STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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AS YOUNG AS WE FEEL

I often think that our particular hobby has a rejuvenating effect; we do, after all, spend quite a lot of time reading about our fictional teenage heroes and heroines whose exploits transport us in imagination to our own youthful years.

I recently had the great pleasure of visiting Charles Hamilton's niece, Una Hamilton Wright, and her husband Brian. Browsing through Una's treasure-trove of unpublished Hamiltonian letters, poems, plays and stories, I was struck by a musical called LOOKING AFTER UNCLE which includes a song, *'Why Should A Man Be Fifty-Five?'*. Certainly Charles Hamilton managed to retain an empathy with youth to the very end of his long life. That empathy, in combination with the insights of maturity, helped to give his stories their wonderfully compelling quality.

Una Hamilton Wright says: 'LOOKING AFTER UNCLE was written during the flapper period of the twenties. Uncle, Mother and Father (Una and Percy Harrison) all piled in and all three wrote words, uncle hatched the plot to which Mother also contributed, while she and Father wrote the music.

They were all enthusiastically busy with it when I was little. I can remember some of the numbers being tried out. The atmosphere was similar to that of THE BOY FRIEND, and the piece would fill that sort of slot in the market for musicals if one should appear again.'

Una has kindly provided me with copies of some treasures from her marvellous collection which we shall be publishing in forthcoming C.D.s Here is the young-at-heart song from LOOKING AFTER UNCLE.

MARY CADOGAN

WHY SHOULD A MAN BE FIFTY-FIVE?

My outer man is fifty-five
And serious and sage,
But right inside, a youth I hide,
Who's barely come of age,
I never was so much alive,
Of pep I've still got plenty,
Oh why should a man be fifty-five,
When his heart is barely twenty?
CHORUS
Oh why, oh why, a waist so wide,
A girth of such extent-y?
When really truly just inside
I haven't quite turned twenty?

* *

SUSAN BEATRICE PEARSE **Les Hawkey**

In the early decades of this century - before cheap photography really took over - a great number of artists earned their livings solely by drawing in magazines and "comics", sometimes adding postcards, commercial adverts, and posters. There were of course "specialists", and where young children were required, probably the three who were most in demand were Hilda Cowham, Mabel Lucie Attwell, and Susan Beatrice Pearse. The first two were possibly better known than Miss Pearse. All were born in the eighteen-seventies - Hilda in 1873, Susan and Mabel Lucie a year apart, 1878 and 1879 respectively.

They had another thing in common - they all married excellent artists, whom they met as students. Mabel married a first-class illustrator of children's books, Harold Earnshaw: Hilda became the wife of the painter, engraver and illustrator Edgar Lander, while Susan's husband was Walter Ernest Webster, R.I., R.O.I., a highly regarded portrait painter and magazine artist, mainly in black and white, or wash.

Like Hilda and Mabel, Susan always used her own name. She was the daughter of a journalist, born in Hampshire, and coming to London to study at the Royal Academy of Arts in South Kensington. After her marriage in the early years of the century she and W.E. Webster lived in Chelsea, and then in Parsons Green. Around 1926 they took a house in Oxfordshire, but kept a studio in London. Later on (possibly after Walter's death) she bought a cottage in a small Berkshire village, and is said to have commuted in a small care at breakneck speeds until quite late in life.

Ameliaranne and the Green Umbrella (1920)

As one of a myriad fine illustrators who flourished between 1900 and 1950 she has her own claims to fame. For instance, she drew the front covers of the "Playbox" Annual for over a quarter of a century (1910 to 1935, with only two exceptions) and for Arthur Mee's famous "Children's Encyclopaedia" she did innumerable b/w and colour illustrations (her beautiful use of water-colours always made the latter outstanding). She had great success from around 1907 on with pretty postcards and with commercial adverts, the most noteable of which was one for "Start-Rite Shoes", which the

company used for many years. Then of course there were her inimitable illustrations for the long series of books about Ameliaranne Stiggins. These started in 1920 with "Ameliaranne and the Green Umbrella", by Constance Heward (1884-1968) who wrote most of the original stories, although they were taken over later on by various other authors, well into the 1940s. The delicately coloured drawings were, however, always supplied by Susan Beatrice Pearse, up to at least 1946. Most of these books were reprinted by Harraps many times and are still available today.

As to more general book and magazine work, some of her earliest was for "Little Folks" in the 1890s, and she remained a contributor until the magazine closed (absorbed into the monthly "The Quiver" in 1933), she also contributed prolifically to many children's Annuals - Blackies, Partridges', Pip & Squeak, The Bruin Boys, and other Amalgamated Press issues, and Nelson's "Chummy" and Jolly" books. The writer has over two dozen entries in his catalogue, apart from the many "Ameliaranne" volumes. Little, if anything, of her work can be found beyond the 1950s, but judging from the "Playbox" covers, and the last "Ameliaranne" pictures, her mastery never declined, and was as fresh and appealing in the '30s and '40s as when she first started.

She had intended becoming a serious water-colourist, and in her early days had exhibited at the Royal Academy, as well as in Paris and Vienna, but she presumably found that depicting young children for books, magazines, etc., was more rewarding, financially and artistically. Her little boys and girls were probably closer to Attwell than Cowham - but without the sometimes "cartoon" - like style of the former or exaggerated gawkiness of the latter. Hers were always kiddies you wanted to pick up and cuddle. If she had a fault, it was that she couldn't draw an ugly child to save her life!

Ameliaranne, Bridesmaid (1946)

And what a life it was! Childless herself, she enjoyed her work, was apparently always cheerful, had very many friends both in the arts and the theatre as well as a happy marriage to a fellow artist. she died at her country home in 1980 at the ripe old age of 102!

HOME.

THERE'S a tiny house in a tiny street,
Far from the tramp of countless feet,
The sun shines early and lingers late
On the lilac trees beside the gate.

There's a tiny path to a tiny door,
There's a snug thatched roof, there are windows four,
There are curtains white and geraniums red,
And asters gay when the summer's fled.

There's nothing inside that's grand or fine,
But there's something about it you can't define,
There's a "feel" of their own to the old chintz chairs,
There's a sound of its own to the clock on the stairs.

If you passed it by you would hardly stay
To gaze at the lilacs—you'd take your way,
For to outside eyes there is nought to see,
But then it is "home" and the world to me.

BELLA SIDNEY WOOLF.

* *

A THRILLER IN THE GEM; or, THE RED ROOM AT THE BLACK HOUSE **by Ray Hopkins**

Not the Cousin Ethel they knew! That is the opinion of the startled juniors when Gussy's popular girl cousin appears at St. Jim's in a highly nervous state, distraught and panting with fear. As Figgins reaches her she just has time to gasp that she is terrified of being killed before fainting in his arms! It is a long and terrifying story that she tells the juniors when she is taken inside and calms down.

Ethel has been left in the care of Mrs. Cleveland's uncle, Dr. Gadsby, a man of science who experiments on animals in his search for new and more efficacious poisons. This costs him a lot of money and he has already run through two fortunes comprising fifty thousand pounds left to him upon the deaths of his first wife and his own father's brother. It is now obvious on what line his thoughts are carrying him as it appears that Ethel, at the age of 21, will inherit ten thousand pounds left to her by her grandfather. Ethel tells

the juniors that if she dies before she reaches that age the money will go to her grandfather's brother who is Dr. Gadsby.

Ethel is left alone in the forbidding building known as the Black House with her great-uncle when Mrs. Gadsby falls ill and is sent to Bournemouth to get well. Mrs. Gadsby, before she leaves, tells Ethel she must not allow her husband to move her into the Red Room located on the top floor of the turret on one corner of the Black House. This was the room that became the death-chamber of Dr. Gadsby's first wife and his uncle. Inquests revealed that, though previously in good health, they had both died from heart failure. Mrs. Gadsby is convinced that she herself would now be the occupant of the Red Room and in immediate danger if she was an heiress to any large sum of money.

Immediately after her Aunt leaves for Bournemouth the Dr. tells Ethel he needs her room for a laboratory and she must therefore move into the Red Room. Ethel has now spent two nights in that room, too terrified to sleep, not knowing what she is menaced by but realising that the Doctor must have confiscated letters she has written to D'Arcy. Her Aunt has told Ethel to be on the alert for a sound like someone whispering and a sound as of faint breathing which will start from the direction of the chimney and continue across to the bed. The uncle told Dr. Gadsby's wife the day before he was found dead that he had heard this mysterious sound.

Ethel has also seen the menacing bloodhound which appears to be patrolling the grounds of the Black House. She has only been able to slip away and arrive at St. Jim's in this disconcerting state of terror because the dog had followed the Dr. when the latter went for one of his periodical walks across the moor.

Figgins comforts the frightened girl, holding her hand for quite an inordinate length of time and murmuring "Ethel Dear." It says something about Gussy's state of mind that he does not make his usual remonstrances regarding Figgins' familiarity with his cousin in taking over his own cousinly duties. But he, like all the rest of the juniors, is in a whirl at this dark cloud of horror which has overtaken the placid life of Cousin Ethel.

The scientist's car arrives in the Quad and Kerr hurriedly tells Ethel that if she hears this strange sound in the Red Room she must write immediately and the juniors will go in force to the Black House and save her. But how can she write when Dr. Gadsby destroys her letters? Kerr instructs her to write an innocent sounding letter being sure to include the word "picnic". She is to do this as soon as possible after hearing the mysterious whispering noise in her room. That will alert them that they are to come to her rescue at once. On no account must she use the bed in which the two previous victims died.

Dr. Gadby's kindly manner and softly affectionate voice as he urges Ethel to come back home with him stupify the juniors and they wonder if perhaps Ethel has allowed her imagination to overcome her natural good sense. Figgins tells her to stay at the school, and earns a thousand lines from Mr. Ratcliff who has accompanied Dr. Gadsby to see that Ethel obeys her uncle. The Doctor promises her that she will be able to join her Aunt in

Bournemouth the following day if she will just come home with him now. Ethel accompanies him with a last despairing look at Figgins.

That night, Ethel hears the dreaded noise which traverses the Red Room from chimney to bed. Her screams of fear bring her guardian to the room but she refuses to allow him to enter. The following morning, Dr. Gadsby forces her to write a note to Figgins apologising for the furore she had caused and allows her to insert the fact that she will be unable to attend the picnic because she will be leaving for Eastbourne immediately. Dr. Gadsby promises to post the letter at once and it will be delivered at the school by the four o'clock post so her friends will know in good time that she will unable to accompany them on their picnic.

Upon its arrival at St. Jim's, Ethel's letter puzzles some of the juniors, it sounding so unremarkably unlike the hysterical state in which they had seen her the previous day. But the sagacious Kerr realises that Dr. Gadsby has had a hand in composing the letter. However, the fact that the word "picnic" appears in the letter is proof that Ethel is still in mortal danger.

The rescue contingent from the school leaves right after lights out, Tom Merry, Arthur Augustus and Blake meeting Figgins and Co. at the school gates. They arrive at the Black House by ten o'clock.

The first stumbling block upon their climbing the wall of the Black House is the appearance of the fierce bloodhound which bars their path to the house. Their instincts recoil at having to harm an innocent animal but they know they must do it in order to rescue Ethel. Kerr has come prepared with some poisoned meat and they watch the dog devour it, its death throes sending shivers down their spines.

The Red Room at the top of the turret can only be reached by scaling a sheer wall covered in ivy which pulls away if tugged at too strongly. D'Arcy tells Figgins that, as they are to get into Ethel's room it will be only right and proper if he, as Ethel's cousin, accompanies Figgins on his perilous journey upward. Her room can only be reached from the inside of the house by a stairway leading to another door that opens on to a flat roof which ends at the door of the Red Room. As he reaches the point where he can see above the parapet, the door from the house opens and Dr. Gadsby appears. He soundlessly crosses the roof and listens at Ethel's door for a full minute. Has he already accomplished his foul task or has the deed yet to be done? Gadsby returns below.

Figgins and D'Arcy calm Ethel when she hears their faint taps at her door. All three remain in pitch darkness and very soon the dreaded whisper is heard from the direction of the chimney and makes its way across the room and on to the bed. While D'Arcy holds a lantern, Figgins raises a cricket stump he brought with him and beats the horrible writhing thing to death. As he had at once realised in the lantern light, it is a poisonous reptile with an ugly flat head. Figgins beats the snake's head shapeless but it is still moving as D'Arcy pushes it out of Ethel's sight under the bed.

Hearing the noise, Dr. Gadsby races upstairs and on to the flat roof where he had inserted the snake into the chimney aperture. As Figgins

withdraws the bolt Gadsby staggers in, an upraised stool in his hand. Figgins tells him they know everything, and he must surrender to arrest. He curses them, cries that they will never leave the Black House alive and reaches inside his pocket for his revolver. Figgins lashes at him with the cricket stump and he and D'Arcy force the Doctor through the door and realise that his withdrawal of his empty hand from his pocket, and his quick dash to the doorway leading to the interior of the building, mean he has left his gun below. Dr. Gadsby vanishes through the house door and there is the sound of a cry and a falling body. When Figgins reaches him at the bottom of the stairway Gadsby's neck is broken and he is already dead.

This sombre episode is in direct contrast to the joyous chronicles which the tales of St. Jim's often tend to be. The GEM in a single issue (No. 185, 26 Aug. 1911 entitled. "The Black House on the Moor") presents the reader with a gripping horror story. The use of a relatively small cast concentrates one's attention on the plot which, although it contains several likenesses to ones we may have met before, nevertheless gives the author an opportunity to get away from the jolly japes and never-ending scraps with the Grammarians.

* *

GREYTOWERS COLLEGE **by Peter Mahony**

Can any reader throw light on the following? My father, an avid Hamilton and Brooks fan, told me of stories of Greytowers College (pre-World War I) which featured the following characters: Peter CLEGG - a burly bully, who was an outstanding goal-keeper and a useful quick-medium paced bowler. TOM MORDANT - a brilliant opening bat and leg spin bowler - possibly of West Indian origin - a planter's son?

TOMMY HUNT and FRED HARRIS - quality inside forwards. Hunt, quick, elusive and brainy - a voracious goal-scorer; Harris, tall, hefty - dominant in the air - between them, these two netted over 50 goals in one season!

REX CAREW - a new, younger boy - bullied, but not cowed, by Clegg - he showed himself to be a useful batsman and a lively right winger.

Dear old Dad is long dead, but his lively descriptions of these characters have lived with me for nearly 50 years. I have never come across any Grey Towers stories featuring these lads. Come on fellow buffs! Supply some more details - please!

* *

BLAKE'S CASEBOOK **by Reg Hardinge**

THE AFFAIR OF THE BRONZE MONKEY (U.J. No. 800) specially written by EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, had one or two unique features about it. First, the narrative was related throughout by Sexton Blake. He had all the facts of this strange and remarkable problem jotted down in his casebook, and his method was to tell the tale exactly as it occurred. He was not actually present himself at several of the events that took place, but he gleamed all the details afterwards and then set them down

Briefly, the plot devolved round the attempt by two ruthless American con-men to blackmail a friend of Blake's, Mr. Horace Cromer, a famous poet and essayist who lived in Richmond. Whilst in the United States Cromer had joined the Bethmites, a quasi -religious cult with stringent rules of conduct. On his return to England Cromer had disassociated himself from this sect. Two men, Kennedy and Becker, had somehow discovered Cromer's Connection with the group and come across to England, posing as Bethmites, and demanding a large sum of money because of his severance from the order.

Blake was engaged to bring the two blackmailers to book, and adopting a disguise he set off for a block of flats in the Putney area. Dressed in loose-fitting clothes, curious boots, and an aged slouch hat, with his yellow face lined like parchment, the detective undoubtedly looked like a Chinaman. Blake managed to gain admittance to the third floor flat by means of the fire-escape, and stood outside the door listening. When his intrusion was discovered he introduced himself as Sing Yan. But the two rogues were convinced that he was spying, and attached him. Kennedy smashed the butt of his revolver down upon the sleuth's head, knocking him out. With Becker's help, Blake's hands and feet were tied with cord, and, under cover of thick fog, he was carried down the fire-escape and dumped in the stretch of water that ran by the back of the building. That would have been the end of Blake, except that a watching Tinker had witnessed the whole scene and was able to rescue him.

The excellent Vine montage which comprises the cover of 'The Affair of the Bronze Monkey' includes two pictures of Blake in his disguise, one outside the window, and the outer when he is felled.

FASCINATING TALE OF SEXTON BLAKE. £300 FOOTBALL COMPETITION.

On an earlier occasion, Blake had assumed the identity of an oriental. To be precise this was in 'When Greek Meets Greek' by G.H. Teed (UJ No. 488), the second of the Yvonne Cartier saga, which also introduced Dr. Huxton Rymer to readers for the first time. At Batavia (Jakarta), where Yvonne's yacht the Fleur-de-Lys lay, Blake overpowered the Chinese Cook on the quayside, and, donning his clothes and disguising his face, went aboard and took over the galley. (Fortunately Blake was an expert cook!)

E.S. Brooks provides an insight into certain aspects of Blake's capabilities. For instance, dancing, as a rule, bored rather than entertained him. When Cromer was ill, Blake was able to make a fairly accurate diagnosis of his complaint as he was not entirely unversed in medical matters. Cigars were all very well, but there was more comfort to be got from a pipe. We learn too that Blake owned a small racer in a nearby Baker Street garage, and that Tinker would ring for it to be sent round when needed. The days of the Grey Panther were still to come!

* *

The rather grim picture below is to serve as a reminder that I need further material for the Brooks' column.

(Editor)

* *

NICHOLAS GOADE DETECTIVE

by Ian H. Godden

The article on E. Phillips Oppenheim by Donald V. Campbell in C.D. 554 was a very satisfactory tribute to a writer whose name was once a household word but is now so little known that even secondhand booksellers confuse him with somebody else.

Oppy holds a special place in my reading affections because, when I was a schoolboy in the early 1950's, I discovered one of the last of the old lending libraries where, for the sum of threepence, I could have my choice of a long line of battered and much-read titles by this prolific writer. His books fascinated me and I read every one I could find.

Oppy's novels were thrillerish romances or espionage yarns or mysteries of one kind or another often set on the French Riviera. As Campbell says Oppy seemed obsessed with money and a great many books dealt with people suddenly becoming rich, like the remarkable SIMPLE PETER CRADD, or in the case of THE AMAZING QUEST OF MR. ERNEST BLISS where a bored young man of great wealth takes £5 and goes off to earn his own living for a year.

That Oppy became a wealthy man from doing what he liked best must have been gratifying to him because what he liked doing best was reclining on a sofa and dictating for hours on end to a secretary, just like a man reading aloud and lost in the fantasy world he was creating.

The worst book Oppy ever wrote was his own life-story, THE POOL OF MEMORY, which is dull to the point of unreadability, as well as being extremely inaccurate in many of the so-called facts about his life. This is what we might expect from a man who lived so much in his own fantasy world. Robert Standish in his fascinating biography of Oppy, THE PRINCE OF STORYTELLERS says that Oppy wrote to amuse himself; elsewhere in the book he says that he wrote for money. He is probably right on both counts and we are left to ponder the subject of a man who could make so much money out of doing something he enjoyed so much.

Campbell says that Edgar Wallace's books 'often allowed the plot to obscure meaning' and that this may have been due to 'multiple dictation techniques' - all of which is true but Oppy's methods of production were similar but without the disadvantages.

Oppy's novels were frequently about the lives of the aristocratic and the wealthy living their gay lives in the whirl of the Monte Carlo social scene or people high in the power structure of their country and engaged in some urgent matter of vast international importance or spying in high places and so forth. So it is quite remarkable to find that his book of short stories, NICHOLAS GOADE, DETECTIVE is as unlike any of this as it is possible for a book to be.

Goade is a senior Scotland Yard Detective who captures an American villain and is, as a result, given a large reward and six month's holiday which he spends driving his decrepit old car around the tranquil, rural by-ways of Devonshire, accompanied by his delightful little dog called Flip.

Both the man and his dog are very pleasant characters, the lovely landscape is portrayed with considerable feeling and all of the ten stories told in the book contain interesting characters and situations and there is a homely and comfortable feel about the whole thing that does the author great credit.

Goade is able to bring happiness to someone in those stories where he plays an active part in proceedings: sometimes he is more observer and recorder than active participant. Goade is thus shown to be a man of compassion whose exploits leave the reader with a warm feeling that wrongs have been righted and justice done.

Sometimes Goade has to use his skills as a detective as in the first story, The Coroner's Dilemma, where he is able to bring to justice a particularly brutal murderer; sometimes he has to call on Scotland Yard and its resources for assistance as in The Beautiful Sisters of Wryde and one or two others but mostly he uses his own considerable powers and understanding of his fellow-man to uncover the culprit In several stories the person committing the crime has done so because of extreme provocation and these are revealed by Goade to the advantage of the person concerned.

So Goade wanders about with his little dog having adventures and helping people in the towns, villages and countryside of Devonshire and it is all delightful. The book may not be typical of Oppenheim but it shows the quality of the man that he could produce stories of this type.

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GEMS OF HAMILTONIA NO. 15 from John Geal. Gosling the Porter MAGNET No. 1151.

"Gosling was not a cheery character. He generally took a pessimistic view of life. Often and often Gosling wondered, as he sipped his gin and water in his lodge, what had induced him to take up a place at a school. Boys, in Gosling's opinion, were dratted imps. There was occasional satisfaction in shutting out a fellow who arrived a second too late at the gates, and reporting him; but, generally speaking, Gosling's view of the rising generation was that they all, or almost all, ought to be "drownded". Thrashings and detentions were good, in their way, but "drowning" was what Gosling really would have recommended."

* *

TABLEAU **by Ted Baldock**

Our revels are now ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
Shakespeare: The Tempest

"Lemon squash at Uncle Clegg's."
"By Jove, just the ticket."
Billy Bunter pricked up his fat ears. It was warm. It was in fact a warmth which could without exaggeration be designated a heat wave. The heat shimmered in the hedgerows and under the trees in Friardale Lane. And - there seems always to be a thorn - there were insects, myriads of them. A large number of the bumbling variety which usually minded their own business and a still larger number of the more voracious type, those to which nature had bequeathed a distinct penchant for human ears and necks. These latter were hunting in swarms that summer afternoon. Slapping and swatting were the order of the day with Harry Wharton and Co as they made their leisurely way towards Friardale.

It was a half-holiday in mid term and Billy Bunter, in his usual state of impecuniosity, was sitting on a stile by the lane-side when the Famous Five strolled by and the fat Owl caught a fragment an extremely pregnant fragment of conversation as they passed.

"Beasts!" he murmured to himself slapping his fat neck for the hundredth time. Whether or not he was referring to the winged denizens of Friardale Lane or to Harry Wharton and Co. is not clear; it could have been either. Such was Bunter's happy way of describing his "pals". He heaved himself from the stile and with a final whirl of his straw hat to scatter the legion of flies he proceeded slowly after the Famous Five Wharton glanced round. "Step out you fellows." he said to his chums, grinning. Forthwith they lengthened their pace and surged ahead, much to Bunter's chagrin. The fat owl had many failings: are we not all something of a composite

agglomeration of warring characteristics? However, although he possessed rather more failings than is normal, upon occasions - and this was one of them - he could be a 'sticker' of the first order. Lemon squash had been mooted; such a celestial liquid on a hot day was irresistible. Hence Bunter 'stuck' like a limpet. Doubtless he could have given that crustacean a useful hint or two on the gentle art. He plugged manfully in the wake of Harry Wharton and Co, with flies still dancing attendance. They seemed very attached to him, invariably selecting his sticky, perspiring head and particularly his fat ears, as the chief object of their activities. This attachment seemed almost permanent, so clinging were they in their attentions.

Thus did they all six juniors progress towards the village of Friardale, Bunter getting redder, more breathless and infinitely more beset by winged admirers. The little village, dreaming and silent in the bright sunlight, was reached at last. The striped awning over Uncle Clegg's shop was welcome indeed with its promise of shade, and refreshment. To Billy Bunter it was akin to a palm girt waterhole in the midst of a limitless desert as he tottered after the Remove fellows. The little tables awaited thirsty way-farers on this still, glowing afternoon.

Harry Wharton and Co. were comfortably ensconced when the dusty, weary and fly-beset Owl trailed up.

"I say you fellows!" he gasped.

"Why, here's old Bunty," exclaimed Bob Cherry in well feigned surprise. "Splendid fellow Bunt. You are just in time to treat us all around. I always said that we could rely on Bunter, didn't I you fellows?"

The fellows grinned, and Johnny Bull grunted.

"I say you know - I seem to have forgotten to bring my spare cash," said Bunter with a very creditable display of annoyance. Harry Wharton smiled and nodded to Uncle Clegg.

"Come along Bunter old porpoise, park yourself here."

Billy Bunter lost no time in doing so, and soon all was merry and bright. Lemon squash is a very desirable and pleasing liquid on a warm afternoon and Uncle Clegg did fine business in the soft drinks line before Frank Nugent glancing at his watch announced that they had better start moving if they wanted to get back to the school and watch old Wingate piling up the runs against St. Jim's on Big Side.

"I say you fellows!" squeaked Bunter.

"Sorry old fat man. Time to go."

"Beast!" I say - I could manage a few more doughnuts...."

Let us pause here for a moment and draw back from this happy scene, which has been repeated with variations many times over the years. The sun seems suddenly to have dulled somewhat. It has become very still and quiet. The slight movements of leaves in the old elm outside Uncle Clegg's shop have become frozen, as have the figures seated at the table below. Uncle Clegg himself has assumed a statue like rigidity in his shop doorway. It is as though we are looking at an old and faded sepia photograph in a Victorian

album. Billy Bunter's glass is poised half way to his capacious mouth. Harry Wharton is bending towards Hurree Singh. Bob Cherry's straw boater is arrested in the act of fanning his heated brow. We know that, unseen along the lane beyond Friardale wood, lies the old pile of Greyfriars school. Time has temporarily stopped as we recall the characters who have been our companions over the years, who have cheered and inspired generations of boys - and men. A blazing afternoon of long ago, possibly symbolizing for us a familiar way of life - and a tranquillity - that is now vanished.

* *

THE "CLASS" MAGAZINES - Musings on The Strand and Others by Donald V. Campbell.

Why do we start collecting? What inner force drives us to populate cupboards, bedrooms, garages, stairways and just anywhere with dusty, mainly unread as well as ancient, books or magazines or comics? Why do wives put up with the mess? When wives (or, more "politically correctly", partners) "join in" is it willingly or is it just to keep the peace? Apologies to the female collectors out there, but take a look around a book fair or a bookshop! These are usually tenanted by the male (there has however been a noticeable, if small, swing detected recently and more women are attending these hallowed places). Mind you, many stalls and shops are owned or run by women. But, to get back to the point - why and what do we collect?

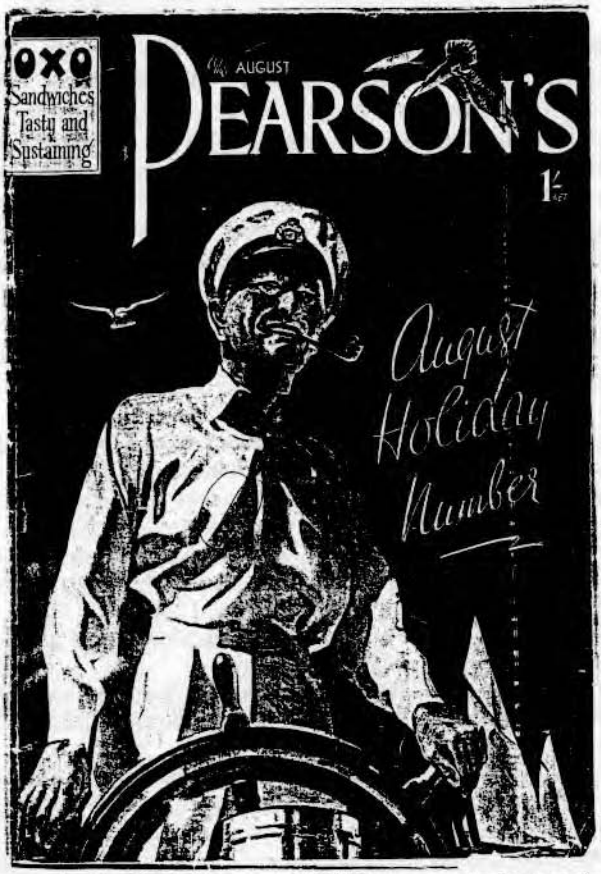
Some booksellers seem to make a healthy enough living from passing on to us the detritus of the attic or cupboard from which spill *"Radio Times", "Everybody's", "Picture Post", "Strand", "Windsor" et al.*

Let's stay with the "class" magazines much favoured and read by those with a shilling to spare each month from around the turn of the century until just beyond the second world war: *Strands and Windsors and Royals and Pearsons and Harmsworths and Londons and Storytellers and Argosys and so on.....* Why "class"? Well we must ask ourselves - "Who read *Strand* Magazine"? Was it the boot boy? The chambermaid? The miner? The smelter? The jam boiler? The shopgirl? The seamstress? Who was it aimed at? Can we glean an idea from the long running "Curiosities" picture and reader page in *The Strand?*

The Strand, May, 1907: Curiosities submitted from: *County School, Bedford: Royal Parade, Eastbourne: The Hayes, Kenley, Surrey: Friesthorpe Rectory, Lincoln: Ayton Cottage, N.B. (North Britain!) plus Chicago, New Zealand and Philadelphia.* We can safely say that there were very few seamstresses, miners, smelters and jam boilers in these pages.

So the likes of *Strand and Royal, Windsor and Pearsons, Harmsworth and London,* were aimed at those with both time and money to spend and, perhaps, with aspirations to join with the rich who figured so prominently in the adventure stories and the romances and the children's items and the mini-biographies featured. Cheaper magazines like *The Violet* catered for other romantics with their feet anchored more firmly in "their place"!

We find Conan Doyle (offering far more than the ubiquitous Sherlock Holmes) in *The Strand,* with Kipling turning up in *The Windsor.* It should be remembered that, by and large, the stories and serials appearing in the monthlies were also published in hard-



back and then paper-back. Both Sapper and Wallace were to be seen in *Strand* as were Oppenheim and de Vere-Stacpoole (of *Blue Lagoon* fame).

In the early days Hall Caine (a very Christian writer); E. Nesbit; C.N. and A.M. Williamson; L.T. Meade and her collaborators, and in later years H.A. Vachell, Gilbert Frankau, Barry Perowne, H.C. Bailey, as well as P.G. Wodehouse, all told humorous, or adventures or romantic stories in settings of not less than faded opulence. Almost alone W.W. Jacobs presented his characters in "ordinary" surroundings. These surroundings included frequent visits to "The Bull's Head" and similar hostelries - but Jacobs wrote colloquial comedies.

All these magazines stories then were unreal, escapist, and fantasy (none more so than those by E. Nesbit, though we would argue that she wrote for children - but what kind of child originally?). Is it that today's collectors are looking for their escape into a world that probably never existed except in the minds of the writers?

Has the question been answered? What was it - why do we start collecting? Perhaps it was ONE book or ONE magazine that we laid hands on. Or was it an illustration on a dustwrapper, a headline, or did something else turn up, buried among other artifacts, that we felt we really wanted?

In an incautious moment, we looked and read and the hook was into us - a barb that will remain secured until we find another SOMETHING to turn us into collectors of what? And then -

"Sorry, family! I need more space in the cupboards, the garage, the stairway and the....."

* *

LAUNCH OF THE CAPTAIN JUSTICE ASSOCIATION

Following Ron Hibbert's much admired reproductions of some of the Captain Justice stories from THE MODERN BOY, Ian Bennett (who contributed 'Justice Island Revisited' to the 1992 C.D. Annual) is co-ordinating the foundation of the new Association. Already Bill Lofts has kindly consented to be Patron of the Captain Justice Association and a small nucleus of Founder Associates has formed. The CJA aims to act as in informal link between CJ enthusiasts, with a view to enabling Ron Hibbert, as Publisher Founder, to reprint the complete CJ saga from the pages of MODERN BOY, for the benefit of all.

Membership enquiries will be warmly welcomed. There is no membership subscription. A prospectus will shortly be available. Please send a 9" x 4" S.A.E. to IAN BENNETT, 20 FREWEN DRIVE, SAPCOTE, LEICESTER, LE9 4LF.

* *

It helps the C.D. if readers advertise their WANTS and FOR SALE book and story-paper items, etc. in it. The rates are 4p per word; a boxed, displayed ad. costs £20.00 for a whole page, £10 for a half page or £5 for a quarter page.

* *

THAT DESERT ISLAND SYNDROME..... by Margery Woods

Part 2 The Girls' Crystal and others.

The theme of a castaways' school was explored in the very early days of Amalgamated Press's girls storypapers, notably when the School Friend was launched in 1919. Julia Storm's serial, The Girl Crusoes, ran for many weeks and ably exploited the full potential of the Crusoe theme in the way the young castaways and the three mistresses shipwrecked with them set about utilising materials to hand and organising a miniature society within the framework of their island prison. So successful were their efforts--- and those of the author!---that the school they set up became a commercial proposition and a second serial on the same theme followed almost immediately, to be succeeded by yet a third island adventure introducing the same characters and a new castaway.

The popularity of the island story combined with a school had not diminished at all when three decades later the Girls' Crystal, at that time valiantly keeping the flag flying for A.P.'s storypapers, serialised The School on Castaway Island, the story of a party of English boys and girls en route for Africa when their ship ran aground on a coral reef.

Once the young castaways get over their shock they are jubilant, visualizing great fun on their own desert island, until Mr. Barnard, the schoolmaster in charge of them, decides that their schooling must not be neglected while the adults endeavour to refloat the ship make repairs and get the radio working so that a message for help can be sent out.

The island is described as a real tropical gem set in the Indian Ocean and probably uninhabited. This is where Peter Fleming, writing as Renee Frazer, inverts the castaway theme, for the island *is* inhabited, by a real Crusoe girl.

Her name is Tania and she has lived alone on the island for several years, her childhood almost forgotten and her early days as a castaway receded like a dream. She had been stranded by a shipwreck with only an old sailor who had survived the wreck. he had cared for her until one day he too had vanished in a violent storm. Now Tania's only companions are Bimbo, a monkey, and Michi, a black panther. Yes, the big cats became a regular feature of the later island stories.

Soon she meets the newcomers and the typical plot layout begins. Two boys lead the characters, Gerry, self-assured and charming, and Dave, quieter, less articulate but very likeable, and provide the conflict. Dave tries to warn Tania against trusting Gerry while the two main girl characters, Pat, the friendly one and Myra, the unpleasant one, provide further conflict. Villainy comes in the form of Stanhope, the ship's mate, and the mystery element in the Shell Grotto and a simple box containing a book belonging to Tania, which the island girl is unable to read. Once the existence of this is known there is a surge of threatening interest in it and it becomes obvious that Tania has an enemy amid the newcomers. Myra? Or one of the two boys? But which one? Meanwhile, Tania is desperately anxious to join the little school set up by Mr. Barnard, to which idea the schoolmaster agrees, until the invariable blackening of her character gets under way in a cruel attempt to prevent her from learning the secret of her past and identity at last. Naturally a monkey and a panther cause a few problems and tragedy threatens when the panther is shot, fortunately not fatally because, as readers would guess, the big cat has an important part to play at the climax of the story, and perhaps there were some suspiciously moist eyes among the readers as Michi is nursed back to health with Pat's help.

The story is sustained and crafted throughout this long serial with the customary skill of one of A.P.'s top writers. Right to the end both Tania and the readers are kept guessing as to which of the two boys, each one capable of exuding a great deal of attraction, is her enemy. Then the mystery is solved of the link which had seemed to come out of the blue.

Tania's old sailor guardian had set out in the ship's boat to try to find help. After the storm he had been picked up by a ship on which Gerry's father was a steward. From the seriously ill old man he had pieced together the story of the island, the wreck, and a chest of pearls which the old man had rescued and hidden to keep safe for the little girl. Fortunately for Tania neither Gerry nor his rascally father had been able to identify the island, until now.

All the ingredients of appeal, mystery, treachery and misunderstanding, plus the unfailing fascination of a wild and fierce animal tamed into devotion and protection, went into this enjoyable story, with just a whisper of promise of romance to come in the unwritten future.

Tomba, John Wheway's Mystery Boy of Castaway Island, made another appearance with his chums Joan, Corinne and Peter, in the Girls' Crystal Annual of 1943. They were homeward bound, just after their rescue from the island, when they discover a chart which sets them on the trail of a golden idol reputed to be hidden on a

volcanic island, presumably somewhere near their route. Tomba clashes with the mate of their rescue ship, and more treachery ensues when they land on the island to search for the golden idol. The mate causes a landslide which blocks the entrance to a cavern in the side of the volcano and traps the youngsters within. But the mate had reckoned without Tomba's jungle skills and a pack of leopards, who obediently begin excavating the landslide with their powerful paws. Even for a devoted Wheway admirer disbelief was not so easily suspended during this episode. But again, here is the pure wish fulfilment for so many, of possessing perfect control over a powerful feral creature. And the leopards deal very competently with the mate, foiling his escape with the golden idol.

There was more exotic escapism the following year in the Annual with the Castaway of Pearl Island, by Linda Martin (a new pseudonym for Wheway, Fleming, or....?). Here are the ingredients as before, another mysterious jungle boy, the requisite

In this enthralling story you will meet again Joan Brentford, Tomba, the Island Boy, and the other cheery characters in that famous serial, "The Mystery Boy of Castaway Isle."

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

big cat, a jaguar this time, but with a touch of reality---or realism---in the form of invading Japs. And again the party of explorers discover a castaway who has been stranded on the island for seven long years since the wreck of the ship carrying him, his father and a cargo of wild animals to Australia. Only Leo and one animal had survived.

The boy's seven years of enforced survival technique stand him in good stead during his rescue of the exploring party from the Japanese army. There is a grand finale of real Boys' Own stuff, slicing the liana rope bridge over the ravine with just the right timing to bring about the required consequences, then the race for the beach, dismay at the sight of Jap reinforcements, and the glorious arrival of the Royal Navy. Castaways escapism into battle.

Stirring stuff!

* *

CHANGES IN GREYFRIARS CHARACTERS by Roger M. Jenkins

There were three famous Removites in early Magnets whose characters changed so much over the years that readers of the period 1928-40 would scarcely have recognised them in the early days. Oddly enough, in later years they all became sympathetic characters to some extent.

The first two need only passing mention. Bunter, the amiable duffer of 1908, soon became actively malicious and unpleasant, a despicable sort of person, and Charles Hamilton did not really contrive to give him some attractiveness until the Whiffles Circus series. Vernon-Smith really was a Bounder from the beginning: wealthy and unscrupulous he remained until the end, but savage, scowling, and remorseless he was also, at first, and red Magnet readers long recalled how he contrived to get the Famous Five expelled one by one.

It was Lord Mauleverer whose character altered as radically as any. In Magnet 184 he arrived at Friardale station as a new boy, having already arranged for the hire of a coach and four to meet him, and he drove it at speed with several Removites aboard, showing considerable panache himself. He told Dr. Locke that the hire was a mere £20, a vast sum in those days. He tipped Gosling £5, and later hired a large Daimler for £20 so that some Removites could accompany him on an afternoon spin. Perhaps his most spectacular coup was to hire a special train on the railway. He informed Mr. Quelch that all this expenditure was good for trade, and added that his income used to be only some £50,000/£60,000 a year, but now that coal had been discovered on the Mauleverer estate, his income was £500,000 a year. Small wonder that Ogilvy, Skinner, and Bunter appealed in turn to their form-master to have him placed in their studies, but his lordship was allotted a new study on his own, No. 15.

Lord Mauleverer's guardian at first was Sir Harry Braithwaite, and he devised an ingenious plan to suggest that all the fortune was lost, in order to test his character, but Mauleverer sent him all the ready cash he had, thus proving his essential good-heartedness.

So far the impression was given of a pleasant, lazy young spendthrift, but the defects in his character were mercilessly exposed in Magnet 203. Loder had lost a good deal of money in gambling, and sought to recoup his losses by patronising this wealthy junior. When the Removites warned him about the dangers of this course, he agreed, and when invited him to play cards for money, he agreed, and lit up a cigarette when offered one. The Removites sentenced him to be lectured to by Alonzo Todd.

Mauleverer was habitually lazy and in No. 243 Bob Cherry devoted a great deal of time to making him take exercise. Later on all sorts of objects including money began to disappear, and a number of suspicions were aroused until it eventually became known that Mauleverer was unconsciously responsible since he was a sleep-walker, and

he claimed that Bob Cherry's attentions had so disturbed him that it had triggered it all in his subconscious.

It is difficult to reconcile all this with the firmness of character he displayed towards Wharton in the two Rebel series, and the enterprise and initiative he evinced in the rebellions at High Oaks and Popper's Island. Weak characters are interesting only if they fit into a complex situation, like Hazeldene. No doubt Charles Hamilton felt that Mauleverer would be useful in the stories only if he could make a positive contribution to the plot, and the improvement in his character may well be attributable to this consideration. Certainly, the Magnet was all the richer as a result.

* *

Malcolm Leonard Saville - A Mystery

by Bill Lofts

I was very much interested in the article by Anthony Cook on this fine writer. I can well remember the late Derek Adley having correspondence with him in the sixties. This was regarding a series of school stories that appear under a 'Ray Saville' by line, published by Aldine's in their 'Schoolboys Pocket Library' in the 1932/3 period. The school was Fellsgate (not to be confused with Charles Hamilton's Felgate in 1949).

The stories were not bad at all; and Derek was of the opinion that they could have been penned by Malcolm Saville, as there was no record of his pre-war output. Later it was discovered that the stories were reprints from Boys Own Library of the 1920/1 period.

I do agree with Mr. Cook that it sounds astonishing that Malcolm Saville worked for Amalgamated Press, George Newnes etc, and had not written any stories prior to his first book in 1943, and at 41 years of age. Most cut their eye teeth on cheap fiction, and indeed many like to forget their early days. I've even known some to deny it, although official records say they got paid for the stories. Certainly, in the old days, it was frowned on by the powers that be for their staff to write for rival publishers, though of course many did. H.W. Twyman, editor of The Union Jack, wrote a lot for George Newnes, whilst Reeves Shaw, senior editor of Newnes, did a lot for Amalgamated Press Ltd.

Someone who did work for Aldine thought it was "the administration chap Malcolm Saville at A.P." whilst another was certain that Saville wrote stuff before the last war. However, when Derek at last traced Mr. Saville, he never seemed to confirm that 'Ray Saville' was himself. So we went on the lines that Twyman suggested to me, that Directors demanded loyalty to the firm, and that it would not enchance their prospects of promotion if found out. Unfortunately, I never had access to Aldine's records. The firm closed down in the mid-thirties with them all destroyed. Its main editor, Walter Light, died in 1940 when I was still a school boy. So the mystery of 'Ray Saville' seems never to be solved. Unfortunately Derek's files relating to Malcolm Saville were also thrown away in error on his sudden death, so one cannot be more precise on the subject.

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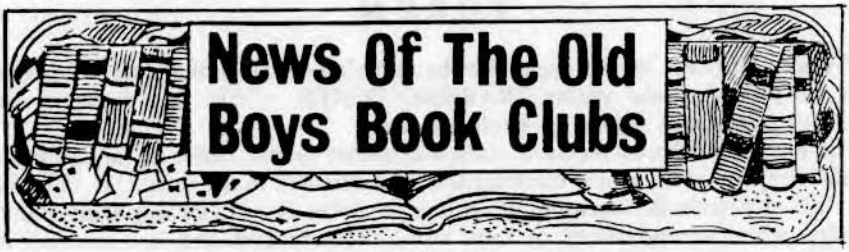

NORTHERN O.B.B.C. REPORT

It certainly was not "flaming June" when we had our Club Barbecue at the home of our Secretary and his wife Vera, in Wakefield. Indeed, it was rather overcast and cool but at least the rain did, hold off and a number braved the "summer" weather to sit outside almost huddled round the barbecue! As soon as we had eaten, we made excuses to desport ourselves in the cosy atmosphere of the house and people found lots of reasons why they should congregate in Geoffrey's splendid library.

The latest four Bunter facsimile books from Hawk were available along with preview copies of Naveed Haque's Collectors' Digest contents listing, printed that very afternoon.

During the evening, the thirteen present enjoyed some of Vera's home baking.

Our next meeting is on July 8th with a visit from Clarissa Cridland who will be presenting items on the Chalet School series. We shall meet at the home of our Secretary in Wakefield at 11.45 a.m. for an informal hotel lunch although our main meeting will be in the evening at our normal venue in Leeds.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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FORUM

EDITOR'S NOTE: We apologise for the omission of the author's name last month when we published the verses TRAINING COKER. This, like so many other Greyfriar's poems, was written by Keith Atkinson.
Several letters have been received about the author whose name so much intrigued Donald Campbell in his article featuring female illustrators in the April C.D. The Right Hon. E.H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, according to Brian Doyle, Dennis Bird and Ray Hopkins, wrote several books of fairy stories for children and is a member of a distinguished family. The 2nd Baron Brabourne, he was related to the Mountbattens and lived from 1829 to 1893. Later members of the family maintained the literary tradition: the Hon. Eva Knatchbull-Hugessen had three books published in the 1890s, R. Knatchbull-Hugessen produced a fairy-tale volume in 1910 while Sir Hughe Montgomery Knatchbull-Hugessen wrote a book about his family in 1960. Dennis Bird writes that one of the Knatchbull-Hugessens was British ambassador to Turkey during the war: his valet burgled his safe of war secrets, and this led to the film, 'Operation Cicero'. Brian Doyle has worked with the present Lord Brabourne (who as John Brabourne produced films such as *Up the Junction* and *Sink the Bismarck*) and also with his son, Lord Romsey, when, as Norton Knatchbull, he was a film location manager. Brian says: "Recalling the name as a writer of children's books, I asked Norton if he was related (not then knowing of his illustrious family connections!). He admitted that he was and when I asked if he also wrote, he said with a smile 'Sadly no, Brian, I think my talents may lie in other directions...' Since he will become the next Earl Mountbatten in due course, we trust they may...." More details about the first literary Knatchbull-Hugessen can be found in Brian's book, THE WHO'S WHO OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE.

D. WITHERS asks: Can anyone supply information about the SPORTS BUDGET which I believe was an A.P. publication in the 1920s and 30s? I only read the odd copy myself. Was this the original home of 'Sporting Sam'? And who was the artist concerned? Was it Alfred Bestall or Jack Greenall?

WILLIAM JENNINGS writes: I am the eldest grandson of the late Rex Hardinge and I am very interested in collecting any of his works, under any of his various pen-names, regardless of format or condition. I am also interested in collating a list of all his works but am not sure if I even have a complete list of all his pen-names. I know of the following: Rex Hardinge, Rita Hardinge, Charles Wrexe, Rex Quinton, Vivian Charles, Capstan. I would be grateful if any C.D. readers could add to this list or be of assistance in locating any of my grandfather's works.

IAN BENNETT and TED BALDOCK have recently paid the C.D. the following compliments. Ian says "C.D. is such a part of life these days that I simply *couldn't* be without it - I've been a subscriber since 1966, as I recall (they're ALL in the study!) and Eric Fayne and I have been great pals ever since..." Ted comments "our unique little periodical materializes each month like a ray of sanity in an otherwise rather suspect world. I would willingly exchange - were it my prerogative - all the politicians in the 'Zoo' and their perpetual vapourings for one copy of our Mag!"

DARRELL SWIFT comments: I was most interested in the editorial in the June C.D. concerning the illustrations in the Skilton and Cassell books.

My introduction to Frank Richards was through the yellow jacket books in the school library. After reading a number of them, I started the collecting craze and avidly scoured the bookshops (at that time W.H. Smith's in Leeds had an excellent children's department) to spot a new Bunter book. To me, R.J. Macdonald was the official illustrator so when BACKING UP BILLY BUNTER came out with the Chapman drawings, then I was a little dismayed. I had never seen a copy of "The Magnet" then and knew it only by name so did not know the association that Chapman had with that publication and the fact Macdonald was associated with "The Gem" - and I had not even heard of that paper.

As time went on, I had to assume that Macdonald had just given up (not realising he had died) and accepted Chapman. I was never keen on the caricature theme he used and even now, I prefer Macdonald for Greyfriars but admit to liking Chapman, too. I think it all depends on first impressions: I was introduced to Greyfriars by Macdonald and that is no doubt the reason I prefer his work - certainly in the Bunter books, anyway.

RAY HOPKINS WRITES: I so enjoyed your *Fifty Years On* editorial in the May issue. It started my brain clicking (incredibly it is still able to do this - the cogs must be getting a trifle worn by this time) with your mention of the final Valerie Drew serial in THE SCHOOLGIRL which was never concluded in GIRLS' CRYSTAL succeeding issues. It just occurred to met that it may have not been printed to the end because the author (who we now know to be Reg Kirkham through Bill Lofts' detective efforts) did not in fact finish the story himself. "Valerie Drew's Holiday Mystery" (SG. 1939) was reprinted in SGOL (2) No. 47, Sep. 1948. The next Drew story "Suspects of Pleasure Isle" (SG 39,40) was never reprinted anywhere and the one which followed lacking only two instalments to be completed, "Valerie Drew and the Avenging Three", is lost forever apparently. What made me think that the story may never have been completed is that I remember that Bill Lofts said (or wrote) that Kirkham died (or was killed) during the war, though at what time was never mentioned. This lead me to delve further and I find that there were Hilary Marlow stories in SCHOOL FRIEND ANNUALS for 1942 and 1944 and a Joan Vincent and a Hilary Marlow story in SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ANNUAL for 1942. My Annual listings are not complete so there may have been more in between and after. So, if these were in fact NEW stories then Kirkham was still alive much later in the forties than the Valerie Drew unfinished serial appeared. Yet another mystery is that an ISOBEL NORTON story called "Judy's Big Secret at School" appeared in SGOL (2) 73, Oct. 1949. If we lost Kirkham during the war, then this must be the use of a byline by another author, or the printing of a story found in a drawer many years after it was written. We'll never know now, but the above may start your brain clicking too!

* *

Story Paper Collectors' Digest

A contents list of main Hamiltonian articles etc. in each issue

from

No 1 of November 1946

to

No 579 of March 1995

Compiled by Naveed Haque

I am delighted to draw readers' attention to this listing of the main Charles Hamilton features. Covering our magazine from the first issue to number 579, this index is an easy-to-consult recall of an enormous body of work from many contributors over the years. It is of course helpful if one wants to trace an elusive article but cannot remember exactly when this was published and, browsing through, I became so intrigued that I spent a pleasant hour or two looking up in long-ago C.D.s some of the listed items. Mr. Haque also slips into his text occasional references to non-Hamilton articles which have particularly interested him (the subjects of these range from P.G. Wodehouse to Snow White and Enid Blyton).

This STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST CONTENTS LIST is available from *Happy Hours*, 37 Tinshill Lane, Leeds, LS16 6BU for £4.29 (four pounds and twenty-nine pence), which includes postage costs.

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THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN JUSTICE *REPRINTS*

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Series 1 - *Captain Justice - Modern Pirate*
2 - *The Ocean Outlaw*
6 - *The Flying Cloud*
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