

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 50

No. 592

APRIL 1996



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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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THE EDITOR'S CHAT

OUR COVER

Len Hawkey sent the picture for this month's cover. He says "This is an unusual picture of Sexton Blake's consulting room. The artist is G.M. Dodshon (pretty awful, in my opinion). Is Pedro pulling out a hand or a glove?"

I don't know the answer to that, but I was surprised to see that G.M. Dodshon illustrated a Sexton Blake story. I always associate his work with the girls' papers, and particularly the early *School Friend* Cliff House stories. Although he designed some stunning covers, his pictures of the girls lacked the charm of Leonard Shields' Morcove pictures, and of many of the other A.P. illustrators, including T. Laidler, who was to

A SPECIAL "MARJORIE HAZELDENE" NUMBER!



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
The Special "Marjorie Hazeldene" Number of the "Cliff House Weekly," and TWO Entrhralling Serials.



COMPLIMENTS FROM POLLY! "Hullo, Miss Bullivant!" came from the parrot. "You are looking charming this evening—younger than ever!" The mistress was astounded!

portray the images of the Cliff House girls during the 1930s in *The Schoolgirl*. Dodshon often gave his subjects an oriental look, and he was almost a caricaturist in drawing Bessie Bunter and some of the other Cliff House inmates. Yet his colour-cards of 10 of the girls (given away in the 1922 *School Friend*) are quite charming. It seems that when he was in the right mood for it, he could make his heroines attractive. Two rather different examples of his Cliff House pictures are shown here.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR E.S.B. PAGES

I am glad to be able to report that my plea for more *Nelson Lee and E.S.B.* material has borne fruit, but I would still welcome further contributions so that a good reserve of articles can be built up. I know that there are many Brooks' enthusiasts amongst the C.D.'s readers and I hope that they will be moved to get going more frequently with their pens, typewriters and/or word-processors.

I could do too with a few more items for Blakiana.

With warm Easter Greetings to you all.

MARY CADOGAN

BIGGLES & Co.

The W.E. Johns Quarterly Magazine

First published in October 1989, *Biggles & Co* is a non profit making A5 sized illustrated magazine, in full colour covers, with forty-four pages of articles and stories by and about W.E. Johns, the creator of *Biggles*. Now in our seventh year, the Winter 1995 edition (number 25) included a complete *Biggles* story and a non-fiction article by Johns. The Spring 1996 edition will be published during March.

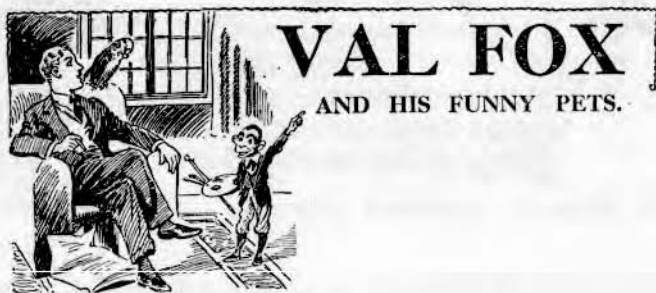
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Amidst the plethora of young, and even younger, characters who introduced our parents and grandparents to the mystery, magic and methods of training the little grey cells in the arts of observation, deduction and ensuring that two and two always added up to four, there was one popular detective whose exploits continued for at least twenty years. This was Val Fox, and his showcase was one of the most famous and superior coloured twopenny comics, A.P.'s PUCK.

For good measure, and keeping in mind the youngest section of PUCK's readership, Val Fox was given two funny pets. One was Uncle Pat, a somewhat muddle-headed parrot; the other was Mickey the monkey, whose anthropomorphous conversations added much humour if not much assistance while their young master solved the mysteries. In the early stories, before 1920, Val Fox was described as The Ventriloquist Detective. His services were always at the disposal of the Government and he was not allowed to be in the army. Despite the animal larks he was a true professional, having an office with clerks and assistants, and a home complete with housekeeper to field the callers and administer to his creature comforts --- an essential requisite for all would-be Holmeses. He also possessed a caravan, presumably motorised, in which he drove out to more distant cases.

During the twenties the ventriloquist heading was dropped in favour of Val Fox and his Pets, until a decade later when it became Val Fox and his Funny Pets. By then the tone of the stories became more juvenile and not quite so pedantic as in the earlier years when PUCK had an air of sophistication that set it apart from the other coloureds.



The Mystery of the Convict.

It is interesting to study the differences in atmosphere that distinguished one comic from another. Although the formats of design, layouts and illustrations, and story formulas were basically the same, with similar casts of stock characters, somehow each publication succeeded in taking on a style entirely its own, and so it was with the detective stories. The colour comics kept the themes fairly gentle, in keeping with the tender age of the reader, while the penny plains, especially in earlier days, presented a much more robust type of story. Of A.P.'s quality stable of coloureds, the Tiger Tim group --- RAINBOW, TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY, PLAYBOX and BUBBLES --- more or less kept away altogether from the detective genre, while JUNGLE JINKS veered towards a spot of mystery occasionally during its long running series featuring Gipsy Joe but it mostly kept to a cast that echoes the paper's title, combined with the ongoing sagas of little lonely orphans and similar unfortunates.

The comics at the turn of the century tended to be closer in content to the boys' storypapers in many of their stories. The print was minute, in solid blocks, allowing for a much more verbose development of storyline and character. In 1904 THE BIRTHDAY BUDGET featured the thrilling adventures of Vernon Trew, detective, and Clutch, the man-

tracking dog, author credit Donovan Mart, as they hunted down The League of Dread, whose members carried a branded star on their right hands, while victimising beautiful heroine Esther Kirk. There tends to be too much dialogue and not much action, despite the foreboding conveyed by the dramatic title, while some of the characterisation is sketchy. Two tall gentlemen call on Trew, produce revolvers and immediately become ruffians, although their dialogue does not convey this. Moments later Trew has disguised himself as his clergyman friend (and disguised the dog as well!) only to meet the two League of Dread pseudo Scotland Yard men on the train. Credulity is a trifle strained, but no doubt he foils them convincingly enough in the following week's instalment. A point of interest in this early comic is a bright tale of two young medics which is illustrated by G.E. Studdy, presumably before he found greater fame with the advent of the marvellous Bonzo.

The Birthday Big Budget. (12)



The first series of THE BUTTERFLY, ½d, in 1914, featured a series called Daring & Co., starring a female sleuth, Mrs. Matmaddox, formerly Polly the Board-School Girl Detective, (girl marries her boss, presumably). This is a story which makes a reader nearly a century later wish for a few footnotes. In the hierarchy of education the small suffix 'ing' bridged a huge gap at that time, the gap between a boarding school, usually public, only for those who could afford the fees or win a scholarship, across the gamut of seminary, church, grammar, secondary, elementary, council, and the board school, this last the toughest and lowliest of Victorian to pre 1940 scholastic establishments. The board school usually provided the main catchment for slum and lower working-class areas, averaging forty to fifty children per class, which teachers educated heroically and mainly extremely well in conditions that would guarantee a revolution among today's educationalists. (Actually those schools produced better readers and scholars than many of today's comparatively pampered schools, although the less said the better about the discipline that enforced the absorption of those hard won skills in the three Rs.)

So, was Polly the product of one of these tough schools? If so, she was a perfect example of how skill and talent and determination could overcome poverty. She is a partner in the detection firm of Daring & Co., with consulting rooms in Laker Street. Her husband, Max, is described as an ex-cracksman. He is also a fully qualified doctor.

Doubly intriguing. He does not appear in all the stories, sometimes being sent abroad on mysterious missions. There is one visitor who often comes rushing into Polly's consulting rooms, saying, "Thank goodness you're here!" This is Inspector Wing of Scotland Yard, needing her assistance (and reinforcing the stereotype of the plod like policeman who requires the brilliant untrained amateur sleuth to sort out his problems for him!). Fortunately for Inspector Wing Polly has positively Holmesian powers of deduction, reading information from callers' walking sticks and knowing their identities before they even present a card.



...tell your friends about the Adventures of the Firm of

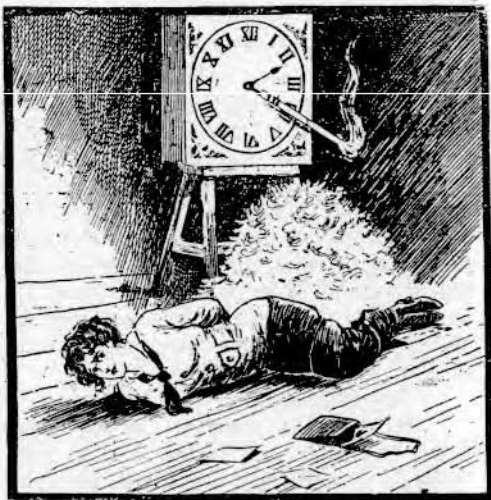
Being the Adventures of Mrs. Matmadox, formerly Polly Smith, the Board-school Girl-Detective.

THIS WEEK :

The Strange Case of the Elderly Caretaker.

She also advances bravely into situations that lead to the Perils of Pauline type of cliff-hangers, keeping the reader on tenterhooks for the next week's instalment. This, incidentally, can prove extremely frustrating for the collector reading them more than eighty years later and discovering that the next issue has long since sold out. Usually divided into three or four parts, the Polly stories were grand entertainment, and still are, provided they are accepted within the era in which they were written. Unfortunately the BUTTERFLY did not have author credits.

These are just a few of the long gone, unsung detective characters belonging to childhood and invoking a taste for one of the most popular genres of fiction ever created. How many more wait to be discovered and to reward both reader and researcher?



Slowly the hand of the clock moved round. In three minutes the torch would reach the shavings, and then —

This story by "an unknown author" is in the tradition of Frank Richards's *Who Punched Prout?*, *Who Hacked Hacker?*, *Who Walloped Wingate?* etc. The author's name will be revealed when we publish the concluding instalment next month.

WHO KICKED

QUELCH?



by an unknown author

A hefty book was swung at the shadowy gowned figure, which flew headlong to the earth. An anguished yell rang out.

THE FIRST CHAPTER - No Fun for Wibley

William Wibley whistled.

The acting genius of the Remove was feeling cheerful as he walked out through the door of the House. He was about to spend the half-holiday enjoying himself in his own peculiar way. Other fellows, such as Wharton or Cherry, might prefer to kick a football on Little Side. Skinner, Snoop and Stott might choose cigarettes and banker in a locked box-room. Billy Bunter, given half the chance, would devote himself to scoffing jam tarts in the tuckshop. But Wibley was on his way to Mr. Lazarus' shop in Courtfield, there to devote a happy hour to selecting costumes and greasepaints for the Remove Dramatic Society's production of "Macbeth". Wibley was to play the part of Macbeth himself. He would have played Macduff, Banquo, Banquo's ghost, Duncan, Lady Macbeth and the three witches as well if only Shakespeare had not been so inconsiderate as to have these characters appearing on stage at the same time as one another. Still, Macbeth wasn't bad to be going on with. So Wibley whistled.

"Stop that noise!"

Wibley looked round to see the rugged face of Coker of the Fifth glaring at him. Coker had been deep in conversation with his studymates at the top of the steps and Wibley's whistling had interrupted his flow. Potter and Greene were being deprived of valuable instruction on football. Coker did not approve of noisy fags, especially Remove fags. Even less did he approve of being interrupted.

"Rats!" replied Wibley briskly.

"You cheeky fag. I'll smack your head!" And Coker took a stride towards the junior.

Wibley leapt back and stuck out a foot. Coker tripped, lost his footing and rolled down the steps. Potter and Greene looked at each other and quietly faded away into the House.

"Ow! Wow! Groogh! Oh, my nose!" Coker sat and roared.

Wibley took one look and, deciding wisely that discretion was the better part of valour, took to his heels. Anxious to be out of Coker's field of vision when he had recovered sufficiently to seek revenge, he dived for cover, as it were, and charged into the walk under the old elms.

"Crash!"

For a moment Wibley thought that there had been an earthquake, or that the sun had fallen from the heavens, for all that he could see were stars. He sat on the earth for a moment, wondering dazedly what had happened, until a stinging pain in his shoulders sent him leaping to his feet. Then he observed the savage face of Gerald Loder of the Sixth, who, ashplant in hand, was wildly lashing out at him.

"Look where you're going, you clumsy young fool!"

It was borne upon Wibley that in his haste to escape from Coker he had collided with Loder and he felt that he fully understood the significance of the old saying about the frying-pan and the fire.

"Sorry, Loder."

"Sorry? I'll make you sorry! I'll skin you! Bend over!"

"Oh, I say, Loder! It was an accident."

"I'll teach you not to have accidents. Bend over!"

For a moment Wibley thought of refusing. But a prefect, even a bullying prefect like Loder, had to be obeyed. Slowly he bent over.

Swipe! Swipe! Swipe! Swipe! Swipe! Six strokes came down with the full force of Loder's arm.

"Let that be a lesson to you." Loder scowled, tucking his ashplant under his arm and walking off.

"Ow! Ow! Oh, my hat! Wow! Oogh!"

Painfully Wibley limped away towards the House, all thought of Macbeth having vanished from his mind. As he slowly crossed the quad a loud roar came from the direction of the tuckshop.

"There you are, young Wibley! Stop! I want you!"

Wibley had forgotten Coker, under pressure of events, as it were. He would have preferred to remain in that state of blessed forgetfulness, but it was too late. For the second time in ten minutes, he ran from Coker. This time, after his hectic encounter with Loder, his running form was not what it had been earlier and as he scampered breathlessly up the stairs to the Remove passage he could hear the pounding of size ten boots gaining rapidly on him.

"Rescue, Remove!" he yelled desperately.

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo! 'Ware Fifth form!" The welcome voice of Bob Cherry signalled the presence of the Famous Five on the landing.

Harry Wharton took one look at Wibley's strained face.

"Cut, Wib! We'll deal with Coker."

"Out of my way, you fags! I want Wibley!"

"You can't have him, Coker, old bean. You've got us instead. Now buzz off unless you want trouble."

"The troublefulness will be terrific!"

"Why, you cheeky fags! I'll pulverise you!"

Coker rushed at the juniors. But something went wrong with the pulverising. Five pairs of hands grasped him and the Remove passage rotated round him, the floor going

where the ceiling should have been and vice versa. The world continued to spin as Coker was rolled, not at all gently, down the stairs and into the Fifth form passage, where he was deposited in an untidy heap.

Coker sat up dizzily and slowly rose to his feet.

"That fag Wibley! I'll make him sit up for this!"

In Study No. 6 in the Remove, Wibley was leaning on the table, this at the moment being more comfortable than sitting down.

"That cad Loder! I'll make him sit up for this!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER - Coker Asks For More!

"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter was fairly dancing with excitement as he rushed into the Rag, where the Remove had gathered after tea.

"Roll away, barrel."

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, Loder's in a wax. He! He! He! He's had a wiggling from Mossoo. Mossoo told him that he was a rotten beast and a bullying cad! He said he was behaving like a bargee and if he did it again he'd be for the high jump."

"What are you burbling about, you fat ass?" said Harry Wharton.

"Mossoo saw Loder boxing Tubb's ears and went for him like a tiger. Threatened to punch his nose, you know. Put his fists up and danced around him. He! He! He! I thought Loder was going to hit him first! I say, do you think they'll have the gloves on in the gym?"

"Gammon. You're making it up, you fat Ananias."

"Oh really, Bull! Ask Smithy. He was there."

"Do you know what this fat idiot is babbling about, Smithy?" asked Harry Wharton of Vernon-Smith, who had just come into the Rag with Redwing.

"He's exaggerating, of course," replied Vernon-Smith, "But it's true that Mossoo told Loder off. Tubb is Loder's fag and it seems he burnt Loder's toast, or something. Anyway, Loder chased him out of his study and boxed his ears just as Mossoo came round the corner. Mossoo's a decent little ass and he gave Loder a thoroughgoing ticking off in front of a crowd of fellows. Loder's face was a picture! But Bunter's talking nonsense as usual. Mossoo may have waved his arms about a bit - you know what these foreigners are - but that was all. One thing he did say was that he'd have to think about whether to report Loder to the Head."

There were amused smiles from the Removites. Loder was not popular with the juniors and the thought of him worrying whether he was to be brought before the Head for bullying was one to add a little cheer to their evening.

"I wonder if Mossoo will go to the Head," said Tom Brown.

"Very unlikely," said Peter Todd. "You know what Mossoo's like. He's soft-hearted and he'll be satisfied to have frightened Loder."

There was a little buzz of talk and the general feeling among the fellows was that Peter Todd was right. Mossoo never followed up a punishment once he had cooled down.

William Wibley had been standing at the back of the crowd of juniors, listening to the discussion with considerable interest. He still ached from Loder's savage caning and resentment burnt deep inside him. As the conversation drifted back to football Wibley quietly slipped from the room, a grim little smile - the first since his encounter with Loder - playing round his lips.

A few moments afterwards the door of the Rag was thrown open and Coker of the Fifth strode in, and gazed around the room. Fifth Formers were not supposed to enter the Rag but to the lordly Coker such considerations were less than the dust beneath his feet.

"Clear off, Coker. Fifth Form not wanted here. Try Colney Hatch."

"Don't be cheeky, Cherry. I'm looking for Wibley."

"Look here, Coker, haven't you had enough of trying to catch Wibley?" said Harry Wharton angrily. The captain of the Remove's patience with Coker's high-handedness was rapidly getting thin.

"I didn't come here to argue with you, Wharton. Wibley's a cheeky fag and I'm going to teach him a lesson."

"If you don't clear off and leave Wibley alone, he won't be the one to get a lesson. The boot will be on the other foot."

"That's enough, Wharton! I don't take cheek from fags."

"Right! You've asked for it. Come on, you fellows. Let's take the idiot home."

There was a concerted rush and for the second time that day Coker was swept off his feet and whirled unceremoniously to the Fifth Form passage, there to be deposited, carriage paid, as it were, outside his study door.

THE THIRD CHAPTER - A French lesson for Loder!

Wibley made his way from the Rag to his study where he quickly sorted out the property and make-up boxes of the Remove Dramatic society and with swift, practised movements began to make up for a part he had played successfully on a number of previous occasions. Always before it had been as a jape but this time he had a serious, even revengeful purpose.

There were about fifteen minutes to go before the start of prep., so speed was of the essence. But to one of Wibley's skill no more than three or four minutes were needed to change the trousers, pad the body, adjust the wig and false beard, apply a few deft strokes of grease paint and whisk on a gown.

The door of Study No. 6 opened and from it emerged, to all intents and purposes, the figure of Monsieur Henri Charpentier. The figure proceeded, with the slightly strutting walk of the Greyfriars French master, down the stairs and into the Sixth Form passage, where it tapped on the door of Loder's study and turned the handle. The door was locked.

"Who's there?" came Loder's voice from within.

"Ouvrez zis door, Lodair, s'il vous plait."

"Oh, yes, of course, Monsieur Charpentier. One moment, please."

There were hurried movements inside the study before the door opened, and the rattle of coins being rapidly picked up. Wibley grinned. He guessed that Loder had been consoling himself by playing a little banker with his friends.

The key turned in the door and Loder's face, rather pale and anxious, appeared in the opening.

"Lodair, it is zat I come in, n'est-ce pas?" and Wibley swept into the study.

"So! Walkair and Carne, you will go with yourselves, please. I wish to speak with Lodair." Not bothering to hide their grins, Loder's cronies walked out.

Wibley closed the door and sniffed the air.

"Lodair, I sink you 'ave been fumant - smoking."

"Nunno, Monsieur Charpentier, I assure you. It's the - the chimney. It needs sweeping."

"So! Possiblement I should report zis also to Dr. Locke in order zat it can be swept."

"Oh, no, please! It is not necessary. I have already told the - the house dame. Please don't bother Dr. Locke with - with anything."

"But you 'ave not behaved in the way a prefect should. You are one bully, Lodair."

"Oh! Yes, Sir. I-I lost my temper. It won't happen again. Only, please do not report me." Loder almost moaned.

"But you must learn zat to strike ze small garcon is wrong. You 'ave one cane, n'est ce pas?"

"Oh! Yes. All the prefects have canes. Dr. Locke allows us..."

"Give to me your cane, Lodair."

"Wha - what for?" stuttered Loder.

"I zink I cane you, Lodair. Zat is a suitable punishment for a bully."

Loder stood dumbfounded.

"But - but prefects can't be caned."

"Zen I must go and speak with Dr. Locke."

"Oh! No! All - all right. I'll be caned." And Loder slowly picked up his cane and reluctantly handed it to Wibley.

"Zen bend over, Lodair!"

The expression on Loder's face was positively fiendish. He glared wolfishly at the disguised Wibley. If looks could have killed, Wibley would have expired on the spot. Then, very, very slowly, Loder bent over. Wibley's eyes shone.

Swipe! Swipe! Swipe! Swipe! Swipe! Swipe! Six swipes, with all the beef that Wibley could put into them, landed fairly on target. Loder roared.

"Oh! Crikey! Ow!"

Wibley's eyes danced with glee. In the excitement of the moment he forgot his part.

"Take that, you bullying rotter!" he cried in his normal voice.

Loder stopped in the act of straightening.

"What! Who! You're not Mosssoo. Why, I believe you're....."

But Wibley did not wait for identification. Realising that he had given himself away, he leapt for the door and, swiftly removing the key from the inside, shot into the passage, slamming and locking the door behind him just as Loder grabbed the handle on the inside.

"Wibley, it's you. I'll slaughter you."

Being slaughtered did not appeal to Wibley. He ran until clear of the Sixth Form passage then, realising that the sight of the little French master racing towards the Remove passage was likely to cause enquiries to be made, he reverted to the strutting little walk of Monsieur Charpentier.

(To be continued)

WANTED: original artwork W.E. JOHNS related. Biggles, Worrals, Gimlet, Space, drawn by H. Leigh, Stead, Studio Stead or of course by Johns. **Christmas cards** or **prints** advertised in *Popular Flying* in the 1930s illustrated by Johns, Leigh or Stanley Orton Bradshaw. **Playing cards**, with Aircraft design signed Johns. **British Air League** albums illustrated by Leigh. **Skybirds** magazines, models. **Skyways** magazines. **Murder at Castle Deeping** by W.E. Johns, J. Hamilton Edition.

JOHN TRENDLER

4 ASHENDENE ROAD, BAYFORD, HERTS, SG13 8 PX.

Tel: 01992 511588.

There is a passage known to me
 Silent, cool, austere.
 Which all the fellows quite agree
 Inflicts a certain fear.
 Here masters pace and air their views,
 Hands clasped beneath their gowns.
 Each pressing his scholastic news,
 Some smile, while others frown!

Master's passage. A more or less hallowed precinct - except upon certain occasions - a place of dignified silence and decorum.

Here are situated the studies which provided for the teaching staff of Greyfriars a sanctum, a haven and retreat from the battlefields of the form-rooms. Here Mr. Henry Samuel Quelch casts the present, for short periods, into oblivion and immerses himself in that great love of his life, the Magnum Opus to which the larger part of his leisure time is devoted.

History has recorded that in times of intense study he has been known to exercise that well used ploy of his undergraduate days, 'sporting his oak', to ensure a degree of peace and continuity for his researches. This some would designate as unsocial conduct, but it is necessitated largely by the fact that the adjacent study is occupied by none other than the redoubtable Paul Pontifex Prout, master of the fifth form. A formidable gentleman upon all counts, he is not renowned for tact or, at times, feeling for his colleagues. A gentleman who enjoys the sound of his own voice, the booming cadence of which is all too familiar hereabouts.

Other masters have a tendency to lower their voices when they hear his ponderous tread approaching along the passage, hoping fervently that he is not bound for their particular domiciles. They have in the past been known hastily to turn the key to the door and to preserve absolute silence should the fatal knock sound on the panels.

Poor Prout, it seems hardly sociable or strictly gentlemanly for such behaviour to be inflicted on him. The fault, however, lies chiefly with himself. As little Mr. Twigg in an unusually courageous mood once opined: "He is such a crushing bore you know". An opinion to which Mr. Capper, a peace-loving soul and a great avoider of confrontation, gives hearty acquiescence. (It would be well for you Twigg and you also Capper, to keep such opinions very strictly to yourselves!)

Most of the teaching staff at Greyfriars are elderly gentlemen, with the exception of 'Larry' Lascelles who has charge, among other duties, of all sporting activities. He is not at all 'put about' by the time honoured rituals of his senior colleagues among whom he enjoys much popularity.

Mr. Hacker, a master of acid propensities with a rather sour approach to life occupies the study next to that of Mr. Prout on the other side from Mr. Quelch's. The booming of Prout's opinions and the stringent comments of Hacker constitute the perfect combination for 'Fireworks', frequent displays of which enliven the calm of Masters' passage. It is well that Dr. Locke, the Headmaster, has a character with many Solomon-like aspects. These are frequently called into play to soothe and preserve a state of what may at best be described as a fragile peace. Strangely, Prout and Hacker rely upon each other in many ways. Old colleagues, there exists between them a very real sub-stratum of genuine

friendship. Should one for any reason depart, it would certainly leave a considerable void in the life of the other. Friendships can be rather curious affairs, as the Hacker/Prout relationship exemplifies.

It is difficult, perhaps, to conceive masters' passage as a battle-ground in embryo. Yet many subdued, even silent, campaigns have been waged in this dignified area. Battles do not necessarily have to involve canon-fire and wild infantry charges. Equally deadly battles may be waged in icy silence.

For elderly gentlemen, - even school masters, - are but human and thus heirs to all the frailties and shortcomings of this exalted state.

The echoes of this hallowed retreat are periodically awakened by the roars of William George Bunter undergoing stern retribution for one or another of his manifold sins. Most fellows take their punishment with clenched teeth and what stoicism they can muster. But Bunter.....!

As lesson time approaches, hurrying figures in flowing black gowns clasping books and papers may be seen debouching from Masters' passage *en route* for their respective class-rooms. Some perhaps will make a brief pause at the Common room to exchange a last word with a colleague before advancing into battle, partaking a last hasty cup of coffee and fortifying themselves for the coming fray.

Thus Masters' passage is left to solitude and quiet for a brief period, or to the odd house-maid with brush and Hoover. The bust of Socrates perched upon Mr. Quelch's bookcase continues to gaze stonily across the study at the view of the quad through the window, much as he has always gazed, and will continue to do until the ponderous step, the acid tones and the twitters are no more heard in the land.

THE SCREAM OF THE EARTH

by Reg Hardinge

Albert (Bertie) Thacker Brown produced the first ever comic strip starring Charles Spencer Chaplin for the front page of 'The Funny Wonder' no. 72 of August 1915, and entitled 'Charlie Chaplin, The Scream of the Earth (The Famous Essanay Comedian)'. The feature ran for almost 29 years, till May 13, 1944, and the plots of most of the strips were those of Brown himself including the speech balloons. The dialogue below the drawings was the work of some of the office staff. The tremendous boost that was given to The Funny Wonder's circulation figures in 1915 induced its publishers, the Amalgamated Press, to introduce readers of two other publications of theirs, 'The Family Journal' and 'The Weekly Friend', to special offers of 'The Chaplin Lucky Horseshoe' and 'The Chaplin Lucky Charm' with a view to increasing sales. Incidentally, eleven years later, the cover of Nelson Lee Library No. 30 of November 27, 1926, carried a stand-up figure of Charlie Chaplin which was given free inside.

Bert Brown was also engaged by 'Young Britain' to produce a centre spread of 15 frames every week, depicting Charlie's adventures, and starting with issue no. 1 of June 14, 1919.

The two examples reproduced are typical of Brown's style, 'The Kid', the silent film starring Chaplin and Jackie Coogan, was released in January 1921, and at the same time Jackie started appearing in 'The Funny Wonder' strip as 'The Kid', invariably with Mickey the Monkey. Each separate illustration seemed to be crowded with events in the background which were secondary to the main theme. There were touches of subtle

humour too, like the post of the Siamese Twins; the pun on 'Nuts'; 'Wax Worx'; Charlie jumping up and hanging on to the figure of Henry VIII; Charlie on the helter-skelter bumping the gentleman in front of him with his feet, and knocking off his hat, wig and glasses. Charlie always had an attractive damsel in cloche hat and short skirt, like Susie, to see later. The racy style of narrative, reminiscent of P.G. Wodehouse, always written in the first person, added to the humour, and usually ended 'Thine, Charlie Chaplin'.

The 'Young Britain' strip of 15 frames, in contrast to the eleven of 'The Funny Wonder' seemed to have less happening but still contained flashes of brilliance. The silhouettes, five on the right and five on the left of the strip-heading are really splendid, and instantly recognisable as some of the routines of Chaplin's miming from his silent films of that time (1919). The deaf old lady; the girl on the bicycle; the man with a monocle driving his 'Rolls Ford'; the cat and the dog on one side of the road, and the small bird on the other, all watching Charlie's antics; the curio shop-owner depositing the flattened shilling in his safe; the jazz band in full swing in the background of the restaurant where Charlie is ordering lunch for his demure fiancée and himself - all added to the amusement, and fun. Unlike 'The Funny Wonder' strip, the narrative was in rhyme, with no speech balloons.

In 1915 a popular song with the opening lines 'The Moon Shines Bright on Charlie Chaplin' swept the world, and was sung by the men in the trenches in France. The song was a parody of a sentimental ballad about an Indian maiden called Redwing which accompanied the melody of Schumann's 'Merry Peasant'. Chaplin himself, of course, was a musical genius, an adept at composing, arranging and scoring, he won an Academy Award for his music in his 1952 film 'Lime Light'. Particularly memorable was 'Eternally' as was 'This is My Song' and 'Smile' from 'A Countess from Hong Kong' (1967). Though Chaplin never won an Oscar for acting he was nominated for Academy Awards for his performances in 'The Circus' (1928) and 'The Great Dictator' (1940).

On January 1, 1975, Charles Chaplin, somewhat belatedly, was given a knighthood (with P.G. Wodehouse, Garfield Sobers and Roger Bannister) and in March 1975, at Buckingham Palace, in a wheel-chair, had conferred upon him by the Queen the honour that he so richly deserved. After the investiture there was a party at the Savoy attended by, among others, Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Marcia Williams.

Chaplin was living with his wife Oona and family at Vevey in Switzerland where in the small hours of Christmas Morning, 1977, he died peacefully in his sleep. On March 2, 1978 at Vevey Cemetery where he was buried, his grave was found opened up and his coffin gone. A ransom was demanded for its return by two men who were eventually arrested, and the coffin was found buried in a cornfield at the eastern end of Lake Geneva. The two body snatchers were tried and sentenced to imprisonment.

Sir Richard Attenborough's tribute to the great man's comic genius was the film 'Chaplin', released in 1992, spanning the 88 years of his life, starring Robert Downey Jr., and costing £23 million.

Charlie's unique and unmistakable costume for his role of the loveable little tramp was assembled, it is alleged, in the Keystone Studios in 1914, and consisted of Fatty Arbuckle's trousers and father-in-law's bowler hat, with Ford Sterling's size 14 boots. In December 1993 at Christie's in London, an anonymous buyer paid £55,000 for the famous battered bowler hat and bamboo cane which were part of his trademarks.

Finally, 'The Guinness book of Records' states that nearly 300 books have been written about Chaplin's life and art, making him the person who has inspired the most biographies ever.



Just a few characteristic silhouettes of the great film comedian taken from life.



THE CHARACTERS OF CHARLIE CHAPLIN'S FILMS ARE THE PROPERTY OF MESSRS. M.G.M. PICTURES, INC.



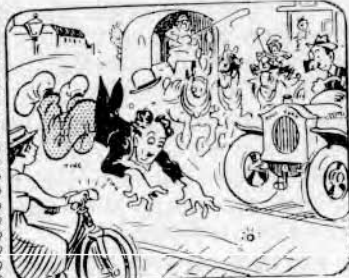
1. While Charlie was out walking
A little lad he found.
Who from his new tin trumpet
Could not extract a sound.



2. "There's something in this trumpet!"
Young Montmorency wailed.
"Please would you kindly shift it,
For I've completely failed!"



3. Behold me, Montmorency!
A doctor of music,
I push my cane right
Out under a nose—



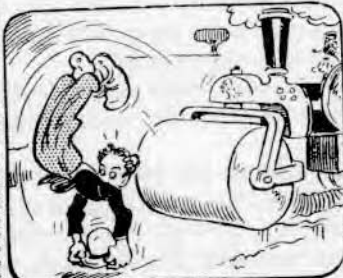
6. Then for that lucky shilling
The wildest chase began,
And Charlie dashed, all heedless,
Beneath a motor van.



7. He nearly caught the shilling,
When the driver of a car
Cried: "Now then, clear the road there!"
Clang! clang! "Well, then you are!"



8. Then once more
This time a shilling
Pigged football set
And Charles got



11. "I'll place it just for safety,"
Said Charlie, "nearby my hat."
Then up came a steam-roller,
And rolled that shilling flat.



12. Then Charlie at the shilling
Sat sadly down and gaped,
It's size was now tremendous,
Poor Charlie was amazed.



15. In an expert
Charlie too
He knew well
The silver



(Next Week, another funny film entitled: "Charlie as a School'boy.")



ney,
rough it.
"Squeak! Squeak!"



4. Said Charlie: "Just to show you
That all is quite O.K.,
I'll play a pretty prelude."
Young Mozart cried "Hooray!"



5. "To patronise musicians
I'm always very willing."
Remarked the deaf old lady,
Tossing him a shilling.



erie ventured.
y horse
s the shilling,
h, of course.



6. The coin bowled down a turning
Where traffic was not great.
Cried Charlie: "See me get it!
I'll catch it, sure as Fate!"



10. "Aha, you pretty beauty,
I've caught you, then, at last!"
Planted cheerful Charlie.
But Fate said: "Not so fast!"



ilver
hat priceless thing,
ith his knuckles,
wered "Ting!"



14. "Tis an ancient silver,"
Says the expert as he gloats
O'er Charlie's lucky shilling,
And hands him five pound-notes!



15. Then Charles and his fiancée
At table made for two
Enjoyed a first-class luncheon—
No room for me or you!

Vertical text on the right side of the page, likely a page number or publication information.

THE FUNNY WONDER 1st

EVERY SATURDAY.

No. 839.

CHARLIE CHAPLIN, KING OF THE KINEMA.

April 26, 1930.



1. Dear Easter-Holidayists.—With a bit of luck and some well-thrown balls and rings, I won a coconut and a cigar as the Easter fair.—Bosh, as you'll see, my luck suddenly went!



2. Pursuing Percy got properly pissed, just because I accidentally snoged his sister's brother, and landed me a handful of pucks in exchange for my cigar. That got my wild up, pal!



3. Now, the Kid had got one of those blow-out games, and I grabbed it to help me get my own back. "Watch!" I yelled. "One puff will take the wind out of his sails!"



4. "Turn 'em!" the old blow-out things blazed out, kicked the cigar out of Percy's face, and brought it back to me. "Tippit, old sport!" I chorused. "Now run away and play!"



5. But Percy didn't play, 'Nance! He started his day's work by grabbing an old gent's stick-took. But I didn't see what he was up to. I was busy trying to break a coconut.



6. All the same, I took a lead in Percy's game, for I lounded the nut wofft to crack it on a stone, and cracked it on the bed lad's nut instead. "Was a good drop of snook, shames!"



7. My! He did get cross! And, not wishing to participate in a bust on such a festive occasion, I made a quick getaway and slipped into a waxwork show. Some chase it was, lad!



8. I thought I was safe, but Percy was intent on having a couple of rounds with me to square accounts, and so I snogged my lead and put my hat on a model, he bowled in.



9. Percy didn't see me, but he thought he did. He believed I was still under my hat, and that the wags figure stopped the wally intended for me, and went all over concertina-like.



10. In less time than it takes to fill an Easter egg, the owner of the wax arrived with a large policeman and, as you can see, I received a large spot of thacka and a generous portion of wax. Poor old Percy still thought the dummy was me, and was as cross as the dummy.



11. Ah me! As long as I remember, I shall never forget the high old time we had at the fair. We swamped everything from the bell-rattle to the acre-hall, whilst Percy got a Taster holiday at the Government's expense! Happy Easter, all!—T. V. C. CHAPLIN.



THE OLD CHUMS

by Tony Glynn

I have just spent a pleasant evening browsing among the pages of the "NLL" in the company of some old chums.

I first met many of these chums more than 50 years ago but they flourished within the ambit of Nelson Lee and St. Frank's well before that. Age has not blunted their youthful enthusiasm, however, and it shines from the columns of the "NLL" of 1928 and 1929, undimmed as ever.

Those two years are my favourites in the St. Frank's saga for from them came the little cache of "NLL" numbers which I discovered as a youngster in the thick of the second world war. They seemed forlorn and forgotten in a second-hand book dealer's shop and they brought a great deal of enjoyment to a small boy in that grim wartime world.

Even as a youngster, I was impressed by the rapport Edwy Searles Brooks maintained with his readers. Surely no writer for a weekly paper ever put in so much time encouraging his readership to keep in touch, tell him of their likes and dislikes and inform him of their lives in general. He sent them his photo in return for theirs and the tone of his answers to them in the weekly "Between Ourselves" pages certainly suggests that he enjoyed it all immensely.

These correspondents, I feel, are old chums. So many of them I first encountered when curled up beside the open fireplace in my old Manchester home and their names have remained fresh over the years.

Late in 1928, Edwy took to publishing a photograph of a different reader each week and their youthful faces, boys and girls from every corner of the British Empire, look out opposite the portrait of their favourite author.

Some wrote to him every week. Chief among these was surely Reg T. Staples, of Walworth. Reg turned up regularly and Edwy seemed to get a tremendous kick from his letters and once told him he was shaping up to becoming a successful humorous writer. Now and again, he indulged in some badinage with Reg. When the Walworth enthusiast sent in his photo, apparently holding a copy of the "NLL", Edwy complained that it wouldn't do. He could see Reg's cap, he could see the old paper and he could see Reg's legs. "I want to see you!" he emphasised.

Several weeks later, Reg, minus cap, was to be seen on the page. "It's quite likely that lots of readers are curious to see your dial, Reg T. Staples, (Walworth)", commented Edwy, "so here it is, this week, gazing out upon you."

Other readers wanted to send him pictures he had no desire to see. One young lady wanted to send him paintings of her collection of bird's eggs to see if he could identify them. Edwy declined the task, saying he was quite sure he would be unable to oblige.

A large number of readers seemed to have the notion that ESB was a general know-all, ready to answer questions on every subject. One, at least, did approach him on his own ground. Isabel W. Rintoul, of Glasgow, whose portrait, complete with the bobbed hair of the twenties, looked out of the page, desired to become a writer of stories and asked for advice. Edwy left her in no doubt that the path of authorship was a thorny one. "First of all, you must have an extraordinary amount of patience; and secondly you must have a

capacity for sustaining hard knocks." It was something one had to stick at then keep on sticking at, he said. I wonder what success the young lady had in later days.

Quite a number of girls appeared in the "Between Ourselves" column and Edwy wasn't above doing some active missionary work, perhaps attempting to win them away from any allegiance to the companion girls' papers.

"..... quite a large number of our girl readers started in the same way as yourself," he told Beryl J. Pilcher, of Godalming, "by getting hold of the paper from their brothers. Brothers! Attention! Slap a copy of the Old Paper in front of your sisters at every opportunity. You never know, they may buy your copy for you next week!"

When it came to dealing with his lady correspondents, Edwy was occasionally on unsafe ground. At least once, he was accused of favouring the girls, answering more of their letters. On another occasion, he had to answer an accusation from Ivy Swailes, of Heckmondwike, that he had "run down" the fair sex by saying in one of his stories that girls were unpunctual.

Edwy, gallant and diplomatic as always and not a bit politically correct, responded: "It is one of the privileges of the fair sex to be unpunctual. I rather like the way you say: 'I'm always on time - well, only five minutes or so late, anyhow.' If that isn't like a girl, what is?"

And now, I suppose someone will come along and say Edwy was sexist! I'm always pleased to see the face of James W. Cook looking out from a 1928 issue and, in January 1929, Edwy gave a large slice of one of his letters.

Some people were quite amazed that he read the "NLL", said James and he went on to defend his position. He might be a little older than the average reader, but he benefited greatly from the "NLL". It interested him and it educated him.

Well, I can tell you that James W. Cook continued to enjoy the "NLL" far into later life. For, in my earliest association with the "CD", I wrote an article on the old chums somewhat on the lines of this one and wondered where they all were at that date, all those young people who became pals on the printed page, long, long ago. James W. Cook was among those I mentioned and I was delighted to receive a friendly letter from him, for he was the Jim Cook who was among the keenest of "NLL" enthusiasts and the author of countless articles in the "CD" and Annual. We exchanged several letters thereafter.

Reg T. Staples, of Walworth, who was almost a fixture in the "Between Ourselves" column through his weekly letter to Edwy, turned up in 1929 sporting the new name of Rex.

"No, all the rest of you, this is not another Staples. It's our same old friend, but he's changed his name to Rex, thinking, no doubt that this is more princely," commented Edwy.

Not all correspondents received Edwy's warm approval, however. For instance, he gave very short shrift to a pair of carping critics who wrote anonymously. He made it plain that he had no time for those who did not have the courage to sign their letters.

Overall, Edwy emerges from these exchanges as a genuinely friendly and helpful personality, deeply interested in those who paid their humble twopence for his weekly St. Frank's offering.

He indulged in gentle whimsy. Stanley Cubin was a reader whose portrait graced the page in May 1929, when he was shown wearing a bowler hat, then the headgear of the smart young man. It happens to make young Mr. Cubin look remarkably like that other Stanley, Mr. Laurel. To cap it all (pardon the pun), Stanley Cubin lived in Ilkley.

"I should imagine that you don't often venture on Ilkla Moor baht 'at..." commented Edwy.

There was good advice for the likes of Mohammed Ali, of Singapore, not the one later known to boxing fame, of course. Edwy told him his English was not so weak as he imagined but he did need to pay some attention to his composition. Since only Malay was

spoken in his home, there was no better way of achieving better English than by reading English magazines. ESB was always exhorting his readers to strive for self-improvement and to continue their education after leaving school. The tenor of his column gives the lie to those who held that popular juvenile magazines were harmful to youngsters' development.

Mid-way through 1929, "Between Ourselves" ceased and was replaced by "Gossip About St. Frank's - Things Seen and Heard" by Edwy Searles Brooks. The bulk of the column dealt with affairs at the fictional school but a portion was given over to Edwy's replies to letters, the earlier personal feeling being lost in consequence. Probably, with the exception of ESB's replies, the greater part of the feature was editorially written. It might be that ESB's heavy writing commitments forced him to give up his previous involvement with the readers.

At all events, the special friendship between author and faithful readers was something which endeared the "NLL" to me when I discovered it on that wartime day.

Nearly 70 years after these pages were printed, the enjoyment, hopes and aspirations of so many young people glow from them. Many of these old chums must, like Edwy himself, have now gone to their eternal reward.

If heaven is made up of simple and harmless pleasures, who is to say that Edwy, all his old chums and those who encountered them long afterwards when the pages of the "NLL" were beginning to yellow will not meet and happily chew the fat when what Hilaire Belloc used to call The Grey Day dawns for us all?



TWO HALVES FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

by Derek Hinrich

SBL 10 of the Third Series, *The Case of the Mystery Parachutist* by Hylton Gregory, is unique. Over the years many issues of the Sexton Blake Library included, besides a Blake novel and the usual editorial matter about other current or forthcoming issues and a "magazine corner", a short short story as a "make weight". But this issue contained in place of the novel, two long short stories.

One of these is the tale which gives the book its eponymous title. This is a "jolly good read" about Blake's hunt for a pair of top agents of the German Secret Service, protean masters of disguise, long resident in this country, in deep cover with multiple

No. 10 (New Series)—SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY

THE LEADING DETECTIVE-STORY MAGAZINE. Two New Volumes appear on the first Thursday of next month. Order them NOW!



By HYLTON GREGORY.

A great story of enemy craft, and SEXTON BLAKE acting on behalf of the Secret Service.

personalities established in various parts of the UK. It is perhaps a story that would not stand up to prolonged examination in the cold light of the day after one's finished reading it (but then few forty-five year old spy thrillers would, would they? We're all so much more sophisticated nowadays aren't we?), still it carries one along with it most enjoyably and the trick in the solution is very neat.

The second half of the book is taken up by a story by Anthony Skene, "The Haunted Hotel Mystery". This is not a Zenith story, nor is it, to my mind, Skene at his best. It is concerned with the strange occurrences at an hotel at Belcombe, near Teignmouth in Devon, which is kept by an old friend of Blake's, ex-Inspector Leadbetter, formerly of the CID at Scotland Yard. The place appears to be possessed of a poltergeist which is ruining Leadbetter's trade. Sexton Blake, however, soon establishes that the incidents are being manufactured to ensure the hotel's closure to enable another, more sinister, traffic to be carried on nearby without any risk of possible interruption.

At the end of the first story the following boxed notice appears:

SPECIAL EDITORIAL NOTICE

The publication of two complete stories in one volume of the Sexton Blake Library is quite a new departure, one that has long been the special request of many readers, and if the experiment meets with general approval the scheme may be repeated when the opportunity offers itself.

The first story has a distinct war flavour, but the second I am placing before you as a definite relief to the strain of the present difficult times. I sincerely hope you like this idea of two Blake adventures in one issue.

The Editor

The Union Jack—No. 1,245.

THE HAUNTED HOTEL MYSTERY



Suddenly, and without any apparent reason, a heavy chair came bumping down the stairway with a tremendous clatter.

There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in man's philosophy. Who can explain the uncanny incidents of the Opening Door and the Floating Curtain which are here recorded? Sexton Blake could not, but he was able to solve the more straightforward mystery of the Haunted Hotel, thus bringing such startling incidents to an end. This awesome tale is written by our popular Zenith the Albino author, and is one of his finest achievements, too.

I do not know whether there was an unfavourable reaction to the experiment, despite "the special request of many readers", or not, but it was never repeated.

The contents of the book are curious. The first story is contemporary but the second originally appeared in *Union Jack* No. 1245 of August 27th, 1927 (where it was published with the same half-page illustration and introductory blurb on the title page). It certainly had nothing to do with "the strain of the present difficult times", but could well have been picked at random from the files.

The purpose of the book, which I believe was published in July 1941, I think is clear. "The Case of the Mystery Parachutist" was either written for *Detective Weekly* and remained unpublished when that paper closed, or perhaps the story was commissioned for one of the *Sexton Blake Annuals* and was found to be too long, and this issue of the SBL was devised as a means of using it. And a good thing too: it was certainly too good a story to have been left languishing in a "dead" file.



MABELLE RIVERS - GIRL DETECTIVE

by Betty Hopton

I recently came across a delightful detective that I had not previously encountered, through the pages of the Girls' Friend Library. The title of the story was "Mabelle Rivers Girl Detective". The author was Alice Millard and it was published by Fleetway House price 3d; I believe the date to be 1910/1920s.

There are 120 pages in this bumper edition of the Girls' Friend Library and it contains 12 complete stories, each with a completely different type of detective mystery. Each story is approximately the same length as those of Valerie Drew in the *Schoolgirls' Weekly*. It's a great shame that there are no illustrations either on the cover or anywhere inside the book, as Mabelle Rivers is described as being a very beautiful young lady, about 21 years of age, who is tall and has chestnut curls. She is very well dressed in simple, but expensive clothes and has a very compassionate and generous disposition, always ready to help those less fortunate than herself.

I would imagine Mabelle to be very similar to Valerie Drew in appearance, but whereas Valerie had her faithful Alsatian Flash as an assistant, Mabelle has no assistant and always works alone. She is employed by a detective agency in the Strand, her boss being the great detective Raymond Barfield. She has also kindly secured employment in the office for some of her former school chums.

Mabelle spent much of her early years in the East End of London and was a pupil at the Council School in LEYTONFIELD. She was not very popular with her Headmistress because she was generally at the bottom end of the class; the Headmistress also predicted that she would not make anything of her life, but Mabelle proved her wrong.

Mabelle was able to command a very handsome salary and she was very generous to her own family, often buying gifts for her mother and sister. Her work often took her to the slum districts where people were starving, she was extremely moved by the plight of these unfortunate people and, out of her own pocket, she would buy food and clothing for these

**THE GIRLS' FRIEND
LIBRARY. 3^D**

CHARMING NOVEL—COPYRIGHT.

**MABELLE RIVERS,
GIRL DETECTIVE.**

By
Alice Millard

LONDON:
Published monthly by the Proprietors at The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, E.C.

poor individuals. On several occasions when she encountered those who were desperately ill and had no money to pay for medical assistance, she would pay the Doctor's fee herself.

In one story Mabelle is mentioned as having a flat at 64S Saint Thomas Mansions, Westminster, but in a later story she is said to have a sumptuous flat in Hampstead.

Mabelle Rivers was once engaged to a man by the name of George Vernon, but the engagement was broken off, causing her a great deal of heartache.

In one story she solves a crime involving an old school friend named Wynne. The young lady works as a seamstress and has been putting the finishing touches on a gown for Lady Thurlmere, which include sewing some real pearls onto the bodies. Wynne is left to lock the dress away, but before leaving she succumbs to temptation and borrows the dress to wear to a

dance, intending to put it back next day before anyone knows. However, at the dance one of the pearls, which was worth several hundred pounds, is stolen. This would ruin her family, and Mabelle is called in to investigate the crime.

Another story finds Mabelle being summoned by her former Headmistress, a Miss Bringle, to look into a series of mysterious thefts at her old school. She is only too ready to help, having forgotten how the Headmistress treated her when she was a pupil at the school.

In another tale Mabelle is treated very roughly indeed when she looks into the case of the attempted kidnapping of a young boy; she is faced with a loaded pistol and is securely gagged and bound hand and foot and left alone in a large lonely house, in the district of Wandsworth Common.

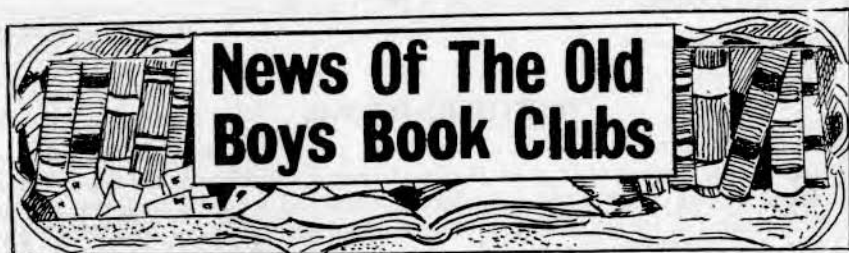
In the very last story, her employer, the celebrated detective Raymond Barfield, confesses to Mabelle that he is in love with her, but although she fully realises how great an honour has been bestowed on her by such a man, she turns him down gently, as her heart still belongs to George Vernon, her ex-fiancée.

By a very strange coincidence in this last tale, Mabelle is involved in a case concerning George Vernon. He was a secretary to a wealthy business man who later made him his heir, but Vernon was weak and foolish and abused his benefactor's trust and also forged a large cheque, in the name of a very wealthy acquaintance of the firm. He went

into hiding after gambling and living the high life, and he had also been the dupe of some clever tricksters, posing as friends. He was weak-willed and easily led, and had become addicted to gambling and wild extravagance. It seemed certain that he was heading for a spell in prison.

By the end of the story Mabelle has managed to save this extremely foolish young man. She helps him to redeem himself and gives him hope for the future. George Vernon begs her forgiveness for his folly and vows to live a decent life in future. Mabelle still loves him, and they go on to face the future together.

Mabelle Rivers is now firmly established as one of my very favourite detectives.



LONDON OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

A lovely bright Spring day was welcome to the twenty two members at the Eltham home of Dorothy and Peter Mahony for our March meeting, commencing at the new time of 3.30 p.m.

Following the usual business matters, which reflected a healthy state of finances, Duncan Harper submitted a detailed Balance Sheet for the Sexton Blake Library for 1995. All four of our libraries do deserve a little more support from borrowers as this is the only reward our librarians seek.

The programme began with a discourse by Peter on 'HAMILTON'S WOMEN' a provocative title! This ranged from schoolgirls to school mistresses, not forgetting Judy Coker and Miss Priscilla Fawcett, with extracts read from applicable papers.

After a delicious tea we resumed with a reading from the newsletter covering the March 1976 meeting. Then Norman Wright gave a talk on 'BALDY'S ANGELS' a long running serial from the RANGER in the mid 1920s. Some of the stories reappeared in later issues of the B.F.L. They were mainly written by Capt. Robert Hawke (Gerald Bowman) and Norman read excerpts showing the credible exploits of First War fliers, written in a mature adult style.

Peter gave a quiz on familiar expressions by characters in papers (anyone not solving 'I say you fellows!' facing immediate expulsion). We have a new venue for our September 8th luncheon. This is the Bull & Crown at Chingford, which offers a very varied menu at competitive prices. Details will accompany this month's newsletter and we will also advise the Northern and Cambridge Clubs who have indicated interest in attending, as this is the 50th Anniversary year of the C.D. We meet again on the 14th April at 5 Queen Anne's Grove, Ealing. Tea will be provided so please let me know if you are attending.

BILL BRADFORD

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our March meeting we gathered at the Linton village home of Roy Whiskin.

After our usual short business meeting we began the afternoon hearing Roy discuss the merits and life histories of two very distinctive illustrators of juvenile literature, both well-known in different fields during the decades around the mid-Twentieth Century, Edward Ardizzone and Eileen Soper, who commercially illustrate the 'Tim and the ...' series and many Enid Blyton titles respectively. Also both did much book and journal illustrating, with Eileen Soper being a proficient wildlife artist.

Later, Norman Wright - occasionally assisted by Bill Bradford - gave us a wonderfully detailed audio-visual explanation of the world of Biggles, and his prolific creator W.E. Johns. Norman was able to provide a wealth of detail about the Hertford born and bred author (who first published an aviation novel in 1922) and the associated recent-Centenary events.

ADRIAN PERKINS

NORTHERN O.B.C.

The seventeen members assembled were given a very interesting insight into book dealing from Daniel Hanson, of D. & M. Books. To begin, Daniel collected books - mainly Giles cartoons - for his own pleasure and, after upgrading and obtaining copies he no longer required, he decided to try and sell them through "Book and Magazine Collector". Quite pleased with the success, he considered he could do this on a larger scale and his mother decided to join him in partnership and set up the firm. All this was when Daniel was a schoolboy of 14. D. & M. Books did not really begin in earnest until he left school at 17 and decided to go into the business full time. At the age of 21, Daniel surely must be the youngest full time book dealer running his own business in the country.

Various new books were on view, including the latest four Bunter facsimiles from Hawk Books which members could inspect during refreshment break.

Donald Campbell then gave us an excellent and perceptive insight into the life of E. Phillips Oppenheim, who had a very eventful life to say the least. Although his books would have been suitable as Sunday School prizes, they did not reflect his rather risqué adventures. Born in 1866 he began work in the family business. Getting involved in writing he produced 152 novels, hundreds of short stories and, in 1940, produced his autobiography. He had an obsession with the south of France, and his later books reflected this. Donald felt that he produced some bad books as well as some very readable ones. In addition to being an author, Oppenheim was an entrepreneur, adventurer and yachtsman, among other things. No doubt his life story was amongst the most varied and adventurous of any author.

Our next meeting is on 13th April with "Malcom Saville", from Cath and Eric Humphrey, and "An Anthology" from Joan Colman. On 11th May we have Derek Marsden from Liverpool with "D.C. Thomson Comics", and Geoffrey Good will delight us with one of his readings from Greyfriars.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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. 01923 232383.

FORUM

From JOHN TOWNSEND, St. Leonards-on-Sea: I enjoyed the Annual very much. It was well up to its usual high standard. It was particularly interesting to read Laurence Price's article on Grey Owl as Hastings Museum has recently opened a new Grey Owl gallery.

(Editor's Note: Mr. Townsend provided a leaflet from the Museum about this exhibition which includes a part reconstruction of Grey Owl's cabin, figures of Blackfoot, Sioux and Aleutian Indians, a miniature Indian village and the inside of a tipi, as well as a wealth of smaller native American exhibits from tomahawks and scalps to dance rattles and a belt that once belonged to Sitting Bull. The Museum is open each week from Monday to Friday from 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., on Saturday from 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. and from 2.00 to 5.00 p.m. and on Sunday from 3.00 to 5.00 p.m. Admission is free.)

From MARK TAHA, London: I really enjoyed Roger Jenkins's article on the Lancaster series, second only to the Stacey series in my view. However, I'm sorry to say that I noticed a slight mistake: Danby Croft was the fictional place and Tranby Croft the real one. I must also disagree with Roger on the Highcliffe robbery. It was specifically stated that Slimy Sugden had arranged to sell the Rembrandt to a crooked American collector.

From H. BLOWERS of Rothwell, Leeds: With reference to the mention last month of the insignia of The Old Boys' Book Club, some years ago I had the pleasure of meeting the late Bob Blythe. In the lapel of his coat he had an enamel badge depicting our Book Club insignia. Questioned about it, he said it had been made in America. It could have been 'a one-off' as I've not seen or heard of one since. In size it was rather smaller than our present tenpenny piece.

(Editor's Note: I possess an O.B.B.C. lapel badge which I think the late Ben Whiter, the long-serving Secretary of the London Club, gave me years ago. It is brass or bronze. Perhaps Bob White, who designed the badge, can shed some light on the background of the enamel versions of it.)

From ROBERT KIRKPATRICK, London: I am trying to compile biographical details about writers of boys' school stories - can any readers help? I can supply a full list on request, but in particular I need information on the following: A.H. Burrage, J. Williams Butcher, Kent Carr, W.E. Cule, Helen Elrington, Meredith Fletcher, A.L. Haydon, Herbert Hayens, Andrew Home, George G. Jackson, Alfred Judd, Robert Leighton, Eric Leyland, Anton Lind, St. John Pearce, Ernest Protheroe, Godfrey Pullen, Hubert Robinson, T.H. Scott, John Sweet and Rowland Walker.

If anyone can help, or refer me to other sources of help or information, I would be most grateful. Please write to me at 244 Latimer Road, London, W10 6QY, or phone 0181 968 9033.

From BILL LOFTS, London: In answer to J. Ashley's query on Baldy's Angels, it was always a policy of the old Amalgamated Press in a long running popular series to have stories in hand often by other authors. The regular writer, often the creator of a series might become ill, and so be unable to continue the weekly stint. Certainly the first tales were penned by 'Gerry Bowman', then later on by Hedley O'Mant. It is quite correct that O'Mant was editor of Ranger and The Pilot, and I have a feeling I was told once that Bowman declined to write any further stories and moved over to a higher plane of journalism. In fact I once had correspondence with him, when he would not give details about his work for A.P. but wished to forget his early days. Certainly O'Mant had far more experience than Bowman in air-combat as, during the First World War, he was a fighter pilot, armed only with a pistol. To sum it up, O'Mant simply took over from Bowman.

From BILL BRADFORD, Ealing: On the morning after the tragic massacre at Dunblane, I had a phone call from Christina Whitehead, living in the U.S.A. She is the elder daughter of George E. Rochester (1898-1966). (He, of course, was a prolific writer of boy's fiction, mainly in the field of aviation, especially in the 1930s.) She wanted friends, and others, to know how horrified and distressed she and all around her were at the terrible news from the U.K., and how they had wept for the children and their families. Such compassion from afar seems worth recording.

FRANK RICHARDS AND MR. QUELCH - A SHARED OBSESSION

by Lawrence Price

The entry for Mr. Quelch in "Greyfriars School - A Prospectus" by J.S. Butcher, Esq., from 1965 reads:

"Remove master; is strict and stern (his "gimlet eyes" are the terror of slackers and wrongdoers), but very fair and is respected. He enjoys long country walks and a game of chess with his favourite opponent, Mr. Lambe the vicar. But his great interest is the compilation of his famous "A History of Greyfriars".
Sometimes referred to by his form as Henry (but not in his hearing)."

A thumbnail sketch of that beast (but a just beast), Henry Samuel Quelch, M.A. But does he always 'enjoy' those long country walks? Other than his great interest in the compilation of "The History of Greyfriars" is there something else that might be termed his great obsession? And that 'something' shared with his creator, Frank Richards?

To begin at the beginning, let us consider just one of those enjoyable country walks of Mr. Quelch. Surely, part of the joy of reading a Frank Richards story is having a pretty good idea of what is to come, together with his repetition and recycling of the well-worn plot.

How many times, for instance, has Mr. Quelch been accosted by a villain whilst out on one of his constitutionals? His perambulation might take him along country lanes or through the woods or along the nearby coast - but, somewhere, a villain will be lurking, ready to attack the unsuspecting master of the Remove. But unfortunately for 'Mug Parkiss' or 'Nosey Jenkins', also lurking nearby will usually be Wharton and Co. who are always, of course, out of bounds or where they shouldn't be. The Famous Five will see off the villain and will be thanked by a grateful Mr. Quelch. An admonition for bounds breaking may follow, but the generous side of the 'just beast' comes to the fore, and no more is said by Mr. Quelch.

It is also time now to consider that obsession of his as we pick up the scent in this typical extract from "Bunter the Bad Lad" when the Famous Five (out of bounds, of course!) save Mr. Quelch from the evil clutches of Mug Parkiss.

They are sauntering, cheerfully, on the golden beach, heading for the gully that leads up to the road over the cliffs and to the village of Pegg. Only to see a well known angular figure descending therefrom, their form-master, Henry Samuel Quelch. They barely have time to 'dodge' and avoid the gimlet eye. Hiding behind a big chalk boulder, they expect Quelch to pass at any moment. Instead moments pass. Wharton peers round cautiously: "Oh scissors! He's squatted down to read his dashed Horace. Goodness only knows how long he's going to stop! What rotten luck!"

Quelch is deeply absorbed in the Odes of Quintus Horatius Flaccus - so deeply absorbed that he notices neither the Famous Five nor the rapid approach of Mug Parkiss, creeping stealthily up on the unsuspecting master. Parkiss has been set up by Coker to retrieve a piece of paper inside an envelope in the possession of Mr. Quelch, on which is some derogatory doggerel of Coker's authorship about the form master. It has been given to Quelch for sake-keeping by Bunter 'the bad lad' who is blackmailing Coker over its contents.

So sudden, so swift, is the attack by Mug Parkiss that even the watching Famous Five are taken by surprise; poor Quelch is pounced upon and dragged over onto the sand. The envelope is roughly removed by Parkiss. But not for long! The Famous Five leave their hiding place and pounce on Parkiss, sending him sprawling in the sand. But Mug is quick on the uptake and in a moment, he is on his feet again, running like a deer, the envelope left

behind. Wharton and Co. help the spluttering and tottering form master back to his seat on a chalk rock:

'Gradually, Mr. Quelch recovered. He ceased, at last, to gasp. Nugent picked up his hat which had rolled away down the sands, and handed it to him, and Mr. Quelch replaced it on his head. Then he glanced round anxiously.

"My book!" he said.

He had dropped Horace, as well as his hat, in that sudden backward tumble. As he recovered, his thoughts ran, naturally, at once, to Quintus Horatius Flaccus. The juniors looked round, and Bob Cherry spotted Horace, and picked it up. That little volume, well-worn by thirty years or so in Quelch's pocket, safely restored.

"Thank you, Cherry!" said Mr. Quelch.

The envelope is recovered too, but this passage makes clear the shared obsession of Mr. Quelch and his creator. The classics, but more specifically, the language of the classics, Latin, that lifelong love and obsession!

In her book, *Frank Richards: The Chap Behind the Chums*, our Editor informs us that when his schooldays ended, Frank received private tuition on both Latin and Italian and that as late as 1951, he described himself as a 'backward pupil'. With his tutor he read, amongst other works, the whole of Horace, that author so beloved of Mr. Quelch. And in 1952 Frank felt confident that 'quite an extensive public' would like a readable Horace - a small volume at about 1/6d. Mr. Quelch would surely have approved! He also produced 'something NEW in Crosswords' - a simple Latin one, of course - 'something you have never before seen in any boy's paper'. Clue 15 down was 'To love, 3rd subj.' As an 'incentive' to complete the crossword **no** prize was offered! Sadly, poor Frank was puzzled by the editorial rejections that came his way when he placed such ideas before unwilling, but knowing, editors.

But there was to be one major compensation. Six months before he died he had the undoubted satisfaction of seeing the times Literary Supplement publish a complete Bunter story in Latin, "Ultio Bunteri" on 30th June 1961.

Frank could not, however, translate 'Yaroooh' into Latin. A spoken extract was included on the long-playing record "Floreat Greyfriars" in 1965.

During 1995 in "The Mask of Comedy", some poems by Frank Richards were published for the first time. These included three songs translated into Latin, and 'Luna Habitabilis' by Thomas Gray, translated from Latin into English, which included a description of life on the moon, as envisaged by Gray in the 18th century!

The surprising choice of songs translated into Latin included Sir Joseph's Song from H.M.S. Pinafore, "The Young Man on the Flying Trapeze" and "Waltzing Matilda". The chorus from the latter gives the flavour-

"Veni ut saltemus, Matilda, veni!"

Veni, Matilda! Veni, Matilda!

Veni ut saltemus, Matilda, veni!"

Et cantabat donec aestuaret in cortina aqua,

"Veni ut saltemus, Matilda, veni!"

I somehow doubt that Mr. Quelch would have approved of such 'recreation' as he sought solace, reaching deep into his pocket once more for his beloved 'Horace'...

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GEMS FROM HAMILTONIA

from Peter Hanger

Coker smiled cheerily in the taxi as he buzzed away to Rookwood. He was feeling elated.

Goals danced before his eyes. Two or three in each half, he hoped - for Coker was going all out. He was not going to be bothered or incommoded by other fellows trying to get the ball; he was not going to listen to any rot from Wingate, captain or no captain. If any other Greyfriars man got in his way, so much the worse for that Greyfriars man. One really brilliant player, in a crowd of duds would have all his work cut out - and Coker was going to take possession of the ball, and take possession of the game - the end would justify him. Goals were wanted - and Coker was going to get the goals.

He could imagine Bulkeley saying to Wingate, after a crushing defeat:

"Dash it all, I didn't know you were going to spring an International on us!"

MAGNET 1154

"Yes - I can see you collaring burglars!" gasped Bob. "Just in your line. Did anyone get on the island while you were there?"

"Yes - that burglar!"

"Sure it wasn't a pirate landed from a lugger?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites.

"You silly ass!" howled Bunter. "Of course it wasn't. It was a burglar - a big, savage, fierce-looking desperado. I couldn't see him in the dark --"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd better give his description to the police," gasped Smithy. "Only don't mention that you couldn't see him in the dark."

MAGNET 1479

Tom and Manners generally contributed a loyal chuckle when Monty propounded a pun. If they saw the joke it deserved a chuckle; if they didn't, it prevented Monty from explaining it!

GEM 1629

The utter asses!" growled Coker.

He had given them explicit directions - the clearest possible. Yet it seemed that they must have misunderstood somehow. Or perhaps they hadn't! Anyhow, they were not to be found. If Coker's enterprise, that afternoon, was to be carried out, it was evident that Coker, like Coriolanus of old, had to carry on alone, unaided.

Which Coker did.

MAGNET 1480

"Now let's have tea," said Coker briskly. "Lots of time yet; it will have to be done after dark, of course. I've got it all cut and dried. But the less I say about it the better. You fellows had better steer clear. In fact, it will be safer for you to know absolutely nothing about it, so don't ask questions!"

Coker sat down to tea.

"Old chap --" murmured Potter.

"Old fellow --" moaned Greene.

It was much to their credit that Potter and Greene almost forgot tea, even that mountain of cake, in their deep anxiety for Coker.

MAGNET 1630

Any fellow who had asked Bunter whether he could swim, would have been told that he was the best swimmer in the Remove, if not the whole school. But at the bottom of his fat heart Billy Bunter had a misgiving about his swimming powers. He would have stated that he could swim like a duck. But once in the water he had reason to fear that his exploits would rather resemble those of a stone than a duck.

MAGNET 1479

.....It was true that he hadn't prepared the passage: and he had had to make a shot at it unprepared: and that it was rather a shot in the dark. Still, his 'con' seemed alright to Bunter. He had at least got some sense out of it: and a fellow couldn't always get any sense out of Virgil!

BILLY BUNTER OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOL



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The French Lesson!

By
DICK PENFOLD



L ATIN and Greek, six times a week,
Make many boys unhappy ;
Science we hate, and Maths. we slate,
And Euclid makes us snappy.
The only lesson not taboo
Is French conducted by Mossoo !

His guileless ways provoke our praise,
He's always neat and dapper ;
Preferred to Prout, without a doubt,
And also Quelch and Capper.
An hour of happiness we woo
When in the hands of meek Mossoo !

He never canes the boys with brains,
He seldom canes the brainless ;
And this is fine, for chums of mine
Prefer their lessons painless !
They like to take things easy, too ;
And that is why they like Mossoo !

He has been known to grieve and groan
At Bunter's French translations ;
Even a saint would make complaint
At Billy's perpetrations !
And Bunter's "pidgin-French" won't do
For skilled French scholars like Mossoo !

Skinner and Stott will "make things hot,"
For this most patient master ;
He tears his hair in his despair,
And thinks it a disaster.
Skinner's "Tray-bong !" and "Parley-
voo !"
Is French that does not suit Mossoo !

Swiftly will pass the hour in class
Under Mossoo's direction ;
When Quelch appears, we quake with fears,
And walk with circumspection !
For "ragging" Quelchy would not do—
He's sterner, firmer than Mossoo !



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