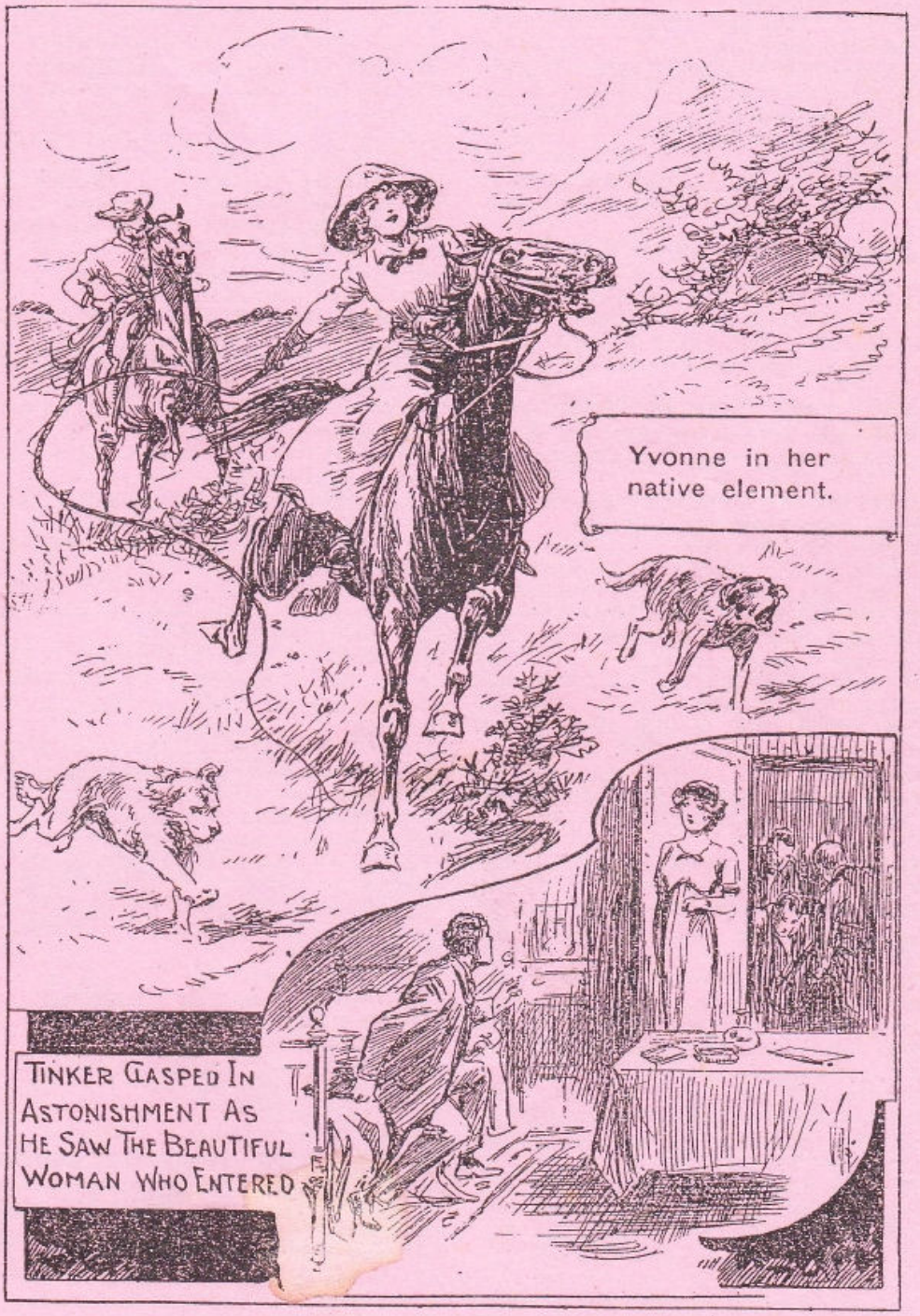
STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 50 No. 598 OCTOBER 1996



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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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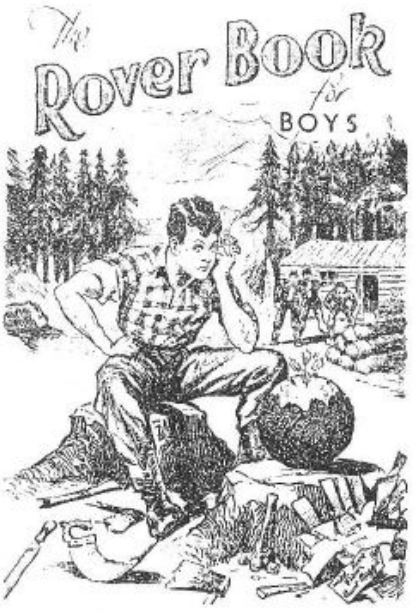
OUR ANNUAL ' BOX OF DELIGHTS'

Last month I promised that I would trail some of the contents of this year's Annual, which I am sure is going to be a great one in keeping with our traditions, and very appropriate for our 50th year.

As always, Hamiltonia will be well represented. Roger Jenkins, that Hamilton chronicler *par excellence*, has contributed an article on the Greyfriars chums' most memorable foreign holidays, with special emphasis on the Sahara, India and China series: Ted Baldock has produced several more of his wonderfully atmospheric Greyfriars vignettes; Peter Mahony treats us to an in-depth study of Rookwood's headmaster, Dr. Chisholm, while Anthony Cook provides a Bunter/Quelch pastiche with a Christmassy flavour. Una Hamilton Wright has written for us an intriguing feature on her uncle's early years - and further items have been promised by Hamiltonian contributors.



Ray Hopkins deals with some very exciting St. Frank's adventures in 'Of Underground Tunnels and Tree-Top Prisons: St. Frank's in the Toils', some Sexton Blake articles are 'in the pipeline (details will be given next month) and Brian Doyle's autobiographical feature 'An Obsession with Words' will trigger warm chords of memory in most of us. One of our youngest readers, Richard Burgon, has given us an excellent study of Harold Avery, Mark Taha takes us on a trip to several Treasure Islands, Norman Wright browses through the Norman Conquest Saga and Ernest Holman explores some of P.G. Wodehouse's ever-engaging characters and plots.

There is, of course, *much* more, and next month's C.D. will provide further "trailers". If you have not already ordered your copy of the Annual, please do so as soon as possible. Charges, including postage, are £10.00 for the U.K. and, for overseas readers (by surface mail) £11.50.

FAREWELL TO A GOOD FRIEND

Most C.D. readers will have noticed that there were in August obituaries for George Samways in several national newspapers, notably, *The Times, The Independent, The Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph.* Mr. Samways, with his stories and verses, did much to enliven the A.P. papers and to enrich the Greyfriars lore. With his passing, one of the very few remaining links with all those creative pre-war A.P. writers has been severed. I feel sure that Tommy Keen, who has provided a personal tribute in this issue of the C.D., speaks for us all when he says "Farewell - and thank you" to Mr. Samways.

As always, I wish you Happy Reading.

MARY CADOGAN

Apologies to Peter Mahony for the mis-spelling of his name on page 12 of last month's issue. Also to the Northern Club organizers of the proposed Jennings Society for the incorrect contact address given on page 28 last month. Readers wanting details of this new society should write to:

37 Tinshill Lane, Leeds, LS16 6BU.

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* *

HAVE WE BEEN HERE BEFORE? by Una Hamilton Wright

He was a teenager. His father was a hard-up middle-class professional. In person he was exceedingly like a pig, a pig of self-helpful and serene spirit, and therefore fatting fast. He trotted on little bandy legs and was ungainly. He had a squeaky voice.

'How old is that fat-witted son of yours?'

'Sixteen'.

'I suppose he would still be sucking his thumb if he dared.'

A talebearer, he listened at doorways to other people's conversations.

He 'looked so like a roasting-pig' that his companions put him on the fire in boyish high spirits.

Food always attracted him like a magnet, 'Wistfully did his eyes, led by his nose, survey at the end of the passage the preparations for supper.'

'That faithful little nose of his, as it sniffed out of a back window, had given him warning of the scents of Paradise from the kitchen below.'

'He looked inward with his little twinkling right eye and sniffed inward with his little curling right nostril, and beheld in the kitchen behind, salad in stacks and faggots; salad of lettuce, salad of cress and endive, salad of boiled coleworts, salad of pickled coleworts, salad of angelica, salad of scurvy-worts, and seven salads more. And on the dresser and before the fire, whole hecatombs of fragrant victims, which needed neither frankincense nor myrrh; Clovelly herrings and Torridge salmon, Exmoor mutton and Stow venison, stubble geese and woodcocks, curlew and snipe, hams of Hampshire, chitterlings of Taunton, and botargos of Cadiz, such as Pantagruel himself might have devoured. He eyed them, as a ragged boy eyes the cakes in a pastry cook's window; ...and meditated deeply on the unequal distribution of human bliss.'

'No lad ever had a cake at school, but he would dog him up one street and down another all day for the crumbs, the trencher-scraping spaniel!' observed the leader of his youthful companions.

During an adventure at sea where sharks were in the offing, one of the party commented, 'Look how that big fellow (a shark) eyes you; he has surely taken a fancy to that plump hide of yours and thinks you would eat as tender as any sucking porker.'

He turned very pale but said nothing.

I have paraphrased many descriptive passages from a famous Victorian novel, so as not to reveal the secret too soon.

Does anyone share with me the felling that there is something familiar about the fat lad, fond of food, with his small piggy eyes and short perceptive nose? With his squeaky voice and fat little legs?

Jack Brimblecombe from Charles Kingsley's WESTWARD HO! was that fat piggy lad, and WESTWARD HO! was Frank Richards' favourite book when he was a child which he had read over and over again. So had all his siblings and so the story and its underlying moral themes were common knowledge to all the young members of the Hamilton family. Jack Brimblecome's main difference from Billy Bunter, who exhibited so many of his traits, was that although often in need of a small loan he had to be *forced* to accept one!

The Brotherhood of the Rose was the antecedent of the Famous Five: the leader, Amyas Leigh, together with his brother Frank and seven others, formed the brotherhood in order to go on a quest to find Rose, the local, eligible maiden who had disappeared with a Spaniard and was presumed to be in South America. Amyas Leigh contributed his leadership qualities and his moods to Harry Wharton, his golden curls to Bob Cherry, together with his heartiness, and his size and quick-tempered rough justice to Horace Coker.

So much in the book resembles the underlying themes of the Greyfriars stories - loyalty, honour, dependability. The basis of Christian principles - so loudly proclaimed in Kingsley's yarn, was merely understood in Frank Richards' work. Kingsley's attitude to war is too red-blooded for modern tastes and in the wartime Greyfriars stories the enthusiasm for war is at a lower pitch. Kingsley's horseplay echoes the worst examples of bullying in a Victorian public school but is nonetheless related to the ructions that persist in the Remove Passage. Even the peppering of Latin tags strikes a familiar note, though they are more at home in Greyfriars' educational setting.

All the epic qualities are present in both works - the leader, the groups, the special henchman, the outsider who is not quite in the group, the dedication to honour and high principles. Frank Richards interpreted all these elements which had been essential to popular tales from Homer to Virgil to Beowulf, making them easily digestible for younger minds. He had had a good grounding in writing adventure stories for 14 years, since he was 17, before the GEM and, a year later, the MAGNET, were thrust into his hands.

When he was first offered a school serial, Charles Hamilton - to give him his real name - complained to his younger sister with whom he was living: "What goes on in a school, Dolly? What *can* go on in a school?" She calmly explained to him that human beings reacted to each other as human beings wherever they were: whether in a ship, in an office, in a caravan opening up the Wild West or even in a school. Charles' young life had been filled with reading tales of daring-do; Scott, both novels and poems, Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* and many other popular adventure tales. He had an enormous stock of yarns on which to draw. So, what was inside, from his reading, came out. I doubt if he knew of the similarities between Kingsley's tale and his own stories, but I do know that he loved *Westward-Ho!* He and his siblings were so familiar with it that they almost looked on it as a real happening.

I find that comparing the Kingsley Elizabethan adventure story and the Greyfriars epic has served to convince me of something I had long suspected: that echoes of familiar conversations found their way into the dialogue at Greyfriars; that in the back of Frank Richards' mind there buzzed the memories of innumerable discussions and arguments, of games and jokes and laughter, of characters acting according to type and then breaking out of their moulds and surprising everybody. If you want to know what Frank Richards' home life was really like, it is all there in the major school series - sometimes obliquely - but quite plain and easy to trace. Returning to Charles Kingsley - it would be interesting to know just what *his* home life had been like...!

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A Magic Story from the Past

BY GEORGE BEAL

WHEN I was about nine years old, I received a Christmas present from my Aunt Louisa (or Auntie Louie, as she was better known). It was a book called CHATTERBOX. I loved books, and still do. In those days, at Christmas-time one mostly received annuals published under such titles as THE BIG BOOK FOR BOYS, THE PLEASURE BOOK FOR BOYS, and so on.

Of course, if you were lucky, you received RAINBOW ANNUAL, or TIGER TIM'S ANNUAL, but somehow the adult world seemed unable to realise how important these books were. To them, they were all loosely grouped together as 'annuals', and one was lucky to get them. Indeed, I was very lucky, because I had plenty of books showered upon me.

Now, to get back to CHATTERBOX. I daresay that most people reading this will be familiar with that title. Indeed, CHATTERBOX was a long established periodical, starting its life in 1866. It was edited by the Canon John Erskine Clarke, sometime vicar of St Luke, Battersea. His editorship lasted until 1901, when he was 74.

According to statement made by one of Erskine Clarke's oldest friends: "it grieved him to see young people devouring the poisonous stuff which he called 'blood-and-thunder stories', and he thought he would try to provide them with more wholesome fare."

The magazine – for magazine it was – lasted until 1948. By that time, it was solely an annual, but it began life as a halfpenny weekly with a strong religious flavour, appearing on 1st December, 1866. It attracted many well-known writers and artists to its pages. John Masefield, H. de Vere Stacpoole, Harold Bindloss and 'Ascott Hope' were among the authors, and illustrators included Gordon Browne, C.M. Brock, H.M. Brock and Harry Rountree.

For most of its life, CHATTERBOX was printed by one firm: Strangeways & Sons, of Tower Street, Cambridge Circus, London. Its publisher was Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., of Paternoster Buildings, London. Both firms are long-since defunct.

CHATTERBOX was, as I have mentioned, a religious-orientated publication. The copy I received as a boy was a book, not a periodical, and bore little resemblance to a weekly (or monthly) magazine. Indeed, it followed in a long-established Victorian tradition, which regarded magazines simply as a part of an annual publication.

It puzzled me greatly that serial stories ran throughout what I regarded as an annual. The story would perhaps begin on page 14, and run for two or three pages, and then maybe continue on to page 34, and so on throughout the book. It was a magazine in book form! I was never aware of any weekly or monthly issue. Indeed, I have doubts as to whether there *was* any large periodical sale. The yearly volume was the mainstay.

As to its religious slant, I can only

say that I was entirely unaware of such characteristics. It was strangely old-fashioned, of course. My copy was dated 1922. My High Anglican aunt must have bought the book at a church bazaar or some such, since I did not receive it until many years after its publication.

I adored that book. I read some of it over and over again. Indeed, there was a story in that 1922 CHATTERBOX which I have never forgotten, and which enchanted me totally at the time. The story was called *The Caravan Cousins*, and the author was Edna Lake, and the illustrations – almost as attractive as the story itself – were by E.S. Farmer.

The story opens with two children – twins – being seen off at a railway station by their aunt. Billy and Diana Murray are both aged 11, and have recently come home to England from India. We are not told exactly what their parents did there, or why the children came back to England. In fact, their parents do not take part in the story at all.

Billy is the careful one, and Diana (who is known as 'Tickato') is something of a rebel. They are put aboard the train on their way to stay with Uncle Francis, whom they have never met. Aunt Agnes, presently seeing them off, is off to Scotland, so the children must be dispatched elsewhere. They are given strict instructions not to leave the train without permission from the guard.

The train pulls out, and they're on their way. At a wayside station, Billy – contrary to orders – leaves the train to get chocolate from a station automatic machine. The machine doesn't

The twins are discovered in the wood!

work properly, and Tickato rushes over to help, and, of course, the train goes off without them!

Now rather scared, twins ask a porter about later trains, but he informs them that there will be no train for hours. Even so, they are both fully aware of the that they should stay put and wait. But Tickato, who is 'rather wild', and who is quite bored by waiting, decides that they should go for a walk. It's beautiful countryside, a lovely day, so why shouldn't they? Billy, somewhat reluctantly, agrees.

They walk for some while, and then get a little tired. Still, there's still a long wait before the next train. They discover an interesting-looking wood, and – despite Billy's mild protests – they go among the trees to explore. Will they get lost, we wonder? Yes, of course they do! It gets dark, and then they are tired, hungry and not a little frightened.

Suddenly, from out of a thicket, a small dog appears (he's called Mascot), accompanied by some young people, who are sympathetic to the twins, and offer to help. Billy and Tickato go off with the newcomers, and reach a clearing, where stands an old gypsy-style caravan, with an ancient horse nibbling at the grass nearby.

Their new friends are called Warrender, and are on a caravan-tour holiday. The party consists of four: two boys and two girls, all rather older than Billy and Tickato. There is also Mascot, the dog, and Slowsure, the horse.

I shall not tell the whole story, since it has been my intention just to supply the flavour of it, and perhaps give some clue as to why I was so fascinated with it. I still am! In fact, some years ago, I thought I would try to

Slowsure is scared by a motor-cycle

find a copy of the CHATTERBOX concerned. I didn't know the date, but I did know that I would recognise the book when I saw it. Some hopes, I thought! All the same, I decided to look for the book whenever an opportunity presented itself. I'd pay a lot of money for it! I knew that, but the months went by, and I found no trace.

One of my favourite haunts in London had always been the Farringdon Road bookstalls. I had been a constant visitor there since my first days in Fleet Street in the late 1930s. I knew the late George Jeffrey well; indeed I knew his mother and father, who had run the bookstalls before him. The barrows – alas, no more – were the remaining link with the old Farringdon Market, which formerly stretched from the Clerkenwell Road almost to Ludgate Circus.

Mascot finds a treasure

The search for Tickato

George Jeffrey had a particular method of organising his barrows. There were the posh books at one end, and the less-desirable volumes at the other end. One day, I strolled up and glanced at his cheap 'all at one shilling' stall. My eye alighted on the spine of a book. It was plain blue, in bookbinders canvas. I knew! It was the book!

I turned the volume over, and I was right. Here it was, that volume of CHATTERBOX which had eluded me for so long. I happily paid George his shilling, and departed. A week later, a bookshop offered me another copy! I now have two.

The Caravan Cousins continues to enchant me. It is not a great work of literature. The writing is good, but not outstanding, but it entranced me all those years ago, and still does. As for Edna Lake, the author; who was she? I have found only one other story by the lady. It too, is a serial in a book. The 'annual' is entitled EVERY-

DAY, and comes from the same stable as CHATTERBOX.

When I found this second story, I turned eagerly to the first chapter of *The Ogre of Orizaba*, by Edna Lake. The story is set in Mexico, and is of the adventure type. For me, I am sorry to say, Edna Lake's magic had disappeared with this second tale. Perhaps I'm just too old to appreciate this second tale, but for me, *The Caravan Cousins* will always remain a fable of enchantment.

I have found no reference to the author anywhere else. The second story appeared in the same year as the first – 1922. So far as I can discover, she wrote nothing else. From the context of her writing, though, I would guess that she had spent time in India and in Mexico. Perhaps she, or her family, were in the diplomatic service. It was not uncommon for people to have such a background in those days.

As I have remarked, she was not a great writer, but she was well-suited for the kind of writing needed for the time. One would have thought that there would have been other writers equally fascinating, but I have found none in CHATTERBOX, although I possess many volumes. I think that for me, it was a magic of that moment in time, never to be equalled, but capable of a small measure of recapture.

* *

TOMMY KEEN writes ON THE PASSING OF GEORGE R. SAMWAYS

Although it is quite an achievement for anyone to reach the age of 101 years, nevertheless it was with deep regret and sadness that I heard of the death of Mr. George Samways.

George Samways

For the past few years, through health reasons, we could not keep in touch but the for previous ten to twelve years we had been very close friends. When I returned to Magnet-and-Gem-Land in the late 1970s, I discovered that George Samways had written many of the stories which appealed to me so much way back in the 1920s. One particular Gem story, 'The Pluck of Edgar Lawrence', always remained in my memory.

So towards the end of the 1970s I traced where he lived and decided to visit his home town, Dursley. On arrival in Dursley I decided to phone him, for although we had written to each other a couple of times, we had never met. Whilst in the telephone kiosk, I noticed a cat pausing outside to wash its face. I was about to dial Mr. Samways' number when an elderly, upright man stopped outside the kiosk and stroked the cat. To this day I am still not sure why I opened the door and asked 'Are you Mr. Samways?' 'Indeed I am' he replied. I explained who I was, thinking how incredible it was that we had met in that way, as I had absolutely no idea of how he looked.

I returned to his house with him. This meeting was the beginning of a very good friendship. He was a kindly, courteous and deeply religious gentleman. I visited him again two or three times, and he gave me several books including a book of poems which was published in 1918 (BALLADS OF THE FLYING CORPS). These books, together with his many letters, have been lovingly kept.

Farewell George Samways, and thank you.

* *

THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES

by Reg Hardinge

J.E.M.'s article (Blakiana, C.D. July 1996) raises some most interesting points, but I disagree with his assertion that not a highly educated female is to be found amongst Blake's opponents of the opposite gender.

Take Yvonne Cartier, for example. Brought up on the Binabong sheep station in Australia, she had, by the age of 23, lost both her parents, and found herself homeless and penniless. An expert horsewoman, she planned to utilise this skill in earning a livelihood. Disguised as a ragged, slim, red-headed boy, she was offered employment as a jockey which she accepted. Riding under the name of Tom Fair, she was a winner in a succession of races, which brought in a tidy sum of money for her. This she used in speculation on the race tracks. A run of luck as a punter increased this to a substantial amount. A few months later she sailed for Europe to equip herself for her mission to wreak vengeance upon the men who had cheated her father of the Jigsaw gold mine and the sheep farm.

She had a brilliant mind, and, studying day and night for six years incessantly, and with great patience, she acquired a profound grasp of science. Ranking with the greatest scientists of the day, she had a fully stocked laboratory in which she conducted her experiments. One of her inventions was an ear instrument.

By the age of 29 she had accumulated a vast depth of knowledge and a nimbleness of brain-power, attributes which featured prominently in her operations against her enemies. Each move was planned with mathematical precision and in minute detail before she proceeded to attain her objective. Indeed, she was then perhaps the cleverest and most feared criminal living.

The C.D.'s cover illustrations this month are by Val Reading for G.H. Teed's very first tale in the Yvonne series entitled "Beyond Reach of the Law" or "A Woman's Revenge" (UJ No. 485, January 25th, 1913).

* *

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.

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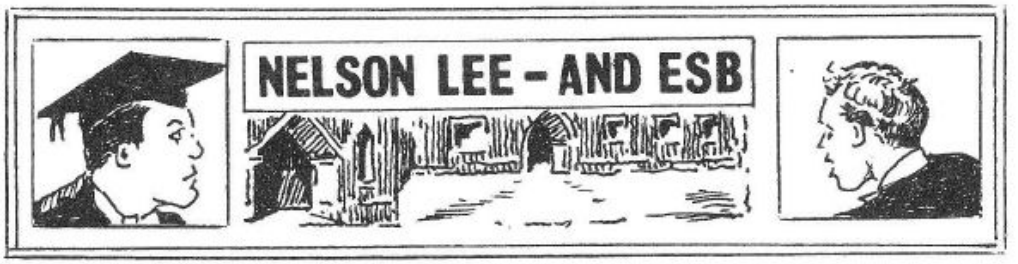


THE LITTLE HUNGER STRIKE AT ST. FRANKS by Ray Hopkins

The Little I refer to is Fatty Little. Not the size of it! The least likely inmate of St. Frank's you would expect to give up eating. For Fatty is well known to be he who, judging by the Arthur Jones' illustrations, busily consumes sustenance all the hours he is not actually asleep in the dormitory. Fatty Little is fatter than all the other fatties in schoolboy fiction, fatter by far than Bunter, Wynn, Tubby Muffin and any others you can rustle up. Fatty Little has to eat continuously in order to stop himself from starving to death. School meals, snacks from Mrs. Hake's Tuckshop, purloined tasties from other fellows' studies, all make their way down Fatty Little's gullet.

So there is a matter of some disbelief when Fatty, who has been incarcerated in the Ancient House punishment room for inadvertently knocking down Dr. Stafford, the St. Frank's Head, announces that, despite Mrs. Poulter's kindness in bringing the fat boy three times as much grub as any normal sized person would want, he will not touch it and the kindly Ancient House Matron is told to remove the heavily-laden tray of food. It is not wanted and the prisoner has decided to eat nothing until the Head releases him from durance vile.

The juniors do not know that Fatty has been 'got at' by the arch revolutionary of the Remove, Timothy Tucker who, stirring things up as is his wont, has told Fatty that the whole Remove will back him up if he will go on hunger strike by not eating either, and the whole thing will be a glorious slap in the face for authority, and the Head will be forced to release Fatty and it will be a great victory for the proletariat. Up, the down-trodden masses of this unhappy world! Tucker, who has an endearing way of referring to himself as 'he of the big head' and addressing any group who will allow him to talk at them as "my dear sirs," is unsuccessful in talking the Remove into boycotting all lessons, all meals, and, in fact refusing 'all duties' in order to show the head who's in command.

Fatty, however, continues to look blooming, and appears to show no signs of fading away to an emaciated pile of skin and bones. Nelson Lee decides he must be receiving supplies of food from somewhere and institutes a very close search of the punishment room. The cupboard, the space beneath the bed, even cracks in the floorboards that might cover a food horde are scrutinised closely, but the great detective cannot find that any unauthorised comestibles have made their way into the punishment room.

Ah, but through the window? There's a possibility... But no, any food hoisted up from the ground would have been spotted immediately from any point in the Triangle. Nelson Lee, ever suspicious, causes watches to be posted outside the punishment room but a negative report is given to him. No supplies of food have reached Fatty, therefore his hunger strike must be genuine. But after two days of not eating, Fatty still looks as always, no sagging of loose flesh and shrinking of his body inside clothes that now look too big for him. He still fills them out beautifully. The fat of years is indeed taking a long time to shrink.

The Remove turn down Timothy Tucker's proposal that the whole form go on hunger strike so that the Head will be forced to release Fatty Little. The Head, after two days of no food having apparently passed down the prisoner's throat, is becoming concerned and sends for Dr. Brett!

And here I burst out laughing as my mind darting back to the great days of wireless and Ted Ray in particular, made me think of another doctor who had to be sent for. It was the housekeeper, being beset by some terrible affliction she couldn't fathom, who told the concerned maid in a quaky voice, "Ooh, it was 'orrible, Ivy, so I 'ad to send for yoong Doctor 'ardcastle." And Ivy's ecstatic response: "Yoong Doctor 'ardcastle? 'e's loovely, Mrs. 'oskins, 'e's loovely!" (Faithful readers all: sorry I couldn't resist that comic delve back into the past!)

But let us return to more serious issues on the agenda. Dr. Brett visits the punishment room and tells Fatty how well he's looking and that not eating will do him the world of good and he must keep it up. Fatty is most indignant and Dr. Brett, smiling to himself, reports to Dr. Stafford that the prisoner is in fine shape and if he hadn't been told to the contrary, he would presume that Little had consumed a most hearty meal not too long before. The boy must continue not eating and this will, in the long run, "strengthen his constitution!"

Nipper's suspicions are aroused when it transpires that Mrs. Hake has supplied Tucker with large quantities of food for two days, and this to someone who ordinarily is quite satisfied with school food and is not known to be a heavy patron of the Tuckshop. Where is all this food going? Nipper considers it's obvious, and thinks Tucker is doing this in order to 'stir up strife' just in a general sort of way because he cannot stand the status quo: a sort of one-man 'rent-a-mob!'.

Nipper, Watson and Tregellis-West keep an eye on the St. Frank's bolshie and see him, laden with what must be parcels of food, make his way surreptitiously to the roof. Ah hah! Why had not Nelson Lee thought of that? From the roof and to the right above the barred punishment room window, a wide gutter slopes down to the rounded cup at the top of the junction pipe just beneath the window. Nothing easier for Tucker than to slide food parcels down the sloping gutter into the eager hands of the incarcerated Fatty! And all taking place after dark when any movement would be invisible from the ground.

Fatty had already received one parcel of three sausage rolls before the supplies suddenly stopped. But Nipper and Co. had been very quiet when they pounced on Timothy Tucker and told him his job as food supplier had finished.

Before rising bell the next day, Fatty was feeling the effects of the forced withdrawal of his sustenance and the roars from the interior of the punishment room from the dying prisoner awoke the echoes in the Ancient House and brought the juniors out of bed, to roars of laughter when they realised who was making all the noise and why! Nelson Lee finds Little collapsed on the bed, whispering in a weak voice that he is dying and has become as thin as a rail, and can he have some food as a dying wish. The detective says he knows quite well that, not only has the prisoner *not* been starved of food for the past two days, but that he has, if possible, been gorging on limitless supplies of food passed to him in a disgraceful way via an outside agency. Fatty weakly interposes that he is near the end and closes his eyes but is startled into sudden joyous wakefulness when the soft-hearted Mrs. Poulter brings him a tray covered in huge amounts of food which he demolishes so rapidly that Nelson Lee is afraid the punishment he deserves might make him sick, and this is deferred.

Fatty is released the following day and the Remove determine to punish him themselves, but frog-marching and bumping would cause them more back pain than it would be worth. So Fatty Little's enormous size and weight save him from any retribution whatever!

Taken from incidents in NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Old Series 284, 13 Nov 1920, entitled 'Fatty Little's Hunger Strike'.

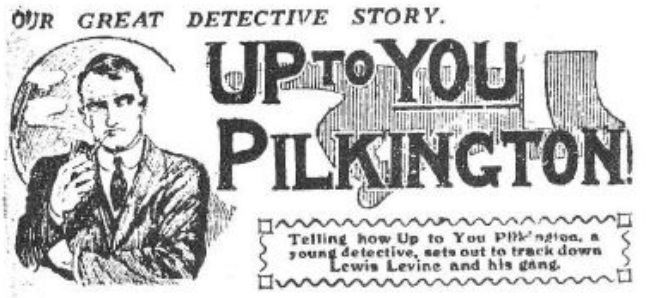
* *

UP-TO-YOU PILKINGTON

by Bill Lofts

For some unknown reason, the black and white Comic Cuts has always been difficult to get hold of in the collecting field. Being the first comic published by Alfred Harmsworth, with sales not far behind Chips, its scarcity remains something of a mystery.

One feasible explanation could be simply that not many survived because copies lacked any colour, and ended up on the counters of fried fish shops! Of course in pre-war days old newspapers and white comics were often used for such wrappings. Coloured comics that included dye were not suitable - more so when vinegar was used rather generously! Consequently many, if not thousands, of copies of The Joker and other black and white comics never survived.



Often writing about detectives in this series, I find it difficult to uncover much descriptive matter. Authors are seemingly reluctant to go into detail. So it was with Pilkington. The author does not even give him a Christian name. Entitled 'Up-to-You Pilkington', the series dealt with the sleuth's adventures in tracking down a criminal named Lewis Levine. After a series of adventures Levine's gang is smashed - and end of story.

* *

ARTISTS v AUTHORS - A Greyfriars Dichotomy

by John Kennedy Melling

(John Kennedy Melling is the author of the recently published MURDER DONE TO DEATH, a survey of parody and pastiche in detective fiction, including Charles Hamilton's Ferrers Locke. The book is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.)

In his prodigious output Charles Hamilton and his editors created over decades a world convincing in all its details. My own father read THE GEM until it faded in 1940 whilst I read THE MAGNET and THE GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUALS at the same time, plus receiving the occasional 1920's ANNUAL.

Descriptions of schools, boys and masters are credible, illustrations life-like in creating a world which readers can visualise. Occasionally there are slips. My father pointed out to me the error which stated the lift in the Eiffel Tower in Paris came down one of the four legs. In the 1921 HOLIDAY ANNUAL, a subject of this article, are several anomalies.

Robert Cherry's account of the greatest Fight at Greyfriars calls on the memory of

Canon Harper, of Wayland, near St. Jim's (in Sussex). The two pugilists leave "seated together on the front seat of the stage coach", and the illustration shews the schoolboys in mortar-boards or *Georgian* toppers. Tom Merry wears a Little Lord Fauntleroy velvet suit at Clavering and on arrival at St. Jim's, to the amazement of Dr. Holmes - but the next day his box arrives, so "he was able to effect another change of clothing" into "everyday raiment". Why was he not wearing this at Clavering?

GREYFRIARS IN PICTURES

In this 1921 HOLIDAY ANNUAL is a full page sepia plate of A GENERAL VIEW OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOL, KENT. A path leads from the bottom left corner, with two strolling beaks, to the pillared gates, and on to the front entrance of the main building, with presumably a chapel to the left and a tower to the right, further buildings stretching again behind, plus a cloister at right angles to what must be the East Window of the chapel. Goal posts are in an unmarked field to the right of the path, outside the boundary walls and buildings, and the sea in a wide bay is behind the school itself.

In BILLY BUNTER'S BUTLER, on page 19 one illustration shews Vernon-Smith leaning against a pillared gatepost, with no gates attached. Chapter Two says he is "lounging outside the schoolhouse". Then "Smithy disappeared into the house, and Bunter and his flock started for the gates". These "gates" appear like a wall without gates again in the illustration on page 26 (when Smithy is shewn wearing his cap instead of the topper he has just fetched). A vignette on p.63 shews The School House with steps and a towering two-storey portcullis-style gate. At Chunkleys the nine schoolboys are shewn as *seven* round an almost empty table.

The WHO'S WHO on page 14 has further discrepancies. The illustration shews the school near the sea, "near the south coast of Kent". Pegg is on the coast to the left past Cliff House, the Coastguard Station to the right on the shore past the "Village" and the Ferry. Highcliffe School is inland from the village and bridge, Friardale Woods, the Priory and the Factory are shewn inland and left of Greyfriars, Friardale itself to the left again, and Courtfield yet further left, inland of Pegg. The railway comes from London through Wapshot, Courtfield Junction, Courtfield, Friardale Station north of Friardale, then parallel with the coast past Highcliffe, perhaps towards Dover? (Near Greyfriars are delineated the remains of the Priory, ruined Chapel and Monastery.)

On the coloured Map published in 1969 by Howard Baker the coast points north east, not south. Greyfriars is right next to Friardale Village and Wood together. Courtfield is nearer the sea, on the River Sark, facing Highcliffe School, now diagonally opposite its former position. Cliff House School is still near the shore but Pegg Bay is now centre stage with the Black Rocks and the Buoy. The Coastguard Station has switched across to near Cliff House. The Ferry (across the Sark) is now near Highcliffe. The railway comes from London and Wapshot, and branches at the River. One line goes through Courtfield to near Cliff House, where it again divides, one line going to Redclyffe and Lantham Junction, the other branching right to Friardale Station (very near the Village) where it joins the right-hand line from the River, crossing the Sark, then the Friardale line continues southwest to Dover. The Plan and From The Air Plan of the School do not tally with the descriptions *supra* but include the ruins.

It is not uncommon for illustrations, plates or even book jackets to fail to synchronise with a text, but it is a pity in a world so vividly documented as Greyfriars. (See pictures overleaf).

Bunter was unusually "nutty" in his looks. His collar was quite clean, his clothes were brushed, and there was a shiny silk topper on his head. He gave Smithy a lofty look.

Vernon-Smith gave Billy Bunter a suspicious look. "Hallo!" he exclaimed. "Where did you get that hat, Bunter? It's a jolly good one for you. Why, you fat fraud, it's my Sunday topper!"

* *

FOR SALE: Greyfriars, St. Jims, Lees, Blake, etc. Reasonable prices. S.a.e. for lists. ERIC SHEPPARD, 1 Forge Close, Bempton, Bridlington, YO15 1LX.

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FOR SALE: About 30 POPULARS, 1927 to 1929. Some very good, £2. Some not so good, £1.25. All plus postage. JOHN GIBBS, Wells Cottage, East Combe, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, Somerset, TA4 3HU. Tel. 01823 432998.

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MORCOVE MUSINGS

No. 6 of an occasional series

by Dennis L. Bird

I have just been to Morcove, and I was delighted to find that the landscape is very much as described by Horace Phillips ("Marjorie Stanton") in the long-running series he wrote seventy years ago for the "Schoolgirls' Own" weekly.

As we know from a letter Phillips sent in 1938 to a young admirer of the stories: "You deserve to be told something about the origin of the word 'Morcove'. I made it up as a kind of variation of the place-name Mortehoe, in N. Devon."

That tantalising hint tells us very little about Phillips' knowledge of the area. Was he really familiar with the rocky coast of North Devon - or did he just pick the name at random from an atlas? Did the prevalence of the word "Barton" in the area (Buttercombe Barton, Stowford Barton, Woolscott Barton, the curious Damage Barton) perhaps give him the name for his chief character, Betty Barton?

From my recent visit, I am inclined to think that he did in fact write from personal knowledge of this remote corner of Devonshire.

As readers of "Morcove Musings" may recall, the saga began with the first issue of the "Schoolgirls' Own", dated February 5th, 1921. The Bartons lived in abject poverty in Ribbleton, a suburb of Preston in Lancashire. Then Uncle George came back from Canada, where he had made a fortune, and he shared it with his brother's family - thus enabling 14-year-old Betty to go to Morcove, one of England's most exclusive boarding-schools for girls. The resultant contrast in social class provided much of the plot material for the early stories, as Betty battled to establish herself.

She would have had to make several changes on her long, lonely train journey to Morcove. Probably she would first have gone from Preston to Crewe, then to Birmingham, Bristol, Taunton, and Barnstaple. Finally she would have travelled on the Barnstaple-to-Ilfracombe line (which existed from 1874 to 1970). The little train would have chuffed its way through Braunton and up the steep gradient to Mortehoe (Morcove) Station, 600 feet above sea level. Here she was met by the jovial school porter, Steggles, who drove her (in pony-trap?) the mile or two to Morcove School.

Whereabouts could that have been? "The Schoolgirls' Own Annual" for 1928 gives us a description. "Although the school is itself a fairly new building, it was built on the site of a much older scholastic establishment... a dame's school in the time of Queen Elizabeth" (the First). A tremendous storm in the 1820s destroyed the old buildings. Later in the 19th century "the directors of the present Morcove School decided to build on this historic site."

There is to this day one, and only one, large house near Mortehoe. It is called Twitchen House, and is now the centre of a discreetly-wooded caravan park. It is half a mile from the village, and is described by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner in his Devon "Buildings of England" book as "a large, studiously Old English house" in William Morris-inspired style, with a "spacious stair-hall with quarried glass... impressive reception hall... decorative plaster ceiling."

Could this be Morcove School? Alas, no! In the 1928 Annual Horace Phillips says "It is a very handsome white stone building in the Grecian style. There is a large main building with north and south wings... The Fourth Form dormitory is on the third floor..." This is all on a much grander scale than Twitchen House.

The village of Morcove does not feature much in the stories after the first few instalments. The real village of Mortehoe, however, should not be so lightly dismissed. It is about a quarter of a mile from the sea, approached from the Woolacombe direction in the south by a steeply winding road which suddenly brings you to a little row of shops, a couple of churches (one now a private house), and a handsome inn, the Chichester Arms. A mile to the west is the grim headland of Morte point, aimed like an arrow at the low, dim blur on the horizon which is Lundy Island, some 17 miles out to sea. The coastline round Mortehoe consists of jagged rocks, coves, and headlands - a real Wreckers' Coast - and Horace Phillips also writes of caves, although I did not find any.

He describes Morcove variously as five or six or ten miles from the main town of Barncombe. That is an obvious conflation of the two real places in the locality, Barnstaple and Ilfracombe. The nearer is Ilfracombe, about six miles away; Barnstaple is more like twelve. In the stories, "Barncombe" is famous for its Creamery (I did not find it) and its castle.

Barncombe Castle is the home of the Earl and Countess of Lundy, and their 18-year-old daughter Lady Evelyn Knight, who is a good friend of Betty Barton & Co. Can we locate this castle? Ilfracombe has a 19th century Castle House overlooking the harbour, and a Castle Hill - but nothing like the fortifications described by Phillips. Barnstaple, on the other hand, had a formidable castle in the 12th century. It rose above the flat surrounding land on a man-made mount, and as Pevsner says, "the wooded motte of the castle still rises above the rooftops." By the early 16th century, however, the walls had fallen into ruins and not much remained. In the 1720s, Castle House was built in the precincts, and survived until 1976. Perhaps this is where Lord Lundy (a director of Morcove School) lived?

My visit showed that it is not really possible to identify the places mentioned in the Morcove stories in the same way as in, for example, the Arthur Ransome or Malcolm Saville books. Nevertheless, I came away feeling that Horace Phillips had convincingly portrayed the North Devon countryside as background to his entertaining tales of school life in the 1920s and '30s.

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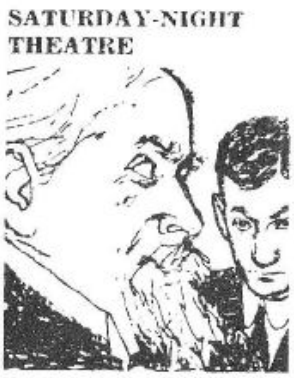
'EAR', 'EAR! A REACTION TO ERNEST HOLMAN

from Donald V. Campbell

How agreeable of Ernest Holman to remind us of the pleasures of talking tapes (August, 1996); not only this but Mary let us in on her secret holiday "listenings".



Dynamite

It is a terrible affliction, this notion of audio-tape-story-listening. I have had the bug for twenty years or more. It started with surreptitious "off-air" recordings of BBC dramas - illegal then and probably still so. My predilection was for drama of the thriller/detective variety. I then went on to purchase commercial audio tapes. Of these the "best" for me (because of their briefness and cheapness) were the long gone and unsung *"PICKWICK"* tapes that managed to encapsulate great (and not so great) literature into one (yes, just ONE), 90 minutes (or less) tape. Not for them (nor for me) the "Cover-to-Cover" eight or twelve hours worth of the great

novelists.

Some examples: D.H. Lawrence's *THE VIRGIN & THE GYPSY* is managed by Elizabeth Bell in around 90 minutes; *THE INVISIBLE MAN* sees David McCallum get through a whopping abridgement in the same time. The excellent Peter Marinker sees off *FLASH GORDON* in similar fashion with a promise that FLASH will return in further adventures. *Unfortunately PICKWICK never followed through on this.* A reading by Anthony Valentine of one of the James Bond sagas was advertised but it never reached the shops - at least not to my knowledge. Anthony Valentine did however manage a much squeezed *DRACULA* in the regulation 90 minutes. Tom Baker popped up with a Dr Who adventure, and the delightful Hannah Gordon made short and effective work of *HOUSE OF CARDS* - a Jilly Cooper heart-throbber. Best of all though were two short stories to tingle the nerve ends - *I AM THE DOORWAY,* and *ONE FOR THE ROAD.* These Stephen King classic ghost/vampire short stories are read with great aplomb and ghoulish eeriness by Ed Bishop.

One gem that I have failed to mention is *TWO JEEVES STORIES* read by Edward Duke. These are brilliantly characterised. His touring one-man Jeeves/Wodehouse show was, apparently, a tour-de-force. My personal favourite from this crop of tapes is *PAUL TEMPLE & THE HARKDALE ROBBERY.* Francis Durbridge's story was published in hard cover but it never made it to the airwaves. It is read with wonderful insouciance by the TV (but never radio) Paul Temple - Francis Matthews.

PICKWICK in the 1970s identified a trend and then seemed to leave it alone. Thankfully I managed to purchase most of the *PICKWICK* output. They were on the shelves for not much more than a couple of years before they vanished in the maws of another and different marketing ploy. Today's resurgence of Audio tapes, whether Cover-to-Cover readings, abridged readings or "off-air" dramas began in the late eighties and appears to have continued apace since then. Ernest Holman is absolutely on the button with his suggestion of the need for excellence in the reading and characterisation of books.

The actors mentioned above are also of some distinction and read splendidly. **Peter Marinker** was often heard on BBC in the sixties and seventies - his was a flexible and most adaptable voice with an easy range in the characterisations which never felt forced or artificial. **Anthony Valentine** was that most elegant yet sinister of Raffles for ITV and his sulky voice persuades us effortlessly into the gothic horrors of Bram Stoker. **Edward Duke** is most winning as the dozy but likeable "drone" Bertie Wooster - PG Wodehouse could have no finer advocate for his characters than Edward Duke, who died tragically young only a couple of years ago.

We all have our favourite actors but whoever appeals we must be grateful for the good work that they do in preserving so many books and short stories on tape for us.

Despite my love of the spoken word in readings such as these it is to Radio Drama that I most often turn. Since the mid eighties my recorder has been at the ready to grab whatever appeals from the BBC's output.

Regrettably, appealing items are diminishing as the nineties progress. Others have already "bashed" the Birt chappie elsewhere but my two-pennorth would be to bewail the demise of good detective classics (***Poirot, Marples, Strangeways, Maigret*** and the like). Instead we now get thud and blunder of various kinds which can lapse into overtly sexual byways which are quite unnecessary. Although the characters of Max Carrados and Norman Conquest got "airings" recently on the Beeb they were "sent up rotten" with a distinct lack of respect for the original characters and plots. Shame, but that is the sad direction that radio seems to be taking now.

Many of the BBC commercial cassettes are selection from the classic detective field and, presumably, sell well enough along with ***Hancock*** and ***The Goons.*** What the BBC's commercial arm does NOT DO is to offer for sale the patently unsaleable plays that have

been clogging the airways for so long. If such fodder is unpalatable for re-sale then why broadcast such unmemorable stuff in the first place? *Sorry, folks - I just can not be light-hearted about this area of the arts.* My suggestion is that you get what you can from the racks in W.H. Smiths and Menzies and your local record shop before they vanish for good. Meanwhile we can look forward to wireless broadcasting being overtaken by non-stop "phone-ins" and rock (?) music over the ether.

When that happens I shall be heard crying out - if not screaming out - "PASS THE ETHER!"

* *

A MATTER OF LOGIC - Part Two

by Anthony E.L. Cook

Despite the ugly criss cross of tape across the windows the tea-room the snug inside had changed not at all. There was still the quiet air of quality about it. Mr. Quelch took a seat near the window over-looking the gardens. His seat was in an alcove partitioned by a high backed bench, its seat and back cushioned and comfortable. Soon he was enjoying a pot of tea, and somewhat to his surprise, buttered teacake (one per person but most enjoyable). He took a newspaper from his pocket and scanned the pages. He liked to keep up to date with the news from all fronts, in particular with the home front as he was so much more concerned now with the day to day running of Greyfriars.

The tea-shop bell heralded the arrival of more customers, who made their way over to the opposite side of the alcove occupied by Mr. Quelch. Having ordered, these three men began an earnest conversation. In retrospect Mr. Quelch realised that it was opportune that the seat of the alcove was split in the centre allowing a gap through which conversation could be heard. It was by virtue of this that he heard some of their discussion, disjointed though it was. His concentration on his newspaper was only broken when he heard the name Wharton mentioned. Then he heard 'from the inside' which meant little to him. As he poured himself a second cup of tea he heard 'get it to the Derby shop quickly, he's a good dealer'. At this point the waitress who had served him asked him if he required anything further, and gave him the bill. After this he heard little more and, finishing his tea, made his way over to the cash desk. He did glance over to the party who had been behind him and saw that they seemed respectable, suited business men. With a brisk 'good afternoon and thank you' to the girl who took his money, he left, dismissing the matter from his mind.

Dinner at Wharton Lodge that evening turned out to be a surprising success in the culinary sense and a greater surprise in other respects. The extra guest referred to by the Colonel earlier in the day did indeed turn out to be someone known to the master of the remove only too well. As he entered the dining room prior to the meal he saw his host escorting a tall figure in officer's uniform from the library, but it was only on closer inspection that he realised this was none other than Ferrers Locke, a relative of the headmaster of Greyfriars, and a private detective.

"Ah! my dear fellow I think you know Captain Locke."

The two men shook hands.

"This is a pleasure Mr. Quelch", said Ferrers Locke. "I can catch up on the news from Greyfriars."

"Indeed a pleasure Mr. Locke, or should I say Captain?"

"No need to stand on ceremony here, Mr. Quelch."

"Dr. Locke did not tell me that you had joined the army."

"Entirely my choice, I can assure you. Certain people seemed to think that my background suited military intelligence."

At this point the Colonel coughed rather meaningly, and Ferrers Locke smiled.

"I feel sure that Mr. Quelch will realise that certain things have not been said."

With one of his thin smiles Mr. Quelch nodded: "I quite understand gentlemen."

With that they went into dinner. The conversation was light and interesting and if this was a foretaste of things to come over the next few days Mr. Quelch felt more than satisfied. The ladies took their leave at the end of the meal leaving the men sitting in front of the fire. The Colonel lit a cigar and they each partook of a welcome glass of vintage port.

"Not much of this stuff left, I fear" Colonel Wharton commented, raising his glass. "Make the most of it while we can." After an hour or so the Colonel addressed his guests.

"Now gentlemen, I feel it my duty to put you in the picture as far as I am allowed regarding certain -ah - differences around the Lodge, and Captain Locke agrees. You already know that a government department has taken over the west wing as well as erecting two small prefabricated huts of their own. There is another item which must be explained Will you please follow me?" Ferrers Locke stood aside. "After you Sir Oliver; Mr. Quelch."

They followed the Colonel up the great staircase. At the top he turned right towards the west wing and came to the oak panelled door which separated that wing from the rest of the house. "This door," said the Colonel "is locked and double bolted from the other side. The keys are held by certain of my staff and it cannot be unlocked from this side."

Ferrers Locke spoke. "There is of course no need for entrance from this side, except in the case of dire emergency. However, should there be the necessity for anyone to contact me, we have installed this."

He went to the side of the door and opened a small cupboard in the wall. Inside sat a telephone.

"You just lift the receiver and are connected to my department. I feel sure that such a case will not arise over Christmas but at least you know the drill." He turned to the Colonel. "Secrets over, I think, thank you Colonel."

All four of them returned to their seats around the fire. For the next hour or so the conversation meandered around the war, Greyfriars and events in general. Sir Oliver, of course, now being a governor of the school, had a great deal of interest in both past and present matters. At one stage in the conversation Mr. Quelch said "I presume, Captain Locke, that your civilian occupation has fitted you admirably for your present position?"

"In many ways," Locke replied, "There is very little difference in principle, though as I am sure you understand there are no moral borderlines as in some civilian cases. You know what they say, all is fair in love and war!"

"I have indeed heard the expression," Mr. Quelch replied dryly.

"You see," continued Ferrers Locke "It all boils down basically to a matter of logic, of fitting facts and situations together to form a pattern. Taking the unusual, the stray comment and the seemingly unimportant, and sifting through these things. Perhaps in the sum total it's not always so easy but that just about sums up the general idea."

Both Sir Oliver and Colonel had their say on the matter while Mr. Quelch listened with interest. A year ago he would have taken little interest in such matters but now his horizons had changed and he found such things fascinating. It was, after all, he reasoned a new experience in fresh circumstances and he was part of it.

His life was still ruled by his academic interests and studies but he realised that there were other things which needed both his interest and consideration. At last the group broke up, tired and satisfied with their first evening. Good nights having been said Mr. Quelch found himself ascending the stairs with Captain Locke. The latter turned right at the head of the stairs and availed himself of the cupboard telephone.

"Someone will come and let me in," he grinned. "Quite fun really". Sure enough, no sooner had he spoken than the door opened and a figure in military uniform stood there.

With a final wave of his hand Ferrers Locke disappeared and the door shut with creaking of un-oiled hinges. As Mr. Quelch prepared for bed he realised that he had not given any time to his usual habit of looking through the Colonel's library. This did not disturb him; there was time enough. It had been a long and interesting day without any doubt, and before he slept many thoughts ran through his mind. As he was dropping off he seemed to hear the creak of the dividing door again, but a sound and dreamless sleep overtook him.

The next morning dawned fine but cold. Fog patches were visible across the gardens and towards the woods beyond. Mr. Quelch, however, arose with a feeling of well being and anticipation. Breakfast was awaiting him. The Colonel and Sir Oliver were already seated. It was no surprise that the meal, although still able to offer a choice, was not of the usual standard for Wharton Lodge, as his host commented. "'Morning", the Colonel said, looking up from his paper. "Hope you can find something you enjoy. Not quite as it was, and Wells says it will get worse."

The remove master acknowledged these remarks as well as Sir Oliver's cheerful good morning.

"Bristol and Birmingham had a bad time last night I fear."

"Difficult to pick 'em off in the dark, Sir Oliver," the Colonel growled. "According to my paper London was quiet, thank God." The three men talked on until Wells came to clear the table.

"What plans for the day Mr. Quelch?" the Colonel enquired.

"A long walk in your beautiful countryside, I think, and coffee in the village. I never tire of walking around this area."

"Sounds a first class idea" Sir Oliver commented. "Would you mind if I joined you?"

Mr. Quelch beamed. "I would consider it a privilege to have your company."

"That's settled then, shall we say nine thirty? And what of our host? Not a heavy day, I hope."

Colonel Wharton sighed. "I am helping Wells with a few outside jobs this morning. Too short staffed to do otherwise. And then plans for this evening, Home Guard y'know. We meet at the White Hart, the usual drill and instruction, that kind of thing. Never know when we might be needed."

"First class, Colonel. I must admit that your meeting place is more than convenient!"

The Colonel opened his mouth to make a rejoinder, but decided against it and grinned slightly sheepishly.

It was just before nine thirty when Mr. Quelch collected his coat from the cloakroom. Wells was pulling the heavy blackout curtains aside and shaking his head in a puzzled way. Seeing Mr. Quelch he took his coat from the peg and helped him into it.

"You seem rather disturbed, Wells" the master said in a kindly manner.

"Only a little, sir" Wells replied. "Thank you for the enquiry. It's just that I found the window unlocked under the blackout protection and I feel sure that it was secure last evening."

"It must be the pressure of things. At least only you and myself know!"

Sir Oliver made his appearance at that point and the two men left for their walk. Mr. Quelch had already considered that his companion's suggestion of a walk together might have a dual purpose and he was correct. As they proceeded on their way Sir Oliver was full of questions concerning Greyfriars' future, its new home and the general implications of the move. Although Mr. Quelch enjoyed his solitary walks he found Sir Oliver a great champion of the school who, as a governor, had a firm desire to do his best, as he saw it, for the future. Over coffee he broached the subject of salaries and school fees, a subject that the master of the remove had given very little thought to over the years.

"How do we compare with other schools in the country?" he asked.

"Our fees are standing at £190 at the moment."

"Reasonable," Sir Oliver commented. "I happen to know that Harrow is £220. And what about staff salaries?"

For once Mr. Quelch seemed uncomfortable. "I suggest that they are in line with most" he ventured.

This comment received a chuckle. "What you really mean my dear fellow is that they are too low. We must see that Greyfriars keeps its eyes fixed firmly on proper business ideals. After all, reasonable increases are expected in school fees and the staff should receive appropriate remuneration." It was in this mood that the two made their way slowly back to Wharton Lodge.

On their arrival a surprise awaited them. The Colonel had company. He was deep in conversation with Ferrers Locke who was accompanied by another officer in RAF uniform and a civilian. It was the former who stepped forward.

"Good afternoon gentlemen". They noticed that his manner was very formal.

"Something very serious has happened. I was just acquainting the Colonel with the facts. I will leave him to explain matters to you, but I would like to know your whereabouts this morning."

It was Sir Oliver who gave the explanation which seemed to satisfy Captain Locke who added: "I shall, however, have to make a search of the premises which will include the rooms occupied by the guests. I presume that neither of you gentlemen will raise any objection?"

"I certainly have none," said Sir Oliver. "But I would appreciate your waiting until my wife returns. She is out with Miss Wharton at the moment."

Ferrers Locke appeared happy with this arrangement but the Colonel seemed rather on edge: "Are you suggesting that my guests are to be searched? After all, you did vet them all before their arrival."

Ferrers Locke could sense the Colonel's anger, and shook his head. "No sir, I do not intend that, but I would like to look around the rooms, in fact all the rooms. Something very important has gone missing and there are at least three entrances to this house and ample space to hide something. You no doubt appreciate our position from your own army days."

Mollified, the Colonel nodded. "Of course. I'm sorry, but I was only thinking of my guests. I do appreciate the seriousness of the situation."

The outcome of this confrontation was that when the ladies returned a systematic search of Wharton Lodge was made but to no avail. Mr. Quelch spent most of the afternoon in front of the fire with Miss Wharton, Sir Oliver and Lady Carstairs while the Colonel retired to his study to deal with personal matters. It was quite late when Mr. Quelch took his leave and went into the library. He felt in need of stimulation, and what better than the bookshelves!

He chose a book and, settling down, read steadily for an hour or more, relaxed and satisfied. At last, putting aside the book he decided to look at a painting which hung on the far wall. Although not an art lover this particular item was something Mr. Quelch would have liked in his own study. It was in oils, of the Italian school and entitled 'Virgil Teaching'. When he approached it Wells entered to draw the blackout curtains, and the master of the remove let out a gasp. "Wells!" he said, "Has the Colonel changed this painting since my last visit?"

"Changed the painting sir? Certainly not to my knowledge. Allow me sir." Wells crossed and switched on the light above the painting.

"Perhaps that is better sir."

"This," Mr. Quelch said "is not the Virgil".

Wells look closely, "Indeed, it is not, sir You are correct."

"We must inform your master at once, Wells."

Without more ado the two of them went immediately to Colonel Wharton's study. As they entered the Colonel looked up from his desk, his smile fading as he saw the worried expression on Mr. Quelch's face.

"I apologise for the intrusion Colonel but I fear there has been a burglary. One of your pictures from the library is missing; at least it has been replaced."

"Missing! But that is impossible." The Colonel rose from his desk and the three of them went back to the library. The picture was appraised and Colonel Wharton agreed that, although indeed similar in content and size, it certainly was not the original. "Upon my soul! But why exchange a picture? When did this happen, Wells?"

Wells could only express equal surprise, and the Colonel said: "Thank you for being so observant Mr. Quelch. We shall have to call the local constable at once."

Mr. Quelch shook his head. "May I suggest that you inform Capt. Locke first."

"But surely this is a police matter?" Colonel Wharton frowned.

"Perhaps, but it appears that strange things have been happening of late and under the circumstances the involvement of the local police might not be welcomed."

The Colonel looked at his guest with surprise.

"Bit of a long shot, the two things being connected. What has a picture to do with the loss of government papers?"

"None that I can understand, but one never knows!"

The Colonel nodded. "Of course you may be right. I will contact Locke at once. Thank you." With this, Wells, who had said nothing and looked utterly dejected, left. Colonel Wharton made a telephone call and Mr. Quelch went to join the other guests saying nothing of what had occurred.

Lunch was late that day as Ferrers Locke came round post haste. The new situation interested him a great deal and also appeared to worry him. As Mr. Quelch had suggested he certainly did not want any involvement with the local police at this time. He wished to try and establish whether both events were indeed connected.

The rest of the day passed in an air of unreality, for the happenings of the past twenty four hours had spoiled the rhythm of the pre-Christmas preparations. Ferrers Locke had asked them all to go over the time from their arrival and jot down anything which each might have considered out of the ordinary. The assembled company talked around this for most of the evening. Mr. Quelch on the other hand seemed preoccupied and he was to be found very much later that evening in the library jotting down notes in his neat, precise hand.

(To be Concluded)

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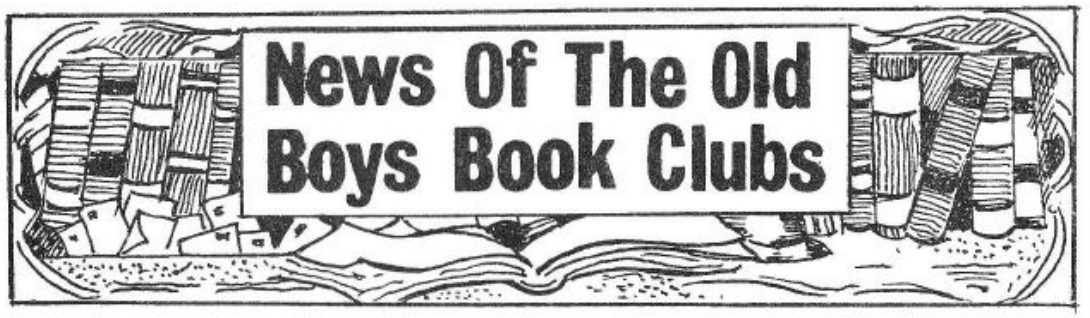

LONDON OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

Our annual luncheon was held on Sunday, 8th September at the Bull & Crown, Chingford and was combined with a celebration of the Jubilee of the Collectors Digest and Annual. Of the fifty-four enthusiasts present, it was a real pleasure to welcome ten members of the Northern and Cambridge Clubs, many of whom were only hitherto familiar names.

Bob and Marie Whiter, residents of California, also joined us. Bob, whose illustrations are known to most, is the surviving founder member of the London Club. Our great delight was to see Betty and Johnny Hopton who came all the way from Carmarthen, despite Betty's handicap. Such enthusiasm knows no bounds!

Bill Bradford read a letter received from Eric Fayne, expressing his distress at being unable to join us, due to a pending hip replacement. His presence would have made the day even more memorable for us, but we send our heartfelt wishes for his early recovery. Roger Jenkins, whose memories of the hobby go back even earlier than the C.D. traced its history from the start and payed tribute to the three Editors. In reply, Mary Cadogan spoke of the joys and challenges in publishing monthly, justified by the many wonderful expressions of gratitude and support from her many readers.

Finally our President, John Wernham, toasted all the Clubs with his usual eloquence and aplomb. With Mary, he has produced the latest publication of the Museum Press, which highlights the first fifty years of the C.D. and consists of over 360 large pages of most fascinating reading. Sales were brisk! Returning to Harper 'Towers', Chris and Suzanne supplied unlimited tea and goodies, between which there was an Auction of books and papers donated by members, with some 27 assorted lots. Bidding was steady and only a handful of books was not cleared. Norman Wright has not yet declared the final takings for the Club from this event, but looked decidedly happy!

The last visitors left in the early evening and it is hoped that they enjoyed the day. The October meeting is at Wokingham. Bring your own 'tuck' but advise Betty and Eric Lawrence if attending.

BILL BRADFORD

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

We were very disappointed that because of an accident our guests for the day, Ann Mackie-Hunter and Clarissa Cridland, were unable to be with us. Our best wishes go to Ann for her quick recovery. We had to plan a fill-in programme for the evening.

A report was given by Joan, Mark and Darrell of their visit the previous Sunday to Chingford for the Anniversary Luncheon to celebrate 50 years of the C.D. A splendid day had been had by all.

The death of George Samways was reported and Darrell was able to fill in some details of contacts with him during his life in Dursley.

In his talk "Relics of Rose Lawn", Darrell recalled some of his visits to Kingsgate and seeing the library of Charles Hamilton. He showed two books that had been given to him

by a fellow collector. The most intriguing was a reference book on stamps and collecting. From Charles Hamilton's many notes in this volume it seemed pretty obvious that he had used it to aid his writing of the Skilton book "Billy Bunter and the Blue Mauritius". Two other books were on view from his library.

Mark Caldicott posed the question of how many people read books in a series in the correct order. He referred to one series that really did have to be read in the correct order because of its "soap opera" theme. With children's books series, it was not usually essential to read in the correct order, though certainly advisable with long-running series such as the Chalet School.

To conclude, Geoffrey read two hilarious chapters from "The Magnet" which rounded off a very enjoyable evening.

Our Annual Luncheon is on 12th October - please enquire if you would like to attend. Our November meeting is the A.G.M. JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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FORUM

From BILL LOFTS: I was most interested in the 'Advertisement' article by Donald V. Campbell that appeared in the August C.D. It brought back memories of some yeas ago, when I was working for one of London's top advertisement and T.V. Companies as an investigator researcher, and also dealt with copyrights.

One of our clients - and a highly profitable one - had requested some information about the old traditional advertisements that had appeared in magazines before the last War, and whether also some would infringe today's Trade Description Act. My chairman, knowing of my great interest in old magazines, requested me to handle this subject, when finally I produced a thesis giving many of the old favourites.

I included many from our old boys' papers. Cure for red noses, Bunter's Nervine (which Frank Richards in his Autobiography revealed as an inspiration to him for the name of Bunter), Increase your height by six inches, and the luxurious moustache, which actually takes years to cultivate. I have a copy of this article somewhere in my files, never reprinted in a collectors' magazine as far as I can remember. If I find it and can revise it, I will submit it for the C.D. or the Annual some time.

From DENNIS HILLIARD: The highlight of the September C.D. for me was the first of Brian Doyle's articles, YESTERDAY'S HEROES. The only thing wrong is the title - Dr. Syn, Sir Percy Blakeney etc. are *not* 'Yesterday's Heroes alone - they are 'Immortal Heroes'. (I admit *that* is not a perfect title.) Anyway, thank you for so very much pleasure. (*Editor's Note*: The second of Brian's articles in this series - 'Captain Kettle' - will appear soon.)

From BOB WEEKS: Does anyone know why the old OUR GANG feature of the DANDY (1938-40s) has (as far as I know) never been reproduced? (Editor's Note: I also have warm memories of Our Gang in films. A good subject for an article by a Thomson paper enthusiast or a film fan, perhaps?)

From REG HARDINGE: I enclose a LET'S TALK IT OVER article from GEM no. 1401 (22/12/1934), with particular reference to Peter Mahony's article in the September C.D. on *Hamilton, Brooks and Cricket.*

Mr. E. S. Brooks welcomes letters from readers. Write to him c/o The Editor, The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

IT is getting a bit difficult for me to answer all the letters I get from you readers, because nine out of every ten of you bring up the same subject! Why not increase the length of the St. Frank's section—or why not revive the old "Nelson Lee" Library? Well, it's all very well to answer one or two letters of this kind, now and again, but when most of you raise the same subject individual answers would become rather monotonous. All I can say in reply to you is that the Editor himself is the man to write to. Meantime, get as many new readers of the GEM as you can.

* * *

It would be rather difficult, Reg Morgan, Melbourne, to tell you how St. Frank's is laid out. Of course, having written about the old school for so long, I have every nook and cranny of the place in my mind's eye—the exact number of steps one needs to take when walking from the fountain, in the middle of the Triangle, to the Ancient House, and so on; just how far it is from Big Arch to the Head's house; how many corners to turn going from Handforth's study, in the Remove passage, to William Napoleon Browne's study in the Fifth Form passage. But if I were to attempt to describe all this, it would fill five or six pages of the GEM. Among the best cricketers in the Junior School are Nipper, Jerry Dodd, Harry Gresham, and Vivian Travers. The best junior boxer, without question, is Ernest Lawrence; but Nipper is jolly handy with his fists, too.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,401.

Many thanks for your nice letter, Gordon W. Thomas, Portsmouth. Hope you'll have some success with your short stories. Naturally, they will stand more chance if they are typewritten; but unless a story is just what an editor requires, it doesn't stand much chance of being accepted, typewritten or otherwise. You are sensible enough to realise the difficulties, but I have sometimes had letters from readers who apparently think that story-writing is one of the easiest games under the sun—a kind of "lazy man's life." But story-writing, like everything else, has to be learned, even by those who have it "in" them. Experience is the great teacher, as in most other walks of life. The other day I came across one or two of my very first efforts, and, needless to say, they were in manuscript form, for they were so awful that they never got into print. Yet, when I wrote them, I thought they were remarkably fine! One of the illusions of youth! It takes some years of experience, and a number of hard knocks, to make one realise that nothing worth while in this life is easy.

* * *

Glad you liked the "Taaz" stories so much, "Removite," Greenock. Hope you are enjoying the present "Christmasy" serial as much. From my own point of view, I think this serial is a lot better than the "Taaz" series; anyhow, I enjoyed the writing a great deal more. Ulysses Spencer Adams, the American boy, is as much in evidence as ever in St. Frank's, but he doesn't do quite so much bragging as when he first came. A good deal of that sort of thing has been knocked out of him. Both Stanley Waldo and Tony Cresswell were missed out of the "Names List" because they are no longer at St. Frank's.

* * *

As you have now found out for yourself, Richard Rowe, Skegness, there is a special Christmas serial in these pages. No, I'm afraid you won't find a St. Frank's Christmas story in the "Boys' Friend Library."

* * *

I want to acknowledge the cheery and enthusiastic and welcome letters from the following: Wilfred B. Thomson, Fife; Stanley Jonson, Port Elizabeth; "A Reader," London; Teddy Pearce, Hatfield; C. Gould, Harrow; William Davies, Aukland; R. Fyfe, Greenock; R. M. Jenkins, Havant; Jack Pulver, London, E.; John Wilmshurst, Manor Park; G. S. Hunnable, Mistley; Bill Upton, Ashburton

DENNIS GIFFORD writes: Last May I was invited to lecture on *Film Fun*, the classic cinema comic, and the many film stars of comedy it included down the years, at the Museum of the Moving Image, which is part of the National Film Theatre on the South Bank. It was successful enough for them to invite me back to do a second talk on a similar theme, this time on *Film Fun's* less famous companion, *The Kinema Comic*. Again it will run around an hour and a half and introduce slides of the cartoon strip characters alongside rare clips from their films. This will be in October, date not yet certain.

That was the good news; here is the bad...

On Wednesday July the first I came home to find my fairly impenetrable house broken into via the sealed glass patio doors, and a bookcase completely stripped of some 20 collectors' item annuals which were arranged as a display. There were two crooks, one young, slim, in dark glasses, the other shorter, older, chunkier, and they posed as gardeners, convincing neighbours that I had hired them to clear up my back garden, but had to go out before they arrived ...

They knew my name, they knew my days for travelling to town, they knew my collection (which is totally concealed from public gaze) and they clearly knew values.

The annuals taken were: Butterfly (1940), Chips (1939), Funny Wonder (1939), Golden (1938), Jingles (1937), Film Fun (1947), Radio Fun (1943), Knockout Fun Book (1941), Playbox (1934, 1942), Puck (1921, 1923, 1926), Sparkler (1939), Sunbeam (1937),

Tip Top (1940), Whizzbang Comics (1944), Wizard Book (pirate cover) and other Thomson annuals (uncertain).

Whilst I can hope some may turn up at boot sales, book fairs, or postal dealers, I am anxious to replace them, if anyone has copies for sale - especially those like Knockout which I bought myself as a lad in 1940!

* *

OUR BOOKSHELVES

REVIEWS BY

MARY CADOGAN

(Picture by Terry Wakefield)

BEHIND THE CHALET SCHOOL. By Helen McClelland. (Second revised edition: Bettany Press paperback £14.99)

This new edition of Helen McClelland's biography of Elinor M. Brent-Dyer will be welcomed by many collectors. The book first appeared fifteen years ago: its author, in common with other biographers (I speak from personal experience!) found that its publication stimulated the emergence of hitherto undiscovered facts about her subject's life and work. Helen McClelland has taken full advantage of incorporating these into the present revised edition, as well as correcting small errors which occurred in the original version.

The new material, particularly that which deals with the so-called 'missing' years of Elinor's life and the mystery of the 'disappearance' of her half-brother, rounds out what has always been an attractive and rewarding study - not only of a celebrated author but of an extremely successful series of children's books. As is well known, of all the girls' school story series, only Elinor Brent-Dyer's Chalet School saga has remained constantly in print - from the 1920s to the 1990s. In BEHIND THE CHALET SCHOOL Helen McClelland explores many of the reasons for the resilient appeal of this international, tri-lingual, Alpine fictional school.

Like Frank Richards, Richmal Crompton, W.E. Johns and Enid Blyton, Elinor Brent-Dyer is one of the few prolific authors from the heyday of twentieth-century children's fiction who seems set to spread her influence up to the coming millennium and beyond. BEHIND THE CHALET SCHOOL is a fitting tribute to her achievements. (The book is available by post from Bettany Press Distribution, Marmic, Stanway Green, Colchester, Essex, CO3 5RA.)

MURDER DONE TO DEATH. By John Kennedy Melling. (Scarecrow Press. £43.70).

My first response to this lively study of an intriguing area of detective fiction is just how much ground the author has been able to cover in his 260 or so pages of text. The width of this survey is, however, its weakness as well as its strength: readers may be delighted to see references to favourite characters from popular fiction such as the Scarlet Pimpernel, Sexton Blake, Sherlock Holmes, Charlie Chan, Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys and Richard Hannay (to name only a very few) but feel disappointed that such mentions are generally only too brief.

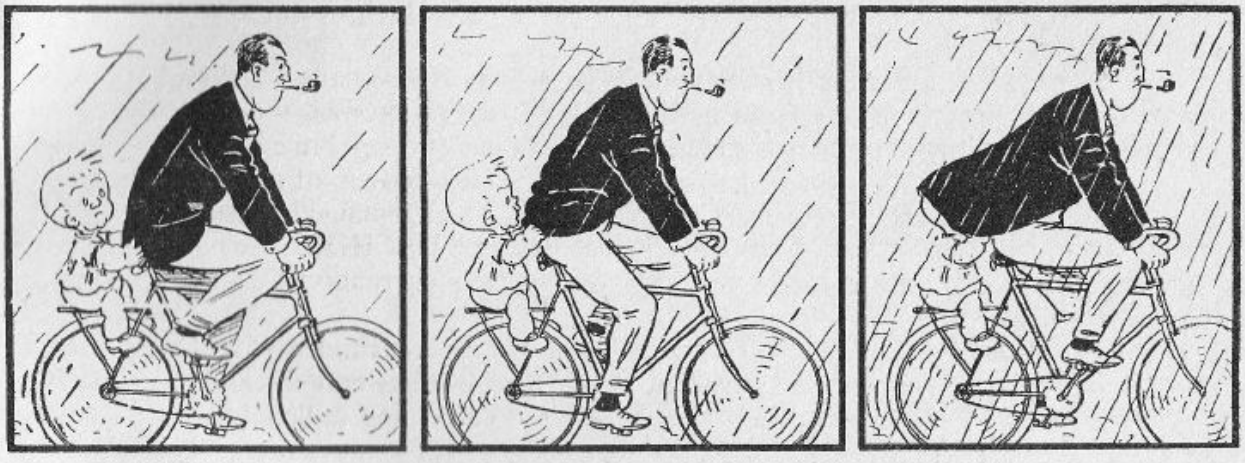
John Kennedy Melling's concern, however, is not to provide a comprehensive, in-depth history of the sleuthing genre but to concentrate on its parodies and pastiches, and his may be the only book-length survey to date of these. Certainly MURDER DONE TO DEATH's many appetite-whetting descriptions and commentaries are likely to make readers return to the original stories about the characters who are featured. Stage, screen, radio and T.V. parodies and pastiches are covered, in addition to literary examples.

MURDER DONE TO DEATH is written with affection as well as erudition. From its welter of images and memories I especially enjoyed sections on what the author calls 'Silly-assery'. Charles Hamilton, as well as P.G. Wodehouse, is referred to several times in this book (though Herlock Sholmes is not given his due coverage, and Magnet editor C. Maurice Down seems at an important point in the text to have been transmogrified into C. Maurice Bland). Nelson Lee and E.S. Brooks are only touched upon, and this lack of emphasis is surprising in view of the attractive Trackitt Grim pastiches. However, if you are intrigued by parodies and pastiches - from Simenon and Sayers to Stout and Spillane - do try to get hold of MURDER DONE TO DEATH.

It is printed and published in the U.S.A. and its price will be daunting to many British readers. (Let us hope that it will find its way into our public library system.) It can be bought in England from Shelwing Ltd., 4 Pleydell Gardens, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2DN.

* *

ANOTHER NIPPER ADVENTURE by Brian White



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GEMS OF HAMILTONIA from Peter Hanger

Billy Bunter proceeded to mount without assistance. The donkey turned his head, and gazed thoughtfully at Bunter.

Perhaps he doubted whether he would be able to carry the weight. The donkey was, of course, an ass; but he was not such as ass as to carry Bunter's weight if he could help it.

MAGNET 1435

To do Bunter justice, he would have not have told the truth, if Coker had given him time to make up an untruth. But Coker was too impatient. *MAGNET 1442*

But, really the Fifth ought to have known that Prout was coming. Prout was a stout gentleman - a stout gentleman - a heavy gentleman. He had been likened to the "huge earth-shaking beast" mentioned in Macauly. No floor, however well constructed, ever took Prout's weight without giving tongue.

Floors creaked under Prout. Fellows had even said that the quadrangle trembled under him.

That, no doubt, was an exaggeration. Still, it was certain that even a deaf man would have known, as a rule, when Prout was coming. *MAGNET 1442*

"Bai Jove! Is that Buntah!"

"Your old pal," said the Owl of the Remove, stretching out a fat paw.

Arthur Augustus blinked at him, and took the paw. Arthur Augustus would have shaken hands with a rhinoceros rather than have hurt the animal's feelings. *MAGNET 474*

Football jaw was more interesting. Blundell, captain of the Form was discussing the coming First Eleven match with St. Jim's, and expressing grave doubts whether Wingate had put enough Fifth Form men in. Blundell, of course, was in the First Eleven, and it was said that Warren, the new fellow, was going in and perhaps Hilton... But in Blundell's opinion, the First Eleven would have been greatly improved by picking eleven men from his form; only four or five seemed - to Blundell - asking for trouble. In the Fifth Form there was a general concurrence in this opinion.

Coker listened rather impatiently to this talk. Not that Coker wasn't keen on footer; he was. But Coker had no more chance of playing for Greyfriars than the man in the moon. So football jaw seemed rather drivel to Coker. *MAGNET 1444*

Hoskins liked fellows to listen when he played his musical works.

It was not easy to get them to listen-in. They would almost as soon have faced Hoskins with a machine-gun as with a musical instrument. *MAGNET 1568*

"And Prout's as mad as a hatter," went on Coker. "I needn't tell you that Prout is always giving me trouble in one way or another; the whole school knows that! I'm very patent with him; I wonder at it myself, sometimes! You'd hardly believe how often I've been tempted to hit him in the Form-room --"

"Eh?"

"But I've never done it!" said Coker, with the air of a fellow telling a tale of wonderful self-control. "Never once!" *MAGNET 1442*

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