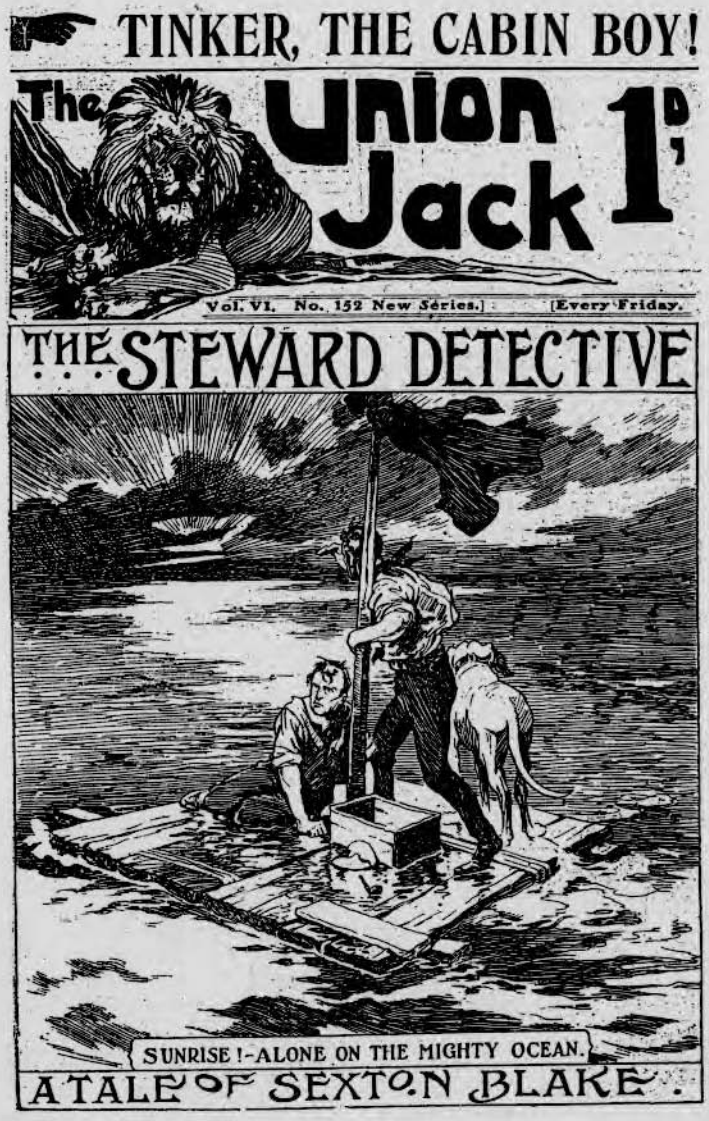
STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST
VOL.51 No.605 MAY 1997



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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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The Editor's Chat

OUR COVER

Len Hawkey, who provided this month's cover picture from the *Union Jack* of 8th September 1906, says that it is by Fred Bennett and 'possibly the finest ever done for the *UJ*'.

SOMETHING OLD AND SOMETHING NEW

Recently I requested articles on the *Gem* to mark its 90th anniversary year, and I have already received several fine items about this old established but still much collected paper. However, I feel sure that some of you have special memories of and thoughts about the *Gem* which you have not yet put on paper: I look forward to more St. Jim's features arriving here during 1997.

It is interesting that 90 years on from the first publication of the *Gem* a new boys' paper has been produced. Entitled *Boys First,* it is intended to be a general interest magazine and thus distinct from today's general run of picture-strip juvenile papers. At £1.60, the April edition of this glossy, well-printed, 20-page monthly offers a variety of articles on 'popular' science, engineering and nature themes, two text-stories (one complete and one serialized) and one picture serial. There are also puzzles, letters and an article on a celebrity (Damon Hill).

The project is commendable, but I have reservations about its fictional content. The space and sci-fi picture story, despite having the appropriate trappings, lacks atmosphere and charisma - for me, at any rate. The text-stories are on the short side and, although the adventure serial featuring a group of boys seems promising, I cannot say that I enjoyed what is described as 'a revolting but true story' called 'What's For Dinner Mr Bean?' For boy readers the most attractive item is probably the double centre-page spread of Facts and Figures (and colour pictures) on the 'McLaren FI Roadcar' (which is

slightly reminiscent of the expanded picture features in the 1950s *Eagle*). Mark Taha, who supplied me with this April number, writes positively about it and says it reminds him of the 1970s 'World of Wonder' magazine. I would be interested to know how other C.D. readers respond to *Boys First* which is published by Glenmoor Publications of Bingley and is, I hope, available from newsagents in most parts of the country.

VERY SPECIAL BIRTHDAY GREETINGS TO JOHN WERNHAM

May 2nd marked the 90th birthday of John Wernham, President of the London O.B.B.C. and Founder of the Museum Press. I would like to send him hearty congratulations from myself and C.D. readers. I have heard John say with pride that he and the *Gem* were born in the same year: 1907 was certainly an auspicious one for our hobby in this dual event.

Many happy returns to you, John, and warmest thanks for all that you have done and are doing for the London Club and for the hobby generally.

MARY CADOGAN

John Wernham

ETONS, BLAZERS AND GYM-SLIPS!

By J.E.M.

Our images of favourite characters in fiction depend to a great extent on how they were seen by their illustrators. When we think of Sherlock Holmes, for instance, we immediately conjure up a picture of the detective in a deer-stalker - though nowhere in the canon does Conan Doyle actually mention Holmes wearing such headgear.

Illustration by Sidney Paget, 1890.

And what of our school-story heroes and heroines from Greyfriars, St. Jim's, St. Frank's, Morcove, Cliff House and the rest? Did Frank Richards invent Bunter's famous check trousers or were they introduced by his great illustrator, C.H. Chapman? And those fancy striped trews worn by the blades and dandies (Vernon-Smith, Ponsonby, Gussy *et al)* were they insisted upon by Richards or were they the inspired creations of Chapman, Shields and Macdonald? Whatever the answer, such garments are firmly impressed on our memories, inseparable from the characters who wore them.

There were, of course, some fundamental changes in all schoolboy dress. By the end of the nineteen twenties, Greyfriars, St. Jim's and St. Frank's had abandoned Etons in favour of blazers and, indeed, displayed a more informal approach to clothes altogether. On holiday, or in leisure periods during the summer months, open-necked shirts were often depicted. On at least one occasion, Bunter was shown by the inimitable Shields wearing a panama hat and a vast cummerbund! Many years ago, Eric Fayne commented that "The Magnet had gained by the passing of Etons" but he doubted whether The Gem had, for R.J. Macdonald's boys in Etons seemed to him "to be more attractive than those he depicted in sports jackets". Perhaps others shared similar feelings. Nevertheless, 1930 ushered in a new sartorial age - at any rate for boys. The dress scene, however, seemed rather different for girls; any move towards informality except at holiday time, and not always then, was slow and reluctant.

Morcove, for example, tended to wear gym-slips, come hell or high water - or, at least, come summer or winter, though exotic newcomers like 'Rose of the Desert' were always presented in their own elaborate garb. Even in summer-time, the fair sex were depicted sculling down the river in gym-slips, complete with long-sleeved blouses (see Morcove as illustrated by Shields; and Cliff House as depicted by Chapman in the

famous Feud with Cliff House series, The Magnet 1528). Gym-slips were surely not the coolest garments to wear in the heat and certainly not for strenuous activity like rowing! It is interesting that in the above-mentioned Magnet some of the schoolboy characters are also illustrated rowing but in shirt sleeves or unbuttoned blazers.

The Nelson Lee displayed some rather incongruous dress in the famous Caronia tales in 1931 (NL 78 to 83, Second New Series). Irene and her Moor View friends join a St. Frank's group for adventures in a South Balkan country. It is August and Nipper, Handforth and Co. are all depicted (by Kenneth Brooke) in very casual dress, often without jacket or tie. Irene and Co., by contrast, are still in stifling gym-slips and black stockings. Even odder is the fact that, getting on for a year earlier (NL 34, Second New Series), the Moor View girls had been shown by the same artist in summer dresses, though of uniform design. Perhaps, in the later Caronia stories, young ladies wearing less formal dress while abroad would not have been readily identified as what they were - schoolgirls. The gym-slip, in other words, became a sort of artistic shorthand or identikit.

To be fair, it does seem that in those days, real girls' grammar and public schools were pretty rigid about dress, the famous gym-slip dominating. Some schools did permit a slightly more tolerant approach to senior girls while, at one very up-market school, everyone had to change for dinner. The same establishment regularly *changed its whole uniform*, its distinction indicated not by colour, style or emblem but largely by its obvious expensiveness! This sort of thing would not have done for any of the famous fictional schools of our youthful reading. Can you imagine Morcove with a different uniform every year? We are all traditionalists at

heart and expect to see our school characters in traditional garb. And this is just as true for the male as for the female sex. Once the great rejection of Etons was accomplished, we did not want to see any further transformations. *Puer manebit,* indeed. And, perhaps, *puella manebit,* too!

Back in the "real" world of today, it is, perhaps, amazing in view of the bizarre clothing worn out of school by the young, that school uniform still survives. At its best, it is something to remind us of happy days.

Editor's Note: I remember that just one gym-slip, frequently let down (and out!) served me for my five years at Grammar School, but wartime clothes-rationing may have been the reason for this. One of our readers, Sylvia Reed, wonders what colour Morcove's uniform was (I always presumed it to be navy-blue) and whether its badge or motto was ever described? By the way, we did have uniform "summer dresses" at school, but rarely seemed to wear these.

****

THE GEM AND I by Terry Jones

I was delighted to read in the Editor's letter in the February issue of "Collectors' Digest" that 1997 will see several features in our magazine about the grand old *Gem* to mark its 90th anniversary. As our Editor pointed out, there is no doubt that the *Magnet* was ahead of the *Gem* in popularity, but that does not alter the fact that St. Jim's has a lot of loyal "old boys".

The *Gem* arrived in my life when I was around ten years old. The *Magnet* didn't arrive until two years later in 1934. An uncle was staying at my home, near Bristol, and one morning he arrived back from his walk with a magazine called the *Gem* and handed it to me. He must have been a very intelligent uncle because he knew what small boys would enjoy reading. Up to then, my parents had supplied me with a regular diet of *Sunshine Stories, Playbox* and *Rainbow.* The penny comics such as *Larks* and *Funny Wonder* I was not allowed to read. They were "too common".

I was enthralled with the *Gem,* which I was allowed to open after it had been inspected by my father to see if it was fit for his offspring to read. I regarded the time he took with grave suspicion. I never did approve of reading my papers "second hand". (I used to moan to my mother "He's folded it over" after years of inspection by my father of my treasured *Gems* and *Magnets.* They all had to be read opened like a hard back book.)

At last I got to read about the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's. I was converted at once. Tiger Tim and the Bruin Boys were expelled the next day.

My next thrill was being presented with a *Schoolboy's Own.* This time it was my mother who gave it to me. I can remember this one well. It was published in July 1933. The title was "St. Jim's in the Soup". It was number 200. How do I know? Because I still have the treasured little book, now nearly sixty-one years old.

So, here I am in 1997 and what do I read for relaxation? The *Gem* to be sure, as well as the old faithful *Magnet.* What is also a delight for me is that I am reading *Gems* I have never read before thanks to that publishing genius, Howard Baker.

I have bought several of the books in cut-price book-shops in Gloucester and Cheltenham for as little as 99p each. Mint copies, not second-hand, which is sad because it means they are just not in great demand.

But for me there will always be a subtle magic, a comfort if you like, to settle down with St. Jim's schoolboys. If I am feeling unwell the very light reading that doesn't need much concentration is a wonderful tonic. The stories were much lighter in content than those in the *Magnet.*

I must not forget to mention the brilliant illustrations by R.J. Macdonald. "Mac" was the *Gem*. Without him it would have been very boring to look at. I always spend time taking in the background as well as the main characters which he made live. Then, when into the stories, I can see them all as the illustrations portray them.

When I mentioned earlier on that the stories were lighter in content than the *Magnet* ones as a rule, that was not always the case. I must bear in mind the Talbot series and the superb Christmas 1936 title "The Ghost of the Ruined Chateau" set in France in a blizzard. With the bonus of Macdonald's excellent cover illustrations I still place these stories among the very best of creepy adventures for the St. Jim's juniors.

Sadly the latter was the last of the eye-catching blue and red *Gems*. The next issue (1557) was a dreadful buff colour with a smaller 36-page format. I wasn't as keen on the *Gem* from that day on. The final tedious, over-long Silverson series really did it. Seventeen stories with same photo were just too much.

Even then it was a sad day for me when the friendly little paper I started to read in 1932 was swallowed up by the pathetic *Triumph* in 1939.

Ten years on, in 1949, I was gazing at the magazines and books at one of London's main railway stations. Suddenly, I came across a book with a red dust-cover and written on it the magic words "Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's". Inside was the information that St. Jim's re-opens!

I could hardly believe my eyes. On that June day I soon parted with the six shillings for the first Mandeville St. Jim's book. Sadly, they didn't last long. But in 1952 the Gold Hawk books launched their St. Jim's series at the rate of two a month.

Alas, another upset. Just twelve of those brilliant little books at one shilling and sixpence each, then they finished. By the way, does any reader know if they were original stories or repeats? I never have been able to find out.

From then on it was a case of reading tatty old *Gems* and *Schoolboy's Owns* until the happy day I discovered the Howard Baker reprints. After many, many years I had *Gems* to read I had never seen before.

My brother and I have often compared the merits of the *Magnet* and the *Gem*. The more powerful *Magnet* didn't always have the lead, we decided. St. Jim's had the two houses, which was a tremendous bonus. What fun there has been with the rags and battles to decide who was "Cock of House".

Then there were the equal starring roles of the two forms, Shell and Fourth, resulting in more rags and adventures. The insults hurled at each other before a good old scrap will always be great light reading. A very strong point too was the fact that the junior cricket and football teams were made up from the Shell and the Fourth. This was a weak link in all Greyfriars stories, having just the Remove to represent the lower school. There were probably better players in the Shell and Fourth!

How flat the St. Jim's saga would be if Blake didn't continually insult poor old "Gussy", and the Shell fellows didn't frog-march Arthur Augustus back to study number six with the plea to "keep their tame lunatic" under control.

What fun when the two houses declared a truce in order to declare war on Gordon Gay & Co. of Rylcombe Grammar. What about those hilarious times when D'Arcy has fallen in love? Yes, we agreed, there is much going for the *Gem* at all times.

When winter arrives and darkness creeps in at an early hour I love to make my way to study number six. It's pax with the New House bounders because a celebration feed is about to take place. Wasn't Greyfriars beaten fair and square, two to one on the footer field? Isn't Fatty Wynn the best cook in the school? Are not his "sosses" a joy to behold and a greater joy to devour? I'm always welcome and, even in my old age, am always one of them.

When summer is here and I'm on the lawn with the *Gem*, it's boating on the River Ryl and I go with them. They let me steer. If I am lucky I shall be joining them for a trip up the Thames for the summer vac.

Oh yes, I'm a great *Magnet* reader but never will I exclude the *Gem* from my reading sessions in these days. It came into my life when I was ten years old and now I have seen seventy-four summers so it has been by my side for sixty-four of them even when I didn't read it regularly. At the moment I am well into yet another Howard Baker *Gem* reprint.

But - it's time for tea in study number ten. Excuse me, dear readers, or I shall be late ...

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A HARDY PERENNIAL

by Alan Pratt

I was 10 years old when I first read "The Sign of the Crooked Arrow".

What excitement! This was something quite different from the Famous Five and the Secret Seven.

The Hardy Boys, Frank and Joe, had their own car, motor bikes and even (wow!) a speedboat. They charged around the United States of America at breakneck speed on the trail of criminals more ruthless than I had encountered in children's fiction. This was the stuff that boys' dreams were made of!

Some 40 years later, having read many other titles in the series (and having re-read "The Sign of the Crooked Arrow") I would be forced to admit that these are not exactly literary classics. They are implausible, improbable and decidedly slangy in construction. But then, why quibble? Despite their obvious shortcomings they are still a jolly good read.

Frank flattened out to make himself as inconspicuous a target as possible

(The Sign of the Crooked Arrow)

The Hardy Boys are around 15 or 16 years old, Frank being older by a year. They live with their parents in Bayport and their father, Fenton Hardy, is an internationally famous private detective. Naturally the boys want to follow in his eminent footsteps and like nothing better than to help dad in his cases or even solve mysteries of their own. This they do with great regularity, often being catapulted straight into an adventure without having to look for it. In one story, whilst on a leisurely drive, they witness gangsters shooting at the lone occupant of a small speedboat. In another they are forced off the road by a maniacal pilot flying his "airplane" at head height. In yet another adventure, they are on the spot as a mysterious aircraft drops bundles of counterfeit currency into Barmet Bay.

From these exciting opening sequences, the lads are propelled from one peril to another, facing danger at every turn. Houses fall on them, they are caught in floods, fires and landslides but they emerge dusty but otherwise unscathed. The criminals are always brought to book and the Hardy Boys receive chunky monetary rewards. Fisher T. Fish would have been proud of them!

There is also a full cast of supporting characters. Frank and Joe have a number of school friends, notably Chet Morton, the ubiquitous "fat boy", Tony Prito and Biff Hooper. There are also a couple of girls, Callie and Lola, who are sweet on Frank and Joe, but, these being children's stories, the lads are far too keen on mystery-solving to find time for romance. The local police, represented by Chief Collig, Detective Smuff and Patrolman Con Riley, are generally "baffled" and somewhat in awe of the quick thinking Hardy boys and their famous father.

The boys made their way cautiously to the boathouse.

(*The Secret Panel*)

Mrs Hardy is kind and indulgent (and, frankly, somewhat idiotic when viewed from adult eyes) and Aunt Gertrude who comes to live with the family as the series progresses is peppery and dogmatic and provides comic relief.

Viewed critically it must be said that characterisation is generally poor and the yarns often hang together on a series of unlikely coincidences. But, in truth, such comments are largely irrelevant. What matters is that the boys act out just about every childhood fantasy, and everything happens much too fast to allow even a tinge of boredom to set in.

The first volume in the series, "The Tower Treasure", was published by Grosset & Dunlap in the United states in the 1920s. Further titles followed at regular intervals but it was not until the early fifties that British editions became available from Harold Hill, a small Tyneside publisher. All titles are attributed to Franklin W. Dixon but it is now known that no such gentleman existed. Books were, in fact, written by a number of writers employed by one Edward Stratemeyer who allegedly came up with the early storylines. New stories continued to appear under the Dixon by-line and from the 60s onwards the early titles were re-written in an up-dated and "sanitised" form, removing amongst other things occasional references to the boys carrying firearms, and some somewhat crude racial stereotypes.

It has to be said, however, that, worthy as the publishers' intentions may have been, the degree of re-writing did much to destroy the simple charm of the earlier adventures, and hobbyists are urged to hunt out the original texts in hardback form. These still turn up at reasonable prices and with such evocative titles as "The Secret of the Lost Tunnel", "The

House on the Cliff", "The Wailing Siren Mystery" and "What Happened at Midnight". I still experience a strange, vicarious thrill when I come upon a previously undiscovered volume.

Incidentally, my wife, Jacqui, feels the same when she locates a new Nancy Drew mystery - Nancy was the female counterpart to the Hardy Boys, another series character to emanate from the Stratemeyer syndicate. But that must be the subject of a further article.

Editor's Note: One or two English readers have asked me whether the American teenage Nancy Drew or our own home-grown Valerie Drew came first upon the female sleuthing scene. I think Nancy must claim precedence. Apparently Edward Stratemeyer drafted the first three of her adventures shortly before he died in 1930. It is intriguing that the title of the first story to feature her, "The Secret of the Old Clock", (1929), is echoed in Valerie's first exploit, "That Amazing Room of Clocks", which appeared in *Schoolgirls' Weekly* on 7th January 1933 (number 542). Valerie was, of course, created by "Adelie Ascott", better known to Sexton Blake fans as John W. Bobin. One feels that Bobin must have come across American Nancy, though in fairness it must be said that he had created a teenage girl-detective for the *Schoolgirls' Weekly* long before either of the Drew girls came to fictional life. His Sylvia Silence began her run in 1922, and his Lila Lisle followed in the 1930 *Schoolgirls' Own.*

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IN DANGER AT ST. FRANK'S by Ray Hopkins

Part 1

Nelson Lee and Nipper, fleeing from the unwelcome attentions of the Fu Chang Tong, find themselves with new identities at St. Frank's College. Nelson Lee becomes Mr. Alvington, the new Housemaster of the Ancient House while Nipper assumes the name of Richard Bennett (later Hamilton), a member of the Ancient House and assigned to Study C. The previous Housemaster, a Mr. Thorne, had mysteriously disappeared but Nelson Lee succeeded in finding him, he having been held a prisoner in a cave at Caistowe Bay without food and water, said experience having affected his memory so that, when found, all he could do was utter the name "Justin Farman". This is a reporting of events in *Nelson Lee Library*, Old Series 114, 11 Aug 1917, "The Boy from California".

Justin Farman is the name of a new Junior from California. His father is a railroad millionaire who also owns a large ranch in Arizona. When Nipper meets him at Bellton Station he is not of the "cat's whiskers/bees' knees" fraternity in his style of speech. "Well, hang it all, you talk English as though you'd been born here", says Nipper. "The fellows are expecting you to talk like a Western cowboy". He is consequently startled when Farman immediately relapses into a more colloquial type of speech. "Waal, say, that's jest bully. I'll allow English is a heap fine language. Guess it's sure the best language ever. But if I was to stay around this allfired school and trot up refined English, I guess I'd choke. Yep, sure, you've relieved me some." He goes on to say that he will be able to talk "high-falutin' English whenever it's necessary".

Fullwood, dolled up in all his finery, including glittering waistcoat and obligatory monocle to show how frightfully uppah-class he is, immediately insults Farman upon his first meeting by calling him "a dirty cowboy", but is forced to make a quick 'right about' when Farman produces a wallet stuffed with banknotes and asks if he can help anyone with any cash. If the new boy has lots of money Fullwood can relieve him of it by cheating at cards, then he will be prepared to think Farman is O.K. - if only for fleecing! He apologises to Farman and invites him to his study for a game of draw poker. Farman is too easy-going and good-natured to refuse. Nipper rescues him but Fullwood counter-attacks by inviting the new boy to a night jaunt to the White Harp for a spot of billiards and cards and other jollities indulged in by the knuts. Farman is too amiable to say no and doesn't realise that going out of bounds at night is strictly forbidden at St. Frank's.

Nipper overhears Fullwood, Gulliver and Bell plotting, and decides to watch in case they talk the easy-going new boy into accompanying them. Nipper, Watson, Tregellis-West and Handforth discover Farman is missing from his bed and hasten in hot pursuit. A call for help from the lane leading to the White Harp leads them to Fullwood who says that they were attacked by two men who made off with the new boy.

Fullwood and Co. run off through the bushes when Mr. Alvington is spotted coming down the lane from Bellton, so only Nipper and Co. are there to explain to the Housemaster the reason for their being out of their dormitory. Nelson Lee, like Nipper, believes there must be some connection between this kidnapping and the previous one, and requests the boys to accompany him as he follows the trail left by the two men carrying the bound junior through the bushes and into the wood. In sight of the old ruined mill on Bannington Moor, they observe a car parked beside it and are just in time to see a bound figure being forced into the car by two men. Nelson Lee runs forward and intercepts the bigger of the two men, who has an American accent, and manages to knock the man's revolver out of his hand. Nipper is startled to see that the other man is a Chinaman, and fears he may be a member of the avenging Fu Chang Tong, in pursuit of them both. Both men are agile enough to escape the clutches of the St. Frank's party and speed off in the car.

Farman, strangely quiet when released from his bonds, tells Nelson Lee he prefers not to speak about it when pressed by the Housemaster to say if he knows the identity of the two men. Farman refuses to say why he was kidnapped and why he will not talk about the incident. A mystery is presented to the reader here but is not cleared up in this story. Confusingly, these early stories are interspersed with complete detective tales about other subjects.

The two mysterious men - the American and the Chinaman - turn up again in the next episode in the Justin B. Series which appears in No. 116, 28 Aug 1917, "Fullwood's Victory", when they come upon him unluckily alone in Bellton Wood while his study chums, Owen Major and Canham, sheer off chasing a butterfly, a wildlife species in which Farman has no interest whatever. The two men club the American junior but, before they can pick him up and disappear among the trees, they are startled by the sound of a motor car approaching along the lane whose occupants would be likely to observe two men carrying an unconscious boy. They drop Farman and, by the time the car arrives, the occupants, who are Fullwood and Co., see Justin B. lying with a bleeding wound on his head. To their amazement, standing over the fallen junior is the figure of Nipper with the club in his hand which is obviously the instrument that dealt the blow!

A strange set of circumstances has caused this tableau to be set before the blackguards of the Ancient House Remove. Farman had been seen coming down from the dormitory closing his pocket-knife which he intended to take with him on the trip to Bellton Wood. While his study chums chased butterflies he intends to do a little whittling to pass the time. No sooner had Farman and Co. departed than Teddy Long came down from the dormitory holding out his Eton jacket which had been cut into shreds. Long said Farman had done

this in revenge for what had occurred that morning in class, when Mr. Crowell had accused Long of talking and Long had said it was Farman, for which Mr. Crowell awarded the American junior one hundred lines. Actually, Fullwood had given Teddy Long a pound to cut up his jacket and accuse Farman of the dirty trick. This was, in fact, Fullwood's revenge on Farman's turning down his offer of tea, ciggies and cards in his study. "Study A [Fullwood's study] ain't the place for a decent feller", says Justin B.

Nipper had seen Farman handling his pocket-knife as he left the dormitory, and Long avers that he actually saw the boy from California damaging his jacket. Nipper likes Farman, has observed that he appears to be "good-tempered and decent". However, he wonders if his real character may be of a darker hue than he has so far shown; Nipper feels it hardly likely that Long would ruin his own jacket and, not knowing of the sly pound that has changed hands, chases out after Farman saying he's going to give him a good thrashing. Totally unlike his usual fairplay self, Nipper is not thinking of hearing what Justin B. Has to say before administering a good hiding.

From a high point further down the lane he sees Owen Major and Canham race off into the wood, sees Farman sit down and begin to whittle and the two men jump out of the bushes and bludgeon him to the ground. By the time Nipper appears at the scene the two men have disappeared. For a reason he cannot give later, Nipper picks up the cudgel and is looking at it when Fullwood and Co. jump out of the car and accuse him of the deed, having heard Nipper state that he was going to find Farman and punish him for wanton damage. Owen Major and Canham reappear and join in the accusations. None of them believes Nipper's explanation that two men did the deed.

He isn't too worried about the misapprehension at his suspicious stance over the fallen junior. Nipper knows that when Farman regains consciousness he will exonerate him and also confirm that his attackers were two men. Farman, in fact, recovers quickly from the blow, though the Doctor wants him to spend a few days in the school hospital in case of belated concussion. However, when Nelson Lee taxes him with the fact that the two men must be the same two who tried to kidnap him previously, the boy will not confirm this, especially when Nelson Lee presses him by saying they must be traced and arrested. The schoolmaster detective refers to them as his enemies who must be sent to prison. Farman says the men are not enemies of his! Nelson Lee is thunderstruck.

Despite Justin B's iteration that Nipper is his friend and most certainly did not attack him, most of the Remove choose to believe that he did and, despite the fact that he is exonerated publicly in front of the whole school by Dr. Stafford himself, he is sent to Coventry after a form trial and only his two close chums, Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson, stand by him to share the silence accorded by the rest of the Remove.

(To Be Concluded)

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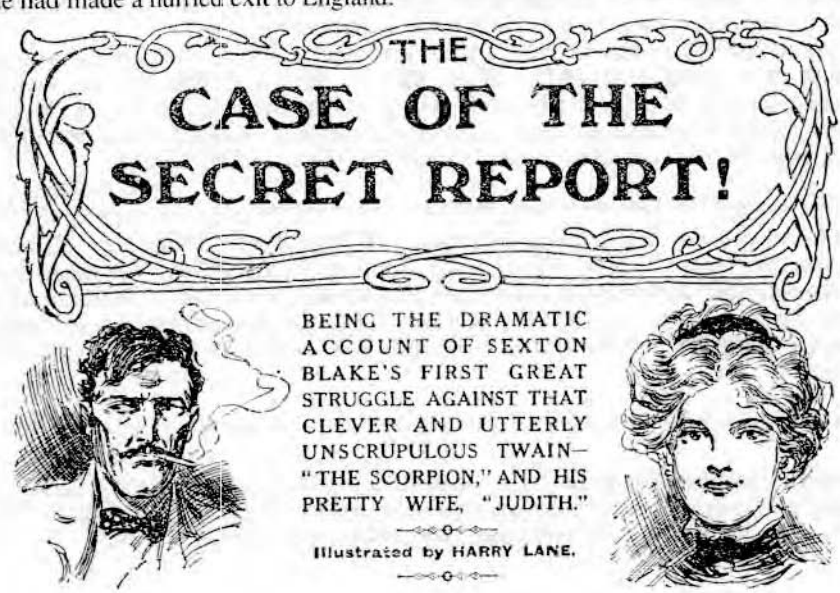
THE STATE SECRET AFFAIR by Reg Hardinge

(UJ No. 517, September 6th 1913. The Case of the Secret Report by John William Staniforth, illustrated by Harry Lane.)

The Outrams were the new tenants of Cliff Cottage near Tranmire Castle in Kent. Outram, who called himself an artist, was young, slightly-built, wiry, with a dark, sallow complexion and high cheek bones, and with eyes, hair and moustache of deepest black. His wife, Judith, unmistakably English, was wonderfully pretty, with her baby face and innocent blue eyes. This charming couple were two of the most notorious criminals in Europe. Outram's real name was Charles Major and he was from Gibraltar. Natives of Gibraltar have been nicknamed "rock scorpions", and that, precisely, was why Major's sobriquet in criminal circles was "the scorpion". A man of great ability, fluent in at least ten languages, and a master of disguise; cunning, clever, daring and resourceful, he knew not the stress of fear and panic. Judith was as crafty and unscrupulous as her husband, and indeed many of their coups had been planned by her and carried out with her assistance. Warrants for their arrest were out in every capital of Europe for burglary, forgery and blackmail. Their latest exploit, the running of a gambling den in Paris, had ended with the Scorpion being caught cheating at cards, shots being fired, and one of the players being mortally wounded. The couple had made a hurried exit to England.



It was when Lord Warrington, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was on a brief holiday staying with the owner of Tranmire Castle that the Scorpion learned of the state secret that could earn him a fortune. A visit by the master crook to the castle (for the purpose of assessing the possibility of a successful burglary) took him to a door, slightly ajar, which led into a room from which the voices of the Minister and his host could be heard conferring. As he eavesdropped outside he overheard how a report to the effect that England's military and naval defences were in extremely poor shape had been completed, and was on its way down to the castle from London by special messenger for Lord Warrington's signature. If the Scorpion could lay his hands on the document, a hostile country, say Germany, would pay a million pounds for the information.

Back at the cottage, the Scorpion proceeded to contemplate his next move. To stimulate their faculties when tackling a stiff problem, some use tobacco, or music, while others use drugs. The Scorpion had his mandolin, his constant companion, whose rhythmic and tinny sound sharpened his wits. Having filled and lighted his pipe, he sank into a basket chair, and started to play, using his plectrum.

The Scorpion's method of thinking out and perfecting his schemes.

Once his plan was formulated, the Scorpion acted swiftly and efficiently. The car conveying the courier to the castle was successfully ambushed, the driver and messenger attacked, and the document was secured.

Blake, Tinker and Pedro were in their car in the vicinity of Dover, having concluded a case which would be listed in the index as "The Clue of the Crooked Sixpence". They were soon involved in the state secret affair when they came across the injured messenger and chauffeur and took them to the castle. There Blake learned the full details behind the audacious theft, from Lord Warrington, who asked him to track down and recover the document from Outram who was suspected of being the culprit.

Disguised as a groom, Blake visited Cliff Cottage to gather information. He talked to Mrs Outram, and as he was leaving he was attacked by the Scorpion who was lurking by a bush near the gate, and pushed into a disused well. The couple then attached a length of hosepipe to a water tank, and used it to fill the well with water. As the level started rising Blake was forced to tread water for almost two hours, to survive. With his strength almost spent, he was rescued by Tinker.

The Scorpion and Judith had gone and were heading back to the Continent. Blake and Tinker picked up their trail, which led them to the Frankfurter Hof Hotel in Berlin. There they overheard the Scorpion making a phone call to General Von Reimer who agreed to come to the hotel to meet him. While Tinker met the General outside the hotel and kept him occupied, Blake, disguised as Von Reimer, went up to meet the Scorpion in his sitting room, snatched the vital document which was on the table, and made off with it. Then he and Tinker drove away in a car, successfully eluding their pursuers, eventually getting back to England unscathed.

All these heroes had similar traits - expensive wardrobes, glittering cars, impeccable upper-class English, menservants, elegant apartments, monocles, a languid air, and glamorous girlfriends, occasionally transmogrified into wives, not always successfully (*vide* Wimsey's wife compared with Marlowe's!)

Several of them were natural subjects for the collectable magazines. The *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* started in the autumn of 1941, the annual *The Queen's Awards* became the *Mystery Annuals* from 1958 to 1961, with a plethora of anthologies edited annually, as with many other volumes, by the Queen duo.

The Toff first appeared in *The Thriller* magazine in 1933, his first book *Introducing The Toff* came out in 1938.

Blackshirt, the gentleman cracksman later on the side of law and order, appeared in eight magazine short stories which together became his first title *Blackshirt* in 1925.

The Saint's first novel was *Meet The Tiger* in 1928, and in the spring of 1953 appeared *The Saint Detective Magazine*, then *The Saint Mystery Magazine*, finally *The Saint Magazine*, till 1967; Charteris was consultant to *The New Saint Magazine* from 1984 to 1985. He also edited several Saint anthologies.

Philo Vance has appeared in magazines in a serial in *The American Magazine*, later published as a novel in 1929, titled *The Bishop Murder Case*.

Berkeley Gray was, of course, Edwy Searles Brooks, a celebrated author in the Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake series. Norman Conquest, *aka* "1066", was the hero of fifty novels from 1938 and "swashbuckling" isn't a charismatic enough term for him, as he, in the Saint's phraseology "smote the ungodly". One example, I think in *Detective Weekly*:- an armour-clad two-gun Steve the Croat shouting "Make the hok-kays" is faced by 1066 on a chandelier swinging down on him, despite one bullet hitting the heel of his shoe, to flatten him. I recall a similar incident in one of the French OSS 117 films, *Furia in Bahia pour OSS 117*, in an operating theatre on the top floor of a skyscraper, when 117 leaps on the overhead light and uses the operating table as a battering ram to send a villain through the window!

Patricia Craig makes a pertinent comment in her Introduction to *The Oxford Book of English Detective Stories*. "The frivolity and affectation of the 1920s man-about-town detective (not unpleasing, especially in retrospect) gave way to a different kind of urbanity - with a literary flavour *pace* Blake and Innes". Let's conclude with a toff who first appeared at the end of the Golden Age and never in magazines, Elizabeth Daly's Henry Gamadge, well-educated, well-dressed well-spoken bibliophile and amateur sleuth - "make the hok-kays" for the Toffs versus the Ungodly - as the actress said to the bishop.

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CHARLES HAMILTON THE MAN: INFLUENCES ON HIM - AND HIS INFLUENCE ON OTHERS

by Una Hamilton Wright

I Influences on Charles Hamilton

First of all I'm going to deal with the influences <u>on</u> my uncle. Frank Richards the man was very much the product of these influences. Then we shall see what kind of a man these produced, and finally have a look at <u>his</u> influence on other people, notably his readers - including John Major!

As Frank Richards the man was really Charles Hamilton, I am going to allude to him by his own name. Charles Harold St. John Hamilton was born on 8th August 1876 in Ealing, West London, the sixth child in a family of eight. He was the fourth son, there followed one more son and finally a third daughter, my mother, christened Una but always known as Dolly. Charles had a brother immediately above and below him, so he knew all about sibling competition.

The first major influence on my uncle was religion - both his parents were from deeply religious families and his upbringing was strictly moral. When Charles was three one of his

The document was handed over to Lord Warrington who expressed his deep gratitude to Blake and Tinker for being the saviours of Great Britain and the Empire. The Foreign Secretary wondered whether Blake and the Scorpion would meet again.

Indeed they did - three more times at least - as the author, Dr John William Staniforth, wrote seven tales for the *Union Jack* between 1913 and 1914. But Staniforth's main contributions to schoolboy literature were his creations of Nelson Lee and Nipper, writing under the pseudonym of Maxwell Scott. Nelson Lee was first introduced in the *Marvel* in 1894, and further exploits followed in the *Union Jack, Big Budget, Boys' Friend, Boys' Realm, Boys' Herald* and the *Nelson Lee Library*. Later, of course, Edwy Searles Brooks adopted Nelson Lee and Nipper, transporting them to St. Frank's.

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THE TOFFS V. THE UNGODLY by John Kennedy Melling

There was such an antipathy against the newly-formed 19th century police forces that the inquest on the first policemen killed on duty was recorded as "justifiable homicide". The Druscovitch bribes scandal involving several senior Scotland Yard detectives exacerbated this feeling, so the first 'teckers featured non-police, amateur, non-professional or privately-commissioned.

A natural sequel when the Golden Age started around 1920 was the aristocratic sleuth in what the Americans dubbed the "silly-assery" era. In chronological order their names are:

Dr. Reggie Fortune	created by	H.C. Bailey	1919
Lord Peter Wimsey	"	Dorothy L Sayers	1923
Blackshirt	"	Bruce Graeme	1925
Roger Sheringham	"	Anthony Berkeley	1925
Philo Vance	"	S.S. Van Dine	1926
The Saint	"	Leslie Charteris	1928
Ellery Queen	"	Ellery Queen	1929
Albert Campion	"	Margery Allingham	1929
The Toff	"	John Creasey	1933
Norman Conquest	"	Berkeley Gray	1938

This list spans the entire Golden Age. What or who was the original? Baroness Orczy's languid master of disguise, aristo Sir Percy Blakeney, Bart., appeared in a play in 1905, Edgar Wallace created a similar hero in *X Esquire* in 1908. Wimsey's antecedants point to the Hon. A.A. D'Arcy of St. Jim's and the famous Editor of the series. Lt-Col. N.T.P. Murphy in *In Search of Blandings* pinpoints actor George Grossmith as the original of Bertie Wooster, the man-about-town. This leads on to the monocled actor Ralph Lynn, hero of Ben Travers' Aldwych farces, and Lynn played the lead in P.G. Wodehouse's 1929 novel filmed in England, *Summer Lightning*.

Bulldog Drummond had a silly ass sidekick in Algy Longworth.

elder brothers died at the age of nine and his father's religion gave way to atheism - the second influence on Charles. His father was a bookseller and journalist and he began to write for the Freethinker. He was also a reclaimed drunkard who had lapsed and succumbed again to the bottle to drown his sorrows. The paternal drunkenness and the poverty it engendered became the third influence on Charles' life. When Charles was seven his father died of T.B., hastened on by his drinking. A year earlier a schoolfriend had confided to Charles that his father had died. Charles replied, to his friend's astonishment, "I wish mine had."

There were, however, good influences on Charles' childhood. When it was not being ravaged by his father's drunken tempers his family background was cultured and intellectual. His father was something of a scholar and read Latin and Greek and had high moral principles. Charles' mother's family was sociable, cheerful, generous and numerous. His one bachelor uncle, Steven, on this side, was kindness itself to the Hamilton children and the mainstay of the family after their father died. It is easy to see why father-son relationships are rarely satisfying in Charles Hamilton's writing whereas uncle-nephew ones are always happy. Drinking he treated as a vice.

Money was short for the whole of Charles' childhood and entertainment had to be home-made. All the children read voraciously. My mother, Dolly, had eye-trouble and could not read as much as the others, so Charles used to read to her and make up stories for her about farms in Canada and furnish them with the people and animals that she demanded. Thus he learned how to describe scenes - excellent training for a writer!

His early reading included Scott's novels and poems, Thackeray, Dickens, Marryatt, Charles Reade, Lewis Carroll, Charles Kingsley, Fenimore Cooper, Macaulay and many others. He made himself familiar with Byron's and Tennyson's poetry and at the age of eleven he learned the whole of Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* by heart when he was kept in bed by a childhood illness.

Charles attended an assortment of schools, mostly church-run, changing whenever his family moved house. His education did not influence him much; he loathed his schoolmasters but loved the subjects taught, except for Mathematics. He loved literature, history and languages and in his teens a neighbouring spinster befriended him, taught him Italian and polished up his Latin which they happily read together.

Charles cut his literary teeth as a reporter on the Ealing local paper, which his uncle Steven owned. He and his elder brother Dick, taller and more handsome than Charles but not as intellectual, worked together as young newshounds. Meanwhile Charles was writing stories in his spare time and, when seventeen, was persuaded by his elder brother Alex to send one up to a boys' paper. Charles did so, and the story was immediately accepted - and he was invited to send as many more as he could. Thus Charles was launched on his career.

Dolly studied singing at the Royal Academy of Music and started to go abroad for holidays with student friends. Eventually she persuaded her shy brother to come with her to Paris, and from this one tentative trip Charles never looked back. He entirely succumbed to the influence of the Continent and preferred its informal ways to the formalities of England and would have liked to live there permanently. But he had to keep a pied à terre in this country to stay in touch with publishers.

From this amalgam of mostly homely influences sprang the boys' author who was to be more prolific than any other British writer, who wrote the equivalent of 1,000 novels; while at his peak, 150,000 words a week regularly thundered from his typewriter.

II Charles Hamilton the Man

One of Charles' nicknames at home was 'Charlie the Peacemaker'. The rows and tempers caused by his father and the squabbles among his siblings made him value peace at any price. He soothed irate brothers and ruffled sisters with a diplomat's skill. He was a

loner who nevertheless enjoyed socialising if other people organised it. He felt himself overshadowed by his charming and entertaining brother Dick. He was very shy and sensitive, and his feelings were easily hurt. When I was a child he impressed on me how one must never hurt other people's feelings, even though one suffered in consequence.

There are so many adjectives that describe Charles Hamilton the Man, he had so many facets. He was meek, kind, gentle, generous, thoughtful, humorous and witty, with a bitter irony, protective, organising, and above all hardworking and disciplined. Small of stature, but broad and muscular, his sensitivity about his lack of height (5'6") induced a certain competitiveness in his nature. He would demonstrate to his handsome 6ft. Brother Dick (and to the memory of his handsome 6ft. Father) that he could make his mark not by looks but by reaching the top of his profession and staying there for 54 years. He thus became somewhat dogmatic on all matters literary and grew to laying down the law on other subjects as well. He could reduce any topic to ashes with his blistering humour. But generosity was his dominant quality - I can remember him keeping little piles of halfcrowns ready to give as a tip to anyone who seemed deserving.

Charles got on very well with women of all ages and would as soon take the mother of one of Dolly's friends to the theatre as take the friend herself! He nearly proposed to Dolly's best friend, Grace Hancock, at Covent Garden, but he got cold feet and didn't. He admitted to Dolly that he was afraid of the responsibility. He wondered how any serious-minded man could commit himself to keeping a woman in the condition to which she was accustomed, seeing how unpredictable life was - no doubt thinking of his father who had let down his mother so grievously. He did not want to let a woman down in like manner. He took over the responsibility for his mother and removed her financial worries during her later years. He seemed to search for responsibility, and at one stage wanted to adopt his sister Dolly, but his mother would not allow it. Many years later he wanted to adopt me, but similarly my parents would not agree.

Charles preferred women to men: he had a female doctor, and a female literary agent. He was friendly, brotherly, avuncular, but no lover. He loved children, particularly lame ducklings, and made a fuss of other little nieces before I arrived on the scene, late in his life. Always little girls (he left a trail of them around Europe and in Kent and Buckinghamshire) who retained fond memories of him. He shunned meeting men of his own generation except in a formal context, such as when employing a builder or gardener, and he was kind to elderly men, who, I suppose, offered no competition.

After his mother died in 1913 he <u>did</u> get engaged on the rebound to the niece of an English hotel-keeper in the south of France. He immediately regretted it, foreseeing intrusions into his writing life. He realised he needed to be a loner with no legal ties. He begged the very proper young lady to elope with him, and, as he anticipated, she refused, which let him off the hook with a fairly clear conscience. He wanted her to keep the ring, which she refused to do, and so he gave it to Dolly, saying he would have no further use for it.

Having first sampled the Continent in the early 1900s Charles had developed a taste for travel. Fluent in French, German and Italian, he toured Europe extensively and settled in Paris, Nice, Vevey and Como for long periods. In England he made his headquarters with sister Dolly, sharing a flat with her in Hampstead until she married. He also owned a bungalow on Canvey Island near his brother Alex, father of one of the special nieces. He had meant to settle on the Continent after Dolly married, but the First World War intervened and he had to rush home across Europe from Austria along with Mickie, his dog, and his sister and brother-in-law who had joined him for a holiday. He settled temporarily in Hawkinge, a little village near Folkestone, because it was within reach of the quarantine centre where Mickie, on eventual arrival in England, would have to stay, and Charles wanted to be near enough to visit him daily. Charles developed a liking for property and

bought a little cottage in the centre of Hawkinge called 'Clyde Cottage' which still stands but has sadly been altered beyond recognition. He acquired a property in Hampstead Garden Suburb down the road from his sister and her husband, so that they could all continue together for the duration of the war, and he had a cottage near Aylesbury as a retreat during the monthly Zeppelin raids. Later he built a bungalow in an orchard near Hawkinge and called it 'Appletrees', meanwhile buying his main house, 'Rose Lawn', in Kingsgate, near North Foreland, Kent.

After the First World War Charles made his London home with Dolly and her husband in Golders Green, spending more than half the year there.

As a result of the War Charles had become a recluse, seeing no one but family. He longed to go back to his pre-war life of travel but felt that he was no longer capable of it. He bought a villa in Wimereux, near Boulogne, but sold it after a few holidays - his housekeeper did not like France. I can still see the wistful look in his eyes when the furniture from the French villa arrived at Rose Lawn. A chapter of his life had ended. Charles Hamilton the Traveller had had to become an Armchair Traveller and the famous travel series of the twenties and thirties were the result.

III Charles Hamilton's Influence

Charles Hamilton's influence on his child readers was immense and longlasting. He was more than ten years into his writing life when he was asked to contribute the main story - about a school - for a new paper, the *Gem*, in 1907. A year later the *Magnet* followed and Greyfriars, the most famous of all fictional schools, was launched. This paper lasted until May 1940 when the wartime paper shortage forced it to close. Greyfriars reappeared in *Bunter Book* form in 1947 and continued until its author died in 1961, and beyond. The *Bunter Books* have recently been reprinted, so Charles Hamilton's influence has lasted 90 years and has not finished yet.

His influence was for good, for morality - the good boys always won and the baddies were ultimately ridiculed and worsted. The attractive personalities, with one or two exceptions, belonged to the good, dependable boys. His themes all exemplified strength of character - boys were wrongly accused of youthful misdeeds but were compelled by their code not to tell tales to establish their innocence. The emphasis was on doing the right thing just because it was right. All the virtues which make people get on with one another were featured - truthfulness, honesty, dependability, responsibility, cheerfulness and a willingness to 'Grin and bear it'. Smut and sex were omitted, being judged unsuitable. The pill was coated with the jam of humour and adventure and the interplay of characters. A boy could always find a character with whom he could identify. Proof that Charles Hamilton's influence was strong and resilient lies in the fact that his work sold so much better than that of his competitors. If his message and influence had been rejected by his young readers his work would not have sold in such vast quantities and for so long. George Orwell came under his spell although he had attacked boys' writers and Frank Richards in particular, for being high-principled and moral, and therefore unrealistic. Orwell nevertheless had to concede in his article in *Horizon* in 1940, just before the *Magnet* finished, that Billy Bunter was a genuinely original, entertaining and 'first-class' character. After the Second World War further generations of children came under Charles Hamilton's spell.

Within his close-knit family, Charles' influence was varied. Dolly idolised him, but some of his brothers and sisters found his intellectualism irritating while others were jealous of his success. Dolly's husband - my father - a musician, very much admired his brother-in-law and they got on extremely well, being on the same wavelength - Charles was very fond of music, especially opera. To Dolly's friends he was her "wonderful brother", always so kind. To anyone who worked for him he was "kind Mr. Hamilton". To his publishers he

was not only their principal moneyspinner but a dependable author whose copy arrived immaculate and on time.

To me, the last of his little nieces, he was my "kind uncle", and to me the word 'uncle' meant 'Uncle Charley'. He was the person I could always turn to for help. He loved children and got down to their level. My schoolfriends used to ask me if my uncle was coming when I gave out party invitations. They, too, came under his spell. I spent a lot of time with him in my formative years and I learned from him that education was something to be sought and prized. He introduced me to many interests, teaching me to cycle and to sail a boat. Manners and morals were dwelt on, and an interest in the arts encouraged. His conversation bristled with literary quotations and phrases in French, German and Italian, kindling my interest. He urged me to travel and I have enjoyed visiting his old haunts in Europe. However one attempt to influence me failed: I could never share his love of Latin. Although I was interested in Roman history and culture I found the language painfully difficult and hated it as much as he hated mathematics. I have so many happy memories of him, particularly of his making up bed-time stories for me about Silverwings the Fairy in the Great Green Forest, and, when I was older, his writing plays for me and my friends to perform in his lounge at Rose Lawn - converted into a mini theatre.

His influence has lasted nine decades and seems likely to make its century, at least. He has given the character of Billy Bunter to English literature, enthralling children of every age and many generations.

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GUSSY, THE 'MASHER' by Peter Mahony

'Affaires d'Amour' were an occasional feature of Charles Hamilton's writings. There was the Harry Wharton/Marjorie Hazeldene/Bob Cherry triangle in the *Magnet* which cropped up from time to time. Wingate, the Greyfriars skipper, took a shine to Rosie Locke (the Head's daughter) and, later, to an actress or two. Coker was keen on his cousin, Amy, and afterwards on Phyllis Howell of Cliff House (though Phyllis was not a Hamilton creation). Bunter fancied Cora Quelch; Smithy hankered for Marjorie (as did several others); and the tragic Arthur Courtney endured a good deal of pain on account of Violet Valence. Lord Mauleverer once stirred his stumps sufficiently to pay court to the young lady at the Bunshop; while the devious Harold Skinner managed to embroil Mr Quelch with Miss Penelope Primrose, the Headmistress of Cliff House.

Some of these stories provided a good deal of fun - particularly the Quelch/Primrose affair - but the others, especially when dealing with 'first love', were, frankly, a bit 'twee'. And it does seem that Hamilton/Richards missed a trick by not involving tomboy Clara Trevlyn with one of the Greyfriars lads. A 'relationship' with Miss Clara would have been light-hearted, straightforward and robust - a real 'no-nonsense' affair.

In the *Gem*, Hamilton/Martin Clifford adopted a different approach to 'love'. George Darrell, the prefect, pursued an opera-singer; Mr Ratcliff made advances to Edith Glyn; Reginald Talbot and Marie Rivers had a 'thing' going at a deeper level than any of the Greyfriars friendships; and the George Figgins/Ethel Cleveland romance was a recurring feature of the Saints' stories.

Altogether, Clifford/Hamilton developed his 'love interest' yarns to a greater depth than Richards/Hamilton did. Indeed, Tom Merry's refusal to listen to the blandishments of Marie Rivers (the second 'toff' series), or to be daunted by Ethel Cleveland's show of temper (the 'Stolen Tenner' affair) displayed a more 'adult' approach to the fair sex and its foibles than anything in the Greyfriars canon.

A natural development of this adult approach was the introduction of a 'Don Juan' type into the stories. Most authors would have gone for a *roué* - Gerald Cutts of the Fifth would have been an admirable choice; but Clifford knew a trick worth several of that. His

'Gay Lothario' was that arbiter of taste and decency - the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. With Gussy 'on the go' the ladies would not suffer from betrayals or philandering - but they would get some heavy doses of embarrassment. (Perhaps Clifford thought it would "do 'em good"!)

The trouble with Gussy was that he was 'susceptible'. So, initially, were some of the ladies. Gussy's outward appearance was undoubtedly appealing. His peers may have thought him a 'fop' or a 'dandy', but the girls rarely failed to be impressed by his snappy dressing. In addition, his manner was poised and confident - the result of a noble upbringing. Though his monocle and lisp were, perhaps, drawbacks, his polished urbanity and considerate politeness were definite 'plus' points. Tom Merry, Blake & Co. were obviously cheerful schoolboys, but Gussy, who sported few items of school uniform, looked like a 'young man about town'. His obvious affluence was another advantage - a girl 'dated' by him could look forward to some lavish spending.

Neither was Gussy lacking in the 'gift of the gab'. Boys like Figgins tended to be tongue-tied in female company, but not the Honourable Arthur Augustus. Much of what he had to say was little more than inane burbling, but the girls would prefer that to inarticulate blushing. All in all, Gussy had quite a lot going for him in his pursuit of the fair sex.

Yet, despite these advantages, Gussy's affairs all foundered dismally. The chief reasons were his innate foolishness and his sublime over-confidence. Most of the objects of his affection were older (in the context of his 'teen' years, considerably older) girls. They may have been initially deceived by his mature appearance and then, having found that he was a 'nice boy', been tolerantly amused by his attentions. Once they found he was serious, their attitude quickly changed - and Gussy was 'turned down' with humiliating regularity. (Even if he had been the right age, I suspect that most of them would have found his 'put them on a pedestal' trait too much to take.)

Over the years, Gussy tried his luck with more than a dozen girls. Fortunately, they were all decent ladies, irrespective of their origins and backgrounds. What he would have done if a 'gold-digger' had got her claws into him is difficult to assess. Exit running, perhaps? (Martin Clifford may well have missed a trick here. Imagine Lord Eastwood's face if his hopeful son had been sued for breach of promise!)

Now let's examine a few of Gussy's more involved 'affairs'. He certainly played the field! There were Ethel Courtney, Edith Lightfoot, Constantia Potts, Clara O'Neil, Dorothy Fane, and Clotilde (of the circus). His patient cousin, Ethel Cleveland, was another of his soft spots and there were occasional 'passing fancies' like the baker's daughter, Dick Brook's sister, and even a housemaid or two. Whatever else he was, Gussy was no snob! A 'pretty gal' was a 'lady', worthy of admiration and respect. Indeed, his '*noblesse oblige*' extended to all females, of whatever age. Mrs. Mimms, Dame Taggles, Mrs. Holmes, Priscilla Fawcett etc. etc., all considered Gussy a perfect little gentleman.

Nevertheless, Arthur Augustus caused a number of embarrassing situations. He was the chief sufferer, but the 'gals' did not escape unscathed. Early in the *Gem* saga (No. 36 'D'Arcy's Romance'), Ethel Courtney, Dr. Holmes' niece, visited St. Jim's. Ethel (how often did this name come up in Hamilton's canon!) had flaxen hair, blue eyes, a sweet smile and a fiancé. Gussy, unaware of this last fact, was hopelessly smitten. Setting off, unasked, to meet her at Rylcombe Station, he fell foul of Pilcher & Co. and ended up in a ditch. Ethel arrived in the school 'trap' and rescued the dilapidated swain. To her, he was just a muddy schoolboy; to Gussy, the incident was an utter humiliation.

To establish his standing as a wooer, Gussy broke bounds to buy Ethel a bouquet. Figgins & Co. raided the parcel - Fatty Wynn thought it was tuck - but restored it to its owner, with a deal of ribald comment. The unfortunate Gussy sallied forth on a rainy evening and got thoroughly soaked hovering under the beloved's window. To complete the disaster, Taggles' goat crept upon him unawares - and ate the bouquet!

The 'gaff' was now blown, and poor Gussy had to endure a lot of chipping and one or two unkind rags from his unfeeling schoolfellows. The situation was becoming desperate; it seemed that Ethel's visit would end before she was made aware of his burning passion.

Tom Merry came to the rescue by acting as 'go-between'. As usual, Tom was more perspicacious - and kinder-hearted - than the rest of Gussy's friends. He realised that Gussy was 'serious', and decided to bring matters to a head. Ethel, a highly marriageable eighteen-year-old, was entertaining a guest, Captain Lorraine. Guessing how the wind was blowing, Tom advised Gussy not to communicate with Ethel, but, finding the noble one was determined, agreed to deliver a letter to her.

The letter - really a proposal - caused initial amusement to Ethel and the Captain. Then, realising how painful it could be for Gussy, the girl asked Tom to send the budding swain to see her. Gently, she explained about her engagement and let the poor sap down as lightly as she could. Gussy's disappointment was great; but his gentlemanly instincts stopped him from bothering her again. Only Tom knew the real extent of Gussy's emotional suffering. All in all, this was one of Hamilton's best efforts in dealing with 'calf-love'.

It wasn't very long before Cupid struck again. In *Gem* No. 5 (New Series - "D'Arcy the Dude") Gussy fell for Ethel (again!) Lightfoot, daughter of a local music teacher. He 'cut' a House football match to go to Rylcombe and came back burdened with drapery goods! This led his friends to think that his 'latest' was the assistant at Short's, the drapers.

Professor Lightfoot occupied the floor above the draper's and Gussy enrolled for violin lessons. Ethel was friendly with Maud Jones, the draper's assistant, and occasionally popped into the shop to say 'hello'. Gussy, when not taking his violin lessons, took to popping in there too. Maud, in her late teens, was younger than Ethel, who, at 21, was even further out of Gussy's range than Ethel Courtney had been. Consequently, not only his friends, but also Maud's 'young man' mistook his intentions - particularly as mammoth parcels of draperies kept arriving at St. Jim's!

With great strategy, Gussy contrived to remain at the Lightfoots' while the Professor went off to give an 'away' lesson to another pupil. In an excruciating passage, Martin Clifford had a tongue-tied Gussy mystifying a bewildered Ethel while he tried to 'propose'. The net result of half an hour of humming and hawing was to convince the alarmed girl that he had 'heart pains'. She was on the point of calling the doctor when a red-faced D'Arcy beat an undignified retreat.

The next episode was even worse. Figgins & Co. 'conned' Gussy into a rendezvous with Ethel. Gussy duly went; Ethel did not. Instead, Maud's 'young man' (also 'conned by Figgins) turned up, breathing fire and slaughter. A fight ensued - stemming from the assumption that Gussy was 'mashing' Maud. More humiliation for the one and only - especially as Figgins & Co. witnessed the fracas.

Desperate for sensible advice, Gussy made a Sunday visit to Miss Priscilla Fawcett. She took him seriously and gently pointed out that Ethel was much too old for him. He was advised to conceal his feelings: otherwise, he would have to give up the violin lessons and cause the Professor financial loss. Poor old Gussy did the noble thing again and "confined himself to dumb admiration".

His next target was even more unsuitable. Constantia Potts was the daughter of Hiram K. - a Chicago canned-beef merchant. She was beautiful, graceful and worldly-wise - and nine years older than Gussy!) I'll say this for the lad - he never learned and, boy, was he resilient!) His rival for the lady's attention was an obnoxious American named Fish - though whether he was a relative of Fisher T. was not stated.

Gussy and Fish clashed verbally on several occasions. The Honourable even contemplated challenging the 'Yank' to a duel! Eventually, Fish was discredited in Miss Potts' estimation and Gussy became a favourite of Hiram K. (Americans, particularly

wealthy ones, love an aristocrat.) Unfortunately, Constantia regarded D'Arcy as a "dear boy" (his usual fate) and when he 'proposed' she gave him some terse advice. Less delicate than English girls, she called him "a little goose"; pointed out the discrepancy in their ages; and, piling agony on injury, said she might have been interested in his elder brother as "I've made up my mind to marry a title". A sadly deflated Arthur Augustus left Chicago for the Rocky Mountains stage of Tom Merry's trip.

Back from America, Gussy became involved with Tomsonio's Circus. Jack Talbot, the circus's rider, was injured and Gussy, a brilliant horseman, took his place. This brought him into contact with Clotilde, the Circus Queen, and - for once - he did not fall headlong in love. Perhaps his past experiences were teaching him!

This temporary working interlude was followed fairly quickly by another romantic fling. In *Gem* 144 ("D'Arcy's Disappointment") Clara O'Neil, the Vicar's daughter, became the object of his affections. This time, Wally D'Arcy decided to aid his elder brother's suit. Gussy, dithering outside the Vicarage, was pushed into the garden by Wally. Clara was gardening and the confused Gussy became unusually tongue-tied. He beat a hasty retreat, much to Wally's disgust - the scamp of the Third had expected Gussy to propose!

Leaving Arthur Augustus in Rylcombe Lane Wally barged into the vicarage. Clara, a good-humoured Irish girl, invited him to tea and Wally regaled her with an account of Gussy's love affair. She laughed; then reproved Wally for being flippant. Undaunted, Wally informed her that "He's got it badder than ever this time" with a girl "years and years older". Clara, a nice-looking 25, was not amused when Wally disclosed that *she* was the 'adored'. Wally had his ear soundly boxed.

The matter did not end there. The pair called a truce and Wally suggested that Clara should 'cure' Gussy by accepting him! The scamp had a shrewd idea that the 'engaged' state would inhibit his brother and bring him to his senses. Clara, with a streak of Irish mischief, agreed "to think about it"!

Wally left the vicarage, found Gussy and sent him back to 'pop the question'. This time Gussy managed it - and was accepted! There followed a euphoric period for Gussy, contemplating the beloved, writing mushy poetry and - buying a ring! When he visited her again to seal the engagement, Clara shrewdly began 'pushing it'. How long were they to be

engaged? Will they marry *before* he goes up to Oxford? Will his father consent? What will his mother think? Gussy suddenly found himself under severe pressure.

Having had her 'pound of flesh', Clara let him off the hook - and was Gussy relieved! He even confessed: "I suppose I am an ass". Clara O'Neil had made a telling contribution to Gussy's 'growing up'. So had young Wally!

For a long period, Gussy contented himself with his pretty cousin, Ethel Cleveland, for female company. He was not 'in love' with Ethel, but he did take a proprietorial interest in her which she occasionally found irritating. George Figgins was strongly disapproved of by Arthur Augustus - he could never understand what Ethel 'saw' in Figgins. Frequently he complained that Figgins seemed to regard Ethel as "his cousin, not mine".

Ethel handled these strictures with feminine aplomb. Generally, she discreetly encouraged Figgins, while preserving Gussy's good-temper. Now and again, trouble brewed - usually with embarrassment for Arthur Augustus. His attitude to Ethel, who was probably a couple of years older than he, was avuncular rather than romantic.

Martin Clifford gave the one and only a final fling in *Gem* 404 ("Gussy and the Girl"). The beloved this time was Dorothy Fane, a porter from Blankley's (Wayland's Department Store). The smitten swain began placing expensive orders - to be delivered by Dorothy! His friends, concerned by this latest outbreak - there really had been too many - took drastic measures. With debts mounting daily, Gussy really needed protecting from himself. Terse comments and ridicule had little effect, so a full-scale 'rag' was ordered.

Dorothy, making yet another delivery, was confronted by Gussy, tied to a chair and painted all the colours of the rainbow! The young lady cut him loose; then she departed, valiantly hiding her amusement. The unfortunate victim's humiliation was immense.

Highly incensed, Gussy challenged his tormentors to fight. Six(!) bouts were arranged, with Figgins as referee. In turn, Gussy recorded first-round K.O.s of Tom Merry, Lowther, Manners, Blake and Digby. The victor hardly landed a blow until scrap number 6. Then Gussy got in a good one on George Herries, who promptly retaliated. Herries had to be called to order by the crowd before he, too, lay down. Gussy's vengeance, needless to say, was still unwreaked.

Eventually, the affair was ended by a masquerade. Kerr, of the New House, disguised himself as "Mr. Harker, employed at Blankley's". He came to St. Jim's, complete with a whip, and taxed Gussy with trifling with "a man's fiancé". After a hectic scene in Study No. 6, Tom Merry & Co. escorted 'Harker' from the premises. Gussy's unerring sense of propriety led him to stop his pursuit of Dorothy - and to cancel his expensive orders from Blankley's.

And that was that. Gussy's roving eye continued to rove, and he never missed a chance to 'chat up' a pretty girl, but the days of intense courting were over. Martin Clifford extracted a good deal of fun from these stories - but I still would have liked to read "Gussie and Gold-Digging Gertie" or something similar. That could have been Hamilton's 'love story' *par excellence*.

FORUM

From Anthony E.L. Cook:

What a breath of fresh air to read Donald V. Campbell's "The Wonderful Gardens", not just a trip back to past reading but an in depth look at something which could be so easily passed by without really considering the more interesting implications.

From Martin Waters:

You will obviously be giving a lot of attention to the *Gem* this year. I wasn't even born when this publication ended but I hope that you will give plenty of attention to 'Gussy'. This character is very real to me, I have met lots of people like 'Arthur Augustus' over the years. In the Territorial Army many aristocrats began their service in the ranks, and not all of them became officers. One of my sergeants was an 'honourable' in the 1970s. At times I had to act as bodyguard/nursemaid to young men from a sheltered background, I had to guard them from strong drink and loose women etc. Over the years I met quite a few youths like Gussy, and the character is very real to me.

From Ray Hopkins:

It was of great interest to find out, in the February and March C.D.s, after all these years, that Horace Phillips wrote the first two numbers of the SGOL. Brian Mowbray is lucky to have access to these rare issues. It is odd, come to think of it, that Phillips didn't use earlier Morcove stories as the basis for the Rockcliffe stories, first issued in 1922, as he had already become Marjorie Stanton in 1921. However, he didn't waste much time in putting Morcove into the SGOL which first appeared in No. 4 in Feb 1923 in a New and Original story "The Mystery Girl of Morcove".

From Mark Taha:

With reference to Ted Baldock's article in the February C.D., I fail to see any great similarity between Coker's Aunt Judy and Dickens' Misses Trotwood and Pross. Surely they were both "crusty old women with hearts of gold" while Aunt Judy was simply a "dear old soul" but not overendowed with common sense?

There have of course been other novels dealing with the French Foreign Legion besides those mentioned by Brian Doyle. I might instance those written in the 60s by Jean Larteguy and three paperbacks, starting with "Hellfire" in 1978, by Leo Kessler. However, they're rather less romantic than P.C. Wren! Incidentally, one of the most ludicrous of all *Gem* substitute stories was "Kildare of the Foreign Legion" in 1931. Personally, I found one or two flaws in the 1939 film of *Beau Geste*. Surely using Gary Cooper and Robert Preston as young English aristocrats was a flagrant case of miscasting? I'd have cast Errol Flynn and David Niven myself - and shown more of the Sergeant actually driving the men to mutiny rather than just barking at them!

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MORE ST. JIM'S TITLE ROLES (Quiz from Peter Mahony)

Something a little more difficult - name the "TEMPORARY CHARACTERS" who filled these title roles.

		Year			Year
1.	The St. Jim's Curate	1907	6.	The Sneak of St. Jim's	1919
2.	The Cad of St. Jim's	1909	7.	The Scapegrace of St. Jim's	1926
3.	The Ghost of St Jim's	1908	8.	The St. Jim's Magician	1932
4.	The Hero of St. Jim's	1912	9.	The Spectre of St. Jim's	1934
5.	Algy of St. Jim's	1914	10.	The Drudge of St. Jim's	1936

(Answers on page 31.)

THE FILE ON VERNON-SMITH by Margery Woods

Part 5 The Bounder Abroad - Kidnapped!

The Lamb series with Smithy's triumphal rescue of Mr. Quelch and his contribution towards the downfall of Slim Jim was not the Bounder's first brush with abduction. This theme was a perennial favourite in fiction for the young (and the not so young) and was frequently used in the Greyfriars stories. Most of the leading characters at one time or another were forced to suffer the indignity of being bundled up or drugged or knocked unconscious before being shoved in some dark hideaway, the more inhospitable the better. Even Bunter, Fish and Coker did not escape. Smithy seemed to be a favourite target, not entirely because of his millionaire father and the ransom angle but often because Smithy had a positive talent for homing in on villainy. Sometimes this was accidental, as in the case of Slim Jim Lamb, when Smithy, never the man to ignore anyone who dared to thwart him, set off on the path of vengeance. His mind tended to be one-track at times like these and led him headlong into situations which left the villains little option but to remove this troublesome obstacle. Thus Smithy came to have first-hand experience of being the victim on several occasions. One of these, the attempted kidnapping of him by Count Zero prior to the Polpelly Christmas series, was a short-lived affair; not so the African business or the ordeals at the Kicking Cayuse in the heart of Texas.

Smithy was not in the sunniest of moods just before the Easter hols that year. His plans to go cruising with Tom Redwing look like being abruptly changed by Mr. Vernon-Smith's sudden decision to buy a ranch, and then instruct his son to go to the States and inspect his new acquisition. So Smithy invites the Famous Five to join him and aid and abet. The villains start coming out of the woodwork before the chums even leave Greyfriars and the first attempt to remove Smithy from the action is foiled by Bunter, thus continuing the tradition of the Fat Owl being where he shouldn't be and providentially being able to help Smithy out of a rough situation, thereby placing the Bounder under an obligation to take along one fat, obtuse and unwelcome guest by the name of William George Bunter. Aboard the steamship bound for New York, Bunter boasts that he is never seasick, a boast that naturally the sardonic Bounder can't resist putting to the test as he plies his unwelcome guest with rich goodies and watches the Bunter countenance turn green, and then the ghastly consequence, with malicious amusement. But before long Smithy has cause again to be glad of the proximity of the Fat Owl.

No sooner have the chums arrived in New York than a warning message is delivered to Smithy who, characteristically, tears it up and tosses it away. Buckskin Bill, guide in charge of the Greyfriars party, soon spots Two-gun Sanders (the gunman foiled by Bunter before they left the school) trailing the party and deals with him efficiently. But there are more accomplices waiting, under orders to get Vernon-Smith. Unfortunately they get Bunter by mistake. As the reader knows, Bunter has remarkably eel-like talents and manages to elude his captors and hide in a cupboard until he thinks it is safe enough to scarper. Meanwhile, the gang have discovered their mistake and succeeded in collaring Smithy. Once again Bunter holds the key to escape, leading to a delightful snippet of dialogue:

Bunter: "I - I say, they'll hear us ...."

Bounder: "Shut up, you fat fool!"

Bunter: "Oh really, Smithy ...."

Bounder: "Quiet, old chap!"

Smithy remembers the manners of gratitude!

A further attempt to capture Smithy is made on the train to Texas, and he begins to learn what it is like to be hunted. He is lassoed at Prairie Bend, waylaid in the hack carrying the chums on the last stage of their journey to the ranch, then he is seized and taken towards the Mexican border, which proves to be a ploy to divert the inevitable

searchers. Actually he is left bound in a timber stand not far from the ranch. Yet again, Bunter does not fail to materialise, having managed to get lost in the timber, where he stumbles on the captive Bounder and Two-gun Sanders who is taking a well-earned nap. Freed by Bunter's trusty blunt penknife, Smithy takes charge of Sanders' guns and triumphantly escorts him back to the ranch.

This series vividly depicts Vernon-Smith's chameleon quality in the way he adapts himself to changed circumstances and suddenly from a schoolboy becomes a man. At the ranch he loses no time in showing the disparaging ranch hands who is boss, even if he is fresh from an English public school and thrown in at the deep end of some real wild west corruption. For he is sure now that the ranch foreman is playing a double game and is responsible for the ranch having been a failing concern for many years.

"Listen, Barney Stone!" said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth. "Either Bill Buck comes back to this ranch, or I send a cable to my father!" "You figure that your popper will fire a foreman to please a schoolboy who's lost his temper?" asked Barney.

All Smithy's courage, stamina and ruthlessness, not forgetting his ability with firearms, are needed before the mystery of the Kicking Cayuse and its villains are sorted out. All Smithy's suspicions are proved. The rascally foreman has been using the ranch as his H.Q. in the absence of its owners while he runs a cattle rustling gang and doubtless other enterprises yet to be discovered. His attempts to get rid of the new owner's son are many and vicious, including directing him into a route over quicksands and sticking thorns under the saddle of Smithy's horse. But the Bounder survives, aided by an old Indian whom the Bounder has saved from a merciless beating by the ranch hands, and at last the villainous foreman and his gang are behind bars; the Famous Five and their host can get on with enjoying a reunion with the Rio Kid and the rest of their holiday.

The African kidnapping begins along similar parallels; Bunter seeking a free holiday berth, and Smithy to the surprise of the Remove, actually inviting the Fat Owl to be his guest. But Bunter does not know that Smithy's "holiday" is to be spent with a tutor in business management. High life will be conspicuously absent. The Remove chortles, Smithy grins, and Bunter boasts about his pal Smithy, until Mr. Vernon-Smith suddenly decides to make a business trip to East Africa and invites his son to bring his friends along.

While this is accepted in great glee the joke rebounds as Smithy is now more or less bound to take the insufferable Bunter along.

In Nairobi they encounter Kikolobo, a dignified Kikuyu warrior, and Smithy makes an implacable enemy by thrashing a German-Arab half breed called Ludwig Krantz whom the police are seeking for slave-trading. When the chums leave Nairobi to travel out to the Milsom bungalow they do not expect to see Krantz again but are eager to go on safari, for which Mr. Vernon-Smith has engaged a guide, Kikolobo. Smithy's father departs on his business and the chums take to the jungle where they engage in the usual storypaper jungle capers --- until Krantz reappears, hell-bent on revenge. His plan is to capture these schoolboys and sell them as slaves. But most of all he wants revenge on Vernon-Smith.

This comes very quickly during an encounter with a gorilla which the Bounder shoots, enraging the beast (wildlife conservation not having got under way at that time and macho slaughter being very much in fashion) and in the commotion this causes the Bounder is seized by Krantz. Despite his usual toughness Smithy has a rough time, driven through the jungle until Krantz meets up with his gang. The Bounder is sure that Kikolobo will track him but he has not yet realised that Krantz means to capture the whole party.

Again the storyline parallels are drawn. Bunter manages to get lost from the chums as they seek Smithy, stumbles on the Krantz camp and the captive Bounder, frees Smithy, who slashes his Arab guard, seizes his rifle and fires. Smithy armed has a distinct Bond talent when dealing with thugs and has no hesitation in meting out punishment, but he remains believable, never suddenly able to escape like magic from an impossible situation that might have defied a Houdini.

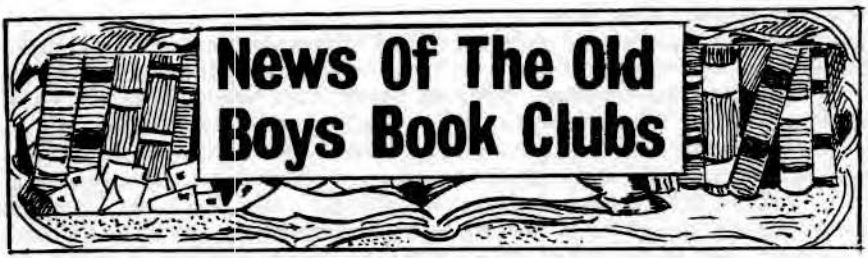
The action moves on to Uganda where the Bounder and Krantz meet yet again. Smithy gets the best of that encounter, leaving the slave-trader with a bullet wound, but Krantz will not give up. Humiliation is one of the most potent spurs of revenge and Krantz would never forgive the boys, and the Bounder in particular, for the humiliation they had inflicted on him. He had been beaten, scarred across the face by the knife-wielding Smithy, and shot; now his desire for vengeance was paramount. His next chance comes while Smithy is fishing from a canoe on the lake while the faithful Kikolobo makes a fire on shore. Suddenly Krantz comes from nowhere, lands in the canoe and the craft is skimming away along the lake.

Kikolobo swims in pursuit but is outdistanced, and yet again Harry Wharton and the chums set off on the rescue trail, only to be captured themselves by the triumphant Krantz and his gang. Their place of imprisonment is in the crater of an extinct volcano, and naturally Bunter takes a very dim view of the not over comfortable living conditions. Smithy loses patience and paints a clear word picture of the fate awaiting them; to be sold for ivory to a black king deep in the wildest native country. There they will be slaves, but as Bunter is probably too fat and useless as a slave he'll be fattened up to be cooked and eaten.

Harry reproaches Smithy, but Smithy has had enough of Bunter. But Kikolobo is tracking them. He too is determined to have revenge on Krantz. Many of his tribe have been abducted and sold by the slave trader in the past. There is much anguish, pain, peril and despair for Smithy and his chums before they are finally free and meet up with his father, who is worried sick, and the law. Krantz, however, eludes the law and in the jungle meets a most satisfying Nemesis .... on the spear of Kikolobo.

Bunter only just escapes the cooking pot, and the Greyfriars juniors suddenly realise that it will be quite nice to see old Quelch again. The Bounder and Harry Wharton have had several moments of emotional closeness of spirit during the perils and privations of the African safari, fraught unguarded moments that betray that strange, almost love-hate relationship they share but rarely consciously acknowledge. But it was not always like that....

(To be continued)



LONDON O.B.B.C.

A jovial crowd assembled at the Acton home of Chairman Duncan Harper for the April meeting. The old grey matter was taxed by two tricky quizzes. Vic Pratt presented a quiz on the theme of comedy, encompassing cinema, television, radio and music hall. Mark Taha asked questions relating to detectives in television, film and literature.

Duncan presented clips from the 1938 film "Sexton Blake And The Hooded Terror", which provoked lively discussion. Finally, members enjoyed Phil Griffiths' reading of a story from Richmal Crompton's "William The Lawless".

Thanks were extended to our hard-working host, who provided us with both an admirable new venue and a splendid tea.

The next meeting at the home of Roy and Gwen Parsons on Sunday 11th May will be preceded by a chicken luncheon beginning at noon. Please phone by the Wednesday before the meeting if you wish to attend, on 01980 862 664

Vic Pratt

NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

A number of us had met for a most enjoyable informal dinner on Saturday evening, 5th April.

An updated report on the Jennings Meeting, to be held in Leicester on 21st June, was given. Anyone wishing to attend should please apply now.

We were delighted to have two guests with us for the evening - Alan Pratt, from the London Club, and Alec Williams, who was representing Mary Francis from Leeds Library Services.

Alan's extremely enjoyable presentation was on "Westerns". He spoke about films from his boyhood which had whetted his appetite, so that he then began to read a wide variety of "Westerns". Alan showed us an interesting selection of American and British western comics and papers. He concluded with a selection of hardback novels from his collection. During this presentation Margaret Atkinson proved also to be an expert on western films and books.

Alec Williams then spoke to us about the sort of books children read today and borrow from libraries. He is responsible for helping to set up school libraries, and gave some examples of authors who produced works in the 1960s that are still very much read today. Britain leads the world in producing stories for children, and many publications are exported. Alec proved to be an expert story-teller to children, and he read us some very amusing short poems.

Our May 10th meeting will have Chris Scholey with "Pidgin English" and "Secret Lives" and discussion on Enid Blyton.

Johnny Bull Minor

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For our April meeting we gathered at the Willingham Village home of Keith Hodkinson.

After our usual short business section, we had a quiz delivered by Howard Corn and prepared by Paul Wilkins and Howard, originally prepared - for our Christmas gathering - at Paul's bedside in hospital (Paul suffered a stroke last November). The quiz consisted of twenty questions concerning Children's Hour, the much missed - even after a lapse of 36 years since it was last properly transmitted - BBC radio programme.

Later Keith invited us to share the strange multi-faceted world of Alfred Hitchcock, truly one of the greatest storytellers on film. Using film and video extracts from many of his 57 films, Keith demonstrated Hitchcock's directorial abilities which fully utilised his scriptwriting and scenic layout background. In this selection - part one of a lengthy appraisal - Keith had chosen samples of his earliest films up to *North by Northwest*, by way of *Blackmail, The Lady Vanishes, Strangers on a Train* and *Vertigo* amongst many others.

Adrian Perkins

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Bound vols. Of Marvel, 1912, Nos. 415 to 440, Nos. 441 to 460
Bound vol. Of Champion 1950, Nos. 1458 to 1509.
Duplicate Sexton Blake Library 3rd series (some 2nd series).
Boys' Friend Library, few bound vols. of 1st and 2nd series, 3 to 7 copies in each, plus single copies.
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ANSWERS TO ST. JIM'S QUIZ

1. MR. DODDS
2. ALBERT CLYNE
3. HENRY BINKS
4. ARTHUR WODYER
5. ALGERNON BLENKINSOP
6. BARTHOLOMEW RATCLIFF
7. ANGELO LEE.
8. MR. FRANK FAWCETT
9. DR. GERALD WYNDE
10. TOM LYNN

TALKING SENSE by Keith Atkinson

Harry Wharton's temper had the Famous Five estranged,
And in stubbornness of mind he would not go out as arranged.
"Leave me alone!" he grunted when his friends proposed a game,
A puntabout at football, on the off-chance that the same
Would liven up his surly mood and lift the sullen frown,
But Wharton remained adamant, and would not follow down.
"My absurd Wharton", Inky purred in conciliatory tone,
"Let the milk of human kindness perceive the dogful bone.
Let not the sun go downfully upon your direful wrath,
Too many cookful gentlemen debase the soupful broth."

"Oh! Let him stew in his own juice," growled Bull with savage face.
"If he's going to be stubborn, let him mooch about the place."
"My esteemed Johnny," Inky crooned, "this wisefulness I tell,
The stitchfulness in timefulness goes longest to the well.
A halfful loaf is better than a bushful bird in hand,
And the bestful plans of mice and men are built on shiftful sand."

Bob Cherry could not long remain in unforgiving mood.
He said "Oh, come on, Wharton, there's no reason to be rude."
"My esteemed Cherry", Inky smiled, "I've said talkfully enough
To pour oilfulness on water which is troublefully rough.
The speechfulness is silvern, the foregivefulness divine.
The lastful straw will sinkfully upset the Plimsoll line."

Then Wharton grinned at last and said "Your proverbs are such that
They'd raise a smile upon the face of the proverbial cat."
The Nabob's calm had won the day with soothing words pacific,
As Inky said "The smilefulness is joyfully terrific."

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