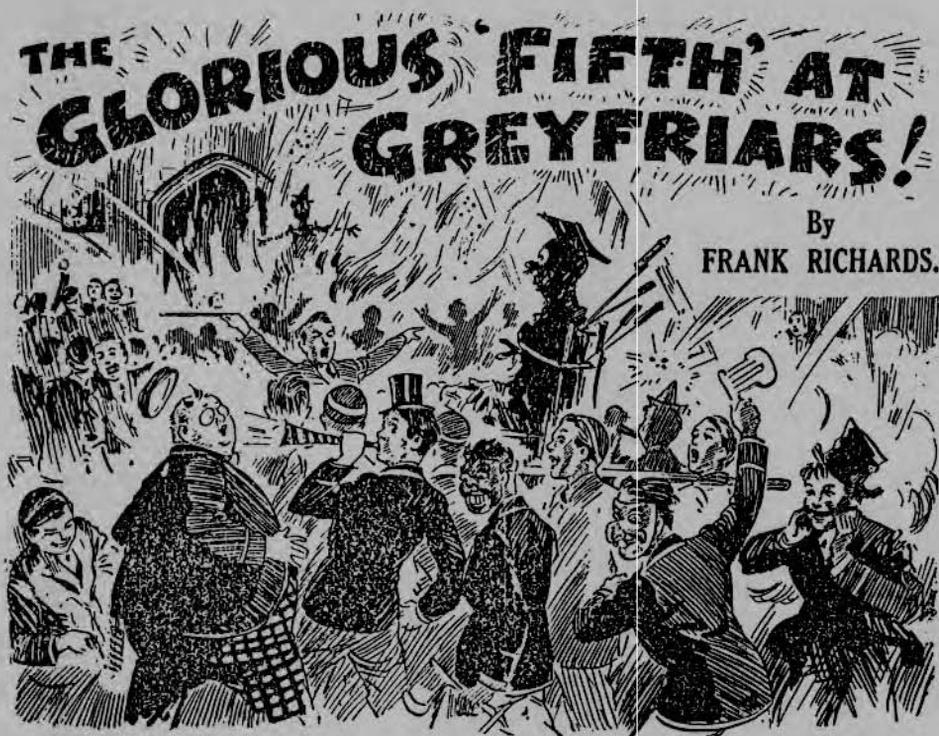


STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.51

No.611

NOVEMBER 1997



By
FRANK RICHARDS.

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Editor: MARY CADOGAN

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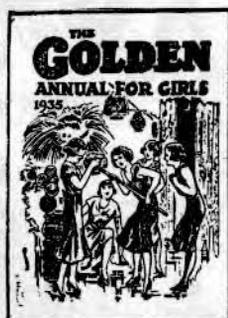
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THE ANNUAL

We are well ahead with the production of the Annual which is indeed bursting with good things this year.

Items now at the printers include further literary reminiscences from Brian Doyle, intriguingly entitled *A Kipper in a Murder Book*; an entertaining article about the Silver Screen from Ernest Holman, and Les Rowley's



stylish and rollicking story *Bunter's Christmas Probation*. Further Hamiltonian items are Bob Whiter's assessment of *The Master Mummer* (Wibley, of course) and Peter Mahony's round-up of *The Capers of Cutts*.

Derek Hinrich looks at spies, adventurers, sleuths and secret agents in *Various Parties Converging on the Sea* while Dennis Bird describes one of the most attractive of all girls' papers, *The Crystal*, and Ray Hopkins explores the work of Draycot M. Dell in '*Gotcha, Joan Inglesant*'. And there is much more - which I hope to outline next month. (If you still have not ordered your Annual, please remember to do so soon. The price, including postage and packing, is £10.50 for U.K. readers and £12.00 for those living overseas.)

THE CLUBS

We shall soon be celebrating the half-century of the Old Boys Book Clubs which started fairly soon after the C.D. became established. It is good to know that the clubs have not only survived but flourished. Some are small and meet only two or three times a year while the London and Northern Clubs remain large and hold regular monthly meetings. It seems astounding to people outside our hobby that club members never run out of things to say about books and papers - but I know from personal experience of all the clubs that both the prepared talks and the spontaneous discussions remain as lively, informative and entertaining as ever. Similarly the warm and friendly spirit of the early meetings has been maintained.

As well as being a staunch member of the London Club for almost three decades, I am proud to be President of the Northern Club - an office to which I was appointed eleven years ago. I have now also accepted the Cambridge Club's invitation to become their President. My pleasure in undertaking this role is enhanced by the fact that I shall be following in the footsteps of Bill Lofts, who was the Cambridge Club's former President. The club is a living perpetuation of Bill's work for the hobby, and I look forward to my future association with it.

Happy Reading,

MARY CADOGAN

THE DANDY 1937 - 1997 - A Personal Tribute

by Des O'Leary

Taking my little four-year-old grand-daughter to buy a comic last month, I was struck, like George Orwell, by the mass of comics and magazines on the newsagent's shelves.

Alas, there were no *Magnets*, or *Gems*, *Champions*, *Wizards* or *Film Funs*, but among the crowd of special interest magazines, for enthusiasts of computing, D.I.Y. etc., two comics stood out like "good deeds in a naughty world". Most of the comics on view looked to me garish and very expensive. Many were just spin-offs from children's T.V. programmes, some were trying to attract the parents of small children by claiming a link with the National Curriculum (poor kids!), but . . . *Dandy* and *Beano* were there.

Since it first appeared in December 1937 the *Dandy*, with its sister comic the *Beano*, has seen many competitors come and go. Yet



Dandy has remained, cheerful and still retaining its British identity through the vast changes of the last sixty years.

Who among us will not smile with remembered pleasure when we are reminded of Desperate Dan, Keyhole Kate, Korky the Cat and a host of other vivid characters? No matter what your favourite might be, (Barney Boko, Black Bob the sheep-dog, Freddy the Fearless Fly are others who come to mind) it is self-evident that the *Dandy* has peopled British imaginations with a host of unforgettable characters.

Why has *Dandy* outlasted the competition? I think we can distinguish several important factors in its success.

Firstly, D.C. Thomson already had wide experience of artistic possibilities.

Although the "Big Five", (*Adventure*, *Rover*, *Wizard*, *Skipper* and *Hotspur*) were story papers, they still made use of dramatic and comic illustration and cartoons. "The Cheery Chinks", "Nosey Parker" and "Silas Snatcher" were appearing from the 1920s on in the story-papers, drawn by Chick Gordon and Allan Morley. Jack Glass and Fred Sturrock had also been working as "heading block" artists on the story-papers, as were James Crichton and James Clark on "Billy and Bunny" and "Willie Waddle".

And the incomparable Dudley Watkins had from 1936 worked on "The Broons" and "Oor Wullie" in the Thomson-owned *Sunday Post*.

Secondly, the story-paper background contributed unmatched skill at story-plotting and scripting. We should remember that the first *Dandys* were not all humorous strips. As in other comics of the Thirties, written stories were prominent for some time - the first *Dandy* had no less than six written stories. The adventure-strip, too, was one of the glories of the comic, "Black Bob" being perhaps an outstanding example. Dudley Watkins, Paddy Brennan and others produced magnificently drawn action sequences, "Danny Long-Legs" and "Westward Ho with Prince Charlie's Gold" being examples.

My own memories of the first *Dandys* cannot be impartial. I was four years old when it first appeared. My mother taught me to read from it while herself enjoying the thrilling

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THE DANDY

EVERY MONDAY *fun for boys and girls!* No. 2893 May 3rd, 1997 **42p**




prose and picture stories. To this day, memories of "Wild Young Dirkie" and his deeds against the English Red-coats, "Jimmy and his Grockle", "Old King Cole" and my Dad's favourite, "Our Teacher's a Walrus" (the title alone made my Dad laugh uproariously) evoke fond thoughts of my childhood in those far-off days.

I did, however, notice one difference in today's *Dandy*. Far from the 2d. that I remember paying for it, today it costs 42p. That's nearly eight shillings and sixpence in old money!

Those of us interested in *Dandy* will find Ray Moore's excellent *Dandy Monster Index* a mine of information to which I gratefully acknowledge my debt in this article.

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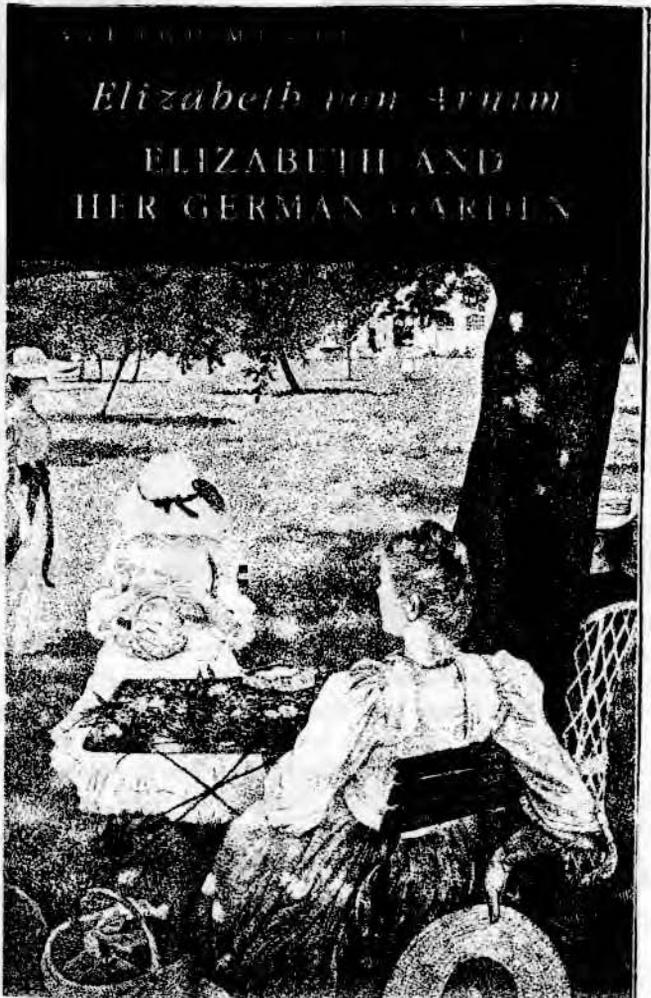
THE WONDERFUL GARDENS

by Donald V Campbell

4. Elizabeth von Arnim

Elizabeth and her German Garden is an adult book (claiming to be a novel but much more of a diary) which has at its core the unusual garden of Elizabeth von Arnim.

Elizabeth was an English (Australian born) girl of 23 when she married, in 1889, Count von Arnim - some fifteen years her senior. The courtship occurred on a tour of Europe with her father (Mr Beauchamp - Beecham to you and me). It was whirlwind by any measure and the widower-Count was quickly successful. Because the garden is central to her story and because of the book's unusual publication history - successfully printed and many times re-printed in 1898 and after; re-set and re-printed in 1929; taken up and re-issued by Virago in 1985 - I decided to slip it into the wonderful garden series - where it can



certainly stand on its own merits.

The foreword to the 1985 edition suggests that it is an extraordinary work with an idyllic quality about it. Easy enough, one supposes, to be idyllic when one discovers one's own garden on a large estate!

Elizabeth is allowed by her husband to open up his old estate in Pomerania about seventy miles from Berlin. Here she finds a garden which, in its wildness and wilderness, captivates her. It was a release for her - she had provided the Count with three daughters in a few years and we must guess that he was hoping for a son and heir. The gardens provided peace and tranquillity away from her imposed motherhood. Her first sight of the garden is almost ecstatic and she realises that here she can be herself, and alone, as she ostensibly prepares the house for the coming of the family.

It is startling for the modern reader to find two fully written out musical quotations on the first page - one to indicate the "gentleman owl's" call, the other showing the female's reply:



However, we must remember that, even for the most casual of readers at the turn of the century, the expectation that such music notation could be read and sung would be easily and satisfactorily met.

After five years of marriage there is a real sense of happiness for Elizabeth in the move to the estate. She writes of her departure as calling to mind:

"The whole interminable length of living in a flat in town".

She calls her garden:

"... her own Kingdom of Heaven (where) followed six specially blissful weeks from the end of April into June during which I was here alone, supposed to be superintending the painting and papering, but as a matter of fact only going into the house when the workmen had gone out of it how happy I was During those six weeks I lived in a world of dandelions and delight."

To begin with she is rather inept as a gardener but her joy in the flowers and nature is unbounded. She says of herself:

"I knew nothing whatever last year about gardening and this year know very little more, but I have dawns of what may be done and I have at least made one great stride from ipommaea to tea roses."

The reference to ipommaea introduces her gross failure to make an easy-growing plant apparently produce anything other than bare earth. She purchased tenpounds weight of seed and planted it in every place she could think of and waited. And waited. Ipommaea was her first lesson in gardening - a failure is easy to come by. We have many of us been there!

In the house there were a cook and a handmaiden. Retiring at night Elizabeth would have with her a large dining bell and a locked door. She was quite frightened of intruders. Yet her maid slept as soon as her head touched the pillows. The bell, though, gave Elizabeth some comfort.

The Countess had that all-pervasive predicament encountered by those who employ domestic help - the servant problem. Her first gardener used to offer his resignation on the first of each month and then approached her with a pistol in hand and had to be carted off to the asylum. A new gardener was eventually procured but he lasted only into the following year! Besides the episodes with the servants there is some attempt to depict the people who

come to inhabit the house and gardens. The Man of Wrath (her husband) is touched upon and is even seen offering her the possibility of the treatment meted out by Russian husbands to their wives - namely a good beating. There are Irais and Minora - the first a visitor from previous times and the second a friend of a friend who paints Elizabeth as well as riding a bicycle. The children get affectionate paragraphs to themselves and are referred to as The April, The May, and The June, babies. They are mainly catered for by Miss Jones who, according to The Man of Wrath is, along with governesses in general, so unpleasant because:

"... they are not married."

Christmas gets a warm and welcome reception from Elizabeth:

"It is the fashion, I believe, to regard Christmas as a bore of rather a gross description, and as a time when you are invited to over eat yourself, and pretend to be merry without just cause. As a matter of fact, it is one of the prettiest and most poetic institutions possible, if observed in the proper manner, and after having been more or less unpleasant to everybody for a whole year, it is a blessing to be forced on that day to be amiable, and it is certainly delightful to be able to give presents without being haunted by the conviction you are spoiling the recipient, and will suffer for it afterwards."

In her wilderness of a garden one foreign importation is of English marrows - she does not approve of the German habit of substituting cucumbers for the marrow. Elizabeth Jane Howard tells us in her introduction that two tutors to the children (both to become world famous authors) do not truly recognise that a garden exists:

"E.M. Forster, who stayed at Nassenheim in 1904 as tutor to her children, in complaining about the garden, describes it rather well:

'I couldn't find it. The house appeared to be surrounded by paddock and shrubberies. Later on some flowers, mainly pansies, came into bloom. Also rose-trees in the little whirligig of laid out beds. But there was nothing of show - only the lilacs effected that the garden merged in the "park" which was sylvan in tendency and consisted of small copses'"

Hugh Walpole later tutored the children (1907) and remarked:

".... the garden is becoming beautiful in a wild and rather uncouth way, but it is a garden of trees and shrubs rather than flowers."

Her diary recognises that the garden - her garden - is a blessing on her:

".... that I may grow in grace and patience and cheerfulness, just like the happy flowers I so much love."

And so she ends her book. Hopeful and wistful; and from the heart of one who has got so much. It is still touching one hundred years later, both as story and as gardening book.

Wanted: All pre-war Sexton Blake Libraries. All Boys Friend Libraries. All comics/papers etc with stories by W.E. Johns, Leslie Charteris & Enid Blyton. Original artwork from Magnet, Gem, Sexton Blake Library etc. also wanted. I will pay £150.00 for original Magnet cover artwork, £75.00 for original Sexton Blake Library cover artwork.
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THE SUPERSESSION OF WU LING

by Derek Hinrich

In Digest No. 608 of August 1997 J.E.M. paid a well-merited tribute to that splendidly sinister and memorable adversary of Sexton Blake's, Prince Wu Ling, the head of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle, who for over twenty years embodied the Yellow Peril in *The Union Jack* and *The Sexton Blake Library* and was, as J.E.M. rightly says, a far more credible figure in that role than his contemporary, Dr Fu Manchu.

As far as I can see from *The Sexton Blake Index*, the machinations of Wu Ling -

GREAT NEW SERIES TO-DAY.

which would, come to think of it, not have been a bad title for one of G.H. Teed's gripping stories - are recounted in 24 issues of *The Union Jack*, two of the SBL first series, and three of the second series. In addition the Prince was "borrowed" by Jack Lewis for SBL1/111, *The Jewels of Wu Ling*, in 1920 and (along with Yvonne and Kestrel) by G.N. Phillips in 1922 for a pair of multiple-villain *Union Jack* stories - No. 956, "Threatened by Three" and its sequel, No. 969 "In League Against Him".

After the Manchurian tales of 1932 recommended by J.E.M., Prince Wu Ling fades from the scene. G.H. Teed's last original contribution to the saga of Sexton Blake appeared in early 1938 and, fittingly enough, featured Dr. Huxton Rymer, his other great adversary for Blake (SBL2/608, *The Bailiff's Secret*), though earlier stories of his were reprinted in the Sexton Blake Library until the close of the second series, and in *The Detective Weekly* until it ceased publication in May 1940 (Teed himself died on Christmas Eve, 1939).

The UNION JACK. 1d.



THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE YELLOW BEETLE



NO. 507. NEW SERIES 1

June 19th. 1913

LEVERY THURSDAY.

Indeed, from 1937 - when the publication of Sexton Blake adventures as such was resumed after a hiatus of nearly two years - until its closure in 1940, *The Detective Weekly* subsisted almost entirely on reprints of old *Union Jack* stories or abridged SBL novels. Of its last thirty-three issues, twenty-five featured refurbished stories which had originally been published in *The Union Jack* between 1910 and 1915. This had been a period rich in invention when the foundations for Blake's Golden Age of the '20s and '30s were laid, but the reprinting policy was surely clear evidence of a decline in direction, or a loss of editorial faith in Blake in the weekly form.

The old stories were updated and abridged to fit into the smaller space available. Where I have been able to compare *The Union Jack* versions with those in *The Detective Weekly*, the originals have always struck me as far superior.

DW/367 of March 2nd 1940 featured "The Brotherhood of the Beetle". This was a revised version of UJ/507 of 28th June 1913, "The Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle", the first story to feature Prince Wu Ling.

In bringing the story up to date, not only did the deadly beetle lose its distinctive colour, at least in the title, but the text was shortened, various names were "modernised" ("Sir George Halliday" became "Sir John" and his daughter "Gertrude" was rechristened "Sylvia") and Prince Wu Ling was dispossessed of his Grand Mastership and of his princely title. The head of the Brotherhood was now another sinister oriental, a General Otara of unspecified nationality, though the name suggests the principal villain is now Japanese (a sign of the times in 1940!). And plain Wu Ling is relegated to the role his faithful henchman San performed in 1913, and ends in gaol. How are the mighty fallen!

I wonder if G.H. Teed knew of these changes before he died or if he approved of them? Surely not the latter!

This illustration from Detective Weekly 367 (2nd March 1940) depicts the same scene as the top picture of the cover of Union Jack 507 (28th June 1913), shown on page 9.



It had fallen to Foo Loo to remove the man who had discovered the secret of the Brotherhood. And Foo Loo had failed. "The Council is not dealing in excuses," said General Otara, coldly. "Brethren, what is your verdict?" The answer came from the sinister assembly in one voice: "The Beetle." And Foo Loo knew, even as he knelt there, that he was doomed.

OBITUARY - DORIS CAMPBELL 1918 - 1997

I am sure the name of Doris Campbell is unfamiliar to many of the readers of Collectors Digest, but her work helped to give pleasure to most of us over the past 50 years when she was active in the world of children's literature.



If you had a Rupert Annual for Christmas between 1946 and 1994 then you should know it was Doris who carried out the colouring of the black and white pictures used originally in the *Daily Express* when they were eventually reprinted as stories in the Annual. Originally working as part of a team at The Florence Studios in High Holborn, London she eventually took over the whole of the work as a freelance colourist to the *Daily Express*.

Although not receiving a noted acknowledgement in the Annuals until the last few years, her work was very highly regarded by the many different Rupert Editors of the *Daily Express* who worked with her, as she always produced a quality result, often working to very tight deadlines.

Being a very shy person, she tended to avoid publicity and, like Rupert artist Alfred Bestall, only really received true personal recognition towards the end of her career. Doris was also an accomplished artist in her own right, creating a considerable number of historical miniatures.

Doris Campbell lived most of her life in and around Ringwood and Bournemouth and passed away after a short illness on July 14th. Her legacy is the pleasure she helped to provide to the many of us who remember our Rupert Annuals at Christmas with affection.

John Beck

A "TOM MERRY" QUIZ

by Peter Mahony

Identify the title characters of these *Gem* stories by MARTIN CLIFFORD (no substitute authors included):

	<u>Year</u>
1. Tom Merry's Slave	1911
2. Tom Merry Minor	1913
3. Tom Merry & Co.'s Ally	1915
4. Tom Merry's Passenger	1923
5. Tom Merry's Foe	1924
6. Tom Merry the Second	1932
7. Tom Merry's Big Fight	1936
8. Tom Merry's Bodyguard	1936
9. Tom Merry's Double	1937
10. Tom Merry's Enemy	1939

(Answers on page 27)

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YOUNG ERN OF ST. FRANK'S (Conclusion)

by Ray Hopkins

Lawrence demurs at Mr Rook's next promotional bout at Helmford. It is with Kiddy Welsh in a twenty-round contest. His less than excited response to Mr Rook's news is that Welsh is far too well known to fight an unknown like him; added to that, Welsh is the lightweight champion of London. Mr Rook is sure Welsh's title will become Lawrence's and then he will be able to fight the lightweight champion of England. Rook tells Lawrence he is the finest boxer he has ever had the pleasure to promote. Win or lose he can guarantee Lawrence a fixed sum of money (£500) which he will receive before the fight takes place. A shocked Lawrence tells the promoter he's not worth that huge amount of money, and he cannot allow his boxing *nom-de-plume* to become famous because of the promise he made to his father.

The bout will be held in London, at the West End Sporting Club in Kensington. Lawrence, alarmed and agitated, says he cannot appear there because that is where his father's ironmongery business is located and he often frequents the W.E.S.C. which is close by. Lawrence is appalled that he is unable to accept what sounds like the chance of a lifetime. What a help to his father that huge sum would be.

Lawrence's father writes to his son to the effect that one of his creditors refuses to give him any more time and he must pay him immediately. The only way he can do this is to sell up the old home so his son will never see it again when he returns to London for good at the end of the present term. This decides Lawrence once and for all that he must agree with Rook's generous offer and hope his father's business worries will stop him from attending the bout and discovering that his son is the well publicised boxer Young Ern.

On the afternoon of the bout, Lawrence, waiting for the London express at Bannington station, is approached by a man dressed in chauffeur's uniform who tells him Mr Rook has sent a car along to save him the rail journey. But, climbing inside, he finds himself seated between two men who tell him he is not being taken to London. Going through Guildford he realises that they are on the same route to London that Nipper, Christine and their Co's will be following. These juniors are invited to a party in London by Tinker, Sexton Blake's assistant, who had driven his guvnor's car to St. Frank's to pick them up. But he knows there is no way they will become aware of his plight and attempt to rescue him.

Arriving at a deserted farmhouse, the men lock Lawrence in an attic, strongly bolted and with no escape possible through the tiny window. He hears the front door slam as they leave the building. To his consternation the brains behind the abduction turn out to be those of his housemaster, who confronts him shortly after the other two have left. The latter, playing his role of blackmailer again, promises to get him to London in time for the bout if Lawrence will sign an agreement to pay him £200. Smale Foxe leaves Lawrence to make up his mind and is disconcertingly confronted outside the front door by a disreputable old tramp who produces a gun and proceeds to lock Smale Foxe in a cupboard downstairs, afterwards releasing Lawrence and driving him to Esher station where the boy boxer discovers he will have ample time to get to London. Upon returning to the car to reward

the amazing tramp, he sees the car disappearing up the road. As a certain royal personage remarked: "Izza puzzlement!" But not if you recall Nelson Lee's gift for impersonation!

Lawrence arrives while the preliminaries at the W.E.S.C. are going on, and he is heartily welcomed by a distraught Norman Rook. So Young Ern, as promised, will fight Kiddy Welsh. But storm clouds are gathering up in the balcony where an elderly, well-built man is staring unbelievably at Young Ern when he enters the ring to be introduced to the punters - a ceremony which takes place ten minutes prior to the actual beginning of the match. He cannot believe his eyes but a borrowed pair of opera-glasses confirms that the unmarked youngster, contrasting strongly with Kiddy Welsh, still young but considerably more bout-worn, is indeed someone he knows and loves dearly and has forbidden ever to appear in a boxing ring.

As Lawrence had feared, his father has turned up, has recognised his son and confronts Mr Rook, ordering him to remove the boy boxer from the ring before the start of the bout. The promoter explains Ernest Lawrence's career in the ring so far and reveals that his son has been the anonymous sender of the prize money Mr Lawrence has received. "It is against all his own wishes and inclinations to appear in the prize-ring but he is doing it for your sake, Mr Lawrence, and for your sake only!" Norman Rook tells him. "His one and only object is to obtain money so that he can send it to you." Mr Rook also says that he is so convinced his son will win, that he has bet heavily on the fight's outcome and intends to give Young Ern an extra £200 on top of the £500. Mr Lawrence apologises to the promoter for his belligerent attitude and returns to his seat in the balcony.

Young Ern knocks Kiddy Welsh out in the seventh round and returns to the dressing room to be confronted by his father. "I am proud of you, more proud than I can say! Mr Rook has told me everything and I know the truth!" Mr Lawrence tells his son. And thus, the career of the St. Frank's junior who could have become a champion professional boxer draws to a successful close.

A word must be inserted here regarding the machinations of the extraordinary Housemaster, Mr Smale Foxe, who crops up in some of the narrative involving Ernest Lawrence's boxing career. He is, of course, not the Mr Smale Foxe who was employed originally as Housemaster. There are, in fact, two of them, twins, facially alike, but totally different in personality and character. They are Ralph and James, and it is the latter who has the large role for he has come to St. Frank's to bring disrepute upon the school, and the fact that he is unscrupulous and cunning seems to work in his favour to accomplish this ambition.

Both men were trained schoolmasters which makes it easy for James to supplant Ralph at St. Frank's in order to gain his ends. James has a hold over his honourable but weak-willed brother, so that when Ralph obtains a temporary appointment at the same school James was dismissed from fifteen years earlier, James is quick to injure his brother so that he has to recover away from the school, thus giving James himself the opportunity of impersonation and setting the wheels in motion to bring the name of St. Frank's down into the gutter. James had once been an under master, and was dismissed because he had invited a bookmaker into his study to transact some betting business with some senior boys. This was in the days before Dr Stafford became Headmaster. The previous Head (who had since died) had caught the bookmaker in the study of the under master. James's name had been put on a 'black list', and for two years he had almost starved and had sworn to get his revenge on St. Frank's. Seven years ago Ralph was put in prison for a crime committed by his brother, and this is the hold that James had over him.

Nelson Lee has been keeping a close watch on Smale Foxe's activities and is finally able to catch him in a serious burglary of money and jewels. But James's hope that it will bring discredit on St. Frank's comes to naught. The stolen goods are returned to the owner,

who refuses to prosecute, and James departs, dirty and unkempt, leaving the way clear for Ralph to take up his usurped position.

THE END

(Retold from incidents in *Nelson Lee Library* Old Series 294-304, Jan-Apr 1921, and reprinted in *Schoolboy's Own Libraries* 327, 330 and 333, published in 1938.)

MORE CHALLENGES FOR THE TOFF

by Peter Mahony

(Conclusion)

The even tenor of St. Jim's did not last long. In the very next *Gem* (No. 376 "The Path of Dishonour") George Gore plunges recklessly, gambling with Tickey Tapp. Tapp, another of the Toff's Angel Alley acquaintances, swindles Gore into signing IOUs for £15. He then threatens Gore with exposure unless he pays up by "next Tuesday". At his wits' end for money, Gore is tempted when he is sent to the Head's study and finds the safe open and Dr Holmes absent. He succumbs and steals £18 in currency notes. The theft is not discovered and Gore suffers mental torture from his guilty conscience. Eventually, his "nerves" make it obvious to his form-fellows that he is in dire trouble. Talbot, his study-mate, corners Gore and persuades him to "come clean". The sorry story emerges and Talbot puts the kybosh on Tickey Tapp by threatening to "shop" him to the police for past crimes. Tapp is forced to surrender the IOUs and Gore is in the clear - except for the stolen money!

Talbot's penchant for doing good by dubious methods comes out again. He takes charge of the cash and breaks open the Head's safe to put the money back! His method is nocturnal: consequently, when Dr Holmes catches him at the safe, the situation could not look worse! A really wary reprobate - Levison for instance - would have chosen a less obvious time - during classes for example, when the Head would be teaching. The Toff's training had made him a "night-bird" - many of his escapades hinged on this trait.

Caught at an opened safe, with the notes in his hand, Talbot's only resource is to "come clean", but he cannot do this without betraying Gore. So he keeps 'mum'; Dr Holmes is left to assume the worst. Distressed by Talbot's apparent duplicity, he insists that the Toff should leave the school. Talbot, unwilling to face public shame and the disgust of his friends, elects to go immediately. When the Saints wake in the morning, he is gone - and Gore is the only one who knows why. (Dr Holmes' tolerance of Talbot is to be greatly commended. This is the third occasion on which the Toff was caught red-handed: belief in his *bona fides* was really being stretched to the limit. Quietly sending him away would avoid scandal and give the Toff a chance to 'go straight' again. The whole episode illustrates Clifford/Hamilton's Christian attitude towards sinners - unlimited opportunities to repent and reform, plus protection from the extremes of punishment. Well done, Dr Holmes!)

But not as well done, Talbot. Tom Merry - or any of his upright friends - would have advised and encouraged Gore to make a clean breast of it to the Head. And, in view of Dr Holmes' genuine concern for his boys, the confession would have reaped a positive reward. Using deviously acquired skills to conceal Gore's crime landed Talbot in the mire. And perhaps he deserved it, for his inclination towards safe-cracking needed to be curbed. (Later episodes in the Toff saga showed that he never really conquered the urge to indulge this skill)

Talbot, on his travels once again, takes a job at Chamgum's Circus. Back at St. Jim's, Gore's conscience torments him into a nervous breakdown. In the school sanatorium, Gore becomes delirious. His burlblings are heard by Marie Rivers: she fetches the Head: he listens at Gore's bedside: the whole sorry mess is revealed. Talbot, of course, is retrieved from the circus; Gore is considered to have been punished enough; things return to normal yet again.

This Gore affair lasted through three *Gems* (Nos. 376-8). Talbot gets a much-needed rest for the next three months. Except for helping Levison (*Gem* 385 "Levison's Last Card") out of the clutches of Moses, the money-lender (into whose toils Levison had fallen through helping Talbot raise funds for Hookey Walker) the Toff takes a back seat until *Gem* 393 "The Housemaster's Homecoming". This story, rated by Hamilton as one of his best ever, introduces the military martinet, Colonel Lyndon - with far-reaching results for the Toff.

Mr Railton, now Sergeant Railton, returns to St. Jim's from Flanders. With him comes Colonel Lyndon, a tall, thin ramrod of a soldier, mahogany-skinned, white-moustached and permanently frowning. He is an uncle of George Gerald Crooke, the black sheep of the Shell. Apparently Lyndon had two younger sisters, both of whom displeased him. One is Crooke's mother - who married a City millionaire - not *persona grata* with the military/aristocracy. The other sister is dead, but not before - to quote Crooke: "She came an awful mucker: married a man who went to the giddy bow-wows. I believe he finished up in prison or something."

This unfortunate lady had been the Colonel's favourite. Her downfall had soured him, though his tough manner went down well with his soldiers. His visit to St. Jim's is soon making waves.

To start with, Crooke wants to impress the Colonel (who has lots of money!), so he canvasses Tom Merry for a place in the Shell cricket team. Tom is unwilling but agrees to include Crooke if a team member will voluntarily stand down. Crooke tries his luck, with no success, until he tackles Talbot. Talbot's good nature is appealed to; he consults Tom as to whether he can be spared. Tom says "No", so Talbot disappoints Crooke, who promptly insults him - first, by trying to bribe him out of the team; then, by threatening to rake over Talbot's past with his uncle, who is a Governor of St. Jim's. Talbot loses his temper and fells Crooke with a heavy blow between the eyes. The Black Sheep now has a 'shiner' to show to uncle. He is also ready to serve Talbot ill at the least opportunity.

To develop the theme, Talbot shows reluctance to get involved with the welcoming of Railton and Lyndon. Tom Merry astutely infers that Talbot knew the Colonel from his 'Toff' days. Talbot admits to having "heard about him before I came to St. Jim's". The scene is set for some weighty revelations.

The soldiers arrive. Lyndon sees Crooke and is not impressed by his black eye and swollen nose. Crooke blames it on "a ruffian who has been a well-known thief and cracksman". He regales the Colonel with Talbot's murky history. Lyndon, whose position as Governor is new, is appalled that such a boy should be allowed into the school. He resolves "to raise the matter".

They go to watch the cricket. Talbot is bowling; the Colonel scrutinises him, and is certain that he has seen him before. He cross-examines Talbot in front of the school - and succeeds in putting up a number of backs, including the Toff's. The game proceeds in an uneasy atmosphere.

Later, Lyndon hauls Talbot before the Head. A long inquisition into Talbot's origin follows; the death of his father, Captain Crow, in a fracas with the police; the circumstances of his reform; the King's Pardon etc. The Colonel finishes by casting doubt on Talbot's integrity: "I have heard clever stories told before." He offends Talbot, irritates Railton and disagrees with Dr Holmes, who is firm in his endorsement of Talbot's honesty. Determined to enforce his judgement, Lyndon convenes a Governors' meeting to review Talbot's status as a scholarship boy.

Marie Rivers, aware of the true story, tries to persuade Talbot to explain how his face is familiar to Colonel Lyndon. Talbot, with his 'touchy' streak to the fore, is adamant: "I would not utter one word that would seem to be making a claim on him". Lyndon's cynical distrust has made the usually tolerant Toff very bitter.

Mr Railton shrewdly suggests to Talbot, before he is called before the Governors, that Colonel Lyndon must have seen "someone closely resembling you, which gives him this strange impression. Surely, that person must be a relation of yours, and you must know something of him." Talbot does not comment, and remains reticent when questioned by the Governors. He refuses to disclose his full name because: "My father's name has been disgraced. There is no reason why I should bear it. It is a matter that concerns only myself, and I have a right on that subject to say nothing."

This 'high horse' approach does not please the Governors. (People accustomed to the 'high horse' always disapprove of others who try to mount it!) They decide that Talbot is not a fit pupil for St. Jim's. Dr Holmes, offended that his judgement and support of Talbot have not been endorsed, resigns in protest. Once again, Talbot's handling of his affairs has an adverse repercussion on one of his best friends.

Talbot, however, is implacable. Rather than 'play Lyndon's game' he is prepared to leave St. Jim's. (The regularity with which the Toff departed the school for uncertain periods of existence shows a stubbornness of character bordering on the arrogant. In the light of what transpires that arrogance was probably hereditary!) To show how little he cares about his fate, Talbot plays his last match for St. Jim's and scores a century. When the game is finished, he learns of the Head's resignation - and his surly resolve is shaken. He makes up his mind to appeal to Colonel Lyndon, who has retired to the inn in Rylcombe.

Walking to the village after dark, his mind in a turmoil, the Toff lingers on the bridge over the Ryll. A car approaches and he carelessly steps into its path. He is knocked down - by Colonel Lyndon's car. The Colonel renders first aid, opening Talbot's collar. A locket is revealed. Inside it is a picture of a woman - Lyndon's dead sister. Talbot comes to; Lyndon demands to know the truth: "She was my mother" says the Toff.

Talbot is taken to the sanatorium at St. Jim's. In a long exchange of views, he and Lyndon resolve their differences. Lyndon resented Talbot's father for being a waster; Talbot resented Lyndon for "letting my father go to the dogs". It transpires, as always, that there are two sides to everything. Lyndon's neglect was largely due to absence on service in India. His later attempts to trace his nephew were thwarted because 'Richard Talbot Wilmot' (the Toff's father) had become 'Captain Crow'.

Amends are made. Talbot is 'adopted' by the Colonel; he ceases to be a scholarship boy; he is reinstated at St. Jim's as Lyndon's ward. Dr Holmes withdraws his resignation; Sergeant Railton, invalidated out, becomes Mr Railton, Housemaster, again.

This completes the main Talbot saga. Later adventures involving the Toff are really the 'going over of old ground'. This sequence of criminal - reformed character - lost nephew adds up to Clifford/Hamilton's most dramatic series of deep, sustained writing.

Apart from the splendidly complicated plot, the character development is quite outstanding. Talbot is a fine creation; so is Colonel Lyndon. Tom Merry comes out strongly as a schoolboy maturing into a man. Levison breaks away from his villainous role to display qualities of intelligence, friendly concern and self-denial which no one suspected he possessed. Marie Rivers, particularly in her initial appearance, is one of Hamilton's best-drawn female characters. Hookey Walker and the 'Professor' are convincing criminals - though their unlikely reforms reduce their credibility. Dr Holmes emerges as a beneficent Head, genuinely concerned for his boys' welfare. Even George Gore, hitherto a surly bully, shows greater depth of character.

If the whole saga were to be reprinted in one volume it would stand among the finest stories of the twentieth century. (Now, there's an idea for ambitious publishers!)

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REMEMBER, REMEMBER

by Margery Woods

History is not everyone's cup of tea, at least the learning of that fascinating subject.

The Bunters of this world find it very difficult, even with the utmost expenditure of their intellectual capacity, to recall the dates of these events which shaped our country, apart from 1066. Even more gifted individuals, to whom certain dates do ring a distant memory bell, sometimes find it difficult to match the right event to its right date. There is the odd genius or so, who is quite capable of producing at an instant's notice the exact date when King Tutankhamen cut his first tooth, or of quoting time and temperature of Archimedes' bath the day he cried "Eureka!"; the rare and the good of such I.Q. ratings are far too clever to allow precious brain cell storage on a mass of facts that merely enables them to show off in TV quiz shows. But ordinary mortals of modest memory can take heart; there is one certain date that no child will ever forget. Once implanted it is there for ever. November the Fifth, Guy Fawkes Day. The historical facts are of little matter, if ever retained; the fireworks, the bonfire and the guy are the all-important essence of the day. And even should a child have a shocking memory lapse, no comic or storypaper would be likely ever to let the first week of November pass without a celebratory tribute to the Gunpowder Plot.

Tiger Tim never forgot it. Nor would he and the Bruin Boys ever forget the year they had a problem with their guy. Or rather a lack of a guy, and no volunteer to play the part. Then Fido had a bright idea; why didn't they borrow Mrs Bruin's frock and hat and dress Bobby up in them for their guy? Alas, they didn't manage to get far enough to collect one single penny before Mrs Bruin spotted them and was so furious she locked up the guy in the cupboard and told the rascals there would be no fireworks for them that night. She shook her cane at them and packed them off to bed . . . at five o' clock!

Bobby, however, wasn't in the least bit worried about being shut in the cupboard. He was able to have a grand Bunterish feed of cake and pie and apples and custard, topped off with an odd dessert; pickled onions. Then Tiger Tim and the boys found him and were given their share of all the goodies Mrs Bruin had baked for Sunday tea. Retribution arrived with the good lady in person.



4. Mrs. Bruin forgave the boys and they had a jolly evening with their fireworks.

It looked like being a very damp squib of a November the Fifth for the naughty Bruin Boys until Tiger Tim, their crafty leader, took all the fireworks to Mrs Bruin and told her how sorry they were and as they couldn't let them off it seemed a pity to waste them and perhaps she would like to have fun and set them off.

This wily bit of psychological approach made Mrs Bruin relent, and

so the Bruins enjoyed their Guy Fawkes Day after all.

In later years Cliff House tended to give November the Fifth a miss, although Bessie Bunter did once set up a Firework Fund for deprived children. But Bessie had an enemy in another form, a girl who stood to lose favour with a relative if Bessie succeeded in acclaim for her efforts. Plus Sarah Harrigan's spite to contribute another setback to Bessie's plan, with the result that Bessie was accused of raiding the fund for her own use. That Bessie

would win through was never in doubt, but there were no fireworks, no guy, and no fun of the more spectacular variety in this tale of the famous Fifth.

But in a much earlier story, back in the *Schoolfriend* No. 78, Bessie suffers great indignity along with her chums during the Cliff House celebrations. It all came as a climax to the trouble the Fourth were having with the Third, after the Fourth Form Common Room is given over to the Third. Not content with this, the girls of the younger form started invading the Fourth's studies, and all under the aegis of Connie Jackson, who hated the Fourth. Nor could Barbara Redfern expect any consideration from her cheeky young sister in the Third. This was one very sad tale when even the Fifth decided to join in the fun, so that when the firework display and the bonfire got going a positive procession of guys was trotted out by the rival forms. Babs, Clara, and Bessie were included, and the display ended with the final insult, a set piece with a distinctly rude comment about the Fourth flashing its message in sparks that lit the night sky. Perhaps this was the reason why the chums of Cliff House decided to give November the Fifth the go-by in favour of much more serious business.

But this was not the case at Greyfriars.

Loder had a quite dreadful Fifth of November one year; one he was not likely to forget for a long time. After he had succeeded in deposing Wingate as school captain during the absence of Dr Locke, Loder ruled with the hand and asplint of a tyrant. The Remove had formed a secret society and their revenge on Loder was triumphant. He was captured, bound and gagged, and forced to play the leading role of the guy. The secret society orchestrated their unmasking very skilfully during the procession so that Loder could not single out any boy as being part of the conspiracy.

As the procession circled the great roaring bonfire there were many demands to burn the guy, which, no doubt to Loder's relief, were ignored, to the disappointment of those who were not yet aware that the guy was a living one.

But the Remove were not yet finished with Loder. He, still in his chair, was left under



As Prout jerked the mask from the face of the effigy, the light from his study window fell upon a white and furious face, and jaws that chewed frantically on a handkerchief. "Loder!" said Prout, like a man in a dream. "Loder, of the Sixth Form! My head perfect! Loder!" "Crumbs!" gasped Trotter, the page.

the study window of Mr Prout, where the Fifth-Form master spotted it after lock-up. Mr Prout objected to this untidy debris being left under his window and sent for Trotter to remove the unseemly object. Only then did the guy prove to be alive!

Loder was released at last, on a November the Fifth that for him would be quite unforgettable.

The Bounder got his turn, too, at being the star performer one Guy Fawkes night, a role he would doubtless have happily left to an understudy.

He was having one of his more malevolent spasms at the time and had fallen out with most of the school. Now he was paying for his sins, and he paid for them with interest when his personal plan for a November the Fifth celebration went badly awry. Coker was supposed to be his victim, a jape with which the Remove went along quite happily, until they discovered that Smithy was bound on his own more treacherous undercover business. After being persuaded that it was all in a good cause against Coker, Wibley fixes up a very recognisable model of Dr Locke, which the Bounder keeps well hidden until the last moment. But Wharton is suspicious. He thumps the Bounder and un masks the guy.

So the biter is bit. The Bounder is seized, tied up on the chair for the guy and is crowned with a bucket of soot and water, then paraded round the field. Not for the first time - nor the last! - the Bounder discovers that the way of the transgressor can be very hard. For him, this was one November the Fifth not to be looked back on with happy nostalgia!

But THE GLORIOUS FIFTH AT GREYFRIARS was a day never to be forgotten by Mr Quelch.

The trouble began, as usual, with Bunter on his eternal quest for tuck. After discovering that Bob Cherry's parcel contains fireworks, rather inedible, even for Bunter, the Fat Owl throws them across the study in disgust - or rather, in the fire. Had Bunter deliberately aimed at the fire the fireworks would never have found their bullseye. But they did, and the resulting bang was heard all over the House.

This incident came during a similar time of turmoil, only this time it was Wharton, not the Bounder, on his high horse. When Wharton decided to rebel he was quite capable of outdoing even the king of the rebels. Harry was at war with his friends as well as all authority, after being victimised by Loder.

When the Bounder decides to tar and feather Loder on the Fifth Harry is his man. The two conspirators plan the event to the last detail and the last minute. But naturally it goes wrong. The unexpected always crops up; in this case it was Mr Quelch, whose favour no longer extends to his former head boy, quite the opposite. He collars Harry and details Loder to take Harry back to the House and keep him there. A task which the vindictive Loder is only too happy to perform. This saves Loder getting the tar and feathers; Quelch gets the treatment instead.

His efforts to pin the blame on Wharton fail, for Wharton has an unshakeable alibi: he has been under the eye of his worst enemy, Loder. And even Mr Quelch realises that Greyfriars has not yet added the art of being in two places at once to its curriculum.

The sight of poor old Quelch staggering about, dripping tar, while the bonfire blazes, the bangers bang, and the massed cheers chase the sparks to the night sky, would live in the memories of that particular November the Fifth for many years to come.

Remember, remember: always take the greatest care with fireworks - and be kind to the guy. You never know

WANTED: The Mounties Annual, D.C. Thomson 1939. Offers to PATRICK MORLEY
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FORUM

From Brian Doyle:

With reference to Norman Wright's excellent Review of the new book *Enid Blyton: a Celebration and Reappraisal* in the October 'SPCD', I should like to correct a remark by Ann Thwaite in this publication. She cites several well-known books about Children's Literature and says that none contains any mention whatsoever of Enid Blyton; she also stated that on checking the 'dozens of books relating to children's books' on her own shelves, she finds again that 'most of them contain no references to Blyton whatsoever'. Only in one book, *Books for the Teacher* by Kamm and Taylor (1966) does she find an attempt to define Miss Blyton's appeal to children

Obviously, Ms Thwaite has never seen my own book on the subject, *The Who's Who of Children's Literature*, published in 1968, which received almost unanimous praise from the critics (except one, who complained that he wasn't included in it!) in national newspapers and magazines, and won an Award in the United States, where it was also well-received and appeared in both hardback and paperback. In my book, I devote more than two detailed pages to the works of Enid Blyton, plus a photograph of her. Some people must have noticed this since, upon Miss Blyton's death, I was asked to do two TV appearances and make several radio broadcasts to pay tribute to her (and also Richmal Crompton and W.E. Johns, who had also died around that time).

Ms Thwaite has made some excellent contributions to the literature on children's books and writers; I have read them all, and reviewed her fine biography of A.A. Milne for the *Story Paper Collectors' Digest* when it came out. But credit where it's due, please, Miss T - and if you do come across my book, do look up pages 30 - 32 . . . !

From Patrick Morley:

Being a member of the London Old Boys Book Club and a subscriber to the Digest and the Library has meant I have re-read quite a few of Charles Hamilton's stories from my youth. A few thoughts have struck me:

First, *Billy Bunter's Holiday Annual for 1967* carries a list of members of the Remove, presumably extracted from an earlier volume. It lists no fewer than thirty-nine names. If I were one of the parents paying the no doubt considerable fees Greyfriars presumably commanded I would want to know what was going on that such huge classes were considered acceptable. No wonder Bunter is such a total ignoramus!

Second, a map of Rookwood in the above volume (again extracted from an earlier work) refers to the London - Dover road. I've heard of going to Birmingham by way of Beachy Head but the London - Dover road going through Hampshire is decidedly off course.

Third, in a volume of *Schoolboys Own Library* (I think it's 364 *The Greyfriars Cracksman*) Mauleverer, making his lazy way one Wednesday half day into Courtfield to cash a cheque, is urged to get a move on otherwise the bank will be closed and he will have to wait until Saturday afternoon to cash it. Did banks really open on Saturday afternoons even in those days, or is it a slip by the Master, an unusual one since given his gambling proclivities he must have been pretty au fait with bank opening hours.

From Harry Blowers:

Congratulations and thanks for the memories to Brian Doyle for his treatise on Bulldog Drummond. As one who has seen the pictures and read all the books, I am still one of his fans. In the 1929 picture with Ronald Colman I think the pub scene was appropriate, and the tune still haunts me at times and here are some of the words:

"I caught the hint of a roguish eye,
and I says to myself says I says I,
There's the one, the only one, the only one for me".

From Arthur Edwards:

One of the many attractions of SPCD is that one can detect loose ends, or find food for thought.

One such arose in No. 608 which I have just read. On page 22 I learned that Sapper's first book was titled *Sergeant Michael Cassidy*. This reminded me that in my early (post WW1) years, a popular song was about a Sergeant (or was it Private?) . . . and his 'wonderful audacity, Sergeant (or Private) Michael Cassidy V.C.' I believe there was a Cassidy V.C. but have no recollection of his rank. The question that arose was - which came first, the book or the song, or were they independent of each other but with the common source, viz. Cassidy V.C.?

From Donald V. Campbell:

I had to write back immediately because I found the August SPCD to be a wonderful balance of interesting things. Keith Atkinson on Alpha of the Plough and Harry Wharton's jacket button: Brian Doyle with his extended look at Bulldog Drummond/Sapper - and with more to come with some appreciation of Gerard Fairlie; Sexton Blake and the Menace from Manchuria; the lovely appreciation of Enid Blyton from Norman Wright; and last but by no means least, the jolly look by Des O'Leary at Mr Smugg who gave so many of us in Form 3A lots to laugh about at the time. (I modestly refrain from mentioning a piece by DVC!) Nice balance and interest. Thank you.

**DICK BARTON, "SCRAPBOOK", THE MAN IN BLACK, PC 49, DR. MORELLE,
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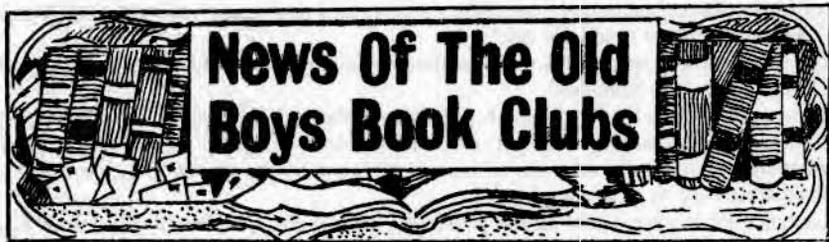
The Vintage Radio Programme Collectors' Circle

was set up last year to enable serious collectors of radio output to exchange programmes for personal and private enjoyment and to assist in the location of material in private hands to prevent its destruction. Written material is, in general, available to collectors, but so many broadcasts, which reflect our Social History, are not.

Unfortunately, much radio output has not been preserved, due to constraints of space and money and what remains is rarely transmitted today.

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NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

This October meeting, which was the tenth attended by Mary Cadogan, our club President, proved to be an extra special one. 13 members enjoyed lunch at The Old Post Office, Barnsley and 17 gathered for the evening meeting in Leeds.

Club business was quickly dispensed with and the rest of the evening was given over to Mary.

In the first talk Mary gave us her own tribute to Eric Fayne and Bill Lofts. She told us how both had key roles in her introduction to and enjoyment of our hobby and also her own writing life. Although it was tinged with sadness, Mary had all of us laughing at some of her personal memories of Eric and Bill.

Working with the BBC, Mary's second talk, was both informative and humorous, especially the anecdotes about the stars we would have all liked to meet.

The November meeting is the AGM.

PAUL GALVIN

CAMBRIDGE CLUB

For the first meeting of the 1997/98 session we met at the Cherry Hinton home of Adrian Perkins.

During the usual business section of our Club's October afternoon meeting, we held the Club's AGM. We formally elected to office Roy Whiskin as Chairman, with Keith Hodgkinson as Treasurer, and we made arrangements for future meetings.

As part of a general round table discussion on memories of the wireless, we listened to an audio recording of a 1982 BBC radio programme. This was a quiz consisting of a great many extracts compiled from sixty years of programmes, and the questions were intended to whet appetites for the discussion topic.

The general nostalgic flavour of the meeting was reflected by Howard Corn who produced a nearly-spontaneous quiz consisting of 20 questions concerning characters in British comics.

ADRIAN PERKINS

SOUTH WESTERN O.B.B.C.

Seven members met for the October meeting at the house of Tim Salisbury in Uphill.

Bill Lofts and Geoff Lardner were both fondly remembered for the contribution they had brought to the club and then Una Hamilton-Wright gave a most interesting talk on her uncle, Charles Hamilton, entitled "His Master's Voice", on the history of the Bunter years, incorporating both his love of opera and HMV records and being at the beck and call of his 'masters', the Amalgamated Press.

Laurence Price played a recording of when he was ten years old reading "How to be a Cub Reporter" from Eagle Annual No. 6 and discussed how that dream had remained sadly unfulfilled!

E. Grant McPherson told us about his remarkable escape from the fire which destroyed much of his bungalow last year; all felt that Providence had intervened and although sadly

many of his books and magazines were lost other valued possessions were saved. But best of all 'Mac' was with us to tell the tale!

The usual bumper spread followed, as always lavishly provided by Mrs Salisbury. It is surely bought from Mrs Mimbles!

In connection with the Enid Blyton centenary, John and Betty Hopton were pleased to be able to tell us they may have a spot on the BBC2 *Antiques Show* this autumn displaying their extensive Noddy collection; the television crew stayed much longer than expected, so impressed were they by what they saw!

Laurence Price gave a talk on the possibility of two early stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and H.G. Wells about man-killing plants being an influence for such S.F. works as John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* and Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

LAURENCE PRICE

BOOK REVIEWS by Brian Doyle

"*Tales of Wrykyn and Elsewhere: 25 Short Stories of School Life*", by P.G. Wodehouse. 19 illustrations by T.M.R. Whitwell. 328 pages. £25.00. 1997.

"*Wodehouse Goes to School*", by Tony Ring and Geoffrey Jaggard, with Introductory Essays by Jan Piggott, and illustrations by Bernard Canavan. 231 pages. £20.00. 1997.

If you like school stories and are fond of the writings of P.G. Wodehouse, then these two books are for you. Even if you don't like Wodehouse, but enjoy school stories, or if you adore Wodehouse but aren't too keen on school stories, they are still for you. If you don't especially like either school stories or Wodehouse, bad luck, it's your loss (but, even so, you're still likely to dig out something you'll enjoy from these two tomes and their total of 554 pages).

Which is an undeniably long-winded but hopefully light-hearted way of saying that these books will almost certainly interest YOU! All readers of *Story Paper Collectors Digest* surely enjoy school tales, or they would hardly be reading the magazine. They're quite likely to like Wodehouse's books too. And here they are irresistibly combined. . . .

Tales of Wrykyn and Elsewhere contains 25 school stories. In 1905 PGW wrote 6 stories set at Wrykyn College over the overall title *Tales of Wrykyn for The Captain* magazine. In 1903 he had written a book *Tales of St. Austin's*, containing 12 stories (several of which had originally appeared in *The Captain* too, as well as subsequently in the *Greyfriars Holiday Annual* and elsewhere) plus 4 essays. For some reason a book containing the 6 Wrykyn tales never appeared. But now, in this volume, we have the original 6 Wrykyn stories (with the illustrations by T.M.R. Whitwell from *The Captain*), six more Wrykyn tales, plus a further 13 stories set in other schools.

A word about Whitwell: he held the unique record of illustrating no fewer than 31 school serials in *The Captain* (from Warren Bell's "Tales of Greyhouse" in Volume 1 (1899) to Gunby Hadath's 'Pulling His Weight' in Volume 50 (final volume in 1924). He also illustrated 8 school serials for *Boys' Own Paper* between 1919-25. All these plus many short stories. All of them school stories! Nothing else seems to be known about him.

So, of the 24 school stories in this book, 14 have never appeared in book form before; 7 were in American-published anthologies, now out-of-print, and the remaining 4 have appeared only in *Plumstones*, limited edition booklets aimed at PGW collectors. So, unless you happen to possess old copies of *The Captain*, the contents of this volume are virtually unknown and, in effect, 'new' stories by 'The Master'. All are set in the period 1901-10.

Wrykyn is a major public school with 600 boys and is situated by the River Severn, which places it in the Gloucestershire-Worcestershire or Shropshire areas (it is never stated exactly where it is sited). The 'Elsewhere' schools are St. Asterisk's, St. Austin's, Locksley, Beckford, Eckleton and Sedleigh. Readers may recall the latter as the setting of

the latter-half of Wodehouse's classic school novel 'Mike' (originally serialized in *The Captain* and published in book-form in 1909). The first half was set at - Wrykyn! It is (apart from the writings of Charles Hamilton) the best school story ever written, in my opinion. It also introduced one of PGW's most famous characters - Psmith.

Remember that lovely quote from Psmith when he meets hero Mike Jackson for the first time at Sedleigh: "Are you the Bully, the Pride of the School, or the Boy who is Led Astray and Takes to Drink in Chapter 16?" "The last, for choice," replies Mike, sensibly.

Wrykyn is based largely on the real-life Dulwich College, but moved into the countryside, and made almost entirely a boarding-school. PGW was himself a pupil at Dulwich, 1894-1900, and described his time there as "six years of unbroken bliss". He was a fine all-round sportsman and athlete, a Prefect, joint-editor of the school magazine, even sang at school concerts, and got along well with his fellow-pupils. So no wonder he was happy there; he may not have been a Bully, or the Boy Who was Led Astray, but he might well have qualified as the Pride of the School

PGW was tempted to become a writer by a school story! He happened to read Fred Swainson's story 'Acton's Feud' in *The Captain* in 1900 (while still a schoolboy himself) and was so impressed with it that he decided to try his hand at the genre. His first effort was a St. Austin's tale, 'The Prize Poem' which appeared in the *Public School Magazine* in July 1901. He went on writing school short stories (as we see from this book) and his first novel was another in the genre - 'The Pothunters', published in 1902. Another half-dozen fine school novels followed before he began his 'adult' writing career, which is another story

As a schoolboy, incidentally, PGW's favourite school story author was Talbot Baines Reed, and his favourite Reed book was 'Tom, Dick and Harry'.

"The worst of school life, from the point of view of a writer, is that nothing happens . . ." he once wrote in an article in *Public School Magazine* in 1901.

Charles Hamilton might have disagreed, and it's intriguing to note that, by the time *The Gem* appeared in 1907, and *The Magnet* the following year, PGW had published many short school tales, 5 school novels and a book of school stories . . . !

Wodehouse shows in the early school stories contained in this new book what a good, enjoyable writer he was, even at the very beginning of his illustrious career. He was learning his craft, but also creating it at the same time. When you read them, you find yourself thinking "That's rather like Hylton Cleaver, or Gunby Hadath's style" - and that's quite right, since Cleaver began writing his own marvellous school stories (set at Greyminster and Harley, among other schools) for *The Captain* at around the same time that PGW stopped and went off to America to write his adult comic novels; Hadath started his own career as a school story writer around the same period too. And both were admirers of Wodehouse. I remember that Cleaver once told me that he was strongly influenced by Wodehouse's style and school tales, and was a great admirer of his. "It was a bit of an ambition of mine to sort of 'step into Wodehouse's shoes' in the school story field", he said with his deep fruity chuckle, and, of course, that's just what he did.

It might be true to say that Wodehouse created the modern school story, with its humour, realism and absorbing situations, in tandem soon afterwards with the great Charles Hamilton, while others (such as Cleaver, Hadath, Bird, Goodyear and Haviton, plus many others) consolidated it. Before readers say "But what about Hughes, Farrar, Reed, and others?", I don't count those esteemed authors as 'modern'. And others, such as Avery and Bell, are on the 'borderline'. (There's a whole new article brewing up here . . . !)

This is a fine volume, but why is there no Introduction, giving dates and when and where the stories originally appeared, or telling us something of how PGW wrote them, or mentioning his own schooldays at Dulwich College? Something about PGW's association with *The Captain* and other magazines would have been interesting too. (Much of all this

is contained in the next book reviewed, but it would have been useful to have it in this volume too.)

But this is a rare treat, a fine and unique collection of some of the best public school short stories of their period, by a man who was quickly learning to become a joyous master of English literature. Schooldays really are the happiest days of your life when the great Wodehouse recreates them . . . !

*"You don't know anything about anything", Mr Pynsent pointed out gently.
"It's the effect of your English public school education." ('Sam the Sudden',
1925.)*

Applied to the school stories of P.G. Wodehouse, the above might well be paraphrased as: "You know everything about everything. It's the effect of your Wodehousian public school education."

When you have read 'Wodehouse Goes to School' it's a pretty safe bet that you will know everything about the school stories of P.G. Wodehouse.

For this new book by Tony Ring and Geoffrey Jaggard is a real example of telling tales out of school, a book for the real devotee. It perhaps tells the general reader rather more - a lot more - than he would really want to know on the subject of PGW and his school tales.

The book sorts the boys into lists by schools and houses, likewise the headmasters and housemasters, and explains many topical references which are now obscure. In addition, it includes two long essays on the Dulwich College of Wodehouse's day and how he used his own school experiences in the school stories; these are by Dr Jan Piggott, today's Keeper of Archives, and also a teacher, at Dulwich.

It's a sort of comprehensive and de luxe 'Trivial Pursuit' of PGW's fictional schools and characters - a Who's Who and What's What of Wodehousian educational establishments, of the schools, boys, masters and other characters in the entire Wodehouse school genre, covering 11 schools (the best-known being Wrykyn, Sedleigh and St. Austin's), also stating what book or story they appeared in and when, and details of original magazine publication, if any. There are detailed lists of books, magazines and papers in which PGW's school tales were published, ranging from the *Greyfriars Holiday Annuals* to *Puffin Post*, from *The Captain to Chums*. To give some idea of the loving detail involved, let's take one or two examples:

If you look up 'Prizes', you'll find a list of all the Prizes and Awards given at all the schools.

Under 'Crime and Punishment', there are lists and details of boys' impositions, canings, 'gatings' and so on, and exactly what offences they committed to warrant such punishments (e.g. Johnson III: 200 lines from the Sedleigh Headmaster, for laughing in Assembly).

My admiration goes out to Tony Ring and the late Geoffrey Jaggard (who compiled those classic Wodehousian reference books *Wooster's World* and *Blandings the Blest* some years ago) for the massive and astonishing research they have put into this project. The book is, in fact, the latest volume of a lengthy and comprehensive work by Tony Ring called *The Millennium Wodehouse Concordance*, a detailed Companion to the works and worlds of P.G. Wodehouse.

The compilers appear to have missed out on an entry under 'Scholarship' - but there, on pages 76 and 151 are mentions of 'the Gotford Scholarship', offered at Wrykyn College and included in PGW's school novel *The White Feather*. It would also have been useful to have had a map showing where the schools are situated. But I'm probably being pedantic

....

This is a book for the Dedicated Fan, a snapper-up of considered trifles, it is a true (but at the same time fictional) Encyclopaedia of Wodehousian Schools and Education, a Surfeit of Schools and Schoolboys, a Myriad of Masters, a Welter of Wodehouse.

It will be an essential reference for the Wodehouse researcher and for the general reader. It is a monumental piece of research, but it wears its scholarship lightly and it's fun too. It's the last word of PGW's early 'stuff' (as he was wont to call his writings).

Accept no substitute - this is the real thing ('the cat's whiskers' and the 'bee's knees', as many an American Wodehouse character might have said).

ANSWERS TO TOM MERRY QUIZ

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. 'M Pong | 6. George Kerr |
| 2. Mike (the monkey) | 7. The Limehouse Slogger |
| 3. Giacomo Contarini | 8. Mr Blum |
| 4. Billy Bunter | 9. Reggie Clavering |
| 5. Ralph Cardew | 10. James Silverson |

THREESCORE YEARS AND TEN - WITH WILLIAM by Mary Pearson

I suppose that after nearly 70 years of avid reading about William I may be called a Williamophile.

I was first introduced to him by a family friend who was also my teacher, and I must confess that, at the age of about 8, I could not appreciate the excellent writing of Richmal Crompton - only the escapades of William and the Outlaws.

Later on I joined a lending library where I read one or two more William books but at the end of 1930, to my great joy, I was presented with my first book, *William the Conqueror*, inscribed 'To Mary from Daddy Xmas 1930'. I must say here that a contemporary of mine at this time put in a request for this very book as a Sunday School Prize, but on Prize Day was devastated to receive a history book with that title.

Well, *William the Conqueror* was the beginning of my collection, and my father saw to it that I had each new volume as it came out, plus many older ones, until by 1941 I had the full set of 23.

At this particular moment I possess 28 William books but, sadly, these include some paperback editions.

I love William as much today as ever I did and my current Saturday morning treat is the reading (in bed) of at least one story. I have my favourite stories, of course, and one Christmas I read *William's Truthful Christmas* to an audience of elderly people - some of them blind - and I am proud to say that it brought the house down.

My father was a headmaster and I attended his school. Occasionally, with a teacher absent, there would be a lesson period to be filled and more than once my father asked me to select a William story for him to read to a certain class. Knowing the children as I did, I was easily able to choose the right story for



"Don't you think it's very like me?" asked Lady Atkinson.

"It's not as fat as you are," said William critically. "I'm not being impolite. I'm being truthful."

the right age group.

Mention must be made, of course, of Thomas Henry's wonderful illustrations. Every one is absolutely authentic, and it gives me particular pleasure to trace the fashions in clothes through the decades from the 1920s onwards in his drawings.

As for William himself - how I longed to be Joan, the only girl for whom William had a lasting (but reluctant) affection. How I longed, when of school age, to join in the Outlaws' adventures, and how - after my school days - I sympathised with all their enterprises, for it really was 'the thought that counted'. They always meant well.

William's long-suffering elder sister, Ethel, I first identified with my cousin, who was a flapper in the 1920s. Later on Ethel became a contemporary of my own, and even later, then having a schoolboy son, my heart went out to Mrs Brown. At this particular stage of my life, by the way, I have a grandson just the same age as William.

The loveliest thing about my William books (as indeed about all books) is that they are always there - dear old friends, always the same, and available at any time for my delectation.

There have been various T.V. adaptations of William stories, and even some films made, but to me **NO ONE** can portray William or his outlaws. They are firmly and permanently entrenched in my imagination and there they will remain.

So here's to William

And Down with Skool.

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA

from Pete Hanger

Billy Bunter would have been content to doze through every single class at Greyfriars, and ultimately leave school knowing exactly as much as when he entered it. Indeed, on such terms Bunter would have considered school life a really enjoyable institution. It seemed to him very hard cheese that an interfering old gentleman should insist upon cramming into his head things he did not want to know. *Magnet 956*

If Mr Bunter asked the Captain of Bunter's form how his son shaped as a cricketer, he would not be told that Bunter's proper place was in an England eleven. He was more likely to be told that Bunter's proper place was in a lunatic asylum.

If he had wanted to know how Bunter had played football last season, the description was certain not to be a flattering one. Bunter knew what a first-class footballer he was; but other fellows had an obstinate conviction that he played footer like a potty elephant. *Magnet 900*

Mr Squidge jumped back.

"'Ere, 'ands off!" he roared.

But it was not hands off - it was hands on! It was five pairs on hands on, and with vigour. *Magnet 1613*

.... Bunter had certain reasons for believing that his sister Bessie, at Cliff House school, had had a cake from home. For which excellent reason, Bunter had decided to roll over to Cliff House and visit Bessie, like the affectionate brother he was. *Magnet 1615*

Billy Bunter was annoyed.

It was, in fact, very annoying. Often and often, it had happened that the universe was not run wholly to Bunter's satisfaction. Now it was happening again.

Bunter the Ventriloquist

Billy Bunter's own affairs were to him the most urgent and important affairs in the universe. He could never get it into his head that they were not quite so urgent and important to other people. Bunter concentrated all his thoughts on the comfort and benefit of W.G. Bunter, and cheerfully expected others to do the same, which, very often, others didn't.

It was quite common, in fact, for a fellow to think about his own affairs and not Bunter's at all, which seemed shockingly selfish to Bunter.

Magnet 1614

Prout bounded again. It was not really easy for Prout to bound, for the law of gravitation had a lot of effect on sixteen stone. But he did bound - clear of the earth.

Magnet 1603

Billy Bunter blinked after them over the veranda rail.

"I say, you fellows, are you really going without supper?" he squeaked.

The juniors marched on without answering that question.

Billy Bunter blinked after them! He gazed after them! He stared after them!

"Well!" said Bunter. "My hat!"

He had told them that there was roast chicken for supper! And there they were - walking off, as if that was a matter of absolutely no moment! It was quite beyond Billy Bunter's comprehension: and he gave it up!

Magnet 1597

Lord Mauleverer did not "squat". He had called on business, as Fishy guessed: and if he wanted anything that Fishy had to sell, Fishy was prepared to treat him with the distinction due to a nobleman, and charge him three times the value instead of merely twice that amount as was his custom.

Billy Bunter the Bold



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