

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST
SPRING SPECIAL 2006



30 Pages.

Every Wednesday.

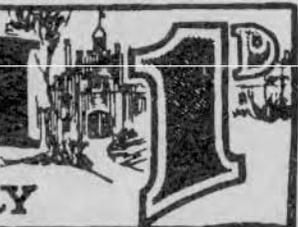
April 29th, 1922.



TOM MERRY TURNS OUT FOR THE FIRST XL.

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TALBOT PARTS FROM TOM MERRY!

"Good-bye, Tom! God bless you! Believe in me, that's all I can ask you now—that will help me! Good-bye—good-bye! He's not just a chap ever had!" Tom, blind with tears, watched Talbot as he passed through the school gateway. He could not speak—his voice was choked with sobs. "Good-bye!" whispered Talbot. And he was gone! (See the grand school tale in this issue.)

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

SPRING SPECIAL 2006

Editor: MARY CADOGAN

My Editorial looks *back* over a hundred years – and *forward* to some of the enrichments that modern technology is bringing to our hobby today and in the future.

This C.D. Special celebrates the centenary of St. Jim's, the Hamilton school which first appeared in *Pluck* in 1906. St. Jim's is especially important because it was the first of Charles Hamilton's famous trio of ever resilient and much loved fictional schools. Most of us, of course, remember its saga unfolding in the pages of the *Gem*, when Tom Merry had taken over the leading role from Jack Blake who starred in the *Pluck* tales. Included in this issue of the C.D. are extracts from some of Eric Fayne's articles about St. Jim's, which was always his favourite of Hamilton's schools. He wrote about it extensively for the C.D. as well as in the excellent compilation by the Museum Press, *A History of the Gem and the Magnet*. Eric's memories of, and affection for, St. Jim's provide us with a wonderfully apt centenary tribute.



Looking forward, another extremely resilient saga – that of Sexton Blake – is undergoing a very welcome 'reincarnation' which can be savoured by C.D. readers who have access to the internet (see the article by Mark Hodder on page 10). I am extremely pleased for our magazine to cooperate with Mark in helping to keep alive and to extend the influence of Blakiana.



Something else to be celebrated is a remarkably attractive book by C.D. reader and contributor Derek Marsden, who is a recognised expert on the D.C. Thomson papers. Entitled *Free Gifts in the Big Five* this book of almost two hundred large pages is a work of astoundingly comprehensive research which many C.D. readers will wish to possess (see pages 24, 25 and 61).

I plan to bring out another AUTUMN/WINTER SPECIAL with a Christmassy flavour in October or November. An order form for this is enclosed, and I look forward to receiving your articles and features for it.

Happy Browsing! MARY CADOGAN

THE GOLDEN TIME

by Ted Baldock

I have come to the conclusion that the only completely magic age in life is between the ages of ten and fourteen, a time when the senses are vividly aware of beauty yet unawakened to evil. It is the only time in life when, for a brief period, heaven is on earth and we, in the astounding self-sufficiency of youth, are in the centre of it and therefore very near to God.

H.V. Morton. In Scotland Again

A laughing face at the form-room door,
A clatter of hurrying feet,
A rotund shadow on the floor,
The happy scene's complete.
The boys of this, and other years
Have gone their separate ways,
New voices now take up the cheers,
As in the old schooldays.

Lessons were over for the day. There was a holiday atmosphere in the air, a spirit of escape from thralldom, a welcome sense of freedom. Most of the staff were gathered in Masters common room, there to partake of the traditional refreshment, a glass of sherry and a biscuit, before going into hall for the mid-day meal.

An agreeable air of calm pervaded the room. Some masters were standing, glasses in hand exchanging views, some were relaxing in the comfortable well worn armchairs. Mr. Prout, master of the fifth form, was applying himself to the biscuit barrel on the sideboard. Prout was very partial to a biscuit with his pre-dinner sherry. It behoved Trotter, the page, to see that the barrel was never allowed to lack a good supply of Abernethy's. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, concealed behind the voluminous pages of the *Times*, was 'catching up' with the events of the day. Mr. Hacker was emphasising some item of information to Mr. Capper, who, judging from his expression, was not fearfully impressed as he sipped his sherry. "But surely, Hacker, if such was the case ...".

Mr. Twigg, seated in a corner out of the line of fire, as it were, was chuckling over an item of news in *Punch*, happy to be released for the time being from the turbulent members of the second form. Over all was the quiet murmur of voices and the occasional mellow boom from 'old pompous' delivering himself of an opinion.

The windows of the common room were wide open, the gentle breeze of a perfect summer day gently stirred the curtains. A long afternoon lay ahead, an afternoon

minus any official duties. At that precise moment the members of Dr. Locke's staff, with the exception of a small ripple of disagreement here and there, were at one.

A similar feeling of relaxation reigned in the remove passage, perhaps a trifle more boisterous but much in the same spirit. Freedom was in the air and for the moment all petty differences and feuds were put aside. Billy Bunter was weighing the possibilities of attaching his fat person to Harry Wharton and Co. Reconnaissance and probings not unconnected with keyholes had revealed that they were intending to cycle in the direction of Courtfield that afternoon which, of course, indicated that a visit to Chunkleys would be in the offing and he was determined to be 'of that company' to share in the fleshpots of that excellent establishment.

With Gosling, the ancient keeper of the gates at Greyfriars, the weekly half-holiday took on a completely different view. Gosling did not approve of half-holidays, he saw no need whatever for such institutions. In this rustic philosophy holidays spelt disruption and trouble – mischief as sure as night followed day. Boys would be at large with time on their hands. Time to formulate all manner of japes and 'leg-pulls'. Better that they should be confined to the form-rooms under the sharp eye of authority. Such was his opinion of 'halfers'.

The researcher into the proposed activities of Harry Wharton and his chums proved to be completely successful, such were the Owl's methods of surveillance. Thus we may see him safely attached to the Co. for the afternoon. There had been a little difficulty in obtaining a bicycle, his own machine being in a hundred ways quite unroadworthy. Finally he had managed to 'borrow' Harold Skinner's machine, quite unknown to that fellow, for which the piper would be paid fully – and running over – later. It had ever been the Owl's philosophy to enjoy the present and let the future take heed to itself. Sadly in the past that future had been anything but pleasant and of a certainty always painful. But the thought of Chunkleys and all that was to be inferred by that magic name always won the day.

* * * * *

It had been Mr. Quelch's intention to utilise the half holiday in quiet contemplation of certain documents relating to the monastic activities current at Greyfriars during the dark ages which, he was sure, would prove not only relevant but essential to his history of the foundation. A few hours of quiet study were, to him a glorious escape from the usual duties of imparting – or attempting to impart, knowledge to a remove whose attention it was frequently not a little difficult to hold. He had no intention of 'sporting his oak' while fervently hoping that interruptions would not occur. Alas for his well laid plans. Normally meticulous in his arrangements he had on this occasion failed to consider the possibility of his old friend and colleague, Mr. Prout, 'happening'.

He was barely ten minutes into his studies when a heavy and ponderous step was heard approaching his door where it stopped, and a familiar boom reached the remove master's ears.

"Are you there, Quelch, my dear fellow ..."

Prudent to a fault Mr. Quelch remained silent breathing a prayer that Prout would go away. Receiving no reply Mr. Prout applied his knuckles to the door, there was a pause then the handle was turned and the plump features of the fifth form master were inserted.

"Why, there you are Quelch, did you not hear me knock?"

The remove master did not give a direct answer to Prout's question.

"I have much to attend to, Prout, would you excuse me? Perhaps some other time."

Mr. Prout did not appear particularly impressed by his reception. Purpling a little, as was usual when he met with a rebuff, he drew himself up and prepared to leave Mr. Quelch to the urgent matters which apparently brooked no delays.

"As you wish, Quelch, as you wish sir, I will disturb you no longer!"

With which he swept from the remove master's study with a great display of dignity. As the door closed Mr. Quelch indulged in a sigh of relief and settled once

.....
The "Magnet" Rhymester is still going strong; Mr. Quelch is his latest "victim" to rank amongst our popular feature—GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES.



A SLOW, majestic, solemn tread,
A gown that's primly rustling.

Whose is that figure just ahead,
That moves, quite free from bustling?
Who owns that gimlet eye, whose say
So oft foretells disaster?

'Tis Henry Samuel Quelch, M.A.,
Of the Remove—Form master.

A husk that's hard as granite flint
Forms Quelch's grim exterior;

But oftentimes you catch a hint
Of quite a kind interior.
The fellow's prim, precise, and just,
His methods are not harmful;
He wields the cane, and yet we must
Improve, through his example.

He's popular with all his boys,
And very loyal towards them;
Golf and classics are his joys
When scanty time affords them.
For Henry Quelch is typing out
A "History of Greyfriars."
'Twill never end, without a doubt,
And yet he never tires.

In class, Mark Linley is his joy,
A clever knowledge-hunter;
Wharton is his bright head-boy,
And his dismay is Bunter.
That fat one is his trial in life,
The bane of his existence;
And Mauly sleeps through storm and
strife,
'Till roused with firm insistence.

But though his Form is none too grand,
At all times they'll support him,
And form a loyal, helpful band,
As harsh experience taught him.
When through Misfortune—fickle
jade!—
Quelch left Greyfriars portals,
He found his feet through Mauly's aid,
Most affluent of mortals.

Through Quelch's hands have passed a
crowd
Of boys, and he's improved them.
So hear us shout that we are proud
That his example's moved them.
We'll raise our glasses, and we'll say:
"Here's health and great prosperity
To Henry Samuel Quelch, M.A."—
In spite of his severity.

more to decipher, and probe among, ancient documents, raising in the process little clouds of dust.

* * * * *

Billy Bunter grunted, sat back and surveyed the board. The three-tiered cake-stand in splendid isolation in the centre of the table had been plundered of its appetising array of cakes and tarts, a few crumbs only remaining. The battle had been fought and nobly won. The table resembled, with the aid of a little imagination, a stricken field. Evidence of this was the sea of crumbs and fragments of Chunkleys delicacies decorating not only the table before him but also his waistcoat, the two lower buttons of which had been loosened.

Harry Wharton and Co. had done full justice to the attractive fare and were now sitting back chatting cheerily among themselves. The Owl's attention had wandered and was now fixed upon an immense sideboard at some distance upon which was displayed an impressive array of pineapples – one of Chunkleys specialities – strategically placed there by a hopeful management to attract customers and would-be purchasers. The centre-piece of the display was a truly magnificent specimen. It was upon this splendid fruit that the Owl's eyes were fixed, glistening behind his large spectacles (it being almost on a par with those grown in the Pinery at Bunter Court!).

Brushing away a little cloud of crumbs from his waistcoat he addressed the Co.

"I say, you fellows", then he paused as he surveyed the cheery five.

"I say..."

"What is it, old fat man, surely you have reached or passed the plimsoll line?"

"Yes, I, I, look here, let us finish up with one of those pineapples, my treat you know".

Harry Wharton and Co. looked startled as they gazed at the Owl, as well they might.

"What – what did you say, Bunter" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"My treat, you know, you settle for the tea and I will stand treat with the pineapple."

Mr. PAUL PONTIFEX PROUT.

Master of the Fifth.

P is for PROUT—Paul Pontifex,
To whom we pay our best respects!
His stately stroll is full of swank
Just like a galleon—or a tank!
They call him "Pompous" on the sly,
But not when he is passing by.



He's often fussy, and no doubt
He likes to throw his weight about.
But still we think, upon the whole,
He's really not a bad old soul.
High in the Rockies, years ago,
He slaughtered bears, or tells us so,
And his beloved rifle still!
He keeps and treasures with a will;
Though time has touched his form and
face

Alas, to somewhat riper grace!

Here was an offer quite unprecedented, one they felt they could not – ought not to turn down. It was almost a once in a life-time occasion, coming from such a source.

“Has your postal order arrived at last, Bunty. Jolly good of you to cough up, those pineapples will be very expensive you know.”

“Never mind the price, you fellows, I say...” Billy Bunter seemed to hesitate.

“I say, you fellows, there has been a delay in the post – ‘Er, would you lend me a trifling sum, say ten shillings, and I will settle with you when my postal order arrives. I am expecting it tomorrow, it is rather overdue, you know. I have asked the Pater to write to the Post Master General about it, that should hasten it along.”

Harry Wharton and Co. gazed at their fat companion. They appeared to be speechless. This proposition was a trifle difficult to absorb. As they interpreted it, he was to ‘stand’ treat for an expensive pineapple for which they were to pay. This seemed, to them at least, a little illogical.

Shortly afterwards, as they were leaving Chunkleys, the casual observer may have noticed that the display of pineapples on the sideboard was quite undisturbed. The splendid centre piece remained inviolate. Billy Bunter had tried, he had tried hard, but his form-mates had failed to rise to the occasion.

It was a very disgruntled Owl who returned to Greyfriars with his ‘old pals’ on that long ago afternoon. We all have our little successes – and failures. In the Owl’s case, success in attaching himself to the Chunkley party may be regarded as a ‘plus’, his failure to convince his ‘old pals’ to stand treat being the other side of the coin.

On the journey home, while plunging at the pedals of Harold Skinner’s bicycle, he ruminated upon the harshness and lack of justice in a hard and unsympathetic world. This seemed to justify, and indeed intensify, when he was interviewed later that evening by Harold Skinner. Shakespeare has said that, ‘Liberty plucks justice by the nose’. Bunter was inclined to agree, following a somewhat harrowing experience in which Skinner’s boot had played a major role.

A sad yet interesting footnote to the affair records that Bunter was observed partaking his tea that evening in a standing position. Why life had to be so perverse was a perennial mystery to him, one which his fat intellect could not encompass.

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BAKER'S DOZEN

from Ernest Holman

- 1) Who gave Herbert Vernon-Smith of Greyfriars the nickname of the Bounder?
- 2) Lord Conway was the elder brother of which Hamilton schoolboy?
- 3) What were the frequent expressions used by
a) Bob Cherry b) Tom Merry c) Jimmy Silver
- 4) Bunter often referred to a schoolmate as a 'Beast'. What was the equivalent expression used by sister Bessie to any of her Cliff House schoolmates?
- 5) Nipper of St. Franks stories and Tinker of the Sexton Blake yarns had names of their own. What were they?
- 6) Not the least of the Sexton Blake set-up was the dog. What was its name?
- 7) Henry once told the Outlaws that 'he had been told to take it out!' To what was he referring?
- 8) Violet Elizabeth's father had made his money by manufacturing a table relish. What was its name?
- 9) Can you give Ginger of the Outlaws his correct Christian name?
- 10) In the Wodehouse stories, what were the first Christian names of Beech of Blandings, Jeeves of the Wooster stories; what was the second Christian name of Bertie Wooster?
- 11) Bertie once confessed, in a very early Jeeves story, that he had once written and asked a famous stage Artiste for her autograph. Who was the Artiste?
- 12) In the centre pages of the *Magnet*, appeared stories of St. Sam's School. Who were the leading lights of the school?
- 13) How many Editions were published of the Greyfriars Holiday Annual?

(See inside back cover for answers)



ONE CLICK TO BAKER STREET; OR, BLAKIANA ONLINE!

by Mark Hodder

In a story near the beginning of the Sexton Blake saga, a criminal makes his getaway on horseback and Blake races after him mounted on a bicycle. By the end of the saga, the detective has abandoned pedal-power and taken the controls of a jet plane to pursue his quarry. If there's one thing you can say about Sexton Blake, it's that he wasn't afraid of technology.

It seems only fitting, then, that Blakiana should adopt the same attitude. So, after 60 years in the good old CD (and we fervently hope for many more!), our celebration of all things Blake has leaped onto the internet in the shape of an ever-expanding website. You can visit it at www.sextonblake.co.uk. Here's what awaits you at Blakiana's new online home:

THE SEXTON BLAKE BIBLIOGRAPHY

The most comprehensive Sexton Blake bibliography ever published! It currently contains 5,136 items. In addition to a 'master list', there is a page for every year from 1893 to 1998, each containing publication details, story notes and, in many cases, a small image of the cover which can be clicked to open a larger view. In addition to the UJ, DW and SBL adventures, you'll find full details of Blake's appearances in THE MARVEL, ANSWERS, PENNY PICTORIAL, PENNY POPULAR, DREADNOUGHT, BOYS' FRIEND, BOYS' HERALD, BOYS' JOURNAL, NUGGET WEEKLY and many other periodicals. New notes are added on a weekly basis, so the bibliography repays regular visits.

SEXTON BLAKE - A PUBLISHING PHENOMENON

A section containing articles which cover the whole Blake saga, from his very beginnings in the Victorian Age to his last gasp in the guise of Victor Drago in the TORNADO.

SEXTON BLAKE'S AUTHORS, EDITORS AND ARTISTS

Articles about the people who brought the detective to life for generations of readers.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SEXTON BLAKE

This is where you can read essays about the world of Blake; from floor plans of his Baker Street home to a look at Dorothy L. Sayers' 'flirtation' with the long-lived sleuth.

SEXTON BLAKE'S ASSISTANTS, FRIENDS AND DUBIOUS ALLIES

These articles cover the sidekicks and the Yard men, the King's spies and the beautiful adventuresses.

SEXTON BLAKE'S ENEMIES

Here you will find profiles of the wonderfully wicked and brilliantly bad men and women who tried to outwit the greatest detective who ever lived!

THE SEXTON BLAKE CASEBOOK

Each month four Sexton Blake adventures will be republished on the website. This is your chance to read some of the oldest and rarest material. (If you'll excuse a momentary foray into technological gobbledegook: the stories are scanned from the original periodicals and published as PDF files. This means you can read them on your computer using a free program called Adobe Reader. Instructions for downloading and installing this program are on the website).

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SEXTON BLAKE

Currently we have two cases written by John Hall, both of which originally appeared in 'Sherlock Magazine', and a story penned exclusively for the Blakiana website: 'The Séance at Stillwater Mansion' by Mark Hodder (Hey! That's me!).

SEXTON BLAKE ON STAGE, SCREEN AND THE AIRWAVES

This part of the website covers the Sexton Blake theatre productions, cinema and television appearances, and radio broadcasts. You can even listen to old Sexton Blake radio plays on your computer!

A BAKER STREET SCRAPBOOK

This is a wonderful collection of photographs and cuttings, autographs and letters, manuscripts and snippets.

THE BAKER STREET INDEX

Finally, here you'll find a list of other websites which may be of interest to Blake enthusiasts.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Over forthcoming weeks and months, in addition to brand new articles and Blake stories written especially for the Blakiana website, I will be republishing material from past issues of the CD. The work of almost legendary Blake scholars who, sadly, are no longer with us, such as Walter Webb, Bill Lofts and the Packmans, will see the light of day once again, reaching a new generation.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The creation of the online version of Blakiana has been a one-man job (it took three years and in that time I went bald and turned grey!) but essentially it is YOUR site; the internet home for Sexton Blake enthusiasts. Your contributions will be very gladly received... as will any constructive criticism. Perhaps, while browsing the bibliography, you spot an error. Or maybe you're reading one of the many articles and you come across a spelling mistake. Or there's a particular old story you'd like to see online one month. These are all things I need to know. And, of course, if you have an article or story you'd like to contribute... send it! You can contact me via email at m.hodder@ntlworld.com.

I do hope you'll spend many happy hours exploring the fascinating world of Blakiana in its online form. This marks a new step for our hobby and one which, I fervently hope, will bring Sexton Blake to the attention of a whole new audience-including enterprising publishers and film-makers, hint, hint!

A SCANDAL IN BAKER STREET - But Did Anyone Seek Their Advice?

by Derek Hinrich

In 1895, a year after Mr. Sherlock Holmes resumed his practice, there began one of the most bizarre cases ever to appear in the civil courts of this country. It is probably the only action comparable to that of the Tichborne claimant, which itself led to the longest civil trial in British legal history.

The Druce-Portland case dragged on for twelve years before its resolution, a period that suggests undertones of the great chancery suit of Jarndyce versus Jarndyce in *Bleak House* (though this was actually a shorter matter than the suit that probably inspired Dickens, which arose from the intestate death in 1798 of a miser named Jennens and took over eighty years to settle!).

The Druce-Portland case involved two of the wealthiest noble families in the country. It began, metaphorically, on Sherlock Holmes's doorstep, but one wonders if anyone sought his advice or, upon his retirement, that of his eminent neighbour, Mr. Sexton Blake. Many scholars, especially those amongst our American cousins,

have raised the possibility of Sherlock Holmes' involvement in various contemporary *causes celebre* (notably those of Jack the Ripper and the theft of the Irish Crown Jewels), but they have not, as far as I know ever suggested this to be one possibility and yet we know that Holmes did undertake delicate civil matters. The Hammerford Will case, the Dundas Separation case, and the Smith-Mortimer Succession case come readily to mind. Civil cases do not figure so largely in what we know of Mr. Blake's practice, but he too must have dealt with such matters.

The whole affair arose from events some thirty years before Sherlock Holmes' return. A Mr. Thomas Charles Druce, the proprietor of a successful furniture shop, the Baker Street Bazaar, died in 1865 and was buried in a vault in the London Cemetery at Highgate. In 1895 a Mrs. Annie Druce, the widow of Mr. T C Druce's eldest son by his second marriage, alleged that her husband's father had not in fact died in '65 but had arranged a bogus burial to enable him to stop a double life, which had grown tedious to him, and had resumed his other existence as the fifth Duke of Portland. Mrs. Druce's son was therefore, subject to the trivial matter of proof of these assertions, the rightful sixth Duke of Portland.

Why Mrs Druce seized upon the Duke of Portland as the subject of her delusion or fantasy is not clear. William John Cavendish-Scott-Bentinck, fifth Duke of Portland who died in 1879, was apparently a preternaturally shy man and enjoyed a reputation as what might be termed 'the eccentric's eccentric' which may have helped her. The Duke's eccentricities, which are too extensive to list here (the reader seeking further information should consult the relevant passage in *Amazing Grace The Great Days of Dukes* by E. S. Turner), other than to mention his extraordinary passion for the construction of subterranean additions to his seat, Welbeck Abbey, which began with his succession to the title in 1854 and were still in full swing at his death 25 years later. These included an underground ballroom, 174 feet long, 64 feet wide, and 22 feet high where 2,000 guests might be entertained (though he never entertained); and a carriage tunnel a mile in length from his stables under the Abbey grounds to his gates, which was lighted by gas jets and by lanterns in the roof like miniature greenhouses which dotted its course, so that he might leave his estate unseen in his close-curtained carriage.

Mrs Druce started proceedings to prove her claim. The first step was to obtain authority to open the Highgate tomb. She applied in turn to the Home Office, to the Metropolitan Police, and to the Chancellor of the Diocese of London. The Home Office refused her request. So did the Metropolitan Police. Proceedings before the Chancellor of the Diocese were protracted but abortive, partly because the Home Secretary continued to refuse to authorise an exhumation, partly because other Druce family problems obtruded. T.C. Druce had lived with the woman who became his second wife for some years before he married her because he could not do so legally until his first wife, whom he had deserted, died. While he was waiting for this to happen his mistress bore him at least one child, an elder son. When Druce died he made generous provision for the children of his second marriage and for their siblings borne out of wedlock. If T.C. Druce had not died in 1865, then his will was invalid and

his eldest, but illegitimate, son Herbert Druce, would lose his inheritance. He made a deposition that he had seen his father's corpse after his death and again, in his coffin before the funeral. At this stage Herbert Druce would not consent to his father's grave being opened.

All this took some eight years, involved many court appearances and submissions. The prolonged litigation absorbed Mrs Druce's resources. She became more and more frustrated and distraught. Eventually the poor woman's mind gave way entirely under the strain and in 1903 she was committed to an asylum. But already other Druces had entered the lists.

T.C. Druce had had children by his first wife, and if T.C. Druce was indeed the fifth Duke of Portland incognito, then a male descendant of this marriage had an even better claim to the Dukedom than Annie Druce's son. Such a one was Mr George Hollamby Druce, a resident of Australia who appeared upon the scene in 1901. While Mrs. Druce's original claim may be attributed to delusion, this later one clearly appears much more opportunistic. To pursue such claim as he might have, G. H. Druce had, however, first to make some accommodation with the son of his elder brother. Truly the way of pretenders, no less than that of transgressors is hard. He also had to raise the wind to finance his "claim". To this end, over the next six years three limited companies were formed either by G.H. Druce, or in his interest, to raise what might well be called "venture capital". In the event of G.H. Druce being successful, investors were promised very handsome returns payable from the Portland estate and that of Lord Howard de Walden (who had inherited part of the Portland estate on the death of the fifth duke as there was no direct heir: this portion was also included in the claim).

Throughout the years the Druce claim existed it would have been necessary for the Duke of Portland's and Lord Howard de Walden's legal advisors to have maintained watching briefs upon the activities of the Druce factions and to employ agents to act on their behalf. From 1895 until 1903 the obvious man for such a role would have been Sherlock Holmes. Such a commission would not have entailed his constant attention. Once G.H. Druce appeared upon the scene, however, any enquiries may well have become more onerous because he presently produced witnesses from the USA and New Zealand who averred that, while in England years before, they had known the fifth Duke both as himself and in his role as C.H. Druce. While their stories would require investigation in this country, enquiries into these person's antecedents would presumably be referred, in the one case to the Pinkerton Agency, and in the other, to some similarly appropriate local body in Australia or New Zealand.

But in the autumn of 1903 Mr. Sherlock Holmes, now rising fifty, retired from a practice which had become wearisome to him and settled in a cottage on the South Downs, five miles from Eastbourne and in sight of the sea, to keep bees and, no doubt - as the humour took him - to begin to draft that promised magnum opus of his declining years, *The Whole Art of Detection*.

A little earlier, by one of those strange coincidences which were so often to mark their careers, that other celebrated detective, Mr Sexton Blake, exhausted by prolonged

overwork in rounding up The Brotherhood of Silence and other malefactors, dismissed all his staff except for his new page-boy (a cheery urchin known as Tinker whom he had rescued from a life on the streets), closed his office and, under the name of Henry Park, retired to a cottage in the secluded village of Brampton Stoke. There he too contemplated life as an apiarist. After some months, however, his idyll was shattered by a sudden charge of theft levelled against him by Sir George Clinton, the squire of Brampton Stoke (I have been unable to find this village in any gazetteer but as its neighbourhood was served by trains from Euston, it is probably somewhere in the West Midlands). Poor Mr. Park evaded arrest but Sir George Clinton then sought Sexton Blake's help in tracking him down. Blake, moved by the irony of this novel commission, determined to use it to clear his alter ego and find the real culprit. With Tinker's help, he was successful and returned, reinvigorated, to his practice, which he now transferred to Baker Street and which he was to continue to pursue for another 66 years to the confusion of the criminal classes world-wide.

So as Mr. Holmes retired, Mr. Blake entered upon the Baker Street phase of his career. He was, of course, now the obvious choice to continue Mr. Holmes's work on the Druce-Portland case, which was within four years to reach its climax.

G.H. Druce's problem lay in how to force action in his suit. He decided that the best way forward was to attack Herbert Druce so in 1907 he laid an information claiming that Herbert Druce had lied in his depositions about his father's death and burial, and was thus guilty of perjury.

The hearing of the summons against Herbert Druce for perjury began at the Marylebone Magistrate's court in October 1907. The case created a great sensation. Several eminent counsel were involved on behalf of both Druces, and with watching briefs for the two noble families involved. The courtroom was crowded. There is a contemporary drawing of the magistrate on the bench surrounded, and almost hidden by, a throng of fashionable ladies in Duchess of Devonshire hats.

The evidence of G.H. Druce's witnesses began to unravel under cross-examination but the *coup de grace* to the claimant came when Herbert Druce agreed to the opening of the vault in Highgate cemetery and the exhumation of his father's body. This was carried out under safeguards appropriate in such a serious matter and the well-preserved body of an elderly man recognisable as T.C. Druce was discovered within the inner, leaden, coffin.

The claimant's case collapsed. One of his "witnesses", the American, who was at one point in the proceedings described as a "professional perjurer", speedily absconded to the USA. While on shipboard he learnt that he was being pursued for perjury, and that the British authorities would demand his arrest and extradition as soon as his ship docked. He promptly suffered a complete nervous and mental collapse. On arrest he was found unfit to plead and confined to an asylum. He died a year or two later, still confined. The other two witnesses produced by G.H. Druce, both women, were convicted of perjury and were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

So the case ended. The Portland "claimant" unlike the Wapping butcher, Arthur

Orton, in the Tichborne case, suffered no prosecution as he had been careful to stay within the law. And the discreet parts that Messrs Holmes and Blake played received no publicity: obviously, another of those matters for which the world is not yet prepared.

¹These are all cases mentioned, but not narrated by Watson.

²Lest it be thought that this adventure of Mr Blake's was in part an exercise in plagiarism, let me point out that the account of his temporary retirement was published in *The Union Jack* ("Sexton Blake's Own Paper") of 15th October 1904 (in the story "Cunning Against Skill"), nearly two months before Mr Holmes's retirement was announced in *The Strand Magazine* in "The Adventure of The Second Stain".

THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE PARALLEL DETECTIVE

by Derek Ford

Last summer I spent a hard read catching up on "Sexton Blakes's Adventures" in my collection of **Penny Pictorial**: number 465 to 761 (1908/13). There is a complete list of the titles in the Packman's **Supplement**, commencing in August 1907 and finishing in December 1913. This must have been the first Union Jack 'licence' for their Harmsworth detective. The author, I understand, was Andrew Murray.

What did I find out about Mr. Murray's licence to write about Sexton Blake? Well, here is a selection:

"I am convinced that even in prosaic London, ten in every thousand found dead have been the victims of crime direct or indirect." (467) One of the detective's hobbies was the study of ashes of different kinds of tobacco. (475) Jefferson of Scotland Yard was on the phone to find one of their men. A clue from a newspaper ad. "Wanted: small furnished house. Must have close and uninterrupted view of the L & S.W. Railway", saves Prince Michael of Luranim from being blown up. (476) Blake told Sir Christopher that he could get the protection of a couple of Scotland Yard men for a guinea – but Sir Christopher was writing a post-dated cheque for 200 guineas – purchasing "peace of mind" – safeguarding the wedding presents of Sir Christopher's daughter on her wedding day – and of the Emerald Star. (477) The case started over a quarrel about a game of cards, or croquet. On a trial trip in a balloon, a heavy barometer is dropped and starts a murder hunt. Pedro is illustrated (478).

The first body in the library case of Colonel Despard, and the butler Watson. (481). The first case of Lady Molly Maxwell – "his understudy" – but Blake only appears at the end to rescue her. (488) Blake was deep in "Moscardel's Criminal Phrenology" when he was disturbed by a ring at the bell. He was without a servant –

the last importation had seen fit to attempt to tidy his notes and had left with a month's wages within the hour... A tilted window bracket reflected the features of the caller to him as he sat in his armchair in his den on the first floor. If they looked uninteresting he took the simple expedient of ignoring the bell. If otherwise, he pulled a self-contrived cord, which released the latch, and the door swung open... to a case of hidden Indian temple treasure, (489). A telegram from Lady Molly to Basle introduces Blake to the "Case of the Missing Minister" (490). Lady Molly is also concerned with the Yorkshire mystery about the famous dogs of Dare that no longer win the championship cup since farmer Morris came back from abroad, (492/3).

From his morning pile of letters Blake handed Bathurst a massive old-fashioned key and a typewritten letter. (519). His only confidant, Bathurst, with assistance from an elderly dumb mechanic – a Swede, named Olsen – whom he had saved from being hung for murder, he was building an aircraft in an old, half-ruined factory, on the dreary marshes eastward of London. There is an illustration of Blake flying the frail aircraft with Bathurst, (534). Blake now has a new man-servant, Simmons, and takes up, with Bathurst, a series of cases against Marston Hume (545/552) and (603/607). Blake had been up since four, hard at work on the poison cells of a moccasin snake sent over to him from Florida. (575). Returning from a flying visit to the Continent, he spots a fire at a house in Warringham Crescent. At the nearest street fire signal, he gives the alarm. He then asks a constable to let him know more "to my rooms in Messenger Square." (581). Incidentally, the Dalston Theatre, London, in May 1908 was advertising in Penny Pictorial: "Sexton Blake, Detective – 4 Acts – 3rd Act of 4 Sexton Blake's rooms in Baker Street" (467). "When Lady Molly Maxwell married two years ago..." (616)

"Sexton Blake drew level with his front door in Messenger Square – an unknown woman was lying dead at the foot of the stone steps." (648/661)

The second **Union Jack** licence must have been for **Answers**, and here again I refer to the Packmans' **Supplement** for a list of titles covering 1908 to 1911. Again the author was understood to be Andrew Murray, and it would be interesting to learn if he used the Messenger Square address and Bathurst as assistant.

In 1929 the editor of the **Union Jack** wrote of his requirements: "Characterisation of stock characters should be kept consistent with the published presentments "of the SBL "Complete detective stories." In 1948 of the SBL: "The same central characters are invariably used in those stories." (In 1929 the A.P. published 110 titles; in 1948, 45).

The **Knockout** Blake strip was a special case for juniors. I still wonder how Blake and Tinker, bound and gagged, escaped from the top of Nelson's column. The old licence of "with one bound" could hardly apply here. In 1952 a case story replaced the strip for a season, then it was back to the routine of a weekly strip case, this time Blake looking like a certain antiques dealer of my acquaintance.

Warwick Jardine wrote his first case-book for the SBL in 1932. Between 1948 and 1953 he wrote a total of eight titles; four vintage and four with too much of Captain Clifford Gordon of MI5 an example of the editorial "invariableness".

That rascal artist Tom Keating called his fake paintings “Sexton Blakes”. But the **Millennium Brewer’s Dictionary** recognised Blake’s true merit: “A true hero of boys’ stories, in many ways the equal of Sherlock Holmes.” And Anthony Parsons – a worthy successor to Conan Doyle – had done more than most to create that equality.

THE MASTER’S VOICE

Charles Hamilton describes how he created some of his Greyfriars characters

By Glyn Frewer

(Editor’s Note: Some of the quotations in this article appeared earlier on the long-play record *Floreat Greyfriars*, E.M.I. 1961)

I recently listened again to a recording of a 1997 radio programme Called “Good Old Greyfriars” on which Charles Hamilton, in that warm, friendly voice of his, looked back over his long creative life and recalled how some of his famous evergreen characters came into being. From this recording I have lifted a few verbatim quotes because, brief though they are, they do help to provide an insight into his thought processes.

Charles Hamilton lived in the same volatile, wayward world we all live in, yet he succeeded in creating a world of his own, a world into which he invites us, young and old, to inhabit and enjoy whenever we feel like it: an invitation as irresistible today as it ever was. Entering this world is like entering a retreat of the kind that today’s therapists frequently recommend, a place where one can escape the pressures, the idiocies, the uncertainties of modern living. This is where to go to feel secure, reassured. We are in familiar surroundings, among familiar friends, friends we can rely on, by and large, to always be true to themselves. Time means nothing, no one ages. Simply by opening a book and turning the pages, we readers discover a form of escapism more enjoyable than many on offer today. As Charles Hamilton himself puts it:

“Greyfriars – it’s a life of innocence. It’s as things should be. It’s no good saying things are exactly like that because we know they’re not, but it’s as things should be – and might be.”

Into this ideal world go his characters, and he describes the origin of some of them. On Bunter:

“Bunter is a combination of three persons. His circumference was borrowed from an editor. He overflowed the arms of his armchair and how he got into that chair and out again I never knew, but his

FRANK RICHARDS

AS / XNEW HIM

BY C. H. CHAPMAN



Frank Richards

circumference struck me as very striking and I handed it on to Bunter.”

One was a relation of mine that used to peer at me through his spectacles like an owl. That’s where he got his specs.

And another was another relative who was always expecting a cheque and in the meanwhile was very anxious to borrow a pound. And that became Bunter’s postal order.”

On Bunter’s name:

“A name must call the character to mind. If Billy Bunter had been called Bertie Montmorency he wouldn’t have come across at all, couldn’t have. There used to be, when I was a kid, something called Bunter’s Nervine, some kind of quack medicine. I never came across it, I used to see it advertised and I think it must have put the name into my mind. And also, the words Billy Bunter suggested themselves as someone who was fairly plump.”

On Johnny Bull’s name:

“Bull, for instance, suggests a certain strength and obstinacy. That’s what Johnny Bull is. He’s a good chap but he’s rather obstinate and inclined to say ‘I told you so’.”

On Hurree Jamset Ram Singh:

“I liked the idea of making a coloured boy a friend on equal terms with the other boys and a valued member of the Co. I thought it had a good effect.”

On Gosling:

“What I says is this ‘ere. I heard a socialist orator say that once, I think it was on that tub at Hyde Park Corner – oh, seventy years ago, I should think: one of the early socialists and he was waving his arms about: ‘What I says is this ‘ere.’ That went right off to Gosling.

Charles Hamilton touches briefly on his career. As we know, he first created the world of Greyfriars and its inhabitants in 1908, when he was thirty-one. On being asked if he felt he had a ‘golden period’:

“Nineteen twenty-five to nineteen thirty-five I think was the best. I did my best work, then, I think. ‘Course, I was only a young fellow then, about sixty-five.”

At the time he said this, he was nearing the end of his life. He was to die aged eighty-five and he was still writing almost to the end. He describes the approach to which he always adhered:

“The actual fact is, that if you write for boys, you must write for adults. You can’t write down to a boy, he spots you at once and throws the thing aside. And if there’s anything he doesn’t understand, he’s

perfectly willing to pass it over without understanding it. He thinks that's something the author knows and he doesn't."

How Charles Hamilton managed to sustain this lifetime of inventiveness and manifest enthusiasm for the world and characters he created is revealed at the end of the interview with an admission that encapsulates what you and I and all his readers feel when we read and re-read his stories:

"I know it's utterly absurd at my time of life, but when I'm sitting at a typewriter I'm only sixteen years old. Oh yes, I live at Greyfriars."

Thanks to Charles Hamilton, so, whenever we choose, can we all.

THE VANISHING BACKGROUND

by Ern Darcy

I sit back and read with awe the articles written in the Collector's Digest and annuals by the knowledgeable men and women of OBBC members over the years.

You can't help but be really impressed how well contributors put their view regarding their favourite papers, authors and artists. Charles Hamilton, Edwy Searles Brooks and the many and various authors of Sexton Blake. The Magnet, Gem, Nelson Lee etc. are spoken of with respect and joy.

How rich our hobby has been with so many club members and contributors writing with so much passion and knowledge of their particular loves. How lucky we have been to have had people of the calibre of Herbert, dear Eric and Bill Lofts with his inquisitive mind, like Sexton Blake.

Mary Cadogan, our editor, and Margery Woods with their love of School Friend, Schoolgirls' Own, and Girls' Crystal etc. adding the charm of Babs, Clara, Marjorie and Co. certainly helps to balance the ledger.

The dedicated work over the years of Ben Whiter, John Wernham, Roger Jenkins and other old boys book club members. Just a few of the many who have given us so much pleasure and enjoyment.

I give you another name not seen in our CD much – Edward Reginald Holme-Gall, another part of our vanishing background of authors who have left us. As a boy of 10 years in 1944, my first contact with the old papers was the wartime Champion. This was followed by Wizard, Hotspur, Rover and Adventure.

I always read E.R.H-G's yarns first in the Champion. For some reason I loved his stories. We were able to get back numbers of Champion and Triumph from our local second-hand bookshop. I read with much interest Edwin Dale and Rupert Hall without knowing they were the same author.

During the sixties I tried to get in touch with Mr Home-Gall without success. In 1970, Mrs Story from Howard Baker suggested I get in contact with Bill Lofts. Within

a short time "Sexton Blake Bill" had put me in contact with E.R. H-G in Montilevet, France.

I then corresponded with this lovely gentleman author for over 3 years. We would write long letters to each other and he sent beautiful cards to our two daughters. Bill had found that so many authors were very friendly and helpful, and Mr Home-Gall was no exception. When he died in December 1974 we all felt that we'd lost a true friend. We had certainly lost a man who had endeared himself to our family. From his letters I can tell you a little about this prolific author.

He started in the very early twenties writing for D.C. Thomson, the firm that he wrote for again in later years. The Amalgamated Press paid more, and he was lucky enough to have his stories liked by R.T. Eves, Chief-Editor of *Champion*, *Triumph* and several girls' periodicals of that time.

He wrote detective, adventure and war stories as Rupert Hall, and sporting stories as Edwin Dale. He wrote the first *Speedway* and *Ice Hockey* serials in Great Britain. He started detective *Colwyn Dane* as Rupert Hall for three to four years, then it became *Mark Grimshaw*, written by "all and sundry".

Mr Home-Gall attended all early speedway meetings and met all the famous Aussie and U.K. riders. His favourites Vic Duggan, Bluey Wilkinson, Lionel Van Praag and Dicky Case, are legends of the sport here in Australia. Dicky Case was washing dishes in an Australian restaurant when he wrote to Edwin Dale asking how to become a speedway rider. The rest was history. The power of our boyhood authors!

To my query, did you play sport as a boy? He replied, "I played cricket and football in my youth, once did a half lap on an Aussie's speediron then fell off, deciding that I'd rather write about it than partake". About *Ice Hockey*, "I had to present autographed copies of the *Haunted Ice-Rink* to the winning team at *Streatham Ice Rink* and finished on my backside, to the great delight of the two teams and the entire crowd."

Edward told me the story of his successful *Boys Favourite Library*, bought out after WWII. Sales of the No. 1 reached nearly 70,000 copies. He received, as an ex-serviceman, a "suicide ration" of paper so called because you received enough paper for a failure but not enough for a bumper success. He was doing well until the "big guns" returned and shot the B.F.L. down in flames.

Edward had joined the army, under-age, in the Great War and fought with gallantry in Turkey. He landed in Suvla Bay on the 10th August 1915 at the age of 16. During that campaign and others he attained the rank of Captain and was awarded the *Military Cross* before returning to London and writing.

Mr Home-Gall wrote many stories for A.P.'s *Triumph*, *Champion*, *Champion Annual* and *Champion Library*. Bill Lofts helped me find the titles and authors of all but 42 of the 274 *Champion Library* and I have 62 of E.R.H-G's *Edwin Dale* and *Rupert Hall* stories. Allowing that he may have written a few of the missing 42, he has written almost 25% of the *Champion Library* (his first *Champion Library* I have is No. 9 and his last No. 274). A big effort over the years considering his large input into A.P.'s and Thomson Weeklies.

I found this gentleman author a most humble person who appreciated his readers over the years. A generous man who had no hesitation in sending me gifts of his work. A typical example of his generosity was his gift of a rare proof copy of his cricket book, "A Prince of the Willow". This copy was the only one he had left.

The inscription inside reads as follows, "To Ern Darcy as a small souvenir from the author of this story to as loyal a reader as any writer of juvenile fiction could ever wish to have (stretching back from today into the 40s). Edward Home-Gall Villa Tout-Bas Montilevet France 1972."

During the sixties and early seventies Edward had huge success in girls' fiction with Shirley Flight Air Hostess. This prolific seller sold 1.5 million copies in a series of books featuring Shirley and her chum Wendy in various lands, having exciting adventures. Shirley sold nearly 600,000 copies in France alone and was translated into 8 European languages.

Shirley proved so popular that a "bandes-bessinnees" (comic form) was produced monthly. This was a book of 200 frames. Edward never liked this picture form but it was a regular breadwinner. I have a couple of these that I can't read because they are in French and Spanish. Edward, like all of us, still loved the written publications. He had approximately 50 of these monthly Shirleys at the time of his death.

I only have one photo of Edward as he was a shy man but my good friend Bill Lofts sent me a gift of E.R.H-G's The Outlaw Mountie. Bill penned a good description of E.R.H-G. inside the book. It read, "I had the pleasure of meeting this author in the 1960s when his home was on an island on the Thames. Tall, lean with an extremely friendly disposition, he was kind, hospitable and I felt instantly at home with him. For many years he wrote almost the whole contents of two very popular boys papers, The Champion and the Triumph, under his own name and the pen names of Rupert Hall and Edwin Dayle stories which gave pleasure to many. Edward R. Home-Gall died in France in 1974 aged 76 years. W.O.G. Lofts 1985."

Strange as it may seem to Hamiltonia lovers, the richness and passion they have for Magnet and Gem, I also have for Champion, Triumph and Thomsons. My love of cricket and football games that I played for many years and my boyhood connection with the speedway near my home made me a natural for E. R. H-G's writing. His own favourites, Champion's Bulldog Blade and Triumph's Mad Carew were also my favourites. Going through some old copies I found another firm favourite, Victor Gaunt-Master Spy. Just as good as when read many years ago.

A disappointment for me is not knowing which stories Edward wrote over the years for DC Thomson. I fantasize sometimes about my favourites that he may have written but it is just that – a fantasy. That makes me a little envious of the knowledge of the Hamiltonians; they really know their subject!

Edward Reginald Home-Gall's stories and adventures, like those of his fellow authors, may have come from another age but their appeal still lives on for young and old alike.

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Derek Marsden



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The title "Doing one's Homework" is rendered in a large, bubbly, outlined font. Behind the text, two rifles are crossed diagonally, and a pencil is positioned horizontally across the bottom left of the word "Homework".

Doing one's Homework

by Bob Whiter

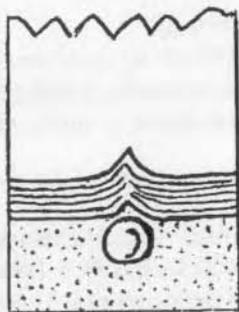
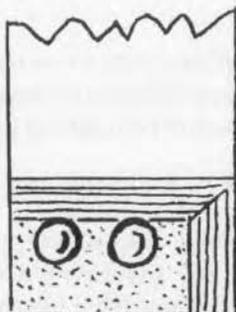
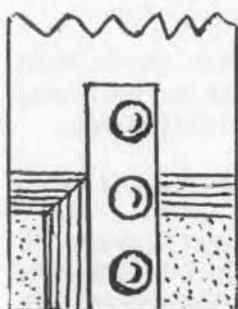
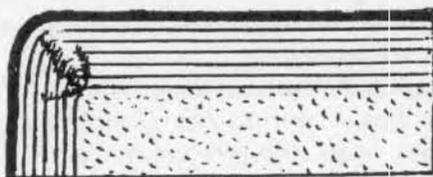
I suppose most people who know me, know I'm very interested in things military, particularly those appertaining to the Two World Wars, especially World War I. I suppose that this is because I served in the second, and was able to observe the status quo as it were. Subsequently I'm afraid it tends to make one a little critical of books and documentaries on these two conflicts. One example – books and narrators will persist in referring to the German army of World War II as the 'Wehrmacht' which really means all of the German armed forces, i.e. Army, Navy and Air force. The German word for army is "heer," sometimes the French term "armee" was used. Another expression that irritates me is the way everyone refers to the German Field Marshal Rommel as the "Desert Fox". I had lots of friends in the 8th Army and I never heard them once refer to him as such; not that the British didn't give full credit to a clever enemy – they did, even using the term "doing a Rommel" when a successful stunt of any kind was pulled. Desmond Young in his excellent book on the German soldier never once refers to him using the description. The first time I heard the expression was in 1951 when Hollywood released the movie entitled "Desert Fox," with James Mason playing the Field Marshal.

I'm always a little surprised when men who served in one or both of the two conflicts tend to possess so little military knowledge. I well remember as a boy, and beginning my life-long interest on the subject, being given a Prussian 1st class Iron Cross. This has a pin or some other form of attachment which enables it to be secured directly to the uniform without a ribbon (on the outside in the centre of the right hand tunic pocket). At the time I didn't know this and asked several veterans about it. "Oh, someone's put a pin on the back so that his girl can wear it as a broach," was the

answer I got – some didn't even know what to tell me and at least admitted such. It wasn't until I started collecting photographs of Germans wearing both second and first class crosses that I realized what I had.

I would have thought that W.E. Johns, having served in the war, would have known his "onions." In the story which first appeared in the **Gem**, namely "The Spyfliers," Johns has Rex tie up the corporal using the "pull through" from a German rifle (page 188 of the reprint). Neither the 1888 Commission rifle nor the 1898 Mauser rifle or their carbines had pull throughs (for those not conversant with the term, the "pull through" was a cord with a weight at one end and a loop the other). This was used with a piece of flannelette folded through the loop to clean the interior of the rifle barrel. It was concealed in the butt of the Short Lee Enfield, when not in use, the butt plate having a hinged trap. The German rifle was provided with a cleaning rod. This was carried in a groove in the wooden fore-end under the barrel. The protruding end, slotted for the cleaning cloth, necessitated the partial hollowing out of the bayonet's hilt to allow it to be fixed to the rifle.

CORPORALS' BRAID ON COLLAR



CORPORALS' BRAID ON CUFFS.

Another mistake I noticed in Johns' otherwise quite excellent story was his reference to the German corporal, i.e., "wore the chevron of a corporal," (page 181). In the old Imperial army, unter officier's (corporal's) rank was denoted by braid on the collar and cuffs. Perhaps I'm nit-picking, but when I think of the research I carry out before writing articles for the various military magazines, I don't see why other people can't do the same. I also find it strange in Johns' case – after all he'd had personal experiences both with aeroplanes and German troops and guards.

On page 113 we find another error. Normally the Sopwith Camel had two Vickers guns mounted on the top of the engine cowling; their breeches were enclosed in a "hump," which gave the plane its name! Unfortunately when used as a night fighter, the glare from these guns tended to blind the pilot. Two Lewis (sometimes just one) were installed on Foster mountings above the centre section of the upper wing, the two Vickers being removed. For those interested, a visit to the Imperial War Museum, London, enables the visitor to view a Sopwith Camel with a Lewis gun so mounted. It is the actual plane that Lieutenant Stuart Culley, a Canadian, used to bring down the Zeppelin L53 into the North Sea, the pilot taking off from a lighter towed behind the Destroyer HMS Redoubt. But Johns tells us that the S.E.5a had twin guns mounted on the engine's cowling. Page 113, i.e., "a double stream of flame was blazing from the two guns mounted on the engine cowling." In point of fact, this particular machine had only one Vickers gun mounted on the side of the nacelle and a Lewis gun, à la Foster mounting, above the upper wing.

Speaking about doing reference before writing either story or article, I'm reminded of my good friend Roger Jenkins' remarks after visiting Frank Richards' library at his home: "Lots of reference books with pertinent words and phrases underlined in pencil." One example comes to mind – when the boys went to South America – incidentally when reading this Series, I learned what peccaries and anacondas were. I showed one of the **Magnets** to my headmaster – he showed a little disapproval at first, but on perusing same, said, "This man had done his homework."

Postscript

After all my criticism, I would still like to say a very big thank you to Norman Wright (also Jennifer Schofield and Andrew Skilleter) for republishing the story and making it available to surely a large number of both old and new readers and collectors.

SALE: Greyfriars Book Club with slip cases (all VG copies): 2. Loder Captain £45; 4. India Series £45; 6. Dallas Series £30; 7. Crusaders £15; 10. Bullseyes £12; 18. Bounder of Greyfriars £15; 33. Pengarth £15. Sexton Blake Libraries (VG): First Series 262; 343; 348; 355; 361; 362; 371; 375; 378; 380; 391. Second Series 12; 13; 22; 29; 108; 120; 129; 148. All at £2.50 each. Postage extra. R.E. ANDREWS, 80 GREENWOOD AVENUE, LAVERSTOCK, SALISBURY SP1 1PE. Tel: 01722-326624.

SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

by Ted Baldock

Or am I mad, or else this is a dream;
Let fancy still my sense in lethe sleep;
If it be thus to dream, still let me sleep.

Shakespeare. Twelfth Night.

Greyfriars – Nulli Secundis

It has been said, not without a degree of wisdom, that one's youthful friends and the memory of early adventures should be left to the ever receding march of time. It has also been said that distance lends colour and charm to the view. However, to me the urge was irresistible. It was something I had to accomplish, be it wise or the reverse. I would return, seek out and attempt to catch the essence the atmosphere, of those early Greyfriars days. Whether the attempt would prove illusory time would reveal.

As I walked along a bosky Friardale Lane towards those familiar gates a light breeze was stirring the leaves of the trees. The branches met overhead forming a welcome shade and bringing the heady scent of gorse from the heights of Courtfield Common. Here was the stile beyond which wound the foot-path through Friardale wood. I wondered whether the ancient Gosling would, after so many years, 'still be holding fort' as in those distant days when I was a Greyfriars fellow.

In my mind I see him still gazing into space holding in one gnarled hand a formidable bunch of keys and awaiting the first mellow chime from the clock-tower announcing the ceremony of 'Lock-up'. Before its echo had fairly ceased he would bring the great gates together and insert one of his keys, thus securing Greyfriars within from the world without. Should any unfortunate fellow fail to show up on time he would be well aware of the fate awaiting him. There would follow a little ceremony which never failed to give Gossy pleasure. That of taking a fellow's name to be duly reported to the victim's form-master.

Passing through the gates, with Gosling's gracious permission, and entering the quadrangle I became aware of a strong sense of history, of timeless days and years of peace and tranquillity. So many events in and around these grey old buildings through the centuries, where William George Bunter, Harry Wharton and Co. and a host of other fellows well known to us have contributed their mite to the history of the school.

I was acutely aware of the atmosphere as I wondered through the well-remembered scenes of the past. There stood the fountain in the centre of the Quad, there the smooth green turf sacrosanct to the great 'Men' of the sixth form, there the tuckshop, there the ancient elms, sturdy and shady as ever. Even the rooks were still in residence. How many generations of these wily birds had witnessed the life below as they

swayed on their lofty perches?

I next approached that hallowed precinct, Masters passage, and that august retreat from official duties, Masters common room. A restricted area to all but the teaching staff. A room within which, at times of stress, masters were wont to reveal hidden facets of character, where steam and strong feelings were released in comparative safety from the world at large. Where animosities occasionally rose to the surface, rumbled and erupted causing storms to rage for brief periods, then die away under the soothing influence of coffee and biscuits.

The passage was empty and silent as was the common room, it being some weeks into the summer vacation. All the masters were away, following their various diversions. Mr. Quelch, it may be safely assumed, would be engaged on one of his walking tours. One of his pockets is fairly certain to contain a small edition of the *Aeneid* of Virgil, (what better company), the remove master being by nature a solitary gentleman who enjoyed his own company with that of his favourite classical author. As he said on one occasion to Mr. Prout, the Master of the fifth form at a somewhat acid moment. 'I am never less alone than when by myself'.

I stood in the silent passage, reflecting on past happenings. Brooms, brushes, dusters and Hoovers had completed their various tasks leaving a pristine 'Battle Ground' for the campaigns of next term when once more there will be many sounds reverberating as of old. Of a surety the deep boomings of Mr. Prout will be heard, together with the sharp ejaculations of Messrs Hacker and Capper, and Mr Twigg will be contributing his customary mild twitterings. In short, life will again pulsate in Masters common room.

Next I sought that other, perhaps more famous, passage where dwelt in term-time Harry Wharton and Co., and other members of the remove. It also was empty and quiet: all the study doors were open, doors through which on countless occasions Billy Bunter had been forcibly ejected, hurled, kicked and frequently led forth by a hand clutching a fat ear midst loud local accompaniment. This passage may be said to be steeped in history – at times quite violent history.

From the top landing runs a narrow stairway leading up to the box-rooms. These dusty apartments have been the scene of many exciting incidents in the long Greyfriars story. The passage has echoed to the sound of many feet, the shuffle of monkish sandals, the rush of youthful boots with shouts and laughter and, at times, the faint chantings from distant times when the great building flourished as a monastery.

The Headmaster's garden is a pleasant and shady retreat on a warm August afternoon: a well tended and beloved garden, evidence by the stooping figure in the rose bed, busily occupied. Mimble, for it is he, takes great pride and care in keeping everything in immaculate order. It also briefly provides an escape route from his normal duties at the tuckshop where he is under the eagle eye and ready tongue of Mr. Mimble, the presiding genius of that important establishment.

Dr. Locke and Mr. Mimble share a common bond in their love of a well maintained garden. Social status is forgotten, or at least put aside, when they consult together. The Head places great confidence in the opinions of Mimble who, with many years

of practice, has become steeped in garden lore. It is in the rose-garden that the Head enjoys the all too short intervals from the responsibilities of steering Greyfriars through the inevitable ups and downs which occur in the running of a great school.

I recall vividly those seemingly endless drowsy summer afternoons in the dim old form-room, half listening to the on-going drone of Mr. Quelch's voice as he strove to impart some elements of knowledge to a less than enthusiastic form. Many of his pupils would be fighting a strong desire to 'drop-off'. In fact for a few it was a losing battle with the continuous drone and the closeness of the form room. They were in due time abruptly brought back to reality when the gimlet eye fell upon them. Mr. Quelch was engaged in what can only be described as an uphill task. Now, years later, having reached the full stature of maturity I feel that he deserved better, a more appreciative form, certainly a more attentive one.

Also recalled were the incredibly slow creeping hands of the clock during those endless afternoons with the sun shining so brightly and invitingly outside. The sharp rap of the remove master's voice as he reprimanded Bob Cherry for shuffling his feet, while Lord Mauleverer, partly hidden by Bob's broad back, dozed peacefully on. Then at long last would come the cheery clang of the bell signalling 'down pens' for the day. What relief, what joy, and what a rush to get out-doors, what an uproar of voices, above which could be heard on its top squeek, "I say, you fellows". We were free, that is until tea time, after which would come 'prep' – but that would seem a world away.

Leaving Greyfriars in the cool of the evening, and having slipped a large silver coin into a gnarled hand at the gate, I was sauntering along the lane to Friardale, there to take a bus from the village to Courtfield, and a train home.

Deep in thought concerning all I had seen that day and the many memories which had surfaced in my mind, I glanced up and saw approaching me a stalwart figure in Police uniform which seemed to be familiar. I had seen it many times in the past, for it was none other than Police constable Tozer, the local arm of the law. He was gazing keenly at me, obviously a bell was being struck deep within his memory. We came abreast and he saluted.

"Lovely afternoon, sir" he said.

"Indeed it is, constable."

"I'm sure I've seen you before sir, somewhere".

He gazed keenly at me now.

Then recognition suddenly broke upon him..

"You were at the school, sir, now I remember."

"And you are constable Tozer, I exclaimed.

We stood chatting for some time about the past. Then he said "I am on my way to see Mr. Gosling, for we usually pass the time of day when I come this way."

Time had been very kind to 'old Tozey'. He seemed not to have changed – perhaps he was a little stouter, but it was the same 'arm of the law' that we knew in earlier days and whose official leg we had so often pulled. Thus we parted. He towards Greyfriars and his old friend, Gosling, I towards home with my mind full of

happy impressions. In restless times 'our' world remains calm and serene.

So did my Odyssey come to an end, my attempt to bring into focus some glimpses of that far off time, school-days and youth. To sense again the freshness and unbounded confidence of a time which has quite rightly been termed, 'The best years of our lives'.

Greyfriars placed an indelible stamp upon me which will remain unfaded in my heart. That evening when I returned home I went up to my study to see in serried ranks handsomely bound volumes upon the shelves, relating the history of a unique school, and an equally unique band of characters.

ABDUCTED FROM MORCOVE

by Ray Hopkins

The Captain of the Fourth Form at Morcove shifted uneasily in her bed. Was she dreaming of the film Study 12 coterie had seen at the Electric Palace in Barncombe that halfer! The aeroplane's loud hum sounded as though it was circling the school, lighter in tone than that of the airship in the film. Betty Barton sat up in bed, eyes wide open and conscious that the noise was still in her ears. She wasn't dreaming! "Fay Wray!" she said.

"No, dear," a yawny voice came to her ears from the next bed. "Your old pal, Polly. Think Charlotte Greenwood. How I envy her long legs. I could be a netball star if I had them" Betty said. "No, I mean that's who the new girl reminds me of. Fay Wray! It's the almond eyes." Polly Linton jumped out of bed. "You're making me hungry. What's that noise, by the way? Oh, I get the connection. You're thinking of DIRIGIBLE. But that noise is not coming from an airship. Not deep enough. And more jerky."

"What ze diggings! All zat noise," came from the bed whereon lay Morcove's royal queen of Nakara. "Oh, Lor'," murmured Polly. "The infant's awake Now there'll be trouble." And soon there was a "Yowp" from Paula Creel as Naömer Nakara, jumping out of bed to see what the commotion was all about, rumbled the hair of the long-suffering one.

Meanwhile, the rest of the fourth-form dormitory was clustering around the window trying to follow the course of the now loud plane. Madge Minden, Tess Trelawney and Pam Willoughby watched as the plane flew lower over the games-field. Suddenly, the engine cut out. "It's going to crash," cried Madge. But, no. It came to a brief stop and then to the amazement of the girls at the window, "Betty and her chums were almost deafened by an outburst like that of a machine-gun, whilst the whirling propellers set the mammoth bi-plane taxiing along the grass."

"Well, what do you think of that?" was the cry that went up, but Betty, who was now leaning right out of the window, cried. "Quiet, girls," suddenly turning white as she heard, from the games-field where the plane had landed, "Help me!" followed by the sound of continuous sobbing. When Betty and Co. arrived downstairs, they

found Miss Somerville, Morcove's headmistress, pulling back the bolts and catching a half-fainting schoolgirl leaning breathless, with eyes closed, against the front door. "They opened the door and pushed me on to the ground. I don't know where I am." She clasped Miss Somerville. "Don't turn me away, please."

Betty and Co. watched as the Head led the girl to her study. "Did you notice," Betty said to Polly, "she has a foreign accent, and her eyes!" Polly said, "Like Fay Wray, yes. I did notice. So that's three of them: Fay, Amy Johnson and the new girl. Brenda Garth, though, doesn't sound foreign. She speaks very precisely. Perhaps she learned English at school after speaking another language at home and of course, Amy, I mean the real one, if you heard her on the wireless last year, has a real Yorkshire twang, bah goom, she 'as!"

Miss Somerville thinks the mystery girl will sleep more comfortably with girls of her own age, and gives her an empty bed in the Fourth Form Dormitory. As dawn breaks, some movement disturbed Betty and, in the half light, she saw the girl from the plane walking slowly around the dormitory. Thinking she may be sleep walking she half rose to guide her back to bed, then realised the girl was stopping at each bed, staring searchingly at every occupant. When she reached Brenda's she came to a sharp halt and Betty heard her sudden intake of breath and a muttered word in a foreign tongue. Why, thought Betty, was the girl looking for Brenda, her definite objective, for she immediately returned to her own bed and settled down to sleep. But Betty remained awake until rising bell, baffled by the mystery girl's actions.

Next morning, the girls hear from the doctor that the girl is quite uninjured but the shock of being ejected from the aeroplane has taken away her memory, even to the extent of not remembering her own name or where she came from. "Foreign!" Betty was sure of it. "There was just that slight accent, and there were mannerisms now and then to make it certain that she was not British-born." Miss Somerfield had assigned her to Brenda's study for the present. "But, why," said Polly, "had she immediately spoken in English when found, when she made a point of saying that she had no idea which country the plane had dumped her in?" Betty introduces the girl to her new study mate as Miss Dark because she arrived at night. Polly christens her Angela, adding a rider to the effect that "Angels don't usually travel by plane, but still..." She who had flown in lets out a ripple of appreciative laughter and says she likes her new name.

Brenda Garth is called out of morning classes by a visit from her mother who has travelled down from London and plans to stay for a short while in Barncombe, Morcove's nearest town. She tells Brenda that there is danger ahead, a statement which would have had the heads of Betty and Co. in a whirl, had they heard it. "We must not speak in our own tongue at Morcove. Therein lies the danger. No one must know that we are not English." "Lucky I had that English governess," replies her daughter. "I'm sure there's no trace of a foreign accent when I speak. At least, I've been at Morcove for only a few weeks and no one has remarked that I speak in any way differently from the rest of them."

Mrs. Garth tells Brenda there is trouble in their own country (name not mentioned

thus far in text). "A year ago, your very life was only saved by smuggling you out of the country just in time. There is a rumour that they would like to have you back. No one knows where you are living."

Brenda points out Angela to her mother and relates her mysterious arrival, a shock which has apparently robbed her of her memory. She has a slight foreign accent she tells Mrs. Garth. The latter gives a searching look at Angela as she passes in the distance which causes her to comment that Angela has a certain likeness to Brenda and warns her daughter to be on guard against her, night and day. "There may be no connection with the troubles in our native land but, nevertheless, keep a constant watch on her, in case. If she was sent from our country then our secret is known." Mother and daughter depart for Barncombe, Mrs. Garth assuring Brenda she will remain there while their perilous situation still exists.

News arrives that the wreckage of an aeroplane has been washed up on the seashore. The Study 12 coterie, accompanied by a white-faced Angela, learn from a local policeman and a government official who has arrived to check on survivors that no plane has been reported overdue or missing. Miss Somerfield immediately puts the seashore below the cliff on which Morcove stands, where the plane's remains are being battered by rough seas, out of bounds. During afternoon classes Angela is sent for further questioning by officials enquiring into her case.

After Brenda leaves her mother in Barncombe she hears in the Creamery that an aeroplane had come down in the sea during the night and is lying just offshore below Morcove. She decides to go to the shore before returning to the school to see if she can find any evidence of the plane's departure point. If it turns out to be one from her own country, that will prove Angela came from there and her mother's fears will be well realised. But there is nothing to be seen. "Early in the afternoon a tugboat had steamed up to attempt salvage operations. There had been an immediate attempt to drag the plane out of the rocky shallows on the falling tide. When the salvage people had thought they had the machine towed clear and likely to keep afloat while buoys were being lashed to her, it had suddenly gone under. So now that mysterious aeroplane, unidentified and unclaimed, was lying at the bottom of the sea, a good half mile from the beach. She was not worth diving operations."

Brenda is observed by a man and a woman in sea-soddened clothes who are sheltering from the wind inside one of the many caves which penetrated the cliff. But they keep well back in the dark so that Brenda does not observe them. Further along the sands Brenda is knocked out by a piece of rock dislodged by Angela racing down the zig-zag path to the beach in search of any flotsam that may have been washed up there. When Angela sees the inert body, making sure that Brenda is entirely unconscious, she loosens the neck of Brenda's school blouse and reveals a small tattoo of an "intricate pattern, no bigger than a sixpence". Angela smiles and mutters, "So!"

Brenda moves her head slightly and Angela just has time to replace the neck of her blouse, when Brenda opens her eyes. "I saw you fall and came as quickly as I could", said Angela. "Can you get up?" Betty, hurrying down the zig-zag path,

having been sent to bring Angela back by Miss Everard, who feared Angela's loss of memory was causing her to wander about not knowing what she was doing, wonders momentarily if, seeing the two girls alone on the beach, one has attacked the other. However, seeing Brenda on her feet and hearing the explanation, she urges them to return to school and put Miss Everard's fears at rest.

Returning to the form-room in the evening, to retrieve a book she needed for prep, Betty is startled to see the face of an unknown woman peering into the darkened room. "A handsome face, charged with a look of anxiety and desperation, the dark eyes peering in craftily." The face vanishes in a second as Betty makes a sudden move to jump to the window. Betty muttered, "What's coming over the school, that one thing after another is happening like this!" "Might have been someone from the plane," opines Polly. "Landed safely and went into hiding instead of reporting herself alive and well. Afraid of being arrested for pushing a schoolgirl out of the plane and abandoning her." "Thank you, Mr. Sexton Blake," said Betty, "No, dear, just me letting my imagination run riot, as usual," answered Polly. Betty wagged her finger. "Take notes. You may yet appear in the UNION JACK!"

Before rising bell, Betty and Polly accompanied Brenda, who had made the request the night before that they go with her, to the beach before the school is awake. They dress warmly, for gusts of strong wind were breaking against Morcove's outer walls as they leave the school and raising flurries of sand along the beach. "Here look at this," Polly stops them and points to a schoolgirl's footprints recently made, untouched by the tide. "Guess who?" says Polly and nods when Betty silently moves her lips, "Angela!" "Looking for flotsam," says Polly. "But why," whispers Betty, "is Brenda interest in the same thing?"

All three girls are searching along the beach separately, Betty pounces on a sodden object. "Of all things, it was a printed book and every word was in a foreign language, and even in a strange, old-fashioned type." But Betty barely has time to notice this when the book is snatched from her hand and a vicious shove knocks her to the ground. She stared open-mouthed at her attacker and recognised the same hard face she had seen through the form-room window, that face now suffused with fury as the woman turned and ran away from Polly and Brenda who were now racing toward their form captain.

After school has finished for the day, Betty and Polly return to the beach in case more "clues", as Polly puts it, may have been washed ashore. "And," added Betty, "we'll just check the caves for any signs of that woman." The caves they enter are empty, but one, connected with a summer residence on the cliff top above, now, in November, untenanted, has had the padlock broken on the gates erected at the entrance and the store cupboards inside, ransacked. "There must be two of them judging by all the footprints in the sand. Who are they? Where did they come from? Why did they come to Morcove? And how is it that nothing is known in this country about a missing aeroplane?" says Polly.

Footsteps crunching in the sand as of someone approaching, alert them at this point. The two girls crouch down behind one of the lockers. Will it be the mystery

woman? Betty and Polly prepare to make a quick dash for safety. But they stand upright, staring. The new arrival is Brenda Garth. She is disconcerted to find the others in the cave and refuses to tell them why she is searching alone in the cave. Why didn't she ask them to go with her this time?

On the way back to the zig-zag path, they see another girl at the water's edge, some distance from them, picking something out of the sand. But she speeds off with her back to them when Polly calls out to her. "Angela Dark, for a cert," says Polly. Angela has locked herself in the study which she shares with Brenda and refuses to open it when Betty knocks at the door. Betty returns to the study while Angela is still at tea and finds the fireplace full of ashes. "You have destroyed what you found at the beach. You should have taken it to Miss Somerfield. Apparently you don't want anything to be seen that may get washed up from that plane. Why?" But Angela clamps her lips together and refuses to reply.

The Study 12 coterie bombarded the Morcove Detective Agency (Barton and Linton, Props.) for information and is in a buzz of speculation about Angela's find on the sands. In other areas, she is pleasing Miss Everard, the Fourth-Form mistress, by working diligently in class and turning out to be a creditable pupil with no language difficulties, if not popular with Betty and Co. But why had no one turned up to claim her, and is her memory still as faulty as she claims? Study 12 thinks the memory loss is "all bunk" and only retained for sinister reasons.

Brenda is called away from Morcove by a telegram from her mother. She assures them when they find her packing her bag in the dormitory that the message did not contain bad news. In fact, she allows them to read it. Her mother is sending a car for her at one o'clock. Brenda tells them she is greatly surprised but unconcerned.

Very early the following morning, Betty and Polly find themselves again on the beach below Morcove. "The tide was high and waves of monstrous size were rolling in, to tumble and crash on to the beach, when the wind would fill the air with flying spray." Something had awakened Polly. Angela's bed was empty! Angela has clearly made a discovery, and is kneeling, digging a hole in the sand with her hands. Giving Angela time to get to the top of the zig-zag path and disappear, Betty and Polly dig up a brown paper parcel, quite dry, and obviously not flotsam from the sunken aeroplane. The parcel contains a man's dark suit and a peaked cap! "That's a chauffeur's uniform," says Polly with conviction, as they climbed the zig-zag path. Although saying she was puzzled, she suddenly stops dead. "Betty, just suppose – oh, golly – suppose this uniform was used by the man who drove Brenda away? You remember, her mother wasn't in the car. Angela has been told to return it where she "borrowed" it, in case it is missed. And that likeness we've noticed between Angela and Brenda. What's become of Brenda? Has she been kidnapped?"

The two girls race on to Morcove not knowing that their conversation has been heard by Angela, concealed in bushes at the side of the path when she realised that they were following her and that the parcel she had so carefully buried is being taken back to Morcove. "She crawled on hands and knees out on to the gorse-covered level of the cliff-top, and then, rising to her feet, she dashed away in the wild, wintry

morning, like one in fear for life itself."

Betty and Polly show the parcelled chauffeur's uniform to Miss Somerfield. Matron confirms that it is one from Morcove's own stores. Study 12 girls and the rest of the Fourth Form are detailed to search the school for Angela Dark. After listening to Betty and Polly's theory, Miss Somerfield is convinced that Brenda is in the hands of kidnappers, probably Angela's parents, and their daughter indeed was sent to Morcove to aid in the abduction of the new girl. But who is Brenda really and why has it been necessary to abduct her?

Angela cannot be found by the many searchers. The head tells them to leave the school environs and continue the search. All this excitement and mystery before breakfast! "The undulating moor was all around them – easy place for anybody to hide in, and oh, so difficult for those seeking a runaway." A thorough search of the moor ended in disappointment but, finally arriving at a road at the edge of the moor, it is Polly who spots a piece of paper and pounces upon it. It contains a confirmation of their worst fears. "Car not taking me to Mother. Come and find me, Brenda."

Later, a terrific storm at sea, including lightning flashes, reveals to watchers at Study 12's window, something floating shorewards. "Sure as fate," says Polly, using borrowed field glasses, "that must be part of the sunken plane. The storm has broken it up and washing it ashore at last." On the way to the cloakroom, Miss Everard is told and she urges the girls to see if they can retrieve anything from the remains of the plane. "If only we can find where the plane came from it will tell us where Angela Dark came from and why Brenda Garth has been abducted."

"The crumpled mass was rising and falling in the waves just where they tumbled finally to the shore. Higher still the hill of water rose and then it burst into a foaming flood that swept up the shingly slope, bringing the wreckage with it." There were no registration marks on the underwing of the plane that formed part of the wreckage. Polly splashes her way beyond the water's edge as she spies a small, wooden object floating shorewards. It is a cigar box! Disappointment all round. No clues here! But Miss Everard discovers a small label inside the box which is clearly a name and address. The words in a foreign language mean nothing to her or Miss Somerfield. Discovering which language it is will mean they will know from which country the aeroplane left on its journey to Morcove.

Dolly Delane's parents run a successful small-holding less than a mile from Morcove and live in a small cottage beside the main road into Barncombe, the nearest town. Dolly is a day girl but still a member of the Study 12 coterie, though not as frequent a participator after school. Chores and other useful backup to her parents are Dolly's lot in their business which kept "a cow or two, calves, chickens, bees, pigs, geese and turkeys," so Dolly is a great help to her father with the livestock. When Dolly returns to Morcove after dinner at home she is met by an excited crowd of girls. "A place called Kroncova," Betty told her. "Good Lord, where's that?" inquired Dolly. "Somewhere in the Balkans," says Polly. "Capital of Solvakia, in fact." Dolly shook her head again. "So that's where the plane came from and also the one we called Angela Dark." "And, guess what," went on Polly. "This place we've

From Clue to Clue at Morcove!



The Chums of the Fourth Form at Morcove School Tackle Their Biggest Problem!



The Mystery Ship at Morcove!

By MARJORIE STANTON

Meet the Chums of Morcove School in the Greatest of All School Mystery Stories.



The Schoolgirl from the Skies!

By MARJORIE STANTON

never heard of is in the news today. Imagine that!" Betty interposed, "They want to restore the monarchy but she who should be on the throne has disappeared." "Shades of THE PRISONER OF ZENDA," said Madge Minden. "Good Heavens, girls," said Dolly. "Is it possible our schoolgirl amnesiac is the missing queen?" Betty said, "Perhaps that's why Brenda was kidnapped. She found out too much about Angela and had to be taken to keep her silent." "The girl who knew too much!" said Polly. "Oh, what a good title for a film." "And Mrs. Garth can't be traced either. Looks as though the kidnappers have got her, too," said Betty.

After lessons for the day, Dolly returns to the cottage to finish up some small chores until darkness falls. She extinguishes the lantern she had been using in the shed, steps outside into the dark and glances across to where Morcove is visible on the cliff top. In the intense darkness she is startled to see a light flashing from the top of the school an intermittent flash that she thinks must be Morse code. She hastens to tell her Dad who goes outside to look. Morcove is entirely in darkness except for lighted windows, tiny squares from where they are standing, but the Morse code-like flashing is now coming from out at sea. "And that must be answering the message from the school, but what's out there?" The flashes from the sea ceased. "Now what?" Mr. Delane said. "Ah, there it is again from Morcove. I think we'd best cycle up to the school and tell Miss Somerfield what's going on."

Polly, "doing a spot of Sexton Blake," as Betty puts it, is inadvertently locked outside on an iron fire-escape landing when Study 12 runs upstairs ahead of Miss Somerfield and Mr. Delane, and are ordered back down by the Head, not knowing that Polly is outside in the wild wind. When she returns, windswept and wet, she electrifies them by saying she has seen Angela! Polly had run down the fire-escape to the ground and was going round the building looking for an open window. Angela suddenly appeared from behind some bushes, crouched down as though she was looking for something she'd dropped, something that might incriminate her. She found it, pounced on it and was gone like a flash. "I couldn't follow her. It was pitch black out there. Miss Somerfield will be furious that I was outside but I must tell her. Can't have that girl using our fire escape to send messages to Lord knows who." At this point Dolly Delane pushed open the door of Study 12 and, gasping for breath, cried, "We've seen her, girls, Dad and I. Angela Dark! Dad is chasing her on the moor now. I came back to tell Miss Somerfield." "You're a life-saver, Dolly," Polly grinned. "Now I won't have to tell the Head and be gated for a month."

Mr. Delane with Dolly finally returns to the cottage on the Barncombe Road, Angela having eluded him on the moor. The local police, being unable to discover any clues to the whereabouts of the missing Brenda Garth, Miss Everard and Betty go to Miss Somerfield after dinner who gives her permission for a massive organised search party in which the whole school is allowed to participate. "Provided we all stay in groups, there should be no risk to any of us." They were lucky. The wild, inclement weather had been succeeded by sunny, dry weather. Hurrah for the good old English climate! Warm coats were needed, however, late October was hardly summer. "Some were going to roam the seashore, giving a particular eye to all the

caverns. Some were going one way over the moor, and some another. Barncombe itself and villages round about the countryside would be visited between now and sunset."

Study 12 decide to concentrate on the moor where Brenda's "help me" message was found. Perhaps she had been able to fling out another brief S.O.S. during her abduction ride. Polly Linton, searching in the bracken at the side of what was a little-used by-road, all rutty and stony on the moor, discerns a smear of oil where perhaps a wheel had gone into a dip and the engine had wiped across the bracken. A little further on: "Look at this," she said, holding up a tightly twisted wisp of withered grass and bracken, thickly smeared with oil. "This was caught in the greasers of the cardan shaft underneath and he had to pull it away. No, really," she went on as some of the others smiled at her unusual use of car language. "I've known Dad having to do the same thing when we've had the car in the long grass, picnicking. Good job schoolgirls don't smoke pipes," she went on, which caused Betty to remark, "Now what are you on about, dear?" Polly answered. "This is turning out to be what a gentleman who shall be nameless would refer to as a four pipe problem."

The trail leads them to the remains of an old mill, its superstructure and sails long since removed by age and weather. There is no sign of life or any indication that anyone has been there for many a long day. A half ruined out-building lies to one side and Study 12 disconsolately turn to head back to Morcove. But Polly spots a small pool of oil inside the building and part of a cigarette packet flung against the wall. With a glad cry she halts the rest. "Brenda did leave another message for us. Look!" On the piece of thin cardboard in hastily scrawled words, they read: "I am with Mother and we are to be put aboard a ship. Goodbye, Morcove. Brenda."

Hastening back to Morcove, Betty and Co. show Brenda's last message to Miss Somerfield who fears they have found it too late to rescue the kidnapped mother and daughter. But Betty suggests that the foul weather may have prevented the two prisoners from being taken to whatever vessel had been signalled to from the top of the school. And there is still a chance that they are somewhere on shore in the vicinity with their captors. "So the boat will have to come back probably after dark, tonight. We may still be in time." Miss Somerfield tells Betty and Co. to get a good tea in the dining room while she apprises the police superintendent in Barncombe of the findings and what they must do in order to save the Garths from their captors.

Miss Everard, after tea, realises she cannot possibly let Dolly Delane go home alone in the dark. As one of the successful Study 12 group she has been feted with the rest and had stayed to tea. Miss Everard says she will see Dolly home, and yes of course, Study 12 must accompany them. Safety in numbers as someone remarked. "And we can see you safely back, Miss Everard," Polly cheekily remarked. "The game may still be afoot." Tess startles them by stopping suddenly and staring fixedly out to sea. "I can see a large vessel quite close in now, without any lights!" No further than a mile from Morcove's rocky coast, as they could all discern concentrating on the direction where Tess pointed.

Miss Everard urges them off the road and beneath some overhanging branches.

"Don't move, girls. Say nothing. Be careful, there's a car coming." They hadn't observed the car. It approached, not long the road but across the moor. Not far from the crouching party, the car stopped, the doors opened and dark figures appeared: two men, two women, two girls! In one fearless shouting batch they ran towards those shadowy figures. The scene was suddenly lit as if by searchlights. "Thank God," Miss Everard cried, "The police. At last!"

Powerful police car headlights lit up the group of captors and captives as they hesitated at the top of the zig-zag path leading to the beach. The four captors fled as if for dear life. Brenda and her mother were surrounded by a jubilant Study 12 and hugged like long-lost relations. The police thundered after the fugitives from Solvokia! Miss Everard and Study 12 stand transfixed as Brenda tells the, "You are mistaken if you think the girl who was landed at Morcove is the Queen of Solvokia. You have, in fact, saved the Queen yourselves." Mrs. Garth says softly, "My dear daughter is Solvokia's Queen and you have saved her from the worst enemies our country ever had. My dear girls..." She broke off and opened her arms as if to embrace them all.

The police round up the miscreants, the rescued ones are whirled back to Morcove by the jubilant girl detectives and Miss Everard. Naomer makes tracks to her favourite objective in Study 12, the corner cupboard, to "cellerate with a refresher. Gorjus!" as she puts it. Her special concoction of clove cordial is poured out and with all raising their glasses, Brenda proposes a toast to Study 12.

When the Garths have departed, Naomer informs them, "And now I am ze only Queen at Morcove, so what ze diggings. You, Polly, you must show me more respect." "Oh, you," said Polly pulling down the corners of her mouth, "You're just an imp." But she gave an affectionate grin to the girl Queen.

"Brenda Garth was very quiet but I shall miss her all the same," Betty said to Polly. "Never mind, you've got a treat in store. Fay Wray is coming to the Electric Palace in "The Mystery of the Wax Museum." In colour!" Can you imagine?" "I shall probably faint before the end," said Betty. "Never mind, dear," Polly assured her, "I'll be there to catch you as you topple into the aisle.

(The above series can be found in THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 558 to 560. October 1931. It was never reprinted in THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY.)

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LET'S GO TO THE PICTURES

by John Hammond

What memories that phase brings back - "going to the pictures". It produces vivid recollections of a night out at the cinema: the commissionaire with his smart uniform, the sense of anticipation, the cinema organ, the unforgettable moment when the "big picture" started. When I was growing up in the 1940s there were 50 cinemas to choose from in my home town of Nottingham and the surrounding suburbs. They had such wonderful names: Apollo, Grand, Metropole, Roxy, Curzon, Rio, Palace, Adelphi, Regal, Orion, Olympia, Palladium. They varied from "super cinemas" in the city centre such as the Odeon and the Elite to modest "flea pits" in the suburbs with names like the Rex, the Cozy and the Queens.

Going to the pictures had a sense of occasion about it which is altogether lacking from seeing a movie today. We did not realise it at the time but we were witnessing the golden age of Hollywood. In America there were stars like Greer Garson, Shirley Temple, Gregory Peck, Gary Cooper, Paulette Goddard, Clark Gable and Cary Grant. In Britain we had Leslie Howard, Rosamund John, Patricia Roc, Phyllis Calvert, Margaret Lockwood, Robert Donat, John Mills and Michael Redgrave.

In the dark days of war and austerity "going to the pictures" was a release from air raids and rationing, and was a means of escape into a more glamorous world in which - for an hour or two - we could forget the problems of daily life.

The first film I can remember seeing at my local cinema, the Tudor, was the classic 1938 version of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* starring Errol Flynn, Claude Rains, Basil Rathbone and Olivia de Havilland. During the following twenty years I spent many happy hours watching such films as *Sixty Glorious Years* starring Anna Neagle, *Lost Horizon* starring Ronald Colman, *Pimpernel Smith* starring Leslie Howard, and *Johnny Belinda* starring Jane Wyman. My mother loved the Tudor also and wept buckets over Greer Garson in *Mrs Miniver* and Celia Johnson in *Brief Encounter*. Nothing could equal the thrill of walking up the cinema steps, entering the dark auditorium, being shown to your seat by the torch of the uniformed usherette and waiting in anticipation for the curtain to part and the credits to unroll across the screen.

As a boy I was a devoted patron of the children's Saturday club (called, for some reason, the White Moth Club) and revelled in the adventures of *Flash Gordon*, *Don Winslow of the Navy*, *Kit Carson*, *Deadwood Dick* and *Hopalong Cassidy*. On one occasion my friend and I were a halfpenny short of the sixpence each we needed to enter the cinema. We carefully arranged the eleven pence halfpenny in a pyramid with the smallest coins at the top, walked boldly to the box office, asked for "two sixpennies, please," and disappeared into the darkness before the coins had been counted.

The Tudor continued to be a popular part of the local scene for many years, offering two full-length feature films every week (one from Monday to Wednesday,

another from Thursday to Saturday) each with "full supporting programme". It never stooped to showing dubious adult films and its advertising was always tasteful. The National Anthem was played at the conclusion of every performance.

The cinema survived many vicissitudes including the 'blitz' in May 1941, in which the suburb was heavily bombed, and the floods of 1947. During the Second World War the Tudor came into its own, showing patriotic films such as *The Silver Fleet*, *Fires Were Started*, *The Foreman went to France* and *The Way to the Stars*. After the war the children's club was relaunched under a new name, the Victory Club, sometimes showing George Formby or Old Mother Riley films as a change from serials. Competitions and quizzes were organised and children were encouraged to take part in painting and colouring on film related themes.

There was a chorus of protest when in 1959 it was announced that the Tudor was to close, as the cinema had attracted a loyal and devoted following. A petition to try to save the building gathered 800 signatures but it was all in vain. Representations were made to the local authority to acquire the building or at least to prevent its demolition, so that it could be used for some other purpose but all efforts to save it came to naught.

The final showing of films took place, swiftly followed by demolition. A sale of doors, radiators and other fittings was advertised but the handsome imitation Tudor bargeboards, all carved by hand with decorations of flowers and fruits, were saved and now grace a private garden.

Where have they all gone, those picture houses of my youth? Where now is the Highbury, in which as an adolescent youth I watched Lon Chaney and Bela Lugosi in *Ghost of Frankenstein*? Where now is the Globe, where I saw *Tarzan and the Amazons*? Where is the News Theatre, where I saw Danny Kaye in *Up in Arms*? Many have become bingo halls, some have become supermarkets or warehouses, but most alas! have been completely demolished, leaving no trace of their existence.

But even though most of these picture houses are no more, I have only to see a photograph of one of them to conjure up a host of recollections. Their very names - Majestic, Futurist, Imperial, Ritz - convey for me an atmosphere of a vanished age and recreate the sounds, sights and smells of my youth.

I am glad I can remember the heyday of the cinema. For me and those of my generation the films of the 1940s and 1950s have never been surpassed. This was brought home to me forcibly the other day when I watched on video the 1937 film version of *The Prisoner of Zenda* starring Ronald Colman, David Niven, C. Aubrey Smith, Douglas Fairbanks Junior, Madeleine Carroll, Mary Astor and Raymond Massey. Where today could you assemble a cast of this quality? Think of the great romantic films of the past: *Random Harvest*, *Rebecca*, *Brief Encounter*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Intermezzo*, *Casablanca*. Are films of that calibre still being made today?

Leslie Halliwell in his indispensable *Film Guide* stated: "Nostalgia is only a trendy word to describe something which people have at last learned to appreciate because it has been taken away from them". Anyone who professes to enjoy the films of the 1940s runs the risk of being accused of living in the past. My reply to that is

that the films of the past have much to teach us today in terms of entertainment value, quality, and acting ability. Personally I would rather have *Random Harvest* than a truckload of today's blockbusters.

A friend told me that when she was a girl of 16 her mother took her to see *Random Harvest*, but they only had one handkerchief between them. They spent the entire film passing the handkerchief from one to the other. They don't make 'em like that any more!

FORUM

From Mark Taha:

A few comments on the Autumn/Winter Special, which I enjoyed.

- Page 19 Will have to check with Brian re the actor. His gatecrashing showed the king of entrepreneurial spirit we needed!
- Page 31 As Derek will know, the "Giant Rat" was the subject of both a novel and short story. The Benjamin Bathhurst story appears in an anthology. "Alternate Histories" by Martin Greenberg and Gregory Benford.
- Page 42 Courtfield Cracksman's my favourite Christmas story, too. Poynings, Lagden-wonder if Hamilton ever had bad experiences with anyone of either name? And I'm surprised that Christmas presents rarely seemed to feature in the *Magnet*.

From Brian Mowbray:

A couple of facts which might interest the readers are firstly the reprint of "Monsieur Zenith the Albino" by Anthony Skene which was published by Savoy Books in 2001; and secondly something I noticed in a library, the statement that copyright on anonymous works lapses 70 years after publication, which has obvious implications if anyone wanted to republish some old stories, such as 1920s Sexton Blakes.

From Ernest Holman:

Listening to a radio version of "Dad's Army" there is a scene where Mainwaring thinks something should be "reported". Wilson asks "If it wouldn't be rather like -er-sneaking". Mainwaring's prompt retort is: "This is war Wilson - not Greyfriars!"

From Brian Doyle:

(Editor's Note: Brian sent me this item before we heard of the passing away of our contributor, Dennis Bird.)

Dennis Bird makes two omissions in his entertaining article about 'The Prisoner of Zenda': the two major stage musicals based on the story.

Sigmund Romberg's 'Princess Flavia' was produced in New York in 1925. Rassendyl was played by Harry Welchman and Flavia by Evelyn Herbert. The main song hit from the show (or 'operetta' as it was then called) was 'I Dare, Not Love You' and it was notable for its large male chorus. It was Romberg's first show after his huge success with 'The Student Prince'. It ran at New York's Century Theatre for only 19 weeks, before moving on to a further run in Chicago. Anthony Hope apparently never saw the show but once admitted that he had no musical taste and remarked that he might have found the music and choruses dreadful!

In 1963 Vernon Duke's 'Zenda' opened at the Curran Theatre, San Francisco, and later moved to Los Angeles. Alfred Drake played Rassendyl and Anne Rogers was Flavia. Drake was a famous American theatre star and created leading roles in 'Oklahoma', 'Kiss Me, Kate', 'Kismet' and other top shows. I had the pleasure of interviewing him during his run in 'Kismet' in London in the mid-1950s and found him to be a charming chap. Anne Rogers did the show following her long stint as Eliza Dolittle in 'My Fair Lady' at London's Drury Lane Theatre - a role she 'took over' from Julie Andrews, in 1959.

'Zenda' never went on to New York, or London, or indeed, anywhere, so far as can be traced, so presumably it wasn't a big hit. It did appear as an LP record album which is now a rarity - so if you see it, snap it up!

From Des O'Leary:

What a grand surprise to have the Autumn/Winter Special. Full of interest, and lots of illustrations too. I was particularly glad to see that Ray Moore's final article on illustrated covers and strips in the Thomson papers has made it in. With Derek Marsden's encyclopedic background knowledge it has been a very interesting valuable series.

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FUN AT POPPER COURT! (Or, "Getting Started With Greyfriars!")

by Len Cooper

It was with great pleasure that I recently stumbled across an old favourite of mine from way back in the swinging sixties (although I don't remember much 'swinging' going on in Bletchley - as you can probably guess!),

When I talk about this 'favourite', I refer not to an old Beatles' single or my Airport Service Meccano set! - but to the Armada paperback *Bunter the Racketeer*.

Well I remember almost daily visits to our local newsagents ('Bunces' - a fairly substantial 'newsagents' which always seemed to have some good toys therein!) with half-a-crown burning a hole in my pocket, ready to buy the latest masterpiece about the Fat Owl, whom I had discovered in the pages of the yellow-backed Bunter books, just a few months before.

For me, things had really taken off after the discovery - in Bunces - of *Billy Bunter and the Man from South America* (from Merlin - an SOL reprint, as Hamiltonians will know, which includes the 'Famous Four', as our Johnny had not yet arrived), and there followed a steady stream of these little yellow marvels!

The Armada paperbacks began to appear shortly afterwards and were snapped up, by me, with equal vigour. But it was the information in the front of them - referring to the 'Magnet' - which got me both intrigued and interested... however, it was destined to be another 30 years until I actually saw one of these legendary 'story papers'!

But, enough of my life story...

A picnic in the sunshine, the glorious River Sark, Horace Coker, Sir Hilton Popper, the Famous Five and Billy Bunter are the main ingredients of a wonderful 'short story'.

Bunter the Racketeer is an edited version of Magnets:

1479 - Billy Bunter's Burglar, June 20th 1936

and

1480 - The Popper Court Tea-Party, June 27th 1936

Based on this two-Magnet 'series' (sandwiched between the Putnam van Ducky and Muccolini Circus series), the paperback comprises 155 glorious pages - including 6 full-page illustrations by CH Chapman (from the original Magnets), with many leading characters in all their glory. Initially, I had thought that it was the full two issues - but it is most definitely abridged.

As with many of the Great Man's stories, his descriptive powers evoke memories, for me, of glorious summer days, with lush green trees and a wide lazy river (OK, so it was only the Grand Union Canal, at Fenny Stratford - but it was the Mississippi to me!),

The plot - as always - is well constructed:

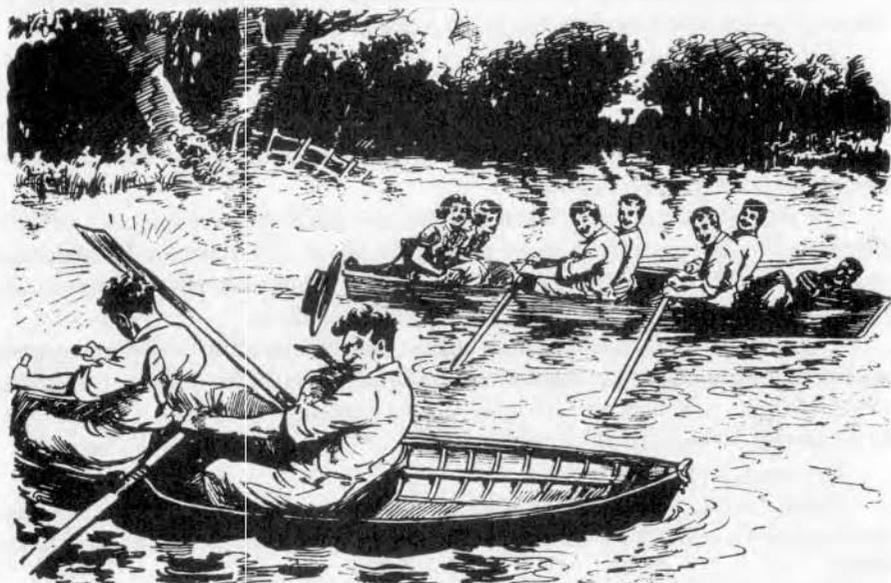
Bunter overhears the Famous Five discussing a picnic on Popper Island, through

a half-open door. He cannot believe his luck when they leave a large and heavy parcel on the table, while they sort out the boat...

...when they depart, Bunter snaffles the parcel and scoots off to the box room - whereupon he discovers a selection of old newspapers, bricks and sardine tins.

Realising he's been had, Bunter rushes down to the landing-raft - only to discover the Famous Five rowing away, in the company of the beautiful Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn.

On the way to their destination, they meet the great Horace:



Sounds like a thrashing whale reached the ears of Harry Wharton & Co. and their girl chums of Cliff House. They glanced round, with smiling faces, to see Coker and Potter pulling in the Fifth Form boat. Potter, at least, was pulling—Coker was catching a marvellous succession of crabs. "Yaroooh!" yelled Potter, as Coker's oar caught him a crack on the head.

Not wishing to be left out, Bunter follows on foot.....unaware of our heroes' encounter with the irascible Sir Hilton:

... Sir Hilton slipped his riding-whip down into his hand and waved it to the schoolboys in the boat.

"Here, you!" he called out.

"There, you!" called back Bob Cherry cheerily.

"What, what?" ejaculated Sir Hilton.

"Which, which!" answered Bob in the same cheerful tone. And the boat's crew chuckled.

They had certainly intended to land on Popper's Island. But they had not landed on it yet, so that was all right! Sir Hilton, so far, had nothing to report to the headmaster of Greyfriars. So Bob saw no reason for not exchanging a

little light badinage with the irascible old gentleman.

"What!" exclaimed Sir Hilton.

"Boy! You are impertinent!"

"Man!" retorted Bob "Same to you, and many of them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By Gad," exclaimed Sir Hilton, "if I were near enough, you impudent young rascal, I would lay my riding-whip round you!"

"Jump!" suggested Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors and Marjorie and Clara smiled.

Sir Hilton's face was quite purple...'

...the unscheduled meeting means that the Famous Five must change their plans...

A short time after the badinage (or 'bandinage', as it's printed in the paperback!), Bunter arrives on the bank opposite Popper Island - but is stuck for a lift across... enter Coker!

Would one expect the mighty Horace to help out a mere fag (with whom he usually only has 'a short way')? Of course not... unless it was contrary to what Potter and Greene suggested!

Thus it was, that the Fat Owl ended up on the island for the night - Bob Cherry thoughtlessly answering 'adsum' on Bunter's behalf, at call-over!

Naturally, it was not a trouble-free stay and the Popper Court burglar turned up and (unknown to Bunter) deposited his swag.

The following morning Coker learns of Bunter's night out, and tells Quelch about his part in the saga. Quelch then tells Prout, who is - as usual - unhappy with Coker and they have a frightful row about the rights and wrongs of Popper's claim to the island! Coker loses the argument and ends up with 500 lines!

After his rescue, Bunter is full of stories about a big, fierce, savage-looking desperado, with a revolver and a knife whom he couldn't actually see in the dark!

Naturally, he is not believed... until Hobson comes back from Courtfield, with the astonishing news: There really was a burglar!

Coker, meanwhile, is fuming about Popper's assertion that the island is his - and resolves to stay on the island, with or without study mates, the fair-weather friends: Potter and Greene!

Never being one to back down, Coker does indeed land on the island - whereupon he encounters the burglar, who has come to collect his swag! Unfortunately for Mr Leech, he encounters a schoolboy of unorthodox, but very effective, fighting skills... Coker wins the battle, and Leech scuttles away!

During the fight, Coker had banged his head on something hard, half buried in mud... the stolen Popper Court treasures!

Prout, meanwhile, has learned of Coker's plans and is waiting for him to arrive back at Greyfriars... when the dishevelled Fifth-Former does appear he is dragged immediately to the Head - just pausing briefly to argue again, that Popper Island is public land.

In this exchange, we see Hamilton at his humorous best:

'... Horace became aware of the portly figure overtopping the crowd. So far, Coker had not guessed that his exploit was known to the school. He guessed it now.

"Oh!" gasped Coker "Yes, sir!"

"You have returned!" boomed Prout.

That question hardly needed an answer. Coker was big enough to be seen! But Coker answered:

"Yes sir!"

"I do not desire," boomed Prout, "to condemn you unheard, Coker! If you have merely been on the river, Coker, rowing in your boat, I have nothing to say to you, Coker. But I have reason to suspect that you have deliberately and intentionally added to the offence you have already given by trespassing on the property of Sir Hilton Popper. I require to know, Coker, and at once, whether you have done this."

Coker's jaw set square.

"No, sir!" he answered.

Prout looked at him. There was a general gasp. Everybody knew that Coker had been to Popper's Island - Potter and Greene best of all. So Coker's reply caused general amusement. Coker had his faults, but he was the last fellow in the world to lie himself out of a scrape. Coker would have snorted with scorn at the idea.

"You - you have not, Coker?" exclaimed Prout.

"Certainly not, sir! I should refuse to put a foot on Sir Hilton Popper's property if he asked me!" answered Coker firmly.

Then Coker's meaning dawned on the eager listeners-in. It was not always easy to get Coker's meaning, even when he did mean anything. But they got on to it now. Coker did not regard the island in the Sark as Sir Hilton Popper's property, and wasn't going to pretend that he did,

"Coker!" boomed Prout. "I have good reason - good reason to believe that you have been on Popper's Island. But if you assure me that you have not done so, I am bound to take the word of a boy in my form."

Fellows waited breathlessly for Coker's answer.

"I didn't say that, sir!" said Coker calmly. "I said I hadn't been on Sir Hilton Popper's property, and I haven't! I've been on the island in the Sark."

"Good old Coker!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Good old fathead!" said Johnny Bull.

"That island, sir, is public land, as I mentioned when you were speaking about it this morning!" said Coker.

"Jevver hear a man ask for it like this?" murmured the Bounder.

"Never!" sighed Bob.

Prout breathed hard. He breathed deep. His portly face assumed a purple hue. If he had been wrathful before, he was towering now.

"Coker!" he gasped. "Do not bandy words with me, Coker! Do not bandy words with your Form-master, Coker!

Have you, or have you not, trespassed on the property of Sir Hilton Popper?"

"No, sir!" said Coker firmly.

Coker was the man to stick to his guns.

Prout almost choked.

"Have you, or have you not, landed on the island in the river called Popper's Island?" he gurgled.

Coker had fairly forced him to put it Coker's way.

"Yes, sir" answered Coker...'

A frothing Prout and astonished Dr Locke are further bewildered by Horace's ramblings... until he opens the attaché case, to reveal Sir Hilton's silverware.

Coker is an unexpected hero. Popper's silverware is saved and Prout is - for once - proud of that often troublesome member of his form.

Thus ends Magnet number **1479**... and anyone picking up an issue could read it blissfully unaware that there was more come...

...Magnet **1480** - *The Popper Court Tea-Party* - has a front cover showing Bunter missing a tennis ball and hitting the unfortunate Hazeldene... hence the paperback title *Bunter The Racketeer*.

Sticking with the tradition of using our protagonist's name in all book titles explains why the title was chosen... though *Billy Bunter's Burglar* might have been more apposite!

The fun begins with Bunter rushing into Coker's study, with an enraged Bolsover in hot pursuit. Bunter astutely tells Coker that Bolsover is on his way to thrash him with a fives bat! Moments later, the Remove bully is naturally given short shrift by the burly Fifth Former and doesn't have the opportunity to explain that it's really Bunter that he's after!

Later that day, the Famous Five are planning a walk in the woods and the Fat Owl - keen to avoid Bolsover - is eager to join them. When they see Sir Hilton Popper approaching, Bunter hides up a tree - even though Wharton tells him that they have a right to be there.

After accusing them of frightening the birds. Popper asks if one of them is Coker - keen to express his gratitude for the return of his silverware. Upon learning that Coker is not present, he says he'll ring the school - as he cannot trust the "foolish schoolboys" to remember a message for him!

Bunter is still aloft - and suffering with a beetle that has crawled down his neck. Releasing a hand to smack the troublesome insect, he falls onto the unsuspecting Sir

Hilton... fortunately, squashing his hat down over the Baronet's eyes, and making his escape.

Bolsover, in the mean time, has not forgotten the thrashing received from Coker and, later, tricks Bunter into the Fifth Former's study, forcing him to rag it.

Whilst he is there, Trotter knocks on the door with a message for Coker that Sir Hilton is on the telephone. Using his ventriloquial skills, Bunter gets rid of Trotter and subsequently takes the call. The Baronet invites 'Coker' and some friends to Popper Court on the morrow. Bunter comes off the telephone worried about the repercussions of having accepted the invitation...

...but an idea occurs to him, which might get him out of a scrape - and result in a splendid feed!

Thus it is that Bunter, Bolsover, Skinner, Snoop, Hazeldene and Micky Desmond end up taking tea on the lawn at Popper Court!

Coker, meanwhile, is making good his promise to pull down the *Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted* sign on the island. Harry Wharton and Co. come across the foolhardy Horace and - against their better judgement - help him to complete the task.

...unfortunately, they are all caught in the act, by Sir Hilton's head keeper and taken to the irascible Baronet.

When the bogus Coker sees the real Coker, he - and the rest of the party - beat a hasty retreat... Sir Hilton in hot pursuit with the riding whip!

All's well that ends well - Coker and the Famous Five are forgiven, and allowed the stay for tea. Bunter can only mourn the loss of a magnificent feed!

For me, as well as giving prominence to one of Hamilton's greatest comic creations



Gripping his riding-whip, Sir Hilton Popper charged across the lawn, in pursuit of the fleeing tea party. Bolsover & Co. were racing down the drive in grand style. But it booted not! Sir Hilton's long legs went like lightning. Bunter, rearmost of the party, gave a sudden fendish yell, as the riding-whip landed. "Yoooop!"

- Horace Coker - this story contains many key facets of his most successful works:

- It is school, rather than 'holiday based.
- The plot is clever - simple, yet effective
- The Greyfriars environs are described in all their glory - the woods, the River Sark and Popper Court
- The bully, in this case Percy Bolsover, gets his come-uppance - as do those other rascals. Skinner, Snoop and Hazeldene.
- Masters have a key role - old Pompous provides the humour, Quelch the severity and the venerable Dr Locke a mixture of both.
- The Famous Five are prominent: Johnny Bull has the opportunity to grunt a lot and say 'I told you so', Wharton displays his leadership qualities on a couple of occasions, Hurree Singh's flowery speech astonishes Sir Hilton and Bob Cherry's 'boat-to-bank' light badinage has one laughing aloud.
- Finally, we have a tremendous punch-up between the burglar and Coker, wherein - as always - good triumphs over evil!

In summary - the genius of Hamilton shown in just two Magnet issues.

If you're daunted by reading a 10, 12 or 16 issue series, try this short and sweet pairing. It's a corker!! In fact, so good is this tale that I have recommended its reading to several people as a good way to 'get started' - including my lovely wife... 'nuff said!

I have several copies of **THE GREYFRIARS FLAT MAP (27" x 20")**. Basil Reynolds' brilliantly coloured plan on imitation cloth-card. £7.00 inc. post, additional copies £5.00 post free.

Also, **GREYFRIARS FOR GROWN-UPS** by Lawrence Sutton. Mint in d/w. £7.00 inc. post, additional copies only £5.00 post free.

From: Ian Johnson, 11 Church Hill, Loughton, Essex, IG10 1QP

GORDON HUDSON WRITES:

I was interested in the article on "School Cap", which I used to take. One error, however, which the author made - which was originally made by Bill Lofts. Basil Storey was born in Gateshead... and not Newcastle.

100 YEARS OF ST. JIM'S

In C.D. no. 42 (June 1950) Herbert Leckenby wrote:

Although *Pluck* never quite reached the top flight among boys' weeklies it had one claim to distinction, for in it St. Jim's was born. Readers of *Pluck* were the first to hear of Jack Blake, Herries and Digby, and to chuckle over the sensational arrival of D'Arcy. True, Tom Merry waited until the school had the dignity of a paper to itself and the school only stayed within yellow covers for about the length of a term, nevertheless the distinction is there. He then gave an interesting history of *Pluck* commenting that:

With No. 106, Nov. 10th, 1906, came that historic story *Jack Blake of St. Jims*. I venture to say that when the editor okayed the proofs that day in the long ago, he little dreamed that nearly 50 years on that sturdy member of the Fourth would still be at the school by the silvery Rhyl. No, more likely, he would look upon it just as another story for boys of the period, to while a pleasant hour or two away...

And here's something I have often pondered over. Supposing the *Gem* had never been born in 1907, and the St. Jim's stories had continued in *Pluck*, would that paper have run on until the Second World War instead of dying in the First? Or would St. Jim's have long ago passed into oblivion along with Lyncroft, Haygarth, Abbotsrag, and all the other schools which dwelt awhile within the yellow covers of "Pluck". It's an illuminating thought, but one which cannot be answered.

Now, let Eric Fayne take up the St. Jim's story.

CONCERNING THE GEM ALONE

JACK BLAKE

The St. Jim's stories, with Jack Blake & Co as the main characters, appeared originally in *Pluck*. Tom Merry did not arrive at St. Jim's until the *Gem* was 11 weeks old. Would the St. Jim's stories have continued for 33 years in the *Gem* had Tom Merry never taken over the lead of the St. Jim's juniors?

This is purely a hypothetical question, and there can be no answer, but it is interesting to theorise on the subject. It is my opinion that without Tom Merry the St. Jim's stories would have disappeared long before the first Great War. For Jack Blake & Co carried little of the characterisation of the Terrible Three.

Gussy, certainly, was a great pen painting down the years; he was, perhaps, the *Gem's* greatest pillar. But Gussy was not in the leader class; like Billy Bunter, he was the larger-than-life character, of infinite use to the author for a variety of purposes in connection with his stories. In a changed world, Bunter sells the Bunter books today, but I have never believed that he was the foundation stone for the success of the *Magnet*. In the same way I regard Gussy, whom I love dearly, as a pillar of strength but not the foundation stone of the *Gem*.

As for Blake, Herries, and Digby, they figured probably in every story of St. Jim's

that was ever written, but what is to be said of them as character sketches? Blake was good-tempered, loyal, and, above everything, more or less patient with Gussy; Herries was a lover of animals; Digby was – well, just Dig. Though each has reserved for him a very warm spot in our hearts, I cannot recall one outstanding story in which Blake, Herries, or Dig played a leading part.

In fact, they were normal, ordinary boys, just like the boys we sat next to in class, or perhaps, much the same as we ourselves were in our schooldays. Their very naturalness enhanced the St. Jim's stories; they could never have carried the *Gem* for 33 years.

THE TERRIBLE THREE

The Characters of the Terrible Three were drawn with much firmer lines. In Martin Clifford's own words:- "Bosom pals as the three were, they had many tastes that were not in common. On several points they agreed to disagree, as it were.

"Tom Merry and Lowther bore manfully with Manners' camera. And Tom Merry and Manners resigned themselves patiently to Monty Lowther's enthusiasm for the films, and often allowed him to march them off to Wayland Cinema. While Manners and Lowther joined in Tom's enthusiasm for football and cricket, though not to the same extent – and bore cheerfully with the rest. But it sometimes happened that different tastes led different ways".

It was to a world of idealism that Tom Merry, Charles Hamilton's first great schoolboy leader, was introduced in 1907. His description caught the imagination at once – sturdy, curly-haired, blue-eyed, always smiling. His characteristics, too, were full of appeal – straight as a die, brave, manly, a giant at sport, a great pal, full of mischief, and kind as only the simple at heart can be. Tom Merry was every schoolboy's ideal in those days preceding the first World War, before values became distorted and mankind became cynical. He was what every boy would have liked to have been, but knew that he was not. The foundation of the greatness of the *Gem* was laid on this ideal schoolboy leader, and the magnificent series of stories between the blue covers made the *Gem* the most popular boys' paper in the kingdom in those golden years.

Manners, in contract, was quieter, shrewder, a fellow who never allowed his heart to control his head. Where Tom was a little too easy-going, Manners had just that bit of extra ballast that his leader lacked. His only weakness was his camera – and his minor. It is difficult to determine whether the coming of Manners Minor upset the balance a little. At any rate, it showed Manners in a new light, from his family background. The younger son was spoiled and indulged by foolish parents who bestowed less affection than his due on the elder son. Looking back on it now I think that here the author used too much the brush he had handled when sketching the character of Frank Nugent, who, fundamentally, was quite different from Manners. Be that as it may, one of the very finest series of White Cover days was the "His Brother's Keeper" series, one of the most powerful and touching that the *Gem* ever presented.

As I commented earlier, Manners really came into his own in own in the last nine

months of the *Gem*, when the salient points of his character were strongly emphasised.

Monty Lowther was, again, a complete contrast to Tom Merry and Manners. Happy-go-lucky, full of high spirits and bad puns, irresponsible to a degree, he was still capable of deep feeling as was shown in "Stage Struck", in the series when his uncle was kidnapped, and on many occasions during his life at school. He was the perfect complement to the other two members of the Terrible Three.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther was strong character studies; Blake, Herries, and Dig were not. But, with Gussy, we had seven juniors who made the perfect combination for magnificent school stories.

THE PREFECTS OF ST. JIM'S

For some reason, I always prefer Kildare to Wingate. Perhaps Kildare seemed to have less pomposity and sense of dignity, to be more the human, older boy. In early days there were many splendid stories introducing the rivalry between Kildare and Monteith, the captain of the New House, - a rivalry which was cleverly reflected in the emotions of junior school.

Monteith was a grand character study. A restless, jealous type, thin-skinned and querulous, he was not without a sense of decency. A fine contrast to Kildare, he featured in stories of strife between older boys - stories which were mature and worthwhile. Why Monteith was dropped from the scene with the Blue Covers is something I have never understood and have always regretted. The Sixth Form never held much interest again, and readers will recall that Roger Jenkins has observed that, in the same way, the glory went from the Sixth Form at Greyfriars with the killing off of Courtney.

Knox was just the stereotyped bullying prefect, chiefly serving as a reason for fun and games among the juniors in lighter tales. Langton was weak, and also dropped out with the Blue Covers. Darrell was pleasant enough, but featured too seldom to be worth consideration. The rest were merely names among many.

THE DECLINE OF THE GEM

I have made a very close and comprehensive study of the *Gem* in recent years, and I have no doubt at all that the decline of the *Gem* in White Cover Days was a result of the change in story policy which first became evident towards the end of 1914 and was intensified during the next year or two. It seems odd that fine characters, built up to enjoy tremendous popularity during the Golden Age of the *Gem*, should have been relegated to the back-ground or, in many cases, dropped entirely from the story. If dispensing with certain characters had meant a higher development of a smaller cast, there would have been no grounds for criticism, but as it was, a great many new characters were introduced who altered the whole aspect of the St. Jim's story.

TALBOT

The coming of Talbot marked the start of the change of policy. The first two

Talbot series were first-class, but for the next year or more, he monopolised the St. Jim's stage, and the *Gem* became, for too long, largely the story of Talbot. However well-written these yarns were – and most of them are excellent – this overplaying of a new character was surely a mistake.

Roger Jenkins has recently, in a thoughtful and discriminating article, pointed out that the coming of Talbot, with the resultant close friendship and understanding between the Toff and Tom Merry, struck a blow at the unity of the Terrible Three. It is an accurate observation. It was the first change in the balance of the St. Jim's stories. It was by no means the last.

THE REFORMATION OF LEVISON

Whether one prefers Levison as the bad lad or as the reformed character is a matter of taste, but it is certain that his reform caused many changes at St. Jim's. The reformed Levison needed his own friends, so Clive and Cardew were introduced to make up the new set, Levison & Co.

One would have thought that, even with Levison reformed, the Black Sheep were sufficiently represented by the grey Cardew, the black Crooke, and the yellow Mellish. But it was evidently felt that Crooke and Mellish were now left without an evil genius, so Racke came along to fill the place, and, in case he were not enough, Clampe, Chowle, and Scrope were added to the cast.

To bring about the reform of Levison, his minor had to come to St. Jim's, and this altered the balance of the Third Form. Where, previously, the Third, in its infrequent appearances, had been represented by Wally, Curly Gibson, Jameson, and Joe Frayne, the advent of Manners Minor (with his consequent impact on his brother) and of Frank Levison, changed the Third's heroes to the Three Minors. And as the Third Form was now to feature more prominently in the general scheme, the unpleasant Piggott was added to the scene.

R.J. MACDONALD

This history would be sadly incomplete without a tribute to the artist who first illustrated the *Gem* in 1909 (No. 91 – “Tom Merry & Co Abroad”). From that issue till the very end, with the exception of the period from August 1916 till July 1919, during which time Warwick Reynolds deputised for him, there were very few issues of the *Gem* that Mac did not illustrate.

He was not very strong on character details (except that nobody else could ever portray Gussy as he did), but there was no artist who could touch him in the field of depicting schoolboys in Etons. Only Shields and Chapman could equal him in drawing schoolboys who were really natural and attractive always. Occasionally he seemed to produce his pictures without referring carefully to the incident described by the author. Four examples of this came to mind, but there were others. He showed Skimpole as taking part in a football match in France, when Skimmey was not even a member of the holiday party; he showed Tom Merry & Co, spick and span in Etons, when they were roughing it in the breathless heat of the Congo; again, he dressed

them in those unlikely Etons when they were on their flying holiday in 1939; and in the Silverson series, when a stranger recognized Gussy as being a St. Jim's boy by his cap, Mac drew him with a topper.

But these were very minor faults. Macdonald's work, over the years, gave the *Gem* the most distinctive covers on the bookstalls. He can never be forgotten while St. Jim's is remembered.

HIGHLIGHTS OF GEM HISTORY

The history of the *Gem* falls into no less than nine divisions:-

1907 – 1909	THE RISE OF THE GEM
1910 – 1914	THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE GEM
1915 – 1920	THE DECLINE OF THE GEM
1921 – 1925	THE INDIAN SUMMER
1926	THE TIME OF GATHERING CLOUDS
1927 – June 1931	THE TWILIGHT YEARS
July 1931 – 1937	THE GOLDEN RE-PRINT YEARS
1938 – March 1939	TWILIGHT OVER THE RE-PRINTS
April – December 1939	THE GLORIOUS SWAN SONG OF THE GEM

No other paper within my knowledge has such well-defined divisions. They add a strange interest to the history of the *Gem*.

No other paper suffered from the substitute blight to anything approaching the extent the *Gem* suffered. No other paper had re-printed in it more than 400 of the stories which it had published in earlier years.

No other author – not even Frank Richards – can compare with Martin Clifford in having his stories re-printed over and over again.

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FREE GIFTS IN THE BIG FIVE

by Derek Marsden

Reviewed by Mary Cadogan

As soon as I saw the illustrated front and back covers of this engaging book I was back in the excitements of childhood days when our favourite story-papers would promise *AMAZING, EXCITING, WONDERFUL FREE GIFTS* to be given away 'in next week's issue'. We were tempted by such rich promises not only to be sure to buy the following week's number of our regular magazines but, occasionally, to buy one or two of those which we never normally read.

There was, over the years, a plethora of give-aways; sometimes these lived up to the expectations of their vivid 'trailers'; sometimes they were shoddy and disappointing. However, we always looked forward with eager anticipation to the next marvellous free gift which was to come our way.

Derek Marsden's book is entitled *Free Gifts in the Big Five* (Adventure, Hotspur, Rover, Skipper, Wizard) but also included are details of give-aways in one or two other D.C. Thomson papers (Red Arrow, Vanguard and – for girls or young women – The Blue Bird).

The book comprises almost 200 large pages, 28 of which are in colour. Black and white pictures also abound, and hundreds of mouth-watering free gifts are illustrated. As an introduction Derek Marsden provides a brief history of children's papers and their give-aways. There are also pages and pages of detailed lists of what was given in each paper, together with dates and short descriptions. Researching this subject so comprehensively must have been, for the author, both a dream and a nightmare! He has uncovered an extremely rich seam and makes a valuable contribution to the history of story-papers.

I thoroughly recommend this book for a great nostalgic wallow! You will enjoy it if your interests include some of the following which are the themes of the free gifts:-

Football and footballers, railway engines, cars, aeroplanes, ships, tricks, jokes, riddles, comic masks, 'mystery' pencils, 'magic' painting books, exam secrets (!), badges, detection, thought-reading, militaria, conjuring, ju-jitsu, stamp-collecting, hill-billy songs, animals or birds. (See pages 24 and 25 for information about how to order it.)

PREPARATION

by Ted Baldock

The lessons learnt on 'Big Side'
 Will last a lifetime through,
Time passing by will never hide
 Traditions which we knew
To down your man and pass the ball
 These were the concepts taught
To answer always to the call
 To strive and fear for naught.
George Wingate always led the fray
 When sweeping down the field
To keep the 'enemy' at bay
 And not an inch to yield.
Old Greyfriars stands a bulwark yet
 The symbol of an age
To instil things we won't forget
 In the new modern days.
The tuckshop shaded by the elms
 Hard by the Sixth-form green,
Dear to us – familiar realms
 Shot through with youthful dreams.
The sun has set, the shadows fall
 Lights from the house are gleaming,
And still is heard the far flung call
 We know the truthful meaning.

BAKER'S DOZEN - answers

- 1) George Bulstrode of the Remove reckoned, on first meeting Vernon-Smith, that he was 'a bit of a Bounder'.
- 2) Arthur August D'Arcy of St. Jim's.
- 3) a) Jolly b) Why grouse c) Keep smiling
- 4) Cat
- 5) Nipper - Dick Hamilton Tinker - Edward Carter
- 6) Pedro
- 7) His baby sister
- 8) Bott's Sauce
- 9) Ginger was always referred to in every instance, even by his mother, as Ginger.
- 10) Sebastian Beech; Reginald Jeeves; Bertram Willberforce Wooster
- 11) Marie Lloyd
- 12) Jolly, Merry and Bright
- 13) 21 - Nos. 2-22. No. 1 was only called the Holiday Annual.



NOTE FOR PHANTOM FANS

FOLLOWING A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS (Both my wife and I have had to have operations AND the house has been flooded)

PUBLICATION OF "THE PHANTOM OF CURSITOR FIELDS" WILL BE DELAYED UNTIL JUNE, 2006. It will be an A4 size paperback (in the same style as My *CAPTAIN JUSTICE SERIES*) and contain 140 pages.

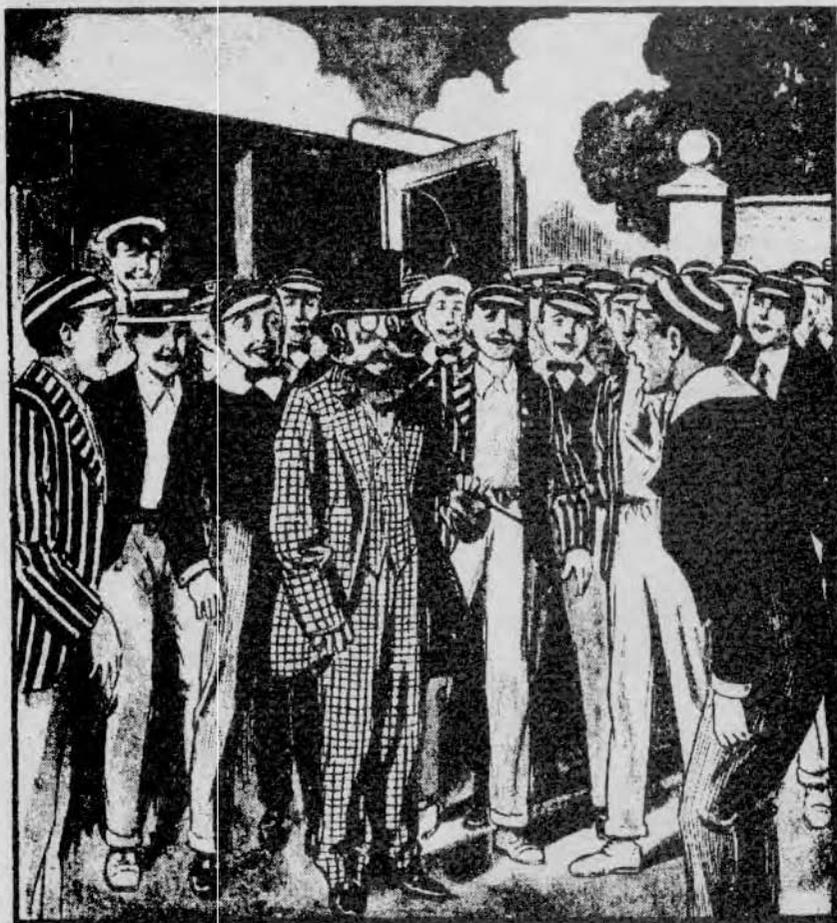
Write to me in May for full details of cost, etcetera.

R. Hibbert, 30, Alton Road,
Ross on Wye, Herefordshire,
HR9 5ND
Telephone (01989) 564512

An Affair of State! 5,000 Prizes!

(A Grand School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.)

Your Last Chance This Week.



OH WHERE, OH WHERE IS GUSSY?

(A Screamingly Funny Incident in the Magnificent Complete School Tale inside.)

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