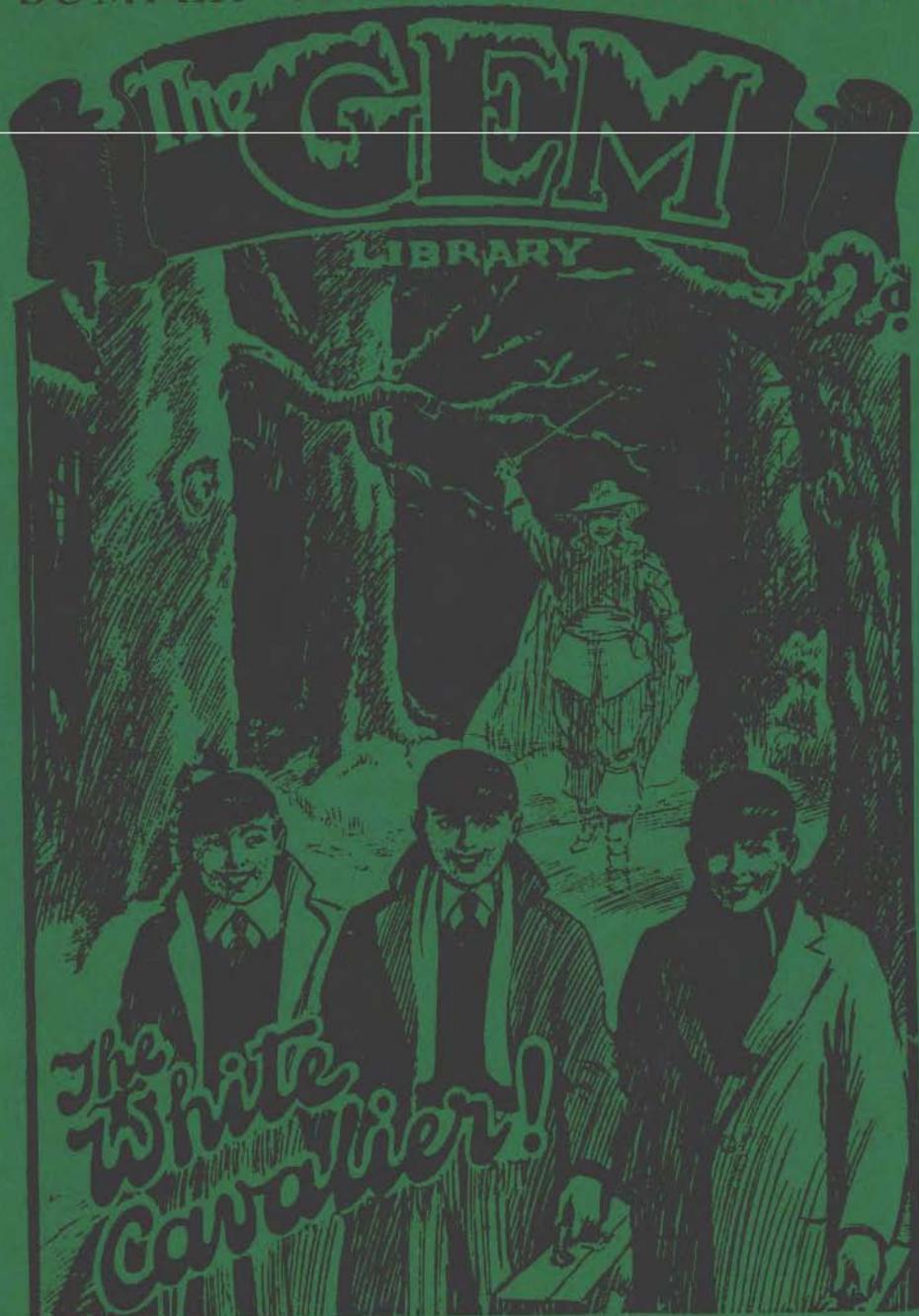


STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST
AUTUMN/WINTER SPECIAL 2006



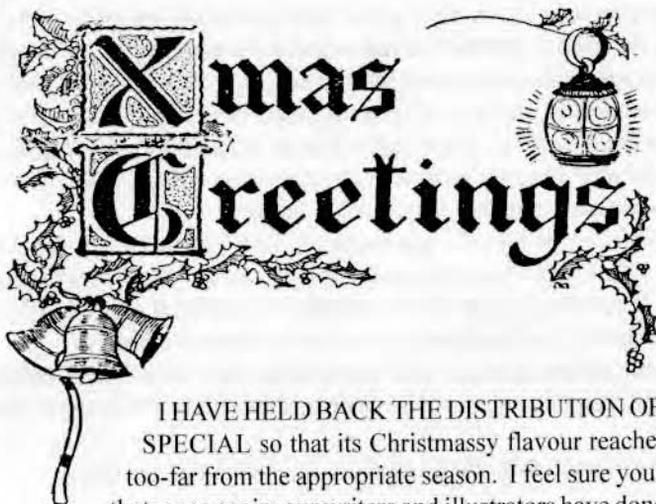
Frank Richards Bob Whiter

BUMPER CHRISTMAS NUMBER.



COLLECTORS' DIGEST AUTUMN/WINTER SPECIAL 2006

Editor: MARY CADOGAN



I HAVE HELD BACK THE DISTRIBUTION OF THIS CD SPECIAL so that its Christmassy flavour reaches you not-too-far from the appropriate season. I feel sure you will agree that, once again, our writers and illustrators have done an excellent job for us.

This, of course, is the time of year when we like to buy special books, both for ourselves and as presents for our families and friends, so this issue carries several reviews - both of books and of spoken-word CDs. **Una Hamilton Wright's** biography of her celebrated uncle, Charles Hamilton, deserves particular mention. It is comprehensively reviewed by **Brian Doyle** elsewhere in this issue, and another doyen of boys' fiction, **Norman Wright**, says of it:

Bunter aficionados will celebrate the arrival of "The Far Side of Billy Bunter" as a landmark work that deserves pride of place on their bookshelves. Like Bunter's postal order this biography has been a long time coming but the wait has been well worth while. With a unique insight possible only from a family member, Una Hamilton Wright has painted a detailed and, to a great extent, first hand portrait of Charles Hamilton and his family ties and relationships. Here, for perhaps the first time, Charles Hamilton the man is revealed. "The Far Side of Billy Bunter" perfectly compliments previous biographies written on Hamilton.

This season, despite its warmth and cheer, is also a time when we think sadly of absent friends. Earlier this year I was sorry to read of the passing of E.S. Turner, a

journalist whose articles I always enjoyed, and whose book BOYS WILL BE BOYS is known and loved by many of us.

Adrian Godfrey, a member of our collecting circle, also sadly passed away this year. He was a loyal supporter of the C.D., and readers might remember him from the time - some years ago - when, as a very young man he worked in Danny Posner's Vintage Magazine shop in London. As 'Nikki Sudden' Adrian subsequently made a name for himself in this country and abroad as the leader of a successful pop group.

Very recently, our hobby has lost another extremely popular friend and collector, Keith Hodkinson. He has been described as the backbone of the Cambridge Club, and he was passionately interested in films as well as old boys' books and papers. His presentations to the Cambridge Club were always memorable and enlightening. Sadly, Keith was run over by a car and badly injured when walking his dog near his home. Taken to hospital, he never recovered consciousness. Our sympathetic wishes go out to Keith's widow, Jacqueline, and to all his family.

As always, as the year approaches its end, I thank Mandy and all at Quacks Printers for their help. And, of course, to all you loyal contributors to, and readers of, the C.D. I send deeply appreciative thanks for continued support. (Don't forget to order your Spring/Summer Special, for which a form is enclosed!)

Some months ago I was very honoured to receive from **This England** magazine the award of their Silver Cross of St. George. Part of their article about this is included on page 5.

It only remains for me to send you the traditional greeting;

A MERRY CHRISTMAS

AND A HAPPY, PEACEFUL

AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

May Cadogan





A Silver Cross for keeping alive childhood memories



For almost 20 years author and broadcaster Mary Cadogan has brought bliss to young-at-heart readers with a magazine devoted to story papers that once enraptured generations of children.

Through the pages of the *Collector's Digest* there have lived again such larger-than-life characters as Billy Bunter, Dan Dare and Sexton Blake.

Articles about defunct publications like *Gem*, *The Magnet*, *Boys' Own*, *The Schoolgirls' Own* and *Chums* came in from all over the world.

Enthusiasts with rich memories of children's fiction sent in extracts from lovingly preserved copies along with authoritative pieces about publishers, writers and illustrators, and Mrs. Cadogan — whose young looks and zest for life laugh at her 78 years — devotedly edited them.

But now, after a labour of love that has lasted 18 years, she has been



tors have been Frank Richards, P.G. Wodehouse, Richmal Crompton and Anthony Buckeridge.

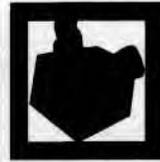
△ Author Mary Cadogan, whose editorship of a children's fiction magazine has delighted a host of readers.

Your Editor featured in *This England*, May 2006.



Eastwood House for Christmas

by Robert Whiter



Over the years there have been numerous selections made by readers and collectors of what was either the best or the most popular Christmas series in the *Magnet*. Although it might be generally agreed that the percentage of the old devotees hold the *Magnet* closer to their hearts, there are still a goodly number of people, myself included, who also love the *Gem*. On this assumption I got to wondering - what was the premier Christmas series in the jolly old *Gem*?

I suppose the first "series" that comes to mind would be the Mystery of the Painted Room. If my memory serves me correctly, the Christmas or "Winter" number containing this celebrated story, was a double number! I well remember our old friend Eric Fayne saying how he implored the editor not to cut the story when it was reprinted - so two issues of the *Gem* were used, and no cutting! For obvious reasons two different titles were used. The first number then bore the legend, "The Mystery of Eastwood House", whilst the now second story became "The Hidden Hand". Going back to the first issue of this story, my fondest memory is of my very good friend Alfred Horsey. Some of you older collectors may remember his sparkling article in the "Story Paper Collector" put out by William Gander entitled "Footlights & Favourites". He had the original idea of forming the old boys book club. Alfred gave me a copy in excellent condition. I was about 13 at the time - he must have been around 35. It is a story that I've read and re-read many times.

Probably the next most popular Christmas story in the *Gem* was first published



By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

A Grand Long Christmas Story of Tom Merry & Co., and the Chums of St. Jim's.

December 24, 1921, No. 724. As with the Painted Room tale, we find a good assortment of St. Jim's juniors invited to Eastwood House (Gussy's home). In fact it was entitled "Lord Eastwood's Christmas Party". This was a procedure that was carried out on several occasions in the *Gem* saga. Rarely did it happen in the *Magnet*.

In the "Bunter in the Attic" Christmas series, we saw a fairly large assortment of guests attend the Fancy Dress Ball at Wharton Lodge. But that was for only one night. There was also the time when Jimmy Silver invited not only his friends from Rookwood, but also some from Greyfriars and St. Jim's. This was the oft repeated story of Jimmy Silver's uncle accused of theft, deserting from the army and hiding in the secret passage in the Priory. But to return to the "Lord Eastwood's Christmas Party" story, it's the secretary, Bloore, who was systematically poisoning his lordship. This story was reprinted first in the Holiday Annual for 1938 with new illustrations (I would say by Kenneth Brooks) and a new title, "The Shadow Over Eastwood House!". When Howard Baker brought out his own Holiday Annuals, he simply reproduced the original *Gem* containing the story, you might say, "lock, stock and barrel!". This graced the Silver Jubilee Edition 1977. Concerning the story itself, Cousin Ethel had good reason to be glad that Gussy had invited not only friends from his own School House, but also "The New House Trio", Figgins, Fatty Wynn and that astute young Scotsman, George Francis Kerr. The latter, by collaborating with the Canadian junior Kit Wildrake, was successful in bringing to justice the bogus secretary.

This volume was a bumper issue indeed, as we were also treated to the 1977 Christmas number of the *Gem* 1035, containing the story, "The White Cavalier!" Although it hadn't perfected its wonderful 1930s colour combination, the cover was very seasonable! Really Christmassy! Three juniors in overcoats, a couple with scarves and carrying suitcases, are walking towards the reader through a snowbound wood; brandishing his rapier the ghostly White Cavalier is trailing their footsteps. The story, which brings to the fore Ralph Reckness Cardew, that whimsical junior, gives much evidence that our delightful author was a devout reader of Conan Doyle. There is also a very fine illustration filling the opening pages of the Christmas party gathered around the huge fireplace in the great hall of Eastwood House, listening to Gussy narrating the legend of the White Cavalier.

Cardew was also the centre figure, one might say, when again a band of St. Jim's juniors spend Christmas at Gussy's ancestral home. This followed a turbulent term which saw Cardew oust Tom Merry from the captaincy. Cardew persists with his enmity even during the festivities at Eastwood House. The series culminates with Cardew arranging for a tough to give Tom Merry a beating! The plan goes awry with cardew's chum Levison becoming the victim. Gussy's younger brother Wally finds out and orders Cardew out of his "father's house"! In between all this we are treated to sharing the various holiday joys among the juniors, made all the more interesting by the attendance of Cousin Ethel and Doris Levison. This really was a Christmas series, starting with *Gem* 321 November 24 1923 it ran until January 12 1924.

Two stories, not the usual Christmas offerings as they took place at the school come to mind. The first one is the famous "Nobody's Study" which featured Levison

before his reformation, and the second one has Tom Merry expelled on the eve of breaking up, and his many friends barred out in the school in protest. I have to admit that I didn't care for this last one. It's not that I don't like barring out stories - I do! But not at Christmas-time!

I think the last series with which I'll end this brief survey was when the boys go to France and have to take shelter in the ruined chateau and the ghost appears, the ghost being projected on the wall by means of a movie device - I can't recall this idea ever being repeated!

So there you are, which was your favourite? Incidentally, if there's one I've overlooked, I crave your indulgence. If there's one you have not read, beg, borrow or steal it. They are all ripping stories and you're bound to enjoy every one!



BOOK REVIEW

by Brian Doyle

'Rupert and the Women in his World', by Mary Cadogan. Published by The Followers of Rupert, 2006.

Faithful followers of Rupert Bear will be relieved to know that this enchanting new book is not a 'News of the World' type exposé of the little bear's amorous misadventures with the fair sex, but a fascinating assessment of the contributions made to the saga by the feminine writers and illustrators and colourists; also of the part played by women and girls who inspired some of the stories, together with detailed looks at the feminine fictional animal and human characters in the tales. And it is all done with Mary Cadogan's usual expertise, insight and warmth and with a true devotee's love and understanding.

The two most important women in Rupert's life were his real-life creator, Mary Tourtel, and his fictional mother, Mrs. Bear. And both ladies come together in Rupert's very first appearance on Monday, November 8, 1920, in the 'Daily Express', in a delightful drawing (under the title 'Little Lost Bear') showing Mrs. Bear sending Rupert off to do some shopping ('some honey, fruit and eggs') in front of their little cottage in Nutwood, as a pipe-smoking Mr. Bear looks on from the doorway. Mary Cadogan writes engagingly about Tourtel and Mrs. Bear (even drawing parallels between the latter and another patient parent in fiction, Mrs. Brown, mother of 'Just William'!).

Mary then introduces a section featuring veteran artist Jennifer Kisler (who did Rupert artwork and illustrations from 1956 to 1979) and several other key contributors

Rupert and the Women in his World

MARY CADOGAN



to the saga as illustrators, colourists and writers, including Doris Campbell, Enid Ash, Edith Fraser, Marjorie Owens, Muriel Willa and Gina Hart. Also covered is Caroline Bott (no relation of Violet Elizabeth as far as we know!), Alfred Bestall's god-daughter and author of his biography in 2003.

Feminine characters who have appeared with Rupert include those familiar three Girl Guides, Pauline, Janet and Beryl; they were real young ladies who were originally in the 10th Surbiton Girl Guides and eventually appeared in no fewer than 21 adventures between 1947 and 1965. But, as Mary Cadogan points out, while Rupert was quite happy to share adventures with various girls, his closest friends were all male - Bill Badger, Algy Pug, Edward Trunk and others. A bit like William Brown really, who stuck with his Outlaws and only rarely tolerated girls as close friends.

Practically all Rupert's feminine associates and friends are covered here, including Cousin Joan, Lily Duckling, Rosalie Pig, Ottoline Otter and Tourtel's clutch of little girl Princesses, plus such human girls as Margot the Midget and Tigerlily.

Rupert has always been the 'star' and central figure in his stories. But here he beckons his co-stars, supporting players and back-room girls and ladies, human and animal, real-life and fictional, to join him centre-stage and bask in the spotlight for a few moments, the novelty being, in this instance, that they are all on the distaff side. The book includes many fascinating facts, character studies and much background information on the Rupert saga.

This splendidly-produced book is large-format (slightly larger than a Rupert annual) and features 75 black-and-white illustrations, 12 colour pictures and 18 photographs and will make a worthy and invaluable addition to your Rupert library.

Personally, I have been a Rupert fan (or 'Follower') ever since I was given 'The New Rupert Book' dated 1938 (which I still have) and which (I seem to remember) contained my two favourite stories: 'Rupert in Mysteryland' and 'Rupert and Bill in the Treetops', images from which have remained in my mind ever since. I had the succeeding Rupert annuals for many years and also collected the small yellow-bound Rupert books too.

And to this day I rather angrily correct people who refer to our young hero as 'Rupert the Bear' - he is, I remind them tersely, the one and only Rupert Bear. I do the same with people who think that Noddy lives in Toytown (that was Larry the Lamb) - Noddy, I remind *them*, resides in Toyland...

(This book is not at present available to the general public but anyone joining The Followers of Rupert will be sent a free copy with the Society's Spring Newsletter. Details of membership can be obtained from the Secretary, John Beck, 29 Mill Road, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2RU.)



The Morcove Masquerader

by Sylvia Reed

(Wherein Tess goes undercover to right a wrong done to another)

Morcove's Study 12 Coterie are to spend Christmas at Priors Wold, in the Cotswolds, the home of Judy Cardew, her brother Dave, and their widowed Mother. They are really excited about this, with the exception of Tess. Tess has a big worry hanging over her head, and being the usual terse Tess, has not taken her chums into her confidence. Tess has befriended a family by the name of Barlow, who live in genteel poverty in one of the poorer areas of Barncombe. The Barlows have in their possession a precious jewel, that Tess thinks is quite valuable. If it can be sold, the proceeds will help them tremendously. Tess, offers assistance to the Barlows in sending this jewel to her Father for possible valuation. This he does, and returns the jewel to Tess via registered post. However, the jewel disappears. For some reason, Tess suspects a Morcove senior by the name of Valerie Floyd. But, how can this be proven? In the meantime, on hearing that there is trouble at Valerie Floyd's home, Miss Somerfield arranges that Valerie accompany the Study 12 Coterie to Priors Wold for Christmas. The chums are not pleased, least of all because they aren't even friendly with her.

Note: The full story appears in The Schoolgirls' Own Annual, 1937. Actual copy from the story itself is in italics.

Tess awakens on Breaking Up day. She has had a bad night; something is obviously on her mind; she has not confided anything to her chums. Betty is aware that something is wrong, so she affectionately chides Tess:

"Eeh, Tess, lass!" Betty frowns at Tess, concerned at her apathy, at this special time of year. "Th' Moother wud a got thee oot of bed wi' a wet clout!"
"I know," nodded Tess. "I'm thoroughly ashamed of myself."
She gazed affectionately round at their smiling faces. There was action and excitement aplenty, and soon the dormitory was empty, save for Tess. "No Priors Wold for me," she muttered. "No Christmas with Betty and the others." Tess cannot take the Coterie into her confidence, without having to name the girl that she is sure has committed the theft. At the same time, Tess realises that she has to reveal the loss to the Barlow family. An intolerable situation, but Tess is made of stern stuff, so she tells Betty that she cannot come to Priors Wold. Betty is stunned, but accepts Tess' decision, and passes on the news to the Study 12 Coterie. At the same time, Betty learns that Valerie Floyd is to accompany them for Christmas, due to trouble at home. Tess is quite shocked to hear of this revelation, and then who but Valerie herself comes face to face with Tess. Quite a nasty piece of work Valerie is, and she



is very unpleasant to Tess, who does not react. But then the idea comes to Tess that perhaps she can also go to Priors Wold, but not as Tess Trelawney! Slightly comforted by the glimmerings of the masquerade growing in her mind, Tess goes into Barncombe to give the bad news to the Barlows. This is the worst news that the Barlow family can hear, right upon Christmas, but they are bearing up, and Mrs Barlow gives Tess some reassurance regarding the loss.

"Judy, darling —"

"Yes, mother?"

"Oh, there you are!"

Mrs Cardew, entering the great drawing-room at Priors Wold, had not instantly seen her school-girl daughter, who was in one of the deep window-bays. Beyond these ancient leaded casements the eye encountered first the lovely grounds of the stately country house, and then a vast expanse of the rolling Cotswolds, criss-crossed by a lonesome road or two.

"Any cars in sight yet, Judy?"

"Not yet, mumsie! But it's about time some of them did begin to turn up. Those who are coming by train, anyhow."

"Yes, the train should be in by now. I came to tell you, Judy, I have obtained that extra help I so badly needed for Christmas," chatted on the young widowed mother of Morcove's popular Judy. *"The domestic agency at Wansford sent a girl out to see me, and I have taken her on!"*

Judy has a quiet few words to her mother about Valerie Floyd, and how she was not a friend of theirs. Mrs Cardew decides to take Valerie in hand and include her in a special visit to Yewleigh Court. This will give the chums time to themselves.

Everyone arrives, and there is gaiety and abandon. From Grangemoor there is Jack – Polly's brother, Jimmy Cherrol, Tubby Bloot and Tom Trevor, brother of popular Bunny Trevor. Various parents are also in the Christmas festivities. Finally, the unwanted guest arrives. Valerie Floyd. She soon makes her presence felt, and requires help with her unpacking. Mrs Cardew's temporary maid is seconded to assist Valerie. On her way to Valerie's room, the temporary maid has a few welcome words voiced to her by Judy. The masquerader was not recognised. Valerie, after the maid had carried out her various requests, is finally alone in her room. She takes out a tiny something, wrapped in tissue paper, from her handbag, and looks at it exultantly, gloatingly. But a secure hiding place must be found for it. This is found, in a cupboard, under a loose floor board. Valerie now starts to relax, although there is a niggling doubt in the back of her mind. She is hopefully in the clear. After all, Tess is not at Priors Wold, and it seems that the Morcove chums have no knowledge that there ever was a theft, let alone actually knowing that the jewel existed.

It is time for revelry. Betty and her friends, Jack and the boys are full of the Christmas spirit, even though there is a pall upon the girls because of the absence of Tess. This revelry is just beneath Valerie, she treats it with contempt, preferring to decorously languish beside the large fire place in the hall lounge, where the parlour games are taking place. Valerie complains to Mrs Cardew about the chilliness of her room, to which Mrs Cardew politely responds by organising the new temporary maid to attend to her requirements. 'Elsie Hudson' is excited – it may be an opportunity to have a quick search of the room for the missing jewel, which she is sure that Valerie has brought with her to Priors Wold. On her way to Valerie's room, she becomes entangled in the midst of a scrum between Naomer and Tubby, and the bucket of coals, and firewood 'Elsie' is carrying, is thrown asunder. Horrifyingly, her spectacles are also knocked off. Instant apprehension, when Tubby picks them up and gives them to her. Will the disguise be seen through?

"Oh, so sorry! Here, I'll put the coal back and take it up for you – yes, of course, I must! The glasses aren't broken?"

Thank goodness, no! So the new maid was saying to herself, whilst returning a calm vocal response. If the glasses had been smashed, or even if, before she had recovered them, he had struck a match to help her to find them – so that he and Naomer must have seen her face without the glasses!

But it was all right. Two minutes later, Tubby was delivering the refilled bucket into her charge, outside the door of Valerie Floyd's bedroom. There was his honest face, smiling straight into Tess's eyes, but those eyes were again behind the spectacles, and in a moment, being eager to resume the fun, he was gone. Suspecting nothing! 'Elsie' breathes a sigh of relief, and goes about her duties in Valerie's room. Now, time for a quick search. Where did Valerie hide the jewel?

The same magpie nature which had impelled the senior to stoop to theft, at Morcove, would guarantee her keeping the trinket available, but **hidden**. There would be the longing of a girl who was all vanity to wear the jewel on some safe occasion. It was certain that she would never seek to sell it. She meant to keep it as something that could be a proud, unchallenged possession in the years to come – long after she had left Morcove.

Suddenly, Valerie walks into the room.

"Huh, you're here, are you!" Valerie said, with her usual contumely, stalking in. "I was told to get a fire going, miss."

Tess passed out, drawing a deep breath as soon as she was in the corridor, with the door drawn shut behind her. As a domestic, she was supposed to go up and down by the back stairs. On her way to them, she encountered two of her Morcove chums – Bunny and Pam. They were coming away from their bedroom, having been to it to put themselves to rights after all the rough and tumble of hide-and-seek. A kindly glance from both girls, in passing, and that was all!

"She looks a nice girl, Bunny."

"Yes, doesn't she? I think she must be the one Judy was speaking about. Her name's Elsie Hudson, and she only came today. Pam, I hear the gramophone! Oh, they've put on a dance-tune!"

Tess goes back to the kitchen quarters, and joins in the general Christmassy conversation taking place amongst the domestic staff.

The weather has turned, promising a wonderfully snowy, but sunshiny Christmas Day. Naomer is beside herself, and tries to rouse Paula. Paula, of course, would rather spend an extra half hour in bed. But to no avail!

Judy comes in to greet Paula and Naomer, and wish them a Happy Christmas. Presents are exchanged, then Judy says that she has bought all of the domestic staff a little present, and has also managed to get a little something for the new temporary maid.

"Elsie, I like to give something at Christmas to all who work about the house for mother, and so –"

"For me, miss? Oh, Ju – miss," the masquerader quickly recovered herself, and hoped that the slip would not be noticed. "It's kind of you – too good, when you know I – I am only here for a little while."

"How do you know?" Judy blithely retorted. "You may be going to be here for years, Elsie! Mother likes you – hears such good accounts of you, too. So, meantime – Happy Christmas!"

"And the same to you – miss, I'm sure," Tess smiled, whilst in her heart she suddenly wept.



It's after breakfast. Betty and Polly are loaded up with Christmas presents. They see 'Elsie' coming to 'do' their rooms, but because it is Christmas, the girls decide to 'do' the rooms themselves, thus leaving 'Elsie' to have a lighter work load that Christmas Day. Tess demurs, saying that she will look in the rooms later on. Betty and Polly walk away, deep in talk. They are wondering how Tess is, and how her Christmas Day is shaping up. 'Elsie' of course, overhears this, and on one hand she is overjoyed that her masquerade is undetected, and dismayed and upset at the concern that Betty and Polly have unwittingly shown her. She pulls herself together, secure in the knowledge that when she has unmasked the thief of the jewel, she can reveal her true identity.

Bells across the snow – Christmas bells! And now from one of the upper windows of ancient Priors Wold, whilst she went about her lowly tasks, she could see the chums she loved, going across the whitened wastes with parents and other grown ups, to attend the short service.

Back they came in a little while, giving full play to riotous spirits. Tess, watching again, saw all the snowballing that was going on.

Tubby and Naomer are to the forefront of the snowballing, which gives vent to increased appetites. Naomer spies 'Elsie' coming from the dining room, so she tries to pump her about the anticipated divine repast. Tess manages to escape, but on her way to the kitchen, she is waylaid by Mrs Cardew.

"Oh, there you are, Elsie – and wait a moment," came the pleasant arresting cry. "I have just been to the kitchen to say that I think the very youngest member of the staff should bring in the pudding presently! That means you, Elsie!"

Tess of course, has to display delight, but inwardly she is quaking. Supposing her masquerade is seen through? However, she carries the solemn occasion off well. Later, whilst the Christmas dinner is in full flight, she gets another chance to have a quick search of Valerie's room. But again, her search is unrewarded. She returns to her bedroom, disconsolate. She can hear the revelry continued downstairs, far into the Christmas night. Boxing Day came and went, and still Tess made no progress at all. The following morning at staff breakfast, Tess overhears remarks made by a parlourmaid regarding the radiator not working.

"Oh, an airlock, I daresay," responded the housemaid who had charge of the bedroom in question. "It's happened before, and not surprising, the way the plumbers had to take pipes all over the house when they put them in – I'll never forget it! Half the floor boards torn up –"

"And some of 'em never put back proper, either!" was another housemaid's laughing rejoinder. "Still, the central heating do save a lot of work! You find it summat to do, don't you, Elsie Hudson, having to remember that fire in the swank-girl's room all day?"

Morcove's masquerader laughed.

"I should think I do!"

She was also thinking to herself excitably: "Floorboards – taken up and never put back properly!"

Tess now thinks that she may be on to something. She quickly goes upstairs to tend to Valerie's room; she may have a quick chance for a search as well, whilst guest breakfast is still underway. But, she finds the door locked, and can hear Valerie moving around in the room.

"What do you want?" came the snappish inquiry, for Tess had let her hand rattle the doorknob. "It's only me miss – to do your room. But I can look back presently."
"No, come on in!" The key was turned back, and Valerie whipped open the door, looking as unamiable as ever. "And if it's to be a fire – let it be a fire!" she said, stalking out to leave Tess free to pass in.

Tess tends to the fire, and then starts to search for any loose floor board. She eventually finds one, and prises it open, but to her severe disappointment, it beholds nothing. Valerie has taken steps to cover her tracks. Tess is again, disconsolate.

It is time for the Coterie and the boys to go tobogganning. There is much hilarity, and again, Tess finds herself wanting to be 'herself' and be a part of it all.

Evening comes, it is time for the grand party at Yewleigh Court. This is the special event that Mrs Cardew has promised Judy that Valerie Floyd will attend. Valerie gives more care than usual to her attire. She is not content with all of the finery draped about her, so decides to **wear the jewel**. After all, she reminds herself, no one knows about the jewel, let alone about the theft and that she is the culprit. So, she attaches it to her dress, and then reaches for the fine ermine cape that will keep her warm. There is a knock at the door'

"Yes, what do you want?"

"It's only me, miss," shyly pleaded a voice that she recognised as belonging to the temporary maid. "May I come in, please?"

"I'm dressing! Oh, all right then," Valerie next moment acceded, and crossed to the door to unlock it. After all, she would rather enjoy being gazed at admiringly by this 'skivvy'.

'Elsie' enters the room, quickly shuts the door, locks it, and puts the key in her pocket. Valerie is dumbfounded, and when Tess looks her directly in the eye, begins to panic and starts babbling.

"Valerie," she was answered – and then she knew, and she lost all the proud poise instantly. The beautiful clothes seemed to drape a figure palsied with terror. Her parted lips emitted a husky: "Tess! Tess Trelawney!"

Even though Valerie has fallen apart, she will not admit to Tess that she has the jewel. The cape she is wearing hides the jewel, so she tries to bluff, however Tess will have none of it. Tess finally threatens to send for Mrs Cardew. This has the desired affect, and Valerie removes her cape, unattaches the jewel and throws it at Tess, as if it were a worthless bauble.

Then Valerie loses control completely. She flings herself upon Tess in a half crazed way. They struggle back and forth, but finally Tess gets the better of Valerie and manages to escape into the corridor – **blundering straight into Betty Barton**.

Betty is amazed. She sees 'Elsie' in a different light – she seems familiar, somehow. Tess quickly responds.

"Betty dear – yes; but keep quiet, keep calm," Tess whispered, rather frantically. "Oh, isn't there somewhere –"

"My room; come on then – we shall be alone there," was Betty's quick-witted suggestion. It was like her to be turning quite calm already. Always a good one in any crises, the Form captain! "The others are all downstairs. Here we are."

Betty and Tess both talk at once. Betty is astounded, and Tess, for her part is in a difficult situation.

"Found out – and I am so sorry," Tess smiled ruefully. "This makes it terribly awkward, Betty. I wanted to last out my time here as 'Elsie Hudson' and then go away, none of you any the wiser."

"Oh, but Tess, you can trust me," was the earnest whisper. "Tell me everything, and – we'll manage!" **The Captain's famous slogan, that!** "Why – why have you been doing this?"

Tess responds.

"How I came to suspect Valerie of being the thief, Betty," the subdued voice was saying, five minutes later; I remembered her being on hand when I received the emerald by registered post from Dad, at Morcove. She saw me sign for the registered package, and saw me open it there in the front hall at Morcove. I was excited, you see, and stood to read the letter, and then I opened the little cardboard box and took a look at the jewel lying on some cottonwool. Next morning, when I missed the jewel from my table-drawer in the study, I could think of no one else but Valerie. There was no one else to be thought of."

Betty of course, is still astounded by the masquerade Tess had accomplished, and the revelations of the jewel and the implication of Valerie. But now, of course, matters must be attended to. One, the return of the jewel to its rightful owners, the Barlow family in Barncombe, and two, Tess Trelawney and 'Elsie Hudson'.

Meanwhile, to give some reality, Betty and Tess hear the Yewleigh Court contingent leave. Valerie, of course, has managed to pull herself together enough to join the ensemble.

There is a hurried conflagration, and Betty and Tess agree that the others, should be told about Valerie, but not all of them about Tess. Of course, Naomer and Paula are the ones not to be told the whole truth. Poor Naomer and Paula! But Naomer, being Naomer, would be liable to let the cat out of the bag. It is arranged that 'Elsie' leave temporary employment at Priors Wold, and that Tess Trelawney finds herself being able to come to Priors Wold for a belated Christmas.

An hour later, one of the back doors of Priors Wold was softly opened, to let a certain girl slip forth into the starry night. It was Tess, in borrowed clothes. None of her confidantes had attended her to the door; but after she had been gone about a quarter of an hour, she was quietly overtaken by Judy's brother Dave. He came trudging through the snow to where it had been arranged that Tess should await him. Although he carried an expanding travelling bag in either hand, he did not appear to be at all weighed down. The bags were, in fact, empty!

"Feel all right, Tess?"



A yell of welcome crashed out as the door opened—a fitting reward to Tess for all that she had gone through.

"Oh, fine, Dave," his whispered inquiry was answered.....

Excitement at Priors Wold. There is sudden news that Tess is able to come after all, and is actually on her way! Paula is tremendously excited.

"Tess! Hooray, after all – Tess darling! Better late than never, Tess!" – and more ringing cheers. "Come on in, Tess – hurrah!"

"Most gwatifying, yes, wather, haw, haw, haw! Haow are you, Tess deah?" beamed Paula, who with Naomer had not been let into the secret. "Haow did you enjoy your Christmas, Tess?"

"Oh – I was with friends!" smiled Tess, meaning the very chums who were even now mobbing around her.

Next morning – more revelations. Elsie has disappeared. Mrs Cardew is concerned, until she finds a note left for her.

“See the note she left behind for me, Judy darling,” Mrs Cardew said, when alone with her daughter for a moment after breakfast. “A girl who could write like that! A little illiterate, of course’ but then one doesn’t expect a girl in service to have been to Morcove School!”

Valerie is down, early, even though she didn’t get back from the Yewleigh Court party until three in the morning. She is pleasant, although subdued
The superior senior of the Morcove “Sixth” now seemed to be a sadder and a wiser girl, and in a considerably chastened mood. So – let it go at that!

There is excitement in the air, even at this late stage of the holidays. With the unexpected late arrival of Tess, the icing is put on the cake, so events are planned to completely fulfil the remaining few days of this ever so exciting Christmas at Priors Wold.

(Editor’s Note: I am particularly pleased to include Sylvia’s article on *The Morcove Masquerader* in this issue of the C.D. as it is one of my favourite Morcove Stories. I think it was the first tale I ever read about Marjorie Stanton’s great school. It was the lead story in the 1937 *Schoolgirls’ Own Annual*. Leonard Shields’s fine illustrations are a worthy complement to the story.)



SALE: Howard Baker Annuals, Book Club and Greyfriars Press volumes. Half year bound volume Union Jacks, Tom Merry Annuals, Boys Friend Libraries (St. Franks). Nelson Lee No. 1(Fair), No. 130 (DN) etc. SAE for list. REGANDREWS, 80 Greenwood Avenue, Laverstock, Salisbury, SP1 1PE.

Best Wishes to Mary and all Hobby Friends. Send for latest catalogue of Comics, Story Papers and Annuals, JACK WILSON, 19 Dunbeath Avenue, Rainhill, Prescott, L35 0QH. (Nostalgia Unlimited).



LIBRARY CHAT

by Derek Ford

Sexton Blake and Tinker, investigating mystery lights for the Secret Service at Brackley Down, arrive only shortly after Parker's startling cover picture episode to find one of the observers murdered and the other running away, whom Tinker quickly follows. On the log-sheet Blake finds the words 'ghost seen'. Casting around the Post he sees the print of a naked human foot. There is someone watching his discovery from Stormaway House, the home of the Bournes. Six months ago Sir Dudley had committed suicide, jumping over the cliff. Investigating, Blake is coshed in the grounds, and later finds the tell-tale marks gone.

The second observer, Dave Wilson, whom Tinker is pursuing, then becomes a victim of the "Old Man", recluse magician Jacob Zeal of Wideacre Farm, with its concealed door and tunnel, which Tinker escapes through when the house is burning around him and where he meets up with Blake again. Through a keyhole, "the late" Sir Dudley Bourne is seen. They are then trapped in a cave, a machine-gun covering them, then plunge into a cavern three parts full of water from the rising tide. They battle out through a split in the rock wall.

A chip of pottery off some ancient urn that Blake has found earlier on now sends him to London and the British museum. After various escapes, Dave Wilson "To his amazement... found himself looking into a large chamber, hollowed out of the ground. The decaying remains of massive old timbers still managed to support the walls and roof, but the strangest sight of all occupied the centre space. Wilson stared at it in bewilderment for some moments; then he realised that he was looking at the remains of an old ship, such as some Viking chieftain used when he set out to harry his enemies!"

A light showing through a tangle of bushes sprouting out of the cliff face has Tinker soon climbing down to another of the passages radiating from Stormaway where he encounters Wilson again (they are now hunting him with Major Dunkley's bloodhounds) and they get up-to-date only to be held up again by the Old Man, and find Lady Bourne about to sign Stormaway to him after he's been threatening the life of her daughter, Joyce.

"Even as this twist was given to events, Blake arrived back." Now to unmask the Old Man as Dr. Gilman, and to follow him through a panel in the cellar of Stormaway.

THE OBSERVER CORPS MYSTERY

By
REX HARDINGE



The
SEXTON
BLAKE
LIBRARY

Gilman encounters his workmen, who have just found an ancient shield and helmet: "This is the discovery of the century, of all time. A great king is buried here with all his trappings, and to think those fools of Bourmes have lived on top of it for all those generations."

Then he finds the escaping Sir Dudley and knocks him out, throwing him over his shoulder, and hurries on his way to his captives, who have now escaped but are soon rounded up by his machine gun. But then Blake is holding the gun. Gilman escapes, setting off a series of explosions, but they manage to escape through a crack in the passage.

Later, inside the great chamber, Blake and his companions see the skeleton of the old ship, and a seated Dr. Gilman staring at a collection of shields and other ornaments that are stacked before him. Then Blake's voice interrupts him, and he snatches at an ancient spear, and, with a wild cry, plunges the jagged corroded blade into his own

neck.

It is now only left to the re-united Bournes to contact the British Museum over Haakon's tomb, and for Blake to report to the Secret Service that he has been unable to find any spies at Brankley Down. Obviously based on the 1938 Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, discovery of a Saxon ship, this was very ingenious plot of Hardinge's. A one-off, to be well remembered.

In 1953, the Baker Street pair were back in Hardinge's Cornwall investigating the murder of the Elliotts of Tregarne, once rich owners of a silver mine now long disused, but of which someone is trying to gain the apparently worthless estate. This time not for a Saxon ship but for uranium! (SBL 291/3). And *The Riddle of Highwayman's Stone* (181/3) is recommended while you are down that way, too.

A Christmas 1931 case-book by Paul Urquhart - *The Mystery of the Thirteenth Chest* - reminded me of the recent 53 million bound Securitas robbery in a raid in Kent. Thirteen sealed chests of gold are loaded at Croydon airport, although there are only twelve listed, for Paris under the eagle eyes of Inspector Coutts. By the next page the plane is having to make a forced landing because the chests have broken loose. A gang was waiting with lorries to sneak them away, organised by the Hawk. Meeting up with Jim Blades, who has been in the thirteenth chest, and removed the wedges from the other twelve, Sexton Blake makes him assistant throughout, Tinker mislaid. The Hawk thinks that Blake is still a member of his gang of twenty-two (no minimum wage then!). At one stage Blake represents himself as an agent for a firm of gramophone manufacturers, selling records, but eventually everything is resolved by page 58, leaving room for a short story, *The Crook Promoter*, by "a popular author".

UNREFINED?

by
Derek Hinrich

I used to subscribe to a magazine dealing with detective fiction called *Sherlock* which was edited by my friend David Stuart Davies. After he relinquished the editorship I only received one further, very inferior, issue: it apparently ceased publication thereafter - at any rate I heard nothing of it for many, many months until, out of the blue, I received a new issue in June with the news that David had resumed the editorship. The magazine was rather slimmed down in comparison with earlier editions. It contained, however as others before it had, a Holmesian pastiche, or if you prefer, a new Sherlock Holmes story "by another hand".

This began on the very day, 7th October 1903, upon which Holmes finally left 221B Baker Street to retire to a cottage on the South Downs, five miles from Eastbourne and in sight of the sea to keep bees and, as the humour took him, to commence work upon that promised treatise of his declining years, *The Whole Art of Detection*. As he

waits for the last removals of his effects to be completed, he is approached by Inspector MacDonald with a last appeal for assistance. The case need not detain us, but Holmes initially responds, "...I am now no longer able to provide assistance. May I suggest that you consult my near neighbour, Mr Blake? He is a good man if a little unrefined."

Unrefined! This is typical of the man. No professional colleague or rival of Sherlock Holmes, with the possible exception of Inspector Baines of the Surrey Constabulary, ever received anything better than a backhanded compliment from him. Right at the outset of their relationship, Holmes is curtly and contemptuously dismissive of Poe's Dupin and Gaboriau's Lecoq when Watson has the temerity to compare him to them; and when later Dr Mortimer, in the preliminary consultation on the Baskerville case, speaks approvingly of the methods of M. Bertillon of the Sûreté, Holmes's manner becomes decidedly chilly. To Holmes, he himself was the nonpareil.

Of course Holmes must have been professionally aware of Sexton Blake, although in truth they had only been neighbours for a matter of weeks since Blake had only taken rooms in Baker Street shortly before the autumn of '03, as is related in *The Mystery of Hilton Royal* in the Christmas 1904 Issue (No 62) of the *Union Jack*, second series. This was only his second case after resuming his practice following upon the events recorded in *Cunning Against Skill* (in *Union Jack* 2/53). Therein Blake, utterly exhausted after his struggles with the Brotherhood of Silence and other malefactors, retired, under the name of Henry Pink, to the midlands village of Brampton Stoke to lead the life of an apiarist, only to have his repose disturbed by being accused of theft by the local squire. Before that, Blake had had offices off the Strand and lived in rooms in Islington.

Strange, by the way, how these Baker Street men were drawn towards the idea of bee-keeping as a suitable pastime for their retirements! Perhaps Blake's experiences in Brampton Stoke had taken Holmes's fancy, though doubtless he ensured that he would avoid any unfortunate incident similar to that which shattered Blake's brief idyll.

Blake had by 1903 been active for some ten years. Many of his cases had been, and yet many more as we know were to be, sensational - far more in fact than Mr Holmes's, but the fact that his cases would attract the yellow press, as it was called in those days before tabloids were invented, is not the measure of the man. If a lack of refinement was the best stick Holmes could find to beat Blake with, it was a poor weapon to chose and unworthy of either man.

Holmes told Watson that his ancestors were country gentry, members of the squirearchy. He did not actually say that his father was a country gentleman: indeed there are indications in Watson's narratives which suggest to me that Holmes may well have been the younger son of a younger son, and that his father was sent, as was the way, into the world to earn his living as best he could, perhaps in one of the professions. (Holmes, for example, displayed in several of the cases narrated by Watson such an intimate acquaintance with the inner suburban areas on the Surrey side as to suggest he knew the area since infancy.) Primogeniture is an ancient custom, if not the rule, amongst the class from which Holmes sprang. Although

Sherlock Holmes attended one of our two oldest universities, it is not clear which. He apparently left without taking a degree to pursue his own eccentric and eclectic studies. He had an impecunious youth, as may be deduced from his ingrained habit of making his first pipe of the day from the dottle of the day before (I have tried this in a spirit of scientific experiment: I do not recommend it).

Sexton Blake was the son of a distinguished Harley Street surgeon, Sir Berkeley Blake. He had the conventional public school education one would expect, and had thereafter trained for his intended career by qualifying as both a doctor and a barrister. He was as well equipped for his chosen profession as Holmes or Dr Thorndyke. He was an accomplished linguist, fluent in several European languages, as well as Arabic and Mandarin. His youthful circumstances were almost certainly more fortunate than Holmes's. I do not mention this to belittle Holmes, merely to illustrate an area where his vanity all too often led him astray.



PASSING ON THE WRITING BUG

by Tony Glynn

I had a set of friends in the 1920s although, since I was born in November 1929, I have no conscious memory of that decade at all.

They were also friends of the Second World War, of which I have many vivid memories. One of my happier ones is of discovering in a second hand bookshop a sequence of issues of the *Nelson Lee Library* dated 1928 and 1929, featuring, of course, the stories of St Frank's College by Edwy Searles Brooks. The publication, which ceased to exist in 1933, was to me an astonishing discovery.

That treasured cache of little magazines, enabled me to escape from the uncertainties of the wartime forties into what I imagined were the spacious and peaceful twenties and into the company of the amiable Edwy Searles Brooks, his works and the devoted set of readers who wrote regularly to the entertaining column *Between Ourselves* which the author conducted. Unlike many authors. Brooks had no snootiness. He kept up a genuine friendship with his readers and he was obviously deluged with letters.

By a curious telescoping of time, I came to see these young readers of 1928, the year my parents married, and 1929, the year of my birth, as contemporary chums. It was as if they enjoyed a Peter Pan status on the yellowing pages of the old copies of the *NLL*.

But, in the real world, they grew up and three of them emulated Brooks, becoming

authors in their own right and I don't doubt that Brooks played a part as role model.

In the case of the only one I ever met in the flesh, I know that was true because I heard him say so.

He was John Russell Fearn, a Manchester born Lancashire lad whose portrait you can find gracing the *Between Ourselves* column in a September 1928 *NLL* and who, by the middle 1930s, was established as a professional science-fiction writer. He had the distinction of being the first English author to break into the American pulp science-fiction magazine and make regular sales in that market. He went on to write many thrillers and Westerns. In the 1950s, he became a star turn of the British paperback science-fiction market with many novels written under the name of Vargo Statten. This last activity caused him to be regarded, somewhat unfairly, as a writer for juveniles only but his full output covered a very wide field and he employed a variety of pen names. In the thirties and forties he held a firm position in the American pulps, matching the best of the home-grown talent. His scientific super-heroine, the Golden Amazon, originally created for the Canadian market during the war, was tremendously popular.

I knew John Fearn only slightly because, in the 1950s, he became patron of the North West Science Fiction Association to which I belonged. He might not have been exclusively a juvenile writer but, certainly, his imaginative horizons were expanded by Edwy Searles Brooks and those tales in which Brooks broke the mould of the conventional school story by sending the St Frank's characters into strange lands to meet lost races.

He acknowledged his debt at the 1954 British Science Fiction Convention, held in Manchester, at which was a member of a panel of authors. Panel members were asked about influences on their work and Fearn unashamedly said that, in his case, a major one was Brooks, with the vigorous and imaginative yams he produced in the *NLL*.

John Russell Fearn died suddenly in 1960, but the work of this acknowledged disciple of Brooks is still kept alive by the efforts of his literary executor, my friend, Philip Harbottle.

With great satisfaction, I can tell you that Phil is causing a number of his science-fiction and fantasy works and thrillers to be reprinted here and overseas as well as putting a number of Fearn's hitherto unpublished works into print for the first time.

Another who showed up regularly in the *NLL* fan columns at that time was young Edgar Mittleholzer, the son of a clergyman from British Guiana. Edgar kept Edwy and his fellow readers *au fait* with the affairs of a part of the world with which most would be unfamiliar. In 1928, Edgar thanked young Mittleholzer for sending him copies of the Georgetown newspapers, saying he suspected he would one day have to lay a series of stories in British Guiana.

In the next decade, the wider world began to hear more of Edgar Mittleholzer. He became a published writer in 1937 and eventually found fame with an important

MARY JANE STAPLES

Fire Over London

The wartime blitz hits London – and the Adams family



body of work, including *Kaywana Blood*, *Children of Kaywana* and a volume of autobiography, *A Swarthy Boy*.

In the 1960s, I was shocked to see a news item saying that Edgar, one of those old chums from the nineteen-twenties I never knew in the flesh, had died by his own hand.

He is now regarded as the greatest novelist of present-day Guyana and a website is devoted to him under that title. His influence remains strong among those interested in literary developments in a region which, in Edgar's *NLL* reading days, was part of the British Empire, throughout which the work of Edwy Searles Brooks was widely circulated.

In any sizeable gathering, you'll usually find someone who's above the crowd and, among the denizens of *Between Ourselves* in 1928 and 1929, that distinction certainly belonged to the irrepressible Reg T Staples, of Walworth.

Reg showed up regularly with comments on life at St Frank's and many another matter and a somewhat knockabout relationship developed between himself and Brooks, to whom Reg even sent Christmas presents. Such was Reg's output of letters that Edwy once commented that he kept a box-file exclusively devoted to them.

One week in 1929, Brooks drew attention to a missive from "Rex T Staples". This was not another Staples, Edwy assured his readers, but "our old friend" who had decided to change his name to Rex because he felt it was more princely. This phase did not last long, however, and he was soon back to being the kingly Reginald again.

In one 1928 column, Brooks told Reg that he looked forward to his entertaining letters as much as he looked forward to his weekly bath and struck a note of prophecy saying Reg had better take care or he would blossom forth as a humorous writer for the papers.

The name of Reg T Staples, the spirited lad from Walworth, stuck in my mind all through the years from my discovery of him in those already ageing Nelson Lee numbers which I devoured in the war years - years in which, I suppose Reg's generation of *Between Ourselves* regulars were mostly involved in war service of one form or another.

So, imagine my surprise just a few weeks ago when, browsing through a website on authors' pen names, I was hit in the eye by the name of Reginald T Staples. He did indeed blossom forth as a writer but not a humorous one. Typical of the Reg of the twenties, he accompanied his achievement with unusual flourishes. He had effected another change of name and had become a lady author!

I was startled to find that our old friend was the author of the long series of highly popular blockbusting novels of East End family life charted through the 20th Century and published under the alter ego of Mary Jane Staples. Furthermore, Reg also had several historical novels to his credit under the name of Robert Stevens.

John Russell Fearn publicly acknowledged his debt to Brooks and I shouldn't be surprised to learn that Reg Staples, like Fearn, was drawn towards authorship though his happy-go-lucky relationship with Edwy Searles Brooks, that hardworking author in a field which was as relentlessly demanding as a treadmill but who found

time to be friendly and encouraging towards those who paid out their modest weekly twopence for his productions. Quite likely the same went for young Edgar Mittleholzer, too.

After all, Edwy's good nature, expressed through his regular column, gave the impression that writers were jolly good fellows and it was no bad thing to be an author. I like to think he passed on the writing bug by good example.



BOOK REVIEW

by Brian Doyle

‘Bullies, Beaks and Flannelled Fools on Stage, Screen, Television and Radio (with added ‘William’), by Robert Kirkpatrick. 425pages. £16.75, incl. postage. Obtainable from the Publisher: Robert Kirkpatrick, 6 Osterley Park View Road, Hanwell, London, W7 2HH.

Kirkpatrick has done it again! His landmark and unique book ‘Bullies, Beaks and Flannelled Fools: An Annotated Bibliography of Boys’ School Fiction, 1742-2000’ was published in 2001 and was an enlarged and updated 2nd edition of his original work which had appeared ten years earlier. This was a superlative feat of research and scholarship, essential to reader and collector alike, vastly enjoyable and a marvellous browsers’ guide to the subject. Kirkpatrick was also responsible for ‘The Encyclopaedia of Boys’ School Stories’ (Ashgate, 2000).

Now comes Robert Kirkpatrick’s latest opus ‘Bullies, Beaks and Flannelled Fools on Stage, Screen, Television and Radio’ (plus a 28-page section on Richmal Crompton’s ‘Just William’ in thee media, complete with full cast-lists, etc.). The book is breathtaking in its research, expertise and completeness, its facts, fascination and its achievement (though Kirkpatrick himself avows that the work is so far incomplete and is only (‘only!’) ‘a work in progress’ with more to come later). But he does admit that nothing like this has ever been compiled before.

The 2001 2nd edition of ‘Bullies...’ contained 27 pages of ‘filmography with a few TV plays, scripts and screenplays thrown in for good measure’. Kirkpatrick decided that this section might well be expanded a little. The result is 425 pages of that little expansion!

The new book is a guide to some 75 stage plays and musicals, over 90 feature films, almost 150 television plays, films, serials and sitcoms, 60 children’s television serials, plays and comedies, 200 radio dramas, serials and sitcoms, and publication details of over 140 scripts and screenplays, all set in and around boys’ and mixed schools (but, as he points out, in keeping with his original work, no girls’ schools -

though I couldn't help spotting one exception to this rule). And these are not merely lists. Full details are given of cast, dates, writers, directors, producers, designers, etc., plus brief synopses and notes wherever possible.

As a very special bonus, the book also brings together full details of the various stage, film, television and radio appearances of Richmal Crompton's 'Just William' in particular giving the facts on almost all of the 64 television episodes and 96 radio plays.

Many years ago I knew actor Harry Locke, who played the role of Robert, William's elder brother, in nearly fifty of the early episodes of the BBC Radio 'Just William' series, starring John Clark, in 1946. He often cropped up in various films I worked on as Publicist in the 1950s. He was a rather 'ordinary' sort of chap and often played cockney sailors and barmen. I once said to him: 'Robert Brown was an unusual sort of part for you in those days, wasn't it, Harry?' 'Oh yes, I suppose it was - but I put on my 'posh' voice for that', he grinned. 'You've got to be versatile in this business...'. But he agreed that the episodes were fun to do, didn't take up much time and were very enjoyable. Locke, who had also worked as a stand-up comedian for a while, died in 1987 at the age of 75.

Full details, including cast-lists and dates, are also given for the entire canon of 'Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School' on BBC TV from 1952-62 (including repeats), for the 'Jennings' saga on both radio (1948-75 (including repeats) and TV (1955-66 (i.e. 10 episodes in 1955 and 6 in 1966)). There are also 21 pages devoted to the 'Grange Hill' TV series, which began in 1978 and is still running - a case of quantity and not quality in my own opinion. That's where you go for an 'EastEnders' type edukashun, 'innit?

I'm glad to see that the best-ever TV series set in a public school, in my view, is included: 'The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's', based on the famous book by Talbot Baines Reed, and produced as a serial on BBC TV in 1961. As is another wonderful TV series, 'To Serve Them All My Days', adapted from the novel by R.F. Delderfield, produced in 1980-81. Among the cast-list of schoolboys, one name catches the eye - Nicholas Lyndhurst, later famous in 'Only Fools and Horses'.

Here too, you will find details of the six Billy Bunter Christmas shows, produced at West End theatres between 1958 and 1963, all written, of course, by Maurice McLoughlin. Most of us recall that the Fat Owl was played by Gerald Champion in two of these, and by Peter Bridgmont in a further three. But who remembers the young actor who played Bunter in the remaining one? It was one Keith Banks (in 'Billy Bunter's Swiss Roll' in 1960).

But they all seem to be here: 'Tom Brown's Schooldays' in 1916, probably the first feature film (silent, of course) adapted from a school story; three people played Tom at various ages, the first being a girl! The main Tom was portrayed by actor Jack Hobbs (not the cricketer!) who was still starring in movies and the London stage over 30 years later; 'The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's' (film, 1921); 'Young Woodley' (play, 1928; film, 1931); 'Goodbye, Mr. Chips' (films, 1939 and 1969); 'The Guinea Pig' (play, 1946, film, 1948); 'The Browning Version' (play, 1948, film 1951); 'Stalky and Co. (TV, 1982); the immortal Will Hay's trio of school films: 'Boys Will Be Boys' 1935, 'Good Morning,

Boys' 1937, and 'The Ghost of St. Michael's 1941; 'A.J. Wentworth, B.A.' (TV, 1983)' and the eerily-memorable 'Unman, Wittering and Zigo', originally a radio play in 1957, then a TV play in 1965, finally a film in 1971. The title-name were the last three names on the Form Register, but the last-named never turns up and is never seen!

There are hundreds more, including the musicals: 'Bunter!' (1988), 'Smike' (1973), 'Tom Brown's Schooldays' (1972), 'Jennings Abounding; (1978), 'Passion Flower Hotel' (set 1965, in a girls' school and which seemingly slipped though the net of Kirkpatrick's 'no girls' schools' rule) and 'Goodbye, Mr. Chips' (the Peter O'Toole musical film, 1969).

I can find only one or two small errors to correct the author on. In the cast-lists for BBC Radio's 'Just William' series in 1948, he spells the young actor who played William as 'David Spencer' when it should be 'David Spenser' with an 's'. And he says that the 'Just William' stage play was produced at the Granville Theatre, Fulham (1946), then going on to the Wimbledon Theatre. But after that it went on to the Lewisham Hippodrome, where I saw it in early 1947 for the second time (I had already seen it in Fulham). That was when I met and chatted with John Clark (William) and Jacqueline Boyer (Violet-Elizabeth), who both starred in the BBC Radio series. And did you know that Boyer was the first wife of distinguished actor Timothy West?

I should perhaps here mention a personal point. I receive an acknowledgment in the book for giving a bit of help with its preparation, but my small contributions were a few drops in the ocean. And, of course, I wrote a lengthy article titled 'The Wonders of an Hour' for the 'Collectors' Digest Annual' 1993, which was all about school stories in the media, plus other pieces in the 'Collector's Digest' and 'The Just William Society Magazine'.

So, if you love school stories in any shape or form, this is the book for you. As Mr. Prout of Greyfriars might have enthused: 'It is unprecedented unparalleled...' Robert Kirkpatrick is to be congratulated upon a remarkable achievement. 'Refer to Kirkpatrick is to be congratulated upon a remarkable achievement. 'Refer to Kirkpatrick!' the cry goes up from those in doubt. As I said before: 'He's done it again!'

Not bad for a work in progress'...



WANTED: The Schoolgirls' Own weekly magazine, Nos. 379, 380, 381, 382, 564, 565, 566. SYLVIA REED, 8 Goline Court, Hillman 6168, Western Australia. Email: diamond2@iinet.net.au

FOREIGN BOYS AT GREYFRIARS

by Frances-Mary Blake

There were boys who were foreigners at Greyfriars in *The Magnet* stories by Frank Richards. Actually there were not that many, although the First World War inevitably saw a couple of very temporary and very unpleasant German boys in the Remove. However, this article is not discussing those close to home, i.e. not the Irish: Patrick Gwynne of the Sixth and Fitzgerald of the Fifth, and Micky Desmond; nor Morgan from Wales or Ogilvy from Scotland. Not even the two colonials Field of Australia and Tom Brown of New Zealand.

But the real foreigners.

* * * * *

(WUN LUNG)

'The Inscrutable Oriental' arrived in the Remove very early, in fact in *Magnet* 36, 1908, and made a sufficient impact to star in the next two numbers as well.

Titled "The New Boy at Greyfriars" was **Wun Lung**, the little "Chinee". He was almost already an anachronism in 1908 and with his flowing robes, long pig-tail and coolie rather than mandarin speech was surely completely out of place in an English public school.

One of the craftiest at Greyfriars, Wun Lung's sleight of hand was all too often used for malicious tricks, clever enough to confuse even the Bounder. The one person he will never jape is Bob Cherry whom he has idolised since Bob stood up for him on his arrival.

That long pig-tail was brutally cut off by (the then bully) Bulstrode, and *Magnet* 128 does reveal clearly what deep distress this brought to Wun Lung. He got his revenge by shaving Bulstrode's head and eyebrows to an egg. And the beloved pig-tail grew back that year of 1910.

Wun Lung took his revenge on more senior men too, especially by his gruesome cooking. A favourite nasty one comes a few years later. The Remove are refusing to fag again, so Loder, Carne and Walker of the Sixth were delighted to find that the little Chinese is willing. He is indeed the perfect fag. He lays the tablecloth and cutlery and provides a most succulent pie as the main course. It is delicious! Is it rabbit? The prefects all have some more. "Come again kid!"

Bowing out, Wun Lung says how pleased they liked the pie so much – and then tells them just what he put into it. True or not, the contents can be guessed! Mice were the tastiest. The three turn green. Carne is sick in the fender – Walker staggers out – Loder can't move or speak. A good Oriental revenge indeed.

However, by February 1930, at long last Wun Lung is shown in the *Magnet's* Portrait Gallery as a proper Chinese schoolboy with short dark hair, collar and tie and jacket, even a handkerchief in his pocket. So that in the two major series in which he appeared – China and the Dr. Sin (1930 and 1937) – while at school at least, he wore the same uniform as the rest of his Form. And all the more believable for it. But still



Wun Lung
in 1914

his typical response remained “No savvy!”

“Wun Lung Minor” was *Magnet* 117, which introduced the younger brother. **Hop Hi** arrived just before the appearance of a much more famous character – the Bounder of Greyfriars, Herbert Vernon-Smith. The Red *Magnet* cover shows Wun Lung dancing on a study table in front of a crowd of juniors because his young brother is coming to the school. Very unusually the cover and all the inside illustrations were drawn by Macdonald of GEM fame.



Wun Lung in 1930

There was really no need for a second Chinese boy, and indeed Hop Hi became ‘lost’ in the school very soon. At first he courted

favour in the Second Form by providing a midnight feast in the dorm, and he wore the same loose garments and pig-tail as his older brother – with whom he chats in ‘a heathen tongue’, otherwise using the same coolie English. In his first story he feuds with Bulstrode of the Remove and typically comes out on top. Otherwise he gradually faded from view, not even appearing in the

following number. Neither did he have any special part to play in the famous China series, except for a few adventures with his brother in England in the first three episodes. He does not go to China, and is virtually ignored in the Dr. Sin series of 1937, by which time he too is dressed in standard school uniform.

In passing there should perhaps be mention of a *senior* foreigner, who only stayed just over a year but was an original and even memorable character.

It was in January 1909 when **Heracles Ionides** arrived, in an early *Magnet* 49, under the title of “The New Sixth Former”. An arrogant and cunning Greek he was closest to Carberry, the worst of the prefects at that time. Ionides was foppish and quite a dandy – accustomed to perfume as well as to whisky! Ten weeks after his arrival, a dance was held at the girls’ Cliff House for both schools, and Ionides was mortified to be taken for a waiter.

In early 1910 Ionides assisted Carberry in a dastardly plot to blame young Dicky Nugent for their own sins but the plot failed and it was the prefect Carberry who was expelled for good. Ionides somehow managed to avoid the same sentence. However, soon after this dramatic event he faded and then disappeared from the Greyfriars scene. It would seem that he was almost certainly ‘asked to leave’.

Maybe the Sixth Form might have held more interesting possibilities had Ionides survived, but truly he was much more suited to Red Cover, i.e. the world before the Great War.

* * * * *

(NAPOLEON DUPONT)

Napoleon Dupont was very obviously French. He came to Greyfriars in mid-1918 with the grandiose title of “Napoleon of Greyfriars”, but alas little Nap hardly lived up to his name. He became merely a “make-up” character part in the Remove, and strangely is never to be noticed in Monsieur Charpentier’s French classes.

Nap is sometimes excitable but basically a gentle soul, protected from bullying by his unlikely studymate and friend, the burly Bolsover (after some early hectic relationships between the two). His best-known talent is for cooking, though he has to realise that his Form do not appreciate such delightful French cuisine as snails and frogs’ legs.

His one significant later role took place as late as 1933. Dupont became star cook for the rebels’ picnic on Popper Island, during which Bunter was tricked into thinking he had become seriously ill through eating that French ‘stew’.

And then Sir Hilton Popper, a Governor of the School, awarded a £5 prize for the Remove junior who won a special exam. Mr. Quelch decreed that this would be a French essay, in punishment for ragging in Monsieur Charpentier’s classes. And any boy with less than 50 marks out of 100 would receive a caning and detention – which meant nearly all the Remove looked to Nap for assistance. In the end only Nap’s studymate, Percy Bolsover, tried to bully the little French boy into submission, but eventually Bolsover’s better nature took over and he persevered on his own.

It was Bunter, of course, who thought that the *Henriade* verses which he found in Nap’s study were originals by Nap, so he bagged them and claimed the prize – and was rewarded with the only whacking.

* * * * *

Another American boy, **Putman Van Duck**, spent a short time in the Remove in 1936 as a sort of antidote, but there was really only one and only “Yankee Schoolboy of Greyfriars” as a *Magnet* at the end of 1910 introduced **Fisher Tarleton Fish** of ‘Noo Yark’ – known inevitably as Fishy.

The Red Cover called him “A Hustling Junior at Greyfriars”, and he was shown as a striding, cheery and confident new boy, without glasses. In the text it is said that “the juniors felt they could like the Yankee chum.” True, Fish was inclined to swank about the good old USA, *but* [quote] “He was evidently blessed with a sense of humour, and could take a joke against himself.” At the beginning he stands up to Bulstrode the bully *and* Loder the prefect quite calmly, and knocks out Skinner with skilful boxing. He is welcomed to Wharton Lodge for the holidays. He does have ‘a nasal intonation in his voice’ but definitely does not use ‘American’ verbal eccentricities such as the bee’s knees or the elephant’s side-whiskers! All this is far

from the Fisher T. Fish that *Magnet* readers came to know.

When and why did the alteration occur? It's usually said that it was animosity towards the United States, due to its delay in entering World War One, that caused such drastic changes to his character, from being reasonably popular to the most unpopular. (Although the change did not happen overnight.) His one and only absorbing hobby was making money by any means, though alas most of his wheezes are doomed to end in dire consequences for the would-be entrepreneur, even as his manner of speech became more and more peculiar and yet somehow applicable.

Illustrations of Fishy reflected this sea-change, too. Within a few years he was being shown as bonier, although never consistently drawn. Not until 1925 did two smallish drawings in the stories of two sub-writers give him rather indistinct glasses. But his portrait in the Portrait Gallery of June 1926 certainly shows the typical

Fishy with glasses. And by May 1927 is seen the final depiction of Fisher T. Fish, with those unmistakable horn-rimmed glasses, shock of untidy black hair, and sharp and bony appearance. This complete Fishy was drawn by Leonard Shields, the second of the two major artists who drew for *The Magnet*. It is true that Frank Richards once commented, maybe somewhat sarcastically, that the artists seemed to think that all Americans had to wear spectacles, but surely Fishy's glasses became a trademark as distinctive as Bunter's check trousers or Vernon-Smith's fancy waistcoats.

Fishy remained a major Greyfriars character throughout *The Magnet* years, a testimony to his lasting impression on the readers. He was prominently involved in two well-known later series of 1929 and 1935 – Hollywood, and Portercliffe Hall with his 'popper'. Hiram K. Fish was developed into an older version of his son, both in illustrations and as written in the text, although he didn't use quite the extremes of his son's 'American-speak'.

As I like – and like to think I can understand – all those who inhabited the Greyfriars world, I don't actually find Fishy to be too repugnant or despicable, not a "worm" as his fellow Removites would say. He has numerous 'cunning plans' for his financial schemes, so I wish him well in the ruthless spheres of the New York stock exchange and big business America in the 21st century.

Finally there is the Indian boy, otherwise known as **INKY** about whom much



"Fishy" in 1934

could be said; who is the best-known and doubtless the best-loved of all the foreign boys.

A prince and a public schoolboy, **Hurree Jamset Ram Singh**, a Hindoo, was one of the very earliest arrivals, coming in *Magnet* 6 in 1908. He arrived from Bhanipur in Northern India, leaving his uncle as Regent, and in England Colonel Wharton stands in as *loco parentis*.

Inky's weird and wonderful English, based on a distorted mixture of proverbs, is yet somehow more believable than Wun Lung's 'funny' speech. Although it might be suspected that the Nabob of Bhanipur could speak absolutely correct English if he had so wished. At Greyfriars he is a valued member of the Famous Five, quietly clever and perceptive. He excels at cricket: the champion demon bowler of the Remove. Great men of the Sixth will choose him to bowl at their wickets for practice. He is permanently in the front row of the football team. Hurree Singh plays a significant part in numerous stories and series, including of course the India series of 1926, in which not only does one read of adventures and dramatic sequences with echoes of today, but the contrast between Inky of the Greyfriars Remove and the Nabob of Bhanipur is made sharply clear.

Two episodes concerning Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh may be strongly recommended.

"The Mystery of Wharton Lodge" (1933) is one of those marvellous Christmas hols at Colonel Wharton's home, and is remembered for Bunter hiding in the attic and coming out to snaffle food, clothing and blankets from Wharton's den. Unfortunately,

these mysterious happenings lead to a most unusual misunderstanding between Wharton and Inky which ends in an unhappy quarrel. Quite uncharacteristically, Inky takes offence, feels insulted, and quietly departs from Wharton Lodge. Colonel Wharton finds both boys fighting in the snow. He grasps their collars and pulls them apart. It doesn't take long before all is discovered, with Bunter to blame, so the two chums make up, with embarrassment.

The second reveals the deep friendship and loyalty between Harry Wharton and his Indian chum. It occurs in April 1932, some 24 years after their first meeting, in a series which can be considered one of the best. Stupid misunderstandings again. Wharton believes that his uncle, Colonel Wharton, now considers him to be 'a burden'. Greatly upset and embittered, the boy determines to remain at Greyfriars School over the Easter holidays



Hurree Singh in 1933

rather than go to the home he will no longer call his. Instead he studies for a scholarship so as to become independent. The school empties as all the fellows leave for their own destinations; Wharton is left miserably alone. Not even Inky has stopped to say goodbye. He goes up to study No. 1. Someone is waiting for him there.

“My esteemed and venerable chum.”

The Nabob had obtained permission to remain and stay with Wharton to keep him company. Inky refuses to leave his friend. The two survive the loneliness together until Bunter (of course) solves the misunderstandings between uncle and nephew and all is calm and bright once more. Harry and Inky happily return to Wharton Lodge, with Bunter as a welcome guest for once – for a while.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh has proved himself a wise, skilful and attractive member of the Famous Five.



BOOK REVIEW

by Brian Doyle

‘The Far Side of Billy Bunter: The Biography of Charles Hamilton’, by Una Hamilton Wright. The Friars Library, 2006. 298 pages.

The journey to the far side of Billy Bunter would be, I imagine, quite a considerable one, but his creator’s niece, Una Hamilton Wright, manages it extremely well. ‘Far away is close at hand’, as Robert Graves wrote in a poem in 1923, and Mrs. Hamilton Wright brings the facts and events surrounding the Fat Owl’s ‘onlie begetter’, Charles Hamilton, better-known, of course, as Frank Richards (and many other pen-names) very close to her readers in this unique and fascinating book.

She began writing it many years ago, when the first moon landings were recent and, since the book is about the private life behind the public image of Hamilton – in fact, about the happenings on the other side, the far side, of the moon face (of Billy Bunter) she made the original working title ‘The Other Side of the Moon’. She had to abandon this, since this was the title of a biography of actor David Niven, and finally decided upon the current one.

Una (can we dispense with formality on this occasion?) was the daughter of Hamilton’s sister, Dolly, and her husband, Percy Harrison, who was also Hamilton’s best friend – she recalls that she was his favourite niece and came to know ‘Uncle Charlie’ well throughout his long and busy life. She remembers him well and with much love and warmth and in this landmark biography attempts to fill in many of the gaps in our knowledge of his life, works and personality.

Just to remind you, Charles Hamilton was the literary phenomenon of the 20th century with a writing life of 68 years. He wrote over 85 million words – the equivalent

of a thousand novels. Not only did he create Billy Bunter, the self-indulgent fat schoolboy of Greyfriars School and such characters as Harry Wharton and Co., Vernon-Smith (the 'Bounder' of the Remove Form) and their master Mr. Quelch ('a beast but a just beast'), but he invented over 100 different schools, using more than 28 pen-names. All this is covered by Una at the beginning and, as we subsequently learn, was merely the tip of the iceberg.

As Mary Cadogan (author of the best-selling first biography of Hamilton), 'The Chap Behind the Chums' (1988) says in her Introduction: '...she provides fresh insights not only into his relationships and activities but into the rich creativeness of his mind and imagination.' She also recalls that Professor Robert Roberts wrote in his 1971 book 'The Classic Slum': 'Frank Richards sets ideals and standards... in the final estimate, it may well be found that he had more influence during the first quarter of the twentieth century on the mind and outlook of young working-class England than any other single person...'

Una's aim in her book is to unveil the 'real' Charles Hamilton, her uncle was perhaps a 'shadowy' man who revealed very little of himself in his only 'Autobiography', written entirely as 'Frank Richards' and published in 1951.

Mary Cadogan revealed much in her biography and dotted a few i's – now Una has crossed a few more, indeed a whole lot more, of the remaining t's...

I won't attempt to sort out the many and rather complex family relationships Una writes about in the early sections of the book. They are fascinating and often endearing, but difficult to summarise here. Hamilton came from quite a large family, one reason perhaps that he went on eventually to write about large families of boys at his many fictional schools.

As to his own education (somewhat wrapped in mystery over the years), it is now obvious that young Charles didn't enrol at Greyfriars or St. Jim's, Rookwood, Sparshot or even St. Swithin's. Una says that Hamilton's family moved house so often during his schooldays that his centre of learning changes every time the journey became inconvenient. It is probable that young Charles went to a Wesleyan Church school in 1884, when he was nine and subsequently attended a local grammar school. All this was in the Ealing-Acton area in West London (then a collection of villages) paid for by a relative (but the actual school is never named). So it is evident that he never knew the dubious joys of being a 'boarder', of indulging in dormitory feasts or of 'breaking bounds' after 'Lights Out'.

Una Hamilton Wright states at one point: 'It was obvious from his conversations that Charles had no respect for any of his schools. To him they had all seemed distinctly Dickensian, staffed by hired hacks who loathed boys. Consequently he despised his formal education. For him his real education was self-imparted and his attendance at any particular school was merely time-serving.'

Bearing all this in mind, one would think it strange that Hamilton wrote so well and so memorably of schools such as Greyfriars and St. Jim's and the rest and wrote quite warmly of such masters as Mr. Quelch and Dr. Locke. But, as Una goes on to say: 'Grey friars and the other Hamilton schools were largely dream-establishments –

school as their author would like it to be.' He admitted more than once, by the way, that Frank Nugent, one of the Famous Five at Greyfriars, was a self-portrait of himself – quite a decent chap and best friend of Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry...

Hamilton left school at 16 and was a professional writer at 18, transforming his rather unhappy schooldays into the cosy ambience, studies and characters in his school stories in many boys' papers and magazines, including, of course, *The Magnet*, *The Gem* and *Boys' Friend*. One of his favourite writers as a boy had been Talbot Baines Reed, so his fictional world was probably coloured by that fine author's stories in *Boys' Own Paper* and in his books.

This book is full of fascinating facts. In the mid-1930s, for instance, Hamilton was invited to write a story for a school film. There was a nation-wide hunt for a boy to play Bunter. The 'fat boy' of Earls Barton, near Wellingborough who weighed 17 stone and whose girth was 52 inches at age 14, was a contender and his co-stars were to include comedian Claude Dampier and music hall singer Nellie Wallace! But the film never happened and the plump lad, whose name was Billy Barton, never found movie stardom. Perhaps he's still up there, in Earls Barton, biding his time and rehearsing his 'Yarooohs'. He'd be about 70 now, but, if the idea was revised, he could always make a guest appearance as Bunter Senior or Grandad Bunter...

Una Hamilton Wright covers her Uncle Charlie's life and career in fascinating detail. In 1947 came the first of the Bunter books and his fame was reborn; suggestions were put forward that he should receive an official Honour. But he couldn't take the possibility seriously. 'I had to laugh', he said in one of his many fascinating letters to his friend and fellow-author, George Foster in 1954. 'Frank Richards in the Honours List! I should as soon expect to see Sir William Bunter there. No, laddie, these things don't happen...' But eventually, in 1958, Hamilton did receive the 'honour' of an entry in that august publication 'Who's Who' – under the name of 'Frank Richards'...!

This book is excellently produced and has four Appendices packed with facts, figures and lists; there are also 38 nostalgic photographs but, curiously, not one showing a copy of *The Magnet*, *The Gem* or other relevant publications.

There are one or two errors: the *Collectors' Digest* began publication in 1946 not 1947 and my own book, *The Who's Who of Boys' Writers and Illustrators* appeared in 1964, not in 1946, for example.

Readers everywhere will welcome this warmly-nostalgic and informative look at the kindly creator of one of Britain's most famous and popular fictional characters.

'The Far Side of Billy Bunter.' And, as Thomas Paine wrote back in 1775: 'Let the far and the near all unite with a cheer.' Several cheers, in fact, for this gorgeous new book.

Orders should be sent to Dr. Peter McCall, West Lodge, 47 The Terrace, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1BP. (£25 per copy, including post and packing, UK orders, overseas, £30 per copy, including p&p).



GREYFRIARS VIGNETTES

by

Ted Baldock



ECHOES OF AN OLD SONG

**His song was only living aloud,
his work, a singing with his hand.**

Lanier. Life and Song

I have been here before. I do not remember when or under what circumstances. But I know the place, it is very familiar. How many times have we, many of us, experienced this phenomenon?

In a dream perhaps, who may tell. It is an odd feeling of certainty and yet of being uncertain. It is not confined to one location or period. We meet a person whom we are sure we have known in some other place and time. Echoes from the past of a garden, a piece of music, a book we have read and loved, a happy time spent on a long ago summer day. A strong suggestion of youthful laughter, and well-being.

Having shared, one might almost say participated in, the adventures of the Greyfriars fellows over more years than one cares to dwell upon, is it not natural that odd fragments flit from time to time through the mind, the cadence of old melodies treasured as something beyond price.

One of the most enduring of pleasures has been the ability to escape into the world of Greyfriars. The golden door is always open for the seeker after old friends, old refrains and early adventures.

Billy Bunter eyed with an extremely jaundiced eye the meagre spread on the study table. Finances were low - they usually were - in Peter Todd's study. Toddy, a lawyer in embryo, intended to rectify this shortcoming very early in his career, and very generously when he entered the bewigged and gowned world of Lincoln's Inn and the legal profession. On the table stood a crusty loaf, a wedge of cheese and two large onions. Peter Todd had purchased the latter that morning from Uncle Clegg's little shop in Friardale. That was the limit of the feast although the kettle was beginning to gurgle and sing by the fire giving promise of tea. It was hardly a repast for a gentleman, so thought the Owl.

The study being empty at the time and Bunter, not being a fellow to let a good and safe opportunity slip by, cut himself a substantial portion of cheese and left the study munching to continue his search for a somewhat more attractive spread.

In pursuit of this laudable quest, not unnaturally his fat footsteps led him towards

that which he considered a very hopeful location, namely the study of Lord Mauleverer. Old Mauly always had a well-stocked board. Furthermore, and this was most important, Mauly never kicked a fellow when he dropped in unannounced, especially at tea-time. This may be connected with a desire not to soil his elegant boots, apart from the expenditure of the energy involved. Another plus, old Mauly never threw anything at a fellow's head. Yes, Mauly was the man.

Bunter opened the door of his Lordship's study and peered in. There was his Lordship reclining gracefully on his sofa with his eyes closed and a beatific expression upon his aristocratic features. "I say, Mauly, old man", Bunter began. One noble eye opened. "Oh, is that you, Bunter. You are just the fellow. Would you be so good as to do me a particular favour?"

The Owl's eyes glistened. In the bland tones of Lord Mauleverer he sensed an invitation. "Of course, old man, just name it, and it shall be done", he beamed. "Do be a good fellow, and go away - now, and close the door behind you. There can be a terrific draught, you know".

Laughter echoed along the remove passage. Harry Wharton and Co. were chatting on the landing when a distinctly deflated Owl rolled up. The cheery Bob Cherry greeted him with a thump on the back. "Why the doleful countenance, Bunty, old man? Has the post office let you down again. I think a jolly strong letter to the postmaster general telling him to pull his socks up is in order, don't you think so, you fellows?" "Oh, don't rot! I say, it must be almost tea-time. Could you lend me a half crown, then I will stand you tea..."

"Now there's a generous offer, you chaps!", grinned Johnny Bull. "I really think we should take advantage of such generosity. In the meantime, Bunter, roll away and stand tea to some one else."

Obviously it was not Billy Bunter's day. Fortune's smiles were directed elsewhere. But it is never so black that it may not become a little blacker.

There was the rustle of a gown and a sharp, acid voice. "Bunter, proceed to my study this instance!"

"Oh Lor, I say, sir it wasn't me - I mean it wasn't I, sir. It was stale anyway."

"What, what, what are you gabbling about boy, go to my study immediately."

With which Mr. Quelch swept away with a rustle of gown and a very sharp atmosphere which suggested that storms were looming not far ahead.

Throughout the years have we not all been here many times? The song will develop along well-recognised lines. Billy Bunter will wax ever more outrageous in his denials and the remove-master will rapidly reach a state of unbelief. At this point, invariably, the cane, always lying ready on his desk, will be introduced into the proceedings. The Owl will be sternly ordered to 'bend over', a request to which he was always very tardy in reacting. 'Six of the best' follow accompanied by suitable sound effects from the fat victim.

Bunter's last resort for sustenance lies in his own study and consists of the cheese, onions and bread, with Peter Todd presiding and Tom Dutton misinterpreting every remark of his two study-mates.



Here an interesting question arises. What price the humble and aromatic onion on the tea-table of a public school 'man'. A Greyfriars 'man' no less? We may be assured with little doubt that it would not be tolerated at Bunter Court. Try to imagine the fearful effect upon the aristocratic and sensitive nostrils of the titled relations. Surely there would be open revolt. Perhaps it would have been better - and wiser - had Peter Todd not introduced those onions into the study. Cheese and Bread, yes - but onions. Yet who may follow the often twisted logic in the mind of an embryo lawyer?

Flights of fancy, but what delightful and entertaining meanderings through a world which has become almost a reality in the minds of not a few old, and not so old, fellows over the years. Close your eyes for a moment and there before you is Greyfriars in all its ancient and fabled glory, there Friardale woods intersected by the equally famous lane winding through to the village. Here the breezy heights of Courtfield Common with its vistas of waving gorse, with the slow flowing Sark and the towpath lined with drooping willows. All are ever present in our imaginations.

A wisp of smoke curling lazily above the trees is issuing from the chimney of the seedy establishment known as the 'Three Fishers'. A house of very doubtful charac-

ter. Notorious among several other 'assets' it is the headquarters of one Joseph Banks who designates himself as a turf accountant. From this dilapidated riverside inn he conducts his business, which consists largely of relieving foolish young punters from Greyfriars school of their pocket money, horse racing and dubious card games figure largely in his area of interests. 'Joey', as he is known to his clients, plays a small yet not insignificant role in the annals of Greyfriars. He is one among several doubtful characters moving among the shadows in the general canvas. These darker areas do, however, serve a purpose in that they enhance by contrast, the sunlit vistas of the Greyfriars scene and remind us that even in Eden all was not as desired to attain perfection.

* * * * *

Outside a cold November fog drifting in from the sea had rendered visibility in the quadrangle at Greyfriars practically nil. The old elms had taken on ghostly shapes in the gloom. Although it was yet early in the afternoon, lights were already beginning to glimmer in study windows. It was not unusual for Greyfriars to be thus inflicted at this period of the year.

In his study in the remove passage Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, 'Inky' to his chums, had drawn the sagging old armchair as close as it was possible within the range of



As Mr. Quelch and Mr. Lascelles came abreast of the Three Fishers, the former's eyes fell on Vernon-Smith sitting on the river bank. "Vernon-Smith!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, with a start. "What are you doing here?" "I've been drying myself, sir," said the Bounder meekly. "I had a spill in the boat!"

safety and was 'toasting his toes' in the warm glow of a cheerfully blazing fire, the while contemplating the ever moving pictures in the glowing depths.

Inky had never completely come to terms with the English winter. It was emphatically not his favourite season. He was accustomed to the searing heat of the dusty plains of Bhanipur in far off India, backed by the eternal snow capped Himalayas on the distant horizon. Here he had felt warm - always warm. Now in this green little island he had been forced into an acquaintanceship with cold, damp, fog, snow and copious spells of rain. All, it is true, falling in their due seasons and he had to admit that the English Spring and Summer possessed magic elements unknown elsewhere.

At the present freezing moment, however, he leaned forward and stirred the fire into greater glory and warmth. So endlessly does the song echo on - always moving, we hope, into the limitless future.

The trauma of winter will pass and once more the green sward of Big Side will beckon. The rooks in the upper reaches of the ancient elms will once more perform the ritual of breeding. And Mr. Quelch, standing at his study window, will breathe deeply the Spring air. The Winter season has increasingly become rather a trial to him. Twinges are apt to attack his various joints, causing a degree of irritability to a nature already somewhat acid-laced. But with the coming of Spring they seem to flee, much to his relief. He now dwells upon those far distant Oxbridge days when he was young and a power in the land - within the confines of his college at least. Oh, for those days, how supple and strong were his limbs then! Twinges were unknown. They lay far in the future and no thought was given to the possibility that one day - one unhappy day - they would inevitably attack.

Much the same may be said of Mr. Prout, master of the fifth form. It has been averred that he was fleet of foot in his younger days. When one considers his bulk today it would seem to be stretching credibility - but who knows? However, when Spring was in the air he would grunt with satisfaction and relief that another Winter was receding into limbo.

Life will go forward. One aspect will always remain static - or even improve! The revenues of the tuckshop will always be in a very healthy state, no small thanks to the loyal custom of - among others - a certain fat member of the remove.

If a man can, in his inmost heart, remain half a boy, just so long will be song continue, and the door to the realms of adventure and romance remain forever open, whatever the season - *Bis Pueri senes.*

A NEAR PERFECT DAY

Come hither lads and hearken, for a tale there is to tell,
of wonderful days a-coming, when all shall be better than well.

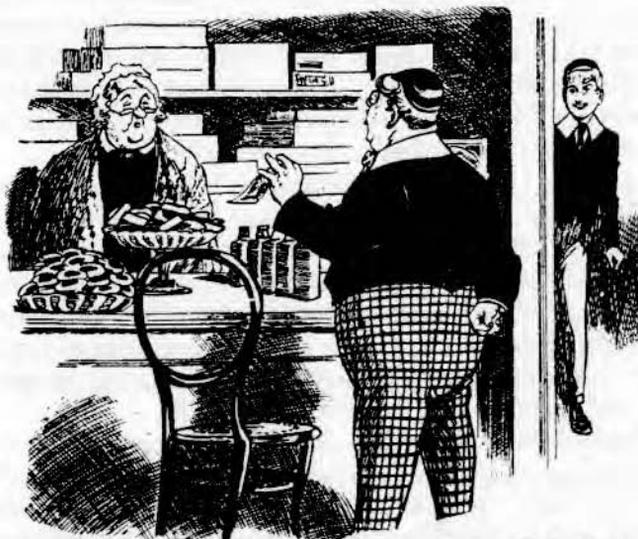
W. Morris. The Day is Coming

As I stand in the gathering dusk beneath the trees in Friardale Lane, there are a myriad echoes around me. I seemed to hear - or sense - the quiet rustle of many feet and the faint cadence of voices. Friardale Lane is an ancient thoroughfare steeped in history, worn by countless generations of monks plying between the village and the monastery of Greyfriars. Mingling also with the rustle of monkish garb are the active feet of schoolboys, running, jumping, strolling, as the moods of youth dictate. All are present in the deepening shadows to be heard by the receptive ear.

I had spent the long summer day at Greyfriars revisiting, in a sense, 'the glimpses of the moon'. It chanced to be mid-vacation and the great old building was deserted and silent, well, almost so - it was temporarily occupied by a small battalion of cleaners armed with brooms, brushes, dusters and Hoovers who were valiantly trying to restore order and cleanliness for the coming Autumn term,

Dust clouds were rising in the Remove passage, study windows were wide open. Old impot. papers and much other debris were being attacked and routed by the onslaught of these formidable ladies.

Outside, among the upper branches of the elms, the immemorial Greyfriars rooks



Dame Mumble regarded the fat junior very sternly. "The bank has refused to honour your last cheque, Master Bunter! You will have to pay cash down in future!"

remained in residence, they, apparently having little regard for holidays. Their perpetual chorus was to be heard, a *leit-motiv* to the ageless scene. I see them now, as I saw them rather more years ago than I care to remember, strutting over the sixth form green, not without a certain dignity and proceeding gravely along Masters walk.

In this quiet and secluded atmosphere of another world where, for the moment, the boisterous rush for the tuckshop during 'break' is muted, no crowds of fellows are to be seen making their way towards the little mecca of sustenance as was the case during term. The sound and fury are hushed now where normally fellows would be jostling for position at the counter of Mrs. Mible's little shop.

Almost certainly there would be heard the stentorian tones of Horace Coker and the urgent squeak of Billy Bunter midst the cacophony as demands were made for immediate attention, and 'make way there you fags' from the senior 'men' asserting their authority. I recall that Mrs. Mible never failed to keep quite an extraordinary semblance of order during 'Breaks,' doubtless by virtue of her long experience of such daily battles. Then at the sound of the warning bell announcing the termination of the fifteen minutes of freedom there would be a concerted rush of fellows from her little establishment. Replenished and refreshed, all the fellows from the inkiest of fags to the most lordly seniors would hurry away to their respective form-rooms. The battlefield would be left to the restorative efforts of Mrs. Mible and her spouse.

Similarly refreshed, and perhaps in a rather more dignified manner, there would be a rustle of gowns and an exodus from Masters common room. When Mr. Prout, sustained by coffee and biscuits, would wax jocund and his familiar boom would be heard. "Come, gentlemen, let us go forward with good heart once more into the fray. Courage, Twigg, courage sir, your little heathens needs a firm hand." "Really, Prout, you overstate the case", bleated Mr. Twigg, gathering up his gown and making his way with such dignity as he could muster to the second form room there to deal with his young 'Gentlemen'. The common task, the daily round. It is difficult to imagine that one day, some years in the future, one of the small, inky second-formers could well not only grace the sixth form, but may also have attained the ultimate pinnacle of success and become Captain of the school - quite a thought!

Resting on one of the seats surrounding the bole of an elm, I pondered upon these scenes drifting through my memory. Looking in retrospect at the ongoing activities of a great school with its many and diverse characters, I saw Harry Wharton and Co., that stalwart company of chums whose adventures had for so many years enthralled me. I saw Mr. Quelch and his colleagues in all their varying humours manfully following the great task of the guiding and teaching of youth. The good days and those lesser times when shadows tended to obliterate the scene. All under the serene guidance of the benign - and wise - Dr. Locke.

In the empty Remove form-room - empty, that is, of humanity - I stood and looked over the serried rows of desks where, in term time the members of Mr. Quelch's form sat and, in most cases, imbibed pearls of wisdom and instruction from their form-master. There stood in splendid isolation his desk raised upon its dais: there, still lying as though in readiness for instant action, the official cane; there the black-board with

its accompanying duster and chalks all waiting to resume service after the holidays. Also present on this warm still afternoon were dust motes drifting through the shafts of sunlight flooding through the windows and seeming, in some strange way, to promote an atmosphere of timeless tranquillity which has no affinity with the breathless world outside.

If it be true that certain rooms retain atmospheric evidence of past activities it must surely be so with the Remove form-room. Has it not seen countless confrontations, tense moments, and painful episodes when corrective measures have been administered by an expert hand to certain members of the form, among whom may be mentioned as being a regular recipient in this respect - William George Bunter.

The bare boards beneath one desk contain much evidence of extensive scarring, the responsibility for which are the restless feet of Bob Cherry who seems unable to keep them passive for any length of time. How often have those feet been pounding in imagination after a ball on Little Side when they should have been reposing quietly and their owner absorbed in the retention of wisdom and facts emanating from the raised dais at the head of the room.

Intending to lunch at Chunkleys in Courtfield, that oasis of so many happy episodes in the past, I was about to move off when I saw approaching me across the deserted quadrangle from the direction of the Head's house, none other than Trotter, the page, that paragon of many secrets. He brought an invitation from Dr. Locke to lunch with him rather than depart so early in the day. This I happily accepted and I looked forward to a genial chat with that distinguished gentleman.

Trotter seemed to have changed little during the intervening years since I last saw him. He appeared to be the same lively and 'knowing' youth of former days, always read to help the boys in any ploy going forward. The ageless page-boy, who enjoyed the reputation of being a recognised authority regarding the exploits of Sexton Blake and Dixon Hawke. Like so much at Greyfriars he has about him a timeless quality well befitting his surroundings.

Passing through the Head's garden on my way up to the house I encountered a stooping figure in one of the borders flanking the lawn. I peered closely at the - it must be said - ancient figure, and yes, I was not mistaken, it was none other than Mr. Mimble, the much harassed husband of Mrs. Mimble. Hearing me approaching he laboriously straightened up and gazed at me for a moment or so before, with recognition dawning on his weather-beaten features, he saluted me. "How are you, Mimble, old fellow", I said by way of greeting. The old retainer had recognised me and we were soon exchanging reminiscences.

The Head's garden was a veritable haven of peace from the noise and activity always present in the rest of the school. It was here that Dr. Locke enjoyed brief and highly valued moments from the onerous responsibilities of Headship. Here also at the other end of the spectrum - as it were - Mr. Mimble also enjoyed those all too brief moments of peace and tranquility which were rather lacking in the vicinity of the tuckshop, under the sharp eye of Mrs. Mimble. Safely hidden by the box hedges and the rose-beds he experienced a feeling of something akin to emancipation, a sense of

freedom, and choice of movement. As he had once opined to Gosling as the two were discussing over glasses of a certain amber liquid, beloved by both, "It is a place where I can hear myself think".

Needless to say my lunch with Dr. Locke was an unqualified success. That splendid old gentleman soon put me completely at ease. We covered the time discussing over an excellent repast.

Among the many topics we touched upon one or two stand out in my mind as being worthy of recording. "I regard every member of my staff as a personal friend upon whom I may rely implicitly". Such was his tribute to his teaching staff. To my enquiry for Mr. Quelch he informed me that the Remove master was spending a few days at Wharton Lodge before departing for Switzerland for the remainder of the vacation. As you may be aware, he added, Colonel Wharton is one of our governors. Thus reminded I enquired as to the health of Sir Hilton Popper, he is also a governor of the school. The Head smiled. "Ah, Sir Hilton Popper, yes, a rather choleric gentleman with perhaps a somewhat over developed sense of property. To the best of my knowledge he is well, and still disputing vigorously the ownership of the island in the Sark", added the Head with a twinkle of amusement in his eye.

One final characteristic incident I must record. Passing through the old Greyfriars gate into the cool shade of Friardale Lane, Gosling, who had observed me approaching, stepped from the doorway of his lodge and drew himself up into a fair semblance of 'attention' and honoured me with a passable military salute by way of farewell. My knowledge of his many and varied techniques stemming from years of experience enabled me to interpret correctly this broad hint with little difficulty.

I slipped a half-crown into his horny palm, upon which he bade me farewell.

Friardale, Courtfield, a train journey and the great pulsating world lay ahead. Already as I boarded the train at Courtfield I had resolved in my mind to return again as soon as the fates decreed - to Greyfriars. Thus did I come to the end of a near perfect day.

A BRIEF SILENCE

**Where the snow-flakes fall thickest
there's nothing can freeze**

Holmes. The Boys

Once more the old school is empty and silent, corridors, form-rooms, staircases, broad landings and commonrooms, all are pervaded, it would seem, in a atmosphere of waiting.

Once more the Christmas holidays have carried away the laughing and boisterous elements leaving a vacuum not a little strange in its stillness. Doors have been left standing half open, as though awaiting the return of their occupants. But there is no sound of rushing feet or upraised voices to break the unnatural silence where nor-

mally everywhere was noise and general uproar.

Outside snow had laid a blanket of silence over the quadrangle. The rooks, those permanent residents in the old elms by the sixth form green, are silent. It would seem that even they are a little awestruck by the unwonted lack of activity. The playing fields, now deserted, stretch away into snowy infinity untrodden by any footprints.

The curtains of Gosling's lodge are closely drawn together shutting out the gloom of the late afternoon. Within his little drawing-room a cheery fire is burning cheerfully. Whatever may be old Gosling's faults - and they are many - he is an expert in making himself comfortable, especially now that those 'drafted boys are away for a week or so.



Traditionally it is one of "Gossie's" duties during vacations to make a round of the school buildings and assure himself that all is well. This does not always fit in with his other arrangements. Sad to relate it is rather a neglected duty. The simple fact being, although he would never admit it, that he is not over fond of deserted form-rooms and passages in the dusky half light of a winter's afternoon when such duties are usually performed.

Mr. Quelch, whose custom it was to linger for a few days after the boys had departed to the four corners of the kingdom, to tidy up a few loose ends, enjoyed the complete silence and solitude when he could devote his whole attention to his History of Greyfriars without the annoyance of interruptions - a situation quite impossible during term.

Later he would avail himself of Colonel Wharton's time-honoured invitation to visit Wharton Lodge for a few days, including Christmas day, where he would be made to feel very much at home by the Colonel and his sister. This arrangement was viewed with askance by another guest, one usually uninvited, namely William George Bunter. Old antagonists at Greyfriars the Head and the pupil managed to 'bury the hatchet' over the festive season, their differences, for the moment put aside, thus honouring the old and happy maxim, "Peace on earth, good will to all men" until battle-lines would be drawn once more in the term which lay ahead.

Mr. and Mrs. Mimble will be enjoying a well earned break from repelling impatient and boisterous customers in their much loved little establishment, the tuck-shop, although Mrs. Mimble will not fail to see to it that Mimble attends to certain adjustments concerning the smoother running of the 'break periods' next term.

Even so, although kept under fairly close surveillance, Mimble does upon occasion manage to escape the eagle eye of his spouse when he will repair to Gosling's lodge, there to spend a happy and comfortable half hour with the old gate-keeper, conning over past experiences, the while refreshing themselves in the time-honoured fashion.

Meanwhile Greyfriars waits silently under its mantle of snow, even the rooks seeming subdued at the unwonted quiet, until, once more all will be activity and noise when the boys return, eager to relate their adventures and activities during the vacation. All - more or less - ready for the new term.

ONCE A LONG TIME AGO

Rich with the spoils of time.

Grey. Elegy.

*After tea -we shall sit round the study fire
having a good laugh at Billy Bunter and
discussing the team for next -week's match
against Rookwood. Everything is safe,
solid and unquestionable. Everything will be
the same for ever and ever....*

George Orwell

Let us dwell for a brief period upon a phenomenon which has - alas in the brash modern age - almost completely disappeared. The Christmas issue looked forward to with impatient anticipation. The bulky number of our favourite weekly, the 'Magnet' with its seasonal double length story of Harry Wharton and Co. and Billy Bunter.

Christmas issues are extant today but can they in any way be compared with those of our boyhood? Are they looked forward to with anything comparable to the enthusiasm which we of that other time felt?

We knew from past experience that a 'Bumper' - even this phrase is redolent of another age - number was in the offing. The editor for some weeks before revealed hints in his weekly chat to the effect that this year it would be better than ever. Of course we knew it would - and it always was!

There would be a gathering at Wharton Lodge which, as likely as not, would be cut off from Wharton Magna and the outside world by deep drifts of snow. A situation anticipated by the faithful Wells, that gem of a butler who had, with admirable foresight, laid in ample stocks of provisions, much to the relief and approval of William George Bunter.

The lake in the park would be frozen over and skating would be the order of the day. A splendid opportunity for Bunter to display his superior technique as a figure skater ('I practise on our lake at Bunter Court, you know'). The Owl's fertile imagination knew no bounds while his entertainment value was worthy of much attention, causing hilarity to the whole party.

There would be a mystery to unravel. There would be tales related to eager

Nobody wants Billy Bunter—not even at Christmas! But as it happens, it's very fortunate for Harry Wharton that the Owl of the Greyfriars Remove turns up unexpectedly at Wharton Lodge!

HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS GUEST!



listeners round the blazing fire and, of course, there would be a ghost to be dealt with. How we looked forward to those ghostly apparitions, perhaps we even shared a modicum of Billy Bunter's terror. The creaking floorboard, the half-open door, which a moment before we could have sworn was shut, the moaning of the wind at the window - or was it something in the passage? All was grist to our enjoyment in those grand old Christmas numbers. They seemed to have everything a boy could possibly require.

Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, would be spending a few days over the holidays at the Lodge with Colonel Wharton - a long-time friend. It is a pleasant sight to see him comfortably ensconced in an armchair by the fire, an unusually benign smile on his crusty features, listening to the cheery chatter of the boys of his form, frowning the nonce at Billy Bunter and observing his frequent applications to the various boxes of chocolates, dates and other delicacies. He would make a mental note to speak to that fat member of his form later Wells and John the footman may be seen hovering in the background ready to minister to the assembled party.

It is a secure and timeless world here depicted. It is a world peopled with our long-standing friends, all of whom we know intimately. It was the late thirties of the last century and the world was about to change forever. So many dreams - a whole way of life - were about to pass into limbo forever. Yet there existed one beam of light

which was to continue to illumine the gloom. Our world, the world of Greyfriars, is inviolate to outward pressures; it was immune and safe from the vagaries of passing change.

Only the faintest echoes of outer strife impinged into the quiet old quadrangle, playing-fields and life at Greyfriars. Here are our friends seated round the fire at Wharton Lodge celebrating another Christmas. Here are cheery faces, chatter and laughter. Wells has made his last round to assure himself that all doors and windows are securely locked. The last embers of the fire are dying out in the hall. Silence reigns in the old house except for the usual creakings and signs which exist in all ancient dwellings and a distant rumbling as of thunder from the direction of Billy Bunter's bedroom, where the Owl is dreaming of ranks of good things - all edible, all within reach. The wind is sighing round the old chimneys, the moon is sailing through a clear sky for the moment devoid of snow-clouds. All is well.

The saga may fade a little with the passing of time and be relegated to the margins of literary history, yet it will always be there to delight the future researcher into that magic world of..... a long time ago.

(Editor's Note: I make no apologies here for repeating above one of my favourite Christmas illustrations from *The Magnet*.)



1906 AND ALL THAT

by Bill Bradford

Having recently undergone spinal surgery I am housebound and not very active, nor will I be for some time to come. As I am thoroughly bored I decided to inflict some thoughts and memories on you, and to look back and see what was happening in the sphere of boys' papers a 100 years ago. 1906 was an exceptionally uneventful year, with only the advent of THE BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY, which I consider to be one of the major developments in our field of interest.

The first 2 issues appeared in September 1906 and were called the SAM JACK & PETE LIBRARY, those characters being very popular in the MARVEL & BOYS FRIEND WEEKLY. This title obviously did not catch on and the Publishers, Amalgamated Press, changed the title to BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY. This was to prove one of their greatest most profitable ventures with 2 series running to 1488 issues, only ending in June 1940 when the wartime paper shortage brought so many publications to an end. The last 24 issues, with 2 per month, were alternative titles of BOYS FRIEND BULLSEYE

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The **RIO KID**

BY RALPH BEDWAY

**BOY
OUTLAW
IN WESTERN
THRILLS**

No. 156
BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY

LIBRARY & BOYS FRIEND KNOCKOUT LIBRARY, I know not why!

Nearly all stories were reprinted, sometimes with Editorial revision of serials from earlier years, from several publishers, largely Amalgamated Press but later from CHUMS (then Cassell & Co) BOYS OWN PAPER (Religious Tract Society) and BOYS MAGAZINE (E. Halton/Allied Newspapers).

The first editor was William H. Back, followed by John L. Garbutt in 1922, who was succeeded by Percy A. Clarke for the remaining years, both the latter prolific writers in many publications. The 1st Series were priced at 3pence and 124 pages, but increased to 4 pence from No. 409. Issues varied between 2 to 5 per month.

The 2nd series of 724 issues was priced at 4pence, except the last 24 which cost 4½ pence. Only 64 pages until no 324, it was then increased to 96 pages until the end.

Lofts & Adley were unable to trace the source of 34 stories, quite a number were original and not reprints, most noteworthy several by Martin Clifford/Frank Richards, E.S. Brooks, just one from Samuel Walkey (why no more?) and, rarest and most valuable, No. 204 CROOKED GOLD (Meet the Tiger) by Leslie Charteris, but published without an author's name. I once had a copy of this but unwittingly gave it to a friend...

Concentrating on authors, Charles Hamilton contributed 22 stories of The Rio Kid (10 repeated) 23 of King of the Islands (7 repeats) and about 26 more, mainly St. Jim's. I can trace 32 stories by E.S. Brooks and 34 by my old favourite Geo. E. Rochester. I can only find 8 Biggles issues (W.E. Johns) whereas I was surprised to see 11 about Baldy's Angels, by Cap. Robert Hawke (Hedley O'Mant).

There were no less than 42 issues featuring Sexton Blake (several repeats) of which I have 12 individual editorial copies, each beautifully bound, ex Norman Shaw.

I remember, when the latter used to offer me 100 BFL's for £50, I bought some but was over choosey. Idiot! Norman Wright and I have often agreed that if we could find a treasure trove we would like it to comprise a complete run of BFL's.

I suppose, for me, and many others one of the main attractions was the variety of stories, adventure, school, sport and crime.

Most of the stories had originally appeared many years before so I had not previously read them. From the mid 1930s onward I was always at my newsagent on the first Thursday of the month when most A/P libraries were published. I always wanted all the SCHOOLBOYS OWN LIBRARY but not all BFL's appealed to me. I always regretted that A/P issued so many libraries on the same day putting a strain on decision and finance.

Incidentally, many Sexton Blake authors contributed non Blake stories. Offhand I remember that these included A. Skene, Gerald Verner/Donald Stuart, R.C. Armour, L. Black, G. Chester, A. Edgar, G. Chester, G.H. Teed, Gwyn Evans, J. Hunter, J. Brearley (Garbutt), A. Blair and W.M. Graydon, to name a few. I first started reading this Library in the early 1930s, the earliest I can remember being No. 371, Dead Man's Isle, a pirate story by Hedley Scott, issued February 1933, after which I was hooked. I have about 570 issues, mainly 2nd Series, so if you are looking for a home for any surplus copies, look no further! Any true lover of pre-war papers must appreciate this library. I am

indebted to the late Bill Loftis and Derek Adley for their publication ORIGINS OF THE BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY, the result of tireless research, printed in 1987. In my opinion this is one of their greatest contributions to the hobby, equalled only by their OLD BOYS BOOKS CATALOGUE, both a must for serious collectors.

At 83 I have so many recollections of boys publications in my childhood. The only child of a failed marriage, at a time when there was no TV or many of today's diversions, reading was my one great escape and ceaseless pleasure.

If you are not already acquainted with the BFL I hope this item will stimulate your interest.



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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT on Page 21



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STIRRING STUFF

by Mary Cadogan

R. Hibbert, a stalwart supporter of the C.D., has produced two bumper and attractive books which will interest many collectors. The first is a reprint of THE PHANTOM OF CURSITOR FIELDS, which originally appeared as a serial in THE BULLSEYE in 28 parts during 1931. This is, of course, one of that paper’s “awesome” tales of ghostly happenings in Cursitor Fields, near Cheapside, in long-ago fog-ridden London.

The gripping text and wonderfully atmospheric illustrations convey the reader through many adventures featuring the mis-shapen phantom, of the “evil-grinning face” and “icy, bony gnarled hands” who glided and swayed along, uttering “a babbling, jabbering of sounds” and trailed behind him “the acrid smell of brimstone”. (Why is it that ghoulish stories can somehow make a kind of cosy reading?)

The original narrative is complete and it is enhanced by articles and commentaries from Mr. Hibbert, Ray Moore, Len Wormull, Cedric Groombridge, *et al.*

Mr. Hibbert’s second offering is a hundred-page study of THE SURPRISE, the

weekly paper which ran from 5th March 1932 until 11th November 1933. This volume is rich in pictures and selected reprints from the paper. Basically, however, it comprises Mr. Hibbert's own text - his detailed assessment of the contents of this extremely colourful paper. We can re-savour the tales of adventure, and the detective, ghostly, comic or dramatic fiction of THE SURPRISE. This is a feast of boys' paper reading, from office-boys' "Backchat" to Jack Dawlish, the devil-may-care "Crimson Bat"; from schoolboys like "The Chums of Cranworth" to secret and criminal societies like "The Red Triangle". Just right for those moments after a surfeit of Christmas pudding and mince pies, when one wants to settle down to a jolly good, escapist read! (Details of how to obtain these publications are given above.)



Mary's Biography now available on Tape or CD

Martin Jarvis, our favourite reader of the William stories, has undertaken an extremely impressive new venture, recording for BBC Audio Books Mary Cadogan's well-loved biography *Richmal Crompton - The Woman Behind Just William*.

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Mary says that they should be available from branches of W H Smith or Waterstone's, at £15.99 for the cassettes or £20.99 for the CDs.

Or they can be ordered direct from: AUDIOBOOKS COLLECTION, Freepost, Bath, BA1 3QZ (website: www.audiobookcollection.com telephone: 0800 136 919).

£2.99 needs to be added for postage.



GREAT CHRISTMAS TREATS



by Mary Cadogan

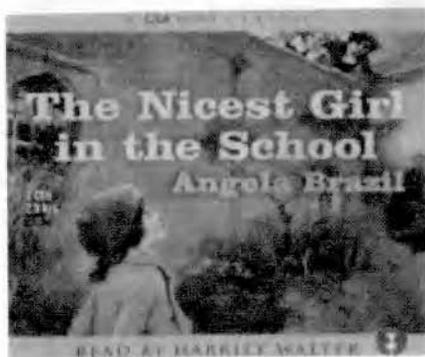
If, like myself, you enjoy being read to by expert narrators, you will love two recently released CDs, which feature the work of the two best known school story-writers of the twentieth century. Angela Brazil's *THE NICEST GIRL IN THE SCHOOL* is read by Harriet Walter, and *BILLY BUNTER'S POSTAL ORDER* is delivered by Martin Jarvis.

Both readers skilfully convey the real flavour and atmosphere of the original stories. Even though I know these books so well I am happy to experience them now in this new format. Wonderful fare, particularly when one is too tired to read the printed word, or as a happy background to chores like washing-up, cooking, ironing, etc.!

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HAPPY CHRISTMASES WITH THE CLIFF HOUSE GIRLS

No. 1. At Holly Hall



sampling the provisions of everyone in a very hearty manner.

A car met them at the station, and they were all introduced to Barbara's jolly father. As they were driving to the house a dramatic surprise awaited them. The car stopped; Mr. Redfern ran to pick up an eleven-year old girl who was sitting in the snow — his own daughter, Doris, mounting guard over a

GOOD-BYE, Miss Primrose!"
"Good-bye, Barbara! A happy Christmas to all of you, my girls!"

"Thank you, Miss Primrose! The same to you and many of them!"

That was the way in which they started off from Cliff House, a merry band of chums of the Fourth Form, to enjoy a right, royal time at Barbara's pretty home, Holly Hall in Hampshire.

And with them went an uninvited guest.

Bessie Bunter had not been asked to join the party, but she went with them. She simply pursued. The train was about to start when Bessie, her parrot-cage, a large and shabby bag, and all her other possessions, fairly shot into the carriage with the others. And that meant quite clearly that Bessie was not to be lost any more.

Moreover, Bessie enjoyed herself thoroughly on the journey by



luckless starving and half-frozen dog. Doris was all right and quite warm—it was just her wilful little way to do a thing like that.

They reached the house after that, and then it came out, quite accidentally and unexpectedly, that there was one memory to mar the Christmas. Years before Mr. Redfern had quarrelled with his brother Rupert—a quarrel he deeply

regretted now—but the portrait of the brother who had gone in anger was still turned to the wall. Was it not enough to strike a sentimental chord in every breast?

But there was heaps of fun in that Christmas holiday. Poor Bessie's hunger was too much for her—they discovered her, looking very guilty, hiding behind a screen just by the eatables.

Her hunger roused her at night; it really must have been the cause. For Bessie, conquering all her fears of an old house, descended the stairs in search of the larder! Downstairs she encountered not food but a suit of armour, which fell upon her with a terrific crash. And didn't Bessie make a fuss about that!

They went tobogganing, and the uninvited guest was given a sled all to herself. And what blood-curdling yells were Bessie's when she shot away a moment too soon, all by herself, half on and half off the toboggan, as it went streaking to the bottom!

"Ow! Help! Yow-ow!" she shrieked.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the onlookers, waiting to see Bessie finish up with a sort of double somersault.

Up into the air rose the fat girl, as the toboggan capsized, and down she came again plunging softly into a ten-foot drift of snow.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooph!" wailed the hapless Bessie, floundering about.

"Do it again, duffer!" teased Doris Redfern. "You shall have my helping of pink jelly at dinner if you do!"

Bessie, however, refused to repeat her performance.

But that was the light side of their stay. There was a serious side, too—a strange and mysterious rumour that a spectral figure had been seen in the house. And

suddenly one night the girls saw it, too—beyond a doubt they saw a grey figure that moved along the corridors and seemed simply to fade into the solid panelling.

But it was not a real ghost, after all. Great was the amazement of everyone to find that Rupert Redfern, the brother who had quarrelled, was back again in the house. He was the "ghost," he had disappeared into a secret passage, that was all. And in that passage he found papers that proved the mistake he had made long years ago, and how he had wronged Babs' father when they quarrelled.

It was Christmas-time, the season of forgiveness and goodwill. Gladly the brothers shook hands, and all was over and forgotten. Once more a united family, they sat down to enjoy their Christmas dinner.

And what a surprise Doris Redfern, in her mischievous way, had prepared for them.

The turkey was expected on the table—a great dish, with a large metal cover, was set before Mr. Redfern. The cover was raised, and everyone expected to see a large and beautifully cooked turkey.

They saw nothing of the sort. In place of it was Bessie Bunter's parrot!

The parrot seemed to have been dozing. But suddenly it opened one dull eye, blinked at Bessie, and emitted a loud and lively:

"Squark!"

Naturally there were shrieks of laughter. Bessie hastily captured her pet and took him back to the cage from which he had been taken. And when she returned the real "bird" was being carved, and everyone was ready to thoroughly enjoy the merry dinner-party that followed.



HAPPY CHRISTMASES WITH THE CLIFF HOUSE GIRLS

No. 2. Christmas with Clara



"Away with you and your Merry Christmas!" he snarled. "Keep your wishes for those that want them!"

And then when Bessie, who was well to the rear of the party, suggested that he deserved to have his beard pulled, the old man shambled off—just as though he was afraid of an innocent threat like that. Why?

"HURROO! Let it rip, girls! Hurrooh!"

Clara Trevlyn was the maddest of the party of girls who had packed themselves into the compartment of the train that was speeding towards her Surrey home.

They were all there—Bessie Bunter as well; the only trouble was that Bessie was the only girl without a seat. They were one too many for the compartment—and Bessie was that one! But she sat in a number of laps as they rattled along, and the jolting proved too much for her balance. They say that excitement usually follows where Clara goes, and it proved a true motto this Christmas.

Mystery awaited them. Full of good cheer, they greeted everyone they met, and wished them the compliments of the season. To an elderly man with a beard, whom they encountered, Clara wished the same cheery greeting.



Stranger things awaited them at the house

There was a maid—a very sweet and willing girl she proved to be—who was called Mary. Mary was charming and ever so obliging, but she seemed to have some secret trouble. At night Marjorie found her standing by the window in an empty room, peering out into the

night. Later Clara actually found her upon the snowy roof of the house, signalling with a red lantern—to whom?

Then appeared another figure in the house—a smart and accomplished girl with a deceitful smile, who was called Eunice.

To the Cliff House girls—or some of them, at least—it soon became clear that Eunice was an enemy of Mary, the maid, and sought by every possible means to disgrace her.

Subtly, when no one was expected to be looking, she tripped her up whilst carrying a laden tray. She made finger-marks on plates that only Mary was supposed to handle!

What did it all mean?

The usual fun of the festive season proceeded apace, despite the mystery. There was much merry snowballing. Bessie, as usual, took cover. She threw her snowballs when no one was looking; and, if a snowball chanced to hit her, she was very annoyed indeed, because she said she was short-sighted, and couldn't see them coming!

But at Rose Villa, Clara's home, the mystery still continued. Racked with secret misery as she was, Mary, the maid, would confide in no one. Eunice, the smart but unwanted visitor, continued to come to the house, and continued to be hostile to Mary.

And then, on Christmas Eve, there were dramatic events indeed! Mary's father came home—the father to whom she had been signalling, night after night, came to receive the papers that Mary possessed—the papers that could clear him of a very serious accusation.

And then—we need not describe how—Eunice's part was revealed as well. Her father—the man who wore the beard and pretended to be old—was the man who

would benefit most if Mary's father was convicted of the crime he had not committed! Eunice was only pretending to be friendly with Clara so that she could enter the house and attempt to steal the papers, and prevent Mary from communicating with her father!

What an amazing mystery to solve on Christmas Eve!

But Christmas saw a happy household, after all! Mary's fears were over—her father no longer had need to hide, a hunted fugitive, with fears always in his mind. Instead, Eunice and her father were the pair who found Christmas so bleak and fearful. But they deserved that for their plotting!

Bessie enjoyed herself as only Bessie can. She ate a record Christmas dinner, and after it dozed peacefully. And after that she wanted to sing!

"I'll ser-hing thee ser-hongs—" she began.

"Don't!"

"Ser-hongs of her-her-Araby, and—" "

"Be quiet, Bessie!"

"And ter-ter-her-hales of fair Cer-hash-mere—Yooop!"

Thump! came a cushion.

"Who threw that cushion?" demanded Bessie indignantly.

"I did!" said Clara. "And there's another if you start again!"

"You're jealous because you're not musical yourself!" said Bessie tartly. "My father often says that I ought to have my voice brought out."

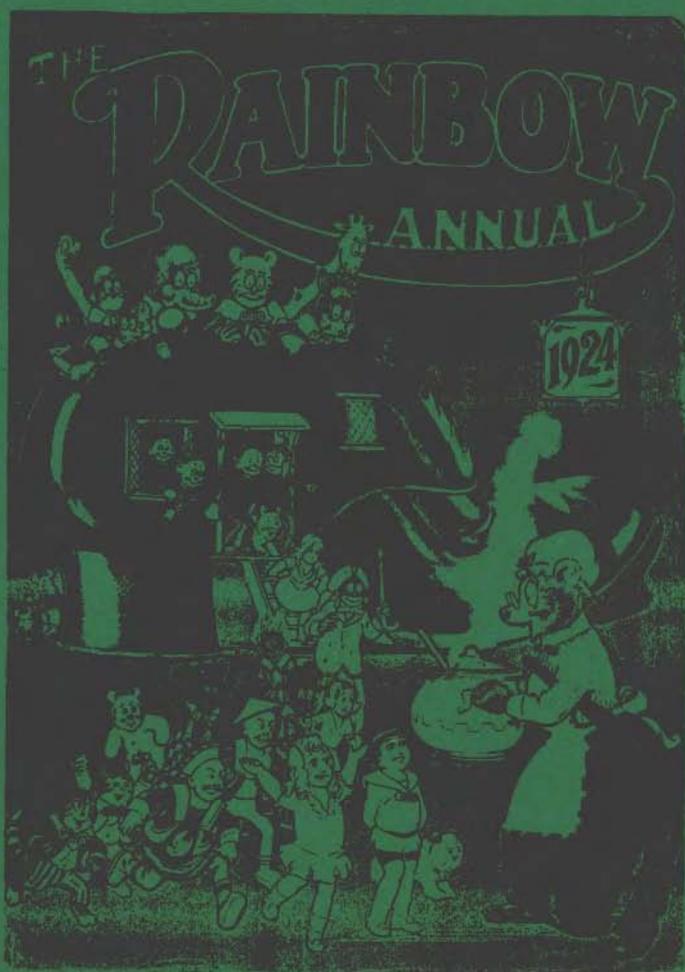
"Brought out and buried!" said Clara.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

However, Clara went to the sideboard and produced a dish of fruit—and Bessie's vocal powers were heard no more!



THE LAND OF NEVER-GROW-OLD





"The Bobby and the Mistletoe" — Tony Glynn

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