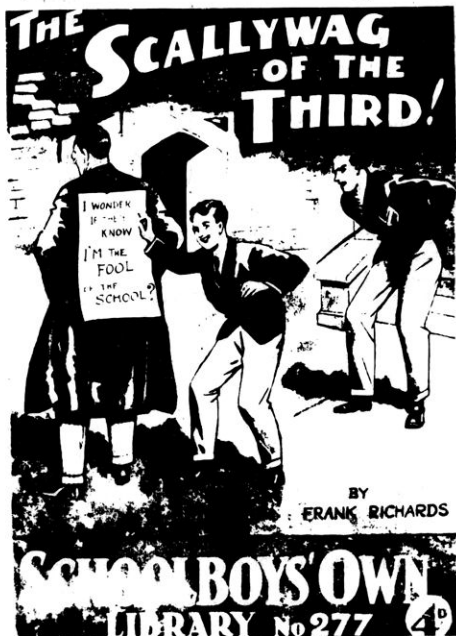


STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Vol. 27, No 319

JULY 1973



15p

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1917 in 2 Vols. - £22.50 each	}	Mint bindings Fine condition Black covers
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A GUIDE OF YOUTH

There has been some correspondence fairly recently in the Daily Telegraph concerning the old papers and the effect they had on the boys who were addicted to them. One man wrote that his school life was lived with a background of the Gem and Magnet. Another correspondent agreed with this to some extent, but added that much more popular were

such papers as Hotspur, Rover, Wizard and the like, and that "swapping" at his school was always on a basis of one Hotspur for two Magnets, and so on.

Naturally there is no need to doubt the truth of what these correspondents wrote. It all depended on the type of school and on the age groups. I would think that Wizard and Co. appealed more to younger lads, that the gentle art of swapping would be found much more in the junior school, and that as boys grew older they would appreciate more restrained writing, which would bring the Gem and the Magnet more to their liking.

My own entire youth was lived in a background of St. Jim's, Greyfriars and Rookwood, and I was certainly reading those papers from the time I was seven years old or younger. But they played no part at all in my school life, and swapping of papers was non-existent. At this distance of time I cannot recall that any of my pals at school ever talked of buying the Gem, the Magnet, or anything else in the weekly paper line. I suppose I regarded my reading inclinations as an addiction purely associated with my home, and I'm sure I never talked about it at school.

Just why this was so I cannot decide. Certainly, I am sure, the Headmaster and his teaching staff would have strongly discouraged such reading matter, but we did not always do the things which the masters considered we should. Possibly it was just snootiness. Whatever the reason, my own addiction to weekly papers had absolutely nothing whatever to do with my school life. It is just possible that there are plenty of others with the same experience.

The fact that old Wizards, Hotspurs, etc., are far scarcer today than Magnets would seem to bear out my view that younger boys, who destroyed as they went, supported the former type of papers, while the older - and surely, the sentimental - saved their copies.

BULLSEYE

For many years it has been accepted that Magnets are the most sought nowadays, and, in consequence, fetch the highest prices among collectors. My experience is, however, that the Bullseye runs the Magnet very close for price-fetching. A couple of years ago I sold a few Bullseyes, asking 7/6 each for them. They were snapped up at

once, and many readers wrote me in vain, dangling the carrot that they would willingly pay £1 each for them.

Last month I offered another Bullseye for sale, asking fifteen bob for it. It was a beautiful mint copy, with the free gift in pristine perfection still within. It was sold immediately. Once again many readers offered £1 or "your price."

Clearly there was something special about the Bullseye, even if one allows for the scarcity value which must be considerable.

A MATTER OF TASTE

In recent months two of our contributors, Messrs. Geal and Harvey, have looked at old and at modern papers, and have made something of a comparison between the two. Our two writers have provided us with intelligent and fascinating arguments.

I must confess that I am one of those who think that modern papers cannot hold a candle to the old ones. I have long come to the conclusion that modern publishers have lost the art, the inclination, or both.

I would go further. In my opinion British papers had been deteriorating for many years, long before the rule of "pitchers only" became the accepted thing for British boyhood.

The heyday of the British paper was in the few years preceding the first world war. One has only to look at a Puck of 1912, with its lovely colours, or a 64-page double number of the Marvel, or a Gem of the 1911 era, or any of the Hamilton Edwards giants, to be convinced that nothing to equal them has ever appeared since. Gems and Magnets of the late twenties or the thirties contained quality reading between attractive covers, but the sheer size had gone for ever and the editing often became a hotch-potch of abandoned untidiness. And, looking at 1973 issues, words must fail anyone who knows them all from early days till now.

Last month Mr. Harvey wrote: "Nostalgia is an unreliable yardstick." That is true, but our findings are not, by a long chalk, based only on nostalgia.

When I'm maddened by the endless din of the constant roaring traffic outside my study window, it is not exactly nostalgia which makes

me yearn for the peace of yesteryear. When I'm charged 5p for my local newspaper and 3½p for a measly Chelsea bun, and I know that, without the gift of decimal currency, they would never have dared to charge 1/- for a paper which is mainly advertisements or 9d for an insipid bit of a bun, it is not nostalgia which makes me yearn for pounds, shillings, and pence, and causes me to decide that decimals and metrication are the biggest swindles ever perpetrated by cynical governments.

It isn't nostalgia which makes my heart bleed over the horrors of Basingstoke, the monstrosity of New Malden's skyscrapers, or what they are doing to once-beautiful Bath.

But, admittedly, nostalgia helps.

ANNUAL OCCASION

Work is going on apace on the new C. D. Annual, due out towards the end of the year. A giant volume takes long preparation. But we're getting along.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

DANNY'S DIARY

JULY 1923

It has been a very hot month. We had nine days running with the temperatures in the mid-eighties. A real heat-wave. It got a bit exhausting as it went on without a break.

There has been a stunning series within the Rookwood in Canada series. Opening story was "The Rustlers of Coyote Creek." Grudger Grimes owns the Coyote Creek ranch, ten miles from Windy River. Grimes, though a miser, is straight enough, but his cowhands are all a gang of horse-thieves, led by Spanish Kit. Lovell, who thinks he can ride Buster, is carried away by the horse, and is roped in by the Coyote Creek gang. Jimmy goes after him on Blazer. Jimmy and Lovell are turned loose on foot to walk home, and their horses are stolen.

In "The Raid on the Ranch," Mr. Smedley and his cowboys, ride

off to deal with the Coyote Creek gang, leaving Jimmy and his friends at Windy River ranch. And Spanish Kit and his gang raid Mr. Smedley's ranch while the owner is away. When Smedley and the cowboys get back, they find the ranch in flames.

In "Held by the Rustlers," Jimmy Silver is kidnapped by Spanish Kit's gang which has now left Coyote Creek ranch. And a new member of the gang is an old enemy of Jimmy's - Pequod le Couteau. But Pequod remembers that Jimmy once saved his life. Jimmy is to be tortured unless he shoots his cousin Smedley, who has also been captured, but Jimmy turned the gun on Spanish Kit and shot him.

Final story in this exciting series was "Rounding Up The Rustlers."

There is a new series of short school stories about Danesford School in the Boys' Friend, by Peter Foy. I have never heard of Peter Foy before, and I don't like his stories much.

There has been a rail crash near Huddersfield, and four people were killed. And there have been two colliery disasters - one at Maltby in Yorkshire, and one at Kilsyth near Glasgow. 35 men died.

After school broke up, Mum and I went to the London Coliseum one day, and saw a good variety programme. The main artists were Little Tich, Ella Shields, and Happy Lillian Lee, the merry Dutch girl.

At the pictures we have seen Leatrice Joy and Thomas Meighan in "Manslaughter," an excellent film about a rich girl who drove recklessly and caused the death of a policeman; Jackie Coogan in "Circus Days;" Betty Blythe in "Chu Chin Chow;" Jackie Coogan in "Trouble;" and Tom Moore and Isobel Elsom in "The Harbour Lights."

Another lovely rural picture was "Quincy Adams Sawyer," with John Bowers, Blanche Sweet, Lon Chaney, Elmo Lincoln, and Hank Mann.

It has been another rather depressing month in the Magnet. The series has gone on about the Willesley twins. First of the month was "The Twin Tangle." One twin is at Greyfriars. Quentin is a good twin. Cuthbert is a bad twin. Next week, in "The Hand of Fate" one twin dies. They are not sure which one it is who has been drowned. They think it is the good boy Quentin. It turns out to be the bad boy Cuthbert. I didn't care much, either way. It finished with: "The Head said he hoped to see Quentin back again at Greyfriars, and Harry Wharton & Co. share that hope yet."



Conducted by

Josie Packman

THE CURIOUS CASE
OF THE REPRINTED
CRIMSON CONJUROR

by John Steele

I found the article by John Bridgewater and Josie's remarks on the Case of the Crimson Conjuror, most interesting, so much so that I decided to read my copy of No. 723, the reprint edition, and found it as intriguing as John Bridgewater states. However, one chapter, No. 12, seemed to be inconsistent with the rest of the story and in fact seemed unnecessary. In fact it gives a clue that Nixon the cowboy at the Circus may in fact be Sexton Blake. I therefore decided to do a little more research

TREASURE
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THE UNION JACK

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OF
CONFUCIUS!

A Story of SEXTON BLAKE and
the Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle

No. 1 1926. EVERY THURSDAY. May 1926, 1926.

and compare the original with the reprint. The first interesting point brought to light was that the original tale has 14 chapters and the reprint has 18!!! No. 171 has 64 pages whilst the reprint has 96, but of course the type was larger and could account for the extra pages.

Chapters 1 - 8 appear to be the same except for changes of the odd word or phrase, for example:-

Cowardly hound becomes dirty blighter

Young 'un becomes old scout

Billycock Hat becomes bowler, etc., etc.

Chapter 9 reprint 723. Blake on the trail.

This chapter has been added to tell us that Blake is in an irritable mood, would not touch his breakfast, even Pedro is aware of his master's moodiness. However, a call from Coutts enables Blake to set his mind clear. Blake now has coffee and sandwiches which cheers up Mrs. Bardell and Pedro. Later in the chapter, Blake rings up the "Daily Gazette" and asks for a statement to be published that he (Blake) promised an arrest within the next 48 hours of the murderer of Cosmos the Conjuror.

Chapter 11 in the reprint is only half the length of chapter 10 in the original and chapter 12 has been inserted. It is this chapter that does not ring true as I mentioned earlier. It opens with Blake travelling along Edgware Road in a Laundry van at a terrific pace disregarding traffic lights, etc., and Blake arrives at Baker Street rather breathless after his hectic ride in what turns out to be a mobile wireless unit of the Flying Squad. No reason is given for this mad ride. Later Blake washes off the brown greasepaint - another clue that he is Nixon? Shortly after this Blake receives a phone call from Haldane, the reporter who went with Tinker to the Circus, informing him that Tinker is in great danger.

Chapter 13 of the reprint is also additional and tells of Blake going in the Grey Panther down to the circus site at Mitcham, to meet Haldane, who is supposed to be keeping an eye on the Mexican suspect as well as Tinker.

Chapter 14 in the reprint is the final half of chapter 10 of the original version No. 171. It will be noted in the first few lines that the steam organ music has been updated from "Never seen a Straight Banana" to "Hang out the Washing on the Siegfried Line!"

Chapter 15 (723) and Chapter 11(171) are almost identical except when Nixon pays off the person who has been following and spying on Tinker and Haldane from early in the story. Apparently his name is Ferret and in the original Blake gives him two crisp notes as payment for services rendered, but in the reprint Nixon hands over to Ferret a couple of five pound notes, and not crisp ones at that.

Chapter 16 (723) and (171) the same. No alterations or additions.

Chapter 17 (723) and 13 (171)

Here we have the first 300 words the same, up to the point where Tinker leaves the circus to go and telephone the gov'nor from the White Hart Hotel in the local village. In the original the story continues with Tinker's arrival at the White Hart, whilst in the reprint (commencing from page 79) we have an extra 1,000 words or so, before Tinker arrives at the Hotel and mainly covers a long conversation between Nixon and Tinker's circus friend Lolita.

Chapter 18 and 14 (171)

Another puzzling chapter. The reprint has an extra 1,000 words which informs us of Tinker's brave effort to save the Guv'nor by flinging himself between Haldane, who is armed, and Blake. Haldane knocks out Tinker and uses him as a shield to escape to the "Bigtop" where the final showdown takes place after a chase and Haldane finally shoots himself as in the original story. Myself I think I prefer the original tale - however, the question arises - who wrote the extra chapters, etc. Is it possible that when Gwyn Evans submitted the original MS. the editor had to prune it down to fit 64 pages and these were replaced for the reprint? I wonder if you Josie or some other Blake expert, can tell if the extra chapters were in fact genuine Gwyn Evans.

(When reading the reprinted version of this story many years ago, I felt much the same as John does now, the additional material and alterations did not read like Evans writings. Apart from the fact that Gwyn Evans was dead when the second tale was published, I feel that he could never have written such chapters as have been described.

Josie Packman.)

MARTHA AND DELLA

Armitage = Armistice

"He works into an incinerator where they burn refuge. He has

been working into it since the Armitage."

"He has just passed his silver service eliminations."

"Do you want cretonnes for the soup tonight?"

Any reader of Gwyn Evans stories asked to identify the speaker would say, "Who else but Mrs. Martha Bardell."

Who else indeed?

Well, just in case you meet a question of this sort in some future quiz let me warn you against the obvious answer. These gems came from the lips of Della. Who is Della?

She is James Thurber's coloured domestic help in "My world and Welcome to it." The above Dellaisms appear in the piece called "What do you mean, it was Brillig."

Literary influences are tricky things and authors notoriously unreliable about them. Thurber hints that it is Lewis Carroll in this instance by saying that only Carroll would have understood Della completely. I think that Gwyn Evans would have been more at home with her than Carroll. It is quite clear that Thurber was a devoted reader of the Union Jack in his earlier days and this simply slipped his memory when writing the Della piece. Della herself was most concerned about Thurber's brain and told him he worked too much with it. She was considerably worried about his mental condition too and warned his wife that his mind worked so fast that his body could not keep up with it. This being so it would not be surprising if his mind had outstripped his memory as well, and he forgot what he had read some years before. Gwyn Evans began Bardellisms in 1924, and Thurber's book did not appear until 1942. But odd bits of good things like Gwyn Evans stories stick in the mind though it is often quite impossible to place them without much mental effort. Remembering Della's warning it is easy to see that Thurber, in trying hard to place where he had come across this extraordinary English, shot right past the real source and wound up in Wonderland with Carroll.

It is interesting to compare the earliest Bardellisms with Dellaisms. In U. J. 1071, "The Time Killer," Mrs. B. is waxing loquacious about casting nastertions on her character. She suggests said gent sees Mr. Sexton Blake in his insulting room and finally sends him away wagging his beard like a man possessed. "He was

observed," she said, "utterly observed."

I think Mrs. B's opinion of her employer whilst having something in common with Della's shows her to be more warm hearted and understanding when she says "A nicer man than Mr. Blake I never wish to see. He may be a defective, but he's a gent - a perfect gent!"

And so say all of us.

J. BRIDGEWATER

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

A LARGER ST. FRANK'S

by Ernest Holman

Harold Truscott's 'interesting point' regarding K. K. Parkington in the St. Frank's Holiday Annual story raises, in its turn, a further 'interesting point.' K. K. P. (the burly junior from Carlton) was, if I recall, one of the new imports when the 2nd New Series commenced in 1930 - so the 1932 H.A. yarn was not, of course, K. K.'s first appearance.

The interesting point I have in mind, however, is the fact that, after the close of the 1st New Series, not a great deal seems to come to light in these 'after' days about the Nelson Lee Library from early 1930 until its close. This latter was the period referred to as the 'declining years.'

For myself, I have very few old 'Lee's,' of any period and must rely solely on memory. That memory does, however, recall very clearly the 1st New Series (the E. S. B. Golden Years). I suppose I began the N. L. L. in the second half of the Twenties, after the 'Nipper related' stories had ceased (although I did read some of the Monster Libraries). I can most certainly remember with pleasure many great series - the India/Giant Crag stories; the tour of Australia 'with' the M. C. C. (even now, I can still see W. M. Woodfull meeting Handforth); the Northestria yarns; and - greatest of all to my memory - the joint N. L. L. and Boys' Realm series which ran concurrently with a splendid St. Frank's/Blue Crusaders set of grand stories. Small wonder, then, that today the 2nd (and 3rd) New Series escapes the memories of many.

Much (unread, probably, by myself) must have been written in the C.D. columns concerning the reasons for the decline of the N. L. L. Has the mystery ever been REALLY solved regarding Editorial policy in relation to the N. L. L.? One wonders not only at the constant chopping and changing of story content and length but also at the seemingly constant changing of Editors.

Presumably, 'decline' means lower circulation as much as 'decline' of stories - in which case, if these changes were Editorial decisions, then the real decline would appear to be in the 'thinking' within the Editor's sanctum. Why, in fact, did the 1st New Series finish? The standard of stories up to the end of 1929 surely did not justify a 'rethink' in a DOWNWARD direction!

Up to then, E. S. Brooks was still turning out his best yarns. Also, at about that time, the Amalgamated Press was enlarging the overall size of some publications. The 'Thriller' had come out in the new, larger, format - and within a couple of years, the Detective Weekly was to blossom forth in similar style. Did anyone in the N. L. L. 'think tank' ever consider this type of UPWARD direction for a 2nd New Series?

Why not, in 1930, a N. L. L. at least in 'Gem' or 'Magnet' size, with FULL length St. Frank's stories? As a result, might E.S.B. not then have turned out a continuing best and kept the N. L. L. going for all time (up to 1939, anyway)? True, we might never have had all those Grey and Gunn hard-backs (never, to me, up to his Sexton Blake standards) - but, if the War had been the only 'killer' of the N. L. L. in what might well have been its real Prime, might there not even have been some post-war hard-back 'Handforths'?

Despite the fact that I have always been - and still am - a Magnet man, I doubt if I looked forward any the less in the later Twenties to the regular Wednesday 'Lee.' Would a bold policy of a new and larger N. L. L. (The St. Frank's Weekly?) with very long St. Frank's stories have paid off throughout the Thirties?

It was never given the test - but - was it ever considered, anyway? And - to end, if you like, on a controversial note - if not, why not?

YOU NEVER FORGET THE REGULARS!

by William Lister

One hears a lot these days about character reading. By palm of

hand, by facial expression, by crystal, by handwriting and by the stars, your character can be read and such fortune or lack of it, that goes with the reading can be made known to you for a small sum (well! more or less small) it depends on who weaves the web for you. Shades of Ezra Quirke! it's not only our Ezra that gets up to hocus-pocus.

However, it is not character reading that I really want to call your attention to, but character writing.

As soon as one aspires to write a short story (or if one aspires even higher, say a novel!) one soon finds out there are loads of rules and regulations to observe.

One of the main points is to be sure your fiction characters have their very own characteristics. So if one of your characters is an adventurer, see he stays one throughout your story, likewise a simpleton, or a romantic or a crook or a one-legged sailor, etc., etc., never slip up and make him (or her) act out of custom. Now this, you will find, is easier said than done. Even when you try a short, short story, you have to "watch it."

Having said that, you will begin to appreciate the work Edwy Searles Brooks put in to keep his customers happy.

Week by week, month by month, year by year, the boys' of St. Frank's took the stage.

Nelson Lee, Nipper, Handforth, Lord Dorrimore, Umlosi, Irene Manners and Doris (real lady-like) you are lucky to find girls like these today, and the occasional guest star, such as Ezra Quirk.

So engrafted on our minds, that after many years, when the "Nelson Lee" had become but a memory, the mention of anyone of these names would immediately conjure up their various characteristics.

We are told that if an author causes his characters to act out of character the result would be consternation. This is true; we like Handforth to be Handforth, Nipper to be Nipper, Lord Dorrimore to be the happy-go-lucky, adventurous millionaire that he is, and Nelson Lee to suck his pipe and weigh things up before coming to a conclusion.

For many years I lost touch with the "Nelson Lee" and yet on renewing acquaintance through the courtesy of the Old Boys' Book Club, there were all my favourite characters - just as I had remembered them, not any of them putting a foot out of place.

Mind you, on rare occasions and under certain circumstances there have been changes. The schoolboy bad character that makes good, or some schoolboy having to hide a certain truth, that causes him to act strangely (or out of character) or one of the schoolmasters being black-mailed or under the influence of drugs, secretly administered.

For the most part at the end of the series such characters return to normal.

I read often. I read much. I read into the long hours of the night. A thousand fiction characters strut before my mind during the years. But mention St. Frank's and I know all the boys and masters. Their habits and reaction to circumstances. Edwy Searles Brooks had built-in these characters, fitting each action and re-action into every boy and master.

For many years, he knew those boys (he had to know them) and because he knew them so well, we know them also.

One finds this pin-pointing of character in all stories, more or less, and on the T. V. screen. Think of "Crossroads," already you have the characters in your mind. Think of "Coronation Street," again you get the picture.

Think of St. Frank's! and Brooks and his host of characters appear before your eyes.

"Make your characters live" say the writing experts. Brooks did just that.

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 110 - Magnet No. 315 - "The Snob's Lesson"

Just before and after the first World War, Sidney Snoop played a more prominent part in the Greyfriars stories. His father had gone to prison as the result of a Stock Exchange swindle, and Snoop's fees at Greyfriars were paid by his uncle, Joshua Huggins, who had worked his passage to Canada and taken employment as a ranch hand before making a fortune for himself. Snoop used to boast of his wealthy uncle who sent him handsome remittances, but he was far from pleased in Magnet 315 when he learnt that his Uncle Joshua was in England and intended to pay

his nephew a visit at his school.

This piece of news became common property when Bunter managed to get hold of the letter from Mr. Huggins. Everyone declared Bunter was a cad (indeed he was a most unattractive character in 1914) but at the same time most Removites were very interested in the news he was peddling up and down the form. Alonzo Todd was one of the few who maintained a loftier attitude: he declared that his Uncle Benjamin would be shocked, nay disgusted at Bunter's action.

Snoop's father did not allow his own misfortunes to alter his own snobbish contempt for his wife's sister, and Sidney Snoop had an equal disdain for his benefactor who was said to eat with a knife and pick his teeth with a fork. Wharton told Snoop that none of this mattered:

"Oh, that's all rot!" said Snoop. "Besides, if you think so, do you think the other fellows will think so too? Do you?"

Wharton was silent. He could not answer Snoop's question in the affirmative.

Charles Hamilton was a realist, but he revealed a clear moral standpoint: Snoop should have made the best of the situation, but of course he tried to run away from it, by feigning illness, by getting himself a faked telegram, and finally by persuading Vernon-Smith to lure Uncle Joshua away by trickery.

At this point the story began to go wrong. Uncle Joshua got to know of Snoop's attitude and so he dressed himself up in loud clothes and talked in an uneducated nasal accent in order to humiliate Snoop in front of his schoolfellows and teach him a lesson. Amusing though the situation was, it contained elements of hypocrisy and dishonesty that did not make altogether pleasant reading. Being ashamed of one's relatives is certainly unworthy and uncharitable, but it is a human failing (especially when one is young) that calls for a sympathetic understanding, not callous mockery. Charles Hamilton wrote a number of stories on this theme, some of them quite delicately handled, but Magnet 315 was not one of his successes. It has a taste far too astringent for many palates.

* * * * *

S A L E : Magnets, Gems, S.O. Libs., etc.

38 ST. THOMAS ROAD, PRESTON.

Mr. Wormull's article in the Nelson Lee Column of the May Digest raises a most interesting point as to the attitude of our reading of the old school stories from a young then adult view.

The little savage was prevalent in the majority of young readers, who revelled in defiance of authority in any form, breaking of bounds, barring-outs, rebellions, bank robberies, fights of all descriptions and all the excitement of fast and furious action.

Examples are recalled with regard to the Magnet that confirm this gulf between juvenile and adult reading. There can be no doubt as our Editor recently remarked that much of Hamilton's best work was far above the appreciation of young readers, and only through the adult eye can the brilliance of such writing be enjoyed to the full.

The Popper Island Rebellion series describes in Magnet No. 1381, Chapter 8, an interview between Dr. Locke and Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith who is making enquiries as to his wayward son being under sentence of expulsion. This splendidly written chapter was no doubt glossed over or even ignored completely by youthful readers anxious to return to the action and excitement of Poppers Island. On reading this Chapter now it can be appreciated to the full for its quality.

From a youthful viewpoint we never had too much Bunter, however improbable or incredible his actions appeared, but the adult prefers his Bunter in smaller and carefully chosen doses, realising at the same time just how essential the fat Owl was to the Greyfriars scene.

The Ravenspur Grange series of 1929, no doubt perplexed the young reader of the time. Following the hilarious Trail of the Trike series, Ravenspur with such a sombre setting, early death, and no William George Bunter to provide humorous relief, one wonders just how many young heads were buried under bedclothes as curtains flapped, or windows rattled, and the relief when after four grim weeks the following issue commenced with the old familiar "I say you fellows."

Although his appearances were far too infrequent, one doubts if young readers derived the same pleasure from the whimsical humour of De-Courcy the Caterpillar of Highcliffe as we now obtain from present day reading of this great Hamilton character, and the many wordy battles

between Masters, particularly in the case of Quelch and Prout, can now be appreciated to the full.

Mr. Wormull states that it's a pity there's such a gulf between man and boy, but in our adult reading there is so much to compensate for this gulf, and fortunate indeed are those of us who can now enjoy the old school stories even to a greater extent than in those far off days of youth.

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 182. HEARTS AND FLOWERS

My experience is that the average schoolboy is sentimental. And that schoolgirls are far tougher. That is the basic reason why there are masses of old boys' papers around today for sentimental old gentlemen to collect, but very, very few old girls' papers. And what old girls' papers there are around are due to sentimental boys who happened to buy girls' papers long ago, - and save them from the dust-bin. Boys love to wallow in sentiment. Girls don't.

Even so, it is hard to believe that tragedy and sentimental pathos were not out of place in school stories. Charles Hamilton himself, of course, often had the soft orchestra playing sad music, particularly in his earlier days. Nevertheless, even in his case, there was a vast difference in the touching episodes and sad finish of the Gem's superb "Schoolboy Pug" series, and in the stark, tragic melodrama of "Bulstrode Minor." One was a welcome interlude; the other was incongruous.

And there was the strange story of the death of Lumley-Lumley, with Tom Merry shedding tears at the Outsider's passing. And the macabre sequel in which the new boy, Levison, who had known Lumley-Lumley in earlier days, realised that the Outsider was not dead at all, but only in a trance. Macabre - and utterly incredible - and strangely out-of-place in the Gem - but a fascinating interlude in the remarkable story of the blue Gem. Almost as though the author had had second thoughts about the wastage of a popular character.

It was, of course, mainly the sub writers who just loved to wallow in sentimentality and to wring our heart strings if they were capable of being wrung. It wouldn't have mattered had those sub stories been credible. Usually they weren't.

Samways and Pentelow were the main culprits, even though the quality of their sentimental approaches differed. Samways brought his readers to the "dying boy's" bedside, and then granted a miraculous recovery, as in the ludicrous "Sunday Crusaders." "Linley Minor," which was equally ludicrous, brought us the same experience, though this one is usually credited to Pentelow.

Pentelow, however, usually went the whole hog, and actually bumped somebody off for good in a bog of mush and melodrama, as in the case of "Very Gallant Gentlemen," a story which is mainly remembered on account of the counterfeit praise which was lavished upon it for a number of years from the editor's chair.

Danny is reminding us in his Diary that 1923 was a particularly mawkish year, story-wise.

Samways gave us his lachrymose "Pluck of Edgar Lawrence," which always strikes me as a rather inferior echo of the Russell on the Stack episode in the school novel "Eric." The episode, as so often happened with the subs, was written around one or two of the minor characters on the St. Jim's stage.

About the same time the Magnet offered "The Supreme Sacrifice," a title which told its own sad tale. This was the tearstained little effort about Stott's noble brother, and it is hard to decide whether readers cried or laughed at it - or did not care enough to do either. According to Mr. Lofts' lists, this one came from S. Austin, but a month or two later Pentelow, not to be outdone in the matter of startling deaths, was back with his Willesley Twins series, which I have always found unreadable - but not because my eyes are blurred with tears at the death of one of the twins.

As though two deaths in a few months are not enough in the Magnet, Pentelow came in with yet another tragedy very soon, this time "The Heart of a Hero," the incredibly unconvincing story of Bobbie Severn who died for Coker, as it were. "Whom the gods love die young," quoted Pentelow, without much originality. Dean Farrar said

it much more poignantly a half-century earlier.

What a mournful year in the Magnet, with three people pegging out in tragic circumstances!

But, as I said earlier, boys are - or were, sentimental, and some could not tell the difference between a tale which was well told and one which was rubbish. Quite a few years back a man wrote me to ask me whether I could help him trace a story which was treasured in his memory. He described the cover picture on that long-remembered Magnet, he outlined the plot, he described it as the finest Magnet story he ever read. I had no need to do any research work. The story was "The Sunday Crusaders."

And I marvelled.

Truly one man's meat is another man's poison, particularly in our curious and beautiful little hobby.

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BESSIE'S TALENTS UNTARNISHED TO

THE END!

by Mary Cadogan

In the May issue of C. D., 'Let's Be Controversial' suggests that Bessie Bunter's pet parrot, who came to Cliff House with her in 1919, disappeared later in the series, and also that Bessie's ventriloquial powers deserted her.

It may be true that little mention was made of these in the later years of the SCHOOL FRIEND; however C.D. readers will be relieved to learn that both Polly the Parrot and Bessie's ventriloquism were resurrected with relish in THE SCHOOLGIRL of the nineteen thirties. Bessie's talents continued triumphant to the very end, as the last SCHOOLGIRL of all (564, 18th May, 1940) shows Bessie tricking Miss Bullivant by projecting an imitation of Miss Primrose's voice outside the form-room.

Although Bessie's more popular pet in the 1930's was her pekingese, Ting-a-Ling, Polly Parrot still appeared occasionally and was the star (near the end of the Cliff House saga) of SCHOOLGIRL 562 (4th May, 1940). Polly by then was perhaps less vicious than in the early days of the SCHOOL FRIEND. He was still, however, vulgar and eloquent, letting Bessie down badly by screeching at Miss Primrose,

Cliff House's revered headmistress, "Primmy's a mean old cat! Ha, ha, ha! She's got false hair."

Though Bessie remained true to her Polly, it is correct that many Cliff House girls seemed to swap their adored pets of the twenties for others, in the thirties. Barbara Redfern's marmoset, Tony, was supplanted by a golden retriever called Brutus, Marjorie Hazeldene's squirrel, Nutty, disappeared without trace and Clara Trevlyn's hedgehog, Prickles, was abandoned in favour of a magnificent alsatian called Pluto. But perhaps the explanation of these seemingly fickle substitutions is hidden behind mysterious lines appearing in a nineteen twenties SCHOOL FRIEND: "Since a regrettable adventure at night, reptiles and fancy rats and mice have been prohibited. The second formers are very keen on silk-worms and caterpillars"

It seems there had been some gruesome goings-on in the Pets' Home at Cliff House School!

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The Postman Called

(Interesting items from the Editor's letter-bag)

R. J. McCABE (Dundee): C.D. is still my favourite magazine. It gives me the greatest pleasure. Long may it be successful. Once again I express my gratitude to you and all who contribute to the paper. I look forward even more eagerly now to Danny. He's getting near the time when I first started reading the Companion Papers.

T. HOPKINSON (Hyde): What about an article on Tom Holland? His "Bully Austin" and "Slings Road" were the first school stories I ever read.

JOHN GEAL (Hampton): Following the article by Deryck Harvey in the current issue of "C.D.," may I make the following point?

Firstly I would like to say that I agree with almost the whole article, but I would like to point out that I did NOT knock Modern Comics in comparison with yesteryear - indeed, I was trying to make the observation that the books of our youth were for reading, and went on to say that the only field left for comparison were the Women's Books on the market (because they are the only mass circulation reading papers

left). The comparison in style was with them and NOT the modern boys comic.

I would like to make one more observation. I quite agree that today's boy knows more of the Modern World, than we did in our own boyhood. T. V. is a boon here, but at the same time it has helped to speed the decline of the young reader. The youngsters today (as a whole) have no time to read - the "Box" demands their attention. I deplore this because reading is one of the finest ways to develop the imagination and the ability to imagine is what gives man that bit extra over the other species that inhabit our world.

Finally, I would like to quote my old Headmaster - one of his favourite sayings was, "Read boys, read. Read good books and papers if you can, read bad books and papers if you'd rather, but read. Adverts, Poetry, the backs of Tramtickets - ANYTHING - but READ!"

He was a wise old bird!

BILL LOFTS (London): My article on the origin of Tiger Tim was very abridged, as in the past I have written full length articles on the subject. My idea was to just write briefly the history for the benefit of new readers. I was quite familiar with E. G. Shorthouse's "Christmas Book" story, and have quoted this in the past. Unfortunately, I have my doubts about it, as most editors regard it as apocryphal. I have seen comic animals in mags. in the 1890's, so the idea is not original. Mr. Truscott raises a good point, as likewise I only remember Mrs. Bruin's school. The changeover must have happened before 1925, when the Hippo girls started in "The Playbox," but the exact date has not yet been determined. This is something interesting to look up in the near future. I was interested in R. Hibbert's article. "John Mackworth" certainly had a short life as a writer in boys' fiction, a direct contrast to "The Thriller" Story Competition writers, one of whom is still pouring out thriller tales - and almost a rival to John Creasey.

Mrs. M. CADOGAN (Beckenham): I think all the superlatives used by the old A. P. story-paper editors really do apply to this month's C. D! I have just read it from cover to cover and it seems to contain even more abundant charms than usual. And this time I'm not forgetting to mention the illustrations - early St. Jim's, recent Bunter - and Nelson

Lee wonderful!

DEREK SMITH (Clapham Park): Many thanks for the May C. D. - excellent as always. I particularly enjoyed the Agatha Christie items.

Even more than Poirot and Miss Marple - who rarely change - I enjoy the throwaway reminiscences of the "Tommy and Tuppence" books in their progress from the Bright Young Things of the earliest tales to their status of not-so-staid grand parents in the latest!

PETER REYNOLDS (Cardiff): I was very interested in the article Bric-a-Brac, but I have noticed that a rather large item of Bric-a-Brac was not mentioned. I mean Alonzo Todd who seemd to have almost disappeared after World War I. I think he appeared in one or two substitute stories in the 20's, and in the 1933 Strong Alonzo series. He is one of my favourite characters and one is puzzled as to why Hamilton dropped him.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Alonzo's final appearance was in the Portercliffe Hall series of 1935. He featured a good deal in Magnet history, and could hardly be termed Bric-a-Brac as the word was used in the article.)

N. W. WATSON (Mexborough): In Mexborough Parish Church we have a series of ten stained glass windows which were presented in 1914 by Leonard Shields, in memory of his parents, who were residents of this town.

I may add that our windows depict conventional Scriptural subjects, and not the adventures of Bunter & Co.

GEOFFREY WILDE (Leeds): Martin Thomas's article on Tinker was excellent, and no reasonable reader can dispute the justice of what he says. But if there are those who carp at his "slight, necessary" modifications, it is probably because they feel a change was made in a tradition that had justified and endeared itself over a lengthy period of success. The alterations made to the original Sexton Blake with his French partner, were made to a set-up which had not similarly established and endeared itself. But a fascinating article, as I say; and personally I have always found Mr. Thomas's among the most appealing of the 'modern' Blake stories.

G. W. MASON (Torquay): Whilst thanking Mr. Thurbon for his most

interesting views, I would stress that Hugh Latimer was not denouncing a legendary figure as "a Traytour, and a Thiefe, to put out a preacher," but the real person much nearer the living memory of the 16th century than of the 20th century.

The 400 years of research since Latimer's sermon would, of course, only serve to complicate an issue, which, in his time, was possibly verbal knowledge, passed from father to son, and re-enacted, or perpetual, on May-day in much the same way as the Russian revolution is remembered today.

Hugh Latimer, like his father, mastered the art of archery, no doubt learning, at the same time, all there was to be known about Robin Hood. He was far too practical a man to preach about legendary figures.

I am grateful for Mr. Lofts' correction. I referred initially, of course, to the printed report of the Cambridge Club, in which there was no indication of his non-acceptance of the theory that Robin Hood "was a pure creation of the ballad muse."

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NEWS OF THE CLUBS

SYDNEY, Australia

A new meeting place for May - a private room in an old-established Chinese restaurant. Good food, and we had our best meeting for some time.

The positions of Secretary and President were thrown open for nominations. Marion Brockman replaces our long-time secretary, Bette Pate, giving Bette a well-deserved rest. Bette really did all the work, and we are all most grateful to her. The President stayed in the same incapable hands - mine!

Bette read an unusually large batch of letters, and comments were made as she progressed. Many items in the English letters corroborated outlooks expressed in C.D. editorials, and a unanimous vote of confidence in the C.D. editor was registered.

The main discussion dealt with Sexton Blake authors, chiefly

Brooks and Teed - two very different writers. An interesting point emerged - Brooks for the younger reader; Teed appealing to the more mature.

This meeting was the second of our 16th year of existence.

SYD SMYTH

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CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at 3 Long Road, on 10th June. Deryck Harvey produced, as a footnote to his talk on Tarzan, a Tarzan magazine containing photographs of all screen "Tarzans," while the Chairman exhibited a number of new items in his collection, including Champions and some interesting Victoriana.

Reference was made to the death of John Creasy, famous writer of crime fiction. Deryck Harvey, who had once interviewed him, paid tribute to his generosity and his wonderful output, while Bill Lofts said that John Creasy had written five Sexton Blake stories, as well as a number of Dixon Hawke tales.

The Chairman reported that he was arranging three exhibitions for the Cambridge High School for Boys, illustrating the development of the Comic and of Comic characters.

It was agreed to take a stall at the Cambridge Leisure Fair in August.

Preliminary arrangements for the visit of the London Club in September, were discussed, and a draft programme arranged.

The next meeting of the Club will be on 1st July (not the usual second Sunday), and the main theme will be science fiction.

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NORTHERN

Meeting on Saturday, 9th June

Mollie Allison gave an account of her visit to the Cambridge Club meeting at the home of Danny Posner, where she, Myra Allison and Elizabeth Taylor had been most cordially received.

We then took part in a St. Jim's quiz provided by postal-member John Jarman. Another teaser, but, like so many of its kind, simple when you knew the answers! First came Ron Rhodes with 11 out of 14, second Geoffrey Wilde with 10 and tying in third place came Tom Roach and Bill Williamson with 9 each.

Then two readings by Harold Truscott. Like Jack Allison at our last meeting, Harold did not find it easy to choose but, he said, you could close your eyes and prick with a pin and be certain of coming up with something good!

Both Harold's readings were short extracts from Holiday Annuals. The first was from 'Lord Eastwood's Experiment' (HA 1927 - Gem 127). Lord Eastwood is alarmed because Gussy is getting through his pocket money so quickly and evolves a scheme whereby Gussy can have his own bank account.

So Lord Eastwood provides him with a cheque book and a pep-talk - the latter of which Gussy regards too little and the former too much!

Accordingly he seeks to remedy a deficit in his account by paying-in a cheque for £100 drawn on the same account!

Then a reading from 'The Rival Editors' (HA 1925 - Magnet 306). Loder discovers what he supposes to be Bob Cherry's suicide note. After an exciting chase through the cloisters the prefects run Bob Cherry to earth and escort him to Mr. Quelch. And finally the discovery is made that the 'suicide note' is really part of a story Bob is writing for the 'Greyfriars Herald!'

Delectable Spring breezes with the pristine freshness of early Hamiltonia!



LONDON

Greyfriars, situated in the pine woods near Wokingham, has never looked better than when a good gathering assembled for the annual meeting, Eric, Betty and Graham Lawrence, plus the help of Jean, saw to it that a good time was had by all.

Two chief inspectors formed the basis of Josie Packman's "Likes and Dislikes." Her favourite was Coutts and Venner was the

one she disliked. Then followed the usual discussion about the various official policemen of the Blake saga. Mention was made of the five stories written about Sexton Blake by the late John Creasey.

Newsletter of June 1956, was the one from which Bob Blythe read extracts.

A cryptic quiz by Eric Lawrence was won by Bill Lofts with Bill Norris second.

Ray Hopkins read from Nelson Lee 487, which appeared in 1924, Winifred Morser obliged with chapters about Gosling's Gold from Magnet 1263, and the chairman, Mary Cadogan, gave a reading about Bessie Bunter from the 1937 School Friend Annual.

Discussion took place including one about the forthcoming visit to the Cambridge Club.

Votes of thanks to the hosts were expressed and it was a fine evening to wend our way home.

Next meeting at 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22. Phone 693 2844. Sunday, 15th July, is the date. Kindly let Josie Packman know if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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FOR SALE: Chance for the new collector: complete run of Magnets from January 1939, till the end of the Magnet, 72 copies (condition varies) £14. Also the following early Magnets, rough and without covers, but Greyfriars stories complete: 424 "Mailed First at Greyfriars" 25p, 368 "Captured at Last" 15p, 330 "The Wrong Sort" 25p, 329 "Boy From the Farm" 40p, 259 "Left in the Lurch" 40p, 267 "Chums Afloat" 40p, 230 "Schoolboy Detective" 45p, 97 "Greyfriars Sweepstake" 50p, 13 "A Jolly Half-Holiday" 60p, 397 "Coker's Canadian Cousin" 50p, 333 "The Dark Horse" 45p, 443 "His Own Fault" 50p, also No. 337 "My Lord Fish" (good copy but back red cover missing) 75p, 332 "Greyfriars Trippers" (needs repair but complete with red covers) 75p, 358 "Billy Bunter's Uncle" (rough but complete with red covers) 45p, 437 "Run To Earth, 45p, 622 to 625 inclusive (good copies) £2 for the 4 copies, 529 "Fighting Fifth," rough but complete 30p, 520 "Very Gallant Gentleman" (on the rough side) 20p, 441 "Schoolboy Farmers" (rough) 18p, 427 "False Evidence" 30p, 699 "Bunter the Bandit" (fair copy, but middle supplement missing; story complete) 15p, 2 1905 Plucks (36 and 56) very nice copies, 30p the 2. 8 rough Plucks (1905 - 1909) 75p for the 8; 7 1905 Plucks, quite good copies, 80p for the 7. Boys' Realm Football Library No. 1, containing first Jack Noble story (rough but scarce copy) 15p. The Girls Own Paper Annual (1892-93) good volume, 28p. Gems 1144, 1163, 1174, 1179, 1180, 1181, 1182, 1185: 38p each. 4 rough early reprint Gems: 1224, 1225, 1226, 1227 (stories complete, but not complete copies otherwise) 50p for the 4 copies. S.O.L. No. 336 "St. Frank's Castaways" 20p. Postage extra on all items.

S.a.e. to ERIC FAYNE

MEMORIES OF DIXON HAWKE

by Guy N. Smith

For a span of almost forty years, in the shadow of Sexton Blake and Tinker, have lurked Thomson's answer to the A. P.'s detectives, namely Dixon Hawke and Tommy Burke. Whilst not achieving the world wide fame of Blake and his assistant, Hawke and Tommy have been consistent, and have outlived their rivals, for the time being, anyway, for the Dover Street detectives are still solving weekly problems in the pages of the Dundee "Sporting Post," and until Blake is revived, they have the field to themselves.

I write with some authority on the subject of Dixon Hawke, for I have been writing these stories for Messrs. D. C. Thomson & Co., for the past three years. However, this detective seems to have had characterisation substituted by uniformity for a long time now, due, of course, to a variety of authors who have not been bold enough to create mannerisms by which he may easily be recognised. Last October I met the Chief Fiction Editor from Thomson's, and we discussed various ways in which Hawke might be 'up-dated.' The conventional weekly murders would have to be replaced by such crimes as drug-trafficking and hi-jacking, and he would be required to take a more active part in the solving of the mysteries, rather than deducing all from the accounts and evidence supplied by third parties. No longer would Tommy Burke refer to him as "govnor," and the master-apprentice relationship between these two would become more of a partnership.

However, there were, in fact, two Dixon Hawkes, purporting to be the same character, yet quite unrecognisable except by name. We have the one who still exists today, the Hawke who solved his problems by sheer brain-power and super-deduction, more allied to Sherlock Holmes (on whom he was probably modelled in the first place) than Sexton Blake. Then we have a lively version of the Dover Street detective who battled with master-criminals through the pages of the "Adventure." This man was a contemporary of Blake, relying as much on lively action as theory, and escaping from various situations with the agility of a Houdini. I only wished it was this Dixon Hawke which was alive today, and not his insipid namesake.

The Dixon Hawke serials from the 'Thomson boys' papers are still vividly imprinted upon my mind, especially the unique "We must

Wipe Out Dixon Hawke," which ran in the "Adventure" in the late '40's. This time the story was narrated in the first person by the villain of the piece, the rascally District Attorney Myers, in Jerris City, U.S.A., where Hawke was trying to break up a crime-wane, and unmask the ringleader, (Myers). Swift action, with a cliff-hanger ending to each episode, left us eagerly awaiting the next issue. Another similar yarn was "Dixon Hawke and the Black Slink," a short time later, this time the identity of the villain was with-held until the last chapter, although I think we all **guessed** who it was.

Annually, up until the 1950's, a 'Dixon Hawke Case Book' was published, containing approximately twenty short cases of the Dover Street detective. However, these were on the lines of the present day Hawke, although much **weaker** in plot, and many of them poorly written. Some were almost too childish to warrant the time spent reading them, and they can have done nothing to enhance the image of Hawke. One would have thought that with the competition offered by the vivacious and popular monthly Sexton Blake Libraries, more effort would have been directed at making Dixon Hawke a prominent figure in the growing ranks of detective characters which were appearing from all sources.

Finally, a word about the writing of Dixon Hawke stories, from my own point of view. They are, by far, the most difficult fiction work which I have ever undertaken, and the payment is well below what I receive for much less constructive work of the same wordage. The plots follow a pattern:- the mystery, the clues which must be shown to the reaser, however obscure they may seem, and the solution. A very high standard is demanded, and one has to strike a happy medium between the complicated puzzle and the simple, the far-fetched and the down-to-earth. I recently wrote one bordering on black magic and the occult, and I was most surprised when it was accepted!

How I wish that I could write the other type of Hawke stories, full-length, full-blooded serials. Alas, there is no room for them today amongst the modern generation. The death of the "Rover," in the early part of this year, was proof of that.

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S A L E : 35 Magnets from 1600 to 1682. 30p each, postage extra.

LITVAK, 58 STANWELL ROAD, ASHFORD, MIDDX.

JUNGLE JINKS

by W. O. G. Lofts

The Nursery type of comics are always far more difficult to obtain than others. Simply because they were not preserved as those for the older boy and girl. Comics such as TINY TOTS and CHICKS OWN, being read by toddlers with usually grubby fingers, and sometimes crayoned on, were usually soon tattered, and just thrown away. Older children used to save them, and one finds that nearly always it is the older age group of comics that has survived the years. In the former category comes the Amalgamated Press JUNGLE JINKS. This ran from 8.12.1923 to 7.2.1925, and had a total of 62 issues. So scarce are copies of these, that I cannot ever recall seeing a single issue in collectors' hands! And that now stretches back nearly 20 years.

JUNGLE JINKS was not actually a new comic, but simply the continuation of CHUCKLES. The latter, which started in 1914, and was edited by Lewis Higgins, is best known in our hobby for its short tale of Greyfriars and Dick Trumper & Co. of Courtfield. Nearly all were substitute stories with an odd one by Charles Hamilton. There were also cut-out models of a few of the famous Hamilton schools including Greyfriars. Later the contents of CHUCKLES became more and more for the very young reader, and in time it catered for the Nursery group. By this time, nearly all its comic strips featured comic animals - the front page especially entitled "Joyful Jinks on Jungle Island." Probably because of this, it was decided to change the title to something more appropriate, and so in issue No. 517, 1.12.1923, it was announced that next week readers were asked to buy JUNGLE JINKS, when a bar of toffee would be given away free to every reader. So when JUNGLE JINKS appeared the following week, the only difference was the change of title. (The first four issues had the sub-title 'AND CHUCKLES.')

The front page continued with the adventures of the Jungle Jinks. The inside page likewise continued with the complete story each week of 'A Gallant Little Gentleman.' This featured little Gipsy Joe, the lonely little wanderer, illustrated by the clever Leonard Shields. The middle pages had practically all comic animal strips, whilst the inside end pages had another serial entitled 'The Last of the Pigmies,' of the popular desert island theme written by 'Harry Revel.' This was

