

STORY PAPER

**COLLECTOR'S**

VOL. 29  
No 348

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DECEMBER

1975



H.W. 1975

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Norman Shaw

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# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by  
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

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## CHRISTMAS:

"Mrs. Tucker's windows look lovely this Christmas. She has little bits of cotton-wool stuck all over the panes and on long threads of cotton hanging down. So you kind of look at the sweets as though through a snow storm. It's very attractive ..."

"The shops in the town looked lovely this Christmas. At Crooks, the baker's, in the High Street, they have a huge model of the Houses of Parliament done in cake. It is covered with marzipan and icing, but it is not to be cut and sold until Christmas Eve. The price will be

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1/- a pound.

"Mr. Woolworth's new shop is blazing with colour, and it is full of nice gifts, all at 3d. and 6d. I did some of my shopping there. The Penny Bazaar looks like a small fairyland.

"In the market they were selling off turkeys at 5/- each and crowds of people were buying them. Everybody seemed so happy, and they kept saying 'Merry Christmas' to one another.

"There was a huge crowd waiting for my tram, but everybody got on, though dozens had to stand. One man took up a great deal of room, for he had a great bunch of holly, and it was awkward to get too close to him. But it was fun."

Yes, it was fun. Readers will recognize that those opening lines of my editorial this month are not my words. They were penned by our old friend, Danny, many, many Christmases ago.

Part of the charm of bygone Christmases was the way the shops were decorated and illuminated for the season. I suppose the large city stores still do it, but, alas, one sees little of it now in the smaller towns. For it was the smaller, independent shops which put on the brave shows. One after the other, they have been swallowed by the big chain stores (and even the big chains sometimes swallow one another), or they have lost the fight against ever-rising taxes, rates, and staff wages. Or they may have succumbed to the tempting offers of the developers.

It's a mistake to live in the past, for Christmas is largely what we make of it ourselves. It's the message of Christmas that counts, and not the outside trappings.

I wish you all a wonderful Christmas, and may joy, love, and peace all find their places in our hearts and in our homes. God bless you all this Yuletide.

#### A HAPPY NEW YEAR

In these strange times, it is difficult to see ahead, let alone to plan ahead, but, all being well, 1976 should be a wonderful year for the readers of Story Paper Collectors' Digest. In February we arrive at our 350th issue. It will be in April, however, that we hope to bring you our special number to mark the Charles Hamilton Centenary. It was in 1876 that the famous author was born. But for that birth there would

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have been no Collectors' Digest, no Old Boys' Book Clubs, and most of us would never have known one another. So, in April, be ready for our special issue celebrating the Hamilton Centenary.

But we have something else to celebrate in 1976. In November next, God willing, we shall be asking you to cheer us on in the celebration of our Pearl Jubilee. It seems but yesterday that we were drinking ginger pop to our Silver Jubilee.

1976 is our Pearl Jubilee year - our thirtieth year of publication, and during those thirty years, not one issue has been missed. If it were not bad form to crow, that would be something to crow about. Next November, Story Paper Collectors' Digest will reach its 30th birthday.

### CURTAIN

For many years past there was a rumour that Agatha Christie had written two stories - one of Hercule Poirot and one of Miss Marple - to be published posthumously. It seems that there was truth in the rumour, for the latest Christie - "Curtain" (Collins: £2.95) - tells of the death of Poirot, who plays a minor part in the tale until he comes into his own in the final chapter, re-introduces Hastings (who made his last appearance, so far as I can recall, in "Dumb Witness" in 1937, a Christie "best"), and goes back to Styles, the house which featured in the author's first published novel.

The publishers tell us that "Curtain" was written over 30 years ago. I would guess that it was written very much more than 30 years ago, though that is merely guessing. Poirot says "hein?" in this tale, as he used to in early days.

The tale has all the ingenuity of the author's earlier work, with the unexpected twist in the tail. Surely, all those years ago, Agatha would not have been thinking of writing a tale to be published posthumously. I can't help wondering whether it may have been written even as early as just after "The Big Four" or even after the earlier "Murder on the Links", and that Agatha (after the style of Pentelov) was sacrificing a character for the sake of a sensation. And, possibly, her publishers were against that sacrifice, in view of the sudden great popularity of the Belgian detective, and persuaded her to put into long storage the story of Poirot's last case.

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The plot is ingenious, and the culprit is well hidden. There are rather a lot of characters, and characterisation is not all that strong (in contrast to some of the truly great Christie characters down the years), so that I did not really bother a lot as to which one was guilty. But the finale is remarkable.

I don't think that anyone will be particularly sad (it is not written with a lump in the throat), for we all remember what happened to Sherlock after he went over those Falls. And Poirot's wig and false moustache are a necessity to the plot, and not to be taken too seriously. To sum up, I enjoyed it, not only for the tale it told but for the conjectures it aroused. I put off reading it, thinking it would sadden me a lot, but it didn't. I wonder whether, next autumn, we shall be given the other "posthumous" tale about Miss Marple.

#### THE ANNUAL

Our Annual is always something special, and I think that this year's edition is no exception. It should be with our readers in the Homeland in plenty of time for Christmas. Overseas readers will have a little longer to wait, but I hope they will find it worth waiting for. It is packed from cover to cover with first-rate articles by our leading contributors, and there are lots of nostalgic pictures. Just the thing to browse over on Christmas afternoon.

Have you ordered your Annual? It is getting very late.  
A Happy New Year to Everybody.

THE EDITOR

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# Danny's Diary

DECEMBER 1925

Christmas again! The trouble with Christmas is that you look forward to it all the year round, it takes ages to come, and, once it gets here, it's gone like a flash.

Two excellent stories in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month: "Surprising the School" in which Billy Bunter falls in love with Cora, Mr. Quelch's niece, a plump young lady. And "The Millionaire Bootboy"

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in which Binks, the page, comes into money.

Another welcome book has been No. 2 of the Monster Library which contains "The Black Sheep of the Remove".

The government has announced that there has been a loss of one and a half million pounds on this year's Wembley Exhibition. So that's the way the money goes.

The first two Rookwood tales in the Boys' Friend completed the series about Mr. Manders's nephew, Marcus. In the end young Manders proved himself to be a thief and a rascal, and he got the order of the boot. These were "Played Out" and "Turned Out Of Rookwood".

The B. F. Christmas Number contained "The Housemaster's Christmas Present". The Fourth bought a clock to give to Mr. Dalton, but he refused it. So they decided to give it to Mr. Manders to put him in a good mood. But when Mr. Manders got the box, his delight changed to fury when he found that the clock had been changed to an ancient kipper. Good pre-Christmas fun. The last of the month started the Christmas holiday series. The Fistical Four were going to spend Christmas with Lovell at his home in the Mendip Hills. But in the opening tale "Trouble on the Train", they fell out with an irascible, elderly passenger. And when they got to Lovell Lodge they found, to their horror, that the irascible passenger was Lovell's Uncle Peter. So it looks as though they are in for an exciting Christmas.

It's curious how there always seems to be a lot of tragic events in real life just before Christmas. This year is no exception. In a fog, a tram went out of control in Bradford, jumped off the lines, and crashed into a building. The driver and the conductor were both killed. At Feany Stratford a charabanc crashed through level crossing gates as a train was passing and nine people were killed. There has been an explosion at Woolwich Arsenal. And at Maidenhead a boat containing five boys was carried over the weir, and three of the boys were drowned.

The Ezra Quirke series in the Nelson Lee has ended, and what a successful series it has been. Quite the best from Mr. Brooks. The opening tale of the month was "The Schoolboy Conspirators", in which the Compact of Ten continued their investigations into the astonishing activities of Quirke. There is interest in Professor Tucker's invention, and a new character, Lord Pippington, who is wealthy but not very quick-

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witted. Then came "The Broken Spell", the final tale in this excellent series. The explanations all make sense - and they are all a very big surprise for the reader.

Next, the first of the Christmas series, "The Uninvited Guests". The St. Frank's boys and the Moor View girls find themselves in a strange predicament owing to a prank on the part of Willy Handforth. They arrive at Dorrimore Castle, only to find that the owner is away, and they are not expected. And, owing to a fall of snow, they are unable to leave, so have to settle down to make the best of their Christmas. Last of the month was "The Ghosts of Dorrimore Castle", which is packed with fun, excitement, and a general eeriness.

At the pictures we have seen Fay Compton and Jack Buchanan in "The Happy Ending"; Lon Chaney and Norma Shearer in "He Who Gets Slapped"; on Boxing Day afternoon we saw Tom Mix in "Dick Turpin"; and lastly there was Betty Balfour in "Satan's Sister", from the novel by H. de Vere Stacpoole. Just before Christmas we went to Woolwich Hippodrome and saw Pimple in "Stand at Ease", a very funny stage show.

In the Magnet the long series about Loder as School Captain in place of Wingate has continued. "Rebels of Greyfriars" told how, at last, the Famous Five succeed in taming their new captain. The last story in this series "Loder's Last Chance" appeared in the Magnet's Christmas Number. Wingate's home "The Gables" is near Wharton Lodge, and Loder is also spending the vac in the district. A fiendish plot by Loder goes wrong, and both Wingate and Loder are stranded in the snow, doomed to freeze to death. But they land up at Wharton Lodge, so Harry Wharton has some unexpected guests. And, in the new term, there is a new election for skipper, and the first hand to go up to vote for Wingate is that of Loder.

In the next tale "Facing the World", Mr. Vernon-Smith loses all his millions, and the Head invites the Bounder to become a pupil-teacher at some school, but the Bounder refuses. In fact, he gets turfed out of Greyfriars. He recalls an interview he had with Mr. Quelch when he first arrived. "I don't care two straws whether you learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, or whether you don't." Mr. Q. had said, "You come here to play the game."

The sequel to this lot was "From Greyfriars to Borstal", so the

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Bounder's lot is hard. In the end, his father gets his money back. I try hard to like these tales not written by the real Frank Richards, but without much success. Most of them are 'orrible! Fancy publishing two tales like this immediately after the series about Wingate and Loder, which was so good.

The opening Gem of the month was the Christmas Number, with a pretty good tale called "Shadowed from School". Caught in the wet one dark night on their way back to school, the Terrible Three come across a strange man in a caravan on Wayland Moor. His name is Beaumont and he is hiding from someone who is hunting him. The story ends at Holly Lodge, Monty Lowther's home. The sequel is a thriller with guns going off in "Hunted Down", but it all winds up with a party at Eastwood House.

Next came "The spoofer of the School House" in which Trimble is knocked down by Edith Glyn's car, and pretends to lose his memory. Cutts and Co. are in the general mix-up. Last of the month was "The Impossible Schoolboy" about a new boy named Ricketts. He is very reckless and does impossible things. In the end his aunt takes him away from St. Jim's. "The boys of St. Jim's never tired of discussing in terms of deepest admiration the Impossible Schoolboy." Personally, I can't forget him quickly enough.

On Christmas morning I found Doug's present to me. He is a good sort. He gave me the new Holiday Annual, which has a lovely picture by Mr. Macdonald on the cover. There is a tip-top and very novel tale of Greyfriars called "Lucky for Parkinson". It's all a dream in the end, but great stuff. I bet Frank Richards enjoyed writing it. A Rookwood tale stars Carthew in a feud with the Fistical Four. A rather weak tale about Glyn's death ray, and a good one, from the distant past, about Grundy being suspected of writing an insulting note about Mr. Linton. Also an old Greyfriars tale about Wibley's impersonations. A lovely book.

Also Doug gave me some gramophone records of the very latest and most popular songs. The best of these were "Babette", "If You Knew Susie", "Yes, sir, that's my baby", "When you and I Were Seventeen", and "Why Don't My Dreams Come True?" All grand tunes. That last record ought to be Parkinson's theme song.

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(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S. O. L. No. 21 "Surprising the School", was a rather curious hybrid, made up of two Bunter sequences from two separate stories (many months apart) of 1920, followed by the main story of the title - the famous Cora Quelch tale of the 1915 Magnet. It would have been far better to have printed the early Magnet story (which was quite long) solo, in slightly larger type. No. 22 started off with a few chapters about Binks from "Levison, the Schoolboy Detective", a tale which appeared incongruously enough in the very unChristmassy Christmas No. of 1910 in the Gem. This was the only time any part of this neglected tale was reprinted. These opening chapters were followed by the original blue Gem tale "Binks, the Millionaire" which also appeared in 1910 two weeks after the Christmas No.)

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# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Well, I was asked to write something controversial for Blakiana and it has succeeded in producing replies. I must thank Mr. Thomas for his articles on the New Look S. B. L.'s especially as I have an almost complete set of these issues, particularly the ones written by Mr. Thomas which are my favourites.

Blakiana is not at all Christmassy this year, but this will not stop me from wishing you all a very Happy Christmas.

OH: JOLLY GOOD SHOW, SIR:

Part 2

by Vic Colby

At long last open to their view in the full glare of the moonlight was a regular city of bee-hive shaped huts of woven grass. A little beyond was a great mound, the top being a flat platform on the centre of which was set a great altar block of hewn stone. In the far distance could be seen a huge white Temple. Spots and Co. found refuge in a cave in the side of the mountain overlooking the Doriri city and the altar block upon the elevated platform.

At dawn, hearing the sound of weird music, our heroes looked out to see at least 5,000 Doriri men, women and children seated in a semi-circle around the mound and platform.

The music stopped with a crash as it did a tall slender women in white draperies, her face the colour of old ivory, appeared on the platform, and with plenty of chanting and the making of passes with her

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arms, she caused a pile of bones to become two full and complete skeletons. A deep murmur came from the crowd below. For a full two minutes those skeletons stood there with their empty eye sockets and grinning jaws. Then the woman who was obviously the priestess, waved her arms again and the bones collapsed into a heap. She then disappeared and the excited crowd below got down to the enjoyment of their festival with strong drink until they too collapsed.

At dusk all was quiet, so Spots and Co. ventured to the mound and saw that the bones which had been made to stand up were all connected by cords, so the whole thing was a matter of pulling the cords at the right time by the Priestess's attendants hidden below the platform. This spectacle was one of a number that the yellow priests had adopted to intimidate the Doriri to make them amenable to carrying out the priests instructions and to incite them to go off head-hunting and on plundering raids. Having obtained access to an underground passage which led from the great mound to the far off Temple, Spots, Lobangu and Errol emerged into the temple to see moonlight pouring through an opening in the summit of the dome, which was reflected from a thousand surfaces of highly polished marble of purest white. Surprised and surrounded by priests and guards our trio fought a valiant but losing battle and were dragged to the altar stone on the platform of the great mound to be put to the torture, and death.

Spots was the first to be spreadeagled on the altar but just as the priest's flashing knife reached him the man suddenly dropped his knife and fell headlong across Sir Richard, shot through the brain. Sexton Blake and Tinker had arrived in the nick of time. Soon, they and a score of bearers, charged headlong into the Doriri, the great loping figure of Pedro racing ahead of them charging everywhere, and the Doriri were soon routed. Errol, his eyes on Pedro, turned to Sir Richard gravely "I say old man, I've heard vague reports of things they call tanks which our chaps are using in this war. Does that happen to be one of their pups? or only just a distant relation?" Blake and Spots met at last, the former saying "I wish next time you fellows want us in a hurry you will have the decency to send a car to meet us, as it is we have had to walk all the way."

To be continued

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It is a wry compliment to the Old Look phase of the Sexton Blake saga that the preference for it which has recently been expressed so vehemently in 'Blakiana' appears to be based upon an almost total ignorance of the New Look! In the same (October) issue of CD in which I proved with facts that the 'gangster policy' attributed to the New Look existed only in the imagination of the critic, that same imagination produced these equally groundless assertions: "As for the New Look Blake covers, well, a good half of them showed fights and the rest were half-naked girls, not a single decent cover picture among the lot."

Herewith I am enclosing a few (allegedly non-existent!) decent New Look covers from some of my own Fleetway SBL's - none of them featuring either a fight or a half-naked girl. Just half-a-dozen examples from the scores of New Look covers with no resemblance whatever to the above-quoted critic's 'description'. She should have remembered at least one of these, that of 'Dead Man's Destiny', since a couple of years ago she criticised the version of Tinker's boyhood given in that particular novel. Apparently in the New Look she remembers only the things she found disagreeable. Indeed, unless it is Blakiana's policy to become a comic feature, these latest criticisms of the New Look suggest amnesia regarding both the New Look and the Old.

Because, among the great variety of Old Look covers I remember, not only did a great number (including even that of the last Sexton Blake Annual) depict fights, but the barest girl I have ever seen on an SBL cover was on an Old Look Parker cover of a Rex Hardinge novel; a young African woman, in frontal view, entirely bare to the waist. Also, among some rather suggestive Union Jack covers, I recall two of Blake in compromising bedroom scenes with Olga Nasmyth, and another one ('The Brute of Saigon') depicting an imminent attempted rape of Mlle. Roxane. Who, of course, also featured in another story as a "clouded bit of nudity" whom Blake was "embracing with such fervour". Even an aeroplane accident caused that amorous young lady to be described and illustrated as found by Blake nearly nude. While another of Teed's exotic young females, June Severance, also featured in a sultry UJ story of attempted seduction.

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So it is quite humorous to have the Old Look referred to as though it had invariably been impeccably prim in narrative, illustration and cover, and the New Look referred to as though it were a hotted-up version of 'No Orchids for Miss Blandish', with covers borrowed from Penthouse or Playboy. But prejudice is notoriously impervious to fact. With the gangster and cover criticisms shown to be unjustified, I suppose it will now be discovered that the New Look paper and printing were of inferior quality!

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## Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

It is a fact that the reformation of Ralph Leslie Fullwood was never really taken for granted by his old associates. Weeks, even months, would go by without Gulliver and Bell even giving their one-time leader a passing glance. Then would come a moment when Fullwood's bad old ways would surface and the cads of Study A would remember such events even though Ralph Leslie had erased them from his thoughts altogether.

But old associations die hard. For no particular reason Fullwood's former study mates brought up the episode of the late Dr. Karnak's position at St. Frank's.

A certain captain Dodge, in the pay of Karnak's enemies, had enquired of many juniors the name of a young gnetleman who could be trusted and the captain's villainous countenance had directed the fellows to name Fullwood.

The sinister personality of this Egyptian; his short sojourn at St. Frank's as science lecturer, and his terrible death have already been chronicled so I will not dwell on that period; but it has a bearing on my letter this month.

These days, if a villainous looking individual enquired for a junior who could be trusted, no doubt, Gore-Pearce or Bernard Forrest would merit that judgment.

There are moments in the lives of such rotters as Gulliver and

Bell when their evil natures demand sustentation and this usually throws up past events befitting the occasion. And this particular occasion was when Fullwood acted as spy for Dr. Karnak's enemies-- or really his avengers - and which really created the cause of the Egyptian's death.

It may be interesting to know how Fullwood after his uphill fight to shake off the bad old ways acts in response to these sudden taunts from his one-time pals. And usually he is able to totally ignore them. So it was very surprising what happened the other evening in the Junior Common-room. The fate of Dr. Karnak and Gulliver and Bell's highlighted description of Fullwood's part in assisting the Egyptian's enemies to commit the crime had caused a minor upsurge of gossip among the juniors but this had ceased as suddenly as it had begun for Ralph Leslie Fullwood was a very popular sportsman these days. Any attempt by Gulliver and Bell to belittle their former study leader now doesn't work except to find echo in such nonentities as Marriott and Merrill, Snipe, etc., who readily follow the thoughts of Study A and agree in unison.

Fullwood had to pass Gulliver and Bell on his way out of the Common-room and the weedy Gulliver had given a sniff of disdain.

Whereupon Ralph Leslie struck Gulliver, and in less time than it takes to write it, Albert Gulliver was writhing on the floor to the startled juniors who looked with amazement. And Fullwood, after only a moment's glance at Bell, opened the Common-room door and was gone.

So now the fellows are wondering if Fullwood, the former cad of the Ancient House, has fallen back to his old ways. But I don't think so. Later, I was able to speak to Nipper about the incident and Nipper assures me Fullwood is as popular as ever. Gulliver simply asked for what he got. His sniff had sparked off in Fullwood that kind of reaction most of us are heir to although perhaps not in so violent a form.

Now a sniff is a way of greeting to the Samoans. It's their custom to sniff loudly and long when greeting friends and relatives. Unfortunately, Fullwood isn't a Samoan!

Clive Russell, Fullwood's close friend and study mate, was very concerned over the incident. He detected a frown of annoyance on his chum's brow and wondered if this was a sign of weakening. For Fullwood to show any regret for what he had done might mean a latent regard for the life he thought he enjoyed before he met Russell.

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But it later transpired that Gulliver had faked injury. Fullwood's punch in the chest had dropped Gulliver to the floor and the cad of Study A had made the most of it by feigning extreme pain.

Fullwood's unusual display of temper however was soon forgotten by everybody except Bernard Forrest and Claude Gore-Pearce.

I am patiently waiting for these two dangerous rotters to put into operation the plan they must surely be exploiting. It is no secret that Forrest intends to return Fullwood to the St. Frank's fast set; and neither is it news that Gore-Pearce is preparing for the day when he will once again assume boss of Study A.

It is a very interesting situation. So far, there is no move from Bernard Forrest. The contretemps in the Junior Common-room has apparently bred no plan in the mind of Forrest and until he acts Gore-Pearce is stymied.

Meanwhile life goes on at this large college. Incidents of minor concern crop up daily but not worthy of mention. Sport dominates the outside activity and visits from neighbouring schools for contests creates gossip and argument.

But apart from sport and class-room intervals the battle for power continues between Forrest and Gore-Pearce.

While their aims run in different directions their actions in processing their plans may create a memorable event in the annals of St. Frank's. For both these juniors are not short of cash. If money will be needed to carry out whatever they are planning then money will be used.

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 131 - Magnets 1609-12, Silver Cigarette Case Series

As a boy, Charles Hamilton taught himself the Greek alphabet under the delusion that the alphabet alone would be the key to reading all the Greek volumes in his father's library. To his disappointment, he discovered that Greek was not just English written with different letters. It is no doubt likely that this early experience put him in mind of the basic plot for the series dealing with the message in the silver cigarette

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case.

A Post-Office raider, Rat Hankey, had injured himself in a motor-bike crash, and he hid the loot in a snow-covered crevice. Bunter, who happened to be passing by, agreed to take the cigarette case to Mr. Thompson in Pegg harbour. Mr. Thompson was really James Soames, Mr. Vernon-Smith's former valet, and both he and Rat Hankey knew Greek and used to send one another messages in English written in Greek characters. Each number of the Magnet in this series contained the famous message in Greek written in Charles Hamilton's own script. After Rat Hankey was captured by the police, Soames spent his time trying to track down the cigarette case that contained the clue to the hidden loot.

This series has all the faults of the later Magnets: it is repetitive, in that Soames suffered one setback after another; it is a little disjointed in places, especially the brief visit to Cherry Place, sandwiched between Wharton Lodge and Greyfriars in the last number; Soames' character is a pale shadow of what it used to be, and he seems a little inconsistent, one moment threatening to crack Wharton's skull with a lead pipe on the grounds that he is not telling the truth, and the next moment acknowledging Wharton's honesty; but perhaps the most serious drawback is in Bunter's character which seemed to grow coarser and more slapstick in the late 'thirties. The Courtfield Cracksman series was being reprinted in the Schoolboys' Own Library at this time, and the comparison is striking. Not only has Bunter lost all his earlier subtle attractiveness, but other characters' reactions seem less restrained: Colonel Wharton pulled Bunter's ear and Harry Wharton committed assault and battery on the guest within his gates. All this represents a sad decline from the earlier high standards.

Possibly the readers of the time were not too critical of the fare being offered in the last of all the pre-war Christmasses. There were as special attractions a memorable vignette of Fisher T. Fish on his own at Greyfriars over the holidays, an amusing description of Bunter's indignation when Fishy tried to push himself in as an uninvited guest at Wharton Lodge, and a jolly fancy-dress ball with some puzzling changes of costume. Above all, there were general festivities, excitement, and of course the never-failing seasonable snow that all helped to induce that

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cosy glow of satisfaction for which Magnet Christmases were invariably famous.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 205. HOW LEGENDS ARE BORN

Last month in C.D., our Northern Club correspondent reported on a talk on Highcliffe School, given by a member, which was greatly enjoyed by our friends in Leeds. It was obviously an excellent address and well-prepared, but there are a couple of comments in the report which makes me sit back and wonder. According to the report, "Hamilton regarded 'Boy Without a Name' and 'Rivals & Chums' as his best work."

And that is contrary to everything I knew about Hamilton. He always maintained to me, (and, I reckon, to nearly everyone else), that his later work was superior in every way to what had gone before. He scorned any suggestion that the post-war Bunter books were not infinitely better than anything in the Magnet. According to him, his 1939 work in the Gem was better than anything that had gone before in that paper, while the post-war St. Jim's was better still. Whether he really believed it is another matter. If he did believe it, most of us would agree that he deluded himself.

In fact, he always professed to be rather vague concerning his earlier masterpieces, groping, as it were, to recall his past successes among so many. So far as his work went, Hamilton never lived in the past. He was rarely reminiscent. He wasn't like us. We were all agog with the treasured tales we recalled from long ago, hoping that the author would have the same joyful recollections. Usually he didn't, though he would always be polite over it and try to make us happy. But we were remembering the iced cake with marzipan on top, while to the author it had been merely bread and butter. Right up till the end, through all the years that I knew him, he lived, so far as his work was concerned, for his present and his future.

Some of his vagueness on his past successes was possibly a pose, but, even so, it is not surprising that old, old tales were lacking in

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importance to him among the multitude of yarns he had written down the years.

To suggest that a man like Hamilton regarded his very best work as having been done in the far distant dear dead days of 1915 seems stunningly ludicrous.

I can well believe that Hamilton may have had a soft spot for the "missing heir" theme. He used it often enough, goodness knows. He repeated the Clare story, lock, stock, and barrel, in the Nameless Schoolboy serial which he wrote for Hinton's "School & Sport". But the idea that he thought he never improved on it is laughable.

One other point in connection with the report which we published last month. The Head of Highcliffe is given as the Reverend Patrick Rhodes Voysey, DD., MA., and one of his assistants is Mr. Albert Hicks Mobbs. I would like to enquire whether those christian names were used by the creator of Highcliffe, or whether, as I cannot help wondering, they are lifted from Pentelow's 1917 Who's Who, in the compilation of which Hamilton had no hand whatever.

There is a curious postscript to this little item of controversy. In the preface to the Museum Press edition of "The Boy Without a Name", the publisher states: "Charles Hamilton once wrote that 'The Housemaster's Homecoming' was the best story he ever did for the Gem."

So we are asked to believe that Hamilton considered his best work of all was written in 1915, and that his best story for the Gem was written in 1916, 23½ years before the paper closed.

I don't believe it for a minute, unless he was pulling somebody's leg. Knowing the author's temperament as we do, it just doesn't make sense. It wouldn't make sense with any author.

Curiosity on oddment. "Housemaster", like "Boy Without a Name", was never reprinted by the Amalgamated Press, and, in fact, the whole long tale of Talbot in the Gem was left strangely incomplete by the omission of "Housemaster" from the reprints.

I once told Charles Hamilton that I always considered (I still do!) that his best work in the Gem appeared in 1911. Do you think he agreed with me? Not on your Nellie! He pointed to his 1939 stories as the best he ever wrote for the Gem.

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REVIEWSBUNTER TELLS THE TRUTHFrank Richards  
(Howard Baker: £3.90)

The title gives away very little of the plot of this volume. This is not surprising, as it is lifted from the fifth story in order that the magic name Bunter may set readers' mouths watering.

In fact, the volume contains the first eight stories of the over-long 12-story Warren series of the autumn of 1935. The lightweight mystery, pleasantly handled, concerned two Warrens - James and Jim. James, the uncouth wastrel should have been the one to go to Greyfriars, but it was actually good old Jim who went. In its three months' progress, the story related how three fellows - Coker, Price, and Loder - all became suspicious in turn of the new fifth-former. Episodic in style, with a plot on rather familiar lines, the story is well told, there are some neat character sketches, and there are quite a few outstanding and original sequences. Though the Warren series never quite seemed to ring the bell, so far as one could judge, it should be well-enjoyed all these years later. This volume winds up with a very jolly November the Fifth story.

THE GHOST OF POLPELLYFrank Richards  
(Howard Baker: £3.90)

Yet another volume in the Greyfriars series. This one contains the final four stories to complete the Warren series. Then the volume is completed with the four-story Christmas series which enhanced the Yuletide of far-off 1935. In fact, this series carried straight on from the Warren series.

In the early days of the hobby, the Polpelly series was very highly rated indeed; perhaps a bit overrated, for it could not really compare with Wharton Lodge, Cavandale Abbey, and the like. All the same, this series, set against Christmas in a haunted, Elizabethan mansion on the coast of Devonshire, is extremely attractive, with its supernatural noises, its treasure hunt, and John Redwing hovering around to deal with the sinister Count Zero.

The volume has a cover which C. D. Annual readers will

remember. It was obviously copied by Shields from a Magnet cover by Arthur Clarke more than a quarter of a century earlier. In the Annual, a few years ago, we printed the two covers side by side, proving beyond any doubt where Shields got his inspiration for that particular picture.

THE BRITISH COMIC CATALOGUE 1874-1974

Denis Gifford  
(Mansell: £12.50)

This book makes no bones about it. It claims to be a catalogue, nothing more, nothing less. But what a catalogue! The author, whose own outstanding artistry embellishes scores of comic papers, astounds us with the information that this is a pioneering volume - that there is plenty more to be found out about British comics. We accept his word for it - after a colossal book like this one, we would accept his word for anything connected with comics - but really this seems to be a catalogue to end catalogues. The thought of the amount of work involved brings one out in a cold sweat.

The comics are arranged alphabetically, the artists for each one are listed, the dates of publication are given, the number of issues, the changes in format, style, or title, the publishers, even the prices which show the staggering effects of inflation. They are all there.

Nearly two thousand comics are listed. I haven't counted the number of comic characters, but they are like the stones in the shingle on the sea-shore - Dreamy Daniel, Tom, the Ticket of Leave Man, Butterfly Bill, T. E. Dunville, Little Tich, K. N. Pepper, Constable Cuddlecreek, Sooty and Sweep, and (a bit sadly) Billy Bunter. And, I should think, thousands more.

Even old Ally Sloper is to be found. I fancy Ally had a dubious reputation, but he once featured on a C.D. cover, and, of course, C. H. Chapman did some of his early work for the Ally Sloper publications.

Traditionally, the artists are anonymous in British comics, but Denis Gifford has drawn on his own experience and knowledge to identify some 750 of them.

The book is expensive, but it is well worth having on your bookshelf if you can run to it. And a book like this lasts for ever, despite the author's warning that his work is not complete. An everlasting reference book on the old comics, to entertain and intrigue its owners

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down the years ahead.

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In the past couple of years we have had a number of enquiries concerning, and requests for, this story which appeared in C. D. over 16 years ago. So, as it has a Christmas flavour, we reprint it this month.

### TOM MERRY FOR BORSTAL

"Tom Merry's been arrested!"

"What?"

Manners and Lowther almost shouted in reply to Baggy Trimble's startling announcement. It was enough to make fellows shout.

It was the last day of term.

Tomorrow, St. Jim's would be breaking-up for the Christmas vacation, and Tom Merry & Co. had planned a celebration in Study No. 10 to mark the welcome event. The party was timed to commence at 7. The chums of Study No. 6, together with Figgins & Co. of the New House had been invited, and had accepted the invitation.

Immediately after classes ended that afternoon, Manners and Lowther went to Study No. 10 to decorate that celebrated apartment, and to set out the Christmas fare which was to gladden the hearts of the guests. A hamper, specially packed for the occasion, had arrived from Laurel Villa, and Manners and Lowther removed the contents of the hamper, setting them out on plates on the snow-white tablecloth.

Tom Merry had gone over to Rylcombe to collect a Christmas cake, baked and iced by Mr. Bunn, the village pastry-cook. Tom had said that he would be back at St. Jim's within half an hour, but six o'clock had chimed from the clock tower by the time that Manners and Lowther finished preparing Study No. 10,

and Tom Merry had not yet returned. Paper garlands festooned the room, holly had been inserted over the picture frames, a bunch of mistletoe dangled from the electric shade overhead, and the table groaned under its mass of appetising viands.

After gazing at their handiwork for a few moments with satisfaction, Manners and Lowther strolled down to the big doorway of the School House to await their leader. They were beginning to wonder what had happened to delay him.

The December dusk had long fallen over St. Jim's, but the dark sky glittered with stars. A mist, which had prevailed during the day, had cleared, and there seemed no reason why Tom Merry should be taking so long over his cycle-spin into the village.

As Manners and Lowther stood waiting in the doorway, a number of fellows came in from time to time. There was no prep to be done on this, the last evening of term, and lock-up had been extended by an hour, so that Taggles would not be closing the main gates until 7.

The two Shell fellows peered into the gloom, becoming increasingly puzzled as the minutes ticked by and still Tom Merry did not return.

It was after half-past six when Levison and Cardew came in, muffled up

against the chill December air.

"Seen Tom?" asked Manners.

Levison unwound the muffler from his neck, and shook his head.

"Tom Merry? No! Has he gone out?"

"He went into Rylcombe on his bike.

We expected him back at least half-an-hour ago."

"The Green Man opens at six," suggested Cardew.

Manners stared at him.

"What's that got to do with it?"

"He might have popped in for a quick one."

"Ass!" said Manners.

"That rustic hostelry looked very attractive when we passed it a while back," went on Cardew. "Some of the customers were singing, and seemed to be oiling up in readiness for an old-fashioned Christmas. Do you think it possible that Thomas, seeing the bright lights and hearing the sounds of festivity, may have slipped in to join the merry throng?" He eyed the two Shell fellows seriously.

Manners grunted. He had no intelligible reply for such a bright suggestion.

And then Baggy Trimble happened.

There was a puffing and a panting, accompanied by hurried footsteps from the dark quadrangle, and the fat four-footer came into the radius of light thrown from the doorway. Normally, Trimble did not move with great speed - he had too much weight to carry. But now, he had exciting news to impart, and he was anxious to find listeners.

He rolled in at the doorway, his little gooseberry eyes almost popping from his red face.

He panted out: "Tom Merry's been

arrested!"

And Manners and Lowther shouted "What?"

Trimble pumped in breath, while Manners and Lowther glared at him, and Levison and Cardew eyed him curiously.

"Oh, dear, what a shock!" moaned Trimble. "I never thought I'd live to see a St. Jim's man yanked off to the cells by a bobby."

Cardew chuckled.

"Like Eugene Aram, with gyves upon his wrists," he murmured.

Lowther seized Trimble by the shoulder and shook him.

"You fat lunatic!" he said sulphurously. "What have you seen, and what do you mean, if you mean anything?"

Trimble twisted away indignantly.

"I've seen Tom Merry arrested that's what I've seen. I had a Christmas postal-order from a titled relative, and I went down to Rylcombe to cash it. When I came out of the post-office, there was Tom Merry walking along the High Street, with a big bobby's grip on his neck. There's no mistake, you fellows. There was plenty of light from the street lamps and the shops. I followed on, and Tom Merry was yanked into the police station like a sack of coke."

Cardew chuckled again. He said:

"My beloved 'eares, bail is indicated. I suggest a whip-round in Lower School."

Manners and Lowther, more puzzled than angry, were staring at Trimble. That there was some grain of truth in his story was possible. but, with Trimble, it was always difficult to sift the wheat from the chaff.

"Do you know why Tom went to the

police-station?" demanded Manners.

"I think he'd been caught shop-lifting," said Trimble.

"What?" Once again Manners and Lowther roared in unison.

Cardew burst into a laugh. He found something entertaining in the peculiar situation.

"The immaculate Thomas!" he remarked. "A fiver to a quid that his comment was 'I don't know what made me do it,'"

"Shut up, you fool!" snapped Manners. He looked worried. "What the dickens can have happened to Tom?"

Cardew thrust his hands into his pockets. He said, reflectively: "In this week's 'Wayland Gazette' there was a report of a young thug being arrested for carrying an offensive weapon. Do you think that perhaps they searched Thomas, and found something of the sort?"

"Cheese it, old man!" said Levison, though he was grinning.

Manners breathed hard. He glanced at his watch, which showed ten minutes to seven. Something certainly was delaying Tom, though Manners was not likely to believe that it was due to the reason mischievously suggested by Cardew.

Manners said: "Look here, Trimble--" Trimble raised his hand loftily.

"Don't speak to me, please, Manners. I'm not a snob, I hope, and I can be tolerant, but I object to being addressed by the pals of a prospective Borstal boy." His fat little nose was turned up even further than it had been elevated by nature.

"You fat slug!" hissed Manners.

Levison and Cardew, both laughing, were turning away when Figgins, Kerr and

Wynn came in at the door. Fatty Wynn was beaming. He addressed Manners and Lowther.

"It's nearly seven, you men. Is the Christmas feed ready?"

"No, it isn't!" said Manners shortly.

Levison and Cardew had halted, and Kerr looked shrewdly at the little group in the hall.

"What's the trouble?" he enquired.

Baggy Trimble supplied the answer: "Tom Merry's been arrested."

"What?" hooted Figgins, Kerr and Wynn, in their turn, with synchronised effect.

Cardew shook his head in mock concern. He said:

"The hitherto blameless Thomas has brought disgrace on his Alma Mater. If you have tears, prepare to shed them now. Thomas has been incarcerated in the cells of Rylcombe Police Station - for shop-lifting in the High Street."

Figgins & Co. jumped.

Manners compressed his lips with annoyance.

"It's nothing, Figgy," he said, darting an angry glance at the humorous Cardew. "Tom Merry went into Rylcombe to collect our Christmas cake. He isn't back yet, and Trimble has rolled in with a tale that he saw Tom walking with a Policeman."

Figgins whistled, and Fatty Wynn looked anxious. Fatty was thinking about the cake.

"The bobby had Tom Merry in a grip of iron," supplemented Trimble. "He said 'You come alonger me. We're getting too much of this sort of thing in Sussex. Borstal's the place for you!'"

Levison checked a chuckle as he saw the expression on Manners' face. It was evident that the humour of the occasion was quite lost on Tom's closest chums.

"It seems possible," observed Cardew, taking impish delight in the annoyance he was causing, "that Thomas may have been arrested for carrying offensive weapons. If such is the case, take notice that next term the Terrible Three will become the Offensive Four, owing to the addition of an eagle-eyed Probation Officer taking root in Study No. 10."

Smack.

Manners swung round, and his open hand came sharply across Cardew's smiling face.

"That's for your cheek!" said Manners.

The mocking smile left Cardew's face as though wiped away by a cloth. He hurled himself at Manners, who put up his hands at once.

"Can it, you two!" said Levison.

He gripped Cardew by the collar and pulled him back. Figgins stepped hastily in front of Manners.

Cardew jerked himself away from Levison. He straightened his tie. His burst of temper seemed to have passed as quickly as it had arisen, though the marks of Manners's fingers glowed on his skin.

"Why stop him?" said Lowther. "Let Manners knock some of his impudence out of him."

A whimsical smile played on Cardew's lips.

He said: "I'm ready - if you promise not to use a flick-knife."

An interruption came in the form of a shout from Fatty Wynn.

"Here's Tommy - and he's got the

cake."

All eyes were turned on the doorway, as Tom Merry came into the House from the dark quadrangle. His face was flushed from his brisk ride on his cycle, his cap was on the back of his head, and he carried a large parcel under his arm.

"Better late than never!" he said cheerfully. He looked over the staring fellows, and asked: "What's up?"

"It's nearly seven. Where the dickens have you been?" demanded Lowther.

"I know it's seven. I got in just before Taggles locked the gates," said Tom. "You see, I had to go to the police station -"

"Oh!"

"Is there anything startling in that?" Cardew laughed softly.

"Thomas, your pals find it very startling indeed. A stout youth, by name Trimble, informed us that you had been jailed for shop-lifting. Knowing your unblemished character, I felt it unlikely --"

"Trimble's an ass, and you're another," said Tom. "Levison, will you oblige me by kicking Trimble?"

"With pleasure," said Levison, but Trimble was vanishing up the staircase at record speed, and he was not pursued.

"What happened, Tommy?" asked Lowther.

Tom Merry passed his large parcel into the open arms of Fatty Wynn, and removed his cap and scarf.

"I had an accident," he explained.

"After I collected the cake from Mr. Bunn. I got on my bike, and as I rode along the High Street a motorist opened his door without seeing me. The door caught the



bike amidships, and I came a purler. I wasn't hurt, and the bike wasn't damaged, but --"

"Is the cake all right?" demanded Fatty Wynn, anxiously.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I think so, though the parcel rolled in the road. P. C. Crump saw what happened, and he insisted that I went to the police station to give particulars. Well, I didn't want to get that motorist in trouble just at Christmas time, though he was a careless lunatic. I spent half an hour trying to persuade Crump not to make a case of it, but he's pretty determined. Anyway, the motorist admits what happened, so I shan't be called as a witness --"

Manners grunted. "You might have broken your neck."

Fatty Wynn added: "You might have wrecked the cake."

Cardew shook his head sadly.

"How disappointing life can be!" he observed. "What a sensation it would have been for the end of term, if Thomas had gone to Borstal. I'm sure the whole institution would have taken him for a model, and he'd have reformed all the inmates thereof."

Manners and Lowther looked warlike, but Tom Merry only smiled.

"If Cardew's finished his funny turn, we'll go up to the feed. Blake and his gang will be waiting. You and Cardew had better join us, Levison. There's tons for all."

"Thanks, Tommy, we will," said Levison. Manners looked grimly at Cardew, but made no comment.

The eight juniors ascended the stairs, and made their way to the Shell studies.

The light was on in No. 10, and Blake, Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were awaiting their hosts.

"Was the invitation for this Christmas or next?" enquired Blake, affably.

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder - and sharpens the appetite," said Tom, cheerily. "Pile in, everybody."

As ten hungry fellows seated themselves, not without wedging and pushing, on chairs and boxes placed round the table, Cardew remained in the passage. He signalled to Arthur Augustus, who joined him with a puzzled expression on his face.

"Weally, Cardew --"

"Can I beg a word of advice, Gussy?" Cardew was serious. "Would you, as an expert on etiquette, regard it as infra dig to sit at the same table as a fellow who has just smacked your face?"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle in his eye, and gazed severely at Cardew.

"I hope you have not been scwapping with Lowthah, Cardew --"

"Not at all. I'm merely stating a case. Would it be out of the question to feed with a man who has just clouted you?"

D'Arcy was thoughtful. After a moment, he said: "You seem to be talking in widdles, Cardew. But since you pose the question, I must say that I should wegard it as impos to bweak bwead with a fellow who had wecently stwuck me."

Cardew heaved a sigh of relief.

"There is no bread, Gussy, and the same objection could hardly apply to the breaking of cake. So let us break cake, before Fatty Wynn scoffs the lot." He entered the study, and called out: "A Merry Christmas, everybody!"

And a very merry Christmas party it was that evening in Tom Merry's study.

# The Postman Called

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

BILL LOFTS (London): The information that Charles Hamilton attended Thorn House School came from an article of mine in the S. P. C. 1962. This was based from the following data. (1) Charles Hamilton told Stanton Hope the name of his old Headmaster. (2) This same man was in charge of Thorn House School where Mr. Hamilton lived, and in the exact period. (3) The school was accepted by close members of the family and has never been disputed. (4) Mr. C. M. Down, editor of Boys' Friend, told me several times that Rookwood was based on Mr. Hamilton's old school. The forms and set-up is likewise identical. This is of course not 100% proof, but can anyone get any nearer than this to certainty?

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Mr. Lofts article appeared in the S. P. C. in 1963, not 1962. There was no mention, in that article, of either Hope or Down. The matter was queried in an item in Collectors Digest in Oct. 1963, but no reply to our query was made. This was a pity, as both Hope and Down were then living, and could, perhaps, have shed further light on the subject.)

There is no harm in guesswork, provided that a writer makes it quite clear that it is guesswork. But Mr. Lister's article stated it as a fact.)

H. TRUSCOTT (Huddersfield): I notice that in "Danny's Diary" in November, Danny includes Lloyd Stone in the cast of the 1925 film of "The Lost World". This actor, I am afraid, never existed. He is a composite of Lloyd Hughes, who played Edward Malone, the reporter, and Lewis Stone, who had the part of Sir John Roxton.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Mr. Truscott is quite right, and we apologize to readers. The fault was not Danny's, but was due to a printing error which I failed to notice.)

GERALD FISHMAN (New York): I've just finished a wonderful book which bears talking about, and which for some reason has not been mentioned in C. D. (or perhaps I missed it). The book in question is titled: "To serve them all my days", written of course by Delderfield. This was, in my humble opinion, a masterpiece of writing on a subject which has gradually faded from the scene of English life, or at least has

been shelved since Hilton's time. To be true, he did probably borrow from Mr. Chips, but really with all due respect to Mr. Hilton, I found Mr. Delderfield's version so encompassing, completely capturing an era and a way of life which would appear to have left us forever. Certainly, for those of us who cherished our youth, this book should be must reading for all.

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### BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

#### No. 21. THE FAIRBANKS, THE MUMMY, and the CHAIN GANG

We opened the new term with Richard Arlen in "Sport of a Nation", from Universal, while M. G. M. sent us our main film in the next programme: Norma Shearer and Fredric March in "Smilin' Through". This was a lovely old story. (Years later we played another version of the story with Jeanette Macdonald in the lead.)

Then came Ronald Colman, Kay Francis, and Alison Skipworth in "Raffles", from United Artists. I'm sure this one was a smash hit. The amateur cricketer and cricketer held the affection of the public for the first 35 years of this century. There were many stage plays on the subject, plus a silent film or two, and there is little doubt that Charles Hamilton's fine Lancaster series was inspired by "Raffles". In one or two well-written tales, Barry Perowne even brought Sexton Blake into confrontation with Raffles.

Next, from Universal, Ralph Bellamy with Gloria Stuart in "Airmail", followed by, from United Artists, John Longden and Eve Grey in "The Wickham Mystery".

Next an interesting double-feature

programme, comprising, from MGM, Boris Karloff and Lewis Stone in "The Mask of Fu Manchu", along with, from United Artists, Douglas Fairbanks in "Round the World in 80 Minutes". The latter was the only Fairbanks Senior film that we ever played. It was a shoddy, disappointing picture. In the early thirties, Fairbanks' marriage to Mary Pickford was foundering, and he spent three years in long trips round the world, during which time he took film of the various places he visited. He eventually collected together the results of his world-filming, and made an 80-minute documentary, to which he himself supplied the commentary. It was a dull failure, with little to recommend it. It has been suggested that, for a while, he was also worried, on the top of his own marital problems, over the marriage of his son, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., to Joan Crawford.

Fairbank Senior was to make only one more film, this time in England, where he had become very friendly with the producer, Alexander Korda. (This was "The Private Life of Don Juan", but we never played it in our cinema, so I

will leave it there.)

Next, from United Artist, came Ronald Colman and Joan Bennett in "Bulldog Drummond". Then, from Universal, Tom Mix in "Hidden Gold", followed by a lovely weepie, from MGM; Irene Dunne in "The Secret of Madame Blanche", which I recall as a favourite of my own.

Next, from MGM, came Marie Dressler and Polly Moran in "Prosperity", followed by, from the same renter, Ramon Novarro, Helen Hayes, Lewis Stone, and Warner Oland in "The Son-Daughter", a title which might hardly get by in our less innocent seventies.

Next, from Warner's, Douglas Fairbanks Jr. and Bette Davis in "The Parachute Jumper". This was followed by Boris Karloff in "The Mummy", from Universal. When we played it, it had an 'A' censor's certificate. A few years later, Universal reissued it, and this time round it had an 'H' certificate for Horror. So, though we played it on its first time round with its 'A', we would not have played it later on with its 'H', as we never booked any 'H' or 'X' films. The horror part of it was only due to Karloff's make-up when they unwound the mummy, and no boy ever reported that it gave him a nightmare.

Following this, from Warner's, was Paul Muni in "I Am A Fugitive from a Chain Gang". It was famous in its day, and rather overrated. It was, I fancy, more disturbing than "The Mummy".

Next, from RKO Radio, Richard Dix, Mary Astor, and Joel McCrea in "The Lost Squadron", and then, from MGM, William Haines and Madge Evans in "Fast Life". Then, from Radio, a Technicolor Musical: Bebe Daniels and Wheeler & Wolsey in "Dixiana".

Buster Keaton and Jimmy Durante followed in "What! No Beer!" from M. G. M., and then, from Universal, Tala Birrell and Melvyn Douglas in "Nagana". After that, from Universal, Lee Tracy in "Private Jones".

Then, another double-feature programme, this time both from Radio: Richard Dolman in "Love on the Spot" supported by Mary Brian in "Waiting for the Bride" in Technicolor.

Now James Cagney was back, hard-hitting and as popular as ever, in "Hard to Handle" from Warner's. And, to wind up the term, from M. G. M., we screened Norma Shearer and Robert Montgomery in "Private Lives". The 3-months had brought some outstanding films to our screen, plus any amount of two-reelers and single reelers.

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GREETINGS to all Members. Wishing you all the best of seasonal happiness for Christmas and New Year.

A. G. DAVIDSON, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA.

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DISPOSAL: 60 Magnets from 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 hundred numbers. Exchanges preferred. Many below 1202 required. Correspondence welcome.

J. F. de FREITAS, 29 GILARTH ST., HIGHETT, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA.

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WANTED: N. L. L's (o/s) up to No. 92. U. J's; S. B. L's; early Champions. Items for sale.

H. W. VERNON

5 GILLMAN ST., CHELTENHAM, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3192.

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WANTED: in Good Condition: Adventure, Hotspur, Rover, Wizard, Skipper, Champion (1921 - 1967).

J. C. CALVERT

67 BRAMERTON RD., BILBOROUGH, NOTTINGHAM, NC8 4NN.

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WANTED DESPERATELY: Grimsdale Crusoes S. O. L. 252, 254, 256. And B. F. L. 684 "The Lion's Revenge". And St. Jim's S. O. L. 264 "Baggy Trimble's Reform".

P. J. HANGER

10 PARK SQUARE, KING'S HEATH, NORTHAMPTON.

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## News of the Clubs

### MIDLAND

Due to prevailing climatic conditions (fog) the October meeting was below strength but such is the power of the perennial charm of the Hobby, hours passed quickly, joyously. As Tom Porter succinctly wrote in the club newsletter: 'a warming of mutual interests and discussion on those well loved friends of former years who still gladden our hearts with their exploits.'

After club 'business' and the pleasure derived from the correspondence of country members, there was a reading by Jack Bellfield from the hilarious 'The Bunter Cup' in Holiday Annual 1928.

Tom Porter delved into his magic holdall to produce an Anniversary Number, 'Handforth Minor', 53 years old to the day and in mint condition. His Collectors' item was a bound volume of 'The Moat Hollow' series, from the far away days of the 1925 Nelson Lee.

After refreshments, members related amusing, exciting, in one case horrific, incidents experienced during the pursuit of collectors items. The meeting concluded with a reading by Geof Lardner of two

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poems from the 1937 Holiday Annual and a cheery game of 'Find the Title'.

### CAMBRIDGE

The Cambridge Club met at 99 Shelford Road, Trumpington, the home of Jack Overhill, on Sunday, 9 November. Members saw Jack Overhill's wonderful series of personal diaries, running back to the 1920's, and also many of the numerous books he has written.

A welcome guest speaker was Mary Cadogan who gave an entertaining talk on Girls' flying stories, especially the stories which had appeared in the Girl's Own Paper during the war years. She exhibited a number of attractive copies of the G. O. P. for the war period. The wide-ranging talk covered many topics, and was warmly appreciated by those present. Mary also showed a proof copy of the forthcoming book on Girls' stories from 1837 to 1975, which she and Patricia Craig have written, "You're a brick, Angela", which is to be published in February.

Vic Hearn talked about "Rockfist Rogan", the widely known figure in the "Champion", long running from the 1930's to the '50's'. He read extracts and produced copies covering the late 1930's and early 1940's. "Rockfist", airman and boxer, was a perfect complement to Mary's air girls.

During the discussions that followed Danny Posner said that contrary to a widely held opinion the great interest of collectors still appeared to be the "Magnet" and "Gem"; not only among the older collectors, but also among young hobbyists.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to Jack and Mrs. Overhill for their hospitality. With much applause and acclamation Danny Posner was elected Honorary Founder Vice-President of the Club in appreciation of his gathering together the founder members of the club and of his long and generous hospitality.

Next meeting will be on 14 December.

### LONDON

A highly representative gathering of members and friends assembled at the Beckenham home of Alex and Mary Cadogan on 16th November and the distinguished visitor was Denis Gifford, who recently visited the international comics exhibition at Lucca, Tuscany. Mr.

Gifford persuaded Frank Hamson, who originated Dan Dare for Eagle in 1950, to accompany him. This turned out to be an historical occasion as the Eagle illustrator was adjudicated the World's Greatest Comic artist. Furthermore it was learned that Dan Dare is very popular in Italy. Mr. Gifford gave an excellent impromptu talk about the Lucca visit and about comics from Ally Sloper days right up to the present time. Copies of some of his books were on display including the one mentioned recently in C.D. Mr. Gifford was accompanied by his young daughter, Pandora, thus the different tastes in the long history of comics was evident. Mr. Gifford was accorded a hearty vote of thanks for his interesting talk as was also the hostess, Mary Cadogan, in persuading him to attend.

Bill Lofts gave one of his superb elucidations on the correspondence columns of the old boys' books and Millicent Lyle read passages from Talbot Baines Reed's "Eighteen Hours with a Kid" from his Boycott short stories.

Brian Doyle and Bill Lofts spoke of F.R. Centenary proposals.

Votes of thanks to the hosts and the venue for the Yuletide meeting. This at Courtfield, 49 Kingsend, Ruislip, Middlesex. Hosts the Acramans. Phone Ruislip 31025.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

### NORTHERN

Saturday, 8 November, 1975

Chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened the programme by giving us a review of Patrick Howarth's book, 'Play up and Play the Game'.

The author's thesis, said Geoffrey, was that behind Victorian literature there was a fictional archetypal hero, who, after Sir Henry Newbolt, he names Newbolt man. The author traces his history and decline (the latter partly as a result of the first World War) and his eventual demise.

The book deals specifically with schoolboy heroes and there is a section on Hamiltonia: "Kipling and Wodehouse, being writers of unusual distinction, were able to command large sales from books whose boy heroes did not conform to a standard pattern. For the less gifted, or the less original, the safe formula for success remained, far into the

twentieth century, strict orthodoxy in the choice of hero, though variety was permissible in the other characters. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the literary career of Charles Hamilton ..."

Orwell's criticism is also mentioned - the common outlook on life (i.e. of Greyfriars) is that of 'a rather exceptionally stupid member of the Navy League in 1910.'

Geoffrey pondered the superficiality of an author's knowledge when he did a general synopsis of this kind. Could we really believe that the famous five differed from each other only in physical characteristics, as the author claimed? Or did Quelch differ from the other masters only in having a 'gimlet eye'?

The author had quoted Hamilton's output as two million words, whereas it is estimated that he wrote two-hundred million, and, also

indicating an all-too-superficial knowledge of his subject, the name 'Rowlands' is quoted instead of 'Newlands'.

Mollie spoke to us on the subject, 'Are you in favour of Peter Pan?'

She began by reading to us from 'The Chalet Girls in Camp' by Eleanor Brent Dyer. There were forty-odd Chalet Girl stories, but they were not Peter Pan stories, for the characters grew up and moved on. Certain other writers, said Mollie, allowed their characters to grow up, and she mentioned P. G. Wodehouse and Jack North. But she asked, did we, perhaps, prefer the other sort of stories, for example, those by Hamilton and Brooks, in which the characters never grow any older? In the discussion which followed we felt that there was a place for both types of story. The book generally lent itself to developing and growing characters, whose careers one could follow. But one eventually had to bid those characters farewell! Not so, of course, with Hamilton and Brooks. As Hamilton himself put it, the clock always stood at ten to three! We were delighted to welcome

the Northern Club. Next meeting, on Sat., 13th Dec, is the Christmas Party. We meet at the Swarthmore Educational Centre, Leeds, at 4.30 pm for 5.00 pm. But notification to Mollie, first, please.

**"DORIS REDFERN'S DISAPPEARANCE!"**



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**"BARBARA REDFERN'S PERIL!"**