

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 33

NUMBER 391

JULY 1979

Price 26p



The Malatean came bolting up on deck, yelling with terror. "What the thunder!" ejaculated Ken.

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STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. G. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 33

No. 391

JULY 1979

Price 26p

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MARY PICKFORD

With the death of the World's Sweetheart, a link - probably the last living link - with the heyday of the time when the old papers reigned supreme, has been broken. Perhaps there is nobody now in our little circle whose memory goes back so far as the days when Mary Pickford was known as the Biograph girl, making one and two reelers for that company at the rate of about one a week.

But there must be plenty who recall a childhood in which the world revolved round the old papers and Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, and, perhaps, the Gish sisters in a period of from 1917 onwards.

Mary Pickford's first film was entitled "Her First Biscuits", made in the year 1909, a year in which she made 39 short films. 1909 was not a particularly good year for the Gem. On the St. Jim's scene came Buck Finn and Bernard Glyn, and Christmas that year saw Tom Merry & Co. at the Chateau Cernay in France.

The Tomsonio's Circus series was running in Pluck, and stories of that circus appeared in both the Gem and the Magnet. The Magnet stories of the period were charming but episodic, and it was a time when Cliff House was featured a good deal, and it was also the year of the "Aliens", Hoffmann, Meunier, & Co.

Mary Pickford made her first pictures of short feature length in 1913, but it was in 1914, with such films as "Hearts Adrift" (said to be the first time she was starred in electric lights) and "Tess of the Storm Country" that she became the most beloved actress in the world. That was Talbot's year in the Gem, but not a strikingly good year in the Magnet.

1917 was the year that Edwy Searles Brooks created St. Frank's for his delighted boys and girls, and that year Mary Pickford made "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm". Her public wanted her as a little girl with long golden curls, and she was still playing little girl parts when she was well into her thirties.

In 1920, the same year that she made "Pollyanna" and "Suds", she married Douglas Fairbanks. It was a poor year in both the Magnet and the Gem, though the Dirk Power series livened things up just a little in the latter paper. That year the Boys' Friend celebrated its 1,000th issue, and was at the peak of its popularity with Rookwood and Cedar Creek. In the Sexton Blake Library two new characters came on the scene. They were Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie, and they were first paired together in a great novel "The Mystery of the Turkish Agreement". Unlike Mary and Douglas, Grant and Julie were never married to one another. They were too busy with Secret Service work, abetted by Blake and Tinker and Pedro.

In 1921 Mary Pickford made what was possibly her best picture - though not necessarily the most popular one - in "Little Lord Fauntleroy". She played two parts - the young lord and his mother - and, even all these years later, the photographic work is said to have been remarkably

fine. 1921 was a patchy year for the Gem, but the youngster, dewy-eyed in the cinema over Cedric, may well have had in his pocket one of the stories from the delightful series about Seven Schoolboys and Solomon. It was a bad year in the Magnet, with a glut of sub-stories, and the main contribution from Hamilton being a short and sub-standard caravanning series.

In 1927, Mary Pickford cut off her curls, and made "My Best Girl", her leading man being Buddy Rogers, whom she would make her third husband some years later. That was the year of the first South Seas series, introducing Soames, in a Magnet on the crest of a wave, but it was a poor year for the Gem.

In 1929 Mary Pickford made her first talkie "Coquette", for which she won an Oscar - the first of the sound age. In that year, Charles Hamilton wrote nothing at all for the Gem, but his Rio Kid was going strong in the Popular and his King of the Islands was leaving Modern Boy readers asking for more. And it was the year of the very long Hollywood series in the Magnet, though I do not recall that Harry Wharton & Co. met Mary Pickford.

In 1933, Mary Pickford made her last film "Secrets", in which her leading man was Leslie Howard, the British actor. By that time, the Gem had taken on a new lease of life with its reprints, while the Magnet, though fading a little, still came up with such winners as the Hiking Series and the Strong Alonzo tales.

Just why Mary Pickford ended her career so abruptly it is hard to say. But an era ended with her. No actress, either before or since, was ever loved so much by her public as she was. There will never be another like her, just as there never again be anything like the papers which were supreme on the bookstalls during the many years that she was undisputed queen of the cinema.

They were magic days, now long gone, but the memory of them will never fade while those of us remain who loved them so much.

THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

My nephew plays football for the London Spartan League. The groundsman of their club is named Charlie, and his cat, which resides in the pavilion, was blessed with a small family. My nephew became

the proud owner of one of the kittens, and intended to call it Charlie, after its grandfather, the groundsman. However, the little black kitten turned out to be a lady, so she became Charlotte. That was exactly a year ago.

Soon after Christmas, she developed trouble with one of her front legs. She was in pain with the leg, and she became a regular visitor to the vet down in Kent. After a while, Charlotte developed a limp. One evening recently the nephew rang us to say that Charlotte was going to the vet the next day, and they feared it was the end. They believed that the vet would say that the kindest thing would be that Charlotte should be put to sleep.

However, he didn't say that, much to my nephew's - and our - joy. He said that the leg was stiffening, and there was no longer any pain. Charlotte might always have a stiff leg, and a limp, but she would not be in pain, and she would adapt herself very quickly. And she is doing just that.

It reminds me that two of our dearest friends - one of my Old Boys who married one of my Old Girls - had a three-legged cat which lived a long untroubled life and reached a ripe old age without seeming handicapped by the loss of a member. Cats are said to be amazing for the way that they adapt themselves to conditions, and I have a happy feeling that Charlotte will be no exception.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

WANTED: 1934 Magnets, Numbers 1351, 1353, 1368, 1373, 1401, 1402. Greyfriars Holiday Annuals (original), 1922, 1920. Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School (with D.W.), Monsters, Howard Baker Collectors Editions, Magnets, any.

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WANTED URGENTLY: to extend my collection, a complete run of the "Magnet" from No. 956 to No. 1082, in good condition. I offer £250. Also wanted S.O.L. No. 27 in good condition. I offer £7. Regret that I have no swaps at present.

W. SETFORD, 155 BURTON RD., DERBY., DE3 6AB.

Danny's Diary

JULY 1929

Two excellent stories in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. In "The Tyrant Head", Dr. Locke goes on holiday in order to provide a change of scene for his daughter, Rosie. The replacement Head is a Mr. Lothrop, and he soon falls foul of the boys, so the tale ends with a barring-out.

The other story is "Dropped from the Team". Mornington is the "dropped" one. To get his own back, he has a forged telegram sent to Jimmy Silver, saying that Mr. Silver is seriously ill. So instead of playing in the game, Jimmy takes the train home. Mornington is found out, and expelled for his wickedness. At the end of the tale he is still expelled, though he turns up and plays for his old school before the final curtain. There is more of this to come, of course.

It was blazing hot for a week in the middle of the month, with temperatures up to 89 in London. The heatwave has ended now with simply fearful thunder storms all over the South of England.

The School Train series has continued in the Nelson Lee Library. In "Willy Declares War", the Train is at Manchester. Willy sees a dog run down by a motorist who doesn't bother two hoots whether he has hurt the dog. And it is against this man that Willy Handforth declares war. Next week, in "The Mystery of the Cave", the chums are in Wales. When he learns that a Welsh schoolboy has been missing for several days, Handforth sets out to find him.

Then the train moves on to Bath and Bristol. A ship arrives in Bristol with a party of American boy tourists. At the end of the tale, they accept a challenge from Nipper to play them at cricket and baseball. In the final of the month, the train is back in the south, and the story is set in the Isle of Wight, where the boys take part in a talkie film which is being made there. The title is "St. Frank's in the 'Talkies'". It's good fun, but Nipper & Co. are fed up with the talkies in the end.

I had a good Union Jack this month. Entitled "The Man in the Darkened Room", it tells of a train smash in which Blake finds a man's hand and a curious message. All mysterious, and very good.

The first Ken King story this month in the Modern Boy is "The Mystery of the Derelict". Ken and the crew of the "Dawn" come across a schooner under full sail, yet, after a search, it does not seem that there is anybody on board. However, next week, in "The Secret of the Schooner", a savage Papuan is found tucked away on board, so the mystery is solved. A lovely couple of tales.

In "The Trader of Vana-Vana", the young skipper crosses swords with yet another wicked Dutchman. Finally, in "From the Jaws of Death", Ken is saved from the Dutchman by a black man named Sululo. These South Seas yarns are first-rate.

The serial "Cloyne of Claverhouse", supposed to be written by Wally Hammond, the cricketer, is still running in Modern Boy.

In real life it has been rather a tragic month, this July of 1929. On the 9th, a submarine sank and 24 lives were lost. On the 10th there was a pit explosion, and 8 men were killed. And on the 11th, there was a fire at a hospital fete at Gillingham, and 15 people were burned to death.

At the pictures this month we have seen William Boyd in "The Volga Boatman"; Edna Purviance in "Woman of Paris" (this film was made and directed by Charlie Chaplin to make a dramatic star out of the girl who has been his leading lady for many years. I didn't like it much, though I love Edna Purviance); Norma Shearer in "Trelawney of the Wells"; Richard Barthelmess in "Wheel of Chance"; Ramon Novarro in "Scaramouche" which was great; and Davy Lee in "Sonny Boy" which was a talkie.

Doug took me to London with him one day, and we saw the all talking - all singing film "The Broadway Melody" at the Empire in Leicester Square. The stars are Charles King, Bessie Love, and Anita Paige. After the show Doug bought a Columbia record of two of the songs from the film. The songs are "Wedding of the Painted Doll" and "You Were Meant For Me", and they are sung by Layton & Johnstone.

One day Mum and I went to East London to see an old friend of Mum's, and we went to the first house at the Queen's Theatre, Poplar, and saw the Ernie Lottinga revue "August 1914" which stars the comedian Billy Percy. It was very good.

The opening story in the Magnet this month is "The Mystery of

Mark Linley". The sequel, the following week, is "Under Suspicion". Stewart of the Shell loses a banknote for £10, and when it is discovered that Linley has such a note, some are suspicious of him. But Skinner finds the lost note lodged in the ivy, and, for once, does the right thing. A couple of nice, quiet school tales.

Next week brought the first story in the summer holiday series. "Bob Cherry's Big Bargain". The chums have planned a walking-tour of the southern counties, and Bob Cherry purchases an old motor-tricycle from Mr. Jorrocks. However, a number of people seem to be after that trike. Next week, in "The Trail of the Trike", the holiday tour starts in earnest, with Bob riding the trike which he names Methuselah. But there is a mystery about that trike, and we shall find out what it is next month when this lovely summer series continues. Coker & Co. turn up in the second tale. Gorgeous stuff!

First story in the Gem this month is "Grundy's Cricket Match". Next week brought "For Love of Lady Peggy". It brings in the Spalding Hall girls, and a new girl, Lady Peggy Brooke comes on the scene. Blake and Fatty Wynn fall in love with her. She is the "rippingest girl the two juniors had ever seen." Too daft for words. Next week, "The Mystery of River Grange" which also introduces the awful Lady Peggy. She manages to get kidnapped, but Blake and Fatty Wynn rescue her. "Jack and Fatty!" she breathed. "Oh, good egg!"

Last of the month is "Uncle Does the Trick". The boys want to see the Test Match with the South African players, and the "uncle" is Monty Lowther's Uncle Monty, and Figgins pretends to Uncle Monty that he, Figgins, is nephew Monty, and Uncle Monty, to punish Figgins, takes him in a hairdresser's shop and orders that his hair be waved like a girls. (And I see, from the Editor's Chat, that next week's story is entitled "Who Kissed Ethel?" What on earth has happened to the Gem?)

There has been a curious development concerning the murder of the Reading tobacconist last month. A number of people saw a drunken man in Cross St., Reading, about the time of the murder, and they have said that they are sure that drunken man was Philip Yale Drew who was appearing in the play "The Monster" at the Royal County Theatre, Reading, that week. It is a coincidence that my cousin and I saw the play and Mr. Drew at the Theatre Royal at Aldershot weeks ago in the

Easter holidays.

The show is at Nottingham Empire this week, and the police have been interviewing Mr. Drew there. The week after the Reading engagement, it seems that "The Monster" was at the Palace Theatre, Maidstone, and police have been questioning the staff at the hotel where Mr. Drew stayed there. There is quite a lot in the papers about it. But surely a man like Drew would not batter and rob a shopkeeper.

The Popular has been grand all the month. The Rio Kid is still having adventures in Mexico. The first story ended the series about Donna Estrella, whose father was killed at the finish. The title was "Hunted Down". Next came "The Plot of Don Pedro". Next came "Friend or Foe?" in which the Kid sees a litter in which a Mexican woman is a prisoner. Finally "Foes of the Desert" in which the Kid helped the woman.

There are three new holiday series starting now in the Pop. They are the Old Bus series about Tom Merry & Co.; the series about Ali Ben Yusef, the Arab schoolboy, and the Greyfriars chums; and the series about Captain Muffin's floating boarding-house with the Rookwood pals. What a dish to set before the King. I bet he reads the Popular, like I do.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S. O. L. No. 103, "The Tyrant Head" comprised two consecutive red Magnets of the summer of 1911. They were entitled respectively "The Greyfriars Tyrant" and "The School on Strike", and were probably relating the first barring-out at Greyfriars, on a small scale in comparison with those of later years. This pair of stories appeared 18 months before the famous "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out".

S. O. L. No. 104, "Dropped from the Team" comprised 8 stories from the Boys' Friend of the summer of 1922. This was part of a very long series concerning an expelled Mornington, which ended many months later with Mornington returning, in disguise, as a bootboy named Sandy Smacke.

The theatres mentioned by Danny where "The Monster" play had a week's engagement in each case, are interesting to those with long memories. I have no idea where the Theatre Royal at Aldershot may have stood. It has long vanished. The Royal County Theatre at Reading was demolished long ago, and I believe that a big Woolworth store now stands on the site. Perhaps some Maidstone reader may know what happened to the Palace Theatre, Maidstone.

"The Monster" had been on tour for about two years, after a moderate success in the West End of London with Edmund Gwenn in the lead. On tour, with Drew in the lead, it played No. 1 touring dates at first, but by the time of the Reading murder it was playing

No. 3 dates up and down the country. Drew had been popular and famous in his day, but by mid-1929 he was approaching 50 years of age and his star was fading fast.)

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Just a short preamble this month as the articles are a bit long. I would be grateful for some more material which I find is in short supply. Best wishes for happy holidays to all my readers.

THE UNFORGOTTEN

by S. Gordon Swan

To me Sexton Blake always represented the best qualities in the British character: honour, integrity and a love of fair play. From boyhood days onwards, through success and adversity, his adventures formed such a vivid background to my life that when the Sexton Blake Library ceased publication I felt that a vital element had been removed from the world.

Sporadic attempts to restore him to his old pinnacle, while not entirely successful, have at least shown that he is still with us in spirit. Though often we may not agree with the modern approach to his exploits, at any rate we may console ourselves that he is not entirely forgotten.

Of the old writers from the golden days I remember with pleasure the narratives of G. H. Teed, who led us to remote corners of the world and wrote with firsthand knowledge of China, India, Australia and South America. His Blake was a man of the world in the truest sense of the words as well as a man of action.

I recall with affection Andrew Murray's conception of Blake as a man of great strength of character and also a humanitarian. This author also led us to out-of-the-way places and created for us that worthy adventurer, the Hon. John Lawless. Would that today's heroes were cast in the same mould!

We may regard Murray Graydon as old-fashioned, but away from his belted earls and swooning maidens he gave us some fine adventurous reading, albeit his Blake was sometimes in pessimistic vein. We

encountered many hazards in his stories of the cities of Europe and other more far-away places, facing perils in jungle and desert, often in company with Cavendish Doyle, the intrepid secret agent, or Matthew Quin, the wild beast hunter.

I admired Jack Lewis's Blake with his powers of deduction and his remorseless logic in unravelling the intricate schemes of that arch-criminal, Leon Kestrel. The subtle plots of this writer were always intriguing and his handling of Blake's relations with Fifette Bierce and Olga Nasmyth adult and sophisticated.

Who can forget the bizarre Zenith the Albino, with his top-hat, immaculate evening-dress and faithful Japanese servants? Surely this character conceived by Anthony Skene (the name by which we know him best) was one of the most original in fiction. We were never told all there was to know about this remarkable crook apart from the suggestion that he was associated with Rumanian royalty.

How different from the shoddy Secret Service agents of today or from the incredible James Bond, was the man with the queer blue eyes, Granite Grant, No. 55 -- and how delightful his friendly enemy, Mademoiselle Julie. The quality of Pierre Quiroule's writing was also of a high standard, along with that of some others I have mentioned.

There are so many of them to whom tribute is due -- E. W. Alais, Gwyn Evans, Robert Murray and later contributors who, among them, built up a portrait of a man who embodied all those qualities I quoted at the beginning of this article, a man whose name will always be synonymous with high adventure and a strong sense of justice.

THE DAY OF THE BIONICS

by Raymond Cure

This is the day of the bionics. If its not bionic this its bionic that. It is a day in which (via TV) our imagination is stretched beyond the bounds of possibility. Our credulity is strained beyond the limits of our credulity allowance. We sit amazed at such goings on. Mind you, I have heard it said that Edwy Searles Brooks stretched the old imagination till it broke under the strain; with his St. Frank's Holiday series and here he is again in the good old Union Jack with Waldo the Wonder Man.

Believe me there was nothing wrong with Brook's imagination,

he was but the fore-runner of today's TV scriptwriters, and a very modest scriptwriter at that. I care not whether you take his Nelson Lee tales, his Norman Conquest or Cromwell and Lister yarns, or be his name E.S.B. - Berkley Grey or Victor Gunn, all are extremely readable.

All kinds of detectives and their assistants appear on the small screen almost twice-nightly, the Saint also has had a weekly spot. Is the Saint very far removed from Norman Conquest?

Waldo the Wonder-man appeared on the screen of my imagination long before it was invaded by TV's Bionic man, the Bionic Woman, the Incredible Hulk and the Wonder Woman.

For the moment let us move back into the year 1927 (now over fifty years ago). Maybe they didn't know it but what a treat was in store for Union Jack readers in that vintage year. I refer to the fact that the Union Jack sported four tales by Edwy Searles Brooks in a row, starring Waldo, in other words a month of E.S.B! These were U.J's Nos. 1219, 1220, 1221 and 1222. "Waldo's Wonder Stunt", "The Affair of the Professional Avenger", "The Case of the Second Blackmailer" and "The Lightning Flash Mystery". Here is a set of tales to warm the coldest heart. The very titles themselves burn their way into the heart of any Union Jack enthusiast.

Breathes there a man with soul so dead, who wouldn't like that bunch of four in his hand?

Edwy Searles Brooks was what I would term a wide-screen writer, a man capable of Cinemascope tales. Under his pen characters move and move fast and this goes for Sexton Blake and Tinker. I have read some ponderous, slow-moving tales in my time but never one of E.S.B. tales. I expect things to move and keep moving from the first paragraph and with E.S.B. that's what I get.

At this point I will not bore you with long quotations from these four tales, other than to mention the outstanding characters that share these tales with our illustrious Sexton Blake. Hardly has the curtain risen on "Waldo's Wonder Stunt" than we are thrust into the company of a Weirdo, none other than what appears to be a demented hunchback. Come to think of it you don't see many hunchbacks these days. Not that they were very plentiful in the twenties or early thirties, but there was more of them about. Do you remember the old saying "Touch a hunch-

back on the back, a run of luck you'll never lack".

I suppose the lack of these people is due to modern science and medicine. These things are dealt with in childhood, thus there are not so many people with cross-eyes today or hunchbacks and a good job too.

After the hunchback another character turns up, Mr. Rorke the money-lender. He will put you off moneylenders for the rest of your life. Of course money-lending is more respectable now-a-days, just ask at any bank, but we 'old 'uns' know that in the old days Jasper (the swine) would turn the poor widow and her hungry little brood out into the cold, cold snow. I don't suppose the TSB or Barclays would go so far as that, still, reading of Mr. Rorke awakened the old fears of money-lenders.

Of heroes and villains, of honest men and blackmailers, of sweet young heroines and wicked landlords (who thrust them out of rose-covered cottages for a couple of weeks' back rent).

Of those who came to their rescue, be they Waldo or our old friends Sexton Blake and Tinker, you can't do better than read of these characters as they spring to life under the swift moving pen of Edwy Searles Brooks.

Amid all the now old-fashioned scenes of 1927 Waldo, the Wonderman moved with a series of feats to equal any bionic man or his modern TV breed. In his day Waldo was one on his own. Alas this is the day of bionics and there are many imitation Waldo's flitting about our TV screens, but the originals are still the best.

* * * * *

WANTED: Howard Baker Magnets, vols 21 to 26, 32, 50, 51, 52, 56, 59 onwards, mint, d.w.s., reasonable price. FOR SALE: 1941 Greyfriars Holiday Annual.

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WANTED: Bullseye (A. Press); Boys' Magazine (Allied Newspapers); Scoops; and all other comics/papers with Science-Fiction stories.

RON HOLLAND, P.O. BOX 43, PORTSMOUTH, HANTS.

Nelson Lee Column

THOSE EARLY LEES

by C. H. Churchill

Recently I have been reading some of the early detective stories in the Nelson Lee from No. 1 onwards. As is known, many of these were written by authors who usually contributed Sexton Blake stories to the Union Jack and later the S.B. Library. The latter, of course, seeing the light of day at about the same time as the N.L. Library.

While reading these stories I was struck by the thought that they might have been written by these authors as Sexton Blake stories for the Union Jack and altered to Nelson Lee ones by the powers that be to start off the N.L. Library by the simple task of altering the names of Blake and Tinker to Nelson Lee and Nipper. Several things brought this thought to mind. To start with, if one examines N.L. No. 2, on page 13 one will find half way down the page the following sentence:-

"In some way NIPPER must have discovered the man and attacked him, Nelson Lee decided, and again he wondered anxiously what had happened after that. Then he told himself that the one possible solution of the mystery was that Miles had knocked TINKER out and carried him away to some hiding place."

In this case I feel that my theory is correct, otherwise how could the name of Tinker be included? I do not feel that an author writing a Lee story would make such a silly mistake. In other stories the description of Mrs. Jones, Lee's housekeeper, is exactly the same as that of Mrs. Bardell even as regards her language.

Obviously I do not include the stories by Maxwell Scott in this category as he was the originator of Nelson Lee, and they seem like Lee stories. Nor do I include those by G. H. Teed which are excellent and of a much higher standard than those by Darren, Bayfield, etc.

Some fantastic events were described by these other authors too, such as in No. 3 when a kidnapped child, being driven in a sidecar of a motor bike, lost his straw sailor hat in the wind and it lodged high up in the branches of a tree. Nelson Lee rode by shortly after in pursuit

and Nipper spotted it as they flashed by!! Well, really!!

Thinking back to the days of the first war when I was a small lad, as my father was in the Navy I was always dressed in a sailor suit, blue in winter and white in summer (we had summers in those days). With the white suit I had one of these yellow straw sailors hats with a blue band around on which was inscribed "H.M.S. Lion". Them were the days!

HOWZAT?

by William Lister

It's the cricket season again. I wonder what the boys of St. Frank's would think of the soccer hooliganism that is now spilling over on to the cricket field (thankfully in small doses so far). I suppose we ought to make excuses for these sport-spoilers. If they had been brought up in a St. Frank's type school, or at least brought up on a weekly diet of St. Frank's stories as featured in the renowned "Nelson Lee" and written by the more than renowned Edwy Searles Brooks, they would have had these dreary cobwebs of violence blown out of their childish craniums.

However, it would appear that not even a good education given in the best surroundings can clear up the evil that is in man, or boy, or whatever. We still had our quota of bad lads at St. Frank's, though I hasten to say I can't imagine them throwing bottles, darts or brandishing flick knives. Their type of villainy was of a more sophisticated nature; and that brings me back to the cricket field and to "The Schemer of St. Frank's".

Now I wouldn't mind saying that we've all done a bit of scheming in our time, so let's have a look at this.

It all happened (according to the cover page of the "Boys' Friend Library, N.S. 435) in 7.6.34, which by way of interpretation, would mean the seventh day of June, in the year of our Lord, nineteen thirty-four (as if you didn't know) but don't take this as gospel; because some student of the facts and figures of St. Frank's will be able to inform us that it all took place long before that, being probably a reprint from an earlier "Nelson Lee" series.

Our story opens with the pleasant scene of an English countryside cricket field. I had the picture in mind, as I was watching an amateur

cricket match on a field at the rear of the famous Cockington Village, while on holiday in Torquay.

Sprawled out in a deck-chair, basking in the sun, the click of ball against bat, the occasional cry of "howzat" I was no small cry from that St. Frank's scene of over 44 years ago; by the way our cover illustration features an "howzat" moment as the batsman is caught out. The St. Frank's juniors were concluding an "away" game at Midshot. St. Frank's had won (that goes without saying) and Vivian Travers had, as captain, covered himself in glory, Nipper 74 and Travers 69 not out.

Well folks, I've given you the sunshine. Now for the shadow, for over this idyllic scene there is a shadow. As the saying goes "Into each life a little rain must fall". A little rain? Our Vivian Travers was caught in a monsoon - never mind a little rain.

Blackmail! That's the dark cloud that threatens our pleasant little afternoon's cricket. I won't trouble you with a rambling account of this tale. Sufficient to say, there are gripping moments, harrowing moments when the sky is black indeed. All served up on an Edwy Searles Brooks menu. Brooks doesn't leave us there; before long the clouds clear. The sun begins to shine, Mr. Brooks will close this article in his own words.

"Travers batted like one possessed, even after Nipper was out - Travers carried on to the finish of the innings. He made 114 not out. St. Frank's score 380 a magnificent total against the brilliant young Australians."

"Fine, my boy - splendid!" exclaimed Mr. Travers, grasping his son's hand, as he came out. "I'm proud of you".

Praise enough for the hero, and the villain? Again I quote
E.S.B.

"Travers himself was too good-hearted to gloat over Forrest's downfall. The fellow was beneath contempt. He wasn't even worth punching - as a punishment for his cowardly, despicable trick. After all, a fellow doesn't punch a worm because the unfortunate creature happens to be a worm." And so say all of us.

FOOTNOTE. If you haven't got a copy of this issue in your collection you can borrow it from the Bob Blythe "Nelson Lee Library", but don't all rush at once. We don't want any cricket hooliganism.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 156 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 149 - "The Snob"

Charles Hamilton must have had a particular dislike for snobs and upstarts, presumably because of their insincerity. He seemed to have some sympathy for most ranks in society from the aristocracy downwards, but pretence and affectation he obviously found detestable. At any rate, all his stories about upstarts were so graphically related that they sometimes became painful reading.

Algernon de Vere was not introduced as a wholly unsympathetic character. He saved Bessie Bunter who had fallen in the path of an oncoming train, and he was strong and courageous as well as being an excellent cricketer. When he taunted Wharton into breaking detention, he volunteered the fact to Mr. Quelch. Nevertheless although these redeeming features were mentioned throughout the story, he was shown to be insulting to Mark Linley and Sir Jimmy Vivian (who still bore witness to his upbringing in the London slums). Charles Hamilton referred to this as a yellow streak, by which he meant not cowardice but an attempt to hide some secret weakness or shame by swank and half-scornful superiority.

It was not long before it became apparent that de Vere's original name was Timothy Perkins and he was the son of a footman who had made money by eavesdropping when his master was talking about Stock Exchange dealings. Their superior airs even when in service had given offence in the servants' hall, and equal offence was given in the Greyfriars Remove.

The story has some little touches that are quite fascinating. The Schoolboys' Own was reprinted from Magnets 749-52 of 1922 vintage, and the scene at Cliff House when de Vere called on Miss Primrose under the impression that she was the house dame at Greyfriars was described with considerable detail that was obviously a spill-over from the School Friend, and this kind of detail about Cliff House was certainly not provided in later Greyfriars stories. Equally intriguing is the beautifully realised scene where de Vere called on his uncle who had just bought a greengrocery business in Courtfield, hoping to bribe his uncle into selling the business and moving elsewhere. It is a perfect

vignette of lower middle class life in the inter-war years, and it is these kinds of incidents that make so readable a basically rather unpleasant story.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 229. SPALDING HALL AND THE GEM

Charles Hamilton wrote nothing at all for the Gem in the year 1929, fifty years ago. In 1928 he had contributed only the Victor Cleeve series of just four stories. So, from the summer of 1928, Hamilton was absent from the Gem until April 1930, when he returned to offer "Good-bye to Etons", an indifferent tale which did but little to enhance the Gem's reputation.

No doubt we can see cause and effect in the introduction of Spalding Hall, a girls' school near St. Jim's, by a substitute writer, in a story entitled "Up Against It" in January 1929. Danny's Diary has reminded us that 1929 was the year of Spalding Hall in the Gem.

The Headmistress was an angular, amorous lady named Miss Finch. Almost out of the Miss Primrose drawer of early Magnet days, Miss Finch even fell in love with one of the St. Jim's masters, and went arm in arm with him down the streets of Friardale. I forget which master it was, but no doubt we shall find the secret out when Danny reaches that particular story in his Diary.

There were all too many yarns introducing the Spalding Hall girls from January 1929 onwards. Doris Levison went there, and, something of an absurdity, Cousin Ethel was also there, and occupied Study No. 5. It was unbelievable for old readers who remembered "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays", the serial which Hamilton wrote for the Empire Library, and which was reprinted later on as a serial in the Gem, and was reprinted yet again in the Boys' Friend Library.

A new girl at Spalding Hall was a red-headed tomboy, Lady Peggy Brooke, and Blake and Fatty Wynn fell in love with her. My personal reaction to the redheaded tomboy was about the same as my reactions to Tinker's propensity for redheads in the later S.B.L's.

The Spalding House girls went away for holidays with Tom Merry & Co., so possibly the writer had in mind the young ladies who

were often part and parcel of the St. Frank's holidays. One of the Spalding Hall holiday tales was entitled "Who Kissed Ethel?", which, possibly for older Gemites, struck the wrong note.

According to Mr. Lofts's lists of the substitute writers and their stories, which we published years ago in Collectors' Digest Annual, the man who invented Spalding Hall and stuck it down near St. Jim's, was Francis Warwick. Mr. Warwick's great failing was that he abandoned tradition. The Gem had been running for over twenty years, and there had never been a girls' school nearby to distract attention and absorb printer's ink. This was the first piece of tradition that Mr. Warwick chopped away. It was not the last by any means.

It is feasible that he must have discussed the matter with the editor of the Gem before he took so drastic a step. They must surely have had reason to believe that the creator of St. Jim's would never write again for the old paper.

Just how the boys of 1929 reacted to these changes I have never really discovered. I was no boy in 1929, and I hated them. I incline to the view that other long-time readers felt exactly the same as I did. In fact, with the arrival of Spalding Hall, I gave up hope for the Gem and became a very occasional purchaser of the paper. I'm sure that many others did the same.

Mr. Warwick went on with his changes. A new boy, an American named Handcock, came permanently into the stories, was put into Study No. 10 in the Shell, and the Terrible Three became an unbalanced foursome. Then, perhaps with Bootles in mind (and forgetting that the kicking out of Bootles was one of Hamilton's own big mistakes) he got rid of Mr. Linton and replaced him with Mr. Pilbeam.

Surely, when they abandoned tradition at this alarming rate, they drove a big hole in the rusty bottom of a rudderless ship and almost caused it to founder completely. Readers, who had hung on in hope for a long time, finally took to the boats when tradition was flung overboard.

Did Hamilton know of these changes? He said not! By a wry turn of fate he wrote "Battling Grundy", the last new tale before the reprints started in 1931. It introduced Mr. Pilbeam, but Hamilton himself told me that he knew nothing of Mr. Pilbeam and had written of Mr. Linton in "Battling Grundy". An editorial pen changed the name

throughout the tale.

I have no doubt at all that the Gem was on the way out in early 1931, and one of the nails in its coffin was marked Spalding Hall. It was for that reason that I was able to persuade Mr. Down, without too much difficulty, to reprint the old Gem stories from the start. There was nothing to lose. As it was, the Gem gained an extra $8\frac{1}{2}$ years of life.

Charles Hamilton was not too pleased about it. Maybe he felt that it robbed him of a destination for some of his work. But he had only written a small handful of tales for the Gem since 1926, and there was no sign that he intended to improve on it. But in 1939, he was back in good form to carry on for a further nine months or so before the final curtain came down. So he really had nothing of which to complain.

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(Our classic serial from early in the century.)

THE MISADVENTURES OF MARMADUKE

Marmaduke was silent and savage when the juniors went to bed. Blake tumbled into bed in the Fourth Form dormitory, and forgot all about Marmaduke in balmy slumber. But Marmaduke did not forget. He lay awake, his eyes glittering in the darkness like those of a rat, and savage thoughts of revenge in his mind, savage feelings in his untrained heart.

When all was still and silent he crept out of bed. He had smuggled a thick, flexible cane into the dormitory and hidden it in his bed. He drew it out now, and stole towards Blake's bed, a savage determination in his face. He stopped beside the bed, and lifted the walking-cane with both hands high in the air. Blake was sleeping calmly, unconscious of danger.

Crack! Down came the cane, with all Marmaduke's strength behind it,

across the sleeper's shoulders. Blake started up with a yell. And as he did so down came the weapon again with a spiteful slash, and this time it caught him on the right shoulder, almost paralysing his arm.

Blake's yell had roused the dormitory. The juniors were sitting up in bed, calling out to know what was the matter. Marmaduke was by no means finished yet, but Blake, quick to recover his presence of mind, utterly startled as he was, twisted out of bed with the agility of an eel, and Marmaduke's third blow fell on the bed-clothes.

"What's happening?" shouted Herries.

"Hanged if I know!" said Blake, groaning slightly as he rubbed his injured shoulder. "Some chap gone off his rocker, I fancy."

Boys were bundling out of bed.

Candle-ends were lighted, and Marmaduke was revealed, still grasping the walking-cane, and glowering savagely at Blake across the bed.

"It's Smythe!"

"The new kid!"

"What has he done?"

"Never mind," said Jack, striving to suppress the groan of pain that rose to his lips. "I fancy he's wrong in the head. Let him alone."

Herries was at his chum's side in a moment. He looked at the mark of the blow on Blake's shoulder, and his brow became black with rage.

"He struck you like that when you were asleep? The beast! The cowardly cad! Get hold of him, you fellows!"

There was a rush of the indignant juniors at Marmaduke. He brandished the cane.

"Keep off, or I'll brain you --"

They were not likely to keep off. Two or three of them got fearful slashes from the cane, and hopped with agony. Then Marmaduke went down on the floor with a heap of angry humanity on top of him.

"Got him!" panted Herries. "Get out of the way, Blake. He's going to answer for what he's done."

Marmaduke was dragged up in the grip of many hands. He was a good deal frightened now.

"Let me go, you beasts!" he panted.

"We'll let you go when we've finished with you," said Herries grimly.

"What kind of a cur do you call yourself to hit a chap when he's asleep? You're not going to sleep in this dormitory again. You're not safe. Bring him along, and

we'll shove him in the box-room for the rest of the night.

"I won't go!"

"I give you one minute to get into your clothes."

Marmaduke thought he had better obey that order. The night was a cold one, and the box-room was likely to be chilly, and the juniors were evidently in earnest. He dressed rapidly.

"I say --" began Blake.

"Shut up!" said Herries. "You're dead in this act. Do you think we're going to have such a dangerous boulder in here with us?"

"He'll rouse the house."

"Let him! Then he can explain what he's turned out for."

"Look here, he'd get expelled if the Head knew --"

"All the better. Bring him along, kids. Show a light, Mellish."

Percy Mellish led the way with a candle. After him went Herries and several fellows, with Marmaduke tight in their grip. Marmaduke struggled once, but only once. For Herries carried the cane used on Blake. And he used it on Marmaduke, so the captive soon gave it up.

Dark and chilly was the box-room.

"I won't go in there," whimpered Marmaduke.

"Won't you? You'll see, you pig!"

Mellish stood aside and held up the light. The juniors gave Marmaduke a swing, and sent him flying into the box-room. Herries closed the door, and locked it on the outside.

Marmaduke started hammering on the door from within. Taking no

notice of the noise, the Fourth Formers returned to their dormitory. Herries looked at Blake's injuries anxiously. There was a deep mark across his back, and a terrible bruise on his shoulder.

"You ought to have that seen to," said Herries, uneasily.

"Rats!" said Blake. "It hurts, but that's all. I shall have a stiff arm tomorrow, I expect."

"I expect you will, and for a week to come. That brute ought to be expelled."

"I think he would be, if the Head got to know the facts," remarked Blake.

"I hope he'll have sense enough to keep quiet, and not wake up any of the masters, or it's all bound to come out. You can let him out of the box-room when the rising-bell goes."

Blake had little more sleep that night. He was awake and looking somewhat white and worn when the rising-bell went. He tumbled out of bed. He gave a gasp as he did so; his arm was very painful.

"Up with you, Herries, old man. Go and get that kid out of the box-room."

Herries grumbled as he turned out of bed.

"All right! Lucky for him he had sense enough to keep quiet," he growled. "I hoped he'd waken the house and get found there."

Blake laughed.

"Never mind. Go and let him out."

Herries went down the corridor to the box-room. He uttered a sharp exclamation as he saw that the door stood open. Marmaduke was not there. Herries hastened back to the dormitory with the

news. Blake looked serious.

"He couldn't have got out," he said. "Somebody must have gone to the box-room early, and he was found there. There'll be a row."

When the juniors went down they soon saw that there was thunder in the air. Nothing was said until after breakfast, though Mr. Kidd's face was sombre, and he gave the Fourth a peculiar look when they came in.

When they went into the class-room for first lesson, the housemaster entered. The School House juniors were prepared for what was coming, but the New House boys, who knew nothing of the happenings of the night, wondered what was the matter.

"Before commencing the work of the day," said Mr. Kidd, "there is a matter which must be seen into. A most unparalleled outrage occurred in the School House last night. A boy was expelled forcibly from the Fourth dormitory, and locked up to pass the night in the box-room. There he was found by Taggles, who had occasion to go to the room at an early hour."

Figgins gave a low whistle.

"Hallo! Some of your little games, Blake?" he whispered.

Blake grunted.

"Smythe --" Marmaduke had followed the housemaster in, "--- point out the boys who were concerned in that outrage."

"Blake and Herries and Mellish," said Marmaduke, "and that boy there, and that!" He pointed them out. "I can't remember the others, but they were nearly all in it."

"Blake, Herries and Mellish, stand out here!"

The three boys named came out before the class.

"Do you admit the truth of Smythe's statement?"

"Yes, sir!"

Blake and Herries replied together; Mellish was silent.

(Another instalment of this 73 years old tale Next Month.)

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BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 64. THE YEARLING

Our opening main feature this term came from Warner's, and was Sydney Greenstreet in "The Way With Women". We began a new series of True Life Stories, each running for about 25 minutes, and the opening title was "Danger - High Voltage". They were good little tales, but I have not kept a record of which renter released them. Probably M. G. M., I think. In this bill there were also two colour cartoons: "Jack Wabbit and the Beanstalk" and "The Curious Puppy".

Next week, also from Warner's, Errol Flynn in "Never Say Good-bye". The True Life story was "The Bolted Door", a Bugs Bunny colour cartoon was "Buccaneer Bunny", and a pot-pourri of old Mack Sennett extracts - always great favourites - was entitled "Happy Faces". One of the Joe McDoakes humorous items was "So You Want to Keep Your Hair".

Then, from M. G. M., came Gene Kelly in "Living in a Big Way". A coloured cartoon was "What Price Fleadom?"

Next, from M. G. M., a technicolor musical "Fiesta" which starred Esther Williams and Cyd Charisse. A Tom & Jerry colour cartoon was "The Bodyguard".

Then, from Warner Bros., Dennis Morgan in "Royal Flush". The coloured cartoon in the bill was "Greetings Bait".

The following week brought M. G. M.'s lovely film "The Yearling". A long picture, in Technicolor, running for well over two hours - 11,458 ft. to be exact. The stars were Gregory Peck and Jane Wyman, but, as always in animal films, it was the animals - a gorgeous fawn, in this case - which stole the picture, not to mention a natural and attractive small boy named Claud Jarman Junr.

A Tweetie Pie colour cartoon "King Size Canary" plus the Universal News, completed this particular programme.

Next week, from Warner's, came Jack Carson in "Love and Learn" plus a big supporting show which included a colour cartoon "Inki at the Circus".

Then, from M. G. M., William Powell and Myrna Loy in "The Song of the Thin Man". This may well have been the swan song of the Thin Man films, but I have not checked. They were always good. In a long supporting bill there was a Tom & Jerry cartoon "The Invisible

Mouse."

The following week brought "Thunder Rock" starring James Mason and Michael Redgrave, a film made in M. G. M.'s British studios. I had seen this one done as a play some time earlier at the "Q" Theatre. It was something of a ghost story, or, perhaps, an allegory. I seem to recall that survivors of a shipwreck are cast up on the island where Grace Darling once lived, and the present generation met those of a hundred years ago. But my memory may be playing tricks. I have a feeling that the film was not entirely successful. In the supporting bill was a coloured cartoon "Slap Happy Lion".

Next, from Warner Bros., came John Garfield in "Nobody Lives for Ever". In this programme was one of the delightful novelties (from Warner's) in which the words of well-known songs came on the screen

and a bouncing ball led the audience in community singing. This one was entitled "Let's Sing a Stephen Foster Song". The Small Cinema audiences always joined in with gusto. A coloured cartoon was "Peck Up Your Troubles".

The final show of the term brought the magnificent M. G. M. drama "Random Harvest", starring Ronald Colman and Greer Garson. A long film (11,370 ft.) it was a smash hit such as film-makers have long forgotten how to make. It was said to be a woman's picture - and men loved every minute of it. In the supporting bill was a Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon "A Mouse in the House".

(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS SERIES NEXT MONTH.)

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News of our Clubs

MIDLAND

Meeting held 22nd May, 1979

The May meeting is officially the A.G.M., but nobody expected to spend too much time on business matters nor in fact was much time spent. All the officials were re-elected "en bloc" and thanked for their services. Special thanks went out to those who produced the newsletter, which is a real team effort and not left to one person. Its importance cannot be overemphasized because of our large number of postal members.

Having quickly concluded the business we went on to enjoy ourselves and another sparkling, enjoyable meeting took place.

There were several lively discussions.

The merits or otherwise of "Harry Wharton & Co. in the Land of the Pyramids" were discussed. Members on the whole were lukewarm about it, but Geoff Lardner said it was his favourite because he so vividly remembers reading the original and its effect on him was nostalgic.

With Tom Porter present, improved but not quite restored to health, we were able to have our usual feature Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item. These were Magnet No. 1527 published on 22nd May, 1937 and 42 years old to the day and Collectors' Item the latest Charles Hamilton Companion volume by John Wernham and Mary Cadogan. What there is of the latest volume is very good, but it's a pity there is not more. George Chatam's "The Acorn" was also on show.

Two readings were given. One by your correspondent and one by Ivan Webster. The first was concerned with Baggy Trimble trying to borrow money from Billy Bunter - a very humorous episode and found in ch. 4 of Gem No. 572 and the other by Ivan tells of Horace Coker's mad act of crossing out Greene's name from Wingate's football list and writing H. J. Coker in its place - another highly humorous episode.

Our next meeting will be on 26th June and we hope for a better turn out by our members.

JACK BELLFIELD, Correspondent.

NORTHERN

Meeting held 9th June, 1979

Members learned with regret of the illness of Secretary Geoffrey Good - absent for an unprecedented third meeting in a row. After expressing our wishes for Geoffrey's speedy recovery we moved that Nigel Shepley act as Secretary pro tem; this was carried with acclamation and Nigel proceeded to give us the minutes of our last two meetings.

Mollie Allison had brought along a small book of line drawings by Frank Patterson, and the early part of the evening's business was taken up with a discussion of the artists whose work had graced the old boys' papers. Though they are less often spoken of than the authors it is clear that their contribution could be a key one, since it was agreed

that for many of us even a fine tale could fail in some degree if illustrated by the 'wrong' artist. According to our period of conditioning we stood some by Shields and some by Chapman for Greyfriars; some by Macdonald and some by Warwick Reynolds for St. Jim's. Eric Parker was almost unanimously accepted as the definitive Blake artist. All agreed that every one of these illustrators was an artist of both distinction and individuality.

Mollie had also a puzzle to divert us: an extract from a letter to Wharton Lodge written by the captain of the Remove. Within its text 34 hobby names were embedded. Geoffrey Wilde unearthed 33; several other members had scores in the upper 20's.

It was rather strange to think that on this day Canada had been playing World Cup cricket at Headingley; but though the day had been a fine one it still had a breath of the Yukon rather than of blazing mid-summer. Next meeting, 14th July - will summer really be here?

JOHNNY BULL

LONDON

There was a pleasant surprise for Eric Fayne and Madam; indeed it was for all those attending the Greyfriars, Kingsmere meeting on Sunday, 10th June, as Eric Lawrence had arranged for the Reading Barber Shop Harmony club to sing songs from their repertoire. Our Editor had mentioned Barber Shop singing in an issue of C.D. and here was his wish fulfilment. Generous applause was accorded at the end of every song and the session was very enjoyable.

There was an excellent attendance at this venue which must hold the record for the most visits by the club, nineteen in all.

Bob Blythe read extracts from the June 1962 newsletter which featured the happenings at the Clapham residence of that time of Brian Doyle. Roger Jenkins conducted one of his popular Greyfriars Characters Grid competitions and after twelve rounds, Eric Lawrence was the winner. Eric also won the Double Clue Greyfriars Character Quiz that was sent to Roger by the late Gerry Allison some years ago, a very enjoyable quiz.

A Blakian, writing to Josie Packman re the lack of humour in Sexton Blake stories, apart from the stories written by Gwyn Evans,

had his answer as Josie Packman read some humorous chapters from the Union Jack issue, No. 960, The Ghost of Losely Hall by Cecil Hayter. Tinker's ways with comestibles were very funny and the amount he ate which never affected his waistline or impaired his fitness made the humour greatly appreciated. Adding to the fun was that other great Cecil Hayter character, Lobangu. Quite a good reading from Josie. An excellent repast was available and could be enjoyed in the spacious grounds of Greyfriars. Eric and Betty were suitably thanked for their hospitality.

Next meeting at Maurice Hall's residence, 26A Sidney Road, Walton on Thames, Surrey, on Sunday, 8th July. Phone 98 24848.

BENJAMIN WHITER

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The Postman Called

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

FR. FRANCIS HERTZBERG (Wirral): With regard to your note about a Frank Richards' western story in a GT comic album: GT were reprint merchants, either under that name or those of Dragon Press or Alexander Moring, largely reproducing the comics of TV Boardman (including Denis McLoughlin's Swift Morgan/Roy Carson/Buffalo Bill) and the smaller companies, amongst whom were Gould-Light Publications, in whose comic Ace High the 'rip roaring Western Story by famous Frank Richards (author of Billy Bunter & Co.)' first appeared around 1952.

N. GAYLE (Budleigh Salterton): Students of Hamilton might be interested in the following title of information. Andrew Home, a writer for boys in the few years before Hamilton came on the scene, and a prolific contributor to CHUMS and the BOYS' OWN PAPER, occasionally had his popular stories reprinted in hardback. Such a volume is 'OUT OF BOUNDS', circa 1901. I definitely remember reading somewhere (though for the life of me I can't recall where) that when Charles Hamilton was first asked to make the change to writing school stories, he went about the office asking what on earth happened in a boys' school. Whether this is true or not I cannot say, but knowing what I do of Hamilton I'm sure he would have applied himself with his

usual thoroughness to background reading when he did make the change. Can one of the books he read be 'OUT OF BOUNDS' ...? I ask, because within the pages of this one volume, I have found the following characters' names:- Carberry, Thomas, Dodd, Gosling, Railton, Vernon, Blake (!) and a French lad named Napoleon Weiss who is called 'Nap' throughout the story. Ring any bells? ...

Mrs. C. TIMMINS (Bolton): Let me first of all say that every month I look forward to receiving my Collectors' Digest and really appreciate the effort that is put into it.

Being a cat lover I enjoy the small section now devoted to cats. As Charles Hamilton himself had cats around him I feel we can justify the inclusion. We have been adopted by a stray that is obviously determined to make up for any time lost as far as attention is concerned.

Now to the purpose of my letter. I have in my possession, a most peculiar volume. It is a slim 3/6 Schoolboys Album of 1947 published by Gerald G. Swan Ltd. The book contains stories by various authors but a number of them use the names, characters and situations introduced by Charles Hamilton. For example, the first story, by N. Wesley Firth, features a fat character referred to as the 'Fourth Form Barrel' who is trying to borrow money and is waiting for a Postal Order. Another story, by Ernest L. McKeog also has a fat boy, 'Tubby Porson', who has taken a cake belonging to a Fifth Former well supplied with cash by his Aunt Judith. The Remove master is Mr. Railton and other characters are Guy d'Aberon (D'Arcy) and Bill Charlton (Bob Cherry) and Harry Simms (Harry Wharton). A further story by Whitley Woods has a fat boy again plus two characters called Tommy Dodds and Ferrers Minor. Finally yet another story by Dennis Richmond has a fat boy who appears with scraps of sticky food on his face. I am not old enough to remember the 1940's but I wonder whether it was common to imitate a successful author like Hamilton and whether anyone else can think of other examples. I would welcome any comments.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: In the early years after the war there were a number of papers and writers and publications cashing in blatantly on the work and style of Charles Hamilton. One even went so far as to copy chunks word by word from one of his stories. Hamilton talked of an action for plagiarism, but I do not know whether anything came of it. It may have been settled privately,)

BILLY BUNTER REPLACES CHARLIE CHAPLIN by W. O. G. Lofts

Such was the enormous success of the Penny Comics that many boys' papers used to include a comic supplement to give extra spice to their pages. Probably the best and most remembered was in the D. C. Thomson papers, when Spagers Isle, Nosey Parker, Nero and Zero, etc., are just as remembered as the stories today.

These strips gradually increased, so that today boys' papers are almost entirely comprised of picture and comic strips. Even The Magnet, whose school stories must have gripped the reader, was no exception, having various comic pages at odd intervals during its entire run. An interesting feature to record happened in 1920 in Magnet 658 when they announced a Grand Comic Picture Supplement drawn by E. Wilkinson who had drawn for some of the comics.

Issue No. 662 had a full page strip of Charlie Chaplin Form-Master at Dr. Swishem's Academy for sons of retired gas-fitters, and drawn by J. MacWilson. This continued for four issues, then out of the blue in No. 666 and by the same artist we had Billy Bunter - Form Master at Dr. Whackem's Academy, with pupils such as Percy Pie, Bertie Badegg and Willie Wagg. This continued until 672 when the page was dropped in favour of Billy Bunter's Weekly Supplement.

It has been recorded by the writer before of the fierce rivalry that existed between various sections at Amalgamated Press, and which H. W. Twyman late editor of the Union Jack called water-tight compartments. The blue comic, The Funny Wonder, had been running the highly successful Charlie Chaplin, drawn by Bert Brown, since 1915, and so it was said strongly objected to another paper pinching its character. And so Charlie had to be replaced by the Fat Owl of the Remove. Of course Charles Hamilton the original 'Frank Richards' had nothing to do with this strip the script probably coming from a substitute writer like Billy Bunter's Weekly. Both Billy Bunter and Charlie Chaplin are even today household names, but never I think at any time serious rivals.

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WANTED: two or three "Adventure", 1932/4; Bullseye 41, 89; Surprise 3; Film Fun 571; Boys' Mag. 602. Buy/state exchange, wants.

SUTTON, 41 SWALECLIFF AVE., MANCHESTER 23.

REVIEWSTHE BULLY OF GREYFRIARS

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker: £4.95)

This is a gorgeous book containing seven stories from the Magnet of 1929, with the famous author at the very top of his powers. It is also a straight run of tales from the Magnet, which most readers would consider to be the perfect presentation.

All the stories are discussed in Danny's Diary in the C. D.'s of June and July this year. In consequence, there is no need for us to analyse them here. Five of the stories concern the Remove at war with Loder, and with the spotlight turned searchingly on the Sixth Form. Many of us think that Frank Richards was at his near best when writing of the seniors. The final pair star Mark Linley in a quieter vein, with a number of novel touches.

We repeat - a gorgeous volume from the heyday of the Magnet, exactly fifty years back.

BUNTER THE BAD LAD

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker: £3.95)

This is a reprint of the story in Schoolboy's Own Library No. 237. For the Bunter fan, it could not be bettered, showing the old fat man in various moods, and an hilarious riot of fun from start to finish. The composition is mildly curious, but none the worse for that. It starts off with the whole of "Bunter's Brainstorm" of the Spring of 1927 in the Magnet, one of the funniest ever Bunter tales (part of this one was reprinted in an earlier S. O. L., so possibly someone at the A. P., when S. O. L. No. 237 was prepared, had not done his homework). Then, forward to late 1929 for the whole of "Bunter, the Bandit", a great wealth of fun.

Then, oddly enough, to wind up the book, a return to the late summer of 1927 for "Bravo, Bunter", the best of the lot and arguably one of the happiest Bunter tales ever written. This final tale loses a few chapters, which is a pity, though it is not spoiled for any reader who does not know the original.

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