

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

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AUGUST 1980

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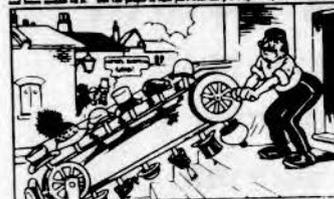
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4. I'm going to the bank to get some more money. I'll be back in a few minutes. I'll be back in a few minutes. I'll be back in a few minutes.



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— **STORY PAPER** —

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## THE NEW ZEALAND SERIES

Unfortunately, there never was one. Concerning Greyfriars or any Hamilton school, at any rate. If Edwy Searies Brooks ever sent the St. Frank's chums to New Zealand, maybe one of the enthusiasts will get out pen and paper and write it up for us.

In a pleasant article by Mr. Leslie Holland which appears in this issue of C.D., he speculates on holiday and travel series which "might have been". Mr. Holland says, with a sigh, that the Famous Five could

have gone to New Zealand to visit Tom Brown's family, "but they never did".

Actually, they did. In the post-war story "Big Chief Bunter", we were told that Tom Brown's father owned an Air Line. He invited a Greyfriars party to visit New Zealand as guests of his son, Tom. We thought we were in for a "New Zealand series". Unfortunately, by a piece of contrivance, the plane had to land on a small South Seas island. The chums went off in a boat with a south-sea islander, and we, the slightly disappointed readers, were landed in yet another South Seas adventure. The story became largely a re-run of the Congo series of the Magnet's early twenties.

However, in the last chapter, they actually reached New Zealand, and, no doubt, spent a pleasant holiday with the Brown family.

"Big Chief Bunter" was published in the Spring of 1963, and was the last completed tale that the author ever wrote of the famous chums. It was, of course, published after his death. Our reviewer wrote of the tale: "'Big Chief Bunter' will ring the bell - particularly with the youngsters."

### FIRE, FLAME & FURY

That was the title of an editorial item by Horatio Bottomley in his paper "John Bull" soon after his office received a bomb in an air raid, late in the First World War. Mr. Bottomley was justifiably incensed at watching his offices consumed in flames.

This, however, is nothing to do with that. I recall standing on Oxshott Heath, some time in the late thirties, I think, and watching the Crystal Palace being destroyed by fire. There was a real sadness at my heart as I stood there, watching the destruction by fire, visible over a distance of a dozen miles or so.

I had the same sad feeling when recently I saw, on the TV screen, Alexandra Palace a mass of flame from end to end. I have often heard both Palaces described, probably with accuracy, as white elephants, but they were much loved by many people. I daresay that Mr. Ben Whiter, our London club's energetic secretary, has fond recollections of the Alexandra Palace, which was near his home at Wood Green. Long years ago, I often went to the theatre in the Palace, where the Archie Pitt

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companies held their dress rehearsals. I saw the dress rehearsal of Gracie Fields' first West End production, "The Show's The Thing", there.

Single-decker trams used to run up each side of the Palace from Finsbury Park and Wood Green, and in those days there was a railway terminus in the Palace, with trains running to King's Cross. I daresay that line went the way of most branch lines, long ago.

Only a few years back I attended a Rose Show at the A.P. Much of the old glory had departed, but happy memories still played on the heart-strings.

### THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

In the garden of Exelsior House we get hundreds of birds every day, which seems quite remarkable with a pussy-cat living there in command. We have a bird-table which is replenished with food for them several times a day, and one of those containers full of nuts - a big attraction for the tits - swinging from the branch of an apple-tree. They provide us with endless entertainment, and the Princess doesn't seem to mind. There are no less than seven blackbirds' nests, and two thrushes' nests in the garden at the back.

A week or two ago we were enthralled to see a pair of thrushes building a nest, of all places, among the roses in the front of the house outside our sitting-room window. The nest is only about seven feet from the ground, and a small family has now been hatched. From our arm-chairs, as we watch television, our eyes constantly stray to the thrushes' nest which is far more interesting. The pair take it in turn, tending their young ones. The one goes into the nest from the right, and the mate leaves by the left. We shall miss them greatly when they move on.

The Princess knows they are there, of course. She discovered they were building soon after we did. As a result of her interest in the thrushes, she has found a new method of admittance to the house. She perches on the very narrow sill outside the windows. Then she taps. As the windows open outwards, it was not too easy to admit her without dislodging her, the first time. But she is intelligent. After the first time, she seated herself in the right spot so that the window could be opened for her without inconveniencing her. And now she often comes in that way.

The Princess gets quite a fan-mail, these days - by cats-whisker wireless, I presume. She preens herself over it all. When I get the chance, I will print one or two of her letters, with her permission. Either in a spare space in C.D., or, maybe, in the Annual.

And, talking of the Annual, the order form for this year's edition will come along to you, as usual, in September, all being well.

THE EDITOR

\* \* \* \* \*

# Danny's Diary

AUGUST 1930

The last week of this month was sweltering hot. For five days the thermometer reached 92 degrees in many places, and it has been too hot for comfort.

Charles Hamilton, the man who wrote the King of the Islands stories, is back in Modern Boy, but not with Ken King. His new series are about a boy named Jack Hare, nicknamed Bunny, who lives with his aunt and uncle and his older cousin Gilbert in Margate. Bunny is a simple soul, but manages to deliver the goods in spite of his simplicity. The opening story came in the second issue of the month, and was a bit of a thriller called "The Man With the Ear-rings", set in Margate and Broadstairs.

The second tale is "Bunny on the Track" and concerns a man who, or so Bunny thinks, owes his uncle a lot of money. The next tale is "Slave of the Wind" in which Bunny pays five bob for a ride in a balloon. He gets adrift and comes down in Boulogne. Last tale of the month is "Bunny's Luck" which which he visits a gambling casino. These tales make a change, though I'm not all that excited about them.

Also in Modern Boy is a new series about boy emigrants in Canada, by Stanton Hope.

I think I shall be a Stop Me and Buy One man when I leave school. They have been doing terrific business this hot summer. They get 17/6 a week, plus 10% of their profits, so they must be getting rich. I buy the

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tuppenny ice-cream bars, but some people get tubs at eighteenpence each. The Walls' blue tricycles are the most familiar, but there is a rival firm named Eldorado which does very well too, thank you very much.

The Duke and Duchess of York have just had a second daughter, and she is to be named Princess Margaret Rose. The Duke of York is the second son of the King.

We haven't been to the pictures quite so much this month, owing to the warm weather, but we have seen some good ones. They are George O'Brien in a nice silent western "The Lone Star Ranger"; Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks in "The Taming of the Shrew", their first picture together - I didn't really like it much, and people have a laugh because the film is credited to William Shakespeare, with additional dialogue by somebody else. At the end, after Petruchio has tamed his bride, Mary Pickford winks at the audience as much as to say "That's what he thinks". Joan Crawford in "Untamed", Pauline Frederick in "Evidence", and Norma Talmadge in "New York Nights". A goodish detective tale was Basil Rathbone in "The Bishop Murder Case". Mickey Mouse in "Wild Waves" was in one of the programmes.

Two goodish tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month, and the theme in both is much the same in each. "Barred by the School" tells of the arrival of Dick Penfold, the cobbler's son, at Greyfriars on a scholarship. He meets with much snobbery. In the second half, his poor old father has the brokers in. He can't pay the rent. The property is owned by Sir Reginald Brooke, and Mr. Snooks, Sir Reggie's agent, turns poor Mr. Penfold out. Lord Mauleverer puts things right, after the Greyfriars chums have held the fort against the broker's men. Not my favourite sort of tale. I must have a hard heart.

The St. Jim's tale also tells of the arrival of scholarship boys, Redfern, Owen and Lawrence, and ends up with a barring-out against Mr. Ratcliff, led by Figgins. A lot of good fun in this one.

Amy Johnson has returned from her solo flight to Australia, and huge crowds gave her a terrific welcome when she landed at Croydon Airport.

The Gem goes on its woeful way. The first story this month was "Cousin Ethel's Champion". Cousin Ethel, who arrived rather late in life to be a pupil at Spalding Hall, and who leads the Tinkle Trio

consisting of Cousin Ethel, Lady Peggy, and Doris Levison, has a big influence on Cyrus K. Handcock, the awful new boy who has joined the Terrible Three at St. Jim's. Handcock, apart from being in Study No. 10, wears check-plus-fours, check stockings, striped shoes, a loud pullover, and a bow tie, falls for Cousin Ethel, and she persuades him to give up chewing gum.

The next tale is "Baggy Trimble's Guests", in which the St. Jim's chums, with Grundy and others, are Trimble's guests for the summer vacation on the Broads. Fortunately it is only a short vac, with a second tale "The Mystery of the Broads". The idea of a party on the Broads is a good one, but this sorry couple of tales turn out to be an extravagant thriller with an ivory casket, a weird Mr. Whimple, and a queer Mr. Quirk.

The fourth tale of the month is "Hands Up, St. Jim's" in which gangsters kidnap Handcock. It was a joyful thought that they might keep him for good, but Tom Merry & Co., like the noodles they must be, chase across the Atlantic and rescue him. Final tale of the month is "Grundy, the Channel Swimmer" which says it all - or most of it.

In the fifth and final Test Match, at the Oval, Australia won by an innings, so Percy Chapman's team was made to look small as the Ashes went to the other side of the world. It was mainly due to that man Bradman. He's a wizard with the bat.

Tommy Lipton's Shamrock V arrived safely in the States for the America Cup but it was beaten in the race by "Enterprise". My Dad always says that race is not really fair, for, by the rules, the British ship has to be made sturdy enough to cross the Atlantic under its own sails.

The Magnet is grand these days. Early in the month the Brander rebellion continued with "Down With the Tyrant". Then came "All Busy on the Greyfriars Front", in which Sir Hilton Popper took a hand to try to quell the rebellion. Then the final story of the series, "Victory for the Rebels", with which Brander and his horrible nephew, Otto Van Tromp, are kicked out for good. I suppose all barring-out stories are much of a muchness, but, from the twists and turns of its fine plot, this is, I think, the best rebellion series of all.

Then the start of what looks like being a grand holiday series.

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"The Menace of Tang Wang" in which a villainous mandarin has sent his envoys to do away with the Chinese boys at Greyfriars. And Mr. Shields' splendid illustrations show the Chinese boys in English garb and not in the oriental robes which were always unlikely in an English school. Last of the month is "Peril from the East" which is glorious as the plot takes shape. And the Chinese go to Wharton Lodge as the vac starts, and Ferrers Locke, engaged by Mr. Wun to protect his sons, comes on the scene. Marvellous stuff.

The Magnet has come to the end of the sticky-backed give-away pictures of cricketers, and I'm glad, for they tend to stick to the story.

August Bank Holiday fell on 4th August this year, the anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War in 1914.

In the Nelson Lee Library, St. Frank's has been re-built, and, at last, the run of detective tales is ended, and all the boys are back at school. So far there seems to be a kind of tendency to too much slapstick, but things may get better as time goes on.

In the Poplar, the Rio Kid has been made the Sheriff of the town of Plug Hat. The titles this month are "The Rio Kid - Sheriff", "By Order of the Sheriff", "Under the Kid Sheriff", "The Bar-2 Bunch", and "Under Fire". In the last tale, rustlers make 500 cows disappear into thin air. I remember the same plot being used in the series in the Gem where the St. Jim's boys went to Wildrake's ranch in Canada. It makes one think! Does Ralph Redway read Martin Clifford?

There are still too many comic pictures in the Poplar, but the paper has improved a lot. In the Cedar Creek tales, Vere Beauclerc has come on the scene. The Rookwood series is about Gunter, the young villain who pretended he was the Head's nephew. And the Bunter Court reprints have just ended at the end of the month.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S. O. L. No. 129, "Barred by the School" was made up of two Red Magnets. The first of these was "By Sheer Grit" which appeared in the autumn of 1911, and told of the arrival of Dick Penfold, the local cobbler's son, on a scholarship at Greyfriars. The second story was "Holding the Fort" which appeared nearly two years later in the summer of 1913. The overall title of the S. O. L. was a bit of a misnomer, seeming to refer to Penfold, who, naturally enough, was not barred by the nice boys but only by the nasty ones, taking it for granted that all the virtues were possessed by the nice ones, and all the vices by the bad ones. In fact, the stories, when issued separately with more than two years separating them, were, perhaps, more successful than when put together in the S. O. L.,

which overlapped the theme just a trifle at one sitting.

S. O. L. No. 130, "No Surrender", comprised two consecutive blue Gems of early 1911, originally entitled "The New Firm at St. Jim's" and "The Great Barring-Out at St. Jim's". Here again, in the S. O. L., the overall title "No Surrender" referred to the second half of the Library.

Was it inspired thinking and planning, or was it a mere coincidence that these two S. O. L.'s, telling respectively of snobbery at Greyfriars and snobbery at St. Jim's, appeared in the same month, August 1930? Snobbery, which I myself never found a pleasant theme to read about, was far more extreme at Greyfriars and at Rookwood down the years, what with scholarship boys, poor parents, and the odd "upstart" who turned up now and then. It was almost non-existent at St. Jim's, and, when it rarely turned up in early days, it was handled much more restrainedly and believably. At St. Jim's I can only recall the one upstart - Vavasour, and he only starred in the one story. The "New Form" of the S. O. L. told of the arrival for the first time of Redfern, Owen and Lawrence, on scholarships. They learn, in advance, that St. Jim's is expecting three young ragamuffins who drop their aspirates and talk with their mouths full. And so they put on an act when they arrive, and give the St. Jim's juniors just what they expect - and more. It was all great fun, and when it was over, they settled in as normal St. Jim's juniors, and everybody, including the author, maybe, forgot that they were scholarship boys. Just as it would be, in real life, in the average school.

In a way it is hard to see why Hamilton bothered to write the Bunny Hare series for Modern Boy. They were uninspired trifles. The series ran for only twelve weeks, and the tales are but little known nowadays. To the best of my knowledge, they were never reprinted.)

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# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I do hope everyone is pleased to read about the Sexton Blake and Sherlock Holmes films. It's interesting to compare our two most famous detectives. I also hope you like the consulting room Chats. Now I have to ask you to write an article for the Annual, so in a peaceful moment please put pen to paper or get out your typewriters and set to work.

## SEXTON AND SHERLOCK ON CELLULOID

by J.E.M.

Filmed adventures of the two Baker Street super sleuths go back almost to the beginnings of cinema and surely Blakians will delight that, in Britain at least, their own hero was put on celluloid before Sherlock Holmes.

The earliest Holmes films were made in America, the very first in 1903. A product of the old Bioscope Company, it was entitled Sherlock Holmes Baffled, and its crude and muddled conception probably left its audiences baffled too. Other American companies brought Holmes to the screen and were followed by Danish and Italian enterprises. In Britain, however, it was Sexton Blake, not Holmes, who first attracted the infant film industry to the Baker Street scene. In 1908, an English pioneer called Douglas Carlile both directed and played the principal role in a film entitled, simply, Sexton Blake. Presumably a success, it inspired two sequels, *The Jewel Thieves Run To Earth* by Sexton Blake and *Sexton Blake v Baron Kettler*.

Another four years elapsed before Sherlock Holmes aroused any film-making interest in his own country and even then it might be called only a half interest; the enterprise which, in 1912, made a series of Holmesian two-reelers was a joint Anglo-French affair. A totally British production came only in 1914 with a screen adaptation of the first Holmes story, *A Study In Scarlet*. The filmed Sexton Blake was already six years old.

The source of all this fascinating information is David Stuart Davies' book, *Holmes Of The Movies*, which, I find, was first published in 1976 and I much regret that I have only just come across it. Mr. Davies himself, unfortunately, is no Blakian. While conceding Blake's early screen appearance, he dismisses him as a mere copy of Holmes and refers to the Union Jack as a "comic". However, after his revelation of Blake's primacy on the screen we can forgive Mr. Davies much and, anyway, aren't we all Holmesians too?

There are other Blakian echoes in this book. It contains a fascinating account of the actor, Arthur Wontner, who played Holmes in a number of British films in the 1930's. Though Mr. Davies does not mention the fact, Blakians may recall that Wontner also played Sexton Blake in the 1932 stage play of the same name and, when Donald Stuart rewrote this drama as a story for the Union Jack, Wontner's portrait was used as a cover illustration.

*Holmes Of The Movies*, includes a reference to a 1932 film called *Sherlock Holmes*, with Clive Brook in the name part. In this adventure, specially scripted for the screen and owing little to anything

written by Conan Doyle, Holmes invents a ray to immobilise the cars of escaping crooks; as he points out, the motor car is now a deadly weapon of crime. Blake fans will remember that Zenith the Albino used a similar ray for precisely the opposite purpose, his device paralysing all pursuing vehicles while he went about his criminal business in a steam car'.

Of special interest to OBBC members, Mr. Davies' book carries a charming foreword by Peter Cushing who is, of course, a Sherlockian expert in his own right and a former leading portrayer of Holmes on TV and films.

(FOOTNOTE: The information on the first Blake films will call for some addition to your Sexton Blake Catalogue which, at present, gives 1914 as the earliest date of Blake on celluloid. Mr. Davies is obviously a reliable source since he has no desire to flatter Blake. He also makes acknowledgements to The British Film Institute, whose authority on early English films is unquestioned.)

### CONSULTING ROOM CHAT continued (2)

A pair of specially cast bronze Sexton Blake busts from the 1926 original to act as book-ends? A rose named "Sexton Blake" for about £20,000? Then there was a splendid silver tiger chair from the Maharaja of Poonch's private collection for sale recently, at £16,000, to read your Anthony Parsons' India case-books in. You could then have worn a rare Ashanti gold cap and sandals, recently sold at Christies for £12,000, to get you in the mood for one of Rex Hardinge's African adventures. And we must not forget a cheque to Eric Fayne who undoubtedly has many dreams for the "C.D." which the wherewithal prevents him from accomplishing. For the added dimension he gives our collecting he richly deserves our reward.

Pictorial Answers. Glancing through the intriguing titles in the "Supplement" - "The Great Auk's Egg Affair", "The Lucky Pig", "The Problem of the Riveted Saucer", for example - we realise that we shall probably never be able to satisfy our curiosity as to what they were all about. But if you had been at Sotheby's auction rooms on February 9th, 1979, your puzzles could have been answered. For on sale were (Lot 281) Answers, Vol. 1-128 in 137 volumes (1888-1956); and (385) Penny

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Pictorial, vol. 1-138 in 93 volumes, (1899-1935). They realised £320 and £200, respectively. "The Property of IPC Magazines", who were selling their archives, there were many lots of legendary A.P. papers. Incidentally, I am still without the main "S.B. Catalogue" and would be grateful for the offer of one.

Stick-up. No doubt by now one of the SBL chroniclers, stuck for another way of capturing our heroes, would have come up with the idea of binding them with the new instant bonding superglue. A menacing gun, their arms behind their backs, a smear of superglue on the palms of their hands pushed together, and a tie round their legs - let them free themselves from that. But no doubt Blake would have long anticipated this hazard, and in his laboratory would have contrived a coat cuff button to release a solvent to free their hands - a sort of "cordless saver". And no doubt he would have found it useful to carry a tube around, too.

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## Nelson Lee Column

"THOUGHTS ON REFORMATIONS"

by C. H. Churchill

A popular theme in the school stories of our youth was a "bad" boy coming to a school and in due course and by good influences becoming a reformed character.

I suppose the most well-known in the world of Charles Hamilton was that of Talbot in the Gem. Although why Jim Dawlish would not take "No" for an answer and keep returning to try and persuade Talbot to throw up everything and rejoin his gang only the author could tell us.

We did not suffer from this in the Nelson Lee. There were several cases of "bad" boys changing their spots of course, but except in the case of De Valerie, who had lapses, the change was permanent and no-one attempted to influence this.

When De Valerie came to St. Frank's he was soon nicknamed "The Rotter". He seemed to enjoy the exotic things in life. However, after he saw the light he became a normal member of the Remove and even was elected Captain of the form when Nipper was expelled in the

Walter Starke series. His weakness for the exotic did reappear in the Dr. Karnak series later on and he starred in a single story in December 1922, "The Demon Within Him", a most attractive and unusual story.

Reggie Pitt, of course, was "The Serpent" in his early days. His reformation came after the near tragedy in No. 177, "The Serpent's Redemption" when his plotting almost caused the death of Tommy Watson. This episode produced the "Short Sharp Shock" treatment and was successful in jerking Pitt on to the right lines. He, too, became Captain of the Remove later on before St. Frank's was enlarged and then he was Captain of the West House juniors.

These two cases of "turning over a new leaf" always seemed plausible to me but I could never swallow that of Fullwood. The point to me is this, the reforming of Pitt took just a series although he was a little uncertain in the following series about Jack Gray, and that of De Valerie only five stories. Fullwood, however, was the arch rotter from No. 112 in July 1917 until October 1925 - eight years. During this long time he indulged in every kind of minor villainy, smoking, drinking, gambling and committed the most spiteful acts on many occasions. To the reader who had followed the adventures at St. Frank's from the beginning it was inconceivable that Fullwood could ever alter so much and become popular and friendly with all the decent characters after what had taken place in the past.

Buster Boots was another case. Not a real rotter when he arrived although he did some odd things. It was more a case of swollen head and lack of a sense of proportion.

Singleton was a rather wild one at first but he was never vicious like Fullwood and fairly soon learned his lesson. In the Ezra Quirke series in which he played a large part, he seemed so different from the Singleton who first arrived at St. Frank's. Even his language bore no similarity. I always think that E.S.B. slipped up a little in this series as Singleton's father was mentioned whereas when Singleton first arrived he was obviously an orphan as it was stated that Lord Bellmore was his Guardian.

REPRINTS

by R. J. Godsave

There is no doubt that the reprints of the Nelson Lee Library in

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the Monster Library in 1924/25 was a great boon to readers of the Nelson Lee at that time. To obtain back numbers from any source was exceedingly difficult, and for the majority of readers the past adventurers of the St. Frank's boys was lost.

At that period of the Lee saga, the name of the author was not mentioned, the narrative being related by Nipper. The only communication between the Editor and his readers was a comment on the current story with an exhortation not to miss the adventures of the St. Frank's boys the following week. These remarks were in the nature of an Editor's Chat and were of various lengths under the heading 'To My Readers'.

Seven of the nineteen series reprinted in the Monster Library comprised of more than the average eight Lees to a series. In order to keep the series to a similar length it was necessary to curtail the original and cut out incidents which would not interrupt the continuity of the story.

Great care was taken to minimise the effect of the cuts made on the story. In the Singleton series, for example, two and a half Lees were cut out. The two Lees referred to Singleton's stay in London, and the half being the latter half of os. 248, "On His Uppers" in which Singleton runs away from St. Frank's after being swindled out of his fortunes by Philip Smith Gore. It was Nipper who discovered that Singleton had joined a third rate circus and acted as the "Wild Man from Borneo". After a short talk Nipper prevailed upon Singleton to return to St. Frank's.

In the final Nelson Lee of the series os. 249 "A Lesson Well Learnt", Singleton has the satisfaction of trapping Gore and his two friends in the monastery ruins at St. Frank's. The deletion of just one sentence, a remark made by Singleton referring to his stay in London, when Nelson Lee admitted to being Philip Smith Gore and Singleton had back his fortune intact shows the care taken in ensuring that the Monster Library would be second to none in the matter of reprints.

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A REPLY FROM MR. KEITH HODKINSON

With reference to your Editorial concerning my paper on School Stories to the Cambridge Club, I am delighted to expound my reasons for my order of merit.

To a certain extent you have based your comments on a 'write-up' which only presents part of the reasoning and therefore is slightly out of context. Nevertheless I suppose it was inevitable that by failing to place Hamilton in the loftiest perch, I would bring the wrath of Hamilton armies on my head. I was not condemning any of the stories or the authors. My own particular favourites from my youth, being only in my forties now, were the D. C. Thomson school stories and in particular those of Red Circle - yet I have placed them at the bottom of the list - purely because on re-reading a selection I found them lacking in literary merit compared with others. This is understandable as they were aimed at an intermediate age group and were deliberately made easy reading. It is my opinion that Hamilton isn't far behind in this respect. There is a difference between nostalgia for a much loved story, series or subject, which I fully respect, and having ones nose continually rubbed into statements that Hamilton was a literary genius. The stories I quoted at the meeting were from the 'middle period', 1925 - 1932.

"Bunter's Brainwave" - Magnet No. 910 (1925)

"Bunter's Night Out" - Magnet No. 1247 (1932)

"Gussy the Sloven" - Gem No. 1177 (1930)

"Coping with Coker" - Popular No. 416 (1927) - short story

"Bunter and the Phantom of the Towers" - an Armada paperback purporting to be a reprint of a Magnet story - number not quoted - length suggests a double number - illustrations are genuine Magnet reprints.

The last of these was the most acceptable, having only just started it when I gave the talk. "Gussy the Sloven" was, in my opinion, the worst. Jack Overhill, whilst challenging my list at the meeting admitted that he based all his love of these stories on one period, which narrowed down, was just two years during the First World War.

The collecting mania for Magnets and Gems speaks for itself about the popularity of these stories and I would be the last to deny this. Many collectors just stockpile their treasures and never read them - I

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am as much to blame as anyone in certain aspects of my quite large collection. I am ploughing through as many as I can, time permitting. I will continue to read and enjoy Greyfriars and the others. I'm about to start on the 'Bunter at St. Jim's' series for which you wrote an introduction in the Howard Baker Reprint volume, though it will have to wait until I finish 'The Gold Bat' by P. G. Wodehouse in the 1904 'Captain'. I haven't got a copy of 'Mike' but I had already started this before I saw your comments. I am trying, therefore, to rectify the gaps in my surveys. But the list of authors yet untouched is massive.

My choice of Brooks No. 1 was by accident, as originally I had no idea that Reginald Brown and Brooks were one and the same. "Rotter of Whitelands" was a cheap Gerald G. Swann book with a gaudy jacket bought for me when I was eleven in 1947. I thoroughly enjoyed it then and my recent re-read confirmed that it is an absolute delight. I immediately read it yet again - the only time I've ever done this with any book. It has stood the test of time and graduation into adult reading and still came through as first class. The Whitelands stories are all re-writes, it seems, of earlier St. Frank's stories. I haven't read any of the originals but two other Brooks non-school tales - one detective - the other a thriller, have impressed me.

My statement about stories versus incidents will seem a bit absurd taken from a report, but my meaning was that "Rotter of Whitelands" is a first class story, beautifully planned out and designed, building up on a continuous flow of incidents, all relating to one another. In fact, I marvel at the way anyone could think up such superbly intricate narrative. I felt with "Bunter's Night Out" and "Gussy the Sloven" that a simple single incident was chosen and waffled out to 13+ chapters and quite honestly was a bore to me. I may well be misjudging the author as these may have been by substitute writers. Bill Lofts reckons I've got the list the wrong way round and no doubt you agree, but then everyone's entitled to his or her own opinion and I had mine - not dreaming that half the country were going to read about it. I don't wish to enter a Hamilton versus Brooks war of the fans - that idea was far from my mind and such a thing would still leave some first class authors out in the cold again. Kent Carr, Richard Bird, Michael Poole, Gunby Hadath - yes hang it all, they all wrote beautifully and I will take up the gauntlet on their behalf!

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(EDITORIAL COMMENT: "Gussy the Sloven" was a substitute story from the Gem of 1930. The paperback, "Bunter and the Phantom of the Towers" was a reprint of a S. O. L. which was notorious for cramming a 3-story series into one book with much drastic pruning.)

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THE 'VACS' WE DIDN'T READ ABOUT by Leslie Holland

Those of us who were Magnet readers during the second half of that paper's life enjoyed Charles Hamilton at his best. The calendar was faithfully followed, and as Summer vacation or Christmas came round Harry Wharton & Co. would be off, with Bunter invariably hanging on to their coat tails, though nobody really wanted him. China, Africa, India, the South Seas, and other exotic spots fell within the compass of those intrepid lads, and even Christmas could extend as far as the Spanish Main, though when it did, we somehow felt cheated of the homely joys of Wharton Lodge.

Meanwhile, what of the rest of Greyfriars? Their lives, we presume, were far more ordinary and hum-drum. Well, now and again Lord Mauleverer or Vernon-Smith would be host to our heroes, but there is much that was never to my knowledge revealed. Who for instance, took Squiff, Tom Brown, or Wun Lung home for the holidays, and why was poor old F. T. Fish condemned so often to kick his heels at deserted Greyfriars when others could travel so far afield? Was it simply that Hyram K. Fish was too mean to provide the cash for a crossing on the Mauretania or one of the Queens?

Coker, Potter and Green sometimes planned tours of the English countryside which crossed the paths of the Famous Five or even the St. Jim's juniors, and often enough those Highcliffe cads, or Loder, Walker, Price and Hilton could be found playing billiards and smoking, (I don't remember hearing that they drank) in dubious riverside haunts. What, meanwhile, was happening to old Wingate or Gwynne? Perhaps they were engaging in manly pursuits near Wingate's home at Chester, I think, whence they removed from the vicinity of Wharton Lodge some time subsequent to the Christmas of 1925.

Peter Todd seemed to spend Christmas at the family home in Bloomsbury, but we never did. What happened to Mr. Quelch or Mr. Prout for that matter? I don't believe they stayed at the school because

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Fishy, more often than not, had only Mrs. Kebble, Gosling, and the Mimbles to keep him company.

One sighs sometimes for missed opportunities. The Famous Five could have been sent to Australia with Squiff, or to New Zealand with Tom Brown, but never were. I don't think they went much with Johnny Bull to Yorkshire either. At any rate the details were never filled in. Were Johnny's family woollen mill owners like the Crowthers of Bankdam? I never really knew.

What magnificent splendours attended Christmas at the aristocratic home of Cecil Reginald Temple, and did Hobson of the Shell and his pals go skating too? By contrast I always used to know what Mark Linley's Christmas in Lancashire would be like. Just like my own with dinner on a rough deal table and a cheerful coal fire burning between the black-leaded set boiler and iron oven. His father would be back in the cotton mill the day after Boxing Day.

Perhaps if the war hadn't put paid to the Magnet we might have read about some of these things, but then if we had there would have been fewer mysteries upon which to speculate all these years later.

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### SOME MUSINGS ON THE SIDE-LINES

from Tony Glynn

Mr. Heath's letter about Felgate and Carcroft interested me. Felgate is new to me, too, but I do remember Carcroft in "Pie" magazine. I wrote something about it in the CD in 1964.

I doubt if Carcroft and Sparshott have any supporters. Surely, they reached only a small audience and have passed out of memory, except where dedicated Hamiltonians are concerned. Greyfriars and St. Jim's, on the other hand, belonged to the days of mass-circulation publishing, thus they became part of popular culture.

I always felt that some of Frank Richards' immediate post-war work was pot-boiling, with publishers trading on his name. There was no real tradition behind it and (from what little of it I read) the old gentleman seemed to be trading in shadows of the glorious substance that was his past.

Just after the war ended, I remember discovering a newly published Frank Richards' story in slim pamphlet form. I remembered

feeling that happy days were indeed here again and I bought it, with high hopes of encountering the magic of Greyfriars all over again. The cover showed a shifty looking schoolboy (a shady prefect, I think) up to something in the old cloisters. The atmosphere of Greyfriars was very strong in that illustration, I wonder if it was by Chapman. The story, however, was a disappointment, the work, I think, of a man whose heart wasn't in it. I can't now recall the name of the school, characters or the plot, but I know the whole thing was a flop for me.

Similarly, with the Topham series (or was it a series, since I encountered only No. 1, which appeared in 1947, a notorious time for mushroom publishing?) put out by John Matthews, of London. The format was tiny, giving Hamilton no real scope and the characters and story elements were sad shadows of something we had known long before. When he appeared in Hutchinson's "Pie" magazine, FR was in good literary and journalistic company, but this was not his proper field. He was a boys' writer and a world-beater in the field. To "Pie" readers, he was surely a curiosity, viewed from a nostalgic point of view. I often think of FR as being a displaced person in those immediate post-war years, until the Bunter books gave him a chance to recover something of his old glory.

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IN DEFENCE OF THE BUNTER BOOKS

by Nic Gayle

In response to Eric Fayne's editorial in the July issue of C.D. wherein he raises the question of the post-war Bunter books, I write to plead the case for the defence. I was seven years old when Charles Hamilton died, and had then just started reading the series, and have continued to do so - albeit spasmodically - until the present day. I had never heard of the Magnet or Gem till 1975, so for me, and in fact for my generation, Bunter WAS Greyfriars, and Frank Richards was the author of books. Now, my adult view of them is the same as anyone else's; that they cannot compare with the greatest or best of the golden years of the Magnet, and I would deem it silly and perverse to argue otherwise, but to acknowledge them simply as stories that are competently written and nothing more is unfair and, I believe, unjust. There are plenty of gems amongst the dross.

One has to accept that Frank Richards's powers as a writer diminished towards the end of his life, but the best of the Bunter books represent a distilled essence of Greyfriars, a Greyfriars that the author had lived with and in for forty or fifty years, and moreover a Greyfriars no longer being churned out along the weekly treadmill imposed by the Magnet. This undoubtedly made a difference: gone were the fifty-two Magnets a year, to be replaced by the equivalent of only half a dozen or so. And in the best stories from the Bunter books he showed that the quintessential Greyfriars could be conveyed with more economy than in days of yore.

'Bunter the Ventriloquist', for instance, is a beautifully written tale where - for once - the results of W.G.B's peculiar and impossible gift are seen to have an interesting and cumulative effect. We see him cause a row between Quelch and Prout - the chapter entitled 'The Last Wasp of Summer' is delicious - and there are some hilarious sequences set in the Remove formroom where Mr. Quelch is forced to take delivery of any amounts of ridiculous goods that he is supposed to have ordered from Chunkley's Stores.

'Bunter in Brazil' once again brings the welcome return of Inky to the limelight as the dusky Nabob takes the lead in unravelling a mystery abroad. In 'Bunter's Banknote', the drama of Smithy's 'execution' lives on in my mind though it must be at least a decade since I last read it, and while on the subject of the Bounder, Frank Richards never wrote about the cancerous nature of gambling as finely as he did in 'Bunter's Beanfeast' - it recalls 'Rivals and Chums' of thirty-five years before.

'Bunter the Bold' is an original and clever story of W.G.B. seeking to reinstate himself in the good books of the Remove who have sent him to Coventry, and the Famous Five at odds with one another - the 'rift in the lute' - gets an interesting and restrained airing in 'Bunter Comes for Christmas'. This is much the better of the two Christmas titles, though it might interest some readers to know that the ending of 'Bunter's Christmas Party' actually came as a surprise to the eight year old Nic Gayle when he first read the story! Thinking back, this can only have been because I did not understand that mysterious word 'extra', and what it meant to have it 'put down'. Oh, the palmy days of

innocence!

My pick of the bunch must be 'Billy Bunter's Treasure Hunt'. Written right at the end of Frank Richard's life, this represents for me the very essence of the Greyfriars I love. At long, long last, we learn the truth about the famous Greyfriars treasure; we follow, in a surprisingly original story, Bunter's benighted efforts to learn enough of the Latin language to help him transcribe an ancient parchment that holds the clue to the treasure, and Coker's attempts to uncover the hidden hoard when the parchment falls into his hands. How the Famous Five get there first makes delightful reading in a story that is gentle, witty, clever and effortless, the distillation of a great man's private world after half a century of living in it. Though 'only a Bunter book', it forms, I believe, a fitting enough memorial to Frank Richards and the wonderful world of Greyfriars.

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BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 77. OUR GOOD-BYE TO FLYNN AND GARLAND

Our first programme this term was headed by a two-hour Technicolor period piece of adventure from Warner Bros., "The New Adventures of Don Juan" starring Errol Flynn. Tip-top entertainment, I recall. In passing, this was Errol Flynn's last really spectacular film, and he had starred in very many big ones in his time. Down the years, we had played all but one or two of his big films.

A Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon in the supporting bill was "Two Mousketeers" which must have blended well with the spirit of the main attraction.

The following week, from M.G.M., brought Judy Garland and Gene Kelly in "If You Feel Like Singing", in Technicolor. Not a favourite of mine, so far as I remember it. It chiefly lingers in the

memory owing to the fact that Judy Garland varied in near sequences from slim, rather plump, to down-right fat. This was because the film had taken a long time to make, and Miss Garland's weight problems were never more obvious. This was Judy Garland's last film for M.G.M. We had played almost all of her films down the years. So Flynn and Garland said good-bye, in successive weeks, to the Small Cinema. Both, of course, were drawing towards the close of their film careers.

A Tweetie Pie cartoon in this bill was "Ain't She Tweet".

Next, from M.G.M., in Technicolor, Robert Taylor and Deborah Kerr in "Quo Vadis". Over-long, running to over 2½ hours, this is a famous tale of

early Roman history. Very spectacular, it had its moments of excellence, but I always thought it not a patch on the Ramon Novarro "Ben Hur" or the Charles Laughton "Sign of the Cross", both of which we had played over 20 years before, in the Small Cinema.

I recall going, as a small boy, with my mother and sister to see one of the silent versions of "Quo Vadis" (it was made several times as a silent). A mother and daughter sat in front of us, and the daughter broke into loud sobs from time to time as the film progressed. And the mother (I assume it was her mother) kept on saying: "Don't cry, Daisy. It's only a picture".

In our bill with "Quo Vadis" was a Bugs Bunny cartoon in colour named "Homeless Hare".

Next, from Warner, Doris Day and Gordon Macrae in a Technicolor musical, "Tea for Two". A light affair, but pleasant enough, I think. The film was supposed to be a new version of the musical comedy "No, No, Nanette", but the link was not evident to the naked eye.

A Tweetie Pie colour cartoon in this bill was "Gift Wrapped".

Next, from M. G. M., a charming Musical "An American in Paris", starring Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron, in technicolor. A coloured cartoon in the same bill was "Rock-a-bye Bear", one of the Barney Bear series, and a novelty singing item was "Melodies from Grand Hotel".

After that, from Warner's came "Man of Bronze" starring Burt Lancaster. I fancy this was a semi-biographical about a star of American football, so I doubt whether it raised the roof in the Small

Cinema. A Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon in this bill was "Cat Napping", and a coloured Traveltalk was "The Isle of Romance".

Next week, from M. G. M., Red Skelton and Esther Williams in a Technicolor Musical "Texas Carnival", of which my memory is a blank. A Tweetie Pie coloured cartoon was "Bird in a Guilty Cage".

Final of the term came from M. G. M. and was "Soldiers Three" starring Stewart Granger, David Niven, and Walter Pidgeon. I seem to recall that this was a version of Gunga Din, but I can't really remember much about it. A Tom & Jerry cartoon in the same bill was "Fit to be Tied".

That vacation we had a meeting of the London Club at Surbiton, and a goodly crowd remained behind after the meeting to see a show in the Small Cinema. The programme on this occasion consisted of: "Romance & Melody" (a Musical in Technicolor); a Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon "Smitten Kitten"; a Joe McDoakes comedy "So You Never Tell a Lie"; a Technicolor cartoon "One Cab's Family"; a novelty "Animals have All the Fun"; a Technicolor cartoon "Sentimental Romeo"; one of those delightful pot-pourris of Mack Sennett comedies released by Warner's, this one entitled "Slap Happy"; and yet another Technicolor cartoon "Hoppy-Go-Lucky". Quite a bill.

The date: 19th April, 1953.  
(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS  
SERIES NEXT MONTH)

OBITUARIES

With great sorrow we learned of the death of Mrs. Jo Doyle, the wife of Brian, our friend and hobby colleague. Jo had endured a long illness, but seemed to be progressing well this year, and it was a joy to us all that she was able to attend the London Club meeting at Twickenham in May.

The news of her relapse and subsequent death at the end of June was a considerable shock to so many of us. Brian and Jo had acted as hosts to many club meetings at their home in Putney. We express our deepest sympathy in their great loss to Brian and to Pandora and Tarquin, and, of course, to Mrs. Doris Doyle, and all the family.

We deeply regret to record the death of Mr. Edward Blight of St. Austell, Cornwall. He had been a loyal and enthusiastic reader of this magazine for very many years, his main interests being the Union Jack and late Victorian and early Edwardian periodicals, and especially the B.F.L. Mr. Blight had a very large collection of varied papers. Our sincere sympathy to Mr. Blight's widow, Margaret.

Another old and valued reader of C. D. was Mr. R. H. Rhodes of Dewsbury Moor, who had close connections with our Northern Club. He died on June 24th, and we express our sympathy to his family.

A link with early hobby days was severed recently with the death of Mr. James Walsh of Liverpool. Mr. Walsh was one of the founder members of our Merseyside Club. A poignant factor was that Jim's wife, May, died only a few hours later. Mr. Walsh was attached to the Catholic Pictorial for many years, and a Leader in that paper ended as follows: "As a family we mourn Jim Walsh and the wife who was too much a part of him not to share life's best adventure together." A beautiful thought with which we ourselves say good-bye to Jim Walsh.

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# News of the Old Boys' Book Club

CAMBRIDGE

The Cambridge Club paid its annual visit to Ruth and Neville Wood at their lovely home at Sweffling on Sunday, June 22nd.

Owing to various causes our numbers were rather smaller than usual, but the meeting was as happy an occasion as ever, and Ruth's hospitality as lavish as ever.

Neville had provided a taped quiz of voices and music of the

1930's and Mike Rouse and Keith Hodkinson distinguished themselves in this. After this, and the always fascinating study of Neville's collection, Keith once again showed his Boys' Own Paper centenary film, since Neville is an ardent collector of the B.O.P. Half way through the film a break was taken for afternoon tea. Following the film there was a very pleasant discussion, and further delvings into Neville's collection. Finally and reluctantly the meeting broke up shortly before 7 p.m. Ruth and Neville were thanked for their kind hospitality and the splendid meals. The weather had been mostly sunny. Cambridge members departed homewards with one more happy day to treasure in their memories.

### MIDLAND

On a showery 24th June twelve members put in an appearance at our home at Dr. Johnson's House, Birmingham.

Bob Acraman, Len Berg and Maurice Hall were present.

Maurice Hall, on his first appearance, was invited to address the meeting and told us in a fluent manner, how he became interested in the Old Papers. He told us that he had written his own biography of Charles Hamilton, but had failed to get it published and had also designed a stamp for the Hamilton centenary, but the Post Office refused to have anything to do with it.

Both Maurice Hall and Bob Acraman showed us interesting items from the Charles Hamilton Museum which they had brought along.

Our usual feature Anniversary Number and Collectors' items were on show as usual. The Anniversary Number was Magnet No. 1323, "The Worst Boy in the school". The Collectors' Items were very unusual - The London Club Newsletter No. 1 and the Midland Club Newsletter No. 1. These created interest.

A reading by your correspondent from 1086 of the Magnet was enjoyed and was taken from the Howard Baker publication "Greyfriars for Grown-ups".

Tom Porter came along with a new idea. "Where would you hide if Coker were on your track because you had purloined one of Aunt Judith's famous hampers from his study?"

The answers were many and varied, but Tom, who had had the

idea from the Randolph Crocker series, knew that the best place was in the secret passage off Dr. Locke's study. This idea caused much amusement.

So we break up for the holidays and the new term starts on September 30th, 1980, when we meet again.

JACK BELLFIELD - Correspondent.

LONDON

At Ealing on 13th July, Chairman and Host Bill Bradford, announced Jo Doyle's funeral took place on Monday, 7th July. A floral tribute was sent by the London O.B.B.C. Ben Whiter, Bob Blythe and Bill Bradford attended the funeral.

Bob Blythe read extracts from C. H. Rolph's "London Particulars", a recent Oxford University Press publication whose author was hooked on the writings of Charles Hamilton from the early Gem/Magnet days. Compton Mackenzie and George Orwell, neither of whom cared for Hamilton, were also mentioned.

Eric Lawrence's "Low Profile" vocal quartet sang melodiously for us several numbers, including the ever popular "Wait 'Till the Sun Shines, Nellie" and "Danny Boy": a return visit we have waited for with great expectations. "Low Profile" was given a hearty vote of thanks by the Chairman after much applause.

Larry Morley's difficult quiz was won by Norman Wright. Runners up were Eric Lawrence, Laurie Sutton, Jim Robinson and Ann Clarke. Part 4 of the Bill Gander tape concluded his conversation with David Hobbs in May 1966. Final item of this enjoyable meeting was a discussion started by Larry Morley: What will happen to the Hobby when we are all gone; will the papers survive?

Thanks are given to Thelma and the tea ladies and out we splashed into the pouring rain for the homeward journey. Next meeting at Josie Packman's abode, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, SE22, (Phone 693 2844), on Sunday, 10th August.

RAY HOPKINS

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## PLAQUE TO HAMILTON UNVEILED

A good gathering of civic dignitaries, hobbyists, local residents, and holiday-makers turned out for the unveiling of a commemorative plaque to Charles Hamilton, placed on his former residence "Rose Lawn" at Kingsgate. The Deputy-Mayor of Broadstairs performed the unveiling, after making a few apt remarks about the work of the famous author.

Plenty of photographs were taken, including a number by John Wernham who had cycled over from Maidstone. Numerous get-togethers and nostalgic chats took place, and refreshments were provided.

A day to remember in the annals of old boys' book collecting, with much appreciation for the memory of a much-loved writer for young people.

BEN WHITER

## NORTHERN

### Meeting held July 12th, 1980

The Northern Club is sad to report the loss of another of its members. Ron Rhodes died a week before our July meeting. He had been in poor health for some time, but members will remember him as he was before his last illness - a fine figure of a man possessed of a formidable knowledge of all the hobby schools, particularly St. Frank's, and an extremely shrewd setter of teasing crossword clues.

The July programme was supplied by the two Geoffreys. The Chairman had concocted a Greyfriars acrostic. Jack Allison was the winner of this puzzle competition, correctly answering 15 out of the 17 clues, and Mollie was a worthy second. One clue baffled everybody. It read "E.g. Smith minor" and the answer began with N and ended with Y. One suspects that Ron would have found it very plain sailing, and written down NONENTITY in a flash.

After refreshments Secretary Geoffrey gave us a sparkling humorous reading from Magnet 876. Here was Bunter at his outrageous but irrepressible best, and the reader soon had all his listeners chuckling appreciatively.

There was as usual a lively and far-ranging discussion-time, and the meeting eventually closed at 9.20 p.m.

Next gathering: Saturday, August 9th.

JOHNNY BULL

REVIEW"ST. JIM'S FOREVER"

Martin Clifford  
(Howard Baker: £15)

This beautiful book is one of the Howard Baker "Specials". It contains 12 Gems, not completely consecutive, from the year 1922. A very satisfying collection indeed, for the year 1922 was one of the very finest in Gem history, and one of those years when the Gem stories were far superior to those in the Magnet.

At this time, the Gem stories were comparatively short, averaging something like 9 chapters, so the plots were tautly presented and there is no trace of padding. Not a superfluous word, one might say.

The volume opens with a 4-story series of rivalry with the Grammar School. This one really sparkles, and is one of the best of its type. Then comes the excellent 5-story kidnapping series concerning Rogue Rackstraw, the miller of the moor. Packed with atmosphere, and with an ever-developing plot, this one ranks with the best of Hamilton's mystery series. The brooding mystery hangs over the Gem in every issue, and the outcome of it all is never cut-and-dried as it is in so many of the later series. And it is full of unexpected twists. For my money, this has always been Hamilton at his greatest in this particular line.

The volume winds up with the priceless 3-story series concerning the Stony Seven. To raise money they open a tea-shop, and find themselves worse off at the end of the day. The series culminates in that glorious classic item in which Gussy visits a pawnshop and tries to "pop his tickah". "Pway, where is the spout?"

A volume with 12 twenty-page Gems which, ignoring every other year in his long career, proves that Hamilton was the finest school-story writer in the world. It is hard to believe that any other writer ever equalled this lot.

At this time, the St. Jim's News was always a bit of a blot, nothing like as good as the Greyfriars Herald, but the Dr. Brutell instalments are worth a nostalgic glance. They are taken from one of the famous Vitagraph serials which were so popular in the cinemas in the early twenties. I fancy that this one starred Antonio Moreno, though I forget its cinematic title.

All great stuff for the Gem connoisseur.

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FOR SALE: St. Frank's S.O.L's: 303 "The Schoolmaster Spy"; 351 "The Valley of Gold"; 396 "Petticoat Rule at St. Frank's" (all very nice copies); £1 each plus postage. S.O.L. 323 "The Six-Gun Schoolmaster" (Packsaddle story by Hamilton); S.O.L. 353 "The Schoolboy 'Tec" (Len Lex tale by Hamilton); £1.20 each plus postage (good copies). Beautiful copy of "Cock of the Walk" (S.O.L. 401), sub St. Jim's tale: £1.40 plus postage. Excellent copy of the notorious sub Magnet "Linley Minor" No. 468, with the ludicrous printing-error which Hamilton once used to condemn the sub writers. Gorgeous tale for anyone who loves sentimental awfulness. £2 plus postage. "B. Bunter's Beanfeast" (Four-square paperback), 15p and post. Write ERIC FAYNE. (No reply if items requested are already sold.)

# The Postman Called

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

CYRIL ROWE (Norwich): Regarding the Jack, Sam & Pete article, I was always tickled that, no matter in what part of the world the comrades were, the villain almost always eluded them by disappearing into a wood. And how many times did Abney Cummings portray them with axes hung from their belts? Still, I enjoyed them immensely in old Marvels from early in the century which turned up from time to time. The sequence in the Marvel later on were less interesting, with a sameness about the tales. At one period, too, I was greatly amused by Ferrers Lord, Gan Waga & Co. Far-fetched, but some excellent tales.

W. THURBON (Cambridge): On Jack, Sam & Pete in the early years of this century their early readers were not confined to boys. In the poorly paid days of the beginning of this century many adults also read the Marvel; here I speak from personal memory of my elders before the Great War. My own father was a keen J. S. & P. fan.

On the Popular reprints. I wrote about these in an Annual for the early 1950's, I was then collecting keenly and so able to compare Marvels and Reprints in the Popular. The early reprints were extremely well done, but the later ones mangled hopelessly. For good editing compare Marvel (Penny series) No. 9, "Comrades True" with Popular No. 9, "The Buried City"; for bad editing compare Marvel 220, "The Forest Spy" with the Popular reprint.

TONY GLYNN (Manchester): Oh dear, JEM seemed to take my comments on the Thomson school rather seriously, to judge from his item a couple of issues ago. I felt that he knew those papers in their earlier days, while, I remember them when they had a very large share of the market, at this end of the country in the late 1930's and through the war years. Perhaps I did not develop that point strongly enough. JEM wondered if I thought the Thomson papers offered "literary caviar". No, of course not. My literary perception is not so badly stunted as that. JEM seemed to be under the impression that my item was antagonistic towards his opinions. It was not conceived in such a spirit. Mr. Holman and JEM wrote about the Thomson papers and their articles set

me musing, so I presented a view. That's all.

I still think that the Thomson challenge had an effect on the AP papers - and I note that there is some thinking along those lines in your comments on the "Popular" in this month's editorial.

Miss E. FLINDERS (Hitchin): As a child I read the early "School Friends", and I loved them very much. Of course, in the second lot of School Friends there were no Cliff House stories. Still, they were very popular indeed. I've just learned for the first time that a million copies a week were sold - for a time, anyway.

DON REED (Christchurch): In the April C.D. Danny tells in his diary how the Mickey Mouse phenomena was sweeping the country. New Zealand was no exception. Mickey Mouse was into everything here. However my most lasting memories of that era were the Mickey Mouse birthday parties at the Strand Theatre in Dunedin, each year. For 3d. admission ~~one~~ saw the latest Mickey Mouse film, and after the show you took your ticket stub to the milk bar down the street and on presenting that were handed a drink of orange and a piece of birthday cake. In the middle of the depression that was a right royal treat!

Probably you have already had an answer to Gordon Hudson's story in the March C.D. about the Fleetway Thriller Library. Issues 1 - 4 were:- 1. Gideon's March by John Creasey; 2. Shock-wave by Basil Copper; 3. Feast of the Scorpion by James Pattinson; 4. Flight of the Bat by Donald Gordon.

Congratulations on the 400th issue of the C.D. I get my copies by surface mail so I'm running three months late most of the time. It takes 14-16 weeks for them to arrive. Captain Cook could do it in 12 weeks 200-odd years ago. I suppose we have progressed somewhere in that time?

Fr. F. HERTZBERG (Wirral): Anent your comments on the post-war Bunter books, although these certainly are pretty thin when compared to the Magnet, for me they have a particular magic, having been my first introduction to Greyfriars, reading my cousin's volumes as they appeared in the 'fifties.

Incidentally, it seems from the few accounts that I have read, that

the bulk of Magnet readers in fact attended schools very different from those depicted by Hamilton, and there is sometimes the implication that this is one reason they liked such schools; my own school, Quarry Bank School, Liverpool, was very close in many particulars, having been founded by a one-time master at Shrewsbury, and drawing on that school's traditions, and this made a quite magic link with my Greyfriars reading.

Reflecting on the similarities of the two schools, it struck me that Greyfriars made no use of the house system: is this odd?

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Readable Magnets 1437 to 1439, 50p each. Also perfect condition Magnets £2 each from 1933. Sexton Blake Library from No. 177, £1 each. Sunny Stories, 50p each. Many early Adventure Annuals, £1 each. Looking for Wizard before 1945; can exchange for Magnets.

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SUDDEN DEATH OF LOYAL C.D. READER

With shock and deep sadness, we record the death of Mr. Richard Dalby of Spanish Place, London. He was taken ill suddenly at his office, and, though a 4-hour operation was performed by surgeons in an effort to save his life, the effort was in vain.

Mr. Dalby loved the Hamilton papers, and he had a very special affection for C.D. which showed in the wonderful letters which he sent along to this office. On special occasions, as in the case of our recent 400th issue, he sent us most charming telegrams which feature among those things which are marked to be kept for ever. His loyalty and his enthusiasm were something which make the hobby so very worth while.

Mr. Dalby had a keen interest in horse-racing. Recently his mare presented him with a foal which was named "The Bounder". Mr. Dalby invited us at C.D. to name the foal.

We shall miss this very great friend very much. We extend our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Dalby and their two sons.

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