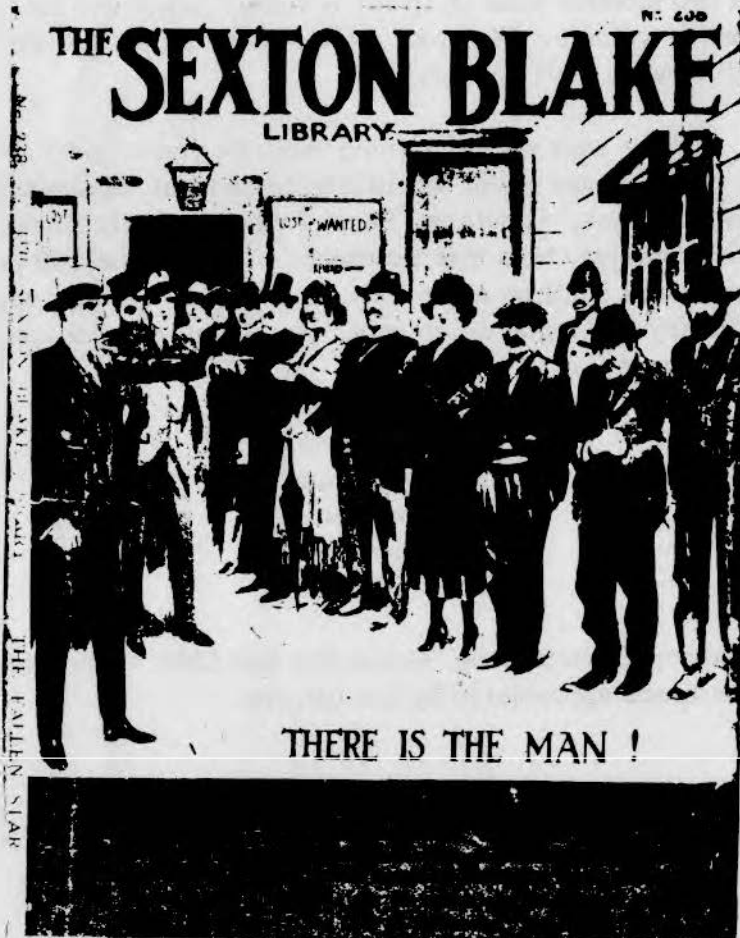


STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 35

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32P

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. G. GANDER

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Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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THE EDITOR TALKS

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THE FULL SUPPORTING PROGRAMME

Idly I have often wondered just how many readers of the Gem and Magnet ever read the serials, an instalment of which always occupied the last few pages in early days. I have a feeling that the answer would be - very few.

The Gem's most famous serial was probably "The School Under Canvas" by Hamilton himself under the pen-name Prosper Howard. I have it as a Gem serial, and also as a "long complete novel" when it was reprinted in the Boys' Friend Library, the latter being a rare collectors' item now. Yet, I blush to say, I have never read the story. It is an omission which I must try to rectify shortly.

A famous Nelson Lee serial in the Gem was "Birds of Prey",

reprinted from the start of the penny "Boys' Friend". Warren Bell's "Sir Billy of Greyhouse" was, I think, an original, and it was probably good, but I never read it. In the white cover years, the paper had several serials written up from the cinema's Vitagraph serials, all starring Antonio Moreno, I think. They never caught my attention, though I liked the Vitagraph serials as a child "at the pictures".

I bought the Gem for St. Jim's, and I suspect that most Gem readers did the same. Even all these years later, I just cannot follow what reasoning caused the Gem editor to cut down (and mar) so many of the fine old stories during a lengthy time in the reprint period in order to make room for serial instalments, short stories, and other items which, I am sure, plenty of readers never bothered even to glance at.

I bought the Magnet for Greyfriars, and I feel certain that most of you did the same. In the early days, the serial instalments, as in the Gem, did not matter. They were merely a fill-up. Several of the serials of the Red Magnet were reprints of old serials by Sidney Drew, and I, personally, always found Sidney Drew quite unreadable. Later on, the Magnet never suffered so badly as the Gem from the "full supporting programme", for the obvious reason that Greyfriars was more generally popular than St. Jim's.

In the earlier twenties, the Greyfriars Herald supplements were always amusing and good fun - worth the space they occupied - helped a good deal by the splendid verses of Samways. But with the passing of time, even those items lost some of their charm, though the St. Sam's little yarns were always good for a laugh.

On the other hand, the St. Jim's News, in the Gem, was stuffy and a colossal bore. It never caught the interest as the Herald had done.

The only serial in either paper I ever read was the Gem's "Tom of the Ajax", which I read aloud to my boys during the winter evenings of the second world war. And to this day, I am puzzled as to why I selected it for reading aloud.

Of course, in its last couple of years, the Magnet cut out a lot of the fill-up stuff, and presented what they called "cover-to-cover" tales of Greyfriars. In my view they were not entirely successful, for the extra verbiage was made up by padding, though Hamilton always vigorously denied it. The stories of the Red Magnet and the Blue Gem

had been even longer, but the majority of those were complete in themselves and there was, more often than not, a secondary plot in them. In the last years, each story was part of an immense series as a rule, and the padding helped to cause some of those series to seem to overstay their welcome.

COMMISERATION!

In these days of Progress, the customer can never win. You pays your money and you pays your money. You may lose on the swings. You also lose on the roundabouts. No wonder there is unemployment.

I see that, in a telegram, "Congratulations" now counts as two words, because it is a long word. You pay £2 for the telegram, plus 15p per word (unless you use the word "congratulations" which costs 30p). No reduction if you have a short signature like "Em" or "Al". A cute way for the post office to make money, except that less and less people send wires as the price goes up.

I also see that postage is to go up again, probably in November. So it will cost three bob and more to send the letter which cost three-pence before some skilled politician thought up the decimal business a decade ago. And only the rich will be able to send parcels.

When we came to this area, ten years ago, the posting-box near Excelsior House used to be packed to overflowing when I went to post my day's letters late in the afternoon - and there were four collections a day. No more. The collections have been cut to two, and my letters fall into a nearly empty box with a plop when I post them now. Less postmen wanted.

Yesterday I saw a rather frowsy-looking cinema with a notice outside: "Special cheap rate this week. All seats £1.50." Oddly enough, it didn't seem to be doing much business. It's a long, long time since customers at the Trocedero enjoyed those wonderful hours of entertainment for a bob or two.

My daily newspaper has just gone up by the astounding amount of 7½d. at one fell swoop. The reason. The cost of paper due to the weak pound. It's not so long since it went up before by a similar amount. Was the reason the cost of paper due to the strong pound?

Verily, the customer never wins. Of course, there's a lot of

money about. I think there must be when I see, on TV, people throwing petrol bombs about the streets, and others throwing toilet-rolls about football-pitches.

THE CORAL JUBILEE ANNUAL

Preparations are now well in hand for this year's Annual. It will be packed, as usual, with entrancing articles from your favourite hobby-writers. Some people left it too late last year when ordering their Annuals. Please make sure that you order in good time and avoid the risk of disappointment. If you are sending greetings or advertising in the Annual, be sure to send along in plenty of time for them to be included.

35 YEARS OF C.D.

Next month, November, this magazine reaches its 35th birthday - its CORAL JUBILEE. It would have been fitting to mark the occasion with a grand double number - double size, double price. With production costs so high, nobody would expect or want that these days. But the spirit will be the same, and I am sure you will all be rejoicing that the good old Digest has lived so long, and is still going strong. It will be one of those issues to cherish.

SILVER WEDDING

That splendid couple, Ben and Lillian Whiter, celebrated their Silver Wedding Anniversary in the middle of last month. Ben has been the Secretary and Treasurer of our London Club for going on for 35 years. He has worked selflessly and tirelessly on club matters down the decades, and must, long ago, have outpaced anybody at the heart of O.B.B. club affairs. And, for the last 25 years, his very sweet wife, Lillian, has been at his side. It is people like Ben and Lillian who made our hobby the delightful one it is. Congratulations to them on their Silver Wedding. And we wish them long, long life and every happiness.

THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

If there is one thing which should make Snowee's fur bristle with anger it is when she reads in the paper, or hears someone say on TV or

the radio, that a mob of rioters and looters, or gutless young thugs who beat up and rob old people, or perverts who ravish little children, "behaved like animals". The insult to Snowee and to all animals is enormous, and a thousand miles from the truth.

Snowee's comment must be: "Every living thing experiences thirst - but drunkenness is found ONLY in MAN."

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

Danny's Diary

OCTOBER 1931

There was a General Election this month, and a National Government has been formed. That is, a coalition government, running the country for the sake of the Country instead of for the sake of the Party. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald is the Prime Minister, and Mr. Neville Chamberlain is Chancellor of the Exchequer. The great aim of the government is to reduce what they call "Squandermania", a lot of waste which is running us all on the rocks.

It has been an excellent month in the Schoolboys' Own Library. "The Greyfriars Castaways" is the third section and the final one of the South Seas series (a magnificent adventure story), and "Chums of the Ranch" is the fourth and last part of the adventures of the Fistical Four on the Windy River Ranch in Canada.

In the Boys' Friend Library there is "The Rio Kid at Bay", a collection of the lovely Rio Kid tales from the old Popular, and including the little series about the feud between Chief Many Ponies and Sheriff Watson, with the Kid acting as a good angel to both of them at different times.

Two very famous people have died this month. One is Sir Tommy Lipton who made a fortune out of his tea plantations in Ceylon, and opened a big chain of shops to sell the tea. He built many boats named "Shamrock" in an effort to win the America Cup for Britain.

The other famous man to pass on is Thomas Edison, the inventor. Though he is usually credited with a great many inventions, it seems

that he often worked on other people's ideas and brought them to perfection. Two of the things we owe to him are the electric light bulb and the gramophone. Tommy Lipton came from Glasgow, and Edison was an American.

My brother Doug has had the Union Jack most weeks this month, and he has passed them on to me. "The Red Swordsman" by Robert Murray is about four matadors, and people who died after the eerie Red Swordsman appeared. "Spanish Gold" by G. H. Teed which introduces George Marsden Plummer is a good thriller about gold hidden in a Spanish fortress.

"The White Black" by Reid Whitly is about a sinister menace which prowled round Prawle End House. And "Crooks Hotel" by Robert Murray tells of a fight Blake had with the Whisperer and his gang.

Plenty of excitement at St. Frank's this month. In "The Black Hand at St. Frank's", Handforth is kidnapped by a dreaded secret society for a ransom of £50,000 - or death. A single tale.

Next week, "Handforth's Good Deed" in which Handy becomes the guardian of a two-year old child. Next "The Riddle of the Seven Stars" in which Ezra Quirke makes a re-appearance. This starts a new mystery series. Travers becomes the possessor of a seven-starred ring, but it brings him and St. Frank's bad luck. Then came "The Curse of Osra" with a spectre in the night, and more about Quirke and the ring.

Final of the month is "The Menaced Schoolboy" in which Travers disappears during a football match. It seems that the curse of the ring has worked again. This is the closing tale of this series, with everything explained.

Some fine shows at the local cinemas this month. Jackie Coogan (quite a whopping lad now) in "Tom Sawyer"; Ralph Lynn and Yvonne Arnaud in "Tons of Money", a British comedy; Maurice Chevalier in "Playboy of Paris"; Harry Carey in "Trader Horn", a big production with some wonderful shots. It was made as a silent film and I should think not really improved by having some sound and dialogue added to it. The same can be said of "Hell's Angels" starring Ben Lyon and Jean Harlow which has marvellous flying scenes, but was made as a silent and not improved by noise and some dialogue being tacked in. This one is partly in technicolor.

Harold Lloyd in "Feet First" is, I think, his first talkie, and it is very good. About a shoe salesman, with some terrific stuff when Harold is hanging on the side of a high building. A good Sherlock Holmes film is "The Speckled Band" starring Lyn Harding and Raymond Massey. And, finally, Elissa Landi and Charles Farrell in "Body and Soul". A fine month.

A wonderful new play named "Cavalcade" opened at Drury Lane on 13th October. They say it is very spectacular with a cast of over 400, and a London General bus drives on the stage in a street scene. It is produced by C. B. Cochran and is written by Noel Coward and the leading stars are Fred Groves, Mary Clare, Una O'Connor, John Mills, Binnie Barnes, and Edward Sinclair. On the 28th, the entire Royal Family attended the performance, including the King and Queen, the Prince of Wales, the Duke and Duchess of York, and the Duke of Kent.

Mum says she will take me to see it later on, for it is sure to run for a long time.

Lord Trenchard has been made the new Commissioner of Police. I asked Doug why he doesn't become one of "Trenchard's Young Men", and Doug says he'll think about it, but probably, the way I am going, he says, I shall be his first arrest.

In the Magnet, the series has continued about the chums in Kenya. The first story is "The Slave Trader's Vengeance". Vernon-Smith is in the hands of Ludwig Krantz. Next "White Slaves of the Congo" with Harry Wharton & Co. all at the mercy of the Congo slave-trader. Then "The City of Terror", reigned over by Tofoloko, the cannibal chief - and the only hope is from Kikolobo, the Kikiyu, who has escaped.

This thrilling series continues with "Saved from the Cannibals", which brings it all to an end.

Final tale of October is "Widgers on the War-path" with them all back at Greyfriars. And Widgers is an Old Boy who has vowed to come back and give six of the best to Mr. Prout. Great fun.

The Sultan of Johore has made a gift of £5,000 to the British exchequer. Nice of him. I wish he'd make a gift to me.

In Modern Boy another series of King of the Islands has continued and ended. "The Dawn's Queer Passenger" is Hudson's beachcomber cousin, Billy Bottle, whom Hudson shanghai's on to the "Dawn". Then

"Cannibal Island" in which Hudson finally does the right thing by his queer cousin.

Then the last of the present series "Luck O' the South Seas" in which the crew of the "Dawn" pick up a castaway in the Pacific - and it turns out to be a girl for whose rescue there is a reward of £1,000. So it's goodbye to Ken King, till the next time.

The school stories about Greystones School by Geo. E. Rochester goes on, but I am not very keen on these school stories. Alfred Edgar is back with another series about motor-racing. There is a lot of advertisements in Modern Boy - too many, I think.

A firm of tailors in Sydney, Australia, has established a real-life record for suit-making. Exactly 1 hour and 52 minutes to make a whole suit, from the back of the sheep to the back of the wearer.

Last, but, of course, not least, the Gem this month. To start with "St. Jim's on the Stage" in which Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. make an Alliance to stage a pantomime of Red Riding Hood.

Next an excellent serious tale "The Great Stamp Mystery" in which a valuable stamp from Ceylon is missing, and Curly Gibson is nearly expelled for stealing it. But it had got stuck in a copy of the "Ranger" which Mr. Selby had confiscated.

Next "Under a Convict's Thumb". An escaped convict is Monteith's cousin who tries to blackmail the New House senior into aiding him, but Tom Merry has a plan to help Monteith. Then "Gay Dogs at St. Jim's", an excellent tale about Gore and his smart set. Finally "The Japer of St. Jim's" is Monty Lowther, who persuades his uncle to let him go back to St. Jim's - but Monty returns with red hair and a squeaky voice and calling himself Jessop till he is found out. And Tom Merry and Manners are happy that they are The Terrible Three again.

(EDITORIAL COMMENTS: "St. Jim's on the Stage" was originally entitled "The Triple Alliance". "The Great Stamp Mystery", originally "Tom Merry's Hobby Club" was the first Gem story to refer to Kerr's gifts as an impersonator. In this tale, unbelievably, he impersonates the Head. The stamp, found in a "Ranger" by Mr. Selby in the 1931 version was originally in a copy of "Pluck" and found by Mr. Quince who was then master of the Third. "Under a Convict's Thumb" was originally "Tom Merry's Ruse"; "The Gay Dogs of St. Jim's" came from "The Smart Set of St. Jim's", and "The Japer of St. Jim's" was originally "The

Return of Monty Lowther". It was always a mystery why certain boys took long absences from school.

Inexplicably, two stories of this period (1907) "Expelled from St. Jim's" and "Tom Merry's Camp", concerning a plot by Tom Merry's cousin, Phipps, were omitted, but were published as one long story nearly a year later under the title "Sacked from St. Jim's".

The Greystones school stories by George Rochester in Modern Boy ran for a long time, but one never hears of them being mentioned in our circle, so they do not seem to have been very popular. I have no trace of them being reprinted anywhere, though they may have turned up in the Boys' Friend Library. The collection of Rio Kid tales under the title "The Rio Kid at Bay" which Danny bought in October 1931 in the Boys' Friend 4d. Library was reprinted under the same title in the B.F.L. six years later in 1937.

"Feet First" was Harold Lloyd's last outstanding film. He made one or two more films, but nothing more of note.)

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I do hope all readers are enjoying the articles recently presented in Blakiana. Material is getting a bit low so if anyone can let me have something to include for November and December, I should be very grateful. It's not easy these days to think up something new for Blakiana that has not already been dealt with over the past thirty odd years, but a small piece about your favourite author or a specially favourite story would help to fill the gaps.

"STEPHEN HOOD" - BLAKE WRITER

by Bill Lofts

"Stephen Hood Lewis - editor of several top selling children's comics - recently retired from I.P.C. after 48 years service with the Company. He started on the comic Chips after leaving school in 1934"

This news may not interest many Blakiana readers, as today's rather trendy comics are not exactly our cup of tea - though they obviously attract the modern young readers. But what did interest me a great deal about Stephen Hood Lewis was that he was undoubtedly the son of 'Lewis Jackson' (Jack Lewis) the popular Sexton Blake writer. For some curious reason he did use the pen-name of 'Stephen Hood' for one single Blake yarn in 1931 (No. 292, The Crook from Chicago) though he did use the name in other fields of juvenile fiction. 'Lewis Jackson' as he is best known to us, was of course the creator of The Master Mummer - Leon

Kestel, though strangely enough and being the odd man out I never cared much for stories of the deadly foes of the great Baker Street detective. To my way of thinking it belittled him a bit in allowing them obviously to escape week after week to renew battles anew. Lewis Jackson, however, had a very easy readable style like Walter Tyrer, John Hunter, Rex Hardinge, and Anthony Parsons, and I enjoyed his stories a great deal, but reverting back to the pen-name of 'Stephen Hood' - during the First World War Lewis Jackson served in the Royal Navy, giving his son the name of Hood after the famous battleship. Readers may recall that Jackson was fond of the nautical theme in such S.B.L. stories as "The Case of the Biscay Pirate". "The Case of John Muir of the Merchant Navy", and "The Case of the Missing Stoker".

I can well remember in the early days of my hobby activities whilst staying at Brighton, going along to the nearby locality of Peacehaven to see him. Unfortunately I was informed that he was ill and in hospital, and later I heard from an editor at Fleetway that he had died, which must have been about 1952/3, and so I missed meeting a man who gave such pleasure to so many generations of readers.

John Lewis (always called Jack) was probably born in the East London West Ham area in the 1890 period where he was married. Later he moved to Epping where his son Stephen Hood Lewis was born. As a boy he first worked in the Post Office as a boy-clerk, but then thanks to the help of Hamilton Edwards the then Managing Director of the mighty Amalgamated Press - he got a position as junior sub-editor on a woman's paper. After writing short pieces for this and Answers, he started to write boys' fiction for The Boys' Realm, The Boys' Journal, Pluck, and Union Jack. In the Spring of 1914 he decided to turn free-lance, when especially W. H. Back the Union Jack editor asked him to write some Blake stories, his first appearing in that paper in 1915. After his service during the First World War in the Royal Navy work simply poured from his pen in all types of fiction as well as Sexton Blakes - I can well remember reading an excellent school story serial in the comic 'Rainbow' under the Jack Lewis name, and the gap at times in his Sexton Blake yarns meant he was simply busy in other fields. A keen cricketer for the Fleetway Players in later years he resembled in size W. G. Grace or Colin Milburn according to one editor, and was similar to the late

great actor Sydney Greenstreet in looks. After the last war, and when the children's market was at its lowest, he wrote a serial for the Rank Organisation, 'The Snakeskin Belt' that was shown at Odeons around the country at children's Saturday matinees, whilst contributing his Sexton Blakes and odd stories for Knockout and other comics.

In all he wrote 41 stories for the Union Jack, several in the early Detective Weekly, and 44 long stories for the Sexton Blake Libraries, the last No. 244 (Third Series) "The Man From Persia" in July 1951. Indeed, this very last story caused quite some controversy by that late great expert Walter Webb, who was of the firm opinion that Lewis Jackson did not write it, even though Leon Kestrel was mentioned briefly. With his name on the cover, plus the fact that official records showed that he was paid for it - one cannot do otherwise than credit the tale to him.

The best period of Lewis Jackson's writings I would say was in the early forties - at least in the S.B.L. field from my own point of view, and whose contribution to the Sexton Blake field will always be fondly remembered.

ROSES ARE RED - VIOLETS ARE BLUE

by Raymond Cure

Roses are red ... well not always; they come in a variety of colours nowadays. They would come in a lot more too if horticulturists had their way. I like a red rose myself, but how about a green rose? James Joyce, a well-known writer in days of yore, wrote in his "Portrait of a Young Man" the following:- "White Rose and Red Rose these were beautiful colours to think of. Pink and cream and lavender too. Perhaps a wild rose might be like those colours and be remembered in the song about the wild roses bloom as the little green place. But you could not have a green one, but perhaps somewhere in the world you could".

To tell the truth I would not know where in the world to look for a green rose except ... perhaps Australia? Now why should I mention Australia? Being a Sexton Blake fan I happen to know that round about 10th October, 1925, one of the green roses turned up. A record of this amazing event is kept between the pages of the Union Jack No. 1148, dated 1925, entitled The Green Rose. The trouble is that there is something fishy about this green rose.

Come with me along to the Binabong Homestead, the estate of Mlle. Yvonne in Australia. Take a seat at the table with Sexton Blake and Tinker and Mlle. Yvonne and Uncle John Graves. Sit tight. You are just about to see a rose the like of which you have never seen before - a green rose!

Found by a native servant by the side of a deep pool, the green rose is a legend of the coloured people of Australia. Only 20 feet across and of undefined depth, the pool where the rose was found was known as the Never-never come back pool or the pool of death, (which does not sound healthy whichever way you look at it). It was believed that when a green rose appeared and was plucked the pool would claim another victim.

Now strange to say that hardly had our friends around the tea-table seen the green rose when into the room came a panic stricken houseman - his brother had been found dead at the pool of death.

In 1925 things were a bit rough in Australia, the locals had to fish the poor fellow out and transport the body in an old truck. No ambulance! You would think there was a recession on, in fact as I remember it life was one long recession in those days.

Personally, I don't think Sexton Blake would have bothered much about a green rose, it was this having a dead body on your hands every time anybody plucked one that aroused Blake's horticultural taste-buds. Talk about the scientific tests made on the shroud of Turin, it was nothing to what that green rose suffered in the hands of our great detective. He had it figured that if this green rose was a fake you would not be able to blame the legend. Exhaustive tests proved the rose to be a fake. That put Blake and Tinker on the track of the real murderer, and that put the villain on his last round-up.

Incidentally Tinker falls into the never-come-back pool with a little help from some unknown villain, but gets out of the pool with a little help from a well-wisher.

The last three paragraphs of the story reveal all - but I am not the one to spoil a good tale for you which is available from the Sexton Blake Library run by Josie Packman.

You could not have a green rose, but maybe somewhere in the world you could - as for me - Roses are red - Violets are blue.

Nelson Lee Column

ST. FRANK'S IN THE B.F.L.

by Esmond Kadish

My invaluable "Guide to the Nelson Lee Library" - admirably compiled by Bob Blythe - tells me that "The Schemer of St. Frank's", published in June 1934, is one of two "new and original" stories written by Edwy Searles Brooks for the "Boys' Friend Library". The second story, "Waldo's Wonder Team", appeared in September of the same year, and both these tales appear to have been amongst the last of Mr. Brooks' "original" writings, as distinct from reprinted or re-worked material. I suppose that, with the disappearance of the weekly "Nelson Lee" from the bookstalls in 1933, it was natural for Mr. Brooks to direct his writing talents to other and, perhaps, "higher things. In March of 1935, the Editor's Chat of No. 1411 of the "Gem" refers to the fact that "our popular author has recently had his first seven and sixpenny book published". It was entitled "The Strange Case of the Antlered Man" and described as a "detective-thriller", with the "scene laid in an English village". Again, according to Mr. Blythe's Guide, this novel was re-written from an earlier "Union Jack" story.

The interesting thing about "The Schemer of St. Frank's" is that it features Vivian Travers, an attractive, complex, and not entirely scrupulous character, somewhat akin to the Caterpillar of Highcliffe, but without the latter's pose of indolence. Travers was introduced in the "Boot-boy Baronet" series in the "Nelson Lee" of January 1928, (the "baronet" was, in fact, Jimmy Potts) and, if we are to believe the author himself, in one of his weekly chats, became a favourite character: "I've had numerous letters from readers who tell me that they like Travers".

The story opens with Travers acting as captain of the St. Frank's Junior cricket eleven, Nipper - rather improbably - having temporarily relinquished his captaincy owing to the possibility of his being called away by Nelson Lee on "an important forgery case". Travers' other great love - besides cricket - is a high-powered motor bike which, although skilful at riding, he is apt to take reckless chances with, and,

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Continued from Page 15 . . .

early in the story, he skids whilst taking a bend in the road, and crashes. Travers is not seriously injured, but he does end up in hospital for a day, and the bike is a complete "write-off". Mr. Travers, whilst normally a rather over-indulgent father, is naturally fearful that his son's craving for speed will result in permanent injury, and threatens that he will remove him from St. Frank's if he ever rides a motorcycle again. Travers reluctantly heeds the warning, until an urgent plea from a distressed Irene Manners to get her back to the Moor View School before "lock-up", and save her from a "row", impels him to borrow a bike for this purpose. Unfortunately, he is spotted by Bernard Forrest, the "cad" of the Remove, and blackmailed. Forrest demands a place in the team as a price for remaining silent, and Travers, realising that Irene's part in the escapade will probably mean her expulsion from school, if it becomes known, agrees for her sake. Eventually, Travers resigns, and Nipper resumes his customary role as cricket captain, but an unfortunate fracas on the field, whilst playing the River House, results in the Junior team being banned from cricket by the Headmaster, Mr. Kingswood. This is Forrest's big chance. He is elected captain of a new team, consisting largely of his cronies, and their performance is so disastrous that Nipper and Co. form their own team. At one important fixture they waylay Forrest's team and substitute themselves for the "official" team. Finally, a junior "England v Australia" match results in Forrest and Co. losing ignominiously, and Nipper's eleven takes the field to win the day and save the honour of St. Frank's! Travers - who, as the result of a fake telegram sent by Forrest, has again borrowed a bike to speed to the bedside of his father, whom he believes to be seriously injured in a car crash - is finally reconciled with his parent, and, once again, provided with one of the "latest machines".

I must confess that I liked this story, and particularly so when Travers is well to the fore. In fact, in the final chapters, when Nipper is given the limelight, I felt that the story had lost some of its impetus. I like Mr. Brooks' work; his plots are always vigorous and fast-moving, the settings often spectacular with carefully observed detail. The one off-putting thing about him - as far as I'm concerned - is that, some-

times, he is so interested in the development of the plot that his characters appear rather cardboard ones and lack depth. Thus, it is nice to be able to read a school story featuring a good, "meaty" character like Travers, although he does have an irritating habit of saying "dear old fellow" at regular intervals - a bit too much like Archie Glenthorne, I feel! Travers, as I have indicated, is not entirely "noble". On one occasion he remarks, "I'm not above indulging in a few clean lies if the occasion demands". A pity that Mr. Brooks introduced him so late in the history of St. Frank's, and that he was unable to develop him as a character more fully in subsequent stories.

For the rest, Irene Manners is portrayed believably as a nice, up-to-date, sporty, but, withal, still feminine schoolgirl of the 'thirties, and there is a sly comment about the great Edward Oswald by Mr. Brooks: "Handforth was one of the most generous fellows at St. Frank's. He was generous with his money, generous with his advice, generous with his criticism, and generous with his punches".

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 172 - Magnet No. 1132 - "Skinner's Shady Scheme"

Mark Linley was something of an anomaly at Greyfriars. When he arrived, having won a scholarship, he wore a loud check suit and a cloth cap, and apparently had been a minder in a cotton factory. He aroused a great deal of hostility from the snobs at school, and it seemed astonishing that he should have gone direct from a factory to a famous public school instead of to the local grammar school. His early years at Greyfriars consisted of studying for further prizes to help out the folks at home, after which he sank into the background, thought he was given some star parts again for a brief period in the late 'twenties. "Skinner's Shady Scheme" involved Mark Linley deeply: Mr. Quelch had caned Skinner, Snoop, and Linley for a fracas in the House, whereupon Skinner shipped Quelch's study, leaving incriminating evidence that pointed to Linley, who happened to be spending a half holiday indoors reading Greek for the sheer fun of it.

In the nineteen-twenties Quelch was not quite the sympathetic

character that he later became. Early in the story, Wharton, Bull, Nugent, and Singh, annoyed about Bob Cherry's detention, successfully pulled Quelch's leg, a pleasure in which the Head Boy of the Remove seldom indulged. The Remove Master was also depicted in an ironic fashion: he writhed inwardly at the sympathy shown to him in Masters' Common Room about his wrecked study, even Monsieur Charpentier referring to "le pauvre Quelch" in his hearing.

C. H. Chapman, on one of his many welcome visits to the London Club, once explained that at this time he and Shields often used to take turns in illustrating the Magnet, one drawing the cover and the other the inside illustrations, and then reversing the process the following week, though the incidence of holidays, of course, upset this routine. Shields' drawings of the boys sometimes left something to be desired, but his illustrations of the masters were frequently superb. In Magnet 1132 there is a full-length picture of Quelch, showing in precise detail exactly what the well-dressed gentleman was wearing half a century ago - wing collar, tail coat, striped trousers, plus (for outside wear) hat, umbrella, gloves, and spats. Standing like a ram-rod with a glare on his countenance, Quelch was obviously the downy bird he was so often reputed to be.

Something went wrong with Skinner's plot to involve Linley, and Quelch was soon able to lay the blame at the right door. Of course, the reader knew all along who the real culprit was, but the extent of Quelch's detective work was not revealed until he confronted Skinner and Snoop with the evidence he had unearthed. If Quelch had lost some of his dignity earlier on in the story, he was fully vindicated by his cross-examination of Skinner and Snoop at the end, culminating in an impressive public flogging which was most satisfactory for Quelch, if not for the guilty party.

* * * * *

BLACK MASK MAGAZINE issues of September and November 1929 urgently needed for The Sunday Times, London. Would purchase, borrow or arrange photography of Maltese Falcon illustrations on September cover and inside November issue. Reasonable fee payable. Please write

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AND NOW - back to the early years of the Century for a thrilling story of the world's Greatest Detective.

THE DEATH OF HERLOCK SHOLMES

The case of Professor Hickorychicory - pronounced Hickychicky - is the next on my list at this period of our residence in Shaker Street.

This affair, which caused the disappearance and supposed death of Herlock Sholmes, proved the most tensely exciting of all in which I shared the work of my amazing friend.

Sholmes had been absent for several days when one morning a coal-heaver was shown into my rooms while I was at breakfast. I rose to my feet, somewhat surprised, but at once the well-known voice reassured me.

"Good morning, Jotson!"

"Sholmes!" I exclaimed in astonishment.

"Himself!" he replied, sinking into the armchair, and resting his feet on the mantelpiece in his old familiar way that I knew so well. "Give me something to eat, my dear fellow. I have eaten nothing for fourteen days. I am famished."

He devoured bacon and eggs ravenously. Through the grime on his face, he looked at me with his old smile.

"I see you have changed your habits, Jotson."

"In what way, Sholmes?"

"You have taken to clean-shaving. I started."

"My dear Sholmes," I protested, "you have been absent. How can you possibly be aware --"

"Deduction, my good fellow,"

said Sholmes carelessly. "When I left you, you were wearing a moustache. At the present moment there is no trace of hair on your upper lip. To the trained eye of a detective, Jotson, the inference is clear. You have shaved clean."

"I see that you have not changed, at all events, Sholmes," I replied.

"The same amazing insight - the same irresistible power of deduction --"

"You flatter me, Jotson. At the present moment," he said moodily, "my insight is at fault. I have met my match at last, Jotson."

"Impossible!"

"It is true. Have you ever heard of Professor Hickorychicory - pronounced Hickychicky?"

I shook my head.

"Naturally," said Sholmes. "Few have heard of him. Even the fact that his name is spelt Hickorychicory, and pronounced Hickychicky, has failed to put the police on his track. Yet he is the most dangerous criminal in London. Every crime that has been committed during the past seventy years has been planned by this man. His hand is everywhere - invisible but powerful. It was he who stole the Crown Jewels of Spoofia; he who robbed the Princess of Ghammon; he, my dear Jotson, who kidnapped the young Duke of Shepherd's Bush, and assassinated the Marquis of Hornsey Rise; he who administered the permanent sleeping-draught to the Home Secretary;

he who abstracted the Prime Minister's spectacles at a critical moment, and caused him to remain in ignorance of the existence of Vulgaria on the map at a critical hour in European history."

"Good heavens, Sholmes!"

"It is true, Jotson. With this unseen, invisible, and unspotted criminal I am now at the death-grapple."

"My dear Sholmes!"

"Murder," said Sholmes quietly, "is nothing to him. I have had several narrow escapes. Yesterday, in a fashionable restaurant, I detected a fragment of German sausage in my soup. It was a plot to poison me; he bribed the waiter. Last evening I received free tickets for the latest revue at the Hippodrome Theatre; a cunning scheme to bore me to death. This morning, as I came here, my taxicab was blown sky-high by a bomb cunningly placed in the taximeter, timed to go off when fourpence had ticked away. I was blown into the air. Fortunately, I landed unharmed on the Monument, and descended safely by means of the steps. Jotson, you know that I have nerve, but I confess that this has shaken me."

He rose to his feet and tiptoed to the window. On the other side of the street a ragman was passing, uttering the familiar cry: "Rags and bones, bottles and jars!" Sholmes turned to me, his face blazing with excitement.

"Run, Jotson!"

"Sholmes!" I ejaculated.

"You see that ragman? It is Professor Hickorychicory - pronounced Hickychicky - in disguise. Bolt!"

We rushed to the door.

Hardly had we reached the garden,

when a terrific explosion shook the building to its foundations.

Sholmes looked at me with a grim smile.

"A bomb! The work of Professor Hickorychicory - pronounced Hickychicky. He sticks at nothing. The coils are closing round him, Jotson. Only my demise can save him. It is a struggle for life or death between Herlock Sholmes and Professor Hickorychicory - pronounced Hickychicky. Jotson, are you with me?"

"Hear me swear --" I began.

"Enough! Let us go!"

With a few magic touches of his hand, he disguised me as a fishmonger. Then he hurried me away.

The next few weeks were full of excitement.

It was the hardest case Herlock Sholmes had undertaken, and he did not conceal from me that sometimes he feared that Professor Hickorychicory - pronounced Hickychicky - might yet escape him. Our narrow escapes were marvellous; we grew familiar with danger. The toils were closing round the hardened criminal, but he was fighting hard. The man who had ruled the criminal world for seventy years was not to be taken easily.

Why Sholmes did not cause the arrest of the man who was so deeply dyed with crime was a mystery to me. Sholmes did not explain. It was one of the secrets locked up in that inscrutable breast.

It was at sunset one evening that we found ourselves pursuing a lonely track amid the rocky wastes and precipices of the wild Hill of Ludgate. Far below us

flowed the dark waters of the Fleet River. Sholmes had been silent for several minutes - a most unusual circumstance. He turned to me suddenly.

"Jotson!" he said. His voice was unusually gentle, and I could not help a rush of tears in my eyes. "Jotson, I feel that the end is coming - the end for him, Jotson, and the end for me."

"Sholmes!" I muttered.

"He is here," said Sholmes. "I have tracked him down. In the narrow pass leading to the Bridge of the Black Friars he is in hiding. Jotson, my old friend, goodbye!"

"You shall not go alone."

"I must, Jotson. At the finish we must be alone - Herlock Sholmes, the detective, and Professor Hickorychicory - pronounced Hickychicky - the master criminal. Fear not for me, Jotson. I am armed. I have here a railway sandwich, and with one blow --"

"But --"

"If I fail, Jotson, I leave to you all my belongings. My account in the bank, amounting to one and fourpence-halfpenny, will be paid to you in a lump sum. I have instructed my bankers. The furniture at Shaker Street is yours - on the sole condition that you pay the remainder of the instalments. Only the tabby-cat I should like to be given to my Aunt Sempronia. You promise me this, Jotson?"

I promised with tears in my eyes. Could I refuse him anything at that moment?

It was in vain to seek to change his resolution. The last scene of the

tragedy was to be enacted between those two alone - Herlock Sholmes, my dear, amazing friend, and the dark and tortuous criminal, the spelling of whose name gave no clue to its pronunciation.

We parted, and Sholmes plunged into the dark and gloomy pass. I sat upon a rock and waited. My eyes were blinded with tears. Was I ever to see again my astonishing friend - ever again to behold those old familiar feet resting upon the mantelpiece in the old rooms at Shaker Street? I am not ashamed to say that I wept, and the lonely rocks around me echoed with my sobs.

Suddenly there was a trampling of feet - a sound of voices. I recognised the voice of Herlock Sholmes.

"At last!"

"At last! Ha, ha!" echoed another voice, the deep and thrilling tones of Professor Hickorychicory - pronounced Hickychicky.

For a moment I saw them locked in a deadly embrace, reeling upon the verge of the wildest precipice of the Hill of Ludgate. Then they disappeared from my sight - still locked in that deadly embrace as in a Chubb lock.

I stumbled away - I hardly knew how. I had looked my last upon Herlock Sholmes - that marvellous man whose adventures I now present for the first time to the public (copyright in the U. S.). Far, far below, where the dark waters of the Fleet murmured beneath the frowning crags of Ludgate Hill, lay Herlock Sholmes, side by side with his deadly foe, Professor Hickorychicory - pronounced Hickychicky.

News of The Old Boys' Book Clubs

LONDON

Leytonstone meeting once again and in view of the host, Reuben Godsave's excellent St. Frank's articles that appear very regularly in the C.D. plus the other three Franciscans, Jim Cook, Bob Blythe and Ray Hopkins, it was another Nelson Lee gathering. Even Winifred Morss chipped in with a very humorous Trackett Grim Story.

Eric Fayne attending the meeting with Madam, conducted a Mixed Alphabet competition like the ones we used to have when he held the wonderful Surbiton meetings. Messrs. Jenkins and Lawrence had the most correct answers.

Jim Cook's competition was one where those participating had to get the St. Frank's characters from anagrams and then state which countries both the St. Frank's and Greyfriars juniors visited. Bob Blythe was an easy winner, but a very generous Jim Cook awarded prizes to every competitor.

Eric Lawrence read some extracts from a book that was written by A. A. Thomson and which dealt with two schoolmasters who resembled somewhat the Frank Richards masters. The title of the book was "The Exquisite Burden".

Some more interesting E. S. Brooks letters were read out by Bob Blythe, thus keeping up the St. Frank's atmosphere.

Votes of thanks were accorded to Reuben and Phyllis for their hospitality and to Jim Cook for the excellent prizes he donated.

Next meeting at the Beckenham home of Mary Cadogan when a full tea will be provided. Sunday, 11th October, is the date.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Eleven members were present for our 377th meeting, held on Saturday evening, 12th September.

A special welcome was given to a visitor - Mr. Nandu Thalange, from Bolton. Nandu had crossed the Pennines to be with us that evening; he is our youngest Member, being 17 years old. He is very keen on the

writings of Frank Richards - the Northern Club was very happy to see him present.

After the formal business, a cassette tape recording was played of one of the Bunter T.V. shows c. 1960. Apart from some slight faults that had been on the original reel-to-reel tape, the recording came over very well. Quite a lot of comment was provoked as in the past, people have not always been complimentary when it came to the T.V. showings. The point was raised, that in fact T.V. has come a long way in the past twenty years and there was no doubt about it, the Bunter plays on T.V. were produced on a shoestring budget.

After refreshments, during which Members chatted informally, Revd. Geoffrey Good gave one of his inimitable-style readings from the C.D. Annual for 1958 - the article by Gerry Allison, "Skinner, Snoop and Stott".

Regrettably, yours truly had to leave early to go along with Nandu to the station to get his last train home - but there is no doubt that a very enjoyable meeting had been had by all.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

CAMBRIDGE

The Club's opening meeting of the season was at the home of Jack Overhill, where the company included new member Roy Whiskin. Adrian Perkins referred to a forthcoming Greyfriars Convention which was now under preliminary consideration. The members of the club present expressed their sympathy to Secretary Keith Hodkinson on the death of his father.

Keith Hodkinson talked about the works of Captain, later Major Charles Gilson who had been a prolific author of boys' stories, writing for the "Captain", "Chums" and particularly for the "Boys' Own Paper". Gilson had been a regular army officer, serving in the Boer War in which he was wounded. He then began his writing career. After being rejected for the army at the beginning of the Great War he joined the Naval Brigade and took part in the defence of Antwerp in 1914, retiring at the end of the war with the rank of Major. His output included adventure stories (showing traces of the influence of Rider Haggard), school stories, and stories of both the Great War and World War II.

Gilson's characters included a Chinese detective "Mr. Wang" and a sea captain character "with apologies to 'Captain Kettle' ". Bill Thurbon recalled a serial by Gilson in the "Boys' Journal", a copy of which Keith produced. Malcolm Pratt produced a list of Gilson's works, and an extract from the Dulwich College Register, showing that Gilson was three years in the Dulwich College First Cricket Eleven, together with the elder brother of P. G. Wodehouse.

After we had enjoyed Mrs. Overhill's marvellous tea; Jack Overhill gave us an entertaining talk on competitions in boys' papers, and in other periodicals of the early years of the century, including his joy at winning one of the "tuck hampers" offered in the early "Greyfriars Herald" of 1915, this leading to a general discussion on competitions. Arrangements were made for the next meeting on 4 December when Perran Newman will be our host.

After the formal business had ended members spent some time browsing among Jack's beautifully bound collection of records and diaries.

A warm vote of thanks was passed to Jack and Mrs. Overhill for their hospitality.

* * * * *

The Postman Called

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

BRIAN SAYER (Margate): I enjoy "Danny's Diary" which is usually packed with hobby information in a readable style. In the current issue I read that he saw Bela Lugosi in "Dracula". Would not that type of film have carried an "X" certificate? I was a boy picture-goer long after Danny, but I remember it was customary for youths to stand outside the cinemas waiting for an amiable person, the plea being, "Can you take me in, Mister?" This was for "A" films - the "X" variety were tantalizingly barred. I wonder if this "custom" applied to pre-war boys. Certainly no youngsters would be wise to approach strangers in a similar way in these times.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT): There was no "X" certificate until some time after Hitler's war. In 1931, there were only "U" and "A" certificates. In the mid-thirties an "H" certificate was introduced - H for Horror. "The Mummy", which played the Small Cinema about 1934

was an "A" film. A few years later it was re-issued with an "H" certificate. Actually, the only horrific item was the impact of Boris Karloff's make-up when first sighted. "The Mummy" was made again more than thirty years later, in a film which, probably, contained an extra shiver or two but was far inferior to the original, although the newer version was in colour. "Dracula", which Danny saw in 1931, would have carried an "A" certificate. I believe it was a bit eerie in parts, but quite innocuous. Much water was to pass under the bridges before the cinema had to shock and horrify to attract its customers.)

LARRY MORLEY (Hanwell): I was intrigued by the letter from reader Ronnie Hunter. The Commodore Cinema was in Hammersmith, but only just. It was opened in 1933 with a great deal of publicity, and was known as "the Showpiece of West London", which indeed it was. At one time Charles Shadwell (remember him from Garrison Theatre and Music Hall?) conducted the orchestra there. From time to time they showed pre-view films, getting the reaction of audiences before showing them in the West End. On one occasion (it was New Year's Eve) I fell into the Thames at Hammersmith (only waist-deep) after looking upon the wine when it was red.

Tramping along a bitterly cold King Street, I was stopped by a constable who observed: "Hullo, hullo, you're wet from the waist down". "Yes," I replied, "my boots are leaking." I ended up attending a preview at the Commodore of the M.G.M. colour version of "King Solomon's Mines" starring Stewart Granger. I only knew the old Troc, Elephant & Castle, in later days when the golden days of cine-variety were over. I have before me a Sunday Concert programme at the Trocadero, dated February 1950. On the bill were Joe Loss and his band, Irving Kaye, the brilliant South African whistling violinist, George Elrick, and Jimmy Edwards. I paid 3/6 for admission. It costs more than that now to buy a loaf of bread. Finally, in case readers get the idea I was a drunk in my younger days, the beer was a lot stronger then than it is today, and one only needed three or four pints to make you merry. As for falling in the Thames, well, it was New Year's Eve, you know.

LEN WORMULL (Romford): Researching books in the British Museum recently, it occurred to me to look up our own Collectors' Digest. I don't know if I am the first to give it an airing, but I do know it gave me a thrill to see it in such celebrated surroundings. Copies are beautifully

bound in a pale shade of blue, and in 2-yearly volumes. Gold lettering on spine gives the shelf-mark (P.P.7617 c.g.), name of magazine, and years of issue. Truly a fitting sanctuary for our illustrious friend. What you might call the Boys' Magazines' favourite magazine.

Mrs. MARY CADOGAN (Beckenham): The September issue of C.D. was a very interesting and heartwarming one. It was good to be reminded in the Editorial of some of our favourite fictional 'bobbies' like P.C. Cuddlecook. My favourite constable from the comics was blonde and beautiful Peggy the Pride of the Force in "Larks". I was very intrigued by Roger's piece on Winchester College as possibly having been one of the models for Greyfriars, and of course I much appreciated Tony Glynn's "Put Me Among the Girls". How splendid that he's become interested in the girls' papers through C.D. articles by Tommy, Esmond and myself. (I hope other readers may follow suit. I can still supply the Cliff House and the Morcove Companions to anyone who is interested, by the way.) R. Goodman from Australia wrote in the September issue about the 'small booklets' that featured Mabel and King Pippin. If he hasn't already seen it, he may like to refer to my article, "Do You Believe in Fairies?" in the 1979 C.D. Annual. I mentioned these stories (they appeared in Young Folks' Tales) and the C.D.A. included pictures of both Mabel and Pippin. They were quite literally really enchanting characters.

C. R. KEARNS (Hull): I wouldn't miss my C.D. Annual for a new Sunday topper!

RONNIE HUNTER (Ventnor): No, you are not being parochial. The Commodore was, strictly speaking, in Hammersmith. There was only one "Commodore" - my most abiding memory of which is of the truly magnificent stage orchestra, which lasted from the opening of the cinema in, I think, 1929, until well into the 30's. The original conductor was Joseph Muscant, but he eventually left and Harry Davidson, the resident organist, took over. I have an idea that Joseph Muscant, afterwards, conducted the Coventry Hippodrome's equally fine orchestra. I wonder if any reader can fill the gaps in the career of Muscant after he left the Commodore?

J. ASHLEY (Fareham): Re Ronnie Hunter's letter in September issue of C.D. The Borough boundary between Hammersmith and Chiswick ran North to South through Goldhawk Road and British Grove. East of the boundary was King's Street, Hammersmith and West of it was Chiswick High Road. The Area is still known as Young's Corner from a Grocery Store which had stood at the junction with Chiswick High Road and Goldhawk Road in the early part of the century.

The Commodore Cinema was located in Hammersmith, just in King's Street.

I remember the Commodore opening, although I cannot remember the exact date. But Joseph Muscant directed the Orchestra and Harry Davidson was the resident organist. Later, I think about 1932, Joseph Muscant moved to the Troc and subsequently to the Troxy Cinema, Stepney. Harry Davidson took over the Commodore Grand Orchestra and by 1933 was well established on B.B.C. Radio's 'Those Were the Days' programme.

I must say how much I enjoyed your article on the Test Matches.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The Trocadero proprietors, later, took over two much smaller cinemas, not far away. One they named the Troxy and the other the Trocette. Neither, of course, was a patch on the Troc itself.)

J. P. FITZGERALD (Manchester): Talking of deterioration of our English as she is spoken (as you have in the recent past) have you noticed lately (apart from those horrors "for real" and "for free") that prominent persons from the highest to the lowest are discarding "going to" in favour of "gonna"?

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Y'know, in this moment of time, y'know, may I be permitted to say, y'know, that in this day and age, y'know --.)

J. A. C. BRIDGWATER (Malvern): I trust we shall be having a Princess Snowee section in the Annual, together with another Mr. Buddle story. I thoroughly enjoy the Buddle tales. I am eagerly looking forward to the treats to come - the Coral issue and the Annual. What a grand finale to 1981!

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): Nelson Lee enthusiasts who claim that

everything must have now been written about their saga, would be interested to know that over the last year I have had many queries from America pertaining to the Trackett Grim stories. I have not been able to help them much as astonishingly they are not recorded in the excellent Nelson Lee Catalogue or in any article as far as I know. Not having the complete run, surely here is an interesting theme for a collector with large collection, not only appraising them, but whether E. S. Brooks did pen them all?

D. SWIFT (Leeds): I wonder if any reader can throw some light on a problem that has intrigued me for some time.

Although the Skilton Bunter books were bound in various colours of cloth when a title was published, Cassell never (to my knowledge) varied the cloth for a particular title - and even future reprints kept the same colour as the first edition.

However, two years ago, I came across one title BUNTER THE VENTRILOQUIST which was not bound in the normal yellow cloth with black lettering as in the previous copies I had seen, but in dark green cloth with gilt lettering. I have never seen any other copy produced in this way. It would appear, at first glance that this could be some special, limited edition, but there is no indication of this in the book itself: the printing is identical to the other editions. Can anyone suggest why this particular copy should be different? The only explanation I can think of, is the fact that Wyman's printed the Bunter books, as they did the William stories and as the later titles of that latter series were produced in dark green and gilt lettering, for some reason Wyman's may have produced a number of Bunter books in this special binding.

If anyone can offer some explanation, I should be most interested.

L. ROWLEY (Penzance): There was much to interest me in this month's C.D. Maurice Hall's "Solving a Mystery and Creating a Mystery" raised an intriguing point as to whether Charles Hamilton kept any records. When I was twelve I maintained a card index of the characters at both Greyfriars and St. Jim's, and I vaguely remember writing to the editor of either the Gem or the Magnet mentioning the fact. To this I received a reply in which I feel sure I was told that an index was kept at Fleetway

House. The time is so far distant that I would not like to swear to this fleeting memory. My own card index was with me until the beginning of the war in 1939 and consisted of nearly four hundred cards. A friend of mine at the time kept similar records of the Sexton Blake adventures and called it his 'Baker Street Index' (he also called his bicycle "The Grey Panther" and a pet dog was christened Pedro). We took our reading seriously in those days and I am sure that the characters from all the boys' papers left a more indelible impression than do the fleeting images that cross the television screens today. Such is progress!

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FOR SALE: Collectors' Digests 1949 - 1956 and later. Also film magazines and books.

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REVIEW

TOM MERRY'S ENEMY

Martin Clifford

(Howard Baker: £7.95)

The star attraction in this volume is a 4-story series concerning a feud between Tom Merry and Lumley-Lumley, the Outsider.

In an earlier series Lumley was shown to have a strange illness in which he went into death-like trances. He left St. Jim's for treatment, and now he is apparently cured, and returns to St. Jim's. An excellent set of stories, with much well-written drama. These tales, slightly pruned in 1934, originally featured in the Gem in early 1911. A rare series which never overstays its welcome.

This new volume opens with "The House of Fear" (1934) which, in 1911, was entitled "The Black House on the Moor". Real Lyceum stuff, and a barefaced "lift" from Conan Doyle, it makes gorgeous reading today. This is the Gem concerning whose cover Mr. Lofts saw some mystery in C.D., recently. That Parker and Macdonald drew the cover between them seems unlikely. Whoever drew the cover, drew the rest of the illustrations to that tale. Certainly Macdonald had nothing to do with it. I would put it down to Kenneth Brookes, but I'm no expert.

"The Mystery of the Sea" ("The Secret of the Sea" in 1911) is a pleasant little tale about a holiday in Clovelly. In 1911 it had been one of those rarities, a story with an alternative title, the alternative being "The Manuscript in the Bottle" which tells a lot.

"The Bully Who Wouldn't Fight", stars that rare old blue Gem "heavy", Gore. Originally entitled "Bound by Honour", it is the first try-out of the theme where the natural fighter is banned from fighting for a time. Hamilton revived the plot many times down the years, but it never had a better airing than in this one.

So! Seven tip-top stories reprinted from 1911, the Golden Age of the Gem. An extra-attraction is a series of short thrillers about the St. Frank's chums, "Ten Talons of Taaz" by E. S. Brooks, who was writing new tales for the Gem at that period.

MECCANO MAGAZINE 1939

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