

Story
Paper

Collectors Digest

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With my large mail and 'phone calls, it is not possible to fall back on Wants Lists, so please jog my memory from time to time. Thanks!

Haven't found time for a holiday yet, but may be away a few days.

Look forward to seeing some of my customers - you'll be amazed!

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STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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W. H. GANDER

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**A Word From The Skipper.****NOT WORTH MUCH - YET PRICELESS!**

Most of us, I suppose, have collections of various sizes. Some of those collections, if we could ever steel ourselves to part with them, might fetch a good deal of money. Almost all of us have collected for sentimental reasons. Very, very few have any eye on a collection as an investment, thank goodness.

I am thinking, at the moment, not of items which might provide a future holiday on the QE2. My mind is running on those bits and pieces which are not worth even a few bob from a dealer. They are of value

only to ourselves. Have you anything like that? Of course you have.

I have a coverless, tattered copy of "The Hidden Horror", a Magnet story of the Red Cover era. I would never part with it, even if anyone was likely to want it.

When I was a small child, my mother would often visit a neighbour called Mrs. Allen. My mother took me with her, and Mrs. Allen would play Sankey hymns on her harmonium - "Dare to be a Daniel", "Shall We Gather at the River", and "Tell me the Old, Old Story", and others like them, with their glorious tunes and touching words. I would sit in the bay window recess, reading a book and sometimes piping in with the hymn. One evening on such an occasion, Mrs. Allen placed a big box of Red Magnets before me, to provide an hour or so's amusement. They were the first Magnets I had ever seen. When it came time to leave, Mrs. Allen said: "Take them with you, dear. Horace won't want them any more." Horace was her son, then away at the First World War. So I took my box of Magnets. I wonder what Horace thought about it when he came home from the war.

At any rate, I have been reading the Magnet ever since. Only one copy remains of those dozens of Magnets which had once belonged to Horace Allen. When I was a child, it was impossible to save old copies for long. They disappeared into dustbins at spring-cleaning time. But "The Hidden Horror" remains from that little heap. Tattered, dog-eared, faded. Worthless, perhaps, but precious to me, having come down the years with me.

Another similar item came to me when, as a small boy I visited my paternal grandparents - the annual "duty" visit, maybe. I came on a book - a Sexton Blake Library, tucked away in a bookcase, perhaps. "Where did this come from Grandma?" I asked, my beautiful blue eyes alive with cupidity. "Mr. So-&-So left it behind when he went away after a visit to us. If you would like it, my darling, take it," said my Grandma. (Grandma's used to talk like that - maybe still do.) So I took it. I still have it, all these long decades later.

It was a copy of S.B.L. No. 2, "Illgotten Gains", a Kew and Carlac story. It was a fine, pristine copy at that time. Down the years it lost its covers somehow, but it has remained smart and tidy, though

coverless, to this day, which may suggest that I never read it. I'm not sure that I ever did. But only a year or two ago I had it bound, and today it has an honourable place in my bookshelves, safe from further deterioration. I value it specially.

I have a white-covered Gem entitled "Charley and the Caravanners". Once-upon-a-time I lent it to a school friend. When he returned it to me, it had his name, in a sprawling, childish hand, written right across the cover. "What have you done that for?" I demanded indignantly. He answered airily, with a remark worthy of one of the facetious schoolboys in Wodehouse school stories: "I thought you might like my autograph. It will be valuable one day."

So vandalism didn't exactly start in the later part of the century! The autograph has never become valuable, but that copy, ruined though it is, is precious to me.

I have a Boys' Friend Library containing "The Schoolboy Castaways". I bought it long, long ago for a copper, in a Kent market. Down the years, that precious copy has stayed with me, though it has worn even worse than I have. But that worn old copy has received cosmetic attention from an expert bookbinder; it has been rejuvenated and looks smart in my bookcase. Especially dear to me, because it has been part of me for so long. The story, by the way, is that one which was originally written to be a serial in the Empire Library under the title "Tom Merry's Treasure Island". Instead, the Empire packed up, and the story became a 3-issue series in the blue Gem. And, a few years later, it was published in the B.F.L.

There are other items, of course, worth nothing, and taking space in the home. A dog-eared, coverless old paperback copy of that lovely old tear-jerker "A Peep Behind the Scenes". It's been with me since I was about 8 years old. I love it with a special love. I have a newish hardback, with smart dustjacket, of the same story, in my bookcase, but the tattered old copy has a place in my heart. An old Sunday School prize "How a Farthing Made a Fortune"; "The School Across the Road", rather a rare tale from Desmond Coke, which I must have had for fifty years; a Penguin with 6d. printed on the cover; a Christie story "Partners in Crime", in hardback with the price 2/6 printed on the dustjacket.

Valueless, perhaps to anybody, but a sentimentalist like me. No doubt you yourself, unless you're one of the tough specimens, have your own little collection of worthless pearls beyond price.

FIRST STOP, CLAPHAM JUNCTION --

A month or two ago Roger Jenkins commented on how off-track Hamilton often was in naming the London Terminus stations at which travellers arrived when on a train journey from Greyfriars or St. Jim's. As Mr. Jenkins remarked, it seems to be evidence that the great author of school stories did not do much travel by train.

However, Hamilton wasn't the only one. I recently read a Sherlock Holmes story in which Waterloo was stated to be the main line station for those on a journey from London to Horsham. I would say that Conan Doyle was also off-track. To reach Horsham by train, one would surely travel from Victoria. True, there used to be a little branch line (actually a L.B.S.C. branch in the middle of the L.S.W. network of old days), mainly single track, which ran through open country from Guildford to Christ's Hospital, Horsham (it was finally closed down about 30 years ago), but a traveller to Horsham from London would be most unlikely to make use of it.

C.D. & THE FORTH BRIDGE

Mr. Tom Porter wrote to me to say some very pleasant things about our June issue. He went on: "And now, already, I expect you are hard at work on the July issue. It all seems somewhat like painting the Forth Bridge. Once finished, it's time to begin again."

Very neatly, Mr. Porter puts it in a nutshell. Unfortunately, as the years dash past, the Forth Bridge seems to double its length every so often. Or is one just slowing down?

Tom adds: "A great gap would open up in our lives if SPCD disappeared, and that is not to be thought of."

Which may be a good reason for tightening one's breastplate and carrying on!

THE EDITOR

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FOR SALE: About 30 Football Annuals, Playfair, etc., published at 5/- each; some pre-war; 25p each, plus postage.

CHURCHILL, 43 RETREAT ROAD, TOPSHAM, EXETER.

Danny's Diary

JULY 1932

There is a new William book just out. It is called "William, the Pirate", and it costs half-a-crown. Doug bought it for himself, and he has let me read it. Tip-top tales, all of them. My favourite is "Mrs. Bott's Hat" in which William is dared by his pals to steal Mrs. Bott's Sunday hat. He wears it and her new coat, and is mistaken for Mrs. Tom Thumb, a midget from the fair. My second favourite is "William and the Musician" in which William becomes friendly with a Punch & Judy man, who has an intelligent dog, Toby, and William arranges matters so they perform at Mrs. Bott's swank party instead of Zevrier, the violinist.

One story in this book is "William and the Princess Goldilocks", and Doug already has this one in a Happy Mag which he bought last year. Richmal Crompton, who writes the William tales, sounds like a man, but is really a lady, so Doug says.

In the Nelson Lee Library this month there have been long complete detective stories of Nelson Lee & Nipper. Their titles have been "The Man from Chicago", "The Fortune Trail" set in Alaska, "The Shadow! The Man of 100 Disguises", and the sequel "On His Majesty's Service".

Also in the Lee there is a serial about St. Frank's, in which an Amateur Boxing Champion is appointed Headmaster. His name is James Kingswood. He sets about reforming the old school.

There has been a big murder trial this month in real life. A society butterfly named Mrs. Elvira Barney has been tried at the Old Bailey on a charge of murdering her lover, Scott Stephen. Patrick Hastings was her defending counsel, and Mr. Churchill, the firearms expert, gave his opinion of the gun in the matter. Mrs. Barney claimed that she had been trying to shoot herself when her lover tried to stop her, and the gun went off and shot him. Mrs. Barney was found not guilty, and the crowds cheered her. But my Dad says that it was a curious affair that she got off altogether.

There is a new book out called The Boys' Wonder Library. Two titles are to be published every month, price 2d. each. No. 1 is "The Squadron of Death", an air story by George E. Rochester, and No. 2 is "For Glory and the Legion", an adventure tale by Leslie Beresford. It is not my line of reading.

The Modern Boy continues with the Correspondence Course Cowboy; the Jan of the Jungle stories, based, I think, on Tarzan; motor racing from Alfred Edgar; plus the serial. But, in the last Modern Boy of May, a new feature has started, and I think it will give me some chuckles. It is called "Just My Fooling" by the Old Boy. It has bits like the following:

"This Week's Best Films: Hackett Downe and Spoila Tree in "A WOODCUTTER'S ROMANCE". A great story of the Cottonwoods in Seven Reels. Music by Chopin. Story by Ewell Logg. Released by Poplar Productions Holly-wood. A real side-splinter. "HORN-RIMMED GLASSES". A spectacular production featuring Seymour Clearly, Lydia Eyelash, and the Lenz Brothers. With numbers by the Co-Opticians. Rather an "eyebrow" film."

Which reminds me that we have seen some good programmes at the Pictures this month. We have seen Seymour Hicks in "Money for Nothing"; Ronald Coleman with Joan Bennett in "Bulldog Drummond"; Norma Shearer and Basil Rathbone in "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney", a neat tale of a society lady who is a confidence trickster; Chic Sale and Dickie Moore in "The Expert". With this last one there was a lovely new Laurel & Hardy 2-reeler entitled "Helpmates". Robert Montgomery and Madge Evans in "Lovers Courageous", very nice indeed. Charles Bickford and Helen Twelvetrees in "Panama Flo"; and, finally, Wheeler and Woolsey in "Girl Crazy". A pretty good month for mid-summer.

Two absolutely stunning stories in this month's Schoolboys' Own Libraries. "One Against the School" stars Vernon-Smith, one of the best Bounder stories ever. He finds out the identity of a bankrobber - and nobody believes him. The second tale is "Gussy, the Runaway". Gussy runs away from St. Jim's, and takes shelter, in turn, at Greyfriars, Highcliffe, Cliff House, and Rookwood, until he is finally hauled back to his own school. One of the finest of all the Arthur Augustus series, I am sure.

Kaye Don has broken the world's record on the water, reaching a speed of 120 miles an hour in a motor-boat.

The first story in the Gem this month is "Cousin Ethel's Champion". Skimpole fancies himself as a poet, and falls in love with Cousin Ethel. The next story is "The Mystery of the Missing Heir". This is a Ferrers Locke story, and Tom Merry, as his assistant, is kidnapped by two Americans in the belief that he is the heir to a fortune, Reggie Graham.

"St. Jim's Under Canvas" comes next, and is a story of rivalry with the Grammar School. The St. Jim's redskins are reintroduced, and go to war with the paleface dogs of the Grammar School juniors led by Frank Monk. The sequel to this story came next week with "The Rival Campers". Cowboys versus Redskins in Rylcombe Woods. Finally, "Skimpole the Inventor". Skimpole invents an airship. So does Mr. Horatio Fish, who loses his plans. Mr. Fish engages Ferrers Locke to find the plans. They were actually in the pocket of a discarded jacket. All light stuff, but good reading with plenty of schoolboy fun.

London has a fine new bridge over the Thames. The new Lambeth Bridge has been declared open this month by Queen Mary, amid vast cheering crowds.

Magnificent month in the Magnet. It is marvellous how Frank Richards keeps the standard up, week after week. The opening tale of the month is "Hidden Plunder", a sequel to last month's tale about Jerry the Rat who hid a huge haul of banknotes in No. 1 study. The police search in vain for the loot, but Carne has found it. But Carne, up to his ears in debt, keeps his discovery to himself. Next, "Coker the Champion Chump". Coker takes up the matter of the lost loot, but he does not solve the mystery, though he gets himself into a tight corner over it all.

Then "Billy Bunter's Banknote". One day Bunter is broke to the wide. The next day he is flourishing a real £50 note. Where did he get it? That is the question, as Spokeshave said. Actually, Bunter had found it in Friardale Wood - and the mystery of the lost loot is still a mystery. Next week, "The Mystery of the Green Satchel". Dandy Sanders is after the loot. He has been told where it was hidden by the thief. At the end, Inspector Grimes gets his man, and the mystery of the loot is solved at last. A great series.

Final of the month is a joyous tale "Who Walloped Wiggins?" One would not expect the Third Form master to have an enemy, but somebody knocked him down in the dark. A Remove chap is suspected, but the culprit was Loder, who meant it for Wingate.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The 1932 Gem, "Cousin Ethel's Champion" was entitled "Skimpole's Fancies" in 1908; "The Mystery of the Missing Heir" was originally "Tom's Terrible Time"; "St. Jim's Under Canvas" had been "Tom Merry in Camp", and "The Rival Campers" had been "The Rival Camps" in 1908; "Skimpole the Inventor" had previously been "Skimpole's Airship".

S. O. L. No. 175 was a 3-story Magnet series (and a splendid one) from the Magnet summer of 1927. S. O. L. No. 176, "Gussy the Runaway" was a 7-story Gem series from the summer of 1922. The S. O. L., though it reads well enough, and is successful, was heavily pruned from the original. 7 stories were obviously far too many to be squeezed into one S. O. L.

It is generally agreed that Ronald Colman was the finest of all Bulldog Drummonds, though the character was revived on screen a number of times as years passed. Ronald Colman himself made another Drummond film some 6 years after the first one.)

* * * * *

DEATH OF LEONARD M. ALLEN

We are deeply saddened to record the death of Mr. Leonard M. Allen of Bournemouth. He had been ailing since Christmas, but early in May he collapsed and was rushed to hospital. After being in the Intensive Care unit for over a week, he passed away on 10th May.

Leonard, who was 74, was a retired Civil Servant. He had been in the hobby since its very early days - there are not so many of us left who recall the first issue of C.D. - and, in early days wrote a few articles for this magazine and the Annual. His main interests were The Captain, the Nelson Lee, and old film magazines. But his great love was C.D. of which he never missed an issue from Number One.

On behalf of its readers, Collectors' Digest extends very deep sympathy to Leonard's widow, Mrs. M. Allen, and the family.

* * * * *

WANTED: Richmal Crompton's "William The Lawless", (or D.W. for same), "William The Superman", Thriller, Picture Library, any; Monsters, any; early Magnets.

SALE: Greyfriar's Holiday Annuals, originals, 1920, 1926, 1927; offers.

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Magnets, Gems, Schoolgirls' Owns, plus other children's books FOR SALE. S.a.e. for list to:-

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Nelson Lee Column

THE GOSSIP COLUMNS

by Len Wormull

The year 1931 in the Nelson Lee saw the return not only of the full-length school story, but also that popular feature *Between Ourselves*. Advance news of the event was given personally by E. S. Brooks, and, with No. 63, the readers' forum was declared open for business. Letters and good photographs of readers were invited, the chat was cosy, and the man responsible was to be seen in the top left-hand corner. Here, at any rate, was the spark of old times. As the paper went to press weeks in advance, it was not until No. 68 that letters were acknowledged, with quotes at the author's discretion. Three weeks later the showcase abruptly changed hands, the author's picture came down, and photogenic 'hopefuls' were left high and dry. What wrought the sudden change? Brooks afterwards said that the dropping of *Between Ourselves* was entirely against his wishes, and that the Editor probably thought he was getting too much limelight. During its short run, two familiar names received a mention - James W. Cook, and Ernest S. Holman. While all this was happening, the boys of St. Frank's were on another of their jaunts to Northestria.

Between Ourselves was immediately followed by *Our Round Table Talk*, this being conducted by the Editor. Outwardly things were much the same, except that the author/reader relationship was broken, and this time for good. The practice of acknowledging readers' letters ended with No. 85, after which only points of interest were printed. A cursory glance down the columns of this period revealed a mini *Who's Who* in hobby names, past and present. Ernest S. Holman, riding high after his own published St. Frank's story, "Saints versus 'Friars'", was a name much in evidence at this time. This being a gossip column, I hope he won't mind me quoting from an editorial reply: 'The greatest practical joker in the Remove, Ernest S. Holman, is probably Vivian Travers. It would be correct to call him the japer of the Remove. Nipper, naturally, is the leader of any Form jape, but Travers is the expert practical joker of the Form. If a day passes without his bagging

a victim, he regards it as a blank'. Robert Blythe was another that caught my eye. No, Bob, all letters to the Editor do NOT go into the w.p.b. Others who put pen to paper at this time, and who are now departed, were Norman Pragnell, Walter Webb, and Julius Herman. With apologies to those I may have overlooked.

Taking the Gossip Columns as a whole, one name stands head and shoulders above the rest - Reg. T. Staples. His outpourings to Fleetway House must have rivalled the letters-to-the-Press of the late Algernon Ashton. He had so much to say, and most of it trifling. Even Brooks called him the 'Walworth Wonder'. It would be interesting to know if anyone in our circle ever made contact with him. On the portrait side, I believe that Jim Cook is the only one of today's champions to see his photo alongside the author's. The late Julius Herman was another, and it took Bill Lofts to discover that he had written stories for the Magnet and Gem.

This period of the Nelson Lee has taken more than its share of knocks, but I personally have rather a warm spot for it. Admittedly, the paper was but a shadow of its former self, but it was still good value for money, with plenty to enjoy. In any case, it was like balm in Gilead (where have I heard that before?) after the shocking events of the previous year. Loyalty may have been sorely tried, but I still looked forward to the weekly copy. K. K. Parkington and his gang of firebrands, who had done so much to liven things up, were soon to return to Carlton College. And if you didn't know this was situated only a bicycle ride from St. Frank's, you have to thank (again) Ernest S. Holman for raising the question. Frankly, I had never heard of the place until then. A new Headmaster was causing a lot of excitement - Dr. Scattlebury by name, and scatty by nature. Not very dignified scootering and leap-frogging about the Triangle, but the boys liked him, and it is possible that readers did too. He took the whole school to see the Derby. Some party! Ezra Quirke was making his farewell appearance, new boy Skeets Bellton took the stage, and Caronia was another place to visit. All this and another flood too!

With all its set-backs, St. Frank's never quite degenerated to the level of the Thomson schools - Hotspur's Red Circle tales excepted. Try as they would to put the stories across, one thing stood out like a

sore thumb. The alienated drawings of Kenneth Brookes. Poor Kenneth! A fine artist, whose only misfortune was to have the wrong conception of St. Frank's and its characters. I give the last word to E. S. Brooks, in answer to a questionnaire: 'I do not know why Arthur Jones was dropped in favour of Kenneth Brookes - but, again, this was purely an editorial decision. I agree with you that much damage was done to the paper by the change.

THE GOOD OLD NELSON LEE

by J. H. Mearns

The Editorial in the April C.D. raises questions regarding the demise of the Nelson Lee Library and its amalgamation with the Gem.

It is my opinion that the N.L.L. reached a new high in the 1931-1932 Nos. 94 - 111. The size, the format (captions, chapter headings, covers, and titles) and the art-work are of a very high standard, comparable with the best issues of the Magnet of that time, which is saying something; and vastly superior to the kind of thing that was going out in the so-called hey-day, the Ezra Quirke series.

The U.S. Adams as Remove Captain series (Nos. 95-97) is a brilliant school story, crammed with incident and novel situations, which are nevertheless integral to the plot. Brooks handles the huge canvas of St. Frank's and its giant cast in masterly fashion, and there is such pace and sheer gusto in the writing that it is quite obvious that he must have enjoyed himself doing it. Nipper is interestingly characterised in the first story (as is Bernard Forrest, for a change). Handforth, though he has his moments and they are good ones, plays a relatively minor role in the series.

The remaining stories (Nos. 98-111) are all of the detective-cum-school story variety, and it is fair to say practically all of them contain genuinely thrilling episodes. The exception is the Tony Cresswell series, where there are definite signs of flagging interest on the part of the author.

During this time, the Editor's Round Table Chat has about six short paragraphs all devoted to the saga of St. Frank's and includes such items as a local geography quiz and terse pen-sketches of juniors and seniors of the school. The middle section of the paper was three pages of Handforth's Weekly, which seems, somehow, to approximate more closely to the idea of a school magazine than either the Greyfriars Herald

or the St. Jim's Gazette.

All of this changed soon after the reprints of the old detective stories got under way, and the Lee was no longer a pleasure to handle, much less to read.

The circulation war was now developing momentum, and the Thomson Weeklies were attracting the type of reader, in large numbers, who probably never had much time for periodicals like the Magnet, Gem, or Nelson Lee. Even the Modern Boy and the Ranger were a shade too "literary" for the boy reader whose taste ran to a menu of short, sharp shocks. (Compare "Black Whip" and "The Black Sapper"; Sexton Blake and Dixon Hawke; "The Rio Kid" and "Rattlesnake Joe".)

The late Geoffrey Wilde wrote an incredibly enthusiastic review of the St. Frank's stories in the Gem. These were poor things in my estimation, and did nothing to restore either the flagging fortunes of the Gem or the flagging enthusiasm of the Author.

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BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I hope you will all enjoy this month's Blakiana which should bring back old memories, especially about the "Proud" Tram series. Please let me know if you have any other views on how the poll should have gone. I also require some more articles and please remember there is the Annual to think about. Just a little something about your favourite character would do nicely. Thank you.

SEXTON BLAKE VISITS NOTRE DAME

by Raymond Cure

Collectors' items have been the cause of crime. Crime that includes murder. They still are.

Whether it is the collecting of stamps, paintings or bric-a-brac valuable items disappear from prize collections.

I do not suppose it will ever come to crime or murder in the case of the valuable collections of the Old Boys' Papers, still, with the increasing rise in prices, one never knows. I mention this in passing; not that I expect any of our brethren to put their collections in a strong

safe, but to introduce the theme of this article, to wit, the nicking of a priceless collectors item.

At this point we turn to a Union Jack presentation of September 1923, No. 1042, entitled "The Case of the Crippled Monk", or "The Mystery of Notre Dame", another of those twin titles so popular in those days. In this case I think the second title should have the pre-eminence in spite of the illustration of a crippled monk leaning on two crutches and staring you full in the face, on the attractive cover. Let the reader, however, decide for himself.

Founded on fact, the birth of this story is told by the editor who conceived of it along with the author, G. H. Teed, after a visit to Notre Dame. If you have a copy read it up on page 7, most interesting.

The author lived in Paris and considering his setting is Notre Dame and his three villains by name the Three Musketeers, he is influenced by Alexandre Dumas. Think of Notre Dame and you think of the hunchback, a queer fellow indeed! Not that he is the only queer fellow in the world of fiction, Frankenstein, Dracula to say nothing of the Phantom of the Opera are all well-known. Where do these characters come from and how do our books come to be filled with these oddballs?, is the title of an article by Angus Wells, himself the author of a number of Westerns under assumed names. In view of the fact that many characters in Sexton Blake tales are indeed "Oddballs" it is worth quoting from his article. "Where a character comes from is pretty much anyone's guess, and the sources will change with the technique and temperament of individual authors. Personally I don't keep files, preferring to rely on the resources of my imagination and memory. Chiefly, they do come straight from the fantasy land inside my skull, springing up in accordance with the demands of setting and general style of the book I am writing at the time.

So characters come from whatever mental processes they are that make us writers."

I have quoted somewhat at length as to what was lurking about in the mind of the author of our tale. Here he comes - the source of all the trouble - "Mathew Cardolak, eccentric antiquarian and mysterious meddler in the near East. A multimillionaire, a strange dwarflike creature, scarcely five feet in height, bent and shrivelled and with a patriarchal

white beard reaching almost to his knees. His head completely devoid of hair. He was a strange personality was Mathew Cardolak and the most arresting thing about him was the deep melodious bass voice emerging from his wrinkled lips. There's an oddball to be roaming around in any author's mind. 'Tis he that plans to secure that amazing collector's item from the vaults of Notre Dame with the aid of the Three Musketeers. Our oddball has his shifty eyes on a priceless relic given to the Cathedral by King Louis XVIII on the occasion of the baptism of his son. Needless to say the plan is foiled by the coming of Sexton Blake. Rather than trace a brief outline of the tale, I wish rather to say that the author spends time on descriptions of characters and scenes more than most. You will have realised that by the description of Mathew Cardolak. One thing more, the author knows his Notre Dame. He takes you on a pen-tour of this magnificent building before he pits the crafty cunning of the oddball against the reasoned logic of the great Sexton Blake. Maybe our friend Josie Packman can give us the author's name as I see no mention of it on the cover. (The author is G. H. Teed - J.P.)

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

by Josie Packman

Just by way of an explanation as to whom the Three Musketeers were, let me say that they were three of the worst criminals ever to pit their wits against Sexton Blake. They first appeared in Union Jack, No. 977, dated 1st July, 1922. Their names were Algy Somerton, Archie Pherison and Reggie Featherstone and were known to their friends as the Three Musketeers as they were always seen about together. But under the seemingly vapid faces of these three men-about-town there lurked the most vicious and criminal types of brains, as anyone who has read about them will know.

I do not propose to write a long treatise on these three criminals as I did this way back in 1953. It was rather a long article and appeared in three consecutive issues of the C.D., Nos. 82, 83 and 84, dated October, November and December 1953. I trust this information will encourage our Sexton Blake fans to re-read these tales and also the Collectors' Digests of 1953.

WANTED: Bunter Books, Bunter Out Of Bounds, Billy Bunter Butts In, Billy Bunter and the Blue Mauritius. MRS. E. HOPTON, 79 Scalpcliffe Rd., Burton-on-Trent, Staffs., DE15 9AB.

UP THE POLL

by J.E.M.

A reprint from C.D. No. 320, dated August 1973

I was looking recently at the result of a modest little poll carried out by the Union Jack in 1932, as part of a prize competition. Blakians will recall the famous "Tram" series when six of the best-known U.J. authors contributed stories based on an identical mystery situation presented to them by the Editor. Readers were invited to vote on the popularity of these yarns, the winning entry being the one whose list came nearest to the popular vote as a whole. This was the result of the ballot:

First:	E. S. Brooks	The Mystery of Blind Luke	U.J. 1490
Second:	Gwyn Evans	Fear Haunted	U.J. 1489
Third:	Donald Stuart	The Witches Moon	U.J. 1488
Fourth:	Anthony Skene	The Crook Crusaders	U.J. 1486
Fifth:	G. H. Teed	Revolt!	U.J. 1487
Sixth:	Gilbert Chester	The "Proud" Tram Mystery	U.J. 1485

Has anyone commented before on the fact that the order of preference arrived at by readers votes was exactly the reverse of the order in which the stories appeared, apart from the preference for Anthony Skene's story over G. H. Teed's? One wonders if this result has any significance. Did it mean that the later the story came in the series the fresher it remained in readers minds and, therefore the better it seemed. If so, then clearly the earlier contributors were severely handicapped. That Skene's story, on this hypothesis, did better than it ought to have done is surely a tribute to his glittering creation, Zenith the Albino - a memorable figure for even the shortist memories. Indeed, one can't help feeling that had this story appeared later in the series - say as fifth or sixth entry - he might well have secured a far larger vote from U.J. readers. Nevertheless, as I wrote on a previous occasion (C.D. 286) the actual winner by E. S. Brooks was a worthy one, a compelling and attractive story.

It would be interesting to have the views of other Blakians on this old U.J. "opinion poll".

 WANTED: Magnets Nos. 1585; 1600; 1683; urgently wanted to complete set of the salmon cover copies. H. PEMBERTON, 63a Parkend Rd., Newall Green, Manchester, M23 8QP.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 178 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 94 - "The Rookwood Rebellion"

By the turn of the year 1921, when this series originally appeared in the weekly Boys' Friends, the Rookwood stories were on average only four chapters in length, and when this Schoolboys' Own is perused it is easy to spot the note of climax at the end of every fourth chapter and the summary of vital facts at the beginning of the following chapter. It all helps to make the Rookwood stories pleasant to read, even if there was not often much elbow room left for character development.

"The Rookwood Rebellion" was set against a background of influenza when certain masters and boys had succumbed, and the school was in quarantine for Christmas, ruled over by the mean-minded Roger Manders. In a sense the story began in the middle, for there is a tantalising reference to a Christmas Eve jest, when someone posing as a Harley Street specialist visited Mr. Manders and conveyed alarming news to him about the state of his health. I would dearly like to have seen that episode reprinted as well, but it was traditional at this time for Rookwood Schoolboys' Owns to be complete in themselves and, since it was of course necessary to have the conclusion, it was obvious that the beginning had to be omitted.

After an amusing account of the manner in which Putty Grace masqueraded as the rejected wife of Mr. Manders, the series settled down to outline the way in which Mr. Manders' interfering proclivities led him from one crisis to another, until the Classical Fourth began a barring-out in their dormitory, Mr. Dalton in the meantime having been dismissed. As usual, themes that were later used so successfully in the Gem and the Magnet first saw the light of day at Rookwood. There was an attack by prefects, followed by a solitary policeman, and last of all a group of bargees who had been recruited at the Red Cow at Latcham. An incident not repeated elsewhere was the return of Mr. Dalton who took on one of the bargees successfully, and so induced them all to leave, but not before they had dunned Mr. Manders for their promised payment.

At this stage, Mr. Dalton stayed on, in spite of the fact that he had been dismissed, and another interesting turn of events transpired when Mr. Manders plotted to put his rival in a false position when Dr.

Chisholm returned. Thanks to the Fistical Four, however, Mr. Manders was foiled in his plan, and the status quo remained. Fascinating though this series is, there is nevertheless no doubt that the shortness of the episodes left a feeling of haste and jerkiness. It was not until the Brander series in the Magnet that these themes were brought to full fruition. "The Rookwood Rebellion" remains a flawed masterpiece, fascinating, but not completely satisfying.

* * * * *

THE SWOT

by Tommy Keen

Recently, I read "Bob Cherry - Swot". The period (1926) appealed to me greatly, but now, after reading the five Bob Cherry stories, vaguely I felt disappointed with the series. Even in my boyhood days, when Bob was supposedly the most popular character with the readers of the Magnet, he had little appeal for me, with his everlasting "Hallo, Hallo, Hallo", which was almost as monotonous as Billy Bunter's "I say you fellows", but Bob was a member of the Famous Five (actually a very valued member of that select company), and as such, his exuberance fitted in well with the totally different personalities of Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh.

However, in "Bob Cherry - Swot", he is completely out of character, he is morose, bad tempered, and at times almost vicious, which although we could expect these traits from Harry Wharton, (and often did, under similar circumstances), with Bob it was all wrong. Apart from the inevitable falling out with the rest of the Famous Five, he was rude and quarrelsome with his former great friend, the splendid Mark Linley.

I am quite certain that way back in 1926, this series about the popular Bob Cherry made enthralling reading, as the theme has been used more than once, but reading the stories now, and visualising Harry Wharton as Bob Cherry, Colonel Wharton as Major Cherry, and with Bunter still being the cause of so much trouble by confiscating an important letter, it could have been any of the Wharton rebellion/downfall/etc., etc., series. Again, as in so many of the Greyfriars stories, to bring the series to a close, a leading character has to be saved from grave danger (in this case, Major Cherry), by the wayward

hero. Not always a satisfactory ending.

I must not, however, be too harsh about this series, for when I read a paragraph or so, as follows, I breathe a sigh of relief, wipe a moist eye, and think "Thank goodness, they are all friends again":-

'Bob could hardly have reached the school at all ... his head was swimming as he came into the lighted House.

There, four fellows of the Remove gathered round him - Wharton, Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Not a word was spoken. Bob gave them a dizzy look, and submitted quietly as they bore him away to the dormitory. Words were not needed. All the members of the Famous Five knew, without a word, in that moment, that the long trouble had ended - that the reconciliation, unlooked for, unexpected, had come at last, and the knowledge of it brought peace and solace to the lonely junior who had so long been the "outsider" of the Remove.'

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

THAT PARKINSON STORY

CHRISTOPHER LOWDER writes:

I recall "Lucky For Parkinson" with great affection; it was the very first pre-War Frank Richards story I ever read (sometime around 1954, I think). John Gray, a teacher at my preparatory school, had the entire run of Holiday Annuals, which he used to lend out to pupils when some particularly good academic result had been achieved (perhaps not surprisingly, he's the only teacher I can recall from that period with any clarity). Years later, when a dealer offered me one Holiday Annual in trade for some items I was offering him, I snapped up the 1926 issue without a second thought, simply to get hold of the "Parkinson" story, so profoundly had it affected by imagination.

Looked at with a professional eye, it's technically almost flawless: neither too long nor too short, with three well-defined crescendos (Man in Grey's appearance; football match; Man in Grey's reappearance), all perfectly paced and each more powerful than the last. The writing too contains some of Hamilton's most striking passages. The eerie atmosphere in the darkened study after the match building up to the climax when the Man in the Grey Coat comes for Parkinson's soul still gives me a genuine frisson. For me, the twist in the tail -- the fact that Parkinson has dreamed the entire episode -- does not grate at all; on the contrary, it neatly rounds the whole thing off. I've never been in any doubt whatsoever that it is authentic Hamilton, and it remains one of my favourite single stories.

Incidentally, the word 'schlemihl' would perhaps be more familiar to eastern European

Jews; it denotes a fool or simpleton. The author of "The Shadowless Man" (something of a classic) was Adelbert von Chamisso, a contemporary of the fantasist E. T. A. Hoffmann.

CROSSED WIRES?

muses Ernest Holman

The Innis Hael business interested me and, as in all such cases, I turned to the Hobby's own 'Wisden' (the Adley/Lofts Men Behind Boys' Fiction). Surprise, surprise! There was no mention of Hael but there was the following: Hale, Innis (real name Samuel Clarke Hook). Turning next to the entry against the Jack, Sam and Pete author, I found amongst the pen-names both Innis Hale AND Innis Hael.

Turning to Ernest Sempill (given as his real name) one finds him described as the most mysterious of boys' fiction writers. It seems he was known at A.P. during the first decade of the century as Michael Storm, the creator of George Marsden Plummer. He was apparently aged about 48 at this time and was suspected as having some connection with the famous Sempill family.

I also looked at the pen-names mentioned by Christopher Lowder. Charles H. Snow has no mention in MBBF. There is an Alan Gale under Sempill's pen-names - but H. Winter Gale is shown as having the real name of T. G. Dowling Maitland, who also acted as an agent for other writers' stories. C. Vernon Frost (real name) is described as the author of several Red Circle School stories in Hotspur.

One accepts, of course, that further information is frequently being revealed to alter previous beliefs. It does seem to me, however, that some wires must have been crossed somewhere, to bring about all the changes that are offered. (I wonder if Dowling Maitland, as an agent, inadvertently got into the act?) In addition, we are asked to accept the fact that actor Claude Rains was, in fact, Ernest Sempill and owed his existence to a Royal indiscretion!

Rains, of course, is an instance of furthering the weather names of Snow, Gale, Frost, etc. I wonder, then, if one can read some greater significance into the fact that when he arrived in Hollywood, Claude Rains became The Invisible Man!

POSTSCRIPT: Tony Glynn asks: "Is Christopher Lowder absolutely sure that Charles H. Snow was really Michael Storm? I have a feeling that I've seen Charles H. Snow, who wrote westerns, given as a pen-name of Harry Sinclair Drago, a native of Oklahoma, who wrote under several names.

* * * * *

FOR SALE: Gems Nos. 1498, 1501, 7d. Sexton Blakes Nos. 176, 196, 168; 10d. Sexton Blake No. 414. Paperback - Billy Bunter's Postal Order, Nelson Lee Library No. 152. All £1 each, postage paid.

JOHN GODDARD, 44 BAKER STREET, POTTERS BAR, HERTS., EN6 2EB.
Tel. POTTERS BAR 59555

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

MIDLAND

Eleven members were present at our A.G.M. always held in May. Terry Jones, who broadcasts on "Severn Sound" was again present.

The business part of the meeting was not extensive. All the present officials were elected "en bloc" and thanked for their services. The success of the newsletter is so evident when the club now boasts forty members, many of them postal members because of living too far away from Birmingham. Twelve editions of our newsletter is well worth £1 (OAP 50p) of anybody's money in a year.

We had a Bring-and-Buy sale arranged

The table was loaded with books and much time was taken up with buying and selling. The generosity of our members was very evident and £15.10 was realised, a very useful sum.

A discussion on games in the Hamilton stories took place. In the later stories only soccer and cricket seemed to matter. Our members were asked their views and as might be expected their answers depended on the games they preferred.

A reading by your correspondent from Magnet 815 (1924) was warmly applauded. Billy Bunter actually tells Dr. Locke he preferred "the sack to a flogging as he might go to a better school under a headmaster who knew Bunter's true value. That there could possibly be a better school than Greyfriars sounded to Dr. Locke a good deal like profanity.

Two games of Greyfriars Bingo were played. The winners were Tom Porter and Christine Brettell.

Ivan Webster gave a reading from a Magnet story about Bunter's attempt to persuade Hoskins of the Shell to listen to his music, if such it could be called. Needless to say Bunter suffers for nothing.

Our next meetings are on 27th July and 24th of August. You will be welcome if you visit us.

JACK BELLFIELD - Correspondent

CAMBRIDGE

The Club concluded its 1981-82 season with the customary visit to Ruth and Neville Wood at their delightful home at Swefling.

It was a joy to visit Ruth and Neville again, and once again our visit was marked by sunny weather, tempered by a gentle breeze, and we were able to enjoy Ruth's lavish lunch and tea in the garden.

We were exceptionally fortunate in the weather, since we had left an early storm behind us in Cambridge, and the weather at Swefling continued glorious until we took our leave, just in time to avoid a heavy rainstorm, which broke over our cars and continued for about half an hour. For the rest of the journey home we again enjoyed sunny weather. On reaching Cambridge we heard that most of the day there had been very stormy.

The day was spent again in browsing among Neville's magnificent Library, especially his splendid and extensive collection of detective fiction, and listening to the tapes and records in the wonderful Aladdin's cave which is his home.

Bill Lofts entertained us in the afternoon with the story of his search for the grave of Sax Rohmer, which he found in a Catholic cemetery adjoining Kensal Green, and of retracing his steps through long avenues of tombstones, half expecting to see the sinister figure of Fu Manchu emerge from the gathering twilight. A further anecdote from Bill, about a mysterious visit to a house, produced one or two other accounts of mysterious happenings.

All too soon another happy day ended and we departed with warm thanks to Ruth and Neville for their hospitality.

The Club will now take the usual summer break during July and August. Meetings will resume again on Sunday, 5th September, when our host will be Malcolm Pratt at his home at Lode.

LONDON

Josie Packman had a busy time at the East Dulwich meeting as she conducted her Sexton Blake Library and officiated in the chair. Furthermore, she talked about the artist, F. J. Harnack, who drew the Decorations in the Text, the small sketches that graced the commence-

ment of the chapters of some of the Union Jack stories. A Mr. Miller wrote to her for the information and Josie traced the artist's name in Union Jack, 1497, "The Blood Brothers of Nan-Hu" written by C. H. Teed.

Reading some of the correspondence columns in Nelson Lee library, New Series 134, circa 1928, both E. S. Brooks and Jim Cook's names cropped up. The photograph printed of both these Franciscans portrayed them when they were very much younger.

More vintage Hamiltonia from Winifred Morss who read the extremely funny story about Miss Bullivant and the frying pan.

Millicent Lyle's reading was "The Greyfriars Experiment" which was a long poem dealing with the subject that all could do as they pleased and no punishments. A very good rhyming story.

"The Problem of the Punctured Penny" was the title of the Trackett Grim story that Bob Blythe read.

The tea ladies were suitably thanked for their untiring efforts.

Next meeting on Sunday, 11th July, at the residence of Bill and Thelma Bradford, 5 Queen Anne's Grove, Ealing. 'Phone 579 4670. A full tea will be provided, kindly notify if intending to be present.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday evening, 12th June, 1982.

It appeared that a number of our Members were on holiday - for only eleven were present. It was good to see Geoffrey Good back as Secretary: owing to various commitments he had been absent for three months.

Mollie reported that we had recently acquired forty single-copy facsimile reprints for our library. All these copies filled in gaps in our library of original issues, but it was suggested that we bought other copies - even if duplicated - to preserve the original copies from natural wear and tear.

The future programme was discussed. Keith Hodkinson from the Cambridge Club would be coming along on Thursday, 17th June, to a special meeting that would be called, to show his excellent "Boys' Own Paper" film that had been seen by two members at the Cambridge Club's Tenth Anniversary meeting in May 1981.

After "break", it was time for third school, with our esteemed Jack Allison (Mr. Quelch?) taking the class for a lesson in Latin (we seem to have read somewhere that Mr. Quelch was rather keen on Latin!). We were all given copies of the Times Education Supplement published in 1961, containing the Bunter Story ("Bunter's Revenge" - construed) specially written in Latin by Mr. Frank Richards. Translating the story very slowly, Jack enabled us to follow the written word. Jack was asked many interesting questions re the story and translation and various aspects of Latin. Contrary to the boys of the Remove anxiously awaiting the school bell to announce the close of lessons, it appeared that time raced ahead of us and all too soon it was time to finish and go home to prep. Many thanks, Jack, for a very novel and fascinating lesson! Our next meeting on 10th July, sees the visit of Bill Lofts. Everyone always welcome.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

* * * * *

The Postman Called

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

EDWARD SABIN (Rednal): I was greatly interested in your notes on Helen Holmes. Yes, I can remember Helen. I well recall her in "A Lass of the Lumberland" and "The Railroad Raiders", although one's memories grow a bit dim over 65 years. All her films were directed by Spike McGowan, her husband, who also played a part in all her pictures.

TOM JOHNSON (Neston): I remember Helen Holmes well. In fact, I possess an autographed photo from her, received many years ago. Also Helen Gibson who took over her role in "Hazards of Helen" from episode 49 to the end, Ep. 119. It was the longest of all serials, though it was really a series, each part being complete in itself. All her films were connected with trains. Her serials were many: "The Girl in the Game", "Lass of the Lumberlands", "The Lost Express", "Railroad Raiders", "Fatal Fortune", "Hazards of Helen", "The Tiger Band".

BERT HOLMES (Barrow-in-Furness). Personally, I thought Helen Holmes as good as Pearl White as the Heroine of the Silent Serials, and just as courageous.

HAROLD LACK (Northampton): I can't tell you how much I look forward to the Collectors' Digest each month, as it brings back so many happy memories of the days gone by. Your mention of Helen Holmes recalled my earliest visits to our local "flea-pit" (alas, long since demolished) on Saturday afternoons. I was taken by an older cousin, as I was then about 6 years old. How we enjoyed ourselves - the price was 1d. and 2d., and we sat in the better seats. I saw several episodes of Helen Holmes's railway serials.

(Editorial Comment: A record mail has come in as a result of my fleeting memory of the Girl who Loved Trains. It is impossible to quote from all, but grateful thanks to all who wrote so delightfully.)

E. GRANT-McPHERSON (Wells): I am writing because I came across your name in Gem No. 1380. In the ads. column you were asking for back numbers of the Gem. Thought you might be interested.

(Editorial Comment: In the Pen Pals section, actually, and I do not recall ever coming across it before. In the thirties I had a good deal of contact with Editor Down, and he quoted me once or twice down the years in his Chats. I can't remember ever writing to the Pen Pals section. But it was as a result of one of those Gem notices that Cedric "Tex" Rickard of Canada got in touch with me. He was my first acquaintance in the hobby. He put Bill Gander in touch with me, and Bill Gander caused Herbert Leckenby to write to me. So the contacts were growing --)

ALAN STEWART (Burnham-on-Crouch): In the May issue W. Bradford's article was interesting - 'How's your Memory?' My regulars were -

Mon. Magnet, Champion, Dick Turpin.

Tues. Popular, Triumph.

Wed. Gem, Nelson Lee.

Thurs. Scout.

Fri. Children's Newspaper (of all things!).

Add to this - S.O.L's, Dick Turpin monthly, comics (Rainbow, Lot-o-Fun, Chips, etc.), plus picking up back numbers. What beats me is - how on earth did I get through that lot in a week? Of course we had no distractions in those days such as T.V. or Radio, but there was still homework to do. On the subject of back numbers - I came to London (Highgate) in 1922, being then 12 years old and I still recall a second-hand shop in Tufnell Park. Stretched across the window was a shelf about

fifteen feet long, sagging dangerously with stacks of the old papers; this was a happy hunting ground for me. When I started collecting again in 1950 I suddenly remembered a cats' meat shop in Highbury where in the window, in neat piles, were Magnets, Gems and Populars, 3d. each! I paid a hurried visit, but alas was too late; all sold. The lady told me she had had a tea chest full. Much gnashing of teeth! The smell of the cats meat still lingers (is Snowee turning up her Royal nose?). Anyway, as Mr. Bradford says, they were happy days and for that matter still are.

ERNEST HOLMAN (Leigh-on-Sea): Many thanks for latest C.D. Danny touched a fond memory - purely because Tom Walls was the owner of April the Fifth, I - and the entire family - backed it. How rich I felt fifty years ago when I won thirty bob!

By the way, can you find room from time to time for more extracts from Danny's early diaries?

BEN WHITER (London): Another splendid issue of the C.D. I thought the cat piece entitled "Fizz" very good. By the way, when "Viennese Nights" was first screened at the R.K.O. Cinema, Leicester Square, the critics slammed it. How wrong they were! It has been reissued about seven times, and always with great success.

BRIAN DOYLE (Putney): Regarding Mr. Cushing's letter on his enjoyment of the 'A. J. Wentworth, BA' stories by H. F. Ellis (which I also have read and often re-read with equal pleasure), he and other Wentworth admirers might be interested to know that a new TV series, based on the stories, is due to begin this Summer. The late Arthur Lowe (of "Dad's Army" fame) plays Wentworth and Harry Andrews portrays the Headmaster. A brand-new Wentworth book is also due for publication this Autumn.

The Wentworth stories originally appeared in "Punch" and the original two books were "The Papers of A. J. Wentworth, BA" (1949) and "A. J. Wentworth, BA (Ret'd)" (1962). They were published in one volume by Penguin Books (paperback) as "The World of A. J. Wentworth, BA" in 1964, this latter volume being recently reissued to 'tie-in' with the forthcoming TV series.

H. F. Ellis, the author, himself taught at Marlborough for a

year and, between 1949-1953 was both Literary and Deputy Editor of "Punch".

Let us hope that the TV series will bring Mr. Wentworth to a wider audience. The books about him belong in that corner of the bookshelves devoted to such warm-hearted humorous classics as "The Diary of a Nobody", "Three Men in a Boat" and (almost unknown, but just as brilliantly funny) "The Journal of Edwin Carp" by Richard Hayden.

Miss M. ALLISON (Leeds): The cover of No. 426 is delightful. I never saw the original, so do not know the season. What strikes me, though, is how well wrapped-up Figgins is, and how lightly clad is Cousin Ethel. Gussy seems to be in-between. Perhaps that was explained in the plot. Nonetheless, a very attractive picture.

I was glad to know Princess Snowee is well, and I enjoyed the encounter with Fizz.

LESLIE E. KING (Chesham): May I just put on record how much I am continuing to enjoy C.D. I lap up every nostalgic word. Here's even more power to your elbow.

F. R. LOWE (Derby): I have written, up-to-date, Danny's comments on the Greyfriars, Rookwood, St. Jim's and Cedar Creek stories - in three separate books. I find them now to be very handy for quick references to the stories, without having to sort through the C.D.'s every time. I have just read three Magnet yarns which I am sure are by sub-writers, although they are not recorded as such in the 1977 Catalogue. These are Magnets 730, 787 and 853.

(Editorial Comment. The entire history of Rookwood, from Danny's viewpoint, is covered in the splendid Hamilton Museum Press volume "Rookwood", still available from our Editorial Office at £3.50 plus postage.)

TOM PORTER (Cradley Heath): What a splendid article Roger Jenkins has given us on Stalky & Co. It is Roger's 177th article. I wonder if John Wernham might collect them in a book when they reach 200, as a tribute to Roger for all his work for the hobby.

JIM MERRILLS (Alberta): C.D. always seems to come up with new twists to the old papers. When I was young, papers like Triumph,

Champion, Ranger and Modern Boy were the starting-point for this type of reading, until I happened to acquire a copy of the Magnet. From then on, it was first with me. Most of the boys went for adventure stories. When trading-day came round for us, if I could not get a Magnet for exchange, it was a "must" to make a fast trip to the news stand to buy a copy.

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): Talking of war casualties amongst our favourite papers, the "Schoolgirl" was one such in May 1940, when it was "amalgamated" with the "Girls' Crystal", leaving the latter the sole survivor of the A.P. girls' papers. The "Schoolgirl" editor referred to the "extension of the war to Norway" in the final issue, and to the suddenness of the decision to cease publication. Whatever the reason, the decision to scrap such long-established papers as the "Gem" and the "Nelson Lee" was a sad business.

I enjoyed Mrs. Gibson's tale of her toughie, Fizz.

* * * * *

WEE WILLIE WINKIE

by W. O. G. Lofts

"Wee Willie Winkie
Runs through the town,
Upstairs and downstairs
In his night-gown . . ."

Whilst for now over sixty years, the Dundee firm of D. C. Thomson Ltd., have published millions of copies of juvenile publications distributed throughout the world, it is also on record that a few other publishers North of the Border, produced papers exclusively for their Scottish readers. To give several examples there was The Young Scot and The Claymore - and at least one comic paper.

Another, to add to these, just fully investigated, was entitled Wee Willie Winkie - named obviously after the famous nursery rhyme, which I believe had Scottish authorship. It was small pocket size, the first number with its distinctive red cover priced One Penny (Monthly) appearing in April 1891.

The front cover showed two almost human looking cats in an amusing situation, possibly drawn by Louis Wain the King of the pussy

illustrators. Its contents were full of riddles, drawings, short essays, poems, and stories - many of which were of a religious nature the trend in those Victorian days. Later, readers themselves made up most of the contributions with their own competitions, puzzles, and queries.

The little paper certainly could claim to have a very distinguished background, for the editor was Lady Marjorie Gordon, stating in her first editorial that the Proprietor was her Mother - Isabel the Countess of Aberdeen! That the paper was a success, could be proved that later it increased its size to almost double, and for the same price. Seemingly by this time it was also distributed in England and published by Partridge & Son. Its revenue must have been good as it contained adverts of famous household name products such as Cadbury's.

All good things come to an end, when in 1897 after a run of six years, it was announced that the paper would close. To celebrate this event (hardly a celebration!) they brought out a special souvenir issue for the final number, the only case I can recall a juvenile paper doing this. This was not only the unique affair, as I found out later that Lady Marjorie Gordon was only born in 1880 at Grosvenor Square, London, so would have been only about eleven years old when editing the paper. Obviously her Mother really handled the whole affair. Wee Willie Winkie could then be said to be a very interesting little paper in more ways than one.

* * * * *

Sale - GEMS - 1507, 1509, 1521, 1547; 75p each. No covers - 198, 232, 240, 241, 253, 306, 308, 309, 314, 323, 327, 352, 358, 369, 372, 378, 381, 382, 426; 60p each.

MAGNET - no covers, 1133; 60p. 56 BUFFALO BILLS (Aldines) 35p each.

20 BUFFALO BILL NOVELS (Aldines) 40p each. 26 REDSKIN LIB. (Newnes) 35p each.

STEWART, COMRIE COTTAGE, WITNEY ROAD

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* * * * *

FOR SALE: "Dimsie Goes to School" by Dorita F. Bruce, 5p; "The School at the Chalet" by Elinor Brent-Dyer, 10p; "The School at The Turrets" by Angela Brazil (nice copy), 15p; "The Forbidden Study" by Hylton Cleaver, 20p; "In and Out of the Box" autobiography of Robert Dougall (brand-new condition), 75p; "Stumper's View", autobiography of Alan Knott (brand-new condition), 75p. POSTAGE EXTRA on all items.

Write ERIC FAYNE. (No reply if items already sold)

WHERE DO I START HIM OFF?

asks Neil Beck

Our son, David, will be four in July, and I am starting to wonder how many years it will be before I can say "Would you like to read this? Both Grandpa and Daddy have been reading them for a long time" - as I hand him a Magnet volume. The problem, of course, is where to start. Being a latecomer, like myself, he can start anywhere in the canon.

In fact, it is an interesting thought that opinions would probably be divided as to just which is the best starting point; not the "best" series, but the most sensible starting-point, always assuming that to start at No. 1 might be ideal, but may not necessarily be the best story to offer a potential reader in an attempt to hook him. I remember starting with the Sahara S.O.L. reprints, and this has remained my favourite story to read - I do not claim it to be Hamilton's "best" (whatever that may mean) - merely that I like it.

* * * * *

THIRSTY?

by F. R. Lowe

The following is a list of the Hotels or Inns in the vicinity of Greyfriars. The name of the hostelry is followed by the Serial Number of the Magnet in which it is mentioned:

Cross Keys (Friardale) 178; Three Fishers 1422; Friardale Arms 418; Red Cow (Friardale) 46; Bird in Hand (Oak Lane) 226; The Feathers 795; The Waterside Inn (Friardale) 107; The Golden Pig 107; Green Man Inn (Ferrydale) 5; Rose & Crown (Courtfield) 751; Anchor Inn (Pegg Bay) 276; Grand Hotel (Lantham) 848; Courtfield Arms 854.

Plus the following, actual serial numbers not recorded:

The Wayside Inn; Station Inn (Friardale); Golden Fleece; Pig & Whistle; Peal of Bells (Courtfield); Bridge Inn (Courtfield); Red Lion (Courtfield).

* * * * *

Early Books For Sale at £1 each: Vernon Warren; Jules Verne; Dorothy Arden; Edgar Wallace; Bull Drummond at Bay; Sydney Hortel; Hank Janson; Rupert; Biggles/Jack o' Lantern; Just Williams; Sherlock Holmes. Also Wizards, Hotspurs, Adventures; 1944 to 1952: 50p and 40p each. S. a. e.

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THE COMIC JOURNAL

A privately published magazine for collectors of British comics, annuals, boys' story papers and associated merchandise. Published bi-monthly, and contains news, views, checklists, reference material and articles of general interest (with at least two free competitions each year).

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For a specimen copy of the Journal, plus sales lists, just send 56p (if you would like to receive the sales lists without the Journal, 26p in stamps towards costs would be appreciated).

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