

STORY PAPER  
**COLLECTORS DIGEST**

VOL. 37

JANUARY 1983

No. 433



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**34P**

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STORY PAPER

## COLLECTORS DIGEST

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BOB BLYTHE

The closing weeks of the Old Year brought great sadness with the news of the death of our very dear friend, Bob Blythe. Bob died peacefully in hospital at mid-day on Monday, 13th December.

He had been ailing for a year or two, and, in the past few months, those of us who knew him well had the stricken feeling that the time he would still be spared to us would not be very long.

But Bob was a great fighter, and a very brave man. He refused

to accept defeat or ever to admit that his life was drawing to a close.

As everybody knows, Bob was a Nelson Lee man. He believed strongly and sincerely that the Nelson Lee Library was the finest paper ever published, and that E. S. Brooks was the best writer in the world, and for all time, for the young and the not so young. Loyalty was one of Bob's outstanding qualities - and he had a great many.

I first met Bob 36 years ago - and 36 years is a very long time. In the avalanche of Time since then, our friendship has never wavered. He and his sweet wife, Louie, have been very dear and highly valued friends of my beloved Madam and myself ever since we first met and chatted, all that lifetime ago.

Some months after Collectors' Digest came over the horizon, to link together those of us who recalled and had deep affection for the old papers (and that was in late 1946), two young men put their head together one evening, - and the Old Boys' Book Club was born.

Those two young men were Bob Blythe and the late Len Packman. It is a sad irony of Fate that both these stalwarts have been taken from us under similar circumstances. And both were equally brave.

They were the co-founders of the first Old Boys' Book Club. As the months went by, branches of the O.B.B.C. made their appearance - in Leeds, Liverpool, and the Midlands. But it was Bob and Len who started it all, bless their hearts.

The first ever O.B.B.C. meeting was held at the home of Len and his lovely Josie. The second meeting was at Wood Green at the home of the splendid Whiter Brothers - and that was the first one that I attended. The third meeting was at my own home which was in Kingston-on-Thames at that time.

The London O.B.B.C. was firmly set on its long and infinitely worth while career. So much of it all was due to Bob and Len, but they never boasted about it, though they must have felt a surge of pride now and then. A great many of the subsequent meetings were hosted by Bob and Louie Blythe at their own home.

I, personally, have very tender memories of the meetings held in those days when the club was young. There was a joyousness about them; a fresh, fragrant quality in the exchange of views which were new then; a

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secretive delight in the chatter which commenced with "Do you remember when ----?"

Bob Blythe was intensely loyal to the club which he had co-founded. He was proud of it, and rightly so, but never in a spirit of self-glorification. Down 36 long years his loyalty and his affection have never wavered. Loyal, too, he ever was to this magazine. We shall miss him enormously. At the moment there is the numb, almost unbelievable sense of loss. It seems too bad to be true that our much-loved Bob is gone. We shall go on missing him. But his memory is immortal in the host of splendid articles he wrote for C.D. and its Annual as the years cascaded on.

For many years Bob Blythe has conducted the London Club's Nelson Lee Library, meeting the needs of the large number who wanted to borrow the work of the immortal Edwy Searles Brooks. Bob was acquainted with Mr. Brooks and his family, and it was through Bob that the great author once attended a meeting of the club which had done so much to keep the memory of St. Frank's alive. It was Bob who compiled and produced the superb Brooks Bibliography which is still in demand to this day.

Bob's death is a great loss for the London O.B.B.C. But it is a loss, too, for the entire hobby. Those who, like Bob, love a great deal because they remember a great deal, are getting fewer and fewer, due to the ravages of Time. Those of us who remain - and especially those of us who were in at the beginning - must make sure that the memory of Bob Blythe and the things he stood for are never allowed to grow dim.

Our deepest sympathy and love go, at this time, to Louie and to their son, Robbie, and to the entire family in their great, great loss. Robert Blythe Junior (Robbie) used to come along to meetings occasionally long ago, when he was a small lad. Now he has a family of his own, to carry on the tradition. The past year has clearly been one of intense strain for Louie and the family.

"Everybody loves Bob!" I recall saying to Louie one day, not long ago, when we were talking over the telephone. I never said anything more true. Everybody indeed loved Bob.

We shall never cease loving him.

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ANOTHER NEW YEAR

As I write this, another New Year is a few weeks away. By the time you read these lines, 1983 will be a reality. None of us knows what the New Year holds in store for us. It is my heartfelt wish that it may prove the best of all time for each and every one of my readers. God Bless You in 1983.

THE EDITOR

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# Danny's Diary

JANUARY 1933

The New Year has started off bitterly cold. In fact, they said on the wireless that 23rd January was the coldest day for many years in this country.

The Nelson Lee Library still goes on offering rather a mixed bag of tricks. First tale of the year is "Secret Service". A valuable document is stolen, and the theft brings many perilous adventures for Lee, Nipper, and the great hound, Wolf. Next another detective thriller, this one entitled "The Mystery of the Gold Ship". Lee and Nipper are up against a Criminals' Confederation led by a master crook, Oscar Dene.

And now Nipper goes back to St. Frank's as a schoolboy, in a series entitled "The Fellowship of Fear". St. Frank's is menaced by machine guns, because the criminals' confederation wants to replace all school curriculums with harmful teachings and doctrines to make the world a worse place to live in. Baron Von Holts is at the root of the dirty work. Two stories of this series appeared this month, and it continues next month. Pretty good.

The row over the Bodyline bowling of our English cricketers in Australia is hotting up, and the Australian newspaper reporters are particularly vitriolic about it. There was an unfortunate happening in the Second Test yesterday when Oldfield was accidentally hit on the temple by a fast ball from Larwood and had to retire. He had an x-ray examination which shows a linear fracture of the right frontal bone. I hope he is able to carry on with his cricket.

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The English cricketers now in Australia are Jardine, Larwood, Voce, Wally Hammond, Maurice Leyland, The Marquis of Pataudi, Mitchell, Bill Bowes, Wyatt, Allen, Les Ames the wicket-keeper, and Sutcliffe.

A new series has started in Modern Boy, written by Flying-Officer W. E. Johns, about a new character Captain James Bigglesworth, called "Biggles" by his friends. They are flying stories. I'm not all that keen on them myself, but some of the chaps at school are raving over them. The first tale, in the year's first Modern Boy, is "Biggles and the White Fokker". The others in the month have been "Peril Over the Line", "Fighting Mad", and "The Duneville Sausage".

The series about Grey Shadow, who has been joined by a 12-year old stowaway, Peter, went on this month, and this series has now ended. These are by Geo. E. Rochester. There is a new series about the Happy Chums, seeking their fortune in California, which has just started. John Beresford's serial "The Danes of Danehouse" is still going on its way, and "Just My Fooling", by the Old Boy, gives plenty of fun.

We have seen some fine pictures at our local cinemas this month. The first one was Joe E. Brown (the star with the big mouth, whom I don't really like a lot) in "The Tenderfoot". An amazing film, and my Mum loved it, was "One Hour With You". It stars Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette Macdonald, and a big supporting cast. A kind of musical comedy and, in a way, a kind of opera. The producer is the famous Lubitsch, and, though there have been plenty of musical Talkies, this seems to be the first of this type. Some lovely songs in it, too. A British comedy was "Leap Year" starring Tom Walls and Anne Grey. With this one there was a Disney coloured cartoon "Mickey's Orphans". The first Micky Mouse I have seen in colour.

A good western was Buck Jones in "High Speed", and with this one there was a splendid Laurel & Hardy two-reeler "The Music Box".

Next we saw a full-length Laurel & Hardy film "Pack Up Your Troubles" with two ex-soldiers looking after an old friend's daughter. It was very funny in parts, but not so good as their short films. James Finlayson and Billy Gilbert were also in this one. Then a British drama "The Flag Lieutenant" with Henry Edwards and Anna Neagle. Then Tallulah Bankhead in "Thunder Below". And Barbara Stanwyck in

"Shopworn". I am very fond of Barbara.

Then a marvellous film entitled "Grand Hotel", a long one with a huge cast: Greta Garbo, John Barrymore, Lionel Barrymore, Joan Crawford, Wallace Beery, and Lewis Stone. In a way it is a series of short stories about various guests at the hotel whose lives become linked together.

Finally Fredric March and Sylvia Sidney in "Merrily We Go To ---" which was a dreary affair.

The Greyfriars story in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month is "His Majesty King Bunter" in which Bunter goes to Africa in Captain Corkran's party, and, by means of his ventriloquism, becomes king of a cannibal tribe. Far-fetched but exciting and unusual. The other S.O.L. is "Up The Rebels", a hackneyed tale of St. Kit's where Harry Wilmot & Co. bar out against Mr. Carker, the new Head who has replaced Dr. Chenies. I remember reading some of it in the Boys' Friend when I was small. Though it is by the real Frank Richards it's rather a stale business. Give me St. Jim's and Rookwood any day.

The French luxury liner "Atlantique" has been gutted by fire. Somebody set fire to it, it seems. There were no passengers on board, but 19 of the crew died in the great fire.

The Gem has continued with the splendid series about Tom Merry & Co. in the States. In "Gussy Discovers America", Gussy falls in love, and gets lost in Chicago. Next week "Tom Merry & Co. Out West" tells of the chums in the Wild West where Gussy and Skimpole get captured by Red Indians.

Then "Gussy, the Bronco Buster" in which Gussy surprises the cowboys of Arizona, and Tom Merry finally meets his very wealthy uncle, Mr. Poinsett. Next week, in "The Cowboy of St. Jim's", the chums return to St. Jim's, bringing with them Buck Finn, the son of a friend of Mr. Poinsett. Buck Finn is to become a new junior at St. Jim's. A top-hole series.

In the Boys' Friend 4d. Library this month there is "Chums of the Islands", a long King of the Islands series; a collection of early South Seas stories from Modern Boy.

The Southern Railway has introduced a new cheap railway ticket called a Day Return. One gets the return journey for the single fare, and

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they can be used any time of the day except in the rush hours. The other companies are going to adopt the same plan.

Still on the railways, there was an accident on the line at Loughborough, where a passenger express dashed into a goods train. One man was killed, and a number injured.

In the Union Jack there has been an excellent story of Sexton Blake versus Mr. Reece and the Criminals' Confederation, entitled "Behind the Fog" by Robert Murray. Pedro plays a big part in this exciting story. Next week the Union Jack brought "Stolen Identity" by Gilbert Chester. A good story of mystery and thrills.

I also had a Thriller this month. It contained "The Talking Skull" by somebody named Edmund Snell. Set in Morocco, it was fairish but I like the Union Jack much better.

In real life, the newspapers have been full of a strange crime this month. On 3rd January a man found that a shed in his yard was on fire. The shed, in Hawley Crescent, Camden Town, had been let to a man named Furnace. In the burning shed was found the charred body of a man, with a suicide note signed Sam Furnace. At first they thought the body was that of Furnace, till it was discovered that the dead man had been shot in the back of the head. It turned out that the man was actually named Spatchett. On 9th January, the BBC broadcast a message declaring baldly that Furnace was wanted for the murder of Spatchett. On 15th January, Furnace gave himself away with a letter to his brother-in-law. The brother-in-law went to the police, and Furnace was arrested the same day in Southend-on-Sea. On the day after his arrest, Furnace managed to poison himself with a bottle of acid sewn up in the lining of his overcoat. He died 24 hours later.

In the Magnet the year's first story is "Dick the Pen-Man". Jim Valentine, known to the underworld and the police as Dick the Penman, a skilful forger, is at Greyfriars now as a schoolboy. The next story in the series is "The Boy With a Guilty Secret", and this is followed by "His Past Against Him" in which Valentine continues to dodge the police and also to dodge his old criminal acquaintance Nobby Clark. Final of the month is "Coker the Detective" with Coker getting mixed up in the Valentine intrigue. A fine series which continues next month.

The Magnet is giving away strips of gummed pictures to stick in

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an album which they gave away earlier. But there is always the risk that they may stick to the pages of the Magnet.

I had one copy of the Ranger this month. The Ranger has Frank Richards's stories of Jim Dainty & Co. of Grimslade School, but I'm never tempted to buy them regularly.

A new show entitled "Fresh Fields" has opened at the Criterion Theatre in London. It has music written by Ivor Novello, and he stars in the show.

### NOTES ON THIS MONTH'S "DANNY'S DIARY"

S.O.L. No. 187, "His Majesty King Bunter" is an example of the worst kind of Schoolboys' Own Library. This was the 6-story Congo series from the later months of 1922 - if one includes the final tale where the boys return to Greyfriars with the black man, Pickle Jar, (reminding one of the Gem's Congo series of 1911 where Tom Merry took home the faithful M'Pong), then it was a 7-story series. The pruning was enormous and ruthless, and the S.O.L. must have cut away almost half the length. Not only did it spoil the story; it was also sheer waste of material, for the series would easily have made two issues of the S.O.L. In passing, one story in the 1922 Magnet series contains what must be the shortest chapter in any Magnet; only a few paragraphs. It makes one wonder whether, even in the originals, the pruning blue pencil had been at work.

"Gussy Discovers America" in the 1933 Gem had been "Tom Merry & Co. in Chicago" in 1909; "Tom Merry & Co. Out West" had originally been "Tom Merry & Co. in the Rockies"; "Gussy the Bronco Buster" was "Tom Merry & Co. Out West" in 1909; and "The Cowboy of St. Jim's" was "The Ragging of Buck Finn" the first time round. New titles were seldom an improvement even fifty years ago. The trendies and improvers were throwing their weight about even then, just as they do today.

There is a mild interest for cinema fans in the fact that in January 1933 Danny saw the Fredric March film, entitled "Merrily We Go To --" in this country. In the States the name was "Merrily We Go To Hell". We don't know why the change was made. It is laughable when one sees the type of title given to some films fifty years later. I was outside a Surrey cinema recently - a one-time theatre which used to attract huge crowds every night, but it now divided into a number of characterless boxes, called Screen 1, 2, and so on. There was an X-certificate film playing in each little box, and each had a title, full of sexual innuendo. The boxes were apparently open for customers, but the whole place looked sleazy and neglected. So are the mighty fallen!

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NEW YEAR GREETINGS to All C.D. Readers  
RONNIE HUNTER, VENTNOR, ISLE OF WIGHT

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# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I do hope you are all enjoying the story of Marie Galante which will continue through to February 1983. The books mentioned in the article are available from my Lending Library should anyone wish to read them. May I take this opportunity of wishing you all a Happy New Year and lots of interesting reading and meetings of the various Clubs. No doubt you will have enjoyed some reading of your favourite stories over the Christmas holidays, especially as these tend to run over several days and give us a respite from work.

## VOODOO QUEEN - Part 4

by Josie Packman

When next we hear of Marie Galante, in "The Rogues Republic" Sexton Blake Library 2nd Series No. 85, dated 31 March, 1927, she has transferred her activities to Santa Marta, a small South American republic, and is involved in one of the many rebellions usual to that area of the globe. It is Marie, with her love of intrigue and desire for power, who has supplied aid to the opposition.

Into this hotbed of intrigue and insurrection come several people all of whom are fated to meet in peculiar circumstances before peace is restored.

Some time previously the only honest man remaining in the Santa Marta government had requested Sexton Blake to investigate the loss of large sums from the Treasury. Blake and Tinker arrive secretly in Santa Marta and carefully disguised they proceed with their work.

Two others - who were to cause much strife - also arrive quietly bringing with them a young man destined to become ruler of Santa Marta, although not in the way these two persons expect. Travelling as uncle and niece, these two trouble-makers are none other than Dr. Huxton Rymer and Mary Trent. When Rymer discovers that Marie Galante is the power behind most of the unrest he is greatly perturbed, remembering the way in which he had left Marie after the New York debacle. He knew also that there would be trouble between the two beautiful women who now seemed to rule his life. The weak streak in him was always attracted by the devilish Haitian, but he knew Mary Trent would leave him for good once she learned about Marie Galante.

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But still he becomes involved in Marie's plot to acquire a large portion of the country's wealth for herself and Rymer.

The last person to arrive on the scene is the young man who had travelled on the same boat as Rymer and Mary Trent. This man is the son of the old President of Santa Marta, whose recent death had signalled the beginning of the uprising. But Sexton Blake and Tinker take a hand in the game, and finally order is restored. The young man becomes president of his country and Rymer and Mary Trent are thankful to get away with whole skins and a substantial sum of money. As for Marie Galante, she disappears once again into the secret places of her native land, still nursing her passion for the white adventurer . . .

Marie Galante is next heard of in S.B.L. No. 153 (2nd Series) dated 2 August, 1928, entitled "The Adventure of the Voodoo Queen", wherein she emerges from her jungle ready for any adventure which will give her the excitement she craves.

Through the widespread organisation of the island blacks which she controls with her Voodoo, Marie Galante hears whisperings of a fabulous treasure in Cuba owned by an old Spanish aristocrat by the name of General Pina. No-one has ever seen this treasure, but it is said that the key which General Pina wears on a gold chain around his neck is the key to the hidden treasure of the Pinas.

This of course is the magnet which attracts Marie Galante to Cuba where once more she is to plot and scheme with Huxton Rymer, only to be foiled in the end by their old enemy Sexton Blake. At this date Rymer is still roaming about the West Indies, unable to return to England until such time as he has acquired sufficient funds to enable him to live quietly at "Abbey Towers". Having drifted from place to place he finally arrives in Cuba and it is here that he meets that exotic woman Marie Galante again. He is still attracted by her magnetic personality but the story of the hidden treasure attracts him still more, for only a small portion of that fabulous wealth would be enough to enable him to return home. (Although Marie Galante has other ideas about that matter.)

Unfortunately for the schemers they are to encounter their arch enemy, Sexton Blake, who, with Tinker, has travelled to the West Indies partly on holiday and partly to escort home General Pina's son, the latter having been receiving medical treatment in England. The old

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General himself was suffering from some obscure disease and Marie's scheme was to present Rymer as a well-known surgeon (a role he was fully capable of filling) with herself acting as nurse, thus securing entry into the Pina home. In this way it would be possible for them to discover where the treasure is cached.

Tinker is fortunate enough to spot Marie Galante and Huxton Rymer together, and after some exciting adventures is able to report to Blake.

On learning that Marie and Rymer are friendly with General Pina's rascally nephew, it does not take Blake long to realise that some plot is afoot. Learning that the two adventurers have discovered where the treasure is hidden he persuades the old General to tell him of its whereabouts, and thereby takes steps to frustrate the plans of the evil woman and her accomplice. In order to save any unpleasantness or scandal, Marie Galante and Huxton Rymer are given the chance to learn Cuba - a chance which they do not hesitate to take, but without the gold for which they had schemed. Marie's schooner is lying at harbour just off shore and with she and Rymer aboard the vessel slips away quietly into the night ...

To be continued

#### THE TWYMAN LETTERS (Part One)

by W. O. G. Lofts

One of the most interesting personalities I met during the middle fifties, was H. W. Twyman, former editor of Union Jack (1921-33) and Detective Weekly. Apart from these two positions, 'Twy' as I will call him, started his career as a proof reader on The Magnet in 1914, later being editor of Detective Library (1919). Unlike most other editors, authors, and artists I met either at the old Amalgamated Press building in Farringdon Street, or Fleet Street taverns, I used to meet 'Twy' at his 300 year old cottage that was buried in the heart of the Surrey countryside. It was here that we discussed for many long hours in many meetings, all aspects to the papers mentioned above. I only wish now that I had had a tape-recorder to remember everything discussed! Apart from this 'Twy' wrote me long letters packed with priceless information, that I still retain in my files. Some date was published in the Collectors' Digest starting with the November 1956 issue, but

certainly not all. 'Twy' did not wish for some points to be printed, in case it aroused some unwelcome controversy, or correspondence that he could not cope with. One respected his wishes at the time. 'Twy' died in 1971 aged 78 after years of a serious illness, now over a decade ago, so in view of the shortage of fresh Blakiana articles, I have decided to print some extracts from letters in future issues of this column.

Firstly it is most interesting to record 'Twy's' reactions to my initial contact with him in August 1956, and his impressions on collectors as a whole ...

"Thank you for your letter just received. I was of course very interested in what you tell me - an interest not unmixed with gratification, because of the nice things you have to say about my work on Union Jack. It is now some years since I relinquished the editorship of that paper - or rather of its reincarnation Detective Weekly - after running it for fifteen years, and of course a lot has happened in that time, a good deal of which I can still remember which may be of interest to you. Naturally I am always glad to meet so interested and knowledgeable a person as yourself, and would be able to discuss the events and personalities of those old days, now passed into history.

May I say meanwhile, I am very impressed by your interest and activities as such a dedicated hobbyist. This sort of hobby seems to me to involve a great deal of detective work, such as would be exercised by Sexton Blake himself, and much exchange of information with others likewise interested. Strangely, it was not till I had been running the paper for some years, that I ever heard there was any interest other than by the week-to-week reader, and then only in the vaguest way, aware merely of the fact there were such people as collectors. I have also learned that there is far more to this pursuit than just the accumulation of back numbers.

In your own case, there is the additional achievement - on which you are to be much commended - of compiling the Gwyn Evans book - which I imagine must have been done by the 'Information Received' method ...

#### Note

I did compile in rough form a manuscript entitled 'Good Heavens - its Gwyn Evans', and handed it over to 'Twy' for revision, subbing, and hopefully eventual publication. Unfortunately with his pressures of writing True Crime stories for the American market (which I helped him a great deal by research) then long periods of illness, he never got round to finishing it. On his death (unknown to me for a long time) all his

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papers, letters, files, graphs, etc., pertaining to Union Jack etc., were destroyed including the mentioned manuscript. A terrible tragedy, and a great loss to future historians of the old papers.

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# Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

The following little item of gossip was told me by Mr. Nelson Lee. The Housemaster-detective was approached by Joe Catchpole, Farmer Holt's foreman, when Lee was in the village recently, and as is usual on such occasions, the time of day was shared and the state of the weather remarked upon. Joe's troubles were lined on his countenance prompting Mr. Lee's enquiry to the foreman's health.

It appeared the irascible farmer had sacked Joe for taking wood from a fallen tree and using the said wood for Joe's domestic use. Holt had also threatened Joe and his family with eviction from his cottage.

Mr. Lee promised he would look into the matter and try and help the unfortunate family. Joe Catchpole was well-known to the boys at St. Frank's for many years and was well respected. Whereas Farmer Holt wasn't. He was a crusty and hard taskmaster to his employees and often was at war with the juniors if he found them on his land.

Lee, on his return to St. Frank's, delved into his law books for a possible legal point that would allow Joe to use the wood from the decayed tree. He recalled a similar case some time ago and knew there was some legal clause concerning wood used on estates.

He soon found what he was looking for. It was ESTOVERS. In law, this is the right of taking the necessary amount of wood from an estate for fuel, fences, repairs, and other reasonable purposes. And armed with that legal item Lee went to see Farmer Holt and argue Joe's case. The upshot was Joe was immediately reinstated for Holt hadn't a leg to stand on in view of Mr. Lee's intervention.

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In a recent competition held by the Remove the first prize was a trip round Patty Little! Oh yes, I know we all laugh at fat people, but

was there ever a jovial, happy-go-lucky beanbag of a man? The most miserable of wretches at St. Frank's are all skinny and weedy like Snipe and Merrell of the Remove and Mr. Pycraft the East House Form-master. There are a few more that I won't name.

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But we do have a few juniors who consider themselves as humorists although it is doubtful if others think so. Vivian Travers is inclined to be humorous at each little opportunity; so when Handforth and Irene Manners appeared to have a tiff Travers sent Handy a note with the words therein: "Cosi Fan Tutti". What followed I will recount on another occasion!

### THE LORD DORRIMORE CUP

by Len Wormull

It was the most important date in the St. Frank's calendar, and for Nipper personally a day he was not likely to forget in a hurry. The occasion was the soccer final between St. Frank's and Greyfriars, in the Lord Dorrimore Cup. And note the pairing, for it seems to have been the one and only meeting between the two famous schools. Billed as a 'Corking long complete school and footer yarn', "Saints versus 'Friars" (2nd N.S. No. 43) was in truth a short tale restricted to 7 chapters - by order of the Special Detective Branch at Fleetway House. (It may have been Nelson Lee's own paper, but how I resented him in the driving seat, with St. Frank's a back seat passenger.) The Cup Final, I felt, should have gone into extra time.

This season the St. Frank's junior eleven were at the peak of perfection, thanks to First Division coach, Wally Freeman. Beating Highcliffe away in the first round, they reached the final after taking St. Jim's, River House, Redclyffe, and Yexford. Now they were poised for the big one - Greyfriars. Little Side had been chosen because it was 'by far the best Public School ground of all'. As a St. Frank's guest, who am I to argue? But even the best laid soccer plans can "gang aley", especially when Bernard Forrest is out gunning for the skipper. Nipper had thrashed him for bullying Hobbs of the Third, besides unwittingly getting him a beak's flogging. To add to his troubles, Forrest was heavily in debt to a Bannington bookmaker, with threatened exposure. Claude Gore-Pearce, who earlier had been on bitter terms with Forrest, makes a surprising accomplice in this one. He, too, is caught in the

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bookie's toils, and stuck for cash. Which was tough on the millionaire son. A way out comes when a racing tout offers then 5 to 1 - if they back ten pounds each - on Greyfriars to win the final. Are you ahead of me? Too dicey, thinks Forrest, knowing the game could go either way. But what if St. Frank's is made to lose the match, and get even with Nipper at the same time? The bet is taken - on tick.

On the great day Nipper receives a telegram calling him to London urgently, signed "Lee". Remiss of the Guv'nor not to have told him he was on a case up North, as Nipper discovers on arrival. Forrest, of course! No time for trains back, and luckily Lee's Rolls is ready for use. First a telegram to delay match as long as possible. Gore-Pearce, in a last-minute bid to stay his return, causes Nipper to swerve and crash the car. But luck was with him. Lord Dorrimore, himself late for the match due to car trouble, chances by at the crucial time. Greyfriars are already one goal up when Nipper, bruised and bleeding, makes for the changing-room.

The preliminaries are merely a peg on which to hang the Final - it is the soccer highlights that make the visit to Little Side worth-while. The thrust and parry is handled with expertise and style, and makes for an exciting climax. Among the visitors were the mighty Blue Crusaders Football Club and the ever-delightful Moor View girls. As a fan of both finalists, I was torn between the two. It was, and had to be, Nipper's game. In a ding-dong battle for honours, he deftly secures the equaliser, and then, in the last second of the game, heads in the winning goal. After which he passes out, the strain of it all being too much. Better luck in the Magnet, Greyfriars, you can't win 'em all. Later the cads answer to Nipper personally, and then sent to Coventry by the Form. The occasion was marked with six first-rate illustrations by Kenneth Brookes. For the curious, we were never told what Nelson Lee said about his precious Rolls coming to grief - time had run out.

Footnote: A mystery no longer, the above story was of course penned by our own hobby friend and correspondent - Mr. Ernest Holman. I would refer readers back to C.D. No. 407, in which the author explains how it all came to be written - in his middle teens!

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 181 - Gems Nos. 935-6 - Lagden Series

The readers of the Gem during the Christmas and New Year of 1925-6 must have been puzzled indeed by the sequence of stories. A pair of holiday stories in Nos. 930-1 was followed by a return to school for three weeks (all by courtesy of the substitute authors) and then came another pair in Nos. 935-6, this time by the real Martin Clifford, set at Eastwood House in Hampshire, amid seasonably snowy, frosty weather.

The explanation afforded was that the kindly Dr. Holmes had readily acceded to Lord Eastwood's request for a special holiday to celebrate the noble earl's birthday, and that the same guests who had gathered together at Christmas were now reassembled. It seems highly unlikely that Dr. Holmes would have allowed such a holiday to juniors in the Shell, Fourth, and Third forms, all the more so as it would be requested every year, birthday anniversaries having a tiresome tendency to recur annually. It is equally improbable that other guests, such as Miss Fawcett, Cousin Ethel, and Doris Levison would all be free to accept a subsequent invitation. Furthermore, there was no account whatsoever of any birthday celebrations, even supposing that a grave, elderly gentleman like Lord Eastwood would ever wish to celebrate his birthday. The real explanation must surely be that the four stories were all part of the same Christmas series, and either there was a mistake at Fleetway House or else Charles Hamilton's second pair of stories arrived too late, for one reason or another. Oddly enough, the four stories were never reprinted in the Schoolboys' Own Library, even though they might have made a compact volume for a 96-page edition.

The plot was unusual. A footpad attempted to rob Gussy in the lane, and the Terrible Three came into view and were just about to capture the rascal when a young man on a motor bike suddenly arrived and, in helping them, only succeeded in letting the rascal escape. The young man named Lagden told them he had injured his knee in the struggle, and he was taken to Eastwood House and given accommodation. He won general sympathy, especially when he explained that there was still shrapnel in his knee after a wartime wound in Flanders.

There were a number of interesting facets to the plot: Wally's

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unattractive mongrel dog, Pongo, had a large part to play in the sequence of events, quite apart from ripping out the seat of D'Arcy's elegant trousers; some insight was provided into the duties of servants and their personalities; Miss Fawcett, with remarks such as "Are you hurt, my poor darling Tommy?" revealed that she was just as ridiculous as she had been in 1907; and Manners was given the role that often fell to Kerr - the shrewd ability to see through surface impressions to the real characters and motives lying underneath.

A hypercritical reader might have objected to the large amorphous gathering of people, many of whom had no real part to play in the drama; it might be felt that there was no sense of festivity or even of getting together - indeed, Eastwood House was more like a large well-run hotel than a home; and at the end not all the villains were brought to book. On the other hand, in a period of substitute stories these two dramatic tales with a well-constructed plot must have been particularly welcome. Certainly the Gem reader must have felt that Christmas had come round twice in the winter of 1925-6.

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CHARACTERS NAMES AND NONENTITIES by R. V. Moss

The first Magnet it was my good fortune to read was published in the month of June 1924. I was immediately captivated by the Characters created by Frank Richards, or as I now know the incomparable Charles Hamilton. For the next twelve years it was to be my privilege to read week by week the continuing saga of Greyfriars. So in fact my reading embraced the whole of the 'golden period', of what to my mind was the greatest of all the papers published for boys.

Since it was the year 1924 the chances were almost one in two, that my first contact with Greyfriars would be by means of a story penned by a substitute writer. That is exactly what happened. It was indeed a substitute story. Yes! I can now distinguish between the writings of the master and the other writers, even if sometimes the best of them requires a careful reading, to comprehend the often subtle differences.

In my first two and a half years of Magnet addiction, no less than one third of the issues were written by these often maligned emergency authors. If the master himself is included, no less than eleven different

scribes provided the weekly Greyfriars fare. So with all these different writers involved, and even the best of them not quite able to emulate the magic of the Hamilton style, and often to produce a somewhat inferior story; why did I become so captivated?

Surely there can be only the one answer - captivated by the characters, and this allied in so many instances with a choice of name which really fitted particular characters. The characters originated by Charles Hamilton were the guiding force. Even in the hands of the substitute writers the distinctive strength of the characters came through. I did not take a great deal of notice of the quality between this story or that story. Some were simply better than others. But the characters were the same. An inferior story barely registered as such, for it was the Famous Five, Billy Bunter, and the Bounder that mattered.

Since the story line was of such less importance, it is not surprising that the various overseas series, with the possible exception of India and China, failed to arouse my enthusiasm. This did not apply to the holiday series spent at 'home'. They seemed to me to be only an extension of the school scene, in the form of 'normal' school holidays. Even then I was usually glad of the return to the school situation; it seemed right that a school story should have a school setting.

Much has been written about the Hamilton names. Those names which often reappeared in different stories, under different circumstances, and linked to entirely different characters. However with regard to Greyfriars the glory was in the ability of Hamilton to use his names with such aptitude, that they became an essential part of the character and so inseparable in the reader's mind. But this was a gradual process as a reading of the early Magnets clearly shows. In the early days the number of such characters was fairly limited. The expert matching of a name to a character or of a character to a name obviously took time to evolve. No doubt this is why so many of the well-loved characters arrived later on the scene. As new boys they took the places of the numerous nonentities in the early stories.

The great surprise in the reading of these stories for the first time, is the number of names which failed to attach themselves to lasting characters, and so become a part of the Greyfriars tradition. Only in an odd instance is there any inkling as to the type of character

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involved. A case in point is that of Price of the Remove mentioned in Magnets 25, 26 and 32. There is just a bare suggestion that he has the makings of the 'future' caddish Price of the Fifth. In course of time the name of a pupil was to become the name of a place. It is indeed a surprise to find in issue 36 that Lantham is a member of the Remove. It seems much more successful as the name of the well-known town. This also worked in reverse. The place name Boisover was to become a fine choice for the later bully of the Remove.

By 1924, to a new reader, the Greyfriars characters were clearly identifiable and soundly established. In a very short space of time it was possible to be familiar with them all. They gave a feeling of solidity. They had always been there, and never more so than with that fascinating form - the Remove. The substantive composition of that class had become well established over the years with a total of thirty-nine members. That includes Alonzo Todd who is sometimes omitted from such a list. I would disagree with the omission of Alonzo who was always good for a quiet chuckle, even if one had sympathy for his inherent simpleness. And what would Uncle Benjamin have to say about such treatment of his poor Alonzo?

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FANTASY!

by Victor Giles

In "No Fantasy, Please, We're Blakians!" J.E.M. suggests that Hamiltonians, too, have condemned the fanciful in their own field, and gives Alonzo the Strong Man as an example.

My criticism of this series is not the obvious one, as I have always had a liking for fantasy. The splendid "Lucky for Parkinson!" was one of the first Greyfriars stories I ever read, and I recall that at the tender age of eight years or so I was somewhat disappointed at the weird goings on turning out to be nothing but a dream!

The reservation I have regarding Strong Man Alonzo is not about the basic plot, but the even more incredible ending.

Bunter, you will remember, has hidden the professor's phial. The Famous Five discover the hiding place - a gap in the Cloisters wall covered by ivy. Johnny Bull reaches into the cavity and grasps the little bottle.

"Smash!"

It landed on the old stone flags and broke into a hundred fragments. The contents ran out in a little pool.

"That's that!" said Johnny Bull grimly. "

I ask you! Would anyone in their right mind have deliberately destroyed that magical mixture? I've had grave doubts about Johnny Bull's oft stressed "sturdy common sense" ever since! Dammit! With Prof. Sparkinson's Elixir in mass production Britannia could have ruled the world, never mind the waves!

Incidentally, what a curious similarity there is in the names - Parkinson and Sparkinson - which Frank Richards gives to key characters in what as far as I know are the only fantasies he ever wrote.

On the subject of Parkinson: as Mr. Keen commented in the June C.D., we are left with the impression at the end of the Holiday Annual story that he is still at Greyfriars. I'm inclined to believe that he not only remained, but went on to become a celebrity in the school!

On what grounds? Well, Magnet 1395 refers briefly to Parkinson, of the sixth-form. I dare to suggest that the "two" Parkinsons are in fact one and the same. For circumstantial evidence turn back to the 1926 Holiday Annual. On page 68 we read, "There were many things Parkinson could do. His construe was the best in the Remove ... His French was as good as Monsieur Charpentier's own ... Remove fellows almost shuddered to see him reading German as if it were English. Mathematics to him were a trifle light as air."

Surely such a talent was not long for the Remove?

Unfortunately, the chapter and verse of Parkinson's remarkable rise to become the youngest sixth-former of them all is a tale F.R. never gave us!

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## REVIEWS

### THE GEM STORY ILLUSTRATED

John Wernham and Mary Cadogan  
(Hamilton Museum, Maidstone)

One picture equals a thousand words, according to the producer of this remarkable book. If so, the prospective reader has a real gorge in store.

A story told in pictures, the sort of thing so much loved by present day educationalists.

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But this, of course, is something vastly different. For it is the story of the Gem - and that means St. Jim's - told in pictures down the years. The number of pictures included is really quite breathtaking. For the Gem fan, it is a wallow in unashamed nostalgia.

John Wernham, who is also responsible for the pictures, provides a running commentary, often very witty, on odd pages among the pictures, putting into words so many points made by the varying artists' pen and paint-brushes. Mary Cadogan provides one of her articles on the feminine talent to be found within the St. Jim's stories, mainly concerning Cousin Ethel but casting an eye on Marie Rivers and some others. The article is packed with the well-known Cadogan charm to lull the blues away.

To get the most enjoyment out of the book, you would find it advantageous to have "The History of the Gem and Magnet" (published years ago by Hamilton Museum Press) by your side, and follow the text of the Gem history as you go from one picture to another.

The main artist by far is R. J. Macdonald, as is only right, but some of the others get a show.

The inclusion of certain little chunks of text from the originals - like trailers on the TV screen - has perhaps a tendency to make the work seem just a trifle "bitty", but that is a mere detail, and, for most of us, adds to the general heartwarming atmosphere.

The St. Jim's Gallery review of Cardew is included, which is a good idea, though one wonders why Cardew alone was selected for this honour. The Galleries, in both the Magnet and Gem, were excellent in their day, and well worth reprinting now. The Magnet gallery overstayed its welcome a little, and the Gem's ended a little too soon. Pentelow is usually credited with both Galleries, though it always seemed to me that there was a considerable difference in style between the two series. The Magnet's was more factual, the Gem's more wordy and rhetorical. Be that as it may, both lots are memorable.

A passing thought! In this book the Blue-cover Gem is referred to as the Green Gem. Some folk are colour-blind. Me, perhaps. But Blue or Green, it's the same old, old friend of our youthful days, so who cares?

A reminder. The book cannot be bought in the shops. It is available direct from John Wernham, 30 Tonbridge Rd., Maidstone, Kent, and the price is £5 which includes postage.

#### CATALOGUE OF BOYS' AND GIRLS' ANNUALS

(Lofts & Adley)

A Review by A. F. Harris Hertzberg

This Catalogue lists over 2,000 children's annuals (although some which are not annuals, or were not for children have crept in) published before 1980, together with publisher, date, and original price.

The Introduction notes 'as with everything else in the world of collecting the vendors often have that half knowledge that leads to inflated prices'. Indeed. And perhaps even worse leads to the destruction of what should be the essential innocence of these old children's annuals by seeing them not for themselves, but for their monetary value.

It further comments that annuals survived better than the weekly issues because of

their 'strong binding and stiff cardboard covers'. They also did so because they were books rather than papers, often presents, and came only once a year rather than every week. It is for this reason that publishers were able to charge such extortionate prices - around thirty times the cost of the weekly for only ten times the content. That they did not use their best work rather than the substandard and reprint material they actually did is hard to understand. (Current annuals, at over £2 each are proportionately no dearer than the 1950s 5/- and 7/6 ones, when the average wage rate was twelve guineas and is now officially exactly twelve times that. They are infinitely cheaper than the 9/6 1883 BOP, the 13/6 BOP for 1920, or the 5/- Holiday Annuals of the 1920s or 1930s. I of course make no judgment on the value of the contents.)

Such a catalogue cannot be either complete, or completely accurate. As Mr. Lofts put it in a recent letter, publishers in many cases no longer exist, often no copies in the British Museum, and official and unofficial lists often inaccurate - the last a statement many might not expect from Mr. Lofts!

Although to do so would have necessitated a different format, the inclusion of some indication of cover illustration where the annual's date was not shown on it would have been a great help to identification - this was done in the same authors's catalogue of Thomson annuals. It may be assumed that this was not possible as most of the research was from records rather than actual copies.

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## The Postman Called (Interesting items from the Editor's letter-bag)

JIM COOK (New Zealand): I have a copy of the book you mention in your editorial in the current C.D., "Follow My Leader". But it hasn't the alternative title "The Boys of Templeton" as your copy. Mine is a 1910 edition and the words "New Edition" are in the centre of the title page. I wonder why the alternative title was omitted from this edition.

DARRELL SWIFT (Leeds): The Members of the Northern Club were most interested to read in the last C.D., the report from the South West Club. It was indicated therein, that South West Club were the first to have the translation of "Ultio Bunteri" from the Times Educational Supplement. In fact, as Jack Allison is the translator of this particular item, the Northern Club was therefore the first to have this story as an item on their programme - not just a few months back, but when it was first translated by Jack over twenty years ago! Indeed, our own editor Eric Fayne, was present at that very meeting!

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J. WILLIAMSON (Victoria, Australia): Hello, hello, hello! Just a few lines in defence of Bob Cherry. I should have written this some weeks ago as I was upset when I read the article by Tommy Keen in C.D. 427. However, we are right in the middle of a very severe drought in this part of Australia - the worst in living memory - and it takes a lot of work to try to alleviate the situation. Fortunately, having been brought up in the Greyfriars tradition, one does not let the idiosyncrasies of nature get one down, but I get very little leisure. Many a time I do not read one word in the daily paper, but I never miss the good old C.D. Bob Cherry was my favourite of the Famous Five, with Frank Nugent very little behind, and I protest at the denigration of Bob. I would have made a special effort to write at once had not your contributor modified his criticism somewhat. I suspect he may have felt sorry for what he had written.

The Greyfriars stories have given me great joy for many long years now, and I hate to see such a lovely character pulled to pieces. Bob Cherry was - and is - tops.

JOHNNY BURSLEM (Wickford): Don't you dare "Give Up" the Introduction to the C.D. Annual! No show is complete without the "overture" - and yours is the best show of the Festive Season.

CHRIS HARPER (Loughton): Re the item by Peter Hanger in the December C.D. that the King of the Islands story "Galleons Gold" is not genuine Hamilton. In the London Club Library we have a copy of this story in B.F.L. No. 341. This copy came from Hamilton's own collection, and I think I can do no better than quote from the Librarian's note on the inside cover: "The parts crossed out in pencil are clearly editorial additions inserted to spin out the story to the required length." Hamilton indicated that about four pages were not his own work.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Hamilton's work, reprinted in the Boys' Friend Library was often not too satisfactory - King of the Islands, the Rio Kid collections, and serials like "King Cricket" and "Football Fortunes" were usually heavily pruned. Skilful pruning could have been harmless, but the pruning was often very unskilful. In our comments on S.O.L's we have often commented on the same factor.)

TOMMY KEEN (Thames Ditton): Regarding the notes at the end of

Danny's Diary for November, I can remember reading the Jim Lee series many years ago, vaguely wondering why the first story was apart from the rest of the series, not knowing then about substitute writers, but in fact in the issue following the first story, the tale entitled 'Detective Bunter' Jim Lee was briefly mentioned.

It gives one the impression that this substitute story may have been written under pressure, or if it was a standby, the Jim Lee paragraph was rather neatly inserted.

The Christmas C.D. Annual is superb - if only one could have all the 'Let's be Controversial' articles in book form. So many of those "Let's Be Controversial" articles I have never seen.

PETER HANGER (Northampton): Further to my recent item. I have just read "Bunter the Cavalier" (897) and "Bunter, the Ink-Splasher" (1160). I wouldn't place either of these in my Charles Hamilton library.

T. HOPKINSON (Dukinfield): What a rotten idea it was to "update" the Greyfriars stories! Anyway, why buy these when the wonderful Howard Baker facsimiles are around?

JOHN WERNHAM (Maidstone): Life seems to keep pounding on and the more I see of contemporary affairs, the more I tend to dive back into the past within the covers of the "Old Papers".

JACK MURTAGH (New Zealand): We are all getting older, but isn't it wonderful to have lived through all those by-gone years when we had our weekly papers, and to still have such happy memories. The kids today will never know what they have missed. It's certainly a different world now and far from being a better one.

R. F. ACRAMAN (Ruislip): I would like to if I may, through the courtesy of your columns in the C.D. postbag, take this opportunity to thank all those members of all the clubs, the contingents down from the Midland and Northern Clubs (who had so far to travel from Bradford, Leeds and Birmingham) and all our London Club members who attended the grand Christmas meeting of 'The Greyfriars Club' on 5th December, at Stanmore, for their wonderful presentation to me, on my standing down as Hon. Sec., (see C.D. Annual, page 72). The beautiful painting

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in oils on canvas, in a lovely inscribed golden frame, showing 'Frank Richards' in a delightfully relaxed informal pose with 'Sammy' at his feet looking so real you could almost pick him up, is something which along with the cut glass lead crystal flower vase presented to your Courtfield Hostess, we shall treasure in our home and hearts. It now hangs in the Frank Richards Museum & Library at Courtfield, and so lifelike is the instant appeal of the picture that I find myself saying "Hallo Frank" everytime I enter the museum room.

ALEX STANDEN (Stockport): Thinking over the names of fictional detectives, even many of the most famous, I came to the conclusion that only three possess that certain magic.

The earliest one is Hawkshaw, the first stage detective, of the famous old melodrama "The Ticket of Leave Man" by Tom Taylor in the eighteen sixties, the others being Sherlock Holmes and Sexton Blake.

Other names, even by accepted masters of detective fiction, sounding "proper humdrum" (as dear old Arthur Askey used to say in Bandwagon) by comparison.

JOE CONROY (Liverpool): I look forward very much to the beginning of the month and the jolly old C.D. arriving. It is like a breath of fresh air. I am re-reading the Courtfield Cracksman series mentioned by Roger Jenkins in the Dec. issue. Really great!

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# News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

## MIDLAND

November 1982

This was an important meeting as arrangements were made for the Christmas Party on 14th December. Despite the small attendance we enjoyed ourselves. The first meeting of the New Year will be on 25th January.

Our usual features - Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item were on display. The A.N. was No. 182 of the Nelson Lee Library (old series), "The Ancient House Burglary" part of the "Boy from

Bermonsey Series". The date was 30.11.1918, only really a few days after The Great War ended and 64 years old. The C.I. was the Monster Library version of "The Boy from Bermonsey".

The question of club subscriptions occupied us for some time. Our sub. is only £1, but some members dodge it. This coming year the newsletter (costing over £1) will not be sent after March to non-payers.

There were two readings, one from your correspondence and one from Ivan Webster.

Mine was taken from "The Greyfriars Hikers" with Bunter malingering with a nail in his boot to dodge carrying anything. It turns out Bunter means his toenail. He, He, He, Bunter thinks it funny!

Ivan's reading was on the unconscious humour of "Gussy".

We finished with two games of Greyfriars Bingo, a great favourite, but Geoff Lardner and Christine Brettall win so many times it is quite beyond me, seeing it is a game of chance.

The Very Best Wishes to all O.B.B.C. members for the New Year.

JACK BELLFIELD

### CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at the home of Bill Thurbon on Sunday, 5th December. In the absence of the chairman, who, to the regret of members, was still unwell, and of the Vice-chairman who was rehearsing for a Christmas show, Edward Witten was moved into the chair. The Secretary reported that Bill Lofts hoped to talk at an early meeting in the New Year on "William".

Bill Thurbon talked about archery, selecting his subjects to cover the period from prehistoric caveman to the last War. He illustrated his talk with a series of tales and legends concerning Archery. Among other items he referred to Homer, The death of Achilles, and the wanderings of Odysseus, and recalled the attempt of Rider Haggard and Andrew Lang to write a sequel to the Odyssey in "The World's Desire". Haggard had written a somewhat similar tale in The Ancient Allan. The bow also appeared in Indian epics about Krishna and Rama. He also recalled North American Indian and Norse Myths. There were many references to the use of the bow in the Bible.

Bill then referred to the English archers in their heyday, quoting

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Featherstones "Bowmen of England", and stories by Conan Doyle, Ronald Welch, R. L. Stevenson ("The Black Arrow") and other authors. He produced a copy of the first book on archery published in England, Roger Ascham's "Toxophilus" - still in print, and still used by modern archers "shooting in a long bow".

After enjoying Mrs. Thurbon's tea, which had been preceded by a Quiz arranged by Edward, the meeting resumed, members recalling Christmas incidents and tales. Roy recalled a snowed-up Christmas in 1970, which had involved a fruitless effort to reach his family home and ended in a return with his wife and two small children to his bungalow and a four o'clock belated dinner of sausages. Tony recorded a Christmas eve scare when he saw a cardboard box walking down his snowy garden - the mystery being solved by the sight of a hedgehog. Keith and Adrian recalled sights and memories of Christmas past. Jack Overhill in his own inimitable way, recalled a Christmas of 1912 when he worked all day and received a shilling payment - untold wealth in those far-off days; as ever Jack's wonderful sense of recall conjured up the whole scene vividly. Bill Thurbon told one of Arthur Gray's ghost stories, and the meeting broke up with the exchange of greetings for Christmas.

### LONDON

The emphasis was on Sexton Blake at the Christmas meeting that was held at the home of Bill and Thelma Bradford. The record attendance present were rewarded by three effusions on Sexton Blake, the first two dealing with the famous artist, Eric Parker, and the third on Sexton Blake. The Eric Parker discourses were all the more interesting as welcome guests present were Sheila and David Harris, the former being the daughter of Eric Parker. Bill Lofts gave the first talk, a concise one as the full text of his contribution will eventually appear in Blakiana column of C.D. Then Norman Wright gave an excellent talk on the artist and followed this with a magnificent slide show that portrayed the artist and his many drawings. Then it was the turn of Arthur Bruning who gave a short talk on Sexton Blake in Character. Zenith the Albino was the subject of a couple of chapters from Union Jack number 894 ably read by Ray Hopkins.

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Roger Jenkins gave his usual Christmas reading from Magnet 1505.

As customary at these Yuletide meetings, Bill Bradford had concocted a quiz of many subjects and Norman Wright, Bill Lofts, Chris Harper and Brian Doyle all were very well up in the answers.

John Wernhan had brought along copies of his latest opus "The Gem Story" and at £4 a copy they went like Bunter devouring hot cakes.

A fine spread was available for the tea interval and after a vote of hearty thanks to the hosts, a glass of wine was available for the usual seasonable toasts. Next meeting at the Walthamstow address on Sunday, 9th January, 1983. Bring own viands, but tea will be available.

BEN WHITER

### NORTHERN

Saturday, 11th December, saw the largest numbers attending our Christmas party, for quite a few years, with a total of 26 people. A number of people had made great efforts to be with us that evening: as well as members' wives, we had Richard and Phyllis Durden from Manchester, Graham McDermott from Epsom - and special guests "The Rochdale Players" (as they called themselves!) from that notable town, from the other side of the Pennines.

The party commenced, with the three gentlemen from Rochdale, giving us sixty minutes' of delightful entertainment. All were school-teachers by profession, but their performance as a "review" of the different aspects of Billy Bunter and the writings of Frank Richards, was really something. The gentleman playing the part of Quelch and the one playing Bunter, were outstanding - and the narrator/Harry Wharton, et al, linked up the whole proceedings expertly. By giving excerpts from various Frank Richards writings, a picture was being drawn of the characters - to conclude with an hilarious piece from the script "Bunter The Hypnotist", as shown on t.v. To conclude, a form "quiz" (instead of lessons, being so near to Christmas "vac."). To the great astonishment of Darrell Swift, he actually got the highest marks - he always claims he hates quizzes and puzzles! A warm round of applause was given to the players on a very original performance.

Tea lasted for one hour - and a fine spread it was. Grateful

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thanks to the ladies who so willingly helped.

In true tradition of our Northern Parties, a game of "Bunter Drive" was played - the highest marks being achieved by Keith Smith, and the lowest (booby prize!) by Norman Smith (no relation!).

"Silent Melodrama" and other games were played, to conclude with an amusing reading from Geoffrey Good.

All too soon, it was time to end - and people left feeling that this had been the best party ever. A very Happy New Year from all Northern Club Members.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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HOW IT ALL STARTED

by A. S. Matheson

The cover illustration on the September C.D. has jogged a pleasant memory of over thirty years ago.

My very first acquaintance with Old Boys' Books was with a volume of Chums. The volume for 1908/09, in fact. I was still at school at the time and became very friendly with a new boy. He loaned me the book, which had belonged to his father and I remember rushing home with the heavy tome under my arm.

I read the book from cover to cover and still believe it to be one of my finest reading experiences. I have read many other more literary volumes since, but few that have remained so vividly in my memory. I can still picture the illustrations by Paul Hardy for the S. Walkey serial, 'Yo-Ho for the Spanish Main', which I still feel is one of the best adventure stories ever written for boys. The names of the protagonists, particularly the villains, are the kind that tend to stick in the mind. Who could forget such names as Solomon Snake, Sharkteeth and Barracouta?

I went on to collect many volumes of Chums at a later date and at one time had more than twenty volumes. None of the others had quite the same effect on me as that first one, which opened the door to a new experience.

There only remains one of these books now but it, too, has one of these timeless Walkey serials inside. It is called 'Sea Kings and Sea Wolves' and again is illustrated by Paul Hardy, who must be considered the perfect partner for the author.

On reflection, it does seem strange that my introduction to the world of Old Boys' Books should be through a book published over twenty-five years before I was born. In fact, I feel it points to the quality of the material and only wish there was more of it around today.

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FOR SALE: Magnets 1300, 1301, 1302, 1303, 1304, 1305, 1306, 1307, 1319, 1320, 1401, 1402, 1403, 1436, 1452, 1453, 1454, 1455, 1609, 1610, 1611, 1612, 1643, 1645, 1649, 1677, 1680, 1682; Gems - 1408, 1483, 1488, 1489, 1492, 1501, 1504, 1505. All £1.00 each, inc. postage.

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LITERARY MEANDERINGS by Mary Cadogan

C.D. readers may like to know about three new books which have been published recently, all very different, but all having great charm and attraction. THE POOH SKETCH-BOOK is a selection made by Brian Sibley from the large collection of Ernest Shephard drawings bequeathed to the Victoria and Albert Museum. These sketches sometimes are preparations for scenes with which we have since become familiar in A. A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh and Christopher Robin books. Other drawings are background details of forest views or of various approaches to Pooh, Eeyore, Tigger, Piglet & Co. There are also studies of the original nursery toys that inspired these now classic characters, and many exuberant and touching pictures (some never before published) of Christopher Robin in rompers and smocks, raincoat and 'wellies'. It is packed with delights (Methuen £6.95).

MY FAVOURITE RAILWAY STORIES, edited by Paul Jennings, is another nostalgic and literary wandering that I found very entertaining. The range of these train stories is wide - from a whimsical Alice THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS episode to the intensities of Tolstoy and Zola, and the rare descriptiveness of Kipling and Hardy. Many other popular writers are represented, like E. Nesbit, Sald and J. B. Priestley, but the real 'star' of this appealing book is the train itself, of course; the train as a symbol of the romance and thrills of travel (Lutterworth, £5.95).

The last of these three books is concerned with romance of a different kind. DIANA, THE FAIRY TALE PRINCESS is a sparkling account of Lady Diana Spencer's life from childhood to motherhood, and it is written and illustrated by Lucy Butler, a 12 year-old pupil of Croydon High School. Intended for children, it is fresh and full of engaging touches that will appeal also to adults (Transworld, £3.95).

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FOR SALE: 394 Magnets, earliest edition is No. 531, mainly around 1930's. Average condition; Gems in book form: Nos. 1436-1469 and 1537-1556; 138 editions of Schoolboys' Own; also 125 editions of Collectors' Digest from No. 251, plus H. B. Holiday Annuals.

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