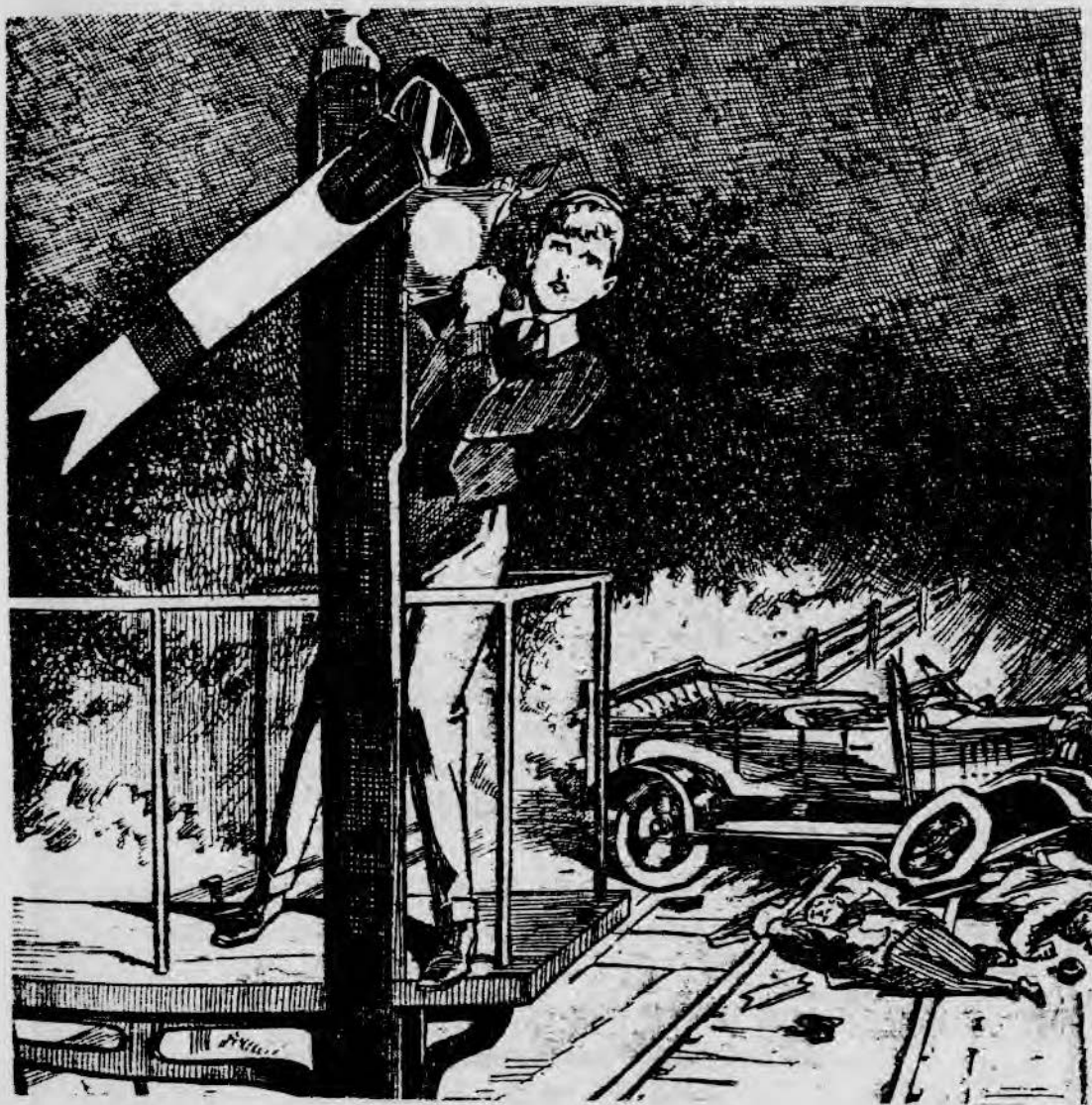


STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOL. 38

No. 448

APRIL 1984



Artist: Arthur Clarke. Magnet 1911

42P

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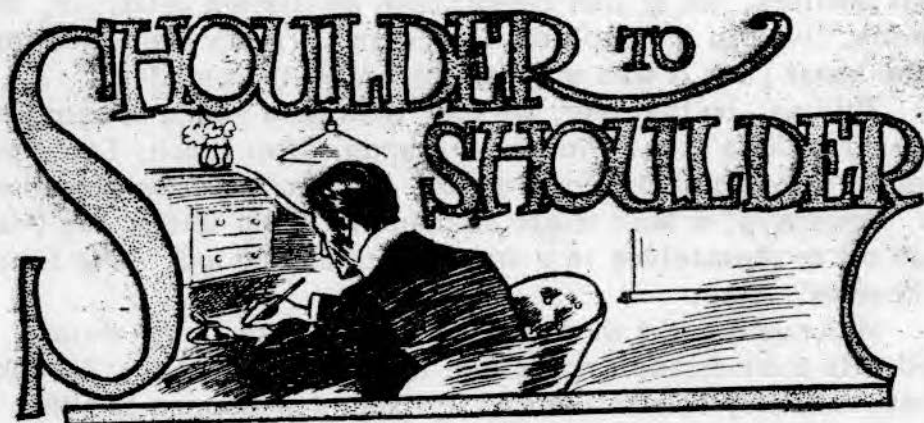
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REMINISCENCE

In one of his delightful letters to me, my good friend, Mr. David Hobbs, who lives across the pond in Seattle, mentioned a family the heads of which tended to regard cinematograph films as being somewhat sinful. Mr. Hobbs' comment swung my mind back to my own childhood.

As a boy it was nothing unusual for me to go the the pictures twice or thrice a week - Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays, maybe. More often than not, my Mother went with me.

In Plaistow - 104, Balaam Street - we had some relatives living. I always called them Uncle Len and Aunt Fanny, though they were not really that. Aunt Fan was my mother's cousin, and

a good deal older than her. They had three grown-up daughters and one grown-up son. Once or twice a year we would visit them for a day, crossing on the ferry from Gravesend, and travelling on that halfpenny-a-mile line, the London, Tilbury, and Southend Railway, though, by that time, I expect the fares had risen beyond that halcyon price. All the same, even after it was taken over by the Midland Railway, the L.T.S.R. was always only half the price of travel on any other line.

One day we paid one of our periodic visits to Plaistow. 104, Balaam Street, was a largish house - three storeys, I seem to recall. No doubt, if it is still standing today, it is occupied by several families, but at that far-off time my distant relatives, the Thorntons, lived in it in solemn seclusion. I fancy the trams ran past the house, but it was a good residential thoroughfare.

With us, on that day, we took with us a young cousin who was living with us then. In the afternoon, after lunch, I told my Mother we were going out for a while. She smiled assent, and we went. Nowadays, a Mum might be doubtful about letting ten year olds go off by themselves in a strange neighbourhood, - but times have changed, alas.

My cousin and I went to the Boleyn Cinema. As we had passed it in the morning I noted that it was showing Fatty Arbuckle in "Fatty at Coney Island" - and Fatty was a weakness of mine. I said to my cousin - I was the evil genius always - "If we can, we'll go there after dinner".

And we went. I remember we laughed ourselves tired over Fatty at Coney Island, but I forget anything else in the programme.

When we got back to Balaam Stree for tea, Uncle Len asked: "Where have you lads been? "

And we told him, being fairly truthful boys. And throughout tea-time we listened to Uncle Len telling us solemnly about the evils of "going to the pictures". He was evidently a persuasive man, for I have never forgotten that long lecture. But it made no difference to my regular visits to those dens of evil. Those visits went on till, a few years later, I became cricket mad, and went off to cricket practice on the "Bat & Ball" - famous Gravesend

ground - night after night, throughout the summers.

On one occasion when I dashed home after school, for a quick tea before dashing off again to the Cricket Club, my father said drily: "I wonder you bother to come home at all".

Ah! We had a lot to put up with in those days.

MARIE DRESSLER

In his old Diary this month, Danny reminds us that in April 1934 occurred the death of Marie Dressler, the film actress. She had been a famous stage character actress for a good many years in the States when Hollywood beckoned to her in the shape of Mack Sennett, and she became world-famous. The important stage star went to the Keystone studios, and the film was entitled "Tillie's Punctured Romance". It was made in 1914, the first and perhaps the only full-length Keystone film - and the first full-length comedy ever made. To support the star, Sennett featured Charlie Chaplin, the villain of the piece, and Mabel Normand, the villain's girl friend. Plus almost every player on the Keystone pay-roll at that time.

The film was a great success. It turned Marie Dressler, the stage star, into a notable film-star, but most of all it benefited Chaplin. Soon, all the big companies were after him with the absurdly tempting financial offers which film actors enjoy. Chaplin was to make only about a couple more Keystones for Sennett before he was lured away. In later times, the film has always been released as a Chaplin vehicle, starring Charlie, but his was really only a supporting role. Marie was the star.

Marie Dressler was a big, unlovely woman, who overacted with a warmth which won all hearts. When films began to talk, Marie made a fortune, in a long run of films, including the unforgettable "Min & Bill", "Emma", and "Tugboat Annie", all made under the M.G.M. banner.

OUR COVER

This month on our cover we reproduce an Arthur Clarke Magnet cover picture from the summer of 1911 - one of the most

famous of all the red covers. The story was entitled "Saved from Disgrace". Mr. Vernon-Smith's car is wrecked on the railway line, and a train is approaching. Bob Cherry goes up the signal post, and, by holding his red scarf across the green signal light, he stops the train in time. I have often wondered whether a red scarf over a green signal would show red.

A heart-warming picture - Arthur Clarke was nearing the end of his life - for semaphore signals are rarely seen these days, at any rate in the south. I'm no artist, but somehow the perspective of the picture looks a bit faulty, as though the base of the signal post might be in the middle of the track. How carping can we get? Let's be thankful for a grand memory-jogger.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

Danny's Diary

APRIL 1934

We put the clocks on an hour on the 21st. Summer Time is here. And when you get up in the morning it seems as cold as the Arctic. Still. Soon be Cricket.

A truly lovely month in the Gem. An Easter treat in the form of a 3-story series about Tom Merry & Co. going off on a trip to the South Seas. Opening tale is "The Menace of the Dwarf". The dwarf is a Spaniard named Pablo Lopez. He keeps saying "caramba" which I expect is a Spanish swear-word which all Spanish villains use, so it's lucky I don't know what it means. Lopez is after a chart which was given to a sailor named Peter Raff. Raff handed the chart over to Tom Merry, and the the Spaniard turns his murderous attention on Tom. The chart shows the hiding place of a secret treasure.

Next tale is "Hidden Gold". The St. Jim's chums set off for Skeleton Island on board Lord Conway's yacht "Silver Scud". With them goes the Rev. Dodds, who is the curate of Huckleberry

Heath. Haven't heard of him lately, but it's nice to meet up with him again. But Pablo Lopez is also on the track of the treasure and of the party.

Last tale of the series (a series which is all too short) is "The St. Jim's Castaways". They find the treasure, but then they are shipwrecked and cast away on a cannibal island in the Pacific. In the end they lose most of the treasure, but still have some gold pieces to take home as souvenirs of a wonderful story.

The final week of the month brings the opening story of another new series which brings in Lumley-Lumley as a new boy. This opening tale is "The Boy Who Couldn't be Sacked". Mr. Lumley-Lumley is a multi-millionaire and a business man to the toes of his gaudy socks. He insists on paying three years fees for his son at St. Jim's in advance - Martin Clifford says that the fees are fifty guineas a term, and Mr. Lumley-Lumley gives the Head a cheque for £700 odd, and the Head signs a legal document to say that the boy will stay at St. Jim's for 3 years.

Which shows that Dr. Locke, though a very good school-master, is a bit of a simpleton, doesn't it? Unfortunately, Lumley, the boy, is a rank outsider. In fact, the boys nickname him the Outsider. And The Head can't expel him. The series continues next month.

Two truly first-rate stories in the Schoolboys' Own Library. In "From School to Hollywood", the Greyfriars chums are on the way to Hollywood to make a school film, and this tale tells of their adventures on the way - in Chicago and other places across the States. Really outstanding.

The other S.O.L. is "Cousin Ethel's Chum", a splendid school story. Gussy's tenner is missing - and Figgins sees it is in the possession of Cousin Ethel.

To revert to the Gem, the St. Frank's serial "Treasure Isle" has ended, and a brand new one, by Edwy Searles Brooks has started. It is named "Ghost River Ranch", a thrilling story in which Nipper, Justin Farman, Archie Glenthorn, Handforth & Co., and Willy Handforth go to the Wild West to solve the mystery of the disappearing men and cattle on the Ghost River Ranch.

There is a new book just out by the crime writer, Agatha Christie. My brother Doug has bought it, and he let me read it, but he took the dust-jacket off first, as he wants to keep it pristine. Seems funny, for I thought the dust-jacket is to protect the book. It's entitled "Why Didn't They Ask Evans?". I found it a bit slow going, but Doug says it is a wonderful tale, full of unexpected twists.

Gerald DuMaurier is dead. He was one of a famous theatrical and writing family, and he was what is called an actor-manager. He acted in plays as well as producing and staging them.

In Modern Boy the latest series of King of the Islands has come to an end. First tale of the month is "The Lagoon of Tunaviva". Ken King is still up against the villainous Mr. Jam in the hunt for the fabulous Pink Coral. Then the final tale of the series, "Billy the Beachcomber". Ken King gets the fortune in the Pink Coral, and uses it to put the island of Tunaviva on its feet again, with Billy, the beachcomber, as head of the island. It has been a fine series. I hope it won't be too long before King of the Islands is back in Modern Boy.

The series continues about Biggles when he was training to be a flier, and the Captain Justice stories by Murray Roberts are still going strong. They use television in their adventures. George Rochester has a series going about the Grey Shadow, the Master Spy of the British Secret Service. There is also a comedy series about "Clev", the Boy Inventor.

Marie Dressler, the film star, has died this month, just as her latest (and last) picture "Christopher Bean" is released in this country. I am sad about it, for she has made some wonderful films. We went to see "Christopher Bean", all about a painter who left all his pictures to his housekeeper, and became famous after his death.

A rattling good month in the cinemas. "I Cover the Waterfront", starring Claudette Colbert and Ben Lyon is very good, about a reporter who courts a girl so that he can land her father who is suspected of being a criminal. With this one there was the latest Laurel & Hardy two-reeler entitled "Twice Two".

"Lady For a Day" was a delight. Starring May Robson and Warren William, it is about an old lady who, with the aid of kindly gangsters, is able to pose as a rich and famous woman so that she can impress her daughter who is on a visit after a long absence.

Maurice Chevalier in "The Way to Love" pleased my Mum a lot, and H. B. Warner in "Sorrell & Son" is a fine story which pleased both Mum and me. Very good indeed is the new young star Katherine Hepburn in "Morning Glory". Also in it are Douglas Fairbanks Junr. and Adolphe Menjou, about a girl who is determined to succeed on the stage, and who is warned that fame may be fleeting. She says "I'm not afraid of Morning Glory". The Morning Glory is a flower which blooms in the morning, dies, by the afternoon, and is picked off.

An English film is Jack Buchanan and Elsie Randolph in "That's a Good Girl", a musical comedy. Grace Fields is tip-top in "Love, Life, and Laughter". Wallace Beery and Jackie Cooper are great in a tough film named "The Bowery". Jack Hulbert is in the navy in "Jack Ahoy!" and "SOS Iceberg", starring Rod LaRocque is a fine spectacle. Mae West with Cary Grant is remarkable in "I'm No Angel", about a very lush woman "Come up and see me some time" and a Salvation Army Officer. It is very funny in an American way.

Finally Buster Crabbe in "Tarzan the Fearless". Right up my street.

The series about Mr. Smedley has continued all the month in the Magnet, and it is a magnificent story from any point of the compass. First of the month is "Form-Master and Rogue". It is the Bounder's intention to "run straight". To keep out of trouble. It's his Form-master's firm intention that the Bounder shall be sent away from Greyfriars in disgrace. What nobody knows is that, if the Bounder is disgraced, Mr. Vernon-Smith will disinherit his son, and make his nephew, Lucius Teggars the heir to millions - and Lucius Teggars is at Greyfriars, posing as a master and calling himself Mr. Smedley.

Then we come to the East holidays. Mr. Vernon-Smith has arranged for his son to spend the holidays in a combination of work

and play. He is to live in a bungalow near Folkestone, under the charge of a tutor, Mr. Pickering. But in this story, the Bounder pays Bunter to take his place, while he, the Bounder goes off with his rorty pals. The story is "The Bounder's Big Bluff".

Next tale, "The Schoolboy Trippers". We find the chums, and the Bounder, in France, with the Bounder at the Casino. But the Bounder saves his father from a murderous apache, so the trouble blows over for a while - and the Bounder goes back with Wharton's party to Wharton Lodge. And, in "The Shadowed Schoolboy", Mr. Smedley turns up and tries to make trouble for the Bounder with Colonel Wharton. A terrific series which continues next month if we are spared.

- - -

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

The 3-story South Seas series in the Gem was really a classic of its kind, and beautifully and economically told. As I discovered from research some years ago, this story was originally written to run as a serial in the Empire Library, where it was announced as "Tom Merry's Treasurer Island". However the Empire Library closed down suddenly and unexpectedly, and the serial was transferred to the Gem, where it appeared as a series of three stories at Easter time 1911. The original titles of the 3 stories were "The Mysterious Document", "Tom Merry's Treasure Island" and "The Schoolboy Castaways". The entire story was reprinted in a splendid Boys' Friend Library about early 1918. The stories were well presented in 1934, when Danny read them, with but very little pruning. The only small fly in the ointment was that Levison (who had not yet arrived at St. Jim's in the reprints) was re-named Snipe in the opening tale.

"The Boy who Couldn't Be Sacked" had originally been entitled "A Rank Outsider", the first story to introduce Lumley-Lumley. They had to go back a year or more to the Spring of 1910 to collect this one. There is no obvious reason why the arrival of Lumley-Lumley had been held over for so long in the reprints. It upset the balance. However, several Lumley tales which had appeared at intervals in 1910 were now brought together in the reprints, which was a sound move.

The fees of £50 per term in 1934 (it had been £30 per term in 1910) was far too low, in each case, for a residential school like St. Jim's.

S. O. L. No. 217 "From School to Hollywood" was the second helping from the Magnet's Hollywood series of early 1929. Three stories fit beautifully into the mediu, with an omission of one tale "Bunter's Amazing Adventure" which had been a first-rate single adventure in the middle of the series. It is not missed, though it was really a pity to exclude such first-rate fare.

S. O. L. No. 218 "Cousin Ethel's Chum" (a first-class school tale and one of the best Ethel-Figgins yarns) was the 4-story series from the Gem of the Spring of 1926, a time when genuine tales were a rarity.

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BLAKIANA

conducted by Josie Packman

At the moment of writing this item for Blakiana the weather here in London is just as miserable as it could get without resorting to heavy falls of snow. Fortunately that has not happened. But by the time you read Blakiana in April, I trust that the weather has improved and we have got rid of our winter ills. I hope you will enjoy Mr. Rowe's article about Blake being Prime Minister. In the Inner London borough in which I live the rates are so heavy that many thousands of people cannot pay them. The present times are as bad in their way as the 1930's. I think I would like to be back in that period, though, as I should be able to buy my Union Jack and Sexton Blake Libraries without the knowledge that they would one day disappear.

THE SECRET

By Raymond Cure

There is something about a secret. It has been said that all the world loves a lover. It could be equally said that "All the world loves a secret".

This interest in secrets is planted in us at an early age. It comes up at Christmas and Birthdays. Parcels around the tree, not to be opened until Christmas Day. You tried to guess the contents by the shape of the package. If you enquired you were told it is a secret.

In time of war Hitler would have loved to know Churchill's plans for "D" day, but it was a secret, a closely guarded secret.

Sometime ago I was told that if I wrote a story with the title containing the word secret I would be half-way to getting a reader. I can believe it. Stories, films and TV come up with a legion of such titles, such as The Secret of the Marsh or the Secret of Broadmoor Towers, or the Secret of the Black Tower, etc.

The authors assume, rightly, that we all want to know the secret.

One wonders if G. H. Teed had heard of this play for in the Union Jack No. 1482 dated 12th March, 1932, he comes up with the title "The Secret". I had the choice of two U.J.'s to read, both with interesting covers and the Editor's blurb strongly recommending them. I picked "The Secret" and I bet it was because of its title.

A source of wonder to me when viewing films is, as the spy rummages among piles of papers he eventually comes on one marked "TOP SECRET" and promptly pockets it. Honestly, do governments mark important papers with "Top Secret" in large letters on the envelope. Well, there it is, a copy of the Union Jack and under the cover illustration, in large red letters two words "THE SECRET" with H. R. Wilson as the illustrator and G. H. Teed as the author.

Now, if anybody could turn out a good tale it was G. H. Teed and The Secret is a good tale and after lots of excitement and tracking down of crooks the Secret was solved. I won't tell you any more about it as it will spoil your pleasure if you have not previously read that particular Union Jack. It can be obtained from Josie Packman's Sexton Blake Lending Library and is well worth reading.

SEXTON BLAKE, PRIME MINISTER?

by Cyril Rowe

Well why not? His acute mind, his preternatural intelligence, his strength and athletic ability and his human understanding would have made him possibly the greatest Prime Minister of the 20th century.

His activities for England against other belligerent nations - thanks of the King on many occasions; similar duties for a grateful Government, both in normal detective ability and as a member of the Secret Service, would have led him into the greatest understanding of secret treaties and of secret diplomacy and undercover agreements. His knowledge of the crooked ways of life would have led him to the selection of the right ministers for his cabinet; his detective ability would have allowed him to frustrate

national and International financial scandals and reward honest endeavour. I can imagine that the Honours list, in this case, could all have been a true reward, rather than a somewhat tawdry collection as was often the case, bought honours.

In the International fold, his worldwide adventures would have given him contact with both high and low in most countries of the world, and preserved in him a sense of International justice and ability to negotiate both through strength of personal evidence and acknowledgment of his own humility, not patriotic bragadocio. My own opinion is based on two theories. 1) that the people who knew, well knew that he did much more good where he was and never sought to promote him for Parliament. (A strong U.J. and S.B. readership would have landslided him in) and 2) that he could not and would not desist from his fight against crime till he had overcome many of his well known opponents. For instance he fought George Marsden Plummer from 1907 till 1929, Huxton Rymer 1913 till 1948. In addition Wu Ling, Carlac and Kew, Gunga Dass were long outstanding opponents, and many more that you can think of. At any rate in his less active years he should certainly have been the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

THE MYSTERY OF BOZ

By C. H. Churchill

Readers of the early St. Frank's stories in the Nelson Lee Library will no doubt recall that Nipper once owned Boz, a kind of Spaniel dog, white with liberal splashes of black. He was first introduced to us in old small series No. 160 "S.O.S. or Tricked by Wireless" dated 29/6/18 a summer holiday series. Nipper purchased him from one of the sailors on Dorrie's yacht, for the sum of "ten bob", and soon he proved his usefulness by aiding in the rescue of Eileen Dare who had been abducted by savages.

Boz was featured from time to time over the next few years and then for some reason he disappeared from the scene completely.

Did E.S.B. forget him? This seems doubtful, as he was mentioned in one of the Ezra Quirk stories in 1925. Silence again after this until 1927 when he appeared in one of the series known as Handforth's Ark series.

What puzzles me is that he first appeared in a holiday series and yet in all the famous holiday series to come over the years, he was never mentioned as being taken again.

We read that he had a kennel in the pets quarters at St. Frank's but never heard that he was taken out by Nipper nor did we learn that he went to Grays Inn Road at holiday time, when St. Frank's broke up.

He could not have been in London in May 1921 as a tracker dog was required in No. 311 "The Hounds of the Tagossa". Pedro was borrowed from Sexton Blake to do the job. Boz had many times in the past been used to trail people and we were told that he was better at it than any bloodhound.

I was always disappointed that E.S.B. did not bring Boz into the stories more often. I really think he must have been forgotten in the end as in the very late stages of the St. Frank's stories we heard that Nipper possessed an Alsatian named I believe Wolf. (Oh dear!!)

Nipper named his little dog "Boz" after a suggestion from Dorrie that he be named Charles Dickens. Dorrie said that Boz's face always reminded him of the immortal Charles. Nipper, however, settled on Boz which, as he said, was just the same.

What did happen to Boz?

THE LURE OF ST. FRANK'S

By William Lister

Make no mistake about it, in its hey-day the 'Nelson Lee' had its fans in every corner of the British Isles and beyond. It could also be said that it had its faithful followers to the very last page of the very last issue, even though numbers were depleted by then.

What then was it that attracted readers?

Boys then were not easily parted from two-pence of their pocket money, and there was always the temptation to opt out for

the "Gem" or "Magnet", two worthy competitions for that tuppence.

However, the 'Nelson Lee' it was, and the 'Nelson Lee' it had to be. Born in the mind of a young writer was a school, of amazing characters, that he was pleased to name 'St. Frank's'.

It was this school that secured for the 'Nelson Lee' a regular order. It was the lure of St. Frank's.

May I digress for a moment, and take a look at this word 'lure'. Chambers' Dictionary gives - something that entices or bait to attract. Roget's Thesaurus yields - drawing one to, pulling one towards, to captuate, to fascinate, or even a stronger term - to drag towards.

The brain-child of Edwy Searles Brooks did just that. A delightful public school of dimensions we could all picture in our mind's eye (with the aid of Nelson Lee artists) while page by page and week by week, slowly but surely, the characters developed. Characters that have lived in the minds of Nelson Lee fans from schooldays till advancing years.

Nelson Lee - schoolmaster detective -, Nipper, his assistant, Handforth and chums, Church and McLure, Archie Glenthorne, Fatty Little and the unforgettable Ezra Quirk. Down the years the characters came and went while some lasted from the day the school appeared until its gates closed with the final issue. Headmasters and Form-masters became household names to those who purchased and read the 'Nelson Lee', while Lord Dorrimore and Umlesi will never die.

A school, its staff, and the boys alone would not have been enough to entice us, to captivate us, to fascinate us or to use a stronger word, drag us towards the Nelson Lee. All had to be woven into theme and plot. A perusal of existing copies of the 'Nelson Lee' will reveal how capable was Edwy Searles Brooks to accomplish all this.

Schooldays mixed with fantastic holidays gripped our imaginations. Captivate us he did, fascinate us he did. Having read our copy we were enticed to buy the week following. Within a few weeks we placed our permanent order. The 'Nelson Lee' had dragged us into its net.

There is a lure of St. Frank's known only to readers of the 'Nelson Lee' and the "Monster Library", a lure that will last till the very last reader lays down the very last copy in existence.

Because of his writings, we could say, even on the news of his death "Long live Edwy Searles Brooks".

The year of George Orwell has arrived - 1984, but into it march the fans of the 'Nelson Lee', still eager to obtain copies of the paper that chronicled the adventures of the amazing boys of this amazing school.

1984 and by purchase or loan you will find people in many towns and cities who still read the 'Nelson Lee'.

They feel - The Lure of St. Frank's.

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 194 - Magnet No. 507 - "Ponsonby's Plot"

By 1917 the wartime paper shortage had already caused the Magnet to shrink to its smallest size of 16 pages including covers. References to the war itself, however, were somewhat ambiguous in tone: the Caterpillar said, "A dashed war tea, you know: Franky won't let me splash in war time". (Which suggested that some luxury foodstuffs could still be had, at a price), whilst Bunter explained the non-arrival of his postal order as having been caused by a delay in the post "due to this blessed war, I suppose". Quite clearly, the seriousness of the story lay nearer than the war in France.

Because of the restricted length of the Greyfriars story, the motivation was explained as an incident that had occurred before the narrative began. Wingate had caught Ponsonby smoking in Snoop's study, and had caned him. Possibly Wingate had overstepped his authority but there was no doubt that Ponsonby was both annoyed and vindictive. Curiously enough he began to cultivate Wingate Minor who soon acquired a taste for smoking, swearing, and gambling at cards. In a number of episodes, Charles Hamilton revealed a knowledge of poker that suggested

something more than mere book learning.

One of the fascinations of the earlier stories is the manner in which character and motivation were analysed in a manner that could lead to general conclusions. When Jack Wingate told lies to his brother in order to get money to gamble, we were told:

Deceit is the defence of the weak against the strong.
The fag tried to find a wretched justification in that thought. He had not yet reached the stage - which Pon had passed long ago - of doing wrong without attempting to justify it to himself.

It was probably the Bounder who first saw why Ponsonby was bothering to patronise a third form fag: Pon was hoping to get his revenge on Wingate by disgracing his young brother. Certainly it was the Bounder who turned the tables by beating Pon at his own game, and Jack Wingate had full opportunity of knowing Ponsonby for what he really was. Short though the story was, it had pace and excitement as well as a fascinating insight into the lure of the compulsive gambler.

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

PHILIP TIERNEY WRITES:

re "Let's be Controversial", 243

Tommy Keen had recalled the persecution of Wharton in the Lancaster serial which I first read in the S.O.L. in 1937.

In those days I was a keen collector of S.O.L.'s and still possess most of my boyhood collection. But not the Lancaster serial. Excellent though it may have been from the literary angle I dislike it intensely and gave my four copies away. After many years my enthusiasm as a collector returned but I don't want those four again.

Whatever sympathy I had felt for Lancaster's crisis of conscience, comparable with Talbot's at St. Jim's in earlier days, was completely banished by the condemnation Wharton had to face

when keeping Lancaster's miserable secret.

I longed for Lancaster to be exposed so that Wharton could be vindicated. "Greyfriars never knew the truth" were to me the most annoying words in the concluding paragraphs. I thought Greyfriars should have known the truth and I think so now.

* * * * *

TOM MERRY CAVALCADE (Serialised from a Long Ago C.D. Annual)

1916

Lizzie Bland, once a housemaid in the Venner home, slipped a placard under the wire of the frame outside the news-agent's shop. She stood back, and read the announcement in large black print on the white paper: "H.M.S. Hampshire sunk at sea. Lord Kitchener Drowned".

Lizzie, face sombre, was turning to enter the shop, when she felt a touch on her shoulder, and she found Mrs. Venner by her side.

"I thought it was you, Lizzie", said Mrs. Venner. "How surprising! Surely you are not working in Mr. Chadley's shop?"

"I'm in charge here", said Lizzie, diffidently, but with lurking pride. She went through the door, and round to the other side of the counter. Mrs. Venner waited whilst Lizzie served another customer with ten Woodbines and a Magnet.

Then she said: "Chris and I have only just returned from Bournemouth, where the Major is in hospital. The Germans used gas at Ypres, you know, and my husband has been very ill. I thought you were going into munitions when you left me. You said you could earn big money in a munitions factory".

"So I could have done." There was a shade of defiance in Lizzie's voice. "But Mr. Chadley would have had to close his shop when he joined the army. He had nobody to run it for him. So I offered, and he jumped at it."

"I see." Mrs. Venner was watching her thoughtfully. "Do you know anything

about this kind of business, Lizzie?"

"I didn't - but Mr. Chadley taught me the ropes for a few weeks before he joined up, and I can carry on till he comes back. I felt so sorry for him. People were so beastly."

Mrs. Venner extracted twopence from her purse.

"Well, I hope you do well, Lizzie. You may give me 'Answers' and the 'Gem'.

Lizzie picked up the two papers.

"It's the last blue 'Gem' - they can't get the blue dye any more. The Editor says it's 'Good-bye to the old blue cover.'"

"Time changes all things, murmured Mrs. Venner.

"It's a grand tale, all about a new boy called Outram. Title is 'Under Gussy's Protection'." With a shaking finger, Lizzie pointed to the illustration on the cover.

"See that picture, ma'am. Those boys are sticking white feathers all over Outram. See what it says underneath the picture - 'White feathers for the funk'. That's the kind of thing those awful women did to Mr. Chadley. They sent him white feathers by post, and stuck them on his shop window. He's not a young man, either - he's forty or more. He wanted to do his bit, but there was nobody to run his shop ---"

Mrs. Venner took the two periodicals. She said, softly:

"You're a good girl, Lizzie. You keep the flag flying till Mr. Chadley comes home."

As she left the shop, a barrel-organ was playing "God Send You Back to Me". Lizzie sniffed, and wiped her sleeve across

her eyes.

1917

"Fourteen days' leave", said the man in khaki behind the counter. "I go back the day after Boxing Day."

"I hear you're in the R. A. M. C.", said Major Venner.

Chadley nodded. "Stretcher bearer", he said.

Major Venner smiled ruefully. He said: "You don't know how lucky you are. I'm invalided out. Gas, you know - at Wipers. The war is over for me."

"It's over for the Russians, too, sir", commented Chadley. "They signed a cease-fire with the Germans today".

"Thank God the Americans are in at last", said Major Venner. "New blood - new life. It will make all the difference."

Chadley shrugged his shoulders.

"They come in at the eleventh hour - to win the war".

"Don't be bitter, Chadley. We've much for which to be thankful. What's in todays 'Gem'?"

The man in khaki took a thin, white covered paper from under his counter. The name 'Venner' was pencilled in the corner.

"'Jack Blake's Hun'", he said. "Blake catches a Boche near the school. Not bad, but not up to the old standard. How do you like the artist Reynolds, who draws the pictures now?"

"Not bad", said Major Venner, in his turn. "But give me Macdonald any day. He can really draw schoolboys." He paid three-halfpence, and took the Gem. "Good-bye, Chadley, I must hurry. I'm taking Mrs. Venner and the boy to see 'Seven Days' Leave' at the Lyceum, so I mustn't linger. A peaceful Christmas, Chadley. I shall think of you on the day after Boxing Day."

(Next month - 1918)

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(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Last month a reader, in a letter which appeared in our Postman Called Column, referred to the old book "Valentine Vox", and we added an editorial comment on the subject. A number of readers have had their memories nudged, and we thank all who have written in on the subject, and, particularly, Mr. Edward Baldock of Cambridge. We have selected an item from Mr. Brian Doyle on the theme, as being a little more detailed.)

MORE ABOUT VAL VOX

From Brian Doyle

You ask (March C.D.) if anyone knows anything about the story VALENTINE VOX THE VENTRILOQUIST.

The book was written by Henry Cockton, who was born in London in 1807 and died in 1852. Published in 1840 it was probably the forerunner of every other story of ventriloquism ever to appear - and plenty have appeared in boys' literature since then! Two which spring to mind, of course, are 'Val Fox' in PUCK, and Billy Bunter in the MAGNET (since Bunter's only real accomplishment, apart from perhaps cooking, was ventriloquism).

Other successors and imitators of VOX included publisher Edward Lloyd's "Valentine Vaux" by Timothy Portwine (in 32 penny

numbers), "Silas the Conjurer" (and ventriloquist) in Beeton's BOYS' OWN MAGAZINE in 1855, and Reginald Wray's incredible Fourth-Form Schoolboy, Paul Verely. There were numerous other boy-vents.

Cockton performed something of a similar service for sleep-walkers in humorous stories when his popular book SULVESTER SOUND THE SOMNAMBULIST was published soon after VOX.

There is no record of Cockton having written a story about a sleep-walking ventriloquist but, since he died relatively young (at 45), he may well have got around to it had he lived longer. A case of sleep-talking, perhaps...

* * * * *

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

MIDLAND

Only 9 members were present at our February meeting, the lowest attendance for years. We are hard hit at present by the illness of several of our most regular attenders.

Arising out of the minutes, an old set of club rules were unearthed. We decided that they need to be brought up to date. Tom Porter has been asked to scrutinise them and deal with the matter at the A.G.M. in May. We are sorry to hear from Stan Knight that his eyesight is badly affected by blood pressure, a sad blow to an omnivorous reader like Sam. We hope that he will soon recover.

After refreshments, your correspondent gave a quiz of 15 questions. They were compiled out of my head at short notice. Geoff Lardner was an easy winner.

I also gave a reading from a 1919 Magnet. Gosling is in contact with a Matrimonial Medium with the prospect of marrying a rich "widder" who owns a public house. The while thing is a confidence trick, and Gosling's dream is soon shattered.

Our next meeting will be on the 17th April, to avoid Easter.

Good wishes to O.B.B.C. members everywhere.

JACK BELLFIELD (Correspondent)

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge O.B.B.C. met at the home of Tony Cowley on Sunday, 4th March. Having assembled at the Longstanton home of Tony we drove across to the near by village of Haddenham, where there is a Farmland Museum, where there was being held on this Sunday a Collection of Vintage Wireless sets, going back to the early days of wireless, including crystal sets. Here we were joined by Mike Rouse who had driven over direct from Ely. Apart from the many sets on view, there were numerous models of broadcasting stations, "pirate" stations, vehicles, etc., together with books, Magazines, Programmes, advertisements, and correspondence. This was very interesting, both to the younger members of the club who saw the actual early sets, and to the older ones who could remember the days of the "cat whisker", etc. Sixty years of radio!

Being at the farm Museum members then made a tour of this, visiting the various sections, and inspecting the old implements and tools, not forgetting the blacksmith's forge. Jack Overhill was particularly interested in a display of shoemakers' and repairers' tools, and explained the use of these to the members.

Back in Longstanton we enjoyed tea provided by Tony, assisted by his family. During tea there was an informal discussion on English and American comics.

After tea Tony played the final part of Neville Woods' tape on life at Marlborough College; this dealt with his time as a senior and, during his final year, as a prefect. This tape has been a source of great interest to the members, since it gave a picture of life at a real public school, as compared with the writings of Hamilton.

The meeting closed with a warm vote of thanks to Tony and his family for their hospitality.

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JUNE WILL BE OUR 450th ISSUE

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LONDON

There was a bumper attendance at the Ealing meeting on Sunday, 11th March. Easily accessible and with local connections with Frank Richards, the members made an extremely good effort to attend.

Chris Harper, in the chair, welcomed the large attendance, which included three new members.

Roger Jenkins conducted one of his so called easy grid competitions and the winner was Roy Parsons. Timothy Bruning was second and Eric Lawrence third.

Brian Doyle, now recovered from his indisposition, gave a fine dissertation which he entitled "Tons of Tecs". The tecs were all there right from Sherlock Holmes, Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee to many of the little known ones like Peter Flint and Tubby Haig.

Norman Wright gave a slide show that featured the artist C. H. Brock and some of the other famous O.B.B. artists. Norman's commentary was very good whilst the slides were being shown.

Roy Parsons' Paraphrase competition was won by Roger Jenkins. Timothy Bruning and Eric Lawrence shared second place; nice to see the latter after his trip to the sunny.

"Were they such Friends?" was the titles of a short discourse by Tommy Keen on those fine Gem characters, Tom Merry and Reginald Talbot.

The next meeting will be at the Bisley, Surrey home of Roy Parsons on Sunday, 8th April.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

We had ten members present at our meeting (our 407th) on Saturday, 10th March, 1984.

A copy of the first issue of "Book and Magazine Collector" was passed round for inspection and it was the general view of all present, that this new publication could push up prices of the old books. Of particular interest would be issue number 2, dealing with the "Magnet comic". Some of us flinched at the sound of

that!

Following on from our previous meeting where Harry Barlow had defended the sub-writers and their work, Keith Smith referred to October 1957 issue of "Story Paper Collector", in which Bill Lofts had an article entitled "In Fairness To The Subs". Keith read out the article and it was obvious that Bill had hit the nail on the head all those years ago, and was able to draw to a satisfactory conclusion our little debate of the previous month.

The Cambridge Club had kindly given us an insight into some of their activities and Tony Cowley had prepared a tape recording of "Children's Hour Remembered". It was good to hear again, excerpts from "Romany", "Toytown", "Sherlock Holmes", with Carlton Hobbs and Norman Shelley; "Norman and Henry Bones" with Charles Hawtrey and Patricia Hayes; "Jennings at School" with Geoffrey Wincott and Wilfred Babbage - as well as an excerpt from an Aubrey Feist play and the voices of the much loved David Davis and Derek McCulloch.

Our thanks were extended to Tony Cowley and the Cambridge Club for letting us hear the tape and we look forward to hearing more of their efforts, in the future.

Our next meeting is our A.G.M. and will be held in our new venue THE CITY OF LEEDS ROOM, Leeds Parish Church, Leeds, 2.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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FOR SALE: Biggles; Just William; Enid Blyton books 70p each. Also Blyton paper-backs, late 40's, 50's. Magnets (covers taped) 1930 to 1938, 40p each; Boys' Magazines, 1920's, 30's: £1.50 each. The War Illustrated, last war, 52 copies £10; World War 1914, 52 copies, £10. OLYMPUS, SANDFORD MILL ROAD, CHELMSFORD, ESSEX.

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At long last our Catalogue of Annuals, Cartoon and Comic Strip and Children's Books. For Beano and Dandy, Biggles and William, Giles and Jane and much more send 2 x 12½p stamps to YESTERDAY'S PAPER, 4a COLLIERGATE, YORK.

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FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: Magnets, Gems, Annuals, Story Paper Collector, S.O.L.'s, S.B.L.'s, NELSON LEES, etc.

MARRIOTT, 27 GREENVIEW DRIVE, Tel. NORTHAMPTON (0604) 711874.

The Postman Called

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

Mrs. NORA COOKE (Norwich): The first Gem I remember - before I could read it - was the story of the voyage of the "Condor" - and wicked Mr. Ratcliff. With heroic Tom Merry and delightful Gussy! I think my grandchildren - 2 and both grown-up - think their Grand-mama slightly mad when they look at my "collection", but I notice they read some of the stories when they come to stay with me. In any case, they are swallowed up by our two thousand or so "proper" books.

REG MOSS (New Zealand): As an Anglican Reader for more than forty years I agree with your comments on the prolific number of versions of the Bible which have been thrust upon us in recent years.

Miss ANN CLARKE (Wandsworth): I hope something comes of Cyril Rowe's suggestions for the Sexton Blake centenary. I'd like to see a book of articles about Blake, but also I'd like to see some of the original stories reprinted - for instance, a selection of stories about the best-known characters in individual paperbacks - characters such as Waldo, Zenith, Yvonne, Plummer, etc. Sherlock Holmes, Bull-dog Drummond, the Saint, are continually reprinted - why not Blake?

On another matter - can anyone tell me what was the first Nelson Lee story and when and where it appeared? Were there every stories about Nelson Lee's early days?

I was recently re-reading "Conspiracy at Abbey" by Eric Leyland. It is a story about twins who change places, one going to school, the other to a tutor. The twin who goes to school is chosen to play in a match and realises he can't because he isn't a genuine member of the school. I don't remember this point every coming up in any of the stories about doubles or impersonations in any of the papers. Did it ever come up?

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Eric Leyland was a regular and enthusiastic reader of C.D. over a number of years, but it is a good many years since I last heard from him. At that time he lived at Ongar in Essex.)

Miss E. B. FLINDERS (Hitchin): I remember when the new "School Friend" had been running about 18 months the printers went on strike, and for six weeks nobody in the Fleetway House was able to work. The printers were getting more money than the authors and the artists, with paid holidays. The authors and artists were all free-lance, of course. Without them, there would have been no work for the printers.

I used to have "Puck" and "Rainbow" when I was a little girl, and I remember Val Fox, who was on the C.D. cover in February, very well indeed.

M. S. FELLOWS (London): I very much enjoyed the February issue of C.D. Like the old annuals, it was "full of good things".

I was glad to be reminded of Sam Taylor (page 5). The Laurel and Hardy picture he directed was "Nothing But Trouble" (1945).

When I was a boy, I spent many of my summer holidays living with friends near Ostend in Belgium. I was still able to obtain my "Magnet" and "Gem" from the man who sold papers near to the Kursaal. I wonder if any of your readers ever encountered him. He sold many papers from many countries and always seemed to be able to pick out the nationalities even before the customers spoke. I watched him do this on many occasions. My father purchased his morning paper from him but was annoyed for a while to find that there was always a little hole in it. He couldn't understand why. Then he spotted the cause - the man had a tiny dog in his canvas bag with the papers and the dog evidently liked the taste of English newspapers. Fortunately, he never chewed my "Magnet" or "Gem". I shall never forget how glorious was that last summer before the 1939 war. I spent most of my month's pocket money on a ticket for Maurice Chevalier ('live' as they now say!) at the Kursaal. It was worth it!

I very much agree with what you said about modern versions of the Bible

E. A. HUBBARD (Sheffield): The Annual gave me great pleasure. Mr. Buddle in particular. The escapism we find in the Digests

(goodness knows we need it these days) is priceless. The contain Refresher Courses (you could call them) that we Old Boys find invaluable.

JOHN BRIDGWATER (Malvern Link): As always the March C.D. was a delightful issue. I do so enjoy "Danny's Diary". I particularly enjoyed seeing the films Danny mentions this month: "Dinner at Eight", "Friday the Thirteenth", "Voltaire", etc. What great days of the cinema those were!

HAROLD TRUSCOTT (Deal): Having found himself in agreement with me, Mr. Keen was disconcerted to find that he was not, after all. But this is not surprising.

It could be that some of my views on Greyfriars, etc., are the same as Mr. Keen's and some are not, a common occurrence when two people who love the same thing start swapping views, and one that keeps things alive. As he says, it is all good fun. May we meet some time, and exchange other similar - or dissimilar - views. I found that my great friend, the late Geoffrey Wilde, and I agreed on almost everything about Hamilton, but not about Shields' drawings of Greyfriars boys, which he liked and I did not, and do not, like. It made no difference to us, however.

* * * * *

B.B. AND ME

by R. Hibbert

No, not Brigitte Bardot, more's the pity. Someone I grew up with; someone John Betjeman grew up with; an Amalgamated Press Character who got a mention in a real poem by a real Poet Laureate.

'----- RAINBOW came on
on Wednesdays - with the pranks of Tiger Tim,
And Bonnie Bluebell and her magic gloves -----'

John Betjeman knew her in her earliest, World War One, days when the stories about her were billed as 'The Amusing Adventures of Bonnie Bluebell, The Fair School Girl', and somewhere in each and every tale new readers were told that 'Bluebell, as you know, is a fairy. She wears magic gloves, and with these she has only to

wish for a thing and her wish comes about at once'.

When I knew her, ten years later, she was the brainy half of 'Bonnie Bluebell and Co., Detectives'. Bluebell was a permanent eight year old; the page 3 girl of THE RAINBOW. At least she was on page 3 when the comic became an eight page thrippeny after years of being a twelve page tupenny. And she solved a mystery an issue. For twenty-five years to my certain knowledge. It wouldn't surprise me if she wasn't before the public for over forty years.

She didn't let on about her fairy past when I knew her. To me she was a human school girl who lived in as crime ridden a district as Nelson Lee's Bellton or Miss Marple's St. Mary Mead.

I didn't know Bluebell's surname then - it was Joy - and I don't remember her parents, but in 'The Mystery of the Missing Chalks' there's a mention of one of them - 'Bonnie Bluebell, who was on her way home with a library book for her mother, waved...'

When I knew her B. B. seemed to spend all her waking hours with a character called Frank. I didn't know his surname either but it ought to have been Watson. He was the 'Co.', the other half of 'Our Helpful Chums' and although not as bright as Bluebell he was good at spotting the more obvious clues even if he often made lousy deductions.

An inseparable pair; they even took holidays together. I can't remember one case which B. B. solved on her own. She could've done, but she didn't. She didn't need Frank's aid as a detective. His sleuthing wouldn't have been graded B- at any Correspondence Course on How to be a Detective Academy. No, Bluebell needed him because he was probably the only person in the whole wide wonderful who shared her passion for riddles.

Any day, within minutes of meeting, those kids were riddling away at one another. They paused when their attention was drawn to the crime of the week, but, as soon as there was a lull in the investigation they were at it again.

B. B. Why is a boy asleep in class like another reading a newspaper?

F. Goodness! I can't imagine. Do tell me.

B. B. (merrily) Because he is enjoying his snooze (his news)!

AND

F. Why is a true sailor like the letter B in the alphabet?
B.B. (she knows, you know) Because you will never find him far from the sea (C)!

They were always like that, but B.B. and Co.'s riddles could've been worse as this sample from CHIPS (The Champion Comic shows:

Why do swans sing just before death?
It's their last chants, I suppose.

Anyway, riddle-me-reeing or not, Bonnie Bluebell and Frank always solved their cases and as RAINBOW ran for 1898 issues and Bluebell was, I think, in all of them that's not a bad record. Even in her pre-Frank fairy days before she was a detective proper she was a Righter of Wrongs, a Champion of Justice. Any wrong doer who crossed her path received instant judgement and a punishment that fitted the crime. National Periodical Publication's Wonder Woman whose exploits weren't recorded until the 1940's was a poor thing compared with Bonnie Bluebell. W.W.'s magic lasso wasn't as useful as B.B.'s magic gloves.

It was always small scale crime that the helpful ones dealt with, but then it would be, wouldn't it? B.B. and Co. never stumbled across £20,000,000 Bullion Heists or Body in Trunk Mysteries but when it came to

The Mystery of the Missing Hamper
The Mystery of the Smudged School Register
The Mystery of the Vanished Apples
The Easter Egg Mystery
The Mystery of the Missing Plum Cake

type cases nobody could touch them.

And then there was that 100% all crimes solved record!

As a very satisfied client said, after The Disappearance of Geoffrey had been cleared up (he got locked in a laundry van and it served him right).

'----- what a VERY good thing you came to solve the mystery, Frank and Bluebell.'

I'll second that.

THOUGHTS ON THE ARTISTS

by Norman Kadish

I always look forward to the C.D. Annual as something festive as well as seasonal, with my old friend Mr. Buddle making his welcome appearance once again.

In the latest Annual I think that Harold Truscott is being rather casuistical in his article "Slips of the Pen". Tommy Keen's article in February is also inclined to be a little pinpricking. However, as he states, Sammy Bunter without spectacles cannot be excused. A good illustrator should be more accurate. In addition, I feel that Mr. Truscott is a trifle too literal in his criticisms.

The main purpose of an illustrator is to help out the literary effusions of an author by making the paper or book more pleasant to look at. Of course, it is a very subjective subject. Tastes vary. Also, there is "artistic licence", whereby the artist sacrifices or bends certain facts to achieve a pictorial result.

One must remember that these artists were doing a job of work for a living. They were probably on "piece work", so the less they drew, the less they earned. Sometimes, no doubt, the editor underlined the salient episode to be illustrated, and the artist, pushed for time, read the caption and drew it.

He had no time to read the whole chapter or story to discover exactly how many characters and other appurtenances were accurately depicted. He often illustrated several stories during the same week.

Although I regard Chapman as a good artist, I prefer Shields. I think he was a greater technician, and he was much better at composition, making, to my mind, a more interesting shape on the page. The lines seem more flowing and mellifluous. Chapman's work seems more wooden.

When Shields draws the Famous Five he makes all the faces more or less the same, but does this matter? They are acting as a group, nor would the average reader, I think, notice or care whether a cake is half-eaten or not, provided a cake is drawn on a table. The reader is mainly interested in the general impression of the illustration on a page, and the atmosphere created.

As I said, tastes in visual concepts are varied. For instance

"Phiz", the well-known illustrator of Dickens' novels is the artist linked with the author, yet I prefer Brock's drawings in a later edition which belonged to my mother and now by brother.

There is no accounting for tastes.

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TIGER TIM



TIGER TIM

by Mary Cadogan

On 16th April, Tiger Tim will be eighty years old. This perky and popular hero is the longest surviving character in British comics. He and the Bruin Boys (drawn by Peter Woolcock) carry on their adventures today in the nursery comic JACK AND JILL. Many of us, however, remember with most affection Herbert S. Foxwell's Tiger Tim of the 1920s and the early '30s, although the greatly gifted Foxwell was not the original artist. It was Julius Stafford Baker who originated Tiger Tim for a DAILY MIRROR strip in 1904. The



same artist then drew Tiger Tim for the MONTHLY PLAYBOX (a juvenile supplement to THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE) and next for Arthur Mee's 1910 NEW CHILDREN'S ENCYCLOPAEDIA, which was published in serial form.

But Tiger Tim and his strangely assorted group of animal friends really came into their own with the launching of RAINBOW, the very first nursery comic, in 1914. So great was the demand for their cheery adventures that further comics were created that made them their 'stars' - TIGER TIM'S TALES (1919) and TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY (1920). And we must not forget the feminised versions of the Bruin Boys - Tiger Tilly & Co. - who were created by Foxwell for the 1925 PLAYBOX comic. Tilly and the Hippo Girls are, alas, now defunct - but it is good that Tiger Tim still beams at us from one of today's comics, aided and abetted by the Bruin Boys, and occasionally out-manoeuvred by the ever-sneaky Porky Boy!

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THOUGHT PROVOKING!

says Francis Hertzberg

Collectors' Digest is of course a pleasure. It is also a memory-provoker, even for those like myself too young to have had personal experience of even the last Magnet, let alone what the Editor refers to as "the spacious year of 1910".

It also is very thought-provoking. Almost every page brings something to mind. Take the February issue, for example.

The reproduced illustrations bring back a different world. A stiffer and more formal one, one in many ways more sparse and spartan, but in others far richer. (The B.F.L. cover illustration with its three school-caps recalls a recent editorial comment thereon: schools have indeed, with the exception of a few private ones, abandoned the cap, yet children are only too happy to wear American ones based on science-fiction films. When I was at school it was a serious crime to travel to school without one.)

The question of "revision", whether in literature or religion, as mentioned in the editorial pages, is one with which I have little sympathy. The times do not make us. Certainly

since the virtual abandonment of the Latin Mass there has been no stability, with an endless series of changes and new books. But in the case of the Bunter stories, dare I write, there is some room for some change. This is almost completely in the padding, the heavily humorous descriptive passages. Children today are not less intelligent than those of the past, but when I was a school-master I found that these passages (for me the best part of the stories) had to be cut, or there was a leaden silence. Children now simply to not read enough to understand the feel of such passages.

"The Missing Millionaire", mentioned by Mrs. Packman, was not only the title of the first Sexton Blake story, but also of a Herlock Sholmes effort in a Tom Merry's Own.

Mr. Lofts speaks of Charles Dickens, Charles Hamilton, and Gwyn Evans in the same breath/sentence: and they do have links. Hamilton borrowed the Christmas Carol for Bunter, Evans borrowed Mrs. Bardell.

"Do You Remember?" speaks of Hamilton's waning powers of invention. They may well have waned, I'm not enough of a specialist to know. But the repetition of a theme is surely not a sign of such a waning. The point of that article is the difficulty of finding new plots: an older man could be excused not doing so with the profligacy of youth and new enthusiasm, when the readers of the earlier effort would be most unlikely to see it.

Mr. Keen continues the discussion about inappropriate illustrations. It often seems in the earlier Greyfriars Herald that illustrations were used from stock rather than commissioned, a practice common in earlier times (when an author was often asked to write a story around a set of pictures) and which still exists to an extent.

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WANTED: Good copy of MODERN BOY No. 321 to replace damaged copy in volume.
Please write ERIC FAYNE.

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WANTED: No. 54 Collectors' Digest. Also Schoolboys' Own Library: Nos. 16, 24, 39, 40, 44, 52, 55, 58, 66, 72, 82, 86, 90, 114, 120, 123, 136, 149, 157, 163, 165, 177, 179, 205, 225, 234. CONNOLLEY, DUNSTAN LODGE, 25 PAYNES PITCH, CHURCHDOWN, GLOS.