

Vol. 40
No. 471

STORY PAPER

MARCH 1986

COLLECTORS DIGEST

52p.



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Bob White '86

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STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

VOL. 40

No. 471

MARCH 1986

Price 52p

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THE TOLL OF TIME

Last month we reported the loss of three of our stalwart readers. As the months go by I seem to be recording the passing of so many who have been in our movement since the beginning. I suppose it is part of the pattern of growing old.

The sudden death of Syd Smyth has been a great loss to our little coterie of readers in far-off Australia, and we send our deepest sympathy to those of our friends who were closest to him.

I, personally, feel his loss very keenly, for he and I had been corresponding for such a great number of years. Syd was an avid Hamiltonian, and his letters, which gave surprisingly few details of the man himself, were packed with his memories of the Magnet and Gem.

His last letter to me was written over Christmas. Syd had always had his C.D. Annuals sent to him by air mail so that he had it in time for Christmas reading. This year, by some mischance, Syd had omitted to order his Annual. I had an urgent

letter from him at the end of November, telling me of his slip-up. He hoped desperately that he was not too late to bag a copy, but he sent his order along with no mention of air mail. I replied to him that I had been able to send him a copy, and added: "I take it that you did not want it by air mail this year". (What I did not mention was that I had already sent it by air.)

He replied immediately "Actually I DID want it by air, but it can't be helped. I forgot all about the posting when I wrote off to you in such a rush".

I am thankful now that I sent it by air, for it meant that he had it in time for his last Christmas.

In his last letter to me, written over Christmas, he wrote as follows:

"Well, I've had my most happy Christmas present, and if gratitude and pleasure on your readers' faces is enough reward for the great labour of producing the dear old Annual, you'll have an abundance of them. I knew I'd receive it on Christmas Eve as usual. What can I say?

"The Annual? It's hard to judge one year against another, but this one is well up to the top. The illustrations are marvellous and the reading of enormous variety. (I'm only half way through, as yet.) It's strange - I've only read a handful of schoolgirls' stories (including 4 of G. H.'s School Friend) yet I find reading articles about them most enjoyable. It makes one want to sample a few, more especially Ransome and Wheway, but, of course, impossible to get now. Still, if I were reading them I should not be reading C. H. so there is the compensation-deluxe."

As I said earlier, how deeply thankful I am now that I was moved to send Syd his Annual by air, so that he had it with him to brighten his last Christmas.

POSTERITY AND BUNTER

Posterity for Charles Hamilton may not have been completely helped by Billy Bunter. I mentioned Frank Richards to a neighbour the other day. "Ah!" said the neighbour. "You mean the Billy Bunter man."

It is right, of course, that Hamilton should be ever remembered and revered for his creation of Billy Bunter, but, much more important in my view, is that he should be revered as the world's greatest writer of school stories.

In a review which we carry this month, a critic looks at a new book on fictional school life "From Brown to Bunter". Our reviewer decides that the author of the book writes slightly of the Gem and Magnet as "bloods". There is, of course, a little bit of snobbery there. Maybe the author thinks it incredible that a writer of worth should contribute his best work to weekly papers - even though the medium had the love of the juvenile and adult public for more than 30 years. He is much more respectful when discussing "Tom Brown" and "Eric".

My personal view is that "Tom Brown" was rather a dreary affair and that Hamilton wrote scores of school stories of far higher merit. I think that "Eric" is a good story despite its overdone sentimentality, but I am certain that Hamilton wrote plenty superior stories. I love Reed's stories, and those of Wodehouse, and I think that Coke's "Bending of a Twig" is the most true to life of any story I know. But Hamilton, in his time, equalled or surpassed them.

And his adventure stories, in my view, out-Henty Henty and out-Ballantyne Ballantyne on a great many occasions.

And, going back to Bunter, some of the masterpieces of the world's greatest school story writer did not feature Bunter at all. For instance, the blue Gem is renowned for truly great school novels - and Bunter didn't appear in them did he?

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

I don't like this cold, snowy weather we are having at the moment of putting paw to paper. Of course, I've got the radiators to lie across, and my man leaves my litter tray in the hall all day as well as all night. It's a rare job for me to get out in it all. We had about 6 inches of snow one night - and it lingered on - and, after all, I don't reckon my legs are 6 inches long. One time I went off my food and was sick a few times. My man was a bit worried, but I'm not sure whether he was concerned for me or for his carpet. He says to me: "If you're not better tomorrow, my girl, I'm calling in the vet". However, I'm better again now.

I went out in it all one night. My man stood at the front door calling "Snowee!! Snowee!!!" And someone passing in the road outside called out "You're telling us!".

* * * * *

Danny's Diary



MARCH 1936

I often go shopping for Mum. There are plenty of grocer's shops in the town, which Mum says is a good thing, for the competition keeps the prices down. I always go to the Maypole for butter (1/- a pound) as I love to watch the men chopping off a chunk of butter from a large lump and then smacking it into shape with their things called platters. I wouldn't mind being a butter smacker when I grow up.

The World's stores is the cheapest, and I go there for dried fruit. I get eggs and bacon at David Greig's, and sugar from the Home & Colonial. Tea from Lipton's, and the rest from the Co-op where they give you a divvy (1/6 in the pound at present).

The tip-top series about the Scallyway of Ken King's ketch has continued all month in the Modern Boy. I think it is the best King of the Islands series so far. Opening tale of the month is "Scallywag's Luck". Danny, the cooky-boy, is smart, but Paget, the Scallywag in irons on Ken's ship, tricks Danny into setting him free.

Next tale is "Dandy Peter's Cutter". Under full sail, Ken of the Islands give chase to the runaway scallyway who has joined the villain Dandy Peter. Then came "Beachcomber of Uvuka". The scallywag, Ray Paget, would do anything for money, and it was Dandy Peter's money that made him tackle King of the Islands. Final of the month is "Ken King's Man-Hunt". Dandy Peter's cutter

has vanished - lost in the boundless Pacific. The King of the Islands is determined to find it, and settle his scores with the man who has carried off Ray Paget. The series continues.

Captain Justice is also back in Modern Boy. The new series introduces a giant colussus from the sea, which is the title of the opening tale. This colossus, dwarfing all round about it, stamps rough-shod over the island headquarters of Captain Justice. Second tale is "Ocean-Bed Robot". Ships vanish without trace, and Captain Justice has vowed that he will run the Monster down.

This month's last Justice tale is "The Robot's Twin". The world seems too small to hold even one of these Monsters, and then a second comes on the scene. The series continues.

And in real life another Monster of the Seas has taken her place - the giant new Cunard Liner the "Queen Mary". This month she has left the Clyde on her first voyage. A million people lined the banks of the Clyde to watch her sail away. And it is expected that this giant liner will bring back the speed Blue Riband of the Seas to Britain.

A pretty good month, as usual, in the 4d Libraries. In the Schoolboys' Own Library the Greyfriars offering is "The Boy Without a Name". When Harry Wharton & Co. first met Tatters he was a poor little tinker's boy without a proper name. When next they came across him he was Arthur Cecil Cholmondeley of Greyfriars, heir to a knighthood and a fortune. A great yarn that holds the interest right through.

The second S.O.L. is an exceptionally good St. Jim's tale entitled "Baggy Trimble's Reform". It is the first time I have really enjoyed a Trimble tale. Trimble becomes "GOOD" - untruthful Trimble becomes truthful Trimble - and the chums find his truthfulness most painful. A tip-top yarn.

In the B.F.L. John Bredon contributes a topical tale, "The Great Disaster". It tells of Britain in barbarism in the distant year of 2000, with two Great Dictators striving to master the land.

There is again no Pierre Quiroule story in the Sexton Blake Library. I bought one of the new four, entitled "The Victim of the Girl Spy", a story of detective adventure in England and France. It is by Maurice B. Dix, who is an unknown writer to me, though the story is fairish.

A good month at the local flicker palaces, which is what

my brother, Doug, vulgarly calls the cinemas.

Sylvia Sidney and Melvyn Douglas were in "Mary Burns, Fugitive", a good romantic tale about a girl who escapes from prison and finds true love. A good little thriller was Chester Morris in "Pursuit". A lovely little film had Janet Gaynor and Henry Fonda in "The Farmer Takes a Wife". A hundred years ago a wandering girl found safety and happiness with a dour farmer. Very pleasant little romantic tale, this one.

Very coy and sentimental was "Our Little Girl" starring Shirley Temple. A doctor's little daughter brings her parents together again. With this one there was a coloured Mickey Mouse cartoon "Mickey's Garden". A British film was "First a Girl" starring Jessie Matthews. Not bad at all.

An unusual thriller was "The Murder Man" with Spencer Tracy heading an interesting cast. A reporter commits a murder and frames someone else. My favourite of the month is "Oil for the Lamps of China" starring Pat O'Brien.

In the Magnet, the adventures of the Greyfriars chums in South America have continued through the month. Jim Valentine has met them at Rio, and they get caught up, in a brief episode, in a South American revolution. But their main peril is from the villainous O Lobo. The first tale of the month is "Shadowed in South America". The month's second tale is "The Vengeance of the Wolf". O Lobo is lurking in the forests which surround Jim Valentine's home.

Then came "The Greyfriars Diamond Diggers", an unusual title. Jim Valentine's uncle has found diamonds on his ranch in the wilds of Brazil, and it is O Lobo's intention to kidnap one of the chums and hold him to ransom in exchange for the diamonds. The month ending with the last story of the series, "The Prisoner of Macaw Island", with Bunter kidnapped and held to ransom. I have enjoyed this series.

In real life the trial has taken place of a Parsee doctor named Buck Ruxton, who had a practice in Lancaster. In the autumn of last year the remains of the bodies of two women were found in a ravine near Moffat in Scotland. Part of the remains was wrapped in a copy of the Sunday Graphic - a special edition put out for the people of Lancaster and Morecambe. That turned the police attention to Lancaster, and they discovered that two women were missing from that town - a woman who called herself Mrs. Ruxton and her maid. Dr. Ruxton was charged with murdering his

"wife" in a temper, and then murdering the maid who saw what happened. At his trial this month he was found guilty and sentenced to death.

The first Gem of the month contains "The Kidnapped Headmaster" in which Dr. Holmes is kidnapped and held to ransom for £500 - but the kidnapers have reckoned without Tom Merry and his pals.

The next tale "St. Jim's Mischief-Maker No. 1!" was rather an unusual tale. Levison's father is ruined, so the boy has to leave St. Jim's. A new bootboy arrives in the person of Henry Higgins, and then all sorts of things start happening to Tom Merry & Co. Higgins is Levison in disguise, but in the end, Mr. Levison's affairs right themselves so Levison comes back to his old place in the Fourth. Next came "Rivals on the Treasure Trail". A strange document turns up supposed to show the way to a vast stack of gold and silver hidden on Wayland Moor. Tom Merry & Co. search for it, and their rival in the search is Knox of the Sixth. Final of the month is "Tom Merry's Great Jape". Mr. Lathom is a great geologist, and his boys in the Fourth have to take up geology - till Tom Merry takes a hand.

The new Rookwood series in the Gem has continued all month, starting off with "Manders Puts His Foot In It". Then "Saving Lovell's Bacon" followed by "Morny on the Warpath" and winding up with "The Captive Schoolmaster". It is Mr. Manders who is kidnapped, his kidnapper is Slog Poggers who wants £50.

What a mass of kidnapping there has been in the merry month of March 1936!

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

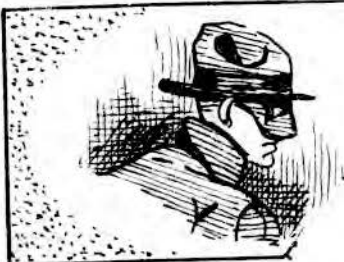
S.O.L. No. 263 "The Boy Without a Name" comprised the first three stories of the Magnet's "Tatters - Chumley for Short" series which commenced at the start of the year 1931.

S.O.L. No. 264 "Baggy Trimble's Reform" comprised a brilliant pair of Gems in which Trimble became "Tood Good for St. Jim's". Smug and self-righteous, he succeeded in stirring up much trouble with his do-gooding. It was far and away the best-ever Trimble series, making his creation almost worth while. The effect was slightly spoiled in this S.O.L. by a third Trimble story, from later in the Gem (1927) being placed to open the S.O.L. and fill-up space. Hamilton repeated the "righteous Trimble" theme later on in the Magnet, with Bunter reforming. The Magnet version was less successful, maybe because Trimble was always a little more oily and less ingenuous than Bunter.

"The Kidnapped Headmaster" of the Gem of 1936 had been "Held to Ransom" in late 1911. This was from a much earlier period than those generally appearing, and it was due to the fact that I pointed out its omission to Editor Down and he went back and picked it up.

"St. Jim's Mischief-Maker No. 1" had been "The Schemer" in the late Spring of 1913. "Rivals on the Treasure Trail" had been "Hidden Treasure at St. Jim's (a substitute story) in the Spring of 1913. "Tom Merry's Great Jape" had been "At The Eleventh Hour" in the autumn of 1913. The 1913 title had been a curiously melodramatic one for what was rather forced comedy throughout.

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BLAKIANA



TECS AND TECHNOLOGY

By J.E.M.

For today's writer of detective fiction the deerstalker image is very definitely old hat. The name of the game is now technology and the modern cop - or crook - without a computer is like a boxer with one arm. This fact may have had something to do with the disappearance of Sexton Blake.

It is true that Blake was always well up in the technology of his time. Well before the first World War his adventures had involved the car, the aeroplane and the cinema (titles like Sexton Blake Aeronature, The Great Motor Car Mystery and The Case of the Cinematograph Actor speak for themselves). Later came more fanciful technology. One of G. H. Teed's earliest yarns, I believe, even anticipated television, while Anthony Skene's stories introduced, among other things, deadly secret rays and X-Ray spectacles! All of which brings me to an interesting comparison.

That great original of the Baker Street brigade, the wearer of the deerstalker himself, was never a high technology man. In spite of his discovery of a re-agent for blood stains, Sherlock Holmes seems to have had little time for science, apart from the purely mental science of deduction. Contemporary technology was

nowhere. Conan Doyle was writing Holmes stories well into the 1920s, yet you will find no mention of the aeroplane, the radio or even, I think, the motor car, and certainly not the cinema.

Perhaps the nearest the Holmes saga got to technology was in the story of The Bruce-Partington Plans (1908) about the design of a new submarine. However, we learn nothing about the craft itself, as we certainly would in any modern spy or detective tale. The plans might as well have been a new recipe for cooking fish. In fact they represented what film-maker Alfred Hitchcock has called the "McGuffin" - simply a device to hand the story on.

If we turn to the present-day, crime fiction can be roughly divided into three groups: 1. The police procedural, as it is called, which features not just a hero-cop, but, inevitably, the whole police organisation itself. 2. The spy story. 3. Sex-and-violence (this last category we can ignore). The first two are of interest because, in this type of story, organisation is now taking over the individual and, inevitably, employs a lot of advanced technology - computers, electronics (as in bug-ging), atomic science and so on. Such fiction is obviously the product of our age and probably started with Len Deighton's famous thriller, The Ipcress File, twenty-odd years ago.

All this is very far from the world of Sherlock Holmes and was to prove too much even for Sexton Blake. If Blake's post-war 'New Look' had continued into the Age of High Tech, he and his organisation would have become increasingly the servants of computers, word processors, visual display units and all the rest. Not quite the Blake image and he had the good sense to leave the crime scene before this happened. The days of the individual super-sleuth were over.

As we have seen, Holmes very sensibly ignored the gadgetry of his day and when we go back to his case-book it is probably to escape our own increasingly mechanised world. Perhaps it is the same with Sexton Blake. Certainly when I myself return to the Blakian saga it is not Blake's encounters with secret rays, robots or invisible men that attract me. My pleasure is in those good old-fashioned tales of the human struggle between crime and justice, evil and good.

Not that I don't enjoy the modern thriller, gadgets and all, and I'm even learning to live with and love science fiction. But when it comes to the pure detective story I prefer

trad. 'tec to high tech. How do other Blakians and crime-fanciers feel?

(The Sexton Blake titles quoted are from the Union Jack, Second Series)

EDITORIAL ECHOES

Further to our "Word From the Skipper" of last month, Mr. W. T. Thurbon writes as follows:

I was very interested in your reference to detective tales in your editorial in the February "Digest". By the 1920's I had read quite a number of detective stories, among them the bulk of detectives you mention as appearing in "Partners in Crime": of these:

Austin Freeman's Dr. Thorndike's stories were very good. They appeared in magazines such as the "Strand", "Windsor", "Pearson's", etc.

Freeman often used the device of making the first part of the story a crime story, and then in the second part showing how Thorndike solved the crime from small clues; most of the solutions were made by scientific methods. Freeman always worked his scientific experiments in his laboratory before writing the story to be sure that his experiments would really work.

There was more than one blind detective, including "Max Carados", written by, I think, Ernest Bramah.

H. C. Bailey began by writing historical stories. I still have a copy of a very good "cloak and sword" story published in Nelson's 2/- series which I acquired in the 1920's. Bailey had two series of detective stories. I regarded his "Reggie Fortune" stories as being among the best of the period. Fortune was an engaging character, a Forensic Scientist. The other, and later, series was about a somewhat shady Solicitor, who always managed to end up on the right side, Josh Clunk; Clunk had two legal assistants - one dealt with all the right side of the cases, the other with the more devious parts. Father Brown, as you say, was a G. K. Chesterton character. The complete Father Brown stories contain some very good problems and solutions. Brown loved using paradoxes. Elgar Wallace was a very prolific writer, of both crime stories and plays; he also wrote the "Sanders of the River" stories.

Inspector Hanaud, created by A. E. W. Mason, appeared in

about four stories. He was a French detective; the first, and probably the best, was "The Murder at the Villa Rose", a very good story. Freeman Wills Croft was good, but not, I think, so good, as Bailey and Mason. I cannot recall much of Antony Berkeley's "Roger Sherringham" stories. "The Old Man in the Corner" was one of two essays by Baroness Orxycy, away from the "Scarlet Pimpernel" tales. She made one other essay in detective fiction, "Lady Molly of Scotland Yard". There were other good writers of detective and crime stories in the 1920's - do you recall the advertisements for E. Phillips Oppenheim, when wireless first came in: "Switch off the wireless, it's an Oppenheim!". Later came the reign of the great lady writers; Dorothy Sayers, Ngaio Marsh; Gladys Mitchell (who only died recently) and, of course, Agatha Christie.

Among boys' papers, Sexton Blake was supreme; when Brooks took over Nelson Lee from Maxwell Scott he gradually turned the series from detective fiction to another school story of the Hamilton type. Incidentally, in "Chuckles" in its early, and best tales, before "Prosper Howard" started the Claremont School stories, there was a series of short stories of "Ferrers Locke, Detective". Certainly running in 1915. There was also the long series of "Val Fox, Ventriloquist Detective" stories in "Puck", beginning before the first World War.

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FOR SALE: Sherlock Holmes Commentary (Dakin) signed and with long dedication by author; mint; in dustwrapper; £5, plus £1 postage. FATHER FRANCIS HERTZBERG, QUARRY BANK, 48 SHALMARSH ROAD, HIGHER BEBINGTON, WIRRAL, CHESHIRE, L63 2JZ.

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A TALE OF TWO TIMOTHY'S

By H. Heath

In late 1921, Brooks' famous Communist School series began in the Nelson Lee. It was a long series, probably the longest ever St. Frank's story as it ran for thirteen weeks (N.L. Old Series 336 - 348). The series was included in the Monster Library, No. 19, and seventeen years after appearing in the Nelson Lee, the story was published in the Schoolboys' Own Library - four S.O.L.s being devoted to it, Nos. 353, 357, 360 and 363.

Brooks gave two of the lesser lights in the Remove major parts in this very dramatic series. Unaccustomed star billing went to Timothy Armstrong and Timothy Tucker. Tucker was the better known of the two, but Armstrong belonged to a shadowy and largely insignificant group - Doyle, Griffith, Hubbard, Clifton and Simmons to name a few.

The winter of 1921/22 saw momentous events take place at St. Frank's. Due to the rascally activity of the new science master, Mr. Hugh Trenton, the Headmaster, Dr. Stafford is suffering from some violent fits - Trenton is cleverly administering him with a powerful drug of his own invention. As a result of the fits Dr. Stafford behaves in a brutal fashion and some pupils suffer ill treatment as a consequence of his temporary irrational state. Trenton is hoping to replace the Head after the latter's dismissal from the School. This is a necessary preliminary step by Trenton and his associates from outside the School, to attain their long term objective of the indoctrination of the young. This is not an isolated venture as we are told of Headmasters at three other Schools are under attack from similar schemes.

It is against this background of the Head's harsh measures

that the seeds of rebellion are sown at St. Franks. During the early part of the story it is interesting to see the steady progress made by Timothy Armstrong as he emerges from obscurity to being elected the leader of the Rebels of the Remove. It is no surprise that Nipper is firmly supported by the better known and more decent characters such as Watson, Tregellis-West, Handforth and Pitt, and they affirm their loyalty to Dr. Stafford. Armstrong's followers are the weaker elements in the Remove, and they have the doubtful pleasure of the support of the three cads - Fullwood (not yet reformed), Gulliver and Bell. Armstrong is not daunted and he goes on to prove that he has definite qualities of leadership and efficiently welds his mediocre followers into an organised force. Timothy Tucker also has a big role to play and his contribution to the Rebel cause is ideas which he is not short of. It is Tucker's plan to seize and hold the Ancient House during the Christmas holidays. It is Tucker's plan to make the written demand for the Rebels to run the School after the Ancient House had been occupied.

Brooks through the use of the powerful combination of Armstrong and Tucker representing organisation and ideas respectively, provided the readers of the Nelson Lee with an enthralling series. An interesting thought occurs to me regarding this excellent story. When the four S.O.L.s were published beginning in the winter of 1938, there was no mention of Communism as had been the case in the earlier Nelson Lees. I believe that this change was a mistake. In any case there can be no doubting that the titles of two of the relevant Lees, No. 343, "The Schoolboy Soviet", and No. 344, "The Communist School" produce a very powerful impact of their own.

Although my knowledge of the Nelson Lee Library is not all that comprehensive, I will hazard a guess that Armstrong and Tucker, the two Timothy's, were never again to reach such heights of fame. The year 1925 was an important year in the history of St. Franks. Two new Houses were created and the numerical strength of the Remove, now totally unwieldy was halved to constitute the Fourth Form. Under these new arrangements Tucker remained a member of the Remove, but he was transferred from the Ancient House to the West House. Armstrong found himself in the Fourth Form and in the East House, where to begin with he was the Junior Captain. In this capacity he seemed to be a disappointment, and Bob Blythe's excellent Bibliography of

Brooks shows the Junior Captain of the new East House as Lionel Corcoran who was introduced into the Nelson Lee in 1928.

I have not read the story where Corcoran became the Junior Captain of the East House, a House which fell below the standard of the Ancient, Modern and West Houses. A possible solution of why Armstrong was replaced is that he missed the equivalent of a Tucker at his side. There was nobody in the East House to provide him with ideas to which he could attach his organising ability displayed so well in the memorable Communist School series. Yes, the two Timothy's had been a strong combination in the winter of 1921/22 when their stars had been in the ascendancy. Their contribution to a powerful series had been immense.

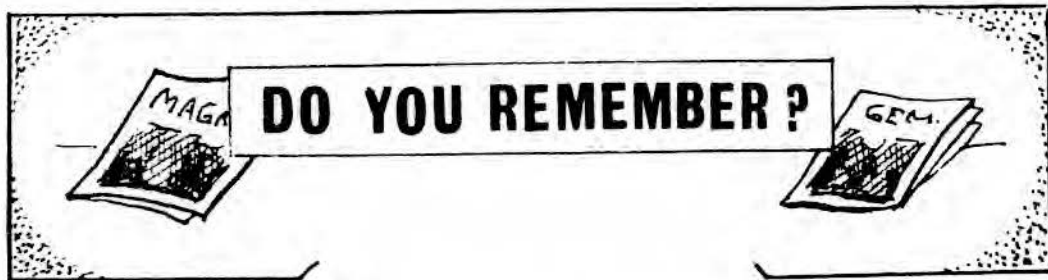
Mr. Howard Baker has so far published three St. Frank's facsimiles. It was good to see the inclusion in this brief Nelson Lee programme of the fine "Ezra Quirke" series from 1925. However, I found the choice of the facsimile "The Barring-out at St. Frank's" from No. 11 of the Monster Library to have been a disappointing one. In my opinion the Communist School series is a much superior and more powerful story. If there is ever a fourth St. Frank's facsimile, then surely there is a very suitable candidate for consideration in No. 19 of the Monster Library entitled, "Rebels at the Remove". Incidentally, I hope that this Monster Library publication adhered to the text of the Nelson Lees, unlike the four volumes of the Schoolboys' Own Library where all references to Communism had been omitted.

The two Timothy's merit a further appearance in the new format covering a memorable series.

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FOR SALE: More Gems down the years; this month back to the very beginning of the reprints: Nos. 1181-83; 1185; 1187; 1189-91; 1194; 1196; 1198; 1200-02; 1206; 1212; 1214; 1218-23; 1230; 1231; 1235; 1238; 1245; 1251; 1253-55; 1258; 59; 1272; 1275; 1278-83; 1287; 1291; 1295-96; 1299-1300; 1303; 1307; 1310-11; 1315-16; 80p each plus postage. Rough copies 1330; 1227-28; 1224-25-26; 1246; 25p each plus postage. Howard Baker Collectors' Pie No. 2 (of Gems and Magnets): brand new condition: £3.50 plus postage. Hardback "The Willoughby Captains" (Reed) 30p plus postage. S.P.C.D. No. 300 (25th Birthday issue and Christmas Double Number): 50p plus postage.

Write ERIC FAYNE (No reply if items already sold)



No. 212 - GEMS 776-84 - CHRISTMAS BARRING-OUT SERIES

By Roger M. Jenkins

The Indian Summer of the Gem lasted in its full glory from mid 1921 to mid 1923, and the Christmas Barring-out Series was published at the end of the year 1922, undoubtedly constituting one of the highlights of this immensely successful era. It was also part of that highly satisfying time when the Magnet and Gem often ran in tandem. In Magnet 776 Bunter, baulked of an invitation to Mauleverer Towers, rang up D'Arcy at St. Jim's to cadge an invitation to Eastwood House, only to discover that there was a barring-out at St. Jim's, and in a footnote the editor recommended Magnet readers to buy Gem 776. In Gem 781, Bunter actually turned up to join the rebellion, but when he discovered that food was running short he telephoned Dr. Holmes who was in the New House and offered to betray the rebels at a price.

Of course, a nine-week series that was intended to cover the Christmas holidays was a great strain on credibility because it played havoc with the time scale. The last number of the series was dated 17th February, when it was announced that the rebels were going home for the remainder of the holidays. The reprints in the Schoolboys' Own Library (234 & 236) made much better sense, with issues in December and January. The reprints were remarkably full, with only one Gem (781) omitted: apart from that, there was only one chapter and a few paragraphs omitted from the other eight issues, though some topical references about the recent war were brought up to date. There might have been two reasons for the omission of the Bunter episode: it was in the nature of an intermission, not part of the developing situation, and it also showed Bunter in a highly unpleasant light, very different from the Bunter of 1934/5 when the reprints were

published.

The series began on a seasonably snowy day at the end of term, with Mr. Ratcliff unwarily stepping on a slide and becoming more than usually odious. It was well known that in his study he had a hoard of quids (golden sovereigns) and when they were stolen suspicion fell on Tom Merry who had actually bumped into the burglar, but his story was disbelieved and he was sentenced to be expelled. With one or two exceptions, all the juniors believed in his innocence and backed him up in a rebellion. Only Dr. Holmes and the two housemasters remained at the school over the holidays, and assistance was sought by them from a troop of ex-soldiers, and Private Brown in particular came over as a likeable young man with a sense of humour. There was even some sort of bonhomie between the rebels and the ex-soldiers, who were incidentally receiving the handsome pay of ten shillings a day. The plot was livened up by a series of moves and counter-moves, and the rebels did not have it all their own way. A number were captured when out foraging for food, and some had to return home, but of course Tom Merry was cleared in the end.

If there is a criticism to be made of this series, it is that the identity of the culprit (an outsider) remained unknown for so long and he did not appear in person until Gem 782. When one considers, for example, the Poppers Island Rebellion in the Magnet, it is interesting to note that Fishy's guilt was revealed at the beginning, and he was closely caught up with the rebellion himself, whereas in this Gem series the link between the rebels and the culprit was very tenuous. Despite this, it was a highly entertaining series, and when it was published it was Charles Hamilton's longest and most successful rebellion so far. Certainly, it was never surpassed in the Gem.

* * * * *

RON GARDNER writes: In Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion I came across this: "Coming Thru the Rye" (G.B. 1924), directed by Cecil Hepworth, starred Alma Taylor and James Carew. Miss Taylor had starred with Stewart Rome in an earlier version in 1916. I remember the film and book being mentioned in a recent C.D.

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REGINALD TALBOT - THE TOFF!

(We have had several requests for a reprinting of No. 1 in our "Let's Be Controversial" series. So here it is - the first essay in the series from nearly 30 years ago.)

No. 1. REGINALD TALBOT, the Toff

Reginald Talbot Wilmot, was his correct name, though that fact seems to have been lost in the mists of time. There can be little doubt that the first stories of "The Toff" caused something of a sensation in their day. Is it possible that Talbot suffered from his popularity? The first two series about him were absolutely first-class, and, seeking to cash in on the demand for Talbot yarns, could it be that the Editor lost his sense of proportion?

For a year or two there was a glut of tales of the schoolboy cracksman, and, even if they became monotonous to some, those by the genuine Martin Clifford were excellent. Unfortunately, as time passed, the substitute writers took a hand, and a succession of hackneyed stories, often oozing sentiment, was the result. It was hard on Talbot, who had many admirers, and who, quite apart from the "Toff" business, was part of the backbone of St. Jim's.

It is interesting to muse on the wisdom of editorial policy - and, incidentally that of the author - over Talbot. That he was a great favourite is certain, but, if it is possible to glean a few fragments of truth from the amazing "Editor's Chats" of the period, it is equally certain that there was a large anti-Talbot group of readers.

By 1916 the Gem was losing ground to the Magnet - is it possible that the defection of an anti-Talbot group may have

played its part?

Probably, fifteen years later, Talbot would have starred for a time and then dropped out, in the way that Dick Lancaster, another schoolboy cracksman, did in the Magnet. There was a natural finish to the Talbot story in "The Housemaster's Homecoming", but Talbot remained to have his murky past re-hashed time and time again.

Personally, I am very fond of Talbot. I regard him as a skilfully etched character, rather old beyond his years - a fine loyal friend to Tom Merry. I feel that St. Jim's would have been a poorer place without him, and I remember with pleasure the early series in which he featured.

But I also feel, with the often-recurring stories based on the same old plot, we have an example of a theme being overplayed.

* * * * *

REVIEW

FROM BROWN TO BUNTER

P. W. Musgrave
(Routledge: £12.95)

I find this book very well written. The work of an Academic (the author is Professor of Education in Australia), he tends, like most academics and some critics to be too facile and easy-going in his comments on Charles Hamilton's writings. He classes Hamilton under a section "Standardisation" with a slightly condescending air. Nobody should expect an author who writes weekly for boys' papers for over 30 years to write a masterpiece every time as those who compose a work "once off" do. It is the cumulative effect over all these years which is important.

Another clue to the author's outlook is that he classes the Gem and Magnet among the "bloods" instead of referring to them as normal schoolboys' story-papers of highest quality produced eminently for their purpose - to entertain boys.

He is again slightly easy-going in discussing the girls' papers and books, devoting only a short paragraph to this topic.

However, the rest of the book is very interesting. He takes the main books from the earliest times of this genre to the 30's, describing each in fair detail. Such works as "Tom Brown's Schooldays" (Thomas Hughes), "Eric" (Farrar), and the works of Talbot Baines Reed are described in detail, adding the more cynical work of "Stalky and Co." (Kipling), and the lyrical and somewhat sentimental "Good-bye Mr. Chips" (Hilton), and books written for adults like "Vice Versa" (Anstey) and "The Loom of Youth" (Alec Waugh, brother of Evelyn).

I think that all hobbyists who are admirers of Charles Hamilton should study this book. By the way, although papers such as "Wizard" and "Hotspur" are mentioned, I can find no reference to Nelson Lee or E. S. Brooks.

N. M. KADISH

TEA IN THE STUDY

By Bob Whiter

The Famous Five came up the Remove staircase in a ruddy, cheery crowd. Tea in the study was the next item on the programme and all of them were ready for it - (Magnet 1,117, July 13th, 1929).

Some of the happiest moments of Schoolboy Hamiltonia must surely have taken place during: "tea in the study". When funds were low, of course, the chums of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood, or for that matter any of our favourite author's Schools, had to put up with 'doorsteps and dishwater' in the Hall! But if Gussy had received a "fivah" from his "governah" or Wharton's uncle had sent him a remittance - tea in the study was the order of the day. The same thing would apply if one of the other members of the Famous Five had received money from home:

Cheery voices from Study No. 13 announced where the Famous Five were. The Co. were teaing in Bob Cherry's Study (Magnet 1441, Sept. 28th, 1935).

Of course we musn't forget the invitations from Lord Mauleverer or when the Famous Five were on good terms with the Bounder, then either of those particular studies would be "unto a land flowing with milk and honey". Sometimes when Tom Merry and Co. would tea with the inhabitants of Study No. 6 of the Fourth Form to celebrate something special, more juniors would be invited than the Study would hold. Then we would see boys sitting outside in the passage; the more fortunate ones inside passing out goodies to those outside. Sometimes during transit, drinks, etc., would be spilt on the heads of the unfortunate boys in between. But it would all be part of the fun and the game! When I first came to Fisher T. Fish's country one of the numerous things I missed were our British "sosses" and I think one of the reasons of my love for these "bags of mystery" are the frequent allusions to them at tea time in the companion papers. Thank goodness a British butcher now makes them in L.A. and even now, generally on a Sunday whilst cooking them in the frying pan, my thoughts almost invariably turn to the stories. Great stories were written around "tea in the study" both in Summer and Winter, not forgetting Spring or Autumn, but whereas the other seasons had their charms, I think my own favourite was Winter.

November dusk and mist lay on the quadrangle; but in Study No. 1 all was bright and cosy. The fire crackled in the grate; the table gleamed with an unusually imposing array of crockery - borrowed up and down the Remove passage (Magnet 1447, Nov. 9th, 1985).

I remember when a boy, my mother used to allow me to have a fire in my room and have my Magnet and Gem loving friends round. Toast impaled on a toasting fork and the kettle singing away on the trivet, we would eagerly discuss the latest episodes in the Hamilton stories.

Stephen Price of the Fifth Form came up the Remove passage and looked into Study No. 1. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were there. It was nearly tea time, and Frank, with a ruddy face, was making toast at the Study fire, while Wharton was sorting out crocks from the cupboard (Magnet 1449, Nov. 23rd, 1935).

In the 1st Harry Wharton's Downfall series the final reconciliation was made in Study No. 1. While Frank Nugent was bringing in the rest of Co., Wharton went downstairs to fetch the supplies for tea in the Study.

"In that study a merry party chatted amicably, carefully avoiding all matters of offence" (Magnet 888, February 14th, 1925).

Study feeds were often the prelude to the breaking up of the morrow, and was there any better way to prepare us for a wonderful Xmas adventure?

The three Fifth Formers, in Study No. 8 at Oakshott, were taking it easy after tea, and nobody felt disposed to move. It was dim and dusky in the Study. The December darkness had fallen on the School. The Winter wind, whistling from the Sussex downs, pattered snowflakes on the window-panes. The Study fire burned with a ruddy glow, gleaming on the faces of the three fellows sitting round the fire, casting strange lights and shadows (Modern Boy 462, Dec. 1936, The Moat House Series, Len Lex the Schoolboy Detective).

Who doesn't want to read on - after sampling "tea in the study"?

WANTED: Funny Wonder Comics, Wizards, Hotspurs, Magnets, etc.
HARRY MARRIOTT, 27 GREENVIEW DRIVE, LINKS VIEW, NORTHAMPTON,
TELEPHONE (0604) 711874.

WANTED: Howard Baker Facsimile - Vol. No. 8 "The Mystery of Wharton Lodge". Also Cassell Hardback "Billy Bunter Comes for Christmas". H. WEBB, 74 WHITLAND CLOSE, STOKE PARK, IPSWICH, SUFFOLK, IP2 9YT.

The Bound of the Haskervilles!

Another Grand Story dealing with the Amazing Adventures of HERLOCK SHOLMES, Detective.

CHAPTER TWO

"So that is the celebrated Bound of the Haskervilles!" said Herlock Sholmes thoughtfully.

We arrived at Haskerville Park, and my friend had proceeded at once to the scene of the supposed suicide of the baronet. Following the tracks in the grassy sward, which had not been disturbed, we had arrived at the border of the yawning abyss.

Sholmes stood regarding it thoughtfully. I watched, in wonder, striving to guess the thoughts that were passing in that subtle brain. He had stopped for a few minutes in the house to use the telephone. Why? I could not guess. Now we were upon the scene of the disappearance. Three weeks had passed since Sir Huckaback had reached that fatal verge. What did Sholmes hope to discover there?

He turned to me at last with his inscrutable smile.

"Do you feel inclined for a stroll, Jotson?" he asked.

"Anything you like, Sholmes."

"Come, then."

We started off along the edge of the abyss. A quarter of a mile's walk brought us to the end, and we walked round it, and along the other side. Sholmes took a pair of powerful glasses from his pocket, and scanned the smiling countryside.

In the distance the smoke of a cottage rose above the trees.

He started off again, and I followed him in wonder. When we reached the cottage it was easy to learn that the occupant was at a meal, for a strong scent of frying fish came from the open window.

Sholmes knocked at the door.

"It was opened by a man in rough attire, wearing very large, heavy boots. He looked suspiciously at Sholmes.

"What's wanted?" he asked gruffly. Sholmes smiled.

"You are Sir Huckaback Haskerville?" he replied tranquilly.

The man staggered back.

I could not repress a cry of astonishment.

"Sholmes!"

"It is false!" exclaimed the cottager. "Sir Huckaback Haskerville is dead."

"My dear Sir Huckaback", said Sholmes quietly, "it is useless to deny your identity. But I have come as a friend, not as an enemy. Her ladyship has repented. She confesses her fault. In future, I am assured, she will utter not a single word that could wound your feelings upon the subject of bloaters. Sir Huckaback, be generous. Return to her ladyship, and relieve her breaking heart."

He wavered.

"Come!" said Sholmes, with a smile. And, after a brief hesitation, the baronet assented.

.....

"Sholmes, I am on tenterhooks!" I exclaimed, as the express bore us Londonwards. "You astonish me anew every day. But this ----"

He laughed as he lighted a couple

of cigarettes.

"The fact is, Jotson, I am pleased myself", he said. "Yet it was very simple."

"But the police ----"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"The police knew that old story of the Bound of the Haskervilles", he said. "Yet they never thought of the obvious deduction. The baronet had determined to disappear. By leaving the unmistakable track of number eleven boots to the verge of the chasm he gave the desired impression. A certain ancestor of Sir Huckaback originated the tradition of the Bound of the Haskervilles by clearing that chasm at a single jump. Why should not that trait have descended to the present baronet? That was the theory I worked upon, Jotson. I was perfectly prepared to find that, instead of having fallen into the abyss, Sir Huckaback had

repeated the performance of his ancestor by clearing it. Consequently, I searched for him on the other side.

"Wonderful!"

Sholmes smiled.

"I wished to ascertain, Jotson, whether Sir Huckaback had ever shown any trace of inheriting the peculiar bounding powers of his ancestor. I called up his college at Oxford. In five minutes I had learned all I wished to know. Sir Huckaback's reputation, in his college days, was that of the biggest bouncer at Oxford. Have you any cocaine about you, Jotson? Thanks!"

And Herlock Sholmes remained in a comatose condition till we arrived at Shaker Street.

THE END



MIDLAND

Bad weather and a forecast of worse to come cut down the attendance to 7 members at our January meeting. The heroes and heroines turned out on such a night.

Tom Porter, our chairman, went into hospital the same day as the meeting. As Shakespeare says, "Thus bad begins, but worse remains behind." Joan Golen had a frozen shoulder.

The meeting was enjoyable enough in a quiet way, but lacked

atmosphere. Your correspondent was forced to take the chair again. Refreshments were provided by Ivan Webster and Betty Hopton.

There were only two items - a quiz by your correspondent and an excellent reading by Ivan Webster on the subject of Prout's Black Eye.

The quiz extended members, with Ivan Webster the winner. He earned a Red facsimile Magnet as a prize.

We closed the meeting at 9 - a half-hour early, but with trains and buses to catch it was inevitable.

NORTHERN

Meeting held on Saturday, 8th February, 1986

Chairman Keith Smith welcomed 10 people present on a wintry evening. We were pleased to have with us David and Elfreda Bradley making their first visit to us. David is a keen reader and collector of William and Biggles and his wife follows the Bunter stories.

Mention was made that Howard Baker would soon be producing the 100th volume in the "Magnet" series - although this number had already been well exceeded with the inclusion of the limited edition Greyfriars Book Club volumes.

Keith and Darrell at their stall at the Manchester Book Fair, had approached a number of customers with the suggestion that a meeting of hobby fans be set up in Manchester and it was hoped that something could be planned in the near future.

The latest book on radio by Denis Gifford was on show - a splendid production.

"Post War Hamilton" was the theme of a presentation by Darrell. After the demise of the "Gem" and "Magnet" Frank Richards was at a loose end and obviously, must have felt the pinch a little when his income fell dramatically. "The Letters of Frank Richards" - a compilation of some of the interesting letters from our author, published in book form some years ago by our editor - was a marvellous source of information re. the attitude of Frank Richards during those lean years. As time went by, more and more publications came out featuring the works of C. H. Sample copies of such items like "Pie" magazine feature Carcroft stories, the "Sparshott" "Mascot Schoolboy" "Mascot Schoolgirl" series, as well as "Headland House" items, "The Lone Texam" and the "Jack Nobody" books were available to illustrate

the talk. An interesting observation was made that Frank Richards indicated in his letters that five books in the "Jack" series were written, yet only three were published. By 1961, Frank Richards was working up to his full capacity again, his stories being in demand - as well as preparing scripts for the Bunter t.v. series and writing articles and short stories for various annuals.

Peter Plowman was thanked for his provision of the refreshments as a donation.

To conclude, Geoffrey read an excerpt from the S.O.L. Rebel of the Remove series. A reading that as always, is appreciated by our members.

Our next meeting is on 8th March.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

CAMBRIDGE O.B.B.C.

The Cambridge Club met at the home of Bill Thurbon on Sunday, 2nd February, 1986.

The attendance was rather small, owing to illness, and the bad weather conditions preventing several members from making the journey.

In the absence of the chairman, Edward Witten was in the chair.

Bill Thurbon spoke about the borrowing of plots and incidents by writers for boys' papers and magazines, in the early years of the century. He recalled Cecil Hayter's Sexton Blake stories in the Union Jack Library about the Zulu Chief, Lobangu, and Sir Richard Loosely, and his stories in "Pluck" and the Boys' Friend Library about Crawley Stern and M'Wama. He recalled a comment he had made in the Digest Annual in the 1950's that Hayter had based Loosely and Lobangu on Sir Henry Curtis and Umslopogaas, but when Rex Harding took over Loosely and Lobangu were more like "Sanders of the River" and "Bosambo". A view endorsed by Harry Homer. Bill then referred to Rider Haggard's story, "Queen Sheba's Ring", published in 1908; in 1915 Reginald Wray had written a story "Phantom Gold" which showed many resemblances to Haggard's novel. He produced, and gave to the Club Library the volume of "Chuckles" in which the story was published. Next he drew attention to arguments that Conan Doyle had modelled his "Professor Challenger" in "The Lost World" on Haggard's "Professor Higgs" in Queen Sheba's Ring. In 1912 "The Lost World"

was based on the discovery in South America of a Lost World on a high plateau in which were found prehistoric men and animals. Reginald Wray had written a "lost world" story in the Boys' Friend which used the device of a "lost world", but an underground one. Bill also produced a copy of the Union Jack (No. 504) which he had bought on a school half holiday in June 1913.

After enjoying Mrs. Thurbon's tea the meeting resumed and Edward produced one of his celebrated music hall quizzes; Keith proved winner with 11 out of 20 answers.

LONDON

The inclement wintry weather did not prevent a good attendance at the thirty-eighth Annual General Meeting of the club. The retiring chairman, Mark Jarvis expressed a hearty welcome to all present. The election of officers for 1986 took place. There was only one nomination for chairman, this being Don Webster. Thus he was elected unopposed. The rest of the retiring officers were re-elected en bloc.

The memory lane reading was taken from newsletter 214, September 1970. It was read by Bill Bradford.

Mark Jarvis read a very fine effusion that Leslie Bowley had written entitled "The Last Assembly".

Myra Stewart's Members' Names Anagram Quiz resulted in a triple tie, Bill and Thelma Bradford together with Chris Harper. Prizes were awarded to them by Alan Stewart. Tommy Keen read a chapter that told of the arrival of Jemima Carstairs at Morcove.

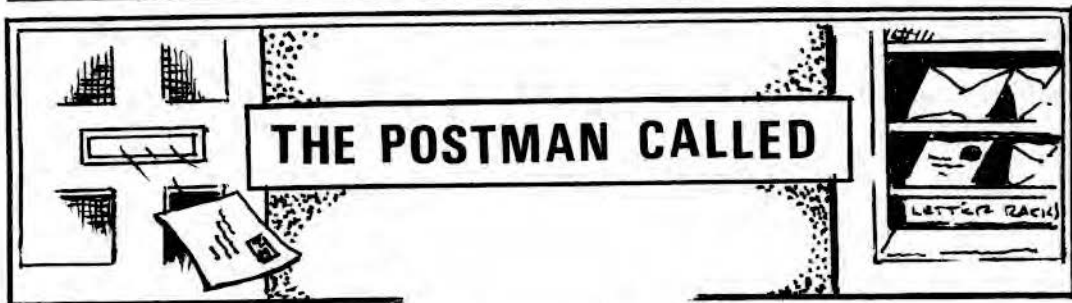
Votes of thanks were accorded to Bill and Thelma for hosting the meeting and to Ann Clarke for helping to wash up the dishes.

Next meeting will be at the Ealing venue and those who intend to be present, kindly bring own comestibles. There will be a chip in for cost of wine, the occasion to celebrate will be the 400th issue of the club's newsletter. The date is Sunday, 9th March.

BEN WHITER

* * * * *

WANTED: S.O.L.'s; especially Nos. 280, 283, 260, 298. Any condition. MRS. R. KEOGH, 78 GREENVALE ROAD, ELTHAM, LONDON, SE9 1PD.



MRS. MARY CADOGAN (Bromley): Cliff House seems to be attracting a lot of interest from C.D. readers lately, and you ask in the January issue whether Peter Hazeldene and the Bunter boys were ever mentioned in the School Friend stories after Hamilton stopped writing these. In some early tales, Bessie very occasionally mentioned Billy, either by name or as her 'brother at Greyfriars', but soon even this kind of reference disappeared. I cannot remember any holiday stories at the Hazeldene home - and Marjorie's family seemed to be put on record occasionally as being not too affluent. (At one time her father was supposed to be a minister of the Church: what a bitter pill his son's behaviour must have been to swallow!).

The boys in Marjorie's life in the girls' papers were cousins (Ralph Lawrence, for example) rather than brothers. However, I think in the 1930s an elder brother (certainly NOT called Peter) cropped up occasionally, and at onetime she may have had a much younger brother. Her family background was subjected to one or two changes, according to the storylines of different authors.

The replies of 'Hilda Richards' to readers' letters were published during the '30s, and it was obvious, by inference, that girls kept asking about Bessie's and Marjorie's brothers, and Greyfriars (encountered by them, presumably, in the Magnet), because 'Hilda' would frequently write, somewhat cryptically, 'I will not be featuring the boy (or the school) that you mention in future stories'. Once or twice 'she' committed herself further to comment that, yes, Bessie or Marjorie had a brother at a nearby school. Possibly Greyfriars was, on rare occasions, given a mention. Incidentally the Cliff House saga created not one but two long-standing boys' public schools which must have been within close reach of Greyfriars. These were Lanchester College (with Jack Tollhurst & Co.) in the 1920s, and Friardale School

(featuring Jimmy Richmond & Co.) in the '30s.

BILL LOFTS (London): My talk at Cambridge was on 'Film Fun' though I did include a few anecdotes on Radio Fun concerning Arthur Askey. Someone having to make quick notes could have easily mixed the two papers up, more so if they were not familiar with the subject.

Certainly I have always been aware that the big hearted comedian never appeared in Film Fun - though he certainly had far more qualifications to do so, than several other comedians who appeared there, being the star role in many films. The new book just issued on the whole history of Film Fun 1920 - 1962 (Clarke's New Press) was co-operated by me a great deal - when my name is included with other old A.P. executives in the acknowledgements.

J. A. C. BRIDGWATE (Christchurch): Regarding your query in the Notes on Danny's Diary about the Nelson Lee story in the Boys' Friend Library, "The Fakir's Secret", this story first appeared in the Nugget Weekly as a Sexton Blake story. It was as a serial from No. 9 of 11/9/1920 to No. 20 of 27/11/1920. No author's name was given. A competition was run in connection with the serial, a two-guinea prize being offered to the reader who could correctly answer 3 questions on the tale.

Incidentally, while Sexton Blake was probing the Fakir's Secret, Nelson Lee was also appearing in the Nugget, battling against Professor Zingrave and the Green Triangle. Now the Nugget Weekly superceded the Detective Library which featured Sexton Blake, and H. W. Twyman did write one Blake story for the Detective Library, so "The Fakir's Secret" could be a Twyman original "deBlakenised" by Twyman himself, but why go to the trouble of replacing Blake and Tinker for the reprint? It makes it even more curious (as you suggested) when it could have been reprinted without alteration as a Blake story as it was originally. Perhaps some other reader can add further information.

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): Your comments on Miss Bessie Bunter seem to have aroused some interest - which is very pleasing!

It should never be forgotten - how could it? - that Hamilton created the original Cliff House characters and certainly wrote the first four tales in the 1919 SCHOOL FRIEND. He was, of course,

still writing about them in the 1949 Skilton book, "Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School", some thirty years later. To this extent, his version of Cliff House may be said to have outlasted those of the sub-writers:- Horace Phillips, L. E. Ransome, and John Wheway. On the other hand in writing the long Cliff House stories for the SCHOOL FRIEND and the SCHOOLGIRL, between 1919 and 1940, it was really these gentlemen who shaped, formed, and developed the Cliff House saga - doing far more, in fact, than the writers who contributed the occasional Greyfriars and St. Jim's yarn for the MAGNET and GEM. I bought the Skilton "Bessie Bunter" book, when it was first published, and enjoyed it - I still do! - but Hamilton's Cliff House characters remain as they were in the original four stories - inevitably so, as Hamilton wasn't permitted to carry on. It is, in fact, a Cliff House tale written for the MAGNET rather than the SCHOOL FRIEND or SCHOOLGIRL, and, obviously, Hamilton must still have had an affection for his schoolgirl characters, or he would not have written the book. As I've written elsewhere, my personal preference amongst Hamilton's Cliff House successors is for John Wheway, and his stories in the SCHOOLGIRL. Mary Cadogan's remark in the Annual that Wheway admired Ransome's abilities in humorous writing and that Ransome thought that Wheway's Cliff House stories were "superior" to his own seems particularly apt.

I can fully appreciate Hamilton's feelings when his Cliff House tales were taken over by other writers - it must be a bit like having one's children forcibly adopted by someone else to an author! Nevertheless, I've always felt it to be not only a great pity, but also a mistake, on the part of whoever was responsible, to ban the appearance of Greyfriars in the Cliff House tales in the SCHOOL FRIEND or SCHOOLGIRL. So far from distracting readers from the MAGNET, the occasional reference to the Greyfriars characters would probably have stimulated interest in that paper. The interest was already there in readers of the girls' papers. Thus, in a 1932 issue of the SCHOOLGIRL, (No. 159), "Miss Richards" - presumably John Wheway - replies to a reader's query:- "Yes, Bessie and Marjorie each have a brother at the school you mention", and adds, somewhat wistfully, "but I doubt if they will be appearing in our stories". (How true!) Other replies to readers include:- "Yes, Billy Bunter is Bessie's brother" and "No I'm no relation to the person you mention" - the latter, an obvious reference to Frank Richards.

It all seems a trifle silly and unnecessary! In the SCHOOL FRIEND, too, apart from early issues, Nos. 9, 11 and 14, in which Billy Bunter, Bob Cherry, and Peter Haseldene are mentioned - I've already referred to this in a previous article - there is little or no reference to Greyfriars in the papers ten years' run. At least, I haven't come across any so far!

MISS EVELYN FLINDERS (Hitchin): I have just read your "Parodied Detectives" in the new C.D. There are several of them I've never heard of. I remember an American called Staff who had a very nice detective doctor who had some exciting adventures with his little daughter. I don't suppose this will help you much, but I know a lot more about H. C. Bailey's Reginald Fortune.

He was a lovely character, attached to the CID - "A genial humorous surgeon who, according to an American expert, of all detectives comes nearest to the dreams of all good detective story readers". First story about 1927. I think all, or nearly all are short stories, about 6 to a volume. I have four books - two of them paperbacks. It's years since I read them. Now I must read them again.

YOU NEVER READ THESE STORIES - No. 1 The Magnet By W.O.G. Lofts

I suppose almost every collector by now, knows that the last issue of The Magnet 1683 entitled 'The Shadow of the Sack' contained an advert for 'The Battle of the Beaks' - next weeks story that did not appear. Probably also the keen Greyfriars reader was aware that this was the first yarn of Harry Wharton in Trouble. Maybe even what would have been the third Harry Wharton Rebel series.

Over the years, this subject has been a matter of great interest and conjecture, as well as controversy. Some writers have even put pen to paper describing their feelings, when their newsagent told them to the effect on that fateful day in May 1940, that this was the last copy of The Magnet. Usually walking away crestfallen knowing that they had lost personal friends in the school of Greyfriars.

According to an old Amalgamated Press stock book that I have seen - 'The Battle of the Beaks', would have been followed by such other titles as 'Bandy Bunter' (editorially crossed out and 'The Meddler' substituted) 'What Happened to Hacker', and

'The Hidden Hand'. All curiously completed in short instalments that was unusual for Frank Richards at that period, which also suggests that the tales may have been intended to be published in The Knockout Comic.

Well apart from the Magnet, a number of other papers at this period finished abruptly. Apart from comic papers one could add the counterpart of Greyfriars and The Magnet, Cliff House and The Schoolgirl - that had next weeks story advertised. Then one can add both their Libraries. The Schoolboys' Own Library, and The Schoolgirls' Own Library. Those two excellent detective story papers The Thriller, and Detective Weekly. All of these (excepting the Libraries) were reputed to have had larger circulations than The Magnet. So it is strange that with the exception of The Schoolboys' Own Library, I have yet to hear of any collector complaining about the advertised stories that never appeared. A big difference of course, was that to the best of my knowledge stories in these publications were usually complete. This is vastly different than being left in mid-air and held in suspense over a series. In the next few articles I hope to reveal some of these missing stories in other publications - starting with the female counterpart of Greyfriars - Cliff House.

* * * * *

POINTS FROM THE POST

J.E.M. writes:

The old detective stories don't seem to have the unflagging support enjoyed by the school sagas which, perhaps, gives a special meaning to the motto of the O.B.B.C.! Inevitably, I suppose, responses to the old story-papers will change as time goes by.

For my own part, Danny's Diary and The Editorial by themselves will always be enough to make the arrival of C.D. one of the most exciting events of the month. Special gratitude and praise, though, to Mr. Jenkins' excellent series and the W.O.G. Lofts for his tireless research.

In the January issue I also enjoyed Tommy Keen's piece on School Friend and had a chuckle at M. R. Thompson's delightful fantasy on Coker and Co.

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