

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

ALL THE THRILLS OF THE FILMS!

Vol  
24

## Film Picture Stories

NO. 24. VOL. 1.

EVERY SATURDAY

JANUARY 5TH. 1935.

BUCK JONES RIDES AGAIN IN A BLAZING WESTERN THRILLER!

No  
278



JIM BURK, the outlaw, pined himself on knowing a good thing when he saw it. That was why he bought the stone cabin, which stood a short distance away from the coach road to the mining town of Okar. The cabin, hidden from the trail by a cluster of rocks, and screened from the heights above by a little wood of pine trees, made an ideal hide-up for Burk and his gang. The owner was willing to sell, and the deal went through quickly. Now an armed man sat as stry on a rocky pinnacle which guarded the only approach to the cabin. He saw a horseman dressed in cowboy garb riding towards him at a gallop, but he only waved a hand in greeting, and the horseman



rode on, and presently entered the cabin. "Hello, gang, am I late?" he greeted Burk and the six men seated with him round a table, above which hung a lighted oil lamp. Burk, a powerfully-built ruffian, greeted. "You know you're late, Dan Lane," he retorted. "But we're all here now, as I can talk." He went on to speak of some cattle which the gang had rustled from over the border, and had sold for a good price. "We can't go back to Lester County," he continued, "but there's gold to be picked up hereabouts if we go to work in the right way. Are all you fellows willing to stand in and take orders from me?" All except one of the gang hastened to express their



willingness to join in any scheme which Burk proposed. Dan Lane, the newcomer, kept silent. He was a fine-looking young fellow, cleaner of build and more honest of feature than the other men. "Lane, I didn't hear your voice," rasped Burk, suspiciously. "I didn't say anything," was Dan's cool retort as he turned and looked out of the window. "Well, say something now," Burk commanded. "We're all listening." Dan swung round and seemed to be sizing up the gang. "Here's what I've got to say," he stated. "I joined your cattle drive for two reasons. First, I knew the land was stolen by the men we rustled them from, and—" Burk interrupted him



with a harsh laugh. "And in the second place you had to clear out of Lester County to save your hide," the outlaw leader sneered. "Your name isn't Lane at all. It's Track Ames, and you led one side in the Stone Walls cattle war. When the smoke cleared away down there the sheriff held you responsible for three or four killings. Look at this!" Burke unfolded a printed poster which he took from his pocket, and held it up for all to see. It bore a striking portrait of Dan Lane—or Track Ames as he really was—and it stated that five hundred dollars would be paid for his capture, dead or alive. Dan took the poster and stuffed it into his own pocket. The cool

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## COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by  
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

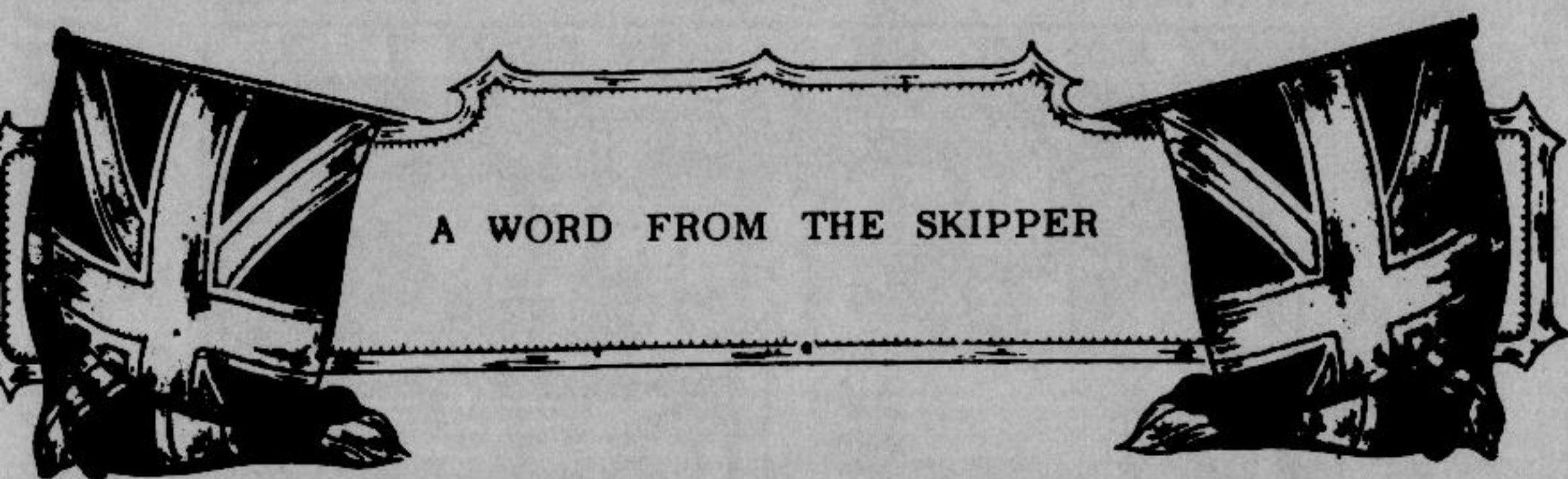
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No. 278

FEBRUARY 1970

Price 2s.3d.



## A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER

WERE YOU AN OLIVER TWIST?

In this issue we publish, under the title "Cosy Violence," an interesting little article by Mr. Martin Hammond. In one or two places I disagree with Mr. Hammond's findings.

He seeks reasons for the popularity of Charles Hamilton, and speaks of stories which charmed coppers from the pockets of working-class boys. As we have said before, the poor were undoubtedly charmed with Greyfriars, but the appeal extended equally to boys of all classes. It was not only the poor who knew something worth while when they saw it.

To give one reason for the popularity of the Magnet and other boys' papers Mr. Hammond says: "Their readers, brought up and ruled by elders grounded in Victorian methods, must have envied every second of that freedom." I think Mr. Hammond means that you and I, so ground under by our Victorian parents who understudied Mr. Barrett

of Wimpole Street, were happy to escape for respite into the fairyland of Greyfriars. Which accounted for the success of the Magnet and the rest.

Such was far from being the case so far as I was concerned and, I suspect, so far as most of you were concerned. It is true that my father did not spend afternoons in betting shops and my mother did not go to evening Bingo sessions. It is true that my mother always had a good lunch waiting for me when I went home after morning school. It is true that I recall one occasion when I went off to play after afternoon school and arrived home for tea, only to find all the tea things cleared away. I missed my tea, and was never late home again.

It is true that my father and mother were born in Victorian times. My mother was ready to give me a "clip" if it was necessary, and I adored her. My father never raised a hand to me in his life, and never laid down the law. He was a great pal, yet I respected him highly. I did very much as I liked, but I did not stray off the rails for the simple reason that my parents set me a good example, without being strict in any way. Most youngsters I knew had their boyhood traced out in very similar lines, and I am quite sure that the same thing applies to most Digest readers. I was very young when I first began to read the old papers. I didn't go to them as a relief from stern Victorian parents. I'm sure most of you didn't either.

So far as school life went, discipline seemed to be a good deal stricter at Greyfriars than it was in the schools I attended. I should have been sad at the thought of leaving my own school and going to Greyfriars, though I loved it. So far as class work went, they almost seemed to do more of that at Greyfriars than they do in plenty of schools in 1970. Possibly because the masters seldom went on strike - except with the cane.

### THE QUARTER-CENTURY

Last month Danny reminded us that, exactly 50 years ago, the Boys' Friend was 25 years old. Come next November, Collectors' Digest will reach its 25th birthday. Only a handful of the grand old papers ran as long as that.

### FRED SWAINSON

Gerry Allison's comments last month on the writer Fred Swain-

son rang a bell for me. My nephew spends a weekend with me from time to time, and he usually comes along with some book which he has found on his travels and which he thinks will interest me. Last summer he came along with "Acton's Feud" by Fred Swainson, published in book form in 1901. After reading Mr. Allison's article, I took down "Acton's Feud" and read it.

Swainson seems to have written competently. "Acton's Feud" appears to be a collection of stories about one school. Possibly it was only chance which prevented Swainson's school from occupying the niche which St. Jim's was to fill in a few years' time. I was rather intrigued to find, in "Acton's Feud" characters named Cherry, Todd, Penfold, and Singh Ram.

Mr. Lofts tells us that Swainson features in his "Men Behind Boys' Fiction" which contains biographies of 3,000 authors, and which is to be published shortly.

THE EDITOR

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ERIC FAYNE

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# DANNY'S DIARY

FEBRUARY 1920

There is a lovely new song out. It is called "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles," and it is a grand waltz tune. Everybody is humming it.

All the taxidriviers had a one-day strike because the cost of petrol has gone up 8d. a gallon. It is quite a big rise, and it says in the Daily Chronicle that the cost of living has trebled since 1913. Oh, for the good old days!

The Magnet is a hotch-potch these days. The stories have been rather putrid, and the paper is filled up with all sorts of stuff because the Greyfriars' tale is pretty short. First story of the month was "The Jape of the Term" about a new boy named Traddles. Next week, in "Smouldering Fires," Phyllis Howell caused Wharton to neglect his duties to the form, so Bulstrode put up as captain in his place. After that came "Phyllis Howell's Brother" - he was only a temporary character, but I expect he will turn up again. Finally "Squiff's Secret" was that he was going to pawn-shops to raise money so that his cousin could go to Australia.

We went to see some friends of Mum's who live at Kew. They were very nice people, and they took us to the first house at Chiswick Empire. This is a beautiful, big Stoll theatre with plenty of plush and a big orchestra. We saw Wee Georgie Wood who seems to be a schoolboy and a plump lady named Dolly Harmer acts as his mother. It is a very nice turn. Also on the bill were Wilkie Bard and the Irish singer Talbot O'Farrell.

In the Boys' Friend, the first Rookwood tale of the month was the last of the Boy From Nowhere series. It was called "Charlie at Rookwood." It turned out that the nameless boy was really Clare, Smythe's cousin, who had been kidnapped by counterfeiters. Then came two stories about rivalry with Bagshot. They were "With Pankley's Compliments" and "Singeing Pankley's Beard." Final Rookwood tale was "Tubby's Golden Dream" in which Muffin was made to believe that he had won a big prize in a lottery. This one didn't seem to be written by the regular Rookwood writer.

Cedar Creek has been up to standard. In "The Rival Editors,"

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Cyrus Hukett started a rival newspaper to Mr. Penrose's paper, and tried to get Frank Richards to write for him. Frank refused, so the rival paper's circulation dropped to just one reader before it packed up.

Then a 3-week series about Frank, who had orders not to go to Hillcrest, rescuing Mr. Peckover from a bandit. Mr. Peckover was so grateful that he wanted to give a reward to the hero. Chunky and Yen Chin each claimed to be the hero - but finally Frank Richards had to own up that he had done the deed.

These three were entitled "A Friend in Need," "Rival Heroes," and "The Scheme that Failed."

There has been a bit of real-life excitement in a development of last year's Green Bicycle mystery. A green bicycle has been found in a canal at Leicester. The police traced the owner, though he had filed off the number, and they have arrested a schoolmaster named Ronald Light.

I have had two Boys' Friend 4d. Libraries this month. They are "Arthur Redfern's Vow" by Charles Hamilton, and "Adventure Creek" which is another collection of old Cedar Creek tales.

There is a new exhibition at Olympia. It is put on by the Daily Mail and it is called the Ideal Home Exhibition. Twenty-one different countries are taking part in it. Mum and I went one day and it was great, though we got terribly tired walking round with things Mum had bought. Before we went home we got on a bus to Oxford Street and went to a new London cinema called the Marble Arch Pavilion. We saw Ethel Clayton in "Pettigrew's Girl" and it was a really lovely picture. Monte Blue was a soldier in it. Films are so good these days. They get better all the time.

All the Gems this month have been illustrated by E. E. Briscoe. I don't like his work very much. But with the first story my heart gave a leap and turned a somersault. It didn't take a magician to know that the old writer was back. The story was "Glyn's Great Stunt" in which Glyn thought he had invented a hair-restorer which worked. He tried it out on Trimble who seemed to sprout a moustache overnight and then, by a trick, managed to get to work on Herr Schneider's head. It was all good fun. I told Doug it seemed too good to be true, and Doug said it probably was - and Doug was right, for this tale

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was only a flash in the pan. The rest of the tales during the month were grim.

In "The Shadow of Doubt," Figgins boxed in a fair, beat the champion and won £10 which he refused to take. A weird new boy (How these new boys come and go all through the term these days!) named Pander starred in "Fighting for the Fags." And in "Skimpole's Rest Cure," Skimmy lost his sight, Marie Rivers became his secretary, and Skimmy got a story published for £10.

We have seen some grand pictures this month. One of the funniest - I laughed myself silly - was called "Oh! You Women!" It was about two snooty sisters named Aurora Noyse and Lotta Noyse, and the stars were Louise Huff and Ernest Truex. Marguerite Clarke was spiffing in "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch" and Douglas Fairbanks was exciting in "The Matrimaniac." I loved Dorothy Gish in "I'll Get Him Yet."

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(Editorial Comment: "Glyn's Great Stunt," read by Danny in February 1920 was the only Gem tale from Charles Hamilton for the best part of a year, and was the first since "The Amateur Advertiser" the previous autumn. "Glyn's Great Stunt" was only a pot-boiler, and not very original, and it shone beyond its merits in that drab period of the paper.)

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## ON STAGE AND ON THE AIR

By Roger Sansom

Sitting in the offices of "The Stage" in Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, while searching for a totally different item in the back-copy files, I was recently fascinated to discover an account of a play called "The White Shame," performed at the Bedford Music Hall, Camden Town in 1913, which featured Sexton Blake.

The piece was written by C. Douglas Carlile and Wilfred Benson, and Douglas Carlile also took the part of Blake. Full details of the cast apparently were not disclosed.

"It was of course almost inevitable," the reviewer reflects, "that that many-sided detective Sexton Blake should sooner or later turn his attention to the White Slave Traffic, and the result, entitled 'The White Shame,' is arousing no little interest at the Bedford this week. The sketch...deals with the familiar subject upon what may be called its more picturesque and sensational side, but...there is a commendable absence of those harrowing disclosures which in certain sections of the Press, for instance, are quite as offensive as the vice they profess to expose."

According to the synopsis given, the plot turned upon a bogus theatrical agency in South America. Blake disguised himself as the manager, and took his place in order to get to the heart of the racket. Subsequent scenes were set in a nursing home and in a Soho nightclub.

"The White Shame, in short," continues the review, "should be as popular as the rest of the Sexton Blake series." Blake on the halls, no less! One of his less well-documented dramatic appearances. Similarly, I wonder if anyone now remembers seeing Donald Stuart's play "Sexton Blake" at the Prince Edward in 1930 (enthusiasts have recalled it in these pages, but all retrospectively)? I turned that up in the records too.

This review, like most criticism in "The Stage" at this period, is simply rather tepidly congratulatory in tone. It unsportingly

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gives away the murderer! And it also describes Blake as "A parallel to or pale reflex of" Sherlock Holmes, but perhaps the comparison was prompted by the presence of Arthur Wontner, who of course played both the detectives in various media. The play was presented by "Donald Stuart" Productions, and Mr. Stuart made a curtain speech, apologising, the writer darkly hints, that "Pedro" had not yet become accustomed to London, and being on-stage. He also mentions that the action included the visible blowing-down of a wall!

Another famous "Blake" - George Curzon - forsook the films for a Blakian radio serial in 1939, which I believe was simultaneously appearing in magazine form. I possess a "Radio Times" backnumber that has a photograph of Mr. Curzon as the detective, and in it I learn that Brian Lawrence (an actor unknown to me) played Tinker; the rest of the cast is not shown. This story, "Enter Sexton Blake," appeared in a magazine programme called "Lucky Dip," and it was written by Ernest Dudley, on (I quote), "a synopsis by Berkeley Grey."

In 1940, Arthur Young, who though he was a good and versatile actor I cannot imagine as Blake, played the detective in another radio serial, presented in another programme devoted to crime stories. This one, interestingly, was scripted by Francis Durbridge, no mean practitioner of thriller serials.

It is curious, considering how unlike anyone's idea of Blake was Mr. Young's appearance, but during the run of the serial, "Radio Times" twice displayed a photograph of him with Clive Baxter who played Tinker, suitably sleuthing. One was on the front cover and the other was on the back. John Robinson, Jane Grahame, Cyril Nash and Wilfrid Walter were also in the cast.

That was during the war. Since then we have had to wait for another series on the air right up to the palmy days of Radio One, and the livewire impersonation of William - Sh, you know who.

### THE SEXTON BLAKE CATALOGUE

In the Sexton Blake Catalogue, there are several points of interest. I am not aware if there have been any amendments to the information supplied, but I wish to make some comments on the list of Union Jacks. On page 31 there are seven instances of stories against which is

printed "Author unknown."

Let us take No. 832, The False Clue. There is little reason to doubt that this yarn may be credited to E. W. Alais. The style resembles his and the introduction of one of his characters, Inspector Kite, confirms it. If so, it was his last contribution to the Union Jack.

In the case of No. 849, Tinker's Lone Hand, this is written in the typical style of Cecil Hayter. On page 7 of this story there is an interesting reference to Marston Hume, a character who never appeared in the U.J., but who was featured in a series of tales in the Penny Pictorial years before.

No. 881, The Colour Line, suggests the style of R. Coutts Armour (Coutts Brisbane), and was probably his first appearance in the U.J.

There is an odd circumstance in connection with No. 967, The Case of the Goldmaker's Secret, which is attributed to Alfred Edgar on the list. For a brief period in 1922 the authors' initials were appended to the stories. Thus, G. H. Teed's yarns were initialled H.T., Pierre Quiroule's W.W.S. and so on. The initials attached to No. 967 are S.G.S., which would imply that the tale was by S. G. Shaw, which I am sure is not the case. A later story, No. 978, The Case of the Branded Man, also by A. Edgar, according to the Catalogue, is said to be by the author of The Case of the Goldmaker's Secret, so it would appear that the initials S.G.S., were an editorial error.

I hope these remarks may prove of interest to Sexton Blake fans.

S. GORDON SWAN

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### A CHRISTMAS CARD CONTROVERSY

by William Lister

I have never received a Christmas card without pleasure: not one. I suppose, like everybody else, I receive a great variety, from privately printed to those bought in bargain basements, and every one is welcome. Of all those received, however, only one caused controversy.

Let me explain: the card - a black and white drawing - depicts a cosy fire on the left and a splendid Xmas pudding in the foreground of the far right. Near the fire a figure is reclining in a comfortable arm-

chair, surrounded by dream figures of our favourite characters such as Billy Bunter, Weary Willie and Tired Tim, Dick Turpin, Buffalo Bill, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Sexton Blake and others. It was drawn by A.W.H., and sent by Gerry and Myra Allison.

A few days earlier my daughter had surprised me by remarking that her eldest son (age 7½), a good little reader, was very interested in the Billy Bunter books. On his next visit I showed him the card. He picked out Billy Bunter and Dick Turpin; Weary Willie and Tired Tim he did not know. I ventured to point out Sexton Blake, and at that point the controversy began.

Kevin, with a withering look on his face, exclaimed: "That's not Sexton Blake!"

I looked again. "Oh, surely it is," I replied.

"No," he repeated, "it is not."

I was not standing for that, and said so. My grandson then called over his younger brother, Stuart (age 5½). "Who's that?" he asked.

"Billy Bunter," responded the young one.

"And who's that?" again questioned the elder brother.

"Don't know," said the little one.

"Isn't it Sexton Blake?" I suggested. Again a withering look, this time from Stuart.

"That's not Sexton Blake."

I was outnumbered two to one. Time to apply different tactics. "And why," said I, "are you so sure it is not Sexton Blake?"

"Because we see him every week on T.V." came the united cry.

And then I understood. For me, the figure holding a pipe and wearing a dressing gown immediately suggested Sexton Blake. But not to them. No, sir! Laurence Payne of T.V. was their Sexton Blake, and no other.

And who could blame them? After all, we all tend to accept the picture first put before us, whether in writing or on film.

This is why some of we old-timers did not take kindly to the new-look Sexton Blake. He is all right; but so far as we are concerned it was not Sexton Blake. (I speak of the writings, not of T.V. Laurence Payne and his co-actor.)

This is true also in the case of films. I have found the same thing in regard to Sherlock Holmes. Peter Cushing is no doubt a great actor, and he has made an intense study of this character; but for me, Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce are the real Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, and all the others are either good or bad imitations.

However, my Christmas card controversy left me in a good mood. At least in 1970 my grandsons are still aware that there is a Sexton Blake and Tinker - not to mention Billy Bunter.

Happy viewing and happy reading, boys!

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## STAUNCH CHUMS AT ST. JIM'S

Sleath put his head out of the study door as Monteith and Webb came up the corridor. He was looking disturbed.

"Stop a moment, Monty, will you?" he said. "You, too, Webb. Come in here. Something beastly unpleasant has occurred."

The two New House seniors entered the room.

"What's the rumpus?" asked Webb, looking at Sleath in wonder. "You look as if you'd seen a ghost."

"It's worse than that!"

"What's happened?"

"Somebody's taken twelve pounds from my desk!"

Monteith and Webb stared at him incredulously.

"You must be joking," said the latter. "You've mislaid the money somewhere."

"I'm not likely to mislay a sum of money like that," replied Sleath. "I've hunted high and low before I spoke about the matter."

There was a painful silence, and the three seniors stared at each other.

"It was the football subscriptions, of course," said Sleath. "I had the money in an envelope in a drawer in my desk. When I came in, I found the envelope lying on the desk, and was amazed, of course. I looked in the drawer, and the money was gone."

"There's no possibility of a mistake I suppose?" said Monteith. "This is a frightful thing for the New House if it gets out."

"It must get out!" exclaimed Webb. "We can't lose twelve pounds, I suppose. Besides, more than half the money was subscribed by School House chaps. The thing's bound to get out."

"I haven't told you all," said Sleath.

"I don't think the School House will do much crowing over the business."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that when I came in I found a School House boy in my room."

Monteith whistled.

"Who was it?"

"Jack Blake."

"Jack Blake! You found him here? What was he doing?"

A glitter shot into Monteith's steely eyes. At the mention of Blake's name he saw a chance at last of repaying his long grudge against the boy he hated.

"He couldn't explain. I thought he had come to play some trick, and chucked him out. He seemed frightened at being found here, but I didn't attach importance to that at the time; but when I saw the envelope lying on the table, and the money gone - well, I wasn't long in putting two and two together."

"It certainly looks suspicious."

"Let's have it plain," said Webb bluntly. "It's well known, Sleath, that there's no love lost between you and Blake of the School House. Can you prove that you found him in your study? He might deny it."

Sleath smiled in a sour way.

"A good many fellows must have heard me chuck him out."

"It's a bad business. You say you've hunted through your study for the money?"

"Every corner, to make sure."

"You ought never to have left a drawer unlocked with money in it."

"It's easy to preach after a thing's happened. There's no thief in the New House, and how was I to guess that Blake would come here?"

"How was he to know you had money here, if you come to that?" said Webb.

"A School House kid can't know much about your arrangements here."

"Well, I suppose he knew that the treasurer of the clubs would have money about somewhere," said Sleath.

"We'll have a look about the room, and make doubly sure before we accuse Blake or anybody else," said Webb.

"That's what I want you to do."

The three seniors searched the study. The hunt was fruitless. They were finishing the search when Baker of the Sixth put his head in at the open door.

"Hallo! Lost something?"

"Yes."

"Is this it?"

Baker held up half a sovereign.

"Where did you find it?" asked Sleath.

"Just picked it up outside your door."

"Blake must have dropped it when he bolted," said Sleath.

Baker stared at him.

"Hallo! What's that about Blake?"

The state of affairs was explained to him. Baker drew a deep breath.

"It looks fishy!" he exclaimed. "The sooner something's done the better. If that kid has taken money, we may be able to get it back before he has time to hide it anywhere. Let's go over to the New House and see Kildare."

"That's a good idea!" said Monteith.

"We'll all go, and say nothing before we've had it out over the way."

This was agreed to, and the four New House seniors started at once. Baker and Webb walked together, and Monteith dropped a little behind with Sleath.

"I say, Sleath," he said, in a low voice, "this is all right, isn't it?"

"What do you mean by all right?"

"I mean, it is really just as you said. Blake really took the money."

Sleath stared at him.

"I don't know what you're driving at, Monty."

"Don't be an ass!" said Monteith irritably. "You hate Blake, and so do I. I'd be glad enough to get the cheeky imp kicked out of St. Jim's, and so would you; but a charge like this can't be made unless it's true. If this is a got-up job to get Blake into trouble, I don't want to have a hand in it. That's what I mean."

"The thing is exactly as I have told you," said Sleath steadily. "The money has been taken, and I found Blake in my study. You know as much about the matter as I do now."

"All right. I only wanted to be satisfied on that point."

"I hope you're satisfied now!" said Sleath tartly.

The four seniors entered the School House, and went direct to Kildare's study. Eric Kildare was head of the School House and captain of St. Jim's. He was the idol of his own house, and even the New House boys could not help liking and respecting him.

A cheery voice bade the visitors to enter the study. Kildare, Darrell and Rushden rose to their feet. For a moment they thought that this invasion meant war. It was not so long since Kildare and Monteith stood foot to foot, fist to fist, and the New House prefect had received the licking of his life. Peace had been patched up between them, though rancour still existed on Monteith's side; but the skipper of St. Jim's soon saw that the present visit was not a hostile one.

"Hallo, you chaps!" he said in his cordial, Irish way. "You're just in time for the brew."

"We've come on business!" said Monteith shortly.

"Do you mean the football?" said Kildare, looking puzzled.

"It isn't football. There's been a happening that means disgrace for St. Jim's - or, at least, for the School House - if it isn't cleared up."

"I don't understand you."

The School House seniors remained standing. Webb, Baker and Sleath looked uncomfortable, but Monteith was enjoying the situation. It was a keen triumph to him to have a weapon like this to use against his enemy.

"I'll explain. Sleath came into his study a while ago, and found one of your juniors there. He couldn't explain his presence, and Sleath kicked him out. Later on, Sleath discovered that the football subscriptions, amounting to twelve pounds, had been taken out of his drawer."

"You are accusing a School House boy of going to the New House to steal?"

"Yes."

"It's a thundering lie!" exclaimed Rushden hotly.

The captain made him a sign to be silent. The lurking smile on Monteith's sour face told him that the New House prefect had a strong case.

"Who is the junior in question?"

"Jack Blake."

"We might have guessed it," broke out Rushden again. "We know you hate him. He's the last kid in the world to touch money not his own."

"It's a question of proof," said Monteith. "I know nothing of the matter, only that the money is gone. But Baker picked up half a sovereign in the corridor, where Blake was when Sleath kicked him out. The inference is that Blake dropped it there, unless

Rushden likes to accuse Baker of being in a plot against your precious junior."

"We all take Baker's word," said Kildare.

"Which means that you wouldn't take mine or Sleath's. Very well, it's a question of proof, as I said. We came over here hoping to settle the matter as quietly as possible, and prevent a scandal. If you choose to meet us in a hostile spirit--"

"We don't. I will send for Blake at once, and question him before you."

Kildare went to his door and called to his fag, who was sent at once in quest of Jack Blake. In grim silence the group in the study awaited the arrival of the accused junior.

(Another instalment of this old, old story Next Month.)

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"My apologies to friends at home and overseas for my prolonged silence during Christmas Festivities & New Year, due to prolonged family illnesses.

"Belated best wishes to all friends, old and new, for a Happy & Peaceful 1970 and welcome to all newcomers to the hobby.

"Now available. Magnet Facsimile No. 3, the famous 'Bunter Court.' 42/- . Sexton Blake original hard covers 'The Mini-Skirt Murders' (M. Thomas) and 'Slaughter in the Sun' (S. Christie), 18/- ea. Expected shortly 7th Sexton Blake Omnibus, 21/- . Men Behind Boys' Fiction (probably March) £4.4s.0d. approx.

"Owing to the misdeeds of the few all orders must now be PRE-PAID. I cannot afford to give six months' credit so if you have any of the above on order and have not received your copy(ies), please remit at once."

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# NELSON LEE COLUMN

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

By Jim Cook

Here is a further selection of articles written by the juniors for the St. Frank's Magazine which I have culled from the bound archives so jealously guarded by Nipper. The captain of the Remove says that they are just what the doctor ordered after the Yuletide festivities when it is back to school and to work and we settle down to "solemn importance" as somebody has remarked.

And so to all who are familiar with the boys at St. Frank's I guarantee the following bits and pieces will make you smile. In fact, I defy you not to smile!

"Gresham's Library is now open for business in Study J. There is a fine collection of volumes which can be borrowed by any member of St. Frank's College on payment of a fee of 2d. per volume per week.

This library is unique in some respects. We have no well-bound classics or highly-coloured novels in stock. The library is designed exclusively to amuse and educate the fellows at St. Frank's, and with this view the library is composed entirely of issues of the "Blood-Stained Bartholomew Library," "Black-Hand Monthly," and "Skull and Crossbones Library."

Among the many famous books by well-known writers now in stock may be mentioned the following:

"In the Dead of Night" by Steele Moore.

"Brought to Bay" by Hyam Dunn.

"The Pirate's Revenge" by Walker Plank.

"Taking Aim" by Drewer Bede.

"At The Eleventh Hour" by Justine Tyme.

"Desperate Debts" by Owen Cash.

"The Barring Out" by G. Watt-Funn.

"One-Way Street" by Turner Gayne.

"The Villain" by Hans Uppe.

"Cunning" by Wylie Fox.

"Besieging the Fort" by Burnett Downe.

Did they raise a smile on that frowning countenance? All right,



what about this? "The West House masters are each to be provided with a short stick to push open the doors of their studies. The booby-trap menace has been increasing greatly over there."

Then there's this:

"Bernard Forrest is reported to owe money to a bookmaker. He said, the other day, that if he couldn't get hold of any cash he would be sacked. The Remove promptly passed round the hat - to pay his fare home."

And this:

"In the middle of third lesson recently Archie Glenthorne rose from his place and walked towards the door. He was sleep-walking!"

It is rumoured -

That Fatty Little, as a protest against the high prices of tuck, started a hunger strike, and continued it bitterly for twelve minutes.

That Josh Cuttle was two seconds late with the rising-bell yesterday.

That E. Snipe construed a line of Virgil without an error. (P.S. This rumour has since been officially denied.)

That in 1908 the spectators at a football match agreed with the decision of the referee.

ADVERTISEMENT: Found. A large cake. Owner can have it restored by applying to Cecil de Valerie. P.S. - Fatty Little needn't trouble to apply. It's a cake of soap.

OLD CLOTHES FOR SALE. Some genuine antique. Owner has recently outgrown them. He bought them when a fag. It breaks his heart to lose them, but it must be done. What offers? Duke of Somerton, Remove.

IMAGINARY INTERVIEW - Our St. Frank's Interviewer calls on

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

"Morning, Bill," said I, strolling into the Globe Theatre, Southwark. Mr. Shakespeare was discussing a flagon of wine in his dressing-room. He nodded genially to me.

"Faith, thou are come at a good season," he said. "I prithee share my sup o' wine."

"No, thanks, Bill. I'd rather have ginger pop."

"As you like it!" he yawned. "But faith, what would you with me, my master?"

"I've just dropped in to ask you whether you wrote those plays, or old Frank Bacon."

"That pig Bacon!" hooted Shakespeare. "Nonsense! I wrote them each one - measure for measure."

"Our master, old Crowsfeet, swears that Bacon wrote your plays." I told him.

"Ha, ha! 'Tis indeed much ado about nothing. As a matter of fact - this is between ourselves - I wrote Bacon's work as well as my own. 'S'fact!"

"Then what did Bacon write?"

"Him? Oh, he wrote advertisements for a margarine firm. He was nobody. Every-

body thinks he was a very big noise, but that's only a comedy of errors. I'm the boy who did all the work. And how! I tell you, laddie, I was a real swift worker. Why, I wrote 'She Stoops To Conquer' in six hours."

"But I thought Goldsmith wrote that?" I gasped.

Shakespeare frowned.

"Did he?" he muttered. "I think it was me. In fact, I remember it distinctly.

I wrote it at the same time I produced 'The School For Scandal.'"

"But Sheridan wrote that!" I ejaculated.

"Nonsense! Goldsmith and Sheridan were just two pen-names of mine. I was the boy who wrote 'em."

"But Goldsmith and Sheridan lived nearly two hundred years later."

"What rot! That's what you learn at St. Frank's. You don't want to take any notice of that sort of stuff. They were merely pen-names of mine. So were Dickens, Thackeray, Addison and - and all the rest of them."

"Phew!"

"And now - coming down to serious business - can you lend me a couple of groats till next Saturday?"

"I produced the groats.

"Good!" he said. "All's well that ends well. Now you can go and chase yourself. I'm going out with old Milton. Chin-chin!"

"Good-bye, Mr. Shakespeare."

He turned back when he got to the door.

"I forgot to mention," he said, "that Milton is another pen-name of mine. Good-bye! "

## WHEN E.S.B. 'WROTE TO ORDER'

by Len Wormull

'Written to Order' is one of the best Controversials I have read. I cannot recall the term as applied to Hamilton, but certainly it has been used in the defence of Brooks, and the author has said as much: "The deterioration in the stories was due to Editorial 'help.' They thought they knew how to write school stories better than I, and told me what to do." On the fateful decision to destroy St. Frank's in 1930, he says: "I can't remember exactly, but most likely it was the Editor's idea." Again, he blames editorial policy for the dropping of *Between Ourselves*, artist Arthur Jones in favour of Kenneth Brookes, and other decisions adversely affecting the Lee. One must accept, according to Brooks, that 'writing to order' had a deleterious effect on the Lee's recovery.

While an author must be responsible for his own work, be it good, bad or indifferent, there is perhaps a reasonable explanation for the sub-standard stories in the later Lees. I have long held that St. Frank's became a stumbling-block to the author's real aspirations - to make a name in the world of detective fiction. When the crunch came, I think he was not unwilling to put up the shutters at St. Frank's. He gave

this practical answer when asked to write more St. Frank's in post-war years: "Yes, I think it is a waste of time for you to ask me to write more St. Frank's stories. The market seems to have changed these days; the modern boy likes strips, and such like. There are many hundreds of faithful old-timers, such as yourself - indeed thousands - who would eagerly buy new St. Frank's stories. But it would not be a paying proposition to produce a new paper with a circulation of mere thousands. You cannot expect any publishing firm to produce a paper for enthusiasts only. The general public must be considered. Also, I am too busy writing books about Norman Conquest and Chief Detective Inspector Cromwell to spare any time for anything else. It's a change that does not appeal to you, but as far as I am concerned, it is for the better."

Brooks attained his goal, but it is clear that St. Frank's went sour on him long before the end, in the same way as Sherlock Holmes with Conan Doyle, and the C sharp minor Prelude with Rachmaninov. Yet, ironically, it is through his school stories by which he is revered.

E.S. Brooks quotes are from letters to Norman Pragnell, 1953-55, copies of which I hold. Permission to quote from them was kindly given by Mr. Pragnell a few years ago.

### CLOSING THE GAP

by R. J. Godsave

The launching of the Monster Library in November 1925 in which back numbers of the Nelson Lee Library were reprinted, came as a pleasant surprise and a boon to readers of the Lee.

Back numbers of the early Lees were virtually unobtainable at that time, and many, including myself, had little hope of ever seeing or reading any.

With the reprints in the Monster Library starting at o.s. No. 158 "Captain Burton's Quest," this practically closed the gap of the St. Frank's stories which started at o.s. No. 112.

It has been sometimes thought that it was a pity that the reprints did not start at o.s. No. 112 which would have given a complete picture of the beginning of the St. Frank's saga.

The alternating St. Frank's and detective stories, together with the short series consisting of four Nelson Lees - which were the pattern at that period - prevented this happening. At the other extreme

the "Hunter the Hun" series comprised of ten Nelson Lees.

Since the average series reprinted in the Monster Library were of a length of eight Lees, it was not possible to reduce the Hunter series without severely damaging the story.

Two other series which consisted of ten Lees and were re-printed in the Monster Library were the Singleton and Ernest Lawrence series. In both cases it was possible to cut out two Lees which were devoted to isolated incidents from the main run of the stories.

The arrival of Nipper at St. Frank's and the Hunter series were reprinted in the 3rd New Series of the Nelson Lee Library in 1933 under titles differing from the originals.

The splendid library of Lees possessed by the London Club has greatly helped to close the gap and enable one to know why Cecil De Valerie of the Remove was once called the "Rotter."

It is difficult to believe that over forty-five years had to elapse before I could have the privilege of seeing and reading some of the Nelson Lees prior to o.s. No. 158.

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NEXT MONTH: Bob Blythe gathers together further letters and items in the history of Brooks' EARLY STRUGGLES.

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THE BOY WITHOUT A NAME

JOHN WERNHAM asks us to express his gratitude for the many kind letters sent to him in connection with the reprint of the above story. It is quite impossible for him to reply individually, but he is more than rewarded for the work by this warm response to his efforts. He looks forward to another year and another reprint which will be, as usual, a secret till publication date comes along.

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WANTED: S.O.L Nos. 149, 151, 166, 168, 169, 170, 171, 173, 177, 181, 185, 186, 189, 207, 215, OTHER S.O.L's FOR EXCHANGE.

PHILIP TIERNEY

6 ABBEY PARK ROAD, GRIMSBY.

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DO YOU REMEMBER?by Roger M. JenkinsNo. 80 - Gem No. 2 (New Series) - "Miss Priscilla's Mission"

Looking over the early Gems in the new series that started in February 1908, the collector is soon made aware of the spell cast by the adventures of Tom Merry and D'Arcy over sixty years ago. The editorial might consist of only a few words, the illustrations might be uneven and often grotesque, but the story carried everything. It was all so fresh in those days: nearly every situation was new, and much was experimental. The readers must have felt they were on the verge of a glorious era of boys' stories, and in one way they were right.

"Miss Priscilla's Mission" explains how Tom Merry's old governess decided to eradicate all ill-feeling by creating friendship everywhere between the boys. It was a farcical situation that Charles Hamilton's keen irony found relish in describing, but when Miss Fawcett's bonnet was tilted awry and her bonnet-box kicked around at the Grammar School, there was an uneasy feeling that the fun had gone too far.

To my mind, there is no doubt that the continued existence of Miss Fawcett in the stories was a mistake of a serious nature. In the early days at Clavering College, when no one could have imagined that over thirty years of Tom Merry stories lay ahead, it was an amusing stroke to provide the hero with a fussy old governess, dressed twenty years behind the fashions, obsessed with patent medicines, and convinced that Tom was a delicate little lad. It was equally amusing to observe how the embarrassment spilled over on to other characters who were caught up with her, but it was all a joke that could soon wear rather thin. As time went on, Tom Merry seemed to become more mature and thoughtful, and the older he seemed, the more incongruous did Miss Fawcett become. In the end, she stood out like an old scarecrow, and it became difficult to associate any serious theme with her. As I have remarked in an earlier piece in this series, Huckleberry Heath was no real holiday centre like Wharton Lodge: it conjured up not warmth, security, and comfort, but a vision of two eccentric old females with cats and a parrot. So it was that the holiday centre in the Gem became Eastwood House, and this inevitably drew the limelight away from the hero of the stories: Tom Merry was just one among a crowd of guests.

It is easy to see what was wrong, but not so easy to put it right. I think that Charles Hamilton should have grasped the nettle firmly in the early days of the penny Gem, and found Tom Merry a male guardian, possibly an uncle from the colonies like Mr. Poinsett who could have come to live in England. Miss Fawcett could have declined into a subsidiary role in the household, or disappeared altogether. Think what splendid Christmas series the Gem could have had if only Tom Merry's home had compared with Harry Wharton's!

It is impossible to put down Gem No. 2 without referring to the strange advertisements of the day: £600 in prizes for solving a simple picture puzzle ("There is only one easy condition which need cost you nothing"); moustaches grown at all ages ("Send at once, as Mr. Dalmet could die with his secret"); an 18-carat gold watch with a ten years' warranty for 7/9d., or an 18-carat gold ring with six real diamonds and a ruby for 15/6d. Even when allowing for the effects of inflation, one cannot help wondering about the genuine nature of the articles on offer. But in my opinion, the advertisement which probably had the greatest effect was one for No. 2 of a new story paper called the Magnet, available for a much more modest expenditure - a halfpenny. There could have been no doubt about the genuineness of the bargain on offer here.

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### LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

#### No. 143     THAT'S MY DAD!

The year 1920 was the worst in the long history of the Magnet. Also, it was probably, for some reason or other, the worst year in the literary career of Charles Hamilton. Though he wrote a considerable number of stories during this time for the Boys' Friend and for the Greyfriars Herald, they were, almost without exception, run-of-the-mill pot-boilers. He wrote but little for the Gem and still less for the Magnet. The divine spark was sadly missing. He seemed to be in a rut, writing not with love but from habit and, as Huxley once observed, "habit changes enjoyments into dull and daily necessities."

Despite the absence from its pages of Charles Hamilton, the Magnet of 1920 is far from being without interest for the student. Some of the substitute tales of the day were so had that it is a mystery how

ever they came to be accepted for publication. Often - a point we have noted before - the basic situation was so farcical that the story was still-born, fit only for the editor's w.p.b.

One such story in 1920 was entitled "The Invasion of Greyfriars" and it had a sequel "Chums Awheel." The utter improbability of the basic plot made it hopeless for the passably intelligent reader. In the middle of term, whitewashers and painters invaded the classrooms of Greyfriars and, after a few slapstick sequences, the Head decided to give the school a week's holiday.

This absurdity, however, fades into insignificance when Colonel Wharton is referred to as Harry Wharton's "father." Wharton writes to his "pater" for permission to take a party to Wharton Lodge. The Colonel, in reply, becomes Wharton's "affectionate father," and he refers to Harry as his son.

It is true, of course, that Wharton Lodge with its environment was not as delightfully developed in 1920 as it was to be in later years. All the same, every regular reader knew that Harry was an orphan, and that Colonel Wharton was his uncle and guardian.

According to the lists of Mr. Lofts, this unhappy pair of Magnets were written by Mr. G. R. Samways. Mr. Samways is not unknown for incredible plots in his young days, but it has always been assumed that he had Greyfriars lore, at any rate of the red cover period, at his fingertips. Yet for any writer to turn Colonel Wharton into Harry's "father" seems quite beyond the pale. If Mr. Lofts is right in his lists, then Mr. Samway's bloomer is quite inexplicable. And, though some author made such a slip, what about the editor and others, who presumably read and passed these two stories?

Admittedly this was not the only bloomer in the Magnet. One author placed Rylcombe as the local station for Greyfriars, and Mr. C. H. Chapman gilded the lily by spreading the name Rylcombe right across the cover of the issue.

In one of the Bunter playlets on television, Lord Mauleverer telephoned to his "father." Mr. Hamilton said it was due to the story being altered by the producer, and added that it should have been obvious to anyone that Mauleverer would not have been "Lord" Mauleverer while his father lived. That seems to be common sense. Yet Lord Eastwood

had a son Lord Conway. I don't know how these aristocratic matters work, but I suppose there is a feasible explanation for Lord Conway.

In one of the Bunter stage plays, "Billy Bunter's Christmas Circus," Colonel Wharton went out for the evening "with his 'wife.'" I saw this being rehearsed, I drew the attention of the producer and nearly everyone else to the mistake, which must have made every Greyfriars fan wriggle. I was told "It's too late to alter it now, old boy!" So they rehearsed it, and nursed it, and put on the show with Colonel Wharton taking his 'wife' out for the evening.

I should add that this was not the fault of my good friend, Mr. Maurice McLoughlin, who wrote the play. The producer added bits of his own and, as too often happens in these cases, the producers know but little of the background of what they are producing. And those who do know are not asked.

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The Story Behind Our Cover Picture - FILM PICTURE STORIES

by W.O.G. Lofts

A short while ago, whilst visiting a collector friend, I was pleasantly suprised to see that he had been fortunate enough to acquire a number of FILM FUNS. Those of pre-war vintage, as most readers know, are very rare indeed and are probably now worth about thirty times their original price. Glancing through them, I was puzzled by one issue dated 1934 that had on the front cover a picture-strip of the adventures of Buck Jones, drawn by his namesake Arthur Jones, the well-known Nelson Lee and Union Jack artist. This was the first time that I had ever seen the famous cowboy depicted on the outside cover, and a closer inspection really startled me when I discovered that this was not a copy of FILM FUN at all but a paper called FILM PICTURE STORIES. This was identical in format and layout to the famous comic, and one which I wanted to know more about. I soon did so from the old Amalgamated Press files.

FILM PICTURE STORIES commenced on July 28th 1934, and was an obvious companion paper to FILM FUN. There is no doubt at all that it was a periodical meant for the juvenile public, as in No. 1 they gave away a large packet of sherbert, and a 'bullroarer' (I presume this made

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a noisielike a bull to the annoyance of parents and teachers), and in No. 2 a large nougat bar and free cigarette cards. The obvious aim of this paper was to feature picture strips of well-known films. This would cater for those readers who did not care for the antics of the slapstick comedians in FILM FUN. That famous cowboy Tim McCoy featured on the cover of the first issue, though this time in the role of a New York policeman in the film 'Police Car 17.' This was drawn by G. W. Wakefield, and it proves what I wrote about him in the current C.D. Annual - that he could draw in a serious vein if he wished. Other picture strips featured Richard Dix in 'Ace of Knaves,' Buck Jones (who died in real life so tragically in a fire) in 'The Fighting Code' and 'Dick Turpin' featuring Victor McLaglan. (In real life Turpin was a short, thickset man with a pockmarked face). Later issues featured mainly western strips with Ken Maynard, Tom Bell, Randolph Scott and a cowboy I just cannot recall at all in my records of them - a Tom Tracy.

Issue No. 12 started a gradual change in policy, which was a sign that all was not going well with the paper. They cut out some of the picture strips and replaced them with full-length stories complete with original film stills, and this increased as the paper went on. No. 30 dated 16th February 1935 had two full-length pages to the effect that from next week the paper would be replaced by FILM FUN. Readers could then join Joe E. Brown, Lupino Lane, Jimmy Durante, Sydney Howard Wheeler & Woolsey, Laurel & Hardy (who ran for 1410 issues 1930/57), Harold Lloyd, 'Our Sally' and that famous detective, Jack Keen.

FILM PICTURE STORIES was a big flop, running only for thirty issues, when one compares the 2,225 of FILM FUN, 651 of KINEMA COMIC, and 1063 of BOYS CINEMA. This publication may of course have been a sort of rival to the latter. The copy is the only one I have ever seen in our hobby after nearly 20 years, nor do I remember it at all in my boyhood days. I have no doubt that other collectors may now recollect this paper, and I'm only too pleased to have been able to revive memories of the short-lived FILM PICTURE STORIES.

I wrote the whole history of FILM FUN in C.D. for Jan. 1962.

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COSY VIOLENCE

by Martin Hammond

The work of Frank Richards has two aspects. He wrote a series

of stories which, week after week, and year after year, charmed coppers from the pockets of poor working-class boys. He also made a myth that still endures and has added a new word to the English language.

He created a whole world that appealed to whole generations of boys. The world is a school where no work is done and the masters, going their ineffective rounds, are cyphers. The boys are not real, but they are a boy's ideal of what a boy should be and live a life any boy would like to live. They exist entirely in the present. Unlike Stalkey and Co., they give no thought to a future when they must earn their places among the rulers of the Empire. They spend their days in untrammelled idleness enjoying themselves with tireless rowdy exuberance. Their readers, brought up and ruled by elders grounded in Victorian methods, must have envied every second of that freedom.

The boys are caricatures, drawn in bold strokes by a master. The idle, comic aristocrat; the bully; the decent, manly young fellow are all exactly as a boy would wish and appeal to a boy's hero-worship or snobbery. The stories, told in brief bursts of action, are hammered along with instinctive narrative skill. The dialogue, matched to each character, will even approach wit, if required.

Bunter crownsthe edifice. The other boys enjoy the freedom every child imagines is the prerogative of adults. Bunter is treated by the other boys much as the readers felt they were treated by adults. He is thwarted, put upon and despised by capricious and superior persons. But, and how his readers rejoiced, he is never defeated. He gets his way. Weakness and cunning are his strength and they gain him a promised land of mountains of grub and rivers of pop. His is the reality, his the success a small boy dreams of.

The myth is harder to analyse, because all myths spring from the deep wells of a nation's being. Just as Rider Haggard, that other myth-maker converted Vikings, or Zulus partly into Englishmen, so Richards touched a chord of Englishness. All his boys, even the rotters, even Bunter, have an unquestioned belief in the virtues the English believe in. All, good or bad, play their part in the triumph of those virtues. That triumph is likely to be attained by violence, for all myths are violent. And violence, sublimated, lightened by humour, is the core of the Richards' myth and the mainspring of the half-boys who people it.

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# NEWS OF THE CLUBS

## MIDLAND

By the kind invitation of Mrs. Hamilton Wright our Christmas Party meeting was held at her home in Sutton Coldfield. We had a most enjoyable evening.

A pleasant feature this time was being able to meet the Wrights' two charming daughters. Now old enough to stay up with us, we appreciated their efficient and untiring ministrations as waitresses.

The comestibles were simply delicious, and attractively served, but what perhaps most took the writer's fancy were those superbly jammy jam tarts.

It was very pleasant renewing our acquaintance with Mr. and Mrs. Wood, whom we had first met last year. Then we met also the daughters of the house. A pity that Mr. Brian Wright could not join us until fairly late in the evening.

Also we were very interested to see that very impressive model railway layout. This was much admired, and like a collection of old boys' books, or a stamp collection, it is the kind of thing that gives continuous pleasure, but is never really completed.

It was pleasing also to see that our charming hostess had displayed again that very fine scroll which had been so beautifully drawn by Winifred Partridge for last year's meeting, and which after signature by all present, had then been presented to Mrs. Wright.

Our very grateful thanks were expressed to the Wrights for a most memorable and happy evening, and a bouquet of flowers was presented to Mrs. Wright by Ivan Webster.

Our new member, Mr. Wareing of Codsall, had brought along a friend, Mr. C. Rollins. We look forward to seeing both these gentlemen again at future meetings.

The anniversary number tonight was Magnet 1348, dated 16th December 1933, and so just 36 years old. The collectors' item was that very attractive new Wernham publication containing "The Boy Without A Name" and "Rivals and Chums."

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NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 10th January 1970

We were lucky the fog lifted enough in the evening for eleven members to find their way to the Meeting. The Library was set out, and there was the distribution of the "Bunter Court Series," and the double issue of "Boy Without A Name" and "Rivals and Chums." A very happy start to the New Year for collectors.

After the formal business, a discussion followed on various topics. A "Yorkshire Post" cutting was passed round showing Frederick Cockroft of Keighley with another hobby of his - a beautiful, intricate tapestry he had made. Although unable to be with us just yet, Gerry Allison was present in spirit and had sent two items for our programme. We now had the first which was a "Hidden Name" contest. Fifteen sentences had a School character in each and the result revealed Ron Rhodes with all correct. Geoffrey Wilde was second with 14.

The second instalment of our three-part "Battle of the Beaks" story had been written by Harry Barlow, and Geoffrey Good read this to us with great effect. Humour in authentic vein (Mr. Prout falling into a stream when trying to escort "Soapy" Sanders to Greyfriars) and a tense, personal problem for Mr. Quelch concerning his sister, held our closest attention. Hearty applause for writer and reader was given.

Refreshments were enjoyed and then Jack Allison conducted Gerry's other item which was a Crossword. Two teams were formed and one had the Down clues and the other the Across clues. All the answers related to the hobby and the finish was a near win for the "Downs" who had 45 letters on the board, against 41 for the "Acrosses."

This concluded the meeting and our happy fellowship dispersed for a five-week interval. Next meeting, 14th February 1970, Saturday.

M. L. ALLISON

L O N D O N

The first meeting of 1970 was held at the home of Betty and Bob Acraman. It was most successful, and two new members, Mary Cadogan and Gordon Wright, enjoyed themselves. Tom Porter made his long journey and was rewarded by easily winning Roger Jenkin's tape-recording

competition covering various Magnet series. As the chairman remarked, Tom was an easy away winner.

Len Packman provided a humorous reading about Sweeney Todd, taken from "Boys Will Be Boys." A further reading by Len from Newsletter 19, circa 1954, was enjoyed by the gathering.

Charlie Wright conducted a quiz, won by Bill Hubbard. Josie Packman provided another quiz, this time on Sexton Blake. Ray Hopkins was the winner. Brian Doyle gave a reading from "The Captain."

A fine spread was provided by Bob and Betty Acraman. Time passed all too quickly, and with the parish church ringing call over, treating us to some campanology, it was homeward bound for us all. Next meeting at 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London S.E.22. Hosts Len and Josie Packman. Date - Sunday, 15th February. Phone Townley 2844.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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JACK HUGHES, 160 CHARTERS TOWERS ROAD, HERMIT PARK,  
TOWNSVILLE, N. QUEENSLAND

WANTS TO BUY

ANNUALS TIGER TIM 1923, 1926, 1928, 1929

PLAYBOX 1901, 1910, 1911, 1916-20, 1924-28, 1934, 1936.

PUCK any before 1923, also 1924, 1925, 1927, 1928.

BUBBLES, any before 1930, also 1936-39.

CRACKERS, any before 1933, also 1936, 1938, 1939.

Also MAGNETS 1200-01, 1205, 1209, 1210, 1213-14, 1216, 1218,  
1230, 1277, 1283 and 1385

GEMS, 1158-60, 1164, 1179-80, 1188, 1216, 1277.

MONSTERS 1, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18.

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WANTED: Complete catalogue of Magnet Library titles.

Write: MR. F. R. LOWE, 103 ST. ALBAN'S ROAD, DERBY  
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FOR SALE: S.B.L. (1928) "Doctor Who wouldn't tell" - excellent copy, 10/- . B.F.L. (1915) "Land of Peril" - good copy, 4/- (J.G. & P.)

Postage extra. Write ERIC FAYNE with s.a.e.

# The Post man Called

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

M. KUTNER (Clapton): For my part, I have a sneaking affection for J. N. Pentelow. During my purple period of 1917 to 1921 inclusive, he wrote a fair proportion of Magnets and Gems, plus the Greyfriars and St. Jim's Galleries. Blessed as I was with the simple love and appreciation of school stories, from whatever source, I enjoyed his tales then, and enjoy them now without regard to literary standards. It's as simple as that! Despite the fact that Pentelow did a great deal of work as editor, author and Jack of all trades for, and on behalf of, the Magnet and Gem, in war-time conditions, and kept their flags flying under difficult circumstances and shortages, he is often regarded as the villain of the piece by some devout Hamiltonians. However, I shall not raise the banner of protest "UNFAIR TO J.N.P." because Collectors' Digest fails to contain a monthly "Pentelow's Corner," because I am in the minority, and the Editor has enough to contend with.

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton-on-Trent): I've wanted for a long time to read "Staunch Chums at St. Jim's," but saw no hope of ever being able to do so. Jack Blake has always been my favourite character at St. Jim's, and if I am in the minority, it's just too bad: but there it is! One character who has never changed seems to be Percy Mellish. The cads have always included him - Gore and Mellish, Lumley - Lumley and Mellish, Levison and Mellish, Racke, Crooke and Mellish - good old Percy still went sailing merrily on, and I don't think he ever showed a good point.

## SNIPPETS FROM THE LETTER BAG

W. SETFORD (Derby): My favourite features are Danny's Diary, Let's Be Controversial, and Do You Remember? I wish you would stop printing reviews of the present Sexton Blake books, because I don't think many Blake fans in the hobby are interested in the new stories.

F. R. LOWE (Derby): No need for any changes in C.D. It's a grand little paper as it is. J. HUNTER (York): Have just read "The Hidden

Horror" again after 57 years. I did not get the thrill I enjoyed 57 years ago. T. W. WALKER (Widnes): The 1969 Annual was magnificent. I enjoyed it very much indeed.

(Grateful thanks to scores of readers who have written with unstinted praise for the 1969 Annual. They have warmed my heart. - ED.)

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## I REMEMBER PETE

by W. T. Thurbon

I was interested in Mr. Wadham's article about Jack, Sam and Pete in the December Digest.

Clark Hook was already an established writer of boys' tales when he wrote his first Jack, Sam and Pete tale in No. 385 of the Halfpenny Marvel, c. 1901. These early stories were crude and powerful, but rather blood-and-thunderish, and they were toned down when they were (nearly all) repeated in the Penny Popular in 1912. It is interesting to compare them.

Clark Hook wrote a J.S.P. tale in No. 1 of the 1d. Marvel (30/1/04). He wrote odd stories up to No. 20. From then on he wrote regularly in the Marvel until late 1920. Towards the end of the period odd tales of Ferres Lord and Ching Ling, and of Calcroft School were interspersed. The last regular series of J. S. & P. tales began with No. 878 "Pete's Football Club" and began a series of J. S. & P. touring a football team.

Clark Hook, of course, was at his best in adventure stories, but the settings that had been adequate for the 1890's and early 1900's were already dated before the 1914 War. Clark Hook alternated the adventure stories with stories set in England, and in later times with a lot of knock-about farce.

Some of the early J. S. & P.'s were very good. The Steam Man, the Balloon, the Submarine, and the first aeroplane series were really superb - interspersed with the early ones were two "tours of Britain" series when J. S. & P. visited industrial England. This was an old device to boost circulation but generally they were very poor tales.

Clark Hook repeated himself as time went by and also found it difficult to up-date his adventure settings.

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I always think (and I believe John Medcroft was of the same opinion) that the real decline of the J. S. & P. tales began with the introduction of Algy in No. 393, c. 1911. This led to the playing up of Pete and Algy at the expense of Jack and Sam and to a great increase in the farcial stories at the expense of the adventure stories.

After 1918 the stories were becoming dated and Clark Hook must have been "written out" of ideas. The final blow was the death of J. Abney Cummings who had illustrated the series from No. 20 of the 1d. Marvels until his death in 1917. Lewis, who succeeded him, was not a patch on Cummings and his "Pete" always reminded me of the old Michelin tyre advertisement.

The Tom Sayers stories began in No. 261, January 1909, and ended in 1918. They began with Tom Sayers as a boy and for quite a while were both boxing and theatrical tales. They later became purely boxing tales. During the early part of the War they were boxing and flying stories. They ended with a series of Tom Sayer on sick leave from the army, touring with a boxing booth.

My collection of Marvels is of earlier numbers and I cannot now recall exactly when the Marvel takeover took place - I think in 1921 or 1922. I remember some of the Mapleton Rover tales.

Jack, Sam and Pete were for many years my favourite characters, as a boy, and I still have a very nostalgic regard for them, even though I realise now what a slapdash author Clark Hook was.

I believe that in the late 1920's or very early 1930's, someone tried to revive J. S. & P. tales in the Boys' Realm. There was a serial introducing Tom Sayers in the 1914 Boys' Realm.

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## THE JACK, SAM & PETE LIBRARY

by O. W. Wadham

There can be no doubt that the year 1905 was a peak period for that unusual trio, Jack, Sam and Pete, the once popular S. Clark Hook creations. In that year the first number of "Jack, Sam and Pete Library" appeared. It was published in September 1905 and was boosted on every page of the Marvel during that month and it was called "Jack, Sam and Pete's Adventures in Africa." A second number was also promised, but no title was given. Does anyone know how many issues of the little-known library were printed? At that time the trio were also appearing every week in the Boys' Friend and, of course, had pride of place in the green-covered Marvel. Before the event of Greyfriars and St. Jiv's it would appear that Jack, Sam and Pete were the most popular characters in boys' weekly papers. The event of the Magnet and Gem in 1909 must have taken away many readers but the trio still had more than a decade to go before the Marvel rang down the curtain and introduced "new blood" that certainly lacked the lustre of the Hook combination.