

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOLUME 2

MAY 1972

NUMBER 305



Grandstand Review

15p

This clever sketch comes from an enthusiast in the States —
Mr. Frank McSavage who lives in California.

"FOR SALE and WANTED ALWAYS: Old Boys (and Girls) publications, seventeenth century to mid-1950's. In stock now Youth's Instructor (1823), Boys Own Reader (1860's), Young Ladies Journal (1868), Ally Sloper's Half Holiday (1880's), Comic Cuts (1890's), Snapshots (1890's), Funny Folks (1870's), Chums (1900's, 1930's), Scout (1900's, 1918-1921), Young England (1900's to 1930's), Wizard, Rover, Champion, Hotspur, Adventure (pre-war, wartime, and post-war), Nelson Lee (late 1920's), Modern Boy (1930's), BOP (1950's), Meccano Magazine (wartime, and late 1940's), Modern Wonder (late 1930's), Children's Newspaper (1930's), Film Fun, Radio Fun, Beano, Dandy, Knockout, Chips, Wonder, Comic Cuts, Mickey Mouse Weekly (late 1940's and early 1950's), Sexton Blake (late 1940's and 1950's), Eagle (1950's), American comic sections (late 1940's), Ellery Queens (1950's). Also few extremely rare seventeenth century newspapers - London Gazettes for the 1680's and 1690's.

E. JONES

43 DUNDONALD ROAD

COLWYN BAY

DENBS.

Phone 0492-31195"

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 26

No. 305

MAY 1972

Price 15p



HORATIO BOTTOMLEY

So very often Danny, in the extracts from his Diary which we publish, brings to the fore some name or event which has long, long been dormant in the background of public memory. Some event which happened side by side with something memorable in connection with the old papers.

It hardly seems possible that it is exactly 50 years since the Rogue Rackstraw kidnapping series featured in the Gem, and Danny reminds us that, in the same month, May 1922, Horatio Bottomley's career crashed and he was sentenced to prison for seven years. I recall that my mother was sad and indignant. Her argument was that Bottomley may have been a bit of a scamp, but that nobody else was ever given the maximum sentence possible.

When I was a child, the periodical "John Bull" regularly came into my home, and the comments of the editor were followed avidly.

Bottomley had founded "John Bull" in 1906. He took his idea to a firm of printers named Odham's Press. Agreement was reached that Odham's would print "John Bull" and that Bottomley should be "editor for

life." In fact, he was editor until late 1921, when he was in deep waters and the crash was inevitable, and Odham's paid him £25,000 to get out. After Bottomley left "John Bull," the circulation fell from a weekly two millions to 300,000.

In 1912, Bottomley commenced the long series of competitions for which "John Bull" was famous. The most popular of them all was "Bullets," and it ran for many years. Later, this contest was joined by another in which very big prizes were offered for forecasting the results of 20 football matches, a pioneer of the idea on which today's pools are based.

I recall my mother regularly doing "Bullets." She was very clever at it, too, though she never won more than a handful of very small prizes. Her idea, of course, was that a big money prize would be a god-send for the family, but I am certain that she greatly enjoyed composing her witty and clever entries. With each "Bullet" entered, a competitor had to send a sixpenny postal-order. Whether the large prizes were always paid is uncertain. A periodical named "Truth" affirmed that they were not.

In 1915, the House of Northcliffe launched their "Sunday Pictorial," and Bottomley was invited to write an article for it every week. He was paid an average of £7,500 a year for this. Actually he wrote very few of them himself. Most of them were "ghosted" by other writers.

Early in 1921, Bottomley decided to start his own "Sunday Illustrated," and so gave up his work for the Pictorial. But "Sunday Illustrated" was a failure.

"John Bull," in Bottomley's day, was the biggest muck-raking journal that this country ever had. It had a great nuisance-value - for the editor. Many people and firms were ready to pay large sums to keep their names out of its pages, and those sums went into Bottomley's pockets. Yet, basically, he was a kind man. I have known many people who "wrote to John Bull about it" - and the result was the righting of wrongs. And plenty of frauds were exposed in its columns.

It is ironical that Bottomley swindled the poor, yet the poor were always his most ardent supporters. Ramsay Macdonald, Britain's first Labour prime minister, wrote that Bottomley was the biggest rogue this country ever knew. In his time, Bottomley published, in "John Bull,"

bitter attacks against Macdonald.

Bottomley served just over 5 years of his sentence. After he left prison, he started a new weekly "John Blunt," with a costly flourish of advertising. It was to be the "John Bull" of his time, all over again. It failed because it was old-fashioned. The public of the late twenties was less gullible than that of 1906-1921. It was eventually announced that the paper would appear monthly until a giant new printing-plant was built to accommodate its enormous circulation. Only one monthly edition appeared.

To launch "John Blunt," Bottomley's catch-phrase, plastered on thousands of hoardings, was "I HAVE PAID, BUT ---." I recall hearing a music-hall artist (I think it was Tommy Trinder) saying, on the stage, "I HAVE PAID, BUT --," and adding, with an ingenuous inflection of voice, "NOT EVERYBODY."

By 1930, Bottomley was no longer the great orator and journalist, the darling of the poor. Too many saw him as a man with a slightly absurd figure and a slightly absurd name.

Yet he must have had enormous personality in his heyday. I have often been surprised that one never sees in C.D. any advertisement for a copy or two of Bottomley's "John Bull." True, it was not a paper for boys but he certainly played a big part in the Britain of the first two decades of this century, and his fall was high drama.

THE LETTERS OF FRANK RICHARDS

Between 1940 and 1961 Charles Hamilton wrote many hundreds of letters to his fans. Most of these letters must be still in existence. One of our New York readers, Mr. James Iraldi, has suggested that we should publish a selection of these letters, and I think it rather a good idea.

Mr. Iraldi has about a score of these letters, which he is lending to me. I also have plenty, myself. If any reader has Hamilton letters and is willing to lend them to me for a while, I will arrange to publish a representative selection of them in booklet form in a few months' time. The letters will all be returned to their various owners.

If you think it a good idea, and will lend me your letters, please let me know - and send them along to Excelsior House.

SURELY NOT!

This week I had a letter from the States (not Mr. Iraldi's!) and the envelope was marked "THIRD CLASS MAIL." A real shock, for our planners love to abolish English traditions under the assumption that anything American or European must be better. It looks as though we, too, may be due for a third-class mail. Though it is hard to think that our Second Class post could possibly be more Third Class than it is already.

THE EDITOR

OBITUARIES

We regret to announce the death of Mrs. Harry Dowler at the age of 81. Mrs. Dowler was known to many club members who visited Mr. Dowler at his home. Our deepest sympathy goes to our old friend, Harry, in his great loss. He and Mrs. Dowler had been married 52 years.

We are also sad to report the death of George Sellars of Sheffield. George, who worked in the steel industry all his life, was a man of deep faith, and he had an unflinching love for the old papers. He was 70.

XX

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing one or more of the following: GEMS 817, 826, 828, 832. BOYS' FRIENDS issues between Nos. 1182 and 1256 (inclusive). Good copies essential.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, CROOKHAM RD., CROOKHAM, HAMPSHIRE.

XX

FOR SALE: HAMILTON S.O.L.'s 53, 108, 166, 245, 253, 257, 278, 283, 295, 298, 299, 301, 304, 322, 337, 340, 347, 362, 376, 379, 382, 385, 388, 392, 394, 397, 400, 403, 407, 45p each. Post free on 3 or more. Also 4 or 5 Bound Volumes of Gems covering approx. 1300-1663.

MR. C. L. LETTEY, 27 HEATHER CLOSE, KINGSWOOD, BRISTOL.

XX

I would like to thank all my friends and customers for their kind support during my stay in hospital and regret any inconvenience caused.

Every effort will be made to resume normal trading as soon as possible. It is anticipated that by the time this goes to press, I shall be out and about.

NORMAN SHAW,

84 BELVEDERE RD., UPPER NORWOOD, LONDON, SE19 2HZ.

DANNY'S DIARY

MAY 1922

Rookwood has been very good indeed this month in the Boys' Friend, even though the first three stories were about the new boy, Gunner, who is really the Grundy of Rookwood.

In "Gunner Gets Going," he prepares a horrible concoction of ink and soot and treacle, intending it for Bulkeley, but, in the end, Gunner gets it himself. Very amusing indeed was "Gunner's Great Catch" in which he tried to trap Jimmy Silver in a box-room, but unfortunately trapped Mr. Greely instead. Mr. Greely is a good character, not unlike Mr. Prout. Then, in "The Rookwood Treasure," Gunner believes he has found that valuable piece of Rookwood history. He tells the Head that he, Gunner, hopes that he, Dr. Chisholm, will accept a small gift of £50,000 - from the treasure.

Finally the start of what promises to be a great series. Mornington series are always among the best of Rookwood. Jimmy has a trial cricket-match, arranged before selecting the team to play St. Jim's Morny is off-colour, and is "Dropped From The Team," which is the title of the story. Oswald is chosen to play instead, and, on the evening before the game, Morny provokes a deliberate fight with Oswald. Great stuff.

It has been a very hot May, with temperatures of 88 degrees in London. A record for May.

They are giving away free gifts with all the Companion Papers, and, to mark the occasion in the Magnet we have enjoyed a series by the old writer of the stories, the real Frank Richards. In "When the Head Resigned," Dr. Locke was requested by the governors to give up his Headmastership. He is replaced as Headmaster of Greyfriars by Mr. Carnforth, who intends to rule the school with a rod of iron. He starts off by caning Coker of the Fifth.

In "The Sixth-Form Rebellion," Mr. Carnforth gets on bad terms with the whole school, but especially with the Sixth when he decides to cane Loder. Wingate supports Loder, and now the whole school is in rebellion. Next week, in "The Greyfriars Barring-Out," Mr. Carnforth has called in a number of prizefighters to help him deal with the situation

The rebels, led by Wingate, defeat the bruisers, Carnforth is turned out, and Dr. Locke returns.

I have a feeling that I ought to have enjoyed this series, but I wasn't all that keen on it. It's a bit far-fetched, and it's really too short for a barring-out series so that everything happens too quickly. But it was novel to have the Sixth in a tale like this.

Finally, "The Stolen Diary" was not really up my street. The Removites play cricket against Abbeydale, a team who play near Vernon-Smith's home. The Removites visit the Vernon-Smith home, but lose the last train home. Some of them, with Bunter, stay the night. That night, burglars break in, led by a villain named Callaghan. A valuable diary, containing particulars of Mr. Vernon-Smith's financial activities, is stolen. Somehow, Bunter gets the diary. And Callaghan threatens a fearful revenge. So it will all go on next month.

A pal of mine at school has lent me a marvellous new book, out this month, called "Just William." It contains short stories about William Brown and his family. I liked it a lot. It is written by a man named Richmal Crompton, and I hope he writes some more books about William. The book cost 2/6, and is bound in red.

There have been two big trials this month. A man named Ronald True was sentenced to death for the murder of a young woman named Olive Young, but he was reprieved by the Home Secretary on the grounds of insanity. This has caused a big outcry about the fact that True, who came from a wealthy family, was sent to Broadmoor, while Jacoby, a pantry-boy, was hanged. The papers say there is one law for the rich and another for the poor.

The other big trial was of Horatio Bottomley, until recently the editor of "John Bull" and M. P. for Hackney. He was sent to prison for seven years for fraud.

Carpentier has knocked out Kid Lewis at Olympia. Letter post has been reduced from 2d to 1½d. So now we can write more letters at less cost. The P. & O. liner "Egypt" has been in collision with a French cargo boat off Ushant, and 87 people have lost their lives.

Doug and I went to Holborn Empire one evening and we saw a lovely touring Revue entitled "Listening In," starring Herman Darewski and Will Hay. At one of our local cinemas there is a new serial, Antonio

Moreno in "The Veiled Mystery." At the pictures we have seen Evelyn Brent in "Trapped by the Mormons;" Mae Murray in "Peacock Alley" (Mae Murray plays the part of Cleo, the Dancer); W. S. Hart in "Wolf Lowry;" Betty Blythe in a lovely long film "The Queen of Sheba;" and a really great film entitled "The Mark of Zorro" with Douglas Fairbanks.

A splendid series is now running in the Gem. In "The Mystery of Tom Merry," Manners goes off with his camera, Lowther goes to the pictures, and Tom Merry goes for a spin on his bike. And during his spin an attempt is made by two ruffians to kidnap him, but Study No. 6 turns up and foils the attempt. Tom's pals don't believe that there was really any kidnaping attempt, and make fun of him in the next few days. Tom goes off in a huff - and disappears. And Kildare, going out to look for Tom, also disappears.

In "Held To Ransom," a demand is made to the Head for £500 for the release of Tom Merry. And a Mr. Brown has taken possession of the mill on the moor. Wildrake, Manners, and Lowther go out on the moor to search for Tom Merry - and Lowther disappears. The Head decides to pay the ransom money, which is placed, as ordered, in a hollow oak tree in Wayland Wood. Inspector Skeat and others keep watch - but they find that the money has been taken from the oak.

In "The Hand of the Unknown," Tom Merry is released and returns to St. Jim's. And Inspector Fix takes charge of the case, and is given accommodation in the Blue Room at St. Jim's. Wildrake, for various reasons, begins to suspect Mr. Brown, the miller. Wildrake tells his suspicions to Fix. And in the middle of the night, Inspector Fix is carried off from the Blue Room, leaving blood stains behind him.

In "Wildrake's Desperate Venture," Gordon Gay and Mr. Railton disappear. Manners, hiking round taking snapshots, takes one of the mill on the moor. A few of the miller's men are seen in the picture, and Talbot recognizes one of them as Smiley Joe, a criminal he knew long ago. So Talbot, Manners, and Tom Merry go to the mill to warn the miller that he has a criminal among his men - and find out that the miller himself is Rogue Rackstraw. But now Wildrake sets out for the mill - leaving behind a letter which is to be delivered to the Head if he, Wildrake, also disappears. The series continues.

The Derby has just been run - and won by "Captain Cuttle." →→→

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: So it is just 50 years since Richmal Crompton, out for a walk one day, was astounded to see, in a bookshop, a stiff cover edition of her William stories, which she had written for a monthly magazine. After a tussle with her publishers, she found that she had no redress - she had signed away all her rights in those early stories. However, the publishers gave her an ex-gratis payment- and Richmal Crompton became one of the few writers who remained loyal to one publisher throughout their careers. And Danny was far from being alone in thinking, in those days, that Richmal was a man's name.)

Edward Shortt was the Home Secretary behind the outcry concerning the execution of Jacoby and the sending of True to Broadmoor. Edward Shortt later became known to picturegoers, from his signature appearing on the censor's certificate at the start of every film. By that time, the case of Jacoby and True was long forgotten.)

XX

W A N T E D , BULLSEYE, FILM FUN (1930-33), SURPRISE (containing 'When Midnight Chimes'). Buy/Exchange, Magnet, Nelson Lee, Bullseye.

SUTTON, 41 SWALECLIFF AVE., MANCHESTER, M23 9DN.

XX

W A N T E D : Magnets, Gems, Populars and Hamiltonia S.O.L's.

DR. B. KELION,

69 FRIERN BARNET LANE, LONDON, N11 3LL.

XX

Grange Binders

FOR QUICK SERVICE

ALL BINDINGS

UNDERTAKEN;

SPECIALISTS

IN ANTIQUARIAN
WORK

r/o 260 HIGH STREET

NORTH MANOR PARK, E.12

- - -

(Tel: 01-552-9866)

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

WHAT WOULD YOU DO CHUMS?

There it was - yellow-backed and with the name of Sexton Blake outlined in red. "The fifth Sexton Blake Omnibus" in large black letters, the cover jacket went on to explain that the contents consisted of "Murder on the Monte" by Ross Richards and "Every man the Enemy" by W. Howard Baker. Two full length Sexton Blake novels, 256 pages and 100,000 words.

From the cover it also appears that the "Daily Mail" considers Sexton Blake to be the "Greatest detective in the World" while the "Sunday Express" not to be out-done exclaims "one of the best known Englishmen in the world."

My wife had secured this copy from the Public Library. Not

by Raymond Curé

ZENITH THE ALBINO! (SEE WITHIN.)
THE MOST AMAZING CHARACTER IN MODERN FICTION!



THE CASE OF THE FOUR STATUES

A Remarkable Tale of Mystery & Adventure: Introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, and Zenith the Albino.

No. 521

EVERY THURSDAY

JUNE 1934

that she is a Sexton Blake fan. Far from it, but she does know the name (who doesn't?), and she realises he is a great detective and has an assistant called Tinker, and if you cared to mention the name "Pedro," I think that too would ring a bell. However, she had spotted the book and promptly brought it home - a great little woman!

I really enjoyed both stories, but it was the second one that had special appeal. I think the author had a pull on me because he had set his story with a Yuletide background, and I love the festive season. I like it all, the Christmas cards, the presents I always wanted and even those I did not particularly want. The snow, plum-pudding, mince-pies, turkey, crackers. Not to mention the pantomimes and the Yuletide Church Services with their carol singers and last but not least some seasonable reading matter.

Now I am not claiming that "Every man the Enemy" by W. Howard Baker is the better story of the two, it is merely a matter of taste and this one suited my palate. A brief "quote" and you will see why the writer got me in particular.

"Eight pairs of hands rested around a roasting fire. Outside it was cold, and beginning to snow, and the wind was whistling round the gables. A great Yule log blazed in the open hearth. In the background merry music played softly. A punchbowl passed. Sparks danced their way up the chimney. Chestnuts sizzled and popped on the very edges of the fire in the hot grey ash. The eight pairs of hands stretched themselves, it was good to be here on Christmas Eve." All this and of course mystery and thrills galore. But talking of mystery - how about this?

My wife, seeing I was pleased with her "find" asked me if there was likely to be any more like it. Seeing that this copy is termed the fifth Omnibus, I informed her that there could be four more hiding in the archives of our Central Library, but where? even if they had them.

Those familiar with Public Libraries will know that you look for the book or books you want under the author's name. D for Dickens, P for Edgar Allan Poe, etc., etc. But in the case of the Omnibus, which author - Ross or Baker? I asked my wife - "Neither," she said, "I found it on the shelf marked Books returned today." We looked on the fly-leaf of the book. Yes copies of Omnibus 1 to 5 were mentioned but no mention of the authors. So how does my wife find another copy even if there is

one in the Library? By hoping there is another one some day under "Books returned today?"

I do hope the publisher remedies this in the future for the sake of Public Library friends of Sexton Blake. If they would print the authors names at the side of the numbered Omnibus life would be so much simpler. In the meantime, "What would you do Chums?" How would you track down another copy?

Perhaps my reader is wondering what sort of a reception the modern library book borrower gives to Sexton Blake. From the dates in my book 8th July, 1969 is the first entry followed by eight more loans by the end of 1969. For 1970 there are 26 dated entries. At two weeks per person it was fully booked for the year. And already for 1971 by the end of January - 4 loans. Yes sir, Sexton Blake is the greatest detective of them all and one of the best known Englishmen in the world.

* * *

AN APPRECIATION

by R. J. Godsave

When Josie Packman casually states that she is running short of Sexton Blake material she gives one a look that can only be described as devastating. Obviously, anyone who has borrowed from her library can hardly plead ignorance of Sexton Blake, Tinker, and some of the leading characters that make up the Sexton Blake Library.

Having been a borrower for some while, and enjoyed reading the Blakes from the library, I am writing this article to express my appreciation - as well as to propitiate Josie - of one Sexton Blake which I found extremely enjoyable and instructive. I refer to "The Secret of the Coconut Groves" No. 1 of the New Series, 1925. This is a wonderful tale of the Copra Industry, introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, Dr. Huxton Rymen and Mary Trent.

One of the differences between the Sexton Blake Library and the School Stories Libraries is that the reader of the former does not know where the setting of a story will be until he starts reading. The school story papers can only venture abroad during holiday periods.

"The Secret of the Coconut Groves" opens with the author's note on the subject of natural and cultured pearls. It is stated that the author

of this story lived for four years in the Malabar Coast of India, one of the most extensive coconut districts on the globe. He can vouch for the fact that a pearl of high quality can be produced by a freak of nature from a coconut. Naturally, these are few and far between, and of a consequence demand a high price.

With the detective element, the wonderful description of that part of the world, and the strange business of a Coconut Pearl makes this Sexton Blake one of the most fascinating stories I have ever read.

* * *

CERTAIN APPEARANCES
OF SEXTON BLAKE

by Cyril Rowe

In -

THE JESTER, commencing April, 1905

"Sexton Blake, Detective" by Maxwell Scott.

THE BOYS' HERALD. Commenced August, 1907

"The Coster King"

"Sexton Blake at School" by C. Hayter, 1908

"Sexton Blake in the Sixth" by C. Hayter, 1908

"Sexton Blake at Oxford" by C. Hayter, 1909.

THE BOYS' REALM No. 240, January 5th, 1907. "The Shadow" in series "Adventures of Sexton Blake. This is the last one so I presuppose that the series opened and ran in 1906 before No. 240.

THE BOYS' REALM New Series No. 1, April 5th, 1919, to No. 4, April 26th, 1919. "The Brass Disc" by C. Hayter.

BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY No. 429 (not in S. B. Cat.)

"Through Unknown Africa" by C. Hayter.

BOYS' FRIEND (WEEKLY) No. 230, November 4th, 1905, to No. 236, December 9th, 1905.

"The Schoolmaster Detective" by Herbert Maxwell.

No. 236, December 9th, 1905, to No. 251, March 31st, 1906

"Sexton Blake on the Railway"

"Sexton Blake in America" by Herbert Maxwell, from No. 252, April 7th, 1906.

"Sexton Blake in the Congo" by W. M. Graydon, 1907.

cont'd...

"Across the Equator" by W. M. Graydon, 1907.

No. 316, June 29th, 1907 to No. 330, October 5th, 1907

"Tinker's Schooldays" by C. Hayter

No. 537, September 23rd, 1911, to No. 562, March 16th, 1912.

"The Four Musketeers" by C. Hayter

No. 562, March 16th, 1912, to No. 586, August 31st, 1912.

"Figure in Black" by C. Hayter, No. 589, September 21st, 1912.

"The Clue of the Fingerprints" by C. Hayter

No. 591, October 5th, 1912.

"The Agony Column Mystery" by C. Hayter

No. 595, November 2nd, 1912.

"The Kidnapped Ambassador" by C. Hayter

No. 599, November 30th, 1912.

"Tinker's Holiday" by C. Hayter

No. 602, December 21st, 1912.

"Tinker's Boyhood" by C. Hayter

No. 607, January 25th, 1913 to

"Tinker Abroad" by C. Hayter

No.

"The Fifth at Telford" by C. Hayter

No. 648, November 8th, 1913.

"Tinker's Fig Pudding" by C. Hayter

No. 652, December 6th, 1913.

"Tinker's Tango Tea" by C. Hayter

No. 654, December 20th, 1913.

"A Waxy Affair" by C. Hayter

No. 657, January 10th, 1914.

FOR SALE: Very early Magnets, (roughish and without red covers, but Greyfriars stories complete) No. 3 (the famous story of Harry Wharton's button), No. 24 "Four on the Warpath" and No. 101 "Dandies of the Remove": £2 for the three. Also Magnets 433 and 466, without covers: £1 for the 2. Also Magnets (good copies) 1058, 1233, 1234, 1236: 70p each. Gem Christmas Double No. for 1915, without covers 75p; Gems 1490, 1491, 1492, 1497 (roughish but complete) £1.50 for the four; Blue Gem 394 (back cover missing) 65p. Gem 1657 (good copy) 37½p. 2 Plucks (1913) (very good copies) 40p the 2. Postage extra on all items.

S.a.e., first, to ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, CROOKHAM ROAD, CROOKHAM, HAMPSHIRE.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

MY MOST UNFORGETTABLE INCIDENTS

by Jim Cook

IN THE ST. FRANK'S SAGA

My memory must be a veritable storehouse for scenes and incidents connected with the history of St. Frank's. Such memorable happenings leap into my mental vision daily, just as if I had been there myself with the St. Frank's crowd.

One particular impression is more regular than others. It is the South Seas series of 1922. There can be no doubt that the tropical background to the series was influential in making such a deep affection to me living as I did at the time in the Northern hemisphere. But now that I reside in the Southern hemisphere and very much nearer to the South Seas I still get these scenes from the stories intruding into my thoughts. This is in spite of the fact that my knowledge of the South Sea Islands isn't so romantic as it was when I lived in London. But such was Brooks' power of description the series remains with me to this day as one of the finest ever to be published in the Nelson Lee Library.

I find myself equally fond of other stories. One is the Dr. Karnak series. Edwy never denied any of the Head's staff their right to teach. Obviously they were all learned gentlemen with the appropriate requirements, but while Dr. Karnak was a good Egyptologist, curator to the school museum and lecturer, he came to St. Frank's to escape members of a sect he formerly belonged to. The esoteric scenes continually remind me of another mysterious character Ezra Quirke. Quirke's spiritualism was less likely to be accepted coming from one so young and I felt a greater allegiance to Karnak because of his position, yet Ezra was a more forceful character. In fact, I get to some stage when I sympathise with him for we were not to know that as the years rolled by Quirke's characterisation was not so doubtful after all.

Somehow I felt annoyed that Browne of the Fifth should have exposed Quirke's trickery. I didn't want it exposed. For me it ridicules Shakespeare's '...more things in Heaven and Earth...' quote and I was sorry that all those mysterious happenings in the secret cellar were mere tricks. Just as they were in the Raithmere Castle episode. Perhaps

somewhere in that 'after Life' Quirke is getting full recognition from Edwy. Karnak got only what he deserved.

Perhaps, too, William K. Smith, the German American millionaire, who tried to industrialise the St. Frank's district, has been relegated to his rightful place. I am always reminded of the tour de force of this series by the remarkable description of the peculiar qualities of an industrialist turned dictator. With money no object, William K. Smith sought to build an empire on the green fields of Sussex, but another who had similar ideas in the years to follow, suffered a like fate. I can never forget the invasion of peaceful Bellton and Bannington by Smith's hordes of foreign workers while the local work force remained unemployed.

Another unforgettable series is the Sahara Series. The St. Frank's party discover a lost Roman race in the recesses of the Sahara Desert. It is governed by Titus, a tyrant Emperor, and I can always accredit this series to my newly-found interest in Roman history. If only these grand stories had been included in the curriculum at school no doubt the scholars would have been the better informed.

I don't think any evildoers portrayed today in fiction are any worse than their counterparts of the old days. If anything, they are given a slightly mellow advantage today over their old time doubles. Most of Edwy's bad-hat characters were not wholly evil-minded, but the machinations of Bernard Forrest and Claude Gore-Pearce of the St. Frank's Remove easily outstrip any other rascals that appeared in the St. Frank's saga.

It is strange that I should always think of Fullwood as he first appeared and not as he later reformed. As the proverb tells us, "first impressions are most lasting," so it is with regret that I am at variance with Brooks' volte face. I can never forget Nipper's arrival at St. Frank's and his tussle with Ralph Leslie for leadership of the Ancient House.

One series we won't be allowed to forget is the Communist story. This is so topical today that one has only to pick up a newspaper and be reminded that what happened at St. Frank's could very easily happen at other schools.

In fact a lot what happened at St. Frank's is now happening in today's schools. What with rebellion, strikes and general disagreement

with the way schools are conducted, I feel sometimes that I am reading about St. Frank's in today's press.

The El Dorado series made an indelible impression. The theme was an hackneyed one - there will always be an El Dorado for fiction lovers - but what made the series so interesting was the great build-up before the actual departure of the St. Frank's party to South America. It was beautifully done. So much of the story had its roots in the beginning of the series prior to it. Later on, Edwy was to repeat this way of intertwining two or three series into one story. This occurred in the South Seas series 1922 already mentioned. The series actually ceased when the party was rescued from the Island that was destroyed by volcanic eruption. But from the moment of rescue the series continued and we were taken to the South Pole for more adventures.

I am not unmindful of very early St. Frank's history. From No. 112 up to the Communist series No. 338 onwards, the tales were what I like to call the 'cosy' stories. They made me feel cosy when I read them. After No. 349 I began to feel that St. Frank's had emerged from boyhood to manhood and the characters had all grown up. A more serious attitude was being applied to the narrative and relevant and up-to-date plots were used.

I will never forget the Col. Clinton series. That was one of my 'cosy' stories. Snow seemed to dominate the tale each week, and reading it before a cheerful fire on a very cold afternoon with tea and toast close at hand, what could be cosier? The coming of Fatty Little is another landmark. For food, by the hamper, in Mrs. Hake's tuck-shop, in the cupboards in the study and everywhere where food may be found was mentioned thereafter. Fatty's favourite expression.. "Great Bloaters!" begs me to ask if this smoked herring is still sold?

Do you remember "Alf Huggins?" It was only a few days ago that my newspaper reported that Eton College proposes to take 12 poor boys each year. I sincerely hope they are not subjected to the treatment Alf 'uggins got when he went as a poor boy to St. Frank's.

I could easily run out of superlatives if I used them to convey the quality of this series. But sufficient to say the story will never fade from my mind.

The arrival of some new juniors never cease to interest me.

Reggie Pitt, Singleton, Farnum, Cecil DeValerie, Dick Goodwin, Solomon Levi, Browne, Buster Boots. One word could be applied to each of them that would sum up their story value. Pitt - tricky. Singleton - rich and foolish. Farnum - deep. DeValerie - introvert. Goodwin - studious. Levi - business. Browne - japes. Boots - dictator. But they all settled down and merged well with the St. Frank's cast.

I cannot ignore the latter-day series. The Feud at St. Frank's. The Cads of St. Frank's. The Bullies of St. Frank's. Then directly opposite as it were, came the Moor View girls. Brooks never devoted a whole story to these girls, but I wish he had! They were certainly worth it. They arrived when Buster Boots was throwing his weight about and they couldn't have come at a better period.

I cannot finish without mentioning the Circus Series. The Onions brothers came to the college from the circus and so did Tessa Love, but of course, she went to Moor View. When the Onions' Circus was in difficulties, it presented a chance for the St. Frank's fellows to show their talent.

After the Circus series came a rather unexpected and totally incredible series about the new, but temporary, head's wife, Mrs. Barry Stokes. The theme would make news today. I always had the feeling that Brooks wrote the "Mrs. Stokes - drug addict" for the parents of his junior readers.

The Moat Hollow series must have made many a parent think. Yes, parents did read the Nelson Lee. They probably thought the series too far-fetched. But it is on record that such schools do exist. Many an unwanted boy is sent to this type of school to be forgotten by his parents or guardians. As one reads these St. Frank's tales today one can very easily reconcile them with what is happening now.

I haven't forgotten either Archie Glenthorne or Phipps. But it would be impossible to tell of these two wonderful characters in these little tableaux. The Archies and Phipps' type of yesteryear have gone into the limbo of happy memories. They don't belong in this present age. But we can always read about them and ponder on past glories.

I have barely touched the great St. Frank's saga. It needs an historian to give a complete analysis of Brooks' creations. For example, I wanted to mention Vivian Travers, Jimmy Potts, Clive Russell, Stanley

Waldo, Timothy Tucker, and a host more, but I will let the reader find these for himself. He won't be disappointed. He can then store them all up in his memory, and spend many a delightful moment with them.

In this series, Eric Fayne recalls some of the cinemas and theatres he knew a long time ago.

THE REAR-PROJECTION CINEMAS

Rear-projection, I imagine, was used solely of necessity. It was a feature of many theatres converted into music-halls, where there was space to the rear of the stage but none to spare for an operating-box at the back of the auditorium.

With rear-projection, the picture was projected on to the back of the screen, and the audience saw the picture through the screen. The main disadvantage was that the picture was always yellowy and muddy. According to where one sat, a point of bright light would be seen in the very centre of the screen. The only advantage was the absence of the beams of light streaming across the cinema, accentuated by the smoke in the auditorium. But those rays are so characteristic of a visit to a cinema, that one missed them when they were absent.

The first time I met with rear-projection was at the Kennington Theatre. I recall suddenly realising that the familiar rays between operating box and screen were missing.

The Super Cinema at Kingston (originally the County Theatre) had rear-projection when I first knew it. In later years, they built an operating-box in the circle for orthodox projection.

The Theatre Royal at Chatham and the Theatre Royal at Portsmouth both had rear-projection. I recall seeing an early talkie starring Ruth Chatterton at the latter house.

One theatre-turned-cinema where I would have thought rear-projection would have been advantageous was the Hippodrome at Colchester, a Gaumont house, but they did not have it. This was almost certainly due to the fact that they could not spare the space on the stage where they ran live-shows at Christmas and some other occasions. (I saw one of the touring shows of "Hit the Deck" on this stage.)

But front-projection was not ideal at Colchester Hippodrome. The theatre was high but not deep. It had a thousand seats on three floors. The operating box was high in the gallery, and the projector had to be tilted at an enormous angle to aim at the screen which would be at the same angle. Patrons in the stalls obviously had a distorted view of the sharply slanted screen. Clearly it would have made for a better picture to have sited the op-box in the circle - but that would have meant sacrificing many circle seats which were much more expensive than gallery seats.

Talking of picture angles, the most remarkable was surely at the News Theatre at Waterloo Station. The projector was in the roof over the stage. It pointed directly at the screen which was almost flat on the stage. Without realising it, the audience saw the picture in a huge mirror which reflected the picture from the screen on the stage floor.

XX

MAGNETS FOR SALE. Write to -
FELDMAN, 4 BALLANTRAE HOUSE, LYNDALE, LONDON, N.W.2.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 99 — Gems 824-831 — Cardew Captain series

Howard Baker's valuable reprint of the Cardew Captain series does far more than make available once again some vintage Gem stories; it also provides an opportunity to examine in detail Charles Hamilton's style during an exceptionally fine period of the paper, when the Gem was still more important to him than the Magnet. There can be no doubt that it is in the presentation of subtle characters like Cardew that the master hand is most obvious, where delicacy of touch is absolutely essential. The Cardew Captain series is a splendid example of this type of mastery.

It will spoil no reader's pleasure to state that the series begins with Cardew being unwilling to attend football practice, and after resorting to all sorts of evasions he is eventually carried down ignominiously, whereupon he decides that if he is going to be forced to play football he might as well try for the captaincy, which he soon achieves. The way in which Cardew carries out his duties as captain forms a large part of the series in question.

The Gem series makes an interesting comparison with a post-war book, "Cardew's Catch." In both tales Cardew is perceptive, determined, unscrupulous, successful, and often irritatingly cryptic in his remarks. His effect on his fellows at St. Jim's is much the same in both stories, but the effect on the reader is quite different. The Gem series contains delightful examples of his badinage and airy mockery which cannot fail to endear him to the reader, as in Gem 824:-

"Kildare has been slanging me, and the trouble is that he's right," said Tom. "I've been slack."

"Thomas has been slack!" said Cardew, addressing space in a tone of wonder. "No wonder common mortals like little me get a little slack at times if the strenuous Thomas has been slack."

This was a vein that Charles Hamilton could never strike again in St. Jim's stories after the nineteen-twenties, and a Cardew who no longer retained his light persiflage was only a hollow shell.

Charles Hamilton at the height of his powers possessed the ability to portray old characters in a new light, in order to give the reader a further dimension in his viewpoint. He did this with both Wharton and Mr. Quelch in the Rebel series, and he did it with Tom Merry in the Cardew Captain series. For the first time in the Gem,

Tom Merry's character was subjected to critical scrutiny, and we were invited to sympathise with Cardew, to laugh with him at "The Saintly Thomas," and to censure Tom Merry for being so lofty in his refusal to canvass votes in the coming election. In short, we felt that Pride did indeed deserve a fall, and it was a traumatic experience of the kind that lifts the story to high eminence. Equally fine were Cardew's moments of generosity as when, at the end of Gem 826, he offered the captaincy back to Tom Merry, and in Gem 831 when a whimsical impulse at the very end of the series aptly provided the title "Just Like Cardew."

The post-war stories are seldom less than workmanlike and competent in their construction, but their style is merely dead ashes when compared with the fine series in the heyday of the Magnet and Gem.

.....

A VIEW FROM OVER THE POND

J. RANDOLPH COX (U.S.A.): You make some excellent points in your reply to Mr. Matthews in "Let's Be Controversial." I think if one goes back through the issues of C.D. and makes a count of the Hamilton vs. Substitute Writer material one could hardly maintain the opinion that there is too much of one over the other. An odd quirk in human nature or thinking (or something) is that there seems to be an impression that Hamilton is mentioned exclusively. Perhaps we are so much more interested in him that we think "Hamilton" whenever his creations are mentioned, and our minds conveniently forget the rest. Perhaps this is the reason (or some of it) for all those newspaper articles about Bunter constantly using the phrases "Yaroooh" and "Glurg" (and other comic book expressions) when on a word-count I would imagine the words he uses the most are really "Beast!" and "I say, you fellows. . ." But to concentrate on those as representative of a Greyfriars story is to miss 99% of the idea. It is a consistent lapse like this that (coupled with others one might mention) gives one the impression that journalists are the most inaccurate of writers. It may not really be true, but it seems true.



LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 170. THE TWILIGHT YEARS.

Last month a contributor appealed for more attention to be given to the stories by substitute writers, and I pointed out that, many a time and oft, we have analysed sub tales.

I must admit that our attention has mainly been centred on the period when substitute tales seemed to matter - that is, the time of Pentelow and Samways. We have never taken a great deal of interest in the period which, in my history of the Gem, I called the Twilight Years. This was the period from early 1928 till mid-1931, when St. Jim's was almost wholly in the hands of substitute writers with Francis Warwick as the most influential of them all. I have observed before that this gentleman abandoned traditions.

It is perhaps not so surprising that these few years of Gem history have been given scant attention, for they contained nothing really noteworthy. Nothing good; nothing outstandingly bad. Just mediocre stuff which, I would think, slowly but surely whittled away the Gem's circulation.

Warwick was the main writer of the period. He set down Spalding Hall, a girls' school, near St. Jim's, and sent Cousin Ethel there as a resident pupil. Most revolutionary of all, he introduced an American boy, Cyrus Handcock, and put him in No. 10 study in the Shell, writing thereafter of Tom Merry, Lowther, Manners, and Handcock, the chums of Study No. 10. Surely no old-stager of the Gem could ever stand reading of these stupid innovations.

He wrote of Morton, the Captain of the Grammar School. Any old reader of the Gem could have told him that Delamere was the Grammar School captain - but clearly Warwick had only read a handful of Gem stories before he took the helm at St. Jim's. Finally, he retired Mr. Linton, and replaced him with Mr. Pilbeam. Handcock of the Shell frequently ejaculated "Great Bohunkus!", but Mr. Pilbeam was typical of school fiction in that he constantly said "Bless my soul!"

In a way, it must have been an odd period for Gem readers. The other sub writers of those later years do not seem to have used Handcock and certainly Charles Hamilton, who wrote about eight tales for the Gem in 1930-31, did not. But Handcock played a biggish part in the last

substitute St. Jim's tale "Skimpole's Musical Spasm" which, according to Mr. Lofts' lists, was written by a man named Catchpole.

Warwick was, I think, not a bad writer, though he lost all sympathy by tinkering with traditions. He was a "chunky" writer - by which I mean that he often divided his chapters into sub-sections. He also included a number of far-fetched and utterly unbelievable adventure stories which were out of place in the Gem.

He did not wallow in sentiment and soliloquy as was the failing of Samways and Pentelow, but his tales lacked warmth. Like all the sub writers, he had the weakness of introducing masses of new characters. He joined with Samways and Pentelow in trying to make a few of these new characters permanent.

Last month Mr. Matthews referred to a story entitled "Won By A Foul," which he described as "so good that it could easily have been written by Charles Hamilton." I have looked it up and read it, possibly for the first time. It may not be a bad yarn of its type, though it founders on its contrivances, and, in my view, is quite un-Hamiltonian. As I have said before, Hamilton himself often used contrivance. How the contrivance was handled decided whether the tale rang the bell.

A brief outline of the plot. Lord Eastwood, enthusiastic over a football match which he watched between St. Jim's and the Grammar School, offers a silver cup for the winners of a repeat fixture to be played in a fortnight's time. (It is at least unusual for anybody to offer a valuable trophy to be awarded on the result of one game.)

Derrington is a rather unpleasant new boy at the Grammar School. (The only reason for introducing a new boy is his expendability as expulsion fodder in due course.)

The cup match takes place, Derrington playing for the Grammar School. Derrington kicks the winning goal, but Herries, a spectator on the touchline, claims that Fatty Wynn, the goalie, was tripped by Derrington. The ref and the linesmen did not see the foul. Only Herries and Fatty Wynn make such a claim, and, later, Talbot "the big Shell fellow," supports them in a loud voice.

So the mood of the St. Jim's team changes, and when the cup is presented to Gordon Gay, Tom Merry & Co. hiss.

Grundy feels that the cup has been stolen from St. Jim's. At two

o'clock in the morning he slides down from his dormitory on a rope. With surprising ease he manages to break into the Grammar School. In the Common Room, where the cup had been placed on view, Grundy discovers that the trophy has been removed. Then he sees a dark, masked figure. Something hits Grundy on the head with a sickening thud, and he is unconscious for a while. Then he returns to St. Jim's.

Grundy's cap is found in the Grammar School Common Room, and it is assumed that he has stolen the trophy. Grundy is expelled from St. Jim's.

In the final chapter, as is characteristic of Warwick, events crowd fast on one another with speedy "chunkiness." Manners rushes into Study No. 10 in great excitement. At the football match he had dropped his camera. As it fell, the shutter clicked. Manners finds that it took a picture, all on its own, of Derrington fouling Fatty Wynn. Proof that the ref's decision was wrong. Tom Merry & Co. rush with this lucky proof to the Grammar School. Gordon Gay is, of course, remorseful. The match must be played again. Tom Merry & Co. (with Handcock speeding home through the dusk, on their bicycles, run into two dark figures. These figures are Derrington handing the stolen trophy to a receiver of stolen goods.

Derrington goes the way of all expulsion fodder, the match is played again, and this time St. Jim's wins. I should think the victory left a bitter taste.

A tale, perhaps, that got by, but it is weakened by the contrivances. It is incredible that sportsmen like Tom Merry & Co. would have disputed the ref's decision. Surely the players on the field would have seen something of the foul if it took place, but it is a spectator, Herries, who makes a song and dance about it. And the closing bit about Manners' camera is really very, very childish.

I wonder whether any writer, even Hamilton himself, could have made this rather incredible plot seem credible.

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

ROGER JENKINS: I should like to take issue with you on the question of the relationship between Hamilton and Pentelow, because I am quite sure that there was a mutual animosity which went very deep. Although

the story of Pentelow's ultimatum to Hamilton is, as I admitted, only hearsay, there is also a certain amount of written evidence which we should do well to examine. In chapter 6 of the Autobiography where the editors are mentioned, Charles Hamilton says, "With J. N. P. the stopgap, there was real worry." In a letter he was much more forthright; he stated his real feelings without inhibition. I quote a section so that the flavour of the letter can be clearly appreciated:

"This man took advantage of his position as editor to push me out into the cold. That was theft. In order to make his thefts effective he put my name instead of his own on what he wrote. That was forgery. By palming off the stuff on the public, deluding them into the belief that it was written by me, he was guilty of swindling.

"I am well aware that we live now in times of great laxity, and that many things that would have shocked us old fellows in Victoria's reign, now pass almost unrebuked. But even in these days we have not yet reached the point of condoning such things as theft, forgery, and swindling.

"I should very much prefer that all these rascalities of the past be buried in oblivion. But if they must be mentioned, surely it should be with serious condemnation, not lightly as if such offences were all in the day's work."

To my mind, this goes far beyond the blanket disapproval of all substitute writers, and the opening sentence of the quotation certainly lends support to the hearsay story which I referred to in the March issue.

W. O. G. LOFTS: The Magnet editor C. M. Down was of the opinion that G. R. Samways was the best substitute writer of the Magnet, and Stanley Austin that of the Gem. Pentelow was of course a far better writer. Francis Warwick told me that he had never read the Gem when a boy - and would have much preferred to write of Greyfriars, but there was no market in this field when he started writing them. Twyman and Ross Shepherd never read the Companion papers when boys, and both confessed to me, that they had no real intimate knowledge of the characters. Twy was always honest to acknowledge that his stories were 'duds.' W. Pike the last editor of the Boys' Friend summed up his single story 736, Billy Bunter Film Star, with the words 'Blooming awful wasn't it.'

GRAHAM BRUTON: The London Hamilton Library contains the following sub stories: Gems 98, 575, 580, 583, 584. Magnets 291, 417, 841.

The Postman Called

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

GEOFFREY WILDE (Leeds): Space will not permit me to deal adequately with the issues raised by Mr. Thurbon in your current issue; perhaps you will allow me a brief reply.

I quite take his point about the dangers of over-enthusiasm, but I assure him that I would personally consider it singularly pointless to attribute any quality to a writer unless I genuinely believed him to possess it.

Though I am not in the least over-awed by it, I did know that Mrs. Margery Fisher was the author of a book on children's reading, an area in which Mr. Thurbon tells me she is a leading expert, whatever that means. (I do wish we could be rid of that misleading word; but that, I can see, will require an article to itself some time.) I will acknowledge anyone who has command of a wealth of factual information as an authority on his subject. That does not mean I need treat his personal preferences as holy writ. Information and evaluation, though connected, are two different things.

While I may not always share his views, I will respect as a good judge of literature anyone who is, in general, a person of some culture and widely-read enough to have a broad base for comparison, and is, in particular, thoroughly conversant with his brief when passing comment on specific works or their authors. Now Mrs. Fisher may qualify on the first two counts, but in dealing with Hamilton she fails grievously on the third. She quotes one short passage describing Bunter eating, and then dismisses the author out of hand. I daresay I should do the same were that all the Hamilton I had read. Though there are some 30 million words of Greyfriars fiction to go at, Mrs. Fisher simply hasn't given sufficient study to a sufficient sample.

It is this unscholarly approach to Hamilton's work, among other straws in the wind, that led me to suspect her (and I did no more than voice the suspicion) of snobbery. I certainly don't level such a charge at

anyone simply for not liking Hamilton. Finally, Mr. Thurbon argues that the criticism of Hamilton is justified because it is based on the standard set by the "very fine writers of today." I don't accept the implication. But that again is a matter which can only be dealt with by a debate conducted at some length.

EDITORIAL COMMENT: Would Charles Hamilton ever have featured at all in such works as Mrs. Fisher's but for the fact that circumstances transferred his stories to stiff-covered, royalty-paying books in the last decade of his life? Yet those stiff covers were only a smallish fraction of his giant writing career.)

PETER HANGER (Northampton): One of the chief arguments used to perpetuate the myth that the Magnet declined is that series, instead of being one big serial - became a collection of complete stories.

I have always argued that this can have no relevance as far as quality is concerned, it being solely a matter of personal preference. So it is specially pleasing to see it acknowledged in the C.D. that the Caffyn series, although a collection of complete stories, nevertheless have considerable merit.

JAMES IRALDI (New York): Like hundreds of other ravenous readers of C.D. I've long wanted to drop you a line, commending you for the superb job you do each month, year after year on our pet publication, but laziness has always intervened - and now that I'm encroaching on my 65th year that ailment has increased (like wine) with age.

So please accept an old reader's most sincerest congratulations AND thanks for everything you have contributed to our HOBBY - and that's plenty.

BERNARD PRIME (Sanderstead): With regard to John Finnemore, I also have a volume about Teddy Lester at a school named Slapton. Rugby was played instead of the usual soccer. Years ago I received a school prize, a hard cover book entitled "Peeps at Many Lands" by John Finnemore. I think this must have been another writer with the same name. Anybody know?

LEONARD M. ALLEN (Bournemouth): Re P. G. Wodehouse and Tales of Wrykyn; these appeared in The Captain Vol. 13 (1905) and consisted of six short stories. The following volume (1905/6) contained his serial story of the same school - The White Feather. The last Wodehouse serial in The Captain was The Eighteen Carat Kid in Vol. 28 (1912). This was

later republished by Methuen, adding a love interest, under the title - The Little Nugget.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

A splendid rally of 10 made our first meeting for 1972 a great success. Mr. and Mrs. Harry Matthews were welcomed, from Adelaide, and it was a pleasure to have with us Mrs. Ron Brockman and Stanley Nicholls. Our secretary, Bette Pate, graciously threw open her comfortable home, and gave a lot of time to provide the generous buffet dinner for her appreciative guests.

Several book items were exchanged, and Ron was lucky enough to secure the last Magnet, and, at the other end of the scale, No. 30 of the B. F. L. The Howard Baker books were discussed and praised.

I have noticed at recent club meetings that the scope of topics discussed has widened. Names like de Vere Stacpoole and Le Quex left me floundering in ignorance.

Mrs. Matthews, a keen Saint reader, was presented with a copy of Bill Lofts' biography of Leslie Charteris as a memento of her visit to our club.

SYD SMYTH

- - -

CAMBRIDGE

Members met a century to the day to mark the birthdate of John Nix Pentelow, who was born about 15 miles from Cambridge. Mrs. Danny Posner (hostess), Mrs. Harold Forecast and Mrs. Vic Hearn were also present.

Danny Posner (chairman) said he expected the booklet, containing a reprint of Pentelow's best-known story, "A Very Gallant Gentleman," to be available shortly. Future projects could include a study of G. A. Henty, the celebrated boys' writer, who was born only a few miles from Cambridge. Jack Overhill, who lives at Trumpington, has already searched the church records for details of Henty, but to no avail. Also,

it is probably not widely realised that the Brock brothers, superb children's book illustrators that they were, lived in Cambridge, and a Profile of H. B.'s widow, Mrs. Doris Brock, appeared in the "Cambridge Evening News" two or three years ago.

Since the meeting a full-length Profile of Mr. Posner has appeared in the "News," written by club member Deryck Harvey, a staff feature-writer on the newspaper. "Many women claim," the article read, "that all men are boys at heart, and if Mrs. Ollie Posner, the ever-cheerful, uncomplaining hostess to Cambridge Old Boys' Book Club, occasionally wears a benign, knowing smile these days, she may certainly be forgiven."

Bill Thurbon (secretary) has contributed several invaluable items to the club's Allison Library, from vintage story-papers to a copy of Frank Richards' "Cardew's Catch," bought for only about 5p at Cambridge market place.

Mike Butterworth of Wickhambrook, near Newmarket (15 miles from Cambridge), a former managing editor at Fleetway, will address the club at their May meeting. Mr. Butterworth now writes the text for the Trigon Empire, in "Look and Learn," the serial having started in a paper called "The Ranger." He is already working on a Trigon Empire annual to appear at the end of 1973:

- - -

NORTHERN

Meeting held on 8th April, 1972.

As Chairman Geoffrey Wilde was unable to be with us until later, the Annual General Meeting was preceded by a game devised and organized by Jack Allison: 'Who wrote what?' Two sets of cards were displayed in various places, each card of one set giving a clue to a particular work for which there was a card in the other set indicating the author or composer.

Keith Balmforth came top, Elsie Taylor next, and June Arden third.

Geoffrey Wilde was re-elected Chairman and Mollie Allison Treasurer/Librarian. The office of Secretary was to remain open until a later meeting.

We seemed to have caught something of the Midland Club's enthusiasm over the Pentelow Centenary and a number of orders were placed for the booklet.

An amount of enthusiasm greeted a suggestion that we might pay a visit to a public school of the north. Various schools were mentioned, including Sedburgh, Ampleforth and St. Peter, York.

Slightly less enthusiasm greeted the suggestion that we form a cricket team to play the school, though certain members were undoubtedly keen.

Present at the meeting were: Jack Allison, Keith Balmforth, Harry Barlow, John Cox, Tom Roach, Bill Williamson, Geoffrey Wilde, Geoffrey Good, Mollie Allison, June Arden, Myra Allison, Elsie Taylor and Annie Allison (13).

At our next meeting (Saturday, 13th May) J. Breeze Bentley is to give a talk on Rookwood.

- - -

MIDLAND

Meeting held on 28th March, 1972.

Attendance was up to eight.

Tom Porter, apart from presenting his customary Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item, gave a spirited reading from the Bunter Court Series, which was much enjoyed by all (there is something about a schoolmaster's reading capability which commands attention, and when it's a Headmaster, well you just can't afford to let your attention wander, even if you wanted to, can you?).

The next item was a tape by George Chatham entitled "Nostalgic Moments in Sound" featuring that splendid star of yesteryear, Bobbie Howes. George is renowned for making up these delightful programmes, presented with his own commentary linking each of the sound excerpts from his extensive record library. We shall long remember his musical impressions of Greyfriars of a year or two ago.

A game or two with appropriate O. B. B. C. connotations and finally the monthly raffle rounded off a pleasant evening. It was typical of the spirit of our little group that Win Brown should have presented the specially-painted "Happy Easter" decoration she made and brought along

to Bill Evans to cheer Mrs. Evans recovering from illness at home.

Our Annual General Meeting will take place on Tuesday, 23rd May, beginning at 7.30 p.m. at the Birmingham Theatre Centre. We hope for an especially good turnout this year and, as quoth the R. S. M., "Everyone on strength will volunteer - fall in!"

IAN BENNETT

Vice-Chairman.

LONDON

from Uncle Benjamin

Friardale was the venue of the April meeting with the five Acramans being hospitable hosts. After three good library reports Bob Acraman played over the famous Greyfriars Record. Newspaper cuttings of C. H. Chapman's 93rd birthday anniversary were shown around and Millicent Lyle gave one of her special Greyfriars features, which included a chapter or two from the Water Lily series of the Magnet. Cedric Richardson spoke of his visit to Corfe Castle where, in the children's section, there were Billy and Bessie Bunter, guinea pigs, housed in a hutch entitled "Bunter Court." Mary Cadogan mentioned correspondence with Howard Baker re publishing Cliff House stories. These will probably appear in the Greyfriars Press Annual for 1973 in the autumn.

Josie Packman spoke of the Sexton Blake play at the Prince Edward Theatre in 1930 which only ran for 27 performances entitled "Just Sexton Blake."

Bill Lofts, unable to be present owing to more research activities, sent along a poser for the Leetes. This being:- "What D. C. Thomson paper had stories of St. Frank's after the N.L.L. had finished?"

The Woodingdean meeting of May 1955 was the subject of the newsletter reading by Bob Blythe. A competition by Winifred Morss was won by Eric Lawrence.

An excellent repast was served by the hosts and photographs were taken in the garden and an inspection of the 'New House' was made by most of those present.

The Maidstone meeting on Sunday, 21st May. The coach leaves Victoria, opposite Woolworths in the Vauxhall Bridge Road at 11.00 a.m. sharp. With votes of thanks to the hosts, it was homeward bound once again