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**COLLECTORS' DIGEST**

VOL. 27 No 313 JANUARY 1973

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STORY PAPER

# COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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HERBERT LECKENBY

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# A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER



## CHAMPION

A couple of months ago, Wilfred Rhodes, one of the Grand Old Men of cricket, attained his 95th birthday. To celebrate the occasion we reproduced, on our November cover, the cover of a Champion published over 50 years ago. That cover carried a photograph of Wilfred Rhodes. We meant to draw your attention to it, but in the rush and bustle of those pre-Christmas days, we overlooked it. So we mention it now. A toast to two Champions - to Wilfred Rhodes, and to a popular paper which honoured him on its cover so long ago.

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CRITICISING THE CRITICS

Reviewing a new book recently, our literary critic had this to say about the Magnet's "Cigarette Case" series of 1938: "Not the Magnet's best Christmas series by a long chalk, it nevertheless has a full quota of festive atmosphere, and is notable as reintroducing that extraordinary character, Soames." I feel sure that most readers would regard that as a fair summing-up of that particular series. However, a Northampton reader did not agree with our critic, and, in a letter which featured in "The Postman Called" last month, he wrote: "Once again I am saddened by your unscholarly habit of stating an opinion as a fact."

Our reader's comment seems to me to be unreasonable. Surely, when a critic is invited to review a book, that critic is being asked to express a personal opinion. It appears to me to be unfair to class a man as "unscholarly" because he does just that. Our space is tight enough, goodness knows, and it is not all that easy to review a large book in the limited number of words we can spare the reviewers. If our reviewer should write "I am, of course, stating only my own opinion, and yours may be different," he is wasting space to state the obvious. And, worse still, C.D. will be emasculated if we try to write sweet nothings about everything.

Critics, whether of books, films, stage, or television, can be very tiresome, as I freely admit. I often wriggle in annoyance when I see a critic drooling over a TV show which I switched off in disgust the night before. But professional critics are doing the jobs they are paid for, often with tongue in cheek, I have no doubt. Our own critics are unpaid, and, inevitably, must collect more kicks than ha'pence. Let us not make their tasks intolerable, or we may end up by having no reviewers at all.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR

May I take this opportunity, once again, to wish all my readers and friends a very happy and prosperous New Year. Next month we shall announce the result of our recent Ballot, and the names of our prizewinners who were most successful in forecasting the result.

THE EDITOR

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# DANNY'S DIARY

JANUARY 1923

For a year there have been five issues every month of the Boys' Friend Library and the Sexton Blake Library. Starting this month, however, they have changed back to the old system, publishing four new editions every month.

In the Boys' Friend they have stopped the short P. G. Wodehouse school stories, and have started a serial by him. It is entitled "By Order of the League," and it is about Wrykyn School and Rugby football.

The Rookwood tales have been good, but, as usual now, so very short. Though they are printed in smaller print than most of the rest of the paper, they don't occupy really more than one page.

The Christmas series at the Priory continued with "Trailing the Spectre." Mr. Spencer, the new secretary of Mr. Silver, has made an excuse to stay on until Boxing Day. He would like to get into the haunted room, where Lovell was scared stiff, but he finds Mornington installed there. In the next story "Run To Earth," the events seem to happen on Christmas Day, though Christmas is well past in real life. Mornington calls the police, and accuses Mr. Spencer of stealing Mr. Silver's Rembrandt and hiding it in the haunted room. Spencer makes a run for it, but is nabbed.

In "A Merry Meeting," Jimmy and Co., still on holiday, meet up with Coker and Co. and have a tussle with him. Last of the month was "An Amazing Match," in which Coker fixes up a football match with the village team, and enlists Jimmy's holiday party to play for him. At the end of the first half, Coker is fast losing the game, so they tie up Coker in the pavilion, play the second half a man short, and manage to beat the villagers. So at the end of January, the Rookwooders are still on their Christmas vac.

In the Gem, too, the Christmas holidays seem to be stretched out, for the Christmas barring-out series has carried on through the month. "Backing Up Tom Merry" was the opening tale of January, in which Tom Merry and his supporters carried on with their rebellion. Dr. Holmes went off on holiday, leaving Mr. Railton in charge. In "The Siege of the School House," Mr. Railton called in some of his old

war-time comrades, including Sergeant Stuckey, to try to end the barring-out, but they are not successful. Grundy disputes Tom Merry's command for a time, but Tom soon squashes him. In "Facing the Foe," Mr. Railton and his "old contemptibles" have another try, but are beaten off. There is tons of action in these stories. Final of the month was "Tom Merry's Recruit." The rebels added Billy Bunter to their numbers but not to their advantage. Finally Bunter tries to sell them out to Mr. Railton, but Railton is too good a chap to win by treachery. So Bunter clears off- and the barring-out goes on. I wish that the St. Jim's tales were longer. They do not occupy more than half of the Gem these days.

There is a new paper out for girls. It is named "The Ruby." In the middle of the month there was a dense white fog over London. There has been a broadcast of "The Magic Flute" from Covent Garden theatre, and it was very popular with listeners, though I am not keen myself on that sort of thing. In South Africa, England won the 2nd Test Match at Cape Town by one wicket, and the 3rd Test Match, at Durban, was drawn. They are going on with the removing of treasures from Tutankhamen's tomb. A lovely couch has just been brought out.

Frederick Bywaters and Edith Thompson have been found guilty of the Ilford murder, and are both sentenced to death.

At the cinemas we have seen Rudolph Valentino, with Lila Lee and Nita Naldi, in "Blood and Sand;" Violet Hobson in "The Son of Kissing Cup;" Harold Lloyd in "Grandma's Boy;" Gerald Du Maurier in "Bulldog Drummond;" and Priscilla Dean in "Under Two Flags."

Not a great month in the Magnet. First was "The Jap of Greyfriars." The little Jap is the small member of a gang of burglars who are out to steal a lot of valuable plate from Greyfriars. The gang is arrested at the finish, but the tale ends with a suggestion that there may be a sequel to it. I hope there isn't. "The New Boy's Secret" told of Jim Lee who is brought to Greyfriars by his guardian Ulick Driver. Bunter, hiding under a railway carriage seat, hears them talking. This is the first of a series, but it does not carry on in the next story "Detective Bunter," which is by a different writer, though Jim Lee is mentioned. In it, Gosling, the porter is knocked down by a motor-cycle, and Coker is accused. But Loder was to blame.

The Jim Lee series resumed with "The Schoolboy Hermit."

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Jim Lee is a mystery, for he seems to try to make an enemy of every one of his schoolfellows.

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Conducted by

Josie Packman

I hope you will all forgive me using up space in Blakiana this month, but I am sure you would like answers to the queries posed by Jim Cook and S. Gordon Swan, and trust you find them interesting. Please remember to alter the name of the story in your Catalogues. May I wish you all a Happy and Peaceful New Year.

DEAD MAN'S  
DESTINY SBL.  
No. 466 (5th Series)

Just how does one make an official record of the Sexton Blake Saga? Are we

## UNION JACK 2

THE LAW  
OF THE  
GUN!

By  
ARTHUR  
PATERSON



The only law they jump to in New Mexico is the Law of the Gun. Here are SEXTON BLAKE and TINKER in a real thriller rough stuff in the wild lands, plus real 'tec work. Complete inside.

to take as chronicled history everything the authors have written and thus record it as fact for the purposes of reference or should we ignore from a given date all that followed afterwards? For example, the above S. B. L. story concerns the life of Tinker and gives the reason why he was so named. Martin Thomas uses his author's licence for this tale, but can we regard this illuminating discovery of how Tinker came into the world, as a reasonable entry into our reference books?

Perhaps the fact that this story has been published should be sufficient evidence of fact. Yet there is nothing to prevent another author in the future when writing a Sexton Blake story to unfold another and quite different version of Tinker's early up-bringing.

JIM COOK

### A POPULAR CHARACTER

by S. Gordon Swan

Undoubtedly one of the most popular characters in the Sexton Blake Saga was Mademoiselle Yvonne Cartier. After her introduction in 1913, there was a flood of stories dealing with her adventures, many of them in conjunction with G. H. Teed's other creations, Dr. Huxton Rymer, Prince Wu Ling and Baron Robert de Beauremon of the Council of Eleven.

A number of these episodes were recorded in those splendid Spring, Autumn and Christmas Double Numbers which were a notable feature of the Union Jack in pre-Great War days. There were also some Yvonne tales in the Sexton Blake Library, but there were not many of these, for some reason.

When G. H. Teed returned to the writing scene in 1922, after an absence of some years, he revived Mademoiselle Yvonne and we find her operating on the side of the law in conducting a detective agency.

Some years before the adventuress had appeared on the films and some of the old papers published photographs from the film, "The Clue of the Wax Vesta." It would be interesting to know the cast of this film and who portrayed Mademoiselle Yvonne.

Yvonne survived until 1926, when she appeared in several stories dealing with Tinker's girl friend, Nirvana. After this she dropped out of sight, and we were given a new feminine character in June Severance, who was the subject of an unfinished series. Later Roxane Harfield, a more torrid version of Yvonne, arrived on the scene, and her motive of

vengeance was similar to her predecessor's.

But Yvonne was not entirely done with. In the late nineteen-thirties some of her early exploits were rehashed in *The Detective Weekly*, about a quarter of a century after they were first published.

In connection with this character, I have a query which I hope some long-term reader may be able to answer. In *Union Jack* No. 587, dated 9th January, 1915, there is an intriguing advertisement which states:

"The Lone Horseman. Great New Yvonne Serial in *The Boys' Journal*."

Has anyone any information to offer regarding this story? It does not appear in the Sexton Blake Catalogue as a serial of the great detective in *The Boys' Journal*, so possibly it was a story of Yvonne on her own. It would be interesting to learn more about it.

AUTHORS LICENCE a reply to Jim Cook's query by Josie Packman

Authors licence has been used several times regarding the early life of Tinker, but we really should take the original one as correct. Tinker was the creation of Herbert Maxwell and first appeared in the *Union Jack* in 1904. The story was in No. 53, entitled "Cunning Against Skill." Tinker was, at that time, one of the apparently homeless but sharp Cockney newsboys of the period and was able to assist Blake in that particular story. He showed such promise of sharp wits and intelligence that Sexton Blake decided to take him into his care and educate the lad.

The next author to mention Tinker's early life was G. H. Teed, in 1926. Fortunately he was wise enough to repeat the fact that Tinker was a newsboy living in the East End of London. This was the time when Tinker was 10 years old and first met Nirvana. I do feel that the Blake Saga authors should not have attempted any further allusion to Tinker's parentage, etc. The Baker Street characters were there for them to use with a complete background of home and companionship, which was more like father and adopted son, or even older and younger brother. Unfortunately the move from Baker Street spoils this relationship. The new set-up was a copy of many other detectives and their assistants and completely upset the chronicle of events.

by Josie Packman

This serial in the Boys' Journal was not listed in the Catalogue as it is purely a story about Yvonne and her adventures in Australia with the Lone Horseman. I have been loaned a copy of the Boys' Journal with the first instalment of this story. It is dated 9th January, 1915. The actual tale, by G. H. Teed, was in three parts and related adventures which happened when Yvonne's father was still alive and thus pre-dated all the Sexton Blake adventures.

This copy of the Boys' Journal also contains an episode of the serial "The Mystery of the Diamond Belt," the story of the film of the same name which appeared in September 1914. An amendment should be made in the Catalogue where the title is given as the Mystery of the Golden Belt.

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## *Nelson Lee Column*

### RED LETTER DAY

by William Lister

I didn't know it - but the day I walked home looking at the current copy of the "Nelson Lee," was a Red Letter Day.

So much of a Red Letter day, in fact, that now even after the passing of 47 years I recall it.

It was towards dusk and just such a night followed as to be appropriate for the occasion. I scanned the illustrations in the gathering twilight of that late October evening in 1925, on my way home.

I was 13 years old and home was a small caravan on a then unbuilt part of Blackpool, which I shared with my ailing father.

Perhaps, everything was geared to fix this first Ezra Quirke story firmly in my mind. No wireless - no T. V., no gramophone and the nearest picture house too far away, as also the nearest tram service. Add to this, no electric light.

So eventually that evening of October found me settling down after tea and homework, to the first of the series of St. Frank's tales by Edwy

Searles Brooks; the memory of which was to remain these 47 years and please God, yet many more.

The opening words of "The Schoolboy Magician" were "The wind howled and moaned around St. Frank's with a steadily increasing force. Now and again it rose to a mighty shriek, and the solid old pile fairly shook with the force of the elements. It was a wild October night!"

It was not only a wild night in fiction; it was also a wild October night in fact.

Father lay on the bunk-bed resting after a bout of sickness. I sat by the stove. Above my head a paraffin lamp flickered. Outside the gale-force wind really howled, and if the old piles of St. Frank's shook, our caravan did too, only more so.

I was scared (caravans had blown over on such a night, roofs had been ripped off) but I huddled over the stove and strained my youthful eyes over the small, small print of my "Nelson Lee."

Thus nature added its atmosphere to my first reading of Ezra Quirke. I loved St. Frank's, I always have and always will. From illustrations (based on colleges of the day) it looks very old and very stable, something that was there long before I was born and would be there long after I died, whereas my little caravan home could have been blown away that very night.

Well now, add to this background provided by nature, the hooting owl, the moon appearing and disappearing behind clouds and the ghostly figure of Ezra Quirke gliding across the school triangle and the supernatural events that followed and you had one lad somewhat scarified, weather-wise and fiction-wise. (Boys were not as sophisticated then as our modern T. V. boys, with their nightly T. V. horrors.)

After the "Schoolboy Magician," seven tales appeared in quick succession. Mind you, in those days it didn't seem in quick succession. To wait a week for the next tale seemed a long time. As we age the weeks go quicker - or hadn't you noticed?

The whole batch of tales increased in mystery as indeed the dark nights and wintry weather, but I doubt if the weather ever provided just the right atmosphere as it did on my first meeting with Ezra Quirke.

I have always thought the title of the last tale was somewhat prophetic - "The Broken Spell." When, later, E. S. Brooks revived

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our Ezra, it wasn't quite the same.

It was good to meet him after the lapse of years, the later tales were good, but the spell had been broken.

By now you will have gathered that I have just been re-reading this remarkable first series. How right you are! Not, of course, in a small wind-battered caravan, straining my youthful eyes by the light of a flickering oil-lamp, but in my own home, by the light of a reading lamp (electric) and with the aid of a pair of glasses and a magnifying glass, yet still straining my eyes on the small, small print.

I wonder why with all these modern aids. Put it down to age. Surprising what 47 years can do.

My eyes may be growing dim, but to read tales of beloved St. Frank's renews my youthful spirit.

### AN OPEN LETTER TO JIM COOK

from Harold Truscott

Having read your article in the November issue and your letter in the December issue of C.D. I am amused at the unconscious manner in which you have provided ammunition for the Hamiltonians - if they wish to use it. I have always been an admirer of Brooks' ability to devise an interesting, even exciting, story (spoilt at times by being too far-fetched, and by too slick denouements, not sufficiently worked out beforehand, too much improvisation, in other words) and at the same time detested his manner of writing. Time and again I have thus been in the uncomfortable position of being urged on by the story and repelled by the writing.

I was reading the NELSON LEE (not as regularly as the MAGNET and GEM but pretty frequently) by the time I was nine, which was in 1923; I had the SOL from the time it started, and I read the MONSTER from its first appearance. I have, therefore, if not as wide a knowledge of St. Frank's as yourself, as the Dean of St. Frank's, a very wide knowledge of the St. Frank's stories; I formed very early in my life the resolve to know even what I did not particularly like as well as possible, on the now old-fashioned belief that one cannot honestly criticise anything, favourably or adversely, unless one has a very wide knowledge of it. This being so, I need a little more than the bluster you exhibit to convince me that Brooks was what I know from experience that he was not. Your only other material consists of snide remarks directed at 'another school story writer' - this occurs three times, and the very deviousness of your approach gives these remarks no more value than I should attach to an anonymous letter. Such remarks, of course, are again backed up by no proof. In fact, in addition to the persistent lack of style and at times rather bad English, both of which make it a worthy tribute to your idol, your main argument seems to be of the 'heads-I-win-tails-you-lose' variety, beloved by those who cannot state and attempt to prove a case: you give no proof of your assertions because a) addicts do not need proof and b) those who are not already addicts will not be convinced, anyway - largely, I gather, through the machinations of that wicked 'other school story writer.' This last reason for giving no proof, incidentally, argues a peculiar lack of faith in the powers of Brooks, on your part. I think, in any case, that E.S.B. could have reasoned rather better than this. This far you are an unworthy disciple, Mr. Cook.

Apart from the three devious references to which I have referred, you have another on the first page of your article, to those that 'prefer to be deluded by the

pretentiousness in others.' This is even more snide, and still more devious. If you really mean 'others,' why not give their names? If this should really be singular, why not give the obvious name in your mind, which is Hamilton? But there are two points concerned here. The word 'pretentious' means 'making claim to great merit or importance' - and that is all it means. In the first place, there is no harm in this, provided the claim is justified by results - even if we may think that to make such a claim, although justified, savours of conceit. Even if Hamilton had made such a claim for his work, it would at least have been justified. But it has yet to be proved to me that he ever did make such a claim. The fact that the A.P. had acumen enough to realise that he was their leading writer in this field is not to be visited upon his head. On the other hand, we know that E.S.B. did make such a claim - his remark about there not being room for two kings on one throne proves that - and he did not justify it.

Finally, you misquote Montaigne thus: "Since we cannot obtain greatness, let us avenge ourselves by abusing it." But this is precisely what a large part of your article is devoted to doing. You state that 'controversy does not warrant exploitation,' and 'Opinions seem to vary with increasing regularity about another school story writer,' and again, 'It is remarkable that a monthly controversial episode can be written if that author of school life was so excellent at his job.' Precisely; you have not yet, obviously, realised that controversy is the best possible proof that an artist's work is alive; witness the libraries of books, definitely not all saying the same things, on Shakespeare, Beethoven, Leonardo, Dickens, and hundreds more. So long as this is happening, one knows for sure that that man's work is alive. It is when everyone has settled down to comfortable agreement that one knows that, at the least, the life is dying, and that there is a strong suspicion that the subject is one about which universal agreement is quite unimportant. If Brooks is so important, St. Frank's addicts, and the Lee column as well, would be far better occupied in showing in what way their idol was great. But this they never do. The Lee column reads simply like a combined back-scratching society and 'Hymn of Hate to Hamilton' (with matters of 'Der Tag' in the background), and makes very dull reading. I am not a St. Frank's addict; I simply have a very wide and long experience of St. Frank's stories - not necessarily the same thing - and I would undertake to do what no Brooksite in my experience has yet attempted to do: make a case for Brooks, and a very good one. I might be able to knock it down afterward, but at least I could make it. And it now occurs to me that I have once seen an attempt to make a case for Brooks, in a C.D. Annual, and it did not come from a Brooks addict; it came from a very strong Hamiltonian, Geoffrey Wild. So it is a peculiar situation; the Brooks addicts constantly attack Hamilton, but they leave their work for Hamiltonians to do.

### POINT OF VIEW

R. F. ACRAMAN (Ruislip): Now for November 1972 C.D. in which you printed a letter from T. Hopkinson (Hyde). Well! at first I was tempted to say "what absolute rubbish" but reluctantly decided that the phrase was not strong enough and since I do not wish to hurt his feelings, as his letter hurt mine, will merely say our friend has much to learn. One adverse criticism such as the Editor's unfortunate remark referring to E.S.B. a month or two ago, can lead to many letters such as this, especially if E.S.B. appears undefended in subsequent issues, for I do know my rebuttal was not unfortunately printed. Can the grand old game of "Knocking the Nelson Lee" have also such sinister connotations? This writer's letter referred to a Howard Baker publication. Can it be that not satisfied with the tremendous coverage that Howard Baker has given all the "Magnet" and "Gem" stories your reader resents the small space given to E.S.B., a man who year in and year out for well over a decade, convinced the best executive brains of the Amalgamated Press that he was far too good to lose. That in addition to that E.S.B. was Universally recognised by many other well-known publishers of hardbacks that his

work was too good to miss to name a few "Collins," "Gerald Swan Ltd.," "Harraps," "Richard & Cowan," long before our "Frank" made hardbacks. That the "Sexton Blake Library," "Magnet," and "Gem," (with E.S.B. writing both as Frank Richards and Martin Clifford) the "Union Jack," + "Thriller," "Nugget," "Dreadnought," etc., etc., (I could go on and on) all considered his work was too good to lose. Instead of joining the old game of "knocking the good old Nelson Lee" let your correspondent consider again in the light of the above that perhaps he is wrong. It is he who is not making the grade for all the above cannot be wrong in their choice. Let me refer my good friend T. Hopkinson to the C.D. items I wrote in the August 1967, and November 1969 (the former in which I quoted the first 4 or 5 series of Nelson Lee's that I ever read and how they converted me from a 100% Hamiltonian Man to a 50% Hamiltonian and 50% E.S. Brookes Man). Indeed let him read Gerry Allison's article in the October 1967, C.D. Only if after reading the initial stories I recommended he still persists he is unimpressed will I then agree that he is beyond the pale and there is absolutely no hope at all for him; and that he would far rather go on believing in such things as Billy Bunter's ventriloquist powers and the monkey gland fluid that made both Bunter and Alonzo Todd super strong men, able to do immediately acts that strong adults cannot do to quote one or two miracles; than believe such things possible as E.S.B.'s North Estrian (Airship blowing astray, remember the Goodyear Airship a few months ago, blowing astray? and my "National Geographic Magazine" of August 1972, featured a race of stone-age men and woman just found in the Philippines (a most interesting article with many coloured pictures) who live in caves eating such things as tadpoles, frogs and - dare I say it, grubs, found in rotted logs as their staple diet). E.S.B. North Estrian people are civilised modern, by comparison, and E.S.B. stories of space (written at a time space travel was unknown, are slowly coming true).

Indeed to all anti-E.S.B. members I would say - Open your minds, do not get so set in your ways, be prepared to consider new ideas put forward by writers as in part reasonably plausible and enjoy yourselves. There are some really good crackerjack stories that make a real change from the staple school story, yet with a school story theme, and E.S. Brookes has perfected this art to the full. Do not carry on "knocking E.S.B."

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: I should be very surprised indeed if the Editor's "unfortunate remark concerning E.S.B." had the slightest effect on Mr. T. Hopkinson's views, expressed in the letter which he had every right to send to this magazine if he wished. Perhaps he will let us know. Mr. Acraman is inaccurate when he suggests that E.S.B. "appeared undefended in subsequent issues."

The Let's Be Controversial article in which the "unfortunate" remark featured appeared in C.D. last June. A letter of protest from Mr. Bob Blythe was published in full in July. A further letter along the same lines, this time from Mr. James Cook, appeared in our August issue. Mr. Acraman did not bother to write until October, when he supported the protests of Messrs. Blythe and Cook. I saw no reason to dig up this subject again, especially as, to try to maintain a peace of some sort, I had not defended the "unfortunate" remark, nor had I published several letters from readers who agreed with it. So Mr. Acraman's letter of October was not printed in C.D.

In passing, the letters of both Mr. Truscott and Mr. Acraman, printed in this issue, are shortened. I am always delighted to hear from readers, but I make a special appeal to those, who hope to see their views published, to be brief. We just cannot cope with massive screeds, however sincere. A point is often made far more effectively in a few words than in a great many.)

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 177. COWARD OR HERO?

In one place in his excellent and most fascinating article on the vicissitudes of E. S. Brooks, in the 1972 C.D. Annual, Mr. Bob Blythe writes: "The Manuscript mentioned in the first paragraph was published in Gem No. 281 as 'Coward or Hero?' Brooks' own title was "The Coward of St. Jim's." "

Mr. Blythe was in error. "Coward or Hero?" in Gem 281 was a Hamilton story. The cowardly hero was Roland Ray who, after his brief starring in the one story, remained on the St. Jim's scene for a time as a very minor piece of dead wood, his name cropping up occasionally for a year or two.

Personally, I have no doubt that the story to which Mr. Brooks referred was "Misunderstood" in Gem 285. The plot was that of a group of boys getting in a fight of some kind. One of them, seeing from some vantage point, an heroic deed waiting to be performed, left his comrades and dashed away to render assistance where it was most needed. He was accused of cowardice, but later was shown to have acted heroically.

Stories of contrived, prolonged misunderstanding always seem to me to be somewhat tiresome, but this was a plot to which Charles Hamilton himself returned on several occasions. Frank Nugent was involved in similar misunderstanding, and Raby was the centre of a plot on the same lines in the Rookwood scene. I have no doubt that there were other times when Hamilton rehashed the plot.

Yet, so far as the Hamilton schools went, at any rate, Brooks seems to have invented it all. Whether the theme was used elsewhere before "Misunderstood" I do not know, but it does appear that Hamilton, as the years passed by, made plenty of use of this plot which was invented by one of the substitute writers. It was in "Misunderstood" that Manners was presented with his famous camera, and that camera featured a great many times in Hamilton stories.

I have seen it suggested that "Misunderstood" was the best of all the substitute stories. My own view is that Brooks' best substitute tale was "A Mission of Mystery." It had the type of plot which was bound to

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appeal to the younger reader. It is a long time since I read it, but I recall that Gussy was given a large sum of money which he had to spend within a few days. The object was to draw the attention to him of a certain criminal. I have a feeling that Brooks used the plot again, later on, at St. Frank's, but our Lee friends can say yea or nay to this. At any rate, as a small boy I loved "Mission of Mystery" in the Gem, but I have never cared a lot for "Misunderstood."

Brooks' most remarkable sub tale was surely "Fatty Wynn, Professional." This was the only "cover to cover" story which appeared in the blue Gem, and it must have been the longest story of all for a normal-sized Gem. It was used between the end of one serial and the start of the next. Brooks' letters show how, while he was writing the tale, he was suddenly instructed to extend it by a number of chapters, I never cared for the tale, and, considering the circumstances, this is not surprising. Like its subject, Fatty Wynn, the story was well-padded.

My view is that Brooks was more successful in writing of St. Jim's than of Greyfriars, and that was an achievement, for I am sure it was easier to write a sub Greyfriars yarn than a similar one about St. Jim's.

### THOSE EARLY ROOKWOOD STORIES

by W. O. G. Lofts

Investigation into the early alleged Rookwood tales commencing in the PENNY POPULAR with 'The Rookwood Waxworks' does clear up most of the mystery.

According to official records, the stories of the first eighteen were 'cuts' from other stories (source not stated) and were greatly revised by R. T. Eves the editor. They could have come from that extraordinary series in the BOYS' REALM FOOTBALL LIBRARY in 1909/10, which starred Jack Noble and Co. of the Third Form at Pelham School. Some themes and the length were identical. E.g. No. 33, 'The Pelham Sports' and P. P. No. 243, 'The Rookwood Sports.' As related in an earlier C. D. article the Pelham tales were started off by Charles Hamilton, and then continued by a host of well-known writers.

As stated by our editor completely original substitute stories were printed starting with No. 254, 'The Secret of the Moor,' by Maurice

Nutbrown - who also wrote a number of substitute stories in The Boys' Realm featuring St. Frank's. Other writers were R. S. Kirkham (a Cliff House School writer) the editor R. T. Eves, and the single story in No. 284, 'One Wet Wednesday,' by Will Gibbons, who was actually office boy on THE BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY.

Mr. L. E. Ransome who was on R. T. Eves' staff in that period kindly supplied with further information.

"As well as editing the PENNY POPULAR 1916/18, R. T. Eves also managed THE BOYS' FRIEND which featured the Rookwood stories. I can well recall Eves developing a Rookwood character in the stories which mainly had to be cut down from a 20,000 length to 6,000 words. No easy task, occasionally writing a linking chapter, and I even did this myself at times! It taught one more about Hamilton's stories, than one could learn by reading them. Indeed, R. T. Eves was the only editor ever to reject a Charles Hamilton story, and this featured Rookwood, and was entitled 'Tommy Dodds Double.' Eves felt rightly or wrongly that there had been simply too much of this. Whenever Hamilton was stuck for an idea, he used the 'double theme' - and Hamilton was greatly incensed about it, and insisted on being paid. R. T. Eves was also the only editor I knew who made small pencilled alterations to a Hamilton yarn. The only time I have known those purple-inked typescripts to be despoiled."

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: We broached the subject of the so-called early Rookwood stories several years ago in C.D. Annual, and we returned to the theme in a recent "Let's Be Controversial." Now we have checked on the matter ourselves, as we ought to have done originally. Those "early" Rookwood tales in the 1917 Penny Popular were Cliveden tales with the names of the Cliveden characters changed to those of Rookwood people. The following are some of the titles, with the original Cliveden title given in brackets: "The Rookwood Waxworks" (The Cliveden Waxworks); "The Cross-Country Run" (The Cliveden Paperchase); "The Fall of the Fistical Four" (The Cliveden Toffee-Makers); "The Captain's Secret" (The Captain of Cliveden); "The Rookwood Minstrels" (The Cliveden Minstrels); "The Rookwood Wheelers" (The Cliveden Wheelers); "The Rookwood Sports" (The Cliveden Sports); "The Rookwood Detectives" (The Cliveden Detectives), and others. The Penny Popular Christmas Double Number for 1917 actually contained two Cliveden tales. One was "Snowed Up," re-published as a Rookwood story with the same title as used originally. Also an unchanged Cliveden tale "Christmas at Cliveden." The latter story was reprinted in C.D. two years or so ago.

The Cliveden tales were short, and very little pruning of them was done to fit them to the Pop's Rookwood scene.)

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**W A N T E D :** Red Magnets,  $\frac{1}{4}$ d and Blue Gems. Will buy or exchange Magnets early thirties

G. BRUTON, 205 LONG ELMES, HARROW, MIDDXS.

Charles Hamilton was a man who, through his gifts, brought warmth and humanity and who conveyed an overall sense of classless kinship to the young throughout more than three decades when poverty and hardship must have been part of readers' lives at many of the homes in which "Magnet" and "Gem" were welcome visitors.

But he rarely betrayed his own social opinions. Boys' school stories were not the platform and, as a professional to his finger tips, he knew that political comment of any kind through such outlets could be (to say the least) editorially unwise.

Even so, something sounding suspiciously like social comment occasionally got through.

One story he wrote contains a paragraph which made a deep impression upon me when I first read it a year or two ago. It concerned Talbot (reprinted in the 1922 Holiday Annual, under the title "To Save His Honour") another rather turgid story in the Talbot/Rivers saga.

The story doesn't matter. After the first Talbot introductions, they became so repetitive anyhow. But listen to Rivers appealing to Talbot - to come back to crime!

"You are dreaming dreams, Toff," said the Professor persuasively. "What is this honesty you have suddenly grown so particular about? Look from that window, look at the filthy rookeries! The landlords draw rents from those buildings. Toff, from half starved, wasted wretches - grind out of them all they can pay, Toff, no matter how they slave or starve or steal to get the money; and those landlords are honourable and honest gentlemen. The honourable gentleman who owns the ground this building stands on - he draws thousands, Toff, thousands every year. Does he work for it? Has he, or his father, or his grandfather, ever done a stroke of honest work, ever done anything but waste in extravagance and riotous living, the money that other men's hands have earned? Work! You could not insult him more than by suggesting that he or his people have ever worked. Offer him a fair day's wages for a fair day's work and he would think you were mad. Toff, we've got to take the world as we find it - with thieves in high places and the whole world run on a system of thievery. We've got to make the best of it. There are two classes in the world, Toff, the

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looters and the looted. I choose to be a looter."

Shades of Dickens and Phiz!

The point is that Hamilton put those words into the mouth of a crook, great professional that he was. But even from a crook they make searing - and convincing - social comment to be found in a schoolboy publication of the period.

How good indeed, really, were those dear old days?

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## The Postman Called

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

JOHN BUSH (Herne Bay): I was very amused to read Laurie Suttons letter, re "Golden Domes" cinema, in the December C. D.

He says "John Bush was in error in stating that it was in Camberwell New Road. There was a cinema there, but the name escapes me." If the name escapes him after living near for 6 years, how can he be sure, it was not the "Golden Domes?"

Seeing that he lives not too far from Camberwell, perhaps he would like to confirm that the actual cinema is still there, and that it is now called "The Golden Domes Bingo Hall."

MRS. J. PACKMAN (East Dulwich): I liked your Editorial very much, it is just what most of us "old timers" think. By the way, that Cinema called the "Golden Domes" was exactly where Laurie said, Len and I went there very often. It was practically opposite the old Camberwell Palace where we used to see Tod Slaughter act in his classic plays such as Sweeney Todd and Murder in the Red Barn, and also Sherlock Holmes. The other cinema in the Camberwell New Road was called "The Grand." It is now a Bingo hall, and the Golden Domes is a Supermarket. Such is progress!

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The Camberwell Golden Domes was certainly on Denmark Hill, as I stated and Laurie Sutton confirmed. Whether the little cinema opposite the South London Palace was also named Golden Domes, I have not been able to ascertain. But if it were under the same management, it may well have had the same name. What a lovely name, too. Other unusual cinema names I recall are the Purple Picture Palace in Camberwell, and the Red Lantern in Herne Bay.)

W. LISTER (Blackpool): As a St. Frank's fan I note that our Jim Cook has upset some of our Greyfriars friends. Trouble is, you've got to know him. He reminds me of old "Handforth."

Did you notice how he knocked our heads together? (We St. Frank's writers that don't write.)

We feel like Church and McClure.

Good old Jim "Handforth" Cook - he's a great fellow. So apologies to you Greyfriars bounders - don't be too upset.

By the way, I notice Peter Hanger of Northampton, is preparing to throw Howard Bakers' "Barring-out At St. Frank's," at Jim for a matter of five-bob.

How about throwing it at me, Peter? I'm St. Frank's, too, and Blackpool isn't as far as Australia.

G. H. WILDE (Leeds): It was not till the very end of a busy month that I found time to peruse the November C. D. and came across Jim Cook's remarkable article, allegedly in praise of E. S. Brooks. The originality of Mr. Cook's thinking was most aptly acknowledged by Mr. Wormull in the December issue a few days later; may I, though, add a brief word?

Mr. Cook seems to feel that the greatness of genius is just too much for words - which, if true, would render his own article, besides much else, redundant. And conversely, he would have it that if an author's merits come under discussion, much less debate, this is a sure sign of inferiority. Now a very substantial library could be filled with volumes solely devoted to discussion of Shakespeare and his works. Can we somehow bring Mr. Cook to grasp that this huge body of commentary exists precisely because Shakespeare is internationally accepted as the greatest writer who ever lived?

The sooner the Nelson Lee column includes features like 'Do You Remember?' and 'Let's Be Controversial' and begins to offer discriminating comment rather than simply enthusing, then the sooner, I suggest, it will acquire a ready flow of material and a lively readership. And if Brooks really isn't getting his due, the sooner the injustice can be remedied. But the C. D. is not really the place for silent reverence and inarticulate awe - how about the Tibetan Times?

W. HOWARD BAKER (London): I would like to say how much I find

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myself in sympathy with the sentiments of your December C. D. editorial. The Digest is becoming a very worthwhile vehicle for the expression of opinions shared by millions of people who have never even heard of Collectors' Digest - more's the pity.

M. LYNE (Ulverston): We greatly appreciated your editorial in the latest issue of C. D. ; very well-written and nostalgic. I know we tend to remember only the good things; but there is no doubt that the old days were better in a number of ways than the present electronic age.

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge): What pleasant nostalgic memories your editorial aroused; especially the memory of the water carts. I can see them still, on a hot summer afternoon in the dusty streets, and recall the pleasant cool scent of the wet roads - and do you remember how small boys would run to stand in the spray from the carts? Those of us who are aged at least have the happiness of many memories, when, if times were hard, people on the whole were happier. Maybe distance lends enchantment to the view and

"Alas that spring should vanish with the rose

That youth's sweet scented manuscript should close"

but I think we were more contented and valued small pleasures much more than the present affluent society with all its possessions values what it has,

I was interested in your comments on the "Tom Merry adrift" series. I seem to remember that some at least of these were reprinted in the Penny Popular - I am sure I remember the incident of Tom Merry in London meeting Jack, Sam and Pete. I don't know about Jim, Buck and Rastus. My interest in the J. S. and P. tales does not extend beyond the Marvel series. I imagine they were probably reprints of the J. S. and P. tales. I know some of the early J. S. and P. B. F. L's were reissued in the second series. There was a short series of J. S. and P. tales in the Boys' Realm some time in, I think, the 1930's. I forget the author's name. I have seen one or two of them. They were very short and played up Pete, but rather in a knock-about style. I think they omitted Algy.

(Many thanks to dozens of readers who wrote to express their pleasure in our Christmas editorial. It is not possible to publish many letters, but I am always delighted to hear from readers. - ED.)

LEONARD M. ALLEN (Bournemouth): I am sure that most readers will not accuse Dennis Gifford of monopolising the Postman Called column. His items of news are most interesting, much trouble must have been taken to clear up the BEANO affair which he elucidates in the November C. D.

May I take this opportunity to thank him for his Sounds Familiar panel game on ITV, especially when the panel includes such genuine enthusiasts as Bob Monkhouse, who concentrates on the game and does not try to be funny like his comedian predecessors. I was amazed, however, that Bob stated in TV Times that a 1932 copy of Merry & Bright sold for £50, surely this is a misprint for £5?

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REVIEW

"MY LORD BUNTER"

Frank Richards  
(Howard Baker: £2.75)

This 4-story series of Bunter as the Lord of Reynham Castle was the Magnet's Christmas treat in the year 1937. Providing delightful reading throughout, full of chills, thrills, spills, and gales of festive laughter, it was certainly the greatest Christmas series of the Magnet's later years.

Also in the volume are four stories of the pleasant series about Wilmot, Mr. Hacker's nephew. We are promised that this Wilmot series will be completed in a forthcoming volume which will also contain about half of the superb Stacey series, in my opinion Hamilton's finest work. To ordinary folk like ourselves it really does seem to be the most extraordinary planning. No doubt there is a good reason for it, but it escapes us.

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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 FATNE,  
EXCELSIOR HOUSE, CROOKHAM RD., CROOKHAM, HAMPSHIRE.

# News of the Clubs

## CAMBRIDGE

The Cambridge Club held an informal Christmas Party at the home of Chairman, Danny Posner, on Sunday, 3rd December. There were present Host and Hostess, Danny and Mrs. Ollie Posner, Harold and Mrs. Forecast, Derek Gibbons, Deryck Harvey, Vic. Hearn, Mike Holliday, and Bill Thurbon.

The Chairman and Mrs. Posner provided their usual generous hospitality, and members contributed various bottles of good cheer, which might not have passed the eagle scrutiny of the Heads of Greyfriars and St. Jim's. Conversation was cheerful and wide ranging, covering many aspects both of the hobby and of the contemporary scene. To use a cliché of Deryck's brother journalists "A good time was had by all."

Much satisfaction was expressed by the club members at the news that Danny Posner had found a publisher and collaborator in a book on Victorian Juvenile Periodicals, and members will look forward eagerly to the issue of this book, based on Danny's fine collection of the papers of this period.

Cambridge hope that when the longer days return, members of other clubs will be able to visit them at 3 Long Road, on the second Sunday in the months.

Good wishes to everybody in the Hobby for 1973.



## LONDON

By car and train, from the wayside station of Ruislip, members and friends proceeded along the Friardale Lane, so ably portrayed on the front cover of the Collectors' Digest, December issue, by Henry Webb, to the hospitable home of Betty and Robert Acraman. Here was a Merry Yuletide welcome awaiting one and all with the tree Acraman boys, Reginald, Roger and Robert all ably assisting. The flowing bowl of Rum Punch, Green Chartreuse and the Taggles brew from St. James'

Gate, were available to greet the visitors.

Roger Jenkins commenced the Yuletide items with a candlelight reading from Magnet number 1661, circa 1939, and entitled "The Phantom of the Moat House." Bob Blythe read from newsletter number 41, the year 1956, and followed this up with a humorous reading from the Nelson Lee Library, New Series 35, entitled 'Handforth's Ghost Hunt.' The chairman, Don Webster, conducted his Last Line Poem Competition and the award of the adjudicators was Millicent Lyle first, Mary Cadogan second and Maurice King third.

Larry Peters' most liked character was Mark Linley and the one he disliked was William George Bunter. His reasons were good and caused comments at the conclusion of the item.

Tom Wright read a funny St. Sam's episode entitled "The Schoolboy Dictators."

Brian Doyle rendered the recording of the late Tony Handcock's radio feature "The Return to Greystones." This was thoroughly enjoyed.

The interval for tea was enlivened by the usual get-togethers and conversations. All the seasonable food items were available from Turkey sandwiches to mince tarts.

Later Bob Blythe conducted his Bingo game and the host Bob Acraman ended the proceedings with a film show.

There was an excellent attendance which included Tom Porter from the Midland club and Mr. Harrison, whom Eric Lawrence had brought along. Votes of thanks were accorded to the five Acramans for their hospitality.

Next meeting at the home of Josie Packman, East Dulwich, on Sunday, 21st January, 1973. Kindly advise if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN



NORTHERN

Saturday, 9th December, 1972.

A convivial gathering of members and their families was present at the 23rd Christmas party of the Northern OBBC.

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An excellent study-tea was prepared by the girls of Cliff House and Morcove (assisted by Bob Cherry!). A truly delectable repast!

There followed a game when a number of picture-ostcards was displayed. We were to guess the names of the various places shown. Celia Wilson was top with 18 and Geoffrey Wilde and Elsie Taylor tied for second place with 17 each.

Then the traditional Bunter Drive. Janet Balmforth had the highest marks and June Arden came second.

A reading from Magnet 1350 provided the drama for the evening and various members read the parts of Col. Wharton, Harry Wharton, Mauly, Fishy and the Famous Five.

For more vigorous activity, a 3-round game of volley-ball followed and we formed four teams. In the elimination contests, Greyfriars beat St. Frank's and St. Jim's beat Rookwood. St. Jim's beat Greyfriars in the final!

Needless to say there were prizes - in fact, for everybody!

A buffet supper rounded off the evening and provided an opportunity for cosy chatter.

Term begins again on Saturday, 13th January, (after the Christmas hols at Wharton Lodge - unless you're staying at Greyfriars with Fishy!).

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#### THE EARLIEST REPORT ON THE ANNUAL

Mr. A. V. Packer writes: I feel I must write to congratulate you on this year's Annual. I have them all and have enjoyed every one, but having just finished this year's, it is far and away the best of all.

Each and every one of the stories and articles are of the highest standard and deserve the fullest commendation.

My warmest felicitations on an excellent Annual.

AND

Dr. R. Wilson of Glasgow writes: "A Gorgeous Annual."

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## REVIEWS

FOUR BOOKS OF SCHOOL LIFE

P. G. Wodehouse  
(Souvenir Press £1.50 each)

The trend to bring back old favourites and old fads in all branches of life is being overplayed a little, it would seem, but one very big advantage is the re-issue by an enterprising publisher of four of Wodehouse's school books which he wrote early in the century. Two of these were out of print when I was born, and I have never been able to catch up with them. I rejoice in the opportunity to do just that now.

It would be impossible, in a small space, to compare Wodehouse with Hamilton. Their styles and their canvases were poles apart, yet each was a craftsman in the metier of the school story. Wodehouse is immensely readable - every one of his school yarns is a pearl. One gets the impression that Wodehouse based his school backgrounds on his own experiences, whereas Hamilton used a vivid and uncannily convincing imagination. Wodehouse tends, probably, to make his boys just a little too clever and rather more than a little too facetious, but no boy reader ever kicked against that sort of thing.

"THE POTHUNTERS," Wodehouse' first school story, is set at St. Austin's. There is a little more knockabout excitement than in later PGW school tales, and this one is really as much a detective yarn as a school yarn.

"A PREFECT'S UNCLE," set at Beckford College, tells of Gethryn who is dismayed at the arrival at the school of his uncle who is four years younger than himself. A delicious dish of reading.

"THE WHITE FEATHER," is played out at Wrykyn. Sheen is a scholar, albeit a rather lackadaisical one, with no interest in cricket or football. He takes up boxing, with surprising results.

"TALES OF ST. AUSTIN'S," is a collection of Wodehouse short school stories, introducing such popular characters of Edwardian times as Pillingshot and Charteris. Some near-perfect little yarns.

Each book, for some obscure reason, contains the same "Afterword," running to several pages. It is a pleasant look at Wodehouse, the man, but nobody really wants it four times.

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JOHN FINNEMORE AND TEDDY LESTER

by C. Rowe

As many readers will know and perhaps some will recall, there ran in the Boys' Realm in the first few years of the century, a sequence of serials about the boys of Slapton School.

These were later published by Messrs. Chambers in book form, reprinted many times and reissued by Latimer House after the second World War.

The chief protagonist was Teddy Lester, and his name appears in four of the titles. He appears in the first tale, "Three School Chums," as a small boy, pale and long faced, looking as meek as a sheep, but beneath this innocent exterior there resided a talent for liveliness, an ability to exploit incidents for fun, and a capacity to earn himself the friendship of many school fellows as he made his way up the school by his stalwart good fellowship, his great ability at cricket, and rugby, and his powers of reasoning.

The first story introduces also Tom Sandys and Arthur Digby, older boys (the chums with Teddy) who are cast in the same mould.

The events are cricket and rugby thrillers, with Sandys a good opening bat and Captain of his house, and a triumphant three quarter.

Bullying is put down and Tom is saved from expulsion over a missing exam paper, in a great climax.

The second tale "His First Term," introduces Ito Nagao, a small Japanese boy who chums up with Teddy and proves a valiant adjunct to Jayne's House by his development with Teddy as superlative half-backs in the Rugby XV. Poaching and trespass, with a feud with the local Baronet, Sir Jasper Popham, provides a diverting theme, and the winning of the House Rugger Cup provides a stunning climax.

In the third volume "Teddy Lester's Chums," the stuttering Jimmy West, the Bat, cockeye appears. He is called Bat because of his flailing arms as he strives to spit out his words - also because of his flying arms as he bowls his devastating left handers, and cockeye because of his terrific squint. A most notable character. Cricket and Rugby again to the fore. But the main incident is a terrible flood with an heroic rescue by Teddy and Ito, and Jimmy. Teddy wins a great cross-country race, but the theft of the medal he won provides a further most interesting

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couple of chapters.

In "Teddy Lester's Schooldays," Tom Sandys has become Captain of Slapton. In this story the Bedlington Club of Knots is put down, and in revenge Teddy is accused of theft of the President's gold badge, but cleared by the intelligence of Ito. A day beagling provides an unusual event for the run of most school stories, and a terrible episode of drunken and mob attack on river wardens, foiled by the steadfast trio, is a most compelling read.

"Teddy Lester In The Fifth." Tom Sandys and Arthur Digby have left for Oxford and after a deplorable cricket start to the season, Teddy is made House Captain and welds a fine side together. Whilst in this tale as in earlier ones, there are misadventures by sea and in caves, one of the finest cricket episodes written by Finnemore (and I class him with Pentelow for his knowledge of the game) is when the three play for Sir Jasper Popham's Coventry House XI, in a two-day match, filling in when a car crash incapacitates the original players.

C. B. Fry captains the side they play for and after Teddy (by accident in last) helps Fry almost to save the follow on by making 40 runs, Fry takes him in to open when they do follow on and they put on 150 before Teddy is out for 54.

Colin Blythe, George Gunn, J. W. H. T. Douglas and Reggie Spooner, all play and are shown in characteristic vignettes.

"Teddy Lester, Captain of Cricket." This tale, published in 1916, shows Teddy at the head of the school with his faithful chums, and apart from the commanding interest of the great game, wherein a new boy Frank Sandsy, Tom's young brother, plays a tremendous part as a great googly bowler, a spy episode brings out once more the character and resource of the hero.

All in all these tales to my mind are among the finest I have ever read in these genre, and contain all the original thrill whenever I re-read them as I do about every two or three years.

What is so compelling to me is the fine language in which the tales are written, clear muscular English, used with power and discernment. This is very true in the dialogue where good English, though schoolboy phrased, naturally, is used, and, thank goodness no Yarroohs! Leggos! etc., that became all too common as schoolboy lingua-franca

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Little has been written in COLLECTORS' DIGEST about that once popular publication, YOUNG FOLK'S TALES, that began about 1906, and finished at the dawn of World War One. Recently I was given a copy of YOUNG FOLK'S TALES, number 171, published in March, 1911.

A list of titles from number 131 to 177, is given on the inside green back cover page, but there is no mention of the popular Prince Pippin until number 165. Another character called Mabel, who shared the honours in the attractive little paper with Prince Pippin, was apparently introduced in number 152 ("Mabel in Funnyland").

Three new numbers of YOUNG FOLK'S TALES were issued each month, but the tales do not appear to have been complete in each volume. The one I have has an introduction, and continues on from number 168. It seems one Prince Pippin yarn, and one about Mabel and an issue concerning no set character were the rule from number 165.

There can be no doubt that Prince Pippin (generally referred to as "our hero" on nearly every page) and Mabel were the mainstays of the 50-page penny publication, but were their adventures continued as serials for their all too short life time?

James Henderson and Sons of Red Lion House, were the publishers of YOUNG FOLK'S TALES, and they also printed the popular comics LOT-O-FUN and COMIC LIFE, but no mention is made of them in several advertisements in the TALES. There is, however, an advert. for the NUGGET LIBRARY, and I was surprised to see that the paper had reached number 181. The titles given were 179: "Tufty on the Track," a rattling school tale. 180: "Jeff Blundell and the Three Patrols," a boy scout tale. 181: "Three Red Men," an interesting school tale. The Gibson series of postcards were also given a half page boost.

Soothing syrups, Steedman's Powders, cough cures and Robinson's Patent Barley made up the balance of the advertising.

Even today YOUNG FOLK'S TALES is a most attractive paper, and I presume it was very much sought after in the years I have mentioned. I wonder why it did not have a longer life - can anyone enlighten me?

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OLD BOYS' FAVOURITES AND  
CHILDREN'S TELEVISION

by L. Wormull

News that Kipling's Elephant Boy is to be made into a series for children's television prompted me to muse on our own treasure-house of potential for the medium. I became convinced that many of the stories and characters we loved as kids could be brought to life on the small screen, and, with this in mind, I have been looking at a few old favourites which strike me as having the right ingredients for viewing.

First, a quick look at the lucky ones. With a lifetime of film experience behind them, Sexton Blake and Tinker were an obvious choice for the set. With the small screen saturated with a kind of vulgarity in modern crime detection, I think there will always be a place for the old-world charm as personified by the youthful Tinker and his celebrated 'Guv'nor'. Another victory for our sleuths, despite the meagre ration to date. Then there was the BILLY BUNTER SHOW some years back. A personal triumph and joy for his creator, though shattered illusions for many of us. Which is not to belittle the fine performances of Gerald Campion and Kynaston Reeves as Bunter and Quelch. No, the Owl seemed better suited to fiction than Show Business, and there we'll leave him. Had C. H. not been so obsessed with his star creation he might have heeded other dependents tugging at his coatsleeves ...

My sights are focussed on those Hamilton scripts which took him far, far away from the playing fields of Kent to those idyllic islands in the South Seas. Yes, you've got it: KING OF THE ISLANDS. What a title and material for children's TV! As a kid from the Old Kent Road, how I thrilled to those tales of Island Paradise, with Ken King and Kit Hudson in their ketch, Dawn, coming to grips with those rascally copra traders. Not forgetting Koko the Kanaka bo'sun and all those other lazy Kanakas chewing betel nut (whatever that is) under the gently swaying palms. What authentic atmosphere, but let Hamilton himself describe it ...

"Like a yellow sickle the moon hung over Lalinge. The lagoon lay like a sheet of molten silver. Tall palms nodded against the blue of the sky, and from the palms came the sound of music and laughter, where a crowd of natives, in white lava-lavas with scarlet hibiscus-

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blossom twined in their dark hair, were dancing."

Dig out those B. F. L.'s of 1934-35 and you will find it all there in "King Of The Islands," "The Lost Lagoon," "The Haunted Island," "Wild Man Of The Islands." A winner for the box, I predict.

Next, the Westerns. Ever seen a Boy Outlaw on children's telly? The odds are you haven't. Then how does the ADVENTURES OF THE RIO KID strike you? A more tricky one this as it would have to be American-made to get the expertise and setting. The mind boggles at the thought of these fine tales of the Rio Grande coming over on colour television. Never mind about the kids - I'd be there! Why didn't someone ever tell Hamilton to exploit these other fields of writing? John Wayne's latest going the rounds is The Cowboys, showing the tough hombre in charge of a training school for tenderfoots. Original idea? Don't made me laugh! Turn back the Thomson pages to pre-war and you will find THICK EAR DONOVAN taming his bunch of raw recruits, while over at the COLLEGE AT CALAMITY CREEK they were even teaching sons o' gunfighters. Material here for a comedy 'dude ranch' if anyone is interested.

Hotspur is currently featuring THE BLACK SAPPER, that great hit from Rover days. Here he is in modern guise among the picture strips, sporting a laser gun and fighting international crime; a changed image to the one we knew. His famous burrowing machine, now named The Worm, has modern refinements like remote control and scanning apparatus. It was indestructibly made of the toughest and lightest metal ever manufactured. I think the kids would love this denizen of the earth on any 'channelling.' For Black Sapper, opportunity knocks!

My thoughts now turn, as they must, to those cobbled streets of Old London, where dimly-lit passage-ways and swirling mists create the perfect setting for THE PHANTOM OF CURSITOR FIELDS. In my view, this should have been screened long ago. Imagine what fun and games modern camera techniques can play with this one. It took Bullseye and the police 61 weeks to lay this most original of ghosts. A real tingler for youngsters of all ages.

The sky's the limit for my next series, based on those demons of the air in their weird and wonderful flying machines, hell-bent on making this planet of ours, and Britain in particular, a most undesirable place to live in. Like Heinz they came in several varieties, so it's a case of take your pick. My personal choice goes to COMMANDER STEEL out of Startler who, with two young heroes out to bring him to justice, provided exciting adventures of a most unusual kind.

Naturally, Edwy Searles Brooks has a place in all this. Had TV been around in his early days it seems certain the indefatigable Bob Blythe would have had little to report in the way of failure. His fantastic plots were ideally suited - still could be - to the medium. We know by heart Professor Challenger's quest to the Lost World without even reading the book. What we haven't seen is the St. Frank's party doing their thing in uncharted lands. And with youth on their side, plus the intrepid Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrmore, and Unlosi, what wonderful prospects for young viewing.