

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOLUME 28 No. 332

AUGUST 1974

Have a chat with Charlie, the Comical Commissionaire. You'll find him on p.17 **G.**



No. 68, Vol. 2.

April 30, 1961.

## BEN TURPIN & CHARLIE CONKLIN

The Paramount Mack-Sennett Nirth Makers.

This Week's Film: "A SPECIAL AT-RACK-TION."



1. Oh, I say! Oh, what a new-looking little lady she's! And Ben and Charlie thought so, too. They did indeed, indeed they did. In fact, said Charlie and the bank ship, and he said, "I'm off home to write to her. I am!" Oh, yes, you'll said Ben. "Oh, all right, my because brought. Oh, you where little-idea? Well to her, will you? Where her?" said he wittily.



2. Here, if the lovable spiritual story with them. How have old Charlie something the typical. And while she was each. In great words to be. And he says to Ben: "Oh, Ben!" "Charlie!" says Ben. "I will get out it some Charlie, and make his feel absolutely non-proper a great! I... if need and shall be done!"



3. He with old Charlie was concluding his speech with a flourish, Ben stopped out and struck the little newspaper into the side and saw that paper box. And that's that! "reached Ben." And now to meet Charlie and the commissionaire. He'll be gone, around the corner. Next day Ben. Ben...? Agree! what? Right!



4. Great! To see! Enter Charlie, with letter flowers. Ben second chapter. "Oh, yes! Charlie, sitting with letter side-let. I wonder, say he. I wonder when I shall get a reply from her?" "The day, how I love her." And at the time old Ben was around the corner doing the secret chuckle. "I will..." and Ben. "In extra... of number of no page 10."

16p

THIS MONTH'S SPECIALS

Vol. 1, School & Sport, 1921/2, No's 1-22. Virtually a mint volume. (Recently bound in dark brown cloth, gilt lettering.) A chance to obtain this very scarce volume with Hamiltonia. Best offer.

Nelson Lee. Old Series.

$\frac{1}{2}$ -yearly volumes, recently bound in navy blue cloth, gilt lettering on spine.

213 - 238; 239 - 264; 265 - 290; 291 - 316; 317 - 343;  
344 - 369; 370 - 395; 396 - 421; 422 - 447; 448 - 473;  
474 - 499; 500 - 525; 526 - 551; 552 - 568.

Over 800 o/s loose copies available. Many bound volumes 1st, 2nd and 3rd New Series and over 1,000 loose copies.

Early Gems. Some more of these. Mint covers, green cloth, gilt lettering.

$\frac{1}{2}$ -yearly volumes, 465 - 698. £24 per volume. 6 volumes only.

Thomsons. 17 volumes post-war only. These are just a few of the items from my very large stock.

Come and pay a visit, you are very welcome, but please advise first!

Collections urgently required. I will top offers already received! Let me know your requirements, I may be able to help.

**NORMAN SHAW**

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# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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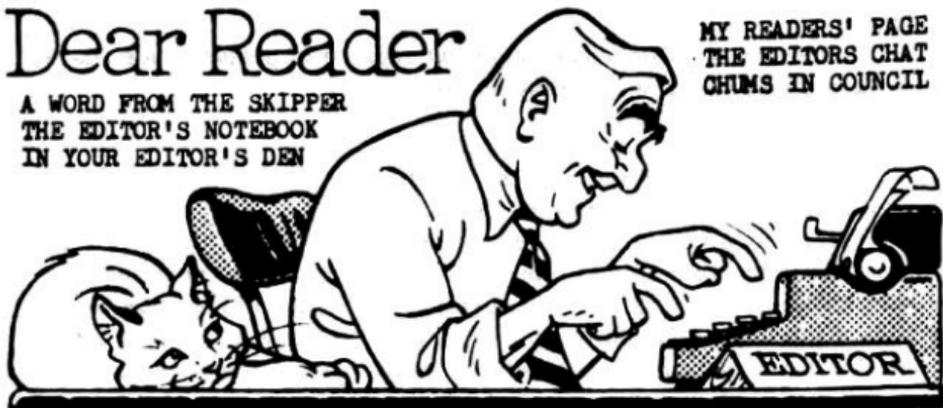
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## Dear Reader

A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER  
THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK  
IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

MY READERS' PAGE  
THE EDITORS CHAT  
CHUMS IN COUNCIL



### "CHIPS"

Perhaps some of you, on a recent Sunday, sacrificed a couple of hours of watching cricket, as I did, to enjoy the TV presentation of that beautiful film "Good-Bye Mr. Chips." How superbly the whole thing was acted, and how splendidly the school scenes were handled! How sad that they've lost the art or the will to make films like that masterpiece of

thirty odd years ago.

"I know the world has changed," said Mr. Chips, when the new Headmaster tried to persuade him, unsuccessfully, to adopt modern methods of teaching. "I've seen old traditions die, one after the other. Dignity, beauty, decency --"

Like Mr. Chips, we ourselves have seen plenty of worthwhile traditions die.

That film was released in 1940. Then, I had recently seen it done as a play at "Q" Theatre. Strangely enough, there was more in the play - a long one - than in the film. So, when we booked the film in "the smallest cinema in the world" its effect was a little blunted for me. I have seen it many times since, and it grows in stature to one of the finest of all time.

The lad, Terry Kilburn, who played four generations of the Colley family, appeared in quite a few M. G. M. specials. I wonder what became of him.

I seem to be often wondering what became of people, these days. Must be a sign of old age creeping on apace.

#### JOBS FOR THE BOYS

Last month I queried the ethics of presenting Jack, Sam & Pete tales other than under the name of Clarke Hook.

Mr. Chris Lowder, in a letter, an extract from which appears in our "Postman" column this month, suggests that some friend of the editor of the B. F. L. was given the job of updating the old stories, and paid handsome sums for doing nothing of any consequence. Mr. Lowder adds: "Clarke Hook, having vanished from the scene some years previously (and how we wish we could discover what happened to him!) would be in no position to argue that his stuff had been stolen from him; not that it was his, anyway, since, like all writers, he'd already signed it away to the A. P. years before."

Charles Hamilton once spoke of a form of endorsement to A. P. cheques, by signing which a writer relinquished all rights to a particular story. Presumably, that did not mean characters. According to Hamilton, he sold his Greyfriars rights in 1921, when he needed cash for some purpose or other, but he always asserted that he never sold his

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rights in Billy Bunter.

The latter claim would seem to be substantiated by the fact that, soon after the war, he wrote a number of stories introducing Bunter, though he was unable to write Greyfriars stories for a time. Charles Hamilton himself told me, when I visited him once, that he was paid two guineas a week to allow Bunter to be presented in strip cartoon form in Knockout. He chuckled and said: "Every little helps."

In addition, the producers of the Bunter plays in London at Christmas time, years ago, had to pay Charles Hamilton a fee for the privilege of staging Bunter.

### THOSE LETTERS

This month we send you the order form for the forthcoming little book of "The Letters of Frank Richards". The work is in similar format to the C. D. Annual. The letters, written by the famous author, cover a period of just before the end of the war until just before he died some fifteen years later. They have all been voluntarily loaned by their owners for inclusion in this little publication, and they touch on a variety of subjects and show Frank Richards in varying moods; sometimes a trifle truculent, sometimes fatherly.

The edition is very limited, owing to the difficulties in publishing anything in these uncertain days. If you are ordering, and I hope many of you will give the venture your support, it will help considerably if you will order early. All being well, publication date will be some time in September.

THE EDITOR

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### DEATH OF E. L. McKEAG

It is with very deep regret, that I have to announce the death of Mr. E. L. McKeag, an old friend of mine, at the age of 78. "Mac" as he was affectionately known to all, was very much connected with the old papers. For a time he was editor of SCHOOLFRIEND and SCHOOL-GIRL, handling the Cliff House and Morcove tales, as well as being a prolific writer for boys and girls. He wrote over 300 Colwyn Dane detective stories in The Champion, and devised the "Come Into The Office Boys and Girls Feature" in the Magnet. Extremely friendly, co-operative,

always ready to introduce me to fellow editors/artists/contributors, I owe a lot to "Mac" and he will be sorely missed down Fleet Street as well as by my humble self.

W. O. G. LOFTS

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## DANNY'S DIARY

AUGUST 1924

Rookwood, in the Boys' Friend, started off with "Cuffy Chips In", a sequel to last month's tale. Sir Theophilus Pratt wants to find the young hero who rescued him from a footpad in the wood. Sir Theo sends a presentation watch for the hero - if he can be found. Peele claims it. But then Cuffy admits that it was he, Cuffy, who rescued Sir Theo by falling on the tramp out of a tree - by accident. Good fun.

"Rookwood Scouts at Wembley" was just another slight topical tale, to cash in with the scouts being at the Wembley Exhibition. Then the start of the holiday series. "Lovell's Great Bargain" was a motor-scooter which he bought for £9, thinking it would be useful on their hiking holiday. Lovell rides the scooter without a licence, but a bobby stops Lovell. Luckily, the bobby is Jimmy Silver dressed up.

In "On The Open Road", Lovell gave honest John a couple of bob to fetch him a gallon of petrol. It turned out to be water. Then Honest John stole Raby's bike, but Jimmy and Lovell got it back.

Finally, "Stop, Thief!" Honest John, still on the scene, now stole the motor-scooter. But Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's are also on a hiking holiday, and Gussy buys the motor-scooter from Honest John. Then the two hiking parties meet.

The series continues. I love it.

I like the Sexton Blake stories which introduce Granite Grant, and I bought one this month in the Union Jack. It was called "The Mystery of the Random Bullet", and it was good, though it did not bring in Mlle. Julie who is a favourite of mine.

There has been a bad accident in Worcestershire. A charabanc crashed into a wall in a place called Blackley, and seven people were killed.

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I don't know whether Mr. Brooks, the writer of the St. Frank's stories, lacks anything, but, if so, it is not a vivid imagination. The new holiday series which started last month, has carried on. Sir Crawford Grey, his son and Reggie Pitt, together with Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi have been captured by a mysterious desert tribe. A rescue party of St. Frank's juniors, led by Nelson Lee, sets off to rescue them. They travel on a marvellous ship like an ocean liner, except that it has wheels and goes overland. It is called the 'Conqueror.' And after seeing a mirage, the party find themselves in a large oasis which seems to have escaped from the days of the Emperor Nero. It is complete with chariots and togas, and dens of lions and a fearful ruler named Titus. The true ruler of this remarkable place is named Marcus Phillipus. He seems to have escaped from the book "Quo Vadis".

The titles this month have been "The Ship of the Sahara", "Trapped in the Desert", "Chariots and Gladiators", "By the Emperor's Command", and "Thrown to the Lions". The series continues.

It's all fearfully farfetched, but somehow you can't put it down once you start on it. It only needs a magic wand and a couple of magicians to make it a fairy story - but then, I like fairy stories. Good stuff.

The Magnet started off with the final story concerning the quarrel between Vernon-Smith and Redwing. The Bounder has been dropped from the cricket team, so he does all he can to ruin the term for the rest of the Remove cricketers. In the end of this fine school story, Redwing and Smithy become chums again, and the feud is over. The tale is called "Vernon-Smith's Feud".

Then came "True Blue" which is very funny, though it isn't meant to be. The new boy Thornton, is a great cricketer. The new umpire at Courtfield Council School is named Osborne, and he is a kleptomaniac. He turns out to be Thornton's brother. The umpire gets hit on the head with a cricket ball, and it changes his character for the better. Luckily for us all, Thornton is only a temporary new boy at Greyfriars. Wow!

The remaining 3 Magnets of the month started the summer holiday series, and it is fine. Ali Ben Yusef is "The Schoolboy Arab", the heir to a sheikdom, and the ward of Major Cherry. Ali is expected at Greyfriars, but Temple turns up in disguise and causes plenty of chaos

to set the series going. Next week "The Foe From Africa" is Bou Saoud, the Spahi, who is seeking the wonderful jewel, the Eye of Ahmed, without which Ali would have no proof of his sheikdom. Bou Saoud makes several attempts to get hold of Ali, the Arab schoolboy.

Finally, in "Bound for Africa", Bou Saoud manages to kidnap and carry off Ali from near Greyfriars. Major Cherry decides to go to the Sahara to rescue him, and Harry Wharton and Co. and Bunter go with him. There are some exciting adventures before the party boards a ship at Marseilles, bound for North Africa. Lovely.

It's a coincidence that both the Magnet and the Nelson Lee are running holiday series set in the Sahara.

A bus caught fire at Nuneaton. Eight people were killed and four injured. And Princess Mary has a son which must be exciting news for our King and Queen.

At the pictures we have seen Rudolph Valentino and Mae Murray in "The Cabaret Dancer"; Arthur Wontner in "Eugene Aram"; Ben Alexander in "Boy of Mine"; Ethel Clayton in "If I Were Queen"; Nazimova in "The Red Lantern"; Richard Talmadge in "Daddy's Boy"; Alma Rubens in "Under the Red Robe". A nice lot of films this month.

It has been a mediocre month in the Gem. The holiday series (not by the real writer) about scouts and cadets in camp carried on for two more stories. Lord Conway has a crowd of boys, "mostly from council schools" under canvas, and the St. Jim's scouts and Rylcombe Grammar School cadets are among them. A crowd of names we have never heard of before. First tale "Ructions Under Canvas"; the second one, about the visit to Wembley Exhibition, was "The Great Camp Mystery." At the end, the boys go back to school for the autumn term, and the Head welcomes them. But more mystery. In the next story they are back playing cricket in "Grundy's Chance". G. A. Grundy appeared in a press report as a cricket wonder boy who played a great innings for Abbotsford. So Tom Merry, without showing much sense, lets Grundy play for St. Jim's. But the Grundy in the report was Gilbert, George's cousin and double.

Then another Grundy tale, "Grundy Going Strong", concerning house rivalry. Grundy, by a mistake, locks the Head up in a room.

Finally "D'Arcy's Discovery". The start of another holiday

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series, which seems to be in the middle of it. Gussy, on a hiking tour (mentioned in the Rookwood holiday series) comes across an absconding bank manager. Quite good, but I fancy they have left out an opening tale to this series which goes on next month. They seem to be having two summer holidays this year at St. Jim's (I wish my school did!), but this one is by the real Martin Clifford.

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# BLAKIANA

conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

AN EARLY SEXTON BLAKE AUTHOR

by S. Gordon Swan

A Sexton Blake author who is rarely mentioned in discussions on the Saga was Frank Howel Evans, whose work I first encountered in CHUMS during the Great War. This was a serial entitled "The Real Thing." In Messrs. Lofts and Adley's book, "The Men Behind Boys' Fiction", it is stated that he was "an author who was fond of writing stories of the stage, and who was probably an ex-actor."

As far as I can find, he wrote only four Sexton Blake tales which all appeared in the UNION JACK in the early part of the century. They were:

No. 147	Footlight Favourites
No. 151	The Pierrot Detective
No. 192	The Society Detective
No. 256	Sexton Blake, Chef

Little information seems available about this writer, but there is an interesting item concerning him to be found in PENNY PICTORIAL No. 502, dated 9th January, 1909. Unfortunately this is not a biography nor an interview with him such as that with Cecil Hayter in a later issue, but is an article by Frank Howel Evans himself, headed:

HOW I WROTE MY £100-PRIZE STORY.

THE WINNER IN THE "RED MAGAZINE" COMPETITION  
TELLS OF A PROFITABLE DAY'S WORK.

Alongside the heading is a portrait of the author, typical of the period; he is wearing a wing collar and his face is adorned by a big black

moustache with waxed ends.

The article tells how he bought the first number of the RED MAGAZINE and found that a prize of a hundred pounds would be awarded to the writer of a short story of eight thousand words, which, in the opinion of the editors, was the best of those submitted.

Evans says he was not vitally interested in the competition but thought he might enter it if he got a good idea. He had practically forgotten all about it until one morning, "when, reading my daily paper, I saw the account of a smokeless gun, invented by Mr. Maxim -- the son, I believe, of Sir Hiram Maxim, the celebrated inventor." It occurred to Evans that a smokeless gun ought to provide material for a good story, so on the 6th of June, 1908, in his idea book he entered two words, "Smokeless Gun."

31st August was the closing date for the competition, and it wasn't until the 28th of the same month that he sat down to write the story. He had remembered that only the previous year he had entered a literary competition at the last moment and won a prize of five guineas.

In his own words: "For a long time I could not get the opening sentences -- always, I should imagine, the stumbling-block of the author. But at last they came, and after that, as well as I can express it, the story told itself ... I write on an average a thousand words an hour, and the story took me within a fraction of eight hours to complete, and gave me the least trouble of any story I have recently written."

When a telegram announcing him as the winner was handed to him, his first sentiment was one of incredulity.

This article affords an interesting sidelight on a little-known author, and his concluding words betray a sense of modesty which is not usually associated with members of the acting profession:

"And with that I think I may finish an article which seems to have principally consisted of the personal pronoun."

O IMMORTAL BANK OF SLEUTHS

by Kenneth Bailey

Part 5

THE NEW YORKERS, continued.

There was really a crisis if the bulky form of Nero Wolfe was seen on the New York streets. His aversion to fresh air could be likened

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to the habits of his cherished orchids over which he crooned and fussed much as a father might over a newborn baby. It is therefore evident that Wolfe's attendance at the scene of a crime was a non-event. It is left to his breezy, extrovert assistant Archie Goodwin, legman, errand goer, filing clerk and general factotum, to gather the clues, infiltrate the suspects and deliver his findings to the master who will sift, list, classify and generally shuffle about, until, with a bottle of cold beer to hand, all is clear. Then up to the Orchid rooms to spray the blooms and discuss with Fritz the menu for dinner. During these cases Archie finds himself bemused with no clear idea of what is going on for Wolfe discloses less than most fictional detectives whilst a case is still open. The large sleuth's passion for horticulture exotica is only rivalled by his delight in matters epicurean. He pats his stomach tenderly in joyful anticipation of an imminent repast. His disposition otherwise is usually disgruntled, the eye rather frosty. He gives the impression of a Churchillian moment of displeasure. In direct contrast to Archie he finds the fair sex insufferable and only dire necessity brings meetings with such persons. Rex Stout has given us an unusually unheroic character in this rotund figure of Central European origin. The reader feels that were it not for the ebullient Archie, he might become submerged in the claustrophobic atmosphere of the New York apartment. (Actually, it is an old house of the brownstone era.)

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Ellery Queen, like Vance, appears as a young man of independent means, except that Queen in his early adventures has a precocity, a touch of arrogance in his manner. He is most conscious of the skilled way in which he has conducted a case rather in the manner of a circus ringmaster showing off the artistes at the end of a glittering performance. Queen's cases abound in perplexity, murders occurring in situations where murders cannot possibly be committed. (Has Gideon Fell learned from such bizarre goings on?) But truth will out and Ellery with a brisk polish of his pince-nez will proceed to elucidate. Such is the situation in the 1920's, but twenty years on things have changed. Queen has done much travelling - he has matured.<sup>1</sup> Gone is the impudent manner, he is now a father and the second World War has rocked the nations and perhaps our detective too. For now come some of the best of the Queen cases,

the Wrightsville series. Set in a small upstate town the stories carry a warmth of feeling, engendered perhaps by war's tragedy, the guilty are often war heroes. Queen himself seems insecure in the void that peace has brought and he too becomes emotionally involved with the hunted. The final act brings distaste mixed with sadness.

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There are many more private detectives of whom I have not written, but it is those chronicled here that have made so much impact on my appreciation of the "Who-dun-it" of the pre-private eye era. May the body's dull thud, the hysterical scream, the pistol's crack and the sinister rumble of thunder not be forgotten.

The globe-trotting Special Agent now bestrides the stage. His dossier is more remarkable for its listing of amourous conquests than for its record of successful conclusions to official assignments. But do not despair - the classical sleuth still awaits us on our bookshelves, to take us to the gaunt manor house crouched behind its encircling walls, or to the lonely farm-house among the Northern beatling hills. Between the pages we again hear the pistol's shot, the piercing scream the body's thud and shudder to the sudden icy draught. We see the tell-tale foot-print on the library carpet, the bullet scarred oak panel, the strange motif of the ring on the corpse's finger. Around us rolls the tempest and a harsh blue light reveals the hooded figure on the broad stairway and along the West gallery speeds the rustic constable his thundering boots sounding as a doomladen drumroll. The net closes and the curtain is about to close on the last act as dramatis personae foregather in the booklined library. Do not worry dear reader, our classical sleuth is indestructible.

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S.O.L's for exchange: No's 15, 17, 26, 47, 61, 71, 108, 109, 123, 143, 159, 161, 253, 271, 273, 275, 304, 376, 379, 382, 391, 352, 410. All in good condition, some excellent.  
WANTED: No's 149, 150, 151, 152, 156, 168, 169, 170, 171, 173, 177, 183, 188, 189, 207, 280.

Any three on my exchange list, not splitting serials, for any two on my wants list.

PHILIP TIERNEY

6 ABBEY PARK ROAD, GRIMSBY.

Latest offerings include Skipper and Rover Annuals (1930's), Dandy, Beano, Radio Fun, Film Fun, Tip-Top, Jingles, Chicks Own, Wonder, Comic Cuts, Rainbow, Sun Comet, Wizard, Hotspur, Champion, Adventure, Rover (1946-1952), Merry And Bright (1933), Jingles (1938), Puck (1935), Comic Cuts (1899), Jester (1904), World's Comic (1897), Big Budget (1904), Schoolgirls' Own Annuals (1923-1931), Lot-O-Fun, Comic Life, Big Comic, Sparks, Puck (1914-1918), Union Jack (1894-1930), Nelson Lee (1918-1933), Skipper, Wizard, Hotspur, Rover, Adventure, Startler (1930's), Harpers Young People (USA, 1889-1895), Picture-show Annual (1934), Girls' Own Annual (1903-1907). Send for catalogue of these, and many more. Also available is detailed list of newspapers ranging from "A Perfect Diurnall" (1642) to "Volkischer Beobachter" (Wartime official Nazi Party daily).

## Ed Jones

43 Dundonald Road, Colwyn Bay, LL29 7RE, Clwyd.

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## NELSON LEE COLUMN

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

What about the nonentities that make up the complement of the St. Frank's College I asked myself the other day. What is it like to be a nonentity I wondered as I looked at some juniors whose identity were a mystery to me.

At one time "a full 150 boys had already been named in the school's records by a narrator and this was not counting outsiders", so there were lots more fellows at the college than this.

But how does one get into the headlines? There are several methods if put to the use. You can make enough noise to be noticed. You can exert yourself by demanding this and that. You can be clever at sports -- a truly first class method this of getting into the news. You can be a cad; a bully; a rotter and even a lazy blighter, but you just have

to be different in some way from the silent ones that doesn't attract attention.

Then there are the thinkers. The ones with the ideas. They are always welcome providing their notions are acceptable and workable. But I must also mention another way of getting noticed. Those which are blessed with plenty of money. Just the fact you have plenty of available cash is sufficient to entitle you to be among the notables. Fellows like Singleton, Somerton, Travers, Archie Glenthorne, Nipper, Tregellis-West, Lord Pippinton are some of the juniors who can lay their hands on wealth at any time. Gore-Pearce and Bernard Forrest and a few more of that kind display their riches in too ostentatious a way to get them any respect except from Snipe, Long and a few more.

I spoke to Cyril Conroy of the Remove and asked what it felt like to be a nonentity. This small, good tempered junior, is one of three brothers at St. Frank's; the others being Hubert Conroy of the Sixth and Alfred Conroy minimus of the Third. Hubert is an easy going senior and Cyril is a cornetist, while Alfred prefers to remain in the charge of Willy Handforth.

Cyril Conroy of Study 17 in the East House was not in the least offended at my question. Arthur Kemp, his study mate, is another who has never shone in the St. Frank's firmament.

Conroy's reply, though, has kept me thinking. "Does it matter", was his answer. It was neither a question or a solution to my query.

Does it matter? Well, does it? Is it far better to worry about being a nonentity after school life?

But some boys are born leaders. They just cannot escape the characteristics they are born with; or the environment in which they enter the world.

Would Nipper be possessed with his famous qualities had he not become associated with Nelson Lee? Has Handforth inherited his father's temperament and Horace Stevens his Thespian ability from his pater? Must one remark "of course"?

But there are flaws in this apothecosis that raises young people to high esteem in the public eye because the parents do not necessarily pass on to their children all their finer virtues.

It would certainly appear to be the case by judging the boys of

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St. Frank's. Like father like son seems to be standard reflective description which may ensure entrance to the college. but now and again the flies in the ointment get noticed.

My thoughts turn immediately to juniors like Teddy Long, Enoch Snipe, Gore-Pearce, Forrest, who managed to pass the admittance tests to St. Frank's but failed to reflect the qualities of their parents. Perhaps those qualities are dormant and would show when put to the test although that time has not arrived. That it could arrive is in evidence in the reformation of Ralph Leslie Fullwood.

Well, so much for the notables and the nonentities. I don't think St. Frank's would have it any other way. Life there would be tedious if the juniors and seniors didn't possess different personalities. I mustn't forget the Fags. Led by Willy Handforth their notice is assured.

Some juniors and seniors come out of their shell at times and exhibit attributes hitherto unknown. The name of Timothy Armstrong, of the East House, immediately springs to mind. He shone rather brightly during the time Dr. Stafford was being drugged and the School went on strike.

I voiced my thoughts to Nelson Lee about nonentities in the School and he made the cryptic remark "There's no Saints without a past; and no sinners without a future". With that thought I will close my letter.

"NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN"

by William Lister

It all started with an ugly face! not that you see many ugly faces these days. There are aids to beauty for both men and women, to say nothing of plastic surgery. No, I don't think I have seen many ugly faces. Sometimes because of severe burns or growths a face may look unusual but you soon get used to seeing them around.

However, as I say, it all started with an ugly face - so ugly that when seen on a dark night, it caused quite a panic, and as it led to several attempts at murder and the reported death of Nelson Lee, it was a real evil omen.

"There's nothing new under the sun" so said King Solomon (and he ought to know), I have often been amazed while reading the "Nelson Lee" to see how some of the "plots" have sprung to life more than forty years after. There is the "Communist" element stories, and the

"Barring Out" or school strike stories, and the "Overseas" Tours and the visits to the various parts of the British Isles.

Communism and school strikes and sit-ins and barrings-out are all part of student and school life now. A school strike was a fantastic thing when I was a boy, but today such a plot would be chicken feed. It happens so often.

However, in the "Peril of the Yellow Men", No. 186, Nov. 23, 1929, we meet the Fu Chang Tong, complete with their nasty Chinese tortures and - wait for it - Parcel Bombs! Yes, close on forty-four years ago St. Frank's suffered these miserable things, sent by still more miserable people.

It was due to the original nasty doings of this "Tong" that Nelson Lee and Nipper came to live at St. Frank's and for that reason only, I suppose we must give the "Fu Chang Tong" credit. However, with the passing of the years, new leaders had arisen and decided that Nelson Lee and Nipper should die (to avenge old scores). You know how it is with "Tongs" and "I. R. A's" and other groups of people who are miserable enough to send bombs via the post. They never let things drop. Born with a grudge they die with it.

But now! back to that ugly face - Young first spotted it and then others and they all agreed it was nasty, very nasty, and it was yellow. From that moment and through the pages of about four copies of the "Nelson Lee" those yellow devils (if you will forgive the term) never give up. If it was possible to get rid of our precious pair those Chinese Tong members would have done it, and this is where our parcel bombs come in. Having tried other means of desposing of the two detectives they resort to this.

Nipper received a parcel that the River House boys assumed was a cake and in the scuffle for it it fell down the hill and - boom! Someone then remembered that a parcel had been delivered to Nelson Lee. You can imagine the rush to warn him. However help was not needed. There was that parcel stuck in a bucket of water.

"Have no fear, chaps" said Lee, "I am too old a bird to be caught by such a crude trick."

You can't help feeling sorry for those yellow devils, can you? They never did manage to eliminate their enemy.

Oh! and by the way, if you do receive a parcel bomb I believe you

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haven't to put it in a bucket of water.

However, do get rid of it quickly or let the army do it.

Well, all that forty-four years ago and now we have the I. R. A. Tong sneaking around with parcel bombs, etc.

As Solomon said "There's nothing new under the sun."

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THROUGH OTHER EYES

by Les Rowley

Greyfriars, its Staff and Scholars, as seen by persons in everyday life.

Mr. Joseph Banks

Mr. Banks put down the tankard from which he had rather noisily been imbibing and looked speculatively at me through a pair of extremely bleary eyes. He had closed the door that separated the rest of the "Three Fishers" from the back parlour in which we now stood. I had there traced Mr. Banks only after visiting the "Bird in Hand" and "Cross Keys" at which other venues he also conducted his precarious business.

"And who might you be, asking a man his opinion of Greyfriars School? What business is it of yours if a young gent wants to back his fancy with Lodgey, Hawke, or yours truly? Like as not you'll go straight to the School and tell the Headmaster. I've lost enough business through prefects and masters sticking their noses in where they weren't wanted. Only yesterday young Mr. Vernon-Smith had a narrow escape. Ah! I see you know that name and perhaps you'll be agreeing with me that he is a game young sprig.

"No shortage of cash where young Vernon-Smith is concerned. Pays on the nail he does which is more than can be said of some of his schoolmates. Young fellow by the name of Hazeldene has tried to welsh more than once, and he's not the only one. Older fellows like Mr. Loder and Mr. Carne have tried it on as well, but they soon find that it doesn't do to play that kind of game with Joey. Just let them know that you'll be calling at the School and they'll find the money from somewhere. There have been times when I've reckoned that they're paying debts with money that isn't their own. I'm a honest man, mister, and I tells them to put it back. I don't want Tozer round here, it's bad for trade.

"A man objects to being slandered and libelled. There's that

writing fellow who made out that all the horses I tipped came in last. They never mention the time, three years ago, when Pork Pie romped home at 10 to 1 and I had to move to the next county to avoid paying out. It's always a bit chancey with the gee-gees what with all the fixing that goes on. Now a nifty game of banker or a quiet game of nap, there's no chance about that especially if Joey is dealing. But I make it a point never to try it on with young Vernon-Smith. He's wide, that young fellow.

"Yes. I've met people from the School who aren't sporty types. Like that Mr. Quelch f'rinstance. Came here one day looking for one of his boys - Skinner it was who had just managed to get out by the back door as his master came in at the front. I was all friendly like and offered this Quelch a pint or a drop of the hard stuff. You should have heard him; threatening to have the law on a man. Talk the hind leg off an horse he would.

"There are some young rips that I'd like to meet, one by one, on a dark night. There's five of them who go about in a gang together. Chucked me in a ditch in Oak Lane once, soaking me to the skin in slime and mud. Just because I took a bet from a kid in the Third Form. Some time I'll catch up with them and afterwards their own mothers won't know them.

"Most of all, though, I want to come across a hefty lad named Coker - sometime when I've four or five mates with me. Then I'll show Mr. blooming Coker that it don't pay for him to use his fists on a bloke that's out of condition. I promise you that when we've finished with him ...."

I never learnt what Mr. Banks was promising for at that moment the potboy put his head round the corner of the door and announced that "there's a young gent by the name of Price to see you Joey."

Something of the atmosphere of the place nauseated me and made me feel ashamed to have paid the "Three Fishers" a visit. Perhaps I had been reading too many books lately for when I left it was by the back door, and as I climbed the fence on Oak Lane I looked to my right and my left. Thank goodness there wasn't a beak or a pre' in sight.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 193. THE SCHOOLBOY ARAB

All of Charles Hamilton's series of travel have become period pieces. They must be read as historical novels are read. They are not dated by any style of writing for the most part, any more than the style of a writer of the calibre of Jean Plaidy is dated. From style alone, they could easily have been written this year. But the tales they tell could not occur in the later half of the twentieth century.

With his Sahara series of 1924, fifty years ago, Hamilton commenced his Golden Age of travel stories. True, a year or two earlier he had written the series of Billy Bunter as King of the Congo. That one, no doubt, was popular in its day, especially with younger readers, but it was not really in the same class as the travel tales which were to follow. For one thing, Bunter was so completely repulsive that the reader became irritated; for another, the tales of how Bunter dominated a savage tribe by making the idol speak by way of his ventriloquial gifts, though they were exciting, were too far-fetched; and perhaps, even in 1922, the cannibals in darkest Africa took some swallowing, as it were.

The Sahara series of 1924, was more restrained. Bunter was no less repulsive yet, but, though he was present, he played a minor role for the most part, which was an advantage. Ali Ben Yusef was pleasantly presented, and his constant use of the present participle in his remarks was novel and fascinating, and, even more important, believable. This was very definitely one of those series which did not come alive until the party left England, but it was one long serial story, with the plot developing throughout. It was not a string of episodes, each one complete in itself - a factor which perhaps marred the series in the closing years of the Magnet. Ali Ben Yusef, for instance, was kidnapped in England, and he did not appear again until he turned up in the Sahara, some few stories later.

This was Hamilton's only travel series which introduced the Cliff House girls. Marjorie and Clara were on the spot at Biskra by a device which was not too palpably contrived. Maybe they added to the lustre of this particular series, but I, personally, am glad that they were not

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introduced into any of the others.

The series came alive after the party reached North Africa, and the final three tales in the series are beautifully written, and contain, in their descriptive passages, a good deal of attractive prose.

My own view is that one character alone made the series. Honest Ibrahim! He was a magnificent character study. The party found him ubiquitous, smiling, loquacious, friendly, slyly simply, utterly unscrupulous, cruel, and murderous. Without a trace of mawkishness Hamilton convincingly related how events changed the heart of this Arab and made him ready to die for the members of the party which he had planned to betray.

In my book Honest Ibrahim stole this series. Stole it from under the very noses of Sheiks, schoolboys, schoolgirls, and Billy Bunter.

One can say that of only one other character in the travel series as a whole - the magnificent Soames. It is a question whether any purpose was served by letting Soames turn up again in later series. As for Ibrahim, he had his glorious month in the Magnet of 1924, and then he was gone. But for those who know the Sahara series (and it is not too well known) he is unforgettable.

Political change and what we euphemistically call "progress" have dated the travel series, and made them into period pieces. I believe that even the Congo of glamorous memory has changed its name and is now called the Zaire.

The travel series improved as time passed, until, with the China series, Hamilton reached his zenith in that line. For China was surely the perfect travel series, without one flaw.

But the tales of the Schoolboy Arab were first-class, putting the series into the top drawer. This was the series in which Hamilton used one of his Mazepa sequences, with Bob Cherry, bound on the back of a camel, driven off to be lost in the desert.

Only the slightest touch of theatre in the conversations, when Bob Cherry referred to the "Dastards." Boys didn't talk like that in 1924, if ever. And Major Cherry saying: "Dastards, do your worst!" smacked of the Lyceum of Victorian days.

But that's carping. The Sahara series is memorable, and Honest Ibrahim, the dragoman, goes down as one of Hamilton's finest pieces of characterisation.

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REVIEWSA BARGAIN FOR BUNTER

Frank Richards  
(Howard Baker: £2.75)

Though the dust-jacket of this volume gives the information that the book contains eight short novels (meaning, presumably, eight single complete stories), the star turn on the bill is actually the 3-story series in which Coker is expelled from Greyfriars and makes himself a general nuisance to the powers-that-be before it transpires that Price was the guilty fellow. Packed with incident, including a semi-farcical sequence starring Aunt Judy, it is all great stuff for Coker fans.

The title story, changed from "Billy Bunter's Bargain" for some reason, is good fun in which the fat youth buys a stolen bicycle from Smudge Purkiss. Bunter is also very much in the lead in two tales from the same mould: "Grunter of Greyhurst" and "The Black Prince of Greyfriars". For those who like their school stories in rather more serious vein there is "The Bounder's Dupe" which has Vernon-Smith involved in a feud with his form-master, an excellent story on fairly novel lines.

All the yarns run in sequence from the Magnet's final autumn, a period notable for cover-to-cover Greyfriars stories as they were often called, each one comprising something like 35,000 words.

A pleasant collection with all the famous author's competence and verve. The cover illustrations are by Shields, while Chapman was responsible for the interior pictures.

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UNMITIGATED BLEAT

Father Francis Hertzberg  
£1.10

According to Father Hertzberg, "Holmes has been satirised, cartooned, pastiched and burlesqued by the bushel." Also, it cannot be denied, he has been written about from north, south, east, and west. His fans can never have too much about him. In this, he is a phenomenon something like Frank Richards.

In fact, Father Hertzberg presents three studies of the great detective. It is all extremely readable, and it should find favour with Sherlock Holmes addicts.

The author has obviously put much work and affection into his three studies of Holmes, and the work is neatly duplicated, though a little more care might profitably have been taken with the typing. It can be obtained from Fr. Hertzberg, Our Lady's Presbytery, 48 Shalmarsh, Prospect Hill, Hr. Bebington, Cheshire. An interesting buy for Sherlockians.

THE SHADOW OVER HARRY WHARTON

Frank Richards  
(Howard Baker: £3.20)

From the abstract nature of the title, this volume might contain any one of quite a few Magnet series, though plenty of readers will be relieved that the name of Bunter is not placed over a series in which he did not star. In fact, this is the nine-story Da Costa series from 1928. It is a story out of the very top drawer, showing the famous author at his greatest and best.

The background is the summer term of 1928, with one war a long time passed and another war a long way ahead. Everything in the Greyfriars garden is lovely, and the many delightful cricket sequences enhance the enjoyment.

Da Costa, the Eurasian, has been sent to Greyfriars by Captain Marker. Da Costa's task is to disgrace Harry Wharton so that the Remove Captain loses the fortune bequeathed to him by Mr. Cortolvin. But the rascally Marker has not reckoned on the spirit of Greyfriars and the effect which it may have on the young rascal who has been paid to work for him.

Characterisation is superb, and the plot develops without a wasted word, while the reader is in clover all the time.

This is one of the finest school stories ever written.

The big volume of 9 Magnets has its main story illustrated throughout by Shields at his best. St. Sam's tales are there also if at any time you feel the need of a little light relief.

In short, the Golden Age of the Magnet in a glowing summer.

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IN PREPARATION NOW:

COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL FOR 1974

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMANo. 5. NEWS REELS, SECOND TO NONE, & MONTY BANKS

Now we started to include News Reels in our programmes, and were to continue to do so until about 1950, by which time television had made them superfluous. Our news reels contracts were always with Universal. In silent days it was the Empire News Bulletin, and, after sound came, the Universal News.

An outstanding picture this term was a big British production "Second to None" - tremendously popular in its day. A Gaumont-British release. I saw it on its West End showing at the Gaumont Theatre in the Haymarket - and then booked it. It was a touching story of which I recall the outline. Two children, childhood sweethearts, both orphans, went adrift in a boat, and were picked up by a British cruiser. The girl was adopted by a naval captain, the boy was put at the naval school for the lower deck at Shotley. Years later, the girl married a naval officer, and the broken-hearted lower deck tar was killed in the spectacular naval battle which closed the film. Micky and Aggie Brantford played the children. A striking scene in the training college at Shotley (H. M. S. Ganges) showed the famous high-mast drill, with Micky Brantford apparently standing on the block at the top of the mast. When he grew up and entered the navy, the part was now taken by Moore Marriott who was miscast. Though he was nothing like the age of the old man he portrayed in the Will Hay films a few years later, he was still really too mature for the jolly jack tar. The girl, now grown up, was played by Benita Hume

(wife of Ronald Colman), and the naval officer was played by Ian Fleming, who, many years on, had a part in the B. B. C. serial "The Forsyte Saga". He died only recently.

"Second To None" was a fine British film.

We had our first Paramount film: Douglas MacLean and Shirley Mason in "Let It Rain". Paramount was a delightful firm, of whom I shall have more to say later.

Pathe had now combined with First National, and the firm was now known as First National-Pathe. We had run Pathe serials, but we now ran our first Pathe feature, "Play Safe", a truly superb knock-about full-length comedy, starring Monty Banks, with some really thrilling railway scenes. Banks was an Italian. He had taken his name from his nickname of "the mountebank". He married Gracie Fields, and was responsible for the temporary sagging of her popularity in this country, when, I seem to recall, on the outbreak of war, she joined him in the States. Italy, was, of course, at war with Britain, but his comment "I'm no Englishman" was widely reported and not well received over here. Gracie, as his wife, was naturally in a difficult position.

A pleasant little American sailor film was Billy Sullivan in "Smiling Billy". That came from Wardour Films, and that term, from the same firm, we also showed Billy Sullivan in "When Seconds Count". I daresay I had to book the latter in order

to get "Smiling Billy".

From First National we had Charles Murray and Chester Conklin (two more stars whom F. N. pinched from Sennett) in "MacFadden's Flats", Ben Lyon in "The Perfect Sap", Ben Lyon and Mary Brian in "Behind the Scenes", Milton Sills in "Framed", Richard Barthelmess in "Glitter", Ken Maynard in "Somewhere in Sonora", and Harry Langdon in "Long Pants". From Universal came Hoot Gibson in a western, "The Rawhide Kid".

Just a final thought on Monty Banks and Micky Brantford. Banks's nickname of

"mountebank" suggests that he may not have been a particularly lovable character in real life, but he was a fine comedian in his day. As for Micky Brantford, I can recall him in no other films but "Fifth Form of St. Dominic's" and "Second to None", but he seemed a promising youngster. I wonder what became of him and of his sister Aggie.

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(Another article in this series next month)

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# The Postman Called

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

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton-on-Trent): Your editorial remarks on "Chuckles" very much interested me. I revelled in it as a small boy, although I was browbeaten by my father (not really a tyrannical parent) who considered it "vulgar", and had eventually to change to "The Rainbow", rather to my disgust.

Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy suddenly gave place to a girl named Wendy on the front page adventures with Pongo and Co.: on "Jungle Island". I was shocked and kept pestering the editor to bring them back. At the finish (perhaps others too, wanted them) he compromised by bringing back Breezy Ben alone, and Wendy stayed.

Tales of Teddy Baxter and Co. of Claremont, finished to give place to Dick Royle and Co. of Belminster.

BEN WHITER (London): I am very interested in the Biography of a small Cinema of which some of us older members experienced performances on the occasion of the Surbiton meetings. I remember seeing "Owd Bob" at the Tivoli Cinema in the Strand. Alas, the cinema has gone, I saw many fine films there. Another fine cinema was the New Gallery in Regent Street. Fancy seeing 'Hindle Wakes' and 'The Legend of the Willow Plate' plus Reginald Foort on the organ for a couple of bob.

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As a member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, may I state that my first introduction to the famous detective was the Herlock Sholmes stories in the Greyfriars Herald. Thanks for printing the story "The Missing Cricketer."

LEN WORMULL (Romford): Your correspondent, H. Truscott, claims there is 'no evidence that Langdon's business sense was bad, as far as the making of films was concerned.' Two of Langdon's close associates clearly thought otherwise:

Mack Sennett: "Noting that Langdon had managed to spend the production cost of the first film before it started - Harry suddenly forgot that all his value lay in being that baby-willed boy on the screen and he decided he was also a business man. His cunning as a business man was about that of a backward kindergarten student, and he complicated this with marital adventures in which he was about as inept as he was on the screen."

Harold Lloyd: "He was a fine pantomimist and had all the essentials of success. Unfortunately, he lacked the judgment to decide what he should or shouldn't do. Later on, he became his own boss, and, like many in our business, he was more fit to be the comic than to act as the guiding light. He could have been infinitely greater had he allowed someone else to direct his career."

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): I cannot accept Mrs. Cadogan's contention that Marcia Loftus had been reinstated because she featured in Chas. Hamilton's 1949 book. Quite clearly he was depicting Cliff House in the early nineteen-twenties. How could it be otherwise with characters sporting such names as Gwendoline, Katie, Annabel, and Cissy - hardly trendy names even for the 1930's.

It is a moot point as to which writer might be said to be the definitive voice for Cliff House. Hamilton created the characters, but, as he himself admits, he was never very happy writing about the Cliff House girls. His schoolgirl characters in the Magnet are rather wooden. John Wheway was the writer who most effectively developed the Cliff House character.

I enjoyed Mrs. Cadogan's "Bouderesses and Bitches". She has, however, omitted one prominent bouderess - Rosa Rodworth, who was

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described as the Stormy Petrel of the Fourth. When her head was turned after winning a beauty contest, Laidler changed her hair-style in his illustrations from a severe twenties crop to a fringed affair which doesn't look out-of-date even today.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Did Hamilton ever "admit" that he "was never very happy writing about the Cliff House girls"? If so, when, where, or to whom? It seems most unlikely to me.)

C. LOWDER (London): Hamilton's 'Inspector Pinkeye'. A reasonably inspired guess would be that Hamilton was having a sly dig in the direction of Pinkerton's, the famous American private detective agency.

The 'Gordon Maxwell'/JS & P puzzle has, I suspect, an even simpler, though perhaps rather less honourable, explanation. The 'revisions' on JS & P yarns usually came into two categories: pruning, and updating. A lot of the Clarke Hook verbiage was cut out, and the slang (Pete's dialogue especially -- his Edwardian slang was hopelessly dated in the Jazz Age!) was modernized. It might be argued that a good sub could do that sort of job with his eyes shut. On the other hand, as Bill Lofts, Derek Adley and I have found, some very odd things went on in the old AP -- e.g. an old story is reprinted with a new author's name attached to it. But, on delving around a little, one finds that the name covers someone else entirely, who received a payment (quite substantial, in some cases) for doing little or nothing at all.

H. MACHIN (Preston): Many thanks for the welcome monthly C. D. , for Danny's Diary, and for your own pungent, fascinating Editorials.

By the way, I have been reading the "D'Arcy Runaway" series of 1922. To my surprise I find that one Gem in the series viz No. 755, "The Refugee at Highcliffe" bears no resemblance to the easy-flowing, inspired style of M. Clifford, but reads exactly as you would expect a substitute story to read.

I wonder if any one else has noticed this.

Perhaps this is why "The Refugee at Highcliffe" was omitted from the S. O. Lib. reprint.

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Offers for Boys' Own Paper Annual No. 11 (1888), fair condition. Also Nos. 12, 14, not so good.  
HARRY BROSTER, KINVER, STOURBRIDGE, WORCS.

# NEWS OF THE CLUBS

## SYDNEY, Australia

Numbers were small to enjoy an excellent meal at our June meeting. Each member revealed just how he started collecting Old Boys' Books, and I have always found this a fascinating subject. Long ago, Herbert Leckenby ran a series something the same in C. D. , and there may be an idea here if our editor thinks it worth while.

Other subjects were the merits and drawbacks of book-reading stands, and whether top condition books should be bound, and if so, should they have their edges cut - sometimes savagely I've seen.

Next meeting is on 30th July.

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## NORTHERN

### Saturday, 13th July, 1974

A goodly gathering, in spite of inclement weather, and we were delighted to welcome two visitors from Australia - Arthur and Jean Allison - on holiday for three months.

Jack Allison continued our 'Voice from the Past' series and the voice he chose was that of Jack Wood. Jack recalled the physique and rubicund countenance of Jack Wood, and remarked on his way of beginning a conversation with a giggle. If you had said to him, "You'd better go home at once, Jack, your house is burning down!" he would have replied, "He, he! Oh, is it?"

Jack was well informed on all Hamilton matter, but it was on St. Frank's that he shone.

Jack Allison read from items written by Jack Wood, including a St. Frank's column in a 1957 CD.

Mollie read an excerpt from the first Nelson Lee story. It was written by Dr. John William Staniforth and published in the Marvel in September 1894. Incidentally, said Mollie, there really was a man called Nelson Lee. He was baptised on the day of Nelson's funeral and therefore so called!

Jack Allison presented a quiz compiled by Jack Wood and entitled 'Fun at School'. Time was running out, so we did not record our answers, perhaps fortunately in the circumstances!

Incidentally, I wonder how many of our readers can say off-hand what was Wingate's middle name or what was Nelson Lee's telephone number?

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LONDON

Sunday, 21st July, 1974

That popular upstairs front room at Josie Packman's East Dulwich abode was packed with eighteen happy members on a gloriously sunny afternoon. We were pleased to see Doris Doyle up from Brighton. Roger Jenkins presented a Team Quiz, the teams being captained by Josie Packman and Laurie Peters. Laurie's Team won with 34 points. Josie's team attaining but 25.

A sumptuous tea was provided by Josie with the help of friend Alice, and was consumed in bright sunshine in the back garden. Having driven down from Norfolk, and broken down in Newmarket, the Rev. Arthur Bruning and his family arrived after tea, but in time to hear Winnie Morss's reading of three chapters from Magnet series "Paul Dallas". Excellent dramatic scenes between Redwing and the Bounder being a feature of this 1927 series.

Brian Doyle read an information-packed article by Kenneth Thompson from "Films Illustrated" on the films made featuring Sexton Blake, a valuable reference for the film/detective fan.

Next meeting at 89 Kempe Road, Kensal Rise, N. W. 6, phone 969 4110, on Sunday, 18th August. Please inform Laurie and Gladys Peters if attending.

RAY HOPKINS

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DISPOSAL: Comics - 1954-68. Victor, Buster, Lion, Tiger, Hotspur, Rover, etc., also War, Battle, Air Ace Lib's, all 10p each, or twelve for a £1, post included.

JIM SWAN, 108 MARNE STREET, QUEEN'S PARK ESTATE,

PADDINGTON, LONDON, W. 10 4JG.

Telephone (London) 01-969-6759

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THE HUMAN BOY

by H. Truscott

One of the most undeservedly neglected aspects of our hobby is a collection of stories the title of which is the title of this article. They are neglected possibly because, although they were written originally for a magazine, it was not a boys' magazine as such and died out long ago; I could not say exactly when. However, the stories were published at intervals in book form, under titles such as THE HUMAN BOY, THE HUMAN BOY AGAIN, THE HUMAN BOY AND THE WAR, etc. - five in all. Later Hutchinson's had the sensible idea of issuing all five volumes in one volume of 768 pages. I am lucky enough to possess a copy of this omnibus.

The stories, of Merivale, sometimes known as Dunstan's, after the Head, were written by Eden Phillpotts, a writer who seems to have tackled just about every form of fiction writing one can think of: plays, such as DEVONSHIRE CREAM and THE FARMER'S WIFE; novels, such as the superb set of twenty known as the Dartmoor novels - although there're quite a few concerning Dartmoor which are not in this set; industrial novels, such as THE NURSEY, about the Essex oyster trade around Hythe and Colchester, THE GREEN ALLEYS, which concerns the Kent hopfields, and OLD DELABOLE, which deals with the Cornish slate quarry and its workers; detective and mystery stories, some written under the unlikely pseudonym of Harrington Hext; short stories, which include, in THE IRON PINEAPPLE and PRINCE CHARLIE'S DIRK, for instance, some of the finest in our language; a study of the female criminal mind, in THE BOOK OF AVIS, which is, in my experience, without an equal; books of memoirs and autobiography, poems, fables, fairy stories, and, with Arnold Bennett, two extremely fine collaborated novels, THE SINEWS OF WAR and THE STATUE. In addition to this large output, he wrote, as one of the brightest jewels in his crown, THE HUMAN BOY.

In the late nineteenth century Jerome K. Jerome and Robert Barr (who wrote under the name of "Luke Sharp") founded a magazine devoted to humour, which revived the title of THE IDLER. Their contributors included such notables as G. B. Burgin and Barry Pain; Pain has always been a particular favourite of mine, for a unique type of sardonic-ironic humour to which he alone seemed to have the key. Nonetheless, the

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paper did not last long. It could not have failed on the score of poor quality, but perhaps humour was not wanted then in sufficient quantities to make the magazine pay - maybe twenty years later it would have had a better chance; or perhaps, as with the ill-fated YELLOW BOOK, a quarterly which was in fact a large hard-back book, charging only five shillings, it gave too much for too little. However, Jerome saw the first two Human Boy stories and was so impressed by them that he asked Phillpotts to send him as many as the young author could write.

Phillpotts, who was not, as many have supposed, a Devonian, except by adoption, was born in India and went to a preparatory school in England. He tells us that his schooldays were happy, and that they were reflected in about half of the stories; also that he strove to keep the invented stories realistic, being of the opinion that most schoolboy tales are vitiated by false sentiment and unreality. At the time he wrote this this was certainly true of a great many. "I made my boys tell their own stories", he writes, "and so avoided any danger of the adult version creeping in. Thus these boys are what I know boys to be: creatures distinct from man and nearer by countless years to their rude forefathers than the beings who got them."

The interest of these stories, apart from the fact that, like Wodehouse, Phillpotts manages to provide well-nigh perfect specimens of the short story combined with the suggestion that his narrators are not masters of the art of writing (a really brilliant technical tour de force), is that they are immensely varied; narrators change almost from story to story and the character of each is different and comes through in what they write; the situations are simple and such as could quite easily happen in any preparatory school. A modern reprint of these stories is long overdue. In the meantime, I have noticed that secondhand bookshops, where these can still be found, still have, quite frequently, copies of one or other of the original individual volumes.

A particular favourite of mine is the second story in the first volume, THE HUMAN BOY. This is called THE PROTEST OF THE WING DORMITORY, and is one of the two outstanding barring-out stories I know outside the work of Charles Hamilton. THE PROTEST is like no other barring-out story at all, and is handled efficiently - (by Phillpotts - and, up to a point, by its organisers) in a very short space. One remark

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that especially appeals to me is by West, the narrator: "Though in it, I didn't do any of the big part, being merely one of those chaps who were flogged and not expelled afterwards". What one might call being in the chorus.

Phillpotts related that, due to the success of these stories, an editor once wrote and begged him to write a companion picture of the Human Girl, a request, needless to say, that was declined. "All that the human boy knows of the human girl", wrote Phillpotts, "will be found in my stories concerning him; it is not very much."

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I still require the following S. O. L's and Magnets. Must be in at least reasonably, good condition, and complete. Willing to pay top prices. Schoolboys Own Library, 100, 104, 108, 128, 132, 138, 162, 166, 170, 174, 182, 198, 202, 206, 220, 226, 268, 272, 278, 284, 347, 362.

Magnets - 1365, 1369, 1373, 1374, 1376, 1378, 1390, 1455.

Collectors' Digest for July 1973.

GEORGE LONGMAN

8 PATHFINDER TERRACE, BRIDGWATER, SOMERSET.

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WANTED: Collectors' Digest 1 to 27 inclusive; also Nos. 29, 30, 69. For Sale: 70 assorted copies of C. D. from 1949 to 1963 (or would consider exchange for Holiday Annuals of the years 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1927, 1928, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1935, 1941. Also wanted: Rainbow and Playbox Annuals. All material must be in perfect condition - this is essential.

THROCKMORTON, THE FORSTAL, BIDDENDEN, KENT.

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WANTED: All post-war books by Charles Hamilton (except Bunter); Who's Who of Boys' Writers and Illustrators; Charles Hamilton Museum Handbook, also any handbooks, catalogues, booklets, etc., which involve the hobby.

Above must be in very fine/mint condition, also Floreat Greyfriars Record (your price paid).

MICHAEL SHREEVE, 25 WILLOW DRIVE, RAYLEIGH, ESSEX.

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WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing same of BOYS' FRIEND - issues between Nos. 1182 and 1256. Good copies essential.

ERIC FAYNE

EXCELSIOR HOUSE, CROOKHAM RD., CROOKHAM, HAMPSHIRE.

DEATH OF SID G. HEDGES

Prolific author Sid G. Hedges died in July at the age of 77. He had around 100 books to his credit, among them boys' school stories such as "The Boys of Pendlecliffe School" and juvenile mysteries, including "The Malta Mystery". He was a regular contributor to "Boys' Own Paper" and many other magazines. He was probably best-known for his many books and articles on swimming and diving (his books on this subject alone sold more than a million copies) and I well remember teaching myself to swim and dive entirely with the aid of his books, as a schoolboy of about 12. He wrote other works on a wide variety of topics, including youth clubs, Sunday School work, music, indoor games, ice-skating, outdoor sports and travel. He was a regular broadcaster in the 1930's. His jobs before, and during, his busy literary career, included those of carpenter, assistant in a draper's shop, soldier, violinist, music teacher, lecturer and journalist. He was born in Bicester and lived there for most of his life.

BRIAN DOYLE

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"THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY"

Recently, a neighbour of mine (who incidentally worked with C. B. Fry on the staff of the 'Strand' and 'The Captain') stopped me one day on my way to the post-box to say, "You collect "Gems" and "Magnets" don't you? The junk-shop in Mortimer Street has a pile for sale at 2p each." It was too late to go that day but I went to the shop the following day, only to find that they had already been sold. The shop owner had realised the true value (she said) and had disposed of them to a London dealer! I asked how many there were and she indicated a pile about 18" tall and said there were also hundreds of "comics" too. They had been found in an attic of a house being cleared of unwanted furniture and junk! I've been kicking myself ever since.

J. YORKE ROBINSON

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OUT SOON: THE LETTERS OF FRANK RICHARDS