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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

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NEW YEAR

WITH

YOUR

EDITOR

PRUNING CHRISTMAS  
ROSES

Last month we referred to the pruning of the famous old Gem story, from the Double Number of Christmas 1911, when it was reprinted in 1934. I made sure that no other Christmas story received the same treatment. In September 1935, I contacted Mr. Down, the Gem editor, and suggested to him that "Nobody's Study" should be presented as a "cover-to-cover" story. This was



done, and, as a result, that famous tale received only minor pruning.

In September 1936, I again contacted Mr. Down, this time to suggest that "The Mystery of the Painted Room" should be presented in two issues. This was done, and so "Painted Room", the most famous of all Gem Christmases, was not shortened at all.

A last thought on "The Ghost of St. Jim's" of 1911. My research shows me that, down the years, this was the most reprinted of all Gem stories.

### MORE ABOUT COMICS

In Guildford, just before Christmas, I saw aprons for sale, each bearing a large reproduction in colour of the covers of, respectively, Tiger Tim's Weekly and Puck. They were most impressive. Mr. Denis Gifford, an expert on comic paper history as well as on things which look and sound familiar, tells us that December was the centenary of the British comic paper. So perhaps the apron manufacturers were more on their toes than we were.

Mr. Gifford also gave us the information, further to our editorial last month, that Dan Leno was the first real person to become a character in the comic papers, and, further to last month's "Small Cinema" article, added the information that Walter Forde featured in a picture strip in Kinema Comic.

### THE TIMES WE LIVE IN

There has been a nationwide survey of the reading habits of 8,000 children, and it emerges that the favourite book among 14-year olds is one comprising an amalgam of loathesome violence, constant sexual activity, and foul language. I find it a horrifying picture of this land of ours, but it has been obvious for years that cheap pornographic books, or even more expensive ones, are bound to get into the hands of children who are seldom short of money today.

Possibly this is another example of what the planners and plotters call "Progress" in the Seventies.

THE EDITOR

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# DANNY'S DIARY

JANUARY 1925

What weather for the new year! There have been heavy gales and swamping rain. Out in the west country the Severn rose and the streets of Worcester have been flooded. And then on the 10th of the month there came the densest fog ever known in Britain and it lasted for three days.

A great Rookwood month in the Boys' Friend. In "The Haunted Tower", Harry Wharton is spending part of the Christmas vac with Jimmy Silver at the Priory. He rescues Lovell when Arthur Edward is attacked by the escaped convict, Jabez Wilson. And the occupant of the haunted tower of the title turns out to be the convict, and, through Wharton, that gent, in his broad arrows, is handed to P. C. Blumpy of Hadley Priors.

Another holiday tale was "All Square". The Fistical Four threw a snowball at a neighbour of Mr. Silver's. Jimmy rescues a dog which has fallen down a pit and gone through the ice. The owner of the dog comes to thank the Fistical Four, and, particularly, Jimmy who went down the pit to rescue the dog. And the dog owner is the neighbour at whom they threw the snowball.

Back at Rookwood, a great couple of tales. Real top-notchers. Lovell crosses swords with an unpleasant new maths master named Mr. Skinforth, who has replaced Mr. Bull. And in the delicious first of the pair, "Up Against the Fistical Four", Lovell discovers that the new master has a case packed with banknotes. In the sequel, "The Rookwood Detective", the Fistical Four are in Bunbury to see a football match, but Lovell gets on the track of Mr. Skinforth in that little town, and finds the master changing banknotes at every shop. They turn out to be "stumers", as the police call them, and Mr. Skinforth gets the handcuffs.

Final Rookwood of the month, "Bulkeley's Enemy" was Carthew. Bulkeley is in for the Head's Greek prize, and Carthew, mad with the Captain, destroys Bulkeley's work - and then finds himself locked in to await Bulkeley's return. Awful for Carthew.

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Australia has won the 3rd Test Match against England. Hard luck for us.

The wonderful Harry Wharton series has continued in the Magnet. It must be the very finest story which the old paper has ever given its readers. It's awfully painful, but they say there is no pleasure without pain, and this one is giving me a lot of pleasure. In "The Downward Path" the new term has started at Greyfriars, and Harry Wharton starts off with plenty of trouble. Mr. Quelch is sad that the fellow who was once his most promising pupil is now becoming the most unruly. In the next story "The Rebel of the Remove", Wharton, who has lost all his old friends, lost the esteem of his Form-master, and now loses the junior Captaincy, is going from worse to wusser.

In "Slacker - and Captain", Wharton slyly pulls the strings so that Mauleverer becomes the new captain, with Wharton the power behind the throne. Magnificent stuff. In "Harry Wharton's Downfall" (for some unknown reason this Magnet has a Macdonald picture on the cover, though Mr. Chapman does the interior pictures), Mauly sees at last how the unscrupulous Wharton is using him - and Mauly resigns the Captaincy. Bob Cherry becomes the new skipper, fights with Wharton, and beats him. Last of the month, "Down and Out", brings to Wharton the realisation that he must lose in his fight against Authority. And Wharton has a narrow escape of getting the chopper. It's awfully sad and depressing, but a simply wonderful tale. The series continues. I wonder whether Harry Wharton & Co. will ever be the same again.

A marvellous new Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie story in the Sexton Blake Library. It is entitled "The Mystery of the Lost Battleship", and the action is partly in London and partly in Havana. Tinker plays a big part in this one, and it's a terrific detective story. One of the best Blakes ever, methinks.

At the pictures this month we have seen Betty Balfour in "Reveille"; Lew Cody and Adolphe Menjou in "Rupert of Hentzau"; Betty Compson in "Miami"; Mary Pickford in "Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall". I didn't like this Mary Pickford one, for she seems to be in the wrong kind of part for her. Also Mae Murray in "Mademoiselle Moonlight"; Tom Mix in "The Last of the Duanes".

Some good tales in the Nelson Lee Library. In "The Schoolboys"

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Pantomime", the juniors, visiting London to see their old friend Lord Dorrimore, went to see the panto "The Babes in the Wood". Later they are the guests of Jack Grey at Grey Towers and they give their own version of the panto with startling results. This was the 500th number of the Nelson Lee.

Now, after quite a few good single stories, we have a new series, the opening tale being "The School of Hidden Dread". The series is about Tommy Watson, who finds his family in financial difficulties, and goes as a pupil to a sinister and mysterious place known as the Moat Hollow School. It's intriguing reading.

There has been a remarkable and tragic accident in Northern Ireland. A train crossing a viaduct in the very bad weather was blown off the lines, and part of the train fell into the valley below.

Two good stories to start the Gem. These were "The New Boy's Secret" and "Manners' Feud." Manners falls foul of a new boy named Torrence, but not on account of Manners Minor for once. Manners finds out the new boy has been named Parkinson, and that he went to Ridsdale School. Actually Torrence had been adopted by his uncle and changed his name by deed poll.

The rest of the stories were not by the real Martin, and were rather poor. "The Prefect's Dilemma" was about Knox who hid an old man's money for a joke. "The Knight of the Pump" was Gussy who protested when a Mr. Pepper put a padlock on some lady's out-door pump. And "Trimble the Hero" was a weird affair in which Trimble claimed to have assisted Lord Eastwood when that gentleman was way-laid on a lonely footpath. This tale will have a sequel next month, unfortunately.

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FOR SALE: C.D. Nos. 23 - 36; 61 - 109; 117 - 119; 122 - 153; 15p. 155 - 204: 12p. Specials Nos. 100, 134, 150, 200: 30p. B. B. L. 2nd No. 459: 40p; 3rd 12, 29, 81, 82, 86 - 91, 94, 104, 109, 111 - 120, 122, 124 - 134, 136 - 138: 30p; 68 8d iss at 25p; 39 9d issues at 25p; 78 10d issues at 15p; 94 1/- issues at 15p. Series almost complete from 149 - 526. P. & P. extra.

MATHESON

CLEISGAIG, LANGWELL CRES., WICK, CAITHNESS.

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

P. TIERNEY writes:

Both the first and second "Wharton-Rebel" serials are great favourites of mine. I cannot decide which I prefer of the two.

But I must fall out with the statement that in the first serial there was no happy ending.

I do not possess the serial in original Magnets but have beside me the concluding lines of the S. O. L. reprint:

"When the election came along Harry Wharton, once captain of the Remove, stood for re-election with his Form-master's full approval. The Co. backed up their candidate enthusiastically, and most of the fellows rallied round, following their lead; and it was so clearly going to be a walkover for Wharton that no rival candidate took the trouble to put up in opposition. And when the election was over there was a roar of cheering in the Rag for the captain of the Remove - Harry Wharton.

\* \* \*

"It was over, Harry Wharton had been through dark days, but he had won through, and all was well with him again. No longer the rebel of the Form, no longer the "worst fellow at Greyfriars" once more captain of the Remove, it only remained for Harry Wharton to strive to keep his resolves for the future."

The end

If that was not a happy ending, what would have been?

(Well, without something of the sort, the Magnet could never have returned to normal. - ED.)

\* \* \* \* \*  
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G. FISHMAN, 200 CORBIN PLACE

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Such was my fascination for the Walt Disney films in the thirties, that when the first issue of the new coloured comic MICKEY MOUSE WEEKLY appeared on the 8th February, 1936, it was natural that I should buy it. Soon it was one of the highest coloured comic circulations between the two World Wars. I continued to purchase it weekly for some time, until my tastes became more mature.

Launching a weekly Disney comic in England was due to the shrewd business judgment of William B. Levy, European Sales Director of Walt Disney Merchandise, but we must start at the beginning to get our history into its correct sequence . . . .

Following the first public showing of the Mickey Mouse film "Steamboat Willie" in 1928 (for the record there were actually two pilot films before this date, the first entitled "Plane Crazy") and the fantastic success of this new cartoon character who probably replaced Felix the Cat, it was inevitable that commercialisation of Mickey and the other Disney characters would follow. This was mainly in the form of newspaper strips: comic magazines: and other publishing media. America, of course, the birth place of the comic strip, led the way with MICKEY MOUSE BOOK (1930), MICKEY MOUSE (1931-4), MICKEY MOUSE MAGAZINE (1933 etc.), whilst England's first contribution was the famous Dean MICKEY MOUSE ANNUAL, started in 1930. Apart from a few syndicated local newspaper children's supplements such as in The Bristol Evening World there was nothing on a National scale.

It was probably seeing the huge sales of the Amalgamated Press coloured comic that gave Levy the idea that there should be a National weekly comic for children featuring all the lovable characters. Thousands of children visited the cinema and saw the Disney cartoons. What more natural for them than to buy a weekly comic and read further of their many exciting adventures? His first task was to recruit a staff, and an advertisement appeared in the Daily Telegraph in the Summer of 1935, inviting applicants, and those with cartoon experience or talent to call for an interview in a small office in Shaftesbury Avenue.

There were many hopeful applicants, all interviewed by Mr. Levy, and his financial assistant a Mr. Rosenberg. Not surprising was

the first appointment of Wilfred Haughton as the principal Disney artist, as he had been drawing Mickey Mouse in the Dean Annuals. He had also achieved some fame for his comic strip in The Daily Herald, which featured two negro children called "Ebb and Flo". He was also a clever inventor making experimental puppet films featuring Lawson Wood's famous "Grandpop", and had invented some clever toy animals, that are still selling well today. Another artist engaged was Basil Reynolds son of a commercial artist of the same name. He had obtained his position on the strength of his newspaper comic strip in the "Daily Sketch" entitled Billy the Baby Beetle, plus the recommendation of Haughton, who saw merit and promise in his work in those early years. Mr. Reynolds was also the nephew of the famous Warwick Reynolds of animal drawing fame, who also illustrated the boys schoolstory paper "The Gem" during the First World War.

A little later, a woman was appointed as assistant editor. This was a Miss Silvey A. Clarke. It could also be said that she had been poached from the Amalgamated Press, where she had had experience in the comic field, having worked on "Favourite Comic", and other coloured children's publications. Mr. Rosenberg left the firm shortly afterwards, and the firm moved to Wardour Street, Soho, almost next door to Walt Disney Mickey Mouse Ltd. It was from that firm, that another artist joined them - this being Victor Ibbitson, who had great experience in the various Disney promotions. He was joined by another artist - a Miss Phyllis Thorpe.

When No. 1 of MICKEY MOUSE WEEKLY eventually went on sale, history was also made. Apart from it being the new Odhams Press works top colour job at Watford, and easily their most important contract, it was the first coloured comic to be printed photogravure and what a highly successful number it was too! The actual print order is now obscure, but it ranged between 500,000 and 750,000 copies, which was a fantastic figure in those days. Its cover was illustrated by Wilfred Haughton. "Skit, Skat, and the Captain" by Basil Reynolds, who also did the page "Shuffled Symphonies" which ran as a serial until he was called up in 1941.

The science fiction picture-story strips were by Stanley White, the short story each week by Richard Ogle, and of course the syndicated

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King features American Disney strips. This all added up to make the paper a treat for all ages. Indeed, it was in such a wide age group, that it scored over the A. P. coloured comics. Boys and girls from five to fifteen found something to interest them, and its popularity was enormous. Just before the Second World War, Haughton was replaced as cover artist by Victor Ibbitson. Some explanation is needed here, and as any student of the comic strip knows, the central character usually develops slightly all the time. Just a line here, or a bit of shade there. Not noticable of course to the daily or weekly reader, but certainly apparent when comparing an up-to-date drawing with an early one. In this case - Mickey Mouse since being taken over by more skilled staff artists on the Disney organisation from Walt Disney, was being streamlined all the time. In fact the original or first drawings of Mickey looked more like Felix the Cat. Haughton's style of drawing was based on the earliest Disney circ. 1935, and he simply would not bring him up-to-date, as children were seeing him on the screen.

During the blitz, the firm were evacuated to Chorley Wood. Some members of the staff went on war service, Mr. Levy eventually selling all his shares in the firm to Odhams, Miss Silvey Clarke becoming full-time editor. Later she married a Canadian serviceman, and shortly afterwards left the firm. She was replaced as editor by H. T. (Jimmy) Caudwell who, amongst other things had once been editor of The Nelson Lee Library. He was assisted by Reginald Taylor, likewise an ex-A. P. staff man, who had worked in the Magnet and Gem office, one of his tasks counting the words on Charles Hamilton's manuscripts, and proof-reading them. Later staff artists included Ernie Richardson, Ralph Draper, Willie Clarkson, and George Rutherford.

In 1955 the comic was retitled Walt Disney's "Mickey's Weekly", and at the end of 1957 there was an unfortunate court case about the copyright of the Disney characters. It was decided that Odhams copyright had expired, and so a new comic was produced by a different publisher. There were in all 920 issues of the coloured paper (counting both titles). They certainly produced a wonderful comic which many generations of children greatly enjoyed.

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REVIEWS
CRIME AT CHRISTMAS

Gwyn Evans; Edwy Searles Brooks  
(Howard Baker Press: £3.20)

A glorious treat for Sexton Blake fans, Union Jack fans, and detective story fans generally. A magnificent offering.

The Christmas items on the bill are four stories by Gwyn Evans which formed the special Christmas Numbers of the Union Jack for the Yuletides of 1925, 1926, 1927 and 1928. Mrs. Bardell plays a substantial part and substantial is an appropriate word where Mrs. B. is concerned - in the Evans stories, plus other old favourites like Splash Page, Ruff Hanson, and Inspector Coutts, not to mention the formidable Mary Ann Cluppins. And Tinker is his well-known, breezy self of the pre-war days.

The stories are filled with the spirit of the old-time Christmas, a spirit which is beautifully conveyed by the luscious art-work of Eric Parker especially. And warmth of story-telling is the all-important thing.

The two stories by Brooks are really one long novel divided into two parts. These are not Christmas tales - they were actually published in the early summer of 1925 - but such was the gift of Brooks in weaving an eerie, chilling tale, that they are especially suitable for inclusion in the volume. Set in Cornwall, this tale of Pengarth Castle (the name sounds familiar), stars Waldo, the Wonder Man, the remarkable character who had an enthusiastic following years ago.

Production is lovely. The covers of the various Union Jacks, in full colour, are a delight to the eye.

If you didn't buy this superb volume for Christmas, I advise you to get it now, in plenty of time for next Christmas - or for any old time.

THE MYSTERY OF THE MOAT HOUSE

Frank Richards  
(Howard Baker Press: £3.20)

This is the last Magnet Christmas and the last Magnet New Year. Inevitably it is a period piece, for the Christmas was that of 1939, and the New Year was 1940. The eight stories are set against a background of black-outs, food rationing, and air-raid shelters.

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This is the first half, more or less, of the famous Lamb series, the longest Magnet series ever. Though the Magnet had been reduced in size, to meet the paper shortage, the Greyfriars stories run from cover-to-cover, so the reader loses nothing.

Mr. Quelch was the only man who had actually seen the face of the notorious criminal, Slim Jim - but Mr. Quelch was unable to tell what he knew, for he disappeared under mysterious circumstances. And, in fact, he does not turn up again in this section of the Lamb series.

The actual Christmas stories, played out at Wharton Lodge, compare well with the Magnet's best Christmases, and, as Ferrers Locke had been called in to try to find out what had become of Mr. Quelch, it came about that Jack Drake was among the guests at Wharton Lodge.

Back at school, in the New Year, there are plenty of thrills centred round the strange new art master, Mr. Lamb, and the reader revels in mirth and mystery.

A very nice volume, and, despite the war-time setting, it should come as a happy release from this violent age of the seventies.

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## BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

By the time this January Blakiana appears in print it will be the New Year of 1975, and we shall at least know, more or less, what sort of winter we can expect by courtesy of the Trade Unionists. Possibly we shall be reading our favourite stories once again by candlelight and the fires may be a little less powerful, but at least we can all lose ourselves in the nostalgic land of our youth and so forget unpleasant things. At the time of writing I have not yet received my copy of the Union Jack reprint volume but no doubt it will soon be to hand. I am sure all you Sexton Blake fans will find that it is a volume well worth having especially in time for Christmas as it contains some of the most famous Xmas tales ever printed in the old Union Jack. I hope you will all have enjoyed your Christmas Holiday and wish you a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

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RAIN, GOLD AND THE ALBINO - NOT  
FORGETTING THE ARTIST

by J. E. M.

Was I the only reader of Raymond Cure's lively and entertaining piece on The Rain Maker and The Gold Maker (October CD) to be struck by a remarkable omission? The article did not once mention the star of these famous UJ stories. Since even Sexton Blake himself was often overshadowed by the bizarre but irresistible figure of Zenith the Albino, it is hard to imagine that Mr. Cure overlooked his presence, and it must surely be the first occasion that a Blakian has celebrated his enjoyment of a Zenith yarn without ever referring to the principal character himself.

The two stories in question find Zenith at his best, with the usual science fiction elements kept within reasonable bounds and the larger-than-life personality of the Albino memorably projected. The Gold Maker saw Zenith's last bow in the UJ and it is arguable that in other settings he never performed so well again.

Waxing enthusiastic over the illustrations to the two UJ's concerned, Mr. Cure implies that the cover the The Rain Maker as well as the inside art work, was by Glossop. I hope he won't mind my pointing out that the cover was the work of Eric Parker. The lively cover for The Gold Maker was also by Parker, the inside drawings by Lang.

Interestingly enough, another contributor to Blakiana made a similar error a year or so back. In a fascinating piece (CD 32) on the famous Tram Series, William Lister stated that the cover of UJ 1485 was also by Glossop. In this case again, Glossop was responsible only for the inside illustrations; the cover was unmistakably Parker's work. This question of who drew what might seem to be something of a quibble and I hope readers - including Messrs. Cure and Lister - will forgive me for raising it; but, apart from our duty as good Blakians to get the facts right, this matter has for me, and I suspect, many other old UJ readers, a special significance.

As a very young enthusiast of Parker's work, I more than once bought copies of the UJ merely on the strength of a Parker cover, only to find on occasion that the inside drawings were, disappointingly, by some

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other artist. And I have to say that without Parker's embellishments to the narrative itself I rarely enjoyed a story quite so well. Not even if it was by a Teed, an Evans or a Skene.

The practice of employing one artist for the cover illustration and another for the drawings in the text was not, of course, unique to the UJ. As all good Hamiltonians know, the MAGNET used to carry out similar permutations with the work of Shields and Chapman. Here again, I had an overwhelming preference, but that is another story and hardly one for Blakiana.

### A HOBBY MYSTERY

By S. Gordon Swan

In pursuing the hobby one often comes across peculiarities which provide an element of mystery. One such item is a book of which I acquired a copy some time ago. The book is entitled "The Clue of the Missing Link" by Gwyn Evans, published by Wright and Brown Ltd.

Devotees of Sexton Blake will remember this title: in the Sexton Blake Catalogue it is listed as U. J. No. 1167, "The Case of the Missing Link," and was a story of Sexton Blake, Tinker, Splash Page and Inspector Coutts.

The book itself is dedicated to "George Teed H. Who Understands." The dedication itself is something of a mystery. Why was the H put after the Teed? Was it an error, or was there some significance in this juxtaposition?

In this story Blake masquerades as Commander Chester Brett, late of R. N. Intelligence, and Tinker as "Ginger" Mullins, while Coutts becomes Inspector Barker. Splash Page remains himself. The rest of the characters retain the same names as in the original narrative.

There are two stories in the book and the second one propounds a riddle while possibly furnishing some reason for the dedication. It is called "The Mystery of the Painted Slippers" and will be remembered as No. 1161 of the Union Jack. But this story was by G. H. Teed, not Gwyn Evans. Chester Brett, "Ginger" Mullins and Inspector Barker again appear, but Nirvana, Huxton Rymer and Mary Trent are also introduced. Readers unacquainted with the Sexton Blake Saga might have been bewildered by references to Nirvana's previous adventures.

What G. H. Teed "understood" probably was the inclusion of a

story by him in a book ostensibly by Gwyn Evans. Presumably there was an arrangement between the authors to this effect. But when Gwyn Evans had so many other stories of his own to draw upon, why did he choose one by a different writer?

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## NELSON LEE COLUMN

### THE LINK

by Colin Partis

About ten years ago a friend of mine, much older than myself, emigrated to Australia. Since then we have kept up a regular correspondence, mainly by tape recordings. He is a telephone engineer and is fond of wildlife. Both in England and in Australia he has always kept some type of pets. He has just retired at the age of 65.

Now, to cut a long story short, some time ago I received from the firm of Howard Baker the reprint of "The Haunted School". In the very first "Between Ourselves" part of the book - page 33 of the opening story "The Schoolboy Magician" - I found, among the names of those who had corresponded with Edwy Searles Brooks, all that time ago in 1925, 24th October - almost forty-nine years ago - the name "Stanley Nelson" of Grimsby.

Brooks, in his reply to the writer of the letter to him, says: "I say, Stanley Nelson. Go easy! We haven't finished the proper Portrait Gallery yet, so it's a bit early to talk about having a special one for Willy's pets. But there's no telling!"

I was intrigued. A Stan Nelson from Grimsby, who was obviously fond of animals. My friend in 1925 would have been 14. Could it be he? Of course, Nelson is a fairly common name.

Therefore, on the next tape to Australia, I told him all about the Baker reprints, and asked him if he was the same Stan Nelson. Oddly enough, in all my years of corresponding with him, I had never thought of bringing up the topic of Old Boys' Books.

You can guess how eagerly I awaited the return tape from Australia. At last it arrived. (I had, by the way, mentioned to him an uncle of mine who has a collection of the old papers.)

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On the second side of the tape, Stan brought up the subject. Here is his answer, exactly as he gives it:

"Referring to the Nelson Lee Library. Yes, old friend, that was me. I distinctly remember writing that letter. When I was 14 years old, I was an ardent reader of the Nelson Lee, and, just like your uncle, I read the Magnet and the Gem as well. But I preferred the more serious writings of Edwin (sic) Searles Brooks, and I bought the Lee for many, many years. In fact, at one time, I had a collection of the Nelson Lee Libraries, but, like a fool, I lent them all to a girl I knew - and I never got them back. If your uncle has any copies of those old Lee's, I suppose he already knows they are worth a fabulous amount of money, and he wants to hang to them. If he ever thinks of giving them away to anyone, he wants to give them to you - and then you can pass them on to me. (Loud laughter.)

"I can remember that story of Ezra Quirke, the Schoolboy Magician, but I much preferred the St. Frank's holiday series, where they all went to the South Seas or the North Pole, and discovered strange lands inside the earth, and things like that.

"A few months ago, when I was working in Melbourne, I saw some bound volumes of the Magnet - I think they were 8 dollars each to buy. I looked through them - and almost bought one - but I didn't like the illustrations. Of course, in the early Magnets, the pictures were interesting in that they were comical - more like the caricature-type in the Charles Dickens books - and I liked them very much. But later on, the artist was changed, and he did serious illustrations, which didn't appeal to me at all.

"All the same, I liked the Magnet. All the characters were very funny. There was Billy Bunter, and Vernon-Smith the rotter, and they were good - but I did prefer the Nelson Lee Library. If I had known they were going to bring out bound volumes of the Nelson Lee, I would certainly have bought them.

"Yes, it was me alright. The letter I wrote to Edwin Searles Brooks was about Willy Handforth, the brother of one, Edward Oswald Handforth, who was a bit of a bully. He had two cronies called Church and McClure whom he was always bullying, but they were staunch friends,

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like the Three Musketeers. Willy had innumerable pets - a snake, a monkey, and a parrot - and I asked Brooks if he would write and publish more stories about Willy Handforth and his pets.

"I attempted to form a Nelson Lee Club, and contacted a few boys at Cloethorpes, over the hill. But the idea never really got off the ground."

Well, there you are. Fancy my friend and I corresponding for all those years, and never realising that we had a mutual interest in the old paper. We shall have interesting discussions and plenty of exchanges of views in the future. You bet!

FROM FICTION TO FACT

by R. J. Godsave

It is remarkable how some of E. S. Brooks' stories in the Nelson Lee Library, which at that time appeared to be somewhat far-fetched, have actually happened years after. When he wrote in 1923 of the slave labour used by Captain Hurricane for the mining of gold o. s. "The Slaves of Dorriemore Island" he little thought that his story would be repeated in real life in 1974.

A report in the "Sunday Telegraph" dated 12th May, 1974, states that men, women and children having been enticed by promises of good pay, good food and a travelling allowance found themselves forced to mine for gold in the jungle of Southern Peru. With no pay, poor food and such ill-treatment that many had died from tropical diseases due to lack of medical treatment.

Brooks wrote of a chain gang of kidnapped men kept in subjection by brutal guards. In his story the St. Frank's party falling foul of Captain Hurricane were also put in chains and forced to work. A similar state of affairs must have existed in the Peru jungle where escape was practically impossible and no connection with the outside world could be made. The mining of gold is always a chancy business and would prove in many cases uneconomical if wages have to be paid.

Slavery has always provided cheap labour, although the legal activities of the press gangs in the compulsory recruiting of crews for the sailing ships of the Royal Navy was not classed as slavery, it came precious near to it with the harsh discipline that prevailed at that time.

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 124 - Gem No. 246 - "One Against the School"

1912 was undoubtedly the heyday of the blue Gem, and the development of Lumley-Lumley's character after his reformation was one of the interesting themes being developed at this time. Perhaps the most remarkable trait that he displayed was his calmness and philosophical cheerfulness even when adversity befell him. In "One Against the School" he certainly needed all the optimism and resourcefulness he could muster.

The story began in an unusual way with Tom Merry leading a deputation to Lumley-Lumley's study to accuse him of backsliding, and all the suspicious circumstances were enumerated. Lumley-Lumley had an answer for each one, but even so the others were not wholly satisfied with what seemed to them to be too plausible an answer each time. This was a situation that has dated more than most. It would not have occurred after the first World War, and one cannot imagine Harry Wharton leading a deputation to Vernon-Smith's study to complain about the Bounder's little lapses from virtue. The incident in this Gem story seems to show Tom Merry & Co. as a little too smug, a little too interfering: they might well have been taken in by the circumstantial evidence, but they had no occasion to be so inquisitorial. One cannot help sympathising with Lumley-Lumley's cool reaction - "I don't want any friends who are on the look-out to hear things about me. I don't want any lofty condescending."

Of course, there was no co-incidence about all this: it was part of a plot engineered by Crooke and Levison, who were annoyed that Lumley-Lumley had given up his friendship with them. Everything that Levison touched was marked by subtle ingenuity, and the greatest mystery of all was when he gave Lumley-Lumley a pass out of gates apparently written by Knox. When Lumley-Lumley was questioned on his return, Levison denied handing him the pass, Knox knew nothing about it, and the pass itself had inexplicably disappeared.

Like many blue Gem stories, it built up to a strong climax, and severe punishment was meted out to the offenders. Perhaps the most unusual aspect of the story is Lumley-Lumley's continued friendship

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with the errand-boy Grimes, who generously gave him shelter and assistance when he most needed it. There is little doubt that the whole story was meant to be seen through the eyes of Lumley-Lumley alone, and though the tension and mystery were well-maintained, the viewpoint is so biased that most of the main characters seem to be acting unsympathetically. It was not until the 1920's that Charles Hamilton was able to present disputes between friends with a detachment and a wider vision.

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Our Classic Serial from Early in the Century

THE CIRCUS RIDERS

"Houp-la!"

The expectant audience were electrified as Mr. Joseph Pye came cart-wheeling into the centre of the ring. A burst of applause greeted him, coming especially heartily from where our friends of the Greyfriars Remove were sitting in a group.

The "great B.P.", as Mr. Pye frequently remarked was not difficult to please when it was in holiday mood. After Joey stalked the Ring-master with the long whip. The time-honoured business of jest and repartee was gone through, and was received, as usual, with as much applause as though it were new.

When the signor and Joey had exhausted their store of new and ancient - mostly the latter - wheezes, the signor signalled the next turn on. And so the performance went on differing in no great degree from the usual run of such performances. Item followed item.

At last came the "turn" of the Wonderful Child Equestrienne, the Queen of the Ring, otherwise Clotilde. A ripple of

applause, mingled with murmurs of admiration, ran through the crowded circus as Clotilde cantered into the ring on her splendid black Mahomet,

The girl looked so fresh and graceful in her simple white dress that it was no wonder that she was such a favourite with the public. She threw a friendly glance in the direction of Bob Cherry.

"What a ripping girl!" said Harry Wharton. "And how beautifully she rides!"

"She seems really to enjoy it, too," said Frank Nugent, as Clotilde stood up on Mahomet's back and leapt nimbly through the paper hoops that the signor and Joey Pye held out for her.

And the way her eyes sparkled and the way she smiled at the signor, whose joyful face was beaming with good nature and pride, caused the juniors to agree with Frank Nugent.

When two or three more horses had been turned into the ring, to fall into line beside Mahomet, who still maintained his easy canter round, Clotilde gave a wonderful exhibition of track riding which

earned loud and prolonged applause.

At the end of her turn, she had to take several "calls" before the audience was satisfied.

"That's really ripping, you know," said Billy Bunter, as Clotilde bowed and disappeared for the last time. "She's a ripping girl, that equestrienne."

Bob Cherry looked at the fat Removite a little suspiciously, but only said:

"Yes, rather."

Billy Bunter grinned oilyly.

"Did you notice how she looked at me, when she first came in?" he smirked. "Those kind of people know a good-looking chap when they see one, you know."

Bob Cherry glared at the fat junior, as did the other juniors.

"I've a jolly good mind to chuck you out of the circus on your neck," he exclaimed.

"Oh, really, Cherry! You needn't show your jealousy."

Hary Wharton turned on Bunter with a frown.

"Don't be a young fool, Billy," he said sharply.

Billy Bunter looked injured.

"It isn't my fault if girls will look at me, I suppose," he said.

Bob Cherry leaned over and took a firm grip of the fat junior's ear.

"Are you going to shut up?" he said in a furious whisper.

"Woohoo! Yes."

Bob Cherry released his grip and sat back in his seat with a slight grin.

Billy Bunter was indignant.

"You beast, Cherry," he muttered, "You're the jealouslest beast I ever met."

"Ha, ha, ha."

"I'll pay you out for this, see if I

don't."

At this point an old lady in the row of seats immediately behind the Removites muttered indignantly. She had been trying to pay attention to the "turn" that was going on, but found it impossible.

"If you don't hold your noise," she said shrilly, glaring at Bunter angrily and grasping an umbrella which had been reposing at her side, "I'll lay this 'ere about yer else."

Judging by the way the feathers in the lady's bonnet were agitated and the businesslike grip she had of her umbrella, she meant what she said.

Billy Bunter's little eyes gleamed, but he made no reply - at least, not so far as the lady knew.

"Shut up!"

The words were rapped out impatiently by a voice which appeared to come from a mild-looking young man on the lady's left.

"Why! What--" gasped the lady, staring at the young man who seemed to be watching the performance.

"Shut up, you old fidget."

The words, in a different voice, came from somewhere on the right this time, and the old lady glanced round defiantly.

"Which I'll say just whatever I chooses," she snorted. "And none of your lip, young man!"

The last remark the lady addressed with vehemence to the young man on her left.

The mild-looking young man gave a start as he realised he was being addressed. He wore spectacles of a size that almost rivalled Billy Bunter's, and he blinked

nervously at the indignant lady.

"I assure you, ma'am, that I made no remark whatever."

"Well, don't you make any more, then, or I'll fetch yer one, sure as my name's Hemma Green," said the old lady darkly.

The young man did not attempt to argue with her, for he was a very mild young man indeed.

Billy Bunter was grinning widely, as were the rest of the Removites. Harry Wharton grasped him by the arm.

"That's enough, Billy," he whispered. "Chuck it!"

At that moment the signor stepped forward to the centre of the ring, and held up his hand.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, in loud and pompous tones, "in the audience to-night I observe a great many young gentlemen from England's most famous public school - Greyfriars College."

The signor paused to allow his judicious piece of flattery to soak in. It produced deafening cheers from the Greyfriars fellows.

"This," continued the signor, when silence was restored, "is very gratifying to myself and to my talented company."

Here Joey Pye caused a general grin by bowing repeatedly, his hand on his heart.

"I anticipated it, however, and have decided to commemorate the occasion by organising a special turn for the benefit of my young patrons. Advance!"

The signor waved his hand in a magnificent gesture. A gorgeous footman advanced into the ring bearing a small green table, on which glittered what appeared to be a magnificent silver cup.

Close behind followed Old Joe, the bay cob, which had been with the circus for years.

Two footmen held Joe firmly, and made it seem as if they were having difficulty in curbing his savage ardour.

There was a burst of applause from the audience.

"I will present this valuable cup," said the signor, "to the young gentleman under the age of sixteen who is able to keep his seat on Joe, the Buck-jumping Broncho, for the space of five consecutive minutes." The signor bowed. "I must add," he said, "that the Buck-jumping Broncho is in no way vicious, but merely playful, and the competitor runs no risk of serious injury in any way. The tan is very soft."

The last words brought smiles to the faces of the audience, and allayed their anxiety. The Greyfriars juniors were agog with excitement. There were numbers of eager aspirants for the possession of the silver cup.

Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his big spectacles,

"I think I shall have a go at that cup, you chaps, after all", he said. "I don't believe Bounding Joe is fierce at all. He looks as quiet as an old sheep."

"Wait till you get on his back," grinned Bob Cherry.

"I suppose you don't want the Third Form to get the cup, Cherry? It's up to the Remove to win it, and I suppose I shall have to be the Remove representative in the contest."

"Why, you young ass, what about me? I'm going in for it."

Billy Bunter snorted.

"Why, even old Dodger, the horse we had to pull us round in the caravan once, ran away with you, Cherry."

The Removites grinned. Bob grew rather red.

"Oh, he - he started off before I was ready," he explained, stammering a little. "You - you see --"

The Removites roared. They remembered what an extraordinary figure Bob had cut on the back of Dodger.

"That Dodger was a beast. He --"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats! Stow that cackle, you silly asses. Blessed if you aren't like a lot of blessed geese," said Bob crossly.

"Ha, ha! Let's all go in for it, then," said Harry Wharton. "Some of the Upper Fourth will be under age, and we want the Remove to lift that cup, even if it isn't quite worth ten pounds."

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

(MORE FUN AT THE

CIRCUS NEXT MONTH)

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## The Postman Called

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

T. KEEN (Thames Ditton): Your article in the Christmas issue of the C.D. interested me greatly, being the first time since those far-off days of childhood that "Tales for Little People" has been mentioned. How well I remember them, the most famous series being "Stories of Tuffy the Tree Elf", and "The Gobbliwinks of Nonsense Land".

These series were reissued in hardback book form in the early 1930's (I remember buying editions for a small niece, who unfortunately does not still possess them), and to me, they were the perfect stories for children. I think I even preferred them to the "Rainbow" and "Tiger Tim's Weekly".

TONY GLYNN (Manchester): I don't seem to have much time for correspondence these days, but I'm faithful to the CD and enjoy it every month. It is the best periodical - amateur or professional - available to-day, so don't allow the prevailing economic difficulties to discourage your efforts.

JACK OVERHILL (Cambridge): Something I've long been going to mention to you. I disliked every new boy that came to Greyfriars and St. Jim's - and what a crop of them there was during the first world war. I didn't even like Tom Redwing. I'm now wondering if I'd have disliked

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Talbot (who became my hero as he did with thousands of others, even eclipsing for a time dear old Tom Merry) as he'd just appeared on the scene before I bought my first Gem in November 1914. What was the reason for my disliking these newcomers? Was it jealousy? Anyway, it's quite a problem - one I can't solve. (I've always loathed Cardew. To me he was always just a bore to put up with in the way Racke was another cad to put up with.) The Bounder, Skinner, Snoop, Stott, Lumley-Lumley - those and many others of the shady sort already on the scene were quite all right with me, but the newcomers - I mean those not mentioned already - good and bad, I couldn't stand them at any price. Grundy wasn't so bad in the beginning, but he quickly became a prize ass.

BEN WHITER (London): Re "The Valley of the Giants", mentioned in the Small Cinema series. Was this the one about the giant Redwood trees of California, and did it feature that glorious punch-up in the saloon between the Federal and Confederate supporters of the U.S.A? I seem to remember that one of the contestants went through the wall of the saloon into a meeting next door of chapel ladies. They don't make films like that any more.

R. J. McCABE (Dundee): I enjoy C.D. very much. Danny is my favourite. His remarks on the old films bring back fond memories. I very like "Biography of a Small Cinema", and I hope it will be retained.

DENIS GIFFORD (London): I am preparing a pictorial history of comic papers, and wonder whether any Digest readers could help by lending me or selling me early copies of the following rare comics: the Pearson occasional comics; Christmas Comic, Sunny Sands, Seaside, Holiday, Summer, Monster; Ransom comics: Merry Moments. The Welsh language comic "Hwyl". Flash Comics, printed in Camden Town. My Funnybone, Every day Comics; the giveaway Happy Families.

(Mr. Gifford's address is 80 Silversale, London, S.E. 26, if anyone has anything to offer him.)

C. DAY (Keighley): I often wonder how on earth you manage to keep producing our little magazine.

You must have to stick to a very strict routine I imagine, which must be a tremendous task. I am sure a resume of your working day from the sifting through the various articles, letters - your own Editorial

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and comments, right through to the complete edition and the posting off to your readers, would be of great interest to all of your "family". Is it asking too much to suggest an article in the "C. D. "?

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## BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

### No. 10. STRONG AND SILENT STILL

In places all over the country, a cinema here and a cinema there were installing sound. But even in the West End of London there was no general scramble to "go talkie." For one thing, there were plenty of people who believed that talking pictures were a passing fad. For another, sound was enormously expensive to install. Thirdly, the giant cinema chains, like the Odeons and the Unions and the Gaumonts were still a year or two away - they were the offspring of the talkies. Most of the cinemas in the county were privately owned as compared with company owned. And owners think twice about huge expense whereas a company or a government concern never bothers in the slightest about the mere detail of from whence the money is to come.

I'm sure that it must have seemed remotely unlikely that our small cinema would ever go talkie. The cost put it beyond reach. Besides, there were plenty of big silent films being released still, and, so far as American films went, the release date in this country was usually at least a year after that in the U. S. A. So, though exhibitors everywhere were beginning to wonder and worry, there were no immediate problems.

Our opening film this term came from Fox - a "big travel picture" entitled

"Lost in the Arctic." I have no cast listed, so I presume it was a documentary. With it we played one of the Snookums comedies which were so popular then (from Universal). This one was "Newlyweds in Society". I have an idea that these two-reelers were the fore-runners of the Blondie pictures of years later. From First National that term we had Milton Sills in "The Hawk's Nest"; Richard Barthelmess in "Wheel of Chance"; Ken Maynard in "The Upland Rider"; Johnny Hines in "The Wright Idea"; Richard Barthelmess in "Out of the Ruins"; Ken Maynard in "Code of the Scarlet"; Dorothy Mackaill and Jack Mulhall in "Waterfront"; Richard Barthelmess in "Scarlet Seas"; Charles Murray (ex-Sennett comedian) in "Do Your Duty"; Milton Sills in "The Crash"; Chester Conklin (another ex-Sennett comedian) in "The Haunted House"; Ken Maynard in "The Glorious Trail"; Harry Langdon in "Heart Trouble"; Colleen Moore in "Oh, Kay!" with Ford Sterling and Larry Grey; and Ken Maynard in "The Phantom City."

From Universal came George Sidney and Mack Swain in "The Cohens & Kellys in Atlantic City"; Rex, the horse, and Jack Perrin in "Wild Blood"; Hoot Gibson in "The Danger Rider"; Margaret Livingstone in "The Charlatan"; Hoot

Gibson in "Smiling Guns"; James Murray and Barbara Kent in "The Shakedown"; Glenn Tryon in "The Kid's Clever"; Hoot Gibson in "Clearing the Trail".

A W & F. film was Betty Balfour in "A Sister of Six"; from British Lion came "Land of Hope and Glory" with "an all-British cast", and from Gaumont-British came "The Legend of the Willow Pattern Plate" with an all-Chinese cast.

In addition to the serial "The Mysterious Airman" we ran an 8-episode

series of one reels on "The British Navy", from a firm of renters named Pioneer.

There were many magazines, used as fill-ups at that time, including Pathe Pictorial, Pathe Review, Eve's Film Review, Laemmle Novelties, Ideal Cine-Review. As well as the Snookums comedies there were the Buster Brown comedies and the "Let George Do It" comedies.

(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS SERIES SOON)

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## NEWS OF THE CLUBS

### SYDNEY, Australia

The November meeting at Attilio's Restaurant was by courtesy of Bob White. A delightful get-together in lovely surroundings with excellent food. Among those present were Bob White, Stan Nicholls, Ern Carter, and Ron Brockman. We find sometimes that books take a back seat, and this was such a night. Old films and players took a front seat, maybe due to the write-ups in C.D. on old cinemas and films, which we all regard as an adjunct of old boys' books. A tape recording was played of "The Snow Goose".

Howard Baker's plan to publish the first Wharton Rebel series was supported, especially by those without it.

The Christmas meeting will be held at the Graduates' Club shortly.

SYD SMYTH

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### NORTHERN

Saturday, 14 December, 1974

We met for our Christmas party at our new venue, the Swarthmore Educational Centre.

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It was a convivial gathering of members and families who partook of an excellent study feed provided by the girls, after the injunction by Miss Primrose to Vernon-Smith and others that they do not smoke until after tea!

Then came 'The Generation Game' with compère Jack (Bruce Forsyth) Allison assisted by Celia (Anthea Redfern) Wilson. There were various competitions to which we welcomed Uncle Benjamin and his nephew Alonzo, Colonel Wharton and Harry, Mr. Quelch and his niece Cora and Miss Judith Coker and Horace.

The finalists took part in a piece of drama - 'The Shaft of Light' - a wartime comedy written some years ago by Mollie Allison and Alonzo (Simon Wilde) Todd emerged as the winner. Needless to say, after the memory test, he also took home the loot! (Though I'm sure that Alonzo would have expressed it differently.)

We then found ourselves surrounded by the treasures of years long past in the form of Comic Cuts, Chuckles, Tiger Tim, Pluck and so on, laid out on the various tables and forms. Given a series of questions we had simply to consult the exposed leaf of the comic to find the answers.

Ron Hodgson came top with nine, tying in second place with  $8\frac{1}{2}$  came Harold Truscott and Geoffrey Wilde and tying in third place came Bill Williamson, Geoffrey Good and Harold Durden.

There was, alas, no time for a Christmas story, for the hours had sped by, as they do on these occasions.

We made our thanks to all who had worked to give us such a happy evening and gave each other our good wishes for Christmas.

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### LONDON

Yuletide at Courtfield. Candlelight readings from Hamiltonia, Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake by Roger Jenkins, Bob Blythe and Winifred Morss respectively. Thespian, Sam Thurbon, read a Sheerluck Jones story and of course, played the parts.

Competition winners were Ben Whiter and Larry Morley, who tied for first place in Brian Doyle's Quiz. The ever popular Eliminator

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quiz was won by Bob Blythe.

Book news was that "Boys Will Be Boys" will not be published until next April and on show was a copy of the latest Howard Baker Sexton Blake reprint "Crime at Christmas",

Bob Blythe read about the 1957 Christmas meeting at Cherry Place. The five Acramans provided a splendid feed which a large gathering of members and friends enjoyed.

Next meeting will be held at David Baddiel's home at 43 Kendall Road, Gladstone Park, London, N. W. 10. Phone number 452-7243. The date is Sunday, 19th January, 1975.

#### UNCLE BENJAMIN

(Mr. Roger Jenkins asks us to state that there will be no Hamiltonian Library at the London meeting in January.)

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#### REFLECTIONS ON THE BRAZILIAN SERIES

OF 1936

by John Wallen

With the possible exception of the 1930 China series, and one or two other travel stories published in the Magnet before that date, the Greyfriars stories set in foreign lands are looked upon with indifference by many enthusiasts. For many the Brazil series of 1936 would probably fall into this indifferent category.

In my opinion the Brazil series like all the Magnets travel series, holds a special charm and charisma. Like so many of the travel series it was a slow-starter, but once the Greyfriars party had set foot in Rio the series really took off, and sustained a high level of interest right through to the final number.

Many would term this series "episodic", but this description would be unjust. The connecting link of the diamonds discovered in the "Montanha-Fria" or "Cold Mountain", and the dogged pursuit of them by O Lobo -- "The Wolf of Brazil", was always in evidence. The continual pursuit of the diamonds by O Lobo, rather reminds one of Kalizelos' quest for the scarab, in the Egyptian holiday series of 1932. But although the general plots of both stories were the same, the

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different methods of handling made them quite unlike one another. Each story in the Brazilian Series was complete in itself but the connecting link was always plain to see.

It has been said about this series that Jim Valentine who acts as host to the Famous-Five and Billy Bunter, at his Uncle Peter's "Fazenda" on the Rio Rexo in the wild back country of Brazil, is no more than a shadow of his former self. My answer to this is that while in the former series in which he appeared (Dick the Penman) he was the star character with intricacies of character well demonstrated, in the Brazilian series he was merely the host of the Greyfriars party, and thus less open to characterisation. Bunter, O Lobo, and Chico the Caraya Indian, were the stars in this series.

Chico held Bunter in high esteem after the Fat Owl had saved his life. From that moment, to Chico, Bunter was "O Mocho Bravo", or "The Brave Owl".

Bunter's tame parrot, Bonito, was another source of amusement in this series, and his mimicry of Bunter's uncomplimentary remarks was a semi-master-piece in itself.

The dramatic death of O Lobo - eaten alive by alligators - was breathtaking, and even more grisly was the death of one of his confederates - stripped of flesh by peccaries (Wild Boar of Brazil) - while tracking Bob Cherry in the dense forests.

In my view the Brazil series was a great success, and Charles Hamilton's description of a primeval Country where life was held very cheap, is awe-inspiring indeed.

\* \* \* \* \*

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

ERIC FAYNE

EXCELSIOR HOUSE, CROOKHAM RD., CROOKHAM, HAMPSHIRE

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BOOK REVIEW

by Mary Cadogan

FLORA KLICKMANN AND HER FLOWER PATCH

by David Lazell

(Published by FLOWER PATCH MAGAZINE  
127 Tower Road South, Warmley,  
Bristol, BS15 5BT, at 50 pence)

This pleasing paper back tells the story of an unusual journalist and personality, who is remembered as an early Editor of the GIRLS' OWN PAPER, from 1908 to 1931. Flora Klickmann was a talented woman who originally intended to become a musician, but who turned to writing when a heart weakness made concert work impossible. She threw her considerable energies into the GIRLS' OWN PAPER which became her symbolical Flower Patch. (Physically the Flower Patch was her Wye Valley house and garden, in which she delighted.)

David Lazell's book, which contains some attractive, 'old fashioned' engraved illustrations, gives information about the background of the early GIRLS' OWN PAPER, which will be of interest to all who have known and enjoyed this long lived paper. The atmosphere created by David Lazell will appeal to all 'nostalgists' and collectors.

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SECOND CHRISTMAS

by O. W. Wadham

The youngsters of New Zealand ALWAYS had a good second Christmas in the early days of this century. As bright and colourful as any modern T. V. outlet it was too. It usually arrived in February of each year and covered all the bookstalls with coloured prints that would take most eyes. They were never later than the second week in February, getting to this country in those years - the 1910 period or thereabouts. Comic papers had real double numbers those days, especially PUCK, LOT-O-FUN and Comic CUTS, while Chips, the Jester and the Butterfly had good black and white issues also, and there were many others like the Magnet and the Gem and the Boys' Friend that had a bit of the space on that small counter (it is still there in that same shop, now selling different goods of course, today); and I mostly got one of all that were offered for sale, because all children were readers of some of the papers displayed and they all had "swops". But they made a most colourful collection the second Christmas week they were displayed, but what a sight for lovers of the old papers. It was a second Christmas with a vengeance that came regularly in February each year and was always sought by the boys and girls of those times. No strike trouble held them up those years.

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