

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 32

NUMBER 380

AUGUST 1978

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A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER.

FILM FANS

When we were youngsters, the great influences in our lives were our parents. And, after them, the story-papers we read, and, in many cases, undoubtedly, the cinema. Along with the Gem and Magnet or the Nelson Lee or Sexton Blake, plenty of us also had the film magazines.

Odham's seem to have been the leading publishers of the fan magazines. Their Kinematograph Weekly was especially for the exhibitor. It could be bought occasionally from the book stalls in London, but mainly it was acquired by subscription - and those subscriptions were only accepted from bona-fide exhibitors.

The Kine was a large publication, packed with information, not for the picturegoer but for the man who was going to screen those pictures. The reviews were written with the exhibitor in mind, stressing all the time the type of audiences to which different releases would appeal.

I may already have told the story of how, when we moved house on one occasion, I decided to get rid of many hundreds of copies of Kine Weekly. I had them standing in a fully-covered conservatory outside our

front door. It was a pile as tall as I was.

A dealer came to the door. "I'll take those all away for you," he announced. I told him he could have the whole immense lot for £2. "Oh, I'm not paying for them," he replied. "I'll take them away without charge." I assured him they were not for sale.

Next morning, when I came down for breakfast, I found that every copy had gone. Honest Joe had come back for them and cleared the lot during the night. In a way, I wish that I still had them. But where on earth would I keep them.

But the average cinemagoers had nothing to do with commercial magazines like the Kine Weekly. For them Odham's seem to have led the way with fan magazines. Their first, I believe, was "Pictures", which may well have come out before the first world war. So successful was it, apparently, that Odham's put out a sister paper "The Picturegoer". Then, it seems, the Amalgamated Press came into the field with "Picture Show" which hit the two Odham's papers so hard that they were combined under the overall title of "Pictures and Picturegoer".

When I was a little lad, my mother was very keen on entering for competitions of all types. Some time or other they ran a literary competition in connection with a British film of the period: "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor." It starred Owen Nares and Isobel Elsom. My mother sent in one entry in her own name; one in the name of my little girl cousin who was living with us at that time; and one in my name. Remarkably enough, she won prizes for every entry. So far as I remember, she won £5 for her own entry, £2-10s for my little cousin's entry, and, for my entry, a lovely bound volume of "Pictures and Picturegoer". I still have that volume today, one of my most valued items in my collection, and, from what I hear of the prices asked by dealers who sell old film items, one of the most valuable.

A good many years back, we had a picture of Mary Pickford on the C.D. cover, as older C.D. enthusiasts may remember. That picture was photographed from that volume which my mother won, all those years ago.

I doubt whether there are film fan magazines for today's enthusiasts. Those magazines were very popular in the Pioneer Age of the Cinema, and in the Golden Age of the Cinema, but I don't think there are

any now for the Sew Age of the Cinema.

BIOGRAPHIES

I think it was on the radio the other day that I heard some wise man say that he doesn't like biographies, because they tell us things we don't want to know. There is a lot of truth in his observation.

Personally, I like biographies, but I am sure that plenty are tarted up for the modern consumer. And, particularly when the subject is dead, all sorts of tit-bits are added which an intelligent reader accepts with a grain of salt. After all, there is nothing to stop the biographer from adding any sensationalism which he thinks will help to sell his book and swell the royalties.

Too many images are smeared by the activities of biographers. Someone writing on the authoress Dorothy Sayers commented that her head was filled with school stories. She went to boarding school expecting it to be a Greyfriars, and was disappointed that her new acquaintances were not female Bob Cherries. Miss Sayers might have enjoyed stories of boys' schools, but as she was born in 1893, and the Magnet did not start till 1908, one doubts whether the Magnet would have become much of a habit with her. And, in any case, one wonders how the biographer knew, over that distance of years.

Were those people who had loved Pearl White any happier for reading that she was a chronic alcoholic? Or isn't the picture of lovable old Will Hay spoiled by the information in a recent biography that he was a "womaniser".

I am not all that keen on autobiography in certain circumstances. Often the writer seems to whitewash himself, which is understandable. It is more acceptable than those who, from what reviewers say, brag of their perversion in books which do more harm than good and should never have been published at all.

But even the most blameless and well-meaning of autobiographers often tend to be dull and colourless. Hamilton's auto was a disappointment, for he devoted too much space to relating his holiday adventures in Edwardian times, in which few of us were interested.

And two lovely ladies, for whose work and personalities I have great affection and admiration - Gracie Fields and Cicely Courtneidge -

presented the reading public with autobiographies which I found as dull as ditchwater.

ANNUAL - 1978

We have been going ahead with preparations for the C.D. Annual 1978, presuming and hoping that it will still be welcome in many homes, despite the belt-tightening that most of us are compelled to do in these hard times. All being well the order form for the Annual will, as usual, go out next month with our September issue.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

DANNY'S DIARY

AUGUST 1928

It seems almost too good to be true, but the real Martin Clifford, after a very, very long absence, is back in the Gem.

Not in the month's first story, however, which is "Ratty's Bid for Fame", about Mr. Ratcliffe putting up for election to the local town council.

Then the old Martin was back with a new series, commencing with "Fool's Luck". Mr. Railton's nephew, Victor Cleeve, comes to St. Jim's under rather mysterious circumstances. Gussy gets into trouble, and he startles everybody by the way he gets out of it. Next in the series is "A Rank Outsider", which is one way of describing Cleeve. Tom Merry & Co. are reluctant to find their popular Housemaster's nephew is such a rank rotter. Final of the month is "A Schoolboy's Secret". The secret is that Cleeve has had to leave his old school, suspected of theft. Cleeve is sullen, moody, and generally detested. A gorgeous series so far. I hope it goes on for a long time, and that Martin is back in the Gem for good.

There was an alarming accident at Euston when an express train crashed into the buffers. 30 people were injured.

The two stories in the Schoolboy's Own Library this month are

"Cock of the Walk", an early Greyfriars story, and "The Schoolboy Scientist", a tale of Berrisford by Michael Poole whose stories I don't like a lot.

Mr. Morris, the head of the Morris motor-car firm, has given £38,000 for an extension of an Oxford infirmary. Good for him.

A new holiday series has started in the Nelson Lee. "Spirited Away" tells how a party of St. Frank's boys and Moor View girls go to Vivian Travers' country house in Essex. Hussi Khan is kidnapped so the party sets off for India in a great monoplane, and it crash-lands in Rishnir. In "The Palace in the Clouds" they find themselves in peril, for the ruler of Rishnir is a cruel tyrant who hates British people.

In "The Ameer's Prisoners", they find themselves shut up in a palace on the top of a mountain, surrounded by soldiers. But they have great leaders in Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore.

"The Siege in the Clouds" continues the series about St. Frank's in India. With poison-gas, machine guns, and bombs, the British party has an exciting time, before an unexpected rescue takes place. Their own machine comes to take them off from their lofty prison. Far-fetched, but fearfully tense and tingling reading. The series in India continues next month.

At the pictures this month we have seen Wallace Beery in "Casey at the Bat"; Rod la Rocque in "Brigadier Gerard"; Tom Mix in "The Silver Valley"; Richard Dix in "Manpower"; Adolphe Menjou in "The Ace of Cads"; John Gilbert in "The Show"; and Lewis Stone and Billie Dove in "An Affair of the Follies".

During the month I have been to the South London Palace and seen Billy Caryl and Hilda Mundy in a revue called "Go".

There have been some lovely Ken King tales in Modern Boy all the month. In "The Castaway of Lu'u", the Dawn carries a passenger named Gerald Goring. He is a rogue of a remittance man, and he is looking for his young cousin who may be living on the cannibal island of Lu'u. There are two more stories in this particular series, entitled respectively "Tricked by Cannibals" and "Sought For - and Saved". The young cousin is saved by Ken King, and goes home to claim a fortune, while a reformed Goring stays in the South Seas as a beachcomber.

Last of the month is "The Sea Lawyer", in which a new series

starts about Dandy Peter Parsons, who makes trouble for Ken King on the island of Lalaio.

The first motor-coach in Europe with sleeping bunks has been put into service, running between London and Liverpool.

As always, the Rio Kid is just great this month in the Popular. In "The Scapegoat", the Kid goes to the help of a fellow cow-puncher in dire straits. Unfortunately, the Kid is made a scapegoat, and finds himself in jail with a lynch mob howling outside. Next week in "The Kid's Close Call", he manages to outwit the sheriff of Pawnee Ford and escapes, but has the lawmen hot on his trail.

In "The Cowmen of Squaw Mountain", the Kid finds friends and is given shelter, but there is a traitor among the cowmen, and the Kid is betrayed to the sheriff. Final of the month, and of the series, is "Hunted", when, eventually, the Kid is cleared of the charges against him - and is happy to get away from Squaw Mountain. Lovely western stories.

Also in the Popular, Pitt continues to plot, the Greyfriars chums are in the middle of the Silver Scud series, the Rookwood chums are touring with a motor-scooter, and Arthur Augustus is suspected of destroying a valuable book belonging to Mr. Lathom. A wonderful paper, the Popular.

I have bought my brother Doug a Broadcast record of his new favourite dance tune, "My Blue Heaven". It cost 1/3.

This month Miss Ivy Hawkes of Surbiton swam the Channel in just over 19 hours. A few days later Miss Hilda Sharp of Brighton did it in quicker time.

The Magnet has been first-chop all the month. First tale was "Billy Bunter's Bookmaker". Bunter tries to find a bookie to accept his bets on tick, but he is unsuccessful. However, one turns up, and Bunter doesn't know he is a character from the play the Remove Dramatic Society is producing. Rib-tickling. Then the start of a very funny new summer holiday series. The three stories published this month are "Billy Bunter's Luck", "Bunter the Boss", and "Bunter's Bodyguard". Mr. Whiffles, who owns a circus, is short and tubby, and has a bald head which he covers with an elaborate wig, and a smooth face which he adorns with false whiskers. He goes swimming in the Sark, and Bunter

finds his clothes and his false adornments. They fit Bunter to a "T" - and Bunter becomes the head of Whiffles circus, aided and abetted by the circus's rascally manager, Mr. Dance. And Mr. Whiffles finds that a bruiser is out to bash him, so it suits Mr. Whiffles to keep his distance for the time being. So Bunter has his own circus, and the results are terrific. All complete nonsense and unbelievable, but so well told that it's glorious entertainment for everybody. The series continues.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 81, "Cock of the Walk" comprised two well-separated stories of the red Magnet of the year 1911. "Cock of the Walk", which introduced Bolsover to Greyfriars, appeared in the summer, and in mid-autumn came the other tale entitled "The Bully's Chance". Bolsover was never a very inspired character, being out of the stock drawer, and he was rarely mentioned in the later Magnet tales. Bulstrode, a far better character, in a similar mould, dropped out completely after the early years.)

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Once again I should like to wish you all very happy holidays and brighter weather than I am experiencing at the time of writing. Its raining and very stormy looking. However, we are lucky in that when we have to stay indoors we can at least enjoy a good browse through our collections of Blakiana or read some of our favourite tales, and thus pass the time happily. If anyone wants something to read on holiday don't forget that I have a large number of Union Jacks, S.B.L's, etc., available from our lending Library. Also, if you have any free time to settle down and write something for Blakiana and the C.D. Annual, I shall be most pleased to receive it, and so will our Editor.

SEXTON BLAKE - WHY NOT ELSEWHERE?

by Cyril Rowe

These random thoughts came to me as I was idly running through some bound half-yearly volumes of old magazines, Cassells, Pall Mall, Windsor, Pearsons, Strand, Harpers, Ludgate and of course Harmsworth's of the first years of the century. The Strand of course, was the only and regular pulpit for Sherlock Holmes. In the others various detectives had their lesser and shorter lived runs. Sir Hugh Greene has collected and edited two volumes of "Rivals of Sherlock Holmes". So the glossy magazines on stiffer paper than the weeklies, all gave chances to detective talent. My point is this. Harmsworth's was the local stable

so why did not Alfred Harmsworth give Blake a run? After all Harmsworth's sold at 3½d against the 6d and later 1/- of the others. Not so much more than the 1d weekly numbers of the Union Jack, Pluck, Boys' Friend, Boys' Realm, etc., which he was also producing. In fact at 3½d less than 1d per week at the monthly rate. Martin Hewitt, Detective, had a run there, as did Vigorous Daunt for a time plus other individual tales. Was he afraid of saturating the market with Blake. Hardly if one thinks of the above number of weeklies that used him, particularly when one thinks of the interest created by the Sexton Blake plays that toured the provinces. In parenthesis, were playgoers considered more intelligent then?

Certainly he used some of the old boys authors in individual tales I picked up, Cutcliffe Hyne, David Goodwin, Gilbert Floyd and Duncan Storm, Reginald Wray, Cecil Hayter, etc. I wonder if Bill Lofts has any comments he ever heard from editorial staff he may have met. Could it have been snobbishness, one wonders.

P.S. by Josie Packman. Sir Hugh Greene did not even accord Sexton Blake a mention in his "Rivals of Sherlock Holmes". It would seem to be snobbishness on his part as well as that of many other writers, or could it have been jealousy that our Sexton Blake was more popular?

SCOUT'S HONOUR

by Raymond Cure

I don't know if you have noticed it or not, but if you have done any travelling at all you will find out sooner or later that Sexton Blake had visited there before you. Be it Russia, China, Albania, New York, Australia, Japan or Austria. You name it - he's been there. Not that I should worry, I have not travelled far outside of England, Scotland or Wales, except that even there you have a job to find a corner where Sexton Blake has not been. Three or four years ago I took a holiday at Falmouth. "Come on" said the coach driver one morning, "I'm going to run you out to the Helston Furry Dance". I had never heard of it before, however it really was something; the crowds, the locals dancing in and out of the shops down the main street, clad in Victorian costume and all headed by bands playing the Floral Dance. (Since made famous by the Brighthouse and Rastric Brass Band whose record of it reached top of the Top Twenty in 1977.)

Apparently this event has taken place for years, the beginning of it lost in the dim and distant past. Imagine my surprise on receiving my usual packet of Union Jacks on loan from Josie Packman's Sexton Blake

library, to find that Sexton Blake had been there years before and had brought a case to a successful conclusion with the tune of the Helston Furry Dance ringing in his ears. I had an article in the C.D. about this time. And now, believe it or not its happened again. My recent selection of Union Jacks contained a copy of "The Jamboree Mystery", U.J. No. 1347, dated 10 August, 1929. On a sunny morning in the year of Our Lord 1929, a charabanc pulled up outside the local Scout Troop's meeting place. (They did not have coaches in 1929.) It quickly filled up with excited Boy Scouts of various ages. Among them a few Rover Scouts who were expected to keep order and among those Rover Scouts - the writer. Never was there such excitement. A day trip was a day trip in those days and above all a day at the International Scout 1929 Jamboree at Birkenhead.

Opening the pages of The Jamboree Mystery brought it all back - this almost forgotten day. Its a small world. I did not know Sexton Blake had been "in on it", but then Blake is in at most things. Profusely illustrated by a Mr. Fred Bennett, who was selected as the official artist of the Jamboree by the great Sir Robert Baden-Powell himself. They remind me of the type of illustrations I saw in The Scout.

The cover page reveals some nasty goings on in one of our Scout tents and as later, one of our scouters was missing and bloodstains are discovered by the camp bed, it does nothing to allay ones suspicions. Besides this, where are the twenty Scouts from Africa? "The Springboks", the top group of the Jamboree are missing and it is nearly opening day when all the top brass of the Scouting world would be there with we smaller fry standing open-mouthed with wonder and awe. I could not tell you what a peep at Sir Robert Baden-Powell meant to us scouts in the year 1929. So you see I really got the atmosphere of this Sexton Blake Jamboree tale having been around at the time.

Now about these "Springbok" scouts, it had been a mass kid-napping or if you like scout-napping. However, with Sexton Blake, Tinker and Pedro on the job it all gets sorted out by the last page - Scouts Honour!

Funny how a tale penned over 49 years ago can bring to life a long-forgotten day; maybe one of the happiest days of your life.

NOTHING NEW?

W. T. THURBON writes:

I was interested in "What's New?" Apart from Hayter, Reginald Wray did extensive borrowing in "Phantom Gold" and his other serial about Professor Kendrix Klux. He borrowed from Doyle's "Lost World" as well as Rider Haggard's "Allan Quatermain" and "Queen Sheba's Ring". On the question of borrowing, Wray borrowed "Kendrix Klux" from Doyle's "Professor Challenger," who in turn was said to have been borrowed by Doyle from Haggard's "Professor Ptolemy Higgs" in "Queen Sheba's Ring".

Hayter borrowed from both "Lost World" and "Allan Quatermain" in the Union Jack tale "The Long Trail". Many of the writers of the early Aldine Robin Hood Library lifted scenes bodily from "Ivanhoe". Later ones borrowed from Stevenson's "Black Arrow". Any Dick Turpin tale that uses "Black Bess" is borrowing from Ainsworth. I am not sure whether Fu Manchu or Prince Wu Ling came first.

And J. E. M. adds the following as a postscript to his article of last month:

Who came first - Wu Ling or Fu Manchu? In my article What's New I revised an earlier opinion as a result of reading William Vivian Butler's The Durable Desperadoes. Now it looks as if I was right the first time - and Fu Manchu did in fact pre-date Wu Ling. The first Sax Rohmer story of Fu Manchu appeared not in hard-back but in Cassell's Story Teller Magazine for October 1912; Teed's first Wu Ling story was published on 28th June, 1913. I understand that the originality of Waldo The Wonder Man as the prototype "gay desperado" of modern crime fiction is also in question; Edgar Wallace's 'The Mixer' pre-dates Waldo as a figure of this type.

* * * * *

WANTED: Chums and Boys' Own Paper for year 1918 to 1925. Write with particulars to

G. T. THOMAS, 31 CORNWALL ST.
NEW PLYMOUTH, NEW ZEALAND.

* * * * *

SALE: Public School Stories (hardbacks), Bunter books, Magnets, Gems, Autobiography Frank Richards, Captain Volumes, C.D. Annuals, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1975, Billy Bunter's Own Annuals, Greyfriars Prospectus.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN.

PHONE 491716

* * * * *

FOR SALE: Old series Lees, School Friends, Lions 1950. S.A.E. for list.

J. COOK, 178 MARIA ST., BENWELL, N/C TYNE, NE4 8LL.

Nelson Lee Column

THROUGH - AND ABOUT - THE UMBRELLA STAND by R. Hibbert

Just outside the Third Form room at St. Frank's was an umbrella stand. One wet dinnertime in November 1924, Juicy Lemon knocked Chubby Heath backwards through that piece of furniture and 'at least half a dozen umbrellas were completely wrecked' - (Nelson Lee Old Series No. 495, 'Willie Handforth's Windfall', 29.11.24, pp 4 and 5) - '(but) it turned out that most of the smashed umbrellas belonged to the Fourth, so the damage was of no consequence.'

'Most of the umbrellas belonged to the Fourth.'

Now, there's something to ponder.

So far as I know this is the only reference to the boys of St. Frank's going about with umbrellas. I'd have thought they would have scorned them. The Removites were inured to the vilest weather. Apart from the Story of Noah I don't know a damper tale than The Great Flood at St. Frank's, and yet during those sodden days Nipper never reached for his umbrella once.

So, why were most of the gamps in that stand the property of Removites? They were hearty, red-blooded lads for the most part, unlikely to shrink from a drop of rain - or a cloudburst - or a South Sussex monsoon - or whatever Edwy Searles Brooks dropped on them.

The answer, I think, in a word, is Bartitsu.

Bartitsu, as is well known to those of us who have access to turn of the century 'Pearson's Magazines', was 'The New Art of Self Defence' invented (not without a lot of help from the Japanese) by E. W. Barton-Wright. In the March and April, 1899 issues of 'Pearson's' he showed us how to defend ourselves 'against every form of attack'. This was, of course, before the days of the hydrogen bomb.

First, Mr. Barton-Wright taught us how to ward off knife attacks with our overcoats, and, once we'd disarmed our opponent, get him into 'a position where you can break his leg immediately'. Then he explained two sure-fire ways of removing troublesome persons from our rooms, which is why Victorian rent collectors had such a trying time in the spring

of 1899.

Then we were given thirteen different ways of incapacitating any thug rash enough to try and mug us. Whether he came at us from behind, in front, sideways on, or up through a cellar-flap, he was soon down on his back, or his face, yelling, "Uncle" or "Hold" as Mr. Barton-Wright, in his sporting British way, puts it. Our assailant might well say, "Hold", because, once we've got him down, some interesting choices are open to us. One: 'if need be - throttle him'; two: 'you can break both his knee and his ankle'; three: 'if you wish you can now break his arm'.

All good stuff, but, in the January and February, 1901 issues of 'Pearson's', Barton-Wright was back with even better stuff:- 'Self Defence with a Walking Stick - or UMBRELLA' - a system devised by a Swiss Professor of Arms, M. Vigny. 'It has recently been assimilated by me into my system of Self Defence called Bartitsu'.

By the time we got to the end of Barton-Wright's introduction we knew that once again he'd delivered the goods. 'Blows can be made so formidable that it is possible to sever a man's jugular vein through the collar of his overcoat'.

We were given twenty-two ways of defending ourselves against people who rushed at us with sticks, clubs and even alpenstocks. The maddened Swiss peasant was probably a tourist hazard up the Jungfrau in those days. And with reason. We take skiing for granted, but in 1901 it had only recently been introduced, by the English, from Norway. Your honest Swiss burger no doubt regarded skiers the way we do skateboarders.

And Barton-Wright went on to tell us what to do about any skilled boxers or expert kickers we might tangle with.

Handforth would have loved it, and probably did.

He, I think, was the first Removite to look through the run of 'Pearson's Magazines' they must have had in St. Frank's library. Wise old Dr. Stafford would know that books are for entertainment as well as study. Handforth, being interested in detection, had no doubt been told that the exploits of 'Pearson's' Simon Carne would be worthy of his attention. Carne, one of Guy Boothby's creations, was, at one and the same time, Europe's most notorious criminal and greatest detective.

So Handforth works through Simon Carne, and Captain Kettle and H. G. Wells' Martians, and all the other high class escapism to be found in 'Pearson's', and one day comes across Barton-Wright.

Handforth, making a clumsy effort to keep the information to himself practises in secret, but all is revealed to his fellow-Removites when he ruptures himself attempting Barton-Wright's Exercise 5, 'How to Disengage yourself and to Overthrow an Assailant, who Seizes you by the Lappet of your Coat with his Right Hand'.

Either that, or he bayonets Salter of the Fifth with his umbrella while carrying out Exercise 9, 'A very Serviceable Way to Disable a Taller Man than Yourself when Opposed to Him under Unequal Conditions'.

Anyway, after Handy has made a muck of things, as usual, Nipper would take over, as usual. Permission would be obtained from Nelson Lee for a 'Self Defence with an Umbrella Club' to be formed. Bannington's biggest Gents' Outfitters would receive a shipping order for steel framed umbrellas with specially sharpened ferrules and, straight after morning school on Monday, instruction would begin. And that is why the Fourth had such a lot of umbrellas that wet November day in 1924.

If Dr. Stafford had any fears, a man of his own generation, Mr. Barton-Wright could calm them with, "Besides being a most practical and useful accomplishment, this new art of self-defence with a walking stick (or umbrella) is to be recommended as a most exhilarating and graceful exercise". And, with pardonable pride, he might have added, "Beat it, if you can."

And, in April, 1901, 'Pearson's' tried.

Mr. Marcus Tindal gave us six pages and umpteen photographs on 'Self Protection on a Cycle'.

And that probably explains why Hand's bike usually needed attention before he could ride out of the St. Frank's cycle shed.

* * * * *

WANTED: Clifford's "Rallying Round Gussy", S.O.L's Nos. 4 to 262, Berkeley Gray, Victor Gunn Books, Monsters, Howard Baker, Magnets, Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, Magnets, year 1934, Elsie Oxenham, Brent-Dyer Books.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN.

PHONE 491716

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 224. THE LAST OF THE ST. JIM'S GREATS

Exactly fifty years ago, in the high summer of 1928, Charles Hamilton was to contribute his last really great St. Jim's story. Just a very few odd St. Jim's tales from his pen were to appear before the reprints began in 1931, but they were merely pot-boilers. Eleven years later, in 1939, he would contribute three more series, including the marathon Silverson series, but the latter, precious though it is to many of us, was too episodic, after the style of so many of the long series of the middle and later thirties. And the sad but true criticism of the Silverson series is that it was not nearly so good as it might have been.

It cannot be denied that, looking at them as at one story, many of Hamilton's later series were too long. With the possible exception of the Lamb series, they did not overstay their welcome, but that was entirely due to the medium in which they were presented. The plot was the trunk of the tree, planted with the opening story, and each succeeding tale provided a branch from the trunk. Many of those branches could have been pruned away without damaging the tree in the slightest.

We loved them at the time - possibly we were often sorry when a much enjoyed series ended, no matter how long it had been - but few of those giant series would make satisfactory books of the normal type. In an ordinary book, the static plots and the irrelevant episodes, no matter how cleverly written and planned, would be too evident.

No such criticism could apply to the Victor Cleeve series in the Gem of 1928. Comprising just four stories, this series was the only work which Hamilton did for the Gem in 1928. In 1929 he wrote nothing at all for the paper.

Undoubtedly it showed up brilliantly after the long, long rash of substitute tales. And no doubt that is exactly what Hamilton intended. We don't know whether Hamilton merely wrote the series and submitted it or whether he was invited by the editor to write it. It is more likely that the Gem needed a shot in the arm, free gifts were being presented, and the editor asked the creator of St. Jim's to turn in something special.

He cannot have had much spare time, for he was then writing Greyfriars regularly for the Magnet, and, though Rookwood had long

ended, he was contributing stories of Ken King and the Rio Kid week by week. But he certainly gave of his best for the beautifully balanced Cleeve series. With its outstanding characterisation, its cricket background, and its restraint in length and in general telling, it would make the perfect school story between stiff covers. In fact, it has always been an under-acclaimed series. With the long run of sub series, there is not much doubt that plenty of the old-timers among readers had drifted away from the fold.

Arthur Augustus plays a delightful part in the opening story, where he opens a telegram intended for his Housemaster, and is astonished to find that, instead of a wired remittance from his guv'nor, "Victor is in trouble - Malcolm".

Unintentionally, in the simplicity of his gentle soul Gussy allows all the bystanders to know that "Victor is in trouble", when he offers his apologies to Mr. Railton.

Cleeve, under suspicion of theft, has had to leave his own school, and, as a special concession to Mr. Railton, Cleeve is allowed to join St. Jim's. Victor Cleeve is a stunningly written character - a non-swimmer, but a good cricketer - and, labouring under resentment at the trick fate has played upon him, he is not an easy customer with whom to make friends. Tom Merry tries, at the request of the housemaster, but without marked success for a time. The sequences are varied and splendidly told; the whole thing moves at a cracking pace. There is plenty of drama, leavened with some witty and charming comedy.

The author was at the height of his powers in 1928, and everything about the Cleeve series was of high quality.

"St. Jim's men had a great pride in their school, and regarded St. Jim's as the very best thing going; and themselves, perhaps, as the salt of the earth. They admitted that there were other schools, some of them quite good; but St. Jim's, after all, was St. Jim's.

"Eton was Eton, doubtless, and Harrow was Harrow; Winchester was Winchester, and Rugbeians might think any amount of Rugby; all that did not alter the fact that St. Jim's was St. Jim's! That opinion was unanimously held in the school. It was an opinion with which the new fellow from Barcroft did not agree. St. Jim's, to him, was a place of exile, and he did not like it, he did not think much of it, and he took no

trouble whatever to conceal his thoughts on the subject."

Readers who had remained loyal to the Gem had waited a long time for the Victor Cleeve series. It was worth waiting for. Sadly enough, the author was never again to reach the same heights with his first great love. Plenty of people, and I am one of them, consider that Hamilton's post-war St. Jim's was superior in quality to his post-war Greyfriars, even though he had lost the art of presenting Cardew as we had known him. But it was all a mere shadow of the Cleeve series of twenty years earlier.

* * * * *

REVIEW

Good Morning Boys, WILL HAY, Master of Comedy

Barrie & Jenkins, £5.95

by Ray Seaton & Roy Martin

The ordinary fans of Will Hay will love this book, which chronicles the whole career of one of England's greatest stage and screen stars.

Purists however, will be puzzled at so many omissions of facts which would have made the book far more complete. Why they should just show a picture strip of the end of Charles Hamilton's series of Will Hay's popular series of stories of Will Hay at Bendover in The Pilot, and completely ignore the story side of it. Why they could not have shown Will Hay on front of The Jolly Comic is another mystery. One would also have thought that Will Hay's daughter Gladys who was a top radio star in "Ignorance is Bliss" would have got a mention. But what does make this book is the original illustrations where the old man Harbottle (taken from the comic office boy) in real life will be a revelation to all, as well as disclosing that Will Hay was a womaniser, and not the happily married man as supposed.

W. O. G. LOFTS

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WANTED: Magnets, Union Jacks, Sexton Blake 1st & 2nd Series. List of Boys & Girls Fiction for Sale, please send s.a.e. Bookfinding Service (any subject or author) send your wants list with s.a.e.

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* * * * *

WANTED: Howard Bakers, Volumes 18, 23, 39. Any original McDonald and Chapman sketches, "Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School". Any Monsters.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN.

PHONE 0224 491716

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 53. THOUSANDS CHEER

We opened the new term with Robert Taylor and Susan Peters in "Song of Russia" from M. G. M. In the supporting bill was one of a Passing Parade series of shorts, this one entitled "Immortal Blacksmith". Plus a coloured Fitzpatrick Traveltalk "The Colorado Rockies" and a Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon, "The Milky Waif".

The following week, from Warner Bros. brought Ida Lupino, Dennis Morgan, and Joan Leslie in "The Hard Way" - an excellent cast, though the subject of the film is blank to me all these years later. A coloured cartoon was "Aloha Hooey".

Then, from M. G. M. came Judy Garland in one of the best of her delightful musicals: "For Me and My Girl".

After that, from Warner's, Olivia de Havilland and Robert Cummings in "Princess O'Rourke". We were now playing so many shorts in our big supporting programmes, that we were running M. G. M. and Warner shorts dead on release, and had to turn to another firm, Columbia, to fill our needs. In support of Princess O'Rourke were the Three Stooges in a 2-reeler, "Some Like It Rough" and a Mr. McGoo cartoon "Hop, Skip, and a Chump", both from Columbia. I do not recall that we ever booked Columbia features, but we were now to play a good deal of their short releases.

Next week, a splendid Errol Flynn film from Warner Bros.: "Northern Pursuit". In the same bill was "Happy Times & Jolly Moments", a superb collection of sequences from old Mack Sennett comedies; a coloured Traveltalk "Salt

Sea Diversions", and a coloured cartoon "Gold Rush Days".

Then a double-feature programme: the lovely Irene Dunne in "The White Cliffs of Dover" from M. G. M., plus "The True Glory" from Warner's. I have no record of any cast in the latter feature, and I assume it was a documentary, made up by Warner's, to show how the war had progressed from the start up till victory. A coloured cartoon "What's Buzzin' Buzzard?" completed a big show, plus the news reel.

Next, from M. G. M., Katherine Hepburn in "Dragon Seed", much acclaimed in its days, and, I seem to recall, a bit reminiscent of "The Good Earth" of earlier days. A coloured cartoon was "Galloping Girls".

Next, in Technicolor, from M. G. M., came Ronald Colman and Marlene Dietrich in "Kismet", which I think was a story from the Arabian Nights. In the same bill was a coloured Traveltalk "Visiting St. Louis" and a Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon "Zoot Cat".

Next, a lovely Technicolor Musical from M. G. M. - the sort of thing that would be too expensive to make today, - Gene Kelly, Katherine Grayson and the M. G. M. star parade in "Thousands Cheer". In the supporting programme was a Tom & Jerry colour cartoon "The Million Dollar Cat".

Then another big double-feature programme: from Warner's, George Raft in "Background to Danger" and from M. G. M., in support, Laurel & Hardy in

one of the best of their full-length films "Nothing But Trouble". Plus a coloured cartoon "The Homeless Flea", and a coloured musical short "Harmonica Band".

The last show of the term brought another fine Errol Flynn film from Warner's:

* * * * *

JULES VERNE

"Edge of Darkness". In the bill was a coloured cartoon "Crazy Cruise".

(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS SERIES NEXT MONTH)

from George Beal

Mr. John Geal, in his piece about Victorian writers, does less than justice to Jules Verne, when he describes his writing as 'hilarious'. It is true that he sometimes had some strange ideas about how English gentlemen behaved (such as kissing each other on the cheek as a way of greeting), but one must remember that he wrote in French, and that what we read is a translation.

It is not quite true to say that Verne wrote for the B.O.P. All his adventure stories were, in fact, written for the French journal 'Le Magasin d'Education et de Récréation', published in Paris by Hetzel, later to be issued in volume form by the same publisher. B.O.P. simply bought the rights in English, many translations being undertaken by W. H. G. Kingston, himself a favourite boys' writer.

Unfortunately, 'The Clipper of the Clouds', although an exciting idea, was one of Verne's less successful works. It first appeared in 1886 as 'Robur le Conquérant', and deals with a flying machine which was kept aloft by a series of propellers, operating in much the same way as a modern autogiro or helicopter. It is rather like an aerial version of 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea'. It is not, however, well worked out, and the story does not read well.

Jules Verne had been fascinated by such books as 'Robinson Crusoe' and 'The Swiss Family Robinson', and wrote several books himself on the same theme. I believe myself that his best work is one of these: 'The Mysterious Island', which appeared in three volumes in 1875.

I think all Verne's works are in print, since an excellent series were issued by Arco Publications in the late 1960's, edited by the Verne enthusiast, I. O. Evans.

(More comments on this subject appear in "The Postman Called" pages - Ed.)

The Postman Called

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

R. J. McCABE (Dundee): The sun always shines when the Digest comes through the letter-box. At present Danny's Diary and Biography of a Small Cinema are of special interest. They bring back so many happy memories.

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton-on-Trent): I have very recently read "Bloody Murder" by Julian Symons (1972) and was rather disgusted because this writer says Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee are not worth consideration as they belong to the "bloods". Yet he gives Mickey Spillane's rubbish (my own opinion, of course) more than a brief mention.

While I would rather read St. Jim's, Greyfriars, Rookwood and St. Frank's than Sexton Blake, I think many O.B.B.C. members would make objection to this remark of Mr. Symons' in no uncertain terms.

J. W. COOK (Auckland): re Harold Truscott in the June issue of THE POSTMAN CALLED. The last thing I want to do is to urge Mr. Truscott to "give up before he loses his sanity".

But you couldn't blame me, you know, for suddenly thinking when I saw your article "PINK FURNITURE" in the C.D. Annual that I was looking at a piece from the "Guild of Cabinet Makers"!

And I don't think you should make such sweeping statements about one particular author who wrote "... one of the most outstanding books ever written for children ..." this flitting from the particular to the general is an attitude that has long since died out in our hobby, thank goodness.

The editor published my letter for the same reason he published your article.

W. BRADFORD (Ealing): In answer to John Geal, "The Clipper of the Clouds" by Jules Verne was serialised in the "Boys' Own Paper", volume 9, between October 1886 and April 1887. There were 23 episodes, of around 2,000 words each.

I find that the novelty of the out-dated style fades after a few chapters and becomes rather heavy going!

BILL LOFTS (London): According to the I.P.C. House Magazine last September, Fleetway House was to be shortly demolished having been bought by a Property Company. This was later confirmed to me by a Director. That they have not yet done so, is not all that suprising in view of the time they get round to things in this modern age. In answer to Mr. Churchill I wrote the life story of Frances Gerard for the Edgar Wallace Society some time ago. Although writing for The Thriller a companion to the S.B.L. my information is that he was an avid reader of all the Sanders tales - so much so that he wrote three books featuring the character after Edgar Wallace's death. Gerard died in Africa some years ago.

J. E. MILLER (Brighton): Congratulations on the excellence of the July issue, and not least on the marvellous cover. How well that old "Pluck" reproduced; an exciting and evocative invitation to every delight of old boys' books. I seem to recall once hearing Northern Weekly Leader, referred to in the July editorial, described as a politically radical paper of the "crusading" type. But memory may be playing tricks. John Geal's piece was a delight and a useful reminder of the questionable literary "quality" of some of the most revered Victorian authors.

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge): John Geal's article on "The Clipper of the Clouds" reminds me that I saw a reprint about 20 years ago. I agree that the reference to the bowie knife is ridiculous, but has Mr. Geal found whether the error was that of the author, or made by the translator.

The "duel of the Mignons" in Dumas' "Chicot the Jester" in the Collins Pocket Library edition was ruined for me by the translator's use of the Scots word "dirk" for "dagger". Knowing well both Castles "Schools and Masters of Fence" and Huttons' "Sword and the Centuries" I know a fair amount about 16th and 17th Century swordsmanship, and would not apply the word "dirk" to the daggers used in such duels.

LEN WORMULL (Romford): How nice to see NELSON LEE mentioned on TV's Winner Takes All quiz-show the other night. Contestants were asked to name the singing partner to Jeanette MacDonald, and Lee's name was on the selected list to choose from! Lord Nelson was another unlikely. Needless to say, both were quickly eliminated, and the correct partner

given. Just the same, a pat on the back for the selector who remembered our once famous detective.

* * * * *

"I DO NOT LIKE BILLY BUNTER" by B. R. Leese

I do not hate Billy Bunter! neither do I like him. To me he is everything a normal schoolboy should not be. He is a liar, a glutton, lazy, obese, stupid and brainless, sly and cunning. The only redeeming feature about him is his so-called feeling for his Mother, and even that does not ring true. He seldom stays at home during holiday periods, but invariably palms himself off with someone else - at their expense.

I admit I tolerated him in the early days of the red Magnet when he shared No. 1 study with Wharton and Nugent, and did their cooking and was addressed as Billy, but since then Frank Richards gradually developed him into an impossible schoolboy character. And yet he became a household name synonymous to the naughty fat boy of the school and even some public libraries banned the books dealing with Bunter because they considered it an imputation on some of the tubby scholars. Such nonsense!

When the post-war Bunter books were published by Skilton & Cassels I wrote Frank Richards and told him I thought Bunter an impossible schoolboy character, and not funny by any means. He replied and said he did not like Bunter either. Then why did he continue to picture him as the most impossible schoolboy character ever appearing in a book? Firstly it was a publicity stunt, the Editor of the old Magnet had insisted on building up Bunter into a national character in order to attract readers. He realised that new generations of boys kept cropping up every few years, and so the novelty of the Owl of the Remove found appeal year after year.

In the very early days I fell for this ploy, but as time went on his antics became a bore; expecting his postal order year after year, tying up his bootlace in order to eavesdrop, scoffing raided grub, swanking about his palatial home and servants, and barging in when not wanted or expected. I became fed up with Bunter after a period. And yet the Editor, and probably Frank Richards moreso, realised the value of Bunter as a character in the Greyfriars saga. How many yarns have opened up with

the plot having a beginning through Bunter either falling down or doing something else ridiculous in order to get the story going.

To print on some of the outer covers of the Magnet, "Billy Bunter's Own Paper", was, to me, the limit and seemed to bring the paper down to the level of a comic. The Magnet always appeared to be a shade more grown-up than the cheery chums of St. Jim's and Rookwood, and to appeal to boys of fifteen years or so.

The absurdity of the grotesque Billy Bunter was carried even a stage further when his brother Sammy and sister Bessie were introduced as exact replicas of Billy. I think the Greyfriars saga would have been much higher in the literary field if we had had less of Bunter as a leading character and more of Horace Coker, who was, in my view far more true to life, and far more amusing than the fat porpoise.

Of course one must sell goods which have the greatest demand and so Billy Bunter will go on for ever, proof I think, that I am crying in the wilderness.

* * * * *

News of the Clubs

MIDLAND

The weather was far from June-like when nine members put in an appearance at our June meeting. It did nothing, however, to dampen the spirits of those who attended. A lively entertaining and enjoyable evening was enjoyed by all. It was our best meeting for some time.

The usual feature Anniversary No. and Collectors' item were on show. These were Anniversary No. Magnet No. 907, published 27.6.1925, 53 years old and Collectors' item, a Magnet volume Nos. 882 to 907. These created the usual eager interest.

There was a full programme with three readings and one game and time passed all too quickly. Ivan Webster read a very amusing article on instructions to car owners and those who had cars amongst us were amused.

Tom Porter, who did the next reading, took the opening chapter of the Arthur Da Costa series. As Tom remarked, it was the same old

tale, Bunter on the make, but it never fails to charm us. Why, is a secret perhaps Charles Hamilton himself scarcely knew. This splendid reading was applauded.

A reading by your correspondent was taken from the Holiday Annual for 1928. Bunter steals Bob Cherry's ticket for a show at Courtfield and is booked for a thrashing. Bunter engages Battling Benson to give him boxing lessons. Benson pulls Bunter's leg by letting him knock him down. Bunter's fatuous antics as a boxer cause much amusement. "Battling Benson is pulling his own leg as well if he expects to get any money out of Bunter" remarked Frank Nugent sagely. In the end Bunter comes down to earth - literally and metaphorically.

Greyfriars Bingo was our last item. Instead of numbers, the names of Greyfriars characters are drawn out of the bag. The game illustrates the very large number of characters used in the Greyfriars stories.

We meet again on 25th July.

J. F. BELLFIELD, Correspondent.

LONDON

A varied programme at the Kingsbury meeting on Sunday, 9th July, Bob Blythe, the host, officiating in the chair owing to the indisposition of Eric Lawrence.

The highlight of the meeting was Larry Peters's short treatise which was entitled "Authors' Freedom". At its conclusion, one and all joined in a general discussion on this subject and there were some very good points raised.

Josie Packman read adverts from two local newspapers about the Mina Road Central School, circa 1927, of which she was quite conversant. Then she followed this up with a reading from Union Jack 1840, the story being called "The Riddle of Ruralding Bay" by Gilbert Chester. Then, as customary, she conducted a quiz on the reading and it was left to that eminent Sherlockian, Brian Doyle, to supply most of the answers.

From Magnet 1289, Wharton Rebel series, Roger Jenkins read one of Frank Richards' finest passages, a real classic, of characterisation.

Bob Blythe read extracts from the July 1961 issue of the newsletter. Bob and Louise were suitably thanked for their fine hospitality.

For those intending to attend the Maidstone meeting, a coach leaves Victoria Coach Station at 10 a.m. Day return fare £1.80. The date is Sunday, 13th August. Kindly inform me if intending to be present so as to facilitate the luncheon and tea arrangements.

BENJAMIN WHITER

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A TELLER OF TALES

by S. Gordon Swan

If I were asked to name my favourite author of juvenile fiction I should find it a difficult task for, in my time, I have enjoyed so many books by various authors. However, pinned down inescapably to one writer without any alternative choice, I should choose Major Charles Gilson as, among adult authors, I would give my vote to A. E. W. Mason.

Gilson had an adult approach to his writing and the quality of his work lifted him above the average author of boys' stories, good as they might be. He had travelled extensively and brought his great knowledge of people and places to lend authority to his works of fiction. He also had the ability to create villains who commanded respect and, at times, even admiration.

In THE FOREST KING the tale was dominated by the half-breed, Gonsalvo Monteiro, who kidnapped a white girl and led her lover and his friends a stern chase through the jungles and remote tribes of South America until the final confrontation. This story ran as a serial in that fine periodical, CHUMS.

Then there was the mighty Ling, a great scoundrel and a veritable giant six feet eight in height, as well as a man of wisdom and learning. He towered over the lesser villains in HELD BY CHINESE BRIGANDS both by reason of intellect and physique. And when he died at the end, to quote Major Gilson's own words: "Let us believe what he himself believed: that the evil that was in him remained upon this earth in that great casket of sinew, nerve and muscle, destined to decay, and the good that was within him -- all that was noble and heroic, the great thoughts that he had had and the wisdom he had acquired -- was carried by his soul into what he himself had described as 'the expansive arch of heaven'."

Most notable of all was Jugatai, the relentless, implacable Tartar

who yet held the seeds of greatness in him. In *THE LOST ISLAND* it was his aim to call the East to arms, and to this end he led the hero, David Gaythorne, and a crafty Cantonese, Ah Four -- whom the Tartar had hypnotised -- to a remote monastery in search of a clue to the whereabouts of a stolen jewel known as Guatama's Eye. To this reader, at least, this quest is reminiscent of the epic journey to the Ilamaseraï by Dr. Nikola in Guy Boothby's once-famous story of that name. Gilson's story ended on an island in the South Pacific, where Jugatai himself met his end.

But he reappeared in *THE LOST COLUMN*, a tale of the Boxer Rebellion, the events in which antedated those described in the previous yarn. In both stories Jugatai was opposed by the stout Chinese detective, Mr. Wang, who was featured in several other romances.

Fictional villains are hard to kill, and Jugatai turned up again in *THE SCARLET HAND*, a story of England China just prior to The Great War. Yet again did he return in a long complete tale in a monthly issue of *CHUMS* entitled *THROUGH THE BOXER LINES* which reverted to the period of the Boxer Rebellion and brought him once more in opposition to Mr. Wang. Much later was published *SONS OF THE SWORD*, a narrative of the Sino-Japanese war, which brought in Prince Jugatai, apparently the son of the original Tartar.

Much could be written about Mr. Wang, Captain Crouch and other characters created by this soldier adventurer who made his mark in the annals of boys' fiction, for he also wrote some fine historical tales, the most outstanding of which is probably *THE LOST EMPIRE*. (Note how the word "Lost" prevails throughout his titles, for he also wrote *THE LOST CITY*.) I hope in this brief article I have paid some small tribute to this fine writer.

HOW THE REMOVE BECAME THE JUNIOR

CRICKET ELEVEN

by R. V. Moss

Why the Junior Cricket Eleven at Greyfriars was comprised only of Remove members still causes puzzlement.

"Let's be Controversial No. 201" gave an explanation. But what Frank Richards described in that particular story is as the article suggested most unlikely even in a fictional story.

But Frank had forgotten what he had written years before when he gave a reasonable

explanation.

It is the 1st July, 1911, and Frank writes as follows:-

"When Tom Merry & Co. came over from St. Jim's, they were likely to find the Remove team in unusually good form. Bulstrode was very keen on the match. The St. Jim's match was really the crucial test of the cricket season for the Greyfriars juniors, and if they came through that all right, they could rest upon their laurels, for the teams were not really quite evenly matched. The St. Jim's juniors were selected from the Lower School at St. Jim's - Shell and Fourth Form. But the Remove team was picked from the Remove alone - the Lower Fourth of Greyfriars.

At Greyfriars, the Upper Fourth and the Shell had been beaten on the cricket-ground by the Remove, and the school junior team was weaker than the Remove team by itself. A fact which was the cause of endless swanking on the part of the Remove.

It was Harry Wharton who had brought it about, and since Bulstrode had become captain he had stepped into the fruits of Wharton's work."

This is a logical explanation. In the early part of the season the Remove had beaten the Upper Fourth and the Shell. The school junior team was weaker than the Remove by itself.

Presumably before outside fixtures began a Junior Captain was either elected, or appointed by the Games Master. This happened to be the captain of the Remove team.

The team as selected was based on ability and consisted of only Remove members. Although perhaps unlikely it is not impossible. In the Greyfriars' saga, apart from the odd occasion members of the Upper Fourth and Shell show little aptitude for sport. The few who do are usually too indolent. They are social rather than competitive players. Thus for the rest of the 1911 season we must assume that this situation continued.

Further, because we must think in terms of a single school year then the above must be the situation in any year on the 1st July. In fact apart from the variation referred to in "An Hour to Play and the Last Man In", Frank Richards was evidently consistent. The Junior Cricket team was from that time on composed wholly of Remove members. But unless we know the 1911 story we are left to wonder why.

This may be a satisfactory explanation of the Junior Cricket Team, but what of the Junior Football Team? Do we assume that the same situation arose and with a similar result?

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NEWS OF THE CLUBS - STOP PRESS

NORTHERN

Saturday, 8th July, 1978

Our fare for the evening was three comic readings chosen and presented by Jack Allison, Harry Barlow and Harry Blowers.

Jack presented a reading from 'Bunter the Ventriloquist' from which Geoffrey Wilde read the section containing the main part for Monsieur Charpentier and Geoffrey Good the section containing the main part for the headmaster. The excerpts that were read related to the master's reactions to Prout's misadventures!

Harry Barlow nominated Geoffrey Good to read chapters two and three of Magnet 910, the first story in the Bunter Court Series, in which the seeds of a rather wild scheme begin to grow in Bunter's mind!

The third reading was chosen by Harry Blowers, who nominated Geoffrey Wilde as reader. It was from the third Magnet (1180) of the China series, containing an account of Bunter's adventures with a deck-chair followed by an equally hilarious account of his adventures with a cup of coffee!

Next month, Geoffrey Wilde announced, our readings were to consist of high drama!

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A GRIM EXISTENCE

by R. J. Godsave

Man's inhumanity to man, it has been said, is nothing when compared with boy's inhumanity to boy. Many of the public schools in

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave unparalleled opportunities for the bullying of young boys by their seniors.

Naturally, the boarding-school offered greater facilities for the torment suffered by boys of tender age. So strong was the convention that boys must rule themselves that the masters, although conscious of all the brutality going on, made no attempt to investigate and prevent it.

Official brutality - for the want of a better description - was the savage floggings of small boys by the school authorities for attempting to run-away and other offences. The running-away action implied both a criticism of the school, and possibly could endanger the continued employment of the master.

The Blue-coat boys of Christ's Hospital who were removed from the London hospital to Hertford in the eighteenth century were the victims of such ferocity in the flogging of boys that Charles Lamb recalled the treatment meted out in *Elia's Essays*.

A distinguished Wykehamist who left the college in the 1860's was asked whether there was much bullying in those days. 'Bullying?' was the answer. 'I'm almost inclined to ask - was there anything else?'

The founders of the older public schools always made sure that their statutes and injunctions were pretty strict relating to the characters and scholastic abilities of the masters. He was generally required to be of grave behaviour, no tipler or haunter of alehouses. A man of sound religion usually meant one whose views were in accord with the government of that time.

Life for juniors could be grim both in and out of the dormitory. On cold nights he was commonly used as a bedwarmer by his seniors having to lie between the icy sheets until his fag-master retired to bed. Lewis Carroll wrote of Rugby 'the smaller boy's beds were denuded of the blankets that the bigger ones might not feel cold.' Many a fag lived under a state of oppression from his school fellows unknown to any slave in the plantations.

By school law at Rugby in the eighties Sixth formers could compel fags to do anything at anytime, and must leave letters, cooking or preparation to answer the call. Prefects at most schools were entitled to bellow for a fag without the slightest consideration given as to whatever he was doing at that time. Naturally his education suffered greatly,

apart from his health, with the performance of cook, valet and housemaid to his fag-master.

It was small wonder that the smaller boys were every bit as bad when they in turn became seniors. Many of the bullying acts were casual practices taken as a matter of course, with no particular ill-will towards the junior concerned.

One must not suppose that schools in the twentieth century were all that desirable in the matter of bullying. Certain incidents which occurred in some of the schools which were brought to public notice showed that while great improvements had been made, there was still the natural bully who would take advantage of the authority given him.

The only good which could come out of this evil would be that the severity of a boy's early public school upbringing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would stand him in good stead in facing the hardships which boys of the 'Bulldog Breed' suffered in the task of raising the British Empire to its peak.

* * * * *

AT THE PICTURE HOUSE

by Ernest Holman

The Skipper's reference to "The Moon Shines Bright on Charlie Chaplin" came at a time when I had been listening to a snatch of the 'Red Wing' tune, played on the piano in the Silent Movie style.

Silent Movies! The Picture House in Leyton High Road. 3d., 5d. seats (9d. in the Balcony). The programme? Pathe Gazette; a Series (Sherlock Holmes, Leather Pushers, Andy Clyde); a Serial (Miracles of the Jungle, Tiger Band, Avenging Arrow); cartoons (Felix, Bonzo, Mutt and Jeff); then - the Main Feature. Here it was that the watching cinema really became aware of the 'Pit' Pianist. During the early programme, this very hard-working individual, hidden away behind a curtain, had been plugging away almost non-stop. Now, with the Feature, came the REAL mood music. After the film was finished and we wended our way homeward, that mood music stayed with us.

It is listening to this mood music recently that has evoked most of the foregoing memories. It couldn't do otherwise, when the tunes are played in the old Silent Movie style. On a Record recently issued, will be found the music that set the action for a host of Silent Stars. To

get the perfect atmosphere, Ena Baga (herself a Silent Movie Pianist at the London Tivoli and, more recently, at the National Film Theatre) with her sister Florence De Jong (both members of a noted Musical family) re-create the tunes and star memories for us.

Just listen to 'Porcupine Rag' and it hardly needs much memory-jogging to conjure up the little tramp. I first listened to this Record on Christmas Day and was thinking of Chaplin and the Bread Roll Dance of 'Gold Rush' as I did so - how saddening later that day to learn of the death of the greatest Clown of all. (Yes, Mr. Editor, I really think he was.) Included on this Disc is not only an appropriate 'Jealousy' for Rudolph Valentino but also that little-heard 'Valentino's Tango'. 'Dance of the Cuckoos' for Laurel and Hardy and 'Felix Keeps on Walking' for the famous Cat are other naturals. The Mary Pickford Mood is represented by Ketelbey's 'Phantom Melody' (I think Mary must now be the only Star on this Record still with us) and the exploits of Tom Mix are very aptly covered by 'Tender Heart' (written by another member of the Baga family). Tom's arrival on the screen - the scene with the girl - the chase across the prairies - we get a 'sight' of all these incidents as we listen to the music. The Keystone Cops are here, plus Clara (IT) Bow, Theda Bara (sultry, fire-breathing), Buster Keaton; Lon Chaney in 'broken-hearted Clown' mood with Massenet's 'Elegy' and Harold Lloyd easily imagined dashing over roofs, holding the Desert Fort single-handed or climbing the sheer face of cliffs and buildings. Like Mary Pickford, Lilian Gish is sentimentally recalled - by a rendering of 'Hearts and Flowers'.

Ena and Florence capture most effectively and efficiently the music that just HAS to be associated with the names in question. The Record is part of the Music for Pleasure Series (MFP 50343 - £1.25) and contains thirteen tracks.

I'm about to play it again - I just have to go back to those far-off days At The Picture House.

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