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LONG COMPLETE ADVENTURE STORY. BY LEWIS BIRD



A THRILLING MOMENT
(See page 10)

NO 1

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The EDITORS CHAT



THE TWO BILLIES

The death of Sir Billy Butlin, of Holiday Camp fame, inevitably takes one's mind back exactly nineteen years to that bright day in the early summer of 1961 when Frank Richards's latest story "Billy Bunter at Butlin's" dropped, entirely unannounced, into the bookshops.

Advertising, at that time, was not yet the saturation business which it is today. It was a bit startling for the Hamilton fan. "It's a novelty", commented the Digest guardedly, reviewing the new book, "but we would not like to see too much of this sort of thing."

Hamilton denied that there was any commercial link in the Butlin story, but it is pretty obvious that there must have been one.

In other years, two new Bunter titles had been published each year. In 1961 there were three - one of them was the Butlin tale. In February "Billy Bunter's Treasure-Hunt" was in the shops. At the end of that story there was a special announcement: "The next story in this series will be 'Bunter the Ventriloquist' ". It wasn't! It was "Billy Bunter at Butlin's" which came out unexpectedly in May in ample time for the holiday season. At the end of that story there was an announcement: "The next story in this series will be 'Bunter the Ventriloquist' ". It was! It appeared at the normal time in September in readiness for the Christmas trade. The Ventriloquist was, in fact, the last one to appear in the author's life-time.

"Billy Bunter at Butlin's" introduced Mr. Butlin himself, a trifle obsequiously, and referring to him a little too often as the King of the Holiday Camps. It presented a very attractive picture of one of the camps.

One feels that Hamilton can have had no first-hand knowledge of the Holiday Camp at Skegness which featured in the tale. He must surely have been primed. My own copy of "Billy Bunter at Butlin's" has the yellow dust-jacket typical of the entire series, but it was on sale at the Butlin camps with a special dust-jacket in red and blue. I had a copy with the Butlin dust-jacket at one time.

"Billy Bunter at Butlin's" was competently written, but it was purely a run-of-the-mill tale, like most of the post-war Bunters. In a way it is curious how the post-war tales, Hamilton's most recent works, are so seldom referred to nineteen years after his death. It is just the Magnet and Gem which fill the hearts of the Hamilton fans. Maybe those yellow dust-jacketed tales will come into their own again later on.

ITEMS TO MAKE US THINK

Recent items in C.D. have set me pondering. First of all, the excellent articles, from various pens, on the competition which the Thomson papers provided long ago against the A.P. favourites. Secondly, Danny's comments on the odd programmes which were being offered fifty years ago to the readers of the Gem and the Popular.

Is it just possible that there may have been a connection? I have never had any doubt that the problems of the Popular, always a paper mainly devoted to Hamilton reprints, were the result of the way the available reprint material had been eaten into by the Schoolboys' Own Library and by the wasteful way many of the S.O.L. reprints were presented. In its closing year the Popular offered a number of series of very short farcical yarns, with others of rare and unlikely adventures. Did the editor think that what was popular for the Thomson readership might save the Popular? If so, it didn't seem to work.

In the case of the Gem, there were a couple of years or more when the stories were so far-fetched that they contrasted strongly with the restrained stories that Gem enthusiasts had enjoyed from Hamilton at one time. Tales like Tom Merry flying a plane through a storm to France; and Kildare joining the Foreign Legion; and a party of St. Jim's boys in array against the snakemen of Zuedaki - all seemed more suitable for the clients of Adventure than for those of the Gem.

All the same, I can be no judge of what the Thomson papers offered, for I never bought one in my life. And when I was a schoolboy, I never knew a schoolfellow who ever read the Thomson papers. But then, I only knew one who bought the Hamilton papers - my best pal, and he was a Gem "man".

THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

Mr. Jimmy Iraldi of New York writes to tell us that they have adopted an adorable kitten which they have named Gigi. "You simply cannot even lift her up without her quivering with joy. She had made many a drab and dark morning cheery and gay with her tireless antics. And how she eats! We continue placing huge cans of pet food before her, much like worshippers before a shrine. And what a fat, furry, and lovable shrine she is!" Mr. Iraldi signs his letter "Yours in bookish and feline fellowship . . ."

It is good to hear of a puss with a good appetite, for the Princess Snowee is the most difficult to feed of all our cats. (It must be her blue blood.) Or have we spoiled her? When she first came to us, she had been fed on tinned food. We gave her a bit of fish as a special treat, since when she will eat no other. But she even knows fish from fish.

She turns up her nose at cod and whiting. It has to be coley, and she even knows coley from coley.

I see in my daily paper that a dog will eat anything, but a cat, unless it gets what it likes, will eat nothing at all. I wonder what's the answer to the problem.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

Danny's Diary

JULY 1930

The Editor of the Popular has come to his senses at last. He announced a "Smashing New Programme of stories" in the old paper. The Rio Kid has come back. The Cedar Creek stories have started a new run from the beginning. The latter have all been in the Popular before, they have been published in the Boys' Friend Library, and, before that, they all ran for years in the weekly Boys' Friend. And Greyfriars and Rookwood are to appear every week. Which is wonderful news.

The last three tales in the Popolaki Patrol in Kenya are "The Burning Jungle", "Congo Foes", and "The Fortune Tusk". They have not exactly been my cup of tea, but I liked them fairly well. The Cedar Creek tales were born again in the third week of the month, and the two tales are "Bound for the West" and "The Greenhorn of Cedar Creek". The long Ferrers Locke tales have gone at long last, and the awful Sidney Drew tales about Calcroft have also departed.

The Greyfriars stories running are the series about Bunter Court. The Rookwood tales have come to the end of those which were in the Boys' Friend, and have gone back nearly to the start again, even with some old Macdonald pictures.

The first Rio Kid tale in the new series is "A Rough-House in Plug Hat". The Kid arrives in Plug Hat, a western town with a reputation for violence. The Kid gets the better of Cactus Carter, the leader of the gunmen in the town, and the defeat of this bully pleases the people of the town.

The sun is shining again over the Popular.

There has been a big explosion at a chemical works at Castleford, in Yorkshire. 13 people were killed, and many others are badly injured. There has also been a terrible earthquake near Naples, and the death-roll there has reached two thousand.

The Modern Boy is another paper which is in a bit of a rut at present. There is a new motor-boat series by C. Malcolm Hincks, and a new dirt-track series by Alfred Edgar. And the serial "Captain of Claverhouse" goes on its way.

Big crowds are going to the Test Matches between England and Australia. But the match at Leeds and also the one at Manchester were drawn. So the tally, as the season gets old is England 1, Australia 1, and two games drawn.

At the pictures this month we have seen Dorothy Mackaill in "The Great Divide"; Moore Marriott and Pauline Johnson in "The Flying Scotsman"; Jack Buchanan in "Paris"; Constance Bennett in "Rich People"; Robert Montgomery and Elliott Nugent in "So This is College" (we saw the silent version of this one, though it is a talkie); and Will Fyfe, Cicely Courtneidge and Jack Hulbert in a British musical talkie "Elstree Calling". All fairly good, but nothing exceptional.

The Magnet, unlike the other papers, is simply grand. The month opened with the last story about Pop, the relative of Sir Hilton Popper who was sent to Greyfriars after being a circus star. The final tale of the series is "The Call of the Circus". At the end, Pop goes back to Walker's World-Famous Circus. A nice little series.

Then "The Hidden Hand". Otto Van Tromp comes into the Sixth Form at Greyfriars to prepare the way for his uncle, Mr. Brander, to replace Dr. Locke as Headmaster. Bunter, under the seat of a railway carriage, hears the plot. Mr. Brander knows that Major Cherry, a school governor, is against his appointment.

Next "Tale-Bearer-in-Chief". Van Tromp, bully and rogue, is now Head Prefect, and his uncle is Headmaster of Greyfriars. And Coker is up for a Head's flogging.

Final story of the month "The Greyfriars Rebellion". Mr. Quelch interferes when Mr. Brander is about to punish Fishy. And a barring-out begins.

This marvellous series continues next month. The Magnet has given away an album, and every month is giving sticky-back photos of cricketers to put in the album. One of my sheets was stuck on the story when I bought it, so I spoiled the sheet and mucked up a page of the story. And Mr. Bragg, my newsagent, refused to change it.

Bobby Jones, the American golfer, has won the British Open Golf Championship. And Conan Doyle, who created Sherlock Holmes, has died. He was born in 1859, so he was 71 when he died.

Two excellent tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library. "The Fighting Form-Master" tells of the arrival of Mr. Lascelles, who was known as Larry Lynx when he was a professional boxer. The other tale in the S.O.L. is "Backing Up Jimmy", and it must be a very early Rookwood story, for Smythe is the junior captain. He is deposed by the juniors because he is a slacker, and the rivals for the captaincy are Tommy Dodd and the new boy, Jimmy Silver. And Jimmy wins.

Our marvellous new airship, the R.100 has flown the Atlantic, and soon the second new one, the R.101, will go into public service.

There has been a public television show at the London Coliseum, and people were able to see things which were actually happening a long way away.

I have a kind heart, I hope, but I can't describe the new Gem tales as anything but awful. The first tale is "Broadside Gussy" in which Gussy joins a team of dirt-track riders, and Mr. Macdonald shows him on a motor-bike with his helmet on and a silk topper on top of the helmet. And his monocle in his eye.

Next tale "The Kidnapped Cricketers". Figgins said that Lumley-Lumley was a Chicago terrorist and no good at cricket. So Lumley-Lumley (I hadn't heard of him for years) produced a terrorist to kidnap the cricketers, and then played a mighty game of cricket against Greyfriars.

Then "Glyn's Submarine". The submarine boys discover a sunken galleon. Nice for small - very small - boys. And lastly, "Pep for the 'Saints' ". An awful tale in which Cyrus K. Handcock, the son of a New York chewing-gum king, comes to St. Jim's in plus-fours and check stockings. He arrives in a motor-car which he drives up the school front steps. And he asks to see President Holmes, the chief of this

outfit. And he is put in Study No. 10 to make The Terrible Three into the awful four. This series continues - alas!

Doug took me to town with him, and we went to the first house at the Chiswick Empire. A lovely theatre with the widest stage I ever saw. A great variety bill, in which the main acts were Teddy Brown, A. C. Astor, and Lily Morris. Astor is a ventriloquist. Teddy Brown is an enormous man who plays the xylophone. And gorgeous Lily Morris sang three songs. I remember two of them: "Don't have any more, Mrs. Moore" and "Why am I always the Bridesmaid!"

EDITORIAL COMMENT: As Danny noticed, in July 1930, "the sun was shining again over the Popular". A wonderful time for the Dannies of 1930. It didn't last long. It was curious that they went back to give a fresh showing to Cedar Creek, which had already lived its entire life in that paper earlier. No doubt, it was good while the new life lasted. And once again, it didn't last long. Let's leave Danny to make the most of it, way back in that joyful summer of 1930.

S. O. L. No. 127, "The Fighting Form-Master" comprised a red Magnet of the early Spring of 1914 entitled "Harry Wharton's Diplomacy" plus another red Magnet of two months later entitled "The Missing Master". Both stories lost a number of chapters in the reprint. The theme (Larry Lascelles, in this case) had been used some years earlier in a blue Gem, and it was repeated, less happily, years later in a Rookwood series. We say "less happily" because the excellent Mr. Bootles was replaced with the rather colourless Mr. Dalton.

S. O. L. No. 128, "Backing Up Jimmy" comprised four Rookwood stories from the summer of 1915, near the beginning of Rookwood in the Boys' Friend. It can be noted that four Rookwood tales of this period made a full-length S. O. L., while, usually, it took eight Rookwood tales to make a Library. The early Rookwood tales were nearly double the length of what they became a little later.

So, we have the Popular reprinting Rookwood tales from near the beginning, and tales from near the beginning also featuring in the S. O. L. I have never doubted that it was the S. O. L. devouring - and wasting, often - so much reprint material which brought about the eventual demise of the Popular.

* * * * *

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BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Just a short preamble this month as the contents of Blakiana are rather on the long side, but I hope you will all enjoy them.

CONSULTING ROOM CHAT

by Derek Ford

Quotes. I have recently added a copy of "The Book of Sleuths" by Janet Pate (New English Library) to my bookshelves. In "Classical Beginnings", pages 13 to 15 are devoted to "Sexton Blake". A potted history is illustrated with three items from "The Penny Popular" (1915), a 1915 Library cover and two stills from stage and screen. Two main paragraphs are devoted to the cuckoo Sexton Blake Investigations of Berkeley Square - no nightingale, unfortunately, this short-lived company. A fair reading of some of the 300-odd case-books in the third series of the SBL. (I would willingly have supplied a suitable reading list), before this "echoes of Bond" series should have led to the author concluding that the real Sexton Blake finished in 1956. Instead, the only recommendation is "The Savage Squeeze" (1965). We are told "Blake tracks his suspect to a strip club, but loses him in the general exodus at the end of the show, for, unlike the uncouth masses, Blake stands to attention while the strip-club band plays the National Anthem". What a parody he had become by then. But the final (I sincerely hope so) send-up must be John Garforth's "Sexton Blake and the Demon God" - seen on BBC TV in 1978 - confusing everybody with a roll-top desk period Blake. It needed an exorcism of Parsons to put matters right.

On finality, on hopes of, perhaps, a "Sexton Blake Weekly" comic, Gil Page, managing editor of IPC Comics, recently commented that the launch of a new comic costs over £100,000. As trends change so quickly, most comics only have a short life - around three years on average. So that would appear to be the end of the matter. It is a lot different from the situation in "Prelude to War", when Owen French tells us in that summer of 1939 "Sexton Blake and Detective Weekly made homework a

time-consuming nuisance to most schoolboys".

£100,000. You may have read recently that the Premium Bond "big one" came to Cheshire. It, unfortunately, did not come to your correspondent. But it made me wonder what magnificent gesture you would have made to your "Blakiana" collection if you had been the winner. A purchase of one of those magnificent mahogany breakfront library bookcases at £2,000-plus, to house your newly hand-tooled, leather-bound volumes of the "Union Jack".

SEXTON BLAKE AT GREYFRIARS

by John Bridgwater

Our Hobby has three main streams, Hamiltonia, Blakiana and Brooksiana. The latter two are very closely linked but a merging of the other two had never, I thought, occurred, if you except Hamilton's use of Blake's name in the title of Magnet No. 1618, "Sexton Blake Minor", a story about Coker's antics as a self-appointed investigator. I have discovered to my surprise that Sexton Blake did make a guest appearance in the Magnet though not at Hamilton's invitation. The story is Magnet No. 818, "Disgraced by His Father". It is credited to a certain N. W. Smith, whoever he may be. (This was Norman Wood-Smith who wrote a few stories for the Union Jack. J.P.) The story tells of the sudden wealth of Dick Russell's father when he becomes secretary to a very generous employer and of his equally sudden disappearance in suspicious circumstances. Dick was one of Greyfriars 'Poor boys' and splashes his father's newly acquired wealth about in a sensible manner. All is going wonderfully well until a request for funds to take all his friends on a coach outing fails to meet with the now usual unstinting reply. Suddenly all trace of his father is gone. Dick is very worried and gets permission to visit his home. He takes Harry Wharton and Co. with him and finds the police in charge. The boys are taken to the Police Station and Dick learns his father is wanted for treason. The boy is shattered by the news. Back at Greyfriars, with the police on watch in case Mr. Russell visits his son, Dick is subjected to all sorts of insults and taunts by Bolsover, Skinner and Co. and others of that sort and though strongly backed up by the Famous Five and Vernon-Smith, he sinks into the depths of misery. He tries to run away but is brought back by his friends.

The effect on him is so serious that the boys decide the best thing is to ask Ferrers Locke to find Mr. Russell. Locke is, unfortunately, away in Russia so Vernon Smith volunteers to engage Sexton Blake and the Head gives permission. The boys go to see Blake who accepts the case as a very dear friend of his, now dead, was at Greyfriars and held the good name of the school sacred.

Accompanied by the boys Blake and Tinker go to Dick's home where Blake discovers a torn piece of paper which leads them to a Mr. Judo, who lives in Hadley Wood, near Biggleswade. Judo pretends to be deaf and dumb but Blake quickly penetrates this imposture. The boys are impatient for results and Vernon Smith suggests bumping the truth out of Judo. They are surprised when Blake agrees and aided by Tinker soon get the information they want. Meanwhile, Bunter, having heard of a reward offered for Mr. Russell's capture, goes out to look for him. By chance the fat owl finds him swimming in the sea not far from Greyfriars. Russell hoodwinks Bunter by telling him he is on Government business and Bunter will be rewarded if he keeps quiet about it, probably by being made Lord de Bunter with a fortune. Bunter believes this. On getting back to Greyfriars he finds Sexton Blake there with Wharton and Co. He cannot resist boasting about his promised title, giving away what he was supposed to keep secret. Blake gets the whole truth out of him and goes off to apprehend Mr. Russell. Later Blake discovers that Judo and Russell's employer are the villains responsible for the crimes of which Russell is accused. At the trial Mr. Russell is acquitted and leaves court without a stain on his character. So thanks to Sexton Blake Dick Russell's ordeal is brought to a happy conclusion.

This is not one of the best substitute Magnets. Credulity is strained somewhat now and then, but for the Blake enthusiast it is an interesting curio and quite readable.

SEXTON BLAKE VISITS BLACKPOOL

by William Lister

It was in the year of our Lord 1931 and in that month when fine weather bursts out all-over (or should do) that our popular detective Sexton Blake visited Blackpool. Not that this fact surprises me; having lived in Blackpool for nearly sixty years and during that time watched

the milling hundreds of thousands on the promenade during the summer, to say nothing of the thousands milling through the coloured lights known to one and all as the Blackpool Illuminations. Sooner or later everyone arrives in Blackpool even if only for a day.

Young and old, Trade Union Leaders, Labour Conservative and Liberal leaders, stars of stage, screen and Television, to say nothing of well-known authors. I saw Edgar Wallace here in late 1929.

This being so you will understand why I am not surprised that Sexton Blake paid us a visit. Not, let me add, for the sole purpose of strolling our excellent prom. or ascending our wonderful Tower or even viewing the illuminations.

Sexton Blake came on business and Blake's business was crime. Little did I know that in 1931 at the age of 19 when the world looked a lot rosier to me than it does now that Blackpool was in mortal danger. "Union Jack" records that in that very year Sexton Blake saved Blackpool. (U.J. No. 1444, June 20th, 1931.) Sexton Blake Saves Blackpool from the pen of Gilbert Chester, illustrations by a Fred Bennett. I have no quarrel with the illustrations except the cover, if that roundabout is supposed to depict a scene from our Pleasure Beach, it's a flop. Even fifty years ago we sported a better riding machine than that, I worked on the Pleasure Beach so I should know. Today's beach could be a good runner-up to Las Vegas, pity Sexton Blake does not visit us now.

However, back to business or rather the business that brought Blake to Blackpool - Crime. I could not help wondering when I commenced to read this Union Jack what dreaded cloud hung over our fair town in that long-ago year of 1931 of which I was unaware at the time. I mean, Sexton Blake saves the Mayor of Blackpool or he saves the Blackpool Tower or the five mile stretch of Blackpool sands would be enough to alarm but imagine the effect of "Sexton Blake Saves Blackpool". What fate awaited us, what cruel death hung overhead? (After all Hitler had not yet got off the ground so there was no danger in that way.)

It only took the opening chapters to reveal that if Blake had not come to our rescue we would have "had it". The same fate has overhung towns and cities and even nations in the world of fiction in recent times; ask Charlie's Angels, the Hulk, Wonderwoman or any of that fraternity. I refer to "GERMS". Now these objectionable little monsters have been

a nuisance since time began. We've all had the 'flu bug, the food bug, the germ infested cut finger or foot. Our top hospitals for years have fought germs. Why then should Sexton Blake become involved in germ warfare? That's the crux of the matter. This is not a case of germs in their natural habitat. Sexton Blake is on to a gang out to Blackmail Blackpool. Believe it or not, this aforesaid gang had bottled or canned the wee beasties with the view of turning them loose on the innocent citizens of Blackpool and its more innocent visitors, and by Gad, Sir, they would have done it but for Sexton Blake! That load of germs would have wiped us out.

A great tale of extra interest to a Blackpool enthusiast be he a local or a visitor.

As Sexton Blake remarks in the final chapter "for the next fortnight I absolutely forbid you to think of Baker Street, the password's Blackpool".

(The Josie Packman S.B. Library has this tale in stock.)

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

BROOKS AND HAMILTON: IMAGES OF THE SOUTH SEAS

by Nic Gayle

This is a 'do-it-yourself' article. By that I mean that the work of comparison - its theme - can be done by you in the armchair. If you so wish. First though, the charge. An unspecified number of paragraphs from both authors setting a scene by the beach on a South Sea Island, introducing one character. Mention must be made of the following points:- 1) a lagoon, the waters of which must be calm and translucent; 2) white sands on the beach; 3) the ubiquitous palm tree; 4) a barrier reef; 5) seagulls, wildlife, and vegetation generally. Within five years of each other, both authors fulfilled these requirements in separate and very different series that were exciting, enjoyable and in the main well-written - Brooks in 1922, Hamilton in the Magnet of 1927. Here is your chance to enjoy - and judge - a slice of both.

You should note that neither writer ever visited the South Seas themselves, deriving their information for background layouts and local colour from books, fictional and factual, with, let it be said, excellent results. Both wrote many stories with a South Sea setting in their long careers, Hamilton in particular, and of the four actual South Sea series that appeared in the Nelson Lee and the Magnet, each was rather anachronistic with sailing ships, treasure chests, and cannibal-infested islands. Clearly both writers devoured Defoe and Stevenson in their youth. This sense of having slipped back in time is well-disguised but often apparent to the discerning reader, but will not trouble anyone brought up on the Jack, Sam & Pete tales of S. Clarke Hook, an author who must have been one of the most cheerfully - indeed, riotously - anachronistic writers of popular fiction the world has ever known.

But we return to our theme, Hamilton and Brooks, who at moments like this, appear as magic spinners of words. They did not need to put in all the details, the subtleties, the atmosphere painting; the stories in both the following examples would have swung along quite happily without them. We could have survived without Brooks's 'hillocks of gleaming coral' or Hamilton's 'pellucid waters of the lagoon' and we would still have two good tales for the reading, but in the end, is not that why this article is being written over half a century after the stories first appeared?

You want comparisons? ... All right, I'll give you one. In Brooks, the seagulls 'wheel', in Hamilton they 'wing'. The rest you must work out for yourselves. Sit back and savour ...

"Dawn on the Pacific.

Harry Wharton came up the companion-ladder of the Aloha as the round, golden sun rose over the sea.

Scarcely moving on the calm waters of the lagoon, the schooner lay at anchor, her cable dropping straight as a string to the coral bottom.

In the clear, pellucid waters of the lagoon, the anchor could be seen hooked in the coral, with fishes swimming round it, and crabs crawling over the rusty iron.

Ashore, the beach of white sand and coral was beginning to gleam and shine in the sun. Beyond rose graceful, nodding palms, and farther still, the line of hills that ran like a back-bone across the island of Caca

from north to south."

"Harry Wharton looked out seaward.

Across the line of barrier reefs, where the Pacific creamed in lines of white foam, the great ocean could be seen, stretching away apparently to infinitude.

The island of Caca lay solitary in the waste of waters, far from any other land, far from the track of trade. The juniors might have fancied that that fertile isle was the only land in the wide world and themselves and the brown-skinned crew of the schooner the only inhabitants.

Not a sail, not a blur of smoke, not a native canoe, appeared on the boundless spaces of the ocean.

He looked to the shore again.

The Aloha was anchored in the lagoon on the eastern side of the island. The western side, beyond the hills, was inhabited, as the juniors knew from Tom Redwing's chart, by cannibal tribes. But as far as the eye could reach there was no sign of human life.

Of other life there were plenty of signs. Innumerable crabs crawled along the coral on the beach. Many-coloured birds could be seen flitting among the trees as the sun rose higher, and their whistling could be heard on the schooner. Seagulls winged through the air, incessantly calling. In the bush by the stream that flowed into the lagoon wild pigs were stirring from their lairs. Insects had awakened in myriads; butterflies, inches in extent, fluttered in the sunshine."

"There lay the lagoon, a great sweep of waving blue water. It was practically as calm as a lake, and of varying colours. Over to the left the tints were of pure ultramarine - a deep, glorious blue. And yet only a short distance away, the water showed like pure, sparkling sapphire, delicate and beautiful. And so clear was the water that had I been in a boat I should have seen the bottom, fathoms below, with the wonderful formations of coral, branching here and there in the most intricate designs.

I was standing on the beach of pure white sands. Such sands as one never sees except in an island of the South Seas. And, in my rear there were coconut palms, hundreds and hundreds of them, some so close to the water that they bent practically over it, and their reflections

were outlined.

'Glorious!' I gasped, as I stood there. 'Oh, glorious!'

It was the only word I could utter, for I was so enchanted.

Gazing out over the lagoon I could see the barrier reef, perhaps half-a-mile distant. The water on the beach here lapped the sands in tiny, sparkling wavelets. But out there, on the reef, the great rollers roared and crashed amid a thunder of foam and spray - the legacy of the recent storm. But here only the faintest echo of the disturbance reached the sands.

And the light over beyond the reef was dazzling. It was a waste of sea and air, without a sail or whisp of smoke.

But nearer, everything was different. There lay the reef, with the snow-white foam marking its position, and the spray glistening like diamonds in the sunlight. And the intense green of the palms, the white of the coral, and predominating all, the blue of the lagoon. It was a scene that any painter would have raved madly about.

Overhead a number of gulls were wheeling in a stately fashion. I allowed my gaze to wander somewhat. One part of the reef over to my left was higher and more rugged than the rest. And on this hillock of gleaming coral, far out there with sea on either side, grew a clump of palms - three stately monarchs who nodded their waving heads towards the island. It was very picturesque."

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 164 - Gem No. 704 - "The St. Jim's Swimmers"

When I visited Charles Hamilton all those years ago I put it to him that the finest two consecutive years of the Gem were from the summer of 1921 to the summer of 1923. He confessed he could never remember dates, but when I began to list from memory some of the series published during this period his eyes lit up and he began to smile reminiscently as the past came alive to him through his stories. "The St. Jim's Swimmers" was a single number from the beginning of this period, dated August 6th, 1921.

1921 was one of those blazing hot summers that live in the

memory (as 1940 and 1947 do for me). The St. Jim's juniors had already spent a summer holiday with Solomon the donkey and were back at school in August, for it was a time when holidays in the Gem and the Magnet did not necessarily coincide with holidays at real schools. Despite this, a story about swimming was most appropriate in such weather and rather unusual as well, since it was a sport not often mentioned in Charles Hamilton's stories. The St. Jim's swimming took place in the River Rhyl (which must have been uncommonly cold most of the time) though there was a reference to a swimming bath later in the tale, but whether this was at St. Jim's is doubtful.

The fascination of the story lies in the interplay of character between Cardew and Tom Merry. Cardew cut swimming practice; Tom went after him and was tripped up. Cardew spent the afternoon lazing on a river bank until a dog jumped in the river and was in difficulties in the strong current, whereupon Cardew jumped in to save the dog and was nearly drowned himself. When he returned to St. Jim's practically exhausted he was full of mocking sarcasm to Tom, a fight ensued, and Cardew fainted after his day's exertions. Cardew's indifference to praise for his heroism, his bitterness about fainting, his perverse pleasure in antagonising Tom Merry were all brought out with consummate skill in a mere twelve chapters.

St. Jim's had just engaged as a swimming coach a Captain Corkran who had nearly swum the Channel. (St. Jim's must have been a wealthy foundation indeed to be able to afford the appointment of a full-time swimming coach.) Of course, talk began of a St. Jim's junior swimming the Channel, and the obvious choice was Tom Merry. To annoy Tom, Cardew arranged a bungalow by the sea and the use of his uncle's yacht to assist in the attempt and, since it was Captain Corkran's dog that Cardew had rescued, Cardew had the captain of the Shell in a cleft stick. Because it was a genuine Hamilton story and not a substitute by Pentelow, a modicum of realism of course prevailed and the attempt was a failure, though the climax did in fact resolve the feud between Tom Merry and Cardew, a theme that was to be developed at much greater length in the famous Cardew Captain Series which also appeared in this celebrated two-year period in the Gem.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 231. A SCHOOL NAMED BOLSOVER

Two of the greatest writers for young people were Charles Hamilton and Talbot Baines Reed. Both men were highly-gifted storytellers. Both wrote easily and fluently, with an appeal which reached beyond youth and charmed the adult mind, with something special which is far beyond mere nostalgia. That is why their work will never die.

Technically, Hamilton was the better writer - Reed made grammatical errors such as one would never find in Hamilton's work - but both have that remarkable quality which never grows stale.

They were not contemporaries. Reed died comparatively young, many years before Hamilton embarked on his striking career. It would be natural for the work of Reed to be familiar to the young Hamilton, and I have no doubt that it was. Personally, I feel sure that a reader, acquainted with both writers, can see Reed's influence on Hamilton in the first decade of the century.

The set-up at St. Jim's, Hamilton's first important school which put him on the road to prosperity and fame, is reminiscent of the set-up in "The Cock House at Felsgarth". The story of Reed's "Willoughby Captains" is the basic story of Kildare and Monteith, which ran, off and on, through a good part of the blue-cover Gem.

The story of "The Willoughby Captains" has dull patches, while the Hamilton version sparkles throughout, but the theme remains the same.

As I have commented before, Monteith was one of Hamilton's finest senior character studies, yet Hamilton abandoned Monteith while St. Jim's was still young. I suggested once that, when he saw great success coming his way, Hamilton might have felt averse to using the temperamental captain of the New House if he was basically the brain-child of another popular writer. At any rate, the dropping of the brooding, jealous Monteith was an error on Hamilton's part. It was also a minor tragedy for St. Jim's.

Recently C.D. carried a review of a new volume of facsimiles of early Magnet stories. One of the stories in this volume is a quaint one entitled "The Greyfriars Fifteen".

The Greyfriars juniors go to play football against a Bolsover College team, and, when they arrive, are staggered to find that Bolsover plays Rugby football. Could the sports masters of Greyfriars and Bolsover, respectively, be so inefficient as to make such a contretemps possible? Well, apparently they could, in the interests of a plot.

But why a school named Bolsover?

In "A Dog With a Bad Name" by Talbot Baines Reed (my favourite Reed story) there is a Bolsover College, and the pivot of the plot is a rucker game at Bolsover. In "The Greyfriars Fifteen", Hamilton changes the last chapter into the present tense to punch home the drama. There is a sequence in the present tense in "Dog With a Bad Name".

It could be simple coincidence, but is it? I wonder whether the memory of Reed remained with Hamilton for a few years more. In "Dog With a Bad Name" there is a Trimble and there is a Raby. The chief character is named Jeffreys. He becomes a school teacher, and the boys of his class enjoy themselves in a history lesson involving Judge Jeffreys. A few years after "The Greyfriars Fifteen", Hamilton wrote a barring-out series. It started with a tale "Judge Jeffreys". A new Headmaster named Jeffreys provided a history class with amusement over the notorious Judge Jeffreys of Stuart times.

Before we leave Talbot Baines Reed's "Bolsover College", a further thought crops up. Bolsover was suffering from "dry rot". A new, live-wire Headmaster takes charge, sets out to get rid of the rot, to reform Bolsover and make it into a fine school. About 1934 Hamilton created a live-wire Headmaster named James McCann who made it his aim in life to make something worth while of the "School for Slackers" and to rid High Coombe of its "dry rot".

I do not believe that it was all coincidence. I think it was the case of one great writer taking inspiration from another. And, if it happened, I am glad that it did.

* * * * *

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REVIEWTHE REMOVAL OF HORACE COKER

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker Special)

This charming volume contains a consecutive run of the last eight Magnets to appear in the distant year of 1910. It was a year when new boys, destined to become part of the permanent cast of the Greyfriars stories, were coming on the scene at frequent intervals. Too frequent, perhaps.

The opening story is "Billy Bunter's Minor" and relates the arrival of Sammy. School stories rarely date, providing they are set in the school itself. For this reason, the early Gem dates less than the early Magnet. The main dating in this story is that the Second Form master is a Mr. Kelly. One wonders what became of Mr. Kelly later on.

Second on the list is the title story, though the actual title in 1910 was "Coker's Catch". A famous story, though not too familiar to readers now. It was seldom used as reprint material, possibly on account of its theme, though it was given a fresh airing in the 1928 Holiday Annual. Coker, the oldest boy in the Shell, gets his promotion to the Fifth, due to the insistence of his Aunt Judy. The Head, with an eye on a quiet life, accedes to Aunt Judy's request, perhaps thinking that Coker would be no more troublesome in the Fifth than in the Shell. Typical of the Red Magnet of the period, the tale is episodic. The first part - the Aunt Judy part - is a dream of delight. The second part, showing Coker's effect on the Fifth, is more run-of-the-mill, though it has its chuckles.

"The Leader of the New School" is a real museum piece, starring Trumper and his pals of the local "board school" - or council school, as it was known later. A quaint Miss Primrose plays a substantial role. The novelty is the main attraction of this one. For a time, Trumper & Co. came on the scene quite often.

Perhaps the finest tale in the volume is "The Schoolboy Traitor", a melodrama in which Hazeldene is persuaded by the villainous Ponsonby to drug Wharton's coffee just before a match with Highcliffe. Solly Lazarus, from the local "board school", is the means of foiling the plot.

"Bunter's Bust-up" is the Christmas Double No. for the year 1910, with fun and games about a Christmas pudding, though it was not a very Christmassy story. A 60-page issue - did I hear you sigh for the good old days? - in which there are other interesting complete yarns by authors of the day. The next tale, "The Haunted Island", has a good eerie atmosphere, and introduces those horsey gents, Mr. Banks and Mr. Cobb, with Solly Lazarus in the picture again.

"The Yankee Schoolboy" relates the arrival of Fisher T. Fish, not greatly different from how we knew him later on. He spends his Christmas at Wharton Lodge. School terms were very vaguely determined in the early Magnet, and new boys arrived at most unlikely times in the term. Finally, "The Girls' School's Challenge", which introduced Johnny Bull for the first time, with his concertina. Rather a loosely-written tale, this one, which seems to lose its way now and then, but superb for the Magnet connoisseur.

The illustrations by Arthur Clarke are gorgeous, and alone are worth the admittance

price. His fags in knee-breeches strike the right note. A number of instalments of the serial about Stanley Dare, the Boy Detective, should not be passed by. But it is the Greyfriars tales which provide hours and hours of joyous reading, as you enjoy yourself the way the youth of 1910 enjoyed itself with the glorious Magnet before the world lost its innocence.

One word sums it all up. Lovely!

* * * * *

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 76. LULLABY OF BROADWAY

We started off the new term's programmes with Errol Flynn in "Rocky Mountain". It sounds like a western but I remember nothing about it. The renter was Warner Bros. The supporting programme contained a potted thriller entitled "The Knife Thrower", and a coloured cartoon was "Magical Maestro".

Next, from M.G.M., came "The Red Badge of Courage", a story of the American civil war, I seem to recall, from a novel well-known at one time. The star was Audie Murphy, and I think it was pretty good. It was made again in fairly recent years, and, though the re-make was in colour, I gathered that it was not nearly so good as the one we played. A Joe McDoakes comedy was "So You Want to be a Bachelor", and a coloured cartoon was "It's Hummer Time".

Next, also from M.G.M., was Dick Powell and Adolphe Menjou in "The Tall Target", a period thriller which went down well. In the same programme was a new Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon "Triplet Trouble".

Then, from M.G.M., Joel McCrea in a technicolor western "The Outriders". Reasonably exciting, I think. A Daffy Duck colour cartoon in this bill was "Golden Yeggs".

Next, from Warner's, Doris Day in "Lullaby of Broadway", a pleasant enough Musical in technicolor. In the same bill was a novelty in technicolor, "Stranger in the Lighthouse", and a Tom & Jerry colour cartoon "Duck Doctor".

Then, from M.G.M., "Father of the Bride", with a delightful cast headed by Spencer Tracy, Joan Bennett and Elizabeth Taylor. A nice comedy, but maybe a bit too dull for our youthful audiences.

This programme included a Bugs Bunny colour cartoon "Rabbit of Seville".

To wind up the term, yet another technicolor Musical from M.G.M.: Fred Astaire, Red Skelton and Vera-Ellen in "Three Little Words". This was, I recall, yet another of those biographical films, telling something of the lives and songs of two American song-writers but, once again, I forget who they were. Probably enjoyable while it lasted, but quite forgettable. At any rate, I recall none of the music.

A Droopy cartoon in colour, in the same bill, was "Droopy's Double Trouble".

Nothing very striking, really, this term - but, maybe, films generally were cont'd...

getting less striking.

(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS SERIES NEXT MONTH)

* * * * *

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

MIDLAND

The April meeting was the A.G.M., but we spent little time on business. All officers were re-elected en bloc and thanked for their valuable services. The Treasurer, Ivan Webster, reported we were £60 in the black owing to the generosity of our president and vice-presidents. The subscription fee still remains at £1.

Our usual feature Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item were on show. The Anniversary Number was Magnet 1631, "The Mystery of Vernon Smith" and the Collectors' Item a Boys' Friend Library (1st Series) published on 1st August, 1913, "King Cricket". The Anniversary Number was published on 20th May, 1939, and was 41 years old to the day. This feature always arouses great interest.

The main discussion was the technique of Charles Hamilton in letting one know the villain of the piece almost at the beginning of his mystery stories. Other writers tend to keep you in suspense to the end. Members favoured the Hamilton technique as it allowed more room for characterisation - a thing at which the great man excelled.

Members are proposing a get-together visit to Norman Shaw's Aladdin's Cave and the date was fixed for the 17th of July.

Your correspondent sold Peter Masters three Holiday Annuals, 1929, 1935 and 1936, at £4 each and he also sold two Howard Baker Gem Volumes, Nos. 4 and 5 and a Spring book, "Tom Merry's Triumph" for £9. These bargain offers are open only to members of the Midland Club.

We send our best wishes to old Old Boys' Book enthusiasts for a happy holiday wherever they are going.

JACK BELLFIELD
Correspondent

CAMBRIDGE

The Cambridge Club met at the home of Adrian Perkins on Sunday, 1st June. The members were very glad indeed that Jack Doupe was able to be with them.

Final arrangements were made for the Club visit to Neville Woods on 22nd June, and for the September and October meetings.

This meeting was a visual feast for members. Mike Rouse began with a collection of slides illustrating Comics from Ally Sloper and Comic Cuts to the Eagle and the latest publications. He followed this up with a very fine collection of slides of postcards illustrating the East Anglian Seaside Resorts, part of the material to be incorporated in his forthcoming book on this subject. The selection on the present occasion covered the period from the end of the 19th century until the end of the Edwardian era.

Keith Hodgkinson showed a series of slides made at the recent Eagle Convention. Adrian Perkins played a tape recording on the story of the Eagle.

After enjoying Adrian and Mrs. Perkins' generous hospitality, Keith Hodgkinson gave a second showing of his film made to celebrate the centenary last year of the first issue of the Boys' Own Paper. This fifty minute film began with the "bloods" which the B.O.P. was founded to replace, and traced the history of the B.O.P., and of its principal rivals, Chums and the Captain, and of the numerous other papers that had appeared during its lifetime, up to the final issue. Keith had skilfully interspersed shots of the B.O.P. and other papers with clips from films and news reels, which brought the whole story vividly to life. Those members who had not previously seen the film were lavish in their praise of Keith's masterpiece, while the other members were equally enthusiastic at the chance to see this a second time.

The meeting closed with a warm vote of thanks to Adrian and Mrs. Perkins for their hospitality.

LONDON

It is hard to realise that we have had twenty meetings at Greyfriars, Wokingham, the hospitality enjoyed, thanks to the host and

hostess, Eric and Betty Lawrence. Fine weather has been enjoyed on nearly every occasion. There was just one short shower, but the grounds were very much enjoyed. Eric Fayne and Madam came over from their home with Roger Jenkins, the latter having his reward by winning the various Schools name's grid, one of those fiendish puzzles compiled by the host.

Another instalment of the tape recording of David Hobbs' visit to Bill Gander in 1966.

A touch of nostalgia was rendered by Bob Blythe who read extracts from club newsletter number of June 1963 and which dealt with an Excelsior House meeting at Surbiton.

"The Great Waxworks Mystery" was the Union Jack yarn by Gwyn Evans that Josie Packman read a couple of chapters from.

Eric Lawrence's visit to a local doctor for a routine check-up brought a startling climax as the medico was carrying a volume of Magnets when eventually he saw Eric. "When I see an address of Greyfriars" he said, "I immediately think that the patient must have read the Magnet." Thus according to information, the medical check-up will take place at Eric's home.

Mary Cadogan spoke of her impending visit to the School friend artist, Evelyn B. Flinders' home at Hitchin.

An enjoyable tea interval was experienced, numerous chats, holiday pictures shown around and discussions being indulged in. Time came all too soon and the picturesque journey home for all. Next meeting on Sunday, 13th July, at Bill and Thelma's home at 5 Queen Anne's Grove, Ealing, London W.5. Phone 579 4670.

BENJAMIN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 14th June, 1980

After the two previous meetings had been held on glorious evenings, it was difficult to believe that now, in the month of June, it was almost like an autumn evening - sultry, wet and misty! However, it was a cheery party.

Our Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, opened the meeting.

We had a discussion on the networked Yorkshire Television programme "Frank Muir On Children", and it had been expected that Frank Richards would have featured in the first programme, but only Richmal Crompton and others had been mentioned. Perhaps an excerpt (as had been promised in a "trailer") would appear from Frank Richards' works in a future programme. Norman Smith and Darrell Swift told of their recent day's visit to London and their journeyings to Danny Posner's shop, The Portman Bookstore and Norman Shaw's.

Geoffrey Wilde mentioned that he had read a book of "Herlock Sholmes" stories being published in the U.S.A. It seemed strange that such a book should be published abroad, when the stories had appeared in their original form in Great Britain.

The Club received an invitation from Mr. Michael Bentley to attend a film show of items relating to Greyfriars, at his private cinema in his home and it was found that all those present could be there and this was duly arranged. Special thanks were extended to Mr. Bentley.

Darrell had brought along a number of items for sale, mainly salmon Magnets and later S.O.L's. Harry Barlow had brought along some volumes of Magnets that he had recently bound: being our own professional bookbinder, he is able to do various jobs for members of the Club.

For our reading Geoffrey Wilde had chosen a section from the famous Brander series. Geoffrey remarked how the series was truly dramatic and that a sense of rebellion creeping throughout the school, was instilled on the mind of the reader. It was a dramatic reading - Geoffrey being able to portray the voice of Mr. Brander in a way in which we would have imagined it to be.

Next meeting will be on 12th July, 6.30 - 9.00 p.m., at the usual venue - Swarthmore Education Centre, Leeds 3.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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WANTED: Collectors' Digests Nos. 1 to 24 inclusive, to complete set.

N. THROCKMORTON, THE FORSTAL, BIDDENDEN, KENT.

The Postman Called

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

BILL LISTER (Blackpool): I was interested in the recent articles on Jack, Sam & Pete. Years ago I used to come across them, and I would laugh my head off, but I don't know how I would react to them now.

BILL LOFTS (London): Pierre Quiroule was married to a French-woman; hence his great love for France and customs. Likewise Eric Parker, the Blake illustrator, who was an expert on French history and Napoleon.

Mr. Nic Gayle seems to have got his lines crossed. Jack, Sam & Pete were biggest money spinners before Magnet & Gem started - but the former simply went on too long and lost their appeal before the First World War.

Whilst Keith Hodkinson is entitled to his opinion on the merits of school stories, I must admit that I was greatly surprised at his selection, as my own would probably be in the reverse order!

NIC GAYLE (Budleigh Salterton): Bill Lofts, whose researches are well-known to us all, has stated that Jack, Sam & Pete were the biggest money-spinners the Amalgamated Press ever had. I chose the adjective "unpalatable" to highlight the yawning gap between the tastes of youth and the discernment of age. I don't believe that J.S. & P. were popular at the beginning just because they were the first group to be featured week after week. Surely this distinction belongs to Blake and Tinker. They were so popular because, at that time, their peculiar mixture of adventure and slapstick was unusual in the old papers.

The Hook monopoly in the Boys' Friend Library ended because of pressure of work. Hook clearly could not write two weekly tales and a 120-page book every month, though he tried it for the first three issues. If they fell before the popularity of Hamilton it took them some time to fall. Greyfriars and St. Jim's are conspicuous by the infrequency of their appearance in the B.F.L. before the twenties, and the Hamilton and Brooks schools had to wait till 1925 for their own monthly library.

As regards the reprint J.S. & P. tale in the Penny Pop, Bill

Thurbon, who probably knows more about the characters than anyone, has assured me that the Penny Pop reprints of the first World War period were particularly crudely pruned to fit the available space, but I acknowledge that my comparison with a complete series was somewhat exaggerated.

Fr. F. HERTZBERG (Wirral): Is there no chance of having some cricketing extracts from the Magnet and Gem in C.D.? I wish Baker or the Museum Press would produce a whole volume of just cricket stories.

J.E.M. (Brighton): I especially enjoyed your editorial comments on Mr. Keith Hodkinson's extraordinary style of literary criticism. Does he really think authors can be arranged in simple ranking order as if they are racehorses or examination candidates? Would he, for instance, care to place "in order of merit" the following novelists: Scott, Jane Austen, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, the Brontes, Henry James? Oh dear, Mr. H.

The trouble is that Mr. Hodkinson's method of comparative study might persuade some readers that it has authority. It hasn't. It is simply an expression of personal preference, given a spurious validity by the device of numbering.

On the dismissive view of Charles Hamilton's work, perhaps we could leave the last word to that literary critic in The Spectator who, some time ago, reminded us of the "tens of thousands of readers" (and they are surely the ultimate critics) who "revelled in the strength of Hamilton's characterisations and the surprising tension of his plots." Just series of incidents, Mr. Hodkinson . . . ?

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): Bill Lofts' article on "The Give-Aways" brought back fond memories of Teddy Tail and Co. We took the "News Chronicle" in our house, but the charming young woman who started me off on piano lessons took the "Daily Mail", and saved the children's supplements for me. There were three a week to begin with - if I remember correctly! One issue featured Teddy Tail, another Jolly Jack, the sailor, and a third paper had Rollicking Rollo, the pirate, on its cover. The last-named character soon disappeared and it was Teddy

Tail who prevailed, as Mr. Lofts has said. Part of the appeal of Teddy Tail, Piggy, Kitty, Puss and Dougie the Duck was that the illustrations were strongly reminiscent of the Bruin Boys, which is hardly surprising since both Teddy Tail and the Tiger Tim drawings - at least, during the early thirties - were done by that excellent artist, Foxwell.

H. HEATH (Windsor): An assertion was once made in C.D. that the post-war stories of Carcroft, Felgate and the like were a complete flop. It set me thinking. Felgate is new to me, but it is known that Frank Richards beginning in 1944, wrote 13 stories for Pie Magazine featuring Carcroft School, and there were 6 in the Sparshott series in 1947.

It is extremely doubtful that these three were very widely read owing to the particular period in which they were published. To say that they were a complete flop is surely being unfair. I have read two of the Sparshott series, "The Secret of the School" and "Taking care of Lamb", both of which were enjoyed, and only one of the Carcroft series which was considerably shorter in length and detail, whetted my appetite for more. Incidentally Carcroft and their own "Boulder", Dudley Vane-Carter received a mention or two in the book, "Billy Bunter Butts In". Vane-Carter's equivalent at Sparshott was Barnes-Poquet, nicknamed the Buccaneer. I detected in 'Plum' Trumpton, a character in the Fatty Wynn mould.

I cannot regard either school as a flop. Judgement will have to be reserved for my part, until the aim is achieved of reading more about these two schools, both of which contain some familiar names - Harry Compton, Bob Drake and Herbert Levitt of Carcroft, and representing Sparshott, Harry Vernon, Tom Rake, Carboy and Lamb, both as Fourth Form Master and member of the Form.

Is it too much to hope that both Carcroft and Sparshott have their supporters?

* * * * *

SHERLOCK HOLMES, anything wanted, including any take-offs and spoofs (e. g. Herlock Sholmes) or comic-strip appearances.

FOR SALE: Greyfriars Press volumes in excellent condition: Nos. 3, 4, 9, 12, 13, 14, 35, 36, 46, 48, 66, 68, 69, and Holiday Annuals 1977 and 1980, and Billy Bunter's Own 1980. All £3 each. Vol. 5 (Courtfield Cracksman) £8; 65 (Safari) £4; 2 (Wharton Rebel) £6. Odd volumes add 50p towards postage; 4 or more post free. Also have out-of-print volumes 19 (Hikers), 21 (Tyrant), 23 (Joker), 25 (China), 27 (da Costa), 39 (polpelly), GHA 1976 and G/C 2 (Loder Captain). Exchange considered for G/C 3 (Making of Wharton) which I require, or would sell. Offers s.a.e. please.

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LONG LIVE HERLOCK!

from H. Truscott

Looking through a booklist recently sent me by Fantasy Centre, a North London firm dealing in science fiction, detective and mystery stories, my eye caught an author's name - Peter Todd. Looking further, I realised that this was a collection of Charles Hamilton's Herlock Sholmes parodies, published by an American publisher, The Mysterious Press, of New York. I wrote for it and it was sent to me. It turned out to be the parodies Hamilton wrote for the eighteen issues of the Greyfriars Herald, 1st series. This was published in 1976, a volume beautifully produced, with a very knowledgeable introductory essay by Philip José Farmer, a noted science fiction writer and a Sherlock Holmes aficionado. Mr. Farmer has obviously done what so many English writers on Hamilton's stories have not: he has actually read some, and a fair number, I should think. There are no silly remarks about repetitive style which is easy to copy, but he does say "And, although he wrote as swiftly as his heroes ran, he wrote well". Of these parodies, he writes "Hamilton's parodies are excellent reading, as well done and amusing as, for instance, Robert L. Fish's Schlock Homes.

Despite the breakneck pace at which he was forced to write, he did not stint on construction." The original illustrations by Lewis R. Higgins (Frank Nugent) have been retained.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The above-mentioned book came to our notice several years ago.)

* * * * *

OVER THE YEARS

by R. J. Godsave

"Time and Tide wait for no man" is a proverb that is only too true. Resistance to the passage of time can only be achieved by mental action. While we all enjoy the old stories, these must, of necessity, represent a contradiction in terms.

Hence, while the characters themselves, remain ageless, the surroundings in which they have their being continue to evolve with the lives of the readers.

We each in our own fashion, carry mental images of the characters, which, in spite of the passing of the years, remain much as we knew them in the days of their creation - depending upon the period in which we first enjoyed our introduction. I should imagine that all of us, to some degree, have been influenced by the drawings and illustrations of our times.

In any publication which stretches over a number of years, the artist must, naturally, be bound by the fashions prevailing at the time he is illustrating a story.

Any paper which started its life in the pre-First World War days, such as the "Magnet and Gem" would show this change in dress and the change-over from horse-drawn vehicles to motor cars, etc., in its later life. This effect would be more noticeable in these papers than in, say, the Nelson Lee which came into being during the Great War when fashions had already shown a sharp change.

* * *

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