

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 35

NUMBER 416

AUGUST 1981

Jack, Sammy, & dis child am Coming Home—PETE.

JACK,
SAM,
AND PETE.
By S. CLARKE HOOK.

HARVEL

1^D

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BORDER.

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LETTER
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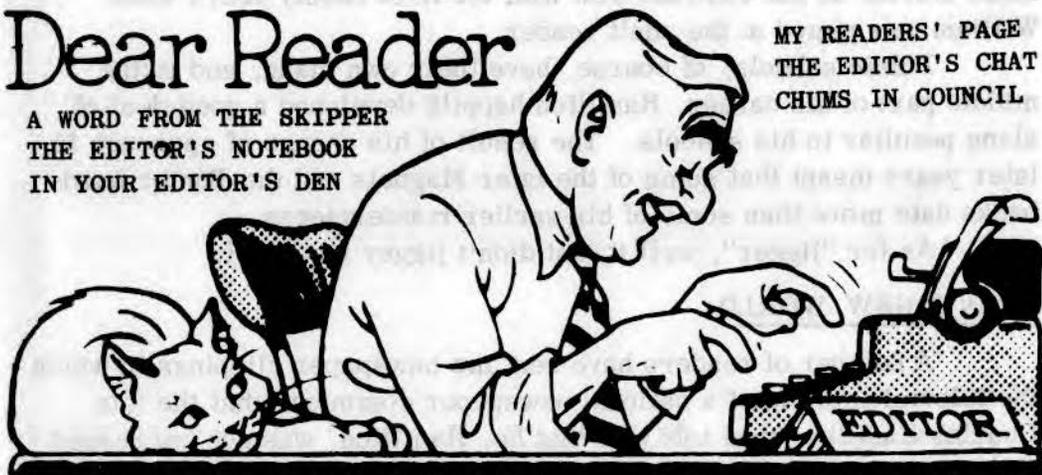
AUGUST 1981

Price 32p

Dear Reader

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

MY READERS' PAGE
THE EDITOR'S CHAT
CHUMS IN COUNCIL



WELL, I'LL BE JIGGERED!

A reader, whose letter appeared in our Postman Called section, commented: "I find Frank Richards' use of the word 'jigger' for bicycle irritating, and wonder why he continued to use such a dated word throughout his later stories."

Nothing dates faster than slang. A writer who includes modern slang in a new story is likely to find it yesterday's slang by the time a reprint occurs.

The word "jigger" never bothered me, for I never came across it in real life. As a youngster I rode a bike, though cycling never appealed to me a lot. Too much like hard work! I certainly never called my bike a "jigger", and I do not remember anyone else doing so either. Possibly it was an Edwardian slang word, and, if so, its origin was too far back for it ever to strike me as being dated.

Both Hamilton and Richmal Crompton made the mistake, in the autumn years of their careers, of using far too much of the slang of the moment. Miss Crompton, writing for children in the last ten years of her life, no doubt tried to make William true to life for the present, but those stories do not contrast well with the first twenty years when William was aimed at the adult reader.

Public schools, of course, have their own slang, and in the middle part of his career, Hamilton happily developed a good deal of slang peculiar to his schools. The result of his change of approach in later years meant that some of the later Magnets and the Bunter hard-backs date more than some of his earlier masterpieces.

As for "jigger", well it just didn't jigger me at all.

BRAVE NEW WORLD

A number of readers have sent me newspaper clippings in which the television critic of a national newspaper comments that the late Charles Hamilton once told him that he, Hamilton, was not impressed by the Twentieth Century, and didn't like it much.

Thanks to the trendies, the do-gooders, the planners, and the cranks, this country seems to have reached a stage when we begin to wonder where we are heading.

Mr. Ben Whiter has sent me an article which featured last week in the "Sunday Times", in which a columnist, unknowingly, followed our example and was dubious of the sex slant of some of the periodicals now on sale regularly for the 12 to 14 age group. The Magnet and Schoolgirls' Own may be distant. Indeed, the lessons they taught us seem to be part of another world, more's the pity.

So what of the Brave New World? The United Kingdom is still the finest land in the world, I am sure, but I am also sure that our parents would not like much what the people we have put in power have

made of it.

I cannot help feeling that many of the troubles we see around us in our lovely country are due to the acts of trendies, reformers, do-gooders, planners, softies, and cranks, who, by the steps they took from time to time down the years since 1950, are responsible for much of what faces us now.

Shakespeare wrote: "Oh, brave new world, that has such people in it." But, of course, he lived a long time ago.

SLIDES

A reader wrote me: "I deeply enjoyed the article "Will Ladies Kindly Remove Their Hats?", but I am puzzled as to the significance of the title.

Actually it was a slide which was thrown on the screen in the earlier days of the cinema, before the auditorium floors were "raked" and, possibly, in times when ladies wore largish hats which might obscure one's view of Mary Pickford.

Years ago, slides were often projected on to cinema screens. "Will Mrs. Brown kindly go home at once? She has left a cake in the oven." In the First World War, they projected slides of the war leaders - General French, Admiral Jellicoe, Marshal Foch, Lord Kitchener. And years later, in the magnificent Trocadero at Elephant and Castle, they threw on the screen magnificent slides to illustrate the gorgeous playing of a great organist on the mighty Wurlitzer. Now what was that organist's name? I've got it on the tip of my tongue.

THE ANNUAL

All being well, the order form for the 1981 edition of the C.D. Annual will be reaching you with our September issue as usual. Our 35th - Coral Jubilee - edition.

THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER (as confided to her Mum)

"I feel so very proud. Dozens and dozens of people have sent lovely letters wishing me a quick recovery, and I had a wonderful Get Well card from Mr. Thurbon of Cambridge, covered with pussy-cats. And Mr. Connolley of Gloucester cheered us all up by telling us of

Timothy who was ill like me, but recovered to live to a very ripe old age. I'm so pleased about it all, and so was the editor. In fact, he purred and purred. I'm much better now, thank you very much.

Our garden is full of birds, which is a problem. Mr. and Mrs. Blackbird have had three separate families this Spring in my Mum's hanging basket, and the youngsters have no respect for me. I'm not really scared of them. Just tactful."

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

DANNY'S DIARY

AUGUST 1931

We are having a terrible summer. Any amount of our cricket at school was ruined by the awful weather. And now the holidays are on, August is the most awful month of it all so far. The entire period has been rainy and stormy. On the 14th there was terrific rain all over the country, but it was worst in the south with a great deal of flooding. And the 24th of the month has gone into the record books as the coldest August day since 1879. On a good many evenings, my Mum lit the fire in the sitting-room to brighten things up.

We went and stayed for a week with my Gran and my Auntie Gwen who live in Layer Marney in Essex, and we went to Clacton where I swam in the sea and also to Southend where I went down the pier and had some fun in the Kursaal.

I bought the Union Jack while I was on holiday, with tips from my Gran. One was called "Menace Over Margate" by Gilbert Chester. Margate is the real goal of Cesare Genna and his gang, but they tried things out at Southend first. And the newspapers reported that Sexton Blake had been shot dead at Southend. But he wasn't dead - and he tackled the Genna gang. Then I bought the next Union Jack which contained "Lonely Farm" by G. H. Teed. This one is set in America and introduces Mile. Roxane. And Blake goes after the last surviving member of the Snyder gang - and that one is the head of the gang, Louis

Martinel. Two pretty exciting tales.

In the Nelson Lee the series has continued about the St. Frank's chums in Caronia. King Victor Orlando is a prisoner in the hands of his half-brother, Prince Zeno. The month's first story is "The Bandits of Caronia".

Next tale is "The Mountain Tyrant" in which the chums are held by a bandit chief in his mountain stronghold. Then "Prisoners of the Pass" in which the chums find themselves up against the devilish Prince Zeno. The girls are with them, too, and the artist shows them smart in gym slips, Panama hats, and long black stockings. The series ended with "Through the Enemy's Lines". The chums win through, and the King Victor comes into his own. And he stays in Caronia when the chums go home to St. Frank's. Far-fetched, of course, but a lot of excitement in this series.

Final of the month is "For League and Cup". Back at St. Frank's, Lord Dorrimore forms a football league and gives a cup. But Prof. Ogleby wants to dig up the playing fields in search for Roman ruins. He is more than half cranky.

This month the aviator, Jim Mollison, flew to Australia solo in eight days, which broke the record.

Things are looking up in the Modern Boy. King of the Islands came back in a new series which opened in the last week of the month. The first story of the series is entitled "The Solomon Islander". Ken rescues the black boy, Koko from a brute named Ezekiel Horn. And Koko saves the life of Ken in return. Lovely little story.

Also in Modern Boy is a series about Greystones School by G. E. Rochester, and a serial entitled "At War for the World" by Don English.

Mum took me to London one day, and we finished up at the Alhambra Theatre, the lovely one in Charing Cross Road which has changed back from a cinema into a live theatre again. We saw "Waltzes from Vienna" which has Marie Burke and Davy Burnaby. Lovely music and scenery, and for this show they have extended the stage so that it goes round the orchestra and kind of projects into the theatre. My brother Doug, who is a bit of a know-all, says it is what they call an apron stage.

The Gem, with the early Tom Merry stories, is simply great. Couldn't be better. It's lovely to see Mr. Macdonald's boys all back in Etons again. The opening story of the month is "Good-bye, Clavering, -- Hullo, St. Jim's". Clavering School is shut down, and all the boys and masters are transferred to St. Jim's. Then "Tom Merry Gets Going" in which Tom Merry challenges Jack Blake for the leadership of the St. Jim's juniors.

Then "The Mystery Master". Mr. Amos Keene comes as a new master of the Shell, but he makes a dead set against Tom Merry. Mr. Kidd, the housemaster, is called in, and Tom is cleared and Keene shown up by a pet parrot which often repeats things it hears.

In the next story "A Gangster at St. Jim's" it turns out that Mr. Keene was sent by Tom Merry's cousin, Philip Phipps, to disgrace Tom Merry. For Tom and Phipps are rivals for the fortune of General Merry, Tom's uncle. Final of the month is "The Schoolboy 'Tecs'". Ferrers Locke is called in to solve a burglary, and Tom Merry helps him. At the end of it, Ferrers Locke says "You've been a lot of help to me in this case, Tom. I don't know what you will be when you leave school, but if you ever want to start life as a detective, there will be a place for just such an assistant to Ferrers Locke. You can bear that in mind. Good-bye!"

(So it looks as though, if things had gone a bit differently, we might, later on, have had Tom Merry as Ferrers Locke's assistant instead of Jack Drake.)

The luke-warm Rookwood tales in the Gem this month were "Stocking the Stocks", "Jimmy Silver's Master-Stroke", both of which feature Carthew and a village rogue named Pinchin; "A Burglar Saves the Bacon" in which Carthew tried to jape Jimmy Silver; "Manders Mad Mistake"; and "Sticking Up For Dalton".

Lovely tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library. "Black Peter's Treasurer", the opening tale of the Magnet's South Seas series; and "The War Trail" which is the third collection about the Rookwood Fistical Four in Canada.

We have seen some rattling good pictures in the cinemas this month. Walter Huston and Una Merkel starred in "Abraham Lincoln" which is produced and directed by the famous D. W. Griffith; Marion

Davies, Ray Milland, Ralph Forbes, and C. Aubrey Smith in "The Bachelor Father" which was fairly funny; Richard Cromwell in "Tolable David"; Chas. Murray and Chas. Sidney in "The Cohens & Kellys in Africa"; Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell in "The Man Who Came Back"; Evelyn Laye and John Boles in "One Heavenly Night", Will Rogers in "A Yankee at King Arthur's Court"; Bela Lugosi in "Dracula" which gave me lovely shivers; and Loretta Young in "Kismet".

The Magnet opened this month with two excellent and original stories in which Ponsonby & Co. found a secret way into Greyfriars, and caused all sorts of havoc till they were found out. These two tales are "The Night Raiders" and "The Secret of the Oak".

Then came "Billy Bunter's Hat-Trick" in which Bunter hides a banknote under the lining of Mr. Quelch's topper, with hilarious results. Then "A Dog With a Bad Name" in which an action of the Bounder's sets Harry Wharton at loggerheads with his friends. Some lovely illustrations by Mr. Shields in this one.

Finally, rather late in the year I would think, the start of a holiday travel series, set in central Africa. The opening tale is "The Schoolboy Lion-Hunters". Vernon-Smith's party, under the charge of his father, goes off to Kenya, and we meet a villain named Krantz, and a black man named Kikolobo, whose life the Bounder saves and who becomes devoted to the Bounder. A promising start to a new series.

Doug took me to the lovely Holborn Empire one evening, and we saw a variety bill which included Hetty King, a male impersonator who sings "Jolly good luck to the girl who loves a soldier"; Albert Whelan who is an Australian whistler; Gaston and Andree who are classical dancers; and Wilkie Bard who is a comedian.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: In brackets are the original titles of the stories Danny read in the Gem in August 1931: "Good-bye Clavering - Hello St. Jim's" ("Tom Merry at St. Jim's"); "Tom Merry Gets Going" ("The Terrible Three"); "The Mystery Master" ("Tom Merry's Mistake"); "A Gangster at St. Jim's" ("The Master's Secret"); "The Schoolboy 'Tecs" ("On the Trail").

In the first month of the reprints the Clavering story "Troublesome Tom" had been omitted, as it had been reprinted in that year's Holiday Annual. Now another one "The St. Jim's Curate" was omitted, possibly because it introduced a cricket-match with a Greyfriars whose junior captain was one, Ponsonby. The first tale to introduce Mr. Dodds,

the curate, who played a part for some years in the early Gem.

In the final tale of the month, the detective, Ferrers Locke, made his very first appearance. He featured in St. Jim's stories from time to time for some years, but in more modern times he was transferred to the Magnet tales.

The Magnet's first South Seas series of ten stories, from the year 1927, was presented in three consecutive months in the S.O.L. No. 153, "Black Peter's Treasure" was the first part, comprising the first three tales of the series. S.O.L. No. 154, "The War Trail" was the third S.O.L. offering of the long series about the Fistical Four in Canada from the Boys' Friend of 1923. This one comprised five stories from the series.)

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Just a short preamble from me this month as Blakiana is quite full. I trust you will all enjoy reading the information about the films and also the play "Sexton Blake". If anyone has any knowledge of the actor C. Douglas Carlile perhaps they would write to Eric Fayne about it?

WHO WAS C. DOUGLAS CARLILE?

by Eric Fayne

In his Diary for February 1931, Danny entered: "At half-term I spent the week-end with my Aunt at Aldershot. We went to the Aldershot Theatre Royal on the Saturday evening and saw a play entitled "Sexton Blake". It was by a Blake writer named Donald Stuart. I am not sure whether he wrote the play or just a story on which the play was based. There was a cast of 15, and the part of Sexton Blake was played by C. Douglas Carlile."

Last month in "Blakiana" there was record of a film of 1280 ft. length (probably two reels), made in the year 1909 (and perhaps the first Sexton Blake film), entitled "Sexton Blake" and released by the Gaumont Film Co. The part of Sexton Blake was played by C. Douglas Carlile. So Mr. Carlile appeared as the great detective in 1909, and was still playing the character 22 years later in 1931. No doubt it was a touring company which Danny saw at the Theatre Royal, Aldershot, fifty years ago.

The name of Douglas Carlile is a new one to me. Does anyone

know anything about him?

(I do not know any further details about C. Douglas Carlile but no doubt someone will be able to help, he was an actor in a stock company early in the century.

The original play by Donald Stuart was taken from the Union Jack story Mr. Midnight, Sexton Blake was played by that well-known actor, Arthur Wontner. According to my records this play was presented at the Prince Edward Theatre (now the London Casino) in September 1930. J.P.)

TALKING FILMS

SEXTON BLAKE AND THE BEARDED DOCTOR (64) (U)

July 1935

Fox British (MGM)

D: George A. Cooper

S: (NOVEL) Rex Hardinge (THE BLACING LAUNCH MURDER)

George Curzon	..	..	..	Sexton Blake
Henry Oscar	..	..	..	Dr. Gibbs
Tony Sympton	..	..	..	Tinker
Donald Wolfit	..	..	..	Percy

CRIME Doctor kills violinist to defraud insurance company.

SEXTON BLAKE AND THE MADEMOISELLE (63) (U)

October 1935

Fox British (MGM)

D: Alex Bryce

S: (NOVEL) G. H. Teed (THEY SHALL REPAY)

SC: Michael Barringer

George Curzon	..	..	..	Sexton Blake
Lorraine Grey	..	..	..	Mlle. Roxanne
Tony Sympton	..	..	..	Tinker
Raymond Lovell	..	..	..	Captain
Ian Fleming	..	..	..	Henry Norman

CRIME Girl robs crooked financier who ruined her father.

SEXTON BLAKE AND THE HOODED TERROR (70) (A)

February 1938

George King (MGM) reissue: 1942 (Amb)

D: George King

S: (NOVEL) Pierre Quiroule

SC: A. R. Rawlinson

Tod Slaughter	..	..	..	Michael Larron
George Curzon	..	..	..	Sexton Blake
Greta Gynt	..	..	..	Mlle. Julie
Tony Sympton	..	..	..	Tinker
Marie Wright	..	..	..	Mrs. Bardell
Norman Pierce	..	..	..	Insp. Bramley
David Farrar	..	..	..	Granite Grant

CRIME Tec unmasks millionaire as head of hooded gang.

MEET SEXTON BLAKE (80) (A)

October 1944

British National-Strand (Anglo)

P: Louis H. Jackson

D: SC: John Harlow

S: (CHARACTERS) Harry Blyth

David Farrer	..	..	..	..	..	Sexton Blake
John Varley	..	..	..	..	..	Tinker
Magda Kun	..	..	..	..	..	Yvonne
Kathleen Harrison	..	..	..	..	..	Mrs. Bardell
Jean Simmons	..	..	..	..	..	Eva Watkins

CRIME Crook steals brother's formula for airplane alloy.

THE ECHO MURDERS (75) (A)

September 1945

British National-Strand (Anglo)

P: Louis H. Jackson

D: SC: John Harlow

S: (CHARACTERS) Harry Blyth

David Farrar	..	..	..	..	..	Sexton Blake
Dennis Price	..	..	..	..	..	Dick Warren
Kynaston Reeves	..	..	..	..	..	Beales

CRIME Cornwall. Tec stages own death to catch Nazis using tin mines.

MURDER AT SITE THREE (67) (U)

August 1959

Francis Searle (Ex) reissue: 1961 (RFI)

P: Charles Leeds

D: Francis Searle

S: (NOVEL) W. Howard Baker (CRIME IS MY BUSINESS)

SC: Manning O'Brine

Geoffrey Toone	..	..	..	..	..	Sexton Blake
Jill Melford	..	..	..	..	..	Paula Dane
Richard Burrell	..	..	..	..	..	Tinker
Harry Towb	..	..	..	..	..	Kenney

CRIME Tec uses truth drug to expose missile security chief as spy.

A Blake Parody

SEXTON PIMPLE (966) (U)

Silent Film

January 1914

Folly Films (Phoenix)

D: S: Joe & Fred Evans

Fred Evans Sexton Pimple

COMEDY Tec takes over train to save King of Cork from spies.

Raffles suffered three Pimple comedies (there were a very long series of Pimple films).

The main actors seem to have been Joe & Fred Evans with Geraldine Evans.

THE ROAD TO MOROCCO

by William Lister

There is no doubt that the world's most travelled man (howbeit of the fiction world) is Sexton Blake.

Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Fu Manchu, James Bond, Tarzan, Nelson Lee or Captain Kettle may have done a little globe-trotting but not as extensive as Blake so it's no surprise when he turns up in Morocco. It wasn't his first visit but for the purpose of the case of the "Kidnapped Correspondent" No. 1141 of the Union Jack dated August 1925, he was there again.

In 1981 that means next to nothing, probably your milkman, butcher, postman or charlady has been to Morocco, but in 1925 a visit to that country would have been for most readers of the Union Jack, the living end. In those far off days Blackpool was the Mecca for all us lads and lasses but Sexton Blake - why he was stepping on the sunlit shores of Morocco.

Morocco! the romantic Riff country, land of mystery as G. H. Teed reminds us. Dark doings were afoot. George Marsden Plummer - ex Scotland Yard man turned crook and Dr. Huxton Rymer one-time surgeon also turned crook, along with Abdel Krim, Riff Chief and Raisula, both of these being crooks in the first place so they never bothered changing, it suited them fine, that is until Sexton Blake stepped on that sunlit shore.

Now, I don't know about you readers but tales of the Foreign Legion and the attacking Arabs never made a strong impression on me. Of course there was always the exception to the rule, in this case the exception being the musical "The Desert Song". I first heard of this when, at the age of 15, I passed a theatre in Manchester, boasting a tremendous queue for this live show. It was a few years later when the Talkies had produced it on the Silver Screen I saw it for 6d. I can see it now, the sand dunes, the Arabs astride their steeds galloping over the desert, their robes flowing in the created breeze, led by the Red Shadow and his band of Riffs singing the desert song and supported by a first class orchestra, that being the limit of my Arab adventures. I can see it all again when G. H. Teed writes "Sakr-el-Droog, the Hawk of the Peak, lay on the sheer edge of the high cliff, gazing

outwards and downwards at the intense blue of the Mediterranean which lay beneath him. To the right the coast was wild and rocky seemingly quite deserted, and it was the same to the west where it stretched in the direction of Tangiers. But Sakr-el-Droog knew that those rocky wadis could vomit forth a thousand men with extra-ordinary speed if he put his fingers to his lips and whistled."

Put my Desert Song stereo record on and I can see them coming singing - you know what!

I do not know if Mr. Teed had been to Morocco, he probably had but if not he could soon knock up a few descriptive scenes via the local library books, and he has sported a few paragraphs on the scenery, etc. After all Edgar Rice Burroughs had never been to Africa and he wrote about Tarzan, or Zane Grey had never travelled the Wild West but became a top cowboy writer, so there is no problem there.

Keep alongside Sexton Blake and Tinker on the road to Morocco also the Kidnapped Correspondent, the rest of the cast could lead you into bad company. It's a G. H. Teed tale so it's worth reading.

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

Form Trials are not unknown at St. Frank's, but are very seldom used by the juniors as a means to settle an argument.

My letter is about a junior who was tried by his Form and the evidence submitted.

It all began when Archie Glenthorne was approached by Enoch Snipe of the East House who mentioned Snipe's uncle had sent him a gold watch chain which he had no use for and offered to sell it to Archie for £5. Snipe had pleaded he was very hard-up - a not uncommon predicament among the juniors - and needed the money.

Archie merely glanced at the chain which had every link die-stamped 18 ct. and thought it would be very attractive with his pocked Hunter that he wore on Sundays. He handed over a £5 note and Snipe cringed with satisfaction and went on his way.

It was not until Phipps, Archie's man, noticed the chain that things began to happen. Phipps said the chain was a fake and Archie had been robbed. But gentle old Archie wouldn't dream of admitting he had been caught and wanted to forget the affair. But Phipps was adamant and mentioned it to Nipper.

In the event it led to enquiries being made and Snipe was questioned. But Archie wouldn't proceed with further action and wanted to drop the matter since the £5 wouldn't be missed; but Nipper decided to call a Form Meeting and the outcome was that a Form Trial would be held to settle the matter.

It is the opinion of the writer that the Form Trial was a means of having something to do on a wet Wednesday afternoon.

William Napoleon Browne had condescended to act as judge as he was Fifth Form and therefore neutral.

And as Snipe was East House and Glenthorne Ancient House, the jury was comprised of Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey of the West House, and Bob Christine and York and Talmadge of the Modern House as disinterested parties.

Archie was called as the plaintiff, but Phipps acted in that capacity as Glenthorne didn't want to bother, and the judge ruled it in order.

Enoch Snipe, as Defendant, was called first, and with his usual servility explained how the chain came into his possession. The 18 ct. gold watch chain had been sent him by an uncle to match his pocket watch he had given his nephew some time ago. The Judge then asked if the uncle had expressly stated the chain was gold and Snipe assured him his uncle had so stated. The chain was then exhibited to the jury and passed back to counsel.

Nipper, as counsel for the plaintiff, took the chain to the judge and whispered a few words.

The judge then ordered Snipe to tell the truth and explain how the chain came into his possession. In the end after a gruelling questioning by Nipper, Snipe admitted he had bought it off a man in Bannington for 10/- and, seeing it was 18 ct. gold it must have been worth much more than that. But Snipe's greed and his ignorance about gold marks would have earned him imprisonment had he been tried in a real court. The

Worm of the East House was thoroughly frightened and Phipps had decided acting on his master's instructions not to prosecute. Snipe was further shocked when the judge pointed out the so-called gold chain wasn't gold at all since it was without a Hallmark. The "18 ct." stamped on each link alone wasn't proof it was gold - without a Hallmark the chain was just a piece of metal.

Space does not permit me here to describe in full the trial and all the evidence that was submitted plus William Napoleon Browne's oratory on swindlers and rogues in general that had Snipe cowering in the "witness box".

Then the judge "retired" to consider the case.

And the judgment? Phipps' claim for redress on behalf of his master was denied on grounds of "caveat emptor" - let the buyer beware. Archie never saw his £5 again for Snipe stated he had spent it.

It was one of those instances where crime does pay. Archie was the loser by £5, Snipe gained £4.10, and the con-man benefited by Snipe's 10/-. And as the guileless Archie wouldn't exactly miss his money perhaps the next Form Trial if ever one is held, will be worthwhile.

A REMARKABLE SERIES

by R. J. Godsave

In the autumn of 1919, E. S. Brooks wrote a remarkable series, which in effect could be said to be four stories rolled into one. This series was reprinted in the Monster Library under the title of "St. Frank's in London". The start of the new term saw a new boy - a Greek - named Titus Alexis. A boy of vicious temper with a hatred of all things, British, deliberately set fire to the College House as revenge for the - to his mind - the unjust treatment meted out to him by the St. Frank's masters and boys.

With the College House having to be rebuilt and the rest of the school decorated, the whole school was transferred to the Turret College, a school that had been empty for some time. On the death of the owner who had modernised and made the college habitable, the trustees had decided not to pursue his aims and so the Turret College made the transfer of the whole of St. Frank's possible. It was Nelson Lee who had

suggested taking over the Turret College, he having his own property just a short way away. So it was that the transfer of St. Frank's to Holborn in the heart of London was made without any difficulty.

It was a novelty for the St. Frank's boys to walk down High Holborn in their free time. It was inevitable that Handforth should fall foul of a cockney youth riding a box-cycle and become engaged in a fight. Also Fullwood & Co. should fall in with a smartly dressed man who promised them a 'bit of sport' in a nearby gambling den. Enticed by Fullwood into the den, Sir Montie Tregellis-West was kidnapped by the two men who ran the gambling den and kept a prisoner. His guardian, Lord Westbrooke, had received a note that he was to bring £5,000 to an arranged meeting place with their agent and then Tregellis-West would be released. Naturally, Nelson Lee made it his business to investigate St. Montie's disappearance. Lack of news of both Nelson Lee and Tregellis-West caused Nipper to ask the help of Sexton Blake and Tinker. This was one of the few occasions that Blake and Tinker entered the pages of the Nelson Lee Library.

After an exciting adventure on the River Thames, Nelson Lee and Sir Montie returned to the Turret College unharmed. Brooks now wrote of a yellow band of Chinamen who inhabited some disused sewers which ran under the school and had an entrance in the school grounds by the use of a false drain cover. How Nipper and Sir Montie found the false drain and entered into the sewer tunnels to find that opium smoking, and no doubt drug peddling was carried out from the sewers. The fact that the Turret College was now occupied greatly annoyed the Chinese who attempted to create havoc at the school by ghostly visitations at night in the dormitories with the object of scaring the junior school so that the authorities would be forced to leave the Turret College.

The final episode of the London stay was to introduce a character who was to become famous in St. Frank's history. James Little, or Fatty Little as he became known, was the only junior to become a St. Frank's scholar without having been to the Sussex home. Although food was his god he was not a glutton, and when his mind was occupied at lessons or sport his thoughts were far away from food.

This serial was so packed with thrills in different settings that it

must rate as one of the highlights in the Nelson Lee saga.

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ERIC PARKER - GEM ARTIST? by W. O. G. Lofts

Until 1909, the Gem had various artists to illustrate the St. Jim's stories. From that date however, when R. J. MacDonald took over on a regular weekly basis, he drew nearly all the covers until the end in 1939. During his service with the R.N.V.R. in the First World War, Warwick Reynolds filled the breach with his rather overblown but clever drawings. There is no doubt that 'Mac' as he was affectionately called, was a very competent artist, delighting many generations of Gem readers with his excellent illustrations of Tom Merry and the other characters of St. Jim's.

Not long ago, when I visited Howard Baker of reprint fame, he showed me the cover of Gem No. 1338 dated 23rd September, 1934. He was of the firm opinion that part of the cover was drawn by the late Eric Parker, the famous Sexton Blake artist. I must agree with him, as the style is unmistakably his work. He had a skilful flair of depicting horror, and making a situation gripping to the reader. The story in question is entitled "The House of Dread", a reprint of a much earlier green Gem yarn. Here 'Martin Clifford' had clearly based his theme on Conan Doyle's famous Sherlock Holmes story "The Speckled Band". The scene depicts D'Arcy shining a torch on a bed (this part drawn by MacDonald) whilst in the background a youth dressed in school blazer, with a look of horror on his face, is about to lash at the large snake poised to strike on the bed. Cowering against the window is a shapely teenaged girl who likewise is terrified, horror showing all over her pretty face.

Eric Parker was of course used to drawing such scenes for the detective stories of mystery, crime and murder for the Sexton Blake Library, Union Jack and Detective Weekly.

Why Parker should have drawn this part of the cover is a mystery as MacDonald was competent enough to draw such a scene. With both artists long dead, plus all the editors concerned I suppose it will always remain a mystery. All other covers around this issue are

drawn entirely by R. J. MacDonald, certainly one of the best artists ever to illustrate school stories for boys.

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SNEAKING REGARD FOR A SNEAK

by Tommy Keen

Skinner, Snoop and Stott were not three of the most pleasant of the Greyfriars characters, although I think I remember reading at one time that Frank Richards rather cared for Skinner. Actually, Skinner was just the mean, vicious type of cad one must have in a place such as Greyfriars, to help show to advantage the utter nobility of Harry Wharton and Co. I may have the wrong impression, but I don't think Skinner was quite so evil in the 1930's, as he had been in the 1920's and previous.

Snoop, also, was quite contemptible, more so, I should imagine, during the earlier days of Greyfriars.

William Stott, the least important of the three, always rather interested me, and often wished that something more would be made of Stott. Actually, I liked the name.

To my knowledge, Stott only featured once in a Magnet story, during the time as a schoolboy when I was besotted by the Magnet (and of course, I still am), but I have since learnt that this story, "The Supreme Sacrifice", Magnet No. 788, was written by a substitute writer, W. S. S. Hope. Stott was not at all a pleasant character in this story of long ago, and it was his cousin, a Clifford Stott, who paid 'the supreme sacrifice'.

Stott was inclined to just follow Skinner and Snoop, although at times he demurred over too much trickery. However, all through the Greyfriars Saga, Stott was a minor character, and although he did not entirely vanish from the scene, as did Bulstrode, Trevor, Treluce, Dick Rake, Hillary, Jimmy Vivian, plus of course Pentelow's Piet Delarey, he never amounted to anything.

Pity, with all the numerous people who kept tumbling into the Sark, that Stott wasn't allowed to show some pluck, and save somebody from a watery grave.

Or was he?

REVIEW"THE BOUNDER'S FEUD"

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker "Special": £16)

This magnificent volume contains nine Magnets, not consecutive, from the Spring and Summer of the year 1924. This is a period of outstanding interest, leading up, as it did, to the Golden Age of the world's finest paper for boys.

"Fishy's Treasure" is a typical Fish story, telling of yet another stunt of the American junior. This time it looks genuine and almost philanthropic, but Fishy slips up as usual. This is followed by "Pen's Pal", a pleasantly sentimental little yarn concerning the friendship between Newland, the rich Jew, and Penfold, the cobbler's son. Nicely plotted, and holding the interest.

"Too Clever of Skinner" is a fine single story in which Skinner, trying to dupe a tricky stranger, gets duped himself, and has to turn to Harry Wharton & Co. for aid in his plight. An outstanding single.

"Standing By Their Pals" is an odd little tale in which the governors of Greyfriars are rumoured as about to raise the fees at the school, which would mean that some boys, including the Bunters, would have to leave. Not much doubt, I think, that this is a "sub" effort, but it is interesting to speculate whether Hamilton would have used such a theme, and just where, in the reading, it is non-Hamiltonian.

An excellent couple of stories are "The Man Who Came Back" and its sequel "Treasure Trove". An Old Boy, Blagden, expelled from Greyfriars in his youth, returns to his old school to beg for the post of cricket-coach. His real object is to search for the fabulous "Greyfriars Treasure". He doesn't find it, but the Famous Five do. A novel pair of tales, well worth a place in the volume.

Finally, the piece-de-resistance - the main attraction. A 3-story series which includes the overall title yarn "Vernon-Smith's Feud". A magnificent trio of tales concerning a quarrel that arose between the Bounder and his best pal, Redwing. Great stuff.

An additional attraction of this period is that the supplement, the Greyfriars Herald, was at its best just now. And some Ferrers Locke complete stories will give much pleasure to most readers.

Altogether a very jolly book, beautifully bound and presented, as always with these "Specials", and well-deserving of a place on any connoisseur's shelves.

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FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: Nelson Lee o.s. 188 to 228 (bound), 1919, no front covers.

WANTED: Thomsons, Magnet, Gem, H/Bakers, etc., also cigarette cards.

91 MOOR CRESCENT, BELMONT, DURHAM, DH1 1DJ

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WANTED: The Prize, Chums, B.O.P's.

38 ST. THOMAS'S ROAD, PRESTON, LANCS.

And now, back three score years and ten for a story of the World's Greatest Detective.

THE SIGN OF FORTY-FOUR!

The mysterious murders of forty-four retired Indian colonels, on forty-four consecutive nights, had naturally attracted a good deal of public attention. Even in the records of crime of the great metropolis this was a little out of the common. The police, as usual, were helpless. The case, indeed, presented many difficulties. With the exception of footprints, fingerprints, and a number of Oriental daggers of curious design, the assassin had not left a single clue behind him. I wondered whether my friend Sholmes would take up the case, though he had not yet been approached officially on the subject. On this occasion the police seemed to have forgotten their well-known custom of appealing for aid to private detectives in cases of exceptional difficulty.

I was reading the latest reports of the strange mystery one morning in our rooms at Shaker Street, when I observed Sholmes regarding me with a quizzical smile. I decided to tackle him on the matter.

"Sholmes," I said, "I am going to speak to you frankly. Why have you not taken up the case of the forty-four murdered colonels?"

Sholmes shrugged his shoulders.

"The police have not cared to avail themselves of my humble services, Jotson. I do not wish to intrude."

"I am sure that you have formed a theory, Sholmes."

"Theories, my dear Jotson, I leave

to the police. My business is with facts. Perhaps if our friend, Inspector Pinkeye, chose to consult me, I could point out a few facts that have escaped his attention, but he has not chosen to do so."

"After the priceless aid you rendered in the case of the biscuit-tin ---"

"I am afraid, Jotson, that our friend Pinkeye is a little jealous. Even police-inspectors are only human. But I do not deny, Jotson, that the case presents certain aspects of interest. There is a wholesale characteristic about it which pleases me -- in a professional sense, of course." He rose and paced the room restlessly. "Jotson, as I have said, I do not care to offer my services unasked, yet it is now the forty-third day since the crimes were committed."

I looked at Sholmes in astonishment. His remarks puzzled me.

"You mean that the assassin has had ample time to make his escape?" I asked.

"I mean nothing of the sort." He changed the subject abruptly. "Have you ever studied the science of numbers, Jotson?"

"Numbers, Sholmes?"

"Numbers!" he replied. "You are aware, of course, that there are certain numbers that are regarded as sacred or of mysterious import to different countries. For instance, take the number two. In this country, for example, every man, and, indeed, every woman, has two hands and two eyes. There are two editions to a

morning paper; there are two shillings to a florin, and two half-sovereigns to a pound; there were two Kings of Brentford. The number two constantly recurs."

"I had never observed it, Sholmes; but now that you point it out --"

"Exactly! Now that I point it out, even the police could see it. Take the number seven. There were Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, seven ages of man, seven hills in Rome, and seven times seven is the number forty-nine."

"True!"

"And, now," said Sholmes, his look growing more serious, "take the number forty-four. Do you not see the connection between that mysterious number and the mysterious murders that have shocked the whole community? Forty-four Indian colonels were the victim of the unknown assassin on forty-four successive nights. Since then nothing has been heard of the ruthless assassin, and the remainder of the retired colonels in England have slept in peace. But --" Herlock Sholmes spoke slowly and distinctly - "tomorrow, Jotson, it will be forty-four days since the last of the murders."

A strange thrill of apprehension came over me. In my mind's eye, I seemed to see a perspective of forty-four new crimes that threatened an equal number of as yet unsuspecting victims.

"That has not occurred to the police," Sholmes said. "Are you ready for an adventure today, Jotson?"

"I am entirely at your service, Sholmes."

"Your patients--"

"Most of my patients died while

we were busy on the case of the biscuit-tin. For the remainder I care little in comparison with my interest in your work."

"Faithful Jotson!" said Sholmes, with one of his rare pokes in the ribs. "Let us go!"

"Where are we going?" I asked, as the taxi cab whizzed through the busy streets.

"Hounslow Heath!" said Sholmes briefly.

"But why?"

"A fair is being held there."

"A fair?" I exclaimed.

"A fair, Jotson, with roundabouts, swing-boats, and a circus. We are going to see the Indian juggler, Bhang Bhung, and his troupe of performing elephants."

"Sholmes!"

"A little relaxation will do us no harm, Jotson. By the way --" He changed the subject abruptly - "you read the account of the crimes? On each occasion the victim was attacked in his bed-room, which was entered by the window."

"Undoubtedly!"

"How did the assassin reach the window, Jotson?"

I shook my head.

"He must have had some visible means of support," remarked Sholmes.

"A ladder?" I suggested.

"A man carrying a ladder at night would excite remark, Jotson. The aim of this amazing assassin has been to shroud his movements in mystery. He did not use a ladder."

"You know what he did use,

Sholmes?"

"Perhaps!"

I could not extract another word from Sholmes until the taxi drew up at the heath. The entertainments were not yet in progress at that early hour, and the place was almost deserted. Outside the circus tent a lithe, dark-skinned man was feeding a troupe of elephants. Sholmes approached him.

"Good-morning, Bhang Bhung!" he said.

The Hindu gave him a surly look.

"No speak English," he said.

I think I have already mentioned in these memoirs that Sholmes was a master of every language, ancient and modern. I was not surprised to hear him address the Hindu in his own tongue.

"Hookey dummy bang woop!" he said with a smile.

The Hindu sprang to his feet.

The meaning of those strange-sounding words I could not fathom; the tongue was unknown to me. But the effect upon the Hindu was electrical. His eyes rolled, and his dark face became livid.

"Sha-ke-ka-ke," said Holmes.

"Wallop hooky snookey woosh!"

Before he could say more, a dagger glittered in the hand of the Hindu. But Sholmes was never taken by surprise. In an instant the handcuffs were upon the wrists of Bhang Bhung, and he was a prisoner.

"Sholmes!" I exclaimed, when we had returned to Shaker Street, after handing over the sullen prisoner to the police. "I am on tenterhooks --"

"As usual, Jotson," he said, with a smile.

"As usual, Sholmes. You will make your explanation as usual?"

"Is there anything to explain?" yawned Sholmes, as he lighted the eternal cigarette. "To me, the thing was obvious from the first. It all centred, Jotson, on the sign of forty-four. As you doubtless know, in the deep and mysterious East, a magic import is attached to certain sacred numbers. It was not by chance, Jotson, that forty-four retired colonels were slain on forty-four successive nights. It was evidently a plot of Oriental vengeance, and the clue was the sign of forty-four. Since he was arrested, I have questioned Bhang Bhung, and he has confessed that, long ago, in his native land, he was fined forty-four rupees. Something of the sort, Jotson, I had divined. The sign of forty-four gave me my clue."

"But how ---"

"My dear fellow, I had to find the man to whom the number forty-four was a deep symbol. I was aware that at the time of the murders, Bhang Bhung was in London giving performances with forty-four elephants."

"Forty-four!" I ejaculated.

"Exactly! The sign of forty-four!" Sholmes smiled. "Had the police cared to avail themselves of my assistance, I could have pointed out our friend Bhang Bhung to them at once. But when forty-three days had elapsed since the crimes, Jotson, I could hesitate no longer. On the forty-fourth day the series of crimes would have recommenced, and forty-four fresh victims would have fallen. I acted in time. That mysterious number gave me my clue; but

that was not all. How, my dear Jotson, had the assassin reached the windows? He could not have carried a ladder, and a steam-crane was out of the question. Yet he must have mounted upon something to reach the windows. I deduced an elephant."

"One more question, Sholmes," I said. "You have observed that the carrying

of a ladder to the scene of the crimes would have excited remark. Was not the presence of an elephant likely to be equally remarked."

But Herlock Sholmes was already under the influence of cocaine, and he did not reply.

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News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

CAMBRIDGE

The Cambridge Club met at the home of Bill Thurbon on Sunday, 21 June.

This was the annual meeting of the Club. In addition to his annual report which illustrated the many fields of interest in boys' books and papers the Club had discussed during the year, the Secretary also reported on the very successful 10th anniversary meeting of the Club held on 17 May.

The meeting carried with acclamation a special vote of thanks to Secretary Keith Hodgkinson, and to Adrian Perkins, for their work in connection with the Anniversary meeting.

Photographs taken at the Anniversary by Keith and by Mike Rouse were passed round.

After enjoying Mrs. Thurbon's tea the meeting was enthralled and fascinated by a talk by Perran Newman, "The Butterfly Farms", being an account of the work of his father, L. Hugh Newman, and of his grandfather, as naturalists and lepidopterists. L. Hugh Newman in particular is widely known as a contributor to many magazines in the 1940's and '50's ranging from the Boys' Own Paper and Collins Magazine to Meccano Magazine, and also as a broadcaster on the subject. Perran produced a marvellous collection of books and magazines, including some splendidly illustrated volumes. He also talked about the art of the lepidopterist, and the running of the Butterfly Farm, illustrating his talk with very many photographs of the work of the farm in catching and

breeding butterflies and moths, many of an intensely interesting nature being taken at short range giving a vivid close up of the butterflies and moths. Perran was very warmly thanked and applauded by the members for an item that provided a grand finale to a most successful Club year.

The Club will resume meetings in September.

MIDLAND

There was rather a depleted attendance at our June meeting, only nine members attending.

Tom Porter informed us that John Tomlinson's widow had died recently. We stood in silence for two minutes as a token of respect.

We enrolled two members, Ken Humphries and Ken Townsend.

Our usual features, Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item were on display. These were Magnet No. 490, 30th June, 1917, and 64 years old to the day. Also Tom Merry's Annual for 1948.

Roger Jenkins had sent Tom Porter a cassette on which there were recorded extracts from Magnet stories. A quiz accompanied the cassette. After listening you had to decide which title to put to each extract, Nos. 1 to 5, and make up from the initial letters the name of a Greyfriars character. We enjoyed listening to the extracts, interesting and very well read, but the quiz left us just nowhere. Our members have very wide tastes in reading and the Magnet is one among many.

We know this by checking each month on what our members have read, anything from the Bible and Plato to the Magnet and Gem.

We finished our meeting with "Cosy Pictures" an idea of Tom Porter's. Scenes from the Hamilton stories such as a study tea after a gruelling game where Greyfriars have beaten Rookwood 2-1 and the table is loaded with good things. The general contentment is passed on to the reader. Each member was asked to give his "Cosy Picture". Many and varied were the answers and of course Christmas at Wharton Lodge cannot be left out.

We finished promptly at 9.30 and wended our way homewards.

We wish O.B.B.C. readers everywhere good holiday and happy reading.

JACK BELLFIELD - Correspondent.

LONDON

Bill Bradford devised another fun-think for members attending the mid-Summer Ealing meeting. Full colour cover reductions of story papers and comics with the titles obscured were on display and our memory files were ransacked for the answers. Continuing his dips into the fascinating Brooks' correspondence, Bob Blythe read Edgar Oswald's letter to his brother, Edwy Searles of 11-13 Dec., 1914, from Dallas, Texas, where E.O. was working for "Blinkhorn Photoplays". Bob followed this with a reading of the July 1964 Newsletter relating the hi-jinks at the Surbiton meeting at Excelsior House.

After tea, enjoyed in balmy weather on the lawn, Bill gave the correct answers to his Cover Display Quiz. Larry Morley, Sam Thurbon and Norman Wright won book prizes. Ray Hopkins read a short newspaper article about the career of Jack Cox, last editor of the BOP who has just died in N. Wales aged 66.

Reuben Godsave's Characters Quiz was another "use your brain" item. The amusing clues when solved led to clever answers, the genial quiz master chuckling at some of our dismayed expressions. Eric Lawrence, Mary Cadogan and Larry Morley received prizes of fragrant toilet soap.

Win Morss read from Magnet 1333, part of the Greyfriars' Hikers Series, and followed this with a "have you paid attention?" quiz.

Final entertainment item was one-half (due to time restrictions) of a Don Webster Quiz (who said Sunday is a day o' rest?), the answers being characters from old boys' books or names of London Club members.

Hosts and tea-ladies were suitably thanked by Mary Cadogan. Next meeting, Sunday, 9 August, at Kingsbury, hosts: Bob and Louise Blythe. Please bring own food. Tea will be poured by Louise.

RAY HOPKINS

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 11th July, 1981

Ten members were present on a fine summer's evening.

Harry Barlow made a welcome return to the Chair. Keith Atkinson gave a report on the recent visit he and Darrell had made to

Norman Shaw's and the "goodies" they had bought there. Mention was made of the forthcoming Comic Mart in Leeds and although dealing mainly with American papers, at least one dealer would be there with some old boys' items.

Mollie Allison presented a quiz based on the characters of The Remove - giving their surnames, and we had to recall their Christian names. Some of the characters were a little obscure, as they featured very rarely in The Magnet stories, so this quiz was not easy by a long chalk. Geoffrey Good and Keith Atkinson tied for first place.

After refreshments, Harry gave us a talk on "My Collection". For some reason, Harry's talks and quizzes seem to end up somewhat hilarious and the Members have not yet established whether this is intentional or not! Harry told us that he disposed of the original copies of The Magnet when Howard Baker started to produce the reprints and now he has re-bound many of them, in uniform volumes and he brought some of them to show us and they looked most attractive. Harry told us how he had been one of the founder Members of the Club.

Thanks were extended to Harry for his very informative and entertaining talk.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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FOR SALE: C, D's Nos. 60, 267, 349 to 362 including Pearl Jubilee issue No. 359. C, D. Annuals 1967, 1975, 1976. 7 Sexton Blake's: 9d. issues, Nos. 338, 341, 342, 343, 345, 346, 348. Holiday Annual 1925 (fair) and 1928 (H. B. reprint, mint). Magnet Companion. H. B. reprints: Magnets 1285 - 1296 (Rebellion of H. W.); 1209 - 1219 (Bunter the Pretender); 1255 - 1261 "Downfall of H. W."; 1138 - 1151 ("Courtfield Cracksman"); 1349 - 1353 plus 1359 "Mystery of Wharton Lodge"; 1247 - 1254 ("Terror of the Form"); 910 - 917 ("Bunter Court"). Also 10 tatty salmon Magnets 1938/39. £30 the lot. Purchaser to collect.

V. SMITH, 9 MELROSE AVENUE, DIDSBURY, MANCHESTER 20

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Girls' Own Annual No. 25 (1904), School Friend Annuals 1936, 1937 and 1952 - Five Schoolgirls Own Libraries - 12 Schoolgirls Picture Libraries - Champion Annual 1956 - pre-war Hultons Adventure Annual. Offers to:-

H. BLOWERS, 25 CHURCHFIELD RD., ROTHWELL, LEEDS

The Postman Called

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

J.E.M. (Brighton): The real highlight of last month's C.D. was "Will Ladies Kindly Remove Their Hats?" I had never previously understood the decisive change made to the old music halls by the Stoll and Moss enterprises early in the century. It was also valuable to be reminded that the variety theatre not only lasted well into the cinema age but was finally destroyed only by the combined power of TV and inflated property values.

On the subject of the early cinema, I expect you know about the part played by the so-called "Brighton School" of film-makers before the rise of Hollywood. It was George Smith who patented the very first colour-film process, and it is still possible to see from the train near Hove Station a wall faintly bearing the original name "Kinema-colour". "Will Ladies Remove Their Hats" was totally fascinating. Could we please have more articles of this kind, using our old storypapers as pegs on which to hang social history?

CHRISTOPHER LOWDER (Malvern): It's possible that the Chinese serial T. A. Johnson is trying to locate (Postman Called, July CD) was Lester Bidston's "The Crimson Claw". Before he turned to recording the exploits of Sexton Blake and Dixon Hawke, Bidston wrote mainly for Addington Symonds' group of AP papers, of which the Champion was the most successful. "The Crimson Claw", as I recall the story, was a futuristic tale featuring a Chinese or Tibetan world take-over bid. It was later reissued as a Boys' Friend Library (2nd Series 107, circa 1927).

JOHN LEWIS (Neston): What an excellent article of Mr. Wormull's on the public houses near Greyfriars.

For the record the Bird in Hand Inn was shown on two other maps of Greyfriars and District prior to that of Basil Reynolds in 1969. They were those in the 1965 "Prospectus", and the one which appeared on page 2 in Magnet 1672 (The Eleventh Hour), of 1940.

The latter map was the source for the other two, and I believe the first plan of Greyfriars and its environs to appear in the Magnet. If

the Editor's word can be taken, for they sometimes lied, then Frank Richards' own comment on this map was: "This map is astonishingly like my own idea of the vicinity of Greyfriars School."

However the mystery of in which Magnet tales the Bird in Hand featured I have yet to solve. I have a feeling the 1940 artist may have invented this particular 'boozer'.

LEN BERG (Wembley Park): In reply to T. A. Johnson's query regarding a Chinese serial he once read, I think I have found it in the Boys' Friend of May to July 1925. The synopsis is: When the Allies, led by Britain, carry the war of 1975 into China, members of the Special Section attached to headquarters are dispatched from Hong Kong on an important duty to capture Sung Shan, chief of the Federal Secret Service, and also to try to locate the Chinese arsenal believed to be in a city somewhere in the Great Khingan Mountains. The serial was entitled "The Lion's Revenge".

LEYLAND VINCENT (Manchester): In the June C.D., a few remarks in "History Repeats Itself" wholeheartedly echo my own thoughts. In the article, the Editor expresses his dislike of modern theatre structure: that is, little, or no scenery, everything bare between the audience and the walls at the rear of the theatre, a low stage, and lighting by spots. Footlights, he states, seem to be a thing of the past. As an actor, I am only too well aware of the complete lack of atmosphere in modern theatre. (Though I was beginning to wonder if I were the only person ... actor, or otherwise ... who was aware of it! Thank heaven, there are, at least, now two of us!) The footlights provided that cosy barrier between audience and artiste. Thus, one had the illusion of a fourth wall, without, from time to time, having to meet the eyes of members of the audience, or, with a low platform-in-exchange-for-stage, feeling that one is almost sitting in the laps of those in the front row. That powerful instrument, the act-drop (the curtain that used to go up and down), was considered an impediment to "art", and often, to add insult to injury, there is no form of curtain at all. The actors, many modern directors reckon, should make their own atmosphere without these "old-fashioned" aids: an experiment which calls for a highly-imaginative audience. Others, less imaginative, keep away, and ... alas! ...

these are in the majority.

GORDON HUDSON (Ouston): I was interested in your comment about the Feltham trams. I was a member of the Tramway Museum Society for a number of years; I eventually had to give up as playing the church organ I could no longer get to Crich at weekends. I used to work on the Gateshead trams there, but I was also interested in the other north-east ones. Two came from Sunderland and one of these was a Feltham. This was different from the standard cars in that it had a central entrance instead of the usual end ones. Because of this it was impractical to operate it as a conduit car and with the London system starting to contract it was sold to Sunderland in 1937. Its London No. was M.E.T. 331 (afterwards L.P.T.B. 2168) and it became Sunderland 100. After the Sunderland tramways closed in 1954, No. 100 was acquired by enthusiasts and eventually finished up at Crich. It was, however, being restored to its M.E.T. livery, and I do not know whether it is still at Crich. There are, I believe, two other Felthams preserved, one in the U.S.A. As you mentioned, Leeds acquired many of the Felthams, and apparently 90 went into service there. Incidentally the Sunderland car was built in 1930 but according to my reference books the standard Felthams were introduced in 1931, as you stated.

Can you please explain exactly when C.D. started, as "1981 is Coral Jubilee Year". I have obtained a number of old copies, the first being No. 37 of January 1950. On this basis, being a monthly publication, No. 1 should have been issued in January 1947. This, however, does not accord with November being the anniversary. Were the first issues published in alternative months? I shall be grateful if you can please explain this as it has puzzled me for some time.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT): C.D. first appeared in November 1946, and, for a very short time, came out at 2-monthly intervals.)

E. A. KADISH (Hendon): You say that "the C.D. is not a necessity". With respect, dear Editor, I must disagree. The excellent light entertainment contained in pre-war books, periodicals, films and radio, has long since vanished, and if the "Digest" were to disappear, what "safety-valve" would we relics of the past have to protect our sanity in an

increasingly lunatic and neurotic world? So, please, sir, don't even mention the possibility of the C.D.'s disappearance: I realise, of course, that so many of us are on small pensions; personally, if any choice has to be made, I intend to give up food rather than the "Digest"!

WILLIAM LISTER (Blackpool): You comment that C.D. is not a necessity. The answer to that is "rubbish"! For many of us, that's just what it is. A necessity. For people with our interests there is nothing to equal it. Secondly, the article on the Boys' Magazine. I took the B.M. weekly, and still have two copies which I keep for old times' sake.

T. HOPKINSON (Dukinfield): Please don't underestimate the value of our lovely little magazine.

LEN WORMULL (Romford): I endorse your sentiments on inflation. Most specialist magazines in the shops are now 50p and more. I see that Joe Lyons is opening up again in the West End, with the celebrated Nippy waitress. Everything is going to be the same as of old - except the price! What a nice cup of tea we used to get for two pence. Now the price of a cuppa nearly everywhere is from 15p upwards. Coffee is around 25p, and on holiday I was charged 30p at one place. A small scone and pat of butter - 27p. The tale is endless. The curse of decimalization.

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MAGNETS SALE: 41 copies in the 1000 and 1100: £41; 71 copies in the 1200 and 1300: £53; 86 copies in the 1400: £43; 133 copies in the 1500 and 1600: £53. Or reasonable offers. Postage extra.

LITVAK, 58 STANWELL RD., ASHFORD, MIDDXS., TW15 3DU. Phone 69 53609

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FOR SALE: Magnets 987, £1.50; 1274, 1004, 1222, 1272, 1276, £1.00 each; 1009, 1128, 75p each; 1229, 1231, 1233, 1260, 50p each. All including postage.

JOHN GODDARD, 44 BAKER STREET, POTTERS BAR, HERTS., EN6 2EB

POTTERS BAR 59555

£8 each offered Sexton Blakes 1st series, No. 184, "The City of Apes", 197, "The Yellow Face". Sixty 2nd series wanted, from £2 each offered. 3rd series No. 39,

H. OWEN, 28 NARCISSUS ROAD, LONDON, N.W.6

"THERE'S A BREATHLESS HUSH --" (Editorial Item)

I was going to write a searing piece on cricket in my next Editorial. I was going to ask "What have they done to the loveliest game in the world?" I was going to ask "Why do we have in every game a battery of fast bowlers who slow down the game and make it a big yawn?" I decided on the title "There's a breathless hush in the Close tonight --", which the Old Hands do not need me to tell them comes from Newbolt's lovely poem "Vitai Lampada".

That is what I was going to do - in readiness for September.

And then Botham happened! On Monday morning at breakfast I said "Australia won't have to bat again. It'll be all over by lunch. We'll go out somewhere this afternoon to forget about it." But it wasn't over by lunch. "May as well see the finish. It'll be over by tea. We'll go for a nice walk in the late afternoon." It wasn't over by tea. "Well, at least it will make the score look passably respectable. It would be marvellous if they got a few runs ahead just so that Australia would have to bat again."

It wasn't over by 'stumps'. The score was, at least, respectable. In fact, it was amazing, thanks to the inspiration of Botham, not forgetting Dilley who supported him so well.

In fact, the impossible happened at the lovely Headingley ground. England won, after a Test Match unequalled in any sporting records. And if all the excitement, as I was glued to the TV set when I should have been working, took weeks off my life-span - well, it was worth it. I don't need to tell you how I felt. All of you Old Hands felt the same.

It was worthy of Hamilton. It was Da Costa and Stacey all over again. If Hamilton had written that match into a story, the scoffers would have said: "Far-fetched! Couldn't happen in real life! Typically Hamilton cricket! Only Pentelow could write about cricket."

If anyone says that, in future, just say "Remember Headingley. July 1981." When Harry Wharton - gosh, I mean Botham - set about 'em, and gave us the cricket we used to love.

Exciting! You ought to see what's left of my bitten finger-nails. Or think of the ounces of tobacco I puffed away in those glorious hours.

Sorry, Australia - but well done, the Old Home Land.

95 YEARS YOUNG

Our reader, Mr. Bill Edwards, has just celebrated his 95th birthday down at his home at Northfleet in Kent. And he still reads and enjoys C.D. and the Annual. Bill must be our most senior reader. Congratulations to him on his wonderful age - and may he go on enjoying C.D. for many, many years to come.
