

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOL. 37

No. 437

MAY 1983

No. 223.—GRAND NEW SERIAL JUST STARTED!

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With the din of musical instruments and much yelling we passed through the City in triumph.

ST. FRANK'S IN LONDON

A Story of School Life and Detective Adventure at St. Frank's, introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "The Sea of Doom," "Alexis the Mysterious," "The Great Fire at St. Frank's," etc. Sept. 13, 1919.

34P

Wizards. Have far too many 1946-49 and other Thomsons such as Adventures, Hotspurs, Rovers. You can have 100 fair copies for £10! Mixed if you like, post extra, (my selection). Would be 60p if good, selling price. A fine Book, "The Comic Art of Roy Wilson", £9.95 + post, by Clark & Ashford. Thousands of pre-war Comics - Funny Wonder, Chips, Chuckles, etc. 50 asstd. for £40, good, single issues sell at £1.50. My selection. Can do an assortment. Many bound vols.

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The Man of the Wheel.



AGGIE DID IT, TOO!

Recently we have been critical of people who take it upon themselves to alter other people's stories with updating and certain trendy 'improvements'. But Agatha Christie was one who, rather inexplicably, altered her own much-loved stories when she turned them into plays.

Agatha has never been particularly well served by others on stage and screen, but her own dramatisations sometimes made one wonder.

She dramatised "Ten Little Niggers", possibly the finest psychological thriller of all time, and emasculated it on stage and screen by whitewashing the youngest characters and letting them escape to a happy ending. Two Poirot books, "Death on the Nile" and "Appointment with Death", had Poirot dropped from the stage play and replaced

with far less satisfactory characters. She always believed that Poirot could never be satisfactorily played by an actor. I don't believe she was right. True, we have never seen a convincing Poirot, a detective second only to Sherlock, but I'm sure there must be first-class character actors, men of small build, who could give tip-top portrayals of Poirot. But film-makers always seem to want a glut of big star names in their Christie pictures, irrespective of them being miscast.

To "Death on the Nile", Agatha supplied a new ending when she dramatised it, and in that fine novel "Appointment With Death", Agatha changed it on stage to introduce a good deal of misplaced comedy, and she even had the murder committed by a different person from the one in the novel. I remember my companion, when I saw "Appointment with Death" having a pre-West End run at Wimbledon Theatre, giving an opinion in the interval as to the identity of the murderer. Knowing the book, I smiled smugly at my companion's lack of foresight. But I had the red face at the end, for Aggie had stolen a march and changed the murderer. Inexplicable.

Several of Mrs. Christie's own dramatisations were given pre-London showings at Wimbledon Theatre, and it was there, on one occasion, that I met Agatha herself.

An interesting point. I had a good deal of correspondence with Agatha Christie down the years, and she never typed her letters - they were always handwritten. An old-fashioned courtesy, maybe. It was considered bad form to type personal letters. When I send to my own friends, though, I always type. It is a kindness. For one thing I hate writing by hand, and, for another, my handwriting is usually quite unreadable.

Another famous writer whose letters to me were always handwritten was Dorothy Eden, who died recently, and, to the best of my memory, all my many letters from Richmal Crompton were written by hand and never typed.

CRASH LANDING

Such papers as the Boys' Friend, Boys' Realm, and Boys' Herald are not too easy to come by these days, owing to their format. From the very size of the sheets, the papers were probably folded once at the time

one purchased them new from the newsagents'. Then, to carry them home, they would probably be folded yet again. And, as they were read, they may well have sustained yet another fold. And once a paper is folded, it starts to deteriorate. That did not matter to most youngsters, whose reading was of the "here today, gone tomorrow" variety. Read one day, and cast out the next day by mother. They were difficult to preserve. The same applied to the Girls' Home, Girls' Reader, and Girls' Friend, which were of the same format. But, in any case, the unsentimental ladies rarely bothered to keep their papers, which is the reason they are so scarce all these years later.

But browsing over Boys' Friends and the rest of similar format is a delight. The giant illustrations on the front covers are top class in the artistic sphere to which they belonged. Briscoe did some beauties in the boys' world, and Gatcombe was unmatched, at that time, in the love-story class. And turning over the serials month after month, not to mention the editorials, is joyful.

I have a vast quantity of all these papers. One day in Surbiton, someone rang me up. He told me he had been an artist with the A.P. Every week he was presented with a free copy of the papers he illustrated. He had vast numbers of them, and wondered whether I would like to buy them. I want to see them - many hundreds, all in breath-taking "new from the shop" condition. I bought all the Boys' Friends, which covered almost all the eleven years of Rookwood. I wish now that I had bought the others - all manner of A.P. papers - but, unless you are a nut, there is a limit to what you can spend on a hobby.

Those Boys' Friends went to my bookbinder. Later I bought up a large number of Friends, Herald, and Realms from the estate of the late Bill Gander. He loved the Hamilton Edwards empire, as we call them in C.D. Another who had a great love for those papers was Herbert Leckenby. Both men, being of an older generation had bought and loved them. Herbert knew but little of the Magnet and Gem, but Bill Gander, being ten years his junior, knew and loved the Magnet and Gem, and had a large collection.

My girls' papers of that attractive but bad-wearing format were obtained for me by the late Frank Lay. They are mint copies.

So there they are - masses of them. All beautifully bound, most

of them by my own bookbinder. Giant volumes - very high, and very broad. Far too high and broad to fit into the average bookcase. About fifteen of them fitted into the bookcase in my den, using one side of the bookcase only. The sliding door in the front just had clearance. The other door, a half-inch further back, would not slide open further than the volumes standing in the other half. I'm sure it's not clear what I mean, but the 15 giant volumes are still there now in the bookcase in my den.

But what about the rest of the volumes - another fifty of them, mayhap. No bookcase would take them.

One day I discussed the problem with my good friend, Roger Jenkins. He recommended a high-class firm of bookcase makers in London - a firm which will build a bookcase to your own specifications.

I planned the bookcase, and had it made. In oak, with two outsize shelves to accommodate the high, wide, and handsome vols. There were sliding doors in grooves - doors of polished plate glass, very heavy when you lifted them out for cleaning. And the dozens of volumes were fitted in snugly.

And now the years slide by. The hair thins and whitens; the sprint up the road becomes a stagger.

Last Saturday evening I went into our sitting-room. No light came when I pressed the switch. I got the step-ladder, went up, and replaced the faulty bulb. On the way down I lost my balance, and crashed through the plate-glass doors of that famous bookcase. The noise was horrific. My beloved First Lady, in her kitchen, thought for a moment that her oven had exploded. Then she hurried in, to find me sprawling in a veritable sea of broken glass.

And your careless, top-heavy editor escaped without the slightest scratch despite reclining in a thousand small bits, and large bits, of glass. Just a whopper of a bruise which went purple, then black, and is now saffron.

I tell the little tale here just to remind you how good were, and are, those outsize proportioned papers - and to advise you to take great care when you go up step-ladders. Or, at least, when you come down. I didn't! But I was lucky. Otherwise I might be feeling very cut up about it now.

THE EDITOR

Danny's Diary

MAY 1933

In the last week of this month a new series of Ken King started in Modern Boy. The opening tale is entitled "King of the Islands". When the "Dawn" sets out on a fresh voyage, the villainous Dandy Peters is a stowaway, hiding among the water-casks.

Also in the paper there is a series by James Dixon about two boys who set out with the idea of breaking into films. The Flying Cowboys, by Geo. E. Rochester, continues with a new adventure each week, and there is a new motor-racing series by Kaye Campson. The Captain Justice tales have ended for the time being.

I'm not very interested in Rugby Football, but Huddersfield won the Rugby Cup Final at Wembley, defeating Warrington.

Automatic traffic lights have been put down in Piccadilly, so maybe there will be less traffic congestion now.

Two excellent tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. The Greyfriars story is "The Foe From the East". A new boy, Arthur Da Costa, has come to Greyfriars to try to bring disgrace on Harry Wharton. The St. Jim's story is "A Schoolboy's Sacrifice", in which a banknote is missing, and the evidence points to Frank Levison being guilty of pinching it. But Levison Major takes the blame, and then Cardew takes a hand. Tip-top tales, both of them.

There has been a bad train smash on the Southern Railway between Raynes Park and Wimbledon. A train from Waterloo to Alton left the lines, and a train going the other way, from Southampton to London, crashed into it. Five people were killed and a large number were injured. The enquiry set up to find the cause of the accident decided that it was due to unstable track, so the main lines over a long stretch are to be re-laid.

The Nelson Lee Library has continued all the month with the series about Mr. Hunter, the brutal and sinister new Housmaster. The first tale of the month is "The Revolt of the Remove". Then, on the same theme, "The St. Frank's Barring-Out". Next comes "No Surrender!" Final Lee story of the month is "The Rebel Fortress".

The Derby has been won by "Hyperion", by four lengths. The horse is owned by Lord Derby.

The Gem's first tale of the month is "St. Jim's for Ever", which is a sequel to last month's story about rivalry with the Grammar School. Jimson Major and Minor arrive at the Grammar School, and wreak havoc. They are really Kerr and Tom Merry in disguise. Far-fetched, of course, but great reading. Next "Bunter at St. Jim's" in which Billy Bunter turns up at St. Jim's as Gussy's unexpected and unwanted guest. Real good stuff, this! Then "Skimpole's Will-Power Won't" in which Skimpole gets the idea that he possesses the power of hypnotism. Finally "The Jape of the Term" in which Blake's Uncle Harry, whom Blake has not seen before, visits St. Jim's and gives his nephew a high old time. The visitor is really Kerr. A lot of disguised people this month in the Gem, but all good fun.

A terrific month at the cinemas. Dad says I go to the pictures too much, but usually Mum comes too. Constance Bennett was in "One Against the World". "Red Dust" is a fine film, starring Clark Gable, Jean Harlow, and Mary Astor. About a love affair on a rubber plantation. Edward G. Robinson was in "Tiger Shark", a kind of Moby Dick tale, and a good adventure story. Esther Ralston and Basil Rathbone in "After the Ball".

I especially enjoyed Harold Lloyd and Constance Cummings in "Movie Crazy". A nice tale about Hollywood, with lots of grand humour, even though I think I liked Harold Lloyd's silent films better than his talkies. A marvellous thriller is "Payment Deferred" which stars Charles Laughton and Maureen O'Sullivan. A man named Marble, desperate for money, murders his nephew who calls on him late one night loaded with wealth. Marble gets away with that murder, - he buries his nephew's body in his back garden. But the money does not bring happiness to Marble. Years later, when his wife commits suicide, Marble is charged and convicted of murdering her. Eerie and absorbing tale.

Another film this month I particularly liked was "Hound of Zaroff" starring Fay Wray and Joel McCrea. They land on Zaroff's island, but he has the habit of hunting humans instead of animals, and it's fearfully exciting when they try to escape from him. Also in this programme was

a new coloured cartoon "Mickey's Revue".

Finally, a fairish British musical "There Goes the Bride", with Jessie Matthews and Owen Nares.

The Magnet is giving away art-plates every week. This month's gifts have been pictures, respectively, of Sydney Bridge, the new Hush-Hush Cunard liner which, when completed, will be the fastest liner in the world, the Empire State Building in New York, and, finally, the Assuan Dam which harnesses the waters of the Nile. The series is entitled **Great Engineering Achievements**.

The opening Magnet story "Bunter's Big Bluff" is the last in the series about the Easter Cruise on the Sea Nymph with the Greyfriars chums as paying guests on board the yacht. Bunter is disguised, with the help of Wibley, and sets out to break the bank in Monte Carlo. Then, back at school, in "After Lights Out", a single tale about Arthur Trill, a new boy, who earns a bad reputation but turns out O.K. in the end. Then "Taming a Tyrant", the tyrant being Walker, the bullying prefect, who is up against the Remove and is made to see the error of his way.

Finally, a cricket tale "The Deserter" in which Vernon-Smith deserts his cricket side just when he is most needed. But the Bounder had a good reason - he was saving the bacon of Dicky Nugent, a fact the cricketers did not know. At the end of the tale, the Bounder is barred by his form. More to come next week. I can't wait.

There is a new cricket serial in the Magnet - "Allison of Avonshire" by John Brearley.

NOTES ON THIS MONTH'S "DANNY'S DIARY"

S. O. L. No. 195, "The Foe from the East" comprised the first three stories from the 9-story Da Costa series in the heart of the Magnet's Golden Age. A fine cricket series, and one of the best series that Hamilton ever wrote. One can recognise much original thought and splendid characterisation. The series was completed in three consecutive S. O. L's, and it was the right length to fit beautifully into the medium.

S. O. L. No. 196, "A Schoolboy's Sacrifice" was a 3-story series from the Gem of 1925, a time when the Gem's Indian Summer was very much cooled by the shadow of substitute stories. In fact, the Indian Summer was over, even though this was one of the best tales of all time of the Levison Brothers. Mr. Selby was gambling on the foreign exchanges, and had purchased a high-value French banknote. The note was stolen by Racke, Levison Major taking the blame when his minor was accused of the theft. Rattling good stuff, slightly

marred overall by having a few chapters from another tale tacked on at the end, quite unnecessarily, to make up the length.

C. S. Forester had written the novel "Payment Deferred" in the mid-twenties. It was dramatised for the West End theatre in the early thirties, with Charles Laughton starring. I recall seeing the actual London play, with Charles Laughton and the London cast, at the Richmond Theatre, though I forget whether it was a pre-West End presentation or whether it went to Richmond after the run in London ended. Laughton then went to the States to star in the play on the New York stage. He stayed on in America for some years, making some fine American films, which included "Payment Deferred" which Danny saw in 1933. A brooding and suspenseful murder mystery with no light relief, it was a great success.

* * * * *

MAURICE KUTNER DIES

It is with deep sadness that we record the sudden death of Maurice Kutner of Finsbury Park. Maurice had been a C.D. reader since very early days, and his widow tells me of the great pleasure he had from the magazine down the years.

Maurice died in hospital, where he had only been for two days following a heart attack. Until then he had never had a day's illness in his life, so that it was a very great shock for his family when he passed away on 24th March.

In earlier times he contributed articles to the C.D. and the Annual, and, at one time, attended a number of meetings of our London Club, where he was a popular member. Of late years he has not featured much in our pages, but he was unswerving in his loyalty to C.D. right till the end. He was a wonderful man, his widow writes of him.

We extend our very deepest sympathy to Mrs. Kutner and the family in their sorrow. We shall never forget Maurice.

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I hope you will enjoy reading this new article by our good friend Bill Lofts. It is a long one so I have decided with his approval to publish it in several parts.

I would like to receive a few words from readers in reply to Jim Cook's letter which I publish in this month's Blakiana. Your views would be appreciated.

THE ERIC PARKER STORY - Part 1

by W. O. G. Lofts

For over twenty years, it was my good fortune and privilege to

meet many Directors, Editors, sub-editors, authors, and artists, not only down Fleet Street, but in the offices of Fleetway House in Farringdon Street, the home of the mighty Amalgamated Press. I use the expression 'fortune' in the sense, that living in London, it was quite easy for me to make these short trips.

Always firmly believing in sharing information with others not so fortunate, I used to write up many of these events in the various magazines circulating at the time. Nearly all personalities I'm glad to say, freely gave me information not only about themselves, but about the papers they were connected with in pre-war days. Papers that gave so much pleasure to us, as they do even today in some cases over a half a century later. Indeed, in time by so many meetings, many became good friends, and probably gave me real inside information, that they would not have revealed to the ordinary interviewer. The very sad fact today, is that with all of them considerably older than myself - unfortunately the majority of them have now passed on.

One man whom I shall always certainly remember with some affection, was Eric Parker THE Sexton Blake artist. The word 'THE' is typed on my script in capital letters, simply because it has often been said that at times the artist does as much as the writer to sell a paper. Nothing could be more truer in this case. Sexton Blake belonged to no single writer. Official records prove that about 200 odd writers have penned stories of the Baker Street detective since the first in the Half-penny Marvel in 1893. It is true that quite a number of other artists portrayed the A.P. sleuth over the years including H. M. Lewis, Arthur Jones, J. H. Valda, Harry Lane, Val, E. Briscoe, C. H. Blake and W. Taylor, but none had a greater impact than Eric Parker when he came on the scene in 1922 in an Andrew Murray 'Union Jack' story entitled "Eyes in The Dark", my own connection with this then new artist, one must start the events in sequence ...

I first met Eric Parker on one of the upper floors in Fleetway House in the late fifties. I was waiting for the lift to take me from the sixth to the ground floor. Almost everyone has experienced the same frustration that the lift is usually everywhere else except the place where you are standing. A well-dressed middle-aged man was waiting with me, who also tutted with annoyance at the delay. I agreed with him,

and recognising him as Eric Parker by photographs I had seen of him said modestly "that I believed he was Eric Parker, the Sexton Blake artist". A sort of twinkle came into his eyes as he replied "I guess you are Bill Lofts, whom Bill Baker was telling me about - who knows all the answers about Sexton Blake". Eric went on "By the way who is that new big office boy he has got, who asks me questions about the old Union Jack". I replied that it was "Mike Moorcock, one time member of the London Old Boys' Book Club, and an enthusiast especially of Edwy Searles Brooks". (Mike today is world famous for his science fiction and fantasy stories, at least one of his books being filmed.) Eric then invited me to have a quick drink with him at the 'Swan', before he had to dash off home for some appointment. Meeting him unexpected I was not primed to ask him much at this short meeting, but we had promised to meet again in the future when he had more time.

We met many times after this, mostly with Howard Baker, or with a group of other old A.P. editors, artists, and authors. Once I remember with Dan O'Herlihy the film actor who has now almost a complete set of Magnets and Gems - and was a great admirer of his work. We also met in the Directors room at Fleetway House to celebrate the return of Sexton Blake in a picture strip in the new boys picture paper 'Valiant' as well as the coming T.V. series. Gerald Verner the Blake writer was present along with other personalities including Brian Doyle. Another sad party that one must call it, was the closing down of the Sexton Blake Library in 1964. Another very unique event was when I walked the whole length of Baker Street with him to catch a bus at the Regents Park end for his home at Mill Hill. Eric was most keen to know exactly where Sexton Blake was supposed to have lived, but I must confess that where the home of his great rival Sherlock Holmes could be pinpointed, no number was ever given to my knowledge of the house kept by Mrs. Bardell, though my own theory it was probably near Marylebone Circus, not far from Baker Street Station.

AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL WHO LOVE
SEXTON BLAKE

by Jim Cook

First of all let's get one thing straight. The tug of nostalgia isn't exclusive to any one section in our hobby. It has been said history cannot

be properly written for at least 100 years until all the facts are on hand and can be put into proper perspective.

But it looks as if we will have to wait a hundred years before the full story of the SEXTON BLAKE SAGA is read.

I will never understand why Sherlock Holmes has been perpetuated with a Hotel and a Pub while Sexton Blake is falling into obscurity. Surely we have plenty of lovers of the Blake stories in the hobby who feel it's about time they wrote a few words of praise in favour of the Baker Street doyen of private detectives?

I've always found the Sexton Blake tales dew fresh. Nowadays the readers must be weary of the frivolous and the mediocre that gets published. The standard laid down by the Sexton Blake editors in the old days is something to be proud about now since that level of fine literature is sadly lacking in present-day detective yarns.

Readers in our hobby may assume so much has already been written about the BLAKE saga that nothing more can be said. But they are wrong. The Sexton Blake saga can still be explored and researched.

It is now nearly a hundred years since Sexton Blake entered the world of detection and we have very little memorials to lay at the shrine of this world famous character of fiction.

Lovers of the School Story dominate the hobby today and while I do not want to burst the bubble of nostalgia that appeals to the majority I do think a little more effort should be afforded to Blake and Tinker who have delighted us for so long.

Perhaps I am wasting my time with this appeal ... in fact I am reminded of jolly old Sisyphus, the Greek king of mythology, and King of Corinth, who was condemned to keep rolling to the top of a hill a huge stone which always rolled down again. Even so, I want to ask hobby members to say a few words in favour - or otherwise - of the Baker Street pair which threatens to fade into limbo unless the spark of remembrance is kept bright.

In the early days of the hobby there was the BLAKE CIRCLE. So much effort went into keeping that viable. But with the passing of time and friends that section has been almost forgotten. Which is a great pity. Yet film stars have a greater following and a sustained interest in them than has our hobby characters. This to me is not only

strange but entirely remarkable since film stars are only human and heir to human errors.

Our characters in fiction are the more reliable! And they never need die.

Please say a few words about Sexton Blake and Tinker.

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

LONDON BELONGS TO ME

by William Lister

London belongs to me! Well, not exactly. My visits there have been few and far between. The world of literature has been the main source of my contact with our capital city.

Charles Dickens often takes one through the streets of a London of past years, while many authors have followed in his train. A book that one can never forget, though it was many years ago when read, it was 'London Belongs to Me' by Norman Collins. A suitable title indeed for an article in which the creator of 'St. Frank's' takes his favourite characters into the heart of the city. I refer to the 'Monster' No. 8, 'St. Frank's in London' by Edwy Searles Brooks.

For some unknown reason my interest lodged itself in tales that took the boys of St. Frank's around Britain and the nearer to Blackpool the greater the interest. Incidentally, a Sexton Blake tale is around featuring Blackpool as also one or two hardback novels; and more recently a Science Fiction one in which our seaside town vanishes.

Be that as it may, any tale featuring a town or city I knew was enough to stir any cooped up adrenaline I happened to have around as in the case of 'St. Frank's visits London'.

Whatever the St. Frank's boys did they did it with gusto! Wherever they went they took laughter and enthusiasm with them. Under the pen of E.S.B. this becomes so infectious that even today the very reading can restore (even if only for a little while) the thrills of your more youthful days.

The artist captures the hustle and bustle of such a holiday on the

introductory pages. Days when the train carriages spilled out the crowds from their open doors and double-decker buses were full to capacity even though they ran frequently.

But, as always, London is not only a place for sight-seeing. Underneath its exterior there is a world of intrigue, mystery and murder.

That being so is it any wonder that having (for a brief period) transferred St. Frank's school to London, with a stroke of his pen, they should become involved in the intrigue, mystery and murder that surrounds them; you can trust Edwy Searles Brooks to supply that.

Writers of school tales are not noted for their powers of description. The only time they go to town is in their Christmas tales. Yuletide - and they can conjure up fog, frost, snow, even blizzards in such a way as to put the whole scene before your eyes. The rest of the time descriptive scenery goes to the wall. Boys want action - action all the way. It's not till one is older that one searches for descriptive scenery. None knew that better than E. S. Brooks and Charles Hamilton.

You will look in vain for glimpses of London in "St. Frank's in London", but you will have more than your fill of intrigue. Chinamen gliding through thick fog on a mission of evil. Ghosts appearing and disappearing. Ghosts in London? you ask. Certainly - you can ask Charles Dickens if you doubt me.

London has passed through the Hitler blitz since Edwy Searles Brooks conceived this tale. But London is still London. Things to see, personalities to see - Kings and Queens, Princes and Princesses, film stars, politicians, authors of note.

Read if you can "St. Frank's in London" and remember, as a citizen of Gt. Britain - London belongs to you.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Our "St. Frank's in London" cover this month is supplied from the Nelson Lee Library of our London O. B. B. C. Readers are reminded that the Library is still going strong, under its Honorary Librarian, Mr. Bill Bradford, and this story, and hundreds of others, can be borrowed from the Library at a very low fee. Don't miss the chance to renew your youth. The St. Frank's in London picture dates from 1919.)

WHEN TIME STOOD STILL

by R. J. Godsave

The fact that many of the authors of our favourite papers wrote of a world in which time stood still was very much to their benefit. It was

not necessary to write of fresh characters every few years which in itself would prove to be practically impossible making continuity extremely difficult. On the other hand, there were some drawbacks, such as it would be very inadvisable for a character to refer to an incident which happened two or three years previously.

The summer holidays in the old series of the Nelson Lee Library had a link in the use of Lord Dorriemore's steam yacht. In this respect those holidays spent in the South Seas were very much alike. The first of these South Seas summer holidays was published in the o.s. 158/165 Captain Burton's Quest in 1918. A thrilling and exciting South Sea adventure which was reprinted as No. 1 in the Monster Library. The next South Sea Holiday adventure occurred in the summer of 1922. This was the series in which Archie Glenthorne's valet Phipps came into his own. There is no doubt that E. S. Brooks knew how to capture and retain the interest of his readers.

It does seem to me that had any of the 1922 St. Frank's party made any reference in a moment of nostalgia to the 1918 holiday then the whole 'time standing still world' would collapse. It would make the regular Lee reader wonder why the St. Frank's juniors could be around fifteen years of age and have spent a summer holiday four years ago while still at the age of fifteen. It would, therefore, be impossible to make mention beyond three or four terms without upsetting the whole structure of the 'time standing still' arrangement.

At the same time an author was free to follow the seasons as they referred to no particular year without any upset.

* * * * *

ILLUSTRATIONS MEANT A LOT

by Tommy Keen

With the exception of the 1926 edition, I do not possess any HOLIDAY ANNUALS, but way, way back, when I did possess most of them, the 1923 Annual was by far my most cherished volume, chiefly because it included 'Who's Who at St. Jim's', with pictures of the leading characters, although strangely enough, excluding Tom Merry.

Recently I have had the opportunity of seeing this splendid volume again, but as Alice would have said during her many adventures in Wonderland, "How very odd".

Firstly, there is a short story of Greyfriars, "Nugent Minor's Lesson", which apart from the rebellious Dicky Nugent and his major, features Dick Rake, and Rodney (another Richard I believe), two minor characters to say the least. As a youngster, I could not fathom the mystery of Jack Drake and Rodney, reading of them only once in an earlier HOLIDAY ANNUAL, and reading in the MAGNET that Jack Drake was then Ferrers Locke's assistant. However, back to "Nugent Minor's Lesson", it is not really the story which attracted me (maybe by a substitute writer), but the illustrations. These were by R. J. MacDonald, the GEM artist.

Oddly enough though, the main St. Jim's tale, "Captain of St. Jim's!" is illustrated by E. E. Briscoe, presumably because this was a reissue of an old series (1914?), when maybe Briscoe was illustrating the GEM!

But the greatest surprise of all, and which I considered rather an original touch, was in the long Greyfriars story, "A Shadow Over Greyfriars" (one of the many Cricket Week stories that cropped up so often in the companion papers in those days), where three illustrations depicting D'Arcy (one including the Cliff House girls) were drawn by R. J. MacDonald. The rest of the illustrations were by C. H. Chapman. Gussy, therefore looked authentic, but the Rookwood characters on Page 111 were pure Chapman, with Mornington of Rookwood almost a replica of any Ponsonby drawing of that period.

Of course, Mr. Wakefield's Rookwood boys did have a definite style of their own, tending to often remind me of FILM FUN and KINEMA Comic, but it proves that certain characters are best portrayed by their special artists - MacDonald could never really cope with Bunter, and Chapman's D'Arcy seldom captured the real personality of the swell of St. Jim's.

What lovely reading this marvellous Annual made again!

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STILL WANTED: Sexton Blake Second Series No. 453, "On the Midnight Beat" and No. 572, "The Crime in the Kiosk". Both by John G. Brandon. Name your price.

J. ASHLEY, 46 NICHOLAS CRESCENT, FAREHAM
HANTS., PO15 5AH.

DEATH OF ANOTHER POPULAR AUTHOR

Following the sad passing of W. W. Sayer, information has just reached me of the death in 1975 of Francis Warwick aged 73 at Richmond, Surrey. The son of Sidney Warwick the novelist and writer for boys. With his brother Alan Ross Warwick (who died in 1974) he first wrote in collaboration with his Father under the 'Frank Sydney' pen name in The Champion. Also penning a few serials in The Gem under the 'Roland Spencer' pen-name in collaboration with Geoffrey Prout.

In 1928 he started to write St. Jim's tales in The Gem introducing such characters as Lady Peggy, Bully Burkett, Cyrus P. Handcock, and those featuring Spalding Hall. In all he wrote 56 stories of Tom Merry & Co., though he confessed to me that he only read The Magnet when a boy, and would have much preferred to write about Greyfriars. But it was in the Sexton Blake field that he will be remembered most as under the 'Warwick Jardine' pen name he introduced Tallon and Sandra Sylvester, as well as Cliff Gordon of the M.I.5. In 1933 he even wrote two stories featuring Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie substituting for W. W. Sayer, but they flopped as his style was just not that of 'Pierre Quiroule'. Very distinguished looking, and much younger than his actual years, Francis Warwick is yet another popular author to leave us, leaving us 32 Blake stories of those golden days of years gone by.

W. O. G. LOFTS

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ALSO RAN

by Esmond Kadish

"Everyone loves a winner," they say. It's true, of course, and a sentiment I share with millions of others. At the other end of the scale, it is the "underdog" who attracts sympathy, if not admiration, although I'm a little sceptical these days. I'm rather confused about just whom I'm supposed to regard as the "underdog". Now, maybe there's something profoundly Freudian about all this, but I've always had a soft spot for those who used to be called the "runners-up" when I was at school. By "runners-up", I mean the chaps who just miss winning the race, whose success is not as striking, and whose personality is less dramatic than the winner's. In our favourite school stories, in the old papers, the role of the "runner-up" is usually played by the captain's best friend, who combines the qualities of loyal chum and able lieutenant. At Greyfriars, such a character is Frank Nugent. Sometimes described as "sensitive" by nature, he is overshadowed by the strong personality of Wharton, and seems, at times, a trifle colourless when compared to the exuberant, good-humoured Bob Cherry, the "sturdy", sometimes

irritatingly honest Johnny Bull, and the shrewd Hurree Singh. Indeed, the only time he seems to spring to life is when his young brother, Dicky, "kicks over the traces", or when he falls out with Harry.

Frank appears, as we all know, right at the beginning of the Greyfriars saga. Hating the school he has been forced to attend, Wharton feels an "instinctive dislike" for Nugent, although "he had a frank, open face and honest blue eyes". Harry's uncertain temper succeeds in antagonising the normally good-natured Frank, and there is the inevitable scrap. In this first encounter, at least, Nugent gives as good as he gets, but in the first "Wharton the Rebel" series: "The slim and graceful Nugent was no match for the captain of the Remove. His handsome face, almost girlish in its delicacy of feature, was sadly marked now. His strength was almost gone, but his courage was indomitable".

At games, Nugent is competent and steady, rather than brilliant. In the "Sinister Dr. Sin" series of 1937 - not generally considered amongst Famliton's best - there is a cricketing interlude, in which Mr. Hamilton demonstrates once again his gift for character drawing, and a shrewd knowledge of human nature. Frank is last man in against Rookwood - "two to tie, three to win". At the bowler's end is Vernon-Smith. Wharton had felt justified in playing Frank in the team because he had shown "such good form lately", but doubts creep in at the end of this match:- "If only - only Smithy had had the bowling. Keen as Harry was to see his best chum do something in the match, he would have given a good deal to hand that over over to Smithy, had it been practicable." Smithy feels the same way, of course, and when Nugent knocks a "safe two", which leaves the batting in his hands instead of Smithy's, he shows his feelings:- "He glared at Frank in passing. 'You fool!' he flung at him as he went." Typical of Smithy, of course, even though Frank obtains the final run to win the match.

Nugent's counterpart in the Cliff House stories is the "golden-haired" Mabel Lynn, who backs up Barbara Redfern as loyally as Frank does Harry, and who, like Frank, occasionally falls out with her best chum. In a 1936 series with the self-explanatory title of "The Girl Who Came Between", she experiences a "sudden surging wave of wretchedness -- she flung herself on the bed. For a minute, two minutes, she lay there, the cherry taffeta carelessly crumpled beneath her weight, her shoulders

heaving with great sobs. She had quarrelled with Babs! These two, who had never had anything except the slightest of tiffs, were estranged." Not a dry eye amongst the readers, I expect!

"Mabs" has not the strong personality of the "blonde bombshell" of the Fourth Form, Diana Royston-Clarke, and, as the Cliff House stories were drawing to a close, it is tomboy Clara Trevlyn, rather than she, who tends to accompany Barbara on escapades after "lights out". However, she does have a flair for acting, and a Wibleyish capacity for impersonation. She masquerades in ancient Egyptian garb as the "White Goddess of the Isisians", in order to save her uncle, in a 1935 series, and, in the previous year, in "Mabs, Queen of the Jungle" she is dubbed "Inkoosikana", or "great chief" by the inhabitants of the "secret city of Shest" in darkest Africa, who have captured the Cliff House girls. Colonel Carstairs, Jemima's father, solemnly explains:- "You are crowned queen of the Ingornbi. Some native legend has it that a white queen with golden hair will come to rule them - it's your hair that has done it."

To think that; if only I'd been blessed with golden curls, I could have been lording it over some fabulous lost city these past fifty years!

Anyway, three cheers, say I, for our runners-up, Frank and Mabel; without them, where would Harry Wharton or Barbara Redfern be?

* * * * *

THE SUNSET YEARS OF THE MAGNET

by Ian Hewson

Having enjoyed the magazine for over ten years, it never ceases to amaze me at the way in which the standard of S.P.C.D. is maintained, month after month, whilst the "freshness" seems to blossom rather than wane. A tremendous tribute to the Editor and, of course, to the numerous contributors.

Whilst I own very few original "Magnets", I have managed to collect most of the major series in facsimile form, and have read, over the years, virtually all of the Hamilton "Greyfriars" tales which appeared in the late twenties and thirties. These days I tend to dip into particular stories, rather than read an entire series, mostly because I enjoy the atmosphere and "feel" of the writing, since it evokes a scene invariably

far preferable to that just beyond the page! My special favourites are "The Trail of the Trike" summer series, and any of the Christmas collections from the early thirties.

I have always felt that Hamilton's work, in *The Magnet* at least, is constantly varying from the extra-ordinarily good, to the relatively mediocre. In a good number of series ("Wharton the Rebel", or "Stacey", for instance), the writing possesses such a vibrant vitality that any inherent weaknesses in the school-story medium are swept aside by the author's joyfully creative, and occasionally inspired, powers of writing. Much of Hamilton's comedy reminds me of that found in Jerome's "Three Men in a Boat", only more so! However, once that fine edge is lost, as it was in *The Magnet* after the "Stacey" series, that which remains seems comparatively stale and flat. The Hamilton champagne is excellent, but the home-made wine seems a trifle thin and vinegary!

Harsh judgement, perhaps, but what an astonishingly high level of creativity was maintained during the thirty-odd years of *The Magnet's* life.

The B.B.C's recent production of "Stalkey and Co." was an outstanding success, I thought; quite the best thing they have done in that field since "Tom Brown's Schooldays" of a few years ago. The vital ingredient of success was surely the fact that the "boys" were played by adults. I wonder how popular the "Prout Black Eye" series in *The Magnet* would prove, given similar treatment?

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The Postman Called

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

WILLIAM LISTER (Blackpool): Please thank Mr. W. T. Thurbon for pointing out that it was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who wrote 'Lost World' and not H. G. Wells, author of 'War of the Worlds'. I think what worries me most is that I read my articles twice before I submit them, and twice when they are in print. In spite of that I never spotted the mistake.

Put it down to old age.

Rev. ARTHUR POUND (Halesowen): I agree entirely with your description of the artist who illustrated "Coker the Detective" on the

front cover of C.D. No. 433 - the superb Leonard Shields. I regard Shields as far and away the best of the Magnet illustrators, just as I regard Eric Parker as the best artist of the Gwyn Evans stories in the Union Jack.

ERNEST HOLMAN (Leigh-on-Sea): I well remember "Tinkle, Tinkle, Little Star!" It mentioned the Premier Cinema in High Road, Leytonstone, a place I often visited when a boy.

Mrs. GERALDINE LAMB (Gloucester): I get tremendous enjoyment from C.D. I was in bed recovering from influenza when the most recent one arrived. My six-year-old son collected the post and exclaimed: "Here are two letters for you, Mum, and this one feels like your Digest." He is already quite familiar with it.

Until I first received the C.D. I was unaware how well organised and long-standing was the hobby of old boys' book collecting. I have managed to acquire a complete run of Digests since No. 25 and most of the Annuals since 1947. The information I have been able to obtain from them has been invaluable. Now I have a much greater understanding of the papers, authors, etc., which makes the appreciation much greater. I also thoroughly enjoy the reminiscent articles, and of course, "Mr. Buddle". I am still happily reading my way through the years of "Digest". I can only assure you it is very much appreciated.

JOE WILLIAMSON (Australia): I am pleased to report the arrival of the Annual. I greatly enjoyed the story "New Term at Slade", and certainly did not guess in advance the reason Conrad Shane spent a night at Slade. The articles on Greyfriars are just great, and I have also enjoyed "Behind the Mask". I should add that, years ago, I never dreamed that the stories of Greyfriars and of St. Jim's were written by the same man. They always seemed so completely different from one another. I used to love especially the tales of Talbot, Levison, and Cardew. In conclusion, in next year's Annual, please don't miss out the Introduction. It is just as enjoyable as Chums in Council.

JIM COOK (Auckland): Your March editorial was delightful as you went back over the years and the new-found love for Sexton Blake via Pierre Quiroule. Your reference to your first reading of that author had me

searching my few Blakes to see whether I had one by P.Q. I found just one: No. 423, "The Missing Spy". You know, those old characters like Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie have nothing to compare them with today's spy story characters. I wonder why this is! Why cannot characters like those be invented now? I expect that writers today have drifted too far away to invent anything nice.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: I don't seem to have "The Missing Spy" in my bookcase, but, according to my records, this was a reprint of "The Secret of the Six Black Dots" which is among my bound Quiroule books. The latter was about the sixth story from the author, and appeared in the early twenties. A splendid story of detection, it had Julie solo, without Grant, for once.)

J. ASHLEY (Fareham): Further to your editorial item on the Cinema at Eltham, S.E.9. I served in Eltham Police from 1946 to 1958, when, on promotion, I went to the East End of London. I remember the Eltham Cinema very well. In my days it still had "The Cinema" painted on the roof. The building was used by Hindes, the Eltham store, as a furniture repository and upholsterers. The First Floor still retained its connection with the film industry, for it was occupied by the Express Still Company. They supplied most of the cinemas with a still display for the current films and forthcoming attractions.

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COMICS WANTED: £20 each paid for Ensign Comics with "Tola, the Strong"; £10 each for "The Rose of Bagdad" (1952), Tom Puss Comic (1949). £5 each for Gloops the Cat Comics; Gerald Swan Funnies Albums. Also require Gerald Swan Thrill Comics, Dynamo Thrills, etc.; Laroo Crockett Ranger Western Comics; Modesty Blaise newspaper strips in scrapbook format, particularly "The Vanishing Dolly Birds" (1976). I also have Comics, Annuals, Books, for sale or exchange. S.a.e. to:-

DAVE GIACARDI, 12 PATHFIELD ROAD, LONDON, S.W.16.

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NELSON LEE LIBRARY

(London O. B. B. C.)

WE ARE STILL IN BUSINESS and ALL ISSUES are available. The charge for a two-months' loan is still only 1p per issue. Also 2p for B.F.L's and S.O.L's (E. S. Brooks). And 5p for Monsters. Many Victor Gunn and Berkeley Gray novels also available. Write:-

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News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

MIDLAND

Eleven members gathered for a fine meeting at Dr. Johnson's house. It was good to see Ted Sabin and Christine Brettell back after absence due to accident and illness.

Members discussed the yearly subscription of £1 which some have still not paid.

On display was the Anniversary Number - No. 199 of the Nelson Lee Library dated 29th March, 1919, entitled "The Breaking Point" in the Bullies' League series. The Collectors' Item was Monster Library No. 5, a wonderful shillingsworth in 1925.

Refreshments, much enjoyed, were supplied by Joan Golen and the Lovedays. Two rounds of Greyfriars Bingo were played, the winners, as per usual, being Christine Brettell and Geoff Lardner. A discussion took place on the subject "Would the Greyfriars stories have benefited if the school had more than one "house", like St. Jim's, St. Frank's, and Rookwood?" The opinion of members was against the idea.

A reading from a Holiday Annual St. Jim's story entertained us all. Then, in a 20 Questions game, Geoff Lardner beat the panel.

The next meeting (the A.G.M.) will be on the 24th May.

JACK BELLFIELD (Correspondent)

LONDON

There was another good attendance at the Walthamstow gathering and memories of another well-attended venue was recalled when Mark Jarvis read the Memory Lane item, this being an account of the Richmond Community Centre meeting in February 1966.

A purchase of some E.S.B's, S.O.L's by Bill Bradford from Maurice King will make a fine addition to the Nelson Lee section of the club's library. A debate re the Founders' Bell took place and further details were agreed to.

Mary Cadogan had some literature, etc., on the forthcoming play "Daisy Pulls It Off" which will be put on at the Globe Theatre.

Illustrations from the School Friend and Schoolgirls' Own are featured on the brochures. Roy Parsons commented on the play as he had witnessed a performance at the Nuffield Theatre, Southampton.

Maurice Corkett won Roger Jenkins' Grid quiz.

From the Cricket Society's Journal for Spring 1983, Roy Parsons read the article therein by J. F. Burrell which was entitled "Cricket at Greyfriars".

Mary Cadogan's tape recording of her interview of John Dunn about the 150th anniversary of Louisa May Alcott, which was first broadcast last October.

From the Gem issue of 1926, number 756, Ray Hopkins read a humorous chapter from the Gussy Runaway series.

Next meeting at Chris and Susan Harper's residence at Loughton, on Sunday, 8th May. A full tea will be provided. Kindly advise if intending to be present. 'Phone 508 4770.

BEN WHITER

CAMBRIDGE

A well-attended meeting on 10th April at the home of Keith Hodgkinson was delighted to welcome the return of Chairman, Vic Hearn, now recovered from his illness, and two guests, Brian Simmonds and Maurice Hall.

Bill Lofts gave a talk on Richmal Crompton and her William stories, which first appeared in "Home Magazine". Bill Lofts gave autobiographical details of the authoress, and talked on the increasing success of the books. The William industry had produced a William Annual, a William Jigsaw, and William Toffees.

The William books were published regularly from 1923 until the 1970's. The first William film was made in 1939, and another in 1947.

Bill then switched to Chuckles, the paper which ran from 1914 till 1923. In its early days it was one of the best comic papers of all time. "Chuckles", at one period, gave away a model of Greyfriars School. The various parts of the model were given in succeeding weeks until the whole thing was completed.

Jack Overhill and Bill Thurbon spoke on Chuckles, Bill particularly recalling the excellent serials that appeared in its first few

years. Maurice Hall thought the model very good when set against the stories.

After enjoying Mrs. Hodkinson's lavish tea, Keith continued the evening with a film display and quiz.

Chairman Vic expressed our pleasure at having our visitors, and the meeting closed with a warm vote of thanks to Keith and Mrs. Hodkinson for their hospitality.

NORTHERN

Saturday, 9th April, 1983

A goodly number of the faithful gathered at the Swarthmore Educational Centre for our April Meeting. It was pointed out, incidentally, by one of our members that one of Hamilton's schools was Swarthmore College - a different spelling, but the same pronunciation!

This being our annual Meeting, we elected our officers for the coming year. It was a re-election of the old team, they evidently being considered suitable to serve another term of office!

It was then a quiz on Magnet numbers with Harry Barlow. Harry gave us the names of various Magnet series and we were to give the numbers of the Magnets involved. Most of us got The Courtfield Cracksman Series (1138-1151) but the rest of the series - oh dear! Nandu Thalange swept the field with all exactly right bar three. The rest of us were also-rans!

After refreshments and conversation Geoffrey Good read to us an excerpt from Magnet 407 which he entitled 'Kiss me, Henry!' This was the story of Mr. Quelch's encounters with the formidable females who responded to what they thought was his advertisement in the Courtfield Gazette - 'Acquaintance with a view to marriage'! If you haven't read the story you may possibly guess that Skinner had something to do with it! And if it isn't in your library you are missing out - Howard Baker's 'Collectors Pie' No. 2 for the facsimile edition.

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DIAMOND WEDDING

On 24th May, (Empire Day), Mr. and Mrs. Jack Overhill celebrate their Diamond Wedding. Sixty glorious years. Hearty congratulations to our Magnificent Couple.

LITTLE FOLKS

by Len Hawkey

Apropos the recent letter from Mr. Harkness, he is not the first collector to be taken-in by the magazine's title. This probably stems from its very early days, when children remained "little folks" much longer than they did in the present century - it was misleading even then, as was the numbering of the Volumes of its "Annual", which in fact was not really an "annual", but was published every six months, a bound edition of six of the (then) monthly magazines.

"Little Folks" started in the mid-19th Century, so that it predated such juvenile periodicals as "The Boys' Own Paper", "The Girls' Own", and its more direct rival - "Chatterbox" - by a decade or so: but its popularity was greatly increased in 1875, when the paper was enlarged, and a "New Series" started. This year, also, the first so-called "Annual" was published. Its publishers then were Messrs. Cassells, Petter and Calpin Ltd., and from the start it set a high moral and artistic standard - without being quite as overtly "religious" as "Sunday" or "Chatterbox", even. In the quality of its authors and artists it set a very high standard too, which it maintained throughout the rest of its 58 years of life.

In the very first years, the magazine appeared weekly, containing 16 pages - but in the 1880's it seems to have become solely a monthly of 64 pages, so that each "Annual" had close on 400 pages, plus several coloured plates - these six monthly volumes were also published in more than one edition, the most expensive, priced at about five shillings, with gilt-edged paper, and ornate thick board covers, - I have several for the 1870's and '80's, lavish with gold-leaf lettering, as fresh and untarnished today as when some young hand opened their pages in a long-vanished Victorian nursery.

Every Christmas, too, up to about the turn of the century, they issued a supplement, the "Little Folks Annual" - again somewhat misleading - with approx. 50 pages, though this was unfortunately not always bound in with the half-yearly volume. Judging from its contents, the magazine was now, it would seem, aimed at a readership of both sexes, around 8/9 to 13/14 years, with several pages each month especially for the "very young". There were also competition pages, an "Editorial

Chat", and articles on Natural History, various hobbies, etc., as well as correspondence from readers. Pages of puzzles were provided, and readers contributed to a "Cot Fund" for an East London Hospital.

During the "pre-1900" era authors included Mrs. Molesworth (of course!), Evelyn Everett Green, L. T. Meade, Mrs. Ewing, Edward S. Ellis, Clark Russell, S. Walkey, and latterly, Bessie Marchant, Mrs. G. de Horne Vaizey, Brenda Girvin, Angela Brazil, etc. Artists were, if anything, even better - Kate Greenaway, Walter Crane, Maud Ellen Edwards, Alice Havers, Gordon Browne, Lizzie Lawson (L.L.), Wm. Hatherell, Wm. Rainey, Paul Hardy, etc. Several of these continued into the present century, plus worthies like Mabel Lucie Attwell, her husband Harold Earnshaw, Hilda Cowham, Arthur Rackham, L. Leslie Brooke, C. E. and H. M. Brock - all three Heath-Robinsons, - Helen Jacobs (sister of W. W. Jacobs), John Hassall, Byam Shaw, Mary V. Wheelhouse, and that immortal trio of lovely "animal" artists, Harry Rountree, Ernest Aris, and S. J. Cash. Rountree's work proliferated - innumerable colour-plates, and monthly covers. Indeed much of his very best work was done for "Little Folks".

The Magazine's finest days were probably between 1900 and 1920. Its size increased to 80 pp per month, colour-plates in plenty, plus coloured pages, and a good quality slightly glossy paper throughout. Its readership was such that by subscriptions alone it was able to endow a complete Ward in what afterwards became the "Queens Hospital for Children" in Bethnal Green, London. In addition, it purchased and maintained a convalescent home for children. In 1907 the then Editor (who liked to call himself only "G.K.E." - the "Good Kind Editor") together with one of his best artists, Miss Esme Stuart Hardy (sister of Paul Hardy) travelled down to Leigh-on-Sea, to purchase a large property, for conversion to their Children's Home. This trip, complete with charming sketches, is described in full, and provides a nostalgic contrast with the Leigh of today. In the event, the purchase fell through, and eventually a mansion at Bexhill-on-Sea was acquired. Thereafter a strict report on contributions, financial and general progress of the Convalescent Home appeared monthly.

Like most other Cassell's publications, "Little Folks" was taken over in the 1920's by the then Amalgamated Press. The last Cassells

issue was Volume No. 104 (1926) - but to their great credit the A.P. kept the paper going as if nothing had happened, even retaining the same editor, Mr. Herbert Darkin Williams, who "reigned" from 1915 to 1933. Not all Cassells publications suffered so little - but that's another story.

Quality was maintained right up to the last issue, in January 1933, when it was absorbed into the adult magazine "The Quiver" - another adopted Cassell's magazine, with the same editor, H. D. Williams. The A.P. had been trying to dampen down the strongly religious outlook of the "Quiver", but how long it survived after the demise of "Little Folks", the writer cannot say. It was still going in 1936, as I have a bound volume for that year, but sadly no mention of "Little Folks" appears therein.

The final monthly number contained an Editor's announcement "We do not want to say 'Goodbye' ". In it he breaks the bad news, saying that it had been coming for some while, due partly to failing circulation, partly to lack of advertising revenue, but partially also, to "the misfortune of our title". He admitted it was difficult to persuade boys or girls up to maybe 16 years, to ask for a periodical with that title. (Strange that the publishers hadn't thought of that 20 or 30 years earlier!) Actually, by present-day standards it was still excellent value for money - 1/-d for 80 pages of good quality reading - Ethel Talbot, Harold Avery, Gunby Hadath, D. H. Parry, Christine Chandler, etc., plus illustrations by the Brocks, Lawson Wood, Thomas Henry, E. P. Kinsella, Chas. Crombie, etc., as well as the inimitable Harry Rountree.

Thus ended "Little Folks" after almost 60 years, the last volume being No. 117 - I am fortunate to possess 101 of those 117 volumes. I'd dearly like to get the remaining 16 - especially Nos. 85, 97 and 99, these being the only ones I'm lacking of the present Century. What happened to the Bexhill Convalescent Home remains a mystery - possibly some Old Boy who lives in that area may know - and thus bring down the curtain on the very last of "Little Folks".

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FOR SALE/EXCHANGE: Magnets, Hamiltonia, etc. S.a.e. for lists.

WANTED: Champions, H.B. reprints, Cigarette Cards.

G. HOARE, 13 BURNSIDE, WITTON GILBERT, DURHAM, DH7 6SE.

"SANDI"

by Ernest Holman

One of my favourite series of stories outside the Companion Papers field has always been those relating to Sanders of the River. I have sometimes wondered if they could form the basis of a C.D. article, but usually arrived at the conclusion that they were not really within the C.D. area. However, Bill Lofts' mention of undiscovered Sanders stories in Topical Times started something for me; I was sure that I had once seen a publication advertised in Magnet stating that a Sanders story was contained therein. As Topical Times was a Dundee paper, obviously it couldn't have been that publication. I started a Magnet search - and found what I was looking for. On pages 8 of Magnet 1019 (during the Redwing/South Seas series) appears an advertisement for Chums, announcing such a story. It was entitled 'The Tax Resisters' and formed part of the Volume 'Bosambo of the River'. So the Sanders saga did, in fact, find its way into the Boys' Weekly Papers.

The information unearthed by Bill intrigued me very much and I wondered if he - or any other collector - may have knowledge of these 'unknown' stories ever reaching Volume form. I certainly have never heard of such a book and maybe there were only one or two tales, anyway.

Wallace first wrote the 'River' stories in the late Edwardian era - Margaret Lane's biography of Wallace states that the stories appeared regularly, for several years, in 'The Weekly Tale Teller'. (No doubt the Lofts/Adley Bibliography gives the details more fully, but this is a publication I do not possess or have even seen) I have a note of nine sets of Sanders volumes, mostly published by Ward Lock. All except the final story were collections of short tales; the last one, 'Sandi the King Maker', was a complete long story of Sanders, Hamilton and Bones coming out of retirement to make one further trip to the 'River'. There was also a set of stories relating the adventures of Bones on leave in London. After Wallace's death, Francis Gerard produced three Volumes of new short stories, relating the adventures of Wallace's characters.

I have always felt that the Sanders stories were the finest that Wallace ever wrote - they were, to me, most enjoyable, containing not only much wit, but some interesting encounters between the principals. Hamilton and Tibbetts at the breakfast table of the Residency featured

some most absorbing passages. There was also a fine film made by Korda in the mid-thirties, featuring Leslie Banks as Sanders and Paul Robeson as Bosambo. I have a record of Robeson singing four songs from the film, including the famous 'Canoe' song.

Some years ago I wrote to one of the publishers enquiring if they were likely to reissue any of the Sanders stories, perhaps repeats of earlier paper-backs. They replied that they had no such intention. In actual fact, I suppose in today's social climate, the stories would 'not do' - probably a reason why the film is never shown as an 'oldie' on TV.

About once every two years I manage to unearth a Sanders volume in a second-hand book store and hope one day to end up with the complete set. I would love to be able to read the stories mentioned by Bill Lofts.

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THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

by M. S. Fellows

When I read in "Let's Be Controversial" (No. 238 in C.D. Vol. 37, No. 435, March 1983) - "I feel quite sure that a boy wearing a monocle would not have been accepted at a school like St. Jim's - or at any other school, for that matter" - I must say that I was inclined to agree.

Half-an-hour after reading this, I picked up the book, "P. G. Wodehouse - A Portrait of a Master" by David A. Jasen, and read the following:

"'Psmith', explained Plum, 'like Ukridge, was to a certain extent drawn from life. A cousin of mine who had been at the public school Winchester with Rupert D'Oyly Carte, the son of the Savoy Opera's D'Oyly Carte, was telling me one day about his eccentricities - how he was very long and lean, immaculately dressed, wore a monocle, and talked kindly, but not patronisingly to the headmaster. When one of the masters asked him, 'How are you, Carte?' he replied 'Sir, I get thinnah and thinnah'. It gave me enough to build the character on, and I wrote a boys' story called 'Mike' in which he figured largely.'"

The same information is given by Wodehouse himself in the introduction to "The World of Psmith" with the following variations: "Rupert D'Oyly Carte was long, slender, always beautifully dressed and very dignified. His speech was what is known as orotund, and he

wore a monocle." Wodehouse goes on to say that this was in 1908 and he was writing a serial for 'The Captain' at the time. He removed the character he had planned and put Psmith in his stead. "The results, I am glad to say, were excellent. At a dozen public schools throughout the country, boys started wearing monocles ..."

Can we believe Wodehouse - or was he pulling our legs?

* * * * *

