

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOL. 38

No. 449

MAY 1984



Skimpole blinked at the writhing junior. "Dear me, Herries! Did I strike you?"

Artist: the young Macdonald in a "striking" picture from one of his earliest Gems at the close of 1909.

42P

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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by

W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by

HERBERT LECKENBY

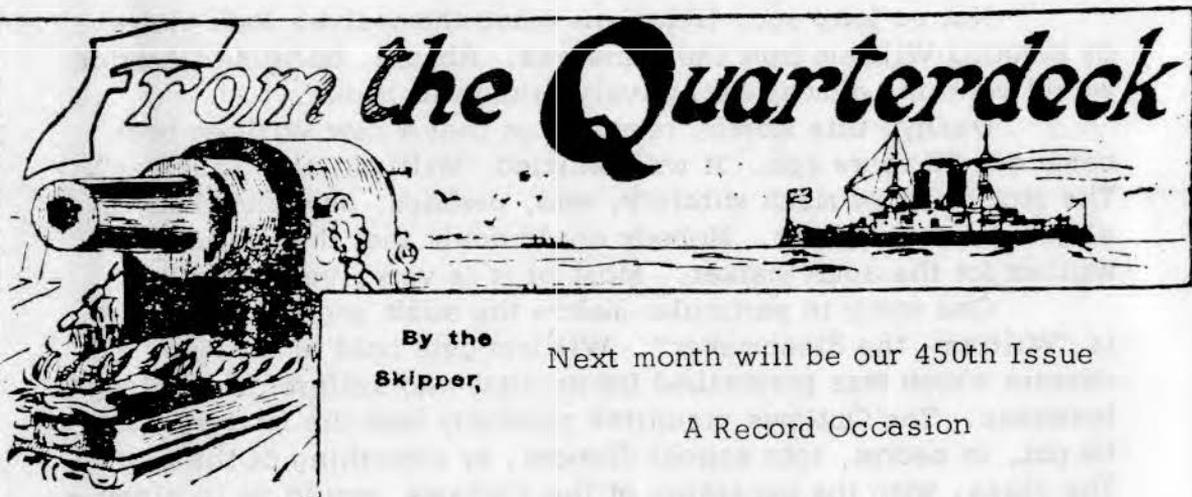
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By the
Skipper,

Next month will be our 450th Issue

A Record Occasion

THE TWO ANGLES OF WILLIAM

Long years ago - long before the name "William" brought anticipatory gleams to the eyes of book-dealers as collectors' items to fetch unbelievable prices - Miss Richmal Crompton, the creator of the young scamp, agreed with me that for a very long time she wrote her William stories for adults, and that it was only in her later years that she aimed him at the children's market.

Roger Jenkins once observed that the charm of William was,

not the effect that he had upon other children of his generation, but the impact he made upon adults in the stories. How true that was!

A small girl who lives in the next house to ours is slowly working through my complete William collection. She has them in the order that they stand in my bookcases. And as the books on my shelves are not arranged in any chronological order, the little lady gets them in no order of time. She confided to me recently: "I like the later ones the best, though I like them all".

That is, perhaps, natural. The later ones were written for children. The earlier ones, far more subtle in their observation and comedy, were aimed at the adult market.

Not so long ago, librarians made themselves look absurd by banning William from their shelves. Absurd, because libraries would contain, almost exclusively, the later books.

Danny, this month, reminds us that a new William book came out 50 years ago. It was entitled "William, the Gangster". The stories show much subtlety, and, perhaps, now and then, a slightly outre element. Nobody could doubt that the stories were written for the adult market. Most of it is very, very amusing.

One story in particular makes the adult angle evident. It is "William, the Sleepmaker". William gets hold of a sleeping mixture which was prescribed for an aunt who suffered from sleeplessness. The Outlaws visualise gleefully how the mixture could be put, in secret, into school dinners, or something of the sort. The class, with the exception of the Outlaws, would go to sleep - and especially the maths master in charge.

They try out the drug on a cat. The next morning, the cat is dead. (Cats are fastidious in their diet. I can't imagine the Princess Snowee lapping up milk to which anything had been added.)

William adds some of the drug to a glass of some soft drink for which a temperance speaker has asked. The effects are hilarious.

For the adult reader the story is great fun. "What devilment the young rascals are capable of!" they murmur as they

giggle. But it is not a tale one might really hand to children, me thinks. It might give them ideas. Or am I being as absurd as the librarians were when they banned William, years later, when his appeal was more for children and less for adults?

REVUES

Danny often mentions something which reminds us vividly of old pleasures which, alas, seem gone for ever. This month he speaks of going to a suburban music hall and seeing a Revue entitled "Walk This Way" which starred two inimitable comedians of the period, Nat Mills and Bobbie. Practically all those magnificent music halls - of which the Stoll and the Moss Empire, respectively, were the best, most of them built in the few years prior to 1914, in largish towns all over the country - have been destroyed now. It is a matter of shame for national governments and also for local authorities that such a thing should have been allowed to happen. Some, at least, should have been preserved for posterity.

The Revue was a type of entertainment comprising singing (real songs by people with real singing voices), dancing, spectacular "scenas", and a number of sketches. At the better theatres the touring company would comprise a couple of stars who would appear off and on throughout the show; one or two supporting players, and a troop of girl dancers - about 12 or 16 sometimes, or a smaller number in the cheaper music halls. The theatre's own resident orchestra would comprise perhaps ten (a few less in smaller houses) accomplished instrumentalists. The Revue made a change from the straight variety bill.

I believe the Revue first became popular just after the First World War. The London Hippodrome staged several, including "Joy Bells", which starred, among many others, George Robey and Laddie Cliff. The latter introduced the famous song "Swanee" to Britain in the show.

I, personally, have happy memories of a number of Revues. The first, maybe, was "By Request" which starred Gracie Fields, Tommy Fields, Edith Fields, and lots of others. A magnificent show. I saw it at Kingston Empire, a lovely theatre which it was

a sin to destroy. "By Request" toured for several years, paying return visits constantly. Then Archie Pitt and Gracie Fields took "The Show's the Thing", a superb revue, to the West End of London.

I recall "The Reply to the Talkies", a wonderful show, which I went down to Finsbury Park Empire (one of the Moss circuit) to see. Another I found unforgettable was "Zip", starring Billy Caryl and Hilda Mundy, superb artists, at Chatham Empire, a Stoll Theatre.

And I remember seeing "Bessie Runs Away" at the old but rather charming little Grand Theatre at Gravesend. The Bessie was Bessie Bunter, with a number of Cliff House girls. It was, of course, a minor touring production, and I have often tried unsuccessfully to trace it, to find out who starred in it. The Grand was famous in its day. Belle Elmore (Crippen's wife) played there, as did Gracie Fields, George Formby, and Tommy Trinder in the days before they became world-famous.

Revue and Music Halls are long gone - like the old papers we loved - but while we remain they will never be forgotten.

THE EDITOR

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DEATH OF TWO STALWARTS

We very much regret to record the death, following a heart attack, of Mr. Graham Slowley in mid-April. The news comes to us by way of our Reader and Contributor, Mr. Nic Gayle, who is Mr. Slowley's son-in-law.

Nic writes: "As a boy, my father-in-law read and loved the Gem, and he was happy to rediscover it and the Magnet in the last five years or so. I'd like you to know that the world of Story Paper Collectors' Digest significantly helped to increase his happiness and pleasure in life over the last five years".

Mr. Slowley leaves a widow, Joan; two daughters, Hazel and Jayne, and two grandchildren, Sarah-Jane and Toby. We extend our sympathy to the entire family in their great loss.

We are also sad to announce the death of Mr. A. V. Packer,

who lived in Southgate in North London, who died early in March. Mr. Packer had been a C.D. enthusiast for very many years, almost from the beginning. Our sincere sympathy to Mr. Packer's family.

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Danny's Diary

MAY 1934

In Modern Boy they are running the life story of the world-famous cricketer, Don Bradman, who holds the record for the highest individual score - 452 not out. It is to add interest to the Test Series with Australia which will be running in England this summer.

The Biggles series continues about the great flyer when he was younger in his early career in the Great War. There is also a new serial called "Spanish Death" which is advertised as being written by Vice-Admiral Evans, C.B., D.S.O., R.N. It's rummy how great sailors - and great sportsmen - seem also able to write "great" stories.

The Captain Justice series by Murray Roberts is now relating how Marcus, the Mysterious, planned to establish himself as "Emperor of the Earth". The series about the boy inventor, Charles Lever - Clev for short - continues, and one tale this month tells how he invents a mechanical bowler called Tinribs, the Terrible. It's a bit farcical. There is also a series of humorous westerns by Geo. E. Rochester, about a sheriff named Chickenfeed Wilson. I miss King of the Islands, and hope he will soon be back in Modern Boy.

The Royal Variety Performance was held at the Palladium on 8th May, and, for the first time, the B.B.C. broadcast it on the wireless. It was great. The show started with several circus acts - Kafka, Stanley & Mae, trapeze artists from America; The 3 Bonos, acrobats from Germany, and Frank Boston, an English juggler.

Then the 3 Sailors, comedy dancers from America. Then Arthur Lucan & Kitty McShane in an adventure of Old Mother Riley, which was great. Then Elsie and Doris Waters, who are well-known

as wireless entertainers as well as on the Halls. Then George Robey in a comedy sketch of a German Music professor. The first half came to an end with the B.B.C. Dance Orchestra conducted by Henry Hall, and a vocalist in the band sang "Just to see my mother smile again, I would walk a thousand miles; just to feel her soft caress, and to hear her say 'God bless.'" This was lovely. Some lovely other dance tunes, too.

After the interval came the Lawrence Tiller Dancing Girls, followed by Murray & Mooney, a comedy pair. Then George Clarke, with "Tiny Mite", a gorgeous act, I have seen several times. Then Billy Bennett "Almost a gentleman".

The Finale was a surprise item "Old Man Variety" with a number of celebrities making appearances along with Jack Hylton & his Band, which they said was in a colourful setting. A marvelous show. I would love to have been there, but, even on the wireless, it was great.

Three of the four Gem stories this month feature the new boy, Lumley-Lumley. In the first story "The Complete Cad", Tom Merry & Co. are going to spend "the first part of their vacation" at Tom's home, Laurel Villa, though just what vacation it could possibly be at the start of May I dunno. At any rate, there is a lot of cricket in the story, and Lumley-Lumley lands himself on the Laurel Villa party. Tom Merry's eleven plays Figgins' eleven, which includes Lumley, and Cousin Ethel turns up as a kind of umpire. Next week, in "A Disgrace to St. Jim's", they are all back at school. Lumley, the complete Outsider, cannot be sacked for his misdeeds, but Tom Merry & Co. can deal with him - and they do.

Then followed "The St. Jim's Jockeys", in which they are invited, by Cousin Ethel, to an "At Home" at her home Cleveland Lodge. And there is to be some steeplechasing and point-to-point races. And Arthur Augustus rides Madcap, and Lumley plays a sordid part in the story.

Final of the month is "Towser's Rivals" which is a bit tripy. Lumley plays a part, but the main setting is a dog show in Rylcombe, in which Towser and Pongo are entered, and Bernard

Glyn's mastiff which turns out to be a mechanical invention of his. The St. Frank's serial "Ghost River Ranch" turns up each month.

There was rather a remarkable happening in New York on 11th May. An enormous cloud of dust enveloped the city, and caused a lot of discomfort to people plus lots of traffic chaos.

My Gran has sent me a new William book just published. It cost her 7/6. It is called "William the Gangster", and it contains 11 stories. My favourites are "William and the Real Laurence", and "William the Sleep-maker" in which he gets hold of Aunt Jane's sleeping mixture (she has had a nervous breakdown) and puts some in the ginger-ale which Mr. Forrester, the Temperance speaker, is to drink. Great fun.

Two stunning tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. "Billy Bunter on the Films" continues the marvellous tale about the Greyfriars chums in Hollywood, and "The Son of a Cracksman" which tells how Kit Erroll arrived as a new boy at Rookwood as the son of a hero, but in reality he is the son of a crook who plans to rob the school.

Another lovely month at the Pictures. "Little Women" is a great film, and Katherine Hepburn as "Jo" is fine, with Joan Bennett as one of the sisters, and Edna May Oliver as the aunt. A good comedy is "Blonde Bombshell" with Jean Harlow, Franchot Tone, and a big cast. "Waltzes from Vienna" is a British musical with Jessie Matthews and Edmund Gwenn. Simply terrific is "The Invisible Man" which is very true to the H. G. Wells novel, and Claud Rains is marvellous though he is invisible most of the time.

"Dancing Lady" is an entertaining back-stage story starring Joan Crawford, Clark Gable, and Fred Astaire. "White Woman" is fairish but on the short side, and it stars Charles Laughton and Carole Lombard. Finally a real mirthquake is the Four Marx Brothers in "Duck Soup". A splendid month at the cinemas.

The Prince of Wales has opened the new Police College at Hendon, and he also laid the foundation stone for a new training centre there for the Metropolitan Police.

One evening at the end of the Easter holidays we went to

Hackney Empire, which is an extremely nice theatre owned by Sir Oswald Stoll. We saw a spiffing revue entitled "Walk This Way", which starred Nat Mills and Bobbie.

The Smedley series has continued throughout the month in the Magnet, and it's a winner. The opening story is set at Wharton Lodge, where the Bounder is an unexpected guest - and Mr. Quelch, getting better from the illness which put him out of action last term and let Smedley take his place as a locum, is also there, all ready for the new term. The boys call Mr. Smedley "Creeper & Crawler". Just as the holidays are ending, Mr. Quelch gets struck down by some mysterious attacker near Wharton Lodge - so the way is clear for Smedley to continue as his substitute as Remove master. This opening tale is named "The Spying Form-Master".

Next comes "Bunter, the Ventriloquist", in which the Owl gives Smedley a trying time, but the story is a bit of an added chunk to lengthen the series, and it doesn't further the plot. And it has a most stupid cover picture of a stupid incident which isn't in the tale.

Then "Saving a Scapegrace", which shows his pals looking after the Bounder to see that he doesn't come too much of a cropper. And finally a nice sentimental little tale in which the Bounder helps the hard-up Monsieur Charpentier. Mr. Smedley discovers that Smithy has sold his diamond tie-pin, and Mr. Smedley reports it to the Head. But the Bounder has given the money secretly to Mossoo, and the old Head puts two and two together - and Smedley is foiled again.

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

The 1934 Gem story "The Complete Cad" had been "The Terrible Three's Cricket Week" in the summer of 1910. "A Disgrace to St. Jim's" had been "Lumley-Lumley's Luck" of four weeks later in the summer of 1910. "The St. Jim's Jockeys" had been "Lumley-Lumley's Rival" three weeks later still in 1910. (The latter, oddly enough, was a sub story; another sub Lumley tale of the same period was not reprinted.) "Towser's Rivals" had been "Herries' First Prize" just one week earlier in 1910, and I have little doubt that this, too, was a sub tale.

S.O.L. No. 219 "Billy Bunter on the Films" was the third spasm of the 16-story Hollywood series of the Magnet of early 1929. S.O.L. No. 220 "Son of a Cracksman" was the 7-story series which introduced Erroll to Rookwood from the Boys' Friend of early 1917. The

Rookwood tales, at that time, were longer than they were ever to be again. For some obscure reason, in the Boys' Friend, the opening tale of the series was separated from the rest by a story on war-time rationing which may well have been a sub effort.

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

conducted by Josie Packman

I am sorry that the last part of the article about Tinker was delayed until this month, but I am sure you will forgive me.

Would some of our Blake fans like to write me something for Blakiana? I have one small item for June and would like some more material. I do not want to give you too many repeats from the early Annuals but that's the only solution in order to keep Blakiana going. So out with your pens, papers or typewriters and get to work possibly on your favourite character. It does not matter if it's been done before, maybe years ago, but just let me have your own interpretation.

THE STORY OF TINKER continued

by Walter Webb

No less welcome was Tinker when he made his way through the shady woodlands and green meadows that led to Calcroft School. Sight of the silver Calder rippling and gurgling its way to the sea, with Barren Tor's shaggy shoulders draped in a mantle of purple heather in the distance, always brought back to Tinker pleasant memories of happy days once spent at the famous old school.

His first visit to Calcroft was on the occasion when his master received an urgent telegram from Dr. Harpner, the Headmaster, requesting him to come over and investigate a murder which had taken place on property belonging to the school. The victim was a Mr. Gideon Crayne, whose nephew Lucien, a temporary Science master, having just taken up his post at the school, was suspected of taking his life. Everything pointed to Lucien Crayne having committed the crime, but Blake soon began to have his doubts. It was during their investigations that Tinker met Fane, Eagleby and Curtwin of Pycrofts' house, three decent fellows whom he chummed up with at once. Blake, ably assisted by Tinker,

finally vindicated the honour of the suspected master, and, incidentally, that of the old school as well. Thereafter, Tinker was always a welcome visitor to Calcroft, and spent with Fane, Eagleby and Curtwin many happy hours in the shady glades of the extensive Calcroft woods, boating on the shimmering Calder, picnicking on the banks of the cool stream, or rambling round the narrow, cobbled streets of picturesque Calcroft Town. Familiar landmarks these, which will bring back nostalgic memories to those who remember Sidney Drew's famous tales of Calcroft School. Happy days for Tinker, too, and a pleasant change from the routine of detective work.

During Tinker's long association with the "Union Jack" and "Sexton Blake Library" there was no attempt made on the part of any author - G. H. Teed with his Nirvana series excepted - to bring even a breath of romance into the young assistant's life. What Tinker's feelings were towards the opposite sex in the days when he and his master were engaged in a ceaseless war against the giants of crime, such as Kestrel, Wu Ling, the Confederation, etc., is difficult to define, for, with so many authors engaged in turning out the stories, there was bound to be a certain amount of inconsistency. The general impression formed was that Tinker took a dim view of girls, and, if they roused any interest in him at all it was of a most academic nature. Certainly, he had no time at all for them in his leisure time, for when not pasting press cuttings into the famous Index, he liked nothing better than to visit a cinema or theatre, or take Pedro for a run round London's streets. The friendly look of invitation in the clear blue eyes of the pretty blonde in the Strand was sufficient to send a discomfited Tinker stumbling by with quickly averted head and heightened colour, whilst the look of admiration in the wistful brown eyes of the attractive brunette dining alone in the Venetia met with similar rebuff.

Typical example of Tinker's apathy was well illustrated in 1930 when G. H. Teed rather shocked us by having the glamorous Mademoiselle Roxane flung unconscious on a rock on Bonaventure Island from a crashed helicopter unclothed, save for a few wispy

items of torn lingerie. There-abouts Tinker's age was given as being nearly nineteen but for all the animation he showed at the sight of the lady's unadorned body, he might well have been an old man of ninety!

Today the modern author shows a more realistic and sympathetic attitude towards him. To the brand new name of Edward Carter which Anthony Parsons has bestowed upon him, John Hunter has given him one or two girl friends to go with it. No more do we read Pedro tugging at the leash in Tinker's hands, for it has given way to something warmer, intimate and exciting. But with the amorous streak developing more strongly to his nature, Tinker still remains the cheery, fun-loving lad of his early Telford days.

Coutts, a regular victim of Tinker's jokes in the golden age, pays only rare visits to Baker Street these days, and only then when Rex Hardinge brings him along; and it is that immaculately attired representative of New Scotland Yard, Superintendent Claudius Venner who is the more familiar sight in the consulting room at Baker Street nowadays. Then, with an appetite made ravenous by a famine of prospective victims, Tinker really lets go, and the elegant leg of the sooper is pulled long and unmercifully.

And so, having emerged more or less successfully from the maze of Tinker's history, it only remains to express the hope that many more milestones of it will be reached here, like so many of the old and popular characters of the past, he drifts into the gradual obscurity that ends in total oblivion. When that time comes there is no doubt that the name of Tinker will live long in the memories of those who followed his adventures week by week in the pages of the Union Jack and Detective Weekly and month by month through those of the Sexton Blake Library.

In October of last year he accomplished a feat seldom achieved in the realms of fiction. He reached his fiftieth year of continuous and unbroken appearances in reading entertainment. It was a record which did not receive the recognition it so well merited.

To the character who has so deservedly earned the affection of millions and brought countless hours of thrills and enjoyment let us pay tribute. The toast - "Long Live Tinker".

Nelson Lee Column

CALLING ALL SNEAKS

by Len Wormull

'Bullying has got to be stamped out, and it is the duty of all boys to report irregularities... sneaking is a word misused.'

Thus Dr. Morrison Nicholls on his arrival at St. Frank's back in April 1929. It was a reform he had insisted on introducing before taking up his appointment, and one which the school governors had seen fit to endorse. In other words, set a sneak to catch a bully! It might reasonably be argued that sneaks were no less objectionable than bullies, but the head clearly thought otherwise. With the school's honour at stake, the head's plea to help in the 'good cause' fell mostly on deaf ears, including those of masters. Mr. Crowell, for one, showed his contempt by awarding no more than ten lines to delinquents reported. Just who the bullies were is not specified, but it did lead Handforth - a possible target - to remark that the head was trying to turn St. Frank's into a sneaks' paradise; an apt title for the series as it turned out (see N.S.153-56).

Claude Gore-Pearce, hereafter Claude for short, was not only a millionaire's son and opportunist, but snobbish and nasty with it; a cad without pedigree. As leader of the Reform Party, whose motto was 'duty and honour', he sees a chance to become something big in the junior school; power meaning nothing less than the Remove captaincy. For Teddy Long, it was a legal excuse to settle old scores. That it paid to sneak is evidenced when Claude, forestalling a raid on the East House, is rewarded with a week's holiday. But not before the head has walked blindly into a well laid booby-trap, intended for Corcoran of the Fourth! Thus encouraged, the now increasing band of tale-bearers goes from strength to strength. In just two weeks, Claude has indeed become 'Boss of the Remove'. But with the captaincy still eluding him.

Disgrace and expulsion always stalked our old friends and enemies, and easily the biggest threat was a visit to the local pub.

Indeed, it became a stock situation in schoolboy downfalls. Nipper was in one of those situations right now ("The Downfall of Nipper"), and all because he went to the White Harp Inn to stop Hubbard putting a bet on; a bet instigated by Claude as it happens. Robbed of their client, the bookies throw him out - right into the path of Dr. Nicholls. What's more the bookies testify against him resulting in a public flogging. The head's obduracy is seen when he ignores a last-minute confession by Hubbard. Verily, there ain't no justice! Troubles seldom come singly, 'tis said, and a worse fate is just around the corner for Nipper.

In the ordinary way Claude stood no chance against Nipper in a fight, and he knew it. But a most extraordinary thing happened in Bellton Lane when the two chanced to meet. A row develops into a fight, with Nipper removing his jacket. A fatal mistake on his part, for Claude seizes the unguarded moment to knock him out. Then came the inspiration and coup de grace, the chance for which he had been waiting. Knowing masters were in the offing, he swamps the upturned face with whiskey, leaving the flask as evidence. And there Nipper is found, helpless and incapable by the wayside.

In the final story, "Scorned by the School", Nelson Lee speaks on Nipper's behalf, and the worst is avoided. Nipper is given the benefit of the doubt after a 'trial by school' - the only occasion I can remember of a schoolboy's fate being left to the mercy of his schoolfellows. By now there is trouble in paradise. An epidemic of petty sneaking, with Long over-reaching himself, has brought swift punishment instead of reward. Despairing of his experiment, and with an 'I told you so' from Nelson Lee, the head concedes defeat. The sneaks' brief taste of honey is over, and the status quo restored. Nipper, whose lips were sealed throughout, is vindicated when Claude confesses all in his sleep. For which confession he is duly flogged.

A delightful series this, and one of the year's top school stories in the Nelson Lee. Corny though it sounds, I do have a sneaking regard for the tale, this being the one where I came in. Oh yes, a well-deserved bouquet for the artist, - a Mr. C. Ambler,

I believe - who caught the mood to perfection. It would be nice to say that St. Frank's settled down after this major upheaval, but already the School Train was being shunted into the sidings. What an hectic life these lads had!

Stop Press: A case was recently reported of a school where sneaking IS actually encouraged. They always did say that Brooks was years before his time.

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by an Old Boy

Instead of alighting at Bellton station I decided to carry on to Caistowe and look at Lord Dorrimore's yacht WANDERER.

Nipper had written to tell me the yacht was under repair at Caistowe, and as I had never seen this famous vessel that had transported the St. Frank's holiday parties to so many exotic places, acting on Nipper's suggestion in his letter, I took the opportunity to visit the little seaport of Caistowe and return to St. Frank's afterwards.

On the way down from London I had been thinking on the history of the WANDERER. It had been originally Sir Crawford Grey's yacht, and at that time Lord Dorrimore owned ADVENTURE, a sea-going vessel that took part in that famous South Sea's treasure hunt some time ago.

But soon after the WANDERER came into Dorrie's possession, probably the result of a deal, and thereafter this renowned yacht was to figure in many exciting adventures that have been faithfully recorded by Nipper.

Although I have never seen ADVENTURE I am told it is smaller than the WANDERER, the latter having six decks.

Arriving at Caistowe, Dorrie's yacht was soon in view. A Cofferdam was being used to repair an underwater section of the vessel. Caistowe has no dry-dock facilities.

I did not go aboard having no permit and I did not see anyone I knew. Yet just looking at this gleaming ship brought memories flashing back to the time it took part in the EL DORADO hunt for Colonel Kerrigan; when it was blown off its course in the South

Seas and given up as lost. Of the time it took the St. Frank's party to CHINA to rescue Yung Ching...

But I had to get to St. Frank's. And so I left the WANDERER with its memories and took the old local train to Bellton.

It was a glorious day. A marmalade sky covered the Sussex afternoon and everything was right with the world.

St. Frank's was looking its best; like a green thought in a green shade in the early Spring sunshine.

I wonder how many of you who read these lines would want to return to school. To 'smell' the school atmosphere; to be taught again the countless things we have forgotten.

Perhaps to be free from the daily worries that gather abundantly when we depart from our Alma Mater.

It is one of Life's little ironies that you can never go back. But we are blessed with memory, and St. Frank's can revive many of our young days with ease.

There are many Schools like St. Frank's that can take us away from the moments of discontent that reign over us and transfer us to our own particular Heaven. Perhaps a trip in the good old WANDERER to the South Sea Islands with their white sandy beaches, waving palm trees and coral reefs. But how lovely it would be to return to the leafy lanes of England and the green countryside.

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WANTED: Ulvercraft and Lythway Press Books. Crime. Historical. Also Museum Press Books, MAGOVENY, 16 Matilda Gardens, Belfast 12, Ulster.

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SALE: Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1920; Original; Good condition £30. C.D. Annuals 1976, 1978, 1979, 1980 - £5 each.

JAMES GALL, 49 Anderson Avenue, Aberdeen. Tel. 0224-491716.

P. S. Can anyone give me the present address of Mr. G. H. Friend, former address was Meadow Croft, Pett Road, Guestling, Hastings, E. Sussex.

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WANTED: Any Thompson Books. (Rovers, Hotspurs, Adventures, Wizards, pre-1955. Also Skippers.)

M. BULL, 22 Coronation Gardens, Shanklin, Isle of Wight, PO37 7DZ. 'Phone 863583 (evenings).

* * * * *

WANTED: Good copy of MODE RN BOY No. 321. Please write to ERIC FAYNE.

THE FADING OF ROOKWOOD

by Roy Parsons

There is a passage in Frank Richards' Autobiography in which Charles Hamilton muses over his proliferation of pen-names. He concludes that he feels, most of all, to be Frank Richards rather than Martin Clifford, with Owen Conquest, Ralph Redway and the remainder some way behind. The point is neatly illustrated in Hamilton's post-war output - 30 plus Bunter books and a good many other stories under the Frank Richards pseudonym, a fair output of St. Jim's material but little else. Specifically only one Owen Conquest book - The Rivals of Rookwood School, published by Mandeville in 1951 in line with their current St. Jim's programme, and in a matching dust jacket. I thought at the time that these were attractive publications and still do so. Unfortunately the Spring Books reprint of the Rookwood story which I now possess is rather less appealing.

However, it is the story that matters and the plot of the Rookwood book is straightforward enough. Jimmy Silver and Co., caught in a rag with the Moderns, are given Extra School for the four succeeding half-holidays. Inevitably the days concerned cover both a house match and a match against St. Jim's. After this scene-setting the story concerns the attempts by Lovell to redeem the situation, for which he was originally mainly responsible. Naturally, Lovell being Lovell these efforts end in disaster, causing the loss of the House match and generally making matters worse. Just as naturally the affair ends happily with Lovell making amends by accident in time for the match with St. Jim's. A pleasant enough tale with enough incident and humour to keep the reader's attention in keeping with the general tone of the Mandeville stories.

Nevertheless there was no successor to the book, presumably because it was not successful enough. Of course Mandeville ceased publication a little while later but further St. Jim's stories appeared and Bunter books were published for another ten years. Perhaps it was inevitable that the Greyfriars stories - or Bunter stories as they had become - would outlast Hamilton's other creations as they had a clearly identifiable central comic character on

which to base their appeal to the mass market. In this respect Rookwood and even St. Jim's could not compete and the characters were not well enough delineated. A series of Lovell books was never a likely proposition.

And so Rookwood faded away, and it is a matter of regret that it should do so, seemingly without a struggle. But it was pleasant to have one more sunny Rookwood volume - perhaps the nearest Hamilton came post-war to inducing nostalgia for the style of the S.O.L. upon which many of our memories of Rookwood are based. If its end came not quite with a bang it was certainly more than a whimper.

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 244. THE MYSTERY OF LUMLEY-LUMLEY

In the Red Magnet of the early Summer of 1910, Herbert Vernon-Smith arrived at Greyfriars as a new boy. He had a double-barrelled surname. He was the son of a self-made millionaire, motherless, and a complete rascal. He could not be expelled, for his father held certain papers which could ruin Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars.

The Head confided to Mr. Quelch: "This boy would not be received into Eton, Harrow, or Winchester - but I was blackmailed into accepting him into Greyfriars. I dare not expel the boy. I must have no contact with him, Mr. Quelch, for he would defy me. You must deal with him".

Mr. Quelch was astounded. And small wonder.

The story was entitled "The Bounder of Greyfriars" - and his schoolfellows nicknamed Vernon-Smith "the Bounder".

Just ten weeks later, in the blue Gem of the high summer of 1910, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley arrived at St. Jim's as a new boy. He had a double-barrelled surname. He was the son of a self-made millionaire, motherless, and a complete rascal. He could not be expelled, for Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, had accepted 3 years' fees in advance, and had, furthermore, signed a legal

document stating that he accepted responsibility for the care of Jerrold for those 3 years.

The story was entitled "A Rank Outsider", and his school-fellows nicknamed him "the Outsider".

So the Head of Greyfriars was incredibly weak. And the Head of St. Jim's was incredibly stupid. But that was author's licence, and few readers will have bothered.

For a moment we ponder. The repetition of plots and characterisation (often down to the most extreme and unnecessary details) was a common thing in the Hamilton Story, but, normally, there was a gap of several years between the original and the duplication. It is staggering that an author should repeat plot and characterisation in such detail as in this case, all in the short space of 10 weeks, when, largely, the same readers enjoyed both the Gem and the Magnet.

It hardly seems likely that the idea was to strengthen the impression of two writers at work - with Clifford copying Richards. But one never knows.

Following the first Outsider yarn came "The Terrible Three's Cricket Week", a summer holiday story, set at Laurel Villa, with more underhand deeds from the Outsider. Four weeks later still came "Lumley-Lumley's Luck", carrying on the theme.

And then, next week, another puzzle. "The Outsider's Chance" (it was never reprinted) was a substitute story starring Lumley. So, exactly 6 weeks after the publication of the first "Outsider" story, we find a sub writer handling the character and continuing the theme. The assumption must surely be that the sub writer read the other Lumley tales in manuscript form, and, just possibly, wrote them with the cognizance of the real Martin Clifford.

1910 was a year in which the Gem had a surprisingly large sprinkling of sub tales, though just why is unclear. According to the lists of Mr. Bill Lofts, the sub-writer credited with sub "Outsider" tales is H. Clarke Hook. Charles Hamilton is reputed to have been on friendly terms with S. Clarke Hook, the father, and it is barely possible that the Gem star author, to give himself

a break or from kindness of heart, may have put some work in the lap of the Hook son.

The next tale, "Herries' First Prize", introduced Lumley and Clifton Dane in supporting roles. This one has all the hallmarks of a sub story, and I believe it was. Then came "Lumley-Lumley's Rival", a sub story (this one was reprinted), followed by "Lumley-Lumley - Hero", which was by Hamilton.

Three weeks later Lumley-Lumley "died" in "A Shadow in the School", followed by the sequel "The New Boy's Secret" which introduced a new boy, Ernest Levison, who had known the millionaire's son earlier, and knew that he was subject to death-like trances. So Lumley was brought back to life, after Tom Merry had wept by his death-bed, - and Lumley left the school to recuperate. Melodrama with a vengeance, quite unbelievable, but good powerful reading in its way. That was towards the end of 1910.

Four months later, in the Spring of 1911, came a 4-story series starting off with "Lumley-Lumley's Return". Now Lumley plotted to get Tom Merry expelled from St. Jim's in disgrace. At the end, the Head, unable to expel Lumley, asked Tom Merry to take the young rascal in hand, and this was done, it seems, with success.

It was well over a year later, in the late summer of 1912, that we meet up with Lumley-Lumley again. Now he has become a pleasant and intriguing character. In two delightful tales, introduced by "Shunned by His Father", we find the changed Lumley very friendly with, and having a high respect for, Grimes, the grocer's boy. The friendship does not please Lumley's father. "I sent you to this school to mix with the best people, and I find you consorting with a common grocer's boy."

Lumley infuriated his father, who disowned him. And Lumley left St. Jim's and became a grocer's boy himself in Rylcombe. A heart-warming couple of tales. When Grimes, humbly, says: "Oh, Master Lumley!" the millionaire's son replies, with equal humility "Oh, Master Grimes!"

At the very end of that year, 1912, we reached the final connected pair starring Lumley, in which he arranges for Grimes to

become a St. Jim's man - but poor Grimes finds himself out of his element.

And that was the end of the Lumley-Lumley saga. Hamilton was never to star him again. It is hard to fathom the author's reason for abandoning a character who had many original facets in his make-up. He had known poverty in his time in the slums of New York, before his father struck it rich. And his friendship with Grimes, later on, was pleasant, and never over-sentimental or patronising.

I feel myself that the likely explanation is that Lumley was not entirely Hamilton's own brain-child. And (as may well have been the case with Montheith, who was similarly abandoned) when Hamilton was fully established, he may have felt it time to drop a character who was not wholly his own. Though I am merely guessing, of course.

A further mystery is why, in the reprint period of 1933 and 1934, the Lumley-Lumley stories were held back a full year before he turned up at St. Jim's. I can find no explanation at all for that.

* * * * *

TOM MERRY CAVALCADE (Serialised from a Long-Ago C.D. Annual)

1918

At eleven o'clock that November morning Lizzie Bland had hung out a few flags. Moth-eaten and faded though they were, they made a brave show, and they were Lizzie's contribution to the celebration and thanksgiving which were apparent on every hand. Now, as the autumn dusk was falling, she lit every gas burner in the shop, and in the rooms over the shop.

Tramcars clattered past, gongs ringing to clear the tracks of the crowds - every car packed with excited, cheering passengers. All day long fireworks had banged, or shot out sparks, or whizzed up into the sky. No fireworks had been manufactured for years, so it was amazing where they came from, but the supply seemed endless.

Groups of young and old went up and

down the street, singing "Keep the Home Fires Burning", "Roses of Picardy" and "How Ya Gonna Keep 'em Down on the Farm", and as the evening grew older the singing became more vociferous and less tuneful.

Lizzie did not close the shop, though there was no business to be done on this, the first Armistice night. She did not join the fun and enthusiasm outside, though occasionally she looked up from her book and smiled as a firework exploded outside or someone put a head in the shop door and yelled "The war's over, missis!".

Lizzie was reading the current Gem. It was entitled "Called to Order", and told of Cardew's experiences in a gambling den run by a crook named Tickey Tapp. All Lizzie's favourites played their parts in the story, and she was happy, and asked for

nothing more at that moment. All that mattered to Lizzie was that the war was over, and Leslie Chadley would be coming back to his shop - certainly, and the blue cover would be coming back to the Gem - perhaps.

1919

The wholesome young man who entered the shop raised his bowler hat, and smiled.

He asked: "Do you remember me, Mr. Chadley?"

Chadley removed the glasses which he needed now for reading, and gazed at the newcomer. In a moment he was on his feet, and holding out his hand.

"God bless my soul, as Dr. Holmes says - it's young Mr. Chris. It must be years since I saw you."

Chris shook hands warmly with the newsagent.

"I'm training to be a doctor, Mr. Chad, and I'm away at college most of my time. I'm not often at home - that's why you haven't seen me around."

"Still read the 'Gem', sir?"

Chris laughed. "When I get the chance. Should I be ashamed of myself at my age? I'll take a copy now, if you have one. What's Tom Merry up to this week?"

"A man can never outgrow the 'Gem'", said Chadley, with assurance. He placed the white-covered paper before Chris. "This week's story is a tale about the Whitsun holiday. Called 'Heart of a Hero'. Rake locks Doris Levison in the vaults under the castle, and Cardew rescues her."

"Do you like Doris Levison so well as Cousin Ethel?" queried Chris.

"I do not", said Chadley, emphatically, "but it's a good yarn."

Chris turned over the pages of the paper. He asked: "What do you think of Alcock and Brown flying the Atlantic yesterday?"

"Fine work!" Chadley rubbed his

hands. "A grand British achievement. Remember the fuss there was when Bleriot flew the Channel?"

"I was too small to remember much about that", returned Chris. In the doorway, he looked back, and asked: "What's the building that's going up next door, Mr. Chadley?"

"A luxury cinema, Mr. Chris. This town keeps abreast of the times."

Outside, a tramcar rattled past, plunging and groaning on its worn and neglected tracks.

1920

"I'm glad the shop hasn't closed, yet, Lizzie", said Mrs. Venner, panting a little. She had been hurrying through the November mist. "We've been to see the Cenotaph unveiled by the King, and then Chris took his father and me to the matinee of 'The Luck of the Navy' at the Duke of York's theatre".

"Lovely", said Lizzie Bland. She still looked youthful, even though her first bloom had passed. "Here's your Gem, ma'am. It's called 'For Freedom and the Cup'. It's a Talbot story, but Mr. Chadley says it's not by the original writer. I don't see how he knows. It reads all right to me."

Mrs. Venner took the paper in exchange for three-halfpence.

She said: "Mr. Chadley is right, Lizzie. Many of the Gem stories have been well below standard lately. I think they must be written by a different author". She paused. After a moment, she continued, speaking slowly, as though choosing her words with care: "I have something personal to say to you, Lizzie. Mr. Chadley is obviously keen in his discrimination of school stories. Is he so discriminating about his own behaviour?"

Lizzie folded her arms, and stared with grim disapproval at her late mistress.

"May I ask what you mean, Mrs. Venner?"

Mrs. Venner glanced round to make certain that no new customer had entered the

shop. She went on: "I have taken an interest in you, Lizzie, ever since you first came to me from the orphanage. I feel some responsibility for you now. When you first took over the management of this shop during the war, you did a kindly act, and you did well. But Mr. Chadley has been home for nearly two years - and you are still here."

"I'm his housekeeper!", said Lizzie, defensively.

"Quite so! But you are also an unmarried woman, living alone with a widower. If Mr. Chadley values your

reputation, and his own, he will put an end to this state of affairs at once. Why don't you marry Mr. Chadley, Lizzie?"

Lizzie rested her elbows on a pile of 'School Friends' on the counter, and looked up into the older woman's face. Her voice was soft as she said: "Mr. Chadley has no love for anything but the memory of his wife and son who were drowned long ago. I'd marry him tomorrow if he asked me - but, in any case, I shall stay here unless he orders me to go."

(Next month - 1921)

REVIEWS

JOHN BULL JUNIOR

Frank Richards

(Howard Baker Club Special)

Another one of the fine Howard Baker "specials", sumptuous in its nostalgic splendour. This one contains seven consecutive Red Magnets from very early in the year 1911. Johnny Bull (called merely John Bull at this period. One wonders when and why he descended from John to Johnny) was probably, down the years, the least popular of the Famous Five. He stars in several of these early 1911 tales, which tell of what happened when he first came as a new boy to Greyfriars. Other newish character fighting for a place in the sun are Fisher T. Fish and Alonzo Todd.

It must be admitted there is nothing particularly outstanding about any of the seven tales here, apart from the wonder of their great length (never to be equalled in later times) and their bubbling, inconsequential humour.

The opening story in the volume "John Bull Junior" is set at Wharton Lodge at the tale end of the Christmas holidays, with Fishy and Bunter present as well as the regular chums. John Bull, playing his concertina out in the grounds at night, set off a rumour that the place is haunted. Bull's concertina played a substantial part for some years, till eventually it disappeared in the mists of time.

In passing, the cover to this Red Magnet is an Arthur Clarke drawing of Bunter in the Wharton Lodge pantry - a picture which was to be copied, detail for detail, on another Magnet cover by Shields, many years later. We ran an editorial feature on the strange affair of the copied covers, in the C.D. Annual of some years back.

The next tale "Forward, Fish!" stars the American boy, and then, in "Rolling in Money", Bull is back to the lead, complete with concertina. Aunt Tabitha gives Bull £500 in cash, to prove whether he is trustworthy, and cousin, Lucas Crane, tries unsuccessfully to lead him astray and get him disinherited.

The theme is carried on in "The Tempter", a good serious melodrama. "The Greyfriars Hypnotist" is, oddly enough, Herbert Vernon-Smith, who needs the aid of Bunter as the hypnotist's subject. Finally John Bull is back in the lead in "John Bull Junior's Weekly". He gets the idea from "Tom Merry's Weekly" at St. Jim's, and the theme is to provide the plot for the next week or two.

A gorgeous, happy volume, much enhanced by some delightful illustrations by Arthur

Clarke who was nearing the end of his life.

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WALLY BUNTER AT GREYFRIARS

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker: £9.95)

The previous volume reviewed contained seven Magnets of the period when the much loved red-covered paper was at its fattest. This volume contains eleven Magnets from the period when the old paper, now with a white cover, was at its slimmest. Eleven consecutive issues from the start of the year 1919. These were the days of that very long series when Billy Bunter went to St. Jim's as Wally, and Wally Bunter, Billy's double, took Billy's place and his reputation at Greyfriars.

Actually, the Gem got the best of the bargain, for the Gem got Billy, with all the various facets of character which made him the world's best known schoolboy. Wally, in the Magnet, was a little stodgy and colourless, but, nevertheless, these Magnets are packed with interest for the Greyfriars fan. Not unique, but certainly very rare was the fact that substitute writers contributed stories to this series in both the Magnet and Gem, presumably with the agreement of the real Frank Richards. There are, in fact, two sub stories in this collection and it would clearly have been rather a pity to omit them.

"Bravo, Bunter", shows Wally beginning to live down the reputation of Billy, whom he was supposed to be. "For Another's Sake" introduced some of the Cliff House girls, plus the father of Clara Trevlyn. Highcliffe comes into the picture with the following yarn, with a sequel in the next one.

Then a short series concerning the reform of Snoop, under the influence of Wally Bunter, plus Snoop's father who has been discharged after war service in the army. Hoskins stars in the next one, inspired to compose a rousing march, possibly to celebrate the end of the war.

"The Artful Doger" is amusing, with Bessie Bunter coming on the scene. Wally feels that, though he may deceive his schoolfellows, it is unlikely that he can deceive the plump young lady who is supposed to be his sister. A bit late in the day to consider that point, we might think. Loder comes up against Wally in the final tale in the volume, "Loder's Luck".

So, though nothing like high-water mark for the Magnet, this is a worth while volume in Magnet history.

I notice that "Jimmy R." of Repton makes his appearances in the editor's chat. He was a reader who, from time to time, sent in spasms of rather good verse, with special requests and the like. I often wonder whether "Jimmy R." was, as he professed to be, just an ordinary enthusiastic reader of the Magnet and Gem - or whether, just possibly, it was really Mr. Samway's doing a little job. Samways may not have been all that popular as a sub writer, but he was supreme with his verse.

For some unknown reason, the Magnet cover on the dust-jacket for this 1919 volume, comes from a very much later period and is far removed from the stories in the book.

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COLLECTORS PIE No. 3

(Howard Baker: £9.95)

A sister for the Holiday Annual which came our way last Christmas time. And when the new Pie was opened, it was found to be packed with good things in great variety.

First on the bill comes a Napoleon Dupont story and its sequel. Dupont, never much featured and almost forgotten now, draws a rapier against the bullying Bolsover Major, and then runs away from school. This pair, from the Spring of 1919, are excellent and unusual reading.

Two Gems from early 1932 are next on the bill; connected yarns introducing Ferrers Locke in what were really his first appearances for his admiring public. "The Nobbling of 'Nobbler Jim'" had been "Figgins & Co.'s Failure" one of the last halfpenny Gems of 1908, and the sequel "The Vengeance of 'Nobbler Jim'" had been "King of the Castle", the second of the penny Gems, also from the year 1908.

"Nerki the Sorcerer" is the final story of one of the Nelson Lee Libraries most loved series. The earlier tales in the series are in the recent Howard Baker Holiday Annual. Once again, the Lee copy is blown-up to Magnet size, in a perfect presentation, so helpful to eyes which have been in use for a long time.

Then two excellent connected stories from the Magnet of May 1910. Finally, a Christmas Sexton Blake story from the Union Jack of 1925, "Nirvana's Secret". Ideal choice. A lovely book, for reading and browsing - a treat for all.

BOOK REVEIWS

from Mary Cadogan

The ever popular Fred Astaire will be celebrating his 85th birthday on 10th May, so it is appropriate to mention in this month's Collector's Digest a new book about him. FRED ASTAIRE by Michael Freedland is published by W. H. Allen at £10.95, and it is a sumptuous beautifully illustrated volume, with photographs of Fred and his sister Adele from their childhood Vaudeville days, and covering his subsequent theatre, film and television careers. Dance of course, being the most ephemeral of the arts does not always lend itself to reproduction in static pictures - but both pictures and commentary in this book convey vivid touches of the magic of Astaire with Ginger Rogers in particular, and with his many other partners.

Another perennial favourite is E. W. Hornung's cricket-loving cracksman (shades of Lancaster!), whose first adventures were published as long ago as 1899. THE COMPLETE SHORT STORIES OF RAFFLES will be published this month, with an interesting foreword by Peter Haining, that gives some fascinating facts about both the author and his character. The publisher is Souvenir Press, and the cost of the book is £8.95. It is many years since these stories appeared in a collected edition, and second-hand Raffles books have been much sought after. The present volume has the bonus of including, as well as the adventures of the debonair amateur cracksman, an intriguing article by George Orwell entitled RAFFLES AND MSS BLANDISH.

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The Postman Called

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

STUART WHITEHEAD (Southampton): I always enjoy C.D. immensely and, by a coincidence, I read in the March "Postman Called" that D. James Martin of Southampton was brought up on stories of Gene Stratton Porter. When I was small, we had a copy of "Girl of the Limberlost" on the bookshelves, but I never opened it. Over the years it got lost. Imagine my surprise the other day, when I was browsing through some old books in Lymington Community Centre, to come across "Freckles" by G. S. Porter. I promptly purchased it for a niminal sum, and, when I've read it, Mr. Martin can have it with my compliments. It was reprinted in 1917.

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): It's a nice bright April day, as I write, although - like Danny - I can't help wishing that it were a little less nippy! Still, in the slightly "revised" words of Irving Berlin's song: "I've got my 'Digest' to keep me warm", or, at least, happy!

Speaking of "revision", I can't help feeling that Francis Hertzberg is confusing the issue a little. Of course, any teacher of young children, worth his (or her) salt, would omit or edit long, tiresome passages, when reading aloud to the class. This was done to me by my own junior-school teacher, and the practice repeated, a generation later, by myself. If I had neglected to do so, bored expressions on the faces of my small charges, and the shuffling of what Alonzo Todd might have referred to as "numerous pedal extremities", would soon have reminded me! Children do not like long prosy passages, and one reason why I started off with the "Gem", rather than the "Magnet", was because the former seemed to contain more jolly conversational bits, and less descriptive prose, than the latter.

But a little sensible editing of the text, when reading aloud to a class of young children, is quite a different matter when compared to the tinkering and tampering, and even re-writing of the original work.

Personally, I have never been able to share the modern passion for "up-dating" everything. Gas-lighting and horse-drawn

vehicles were fast disappearing, when I started reading the "Gem" in the early thirties, but still featured and illustrated in its pages. It never worried me that gas-lamps and pony traps were out-of-date; rather it tended to add to the charm and atmosphere in the stories. Similarly, the fact that a Greyfriars story may refer to the "old money" need distort no modern youngster. After all the fact that he or she is actually reading a Hamilton tale presupposes a certain level of intelligence! Why in our modern society, are we all so obsessed with "changing" everything?

ROGER JENKINS (Havant): The remark in your editorial, about mothers letting children wander around unknown areas of London, takes me back to the nineteen-thirties. As a boy my chief delight when staying in London was investing sixpence in an all-day ticket on the trams, and armed with a packet of sandwiches I covered the whole of the network over a period of time. No one ever queried the wisdom of this, and the only rebuke I received from my aunt in Wimbledon was when I arrived back late for tea. Times were hard in those days but I cannot help feeling that the standards of public behaviour were immeasurably higher.

BEN WHITER (London): I remember going to the Bat and Ball cricket ground at Gravesend to see Kent play against Essex. Kent do not seem to play there anymore. I went to Gravesend, twopence all the way on the tram to Barking - London, Tilbury Southend railway to Tilbury, cross by the ferry to Gravesend but coming home I travelled the Kent side of the Thames. Those days, before the grouping of the railways, the L.T.S.R. engines from Fenchurch Street had Gravesend on the front. Those were the days.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Gravesend has (or had) one of the finest wickets in the country, but the very pretty ground is small compared with other grounds where the counties play. Kent have not had a game there for some years now, which is a pity, for the Cricket Weeks were well attended. They put more on at Canterbury now, probably to save money, on the basis that most people have cars and will travel far to see a game, so the local grounds are no longer important to them. Long ago, they used to play at Blackheath and Catford.)

LESLIE ROWLEY (Chingford): Thank you for the latest C.D. I, too, was intrigued by the Arthur Clarke illustration on the cover. The signal is a lower quadrant gentry and still common in Cornwall.

Many lower quadrants were succeeded by upper quadrants in the early thirties (lower quadrants have the signal arm going down, uppers have the arm going up, of course). I have never heard them referred to as semaphores, but my dictionary tells me that you are quite right to use the term - previously I had thought that the term was restricted to signalling by flag. So I live and I learn. Of course, you when at Surbiton and now at Fleet would be used to the electric (lamp) signalling introduced by the old Southern Railway and now followed by that and other regions. The quadrants, however, are still alive and well.

* * * * *

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

MIDLAND

A slight improvement brought the attendance up to ten. Though lacking some of the usual features, it was a thoroughly enjoyable meeting with scarcely a dull moment.

The refreshments brought along by Betty Hopton, Joan Loveday, and Joan Golen were splendid, and Johnny Hopton paid for the tea and coffee.

One piece of news saddened us all. Stan Knight, our very popular and generous member, is in danger of losing his sight. We hope and pray something can be done for him.

A beautifully-typed quiz was given by Vince Loveday. The winners were Joan Golen and Win Brown. There followed an amusing reading by Ivan Webster from a Magnet tale "Coker Comes A Cropper", in which a disguised Coker walks into Prout's study and tells the master to "Bend over".

A 15-question quiz was given by your correspondent. A discussion followed on the question: "Was Hamilton a snob?". A welter of varying opinions were expressed, and the majority decided he was no snob. There was just time for 20 questions, with Geoff Lardner the victim. Solution was "The Remove box-room window". Nobody got it.

The next meeting, the A.G.M. will take place on 22nd May. All good wishes to O.B.B.C. members everywhere.

J. F. BELLFIELD (Correspondent)

CAMBRIDGE

We met at the home of Keith Hodkinson on Sunday, 1st April. The Club was pleased that Jack Doupe had been able to come from the Isle of Wight, and he brought with him greetings from Neville Wood, whom he had visited en route.

Since the meeting was at Keith's Willingham home, Bill Thurbon talked on Hereward the Wake. Willingham is closely connected with Hereward, and with the probable line of march made by William the Conqueror in his two attacks on the Isle. Bill quoted the D.N.B.'s verdict that the story of Hereward owed far more to legend than history, since there are only two references to Hereward in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle. All that could be safely said was that Hereward suddenly appears in history to defend Ely, and as mysteriously disappears afterwards. Bill talked about novels written about Hereward: Kingsley's "Hereward the Wake"; Macfarlane's "Camp of Refuge" and Henry Treece's "Man with a sword" - all varying in their approach to the story. Hereward: legend and mystery of the flat fenland around their meeting place at Keith's home.

After Mrs. Hodkinson's delicious tea, Keith produced a study in films; producing first black and white, and then coloured sequences from two famous films. First "The Ten Commandments", and then "Ben Hur". The contrast between the black and white and the colour films, with their sound accompaniment was impressive in showing the changing face of the cinema. Keith was warmly applauded.

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

LONDON

The new rendezvous at the Bisley home of Roy and Gwen Parsons was well attended and those who had made the journey

to this delightful spot were well rewarded by a varied programme.

Roger Jenkins read extracts from January 1967 issue of the news-letter which dealt with the Christmas meeting at East Dulwich.

There was a lengthy discussion after Bill Bradford's treatise on Edwy Searles Brooks and his writings on other detectives after his cessation of being involved with Nelson Lee and St. Frank's. Mary Cadogan spoke of the 80th anniversary of Tiger Tim and displayed a copy of the Oxford Companion to Children's Literature which contains references to the various characters that we all were very fond of in yesteryear.

Displaying a C.D. Annual, Mary emphasised what a wealth of riches is contained therein and in all the other issues. Mary read an amusing tale from a volume of Tiger Tim's tales which was the forerunner of Tiger Tim's Weekly.

Brian Doyle read his contribution to the David Niven book "The Last Gentleman". Tommy Keen read an extract from a 1927 Magnet which dealt with the attack on Harry Wharton by two foot-pads and the Bounder coming to his rescue. Chris Harper spoke of the Talbot Mundy story "King of the Khyber Rifles".

The hosts were thanked for such a good gathering and it was announced that the next meeting will be at the Loughton home of Chris and Suzanne Haper. A full tea will be provided.

'Phone 01-508-4770 if intending to be present.

BEN WHITER.

NORTHERN

14th April, 1984

A LOVELY Spring evening for our Annual Meeting, and our outgoing officers were hauled back in again with all the speed of a proposition and a vote, nemine contradicente!

Keith Smith produced a copy of the CD for May 1950, which includes an account of the very first meeting of the Northern OBBC. Thirteen members had been present - scarcely an ill omen seen in the light of the past thirty-four years of our Club's history. Herbert Leckenby had taken the chair and had read a congratulatory

telegram from the London Club.

After refreshments Keith took over to show how Children's Hour had influenced his own reading, beginning with literature arising out of Children's Hour - 'Good Afternoon, Children' (with an opening Toytown story), 'Romany on the Trail', a Jennings book and a Norman & Henry Bones book.

Keith produced a bound volume of Champion for 1947 - and as he continued he produced volume after volume of treasured items (those of us who have visited Keith know him to possess a vertiable Aladdin's cave of boyhood treasures!).

And his literary pursuits, prompted by Children's Hour some thirty-odd years ago, had brought him to his present-day reading, and to 'Dyed in the Wool' by Ngaio Marsh.

One wonders how much our reading of the Magnet has influenced our present-day literary preferences!

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Duplicate Nelson Lee's, Old and New Series. Also Post-War Thomson Boys' Papers, e.g. Rover, Wizard, Hotspur, etc. Offers, or would exchange for Sexton Blake Material, or similar publications. Stamp appreciated.

K. TOWNSEND, 7 North Close, Willington, Derby, DE6 6EA.

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WANTED: Union Jacks 78, 80, 102, 103, 106, 108, 109, 113, 114, 188, 193, 195, 196, 197, 301, 312, 313, 319, 320, 402, 463, 464, 498, 733. Also many 1/2d. issues.

H. A. OWEN, 28 Narcissus Road, London, N.W.6.

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FOR SALE: "Jack's the Lad" (Frank Richards). "Bulldog Drummond" 1943; Knock Out B-D (1935); Attacks B-D (1939); The Final Count B-D (1935); The Third Round B-D (1935); B-D At Bay (1956); The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes (1900); His Last Bow (Sherlock Holmes 1924); Hound of the Baskervilles (1900); Captain of the Pole Star (1900); Many Enid Blytons (Famous Fives). All at £1 each plus postage.

W. WATSON, "Olympus", Sandford Mill Road, Chelmsford, Essex

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NEXT MONTH ANOTHER MILESTONE:

S.P.C.D. No. 450