

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOL. 38

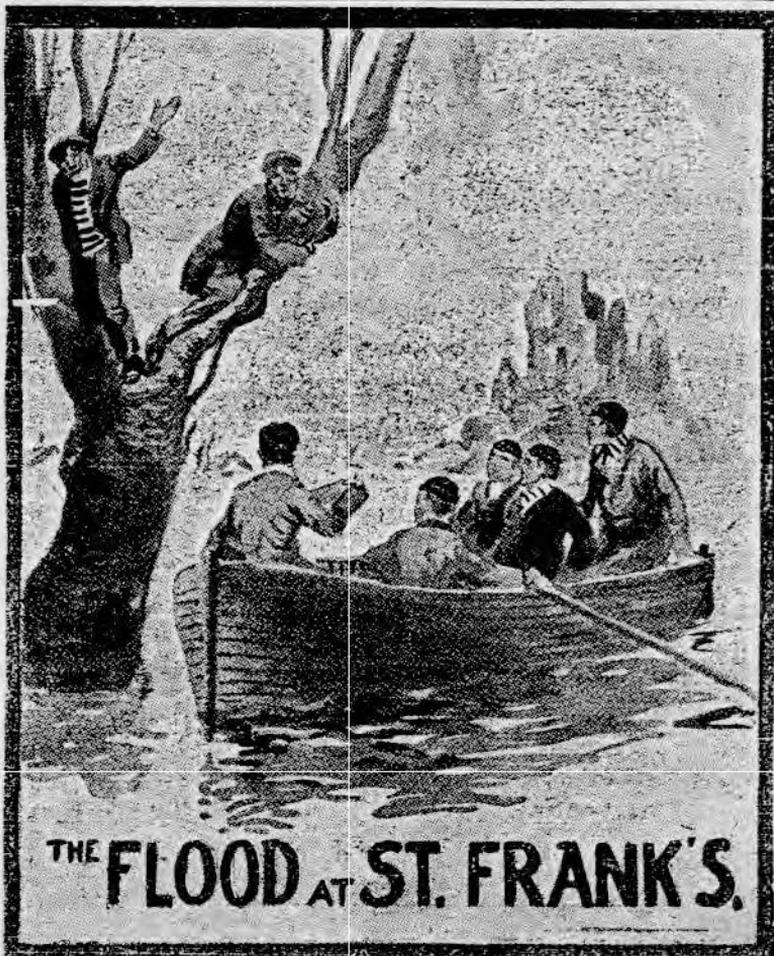
No. 452

AUGUST 1984

NELSON LEE 2!

No. 350

February 18, 1922



47p

THOMSON COLLECTORS! Have now received more copies of the Wizard, Vanguard, Hotspur, Rover & Skipper, pre-war (pre-1944): £2.50 each. Thousands later dates Dandy & Beano, 1950's onwards.

Bound volumes of the Popular, Triumph, Detective Weekly, etc.

Good stock of Bound Comics such as Chips, Comic Cuts, etc.

Bumper lots of Boys' Hardbacks 10,000 to clear at reduced prices, my selection if in lots as quoted last month, but many other authors. Please state Author.

Bound Volume (publisher's binding) EVERY BOY'S VOLUME Vol. 1. 1905: £8. Or Every Boy's Magazine, edited by B.O.P. Editor. Some stories by Conan Doyle and other well-known authors. Also Vol. 4 plain covers 1908: £6. Both scarce. Shipping Wonders 55 in complete set £25.

Good Things. Original pictorial cover (Strahan & Co.) ND about 1880: contents- serial by J. Verne, etc. Scarce but lacks few end pages; serial unaffected. £7 for this very rare volume.

So much to offer - try me with possible purchases and sales. Good prices paid for Collections.

All Howard Baker Facsimiles & Book Club Specials in stock. (Please send wants.) These are in fine condition.

Visitors always most welcome. See for yourself! Give me a ring.

NORMAN SHAW - 84 Belvedere Road, London, S.E. 19 2HZ. Tel. 01-771-9857. (Nearest Station Crystal Palace (BR)).

STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 38

No. 452

AUGUST 1984

Price 47p

(COPYRIGHT. This magazine is privately circulated. The reproduction of the contents either wholly or in part, without written permission from the Editor, is strictly forbidden.)



A THOUGHT OR TWO

One or two items which I have read in the last month or two have lingered in my memory. The first was in a novel by Ruth Rendell who, according to one critic, is "The new first lady of Crime". This is the little bit which made me pause and think: "Hers was the loveliness of those film stars he remembered from his youth in the days before actresses looked like ordinary women. In her exquisite face he saw something of a Carole Lombard, something of a Loretta Young..."

When some of us were young, people went to see the stars.

The name of Mary Pickford or Lilian Gish was sufficient to fill a cinema, irrespective of the film. And years after that, stars like Elissa Landi, Greer Garson, Alice Faye, and others, made an impact which no star of today would ever approach.

Danny, in his 50-years old Diary, made me pause and think last month. Speaking of the time when Handforth went to St. Jim's in the Gem, Danny commented that the stories appearing under the name of Martin Clifford must have been very unsatisfactory for both writers. For the creator of St. Jim's and for the creator of Handforth. Hamilton, in his stories, never mentioned St. Frank's, while Brooks sent Handforth to St. Jim's temporarily because to do so provided the plot of a series. A pity for both writers. Those of us who were around when those stories appeared knew quite well that Brooks had written them, yet they were credited to Martin Clifford.

My third and final little bit of musing is on the Gem serial "The Boy Who Walked by Night". Some months ago Roger Jenkins considered the S.O.L. reprint of this story, and was not enthusiastic about it, though he seemed to accept it was a Hamilton effort.

In an article which is yet to appear, Leslie Laskey refers to this story when it was a serial in the Gem, describing it as "written in a delightfully easy, polished style". However, both Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Laskey are far more enthusiastic over the serial "Manders on the Spot" which followed it. Which is not surprising, for it is a far, far better story.

Mainly due to the lack of characterisation, sub stories on Rookwood were the easiest for the sub writers to churn out, and, generally speaking, the Rookwood sub is the most difficult to detect.

When I read "Boy Who Walked by Night" long ago when it appeared in my Gem in weekly instalments, I never had the slightest doubt that it was a sub story. And in my old age, I still think the same thing. A theatrically written affair, with the awful "Dudley Vane" a stage prop if there ever was one. Hamilton would

have been incapable for writing anything so stagily unconvincing.

In a letter which I have from Hamilton, he states clearly that he never wrote any of the Rookwood tales which appeared in the Gem. I think he was certainly mistaken. "Manders on the Spot" is quite obviously from the master pen. But it was the only one.

FAREWELL TO AN OLD PAPER

When I was a child, there were three weekly family papers, on humorous, chatty lines, all very similar to one another. They were "Pearson's", "Answers", and "Tit-Bits". As, probably, with most of my generation, there would be very few weeks when at least one of these papers did not come into the household.

"Pearson's" disappeared long ago. It is a long time, too, since "Answers" was seen in the shops. And now the last of them, "Tit-Bits", has gone, a victim, apparently, of the never-ending industrial disputes which have been a plague on British industry since the war.

In regretting the passing of "Tit-Bits" I am merely being sentimental, for it is many years since I last bought a copy. And that copy contained an article, slamming Sexton Blake, by the writer of "Boys Will Be Boys", unless my memory is playing tricks.

"But "Tit-Bits" has its niche in history, for the competition it ran for a good "Tommy Atkins" song during the first world war. The winning song was "Keep the Home Fires Burning", written by a youngster, then unknown, named Ivor Novello.

A TOUCH OF HEAVEN

Our local Church Magazine contains the following heart-warming words, in a report on the funeral service of my Beloved Madam. "Her great love of flowers was reflected in the beautiful displays filling the whole of the front of our Church and each window-sill. As somebody said on entering the building "There's a small touch of Heaven here today". She loved so many people and the Church was filled for the funeral service where there was a real note of eternal triumph as we sang: 'God be with you till

we meet again'".

Yes! She loved so many people. And, very obviously, so many people loved her. God bless her!

JOSIE

Readers will be sorry to learn that our much loved Josie Packman has been seriously ill in hospital. Her health has given cause for concern for some months past, and this month, for the first time in a great many years, our Blakiana Column does not appear under her conductorship.

Readers will join me in praying for a speedy return to good health of our Josie.

THE EDITOR

Danny's Diary

AUGUST 1934

The 4d Libraries have offered great reading this month. In the Boys' Friend Library there is "The Kidnapped Remove", in which the St. Frank's chums fall foul of kidnappers while the chums are on holiday.

Also in the B.F.L. is "The Wild Man of the Island" in which Ken King and his pal, Kit Hudson, are marooned on an island which they think is uninhabited - but someone else is there.

The Greyfriars tale in the Schoolboys' Own Library is "The Tyrant Prefect". Loder has a "down" on Harry Wharton & Co., and is out to make trouble for them, but Loder finds they are more than a match for him. The other S.O.L. is "The Fifth Form Rebellion" in which Mr. Greeley gets a busted nose while defending Sir Edward Hanson. Greeley falls foul of the Head, so Sir Edward buys Coombe Manor House, and turns it into a school with Mr. Greeley as the Head of it. But being sponsored by Hanson's father has it drawbacks, as Mr. Greeley finds out, and finally he patches things up with the Head of Rookwood. A great yarn.

In the Sexton Blake Library, "The Mystery of Cell 13" is by G. H. Teed, and introduces George Marsden Plummer. A terrific tale this month in the S.B.L. is "The Sacred City" by Pierre Quiroule, set in Benares in India, and introducing Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie.

The great swimmer, E. H. Temme, has swum the Channel from South Foreland to Blanc Nez, 38 miles, for the fourth time.

Field Marshal Hindenberg has died. He has been the President of Germany since 1925. Things look ominous in Germany with Hitler and his Nazis ever grabbing more power.

In Modern Boy, Tom Mix, the cowboy film star, is telling his life story, and it is very fascinating. Also in Modern Boy there is a new series of school stories about Jimmy Rock, a sports master which Roxburgh School doesn't want. They are written by Michael Stuart, but I hadn't heard of him before.

There is also a new series of Robin Hood tales by John Bredon, about Strongbow, the Outlaw. Captain Justice has been among the cannibals all the month, in unexplored Africa. And Biggles is now in a serial entitled "Wings of Fortune".

There is going to be a Royal Wedding soon. The King has consented to the betrothal of his son, Prince George, to Princess Marina of Greece.

In the Gem, the opening story "St. Jim's Without Masters" is a sequel to one last month. All the masters had gone to Southampton to see the Head off for a holiday cruise, they went on board to say good-bye to him, and the steamer sailed with all of them on board. So St. Jim's is left without masters. Very rum, and most unlikely, I must say. Next week, "The Fighting Form-Master" has Tom Merry and his friends going to a boxing-match where they see the Chicken, a Rylcombe professional beaten by a fighter from London who calls himself Nemo. Later, when the new master comes who is taking Mr. Lathom's place for a few weeks, the chums recognise the new master as none other than Nemo.

"The Secret of Study Six" has Lord Conway wanted by the police, suspected of theft. And the chums hide him behind the secret panel in the walls of Study Six. Finally "The Boy from

Nowhere" (this is not illustrated by Macdonald) who says he has no name and comes from nowhere. And he gets Tom Merry suspected of being a bit mental, till Mr. Dodds, the curate, takes a hand.

A pretty good month at the local cinemas. John Boles in "Beloved" is a musical on operatic lines. Two pictures this month star Spencer Tracy. One was "Bottoms Up", a fairish musical, with a Hollywood producer passing his friends off as members of the British aristocracy. The other film was "The Show-Off" with Tracy as a lovable liar.

A big British film was "Catherine the Great" starring Elizabeth Bergner and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. She marries a mad prince and conquers the court of Russia. Two pictures starring Robert Montgomery. One is "The Mystery of Mr. X", about a thief, who tracks down a killer. This one is set in England, and they say that the English Bobbies in the film really look like English Bobbies, which is a bit remarkable on the screen. The other Montgomery film was a nice little love story, "Fugitive Lovers", with Madge Evans, about an escaped convict.

"George White's Scandals" is a lovely big musical, though the story is slight. It stars Rudy Vallee and Alice Faye among many others. Two other films this month were "Hi, Nellie" with Paul Muni (a bit miscast) and Glenda Farrell, and "Lazy River", with Jean Parker and Robert Young.

Still on the subject of cinemas, the manager of a cinema in the Bow Road, London, and his wife, were brutally attacked and robbed, and an attendant at the cinema has been arrested at Yarmouth for the crime.

The series in the Magnet about the Remove barring-out on the island in the river - in support of Billy Bunter whom the chums think has been unfairly expelled - has ended. The final two tales are "Fishy's Fearful Fix" and "The Rebels at Bay". Finally it is proved that it wasn't Bunter who inked Mr. Prout - it was Fishy. And there is peace with honour all round.

Now the Magnet has gone on to extra-long Greyfriars tales - cover to cover. The first tale of a new series - and the first of

the extra-long stories - is "Bunter, the Billionaire". It is a very unusual affair, and very cleverly contrived, I think. An American named Jarvish has got hold of billions of dollars, but he has a gangster named Tiger Bronx on his trail. To shake off the gangster, Jarvish turns all his billions over to Billy Bunter, with the stipulation that he, Jarvish, shall keep close to the money and become Bunter's valet. It's unique, and fast-moving, and very entertaining.

The second tale in this new series is "A Snob in Clover" with Bunter throwing his weight and his money about. For protection, he invites Harry Wharton & Co. to become his guests on a holiday abroad.

The series continues next month.

The final Test Match against Australia has been played at the Oval. It lasted four days, and Australia won by 562 runs. So the Aussies have won the series, and the Ashes.

- - -

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

S.O.L. No. 225 "The Tyrant Prefect" was a 3-story series from the Magnet of early summer 1929. S.O.L. No. 230 "The Fifth Form Rebellion" was a 7-story Rookwood series from the summer of 1925. This Rookwood story was the prototype of the Magnet's High Oaks series of some years later, and it is likely that the original series was the better of the two.

The 1934 Gem tale "St. Jim's Without Masters" had been "The School Without Masters" in the summer of 1911. "The Fighting Form-Master" had been "The Fighting Schoolmaster" in the late summer of 1911. "The Secret of Study 6" had been "The Stowaway of St. Jim's" the following week in 1911. "The Boy from Nowhere" had appeared under the same title the following week in 1911.

The 1934 Pierre Quiroule novel "The Sacred City" (a fine yarn) had originally appeared, under the same title, in the S.B.L. of the summer of 1921.

As a point of interest, Temme, the Channel swimmer, coached the boys of the Modern School, Surbiton, in swimming, in the early nineteen-fifties. A fine coach, and a charming man with a host of good stories to tell. He was immensely popular.

Rookwood was drawing towards its close when the Mr. Greeley series appeared in the Boys' Friend in 1925.

Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by an Old Boy

Relations between the Bannington town boys and the St. Frank's juniors are normally good even when the odd football match between them takes place. The Bannington partisans seldom show resentment if their team is on the losing end of the game and the referee appears to favour the visiting side.

But there are times when tempers flare, and the town boys show their displeasure both at the ground and in the streets.

A simple incident created the genesis of a recent brawl between the Bannington boys and the St. Frank's juniors. Bernard Forrest of Study A at St. Frank's had parked his motor bike outside a shop in Bannington High Street and a youth with a barrow had come along and had knocked the motor cycle over in escaping an on-coming vehicle. The motor bike had crashed to the ground and a slight graze had appeared on one of the handlebars.

Forrest was in one of his particularly vile tempers and pushed the barrow on to its side with the result that the barrow with its variegated fruit load spilled on to the street and was ruined.

A number of town boys suddenly appeared from a whistle the youth with the barrow had blown and in no time the town boys and Forrest & Co. were fighting. It soon developed into a brawl and the shopkeepers rang for the police.

Inspector Jamieson of the Bannington Police arrived and restored order of a sort. But he later visited Nelson Lee at St. Frank's and complained of the behaviour of his boys.

Mr. Lee was temporary Head at that period and due to the picture Jamieson had given him of the dreadful scene in the Bannington High Street, Lee was obliged to placate him with a promise to place the Bannington town out of bound.

This was unfortunate for the St. Frank's football team that had a fixture to play Bannington that week. Nipper was incensed and was asked to resign his captaincy by the juniors.

Nipper approached Nelson Lee and after a fearful battle was able for Lee to rescind the order. But this didn't affect the juniors' wanting Nipper to resign and Adams, the American junior, was elected.

As Shakespeare says somewhere, when troubles come they come not as single spies but in battalions. Nipper had lost his pet dog Boz at this same period and coupled with losing the captaincy poor old Nipper was having a torrid time.

Boz had somehow strayed from the Pets' quarters near old Josh Cuttle's garden shed and was nowhere to be found.

Timoth Tucker's uncle, professor Sylvester Tucker, was at this time arriving at St. Frank's to take up the position as science master. But Professor Tucker had a shocking memory and his absent-mindedness had taken him from Bannington railway station to the Bannington moor where he mistook the old mill for St. Frank's! In the mill an escaped lunatic from a nearby asylum had taken up lodging and confronted with the professor the scene can be better imagined than can be depicted on a typewriter.

But Nipper's spaniel Boz enters the scene now and it was to the old mill that Boz had wandered. There he and the lunatic had become firm friends until the arrival of professor Tucker. Boz had decided to return to St. Frank's after that, and Nipper's delight finding him again shook off the cloak of sadness that had descended on him from losing the captaincy.

Of course, the reign of Ulysses Spencer Adams, of New York, USA, as captain of the Remove wasn't to last very long. Adams of Study J in the Ancient House, was a strong junior among the few weaker ones who blamed Nipper for the outcome of Bannington being out of bounds. And Adams saw his opportunity to rise up and become junior captain for the first time.

Nipper was content to sit back and watch the coming weeks now that Boz had returned safe and sound.

This is a very edited account of the fight between the town boys of Bannington and some St. Frank's juniors. Some of the latter were marched off to Bannington police station.

It is to be hoped that such an unfortunate occurrence will

never happen again.

BROOKS IN THE BOYS' LIBRARIES

by L. S. Elliott

In the July C.D. on pages 14 and 27 there are references to various Edwy Seales Brooks' work in the B.F.L. and the S.O.L.

B.F.L. (2nd series) No. 439 "St. Frank's on Broadway" was a reprint of 1st series No. 713 "The New York Mystery", an original story. There were four more "originals" in the B.F.L. 1st series:

514 "Nipper at St. Frank's" by Robert W. Comrade.

633 "The Idol of St. Frank's".

704 "Pots of Money".

709 "The Phantom Island", this one being the sequel to "The Kidnapped School" previously serialised in "Pluck" of the nineteen-twenties. In the 2nd series B.F.L. were No. 435 "The Schemer of St. Frank's" and No. 445 "Waldo's Wonder Team", though the latter tale did not feature St. Frank's. Also in this series was No. 200 "Canvas and Caravan" by R. W. Comrade, not a St. Frank's yarn.

There were 3 original St. Frank's yarns in the S.O.L.:

4 "The Fighting Form of St. Frank's".

27 "The River House Rivals".

120 "The Rebels of St. Franks".

Thus there were 11 originals in the Libraries, of which 9 featured St. Frank's.

Reference Charles Churchill's comment on "The Schemer of St. Frank's", although I was lent this book, with others, by Brooks himself, I just cannot recollect anything about it.

As to "The Schemer" this was later adapted as a hardback by Gerald Swan, under the title "The Rotter of Whitelands" by Reginald Browne.

July has brought another immense flow of letters to Excelsior House. The Editor expresses his grateful thanks to all who have written.

BLAKIANA

conducted (Pro Ten) by Mark Jarvis

As I write these lines, Josie Packman, for so long our stalwart editor of the Sexton Blake pages of this August journal (forgive the pun) is very poorly with a diabetic condition in King's College Hospital. During her indisposition, I have taken up the editorial reins. I am sure you will all join me in wishing Josie an early return to strength and health. In the meantime will all contributors please forward items for inclusion in Blakiana to:

MARK HARVIS, 204 LEWIS TRUST, WARNER ROAD, LONDON, SE5 9LY.

The file of articles on hand is exceedingly thin; I look forward to being inundated.

May I remind all borrowers of the Sexton Blake Library that business is now being conducted by Chris Harper, from his home at:
25 ALGIERS ROAD, LOUGHTON, ESSEX, IG10 4NG.

- - -

40 YEARS OF SEXTON BLAKE

by W. O. G. Lofts

If the story was set in England, it could perhaps bring back some nostalgic memories for me, so many many thousands of miles from home.

The story certainly revived local memories for me, because the main character a detective named Sexton Blake, lived actually in Baker Street, London. A locality I knew quite well and only a short walk to my own home. Indeed as a boy I was thrilled that another detective lived there by the name of Sherlock Holmes. In a C.D. Annual many years ago now I related how one typical November day before the last War, and in a yellow pea-soup fog I tried to find the house where Conan Doyle's famous creation lived. It was also years later that I learned that Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake two of Charles Hamilton's creations also lived at Baker Street. Detectives must have found a great liking for Baker Street, as Doctors did for Harley Street, and Jewellers for Hatton Garden.

I greatly enjoyed the story, far better than the usual American type of paperbacks that (when in India) were sent to us troops by well meaning charitable organisations. The author certainly knew India - for the customs, descriptions of people were

accurate down to the last detail. Before going to the Front Line I had been stationed in such places as Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Poona, and many other cities. Many years later I was to learn that Anthony Parsons had written in all 99 Sexton Blake stories. Was at one time a Captain in the Indian Army. Stood over 6ft 3 inches tall. Was born at Nuneaton, Warwickshire in 1893, and died in 1963. His favourite author being Rider Haggard.

It was not long after this, that we were captured by the Japanese, and forced to march for many many miles to a large stockade to a sort of temporary prison camp. Those readers who have in all probability seen the film 'The Bridge on the River Kwai' would be interested to know that we did not whistle Colonel Bogey. To make any sound we would have been shot on sight!

My Sexton Blake Library was soon 'borrowed' by other unfortunate inmates, and not returned. Next to cigarettes, books were in most demand. I can well remember borrowing off some corporal a rather battered and well thumbed 'William' book entitled "William and A.R.P." a great favourite reading of mine when young. I found the tale a bit disappointing about gas-masks, and other war references so alien to the stories I remember of a village called Hadley with its rural setting where Richmael Crompton's famous character lived. Truly in England's green and pleasant Land.

THE "INDEPENDENT" STORY

by S. Gordon Swan

THE UNION JACK and the Sexton Blake Library are best remembered for the galaxy of colourful characters which decorated the pages of those periodicals and there is no doubt that they provided some splendid stories. But the connoisseur of detective fiction may prefer to give the award of merit to those independent yarns which appeared from time to time.

In these tales Sexton Blake was confronted with a problem which taxed all his ingenuity to solve and which exemplified in high degree his powers of deduction and logical reasoning. In the end the skein of mystery was unravelled and the criminal brought to book.

One of the experts at this type of story and one whose name is not often referred to in articles on the Sexton Blake saga, was C. Malcolm Hincks. In the Union Jack and the Detective Weekly he was responsible for a number of tales which come into the category of straight detective stories. As examples of some of his best work I will quote:

- U.J. 1346 The Shadow Man
- U.J. 1377 Hidden Fangs
- U.J. 1441 Secrets For Sale
- U.J. 1459 The Bishop Murder Mystery

These are vintage mystery stories and rank high among the many and varied exploits of Sexton Blake. For these literary efforts this rather neglected author should receive his due measure of praise.

Another author who wrote many good independent yarns was Gwyn Evans. It might be argued that Splash Page, a recurring character, appears in many of these, but then Derek Page was not a criminal who escaped justice at the end; he more or less fulfilled the role of an extra assistant to Sexton Blake. Some of his best tales are:

- U.J. 1153 The Sign of the Saracen
- U.J. 1293 Poison
- U.J. 1375 The Melodrama Mystery
- U.J. 1519 Suspended From Duty

Other good examples of the independent story are to be found in:

- U.J. 1073 The Case of Cormack's Key by H. W. Twyman, in which the editor of the U.J. tried his hand at setting his readers a puzzle to solve.
 - U.J. 1069 The Secret of the Sarcophagus by John W. Bobin, a Sax Rohmerish type of yarn which contains several surprises.
 - U.J. 1146 The Scarecrow Clue by F. W. Young, an ingenious story with a twist in the tail.
 - U.J. 1136 The Clue of the Sheffield Sampler
 - U.J. 1142 The Negative Alibi - both by Gilbert Chester,
-

who wrote a number of good "straight" crime stories.

Mention should be made of two other authors whose output for the Union Jack was confined to a few stories, but those few are notable additions to the Saga. They are Tom Stenner, who wrote:

U.J. 1223 The Puzzle of Blue Ensign, a racing mystery. Those with long memories may recall a scientific detective named Craig Kennedy - he appeared in the film serial, The Exploits of Elaine - and his adventures were recorded by Arthur B. Reeve. The stories generally ended with Craig Kennedy in his laboratory expounding his solution of the crime to an absorbed audience. The ending to The Puzzle of Blue Ensign is planned very much on those lines.

R. L. Hadfield, who wrote two excellent tales in:

U.J. 1343 Some Persons Unknown

U.J. 1371 Burden of Proof

In the latter story Sexton Blake was charged with manslaughter.

Any or all of these stories would be suitable for inclusion in an anthology of Sexton Blake's Greatest Cases.

A VINTAGE YEAR IN THE "GEM"

Leslie S. Laskey

Spread out across your table a number of copies of "Magnet" and "Gem", dating from different periods. How easy it is to identify the year of issue of most of them at a quick glance or, at least, to be right to within a year or so. Provided that you are thoroughly familiar with the appearance of the papers' front covers throughout their long runs, there is no need to peer at dates or issue numbers. The "look" of the cover tells you its vintage.

For the "faces" which the "Magnet" and "Gem" presented to the public gaze, on the bookstalls, were regularly changing in some way. Sometimes the changes were quite subtle. Changes in

letter headings and caption styles, design of titles, colour changes and alterations in the style of cover illustrations. The papers changed in appearance, as time went by, in rather the same way that a person's face alters slowly with the passing of the years.

The "Magnet" and "Gem" almost invariably displayed an attractive and eye-catching appearance amongst their fellow publications, even, perhaps, during the austere days of the Great War period; in the case of the "Gem", one might add, even following the rather uninspired choice of colour for the covers of the small format paper at the end of 1937.

And the most attractive covers ever displayed by the Companion Papers? Doubtless readers' choices would vary a great deal. My own personal choice would be the 1935-37 period for both "Magnet" and "Gem", when the front covers were most attractive; colourful and bright.

I disliked the radical changes of late 1937, just at first. After a few weeks I got used to the salmon-pink colour of the "Magnet". Later I grew to like it. I got used to the buff-coloured "Gem" cover, too, even if I never grew to like it.

I liked that paper's contents, though, a great deal.

Which brings me to the real meat of the "Gem" and "Magnet", the stories themselves.

Sometimes a reader has expressed the view that this particular year, or that particular year, was the "best" year of the "Magnet". I cannot recall anyone making a similar claim for the "Gem". I would not attempt to make any such claim myself, for my knowledge of some of the "Gem's" earliest years is too scanty for that.

However, I would single out one year in the life of the "Gem" which I consider was a particularly good one.

The most outstanding event of 1936, in the "Gem", probably, was "The coming of the Toff". This first Talbot series came at the end of August of that year. A most compelling series, revived from the greatest days of the "Blue Gem", and one that stands reading again and again.

A week previously, one of my favourite single stories of St. Jim's had appeared. It featured Gerald Cutts, and it related how the cunning black sheep of the Fifth used Digby, of the Fourth, as a dupe, in an attempt to save himself from disgrace. This was one of the best of Martin Clifford's many fine stories dealing with the shady and scheming Cutts.

Early in the year 1936 we had witnessed the redoubtable "Gussy" running away from St. Jim's and taking a job in a hotel as an interpreter. Shortly afterwards, Harry Hammond, the Cockney junior, arrived on the scene. Then followed a holiday trip for Tom Merry and Co. to Venice, and some fine stories starring Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, Ernest Levison and Koumi Rao. In July came the first appearance of Reggie Clavering, Tom Merry's "double". There was a fine scouting story - and there were many more entertaining and exciting yarns. The year ended with the famous "Mystery of the Painted Room" and "The ghost of St. Jim's".

A bonus in 1936, for Martin Clifford's readers, was the fact that there was less abridgment of the original St. Jim's stories than there had been in 1935, when the paper had sometimes run three stories altogether.

And what of the supporting programme in the back half of the "Gem" in 1936? In some previous years the secondary stories had been of very variable quality.

Not so in 1936, however.

In the closing weeks of 1935, E. S. Brooks's exciting Nelson Lee stories had ended, with his final serial, and had been replaced by a newly written Rookwood serial. This must have been Owen Conquest's first new Rookwood story for a very long time. Written in the delightfully easy, polished style, with which "Magnet" readers were so familiar in the 1930s, in Frank Richards' work, the Dudley Vane series ran in the "Gem" until the beginning of February, 1936. A story with an unusual theme; the boy with a Jekyll and Hyde personality. It was succeeded by a first-rate serial featuring Mr. Manders. Both of these serials were published in the "Schoolboys' Own Library" subsequently. They compared very

favourably indeed with the "sub." stories of Rookwood which had appeared in the "Gem" a few years before.

In April, Greyfriars replaced Rookwood, as "The Making of Harry Wharton" began in "Gem" No. 1471, surely a prized number in anybody's collection, and the story from "Magnet" No. 1 made its re-appearance. The early Greyfriars tales ran throughout the remainder of 1936, and beyond.

What a wonderful collection of school stories I have just briefly reviewed above, and all offered to us during a twelve month period at a total annual cost of just 8s/8d., or 43½ new pence.

Almost all reprints, perhaps, yes.

But all pure Charles Hamilton.

The "Gem" undoubtedly knew some of its greatest years before the privations and restrictions of the Great War period interrupted its progress. The early 1920s saw the great renaissance of Martin Clifford's writing, with the "Cardew for Captain" series standing supreme, in my own estimation.

The year 1931 brought the reprints of the earliest stories, taking us right back to the days at Clavering College. In the spring of 1939 we were to enjoy, once more, fresh stories of St. Jim's from Martin Clifford.

There were indeed many fine years in the "Gem's" long history, along with some clouded ones, but surely few can have surpassed the all-round excellence of the 1936 "Gem".

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: Magnets, Gems, Annuals all periods. Early Nelson Lees. Bulleyes, Fun & Fiction, Early Thompsons, Boys' Herald Friend Magazine Nugget, Popular Ranger, Union Jack, etc. H.B. Facsimiles.

MARRIOTT, 27 GREENVIEW DRIVE. Tel. NORTHAMPTON (0604)
711874

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

1927

With a squeal of brakes, a Morris-Cowlet drew up outside Chadley's shop. Dr. Christopher Venner alighted, and entered the shop.

Lizzie Chadley, who was behind the counter, threw up her hands and gave a cry of welcome.

"Mr. Chris - we haven't seen you for ages." She giggled with embarrassment. "Oh dear, I'm sorry, sir - I should say Dr. Venner."

Chris laughed.

"You should say Mr. Chris - it wouldn't sound right for you to say anything else. We're old friends, Lizzie - or should I say Mrs. Chadley?"

Lizzie fluttered with pleasure and placed the current Gem on the counter.

"Are you still at the hospital, sir?"

"Yes, Lizzie, I'm still there. I came home last night, and early this afternoon I drove my father and mother to Cannon Street. I saw them off on the two o'clock express for Deal. They're there by this time, enjoying the sea breezes."

"You're a good son, Mr. Chris. Your folks must be very proud of you". Lizzie eyed him for a moment affectionately. "Tom Merry is still in Canada with Wil Drake.

"It's called 'The Dollar Trail', this week. Our Gussy plays a big part in it."

"I'll read it tonight in bed", said Chris, laughing.

After he had driven away, Lizzie went into the sitting-room behind the shop, where Leslie Chadley had just finished his tea. Ethel was sitting on the carpet, playing with her dolls.

Chadley strolled into the shop to serve, and Lizzie washed up the soiled crockery. That duty done, she switched on the wireless set, and sat down with some socks to darn.

Several crackles came from the loud-speaker, shaped like a giant question-mark, and then the voice of the news-reader came over the air:

"The Southern Railway Company regrets to announce that the Deal express, which left Cannon Street at 2 o'clock this afternoon, has been wrecked near Sevenoaks. The engine was derailed as the train emerged from the Polling tunnel at sixty miles an hour. All might still have been well had there been no obstruction, but unhappily the tender struck a bridge, the engine turned over on its side, and the following carriages piled up over the engine. Rescue operations are in progress, but it is feared that the casualty list will be very heavy ---"

With pale face, Lizzie walked unsteadily into the shop. Her husband gave an ejaculation of concern as he saw her.

"Lizzie, old girl, what's the matter?"

"The Deal express has been wrecked near Sevenoaks". Lizzie's voice faltered. "Major and Mrs. Venner were on that train."

1928

"Summer rain brings the roses again... After the clouds roll by", sang the ex-service men in the street.

The white-haired woman, who walked with the aid of a stick, paused to drop a piece of silver into the hat on the pavement, and then entered the shop.

"Lovely day, Mrs. Venner", said Chadley.

"Perfect!" Mrs. Venner sank gratefully on to the chair which he placed for her against the counter. "I have come in to pay for the week's papers - and to say goodbye, I'm leaving the district."

"That's bad news." Chadley looked quite distressed. "We shall miss

you a lot after all these years. "

Mrs. Venner sighed involuntarily.

"In a way it's a wrench to leave. Since my husband lost his life, I've been unsettled, and my house is far too large for me now, in any case. Chris is to be married before Christmas - a bonny girl, and I like her - and he is going into partnership with a doctor at Paignton. I have bought a bungalow there to be near him. "

"I see. " Chadley took the pound note she proffered, rang up the amount on the cash register, and gave her the change. "Please congratulate your son from me on his coming marriage".

"I will. " Mrs. Venner rose, and leaned on her stick. "My future daughter-in-law took me to the talks last evening. We saw 'The Broadway Melody' at the Empire, Leicester Square. Quite an experience! "

"Talking pictures!" Chadley took up a copy of the Gem. "I haven't heard any yet. A passing craze, of course. People like to watch the pictures in peace, and listen to a nice orchestra. What about a 'Gem', Mrs. Venner?"

"I don't take the 'Gem' now, as you know, Mr. Chadley. The stories are not what they were. The original Martin Clifford is dead, of course ---"

Chadley chuckled like a school-boy. He said: "The original Martin

Clifford has certainly written this latest series, Mrs. Venner - he's very much alive. This story 'A Schoolboy's Secret' - all about Mr. Railton's nephew, Victor Cleeve - is as good as anything the 'Gem' ever published. Maybe Martin has been ill, but he's back now in the 'Gem' - for good, I hope".

"Let me have it". Smiling, Mrs. Venner extracted twopence from her purse.

"There's a metal model of the world's largest airship - the R100 - inside. What about a 'Magnet', too? Billy Bunter's having fun and games at Whiffles' Circus. " Chadley's eyes were twinkling.

1929, 1930

The March of Time went on. As the roaring twenties faded into the uneasy thirties, twilight settled over the Gem - the r.101 crashed at Beauvais - the world economic depression forced Britain off the gold standard - Gracie Fields shone in the music halls, Greta Garbo was queen of the films, Henry Hall brought distinction to the radio.

And as the sun rose again over the Gem, twilight was gradullay to fall over a troubled world.

The earth went spinning on down the corridors of Time.

(Next month - 1931)

FOR SALE: Duplicate Nelson Lee's. O/S, 1st N/S. Dates and Details (stamp please). Would exchange for Sexton Blake material.

K. TOWNSEND, 7 NORTH CLOSE, WILLINGTON, DERBY, DE6 6EA.

REVIEW

"WINGATE'S CHUM"

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker Special)

This book is another, very welcome, addition to the tastefully produced, heart-warming, and altogether excellent Howard Baker Book Club "Specials". It contains seven consecutive Red Magnet facsimiles from the early months of the year 1911.

1911 was the Golden Age of the Blue Gem, and, only very slightly to a lesser extent, it is also a special year in Magnet history.

By far the most famous story in the book is "Poor Old Bunter", the classic, much reprinted tale in early days, which tells of Bunter diving into an empty swimming-bath, getting a knock on the head, and losing his memory. And Bunter, for the first, but not the last, time reforms in a great many ways. So much so that he is treated with great kindness by the Famous Five, among whom the newly arrived John Bull plays a substantial part.

Three weeks later, "The Artful Dodger" is Bunter, with happy memories of the treatment he received when he really lost his memory, now pretending that he has lost it again. The sequel does not come up, to the original, but it is amusing, and has many grand moments.

The title tale, "Wingate's Chum" is a kind of love affair between the School Captain and Mademoiselle Rosina, billed in a circus as a child equestrienne, though she is aged sixteen. She turns out to be the long lost daughter of Dr. Locke, the Headmaster, in a lovely old-fashioned yarn of a "lost heiress" with contrivance playing a heart-tickling part. The sort of thing that was typical of the period. Dr. Locke's family was featured a good deal in the early Red Magnet years.

"The Rival Weekly" tells of Billy Bunter launching his "Weekly", in competition with the Greyfriars Herald, while the title "Alonzo, the Footballer" gives away the theme of another tale.

Alonzo is also well to the fore in "The Greyfriars Clown", with the bony Alonzo seeking to join Tomsonio's Circus (fairly often featured in those days) as a funny man.

The final tale in the volume, "The New Page", is very, very obviously a substitute story. About a new boy, Jolly, who has had to leave 16 other schools, and a new page boy named Peter Potts. Jolly is a practical joker, and there is a mix-up between the new boy and the new page. In fact, the yarn is so mixed up altogether that it is a joy to read. Sub tales were a rarity in those days, obviously a factor of necessity and nothing to do with any other writer trying to steal the main author's thunder.

A lovely volume, worth its weight in gold.

* * * * *

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

M. BULL, 22 CORONATION GARDENS, SHANKLIN, ISLE OF WIGHT,
PO37 7DZ. TELEPHONE 863582 (EVENINGS).

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

MIDLAND

June 1984

The attendance was up to thirteen members this month and it was an enjoyable meeting.

The sad news from Eric Fayne on the passing of Madam sobered us all and at the opening of the meeting we stood in silence for one minute as a token of respect. She is a great loss to the hobby.

Our usual features Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item were on display. The A.N. was Nelson Lee (O.S.) 'Lord Dorrimore's Quest' dated 26th June, 1920, and thus 64 years old. The C.I. was another Nelson Lee, 'Nipper at St. Franks', the first school story to appear in the Nelson Lee dated 28th July, 1917. All previous stories in the Nelson Lee had been detective stories.

The refreshments as usual were splendid. Joan Golen and Joan Loveday did the honours and for good measure Joan Loveday paid for the tea and coffee. We are very grateful to these two ladies for their generosity.

The topic, Could the Magnet have achieved such popularity without Bunter?, provoked lively discussion. Some of our members prefer the Gem and do not like Bunter but a general concensus of opinion had to agree that in Bunter, Charles Hamilton created a character that became a household word.

Tom Porter gave a short talk on the search for Greyfriars among the ruined monasteries of our country - Carmrthen, Worcester, Canterbury, Richmond, etc. It was quite interesting.

We finished with a game - "A.P. Families". Betty and Johnny Hopton had provided a first rate quiz previously and Vince Loveday was easy winner with 24 marks out of 25. Even your correspondent got 19 marks.

The next meeting is on 21st August, and is not usually

attended by the officials who take a well earned rest, but on 25th September, we shall hope to start the new term in fine style.

JACK BELLFIELD - Correspondent

LONDON

The Ealing home of Bill and Thelma Bradford is one of the most popular rendezvous for the London club meetings and the July gathering was no exception when the attendance amounted to 37 members and friends being present. Regretably, Josie Packman was unable to attend owing to her indisposition.

Bill Lofts' treatise was entitled Comic Papers and Fun on the Farm. Most of the old comic papers were mentioned including Ally Sloper.

Exhibited by Roy Parsons was a copy of the 13th June issue of Punch which had an article therein by E. S. Turner about the Jolly Hockey Sticks exhibition.

Ann Clarke read the Memory Lane feature from the April 1967 issue of the newsletter.

Millicent Lyle's Greyfriars treatise was about Wharton Lodge being closed whilst Colonel Wharton took Wharton's aunt on a cruise so as to improve her health. Thus the Famous Five had to settle for another place for their holiday and they let W. G. Bunter ramble on about Bunter Court. A fine effort of Millicent's and right up to her customary high standard.

Bill Bradford's Pen Names of Juvenile writers quiz was won by Bill Lofts, Chris Harper was in second place whilst Arthur Bruning was third.

Roy Parsons rendered two humorous readings.

Tea was served in the garden, now looking at its best and Bill and Thelma were thanked for their hospitality.

Next meeting at the Burnham-on-Crouch home of Alan and Myra Stewart on Sunday, 12th August. Full particulars as to train service will appear in newsletter.

BEN WHITER.

The Postman Called

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

NEIL BECK (Polegate): It was on but a few occasions that I met Madam, but on every occasion she had a bright smile and a kind word, and, after the first time when we were introduced, she never ceased to astound me by always remembering my name. I remember that first occasion so well. It was at Surbiton and was one of the first London Club meetings I had attended, and was feeling very much the new boy. Madam, her experience of shy new boys no doubt helping, very soon took me under her wing and escorted me to your den and allowed me to browse among your treasures.

BEN WHITER (London): The moving and lovely tribute to Madam made great reading. The hymn "God Be With You Till We Meet Again" was the one sung at my school, Scarborough, at the short service after breakfast on the last day of term, both at the Edenbridge location and later at St. Leonard's-on-Sea. Many thanks for the wonderful July issue of C.D.

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): The trouble with browsing through volumes like the "Oxford Companion to Children's Literature", is that one tends to concentrate on what has been left out, rather than what has been put in. Omitted are - or seem to be - Edwy Searles Brooks, John Wheway, Leonard Shields, Foxwell, the Hippo girls, Morcove, and the "Schoolgirls' Own". On the other hand, there is excellent coverage of Charles Hamilton (even if you don't agree with everything the authors say!) and Billy Bunter. Included (under GEM) is our Editor, and such diverse personalities as:- Bob Cherry, Harry Wharton, Tom Merry, Gussy, Tiger Tim, Pip, Squeak and Wilfred, Teddy Tail, and Uncle Oojah. Why, though, did they give a special entry to Ferrers Locke, surely one of Hamilton's less-colourful characters?

JIM MERRILLS (Alberta, Canada): Danny's Diary is my favourite read in the Digest every month with his information and thoughts on current topics and events of the times of years gone by. Many

times it brings back memories of pleasant times and events that we wish could be repeated and enjoyed once again. Another very interesting feature is the Editor's Chat with a variety of ideas and information, a must in any good publication. The letters, reviews, and special features round out a very satisfying magazine.

DAVID HOBBS (Seattle, U.S.A.): Thank you for the lovely Louis Wain, cat cover in March. I still have a few of his cat-drawings on 'picture-postcards' from early in the century. Postage $\frac{1}{2}$ d!

The "Tom Merry Cavalcade" serialisation has especially attracted my interest. From my earliest years until we emigrated to Canada in 1925 my family paid regular visits to just such a newsagent's shop in Haydock, Lancs. This was operated by Mother's younger brother - the elder brother, a shoe-maker, had moved his family to Australia about the time I was born. As a matter of fact also in Haydock were family friends who operated, at the opposite end of the then-village, an identical newsagent business. I was allowed to be 'behind the counter' in both shops from a very early age (this didn't happen frequently enough to suit me!) and there were first, comics to look-at, then later, boys' papers to read and always sweets available - licorice-allsorts, bull-eyes, etc., etc.

At about this very time last year my oldest surviving sister visited Britain for several weeks, with several members of her family (from California and Oregon). Our uncle's shop was still at the same location, still being operated by a member of the family - the original owner's grandson. A niece took snapshots of the owner and visitors at the front of the shop, which, when I saw them, reminded me of an old photograph I had, of the identical scene, in 1896. This shows the original owner; his sister, my Mother, holding in her arms her firstborn, my oldest sister (long deceased); and their parents - my grandparents, whom I never knew.

We have no idea who took this photograph - probably some itinerant photographer going through the village, but it is so amazingly sharp that not only the outdoor hoardings for Liverpool and London newspapers, and such weeklies as Tit-Bits, Answers, Comic Cuts, Chips, etc., but even papers displayed hanging in

the window, can be clearly read. I felt that our younger generations, especially those on the 1983 trip would be more-than-ever-previously appreciative of the old photograph, because it showed so many of their forebears.

I have had the original professionally copied, and enlarged, and prints made and sent to everyone interested, including the present operator of the shop, who tells us he has never before seen a picture of his grandfather. Yet, here the latter is, almost 90 years ago, standing in front of quite-obviously the same establishment (despite a few minor, recent alterations) and his name displayed as "STATIONER, NEWSAGENT & TOY DEALER. LICENSED TO SELL TOBACCO & CIGARS".

ESMOND INVESTIGATES

by Esmond Kadish

Much has already been written, in the pages of the "Digest" on the absorbing question of whether a particular Greyfriars or St. Jim's tale was "genuine" Hamilton or not. Little, however, it seems to me, has been penned on the authorship of the Cliff House stories in the early issues of the "School Friend" in 1919 - at least, not in any great detail. Thus it was that, rashly ignoring the old adage about fools rushing in, I decided to do a little literary investigation of my own. For the purpose, I donned the obligatory cape and deerstalker hat, and, with my meer-schaum pipe firmly clenched between my teeth, I testily dismissed Watson from the inner sanctum and commenced operations. My motives were pure amusement; I firmly eschewed mere pedantry, if only because I have a great admiration and affection for the writers who continued the Cliff House saga after Charles Hamilton: Horace Phillips, L. E. Ransome, Reginald Kirkham - and my own particular Cliff House favourite, John Wheway, in the 'thirties'.

To be honest, what really stimulated all this activity was a comment by Mary Cadogan, in a Charles Hamilton Companion volume, that "some authorities attribute the first four (stories) to him (Hamilton); others consider that he was responsible for the first six. "I had always understood that Hamilton had definitely

written the first six, so this was quite a surprise, and I decided to look a little closer at the early "School Friends". The first four tales do, indeed, firmly demonstrate Mr. Hamilton's particular style, his dry humour, and some favourite phrases with classical allusions. In the first story, the egregious Bessie Bunter is firmly established - not entirely a "carbon copy" of brother Billy, I thought, but sharper, and more decisive in manner. In the second story, Hamilton has already mapped out the path his characters will take by having Barbara Redfern elected form captain, and taking the limelight. It is odd, therefore, to note that, when the Cliff House girls appear in the Greyfriars stories - and also in the post-war Bessie Bunter book published by Skilton - it is Marjorie Hazeldene who is the leading light, with "Babs" very much a background character. The third story in the "School Friend" focuses attention again on Bessie, described as "a podgy Peri at the gate of Paradise", and seems undeniably Hamilton, as does number four, which informs us that Miss Bullivant's favourite author was Cicero, "which she pronounced Kikero". There is an amusing interlude in this story in which Barbara considers turning "Hamlet" into "Hamletta", on the grounds that "Shakespeare was hopelessly old-fashioned" and "lived in the time when girls took a back seat".

I must stick my neck out about the fifth story, "The Fourth Form Magazine", and say that, for me, it doesn't seem like Hamilton's work. Miss Bullivant wears a hair-net in this and uses expressions like, "Oh! Ooooh! Oh! Desist, girl!", while Bessie mistakes a tin of hektograph jelly for gelatine, and cooks it with a tin of peaches to make a "flan". Sounds more like "genuine" Kirkham to me! The sixth story, "Under Bessie Bunter's Thumb", whilst still in a humorous vein, has Marcia Loftus (one of the "baddies") confessing to her misdeeds before Miss Primrose:- "She buried her face in her handkerchief and cried bitterly". Says Miss Prim:- "You must beware of your temper, my child. That is your greatest enemy." It doesn't sound like Hamilton to me.

It is, I think, generally agreed that, after this story, the "substitute writers" definitely took over from Hamilton, and, in fact, the Editor's page in number six makes reference to "strong,

dramatic scenes " in the next issue. Cue for Horace Phillips, perhaps, in "Barbara Redfern's Secret", in number seven? Barbara catches a waif at night, stealing the school silver, but refrains from giving the alarm:- "I'm sure she was half dead with shame and fright. The story she told me - her poor mother! Oh, how awful - how sad! "

Story number eight, "A Visit from Aunt Betsy", reverts to humour, with its familiar theme of impersonation. (Kirkham, perhaps?) The two most interesting issues after this, however, are numbers nine and eleven, because in "Bessie Bunter's Way", and, particularly, "Out of Bounds", there seem to be touches of authentic Hamilton. In "Bessie Bunter's Way", the fat girl consumes a stolen picnic in time-honoured Bunter style:- "Bessie slackened down a little when the sardines had followed the eggs, and the cake had followed the sardines. There was another perceptible slackening when the pineapple and the jam-tarts had gone the same way. But Bessie was not beaten yet ---". Later, Bessie observes: "There isn't time to run over to Greyfriars and borrow something of Billy. Besides, he wouldn't lend me anything". "Out of Bounds", in number eleven, has even more clues:- "Bessie had dealt with the school tea, and, like Alexander of old, she sighed for fresh worlds to conquer." At one point, Bessie suggests a "barring-out" directed against "The Bull":- "I'm ready to lead you, same as my brother Billy did the Remove fellows at Greyfriars!" Barbara decides to break bounds, explaining that "Bob Cherry's done it at Greyfriars", and that "whatever a boy can do, a girl can do better". When she does break bounds with Mabel Lynn, she saves - in typical Greyfriar's style! - Miss Bellew's brother from injury at the hands of a footpad "coming home from the Cross Keys, after indulging rather freely in the refreshing liquors sold at that establishment".

Whether this is the real Hamilton or not, the references to Greyfriars disappear after this, and the "subs" seem firmly in control. "For Her Brother's Sake", for instance, features Marjorie Hazeldene, and seems pure Horace Phillips, as does the arrival of scholarship girl, Peggy Preston, and spoiled rich girl, Augusta

Anstruther-Browne, in number twenty-one.

Was my "investigation" worthwhile? Well, yes, it's been a lot of fun, even if I'm not very much the wiser.

You may come in now, Watson, old fellow!

THOUGHT-PROVOKING

says Francis Hertzberg

CD 450 as thought-provoking as usual, and with yet another superb Webb cover illustration.

Of course, fountain-pens are still manufactured. The shops are full of them and two still-existing manufacturers are PLATIGNUM and OSMIROID, both very appropriate for the Quiroule story you mention, with its osmiridium "part of the platinum group". (£40 an ounce in 1921! My father, a working jeweller, told me that gold was only £12 an ounce in the early 50's.)

I do love the T. M. Cavalcade: the "paper garlands, Chinese lanterns, and artificial frost which glittered under the electric lights" gives me a delicious twinge.

I enjoy Mr. Lofts' pieces. His note about a famous artist lost for ever because his work was editorially changed reminds me of the same occurrence to the Rupert artist (the same A. E. Bestal mentioned as appearing in "The Schoolgirls' Own by Mr. McDermott) who virtually gave up the Annual when Rupert was given white face and boots: he repented however, and still does a bit - in his nineties. Mr. Lofts also asks whether boy readers would notice small slips (I question whether it would nothave been valuable for them to do so, nothing builds reader-loyalty like clever letters to the editor pointing out mistakes!); the same question was asked of me recently when I pointed out that the book-reprints of some of the P.C. 49 Eagle strips all had the closed tunic re-drawn to give him a collar and tie.

But really, Mr. Lofts, for all your knowledge, you seem ignorant of the cardinal rule. You write that you are "inclined to agree with Francis Hertzberg that artists never read scripts properly". Are you not aware that no-one ever agrees with me?

I REMEMBER MADAM

by Cyril O. Duke

I would like to add my tribute to Madam to those which have already appeared in the Collectors' Digest.

I remember Madam for many kindnesses far too numerous to mention.

I remember Madam for the welcome to the quiet of Peasmarsh during leave from the R.A.F. during the early days of the war.

I remember Madam for receiving food parcels in the jungles of Burma.

I remember Madam for somehow conjuring up and making our Wedding Cake in 1947 when such things were unheard of.

I remember Madam for the kindnesses to my wife and family during the years that I taught at the school.

I remember aid to grazed knees and torn trousers after falling off my bicycle.

I remember Madam for so many things she shared with my family, a love of animals, particularly cats, and a love of gardening.

Above all we remember her as an English Lady in the truest sense of the word and this is why she was so loved by many generations of school children.

Our hearts have gone out to your Editor in his loss which we share and would only add that we have known him for over 50 years and that he, too, is one of the best-hearted people that one could wish to find.

- - -

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Mr. Duke spent many years at the Modern School, Surbiton, ending his school career as one of our greatest Captains of the School. He served with the R. A. F. during the war, and, in the post-war years, joined the teaching staff of the School. His concluding warm tribute to your Editor is undeserved but much appreciated. In these days he is an enthusiastic reader of C.D. His lovely wife, Elsie, is also an Old Modernian.)

* * * * *

BILL LOFTS writes:

In answer to James Hodge's interesting article "Old Wife's Tale". It was recorded that Sexton Blake did have a wife in Union Jack Xmas Double number for 1901, but this was only a passing reference - no description of her, nor did she appear in the case. Maurice Bond and

Walter Webb who mentioned this affair seem a bit confused on the matter - the former making a statement to the effect that the wife was for a week only. In fact, only quite recently I have discovered a Blake serial 'King of the Detectives' in another magazine, but this needs perusing to see if a 'wife' is mentioned. Reginald Cox was an early subscriber to the C.D. and Annual, but dropped out decades ago. I believe he died some years ago. I have his collection of early C.D. Annuals. The whole affair needs more investigation, and I will report further findings for C.D.

* * * * *

(STOP PRESS): NORTHERN O.B.B.C. REPORT

Meeting held: Saturday, 14th July, 1984.

Only nine members were present on a pleasant summer's evening. It was holiday time after all.

Keith Smith, Michael Bentley and Darrell Swift had been that day to the Manchester Book Fair and had met a number of our Lancashire based members whom we do not see at meetings these days.

We had originally planned to have three items during our evening's get-together. Our Chairman, Harry Barlow, really started the ball rolling by bringing up the question of our accommodation and wondered if in fact our new venue was responsible for the apparently small numbers at our meetings, of late. We established that numbers were not really smaller as we could account for the people missing that very evening.

Keith Smith asked what we intended our Club to be - a number of members had expressed concern that we were not getting new members. Joe Wood, our freelance writer, said he would write an article on old boys' books and approach an editor of a local paper for possible publication and consequently, the promotion of our own group.

Each member was then asked in turn what his and her particular interests were in our hobby and it was surprising to find the wide range of interests our members had - apart from Charles Hamilton, we had Dickens, Richmal Crompton, Shakespeare, Capt. Johns, Detective writers and the exploits of Captain Marvel and Superman.

It had certainly not been intended to have an informal type chat that evening - but it turned out to be most enjoyable and we did learn a lot from each other. We did establish that the Northern Club is very much alive - and our future looks good with some extremely interesting programmes in the months to come.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

* * * * *

MRS. JOSIE PACKMAN DIES

As we go to press we learn with deep sorrow that Josie Packman, associated with the hobby from the beginning, has died. A tribute to Josie will appear in our next issue.