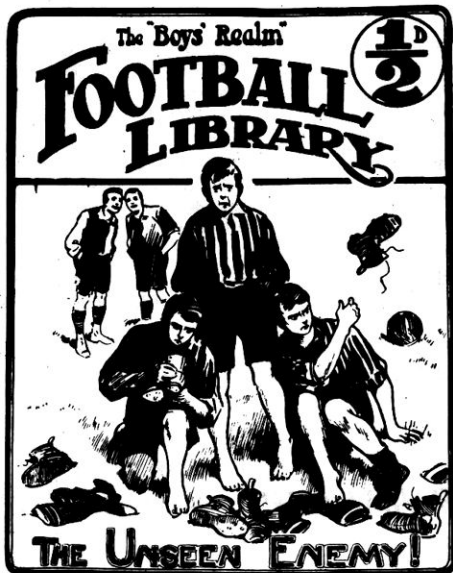


STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST
VOLUME 24 No. 282 JUNE 1970

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Vol. 1. No. 11.

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Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 24

No. 282

JUNE 1970

Price 2s. 6d.



A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER

LOGIC

In last month's "The Postman Called" a reader referred to the great affection he had, as a boy, for the Thomson papers. He made a comment, the logic of which is not quite clear to me. That comment was: "The very popularity of these papers means that there are few left to collect."

One would think that, if these papers were once in greater demand than the Companion Papers, then more copies would have been printed and, in consequence, more would be available for collectors today. In fact, such does not appear to be the case. My experience is that the Thomson papers, and periodicals like the Champion, which are reputed to have enjoyed much larger circulations than the Magnet, are very much harder to get hold of now.

Of course, because Wizard and the like may have outsold the

Magnet by ten to one in a certain district, it does not necessarily follow that this state of affairs existed everywhere.

The thing that mattered was that some papers were saved and cherished and others were not. Different papers appealed to different readers. Those readers who saved their papers had a marked strain of sentimentality in their make-up.

Comics like *Funny Wonder* were bought mainly by younger children who read them, possibly misused them, and then cast them away, as is the habit of young children. Very few comics, especially in reasonable condition, are extant now. It may have been that the Thomson papers also appealed to the younger lad, who destroyed as he progressed.

The quality of the writing of the story papers obviously did not matter a lot. The work of Hamilton and Brooks was so much higher in quality than the medium really demanded that it appealed especially to the introvert type of boy, who was also fascinated by the Peter Pan existence of the characters. Luckily for us, the introverts were often sentimentalists who kept their copies with loving care.

Otherwise, the difference in ratio between reputed circulations and copies available all these years later does not make sense.

THE LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS

A character, in Henry James's "Portrait of a Lady," said: "Old England's a very good sort of country, you know! And it will be still better when we've furbished it up a little."

And the Lady of the title replied: "Oh, don't furbish it up; leave it alone. I like it this way."

Henry James loved England but "Portrait of a Lady" was first published ninety years ago.

It is, of course, absurd to live in the past, but I have come to the conclusion that never before have average men and women been so saddened by nostalgia as they are today. So many people seem depressed by the ceaseless torture of noise, the violence of students who seem to have no work to do, the boring and sickening dirt of what passes for entertainment, the apparent unwieldiness of money since the half-crown passed on, the constant squabbling for higher pay by people who are already highly paid, the unreliability of public transport, the obsession

for figures in high places, the destruction of moral codes, the loss of self-respect. In fact, the "furbished-up" - or, more aptly, the "tarted-up," England.

Maybe nostalgia seems more prevalent to me now because I am older now that I have ever been before. What a pity that life never strikes the happy medium! What a pity that we cannot have the benefits and improvements of today without losing all the best of yesterday! Utopia is always so far away, yet, if human nature were different, it need only be just round the corner.

ACTION STATIONS

Preparations are now going ahead for the 1970 edition of our famous Annual. If you have the seeds in your head for a nice little article for the Annual, please water and nurture those seeds, and send us along the fruits of your harvest. Articles for the Annual are always welcome - and the sooner you can send them the better.

JOHN G. BRANDON

The famous Leatherhead Theatre has wound up its season with "The Silent House," a play by John G. Brandon. The stage is filled with a number of sinister orientals, according to one review I read. The play was written in 1927. I presume that the writer was the popular Sexton Blake author. I was not aware that Brandon wrote plays, but it is likely that our Blakiana experts know of all his activities.

THE EDITOR

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing one or more of the following: GEMS 801, 817, 826, 828, 832. Also POPULARS 401, 403, 407, 413, 415, 422, 441. Also GEMS 727 - 737 inclusive.

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DANNY'S DIARY

JUNE 1920

A most amazing thing has happened. Dame Nellie Melba has sung over a wireless telephone, and has been heard in Europe. It doesn't seem possible, but my Headmaster says that in a few years' time there may be regular broadcasts of wireless programmes and that we shall hear concerts in our own homes. I wonder if he knows what he's talking about. Dame Nellie was in Chelmsford when she sang to Europe.

The first tale in the Magnet this month was by the old writer of the stories, but it was rather odd, for it was exactly the same plot as a Cedar Creek story of last month. It was called "Billy Bunter's Speculation." Billy Bunter wanted to get rich by buying Hankee Pankee Tin Shares, and he sold Peter Todd's bike to raise the money to invest.

The rest of the month was pretty grim in the Magnet. In "Bunter the Farmer," Bunter went to work for a Mr. Percival. In "The Greyfriars Minstrels," Mauleverer provides the money and Greyfriars starts a brass band. In "Fun in the Fifth," a new boy named Archie Howell comes into the Fifth at Greyfriars, but he wants to go into the Remove. He flies in by aeroplane, and later takes his sister, Phyllis, back to her school in the plane, as there is a landing space near Cliff House. A new serial named "The Silence" is in the Magnet.

Letter post has gone up from 1½d to 2d. It won't bother me much, for I don't write many letters. The Derby has been won by a horse named Spion Kop, which came in at 100 to 6. Doug was disappointed, for he had 6d each way on a horse named Sleepy Hilda. I think it is because his girl friend is named Hilda Nightingale. That'll learn him!

Last month we had an old Gem story in the Boys' Friend Library. This month, in the B.F.L., we have an old Magnet story. It is called "On The Warpath." I liked the Tom Merry tale better, but "On The Warpath" is far better than all the new Magnet stories.

A new city has been started in England. In fifty years' time it will glow with cathedrals and universities, but at present it is in the heart of the country. But this month the first sod has been cut at Welwyn Ideal Village which, when it has its cathedrals and theatres,

will be named Welwyn Garden City. It sounds nice.

Nothing exciting in the Gem this month. "At Figgy's Expense" was a tale of house rivalry. "Talbot's Find" was a ruby, and the story introduced a criminal named Jim Dawlish. "The Tuck Dopers" told how the fifth-formers confiscated some tuck from Tom Merry & Co., but a bad lad had prepared the food for the real owners, and the fifth-formers wished they had never confiscated it.

"Australia to the Rescue" is a cricket tale. It is the first story for quite a long time to be illustrated by Macdonald. Briscoe has been drawing for the Gem for months passed.

Last month a lady named Mabel Greenwood, who had died from a painful bilious-type illness, was exhumed in Wales. This month there has been a two-day inquest, and the jury brought in the verdict that the husband, Harold Greenwood, had poisoned his wife with arsenic. His trial will occur later in the year.

Well up to standard has been the Boys' Friend once again. What a grand paper it is.

"Saving a Scapegrace," the month's first Rookwood tale, was a sequel to last week's story. Larry Tigg, who had been trying to black-mail Jimmy Silver, found that it was Peele he had found out of bounds and not Jimmy.

Then started a splendid new Mornington series. In "French Leave," Mornington broke detention in order to play cricket at Greyfriars. Then, in "Last Man In," Bulkeley, who had been sent to fetch Morny back, was outwitted by Newcome. Final tale, "The Rookwood Rebel," continued this tip-top series.

All Cedar Creek space has been occupied by a new series about the return of 500-Dollar Jones, the outlaw. Opening tale was "The Outlaw's Return." Then came "Unmasked" in which a new handyman named Jake Hooker replaced Black Sam. The new man turned out to be the outlaw. Then "On the Track of the Outlaw," in which Frank Richards & Co. took up the trail. Finally, "Frank Richards' Peril" in which Frank found himself alone against the outlaw. Great stuff.

There are two new serials in our cinemas. They are "Perils of Thunder Mountain," and one about female spies, entitled "When Women War." Charles Ray, now with Famous Players films, was good in "Bill

BLAKIANA

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THAT TREMENDOUS YEAR!

by Walter Webb

1922. A year which saw Blake at his peak. Never before had he enjoyed such popularity; never again was he to equal it. Stories of his adventures rose to an unprecedented level, as did the number of authors commissioned to write them. The first world war had not long ended, though the ravages it had caused were still visible. It was against a background of poverty and hardship due to massive unemployment that the stories were written, and in them, Blake came to be looked upon as something of a saviour in that, if only temporarily, he took the mind of his reader from his world of distress into one of thrilling fantasy. Blake's impact on a suffering community can be gathered by the fact that during that year five volumes of the S.B.L. were published monthly, and although that number was soon reduced to four, as normally, his popularity in those days was beyond dispute. With the weekly UNION JACK adding its toll, not to mention the two stories in the CHAMPION, there were at least 350,000 words of Blake being published monthly.

And what great days they were to look back upon! One recalls in sheer nostalgic delight the stories, the men who wrote them, the artists who drew them, and the editors responsible for publishing them. My record book for 1922 tells me at a glance that from Cecil Hayter, the oldest contributor (in terms of service, of course) down to the newest recruit, twenty authors contributed to the narration of Blake stories that year, thirteen artists were commissioned to submit drawings, and that no fewer than thirty-seven well-known stock characters were featured.

Wide-spread unemployment there certainly was in that era, but not for Blake! For him there was no respite from long drawn out battles against Reece and his infamous Criminals' Confederation; from Leon Kestrel and his syndicate of crooks; from Wu Ling and the Brotherhood

of the Yellow Beetle; from Zenith the Albino, Waldo the Wonder-Man, and scores of other well-remembered denizens of the underworld. The odds were overwhelming, but Blake did not stand alone. There was Tinker, Coutts and Harker of the Yard, and the Hon. John Lawless. Granite Grant, the tough, rugged giant of the Secret Service, was often a tower of strength, as was Dirk Dolland, a reformed cracksman, once known as the Bat. These and a few others who stood for law and order, were occasionally on hand to give assistance, and it is worth noting that of the thirty-seven characters mentioned, only five were women.

But what a quintette of smouldering, feminine pulchritude they made! Say what you will about those old Blake chroniclers, they certainly knew how to portray their women. There was Yvonne. Yvonne who had taken her stand alongside Blake against the combined efforts of Leon Kestrel, Zenith the Albino and Prince Wu Ling, to eliminate him in the case known as "Threatened by Three," had her whole being set on a partnership not unconnected with matrimony, whilst Marie Galante, the octoroon, whose uneasy yet not unprofitable association with Huxton Rymer was of a short time basis, also was not without her hopes in this direction. Mary Trent, whilst sharing the admiration of the others, had her own idol in Rymer, and Ysabel de Ferre, otherwise the Black Duchess of Jorsica, ultimately became betrothed to John Fade, the explorer, her saviour on several occasions during her quest for the presidency of the Criminals' Confederation. Lastly there was Fifette Bierce. Fifette, beautiful daughter of as disreputable-looking old lag as Blake ever met in his entire career. Fifette's inner feelings were often expressed when, despite her loyalty to Kestrel, she came to Baker Street to warn Blake of the Syndicate's plans to remove him from their path. Never a vain man, Blake did not regard himself as being of particular appeal to the opposite sex, but these five were under no such misapprehension of the truth of this.

In the world of grim reality there was civil war in Ireland. Bonar Law succeeded Lloyd George as Prime Minister. A shy young man named T. E. Lawrence who, practically single-handed, had organised the Arabs against the Turks, became known as the uncrowned King of Arabia. From the famous London station 2LO on the top of Marconi House in the Strand, broadcasting first began in November, and that

famous fight of 1922 between Georges Carpentier and Kid Lewis was described round by round from the ringside at Olympia by Jack Dempsey, the world's heavy-weight champion. The murderers Jacoby, Allaway, and Ronald True were sentenced to death, though the latter was reprieved by the Home Secretary. The famous trial of Mrs. Thompson and young Bywaters on a charge of murdering the former's husband ended in a verdict of murder against them, and both were hanged. Men puffed furiously at their cigarettes or clamped teeth more tightly on their pipe-stems during the showing of the mammoth D. W. Griffith weepie, "Orphans Of The Storm," featuring the sisters Dorothy and Lilian Gish. Women, unable to restrain their emotions, wept openly. A good year for famous Steve Donoghue, winning the Derby for the second year running, this time on Captain Cuttle from Lord Astor's Tamar by four lengths.

Yes, a year of joy and sorrow in both fields. For Blake there was sadness when his senior writer, Cecil Hayter, was found dead at his home, Apple Tree Cottage in Thakenham on 23rd February. At the inquest two days later it was disclosed by the coroner, Mr. Butler, that the author had died from a perforating ulcer of the stomach. A man of slight stature, Hayter was only 50. Born in South Kensington in September, 1871, son of an export merchant, he had been to Florida with Alfred Harmsworth on a tarpon-fishing expedition, and was noted as the spinner of some pretty tall stories. In his autobiography T. C. Bridges recalls an amusing incident when he and Hayter found themselves fellow-guests at a Harmsworth dinner party in Cumberland Place. It appeared that Hayter and a friend got wrecked in a sailing boat on the coast of South Florida. With man-eating sharks all around the boat, Hayter pulled his friend up the face of the cliff with the brutes snapping at their heels. What Hayter's feelings were when T.C.B. somewhat untactfully pointed out that there was neither a cliff nor a rock within a hundred miles of the place where the incident was alleged to have taken place are better imagined than described.

Judge not too harshly the corn in the Blake field of those days, for, originating from the cosy consulting-room in Baker Street, there trickled through it as a steam the milk of human kindness, unpolluted in an atmosphere from which sex and sadism were ruthlessly shorn.

Much different from a lot of the stuff that is being churned out today, when the milk has soured long before the end of the first chapter has been reached.

+ + +

THE STAUNCH SUPPORTERS

by S. Gordon Swan

APART FROM TINKER and the various other assistants who have served Sexton Blake throughout his long career, there is a little band of stalwarts who may be classed as staunch supporters of the great detective. These are the men who have helped him in his investigations and ventured beside him into far places.

First and foremost among them is Sir Richard Losely, that close friend who shared Blake's schooldays at St. Anne's and travelled on many a safari with him in later years. Familiarly known as Spots, this gallant adventurer's exploits were first recorded by Cecil Hayter, who took his hero through the jungles and deserts of Africa, into unknown South America, on to whaling ships and up into the Arctic Circle, often in company with that redoubtable warrior of the Etbaia, Lobangu.

Sir Richard rather surprisingly made a brief appearance in a story of George Marsden Plummer by Michael Storm, although he did not actually encounter that master criminal. Other authors who chronicled Sir Richard's enterprises were A. Sapt, S. G. Shaw and J. W. Wheway. These three wrote isolated tales, while Rex Hardinge carried on the Losely tradition in a number of yarns. It is noteworthy that, while Hayter's stories were modelled on Rider Haggard, Rex Hardinge's more closely resembled the Sanders of the River tales by Edgar Wallace.

There was a Union Jack serial featuring Sir Richard Losely and Lobangu - In the Hands of the Headhunters, later to be published as a Boys' Friend Library - which brought in Blake and Tinker in the concluding chapters. There were other serials in the Boys' Realm and Cheer Boys Cheer, so that Sir Richard was well represented in several periodicals.

I have placed Sir Richard Losely first because he went to school with Blake and thus enjoyed a long friendship with the Man from Baker

Street; otherwise I would have given pride of place to the Hon. John Lawless, who was created by Andrew Murray. Here was the aristocratic adventurer par excellence, one of a type no longer popular, who stood for all that is best in the British character: courage, honour and decency - qualities which are derided nowadays in the era of the "heel" and the non-hero.

Ever ready to help the underdog, Lawless, as his name implies, did not always act in strict accordance with the tenets of the law. Sometimes he got into difficulties through his impetuosity and generous nature, and on one notable occasion he was victimised by those dangerous master rogues, Kew and Carlac, and found himself in a convict prison. It was his first encounter with the two criminals, but by no means his last.

He stood shoulder to shoulder with Blake in exploits that ranged around the world - in Africa, Australia, Palestine, South America and elsewhere. He helped many a lame dog over a stile and, in company with Blake and Tinker, ran numerous crooks to earth. So far as I know, there were never any independent stories of this character, as there were of Losely, but he did join forces with Nelson Lee and Nipper more than once. He had one thing in common with Sir Richard Losely - he was generally accompanied by a black man, his negro servant, Sam.

Once Lawless was seriously embarrassed by an Arab girl who fell in love with him. This was in Palestine during the Great War. The girl, Luluah, helped him when he was in distress, and in true Eastern fashion made no secret of her intentions towards him. Lawless did not know how he was going to get out of his predicament, but fortunately Luluah was persuaded to devote her attentions to a certain Turk who also figured in the story.

Another character worthy of mention is Humble Begge, who ran a seaman's mission and liked to be known as a Man of Peace. In spite of this appellation there were moments when he wielded a righteous fist, as Sexton Blake could testify, though he was always apologetic afterwards for such unseemly displays of violence. Humble Begge's activities were mainly confined to the Union Jack; I can find only one instance of his appearing in the Sexton Blake Library.

It is interesting to compare this character with that of Quaker

Our "classic" serial. Written in more serene days, before the Half-penny Gem was born.

STAUNCH CHUMS AT ST. JIM'S

Figgins & Co. went straight to their own quarters after the interview. Their study still showed signs of the raid of Blake and D'Arcy, in spite of the efforts of the Co. to put things straight again.

Figgins sat on the table, his long legs resting on a chair. His brow was heavy with thought. The Co. stood with their hands in their pockets waiting for him to speak.

"I never thought," said Figgins at last, "that we should ever start in business as detectives for the purpose of proving one of our own house-fellows a thief. We've got to do it. We know Blake's innocent, and we couldn't let an innocent chap be expelled."

"Right!" assented Kerr. "Besides, half the fun would be gone if Blake left. We should walk all over the School House."

"My idea exactly," said Fatty Wynn. "The rest of them ain't up to our mark. It's Blake who keeps things alive."

"Blake's got to be cleared," went on Figgy. "It can only be done by hunting out the real rascal. He's in our house."

"It's rotten, but I'm afraid so."

"Let's look at the facts. Sleath loses twelve pounds. If it was Baker or Webb or even Monteith, we could take his word for it. But do we trust Sleath?"

"Not much."

"We saw him yesterday," went on Figgins, "at the Rylcombe Arms. We know that he went there to see Joliffe, the landlord. The man he was speaking to asked him if he had brought something, which could only have meant money. All St. Jim's knows that some of our fellows have had dealings with Joliffe. I've had an idea for a long time that Sleath was one of them. Where does he get his pasty complexion? Not through study, I'll bet on that. Then you all know how he cracked up at football; and I've heard he's been spotted sneaking out of bounds

at night, though Monteith takes no notice of it."

The Co. nodded in agreement.

"Now," said Figgins, "it's pretty plain that Sleath has lost money at the Rylcombe Arms, and that Joliffe has been pestering him for it, and perhaps frightening him."

"Looks like it," said Kerr.

"And in that case, suppose he used the football funds to pay Joliffe, and couldn't make the money up again?"

The Co. looked at each other.

"You see," went on Figgy, with an acumen worthy of a legal luminary, "the whole case against Blake rests on what Sleath says. Nobody saw the money taken. Sleath found that it was gone. He might have had it in his pocket all the time. Blake was in his study, and Sleath found him there. That was his opportunity. If he took the money and couldn't replace it, of course he would have to pretend that it was stolen by somebody. Poor old Blake, by going into his study, gave him a chance of fixing it on him."

"You're working it all out well, Figgy. But suppose Blake hadn't gone into his study at all?"

"Then, if my theory" - Figgins lingered a little on this word with relish - "if my theory is correct, Sleath would have found somebody else to fix it on. He would have had to fix it on one of our house. He would have selected his fag, probably - that's you, Fatty."

Wynn turned pale.

"Oh, I say, Figgy --"

"Yes, he would," persisted Figgy, "and some of the money would have been found in your locker, or in your football boots, or tied up in the tail of your shirt, and you would have been expelled."

Fatty Wynn shuddered.

"He's a dangerous beast, if you're right, Figgy," he muttered. "We ought to

be in a convict prison."

"Well, that's how I figure it out," said Figgins. "If I'm wrong, I'm wrong; but if I'm right, we haven't very far to look for the thief. Sleath slung Blake out of his room, and they struggled a bit. What could be easier than for Sleath to shove the half-sovereign into Blake's outside pocket? As for the half-sov that was picked up in the corridor, of course, Sleath shoved it there to be picked up."

"The whole thing rests with Sleath," remarked Kerr. "But if we hadn't happened to know that Sleath was in debt to Joliffe --"

"Well, we did happen to know it," replied Figgins. "That is how we've got a pull over the others, and can figure things out. If the doctor knew it, he would soon alter his mind. We can't tell him. We've got no proof. We've got to find proof."

The Co. looked doubtful.

"I don't see how that's to be done, Figgy," said Wynn, shaking his head.

"That's because you haven't the brains, my son," replied his leader serenely. "Thank your lucky stars that you have a captain who can think for you. The first thing a detective does is to fix on a person to be suspected. We've done that."

"Yes, we suspect Sleath."

"Exactly, and now we've got to bring it home to him. We know Joliffe was worrying him for money, don't we? If we can find out that he's paid Joliffe, we shall want to know where he found the money, and we shall be able to find it out."

"How?"

"By shadowing him. I don't say that's a nice occupation, but detectives do it, and when it's a question of clearing an innocent chap of a charge like this - why, we must do what we can. We must find out for certain if he's paid Joliffe."

"We'll do it!" exclaimed Kerr. "If he's really the kind of brute you think, Figgy, the sooner we get him kicked out of the school the better."

And so Figgins & Co. set to work to follow up their clue, with what success

we shall presently see.

* * * * *

The doctor had said that Blake would find it unpleasant to remain at St. Jim's while the proofs against him were so strong. The Head was right. Blake was not long in finding out the unpleasantness of his position now.

At a single step he had fallen from his high estate. One day he was junior captain of his house; the next he was an outcast, and boys who had trembled at his frown now calmly turned their backs upon him in public.

"We want a new leader," said Percy Mellish to a mass meeting in the junior common room. "I vote we hold an election."

"That's a good idea," said Walsh.

"Herries used to be our chief before that boulder Blake came. Let's go and ask him."

Percy gave him a withering glance.

"Study No. 6 are barred," he said.

"They all stand by Blake. We can't have anything to do with any of them."

"That's so," said a dozen voices.

"There's fellows as good as they are in the house," said Percy. "Let's elect one of ourselves."

"I think we ought to give Study No. 6 a chance," said Walsh obstinately. "Herries was all right in his time."

"Rats! He was never any good."

"More good than you would be, Mellish. I can see your little game."

"What little game?"

"You want to be leader. Jolly good leader you would make, when you let Figgins knock you about. If the chaps elect you, I shall change into the New House."

"Oh, shut up!" said Percy. "We'll give Study No. 6 a chance, if all the chaps think so. Hands up for giving them a chance."

A considerable number of hands went in the air.

"Very well," said Percy sulkily.

"Some of us had better go to their room, and ask them what they mean to do."

"We'll form a deputation," said Walsh. "You can be the head, Mellish, as you're so blooming ambitious to distinguish yourself."

Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

I have left the juniors and seniors strictly alone for a change and report some snippets of conversation from well-known adults round and about St. Frank's.

It is interesting to hear of so many varied points at issue that arise in a simple chat, but life's like that, and we are all the better for a difference of opinion that may result in a search for Truth.

When recently the Rev. Goodchild, the Vicar of Bellton Church, called at the school to see the St. Frank's Chaplain, the Rev. David Smythe, they were having a mild argument at the entrance of the Head's residence in Inner Court and the Rev. Goodchild's voice caught my attention as I passed... "...God has stopped making land, Smythe, but he hasn't stopped making people..."

And in Masters' Common Room, Mr. Crowell, the Remove master, and Mr. Pagett, the Fifth form master, could be heard bemoaning the fate of sundry form room materials ... "and there it was, Pagett, in the very place I should have looked at first. It reminds me of Poe's book 'The Purloined Letter'..." "Oh yes, Crowell, that's the story that describes a full-scale fruitless search for a letter isn't it, and the only place the searchers didn't look was in the letter rack..."

"Really, Phipps, your services to me are more important than your attention to Glenthorne. I have prior claim on you. I am sure this was made clear at the time of your joining my staff..." Thus Dr. Stafford. This poses a problem; should a man serve two masters?

I have heard of a difference of opinion that has arisen between Mr. Pyecraft, of the East House, and Dr. Brett the village medico and school doctor. I won't vouch for the exact words used in the conversation which took place in Mr. Nelson Lee's study, but a little bird told me the following:-

"You will have to curb that temper of yours Mr. Pyecraft! As your doctor I must warn you that these frequent outbursts of hysteria raise your blood pressure..." "Hysteria? Hysteria? What exactly

do you mean by that Brett? How dare you accuse me of being hysterical? What medical grounds have you for saying that? I appeal to you Mr. Lee, am I hysterical?" This must have put Nelson Lee in an unenviable spot.

Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi on one of their rare visits to St. Frank's caused a stir of speculation among the boys for Dorrie's presence invariably means a trip abroad later on. Weird and wonderful were the ideas put forward as likely places Dorrie would travel and not only the juniors but some of the masters voiced their opinions about Dorrie's likely destination. I think some time ago Lord Dorrimore stated he would take the entire school - which included all staffs - on one mighty adventure and the staffs haven't forgotten it. But I don't think this was to be the time for as Dorrie and Mr. Lee went into Dr. Stafford's study, Dorrie was heard to remark that the world had become very much smaller and everything and everywhere had been explored. Dorrie's opinion doesn't augur well for a journey into strange lands he promised everyone, but what actually happened was that Dorrie's words were taken out of context as frequently happens.

Lord Dorrimore, had he been quoted in full, would have been heard to remark that a mistaken impression abounds today that there's nothing left in the world to discover. Science and air travel having made visits possible to any corner on Earth the spirit of adventure was dying because of an erroneous view that all the world is known. All the same, it would be very interesting to know just where Dorrie would take a party on his Wanderer.

Councillor Horace Gribble, the Mayor of Bannington, made a remark in Council that inadvertently got included in the Minutes with the result that Dr. Stafford made a hasty journey to the Mayor's Parlour as soon as he read the Minute Report.

It seems the Mayor stated that never had a local boy been admitted to St. Frank's and since there were some wealthy businessmen with sons of school age in Bannington, why were they barred from the school? Weren't the local lads good enough, etc., etc.? Well, come to think of it there never has been a local junior at St. Frank's as far as I know. Perhaps it's because St. Frank's does not cater for day boys, for that is what a local boy would be. Has there ever been

a day boy at St. Frank's? Nobody knows.

Guess who is the most important master at St. Frank's these days. It may take you some time because unless he figured in past chronicles there was never any reason to quote him at all. He was just another member of Dr. Stafford's staff. A very learned gentleman, very forgetful and sometimes obtuse, often with his head in the clouds in more senses than one. Got it? Well, it's professor Sylvester Tucker. He is in great demand these days for the sky above is getting a lot more attention now that the Space Age has arrived. And the professor is really earning his salary for he is called upon to give more lectures than any other master. It's strange how we suddenly sometimes get into the limelight without really trying.

+ + +

THE THREE-IN-ONE PLOT

by William Lister

In an article of some months ago I had occasion to refer to the custom of Edwy Searles Brooks, and of other writers in the hey-day of the old papers, to take the opportunity of injecting the atmosphere of the current season into their stories.

Christmas was of course the outstanding season of the year into which nearly all the schoolboy yarn-spinners entered, and not a few of the others - to wit - the Sexton Blake authors.

However when it came to the shorter or less celebrated seasons; Easter, Whitsuntide, April Fools' Day, the 5th of November, or the Boat Race, these became the preogative of the writers of our schoolboy tales.

Edwy Searles Brooks was well to the fore, and if I had to substantiate this statement I could do so by referring to "The Boat Race Truants" and "St. Frank's at the Fair," in which two issues Brooks combines into one plot the "Boat Race," "April Fools' Day" and the "Easter Holidays."

I think the reader (I know I did) appreciated the combination of the current events and their favourite characters.

If you want a good laugh, depict an over-excited person bringing his fist down on somebody's top hat.

Small wonder then that the artist chose this scene for the cover of the "Boat Race Truants," and whose fist is likely to come down on your top hat? Our old friend, Handforth's.

Younger readers will no doubt wonder why Handforth or indeed anyone else could get so excited over the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race and there is no doubt that with the passing of the years it has lost some of its appeal.

However, in the days of which I write it was indeed a "star" event in the calendar. Things did not move so fast then. We talked and speculated as to who would win. Very few of us had a wireless. As schoolboys we did not know the result until the arrival of the Sunday morning newspapers. Our simple pleasures lasted longer.

Easter must have been late in the year 1928. I get that impression from the "Nelson Lee" Easter story dated April 7th, 1928, and the seasonable stories usually came out the week previous to the event. Handforth falls for a midnight jape in which he finds himself very nearly "jugged" for assaulting a policeman, only to find out he is the worlds biggest April fool.

Within seven days for the boys of St. Frank's it is hey-ho for all the fun of the Hampstead Heath Easter Holiday Fairground, under the patronage of Lord Dorrimore.

It is said a writer should always be sure of his facts before going into print as he never knows who will read his work with a critical eye. Edwy Searles Brooks was not to know that forty-two years later I would again read this story based on the old-fashioned fairground life, to see if he knew what he was talking about.

You see between 1928 and 1932 I lived and worked on the travelling fairgrounds such as the one depicted in this story. Though he does not deal much with the fairground characters in detail there is an authentic ring about this tale.

Hampstead Heath for Easter. The travelling showman tells Lord Dorrimore it could mean the difference between being able to carry on or go bust.

As I remember it the Easter, Whitsuntide, Bank Holiday and Christmas fairs were the only big money fairs, and those could be failures through bad weather. It was from the takings on these fairs

that the showman of the twenties carried on the rest of the year; the in-between fairs often not even paying ground rent, petrol, etc.

According to the editor's chat in the "Nelson Lee," introducing a St. Frank's in America series, E. S. Brooks had been over in New York gathering details and atmosphere to make the tales authentic. Also on one of the paper-back Victor Gunn - Berkley Grey novel's back covers, with a picture of E. S. Brooks, there is the statement that he went to France and other countries for details as a background to the Norman Conquest and other tales.

Which leads me to wonder if, in the days before his travelling was financially possible, he visited our local fairs and Hampstead Heath in search of facts.

Well, there you are; the three-in-one plot — the Boat Race, April Fools' Day and the Easter holiday!

You do not get many tales today with these features. More's the pity.

THANKS from W. O. G. LOFTS

By courtesy of our editor, I would like to thank the large number of C.D. readers who ordered my Catalogue and who have since written giving high praise for my effort. In reply I can only say that if it were not for your enthusiasm and interest through the years such a project would never have been compiled, with its thousands of statistics. It is inevitable that some later information should come to hand. Readers who ordered early may like to insert the following data:- SCOUT finished 24.9.1966 (B285). SCOUT ANNUAL last issue 1968 (A2055). BOYS' CINEMA ANNUAL (A1500) is same as CINEMA ANNUAL FOR BOYS, (A1596). The latter title is the official one for some strange reason - when this was not published between 1942/6. MASCOT SCHOOLGIRL SERIES (L1126) seems to have had four issues instead of the three originally known by B. M. files.

I have Dennis Hilliard and Tom Johnson to thank for the above data - when an article on the end of the SCOUT will be given in a later C.D.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 83 — Gem No. 403 — "The Call of the Cinema"

Horatio Curll was a seedy character who made a number of appearances in the days of the blue Gem. He had come down in the world, having once sung tenor roles in the Roser-Moser Operatic Company, if we can believe his story, and thence via the Music Hall and bit parts in films he descended to the lowly position of playing piano accompaniment for the silent films of the time. When Monty Lowther was stage-struck in earlier days, Horatio Curll had been his companion. In Gem No. 403 it was film-making that turned Monty's head on this occasion.

It seemed to Lowther that playing the piano in a cinema was the first rung on the ladder to stardom, and he contrived to obtain a special holiday from school so that he could pursue this ambition. The description of third-rate cinemas and depressing cheap lodgings (with Mr. Curll frying kippers on an oil-stove in his bedroom) was drawn with no redeeming features, and the way in which actors seem to live in an artificial dream-world of their own, so remote from reality, was emphasised with cruel accuracy. Quite suddenly, life at St. Jim's seemed highly attractive to Monty Lowther.

When war came, the quality of stories in the Gem appeared to drop a little. High spirits were thought, for a time at least, to be out of keeping with the serious mood of the nation, and many of the weekly tales were rather humdrum, pedestrian affairs. Others seemed to be pale echoes of the past, and there is no doubt that "The Call of the Cinema" was not a patch on the famous "Stage-Struck" of earlier days. For all its stark realism, the later story lacked the pace and excitement of its illustrious predecessor.

The production of the Gem itself also dropped in quality as the war went on, and even before the number of pages was reduced the blue cover became tinted with green, and the illustrations in No. 403 were definitely smudgy and inaccurate. It has always been a moot point whether the illustrators read the whole story through before they began to draw, but in this number it seemed as though Macdonald was challenging the reader to spot the deliberate mistakes in his drawings. In

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 147. THE STRANGE CASE OF BUNTER'S BABY.

Herbert Hinton was editor of the Companion Papers at the outbreak of war in 1914. Mid-way through the war he left the Fleetway House to serve his country, and returned to the editorial chair early in 1919. Legend has it that, late in 1920, he was sacked by the Amalgamated Press for plagiarism, and the offending story was quite obviously "Bunter's Baby," published in the summer of that year.

Hinton based "Bunter's Baby" on a Hamilton Red Magnet story of 1909 entitled "Harry Wharton's Ward." That can hardly have mattered. Plots were repeated willy-nilly all down the years, and nobody turned a hair, no matter who was responsible. But, unfortunately, and inexplicably, Hinton lifted sections of dialogue wholesale from the original story, though he credited the remarks to different characters. He also "lifted" an amusing little sequence concerning a "kid" which Mr. Quelch and Dr. Holmes assumed to be a young goat.

Let us look for a moment at the two stories. The original, "Harry Wharton's Ward," was a rather silly little tale, though it had a lot of the ingenuous charm which was typical of so many early red Magnet stories. Harry Wharton, browsing over "Woman's Journal" comes on an advertisement inserted by a woman living near Friardale. She offers for sale, at the price of £10, a baby boy named Toddles. Harry, being touched (possibly in more senses than one), persuades the Co. that they should visit the woman and buy the child. He obtains Mr. Quelch's permission to buy a "kid," and Mr. Quelch, who likes his boys to keep pets, is pleased.

The boys buy Toddles, and take him back to Greyfriars. Eventually the woman comes to claim her child. Her husband, who was working in Australia, had been hurt, so had been unable to continue to send her money. She wanted £10 to enable her to go to Australia. Finally, the kind-hearted Head arranges matters, and, presumably, the woman was able to go to Australia - with Toddles.

Hinton's effort, "Bunter's Baby," was unquestionably far more credible. A woman, in a lane near Greyfriars, asks Bunter to look after a pram containing a small boy named Robin. She has lost her

purse, and wants to rush back down the lane to look for it. She tells Bunter she will soon come back to claim her pram and child, and promises Bunter 6d if she finds the purse. She does not return, and eventually Bunter takes the pram and contents to Greyfriars.

Later, it transpires that the woman had been taken ill while looking for her purse, had fainted, and been conveyed to hospital. Still later, she informs the police, and comes with a policeman, to claim her property.

There was nothing unusual in Hinton's writing a new version of an old plot. What was astounding was that a writer, of some experience, should pilfer actual dialogue, word for word, from another author's work.

No doubt the matter was hushed up, and Hinton was coldly asked to disappear from the scene. His offence, of course, was greater because, as editor, he held a position of authority.

The more one thinks about it, the more inexplicable Hinton's conduct becomes. It probably seemed an impossibility to him that anybody, even the original writer, would remember an obscure little story from so many years back.

Though he wrote effusive editorials to which he devoted too much space, Hinton wrote very few substitute stories. From this, he would seem not to have been a natural writer of fiction, though his few little tales compare well with the general standard of sub stories. It might have been, though there is no evidence to show that such was the case, that he used old stories as a basis for all his new ones. There were hundreds in the A.P. files. If he had got away with it on earlier occasions, he might have gone too far and risked using an old Hamilton tale as the sire of "Bunter's Baby."

And who gave him away to the powers-that-be?

It may have been someone in the employ of the Amalgamated Press. An anonymous letter would have done the dirty trick. It might have been some substitute writer whose brain-child had been rejected by Hinton.

It is possible that Hinton reckoned without the long memories of old readers of the Magnet. Some readers may have written in to the directors to draw attention to what had happened.

The obvious one to complain would be the man whose dialogue he had stolen, but did he? Even if Hamilton bothered to read "Bunter's Baby," I think it improbable that he would have remembered the snatches from his own work when so many hundreds of thousands of words had flowed from his typewriter between 1909 and 1920. I think we can rule out Hamilton, from that angle.

Hinton carried away from his A.P. office a list of names and addresses of readers of the Companion Papers. Not so many months later he was writing to tell them about his new paper "School and Sport," signing the letters with his familiar "Your Editor" block. And not long after that, the Companion Papers, a trifle cheaply, carried an announcement that the new paper had nothing to do with them.

The fact that Hinton asked Charles Hamilton to write stories (the Harry Nameless - Wilmot series) for School & Sport would seem to indicate that it was not Hamilton who brought about the fall of "Your Editor." But, things being what they were, you never could tell. It was odd that Hamilton should write for a rival to the Companion Papers in this way. The A.P. would surely have taken a stern view of the matter, and it would seem that he was risking his livelihood.

I have sometimes wondered whether someone, with or without malicious intent, may have drawn Charles Hamilton's attention to the plagiarism in "Bunter's Baby," and whether Hamilton, justifiably angry, may have sent a hot complaint to the directors without ever dreaming for a moment that the culprit was his friend, Hinton, who had so seldom ever written a story. Did Hamilton, later on, deeply distressed by what happened to Hinton, try to help his friend by writing for his new paper, thereby jeopardising his own career? It is all conjecture, but the theory would seem to fit the facts.

The author commented, later on, that Hinton never paid for the Wilmot stories. Some time afterwards, the A.P. published the tales, but one wonders whether the A.P. knew the whole history of the Wilmot tales.

Was the A.P. harsh in dealing with Hinton as it did? We feel sorry for a man who has come a cropper, especially one who had served the firm for so many years, and who had done his bit in the war. We know that there was a good deal of jiggery-pokery in the editorial

offices during the war, and, looking back at Hinton from the space of 50 years, it may seem that he did not stray so very much further.

To have condoned Hinton's action might have made a precedent which would have been undesirable. It is hard to decide that justice was not done.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

In April, we had the pleasure of welcoming to our circle yet another new member, Mr. H. J. Heap of Stechford. Of particular appeal to Mr. Heap are those very attractive, as well as practical, journals "Hobbies" and the "Meccano Magazine." As is our perhaps somewhat daunting custom, Mr. Heap was called upon to make an introductory speech, but members were extremely interested by his references to the mechanical toys of yesteryear. Mr. Heap who is in the toy trade, felt that the old ones were better than, as well as very different from, those of today. Most members feel that the periodicals of yesteryear were better also!

It was very pleasant seeing Mrs. Hamilton Wright again on one of her all-too-infrequent visits. Our main programme item tonight was of especial interest to her, as it consisted of the remainder of that recording referred to last month. At the March meeting we had heard the introductory remarks, whilst tonight we heard the remainder which included a visit by the BBC to Charles Hamilton, in which we heard the voice of the Maestro himself, dealing with sundry questions.

At the end of this recording, our distinguished visitor Mrs. Hamilton Wright, made some most interesting comments, giving the background story of some of her uncle's views quoted in the interview.

We are grateful to Bob Wareing for bringing along this recording, and to our Vice-Chairman, George Chatham, who officiated with his tape recorder.

Tonight's anniversary number was Rover No. 315, dated 28.4.28., thus just 42 years old. The Collectors' item was of special interest being Triumph No. 794, dated 6.1.20. This was the first

issue of the combined Triumph and Gem after the latter had ceased publication. Even so, the Triumph soon ceased to exist.

Before and during our coffee break, quite an animated discussion followed some remarks by Ray Bennett, on the great desirability of a formal name for the hobby. Perhaps, as Ray suggested, some member will have a brainwave one of these days and coin a suitable word!

There was of course the usual raffle, in which tonight we drew the line at six winners! We are much indebted to the members who donated the prizes.

EDWARD DAVEY

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 9th May, 1970.

The May Meeting is our Northern "New Year," but through illness, holidays, family and business duties, several of the regular attenders were obliged to forgo it. Indeed, Geoffrey Wilde prefaced his opening remarks "Gentlemen," as for once, not one of the fair sex was in the "Audience." After the usual Minutes and Finance Report we turned the pages back twenty years and read the account of Northern's first meeting, in April 1950, as recorded in the C.D. of May, 1950. A discussion followed on the idea mooted last month of presenting the Leeds City Library with a book of facsimile Magnets, and it was decided to go forward at once with this.

And now, we were entertained, as many times in the past, by Roger Jenkins of the London Club. Not this time in person, but by the extracts from Magnets recorded by Roger, and which had to be identified by "series" and "year." When the familiar voice finished reading the answers it was found our Chairman had a full score of 24. (Congratulations, Geoffrey!) He was followed by Ron Rhodes and Bill Williamson with 14 each and Harry Lavendar with 12.

The interval of informal chat which always accompanies the refreshments was enjoyed, and then Jack Allison conducted a 20 Questions session. We divided into two teams of five and each team was the "Panel" in turn, with Jack as Question Master. Four objects (including "The History of Greyfriars," "Gadsby's Gold Watch," "Courtfield Station," "A Rag," "A Fag" and "Film Fun") had to be

solved by each team. Team A got two out of four and Team B three out of four, but as Team A solved two objects very quickly honours were about even!

This item wound up the evening and it is a five week gap this time to our

NEXT MEETING on SATURDAY, 13th JUNE, 1970.

M. L. ALLISON

Hon. Secretary (Acting).

LONDON

Bob and Louise Blythe, only a few days at home after their Spanish vacation, had the satisfaction of holding a very happy and jolly meeting at their Kingsbury residence. There were thirty-two persons present, among whom were Bob Whiter and his son, Roger, back home in England for about five weeks. Roger had a good playmate for a short time, this being Timothy, the son of the Rev. A. Bruning, the latter making a short visit to replenish his stocks of library borrowings.

Notable absentees were Len and Josie Packman, the former being indisposed. Good wishes for his recovery were expressed after Chairman, Les Rowley, had welcomed one and all.

It was the Chairman who opened the entertainment side of the meeting. He conducted his Greyfriars Entry Examination 1970. After half-an-hour of trying to solve puzzling questions, it was Bert Staples who came first. In second place was Roger Jenkins and Bob Whiter filled the third place. The magnificent prize of a bound volume of Magnets was awarded to Bert Staples by Leslie Rowley. All the competitors and in fact all present were presented by Bob Whiter with a lapel badge of the O.B.B.C.

Bill Lofts then rendered his treatise on the Old Girls' Papers and at the conclusion invited questions on the subject. Both our experts, Mary Cadogan and Ray Hopkins, duly obliged and a lengthy discussion ensued.

Bob Whiter obliged with a quiz and this was won by Ben Whiter, Bill Lofts being in second place and two joint thirds were Charlie Wright and Larry Morely.

ROUND AND ABOUT

by Frank Vernon Lay

A very famous Victorian man-of-letters was Sir Max Pemberton, first editor of 'Chums.' His most famous story was 'The Iron Pirate' first serialised in 'Chums' and then passing through dozens of editions in hard-cover, a 6d pre-war paperback and was also included in that marvellous series of books published by the Readers Library Publishing Company Ltd. and distributed mainly by Woolworth's, Marks and Spencers and other large-scale outlets. What is not generally realised is that the serial version and the book version are not identical. The story goes that Pemberton was taken ill just before the fourth instalment was due and he prevailed upon his friend D. H. Parry to meet the dead-line, but when the time came for the hard-cover publication Pemberton rewrote this particular chapter. Unfortunately copies of Volume One of 'Chums' are very scarce and hence expensive, but perhaps some kind reader who possesses one will either compare it with the book or lend me his 'Chums' so that I can make the comparison.

Readers of 'The Proud Tram' series in the Union Jack may be interested to know that this was by no means the first time a story had been told in episodes by different authors. One of the earliest, if not the first, was a Victorian melodrama entitled 'The Fate of Fenella' published in 1892 by Hutchinson and written by twenty-four different authors, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Bram Stoker, G. Manville Fenn and 'Tasma' the latter an almost forgotten Australian authoress. As it was first published in magazine form and had at least three book editions it was certainly successful and, unlike many Victorian melodramas can be read without too much difficulty to-day.

Lovers of hard-cover school tales may find it rewarding to have their attention drawn to a writer, who, in his time, enjoyed considerable prestige in this field but is, to-day, almost forgotten. I refer to Charles Turley whose most well-known stories were 'Godfrey Marten' and 'Maitland Major and Minor.' The latter was first published in 1905 and a third edition was published in 1926 with a preface by Sir James Barrie, O.M. I feel that quoting a few lines from his preface would not be out of place. "Mr. Turley is the Trollope of boyhood; there are no swashbuckler boys here who go about 'swashing on their bucklers:' no

curley-headed lad in Maitland Major and Minor 'goes in' with nine wickets down for 39 and scores 160; there is no sinister villain in the 4th Form (though there are some unattractive donkeys), nor even at the Master's desk; there is never a scene of heartrending pathos where the author and the reader mingle their tears together." It is, perhaps, a fault of most school stories, that they are guilty of exaggeration, of fantasy and schools that never were and never could be but, in all these things it is the touch of the master that counts, and when to-day we reread the stories that thrilled us as youths we do so with a far different approach and a far different appreciation of the techniques and capabilities of the authors. I shall never forget my disappointment when after much searching I obtained the first three volumes of 'The Boys' Magazine' from the late Bill Martin. I found them completely unreadable. They are, for the most part, stories written down to a level of say the twelve to fourteen-year old and, as such are quite unappealing to middle-age. This is I think the difference between the bulk of the hack-writers stories and those of Charles Hamilton. There is much in the latter that appeals to readers of all ages, they are, in no sense of the term written down and, in point of fact I have always been of the opinion that many of the allusions and devices used by Hamilton were way above the heads of most of his youthful readers, but by the sheer artistry of his writing his meaning came over and that sufficed for ninety-nine per cent of them.

The last of my talking-points for this instalment is the scarcity of the Thomson papers and particularly those of the 1934-1939 period. There is no doubt in the period 1934-40 the Thomson papers sold far more copies than any others. In this period the nearer one gets to the 15-age group the fewer school stories are read but, conversely the more detective stories are read, but the leading group is at all times adventure stories. Research carried out at the time among age groups 12-plus, 13-plus and 14-plus showed the Wizard far and away the most popular weekly paper, followed by Hotspur, Rover, Skipper and Adventure fairly close together and then a considerable drop to The Champion, Pilot and Magnet, with The Gem a non-starter. This table shows how far The Champion had fallen from its leading position in the middle-twenties. Most readers of this period were allowed one or more

The Postman Called

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

ROGER JENKINS (Havant): I was sorry to see such a small reprint of the old St. Jim's story - do let us have a full quota next time!

I first read Dirk Power in the S.O.L. version. You can realise what compression there was in that. The story jerked along so rapidly that it was almost unbelievable. As the original version was little better, it is not surprising, I suppose, that the S.O.L. editor couldn't do much better. I should think he could have picked a better series, really.

DAVID HANGER (Dallington): Most boys today go in for space stories. About two years ago my father showed me some old Magnets, and I asked him if he would find me a story to read. He found "Billy Bunter's Bargain," printed in 1939.

My favourite Magnet series is the 1925 "Bunter Court" series.

While my friends read space stories, I remain faithful to my dad's Magnets. I am twelve.

F. V. LAY (Whetstone): I agree wholeheartedly with your contributor Raymond Curé. Ezra Quirke was one of E.S.B's supreme creations. He was, of course at his best in the portrayal of bizarre characters and situations. Whilst it is possible to suggest the original inspiration for the characters of William Napoleon Smith, Archie Glenthorne and Phipps the nearest I can recall to Quirke is Dr. Nikola, but some how I don't think that can be correct. A word of warning although to potential readers is not to read this series in its S.O.L. version which is so appallingly abridged that the entire atmosphere of the series is lost and the weakest features, the criminal element involving Singleton is pre-dominant thus this S.O.L. is not worth reading. I shall never understand why this series was not reprinted in The Monster Library.

T. M. COCKBURN (Ayr): Congratulations on continued excellence of STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST and on many fine articles and illustrations therein.

Would like to see article appreciating late Dudley D. Watkins of THE BROONS, OOR WULLIE, BLACK BOB and KIDNAPPED fame, if

possible.

I see today is 25 years exactly since V-E Day, 1945, and next week sees 30th anniversary of the last MAGNET. It will soon have been dead longer than it was alive.

BILL LOFTS (London): I quite agree with our editor that it would make a variety to have other reprints than those of the MAGNET. Over the last few years in my connection with publishing firms I have suggested the following:- Bound Vol. of GEMS/UNION JACKS/BULLSEYES-SUPRISE/Selection of Comics/1st HOLIDAY ANNUAL, FILM FUNS, and others. I believe that some of the early PICTURE SHOW ANNUALS will be reproduced in the near future. "Nothing ventured nothing gained" does not seem a popular phrase with publishers though there is no question that the MAGNET reprints hit the jackpot twice a year with every new series almost a sellout in advance orders.

P. TIERNEY (Grimsby): My opinion of that heavily sentimental story "A Very Gallant Gentleman," is much the same as Roger Jenkins. I read it for the first time only three years ago and would have been quite shocked if I had not known what to expect.

As a child I would have been really horrified by the story, and I am sure this must have been the effect on young readers when it was first published.

One of those young readers remembered it so vividly and for so long that, as a B.B.C. scriptwriter many years later, he was instrumental in giving listeners throughout the country the same kind of shock as he had experienced as a child.

Many people will remember the tremendous impression made by the death of that popular character, Grace, in the serial "The Archers" fifteen years ago. That episode was an almost exact repetition of the death of Courtney in the Magnet thirty-seven years earlier.

It was of course that former Magnet reader who first suggested it. It would be interesting to know who he was.

But he and his colleagues cannot be regarded as being primarily responsible for the killing off of Grace Archer.

The person mainly responsible knew nothing about it. He never even heard of Grace or of any of the Archers. John Nix Pentelow died

long before the serial was ever thought of.

A MEMORY OF ERIC ROTHE

By O. W. Wadham

There can be no doubt that the most prolific contributors to the SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY were the immortal pair, Charles Hamilton and Edwy Searles Brooks. Their works are the best remembered, the most cherished, and were, in nearly every case, the most readable.

But there was one writer of school tales in those halcyon days who could tell a tale to equal the best that Hamilton or Brooks could turn out. I refer to Eric Rothe. Maybe this is the first time that Eric's name has graced the pages of COLLECTORS' DIGEST, but I trust it will not be the last. The only story I have read of his in SCHOOLBOYS' OWN is in number 377, a really gripping yarn entitled "The School Squadron." It tells of Selborough School and its newly-formed Flying Corps.

Unknown to the school authorities there is an enemy within the gates - a member of a dangerous gang of foreign spies. He is a handsome, likeable sixth-former called Carton Lester, and two fourth-formers, Raffles and Hayward foil the efforts of the gang in the final chapter. But the story is full of unexpected twists, all logical and most exciting. If Eric Rothe has contributed any other tales to SCHOOLBOYS' OWN I would very much like to read them. Does any reader of COLLECTORS' DIGEST know anything about Mr. Rothe?

LONDON (continued from Page 30):

An excellent repast was provided by the hosts, who were suitably thanked. The usual conversations and get-togethers took place and it was announced that the June meeting on Sunday, 21st, would take place at Wokingham, the Greyfriars, Hollybush Ride home of Eric and Betty Lawrence. Phone Crowthorne 4626. Kindly advise if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN