STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

NO. 34. GRAND DETECTIVE NOVEL. 1D

VOL. 24

NO. 287

NOVEMBER 1970

2/6

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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 24 No. 287 NOVEMBER 1970 Price 2s.6d.

GIVE US BACK OUR HEROES

Those words headed the leader article in a national newspaper recently. We said very much the same thing in an editorial about a year ago.

When we were youngsters, we had our heroes. In fiction we had Tom Merry, Harry Wharton, Tinker, Nipper, and the rest. We tried, perhaps not very successfully, to model ourselves on some of them. We had our heroes in sport. I recall my precious Frank Woolley bat - it had to be a Woolley. We had our heroes - and heroines - in filmland. Where are today's Mary Pickford, Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson, Spencer Tracy, Jeannette Macdonald? Who, nowadays, can command the affection and respect we bestowed on Arthur Augustus, Len Hutton, Robert Donat?

Of course, those old heroes had to be careful of their public image. Fatty Arbuckle, who was every small boy's hero fifty years ago, was involved in an unsavoury court case with undertones of vice. He was finished as a public attraction. His hero days were over. His films were swept from the screens of the world, and some were never released. He became a director under another name. Whether Arbuckle was unlucky it is hard to say, but, at least, the public had their standards. Today we seem to have none.

Our old heroes have their names tarnished at the shrine of modern society. Lloyd George and Charles Dickens are unfrocked as unworthy old scamps. Sir Douglas Haig has become an incompetent butcher. Barrie, the latest on the list, is disclosed as a very odd character. In a new book on Pearl White - a book, incidentally, which is worth its weight in gold for its scores of photographs of the film star - we are reminded that Pearl was an alcoholic all her adult life. And, in the story of her life, Pearl is given some dialogue which sounds suspiciously nineteen-seventyish. Last month, a letter in our own Postman Called column threw a clod at Charles Hamilton for his stiff-upper lip attitude.

A modern football hero, no Harry Wharton, is waiting to "do" a couple of players who once "did" him. And a modern cricketer says he will not "walk" though he knows he is "out."

So our own heroes are tarnished. The modern lot are anti-hero. It is easy to throw clods at the old heroes, but what do we put in their place? Well, there's always "Hair."

Colin Cowdrey, in his latest book "The Incomparable Game" (one of the best cricket surveys I have ever read), writes, concerning wickets: "I believe they're getting too much of modern methods and machinery, in looking after the wickets, when I believe we want the old type of groundsman, the countryman who used the more time-consuming methods to produce the goods."

I fancy Cowdrey has hit the nail on the head. We're all suffering too much from modern methods, which usually means no method at all. Probably we could all do with the old type of groundsman to prepare the wicket of life.

By the way, I like Cowdrey's book because he has something

pleasant to say about everybody. Nobody gets slated in "The Incomparable Game."

CLIFF HOUSE AND MORCOVE

This year's Annual is outstanding for two charming articles on, respectively, Cliff House and Morcove. Mary Cadogan writes on Cliff House; Ray Hopkins takes an affectionate look at Morcove.

As a boy, I bought both School Friend and Schoolgirls' Own for a year or two. Oddly enough, I can remember plenty of the Cliff House stories, but, beyond the names of a character or two, I recall nothing about Morcove. I often wonder why this should be so.

Though it is many, many years since I browsed over either, I have happy memories of a series concerning Augusta Anstruther-Browne and, I think, Peggy Preston (clearly a copy of the Bounder-Redwing theme, though the Cliff House version had some original moments). I fancy Augusta was expelled for cutting off Bessie Bunter's plait, and returned to Cliff House under the name of Olive Wayne. And there was a delightful series about Grace Kelwyn, a kind of female Tarzan. Yes, I have a few memories of the Cliff House of my boyhood, but my Morcove picture remains blank. And, in my view, the passing years dealt unkindly with Cliff House. Later tales were a poor shadow of those I knew.

I feel pretty certain that as many boys as girls bought School Friend and Schoolgirls' Own. The school story fans of the Magnet also lapped up Cliff House and Morcove.

A proof that boys read the two papers? Well, if only girls had read them there would have been none available now.

THE ANNUAL IS COMING

There is a truly thrilling line-up of fine articles in the forthcoming C.D. Annual. Our star contributor, Roger M. Jenkins, is at the top of his form with a thoughtful and amusing study of "Sir Hilton Popper." Roy Parsons writes on "Sparshott," one of the Hamilton branch lines of the post-war years. Christopher Lowder looks at the work of E. S. Brooks, both in the Sexton Blake and in the Lee field, under the intriguing title "Brooks and Bad Luck." Tony Glynn is back

in our pages after too long an absence, and he relates some charming anecdotes in connection with the hobby while he was in the United States. William Champion takes us for a trip through the neglected fields of Michael Poole's St. Katie's. R. J. Godsave gets us into the mood for Christmas by retelling the Brooks story about Grey Towers. W. O. G. Lofts discusses R. W. Wilson - comic artist supreme. If you are a fan of Mr. Buddle and Slade you will be interested to know that Mr. Buddle is back in a new adventure entitled "The Buddle Pavilion."

And, of course, there are lots more. Have you ordered your Annual yet? Don't be too late.

THE EDITOR

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DANNY'S DIARY

NOVEMBER 1920

November 11th, 1920, is a day I will always remember. The King unveiled the permanent Cenotaph in Whitehall, and it is a very beautiful memorial. Also, the burial took place in Westminster Abbey of "The Unknown Warrior." A simple brass slab marks the last resting-place of a British soldier brought from France to commemorate "the many multitudes who during the Great War 1914 - 1918 gave the most that man can give, life itself." It is a wonderful thought that any mother who has lost a son can believe that he lies among the great in Westminster Abbey. As the gun-carriage passed the Cenotaph, King George laid on it a wreath inscribed with the words, "In proud memory of those warriors who died unknown in the Great War. Unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold they live. George R.I."

There is a new Sexton Blake Library out called "The Mystery Box," and it is very good indeed. It is a clever story, and it introduces Granite Grant and Mademoiselle Julie.

In the Boys' Friend, which has been tip-top this month, there is a new series of detective stories by Edmund Burton. It is about The Adventures of Grant, the Chauffeur-Detective.

All Rookwood this month has featured a new series about Erroll and Mornington, and a waif called the Kid. It introduces Baldwin Sleath, a scoundrel who once kidnapped and carried away the son of the Head of Rookwood. In "The Phantom of the Past," Erroll fell in the river and was rescued by the Kid. Erroll took the waif to Rookwood, much to the annoyance of Mornington. A burglary took place in the school; Baldwin Sleath told the Head that his son was a criminal; the Kid ran away from Rookwood; and Erroll went after him. It is a grand series. The other titles were "Divided Duty," "Betrayed by his Chum," and "The Waif's Sacrifice." The series continues next month.

All Cedar Creek space has carried on with the new series about Carson and his rustlers. The rustlers were captured, the town of Thompson set out to lynch them, they escaped through a ruse by a man named Bunco, and finally Bob Lawless fell into their power. The titles

"Roping in the Rustlers," "Judge Lynch," "The Rustlers' Vengeance," and "The Flight of the Rustlers." The series continues next month. It is a very long series - and good.

Sugar rationing has been abolished at last, and the price is reduced by 2d a pound, which is fine.

It has been a poor month in the Gem and the Magnet. The Gem's two opening stories were "Fallen Among Foes" and "For Freedom and the Cup." A Mr. Bright presented a silver cup for competition among the various schools. Jim Dawlish turned up, and Talbot disappeared. Which was awful for Tom Merry who wanted him to play football. Then came the finding of Talbot, and a lot more football.

"The Sacred Idol" starred Koumi Rao. Finally, in "The St. Jim's Hunger Striker" we had Wally D'Arcy punished for being fiendishly awful, Mr. Selby getting too mad for words, and Gussy going on hunger strike. Rather a weak affair.

The trial took place this month of Harold Greenwood, a solicitor who was accused of giving his wife arsenic. Sir Edward Marshall Hall defended him, and he was found not guilty.

The first Magnet of the month was "Coker's Craze" in which Coker wanted to act for the films. Then a very silly story called "The Man from America" in which a Mr. William Chumley, Bunter's uncle who had made a fortune in the States, came back and advertised to find his nephew, who was Bunter - but Bunter offended him. Luckily this was only a short story - seven chapters.

"The Caterpillar's Rest-Cure" struck me as piffle. The Caterpillar and Archie Howell were doubles, so Archie went to Highcliffe and the Caterpillar went to Greyfriars. Lastly "Smithy's Defiance" was a weak affair in which Smithy was at war with Sir Hilton Popper about trespassing on the island. But Smithy threatened to report Sir Hilton for illtreating a dog. Pretty weak.

In the cinemas there are plenty of cartoons about characters named Mutt & Jeff. I think they also appear in a daily newspaper.

We have seen Mary Pickford in "The Foundling;" Sessue Hayakawa in "The Dragon Painter;" Charles Ray in "Peaceful Valley;" Norma Talmadge in "She Loves and Lies;" and Harry Carey in "Bare Fists." But my favourite picture of the month was Dorothy Gish in "Mary Ellen Comes to Town."

BLAKIANA

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MORE STAUNCH SUPPORTERS

by P. Manton King

Having greatly enjoyed S. Gordon Swan's article in the June "Digest" on Sexton Blake's "Staunch Supporters," I felt that I wanted to mention a few, whose activities have given me much pleasure.

Pride of place goes to John G. Brandon's R.S.V.P. and his unorthodox friends, for whom I have a special affection as I met them in the first Blake story I read as a boy. I believe that it was published in the same month as G. H. Teed's "The Fatal Pit," which was my second meeting with Sexton Blake and Tinker. Unhappily both were lost during a wartime move, so I cannot verify this.

The Honourable Ronald Sturgess Vereker Purvale - R.S.V.P. - is (to use one of his favourite terms) an engaging fellow. A hard-bitten, tough aristocrat, who has knocked about the world, he is a good man to be with in an awkward situation and immensely loyal to his friends, among whom can be counted Blake and Tinker.

His servant and friend, "Flash" George Wibley - an ex-burglar - can also be depended on in an emergency, his skill lying in cunning or - as R.S.V.P. would call it - the brains department. These two form a power in themselves, but when joined by Purvale's delightful and charming though vague friend, Lord Montague Chanways and tough taxi-drive, "Big Bill" Withers, they make a truly formidable quartet, who on many occasions assist - and hinder(!) - Blake and Tinker.

These characters also appear in many of Brandon's longer stories, Purvale becoming the Honourable Arthur Stately Pennington (A.S.P.) while Blake and Tinker are replaced by Inspector McCarthy and Sergeant Bowden of the C.I.D. These stories were probably written first as, more than once, I have noticed similarities of plot in the Blake versions which I have usually enjoyed more.

Two more endearing Blake supporters are - I use the present

tense as I like to think of them as still with us - the fighting "Raggies," Joe Harmon and Mike O'Flynn of the Royal Navy, who appear in several good yarns by Stanton Hope. The irrepressible Mike, always searching for a beautiful colleen, the more cautious Joe, trying to restrain him, the inevitable scrap, make amusing reading, set against backgrounds ranging from Southampton to South America.

The two sailors, loyal to each other, are full of admiration and respect for the great detective and his assistant and render them valuable aid, especially where diving is involved, these sequences always being of absorbing interest. It is a great pity that more of these stories did not appear in the Blake saga.

In secret service exploits we must not forget the large and powerful "Granite" Grant of the British intelligence and the delectable Mademoiselle Julie from France. These two agents - although their interests do not always coincide with those of Blake - usually work in conjunction with him and each other. Any rivalry is of a friendly nature. Both also have a tremendous affection for the redoubtable Pedro, which is shown in the "Case of the Bismarck Memoirs," when they meet him with Blake, whose disguise they fail to penetrate, believing the story that he has bought him. These stories by Pierre Quiroule usually have a good plot and move at a fast pace.

These two characters seem to have inspired Beltom Brass, a British secret agent, and Yvonne de Braselieu of the Free French, who appeared in one or two of Anthony Parsons' wartime stories. Many of this writer's plots are quite involved, but Brass and his charming colleague cannot match up to Quiroule's longer established pair.

With Parsons' other characters, Venner and Belford of the Yard, it is a very different matter. The dapper Superintendent Claudius Venner, "Beau Brummell" of the Yard and publicity expert, invariably accompanied by Inspector - sometimes Sergeant(!) - Belford, a languid six-footer, referred to as the "Handmaiden," always clashes with Blake in the early stages of a case. Many of his more ingenious theories are "borrowed" from his "Handmaiden," but all are usually shattered by Blake's logic. Venner is an excellent, though resentful, target for Tinker's cockney wit and is usually introduced by

Mrs. Bardell as "'im again." However, when real danger threatens, the ranks are closed, especially when Venner knows that the credit for Blake's work will be his, to pass on to the Press.

Another staunch Yard supporter is dear old Inspector Coutts, who appears in countless stories. He is handled by Rex Hardinge as expertly as by any other writer, forming with Blake and Tinker, an unbeatable anti-crime combination. Although, at the beginning of each case, he accuses Blake of "barking up the wrong tree" and bristles under Tinker's impertinent repartee, there is a really deep affection between the three men. Blake's brain-power is a tremendous asset to Coutts, while the resources of the Yard are frequently at the former's disposal. Together, they make a great team.

Finally, among the more unorthodox of Blake's allies, are Captain James Dack and his mate, Sam Tench of the battered old tramp steamer the "Mary Ann Trinder." John Hunter - the creator of these characters - was a friend of my grandfather in the early 1930's in Worthing, and I remember, as a small boy, meeting him. Dack and Tench are not above a little honest smuggling, having a healthy and justified contempt for all forms of bureaucracy; but, when real villainy is involved, they come down squarely on the side of law and order. At times they try to deceive Blake but in the end they are firmly allied with him. On his side Blake can turn the blind eye when necessary. Stories featuring these characters are among John Hunter's best.

Sadly, most of these authors are no longer with us and their creations no longer appear in new stories; but so long as the books survive - however tattered they may be - and so long as their readers live, then both authors and characters are with us in spirit.

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The MAGNETS listed under are urgently needed to complete long runs. Top prices offered for good complete copies, or generous exchange would be given. 1000, 1002, 1003, 1004, 1005, 1017, 1020, 1043, 1055, 1104, 1118, 1125, 1138, 1181. Would give five Blue and Orange Magnets for Number 1000, and four for each of the others.

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xxxx

DO YOU REMEMBER? By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 86 – Boys' Friend 3d Libraries 30 & 36 – Grammar School Feud Series

Whenever I glance with modest pride over my collection, my eye often falls on the bound volume containing two early St. Jim's stories in the Boys' Friend monthly library - "Tom Merry & Co." and "Tom Merry's Conquest." They represent an astonishing tribute to the success of the halfpenny Gem, being published as they were in November 1907 and January 1908 respectively. Greyfriars had not then come into existence, but St. Jim's was so popular that two new long stories of 120 pages each were specially commissioned to cash in on the success of St. Jim's. It is not surprising that they should reflect both the strength and the weakness of those early stories.

They dealt with the feud against the newly-opened Rylcombe Grammar School. In the first story, Tom Merry & Co., Blake & Co., and Figgins & Co. each refused to co-operate, and met individually with one setback after another until they agreed to unite under Tom Merry's leadership. The grammarians were forced to sign a document admitting the superiority of St. Jim's, and the story ended with a squabble over the possession of this document which was accidentally torn into three pieces.

The second tale dealt with the return of two old friends: Digby came back temporarily to join his friends in Study No. 6 again, and Marmaduke Smythe, the spoiled son of a Park Lane millionaire, returned to the New House group. Leadership was now determined by the luck of the draw, but each new leader encountered a fresh disaster, and eventually all three pieces of the incriminating document found their way back to Frank Monk & Co. at the grammar school, by the now apparently respectable method of holding hostages to ransom. It need hardly be added that under Tom Merry's leadership the precious document was recovered.

Although the Magnet never reprinted a story that had been published earlier, the Gem resorted to this device on occasions, even before 1931. "Tom Merry & Co's Conquest" was reprinted, somewhat abridged, in Gems 167 & 168. It was certainly the better story of the

two, but since it was the second of a pair it is puzzling to know why "Tom Merry & Co." was ignored. Some readers of the Gem in 1911 must undoubtedly have wondered at references to certain recent events which were never in fact recorded within the pages of the Gem.

All the charm of the early stories is here in abundant measure. There are high spirits but little malice, excitement but no underhand scheming. It is an idyllic, romanticised picture, with Tom Merry worshipped by the smaller boys. Some of the pranks, which involved such unsavoury things as rotten eggs, tar, flour, and ink were certainly prosaic enough, but Charles Hamilton invested everything with contagious good humour which even a severe caning from Mr. Ratcliff could not dispel. The theme was so successful that the author reverted to it frequently in later years, and this aspect of the St. Jim's stories probably helped a little to devalue the reputation of the Gem vis-a-vis the Magnet. But so long as the reader continues to peruse these two fascinating volumes written in the heyday of Edwardian England, he cannot escape falling under the spell of a most enchanting magic.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 152. THE EVERLASTING SUMMER

During the run of this Controversial series, we have mused often on various quite remarkable aspects of the Charles Hamilton career. But surely the most astounding factor was that the saga of the Hamilton schools lasted so long, passing from one generation to another, for ever and ever, with no sign of an amen.

Fashions change constantly in clothes - the crinoline, the bustle, the hobble skirt, the low waists, the cloche hats, the short dresses, the long dresses, the minis, the maxis - and the rest. Hair styles change. There are fashions in slang, which changes from year to year. Styles in entertainments change so that producers have to be slick in keeping pace. Even the television programmes of the sixties seem to be outdated when snips of them are featured in the seventies. Sad though it may be, everything changes - and quickly - even you and I.

But Greyfriars and St. Jim's did not change. St. Jim's, which started in 1906, was much the same when the curtain came down - and it was the fire-curtain, in a case of emergency - at the end of 1939. Greyfriars, born in 1908, was unchanged when the Magnet's funeral march was played at long last in 1940.

Yes, I agree. Greyfriars, in particular, has lived on, but I do not regard the post-war years as any significant part of the remarkable saga. For, whatever Charles Hamilton may have believed, the success and rejuvenation of Greyfriars from 1947 onwards, was not due to a new generation of boys and girls. It succeeded because the old boys and girls remembered, and supported it. Without the giant wave of nostalgia, the Bunter books of the post-war years would have failed. The Magnet reprints are bought by the older generation - those with fond memories of the past.

The Gem and the Magnet, most of us have agreed, were the finest papers of all time. Over prolonged periods, their quality was amazingly high. But quality alone does not make something long-lasting. A fierce fire usually burns out quickly. The Gem and the

Magnet were the world's two most incredible papers of all time, because, with very little variety in their programmes, they went on - and on - and on.

What was it that caused the Hamilton schools to continue successfully while everything else all round them was changing constantly? The one great factor was, without any doubt, the general high quality of the writing. It won the hearts of so many who remained loyal to their favourite author, though they knew but very little about him. Throughout the histories of the Gem and the Magnet he remained enmeshed in an aura of mystery.

But the quality of the writing cannot have been the only factor. It was Charles Hamilton who introduced the everlasting schools and the characters who went to adventure after adventure while they themselves were impervious to the passing of the years. There was not, in fact, very much difference in the Harry Wharton & Co. of 1910, and the same characters thirty years later.

It is not clear whose idea it was, this Peter Pan corridor down the years. And whoever thought of it cannot have appreciated in the slightest how very successful it was to be. From his Autobiography it is obvious that Hamilton made no claim that the idea was his; in fact, it seems possible that it was something that just happened, with nobody realising that he was on to a money-spinner.

Without question, it was St. Jim's, with Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, which was the foundation of the author's tremendous success. Under his own name, Charles Hamilton had been writing for the Amalgamated Press (or the A.P's fore-runner) for a number of years. His work had been competent and readable, without seeming to be anything outstanding. The only factor which made the name of Hamilton of interest through the years, when Messrs. Clifford and Richards were becoming the A.P's most valuable possessions, was its short but very intriguing link with the very early St. Jim's.

No doubt plenty of readers, who had somehow come on a copy of a St. Jim's Pluck story, sat back and wondered. I myself once wrote to the editor and asked: "Are Martin Clifford and Frank Richards really Charles Hamilton who once wrote of St. Jim's in Pluck?" The editor did not hedge. He wrote back to me: "Your guess is quite

correct."

There must have been occasions down the years when Charles Hamilton wondered whether the fashion might be running out. We have commented before that the possibility exists that in 1920, when he was so strikingly absent from the Gem and Magnet, he might have been preparing for some rainy day should storm-clouds gather.

He had given his characters a magic which was present even when he was absent. The Gem and Magnet sailed merrily on course during 1920 and the period round about. Most of the stories of that time were wretchedly poor. It seems certain that circulations must have dropped, though not enough to make the two old papers struggle. And Hamilton himself, for some obscure reason, was below his normal standard when he turned up now and then.

And in the years from 1928 to mid-1931, the Gem was almost entirely in the hands of substitute writers, yet it sailed on. True, production costs were much lower in those days, but, all the same, the publishers were not sentimentalists, so the Gem must still have made money. Obviously, it was the characters and not the standard of writing which sold the papers.

So Greyfriars and St. Jim's stretched far down the corridors of time, while other schools came and went, gas lighting was replaced with electricity, moving pictures gradually became popular, grew in length, and eventually spoke up for themselves, styles of writing appeared and disappeared on the tide of fashion, architecture changed, music went from phase to phase - ballads, ragtime, jazz - governments were displaced and replaced, theatres became cinemas and cinemas became colossal palaces which seated thousands, radio superseded the upright piano, the parlour became the lounge. Everything changed a lot, and when everything changes a lot, everybody loses a little. But the Gem and Magnet did not change. They were the wonder of the twentieth century. If evidence means anything, Harry Wharton, who had featured in short stories in the halfpenny Magnet in 1908 was even more popular in 1938, when the Magnet featured, for the rest of its life, cover-to-cover tales of its old, old hero.

Summer had started before we were born, lasting as we changed from children into youths into young men into not-so-young

some as 'too far-fetched.' The Congo Series was 'daft' to one writer. A girl thought Nipper 'too utterly perfect,' while the charge 'too much Handy' quickly brought protests from the opposition. However, the attacks were mild - most readers expressed their pleasure, rather than displeasure.

Of today's Lee enthusiasts who regularly contributed, it seems that James W. Cook was an easy winner, with W. Lister taking second place. Perhaps the most prolific writer of them all was Reg. T. Staples, described by Brooks as the 'Walworth Wonder.' He was a master of the insignificant trifle - even to enquiring the trouser measurements of the juniors!

The editorial decision to torpedo this happy arrangement came as a death-blow with No 166, 1st New Series. The lively comment between readers and author was replaced by the austere and impersonal GOSSIP ABOUT ST. FRANK'S. It provided the first sign of a crack in the structure.

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EXIT WALTER STARKE

by R. J. Godsave

Two years after E. S. Brooks became the sole author of the St. Frank's Nelson Lees he caused Walter Starke, a prefect and sixth-former to be expelled from the school.

This was an important decision for Brooks to make as Starke had been a leading character and a mainstay of the Lee, although a bully and blackguard.

It is not unusual for an author to reprieve a character under the threat of expulsion by having him perform a noble action which would blot out his past misdemeanour and allow him to remain as a scholar.

An author cannot afford to lose a leading character unless the story rises to the heights of drama. The only drawback to that is that such circumstances can only happen once.

In the case of Walter Starke he was expelled for falsely accusing Nipper of hitting him across the forehead with a walking-stick while both were breaking bounds one night. The first words from Starke upon his regaining consciousness were thought by Kenmore, his bosom friend, to refer to Nipper whose walking-stick it was, when in actual

fact were directed against a passing motorist.

Such was Starke's hatred of Nipper that as his memory returned he agreed with Kenmore that it was Nipper who struck him. Kenmore having followed Starke and found Nipper standing over him naturally took it for granted that Nipper had struck him.

On the face of it, Nipper's guilt appeared conclusive, and as long as Starke stuck to his story it was impossible for Nipper to prove his innocence.

How Nipper returned to St. Frank's, disguised and under the name of D'Albert after having been expelled, and how Nelson Lee who was away from the school at that time, succeeded in trapping Starke into admitting his guilt makes dramatic reading.

Such was the gravity of Starke's action that even had he performed a deed of heroism it would have been impossible for the Headmaster to allow him to remain at St. Frank's.

Simon Kenmore, who shared Starke's study, was no substitute for the bullying Starke, and stories in the Nelson Lee suffered somewhat as a result.

Whether an exciting and dramatic story is worth the loss of a leading and permanent character is a moot point.

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THE EGYPTIAN SCENE

In the MAGNET story "Lure of the Golden Scarab" in the issue of 27th August, 1932, mention is made of the Greyfriars chums "looking from the hotel balcony (Shepheards Hotel) at the varied, ever shifting crowd - with Cairo all round and tall graceful minarets piercing the deep intensely blue sky, and the Nile and the desert in the distance." I was several times in Shepheards Hotel in the 1943-46 period, and the balcony view was towards the famous Mouski, and nearer at hand, was the infamous red light district known as the Berka - in fact you had only to walk four or five chains to the entrance. The Nile was about half a mile away at the back of the then famous hotel. I can understand why Charles Hamilton did not mention all the street vendors and touts in a boys' paper - fully 25 per cent of them were selling "feelthy postcards."

But it is a wonder Bunter, always curious, did not come in contact with those picture sellers, or wander a few chains from the posh hotel just to see what went on at Sharia Wagal Berka.

O. H. WADHAM

OUR SHORT SERIAL. Specially selected for the Christmas season comes this story from a little-known, little-sought, and obscure series of over 60 years ago. How much of the well-known Hamilton magic can you find in it?

CHRISTMAS AT CLIVEDEN

by Charles Hamilton

Dick Neville, of the Fourth Form at Cliveden School, shivered as he sat up in bed.

Dick was feeling none too cheerful, for he and his chums, Poindexter and Flynn, were staying at Cliveden for the Christmas vacation. Unforeseen circumstances had prevented the chums from going to Poindexter's home.

It was a cold, dark night. But a gleam of white came in at the windows of the Fourth Form dormitory, and Dick Neville knew that it was snowing.

Some sound in the silence of the night had awakened him. He sat up in bed, wondering what it was.

Clang, clang, clang!

Dick Neville started.

Who could be ringing the school bell at that time of night? He did not know the time, but he knew that it must be past midnight. Yet someone was certainly at the gates of Cliveden, ringing away with all his might.

Clang-ting-tang-tangle-ting!

"My hat!" muttered Dick Neville. "Who can it be? What can it mean?"

"Are you awake, kids?" came the drawl of Poindexter from the gloom. "Can you hear that galoot, whoever he is, making that row at the gate?"

"I can," said Dick. "I just woke up."

"Sure, and I'm awake also," said Flynn, sitting up. "My beauty sleep has been busted up by that fearful row. Who can it be?"

Dick felt for his jacket and extracted a box of matches. He struck one and lit the candle, and then looked at his watch.

"Just on one o'clock," he exclaimed. "Who can be ringing the bell at one o'clock in the morning?"

"It can't be a practical joker, out in the snow at this hour," shivered Poindexter. "I guess it means something wrong, Dick."

"Then we ought to go and wake Lanyon."

"I wonder the row doesn't wake him. But he sleeps like a brick, I guess. Let's go down."

The clanging of the bell continued. Through the still winter night it came clearly to the ears of the juniors. They rose and dressed rapidly. Such a summons at such an hour was so amazing that they could only conclude that something was wrong.

Well muffled up against the cold, the three juniors left the dormitory, and descended the stairs to Mr. Lanyon's rooms, which were on the lower floor.

Dick tapped at the bed-room door of the master of the Fourth Form. There was no reply. He knew that Mr. Lanyon was a sound sleeper, and he tapped again, and then thumped vigorously. A sleepy voice came at last from within.

"Who is there?"

"Us, sir - Neville, Flynn, and Poindexter. There's somebody ringing the bell at the gate, sir; he's been ringing a long time. We thought we'd better call you, sir," said Dick, through the door.

There was an exclamation of surprise within.

"Dear me! How excessively peculiar! I suppose I must see to this."

A light glimmered under the door of Mr. Lanyon's room. In a couple of minutes the Fourth Form master opened the door.

He was clad in dressing-gown and slippers, and had a smoking-cap on his head and a muffler round his neck, so he presented an appearance very different

from what his pupils were accustomed to.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lanyon. "How excessively peculiar!" That was his favourite expression. "I can now hear the sound distinctly. Indeed, I am surprised that it did not wake me. It was quite right for you to come down and tell me."

Mr. Lanyon led the way downstairs into the hall. He opened the great door, and the wind instantly blew his lamp out. Flakes of snow came in on the gust.

"Dear me," said Mr. Lanyon, "how excessively unfortunate!" He set the extinguished lamp down. "Never mind, we must proceed without a light."

He stepped out into the snow. It was three inches deep in the Close, and still falling in light, feathery flakes. The wind whirled the flakes hither and thither, and whistled round the ears of the Form-master and the boys.

Mr. Lanyon led the way down to the gate. The gate was of iron bars, and between the bars, white now with snow, could be dimly seen a form muffled up against the weather.

"Dear me, there is someone there!" exclaimed Mr. Lanyon, as if that were really a most surprising circumstance. He halted in the snow on the inner side of the gate. "Who are you, my good fellow? What do you mean by ringing this bell at this time of night?"

A white face peered through the bars.

"I want to come in, you fool! Don't stand chattering there, but open the gate!"

"I am not likely to let an entire stranger within these walls without a word of explanation," said Mr. Lanyon.

"Fool! I am a relation of a master at this school, and I have come to stay with him."

"Nonsense. There is only one master staying here during the vacation, and that is myself."

The other gave a start.

"Are you Owen Lanyon?"

"Yes," said the Form-master. "And I have no relations in England - and if I had, they would not visit me at this hour in the middle of a snowstorm. I --"

"But you have a relation in America ---"

"What has that to do with it?"

"This much -- that I am your cousin Ralph from Chicago, and that I want you to take me in."

Mr. Lanyon gave a jump.

"My cousin Ralph! Impossible!"

"Not at all. Get a light, and look at me."

"I have a lantern here, sir," said Dick. "I can light it."

"Do so, my lad," said the Form-master in an altered voice.

Dick sheltered himself from the wind round the corner of the porter's lodge, and succeeded in lighting the lantern.

He brought it back to the gate and handed it to the Form-master. To his surprise, he saw that Mr. Lanyon's face was deadly pale.

The master of the Fourth took the lantern with a trembling hand and held it up so that its rays fell upon the face outside the bars. The stranger did not shrink from the scrutiny.

The face that was disclosed was hard and white, with cold, keen eyes and mocking lips. There was a faint resemblance to the features of the Form-master - enough to tell the watching juniors that the man's claim was wellfounded.

"Do you believe me now?" exclaimed the stranger impatiently.

"Yes," said Mr. Lanyon, speaking with an effort. "I thought you were in employment in Chicago."

"So I was; but I have left it, as you see. I thought you would be glad to see me, cousin mine," said the stranger, with irony in his tone.

"But to come -- to come at this hour ---"

"That was not my fault. I arrived in Clivedale by the last train, and could not find a vehicle to bring me here. I walked -- and here I am. Come, open the gate."

The Form-master made no further demur.

The key grated in the lock, the bolt was withdrawn, and the iron gate swung open with a creak.

The stranger stepped in. He held out his hand to Mr. Lanyon; but the

latter did not appear to notice it. He closed the gate and fastened it again carefully.

The newcomer gave a start as he saw the boys in the shadow.

"What are those brats doing here?"

Mr. Lanyon handed the lantern back to Dick.

"You may go back to bed, my lads," he said in a dull voice.

"Good night, sir!" said the three juniors.

They did not speak till they were in the Fourth Form dormitory again. They heard the heavy door close downstairs. The quarter chimed from the school clock.

"What do you think of that, kids?" said Poindexter at last.

"There's something wrong about that fellow," said Dick, with conviction. "It's very curious his getting here in the middle of the night; and did you notice that Lanyon wouldn't shake hands with him?"

"Sure and I did," said Flynn. "Lanyon doesn't want him here - that's certain. He's forced himself on him."

The door of the dormitory opened. Mr. Lanyon looked in with a lamp. His face was pale and worried.

"Not in bed yet, boys?"

"Just in, sir," said Dick.

They tumbled into bed. The Form-master retired and closed the door; and the juniors were left to wonder at his curious looks till they fell asleep.

* * * * *

Mr. Lanyon entered his study after coming down from the dormitory. The stranger was there, sitting at the table, upon which he had laid a small black bag. He had shaken the snow from his coat upon the floor; and was brushing his hat.

"Ralph," said the Form-master, "what do you want here?"

"Shelter," said Ralph coolly. "That's not much to ask of one's only relation in the world, is it?"

"You know I should never grudge you that. But -- but ---"

"But what?" said Ralph impatiently. "What are your misgivings about?"

"You know," said Mr. Lanyon, speaking slowly and painfully, resting one unsteady hand upon the table - "you know under what circumstances you left England."

The other gave a short, hard laugh.

"Yes, I am not likely to forget; but that is years ago."

"I gave you all I could to help you to a fresh start," said Mr. Lanyon. "I sent you money whenever you wrote for it from your new home. Though you had disgraced your name and mine, I never deserted you. I helped you beyond my means; I faced difficulties you never thought or cared about in consequence. You returned me nothing; but I never asked it, content to know that you were doing well in a new land."

"And to have got rid of me," said Ralph mockingly, "and the danger of being disgraced by me among your respectable friends."

"I was glad of that, too. I never grudged you help, Ralph. I thought you were doing well in America, and that you were settled there. Now you have come back to trouble me. Why?"

The man from Chicago gave a hard laugh.

"You think I have come back to sponge on you, and screw away your paltry earnings?" he exclaimed. "Well, you are mistaken."

Mr. Lanyon's face expressed very strong incredulity.

"Bah, I will prove it to you! You helped me, you say - you sent me a great deal of your beggarly pittance. How much - fifty pounds - a hundred pounds?"

"Less than a hundred pounds in all," said the Form-master quietly. "But all I had - more than I could spare."

"I can, and will, repay every shilling."

Ralph Lanyon picked the black bag from the table and opened it. There was a crisp rustle, and he drew out a roll of notes. He tossed a bundle of them on the table. "Take them!"

The Form-master looked at the notes in wonder. There were ten of them for ten pounds, and he could see that they were genuine.

"Take them," repeated Ralph Lanyon. "You see, I have not come back a beggar. Your wretched pittance is safe from me. I have done well in Chicago - better than

I ever told you in my letters. I ask nothing at your hands but shelter for a week or two. Why don't you take your money?"

The Form-master had made no move to touch the banknotes.

"Is that money yours, Ralph?"

"Mine? Of course it is."

"I mean, did you come by it honestly?"

Ralph Lanyon flushed with anger.

"You - you question that, then? Money is money, wherever it comes from. But if you are so particular, the money was come by honestly. I made it by a speculation in Chicago, and every cent of it is mine."

"I suppose I must take you at your word," said the Form-master, with a sigh. "Heaven grant that you have not come here to bring fresh disgrace upon me. But -- but you were rash to come as you did - if there is anything to conceal. The boys ---"

"I did not guess that there were boys staying here over the holidays. But, after all, they are only boys - they will see and think nothing. Who are they?"

"Three boys in the Fourth. They may not stay here long, as Poindexter --"

Ralph Lanyon sprang from his chair.

"What name did you say?"

"Poindexter," said Mr. Lanyon, looking at him in wonder. "One of the boys is named Poindexter, and it is possible that his father may send for him, and for the other two."

"Not Poindexter of Chicago?"

"Yes, I believe Poindexter's father is a merchant in that city."

"Snakes alive!"

"What is the --"

"Where is my room? I am tired, and want to sleep."

Mr. Lanyon, without a word, but lost in amazement at his cousin's strange manner, took up a lamp and led the way from the room. He threw open the door of the bedroom belonging to the master of the Fifth Form, now away for the Christmas vacation.

"You will occupy this room," he said. "My friend East will not mind."

The man from Chicago grunted.

Mr. Lanyon's brow was darkly wrinkled as he slowly took his way back to his own quarters.

* * * * *

The three juniors were up early the next morning. Directly after breakfast they made their way into the Close, and soon a three-cornered duel was fought with snowballs. At length Poindexter looked at his watch, and discovered that it was a quarter-past ten, and a rush was made for the house to look for letters.

The postman was coming away.

"Any for me?" demanded the three juniors with one voice.

"One for Master Poindexter," said the postman, "that's all. I've given it in."

"It's from popper!" exclaimed Poindexter gleefully. "Perhaps he's going to send for us, after all. Let's get it and see."

They darted into the hall. The letter should have been in the rack, and Poindexter went towards it quickly.

The rack was empty, but near it was standing Ralph Lanyon, with an open letter in his hand.

A quick suspicion shot into Poindexter's mind - quickly verified, for a glance showed him that the letter was in his father's writing.

Ralph turned round quickly and thrust the letter behind him; but too late. Poindexter had seen it.

The boy was trembling with anger.

"Give me my letter!" he exclaimed sharply.

Ralph looked at him savagely.

"Your letter! What do you mean?"

(The second part of this seasonable story will appear in our Grand Christmas Number — Next Month)

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held on 29th September, 1970.

Ian Bennett took the chair with eleven members present, and then read the minutes which were confirmed.

The anniversary number for this meeting was Popular 505, dated 29.9.1928, and so 42 years old; and the collectors' item was one of E. S. Brooks Blue Crusaders stories in typescript.

The first item of the programme which now followed was a quiz by George Chatham. This was taped and consisted of ten well-known voices which had to be identified. Bob Wareing was the winner, and George was suitably thanked.

Next followed a talk by Bill Morgan. Bill's talks are always well worth waiting for and this was no exception. Bill told us very clearly and carefully about the influence on his life of The Captain and The Magnet. He cited a number of reasons and examples and was loudly applauded at the end.

Edward Davey then read for us an excerpt from what he considered the best of the Bunter books, Billy Bunter's Barring Out. This item was received with pleasure as was the final item - a game: Finding the Title. Two rounds were played and both were won by Bob Wareing.

The raffle closed the programme for the evening. The next meeting will be on 24th November, from 7 p.m. onwards.

TOM PORTER

Correspondent.

NORTHERN

Saturday, 10th October.

A smaller attendance than usual, but including once again Gerry Allison, who had brought with him the results of the Greyfriars'

entrance exam. Some unexpected "failures," but interesting to note that chairman Geoffrey Wilde and programme organiser Jack Allison had passed with distinction, and that St. Jim's man Ron Hodgson, and St. Frank's man Jack Wood, had just scraped in. Just what form these and others who passed were to enter was not announced; perhaps as well! It was noted that our president, P. G. Wodehouse, has achieved his 89th birthday, and that our usual greetings had been sent to him on this happy occasion. The library had chalked up its 20th anniversary, and librarian Gerry Allison had parcelled up his 10,000th set of books for postal members. A fine record. Our donation of a Wharton Rebel series facsimile to Leeds Library, had been accepted with thanks. The book was to have a note inside recording our gift, and at first is to be placed on the adult shelves to see what response is forthcoming from prospective borrowers. After welcome refreshments, we settled down to Les Rowley's Wharton's letter quiz of hidden names, and Ron Rhodes came out top with 36 names, plus one or two more not in the official answers - the first time we recall anyone passing a test with 100 per cent-plus rating! Geoffrey Wilde was second with 33 names.

JACK WOOD

LONDON

There was a very distinguished gathering in the Blue Room of the Rembrandt Hotel, Kensington, on the occasion of the October Meeting of the Club. Forty-six members and friends, not forgetting the wives, sat down to luncheon. The President of the Club, John Wernham, was ably supported on the top table by Eric Fayne, Vice-President, Leslie Rowley the 1970 Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, Don Webster, and the three Club Library Curators, Roger Jenkins, Bob Blythe and Josie Packman.

An excellent repast was provided by the hotel and the menu cards by John Wernham. The latter were in "Boys' Friend" green and the complete story printed on them was "The Rivals of Rookwood" by Owen Conquest.

Don Webster proposed the toast of the London Club and Leslie

Rowley the Absent Friends.

After luncheon, the company adjourned to the spacious lounge. Here many interesting conversations took place and reminiscences exchanged. Frank Vernon-Lay brought along supplies of "The Men Behind Boys' Fiction" and that indefatigable man of research and co-author of the book, Bill Lofts, kindly autographed copies. Bill's guest at the gathering was new member, Cedric Richardson, and to the delight and thorough enjoyment of all present, Cedric performed some of his tricks of magic. A very fine show and the thanks of all were accorded to him by very generous applause.

Tea was then served and more conversations and get-togethers took place. How the time passed and soon it was time to depart. Longest journey home, I suppose, was Tom Porter, a member of both Midland and London Clubs.

Next meeting will be at Bob Blythe's residence, 47 Evelyn Avenue, Kingsbury, London N.W.9. 'Phone 205 0732. Kindly inform if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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The Postman Called

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

LEN WORMULL (Romford): As a great film fan I was delighted to see a picture of one of my old favourites (Captains Courageous) adorning the October cover It set me thinking about the stars of the film. Tracy of course won an Oscar for his performance as the Portugese fisherman, Manuel. For many years this great actor is said to have lived a secluded life, embittered by personal tragedy. His only son, whom he worshipped, was born deaf and I believe died in early childhood. He was reputedly difficult to work with, and almost contemptuous of fans Lee Marvin, doing a scene with him in one of his last films, couldn't quite "get" the relationship of the part and asked the star his advice. Tracy is reported to have said: "Look, I'm too damn tired, old, and rich to care. Let's just shoot the scene." And what of that handsome little tear-jerker, Freddie Bartholomew? He grew into a tall

and rather un-photogenic youth, and was quickly cast off by film makers. Brought up by an English aunt who took him to Hollywood, Bartholomew became the central figure in a legal battle when his mother claimed a stake in his earnings. Lionel Barrymore, renowned for his sea-faring roles, gave perhaps his greatest performance in another sea epic, Down To The Sea In Ships, playing "gramps" to another handsome and sensitive youngster - Dean Stockwell. The latter graduated from boy to adult parts successfully, retaining his good looks in the process. Both films were recently shown on T.V.

GERRY ALLISON (Menston): Thank you for the October 'C.D.' What a joy to bask in glorious Indian Summer sunshine, and read the finest magazine in the world. Bliss unspeakable in these grim days.

Your piece about the amazing popularity of Pollie Green amongst girls and young women, which lasted for so many years, and made Pollie as great a money-spinner as Billy Bunter, reminded me of a story which Herbert Leckenby once told me. It may be new to you.

As you mention, Mabel St. John was the most popular girls' writer of her day, but she was really a man - Henry St. John.

Henry's half-sister was the famous Dame Gladys Cooper - who celebrated her 80th birthday early this year. Henry St. John was once asked by his editor if he would introduce a woman reader to his sister, and he arranged a meeting, in which the woman was presented to the famous actress.

Afterwards she said how nice it had been to meet the lovely Gladys Cooper. "But," she went on, "I was really hoping to be introduced to your other sister - Mabel. How I adore her stories of Pollie Green!"

BOB BLYTHE (Kingsbury): As a rider to J.E.M's article (Six of the Best - Best of the Six) in the October C.D., readers may be interested in what E.S.B. himself told me concerning this particular story.

It appears that the Editor of the Union Jack rang E.S.B. and told him that they were in a very tight spot. Robert Murray was very ill and could not possibly write his story in time for the deadline, which was a few days away at that point. Would E.S.B. step into the breach? This Edwy agreed to do.

Having worked out the plot to his satisfaction, he and Mrs. Brooks then spent the entire evening and well into the small hours of the next day writing the story. This was done by his usual method, at that time, by Mrs. Brooks typing as he dictated to her. (Those who have seen the typescripts will agree she made a wonderful job of it. There could have been no hesitation or revision in Edwy's dictation, for the typescripts are practically without erasures of any kind.)

The story was posted to the U.J. editor that same day!

Edwy told me that, as a result of his efforts, he received neither thanks, nor a penny extra!

As this took place in the mid-30's, at a period when Brooks had very little say in what went into the Lee, there is no doubt that he felt very bitter towards the A.P. - and who can blame him?

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): The SCHOOLGIRL STORY MAGAZINE did come out for only one issue. My own copy is personally autographed by the author/publisher Kenneth Newman whom I met some years ago, when he gave me the full story about these publications. I'm afraid that S. Gordon Swan has only revived an old subject that has been fully covered in the past, by myself and the late Walter Webb. Anthony Skene, who is still alive - now well over 80 - personally wrote to me saying that he is certainly not the author of the T.V. programmes, but strongly suspects that the real writer must have heard of him some time. All letters to the B.B.C. on the subject have remained unanswered.

CHAS. H. MATTHEWS (Market Harborough): I had always imagined old Joyce to be an aged widower, ekeing out a rather lonely existence in a small place little bigger than a large hut in the middle of a wood.

Far from being a widower I now discover in the Flip facsimile that he has a wife and two sons, and lived in a house in the wood.

I think this is the first reference that I have seen as to his married state.

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"HAVE YOU ORDERED YOUR ANNUAL?"

MEMORIES OF GERALD G. SWAN — PUBLISHERS

by W. O. G. Lofts

It must have been about 1930. I was then a small boy of 7 years old. I had heard from other boys, that I could exchange my comics at a bookstall in nearby Church Street Market. The back of the bookstall was piled high with thousands of comics and boys' papers. Comics were sold at 4 a penny. Magnets/Gems, etc., at ½d each, whilst S.O.L's were at the high price of a 1d. The tall friendly man who served me, took my rather tattered and soiled comics, stamped them with a rubber stamp with a picture of a Swan in the middle, and told me that I could have half the value, or amount in exchange. I exchanged all my comics - later boys' papers - at the same bookstall right up to the 1940 war. The proprietor's name was Gerald G. Swan.

The name of course is more generally known to most collectors as that of a publisher of fiction during the 1940/60 period. Apart from numerous boys'/girls' papers, libraries, and comics, he also produced romances, westerns, crime, science fiction, as well as hundreds of various types of a new form of Annuals entitled 'Albums.' Enthusiasts of E. S. Brooks also know him as reprinting his old St. Frank's stories under the guise of new schools and pen-names such as Reginald Browne and Edward Thornton.

Only a short while ago, I visited Gerald G. Swan where he now lives in retirement in Middlesex. I recognised him at once, although it must be 30 years since I last saw him, though he did not remember me. Still as I remembered him, a friendly type of man, we had several hours of interesting conversation, recalling the good old days, and here I learned a very interesting story of how a poor boy who made a very successful business career in publishing, apart from other details which should be interesting to readers.

Gerald G. Swan, who was born at Tooting, South London, came from a very poor family. Always having ambitions to own his own business, at the age of 19 and in 1921 he borrowed 30/- from his mother, and started his own bookstall. This was situated in the famous busy Church Street Market in St. Marylebone. By accepting all types of papers in exchange with no restrictions, and by also selling his paperbacks

at slightly less than his competitors, he soon built up a large clientele and his business prospered. About 1938, and seeing how much money publishers were making, he decided to start his own publishing business. At the start he was quite content to build up stocks, before unloading on distributors - and by the time world war two had started he had three large warehouses full of paperbacks. By this amazing uncanny foresight, when paper became severely rationed, and many of the A.P. boys'/girls' papers and comics were killed he was able to get 'in on the market' to his great advantage - as well as still being able to pour out further paperbacks from his own paper ration. His Albums were probably his best asset, as in many years no less than 1,000,000 of all types were printed, the best being Kiddy Fun.

Apart from giving a fair deal to his customers, he always gave one to his contributors, and indeed they were many. With so many A.P. papers closing down he had hundreds of ex-A.P. authors contacting him, with offers to write. His method was simply to pay cash on the nail for any stories, with no restriction holdups on royalties on publication day only or other rights. Providing the stories were up to his standard (which was not high) he took all that they could write. Even the famous Charles Hamilton phoned him once from Broadstairs with an offer to write some school stories - but as Gerald Swan paid the same rate to all his contributors, and would not give a higher rate, nothing came of it. But in view of 'Frank Richards' tremendous popularity and fame in post-war years, he confessed that he probably would have done better to agree to his terms. Surprisingly, Gerald Swan did not take my view at all that E. S. Brooks was his 'star' author. Indeed he had quite a few, who in his opinion were far better. One author who contributed a great deal was 'Elleston Trevor' (Trevor W. Smith) under dozens of different pen-names - and who certainly is quite famous in the literary world today. Unfortunately, he could not recall many of the names used (unknown to me) in his juvenile fiction, though he did remember that E. S. Brooks also used the nom-de-plume of 'Carlton Ross' and possibly could have been W. K. Watt (who did write a science fiction school story) which appeared in his boys' paper 'Scramble.' His most prolific author was William J. Elliott who wrote under dozens of names, especially on the girls' fiction side, and whose claim to fame in our

Sexton Blake field is that he once wrote a Xmas Union Jack story when Gwyn Evans was indisposed. The well remembered detective 'Martin Speed' (Martin Speed Detective Library and stories in all other papers) was created by Gerald Swan - and had many authors writing stories. These included Rex Hardinge - and possibly E. S. Brooks. Another author of his was Herbert Leckenby the late editor of our C.D. which did not come as a big surprise to me, as Herbert in his visits to London always used to ask me about the firm, and I suspected that he had some sort of connection with its juvenile department.

In 1940 he suffered a light setback when a fire destroyed one of his warehouses, curiously the only night no German bombers were over London. Millions of new and second-hand boys' papers were destroyed which included many of the papers we now so keenly would like to get hold of. This was in Burne Street, where he also had his publishing offices, on the corner of Edgware Road Underground Metropolitan Station. About this time he also handed over his market bookstall business to an old faithful employee for nothing, as he was now so involved in publishing. With the end of the war, and paper rationing lifted - plus the A.P. reviving and bringing out new juvenile papers - his 'honeymoon came to end' so to speak - and he then concentrated on bound books. His best effort was a large imposing American English Dictionary, whilst another book reviewed favourably with the press was the well-known biography 'Let's Walk Down Fleet Street.' He had now moved out to the suburbs of Middlesex - and in 1964 he sold his business to Allied Distributors of Manchester - along with all his file copies and records. It would be foolish to say that his publications were of such a high standard as those of the A.P. but it must be remembered that they filled a gap, when not only papers were in short supply, but when there was extreme publishing difficulties - and to say the least atrocious types of printing paper. Many of these are collectors' items today, and probably more than any other the name of Gerald Swan will always be remembered as that of a kind, genial man who not only changed my papers when I was a boy, but certainly deserved all the luck, and successful business career that came his way. He is still very active in his retirement, with plenty of interests, with a large bookcase full of some very good collectors' items (including Edgar Wallace) and happy memories of a poor boy who made good.

XMAS IS COMING! THE PRESENT TIME IS PRESENT TIME

You will be sorry to hear that my pub-home is being pulled down for redevelopment, but my loss is someone's gain, as I am having to break up my Collection which so many of you have seen in the past. So here is the chance of buying some item you may have been after.

OFFERS INVITED FOR THE FOLLOWING:-

1. Nelson Lees (1st New Series) FIFTEEN volumes handstitched and bound in Red Rexine. Lovely copies (194) complete - if you didn't know by the dates, you would think that the newsagent had just dropped them through the letter-box.
2. Nelson Lees (complete 2nd New Series). As above but bound in Red Rexine with glued backs, so can be separated into series easily. Eleven volumes in all.
3. Nelson Lees. (All 25 3rd New Series.) Nipper's arrival at St. Frank's, etc. THREE volumes in Red Rexine.
4. "GEM." Complete run of its last days, Nos. 1574-1663. A lovely Bound Set of six volumes each 15 copies all really MINT condition.
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Litho-duplicated by York Duplicating Services, 12a The Shambles, York.