

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

FEBRUARY 1980

FAGGING FOR COKER

A Magnificent Long Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. By Frank Richard.



Coker was swung round towards the door. He hopped furiously to keep from falling. "Now, all together, said Wharton, "kick as hard as you can! It does not matter if they hurt a little we're really doing this for his own good." Mr. Amos and the other children looked at each other and then they all kicked.

26p

Big purchase of "Sexton Blake" material in various forms - SBL's, UJ's, BFL's, Penny Pictorials in other magazines. Please state wants.

Thomsons

Bound Wizards, 1924, 26, 28, short volumes 105-119, 174-184, 279-288 only. 33 vols. post-war Wizards, Rovers, Adventures. 10,000 boys' hardbacks. Henty, Avery, Westerman, etc., also Annuals.

Clearance sale of "below standard" of most papers and comics. Just state what you require and leave the rest to me. Payment as usual, when goods are received! Sorry I don't list.

Please compare my prices and you'll realise how cheap they are!

Rupert Index, Rupert Bear over 60 years, £4 post free.

Howard Baker Facsimiles. Complete range including Book Club specials. Lists free.

Visitors very welcome, but please give me a ring first. Most days and weekends. I'm always working!

NORMAN SHAW

84 BELVEDERE ROAD

LONDON, SE19 2HZ

Tel. 01-771-9857

Nearest Station B.R. Crystal Palace

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 34

No. 398

FEBRUARY 1980

Price 26p

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

The Man of the Wheel.



ROSS STORY

Mrs. Ross Story died on Sunday, 30th Decmber, and I heard the sad news with a great sense of loss. Ross had been a reader of this magazine for a very long time, but, in addition, she was a personal friend. In times of doubt or discouragement, she was always in the picture quickly with unlimited friendship and kindness. Many of her letters figure among those from readers which I keep for all time. She wrote so well, and had the gift of expressing her feelings in words which gave cheer and help to

those with whom she corresponded.

She had a number of books published, and, in her time, contributed articles to Collectors' Digest. Her great love in the hobby

was St. Frank's, but she also had a good knowledge of the Sexton Blake story. She visited us on several occasions at Excelsior House, and she attended at least one meeting of our London Club.

She was passionately fond of animals, but especially of cats, of which she had several. Her grief was great when she lost her beloved "Isobel", not so very long after we lost our Mr. Softee.

Ross found a squirrel with a broken leg. She took it home, set the leg, and tended it, so that, after a couple of months or so, it was able to run around again. It had lost its wild instincts, and Ross kept it as a domestic pet for a number of years. It died of old age.

Life had not been too kind to Ross Story, but she was delighted when she was able to retire to her dream cottage in the country, not far from Tunbridge Wells. And particularly when she could transfer her beloved cats to the country, and let them run free in her garden. She had several happy years there. Our regret is that she did not have longer.

Mrs. Story leaves a son and a daughter, to whom we extend our sympathy. Here, at Collectors' Digest, we are going to miss her very much. She loved C.D. - and we loved her. We will never forget her.

THE UPWARD TRAIL

No, dear reader, this is not a Wild West story. It is not the Rio Kid, on Sidekicker, who is riding the ever-upward trail. It's us!

From next month, the basic price of S.P.C.D. will go up by twopence to 28p. It is necessary if the Digest is to remain afloat. Just how long we can hold it at even that price I cannot say.

Inflation is a world-wide disease, and much of it is beyond the control of any government. All the same, the acts of scatty governments in the past twenty years have made things a lot worse than they should have been. Two identical bottles of Fairy Liquid stand on our draining-board at the moment. The one that is nearly empty is priced 36p; the new one 45p.

In the International this morning they had packets of Ship matches - 6 boxes to the packet - old and new stock mixed. Old stock 18p; new stock 24p.

Our bus fare - a distance just under a mile from the house to the

town - has just risen from 15p to 18p.

Any reader can match those instances of runaway prices, over and over again. We all get heartily sick of soaring prices - not to mention constant strikes to increase mammoth wages in exchange for indifferent service.

No doubt, whoever was responsible for replacing 240 pence with 100 pence to the pound felt he had written his name in the Sands of Time. Like Pentelow who destroyed Courtney to provide a Roman Holiday.

Before long, somebody else, with the happy thought that he will be remembered with a statue in Whitehall, will change things again and give us 100 pence to the Fiver. The way things are going, it's bound to come.

SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL?

Mr. Tom Johnson of Neston has sent me an article from the Radio Times. According to Mr. Johnson, it made him "squirm".

The idea of the article, presumably, was to advertise a B.B.C. television serial entitled "Grange Hill". I haven't seen any of the serial, and, if the article is anything to go by, I haven't missed much. Apparently a story of life in a modern comprehensive school, it seems that two pupils cheek their teachers in pure cockney liberally spiced with "flipping 'ecks", and the children who play the parts "breathed teenage life into those characters" so they were inundated with requests for signed photographs.

That's all very trivial and doesn't bother us. Unnecessarily the article takes the opportunity to compare Grange Hill with Greyfriars. The writer says, without accuracy being conspicuous: "20 years of hindsight and popular psychology have made it plain that good old Greyfriars was actually riddled with snobbery (Ram Singh, you were constantly reminded, was the Nabob of Bharripur and Jock Blake heir to 'broad acres'), greed (Bunter was plainly on course for an early coronary), bullying and beating by mindlessly authoritarian 'beaks'."

Mr. Johnson says "I wonder if they know that Greyfriars is being reprinted constantly and is much in demand. I wonder where G. Hill will be in a year's time."

He has a point there. Maybe the writer of the article only knew the BBC's own version of Greyfriars from long ago. It was a pretty awful version.

20 years of hindsight have made many things plain, but one thing they don't make plain is that Greyfriars was riddled with snobbery. The Nabob of Bharripur and Jock Blake were not Greyfriars characters at all. Flipping 'eck!

THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

Mr. Farrow of Boston writes: "I am an elderly man, living alone. My two cats, Billy and Bessie Bunter (they eat like the Billy and Bessie) bring me so much love and pleasure. Almighty God, King of Kings, teach me to be the friend of helpless things."

Mr. Thomson of Edinburgh writes: "For 5 years now I have been feeding a large tiger-coloured stray. I call him Jaws, he is so fond of eating. He - like the Princess Snowee - is rather fussy - won't drink ordinary milk unless it is laced with evaporated milk, and warmed. He has brought along a girl friend now - black and white. I christened her Scrounger."

"I try to harden my heart and limit them to one large can of meat a day, but I find myself getting out the tin-opener again before the day is over."

The Princess Snowee, by the way, is flourishing. She gets larger and fluffier. She likes her blanket, carefully folded many times, with her comfort in view, placed near a radiator. And she expects that blanket to be washed very frequently. Maybe Mrs. Cadogan will recall an old fairy-story in which a lovely young lady claimed to be a Princess. Was her claim false? To test her, they gave her a pile of 16 mattresses to sleep upon, and, unknown to her, they placed a small pea under the lowest mattress. "I couldn't sleep", complained the young lady. "My bed was so lumpy." So they knew now that she was a Princess.

Just like the Princess Snowee!

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

WANTED: Boys' Papers, Comics, Libraries and Annuals, large and small quantities.

MARRIOTT, 27 GREENVIEW DRIVE, NORTHAMPTON. Tel. 711874

DANNY'S DIARY

FEBRUARY 1930

King of the Islands came back into the Modern Boy at the end of last month, and the very exciting series has continued through this month. The first tale in February is "A Bid for a Fortune". Egan, the scoundrel whom Ken King had rescued, had hidden a great pearl in the hold of the "Dawn". Then Egan goes overboard in a fight, and it seems that a shark has put an end to him. Only one man knew the secret of the fortune hidden in the ship's hold - Dandy Peters of Lawless Lukwe.

Next week, in "The Secret of the 'Dawn'", Dandy Peters tries to buy the "Dawn". And Ken King wonders why the ruffian offers a price far in excess of her actual value. But the ketch is not for sale. Next, "The Cooky-Boy's Find" tells how Danny, the black cooky-boy of the ship, finds the pearl, and does not dream of handing it over.

The next story is "Troublesome Treasure", and now Ken is kidnapped by Dandy Peters, in an effort to make Ken sell the "Dawn" - but the cooky-boy, Danny, manages to get off the ship and swim ashore.

The series continues next month. Also in Modern Boy is a series about firemen, written by Alfred Edgar.

There is not much real news to record this month. In Glasgow a train ran into the back of another in dense fog, and, though nobody was killed, 52 people were injured. It has been rather a foggy month.

The Gem opened with the last story of the series in which Racke was expelled and Trimble was shanghaied. This tale is "The Shanghaied Schoolboys" in which Tom Merry & Co. find themselves southward bound, on the Mary Malone. It is described as a story with hundreds of quick-action thrills. For my taste, there were hundreds too many.

Next week "£100 Reward" in which Gussy finds a necklace in a Rylcombe street, and it brings him a load of trouble. After that came "Rivals of the River", featuring masses of St. Jim's boys plus Gordon Gay & Co. plus the Spalding Hall girls - and with Grundy, Wilkins & Gunn dressing up as girls. Last of the month is "Glyn's Tank Corps". There are rather weird articles in the Gem each week entitled "Mr.

Parker Pops In" and "Ask the Oracle". Plus a serial.

We have seen some lovely films this month, and the very best was a silent one - Jack Holt in "Submarine" - about two friends who fall out over their love for a girl. One is an expert in submarine disaster work - and his friend is in a sunken submarine. A wonderful picture. The talkies were Paul Muni in "The Valiant", and Victor McLaglen in "The Cock-Eyed World". Another very good silent - Mum liked it very much - was Joan Crawford in "Our Dancing Daughters". We also saw the first talkie western - Ken Maynard in "Wagon Master". Another lovely silent film was "White Shadows in the South Seas" starring Monte Blue and Raquel Torres.

The Magnet has been just grand all the month, continuing with the series about the mysterious Courtfield cracksman. The first tale this month is "Some Person Unknown --". The Bounder uses the telephone in Barnes's garage to ring up the Lantham police inspector. "The Courtfield Cracksman is here at Greyfriars, and I can put my finger on him at any minute --" says the Bounder. The next moment, the Bounder is wrenched away from the telephone by Barnes, who is strangely excited. But the Bounder was referring to Mr. Steele, the odd new master of the Remove. At the end of the tale, the Bounder and Mr. Steele are more friendly.

"Billy Bunter's Bluff" continues the series, and the main scene of activities is set at Highcliffe, and Dr. Voysey's valuable Louis Quinze snuffbox disappears.

Next "The Man from Scotland Yard", a glorious tale in which both Wharton and Bunter find out something they shouldn't know about Mr. Steele. Wharton can be trusted - but Bunter ---

So the next wonderful tale is "Good-bye, Bunter!" Bunter is sent home so that he can't talk and drop a warning to the suspected Courtfield Cracksman. This glorious series goes on next month. It is a very long series - but not a word too long for me.

During the month we all spent a week-end at Richmond with my mother's cousin, and on the Saturday night we went to Richmond Theatre to see the play "The Trial of Mary Dugan" which was excellent, all about the murder of a man named Rice, and Mary Dugan was put on trial for it. The curtain is up when you go in the theatre, and it never comes

down. The whole thing is a trial, and at each performance 12 members of the audience are selected to sit on the stage in the jury-box and bring in a verdict. On the night we were there, the verdict was "not guilty". I expect it always is. It has also been made into a film with Norma Shearer as Mary Dugan, but it isn't released yet. I may go to see it when it comes round.

Two fine tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. "War With Highcliffe" and "Jimmy Joins Up". The latter is the very first Rookwood tale in which Jimmy Silver goes to Rookwood. I loved it.

The last trams ran in Maidstone on 12th February. They have been replaced by trolley-buses, I think. I am so sorry that so many tramways are closing down.

The Popular has been very good again all the month. The Rio Kid stories have been grand. The series about the outlaw, Black George, came to a close with "The Mystery of the Marshal" and "Trapping an Outlaw". The Kid trapped Blake George who was, as I had felt sure, the marshal of Kicking Mule. And justice, swift and sure, was meted out to "Black George".

The Kid stayed on at the Bar-One Ranch, in the bunch of the kindly ranch owner, Colonel Sanderson. The next two stories, forming a lovely pair, are "The Rio Kid's New Pal" and "Yuba Dick's Last Game". The Kid's new friend, Yuba Dick, is an inveterate gambler, but he learns his lesson at long last. And as the month ends, the Kid is still on the Bar-One Ranch.

The Rookwood series is the one where Jimmy and Lovell fall out, Jimmy resigns the captaincy, and Lovell becomes a candidate for the post. The Greyfriars series about Ragged Dick has now ended and Greyfriars has left the Popular - at any rate for the time being - and is being replaced by St. Jim's. The long stories about Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake carry on, and they are quite good. I don't think these can be new tales, but I am not quite sure where they come from.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S. O. L. No. 117 entitled "War With Highcliffe" comprised a red Magnet "Trouble With Highcliffe" from January 1914, plus a number of chapters from a much earlier red Magnet from the autumn of 1910 entitled "Harry Wharton's 'Pro'". In the latter story Tottenham Hotspur plays Loamshire United, whose star player is Jack Neville, a pro footballer. Harry Wharton becomes friendly with him. Ponsonby's team, with three old boys

playing for them, challenges Wharton's team, which seems to indicate a big licking for Greyfriars - but Jack Neville plays for Wharton's side. A number of the Tottenham Hotspur players of the day are mentioned, and Jack Neville is referred to as "a real Bloomer". So, maybe, Bloomer, was the Keegan of his day.

No. 118 of the S.O.L. "Jimmy Joins Up" comprised the first four Rookwood stories from the Boys' Friend of 1915.)

* * * * *

WARWICK SETFORD

As we sadly recorded last month, our loyal reader, Warwick Setford of Derby died suddenly not long before Christmas. It was a poignant factor that our last issue also contained a letter from Mr. Setford as well as two hobby announcements from his pen.

Warwick was only 28 years old, but he had been an enthusiastic reader of C.D. for a long time. He had been a devotee of the work of Charles Hamilton from 8 years old, and he had instilled the same keenness into the heart of his younger brother, Julian, aged 11.

Warwick's father, Mr. Randolph Setford, intends to carry on the hobby in Warwick's place, just as his elder son would have wished.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Setford in their great loss.

* * * * *

NELSON LEE COLUMN

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

There was a letter waiting for me when I reached St. Frank's. It was from a dedicated reader of St. Frank's College history who had sent me a list of questions that demanded answers. The questions related to boys who used to be mentioned in the chronicles - and also girls - who appeared to have faded into limbo.

Here is the reply to my devoted St. Frank's admirer.

"Jepson, Bonner, Langley and Fiske have all left St. Frank's."

"The Village medico prior to Dr. Brett was a cheery little fat man whose name was Dr. Banham."

"The Lytton Trust Scholarship junior, Burnett, is still at the School. But he is somewhat an obscure boy and this is the reason he seldom appeared in the narratives."

"Yes, you are quite correct, Edgar Fenton's sister, Margaret,

was mentioned at the time of The Treasure of El Safra affair. The writer described her rather strangely for a girl. 'Fenton's sister was a year younger, and was plump and not pretty in the least. Still, she was merry and everybody likes her.'

"Frinton too had a sister. She was mentioned in the (First) South Seas adventure No. 160; and also No. 267 Old series."

"Then there's Miss Connie Farman who is the sister of J. B. Farman. Miss Connie remains in what has been catalogued as The Wild West series."

"The senior, Haddock, left St. Frank's some time ago."

"The junior, Noys, is no longer at St. Frank's; his people have taken him away for some reason."

"I have to admit that Winnie Pitt, sister to Reggie, was never mentioned during the Pitt family misfortune."

"Re the 'temporary' expulsion of Guy Sinclair set down in No. 560. It appears strings were pulled to get this senior re-admitted for he is still at St. Frank's."

"Violet Watson stayed with her uncle Benjamin during her brother's 'imprisonment' at Moat Hollow."

"Gordon Wallace, who came to St. Frank's from the River House School, returned after only three weeks. This was no relation to the Wallace who died at St. Frank's later on."

"Regarding Vera Zingrave, step-daughter to Professor Zingrave, I have no information."

Well, that's all for the time being. I am always at your service and will assist where I can.

THE WILLIAM K. SMITH SERIES

by R. J. Godsave

Life in the 1920's was in many ways free and easy. That is to say, that such restrictions of the individual as exist today did not exist in those far off days. No. 445 o.s. of the Nelson Lee Library "The Invasion of St. Frank's" was published towards the end of February 1924. This was the beginning of the William K. Smith series in which the whole countryside around St. Frank's was threatened by this German-American millionaire who bought up land as far from St. Frank's as Caistowe for the purpose of making a big industrial centre

for the manufacture of his own products.

All this meant that Mr. Smith would encroach on the school preserves by his ugly factories and noisy works, apart from the influx of foreign labourers who would be quartered near St. Frank's.

Needless to say, the whole school was up in arms against this intrusion on the ancient school preserves. By manipulating the stock market Mr. Smith proved that he could literally ruin some of the St. Frank's governors. This in turn forced the resignation of Dr. Stafford as headmaster, to be replaced by Mr. Ponsonby Small, a nominee of William K. Smith. Having bought out the River House School for £10,000 with the proviso that all Dr. Hogge's pupils must be found accommodation. Due to his having Mr. Ponsonby Small as headmaster of St. Frank's it was easy to arrange temporary accommodation for the River House boys.

Nowadays, none of this could have happened. Planning permission would certainly not have been given to build on the rich farmland. The figure of £10,000 for the purchase of the River House School in 1924 would appear ludicrous in this last quarter of the century. It would certainly not buy the smallest terrace house in the London area at all events.

An exciting series, although somewhat violent, with the Remove barring-out against Mr. Ponsonby Small. Once again Willard's Island came into its own as a stronghold for the rebel Remove. How Mr. William K. Smith completely lost control of his workforce and the attempt by them to burn down St. Frank's makes excellent reading.

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Many thanks are due to our Editor for his unfailing work in producing our monthly Digest and also for the excellent Annual, and thanks go to the Sexton Blake contributors to both these publications. Its rather wonderful how so much can still be written about our Hobby after so many years. A tribute to all concerned. I could do with a few more articles for future issues of Blakiana so perhaps you could get down to it whilst the weather makes it almost

impossible to go out anywhere. At the moment it cannot make up its mind whether to rain or snow. All we can do is to remain by our fires and look forward to some sunshine in the Spring.

LADY IN DISTRESS

by J.E.M.

Of the many lovely ladies encountered by Sexton Blake, very few were merely decorative. Indeed, most of them displayed a ruthless ambition that the toughest male might envy. One has only to recall the doughty Mlle. Yvonne, the savage Marie Galante or the formidable Olga Nasmyth to be reminded that most of the women in Blake's life were not just pretty faces. As a contributor to these pages once pointed out, the typical Blakian female had won her battle for emancipation long before the era of Women's Lib. Whether as allies or adversaries of our detective, they rarely invited pity or protection.

However, an interesting exception to this remarkable breed made her bow in Detective Weekly in 1933. Her name was Elsa von Kravitch and she was the brainchild of G. H. Teed, the supreme creator of interesting female characters in the Saga. Elsa did share with the rest of the Blakian sisterhood the qualities of dazzling beauty and singleness of purpose. But she differed sharply by living entirely in the shadow of a larger and more ruthless figure - her criminal father, the Baron von Kravitch.

With a devotion as flawless as her good looks, Elsa was dedicated to protecting her no-good parent from what, in truth, were his just deserts. There never was a more self-sacrificing daughter. As her creator explains: 'The girl was linked to her father by ties that she would not, or could not, break. He (Blake) knew ... that while her father needed her she would follow him, no matter into what depths he led her ... It was a tragedy that one so young and lovely should ... suffer at the hands of one she loved, always in striving to defend him to arouse his hate ...'

This affecting extract is from Perilous Pearls (DW No. 12) which tells of the abominable Baron's plot to defraud an insurance company. The scheme embroils an ex-jewel thief, 'Flash' Jim Brady who, not surprisingly, begins to fall for the ravishing Elsa's charms. (Most of Teed's ladies proved irresistible to mortal men; if Blake

himself could get emotionally steamed up by so many of these sirens, what chance had a mere reformed criminal?)

Framed by the Baron as part of the attempted fraud, poor Flash Jim has his affection for Elsa sorely tested. Of course, the Baron's scheme is frustrated but only after some unusually smart work by Blake who demonstrates a remarkable knowledge of precious stones. The story is also enlivened by a number of what used to be called "breath-taking incidents". Tinker and his motorbike take an unintended dive from Vauxhall Bridge into the Thames, the Baron cold-bloodedly murders an accomplice and there is a dramatic shoot-out with the law: automatic pistols versus a sub-machine gun. The Baron escapes only after a roof-top leap which, judging from a lively illustration by Eric Parker, could have graced one of those old film serials.

Perilous Pearls was not the first (or last) episode in the relatively brief saga of Elsa von Kravitch and her father but it was, perhaps, the best-plotted and most exciting. Teed, of course, wrote better-known tales about the fair sex in the pages of the Union Jack and Sexton Blake Library - the chronicles of Yvonne and Roxane are obvious examples - but Elsa von K. is interesting for more than her role as unwilling accomplice and tragic heroine. For once, in a Teed story, Sexton Blake does not get romantically involved with his 'leading lady'. Indeed, he becomes something of a protector and father-figure - almost a substitute for her real father.

There is another point of interest. Detective Weekly introduced into the Blakian saga only three new characters of any consequence. The first and most notable of these was Blake's own wastrel brother, Nigel, the creation of Lewis Jackson. The other two were the Baron von Kravitch and his daughter and if the Baron himself is a fairly run-of-the-mill rogue, it is arguable that Elsa is one of G. H. Teed's more memorable young ladies - if only because, like Little Nell, she is so determined to jerk our tears.

(The von Kravitch series: DW 3, The Silent Woman; DW 6, The Chocolate King Mystery; DW 12, Perilous Pearls; DW 22, The Banker's Box.)

A UNION JACK MYSTERY FOR SEXTON BLAKE by Gordon Hudson

After reading The Man with Two Faces in Union Jack No. 882 from Mrs. Packman's Library, I turned to page 18 to the serial The Fighting Scot by Walter Edwards. A young boxer Reddy MacFarlane, unjustly accused of murder, gets a job on a tramp steamer and leaves England. In this episode he reaches Barbados and wanders around, arriving outside a hut where a native social function is in progress. I read down the page until I reached the last paragraph which commenced. "The dancers continued to give undivided attention to the portable refreshment-bar . . ." and then turned to page 19 to read the rest. It wasn't there! Nor was it on page 20. Both pages were full of adverts. I looked back through the issue to see whether it had been included in any previous page, but no, there was nothing. So this episode ended in mid-sentence. Evidently a printer's error, or - sudden thought - could it have been censored? Did something diabolical happen which the editor belatedly decided was unsuitable for young minds! However, whatever the reason, this left me extremely curious. What happened to the remainder of the episode? Was it continued in the next issue where this one left off, or was there a gap? Does anyone know? I must obtain Union Jack No. 883 to see if this has the answer. If not, perhaps we should call in Sexton Blake Investigations to find out what really happened!

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 160 - Magnets 1247-54 - Flip Series

Charles Hamilton found a perennial fascination in waifs, especially those in the Romantic tradition beloved of Sir Walter Scott, those long-lost relatives who had been kidnapped as young boys. The last manifestation of this unfailing interest was the post-war set of stories featuring Jack of All Trades, whose real identity was hinted at but never revealed, in order to spin out a series of tales that never in fact reached any final conclusion. One of the most interesting waifs of the Golden Age of the Magnet was Flip.

The Flip series began as a postscript to the 1931 Christmas

series at Mauleverer Towers. Bunter was lost in the fog and snow, and a young pickpocket gave him food and shelter. Flip, incidentally, was a most unusual pickpocket in that he studied Latin in his spare time. Bunter later saved his life by pulling him out of a frozen lake when the ice cracked, and Lord Mauleverer, at Bunter's instigation, persuaded his guardian to send Flip to Greyfriars.

There was an entirely novel aspect to this series, in that Flip firmly believed that Bunter was a real gentleman and a hero who had risked his life to save him and was generously financing Flip's education at Greyfriars. Flip's devotion to Bunter was utilised several times in this series, which, like all the best Magnet series, developed in new and interesting ways from week to week. One unique episode, for instance, was when Bunter suggested to the Famous Five that before they opened their letters they should agree to share any tips inside them. To Bunter's surprise and dismay, his was the only letter to contain a remittance, and there was something very odd about that remittance, as later events were to reveal.

After Bunter had given Mr. Quelch a cold by mopping inky water over him, in mistake for Walker, a temporary master arrived, Mr. Lagden. Flip recognised him as Jimmy the One, a cracksman, and warned him to leave. The consequence was that Flip disappeared from Greyfriars, and the scene was set for a tussle between the Inspector from Scotland Yard and Mr. Lagden. As the identity of the criminal was not concealed from the reader at all, the interest lay in the battle of wits between them, and this aspect of this series made it superior in that particular respect to the Courtfield Cracksman or Lamb series, where the surprise ending was really no surprise at all. Needless to say, Flip was re-united with his family at the end of the tale, and went off happily, sad though he was to see the last of his benefactor, William George Bunter.

* * * * *

MUSINGS ON SOME SERIES

by F. R. Lowe

I am a great admirer of Charles Hamilton and his writings and I have now read over nine hundred genuine Hamilton stories over the years, that is, of Greyfriars.

Whilst having read avidly, as a lad, the Magnet, Gem, Nelson Lee, and occasionally the Popular, from 1925 until the end of the Magnet in 1940, I can remember certain things concerning some series which, to my thinking, rather spoiled a few of them for me. Although I was rather critical then as a lad, I used to pass them over. When I re-read these particular yarns now, as an adult, they seem to stand out more than ever and I can see more clearly how they could have been improved, in my view.

To quote a few of these, in the first South Seas series, the finding of the chart floating around in the middle of the South Seas was rather too much for me. It seemed to turn the Pacific into just a large lake. Otherwise this was an excellent series. Then there was the Strong Alonzo series which was well nigh impossible, I never did care for any story about boys with wonderful and extraordinary powers, but I suppose they suited some lads. And the 'doubles' series (Wally and Billy Bunter, etc.) were rather far fetched - I liked the 'possible in real life' stories best - although these particular series were well written and made good reading in their own way. The Courtfield Cracksman series was too painfully long for me and likewise the Lancaster series, in which I thought Coker and the Famous Five were a little slow in jumping to the truth about Lancaster. Hamilton, to my mind, always made his villains and crooks far too obvious, both in the Magnet and Gem.

Series which were also too long were the Hiking series, the Water Lily - with too much Ponsonby, and the Lamb series. The Wild West series was exciting, but just a little too long. Reading these Magnets week by week became rather a bore, and too much repetition. Each of these long series mentioned could have been condensed into six or eight Magnets, and would have been more readable. Sometimes I thought these series were never going to end, especially the second Wharton the Rebel series. On the other hand, long series like the China and the American series were excellent, probably because things were more fast-moving, with more going on.

The Bunter Court and the Loder-Captain series, and the first Wharton the Rebel series were brilliant, with wonderfully contrived plots. The Brander Rebellion series was very good, and just the right length. The Krantz Congo series, with nine issues, was fine. I was

never all that thrilled about impersonation yarns; but Ponsonby's effort as a Headmaster in the High Oaks series was highly incredible - but good fun. The early single story about Wibley paying a visit to Highcliffe as Mr. Mobbs was first rate - I still enjoy reading about him giving the 'nuts' a high old time. I always found that a lot of the single stories seemed to be forgotten after a while, where a series tended to stick in one's memory.

The Egyptian series was thrilling but would have been better concluded by the Greyfriars juniors discovering the Eye of Osiris, or a guide to it, themselves - for it seemed so very obvious that the scarab contained the secret. Another holiday series, the Brazil trip, was quite good. Some rather far-fetched tales of St. Frank's did not appeal to me, especially when the juniors were abroad. The series about Ezra Quirke, the Schoolboy Magician is reputed to be a good one, but it contained too many unexplained mysteries to be realistic - such a lot left for the imagination. An extra Nelson Lee was needed to explain the 'magic' in full. And the 'Death' of Walter Church, which is dubbed as a good series, was much too morbid reading for boys, with far too much consternation by Handforth.

Certain good series of St. Frank's, which do linger in my mind, are the Trumble Rebellion, the Moat Hollow, The Fresh Air Fiends, the Congo, the India and Handforth's Barring-Out.

However, as most old readers of Hamilton and E.S.B. yarns will agree, for all the almost impossible incidents, the little flaws and slips, and there were plenty, that appeared in the old school stories, the lads of my day never really bothered a lot, and I dare say this goes for the lads before us, although we all had our likes and dislikes, and the dislikes were mostly to be found in substitute tales, where the Magnet and Gem were concerned.

* * * * *

MAGNETS WANTED: for binding - good ones only please. Nos. 1652, 1654, 1380, 1386, 1389, 1395, 1396, 1397, 1400, 1401.

B. SIMMONDS, 4 NUTFIELD RD., LONDON N.W.2., 7EB.

* * * * *

WANTED REALLY WANTED: Two issues of the Magnet, Nos. 948, 949. Any help will be greatly appreciated, believe me. Thank you.

H. W. VERNON, 5 GILLMAN ST., CHELTENHAM, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3192.

REVIEWS

"BOB CHERRY - SWOT"

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker £12)

This volume is one of the Howard Baker "Specials", and, needless to say, the production is perfect in every way. It is a book to cherish for all time.

So far as the contents go, it is hard to think of any way in which it could be bettered. For one thing, it contains two complete series, each of which is restrained in length and showing the great story-writer at the peak of his powers. We have the five story series concerning Bob Cherry at loggerheads with his best pals, plus the four story Christmas series in which Coker is kidnapped by his uncle's secretary, a wily piece of work who, almost incredibly, is yet another Poynings. It ends with a novel festive season when the Famous Five take part in "Coker's Christmas Party".

Both series come from the year 1926, a year for which original copies have always been most difficult to acquire. Furthermore, apart from a sub story which divided them in 1926, the two series run consecutively - an added attraction in a volume of this kind.

In my view, the Bob Cherry series must be a smash-hit, all these years later, more so than when it first appeared. It is, in some ways, a re-run of the first Wharton, Rebel, series, though it is less sombre. I am convinced that in 1926 it was not particularly popular. For one thing, it came too soon after the Rebel series. For another, Bob Cherry was not the type of character to become involved in misunderstandings as Wharton did.

Major Cherry is not satisfied that his son is working hard enough at school, and he plays the heavy father with a vengeance. Bob must work for and win the Head's Latin Prize - or leave Greyfriars. And, as Bob settles down to a term of hard work, he falls out with his former friends - and one even finds him nicknamed "The Deserter" for playing football for the Fourth against the Remove.

The writing of this major series is superb, and its appeal to adults, more than 60 years after it was written, must be great.

The Christmas series, starring Coker, which follows the Swot series, provides a splendid contrast in mood and atmosphere, just as it did in 1926. As in the best of Hamilton mysteries, there is really no mystery for the reader, who is clever enough to spot what is going on - and it's all most satisfactory. The character work is delightful, when Coker vanishes. The Head suggests that Coker's friends might like to stay on at school, and organise searches for the missing Horace. Potter and Greene have other engagements, pack their bags, and depart. The Famous Five take over, and succeed where the police have failed. And Bunter, without being too ubiquitous in this series, earns his place in Coker's Christmas Party.

Way back in 1912, Coker's younger brother, Reggie, had come on the scene, and, because he was far more brainy than Horace, Reggie went into the Sixth Form, much to the mortification of Horace. It was definitely a one-story situation, such as could become an embarrassment to the author later. Coker Minor almost disappeared from the Greyfriars

scene after his initial appearance, but he plays his part - a neat little one - in this 1926 series now taking its fresh bow. So far as I can remember, it was his last notice in the Magnet.

A grand book for the lover of Greyfriars, and for admirers of Frank Richards in top form.

THE WORK OF E. H. SHEPARD

(Review by Mary Cadogan)

Edited by Rawle Knox

(Methuen £10.50)

This large and beautifully illustrated book will appeal to many readers of *Collectors' Digest*. It deals with the life and work of Ernest Shepard who is of course known as the man who drew Winnie the Pooh and Christopher Robin for the A. A. Milne stories and verses. This book is a fitting centenary tribute to an artist who has touched the lives of several generations of children with a sense of cosy and carefree magic. Although Shepard is not usually associated with tales of school, it was in fact his illustrations for 'Tom Brown's Schooldays' in 1904 that first established his reputation as a portrayer of youth; he went on to illustrate Hugh Walpole's 'Jeremy' in 1919.

As this book shows, his output was prolific. In his early career Shepard was an artist of many different styles from the caricature to the formal study. There are sketches of relatives that he produced at the age of ten and some fascinating late-Victorian and Edwardian street and domestic scenes. Especially intriguing are the passages on Shepard's army service during the Great War, and the reproduction of his robust cartoons during this period.

Shepard joined the regular staff of *Punch* in 1921 and it was in this magazine that Milne's 'When We Were Very Young' first appeared - from January to June, 1924. Shepard illustrated these verses with precision and charm, and of course the partnership proved to be a long and fruitful one. The book contains a fine selection, in colour and in black and white, of Shepard's drawings of Pooh, Piglet, Eeyore and Christopher Robin; also of his celebrated pictures for Kenneth Grahame's 'The Wind in the Willows'. His other considerable achievements in the world of art are well represented. The Work of E. H. Shepard is an expensive book, but well worth buying - or borrowing from the library.

* * * * *

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 71. THE THREE MUSKETEERS

We opened the new term with an excellent gangster drama from Warner Bros: "Key Largo", starring Humphrey Bogart, Edward G. Robinson and Lauren Bacall. In the same bill was a Warner collection of Larry Semon antics entitled "Anything for Laughter", and I reckon it was a joy. Larry Semon had been a big

attraction in 2-reel comedies in silent cinemas, and I can recall that, as a child, I had sat rocking with laughter in my half-ninepenny seat. I feel sure that Semon's career had ended long before the Small Cinema ever existed, though I know that he appeared, with Oliver Hardy, in a full length silent version of

"The Wizard of Oz". I have an idea that his main place was in what were known as 2LO comedies, though my memory may be playing tricks.

Also, in this bill, was a Bugs Bunny coloured cartoon "Easter Yeggs".

Next week, also from Warner's, came a big Technicolor production "The Flame and the Arrow", starring Burt Lancaster and Virginia Mayo. It was a Robin Hood type of story, with plenty of energy to entertain youthful audiences, though it wasn't a patch on the Errol Flynn "Robin Hood" which we had played years earlier. The star system, which had packed cinemas all over the world for so long, was ending, and it might be true to say that Burt Lancaster was one of the first of the last of them. Also in this programme was a new coloured Tom & Jerry cartoon "Jumbo and Jerry".

Next, yet again from Warner's, came Joel McCrea and Virginia Mayo in "Colorado Territory". It was a re-make of a Bogart film "High Sierra" which we had played some years earlier, and, as usual, the new version, though pretty good, was not a patch on the Bogart film.

In a big supporting bill was a Bugs Bunny colour cartoon "Hare Do", a couple of comedies, and a coloured Sports Parade.

Next, another of the big M. G. M. Musicals in Technicolor: "On an Island With You" starring Esther Williams, Peter Lawford and Ricardo Montalban, and with Jimmy Durante popping on and off. It was spectacular, too long, and not very memorable. A coloured cartoon in that bill was "Foghorn Leghorn".

Next, also from M. G. M. Robert

Taylor and Elizabeth Taylor in "Conspirator". This one was made in England, and had a big supporting British cast including Honor Blackman, Thora Hird, and a lot more. I can remember something about a very nice husband who, in secret, was a spy. I fancy it went down pretty well in the Small Cinema, though nobody else ever had a good word for it. A coloured cartoon in the same bill was "Bad Luck Blackie".

Next, from M. G. M., the magnificent Technicolor film "The Three Musketeers". Very long and very lush, I don't think it was particularly true to Dumas, but it was great entertainment. Leading the cast were Gene Kelly, June Allyson and Lana Turner.

A Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon in the supporting programme was "Mouse Mazurka".

Then from Warner Bros., an excellent drama: "Flamingo Road" starring Joan Crawford and Zachary Scott. Joan Crawford was now with Warner, after her long career with M. G. M., and in "Flamingo Road" she had much the same supporting cast as she had in the similar "Mildred Pierce" which we had played a year or two earlier from Warner's.

A new Tom & Jerry colour cartoon was "The Invisible Mouse", a Technicolor interest was "Jungle Terror" and a Pete Smith novelty was "Crashing the Movies".

Finally another big Technicolor Musical from M. G. M.: "Words & Music". This was a biography of an American song-writing team, and Micky Rooney was allegedly miscast as one of the men. He seemed pretty good to me. A glossy

and very long film, with a flimsy framework of a story and any amount of forgettable songs. Nearly all the M.G.M. singing stars, including Judy Garland, Gene Kelly, and June Allyson made fleeting

appearances in song and dance routines, but it was not a strikingly good Musical.

In support was a coloured cartoon "The Cuckoo Clock".

(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS
SERIES NEXT MONTH)

* * * * *

News of the Old Boy's Book Club

LONDON

In the Collectors' Digest Annual for 1970, there was a very fine article by Mary Cadogan and which was entitled Cliff House School. Thus the first item in the entertainment side of the highly successful Kingsbury meeting was some choice remarks by Mary who stated that this was her tenth anniversary of joining the club. From that time, Mary has never looked back and as is now well-known has some very fine literary efforts to her credit. The company present then drank a sherry toast to the continued progress of the club, and the C.D., and C.D. Annual.

A photostat copy of the Guardian article that was written by Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig about the centenary of the Girls' Own Paper was available for perusal and Mary played over a tape of the B.B.C. radio programme. Then came a slide lecture on the various fairy tale papers and books of yesteryear given by Mary with Bob Blythe being the projectionist.

Laurie Sutton read several short excerpts from the forthcoming book "Greyfriars For Grown-Ups" which he has compiled and which will be published by Howard Baker next April. If the excerpts that were read were any criterion, the book should have a good sale amongst the many Hamiltonians.

Bob Blythe read extracts from the January 1963 newsletter when the meeting was held at Isaac Litvak's home at Ashford, Middlesex. Bob and Louise Blythe were thanked for their hospitality and those present

had the pleasure of seeing Michelle, their new grand-daughter. Another grandfather present was Eric Lawrence who recently saw the arrival of his grandson David James.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday, 10th February, next at 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, S.E.22. Kindly inform Josie if intending to be present. Telephone 693-2844. Bring your own tuck.

BENJAMIN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 12th January, 1980

Our first meeting of the Orwell decade (as I suppose it is likely to be labelled) was held in rather chill and foggy conditions. Happily, only one of the faithful was prevented from attending.

Keith Atkinson had brought along two beautiful bound volumes of the Gem from the early reprint period which provoked much envious admiration; Mollie had a full and interesting post-bag to read to us; one item in the minutes prompted general hilarity, though the Chairman professed himself baffled; and a certain speculative interest was shown in a photograph of Darrell Swift screen-testing for the part of The Claw in a Hollywood B-feature.

After which, appropriately, Norman Smith had brought the Magnet's Hollywood series for the evening's reading, which was undertaken by Geoffrey Good. The passage selected by Norman featured Bunter at his most fatuous and the American quick-buck grabber at his most unprincipled. Geoffrey's American accent immediately assured him of a nomination for this year's Oscar awards; it was a performance which would get him arrested on the spot if he tried it in Teheran.

An enjoyable meeting included the usual refreshments and lively Discussion Time. Who said northerners were taciturn?

Next meeting: Saturday, 9th February.

JOHNNY BULL

CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at the Willingham home of Keith Hodkinson on Sunday, 6th January, 1980.

The main feature of the meeting, which was principally devoted

to films, was the premiere of Keith's film of the story of the "Boys' Own Paper". This film, originally intended by Keith to be a fifteen minute tribute to the B.O.P., had become a 53 minute film history of the paper. It was given an enthusiastic reception by the Club and Keith was warmly congratulated on such an epic effort. This very detailed account, in sound and colour, had taken just over twelve months to make.

After enjoying the ample tea provided by Keith and Mrs. Hodgkinson, the film programme was resumed, with films of a more personal angle. A delightful film of Jack Overhill's son and daughter's swimming feats when they were young, was followed by films of the Club visit to Dick Turpin's birthplace. Keith concluded the display with film of the Club visit to Neville and Ruth Wood at Sweffling last year. Arrangements were made for the next meeting, and the meeting closed with a very warm vote of thanks to Keith and Mrs. Hodgkinson for their hospitality and renewed congratulations to Keith on his fine film.

* * * * *

The Postman Called

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

Mrs. MARY CADOGAN (Beckenham): I greatly appreciated the C.D. Annual this year. The standard of the articles seemed to be especially interesting and lively. As always I enjoyed Mr. Buddle's latest adventure and the way in which it was related to the Hamilton stories. By the way, has there ever been a picture of Mr. Buddle? It would be fun to invite artists amongst C.D. readers to send in their versions of him - and to see if any of these corresponded with the author's mental picture of this sleuthing schoolmaster.

I liked Les Rowley's 'End of Term Report'; his rekindling of the Greyfriars atmosphere makes him far and away my favourite 'substitute' Hamilton writer. And of course I always enjoy Roger Jenkins' articles on the Hamilton schools: it was nice that he used a St. Jim's theme this time, instead of one from the Magnet as he usually does. As always the Annual gave us a nice balance of Hamiltonia, Blakiana and St. Frank's - and of course I was very glad that the Cliff House and Morcove flags were kept flying by Tommy Keen.

ERIC RUFFLE (Woking): In this 1979 Annual I found much of interest and entertainment. My wife and I were alone on Christmas Day and then I thoroughly enjoyed reading 'The Mischief Maker'. Had never read the 'Tell-Tale' and the 1932 reprint.

'The End of Term Report' was very amusing and Jack Overhill vividly described the pre-war and World War Days. 'The Birth of the Magnet' and the Thomson papers story were both very interesting.

Having a lot of nostalgia for steam locomotives (still have cards of the engines of the British companies of pre-World War days sent to me when a boy) I was thrilled with the pencil drawing of the G. W. R. King class. How many years ago I was thrilled at S.R. monsters roaring through Woking!

And I could praise still more of the Annual's contents with happy memories for the reader.

RON BECK (Lewes): I was very interested in your comments in this month's C.D. about proof-reading. I started my career in "print" in 1930 as an apprentice on letterpress printing machines. My wage for the first year was eight shillings a week, that rose in my seventh and final year of apprenticeship to £1.15s.0d. a week. In April 1980 I will have completed fifty years in the trade, all spent with the same company, of which over twenty years have been in the proof-reading department, so, as I do make my living reading proofs, I think I must be a professional proof-reader. I have in my possession several hundred Magnets and Gems plus many other examples of Hamilton's works, such as Rio Kid and King of the Islands stories, and having over the years read them not once but many times, I fully agree with you that errors, taking into consideration the many millions of words that make up these stories, are very, very few. Whether this is due to Hamilton himself or to the expertise of the type-setters and the proof-readers, we have no way of knowing.

I also know from my own experience and also that of my colleagues, how easy it is to accept not what is printed, but what should be, as you have yourself.

I also possess a complete set of C.D's and Annuals, so I would like to finish off by congratulating you for the very few errors that have

managed to creep through.

PHILIP HARRIS (Montreal): Congratulations on the excellent December issue of the Digest - a real Yuletide mixture. Also to Mr. H. Webb for his very seasonable cover. Am unable to comment on the Annual yet, as I am still anticipating its arrival. It will be "devoured" when it does arrive. I loved your remarks regarding the "humiliating" system of boys being addressed by their surnames. I could not agree with you more strongly - surnames it always was. I think I would have had the proverbial pink fit had I been addressed by my Christian name. I shudder to think of it. Frankly I have never given it much thought until I chuckled over your comments.

JACK OVERHILL (Cambridge): A good-all-round Annual this year and a fine cover picture by Harry Webb to enchant us all. I liked The Mischief-Maker, which I read at Christmas as the Slade stories have now become seasonable with me, but Mr. Buddle seemed rather out of character in his failure to unravel the mystery of Tammadge's mischief-making. In the past he's shown himself a rival to Sexton Blake.

I think Slade is best portrayed when it exists in its own right, with nothing about Greyfriars or St. Jim's coming into the story beyond Mr. Buddle's absorbing interest in the Gem. So, mind what you're up to next year!

TOM PORTER (Cradley Heath): I was charmed by the reference to Cradley Heath trams in the December C.D. My grandfather, who came to Cradley Heath in 1873 travelled on the last tram to Dudley fifty years ago tonight, 31st December, 1979.

G. HUDSON (Durham): Some time ago you included some notes on the correct name for the story papers. A colleague in the office recently mentioned that he always referred to them as "books". When he said this I remembered that my father usually called them this, or sometimes just "papers", and he did not call them comics.

This same colleague, who apparently took the Skipper, also mentioned "The Phantom of Cursitor Fields", which he said seemed to run on for years. I was able to show him the notes about this in the

C.D. and he was most interested.

Once again I have received the Annual, and find there is plenty to interest me. I was rather pleased to see a long article on Sexton Blake stories by Anthony Parsons. I am a Blake fan (not forgetting Greyfriars and St. Jim's, of course) so it was particularly nice to see mentioned some of the stories I have read, and which I remember coming out every month. This does not in any way detract from my enjoyment of the Magnet and Gem, but as I am now seeing these papers for the first time, they do not have the same hold over me as the ones I can remember reading in the post-war years.

I enjoyed the Slade story. I would like to say, as others have before, that it would be nice to see these in book form.

GEOFFREY WILDE (Leeds): Touching on an item in your January issue: if J.E.M. cares to study Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's passage on Hamilton alongside Orwell's now-famous essay I am quite sure he will endorse the Northern Club's strictures. Hardy's "assessment" of Hamilton is a shameless straight lift from Orwell; he has clearly never looked for himself at a word that Hamilton wrote. I quite enjoyed his book, which may indeed be an important one, but a writer who so blatantly defaults on the obligations of scholarship sadly impairs his own credibility even where he is more reliable.

RONNIE HUNTER (Chilworth): How charming it was to see mention of the 1928 popular song "A Cottage for Sale" in the Editorial Chat, C.D. January 1980. This tune has, for years, been one of my great favourites and as an avid collector of 78's I still have - and treasure - amongst my collection, the version by Maurice Elwin (with orchestral accompaniment) on a ten-inch Zonophone.

Maurice Elwin first made records as a concert baritone in 1916 and subsequently became, according to my book, the first - if you like, the original - British "crooner". I wonder how many C.D. "Old Boys" (or perhaps "Old Girls") remember Maurice Elwin today?

For the record - not a pun - the reverse side of the 78 referred to (also sung by Maurice Elwin) is "Beside an open fireplace" and this 78 was one of a box of about twenty 10 inch Dance Band and vocal 78's of the late 1920's and early 1930's - all zonophone green labels and all

in brand new condition - which I picked up in a funny little second-hand shop in Rothesay, Isle of Bute, in the Clyde in 1941 when the ship on which I was serving at the time was briefly stationed there. I daresay the owner of the shop was glad to get rid of some of his old stock at that particular time and I recall that I was equally glad to take that stock off his hands. Many of those original zonophone 78's are no longer in my collection, but I still have several - including "A Cottage for Sale" which I could never bring myself to part with.

* * * * *

VOYAGE OF FANTASY

by Len Wormull

I have often wondered if I am alone among hobbyists in dreaming about the old papers. Not only dreaming about them, I would add, but also taking note of the remembered details on awakening. Like the occasion a short while back when I dreamt about the Magnet. It was by no means the first of such dreams, nor was it the only paper. The Nelson Lee has often got into the dream act, asserting its influence as of old. In each remembered version, as in actuality, the Magnet took the ascendancy over all comers. The dream pattern has remained constant ... I would be either pursuing or discovering the papers that most influenced me. I have met them in the strangest places, fought over them, seen them in unfamiliar guise. And I have gone back repeatedly to an imaginary source of supply. On the night in question, they were far from my thoughts when my head touched the pillow. Yet almost at once, or so it seemed, I was on my favourite hobby time-machine going back ... back ...

'... I was in some sort of junk shop rummaging around, in one of those completely alien locales which only dreams can manufacture. My motive for being there was soon apparent, for in no time at all I found them. The good thing about dreams is their way of overcoming all obstacles, no matter how absurd or impossible things may be. The situation is accepted without question. I just knew that the alcove high in the wall contained 'Magnets' and 'Populars', and I was right. I remembered their nice condition and how only the Magnet had changed. Each copy had the Magnet title a different colour, with an overpowering glittering effect. They were going at '3 for 24p' (this has to be a dream!),

and my only problem was not having enough ready cash to buy both lots of papers. The Magnet came first, and I was about to leave a deposit on the Populars, when something happened. A large batch of giant-sized Nelson Lees, in big black lettering, came suddenly into view from nowhere. The dream stayed long enough for me to switch the deposit to these.' Curious about the Popular, though. I was never more than a casual reader here, and those read were mostly used copies. Perhaps the few in my collection qualified them. The link: I used to pass a junk shop on the way to school which sold comics and the like. In later collecting years, I was to unearth a sizeable quantity of Boys' Friends from a similar place.

One of the most vivid and strangest dreams I had concerned red Magnets; strange in the sense that the 'red period' had come and gone before I was born, and that at the time I knew little about them. The venue was well-known to me ... the long line of bookstalls in Farringdon Road. My first job as office-boy was with a firm not far from the site, and many a lunch break was spent browsing there. An erudite's paradise, really, and completely unconnected with boys' papers. Until I had this dream. I was there again, still young, and sorting over some books. Suddenly I stopped dead. Beneath a pile of heavy tomes and jutting out, was a tied-up bundle of red Magnets. With suppressed excitement I pounced, only to be pushed roughly aside. Somebody else had seen them! A struggle for possession ensued, with books flying all over the place, until at last I held them triumphantly aloft. I remember the vanquished, an elderly gentleman, laughingly congratulating me. But don't ask me how much I paid for them, fellas, the dream faded.

A recurring dream goes back to a boyhood scene I knew so well. This was the market place in Tower Bridge Road, Bermondsey, and which in those days was separated into two parts. One contained the usual run of shops, with mostly fruit and veg. stalls outside, while the other was given over to secondhand stalls of every description. Tot-stalls was their more common name. These I found to be the most interesting. On Saturdays women would crowd the old clothes stalls, hoping to pick up something within their means. These were poor times in a poor district. Saturdays was also shopping time with mum, during

which we would break for lunch. There was no Lyons' Corner House, this being too classy for the area, but there was Manze's, the Eel & Pie shop. My favourite was Pie & Mash with Liquor. It became a Saturday ritual. However, the big attraction for me was a bookstall at the end of the market, to which I would make frequent visits. It was one of the kind we all look back on with affection. You name it, this one had it. I knew the stallholder as 'Frank', a tall, bespectacled gentleman who struck me as a good sort. Often he would put aside papers for me until called for. Through him I was able to build up a no mean collection of Magnets and Nelson Lees, which I kept locked up in a wooden box. I treasured them, and guarded them jealously against a depradating brother who treated them carelessly. A sad recollection was coming home one day and finding it broken into, and copies missing. In a fit of pique, I sold the lot back to Frank for a farthing each.

Oh yes, the dreams. The link was there yet in a strangely detached sort of way. There was a shop just behind where the stall used to stand which sold miscellaneous goods, but nothing in the way of periodicals. Inexplicably, I would make dream visits here in search of papers. I can remember a 'windfall' in Magnets and just missing another in Nelson Lees. One incident that sticks out is hammering on the shop door after it had closed. Not once did 'Frank' make a dream visitation. As a point of interest, the New Caledonian market functions every Friday on this very site.

There are of course numerous books on Dreams, and no doubt this type of dream is classified somewhere. The nearest I found comes under the heading "Books". In his book on Dreams, Interpreted, Gustavus Hindman Miller has this to say: "To dream of old books, is a warning to shun evil in any form." I should think that the old papers, with their high moral tone and dream-like charisma, were the finest purveyors of goodness to be found anywhere. Must go now, folks, it's getting near bed-time. Pleasant hobby dreams!

* * * * *

UNUSUAL TECS

by Harold Truscott

Further to Bill Thurbon's comments on exotic detectives and detective stories, may I add one or two more? First and foremost, one

of the perfectly rounded characters in English fiction, Jeffery Farnol's Bow Street runner, Jasper Shrig. Shrig appeared in many of Farnol's Georgian novels, *The Amateur Gentleman*, *Peregrine's Progress*, *Murder by Nail*, etc. If anyone wants to get briefly the full flavour of this fascinating man, let him read Chapter XXXI from *The Amateur Gentleman*, "which describes some of the evils of vindictiveness", and also tells of Mr. Shrig's "'at'", as in this extract:

'But a brick would have killed you just the same -'

'Killed me? A brick? Oh, no, sir!'

'But, if it had hit you on the head -'

'On the 'at, sir, the 'at - or as you might say - the castor - this, sir,' said Mr. Shrig; and glancing furtively up and down the gloomy alley he took off the broad-brimmed hat, 'just run your ogles over this 'ere castor o' mine, an' you'll understand, perhaps.'

'It's very heavy,' said Barnabas, as he took the hat.

'Ah, it is a bit 'eavyish, sir. Peep inside of it.'

'Why,' exclaimed Barnabas, 'it's lined with -'

'Iron, sir. My own invention agin vindictiveness in the shape o' bricks and bludgeons, an' werry useful an' comfortin' I've found it. But if they're going to begin on me with coping-stones - v'y, Lord!' And Mr. Shrig sighed his gentle sigh, and rubbed his placid brow, and once more covered it with the "invention".

Not so well-drawn but nonetheless one of the most interesting of off-beat detectives was Augustus S. F. X. Van Dusen, Jacques Futrelle's *The Thinking Machine*, who appeared in a series of well-thought out pieces of detection in 1907.

Yet another that comes to my mind is Roy Vickers' *Inspector Rasen and the Department of Dead Ends*. With this setting Vickers contributed, as one aspect of his work, some brilliant short detective stories, including at least one masterpiece, *The Rubber Trumpet*.

* * * * *

RUPERT, LITTLE BEAR

by Francis Hertzberg

After sixty years of appearances, Rupert, Little Bear, has long outlived most other children's heroes. Apart from the first fifteen years, Alfred Bestall has been responsible for both the daily appearances in the *Express* (until 1965) and the *Annual* (until this year), but in spite of his gentle love for the character, ironically it will be the work

of Mary Tourtel, who, like Conan Doyle, grew to hate her creation, which will continue to be re-printed, as the Express appear to have no desire to reproduce any of the vast amount of beautiful Bestall stories, and he, unlike Tourtel, in spite of the great share commercialisation of his work played in saving the Express during its financial difficulties, has not been given the copyright of that work so that another publisher might re-print it.



When Bestall took over he faithfully reproduced the Tourtel style, but largely moved away from the Tudor Black Forest setting so fitting for the Brothers Grimm scariness of much of the earlier work, to a softer Nutwood where the period was always that last long year before the Great War swept it away, a setting far more suitable for the gentle whimsy and child-like literalness which replaced magic and menace with moons that really were blue, nests made by real mares and secretary birds who were secretaries.

BILL'S AMUSEMENT ALLEY No. 10: Christmas Golden Stars Number, available for £1.15 including postage/packing. Limited back numbers still in stock. From -
BILL WRIGHT, 49 LENNOX RD., GRAVESEND, KENT, DA11 0EC.

DEATH OF AUSTRALIAN READER

We regret to record the death, in December, of Mr. A. G. Davidson of Melbourne, Australia. George Davidson was a keen Nelson Lee enthusiast, loved the Sexton Blake lore and had a lesser interest in Hamiltonia. He had been a loyal C.D. reader for nearly thirty years. At one time, his comments featured regularly in our columns, but failing health restricted his activities more recently.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his widow, Mrs. Dorrie Davidson.