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STORY PAPER

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# COLLECTORS DIGEST

Volume 34

Number 406

OCTOBER 1980

**"FOOTBALL FOES!"** AMAZING School Tale of HARRY WHARTON & Co. the Slaves of Drayton. **By Frank Richards**

# The Magnet



*—Bunter  
Hunts  
Cover!*

28p

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(London O.B.B.C.)

The largest collection of pre-war Hamiltonian material available for borrowing exists in the London Old Boys' Book Club. Over two thousand items are in the catalogue, and additions are constantly being made. The library restricts itself to Magnets, Gems, Populars, Schoolboys' Owns, and Boys' Friend monthly editions, a mouth-watering feast of reading covering the vintage years 1907-1940. The loan fees remain at the ridiculously low figure of one penny for a weekly paper and twopence for a monthly one because we aim to provide a service rather than to make a profit.

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# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

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Founded in 1941 by  
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

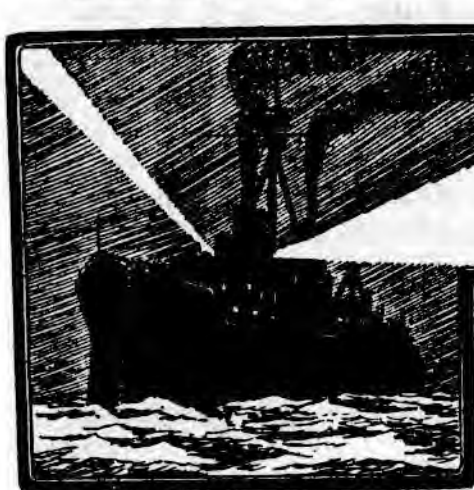
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## A Word from the Skipper.

"Joy which we cannot share with  
others is only half enjoyed"

### LOOK BACK AND WONDER

One quality of C.D. is that, every month, it produces, by way of its contributors, something to think about. When I read through the previous month's issue, I find invariably something which sets me wondering.

Our Nelson Lee Column referred to an editorial in that paper in which the parent of a reader begged "Dear Sid" to come home. That kind of thing must have been rare in our favourite papers after the First World War, but one finds plenty of messages of that description in the

papers which Hamilton Edwards edited in the first dozen years of this century. One cannot be completely sure that the messages were genuine - Edwards liked to present himself as a kind of father figure - but I tend to the view that, for the most part they may have been authentic.

Mr. Roger Sansom gave us a welcome look at Raffles. He mentions that George Barraud and David Niven played the part of "Raffles" on film. I have in my memory, which may be playing tricks, a picture of Ronald Colman as "Raffles" in a film of that name which played the Small Cinema some time in the early or mid thirties. Anyone else recall it?

Mr. Nic Gayle wrote on titles for stories which live on in the memory, while Danny, this month, thinking of titles like "K.K.K-Nabs the Kudos" (following on "K.K's K-ompany") comments "I hate these silly titles."

Were titles really important? I would join Mr. Gayle and say, very definitely "Yes, they were." In my view, the earlier titles were more impressive and memorable than those of the thirties and onward. I liked dramatic titles like "Baffled" and "The Hidden Horror", and "--Some Person Unknown". I liked the metaphorical titles like "The Parting of the Ways" and "The Call of the Prairies".

With exceptions, I do not care a lot for abstract titles like "Come Dark, Come Evil" and "Homicide Blues", titles in the later S.B.L. I often find that if I am seeking some story, of which I recall the plot, it eludes me if it was given an abstract title.

And I dislike the pretentious title where somebody tries to be funny, as in the K.K. titles which Danny mentions. That sort of thing came from editors whom today we would call "trendy". One Rio Kid tale was entitled "Rustlers K.O'd by Outlaw", which strikes me as awful.

"The Schoolboy Caravanner" of 1919 was reprinted nearly twenty years later as "Where's Our Caravan Rested?" which may have struck the editor as very clever and amusing, but left me cold.

### ODD MAN OUT

We often get mention in our pages of writers who, apart from Hamilton and Brooks, were famous in their way and in their limited time, for their stories of school life. When I was in my teens, though

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the Gem and Magnet always came first, I greatly enjoyed seeking out what we called the stiff-cover stories. Probably the most prolific writer of these was Harold Avery, who, I would think, wrote mainly for the younger boy in the 12 - 14 age range. One outgrew him, which was natural. I have many of his stories on my shelves, and one, in particular, "The Dormitory Flag", was excellent, though I haven't seen it mentioned for countless years.

I have mentioned before a story "The Enchanted Bat" which fascinated me for some thirty years. I always read it aloud - it is a short story in a collection of short stories - to my boys at the opening of our school Cricket Week at Surbiton. But in later years I lost it. I could not even remember who had written it, though I had a feeling it was by Reed. When I mentioned it in an editorial some years back, it was my dear friend, Mr. Ray Hopkins, who traced it for me at the British Museum, and, lo, and behold, to my real surprise it was by Harold Avery, included in his short story collection "A Toast Fag". And later, through the kindness of Mr. Norman Shaw, I became the proud owner again of "The Enchanted Bat" - after many years, as they used to say on the silent films.

I am digressing. For the older teenager, there were Wodehouse, Cleaver, and Hadath. And, for the adult, Desmond Coke, who was unsurpassed for character work in school life. His "Bending of a Twig" is a classic. An earlier tale of his, and a fine one, is "The School Across the Road". It is on my shelves, but I have never seen it referred to in our pages down the years.

Which brings me to the odd man out. His name is David L. Smith, and his book "The Reasedale School Mystery" has everything to fascinate the connoisseur of school stories. It is a splendid story, but in all my years as editor of this magazine, I can only recall one reader ever mentioning it - and I think that reader was Mr. Bert Holmes of Barrow, though I may be wrong.

Who Smith was, I have no idea. Whether his story was ever serialised in, say, the Captain, I cannot guess. I have often wondered whether he wrote anything else.

### THE ANNUAL

Our much loved Year Book is now taking shape, and it won't be

so very long before the postman will be handing it over to those who have ordered it in advance. It is packed with superb articles from all our favourite contributors, and I am sure it will brighten many Christmases. If you want a copy, don't leave it too late before you order your copy. We shall be able to print but very few extra to allow for late-comers who have forgotten to order in advance.

### THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

The Princess got squeezed out of C.D. last month, and imagine my surprise when dozens of readers wrote to ask where she had got to. Even at our club meeting at Leytonstone, which I was privileged to attend, a number of readers, more in sorrow than in anger, had me on the carpet for leaving out Princess Snowee. In fact, odd though it may seem, her Corner, which came about after a suggestion from our good friend, Mr. Tom Porter, has been one of the C.D. successes of the year.

A neighbour who dropped in on us recently for a chat gave us the information that everybody in the immediate district knows Princess Snowee. "She's the Boss Cat!" said our visitor. Which may be the reason why we never see any other cat visiting our garden. Come to think of it, she not only bosses other cats, she bosses us, too.

To wind up, a couple of letters from her letter-bag:

Dear Princess Snowee,

When I was a boy of eight or nine, there was a competition at school for the best drawing of a cat. You should have seen my cat:- legs like tree-trunks, head like a horse, belly like a balloon. You'd have felt insulted. And I don't wonder.

My friend, Charles Craske, only my age, won the prize. How you would have purred had you seen his drawing: a perfect outline of his own cat sitting in front of the fire as I'd so often seen it.

When "Charlie" grew up and married, he always had a cat. He was then an artist of great talent - and an F.R.I.B.A. - and couldn't live without one. He was related on his mother's side to George Cruikshank.

Happy dreams,

JACK OVERHILL

Dear Princess Snowee,

My name is Bobby and I live with my Mum and my little sister in

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a country called New Zealand, which is a long way from where you live. I am considered to be very handsome, very big, and I am black and white. My little sister, Polly, is a pretty marmalade colour. She really isn't my sister. We adopted her.

My Mum has lots of lovely books, but I am not allowed to touch them. A lot of them are written by a man named Frank Richards, and are about a fat fellow called Billy Bunter. I think he must have loved food, because, when I am greedy, my Mum says I am like Billy Bunter.

We have lots of birds round our place, too, but I get into trouble if I try to catch them. Mum says they are our feathered friends, whatever that means.

Mum says she would love to visit England one day, but hasn't saved enough money yet. I wondered if I could work my passage on a ship. Do they still have ship's cats? I am a very good mouser, and if it were possible, I could come and visit you, dear Snowee. In the meantime, I must rely on a letter.

With love from your new pen pal,

BOBBY

THE EDITOR

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# DANNY'S DIARY

OCTOBER 1980

A terrible disaster on the 5th of the month. The R.101, the British airship, our pride, struck a hill near Beauvais in France, early on its journey to India. Out of 54 people on board for this special flight, 48 were killed. Among the dead were Lord Thomson, the Secretary of State for Air. A special memorial service was held at St. Paul's Cathedral a little later.

It is said that our other famous airship, the R.100, will be taken out of use, and broken up. All so very sad.

The opening story in the Nelson Lee is "Glutton and Goalkeeper". Fatty Little goes into training, and is picked to be goalkeeper in a match.

Next week, "Handforth the Hypnotist". A story of Handy's latest craze, which is funny in parts.

Then came "K.K. K-Nabs the Kudos". (I hate these silly titles. They have them in the Popular, too. I suppose some editor thinks he is being clever.) In this story Parkington has a fortune - but there are snags. He has to sleep on bare boards, eat nothing but carrots and turnips, and drink nothing but water. A bit far-fetched.

In the fourth week there was only a very short (four chapters) story of St. Frank's, entitled "Safety Last". But a long story "The Avenger" about Nelson Lee as a detective was by John Brearley.

In Modern Boy, the Bunny Hare series has gone on through the month, and has ended. The stories are "The Secret of the Sand Dunes", about pirates in Morocco; "The Man in the Veil" in which Bunny is in trouble with a lot of Nubians; "The Pudding Head", with Bunny in Tunis; and the final tale "Treasures of Carthage".

There have been twelve stories in all in the series, and it won't upset me if Bunny has gone for good. I haven't liked the tales a lot.

At the pictures this month we have seen Conway Tearle in "The Lost Zeppelin"; "Atlantic", about the loss of the Titanic, starring Monty Banks and Madeleine Carroll; Winnie Lightner and Conway Tearle in "Gold Diggers of Broadway", a musical film in colour; Rudy Vallee and Marie Dressler in "The Vagabond Lover"; Harold Lloyd in "Welcome Danger" (terrific, this one!); and Betty Balfour in "Raise the Roof".

The Gem continues to be pretty awful. Dick Lang has disguised himself as a girl and gone to Spalding Hall as Marie Douvar (Trimble falls in love with Marie - WOW!). The last two tales in this grim series are "The Mystery Schoolboy (Schoolgirl)" and "The Treasure of the Douvars".

Next week a so-silly tale entitled "Won by a Foul". Lord Eastwood has presented a cup to be won on the result of a footer game between St. Jim's and the Grammar School (he must be daft!). A new boy, Derrington, wins the match for the Grammar School by a foul on the St. Jim's goalkeeper. Only Herries sees the foul, despite a crowd watching. However, Manners dropped his camera, and, as the camera dropped, it took a picture of the foul. (Nice work, camera!) Grundy thinks the Grammar School has no right to that lovely cup, so goes to

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pinch it. It has already been pinched. Grundy is sentenced to be expelled for pinching. However, Handcock, cycling home in the dark, runs into the real thief who has the cup under his arm. It is Derrington. Whoever thought that one out?

Finally, "The Heavy-weight Hero". "I want to be a fine, straightforward fellow like you, Gussy", says Trimble. And that's the lot for the month.

Jack Diamond, a notorious American gangster, has been shot and severely wounded in a New York hotel.

I wondered whether the improvement in the Popular was too good to last. It was! By the end of October, the Rio Kid has gone, Greyfriars has gone, and Cedar Creek has gone. Of the old favourites, only the very early Rookwood stories are left.

The final series of Cedar Creek tales told how Mr. Slimmey, the master, was replaced by his twin brother, a wastrel wanted by the police. It ended in the second week of the month.

The Greyfriars series about Pedrillo of the circus ended in the first week of the month.

The Rio Kid tales are "The Missing Ranger". The Kid has kidnapped Mulekick Hall, who had recognised the sheriff as the outlaw, the Rio Kid. "The Sheriff's Secret" carried on with the story. Then, in the third week of the month, came the final: "The Kid's Last Blow". The Kid frees Hall, and then rides off himself into the sunset, no longer a sheriff - but free. So it's Good-bye to the Kid. Will he ever come back again?

Now the Popular has the old Rookwood tales under the same overall title each week "The Fistical Four"; a railway series; a series about K.O. Kops; a series about fisheries; and other short tales. I don't like it a bit now. Can a paper carry on with such a weird programme? We shall see.

Two lovely stories in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. "That Guy Fish" tells of some of Fishy's money-making schemes. "True Blue" is the story of a Mr. Wodger who comes to St. Jim's as a temporary replacement for Mr. Ratcliff. Mr. Wodger is ill with 'flu, so his brother, an out-of-work music hall artist takes his place. But Edith Glyn and the scholastic Mr. Wodger are old friends, and she tells

Dr. Holmes of the deception. However, all is forgiven, and the real schoolmaster Wodger takes his place, does a heroic deed, and finally goes off to marry Edith Glyn.

The Magnet's series about the trip to China is just magnificent. This month's first story is "The Scourge of the Red Dragon" in which the party approaches and reaches Hong Kong, the gateway to the East. The second week brought "Greyfriars Chums in China" in which wonderful Mr. Wun comes into the picture at last.

Next "The Mandarin's Vengeance". Wharton, Bob Cherry and Bunter are taken prisoner by the Mandarin and carried off to the palace in the hills of Kwang-Tung. Finally, what I think is the best story of the series so far (and that's saying a mouthful), "The Beggar of Shantung" (lovely title). The man with the begging bowl is Ferrers Locke, in disguise, seeking a way to free the prisoners. The suspense is terrific. There has never been anything like it. I must make note, too, of the truly wonderful drawings of Leonard Shields throughout this long series. He has never done better, and they add to the appeal of splendid tales. The series continues next month.

I saw a very funny joke in the Nelson Lee this month, and I am going to put it down here.

Editor: "You have made your hero too hot-headed, I'm afraid."

Author: "How do you mean?"

Editor: "Well, he has a lantern jaw to begin with. Again, his whole face lit up. Later his cheeks flamed and he gave a burning glance. Then, blazing with wrath and boiling with rage, he administered a scorching rebuke."

That joke was sent in by P. Sinclair, 17 Poplars Avenue, Willesden Green, London N.W.10. He's quite a lad!

EDITORIAL COMMENT: S. O. L. No. 133, "That Guy Fish" comprised a Magnet, "The Schoolboy Shopkeepers" from the late summer of 1913, plus another Magnet "Getting Rich Quick" which was the first story of 1917, four years later. S. O. L. No. 134, "True Blue" comprised two consecutive blue Gems from the early summer of 1912. The stories were originally entitled "Figgins & Co's New Master" and "The Hero of St. Jim's". They were typical of the period, and had a lot of real Edwardian charm. As Danny says, the tales concerned two Mr. Wodgers - one a teacher and the other a music-hall artist. The music hall artist refers to the Boss Circuit, obviously a tilted reference to the famous Moss Circuit of lovely theatres. Finsbury Park Empire and New Cross Empire were both Moss halls. The

changing of a letter to turn a real name into a fictional one was a characteristic of Hamilton in early days. In passing "The Hero of St. Jim's" is reminiscent of Talbot Baines Reed's "The Master of the Shell".

This time the Rio Kid was gone from the Popular for good, and the writing was on the wall for that grand old paper. The Kid came back, some seven years later, in Modern Boy in tales which were anachronistic and inferior to those of the Popular.

When I was in Karachi in the early nineteen-fifties, I had pointed out to me two giant mooring-masts with red lights on top. They had been built for the R. 101 - and were never used. They were left as they had been in 1930, possibly as a memorial of that disaster, and may be there still.)

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# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Just a short preamble this month as the Blake articles are a little on the long side. All I want to say is that I shall need some more articles for the New Year, so please get to work with your ideas.

## TOO MUCH BLAKE?

by Cyril Rowe

This may seem a strange subject for Blakiana; it might seem to suggest that I wished to close the subject of our great man's exploits, but nothing is farther from my thoughts. I just cannot reconcile events.

Let me put it like this. Sherlock Holmes, the other world famous Baker Street detective has been studied by scholars, journalists and savants and his life and his cases determined in time and proper succession. Admittedly his biographies disagree but blame Dr. Watson for making errors which their own investigations have corrected. Basically the time table has been established. I postulate that no-one can do the same for Blake. One only has to study the Blake catalogue to see why. There is too much to go into any one lifetime. There were thousands of cases reported in the Union Jack and the Sexton Blake Library, both journals running concurrently for around a quarter of a century. When one adds cases dealt with in the Boys' Friend Weekly, Boys' Realm, Detective Weekly, Boys' Friend Library, Penny Pictorial, Answers, etc., the total amassed is all but beyond reckoning.

Certainly some two cases per week minimum for scores of years whilst two major journals were running. When one looks at the venues of the cases, localities all over Britain, all over Europe and the other four continents, civilised and savage territory in many and the time factor in travelling (merely) to Australia and the Antipodes and other Pacific venues; the U.S.A., Africa, to Russia and China, when one realises that in most of these investigations considerable internal travel took place it is impossible to believe that one man could have done all that is reported. It is physically impossible.

So what do I deduce! It was not Sexton Blake but **SEXTON BLAKE INCORPORATED**. He was not a man, he was an organisation. And what is the evidence to back this up? We find certain signs in editorial or author's slip ups, for we know that he was Nelson Lee, that he was Ferrers Locke. Although only one fatally inserted name comes to light, to me that is enough. Moreover, G. H. Teed, Gwyn Evans, John Hunter and others, when writing hardback detective novels give the name of the detective but it is not Blake. I maintain that they are part of S. B. Incorporated and those other cases were reported to the credit of the man Sexton Blake and not the Organisation. He was the English Pinkerton's.

Further more when one studies the catalogue again one finds "S. B. Artist": "S. B. Bathchairman": "Collier", "Fireman", "Game-keeper" down the alphabet to "Whaler", there must be fifty or sixty at least of occupational involvements. And again (Editorial and circulation stivers) his appearances in many towns and cities of this country occur over the years and are recorded. The solution which occurs to me is this which is: That the actual aeronaut, the actual postman, the actual racehorse trainer - they all occur - and many more do in fact really exist and are the actual detectives and to enhance Blake's reputation the kudos comes to him. (And a certain amount of cash to the Amalgamated Press.)

Similarly in Leeds, in Birmingham, in Glasgow, in Dublin, in any town, the local police inspector solves the case and Blake capitalises. For remember, the boot is on the other foot on many occasions. So often has Sexton Blake done the job and allowed Det. Inspectors Coutts, Lennard, Harkness, Venner, etc., to take the credit. Therefore I

maintain that a many headed organisation is responsible; only in this way can it be conceived at all that the cases are based on truth and not fiction. One thing I am positive of which is that the Blake of Berkeley Square is not the man of the old Union Jack. One more conjecture and I admit it is a rash one is this. That Leon Kestrel the Master Mummer was not a crook at all and that he with his marvellous ability really did all the necessary when it was "Sexton Blake, Gypsy", "Sexton Blake, Shopwalker", "Sexton Blake, Chef", etc., etc.

Or am I just talking (or writing) nonsense.

### LOVE IS A MANY SPLENDOURED THING

by Raymond Cure

I don't know what the weather's like from where you are sitting, but here it's pretty rough. It's a dreary evening, the home going crowds jamming and pushing through the driving rain trying to snatch any particle of shelter in the dripping trams and buses which crawled slowly across the slippery streets of the city. Add to that rain-soaked scene a poorly clad boy of 9 or 10 years old, selling papers on some barely-sheltered corner (while suffering from a heavy cold) and you have all the ingredients of a Charles Dickens tale.

The reader will have realised by now that the above is not a scene from the 1980's, the weather, yes, but the etc. are certainly not. Actually according to G. H. Teed it is **Scene 1, Act 1** of the Union Jack Nirvana series, the very opening words of a series that was to fasten itself on the hearts and minds of Sexton Blake fans everywhere. It had something and that something was Nirvana. The Editor guarantees the success of this new Saga for its intense human interest and dramatic power. Here is a tale of street waifs, of crime and romance.

It's many years since I have heard a newsboy yelling out the headlines, his poster waving in the breeze as he runs down the street. I do occasionally hear an elderly man wheezing "Evening Gazette" on his stand among the holiday crowds in Blackpool. Now I repeat that the three page prologue to our "starter" tale Tinker's Secret, U.J. No. 1149, Oct. 1925, has a touch of the Dickens; street urchins, a femal Fagan, pickpockets, motherless children, hacking coughs, driving rain and widowed landladies with several children of her own.

Surprise, surprise, who would believe that the ragged cough-

ridden, motherless kid of ten years and a lodger of the aforesaid landlady to boot, would turn out to be Tinker of Sexton Blake fame. This tidbit of information concludes the prologue and from here on the world of Tinker and Nirvana becomes your oyster.

Considering the prologue, life has certainly changed for the better for Tinker, you can view him on the cover of the Union Jack in question, resplendent in evening dress along with the 'gaffer' known to one and all as Sexton Blake, also resplendent in evening dress.

Regular readers of the adventures of Sexton Blake accustomed as they are to a Blake so busy with customers, that he has little time to relax, will rejoice that on this occasion the Blake Agency are having a night out - and what a night! Evening dress, dinner at the Venetia and then on to the top show at the Cosmos theatre, to be viewed from a box. It's what used to be called in 1925, "Living it up". The star of this show is Nirvana and according to all accounts she is a real show-stopper, a dancer, the like of which you've never seen before, and artiste of the kind you give a standing ovation when the curtain drops to say nothing of sending round a basket or two of flowers.

Regular readers of U.J. fans will need no telling that this Nirvana (a kind of Cinderella complete with a wicked sister) plucked at the heart-strings of Tinker as no female had ever done and that says something for Nirvana. In many succeeding issues of the Union Jack romance ebbs and flows. If ever true love never ran smoothly it certainly did not for these young lovers. There are two reasons for not outlining these interesting tales. 1. Many of the Blakian Fraternity will have already read them and 2. those who have not can draw on the services of the Josie Packman Library for this classical series. However, I cannot resist complimenting Tinker on his choice, here is the author's introduction to this heart-throb of yesteryear:

"The girl walked in, her head held high, her red lips pouting, her gracious body swaying, her movements as sinuous as a cobra, she was beautiful. Her hair parted in the middle rippled down on each side of her exquisitely-shaped little head in waves of what seemed spun gold. Her eyes were violet woodland pools, whose secrets where shackled by deeply fringed lashes, her features small and perfectly formed - her mouth of the sort which has dragged many a man to perdition. Her

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throat was a delicate white column" end of quote. I like it, it makes me feel young again. No wonder Tinker fell.

There is one thing to be said about the author, that is, if it comes to describing anything, be it a Charles Dickens scene, a first night premier show, a moonlight night or a beautiful young woman, leave it to G. H. Teed.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

There is a second-class restaurant in Bannington that always evokes a chuckle to the St. Frank's juniors and Fatty Little in particular each time they pass it. For this establishment will always remind them of the day it first opened; a day when Jimmy Little was in town, broke and very hungry. He had accompanied his study chum, Nicodemus Trotwood, to Bannington and the bike ride had given him an appetite that became more acute as he was attracted to a startling notice in the restaurant window ... a notice that sent a thrill of new-born hope down his spine. He gazed at it in a fascinated kind of way, and read the words over and over again, to assure himself that there was no catch in it. And this is what he saw:

"TRY OUR SPECIAL TEAS!

"EAT AS MUCH AS YOU PLEASE!

"TAKE IT AT YOUR EASE!"

Underneath in smaller type stated that, for the inclusive price of one shilling, any person could eat as much bread and butter and drink as much tea as they required. Two slices of cake were provided. Well, since Fatty possessed only two shillings, and the prospect of tea in hall on returning to St. Frank's, this was a heaven sent opportunity, and while Trotwood was spending the last of his cash in a nearby jewellers on a watch, Fatty entered and ordered his special tea.

Well, what followed can easily be imagined. After several repeat orders. plates of thin bread and butter, plus the two slices of

cont'd. on Page 18 ...

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cake and cups of tea, the waitress finally complained to the manager who had not bargained for customers like Fatty Little. Some customers in the restaurant sided with the fat junior's claim that the advertisement said ... Eat as much as you like ... and the manager was compelled to stand by his promise and more plates of bread and butter were brought and disappeared just as quickly.

The upshot was a view of Fatty being ejected by the angry manager and, crashing through the swing doors, and landing on the pavement just as a huge touring car was speeding down the High Street at a dangerous pace - and it rushed straight down upon Fatty Little as he sat dazed in the roadway.

The driver of the car turned out to be Lord Dorrimore. To avoid Fatty, Dorrie knocked over a well-stocked greengrocery stall and oranges, apples, potatoes, bananas and all manner of other things came whizzing round him.

However, Lord Dorrimore settled for the damage and the incident gave Jimmy Little another keen edge to his appetite.

Never again did that notice appear in the window of that restaurant! It was not the kind of establishment the St. Frank's fellows usually patronised, but times were hard, and Fatty was never particular where grub was concerned.

While the incident will always be remembered with a smile, Lord Dorrimore's visit was to lead to one of the most amazing adventures ever recorded in the annals of St. Frank's. But this has been chronicled elsewhere.

Prior to the arrival at St. Frank's of Jimmy Little the school did not boast a fat boy. At least, no junior or senior could measure up to the circumference of Fatty and neither did any fellow possess such an enormous appetite.

Another funny episode in the life of Jimmy Little occurred when a section of the schoolboys went on strike ... a hunger strike, and to everybody's surprise, Fatty Little shunned food along with the strikers. And he kept it up. It was amazing. The Stoics of old Greece would have embraced Fatty to their philosophy quite readily. But just as readily they would have disowned him had they known the truth. For Fatty was being supplied secretly with grub and was therefore able to maintain the

---

image of a fellow sufferer.

But in spite of his propensity to consume such large amounts of food Fatty Little, like most stout people, has a jolly disposition and a cheerful countenance. I have never known him to bear malice. His only weakness is food, glorious food, for which he will fight to the death.

On several occasions he has acted as chef during rebellions and instances where food had to be cooked for the juniors; and at such times Fatty Little is in his own particular heaven.

### CHARACTER NAMING

by R. J. Godsave

It would be interesting to know how authors arrive at the naming of their characters. Do they run through the names of friends and acquaintances, or do they take them from a telephone book? Naturally every author would secretly hope that a character would in the course of time become a household name. This award comes to very few.

Some names given to characters would appear to be given solely on account of their physical appearance. Such a case is that of E. S. Brooks' character of Enoch Snipe who was introduced into the pages of the Nelson Lee at the same time as Archie Glenthorne. We are told that Enoch was of a very unfavourable appearance - red eyed and shifty. One cannot imagine Archie Glenthorne being named Snipe.

A serial running in the old series of the Nelson Lee Library by Harcourt Burrage dealing with the adventures of Tom Tartar at school. The headmaster's son was named Pubsey Wrasper which showed little consideration by his parents when this name was inflicted on their young hopeful. This unfortunate name could be easily thought by the average Londoner, when the boy reached manhood, as a 'nick' name for a haunter of public houses.

It must be extremely difficult to reach a satisfactory and a not too well-known name for the author to give to his characters.

\* \* \* \* \*

WANTED: Books by A. Harcourt Burrage; John Finnemore; Jeffrey Hamilton; Eric Leyland; Eric Leyland & Tes Chard; Edgar Wallace; Magnets, Gems, Populars, Boys' Friend (3d, weekly issues) "William the Superman", "William the Lawless"; "The Amazing Quest of Mr. Ernest Bliss", E. Phillips Openheim; Schoolboys' Own.

CONNOLLY, 25 PAYNES PITCH, CHURCHDOWN, GLOS.

Come Back a Long, Long Lifetime to meet Herlock Sholmes, the Amazing Detective.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE DIAMOND PINS

by Peter Todd

Sholmes was examining, under a powerful microscope, a leading article in his morning newspaper, when I came into our sitting-room at Shaker Street. He looked round with a lazy smile.

"I have surprised you, my dear Jotson," he remarked.

"You are always surprising me, Sholmes," I replied. "May I ask what you hope to discover by a microscopical examination of a daily paper?"

He yawned, as he put down the microscope.

"Merely an amusement, Jotson. It may not have occurred to you that by a careful examination of the type in which an article is printed, much may be learned of the man who wrote it; in fact, his age, form, and starting-price, with sufficient care and attention. A simple amusement for an idle moment, my dear Jotson."

"You amaze me, Sholmes."

"Not at all, my dear Jotson. I do not say that this theory is widely known. Scotland Yard would smile at the idea," Herlock Sholmes shrugged his shoulders, as he frequently did at the mention of Scotland Yard, and changed the subject. "I see that you have not shaved this morning, Jotson."

"Sholmes, how could you possibly know ---"

He laughed.

"Is it not a fact?" he asked.

"It is a fact, certainly. But how

you guessed --"

"It was not a guess, Jotson." Sholmes frowned. "I never guess. I leave guesswork to the police. It was a simple deduction, Jotson, simply explained. After shaving, your face presents a smooth and newly-mown appearance. I have observed this on innumerable occasions."

"True. But --"

"At the present moment it presents a rough and hairy appearance. To a trained eye, my dear Jotson, the conclusion is instant and obvious. You have not shaved."

"It is simple enough now that you explain it, Sholmes, but I confess it would not have occurred to me. Yet I have endeavoured to study your methods."

"Rome was not built in a day, my dear fellow," said Sholmes, with a smile. "You must take time. It would amuse me to test your progress. Look at this, and tell me what you deduce from it."

He took a large pistol from a drawer, and handed it to me. I examined it with great attention. I confess to a keen desire to prove to Herlock Sholmes that my progress in his peculiar art was greater than he supposed.

"Well, Jotson?" he said, a smile lurking round the corners of his mouth.

"In the first place, Sholmes, it is a firearm." I felt that I was upon safe ground so far.

He nodded.

"Go on, Jotson!"

"In the second place," I went on,

encouraged by Sholmes' approval, "it is a revolver of the Colt pattern, which is manufactured in the United States."

"What do you deduce from that, Jotson?"

"That it is an American pistol," I said triumphantly.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Sholmes.

"I am interested now. Pray proceed."

He threw himself back in his chair, and put his feet on the mantelpiece, in his usual attitude of elegant ease.

"There is a dark stain upon the butt," I continued. "I conclude from that - that --"

"Courage, my dear fellow. Go on!"

"That the revolver has been used as a paperweight, and that ink has been spilled upon it," I suggested.

I was mortified to see Sholmes burst into a hearty laugh. I threw down the pistol somewhat pettishly.

"I suppose I am wrong?" I exclaimed.

"Excuse me, my dear Jotson," Sholmes checked his merriment. "I am afraid you are a little wide of the mark. That stain is not ink; it is blood."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed.

"The revolver was found on the scene of the Hornsey Rise murder," explained Sholmes. "You have heard of it? Seventeen of the most respected residents of Hornsey Rise were murdered on the night of the 4th. The peculiar circumstances is that each of them was robbed of a diamond pin. The police have concluded that the murders were committed for purposes of robbery. To that extent, Jotson, the intellect of

Scotland Yard can go, but no further. They have no clue excepting this revolver, which has been handed to me. As a last resource," added Sholmes, shrugging his shoulders, "the police are willing to make use of my valuable services."

"Better late than never," I remarked.

"Perhaps so." Sholmes glanced at the clock. "Nearly half-past nine. At half-past nine, Jotson, I expect a visitor."

I rose.

"Do not go, my dear fellow. I shall need you."

"You delight me, Sholmes. You wish me to observe and deduce --"

"I wish you to take the tongs, and station yourself behind the door," said Sholmes calmly. "You will prevent his escape if I do not succeed in handcuffing him. He will be desperate."

"Sholmes! Who is it, then, that you are expecting?"

"The Hornsey Rise murderer!" said Sholmes tranquilly.

Before I could make any rejoinder to my friend's astounding remark the door was thrown open, and our landlady announced the visitor.

He was a man of powerful frame. My study of Sholmes' methods made it possible for me to observe that he was a man of dangerous character. The handles of several knives protruded from his pockets, and the butt of a revolver showed from his sleeve, and he carried a bayonet in place of a walking-stick. These details did not escape me, though perhaps I ought

to admit that, but for Sholmes' warning, I should have noticed nothing out of the ordinary.

Herlock Sholmes greeted him genially. But the fact that he picked up the poker showed me that he was on his guard. I secured the tongs immediately, mindful of my friend's admonition.

"Good morning!" said Sholmes. "You have called in answer to my advertisement, I presume?"

"I have," said the visitor, glancing at him suspiciously. He may have noticed the tongs in Herlock Sholmes' hand.

"I am glad to see you," said Sholmes. "You have only to establish your right to the property in question, and it will be handed over to you immediately. This way, please! Ah! Help, my dear Jotson!"

Sholmes was upon the ruffian with the spring of a tiger.

I rushed forward.

There was a desperate struggle. In the midst of it, the door was flung open, and Inspector Pinkeye rushed into the room.

A moment more, and the handcuffs snapped upon the wrists of the ruffian.

Herlock Sholmes rose, panting, to his feet. He lighted a cigarette.

"Quite an easy capture," he drawled. "You are welcome to him, Pinkeye."

"Much obliged to you, Mr. Sholmes," said the Inspector, with a smile of satisfaction. "I don't know how you did it, but you've done it. A lucky fluke, I suppose -- what?"

Sholmes smiled.

"Exactly -- a lucky fluke, my dear

Pinkeye!" he said, with a sarcasm that was lost upon the inspector. "Good-morning, Pinkeye."

Inspector Pinkeye marched the scowling ruffian from the room. Herlock Sholmes sank into his chair again, yawning.

"'Twas ever thus, Jotson," he said, with a trifle of bitterness. "Scotland Yard will never understand my methods, and is content to call my success a lucky fluke. But for your generous appreciation, Jotson, I should be discouraged."

"You may always count upon my admiration, Sholmes," I said fervently. "You astound me more than ever. May I ask ---"

"To you, Jotson, I will explain," said Sholmes. "It may help you in your study of my methods. The capture was effected simply through the medium of an advertisement in the daily papers. The murderer left his revolver on the scene of the crime. You are aware that lost property, advertised in the papers, is very likely to be claimed."

"I have heard so," I assented. "But surely, Sholmes, the murderer would not have answered an advertisement of his lost revolver. Might he not have suspected that it was a trap of the police?"

"Undoubtedly, and therefore I did not advertise the revolver. I advertised a diamond pin."

"A - a what?" I exclaimed in amazement.

"A diamond pin, my dear Jotson. Look at this paragraph."

I looked. The advertisement ran:

"FOUND, in the neighbourhood of Hornsey Rise, a valuable diamond pin. Owner can have same by applying to

No. 101 Shaker St. "

I gazed at Herlock Sholmes in astonishment.

"Sholmes!" I ejaculated. "You had found a diamond pin?"

"Not at all."

"One was lost?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then, in the name of all that is wonderful --"

Sholmes smiled patiently.

"My dear Jotson, reason it out.

Seventeen murders were committed in a single night, each for the purpose of stealing a diamond pin. Does not this argue that the criminal dealt specially in diamond pins? My advertisement stated, therefore, that a diamond pin had been found. Sooner or later it was certain to meet his eyes, and the rest was inevitable.

To add one more diamond pin to his collection of ill-gotten gains would be an irresistible attraction for him."

"Most true!" I exclaimed. "But - forgive me, Sholmes - one more question. Suppose some ordinary member of the public had lost a diamond pin - such things happen - and suppose he had seen the advertisement, and come here --"

"My dear Jotson, you are supposing now, and my methods do not deal with supposition." Sholmes yawned. "I leave suppositions to the police, my dear fellow. It is time you went to your patients, Jotson."

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### DEATH OF SEXTON BLAKE AUTHOR

It was whilst visiting the I. P. C. building (formerly Amalgamated Press Ltd.) that I learned of the death of the popular old Blake author, Gerald Verner. Better known in this field as "Donald Stuart" he was 84 and died at Broadstairs. No doubt suitable tributes will be made in Blakiana in the future to his work in the Sexton Blake saga.

W. O. G. LOFTS

\*\*\*\*\*

WANTED: Nelson Lees o/s, most before 130, particularly 16, 19, 57, 78, 113, 115, 248, 294, 407; Nugget 3d. Libs.; S. O. L. 4, 27, 120; B. F. L. 574, 633, 704; Dick Turpins, Nelson Lees, and Magnets for exchange.

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(LES ROWLEY meets THE PRINCESS SNOWEE)

TAIL PIECE

Her Serene Highness The Princess Snowee had graciously condescended to grant me an audience in order to discuss the forthcoming issue of the Collectors' Digest Annual. For the occasion I had chosen my best suit with the herringbone pattern, whilst a freshly cleaned pair of sprats - sorry, spats - adorned my highly polished shoes.

H.S.H. The Princess - regal in her posture of unstudied grace - reached out an imperial paw in welcome. Cushioned on an underlay of that day's correspondence in the Editorial 'in' tray, the First Lady of Fleet and Countess of Crookham Road (as H.S.H. prefers to be known at Court), gazed at me enquiringly over a set of elegant whiskers. It was a penetrating gaze rather in the fashion of that which Queen Victoria may have accorded a footman caught nicking the silver plate. I coughed nervously and asked H.S.H. what she thought of the various articles (my own included) on the subject of school life.

"I will be brief," began H.S.H., "because the daily courier is due with my lunch of fresh white fish, and in order to savour the full bouquet one must eat without due delay. As for those articles. Well I suppose you and your friends find them a-mew-sing; may even, I fear, refer to a particularly good article as the "cat's whiskers". Breeding, of course, forbids that I should reply with similar indelicacy. One observation, however, I feel bound to make. I refer now to the neglect accorded to one of the most important characters of Greyfriars!" H.S.H. pawed to let the implied rebuke sink in. "I refer, of course, to Mrs. Kebble's cat!!" The royal tail uncurled as though to add emphasis.

"True, the cat in question is not of Royal Blood and as such would not merit recognition if One of My Strain was at the School. But since the School is not so Honoured, then acknowledgement must be made of such a cat of plebian origin.

"Mention is made, by a youth named Bunter, of the amazing gifts possessed by the Kebble cat. Amazing in that the cat can annex and open tins of sardines; can slice and eat whole Dundee cakes; and can carry away a family size steak and kidney pie! A plebian cat,

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perhaps, but a gifted one nonetheless. A cat worthy of better pens than yours!"

The regal paw was extended again. This time it was a gesture of dismissal. As I left, with the delicate fragrance of fresh white fish ascending toward the regal nostrils, I pondered on how best the imperial wishes could be met.

Any of you out there - with better pens than mine - care to write an article on Mrs. Kebble's cat?

\* \* \* \* \*

## BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

### No. 80. THE LAST CURTAIN

It really happened just by chance. I had not planned in advance that this should be the Small Cinema's last term. When I booked our programmes early in that September of 1953, I probably thought it likely that I should be doing the same thing the following January.

All the same, for quite a long time, it had been evident to me that television was taking over. There was no lessening at all of the enthusiasm of our youthful audiences. But, with the great god, Television, in almost every home, it seemed pointless, maybe, to go on with the work and expense of the Small Cinema. It seems pretty clear, too, that my own steam was running out.

Cinemas had closed down all over the country - hundreds of them - and were continuing to close. And now we come to the Small Cinema's last term, which was, in fact, a remarkably good one.

Our opening feature came from M. G. M. and was "Lone Star", with Clark Gable in the lead. A rather heavy-going western, I seem to recall, though my

memory of it is dim.

A Bugs Bunny Cartoon in colour was "Ballot-Box Bunny", and a Barney Bear colour cartoon was "Busybody Bear", in this bill.

Next, from Warner's, a lovely Musical, "I'll See You in My Dreams", starring Doris Day and Danny Thomas. This was one of those biographical films, telling the life of an American songwriter. I forget his name, but I remember some of the songs, which, apart from the title number, included "Ukelele Lady", "It Had to be You", and "Yes, sir, That's my Baby", and any amount of others so joyously familiar. I loved every minute of it. I have never heard of it since, but I hope that, one day, it may turn up on TV.

In the supporting programme was a Tom & Jerry colour cartoon "Push-Button Kitty", a Joe McDoakes comedy "So You Want to Enjoy Life", and a Pete Smith novelty "Fixin' Fools".

Next, also from Warner's, came Dennis Morgan in "Canyon Pass". My failing memory tells me it was an

excellent western, but it is a long time since I watched it from the operating-box. A Bugs Bunny colour cartoon in this show was "Hare We Go" and a Barney Bear colour cartoon was "Heir Bear".

Next week, from M. G. M., came an excellent Technicolor film "Ivanhoe", starring Robert Taylor and Elizabeth Taylor. Made in Britain. It went down well with our young audiences. A Tom & Jerry colour cartoon was "Jerry's Cousin".

The following week brought our last Clark Gable film "Across the Wide Missouri", a Technicolor western. I daresay it was passable, but I forget all about it. This came from M. G. M.

A Barney Bear coloured cartoon was "Barney's Hungry Cousin".

The following week brought, from Warner's, another fine Technicolor Musical "By the Light of the Silvery Moon". This was a sequel to "On Moonlight Bay" which we had played a year or two earlier - another tale of Penrod and his sister, starring Doris Day, with another host of glorious old songs to make one happy. I would like to see it again now.

A Bugs Bunny coloured cartoon was "French Rarebit".

The next week brought from M. G. M., Fred Astaire and Jack Buchanan in "The Band Wagon", a Musical in Technicolor, though I forget all the songs. It didn't go down all that well at the Small Cinema, though I believe it was acclaimed by the critics.

In the same bill was a Barney Bear colour cartoon "Little Wisequacker".

Then what proved to be, after all these long, long years, our last Warner

film. When I collected it from the Warner dispatch department at Teddington it can hardly have occurred to me that it was my last visit there. The film was not a great one, but it was a nice little picture, very pleasant in its way - Cary Grant and Betsy Drake in "Room For One More". I fancy it was a married couple who found "room for one more" for a number of orphans.

A Bugs Bunny coloured cartoon was "Eight-Ball Bunny", a colour documentary was "Sportsmen of the Far East", and a second colour cartoon was "Who's Kitten Who?"

And so we came to the Small Cinema's final programme. There was no fanfare of trumpets, no memorial service, no tears, nothing out of the ordinary. For even I did not realise that this would be our last show.

But our final film was worthy of the occasion, though it had not been booked as a swan song. It came from M. G. M., and was Gene Kelly, Debbie Reynolds, and Donald O'Connor in a lovely Technicolor Musical, one of the best of all time - "Singin' In The Rain". Set in the early days of talking pictures, with lovely humour and lovely songs, including the title number (which was not new in itself, the same song having featured in one of Metro's musicals of long, long ago) it was superb entertainment.

And, in the same bill, was our last Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon "Here We Go Again". (Oddly enough, no sooner had we said good-bye to Tom & Jerry, than they started to be less pleasing. They went into 'Scope, with new artists,

and, in my view, they were never the same again.)

So the curtains closed for the last time, and, as the audience filed out, there came over the non-sync the strains of "So long, it's been good to know you",

the march-out tune which we had used for many terms. I should still have that well-worn old record somewhere.

(NEXT MONTH -

AFTERMATH)

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# News of the Old Boy's Book Clubs

## CAMBRIDGE

We met on Sunday, 7th September, at the home of Keith Hodkinson, for the first meeting of the 1980-81 season.

Preliminary discussions took place on arrangements to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Club. The provisional date chosen was Sunday, 10th May, 1981.

Jack Overhill gave a talk on "Sidney Drew" (E. J. Murray) a prolific writer of the period prior to 1920. Drew was an early writer for the Harmsworth papers. He wrote many adventure stories, several of which appeared in serial form in pre-1914 Magnets, as well as in the B.F.L. Jack spoke particularly about "Peril Island", a story that appeared in the Big Budget of 1902, one of only two issues. E. H. Downs had said that Drew was rather a small man, whose work was submitted in handwritten form - a particularly minute script. Drew would turn up at the office with a couple of stories, which he would sell for £40 apiece - this was in the pre-Great War period when money was real. Drew was a keen fisherman, and would then disappear on fishing expeditions; it was also believed he on occasions owned a boat. After a while he would return with more stories. He wrote school stories of Calcroft School, some of which appeared in the Marvel in its late 1919-20 period. These stories were distinctive in style from Hamilton's writings; they had more slapstick, but in their day were good entertainment. (Bill Thurbon said he had recalled them with enjoyment.) Jack recalled boyhood visits to "Dobby" Loker's book shop, with strings of papers hanging in the window (a moment of nostalgia for Bill Thurbon, Jack's contemporary). Jack

spoke of Drew's later stories of Ferrers Lord, the millionaire owner of the submarine "Lord of the Deep", and his friends, Rupert Thurston, Prince Ching Lung, and Gan Waga, an Eskimo. Jack referred to one Ferrers Lord story "The Blue Orchid".

The Club is particularly indebted to Jack for this talk, since he had prepared it under the handicap of an accident to Mrs. Overhill, from which she is now fortunately recovering.

Keith then ran a quiz on a wide variety of authors and stories, from an equally wide range of books and papers. The Omniscient Bill Lofts was first with 36 marks out of a possible 42. Everybody else was "also ran", the next score being 6!

After enjoying Keith's excellent tea the meeting resumed with film extracts by Keith from "The Sea Hawk" and "Ivanhoe".

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

### LONDON

The September meetings at Reuben and Phyllis Godsave's Leytonstone home are always very enjoyable. This was no exception on Sunday, 14th, when there was a good attendance which included Madam and Eric. Roger Jenkins' Anagrams quiz was won by Ray Hopkins with ten correct answers, Messrs. Lofts and Lawrence were joint second.

Eric Fayne's Consequences competition was won by Ben Whiter, Laurie Sutton, Roger Jenkins and Ray Hopkins. Each received a book prize. A very fine brain teaser.

Tea in the spacious garden and on the resumption the company was given a discourse on the forthcoming Radio 4 Programme about Greyfriars by a B.B.C. man, who is very conversant on the subject, the feature being broadcast next January or February.

Bill Lofts then took over with an entirely new Greyfriars theme. Placing adverts in overseas newspapers, he was inundated with replies never realising what he had let himself in for. The letters came from people of all ages and walks of life. Then Bill rendered his dissertation, touching on the readers of South Africa and Eire. Arising from this discourse, one gets the impression that Frank Richards was a very great author. Bill Lofts promised more on this theme at subsequent meetings.

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Next meeting at Bob and Louise Blythe's Kingsbury home on Sunday, 12th. 'Phone 205 0732. Kindly bring mug or cup.

BEN WHITER

### NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 13th September, 1980

It was good to see our Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, back from his holiday and once again, occupying the Chair. Because of recent alterations in the gas supply at the Swarthmore Centre, we had to meet in a different room - and also discovered that we could not have hot water for our tea!

A lively discussion took place re the rising costs involved in our hobby. Remarks were made once again, concerning "sharks" in the hobby who were always ready to make a fast profit. Special mention was made of one very well-known dealer who kept his prices low and it was felt that it was through him that costs were not escalating so fast.

The unveiling of the plaque at "Rose Lawn" was mentioned and it was felt that it was a fitting tribute to Charles Hamilton and to Miss Edith Hood who had done a great deal to keep alive his memory and works. An invitation had been received from Mr. Michael Bentley to attend his private cinema to see a Sexton Blake film and seven members said they could go along on 24th September. Members very much enjoyed his last film show in June.

Joe Wood had brought along a quiz on the Brander/Von Tromp series. Quite unintentionally, it proved to be an amusing quiz, for unwittingly, Joe gave the answers to some of his previous questions, as he was progressing! Geoffrey Wilde got the highest marks (of course!).

Private discussion among our members took place during this time and afterwards, our Chairman asked if Members would bring along to the next meeting, suggestions for a series of readings for future use. Members very much appreciate the readings of Revd. Geoffrey Good and Geoffrey Wilde.

Next meeting is on 11th October and guests are always very welcome.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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# The Postman Called

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

SIMON GARRETT (Bath): In Mr. Holland's amusing article on Magnet vacations (C.D. 404), he refers to Loder and Co. smoking and playing billiards in dubious riverside haunts, but remarks that he doesn't remember hearing that they drank.

Interestingly, I think there was a certain amount of illicit whisky drinking in the Red Magnet period, notably when Vernon-Smith made his first appearance in a "bosky" condition.

I believe that juvenile drinking, like the serious depiction of adolescent love affairs, had disappeared from the Greyfriars scene by about 1920 as Hamilton began to move away from the more melodramatic themes.

But what a pity he gave billiards such a bad press! Even when I was a student, in 1960, the Dean told us the game was a sure sign of a mis-spent youth. Obviously, he was an old Magnet reader!

H. L. MARRIOTT (Northampton): I would be pleased to receive advice as to the best method of preserving Boys' Books, Comics and hard back books.

Some collectors seem to prefer keeping them on open shelves or open book cases, others keep them in brown paper or newspapers and some in polythene bags.

Could other collectors please give advice as to the best method. I am sure many collectors, particularly newcomers, would like such information.

JOHN LEWIS (Neston): I would like to thank Mr. Kadish for his restrained, but nonetheless effective, reply regarding Mr. Hodkinson's controvertible article in the C.D. for August.

I have re-read the School Story Authors ranking list Mr. Hodkinson gave to the Cambridge Club (June C.D.). Forsooth! a fine example of erroneous reasoning. However, how could it be otherwise when the gentleman, who placed Charles Hamilton at No. 10 on his List, cannot differentiate a substitute Gem of 1930 from the genuine article.

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ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): Regarding Mr. Hamilton's early post-war writings, I too have No. 1 of the "Mascot Schoolgirl Series" entitled "Pamela of St. Olive's". I have No. 2 as well. This is called "The Stranded Schoolgirls", and is slightly better than No. 1 since it barely mentions Bessie Bunter's "twin", Peg Pipping. Whatever the quality of the stories, it was nice to purchase something written by Frank or Hilda Richards, in those early post-war days, until the yellow-wrapped Bunter books came on to the market.

I agree with the comment that the earlier Universal version of "Show Boat", with Irene Dunne, Allan Jones and Paul Robeson was far superior to the later coloured M.G.M. film - although there were some beautiful "shots" of the river and the show boat in the latter, if I remember. I think the heart was beginning to go out of Hollywood at this point.

BILL LOFTS (London): Barry Perowne (Philip Atkey) was the nephew of Bertrum Atkey, creator of Smiley Bunn. He was also greatly influenced by the Nelson Lee detective stories when a boy. He simply obtained permission and by some arrangement was able to write Raffles stories from the Hornung Estate. It was Jackie Hunt who was on the editorial of the S.B.L. who thought up the idea of Blake pitting his wits against Raffles. In reply to Derek Ford, Derek Long whom I met some years ago, owed his literary career to Edgar Wallace. His sole reason for only writing only two Blake yarns was because of the closed shop that existed at that time of Hunter, Parsons, Jardine, Tyrer, Drummond and Gilbert Chester. Inspector McLean I feel sure was running just after end of First World War, though first book was in 1929. He was so popular that Thomsons did have a 'Dandy MacLean' Library at one time.

DESMOND O'LEARY (Loughborough): May I say how much pleasure we all get from reading the varied and fascinating articles and essays? It must be a hard task often, editing a varied magazine. But I imagine that the level of enjoyment and appreciation created in the readership is much higher than in any other publication.

Fr. F. HERTZBERG (Wirral): Whilst unsure of the derivation of "Remove", this term is certainly not confined to Greyfriars - there was

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a "Remove", for example, at my old school, the Quarry Bank School, Liverpool.

J. A. C. BRIDGWATER (Malvern): The Digest continues to delight as always. Danny's Diary is especially enjoyable, being now well into my schooldays, and the Small Cinema has got to our post-war cinema-going. So, for me, we are going through a C.D. golden period. Could we have another old St. Jim's serial for the winter? That would make it just perfect. As a dyed-in-the-wool Blakian, I always find Blakiana absolutely splendid and I love the Nelson Lee Column. As I said, C.D. is pure gold just now.

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge): I fancy there was a deal of repetition of themes in the work of both Charles Hamilton, and of his substitute and imitators in the period from the beginning of the "Gem" until 1940. I imagine the average boy probably read these stories for a period of four to five years, from say 10-11 till 15, or perhaps 16; the loyal reader probably lasted longer.

How the post has deteriorated since Danny's Diary days. It now takes five days for a letter to cross Cambridge - and a first-class letter costs nearly the equivalent of half a crown in real money.

(Many thanks to the large number of readers who have written in concerning the Wood Green Empire tragedy. We hope to publish a summary next month. Ed.)

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