

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 35

NUMBER 414

JUNE 1981

"The New Hand!" Special New Story  
In This Issue By Sidney Drew!

## THE BOYS' FRIEND 2c

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# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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## THE EDITOR TALKS

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### MARMADUKE SMYTHE

This month we reach the conclusion of the second of the very old Marmaduke stories. The main attraction in these two tales is that they were written when the author was on the threshold of his career, when the century was very young. Their novelty provides the interest. Neither story is particularly good, the first one being the better of an unusual pair. Both have an elusive charm.

Marmaduke was never to be a permanent character at St. Jim's, but, for some reason, Hamilton seemed to have a lingering affection for him. For some years, in the blue cover Gem, the author revived him from time to time, and he made what we might call "guest appearances" in the stories.

The last paragraph of the second story strikes an odd note, all these years later. "Marmaduke had the proud consciousness of being a fully-accredited member of Figgins & Co."

It seems clear that Hamilton intended to turn the leading New House trio into a quartette, with Marmaduke as the fourth member. It could have acted in those very early days. It was far too early for St. Jim's to have anything like tradition with readers. (Years later, a sub writer took the fatal step of adding a fourth member - the unlovable Handcock from America - to "The Terrible Three". That was flouting tradition with a vengeance, and it must have infuriated all but very young readers.)

Why, then, did Hamilton not pursue the plan with Marmaduke Smythe? The editor decided suddenly that Jack Blake's St. Jim's and Tom Merry's Clavering should be amalgamated, and that the series should run singly in the Gem. Hamilton admitted that he was annoyed about it - he felt perfectly capable of writing two separate series - but, to us today, it seems clear that the editor was right. Separately, St. Jim's and Clavering might both have foundered. As one united school, they went on to an enormous success. And probably that was the reason we never actually saw the New House Four in operation in later times.

Our two Marmaduke tales were reprinted only once, and the occurrence was a surprising one. The Penny Popular started in October 1912, reprinting the early Tom Merry tales. Then, for some reason, in Nos. 12 and 13 the editor inserted these two much earlier tales of Marmaduke Smythe. This was in January 1913. Long before this time, of course, Tom Merry was the complete junior leader of St. Jim's, and, probably, the most popular schoolboy character in the world. Yet, in the two Marmaduke tales Tom Merry had not even been introduced to St. Jim's, and Blake was the established hero of the stories.

So, in the Penny Popular reprint we find Mr. Kidd being changed to Mr. Railton. This did not matter a lot. Both were from the same mould. But Tom Merry was in a different category. As a token gesture, some of the original appearances of Mellish and Walsh were divided among the Terrible Three. It was Tom Merry who was to play the girl's part in "Yeoman of the Guard", while Manners or Lowther was to be Point.

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Finally, the tale was given a different ending. The last line was "Marmaduke had the proud consciousness of being what every St. Jim's boy was. A decent fellow!"

Which was very coy indeed.

The introduction of those two Marmaduke tales into the Penny Popular is a mystery of early days. Perhaps the first. There were to be many more mysteries to intrigue us later.

### HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

Long years ago, in the distant early thirties, my sister and I went to Drury Lane Theatre. The play we saw was Noel Coward's "Cavalcade". If it was a Wednesday, I may have had a copy of a Gem with a reprinted Tom Merry story in my pocket. If so, I must have been very happy.

It was perhaps my first visit to Drury Lane, that famous theatre with the huge revolving stage. As for "Cavalcade", it was the most moving and most spectacular show I have ever seen in a theatre.

At about the same time that my sister and I went to Drury Lane, a very young lady, on holiday from her native Yorkshire, was excited by her very first visit in her life to any theatre. Fancy your first theatrical experience being "Cavalcade" at Drury Lane. No wonder it has always lived in her memory. Neither my sister nor I knew her, and years were to go by before we met her.

Today that young lady is our dearly-loved "Madam", who means so very much to me and, I am sure, to plenty of you who have met her and love her.

I have always felt sure that "Cavalcade", or anything like it, could never be revived, owing to what would be the colossal cost of presentation in these days. At Drury Lane there was a cast of over 400 and a giant orchestra. The show ran there for 405 performances.

To my amazement, a few months ago I read in a newspaper that the Redgrave Theatre at Farnham was staging something very special to celebrate an anniversary of some kind. And the special presentation was to be Noel Coward's "Cavalcade" for a five-weeks' run.

Obviously, we reasoned, it will be a mere shadow of the original, but we just had to see it "for old times' sake". Even without the

spectacle, it is a lovely little Upstairs Downstairs story, relating the lives of the Upstairs family and their servants over thirty years from 1900 till 1930. (Could it be a mere coincidence that the head of the Downstairs contingent was a Mrs. Bridges, played by Una O'Connor at Drury Lane?)

I rang the theatre at Farnham at once, luckily, and managed to book excellent seats for my little party for a date four weeks or so hence. Soon, every advertisement announced ALL SEATS SOLD FOR "CAVALCADE". So we very nearly missed it.

"It will be a mere shadow of what it was at Drury Lane, of course," I had said. And how wrong I was. It was magnificent. There was a cast of 340 in it. In the car park of the theatre, drawn up in a long line immediately beside the theatre, were six huge pantehnicons, fitted up as dressing rooms for the "extras". Tarpaulins covered a specially prepared way from the stage door to the pantehnicons.

The Redgrave at Farnham is a post-war theatre, built in the modern style. I must confess that I don't like "modern style" theatres with little or no scenery, everything bare between the audience and the walls at the rear of the theatre, a low stage, and lighting by spots. Give me footlights (they seem to be a thing of the past everywhere) and elaborate scenery and plush curtains all the time. But, in some ways, this modern theatre was an advantage for "Cavalcade". In the war years, 1914 to 1918, at Drury Lane, the soldiers went marching in continuous lines over hills across the back of the great stage. At Farnham, the soldiers in their khaki, came marching down all the gangways, down iron stairs at each side, from all directions, up on to the stage, and disappearing into the black darkness at the back of the stage. And the singer, beside the grand piano at the right, picked out by a single bright spotlight, sang all the old songs of the First World War: "Tipperary", "We Don't Want to Lose You", "Keep the Home Fires Burning", "Long, Long Trail", "Till We Meet Again", "God Send You Back To Me", "Pack Up Your Troubles", and lots more. And the streams of marching soldiers went on and on and on, down the gangways and the stairs, and into the blackness. It beat Drury Lane, and was unforgettable.

Those who are old enough to remember "Cavalcade" will recall the scene in Kensington Gardens at the death of Queen Victoria. Just

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the silent throngs moving across in both directions, everybody in black and white. You could have heard a pin drop in the silent theatre. It was a memorable scene at Drury Lane. It was no less effective at Farnham. People were even out walking with their dogs, and the dogs were as well trained as the humans.

And the Edwardian London Street seen at Farnham surpassed the Drury Lane presentation, for it went on, silently, all through the 15-minute interval while we enjoyed our ice-creams and watched the street on the dimly-lit stage. Washing hung from the upstairs windows in that London street. A muffin-man entered the crowd, a sweep with his brushes, a group of women bore banners "Votes for Women", children ran in and out among the crowds, street vendors peddled their wares, a newsboy carried his placard, a hurdy-gurdy played, a little girl danced to it. And this was the Interval.

The Principals were superb. The children - looking down at the passing funeral of Queen Victoria - "Mum, she must have been a very little lady." And the servant - "England won't half seem funny without the Queen." The costumes, especially in the ballroom scene, were magnificent.

But what impressed me so deeply was the perfect training of the huge cast. The whole thing was flawless. Drury Lane and Noel Coward would have been deeply proud of it.

Seeing it, with the packed audience cheering it, just as they did long ago, somehow filled me with hope and a kind of confidence. We have seen the greatest of the old papers brought back in the splendid Howard Baker books. And I have seen a renewal of London's greatest theatrical show, which I thought could never be done again. And our C.D. contributors revive many of the old greatnesses and our readers love them. So all is not wrong with our little land.

It is appropriate to finish with the final moving speech of "Cavalcade", which nobody who saw it ever forgets, as Jane holds up her glass to toast in the New Year 1930, as Big Ben chimes:

"First of all, my dear, I drink to you. Loyal and loving always. Now, then, let's couple the Future of England with the Past of England. The glories and victories and triumphs that are over, and the sorrows that are over, too. Let's

drink to our sons who made part of the pattern and to our hearts that died with them. Let's drink to the spirit of gallantry and courage that made a strange Heaven out of unbelievable Hell, and let's drink to the hope that one day this country of ours, which we love so much, will find dignity and greatness and peace again."

THE EDITOR

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# Danny's Diary

JUNE 1931

A remarkable thing happened in the early morning of the 7th June. There were earth tremors felt all over Great Britain, and in some places roofs lost slates and tiles. Not much damage was done really, but it was a big talking point that morning when we got to school.

There has been a kind of farce comedy going on in the Nelson Lee this month, with the continuation of the series about the scatty new Head of St. Frank's, Dr. Inigo Scattlebury. It's all a bit too "scatty" for my liking, though there are amusing bits. In "St. Frank's at the Derby", the new Head goes round on a child's scooter, and he also takes the whole school to Epsom to see the Derby.

In the next story "Hands Off The Head" he takes up bathing in the quadrangle fountain, and the other masters say "The new Head must GO." But Nipper & Co. like the old boy, and their battle cry is "Hands off the Head". In the end, Scatty goes off to a mental home. He was a brilliant man, and being so brainy sent him off his head.

Next week "Handy's Midnight Capture", a story of kidnapping, with Handy as a detective. Final of the month is "St. Frank's Under Canvas", with the old school carrying on in marquees and tents, and with Handforth cooking the breakfast.

In real life, the horse "Cameronian" won the Derby this year.

The opening St. Jim's tale in the Gem is "Terror from the East". It introduces another relative of Tom Merry - a new one on me - in Captain Merry from Burma. And Tom Merry has some extreme excite-

ment owing to the attention of a Burmese named Akyaba. Not too bad a tale. Then "The Conway Cup", full of accounts of sporting events between St. Jim's and Greyfriars.

Next, "Gussy the Waiter", with Gussy in a cafe, and a lot of Trimble. Final of the month is "Skimpole's Musical Spasm", a story of the music-mad new Shell master Mr. Pilbeam and Skimpole who tried to write music for him.

The new Rookwood tales in the Gem this month are "The Rookwood 'Screen' Star"; "The Catch of the Term" in which Mr. Manders gets locked in his study; "Manders versus the Latcham Pet" in which Mr. Manders gets beaten up; and "Tubby Muffin - Also Ran" in which Muffin puts his shirt on a dead cert. All a bit feeble, but they get by.

But the most intreeging bit in the final Gem this month is a special notice THE BIG PLAN! There's a royal treat in store for GEM READERS who are keen to know all about Tom Merry's early days, and how he came to St. Jim's. FULL NEWS NEXT WEEK!

Whatever can it mean? Are they going to start the Popular again with the early St. Jim's tales? Or what? I'm all agog!

Some lovely pictures at our local cinemas this month. We have seen Al Jolson in "Mammy"; Joan Crawford in "Our Blushing Brides" which is a talking sequel to the two silent films "Our Modern Maidens" and "Our Dancing Daughters" (all a bit too girlish for my liking, really); Will Rogers in "Lightnin'"; Frank Lawton and Madeleine Carroll in "Young Woodley, which is the talking film of the play which was on at the Savoy Theatre in London several years ago, about a schoolboy who falls in love with his housemaster's wife; Herbert Marshall in "Murder", a good thriller directed by a man named Hitchcock who is said to have a great future before him; George Arliss in "Old English"; Clara Bow in "True to the Navee", very good; John Barrymore and Joan Bennett in "Moby Dick" in which Capt. Ahab loses a leg in fighting the white whale; and Bessie Love in "Conspiracy".

In the "Young Woodley" programme there was a lovely new Laurel & Hardy comedy "Another Fine Mess". Just great.

Two good tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. The Greyfriars tale is "The Snob", all about a stuck-up new boy named Algernon De Vere, and "Pals of the Ranges", the second grand collection

about the Fistical Four out in the Canadian West. Jimmy Silver & Co. play a big part in rounding up a gang of rustlers.

The Modern Boy is not quite bang up to standard at the moment, but it's still worth buying. There is a good series of school stories by Hylton Cleaver. There is an amusing character named the Prawn at Milford School. There is also a series about the Canadian Mounties by G. E. Rochester introducing the Flying Major and his Cockney mechanic. And a railway series by Alfred Edgar.

The famous and wonderful film "Ben Hur" which stars Ramon Novarro, is back at the Tivoli in the Strand in London where it had such a long, long run years ago. Now it is the same film, but with the addition of sound. It is drawing the crowds again, but I wonder whether what they call "canned" music and sound will really be better than the huge orchestra plus wonderful effects which they had on the original presentation.

This month our King has celebrated his 66th birthday. He is a splendid and much-loved monarch, but I expect he finds the years going by all too fast for him.

There is yet another Rio Kid collection in the Boys' Friend 4d. Library this month - "The Outlaw Rancher". This is the series where the Kid becomes the owner of the Lazy-O Ranch at Packsaddle. Lovely tales.

The magnificent, glorious, utterly wonderful Lancaster series in the Magnet has continued throughout the month, and has ended, with a sigh, in the last story of June. I have written a song about it. It goes like this:

"We've been together now for eleven weeks -

And it don't seem a day too much."

It has a nice tune, and any likeness to any other well-known song is purely accidental.

The month's first story is "Unmasked". Wharton says to Lancaster: "I was at Highcliffe! Never mind what I was doing there - I was there. I was one of the two fellows you struggled with in Dr. Voysey's study."

And Wharton goes on: "You understand? You've got to get out of Greyfriars! You've no right here - no right! Get out of it, and go

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back where you belong."

Next week brought us "The Boy Who Knew Too Much". The one schoolboy who knows the real identity of the "Wizard" is effectively silenced. Harry Wharton is kidnapped. He vanishes. And Lancaster stays on at Greyfriars.

Then came "The Way of the Wizard". The cleverest cracksman in England is a schoolboy at Greyfriars; and the cleverest detective in the world - Ferrers Locke, now engaged to round him up, - is a guest under the same roof.

Then, the last tale of the month, and the last tale of the Lancaster story, is "A Cracksman's Reward". "Greyfriars never learned the truth. All the school knew was that Lancaster had received his wound in risking his life to save Ferrers Locke."

"He was missed at Greyfriars. But he was remembered there with kindness and affection, most kindly of all by Harry Wharton, the only fellow at Greyfriars who knew the true history of the schoolboy crook - the Wizard."

And we shall miss Lancaster, too. Surely, one of the very finest school stories ever written. A lovely, lovely, lovely tale.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 149, "The Snob" comprised the 4-story series about De Vere from the Magnets of midsummer 1922, toward the end of the white-cover era. This series appeared recently in one of the Howard Baker Special editions, and should still be available for the connoisseur. S.O.L. No. 150, "Pals of the Ranges" comprised the second set of tales concerning the Fistical Four in Canada, which occupied most of 1923 in the Boys' Friend. The entire series was covered in four S.O.L.'s.

Though Danny had no means of knowing it then, "Skimpole's Musical Spasm", the last story in the Gem of June 1931, was the last new substitute tale ever to appear in that paper. And, by a coincidence, the very next week would bring "Speedway Coker" in the Magnet, the very last sub tale ever to appear in that famous paper.

We missed Lancaster, as Danny says. But how wise the author was to take Lancaster right out of the cast at the end of the series, and not leave him on at Greyfriars to re-live his "past" in future stories, as he had done with Talbot at St. Jim's. The author had gained in experience with the passing of the years.

The Rio Kid story "The Outlaw Rancher" was reprinted yet again in the Boys' Friend Library six years later, under the same title, in 1937.)

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1981 is the CORAL JUBILEE Year of C.D.!

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

In this month's Blakiana readers will no doubt be pleased to find a very interesting list of Sexton Blake films giving the details of actors, etc. This information has been provided by our good friend and contributor, Mr. John Bridgwater, who extracted it from Mr. Denis Gifford's film book "The British Film Catalogue 1895 to 1970" so we must thank them both for their wonderful efforts. Unfortunately the book is out of print, but is probably still obtainable from local Public Libraries. If anyone has a copy they wish to dispose of I should be pleased to buy it.

I shall have to spread these details over two or three months to enable Blakiana to continue with two articles each time, but I am sure they will be worth waiting for. Those people who possess a copy of the Sexton Blake Catalogue Supplement will be able to add further information to it. I still have a few copies left if anyone should want one, price 17p post free, as previously supplied.

## FIRST PERSON?

by J.E.M.

As an enthusiast of both Gwyn Evans's Sexton Blake stories and the "private eye" novels of Raymond Chandler, I was much intrigued by the article "Stories in the First Person" (C.D. February). However, I fear D.H. is wrong in suggesting that Chandler's pungent style was actually anticipated by Evans. The Ruff Hanson story in U.S.J. 1173 (1926) may have pre-dated Chandler's well-known yarns but it certainly did not pre-date the first person private eye stories of another American writer, Dashiell Hammett, to whom Chandler admitted his own great debt. Not that even Hammett had invented the tough, racy crime story written as if by its own hero. He did however, bring a slickness, polish and style to this kind of fiction which it had hardly known before. As for the realism of his characters and background, it is enough to say that Hammett had been an operative with the famous American detective agency Pinkerton's ("the eye that never sleeps"). He really could write about crime in the first person.

Hammett contributed his first stories to the American magazine, Black Mask, in 1922. This publication soon arrived in this country (with other "pulp" it was often used as little more than ships' ballast!), so

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Gwyn Evans would have had plenty of opportunity to study this style of writing before 1926. In possibly getting his inspiration from Hammett and similar writers he was in good company. According to some very distinguished critics, Hammett's terse, laconic style was an influence on, among others, the great American novelist and Nobel prizewinner William Faulkner.

Some of Hammett's "private eye" short stories have now been collected under the title "The Continental Op" and are available in this country. His later work is, of course, known to every lover of crime fiction, novels like "The Maltese Falcon" and "The Thin Man" reaching an even wider audience on the cinema screen.

If Gwyn Evans was affected by such transatlantic influences he had nothing to be ashamed of. He clearly tailored the new style to fit the Blakian Saga and for many U.J. readers no doubt, this treatment was a novelty. What was truly shameful was the U.J. editor's suggestion that Evans had virtually invented the tough American 'tec who told his story "in his own words". It was no service to any of Blake's chroniclers to make false claims for them. In fact, the old story-paper editors in general, often did their products more harm than good by the technique of "over-sell". Every week we were promised the "most thrilling yarn you have ever read", "the best that so-and-so has ever penned", "an entirely new kind of story", etc., etc. This became so irritating that sometimes it actually detracted from our enjoyment of some very fine yarns.

It is obvious that many of our favourite writers often did get "inspiration" from other sources. To be blunt, even borrowing and downright plagiarism were not unknown. But these were always features of popular writing and, if such writing still gave us pleasure, what on earth did it matter? I for one, do not enjoy G. H. Teed's Wu Ling stories any the less because he bears a suspicious resemblance to Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu, and if that master criminal Professor Reece, just might have been inspired by Conan Doyle's Professor Moriarty, the thought does not diminish by one jot my pleasure in the U.J.'s brilliant series about the Criminal Confederation. Indeed tracking down the possible inspiration of certain Sexton Blake stories has actually added to my pleasure in them and I am sure this has been true also for many other

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## Blakians.

Of course, Blake writers were inspired by all manner of things not least by events in the real world. One could trace a pretty good picture of twentieth century social and political history simply from a reading of the Saga. There were also many truly original themes and characters in the stories of Sexton Blake. But - to return to the main point of this piece - the "first person" American private eye was not a "first" for Gwyn Evans.

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SILENT FILMS

- SEXTON BLAKE (1280) October 1909  
 Gaumont  
 Melodrama Production Syndicate  
 D: C. Douglas Carlile  
 S: (PLAY) C. Douglas Carlile  
 C. Douglas Carlile .. .. . Sexton Blake  
 Russell Barry .. .. . Roger Blackburn
- CRIME Tec poses as cleric to save squire's daughter from marrying murderer.
- THE JEWEL THIEVES RUN TO EARTH BY SEXTON BLAKE (810) March 1910  
 Gaumont  
 S: (CHARACTERS) Harry Blyth  
 CRIME Tec saves clerk from gang who tie him to clock-operated gun.
- SEXTON BLAKE v BARON KETTLER (645) April 1914  
 Humanity Story Films  
 D: Hugh Moss  
 S: (STORY) (UNION JACK WEEKLY)  
 CRIME A story of the stolen plans.
- THE CLUE OF THE WAX VESTA. Not included in catalogue. Probably a foreign film.  
 THE MYSTERY OF THE DIAMOND BELT (3500) July 1914  
 I. B. Davidson (KTC)  
 D: SC: Charles Raymond  
 S: (CHARACTERS) Harry Blyth  
 Philip Kay .. .. . Sexton Blake  
 Lewis Carlton .. .. . Tinker  
 Douglas Payne .. .. . George Marsden Plummer
- CRIME Crook poses as Lord to rob merchant and holds tec captive in cellar.

cont'd ...

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## THE KAISER'S SPIES (3000)

November 1914

I. B. Davidson (KTC)

D: SC: Charles Raymond

S: (CHARACTERS) Harry Blyth

Phillip Kay .. .. . Sexton Blake

Lewis Carlton .. .. . Tinker

CRIME Entomologist runs spy ring of bus drivers from tower in Epping Forest.

## THE STOLEN HEIRLOOMS (3000)

April 1915

I. B. Davidson (Walturdaw)

D: Charles Raymond

S: (CHARACTERS) Harry Blyth

Harry Lorraine .. .. . Sexton Blake

Bert Rex .. .. . Tinker

CRIME Detective is drugged with flowers and tied to sawmill while saving ex-gambler from jewel theft charge.

## BRITAIN'S SECRET TREATY (3000)

November 1914

I. B. Davidson (KTC)

D: SC: Charles Raymond

S: (CHARACTERS) Harry Blyth

Phillip Kay .. .. . Sexton Blake

Lewis Carlton .. .. . Tinker

Thomas Canning .. .. . The Count

CRIME Count catches tec posing as foreign war minister and hangs him over Beachy Head with a fuse.

## THE COUNTERFEITERS (2600) (A)

September 1915

I. B. Davidson - St. George (KTC)

D: SC: Charles Raymond

S: (CHARACTERS) Harry Blyth

Harry Lorraine .. .. . Sexton Blake

Bert Rex .. .. . Tinker

CRIME Counterfeiters using old mill tie detective to the waterwheel and boy assistant to lock gates.

## THE FURTHER EXPLOITS OF SEXTON BLAKE - THE MYSTERY OF THE S. S. OLYMPIC (4529) (A) Atlantic Films (Gaumont)

August 1919

P: D: Harry Lorraine

S: (CHARACTERS) Harry Blyth

Douglas Payne .. .. . Sexton Blake

cont'd ...

Marjorie Villis	..	..	..	..	Gwenda Howard
Jeff Barlow	..	..	..	..	Mr. Reece
Neil Warrington	..	..	..	..	Tinker

CRIME Tec saves kidnapped daughter of inventor murdered for his formula.

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# Nelson Lee Column

## CHUMS NO LONGER

by R. J. Godsave

It has often been said that the three chums of Study D of the Ancient House at St. Frank's were bound together with invisible cords. Where Edward Oswald Handforth was it was fairly certain the Church and McClure would be nearby. The occasion when the almost impossible happened is recorded in o.s. No. 261, "The Split in Study D" when Handforth and his two study mates were chums no longer.

The Breakdown in the health of Mr. Crowell, the Remove form-master was the reason for the introduction of a temporary form-master to take charge of the Remove during Mr. Crowell's absence. Mr. Clement Heath, M.A., proved to be a very different man from the figure that popular rumour had conceived. He was a young man who had served as a flying officer in the R.A.F. and his experience of boys extended no farther than his own schooldays. Since Handy liked to make a mystery out of nothing he soon confided to his chums that Mr. Heath had queer eyes and that he was always looking at him on the q.t. out of the corner of his eyes when the juniors attended the form room. Handforth further thought that he should investigate the new form-master's private movements.

Strangely enough, by breaking bounds at night and following Mr. Heath they found that he was in the habit of entering Bellton Wood and in some cases climbing trees. On a half holiday the three boys found that Mr. Heath visited Greyhurst Cottage in the nearby village of Edgmore. From further visits at night the juniors saw a figure silhouetted on the blind of the front room turning a handle and allowing small objects to run through his fingers and fall in little showers - obviously upon a table. From that observation Handforth came to the conclusion that Mr. Heath

was a crook and a forger.

At the time of the coming of Mr. Heath, Handforth had received a letter from his parents telling him that his elder sister, Edith, had run away and had married a Arthur Kirby against their wishes. Sir Edward and Lady Handforth had hoped that Edith would have married into the smart London set. Not knowing where the young couple were, Handy's parents were now anxious to welcome Mr. Kirby as their son-in-law. Although something of a fire-eater, Handy was very fond of his sister, and was upset not to know where she and her husband were living.

With the worry of his missing sister, Handforth often received lines from Mr. Heath for inattention, and on one occasion when he took his lines to Mr. Heath found the study empty. Leaving the lines on the desk his gaze casually fell on the pen-rack on which were odd pens and a fountain pen. It was this pen that struck the junior in a strange way. He picked it up and stared in disbelief as this very pen with the word "Twenty" set in tiny pearls on the barrel had been a present to his sister Edith on her twentieth birthday. The finding of this fountain pen made Handforth wonder if there was any connection with Greyhurst Cottage and his sister.

A visit by Handforth to Greyhurst Cottage, unbeknown to Church and McClure, found that it was indeed Edith living there with an old couple to look after her. He also found that Mr. Heath was infact Edith's husband - Arthur Kirby. As, in common with other colleges, under-master's were not allowed to marry, so Edith asked her brother not to mention his visit to anyone.

In these circumstances Handforth was unable to tell Church and McClure where he had been and what he had discovered. The result of this was that when Handforth's two chums attempted to go to the cottage one night, Handforth by sheer force, prevented their intention. A terrific fight took place in which all three juniors showed signs of combat. The following morning Church and McClure refused to speak to their former leader, and actually changed out of study D into a small compartment at the end of the Remove passage.

Now that Church and McClure were no longer friends with Handforth they felt free to find out what the mystery of the cottage was. Having obtained two smoke bombs from the Duke of Somerton's Sports

Day collection of fireworks, the two boys made their way on the next half holiday to the cottage with the intention of causing smoke which would cause the inhabitants to rush out of the cottage while the two boys gained access during the confusion. Placing the bombs in an old shed the two boys rushed in the empty cottage and found safety under an old couch. When the inhabitants returned the two boys recognised Handforth's voice and that of an extremely pleasant girl's voice, also that of Mr. Heath. Naturally, the boys were soon discovered, and now the secret of the cottage was no longer a secret there was no reason to carry on the quarrel. So, after promising Mr. Heath to say nothing of their findings the three juniors were once again chums.

This series ranks high in the writings of E. S. Brooks, and there was much more than Mr. Heath's double life as with the introduction of the Comte de Plessigny, who was to be so prominent in the following Amazon series.

\* \* \* \* \*

DO YOU REMEMBER? by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 170 - Magnets 1222-3 - Expulsion of Vernon-Smith Series

It is definitely a treat to open up the Magnet volume for that glorious year of 1931. One can always be certain that Charles Hamilton will be at the peak of his form, and many of the illustrations strike a perfect note, such as Mr. Quelch with bow tie and a wing collar (certainly very old-fashioned for that time), dark frock coat and waist-coat but lighter coloured trousers, the ensemble completed by spats over his shoes. This was the sort of thing that made Britain great.

Magnets 1222-3 develop the very complex relationship that existed between Vernon-Smith and Redwing. At this particular time, Redwing was studying for a Latin prize and Mr. Quelch looked in at Study No. 4 to inform him that he was free to give him some extra tuition in Horace, his favourite classical author. Redwing was not in the study at the time, but Vernon-Smith certainly was: he was in fact lying at ease enjoying a cigarette. Since he had twice been caned for smoking that term, Mr. Quelch decided that he would be detained for the remainder of the term's half-day holidays. This meant that the Bounder would not be

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able to play in the Highcliffe match, and he taunted Redwing with being the cause of the trouble. When Vernon-Smith managed to play in the match, having arranged for a fake telegram to be sent, Redwing was informed of this in advance, and the Bounder found a perverse pleasure in Redwing's shocked disapproval.

The other main characters were the adults. There was a brilliant cameo of the friction between Quelch and Prout, and several episodes where Quelch showed the most acid side of his nature. Mr. Vernon-Smith appeared in each number, and his interview with Dr. Locke after his son was expelled contained a fine interpretation of changing moods and tactics. A great deal of the story was in fact related in adult terms and this perhaps accounts for its special fascination now.

Although this series contains only two numbers, it gives the impression of swiftly-moving events, perhaps because there was no padding at all. The first Magnet relates the events that precede the expulsion, the second number (all at Greyfriars) dealing with the results of that decision. It says a great deal for Charles Hamilton's craftsmanship that the second Magnet is no anti-climax but is as fascinating to read as the first. Self-contained though this series may be, it is nevertheless an integral part of the long saga of the Bounder of Greyfriars that ran intermittently all through the Golden Age of the Magnet.

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WANTED: Richmal Crompton's, "William" titles, particularly first editions, with D.W.S., but all editions considered; early Magnets, pre 1930; Monsters; Thriller Picture Libraries; Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1941.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN

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WANTED: CDA 1968, Silver jacket. Also cheap reading copies SBL 4/5 series, School Friend, Schoolgirls' Own Library, Schoolgirl (English adventures only, preferably with Grangethorp). BB Gets the Boot.

48 SHALMARSH, BEBINGTON, WIRRAL

\* \* \* \* \*

WANTED: Copies of January 1981 C.D.  
Fr. G. GOOD, THORNES VICARAGE, WAKEFIELD, WF2 8DS

OLD FATHER THAMES

by W. O. G. Lofts

Readers of the Magnet who lived near the River Thames between Kingston and Lechlade in Gloucestershire, covering such famous towns as Windsor, Maidenhead, Reading and Oxford, were in for a treat of local surroundings in the late summer of 1939. This was when The Famous Five with Bunter, rowed and sailed past their homelands in the 'Water Lily' up towards the source of England's greatest river. With a hoard of secret loot hidden in the boat's locker, sought after by Shifty Spooner, one of Frank Richards' delightful scoundrels, plus many other well-known characters on the scene, including Cecil Ponsonby & Co. of Highcliffe. The Famous Five wended their way through delightful English countryside, camping by the river mainly at night before resuming their holiday river journey.

Whenever I reread this famous eight part series in the salmon coloured cover era, I instantly think of the traditional song that goes back to my schooldays . . .

High in the Hills,  
Down in the Dales,  
Happy and Fancy Free.  
Old Father Thames keeps  
Rolling Along,  
Down to the mighty sea.

Entitled 'Old Father Thames', thanks to our editor I have been able to establish that this was first composed in 1933, when I was just nine years old. In those days of the glorious British Empire, we used to sing this song, waving little Union Jacks, mainly on the traditional Empire and St. George's Days. The River Thames has always played a large part of the London scene. Before the last war we had the day trips by the Royal Crested, and Golden Eagle Steamers to Southend, Margate and Ramsgate, whilst in the opposite direction there was Hampton Court, Richmond and Kew. Yearly there was the University Boat Race between Oxford and Cambridge, when we wore our favourite team colours with pride, with huge crowds lining the banks and bridges.

Frank Richards in one of the rare disclosures of his boyhood days once wrote 'of him writing reams and reams sprawling in his old boat on

summer days' - which was on the river Thames, whilst much later it was once reported that as a young man he often had a boat out at Henley-on-the-Thames, so obviously he was quite familiar with the settings and atmosphere as well as Geography of our famous river. Quite recently, and just for interest I bought a large scale map of the Thames showing every single landmark. I closely checked with the Famous Five's trip - and found it remarkably accurate in almost every detail, only the Inns and names of fields being fictitious. I worked out that they travelled a total distance of 120 miles, going through no less than 34 locks in the process. The several weeks of rowing and sailing, with rests for days would also be just about right on the 'Water Lily's' journey hired from Mr. Baker the boatman from Friardale.

C. H. Chapman, the Magnet artist, who lived at Caversham (near Reading) by the Thames, confessed to me that this series gave him more pleasure to illustrate more than any other, as he was able to sketch accurately the river and background only a short distance from his home. In my recent talks at various clubs on Overseas readers, I mentioned a South African lady who was so impressed by this series of being so much of England - that decades later when on a visit to Britain, she hired a cabin cruiser, and travelled part of the route of the Famous Five.

There was of course, another Thames series in the Gem in 1923, which by all accounts was far better, though Magnet readers in 1939 would have been unaware of this, it appearing long before many were born. Whether the 'Water Lily' series will be read so avidly in years to come is debatable, though one thing is certain, Old Father Thames will always roll down to mighty sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

SALE: Pink Magnets, £1.00 each; S.O.L's, Nos. 293, 326, 332, 363, 366, £1.25 each; BB & Blue Mauritius, £6.50; Baker, Nelson Lee, Vol. 1, £6.00, Baker Magnet, Vol. 45, £6.00; Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1921.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN

\* \* \* \* \*  
 British comics, annuals and boys' story papers bought for cash. Top prices paid for good quality material. Send 35p for a copy of my informative sales lists. I am now opening up my sales lists so that collectors can contribute articles and exchange information.  
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## FAREWELL TO MARMADUKE

### THE REFORMATION OF MARMADUKE

Silence reigned in the hall. The New House juniors fixed stony eyes upon Herries, and it seemed to disconcert him. He turned red in the face, and Rushden, at the piano, kindly gave him another chord.

Herries made an effort.

"Here's a health to the King and a pasting leace --"

There was a laugh in the audience.

Blake made a sign to Herries from the side of the stage. Herries, greatly flustered, left off singing, and made matters worse by walking over to Blake to ask what he meant.

"Go on!" muttered Jack savagely.

"Go on, you duffer!"

Herries walked back.

"Here's a health to the King and a lasting peace --" said Herries.

"Hurrah! Go it!"

"On the ball!"

Herries desperately pursued the song. Rushden was a good pianist, but it was not easy to accompany Herries. He sometimes slowed down, and sometimes bucked up, and sometimes gave himself a rest that was not marked on the score.

However, he lost some of his nervousness, and he improved as he went on. At the end, he took his bow. The New House groaned. The School House cheered. They were not musical critics, but they keenly enjoyed a triumph over the New House.

"Bravo! Good old Herries!"

Herries had to take several calls, and when he finally retired he was crimson with bashfulness and gratification.

A. Digby, Esquire, came next, with a flute solo. Strange and mysterious sounds came from Digby's flute. Nobody recognised the tune, but it was all the same to the audience. Dig made his bow, and Blake heaved a sigh of relief.

Next came Blake in a cake-walk. He did it so well that even the New House had to admire, and the boeing was only half-hearted. The School House clapped frantically.

"Oh, my aunt!" growled Figgins. "Is Kidd going to stick it out the whole evening? He must be sick of the blessed row by this time."

"He won't go," said Kerr. "He knows there would be a rumpus if he did. It's no good growling. We were going to have Ratcliff at our concert for the very same reason."

"Here's the sketch!" said Figgins, changing the subject.

The whole hall was eager to see the performance of the sketch entitled "New House Funniosities." It was done by Blake, Herries and Digby, with minor parts taken by D'Arcy, Mellish and Walsh.

It represented a rehearsal by the New House Amateur Dramatic Society, and the blunders which the supposed amateur dramatists were made to commit were decidedly comical.

It brought the house down, and even the rival juniors could not help

laughing at the caricature of Figgins & Co.

When the applause died away, the New House burst into an uproar, headed by Figgins & Co. Mr. Kidd jumped up with a frown on his face and called for silence.

The next item was the song "Give Me Back My Eighteenpence", sung by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. It was a comic song, but it is safe to say that it had never sounded so comical as now, when the swell of the School House sang it in a drawling voice, and regarded the audience nonchalantly through his eyeglass.

The whole hall was in convulsions, and the New House cheered D'Arcy as cordially as the School House when he had finished. Even Figgins & Co., like the Tuscans of old, could scarcely forbear a cheer. Jack Blake clapped Arthur Augustus on the back.

"Good! Ripping! You've made the New House kids laugh. What a sell for Figgins & Co., when we get a cheer from their own backers!" said Blake gleefully. "This concert will be a howling success."

The scene from Shakespeare started, and proceeded fairly well, considering the short time allowed for rehearsal.

"Hallo!" shouted Figgins suddenly. "What's wrong with the light?"

A good many other voices echoed the question. The hall was lighted by three great clusters of gaslights, and all of a sudden the lights had started to waver uncertainly. The scene on the platform stopped, the laughter died down, and every eye was turned up to the ceiling.

"The gas is going out!"

A babel of voices arose

immediately. The concert-givers were silent with dismay. Figgins & Co. were too astonished for a minute to take advantage of this glorious opportunity. Then the truth rushed into Figgins's mind.

"Marmaduke! Good old Smythe! He said he had an idea, and would risk a flogging to bust up the giddy concert."

"What's he done, then?"

"Turned off the gas at the meter!"

"Good wheeze! Let's rush those cads before they can get a light."

Everyone was on his feet now, and a signal went round from Figgins.

"Sock it to them! Rush the giddy platform."

Mr. Kidd was on his feet. He did not know what was wrong with the gas supply, but he feared that the New House would take advantage of the happening.

"Keep your seats, boys! Remain where you are till I procure lights!"

"Yes, that's likely!" Figgins murmured. "You can't tell t'other from which in the dark, old sport, and this is where we come out strong."

The New House juniors, overjoyed by the chance, were only too glad to follow the lead of Figgins. A rush was made from the back of the hall, and the New House pack swept through the School House, and Figgins with a number of others gained the platform as the curtain came down with a thud.

"Order!" shouted Mr. Kidd.

"Order!" bellowed the prefects.

But in the darkness the juniors cared nothing for masters or prefects. The New House were determined to avenge themselves, and the School House were not averse to a terrific row.

"Buck up, School House!" shouted Blake. "Throw the measly wasters out!"

"Throw 'em out yourself!" came Figgins's voice, close to him in the dark.

Blake jumped at him, and the two rival leaders closed and staggered about the platform, locked in deadly strife.

They collided with a good many others and sent them flying, and some of the unfortunate artists rolled off the platform. A free fight was raging in the hall. The New House boys had the advantage, as they had come provided with weapons of war. But the advantage did not last long, as the combatants were soon inextricably mingled, and it was impossible to distinguish friends from foe.

"The Head!"

A door at the back of the platform had opened, and the light streamed through, and in the light stood an awe-inspiring figure in cap and gown. It was the doctor.

There was a wild scramble for the door immediately. In a couple of minutes the hall was cleared. Blake had a black eye, and his nose was very red, and Figgins was looking much the worse from the encounter; but he was jubilant.

"We're the giddy victors!" he exclaimed. "We've settled their beastly old concert for them."

That was certainly true. Study No. 6 believed in sticking to it, but they could hardly proceed with the concert now. The New House juniors streamed off, cheering and hooting; and even the optimistic Blake had to confess that the

bagged concert hadn't been such a howling success as he could have wished. In the quadrangle Figgins & Co. came upon Marmaduke.

"Is it all right?" cried Marmaduke eagerly. "I turned off the gas at the meter --" "It was really you?"

"Yes. I had to do a lot of dodging to get at it, but --"

Figgins fell upon his neck, and hugged him like a long-lost brother.

"It was great!" he gasped. "It was gorgeous! And I never thought of it!"

He paused. Then he clapped Marmaduke on the shoulder.

"From this time forth you belong to the Co., my son. Kids, Marmaduke Smythe, Esquire, is taken into the firm from this day forth."

"Right-ho!" said Kerr and Wynn heartily. "Good old Marmaduke! It was great!"

So ended the great concert. On the following day the Fourth Form at St. Jim's exhibited a surprising assortment of black eyes, thick ears, and swollen noses, and that day was the happiest Marmaduke had spent at the good old school. For his reformation was complete, his probation was over, and now he had the proud consciousness of being a fully-accredited member of Figgins & Co.

EDITORIAL COMMENT: So it is Farewell to Marmaduke. Blake excelled in doing the Cake Walk. What on earth is a Cake Walk?

Does anybody know?

BOOK REVIEW

by Mary Cadogan

Amongst recent nostalgic books I feel that C.D. readers would particularly enjoy these three very different volumes.

THE ADVENTURES OF MICKEY MOUSE by Walt Disney (Piccolo Paperback, £1.25) is a reprinting of some very early exploits of Disney's most celebrated hero (who is now, of course, over fifty years old). It is nice to be reminded of characters like Claws the Cat, Mickey's arch-enemy - and two of his extremely attractive chums, Henry Horse and Carolyn Cow (later known as Horace Horsecollar and Clarabelle Cow). The stories are simple but lively, and the full colour illustrations convey the engaging atmosphere of the old Silly Symphonies and the Disney comics.

CIGARETTE CARDS AND NOVELTIES by Frank Doggett (Michael Joseph, £8.95) is a bumper and gorgeous book. All of us who avidly collected cigarette cards in our youth will relish these pages and pages of reproductions - those beautiful cards of butterflies, film-stars, soldiers, Kings and Queens, flowers, cats, dogs, horses, fishes, birds, aeroplanes, cars, trains, bicycles and, of course, all those super sportsmen! The text of the book is intriguing and informative and, altogether, this is a volume to savour and to treasure.

In SWANSON ON SWANSON (Michael Joseph, £9.95), Gloria tells the story of her varied life and career from her appearance in the early Mack Sennett one-reelers to the present day. There is plenty of drama and delight, and almost a history of Hollywood in this book, which not only gives us insights into the life of Gloria Swanson, but into that of many other movie-star favourites - including Wallace Beery (her first husband), Charles Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Snr., Mary Pickford and Rudolph Valentino.

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

HAROLD TRUSCOTT (Deal): I was considerably surprised at Mr. Lofts' remark that Chapman's drawings of boats were almost laughable. I have been looking again at his illustrations for the "Water Lily" series and can find nothing laughable about his boats, which are simply good drawings of boats - unless I have the wrong idea of what a boat is! Could we have a little more explanation from Mr. Lofts, please?

TOMMY KEEN (Thames Ditton): Thank you John Lewis (of Neston) for correcting my error in the January's C.D., regarding Bob Cherry and his Mother. Actually, as soon as I had posted the letter, I realised I had slipped up, for although I had always been under the impression that Bob was one of the many without 'a motherly hand to guide them', I had

only recently read in the Courtfield Cracksman series (Magnet No. 1142), that 'The Head was coming to Cherry Place to dine with Major and Mrs. Cherry'.

Sorry! Let's substitute Snoop for the cheery Cherry. After all the prominence given to Snoop's Father during the earlier days of the Magnet, am almost certain there was no Mrs. Snoop.

D. B. STARK (East Sussex): I find Frank Richards's use of the word "jigger" for bicycle irritating, and wonder why he continued to use such a dated word throughout his later stories. Likewise Fishy's (and others) "Americanese" is somewhat unreal. I read anything to do with Fishy very quickly, but then, he isn't supposed to be liked, anyway.

JOHN BRIDGWATER (Malvern): Recently I was loaned Denis Gifford's "British Film Catalogue" and came on an entry which surprised me. "Jack, Sam & Pete". (Length 5,000 ft.) First shown October 1919. Producer Leon Pollock. Story source: stories by S. Clarke Hook, Percy Moran as "Jack", Eddie Willey as "Sam", Ernest A. Trimmingham as "Pete". Adventure: Cowboys save kidnapped child from gang seeking hidden jewels.

I wonder how many Jack, Sam & Pete fans saw the film. So Sexton Blake was not the only one of the old favourites to appear on the silver screen.

BILL LOFTS (London): In answer to D. Harkness' interesting piece. The editor of the Union Jack told me that his paper's readership ranged from nine to ninety - though it was generally assumed to be in the teenage to the twenty mark for the majority of readers. The writer, J. Story of Worthing, Sussex, was actually Jack Trevor Story the S.B.L. writer, who told me that he read the U.J. as a boy though his favourite was Modern Boy. John Hunter the S.B.L. writer, when tackled by me on the change from Tinker to the Edward Carter, told me that this was on instructions from Len Pratt the Sexton Blake Library editor - who maintained that the Library in 1950 had changed from the juvenile field to the adult from that date. Personally I agree that both the U.J. and S.B.L. have always been for the very much older 'juvenile' reader if one can put it that way. Certainly at the age of twelve

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I found both too adult for my taste - and I would certainly class the very early stories in the U.J. for mainly the adult market.

On the subject of free gifts - I have in a frame a very good art-plate of The Chums of Greyfriars supposed to be given away with the Penny Popular at one time. Can you date this or confirm that it was a free gift? Certainly worth having even though it is by C. H. Chapman.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The art-plate was given away with the Penny Popular early in January 1917, to mark the fact that the Sexton Blake stories in the paper were being replaced with early Greyfriars tales.)

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# News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

SOUTH WESTERN O.B.B.C.

The old story papers faithfully reserved blizzards and snow drifts for Christmas, so we felt distinctly cheated by freak storms in late April.

Only five members were able to plough their way through to Weston-Super-Mare, where we were once more entertained by Tim Salisbury.

The fledgling club was honoured by the presence of Bob Blythe, known to us only by reputation and as a helpful supplier of E. S. Brooks library books.

In the absence of our official speakers, Bob stepped nobly into the breach and enthralled us with part of his famous Brooks collection. We were impressed and surprised by the writer's versatility.

Other newcomers were Bob's charming wife, and Gordon Harrison from Bristol, a D. C. Thomson collector. There was also a fiendish quiz in which your correspondent distinguished himself by forgetting the name of Col. Wharton's butler even when prompted with 'town in Somerset'. The locals were duly eclipsed by Bob Blythe.

The meeting closed with sincere thanks to Tim's mother for her lavish tea and friendly welcome. We look forward to a better turn-out in September.

SIMON GARRETT

MIDLAND

Meeting April 1981

This was the most poorly attended for some time, only nine members being present. Tom Porter, our Chairman, was absent, being unwell and your correspondent officiated in his place.

The question of Howard Baker's raising the price of his facsimile copies of the old papers from £5.95 to £8.95 was discussed. The £15 volumes were not to be raised at the moment, but it will come of course. Many members said that they will be still good value for money.

As Tom Porter was absent there was no Anniversary number this month, but your correspondent brought along an illustrated menu card for a gathering and celebration on the occasion of Eric Fayne's having completed twenty years as editor of The Collectors' Digest and Collectors' Digest Annual. The celebration was held at the White Hart Hotel at Sonning-on-Thames and the menu illustrations were from the Magnet and Gem.

Mrs. Setford, mother of the late Warwick Setford, had sent in more script of Warwick's story of "The Battle of the Beaks". The story is being printed in our newsletter in instalments in his memory.

There was a reading by your correspondent from the Holiday Annual with Bunter describing his talents as a footballer and as a clever chap who could "stuff" beaks. Needless to say both were non-existent.

Refreshments included a delicious cake baked by Joan Golen and biscuits from Mr. and Mrs. Loveday with hot coffee or tea as preferred. These were very much enjoyed.

Our next meeting is brought forward a week to avoid a clash with the Spring Holiday. It will be on 19th May.

Good luck and health to all O.B.B.C. enthusiasts everywhere.

JACK BELLFIELD - Correspondent

LONDON

Incelement weather did not spoil the attendance at the Twickenham meeting as there was the largest muster of members and friends of this year. As is now customary, Sam and Babs Thurbon had collaborated

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together to make a tape recording of an interview between Soames and Miss Bullivant. The various sporting trophies were mentioned, Bessie and Billy Bunter, Cliff House and the famous Painted Room. The two excellent thespians were very well applauded at the conclusion of the tape.

Roger Jenkins played his tape recording of extracts from five Magnet series. Competitors had to give the titles of the series and the initial letter anagram. Roy Parsons was the only successful competitor in naming the five series and the anagram.

Then it was the turn of Bob Blythe who read extracts from some Edwy Searles Brooks' letters that did not appear in the C.D. This item was greatly enjoyed and further readings of these letters will take place at subsequent meetings.

Our esteemed local member, Millicent Lyle, spoke of the 900th anniversary of Twickenham and followed this with one of her unique efforts by which those taking part had to state what six fictional characters that they would take to the forthcoming Royal Wedding. Then they had to write a couplet about the subject. There were no winners as everyone participating gave out their selection of guests and then read their couplet. An enjoyable item which caused great amusement.

The Dollis Hill meeting in May 1964 was the choice of Down Memory Lane that Bob Blythe read out.

Sam and Babs were thanked for their excellent hospitality that regretfully was the ultimate gathering at their Strawberry Hill home.

Next meeting will be at Greyfriars, Wokingham, on Sunday, 14th June. Bring your own tuck, but tea will be provided. There will be no Hamilton library at this meeting.

BEN WHITER

### NORTHERN

Twelve members were present on Saturday evening, 9th May. Mollie reported that she had received a letter from a 17-year-old young man from Bolton, who was keen to join our Club.

Bill Williamson gave a most entertaining talk on "My Collection". He said his collection was really quite modest, but Bill is one of the regular users of our Club Library. He first started to read "The Magnet" and other boys' papers in 1911, until 1924 when he thought he

was a little "mature" to read such periodicals. Although such items were cheap in those days, it was often a case of trying to decide whether to spend the Saturday penny on the local picture-house or some boys' paper - it was not possible to do both! From 1924, Bill still continued to buy the odd copy, here and there. He then went on to say, how through a number of coincidences, the Northern Club was formed - he and Norman Smith still being Members.

During refreshments, Keith Atkinson presented us all with a chocolate wafer biscuit as it was his birthday. Some Members expressed the hope that Keith would have another birthday very soon! Jack Allison presented a quiz on Greyfriars, based on incidents read from various "Magnets". Jack would stop at a crucial point and then ask what followed next. An entertaining and amusing quiz. There was a final question referring to how all the other questions had been related - all the readings had come from the Howard Baker publications, volumes 1 to 9.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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LITTLE RED MAG

by Tony Glynn

I think it was in Syd's second-hand bookshop that I first encountered the Boys' Magazine. It was during the war, paper rationing had hit our boys' books and comics and rare, astonishingly thick publications from the lost days of peace were eagerly snatched up.

The Boys' Magazine, published in my home town of Manchester, died when I was a baby so, when I came across that 1925 issue, it was something totally new to me and totally fascinating. When you are only a youngster, a publication nearly twenty years old looks positively archaic and this one typified the twenties. There was a story of Harold Lloyd who, to me, belonged wholly to that decade. I had heard of him but he had faded from the screen and television, with its revival of movie memories, lay in the future. There was Falcon Swift, the detective with a monocle, and does anything breathe twenties' affection more than a monocle? For me, Gussy, Archie Glenthorn and Jemima Carstairs are just as "twenties" as Bertie Wooster, due to their respective monocles.

There was a boxing tale, featuring a young wanderer of the

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Australian outback and, if I remember rightly - and I'm recollecting that long lost issue wholly from memory - there were cartoons by Jack Grenall, famous at the time of my discovering the Boys' Magazine for his "Useless Eustace" panel in the Daily Mirror.

All these years on, I still remember that issue with affection. It was a relic from a time before my own and nostalgia caused me recently to acquire a few issues from 1925, just because I wanted to savour the spirit of that time again.

Now, the Boys' Magazine looks even more archaic, but I was not disappointed. The stories are sometimes thin, the illustrations vary from good to poor and elements like fast cars, fast locomotives and speeding strut-and-wire aircraft which might have provided thrills in the mid-twenties now seem to be very tame. Nevertheless, there is an intimacy about the paper which the editor called "the Little Red Mag" which is quite enjoyable.

Curiously, some stories bear the names of their authors and others do not. H. Wedgwood Belfield contributed science-fiction of the earth shattering variety which was probably stunning in its time. John Hunter appears with a football mystery. Michael Poole is there with school stories and other stories are by J. Carney Allen, Ralph Merridew and Rupert Drake. I know that Edwy Searles Brooks wrote for the Boys' Magazine and suspect that other AP writers did, too.

The Falcon Swift tales do not carry the name of the author, but they are played up as one of the strong points of the publication. Were they the work of one person or several?

That year of 1925 was a fairly strong one for the Yellow Peril in the Little Red Mag, but then, the shadows of Fu Manchu, Dr. Nikola and the tongs of San Francisco and Limehouse were cast right across the popular fiction of the twenties. Detectives, too, were well to the fore. In fact, the Boys' Magazine started off the year of 1925 with a special detective issue, the following number being a special speed issue.

As always, I found the artists interesting. Much work on the adventure stories was done by Ben Somers, who turned up in children's comics in the thirties. There are tightly drawn and detailed illustrations to H. Wedgwood Belfield's science-fiction, the work of someone who signed with intertwined initials, either GT or TG. Of less striking

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calibre are the illustrations to the Harold Lloyd comedy stories, the work of Alan S. Brown and those signed by Oscar Wright, illustrating the series "Sergeant Renny of the River Police", are rather poor.

There is an old complaint in the provinces that prizes in the competitions which ran in boys' papers and comics usually went to readers in the London area. I have often wondered whether there is any justification for it.

The Boys' Magazine was published by Allied Newspapers at Withy Grove, Manchester, and I wonder if the complaint worked in reverse in the case of the Little Red Mag. I must admit that quite a large proportion of the prizewinners in its various competitions in 1925 lived in the Manchester locality. As a matter of fact, I found that one lived just round the corner from my own home. I passed the very house only the other night and wondered if the chap still lived there. I half entertained the idea that, if a no-longer-young gentleman should emerge from the front door I'd rush up to him and say: "Do you remember winning a prize in the Boys' Magazine in 1925?" An idle thought, of course.

Allied Newspapers were once a pillar of the Press scene in the days when Manchester was a great newspaper city. I have known several men who worked there and, indeed, have worked with a couple of veterans who cut their teeth at Allied in the thirties. I have never encountered anyone who was associated with the Little Red Mag, but there might well be some survivors in the Manchester area. It would be interesting to meet one with clear memories of those days.

Similarly, it would be interesting to know the standing of the Boys' Magazine in the hobby today. Is it a half-forgotten publication or are there perhaps some enthusiasts around even though the magazine figures small in the pages of the C.D.?

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