

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

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SEPTEMBER 1981

THE Magnet ^{1^d}/₂

No. 46. **LIBRARY** Vol. 2.

EXPULSED I

COMPLETE
STORY
FOR ALL

By
FRANK
RICHARDS



Bulstrode, seeing an opportunity of getting a little of his own back, wrenched the cane from Carberry's hand, and commenced to lash the bully's legs.

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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W. H. GANDER

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PROPHETIC?

I begin to wonder whether I am a Seer or a Soothsayer. Or whether the radio commentators at the Edgbaston Test Match might have had copies of C.D. on the desk before them.

We sat in a car in Windsor Great Park that afternoon. The radio was going at full blast. And I was biting what was left of my nails.

"History Repeats Itself!" ejaculated one of the commentators. And it shot into my mind that it was one of our recent editorial headings, though, at that time, it had nothing to do with the grand old game.

"There's a breathless hush in the Close tonight," said the commentator as the excitement rose. From the back page of last

month's C.D.

And soon he was saying: "If one of the old writers of boys' stories had put this in a yarn, he would have been laughed to scorn." We said the same thing on the back page of the Digest.

And, as the last Aussie came in - the commentator again: "Last Man In, and an Hour to Play." And that was the title of one of our Let's Be Controversial articles which happens to be recalled in a review of a new Howard Baker book in this month's C.D.

It was quite uncanny. The solution is probably that all cricket fanatics think alike.

Truly history repeated itself at Edgbaston. Two thrilling matches, and two victories in succession. Knowing our cricket record in late years, I think it likely that the whole picture will have changed by the time you read this. But, wasn't it great while it lasted?

"Just like a tale from the Boys' Own Paper," remarked the sports critic in my daily paper. And that's just what it wasn't! The B.O.P. was much too dignified to print such extravagant stories. It was just like a slice of Hamilton! He couldn't write believable cricket tales! Come off it!

P.C.49

"It's all the fault of the police," said the dear old lady of eighty to me, on the bus.

"Who told you so?" I enquired.

"Mr. So-and-So said so in parliament," said the dear old lady, naming a politician not noted for intelligent remarks.

"What would you do if you heard a burglar breaking in after you got to bed tonight?" I asked her.

"Ring for the police!" she replied promptly.

"Then you shouldn't say anything to undermine our faith in our police," I said, in my most schoolmasterly style.

But when I was a youngster, we used to make fun of policemen. And at the same time, we had a healthy and hearty respect for them.

Close to my home in Kent there was a golf-course. In those days it was an 18-hole links. The last time I was there it had been reduced to a 9-hole course, owing to the twentieth-century disease

which overnight, in the name of Progress, turns grass into bricks and mortar.

However, back to the big links it used to be long ago. My friends and I would trespass on those links. We weren't out to do mischief. Merely to find lost golf-balls.

"Keep an eye up for P.C. Ellis," I would say.

"He only goes after old ladies who've had a drop too much," someone would reply - and we would all laugh. But we kept a wary eye up for P.C. Ellis all the same. Ready to run like the wind if his helmet came over the top of a bunker.

Oddly enough, many of the heroes of the comic papers were convicts or tramps. They routed the police who were almost always ridiculed.

P.C. Cuddlecook was an everlasting figure of fun. Fat and futile. Tom, the Ticket of Leave man was always getting the better of a policeman - and we loved it.

Hamilton's famous "Bobbies" - P.C. Tozer, P.C. Crump, and P.C. Boggs were illiterate, pompous and ineffectual - seldom introduced for any purpose but to add to the comedy.

When some of us were very young indeed, the Keystone Cops had us rolling in the aisles at the cinemas. We gloried in them, and so did our Mums and Dads. At the music halls they sang "The Laughing Policeman" - "there was a fat old policeman, etc." - and we chuckled with delight. I seem to associate something in my extreme youth with the term P.C. 49 - possibly in a song or stories of some sort. Does P.C. 49 ring a bell in anyone else's head?

Yes, we always found a policeman good for a joke, but, all the same, we respected him highly. Most of us still do. It will be a bad day for this country if anyone, probably politically inspired, is allowed to undermine the authority of the police.

JELLY

Recently I had a visit from two of my Old Girls. One I had not seen since she left school nearly thirty years ago. The other I last saw at one of the Bunter shows in the West End some twenty years ago.

"There's someone named Angela on the telephone," Madam said

to me.

"That was Jelly!" I told Madam, later.

"She said Angela. If she had said 'Jelly' I would have known her at once," said Madam.

Jelly was the one who came to the Bunter show. Her name was Angela. For a time I used to call her "Angelica Jelly". Then, for all time, she became just "Jelly". So Angela was affectionately called "Jelly", throughout her schooldays.

When she came to see me I was able to tell her - with all shame long stifled - how that nickname originated so long ago. "Angelica Jelly" was a character at Cliff House in the early School Friend. I don't think she ever played a leading role in any story, but the name lingered in my memory. (Does any Cliff House expert know anything about the fictional "Angelica Jelly"?)

Jacqueline, the Old Girl I hadn't seen for thirty years, told me I always called her "Jonquil", but I can't remember how that one arose. "Jonquil", who lives in Switzerland with her husband, has a son at a boarding school in Devonshire. I forgot to ask her whether he has a form-master named Mr. Buddle.

How we talked and laughed and delved into masses of old photographs that afternoon. The hours just sped by. On the phone that evening Jonquil said to me: "This afternoon has made my year!"

To be able to enjoy one's past life is to live twice!

THE ANNUAL

All being well, the order form for this year's Annual - the 35th - will come to you with this month's C.D. It will help if you can order early. Last year a number of readers were disappointed, and left it too late before sending in their orders. In these times, we cannot print many copies, to allow for late orders, beyond those booked in advance.

On the order form there is, as usual, space for any small advertisement you may like to insert, and more and more readers find it a useful medium for sending Season Greetings to friends in the hobby.

It all helps to keep the wheels going round.

THE EDITOR



A RIGHT ROYAL OCCASION

by MARY CADOGAN



It seems particularly appropriate that I'm writing this Coral Anniversary tribute to the Collectors' Digest at the time of the afterglow of the Royal Wedding. Charles and Diana's names have recently been so joyously on our lips - 'C' and 'D', of course - and C.D. stands too for another precious part of our lives - our own unique magazine. 35 unbroken years is indeed something to celebrate. Apart from its intrinsic values, the C.D. is a tremendous link between the Clubs, and between far scattered individual collectors. And - like our recent national celebrations - the C.D. has its own gracious and much loved 'Royal' Family at the centre of things - Eric, Madam and the Princess Snowee. (The last-named, of course, has always kept us fully conscious of her royal status, but Eric and Madam have been more modest about themselves.) Long may they reign in our hearts! And long may the C.D. - which is as glowingly English as cricket, "Cavalcade" or Charles and Di - continue to flourish!

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CAVALCADE

A matter of interest is that Noel Coward's "Cavalcade" which is being repeated at the Redgrave Theatre, Farnham, from early October, has experienced so overwhelming a demand for tickets that the theatre has had to extend the production's run up till November 14th. It has prompted a royal request for a seat, and Princess Alexandra will see the rare show on October 13th.

Obviously, even in the eighties, a show doesn't really need to be all swearing, cesspool, and kitchen sink to be a success at the box office. It is a comforting thought.

* * * * *

WANTED: Boys' Friend (green one) 1049, containing the Last Cedar Creek story, "Frank Richard's Choice". Will pay handsomely for a loan of this.

HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, KING'S HEATH, NORTHAMPTON

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SALE: Silver Jackets, 1-28, £50.

HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, KING'S HEATH, NORTHAMPTON.

DANNY'S DIARY

SEPTEMBER 1931

The Gem, which has gone right back to the very start of it all, is still going strong with Tom Merry's early adventures.

The first story this month is "The St. Jim's Menagerie". The boys keep pets. Herries's bulldog, Towser, chases Herr Schneider, and Kerr's goat, Billy, butts the Head. In fact, the pets become pests.

Next week brought "Tom Merry & Co. on Strike". The boys aren't happy with the way their food is prepared or their laundry laundered - so they do their own. Gussy burns the washing and Blake burns the bacon. Good fun.

Then "Tom Merry, the Boy 'Tec" in which Tom runs away from school to become Ferrers Locke's assistant, and Gussy goes to London in search of Tom Merry. The Gangster finds Gussy, and Ferrers Locke's assistant finds the Gangster. Final of the month is "The St. Jim's Speed Cops" in which Tom Merry & Co. go out in a Daimler, and Figgins & Co. go after the Daimler on motor-cycles.

The Rookwood stories this month have been "Tubby Muffin's Double", "Silver's Narrow Squeak", "The Fighting Footballers" and "Hansom's Hopeless Hoax". They aren't much, but they get by.

The Gem also has complete stories about a mysterious crook named "The Winger".

Early in the month there was unusually heavy rainfall, but we've got used to rain this summer. This month Great Britain has won the Schneider Trophy for the third time. Flt. Lt. Stainforth flew at nearly 400 miles an hour and broke all records. Later in the month he flew at 408 m.p.h. and broke his own record.

In the Nelson Lee, the series has continued in which Professor Ogleby has decreed that the St. Frank's playing-fields shall be excavated in the interests of archeology. All games are barred - so the boys stage a barring-out, camping on the playing-fields. The stories are entitled "The Spoil-Sport of St. Frank's", "The 'Live-Wire' Rebels" (they

electrify the surrounding fences, which seems a bit dangerous), and "The Battle of St. Frank's" in which Ogleby at last slings his hook. Final story of the month is "The Wrong Mr. Wright", concerning a Handforth blunder.

Warner Bros., the American film company, has taken over the Teddington Studios, and they are going to make films there to meet the British Quota Act, which says that every cinema must show so many British films, and every renter must release so many British films.

I had two Union Jacks this month. The first is "Hot Lead" by Robert Murray. A bomb in Baker St. reopens the battle between Sexton Blake and the criminal named the Whisperer. Under cover of Dan Roper's gang, Blake fights back. An exciting story in its way.

The following week I had "The Black Boomerang", written by a famous old writer, Lewis Jackson, who created Leon Kestrel and Beaudelaire. A story of magic, murder and mystery, and I like it a lot.

Some very good films on at the pictures this month. A lovely film was "Min and Bill" starring Marie Dressler and Wallace Beery. With this one there was a new Laurel and Hardy two-reeler entitled "Night Owls"; Jeanette Macdonald was singing away merrily in "More Than a Kiss"; Wheeler and Woolsey in "Hook, Line & Sinker", but their humour is very American and I didn't like it a lot; Marilyn Miller in "Sunny", a musical with some lovely songs; Richard Barthelmess in "Adios", with the star fading a bit, I think; Joan Crawford in "Dance, Fools, Dance" which is very dramatic. With this one there was another Laurel & Hardy comedy "Angora Love". Finally, a lovely gangster film "Little Caesar" which stars Edward G. Robinson with Glenda Farrell and Douglas Fairbanks Junior.

The new stories about Ken King are going strong in Modern Boy. First of the month is "The Cooky-Boy's Treasure". Danny, the cooky-boy has dreams of wealth when he solves the mystery of the castaway's tobacco-box. Next, "Bo'sun of the Dawn". A villain named Da Silva puts Ken in a pit and leaves him to die. Then "The Tick of Doom". Ken King is carrying a case supposed to contain only clocks - but actually the case contains only dynamite. But there is plenty of ticking.

Finally "Billy Bottle - Beachcomber". This one stars Kit

Hudson. He has to fight temptation. He has only to abandon a beach-comber - and a big fortune will be his.

These new stories of King of the Islands are well up to standard.

Also in Modern Boy there is a series of school tales about Greystones School by George E. Rochester. So - so.

The International Illuminations Congress has been held in London, and all the fine historic buildings have been lit up at night.

The Magnet has carried on with the grand holiday series about the Greyfriars chums in Kenya. The titles this month have been "Jungle Vengeance", "The Jungle Hikers", "Kidnapped in Kenya", and "The Man-Tracker of Uganda". Splendid stuff - adventure, thrills, excitement and comedy. I hope the series goes on a long time yet.

One evening Doug and I went to Chiswick Empire and saw a revue entitled "Vaudeville Menu" in which the leading stars were Donald Stuart and Tessie O'Shea. Tessie is a pretty and plump girl, and made us laugh a lot.

In the Schoolboys' Own Library this month is "Rival Treasure Seekers" which is the second S.O.L. about the Greyfriars chums in the South Seas. The other S.O.L. this month is "The Worst Form at Codrington" by David Goodwin. I did not buy this one as David Goodwin's school stories are always too far-fetched for me.

The trams all over the country seem to be falling out of existence, and I am sorry for I like trams. This month the trams at Gatley and Cheadle were replaced by motor-buses at the end of the month, and the trams at Scarborough were bought by the council just to scrap them. In Ireland, the trams at Cork have given way to buses. A great big shame. If there's ever a shortage of petrol, they'll be sorry.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT): The original title of "The St. Jim's Menagerie" was "High Jinks at St. Jim's". This was the first tale to introduce Herries's bulldog, Towser. As we have previously commented, Taggles had a bulldog, Towser, in the very early St. Jim's. "Tom Merry & Co. on Strike" was originally "Tom Merry's Washing-Day". "Tom Merry, the Boy 'Tec" was originally "Honours Divided". "The St. Jim's Speed-Cops" was originally "Tom Merry's Day Out". This was the first story to introduce Cousin Ethel, then named Ethel Maynard, though the name was changed in the reprint. In passing, it seemed a colossal piece of loose thinking on the part of the author to change Ethel from Maynard to Cleveland in early days.

S.O.L. 155, "The Schoolboy Treasure-Seekers" was the middle section of the Magnet's

South Seas series of 1927. S.O.L. No. 156, "The Worst Form at Codrington" appeared originally as a serial in the Popular.)

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Nelson Lee Column

SHADES OF DICKENS

by R. J. Godsave

In January 1925, E. S. Brooks wrote an unusually long series which comprised of twelve Nelson Lee Libraries o.s. 501 - 512. This was the celebrated Moat Hollow School series. Formerly known as the River House School, but now under entirely new control and with the change of name to Moat Hollow School.

Owing to serious financial losses in the City, Sir Vivian Watson, father of Tommy Watson, was forced to take his son away from St. Frank's and send him to a school where the fees were much cheaper. Mr. Grimesby Creepe, the principal of Moat Hollow School had satisfied Sir Vivian that his son would be well treated at his school.

Naturally, Watson was pleased to learn that Moat Hollow was so near St. Frank's and that he would be able to see the St. Frank's juniors often. Unfortunately, for Watson, Mr. Grimesby Creepe's school proved to be similar to Mr. Wackford Squeers' establishment in Charles Dickens novel Nicholas Nickleby, where the scholars were half-starved and maltreated under the pretence of education.

Such a school could not exist were it not for the fact that some parents resent their offspring's appearance who are in some cases kindly spoken of as 'not as others' and are sent to this type of school to be out of the way, and are virtually prisoners. Whether such schools are in existence in this day and age I do not know; but I do know that there are frequent reports of children being neglected and receiving treatment that is far from loving by their parents. On the other hand, one can see the cross that some parents bear with great courage and fortitude, and give loving care to their unfortunate children who are in no condition to face the trials of the world by themselves.

E. S. Brooks dealt with this series in his usual fine way which became more engrossing with each successive story. Mr. Grimesby

Creepe and his monitors are unable to break the spirit of Tommy Watson by the methods that had succeeded so well with other boys at the school. Some of Watson's former schoolfellows at St. Frank's had found out a few unsavoury facts about Creepe and were doing their best to rescue Watson from Moat Hollow. The introduction of a mysterious phantom figure, whose identity was unknown, had on more than one occasion came to Watson's aid unexpectedly.

The determination of the St. Frank's juniors together with the phantom protector makes this series one of gripping interest to the reader.

"THE IDOL OF ST. FRANK'S"

by C. H. Churchill

I have recently had the opportunity of reading B.F. Lib. No. 633 (4d. monthly issue) containing the story "The Idol of St. Frank's" through the kindness of a fellow Nelson Lee collector who, after trying for many years, finally succeeded in obtaining a copy. His remark to me was "It was never written by Brooks. See what you think of it." After reading it my reaction was the same as his, namely that E.S.B. would never have written a story with so many flaws in it.

Here are some of the things described in the story. Fullwood & Co. are still in Study A but are in the Fifth form! Archie is also in the Fifth but in Study N in the Fifth form passage. Archie is then put into the Remove cricket team at the last moment and although refusing to have a practice "knock" hits up a big score. He refuses to run between the wickets for any low scores but stays at the crease and hits boundary after boundary. This, mark you, in September 1922 only six months after he first arrived at St. Frank's and proved at that time to be hopeless at the game. Another glaring error was to list the Remove cricket team with no Jerry Dodd in it. I ask you!

The last straw is that the language and actions of the various boys does not ring true and reads quite differently to the Nelson Lee Library stories, even allowing for the fact that it was not written in the first person as the Lees were at that time. My considered opinion is that Brooks supplied the plot for the story and then someone else wrote it up. This is more or less confirmed on the title page where it says

"By the Editor and E. S. Brooks author of the St. Frank's stories appearing in the Nelson Lee Library".

Brooks always maintained that anything under his name was written by him but he must have overlooked this one. Bob Blythe, in his Bibliography, lists it as being by Brooks but at the time of compiling his massive volume he had never seen a copy except in the British Museum. He has since secured one and now agrees with what I say.

In the course of correspondence several other Lee collectors have remarked to me how odd some of the St. Frank's stories in the 4d. B.F. Lib. read, almost as if they were by another author. I do not know about any others but I do feel sure that "The Idol" was a rogue story, if I may put it like that, and a pretty poor one into the bargain.

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I trust you will all enjoy Blakiana this month with its somewhat unusual items. I feel sure that in the dim and distant past I have read stories with a similar theme of Tabu running through but I am unable to recall the titles or authors. Maybe someone can remember and could let me know.

I should be pleased to have any articles for the Annual by the end of the month. That is the latest date possible for Eric to prepare the items for the Annual, so please get down to writing something for me.

A QUIZ QUESTION

by John Bridgwater

Quiz questions are a very popular form of entertainment these days. We all like to pit our wits against the panel and try to answer the questions more quickly or better than they do. So, let me pose a "Round Britain Quiz" type question for your entertainment.

Question: What experience was shared by an American Lord of fifty involved in Union troubles on a Pacific Island and an English investigator looking into the causes of coconut disease on the shores of the Indian Ocean?

Answer: Tabu. Both Sexton Blake and Steve McGarrett were put out of action by being put under Tabu at the instigation of the criminals they were pursuing. This ensured that they did not receive help of any sort from the local population and so were most effectively prevented from interfering with the machinations of the criminals.

G. H. Teed used this very unusual device in 1925 in "The Secret of the Coconut Grove" (SBL 2nd series No. 1 - see my article in 1980 C.D. Annual). 56 years later it was used again in the ITV series "Hawaii 5-0" in the two-part story "A Lion in the Streets" screened in July 1981. (For those unacquainted with Hawaii 5-0, Jack Lord plays the part of police chief Steve McGarrett - hence the clues in the question.)

Can anyone supply the answers to some further questions? Did Teed invent this ingenious method of putting the chief investigator out of action? Did the author of "Hawaii 5-0" re-invent it or borrow it from Teed? If neither, from whom was it borrowed? It would be most interesting to know.

Re the Gerald Verner film, the last one in the July list, this film is not a Blake one although the story was written by a Blake author. Of course it may be that this detective was originally Sexton Blake, but I cannot link the Whispering Woman with any Verner (Donald Stuart) Blake story I know.

The following list of large print books by Blake authors has been supplied by one of our keen Blake fans, Mr. Gordon Hudson. Most libraries have a supply of these large print books in stock and very useful they are for people with rather poor sight. It would be fine if they would print some of our favourite Blake stories in this series.

LARGE PRINT BOOKS BY BLAKE AUTHORS

John Newton Chance (John Drummond)

Screaming Fog

Berkeley Grey (E. S. Brooks)

The Big Brain (Norman Conquest)

cont'd ...

LARGE PRINT BOOKS BY BLAKE AUTHORS continuedVictor Gunn (E. S. Brooks)

Dead in a Ditch
 The Next One to Die
 All Change for Murder
 The Painted Dog
 Death at Traitor's Gate (Insp. Ironside
 of the Yard)

J. J. Marric (John Creasey)

Gideon's Day
 Gideon's Fire
 Gideon's Force
 Gideon's Month
 Gideon's Ride
 Gideon's Week
 Gideon's Lot
 Gideon's Risk

John Creasey

The Terror Trap
 The Black Spiders
 Death by Night
 Death in the Trees
 The Long Search
 The Mists of Fear
 Quarrel with Murder
 A Splinter of Glass
 The Touch of Death

The Laughing Grave
 The Treble Chance Murder
 The Borgia Head Mystery
 Death on Bodmin Moor
 The Crooked Staircase

Gideon's Drive
 Gideon's Fog
 Gideon's Men
 Gideon's Press
 Gideon's River
 Gideon's Wrath
 Gideon's Power

The Drought (Dr. Palfrey)
 The Flood (Dr. Palfrey)
 The Inferno (Dr. Palfrey)
 The Plague of Silence (Dr. Palfrey)
 The Mark of the Crescent (Department Z)
 A Gun for Inspector West
 Two for Inspector West
 Hang the Little Man (Insp. West)
 Send Superintendent West
 Holiday for Inspector West

Report from the London "Evening News", 18th July, 1923

COMMONS 4 a.m. SITTING

Strawberries and cream, ices, aliens and the Union Jack were among the subjects which cropped up in the all-night debate at the House of Commons. The House rose at 4.15 a.m.

There had been lively hours. Mr. Kirkwood's reference to the Union Jack as "that rag which floats in every clime" provoked a roar of disapproval and vehement demands for withdrawal of the

expression.

(We wonder which Union Jack Mr. Kirkwood had in mind. The Editor of the weekly paper, probably with tongue in cheek, pointed out that his "Union Jack" was not a rag.)

* * * * *

A VISIT TO WINCHESTER COLLEGE

by Roger Jenkins

The background details concerning Greyfriars always seemed to be most carefully etched in memory, more so than in the case of the other Hamiltonian schools. When Les Rowley and I were shown round Winchester College recently, I began to wonder anew about a possible model or models for Greyfriars, and I looked and listened with a sharpened interest.

As we entered the arched gateway, the heavy wooden doors scarred with the marks of Cromwellian arrows, the porter's lodge was on the right, but the modern Gosling was not looking for a tip - he was chiefly interested in the sale of picture postcards. The first point of call was the chapel, and though Bob Cherry used to refer to "preggers", the chapel at Greyfriars was not closely associated with the plot of any famous stories. The Medieval cloisters, however, brought all sorts of memories to mind, from Skinner furtively smoking cigarettes to mysterious strangers knocking people on the head and imprisoning their victims in a cellar beneath. The only danger in the Winchester College cloisters, on the other hand, came from above where hordes of pigeons roosted.

The seventeenth-century schoolroom has a beautifully illustrated Latin maxim at one end, inviting scholars to learn or leave or be beaten, a maxim which might well have been appropriate for Greyfriars, where few left but many were beaten. (One wonders what STOPP would make of this.) Beyond the old schoolroom are the playing fields: a game of cricket was in progress on the second field (Little Side?) and through an archway could be glimpsed the first field (Big Side). It was pleasing to see batsmen dressed as they were in the Magnet and not looking like astronauts about to land on a hostile planet. To the left, near the stream, is the gardener's house, but Winchester's Mible seemed to be a bit more industrious than the

Greyfriars version, as the grounds were immaculately kept.

Winchester has had as many revolts as Greyfriars. On one occasion the juniors rebelled against the harshness of the older boys' discipline, and on another occasion the Warden was besieged in the dining room until he managed to escape and reach the Sheriff, whose reinforcements brought an end to the revolt. Mr. Brander's fictitious reign at Greyfriars pales by comparison with the real thing at Winchester over the centuries.

A Medieval quadrangle with a bell tower, a wall covered with ivy, war-memorial cloisters with the name "Wharton" prominent, the sanatorium in the distance - all helped to provide details of the Greyfriars background, but near the end my attention was caught by a circular wooden bench-seat round an ancient tree. The don's wife who was showing us round was explaining that only members of the first eleven could sit there, but my mind, alas, began to wander. I could see quite clearly the illustration with Fisher T. Fish on one side of the tree attempting to blackmail Stacey into buying some worthless object for an extortionate sum whilst on the other side sat Mr. Quelch, his face growing grimmer and grimmer.

As we walked down College Street, past the house where Jane Austen died, I was quite certain that part, at least, of the Winchester landscape had found its way into the pages of the Magnet.

* * * * *

SOLVING A MYSTERY AND CREATING

A MYSTERY

by Maurice Hall

The total of scholars, masters and local people for Greyfriars and the surrounding area was in the region of 200 characters. Almost every person had a clearly defined personality, came from a particular part of the country or from a foreign climate from some far distant land. At various times the boys' parents, Aunts, Uncles and servants were described in detail. Each village, town, had its own public house, local shops, police, rivers and parks, etc. All these places had a well established niche in the local terrain and distances could be calculated between key points.

This minute detail was applied in particular to the Greyfriars

scene and proof of the success of this careful building of background shading can be seen in the mass of maps and documentation available to us all.

Just consider the ramifications of this structure. Once established it held up well over the thirty-odd years in the 'Magnet' plus the post-war years in the 'Bunter' books and annuals. Of course over this period some small and a few large errors crept in. A number of our learned fellow members will state that a tremendous number of things changed and that Hamilton was not that consistant, but a large number of variances came from the pens of the substitute writers, particularly with regards to the characters of many of the main school-boys and masters. In 'Magnet' 469 in his editorial chat, Pentelow mentioned that Mr. Richards had arranged all the Remove boys in their studies for him, which he now listed for his readers. Pentelow then said - 'As to the rest who are some times inquired about, - Esmond, Banthorpe, Leigh, Vane, Carlton and perhaps one or two more - they must be understood no longer to be at Greyfriars. This is on Mr. Richards own information, and you will hardly dispute the authority I think' (end of quote). The named juniors had been introduced by various substitute writers and were not accepted by Richards as permanent Remove members.

The St. Jim's complement of characters was nearly as many as Greyfriars, about 170. Rookwood, had slightly less, around 150. Each school was carefully described, each had a planned geographical location, each was set in a different county, i.e. Kent, Sussex and Hampshire. If you take the three schools populations it comes to 520 different characters, in three locations, plus the possibility of each school meeting one another at sport or on holiday. An awesome complexity indeed.

But I have not finished - there were over twenty different schools created by Hamilton, admittedly, not so fully detailed as the main three but one must not forget High Coombe, Grimslade, Carcroft, Sparshott, Topham, St. Kit's - the list goes on and on, not forgetting that he created Ken King and the Rio Kid.

Each venture of Hamilton was just a little bit different from the last, he seldom used the same name twice, I'm sure you get my point,

he had so many varied story lines going the question I ask is - did Charles Hamilton carry all this information in his head? I submit that even though Hamilton was a genius at creating schools and populating them with superbly drawn characters, I believe that he kept records of his creations, probably from the early 1920's until shortly before he died in 1961. How else could he have referred to past events in the life of so many principle characters in the Magnet and Gem stories? Not just a matter of a few weeks back, but often a number of years back.

I believe that once Hamilton realised that Greyfriars had become something of a permanency in the schoolboy fiction field, he decided to commit a basic information of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood folklore to a reference book. It is likely that Pentelow in 1915-1918 had created a similar list of information whilst compiling the very detailed Greyfriars Gallery during this period, and no doubt he mentioned it to Hamilton at one of the editorial meetings.

Hamilton would have by this time noticed the steadily growing number of readers' letters in the Editor's Chat which asked all kinds of questions about Greyfriars and its inhabitants. He must have been aware that his many readers were beginning to look for continuity and accuracy about people, places and events. To sum it up - Hamilton had to take notes for the future.

However, many learned members of our collecting fraternity have said that Hamilton carried all this information in his mind, that he had a fantastic memory. I wrote a letter to Cassells about the Butcher 'Prospectus of Greyfriars School' and the author's note that he had drawn his information from the records of Frank Richards, and this lead me to believe that he had stumbled on Hamilton's file notes but Mr. Kenneth Parker who replied to me said that the records referred to, were obtained from the Magnet and Holiday annuals, plus the post-war Bunter books. Mr. Parker further said, "Hamilton was a journalist and a good one, whose focal point was the next press date, not posterity" - he added - "his (Hamilton's) RECORDS WERE A JOURNALIST'S, IN HIS HEAD!"

Convincing evidence against my Hamilton records idea and I had begun to believe that in spite of all my logic I must be wrong, and Hamilton was a genius of immense stature indeed.

However, last year I received from a fellow collector, Roy Moncrieffe, a letter that he had received from Frank Richards dated 26th March, 1952. In this letter Richards made an interesting comment in answer to Roy's remark that he had, as a keen reader of the Magnet, made a classified index of the Greyfriars characters and even of their football and cricket matches. Richards reply was "Of course, I had to keep such an index myself; but I never dreamed that any reader had done so." I repeat the key phrase, "I had to keep such an index myself".

Could this comment have been a polite palliative to a keen reader you may ask? The sort of remark a politician might make to a voter, a remark without any real meaning? No, I don't think so, because Hamilton, if he didn't want to answer a question would evade, but he wouldn't tell an outright lie. You will find this demonstrated in his stories, behind his words lie a pen-portrait of his own feelings and character. A typical example of Hamilton's art in evasion is shown in this extract. 'Hacker is seeking Bunter who has been disguised by Wibley as the Prince of Bongoland, but Bunter in typical Bunter fashion, speaks in his natural squeak ... I quote ... "Hacker glared suspiciously at the Famous Five, "You know that Bunter is here!"

"Think he is hiding behind one of those pillars, you fellows?" asked Bob, "It certainly sounded to me like Bunter's voice."

"So it did to me," agreed Harry Wharton. "I can't see anything of him!" he added, which was a perfectly veracious statement as he had his back turned to Bunter and couldn't see him ...'

Let us accept that an index was used by Hamilton, it would give a reasonable explanation as to how he managed to keep his many schools firmly in their respective places. However, it also provides another mystery. Where is the index now? So far, nobody has admitted that it ever existed, certainly, no-one has admitted possession of it.

Therefore I must surmise ... I think it was probably a fairly small exercise book or notebook, nothing very large or imposing. Miss Hood was never conscious of it when Hamilton was busy at the typewriter, but I would think that he would need little apart from a few reference books relative to the story he was working on.

So what happened to this book? I think that Hamilton who was fiercely possessive about his schoolboy creations, either burned it

himself when he realised that he could no longer continue writing, or asked that some close friend should destroy his personal notes.

Hamilton had been imitated by a vast number of substitute writers in his lifetime, but I believe that the grand old scholar of schoolboy stories was not going to give a head start to anyone.

Many have copied his work, but none have come to within a mile of his unique style.

* * * * *

REVIEW

FOREVER BUNTER

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker: £7.95)

This volume, comprising seven Magnets from the year 1925, is a joy. Take our word for it. Seven tales from the pen of the greatest writer of school stories, just as he was coming into the real Golden Age of the Magnet and of his career. Seven yarns which provide, not only splendid reading, but also much food for thought for the student of Hamiltonia.

The opening tale is, probably, the least of the seven in worth, bordering a little too much on farce. Bunter finds reason to kid himself that he is descended from Sir William de Bonterre of Stuart times in a wee frolic reminiscent of, and probably rather inferior to, "Viscount Bunter" which had appeared in the Magnet half a dozen years or so earlier. Nevertheless, in spite of the exaggerations, there are genuinely amusing sequences.

"Playing the Goat", in spite of an indifferent title, is possibly the most interesting tale in the book. A fine yarn of cricket, which needed expanding into a series. Why it was not expanded beyond the one yarn is a mystery. The Bounder falls out with Harry Wharton, and is dropped from the cricket eleven. He signs on with Temple & Co. of the Upper Fourth, and plays for Temple's team. Incredibly, Temple doesn't use his new recruit as a bowler, and sends the Bounder in at ninth wicket down. The whole thing is a puzzle, and there are other things in the tale to give the reader food for thought.

An entire article in our "Let's Be Controversial" series was devoted to analysing this Magnet story. The article was No. 201 entitled "An Hour to Play and the Last Man In" (C.D. No. 341, May 1975). Readers who possess that copy of C.D. should turn to the article after reading the story.

The next yarn is another single "Buck Up, Bunter", in which Dad is not at all satisfied with his plump son's progress at Greyfriars. Great stuff for Greyfriars fans, with lots of laughs.

Finally, the star turn, the 4-story series about Ragged Dick. This is a splendid school novel, which plays on the heart-strings in so many ways. In parts it is real Lyceum melodrama, and the contrivance of the whole thing makes it almost beyond belief. But it

is so well-written, with such punch, with fine characterisation, with the outcome never cut and dried till the last chapter. And contrivance, which is another name for coincidence, is the spice of life for us in our reading, as other great writers like Talbot Baines Read had realised long years before. The final story in the Ragged Dick series is one of the truly great moments in Magnet history.

From every viewpoint, this volume is a winner. One can mention that the Greyfriars Herald supplements, in the centre of each Magnet at this time, provide piquant interludes, and spice the main attractions.

* * * * *

TWILIGHT AT AMALGAMATED?

by J-E-M.

It is just over fifty years since the Amalgamated Press launched a new story-paper called the Startler. It bore a strong resemblance to the D. C. Thomson papers, Adventure, Wizard and Rover, which were by then giving AP some serious competition and it is extremely interesting to examine the contents of an average copy.

Typical stories from the Startler included The Black Avenger and his red submarine; Wulf of the Wolves, a kind of Tarzan of Afghanistan (the location, you remember, of a famous Thomson character, Wolf of Kabul), and Bungo Bang the Boy Conjurer. Any of these, like the cover of the magazine itself, might well have come straight from Adventure or Wizard - except for a lack of that unmistakeable Thomson exuberance. Somehow, AP seemed uneasy with its new departure and the proof of the pudding was in the eating; the Startler lasted only two years.

In 1931, AP tried a different sort of venture with the Ranger. Very far from being an imitation Thomson, Ranger was something of a ragbag of every known AP style. An issue in my possession contains The Mystery Man of Mayfair (which, with its Arthur Jones illustrations, would not have been out of place in the Thriller or Bullseye); The Fourth Form at Grimslade, a kind of inferior Greyfriars, by Frank Richards; a soccer yarn by Hedley Scott, and a full back-page cartoon about Paradise Alley, fairly obviously based on Casey Court. The most memorable series in Ranger was probably Baldy's Angels, the saga of a First World War fighter plane squadron, no doubt inspired by the then recent film, Hell's Angels. The Ranger recipe, however, fared no better than the Startler's. Two years after its first

appearance, it was lavishly revamped with story changes and a larger page size, but this new lease of life was brief. Publication ended in September 1935.

Another short-lived venture from AP during this period was the Surprise, a would-be companion to Bullseye. I personally recall two stories from Surprise, both, I think, illustrated by Leonard Shields. These were Night Rider of the Rhondda, an unusual tale about an avenger who rode the famous Welsh valley on nothing more glamorous than a motor bike, and Black Whip, Gang-buster, the latter, in his one-piece, skin-tight suit and mask, being much closer to a Thomson-style hero. Today something of a collector's item, Surprise survived only eighteen months, its last issue appearing in November 1933.

AP, meanwhile, also seemed to be having problems with one of its most famous and established offerings. In 1932, the Union Jack, for nearly forty years Sexton Blake's weekly chronicle, was turned into Detective Weekly which, after a feeble fanfare, soon declined and eked out its final years on a diet of reprints. Other AP stalwarts, of course, like the Magnet, Gem, Modern Boy and Champion carried a loyal following till the Second World War (the Champion actually survived till 1955) but, by and large, the truly great days were over by the middle '30's.

In contrast, this period saw the Thomsons go from strength to strength. In the same year that AP launched the Startler, Thomson added the Skipper to its original trio and, three years later, in 1933, came Hotspur which lasted long into the post-war era. The causes of AP's apparent decline and Thomson's rise are endlessly debatable but one thing is beyond argument. Adult readers still go back to the front-rank AP story-papers, not only with nostalgic affection but for genuine reading pleasure.

Do old Thomsonians go back to tales of Morgyn the Mighty or Rockfist Rogan for the same reasons?

* * * * *

WANTED: MAGNETS 409, 469, 471-4, 498, 501, 505-6, 508, 520-1, 551, 564, 690-1, 700, 723, 727, 1651, 1659-60, 1664-5. GEMS 185, 479, 482-3, 485-6, 488, 494, 1388. GREYFRIARS HERALDS, most. NELSON LEE with TRACKETT GRIM. BB of Greyfriars School.

48 SHALMARSH, BEBINGTON, WIRRAL

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs....

LONDON

With three eminent Franciscan scholars, Bob Blythe, Reuben Godsave and Jim Cook, present and a humorous extract from N.L.L. old series, number 222 read by Ray Hopkins of Handforth's three pairs of smelly kippers and Bob Blythe reading some more of the Brooks letters, there was an atmosphere of St. Frank's at the Kingsbury meeting.

Not to be outdone, Roger Jenkins obliged with the extremely funny chapter taken from one of the issues of the China series that dealt with the Bunter family at the breakfast table, at Bunter Villa.

More nostalgic memories of the East Dulwich meeting of August 1964, were provided by Bob Blythe reading extracts from the September issue of that year.

The Eliminator competition was won by Roy Parsons. The Rev. Arthur Bruning was the winner of Don Webster's quiz. Winifred Morss, travelling up from her Suffolk home, was in second place.

A fairly long tea interval was enjoyed and Bob and Louise were suitably thanked for their hospitality.

Next meeting at Reuben and Phyllis Godsave's Leytonstone residence on Sunday, 13th September. Tea will be provided, but bring your own tuck.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 8th August, 1981

A special welcome was given by our meeting, to Myra Allison who had paid us one of her infrequent visits: it was good to see her again - and she had kindly brought along some of her own made fruit cake, for refreshment time.

Another friend we have not seen for a long time at the Northern Section, was Mr. Breeze Bentley, author of many articles in the C.D. Special mention was made of the fact that one of our members

from the early days, Mr. Bill Williamson, would achieve the age of 80 years, in the forthcoming week. Bill looked as well as ever and certainly does not look his age!

We spoke about the recent Comic Mart held in Leeds, and noted that a small amount of Old Boys' material had been there.

The highlight of the evening was the two talks given to us by Breeze Bentley. Firstly, a long and informative paper concerning Bob Cherry's "romance" with Marjorie Hazledene. From Bob Cherry's arrival at Greyfriars in Magnet number 2, to the last mention of Marjorie in Magnet 1666, Breeze gave accounts of how the "romance" developed over the years - but in effect, had only been over a period of two or three terms.

After refreshments, another talk given by Breeze concerning that lazy character, Lord Mauleverer. A very interesting evening it turned out to be - and special thanks were extended to Breeze for his efforts and research: we hope we can see him again at our meetings, in the not too distant future.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

* * * * *

The Postman Called

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

EDWARD CHAMBERS (Burton-on-Trent): Am I your youngest subscriber? I am only fifteen years old, and have been a keen collector of Charles Hamilton's work for a couple of years now. My modest collection is growing all the time.

(We think you must be, Edward, though plenty of our older readers started as young as you are. - Ed.)

W. W. EDWARDS (Northfleet): Once when I went home with the "Boys' Friend", my father said "Don't ever bring that book home again. It should be called the "Boys' Enemy"". And he tore it up. But I had many more.

(As we mentioned last month, Mr. Edwards has just celebrated his 95th birthday. So we have 80 years between our youngest and our oldest readers. - Ed.)

Dr. P. McCALL (Wokingham): I don't know if you have had an answer to the query about the "Bird in Hand" but this is mentioned in Magnet No. 797 - it is in Oak Lane and sometimes frequented by Loder!

I would like to say how much I enjoy the magazine and always look forward to the beginning of the month.

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): Regarding the Pub "Bird in Hand" I'm surprised that no-one so far has written to you about this. It appeared in the Hamilton story of Greyfriars in the 1923 Annual, "Nugent Minors Lesson". This tale has a whole story behind it, as it originally was intended to be part of a series of Jack Drake v Nugent that was running in the Boys' Herald in 1921. It probably had got lost somewhere, then they could not use it out of sequence - so they used it in the Holiday Annual with some sub-editor making Drake - Rake! No doubt thinking readers of The Magnet would know that Drake had left Greyfriars by this time to become assistant to Ferrers Lock. As Roger Jenkins pointed out some years ago, Rake had also left Greyfriars by this time. It also did not make sense when Drake and Rodney appeared in the long Greyfriars tale in the 1924 Annual!

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Charles Hamilton told me that some stories he had originally written for the Boys' Herald were actually published eventually in the Magnet. One of these was almost certainly "The Christmas Candles" of late 1921 in the Magnet - two short Herald tales joined together. "Harry Wharton's Trust", the unusually late Christmas tale of Magnet 1920 was probably another twosome from the Herald.)

LEYLAND VINCENT (Manchester): Certain writers of schoolboy fiction seem to receive very little notice in C.D. and the existence of one of them has never even been acknowledged. I was introduced to the work of Harold Avery at a very early age. His stories were well written, with no boring details, but nearly always with a little mystery in them which held the interest. Is there much known about him?

It seems a pity that, when writers like Goodyear (who filled page after page about cricket), Gunby Hadath, and Wodehouse crop up time after time, Harold Avery is sadly overlooked. Even more neglected is Andrew Home, yet he wrote some fine exciting stories. "Bravo, Bob!", "The Spy in the School", and others. Does anyone remember him?

Finally, there is one creation of Frank Richards who always

seemed completely unnecessary, and that was Sammy Bunter.

RONNIE HUNTER (Ventnor): The organist at the Trocadero, Elephant & Castle, was Quentin Maclean. I heartily endorse what has been written previously about this cinema in the pages of C.D. and the magnificent shows which were put on there during the early thirties. The Troc was really a bit "off my beat" as my youth was spent where, of course, "our" famous brand-new picture house of those days was the lovely and luxurious "Commodore" at Chiswick (Joseph Muscant directing the Gold Medal Orchestra, assisted by Harry Davidson later of Old Time Dancing fame) at the mighty organ.

Still, I did cross London to visit the Troc on numerous occasions, and I particularly recall a visit made in 1933 when the bill of fare included THREE films, a bicycle competition on stage, and other attractions, plus Quentin Maclean at the organ. Lest it be supposed that I am drawing the long bow by speaking of three films in ONE show, I can add that the three films were "Hard to Handle" (James Cagney), "Hearts of Humanity" (Jean Hersholt), and "That's My Boy" (Richard Cromwell and Dorothy Jordan). The date: 17th June, 1933. I had gone to the Oval to see Surrey play, with the distinct hope of seeing Jack Hobbs batting. There was no play owing to rain, so I opted for the "Troc".

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Three films in one show were no rarity at the Troc. I once saw two films and an entire touring pantomime on stage. Supporting the big films there was always a huge stage show of top-class artists. I remember Sophie Tucker making a speech to the audience after her act, and referring to "This beautiful, beautiful theatre". She was right. Those under 40 today don't know what they missed by being born too late. The huge shows at the Troc, brought complaints from cinemas of smaller capacity. It was the 3,500 capacity at the Troc which enabled them to provide such extravagant entertainment. This was the direct cause of a new clause in all our film contracts, which stipulated that "the entire programme of which this film forms part shall not exceed a total playing-time of 3¼ hours." Actually the clause was not strictly observed, but it curbed the Troc.

I thought that the Commodore Cinema was at Hammersmith - or am I being parochial? Or were there two Commodore Cinemas in that area of London?)

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): Does the Princess like Morcove? She should! There was a mistress called Miss Kitten there in 1934 who

turned out to be a bit of a "cat".

VICTOR GILES (Barking): Have you noticed that a Biggles story is currently being told on Radio 4's "Story-time" programme?

I can't say that I know very much about this rather famous character. Perhaps because he appeared - I think - in "Modern Boy", a paper I never read a great deal.

What does occur to me is that if Captain Johns can be broadcast, why not Frank Richards? A complete "Magnet" tale would fit very well into a week-long series of "Story-time" readings. Who knows, a little campaign to that end directed at the producer might produce a favourable response?

A problem would be to select one suitable story from so many! The BBC would probably end by choosing a piece by a substitute author.

L. E. KING (Chesham): I well remember the "Gems" of 1931 when "Tom Merry - New Boy" and subsequent issues were reprinted. At the time, being only 9 years old, I really thought these were actually new stories. The first "Gem" I ever read was "The Man from Angel Alley" which was a genuine Charles Hamilton effort - early 1931.

LESLIE ROWLEY (Penzance): In the C.D. this month, in your editorial, you wonder who the organist was at the Trocadero. My bet is that the name you were chasing was Quentin Maclean, who was the 'resident' organist there for some years. Reginald Foort and Sandy Macpherson also played at the Troc on the odd occasion, so did Sidney Torch, but Quentin was the resident. My father also played that magnificent organ once or twice as a relief organist.

* * * * *

WANTED: B.F.L. 518 - The Great Disaster; S.O.L. 338 - The Price of Loyalty;
B.F.L. 679 - The Lion at Bay; B.F.L. 684 - The Lion's Revenge.

HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, KING'S HEATH, NORTHAMPTON

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£8 each offered Sexton Blake's 1st series, No. 184, "The City of Apes"; 197, "The Yellow Face". About sixty 2nd series required to complete. 3rd series No. 39, "Pte. Carter's Crime"; U.J. 934, "The Money Flood". £2.50 - £3 each offered or state price required.

H. OWEN, 28 NARCISSUS ROAD, LONDON N.W.6

WANTED: Monster Library, any issues; Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1941; Magnets, Red Series, 1 to 396, blue-white series, 397 to 769; Crompton's "William The Lawless", "William The Superman", "Always A Knight"; Bruce Campbell's Ken Holt Mystery stories.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN

Tel. ABERDEEN 0224 491716

WANTED: Certain Howard Baker volumes/singles. Please send details to:-

HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, KING'S HEATH, NORTHAMPTON

PUT ME AMONG THE GIRLS

says Tony Glynn

Well, there I was with some time for relaxation on my hands and I somehow became interested in recent Annual articles in which Mrs. Cadogan and Messrs. Kadiash and Keen dealt with the girls' schools featured in the "Schoolgirls' Own" and the "Schoolgirl".

Now, I'm ashamed to admit it, but when the distaff side of the hobby began to manifest itself in some strength a few years ago, with Mary Cadogan so well to the fore with the banner, I was miffed. After all, we were the Old Boys' Book Club, weren't we? Why should the girls butt in? Let them go off and form their own club.

All quite wrong, of course, but perhaps a reflection of my feelings so long ago when my sister regularly read the "Girls' Crystal" which, like anything to do with girls, I knew to be downright soppy. It eventually dawned on me that I simply did not know Cliff House and Morcove and perhaps the recommendations of Mary, Esmond and Tommy might be worth following.

I remembered that I had a reprint of a 1936 "Schoolgirl" in the 1974 Howard Baker Holiday Annual, hitherto unread, thanks to my age-old objection to soppy. I was in a calm and peaceful mood and perhaps better fitted to the feminine world rather than to the japes, rags and horseplay of Greyfriars, St. Jim's or St. Frank's. So, why not give it a try?

I began to read the Cliff House story, "Standing By Stella", in that volume of re-prints, found I quite liked it, then became absorbed.

Not that all was gentle and ladylike at Cliff House. This tale

told how Stella Stone, trying to swot for an exam in the hope of becoming a vet, was victimised by spiteful senior prefect Sarah Harrigan, who set out to prevent her studies. In a war of nerves, Sarah really turned on the nastiness and ended by putting Stella deep into trouble with the head, Miss Primrose.

I became quite fond of Stella. Laidler's illustrations showed her, in high heels and the fashionable skirt-length of 1936, to be an attractive young adult rather than a schoolgirl. She was very much put upon and had all my sympathy.

Gradually, I became quite interested in Cliff House and its cast of characters. I was pleasantly surprised in Bessie Bunter. My earlier memory of her dated from a time when she turned up in a "Magnet" story immediately pre-war. It had to do with her calamities as an ice-skater and she came across simply as a female Fat Owl. In this story, however, she was something other than Billy Bunter in drag. True, someone stuck a pen in her ear during a row in form, but it did not become one of those howling, yaroooh-ridden incidents as would probably have been the case with her brother.

Later, with poor Stella suffering badly under the attentions of Sarah, Bessie suggested to her study-mates that perhaps they should invite Stella to tea and I recalled that one of the Annual writers had referred to Bessie having a sympathetic streak.

Jemima Carstairs, of whom I'd heard in the past, was something of a background figure, but I'd like to know more of her and Babs and Mabs seemed to be a pair whose further company I'd enjoy.

"Standing By Stella" was obviously the beginning of a series dealing with the friction between the hapless Stella and the awful Sarah whose surname, I noted, needed only a change of one letter to become "Harridan". I wonder how it all turned out?

Perhaps, one day, I'll know. After all, one of the attractions of the hobby is that we can pass on our enthusiasms to each other and this encounter with Cliff House, brief though it was, made me quite happy to be among the girls with the scales lifted from my eyes.

I haven't a doubt that I'll return because, Mary, Esmond and Tommy, I think you can say you've made a convert.

I REMEMBER, I REMEMBER ---

by R. Goodman (Australia)

My earliest periodicals were the "Mabel" series about the girl who was the friend of the Fairy King, and a companion series about a "King Pippin" who performed many feats. They were small booklets of about octavo size.

My next love was the Jolly Jester, a great little paper giving stories as well as funny strips. I well recall "The Black Moth", "Springheel Jack", "Hawkshaw", and - one of the best - "The Seven Secrets of St. Ormes". Incidentally, the last introduced (as one of the secrets) what today would be a closed circuit television, where the picture was formed on a rotating drum but was akin to a motion picture. Unfortunately, the Jester ceased to arrive due to the war, about, I think, 1916, so preventing my learning of what happened to "The Dauntless Three" - an English, French, Irish combination of soldiers who seemed to manage a private war of their own.

Later, I became acquainted with the Nelson Lee Library, the first I recall being "Fangs of Steel" with Lee in his detective role; also his encounter with Jim, the Penman, as in "The Monk of Montessor".

Still later, with Lee and Nipper at St. Frank's, I followed their adventures with various characters such as Handforth of nose-punching ability, and, later, the advent of his younger brother. Such stories as "The Bullies' League" and "Barring Out the Bully"; the advent of John Busterfield Boots and many others are happy memories, not forgetting Lord Dorrimore.

Slightly before Nelson Lee, came the Gem, with Tom Merry, Baggy Trimble, Arthur Augustus, D'Arcy, and many others who delighted me no end.

Here I commit a heresy - I just could not take to the Magnet! Horror!

My main delight was the annual appearance of the Chums volume. I received my first volume - that for 1910 - at the age of four. I still have this. Although in a bit of a mess, the stories are still readable. I have many later volumes of Chums. My first Boys' Own Annual came in 1913. I was grieved to find that S. Walkey's pirate yarns came in alternate years, and so I developed a yearning for the volumes for 1911, 1913 and 1915.

DEAR PRINCESS SNOWEE

Dear Princess Snowee,

Just a few lines to say Hello and hope you and your family are well. Mum says you are having cold weather at your place. It isn't all that warm here. I don't like the cold weather. I am allowed to sit in the armchair and watch T.V. Do you like T.V. Snowee? I love stories with horses in them. When a film with horses comes on T.V. I sit up to watch. Polly loves a "punch up" and when there is a fight on T.V. she goes right up to the T.V. and gets very excited.

Mum was so pleased last week, when a friend gave her some lovely old Mickey Mouse Annuals. She showed me some of the pictures. I've never seen a mouse before with clothes on. We sometimes watch the Mickey Mouse Club on the T.V.

Well, dear Snowee, I'll finish off here, so till next time, keep your paws warm and I'll say cheerio and all the best.

With love from your Pen Pal,

BOBBY (New Zealand)

* * * * *

FOR SALE: good condition Magnets - 1929, 1932, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937. About 100 copies, £1.50 each. Also Gems - 1420, 1423, 1434, £1 each. Still looking for 1931 Wizard.

W. WATSON, OLYMPUS, SANDFORD MILL ROAD
CHELMSFORD, ESSEX

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SAM THURBON wishes to tell all his friends in the world of Old Boys' Books that from 7th September, 1981, his address will be:

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