STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 36 NUMBER 421 JANUARY 1982

By DAVID GOODWIN

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CALL AT A CHURCH BAZAAR!

On the Friday evening I had been reading the November C.D. in which our contributor, Mr. Len Wormull, drew attention to the book "Murder at School" by James Hilton, which he had come across in a Public Library. He enjoyed the book, and recommended it.

On the Saturday afternoon, I happened to be in Farnham. I was strolling along towards the car park where my nephew had left his Mini, and noticed a hall, outside which was a notice "Church Bazaar Now In Progress". I always like a Church Bazaar where the ladies do so much work to help the cause. And there is usually a stall of old books at these

functions. So, although I know nothing about the Church concerned, in I went.

There was a giant bookstall, with hundreds of old books displayed for sale. By a curious coincidence, on the very top of the display was a Pan paperback. I was attracted first of all by the publisher's price, printed on the front - 2/-. (This particular Pan was printed in 1953.)

So, soft-hearted by the two bob, I took note of the title. "Was It Murder?" by James Hilton. Inside, under the new title again, was the information "Originally 'Murder at School' ". The very book of which I had been reading Mr. Wormull's report the night before.

Naturally, I bought it. They charged me 5p. It is a beautiful copy, so the Church was not out to make money on any exaggerated scale.

"Murder at School" was first published in 1931, and the period is actually stressed by one character asking another: "Have you seen the play 'Young Woodley' which is running in London?" That play was on at the Savoy Theatre, starring I think, Frank Lawton, at about the time the book was being written.

One wonders just why the title was changed in later years. Possibly because "Murder at School" might sound like the Magnet, while "Was it Murder?" might appeal to a more mature public.

I could not truthfully say that I have found it compulsive reading, but it held my interest, there are unexpected twists, and the outcome is never obvious.

A boy is killed by a heavy gas bracket falling on him from the dormitory ceiling, where there are a number of such heavy brackets. For me, that bit dated the story. It seems unlikely that a public school would have its dormitories lit by heavy gas brackets in the early thirties. Marmaduke turned off the gas at the meter at St. Jim's and plunged the school into darkness - but that was in 1906. Levison, in his secret hiding place in "Nobody's Study" found a way of plunging the room into darkness by interfering with the gas pipe, but that delightfully atmospheric story appeared in 1912.

In all my lifetime, I have never known a school illuminated by gas. It would have been most unlikely in 1931.

In the story, a prefect sleeps in a bed in the dormitory of which

he is in charge. When the prefect is away, a master has to occupy that bed in the dormitory. It seemed a bit unreal. Yet Hilton was a pupil himself at the Leys School in Cambridge. Possibly he wrote of things as he remembered them many years earlier.

Hilton's most famous work was the lovely "Good-bye, Mr. Chips", which I had many years ago, but I seem to remember it as a shortish tale, more of what they call "novela" length. Not much more than a pamphlet. I cannot recall being impressed by the book, unless my memory is playing tricks. But the play and the film were unforgettable.

Maybe I read "Was it Murder?" with a mild heartache. I don't read the works of modern thriller writers. I miss those famous authors who charmed the hours with their psychological thrillers and tales of deduction in the thirties and forties. People like Agatha Christie, Freeman Wills Crofts, John Rhode, Austin Freeman, Roy Vickers, Clifford Witting, Anthony Gilbert, and others. When they passed on, they left gaps which seem never to have been filled.

WHERE THE SNOW LAY DINTED

In the charming Christmas card he sent us, Mr. Maurice Hall wrote: "Pity these modern houses are without coal fires. - Wretched central heating."

How wholeheartedly I agree with Maurice! Central heating means less work, and, if it is a good system, makes the whole house warmish. But in the recent cold snap, with snow everywhere, and icy blasts blowing outside, somehow one never felt really warm and cosy as we did at home in the old days, round a blazing coal and log fire, with the cat stretched out on the mat in front of us. Fancy if we had read "In a chilly Wharton Lodge, Colonel Wharton and the boys sat, telling ghost stories, round the radiator." It wouldn't have been the same, would it?

HAPPY NEW YEAR

"God holds the key of all unknown, and I am glad." So goes the beautiful old hymn, a great favourite of some of our Mothers. By the time you read these lines, we shall have crossed the threshold into 1982. Nobody on earth knows what the New Year will bring to the world, to our country, and to us and our families. I take this opportunity to wish you all, and your loved ones, a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year. God

bless you all, my very dear friends.

THE EDITOR

* *

Danny's Diary

JANUARY 1932

The Modern Boy has now been permanently enlarged to 32 pages, which is a step in the right direction. There is not much change in the programme of stories at present. Alfred Edgar has a science fiction series about weird creatures who live in cities far below the earth's surface. G. E. Rochester's stories about Porson's Flying School are just a bit too farcical to be up my street. Murray Roberts's series about Captain Justice, the Sea Rover, are good of their type. Capt. Frank Shaw has a series about the Air Musketeers.

In one Modern Boy this month there is an illustrated article about the making of the wonderful M.G.M. film "Ben Hur" which stars Ramon Novarro. It is not a new film, of course. It was a silent masterpiece and ran at the Tivoli in the Strand for a year about 1926. It is now issued with music and sound accompaniment, and it is as wonderful as ever.

The year has not started off very well so far as the weather goes. On the 9th there were terrible gales and heavy rain all over Britain, and flooding everywhere, especially at Monmouth where the River Wye overflowed its banks.

A thriller series all this month in the Nelson Lee. Six St. Frank's Fourth-formers disappear. They have been kidnapped by a gang of crooks, and are given a drug which destroys their will-power so they become slaves of the gang. The opening story of the month is "The House of Secrets". Next tale is "The Mystery of the Smugglers' Cave" in which yet another boy, Stanley Waldo, disappears. Then "The Return of Professor Zingrave", who directs the sinister gang from Crag House. Next "The Captives of the Crag House". Nelson Lee himself becomes a captive of the gang, but, in this final tale of the series, Nipper & Co. turn the tables and rescue the prisoners.

The next tale is "The Monster of Moat Hollow". Handy and his friends set out to find a treasure, and find instead a ferocious gorilla. This is the start of another thriller series.

The tales are exciting, if far-fetched, but St. Frank's as a school doesn't seem to figure much in them.

In the Boys' Friend Library this month there is "The Rio Kid's Enemy". This is the series about Black George, the outlaw who goes about his evil hold-ups wearing a black mask.

At the pictures this month we have seen Gloria Swanson in "Indiscreet", but Gloria is not a favourite of mine; George Arliss in "The Millionaire" which is fine, and in the same programme was a new Laurel & Hardy two-reeler "Be Big". Jack Holt in "Fifty Fathoms Deep"; Frederic March and Claudette Colbert in "Honour Among Lovers" which was good; Norma Shearer and Clark Gable in "A Free Soul", a dramatic tale I liked a lot. Finally, Owen Nares in a British film "The Middle Watch".

There has been a mutiny at Dartmoor in real life. A hundred convicts attacked warders, and imprisoned the governor in his office.

Lovely month in the Gem. First tale is "Banned by the Beaks". It's the school magazine "Tom Merry's Weekly" which is banned, so the boys print it in the night.

In "Lovelorn Gussy", Arthur Augustus falls in love with Ethel Courtney, the Head's niece. "The Sneak of the Shell" is the next one, and the "sneak" of the title is Tom Merry, or so it seems. A manuscript belonging to Herr Schneider disappears. The culprit is Gore. Next is "The Mystery of the Hut", which reintroduces Ferrers Locke with Tom Merry and his chums as his nine assistants. Finally "Puddings and Pains at St. Jim's", a very mirthful story in which Figgins makes a fig-pudding, and puts syrup of figs in it - to the great discomfort of a number of people.

The Rookwood tales in the Gem are "Morny Comes a Cropper" in which Morny hides a fiver to annoy Mr. Greeley - and then Morny can't find the fiver; "Hansom Does the Handsome"; "Newcome's New Idea" when Newcome reads gangster stories and talks like a gangster; "Tubby's Winning Goal"; and "Tom Rawson's Enemy" in which Peele goes in for a scholarship to stop Rawson getting it. Nothing to write

home about, and not by the real Owen Conquest.

The first regular air-mail has started, from London to Cape Town, so a letter to South Africa now only takes four days from door-to-door.

I have had the Union Jack most weeks this month. My first one is "Planned from Paris" which brings back Mlle. Roxane to the U.J. The story is by G. H. Teed, and tells of the escape of Louis Martinel from Devil's Island where he was serving a life sentence. Next "The Tree of Evil" by Rex Hardinge, set in Africa, and introducing Lobangu and Sir Richard Loseley. Finally, "Reece's Recruit" by Robert Murray, another tale of the Criminals' Confederation. The strange Inspector Anstey is anxious for Dirk Dolland to join the C.C. - and Dolland is willing to oblige.

In the New Year's Honours List, Princess Mary is now given the title of the Princess Royal.

Two grand tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library. "Barred by the Form" is Bob Cherry. Major Cherry is not pleased with his son's progress, and so Bob has to sit for an examination. There are all sorts of misunderstandings, and everybody seems to turn against Bob. "Rivals on the Warpath" is a story about the competition between the School House at St. Jim's and the New House. It is great fun. At the finish there is a very funny bit where Mrs. Stumper comes to answer a matrimonial advert which she thinks Mr. Ratcliff has put in the paper.

"You are not a young man as you stated," said Mrs. Stumper rather severely. "I should put you down as fifty-six or seven."

"Madam, I - I am fifty; but --"

"Very good. I am twenty-nine," said Mrs. Stumper, two whole decades slipping inadvertently from her memory.

When I told my brother Doug about it, he was very toffee-nosed. He said it is bad form to make jokes about ladies and their ages. But later on I saw him reading "Rivals on the Warpath", and he was laughing fit to bust.

Grand month in the Magnet. The year opened with the last story of the series about Christmas at Mauleverer Towers. It is called "The Secret of the Turret", and it is Billy Bunter who is the means of lifting the shadow which has been over the Christmas party. One of the best

Christmas series ever.

Next week, still at Mauleverer Towers, another series starts with "Bunter's Night Out". A waif (and pickpocket) named Flip, does a service for Billy Bunter, and Bunter is truly grateful. And Flip becomes devoted to Bunter: "Such a grand gentleman!" Bunter asks Mauleverer to arrange for Flip to go to Greyfriars, and Mauly, surprised that Bunter has not asked for something for himself, agrees. In the next tale "The Terror of the Form", Flip makes things hum in the Second Form, and is still devoted to his hero, Bunter.

Next "Billy Bunter's 'Cert!'" in which Bunter, aided by Flip, goes in for gambling. Lovely sequences in this tale. Finally, "Bold Bad Bunter" in which Bunter drenches Mr. Quelch with a squirt. Flip takes the blame and is to be punished, but Bunter confesses. And there is a new master in the Remove, while Mr. Quelch recovers. The new man is Mr. Lagden, but Flip recognises him as a cracksman, Jimmy the One. This lovely series goes on next month.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 163 is the first part of the 5-story series of the autumn 1926 Magnet. This series about Bob Cherry in trouble with friends and masters has never seemed to me to have been particularly popular. It was, in some ways, a re-run of the theme of the Harry Wharton, Rebel series of 18 months earlier. Maybe the Bob Cherry series appeared too close on to the Rebel series. Misunderstandings came thick and fast in both series, but Bob Cherry was a different character from Wharton, and the misunderstandings were less convincing. It may well have been more successful, over five years later, in the S.O.L.

S.O.L. 164, "Rivals on the Warpath" was a 3-story series from the Gem of the autumn of 1921, a period when the Gem was just starting on its glorious Indian Summer. The three stories fitted snugly into the S.O.L., and this is an excellent volume.

Of the stories in the Gem in January 1931, "Banned by the Beaks" was originally "By Order". "Lovelorn Gussy" had once been "D'Arcy's Romance" (Gussy falls for yet another Ethel); "The Sneak of the Shell" had originally had the bleak title "A Sneak". "The Mystery of the Hut" had once been "Stony Broke", and "Puddings & Pains at St. Jim's" was originally "Figgins' Fig-Pudding".

For some unknown reason, the latter story had been much sought after in the war years and the early twenties. One often came on advertisements for it in the Gem itself.

Two stories of this halfpenny period were omitted. These were "The Diabolists", which told of the Diabolo craze and was obviously dated, though I wonder whether that really mattered. The other tale omitted was "Skimpole's Little Scheme", which was great fun in 1908 with Skimpole as a socialist. Omitted in 1932, one would think, for political

reasons. One other story of the halfpenny period which was lost entirely was "The Curate of St. Jim's", which introduced the Rev. Dodds and was a lovely cricket tale. No doubt omitted because it introduced cricket at a school named Greyfriars where the junior cricket captain was named Ponsonby. The tale had only one re-print, and this was in the very early Penny Popular.)

* *

C.D's OLDEST READER DIES

With real grief and sadness we have to report the death of Mr. Bill Edwards, of Northfleet, Kent. Mr. Edwards, who was in his 96th year, was the oldest reader of this magazine. He collapsed suddenly early in December, and died peacefully in hospital two days later. He had a very deep affection for C.D., and his son has told me of the great pleasure it brought to him in the eventide of his life.

Bill Edwards remembered taking the very early Boys' Friend, but he had no real knowledge of our later papers. But of C.D. he always said: "It is such a lovely little magazine". At least once a month he would send me a long letter, usually accompanied by a wad of old newspaper cuttings on various subjects. His letters were truly amazing for a man of his age, clearly written in a small hand and full of memories. I never missed replying to him, and I am happy to feel that C.D. gave him so much joy, just when, as happens with so many very elderly people, he was lonely. A grand old gentleman indeed, and, here at C.D., we shall miss him very much.

* *

Nelson Lee Column

A BAD CASE OF THE FAVERSHAMS

by R. Hibbert

' —— if there is one thing that a true-blue boy detests more than another it is rank cowardice' - Edwy Searles Brooks.

'It's not my fault! It's born in me - I can't help it! What's the good of fighting against a thing that's in your very blood!' - Harry Gresham.

Both quotations are taken from page 15 of the 1st New Series Nelson Lee Library, Issue Number 52. This is dated 30th April, 1927, and was titled 'Shunned by St. Frank's!'

I'm a coward and nobody seems to notice. But then, I avoid being put to the test. As Confucius says, "He who never walks by the river

bank doesn't need to hold the Bronze Medal of the Royal Life Saving Society".

Harry Gresham - anti-hero of the 'Funk of St. Frank's' series - was a coward and everybody noticed. Railway porters - a respectful body of men in 1927 - who chanced upon him while going about their portering were moved to address him, quite spontaneously, as 'Young 'ound and white livered young cur'. His school fellows yelled, 'Funk!' 'Coward!' and 'Cad!' at him from Rising Bell to Lights Out. Sometimes they howled, 'Yah! Funk!' 'Yah! Coward!' and 'Yah! Cad!' which makes it sound worse.

Harry - and this is what happens if it's your fate to have a key role in melodrama - was always being put to the test. Once a day, twice a day, on the hour, every hour on a really bad day. He never knew when he'd be expected to face up to rabid Alsations or brutal tinkers. Harry ran from every encounter and there was always a vast multitude assembled to witness his disgrace. He reproached himself to sleep most nights. He was forever telling himself - and anyone who'd lend the odd sympathetic ear - that his cowardice 'was in the blood'. So - a complete funk and habitual breaker of the 5th Commandment. Not a pretty sight. Harry Gresham had more than a touch of the Harry Favershams, but, like the hero of 'The Four Feathers', he proved himself in the end and was true-blue, white all through and as red blooded a young Brit as you'd wish to have by your side in a Chinatown brawl.

The oddest of the sympathetic ears belonged to Edward Oswald Handforth. 'Handy - Psycho-analyst!' That tactless, heavy handed rowdy did a great deal towards getting to the root of Harry's trouble.

It wasn't all in the mind, anyway. There were sinister outside forces at work; vampires, phantoms, shapeless monsters. Unexpected stuff in a story that takes place just after Easter. And, lurking in the background, that reliable standby, THE ONE WHO WOULD INHERIT IF ONLY THE HERO WERE OUT OF THE WAY.

A good series; four issues; just the right length. 'Miss Appreciation' who wrote to E.S.B., and got a mention in the Between Ourselves section of 1st New Series, Number 60, 25th June, 1927, wanted it twice as long. When I was as old as she was I might have

thought the same, but now I steer away from a thick book. "At your age, will you ever get to the end?" I ask myself. A library shelf of good, fat novels puts me right off. Makes me feel quite fainthearted. But then, like I said, I'm a coward.

PETTICOAT RULE

by R. J. Godsave

The revolt of juniors at St. Frank's has usually been against the repressive rule of temporary Headmasters or Housemasters. It is all the more remarkable to find that on one occasion the juniors revolted against the good intentioned, yet misguided school authority.

This startling change in the running of St. Frank's as though it were a high school and kindergarten was brought about by a Miss Jane Trumble who inherited her late brother's entire fortune and his interest in St. Frank's College. Being a dominant personality with decided opinions she was elected Chairman of the Board of Governors, no doubt by exerting pressure on the rest of the Governors.

Her first action as Chairman was to visit St. Frank's College and introduce some of her ideas on the running of the school. It was unfortunate that her visit to St. Frank's coincided with the public flogging of a sixth Form prefect for an act of great brutality to his fag. This flogging greatly increased Miss Trumble's unfounded belief that the school was controlled by brutal masters.

Openly insulting Dr. Stafford in front of the assembled school, he had no alternative but to hand Miss Trumble his resignation. The masters, led by Nelson Lee, decided that they too would hand in their resignations unless Miss Trumble apologize to Dr. Stafford. For a person of Miss Trumble's make-up an apology was unthinkable. So it was, that being unable to recruit a fresh set of masters, Miss Trumble engaged the necessary mistresses. These ladies appeared to be somewhat elderly and rather unpleasant. As Miss Trumble informed the school 'she did not agree with the principle of having masters to teach the boys. It was essentially a task for women, who were more kindly, who understood the little wants of children, and who would teach lessons in a much more thorough manner'.

No doubt E. S. Brooks realised that he was presenting the fair sex in an unfavourable light by his description of the mistresses. In an

attempt to alter the balance somewhat he introduced Miss Nixon, who was to be the Form Mistress of the Third Form. She was about twenty-two years of age, a quiet, small, attractive looking girl. For her to be in charge of the Third Form was the worst kind of hard luck.

Trouble for the Remove was soon to come. Miss Trumble, meeting the return of the Remove Football Eleven who were crossing the Triangle from the playing fields, was shocked at the muddy sight and traces of blood of the footballers. The upshot of this was that such a rought game was henceforth forbidden. Catching Fullwood & Co. smoking in Study A caused the withdrawal of the use of studies for all the Remove boys.

Before actually revolting, Nipper asked permission to revive the Junior Cadet Corps. Having the uniforms and all the equipment Miss Trumble agreed with Nipper that it would keep the boys out of mischief if they were allowed to play at soldiers. By using a disused barn at the rear of Little Side, and by digging trenches around it, made it easy to retire into the barn and defy Miss Trumble and the mistresses.

Miss Trumble working in conjunction with Farmer Holt, an old enemy of the boys, and by the treachery of Fullwood & Co. allowed Farmer Holt to flood the trenches. At this point the cadets took possession of the Ancient House and kept the mistresses out of the building. Miss Trumble had no option but to resign, and with her ladies left the school. Petticoat rule at St. Frank's was at an end.

* *

FOR YOUR DIARY

The B.B.C. is repeating the very popular programme "Good Old Greyfriars" on Sunday, 10th January, at 10.15 p.m. If you haven't heard it previously, don't miss it. If you heard it last time, then you don't need us to advise you to switch on for a nostalgic half-hour. It goes out on Radio 4.

* *

S.B.L. 1st series WANTED. £10 offered No. 197, "The Yellow Face"; £8 - 184 "City of Apes". About 50 2nd series still required, from £3 each offered. Also early U.J's and "Collectors' Miscellany".

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

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

May I take this opportunity of wishing all my Blake readers a very Happy and Prosperous New Year, if one is permitted to use the term prosperous in these bad times.

I trust you will enjoy the articles this month, especially the one about the rather bitter Sexton Blake. Perhaps someone can offer an explanation as to why Paul Herring was allowed to write such nonsense when the best tales of Sexton Blake for the period, were being printed in the Union Jack. It would be interesting to know why the editor of the Marvel allowed such a thing to happen.

I am sorry to have to start the New Year with a grumble, but I have only two articles in hand for Blakiana, both by the same author, so they will be used for February and March, but I would like to have something for future months, so please get out your pens and paper and try to write something for me.

WHEN CHURCHYARDS YAWN AND THE GRAVES GIVE UP THEIR DEAD

by Raymond Cure

"The Great Waxworks Mystery" a Union Jack presentation for September 1925, No. 1143, immediately caught my attention as I perused the six copies of the Union Jack among my suggested reading.

After all, we do have our very own Waxworks in town, a place I visited often in my younger days and even now I sneak in an odd visit, the Chamber of Horrors being my favourite compartment.

Mind you, I would not like to spend a night there, the trouble being I have too much imagination. It must have started when as a lad I heard the family talking about someone who had taken a bet to spend the night in the Chamber of Horrors for £100, rumour was, the chappie came out insane, though not in our town.

At this stage I cannot tell you the author's name, but I can tell you where he got the plot from. In late 1923, I heard of the Chamber of Horrors sleeper and our story "The Great Waxworks Mystery" came out in 1925. (The author was Gwyn Evans. J.P.) According to the Union Jack one Antony Blair took a bet of £10 he would sleep the night in the Waxworks Museum. (He seems to be doing it at a cut price.) So our

story begins:-

"Midnight in the Chamber of Horrors, twelve o'clock when churchyards yawn and the graves give up their dead ... from there on I was hooked. If you visit the Waxworks once a year and call in at the Chamber of Horrors you will find it getting more frightening every year, if a 1923 volunteer did it for £100 I would need a couple of thousand for the job today. They have sound effects with some models nowadays.

Let the author of "The Great Waxworks Mystery" lead you gently by the hand onto the scene as the bells of Normouth Church peal 12 p.m. 'The Witching Hour' Blair murmured to himself when churchyards yawn and graves give up their dead. In the eerie crimson glare of the solitary lamp he could see the stark uprights of the replica of the guillotine. The wicked looking triangular blade glinted and somehow it looked red - and wet.

Now that should wet one's appetite for more, the more being Mr. Blair, surrounded by wax effigies of all the top murderers sees one (recently hanged) move towards him striking him down. Coming round, the whole waxworks is afire. Grotesque faces melting in the heat, reminding one of Dantes Inferno. Blair was rescued, his screams heard from Lands End to John O'Groats. It is here that Blake steps in.

Now a story with a start like that is worth looking into. I should not do this really, but just hoping the above has got my reader in the right mood, I shall quote the effects of a night in the Chamber of Horrors. "Blair began to scream, high pitched hysterical laughter, horrible to hear that broke off into a coughing gurgle" end of quote.

So one can see why I confine my visits to the local Chamber of Horrors to daytime only. Do not think our author has finished with you yet, he is out to reduce you to a nervous wreck. He will take you to watch Sexton Blake hiding behind a huge stone angel in the field of the dead, while the criminal scoops earth from a grave. Well! as Ebeneezer Scrooge said to Marley's Ghost, "There is more of gravy than grave in you." Still you have got to admit it's all pretty scarey. However, I suggest you borrow a copy from Josie's Packman's Sexton Blake Library, but if perhaps your wife has to take you, screaming, all the way to your favourite Psychologist, don't blame me.

SEXTON BLAKE PLAYS SECOND FIDDLE

by D.H.

What has Jack, Sam and Pete got to do with Sexton Blake? Well, if you will bear with me for just a spell, I will explain. It all began with an article on J. S. & P. in the Collectors' Digest. My interest was aroused, so I wrote to Norman Shaw for some "Marvels" which he was selling at a special and very reasonable price. When the parcel arrived I put my U.J's to one side and got stuck into the Marvels.

I enjoyed the adventures of the trio which took place in various parts of the world, as well as the other stories which appeared in the paper. Then I came to No. 133 of that publication which was dated 11.8.06 and in which appeared a story entitled "On Special Service" by Paul Herring. The star of the story was Detective Shirley Steel of Scotland Yard and this was the first time I had ever heard of a man with what has always been considered a girl's name.

Now, men attached to the Yard could not officially have young assistants like their private counterparts, but Steel had an unofficial assistant in Dick Hope, boy reporter, who in turn had three newsboys to help him, known as Dick Hope's "Awkward Squad". As the author put it, they were always on active service and Sexton Blake envied the smart assistance they rendered Scotland Yard against which he had bitter feelings.

Surely this cannot be the same Blake we read about in the Union Jack, who was on very good terms with all who worked in the large red brick building on the Thames Embankment. But sure enough it was. He had a young assistant named Tinker. Perhaps this story deals with a very young Blake before he had matured and come to know all the men of Scotland Yard better. He complained to Steel that they interefered with his cases, put obstacles in his way at every opportunity and complained bitterly that they never gave him any credit for his successes! This is certainly not the Blake we are accustomed to, the man who solved cases that baffled Scotland Yard yet let all the kudos go to them.

All through the story Steel takes the leading role while Blake plays a supporting one.

The names of the characters were most unusual, to say the least. There was Bob Bridle, a jockey, a Mr. South Hampton, a German crook

called Max Grubble, and an American ditto rejoicing in the name of Hiram Snaffle. And for the very first time I came across Blake being addressed as "Sexton".

* *

DO YOU REMEMBER? by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 174 - Boys' Friend 3d. Library No. 383 - "After Lights Out"

The Hamilton schools were only sporadically represented in the old Boys' Friend monthly library, often by reprints or substitute stories, but there were a handful of originals by the genuine author himself, and the St. Jim's story, "After Lights Out" (or "Expelled from St. Jim's", to give it its sub-title) was one of the last to be written. It was certainly the most dramatic of all Martin Clifford's character studies to appear in this format, starring Racke, Cardew, and the reformed Levison, with Levison minor in a strong supporting role - in other words, all the later additions to the St. Jim's cast, including Grundy, Trimble, and Clive, were in evidence. The old faithfuls, like Tom Merry and Blake, were little more than a Greek chorus.

The plot was simple enough in its theme, but the characters were moved about with all the skill and subtlety of a master chess player. It involved Cardew breaking bounds with Racke and Crooke to play cards with Lodgey at the Green Man. Levison tried vainly to dissuade Cardew, and the three encountered a tramp who was later to play a major part in the story. Racke was later brutally assaulted by the tramp, and he blamed Levison, who was adjudged guilty and expelled.

Eric Fayne considers that this story was originally intended to constitute a series of three in the Gem, and I feel sure that this theory is correct. The 39 chapters break up nicely into three sections, each ending on a note of climax, the first being where Racke is lying senseless in the grass, and the second with Levison escaping from Nobody's study. The great mystery, however, is why these stories never appeared in the Gem as originally intended, especially as so many substitute stories were beginning to be published at this time. Cardew arrived in March 1917, and by the summer of that year the 20 page Gem had shrunk to 16 pages. As "After Lights Out" features a cricket

match, it is possible that these three St. Jim's stories were by that date too long for their intended format. If that is the case, we can feel grateful that we still possess the tale in its unabridged form, especially in view of its high quality and enthralling drama.

The war was beginning to impinge on the stories in a number of ways: Mr. Railton's war wound led him to walk for an hour in the quadrangle at night; the juniors had war teas; Racke used to break the food regulations by making forbidden purchases at Rylcombe; and Mr. Racke himself was a purse-proud war profiteer, who sent his son to St. Jim's to make 'nobby' acquaintances and gain the polish so necessary to the parvenu. How successful his scheme was may be judged by Gussy's innocent remarks to Racke when visiting him in the school sanatorium: "I sympathise with any chap who is down on his luck, and I should nevah think of wememberin', at a moment like this, what a wottah you are!"

* *

THE BATH MAGNET CLUB by W. O. G. Lofts

That Magnet and Gem Clubs existed before the Second World War, whilst the papers were still running, can be proved by letters and advertisements in the various Companion Papers correspondence columns. How they were conducted, number of readers, and activities so far one has not been able to determine - that is until recently. Until then, I had always assumed that they were run by groups of enthusiastic schoolboys with perhaps a dozen members where the main activity was swopping old copies. Maybe also some producing their own little magazine in a very amateur way. Thanks however to a member of the Western Club, I was able to peruse the Club magazine of one of these organisations, and was impressed by its presentation. Professional type of printing, and its contents which contained editors chat, quizzes, answers to queries, and articles all written in an intelligent vein. Apart from the editor, there was a sub-editor, and even President, plus details of a Club Library which contained hard cover books by popular authors.

Curious to learn more about The Bath Magnet Club, I decided to track down the editor after a gap of some forty years - when I was lucky in the fact that he was still living in the Spa City of Bath. Despite not

reading a Magnet or Gem for forty years, I found A. S. R. Austin co-operative, and happy to talk about those good old days when he was a Grammar School pupil. The Club started about 1937 when the magazine was entitled 'The Realm' having then 36 pages. There were over 100 members, half of them living in Bath, and the rest as far afield as Hunstanton. They did have meetings of sorts, when he considered himself like St. John in preaching the gospel in getting boys to buy regularly the Magnet and Gem. At times as many as thirty boys would be crammed into his front room, with his Mother supplying tea and cakes. The Club Library was enormous with Magnet and Gem No. 1 upwards for loan, as well as many issues of Nelson Lee Library. Most popular characters at Greyfriars were Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, with Bunter very much disliked. It was suspected many times and discussed that Frank Richards/Martin Clifford/and Owen Conquest were all the same author, but always dismissed as impossible for one man to pen all the material. The Club folded as expected at the Second World War. He joined the Fleet Air Arm as aviator. Was shot down by Me109F, survived and is now Secretary to several famous organisations - Patron the Queen, including the Royal Smithfield Club. He considered that the President, R. H. Ponting, was the real brains behind the Club, being an expert, but he had left Bath many years previous, and had lost touch.

Tracing R. H. Ponting was far from easy, but eventually found in the Midlands, he was co-operative, and yet another case of an old Greyfriars boy made good! Such was the influence of Frank Richards' writings and knowledge of languages on him, that he went on to Bristol University from Grammar School where he studied and passed with full honours - French, German, Latin, Greek and even Russian. Over the years he had had the distinction of teaching at Manchester University as well as teaching other teachers'. In answering my questionnaire, he went even better by typing me an essay on his interest and Magnet love as a schoolboy. His father being an architect he used to draw many maps of Greyfriars, as well as entering in note-books all the little personal details about the characters. Probably the best writer they had in the Bath Magnet Club Magazine was a chap named T. U. G. Fuller who became a journalist, and who penned a so true to this day article 'Characters That Will Never Die' - he was also running The Romford

Magnet Club.

All in all he had long concluded that the Magnet and Gem contained literature that bore some relation to the life of a schoolboy in his early teens. More important, it was appearing currently and regularly, and he could look forward to some sort of development parallel to his own life. Another measure of the dominance of Greyfriars in his life was the fact that whenever his English master required him to write a character sketch he always chose a Greyfriars character to enlarge on.

He wanted to luxuriate in the Greyfriars countryside, he wanted to get inside that scene, to board the boats Wharton & Co. rowed or punted in. When swimming in the River Avon, every second in the water he half expected to see a punt drift by with Mauly reclining in it. He loved the Holiday series and those overseas. He has always recalled a cover of a blue and gold Magnet with Bunter on a camel beholding the pyramids. He could assure anyone that the pyramids themselves would have been enchanted by being seen by the heroes of Greyfriars!

P.S. A letter appeared in the 'Blake Answers Back' column in The Gem in July 1939 by A. S. R. Austin, only a few issues on from where a photograph appeared of a Robert Whiter.

* *

REVIEW

HOLIDAY ANNUAL 1982 (Howard Baker: London £7.95)

This latest edition of a deservedly popular series is well up to the high standard of its predecessors. For the St. Jim's fan there is a heartwarming Christmas story in the Gem's Christmas Number of 1931, which, in its turn, was Tom Merry's first Christmas in the Gem of 1907. The story was fully covered in last month's C.D. when Danny recorded in his Diary that he had purchased it. Featuring a number of old favourites like Marmaduke Smythe and the Rev. Dodds, it is a happy tale without much plot, but packed with all the atmosphere of a long ago Christmas. "St. Jim's for Merrie Christmas" is the 1931 title.

Greyfriars enthusiasts are well-catered for in three single Magnets from the mid-twenties. "Poor Old Bunter" is the amusing one about Bunter seeking time off from school, owing to the uncertain illness of an ever-changing relative. Bunter's object is to make use of Coker's ticket for a performance at the Courtfield Theatre Royal.

"Coker's Cross-Words" finds the Fifth-form giant composing a puzzle in line with the

crossword mania which was then hitting the nation. Crosswords came from the States though the first was invented by an Englishman, according to all accounts. This must be a tale of mystery - the mystery being how anyone, who spelled like Coker, ever got into a school like Greyfriars.

"The Barring of Bunter" finds the Owl sent to Coventry, a silent place which is not up Bunter's street at all. There is great fun and excitement when he has a plan for revenge on those responsible for his stay in Coventry.

"The Spectre of Handforth Towers" is the Christmas Number of the Nelson Lee Library, dated Christmas Day 1925. Mysteries - real ones this time - and thrills, abound in the type of story in which E. S. Brooks excelled. Blown up to Magnet and Gem size, this one is particularly attractive for eyes which are no longer young. It is a splendid presentation.

Introduced by an article from the pen of Mary Cadogan comes the Christmas Number of the Schoolgirls' Own, dated Christmas Eve 1921. This, too, is blown up a little in size, with much advantage, and it is jam-packed - or mince-pie-packed - with seasonable tales and items.

Last, but by no means least, comes the Union Jack Christmas Number for 1932, "The Masked Carollers" by Gwyn Evans. Flawlessly reproduced, it makes delightful reading.

"Something for Everybody" announces the publisher's blurb. And, believe me, it is an accurate summing-up. A splendid book, well-deserving of an honoured place in your library, after it has given you hours and hours of gorgeous reading.

* *

A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR is the wish of STUART WHITEHEAD to all Old Boys and Girls everywhere.

* *

WANTED: "Dark Hill" and "Sown Winds", both by authoress Winifred Duke. "Our Spoons Came from Woolworths" (author unknown); "Sealed Door of Love" by Pamela Wynne.

MRS. D. DOYLE, COURTNEY KING HOUSE
EASTERN RD., BRIGHTON, SUSSEX.

* *

SALE: Books of Biggles, Just William, Enid Blyton, many 1920 school books; all £1 and 70p each. Strand Magazine bound £3; Sexton Blake Library £1 each; Wizard, Rover, Hotspur, Adventure: offers!

OLYMPUS, SANDFORD MILL RD., CHELMSFORD, ESSEX

* *

WANTED: Sexton Blake Second Series. Numbers 365, 417, 425, 437, 445, 453, 477, 493, 517, 556, 572, 575, 579, 606, 636, 652, 670, all by John G. Brandon.
Please quote your price.

J. ASHLEY, 46 NICHOLAS CRESCENT, FAREHAM
HANTS., PO15 5AH. FAREHAM 234489

The Postman Called

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

TONY GLYNN (Manchester): I think it was Toddy, the second of "Helen's Babies", who wanted to see "the wheels go wound". Toddy, if I remember, was the younger of the two.

"Helen's Babies" was written by John Habberton, an American journalist who was a veteran of the civil war and I think it was first published about 1875. Somewhere in the book, the narrator makes reference to his own service with the Union army.

I first encountered "Helen's B's" when I was about 14 and an old lady who was a friend of my grandmother, gave me an old copy. Somewhere down the years, I lost it. I remember my grandmother telling me that she had enjoyed the book in her young days (she was born in 1868). I think it was a great favourite on both sides of the Atlantic.

It's strange how the "wheels" quote keeps cropping up. Some years ago, a girl I worked with, much younger than myself, suddenly trotted it out in some circumstances or other and it turned out that she was an "HB" fan. She loaned me her treasured copy and I enjoyed it all over again.

Habberton wrote a sequel "Helen's Other Babies". I tried it in my youth, but the charm of the original was not there.

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): Your mention of "Helen's Babies" touched a responsive chord in my memory. I remember borrowing it from the Library in my Junior School and chuckling away as I read it. Then I recalled that I still have my old school exercise-book in which we had to "review" various works of fiction. I found my exercise-book - and there it was! A review of "Helen's Babies" by John Habberton, my review dated 8th June, 1934. Toddie and Budge are the two young sprigs whose doings are recorded by their uncle, and I see that I was amused by an incident where Toddie is standing on the window-sill explaining that he is Jonah, cast up by the whale.

Apparently I had also read three of Henty's books: "When London Burned", "Beric the Briton", and "With Wolfe in Canada". Other books reviewed were "Tanglewood Tales", "Hans Brinker", and "The Cricket

on the Hearth". Ah, memories, memories!

JACK OVERHILL (Cambridge): I bought my first car in 1931, a two-seater tourer, with dickey, Morris Oxford, bullet-nosed model. Big balloon tyres. The car was so wide that four of us could sit in a row. Did 21 miles to the gallon. I gave £12 for it; excellent condition. Petrol 1/1d. a gallon. It remained that price all the time I had the car. A friend, Noel Dodd, still living, gave me my first and only driving lesson. The next day I drove my car five miles. She stopped in Grantchester. No petrol, to my surprise. There was an empty 2-gallon can in the car, and I walked with the can to the nearest garage, filled it - 2/2d. I've still got the receipt for the car in a fat bound volume of mine called Memorabilia -- you can guess what that's like, as I'm a hoarder by nature.

BILL LOFTS (London): A really excellent Annual this year, and one which one can dip into again and again. Concerning Laurie Sutton's interesting piece: in 1969 when 'Men Behind Boys Fiction' was issued - I did state that research was still continuing on the list of Charles Hamilton schools - and several additions have been found since that date. 'Arthur St. John' was considered to be one of Mr. Hamilton's pen-names in the Trapps Holmes stories, but ruled out simply because it equally could have been Henry St. John Cooper, whose writings in this field have not been traced. It is also strange that although many odd stories were found in the effects of Charles Hamilton, - none by 'Arthur St. John' did turn up.

E. R. Home-Gall showed me his correspondence with H. A. Hinton and School and Sport, as well as having last issues of the paper - which suggests he wrote the final stories. As our editor says so rightly, Hinton could write to some extent - penning a few Magnet yarns, and I believe it was he who filled in the gaps. Perhaps one day I can write up my further research revelations on the School and Sport saga.

BILL BRADFORD (Ealing): I share the curiosity expressed by the Rev. Hobson at the apparent lack of interest in Chums which I read in weekly or monthly form from 1930 until its demise in July 1934. On that sad occasion the Editor recommended 'Modern Boy' and promised great

things in Chums Annual.

The Modern Boy was an excellent publication, but had little in common with Chums. The Chums Annual from 1935/36 onwards was reduced to half the number of pages and the contents rarely achieved its former qualities. I am fortunate in having a complete set of the Annuals and also many weekly and monthly parts. The illustrated covers of 1/- issues 1932-1934 are among the finest in the history of our papers.

Regular contributors were Hylton Cleaver, Draycott M. Dell, Oswald Dallas, Charles Gibson, Gunby Hadath, Sydney Horler, John Hunter, D. H. Parry, Geo. E. Rochester, Frank Shaw, S. Walkey, Percy F. Westerman. Illustrators included Fred Bennett, Cecil Glossop, Paul Hardy and Harry Lane, all of whose work is instantly recognisable.

14th September, 1982, is the 90th anniversary of the first issue of Chums. Perhaps our Editor would consider a Chums cover for the September C.D.?

"There are some shrewd contents in yon same paper."
(Merchant of Venice - Act III, Scene II.)

HAROLD TRUSCOTT (Deal): In his article The Greyfriars Guide to St. Frank's, in the new C.D. Annual, Nic Gayle divides Greyfriars/St. Jim's/Rookwood lovers, in their relation to St. Frank's, into two groups: those who have read a little St. Frank's once and decided not to read any more, and those who have read none at all. With respect to Mr. Gayle, this does not cover all possibilities. There is yet a third category, of those who have read a lot of St. Frank's, both as a boy and in later life, and still do not like the stories. To this category I belong.

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge): I think Fr. Hertzberg is wrong to say "It is surely inevitable that all fictional detectives must owe something to Holmes". Among Holmes's predecessors is Poe's Dupin (Murder in the Rue Morgue, etc.), Dickens's Sergeant Bucket and Wilkie Collins Sergeant Cuff. There are D'Artagnan's deductions about the duel in "Vicompte de Bragellone"; Voltaire's "Zadig", not to mention the Prophet Daniel's "Perry Mason" court exploit in the case of Susanna and the Elders!

Incidentally, talking of Sergeant Bucket and "Bleak House", do

you think that Charles Hamilton took the name of Herbert Skimpole in the Gem from Harold Skimpole in "Bleak House"?

Have you, by chance, read Mark Girouaud's book on chivalry, "Return to Camelot"? It is entertaining, but contains one error that will appal all Frank Richards fans. On page 266 there is a reference to "the enormously popular 'Famous Five' of St. Dominic's as endlessly retailed in the Magnet".

TOMMY KEEN (Thames Ditton): As usual, the Collectors' Digest Annual is an absolute delight, and I, being the type who could not keep it for Christmas reading, devoured it immediately.

Being a Greyfriars enthusiast, I found Leslie Rowley's "A School for All Seasons" perfectly delightful, such a wealth of knowledge of the School, and its surroundings. On reading it, one is at Greyfriars.

Also praise to Jack Overhill for his moving story "The Dove", I envy Mr. Overhill his memories of such an adventure - a lovely story.

Thanks also to Harold Truscott for his appreciation of Johnny Bull, a much under-estimated character, who with Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh, were the three most interesting members of the Famous Five. (My opinion, of course.)

Just one little minor thought - with so much published now about pussies and doggies, I do sincerely hope the C.D. Annual will always be known by what it is now, and not suddenly become the C. & D. Annual (Cat and Dog Annual). I sense these four legged friends have already started to ascend the ladder!

"ROBBY" (Hayle): The "Editor's Christmas Box" - I have not touched anything to give such a wonderful and nostalgic feeling on the (Old) time Christmas as this has done, and it brought back memories long since forgotten.

"The Princess Snowee's Corner" is delightful. I love all cats - stupidly so - and particularly the Princess and the large black Tom Cat next door.

* *

The Best of NEW YEARS to all at EXCELSIOR HOUSE and to Fellow Collectors.

GERALD FISHMAN, NEW YORK

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

MIDLAND

At our November meeting, 11 members attended. We shall expect more on 15th December, as we have hired a bigger room.

Most of the meeting was given to discussion preparing for the Christmas party, but we still managed one or two of our regular features.

The Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item were on display. The A.N. was Magnet 511, dated 24th of November, 1917, and 64 years old to the day. The C.I. was a bound volume of Magnets (a real beauty) Nos. 501 - 540. I wonder how much a dealer would want for such a volume. Great interest was shown in these features.

An item of interest in "The Bookseller" catalogue ran as follows:- "Quiller Press, Billy Bunter by Frank Richards, edited by Kay Orlon, price £3.95." Is Howard Baker about to be imitated?

We had time for a game of Tom Porter's Greyfriars Bingo. As usual Geoff Lardner won it. How does he do it so often?

Ivan Webster read a single chapter from Howard Baker's Magnet, Vol. No. 13, Bunter trying to get Linley to withdraw from a Latin exam for which Quelch will give a handsome classic volume as the prize.

Bunter naturally does not want the book, but his uncle has offered to give him £5 if he wins it. Bunter's idea is for Mark Linley to give Bunter the Latin verses he has prepared so that the Fat Owl can copy them out.

Nobody will be surprised to learn the Fat Owl is ejected from Linley's study with his boot landing on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars. We all enjoyed Ivan's amusing reading.

By the time this report is being read in the C.D. Christmas will have come and gone, so I take this opportunity to wish all O.B.B.C. enthusiasts everywhere, the age-old wish - a Happy New Year.

JACK BELLFIELD - Correspondent

CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at the home of Edward Witten on Sunday, 5th

December. Bill Thurbon talked about the regression theory, the experiences of people under hypnosis recalling what appeared to be experiences of the past, a subject on which Vic Hearn had previously spoken to the club. Bill had found Vic's talk very interesting, but one that raised many questions. He pointed out the many changes that had taken place in the lifetime of himself and Jack, and wondered what the man of 2081 would think of our century? He pointed out also the many questions raised by regression under hypnosis - and whether the "subject" was really "regressing" or responding to suggestions by the hypnotist. He thought there was still as much truth in Hamlet's "there are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamed on in your philosophy" as when Shakespeare first wrote it. A possible answer to the regression theory was the Greek idea of transmigration of souls, which was held by some Eastern religions - reincarnation. It was interesting to see how many authors had written stories on the theme of reincarnation, or of "time travel" or some similar theme, and how they had treated it. He quoted from Rider Haggard, an early Sexton Blake tale, "A case of reincarnation", A Merrill, Hilda Lewis, Wilbut Smith, Ronald Welch, W. Douglas Duff, John Dickson Carr, Edwin Lester Arnold, Edith Nesbit, Rudyard Kipling, Jack London, Philip High, Margaret Baker, and Alison Uttley. An interesting discussion followed, which reached no definite conclusion on the subject! "There are more things ---"

After enjoying Edward's magnificent spread, to which Mrs. Overhill had added a Christmas cake, the meeting sat round Edward's fire and told Christmas stories: Vic Hearn led off with a delightful story of a modern Scrooge, and Keith followed with a Christmas story of a snowed up train. Roy Whiskin read extracts from the "Festive season" section of "Greyfriars for Grown-ups", Edward Witten read a hilarious short story about an unfortunately named variety of potatoes. Jack Overhill then read out the questions in the "Digest" song quiz, which produced short bursts of more or less melodious singing, and followed this up with one of his marvellous stories of Christmas in his boyhood.

As so often happens at a Christmas meeting of the club, Jack's talk brought a glow to our hearts, and we broke up, after warmly

thanking Edward for his hospitality, wishing one another a Happy Christmas.

LONDON

There was an excellent attendance at the Ealing meeting despite the severe inclement weather. Naturally, the state of the roads debarred the long distance members from attending. Mary Cadogan, in the chair, welcomed all those who had made the journey. Both Bob Blythe and Sam Thurbon were unavoidably unable to attend due to indispositions and the wishes of all present expressed for their speedy recovery. Tony Rees read his poem "A Dream of Greyfriars" which was accorded applause.

Brian Doyle and Laurie Sutton tied for first place in Bill Bradford's "Titles, last numbers and last the title of several last numbers" quiz, prizes awarded to the winners and runner-up, generously donated by Bill Bradford and Maurice King, Bill Bradford drew Collectors' Digest for his one minute talk in a competition suggested by Brian Doyle. About a dozen members took part and interesting to see Horace Owen, no mean Blakianain, draw the Thomson papers.

The feed in the Rag was excellent and there was a great spirit of concord and conviviality. But as the snow began to be heavy, some members had to bid adieu. A full report of what transpired after tea will appear in the club's newsletter for January next, plus the provisional rendezvous at Shepperton on Sunday, 10th January. Hearty votes of thanks were accorded to the hosts, Bill and Thelma Bradford for their outstanding hospitality.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Christmas Party, 12th December, 1981

While most of Britain had falls of snow, Leeds was fortunate in being clear - but this did not help to boost attendance of only sixteen people - somewhat low for a Christmas Party, but perhaps some of our members had encountered some bad weather.

Nevertheless, it was a cosy gathering. It is not our custom to have any official business on these occasions - apart from a library

session - as a number of members bring along their spouses and it would not be fair to them.

Some sad news though - we had learned that Ron Hodgson who lived near Doncaster, had died that very morning. This came as a great shock to us all and at the end of the proceedings, we stood in silence for one minute in a tribute to Ron. We had not seen Ron for two years, owing to his having an "itinerant" job and negotiations were in place for him to work and live in Torquay.

One person we were pleased to see, was Marion Wilde, the widow of our much-loved ex-Chairman, Geoffrey. Marion had brought along some books from Geoffrey's collection that she wanted to be used as prizes.

After refreshments, various games were played - and some members portrayed their acting expertise in a silent melodrama - so ably narrated by Geoffrey Good. To conclude, a Christmas reading from the Mauleverer Towers series, by Geoffrey. This was much appreciated by our members and the excerpt showed Charles Hamilton's capabilities at introducing humour into his stories, especially where Bunter was involved - and even more so, when attempting to "bilk" a taxi-driver!

Very soon, it was 9.30 p.m. and time to wish each other the compliments of the Season. All Northern Club Members wish all C.D. readers the very best for 1982. JOHNNY BULL MINOR

(Eric Fayne adds: Here at Excelsior House we are very, very deeply grieved to learn of the death of Ron Hodgson. We have lost, in Ron, one of the finest and most loyal of all our readers. His memory will never die.)

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GOLDEN FUN No. 12. Our Now! The magazine for the collector of the British comic and storypaper. This latest issue features interview with Bob Nixon (former artist Lord Snooty, Roger the Dodger, Frankie Stein); interview with Alfred Bestall (Rupert Bear's author/artist); appreciation of the Wolf of Kabul (by Lofts & Adley); interview with Charles Chilton (Jet Morgan, Riders of the Range); appreciation of Barry Ford (the writer of western strips). 40 pages. Price £2.10 plus 19p postage, from:

ALAN and LAUREL CLARK, 24 ARUNDEL ROAD
TUNBRIDGE WELLS, KENT, TN1 1TB

THOSE LOVELY LOVE STORY PAPERS

by Mabel McKay

"Nell was under middle height and so small and slender she looked almost like a child. Her complexion was creamy white. Her eyes were a large, lustrous blue, fringed with long black lashes and her silken hair was a glorious golden auburn."

No, not from Mills and Boon, but an extract from "Fireside Novels" 1886.

Those love story papers. How they have survived generations of change. Wars and depressions. Banned by parents and read avidly by young girls. Didn't we love them? The heroes were handsome, 6 ft. millionaires, the girls beautiful and virtuous and true love always triumphed on the last page. Even the names of the papers were romantic; Bow Bells 1903, Heartsease 1903 and My Queen. This last named one was put out by Aldine Pub. Co. These were followed by the Horners Penny Stories, Sunday Stories, Penny Pictorial 1909, and Women's World - this was published by Amalgamated Press. My first experience with these papers was the day when visiting my Grandmother and she gave me some of these papers to keep me quiet. Horners and Sunday Stories must have had a long run as I have copies dated 1903 and I did not see them until the time I mentioned above in 1925.

Then came Pam's Paper, Peg's Paper, Betty's Paper and Peg's Companion in the 1920's and 1930's. These were the favourites in my youth.

1950's were the years of the Miracle, Oracle, Silver Star and Glamour.

Then came a lull in the written story with a surfeit of Picture Love Comics plentifully larded with information and photographs of the current "Pop" stars.

But now, what do we find in these days of liberated woman. What do these enlightened girls read? Why, Mills and Boon, of course. Those romantic stories of love in far-away places and what do you know the heroes are handsome 6 ft. millionaires, the girls are beautiful and virtuous and true love triumphs on the last page.

People don't change, not really. Under all that modern sophistication we are still romantic at heart.

WANTED: BFL 337, "Rivals of Rippingham".

MEARNS, 4 OGILVIE PLACE, BRIDGE OF ALLAN, FK9 4TE

* *

FOR SALE: Howard Baker Magnet reprints, Volumes No. 12, 14, 20, 26, 52, 53, 64, 66. £4.00 each, postage extra.

BOB BLYTHE, 47 EVELYN AVE., KINGSBURY, LONDON, NW9 0JF.

* *

WANTED: Bullseye 41, 89; Surprise No. 3; Film Fun 571. Buy, exchange, or photostats of last two.

SUTTON, 41 SWALECLIFF AVE., MANCHESTER, M23 9DN

* *

WANTED: B.F. 4d. Lib. 514, "Nipper at St. Frank's"; 542, "Staunchest of Chums"; "The Borgia Head Mystery" by Victor Gunn.

CHURCHILL, 43 RETREAT RD., TOPSHAM, EXETER

* *

MAGNETS FOR SALE at £1 each; also Gems. Will exchange for 1930 onwards Wizards.

WATSON, "OLYMPUS", SANDFORD MILL RD., CHELMSFORD, ESSEX

* *

SEXTON BLAKES for Sale. S.a.e.:

KEARNS, 25 SPRINGHALL CLOSE, SHELF, HALIFAX

* *

FOR SALE/EXCHANGE: Nelson Lees, Magnets, Gems, B.F.L., S.O.L., Thomsons, etc.
WANTS: Thomsons, Champion, S.O.L., Magnets, H.B. re-prints, Cigarette Cards.

G. HOARE, 13 BURNSIDE, WITTON GILBERT, DH1 6SE

* *

CHRISTOPHER LOWDER WRITES

You're right: it does seem odd -- that dive in the price of petrol from 2/6d. a gallon (1927) to the 1/6d. of a decade later. And on reading your comments, I thought I'd perhaps made an error in transcription. But no, Chester's entry is quite clear: "Petrol, 13 galls. @ 2/6d. -- £1-12-6". There may well have been a score of reasons why petrol did plummet in price (would coming off the Gold Standard have anything to do with it?), but whatever they were, it did.

cont'd. bottom of Page 32 . . .

STOP PRESS. Result of our Christmas Song Teaser Competition.

Once again our little song competition roused a great deal of interest among the large numbers of readers who have memories of the old days when songs had proper tunes and were not just a row. It must have set many folk humming and warbling in many homes this Christmas.

The following is the correct list of the song titles: 1. Little Grey Home in the West. 2. I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles. 3. Burlington Bertie. 4. Knees up, Mother Brown. 5. Wyoming. 6. If You Were the Only Girl in the World. 7. A Little Bit of Heaven. 8. Till the Sands of the Desert Grow Cold. 9. Alexander's Ragtime Band. 10. Oh, You Beautiful Doll. 11. In the Twi-Twi-Twilight. 12. Roamin' in the Gloamin'. 13. Meet Me To-night in Dreamland. 14. She'll be Coming Round the Mountain. 15. My Dreams are Getting Better All the Time. 16. Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer. 17. God Send You Back to Me. 18. My Old Man's a Dustman. 19. When I Grow Too Old to Dream. 20. After the Ball. 21. The Lambeth Walk.

The best entry came from Mr. Donald Webster of Bideford, who had 16 correct. Congratulations to him for his wonderful memory. He will receive a lovely little collectors' item: an excellent copy of S.B.L. No. 218, "The Case of the Bendigo Heirloom", a Sexton Blake-Leon Kestrel story, newly-bound in red with the title in gold letters.

Three entries had 15 correct. They were sent in by Mr. F. R. Lowe of Derby; Mr. E. Lawrence of Wokingham; Mr. L. Sutton of Orpington. £1 is being sent to each of our three runners-up.

In conclusion, grateful thanks to all who had a shot at the little contest, thus helping to make it the great success it has been.

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CHRISTOPHER LOWDER WRITES continued

As for Mr. Hertzberg's 'grouse' (his word) that it was neither necessary nor desirable that I translated old money into new in my piece, he is, of course, wrong. It occurred to me that he may well be the only man alive today pottering around jingling half crowns in his pocket. What he clearly fails to understand is that there are actually readers of this magazine who are (relatively speaking) quite young. Anyone born during the years 1965-1970 (and I understand there are subscribers to, or readers of, C.D. from this period) would have had little or no experience, and thus understanding, of old money. To such readers, the figures '9/8d', say, or (worse) terms such as 'one and four-pence three-farthings', are utterly meaningless, and it's no good writing in code if only half your readers understand what on earth you're talking about. What I can't understand is why Mr. Hertzberg should be so upset.

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