

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

AUGUST 1968

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SUMMER EDITION

2/3^d



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22

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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RE-ISSUES

From time to time we have commented on revivals in the London theatre, with particular reference to *Desert Song* and *Student Prince*, and we have noted how contemptuous of them some of the dramatic critics of the national press have been. A critic, writing in one of the London evening papers, gloomily saw these revivals as likely to bring about the death of the theatre as we know it, the argument being that theatre stages will be occupied with revivals, so that there will be no place for the work of brilliant modern playwrights.

A specious argument indeed. It seems most unlikely that the number of revivals will ever be very large - certainly not large enough to keep any worth-while new play from being presented to the public. Further, the revivals take back to the theatres the family audiences which have been driven away, from both the theatres and the cinemas, by the type of presentation which has been all too prevalent in recent years.

I, personally, am all for revivals - providing the revival is as good as the original. I take the same view concerning re-printing of the old stories. Unfortunately, in all but a very few cases, the reprinted version is only a pale shadow of the original. As I have said before, I feel strongly that when abridged versions are published, it should clearly be stated at the commencement of the book that abridgment has taken place. Only by such procedure can the reputations of the old writers be protected.

And how did the writers themselves feel about their early work being re-issued? Well, Charles Hamilton took a very dim view of it indeed. While most of us revel in the Popular, Hamilton detested it. His view was understandable. Apparently, by the nature of the contracts, the old A.P. authors sold all rights to their work. They got nothing extra, no matter how often their work was reprinted - and Hamilton was the most reprinted of all. He also realised the danger that, while old stories were reprinted time and time again, there might be less call for new output from his typewriter. A near-decade of reprints in the Gem closed that paper to new work from him for many years.

I wonder whether he ever paused to consider that the very fact that reprints became the policy of the Gem was due to his own neglect of the paper in the late nineteen-twenties and early thirties.

FOR OLD CODGERS:

Every year we come across scores of references in the national, the international, and the local press to the old papers which are embraced by our hobby. I probably come across more than most people, for the simple reason that my readers so often very kindly send me along clippings. This week I have had (sent to me by Mr. W. Lister of Blackpool) one of the very nicest I have ever seen. This comes from the West Lancashire Evening Gazette, and it is headed "For Old Codgers."

In a delightful column, the writer commented:

"When we look back to comics we think of 'Chips' and 'Comic Cuts,' with the immortal Weary Willie and Tired Tim, with the kids of Casey's Court on the back page; where the elderly couple used to regard all the goings-on benignly, by the side of the door labelled 'Boots Mendid' and 'Washin Dun.'

"As we neared that period now regarded with so much awe and reverence as 'teenage' - neither the word nor the foolish homage paid to it had been invented then - we graduated to those

marvellous weeklies 'Gem,' 'Magnet' and 'Penny Popular,' where the eternal boys of St. Jim's, Greyfriars and Rookwood never grew older with the passing years, but were, in Shakespeare's term, 'boy forever.'"

A reader was inspired by the article to write to the newspaper in question. He had this to say: "One addition could usefully be made to what was said about boys' old-time periodicals in Saturday night's entertaining leading article - mention of their high moral standard. They had an immense influence on readers. This country would be far better off today with boys' heroes like Harry Wharton and Tom Merry than with the scruffs who currently command worship."

Did I hear a faint cheer from the distance?

REAL OLD BOYS' PAPER STUFF!

There's a breathless hush - not in the Close tonight, but over the world's finest cricket ground, at Edgbaston. Dead silence over the crowd, while the injured captain, with a score at 97, was striving to complete his first century against Australia in England, in his 100th Test appearance. And the T.V. commentator said, huskily: "It's like the old boys' story papers, isn't it, Dennis," And Dennis, shakily, agreed that it was.

ANNUAL TIME AGAIN:

The hair is a little whiter, the bones are a trifle creakier, and it is a few inches further round the circumference. Which tells us that another year has gone by - and it is Annual time again. Next month, all being well, we shall be sending you your order form for Collectors' Digest Annual of 1968. If the spirit moves you, and you are thinking of sending along a literary gem for inclusion in this great Year Book, please do it now. Already, several magnificent articles are in print. I hope to tell you a little more about them next month.

THE EDITOR

 WANTED: To complete run of Lees: OLD series 105, 128, 130 to 134, 144, 145, 448, 451, 452. 2nd new series 151.

FOR SALE or EXCHANGE: Boys Realm, Modern Boys, Lees c/s. S.O.Ls. also Bound Vols. Boys Own Paper No. 1 Jan. to Sept. 1879, Girls Own Paper 1881, 1883, Vol. 5.

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HAMILTONIANA

It was 62 years ago that Charles Hamilton created Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, destined to become one of his most famous characters. The story appeared in PLUCK in December 1906. The school was St. Jim's, but Tom Merry and his friends had not yet made their bow. It seems a strangely empty St. Jim's without them. Very few copies of the tale are still in existence. Very few C.D. readers have ever seen it. This month we start it in serial form.

THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S

By Charles Hamilton

"Come in, Blake!"

Jack Blake of St. Jim's entered Kildare's study with a very doubtful expression upon his face. Kildare, besides being head of the School House, was captain of the school, and the most popular fellow at St. Jim's. He was worshipped by the juniors of his own house, and Jack Blake was the foremost of his admirers. Yet there was a noticeable absence of alacrity about the way Blake accepted the captain's invitation to enter his study. Kildare observed it, and smiled.

"Don't be uneasy, Blake. I'm not going to haul you over the coals this time."

Blake's face cleared, and he grinned. He was oftener in hot water than any other junior in the School House, and he had frequently been called into the captain's study with painful results to himself. When Kildare called him in his palms had tingled in anticipation, and he was agreeably surprised by the captain's assurance.

"That's all right, Kildare," he said cheerfully. "I wondered what it could be this time. Lickings are off, then?"

"Lickings are off!" said Kildare. "I called you in because I wanted to speak to you, Blake. Sit down."

Blake sat down. He was fully sensible of the honour of being asked to sit down in the study of the captain of St. Jim's, but his manner was as cool and unconcerned as ever.

"Right you are," he said. "If you want my opinion —"

"I don't!"

"Oh," said Blake, "well, what do you want then?"

"There's a new boy coming to St. Jim's, Blake!" said Kildare seriously.

Blake elevated his eyebrows.

"Nothing astonishing in that, is there? I was a new boy myself once."

"This new boy is a little out of the common."

"Is he coming into the School House?" asked Blake. "If there's anything no-class about him he ought to be shoved into the New House, you know, along with Figgins."

"He is coming into the School House, and will be in your form," said Kildare. "His name is D'Arcy — Arthur Augustus D'Arcy!"

Blake said nothing, and Kildare went on.

"The doctor has asked me to keep an eye on him to some extent, as he has suffered from a very indiscreet training. It is probable that he will get into trouble with the other juniors at first, and I don't want him put upon. I depend on you, Blake, to see that there is no bullying, no ill-natured persecution."

"Oh!"

"I don't mean that I want you to dry-nurse him," said Kildare hastily. "He will learn in time to look out for himself, like the rest of you; but at first I want you to bear with him a little, and not be too rough on him. There are very few boys in your form, Blake, to whom I could speak like this, but I think I know you well enough to be sure that you will take it in the right

spirit."

"I'd do anything you asked me, Kildare!" said the junior.

"Then you'll bear in mind what I've told you?"

"Certainly. I suppose from what you say he's a queer sort of merchant, but I'll take him under my wing, Kildare."

"That's right. You see, he'll probably get quite enough chipping from the New House youngsters."

"Oh, my hat!" said Blake in dismay. "Is he such a rank out-and-outer as that? We don't want Figgins & Co getting on their hind legs and giggling at us. Is it too late to have him sent into the New House instead? If he's a silly goat, he'd feel more at home there."

"If you like to go to the Head's study, and put it to him, perhaps --"

"No, thanks!" said Blake hastily. "When is the boulder expected?"

"This afternoon."

"I'll keep a peeper open for him. Do you know which study he'll be stuck into?"

"Yes; Study No. 6."

Blake gave a whistle of dismay.

"You're joking, Kildare. You don't really mean he's going to be put into our quarters?"

"Yes, I do."

"But there's three of us in No. 6 already," expostulated Blake. "There's barely room for Herries and Digby and me. And we're quite a happy family, and we don't want any strange dogs in the kennel."

"Can't help that. He's coming into No. 6 for the present at least. Some of the other Fourth Form studies have four in them."

"Yes, only we're so comfy in No. 6 on our own," said Blake. "Still, anything to oblige, especially if it can't be helped. I'll tell Herries and Digby."

And Blake rose from his seat.

"I needn't ask you to be civil to him," remarked Kildare. "Not to make him feel like an intruder, I mean. He's been the pet of two maiden aunts, so he'll find it a bit rough first coming to a public school, anyway."

"He shall be the apple of my eye, the darling of my heart. When he sinks into slumber I will imprint a tender kiss upon his baby brow --"

Kildare made a threatening gesture, and the junior vanished from the study. The captain of St. Jim's laughed heartily when he was alone. Blake was the coolest and cheekiest youngster in the School House, and probably the most healthy and good-hearted. Kildare liked him, and felt that he could be relied upon.

Blake was gratified by the confidence reposed in him by the captain, but his feelings were not wholly pleasant as he took his way to Study No. 6.

He and his chums, Herries and Digby, filled up the study comfortably, and they were, as he had said, a happy family in No. 6. It was not agreeable to have the family circle broken in upon by the intrusion of a stranger, especially such an individual as the new boy appeared to be by Kildare's description.

Then there was the fellow himself to be considered. The School House - or, at least, the junior section of it - was at war with the other house at St. Jim's, and Blake and his chums were the leaders in the contest.

If the new recruit was some extraordinary out-and-outer, Blake knew how joyfully the New House juniors would seize upon the occasion to mercilessly chip No. 6 study.

Herries and Digby were in the study when Blake went in. Digby was making toffee, and Herries was sitting on the table, giving him advice, which was not very gratefully received.

"Hallo, you chaps!" said Blake. "I've just had some news from Kildare. There's a new chap coming, and he's stuck in here with us."

"Rats!"

"Fact! His name's Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and he's some sort of an out-and-outer, and we've got to be kind to him."

"Bosh! If they shove anybody in here there will be a row."

"There ain't much room, that's a fact," said Blake, looking round. "If you could take a smaller size in boots, Herries, it would make a difference. You'll have to leave some of your feet outside when you come in, that's all. The worst of it is, that if the new kid is a funny merchant, Figgins & Co will get hold of it, and chip us no end."

"They've already got a point ahead of

us," said Digby, looking up, with a crimson countenance, from his toffee-making. "You know Figgy has started the New House Amateur Dramatic Society. They say Kerr is a born actor, and makes up ripping."

"Yes," said Herries, "and later on they're going to give a performance of 'Hamlet,' and the masters are invited. Figgy will take a lot of biscuit over that."

"Oh, rats!" said Blake rather uneasily. "They'll make asses of themselves, you'll see."

"They're doing it in deadly earnest," said Herries with a shake of the head. "They're holding rehearsals in the woodshed, I hear."

Blake's eyes sparkled.

"Are they? Then some of us had better be on hand at the next rehearsal to help them through. "If they won't invite us, we'll invite ourselves. All guests expected to bring their own pea-shooter." He broke off suddenly. "What's the giddy row?"

There was a sound of laughter and many voices in the quadrangle. Study No. 6 was in the fortunate position of overlooking the quad. Blake was at the window in a moment. He looked out, and uttered an exclamation:

"Oh, my Aunt Tabitha! The new kid!"

(There will be another instalment of this 60-years old story in the next issue of Collectors' Digest.)

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 126. ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY - NEW BOY

It is with a great sense of occasion that the reader enjoys the story of the arrival of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at St. Jim's. There is something of a thrill and a tingling satisfaction in reading of the creation of a character who was destined to become world-famous and to live on down sixty cascading years.

The author, when he wrote the story, felt no sense of occasion. Of course he didn't! He had no means of knowing that he was commencing a series which would be indestructible and siring characters which would be everlasting. He could not guess that St. Jim's was to capture the hearts of British youth and become one of the most famous schools in fiction.

It would have been beyond his comprehension that his hero, Jack Blake, to enjoy his little hour of fame and then to be permanently eclipsed by Tom Merry. Even as "The Swell of St. Jim's" was being written, the glory that was Jack Blake was slowly ticking away.

It is fascinating to compare the writing of this story with that of some of the Gem tales of only a few years later. There is really nothing to indicate that the writer will become the greatest exponent of all time of the school story. The story is adequate for the medium in which it is presented. It is fluent and readable, but that about sums it up. There are none of the mannerisms and grating extravagances which marred the work of so many of Hamilton's contemporaries at that time. The story is

notable for the fact that it does not offend in any way more than for anything remarkable in its writing.

In the first chapter, which we print this month, the adverb "hastily" was used four times in as many paragraphs. (We have chucked out two of them.) This suggests that the writer did not check his work, and, in fact, half a century later Charles Hamilton was to claim that he never re-read his work after it left the type-writer.

There is a clumsy split infinitive. Nowadays it is considered pedantic and unnecessary to be too fussy about split infinitives, but the good writer took care to avoid them in 1906. There is an absence of that happy choice of words, that skill in instilling convincing atmosphere, that rare art of coining phrases for which the writer was to be noted as time went by. In "The Swell of St. Jim's" Hamilton is feeling his way, groping for something which is only just round the corner. The reader today senses it as the writer cannot have sensed it all those years ago.

At the time, there was nothing at all extraordinary in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He was a stock Edwardian character.

After St. Jim's had said good-bye to "Pluck" and had joined the Gem, after Jack Blake had been eclipsed and Tom Merry had become the most loved schoolboy in the world, - only then did Hamilton develop Arthur Augustus into one of his finest creations. And because he was built on the base of a stock character, the later Arthur Augustus was a splendid and notable piece of work.

Only a few years later, he was to star in the Gem story "Bought Honours," - and no finer school story has ever been written.

Even so, it might be claimed that Arthur Augustus was never believable - a schoolboy would never be allowed in class wearing a monocle. On the other hand, it is scarcely believable how many boys are allowed to attend class in 1968. The wearing of a monocle might rightly be termed affectation. The wearing of long, untidy hair, the sporting of dirty tight trousers and gaudy, shoddy clothes, the ostentatious puffing of cigarettes - all are signs that some schools and schoolmasters are not doing their jobs, which is to train young people to be neat, clean, and decent among other things. I prefer to believe in Gussy.

One phrase in this month's instalment intrigues me. Herries says: "Figgins will take a lot of biscuit over that."

Presumably he means; "Figgins will gain kudos for that." "Taking the biscuit," in the sense in which the author used it then, seems to have been lost in the mists of time. I have never come

across it before.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

ROGER JENKINS: I think that Charles Hamilton never struck a more enchanting vein than his summer holiday series set in the English countryside. The general pattern of the stories is a familiar one to old readers: in particular, the rogues who sold camping rights they didn't own, and the encounters with awkward customers like Coker, Grundy, Bunter, or Ponsonby - these never failed to delight the reader. It is said that old jokes are the best, and certainly some old situations are capable of warming the heart.

You have done full justice to the caravanning series, but there are some other summer holiday tales that deserve mention too. I have a soft spot for the hiking stories which were accompanied by animals. The St. Jim's juniors took Solomon the donkey with them, a series which was specially enlivened by a hostile encounter with Cardew. The Rookwood juniors took a pony called Trotsky (so called because he disliked work) and this series had a sequel which took place when term began again; similarly, the holiday with Lovell's motor-scooter (a more modern touch) had a sequel that carried the series over into school time. But old or new, they all had an infallible ingredient - charm.

* * * * *

R E V I E W S

Frank Richards

(Merlin Hamlyn 2/6)

BILLY BUNTER - SPORTSMAN

This story is a hybrid of two very early Magnet tales: the closing chapters of No. 134 "Todd the Terrible" and the main content of No. 136 "Billy Bunter's Kick-Off," originally published in the autumn of 1910. The story is interesting as showing Alonzo Todd as a comparatively new boy and in giving Bulstrode a prominence which was denied him as years passed. It may be doubtful whether the original Magnets are still in existence at Fleetway. This edition is probably a reprint of Schoolboys' Own Library No. 83, entitled "The Fool of the School."

Frank Richards

(Merlin Hamlyn 2/6)

BILLY BUNTER & THE BANK ROBBER

Not a very good title for this tale. The Bounder is the central character, and it is, in fact, one of the finest Smithy stories of them all. Sometimes known as the Captain Spencer

series, it appeared in the golden age of the Magnet, and shows Frank Richards at his very best. The original Magnets were Nos. 1008 "One Against the School" and 1009 "Hunted Down." The year was 1927, just before the first South Seas series. It is quite well adapted in this edition, even though several chapters from the second story have been chopped away completely.

This edition may have come from the original Magnets, though Schoolboys' Own Library No. 175 entitled "One Against the School" contained edited portions of Magnets 1007, 1008, and 1009.

Both these Merlins are well-produced, with good, clear print, and the illustrations are excellent.

Frank Richards
(Armada 2/6)

BILLY BUNTER THE BOLD

This is one of Charles Hamilton's merriest post-war Bunters. The captain of the school has graciously agreed to take tea in Study No. 1, but when he and his hosts arrive in that celebrated apartment, they find the cupboard is bare. As a result, the Owl of the Remove finds himself in Coventry. Adventures and misunderstandings follow thick and fast. For those who like a school story on the light side, this is rattling good entertainment.

First published 14 years ago, it now comes round again to delight yet another generation of youngsters - and their parents.

Offered in Exchange: "Magnets" 1477-91, 1506-19-21-31-34, 1666. "Gems" 1013, 1434-48, 1541; S.O.Ls. 146, 147, 150, 154, 158, 172, 251, 304, 411. NEW SERIES in following: "Popular" 258; "Nelson Lee" 86-87; "Greyfriars Herald" No. 1-35-40-48-50.
WANTED: "Magnets" 704-5-6-7, 809-12-28, 981-82-84, 1023-24-82-89, 1301-3-5-7-1325-78, 1404-9-11-12-34, 1567, 1656-82. "Gems" 774, 812-13-16-17-18, 1023-24-48-1066-95, 1469-83, 1579-94, 1619-54-57-1659-60-61-63. Collectors Digest Annuals, previous to 1951.

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W A N T E D : Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: GEMS: Some issues between 801 and 832; 953, 954, 959, 960, 970, 974, 975, 981, 984, 985, 986, 987, 989, 990, 992, 993, 995. POPULARS: 401, 403, 407, 409, 413, 415, 421, 422, 441, 442, 466, 467, 474.

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NELSON LEE COLUMN

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

By Jim Cook

Poor old Nipper!

His sojourn at St. Frank's was intermittently broken by references to his upbringing, by jealous rivals.

An account just published of Nipper's first association with Nelson Lee has found its way into St. Frank's and into the wrong hands. And today Nipper is experiencing another of those unhappy times when his enemies have made great play of his pre-St. Frank's life when Nipper roamed the streets of London as a ragamuffin.

It is a period that Nipper would like to forget because of its erroneous presentation.

When Nelson Lee became his guardian Nipper's parentage was uncertain. Nipper had no brothers or sisters that could be traced by Lee but the master detective was able to establish that Nipper's parents were dead and that Nipper was entitled to the honourable name of Richard Hamilton.

I don't suppose we shall ever read of the strange interval of time between St. Ninian's School and St. Frank's. Even Nipper himself hasn't a clear memory of his leaving St. Ninian's after losing his parents and his subsequent roaming the streets of London.

It is interesting to note that another London "urchin" roamed London at the same time as Nipper and he too became an assistant to a well known detective. But their paths although running parallel for a time eventually forked and both were to finish in different spheres of life.

Because of circumstances Nipper really never shone in the criminology firmament as did his counterpart Tinker; Nipper's acumen for crime busting was shortened in mid-career by Nelson Lee's hasty retreat to St. Frank's. And sometimes one wonders whether crime would have reached its proportions today if these two erstwhile London street urchins and their respected gov'nors had joined forces. But as Nipper once remarked to me, when I exploited this very subject with him you can't have two kings on one throne.

Perhaps fate ordained Nipper's coming to St. Frank's for he certainly was needed there. St. Frank's was unknown to the world generally until Nipper put it on the map. From a somnolent

academy resting peacefully in a rustic calm a famous college began to make headlines in the world's press; St. Frank's was born! St. Frank's rose out of the ashes of dormancy and the civilised world became aware of places like Bellton, Bannington and other places close to St. Frank's.

Nipper's remarkable powers of leadership altered the whole school's attitude; even the seniors began to think positive and a general renaissance awoke the college from its slumbers.

It is not uncommon for one person alone to change a way of life that for years has been the accepted thing but Nipper's coming to St. Frank's did this very act. The door was wide open for changes at the old school but until Nipper came St. Frank's slept in the lazy atmosphere of inertia; sport generally failed to reach the headlines in the local press for each sporting event was a foregone conclusion with a win to the visiting teams.

Staid form masters like Mr. James Crowell and Mr. Arthur Stockdale were never threatened with anything other than a humdrum existence and their lives ran merrily on until one day a decision taken in Gray's Inn Road, London, was to alter everything. The brooding silence at St. Frank's was going to erupt into a world-shattering explosion. And Nelson Lee and Nipper as they stealthily escaped from the chambers in Grays Inn Road and over the roof of Bevison, Norton & Co., the engraving works adjoining Lee's rooms, little thought of the impact their move was going to make on the college.

Was it Nelson Lee's weight behind Nipper that was responsible for pulling the Ancient House out of the rut? Or was it a natural thing to do? Most of us are tidy by nature and Nipper's first reaction to the indolent juniors was surprise. Surprise at the slipshod way of life at St. Frank's and disgust at the weak leaders.

A great cleansing was due and Nipper did it. He restored the Ancient House within a very short time to its old greatness by deposing Fullwood from the junior captaincy and instilling into the juniors a better outlook. And opposite the Triangle the College House also woke up to its faults and complacency and from that time the enthusiasm brought about by Nipper's new order was to remain with the boys of St. Frank's.

With these changes St. Frank's became a magnet drawing great personalities to the school. Even the environs to the college became famous and when one came across the village of Bellton in the news you immediately associated it with St. Frank's. Until Nipper came, Bellton was just a sleepy old-world village in Sussex.

It was never connected with St. Frank's College.

Wherever the St. Frank's juniors went headlines in the world's Press resulted. And perhaps not a little was due to Nelson Lee's great friend Lord Dorrimore. When Lee came to St. Frank's he brought his friends with him and Dorrie - as he was affectionately known - was one of the many who were to write St. Frank's history.

Unfortunately, strong men like Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore and young wizards like Nipper belong only to St. Frank's. They have been endowed with an eternal existence but available any time to gather forces and put things right. And putting things to right is a much needed operation these days.

* * * * *

COVER DESIGN

by R. J. Godsave

One of the interesting facts of the Nelson Lee Library was the flexibility of cover design. Although a similarity of heading was maintained throughout a series the arrangement of the printed matter did not follow a rigid pattern.

Whether this freedom was an advantage over the fixed cover design papers it is difficult to say. If it was to the disadvantage of the Nelson Lee then the printing in bright and attractive colours, with red and blue dominating, made up for it.

Occasionally, the cover was printed in sombre colours, which appealed to the eye on account of the restful atmosphere imparted. Such was the cover of No. 382 o.s. "The Price of Folly." A more delightful one would be difficult to imagine.

Two smallish drawings in a framework of dark blue with narrow red lines running down the centre of the frame. This fine effect was obtained by an almost complete absence of red, the dark blue being relieved in parts by a pale pink.

The drawing above the title, which was displayed in the centre of the cover, depicted the rescue of Fullwood from drowning in the River Stowe by Archie Glenthorne. Fullwood sitting on the tow path with Archie Glenthorne standing over him. In the background of the small drawing underneath the title can be seen the St. Frank's buildings through the trees. A punt lying alongside the river bank under the overhanging willow trees is in the foreground. The whole drawing is attractively printed in dark blue.

A complete change of colour was occasionally made by the dominating colour being yellow, which again made an attractive cover. Had yellow and green been used on the occasion of the appearance

of the first St. Frank's story No. 112 o.s. then the College House juniors would have been wearing their own caps instead of those of the Ancient House colours.

fl each plus, excepting for 831, 852, 970, my inferior complete copy offered for reasonable binding copies GEMS 805, 807, 817, 828, 831, 841, 846, 852, 862, 866, 970, 980. In need selected Greyfriars and St. Jim's S.O.Ls. or Red Magnets offered instead. For exchange on generous basis for above or for pre-No. 436 Gems:- 1928 Holiday Annual and non-bindable but complete Hamilton Gems 364, 378, 409, 441, 443, 492, 510 (Xmas Double 1917), 562, 574, 596/605 (Caravanning), 608, 726, 743, 768, 769, 772, 773, 776, 804, 80 $\frac{1}{2}$, 812, 814, 817, 821, 825, 827, 836, 837, 839, 842, 844, 845, 847, 853, 855, 863, 864, 865, 909, 919, 920, 928, 930 (Xmas 1925), 931, 951, 988, 989, 991, 1006, 1015, 1021, 1031, 1034, 1035 (Xmas 1927), 1072, 1251, 1265, 1266, 1267, 1268, 1270, 1290, 1294, 1455. For sale or exchange for specimen comics 1920s and any Sexton Blakes 1920s or what have you:- Stacks Modern Boys including many with Hamilton contributions, Gold Hawk books St. Jims Nos 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 11, Triumphs early 1930s, Scouts circa 1932, stacks postwar Hotspurs, Adventures, Wizards, Champions, Film Funs and Radio Funs, Silver Jackets Nos. 10, 11, GEMS 930 (Xmas), 574, 599, 601, 773, 825, 855, 991, 1021, 1031, 1072. Write airmail.

CHARLES van RENEN, BOX 5046, PORT ELIZABETH, SOUTH AFRICA.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: 30 Cheer Boys Cheer (1913), Volume 2 Chums, The Rivals of Rookwood (Hardback) (Famous Manders Telephone Talk), 91 C.Ds. 1947-68 (including two 4/- double numbers), The Charles Hamilton Museum, 8 Penny Marvels 1908/11, Wonder Books of Comics (Charles Hamilton Bunter Story, Bigles Story), Chatterbox 1921 and 1946, 9 2/6 Sexton Blakes, 8 2/6 Bunter Books, Scrapbooks Manchester United 1948/50, The Red Devils M/C United, Illustrated Books The United Story (up to Munich disaster), Star of the Films 1937, (Daily Express Wonder edition), 4 8d Sexton Blakes, Pantomime Stars 1913 (rare).

Write: BOX J.L., C/O COLLECTORS' DIGEST

FOR SALE: B.F. 891 - 900. Rookwood Caravanning Series complete, plus Cedar Creek! £6. "A glorious series" - Danny.

G. ALLISON, 3, BINGLEY ROAD, MENSTON, ILKLEY.

BLAKIANA ~

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

GWYN EVANS, MASTER OF THE UNUSUAL

By "Anon"

If a poll were to be taken to determine the most popular Blake author, I am sure the name of Gwyn Evans would rank among the first three.

His style of writing was bright and breezy and his plots were ingenious, and off-beat, but plausible nevertheless. And a Christmas Issue of the "Union Jack" without a Gwyn Evans yarn, just didn't seem like Xmas.

According to the Sexton Blake Catalogue, the first Evans story appeared in U.J. No. 1071 in 1924 entitled "The Time Killer," and although I haven't read it, I'm sure its theme was as novel as the eye-catching title. It wasn't until the following year, 1925, that Evans' first Xmas story appeared, and this was entitled "The Mystery of Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Pudding." Again I must confess that I have been denied the pleasure of reading this one and also the following two Xmas issues.

Although the Catalogue lists the official Xmas Number for 1926 as "The Adventure of the Two Devils" by G. H. Teed, two issues later "Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Eve" by Gwyn Evans appeared, so he was still represented during the festive season.

The following Xmas - 1927 - he wrote "The Affair of the Black Carol" and for the 1928 Xmas issue he gave us "The Crime of the Christmas Tree." Having recently acquired this issue, I can vouch for its clever and unusual theme.

Xmas 1929 saw a two part story. U.J. 1365 presented "The Mistletoe-Milk Mystery" and No. 1366, the sequel entitled "The Masque of Time." Again I can recommend from personal experience.

Who else but Gwyn Evans could come up with a title like "The Man Who Hated Xmas" for the 1930 Xmas issue? 1931 did not see a story by him, but 1932 did. "The Masked Carollers" was printed in U.J. No. 1521, and this was destined to be the last story he was to write for the "Union Jack," because just ten weeks later this fine old paper ceased publication.

True, "The Detective Weekly" was published the following week and continued to print stories featuring Sexton Blake, by popular U.J. authors, but somehow it just didn't seem the same.

However, to return to Gwyn Evans, let us take a closer look at one of his Xmas specials to see how unique in theme and treatment they were. A very good example is the previously mentioned 1929 two-part series which commenced with "The Mistletoe-Milk Mystery." The author took such apparently unrelated things as a bottle of red milk with a sprig of mistletoe tied around the neck, a mild-mannered bank cashier named Mr. Habbakuk Meech, a kidnapping, and blended them into a first class mystery. For good measure he added a Time Machine, the disappearance of Julius Jones, night editor of the "Daily Radio," that go-ahead newspaper, and with ace reporter Splash Page knowing more about matters than he let on.

A Christmassy atmosphere pervaded the entire story, and the happy tone was not marred by any murders, although it did have its sober, but not sombre, moments.

Evans gave full credit to H. G. Wells' "The Time Machine" for a similar machine which featured in the story, but the twists and the original use to which the Machine was put, were strictly our authors, and owed nothing to Wells.

The cover of the U.J. relating this story was a striking one by Eric Parker, and set the mood. On a snow-covered doorstep reposed a bottle of red milk adorned with mistletoe, while on the door behind was the sinister shadow of the hand which had just deposited it.

Turning the page we were introduced to Mr. Habbakuk Meech.

"Mr. Meech was a rotund little man, with a pink, placid face, a little button of a nose, in which was embedded the V of an old-fashioned pair of steel-rimmed spectacles. He had pale, watery blue eyes, an indecisive moustache, and over his bald cranium a dozen remaining hairs had been carefully and scrupulously brushed in twelve parallel lines."

As cashier-accountant with the Baker Street Branch of the National British Bank, his one claim to fame was a record of 30 years of punctuality. Fate, in the form of Professor Hugo Hirsch was destined to change all this.

For those who haven't read the story, I won't spoil it by revealing too much. Through the Professor's Time Machine, Mr. Meech travelled back through time to 1735 and rode in a horse-drawn coach with a lovely young girl who completely captured his heart.

"Queer, unaccustomed emotions swept over Mr. Meech. If this was the 18th century, then, egad, the girls were prettier than

the short-skirted, bare-legged hussies of the twentieth."

(Although this sentence was written in 1929, it is possible to apply it to 1968 as far as the reference to short skirts is concerned.)

When the dour but efficient Welsh night editor of the "Daily Radio," Julius Jones was confronted with the Time Machine, he naturally chose to be transported into future, being a good newspaperman. As the news editor of a frankly sensational paper, he was always hoping for "a nice juicy murrder" as he phrased it. However it came as a distinct shock to find himself ten years hence in the death cell on a murder charge with his execution a few short hours away.

Leaving Julius in this predicament and you, the reader wondering at the outcome we move on to the second story in the series "The Masque of Time."

This story, at one stage took the reader back to the times of the ancient Druids who took delight in performing barbarous rites and indulging in the most revolting forms of human sacrifice. Other events were related which culminated in the mysterious and fascinating happenings being satisfactorily explained.

This could quite possibly be one of the best Xmas issues Gwyn Evans ever wrote for the U.J.

Another first class effort of his which I hold in high esteem is "Hercules Esq.," a serial which did not feature Blake or any of his other well-known characters, but this new set certainly left an indelible impression on the reader.

It began on 7 July 1928 and ran for 24 weeks, concluding in the Christmas issue which Evans also wrote, the previously mentioned "Crime of the Christmas Tree."

The star of the story was Bill Kellaway, an unemployed and destitute newspaper reporter. Seated on the Embankment one night, he spends his last sixpence on a good luck charm, a replica of the Egyptian crocodile god, Sebak. Shortly after, a man introducing himself as Dr. Armand Lenoir asks him how he'd like to earn one million pounds!

After being convinced of the man's sincerity, he learns he has to perform six tasks, but is not to try and discover the identity of his employers other than Lenoir himself.

A group of millionaires known as the Secret Six, are suffering from boredom, so their friend, Lenoir, makes a suggestion. In mythological times, Hercules had to accomplish twelve tasks in

order to attain immortality, he told them, therefore why shouldn't he select some unknown person at random and let each member of the Six give him a task to perform, the reward being one million in cash contributed equally among them.

The idea is accepted, and after passing a test Bill Kellaway is given a hundred-pound note for expenses and driven to the Hotel Splendide where a suite has been booked in his name.

Next day he accompanies Lenoir to the Safe Deposit Vault in Chancery Lane where a brief-case containing the money is deposited. Each has a key which means the safe can only be opened when both are present. Only in the event of the death of one of the key-holders can the surviving member gain access to the safe and its contents. This proviso plays a very important part later on in this gripping serial.

After leaving the Vault building, Lenoir tells Bill he is to go to No. 9 Rice St., Pimlico at 9 o'clock that night and ask a Mr. Metaxas for a yellow envelope which contains details of his first task.

Earlier that morning, Kellaway had availed himself of the valet service provided by the hotel, in the person of a sad faced man named Henry. On his return, Bill feeling he needs an ally in his forthcoming tasks, offers him a permanent job with him.

"It sounds an attractive proposition, sir," said the valet.

"Good! You're engaged, Henry," said Bill. "What's your other name?"

"Henry," was the reply. "A rather unusual combination, sir."

"Henry Henry, eh?" said Bill.

"Yes, sir. I was known by the ribald at school as Henry squared," was the quiet reply.

"You'll do!" chuckled Bill.

And so another first class creation of Gwyn Evans in the person of Henry was born, and although Bill was forbidden to tell anyone about the tasks he had to carry out, his new valet proved invaluable in assisting him.

Also entering the scene at this time is a mysterious young girl calling herself "Echo," who first warns Bill he is in danger if he goes on with his projects, then helps him when some of the Secret Six begin playing unfairly.

(To be continued)

 "Can anyone supply one copy of Puck (1933). Your price paid or exchange." HEARN, 191, ARBURY ROAD, CAMBRIDGE.

DANNY'S DIARY

AUGUST 1918:

"This anniversary falls at a time when the shadow of war lies heavily on our land, and the very existence of the Empire is assailed by an unscrupulous foe. In this time of trial it is our earnest desire to share the sorrows of our people, and, so far as in us lies, to alleviate their sufferings."

That was the King's message on the occasion of the Silver Wedding Anniversary of King George and Queen Mary.

The war news hasn't been very good lately. The allies have been retreating everywhere, and the Zeebrugge raid has been the only joyful bit of recent times.

Mum was away at Layer Marney, where my Gran is very ill, and Jessie came to be our housekeeper for a time. Jessie is very fond of going to the pictures, and she took me with her several times. We saw Franklyn Farnum in "The Scarlet Car," and another time we saw Theda Bara in "Du Barry." I like Theda Bara who is a vamp, but the picture Jessie cried over was Alma Taylor, Henry Edwards, and Stewart Rome in "The Touch of the Child." On the night before I went to Layer Marney, Jessie and I saw Mrs. Vernon Castle in "The Vengeance of Paula."

Doug went one night to see "Chu Chin Chow" which has just reached its 900th performance at His Majesty's Theatre. He went with his new girl friend Edith Gill, and refused most rudely when I said I would like to go with them.

There has been a police strike in London, but it only lasted one day. It was a chance for Bill Sykes and Co to make hay.

All the month the Boys' Friend has been a dream. The caravanning series has gone on for the Rookwood chums. The stories have been "The Caravan Cricketers," "The Haunted Caravan" (Billy Bunter of Greyfriars had joined the party, and did some ventriloquism), "The Caravanners' Guest" (he was an escaped German), "Jimmy Silver & Co's Victory" and "Rivals of the Road" (the last two were about rivalry with Tommy Dodd & Co who were also caravanning).

The Cedar Creek tales have been sooperb. "In a Borrowed Name" and "The Claim Robber" were about Gunten who was caught, by a ruffian named Four Kings, robbing the mining claims. He gave Frank Richards' name, and that set Four King's on Frank's track.

Then a grand holiday series started, in which Frank Richards

& Co set off to ride and camp, heading towards the Pacific. Yen Chin keeps trying to join them, but they don't want him. The stories were "Frank Richards & Co's Holiday," "Yen Chin's Ruse," and "Foes of the Foot-hills." In the last tale of the month, they met up again with the villainous Alf Carson, who first appeared in the recent runaway balloon series. I hope this holiday series goes on for a long time.

Both the Gem and the Magnet have been pretty good this month. There has been a three-story series in the Gem about a new boy named Paul Laurenz. These stories were "The Schoolboy Hun," "Cardew's Chum," and "The Son of a Sailor." Of course, yet another new boy is a bit depressing, but it was a fairly good series. The new boy is supposed to be the son of a German. He becomes a chum of Cardew's, - and Cardew's uncle, Commander Durrance, visits St. Jim's. The Commander's own son had been stolen as a baby by a villain named Luke Clancy. Racke has engaged a new "man" to replace Mr. Berrymore who was kicked out a few stories back. His name is Scaife, and Commander Durrance recognizes Scaife as the Luke Clancy who was sent to prison for stealing his baby son. It is obvious all the time that Paul Laurenz will turn out to be the Commander's lost son, but it is a passably entertaining series.

Then came "Looking After Levison" in which Grundy became convinced that Levison was treading his old shady paths. He was actually cutting sport and going off to help a soldier gardener. A very ordinary tale, but better than plenty.

Last of all was "The Final Event" which was the last story in the Sports Contest series. It was on a par with most of the other contest stories.

Mum, who has been in Layer Marney for several weeks, wrote to Dad that it was the beginning of the end for my Gran, and that Gran wanted to see Doug and Danny before she dies. Mum said she thought Doug and I ought to go. So, though we felt rather embarrassed, we set off from Liverpool Street station one Tuesday towards the end of August.

Mum met us with a horse and trap when we got down from the little local train in Essex, and a man drove us over to Layer Marney. I felt pretty awful, for the house, which has always been so full of life, seemed quiet and sombre.

While Mum took Doug in to Gran's room, Auntie Gwen talked to me in the dining room. She said Gran was very ill, and she hoped I would be a very good boy and efface myself. I didn't know what that meant, but I promised I would.

Auntie Gwen said it was most astounding that anybody's dying wish should be to see me and that old people were quite unaccountable. After tea I had a little walk in the tiny village, and when I got back they said I had better go in to Gran before she was settled down for the night.

I went in to Gran's room by myself. She looked very white and fraile, and her hair was stragglng all over her pillow.

I whispered: "Gran!" and she held out her hand to me. I felt like crying, for Gran used to always be smiling - and this time she did not smile at all.

She said, in a very small voice: "I'm so tired, Danny."

I said: "I'm sorry, Gran!"

She held my hand, and I felt kind of choking.

She said to me: "I'm a very old woman, Danny."

I said "Yes, I know, Gran. Very old!" I didn't know what to say, so I said "But very sweet tunes are played on old fiddles."

I felt awful at saying that, and it was quite a surprise when Gran smiled. And I smiled, too. And then Gran gave quite a little laugh, and sat up a bit in her bed.

She said: "Do you still read a lot, Danny?" and I told her I did. She said: "Tell me what you've been reading."

So I told her about the Magnet. I rattled on about the latest series with the new boy, Aubrey Angel. In "Kicking Over the Traces," Angel was taking up Jimmy Vivian, and getting him into bad ways, until both were caught, and Angel acted treacherously. Then, in "Sir Jimmy's Enemy," Angel by a piece of forgery, made Jimmy think that Lord Mauleverer was looking down on him. But it all came right in the end, and it was a good series.

"Am I making you more tired, Gran?" I asked her.

She smiled a wee bit again, and shook her head, and told me to go on and tell her some more.

So I said that "The Second Form Mystery" was about the new boy, Spring, and that it was all about the Second Form, and was a washout. And that the next tale, "Put to the Test" was a silly affair in which Mr. Vernon-Smith wanted to test his son so pretended he had lost all his money, and went to live in Plummers Court, Bermondsey.

I finished up about the last tale in the Magnet which was "Coker's Campaign" in which Coker decided to squash Wingate, but got squashed himself. This was a typical Coker affair, and quite funny.

Then Auntie Gwen came tip-toeing in, and Gran told her she was interrupting. Gran said: "Go now, Danny, and come to see me again tomorrow."

We have been at Layer Marney a week now, and I go in to see Gran every day. I really think she is beginning to get brighter, and the doctor says there is a turn for the better.

On several days I have been in to Colchester with the carrier, whom everybody calls Mo. He is a nice man, and lets me ride on the box beside him. He doesn't leave town till six in the evening, so I have been able to go to the pictures several times when it was wet. I saw Douglas Fairbanks in "The Man from Painted Post" at the Vaudeville, and Pauline Frederick in "Mrs. Dane's Defence" at the Headgate. Also at the Headgate, I saw Bruce Bairnfather's "The Better 'Ole," the Romance of Old Bill. Doug came with me this time, and we both enjoyed it, and Doug paid for the tickets.

I took Gran back four ounces of Clarnico Lily Caramels and she smiled and seemed pleased, but Auntie Gwen said she thought even a brainless boy would have more sense. And Gran said "Don't nag, Gwen! I'll eat them when I'm better."

So that's that.

FOR SALE: B.O.A's, Chums, (from 1920) Captains, Bunter/Merry hardbacks and Annuals, Holiday and Champion Annuals. ALDINES - Detective Tales, Boys Pocket Library. BILLS. ½d and 1d Vanguards, Marvels, U.Js., Plucks, Friends, Lees, New Series.

NORMAN SHAW, 84, BELVEDERE RD., S.E. 19. 771-9857 Evenings.

EXCHANGE:- 40 Dixon Hawke Lib. Will only exchange for other D.H.L. Magnets and Gems for similar. Some post war Thomsons.

McMAHON, 54, HOZIER CRES., TANNOSIDE, UDDINGSTON.

SALE: 42 consecutive "KNOCKOUTS" (1961) Rookwood stories. Mint. 30 "TIGER TIM'S" (1934) Rough but complete. Offers.

PARSONS, 4, PARK ROAD, TRANMERE, B-HEAD.

FOR SALE: RAINBOW ANNUAL 1939. 11/- plus postage.

L. MORLEY, 76, ST. MARGARETS RD., HANWELL, W.7.

FOR EXCHANGE for Holiday Annuals of the nineteen-twenties: Tom Merry and Billy Bunter Hard Backs, Tom Merry's Own issues 5 and 6, British Boys' Annual, Champion Annual 1940.

H. INNS, 76 MORRISON ST., EDINBURGH 3.

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

GERALD ALLISON (Menston): The Digest is better than ever these days. I am looking forward to reading of dear old Gussy as a new boy next month.

C.A.J. LOWDER (London): I take Mr. Lofts's points (C.D. No. 256) about my rather old-man-riverish article, serialised in Blakiana. But I, too, must point out that I wrote "The Man Who Made Sexton Blake" at a time when Josephine Packman was crying out for copy. Luckily - as I thought - this large bundle of early Marvels had just come my way, so I thought I'd try my hand at Harry Blyth - primarily because, to me, he has always been an enigma.

This, too, is easily explained, for, after subscribing to the C.D. for a while in the early 1960s, I missed out on it for some years, only returning to the fold - with great pleasure - at the beginning of last year. Consequently, my knowledge of Blake lore is limited to Blakiana references, what little I have been able to mug up for myself, and a series of fact-packed letters that Mr. Lofts himself wrote to me some years ago.

Incidentally, it is only since I joined Fleetway myself, that I learned that the Editor of the Marvel was a chap who went by the highly unlikely name of Somers J. Summers. He, it seems, was only 18 or so when he took up the position.

When the mind had ceased its boggling, the reason for that seemingly irreconcilable mixture of jokeyness and facts-and-figures became only too apparent.

What else would one expect from a teenager in such a position but bubbling facetiousness and a judicious dip into the D.N.B. and the good old Encyclo. Britt.? In this way, both readers and Alfred Harmsworth were, presumably, satisfied.

I only hope I've got it right this time! Though I still believe that a lot more, so to speak, extra-mural lobbying went on behind the Blake scenes before he emerged as the weekly star of the U.J. in the early 1900s.

CHARLES DAY (Keighley): I was interested in the article by Mr. Jim Cook, entitled, "I like to think them finished," in which he says, "We cannot prevent present-day authors giving Sexton Blake a brother and a father" etc. In point of fact, Lewis Jackson (in No. 1 Detective Weekly, April 25th 1933) created Dr. Berkeley (not Barclay) Blake, of Harley St., and Nigel Blake, the wastrel brother.

He also gave S.B. a sister-in-law Clare, and a nephew, Garry.

As regards the 5th Series, "S.B.L.," my own feelings are that everything happening to Sexton Blake at the present moment is part and parcel of the "Saga" which I hope will not end for many years to come.

HARTLEY RHODES (Keighley): With the news that you are going to re-print in serial form "New Boy," you will be having us all wishing our time away, (as if it does not go quickly enough).

ARTHUR V. HOLLAND (Australia): I was really thrilled to read of the coming serialisation of Charles Hamilton's old story - "Arthur Augustus D'Arcy - New Boy," and I'm hoping you will see your way clear to include all of it, but should this be impossible due to lack of space, please try to include the closing as well as the opening chapters. I feel sure that many of the C.D. readers will consider this to be a most important matter.

I was much impressed with the heart warming illustrated editorial heading for the July issue, so nicely drawn by H. Webb.

W.J.A. HUBBARD (Leytonstone): With regard to Mr. Cockcroft's comments on my article "The Lanchester Tradition" I would like to make it clear that while I welcome fair and reasonable criticism of my articles I can see no point in making it at an interval of many years when articles are often out-dated and the information they contain superceded by more up-to-date research.

When I wrote "The Lanchester Tradition," which is some six years ago now, neither I or any other admirers of the hard cover school story knew very much about G. F. Bradby or his books. My remark that there had been no new edition of "The Lanchester Tradition" since its initial appearance in 1914, until 1954 was based on a note in my copy of the Richards Press 1954 edition of the book which made a brief statement to this effect. The information that John Murray published editions in August, 1919 and July, 1928 is news to me but I have a feeling - I may be wrong - that these two books were "Colonial" or "Overseas" editions often frequently printed by U.K. publishers between the two World Wars and consequently not made available to readers in Great Britain.

I was aware that G. F. Bradby had possibly been responsible for other novels but I had no details when I originally wrote my article and the operative word, Mr. Cockcroft, is "seems" and it applied, although I agree I did not make this clear, to further school yarns. I can now state, however, that to Mr. Cockcroft's list of Bradby's books should be added a further story entitled

"Dawnhope" which is said to be a school tale and very good but I have never read it nor does any Collector seem to possess a copy. "Dick" (published 1906) and "For this I had borne him" (1915) are reported to contain good references to "pot" cricket.

FOR SALE: 11 early Penny Populars, each containing Tom Merry, Sexton Blake, Jack, Sam, & Pete 6/- each. Christmas Double Number of Pluck for 1915, lovely copy 7/6. Long run of Marvels 2/6 each. 13 fascinating copies of Pluck containing Tom Mix and Charlie Chaplin stories of early Chaplin films (Charlie in the Park, Champion Charlie, Charlie's New Job, Charlie By the Sea, The Tramp, Charlie at Work, Charlie's Night Out, "Charlie's Elopement) some containing original art plates from the film given away with the paper: excellent condition; £2 for the 13.

Boys' Friend Libraries (coverless, but good copies): A Trip to Mars by Fenton Ash; Pete's Wireless; Pete's Partner; Pete in Russia; Tracked Through the Jungle; Paddy Leary's Brother, school story by T. C. Bridges; "The Terror of Tibet" (Ferrers Locke tale); The Sport-Shy School by Gordon Maxwell; Volcano Island; Congo Adventurers; Goalie Pete; Leave it to Pete; The Rollocking Adventures of Jack, Sam & Pete; The Mandarin's Treasure. 3/6 each. With cover "By Airship to Ophir" by Fenton Ash 3/6. B.F.L. No. 193 "Chief Constable Pete" good copy with cover 6/-. Ditto No. 338 The Land of Peril 6/-. Interesting but rather rough copies of early Edwardian Boys' Realms and Boys' Friends 1/3 each. Red Magnet No. 394 The Fellow Who Won 15/-. Magnet No. 984 Coker's Christmas Party 12/6; Magnets 952, 982, 991, 1006, 1010 8/6 each. Gems 642, 1135, 1138, 1139, 1158, 1159, 1219, 1259, 1331, 1332, 1333, 1334, 1336, 1337, 1352, 1364, 6/- each. Postage extra on all items.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE RD., SURBITON.

W A N T E D : Magnets, Gems, Populars, Lees (Old Series), Monsters, Bullseyes, Skippers, Wizards, Pilots, U.Js., SOLs, Scouts, Captains, Chums, BOP's, Holiday Annuals and similar.

NORMAN S. SHAW, 84 BELVEDERE RD., UPPER NORWOOD, LONDON, S.E.19.

771 9857 Evenings;

WANTED: Magnets Nos. 1118-1121, 1161-1165, 1209, 1210, 1217, 1219, 1401-1403, 1453, 1455, 1456, 1499-1507, 1092-1107, 1175-1186, 1276, 1277-1284. J. CONROY, 256 TOWNSEND AVE., LIVERPOOL 11.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held June 25th 1968

There were eight members present at the Birmingham Theatre Centre and these included Mervyn Adams after a lone absence. He was warmly welcomed.

A number of apologies were received from absent members and Joe Marston sent along £2 towards the club funds.

A sad note was struck when it was announced that W. N. Hull a valued postal member had died recently. A period of silence was observed in his honour. Both Tom Porter and the chairman have written letters of sympathy to Mrs. Hull.

A beautifully typed copy of the revised club rules was received by each member present. Win Brown and her daughter were responsible for this and were warmly thanked.

The usual feature - Anniversary No. and Collector's Item were this month: Nelson Lee Library No. 316 (Old Series) dated 25th June 1921, just 47 years old. "The Match of Destiny," one of the famous Jerry Dodd series and The Vanguard ½d Library, a story by Charles Hamilton was included in it "The New Boy at Northcote."

The raffle prizes were very generously donated by Mrs. W. Brown, Bill Morgan and Stan Knight and were won by Win Brown, Win Partridge, Norman Gregory and Ted Davey.

An interesting talk was given by Bill Morgan who took members a trip down Memory Lane. He showed us his boyhood acquaintance with the whole range of comics and magazines. His favourite was "The Captain," although he was keen enough on the Magnet to start reading it at No. 11. Bill obviously believed in the adage "Things ain't what they were."

The other programme item was the conclusion of Norman Gregory's crossword quiz. This was won by Mervyn Adams, who seemed in fine form after his absence.

J. F. Bellfield
Correspondent.

AUSTRALIA

The Golden Hours Club regulars turned up at Cahill's Restaurant, Sydney, on Tuesday, 11th, for the bi-monthly meeting, which was a little delayed from when first planned. With a small panel

it must be assured all can attend.

After a meal, some mail supplied by our absent secretary Bette Pate was read out and the members would like to thank Ron Hodgson for keeping our club so well informed and also for his constant goodwill towards us.

The latest Merlin books were handed around courtesy of Will Lofts and the evening continued with general discussion until it was time to face the winter weather again.

The next meeting is on July 30th.

Syd Smyth

- - - - -

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 13th July 1968

When the Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, opened the Meeting seventeen enthusiasts were there amongst whom we were glad to see Tom Porter visiting from the Midland Club.

After the minutes and Treasurer's Report had been dealt with, there was an entertaining miscellany of news: Librarian Gerry Allison had on display four Sexton Blake Hardbacks, which were now in the Library; a donation to the Library had been received from Norman Trees of Middlesbrough; from St. Anne's on Sea Cliff Smith had visited Gerry; news from postal members included a sequel from John Jarman of his account of a night in a Salvation Army Hostel, read out at a past meeting; a cutting from a Northampton newspaper had been sent to Gerry, and Jack Wood read this for us - entitled "The Last Word on the Great Student Uprising" it featured a revolt at GREYFRIARS led by one Billy Cohn-Bunter! Jack also told of a "Blandings Castle" Play at the Manchester Opera House.

The three names drawn for the programme had been:- Ron Hodgson, Geoffrey Wilde and Myra Allison, so Ron opened the innings with a talk on a Charles Hamilton School not often in the news. "Oakshott" in the Modern Boy featuring Len Lex the Boy Detective. Ron traced this short-lived series for us very expertly, showing Modern Boy and S.O.B. copies, and nicely commented on the Detective Inspector Nixon who seemed so dependent on the help of Len!

A change followed as Geoffrey had a competition; reading out 20 extracts of conversation (all Greyfriars) he required each member to write down the speaker - and the series. With 40 possible marks Elsie Taylor (omnivorous reader!) had 32, then Gerry

Allison 29 and Jack Wood 21.

The interval of tea, sandwiches and biscuits, and of course, loud and prolonged general chat followed before Myra Allison brought out a "20 Question" Session, one of our favourite items. The team - Tom Porter, Tom Roach, Gerry Allison, and Mollie Allison out of 10 items lost 2. "Mrs. Hippo's Washtub" and "The Cushion" which one member always brings to our meetings!

It was time now for leave-taking, and our visitor Tom said he had enjoyed the meeting very much - we hope as much as we had enjoyed his company with us.

Next Meeting, Saturday, 10th August 1968.

M. L. Allison
Hon. Sec.

- - - - -
LONDON

After "Friardale" last month, it seemed fitting that the July meeting should take place in the homely atmosphere of "Greyfriars," situated amid the pines of Wokingham. A fine day and a good attendance plus an excellent meeting.

Two good reports from the two librarians, Roger Jenkins and Bob Blythe. The Folkestone outing details were settled and the menu selected. Don Webster in the chair, then got the entertainment side of the gathering going. Roger obliged with the first item, a reading from "Gem" number 385, entitled "Levison's Last Card." A very good extract was read and the verdict was excellent. Don Webster's "General Knowledge" quiz was won by Ben Whiter.

From the "Greyfriars Press" were several specimens of famous Amateur Magazines that have featured the hobby on show. These formed the nucleus of a talk given by Ben Whiter. Amongst the numerous exhibits were bound volumes of "Story Paper Collector," "Red River Rambler," "Collectors' Miscellany" and loose copies of "Interesting items," "Koolinda," "Collecting Juvenile Literature," "Expression," "Williametta's Seedling," "Shambler," "Dime Novel Roundup," etc. Mention was made of "Collectors' Digest" and all the famous magazines that appeared in some of the old papers viz "Greyfriars' Herald," "Tom Merry's Weekly," "Billy Bunter's Weekly," and "St. Frank's Magazine."

For those who missed it at the "Friardale" meeting, Win Morss gave her "Twenty Years Later" reading.

A splendid spread, glad that I made the meeting and that the

COLLECTING ANNUALSBy W. O. G. Lofts

It's surprising the large number of people who collect Annuals of some description. It's even more surprising that in the thousands of articles written on almost every aspect in our hobby, nobody so far has written an article on the many different types of Annuals collected.

What a wealth of untapped material there is to be found in them. Especially for such a researcher as myself! In the many thousands published over the last 100 years, I have already found out many new interesting facts, and of our favourite authors contributing to hitherto unknown publications. I have also seen once again Annuals that I last saw when a schoolboy; and what happy memories they bring back, of receiving them at Xmas-time. Those were extremely happy days for me.

Annuals, of course, are much easier to put into a large bookcase, and above all- they can still be picked up very cheaply for as low as 6d each in jumble sales, and the many second hand bookstalls up and down the country. The strong binding and stiff cardboard covers has preserved them obviously more so than the thin paper weekly issues. Only recently a Director friend of mine at Fleetway told me with glee how his wife had picked up quite a few Holiday Annuals at a Church bazaar for only a few shillings, but stories like this are commonplace in our hobby.

Easily the most collected Annuals are the B.O.P. and CHUMS, with their weekly/monthly/yearly issues in bound form. Undoubtedly, the most popular are the Greyfriars Holiday Annuals which are also the most valuable. The very early issues which are the best produced, now fetch several pounds in good condition. I can well remember Mr. C. M. Down editor of The Magnet and Gem telling me with pride, how he thought up the idea, and some other editors telling him that such a venture would be a flop. Boys and girls who bought the Hamilton papers each week certainly supported a yearly Annual even though it cost them 5/- and it was a tremendous success.

Comic Annuals are another popular collecting theme, when nearly all the famous A.P. comics had a yearly Annual featuring their own weekly characters. PUCK, SUNBEAM, TINY TOTS, RAINBOW, PLAYBOX, TIGER TIM'S, BO-PEEP (Cassels started an Annual 1882 with that name), BUBBLES, CHICK'S OWN, CRACKERS, whilst such was the popularity of Tiger Tim and the Bruin Boys that MRS. HIPPO'S

and THE BRUIN BOYS' ANNUAL were also excellent additions.

A great puzzle is why Annuals published with the same name as the penny, or black and white comics, never sold so well. CHIPS, FUNNY WONDER, JESTER, BUTTERFLY, JINGLES, and FILM FUN ANNUALS never to my inside knowledge sold as many as their coloured counterparts. An editor of the comic Annuals did tell me that it was assumed that parents mostly bought the junior coloured comics for their children each week. An ideal Xmas present was an Annual featuring their child's own favourite comic characters, which they likewise bought. The black and white comics were aimed at a much older age group of readers, and therefore an Annual brought out in colour, when the main characters were always in black and white, just did not make a hit with readers. Readers likewise who paid a penny cheerfully for a weekly comic were not so keen to pay shillings for an Annual. All the same it's surprising that no COMIC CUTS ANNUAL was ever attempted, or a MERRY AND BRIGHT ANNUAL, but all in all the black and white comic yearly Annuals were usually produced on thick paper, and never were half as well produced as their coloured-comic counterparts.

Boys papers also had their yearly Annuals with the MAGNET, GEM, BOYS FRIEND, NELSON LEE LIBRARY, POPULAR, covered in general with the HOLIDAY ANNUALS. CHAMPION and TRIUMPH had their own individual Annuals for many years. The D. C. Thomson group at Dundee went the whole hog and WIZARD, ROVER, ADVENTURELAND, SKIPPER, HOTSPUR books for boys were a popular yearly feature. No BULLSEYE, PILOT or RANGER Annuals however, and the thought has just struck me that there was also no delightfully named CHUCKLES ANNUAL to try and collect today.

Rarest Annual of all must be the 1942 New Zealand CHUMS ANNUAL; this I saw many years ago at the house of a well known collector. He showed it to me specially because of its Sexton Blake story by John Brearley. This unfortunately went somewhere overseas to a now forgotten correspondent, and has not turned up since.

What was the first yearly Annual for 'juveniles has not been traced so far. I have FISHER'S JUVENILE SCRAPBOOK which ran from 1836-50; but I should think there were many earlier than this date. CHATTERBOX collectors must not forget the CHATTERBOX NEWSBOX from 1914, and the CHATTERBOX CHRISTMAS BOX in 1898, and readers who want a real boys' Annual of popular boys' authors could not do better than to seek the CRUSOE ANNUAL in 1925 that had JOHN HUNTER/Douglas DUNDEE (of Champion fame) and R. H. Poole among its

contributors. REDCAPS ANNUAL, HAL ROACH'S OUR GANG ANNUAL, ALFIE APPLE'S ANNUAL, BILLY PLONKIT ANNUAL, BONZO ANNUAL, FELIX ANNUAL, UNCLE OOJA'S ANNUAL, WHIZZBANG COMICS ANNUAL (A.P.) The firms that specialised in yearly Annuals: Collins, Dean's, Blackies, Nelson, Oxford University Press; Gerald Swan's unusual title of ALBUMS. How many readers recall these? Annuals named after famous personalities such as SHIRLEY TEMPLE ANNUAL, ARTHUR ASKEY ANNUAL, DENIS COMPTON ANNUAL, MADGE WILLIAMS ANNUAL, AUNT MAJ'S ANNUAL, and bang up-to-date the ROGER MOORE ANNUAL.

Schoolgirls were not neglected. SCHOOLGIRLS OWN/SCHOOL FRIEND: very popular weekly papers had their own yearly Annuals. Most surprising was the fact that D. C. Thomson who rarely ventured into the girls market published several Annuals for girls in the 20s. More surprising is that many of the authors mentioned were regular contributors to the A.P. papers!

NISTER'S HOLIDAY ANNUAL deserves special mention, because in this yearly Annual appeared stories by G. A. Henty, but all in all an Annual usually appeared towards the end of the holiday season with in many cases the next year's date. It was sold mainly over the Christmas period; but I wonder how many other readers had to do the same as I when a boy?

With extremely limited pocket money of only a few coppers a week, I had to save up my pennies. Wait until the Xmas rush was over and usually the Annuals then were reduced to half-price. Unfortunately, so many other boys did the same thing, that more often than not, the Annual of my choice was soon sold out.

Collecting Annuals can be an extremely interesting and a fairly cheap hobby. In the space of this article I have only mentioned a fraction that now appear in my growing list of them. Perhaps one day in the future, when I feel that I could not possibly add any more, they will be published in a C.D. ANNUAL.

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MORE MYSTERY AUTHORS IN THE B. F. L.By S. Gordon Swan

No. 356 of The Boys' Friend Library is entitled "The Pride of the Film," by Victor Cromwell. The author's name is unfamiliar to me, and I am not aware if it was repeated elsewhere, but some quality in the story reminds one irresistibly of S. Clarke Hook. It would be interesting to learn if this was one of his pen-names.

In the course of its long career, many serials ran through the pages of the Union Jack. One of these in the pink-cover days was "The Sea-Waif." There is no mystery about the author - it was David Goodwin - but its publication in book form provides a puzzle. It was reprinted under the same title in No. 531 of the B.F.L. But some years later, in No. 755, appeared "Topsail Tony," also by David Goodwin, and this story began in substantially the same manner as "The Sea-Waif" and dealt with the same characters, but took a different trend throughout the course of the narrative and followed another set of adventures altogether. One can only conclude that the serial was a long one and was thus published in two sections, using the same opening chapters in each case.

No. 614 was called "The Red Man's Trail" and was followed by a sequel in No. 615, "The Crimson Arrow." These were Wild West yarns and featured, among others, our old friend Buffalo Bill. On reading these two stories one becomes aware of the unmistakable style of Duncan Storm, who in earlier days used the name of John Grenfell. Though the sea was his favourite background, I think there is little doubt that he penned these Westerns.

Curiously enough, a much later story bears the stamp of the same authorship. I refer to No. 367 (Second Series) "Lost Castle." In this case the writer's name is given as Charles Wentworth. In spite of the title, this story is also a Western, and an unusual one at that, and written in the same manner as the other two printed years before.

When we come to No. 274 (Second Series), published on 5.2.1931, we encounter a story that was originally written some twenty-seven years before! "Boss O' Mill-Land" is the title, and no name is appended, but this is a very much abbreviated version of a fine serial which ran for many weeks through the pages of "The Boys' Realm" in 1904, and written by David Goodwin - "A Lancashire Lad." It seems a pity it had to be abridged to such an

extent, for the original was a splendid yarn indeed, with nothing old-fashioned about it.

No. 100 (Second Series) affords another surprise. Entitled "A Fighter of the Plains" in the B.F.L. it is by an anonymous writer. But years before, when it ran as a serial, an author's name was given, though not the right one - James Robertson. It was serialised in The Dreadnought, commencing in the issue numbered 111 and dated 11.7.1914. The story is about a hunter and trapper named Nat Rice, who rescues a white girl called Esther Hammond from the Indians who have captured her.

But admirers of Major Charles Gilson will recall this story under the title of "Red Lynx," which was Nat Rice's nickname. This was published in hard covers many years ago.

Doubtless if one could read every issue of the B.F.L. more of these oddities would come to light, but for the moment these few instances must suffice.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: "The Red Man's Trail" and "The Crimson Arrow" were serials in the Greyfriars Herald of 1920. The author was given as Mr. Paul Pontifex Prout, Master of the Fifth Form.)

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ALFRED R. PHILLIPS



ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

By Gerry Allison

According to Len Wormull the above shows how the boy readers of Henderson's YOUNG FOLKS voted in 1881 after "Treasure Island" had appeared as a serial in that boys' weekly. And in my opinion, the lads were absolutely right.

Quoting from Len's article in the June COLLECTORS' DIGEST, "the boys would sooner have their old favourite, Alfred R. Phillips, a writer whose tales are now almost forgotten." That was in 1912, and the name of this star writer does not appear in Brian Doyle's "Who's Who of Boys Writers."

A bookseller once told me - when I noticed shelves full of Stevenson's books in his shop - "Robert Louis Stevenson, like Conrad and Henry James, is one of those authors whose books are praised by the critics because they know they will never sell and so compete with their own works!"

By an odd coincidence I have recently read Treasure Island by R.L.S., and also Don Zalva the Brave by Alfred R. Phillips, and the latter story gave me ten times as much enjoyment as did Stevenson's masterpiece.

Some months ago, I acquired a set of 52 copies of Comic Life - the complete run for 1913. In No. 765 of this Henderson comic begins a serialized reprint of "Don Zalva the Brave, or, the Fortune Favoured Knight of Andalusia." The date of the issue was February 15th, so without checking up I began reading the story.

I was enthralled from the start. The setting of the tale is Spain under the Moors, surely one of the most romantic periods of history, sadly neglected by novelists. Don Zalva, a Spanish knight, joins the army raised by the Marquis of Cadiz against the Moors, and his thrilling adventures and dashing exploits are related in a superb style.

By the time I had reached the copies of the comic for November however, the hero Don Zalva was still in the midst of incredible dangers, and I began to have a horrible fear that the story would continue into 1914, and that I should not be able to finish it.

My fears were correct! In Comic Life No. 810 for December 27 1913, chapter XLI leaves our hero in the hands of the Inquisition and ends thus:-

"Around these dreadful instruments were some half-dozen men, clad in tight-fitting garments of red leather, and wearing red masks. Don Zalva was placed close by these torturers, who glared at him through their horrible red masks with a kind of fiendish triumph."

Well, I was 'fair heart-sloughed' as we say in Yorkshire at having to leave Don Zalva in such a situation. But now comes the wonderful happy ending to this little episode.

In a letter which I wrote to 'Otto Maurer' - the supreme expert on all 'Hendersoniana,' I happened to mention my great disappointment over 'Don Zalva the Brave.' A week later I received a neat packet from him. The enclosed letter read:-

Dear Gerald, It happens that I have two copies of Alfred R. Phillips' Zalva the Brave in book form. I am enclosing one of them with my blessing and best wishes. I remember it as a most exciting story. Robert Louis Stevenson admired Phillips, and tried to emulate him in THE BLACK ARROW. Sincerely yours,

Just a typical and marvellous example of the way members of our hobby help each other. So now I have completed all the 94 chapters of this superb story and am looking forward to reading the sequel - ZALVA and SELIM; or, THE TWIN KNIGHTS OF ANDALUSIA. "With full-page illustrations by W. Boucher." Fortunate lads, who were able to buy Henderson's YOUNG FOLKS!

NEWS OF THE CLUBS - LONDON REPORT (continued from page 29)...

attendance was good The Don proposed the hearty vote of thanks to the three Lawrences, Eric, Betty and Graham. A lovely evening for the homeward journey. Ray Hopkins and I caught a fast train back to Waterloo and it must have been pleasant for the car members.

Next meeting at 27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22. on Sunday, August 18th. Hosts Len and Josie Packman.

Uncle Benjamin

ANNUAL TIME IS COMING ROUND AGAIN. If you are thinking of contributing an article, please send it along very soon to the Editor.