

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.
23
No.
275

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THE HOUSE OF A HUNDRED WINDOWS!



Out of the darkness came six stealthy figures. They were creeping through the slender trees which surrounded the home of a hundred windows, strating silently far and deep in the dark. They were all close windows a man watched in terror, knowing that the six shadowy men were coming for him. He knew that his long vigil was ended. With that midnight hour he realized that the strange house would be searched. For six were entering, the watching man knew he was powerless to escape! (See page 25.)

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NOVEMBER 1932

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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W. H. GANDER

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HERBERT LECKENBY

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The Man of the Wheel.



NO SKIES SO BLUE!

Recently I was browsing over an editorial in a "Penny Popular" of early 1920. In the summer of the previous year the editor of that paper had discontinued reprinting the old stories. He had given his readers a programme of entirely new tales of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood. Unfortunately, the new stories were not written by Charles Hamilton.

Readers, perhaps were slow to show their gratitude. Some of them wrote in to ask for a return to the old programme. So, early in 1920, the editor wrote the following in his editorial to show why it was impossible for him to change his

policy:-

"Again we have the fastidious critic upholding the stories of many years since as against the yarns of to-day. It is just the question of the old days - and the effect of memory. Memory plays many weird tricks. Nothing, of course, in all this is intended against the old-time

tales, but when you hear some dear old fogey talking in this strain you know at once he is just a victim to the impressions of the past - and hardly a victim, for nobody can object to his liking the stories of his early days, or pity him for the penchant, but he need not decry what is doing now. What such a critic thinks is just about what Tom Hood wrote:

'No skies so blue or so serene
As then -- no leaves look half so green
As clothed the playground tree!
All things I loved are altered so,
Nor does it ease my heart to know
That change resides in me.'

"But that is precisely where the disparager fails. He cannot see that he has altered in himself. He gets up from his armchair and talks in this wise: 'The stories these days are nothing like as good as those I read when I was a lad.'

"We know in ourselves that it is all erroneous. The critic casts a glamour over the old days. He dreams of what was not real - something that has matured since in his mind."

In that little piece we know what the editor meant, but, of course, he was being sly. Never once has he mentioned that, about five months ago, all unannounced, the new Rookwood tales had dropped out to be replaced by the old ones from the Boys' Friend. And, quite recently, the new St. Jim's tales had been replaced by a serial. And, looking in our crystal ball, we can see that, before much longer, the Popular will again be an all-reprint paper.

Fifty years on, we can look back dispassionately and see quite clearly that the critical reader of the Pop was right, and the Hood-quoting editor was wrong.

In our turn, we have often asserted that boys' tales of to-day cannot hold a candle to those of long ago. Let us hope that, in fifty years time, somebody will be able to see, just as clearly, that we were right.

NO SPADE A SPADE!

We used to snigger about the Edwardians who talked, coyly, about "an interesting condition," "a happy event," and "unmentionables." But today they use euphemisms just as glibly. Tramps are called

"hippies," a mistress is called a "girl friend," immorality and vice are called "the permissive society," smut and pornography are called "art." Boys and girls are called "teenagers" and are so much more responsible than we were when we were kids. I'm not sure that the last-named isn't the most harmful of the lot, especially as the fine old story papers, with their high moral code, are now called "comics."

A lot of it is our old bugbear - change for the sake of change. Which is probably why the chemist gives us a free spoon so that we can take our medicine in continental style.

A young lady, who has often helped when we have had club meetings at Excelsior House, has recently been blessed with "a happy event." At the hospital, the proud father was stunned to be told that his wife had given birth to a boy of 300 grammes.

What, you may well ask, is that latest bit to do with the hobby of old papers? Well, there was once a blue Gem entitled "The Limit." This, surely, is it!

NO ORCHIDS FOR YOUR EDITOR

That dauntless warrior, Mr. Bob Blythe, is back in the arena this month, fighting for more C.D. space for the Nelson Lee Column. His comments appear on our Postman page.

So far I have no reason for thinking that our general readership feels that we do not give a fair show to the Lee. In the 23 years of C.D.'s existence, the Lee Column has probably averaged 3 pages a month, which I think is pretty good going for a field which is more limited in scope than either Blakiana or Hamiltonia.

The time may come when it is possible to enlarge the Digest permanently, but at the present time, as I pointed out recently, we could not give more pages to the Lee Column without cutting out something else. It may well be that a long-running series like "Let's Be Controversial" has overstayed its welcome. It could be that the time is ripe to pension off Danny with his Diary.

In the old papers there were long periods of time when there were no editor's chats. Probably C.D. could do equally well without an editorial. Our "classic" serials have seemed to be popular with vast numbers, but the space the instalments occupy could be used to extend the Lee Column when Lee items are available.

My job is to give readers what they want, and to keep everybody happy, including our Lee enthusiasts. At this point I am happy to announce that next month Mr. Blythe starts a new series on the "Early Struggles" of Edwy Searles Brooks. This will delight Lee fans and nearly everyone else. These articles are the best thing that ever happened to our Lee Column.

NO TIME TO LOSE

No space left to say much about the Annual, but, in addition to items I mentioned last month, we have a wealth of articles on the Lee and Sexton Blake from our top contributors. Our incomparable artist, Henry Webb, has drawn the delightful cover. I think you will agree with me that, though the old papers had some splendid illustrators, our own Henry can equal the best of them. Have you ordered your Annual yet?

THE EDITOR

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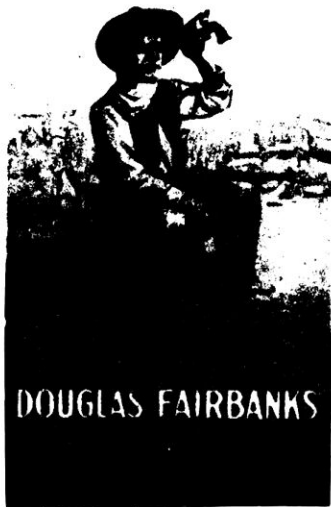
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DANNY'S DIARY



Another of the posters Danny saw outside the cinemas 50 years ago.

NOVEMBER 1919

On November 11th (it was a Tuesday), the first anniversary of the Armistice, all the British nation, in response to an invitation from King George, stood in silence for two minutes in memory of those who died in the war. Everything stopped for the two minutes - trains, trams, buses. It was a wonderful thought from the King. The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. The King put a wreath on the Cenotaph. This is still the temporary monument - the permanent Cenotaph won't be built till next year.

I am still having the Greyfriars Herald which came back at the end of October. They gave away a free Art Plate of the Price of Wales. I like the new series of stories about the boys on the school ship "Benbow." There is another new paper

out called "Cheerio," but it is more of a girls' paper. It contains a serial called "The Fellow Who Loved Violet Hopson."

The Picture Show is a good paper. It has "Just Me," her life

story written by Pearl White, running as a serial.

It is pleasant, for the first time for a long while, to be able to write that the Magnet has been excellent this month. The opening tale was a bit ridiculous, though funny. It was "The 'Herald's' Rival." Billy Bunter tries to get his "Weekly" published instead of the Greyfriars Herald.

Then came a tip-top Smithy-Redwing series. The Bounder caused Redwing to defy Mr. Quelch; Skinner gave him away; and Smithy plotted to land Skinner with a beating. Jolly good tales. The titles; "The Bounder's Fault," "Facing the Music," and "The Right Thing." Final tale of the month was vivid melodrammer. It was named "Cast Out by his Chums" and told how the Nugents lost all their money from gambling on the Stock Exchange.

The musical play "Chu Chin Chow" has now passed its 1470th performance in London, and has broken the record previously held by "Charley's Aunt."

All the Rookwood stories in the Boys' Friend have been part of a long series about Lovell's minor, Teddy. Most of these minors come out of the same mould and Teddy Lovell is not very exciting. The stories are "Lovell's Minor," "Looking After Teddy," "The Trials of Teddy," "A Disgrace to His Form," and "Barred By His Form."

At Cedar Creek, the Algernon Beauclerc series wound up with "Foul Play" and "Algy's Triumph." Then came "Follow Your Leader," a story of rivalry with Hillcrest School. Last couple of the month were "Frank Richards' Rival," in which Todgers almost got the prize for Frank Richards' story, and "The Cedar Creek Author," in which the newspaper man, Mr. Penrose, engages Frank to do a weekly story for his paper.

There have been Art Plates given away with the Boys' Friend - one on cinema stars and one on boxers.

The Prince of Wales has been to the States and met the President, Mr. Wilson, at the White House. The Prince was given the freedom of the city of New York.

At the pictures we have seen Clara Kimball Young in "The Road Through the Dark;" Billie Burke in "Good Gracious, Annabel" (I loved this one); Mary Miles Minter in "The Eyes of Julia Deep;" Charles Ray

in "The Sheriff's Son" (Charles Ray is always good); and Mary Pickford, who was in top form in "Rags."

The Daily Mirror has been running a £1000 beauty competition. Doug sent in his young lady's picture, which I thought a scream - she's got a face like a poached egg. I wanted to send in Mum's picture, but she wouldn't let me. The first prize has been won by a girl named Miriam Sabbage.

In the Gem the first of the month was "Playing a Part." Wiggins, a new boot-boy, is really the boy detective Dalton Hawke. He is on the trail of Jim Dawlish.

Then "Grundy's Delusion" was that he was a hypnotist who could bring about reforms. Two stories about Mr. Ratcliff were "The Tyrant of the Fourth" and "The Disappearing Fourth."

In "A Link With the Past" a new boy named Stewart comes to the school, and thefts commence. So Dalton Hawke comes back - this time as a sportsmaster. What a character!

In the Greyfriars Herald, the titles of the month's Benbow tales are: "The Boys of the Benbow," "Jack Drake's Ordeal," "The Last Flutter," and "Drake's Despair." Jack Drake is hiding from his snob pals the fact that his father is a ruined man. R. J. Macdonald is the illustrator of the Benbow tales.

SMALL NUMBER Holiday Annuals, Halfpenny Marvels, Union Jacks, Plucks, etc., for sale. S.A.E. with enquiries or offers, please.

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BLAKE IN DISGUISE

By S. Gordon Swan

In the May C.D., Mr. Cyril Rowe asks how often was Blake disguised as someone else in the A.P. papers. I have not the full details or relevant titles at hand, but I can quote a number of instances where Blake and Tinker were converted to Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake.

S.B.L. (First Series) No. 45 was The Barrier Reef Mystery by Andrew Murray. This appeared in B.F.L. (Second Series) No. 366 as The Secret of the Reef by John Andrews, a story of Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake. The oddest point about this was that the original story was divided into 4 parts, the first being written in the third person, the second part narrated by Hon. John Lawless, the third by Blake and the fourth by Tinker. But in the later version the whole of the story had been changed to the third person!

S.B.L. (First Series) No. 8, Victims of Villainy, became Peril in Persia; No. 25, The Secret of Draker's Folly, was brought out in an abridged version under a title I cannot remember; No. 52, The Mosque of the Mahdi, also was abridged in the B.F.L; No. 68, The Broken Trail became the £1,000,000 Secret; No. 124, The Mystery of 1000 Peaks reappeared as The Temple of Fear, if memory serves me correctly. All of these stories were originally by Andrew Murray, and in all of the reissues Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake were substituted for Blake and Tinker.

I have not read B.F.L. (New Series) No. 254, The Terror of Tibet, which Mr. Rowe mentions, but from the description it sounds like an abridged version of The Black Abbot of Cheng-Tu, which G. H. Teed wrote as a long serial for the U.J. in the late twenties.

Apart from The Fakir's Secret, which was quoted in the article, one of Murray Graydon's early Blakes, Across the Equator - B.F.L. (First Series) No. 124 - was reprinted in the second series as a Nelson Lee and Nipper story, not forgetting their bloodhound, Rajah.

S.B.L. (First Series) No. 13, The Case of the Twin Detectives,

by Edwy Searles Brooks - which had originally featured as a serial in The Dreadnought under the title of The Heir From Nowhere - came out in the B.F.L. as The Crook of Mosquito Creek. I think in this case the names were altered to Nelson Lee and Nipper.

The most peculiar instance of this substitution business is to be found in B.F.L. (Second Series) No. 646, The Beggar of Kashapore, by John Andrews. The first half of this story is a shortened version of S.B.L. (First Series) No. 4, The Rajah's Revenge, a tale of Count Ivor Carlac and Professor Kew. These names are changed to Count Ivor Otho and Dr. Zenn. The second half of the story is apparently new material and bears the stamp of Edwy Searles Brooks. This is a hybrid story altogether with two separate plots. Why abridge the original tale and then supply a new second half? It doesn't seem to make sense.

The purpose of reprinting these Blake tales as the adventures of different detectives is obscure. It will be seen that in most cases Andrew Murray's stories were chosen for conversion. In the nineteen-thirties a number of his early tales were reprinted in the S.B.L. (Second Series) and one or two - still retaining Blake and Tinker - in the B.F.L. So why did someone go to the trouble of changing Blake and Tinker to Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake or Nelson Lee and Nipper? Inevitably the occasional "Blake" or "Tinker" was overlooked and the substitution betrayed. Presumably it was editorial policy to boost these other detectives at times, but the general procedure was erratic.

* * *

SEXTON BLAKE IN BLACKPOOL

By William Lister

One wonders if Sexton Blake ever had a holiday. That he has attempted to have one from time to time, the writer would be prepared to admit, though usually without success. Having recently read "Raffles' Crime in Gibraltar" by Barry Perowne, one finds that Sexton Blake, having concluded a case, arrives in Gibraltar looking forward to a few days rest, only to find that Raffles, the gentleman crook, needs his attention. This is the pattern of many of Blake's planned

holidays.

A visit to Blackpool - that Mecca of the North - as recorded by Walter Tyrer in "Crime in Room 37" means business as usual. Mr. Tyrer seems to know his Blackpool (or should one say, as it was until about twelve years ago). Here is his setting:

"At the height of the season, there are hundreds, even thousands, of motor-coaches rolling into Blackpool every day. Some of them spill out their occupants for a few hours of gaiety, and then gather them up at night and carry them back to the colourless and unexciting towns where they live and work.

"Other coaches, and these are usually more sedate, bring more permanent visitors to stay for a week or a fortnight, and therefore their occupants do not think it necessary to cram so much enjoyment into the immediate moment."

If one has lived in Blackpool for fifty years, one becomes used to famous names gathering round its light as moths round a candle. One has seen Gracie Fields, Laurel and Hardy, Tom Mix, George Formby, Arthur Askey, etc., and in recent years Cilla Black, The Beatles, Cliff Richards and Harry Worth. On one occasion, when asked for direction by a car driver, it proved to be Robert Morley himself. You can bump into anybody here. Featured on screen - radio and T.V., mentioned in novels and articles, it is no wonder that sooner or later favourite Old Boys' Book Club characters should arrive on the scene. In a caravan holiday series, none other than Edwy Searles Brooks brought the famous boys of St. Franks through Blackpool. So it is nice to know that Sexton Blake and Tinker have also paid it a visit.

One looks for their reactions; Sexton Blake seems too occupied to notice, but one sees it through Tinker's eyes: quote "Now Sexton Blake was free to go to Blackpool, and his assistant, Tinker, was delighted to visit the holiday place during one of the pleasantest months of the year. They found Blackpool crowded and gay as usual during the summer months and Tinker looked with envy towards the packed acres of beach and the glistening sea beyond, at the great bathing pool and at the long piers and the imposing height of the Tower."

Sexton Blake found a vital clue to the case in a Blackpool tram ticket - one would assume it was the old style tram ticket that most

O.B.B.C. members have collected in their younger days and not the modern colourless roll type of today (there are still trams in Blackpool).

Walter Tyrer gives a local touch. One of the characters goes to "an expensive hotel in secluded grounds which catered for people of wealth or refinement, who used the golf courses round and about and tried to pretend that Blackpool was not near at hand" (referring, of course, to St. Annes), such being the St. Annes outlook until a few years ago - but only a small percentage of them now retain this attitude.

Do children ever change? "Crime in Room 37" describes the first effect of Blackpool on the young ones - "the twins, Janet and Jasmine, who screamed excitedly because the Tower could be seen at the end of the street, just beyond the rooftops. It is difficult to escape from a sight of the Tower in Blackpool and nobody wants to." You may think this a little exaggerated, but be assured children even in 1969 still thrill to the Tower.

Walter Tyrer (so one is informed) often used Lancashire as a setting. Born in St. Helen's in 1900, he worked at a local glass works and then joined the R.N.A.F. He began writing detective fiction in 1924. In 1947 (Lilliput) he admitted writing 20,000,000 words of juvenile fiction.

Well now, apart from Blackpool, "Crime in Room 37" (S.B.L. 321) is a good tale.

There may have been other visits by Sexton Blake and Tinker to Blackpool. It would be of interest to the writer of this article if any reader knows of such.

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NELSON LEE COLUMN

WHAT I LIKE ABOUT

E. S. BROOKS

By R. Acraman

When I was approached to produce a three minute article on the above subject my first thought was "Why three minutes, when three words are all that are needed?" Collectors' Digest readers of Aug. '67, already know that both our "Grand" Frank Richards and our master of the enthralling adventure and suspense school, St. Franks, in the Nelson Lee, rate equally in my admiration. In my opinion both are superb in their presentation. Nevertheless, the three words that I would choose to describe the above subject would be that Brooks is "A refreshing change." These words, let me hasten to add, are not the slightest reflection on Frank, who is the acknowledged master of the traditional school story from which all others are in one form or another copies, with the exception of E. S. Brooks, whose resemblance ends at the word "school."

With Edwy we have imagination taken far outside the school realm into adventure and suspense. While retaining the school flavour we are permitted to explore into the imaginative and outer fringes of logical reasoning, properly spiced with the uncertainty of not being able to guess what the author has next "up his sleeve." One of the most enthralling yarns of Edwy illustrating this point was the "Foo Chow" China series, and another the North Estrian series. The stopping of the "Foo Chow" yacht on the high seas by the Wanderer, and the armed boarding by Nelson Lee with Lord Dorrimore and party, the latter descriptions of the China inland scene and the gradual breakdown of "Foo Chow" are in my opinion superb in their presentation that has no equal in the traditional school story, because the author has drawn reasonably freely on his imagination by following a logical sequence of events through, to a stage where each act in itself is logically acceptable. The North Estrian series the same. The airship adventures, prior to the crossing of the mountain ranges, the huge walls that were built to keep out the more undesirable enemy, and The Great Wall of China, Hadrian's Wall, were all history hundreds of years ago so why

should we not imagine for a space that each section of each story is reasonably plausible and enjoy the story? If E. S. Brooks had described a primitive race building a huge pyramid of stone blocks some 500 ft. (481 ft.) high out of stone blocks, some 2½ tons apiece, covering some 12 acres, so closely fitted a knife blade could not be inserted, or the Great Wall of China, he would be laughed off as letting his mind run away with him, but in actual fact as we all know these things are facts. How would Brooks have suffered if he had written about men in space?

On the other hand, if we go for the traditional school story where everything is commonplace and acceptable to the most logical mind, then how do we account for the ventriloquist Bunter that cannot only throw his voice anywhere but also imitate inflexions of voice and ways of thinking? How many times has Bunter rapped out in Quelch's tone and the "Heads" words that he could not even pronounce in his normal voice and yet he has applied these words accurately and verbally to the situation? Does anyone accept as plausible the impersonation of Mr. Whiffles of Whiffles Circus, by Bunter for a period of over two weeks?

Does anyone accept as plausible the story of the taking of the monkey gland fluid by both Alonzo Todd and Bunter, giving them strength beyond the build of their bodies? I could quote dozens of other instances. So if we are going to excuse these perfectly unacceptable happenings as reasonably possible, then by the same token we must accept E. S. Brooks stories as similarly plausible and possible. Indeed my own personal opinion is that they are a lot more plausible than the above described instances. There gentlemen, I rest my case.

My opinion is that Brooks is "A Refreshing Change."

* * *

TRIBUNAL

By Len Wormull

On opening a parcel of eagerly-awaited back numbers of C.D., I promptly set to work on a study of its past history. I read, with first time relish, the eruptive themes around Brooks and Hamilton, and became acutely aware that hell hath no fury like a Lee-ite scorned. I saw our old friends, Bunter and Handforth, become the victims in a defamatory war of words, jointly accused of being the most improbable

characters in schoolboy fiction. So rapt was I by their embroilment that I suddenly found myself conducting a mock tribunal along these lines

"William George Bunter, take the stand. . . . You have achieved world renown by your feats of gastronomy. But please explain to the court how you managed, in one sitting, to scoff the entire stock of Mrs. Mimble's tuckshop?"

"That's easy, sir. I've got a whale of an appetite. He, he!"

"Bunter, you are charged with bilking the railway. But first the court is curious to learn how it was possible to conceal your vast circumference beneath a carriage seat?"

"Beast! I - I mean - I'm not really fat, sir. In fact, I cut a slim and dashing figure. . . ."

Laughter in court.

"Silence! One must conclude, Bunter, that Frank Richards had his seats made to order. You are further charged with masquerading and defamation of character. When you joined Whiffle's Circus you were seen to impersonate a female fortune-teller and make slanderous attacks against Harry Wharton and his friends. How was it possible to deceive such intimate acquaintances at close quarters?"

"He, he, he!"

"Answer the question, Bunter."

"Well, sir, I always told old Wib - I mean Wibley - that I was the best actor in the Amateur Dramatic Society. I'm also a jolly good ventriloquist. Besides, those rotters deserved to have their silly legs pulled."

"One other point, Bunter. Your spelling has been held up to ridicule. After a lifetime at Greyfriars, how was it you were unable to correctly spell a simple word like CAT?"

"Oh, really, sir! You must be thinking of that ass, Coker. He can't spell for toffee, sir. Class work was always my strong point."

"Thank you, Bunter. Your evidence runs true to form. In view of your wonderful contribution to mass enjoyment, I find the charges negligible. Case dismissed. Edward Oswald Handforth, take the stand."

"Now then, Handy - er - Handforth. You have been commended for outstanding bravery in the face of impossible odds. Your record

shows that your short answer to every problem is a punch on the nose. Would you say this was the recipe for your success?"

"Oh, rather, sir! Without my famous right I would have been a nobody at St. Frank's."

"When you visited China, did you, or did you not, rescue a child from a tiger by punching it on the nose - the tiger, I mean?"

"By George! That was a beauty of a right, sir! I also kicked the brute in the rear. You should have seen him run!"

"Incredible! I would have thought that was Willy's prerogative. You were also seen clinging to a plane soaring skywards. Wasn't that tempting providence too far?"

"Just a giddy stunt, sir. I saw it done on the films. Wasn't old Dorrie surprised when he saw me climb into the cockpit? Mr. Brooks told me I'd get away with it."

"No doubt the sky was the limit! Your list of heroics is so formidable and out of this world, Handforth, that the mind simply boggles. Saving Irene's life...duel with fists against spiked club in Northestria...clobbering Redskins in Arizona...."

"Hold on, sir, you could go on forever. You see, Mr. Brooks was years ahead of his time, and never ran out of ideas."

"It has also been said that many of these ideas were far-fetched. Would you agree?"

"They loved all that stuff, sir, and you have only to look at Batman and Superman to see things haven't changed. Like their blessed cheek, though, to pinch my material!"

"One last question, Handforth. You were always known to cut a dash with the young ladies. Have you any future plans in this direction?"

"Well I'm jiggered! Didn't you know, sir? Handforth IS James Bond!"

"Thank you, Handforth. You have given conclusive evidence to show that the fat Owl - I mean Bunter - was a mere novice in the field of implausibility. I award you the St. Frank's medal for conspicuous gallantry and improbability under the Author's Licence Act. Court adjourned."

But, of course, we all know this is not the end of the story. Ere

long they will both be back for further interrogation. . . .

* * *

OLD AND NEW

By R. J. Godsave

The old and new series of the Nelson Lee Library are so different in their presentation that one could be excused in thinking that another author had supplanted E. S. Brooks.

With the old series having an atmosphere of calmness, the new was startling in its presentation of activity and adventure. Whether one took kindly to this difference, must, to a great extent, have depended on the period in which one was first introduced to the Nelson Lee saga.

Obviously, a reader starting with the new series must have been impressed by these stories and probably be unaware of the placid atmosphere which had prevailed in the old.

On the other hand, a reader who received his or her baptism in the old series, would probably object to the increased tempo in the new. In the Congo holiday adventure, New Series 61 - 67, the events moved so fast with the St. Frank's party falling into so many situations of danger that I think the reader must have been left in a rather breathless state.

At the same time the stories in the new series showed what a remarkable imagination E. S. Brooks had and his ability to put it into writing. This is not to say that Brooks showed little imagination in the old series as the absence of repetitious plots proves.

It would, of course, be unfair to condemn any author for repeating the main theme of a story, as to have to produce one for every week for a number of years would be a strain even for a superman.

It does appear to me that the old series were of a somewhat serious style in comparison with the frivolity that can be found in the new. The tendency to centre the story on one person to the exclusion of other well-known characters was also to be found in the new series.

No doubt the additional houses at St. Frank's were very much responsible for the lighter tone which in a way was forced on Brooks. The distribution of the juniors to the various houses, and the seniors for that matter, broke up the base upon which the old series was built.

No. 78 - Magnet No. 1238 - "All the Fun of the Fifth"

It would be an interesting task for a researcher to investigate how the Magnet gradually began to take note of the changing seasons. Christmas was referred to almost from the beginning, and double numbers at Easter and Summer made reference to those school holidays, albeit briefly. Even Whitsun was given the occasional mention, too, but Guy Fawkes' Night was probably last on the list for regular recognition. During the nineteen-thirties, however, November 5th received ample attention at the appropriate time, and it was indeed an occasion which lent itself to unusual plots revolving around masked juniors and strange effigies.

Magnet No. 1238 began very promisingly with Sir Hilton Popper chasing a pickpocket up Friardale Lane and shouting "Stop thief!" in true Dickensian style. The November dusk provided just the right atmosphere, and most of the story seemed to take place at night. The pickpocket, Alfred 'Erbert Parker, darted into the school, hid in Gosling's woodshed, and then decided to hide Sir Hilton's pocket-book in the gully. Thus was the scene admirably set for a complicated series of misadventures.

The story was richly humorous, especially where Sir Hilton was concerned. He was introduced at the beginning as a lord of a great estate covered with ancient oaks and modern mortgages, whilst Mr. Parker introduced himself as an honest man well-known at the labour exchanges all over the county of Kent. (It is astonishing how accurate Charles Hamilton was in the delineation of character: the sort of person who is always proclaiming his own honesty is often the biggest rogue of all.) The scene in which the pickpocket, having safely hidden the wallet, confronted the baronet and accused him of defamation - "That old gent is calling me names - actionable names. And when I sees my solicitor -" is in the true Hamiltonian style, using character rather than action as the basis of comedy.

Single stories in the Magnet never rose to the heights of the famous series in the Golden Age, but there were some which could give

a good account of themselves, and among this select band we may unhesitatingly place "All the Fun of the Fifth" in the far-off year of 1931. It was a brilliant little cameo, depicting most of the well-known characters of the Greyfriars scene and allowing them to give a short curtain-raiser which would immediately be recognised as authentic by those who were familiar with the entire performance.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 140. THE GREAT HIATUS

Perhaps the greatest mystery of Hamiltonia is why Charles Hamilton was almost non-existent in the Magnet and the Gem in 1920.

The period 1919 to 1921 was a time which saw a swing away from the Magnet and a return to the Gem with the cream of his work, though the giant gap in the middle has caused the trend to be somewhat overlooked. It was grim irony that, after "The Amateur Advertiser" in early October, 1919, the author was to contribute only one story to the Gem before the following autumn. "Amateur Advertiser" was novel and amusing, but, dealing as it did with the falling circulation of the Gem, it turned out to be a sick joke. Nobody knew better than Hamilton and the editor that the circulation problem was due to the glut of substitute stories in the Gem over several years.

In 1920, Charles Hamilton wrote 8 stories for the Gem, but things were much better in 1921 when he contributed about 30 stories. Some of them were unnoteworthy little pot-boilers, but the year is memorable for the lovely little 4-story series about Seven Schoolboys and Solomon.

Things were not nearly so happy for the Magnet. 1919 had been a bad year, and in 1920 Hamilton contributed only 5 stories to that paper. You can, if you like, tack on the 5-story series about the schoolboy cinema stars, (I don't, for I am convinced he did not write it!) and make it 10. It was still the worst year in the paper's history.

In 1921 there were only eleven genuine stories in the Magnet.

It was this great hiatus in the supply of genuine material which cast such a heavy cloud over the whole of the white cover era. Just why

did it occur?

It was nothing to do with Hamilton being in the army, for he was never in the army. It can scarcely have had to do with disputes for he still went on writing for papers from the same stable.

Rookwood, of course, was the main reason for so many substitute tales from 1915 onwards, and when Cedar Creek joined Rookwood, the Magnet and Gem were increasingly neglected.

In 1919 and 1920 Hamilton wrote new, long stories of all three schools for the Holiday Annual, which was launched in October, 1919, but the most significant factor is that in October, 1919 the Greyfriars Herald came out again, and Hamilton contributed the Benbow series, later transferring the leading characters to a Greyfriars series in the Herald.

It was utterly preposterous that a man who already had far more on his plate than he could cope with adequately should now make himself responsible for this work in a minor paper. The only feasible explanation - and I have expressed this view before - is that it paid Hamilton better financially to concentrate on the shorter stories. It is inconceivable that it was by the publishers' wish that he wrote two shorter stories weekly for the Boys' Friend, which had a large and strong supporting programme, and neglected the Magnet and Gem, whose very lives depended on the quality of their long stories.

In 1945 Charles Hamilton wrote to Herbert Leckenby as follows: "No human being could have kept going the Magnet, Gem, Rookwood, Cedar Creek, Cliff House with Bessie Bunter, and the series in the Herald, all at the same time. But there was no need to start the last named at all; and any of the minor series could have been and should have been shut down, or rather, should not have been commenced." (In fact, Hamilton was not writing Cliff House at this time.)

That was absolute common sense. But that letter was written at the time when the author was at his most bitter against the Amalgamated Press - and he was writing tongue in cheek. Only a few years later, with all the old differences happily forgotten, he wrote: "I was always happy to start any new school and any new series, and I loved doing it." And, a few years later still, when I suggested in this "Let's Be Controversial!" series that the reason we had so many

substitute stories in the Gem and Magnet was that Charles Hamilton had "too many irons in the fire," he took up the cudgels, strongly contending that he never had too many irons in the fire, that he wrote always what he wanted to write, and that turning to the lesser series was as good as a holiday to him. He forgot the allegations he had made in 1945.

At this stage, two points are worth remembering. Charles Hamilton wrote to Roger Jenkins: "After Hinton's time, Maurice Down edited the Boys' Friend; but changes were made in the middle-twenties, and the paper went to another editor; and, as I thought I ought to stick to my chief, I ceased to write Rookwood." Roger Jenkins pointed out that the end of Rookwood was "a purely voluntary act on the part of the author."

John Wheway wrote (to Frank Lay): "It is perhaps not generally realised the awe with which Hamilton was regarded at Fleetway House in his prime. He was almost a law unto himself - he was almost Fleetway's bread and butter."

The main reason for that great break in Hamilton yarns for the Gem and Magnet from the autumn of 1919 till the autumn of 1920 (and much later in the Magnet) was that he was concentrating on Rookwood, Cedar Creek and the Benbow. Even this would have been an almighty undertaking for most writers, but the most prolific of them all could have turned out a little more, had he been so inclined. Then why did he slow down?

Charles Hamilton was a wealthy man. In case anyone should think there was anything heinous in that, I would point out that he worked like blazes for his wealth, and he deserved every penny he earned. His regular income, without any break for at least 30 years, would be very high even in these days. In those days, with low income tax and low and stable cost of living it was enormous. Even during the period of the great hiatus, his income was still steady and high.

It might have been for health reasons that he struck out the longer St. Jim's and Greyfriars tales and concentrated on shorter ones. But he never referred to any major illness in his life, or made any reference to a period of slowing down to recuperate. His travels, which did not take him beyond the Mediterranean, seemed to end with the

start of the First World War.

He is reputed to have lost a fortune in speculating on the Stock Exchange. Is it not possible that, during the period of the great hiatus, he eased up a little on his writing and gave a good deal of his time to "playing the market," something which he admitted to greatly enjoying? Is it purely a coincidence that, of the few stories he wrote for the Magnet in 1920, two of them were "Bunter the Bankrupt" and "Billy Bunter's Speculation?"

Something caused the great hiatus, but one thing seems to emerge. Charles Hamilton wrote only what he wanted to write. I feel that he alone was responsible for the yawning gap.

* * *

ECHOES OF AN UNFINISHED SYMPHONY

ROGER JENKINS: I particularly liked the piece on the substitute stories and the relations between Charles Hamilton and the Amalgamated Press. I suppose the views of most of us have veered round somewhat over the years. I don't like the substitute stories any better than I ever did, but I think one has to see them in perspective.

RAY HOPKINS: The "Let's Be Controversial" item was most interesting this month, on a subject that has always puzzled us and it would appear that you have the answer in a dispute between author and publisher. A very sad case as it has robbed us all of many more years of the Magnet to collect and cherish, not to mention the income that the author must have lost during the war and after until Charles Skilton put him into hardbacks for us.

You will be interested to hear that like The Magnet, both The Schoolgirl and The Schoolgirls' Own Library were similarly afflicted by being shut down without previous notice. Reasons were given in the final issues of both publications, however, and it is strange that the same thing was not done in the case of The Magnet. On page 6, The Schoolgirl No. 564, dated 18 May, 1940, which is the date of the last issue of The Magnet, appeared the following notice:

"YOUR EDITOR VERY MUCH REGRETS - that with this issue the Schoolgirl has been forced to suspend publication.

As you know, the vast majority of the wood pulp used in the manufacture of paper in Great Britain comes from Scandinavia, and the extension of the War to Norway has prevented supplies of this pulp from reaching England.

In consequence, the shortage of paper has become acute, and this decision concerning the Schoolgirl had to be taken so suddenly that it was found impossible even to make any suitable alterations to this issue."

As the Library contained complete-in-one-issue stories, there were no loose ends left hanging, as in the case of The Magnet and The Schoolgirl, except for the fact that only two of the final four stories advertised in the issues of the previous month appeared. The final issue was to have been No. 735, "Secret Leader of the Rebel Four," a school story by Gail Western, and this turned up as No. 1 of the post-war Schoolgirls' Own Library, which made its appearance in October 1946.

W. O. G. LOFTS: There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that Charles Hamilton had written at least four stories of Greyfriars - which were in hand and not

published when the MAGNET suddenly ceased publication. I have seen all these listed in a record book, date of acceptance, payment (which was always only on acceptance). Mr. C. M. Down, when questioned about this by me some years ago, told me that these four stories were in his office at the time when the Companion Papers office closed in 1940. These were handed over to a Director with other official documents and records, and he was given to understand that these stories were to be eventually used in another publication. The Magnet manuscripts simply disappeared from that date. I have had permission to search the vaults of Fleetway House to see if they were dumped down there - but they simply are not to be found. I don't think the A.P. would have been worried in writing 'off' say £120 for four stories, when thousands have been written 'off' in other ventures.

As in the case of the Wingate Love Series - I fear that we have greatly lost chances over the years to solve many of these problems, by not contacting Charles Hamilton when he was alive. On the subject in question, I feel he would have consented to re-write these four stories if the right financial payment had been offered to him. Often I was tempted to make him an offer in this respect, but plead guilty to never having the confidence to put pen to paper. Lastly, it is not correct to say that the Magnet just ceased without any amalgamation. It was amalgamated with the KNOCKOUT COMIC (in the sub-title) whilst THE THRILLER just stopped and was never amalgamated with any other paper. It certainly is incorrect to say then that 'No other paper shut down in this amazing manner.'

ERIC FAYNE adds: Mr. Lofts is splitting hairs. Anyone who has the last Magnet knows that there is no indication of any amalgamation with anything. That a bright lad later tacked "Magnet" on to the title of Knockout is quite beside the point.

Though A.P. might have been unperturbed at losing £120 (worth a great deal more in 1940 than it is today), the matter has to be looked at relatively. From one post-war tale alone, "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School," Charles Hamilton made £1,000 in royalties and the publisher presumably made a nice profit. If the A.P. had published the lost series, they would have had no royalties to pay on items they had bought outright.

Mr. Lofts does not suggest what might have become of the lost series, but I feel that he would have been equally unsuccessful had he searched Rose Lawn for the carbon copies.

DON WEBSTER (on an earlier topic): As one of the few readers who has read the Serial in "The Boys' Realm" and the abridged story in "The Boys' Friend Library," I feel that I am in a position to comment.

In serial form "King Cricket" was excellent, and the mere fact that Charles Hamilton went into correct details in introducing the famous players of the day was partly responsible for its success.

It would be superfluous for me to add to the remarks in the Controversial in C.D. - I can only say as a cricket lover, I enjoyed every chapter and could read it again with pleasure (but not the BFL version).

It is an amazing fact that prior to the first World War every County was captained by an amateur, so perhaps Charles Hamilton was a bit of a prophet when he elected to appoint a professional Captain for Leamshire.

I did make some small contribution on the abridged edition (in which only two County fixtures were featured) in C.D. some years ago, which elicited a reply from Charles Hamilton saying how pleased he was to see "King Cricket" reviewed in its pages. I sent him my copy to read (and autograph) which he returned with a few wry comments.

COLLECTOR WISHES TO PURCHASE old Picture Postcards, in quantities of not less than 100. - BRADLEY, ROSEHILL COTTAGE, LEAVENHEATH, COLCHESTER, ESSEX.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

AUSTRALIA

The Golden Hour club meeting was held as usual in Cahill's Restaurant next to the 'marked for extinction' Theatre Royal! Already the ominous signs are present and we were forbidden upstairs so we have had our last meal at our big round table. It used to seat all our members back in the good old days when we were double today's total. Nothing seems permanent these days and I suppose one of those ghastly square multi-story office blocks will replace the charming, individual theatre and shops there now.

Perhaps as a gesture of defiance Stanley Nichols produced some Henty's and for some time the conversation was far from this decade. Then the Basil Reynolds map of Greyfriars district was unrolled for the delectation of members. Of course there were a few 'Shouldn't that be over there, surely?' but here we had something even the developers could not change. It is to be hoped that this map will be on sale in Sydney.

Proceedings were closed at an earlier hour than usual and the next meeting is on the last Tuesday in November. A Christmas dinner and meeting will be held in December and it's hoped that our occasional members will be present.

SYD SMYTH

* * *

MIDLAND

Meeting held 30th September, 1969.

Our meetings are always very pleasant, but this one will certainly linger long in the memory as a particularly happy occasion. We were both honoured and delighted to receive a visit from that very charming lady, already known as a keen postal member, Mrs. Kay Hull, of Spondon, Derbyshire. It is most pleasing to record that Mrs. Hull much enjoyed her visit to us, and has since written a most charming and generous letter of appreciation.

An especially attractive item tonight was a talk from Ian Bennett. His talks are always something very special, and this one,

perhaps more accurately described as an introduction to a discussion, was a brilliant, yet pithy, exposition of a very large subject; namely the basis of the interest of the hobby.

For debating purposes Ian ascribed this very firmly to nostalgia. We are a small group with one common bond, retrospection. Our memories range from 1910 onwards, and looking around today nothing to us remotely compares with the old standards of juvenalia. No depth of communication between an author and his reader. Television the main thing nowadays, just not remembered. Ian instanced the Power Game and Sir John Wilder. Thus we are a vanguard and a rearguard with a legacy not really understood by the younger generation. They have no one to succeed Charles Hamilton and others in the old papers that meant so much to us. How eagerly we looked forward to the next issue of our favourite paper. Sixpence was wealth untold in those days, and meant to Ian an assured supply of "Modern Boy" for three weeks!

Naturally much discussion followed this splendid talk. Our charming and welcome visitor made an interesting point that in her case enthusiasm (for Greyfriars actually), came through later acquaintance, and not from schoolday memories.

The evening ended with quite a festive spirit. We had two games of "Twenty questions" in which our esteemed Treasurer, Norman, performed splendidly by guessing "Mr. Corbett's Holiday Annuals" in 14, and "Gussy's Monocle" in only 13 questions.

Tonight's anniversary number was "Nelson Lee" Old Series No. 69, "The Mystery of Barron Hall," dated 30.9.1916, and the Collectors' item was Gold Hawk Book No. 1, "Tom Merry's Secret."

EDWARD DAVEY

Chairman and Secretary.

* * *

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 9th October, 1969.

A misty Autumn evening, turning later to fine drizzle, saw ten members arriving for the Library session which normally opens our Meetings; (six usual attenders had been variously kept away by illness,

holidays, family commitments and church engagements). After the Library had been cleared away, Geoffrey Wilde took his place in the Chair. Following the approval of Minutes and Finance Statement, Geoffrey led an interesting discussion. The phrase "to get shut of" (i. e. to get rid of) used by Frank Richards had intrigued a friend of his. Research so far had failed to trace it in any dictionary. It certainly had a northern sound to it, and, therefore, very interesting that a southern writer should use it. The friend wondered if those still saying it (as we do) had been youthful Magnet and Gem readers.

The Secretary reported that a congratulatory card had been sent to our President (whose new book "A Pelican at Blandings" had just received a very good press) for his 88th birthday on October 15th. She then read a column from Northerner II in the "Yorkshire Post." Gerry Allison, seeing that the Government Social Survey on "The Young Smoker" had reported rebellious and delinquent tendencies in schoolboy smokers, had written to the paper pointing out this was true at Greyfriars! He gave an apt extract from a 1917 Magnet featuring Vernon-Smith and Ponsonby, when the former, with Mr. Quelch coming up the passage, broke a bottle of eau de cologne in his study to mask the smell of tobacco smoke!

A Quiz was now given by Harry Barlow (neatly recorded on his tape recorder). All 20 Questions had been set on the Wharton Rebel No. 2 series. No excuses for failing now, but the result (winners Geoffrey Wilde, 18; Bill Williamson, 12; Jack Roberts, 8½) revealed that some of us read - but mark not nor learn, much less inwardly digest.

The ladies now served the refreshments and after this interval, we settled down to enjoy the first instalment of our version of "The Battle of the Beaks." Written by Cliff Webb of Wigan in authentic style it revealed Mr. Hacker's resentment against Mr. Quelch for believing in Wharton's innocence, and ended with a masterly piece of circumstantial evidence against Wharton to feed Mr. Hacker's anger.

This was the final item, and members dispersed homewards at 9.20 p.m.

Next Meeting, Saturday, 8th November, 1969.

M. L. ALLISON, Hon. Secretary.

LONDON

Once again the annual autumn meeting took place at the Leytonstone home of Reuben and Mrs. Godsave on Sunday, September 19th. There was a gratifying attendance of 24 and this included Tom Porter of the Midland Club, who managed to find his way from Euston - quite a feat.

Chairman, Don Webster opened proceedings with an address of welcome to all and then told of Frank Case of the Liverpool Club who is very ill. Expressions of sympathy were evident from all present and the wish for a complete recovery.

Two good reports from the two librarians, Bob Blythe and Roger Jenkins, and the latter told of Les Rowley presenting some "Magnets" for which he was thanked.

From the first "Collectors' Digest Annual," Bob Acraman read Jack Corbett's article "Astounding Adventure." This dealt with a counterpart of Mr. Quelch who was supposedly met at Pegwell Bay. Bob Acraman promised to read the sequel at a future meeting.

On Sunday, November 17th, 1953, the club met at Surbiton and an account of the happy and jolly time on that occasion was read from club newsletter 17 by Len Packman. Host of the meeting was the skipper, Eric Fayne.

Personal reminiscences as told by Frank Vernon-Lay followed and were illustrated by specimens which were passed round for members to examine.

Bill Hubbard won the host's General Knowledge quiz.

Bill Hubbard read Kenneth Allsop's article from "Books and Bookman," October 1966, entitled "The Fat Owl." A discussion took place during breaks in the reading and opinions were expressed.

The November meeting will be either at Kingsbury or Cricklewood; members will be informed by post. Also the Christmas meeting will be at the venue to which, of the two former places, we do not go next month.

A fine spread was provided by the hosts during the thirty minute break when members satisfied the inner man and held informal chats which are so enjoyable. Most of us had a lift right home or to the nearest station and I think everyone had an enjoyable time.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

The Postman Called

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

R. ACRAMAN (Ruislip): Felt I simply must write to you to ask if you cannot spare just a little more space for the Nelson Lee. I am referring to the August number which has now been superseded by the September number, in which were three and a quarter pages of Nelson Lee.

R. BLYTHE (Kingsbury): I'm sorry to see that there has been no follow up to my comments re more space for the Lee. I find it difficult to believe that your readers are so apathetic that they can't even be bothered to write in support of my protest - or have they? If they have, then some extracts from their letters would be appreciated.

IAN BENNETT (Leicester): I have often wondered why no mention was ever made in the pages of C.D. to the passing of Captain W. E. Johns, creator of the famous "Biggles," in June, 1968. The B.B.C. News featured this sad event, and I have kept his obituary notice from the Daily Telegraph. The 1967 C.D. Annual contained a Biggles article, you will recall - and very good it was, too. Congratulations on the continued high standard of C.D. - it is a constant source of pleasure to so many.

NORMAN KADISH (Edgware): As a newcomer to Collectors' Digest may I somewhat diffidently reply to Geoffrey Good's article on the preservation of old publications?

It would be an advantage to collectors of treasured books to learn something of the craft of book-binding or else be acquainted with the accepted methods of repairing books. "The Repairing of Books," by S. M. Cockerell (Sheppard Press, London) is a work by a noted authority in this sphere, and is a useful acquisition for any collector.

The author mentions the use of benzine, methylated spirits or carbon tetra-chloride, painted on for the removal of the tape, and the removal of the slimy trail is brought about by the further application of the solvent and the pressing on of blotting paper, while the solvent is wet - or alternatively, by the simple dabbing of impregnated cotton wool.

Tears should never be mended by Sellotape. Tissue and paste over the tear, the pressing under light weights and the tearing off of the superfluous tissue after drying is the accepted book-binder's method.

In addition, the cheap paper used in such papers as the "Magnets" becomes 'woolly' in time, in which case the book-binder would re-size the leaves in a flat large tray of hot glue size, thus reducing stains and increasing the strength, whiteness and crispness of the paper.

M. HALL (Penryn): End of an old friend. The Wizard ceased to exist in September, 1969. It is now only Rover.

MACKENZIE DAVIDSON (Muchalls): With regard to Mr. Gerry Allison's reference to the "Peoples' Friend" of Dundee, I think I am correct in saying that it was within its columns that "TOMMY BROWN - A BAD BOY'S MEMOIRS" first appeared. The author was one by the name of AITKEN MURRAY who also wrote a sequel TOMMY BROWN AND COKERNUT - the latter being a mongrel dog. These yarns were republished in paperback form and on the cover of the Memoirs was a drawing of Tommy saying: "Mischief just Sprouts out ov Me!" as he knocks over a bottle of ink.

I have no knowledge as to who Aitken Murray was nor if he ever wrote anything else - perhaps some Digest reader can help. It is over half a century since I chuckled at this precursor to Richmal Crompton's "William." I have often wondered if she based her character on Tommy - there is great similarity of situation - but, of course, boys are much the same all over.

FRANK PARKER (Thames Ditton): I think that your recent items about the substitute writers in the Magnet have been more fascinating than any I can remember. I'm developing my own theory of how to recognise the Hamilton style: 90% of all his chapters commence either with the name of a character or with a short quoted exclamation or question. But I lack the access to the substitute stories to test the test. I wonder has this been noticed and tried by others?

My warmest good wishes for the continued success of "C.D." and thanks for many rewarding issues.

(EDITORIAL NOTE: Several readers have kindly sent in with suggestions for repairing old periodicals, in response to the letter we published last month from the Rev. Good. When space allows, we will print a few more extracts.)

THE COGWHEEL LIBRARY

By W. O. G. Lofts

Since I published my lists of Boys' Weeklies and Libraries, many years ago now, many dozens more have been added to my files. I don't honestly think that I will ever be able to satisfy myself that I have discovered every single one published. Publishers were very slack, and the rule not strictly enforced years ago, that every single periodical had to be sent to the British Museum. Consequently I have in my own collection many first editions not recorded there, and I don't think I could do better than to start what I hope to be the first of a series of articles on rare papers in my collection, with The Cogwheel Library.

This was published by Charles Shurey in 1921, and was of Boys' Friend Library size price 4d. Charles Shurey of 'Shurey's Publications' had been in the juvenile or boys' fiction game for many years. His best efforts were 'Comrades' and 'Pals' as well as schoolgirl papers, and he usually was billed as 'the editor.' The title of 'Cogwheel' is very curious for a start, which may have misled people in thinking that it was a cycling magazine, but there is no doubt that its contents were 100% boys' fiction. The cover showed boys playing rigger, and the illustrator was 'J. Abbey.' The inside cover page had a full size advertisement for 'Yes or No' which has been mentioned a great deal in C.D. lately. Cogwheel was described as 'The Yellow Magazine' though my own impression of 1910 copies was that it was white, maybe faded a little through the years. The main story was entitled 'The Three Chums' by Rowland Walker, his real name, who had contributed to Chums, Boys' Realm, and had also several hard cover novels to his credit. The story was briefly about Bellington Towers, an old Elizabethan School, near the little village of Bellington, on the Kentish Coast, and dealt with the adventures of a boy in the fourth, named

Jimmy Wiles, whose great grandfather turned out to be a pirate, and who eventually came into his estate. The story was not bad at all, though aimed at a much younger group than the Magnet reader I should think. This tale ran for 73 pages, then, to make the book up to a required length of 80 pages, they inserted the first two chapters of the story appearing in No. 2 of The Cogwheel Library.

To say that this was startling would be putting it mildly, and I leave the readers their own conclusions about it and who the title and characters reminded them of.

DICK MERRY OF ST. MARTIN'S

By Edward C. Adams

A school story featuring the boys of St. Martin's featuring an 'Owen Owen,' a dusky skinned junior of Asiatic origin of the name of Singh Ram Jam, and a Chinese boy who spoke thus.. 'Me say, gettee longa talkee plenty quick. Me wantee game of klicket' and who had almond eyes, and who wore a pig-tail carefully braided. His name incidently being 'Li Ah Ti Shoo.' The boys eventually made themselves into a gang called 'The Serious Six.'

Edward C. Adams was a writer of various stories of whom I know next to nothing, except that he had written in Boys' Journal. Strangely, another man named Adams was sub-editor on the Gem in 1921, and he had the curious policy of inserting the serial first before the main St. Jim's story! But I am certain this was Frederick K. Adams, another writer. On the last page but one, was an advertisement of pretty photo-cards of cinema stars of whom Danny in his Diary may know more than myself! Virginia Pearson, Theda Bara, Madlaine Travers, Violet Hopson, William Farnum, Mabel Normand, Edith Johnson, Gaby Deslys, Norma Talmadge. I do happen to know Tom Mix, Charlie Chaplin and Alice Brady. Any six Photo-cards for only 7d. post-free! The last page gave the titles of Nos. 2, 3 and 4 of the Cogwheel Library which were it seems issued simultaneously. No. 2, Dick Merry of St. Martin's; No. 3, The Pirate of Phantom Isle by George E. Hopcroft; No. 4, Peril Island by Trevor Bramall. Authors of whom I know nothing at all.

It would be very interesting to know if any reader has any further issues of the Library in his collection, but I don't think it could have lasted for very long.

All in all it was not a bad little library at all, and at least it makes a very interesting addition to my collection, which I can claim to have some very rare and unusual items.

BUNTER -- CHAPLIN. TRAGIC or COMIC?

By John W. A. Bush

I suppose all C. D. readers will agree that Charles Chaplin is the greatest tragic comedian of our time, especially in the silent screen era. If we look back on "The Kid" which I regard as his greatest film, one realises that its success depended on its poignant scenes as much as its hilarious moments. Charles Hamilton created a literary figure, Bunter, who in many ways calls for our sympathy, such as we gave to the down and out tramp, of the films. In fact I think that Bunter is a replica of Chaplin's tramp. Has any reader who has read the funny adventures of Bunter, ever realised the tragedy of this character? I am not referring to the long awaited postal order, but to the school-boy who is not ever wanted at home, who in fact has no real home, a father in name only, and a brother and sister without any family affection. A person who has to depend on being able to go home with boys who are not even his friends. Can one wonder that his world consists of day dreams, Bunter Court, etc.? In conclusion, I hope that like myself you can laugh at and sympathise with that great character Bunter.

FOR SALE: Blue Gem No. 379 "Grundy of the Shell," 12/6. Fun & Fiction No. 86, 7/6. Gems 981, 985, 986, 8/6 each. Gem 984, 6/- . BFL 680 "Pete's Wireless," "Volcano Island" (Pete) good copies but coverless, 3/- each. Magnets 1643 - 1650 inc. (the Water Lily series) £2 for the 8 copies. Postage extra on all items.

S.a.e. to ERIC FAYNE

WANTED - Copy of Bob Blythe's "Nelson Lee Catalogue" - please state price and cash sent immediately. Write to: LEONARD RICHARDS, 18 RETFORD COURT, THE PHILOG, WHITCHURCH, CARDIFF.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Miss Bette Pate's address is now 31 DAY ST., DRUMMOYNE, N.S.W., AUSTRALIA.