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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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AUGUST 1971



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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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THOUGHTS FROM THE DECK-CHAIR

Some months ago the opening story of the Magnet's 1932 Egypt series was printed in Armada. Now Armada has come up with another tale - this time the fifth in the series, "Billy Bunter's Bargain," is the offering. The original illustrations are used inside, and it is a pity that Leonard Shields, the artist, is not credited for his work. But the story is jolly and exciting, and well worth anyone's three-and-a-tanner (17½ in Egyptian currency).

Of course, we are startled at the beginning.

"You cheeky devil!" snorted Bunter.

Everybody knows that Frank Richards never made his boys - even Bunter - call anyone a cheeky devil. So we dash for the original to find out exactly what Bunter did say.

And what he said was: "You cheeky nigger!"

Perhaps it is right to delete "nigger," in case any sensitive feelings are hurt by Bunter's fatuous comments in 1932. But maybe you and I have sensitive feelings in 1971 about Bunter being made to denounce anybody as a cheeky devil. Possibly our feelings don't count.

Recently published was a fascinating book entitled "The Classic Slum" by Robert Roberts. The scene is mainly Salford, and the author makes affectionate references to Greyfriars. He sums up: "In the final estimate it may well be found that Frank Richards, during the first quarter of the century, had more influence on the mind and outlook of young working-class England than any other single person, not excluding Baden-Powell."

I feel sure that Mr. Roberts is right. Those of us who grew up, influenced greatly by the story papers of our days and particularly by the stories of Charles Hamilton, were lucky. It must be far, far more difficult to grow up today. Two important words in Hamilton's dictionary were Decency and Honour. Today, considerations of decency are increasingly lost; the word honour takes on satiric meanings.

In the schools they are abolishing religious knowledge and replacing it with sex instruction. The experts tell us that sex instruction, which we managed very well without, is necessary to help young people to grow up properly. From what the experts say, it is quite a miracle that you and I grew up at all, and it is even more astounding that we are quite normal people and always have been.

Certainly statistics tell a horrifying story of a section of young people today. So far as I can see, these statistics are largely due to the experts who abandoned and ridiculed the standards we knew. So the experts have to plan sex education to deal with problems which youth would never have had but for the experts. It's a vicious circle - with masses of money being grabbed by the vicious. There's money in muck.

Most of us are pretty thankful that we grew up with Hamilton, Brooks, and the rest.

Lots and lots of readers have been happy to know that Mr. Softee has come to live at Excelsior House. He seems happy, too. Now that he is running things to his liking, and we have fallen into his

routine, he thinks it quite possible that he may decide to stay. Providing we continue to behave ourselves.

THE ANNUAL

Next month we shall be sending you the order form for the Silver Jubilee edition of Collectors' Digest Annual. In the meantime articles are coming in, and we hope to receive plenty more. Articles are always welcome, and if they are of restrained length they are even more welcome. Very long items are often very difficult to use, when space is limited. But please keep writing - and keep me busy.

THE EDITOR

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GERRY ALLISON

Gerry Allison died in hospital in the early hours of June 27th. He was 66. His death is a sad loss to the hobby of which he was always the most scintillating of stars. A gentleman, in an age in which, sadly, gentlemen are a rarity, he had a devotion for the old papers which was simple in its deep sincerity. He was a wonderful friend, and, even for those who did not know him personally, a letter from him was invariably a treasure.

Our sympathy goes out to Mrs. Myra Allison and her family, and also to all the members of our Northern Club whose loss is even more acute than our own.

A great many people have written to us to express their sorrow. It is impossible to print more than a few of these letters. We have selected a few tributes from those who knew Gerry best. They speak on behalf of all of us.

GEOFFREY WILDE: It will seem impossible to think of the Northern Branch of the O.B.B.C. without its presiding genius and father-figure, Gerald Allison. From its very inception, Gerry worked for it with unstinting enthusiasm and devotion. The presence of such a dominating personality could have spelled the ruin of many organisations: it was not the least of Gerry's achievements that our club was never in any such danger. Indeed, looking back over my own fourteen years' association with the club, I recall it as a period which saw a steady and continual influx of new members, lively, creative personalities who would grace any gathering of enthusiasts — and most of them came to us directly through Gerry. His genial spirit embraced all but overshadowed none. The wealth of Northern talent which he so much helped to foster was, in fact, the foundation of the claim he liked to make, with genuine but quite unmalicious pleasure, that we were the 'Cock House.'

Gerry's other great secret, I think, is that he was that rare thing, a truly keen and active correspondent. He could always find the time to write a warm and friendly note, and this labour of love, unobtrusively done, was an important part of the background to

Northern's flourishing Club life. Our postal membership extended literally across the world; fairly recently Gerry sent out his 1,000th parcel as Club Librarian. These parcels, and the comradely letters which accompanied them, brought great joy to more people than one could easily compute. He died with a host of friends, some of whom he had never even met.

Mrs. JOSIE PACKMAN: Although I did not see Gerry Allison as often even as Len did, I kept in touch over the years by post. As a tribute to his memory I can only repeat the words he himself wrote a year ago about my dear Len. 'Gerry Allison is dead, but his work for the Old Boys' Book Clubs, especially the Northern section, will never be forgotten.'

ROGER JENKINS: Having known Gerry Allison for upwards of twenty years, I feel a great sense of desolation to learn of his death. He had survived three previous attacks of coronary thrombosis as a result of his own natural determination and Myra's loving care, and his interest in the hobby seemed, if anything, even stronger and more abiding in recent times.

As a fellow-librarian I can fully appreciate the trouble Gerry went to on behalf of the borrowers (which put me to shame at times), but in addition to all this he was continually exerting a keen and inventive mind towards providing novel entertainment for the Northern Club, where his absence will be sorely felt.

The hobby can ill afford to spare such a generous and enthusiastic personality from among its ranks, and our deep sympathy goes out to all his family. At the same time, there is the consolation of knowing that nothing can eradicate the memory of so much past happiness.

HARRY BROSTER: There were four of us who met at Chesterfield many years ago and so started the annual get-together mostly held beneath the Crooked Spire. Four of us, Herbert Leckenby, Gerry Allison, Jack Wood and myself. It was a great shock on reading the announcement in C.D. of Gerry's passing and realising I was the only one left of that quartette who spent such a wonderful day together on Chesterfield Park. It was Gerry who introduced me to the wonderful

world of the O.B.B.C. A chance advert of his in Exchange & Mart asking for Jack North "Plucks" caused me to get in touch with one who proved such a wonderful friend. Through him I was introduced to other wonderful people. Once again I recaptured the charm of the old papers and comics of my youth. Like myself, he was a Pentelow fan - so was Herbert Leckenby. Jack Wood was not a Pentelow man but like us other three he had a common love - cricket. We had much to talk about that day many years ago at Chesterfield. I shall never forget. I met all there on many occasions in later years; one of my treasured possessions is a letter from Herbert a week before he died. Equally precious is a photograph of Gerry (and others) taken at John Gunn's place at Matlock. When I pick up a "Jack North" and I have them all, I will remember the one who more than any other, helped me to enjoy the happiness of O.B.B.C.

W. T. THURBON: Many, who knew him more closely than I, will no doubt add their tribute to his memory. Although I never had the privilege of meeting him personally, we had corresponded over the hobby for nearly twenty years, and I had come to regard him as a close, personal friend. He will be greatly missed, not only by the Northern Club, but among the whole of our confraternity of collectors.

It is sad, but surely fitting, that his contribution to the Digest that brought to us notice of his passing, should have contained his article with the title beginning "The Joy of Living." He certainly found great joy in the hobby, and gave great service to it, and in the service enhanced the joy of living for many others.

His memory will long be cherished by all who knew him.

- - -

Mrs. Myra Allison would like to thank all C.D. readers who have sent letters of sympathy.

She cannot reply to all of them but has found much consolation in the messages she has received.

 WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing one or more of the following: GEMS 801, 817, 826, 828, 832. Also POPULARS 401, 403, 407, 413, 415, 422, 441.
 ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, 113 CROOKHAM ROAD, CROOKHAM, Nr. ALDERSHOT.

DANNY'S DIARY

AUGUST 1921

I am in a dilemma. Now that Cedar Creek has gone out of the Boys' Friend I am paying my three-halfpence a week for the Rookwood story, for that is all I read in the B.F., and the Rookwood tales are so very short. And three-halfpence is three-halfpence. I put the problem to my Grandmother at Layer Marney. I said I could get an ice-cream bar for a penny from the "Stop Me and Buy One" man. They come round on blue trikes, selling ice-cream bars, and they have a notice painted on the trike: "Stop Me and Buy One." Of course, it is hard ice-cream, and I prefer the custardy cornets which the old-style ice-cream barrows sell. Still, it's all right.

My Gran sent me five bob and told me not to stop buying the Boys' Friend as reading Rookwood is good for me. What a lovely surprise! Gran always comes up to scratch.

The Rookwood stories have all been holiday tales, and very good. In "Jimmy Silver's Holiday," Jimmy and his family and his pals have gone to north France for a stay. And Mornington has gone also, to gamble at the casino, as his uncle Stacpoole keeps him short of money. And passports are not needed any longer for a day trip, though Morny stays longer than a day.

In "Mornington's Folly," Algy Silver has £15 spending money. Morny promises to change it into Franch money for him, but loses it all on gambling. In "Jimmy Silver & Co. in France," Algy accuses Morny of theft, but Erroll turns up and replaces the money for Algy. In the final story of the month, the Rookwooders return to England, and go on a cycling tour. They meet up with Bunter who is in a caravan. Bunter pretends it is his van, till Harry Wharton & Co. turn up.

There has been a nasty accident in Forest Hill this month. A General omnibus turned over. Two people were killed, and twenty were injured.

The great singer, Caruso, has died in Naples. Doug has a gramophone record made by Caruso, who had a very powerful voice.

It has not been a good month in the Gem, though the first story

was fine. It was "The St. Jim's Swimmers," and in it Cardew pestered Tom Merry to try to swim the Channel. A great and very unusual tale. When Tom got into difficulties in the Channel, Cardew dived in to help him.

"Tom Merry's Mission" was a silly affair. Tom's Indian uncle had sent a Mr. Anderson to replace Mr. Lathom as a form-master.

"Glyn's Wonderful Invention" was a mechanical dummy of Mr. Selby. And "Trimble, the Truthful" was a mixed-up affair about an old lady named Miss Sophronia Marjoram. Very weak.

The great new British airship, R38, broke in two and fell in flames in the Humber while on a trial flight. Only 5 were saved out of a crew of 49.

England drew the game with Australia at the Oval. So English cricket is not rejoicing.

The Magnet has really come into its own again with a topping new caravanning series. These are a good bit longer than most of the Magnet stories have been lately.

In "The Greyfriars Caravanners," Harry Wharton & Co. hire a caravan from Mr. Lazarus, but Coker steals a march on them and goes off with the van, and there is some fun before Wharton gets it back. Next week, "The Secret of the Caravan" found the party dogged by several villains who were after some loot which the previous owner, a criminal, had hidden in the van.

Then "Mauly and the Caravanners" reminded me very much indeed of one of the stories in the St. Jim's caravan series last year in the Gem. Mauly has been persuaded to spend a few days on holiday with Ponsonby of Highcliffe. Pon has a rake named Captain Gadsby staying with them, and their idea is to get Mauly gambling, and to bag his money. But the caravanners take a hand.

Final of the month was "The Caravan Detective." The chums have let a lame man named Wilkinson join the party as a helper. But Jack Drake also joins the party. He is now Ferrers Locke's assistant, and is seeking an escaped convict named Bert Gunner. And Wilkinson turns out to be the convict.

At the cinema we have had the new Charlie Chaplin two-reeler. It is rather an odd picture. It is called "The Idle Class," and it is all

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN
27, Archdale Road, London, S.E. 22

I am pleased to be able to report that the Sexton Blake section of the O.B.B.C. London Library is proving fairly successful, although I could do with a few more borrowers. There are quite a number of 2nd and 3rd series S.B.L's and D.W's available. Letters and contributions from new members have mentioned the "Sexton Blake Circle" so I have included our old title in my preamble this month. This edition of Blakiana features two new writers to our section, Mr. John A. C. Bridgwater of Swanage, Dorset, and the Rev. Francis Hertzberg of Higher Bebington, Wirral, Cheshire.

I have a fair amount of short articles in hand for Blakiana but I would be grateful for some special ones for the C.D. Annual. As our Editor writes - it will be our Silver Jubilee Edition - so the Sexton Blake Circle must make a good showing.

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * *

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

by John A. C. Bridgwater

I have recently acquired and read a most interesting copy of the Union Jack. It is No. 227 and carries adverts for No. 1 of the Magnet, No. 1 of the new series of the Gem, and is dated 15 February, 1908. No. 1 of a new paper called "The Girls Reader" is also advertised. The title of the U.J. story is "The Flood."

I have been temporarily living in Marlow and the story is about the great flood which engulfed Great Marlow (as it was then called) and Maidenhead. Bray was cut off, Eton playing fields were under water and the river was up in Reading and Caversham. Having been travelling around all these places the tale was of great interest to me. It is a remarkable coincidence that of all the hundreds of Blake tales this one should come my way whilst temporarily in the area. Another minor

point of interest, it was published on 15 February, the day after my birth date (though ten years before I was born). The story by W. M. Graydon, is noteworthy for the murder, which isn't by the way, giving rise to more incorrect theories by the master, Sexton Blake, than any other tale I know of in the Saga, many of these theories being quite wild guesses. The "Law" in the persons of two constables, fares even worse. They are merely two rather second-rate crosstalk comedians. But the Flood, well that is quite different. It dominates the story and is handled in a masterly fashion by the author, apart from a few noises which he makes it produce. My feelings after reading the Flood is that it is quite a paradox. Sexton Blake puts up the poorest performance as a detective that I have read and yet it is one of the most enjoyable stories about him that has come my way. Pedro, I was very pleased to find, did a superb piece of tracking and outshone his master in efficiency at his job. But don't you agree that when our hero makes mistakes and gets hold of the wrong end of the stick he becomes more human and believable, and one's affection for him is thereby increased? The author neatly rounds off the story thus:- "Thus ended the puzzling mystery of the Flood, a case that does more credit to Sexton Blake's kindness of heart than to his skill, and shews that the shrewdest of detectives may go astray in his judgment."

* * *

BY DOYLE OUT OF HOLMES?

by Father Francis Hertzberg

Being very much a new boy to old Boys' Books, I write with some trepidation, fearing to be accused of denigrating our common hero. I hasten to add that I am not attempting to do so, merely posing a question which older hands will, probably, dispose of out of hand. Is Sexton Blake a derivation from Sherlock Holmes? (And for that matter, is Dixon Hawke a descendant of Holmes strained through Blake.) Of course there will be great variation in the Blake saga, product of many hands, still growing after nearly eighty years, when compared with the sixty odd Holmes stories from the hand of one man, dead for half that time. But there are strong points of resemblance.

Blake appeared first only two years after the beginning of the series of Holmes short stories, during the first mad enthusiasm for the "new detection." He shared, as Mr. Turner pointed out, the di-syllabic first name and monosyllabic surname. He also shared Baker Street and a housekeeper called Martha. Parker gave him a similar aquiline profile and receding hairline at the temples. (Parker and Holmes' American illustrator, Dorrr Steele, shared the same fluid line.) Holmes served the Royal Houses of the Netherlands, Scandinavia, as well as England; the early Blake served the Kaiser. If this appears to put Blake in the shade, it must be remembered that whilst Holmes refused a knighthood, it was a peerage that Blake turned down. They shared the "Legion of Honour." Holmes worked for the Prime Minister. Blake for the Lord Chancellor - honours even?

Did Blake do his bit in Holland, Holmes did his in America? Blake's apartments were dynamited, Holmes were set afire by Moriarty's minions. Holmes did monographs on the preservation of footprints in plaster of paris, Blake on finger print forgery and ballistics. If Blake had a drunken brother so had Watson.

Blake can be pithy: "I'd rather work for nothing for a naval man like yourself than take banknotes from those who are careless of the honour of old Britain," but so then is Holmes: "My professional charges are on a fixed scale, I do not vary them, save when I remit them altogether." Blake's case of the Baron von Kravitch "luxury loving, aristocrat by night and picker up of cigarette ends by day is not un-reminiscent of Neville St. Claire, well off gentleman by night and a beggar with a twisted lip by day.

Is it just chance or the way of all detectives - or is there some link between the two Men from Baker Street? Note: Whilst the Holmes Saga ended with the twenties, Sexton Blake continued to flourish and develop for decades after this. Mr. W. Howard Baker once said in a "new look" editorial that "Sexton Blake must not be dated, as Sherlock Holmes is."

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THAT MICHAEL STORM STORY

by W. O. G. Lofts

I was greatly interested in Cyril Rowe's recent piece in

Blakiana on the book he had by 'Michael Storm' and which he had discovered the same as being in a Boys Friend Library. In comparing the two books, there is no doubt that it is the same tale being word for word printed. The Boys Friend Library No. 194 (second series) did however have an author's name. This being 'Innis Hale' which according to my records was used by not 'Michael Storm' but by S. C. Hook - the writer of the famous Jack, Sam and Pete stories. But there is always the possibility that more than one author used the pen-name as it is known in other cases in our hobby.

Strange, as it may seem, there is just no record of the B.F.L. in old Amalgamated Press files - nor any honorarium paid, which strongly suggests that the author was then deceased. And I am certain that the story was a reprint from an earlier serial - though where at the moment I just don't know. Blackie's who have been approached on the subject, say that all their records were destroyed of their book period (1945) in the last war - but as far as they know, it was published not via the author, but in some agreement with the A.P. Personally, I have no doubt that 'Michael Storm' died somewhere about 1910 abroad. According to an editor way back in 1908 he was already a man in his late fifties, and impossible for him to be in a police officer capacity in the 1930's. If the B.F.L. had been original there certainly would have been a record of it, and I'm quite inclined to think that the U.J. announcement about it being by a 'secret service agent' with a pinch of salt. Incidentally there was another 'Michael Storm' writing about 1945, lurid, sensational paperbacks with such titles as 'The Hot Baby on a Cold Slab' and unquestionably this author had no connection whatsoever with our writer.

If any of the older collectors can recall a serial with the title of 'The Grey Messengers' or 'The Death Drums' in any of the old papers, I would be delighted to hear from them.

Most certainly I agree with Cyril Rowe, that the story was very well written, and although I am one of the last people to assume anything by the style of writing - I must confess that it does read more like 'Michael Storm' than S. Clarke Hook.

TENSE MELODRAMA FROM 60 YEARS AGO IN OUR CLASSIC SERIAL

THE ONLY WAY

"Master Courtney, please?"

Morning school was over, and most of the fellows were in the Close when Parker, Sir Hilton Popper's head-keeper, came up to the School House. Many of the fellows knew him by sight, and some of them gathered round in the hall to see what he wanted.

Parker's face was ill-tempered, perhaps because he had a black eye, the result of the blow Valence had given him the previous night. Trotter grinned as he came up, and Parker asked for Courtney.

"I'll take him in a message," said Trotter.

"I've got a letter for the young gentleman," said Parker grimly, "and Sir Hilton's orders was that I was to deliver it into his own hands."

"I'll find him," said the page.

"I'll wait 'ere till you do!" said Parker.

The grim-looking keeper, in his gaiters, attracted many curious glances as he stood waiting in the hall. Bob Cherry guessed that he had come on account of what had happened the previous night, but he could not guess why he asked for Courtney instead of Valence. It was certainly Valence who had been out after the partridges.

Courtney came in a few minutes. He was looking perplexed.

"You asked to see me?" he inquired.

The keeper looked at him scrutinisingly.

"You are Master Courtney?"

"That is my name."

"I reckon you're the same fellow," said Parker. "You gave me this black eye last night."

Courtney stared at him in amazement.

"I gave you that black eye?" he repeated.

"You did!"

"You must be dreaming," said Courtney, in wonder. "I didn't stir out of the school last night. I don't remember ever seeing you before. Who are you?"

The keeper grinned sourly.

"Name of Parker," he said. "I've

brought a note to you from Sir Hilton."

"To me?"

"That's wot I said!"

"I suppose there's a mistake of some sort," said Courtney. "But if you don't keep a civil tongue in your head you'll go out of here on your neck."

"If you lay 'ands on me, young gent, you'll find me 'arder to tackle than I was last night."

"I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about," said Courtney impatiently. "If you have a letter from Sir Hilton, you'd better give it to me."

"'Ere's the letter!" said the keeper surlily.

He fumbled in his pocket, drew the letter out, and handed it to the Greyfriars prefect. Courtney took it, and the keeper departed.

Courtney turned the letter over in his hands in wonder. Valence came in, and glanced at him. Valence was very pale.

Courtney went into his study with the letter. He closed the door, opened the letter, and uttered an exclamation of utter amazement as he read it.

For this is how it ran:

"Master Courtney, - My head-keeper reports to me that he caught you in the woods last night, with your pockets and a bag full of my birds. I knew that the poacher who has done so much damage to my preserves was a Greyfriars boy. I give you your choice. You can either come to my house at six o'clock to-day, and take a thorough trashing for your conduct - a sound flogging, as hard as I can lay it on - or I will place the matter in the hands of the police.

Hilton Popper."

Courtney dropped the letter in blank astonishment.

"The man's stark, staring mad," he muttered. "What on earth has given him the idea that I was in his coverts last night?"

There was a tap on the door, and Valence came in. He was looking pale and harassed. His glance fell on the

letter on the floor.

"Is that the letter from old Popper?" he asked.

"Yes."

"May I read it?"

"If you like."

Valence picked up the letter, and read it. Then he sank into a chair, with a hoarse cry. Courtney fixed his eyes upon him.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Oh, can't you see?"

"No, I can't!" said Courtney tartly.

"It was you who were in the coverts last night, stealing his game - you whom his keepers caught? You are safe enough. He seems to imagine that it was me."

"Oh!"

"How they could have got the idea into their heads I can't imagine."

Valence groaned.

"I shall send Sir Hilton a message explaining," said Courtney.

"What!"

"Oh, I shan't mention your name," said Courtney scornfully. "I shall merely say that I was not on his ground last night. Fortunately, Wingate can bear me witness. What I can't understand is - how they got hold of my name."

"But - but if you do this, Popper will come here --"

"Well, I shall be cleared."

"But - I - I --"

"You!" said Courtney. "I don't see that you've got anything to be afraid of. You say you had your face blacked, so the keeper can't recognise you. It's all right for you."

"But - but --" stammered Valence.

"Don't you see that it's quite clear that there was a Greyfriars senior there - the two keepers will swear to that, and that he owned up to belonging to Greyfriars, and gave the name of a Greyfriars fellow."

"You gave your name?"

"Not my own name!"

Courtney started.

"You unspeakable rotter!" he shouted.

"You don't mean to say that you gave my name?"

The cad of the Sixth winced.

"I did it in the hurry of the moment," he faltered.

"You gave my name?"

"I had to give them a name, and I blurted out the first one I thought of - not my own. Do you see? I never thought at the time - of this."

"You cad!"

"I - I thought you'd get clear all right if there was an enquiry."

"You mean you thought you could depend on me to be fool enough not to give you away!" exclaimed Courtney angrily.

Valence cowered.

"For goodness sake, Courtney, stand by me," he whimpered. "I'm ruined if you don't. I promised you last night to give it up for good -- I meant it. Don't let me be sacked from the school when I'm starting fresh."

"Do you want me to take the blame for what you've done?" exclaimed Courtney, in angry astonishment. "If somebody doesn't go to Sir Hilton Popper to take that flogging he'll come up here."

"I know he will."

"And the Head will expel the chap who's found to be the poacher. You don't expect me to get expelled from the school on your account, do you?"

"No! No - but --"

"If you did, you'd be disappointed," said Courtney savagely. "Do you think I could go home to tell my pater I'd been expelled - to save a rotten blackguard who couldn't behave himself decently after a dozen warnings?"

"Oh, pile it on!" said Valence bitterly. "It's manly to hit a chap when he's down."

Courtney's face softened.

"I'm sorry I said that - but I must clear myself."

"If you can prove it wasn't you --"

"I can easily do that."

"If you do, I'm ruined," groaned Valence. "The Head will know there was a senior of Greyfriars poaching on Sir Hilton's estate last night --"

"He won't know it was you."

"He will soon know. He will tell Wingate to inquire into it - and Wingate knows already."

Courtney started.

"Wingate will have the report all

ready for him," said Valence in a tremulous voice. "And two of the juniors know. Cherry and Wharton picked up a partridge I dropped in getting in last night. If every fellow in the school is questioned, they'll talk."

Courtney clenched his hands.

"Oh, you fool! You've done it now. I warned you yesterday, and you only insulted me in return."

"You can save me."

"I would save you if I could, for - for somebody else's sake; but I can't be sacked from the school in your place."

"It needn't come as far as that."

Courtney brightened up.

"Of course not!" he exclaimed. "The old fellow gives you a chance - and it's very decent of him, too, and shows he's not so black as he's been painted. If you go up to his house and take the flogging, it's all serene."

Valence gave a cry.

"I can't!"

"Why can't you?"

"I couldn't bear it. I'd rather be expelled!" groaned the miserable fellow. "You know what a brute he is. You remember his being summoned for assault, for horse-whipping a boy who trespassed in his woods, and he had to pay a lot of money to the kid's parents to keep the case from going any farther. I don't believe he's given this chance out of decency. He'd rather flog a fellow with his own hands than leave him to any other punishment. He'd rather cut the skin off my back with a riding-whip than have me expelled from Greyfriars."

Courtney nodded slowly.

"I daresay you're right."

Valence groaned miserably.

"I couldn't face it. I believe it would kill me. I'd rather be expelled a hundred times."

"Think of your people," said

Courtney sharply. "Take the flogging; it will save you from the sack."

Valence shuddered.

"I can't!"

"You must!"

"I can't - and I won't!" gasped Valence. "It's impossible. If you don't choose to help me, I shall be

expelled. And Violet will be cut up over it, you know that!"

Courtney smiled bitterly.

"I know she will; and it's for her sake I'd save you if I could. But you can save yourself by taking the flogging."

"I can't - I can't!"

"How can I help you? You don't want me to be sacked, I suppose, to save you from a flogging?" demanded Courtney scornfully. "You couldn't be idiot enough to ask a thing like that."

"No, no -- but --"

"But what?"

"They think it was you," faltered Valence. "If - if you go there, and don't say anything, they will still think it was you."

Courtney drew a deep breath.

"Is it possible that you're asking me to go and take the flogging for you?" he asked, with such a world of contempt and bitter scorn in his voice that it stung even Valence to the quick.

The coward groaned aloud.

"Well, let them do as they like,"

he muttered. "It will mean the sack for me. I don't care. Better that than to be cut to pieces by the cruel hound's riding-whip! I shan't go to his house; that's settled. Let them do as they like."

And he staggered from the study.

Courtney remained alone. A sweet, kind face was before his mind - the face of Valence's sister, who had asked him to help her brother. One word from Violet Valence meant very much to Arthur Courtney. He knew that Valence would be expelled rather than take the savage flogging the baronet intended for the culprit; and he knew what a terrible blow that would be for his sister, whose pride in her handsome brother was great, and who never could or would understand how utterly unworthy he was of her kind affection. If he could only have saved the miserable wretch, for Violet's sake! But it was impossible. If Valence had not the courage to save himself, he was ruined!

(MORE DRAMA FROM EARLY
IN THE CENTURY NEXT
MONTH)

NELSON LEE COLUMN

EARLY STRUGGLES

by Bob Blythe

THE BOYS' HERALD

In 1910/12 E.S.B. was engaged in writing one of the longest serials (if not the longest) in the GEM, "The Iron Island" and its sequel "The Brotherhood of Iron," but although this provided him with a steady income, the cheques were small and in consequence, other stories had to be written and sold, to keep the ever-present wolf from the door.

As a result of conversations with Hinton, the editor of the GEM, he evolved an adventure yarn of the sea which, with Hinton's recommendation was passed on to Horace Phillips, then editor of the BOYS' HERALD. Brooks took a great deal of trouble over this story and wrote, in great detail, a three page synopsis, which he sent in the first place to Hinton.

We start this correspondence with a short extract from a paragraph of this synopsis, partly to outline the story, and partly to show how E.S.B. wrote a synopsis.

Dear Mr. Hinton,

..... I have been thinking out an idea for a sea story such as you outlined. For the main plot of the story I suggest the following:- The hero, a boy of about fifteen, could decide to run away to sea, partly because his mother treats him very badly. His mother has told him that his father is dead, but somehow he has a feeling that this is not the truth, for every quarter, regularly, a letter comes from a port in Java, containing money. He can never find out who is the sender, but believes it to be his father, who he hasn't seen since he was a child of three. There is a mystery surrounding his father which he can never fathom.....

Hinton was satisfied with the synopsis and asked for the first instalment to be written up.

May 22nd, 1911.

Dear Mr. Hinton,

I enclose herewith the first instalment of the new story. I do not send any "Brotherhood of Iron" because I have been extra careful with the opening of the BOYS'

HERALD tale, and consequently it has monopolised a good deal of my time.

In case you want any of the "Brotherhood" to-morrow I can let you have it if you will notify me. But failing any message from you to this effect I will bring 12,000 words with me when I come to see you on Wednesday.

With regard to the title - "The Secret of the Lagoon" - this is, of course, only provisional. It would be a simple matter to have the diamonds in a secret place on a little islet in the centre of a lagoon. This perhaps would be a good wheeze as the islet could be transformed for a time into a kind of stronghold. The word "lagoon" also seems to smack of the Pacific islands. However, I attach a few alternative titles for your approval.

Yours sincerely,
E.S.B.

This also was satisfactory and it was decided to publish in the BOYS' HERALD and the matter was passed to Phillips, as editor of that paper.

May 26th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I shall be glad if you will call and see me on Monday, afternoon about 3.30.

Yours very truly,
HORACE PHILLIPS

May 28th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

Thank you for your letter received Saturday morning. In accordance with your request I will call at your office at half-past-three to-morrow - Monday - afternoon.

Yours sincerely, E.S.B.

The title had now been finally fixed as "The Stowaway's Quest," and the following letter is interesting, inasmuch as it shows that a non-de-plume was asked for. E.S.B. had not had his own name used on any story published by the A.P. at this point.

May 30th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

With regard to the non-de-plume, would you mind choosing one of the following:

Lewis Crawford
Oliver Hoyle
Norman Greaves
Aspall Storham
Andrew Lester
Roland Boyne

I am getting on with the second instalment of "The Stowaway's Quest" and will let you have it on Thursday morning. The curtain to the first instalment I enclose herewith.

Yours sincerely, E.S.B.

The correspondence concerning "The Stowaway's Quest" from here on need no comment from me and so I give them as written. I

have left out several which merely record deliveries of various chapters.

June 6th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Can you finish up instalment two with the rescue of the hero and his friends by Rufus Crang in his hydroplane? I am perhaps wanting this for a front picture. In any case, please let me have the remainder of the instalment by an early post.

Owing to the coronation holidays we have to go to press a good deal in advance. This means that I must have instalments three and four as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully, HORACE PHILLIPS

June 7th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

Thank you for your letter of yesterday's date. It seems that I have been under a wrong impression, for I thought the matter I took you last Friday was sufficient to make up the second instalment. However, I now enclose some copy which finishes the instalment at the point you mention - the saving of Stanton, Harry and Billy, by the hydroplane.

I have noted what you say with regard to the Coronation holidays and I shall certainly not keep you waiting for copy. This week, however, my parents are leaving for the country, and what with packing-up, and getting in a batch of work for the "Gem" - which was imperative - I have been unable to start instalment three so far. I am taking particular care over the yarn and do not wish to rush through the instalment in the midst of packing. You can rely on it for certain, however, first post Monday morning, and the fourth instalment will be in your hands next Wednesday. After that I can get well ahead, and keep you supplied with stuff in advance.

I will call at your office to-morrow in accordance with the arrangement, and trust to see you with regard to the fourth instalment, which I shall bring up with me next Wednesday from Suffolk.

Yours sincerely, E.S.B.

P.S.

Should you urgently require the 3rd instalment - or some portion of it - before Monday, as above, I will do my best to let you have it. E.S.B.

June 11th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

You will see immediately that the enclosed does not represent a full instalment - indeed it is only a third of what I intended to send. I am very sorry I cannot enclose the lot, but owing to a breakdown while motor-cycling down here, I was unable to arrive here at the expected time.

I am posting on the remainder of the instalment to-morrow, and will, as arranged, bring up the fourth instalment complete on Wednesday morning.

Trusting I am causing you no inconvenience over this mishap, and with apologies.

I am, Dear Mr. Phillips,

Sincerely yours, E.S.B.

June 16th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I am very disappointed that you have not yet sent me the remainder of instalment four of "The Stowaway's Quest" as promised. Please let me have this without fail on Monday morning.

Unless you can keep up to time with the instalments I shall have no alternative but to close down the story.

Yours sincerely,
p.p. HORACE PHILLIPS

June 17th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

It was with considerable surprise I read your letter of yesterday's date received this afternoon. I got the remainder of the fourth instalment done all right, and you should have had it in your hands the first thing on Friday morning, as promised. Imagine my surprise, on making inquiries, when I found that the letter was not posted till Friday night! I am exceedingly sorry that you should have been inconvenienced over this matter, and in future you may be sure I shall personally attend to the posting of my letters.

As I said in my previous letter you can absolutely rely on getting the fifth instalment, complete, on Tuesday morning, and I shall certainly not fail to keep up to time with the future instalments.

Again expressing my regret that you should have been disappointed.

Sincerely yours, E.S.B.

July 18th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I enclose herewith the synopsis of the first instalment of the suggested Australian story, and shall call upon you to-morrow morning - when I will bring the 9th instalment of the STOWAWAY'S QUEST.

Sincerely yours, E.S.B.

July 20th, 1911.

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I simply couldn't get to the point we arranged without making the instalment too long. But as you say you do not wish it to end with the adventurers sighting the Celebes, I think it is perhaps as well. In any case, I am sending you the first part of the 10th instalment on Sunday night, so you can terminate this instalment at the point where they board the Celebes, with the mutiny progressing, if you so wish it.

Yours sincerely, E.S.B.

"The Stowaway's Quest" is nearly finished and E.S.B. has submitted a "Bush" story.

July 21st, 1911.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I am returning herewith the synopsis of your suggested "Bush" story.

After careful consideration I do not see much promise in this plot. Generally speaking it does not break any fresh ground, and you depend for a start upon a very improbable incident.

A black tracker would not make the mistake you refer to.

Perhaps you will let me see something else on more original lines.

Yours sincerely,
HORACE PHILLIPS

MORE NEXT MONTH

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 91 — Boys' Friend 4d Library No. 266 — "The Rio Kid"

The Rio Kid stories constitute one of Charles Hamilton's strangest excursions into the realm of fiction. Eric Fayne declared that he never once guessed that the Magnet and Gem author was also Ralph Redway, and this is hardly surprising: after all, the gentle ironies of the Greyfriars situation were scarcely appropriate to the life-and-death saga of the Rio Kid, whose precarious existence was related in taut and exciting prose. Nevertheless, with the advantage of hindsight, we can now observe all the clues that were strewn in our path: the stories first appeared in the Popular in the late 'twenties, and that was a paper almost exclusively devoted to Hamiltoniana; the Cedar Creek stories had much in common with the Rio Kid tales, and no one could doubt that Cedar Creek was genuine Hamiltoniana; and the style of Ralph Redway, though terse, was not entirely deficient in imagery of a well-recognized type. ("Hope in the hour of the shadow of death ran through his veins like wine.") I certainly find no difficulty in crediting Charles Hamilton with the authorship of these stories that he claimed.

Boys' Friend Library No. 266 must have been a reprint of some of the earliest stories. Piece by piece the initial sequence of events was revealed. The Rio Kid had been held up bringing the pay back from the bank in Frio. Rancher Dawney, a hard case, had refused to believe this story (and in view of the Rio Kid's acknowledged quickness on the draw, who could blame him?). Dawney had run the Rio Kid off his ranch and branded him a thief, and later he had offered a reward of a thousand dollars for his capture. Subsequently, the Rio Kid, now an outlaw, had been involved in all sorts of incidents, and practically every misdeed was laid at his door. By the time that the Rio Kid had convinced Dawney of his innocence, it was too late in the day to be of much use.

It is impossible not to admire the competence with which Charles Hamilton handled the technical terms and slang of the Wild West. The stories seem authentic and at times compelling reading, but there is (in the early tales at least) a disturbing lack of humanity in a hero whose lips curl back from his teeth and whose heart is full of

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 161. THE UPSTARTS.

It is impossible, from one single novel, to get much knowledge of an author's outlook. From a number of stories, spread over many years, it is possible to learn a very great deal.

Many of us have read and studied the stories of Charles Hamilton for our entire lives, and, in consequence, we know a very great deal about him. An author writes with tongue in cheek, and so we cannot judge his character from his stories. We do not know whether he was generous or selfish; brave or cowardly; bright or sulky; wise or foolish. But, because all writers try to make their writing into a form of propoganda, we do know a great deal about his views of life and his beliefs.

One thing which stands out very definitely about Charles Hamilton is his belief in breeding. Hamilton's lesson was that breeding counts, and that you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Money didn't matter. Family and background did.

I find myself very much in agreement with most of Hamilton's philosophies, but I never found comfort in his stories of upstarts - and there were a number of such stories. The author showed, more or less vividly, that few things are as vulnerable as vanity. But, almost invariably, the central figure - the upstart - was drawn with no redeeming features at all, and a main weakness of the stories was the collection of snobs who buzzed round the upstart - and the snobs were always the caddish characters, as though all the vices are the prerogative of the cads of this world. The snobbery, in fact, both at Greyfriars and Rookwood, was far too extreme to be credible.

Plotwise, the Montmorency series of Rookwood in 1921 was the best of all the upstart stories. On account of the twists and turns of its plot, the series held the interest, but vanity and snobbery were so overwritten that, for any but the most insensitive, it made almost embarrassing reading. George Huggins had been a pantry-boy at Goby Hall. His father made money, changed his name to Montmorency, and sent his son to Rookwood.

The inherent unpleasantness of the story causes one to analyse

it in a way which we should not be tempted to do in another tale. We question whether the pantry-boy from Goby Hall would ever have been accepted for entry into a school like Rookwood. We do not pass over the contrivance which took the young heir to Goby Hall to Rookwood in his turn. It was, as Owen Conquest himself might well have said, Pelion piled on Ossa when, later on, the father of Huggins-Montmorency was in trouble with the police over irregularities in his bankruptcy. And it was the final crunch when Jimmy Silver, on holiday still later, found that Montmorency was the waiter at his dining table. That last item was so unnecessary that the added contrivance left an unpleasant taste in the mouth.

The episode at school, when the snobs tortured the unhappy Goby to make him spill the beans about the former servant in his father's house was, perhaps, not so incredible - boys can be intensely cruel to one another - but it did not make happy reading.

In the Montmorency series, Owen Conquest pulled out all the stops to prove that the qualities we possess never make us so ridiculous as those we pretend to have - but he would have hammered home the point more effectively had his writing of the story been a trifle more restrained.

Only a few weeks later, Rookwood presented the same plot in reverse. This time, the Marquis of Maybrook wished to reward his gamekeeper's son, Morcom, who had saved the elder son of the Marquis from a watery grave. Morcom was to go to Rookwood. Perhaps Morcom was a Boys' Friend reader and so knew of the vicissitudes of Montmorency. At any rate, Morcom was afraid that he would meet snobbery at Rookwood, and did not want to go. So Lord Bob Egerton, the younger son of the Marquis of Maybrook, sent Morcom away on a Cornish holiday, while he, Bob, went to Rookwood as Morcom. And Rookwood bestowed on Lord Bob the treatment which it reserved especially for the sons of gamekeepers.

And this tale gets by in a way which the Montmorency series did not. Snobbery is again rampant, but it is to some extent amusing for the reader knows that the victim of the snobbery is really Lord Bob. Quite a jolly little series this one.

The Montmorency series, of a lad who was less than he

pretended, and the Morcom series, of a lad who was more than he pretended, were very much alike, yet they presented a strong contrast one with the other.

Rookwood was the most snobbish of all the Hamilton schools. And the year 1921 proved it with a vengeance. Handled with a little more sympathy, the Montmorency series might have rung the bell. But Hamilton had no sympathy to spare for upstarts.

This, of course, is an adult appraisal. It is quite certain that plenty Rookwood readers of 50 years ago lapped it all up with relish.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held on 29th June, 1971.

A hushed group of eight regular members assembled to the immensely sad news of the sudden death of Edward J. Davey a few days earlier, on his return from holiday in Devon. Ted, as he was affectionately known to us all, was one of our original Founder Members and an ardent and most enthusiastic supporter of our Club over the years. In recent years he had been Chairman for two consecutive terms and our Vice-Chairman up to the A.G.M. in May this year. His personal initiative lay behind many of the Club's recent social activities and he will always be associated by us all with one, Coker, to whom he made frequent amusing reference. Chairman Ivan Webster represented us at the funeral and the Club sent a floral tribute. Ted will be sadly missed by all who enjoyed the privilege of his friendship down the years.

We stood in silent memory of our old friend before continuing, as we are sure would have been his wish, with our evening's programme. Tom Porter produced the Anniversary Number, Nelson Lee Library (Old Series) No. 160, "S.O.S." or "Tricked by Wireless" dated 29th June, 1918, and this 53 years old to the day. Collectors' items were the new Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee Catalogues.

Bill Morgan then presented a stimulating talk entitled "Memory and our Hobby." This was followed by an amusing recitation by

Chairman, Ivan. Laughter gave way to perplexity as we tried to answer a difficult quiz by Norman Gregory. Then followed the raffle, a reading by Tom Porter from "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School" (Armada) and the evening concluded with Tom's celebrated "Greyfriars Bingo."

IAN BENNETT

Vice-Chairman.

0 0 0

NORTHERN

Meeting held 10th July, 1971.

The Chairman, in opening the meeting, had more sad news to report, this time the death of Gerry Allison and Geoffrey paid tribute and expressed deep sympathy to members of the family in their sad loss. Gerry was one of the founder members of the Club and two other founder members at the meeting, Harry Barlow and Bill Williamson, said a few words about Gerry and the Library, for which he did so much hard work.

The vacant position of Treasurer and Librarian was filled by Mollie Allison.

It was suggested that some permanent form of tribute be devised in memory of all long-standing members and this is to be discussed at a later meeting.

A new member, John Cox of Huddersfield, was welcomed, with the hope that this will be the first meeting of many he will attend.

The Howard Baker future programme was discussed and also a tentative exhibition in the new building of the Yorkshire Post.

A few questions posed by new member John Cox provoked discussion and the programme was closed by another of Jack Allison's enjoyable crosswords - this one having some clues that really caused head scratchings.

Next meeting 14th August.

R. HODGSON

Hon. Secretary.

Eric Fayne continues the series in which he recalls the cinemas and theatres he visited long ago.

THE UPSTAIRS CINEMAS

The day of the very large cinema is long past. Nowadays it is a common thing to come on two small cinemas together, one upon the other. Years ago, the local authorities tended to frown upon cinemas which were run high up in some particular block. This, fairly obviously, was with the thought in mind of the difficulty of exits in case of an emergency, especially at a time when operating-box fires were not entirely unknown.

An odd factor, in silent film days, was that towns which were extremely well-off in live entertainment were usually poorly catered for in the silver screen line. We have already referred to Chatham as coming into this category. Portsmouth was a similar town with the same factor evident. Yet another was Woolwich.

In the twenties, Woolwich had no less than three very good live theatres. The Royal Artillery Theatre, up on Woolwich Common, presented first-class plays and musical comedies, many of the latter being toured by the famous firm of Macdonald and Young.

Woolwich Hippodrome was a music hall, resplendent in red plush, thick carpets, and gilt. Though it was a comfortable and pleasant theatre, it never was quite in the same class as the Stoll, the Moss Circuit, or the Syndicate Halls, though it was certainly a more modern house than plenty of the Syndicate music halls. It stressed variety more than revue. It reminded me to some extent of the Hippodromes at Southend and Putney.

Woolwich Empire was the third live theatre in the town, and, though it was a large and well-equipped house, it offered the "third-class" touring attraction, similar to that presented at Barnard's at Chatham, the Grand at Gravesend, the Queen's at Poplar, and plenty of others. Woolwich Empire was not in the same class as the other two houses in the town, possibly due to its position. It stood near the river; the splendid L.C.C. tram service, which had by-passed the more classy Powis Street, used the road where the Empire stood, but it always seemed rather isolated and off the beaten track.

So Woolwich, when I knew it as silent films were passing away, was very well off for live entertainment, but had little then in the way of cinemas. There were only three, and these were not elaborate. There was one facing on Woolwich Market, and there were two more small picture houses in the road which ran past the station towards Eltham. One of these stood right beside Woolwich Arsenal station. It was high over a block of shops or offices, and one mounted several flights of stone steps to reach the auditorium. Just why I paid my one visit to that little upstairs cinema I cannot recall. It is likely that I went simply out of curiosity. But I remember the film I saw, accompanied by the tinkling piano. It was named "Orange Blossoms," and it starred Myrna Loy.

I can bring to mind one other upstairs cinema, though no doubt there were others. This was the little cinema in Middleton-in-Teesdale, where, once again, one mounted long flights of stairs to reach a lofty auditorium. This was many years after my Woolwich visit, for I saw Jeannette Macdonald and Nelson Eddy in the unforgettable and delightful "Maytime."

URGENTLY SEEKING reasonable binding copies Gems 807, 828, 841, 852, 862. Top prices or my inferior copy plus Hamiltonia on generous exchange basis. Also wanted specimen comics of the twenties.

CHARLES VANRENEN, BOX 5046, PORT ELIZABETH, SOUTH AFRICA.

XX

... IF SO, PLEASE GET CRACKING AND SEND IT ALONG TO THE EDITOR.

POST-WAR ST. JIM'S

by H. Truscott

If the prosecuting counsel in a trial asks a witness about one aspect of a particular matter the defence counsel is entitled to go deeper into that matter, to bring all of it, if he sees fit, to light. In a recent C.D. Roger Jenkins wrote about the Goldhawk St. Jim's stories. He spent roughly half of the article describing how they came into being, referred briefly to the first, TOM MERRY'S SECRET, admitted that the stories were good value for money, but adversely criticised (without naming them) some of the more serious stories by saying that Hamilton's post-war ability did not stretch to handling the subtleties of characters such as Cardew; for good measure, he brought in as evidence a remark by Hamilton to the effect that Cardew seemed to have turned into a scoundrel. Like the defence counsel, I want to go into this matter a little deeper.

In my experience, it has always tended to be one of the adverse aspects of devotees of Old Boys' Books (and this includes experts) that they too easily mistake personal preference for critical assessment, remembering that criticism properly means finding out what a particular work or object is; I have known many such devotees who were surprised to learn that it is possible to admire what one does not like. Taking as impartial a view as possible, the stories in the Goldhawk books are as good as numbers of pre-war St. Jim's stories - of a type. That type is mainly the kind of single issue story for which the GEM, comparatively speaking, was more noted than was the MAGNET - again, comparatively speaking; with suitably different details of style in each magazine; just as although it is true that Wagner in DIE MEISTERSINGER is as much Wagner as he is in TRISTAN UND ISOLDE, yet the elements mainly to the fore are very different in each case. Those who do not specially like St. Jim's will naturally have noted the points in which such post-war stories as the Goldhawks differ from those prominently among the best of the pre-war. And there are differences; it is true that many of the plots are old ones; again, my experience is that Hamilton scarcely ever used a plot more than once without handling it differently each time, and nearly always as well as before, and this holds good here. The differences are that, as in the post-war Greystriars stories but not to quite the same extent, the number and identity of characters is far more circumscribed than was usual before the war; and, generally speaking, the stories tend to be of a more serious nature than numbers of the earlier GEM stories. These are the conditions, however, and it is no use - indeed, it is scarcely fair - to complain because they are not something they do not set out to be (I think one must remember here, too, that as with the post-war Bunter books, Richards was not necessarily writing for old readers but for a new generation, where much needed to be re-introduced). If one takes just these eleven stories, there is enough variety; it is always easier to state what something is not than to be positive and assess and, most important, appreciate what that something is; to discover what the artist set out to do rather than to assume that he intended to do something else and arraign him for not doing it.

If one considers these stories on these terms, what comes to light is that they are all tautly written, always with new sidelights where old material is used, and that they add an autumnal view of Richards' mastery such as is often found in the later stages of an artist's work. There is a controlled richness working on a small but vivid scale, plus a steeliness which will bend but will not break - a master enjoying his mastery. D'ARCY'S DISAPPEARANCE is an example of a plot he had used a number of times before, at least twice with the same character as in this story. THE WANDERING SCHOOLBOY, in the very first HOLIDAY ANNUAL, had Gussy "wetishin'" from St. Jim's for a time, visiting Greystriars and Rookwood; the same idea was used differently in the GEM in 1922, Gussy taking in Cliff House and Highcliffe as well this time. In this latest version we have Gussy rescuing Mr. Quelch from a none-too-friendly bull and, as before, the treatment is quite different. Only the bare framework is the same. There is a new

concentration - perhaps too much for some - on a small area in this, as in most of the others, but I, who was, and am, a great St. Jim's lover anyway, find the new approach in these tales vastly interesting, and indicative of a more laconic method consistently maintained. This is fascinating, and more than makes up for what of the older atmosphere may be lacking.

One very interesting point is that Cardew, who features in several of the Goldhawks, is evidently still a fairly new boy. He is still known as "the cad," which he was not in so many words later in the GEM saga, he is even referred to at one point as being a recent comer, and he makes one reference to something in Talbot's past of which he has heard but the nature of which he does not know. Now, it is true that a number of these stories feature Cardew at his most caddish (which is true to his early type, anyway) - but it is not true that he is any more so than he could be pre-war. Nor is it true that the light, bantering character is absent or less surely handled than before, although Hamilton seemed to think it was; it is present in D'ARCY'S DISAPPEARANCE, especially in the manner in which Cardew tells the other juniors that Gussy will be all right; he, Cardew, has prevailed upon the fellow responsible (himself, in fact, but he lets the others arrive at this point only gradually) to own up to heaving a book at Mr. Lathom. But I recommend as one of the best of these stories SKIMPOLE'S SNAPSHOT, in which the more enigmatic Cardew is well to the fore. This concerns a photographic competition held by the Rylcombe Gazette, in which Skimpole manages to take a highly compromising picture of Knox, which Manners rather uncharacteristically holds over Knox's head at one point. However, we have Cardew twice pulling Arthur Augustus' leg, the first time somewhat maliciously, allowing the swell to take eight pictures with a camera minus film! The second time the intention is benevolent: Cardew removes the roll of film containing a second set of pictures Gussy has taken, and substitutes another on which he takes a further eight. He allows Gussy to believe that these are what he has taken, with the result that Gussy wins the prize - with Cardew's snapshot! Not exactly a scoundrelly action.

This is as good as any pre-war single-issue GEM story in the heyday of that magazine, and yet holds touches that are new, and that I, for one, welcome. And the dialogue sparkles with all the old wit and invention. But Mr. Jenkins miscalculates somewhat when he says that one of the Goldhawk stories is about the length of a single GEM issue. The average of chapters in the GEM St. Jim's story was fourteen; in the Goldhawks it is between twenty and twenty-three, and chapter lengths are comparable.

One final point about these stories. Richards here, towards the end of his career, actually introduces a new boy, Ridd, a distant relation of Blake; he arrives in time to be a deciding factor in an election for Form captain - shades of Jimmy Silver's arrival at Rookwood. Nor is Ridd only a passenger for the one story; he is mentioned in others of the series, notably WHO RAGGED RAILTON?, where he has a fairly prominent place, and it seems likely that if Richards had continued with the St. Jim's stories Ridd would have been there to stay.

Finally, on the subject of Cardew and post-war stories, I would like to mention an outstanding Spring Book: TROUBLE FOR TOM MERRY. Not only is this one of the finest St. Jim's stories ever to come from Martin Clifford, but it has Cardew at first fully convinced that Tom Merry really did drop the dictionary on Knex's head, as practically everyone else also believes, while Tom believes that Cardew did it; Tom is at last convinced that Cardew did not do it, but, more important, Cardew is eventually equally certain that Tom did not, either; and Cardew sets his wits to work to find out who did do it, and succeeds. Once again, Cardew is up to pre-war standard, with all his old bantering wit, and the characteristic determination to fox the other juniors and hide the fact that he is helping a lame dog over a particularly unpleasant stile. This, also, is not precisely within my definition of a scoundrelly act.

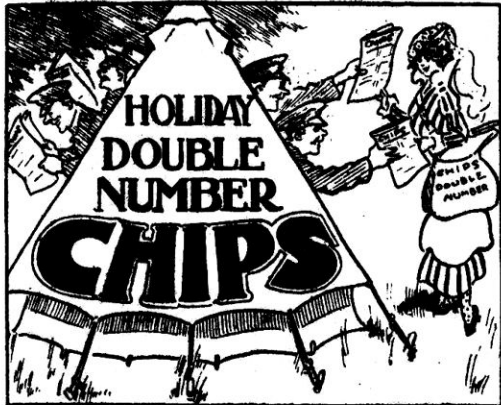
REVIEWEDWY SEARLES BROOKSBob Blythe
£1.25 inc.BIBLIOGRAPHY

This new edition of an invaluable book is an obvious necessity to all Nelson Lee Fans, which means all those who enjoy the various and vast stories which came from the pen of E. S. Brooks. It is, also, of enormous interest to anyone who has an interest in the periodicals of yesteryear. The book is a bottomless well of information gathered over years of tireless research.

This edition is a vast improvement on the previous one. The illustrations of the environs of St. Frank's, the photograph of the famous author, and the introduction by the author's son add lustre to a real jewel. Production is beyond reproach. Mr. Blythe deserves hearty congratulations for this new edition as a result of his enterprise.

* * *

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