

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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MARCH 1973

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A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER



HERLOCK SHOLMES

Recently on television there was a skit on Sherlock Holmes, under the title "Elementary My Dear Watson." I noticed that one or two TV critics in the national press were overwhelmed with admiration, and used the words "genius" and "brilliant" in describing it. My funny-bone is on a different wave-length, obviously, for I found it witless and unfunny.

Charles Hamilton did it all a thousand times better in the

original Greyfriars Herald over fifty years ago.

BEYOND RECALL

In January we chatted about literary critics, and, being human, we found excuses for our own and condemned other people's.

Just before Christmas, an enterprising publisher issued a book containing the words and music of a big selection of much-loved songs of many years ago. I thought it delightful, but a newspaper critic thought the opposite .. He like modern songs, and must have found much enjoyment in slating the old ones. An example, perhaps, of the pot calling the kettle black.

He really went to town by hurling insults at "Love's Old Sweet Song" and was scathing over the line "Once in the dear dead days beyond recall ..."

Nobody can deny that we have progressed in the last sixty years, but not nearly so much as we might have done if it hadn't been for the planners and the plotters.

Last month my dear late friend, Gemini, drew attention to "the poverty, the unemployment, the dirt, and the damage done to human dignity early in the century." Everything he said was true. Yet, so far as I can see, one evil has usually been replaced with another. And, if we are to believe everything we read in the papers and see on TV, there is still plenty of poverty, plenty of homelessness, plenty of unemployment, plenty of dirt - in fact, more dirt than ever.

MAGNETS GALORE

Last month, under this heading, I said that I had heard that the Magnet Building Society was giving away volumes of Magnets to prospective customers. I regret that I got the wrong end of the stick. The items given away are single reprint copies which are supplied by Mr. Howard Baker from Volume 8 of the Magnet facsimiles. I am sorry for any inconvenience my error may have caused anyone.

The Evening Standard, with the caption "Excruciating Pun of the Month," mentioned sets of six Magnets, with a wrapper round the set which compared the ample figure of Billy Bunter with the equally ample figure - in solid cash - which formed the assets of the Building Society.

A pretty bright idea this, on the part of somebody.

Still on the subject of last month's editorial, Mr. Lennard of Cheshire sent me a recent article from a North Country newspaper. The article referred to big sums paid for certain old periodicals - £500 for Superman No. 1, and £400, in New York, for No. 1 of the Magnet. It must have started some more attic-searching.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

DANNY'S DIARY

MARCH 1923

When I told my brother Doug that "Treasure Island" by Robert Louis Stevenson had started as a serial in the Union Jack he waved his arms in the air and said: "Don't mention that. I took it as one of my English Literature subjects in my Oxford Junior."

The series in the Boys' Friend, about Raby's misunderstanding with his friends, has continued this month. When the Fistical Four were attacked by the Bagshot Bounders, Raby took to his heels and ran. It looked bad, and his chums thought the worst. But in "The Fistical Funk," it turned out that Raby had seen Dick Pankley, the young brother of Pankley of Bagshot, struggling for life in the river - and Raby had gone to save him. Jimmy and Lovell and Newcome were apologetic, but Raby refused to be friends with them again.

"On Fighting Terms" was an amusing tale in which both Mornington and Mr. Dalton tried to patch up the quarrel by inviting all the Fistical Four to tea - but Raby wouldn't be coaxed.

However, the series wound up with "Chums Reunited." Raby went to the assistance of his former friends when they were attacked by Tommy Dodd and the Moderns - and after that all was calm and bright.

"Rivals of the River" was laid on to coincide with the University Boatrace. Classical seniors were to row against the Modern seniors - and Knowles plotted to bore holes in the Classics boat. However, Jimmy & Co. were waiting for him - and smothered him with green paint. And the Classics won the race the next day.

"Lovell's Wonderful Wheeze" was a real rib-tickler. The

wheeze was a crib on a piece of cardboard on the end of elastic. When the crib was released, it disappeared up the user's sleeve. All the form tried it - but Mr. Dalton soon spotted what was going on.

While on the subject of boat races, I must record that the University race was very close this year. Oxford beat Cambridge by less than a length.

Larry Semon is now on the front of the Kinema Comic. He appears in the cinemas in 2LO comedies, and they are great. He makes me split my sides at the pictures, and the drawings in the Kinema Comic are wonderfully good.

There has been a wonderful story in the Sexton Blake Library this month - "The Case of the Cabaret Girl." It features Granite Grant and Mlle. Mulie, and it is set in Vienna and London. Doug read it first and gave it to me, and Mum read it, too, though she found the small print a bit trying.

A pal of mine, whose dad plays in the orchestra at the New Cross Empire, got me two tickets for the show, and I took Mum to see a lovely variety programme. One act was named Revnell and West. Ethel Revnell was a very tall girl, and Gracie West was a small, dumpy one. Gracie said "Isn't it funny?" and Ethel said: "Do you mean funny ha-ha or funny peculiar?" I thought it a very good and original joke, and I must try to remember it.

The Magnet has been a bit funny ha-ha and a bit funny peculiar this month. Although the real Frank Richards wrote two of the stories, it has been rather a rag-bag in March.

"The Sporting Champion" was about the governors giving a silver cup to the best athlete in each form. There was a lot of very sentimental stuff about Penfold, whose father is a cobbler. But Vernon-Smith got the cup as the best athlete, and, as Penfold had tried so hard, they gave him £20 as a consolation prize.

In "Bunter's Latest," Bunter was annoyed when the Famous Five gave money to a dumb beggar. But Bunter then pretended to be dumb, with the aid of his minor. Though it came from the real Frank, and it was tickling in parts, it was just a bit too silly to be very popular with me.

"The Supreme Sacrifice" was a chunk of sentimental awfulness.

Stott of the Remove was ashamed of his brother, Clifford, who was a noble character. Clifford, "only a bank clerk," was sent to the Courtfield branch of his bank, to his brother's horror. Stott of the Remove got lost in the cold, wet fog. Clifford found him and Clifford took off his own clothes to put them over his brother. So Clifford died of exposure later in the Greyfriars sanny, and readers wept as the blinds were lowered. And Stott said "I will be a better boy in future in memory of my noble brother" or words to that effect. And Harry Wharton & Co. had lumps in their throats.

"Billy Bunter's Boat-Race Party" was a very light effort from the real Frank. By using his ventriloquism, Bunter took to town a party consisting of the Famous Five and Skinner and Co. A very mixed lot to go to the boat-race together.

Last of the month was "A Message from the Sea." This was a potted novel - so much in it that it all became fish-paste. A fellow saved from the sea, a message in a bottle, found by Bunter, a wicked uncle, an heir stolen as a baby - and a lot of new characters. All in 9 chapters.

Some readers of both the Magnet and Gem must have been soaked with tears this month. Not satisfied with one death from exposure in the Magnet, they gave us Lawrence pegging out from exposure in the Gem. The tale was "The Pluck of Edgar Lawrence," with which the month opened. Redfern and Lawrence quarrelled. Redfern's uncle then invited him to take a party for a long week-end to Cornwall, and he took 17 fellows. Redfern went treasure-hunting in a cave, and Lawrence saved him from the sea. The exposure gives Lawrence influenza, which turns to pneumonia. Oddly enough, they wire for Marie Rivers to come to Cornwall from St. Jim's. Presumably they have no nurses in Cornwall. Lawrence is dying, but he is still able to talk quite a lot.

"Don't reproach yourself, Reddy - don't, old man. The past is done with and I've nothing to forgive. But I want you to be with me at the finish. I don't want you to go away any more. You'll think of me sometimes, won't you, Reddy? You won't drive me out of your thoughts? I'm not afraid to die. I don't think any fellow need be, if he's gone through life with a straight bat. Don't cry, mater - don't cry. After all, death is but the beginning of a new life - a better, a fuller life. I've never been a religious fellow, as you know, Reddy, in the usual sense of the term. I'm afraid the Head's sermons used to go in at one ear and out at the other. But I believe that the real religion is that which a fellow carries about with him in his daily life - the sort of religion that prompts him to play the game, to help those who are weaker than himself,

to put honour before everything. That sort of fellow may not go to church for a year - for twenty years. But God won't forget him when his time comes. God never forgets a sportsman."

I felt a bit more cheerful. It seemed to me that there couldn't be much wrong with the lungs of a dying lad who could make a speech like that. But, nay. The author added: "Lawrence lay back upon his pillows. All hope had been abandoned now. The boy was dying."

But Lawrence was having us on.. He perked up, to live happily ever after. It must have been Marie Rivers' nursing.

After such a damp start to the month, the sun came out and the Gem was splendid. A grand new series was introduced with "The Fifth-Former's Secret." Blake & Co. were going to Abbotsford to see a boxing-match starring the Chicken, but St. Leger damages their bicycles so they cannot go. But Lowther sees the Chicken on the films, and when Oliver Lynn, St. Leger's cousin, arrives as a new boy at St. Jim's, Lowther recognizes Lynn as the Chicken.

In "The Schoolboy Pug," Lynn is put into Study No. 6, and Blake & Co. can't help turning up their noses at the new boy's manners and customs. He bullies them all, and throws them out of their study. It is only then that Tom Merry thinks it right to let Study No. 6 know that their new study-mate is an ex-prizefighter.

In "Cardew's Fighting Chum," Cardew thinks it a joke to take up Lynn and pretend to be his friend. But Lynn rescues Cousin Ethel from a number of thugs, and, after that, Blake & Co. are his real chums.

Final of the month was "Lynn's Loyalty." Lynn finds out that St. Leger has gone to a pub, and that Mr. Ratcliff is suspicious. So Lynn goes to help his cousin - and is caught himself in the Green Man.

This is a mighty fine series, and I hope it goes on for a long time yet.

At the pictures we have seen Eileen Percy in "The Flirt;" Reginald Denny in "The Kentucky Derby;" Alma Taylor in "The Pipes of Pan;" Mary Carr in "Silver Wings;" W. S. Hart in "White Oak;" Lionel Barrymore in "Boomerang Bill;" and Madge Bellamy in "Lorna Doone."

When I told Doug we had seen "Lorna Doone," he said: "I took that in English Lit. in my Oxford Junior." And I said: "This is where

I came in."

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

F. ADDINGTON

SYMONDS (His last words about Sexton Blake) presented by Victor Colby.

It was with very much regret that I learned of the death of Sexton Blake author Mr. F. Addington Symonds.

Just recently I came across a copy of the "Boys' Own Annual" edited by Jack Cox, published 1972, on a large city bookshop counter 'midst all sorts of modern annuals for the Xmas trade.

Thumbing through this copy of the Boys' Own Annual, I was surprised and delighted to see an article "Famous Detectives of Fiction" by F. Addington

No. 1. NEW AND ENLARGED SERIES!



Symonds, in pride of place, immediately following the editorial.

My mind went back to the first two Champion Annuals ever published (1924 and 1925) to which our Editor, Josie Packman, referred in the August Blakiana editorial, for in the 1925 Champion was an article entitled "Famous Fiction Detectives" by Earle Danesford now known to be F. Addington Symonds.

Two articles - titles almost identical, but separated in time by almost 50 years!

The subject matter had changed considerably but Sexton Blake was referred to warmly in both articles, and mention was made in both to the author's own "Panther Grayle" the modern methods detective who was featured in the weekly Champion.

Here, by way of comparison, are the detectives dealt with in the two articles: -

1925. Sherlock Holmes, M. Dupin, Professor Van Dusen, Dr. John Thorndyke, Craig Kennedy, Paul Beck, M. Poirot, Luther Trent, The Man in the Corner, Astrol, Lecocq, Father Brown, Ashton Kirk, Old Ebbie, Sexton Blake, Panther Grayle, Nelson Lee, Ferrers Locke, "Q", Royston Gower, Carson Holt, Splash Page, Jeffery Darke, Curtis Carr and Kingston Carew.

Referring to Sexton Blake the author says: -

"It would be probably no more than the bare truth to affirm that Sexton Blake is easily the most famous and popular of all present-day detectives. He has had a wonderful vogue and although he has been "running" for many years now, his popularity is as widespread as ever if not indeed, more so."

1972. "Talk of detectives and you may well think of old-timers Sherlock Holmes and Sexton Blake or the modern stars of television - Charlie Barlow in Softly, Softly, or Chief Robert Ironside, the chair-bound San Francisco detective."

After this preamble the author traces the origin and growth of the detective story, mentioning in passing, the following detectives:

Auguste Dupin, Wilkie Collins' Sgt. Cuff, Old Ebenezer Grice, Martin Hewitt, Prof. Van Dusen, Fleming Stone, Old Man in the Corner, Hamilton Cleek, Charlie Chan, Max Carrados, the blind

detective, Uncle Abner, Quentin Quayne of the old Strand Magazine, Dr. Thorndyke, M. Hanaud of the Paris Surete, Philo Vance, Lord Peter Wimsey, Reggie Fortune, Father Brown, Ellery Queen, Sir Henry Merrivale, Dr. Gideon Fell, Perry Mason, Ludovic Travers, Albert Campion, Gervase Fen, Harvey Tuke, Hercule Poirot and the Official detectives Inspector French, Supt. Wilson, Inspector John Appleby, Chief Inspector MacDonald, Roderick Alleyn and the internationally famous Inspector Maigret.

Mention is made of colourful heroes such as Arsene Lupin and Raffles down to the Saint, The Toff, Lemmy Caution, Norman Conquest and Paul Temple. The author refers to one character as being a legitimate crime investigator and goes on "So, also, is Sexton Blake whose name was such a household word in Britain that it was invariably coupled with that of Sherlock Holmes. Blake, first invented nearly 80 years ago by Harry Blyth, was obviously modelled on Holmes although the two had very little in common except their physical appearance and the fact that both had their headquarters in Baker Street. (The modern Blake has chromium plated premises in Berkeley Square.) Sexton Blake appeared in innumerable stories by an army of chiefly anonymous authors, with translations into most European languages. His adventures have been portrayed on stage screen and television and his fans banded themselves into a Sexton Blake Circle, which like the Baker Street Irregulars (supporters of Holmes) meet regularly for lectures, readings and discussions. Collectors vie with each other in building up libraries of his stories and astonishingly high prices are paid for rare items."

The author rounded off his article by referring to Nick Carter, Nelson Lee, Dixon Hawke, Ferrers Locke and Panther Grayle.

It is good to know that at the end of his life the author was still able to write about the characters he loved and was able to have the resulting article published as recently as 1972, in an Annual that has had such a long tradition of all that is best in boys' books.

VICTOR COLBY

THE DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

September, 1923

THE IMMORTAL DETECTIVE in which we introduce you to somebody

you may already know

by Gwyn Evans

The Immortal Detective. Immediately one has a vision of a long, thin, intellectual face, above a nonconformist collar - a stained and tattered dressing-gown, a fiddle, and a hypodermic syringe. "Elementary, my dear Watson." But my title of the "Immortal Detective" does not, in this instance, refer to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's remarkable creation - Sherlock Holmes. I write now of a detective who was born in 1894, and to quote that pleasing advertisement of a still more pleasing commodity, he's still going strong.

He has been hit on the head, gagged and bound with unfailing regularity for 1,248 weeks, up to the time of writing, and I can confidently predict that he will undergo the same treatment for another twenty-five years.

He has been engaged in cases in London, Peking, Johannesburg, Alaska, Timbuctoo, and Oshkosh, Pa. Practically every crowned head in Europe has decorated him for his services. He has been in turn a sailor, a chauffeur, a mandarin, a coster, a jockey, a big game hunter - and - but it would be tedious to enumerate what he has been in his thrilling battle against crime. It would be simpler, perhaps, to mention what he has not been.

I think the only professions which he has not at some time or other graced and embraced are those of a politician and catsmeat man.

Whereas Mr. Sherlock Holmes had only one master criminal to deal with, the redoubtable Professor Moriarty, our detective pits his wits regularly against some thirty-five master crooks. Some of them are banded together in a confederation, one of them is a Chinese prince and ruler of five million people. A third is an Albino while a fourth is an ex-detective inspector of Scotland Yard.

Our hero has been a hero of three plays, about half a dozen cinema films, and innumerable serial stories. Countless millions of words have been written about him. At a penny a line they would almost wipe off our debt to America. His name is a household word throughout England, but there is one mystery about him that has never been solved. He is a character without a known creator. He has grown almost legendary. The chronicles of his exploits are as varied and almost as

unending as those of Robin Hood and Dick Turpin. He has almost become a national hero with the youth of the country.

The name of the immortal detective is Sexton Blake.

He first appeared on the scene in 1894, and has appeared with unflinching regularity week by week in the "Union Jack Library." Recently, so wide has been his popularity that he features four times monthly in 60,000-word novels in the "Sexton Blake Library."

Sexton Blake is a character that will never grow old. When the cycling boom was on he was a cyclist. When Bleriot flew the Channel, Sexton Blake had already tinkered with aviation, and now that the Radio boom is on, he is a wizard of wireless.

Age cannot wither, nor custom stale his infinite variety.

TRIBUTE TO THE ARTISTS

by S. Gordon Swan

No. 533 of the Union Jack, dated 27th December, 1913, was a rather unusual issue. Not in respect of the story "A Yuletide Vow," which was a typical Murray Graydon effort written for the Christmas week number and featuring Laban Creed, whose name did not appear on the title-page.

What makes it unusual is the fact that the illustrations throughout are by different artists. The cover design is by Val, but on page 2 appears a portrait of Mr. Willis Reading (who illustrates our new "Snake" series), and on the opposite page is a drawing by this artist.

Page 4 contains a photograph of Mr. E. E. Briscoe (an old favourite of "Union Jack" Readers) with an illustration by him on page 5. On page 8 we find a picture of Mr. W. Taylor (a new-comer to the pages of the "Union Jack." His clever sketches illustrated "The Crooks From America") and a drawing by him follows on page 9.

Then on the tenth page is a portrait of Mr. Harry Lane (one of the most popular artists on the "Union Jack." Illustrator of the "Carlac" series). His sketch is shown on the following page. On the centre pages another artist has the limelight. He is Mr. Arthur Jones (one of your Skipper's recent "finds." He is going to be very popular).

Page 17 shows a picture of an artist unknown to me by name - Mr. R. Kessell (who designed the frontispiece to this number on page 1, as well as that of the Christmas Double No. , and many others).

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Nelson Lee Column

THE FRUITS OF PERSEVERANCE - OR, IF AT FIRST
YOU DON'T LIKE EDWY (OR CHARLES), TRY, TRY
AGAIN

by R. Hibbert

I'm not an authority on Edwy Searles Brooks and all his works, but I've read a lot of the Old Series of Nelson Lee and some of the 1st New Series.

I was disappointed with the first Nelson Lee's I read. I was disappointed because Edwy Searles Brooks' school stories weren't like Charles Hamilton's school stories.

But I persevered with Nelson Lee; just as, after World War II, I'd had to persevere with the Bunter hardbacks which were just coming out. I remembered the Magnet from my schooldays and was delighted when 'Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School' and 'Billy Bunter's Christmas Party' appeared in the bookshops. But, in the fifteen years between reading my last Magnet and my first Bunter hardback, something had happened to me; perhaps something had happened to Charles Hamilton as well. I had to work at those books until I'd re-accustomed myself to C. H.'s orotundities. But I persevered and now I buy, read and enjoy the Howard Baker reprints and borrow Hamiltonia from the London O. B. B. C. library.

So, when in 1970, I read my first Nelson Lees and didn't much like them, I decided it was probably as much my fault as Edwy's, so I persevered. I'm glad I did.

E. S. B. is no stylist and yet his manner suits his matter. His grammar can be faulted; so can mine and I don't write under pressure. But he has his virtues as a writer. His plots are usually highly original and move at a rattling pace. He succeeded in combining the school story and the thriller and he did it well. I think of him as a master of melodrama, and I don't use the word 'melodrama' in a depreciative sense. I enjoy the books of Harrison Ainsworth, surely the most melodramatic of English novelists, and he and E. S. B. have a lot in

common.

Some people will say that the Nelson Lees are too farfetched, but that's the way I like them. St. Frank's is an unreal school even when nothing's happening; so is Greyfriars. Just to take one point; both schools are shockingly understaffed. The pupil-teacher ratio at St. Frank's and St. Jim's is ridiculous. It probably is at Greyfriars and Rookwood; I haven't read enough to know. Hamilton's and Brook's masters can have seventy boys in a form - and be taking them for all subjects apart from Maths and French. It's hard to see why parents and guardians pay the no doubt exorbitant fees. Unless they think it worth it to get their boys off their hands for the next twenty to thirty years.

If the very setting is farfetched it's not surprising that melodramatic happenings occur in both E. S. B's and C. H's schools. Could an author keep a school story going for long unless he brought in melodrama? And E. S. B. doesn't play down the melodrama. His villains are real villains; blackhearted and ruthless. They strut and snarl and have their wicked way right up to the last chapter. His heroes find themselves in a bewildering world where anything can happen and undoubtably will. Against a background of flood, tempest, fire, shipwreck and the collapse of great buildings they strike back doggedly at seemingly all powerful foes.

That's what I like about E. S. B's stories.

I go to him for blood and thunder.

Maybe I like him for the wrong reasons. But if Edwy set out to entertain his readers and if his stories give me enjoyment do my reasons matter?

One could argue that a course of Nelson Lee in boyhood was a good preparation for later years. Pick up any newspaper and you'll see that life itself is a melodrama. Obscene, ridiculous, unbelievable things happen every day; always have - what writer could have invented Hitler? - and no doubt always will.

The world of St. Frank's was an uneasy, uncertain world and, even though virtue usually triumphed, there was always another struggle just a little way ahead.

It was very much like the world we live in.

It looked like history being repeated. It was the first night of term, and the dormitories were fairly throbbing with noise. Free rein was usually allowed on these occasions and masters and prefects became discreetly deaf, but even so, it was necessary to keep within the limit.

This laxity made it possible for a few seniors and juniors to stage a celebration party to wind up the holidays. The Spree was arranged to be held in a big room on the top floor of the East House.

Gore-Pearce had been invited, not because of his popularity, but purely on account of his wealth which he thought would buy him friends. Needless to state, he found plenty who were willing to share his friendship while his funds lasted.

The spree began as it did on another memorable occasion with gambling, smoking and champagne, etc. Soon the atmosphere was thick with blue haze and excitement as losers tried to recoup their losses and winners, flushed with their good fortune, played to win even more money.

But the cigarettes, champagne and emotion proved too much for Claude Gore-Pearce and he fainted.

Now whether Gulliver and Bell were forcibly reminded of that other incident when Wallace, a senior, had died in similar circumstances will never be known, but Gore-Pearce's condition was giving every appearance of a fatality. And Gulliver and Bell, alarmed and shaken out of their wits, began to scream. They flew downstairs and out into the Triangle. Lights began to appear in every House and in a matter of moments the whole school was under the impression that Gore-Pearce had been murdered!

Well, Gore-Pearce was very much alive. He had certainly succumbed to the liquor and gambling excitement, but he had been brought round and rushed to his own House before the alarm had brought masters and prefects on the scene.

But the incident must have reminded many that night of the time Wallace died. It was in such surroundings that Wallace, a senior and a contemptible rotter, had collapsed and died. Nobody mourned his passing. He was a mean, spiteful sneak, and his exit from all earthly

things was simply regarded as a sensational piece of excitement.

Nobody I spoke to even knew his first name, such was he ignored.

But the sudden death of Wallace started a chain of events that almost finished St. Frank's. The London dailies had their reporters sent down to the school and newspaper headlines followed that soon forced many parents to take their sons away from St. Frank's.

The scandal that broke out was the result of over-zealous news reports that spoke of "midnight orgies at St. Frank's" and "Boy dies at brawl at St. Frank's."

'The tragedy itself had been sordid, but there had certainly been nothing mysterious or sinister about it. Yet the newspapers had insinuated that St. Frank's was a veritable hotbed of vice and iniquity. The disgraceful party which had led up to the death of Wallace was indicated as quite a common occurrence - instead of being, as it actually was, an almost unheard-of orgy.' *

It took a long time for St. Frank's to get back to normal. It was the first day back for the party who had accompanied Lord Dorrimore, Umlosi and Nelson Lee on a journey to the Sahara where Romans had been found living under the Emperor Titus. **

* -** both these events are recorded in NLL-Old Series - No: 485 and
No: 477

Today, I heard two versions of the English language. I was in the Head's study and Dr. Stafford suddenly broke off his conversation with me and excused himself as he pressed a button to summon Tubbs, the page.

"Convey my desire to see Mr. Crowell, Tubbs, please," he said when the page arrived.

A few hours earlier I had been in Bannington and heard a respectable looking man address a young lady and say, "Tell Bradmore I want him!"

I mentioned this to the Head and he said this was the age of imprecision and verbosity. Too many words, and not the right ones, were used unnecessarily.

Well, looking at the words the man who wanted Bradmore used, I would have thought the Head was a little more verbose himself.

But there is a difference. Whereas "Convey my desire to see--," has a pleasant, commanding ring, "Tell Bradmore I want him..," is an order with threats and dictatorial.

Nelson Lee once explained the mysterious depths of cablese, the language journalists use for communication between them and their editors.

No adjectives and no sentiment in cablese. "Compounds not in the dictionary, but formed on analogy, are word savers," Lee told me. He then recalled some dramatic cablese messages he had known, told to him from reporter friends.

When Dillinger was finally caught and slain by the FBI the following cable was conveyed to the world; DILLINGER DEADSHOTTED.

The Abyssinian War brought the gruesome news: ETHIOBIGPOTS HEADS OFFHACKED SWORDWISE. Well within the Post Office maximum of 16 letters per word.

Nipper came in at that moment and joined in the conversation. He suggested the following for one of Lord Dorrimore's famous adventure trips ... DORRIE AFRICAWARDS HANDYVITED TISRUMOURED.

Broken down it means ... "Dorrie is planning to go to Africa; Handforth is invited it is rumoured."

Incidentally, when Nipper showed the message he had written just for fun to Handy, the leader of Study D demanded to know why his invitation was only a rumour!

This started a chain reaction for the whole school was soon talking about the forthcoming trip Dorrie was planning. And Lord Dorrimore at that time, I was told, was somewhere in the South Pacific in his yacht, the Wanderer.

POINT OF VIEW

R. F. ACRAMAN (Ruislip) writes:

What on earth has come over the C.D. lately? It now appears to me that the C.D. has become, not a friendly magazine where discussion and views on the hobby are freely and sociably expressed, but a vehicle for the publication of spiteful letters and articles of personal attacks on club members in a way that shows a complete and utter disregard for either the niceties and formalities of a friendly club spirit, or consideration for a fellow club member's feelings. Such letters reflect no credit on

the writer, and even less on the Editor for printing them thereby creating bad feeling and even distress to all club members.

For ourselves, we have always encouraged our three young sons to read the old books and papers, Hamiltonian, Brooks and Sexton Blake, in the fond belief that the code of conduct portrayed in the stories will show them the right and decent way of life, and help to build their characters along the right lines. Similarly, we thought that the C.D. magazine was following the same trend with the Editor, Eric Fayne's notes very often lamenting the passing of the older standards and way of life. How then can this be reconciled with the printing of such inconsiderate and hurtful, spiteful and malicious, deliberately insulting articles and letter such as we have seen in the June 1972 and January and February, 1973, C.D.'s?

It was the Editor's article in the June C.D. which caused my item in the January, 1973, C.D., of which the salient points in support Brooks were left out, to be written. His footnote, with which I do not agree for reasons I have already placed on record with him, I let pass to end the matter. This article coincided with Mr. Truscott's letter of personal attack on Jim Cook (along with his other remarks of a derogatory nature against the Nelson Lee). I did not consider his very open letter and personal attack on Jim Cook either typical or indicative of the friendly club spirit. The very next month three personal and separate attacks were made on myself in the columns of the C.D., one by Mr. Wilde and sneering remarks by the Editor in his "Let's Be Controversial" and in his heading to Mr. Wilde's letter. In this regard members do not need telling who has been putting words into the mouths of others, for the articles I have protested about speak for themselves. In the most recent attack by Mr. Wilde I could very easily and simply tear Mr. Wilde's letter apart shred by shred in support of my articles and it would be done without any of the spiteful unpleasantness that he has brought into it, and in less space than say the Editor allocated to Mr. Truscott's letter in the January C.D.; but, quite apart from the fact that the Editor would never print my article in full (remember in my previous article in support of Brooks I was only allowed $\frac{1}{2}$ of a page against Mr. Truscott's $\frac{1}{4}$ pages, my article being reduced) the Editor had already lots of Nelson Lee material which has never been produced, so what chance has a "Lee" man got for a fair hearing and it is clear the very nature of Mr. Wilde's letter is that I am a 100% Lee supporter, which I am not. Indeed another article on Mr. Bunter I submitted with my February C.D. item was not, again printed, to show my own interests in both our excellent writers are equal.

Mr. Wilde's letter in the February C.D. I will treat as mere vulgar abuse, for if anybody has a copy of my article in the January C.D. by their side when reading the vitriolic outburst Mr. Wilde has written, they will see that his letter is totally unjustified, totally inaccurate and something of which - in a calmer moment - both he and the Editor should be ashamed of having printed, and readers can draw their own conclusions. In all my letters and articles I have kept a friendly note, certainly never personally insulting any club member as those above have, and as a 50% Hamilton and 50% Brooks man have always tried to let others who decry Brooks' writings to see what they are missing by recommending what is generally considered the best book to try. I have said many times that I was always a 100% Hamiltonian until I read some of Brooks' works, when I then became a supporter of each equally. My three sons, similarly, read and enjoy both authors and have been instrumental in introducing the Bunter books into the library at their prep school, thus making many new fans for the stories among their schoolfellows.

I sincerely trust that there will be no more spiteful and malicious letters or remarks that are hurtful or defamatory to any club members. I believe our club to be a gathering of friends where feelings and tempers should never be allowed to get out of hand, and the spirit of warm and welcome friendliness and consideration for each others' feelings among club members should be one of its most attractive features. I also believe that Betty and I have always played our part in encouraging this feeling. There

can be no doubt that we are not entirely unsuccessful in this regard, as the warm notes of the club newsletter four times in the last year testified, of which the last one by coincidence appeared in the January C.D. in direct contrast to the slight "With Friends Like These." I trust that the previous balanced and friendly criticism, articles and correspondence will once again become the order of the day in the C.D.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The preceding item is printed in this issue at the request of Mr. Acraman. In a letter which followed it, Mr. Acraman wrote: "Quite frankly my first reaction was to immediately institute proceedings under the Defamation Act of 1952, but upon reflection I realised that such action would rebound upon the club as a whole ..."

In a subsequent letter, Mr. Acraman informed me that he had experience of libel actions, and had been paid substantial damages. He wrote: "I mention this not in order to intimidate you but to let you see that I do personally know something about libel." Mr. Acraman concluded his letter as follows: "Libel is a serious matter, Eric, and in your position you would be the publisher and in a much more serious position than your contributors. I hope for your sake as well as the Club you do not publish libel in the future."

I feel sure that nothing published in this magazine last month was intended as a malicious personal attack on Mr. Acraman, and I regret that he should seem to think it was. The remarks which Mr. Acraman had written and which had been published in C.D. were certainly challenged, but I cannot see that that was any libel on Mr. Acraman's personal character which, as everybody knows, is beyond reproach.

In the same way I am sure that Mr. Acraman intended no adverse reflection on the character of Mr. Hopkinson when, in our January issue, he wrote that he was tempted to describe Mr. Hopkinson's letter as "absolute rubbish" but "reluctantly decided that the phrase was not strong enough," and added that Mr. Hopkinson "has much to learn."

A literary magazine can thrive only on its discussions. Without them it is lifeless. Literary discussions in all fields generate heat, but no harm is done providing one keeps a sense of humour. A man who insists on going into print, on a subject which he knows to be controversial, does so in the full knowledge that somebody will probably hit back.

This month Mr. Acraman gives his opinion that your editor is malicious, spiteful, unfair, and incompetent. That should be enough to get me expelled from the club after 25 years of membership.

I have space to comment on only one point from Mr. Acraman's list. His article on "Mr. Bunter," about 1,350 words in length, was dated and postmarked 10th January, and I received it on 12th January. By that time the February issue was completed apart from club reports. Does Mr. Acraman mean that I should have scrapped the issue, and started my work again in order to include his lengthy article?

I have not the slightest reason to believe that my readers want C.D. controlled from Ruislip. But, if they do, then I have outlived my usefulness to the hobby. In any case, one thing is very clear. The editor of C.D. is vulnerable. He stands alone. He has no strong group to back him if he happens to be attacked. The future of the magazine must be in doubt from now on.)

* * * * *

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WESTWOOD

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 179. THE GLORIOUS PROUT and the Sheriff's Kit

This month we link together two topics which, when they appeared in last month's issue of C. D. , were widely disconnected. The first occurred in this column when we discussed stories which were, allegedly, "written to order." The second occurred in a club report when attention was drawn to "the difficulty in collecting the free gifts given away with papers."

People seem to collect anything these days, but I did not know that any attempt was being made to collect those "free gifts," though I have plenty of the sometimes delightful so-called "free plates" which were handed out over the years. Some of these gifts were worth-while - for instance, the Magnet gave excellent cut-out figures of cricketers on one occasion, while the famous train engines, presented with the Popular early in the 20's, were fascinating.

Generally speaking, I detested the "free gifts." Any amount of space was wasted in advertising them, and for many weeks on end the illustrations on the covers of various papers, showing incidents in the stories, would be replaced with full-page pictorial announcements of the said gifts.

Sometimes, too, the gifts were out of keeping with the dignity of the paper in question. Charles Hamilton's polished style of writing was surely aimed at the older and more intelligent schoolboy. Yet the Magnet presented bars of toffee over certain weeks. Some of the toffee melted, some of it was squashed, and some of the copies of the Magnet's Krantz series were smothered with stickiness inside.

Later, at the time of the Prout - Headmaster series, the Magnet gave away what was claimed to be a sheriff's outfit, comprising of a tin badge shaped like a star, a thumb-recording outfit, a pencil for producing invisible writing, and a letter-code. I doubt whether the average Magnet reader walked around wearing a tin badge or took much interest in the other items in the kit.

It is a question just how much control the editor exerted over the long-running series of stories which he published. Obviously he indicated to authors the rough length he required, but I would be

surprised if the editor did not also discuss and plan stories and series with his writers. That, after all, was his job. He was the man responsible for the good health of the paper.

We tend, of course, to praise authors lavishly for certain series as their own work, and to find excuses for others on the grounds that they were "editorially directed." It is at least possible that some of the most successful series were editorially inspired.

The Prout-Headmaster series was, in my view, a great one. The two or three opening stories contained some magnificent character work and much superb writing. It ran for 11 weeks, which was really too long, and I think it deteriorated as it progressed, though the interest was maintained throughout, which was the main thing. In the centre there was rather too much knockabout padding; towards the end, it tended towards melodrama, and the finish was slightly too abrupt. But, over all, it was a real winner.

Into three of these stories Charles Hamilton introduced the free gifts which had been given away with the Magnet.

We don't know whether this was Hamilton's own idea, or whether the editor asked that they should be introduced into the series as they were. Personally, I feel that they rather weakened the series, and, I would think, made them a difficult subject for reprint purposes, long after the Sheriff's kit had been forgotten.

This does not mean, of course, that the stories were not well up to normal standards.

This series is usually regarded as one of the Hamilton "greats." I always felt that only the Stacey series reached quite the same very high overall standard again as the Magnet went on its way. Nobody has ever beefed about Prout-Headmaster being editorially inspired. It was too good. But the editor may well have had a hand in it.

Prout was one of the greatest pieces of characterisation at Greyfriars, and he suffered nothing that his adventures as a shot in the Rockies were ignored in later days. We shall come back to Prout again. How could we fail to do so?

* * * * *

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOESROSS STORY

As most Lee-ites know, the real reason why the Nelson Lee declined in popularity was because E.S.B. had lost interest; this was apparent in the uninspired writing, the lightweight plots, which were a feature of the later issues. This was a result of direct editorial policy - Edwy was no longer allowed to write the way he wanted to. Until now he had had a completely free hand; free to create his own situations and characters, to make of the Nelson Lee, single-handed, the great little paper it was.

Suddenly, all that was changed. Over a period of 16 years and more, Edwy had created, lovingly and skilfully, the school of St. Frank's, had introduced masters and boys who found their way into our hearts as well as our homes. Then he was told: 'Give everything a "new look"; destroy St. Frank's, replace the school with a Detective Academy, relegate the old and well-beloved characters to the background, bring in new scenes and faces.' The results were catastrophic: a series of slapdash stories and eccentric and unacceptable characters: Dr. Scattlebury and K.K. to name but two.

A writer - to give of his best - must be inspired by his characters and his plots, live the situations he devises. Once a policy is dictated, and the writer is forced against his will and inclination (and what writer can afford to quarrel with his bread and butter?) to accept such policy, something must inevitably go from the writing - and the writer.

Up to the end of the 1st New Series, Edwy's writing and plotting was unparalleled; the rot set in when he was no longer able to write as he wanted to write; when he had to 'write to order.' One finds it hard to believe that it was Edwy's own idea to burn down St. Frank's, to introduce the uninspiring and uninteresting characters that rampaged through those last issues. And what writer can do his best under any circumstances when given less than 5 pages in which to do it?

Admittedly, writers of the calibre of Charles Hamilton and Edwy Searles Brooks could 'write to order' in the sense that they could supply their editors with school stories, adventure stories, serials, etc., of the highest possible standard. But that is an entirely different kettle of fish. When established characters and story-lines are deliberately sabotaged by editorial policy, it is inevitable that the author should become discouraged, perhaps even embittered, and his attitude must automatically be reflected in his writing.

E. MAGOVENY. I didn't notice any decline in the St. Frank's stories. But there was a lot of change, too many long holiday series, and ugly illustrations. "The Castle of Fear" was as good as anything Brooks ever wrote.

BILL LOFTS. It has always puzzled me why Hamilton and Brooks have stated that 'they were writing to editorial policy' to explain the poor quality of a story or theme. They conveniently forgot the excellent series they did write which were editorially suggested, e.g., 'The Bunter Court' Series, and 'The Hounds of the Targossa.' It was an editor's job to discuss with authors, plots and ideas for series, and they would not be good editors if they did otherwise. Most authors I have met were always glad of this (including Leslie Charteris) and grateful in later years for the help. It was Monty Haydon who suggested to E.S.B. the name of his character Norman Conquest, and the amount of money it made for him in later years was considerable. Contrary to what Mr. Hamilton may have said or written, he was glad at the time to accept ideas and plots, as his plot instinct was very limited in new slants for themes of stories. Mr. Down, the Magnet editor, told me that C.H.'s ideas were so limited that in reading through a manuscript he could always tell what was going to happen. Harold May, editor of the

Nelson Lee Library, was extremely easy-going and something of a butt, and E.S.B. had a completely free hand in writing the stories. For reasons unknown, he was taken off the Library in 1926 and did not leave the A.P. until the early thirties (he never retired as stated by E.S.B.). Brooks obviously resented the new editors and policies, and possibly his writing did suffer to some extent. It is still hoped to resolve about the latter, some day in the future.

LEN WORMULL. As one who delighted in Bunter's ventriloquial mimicry, I am with you in calling it 'polished nonsense.' So polished, in fact, that in boyhood I quite overlooked that it was nonsense. His remarkable gift left so many fine tales in its wake that I find it hard to subscribe to the term 'trifles,' however.

Unlike reader R. Acraman, who became a convert to St. Frank's in after years, I became a convert to Greyfriars in early times. Nothing cemented this relationship more than my initiation with the now famous Bunter Court series, the success of which hinged on Bunter's clever ventriloquism to imprison Mr. Pilkins the estate agent, in order to carry out his great deception. An unsurpassed laughter-maker and major work, I aver. Thereafter I was hooked. To Bunter the mischief-maker, ventriloquism was the most formidable weapon in his armoury, the skilful use of which was to be seen in the classroom, on the telephone, and from behind locked doors. And especially those locked doors! The 'imaginary' master hurling insults at a colleague, resulting in feuding and fighting, - what gems of writing! The "gift" became as much a part of the Bunter image as gorging, bilking and the proverbial postal-order.

Our friend Mr. Acraman would do well to ponder this, and then take a look at the inept performance, by comparison, of that other ventriloquist at St. Frank's, Nicodemus Trotwood. And to counter the Strong Alonzo charge, there was Stanley Waldo, a schoolboy capable of superhuman feats - without the elixir!

* * * * *

The Postman Called

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

Mrs. J. PACKMAN (East Dulwich): I received the C. D. on arriving home tonight, a marvellous issue and so on time too. Is there any other magazine which arrives so promptly every month? May I also add my praises for the Annual and trust that the Sexton Blake readers enjoyed the Blake contributions.

LEN WORMULL (Romford): W. Lister brought to mind my own rather bizarre first meeting with Ezra Quirke, years after his departure from St. Frank's. It came by way of a local rag-shop, a dark and smelly place piled high with old rags, waste-paper, and bottles. Even the occupant seemed a queer fish. Each time he would disappear into a cellar, returning minutes later with a handful of dust-laden papers. I often wondered about that cellar with its seemingly endless supply; a coincidence a story from the series is called The Cellar Of Secrets.

To my dismay, it failed to turn up with the final solution, The Broken Spell. This came much later after searching the bookstalls.

I now have an immaculate set of Quirke, a reminder of a true masterpiece of boys' make-believe.

D. JAMES MARTIN (Southampton): Your notes on Joe Frayne I found most interesting. I have one much treasured Gem starring Joe: "The Faithful Fag." Surely one of the true Gems.

F. STURDY. I still maintain that other boys' papers should receive the same coverage as Hamiltonia, Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake, even though I am a strong supporter of these characters and their writers. I realise that I am in a minority in this view, but I do feel that these subjects have been overdone.

JIM SWAN (London): As usual, the new Annual was a feast for sore eyes. One outstanding article was "This Week's Rover" by R. Hibbert. It was right up my street being a reader of this paper from around 1928. As Mr. Hibbert put it: "It looks as if the Rover's here to stay." And now it's amalgamated with Wizard. I find this happens fairly often if anyone writes or remarks favourably about a particular paper. I did it myself when I lauded the Wizard to the skies. Bang! It joined in with another paper. It's out still, I know - but it's not the same - not to us "old 'uns" anyway

Miss I. M. LEES (Canterbury): Sheer nostalgia impels me to read about my old favourites. Not only because I enjoyed them as a child, but they also bring back memories of friends, relatives and places of those happy, far-off times. My favourite schoolboy hero was Tom Merry and all the other schools, schoolboys and authors - Frank Richards, Owen Conquest, Wharton, Greyfriars - the lot - were his opponents! Not knowing any better I pinned my allegiance loyalty to Tom Merry and disliked all the others heartily. Now, whose fault was that? - obviously not mine - but Charles Hamilton himself and his publishers. And now it is my old favourite and his author 'Martin Clifford' who give nostalgic pleasure. Well - well -!

Mrs. M. CADOGAN (Beckenham): A quick note to say, in answer to

your question in this month's C.D. , that I love the pictures, and am sure that all the readers do! C.D. would not be the same without them, but as you suggested perhaps we tend to take them for granted like "Mum," and could not imagine being without them!

ANDREW ZERBE (Montgomery, U.S.A.): I am enjoying C.D. very much indeed. I enjoy Blakiana the most, but that's probably because I know the most about it.

CHAS. VAN RENEN (South Africa): I derive great pleasure out of every number. I should like you to know that I do not take for granted all that you and the contributors to C.D. do for us subscribers. I am deeply sensitive of all the time and efforts you so generously devote towards our happiness. My grateful thanks.

R. M. JENKINS (Havant): The current Brooks v. Hamilton controversy (started I notice by a side-swipe at Hamilton in the Nelson Lee Column last November) set me thinking back to past years when discussion was sometimes on a more tranquil note. I have just been looking over the discussion "St. Frank's - Success or Failure?" that I had with Bob Blythe in the 1951 C.D. Annual. For all its limitations, we did at least conduct it with good humour and make some attempt to answer each other's points.

RAY HOPKINS (London): Chris Lowder's summing up of the Prince Menes series in his article on G. H. Teed made one realise what a lot of bewildering excitement one missed in one's childhood reading by sticking mainly to school stories. These stories sound very adult (in the best pre-permissive era sense of the word) and must have been difficult for a child reader to fully understand. I believe this article gave me the clue to the connection between the readers of the Sexton Blake saga who are also devotees of Dennis Wheatley - yet another author whose works I have never dipped into.

Roger Jenkins' article on the various Fifth Forms is yet more evidence of his depth of understanding and vast background of reading into the Hamilton school stories. Roger's articles always add immeasurably to one's own knowledge; he earns one's gratitude by pointing out aspects of the characters' personalities that one had not

noticed, such as the relationship of Hilton to the opposite poles of Price and Blundell. These aspects, already pointed out, can be of great value when encountered in one's later reading.

Jack Overhill's article on Cecil H. Bullivant underlines the thrill accorded to one who is able to get in touch with an author he has revered for many years, and what a warm feeling of satisfaction must have been his to be able to pass on the news that he was still alive to an old friend of that author. Although the connection is tenuous I was reminded of the time I attended a lecture at Morley College many years ago. The speaker was Stella Gibbons and I found myself sitting behind Angela Thirkell (I recognized her because I had attended a lecture the prior week at which she was the speaker), an author whose comic writings I vastly enjoyed. I was too overawed to tell her so, though! (Born thirty years too soon, obviously!)

* * * * *

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at 3 Long Road, on 11th February. 7 members were present, including Dr. Trevor Page, a new member.

The President welcomed Dr. Page as a member of the Club.

Among the correspondence read was a letter from J. T. Edson, in which he mentioned he was collaborating in writing a new novel, "a sort of sexy Red Circle," based on the style of school stories in "Wizard" and "Hotspur," but set in a high class public school for the daughters of upper class criminals. He also mentioned that some of his old stories were being revived in "Victor."

Four members hope to attend the London Club Lunch.

Danny Posner reported that Mr. Mel Lewis was writing an article for the magazine "Antiques," based on his (Danny's) collection. Reports were received on other publications, mostly relating to American Comics.

President Bill Lofts gave a talk on "Sax Rohmer," author of

many horror and eastern mystery tales, especially renowned as the creator of Dr. Fu Manchu. Trevor Page, who is keenly interested in Sax Rohmer's works, books, films and radio plays, led the discussion which followed.

The Club is arranging an exhibition of old boys' books and comics in the galleries of Messrs. Heffers, the leading Cambridge booksellers, mainly items from the Chairman's collection, commencing on 19th February.

A discussion on general affairs followed, and it was agreed to approach the other O. B. B. C's to discuss the possibility of forming a national federation of clubs.

Next meeting at 3 Long Road, on Sunday, 11th March.

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NORTHERN

Meeting on Saturday, 10th February

P. G. Wodehouse in the many facets of his life and character was the main fare of the evening. First of all a talk by Mollie Allison, in which she read excerpts from PG's autobiography, 'The Performing Flea.' (Sean O'Casey had referred to him as 'the performing flea,' a term which Wodehouse said he took to be complimentary.) Pelham Grenville Wodehouse was so called after a godfather (he said) "and not a thing to show for it except a small silver mug!"

The book includes a series of letters written by PG to Bill Townend, a school friend of his Dulwich days:

"I hear that Edgar Wallace now runs a Daimler and that each of the five members of his family has a car. Also he has a day-butler and a night-butler. It seems you can call at the house at any hour of day or night and find butling going on ..."

Then a Greyfriars Quiz conducted by Geoffrey Wilde - though it included three questions on St. Frank's! Ron Hodgson was declared winner with 15 out of 20. Next came Elsie Taylor and Bill Williamson who tied with 11 each.

And back again to PG. This time a recording of a television interview with Malcolm Muggeridge in 1961. In his many books, said

Muggeridge, translated into most European and some Asiatic languages, PGW has created a world of his own ... the world of Mike, of Psmyth, of Jeeves and Bertie Wooster, of spats and tail coats ... a world in which, for forty years, time stood still ...

What a delight to hear PG's voice - firm and clear and with an impeccable accent:

"At school I was always writing things. I had a wonderful time ..."

And finally a recording which Myra had made of her own shorthand notes on hearing PG recently on a wireless broadcast. He was still living a full life, plotting in the morning, taking his dogs and cats out in the afternoon, dinner, then writing in the evening.

A man of genuine charming naivety - and puzzled about politics and decimals. (Aren't we all!)

He seemed, said Myra, a pleasant old chap. Though I'm not too sure if PG would accept the 'old.' Even at 91!

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LONDON

A distinguished gathering of 60 members and friends attended the Silver Jubilee Luncheon party at the Rembrandt Hotel, Kensington, on Sunday, 18th February, and, as at previous anniversary meetings, enjoyed an excellent repast. The souvenir menu card booklets, the blue background cloth club badges and the photograph of a Surbiton meeting of long since, were provided by the President of the club, John Wernham. The Cambridge club were well represented by William Thurbon, Deryck Harvey and Danny and Ollie Posner; the Birmingham club by Winifred Brown, Winifred Partrige and Tom Porter, and the rest were of the parent club and numerous visitors. Joining the party for tea was Terence Hobbs of Seattle, son of David Hobbs. In the chair was Don Webster and supporting him in the proceedings were Bob Blythe and Josie Packman, Roger Jenkins and Eric Fayne. The Loyal Toast was proposed by Don Webster, the Club by the president, John Wernham and the visitors by Mary Cadogan. Replying to the latter was Mr. Posner who spoke about the progress of the Cambridge club. He spoke of the assistance given by Bill Lofts, to whom a great debt is

owed by all the clubs for his great research. The President, John Wernham paid tribute to the zeal and devotion of many stalwarts of the club, and mentioned the first President, Frank Richards.

Between luncheon and tea, the Man of Magic, our Cedric Richardson, performed some of his illusions and this consisted of three items, taken from Sexton Blake, Nelson Lee and Greyfriars. His assistant for one of these items was one of the Acraman boys. The show was thoroughly enjoyed by all present and grateful thanks were accorded to Cedric at the conclusion. The banqueting manager was also thanked for the superb luncheon and tea. During the latter came the informal get-togethers and cosy chats. Thanks are due to all who made long journeys to be present to help to make the occasion so successful, jolly, and happy.

Next meeting of the club, the A. G. M., will be on Sunday, 18th March, at the Richmond Community centre. Kindly let Don Webster know if intending to be present.

Copies of the souvenir menu card booklet are available from the undersigned at 25 pence each.

BEN WHITER

* * * * *

REVIEW

"TOM MERRY & THE NIGHT RAIDERS"

Martin Clifford
(Howard Baker: £2.75)

This volume, with its neat, lemon dust-jacket and its just-right proportions, I find exceptionally attractive. Even apart from its contents, the book is an asset to any self-respecting book-case.

This is the Secret Passage series of the 1939 Gem; a joyous romp concerning House-rivalry at St. Jim's, in which Figgins and Co. benefit for a while from Fatty Wynn's discovery of a secret passage, giving them an easy and unknown way into the School House.

Tastes vary so much concerning various series. Of this one I can only say that I have always had a very soft spot for it, and can return to it at regular intervals, re-reading with undiminished pleasure. Comprising 6 Gems, it never overstays its welcome as a few much longer series may do.

This series makes a fine book on its own, but the kindly publishers have also included an amusing complete single Gem concerning that pleasant character, Tompkins. Stories of Cedar Creek and also stories of the later days of the Benbow school ship were also running at this time in the Gem. The purchasers of this quite delicious book have plenty of all-Hamilton reading matter, apart from St. Jim's.

A delightful volume, in my view.

An excellent buy.