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COLLECTORS' DIGEST
Vol. 28 No 325 *January 1974*

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A SMEAR ON "THE BOYS' FRIEND"

Last month we looked at a solitary Christmas Treble Number, the brain child of that illustrious Edwardian editor, Hamilton Edwards. It is interesting to look for a moment at another little event of Edwards' career, of about the same period.

In December 1905, a youngster named Nesbit, broke open and rifled a safe in Newcastle-on-Tyne. He went on a spending spree, and hid the rest of his guilty gold. The police, however, caught up with the youthful burglar, and he appeared in a magistrate's court in January 1906.

The boy excused himself by saying that he had seen a picture of a boy opening and robbing a safe, in "The Boys' Friend". A policeman

gave evidence that the paper in question was in the boy's pocket when he was arrested. The boy's father stated that he had always kept a strict supervision on what his son read, and was unaware that he had sunk to reading a paper like the Boys' Friend. The magistrate, a Mr. Hugh Morton, was a Newcastle alderman, and was also the head of a successful clothier's business in that city, so it seems likely that he was very nearly as important as he thought he was. From the bench, Alderman Morton launched an attack on the Boys' Friend, and expressed the opinion that it was scandalous that such unwholesome literature should be on sale in the shops to corrupt impressionable boys.

Northern newspapers went to town on the magistrate's comments, and some London paper, perhaps not reluctant to have a dig at the Harmsworth publications, also gave publicity to the matter.

Hamilton Edwards, understandably, was annoyed by the Alderman's remarks, and by the "garbled accounts" of the affair which appeared in various newspapers. Over a number of weeks he devoted a large section of his editorial page to defending himself and the Boys' Friend, and stated that he had searched through the past four years of the paper, satisfying himself that no such picture, as described in court, had ever featured therein. He claimed that he had been put to considerable expense in following up the case, that the circulation of the Friend had been adversely affected by it, and he hinted, rather wildly, at an action for libel. Nothing seems to have come of the latter. Magistrates are probably privileged people.

Edwards made the mistake of having too much to say on the matter, and sympathy may have changed to boredom if it occurred to readers that sometimes "qui s'excuse s'accuse."

I feel quite sure that plenty of the muck available to the large purses of boys today can corrupt the young. The Boys' Friend, in Edwards' day, had plenty of crime stories and tales of violence, but the moral standard was high and generally very wholesome. Any Boys' Friend reader who went wrong would have gone wrong in any case.

Edwards may have been right in thinking that the case could affect his circulation. Plenty of parents in those far-off days were conscientious concerning what their children read. But, one suspects, the bit of sensationalism could well bring in others, anxious to find out

what it was all about.

HARD TIMES

Next month the price of Collectors' Digest will be increased by one penny. It is now exactly two years since the price of C. D. was last increased, and, as everybody realises, the many facets of cost in connection with the production and mailing of the magazine have been steadily going up since that time. Now our readers must be asked to share in these increases.

I am not suggesting that this small increase will put C. D. into the black, but it will help a little, especially if subscribers will send along the increase on the balance of their unexpired subscriptions. In these cases, only a blessed few ever bother to do so, I might add.

As is obvious with a reminiscent magazine of our type, a large number of our readers are elderly people - pensioners who have to count their coppers in these difficult times. It is for this reason that the price of C. D. has been held down for so long. Now, it just must go up, and it is almost certain that another small increase must come during the next few months.

A further point. For many, many years, we have always posted C. D. in large envelopes. That is, flat. The advantages of this are obvious, especially for the many readers who like to get a year's copies bound.

Our new supply of C. D. envelopes have more than doubled in price to what they were in the summer, and, in addition, a hefty VAT charge is slapped on the top. Our latest consignment, it is admitted, is far superior in quality to what is necessary, but there is an acute shortage of paper, and we have to take what we can get, and be thankful.

Envelopes of half the size we use at present would necessitate the magazine being folded once down the centre, but they would be less costly. We shall avoid it, if we can, but it may be unavoidable. The next time you write, you might mention whether you would be sorry to receive your C. D. folded once.

1973, which is drawing to a close as I type this editorial, has been a worrying year for the man in the editor's chair - not because readers are any less appreciative and enthusiastic, but solely on account

of the inflation which hangs over the country like a pitch-black cloud.

In a letter from Jack Overhill, my dear old friend winds up:

"These are difficult days, but we've seen worse, haven't we ..."

I suppose we have. We must pray for a return of decency while so many are glorifying and making money out of indecency, and for a return of Faith in our land where, for too long, a moral standard has been allowed to slip and slide.

THE EDITOR

Danny's Diary

JANUARY 1924

Rookwood in the Boys' Friend kicked off the New Year with "Trailed in the Snow". Still on holiday at the Priory, Texas Lick was the one who followed a snow trail and found the man who had stolen Mr. Silver's Tintoretto.

On their way back to school in "Cut by the Study", Texas Lick plays poker in the train with a card-sharper named Captain Punter, and annoys the Fistical Four thereby. So much so that they send Lick to Coventry until he promises to do no more gambling.

The last Texas Lick tale was "Fed Up With Rookwood." Lick persuades the Fistical Four to break bounds with him and go for a day trip to Brighton. But circumstances cause the Rookwooders to be taken by a policeman when they arrive in Brighton. Jimmy Silver & Co. decide to take their floggings, but Lick isn't keen on it. He decides to clear off and go back to his Pop in Texas. In a way I'm sorry he has gone, for I liked the Lick stories.

Last of the month was "Working the Oracle", and it was a welcome return of Putty Grace in the lead. Putty's uncle, Mr. Theophilus Bubb, wants to adopt him, providing he leaves Rookwood, goes to live with Mr. Bubb, and changes his name to Bubb. But Putty finds a way to persuade his kind uncle that it would not be a good idea at all. A lovely Rookwood month in the Friend.

The Michael Poole stories continue in the Friend, and there is a new David Goodwin serial "Topsail Tony."

Good news for bird lovers this month. The Farne Islands off Northumberland have been purchased by the National Trust for use as a bird sanctuary.

Splendid new Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie story in the Sexton Blake Library this month. It is called "The Secret of the Black Wallet", and it starts in Monte Carlo where a young wastrel loses all his money and gets mixed up in a lot of intrigue. Great, this tale.

It has been a bitterly cold month, with days of very heavy snow. There has also been a railway strike. A portion of the railway's drivers are called ASLEF, and these have struck, so that services have been a bit topsy-turvy. Not so nice, hanging about in the cold for trains that don't come.

We now have the country's first Labour government. Mr. Baldwin has resigned, and Mr. Ramsay Macdonald has formed a ministry.

First story in the Magnet this year was the last of the Christmas series. In "The Wraith of Lochmuir", Sandy Bean, the old piper, saved Aubrey and Mick Angel when they went through the ice of the loch. But it turned out that Sandy was actually the one who was playing ghost. I have read Christmas stories I like better, but there were plenty of nice things in this Christmas series about the Lochmuir ghost.

After this, the Magnet slipped for the rest of the month. In "The Greyfriars Newspaper", Fisher T. Fish started it, and, when there was a shortage of news, he made up sensational items. He came a cropper when the printers wanted their money.

In "The Waywardness of Wibley", Wibley ran away from school to join a third-rate touring stage company, and found it hard going. Last of the month was "The Greyfriars Flood" when a dam broke and flooded the neighbourhood. The Remove team played football (or water polo) in swimming suits, while Wingate refereed from a sailing boat, with a megaphone in one hand, an oar in another hand, and a whistle round his neck. Silly. Who'd want to play swim-football in the floods in January?

The submarine L24 has been lost with forty-three lives after a

collision with the battleship "Resolution."

The real-life wonders of Tutankhamen's tomb, which drew a lot of interest this year all over the world, would seem to have inspired an exciting new series now running in the Nelson Lee Library. The St. Frank's museum has been enriched by a number of priceless treasures, including the mummy of the ancient King of Baal, which have been presented by Lord Dorrimore. The new curator of the museum is an Egyptian named Dr. Karnak, and immediately after his arrival there were strange and inexplicable happenings at St. Frank's. The chums are suspicious of Dr. Karnak, and it turns out that he wants to secure possession of the treasures. It also turns out that the awful Shape, which has haunted the neighbourhood of the school, is a deformed African native who acts as a bodyguard to Dr. Karnak.

This month's tales are "The School Museum Mystery", "The Evil Eye of Baal", "The Curse of the Moon God", and "The Sign of the Sacred Scarab." The series continues.

In the Gem, a half-and-half month. In "Tom Merry's Foe", St. Jim's is back for the new term, and the feud goes on between Cardew, the new captain, and Tom Merry, the old captain. Tom rushes to the defence of Cardew who is being attacked by Cutts in a wood. In "Just Like Cardew", the new skipper becomes slacker than ever, and, in a new election at the end of the story, Cardew amazes everyone by voting for Tom Merry - who becomes captain once more.

Next was a weak affair named "Eric Kildare's Secret". A longer tale than the usual ones, but none the better for that. Kildare tries to save his cousin from disgrace.

Final of the month was "A Vendetta at St. Jim's." A new boy, an Italian named Dimarco, comes to work out a vendetta against Contarini, but ends up as his friend. I thought Contarini left St. Jim's years ago, but apparently he is still there. At any rate, Dimarco leaves at the end of the story, so there is something to be thankful for.

A fair month at the Pictures. We have seen Mary Miles Minter in "The Little Clown"; Constance Talmadge in "The Ordeal"; Harold Lloyd in "Why Worry?"; Rudolph Valentino back again in "The Sheik"; Richard Talmadge in "The New Reporter"; and Tom Mix in "Yes, we have no Temper!"

I had a good number of cash presents over Christmas, and just before school started I took Mum to the Wimbledon Theatre to see "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves". In the pantomime they sang the song everybody is singing, "Glide my Golden Dreamboat", and Clarice Mayne sang a toe-tapping new song:

"She brought her father, her mother,
Her sister, and her brother,
Oh, I never see Maggie alone."

* * * * *

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BLAKIANA

conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I trust you have all had a Merry Christmas, plenty to eat, plenty to read and lots of other entertainment. At the time of writing there are the usual threats of power cuts, but if everyone has laid in stocks of candles we can at least read, in bed if necessary.

I am sure you will all agree with me that 1973 was an excellent year for Blakiana and the New Year has already begun well with this January issue. My thanks are due to all our contributors and so please keep up the good work and let us all have a Happy New Year.

JOSIE PACKMAN

TANGENTS

by Christopher Lowder

One of the things (one of the many things) I like about the Old Boys' Papers research field is that it's so extensive, and there's always something new and surprising waiting just around the corner.

You can gain this new and surprising prize - this fresh jolt to your collectors' complacency - any number of ways, but usually, I've found, when what you're looking for has nothing whatever to do with what you actually find. Immersed in one subject (an author, an illustrator, a type of story, and so on), you find yourself suddenly blown off at a wild tangent on to something quite different ... and sometimes far more startling.

Recently, whilst investigating that hardy annual, the Frank Atkins/Frank Aubrey/Fenton Ash/F. St. Mars problem (who was who, who wrote what, when, where, and was the father the son, or the son the father, or, indeed, the daughter - and other complications), I came across, 'midst other finds of rather less note, an entirely new field of G. H. Teed research, and an entirely new (that is to say, old, and entirely forgotten and unrecorded) Sexton Blake story.

Since it may interest you to follow the crooked path of the ardent researcher hot on the trail, here is, briefly, what happened.

There is an American adventure story writer I'm rather fond of named Arthur O. Friel. He specialized in tales of the South American jungle, was an exceedingly good writer, and wrote mainly for that excellent old American pulp magazine Adventure. So did such stalwarts as Talbot Mundy, Arthur Howden-Smith, Rafael Sabatini, J. Allan Dunn, and (as I discovered when I bought up a whole pile for their Friel stories some months ago) so did F. St. Mars.

F. St. Mars? The nature story writer? The very same. Interesting, to say the least. But what was the writer whose real name (according to Amalgamated Press cheques) was F. Atkins, Jr. (and thus, the son of that F. Atkins whose pseudonyms included 'Frank Aubrey' and 'Fenton Ash', and whose work is avidly collected by devotees of early science fiction and fantasy, who will pay 40 quid and over for a copy of his "The Radium Seekers" in fine condition) doing in a magazine devoted to tough, full-blooded adventure yarns? Why, writing nature stories, of course.

Curiouser and curiouser. They must be very good nature stories, I supposed. They were. Exceptionally good, in fact.

At this point, the long arm of coincidence (fate, luck, call it what you like, but without which no researcher would ever get anywhere) extended itself. Whilst browsing through a Hampstead second-hand bookshop, some days later, my eye caught ... Well, what else? The name F. St. Mars, of course. "The Wild Unmasked", Chambers, 1920 - fine condition, 10p.

I bought, read, was converted. More St. Mars I had to have. Or, if not stories, at least information. A checklist was indicated.

So, down to the Fleetway vaults, hot-foot. St. Mars wrote mainly for the old Red Magazine and the London Magazine (the latter with beautiful illustrations by that fine artist Warwick Reynolds). A full list was soon compiled - during which, I was knocked off at so many tangents I'll be occupied for the next year and a half at least sorting them all out.

Let's deal with G. H. Teed first of all. In 1915, he wrote a two-part fantasy story (with more than a touch of mysticism about it) for the Red Magazine - No. 156, "The Strange Adventure of Professor Sampson Parr" (1 Oct. 15); and No. 158, "The Disappearance of

Dr. Coe" (i Nov. 15) - under the byline Hamilton Teed,

The plot concerns strange spider-like beings (the Selenites) who inhabit the Moon, but who can transport themselves (via a form of space-warp) from the Moon to the Earth, where they change themselves into beautiful women, with a view to conquering our planet.

Fairly far-out, you might think, from the heavy of the Sexton Blake saga? Not really. Teed was very much into fantasy, science fiction, and the like at this period in his life, as the Blake versus Prince Menes series in the 1917 UJ shows (see my article in the CD Annual, 1972 - "The Progressive Phase of G. H. Teed"), and, as an incidental, it must be remembered that at the end of his life (in the late-'30's) he was hammering out dozens of science fiction and fantastic lost race stories for Odhams Press. These two early ones for the Red Magazine were not at all like his Blake stories of the period - however, more a cross between H. G. Wells and William Hope Hodgson.

However, now I was on the Teed trail, it occurred to me to look further afield. Having proved the existence of two stories for the adult market, it was likely there were more to be unearthed. But where?

A logical progression (too long to go into here) led me to Answers Library, that well-known romance library to which many of the juvenile writers contributed - Andrew Murray, Sidney Drew, H. Gregory Hill, Cecil Hayter (remember that name it'll crop up again), etc.

Jackpot! A steady two hoursworth led me to No. 371 (30 June, 17) "A Love Awakened," by "the author of 'Yvonne'". A "complete Canadian romance" and set in New Brunswick, to boot. The plot involves the stock market, wheat speculation, and so on ... Dick Saunders loves Eleanor Brent, but is about to be ruined by Digby Falkiner - a novel in the classic Answers Library mold.

Okay. Now ... what about that Sexton Blake story?

Naturally, any researcher worth his salt keeps his eyes open. Anything that looks even faintly interesting is worth investigating . . . and sometimes strange secrets are hidden beneath the most innocent-seeming covers (I should say wrappers!).

Thus, while tracking through the interminably un-torrid tales of Edwardian (well, Georgian) love in Answers Library, who should I come across but another yarn-spinner of great merit, Cecil Hayter. Another

list to be compiled, clearly - Hayter being an old favourite of mine.

And thus ... No. 85 (6 Jan. 12), "The Man in the Train" - a Sexton Blake story, no less (and with a cracking conclusion, too - where the villain plunges screaming over the edge of a quarry'. Great stuff.). An added bonus: Hayter's "Man in the Train" is illustrated by our old friend Arthur Clarke.

So there we are. Some interesting lines of research revealed simply because I wanted to compile a list of F. St. Mars stories.

Of course, I'd known that Teed had written for the purely adult market before, but only towards the end of his life (stories by him can be found in American pulps of the mid - to late - '30's - Thrilling Adventures, for instance), and not at the start of his career.

And as for the Blake novel - well, that's just another one to be added to the list. I doubt not that there are yet more stories to be unearthed in the vast collection of magazines published by the Amalgamated Press from the 1890's up to 1940. The trick is to find 'em!

SEXTON BLAKE IS ALIVE AND WELL ...

by Deryck Harvey

Sexton Blake himself answered the door, and smiled. "Mr. Harvey?" he asked. "How very nice to see you. Won't you come in?"

I've met thousands of people and undertaken hundreds of interviews in my time, but nothing had given me a greater thrill than this moment.

Could it be true? I'd written about "Blake's End" and "Blake's Demise" in recent issues of "Collectors' Digest". Then I had a bright idea: why not ask the man himself about his premature "retirement"?

Blake took me into his Baker Street home, ushered me into his penthouse flat which, I'd read, had cost £27,543 at least eight years ago.

"Do sit down. Would you care to smoke?" He proffered a wooden cigarette box. There was a choice of brands.

"Mr. Blake," I stammered. "I ... er ..." I muttered something about the pleasure he had given me and countless others over the years, and the wonderful example he had set.

"Ah, yes," he said. "Good of you. People are so kind." He broke off, put a match to a briar pipe, and puffed at it until clouds of

blue smoke billowed around him.

"Now, what's all this about my retirement? Exaggerated, you know. The fact is, I've never been busier. You might say business is booming!"

Blake's politeness, his rhetorical questions and short statements, had helped to put me at my ease.

Now he was in full spate. "I was sorry when the old Sexton Blake Library died," he said. "It was well enough liked, and as you say, it gave pleasure to a great many people.

"It would be wrong, however, to think that I've been phased out in any way! You just have to look around you to know that there's as much crime about today as ever."

Blake's brow knitted; his V-shaped peak seemed to lurch forward. "I was pleased, you know, when Mr. Baker brought the image up-to-date in the fourth series. A man has to move with the times. For a long time, Sexton Blake Investigations had been under way. I know some readers didn't like it, but, well, a man doesn't always like to be buried in the past!"

There was a knock at the door, and a head peeped round.

"Ah, Mrs. Bardell," said Blake, "and a timely cup of tea." He himself poured, and offered thinly-cut slices of fruit cake.

"As I was saying, you have to keep up, although I was rather amused when the TV series featured some of the earlier cases. An excellent performance by Mr. Payne, I thought."

I hesitated to ask Blake about his current cases - professional etiquette, and all that. But he seemed to anticipate my thoughts.

"You must be wondering what I'm engaged on at the moment? I suppose the stories will be told one day. Northern Ireland. Industrial sabotage. The bomb-scare cases."

All too soon, my time at Baker Street was at an end. "Is that all right?" Blake asked. "I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to excuse me now. I have an appointment in a few minutes' time."

He showed me the way to the door. "Give my regards to Mr. Payne and Mrs. Packman, won't you?" he said. "I always enjoy 'Collectors' Digest'".

"Do you know, it must be about 25 years since one of its readers

came to see me." He pondered. "A Mr. Maurice Bond, I think, in 1948."

I shall never forget my meeting with Sexton Blake, or my visit to Baker Street. The great detective proved as polite, charming and personable as I'd always imagined him.

What is more, he's alive and well and living in London, and I can't help feeling that all his recent cases will be recorded, one day. Soon, I hope.

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

UNLUCKY NELSON LEE?

by W. O. G. Lofts

Long ago, I reached the conclusion that the Nelson Lee and St. Frank's characters seemed to be unlucky in every way. Seemingly always having to compete against similar and more popular characters. I refer of course to Sexton Blake, and the schools of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood. Unlucky could also be the term applied to the creator of Nelson Lee - Maxwell Scott, and to Edwy Searles Brooks, creator of St. Frank's. Both suffered frustration at editors' and administrators' hands with their characters, as we shall see starting right at the beginning ... Sexton Blake first appeared in the $\frac{1}{2}$ Marvel, of 1893. Nelson Lee did not appear until forty issues later in 1894, so Blake already had a big start in popularity. But to balance this, Maxwell Scott was a far superior writer to those who were penning the Blake stories. One could say that up to about 1900 both characters were equal in popularity. In 1904, however, W. H. Back, editor of the Union Jack, decided to make it exclusively Sexton Blake's own paper. He could have easily chosen Nelson Lee, but he didn't, and so Lee then had to play second fiddle in odd serials in other boys' papers, and in the Boys' Friend Library. The balance seemed to have been returned in 1915 when the Nelson Lee Library was launched. To enable other writers to pen stories of the Greys Inn Road detective, Maxwell Scott sold the copyright of the character to Amalgamated Press for only £50. He easily

could have got fifty times that amount, if only he had had a proper business ability. Scott then retired more or less bitter at how much his character was really thought of in the financial sense. Some three months later, the Sexton Blake Library started, when unfortunately for Nelson Lee, the sales of this venture were far superior. Sexton Blake was far better known and more popular. Apart from the U. J. he had also appeared in short stories in Answers and Penny Pictorial. These publications ran into the million plus category. Blake had also appeared in numerous plays on the stage, and his name was practically a household word. There was talk of folding the N. L. L. in 1917, when someone came up with the idea of having a sort of school-cum-detective tale each week, and so St. Frank's was born. E. S. B. was given the job, and told to "model his school on Greyfriars", though I personally have never found any resemblance at all between the two schools - which is to his credit. This novel idea caught on and the circulation rose to reasonable proportions. Indeed, so much so, that in 1919, and borrowing the idea, H. W. Twyman then editor of Detective Library had Sexton Blake attending Kingsmere College in a series of tales written by S. G. Shaw. In the same year, and because of the growing popularity of St. Frank's, a series of short stories featuring that school and written by E. S. B. started in the Boys' Realm. It was also around this time that Harold May was appointed editor of the N. L. L., W. H. Back being promoted Director of the firm. May, however was very easy going and he let E. S. B. have a completely free hand in everything. He also had the unfortunate habit of jumping the gun with things without consulting higher authority. I related a story in a recent C. D. of where a writer spent a considerable time in writing a Lee tale, then having it rejected because May had not got higher permission first. Harold May had already blotted his copybook by giving E. S. B. a higher rate for stories than even Charles Hamilton was getting. When E. S. B. asked the same thing for his Boys' Realm St. Frank's tales, R. T. Eves then editor, refused pointblank and rather than submit to him, wrote all the latter tales himself - with the aid of Maurice Nutbrown a sub-editor. In 1925 the famous Schoolboys Own Library started, and not to be outdone, Harold May later in that year, brought out the Monster Library. There is no question that the latter publication was far superior to the S. O. L.

as the stories were not cut. The big snag was the price of 1/- to the S. O. L's 4d. Consequently the sales were never high, as most N. L. L. readers simply could not afford to buy it. The amazing thing was that the Monster Library ran for nineteen issues, but it ceased in 1927. It was also about this time, that the N. L. L. sales began to slide. Why exactly one will never know, as E. S. B. was writing as well as ever, but perhaps the novelty had gone. A scape-goat had to be found and it was Harold May. He was replaced by Alfred Edgar somewhere about 1928. (May did not retire as stated by E. S. B. Staff records at A. P. prove that he did not leave Fleetway until the early thirties.) Edgar was unlike May in every respect, and was strong-willed, precise, and methodical. The discussions of future stories was by all accounts a strong clash of personalities. Edwy insisted that he knew exactly what the readers wanted. Edgar insisted that E. S. B. was only a contributor, and should write what an editor told him. Curiously enough, the stories still reached a high standard, and Edgar not long after left the N. L. L. but went on to far greater things as the playwright 'Barre Lyndon', and became world famous in Hollywood. Jimmy Caudwell the next editor under 'Monty' Haydon (who had replaced W. H. Back who had died abroad) was told simply to get E. S. B. to plug Handforth for all his worth in the stories, and make him the leading character as Billy Bunter was in the Magnet. The late Mrs. Frances Brooks told me that Edwy got almost to dislike him in the end. Arthur Jones was replaced by Kenneth Brooks as artist, the former probably bettering himself, by more lucrative work on the new paper, the Thriller, which certainly had a greater readership. By this time, the once proud N. L. L. had been relegated into a corner of a sub-editor's office. Sensing that he was on a good-hiding to nothing, Caudwell shortly moved over to the firm of Odhams, where his creative talents were eventually put to good use on Mickey Mouse Weekly and Modern Wonder. The N. L. L. also was regarded as something of a joke amongst editors at that time, as everyone knew it would in the near future be killed off, and they avoided like the plague any hints or suggestions to take it over. However eventually it was taken over by the Companion papers editor Mr. C. M. Down, who in an interview some years ago stated quite frankly ...

*Yes, you are correct in your information. After being banded about from

department to department, the Lee Library was finally handed over to me. This was I presume because of our success in the school story field. Personally, I never had any interest in St. Frank's, nor was I particularly anxious to renew contact with E. S. Brooks - who was a somewhat difficult man to deal with in his early days in writing for the Magnet and Gem. I actually handed over the Library to one of our chief sub-editors, Hedley O'Mant, to have a completely free hand. He had had great experience with the school/detective tales - having written the Ferrers Locke stories in the Magnet after Charles Hamilton had ceased to write them! ...

O'Mant the last editor, was of the new type of school, and had the strong conviction that the Lee tales should have the D. C. Thomson type of stories, and it is no wonder that many readers have assumed in recent years that E. S. B. never wrote many of the tales. Gone was the easy flow of writing, and slang and other impossible themes finally killed off the N. L. L. after yet another series of mainly reprints. The last issue was 23rd August, 1933, being amalgamated into the Gem. St. Frank's stories of course continued in various publications up to 1940.

Enthusiasts of Nelson Lee today are also unlucky in getting inside data of their favourite paper. Whereas so much data has been gleaned from Magnet and Gem offices, the amount in the St. Frank's saga is nil. Alfred Edgar and Jimmy Caudwell both refused to discuss it when contacted. Harold May is believed dead, so are Hedley O'Mant, and the chief editors, Down and Monty Haydon. Arthur Jones completely disappeared, whilst Kenneth Brooks' information was negligible. Mrs. Brooks blamed the whole decline and death of Lee on Monty Haydon - yet it was Monty who suggested the name of 'Norman Conquest' for E. S. B's famous 'Berkeley Grey' pen-name, and who in the Thriller undoubtedly made his name far more famous (and his small fortune) than his St. Frank's stories. Nelson Lee and St. Frank's had an unlucky history, but lucky enough for Edwy Searles Brooks. It was Amalgamated Press who eventually put him on the road to fame and fortune.

* * * * *

WANTED GREATLY: Magnets 1201 - 2; 1164 - 5; 1158 - 7; 1137 - 5; 1132. Also most below. Good prices. Exchanges, correspondence welcome.

J. de FREITAS,

29 GILARTH ST., HIGHETT, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3190.

THROUGH OTHER EYES

by Les Rowley

Greyfriars, its Staff and Scholars, as seen by persons in everyday life.

Mr. Wells of Wharton Lodge, Wimford, Surrey.

The rays of the afternoon sun slanted their way through the pantry window to find reflection in the silver candelabra that Mr. Wells was polishing. I already had a feeling that I was being granted more of an audience than an interview. It had not been easy to obtain a few minutes with the butler of Wharton Lodge and I knew that I would have to tread warily indeed if our meeting were to be of any value at all.

I had accepted and joined Mr. Wells in a glass of his master's port and the gentle warmth of the ruby liquid and our mutual appreciation of the wine helped us both to relax.

"Yes, I do recall the afternoon when the Colonel told me to send Master Harry to him. It had been known for some time downstairs that Master Harry would be going to school and the popular surmise was that the school would be that of the master's for Greyfriars still claims the Colonel's attention as a member of the Governing Board.

We did not view Master Harry's departure with any great regret. He had proved himself a wilful lad of high spirits - spirits that were often mis-directed. To us it seemed agreeable that the staff should be relieved of serving such a quick tempered boy whose introduction to the hard facts of life seemed much overdue. The School can claim much credit for transforming the Master Harry of those days into the Master Harry that we all respect today.

Apart from the influence of the School itself, the personal influence of his friends has also had its effect. It is easy for those who know to detect in Master Harry's character something of the open honesty of Mastery Cherry, the calmness of Master Nugent, and the frankness of Master Bull. It is, however, to His Highness the Prince Huree Janset Ram Singh that most credit must go for directing a previously self-centred nature into less selfish channels. These few comments must, however, suffice for my impressions of Master Harry and his immediate circle of friends.

I feel able to speak more freely about a Master Bunter - a person who enjoyed the hospitality of this roof more often than by invitation.

Of almost unlimited appetite it was impossible to estimate the requirements for table when he is present. Meals at orthodox times prove insufficient for such a capacity. The silver biscuit box on the dining room sideboard is emptied within minutes of it being filled; the number of cakes and pies annexed from the larder can only be computed from the amount of crumbs found in the bedclothes of Master Bunter's bed. This person's gluttony is only matched by his laziness and his disregard for the truth. I must confess, Sir, that there have been occasions when I have been tempted to accelerate the departure of this interloper by the application of a well placed boot!

But I forget myself, Sir. That I have continued to serve the same master for so long a period is ample proof, I think, of the esteem in which I hold Colonel and Miss Wharton. A period that has covered some unique occurrences at the lodge especially when Master Harry has been home on holiday with some of his friends. I can see from your face that you are familiar with some of them and I will not dare to encroach on your remembrances. Here I am, and here I shall remain, serving my master and mistress and, on occasion, their nephew. Some say, Sir, that the day of the butler is over. I intend, Sir, to refute that suggestion by continuing to play my part as butler at Wharton Lodge. And, now if you will excuse me, Sir, I must instruct young Thomas in his duties for tomorrow. The car will take you to the station, Sir, in time for you to catch the 5.45. Good day, Sir, and ... thank you, very much, Sir!"

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 115 - Magnets 1084-5 - Who Punched Prout?

One of the most distinctive features of the Magnet during the nineteen-twenties was the development of the relationship between Coker and Mr. Prout. Charles Hamilton entertained the reader with long descriptive passages concerning the trouble each caused the other, all written with such a detached air of tolerant amusement that even the youngest readers could appreciate some of the humour of the situation, whilst the older readers could savour it to the full. Nothing illustrated

better the wisdom of not writing-down to your audience than the series in Magnets 1084-5, dealing with the punching of Prout.

The first chapter was devoted to analysing a situation in the Fifth form. Prout was utterly weary of Coker's abysmal ignorance, whilst Coker considered that he was being victimised by an ignorant form-master. Later on he developed this theme at length in the games study, and his prediction that he might one day lose his temper and punch Prout was unfortunately overheard by the Fifth-form master himself as he arrived to favour his boys with one of his valued confidential chats. Prout eventually decided to take no notice of words overheard by accident, and the crisis was for the time being averted.

What is so fascinating about this type of situation is the way in which we are given an insight into Prout's character: how he imagined the Fifth-formers enjoyed his informal chats, how he thought the other masters were delighted with his reminiscences and advice on how to control their forms, and how (when someone did in fact punch him on the nose in the darkness of Coker's study) he felt the blow to his prestige more than anything else. The analysis of Coker's and Prout's attitudes to the developing situation supplied a two-dimensional picture. It was not a simple case of right and wrong, but a complicated affair of misunderstanding and stupidity.

Of course there were many scenes of action as well, with Coker refusing to be expelled and barricading himself in his study. Both Dr. Locke and Mr. Prout became bewildered at the unexpected course of events, and Mr. Prout's advice to Gosling on how to gain entrance to the barricaded study is a little gem in itself. Charles Hamilton once told me that he thought the Magnet was improved tremendously when he gave up his foreign travels about this time, and there can be no doubt that the quality of his writing in 1928 might have made a reader from the days of the red Magnet wonder if a new writer had taken over the Greyfriars stories. The air of confidence and sparkling humour which began at this time marked a truly astonishing development in the history of the Magnet.

* * * * *

SALE: Tom Merry's Own; Sexton Blakes post-war; Hank Jansen paperbacks; books by Berkeley Gray.

MAGOVENY, 65 BENTHAM ST., BALFAST.

REVIEW"BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS"

(Frank Richards:
Howard Baker. £2.75)

The 4-story Cavandale Abbey series is probably the most loved of all the Magnet Christmases. Published for the far-distant Yuletide season of 1930, this splendidly atmospheric tale has everything which should be present in a Christmas story. There is a phantom, there is a secret sniper, there are two mysteries, and there is Ferrers Locke, the detective, who comes along to solve them. The chapters in which Bunter manages to land himself for the holiday on Lord Cavandale, the owner of the horse Maharajah, and the sequences where the host slowly becomes disillusioned with his plump guest, are real gems of literature which can be savoured again and again with never-lessening joy.

The Cavandale Abbey series would have stood alone well, but, being in festive mood, the publishers have added to the feast with two delightful single stories from the year 1931. Coker stars as "The Champion Chump", and nearly gets himself sacked, but, as so often in Coker tales, it is really the glorious Prout who steals the show. "Billy Bunter's Bunk" is a delicious morsel to wind up the book, and, in this one, the St. Jim's chums have a part to play. All very satisfying, and yet making us sigh that the Magnet no longer comes on the scene week by week as it did in those halcyon days.

The artist throughout is the superb Leonard Shields.

* * * * *

CHARLIE WRIGHT

With deep sorrow we heard in November, of the death of Charlie Wright. One of the most popular figures in the London Club, Charlie, who was a loyal supporter of this magazine from very early days, has been seriously ill for several years. We have marvelled at his patience, his gentleness, and his bravery. Now he is gone, and the hobby is much the poorer for his passing. Sadly, though perhaps appropriately, a charming article from Charlie, in which he looks back into the days of his youth, is one of the bright spots of this year's Annual. It is Charlie's farewell to us all. On behalf of its readers, Collectors' Digest expresses to Charlie's widow, Olive, our very deepest sympathy in her great loss. She will miss Charlie the most of all, but we will miss him too.

The Postman Called

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

BILL LOFTS (London): I would be the last person to discredit the late Walter Webb on his wonderful contributions to the Sexton Blake saga. But, in the interests of accuracy, the article in December Blakiana "Gleanings from Walter Webb's Notebooks" came almost word for word from my article in the October, 1955, C. D. I remember Walter asking me for a carbon copy before it was published, as he was so excited at the information contained. Indeed, although I met Harry Blyth's son -- another well known collector had corresponded with him before me. Going back further John Hunter was a sort of slight friend of Blyth junior before the war when both lived at Margate. Mr. Hunter told me that Blyth was like Mr. Bunter on the stock exchange and had lost all his money, and felt that A. P., should have given him a pension for his father creating Sexton Blake! In the sixties and with the now late Frank Pettingell the famous actor - we went to see Blyth junior again, but he had then died, also his wife.

MARY CADOGAN (Beckenham): What a lovely piece of Christmas cheer (in the shape of the golden December C. D.) came through my letterbox at the weekend! All the well-loved Christmas ingredients were represented - Bunter, his half-eaten Christmas (bed-side!) pudding and a cosy-olde-time spook - plus memories of "Bunter the Benevolent" and Rookwood Christmas stories. I found "Blakiana" intriguing - Blake in his very early days, and into the 1960's. And that other celebrated sleuth - Herlock Sholmes! Using the close print for a page or two for reprints makes a happy variation in the 'Digest' - and as C. H. Matthews suggested, why not consider a "Mr. Buddle" serial in the monthly one day? May I suggest how fascinating it would be to send him along to Cliff House on one of his adventures?

Thank you again for a happy fore-taste of Christmas!

R. J. GODSAVE (Leytonstone): The old papers, more than simple reading matter carried with them an aura, entirely their own, and, to those, reading the old stories from their own boyhood, have memories of a bygone way of life and in most cases, past enjoyment and happiness.

Much of the enjoyment, too, was in the anticipation of next week's instalment, particularly as, in those not so affluent days, two pence from a boy's pocket money represented in most cases, a major investment.

For this reason alone, to have the St. Frank's stories re-created by a substitute writer even in the imitation of E. S. Brooks would be for the reader to suffer a sense of anticlimax and disappointment.

No! Please let us keep the rosy glow of our memories and allow the passing of years to enhance, rather than detract from our fondness for the St. Frank's of the past.

MOLLIE ALLISON (Leeds): This morning the C. D. Annual arrived (1973) - the list of contents made me want to sit down and read and read! But no, you know what there is to do before the 25th arrives, and I thought 'Later.' However, one article just had to be read at once - perhaps you can guess, Mr. Softee! Bless him! It brought tears to my eyes, but I loved it. Many thanks, and for all the other happy reading you have brought to us.

F. STURDY (Middlesborough): Pleasantly surprised with the Herlock Sholmes feature which I think was attributed to Peter Todd at the time.

LEONARD H. ALLEN (Bournemouth): The first serial I saw was "The Broken Coin" in 1915, but I can still recall some of the episodes. The cast was a strong one and included Francis Forde, Grace Cunard, Eddie Polo and Jack Holt as the villain. A publicity stunt was a give-away coin presented to each patron of the cinema screening the film. These are quite valuable today as collectors items. The serial proved so popular that it was extended for a run of twenty-two weeks.

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WANTED IN GOOD CONDITION: S.B.L. FIRST SERIES, 2,6,14,21,23,24,26,32,33,35,37,38,39, 42,46,47,48,51,52,55,58,77,88,90,93,99,101,112,117,145.

PENNY U.J., 134,149,271,309,373,425,430,468,478,488,492,495,498,505. STATE PRICE.

S. GORDON SWAN

51 BEATTY AVENUE, VICTORIA PARK EAST, WESTERN AUSTRALIA 6101.

+ + + + +
CHANGE OF ADDRESS - Don Webster's new address is 3 Broadlands, Alvaladiscott Road, E. Bideford, N.Devon.

News of the Clubs

LONDON

The Yuletide Spirit was very much in evidence at "Courtfield", Ruislip, on Sunday, 16th December. The power crisis was not worsened at this meeting, but was used to great effect by the burning of candles which produced a delightful, festive atmosphere.

Roger Jenkins went into action first with a reading from "The Phantom of the Highlands." Josie Packman followed in superb style with a reading from the Union Jack of 1926 - Gwyn Evans' story "Mrs. Bardell's Christmas Eve." Bob Blythe added to the entertainment with some seasonable reading from two stories in the Nerki, the Sorcerer series, of the Nelson Lee Nos. 152 and 153.

David Aaronberg read a fine story, "The Case of the Ranelagh Ruby", from a school magazine "The Taylorian Literary Supplement", 1951. Mary Cadogan pleased us greatly with a story from the C. D. Christmas Number of 1948.

Seasonable fare took the form of delicious turkey sandwiches, mince tarts, and a lovely cake with the Old Boys' Book Club done in icing.

The host, Robert Acraman, wound up a grand occasion with a reading from the latest Howard Baker newsletter. Our thanks to Bob and Betty Acraman for their excellent hospitality.

The next meeting is at the Richmond Community Centre. If attending, please notify.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

(Roger Jenkins asks us to inform members that he will not be attending the January meeting, so there will be no Hamilton Library on that occasion.)



NORTHERN

Saturday, 8th December, 1973

The twenty-fourth Christmas party of the Northern OBBC and a convivial gathering of members and their families for a study-tea provided

by the girls of Cliff House.

There followed a game in which we were required to identify the places depicted in a number of photographs. The observant traveller was able to rely on memory and the rest of us used our imagination! Top marks to June Arden, then came Celia Wilson and tying in second place were Jeremy Wilson and Bill Williamson.

Highlight (possibly!) of the evening was our presentation of 'The Ghost of No. 1 Study' from the Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1932. The cast was as follows: Nugent - Ron Hodgson, Cherry - H. Truscott, Bunter - Jack Allison, Hurree Singh - Barry Barlow, Wharton - G. Wilde, Bull - Jesse Wilson, Smithy - G. Good.

And when the uproarious applause (sic!) had died away we organised ourselves for a Smithy-Drive (an interesting variation of the Bunter-Drive and stemming, one would suspect, from the genius of Jack Allison!).

Refreshments - that is, going to work on the left-overs - and then a team game. The same thirty questions for each team but presented in varying orders. Each question was to be found on a card collected and returned by the 'runner'.

Top came Cliff house with 26½, then Greyfriars with 13½, St. Jim's 5 and Rookwood 4. My, oh my! What would Dr. Chisholm have had to say?

But here's one question from the cards which confounded us all: How long is a lustrum?

After thanks to all who had organised, helped and supported, we wended our homeward way - though certain of the more intrepid spirits, it was rumoured, were off to other parties! (Though we'll bet they didn't have a Smithy-Drive!). (News of the Clubs continued on Page 28.)

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WANTED: Magnet 556.
FOR SALE: 1938 Butterfly, 20p; two abridged William books, 25p; Captain, Volume 27, £1.50; two 1917 Scouts, 35p.
Postage extra on all items.
Write -

JOHN WALLEN,

10 ROCKFORD AVE., SOUTHDENE, KIRKBY, NR, LIVERPOOL.

BETTY BALFOUR

by Harold Truscott

Squibs was the first of four films about a Piccadilly flower-girl, with Betty Balfour, and directed by the man many, including myself, regard as the finest silent film director England had, George Pearson. Betty Balfour, born in North London in 1903, appeared in a public performance of a pantomime in Kensington when she was ten, and was spotted by a London agent, J. L. Davis, who persuaded her aunt, who was also her guardian, to allow her niece to go on the stage. Pearson's partner, T. H. Welsh, gave her her first film part, as a maid-of-all-work. Betty returned to the stage but, as she has said herself, she gradually became obsessed with the problem of expressing herself "to the deaf, one-eyed monster - the camera." Her first starring part came soon after, again with Wright, in "Mary Find The Gold." "Squibs", which finally established her with the public, came in 1921. The original trade show of this film had an ending which showed Squibs happily married to her policeman lover, but Will Jury, head of the distributing firm handling this film, insisted that the ending be changed so that the film could lead to a series. Three more about this character followed at intervals, with other films in between, but finally Squibs was married. Betty had said that she asked for this to be put in because she stood a chance of being killed as an artiste by the part she had created (shades in the twenties of what has happened to characters in television series).

Her films were simple, with fine artistry, but yet not in the least arty. Throughout the twenties she held British audiences and her films had considerable success in America, although she never went to that country. Her first serious part, in which she proved herself as fine a serious actress as she was a comedian, was made in 1924, again by George Pearson, who directed the majority of her silent films. It was called *Reveille*, a study of the effects of war and its aftermath on the common man. The film was, I think, England's finest silent film. Other films followed, including Syd Chaplin's "A Little Bit Of Fluff", some comic, some serious. In all Betty proved her ability and versatility, and never gave less than her best. In 1930, she made her first sound film, "The Brat", again based on the Squibs character. For this she put up the money herself, but it was not so successful as her

silent films. Audiences seemed to think that talking diminished her stature, a view I have never shared, although I preferred her silent films on the whole, simply because I prefer the silent film as a medium, anyway.

But she was superb by any count in "The Vagabond Queen", also in 1930, with a quite young-looking Ernest Thesiger. You were quite right in remembering her in "Evergreen", in 1934, in which she played Jessie Matthews' old-time music hall friend. Her last appearance in a film was in 1945: "29 Acacia Avenue," for Columbia. She tried a stage comeback in 1952 in "The Golden Grain", at the Embassy Theatre, Swiss Cottage. Alas! it ran for only ten nights. It was thirty years since she had been on the stage, although, as I did not see this, I do not know if this was the cause of the failure. From what I have read, I believe it was the play itself that failed to grip.

Known in her heyday as England's Queen of Happiness, she could be to some extent aligned with Mary Pickford, in America, or even the earlier comedy of Marion Davies or Bebe Daniels, after the latter left Harold Lloyd's films; but only to some extent. In the last resort, Betty was an unique artist, like no one else at all, as unique as my beloved Harry Langdon.

She still lives in retirement in North London.

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NEWS OF THE CLUBS continued

MIDLAND

Though the absence of a mention in recent issues might suggest the contrary, the Birmingham branch is alive and well. With so many changes taking place to the city centre, suitable meeting places have been difficult to arrange. For some months at least, a room has been booked in a modern, pleasant building, Dr. Johnson House, in Bull Street.

Club programmes are not entirely devoted to Hamiltonia but there is usually a reading from one of The Masters stories. Tom Porter continues to supply a suitable Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item for perusal at the meetings. Treasurer Norman Gregory is happily much better and was able to attend a recent meeting. For only the

second time in its long history the Midland OBBC has a lady chairman at the helm, Win Brown.

WHEN THE SPARKLER SPARKLED

by O. W. Wadham

No doubt in the 1930 period that coloured comic THE SPARKLER was a great force in introducing strip cartoons to readers. The Sparkler had twelve pages in those years, and there were NINE strip stories, most of them of twelve pictures. I have a copy of The Sparkler for 26th March, 1938, and a neat paper it is too. Priced at two pence it had a neat four-colour cover, and besides the drawings there were four serials and a page of chat and crosstalk.

The cover characters were Captain Kipper and the boys of the Ocean Wave. Also at the left side of the paper was a fierce bulldog in "Our Sideshow". The story serials were on the old theme that had been popular in comics for over forty years - mill mysteries, queer old houses, cowboy bandits, and dock stories.

According to that complete list of comics in the 1963 DIGEST ANNUAL by W. O. G. Lofts and D. J. Adley, THE SPARKLER only lived for 264 issues. It made a good showing in its day, and helped to make popular the comic strip. It finished its run on December 5th, 1939. There was no sign of the end coming in a little over twelve months, in the neat copy I have.

 Happy New Year Members All, especially our Editor; my special friend Howard Sharpe, also Messrs. B. Vernon, Darcy, J. Belton, "Sir" James Swan, V. Colby, S. Smyth, J. Cook, W. Lofts, R. Jenkins, R. Godsave, and very specially all of my Lee and Union Jack Collectors. Do not think I am overlooking Bette Pate or Mrs. Josie Packman. After all, the ladies of our hobby have in my mind been equal or more up to the gents in their contributions to the Digest. This is not a Ladies' Lib. publicity plug. After all, girls are girls, not men. Who could love a man in mini's? Not me. To put all nonsense aside, I wish every member I have not been able to mention the best New Year that they have ever had. Sincerely,

A. G. DAVIDSON,

193 RAE ST., FITZROY NORTH, MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA.

++++++
WANTED: Any issues of "Scoops".

S. R. DALTON, "SAMARKAND", NORTH LANE, LEEDS, LS8 2NG.

STILL STORMY

(CYRIL ROWE has a few comments to make on the "DUNCAN STORM" article by W. G. G. Lofts in the latest C.D. Annual.)

I have ever been immensely interested in Duncan Storm (who was Harry Revel and John Grenfell) but I have always been puzzled by the statement that he was Gilbert Floyd.

Floyd, I have heard, was on "Answers" staff and was editor of The Boys' Realm. I have no material from "Answers", but in Boys' Realm No. 21 (November 1902) there was a 2½ pages long story of Australia, called "Paddy Polwhite's Legacy." A very ordinary tale indeed.

In No. 26 (December 1902) there was "Our Christmas Highwayman", a tale similarly undistinguished. Also by the author of "Captain Handyman", a 4-page tale "Bunter Street Pirates". This had a little more life. In the same issue was an article "Ghosts and Phantom Ships" by Captain Shand.

Ever since the Realm began, and certainly until issue No. 44, there had been yarns of Capt. Handyman with no author's name given.

Floyd? Shand? Or Whom?

At that period, some similar tales of like length were appearing in the Boys' Friend. These were ascribed to "the author of the Capt. Handyman tales appearing in the Boys' Realm." But they were not all anonymous. Some bore the names of T. C. Bridges, Lieut. Lefevre (Paul Herring), and that to me indicates a composite performance.

Some years later, this same series of short Handyman tales was reprinted as a serial in Pluck. I possess some copies and can verify this.

I found just one reference once in a Boys' Friend that Captain Shand was back from a voyage and would be writing again. Perhaps Mr. Lofts had spotted this also.

I possess the first sixteen numbers of Penny Pictorial (among many others) and here Floyd has six tales varying in length from two to three thousand words - all very insipid, colourless little novelettes. Also four articles, typical journalism of the period, with little distinction about them.

In Harmsworth's Magazine, Volume 2, appears "The Great Green Diamond"; in Vol. 4 "Baba and the Black Sheep" and "Those Dying Gladiators", and in Vol. 9 "H. M. S. Horrible's Baby". These are of average length, 5,000 words, with a bit more drive, but again not very distinguished.

Was he Clabon Glover? I find nothing in Realm or in the first 127 issues of Boys' Herald by this name, but in the Boys' Friend 318 appears "The Silver Mine". This is 10,000 words of the Canadian Woods. In 337 Glover has a tale of similar length "The Poacher", a country life tale, and in 354 "Caught in the Toils", a tale of Burma.

I know nothing more of Glover, but the style is quite ordinary. Could be Floyd, and it could be Mark Darran, or T. C. Bridges, or Royston Gower, or Ambrose Earle - in fact, anybody of that era, so far as I can judge.

What beats me is how Floyd changed from this paltry material, to the breezy narrative, the common tongue, the complete picaresque tales of the Bombay Castle, etc., which he portrayed as Duncan Storm, and so capably rendered in other tales under his other pseudonyms.

The writer of Bombay Castle may be Floyd, but I just can't and don't believe it.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: I know nothing of Duncan Storm, but the editor of the Boys' Realm, (c. 1900, was Hamilton Edwards surely.)

* * * * *

YOUNG ENGLAND

by J. Wallen

At a time when the century was young, and a higher moral standard reigned, many patriotic magazines adorned the bookstalls. This was especially true during the 1914-18 War. One such magazine was "Young England."

I myself possess the 36th Annual volume of "Young England" dated 1914-15, and I prize it greatly.

Although my own personal knowledge of the magazine is not great, I presume that at the end of every twelve months of the publication, an Annual volume would be produced, containing the past years issues.

There are many patriotic articles telling of the first twelve months of the Great War. These include such items of interest as "The

Creators of the German Navy" by Luke Harruney, and "Songs that Soldiers Sing in War" by "One who has been with them on active service." This of course includes such favourites as "Dan Tucker" and "Dolly Gray." However one rather queer song goes as follows: -

"Shoo fly, don't bodder me!
Shoo fly, don't bodder me!
Shoo fly don't bodder me!
For I belong to Company D.
I feel, I feel, I feel - I feel like the morning star;
I feel, I feel, I feel - I feel like a big cigar."

Another article is concerned with the origin of the real "Huns", which of course is not calculated to produce a favourable impression.

However the main items of interest for myself in this gigantic volume are the many school stories. The longest of which is "The big house in the wood" by F. L. Morgan. This concerns a Sixth-Former named Glenister, who attends a school called Bonnington's. This story is very readable throughout, and is competently written. Another very good school and cricket story is entitled "Falinge's game" in which Falinge who is rather reminiscent of Cardew, wins a cricket match for his school with two broken fingers - an injury which he sustained while fielding. At one point in the story when Falinge is discovered smoking by a prefect and is asked whether he has anything to say for himself, the following results: -

"Falinge blew out a cloud of smoke and watched it slowly dissolve in the air. "Plenty," he said pleasantly. "The day is perfect, the view excellent. I am feeling quite nice and comfortable, and the only blot on the landscape is a youth wearing a Watton cap, staring rudely over his bicycle."
This is a fine story by J. P. Lamb and its shortness of length adds all the more to its pleasantness.

There are many sporting articles in this volume by sporting personalities of the period. Cricket features include "The task of the boy who goes in first" by Robert R. Relf of Sussex and England, "Lurking dangers for the all-rounder" by J. C. Hubble of Kent, and "How to avoid getting out" by S. Cadman of Derbyshire. All of these articles are very informative, and I wonder if any readers can recall ever seeing any of the aforementioned play.

Other articles include "How to make a lightweight tent", "How to make a chinese butterfly kite", and many Boys' Brigade and Boy Scout features.

"Young England" is filled with first class illustrations from cover to cover, and many informative photographs.

The "Young England Annual" for 1914-15 is a highly enjoyable volume, and it has given me many happy hours of contented reading.