

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Vol. 28 No 327 MARCH 1974

3 GRAND SCHOOL STORIES by MAXWELL SCOTT,
DAVID GOODWIK,
& SIDNEY BREV.



The object of THE BOYS' FRIEND is to Amuse, to Instruct, and to Advise.
ONE PENNY.

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Chapters

The Captain of St. Ninian's.

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By
Maxwell
Scott



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BROWSING

I always feel that the possession of a large collection of old periodicals is something akin to having a large garden. When wandering through either one is likely to come upon something unexpected over which to linger.

My own garden is small, but my collection is immense. In fact, a big collection of the old papers is essential for the editor of a paper like C. D., otherwise it would be far more difficult for us to offer for readers' pleasure the variety of cover pictures which have been a feature of this magazine down the years.

I daresay that, as in my own case, the owners of large collections find more pleasure in browsing over the old papers than in reading them. For one thing, the print of the old papers is small for eyes which have done a good deal of work in their time. For another, some of the writers, churning out their efforts for youngsters, did not reach the standard which will stand up to adult criticism.

But browsing is another matter entirely, and I spend hours at it. In my opinion the finest browsing ground is in the papers published in the decade prior to the first world war. Nothing of later vintage can compare with the pre-1914 charm.

The Hamilton Edwards empire of papers is a veritable Aladdin's cave of treasure for the contented browser, not only for its immense variety of stories and pictures, but for its editorials in which the editor warned constantly of the undoubted evils of smoking while on another page he accepted advertisements for cigarettes at 5 a penny, with the added inducement of cigarette cards with each packet.

My golden medal for browsability (have I coined a word?) I award to Fun and Fiction which is a joy throughout its two or three years of publication. And all the time one is with F. and F., one is asking oneself what on earth age group it was aiming at, with its comic pictures, its love stories, its outrageous 'tec tales, its melodrama ("No Mother to Guide Her", "His Convict Bride", and so on), its wicked landlords (they were all wicked) and its cruel people of wealth (they were all cruel) and its pure and beautiful poor people (they were all pure and beautiful). Not to mention its weekly writeup of old real-life crime cases (Florence Maybrick) and its articles (usually very good) of music hall stars of the day.

The editor claimed (surely with tongue in cheek) that Fun and Fiction had the world's largest circulation of any weekly periodical, and he substantiated this by doubling the size of F. and F. and, of course, the price, and by introducing a sister paper "The Dreadnought". But he came to earth with a bump when the second sister paper announced, The Firefly, suddenly became a new name for Fun and Fiction itself, with the price down to a halfpenny again.

Browsing over Fun and Fiction one feels that it was made by its artists. One gets the impression that the great artist J. Louis Smythe,

drew quite 75% of the pictures and that he was, in fact, Fun and Fiction. But then one realises that a great many of the pictures were drawn by Wakefield, and realises, in addition, how very much alike was the work of these two artists. Wakefield was at his happy best in work of this type, and Smythe was unsurpassed for his firm drawings of beautiful villainesses with pointed shoes and spiked headdresses. I always loved J. Louis Smythe, didn't you?

E. LIVINGSTON PRESCOTT

Readers will recall that in my editorial last month I referred to my favourite novel, "Dragooning a Dragoon", by an author named E. Livingston Prescott. In a letter to me Mr. W. O. G. Lofts, our own expert on authors, writes: "Curiously, your query on the author E. Livingston Prescott was raised with me by some collectors ages ago, and I still have the data. The real name of the author was a woman, Edith K. Spicer Jay, and she wrote at least twenty novels." Mr. Brian Doyle has also been kind enough to track down the matter for our interest, by means of "Modern English Literature", published by Boots' Book Lovers Library in 1903. Mr. Doyle writes: "The book gives a short synopsis of "Dragooning a Dragoon" which sounds as fascinating as you say. The author also wrote "His Familiar Foe", "Illusion", "Knit by Felony", "Red-Coat Romances" and "The Rip's Redemption"."

I am surprised to find that the writer is a woman - not because my favourite novel is written by a woman, for I find many woman writers among my favourite authors. But most of the Prescott novels seem to have army backgrounds, and such a background seems unusual for a woman to select. The hero of "Dragooning a Dragoon" is a Captain of Dragoons, and his martinet of a father is an army Colonel.

If any reader ever comes across a Prescott novel and would be prepared to sell it, I would be delighted to acquire it. Other Prescott titles I know are "Scarlet and Steel", "Dearer than Honour", and "A Mask and a Martyr."

THAT DARNED CAT

It must be admitted. This year's Annual was "stolen" by that furry young scamp, Mr. Softee. Almost everyone has written to say

that he captured their hearts. Nobody else came within miles of him - and, unfortunately, he obviously knows it.

Now, more than ever, he spreads his great white frame, full out on his back quite shamelessly, his back legs in the air, his front ones over his face, on a chair or on the carpet. It's really insufferable!

Worst of all, he has taken to appropriating my own rocking chair. So much so that last Sunday I went to church with a huge great full moon of white fur totally covering the seat of my brand new trendy bags. And nobody mentioned it till after the service.

IT'S NOTHING . . .

. . . to do with the hobby, but this morning, in the International, I saw lovely thick cellophane bags of Bassett's Liquorice Allsorts - special price - 12½p for half-a-pound. In case you've forgotten real money, that's half-a-crown for half-a-pound of liquorice allsorts. It seems only last week that I was buying them, as a kid, at two ounces a penny. "You'll ruin your teeth", they used to tell me, but I've still got most of them. (The teeth, I mean, not the allsorts.)

And in the national press, our old friend Mr. Woolworth has been offering toilet items at reduced prices. 12½p off, said one item. Trouble is, one has no idea what sum it's off, and cynics among us may feel that if goods can be sold at 2/6 off, and, presumably still make a profit, then the profit must have been far too high in the original pricing. Shaving Cream was 8p off, with the added inducement of "12 grams free." I am unimpressed. I have no idea what 12 grams are, and I'm far too old to learn.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

WANTED URGENTLY: S.O.L. No. 1, The Greyfriars Players, will pay £6. No. 4, The Fighting Form At St. Frank's, £3. No. 27, The River House Rivals, £2. No. 56, The Terror Of The Third, £2. No. 120, Rebels Of St. Frank's, £2. These S.O.L's must be in fairly good condition, with covers.

ALSO WANTED: Lone Texan by Frank Richards (The Post War Western), £2. Rallying Round Gussy (Mandeville), £1. Floreat Greyfriars Record, £3, and the three post-war 'Jack' Novels, 40p each.

W. SETFORD

155 BURTON RD., DERBY.

Danny's Diary

MARCH 1924

Always tip-top; that's Rookwood in the Boys' Friend. The strife caused by the dismissal of Mr. Dalton has developed into a full-scale barring-out. In the first tale of the month, "Sticking To Their Guns", Dr. Chisholm appoints a new master for the Fourth. He is Mr. Carker, and he is a bit of a brute. He ends up by getting tarred and feathered - and the Head expels Jimmy Silver as the ring-leader in the dark deed.

In "The Retreat from Rookwood", the whole of the Fourth, in the middle of the night, leave Rookwood and set up their headquarters on the island in the river.

Dr. Chisholm is scandalised at events, and in "Holding The Fort", he sends the Sixth Form to deal with the rebels - and the Sixth return soaked with river water, knocked about, and defeated.

In "Facing the Music", the Head tells Mr. Carker that it is about time he, Carker, brought his form to book. So Carker hires some ruffianly thugs, and the rebels have a rough time till Mr. Dalton, once a boxer, comes along and deals with the thugs.

In the last of the month, "The Fight With the Fifth", Hansom offers the services of the Fifth Form to bring the rebels to heel, but they are even less successful than the Sixth were.

In London there has been a strike by the tram and busmen. From the 21st to the 31st March the only trams and buses were those driven by volunteers and those men who did not join in the strike.

In the Gem the Lee series continued for the first two weeks, the titles of the stories being "The Shadow of a Secret" and "For Honour's Sake". Cardew, who was once at Wodehouse School, recognises Pomfret, the new boy in the Fourth, as Lee, once of Wodehouse. Cardew finds out the reason why Mr. Pomfret is pretending that Lee is his nephew, Len Pomfret. Eventually, Len himself confronts the man with the fact that he used the money which was left in a will to his nephew. Pomfret kidnaps Len, but Cardew saves him, and the criminal

is taken by the police. Len's uncle turns up, so Len goes back to Wodehouse.

Perhaps it tailed off a bit, but it was a very readable series and I enjoyed it.

"Gussy's Grocery Store" was not, I think, by the real Martin Clifford, but it was no bad tale in its way. Grimes is given the sack by Mr. Sands, the grocer, so Gussy takes a vacant shop and opens it as a rival grocery with Grimes as his partner. It read quite well, but a picture by Macdonald showing a delivery trike with "Gussy's Grocery Store" printed on the side, was too silly,

"Cock of the Walk" was a neat and jolly little tale - and all the Gem tales are too "little" these days. They only occupy about eleven pages out of the Gem's 28. Tompkins misses Len Lee in the study, for Len protected him from the bullying of Mulvaney Minor. But Gussy takes Tompkins in hand, and turns him into the "Cock of the Walk".

Finally "The Other Grundy". Grundy wants a short motor tour with his uncle, but Mr. Linton won't give him leave. But Grundy has a double - his cousin Gilbert. He persuades Gilbert to take his place at St. Jim's for a day and night. Quite good fun, based, of course, on the Bunter exchange series, but it was impossible to make much of it in one story of a few chapters. Maybe Grundy's double will turn up again some time, even though the idea is a bit stale.

The price of coal has gone up again, this time by 2/- a ton. And vehicles can be driven in Hyde Park for the first time since it was opened 288 years ago.

There is really nothing I can say in praise of the Magnet again this month, so I won't try. In "The Young Pretender", Bunter has trouble from overeating, and the doctor, suspecting appendicitis, sends him to hospital. The alarm is a false one, and Bunter returns to Greyfriars in a bathchair, and the chums get up a charity football match and raise £50 to pay for the operation which wasn't!

"Duffer and Hero" was a silly affair in which Alonzo Todd took Coker in hand to try to make him less ferocious. In "The Rebels of the Second" a new Head named Dr. Craddock takes Dr. Locke's place, and falls foul of the Second Form. Supposed to be funny and exciting, but is neither. In "Fishy's Treasure", Fishy starts "Fishy's Weekly",

and offers £10 to anyone who can find where a £10 note is hidden. Very sad.

You can cry or laugh at the last one, "True to His Word", according to how it strikes you. Slinker Bates has escaped from a reformatory, and he saves Hobson. Slinker has stolen Hobson's watch, and Hobson chases Slinker down a loose drain pipe. When Slinker gets out of the pipe, he pushes it, with Hobson inside, down an embankment and it falls across a railway line. Slinker rescues Hobson from the pipe just as the express arrives. Later, Slinker is a mass of fire after a motor-bike collision. Hobson raises Slinker high above his head and hurls him into the river. It puts the fire out.

Of course, there is a big supporting programme in the Magnet, if anyone buys the Magnet for its big supporting programme.

At the pictures we have seen Betty Balfour in "Squibs' Honeymoon"; Rudolph Valentino in "Blood and Sand"; May McAvoy and Conrad Nagel in "Grumpy"; Jack Hoxie in "Don Quickshot of the Rio Grande"; Blanche Sweet in "Anna Christie"; Edna Purviance in "A Woman of Paris". The last named was very disappointing for me, as it was Charlie Chaplin producing a film featuring his lovely leading lady, but it was very slow and stodgy - for me, at any rate. Last, a good British film "The Naked Man", starring Henry Edwards and Chrissie White". We enjoyed this one, but another we found disappointing was Mary Pickford in "Rosita".

An exciting and very original series of barring-out stories is now running in the Nelson Lee Library. Cyclone Smith has bought up St. Frank's and much of the surrounding countryside, intending to turn it all into a giant factory site. The old Head of St. Frank's has been replaced with Mr. Ponsonby Small, who is an agent for the horrible Mr. Smith. The Remove rises in revolt against the oppression of these two men and their gang of foreign labourers. This month's tales are "The Amazing Mr. Smith", "Driven to Revolt", "Handforth's Rebellion", "The Rising of the Remove", and "The Siege of the Rebels."

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: In her touching autobiography, Mary Pickford says that "Rosita", for which she engaged the German director, Ernst Lubitsch, was the very worst film she or anybody else ever made. It was her first adult part in big productions.)

X
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BLAKIANA

conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

As a lovely pussy cat of the name of Mr. Softee took pride of place in the Annual, I thought it might be appropriate to have a dog take the same place in the monthly C.D. and who better than our dear old friend Pedro. The article here published was written by one of our well-known contributors and I hope all readers will be pleased with it. I am sure our Editor, whom Mr. Softee owns, won't mind us hearing about Sexton Blake's dear old dog. If anyone wants to read the particular Union Jacks, Nos. 1179 and 1180, I have two copies of each in the Library ready for the asking. First to write will be the first served. And for your further delectation - coming shortly - an article in three parts by Mr. Kenneth Bailey, subject - our favourite detectives!:::

Also very interesting articles from our old friends J. E. M. and Cyril Rowe.

JOSIE PACKMAN

SEXTON BLAKE - DOG LOVER

by Raymond Cure

You either love dogs or you do not. I do not think there is a neutral attitude. If you love dogs then you may prefer your favourite breed. It makes no difference, if you really fall for one dog you will fall for the lot.

On this basis I make no excuse for using as my title - "Sexton Blake - dog lover" and refer to the twin tales in the Union Jack - "The House of Hathou" and "Pedro takes Charge" from the year 1926, Nos. 1179 and 1180. A very intimate glimpse into Blake's feelings is given in a few words. "Pedro crouched in the stern of the vessel, as Blake fondled the bloodhound's silken ears, the animal quivered in ecstasy at his beloved master's caress".

In a tricky situation Blake had removed his waders and hid them in some furse bush, he had been followed by an excited Pedro, then, "Quiet boy, don't bark" said Blake. Pedro would never dream of breaking his master's command.

On one occasion things looked very black for Blake. Trapped in a dungeon, Sexton Blake, Tinker and Dr. Ah Sin find the villain of the story gloating down at them from the trap-door above, then the trap-door closed, like the crack of doom. Outside a terrible storm was raging. In this situation, frightening as it was, where do you think Blake's thoughts were? "Gentlemen" said Blake, "we still have a card to play. Somewhere out there in the storm, we have an ally. A faithful friend who has been my companion in a score of adventures. He is watching and waiting for his master's call." "You mean" demanded Dr. Ah Sin. "Pedro, my bloodhound, the most faithful friend a man ever had" said Blake, and there was an unwonted tenderness in his voice. (I ask my readers to note that personal touch - my bloodhound.)

"Some dogs are specially trained in whistle signals, and Pedro had been trained by Blake. They had a strange understanding between them, Blake knew that. Anyone may become a dog's owner for the payment of a few shillings or pounds, but to become a dog's master is a privilege that is given to one man alone, for a dog's devotion passes the love of a woman and is the most unselfish and wonderful thing in the world. Once a dog gives his love neither sickness nor health, poverty or riches, brutality or kindness, makes any difference, a dog's devotion for the object of his affection is terminated only by death."

Now settle down readers, I am going to ask you to read that last passage again. I understand it was written by Gwyn Evans (but you must check this), if so, it seems he had the right idea about dogs. However, we have left Pedro outside in a king-size storm, so we had better get back.

"Pedro heard a faint whistle, he leapt to action, then paused - what was that? The whistle had given a note of warning. Something was wrong with the master - he knew it - he sensed it and his whole body quivered with rage. (At this stage comes a terrible fight between Pedro and the villain's wolf-dog.) Later, Sexton Blake stared after the bloodhound with misty eyes; Blake trapped in the dungeon had sent Pedro back to London with a message for help. After a most adventurous journey, reminiscent of Jack London's "Call of the Wild" and some of the adventures of Rin-Tin-Tin, Pedro makes it.

The story fades out, Blake is safe back in London, thanks to

Pedro. He is fondling the dog's ears. "That dog is worth his weight in gold" says Dr. Ah Sin, and the assembled company agreed.

The writer is indebted to the twin tales in the Union Jack, though other tales may develop this theme still further.

Both of these stories may be obtained from the Sexton Blake Librarian, Mrs. J. Packman.

SOME MORE GLEANINGS FROM WALTER WEBB'S NOTEBOOKS

Some early authors of Sexton Blake stories are as follows:-

MELTON WHYTE: According to Mr. H. J. Garrish his real name was G. J. B. Anderson, who had a big output and contributed a lot to Union Jack, Marvel and Pluck. An Art photographer, his work appeared under many pen-names.

PERCIVAL COOKE: Created as secretary and pupil of the great detective the character of Wallace Lorrimore. An authority on stamp collecting, Cooke was in reality, Percy C. Bishop, one of the first editors of "Pluck". Much older than most of the other contributors to the Harmsworth papers who were then in their "twenties", Bishop was rather an ordinary looking man.

CHRISTOPHER STEVENS: As far as is known that was his real name. Is remembered as the author of the 1901 U. J. serial, "Griff, the man-tracker".

STANHOPE SPRIGG: Wrote chiefly for the adult papers, including serials for "Answers". Became editor on one of the adult papers and controlled a literary agency in the vicinity of Henrietta Street.

ALEC G. PEARSON: Had a host of pen-names. In his younger days had knocked about the world quite extensively. Was an ex-naval man. Lived in Southsea during the latter part of his life.

T. G. DOWLING? MAITLAND: Wrote also as Tristain K. Monck. An agent for other writers.

D. H. PARRY: Wrote also as Morton Pike and Captain Wilton Blake. An editor regards him as "far and away the best of the Harmsworth writers; a sound historian, a colourful writer, with the proper

appreciation of the values of life. A craftsman through and through, with no idea of money values.

* * * * *

DEATH OF JOHN W. WHEWAY

With regret I learned only recently of the death of John W. Wheway in January. John, whom I knew quite well, started writing around 1922, on the Champion and Triumph staff, under F. Addington Symonds. His speciality was sporting themes. In 1931, in the revived SCHOOL-GIRL, he wrote practically all the Cliff House School stories until 1940, under the famous pen-name of 'Hilda Richards'. I first met John years ago when he was editing PETS ANNUAL, and was sharing a room with E. L. McKeag, former editor of SCHOOLFRIEND. Small in stature, very shy and softly spoken, John was not only a gentleman in every sense of the word, but a mine of information on all aspects regarding the old papers. No-one could have been more co-operative to me in my quest for inside information. I, for one, will always remember him.

W. O. G. LOFTS

* * * * *

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Nelson Lee Column

WINDMILL LAND

by William Lister

Greetings from Windmill Land. That's what Blackpool was called in the distant past. In fact a book on local history was entitled "WINDMILL LAND". Out of print for years, but recently re-issued as the "Story of Blackpool" no doubt, because there is a shortage of windmills around here. Not that it was always so. In my schooldays a reasonable number of windmills were scattered about the Fylde - Coast. Even now there are two about thirty minutes from where I am writing.

A while ago, I read of a family that had taken over a Windmill, renovated it, and now live in it. I found the information most interesting.

Now I am not an authority on windmills, but I have been in a number of them in my time. I believe Don Quixote was quite a lad for windmills. As I have said, windmills were not as thin on the ground as they are now (back in 1924). This is what makes me interested in the little paper now before me.

The title "The Secret of The Old Mill" and by diligent reading of the very small print with the aid of a King-size magnifying glass, I discovered that St. Frank's School sported a Windmill, situated in the village of Bannington. Not only a mill, but a very old mill, and a mill with a secret.

Now I don't like very small print, and I don't like reading with a magnifying glass, but I did want to know about the old mill and its secret, beside which the writer is Edwy Searles Brooks and I'll tackle any work of his, even if I do have to descend to using a magnifying glass.

Let's take a look at this windmill. From the artist's point of view on the lead illustration, it is old and rather more rustic looking one than any I have seen. Emerging from the mist, it can hardly be seen except for a full moon (itself a little obscured by mist) I would imagine on a summer evening it would make a nice scene, but on a night like this - ugh.

Brooks confirms this: "The ruined mill, gaunt and forlorn,"

stood out sharply against the sky-line. During the summer months the old place was singularly picturesque. But amid the drabness of approaching winter the ruin was particularly repellent and ugly."

Illustrations reveal that large wooden beams support the base, while about a third of the way up there is a broken-down wooden balcony, in the shape of a six-sided body and with the usual dome and broken sails. Rather a wooden affair not like the stone and brick based ones that used to exist around here.

Brooks sees it thus: "Bannington Moor was looking bleak and grey on this dull November afternoon. Not a soul in sight (except Willy Handforth and Chubby Heath looking for a lost pet squirrel). The squirrel had made a dart for the gaunt and sombre bulk of the old ruined mill, leaped at the rotting woodwork, and streaked up.

"Most of the St. Frank's juniors knew the old mill well, it was one of the local landmarks, and the fellows had had more than one adventure in it." (Here let me interrupt the train of thought and ask some of our O. B. B. C. research worker's if they can unearth some of these adventures. I may have read about this mill before. If so, I forget.)

We shall now follow Willy Handforth into the mill. "Handforth entered, and climbed the rotting ladder to the first floor. There were similar ladders leading to the very summit of the ruin. Handforth nearly reached the top. The last ladder was in a bad state of decay; he mounted it cautiously. He came to a dead halt. His colour fled. He chilled to the marrow, he was stricken stiff with fear. From the black opening above, something had appeared - a hairy arm, and a clutching hand, with long hairy fingers. Handforth slipped down a rung and looked again. The hand was still there - reaching even lower, the fingers moving about in a horrifying way. There was something ghostly about the mysterious hairy hand - something weird and uncanny."

Willy Handforth then acted as I would have acted in those circumstances, he fled. From then on that mill held a secret, not only for Willy, but for the others who later got wind of the affair. The secret?

I close with an excerpt from the "Bannington Gazette" "LUNATIC AT LARGE" - "We learn that one of the inmates of Helmsford Asylum escaped last night and is now roaming the area. He suffers from the

delusion that he is an inmate of the Zoo, and will occasionally walk on all fours."

Nuff' said'.

A PERSONAL VIEWPOINT OF ST. FRANK'S AND
WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE

by J. Wallen

Although I am a Hamiltonian, many of Edwy Searles Brooks' characters intrigue me. And the most intriguing of all is William Napoleon Browne.

This character I can feel a real affection for. He is delightfully reminiscent of the Caterpillar. I don't of course mean that Browne is a copy of De Courcy, or anything of the kind. Only that he is in the mould of character that I know and love so well. Laconic, and easy-going, with a novel mode of address. These are the qualities which endear me to Browne.

In such an article as this - where a Hamiltonian is praising a St. Frank's character - perhaps it is only natural that a small amount of criticism will emerge. My own "grouse" is that St. Frank's characters seem a little too ingenious, and unfortunately William Napoleon Browne is no exception.

In the Ezra Quirke series where Browne tries to make Nipper and Reggie Pitt see how easy it is for a trickster to produce marvellous effects. I am afraid that Browne showed up as being rather more clever, than believable.

The banging desk lid and the shrivelled hand, which Browne rigged up in the form room, were completely unbelievable.

I also found in this series that the descriptions of the effects of Quirke's, and Browne's tricks, were far superior to the explanations given. The reader for weeks has been kept on the edge of his seat, by a string of fantastic happenings, and Brooks decides that a word or two about "The Usual Illusionists Tricks" will suffice.

I am truly sorry that this article seems to have degenerated into a "Let's Knock Brooks" piece, but I never began the article with any such intention. I have stated that what I believe to be the truth.

In general I enjoy a St. Frank's story despite the unbelievable note. And I think of William Napoleon Browne as a piece of exceptional

character work.

Let me placate any St. Frank's enthusiasts who may be burning with indignation, by quoting a piece of typical Browne. This is taken from "The Haunted Form-Room," No. 546, O. S. -

"Come in -- come in," invited Browne politely. "Surely it was unnecessary to go through the formality of knocking? Sit down, Brother Handforth, and make yourself quite at home."

This was evidently a piece of sarcasm, for Handforth was already sprawling in the easy chair. The door was closed, and the host beamed on his visitors."

In the above passage, Browne was anxious to hear of a trick which had been played against Quirke.

And so there it is -- a picture of St. Frank's, and William Napoleon Browne, as I see it.

As Browne himself might put it -- or not -- "A commendable effort Brother Wallen."

* * * * *

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MRS. J. PACKMAN

27 Archdale Road

East Dulwich, London, SE22 9HL

This famous story, No. 223 in the new series of Blue Gems, has been generally given short shrift in the comments that have been devoted to it. I have seen it described as "souplely sentimental", and doubts expressed as to whether it was actually Hamilton's work; in fact, one commentator had no doubts: for him it was definitely not by Hamilton. The two most favourable accounts I have seen are by E. S. Turner, who selected it for quotation in his book, BOYS WILL BE BOYS, and that given by Roger Jenkins in his article on the Blue Gems, and I would not say that the latter was exactly glowing with enthusiasm. In direct statement Turner gives no summing-up of this story, but he certainly does not pan it, nor does he doubt its authenticity, as he does that of another GEM story. Jenkins calls it "a most unusual tale", and also says that "it was (nevertheless) an odd tale to find in the GEM, and it is not surprising that the strangeness of the theme once led a famous collector to declare it was the work of a substitute writer." Frankly, it surprises me that anyone who knew Hamilton's work at all well, as I assume this famous collector did, should come to this conclusion. The story is a powerfully written one, and the mastery shown in its writing is scarcely let up once throughout; while, in my experience, it is rare at all to find this mastery in the work of substitute authors writing substitute stories, whatever they may have been like in quite independent work. "Sentimental", too, is the last adjective I should think of in connection with FIGGY'S FOLLY - especially when I think (with a shudder!) of what someone like Pentelow would have made of such a subject.

Maybe it was "an odd sort of tale to find in the GEM", but, if so, it is surely only because a lot of the interest centres on adults - seen in two ways. The subject itself is not odd, unless it is because Hamilton usually avoided making a real issue of feelings of attraction between the sexes. The relationship between Bob Cherry and Marjorie Hazeldene is always kept within bounds, and nowhere but in this story, to my knowledge, does Figgins' feeling for Ethel Cleveland flare up as it does here. But this kind of deep feeling for a girl on the part of a boy of Figgins' age is not exaggerated, nor is the feeling of tormented jealousy that goes with it, as I can testify from my own experience.

Nor would it be unusual for such a boy to feel as Figgins did about the girl going away for a long period. Maybe he would not actually do something about it, as Figgins did - at least, not at that time. Nowadays, he might well do so.

One can wonder if some of the characterisation would have gone over the heads of the boys (and girls) who read the tale at the time of its issue, especially the "elderly French gentleman", with his obvious use of stays, his feet crammed into shoes too small for them, and his efforts to make his ageing face look younger. But what a superb piece of work all this scene is, with the Frenchman in the carriage with Aunt Adelina and Cousin Ethel, and Figgins outside, in a terrible state of mental torture and divided feelings. Forgetting for a moment the story's appearance in a boys' weekly, the whole thing, the psychological cut and thrust, is magnificent, as is also Hamilton's knowledge of the workings of the female mind; witness this paragraph:

'With Ethel miserable in her carriage, and Figgins miserable outside it, the ancient Johnny of the boulevards rattled on, charming Mrs. Quayle, and boring her niece almost to extinction, though she nodded and smiled, in case Figgins should glance in from the corridor. If Figgins should see her apparently amused and entertained, she expected him to know by some mysterious intuition that she wasn't anything of the kind - which is one of the ways that women have.'

This is characteristic of Hamilton's touch practically throughout this latter part of the story, and such gentle humorous perception does not, as a rule, come from a sentimentally-minded author.

How subtly the character of Fred Harris grows, from his first brief appearance, with Figgins' distaste for him, and his re-appearance later on, to his working like a Trojan to free the carriage door in the wrecked train. All is brilliant. We gradually get to know this man, as we might gradually and almost casually get to know him in life. This story may not have been ideal for a boys' paper, but what brilliant work it is; and so much ground is covered in a short space. At the end of it one feels that Hamilton packed into it as much matter as one would find normally spread over a fairly lengthy novel.

One of the most outstanding things about Hamilton's writing in this story is his masterly way of mingling the boys' reactions with those of the adults, so that all moves quite convincingly, and yet Figgins never ceases to be a boy, both happy and miserable, manly and sensitive at the

same time; Hamilton shows so well that a boy's sensitivity can go quite as deep as a girl's, but that it is a totally different thing, with quite different reactions. His understanding is acute.

Perhaps the way in which Hamilton's mastery is a little in abeyance is in the introduction of the train crash. The event itself is beautifully handled, but it happens just a little too conveniently, to get Figgins out of a decidedly awkward situation, presumably.

Finally, if FIGGY'S FOLLY is an odd sort of story to find in a boys' paper, is it more so that No. 237, STAGE STRUCK? Here Monty Lowther runs away from school, bitten by the acting bug. Hamilton's descriptions of the run-down theatrical company he joins, which, if it had seen better days had certainly forgotten what they looked like, are, I should think, quite as much out of place in a boys' paper, if one is going to be so restrictive, as a good deal of FIGGY'S FOLLY. But Jenkins makes no comment on this, and calls No. 237 "a splendid story which is probably as true of stage life today (1953) as it was when it was written all those years ago". And I agree with him. But if STAGE STRUCK is not odd to find in such a paper, neither is FIGGY'S FOLLY, which is equally splendid - and equally true.

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 189. FAYNE'S FOLLY

Once upon a time - about 25 years ago, to be exact - a gentleman who was regarded, in those far off days, as something of an authority on Hamiltonia, wrote to Charles Hamilton as follows: "I consider 'Figgy's Folly' to be one of the finest stories ever to appear in the Gem. Did you write it?" Hamilton replied: "Of course I did."

I don't know the identity of Mr. Jenkins's "famous collector." It cannot have been Eric Fayne, for he was never famous. All the same, there was a time when I doubted the origin of "Figgy's Folly", though I cannot recall that I ever expressed that doubt in any published article. It was a very, very long time ago. I floundered, perhaps, over the "Ethel, my darling", which was far off the Gem's beaten track, and over the rhetorical questions.

"Crash! Crash!
 What had happened?
 The train whirled and rocked and swayed like a ship in a storm.
 Was it an accident?"

And, a bit later:
 " 'Help! Oh, help, Figgins! Oh, Figgins!'"
 That was the name that fled to her lips.'

The rhetorical question was the stock in trade of many a sub. It was rare with Hamilton in later years. Also, I would have expected a writer of Hamilton's quality to have written: "that was the name which she uttered instinctively."

Mr. Truscott is right when he says "one feels that Hamilton packed into it as much matter as one would find normally spread over a fairly lengthy novel." Perhaps that little fact misled me. That, too, was a characteristic of the subs.

I have mentioned a few isolated items which may have made me wonder, a very long time ago. It is true that, much later (about fifteen years ago) I wrote that it was a sentimental tale, out of place in the Gem - or words to that effect. I now think it a mistake to suggest that anything which appeared in the Gem or Magnet was "out of place" therein. The great and everlasting charm of the Gem and Magnet genuine tales was their infinite variety. Most of us, now, would not have had it otherwise.

As for Mr. Jenkins's brief summary of the tale (written some fifteen years back), it seems to me to have been well-reasoned. He hadn't the space to deliver a sermon on it, and he, quite rightly, gave his own views in a few words.

"Boys Will Be Boys" does not "pan" it, perhaps, but I suspect that the author, in selecting passages from untypical Hamilton work, was inviting a chuckle from his readers. The other story, which Mr. Truscott does not name, was "Ashamed of His Sister", an earlier Gem of sentimental structure.

Mr. Truscott exaggerates in referring to "Figgy's Folly" as "this famous story." "Figgy's Folly" is not famous. It may have caused a furore in far-off 1912, though I have no reason to believe that it did. Apart from a drastically pruned little version of it which appeared in the old Penny Popular in 1916, under the title "Figgins' Daring Escapade",

it was entirely neglected as re-print material. The S. O. L. and the Holiday Annual ignored it. The Popular, which gave more than one airing to some blue Gem tales, never turned up with this one. And the Gem, which reprinted almost all of them, passed over "Figgy's Folly."

Far inferior tales were occasionally reprinted, of course, and I personally regret that it was omitted. But it is obvious that "Figgy's Folly" would not have remained neglected for 25 years had anyone in the editorial department considered that it was "famous" or of outstanding appeal.

Like "Figgy's Folly", "Ashamed of His Sister" turned up, in 1916, in the early Penny Popular. The new title was "The Snob's Reformation". After which it was heard of no more.

* * * * *

THE MAN THAT I MARRY by MARJORIE HAZELDENE
(as reported to Mary Cadogan)

From time to time there has been discussion in COLLECTORS' DIGEST about my relative feelings for Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry. Indeed at Cliff House too I have learned to live with constant teasing from Clara Trevlyn and Dolly Jobling on this subject. (Clara doesn't understand what I see in boys at all, as she considers girls infinitely superior in every way: Dolly is still so pre-occupied with trying to find a recipe for making decent toffee that she'd probably rather spend time with that odious Billy Bunter discussing culinary skills than give attention to Bob and Harry's attractions.)

Perhaps C. D. readers may like to hear how I really feel about these two intriguing Removites. I must admit that in the early days of my relationship with the Greyfriars' boys, Harry seemed to stand head and shoulders above all comers. Possibly I idealized him then, because he seemed to embody the (many) manly qualities which my poor brother Peter has always so sadly lacked! I am not ashamed to confess that time was when I thrilled to every admiring glance from Harry's dark and lustrous eyes, and no girl could help liking such a strong, resourceful and chivalrous young man. But occasionally Harry's moodiness put me off - and I learned to hate his stubborn, angry pride.

With Bob things were so different. First of all he was just a background member of the Famous Five - genial and trusting, and not too bright. But suddenly I began to realize his importance in my life. Bob, awkward and inarticulate, nevertheless made no secret of his feelings for me: they were written all over his sunny face whenever we met, and I just had to respond to his rugged warmth and integrity.

George Bernard Shaw - who has said some intelligent as well as many stupid things about women - made his CANDIDA eventually choose the man who needed her most. And Harry, though he admires, doesn't need me, as Bob does. Harry will one day be a famous leader of men - with or without help from whoever becomes his wife, while Bob may attain no greater career than games-master at the local grammar school. But to me he will always come first, cheering my moments of doubt and depression, and confirming my faith that - on the whole - men are good and honest, and can still live up to the high standards of dear old Greyfriars.

(Perhaps we should remember that it is a woman's privilege to change her mind, so the last word on this subject may not yet be spoken! Mary C.)

* * * * *

REVIEW

"THE JOKER OF GREYFRIARS"

(Frank Richards -
Howard Baker: £2.75)

Plenty of Charles Hamilton's stories are far more famous than this one, for some reason or other, yet, of its type, he never wrote anything more delightful or more entertaining for the connoisseur of school stories. Owing to the fact that so little has been written about it, it should come as even a greater treat than most of the reprints. From the Magnet of the autumn of 1928, this 5-story series of Christopher Clarence Carboy, a practical joker who went to Greyfriars as a refugee of sorts from Oldcroft, was written just as the famous author reached, as many of us think, the peak of his powers. Bubbling with fun throughout, it nevertheless has a leavening of drama in the sequences when the new boy crosses swords with Harry Wharton, and it is the school story supreme. It is the Magnet - and, of course, Frank Richards - at their

very best. It needs no other recommendation.

This truly generous volume is completed with three other superb tales from the same incomparable era, including that unforgettable pair in which the question is asked "Who Punched Prout?" The final tale in a volume to cherish is "The Form-Masters' Feud" which is as delicious a sweet as fresh strawberries and cream to end this sumptuous meal.

Leonard Shields, the artist, like Frank Richards, the writer, is at his outstanding best.

What a tonic for anyone who is a bit weary of television and the newspapers!

BOOKMARK. Messrs. Howard Baker Ltd., have just issued their map of Greyfriars as a bookmark. It was striking, some years ago, as a wall-map, but now, put out as a bookmark, it will certainly be much more useful, and, dare we suggest it, must more popular with the lady of the house. The colours are more effective in the bookmark than they were in the large earlier offering, and we have a quality job which should appeal to everybody. The modest price is 40p post free.

"DON'T FENCE ME IN"

Renee Houston (Pan; 35p)

For those who remember the British music hall in its heyday between the wars, this autobiography of Renee Houston is a "must". Entirely a show-biz story, it gives the history of the famous Houston Sisters, perhaps the brightest and most delightful act of the music hall of any era, and goes on to tell of Renee's career after she married her third husband, Donald Stewart, to whom she was devoted. Music halls, theatres, and famous names of all kinds abound in a book which is full of interest, packed with fun, and often extremely touching. In these days of expensive books, it is nice to find the first edition of any autobiography in this useful and inexpensive format. Don't miss it if you remember the British music hall and especially the incomparable Houston Sisters.

* * * * *
W A N T E D : Nelson Lee Library, old series up to No. 142, and also No. 150 (o.s.).
Early Champions up to year 1934. Sexton Blake Library from 1st series to No. 65,
3rd series. Union Jacks before year 1926, particularly Nos. 1109, 1112, 1113, 1120,
1135. Supplements wanted for the following nos.: 1119, 1139, 1140, 1143, 1145, 1148.
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The Postman Called

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

BILL LOFTS (London): My information that 'Duncan Storm' was Gilbert Floyd originally came from R. T. Eves who was on the staff of the BOYS' FRIEND when Floyd was writing. Indeed, so impressed was he, that when he started THE SCHOOLFRIEND in 1919, he commissioned him to write a serial of schoolgirl castaways on a desert island under the 'Julia Storm' pen-name. Later this was not only confirmed by C. H. Down, editor of the Magnet and Gem - who was a friend of Floyd, but he wrote an interesting piece in the S. P. C. about him and his sea-voyages. Floyd, who was editor of THE BOYS' REALM in 1902 (and under the controlling editor, Hamilton Edwards) became wealthy, independent, and was able to make long trips abroad. Consequently, his stories (especially the Captain Shand ones) had to be written by other writers, as they were very popular with readers. I very rarely make theories, but Clabon Glover is only a possibility of

being Floyd. It is strange that I have yet to know anyone who knew him at all. I must also say that authors can change their style dramatically at times, especially when they get away from their favourite theme.

CHARLES DAY (Keighley): I was very interested in the "Huxton Rymer Story" by Mrs. Josie Packman. Rymer was one of my favourite characters in the Blake Saga, along with Waldo, Zenith, etc. Also I revelled in any yarn by G. H. Teed.

Is it possible for us to have a little something about "Rookwood" in the C. D. in some future article? I always had a very soft spot for "Uncle James", he seemed to be such a cheery dispositioned character.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: We try to give Rookwood a fair share of attention. Our December issue carried an article devoted to the Rookwood Christmas tales.)

F. R. LOWE (Derby): How nice it was to read Danny's mention of that lovely little song of long ago 'Glide my Golden Dream Boat' - a song which I thought was long forgotten. Well I remember singing this song, gathered round the piano with the family, my sister playing - and I think she still has the music to this. Other tunes around the same time, if my memory serves me right, were 'Shalima' and 'Ukelele Lady.'

E. THOMSON (Edinburgh): In January C. D. I noticed a reference in "Danny's Diary", to a film star, Richard Talmadge. He was my favourite star, during the 1920's. I can only remember a few of his films, "The Unknown", "The New Reporter", "Fast Company" and "The Speed King". To me, he was the greatest stunt man ever. He was discovered by Douglas Fairbanks, Sen., at a Hollywood fete, a circus acrobat, real name Victor Metzette. "Duggie" so admired his prowess, he got him a film test and he passed this with flying colours. He was given the name "Richard Talmadge" by the film company, (no doubt the film company were cashing in on the fame of the Talmadge sisters, Norma, Constance and Natalie, who were household names at that time). He was no relation. He became head of Hollywood's stunt men, after he gave up films, I believe.

The Annual, as always, was great. I read "Mr. Softee" first. It was really good, and I was sorry when I came to the end of it.

CHARLES CHURCHILL (Exeter): I did enjoy Bill Lofts' article in the

N. L. column. It seems to prove that E. S. B. had to write to order in the later stages of the N. L., which is what so many of us always maintained.

The story of Slade in the Annual was again first-class. I always leave this to the last to read, so that I end up with one of the most enjoyable items of all.

B. R. LEESE (Costock): The Digest brings me an hour of nostalgic happiness each month. I read my first blue Gem in early 1915 (I think), "At the Eleventh Hour." I can see the cover, even now, in my mind's eye. My first Magnet was "Micky Desmond's Luck", (red Magnet). I began reading the Boys' Friend just before the Rookwood stories began, and for long Jimmy Silver and Tom Merry & Co. were my favourites.

("At the Eleventh Hour" was in the 1913 Gem. - ED.)

T. SHERRARD (Potters Bar): I have a couple of snapshots of Betty Balfour taken by myself in the middle thirties at a beauty competition at Cliftonville in Kent - not very far from Charles Hamilton's abode in Kingsgate at the time.

Wearing a large hat and carrying a bouquet of flowers, she looked a lot different to the modern film stars who sport leather jackets and jeans.

Also Leonard Allen (Bournemouth) might be interested to know that I used to follow the serial film "The Broken Coin" when I was a boy at the Camden Hippodrome, Camden Town, which is now Camden Theatre, and owned by the B. B. C. I believe, for film production.

There was also a serial about that time with "Lucile Love", but I have forgotten the title. Perhaps further articles on the old films would be of interest to us oldies.

(A brand new series of articles on old films will start in Collectors' Digest shortly - ED.)

HAROLD TRUSCOTT (Huddersfield): May I add a short postscript to J. Merrills' postscript to Gordon Hudson's article? This is an idea that could be taken further; why not some more Trollope, possibly by Simon Raven, a self-confessed devotee of this novelist's work, although he adds that his respect does not prevent him from cutting and hacking these

novels about; and, as B. B. C. Television is proving now, he certainly meant what he said. Or possibly some more Conrad, by Nicholas Monsarrat, perhaps; or Jane Austen, by Marjorie Proops, or maybe Barbara Cartland. Maybe some more Henry James, by Norman Mailer or Joseph Heller; and why leave out Shakespeare in the cold? After all, if someone does not do something about it, future generations will only have the original Shakespeare plays to go to. Perhaps Jim Cook could be persuaded to write some more St. Frank's. What a blessing that P. G. Wodehouse is still alive; although, now I come to think of it, Richard Gordon did have a go at being another Wodehouse, in a book called "Nuts in May". Well, the first word of the title was apt.

* * * * *

News of the Clubs

MIDLAND

The first meeting of 1974 was held at Dr. Johnson House, Birmingham, on the last Tuesday in January. Main topic was Ivan Webster who appeared on the BBC 1 TV programme, Midlands Today, on 17 January. The club members were proud of the way Ivan described and spoke-up for the hobby - firmly correcting his interlocutor Tom Coyne for calling the Magnet and Gem comics. The programme brought in some interesting correspondence and a new member for the club. Everyone was delighted to welcome Geoff Lardner, who had found his interest for the hobby awakened. At the drop of a hat, Geoff brought forth a sublime tableau, a great display - mouth watering copies of Boys' Own Papers and Annuals for the seven members present to admire. The ever verdant Tom Porter provided the monthly anniversary number NLL (OS) 34, 'Robbery Wholesale' by G. H. Teed (Nelson Lee v The Black Wolf) dated 29/1/1916; - 58 years old. The collectors item was Magnet 18, 'Roughing It' (Levison comes to Greyfriars).

CAMBRIDGE

On 10th February, Mrs. Olly Posner was our usual charming hostess.

Warm congratulations were offered to Jack Overhill on his 71st birthday.

To everyone's regret the introduction of Sunday Football had made the presence of Bill Leivers, Manager of Cambridge United, impossible.

Jack Overhill, in his own inimitable way, spoke of sport, and his favourite sport, swimming. He told how the omniscient Bill Lofts had traced for him a swimming story in a Boys' Realm of 1911, referring to the crawl stroke, which he himself had first seen demonstrated in 1921 - one more instance of how up-to-date were boys' story papers. He also recalled his misfortunes in school football and cricket, resulting in hacked shins and broken teeth.

Vic Hearn gave an entertaining talk on his experiences as a footballer, club official and later as supporter of Cambridge United, followed by his memories of football stories, mainly in "The Champion", but including other papers. This was illustrated by a selection of "Champions" and other papers, illustrating incidents from tales, and the various plots, and by interesting souvenirs, programmes, free gifts, photographs of players, etc. Enthusiastically received, this brought forth many memories and discussions - a particularly interesting discussion being raised by Jack who asked why soccer seemed to provoke so much violence among a certain section of spectators, while cricket in general did not - the general conclusion was that the excitement compressed into ninety minutes of violent action, and the association of the "fan", with his club scarf, etc., could set up violent emotion foreign to the more leisurely atmosphere of cricket.

Neville Wood followed with an interesting talk on the problems involved in writing a football story. After discussing plot, sub-plot, possible incidents and many aspects of the matter he concluded with a statistical study of soccer tales, particularly in Chums, and with a reference to Sidney Horler's fine tale "Goal." Members warmly applauded Neville's effort.

Secretary Bill Thurbon talked on a wide range of football tales, rugby, rugby league and soccer, mainly of the period to the 1920's, ranging from "Tom Brown's Schooldays" to the "Boys' Realm", "Scout" and "Boys' Friend Library." He reminded Jack of a famous Magnet

story of c. 1914, in which Harry Wharton and Co., played as "Maoris", and pointed out that Charles Hamilton first introduced "Inky" at a rugby-playing school in a story in the "Marvel" in 1907, nearly a year before "Inky" appeared in the "Magnet".

Deryck Harvey produced a host of interesting items, including Eric Quayle's latest "Collectors' Book", this time of Boys' Stories, and number 1 of the N. E. L.'s new Science Fiction Monthly, containing some fine examples of S. F. art work in large colour reproductions.

He then turned members green with envy with a Collectors' dream come true. The purchase of over a hundred 3rd and 4th series S. B. L.'s at 2p each! When members had recovered their breath, Deryck talked of his experiences as a supporter and later reporter of both rigger and soccer.

The meeting broke up with warm thanks to Mrs. Posner for her hospitality.

LONDON

The 26th Annual General Meeting was held at the spot which has been the scene of so many successful meetings as years have gone by - East Dulwich, the home of popular and much-loved Mrs. Josie Packman, who was, incidentally, elected as Chairman for the coming twelve months. The retiring Chairman, Mrs. Mary Cadogan was given warm thanks and congratulations for her successful year in the Chair - a year just ended. There was great applause in her honour from the twenty-five members present.

Some amusing readings entertained the gathering. Mary Cadogan and Ray Hopkins read from Gem No. 18 "Skimpole's Crusade". Winnie Morss obliged with extracts from Magnets 1087 - 1089.

An exciting elimination quiz, devised by Bob Blythe, was won by Mary Cadogan and Eric Lawrence, with Norman Wright and Josie Packman as runners-up.

Tributes were paid to the author John Wheway, who died recently, and Mary Cadogan referred to her visit to his home only a few weeks ago.

The next meeting will be held at "Greyfriars", Hollybush Ride, Wokingham, Berks., on 17th March. Those hoping to attend should notify the hosts, Eric and Betty Lawrence - telephone no. 0344 - 64626.

NORTHERNSaturday, 9th February, 1974

After the Library session, business and chatter our first fare of the evening was Mollie's showing of two cine-films she had made.

The first was of various Hobby 'personalities' taken on holidays and days out. One had the impression of the Clubs making their presence felt! And the second was a rather longer film taken during Mollie's holiday a few years ago in Fishy's homeland. We didn't actually see Hiram K, but, then, no doubt he would be busy in his 'Noo Yark' office negotiating deals! Altogether a creditable and well-devised production.

And then a continuation of the five-minute talks of last month - so that none would be left out! Perhaps the speakers wished that the programme committee had been a little less conscientious!

And the minutes secretary didn't get out of it after all, even when he announced that he had forgotten his subject!

* * * * *
 WANTED: Sexton Blake's 1st series, years 1915-1925, 2nd series from 1925. Union Jacks, especially years 1920-1922. Also pink covers, etc.

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* * * * *
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EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

by R. J. Godsave

Whatever the reasons for the decline of the present day educational standards, those of us whose schooling took place in the days before the war, must, to a certain extent be grateful for the added tuition provided by the authors of the old papers.

As television was not a distraction in those days, the majority of schoolboys and schoolgirls, made full use of the various papers which were circulated amongst them.

Like many of its contemporaries, the Nelson Lee Library took its readers to various countries all over the world with the holiday stories.

Such was the descriptive powers of E. S. Brooks that the reader became closely acquainted with a south-sea atoll with its sandy beaches, palm trees and lagoon.

The El Dorado series gave a fascinating account of the St. Frank's party traversing the Amazon and the vast forests of that region.

Some of Brooks' stories of 'lost worlds' were considered by some to be far-fetched and fantastic. Even if this was so, no-one can doubt that the Northestrian series gave the reader a glimpse of medieval life and the weapons of that period. In the 'New World' series the reader was introduced to a lost people who still lived in the times of Oliver Cromwell.

It must not be supposed that the homeland was neglected. Many large towns in Great Britain were visited by the St. Frank's schoolboys in the 'School Train' series, much to the delight of those readers who were fortunate enough to live in those towns.

With the 'School Ship' series visiting Australia and New Zealand, an instructive account of these countries was given much to the pleasure of those readers who had family connections in these countries.

After some exciting visits to foreign parts it was always a pleasure to come back to the Sussex countryside and enjoy the quieter adventures of the St. Frank's schoolboys.

Although Brooks and other authors did not necessarily realise it, their writings were a great help in the educating of the school children of those days.

* * * * *

IT WAS VANDALISM

says Len Wormull

Ever poured wrath on someone you have never known? I have, and the germ was implanted the moment the Reformation of Fullwood series came into my possession. An otherwise immaculate set is marred by the cover-removal of the first story. The New Houses At St. Frank's. And only recently while reading Between Ourselves in the same issue did I discover the culprit indirectly responsible for this mutilation. None other than E. S. Brooks himself! It seems that inside the front cover was a map showing the new houses at St. Frank's, and this is what the author had to say:

"I'm going to suggest something, and I advise you to do it NOW. Cut out that map, and preserve it. You'll want it later on, mark my words. And don't forget - do it NOW. Do it before you read another word of this chat of mine, and then you'll know it's gone. If this were not enough ... "If you can't find the scissors, tear it out, and trim it up afterwards." What advocated vandalism! Here was one reader who must have rushed straight to the scissors in response, and I can't help wondering how many more copies in the hands of collectors suffered the same fate. How thoughtless of E.S.B., and how little faith he must have had in his own paper for future collectors.