

STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

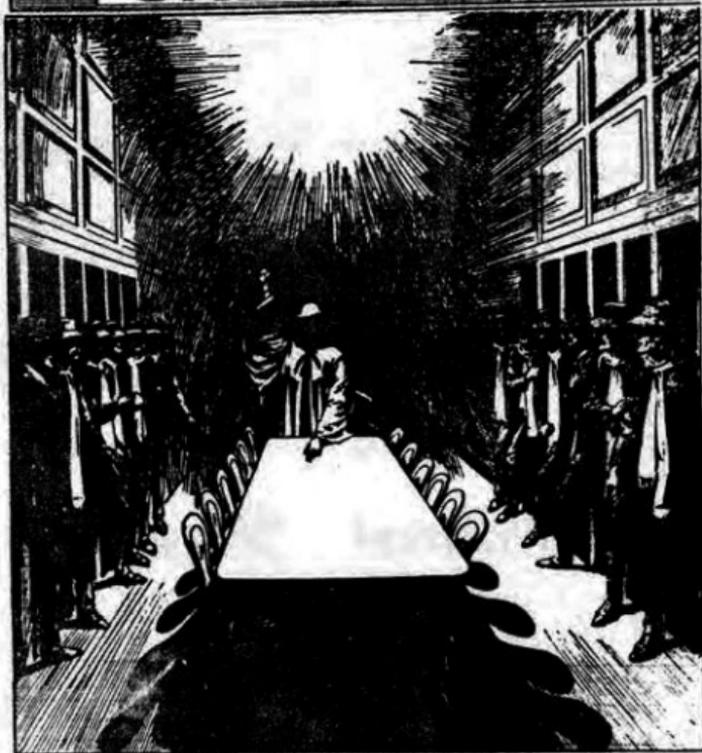
Vol. 28 No. 335

November 1974

THREE LONG COMPLETE STORIES

PLUCK

ONE PENNY



THIS PICTURE APPEARS ON THE COVER OF NUMBER ONE OF "PLUCK."

NUMBER ONE OF PLUCK contains Three Grand, Long, Complete Stories. The illustration above depicts a working incident from "Breathes of the Red Robe," a tale of a western Secret Society having for their leader a follower of the notorious Guido Fawkes.

16p

"You'll be needing plenty of spare cash this Xmas the way prices are:

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THIS MONTH'S SPECIALS

Boys' Cinema. Bound $\frac{1}{2}$ yearly Volumes, red cloth, v. g. c., contents as new: 1920, 1921, 1922, £16 per volume.

Detective Weekly. Red cloth, v. g. c. 1934, 1935, 1937, 1940, $\frac{1}{2}$ yearly vols. £16 each.

Boys' Realm. Magnificent Rex Morocco Dark Maroon bindings, just bound, 1923, 1924, $\frac{1}{2}$ years, £16 each vol.

Populars. Dark maroon binding, see above, as new. $\frac{1}{2}$ yearly, 1925, 1926, £16 per vol. Also red cloth, 1920, 1921, 1922, £16, $\frac{1}{2}$ year.

Rovers. Maroon Rex bindings, as new. Complete years, 1951, 1954, 1955, 1956, £9 per vol. Many others.

Lots of other bound Volumes, including Puck, Maroon Rex binding, $\frac{1}{2}$ year, 1914. Magnets, Vols. 51 to 57. Lees, Young Britains, Turpins, Gems, Larks, Comic Cuts, etc., etc.

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STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

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Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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No. 335

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SEVENTY YEARS OF PLUCK

Exactly seventy years ago, early in November 1904, the Amalgamated Press introduced its juvenile clientele to a new publication named "Pluck." One of our readers, Mr. Jack Parkhouse of Bath, sent me a throwaway advertisement, put out to advertise the new paper. I had it photographed, and, to mark the occasion, it appears on our own cover this month. "Pluck" ran for 595 issues, and then became a victim of the paper shortage in March 1916. Some four years after the

end of the war "Pluck" returned to the bookstalls, but this time it did not seem to capture the fancy of the youth of the nation, for it disappeared after exactly two years.

The wonder of Pluck today is that of so many good Edwardian things - its solid feeling. For years it consisted of no less than 36 pages, including the covers, and the price remained at one penny (the real solid penny) until the war came along to spoil everything.

For the most part there were two long complete stories, plus an instalment of a serial. Charles Hamilton was a regular writer, contributing complete school stories, and any amount of the surnames, later to become very famous for other characters, were given their initial airing. Hamilton's serial "The Rivals of St. Kit's" appeared in Pluck in 1906 (and not in the Marvel to which, in a moment of aberration, we attributed it in a recent C.D.). Pluck, of course, was the birth-place of St. Jim's, which is the main reason the paper is recalled so affectionately now.

The bill comprised school stories, detective stories, adventure stories. H. Clarke Hook wrote a long series of tales about Specs & Co. of Lyncroft, tales forgotten today. A Harry Belbin wrote a series about the Captain, the Cook, and the Engineer. Jack North contributed his stories about Wycliffe School, which seem to have been popular at one time. Detective stories, anonymously written, starred Frank Ferrett, detective. Hamilton mentioned him in some early Gem tales. Detective-Inspector Spearing was another 'tec star, and Mark Darran wrote of John Smith, Detective.

The main artists during the Edwardian period were Arthur Clarke, Leonard Shields (who illustrated the St. Jim's stories), and R. Macdonald.

There are a goodly number of Plucks still around, but the copies with the St. Jim's dozen are very rare indeed. Some years ago "The Swell of St. Jim's", the story which introduced Gussy to an admiring juvenile world, filled our "classic serial" slot for a time. It had never previously been republished. Another was "Staunch Chums of St. Jim's," which, in the same way, had never been reissued. One day, maybe, we will present another of them.

So, Pluck came on the scene, near the turn of the century, seventy years ago, to brighten each week for a distant generation.

Perhaps, in our little circle, there may still be just one or two to whom those early displays of genuine Pluck are a golden memory. If so, they are very, very old memories.

CONCERNING C. D.

From next month the price of Collectors' Digest will rise by one penny. It is nine months since the price of our little mag. went up by another penny, and we really haven't done too badly to hold it stationary till now. I don't need to tell readers that inflation all along the line is a constant anxiety. Many luxuries are being priced right out of our lives, and there is no end in sight yet. I can only promise readers that we are holding prices down for just as long as it is humanly possible to do so, and to ask for understanding in this nationwide problem.

THE ANNUAL

Last month we mentioned some of the attractions in the Annual which will be coming your way in mid-December. Here are a few more. Ernest Holman recalls the arrival of Bob Cherry on the Greyfriars scene; Harold Truscott takes an affectionate and critical look at three Captain authors; Jack Overhill reminisces over "The School Bell"; Les Rowley takes a car ride into the past and lands, this side up with care, at Wharton Lodge; R. Hibbert wonders whether they did much school work at St. Frank's, and Jim Cook also writes with E. S. Brooks fans in mind. Ray Hopkins re-lives a well-loved period of Morcove history, and Raymond Cure switches the spotlight on to Sexton Blake. Mr. Biddle is around again, and his new adventure is entitled "The Meredith Letter."

Have you ordered your Annual yet?

THE EDITOR

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DANNY'S DIARY

NOVEMBER 1924

On 1st November, the Prince of Wales went to the great Wembley Exhibition, and officially declared it closed. Since it opened on 23rd April, 17½ million people have visited it. It has been a great success, and it seems likely that it will be re-opened next year for a second season.

A couple of good, humorous tales to open the month for Rookwood in the Boys' Friend. They were "Putty's Bright Idea" and "The Jape of the Term". Carthew got on the wrong side of Putty Grace. The prefect sent an advertisement to the local newspaper, offering his Enfield bike for sale for £10 - application by letter only. Putty altered the price to ten bob - application in person only. And Carthew had the time of his life.

In "Cuffy in Goal", Tommy Dodd boasted that his team, with Cuffy in goal, could beat the classicals. To even matters up, Jimmy played Gunner in his goal. Rather stale plot, really. Exactly the same thing happened in a Gem story a year or two ago.

Then another jolly pair. In "Leaving it to Lovell", Lovell amused himself by running up the bids at an auction sale. He did it once too often, and a giant trunk, recently belonging to Colonel Thompson, now abroad, was knocked down to him for £2. In "The Secret of the Trunk", Lovell advertised it for sale, and was offered £5 or "your price", for it by a strange John Smith of the Peal of Bells, at Greenwood. But Mr. Smith turned out to be Nosey Jenks, wanted for burglary. He had robbed Colonel Thompson, and hidden his guilty money in the trunk upstairs. Obvious, of course, but good fun.

A most remarkable thing has happened. A photograph has been sent by wireless from London to New York. Ain't science wonderful?

It has been a great month in the Magnet - and what a joy it is to say so. Just when I thought the old paper was pegging out, it has taken a new lease of life. Billy Bunter has starred in every story this month. The opening one, "Both Bunters", was a single, bringing back on the scene Wally Bunter. Rather a well-known situation of mistaken identity,

but good fun. Of course, it clashes with that very silly time when Wally became a form-master, but who cares?

Then a 4-story series which was a gurgle of joy from start to finish. In "Giving Bunter Beans", Walker wanted to entertain his rich uncle so he called on Bunter to give a ventriloquial performance - with disastrous results. Bunter imitated Hurree Singh's voice and insulted Walker. The Head is uncertain whether to flog Bunter or expel him. Bunter would prefer expulsion - much less painful. Besides, he tells the horrified Head, he might go to a better school than Greyfriars. So Bunter hides from the flogging until he is smoked out, - and is expelled. However, Bunter is not sent to a better school; he is put to work, which is awful. So Bunter comes in a caravan outside the school gates, until Coker runs the van into the river. Bunter caught a bad cold - and is at last forgiven. The last three stories of this fine series are "The Vanished Ventriloquist", "The Bunking of Bunter", and "Billy Bunter's Campaign". Great stuff.

There is a new craze - cross-word puzzles. Everybody's doing it. They were invented by an Englishman who sold the idea to an American newspaper. So crosswords were first on the scene over there, but everybody's crossword crazy over here now.

The Magnet is giving away free art plates of warships.

The St. Frank's school scandal series has continued and ended. First of the month was "The Schoolboy Reporters" or "The Haunted Editor." Pitt & Co. invade Fleet Street to get publicity for what St. Frank's did in salvaging the "Trident".

Final story of the series was "Saved by the Fourth", in which Pitt, by winning over the editor of the "Daily Sun", manages to make everything right for the old school.

Now came a number of single, complete stories in the Nelson Lee. Unusual in the N. L. L., but welcome. "Archie's Awful Ancestor" was a comedy in which Archie Glenthorne astonished everybody by becoming fearfully energetic. Next "The Secret of the Old Mill" in which Professor Sylvester Tucker comes to St. Frank's as a science master, a tale of plenty of fun and mystery. Finally, "Willy Handforth's Windfall", in which Handy's brother wins a prize in a magazine competition.

A thrilling new story this month in the Union Jack has been "Black Magic" which is about - well, black magic.

There has been a Royal Film Performance. The King and Queen attended the Marble Arch Pavilion for a special showing of the big British naval film "Zeebrugge".

Photos by wireless. Sounds impossible, but it has actually happened. A photo was sent this month, by wireless, from London to New York.

Some lovely pictures we have seen in the cinemas during November. Lillian Gish and Ronald Colman in "The White Sister"; Ramon Novarro and Alice Terry in "Scaramouche"; Norma Talmadge in "Secrets"; Gloria Swanson in "Zaza"; Harold Lloyd in "Girl Shy"; Richard Barthelmess in "Twenty-One"; Jackie Coogan in "Boy of Flanders".

I should think the Gem has lost a few readers this month. If it keeps on like this it will be losing me. Started off with "The Fool of the Form". Tom Merry promised the mother of Robert Courtneidge that he would look after Robert. But Robert was easily led and a bit of a pincher. In fact, he pinched £5 from Mellish's locker. And in order to save pain to Robert's Mum, Tom Merry lied and 'confessed' that he had pinched the £5. Next month "The Chinese of St. Jim's." Knox bullied the new boy Chin Ling, and Chin made Knox see ghosts. Mixed up with a tong and a casket.

It's staggering that somebody thinks that a number of games and a Silver Cup make a story, or that the editor prints it. These cups turn up time after time as the months go by. This time it's Lord Eastwood who presents a 30 guinea silver cup. They must have hundreds of cups stowed away at St. Jim's. Called "The St. Jim's Football Tournament." Yes, another tournament as well as another cup.

Finally, two adventure tales in which Tom Merry & Co. go for a trip on Lord Conway's yacht, and it gets wrecked. And there are scoundrels on an island. And Figgins misses a train for Greyfriars, and so is on hand to rescue the stranded lot. These two were "The Shipwrecked Seven" and "The Secret of Stark Island."

There has been a bad railway accident. A train from Liverpool to Blackpool, was derailed, owing to the breaking of a pin in the engine.

Most of the stock was gas lit, and a fire occurred in the wreckage. Thirteen people were killed and many injured.

BLAKIANA

conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Now that the winter evenings are upon us no doubt more of you will be reading your Sexton Blake stories by the fire, also with a light other than a candle, Unions permitting. There is a large selection of material to choose from our Lending Library, so will you please let me know your requirements as soon as possible in order that I can post the parcels before the Christmas rush begins. The books may then be kept and returned after Christmas. Don't delay because the Christmas tales will soon be borrowed. I have had enquiries from new readers about the colour of the pre-war Libraries and Union Jacks. The Sexton Blake Library has always had a coloured cover, right since No. 1, which as you know appeared in September 1915. This tradition was continued up to the very last S. B. L. to be printed in 1968. The Union Jack covers were also very well coloured, the first change from the old pink covers being in the issue dated 2 October, 1920, No. 886, The Case of the Bogus Judge. Practically all the covers were in multicolour, even the war-time issues of the Sexton Blake Library.

TINKER ABROAD

by S. Gordon Swan

The story "Tinker Abroad" began in The Boys' Friend No. 628, dated 21st June, 1913, and ended in No. 643, 4th October, 1913. No. 628 was a memorable issue for admirers of the Baker Street pair. As well as the new serial it contained the concluding instalment of "Tinker's Boyhood," and also a short complete tale of Sexton Blake entitled "The Affair of the Music-Hall Star."

A search through the names of the Blake stories in The Penny Pictorial which are listed in the supplement to the Sexton Blake Catalogue, does not reveal this title, so it may have been an original story and not a reprint, unless the title was altered.

"Tinker's Boyhood" has been dealt with elsewhere. "Tinker Abroad", although it immediately followed the first-named yarn in The Boys' Friend, in actual chronological order, followed "Tinker's School-days" and "The Four Musketeers", which ran serially before either of the other tales.

Tinker having left school and the rest of the Four Musketeers having gone their separate ways, the lad had been working as Sexton Blake's assistant. He had helped in various cases and had been on a trip to the West Coast of Africa, where he had met Sir Richard Losely and Lobangu. Yet about a year later Tinker began to feel worried and depressed. During the past months Blake had moved his lodgings several times and at present they were living in a shabby old house off the Euston Road. Blake had made no attempt to confide in his young assistant the reason for all these abrupt changes of residence.

Suddenly one day Blake sent Tinker with a letter to a place near Burnham in Essex. On arriving at the station he found that he had to walk seven miles to his destination and he began to get an inkling that his errand had been designed to get him out of the way.

The letter he carried was to a gentleman called Somers-Garden who lived in an old red-brick farmhouse. On receipt of the letter Somers-Garden gave Tinker a fair-sized brown-paper parcel and told him not to open it until he got home. It occurred to Tinker that the parcel could have been sent through the post, and he was more than ever convinced that this mission had been devised to keep him away from the house in London.

On returning to their lodgings Tinker found Blake lying seriously wounded in a first-floor room, surrounded by every evidence of a desperate struggle. The lad hurried out to find a doctor and eventually succeeded in finding one -- a rather shady character who insisted on a fee in advance. When they got back to the house Blake's body had disappeared, and the doctor, seeing signs of a gun-battle and not wishing to become involved in a police-court case, refused to have anything further to do with the matter and departed in a hurry.

Tinker made a meticulous investigation and found various foot-prints indicating that seven men had been concerned in the attack on Blake, who appeared to have wounded some of his assailants until he was

rendered hors-de-combat. The attackers had then ransacked the rooms, apparently in search of something, then left, taking their wounded with them. But another man had taken Blake's body away by means of the roof.

Tinker now thought of opening the parcel and found it contained a book from Blake's reference library and a letter addressed to Tinker himself in Blake's handwriting. The envelope marked a place in the reference book which dealt with a dangerous criminal named Noah Rand who was now posing as a millionaire philanthropist, calling himself Sir James Martlet. There was a note that he had transferred large sums of money to Brazil and had purchased a hacienda in the Rio d'Oro region.

The letter told Tinker that they were the last words Blake might ever send him as he had accumulated evidence against Rand and a show-down was inevitable, for Rand's emissaries had traced Blake to the Euston Road. The letter enclosed some money for Tinker with which he could start a career for himself or, if he chose to get on the track of Noah Rand, he could apply to Mr. Somers-Garden for further money and instructions. Naturally Tinker chose the latter course.

All the foregoing was a preliminary to a series of adventures on sea and land, too numerous to mention. A novel aspect to the tale was the introduction of Lobangu, who joined Tinker at Madeira and accompanied him to South America, where they encountered many perils in the shape of gun-runners and Arab slavers, who seemed a long way from their usual habitat.

Eventually the millionaire criminal was tracked to Mazan, a town in Brazil, which seems to be a haven for wanted men even up to the present day. Tinker was captured and imprisoned; hearing a man playing a guitar outside his window he threw a message out in the hope it would be delivered in the right quarter.

The guitar-player turned out to be Sexton Blake in disguise, so Tinker's plea for help was fruitful. The detective had been smuggled out of the house in London by Mr. Somers-Garden and, after recovering from his wounds, had traced Noah Rand to South America. The master-criminal was arrested, but in the tradition of the times took cyanide of potassium and escaped earthly justice.

So far as I know, "Tinker Abroad", like its predecessor,

"Tinker's Boyhood," was never reprinted in The Boys' Friend Library, so anyone who wishes to read it must acquire the necessary copies of that green periodical which afforded so many so much reading pleasure in the early years of the twentieth century.

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

THE WHISKY CONNECTION - WAS IT A COINCIDENCE?

by Len Wormull

Can you pin-point exactly your first encounter with Frank Richards or Edwy Searles Brooks? A tall order for some, perhaps, but easy enough if you have a memory link. Mine happens to be whisky in both cases! Not through any boyhood addiction to the stuff, let me add, merely that our two favourite school writers found a good external use for it. External? Let me explain.

Shortly before I came to read Magnet and Gem I somehow acquired an old and tattered copy of the Boys' Friend Library; a school story by Frank Richards. It moved me deeply, and, although I quickly forgot the title, the whisky incident stuck in my memory. It was of course the now famous Boy Without A Name which, thanks to Museum Press, I was able to savour once again. The moment of drama came when Clare, a scholarship lad at Highcliffe, falls victim to a monstrous plot by Ponsonby to get him expelled. First the carefully planted whisky bottle in Clare's study to be discovered later. Then to the real moment of horror - struck down by chloroform and swamped in whisky, with a half-empty bottle by his side. Found unconsciously by Roper of the Sixth, he reflects:

"There were some 'wild beggars' at Highcliffe; the taste of intoxicating liquor was not wholly unknown in some of the Sixth Form studies. But drunkenness! And a junior! And the boy was completely unconscious!"

Clare is condemned and expelled, snobby Mr. Mobbs is secretly delighted, and even his loyal pal the Caterpillar is stunned. All comes right in the end, with Clare finding his father and real name - Frank

Courtenay. Thus was my introduction to dear Pon at his very worst, and to Frank Richards at his very best.

Long after the story was published I placed my first regular order with the Nelson Lee Library, beginning with the Sneaks' Paradise series. Of the many St. Frank's stories I came to read, this was the one I just had to turn to when renewing acquaintance in later years. I had forgotten much of it, but the manner of Nipper's disgrace and downfall remained crystal-clear. It brought back memories of another time, another place. You see, the whisky was at work again!

It was the first starring role for Claude Gore-Pearce, a comparative newcomer in odious characters; snobbish and rich like Ponsonby, though lacking the breeding and finesse of the Highcliffe dandy. Encouraged by the new head, Dr. Morrison Nicholls, the sneaks of St. Frank's were having a high old time of it. The New Order found Claude quickly asserting himself as leader of the Reform Party, at the same time coveting Nipper's position as captain of the Remove. His chance came in most dramatic fashion.

In defence of dear Claudius, nothing was premeditated. It happened quite suddenly in Bellton Lane, not far from the White Harp Inn. He comes on Nipper unexpectedly, an argument develops and he is forced into a fight which he knows he cannot win. As Nipper removes his jacket Claude gives a cowardly knock-out punch. Dr. Nicholls and Mr. Pycraft can be heard approaching ...

"He realised that if Nipper was found like this - obviously struck down while peeling off his jacket - there would be an enquiry. And he recalled that he had a flask of whisky in his pocket. It took him just five seconds to withdraw the cork, swamp Nipper's face with a quantity of the spirits, and to drop the bottle on his chest ..."

Nipper is condemned, hauled before the school in disgrace, and flogged. To stop the reader wondering why Claude had the whisky so conveniently to hand, it was explained that he had bought the stuff for a "little celebration" to be held later. Not so shocking at St. Frank's when you delve a little. Hitting the bottle was not wholly unknown to Gulliver and Bell, for instance. Now the study dupes of Claude, their former bad company took in the late and unlamented Bernard Forrest,

and before that Ralph Leslie Fullwood, prince of blackguards. When poor Fully was trying to mend his wicked ways and gives his old pals the go-by, they tempt him back into the fold with a "swig out of the flask" - No. 537, The New Houses At St. Frank's.

So there we have it, two unimpeachable characters - Courtenay and Nipper - slandered by drink. In my own case, I find the whisky initiation with the two authors a remarkable coincidence. Equally remarkable in my view is the marked similarity between the two widely separated incidents.

"THOSE HARD WORKING CHARACTERS"

by William Lister

It all started at a Bank holiday party at the TRAVER'S COUNTRY HOUSE, and a very nice party it was too. However, nobody knew what fate had in store for them.

Fate? or the pen of Edwy Searles Brooks? after all they were his creation, and as such he was entitled to plunge them into the most perilous adventures, always provided he got them out again. They rally had no need to worry, as they were his means of livelihood at that time, so they must have known he couldn't dispose of them.

He did cut rather close to the bone sometimes. Like that time he whisked the whole party to India, "just like that" as Tommy Cooper would say. I mean, if you were one of E. S. Brooks characters you had to be prepared for this kind of thing. The customers had to be entertained if they paid twopence for their "N. L." and if the old paper ceased to exist you ceased to exist too. So it was a case of "rally-round old fruits" as Archie Glenthorne would say.

Rally-round they did too. I never knew those St. Frank's boys to fail us. There was a lot of competition in those days, what with the "Gem" the "Magnet" and the "Union Jack", all aiming for your twopence. The St. Frank's crowd did so well that they got my regular order. The others took their turn as finance allowed, and to this day I never regret my decision.

However, back to the drawing-board. I started by drawing your attention to this country house party and India, and fate. Now, to get from a super house party in Essex to a remote part of India, you need a good flying machine, and Lord Dorrimore had one to boot. To say it

was the year 1928, it was some machine. In no time at all our St. Frank's party were in Rishna, a remote section of India. Here they became prisoners of that rotter the Ameer of Rishna, who to get his own way does not hesitate to use poison gas, machine-guns and bombs. I hope I'm not rushing you. In fact, at this point I intend to give you details of the brochures (so to speak) whereby one can obtain further information if so desired.

Nelson Lee titles as follows, "Spirited Away", N. S. 118, 1928. "The Peril of Kybur Pass", N. S. 123, being the first and last of this excellent series. If you have no collections, try the M. Allison or Bob Blythe club libraries.

"The Siege in the Clouds" one of the in-between tales provides a picture of what to expect, the cover gives a full frontal view of a magnificent castle in the clouds, higher than the New York Skyscrapers. Standing as it does on sheer rock a joy to behold, yet the scene of dangerous and exciting adventures.

Guess who rescues our friends from a fate worse than death? None other than the British Army. E. S. Brooks spares no expense when it comes to a full cast, and like I said, having got them into this dreadful situation, he has to get them out safely BECAUSE the customers will be waiting for their favourite characters to appear as usual next Wednesday.

Come to think of it - we did expect a lot for our money.

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 122 - Schoolboys' Own Library

No. 170 - "Prefects on
Strike"

Near the beginning of the summer term in 1919, began the famous series in the Boys' Friend about the strike of the prefects. Bulkeley became the victim of a booby-trap intended for Carthew, and lost his temper when caning Raby. The Head happened to arrive at this inopportune moment, and instantly dismissed Bulkeley from his position as prefect and captain of the school. He appointed Neville in his place, and to his great astonishment and intense annoyance, Neville refused. Eventually all the prefects resigned, including even Knowles, who was supposed to cherish ambitions of becoming captain of Rookwood himself, but the prefects were unanimous because they all felt that the Head's arbitrary action was a slight on the whole body of prefects.

There was no counterpart of this famous series at Greyfriars or St. Jim's, and there were probably a number of reasons for this. We know that Charles Hamilton felt that the Boys' Friend was not on the same high level as the Magnet and Gem, but quite apart from this, the character



No 3.

E.E. BRISCOE

The Schoolboy Raide

NO 2.



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and only **ST. JIMS.**



of the headmaster of Rookwood was unique. He was **Lofty**, autocratic, and irritated by opposition; his voice was said to have distant hints of rumbling thunder when he was annoyed. He could be obstinate to a degree, and quite clearly lacked the serene wisdom of Dr. Locke and Dr. Holmes. Nevertheless, his character was a great asset to the Rookwood saga: it supplied a spice and zest that provided the necessary clash of personalities to initiate many a fine series in the Boys' Friend. Certainly, only Dr. Chisholm could have precipitated a strike of prefects.

The series developed in promising style, with Carthew backing down and being re-appointed as a prefect. He stood in the election for captain, expecting no opposition, but Tubby Muffin was nominated as a freak candidate to make the election a farce, and when Muffin was elected he made a dignified speech of acceptance, ending, "Gentlemen, you have placed me in a very important position. All I can say is, I deserve it."

Despite such amusing episodes, the series itself was very far from being farcical. The fourth-formers backed up the ex-prefects loyally, and were rather taken aback to discover that the sixth-formers were far from grateful for this unexpected

support, whereupon the fourth-formers refused to obey the sixth-formers on the grounds that they were no longer prefects. Each week produced a new twist and turn to events, until the last number, which dealt with a small fire at Rookwood; this episode seemed slightly contrived, but this was only a small blemish on a very lively and readable series.

Perhaps the strangest aspect of the series was the fact that in the previous term the masters had gone on strike, and the Schoolboys' Own reprint in No. 170, retained Jones major's reference back to this earlier series in the spring term, despite the fact that the reprint "Masters on Strike" was to be delayed for another two years. Undoubtedly, the selection of the Rookwood reprints was the most haphazard of all, but as the reprints were in almost every case a complete series this defect was not, perhaps, of much importance.

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 196. THE LETTERS

There is much appeal in "The Letters of Frank Richards" which we recently published, and they provide "musing material" for many years to come. As we have observed many times, the mood changes completely after the first year or two covered by the letters. The abrasive quality which peeps through for a while is replaced by a gentle kindness, once the author got back to writing of Greyfriars again.

The earlier letters provide quite a few points of discussion, and we have, in fact, discussed some of them in this "Let's Be Controversial" series in recent years.

Two points, however, present themselves in the very first letter in the book; this was one dated January 1945, and it is one that I had probably not re-read since I first received it.

In it Charles Hamilton writes: "It was the use of my pen-names by other writers that led, more than anything else, to the final severance of my connection with the publishers."

That assertion takes a lot of swallowing. It was ten years since a substitute writer had written for the Magnet or Gem. There had been

a couple of sub Rookwood serials in the Gem in the middle thirties, but that was all. It is quite incredible that, with a war bringing all normal activities to a standstill, Hamilton severed his connection with the A. P. on account of sub tales which had appeared all those years before. It is also inconsistent with items, found elsewhere, about paper shortage and Hitler killing off the source of his income.

That the A. P. were dogs-in-the-manger after the war has seemed evident, but whether the firm treated the author badly in 1940 it is impossible to decide without further evidence. It seems likely that the "severance" came because, with most papers closed down, they no longer had the vehicles to carry his work. Something certainly happened to cause the Magnet to cease as suddenly as it did, just after a new series had started, but I do not believe that it can possibly have been anything to do with substitute writers.

Finally, I always had the impression that the term "substitute writers" commenced with Collectors' Digest and that it was coined either by Herbert Leckenby or by some other very early hobby writer. It is clear that I was wrong, and the term had been used long before the days of C. D. Speaking of the "Rio Kid", Charles Hamilton wrote: "The A. P. were kind enough to let me keep him to myself, and their wretched substitute writers, as they called them, were never allowed to mangle him." That letter was written to me thirty years ago, and several years before C. D. was born.

The fact that the A. P. themselves spoke of "substitute writers" is proof of the status of Hamilton. Clearly the management did not put the subs on the same level as the star, anymore than an understudy in the theatre has the same status as the real star of the show.

But theatres usually make sure that an audience is advised when the understudy is appearing in the unavoidable absence of the star.

FOR SALE: OFFERS - No. 1 to No. 59 Hotspur (57 copies, 2 missing) September 1933 - October 1934. The Scout: Every Boy's Weekly, 218 copies (one missing) 1162 - 1381, August 1930 to October 1934. The Children's Sketch, 29 copies, July 1931 - January 1932.

JACK OVERHILL

99 SHELFORD RD., TRUMPINGTON, CAMBRIDGE. Tel: TRUMPINGTON 2263.

REVIEWGREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL 1975(Howard Baker Press:
£3.20)

A volume of this kind has all the exciting charm of the old-fashioned, yet ever-welcome, Christmas stocking. Top-of-the-bill is the 3-story Magnet Christmas series for 1928. This was a delayed sequel to the first South Seas series of 1927, and it reintroduced Soames, who was originally one of the Magnet's greatest pieces of adult characterisation. This series, in which both Tom Redwing and the Bounder were kidnapped and held prisoner in a haunted cave, has never been among the Magnet's most popular Christmases, possibly because the reader preferred a holly-woven festive season to one in which the boys sacrificed the orthodox Christmas in order to search for their missing chums. All the same, the series is rewarding in its own way, and the originals of it are rare.

It is nice to see a 1915 Penny Popular included in the volume, though the St. Jim's story "Seeking His Fortune" is part of a famous 1910 series in the Gem in which Tom Merry lost all his money. The whole was excellent; just a part may be irritating to those who cannot "read on." "Tinker's Daring" comprises the closing chapters of a 1909 Union Jack story which was entitled "The Mystery of Dusky Hollow." A half-a-loaf which should please the Blake fans. Plenty of readers, too, will welcome the not-unworthy Jack, Sam & Pete story.

The blue Gem is represented by "The Jew of St. Jim's" which the new publishers describe as of "sociological interest". It is hardly that, luckily. By 1915, when it appeared, the blue Gem was well past its quality peak, and the story is not really striking. It was the first introduction of Dick Julian who played a very minor part in Gem history, and the author was always faintly patronising in tales of this type, to the mild embarrassment of the reader. In this one, Lowther tries to trick the Jew into "spending money" which Monty assumes will be painful for a Jew, but funny to others. The trick misfires, and a feud follows, until, by means of a contrived ending, the two boys become pals.

A far better blue Gem tale is "The Toff's Triumph" which is the 1937 reprint version of the late-1914 story "Talbot's Triumph." This

is one of the best of the early Talbot yarns, and it is of additional interest as the story to introduce "The Professor".

If the inclusion of Magnet No. 1 in the volume is intended as a "special attraction", it must be a bit of a damp squib, splendid and fascinating though the story is. As it was republished a decade or more ago by the Fleetway House, and sold in its tens of thousands, it is likely that there are more copies of this Magnet about than any other. So its selection is a bit of a mystery. Still, Frank Richards tales have been well reprinted for sixty years, and their new appearance has always been welcomed by loyal readers, so this one may be no exception.

Altogether, a lovely Christmas stocking of a book, with plenty of other delightful trinkets in additions to the main items mentioned here. It should ring a merry peal of bells this coming Christmas.

* * * * *

The Second Instalment of our CLASSICAL SERIAL, from a rare circus series of nearly seventy years ago.

THE CIRCUS RIDERS

"You young humbug!" said Bob Cherry, handing Billy Bunter his cap which had fallen off. "It was nothing."

"That's all you know, Bob Cherry. I'm all in a flutter. You have never been kicked by a horse," said Bunter indignantly.

Clotilde and Jack Talbot laughed heartily.

Billy Bunter was really so absurd; and not knowing of the fat junior's reputation for greediness, they could see no object in his absurdity.

As Joey Pye reappeared from the caravan with half a huge pork-pie on a dish, Bunter's eyes lit up with greedy anticipation.

"I'm feeling quite faint," Bunter murmured.

Clotilde, quite innocently, interfered.

"What ever are you thinking about, Joey," she cried. "Fancy bringing pork-pie to a boy who is feeling faint. Take it back, you goose, and bring him a glass of water instead."

"Yes, Clotilde," said Joey meekly.

Bunter gave a horrified gasp as he saw Mr. Pye whisk the pie round to take it away again.

"Hold on," he exclaimed in alarm. "Bring that pie back. I don't want any water."

Clotilde opened her eyes wide in astonishment.

Billy Bunter snatched the enormous chunk of pie off the plate, and proceeded to devour it in huge mouthfuls.

"My eye!" gasped Mr. Pye.

"What a capacity! Don't they feed you at all at Greyfriars, youth?" He turned

to Bob Cherry.

"Of course they do, and jolly well, too," said Bob Cherry warmly.

"Greyfriars is a jolly good school. Bunter eats enough for ten ordinary chaps every day in the year."

"Oh, really, Cherry," remonstrated Billy Bunter, with his mouth full. "I think they're very stingy with the grub at Greyfriars."

"Shut up, you porpoise," exclaimed Bob, angrily.

Bunter had no idea of "sticking up for his school," but it annoyed Bob Cherry, who was justly proud of the "coll", to have it disparaged by Bunter.

Bunter finished the pork pie.

"Really, Cherry," he expostulated, "I don't think you ought to be rude to me, especially" -- Bunter puffed out his chest and looked virtuous -- "especially when there is a lady present."

Bob Cherry glared at him as he smirked at Clotilde in his insufferably self-satisfied way.

"I seldom get enough nourishment for my delicate constitution," went on Bunter. "I'm not greedy, but I admit that I like a lot."

"It looks like it," muttered Joey Pye.

"I'm a splendid athlete," continued Bunter. "There's nothing in the sporting line that I'm not good at. I'm a first-rate photographer, too." He blinked at Mr. Pye through his enormous spectacles. "Every illustrated paper in the country will be publishing my photograph shortly."

"As an advertisement for Dr. Bloggins' Fattener, perhaps," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry, you're jealous of my powers as a photographer. All the chaps in this school are jealous of me."

Billy Bunter sighed pathetically. Joey Pye grinned broadly.

"I'm sure they are," he said. "And what else can you do, my little man?"

Billy Bunter blinked a little doubtfully. His eyes could see the picture of Jack Talbot sitting easily and gracefully on his big grey, which was moving about restlessly, as if it was tired of waiting.

Bunter was struck by a brilliant idea. He remembered that during a visit to Margate one summer he had had several rides on the beach donkeys there. It was true that he had fallen off, but that was a matter he preferred to forget.

"I'm a jolly good rider," he said boastfully. "You should just see me on a horse."

Jack Talbot and Clotilde looked interested, and even Joey Pye's grin faded. This was a matter which interested circus folk.

Bob Cherry stared at Bunter. This was the first he had heard of this latest accomplishment, and he was inclined to put it down to Billy's imagination, which was fertile enough for a newspaper reporter.

He had no proof that the fat junior could not ride, however.

Bunter proceeded to elaborate his statement.

"You should see me on a cavorting steed. I can ride like - like anything." Bob Cherry laughed.

"Really, Cherry, you don't doubt

my word, do you?"

"Well, that's as may be," replied Bob Cherry diplomatically. "I've known you to make - er - slight inaccuracies before now."

"Really, Cherry --"

Bob went on, struck by a brilliant idea.

"Perhaps this chap will let you have a ride up the road on his horse." He looked enquiringly at Jack Talbot.

Bunter backed away from the horse in alarm.

"Oh, I say, Cherry, I'm still feeling unwell after that fearful kick --"

"Oh, scat! Will you let him have a ride, Jungle Jack?"

Jack smiled.

"I'm afraid I can't. The horse isn't mine, you see --"

Bob Cherry looked disappointed.

As a matter of fact, Jack didn't like the idea of seeing Bunter on Dapple's back at all; and had the horse been his own, he would have refused Bob's request.

Billy Bunter came forward with a swagger.

"Well, I don't mind if I do have a ride," he said. "I always think a ride before breakfast does you good."

But Jack Talbot shook his head to Bunter's secret relief.

Can't be done, I'm afraid."

"Just a little way - say a couple of miles," urged Billy Bunter. "I'll be back in five minutes."

Jack shook his head again, and Joey Pye grinned.

"I tell you what," said Billy, emboldened by Jack's firm refusals.

"Just let me put him at the fence, to see

how he jumps."

"No, I tell you."

"Well, look here," said Billy Bunter, going too far as usual, "may I have a ride on this girl's horse?"

Jack Talbot frowned. There was something objectionable in Billy Bunter's tone, which Jack resented.

"Of course you can't," he said sharply.

Billy Bunter assumed a discontented expression.

"You see," explained Clotilde with a smile, "you could not ride side-saddle, anyway."

Bunter gave a grunt.

"I don't mind little things like that, you know."

Joey Pye roared with laughter.

There was a mischievous expression on Clotilde's pretty face.

"Well," she said carelessly, "perhaps you might have a little ride, after all. Mahomet will probably try all kinds of tricks, but I don't suppose you will mind that."

"Oh, dear!"

"Whatever's the matter?"

"Ow! My back!"

"Your back again?"

"Yes, it's come on worse again." Ding-dong. Ding-dong.

The strident notes of the Greyfriars breakfast bell interrupted Billy Bunter's lamentations.

"There's our breakfast-bell. We must be off. Good-bye. See you all again at the circus," sang out Bob Cherry cheerfully, raising his cap to Clotilde. "Come on, you fat humbug."

Billy Bunter did not trouble to

raise his cap in his hurry to obey the doubly welcome summons of the bell. He had already turned and was making for the school buildings as fast as his little fat legs

would carry him.

With a chuckle, and a wave of the hand to his new acquaintances, Bob Cherry ran off after the fat junior, leaving the circus chums laughing heartily.

(Another instalment of this old, old story next month)

* * * * *

The Postman Called

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

LARRY MORLEY (Hanwell): I disagree with Jack Cook's remarks regarding old film and cinema articles. I'm sure many of your readers welcome them. The old papers and childhood cinema-going were closely akin.

EDWARD THOMSON (Edinburgh): I enjoy all the issues of C. D. and all the items, especially "Danny's Diary" with his entries of the happenings of the "Twenties", my favourite years. Christmas during those years, when I made my way on my bicycle to the little newsagent's shop on the corner, was really a wonderful time. Propping my cycle against his window, and entering his gaslit shop with the veritas mantle swinging precariously on its stock, I gazed enraptured at the marvellous array of Christmas numbers, their mastheads dripping with snow, "The Boys' Friend Weekly, Magnet, Gem and Popular" and of course those wonderful coloured comics, "Jester," "Merry & Bright", "Funny Wonder", "Comic Cuts", "Chips", etc. Gazing reluctantly at the others, I chose my favourite, "Boys' Friend", "Popular" and "The Jester". Mounting my cycle again, I made for home, dismounting several times to relight my "Silver King" oil lamp, the supporting spring having gone for a "burton". Yes, to me, the "Twenties" were just marvellous, and Danny brings them all back, those wonderful years of our youth.

W. J. RAYNER (Bury St. Edmunds): I must write to tell you how much I am enjoying the series "The Small Cinema". Do please keep up the articles on old cinemas, theatres and films.

You mention the "W. and F." Film Service and the question of the initials thereof.

C. M. Woolf was associated with a friend named Freedman. They were furriers, but they foresaw a future for films and started a distributing agency in London, known as W. and F. films, the two giving their initials to the name of the firm.

MAURICE KUTNER (London): Many thanks for "The Letters of Frank Richards". As the letters are of the post-war period I find them not only interesting but exciting. They are of a period when we began to find out more and more of this many-sided Charles Hamilton. The appearance of numerous hard-cover books, beginning with "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars" made those post-war years as heart-warming as the post-war period of the first World War, when numerous and frequent new publications brought happiness to those lucky ones who were old enough to read and enjoy.

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): Fr. F. Hertzberg raises an interesting point about the comic SUN, but the fact cannot be disputed that the first four issues were entitled FITNESS and SUN, as I saw these only recently. An editorial blurb in the first issue states that it was a revival of the old Health magazine of the same name that was suspended in 1940. The offer to buy up any pre-war copies of SUN was bogus, and to give the impression that such a comic existed then. There is simply no record of any previous publication in any directory or records that I have seen. This was as Fr. Hertzberg says a 'cover-up' of the real purpose to get the exclusive copyright of a title. Hence we had the curious names of comics such as Gosport and Stretford Couriers. According to Willings Press Guide SUN comic was supposed to have started in 1928! But this information came from J. B. Allen, and a lot of queries about this to the publisher were not answered when I wrote to him some twenty years ago.

D. J. MARTIN (Southampton): Your Editorial for September with its mention of Frances Hodgson Burnett, reminded me and from the bookcase I took down a second-hand copy, (purchased by my grandfather for 2d.) of "T. Tembarom." What a grand tale it is, worthy to be read by any seeker after nostalgia. But as you say her name is almost forgotten and the poor little rich folk of today know not what they have missed.

My mother (aged 81) decided she would read it again when she finishes the Da Costa Series. So thank you for reminding us both.

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 8. "Q-SHIPS"

All films, forty years ago, were of celluloid base. In consequence, they were highly inflammable. Operating-box fires occurred in this country, but very rarely, due to strict regulations, introduced in the very early days of cinemas.

In the same term that we played "Stop That Man" we also played the New Era production "Q-Ships". This was a magnificent film concerning the British Mystery Fleet of the first world war. It was a documentary, tense and thrilling; we played it on a Friday and held it over to screen it again on the Sunday.

It was when I came to making a splice on "Q-Ships" prior to screening, that I ran into an extraordinary snag. To make the splice, one scraped a small section of the emulsion side of the film, used a tiny brush to apply a thin coating of the chemical "amyl acetate" (obtained in twopennorths in a small bottle from any chemist) to the scraped section, and then pressed that on to the non-emulsion side of the film. The joint stuck firmly, and, hey presto, a neat splice was accomplished.

But, hey presto, with "Q-Ships", the splice refused to be made. It never even looked like sticking. The amyl acetate had no effect whatever. I might just as well have been using water.

I was at a loss what to do. By this time I had been handling films for two

years, but I had never before experienced film which could not be joined.

A suspicion shot into my mind. I cut out a frame, took it away from the op-box, and applied a match to it. It should have flared and disappeared in a second. It didn't. It merely curled, but never caught fire.

I saw at once why I had been unable to make a splice. It was non-flam-stock. Safety film. Non-flam stock photographed beautifully and was the equal of ordinary film, but it had one giant drawback. It couldn't be joined. For years there had been experiments to provide a safety stock - but always they ran up against the same snag. If the film broke, there was no means of repairing it.

I rewound the entire film. Every single previous joint came apart. There was nothing which would join non-flam film. That was why cinemas went on using inflammable film till after the second world war.

I saw myself faced with a dozen unnecessary changeovers unless I could think of some means of joining the reels together and renewing the splices which had parted. I solved the problem. I took one frame (4 sprocketholes) of ordinary absolutely opaque inflammable film. Scraped each end. Applied amyl

acetate to each end, and found that it stuck hard to the non-flam stock. So I was able to join up "Q-Ships" by inserting one frame of opaque flam stock at each place which there was a break. When the film was screened, the one frame was barely discernible on the screen to anybody who was looking for it.

It was not until the middle forties that the break through came and companies began to use non-flam stock. And any projectionist could get a little bottle of the special new film cement by applying to the renters. I used to take a bottle over to Warner Bros. at Twickenham, and get a fill-up. By 1950, most cinema film was non-flam, a big safety advance. It took a war, in fact, to achieve a break through to find something that would join non-flam.

That term, along with "Stop That Man" and "Q-Ships" we had some splendid bookings. From First National came Milton Sills in "The Valley of the Giants"; Charlie Murray (the ex-Sennett comedian) in a mystery thriller "The Gorilla"; Monty Banks with Jean Arthur in "Horse-shoes" (a tip-top Pathe mirthquake); Ken Maynard in "The Devil's Saddle"; Monty Banks in another Pathe comedy "A Perfect Gentleman"; Ken Maynard in "The Red

Raiders". From Universal came "Uncle Tom's Cabin". This was a big production, but none of the names in the big cast is remembered today. Another big production was "When Fleet Meets Fleet", which came from International Cine. We had a few films from this renter, but I have no memory of them. Their films were, I think, mainly semi-documentaries, and I fancy that "When Fleet Meets Fleet" was German. The stars were John Stuart and Bernard Goetke, whoever he was. Stuart, of course, was very famous on both stage and film, and I often saw him at Kew Theatre. I believe he is still living. From P.D.C. came William Boyd and Bessie Love in "Dress Parade"; William Boyd, Sue Carol and Alberta Vaughan in "Skyscraper"; Rod La Rocque in "Hold 'Em Yale".

This term we also screened (several times) a film which had been made, on stage and outside Kennington Theatre, with my own boys and girls plus Vernon Keith as Mr. Quelch in a school episode. I still have that film.

A last thought on "Uncle Tom's Cabin." To the best of my knowledge this was the last time this classic story was made into a film.

WANTED: Monster Libs, Gems, Magnets, S.O.L's, Chums, Boys' Own Annuals, Elsie Oxenham's. **SALE:** H. Baker reprints; Greyfriars Holiday Annuals; Bunter books.

J. GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND.

(Aberdeen 491716)

WANTED: Wizard, Hotspur and Adventure (magazines) 1931 - 35.

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WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing same of BOYS' FRIEND - issues between Nos. 1182 and 1256. Good copies essential.

ERIC FAYNE

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FATHER HERTZBERG, 48 SHALMARSH, BEBINGTON, L63 2JZ, WIRRAL.

TOP PRICES for Magnets, particularly 1201, 1200, 1189, and many below. Exchanges. Also Bullseyes. Welcome all correspondence.

J. de FREITAS, 29 GILARTH ST., HIGHETT, AUSTRALIA 3190.

News of the Clubs

CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at 3 Long Road, on Sunday, 13th October. President Bill Lofts welcomed new member Bill Bennett, and, as guest speaker, Mary Cadogan.

The officers of the club were re-elected en bloc. The theme of the meeting was "Hamiltonia". Bill Lofts said that the O. B. B. C. movement was really due to the Hamilton Fans. He gave information about Hamilton, and his writings, especially in the Magnet and Gem. He also paid a warm tribute to Eric Fayne, who has done so much in so many ways to revive the interest in C. H.'s work after the war and to maintain this through the Bunter plays, through the "Digest" and in so many other ways. The members of the Club heartily endorsed Bill's tribute. Bill Thurbon said in Bunter Charles Hamilton had added a character to English folklore. In that days "Sunday Times" a serious article on the problems of the over-weight child had referred to the "Billy Bunter Syndrome". Vic Hearn felt that by the late 1930's the Magnet was losing to the Thomson papers, a fact which Bill Lofts endorsed by quoting circulation figures.

Mary gave an interesting talk. She thought there was no great

difference between Hamilton's appeal to the working class and the high school girl. To meet Hamilton's writings was to her to view a new and permanently sun-lit world. It would be impossible to do justice to Mary's talk without half-filling the "Digest", but I must specially mention her references to the Da Costa series, and to "Inky". Mary wondered what Hamilton really thought of adolescent boys. Part of Hamilton's appeal had been that his characters seemed more manly than real adolescents, and she thought boys who read and identified themselves with the characters in the stories in turn felt manly. Bill Thurbon pointed out that "Inky" had appeared in a ruggie-school story in the Marvel some time before he appeared at Greyfriars.

Jack Overhill gave an entertaining talk in his own inimitable way on the occasional Hamilton "Spine-chillers". He recalled his own boyhood days around 1915, and of reading Magnets and Gems by the light of shop windows, in dark recesses of shops where he worked as an errand boy, and by the dim light of an oil lamp. But he also recalled being scared by reading a Greyfriars German Spy story in broad daylight and being afraid of the Spy who might catch him. He recalled the story about the kidnapping of Hop-Hi (smuggled out in a fake Postman's bag - Bill Thurbon suggested that Hamilton might have borrowed the idea from Chesterton's "Father Brown" story "The Invisible Man"). Among other stories he had found frightening were the classic "Nobody's Study", and the story in which Lunley-Lumley is believed to have died, but is really in a trance from which he is roused by Levison.

Next Meeting, 10th November.

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NORTHERN

Saturday, 12th October, 1974

We met at the Swarthmore Educational Centre, though not quite as we had planned, for we were on the outside, rather than the inside, of the building! Apparently, as subsequent investigation was to show, something had gone wrong with the Centre's book-keeping system and our engagement of the premises had not been recorded in their diary.

Apart from discovering that a Leeds pavement in October is a

cold and dismal place for the lonely and rejected, we further discovered it to be somewhat unsuitable for a meeting of the Northern (or any) OBBC:

Happily, before our rejection should turn to dejection, we were able, at Mollie's invitation, to repair to her home at 29 Eden Crescent, where we spent a pleasant evening along more orthodox (and more comfortable) lines.

A quiz by Ron Rhodes was the first highlight, the answers being names of personalities connected with Highcliffe and Cliffe House and people and places which came under the heading of Courtfield and Friardale.

Top came Geoffrey Wilde with 17 correct, second Harold Truscott with 13 and tying in third place with 12 each came Ron Hodgson and Elizabeth Taylor.

After refreshments, a quiz by Jack Allison on the letters in the Brander Rebellion Series. For each letter we had to guess who wrote it and to whom it was written. Geoffrey Wilde came first with 17 marks, then Bill Williamson with 16 and Myra Allison with 15.

Mollie announced that our worthy president (P. G. Wodehouse) was to celebrate his ninety-third birthday on the following Tuesday. As is our custom, we had sent him a card from the Northern OBBC.

Mollie produced a copy of PG's latest book, 'Aunts Aren't Gentlemen'.

It makes one wonder what would today be emanating from the pen of Frank Richards were he still with us!

The next meeting, on the second Saturday of November, at 6.30 p. m., will be held (we sincerely trust) at the Swarthmore Educational Centre - this time inside the building!

- - -
LONDON

Thirty-five members and guests were present at the Hamilton Museum gathering at the familiar rendezvous at Maidstone.

Gracing the top table at the buffet luncheon was the President and curator of the museum, John Wernham, and with him were three of the most distinguished ladies connected with the Hamilton saga. These

were Miss Edith Hood, who looked after Frank Richards for so many years: the two Chapman sisters, Dorothy and Marjorie, who kept house so long for their father, C. H. Chapman, famous illustrator of the Magnet.

Prior to lunch, the museum came under close inspection by one and all.

After lunch, the Hamilton film was shown, never fails to please, especially the scenes of luncheon parties of yesteryear. Following up this film was another one entitled "All the Year Round" which featured the local countryside and upper reaches of the River Thames. After these two films, tea was served and then there was a long time for interesting conversations. The time passed all too quickly and with votes of thanks to the hosts, John and Mrs. Wernham and his staff, and good wishes to those who were unable to be present due to indispositions, it was homeward bound with happy memories.

Mary Cadogan will be the hostess at her Beckenham residence on Sunday, 17th November, for the next meeting.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

* * * * *

THROUGH OTHER EYES by Les Rowley

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

Miss Coker poured some tea into a cup of frail looking bone china and passed it across to me. It was a dainty room in which we sat and, with its gay chintz curtains, the cushions and covers of a light floral pattern and furniture that was old before the turn of the century, it seemed an ideal setting for the lady I had come to see.

"So you are one of Horace's many admirers." It was a pronouncement not an enquiry. "The darling boy has so many friends, but some I feel are not entirely worthy of his friendship. You know Masters Potter and Greene, both of whom Horace has helped enormously in studies and in games? Where were they when dear Horace was kidnapped by those nasty men? It was left to some dear little boys named Carter, Plummy, Bullock and Newton, oh and coloured lad whose name I cannot remember, to restore Horace to his Aunty.

"It has always been a disappointment to me that Horace's attributes are not fully recognised by his schoolmasters. I have spoken to Mr. Grout - or is it Stout? - many times, but dear Horace still remains in the Fifth Form instead of taking his rightful place in the Sixth Form as Captain of the School. Men are such stupid, blind animals they cannot see true genius even when it is pointed out to them. I remember the trouble that I had in getting Horace his remove from the Shell. All kinds of silly arguments were put forward then just as they are now. We shall see what can be done on my next visit to Greyfriars. I intend to take my stoutest umbrella with me so that I can drive a point or two home.

"In the case of games it is not a matter of stupidity but of selfishness and envy on the part of Grundy the captain of the Fifth Form. He dare not give a better boy the chance to oust him from the team. When I mentioned this to Bundle he did however promise to find dear Horace a place when they next played marbles, so I hope to hear some good news from Horace soon.

"There have been times, I fear, when I have been deluded by wicked men like Mr. Sarle who was my legal adviser at one time. This evil man persuaded another nephew, Edgar, to lie and trick me into believing my trust in Horace was misplaced. But the darling boy won through in the end, proving how wrong his silly aunt had been to doubt him.

"They actually had the impertinence to expel Horace for setting light to fireworks in Mr. Snout's office just because the dear boy had said he would. I sometimes think that schoolmasters are bereft of even a grain of common sense. They should have known that he was innocent of any such prank. But then Horace is always telling me that his form master cannot even spell and that when he points out the mistakes the silly man only gives him an imposition. Perhaps my nephew should go to the Headmaster and offer some advice on staffing matters.

"It is my belief that Greyfriars will become famous because it has had Horace as a pupil. When that time comes it will lay to rest once and for all time the silly prejudices of those who now can only sneer. I must finish soon because I have to pack a hamper for Horace. The School food is not sufficient for a growing boy, you know. But before you go I have one final point to make against the critics of my nephew. I have often been told by misinformed people that Horace is good neither at games nor lessons. I once overheard a little boy refer to Horace as the fool of the Fifth. They are all wrong, of course. But even if they were right - which I won't for the moment allow - there is something they cannot deny. Horace is as honest as the day; is incapable of falsehood and as loyal as they come. How many of his critics can claim those qualities today?" The grin had quite disappeared from my face as I took my leave.