

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Vol. 29 No 342

JUNE 1975

2 LONG, COMPLETE TALES!



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

No. 342—Vol. 29, 2nd Series.

ONE PENNY.

[Printed in Great Britain by the Proprietors.]



Scenes from Today's Splendid Installment.

17p

Here are only some of the items in stock - single copies and bound volumes.

Magnets, Gems, Populars, G/Heralds, SOL's, Holiday Annuals, Bunter and many hardbacks and Annuals, Union Jacks, SBL's, Detective Weekly, Thrillers, Modern Boy, BFL's, Nelson Lees, Thomson, Wizards, Hotspurs, Adventures, Rovers, Skippers, Champions, Boys' Realm and Friend, Scout, Pilot, Triumph, Ranger, Startler. HB facsimiles, Boys' Magazine, Nugget Lib., Champion Lib., Young Britain, Aldines various, CD's and Annuals, originals by Chapman and Parker, Sports Budget, Sports Fun, Sports Library, etc.

Many others including large selections of comics such as Comic Cuts, Chips, etc. Thousands of Annuals and hardbacks.

Visitors very welcome almost any time, but please advise first.

Very good prices paid for collections, Old Boys' papers, Comics, Film Mags., Annuals, Hardbacks, Children's.

NORMAN SHAW

84 BELVEDERE ROAD

UPPER NORWOOD

LONDON, S. E. 19 2HZ

Nearest Station B. R. - Crystal Palace

Phone 01 771 9857

STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

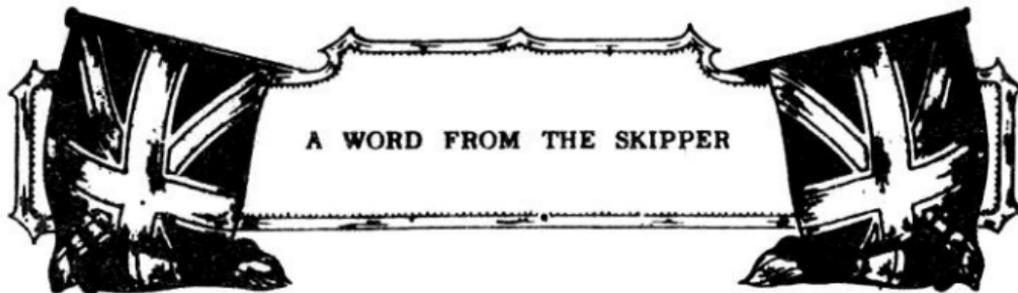
Vol. 29

No. 342

JUNE 1975

Price 17p

(This magazine is privately circulated. The reproduction of the contents, either wholly or in part, without written permission from the Editor, is strictly forbidden.)



A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER

ARCHIE

Richmal Crompton and I were lunching together a few years ago, and we were talking about her various characters who had associated with William down the years. I think I rather startled her by mentioning that I did not like Archie.

Archie Mannister was an impecunious artist of the hippie type, and he featured in many of her stories after the war. He was very much a character of the post-war era, which was perhaps why he did not appeal to me. It is, in fact, curious how so many writers build an established pattern and then, unconsciously, wreck that pattern which loyal readers have grown to love.

I never knew much about the Jack, Sam and Pete stories, but I have heard from many who liked them that they were spoiled, in later days, by a character, Algy, who was attached to the three comrades.

One of the most astonishing examples of this type of thing was found in the Gem in the late twenties when a substitute writer added a tedious character named Hancock to the Terrible Three, and wrote of Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, and Hancock, the chums of Study No. 10. The drawback of long-running series, whether in the old papers or on television, is that readers or viewers are offended when changes are made.

One has to go back to the twenties and thirties, of course, to find the best of William, though I could not make that point to dear Richmal Crompton. She probably knew it, in any case.

In the changing world, in which things seldom changed for the better, William was less of a lovable young scamp and more of a juvenile delinquent. He was the centre of adventures with the Outlaws, and with Ginger in particular, while his real charm was in the effect he had on adults. In the last few William books a welter of juvenile conversation replaced the subtle and delicious asides of the writer. A constant repetition of what the writer thought was contemporary slang became a bore.

Luckily for us there is a wealth of Richmal Crompton for us to enjoy from the days before the Hitler war destroyed so much that was dear to us.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ON

On 7th June, our Northern Club is celebrating its Silver Jubilee. How we would have loved to be with them on that great occasion! Unfortunately, for so many of us, the distance is considerable and fares are a big factor in these depressed days. But they can be assured that we shall be rejoicing with them in spirit and giving thanks in our hearts for all that the club has meant down the years and still means today.

As with London and with all our clubs, there are a few who were there right from the beginning, whole others among today's leading lights have joined the club at varying boarding stages down the years. In a changing world, the clubs remain unchanged and still loyal to their

first ideals.

Hats off and three cheers for our club at Leeds. And may the second twenty-five years be every bit as good as the first quarter-century.

MERSEYSIDE

While on the subject of clubs, I recall that we used to have a thriving branch at Liverpool. Mr. Bert Hamblet, of Hoylake, tells me that he and a small number of hobby enthusiasts meet at quarterly intervals, and they would like to increase their numbers. If any readers in the Liverpool area would care to take part in these activities, they should write to Mr. Hamblet, care of Collectors' Digest, and we will see that all letters are forwarded to him.

THE SPEED OF THE TURTLE

Last month, owing to a printing error in our letter-bag column, we caused a reader to refer to "seal mail" instead of "sea mail". Perhaps, considering the time it takes a letter to reach Australia or New Zealand in this brave new world, it was not inappropriate, though maybe "turtle mail" would have been even more fitting.

Speaking of printers' errors, have you noticed what a glut of them there is every day in the national press, particularly in the so-called quality papers? Never were so many mistakes made by so many. It is astounding when one reads, among the errors, that the newspaper industry is heavily over-manned. Don't any of the over-manning brigade do proof-reading?

I have often commented on how very seldom one found a printing error in the old Companion Papers. Standards have slipped deplorably as the labour force has increased. Or so it seems to me.

SO SOFT!

Scores of readers who write to me during the course of a month send their best wishes to Mister Softee and enquire after his welfare. For some months now he has not been very well, though he will be on top of the world for a day or two before he slumps again. Just what the trouble is we cannot say. The vet, who at first wondered whether he might have been poisoned, is now inclined to think that it may be kidney

trouble. At any rate, our chunk of whiteness is receiving plenty of attention, and we hope for the best. For a few days we thought we were going to lose him, but just at the moment he has perked up again, is eating well, and is so affectionate.

I came on the following verse recently - a prayer for animals. It's soft - but I liked it. I hope that some of you will like it too.

"God help my pets who look to me,
For food and drink and company.
They cannot live without our care,
They cannot speak to say a prayer.
So bless them, Lord, for they are dumb,
And bring them home when Kingdom come."

SO SORRY!

To keep us more or less paying our way, the price of C. D. must rise by another penny from next month's issue. I am so sorry about it, and can only hope that readers will understand, and that the time will come when costs and prices and overheads start to go down instead of up.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

Danny's Diary

JUNE 1925

The story about Mr. Greely and his Manor House School has continued and ended in the lovely series in the Boys' Friend. The first tale of the month was "The Limit". Dr. Chisholm has put the new school out of bounds for Rookwooders. The Fistical Four try to stop Mornington from visiting the Manor House, and the Head comes on them and, mistaking their intentions, gives them a severe punishment. And that is the limit for Jimmy Silver & Co. They, too, leave Rookwood and join the Manor House.

In "Rookwood's Rival", Mr. Greely finds difficulty in maintaining discipline in his new school. Mornington makes himself a nuisance,

while Hansom, as the son of the founder, thinks that he is entitled to special privileges.

Last of the series is "Back to Rookwood". There is a glorious scene in which Mr. Greely clashes with Sir George Hansom who insists on interfering in the running of the school, and is very cold indeed to the new Head when he learns that his son is to get a flogging for throwing his weight about. When Dr. Chisholm holds out the olive branch, Mr. Greely is thankful to accept it and meet his old boss half-way - and a splendid series is over.

Last of the month was "Gunner's Discovery". A very startling discovery, in fact; that a fearful old tramp is Mr. Dalton's brother. And Gunner fancies that he may get some special privileges on account of keeping the secret. The tramp has been pulling Gunner's leg, and the series will carry on next month.

It has been a very hot month. 11th June was a record with the temperature reaching 87 degrees at Kew. It was a bit too hot even for me, and I'm as brown as a berry from sun-bathing.

For some unexplained reason both the Boys' Friend Library and the Sexton Blake Library have started again at No. 1. I wonder why they do these things.

Two excellent tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library. No. 5 is "The Greyfriars Caravanners" which is more about tracking criminals than caravanning. It introduces Jack Drake, who carries a revolver in his hip-pocket. No. 6 is "Captain of the Fourth", a good Rookwood tale concerning one of those feuds between Jimmy Silver and Mornington.

First Magnet of the month was "The Rival Ruckshops", a rather daft affair. The Head closes down the school shop, so Fishy opens one, and the Famous Five try to run another. Then "Alonzo the Slogger" in which Todd becomes possessed of amazing strength and even attacks Mr. Quelch. Alonzo has sent for some special medicine, but accidentally the firm has sent him a special tonic for dray horses.

Then a new series by the real Frank Richards, and in the opening tale Bunter comes across "Ragged Dick" who is tramping the roads with a gipsy tinker. But Ragged Dick renders a service to Sir Henry Compton whose grandson has just died. Sir Henry has a rogue for a nephew, and, to stop the nephew inheriting, the baronet plots that Dick shall take the

grandson's place. In "Ragged Dick at Greyfriars", Dick finds that there is somebody there who knew him as a vagrant. Good dramatic series, and it will continue next month. It rather reminds me of the Len Lee series in the Gem last year.

The Nelson Lee started with a holiday story, "Wembling at Wembley", in which the pals go to the great Exhibition. Handforth falls in love with a pretty waitress until he is cured when he sees her pushing a pram. Then a novel and entertaining new series, the opening tale of which is "The Scouts of St. Frank's". A lot of St. Frank's was destroyed in the explosion at the end of the last series, and the governors were planning to send small squads of juniors to other schools. However, the juniors persuaded Sir John Brent to let them all go under canvas for the term. Before they can do that, they have to become scouts. Their scoutmasters are Nelson Lee and Mr. Beverley Stokes.

The camp is on the Downs near the sea. Handforth's patrol is "The Tiger Patrol", the title of the next story. The "tigers" get mixed up with Captain Jonas Starkey and his sinister schooner, the Lotus. Final of the month is "The Spectre of the Sea" in which there is a ghost in Pirate Cover and the camp seems to be haunted. Nelson Lee fancies that someone is anxious to drive the camp away from the area. It's all exciting and original. The series continues next month. There is a lovely series of drawings of public schools by the artist, Mr. Briscoe, in the Nelson Lee.

A General bus overturned at Dalston. One person was killed and forty were injured.

At the pictures we have seen David Butler in "The Arizona Express", which contained a spectacular train crash; Pat O'Malley and Mary Astor in "The Fighting Adventurer"; Gloria Swanson in "The Humming Bird"; George Arliss in "The Silent Voice"; Buck Jones in "Against All Odds"; and Baby Peggy in "Captain January".

In the Gem there were two stories about Racke's cousin, Walter Clegg, whom Racke tried to disgrace. They were "A Disgrace to the Shell" and the sequel, "Cardew Takes a Hand".

Then a marvellous series, starting with "Levison Minor's Plight". Mr. Selby has been gambling on the Foreign Exchange. He bought a ten thousand franc note for £200, expecting its value to rise. But the value

fell, and now it was worth only £110. Mr. Selby had confiscated Frank Levison's Holiday Annual. Mr. Selby slipped his French banknote inside the Holiday Annual. Frank took the book without permission; the banknote fell out; Racke found the banknote and posted it off to Mr. Lodgey who was dunning him over a gambling debt. In the second story "Levison's Sacrifice", Frank is to be expelled for stealing the note - and Levison Major confesses that he took the note. This series goes on next month.

It is an unusual tale with a novel plot, and most noteworthy for some truly splendid dialogue between the Head and Mr. Selby. It would make a lovely play on the stage.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 5 "The Greyfriars Caravanners" was rather an odd selection, being three stories from the 6-story caravanning series of 1921 - and they were the first, second, and fourth stories of the series. It is hard to see why the remainder of the series did not make up another volume of the S.O.L. S.O.L. No. 6 comprised two series of stories from the Boys' Friend of 1916.

It is interesting to see that Danny, this month, saw George Arliss in "The Silent Voice" and Baby Peggy in "Captain January". I did not know that "Silent Voice" had been made as a silent picture. Years later, George Arliss made a talking picture of "The Silent Voice", presumably the same story, though it was named "The Man Who Played God" in America. It was one of Bette Davis's earlier films. Shirley Temple, of course, played, years later, in a talking picture of "Captain January". I recall seeing it at the Palace Cinema, at Nairn, in Scotland, some time in the mid-thirties. A passing thought. I wonder who Baby Peggy was - and what became of her.)

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

By the time you read this little paragraph June will be here and many of you will either be on your holidays or preparing for one. I wish you all a happy holiday with lots of sunshine and plenty of time to lay about on sunny beaches and catch up on your reading. There are plenty of books in the Sexton Blake Library section for you to choose from. For your information 10 U.J's or their equivalent weight in S.B.L's or any other papers can be sent 2nd class post for 24p. The postage rates are fiendish. One would think the P.O. does not want to

do any trade in stamps, they discourage everyone from writing letters and sending parcels. But there, I suppose even 24p is well spent if one can enjoy the pleasures of our hobby.

IT'S ALL VERY SCARIFYING

by William Lister

(if there is such a word)

I wonder why we thrive on fear? Before the coming of moving pictures such authors as Edgar Alan Poe, Bram Stoker with his Dracula, and the author of Frankenstein, a woman, I believe, provided for the need to be scared. (The authoress was Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, wife of the Poet Shelley - J. P.)

The coming of the cinema especially the "talkies" took these tales and injected them with real-life thrills. Early in the year 1931, droves of we teenagers as well as "oldies" visited the Palace Picture-house at Blackpool, (now defunct) to see and hear Dracula. It scared us all stiff but we loved it and went later in the week for a second helping. The passing of time brought "Frankenstein" to the screen to say nothing of a few Edgar Alan Poe tales.

Since those days I have seen on TV a few of the old re-issues of these films. My hair no longer stands on end, for two reasons, one, by modern standards the films seem a bit "corny" and the second - I haven't much hair anyway now. This doesn't prevent me drawing up my chair, dimming the lights and seeing the latest TV thriller and here's hoping it makes my skin creep.

So you will imagine with what pleasure I picked up a copy of the Union Jack entitled "The House of Fear", 1928 vintage, No. 1306.

Now the kind of thrills that Sexton Blake and Tinker specialise in are of the dramatic type, not the "spooky" ones. If you want the spooky type tales to tickle your fear-buds then you need to read the Christmas tales of the "Nelson Lee" and the "Magnet". By spooky I mean ghosts and ghouls, skeletons and things that go bump in the night. Now Sexton Blake does not usually rely on the supernatural to provide the thrills, his fear-mongers are of the earthy type. So what kind of fear will the "House of Fear" provide - on the old maxim "any kind of fear is better than none" we will investigate.

Well now, from the moment of opening the front door and

stumbling over the butler's dead body there are some queer goings-on in this house, if you will allow me to say so. Pick yourself up, open the dining-room door and you will find the table laid with a half-eaten meal for two and (shades of Goldilocks and the Three Bears and Whose been sleeping in my bed) if you care to follow Blake upstairs to the bedroom you will find the rigid form of a young woman lying on the bed.

I know in these days death is a more common-place public thing than it was in 1928. By car, bomb, hi-jacking or mugging, etc., we have an increase in the death toll, but back in 1928 to see a dead body lying around could give one the "willies" so to speak, and if you've never had the "willies" you don't know what you are missing.

Around the 1921 - 1922 at the tender age of 10, I went with a school-friend to his house in the hopes of doing a "swap" with some comics. The front door opened straight out onto the street, no garden, but it was locked. A bedroom window was open, little John climbed the drainpipe and entered through the window. A piercing shriek and a second later he came flying through the door and kept running and screaming down the street towards the Police Station, I followed. It appears he had found his mother dead, her throat cut, lying on the landing. I did not see her, except in my dreams, for weeks after. You will gather that when I enter a place like "The House of Fear" even if I am right behind my favourite detective, I get the atmosphere alright. However, back to the drawing-board. From the time Sexton Blake and his friends entered the house, found the murdered butler, the half-eaten meal and the lady on the bed, they had been watched by a strange figure in a black cape. Need I say more? To do so would rob any future reader of the "House of Fear" of the delightful feeling of the bursting out of his fear buds. But I will give you a bonus, here it is - the master criminal is our old rascal George Marsden Plummer and once again Sexton Blake pips him at the post.

A SNIPPET FROM DOWNUNDER

by O. W. Wadham, New Zealand

A perfect Sexton Blake.

Looking over some thousands of still photographs of old American motion picture films made before the early 1920's, I chanced on a very good picture of the star actor William Gillette who was appearing in a

Sherlock Holmes film. The year was 1916 - a long time ago.

The film was quite a sensation in America, and I presume, here in England. William Gillette was a perfect Sherlock Holmes and looked every bit like Sexton Blake. What a pity he was not chosen to play the part of Sexton Blake in the few films made of his adventures. He would have made a perfect character, and who knows, maybe we would have had prestige films made of Sexton Blake such as have been done for Sherlock Holmes.

A SUBSTITUTE AUTHOR

by S. Gordon Swan

Early issues of the Penny Pictorial contain several items of interest about the authors of stories in the old periodicals. Number 319 of this excellent little magazine, dated 8th July, 1905, relates an anecdote involving two novelists, one of them a Sexton Blake writer.

D. H. Parry was noted chiefly for his historical tales, many of which, under the pseudonym of Morton Pike, dealt with Robin Hood and his Merry Men of Sherwood. Nevertheless, in the first decade of the twentieth century, Parry wrote a handful of stories of Sexton Blake which were published in the Union Jack.

The other author in question was Max Pemberton, who rose to fame with the publication of "The Iron Pirate" in the first volume of Chums, 1892/3. The particular anecdote in the aforementioned Penny Pictorial concerns this famous story.

When the first instalment had appeared in Chums, Max Pemberton was stricken down with a bad attack of influenza and was unable to carry on writing. As the fourth instalment was due at the printers, Pemberton called in a friend of his -- D. H. Parry -- and asked him to write the instalment for him. Parry obliged and Pemberton was amazed at the manner in which his substitute copied the original author's style and characters. Before the novel was published in book form Pemberton had re-written the instalment.

An interesting question arises from this little-known incident. "The Iron Pirate" was reprinted in Chums, Volume 35, 1927/8. Was this the original narrative containing D. H. Parry's contribution, or was it Max Pemberton's revised version?

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

"MORE PROGNOSTICATIONS OF E.S.B."

Looked up by
C. H. Churchill

The Collectors' Digest of last August included in the Nelson Lee column a very interesting article by fellow Leeite Mr. W. Lister, entitled "Nothing New Under the Sun". He quoted several plots and incidents from old Nelson Lee stories which have occurred in real life some forty years or more after they were "invented" by E. S. Brooks.

He gave an account of "Parcel Bombs" from the Nelson Lee New Series of November 1929. I see that there was an earlier affair of this sort related in OS 311, May 1921, entitled "The Hounds of the Tagossa". In this very good story a parcel bomb disguised as a box of cigars was sent to Nelson Lee. Captain Mason, the pilot of the ill fated airship "Suffolk Queen", also received one and many juniors received various types of "killer" parcels such as poisoned chocolates, etc. They were all despatched by Ivan Grezzi, a survivor of the infamous terrorist gang, the Tagossa, from Mordania. In their adventures there the St. Frank's party had been instrumental in defeating the Tagossa and restoring King Boris to power. These things happened, of course, largely through the skill and acumen of Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore. Ivan Grezzi had therefore attempted revenge by sending these parcels. Naturally this plan was brought to nought, mainly, again, by Nelson Lee.

The N. L. old series, especially the pre St. Frank's stories, contained many instances of "foresight" shall we say, by E. S. Brooks. Examples are the helicopter and the midget submarine. The latter became well known during the last war and now helicopters are a common sight in the sky today. E. S. B's early helicopter was really an aeroplane that could hover as described in OS No. 104, "The Hovering Peril". It did not, of course, have the overhead revolving blades we see today.

In OS 375, we had "The Golden Rover" a gigantic aeroplane for those days. Who could have imagined in 1922 that planes of this size and bigger would one day be travelling the world in all directions in their hundreds as they do today.

Coming to space travel, we had that famous N. L. serial "In

Trackless Space" by Robert W. Comrade, which was afterwards reissued in the B. F. 4d. Library. In this a party of people travelled to the Moon, Mars and Venus and returned safely. The Moon we were told was all rocky with strange monsters, Mars was all brown and Venus was all white with milk coloured seas! Perhaps our present day space travellers will, in due course, discover all these things to be true. Who knows?

HEIGHTS OF DRAMA

by R. J. Godsave

It is rather a risk for an author of weekly school stories to introduce death into his writings. At the age of 10 - 16 years death is one of those happenings in the so distant future that it has little impact on the majority of readers. It does, however, give the author an opportunity to rise to the heights of drama which in the case of E. S. Brooks made the series relating to the death of Walter Church outstanding. 1st New Series, 72-80 Nelson Lee Library.

It is well known that a person can be in a state of coma which so resembles death that even medical men have been deceived. In the story written by Brooks the great knowledge of poisons and their antidotes possessed by Nelson Lee enabled him to bring Church out of his trance by the prompt administering of the antidote.

At one period of the series the reader is told that Walter Church had died and they had no reason to believe otherwise. Whether the shock of being told of his chum's death could cause a mental aberration to Handforth is open to question, but it is difficult to understand why he did not accept Dr. Brett's verdict, made in good faith, as Church had been very ill for some days. At that moment he did accept the fact that Church was dead, although shortly afterwards he informed McClure that he did not believe that Church was dead. A settled conviction had come upon him that Church was alive.

Strangely enough, Handforth was correct as Walter Church was in a state of coma due to being poisoned by a rare South American poison discharged on a splinter through a blow-pipe by the high priest of a sect who had a grudge against the Church family, and had been responsible for the death a few years earlier of Church's uncle.

Brooks having built up the character of E. O. Handforth as an obstinate and self opinionated person could not have written this series

with any other junior as a centre piece with the exception of Arnold McClure. Any other character but Handforth would have accepted the medical verdict and that would have been the end of the dramatic part of the series.

In many ways Handforth proved to be a great asset to Brooks in the later Nelson Lees than when he was first introduced in o. s. No. 112 as being somewhat of a clown.

* * * * *

CHESS - & CHARLES

by W. T. Thurbon

May I raise a side line? How good a chessplayer was Charles Hamilton?

I was never a strong player, and gave up serious chess when the war began. After my ten year old grandson, and my daughter for the first time in her life, beat me at Xmas 1973, I dropped it entirely, but have recently been inveigled back into the game by an office colleague, and it set me wondering about C. H. There is, of course, the famous photograph; and many references to the game, particularly in the Gem, where Manners was the chess champion. But I only know one Gem entirely devoted to the game. That is No. 538, of June 1918, "The Champion of the Shell", and part of the long series of sporting contests between the Shell and the Fourth. Manners plays six Fourth formers simultaneously, losing only to Koumi Rao, and then plays three games against Koumi Rao, assisted by Levison, Kerr, and Redfern. After winning one, and losing one, the final game, which Manners wins, is played during a Gotha raid. I have been told that the series was by a substitute writer. I wonder if it was, or was it the real Martin Clifford. There are various chess references in the story. To Kieseritski and the "immortal game", and to openings including Ruy Lopez, Muzio (I should have thought even in 1918 an outmoded opening) and to the French Defence. I recently borrowed the number from the Northern Library, and tried to play through the score of the game, most of which is given in the story. I found it difficult, since one or two moves are not clear, and I think in one paragraph part of a line is repeated. Have any of our chess playing readers who know the story ever tried to play through the game? If so, what do they think of it? The last few moves are not given

and we are told Manners won on the 28th move. On the score as I played it up to Manners' 23rd move, the last given, it seemed to me that he then had mate-in-two.

But it would be interesting to know how good a player C. H. was, and I should be interested to hear from any other chess player who has tried to play the game through.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The long and dreary sports series was mainly sub-written, but Hamilton contributed two or three tales to the series. One of these was "The Champion of the Shell", and it was cleverly written. Hamilton was fond of chess, though I cannot say whether or not he was a good player. The chess board of the famous picture was given to me. I had it made into an occasional table, and it is a prized possession.)

* * * * *

THE FACELESS ONE by John Wallen

Only a handful of characters in Hamiltonian literature enjoy unanimous popularity. Even such personalities as Harry Wharton, Vernon-Smith, and the great W. G. Bunter himself, do not meet with universal approval, and indeed in some quarters are actively disliked. One of this select-- almost exclusive - band is Tom Merry, who has inspired the title of this article.

In my opinion Tom Merry as a character is overrated. That of course is a cynical calculated remark, and I must admit that my conscience was not entirely at ease as I write it down. We must however shake off our shackles and speak our mind.

Tom Merry is not an inspiring character study like Vernon-Smith, Bunter, or the much neglected Cardew. It would I think be untrue to say that Tom Merry as a character is any more distinguished than the glut of other "Form Captain's" from this period, created by Hamilton himself, and many other authors. I am sure that if I asked a reader to write a character study of Vernon-Smith, or Harry Wharton, he could fill sheet upon sheet of closely typed analysis. How far could the same person go if Tom Merry was his subject? Not far without padding it out, in my opinion.

The truth of Tom Merry is that since the grotesque situation of his Lord Fauntleroy like arrival, he has been the peg on which to hang the story. I do not deny that he has appeared in many fine tales, and

often played even the leading part. But rather than being an entity in himself his character -- such as it is -- is reflected in others. He is if you like the straight man, the necessary foil for the brilliance of others.

Tom Merry is of course very likeable. Just the sort of chap we would all like to be in fact. Strong, honest, sturdy, yes all of these, -- but oh so predictable.

As regards characterisation in general Charles Hamilton obviously felt -- like Rossini and his famous crescendo -- that one cannot have too much of a good thing. Tom Merry however is not one of his greatest works. Why then is Tom Merry loved by one and all? There is no single answer to that question. I think it has a lot to do with childhood memories. One remembers the stories that delighted so, and Tom Merry's well publicised name sticks. Memories too of well loved covers proclaiming new stories of Merry and Co. This in its turn recalls childhood days, and an eternal Summer.

In short Tom Merry is loved mostly from nostalgia, while other more powerful studies live in their own right.

* * * * *

Average £2 each paid for these comics:- Garth (1951), Tornado, Panda, Classics Illustrated Comic of Dracula, Jolly Western, Australian Jimpy Comics.

Following Comics and Annuals are offered for Exchange only:- some 1939 Hotspurs, many 1946 Beans, Super Duper No. 8 (1948), Playbox No. 684 (1938), Jester No. 1, 802 (1936), Garth in "The Last Goddess" (1960), Ibis The Invincible and The Book of Evil (colour comic), Wizard No. 896 (1940), Adventure No. 1042 (1941), Sun No. 2 (1947), Comet No. 32 (1947), Swift Morgan in The Lost World (1948), Swift Morgan and The Ancient Egyptians, Tales from the Crypt No. 40 (U.S.), Chatterbox 1925, Dandy Annual 1951, Knockout Fun Book, 1944, 1954, Donald Duck Book, Circa 1940, Tip Top Book 1939, Black Bob (1956), Lion Annual 1958, Kit Carson 1956. Write to -

DAVE GIACARDI, 12 PATHFIELD ROAD, LONDON, S.W.16

* * * * *

WANTED TO PURCHASE: Boys' Friend 4d. Library; U.J.'s with Confederation Stories; Aldine Buffalo Bill Novels; Bullseye Library; Amal. Press Rocket 2d.; Chips; Comic Cuts; Pink Boys' Realm; Green Boys' Friend; B.O.P. Annual with serial "Living It Down, or Under a Shadow".

Scouts Annuals for 1927, 1928, 1931, 1932, 1933.

List of available numbers, condition and prices to:

ROBERT STOREY, 34 ABERDEEN CRESCENT, BRAMALEA, ONTARIO, CANADA, L6T 2P9.

Come Back Fifty Years to Continue Your Summer Term at good old Rookwood School.

LOVELL'S REVENGE

Jimmy Silver & Co. were sympathetic. Most of the Classical Fourth were sympathetic.

So far as sympathy went, Lovell was comforted in his affliction.

Unfortunately, any amount of sympathy, however sincere, did not make it possible for Lovell to sit down that morning with any degree of comfort. Like the young man of Hythe, who was shaved with a scythe, he did nothing but wriggle and writhe.

Third lesson seemed endless to Lovell that morning. He had always liked Dicky Dalton. Now he felt that he quite disliked him. Towards Mr. Greely his feelings could only be described as Hunnish.

Lovell was quite a placable fellow by nature. It was seldom that he let the sun go down on his wrath. Perhaps he was rather quick to take offence, but he was equally quick in forgetting all about offences. Now he did not forget. That hefty "six" helped him to remember, of course. When the Classical Fourth came out after third lesson Lovell was walking quite painfully. Indeed, Smythe of the Shell, passing him in the corridor, asked him if this was a new thing in cake-walks.

In the quad the Fistical Four came on some Modern fellows - Towle, Lacy and Leggett, and some more. They grinned at Lovell and told him to hold his shoulders up, and take his hands out of his pockets, and warned him that slacking and loafing deteriorated the character. Evidently, Tommy Dodd & Co. had told the story all

over Manders' House.

Lovell breathed fury.

"I'm fed-up with that ass Greely," he told his chums. "I shall never hear the end of this."

Jimmy Silver smiled cheerily.

"Keep smiling," he said. "The fellows will forget about it in a day or two - a jest never lasts long."

"I've had six from Dalton and I've had to cough up an apology to that priceless old ass Greely. And now I'm going to be chipped to death by those asses from Manders' House!" hissed Lovell. "I'm jolly well going to take it out of Greely somehow."

"Better let it drop," advised Raby. "You don't want another six from Dicky Dalton."

"Blow Dicky Dalton!"

"He was bound to come down heavy," said Jimmy Silver. "This has really given old Greely a pull over him, you know, and he doesn't like it."

"The old ass will be giving him advice about managing his form," said Newcome. "He will trot you out as an awful example, Lovell."

Lovell gritted his teeth.

"Meddling old ass!" he said. "I'm jolly well going to make him sit up."

That seemed to be a fixed determination with Arthur Edward Lovell, and his comrades wisely did not argue the point.

By the following morning Lovell

had given the matter so much concentrated thought that he had evolved a plan of campaign. Jimmy Silver noticed him grinning in second lesson, and he was glad to see it. For a whole day Lovell had been understudying that ancient king who never smiled again.

In "quarter" Lovell strolled out into the quad with his comrades, with quite a cheery expression on his face.

"You fellows on?" he asked.

"What, how, and which?" inquired Raby.

"Dicky Dalton's gone to speak to the Head," said Lovell. "A fellow can nip into his study and use his telephone."

"What do you want to use his telephone for?"

"Greely!"

"Oh!"

"That old ass is jolly keen on deppartment and things," said Lovell. "It hasn't occurred to him that he's in need of any instruction himself. Well, he's going to have some."

Lovell's chums looked mystified.

"Come along," said Lovell. "Dicky Dalton will be with the Head now, and you know the old boy won't let him off under a quarter of an hour. We've got the whole quarter. Come on!"

Lovell led the way, and his comrades followed him in rather a gingerly manner. Lovell marched into Mr. Dalton's study, and with some hesitation his friends followed him in. It was probable that Mr. Dalton was safe with the Head for a time, but ---

Lovell did not allow for "buts". He took a slip of paper from his pocket and sat down to the telephone. On the slip of

paper were a number of names and addresses, with the telephone numbers opposite them, apparently selected and copied out of the local telephone directory.

Lovell rang up the exchange, while his chums stood uneasily watching him. Jimmy Silver kept the door ajar, with one eye on the corridor.

"Latcham, 101," said Lovell into the transmitter. A few moments later: "Is that Latcham, 101 - Purkiss' Academy of Dancing and Department? Can I speak to Mr. Purkiss? It's rather important."

The Co. gazed at him in wonder. What business Lovell could possibly have with Purkiss' Dancing and Department Academy at Latcham was a deep mystery to them.

"Good-morning, Mr. Purkiss!" Lovell, to the further surprise of his chums, was speaking now in a deep bass voice, obviously to give Mr. Purkiss the impression that a man, not a schoolboy, was speaking to him. "I understand from your advertisement in the 'Coombe Times' that you are prepared to call and give personal instruction in deppartment. Could you make it convenient to call this afternoon? Mr. Greely - Horace Greely - Rookwood School."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver blankly.

"The fact is, Mr. Purkiss, your instruction will - ah - be very valuable to me," went on Lovell in his deep voice. "My training has been somewhat neglected in this - ah - direction. No doubt we could arrange terms quite satisfactorily if you could call this afternoon. Would three o'clock suit you? Thank you very much. You will ask for Mr. Greely, in the School House. Thank you very much!"

Lovell rang off and grinned at his chums.

"You awful ass!" breathed Raby.

"Can it!" grinned Lovell, and he rang up another number.

"Mr. Montgomery Smith? Good-morning, Mr. Smith. I understand from your notice in the 'Coombe Times' that you give careful instruction in manners to backward boys. No, dancing lessons will not be required. But the personal training you allude to in your advertisement - exactly! Can you undertake to give the same instruction to a man of middle age? Yes, yes; Mr. Greely, Fifth Form-master, at Rookwood School. No doubt you are surprised, Mr. Smith, but you will allow that I know my own business, and it unfortunately happens that my training has been very much neglected in this direction. It is never too late for improvement, you will agree --"

"Lovell!" gasped Newcome.

"Shut up, you ass!"

"But, you dummy --"

Lovell gave his chums a glare and went on:

"This afternoon, at half-past three, if you can arrange it, Mr. Smith. If you

will give me this afternoon some instruction, we can then discuss terms for a whole course. Thank you very much! Half-past three. You will ask for Mr. Greely, in the School House. "

Lovell rang off again.

He looked at his paper, evidently for another telephone number. Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome fairly hurled themselves upon him and dragged him away from the telephone.

"Let go!" howled Lovell.

"You frabjous ass! You've done enough already to get you bunked from Rookwood," gasped Jimmy.

"I don't care. "

"Well, we do! 'Nuff's as good as a feast, or better. This way!"

"Leggo!"

"Bring him along!"

Three determined youths hooked Lovell out of Mr. Dalton's study. Arthur Edward resisted all the way down the passage, but he had to go. The opinion of his comrades was that he had done enough, if not too much.

(CONTINUE YOUR TERM AT ROOKWOOD NEXT MONTH)

REVIEWS

THE GREYFRIARS COWBOYS

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker: £3.20)

The Texas series of 1938 is not really out of the top drawer of Hamilton travel series, though it has its moments, and is notable for some extremely pleasant descriptive passages. Set mainly in the vicinity of Packsaddle, where Mr. Vernon-Smith is the rather unlikely owner of a ranch, it sets one's thought racing back to a little series of

western tales which the author had contributed to the Gem earlier.

The opening two stories have been featured in an earlier book, and this volume contains the remaining eight tales of the series. It really falls into two parts; the downfall of Barney Stone, the villainous manager of the ranch, and a chase of a thief in a flour-bag mask. Into the second part of the series comes the famous and lovable Rio Kid and his old enemy, Mule-Kick Hall. Unfortunately, though their starring is novel, the Rio Kid is a complete anachronism on the same stage as the Greyfriars boys. In addition, the series is not really helped by the fact that the boys, and particularly Vernon-Smith, are far too adept with a cayuse, a gat, and a quirt - and the Bounder is so callous that he grates.

Still, Frank Richards is never less than entertaining, and this one will get by easily enough. Plenty of people will adore it, I'm sure.

THE WORST BOY AT GREYFRIARS

Frank Richards

(Howard Baker: £10)

This is a beautiful book, a treasure for any dedicated collector of Hamiltonia. The story - ten issues of the Magnet from late 1924 until well into 1925 - the First Wharton, the Rebel, series - is, without any doubt at all, Charles Hamilton's most famous work, and, in many ways, a remarkable achievement on the part of the author.

For many years a pleasant pastime for enthusiasts has been comparing this rebel series with the later one of 1932. The second one makes happier reading - the reader is more in clover - but the first series, offered in this book, is more powerful and, in some ways, more adult. It is the most adult study of boyhood which Hamilton ever penned. Harry Wharton, in this story, is actually guilty of the conduct of which he is unjustly accused in the second series. Last autumn we reviewed this First Rebel Series in Collectors' Digest, when the series reached its fiftieth birthday, so there can be no need at all for us to say more about it here. It is sufficient to say that the Magnet came of age and gave a new dimension to the weekly school story with this superb narrative of the worst boy at Greyfriars.

The binding is splendid. What impresses me particularly is the sheer good taste which is evident on the covers. The glittering gold on the black cloth, the title embossed in gold with the author's name, and,

best of all, at the foot of the cover, the very description by which the series has been affectionately known to readers and collectors for years and years. A transparent and plain dust jacket protects the covers, and the volume is supplied in a black box which, while giving protection to the treasure within, leaves the spine, with the titling in impressively large lettering, on view to embellish one's bookcase.

This is a limited edition of 400 copies, and each individual copy is numbered.

It is a fitting setting for one of the brightest jewels in Frank Richards's crown.

* * * * *

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 15. SUBMARINE - AND THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

This term we played a wonderful film which I would include in my Top Ten of the silent screen. I happened to go one evening to Kennington Theatre (which was still silent) and saw Jack Holt and Ralph Graves in "Submarine". It was magnificent - a marvellous story, perfectly acted, sumptuously filmed, and wonderful, exciting entertainment. I knew at once that I must book it for the smallest cinema in the world.

The renters were F. B. O. (Film Booking Offices), a firm with which I had not previously done business. I booked "Submarine", and we played it with great success. Years later, it was re-made as a talking film, under a different title, but it wasn't a patch on "Submarine". Re-makes seldom are a patch on the originals, as I expect you have noticed.

Another F. B. O. film we played that term was "After the Storm" starring Hobart Bosworth, Charles Delaney, and

Eugenia Gilbert. I'm sure it was good. My memory of F. B. O. films, like those of P. D. C., was that one could always rely on first-class entertainment with them.

"She's singing to bring down the giant chandelier" screamed the Phantom of the Opera, as the Prima Donna sang on the stage. At least, the caption on the screen told us what the Phantom was calling.

"The Phantom of the Opera" which we played this term, starred Lon Chaney, Norman Kerry and Mary Philbin. It was a big production from Universal. It had been banned in Britain for years, and the authorities had just relented and lifted the ban.

"Phantom" was not banned for being horrific. The banning had nothing to do with the content of the film. It was the result of a publicity stunt played by some over-clever publicity agent in the Universal camp. I forget the exact

details, but it was something like this. A wireless message from one of the ocean liners informed Southampton that a very important person was on board, and asked for a very special reception to be arranged. A whole crowd of celebrities, including perhaps the Mayor and Corporation of Southampton, plus other people who were nearly as important as they thought they were, was waiting at the dock-side. The band played martial music.

Down the gangway came a number of people bearing a huge banner: 'The Phantom of the Opera' is now landing in Britain! And behind the banner came several uniformed people bearing the big can of film.

The authorities were not amused. In fact, they were furious, and questions were asked in parliament. The outcome was that "The Phantom of the Opera" was banned in this country, and lay languishing in the Universal vaults for years.

Now, at long last, the authorities relented. The film was released at long, long last - and we played it. Nowadays it might have got an "X" certificate, for Lon Chaney's make-up, when he was unmasked, was spine-chilling (though our audiences took it in their stride). But in those days there were only "U" and "A" certificates (years later they introduced an "H" certificate, for "horror"), and "Phantom" had an "A".

Also from Universal came a big documentary type production: "The White Hell of Pitz-Palu".

From First National came Colleen Moore and Lloyd Hughes in "The Huntress"; Corinne Griffith, Clive Brook, Lloyd Hughes and Louise Fazenda in "Declassee"; Ben

Lyon, Lya de Putti, Lois Moran and Mary Brian in "The Prince of Tempters".

From Gaumont British came Marie Prevost and Ralph Graves in "The Side-Show"; Rex Lease in "Making the Varsity"; Harry Peel in "Nerve"; Alf Goddard and Cyril MacLachlan in "You Know What Sailors Are"; the big war film "Verdun"; John Stuart in "Smashing Through", Brigitte Helm and John Stuart in "The Yacht of the Seven Sins"; Lars Hansen in "Homecoming". Some of these Gaumont releases were almost certainly UFA films from Germany. I fancy that "Verdun" was French.

Our serial was "The Indians are Coming", a 12-episode production from Universal (this was a talking serial of which we ran the silent version). We also started a delightful series of 2-reelers, collectively entitled "Ghosts of Yesterday". They were in technicolor and were Ideal films released by RKO-Radio. There were about ten of them, released at about three-week intervals so that they spread over several terms. No. 1 was "The Princes in the Tower", and other titles in the series later on were "The Man in the Iron Mask", "The Blue Boy", and "The Vanished Hand".

This term, too, we played three of the Micky McGuire Comedies from Ideal. These were good of their type. After completing a number of 2-reel comedies for Ideal, Micky McGuire joined MGM and changed his name to Mickey Rooney. Also from Radio we had a run of issues of the "Ideal Cinemagazine". Of the same type was the British Screen Tatler, probably from Gaumont. One Silly Symphony this term (from RKO-Radio) was "The Skeleton Dance". From MGM came only a couple of Charley Chase comedies (2-reelers):

"Tell 'Em Nothing" and "Forgotten Sweeties".

We had an occasional feature from a firm named Moss Empires. One this term

was William Powell and Clara Bow in "My Lady's Lips".

* * * * *

The Postman Called

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

MARGO RUDD (Canada): I would like to say how much my Father and I enjoy "Collectors' Digest". I am a special fan of "Let's Be Controversial" and "Danny's Diary". Although I've recently turned twenty-two, I still find enormous pleasure in re-reading particular Gem and Magnet series for the sixth and even seventh times. I will forever be a Charles Hamilton fan!

FRANCIS HERTZBERG (Wirral): The question of Magnet volume numbering - a similar problem occurs with the Strand in its last, digest size days in the '40's. Suddenly it started changing volume numbers anywhere, or so it seems, rather than in January and July as before; indeed the volume numbers printed as printer's references at the bottom of the pages are not in fact a reliable guide either; binding is certainly a problem. The volume numbers on the Eagle also, in odd issues, were widely wrong, but unlike the Strand, where there was in many cases no mention at all of the year of publication in the last issues, this doesn't cause much of a problem.

I agree with so many correspondents, that it is only the Magnet, and some of the comics of my boyhood (Eagle, Comet, Sun, Film Fun, etc.) that keep me approximately sane!

E. YEOMAN (Newquay): May I congratulate you on the wonderful May issue of C.D. Danny's Diary gets better every month, especially as it approaches the Magnet's golden years.

G. FINDING (Bedford): You might be interested in the enclosed cutting from our local paper.

You will see that it is an advertising gimmick by the Magnet Building Society. I spotted it yesterday and this morning I called at the office and was presented with five Howard Baker, Magnet reprints, Nos. 1350-53 and 1359 (together with building society literature of course).

The office had a bold window display featuring our friend Bunter and this presented an atmosphere which took me back quite a few years. All very interesting and very nice for free.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The cutting from the Bedford local paper contained an item concerning "the 2d. Saturday boys' comic, the Magnet". "I was out for a stroll", says the writer, "when I noticed the offer of free Magnets in the Society's windows. I told the young lady that while I did not wish to open an account with them, I would be very interested in obtaining one of the comics. She gave me six, which I have found absorbing reading." The writer commented that the offices of the Society are in a thoroughfare named Greyfriars, and that they did not seem to be aware that most of Bunter's escapades took place in the confines of Greyfriars School. Someone might point out to the happy writer that the Magnet was not and is not a "comic.")

A. W. H. LOYNES (Tewkesbury): In the 1962 C.D. Annual there is a short description of the Scottish writer of boys' books - R. M. Ballantyne. He came close to Frank Richards in my childhood affections. During the First World War we lived at Sudbury Hill and I ran up and down the lanes to a little R. C. School called St. Anselm's, at the bottom of Mount Park Avenue, Harrow-on-the-Hill.

On my birthdays and at Christmas I was given books by R. M. B. the first being "Martin Rattler" and in time, not only did I collect some dozen or so of his books, I also made a hobby of even collecting the titles of all of his eighty stories and knew them off by heart in alphabetical order.

Now, in the centre of Harrow is a steep hill road called Waldron Road. Over a high stone wall was a big mansion. When I was a boy, somebody told me that R. M. Ballantyne had once lived in that house. This sanctified it for me and I made many a pilgrimage to it, BUT - now that I have started on my 1914-1919 memoirs I have collected some literature to assist my memories and have acquired the book "Harrow Through the Ages" and this is what it says on page 172 - quote:-

"Robert Michael Ballantyne --- came to live in Harrow in 1885, and built the house known as "Duneaves" in MOUNT PARK ---"

It all came back to me, and filled me with chagrin. I had run up and down Mount Park Avenue four times a day for four years, literally thousands of times and "Duneaves" was the big house just beyond our

little school (which, sadly for me, was demolished under the pressure of "progress" half a century ago), in fact, the tall elaborate chimneys of Duneaves could plainly be seen through the trees from our playground, and it has taken sixty years for me to make this shattering discovery. I haven't been back to those parts since 1919.

Sorry to inflict all this on you but I feel sure you will understand when I saw the name R. M. Ballantyne in your Annual.

H. P. CLARK (Nuneaton): I noticed the following in an article by Vivien Bird, a feature writer for the Sunday Mercury, which has a large circulation in the Midlands.

"How lucky we were in the simple ethics of those two-penny school weeklies, where the cads and rotters who smoked behind the fives court never made the first teams.

"The Magnet was not my favourite - the Greyfriars boys were too prissy, or gross caricatures such as Billy Bunter. For me nothing touched the Nelson Lee Library and the St. Frank's boys."

I wonder what Hamilton fans think of this summing up of their favourite characters?

WANTED: Union Jacks, Union Jack Supplements (both before the year 1926); Sexton Blake Libraries up to No. 85, Third Series; early Champions; Nelson Lee Library up to No. 92 (old series only).

H. W. VERNON

5 GILLMAN ST., CHELTENHAM, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3192.

WANTED: Girls' Friends, Readers, Homes for 1912, 1913, 1914 - bound volumes preferred. Dreadnoughts. Bound volume of Boys' Friends - mid-1924 to mid-1925.

ERIC FAYNE

EXCELSIOR HOUSE, CROOKHAM RD., CROOKHAM, HANTS.

SELLING: Comrades, Young Ladies' Journal, Comic News, Funny Folks, Ally Slopes Half Holiday, Scraps, Snapshots, Varieties, Boys Of The Empire, Aldine Half Holiday, Youths Instructor, (1860's to 1890's). Chums, Scout, (1900's to 1920's), Gem (1 to 20, 1908), Knockout, Jingles, Radio Fun, Thompsons, Champion, Tip-Top (late 1940's). Also 1,000's original newspapers from 1680's to WW2. Send for full list.

ED JONES, 43 DUNDONALD ROAD, COLWYN BAY, CLWYD.

WANTED: Richmal Crompton's "William And the Pop Singers", "William The Masked Ranger" and "William The Superman". Also Schoolgirls' Own Annual, 1942, School Friend Annuals 1942, 1943; Golden Annual for Girls 1928, 1929 and 1939. Popular Book of Girls' Stories. Many pre-war issues of Weekly Girls' Papers still required. Also Schoolgirls' Own Library 611, "When Pam Came To Morcove".

MARY CADOGAN

46 OVERBURY AVENUE, BECKENHAM, KENT. Telephone 01-650-7023.

News of the Clubs

MIDLAND

The level of laughter and comradery in which we all share was as refreshing as usual at the April meeting. Eleven members enjoyed a delightful sentimental wallow in the dear dead days beyond recall.

Much pleasure was derived from the correspondence of the clubs invaluable country members and the anniversary number and collectors item supplied by the doughty veteran of the Midland OBBC, Tom Porter. The former was Magnet 742, dated 29.4.1922, 53 years old to the day. It contained a Greyfriars story 'Tickets for the Final' and the cover illustration was of the entrance to Chelsea Football Club (pre Wembley era) with a poster bearing the legend 'F.A. Cup Final: Preston North End v Huddersfield Town'. The collectors item was Tom Merry's Annual No. 1, published 1949.

There was a reading by chairman Warwick Setford from one of his own writings 'Wharton's Trouble'. A dozen copies of the Boys' Realm were on display for members to dip into and there was a raffle for a mint copy of Modern Boy, No. 231.

Another happy evening drew to a close with a game - as many names as possible from the phrase 'Located at Greyfriars, Kent'. Such was the interest and concentration that the study party was in danger of being 'locked in' at the usual rendezvous, Dr. Johnson House, Birmingham.

CAMBRIDGE

Meeting at 3 Long Road, on Sunday, 11 May. Bill Lofts welcomed new member, Dr. Doupe, to the meeting. The meeting heard with regret

that Harold Forecast had been in hospital and sent good wishes for his recovery. An interesting discussion on "horror" stories took place. The subject proved wide ranging - from early Marvels, Victorian "Bloods", Union Jacks and American Horror Comics through films and plays to Greek tragedy, "Dracula", Black Magic, to Edgar Allan Poe (several members recalled the "Masque of the Red Death"), Wells, G. P. R. James, Conan Doyle, Arthur Gray and others. Danny Posner recalled reading Sax Rohmer's "Brood of the Witch Queen" in a caravan in France at night during an electric storm. Sympathetic hilarity greeted Bill Lofts account of how he lent six "horror comics" for display at the House of Commons when the horror comic laws were under consideration, and two of these disappeared on the first day! (and Bill never got compensation). Danny said collectors were spending a lot of money on horror stories at present. Deryck Harvey recalled the eerie sensation of walking home through Edinburgh streets at 3 a.m., while reporting the Festival, through streets connected with Burke and Hare.

Dr. Doupe then talked about his introduction to the hobby, and about his Henty collection.

Danny produced a copy of the "Bessie Bunter" song from a 1924 Schoolgirls' Own and the club members sang this - not altogether to favourable comment from Deryck as Arts critic of the Cambridge News.

Bill Lofts produced a copy of the new life of Charles Hamilton, written by Derek Adley and himself.

Danny Posner gave interesting information about the hobby, arising from his shop. He had met a Magnet Collector at Tooting, who had commenced collecting when No. 1 of the Magnet was first published; he had also purchased a large amount of material about Collins Music Hall.

Next meeting 3 Long Road, on Sunday, 8 June. No meetings in July and August. New season starts in September.

NORTHERN

Saturday, 10 May, 1975

We met again in the shades of Monsieur Charpentier, that is, in the French set room at the Swarthmore Centre, where a poster looked down on us to announce the Cannes l'hiver!

REVIEW BY
ROGER JREVIEW

"THE WORLD OF FRANK RICHARDS" W. O. G. Lofts & D. J. Adley
(Howard Baker Ltd: £3.20)

"The World of Frank Richards" is a volume that has been given much advance publicity and it is something which many collectors have been eagerly waiting for. Whether the book will please or disappoint must depend upon the reader's own knowledge and viewpoint.

Most Hamiltonians will have already come across a good deal of the material before. Bill Lofts' articles in the S. P. C. a dozen years ago covered many of the points in Chapter 1. On the other hand, a number of items are new and interesting, while others, like the sale of copyright mentioned on page 71, will be new to some readers. But it is puzzling to see no reference to Charles Hamilton's own copyrighting of Billy Bunter, which obliged the Amalgamated Press to pay him for the Knock-Out strip during the war and which enabled him to introduce Bunter into Sparshott and other schools. Another omission is a complete list of Hamilton's addresses. We should also have liked to have seen a definitive list of all the schools he created.

The authors show no bias in favour of Charles Hamilton; indeed, they seem never to have met him, corresponded with him, or interviewed Miss Hood since his death. As a consequence, their picture is inevitably drawn from reminiscences of various Fleetway House personalities. The reader must form his own judgment about the reliability of this evidence, though it is clear that the authors themselves find it more convincing than anything Hamilton himself ever said. Perhaps they intend their book to act as a counterweight to the Autobiography, and this is fair enough, though it is less satisfactory to find little warm appreciation of the stories themselves. Some of the quotations they use have already been used by other people in their articles, and the comments on Clyde Cottage, Apple Trees, and Rose Lawn seem based on others' articles in earlier C.D.'s. The description of the books in Hamilton's library, referred to on page 107, comes from last October's C.D., and it is astonishing to see it worded in such a way as to suggest that the authors themselves did all this investigation. It would seem more generous to acknowledge what was taken from other people's researches. The customary habit of

acknowledging sources of information has been unaccountably neglected.

No special type-face is provided for the numerous quotations, and the production would have been improved with the use of glossy paper for the liberal supply of pictures. Certainly the volume will prove a useful reference book for those collectors who wish to have information assembled in one place.

ROGER JENKINS

MORE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BEN WHITER (London): Surely the May issue was the zenith of C.D. issues. What a superb number! The Chapman drawings on the back cover were lovely. The artist feature is excellent, and one of the most enjoyable items. The Small Cinema feature continues to thrill. The Syd Chaplin's "Charley's Aunt" film is easily remembered as one of the funniest silents I ever saw.

JACK ALLISON (Leeds): When I was a little lad my brother, Gerry, would command me to read Magnets he thought specially worthy (most of them), and then examine me to make sure I had thoroughly digested them and not done any skipping. To my mind it is no small tribute to Charles Hamilton that I still take pleasure in his works after this harsh introduction to them.

D. J. MARTIN (Southampton): My interest in school stories began before I could read when my mother read to me from her copy of "Betty's First Term" by Lillian F. Werill (1907 approx.). Another book that attracted me was "Well Won" another unknown and copy disposed of whilst I was in the army. "The Elcheste College Boys" by Mrs. Henry Wood is another title of the past that is worth re-reading. Perhaps you have come across some of these stories. They may be forgotten now but they prepared me for the Gem and Magnet when I was older.

O. W. WADHAM (New Zealand): In the Magnet dated 29th October, 1932, there appeared an advt. for a twopenny library that has not been mentioned in any Digest publication that I have seen before. Numbers 7 and 8 of the 'Boys Wonder Library' are mentioned. No. 7 being a football tale entitled, "On the Ball, Trojans" and number 8 "The City Under the Sea", a story of the strange people living in it. How long did the Wonder Library last after number 8? Any reader know anything about it?

The Bloodhound
from PARIS.

NO 9.



PAUL HARDY Famous Illustrator
of PIRATE adventure
and other Period episodes. Did a lot
for writer S. Walkey in CHUMS.



NO 10.
Thomas
Henry