

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOL. 30, N° 350 February 1976

**PUCK 1!** THE BEST COLOURED COMIC **POCKET-MONEY AND A TOY MODEL EVERY WEEK** **EVERY WEEK**



No. 350 Vol. XXXI

EVERY THURSDAY, ONE PENNY.

March 25, 1975

**ANGEL AND HER MERRY PLAYMATES ARE SEVERAL TOO MANY FOR JOE JINKS AGAIN.**



1. Angel and her playmates were in the kitchen when they saw the chef. They were all very happy to see him. They all went to the table and sat down. They were all very hungry and they all wanted to eat. They all looked at the chef and they all said, "We are all very hungry. Can we have some food, please?" The chef smiled and he said, "Of course you can. I will get you some food in a moment." He went to the cupboard and he took out a plate of food. He put it on the table and he said, "Here you are. Enjoy it." They all thanked him and they all started to eat. They were all very happy and they all enjoyed their food very much.



2. The children were all very happy to see the toy model. They all wanted to play with it. They all looked at the toy model and they all said, "It is very nice. We want to play with it." The chef smiled and he said, "Of course you can. I will let you play with it for a while." They all thanked him and they all started to play with the toy model. They were all very happy and they all enjoyed playing with it very much.



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20p

THIS MONTH'S SPECIALS

Gems. Special offer during February only - small format, 38, 39. Excellent  $\frac{1}{2}$  yearly bound Volumes. Have a surplus of these, selling Half Price at £12 per Volume. Single issues 50p each. February only.

Good stock of earlier Gems. 3 Vols. mint, green cloth, 1920, 21, £30 per Vol. Others, 1935, 36, 1937, 38, £24 per Vol. Over 3,000 single issues.

Just in! The Boys Magazine. 600 issues, 1922 to 1934. £1 each.

Haven't mentioned Nelson Lees last month! Very large stocks of these bound and unbound. Available now! The Charles Hamilton Companion No. 2, "The Greyfriars Characters". A must for the collector. £2.50 + 50p post.

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**Norman Shaw**

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# STORY PAPER

# COLLECTORS DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by  
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 30

No. 350

FEBRUARY 1976

Price 20p

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## The Man of the Wheel.

### QUEEN OF CRIME

With the death of Agatha Christie we have lost one who, without much doubt, was the most popular writer that the world has ever known. On more than one occasion in the past I have compared her appeal and her success with that of Charles Hamilton. It is fairly certain that we shall not see again the like of either of them.

Agatha, like Charles, wrote of the middle and upper classes. There was no squalor or grime in her tales. Her violence was muted and never

sadistic. In her middle years she had a humour and a gift for characterisation which have made her delicious, puzzling thrillers into classic of their kind.

The first Christie I ever read was "Ten Little Niggers". I

found it wonderfully original and a superb feast of reading. After that I had every Christie as it was published, and I set about getting her earlier masterpieces - not an easy task in those days before paperbacks were so prolific. For a long time now I have had in my bookcases every single story she ever wrote, even including a number of short stories which have been published only in America.

The short stories which the Americans can buy, and we can't, are mainly those which were later extended into full-length novels - and, of course, "Three Blind Mice", staged as "The Mousetrap" and now published under that name in America. Incidentally, it is very far from being one of the best Christie shorts.

My own favourite Christie is "Five Little Pigs" which strikes me as so clever because Poirot solves a 16-year old murder. I like "Cards on the Table" because there are only four suspects. The one Christie weakness of too many characters in the cast does not apply to "Cards on the Table".

The best of Christie undoubtedly appeared in the thirty years between 1930 and 1960. Most readers would agree that the standard of Christiedom has slipped since 1960. "Ordeal by Innocence" was a clever and intriguing story in 1958, and, in 1959, "Cat Among the Pigeons" was probably the last really excellent Poirot story.

Though I always preferred Poirot to Miss Marple, it would be unfair to leave her out of this brief survey. I preferred the Marple short stories to the full-length tales of the dear old soul, but "A Murder Has Been Arranged" is a delightful tale with Agatha's old soul at her very best. There are others of fine quality.

I liked the Mr. Quin shorts, which introduced that lovable piece of characterisation, Mr. Satterthwaite, who was also re-introduced in several Poirot tales, not the least being "Three Act Tragedy."

Throughout the fifties I had a good deal of correspondence with Agatha Christie, and once met her at Wimbledon where they were giving the stage premiere of either "Ten Little Niggers" or "Death on the Nile" - I forget which.

The first Christie play I ever saw (about 1930) was "Peril at End House" at Richmond Theatre, which was some years before I read my first Christie book. Charles Laughton played the part of Hercule Poirot,

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and I fancy I enjoyed it, though my memory of it all is vague. Poirot, in fact, was rarely impersonated on stage or film, possibly because of the difficulty in presenting an acceptable version of the Belgian detective with the luxurious moustaches.

There have been, of course, plenty of Christie films, but the famous authoress, generally speaking, was not served well by the cinema.

The death of Agatha Christie has left a gap which will not be filled. But we shall go on talking about her work for a long time to come, and it is hard to foresee any time in the future when her books will be absent from the bookshops.

Stage critics - those clever trendies who shape so much of what is seen in the theatres - have never been kind to Agatha Christie. They slated "The Mousetrap" and "Murder at the Vicarage" and almost every play which she wrote. But the public, which knows what it likes, packs every theatre where the Christie plays are staged. Here's to the public.

### HARRY DOWLER

Harry Dowler, whose death we announced last month, had been a loyal and enthusiastic reader of this magazine right from the beginning. He was a friend of the late Herbert Leckenby, and they were of the same generation. Both recalled with pleasure the Hamilton Edwards papers. Harry Dowler's great interest was in the works of Maxwell Scott. He was a Nelson Lee fan, but not, for the most part, the Nelson Lee of St. Frank's. His modest collection contains Herald, Friends, and Realms, covering such famous stories of their day as "Birds of Prey", "Nelson Lee's Pupil", "Nipper's Schooldays", "The Great Unknown", and quite a few more of those old tales which delighted those who were young early in the century.

Harry Dowler was born in 1890 in Manchester, the fourth of a large family. On leaving school he started as a telegraph boy. He attended evening classes in commercial subjects, and later on ran his own commercial school. He met Annie at a social evening (and that was most unusual, for Harry was not given to attending social functions), and very soon Annie became Mrs. Dowler.

He was a keen sportsman, and won numerous prizes for swimming, a sport which he kept up till he was nearly eighty. In recent years he lived with his daughter, and enjoyed excellent health until last Autumn, when he seemed suddenly to have lost the zest for life. He died in November, and, at 85, he had had a wonderful life.

We shall not forget him, and the terse and pithy comments he often used to send along.

### TAILPIECES

I cannot resist giving space to two little items I have read this week. In my daily paper, Bill Travers commented: "If we're not careful, we're going to end up with miles and miles of concrete and millions of banknotes, and not a tree left." He has something there.

And in a local paper, a young man who landed up in court for attacking a policeman in a drunken brawl, was said to be a 23-year old fitter's mate, earning £90 a week. One wonders how much the fitter gets.

THE EDITOR

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### YOU'RE A BRICK, ANGELA!

On Wednesday, 18th February, on Radio 4, the BBC are transmitting a half-hour programme on the girls' fiction book which has been written by Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig. It begins at 4.5 p.m. and has the same title as the book. The broadcast is going out the day before the book is published.

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# Danny's Diary

FEBRUARY 1926

A good Rookwood month in the Boys' Friend. It started off with "A Friend in the Fifth", which continued the story about Bailey of the Fifth. Tubby Muffin found a letter which the senior had received from a bookmaker, and Tubby was blackmailing Bailey. Then Jimmy Silver

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took a hand, and Bailey was able to smile again.

"A Hero in Haste" was not particularly original, but excellent reading. Lovell and Gunner are hares in a paper-chase. Gunner insists on going across Farmer Barker's land, and he gets nabbed by the farmer and locked in a barn. He escapes, and rescues a little girl from a bull. And when the farmer arrives at Rookwood to make his complaint, it turns out he is there to thank the hero - Gunner - for the little girl was his daughter.

Then a new series, the first two stories being "Off His Game" and "Parted Pals". There is a row between Jimmy Silver and his best pal Lovell who is off-form. Lovell lets down the side, in a football-match again the Moderns, and Jimmy resigns the captaincy. And there are a number of candidates for that captaincy - including Lovell.

A couple of good tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library. One was "The Greyfriars Journalists" and the other was "D'Arcy of St. Jim's". Both are very old tales, but that suits me, for I always enjoy the older stories, particularly those about St. Jim's.

A giant new cinema has opened in the West End of London, just off Piccadilly. It is called the Plaza. The opening film is "Nell Gwynn" starring Dorothy Gish, and it was made in England. Dorothy Gish is one of my favourites, and she is living in England at present, and is now making another film over here, entitled "London", which will be released later in the year.

The big rebellion series has continued throughout the month in the Nelson Lee Library. This month's tales are entitled "The Flame of Rebellion", "The Iron Commander", "The School Without a Master", and "Loyalty Wins". Guy Sinclair is at last made to face his punishment for all the wrongs he did his schoolfellows and for blackmailing his Housemaster, Mr. Beverley Stokes. Mr. Stokes is able to vindicate himself when the final enquiry takes place. At the end of the series there is a new character, Mr. Noggs, who promises to play a big part in the next series.

The 4th Monster Library, price a shilling, is out. It is an early St. Frank's series in book form, and it is entitled "The Boy From Bermondsey".

Mum, and Doug, and I went to the Alexandra Palace one day to

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see a wireless exhibition, which was interesting, especially to Doug who is a wireless fiend. Then we went to the first house at the Wood Green Empire, and saw a new revue called "Irish Follies". The stars were Arthur Lucan and Kitty McShane who were both very good. It was great fun, and I laughed my head off.

At the pictures we saw Betty Balfour in "Monte Carlo", Hoot Gibson in "The Calgary Stampede", Harold Lloyd in "College Days", and Constance Bennett in "The Goose Hangs High". One of our cinemas had a return of that lovely picture "Way Down East", starring Lilian Gish and Richard Bathelmess, and I loved it as much as ever.

A very, very weak month in the Gem. In "Fatty Wynn's Folly", Fatty fell in love with a plump girl named Miss Bertha. In "In The Toils", Dr. Holmes has backed a bill for his nephew, Ralph Holmes, and is blackmailed by a Mr. Moses who talks about "monish".

"A Spectre of the Past" deals with someone whom Levison ruined in his old days as a scoundrel, and next week it had a sequel in "Scorned by the School". Someone named Snelson was out to get his revenge on Levison.

A very good Sexton Blake tale this month in the S. B. L. Entitled "The Impersonators", it is about Waldo the Wizard. Blake says that Waldo is a wonder man, the strongest man in the world.

There have been two big fires in the Stately Homes of England this month. It is so sad to see history and tradition go up in smoke in this way. Oulton Park in Cheshire was gutted by fire and five people died, and Benacre Hall in Suffolk was destroyed in another blaze.

The first story in the Magnet this month, "Back To The Factory Again", was a sequel to the one that closed last month's lot. Mark Linley has been expelled from Greyfriars, but Bob Cherry takes a hand and the foul deed is traced to Ponsonby, who is expelled now from Highcliffe. The next tale was called "The Hidden Foe". Pon lingers in the district after his expulsion in order to get his own back on the Greyfriars chums. At the end, Pon drops down into Pegg Lane just as a car is coming along. The car swerves to avoid him and goes over a cliff. And in the car is Pon's father, who is, of course, "an old gentleman". All the paters are "old gents". Pon dives in the sea to rescue his father, and the Greyfriars chums help. So Pon is forgiven

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all his evil deeds and goes back to Highcliffe.

In "Billy Bunter's Legacy", Bunter's aunt dies and leaves him £50 on the condition that he slims down to 7 stone. And Bunter is also left a weighing-machine, which he sells. But a condition of the will was that Bunter kept the machine, so he gets nothing. Fearful tommy-rot!

But the final of the month, "The Mystery of the Head's Study", was a dream of delight, and the first decent tale in the Magnet this year so far. The star of the story is Bunter's ventriloquism, and there is a delicious chapter in which he talks, through the locked door of the Head's study, in the Head's voice, to Mr. Prout. A real mirth-quake, this one.

There is a new Magnet portrait gallery, by Mr. Chapman, now running, but some of the drawings are pretty smudgy, and I don't think that many of them are all that good.

There is a new song out. It is called "Good-night, I'll see you in the morning." One of the dance bands on the wireless signs off with it late in the evenings. Doug has bought a H. M. V. record of Jack Hylton's band playing it. H. M. V. records cost three bob each.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S. O. L. No. 21 comprised chunks of two consecutive tales in the Magnet of early 1911. Entitled "The Greyfriars Journalists" it related how the new boy, Johnny Bull, started "John Bull's Weekly" and Billy Bunter came into competition with "Billy Bunter's Weekly". Considering the massive pruning, the tale was pretty successful. No. 22, "D'Arcy of St. Jim's" was a pruned version of two blue Gem tales of 1910, including an amusing sequence of D'Arcy in love. A couple of very pleasant S. O. L's.

It is startling to see that Danny saw the music hall stars Lucan & McShane as long as fifty years ago. Danny doesn't tell us whether they had yet evolved the magnificent Old Mother Riley & Her Daughter Kitty.)

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FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE for Magnets: many Annuals before 1940; also before 1955: Rupert, Granpop, Felix, Wilfred, Cinema Annuals; many Picturegoers 1928-1934. Comics, Biggles, Eagle, Magic, etc. Write your Wants.

BILL WATSON, OLYMPUS, SANDFORD MILL RD., CHELMSFORD, ESSEX.

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WANTED: the following copies of the Boys Own Paper: April, May, June, July, August 1942; January 1943; March 1951; January 1952; April 1955; February 1956; February, May 1957; November, December 1964; March, August, September, October, 1965.

J. W. DOUPE, 28 KING'S QUAY ST., HARWICH, ESSEX.

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

In spite of all those gloomy predictions about cutting down expenses I received over 100 greetings from home and overseas. I should very much like to read the story in No. 73 of "Pluck" mentioned in Mr. Swan's article. If anyone has a copy to spare or to lend would they please oblige me. There are so many of these early tales which eventually turned up in the Union Jack, or vice versa, it would be interesting to have them all tracked down. Can anyone also oblige with a short outline of the tale in Union Jack No. 500, to compare it with a Nick Carter re-write?

## THE HALF-NAKED TRUTH

by J. E. M.

Mr. Martin Thomas is not only a distinguished and well-remembered writer of 'new look' Blake stories, he is also a stimulating controversialist; and a stickler for hard evidence. In his article "Bare Facts" (December's CD), he firmly established that illustrations for the 'new look' SBL were not exclusively of "half-naked girls". However, in his references to older SBL and UJ offerings, he moved on to shaky ground - facts notwithstanding.

Surely it won't do to compare the subject of that old Parker illustration he mentions with the half-dressed damsels Mrs. Packman complained about? The semi-nude African girl Eric Parker drew so long ago for the SBL was presumably dressed (or half-dressed) according to the custom in her part of the world. Hardly a risqué or erotic figure, she is very different from some of those paler-skinned young ladies, often less than conventionally clothed, who urged their fleshly charms upon us from the 'new' SBL. As for that UJ drawing for "The Brute of Saigon" back in 1930, let it be known that Mile. Roxane is at least depicted fully clothed! Of course it is true that a number of 'old look' Blakian offerings were far from innocent (I wrote a brief note on this topic myself in CD 306), but can it seriously be denied that the sexual element loomed more frequently and more explicitly in the 'new'

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Blake than it did in the 'old'?

At this stage, it might be relevant to point out that many of us did not like the sex in Sexton at any period, though we were not necessarily repressed puritans on that account. For my own part, I welcome literary realism, sexual or otherwise, in the right context. But such elements are surely out of place in the Blake mythos. Like Sherlock Holmes, Blake is an essentially Victorian figure, even though little enough of the nineteenth century remained when he was created. To borrow a term quoted in a different connection in December's CD, he was in some senses an example of "Newbolt" man - one of those uncomplicated heroes from the age before psychoanalysis, sexual sophistication and all that. For this reason, some of us were as uncomfortable in the presence of a carnal Blake as we might have been had we ever encountered a passionate Sherlock in the arms of a scantily-clad Irene Adler!

Which brings us back to the 'old' - versus - 'new' debate. Despite a number of lapses into the torrid (and G. H. Teed was, perhaps, the leading culprit in this field), the 'old' Blake was, in general, a Holmesian figure of saintly purity. And, in general, so were the supporting characters. Even the crooks seemed remarkably free, on the whole, from sexual concerns. It follows, therefore, that most of the illustrations from that very long period were also pretty innocuous. Lastly, if Mrs. Packman's criticisms of the 'new look' graphics are too sweeping, what, I wonder, does Mr. Thomas think about E. S. Turner's comments on the subject in his famous Boys Will Be Boys? For Mr. Turner also found those later SBL covers "monopolised by frightened females, often in *négligée*".

## TWO FALSE CLUES

by S. G. Swan

On Page 31 of the Sexton Blake Catalogue, among the list of Union Jacks and their respective authors, there are seven issues against which is printed the note "Author Unknown". One of these is U. J. No. 832, "The False Clue", dated 20th September, 1919. This is a tale of Underground London, which begins with Tinker encountering two men who are trying to persuade an unwilling third to go with them and play cards for money. The reluctant one is James Collett, a weak-

natured jeweller, who frequently succumbs to the lure of gambling. When Tinker interferes in the affair he is knocked out for his pains and Collett is enticed once more into playing with his "friends", two cunning Jews.

Next we are introduced to Raynor Brent, a young engineer of Blake's acquaintance, who has invented a trench-digging machine which is being used to bore a new tube under London. It transpires that Brent is in love with Mabel Collett, the daughter of the man whom Tinker had met earlier.

Blake, Tinker and Brent meet Mabel Collett, who tells them that something appears to be wrong in the house of Mr. Lewin, the jeweller for whom her father works. On investigating, they find the body of Lewin in the basement, and nearby is a round, tapering steel bar, known as a triblet, used by working jewellers for shaping rings. This bar has Collett's initials on it and this is the false clue, for Blake does not believe Lewin was killed with it. But the inspector who is called to the scene of the crime is convinced Collett is the murderer.

In the course of the story the reader meets Jake Trucker, foreman of the boring job, who is in charge of the mechanical excavator, which he works on his own. The machine is halted by an obstruction, and Trucker comes upon a mass of fallen masonry which discloses a few steps of a narrow stone stairway, part of some ancient building -- the remains of a monastery, in fact. Mounting the stairs, he is startled to find himself confronted by the back of a modern safe. Proceeding further, he finds a shell of old brickwork which has crumbled in places, revealing a backing of wooden panelling, some of the latter split, so that he is able to see through into the room beyond. It appears to be a jeweller's workroom, where two men are talking, one Collett, the other his employer, Mr. Lewin. Jake hears Lewin speak of a collection of jewels worth half-a-million, and Jake, who before the Great War had been a crook, is tempted to return to his old ways by the thought of this vast amount.

He finds an opening into the cellar through a flagstone that revolves on a pivot and startles Lewin, who is now alone, Collett having departed. Lewin is holding a brilliant jewelled star and Jake is fascinated by it. But Lewin approaches him with a steel bar in his other

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hand and Jake instinctively hits him with the heavy brass lantern he is carrying. In this unexpected way did Lewin's murder come about; Trucker had not meant to do it, but once done it was no use repining. He looked about him for the safe containing the half-million in jewels, but could not find the front of it. He had no time to look further, but, replacing the flagstone, made his way out of the house, narrowly avoiding a girl who had entered and was calling anxiously: "Father!"

This is substantially the plot of "The False Clue" and it has been outlined briefly for a particular reason. In the subsequent events Blake learns from the arrested Collett that the safe is hidden behind a furnace in the cellar; but when he investigates he finds the safe gone from its place. Trucker, having stopped work on the boring project by alleging that a spring of water had flooded the tunnel, had enlisted the aid of the men with whom Collett had been gambling and blown the safe open. When bending over it he had been struck on the head by his accomplices, who fled with the loot but were captured by Tinker and Brent as they came along the tunnel. Trucker was near to death, but before he died he confessed to Lewin's murder and thus cleared Collett.

I have always believed this story to be the work of E. W. Alais as it bears the hallmark of his style. Now I can offer confirmation of this belief by directing attention to Pluck No. 73, dated 24th of March, 1906, which contains a story with the very same title, "The False Clue", by Cedric Wolfe, which we know to be a pseudonym of E. W. Alais.

This is a tale of Kit and Cora, the brother and sister detectives, and basically the plot is identical with that of U. J. No. 832. In this instance the narrative starts with Kit and Cora encountering a girl in distress who is searching for her father. In both cases the girl's name is Mabel, but her surname is changed. Jake Trucker is now Jake Cronter, an American crook.

The Union Jack in question is not a word-for-word replica of this old Pluck yarn of thirteen years before, with Blake incorporated into the story, but a re-written version; different incidents occur, but the main theme is the same. By comparison, I should not hesitate to assert that the second account is better than the original.

The discovery should surely establish the identity of the author

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of U. J. No. 832 beyond question.

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# Nelson Lee Column

"OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION"

by L. M. Allen

The price of the "Nelson Lee" was raised to 2d. on 26th November, 1921, but to maintain the sales the number of pages was increased by eight, to forty-four, and a supplement "Nipper's Magazine" introduced. This feature was gradually reduced to two pages, the remaining six consisting of reprints of Nelson Lee detective stories. The issue for 9th December, 1922, saw the last of "Nipper's Magazine", the whole eight pages being devoted to two detective yarns under the title of "Our Detective Story Section". All were reprints but the illustrations throughout the run of this supplement appear to be originals by E. E. Briscoe.

Another detective, Carfax Baines, replaced Nelson Lee with a weekly adventure, but the other series had no central character and, in my opinion, were originally written for an adult paper, possibly "The Penny Pictorial". They described Scotland Yard methods in dealing with various types of criminals. Other, but little known sleuths, replaced Carfax Baines, in turn the exploits of Mervyn Hume, Abel Link, Gordon Fox and Derek Clyde were offered. The stories were very similar to those appearing in the comic papers between 1910 and 1916, possibly some reader could trace their antecedents; for instance, Abel Link is very reminiscent of a former "Firefly" character, Abel Daunt, who was later resurrected in the "Bullseye".

Positive proof of reprinting, however, was evident when, in No. 410 of the "Lee", the first instalment of "The League of the Iron Hand" was published. Very rarely was the author's name given throughout the forty-nine numbers of the "Detective Story Section", and this was no exception, but it can be traced as a reprint of the Maxwell Scott yarn, slightly rewritten and condensed, entitled "The Iron Hand". This story first appeared in "The Boys' Herald" on 6th July, 1907, illustrated by Val Reading. Another Maxwell Scott serial succeeded

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this in the section. "The Silver Dwarf" followed by the sequel, "The Missing Heir". The Amalgamated Press paid the author what they considered a very large fee in those early days for the two stories, £175.10.0., which was about £5 an instalment. They, however, certainly reimbursed themselves, for both were reprinted at least three times. Originally published in the green "Boys' Friend", the story and sequel ran for thirty-six weeks, concluding 6th August, 1902. Both were reprinted under the original titles in the "Boys' Field" 3d. Library, No's 16 and 17. Then in the "Lee" supplement and later as three weekly numbers of the "Nelson Lee Library" 2nd N. S.

The last instalment of "The Missing Heir" saw the end of the "Detective Story Section" which was replaced by "The St. Frank's Magazine", a reversion to the old policy on the "Nipper's Magazine" principle.

#### COMENT

from J. W. Cook

With reference to Robert C. Blythe's article in the Collectors' Digest Annual I feel I must point out to him that it has been stated that "... Lord Dorrimore was not a wealthy man when he inherited his title, but owing to fortunate investments and discoveries of valuable properties during his wanderings, he has become a millionaire." (N. L. L. O. S. 20/2/1932.)

I must further point out an amended reference to Lord Dorrimore's apparent absence from the Forces that prompted Mr. Blythe to understand the reason. The amendment reads "... "Dorrimore himself recognised it (poison gas) as such for he had quite a lot of fighting on the various fronts." (N. L. L. O. S. page 10-430.)

Perhaps Mr. Blythe will now know how Dorrie got his money. And that Lord Dorrimore was in the Forces.

He remarks on the charmed lives of the St. Frank's holiday Parties. Surely we can forgive the chronicler for using his licence?

But if we are to remonstrate on charmed lives surely we must include those that appear on our television screens week after week after week!

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No. 132 - Magnets 1195-1203 - Tatters Series

How pleasant it is to open up a Magnet volume of the Golden Age! The superiority lies not in the production itself, though Shields's illustrations are never less than competent, but in the style of writing and the weaving of plots. All situations, all episodes are brand new; there is no repetition and never a feeling that anything has outstayed its welcome. The Tatters series, though not outstanding, shows all the consummate skill and artistry of this era.

The story begins as a postscript to the Cavandale Abbey series. Both the Famous Five and later Bunter come across Tatters, a boy in the custody of a wandering tinker named Wilson. It turns out that he is the grandson of Sir George Cholmondeley, who has spent vast sums searching for his grandson, Arthur Cecil, to carry on the family name and title. The other grandson, Cyril Rackstraw, hoping to inherit the money himself, has in fact paid Wilson to keep Tatters out of reach, but Sir George does in fact succeed in finding him in Magnet 1195. He is identified by a birth mark, and sent to the baronet's old school, Greyfriars. (As Sir George is also a governor, he is in a good position to force Dr. Locke's hand.)

Charles Hamilton was a great admirer of Dickens, but he held only contempt for Scott's characters. Nevertheless, it is strange how often he made use of the old Romantic theme of the long-lost heir, so beloved by Scott. The only unusual twist in the Tatters series is that the discovery is made in the first number. The rest of the series is devoted to developing the possibilities of the situation.

If the Tatters series had been written a few years later, the plot of each weekly Magnet story would no doubt have been identical: Tinker Wilson would have attempted to kidnap Tatters, and would be foiled every time. In point of fact, Wilson is soon arrested and sent to prison. Rackstraw renews an acquaintanceship with Carne, who willingly looks for evidence to get Tatters expelled, but finds none. He is then blackmailed into manufacturing evidence himself, but after a short time he refuses to go on with this villainy and Rackstraw has to look elsewhere. This is typical of Golden Age plots: they twist, they turn, they develop -

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but they never become repetitive.

Two characters are brought forward to play large parts in this series: one is Hurree Singh, who is the first to see through Carne's trickery. He tells Harry Wharton that he is older than Wharton, some thousands of years older with all the wisdom of the East behind him. The other character is Ponsonby. For several weeks he keeps up a running feud with Tatters in episodes that sometimes seems irrelevant and pointless, until eventually in the last number the clear motivation is provided for Ponsonby to play a major role in the grand climax.

It is perhaps a truism to say that St. Jim's was self-contained whereas Greyfriars needed an outside character in most series. It may possibly be more accurate to say that the prominent Greyfriars characters were fewer in number, and that they were kept that way by letting newcomers leave when they had played their part. Tatters was a likeable personality, but his departure at the end of the series was no great loss to the Greyfriars scene. What was important was the way the permanent characters had reacted to him, and in that formula lay the secret of the success of the Magnet.

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#### ARE WE TOLD TOO MUCH?

The Editor asked last month

Tommy Keen gives his view

There certainly was a charm in the aura of mystery regarding the authors and artists of the Old Papers (Your 'Chums in Council' - Jan. issue) of the 1920's, the decade in which I became an avid reader of Monday's "Magnet", Tuesday's "Schoolgirls Own" and "Popular", Wednesday's "Gem", and Thursday's "School Friend". To me Frank Richards was one person, Martin Clifford another, Hilda Richards I assumed must be Frank Richards' sister, and Marjories Stanton, who wrote the marvellous Morcove stories in the "Schoolgirls' Own", was an author apart. She was exclusive, I saw no more stories from the pen of Marjorie Stanton.

The Morcove stories were far deeper, and (in my opinion) more interesting than the school stories in the other papers, all of which I adored, and have often wondered if Morcove had been a Boys' School, how much higher in the popularity stakes would it have appeared? In

latter years, when I discovered that Marjorie Stanton was, in fact, a man, and that for awhile Hilda and Frank Richards were one and the same person, I was slightly disillusioned. Little did I guess however almost all the 'female' writers were men, and that Hilda Richards, Marjorie Stanton, Joy Phillips, Ida Melbourne, and Mildred Gordon, could perhaps all be one and the same person. So, by all the research made by W. O. G. Lofts and other writers, much of the mystery has faded.

The artists too had charm. To me, C. H. Chapman was real Greyfriars, G. M. Dodshon's Cliff House WAS Cliff House, and although Leonard Shields' drawing in the "Schoolgirls' Own" were superb, unfortunately every Morcove Girl (with the exception of Naomer) looked exactly alike. This was repeated with the boys in the "Magnet" when Mr. Shields began to illustrate the Greyfriars tales in 1926. With the exception of Bunter, they all looked identical, and of course this Bunter could not be compared with Mr. Chapman's famous W.G.B.

As you ask, are we told too much? Perhaps we are, and yet it is of course interesting to know some of the history of the people who gave us so much pleasure in our childhood ... in our youth ... in middle age ... and old age!

Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Cliff House (which however failed to exist for me when brought into the "Schoolgirl", this was not the Cliff House I knew, not even the "Magnet's" Cliff House), and magnificent Morcove. Even today their very names spell excitement, delight, and yes ... even mystery.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

from R. Rhodes

No. 205 - HOW LEGENDS ARE BORN

In response to the above article which appeared in Collectors' Digest for December 1975; the Northern Club member responsible for the talk upon Highcliffe School was myself and I would wish to comment as follows upon the two points made by the writer of the article which caused him to sit back and wonder. Firstly the quotation "Hamilton regarded 'Boy without a Name' and 'Rivals & Chums' as his best work"

is somewhat out of context - I cannot, nor would I, ever claim to know what Charles Hamilton thought; unfortunately I never had the honour of meeting him; the quotation is taken directly from the preface of the Museum Press re-print of the stories which was, I understand, written by John Wernham. This was made quite clear to my audience when the address was given. Perhaps I may be forgiven if I suggest that the only true yardstick by which an author's work can be judged must be the pleasure and stimulation which the work provides for the reader.

Secondly in the matter of the christian names of the two Highcliffe Masters, Dr. Voysey and Mr. Mobbs, I honestly cannot say where this information actually came from; it is quite likely and in fact probable that the source was not from the work of the maestro and could well be attributed to Pentelow's 1917 efforts. Much of my information accumulated before the war was simply a scrappy note without annotation or reference. In recent years I have tried to remedy this but so far I have no reference for these christian names. I think it also possible that I may have obtained it from the "Twins from Tasmania" serial. I do remember at the time I noted it that I felt somewhat peeved that an old dodderer like Dr. Voysey had my own surname as one of his christian names; that now seems such a juvenile reaction that I can only conclude that it was before the war.

The author of the Let's Be Controversial article does in fact refer to the preface to the Museum Press edition when he writes of a curious postscript to the item of controversy, this curious aspect is perhaps now explained when it is realised that I was quoting from this preface. I would, however, personally opine here and now that these two stories of Highcliffe have given and do give to me as much pleasure as any other stories by the maestro. This is purely personal and I do not ask anyone else to subscribe to this view.

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WANTED: Public School stories by Harold Avery; Desmond Coke; R. A. H. Goodyear; Hylton Cleaver; Gunby Hadath; Alfred Judd. Stolz, "Somatic Development of Adolescent Boys". 1920 Greyfriars Annual. Monsters; Chatterbox; Annuals.

JAMES GALL

49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND.

Our serialisation of one of the stories which put the author on the road to fame, seventy years ago. Before Tom Merry was created.

- MISSING -

Blake dashed in at the gates of St. Jim's, flew across the quadrangle, and darted into the School House. He had made a lightning run of it, and now he rubbed himself down and changed his clothes in record time. Then he put his head into Study No. 6 and called to Herries and Digby, and the three went down to the gates.

When Figgins & Co. arrived, hot and dusty, there was Blake awaiting them at the gates, cool and clean, in a nice Eton suit, with a sweet smile on his face.

"Hallo, you dusty rats!" he exclaimed cheerfully. "Have you been walking or crawling?"

Figgins glared at him. Blake had had the advantage of being in flannels, but he had really made a record run, and the New House juniors had certainly been "not in it".

"Perhaps they stopped to rest," remarked Herries. "Figgy looks tired."

"And Fatty Wynn looks as if he was going to melt," observed Digby. "Poor old Fatty! You shouldn't eat more than twelve meals a day."

"Oh, let 'em cackle!" said Figgins. "Anyway, there's one of your kids still in the wood. I left him in a thicket, and you had better go and collect him."

And the New House trio marched off to their own house.

Blake looked rather anxious.

"D'Arcy doesn't know the wood much," he said. "He was some distance from the footpath. I hope he'll get back in time for

callover."

"Let's go down the road and meet him," suggested Digby.

"That's a good idea. Come on!"

They sauntered down the road towards Rylcombe. They came to the spot where the footpath turned off into the wood, but there was no sign of Arthur Augustus. Blake looked at his watch.

"I say, it's calling-over at school. He can't have gone back another way, can he?"

"He may have come out of the wood at a different point," said Herries. "He may be at St. Jim's by now."

"We'd better go and see. It's too dark to start hunting in the wood."

They sprinted back to the school. The gates were closed, and Blake had to ring up Taggles, the porter. Taggles looked grim as he opened the gates.

"You'll catch it 'ot!" he said.

"Calling-hover 'as been finished ten minutes ago, young gents."

They marched into the School House, and the first person they met was Kildare, captain of all St. Jim's.

"Where have you been?" he asked, frowning.

"We've been looking for a lost donkey!" said Blake cheerfully. He jumped out of Kildare's reach. "It's a fact! I suppose Adolphus has come in?"

"Do you mean D'Arcy?"

"That's the identical individual I do mean."

"He's not come in."

Blake's face fell.

Kildare went on: "There were four missing at call-over -- D'Arcy and you three. I imagined that you had him with you, as you are always together."

Blake explained how he had parted company with D'Arcy. The captain of St. Jim's looked grave.

"The lad is lost in the wood," he said. "He would never find his way out after dark, if he had left the footpath. He must be still there."

The chums were silent with dismay. Although they were never tired of chipping the swell of the School House, they liked him, and the thought of his passing the cold night in the wood was disturbing.

Kildare was looking worried, too. He had had a cane ready, but he did not think of that now.

"Poor old Gussy!" exclaimed Blake at last. "Do you think the doctor would let us go and hunt for him, Kildare?"

"He will be searched for," said Kildare drily. "I must go and speak to the Head."

Kildare turned away. A thought came into Digby's mind. Blake had told his chums about the adventure with the gipsy.

"I say, Blake," said Digby nervously. "It isn't possible, is it. -- that -- that Barengro --"

Blake turned pale. In the excitement of the race with Figgins he had given little thought to the gipsy.

He ran after the captain of St. Jim's, and blurted out hastily the story of the adventure in the wood. Kildare's face grew longer as he listened.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed.

"It is possible that the brute may have hung about and found D'Arcy alone, and --" He broke off. "Come with me to the Head, Blake."

He hurried Blake off to Dr. Holmes's study. The doctor's face grew as anxious as Kildare's as he listened to Blake's account.

"D'Arcy must be searched for immediately," he said. "Please call Mr. Kidd. I will telephone to the police station in Rylcombe and warn them to look for the ruffian Barengro."

The Head promptly rang up Rylcombe Police-station. He had just rung off when Mr. Kidd came into the study. In a few words, the Head explained the matter to Mr. Kidd. The master of the School House showed by his look that he shared the Head's anxiety.

"I have heard of this Barengro before," he said. "He bears a bad reputation in the neighbourhood of Castlewood. He has been cast out by the gipsies, and seems to live by poaching and any rascality that comes his way. He has been in prison. I believe he is capable of anything."

"You will take some of the senior boys, Mr. Kidd, and search for the lad," said Dr. Holmes. "You had better take Blake, too, to point out where he left D'Arcy."

"Hadn't Figgins better come, too, sir?" asked Blake. "He saw D'Arcy last."

"Certainly, take Figgins, Mr. Kidd!"

In a couple of minutes - for Mr. Kidd was swift - the search-party were ready. Figgins, called out from the New

House, was glad to go. Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, came with him to join Mr. Kidd and Kildare. Monteith was not particularly anxious about the fate of Arthur Augustus, but for appearance sake he felt that he had better show some concern. The five seekers passed out of the school gates and hurried down the road.

"This is beastly, Blake," muttered Figgins. "I shall be awfully sorry if anything has happened to poor old Gussy."

"It's my fault," said Blake miserably. "I oughtn't to have left him in the wood. It was my fault."

"No, it wasn't!" said Figgins stoutly. "Hang it! I wish I hadn't shoved him into that bush now. But it can't be helped."

They crossed the stile to the footpath. There they lighted their lanterns. Mr. Kidd had an electric lamp, and Kildare and Monteith had acetylene bicycle-lamps, so there was plenty of light. They passed along the footpath, calling loudly to D'Arcy.

Eerie and grim was the wood in the black shadows of night. The shouts of the searchers echoed among the dark trees.

But no reply came to their shouting. Only the echoing of their own voices came booming back from the gloomy aisles of the wood.

They followed the track Blake had taken in his run. They reached the spot where he remembered that D'Arcy had fallen behind. They came to the bush in which D'Arcy had tumbled from Figgins' push when the New House junior overtook him in the race.

They hunted for traces of D'Arcy. The lights gleamed under the shadowy trees. Searching for footprints was almost hopeless. The grass was trampled here and there, but

the tracks were confused and indistinct.

The search lasted an hour. Suddenly Blake uttered an exclamation:

"Look here, Kildare!"

He was pointing to the ground. Kildare turned his light full upon the spot. It was a clear space, and there was a sharply-defined footprint in the soft soil.

"You think D'Arcy made that track, Blake?"

"Certain!" said Blake emphatically. "He wears awfully little shoes, you know. I'd know that track anywhere."

Kildare whistled, and the others soon joined him. The party took up the trail from that spot. The next discovery was made by Figgins. In another soft spot were the clear prints of two pairs of feet.

D'Arcy's tracks were easily recognised. The others were large and clumsy. Blake and Figgins looked at one another. The same thought came to both of them at once.

"Barengro!"

"You think those tracks were made by the footpad?" asked Mr. Kidd.

"They look like it, sir," said Blake.

"Whoever it is," said Monteith, "D'Arcy appears to have been walking by his side. That does not look as if he had been hurt."

"Quite so," assented the housemaster. "This is quite half a mile from the spot where D'Arcy was last seen by Figgins. He must have walked here."

"Perhaps the other tracks belong to someone who was guiding him out of the wood, sir."

"But they are not leading out of the wood," said Blake quickly. "They are pointing towards the thickest part of it."

Whoever he was, he was taking D'Arcy right into the heart of the wood."

They searched on, but it was in vain. Another hour glided by, but no further trace of D'Arcy was found.

With heavy hearts the searchers turned back to the school. They had a faint hope that during their absence D'Arcy might

have turned up there. But nothing had been seen of the missing boy.

There was little sleep that night for the chums of Study No. 6, or for Figgins & Co. over in the New House. Their hearts were heavy with vague fears and forebodings. What had become of D'Arcy? (More of this 70-year old classic next month.)

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## The Postman Called

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

CHARLES CHURCHILL (Exeter): The Annual as usual is great. I must say I thought "Madam's" article was absolutely first-class. Please tell her that now she has broken the ice we hope she will take the plunge again and write some more.

ALEX G. STANDEN (Stockport): "The Biography of a Small Cinema" is very interesting indeed - the first cinema I ever attended was the "Electroscope" on Tooting Broadway about 1916, the serials being "The Broken Coin" with Francis Ford, Grace Cunard and Eddie Polo, and "The Girl From Lost Island", a serial which nobody seems to remember.

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross): Many thanks for another grand feast of reading in the good old CD Annual for 1975. Henry Webb's jolly cover brought a smile for a start with his Bunter expression so reminiscent of Mr. Chapman in some of the HA illustrations from the 20's.

What a charming idea to have Madam write a "pet" story for this Annual. You'll have to get after her to start thinking about another for the Pearl Jubilee Annual next year.

Roger's chases in search of copies of our favourite old papers were an eye-opener and the early crooks connected with the hobby were interesting to read about.

N. M. KADISH (Edgware): I have greatly enjoyed the latest episode in the saga of Mr. Buddle - that unassuming but very perspicacious pedagogue - in the Annual of recent date. It seems to me that it would be a good idea to collect all these stories in a single "Buddle" book for

the future delectation of his admirers.

L. HOLLAND (Oldham): The memory of the circumstances in which I became an ardent Magnet reader will stay with me till the end of my days. I was under nine years old when I contracted scarlet fever, and I was isolated in my bedroom for some weeks, which was quite irritating once the fever had passed. Up till that time I had been a reader of the weekly comics: Funny Wonder, Chips, Comic Cuts, Tiger Tim's Weekly, etc. One day my mother came into the bedroom and dumped on the bed a small pile of books, a gift from my older cousin. They were Magnets. I started to read the earliest one - No. 1142, "The Artful Dodger". Immediately I was absorbed in what I now know to have been one of the best series in the Magnet's 32 years - the Courtfield Cracksman series.

It wasn't long before reading the Magnet stimulated an interest in football and cricket (Bradman's year, that was). I date my beginnings as a real schoolboy, as distinct from a mere infant, from the days when I began to read the Magnet.

I have just finished reading the 1975 C.D. Annual, and I should like to congratulate you on a most excellent and enjoyable publication. May I say that it has been a delight to read of the Annual's own scholastic creation - Slade School and Mr. Buddle - and I have nothing but admiration for the interesting plots which are developed in such a short space.

DEREK ADLEY (South Harrow): I was very impressed with this year's Annual. I would say it seems the best Annual for some years. I don't mean, of course, that the others were not up to standard, but this one is particularly appealing.

F. OSBORN (London): The first item I always read in C.D. is the Editor's Chat, and I anxiously look for news of "Mister Softee", and sincerely hope that all is well.

(Mister Softee was poorly through the hot summer, but for many months now he has been bounding with good health. The vet advised taking him off all "dried foods", so we did just that, tipping the contents of all the packets into the Basingstoke Canal. And - touch wood - our purrfect puss seems all the better for it. - ED.)

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## BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

### No. 23. THE ARLISS FILMS

Our opening film this term was Marion Davies in "Peg O' My Heart" from M. G. M. (I am not absolutely certain, but I believe this was the Marion Davies picture which featured the charming, sentimental ballad "There's a light in your eyes, Sweetheart Darlin'." What a pity that so many lovely old tunes, which we hummed, whistled, or sang for a while, have got lost with the passing of the years!)

Next, from Warner Bros., came James Cagney and Madge Evans in "The Mayor of Hell". I forget all about this one, but all Cagney films of those days were great entertainment. The next, also from Warner's, was William Powell in "Private Detective 62", followed by, from Universal, a light comedy "Her First Mate", starring a pleasant team, Slim Somerville and Zasu Pitts.

The following week brought, from M. G. M., Lee Tracy in "Clear All Wires". Lee Tracy was a star, popular for a time even though he never quite reached the skies, but who is forgotten today. Next, a big attraction at the time, from Warner Bros.: Leslie Howard, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., and Paul Lukas in "Captured".

Next, another superb film from Warner's: George Arliss and Bette Davis in "The Working Man". (Bette Davis had made one previous film with Arliss, before we "went talkie". This was the lovely and memorable "The Silent Voice", named "The Man Who Played God" in the States.)

The Arliss films were all magnificent, yet nobody seems to have had the bright

idea of reissuing them today. Bette Davis, all these years later, has spoken of how enormously her career was helped by the films she made playing lead to George Arliss.

Then, from M. G. M., Lionel Barrymore, Miriam Hopkins, and Franchot Tone in "The Stranger's Return". Sounds delicious. Next, from Universal, Pat Hanna (whoever he was!) in "Soldiers Don't Care", followed by, from M. G. M., Loretta Young and Franchot Tone (two of my favourite stars in those days) in "Midnight Mary".

Next, from M. G. M., Lionel Barrymore, Lewis Stone, Elizabeth Allen and Benita Hume in "Service", which is just a name to me now, followed by Mary Brian in a little Musical from Universal, "Moonlight and Melody".

Next, a double-feature programme, both from M. G. M.: Warner Baxter and Myrna Loy in "Crooks in Clover", supported by Spencer Tracy in "Stanley", the Story of a Great Achievement.

Then, from Gaumont-British, Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge in "Falling For You", the first of several very popular films we were to play in the next year or two from this popular British pair.

What can I say about the next programme? It was, from Warner's, the incomparable George Arliss in "The Affairs of Voltaire", magnificent by any standard. In the same programme we played Laurel & Hardy in "Twice Two",

one of their superb two-reelers.

The following week, from Universal, Rod La Roque in "S. O. S. Iceberg!" And then, from M. G. M., Marie Dressler and Wallace Beery in "Tugboat Annie", almost certainly the most popular Dressler film of all time.

Then, also from M. G. M., one with a startling cast, though the theme eludes me: John Barrymore, Lionel Barrymore, Clark Gable, Robert Montgomery, Helen Hayes, and Myrna Loy in "Night Flight".

Next, from M. G. M., a picture which has always lingered lovingly in my sentimental memory; Alice Brady, Frank Morgan, Madge Evans, and Micky Rooney in "Ring Up The Curtain", one of the most delightful motion pictures ever made of a stage family and back-stage life. Quite

superb - and in the same programme was Laurel & Hardy in "Me and My Pal", their latest release then.

A moment's thought for Alice Brady, who was at her lovable best in "Ring Up the Curtain". Her death, some dozen years ago, robbed the screen of an adorable character actress, not unreminiscent of the delicious Bille Burke in her prime.

The term wound up with, from M. G. M., Lee Tracy, this time with Madge Evans, in "Accidents Wanted".

Looking through all these old booking lists, I am impressed mainly by the features which we played, but, additionally staggering, is the huge number of educational subjects which we screened - on surely every theme under the sun - and I wonder where on earth they all came from.

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FOR SALE: Armada paperbacks (new): Bunter the Ventriloquist, Bunter's Bad Luck, William the Ancient Briton, 15p each. Armadas (2nd hand) - Mike at Wrykin, Billy Bunter's Beanfeast, 10p each. 2nd hand hardbacks: "Dick Never-say-Die" by Michael Poole, 20p; "The Priory Mystery" by Herbert Hayens, 10p; Disappearance of Tom Merry (without dust jacket) 15p; "Greyhouse Days" by Warren Bell, 30p; Armada paperbacks (new): Bunter in Brazil, Bunter's Bargain, William and the Monster, 15p each. Magnet 466, good copy but without covers, 30p; Gems 992 and 995 (rather rough) 15p each. Magnets 1262 and 1263 (fair copies) 40p each. Magnet 1300 (fair copy) 40p. Aldine Boys' Own Library, No. 75, "Monsieur Bob" (good copy), 15p. P. & P. extra on all items. Write: ERIC FAYNE. (No answer if items already disposed of.)

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# News of the Clubs

## MIDLAND

An air of carnival pervaded the December meeting sparked from swapping of card and verbal greetings punctuated by the consuming of sweetmeats, comfits and coffee.

The informal programme included a reading by Tom Porter describing a certain character chalking 'Quelch is a Beast' on the form-room blackboard (from 'Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School) followed by a piece read by Edward Sabin from Magnet No. 1, clearly pointing out first impressions of Bunter and the changes to come.

Photographs taken at the 1968 and 1972 Christmas meetings were passed around together with an Anniversary Number, Nelson Lee Library old series, No. 80, 'A Mid-Atlantic Mystery', 59 years old to the day.

Midland OBBC meetings are held at Dr. Johnson House, Birmingham, 7.15, usually last Tuesday of the month.

### CAMBRIDGE

The Club met on Sunday, 11th January, at 20 Wingate Way, the home of Vic Hearn. Items of business were discussed, and arrangements made for the next meeting on 8 February, at 5 All Saints Passage.

Danny Posner then gave an excellent, and well researched talk on Colonel Custer and the Battle of the Little Big Horn, pointing out that this was the centenary year of the battle, which had been the biggest disaster suffered by the United States Army in the whole course of its Indian Wars. Having outlined the general course of the battle, and briefly summarised Custer's career, Danny went on to talk about the various opinions held on Custer, and the enormous amount of writings on the battle which had taken place over the last century. He produced a fine collection of books and magazines, ranging from Custers own "My life on the Great Plains" through many other volumes to magazines and Comics - including "Garth". He played a recording, made by his young daughter, of the regimental march of the 7th, "Garryowen", and also produced a plasticine model of Custer also made by his daughter; members sending congratulations via Danny, to his daughter. Time was drawing on, and members pressed Danny not to cut his talk short, but to continue it at the next meeting in February, which he agreed to do. He concluded by showing extracts from the film about Custer, "They died with their boots on", pointing out the error in the film which showed the troopers using sabres, since Custer had left sabres behind when he led out the 7th Cavalry to the battle. The meeting closed with a vote of

thanks to Vic for his hospitality.

### LONDON

The popularity of the East Dulwich venue was once more apparent on the 18th January, when Josie Packman, the hostess, welcomed a near record attendance. Mary Cadogan commenced the proceedings with a fine treatise entitled "Girl Flyers and Aviators". Copies of the Schoolgirls' Own Library, "Little Folks" and "Girls' Own Paper" plus a Margaret Burnham Hardback were used to illustrate the talk and show the comparison between the fictitious and the actual girl aeronauts.

Eric Lawrence conducted one of his Character Letter puzzle Grids which proved popular and left Roger Jenkins an easy winner. Isaac Litvak explained what a Muzuza was and brought along one with him. Jim Cook, in his latest C.D. letter from St. Frank's, mentioned this word, thus the elucidation. Isaac kindly showed two other items that Solomon Levi would have used.

A newsletter of 1959 was the one from which Bob Blythe read extracts, and to conclude Ray Hopkins gave a talk on Morcove.

The Annual General Meeting of the club will be held on the 15th February, at Josie Packman's address. Let our excellent hostess know if you intend to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

### NORTHERN

Saturday, 10th January, 1976

Early in the meeting there was some discussion of the current high prices being charged for the old magazines. Certain of us felt that high prices guaranteed that the items would be preserved, though one could not help remembering the early CD's where half-a-crown is remarked on as being an exorbitant price to pay for a Magnet!

One member questioned whether prices would continue to rise. Would the demand still be there in, say twenty years? Others felt that the intrinsic value of hobby literature was coming to be recognized.

George Teed's Sexton Blake was the subject of a talk and readings given by Geoffrey Wilde. Teed, said Geoffrey, was perhaps not the greatest of the Sexton Blake writers, but he contributed more

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character and charismatic quality to his subject and his adult way of writing invested his tales with a power and drama they had not had before.

In Teed's writing there is a move away from the detective with his private client and Blake is seen as the international adventurer.

Teed gave an adult slant to the stories and Yvonne Cartier becomes the first of the young women to play an interesting role in the life of Sexton Blake. And a few years later there was Roxane Harfield. And Tinker, too, was given a love-life - in the shapely form of Nirvana. All of which, no doubt, made the business of detecting - to say nothing of reading - even more exciting!

Mollie finished off the evening by presenting us with a Hamilton quiz. Winner was Geoffrey Wilde with 33, second Bill Williamson with 30 and third Ron Rhodes with 31. Harry Barlow claimed to have 42, but as there were only 37 questions we think he was working a fiddle somehow!

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FOR SALE: Knockout Annuals - 1944 £5, 1945 £5, 1947, 1948, 1949 £4.50 each, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1962, £3.00 each.

Radio Fun Annuals - 1949 £4.50, 1952 £3.50, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, £2.25 each.

Wilfreds Annual - 1927 (lacks spine) £1.50, 1929 £3, 1937 £3.

Ace Book of Comics (Odhams) £2.50. Wonder Book of Comics (1949 Odhams) £2.50. Big Parade for Boys (6 Bunter stories) £4.00. Sparkler Annual 1938, £5.00. Wonder Album of Filmland 1933, £4.00 (Amalg. Press). Film Lovers Annuals 1932 £5, 1933 £5. Picturegoer Annual 1959/60, mint, £2.50. Plus Postage in each case. Cash with order. Please allow sufficient for postage.

S. JENKS, THE LODGE, NORTHBROOK, FARNHAM, SURREY.

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WANTED URGENTLY: Howard Baker Vol. 18, dealing with the whole of the Stacey Series. £10 offered or £5 and vols. 16 and 17, the complete Stacey series. Also wanted: Tiger comics and ABC Film Reviews; Gems 1564 & 1569, £2 offered each.

H. FRANKLIN

83 UFFINGTON AVE., HARTSHOLME ESTATE, LINCOLN.

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FOR SALE: Bound volumes of Boys' Friend and Boys' Realm containing Nelson Lee tales, 1901-1907. Unbound copies of Boys' Friend (1901-1903) and Boys' Realm (1908-1909) and other items.

MISS J. DOWLER, 29 SYLVESTER AVENUE, STOCKPORT.

NOTICE

Owing to inflation, the price of the forth-coming book, "You're a Brick, Angela!" by Mary Cadogan & Patricia Craig (published by Messrs. Gollancz) will be £6.50, and not £4.50 as previously announced.

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HAMILTON & RUGBY

by W. Thurbon

I was interested in Bill Lofts' article on rugger or soccer in this month's Digest. I think Bill has overlooked "Marvel", No. 161, dated 23 Feb. 1907. Besides the usual Jack, Sam & Pete tale this number contained a "splendid school tale" by Charles Hamilton, entitled "Fair Play". This was a school, rugger story. But it has a very special interest for readers of the Magnet. Nearly 12 months before No. 1 of the Magnet was published Charles Hamilton was writing a school rugger story, and the hero, then in the Third Form of Netherby School, was no less than Hurree Ramset Jam Singh! One interesting thing about Hurree Singh, apart from his prowess at rugger was that he spoke "excellent English" at the beginning of the story, but, as Gerry Allison said when writing up the matter for the January 1961 "Digest", his English did not remain excellent but equally did not deteriorate into the jargon with which we are familiar from the Magnet. When I came across this Marvel I wrote to Gerry, who confirmed my idea that this was another "first appearance" in the Marvel. Bill will find Gerry's article in No. 169 of the Digest. I sent the Marvel on to Gerry, and I think he placed it in the Library of the Northern Club. Bill may like to look up the story.

I don't recall the "Greyfriars Fifteen", but I have a vague memory that in an early Magnet, possibly pre-1914, there was a rugger story - I may be confusing it with another story (sixty years is a long time to look back) but I have an idea that the theme was a confusion between Greyfriars challenging another school, neither party realising that one played soccer and the other rugger and the final solution was a mixed game in which each won according to its own rules. Does anybody recall the story? I also seem to recall a St. Jim's reprinted story in the first Penny Populars in which an impromptu rugger match takes place in a form room. Again does anyone recall this?

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FOR EVER AND EVER

by R. J. Godsave

We are all well aware that time stood still in the stories written by the authors of our favourite papers of our younger days. Unfortunately, for the readers time does not stand still, and a sense of sadness creeps in when one thinks of the distance in time between the present and those far-off days which forever widen.

The authors of those stories defeated time temporarily by bringing them up-to-date in material things. E. S. Brooks did this in the Nelson Lee Library by the re-building of St. Frank's with the extra houses. This in turn had the effect of seeming to push the stand-still characters further into the past.

The readers, of course, have their own mental pictures of characters which in some cases are ably assisted by illustrators who emphasise some physical peculiarity by which identification is made easy. It is the readers who determine for themselves how much the characters alter over the years.

The test of a good writer must be his ability to create by his description a likeness of his characters which are similar in the minds of his readers. Even had Charles Dickens not had George Cruickshank to illustrate some of his novels most of his readers would be able to identify his characters in their mind's eye with a similarity which could be startling.

It was George Orwell's complaint that the stand-still of time gave a false impression of life in which everything was safe, solid and would be the same for ever and ever. Had Charles Hamilton, who was the recipient of the above criticism, written of a world in which time went by, it would have been necessary to create many fresh characters to replace those who had passed through the schools, and in so doing would have been unable to produce the lasting characters which he so cleverly built up into almost living persons.

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CARDEW OR D'ARCY?

John Wallen

To my mind the Gem's two most outstanding characters were Arthur Augustus D'Arcy - the swell of St. Jim's, and Ralph Reckness Cardew - the laconic, supercilious, cad of the school.

I find it very hard to determine which of the two was the finest character study. "Gussy" certainly contributed more to the success of the Gem than Cardew during that famous old paper's life span of more than thirty years. But popularity is not everything, and in my own opinion the way Hamilton handled the intricate whimsicalities of Cardew was unsurpassed by anything at St. Jim's.

"Gussy" however, while not possessing such an interwoven character as Cardew, was out on his own in another aspect - he was far more loveable and innocent.

Most people would find it far easier to appreciate D'Arcy, than the devious scheming Cardew. "Gussy's" child-like innocence is certainly a powerful factor in his favour. Also while nearly all Hamiltonians have a great affection for D'Arcy, many feel only dislike for the sneering cad of the Fourth. Most people would certainly agree that D'Arcy was one of the finest pieces of characterisation at St. Jim's, many however, would place Cardew way down the list. I feel that this would be more due to a personal dislike of Cardew than a denouncement of his powerful character.

The "bad lads" of Hamiltonian Literature have always been great favourites with me, Cardew and Vernon-Smith, I have always held in high esteem.

D'Arcy is another favourite however, and I find it almost impossible to separate the two. Many will disagree, but I feel that Cardew is the superior of the pair - by a short head, as a racing commentator might put it. His unpredictable nature was among the greatest of Hamilton characterisation, and if it was bettered it was only by one or two Greyfriars characters.

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CURIOSITIES OF JACK'S PAPER

by W. O. G. Lofts

Recently I have been doing some research into Jacks Paper. This was a shortlived boys' paper published by Pearsons in the 1922/3 period, and then being incorporated into the more famous Scout. It was an attempt to be an ideal companion paper to the girls Pegs Paper, but whereas the latter was highly successful running for 1108 issues (1919/40) poor Jacks Paper folded after only 17 issues.

The main reason for my interest, was to try and establish whether the main series of scientific detective tales featuring Farringdon were actually written by R. Austin Freeman - creator of course of Dr. Thorndyke. The former tales were penned by a mysterious "Jack Wylde", but despite extensive research and some amazing coincidences, nothing could be proved. Records at Pearson's have long passed into oblivion, and one can only make assumptions.

Research did however establish that the editor of Jacks Paper was a Mr. C. H. Butler, and by all accounts he was an extremely good-looking man, and who later on in a Pearson's magazine competition offered himself as a prospective marriage partner to the lucky winner in a woman's magazine competition! Of course there being a clause, whereas the winner could take instead a large cash prize, which she eventually did, probably to the relief of C. H. Butler!

But easily the most interesting discovery was that in No. 4, dated 21st November, 1922; there was a school story entitled "The Ghost of the Hooded Monk", featuring Jack Harker of St. Benedicts, the author being "Clifford Owen". This writer was Charles Hamilton, who had used it for his St. John school tales in the Aldine "Diamond Library". The story was obviously a very old one reminiscent of his very early work, and how it came to be published in 1922 is a mystery that seems unlikely to be solved. Whilst mysteries do remain with Jacks Paper at least one can add another school to the credit of Charles Hamilton