

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 30 NUMBER 357

SEPTEMBER 1976

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A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER

TRIBUTE?

The Nationwide TV programme of early August, intended to be a hastily-concocted tribute to the centenary of the birth of Frank Richards, was well-meant and harmless enough. The combination of Miss Edith Hood, who was the author's housekeeper for a long time, and Gerald Campion, who played Bunter in the television series of the late fifties, seemed a curious one. It was pleasant to see Miss Hood, who looked her usual kindly self, but it was patently absurd to expect an elderly lady, unaccustomed to being in the public eye, to be articulate on television. Gerald Campion had a fair amount to say, mainly limited to reminiscence of the Bunter TV series.

An extract from one of those old playlets showed up only too clearly how badly constructed and cheaply produced that old series was. To wind up there were three B. B. C. personalities demonstrating Bunter's gluttony, with plenty of the Yaroooh, Grooh, and Yow which is always found indispensable for this sort of thing.

Personally, I would question whether much of the publicity which Charles Hamilton has received in the past dozen years is a real service to his reputation as a great writer of stories for boys. Over-exposure, especially with a concentration on Bunter, his eating, and his Yarooohs, to the exclusion of the more memorable aspects of the Hamilton career, is all too apt to lead to the familiarity which breeds contempt.

THE PHANTOM

Recently I could not resist sitting up very late in order to see on television the old Universal silent film "The Phantom of the Opera", starring Lon Chaney and Mary Philbin. I found it surprisingly entertaining, and it carried its years very well indeed. Some time ago, in one of our cinema articles, we referred to the time when it was screened in "the Small Cinema". No wonder the youthful patrons of that little theatre revelled in the good old-fashioned "blood and thunder".

I read several references to the TV presentation in different papers, but not one of those which I saw referred to the fact that the film was banned for a number of years in this country. The banning was not due to anything in the film, but was punishment for a publicity stunt which offended a number of people who were nearly as important as they thought they were.

STILL CHRISTIE

Last month I mentioned that Colonel Wharton featured in the Christie novel "Destination Unknown". I might have added that Hiram Fish appeared in "The Secret of Chimneys". The latter, published in 1925, was about the worst of all the Christie novels - long-drawn out, coy, and boring. The reason probably was that the main characters were young adults, and Christie, like Hamilton, was never at her happiest with the young adult. The finest characterisation of both

authors was with older people.

THE ANNUAL

With this month's issue of C.D. we send you the order form for the 1976 edition of Collectors' Digest Annual - our 30th birthday, our Pearl Jubilee Edition. It will help if you can get your orders in reasonably early. Under present circumstances, it will not be possible to print many copies beyond those necessary to fulfil advance orders.

As usual, on the entry form there is space for any advertisement you wish to include in the Annual or any good wishes for the season which you may wish to express.

These are difficult times, production-wise, and the advertisements which you are able to send along all help towards our heavy running costs. I need not say that the Annual will be jam-packed with articles from your favourite contributors.

TAILPIECE

My Sunday newspaper this week was a complete mass of printing errors. They were as thick as fleas on a Mexican dog, as the Rio Kid used to say. And the paper cost just on half-a-crown in the money which used to mean something.

It costs the earth to eat out. So perhaps I shouldn't complain at Printers' Pie for half-a-crown.

In response to the many, many readers who kindly enquire after the welfare of Mr. Softee, he is fine, thank you. Last summer the heat got him down, but this year he hasn't turned a hair or allowed it to affect his appetite. And, speaking of his hair, he has grown a very thick coat in the last week or two. Might be a sign of a severe winter to come.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *
WANTED: BULLSEYES. Also MAGNETS betw/een Nos. 1 and 984 inclusive.

H. L. MARRIOTT

27 GREENVIEW DRIVE, LINKS, NORTHAMPTON, NN2 7LA.

DANNY'S DIARY

SEPTEMBER 1926

The Magnet has gone on with its grand series about Harry Wharton & Co. in India. The first story of the month was "The Terror of the Jungle". The chums go out on their first tiger hunt, but the result is that the Nabob falls into the hands of his enemies and is carried off to the castle of Baji Rao, who will succeed to the throne of Bhanipur if Hurree Singh dies.

The next tale was "The Nabob's Rival" and we meet Mook Mookerjee, who taught Inky his weird and wonderful English. And, through Bunter, Baji Rao is defeated and the nabob is saved.

Bunter is duly honoured, and it just remains for Hurree Singh to deal with his villainous rival to the throne. And when that is done, the chums start off back for England and a glorious series has come to an end. Final tale "From India to Greyfriars".

To follow this, the last tale of the month seemed destined to be an anti-climax, but, through a brilliant bit of thinking on the part of the author, it starred Coker, and "Coker the Rebel" is a dream of delight from start to finish. Coker decides to put Walker, the prefect, in his place and take him down a few pegs. Coker earns a detention for every half-holiday of the term, but he breaks bounds and leaves a dummy in the form-room. And when Walker gives a mighty smack on the head to the supposed Coker, Walker believes that he has killed Coker - and explains that he did it in self-defence. Lovely stuff!

We had a long hot spell in mid-September, and September 19th was the hottest day of the year, with the thermometer going up to 88 degrees.

Delicious tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library. These are "The Chinese of Greyfriars" telling of the arrival of Wun Lung at Greyfriars, and "The Shadow of Shame", a Rookwood story in which Bulkeley has to leave Rookwood as it is believed that his father has robbed a bank. But the real thief is the father of Catesby of the Sixth.

Jack Dempsey, the great boxer, and world champion for so long, has at last been defeated - by Gene Tunney.

In the Nelson Lee Library, the series about the St. Frank's chums in China has ended. First of the month was "Handforth, the Reckless". Yung Ching is imprisoned in the Temple of Pao-Kang, and Lord Dorrimore means to rescue him. Handforth wants to help, but Dorrie doesn't want his help - so Handy has to hang on to Dorrie's aeroplane. The series ends with "St. Frank's at Bay", in which Foo Chow, smarting under his defeat, tries to get his revenge on the St. Frank's party.

With their exciting holiday over, they all get back to St. Frank's for another new series. Nipper - now called Dick Hamilton for some odd reason - is away on a case with Nelson Lee, so Handy decides to offer himself as captain of the juniors, in the opening yarn of the series, "Handforth's Bad Bargain". Final of the month is "Vote for Handforth" - and, if you don't, look out for his fists.

I had a copy of the Boys' Realm this month, and it has a new serial entitled "Raggies O' The Rambler" by Stanton Hope, about sailors on the lower deck in the navy. I think it quite good.

The two stories of the first part of the month in the Gem completed the so-so series about the St. Jim's chums on a motor boat. They were "The Secret of Lonely Island" and "The Spoofer of the 'Silver Spray' ". I could not read any of this series very easily.

But with the next story, "The Fool of the School", the real Martin Clifford was back with a new series about a new boy named Angelo Lee. Cousin Ethel asks Gussy and his friends to look after Angelo, who doesn't want to come to St. Jim's. There were plenty of amusing bits in this one. Angelo is not quite such a fool as he pretends to be. In fact the next yarn of the series was "Not Such A Fool As He Looked". Deep down Angelo is very cunning. He wants to be sacked, so that he can become an airman. The series continues next month.

A cheap excursion return from Paddington to Plymouth costs 12/9, and lunch on the train on the outward journey is 2/6, and supper on the train on the way back is 3/-. Doug is musing as to whether he might take me on one of these day excursions.

At the pictures this month we have seen Tom Mix in "My Own Pal", Percy Marmont and Raymond Hatton in "Lord Jim", Bebe Daniels and Rod La Rocque in "Wild, Wild Susan", Mary Pickford in "Rosita"

(which disappointed me a lot), and Buster Keaton in "Go West" which was very funny.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Schoolboys' Own Library No. 35 "The Boy from China", comprised three consecutive halfpenny Magnet stories of the autumn of 1908. Wun Lung was one of the early new boys at Greyfriars. "The Shadow of Shame", No. 36, consisted of a 5-story series from the Boys' Friend of the early summer of 1918, concerning the disgrace of Bulkeley.)

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Once again I am pleased to be able to welcome a new contributor to Blakiana. Mr. Dennington's memories of the Flying-Bomb period will no doubt awaken our own memories of those hectic days. I myself can remember travelling to Westminster from East Dulwich on a tram, without any glass in the windows, these were boarded up but we still could hear the noise of the flying-bomb which seemed to follow us all the way. However just before reaching Westminster Bridge the bomb decided to turn round and go back. It landed near the Elephant and Castle, just a short distance from the Bridge. Another narrow escape for all of us on the tram. Happy Days!!!!

TWO MADEMOISELLES

(1) Mlle. Roxane Harfield

by Don Harkness

Mr. Teed created many interesting characters and fine stories. Perhaps more than any other Sexton Blake writer he brought to the reader quite a number of memorable members of the fair sex. Although I have never had the pleasure of reading any of the tales dealing with the famous Mlle Yvonne Cartier, I have had the great pleasure of making the acquaintance of Mlle Roxane Harfield, and a delightful series these stories turned out to be.

They commenced on 15th March, 1930, in Union Jack No. 1378 and continued through to Union Jack No. 1497, in 1932, for a total of 21 stories. (Roxane did appear in the story called "Revolt", U. J. No. 1487, but this was one of the six Proud Tram series and not part of Roxane's story - so does not really count. J. P.) The first of these

stories opens in the Canadian Forests and Roxane is described thus:-

"In any milieu Roxane Harfield - Mademoiselle Roxane they called her in the wide timber country among the French Canadians - would have been beautiful. Her figure, a little over medium height was just showing the promise of her lovely womanhood, her features were small and perfectly formed, revealing the perfection of the beauty that had been her mother's and the decision that she had inherited from her father. Her eyes were of the deepest shade of blue imaginable, like the summer sky of a Canadian mid-day and the crown of her hair was russet brown and soft as sheen as the maple leaves that were turning their last caress to the Indian summer. But there was something more devastating in her mouth when she smiled - soft red lips that curled distractingly and trembled a little as if on the verge of tender laughter."

As the title of the story implies "They Shall Repay" it is a tale of vengeance for a great wrong. Eight business men swindle the two women out of the land left to them by the girl's late father, discovery of which causes the death, by shock, of the mother. Mlle Roxane vows to avenge the death and break financially all the men who were concerned in the conspiracy. This vow takes her from Canada to England, Saigon, the United States and includes Devil's Island among the exotic places of the chase. In England her first victim seeks the aid of Sexton Blake and this brings the two into conflict with each other.

Without one dull episode this is a series to be remembered fondly, with only one regret in that it had to end.

TWO MADEMOISELLES

(2) Mlle Yvonne Cartier

by Josie Packman

Well this is rather an impossible task, to compare two of Mr. Teed's young ladies. Of course Yvonne was first and all her adventures were thought of first, Roxane was in my opinion a rather poor copy of the original.

Mlle Yvonne's first appearance was in Union Jack No. 485, dated 25 Jan. 1913, the title being "Beyond Reach of the Law". The first part of Yvonne's story lasted until 1917 when Teed stopped writing for the Union Jack and Sexton Blake Library to go to war. It was nearly five years before the next story appeared and from then on Yvonne featured

in various series until 1926, the last story being the Christmas one dated 11 December, 1926, Union Jack 1208. I append these few details for the benefit of new members of the Blake fraternity and for those who do not possess a copy of the Collector's Digest Annual for 1951, which contains the "Monograph on Yvonne Cartier" written and compiled by Harry Homer.

The first eight stories have been called The Vengeance Series because the theme of the stories was the ruination of Yvonne's family and the death of her mother caused by the crooks who swindled them out of their estate of Bingabong in Australia. Yes, Yvonne was Australian and given the title of Mlle. to make the character more sophisticated in those far off days of 1913. One has to remember that the new freedom of women was in the ascendant, the social reformers H. G. Wells, etc. and Mrs. Pankhurst fighting for women's rights made the character of a young girl fighting to right her own wrongs, a great hit. Mr. Teed's original plots were absolutely marvellous and a great success and I have always felt that his writings were worthy of the hardcover books rather than a weekly paper. But who are we to grumble, we may never have had the pleasure of reading about Yvonne and her adventures with Sexton Blake but for the weekly paper the Union Jack. These adventures took both of them and Tinker to places all round the world. One of the best tales was No. 1 of the Sexton Blake Library entitled "The Yellow Tiger". A story of romance, adventure, war and many thrilling happenings on the way to the island of Kaitu in the China Seas.

To describe Yvonne and do her justice is almost impossible. She was undoubtedly beautiful with lovely bronze-coloured hair and huge violet blue eyes. Apart from her beauty she was clever. In the six years between the loss of her mother and estate to the time when she was ready to carry on her programme of vengeance, she had studied hard and become an expert chemist. On board her yacht the Fleur de Lys, she had a laboratory that many a Professor of Science might envy. Yvonne became a very popular character. According to our records she appeared in 62 Union Jack stories, 5 tales in the Sexton Blake Library and 5 Detective Weekly reprints and in a series of stories of her early life before meeting Sexton Blake, on her Australian station of Bingabong, appeared in the Boys' Journal in 1914. After comparison

with Roxane I think Yvonne wins hands down.

FLYING BOMBS, SEXTON BLAKE AND ME by G. L. Dennington

It is with some diffidence that I throw my cap into the Blakiana arena. Compared with the erudition of those who have devoted a lifetime to the study of the great detective my knowledge of the subject is positively puny. My main justification for presuming to write at all is that I judge from most items in Blakiana that their authors interest lies in the period before the thirties, whereas mine is most definitely from the Thirties onwards. Even Tinker could deduce something about our respective ages from that I suppose.

I can recollect quite clearly the circumstances which first introduced me to the pleasures of S. B. L. What they would term today an instance of "total recall". It is the summer of '44 (a real old-fashioned English summer with plenty of rain). I am a South London schoolboy with an early morning paper round to complete, just about to set forth from the newsagents, clutching a bundle of war-economy size Daily Heralds, New Chronicles, Daily Mirrors, etc., when, hearing the sound of an approaching V.1 flying bomb, I pause in the shop doorway and wait for the infernal machine to pass on - indeed I silently urge it to pass on. Time stands still and while it does my attention is attracted by the picture on a paperback near the door, showing a girl, pistol in hand, jumping down an embankment from a moving train. Intrigued I purchase the book and subsequently read it with avid enjoyment. My first Sexton Blake story.

I do not recall what happened to that particular V.1 (after all V.1's did not have the rarity value of Sexton Blake stories) but I do know that this particular volume ignited a passionate interest in me for the S. B. L. which persisted for several years. The volume was No. 74, 3rd series, "The Man who Would Not Quit" by Gilbert Chester. I suppose I can thank Hitler for introducing it to me.

Unfortunately my interest in the Baker Street Sleuth ended as abruptly as it began, when, without my permission and without reference to me, the Amalgamated Press suddenly reduced the size of the volumes from 96 pages to 64 pages. To my ways of thinking this drastically curtailed authors' scope for developing stories in a way to

which I was accustomed. I was sadly disillusioned. You can't treat your public like that - not if they are 16 year olds set in their ways. What is more the price remained unchanged.

Twenty-seven years were to pass before I looked at a Sexton Blake story again. That was when, with the onset of middle-aged nostalgia, I began collecting them as a hobby. It seemed more sensible than collecting pound notes. Ironically, among those which I have read since then with the greatest of pleasure is the very volume which caused me to terminate my association with the great criminologist. (Actually to describe a detective as a criminologist is a slight misuse of the language) I refer to No. 149, 3rd series, "Warned off" by John Hunter. An appropriate title in view of my reaction at the time, but now I feel that I reacted too impulsively condemning the new format without giving it a fair trial.

* * * * *

NELSON LEE COLUMN

"HUMOUR and EDWY SEARLES BROOKS"

by William Lister

I think I have a sense of humour. More than once back in my school days, I have seen by mother swiftly glance my way, when, while I was quietly reading I would suddenly break into laughter. She seemed to think it strange. This is something I have noticed even to this day. Laugh at a well-told joke, laugh at an animated cartoon, laugh at a Laurel and Hardy picture, laugh if you like when your postman slips on the ice, and the world will laugh with you! Laugh while you happen to be reading and most folk will think you're round the bend.

I liked the Jack, Sam and Pete stories for their humour, to say nothing of the short sea tales by W. W. Jacobs or "Three men in a Boat" by Jerome K. Jerome, and P. G. Wodehouse with his "Jeeves".

All of which brings me to the point in hand, that while re-reading my 1974 copy of the "C.D." Annual, I noticed on page 18 of an article by Mr. H. Truscott entitled "Three Captain Authors" the following statement: -

"There is much humour, as well, in the tale of Charlie Green. Humour in any case, is a fairly large item in Warren Bell's stock-in-

trade, as I think it had to be in that of almost any writer of school stories that hoped for a continuing public, and Swanson and one other, Edwy Searles Brooks are the only big figures I can think of who were deficient in this quality."

As a fan of the aforesaid Edwy Searles Brooks, I am quite prepared to believe that I wear rose-coloured glasses so far as his writings are concerned. To me he is "Top of the Pops" to use a modern phrase. But I don't think I am wrong in claiming he certainly isn't deficient in humour.

I remember when I first renewed acquaintance with the "Nelson Lee" after almost a life-time (through the O. B. B. C.) I turned to see if Handforth and Co. still had the old laughter magic, or if Phipps and Archie Glenthorne could still wring a smile from my old cracked lips. I found that they had, and they could.

Perhaps I've mistaken the meaning of the word "deficient", thought I, turning to my dictionary. "A wanting or a falling short of anything" it said.

With Handforth and Co., plus Archie Glenthorne and his valet, Phipps, in mind I wouldn't like to say that E. S. B. fell short of humour.

Still, as I said, I may be wearing those rose-coloured spectacles again; or it may be Mr. Truscott (who himself has a good sense of humour, judging by the trend of his interesting article) was probably only an intermittent reader of the "Nelson Lee" - and therefore missed all the rip-roaring fun Mr. Brooks provided for those he lovingly called "customers".

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

Let us stroll around the environs of St. Frank's and recall some of the incidents connected with a particular spot.

I am standing at what used to be the old barn which figured so well as Fort Resolute when St. Frank's was under Petticoat Rule. The whole of the school was taken over by women teachers with a Jane Trumble as Head. Even today, the Third form still tells of a Miss Nixon who ruled them in such a pleasant way that they often wish she were back again. But St. Frank's consisted of only two Houses then; the Ancient House and the Modern House, the latter being the old

College House.

I next find myself at Moat Hollow. This building was erected on the site of the old River House School. Moat Hollow has so many memories that it would need a booklength account to describe all that went on there.

Today, it stands forlorn and deserted. The spiked fencing that adorns the high walls remain just as they were created there by Grimesby Creepe who once used Moat Hollow as a sort of latter-day Dotheboys Hall.

Looking at Edgemoor Manor I am reminded of the time the earl of Edgemoor was reinstated after a battle with Mr. Gore-Pearce. The St. Frank's juniors will tell you this was one of their finest hours. The manor is in the hamlet of Edgemoor and is very much like a feudal castle. Built of grey stone with ivy clinging to many old walls, the battlements are perfect, and indeed, this is one of the finest Norman structures in the south of England.

I'll cross the river Stowe and look at Willard's Island. Old Willard's Folly remains as a monument to many an adventure of the boys and a reminder of gang fights with crooks.

Now I shall come ashore and follow the road to Bannington or come back and look at the River House School. The school it will be. The original number of thirty-five pupils has swollen now and extensions have been built making the school a worthy rival to St. Frank's in size and in sporting matches.

With Farmer Holt's farm to my left I think I will give it a miss as the irascible farmer is a person I would rather not meet.

Caistowe isn't very far from there and the sleepy little seaside town will always remind me of Lord Dorrimore's yacht Wanderer. Caistowe is also noted for its attraction for absconding schoolboys. I can remember when Harold Frinton tried to stowaway on board to escape the law. And of Walter Starke's attempting to get Nipper shanghaied on a tramp steamer. The plot failed and it was Starke's last act of vengeance against Nipper.

Let's go down the coast to the lighthouse where many a storm has brought the boys of St. Frank's to Shingle Head to rescue those aboard an unfortunate shipwreck.

There's a gale blowing now, so I think I will return to the school and start out afresh tomorrow.

The next day dawned with a promise of rain which kept me indoors. Whenever I stay at St. Frank's I have a presentiment of something about to happen. It's not an uncomfortable experience; rather like taking part in an adventure the outcome of which will bring an exciting happiness.

After breakfast the boys went to the big School House and peace reigned supreme over St. Frank's.

Later, Nipper invited me to Study C and tested my knowledge of the school's history.

One of the questions he fired at me was 'when did the Moor View girls wear Etons?'. Well, when did they? Because they did once, you know. Sheer necessity, of course, but it happened.

Another question: When did the boys of St. Frank's stay at Turret College and where is it?

After which the questions came thick and fast: What happened to the junior Noys? When did Nipper first disclose his real identity to Tregellis-West and Watson? What is the surname of Mary Jane, the Ancient House servant?

What happened to Dr. Karnak? Which junior is entitled to call himself the Duke of Walsham?

Want any more?

Fortunately Handforth & Co. barged into the study and there was an argument about a forthcoming sporting fixture.

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 136 - Gem No. 274 - "D'Arcy the Suffragist"

Any Magnet or Gem published between the summer of 1911 and the summer of 1913 is more than likely to prove extremely readable and entertaining. In those palmy days before the first World War which are looked back upon so nostalgically, Charles Hamilton had approached the peak of his early style. In the summer of 1913, Mr. and Mrs. Harrison and he gave up the London house and began a year's tour of the

continent, and it is not surprising that the standard of his writing began to slip a little thereafter.

"D'Arcy the Suffragist" was published in May 1913, towards the end of the early peak period. In an eloquent speech to the juniors, Gussy developed his argument that the government of the county was in the hands of a dozen respectable families who took it in turn to rule. Elections made little difference to this arrangement, and so there was no reason why women shouldn't take part in the harmless amusement of voting. He added that he knew all about this because he had some relations in the House of Lords and two poor relations in the House of Commons.

The story, though highly amusing, is little more than a series of almost disconnected episodes, which was no doubt enough for Charles Hamilton to poke fun at the suffragettes who were depicted as muscular, aggressive, domineering, inconsistent, and ruthless. They fought with the police, threw stones through windows, and set pillar boxes on fire, incurring the hostility of the local population. So far as one can judge from the story, Charles Hamilton had no sympathy with those who denied women the vote and, equally, no sympathy with the way in which the suffragettes set to work to obtain it.

Reading the story over again for the first time in some twenty-five years, I am now struck by its topicality. The wheel has come full circle, and violent protest has once more become fashionable. People in authority who will not listen to reasoned argument are influenced by the desecration of cricket pitches or riotous behaviour at motorway enquiries. I certainly find it easier now to understand why the suffragettes acted as they did, and my amusement in reading Gem 274 is tinged with a lurking uneasiness. As with so many of Charles Hamilton's better stories, there is a pill in the jam, a social comment under the surface happiness.

* * * * *
WILL EXCHANGE my many pre-war children's Annuals for pre-war Old Boys' Magazines. My books consist of Ward Locke Wonder Book, True as Steel, Felix Annual, Wilfred's, Crackers, Film. Many Biggles, Just William, Jolly Jack, Champion, Leading Strings, etc.

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

Our Serial "Classic" from 70 years ago.

- MISSING -

He entered the ruins, and looked about him. A glance showed him that Blake was not there, and another that the packet was not on the steps.

Had Blake placed it there? He would certainly not have failed to do so. Then it had been taken by the gipsy. But where was Blake?

If he had left the ruins he would have returned to the school. He had not left them. Then where was he? There was only one conclusion to come to, and Mr. Kidd was forced to come to it. The boy had ventured into the vaults, and had fallen into the hands of the kidnapper.

The housemaster called to the inspector. Mr. Skeet, angry at having his carefully-laid trap upset, came sulkily to join him. His expression changed when Mr. Kidd pointed out that the packet had been taken.

"Do you think Master Blake really put it there?" he said dubiously.

"Of course!" exclaimed Mr. Kidd. "Why should he neglect to do so, when he was sent here for that special purpose?"

"That looks reasonable," admitted Mr. Skeet. "Then it looks as if the gipsy had been and taken it, and we haven't seen him. There may be something in what you said about an underground passage."

"There is certainly something in it," said the housemaster drily. "Fortunately, I thought of bringing my electric lantern. I shall now search the vaults for Blake, and you can follow if you think fit."

The inspector apparently thought fit,

for he followed the housemaster down the stone stair. Mr. Kidd advanced into the vaults with the lantern held high.

He uttered a sudden exclamation, and stooping, picked up something from the stone flags of the floor. It was a schoolboy's cap.

"The boy's cap!" exclaimed the inspector, convinced at last. "Then Blake has certainly been down here, Mr. Kidd."

"I never doubted it. This is certainly Blake's cap. It is that of a School House boy, by the colour."

"I wonder how he came to lose it?"

"He could only have dropped it in a struggle. He has been seized by the gipsy, and now, in all probability, is sharing D'Arcy's imprisonment," said Mr. Kidd. "What can have made him venture into the vaults at all, the unfortunate boy?"

They continued the search further, but without result. Mr. Kidd shouted Blake's name till the subterranean depths rang with sound, but there came no reply to his calling.

The searching and the shouting were alike useless. Beyond the cap, no sign was discovered of Blake; and to the shouting there came back only hollow echoes. At last the housemaster was compelled to give up the search.

Whatever the secret of that gloomy place, it was too well hidden for him to discover it. His heart was heavy as he ascended the stone stair. During the long and futile quest evening had fallen, and it was in the dusk that Mr. Kidd took his way

back to St. Jim's.

The chums were watching for his return. They saw him come in and go to the doctor's quarters. They read his expression, and the gloom in his face was reflected in their own. Blake had not returned, and they knew now that something had happened to him.

"Blake! Is it weally you?"

The voice of Arthur Augustus was weak and faint, but he had not forgotten to drawl or to lisp. Those little peculiarities had become second nature to the swell of St. Jim's.

Blake stood up in the darkness. He was both annoyed and angered by the ill-luck that had befallen him, and ready to kick himself for having fallen into the clutches of the gipsy.

Still, he was glad to have found Arthur Augustus. His usual coolness very quickly returned to him. His situation was a perilous and unpleasant one, but he tried to take it in a humorous mood.

"Yes, Gussy," he said, "it is weally me! Here I am, deah boy, as large as life and twice as natural."

"I'm jolly glad to hear your voice again, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus; "or any voice for that mattah. It's been beastly lonely here."

"Yes; these ain't the quarters I should choose if I had to make my choice," remarked Blake. "They'll seem a bit dark in the long run. I'm sorry I can't see you, Adolphus, but your voice sounds like that of a sick chicken!"

"Don't joke about it, deah boy!

It's no joke to be shut up here for a week," said Arthur Augustus dolefully.

"Well, you haven't been here a week or anything like it," said Blake. "I dare say it has seemed as long as that to you, though. We've been hunting for you high and low."

"Have you been looking for me, then?"

"Of course I have, and that's how I got here."

"Barengro just pitched you in, didn't he?"

"Yes; he found me on his track. I came to discover his secret, and I've discovered it, and this is the result," said Blake, in disgust. "However, we're going to get out of this soon, Gussy."

"We can't," said D'Arcy miserably. "I've searched for any kind of an opening, and there isn't one. I don't even know where the door is that the gipsy uses when he brings me grub. It must be a stone that turns on a pivot, I think. There's no sign of a door. I've hunted for it."

"How did you get here, D'Arcy? I suppose Barengro collared you in the wood?"

"Yes. Figgins shoved me into a bush - it was vewy wude of him - and when I scwambled out of it, I found that bwute Barengro staring at me, and looking vewy unpleasant. He dwagged me away into the wood, and made me keep there till dark, and then he brought me here. I twied to get away, and he was vewy bwutal. He had the cheek to hit me with a gweat cudgel, the bwute!"

"And you've been shut up here ever since?"

"Yes," shivered D'Arcy. "He

brought me an old coat and a blanket, and he's given me bread and water to live on. The watah was beastly cold, and the bread vewy hard and nasty. But I got so hungwy that I had to eat some of it."

"You've been through it, Aubrey, and no mistake," remarked Blake. "You seem to have had a high old time. Perhaps that'll be a lesson to you. If you had bucked up you wouldn't have dropped behind when I was racing old Figgins, and the gipsy

wouldn't have collared you. When we get out of this hole, I'll put you through a course of gymnastics that will make your hair curl. See if I don't!"

"I think we shall nevah get out!" said D'Arcy dolefully. "I don't know why Barengro is keeping me here. He hasn't spoken one word since he put me here - not a word, the bwute, though every time he brought me a loaf and watah I asked him politely to explain what the little game was."

(THIS OLD, OLD TALE WILL BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH.)

* * * * *

The Postman Called

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

LEN WORMULL (Romford): Having recently read Ravenspur Grange, I found your critical analysis both reasoned and valid. An apparent weakness, I thought, was in the concluding dialogue. Dying from self-administered poison, Edgar Ravenspur - a self-confessed four times killer - makes some strange utterances indeed. To quote but a few: "Bah! I have no regrets - except that I failed" . . . "But does not the proverb say, 'More haste, less speed - ?' . . . "You win, Ferrers Locke! But the gate of death is open for me to escape you!" Then, contradicting his earlier statement, "I repent - while there is time to utter the words, I repent - God have mercy on me, a sinner!"

I followed this with another reading of the Courtfield Cracksman, to me one of the greatest school stories in the Hamilton repertory. Flawless until I came to the parting words of Barnes, the villain of the piece: "Bah! I've had a long run, and a good run, and I'm ready to take my gruel!" The phraseology somehow jarred for me, unbecoming the character and the occasion.

Contrivance and theatricality, yes. But who would hold it against the author, when so much fine writing and atmosphere is there to be savoured?

D. SWIFT (Leeds): I would agree with N. Gayle of Exmouth, who says that he believes Frank Richards has a place in English Literature. Now we have just celebrated the centenary of the birth of that remarkable man, we see that various comments and references (quite justifiably) are being made in periodicals and newspapers.

To some degree, N. Gayle is correct when he says that all comment and criticism of Frank Richards' works seems to be tinged with nostalgia when the critic in question seems to recall his childhood days when he read "The Magnet" and "The Gem". However, although not claiming or even wishing to be a critic, I should say that perhaps not all the devotees of Frank Richards regard his work with nostalgia. "The Magnet" ceased publication four years before I was born and it was not until 1973 that I saw the first Magnet - and that being a Howard Baker facsimile production. Admittedly, when at school I read the "Bunter" books and even then realized the true genius of their author: but as most will say, the Bunter books never recaptured the magic of "The Magnet".

So, to N. Gayle, I would say that he has found at least one reader of "The Magnet" who cannot, even if he tried, find anything nostalgic in the reading of the same: only pure, wholesome entertainment!

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): Our editor is quite correct; William E. Groves was a very prolific writer in the twenties, writing adult, girls and boys stories. A photograph of him will be found in S. P. C. No. 64. Only details known about him is that he was believed a Northerner. Was fond of the poor girl at the mill romantic stuff (which sold so well to the working classes) and was on the staff of 'Answers Library' where Mrs. Frances Brooks wrote. He also wrote under the name of 'Ernest Scott' (for boys) and 'Effie Scott' (for women and girls). He might well have used others, as my own complete list of all girls writers at A. P. shows a number still mysterious - and which official records are lacking.

W. A. PERRETT (Cork): I was delighted to read in the July issue of Danny's Diary that Leonard Shields was Danny's favourite artist. He echoes my sentiments exactly. Shields was, in my opinion, by far the best of all. He was the current artist at the time of my introduction to the Magnet in the "Tyrant of Greyfriars" series in 1931. (How could it

be that long ago!) Comparing Shields with Chapman, his Bunter sketches particularly were far superior. However, having recently acquired the first Wharton Rebel series, I thought that some of Chapman's illustrations were delightful, if a little dated for the period - e.g. prefects in frock-tailed coats.

Congratulations on a very absorbing magazine.

MARY CADOGAN (Beckenham): I would like to draw your readers' attention to two recently published biographies of popular authors, Gillian Freeman assesses the life and work of Angela Brazil in THE SCHOOLGIRL ETHIC (Allen Lane, £4.50), and Mollie Gillen's THE WHEEL OF THINGS is about L. M. Montgomery, the creator of 'Anne of Green Gables'. This book is published by Harrap, £4.95. Many of your readers would enjoy these excellent and entertaining studies.

S. GORDON SWAN (Western Australia): The first story of Martin Stern appeared in PLUCK, No. 71, New Series, dated 10th March, 1906, and other stories followed in subsequent issues. This initial effort was described as "a powerful real-life story by a new author, Andrew Hales." I can find no information on this author, nor have I seen his work elsewhere. Could he have been some connection of A. G. Hales? As regards Martin Stern, he began his career in the somewhat unusual occupation of night-watchman.

Mrs. V. BLEAZARD (Basingstoke): In these days of violence and vandalism it is nice to know that Frank Richards lives on in the memory of some of us to whom he gave great pleasure. My brother and I enjoyed his stories so much, and they were passed round to so many others. In those days, life was centred a great deal in reading and in songs and the piano. My brother used to sing "Glorious Devon", "The Admiral's Broom", "On the Road to Mandalay", "Jack's the Boy" and "The Shade of the Palm". Such lovely old songs.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Mrs. Bleazard is a wonderful lady in her mid-eighties though she looks very much younger, bless her.)

COMING SOON; THE PEARL JUBILEE - the 30th
 Birthday - of COLLECTORS' DIGEST

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 30. JAMES CAGNEY IN SHAKESPEARE

Our opening feature for the new term came from M. G. M. and was Wallace Beery and Jackie Cooper in "O'Shaughnessy's Boy". This was followed by Joan Crawford in "I Live My Life", also from M. G. M.

Next, from M. G. M., came Cicely Courtneidge in "The Imperfect Lady". This was, I believe, our Cicely's only Hollywood film, and it was not a very successful one. Glamorised under the Hollywood system, Miss Courtneidge was no longer the delightful character player so well known on the English stage and in English films. It was a disappointment for those accustomed to her inimitable comedy.

Then, again from M. G. M., came Spencer Tracy and Myma Loy in "Whipsaw". Now, for a change, our next one came from Warner Bros., and it was Dick Powell in "Shipmates for Ever", a pleasant musical.

Next, from M. G. M., came Lionel Barrymore and Wallace Beery in "Ah, Wilderness." I forget the film, but the stage play of the same title was a joyous drama of American family life. Good stage plays do not always make good films. I forget whether or not this one did. †

Now, from Warner Bros., came Kay Francis in "I Found Stella Parish", which is merely a name to me now. This was followed by, from M. G. M., Mala in "The Last of the Pagans". This, probably was a dramatised documentary. Some time earlier we had played the first Mala film, but I forget whether this one was equally good.

Now, from M. G. M., came Laurel and Hardy in their latest full-length feature "The Bohemian Girl". The mixture of opera with the Laurel & Hardy type of comedy seems a bit curious, and I don't think the film ever became an evergreen like many of their pictures. But I expect it had its moments of genius.

Then, from M. G. M., came Jackie Cooper in "Tough Guy", followed by, also from M. G. M., Lionel Barrymore in "The Voice of Bugle Ann". It sounds charming, and I have a feeling that it was, though I cannot remember whether Bugle Ann was a dog, a horse, or a soldier's young lady. Next, from Warner Bros., the incomparable Paul Muni in "Dr. Socrates".

Then, from M. G. M., Warner Baxter in "The Robin Hood of El Dorado", followed by, also from M. G. M., Lewis Stone and Chester Morris in "Three Godfathers". This was M. G. M.'s term with a vengeance.

To wind up the term came "A Midsummer Night's Dream", from Warner Bros., running for over two hours. Shakespeare, with the star players being James Cagney, Micky Rooney, and Anita Louise, gave me a few qualms when I booked it. In fact, it was surprisingly good. Micky Rooney was a superb Puck, and James Cagney played Bottom, the weaver. I only have the three players listed in my booking records, but many Warner stars had their parts to play in the production. It was, indeed, a film to

which one went to scoff and remained to applaud.

(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS SERIES SOON)

* * * * *

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

The end of term meeting on Tuesday, 27th July, was an amiable informal affair with members happily seated round a table groaning with good things: Tom Merry and Holiday annuals, Populars, red Magnets, Bunter books. After news of club postal members, Tom Porter slipped from his sleeve an Anniversary Number, Gem No. 20, dated 27.7.1907 (69 years old to the day) entitled 'Tom Merry's Day Out', followed by a Collectors Item, a handsome volume of old series NLL, 14 to 26. Conversation ebbed and sparkled, ranging over numerous aspects and details of the Hobby. The evening concluded with a reading, in his inimitable manner, by Jack Bellfield from 'What happened to Bunter' (Holiday Annual 1927) featuring a magnificent clash between the fat owl and Kildare of St. Jim's. Next meeting Tuesday, 26th October, Dr. Johnston House, Birmingham.

NORTHERN

No report of Northern Club meeting has reached us at time of going to press.

D. Swift and other Members of the Northern Section of the Old Boys' Book Club, would like to thank their Secretary, Father Geoffrey Good and his wife, for the entertaining evening held at the Vicarage, Staincliffe, Batley, on the 8th August, 1976. Approximately twelve Members met that evening to drink a toast to the memory of Frank Richards and listen to "Floreat Greyfriars". After which proceedings, there was an opportunity to sample the delights of the good Vicar's extensive library and his good wife's delicious supper!

* * *

LONDON

The meeting was very well attended as it always is at the home of Gladys and Laurie Peters. We all missed our dear Uncle Ben, and send him our most sincere wishes for a speedy recovery from his unfortunate accident. Things seem to be waking up a bit on the Centenary Celebration front. Various reports came in from members including newspaper articles, and Exhibitions at libraries still to come. A very successful one was held at Ealing, but as this was on one day only, and we had had no definite information about it, we were unable to give it the support it deserved.

The splendid tea was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone and the entertainment after this, included another reading from the "Battle of the Beaks", the July News Letter of 1959, and a short "William" story which had us all giggling. Norman Wright had brought along a tape on the life and times of the late Will Hay. This was interesting, and we learned lots of things about the comedian which lots of us never knew before, one of the funniest of which was that he was a hypochondriac. It seems that sweepstakes used to be run amongst his colleagues as to what particular "ill" he would be enduring when he turned up for work each day.

The time went all too quickly as always when one is having fun. How lucky we are to have such a hobby ... with such people,

WIN MORSS

* * * * *

FOR SALE: VERY RARE items for the keen Hamilton collector. Pluck containing very early and almost non-existent St. Jim's story; aged and worn copy, preserved in brand-new binding of navy blue with "Mutiny at St. Jim's" Chas. Hamilton in gold on cover; £7. Similar very early and rare Pluck with "The Mystery of the Housemaster" Chas. Hamilton in gold on brand-new navy blue binding; £7. Volume containing twenty selected Gem ranging from 1934 to 1936 (most bound in chronological order). Nice copies and good binding in red with gold lettering: £18. Second-hand hardback "The Sporting Fifth at Ripley's" by Goodyear, 25p. Full postage and packing extra on all items.

Write ERIC FAYNE

(No reply if items already disposed of)

EXCHANGE FOR GEMS OR MAGNETS: Annuals as follows 1929, 30, 35, 51 and 52 Champions; 1922 Boys' Own Paper; 1956 Playbox; 1933 Crackers; 1934 My Favourite; 1935 School Friend Annual (3 Hilda Richards stories and 8 articles on Cliff House).

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REVIEW

VICTORIAN COMICS

Denis Gifford

(George Allen & Unwin, £5.50)

Denis Gifford has produced another collectors' piece, full of fascinating reproductions from Victorian comics. He provides an informative commentary about 'the rough and the tumble, the bash and the splash, the black-eye and the bandage' which originated in these nineteenth century comics and still continue in the present day 'Beano'.

The first British comics Anti-hero, Ally Sloper, is well represented. There are plenty of pictures from favourite comics like the early ILLUSTRATED CHIPS, THE BIG BUDGET, COMIC CUTS, LARKS, DAN LENO'S COMIC JOURNAL, THE JOKER, etc. The standard of illustration in these early ½d and 1d comics is impressive. I particularly enjoyed Weary Willy and Tired Tim, drawn by Tom Browne in ILLUSTRATED CHIPS.

These characters were as lively in the Victorian comics as during their more recent years, and another appealing double-act were Airy Alf and Bouncing Billy in THE BIG BUDGET. This enterprising pair usually came to comic-grief at the end of each episode - smothered in soot, soaked with water or simply 'spifflicated'.

Comic Coppers are here in plenty - starting with the 'peelers' who so frequently crossed swords with Ally Sloper and including Chubbloek Holmes and Shirk the Dog Detective in FUNNY WONDER.

Beautifully produced throughout, and with a coloured picture cover, this book will have a lasting appeal not only for comic-lovers, but for the general reader. (M. C.)

* * * * *

A NOTORIOUS CHARACTER IN CHUMS by S. Gordon Swan

The monthly parts of CHUMS differed from the Annual in that they contained several story supplements which were omitted from the yearly volume. The supplements were numbered I to VIII in Roman figures to differentiate them from the ordinary page-numbering.

Some unusual features are to be found in these special sections. In the issue for January 1924, appeared a story entitled "The Lure of Limehouse", by no less a writer than Sax Rohmer, the creator of Fu-Manchu. This yarn was identical with "Kerry's Kid", which is one of the stories in "Tales of Chinatown", by the same author.

In the next supplement the redoubtable Dr. Fu-Manchu himself made his bow to readers of CHUMS in the first story of the first book about this character. There were ten stories in the series which was completed in the March number. In April began another set of ten stories which comprised the second book of Fu-Manchu. (This was originally published as "The Devil Doctor".) These ended in the first supplement in June and the reader was told that the "Si-Fan Mysteries" would follow immediately. But for some reason the tales in the third book did not commence until January 1925.

One wonders if Sax Rohmer was aware that these yarns were being published in a boys' periodical and if he received any payment for them, as his biography states that he was consistently swindled by his agent for some years, the agent receiving the money for reprints of Rohmer's stories in various publications.

In CHUMS monthly part for August 1924, began a serial by John Britton called "Rainbow Gold". This was a very long story, for each instalment took up practically all of the eight pages in each supplement. I have not encountered this writer's name anywhere else and he is not to be found in Messrs. Lofts and Adley's book, "The Men Behind Boys' Fiction". In all probability it was a pen-name and the reason for his being overlooked lies in the fact that this serial would not

be included in the Annual.

* * * * *

GLOOPS - A LOVABLE WHITE KITTEN

by W. O. G. Lofts

Most of us born before the last war had our own particular newspaper comic strip animal favourite: depending usually on what Dad usually bought as his regular daily paper. My own father was a reader of The Daily Express, so that it was logical that my own brothers and sisters would be avid fans of Rupert Bear. Young readers of The Daily Herald would likewise have loved Bobby Bear - another member of the Bruin family. An extraordinary large mouse dominated The Daily Mail, with the so apt rhyming name of Teddy Tail (whose knot in the tail could never be undone in an incident early in his career) whilst the Daily Mirror had that world famous trio - Pip, Squeak, and Wilfred (whose children's club used to yearly fill the Albert Hall). The last of the National Dailies, The Daily Sketch, had for a change of animal a rather ugly looking animal by the name of Uncle Oohjar.

Apart from Rupert, all sadly to say have long gone from the scene, mostly killed off with the event of the second world war, some briefly to return afterwards, but then fade into oblivion because of the changing tastes of our times. Membership cards, and badges of the above Clubs are still retained as souvenirs to remind us of the very happy times of our own childhood.

Another comic animal, certainly not so well known as the National Daily strips, but who must have delighted generations of young readers, and is practically unknown to readers of the South of England, was a white lovable kitten called Gloops, and for its history one must go right back to the beginning . . .

In 1926, The Yorkshire (Sheffield) Telegraph & Star was running a children's picture strip featuring two Yorkshire terriers named Fuzzy & Wuzzy, and entitled aptly 'The Yorkshire Tykes'. It was drawn and told by Cousin Ken, whose identity was never revealed and is a close secret even to this day. Perhaps the tykes became too boistrous for the artist in time, and he decided to draw a gentler animal, but whatever the reason in issue dated 20th March, 1926, a small white kitten bounced on the scene, was never to grow up like Peter Pan. Apart from

a gap in post-war years is still appearing in the now renamed 'Star'.

"I want you to meet some little new friends of mine. GLOOPS, a beautiful (lovely) kitten, and the Tellystar twins who live just behind the offices of The Telegraph & Star."

So stated the opening instalment, and soon Gloops was joined by such other favourite characters as Granpa (No d) Emma, Burford, and Belinda. The characters had become so popular that in 1928 a Gloops Club was formed, soon with a membership of 200,000 whose ages ranged from 10 days to 87 years!

The aim and ideals of the Club (like other newspaper children's clubs) was to help children less fortunate than themselves, to buy hospital cots, and help other charities, as well as having splendid christmas parties, and outings themselves! When sufficient strips had been published, it was inevitable that Gloops Annuals would be published containing of course reprinted material. Apart from the yearly edition, there was Birthday, Winter, Summer, Easter, and other editions.

The war, unfortunately stopped the activities of the Gloops Club, and afterwards and after a gap of some ten years Gloops was revived, and with further Gloops Annuals appearing in the fifties. Several other 'cousin' artists have drawn the strip since the original 'cousin Ken' in 1926, and the lovable white kitten of amazing individuality, resource, mischievousness, cunning, delightful navete, and general lovableness is still there to entertain children (and adults!) the same as it did their grandparents.

* * * * *

A KNOCK FOR BOYS OF ENGLAND

by O. W. Wadham

Boys' papers were real money makers many moons before the Magnet was born.

I have a volume of Answers for the year 1889. A correspondent inquires: "Do boys' papers pay?"

The answer is given as follows: "It will be a good many days before Answers brings in the big profits of some of the boys' papers."

Take Boys Of England for example: it is a journal for which we have no admiration, but its money-making power is, nevertheless, considerable.

The proprietor, Mr. Edwin J. Brett, who, from being a small engraver, has become a rich newspaper owner, is believed by competent judges to net over £13,000 per annum from Boys Of England.

Our opinion, however, is that the best paper for boys - and big boys, too - is Young Folks, which is full of stories by leading authors of the day. Robert Louis Stevenson, William Black, and many other distinguished men write for Young Folks."

Surely this could not be the paper that afterwards became Young Folks Tales, and famous for years for Prince Pippin and Mabel fairy stories? Today it is one of the most difficult of publications for collectors to secure.

Incidentally, Answers, in after years, was regularly advertised in nearly every Fleetway boys' paper and comic journal that existed. It ceased publication about a decade ago, yet Titbits, cast in the same mould, is still prospering.

* * * * *

"STRING OF PEARLS"

threaded by Ernest Holman

My string contains 23 such adornments, 12 mediums, 11 smalls. I know they are not everyone's choice; cultured pearls at most, some might say. Nevertheless, to me they fill a worthy place in Hamiltonia.

Written after the second World War, they are all stories of St. Jim's. Excluding Annuals, they are (so I believe) the complete set of Tom Merry yarns to appear in the post-war years. (There may have been others but I have certainly not seen or heard of them.)

The first five of the mediums were published by Mandeville (mostly printed and bound in Czecho-Slovakia) at the end of the Forties and beginning of the Fifties. In hard back covers, they were approximately 60,000 words in length.

In 1952, the Goldhawk paperbacks began to appear. These were about half the length of the Mandevilles - somewhat longer than a single 'Gem', more nearly of 'Magnet' length. They came out near the end of this year at the rate of two a month. Early in 1953, No. 11 appeared on

its own - and then silence! There were to be no more. Thus eleven small pearls constituted the sum total of this short-lived venture.

However, the mediums re-appeared. Spring Publications reprinted the first Mandevilles in hard back - followed by seven new stories. Then, again, silence. The same situation - there were to be no more. Twelve medium pearls in all.

I have them all - 23 post-war St. Jim's, for easy 'lifting off the shelves' at any time - as often, I suppose, as one reaches out for a 'Holiday Annual' to re-read. Well, what sort of stories were they?

Certainly, they contained nothing new - the pattern as before, in fact. All the same, a not-unattractive pattern.

Gussy, of course, was always to the fore: on the run (once more!) from injustice; later to be in the same situation, leading to a Tuckshop rebellion; reforming Cardew; getting involved in a diamond robbery; ragging (unsuccessfully) the New House; correcting his minor. In particular, a splendid example of Gussy's tact and judgment - unable to vacate the Head's study which he has entered on one occasion, he is forced to hide behind a chair and listen to a conversation not intended for his ears. Only Gussy could reveal his presence and offer apologies for having inadvertently 'listened in'. ("Extraordinary," thought Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton, slightly amused, agreed.)

There was a sacking for Tom Merry but, like other heroes before him, he just 'wouldn't go'. At one time Tom was kidnapped but George Francis Kerr was, as usual, able to solve the matter. (The persecution of Mr. Railton in this story by Miss Priscilla Fawcett is fascinating.) Tom also tackles 'The Game One' in the local Ring; naturally, Tom Merry is prominent in all the stories, especially in three that recall Talbot's past.

There is plenty of House Rivalry; we have Ratcliffe very much 'down' on Figgins; a couple of typical Baggy Trimble yarns; Skimpole innocently photographing Knox abaft 'The Green Man'; Manners Minor taking to the 'Pools'; Bunter causing trouble at St. Jim's. All the usual, familiar plots - told with Hamilton efficiency throughout.

If one thing stands out more than any other in these stories, I would say it is the re-emergence of Cardew. Pretty well a shadow of his former self in the 'Gem' after the middle of the Twenties, Cardew is

back in many of his 'ways'. True, the portrait is never so finely sketched as, say, in the Cardew Captain series of the early Twenties; all the same, he is a recognisable R.R.C. Now called 'The Cad' (thanks to Douglas Robinson) he is soon in a variety of scrapes due to his gambling propensities; we also see him again opposing Tom Merry for the captaincy; twitting Tom in the old whimsical manner; backing-up Tom when the latter finds 'trouble'; ragging Railton's study; unmasking the Head's Secretary; falling into the clutches of Cutts; letting the side down in the Carcroft match; despatching Gussy on a mission with an empty camera. If not exactly the Cardew as we knew him, nevertheless he played many typical parts in these post-war stories.

My own favourite pearls are the small ones; some of the Goldhawks were not far removed from many single 'Gem' yarns - they had continuity, with many references to previous incidents in subsequent stories. The last four Goldhawks all contained the name D'Arcy in the titles, as though a look ahead was imagining Gussy Books as well as Bunter books.

Illustrations left much to be desired. C. H. Chapman was the later illustrator of the Goldhawks (so that in the early Fifties there was the very odd fact of Chapman sketching St. Jim's and MacDonald doing the same for Greyfriars!). I doubt if a single one of the 23 books showed the reader a typical St. Jim's image. (Perhaps one was reminded, instead, of Jennings!) This question of the illustrations is the least attractive part of all these books - and to think that Bob MacDonald was available at the time! One further interesting point about the hard backs brought out by Spring was that all issues showed St. Jim's as having been written by Frank Richards (of Bunter fame!). Not a mention of Martin Clifford!

(I was tempted to include one of the Bunter books in these post-war St. Jim's; "Lord Billy Bunter" was acted out as much by the St. Jim's boys as the Greyfriars contingent. Quite a part of the story is the attempt of Gussy's friends to prevent him "givin' a wottah a feahful thwashin.'")

Literally, the end of the road for St. Jim's was a caravanning story - and the only holiday yarn of the lot. It had all the Hamilton

ingredients - Gussy 'seeing a man about a horse'; a mysterious follower of the Van in which he has earlier hidden plunder; witnessing a robbery (and, of course, catching the thief); above all, meeting up with Figgins & Co. and indulging in the usual ructions on the road. This final St. Jim's could not have wound up more typically than "the summer sun nowhere shone down on a happier crowd than Tom Merry & Co. Caravanners."

If none of these 23 actually class as 'little Gems', they all make up quite a presentable post-war "String of Pearls".

Long School Tale by Chas. Hamilton.

