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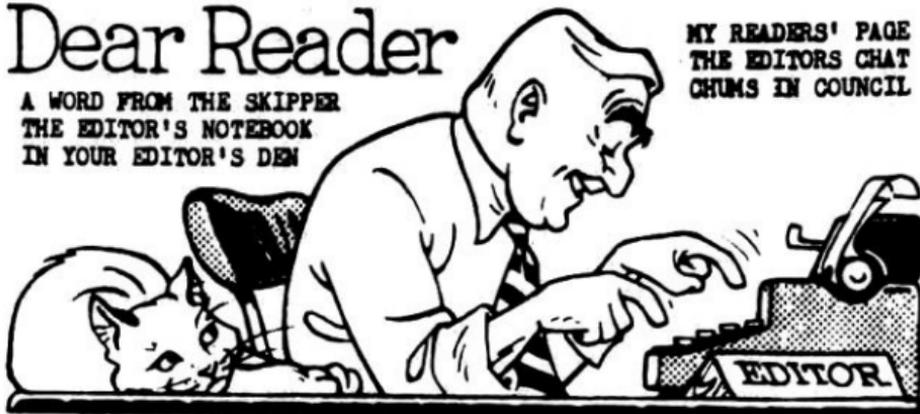
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Dear Reader

A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER
THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK
IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

MY READERS' PAGE
THE EDITORS CHAT
CHUMS IN COUNCIL



THAT THREE-GUINEA WATCH

In a recent letter a reader mentioned that lovely old tale "The Adventures of a Three-Guinea Watch" and I was moved to sort it out from my book-cases, and read it again. It is many years since I last read it. I found that it had lost none of its charm for me, and I enjoyed enormously reading it again after such a long passage of time.

First published in 1880, it was Talbot Baines Reed's first full-length story. It was also the first time that Reed was persuaded to

abandon anonymity and allow his own name to be attached to the story.

I was no youngster when I first read it, for, when I was a boy at school, it had long been out of print. I sought it, but it took me years to find it. At the public library, its number always showed in red, meaning that the book was not available. It was either "lost, stolen, or strayed".

The story would provide ample ammunition for attack from trendy modern critics, of course. As with most Reed stories, there is a marked religious motif - the author was a sincere believer - and, another feature of most Reed tales, coincidences come thick and fast. And why not? They give the non-snooty reader a cosy feeling - and, after all, coincidences do sometimes happen in real life. Once when I was touring in Scotland I went into a telephone box in Wick in the north to ring up my home to assure myself that all was well. Various phone-numbers had been pencilled on the walls of the booth, as is the custom with the British public, and I was astonished to see my own phone number - Elmbridge 3357 - pencilled clearly in front of me. Goodness only knows who had written up my phone number in that far-north box. I never found out.

And, of course, one does occasionally run into an old acquaintance in the most unexpected places.

Reed is so readable, and that, I guess, is the secret of most of those whose work has lasted down the years.

"Three-Guinea Watch" is not a school story, though the watch's first owner is a boy who is at Randlebury School for a few chapters. The middle chapters are set at Cambridge, and the final sequence is played out at the relief of Lucknow. There is a considerable amount of delightful gentle humour, especially in the chapter when the watch finds himself among other "unredeemed pledges" at a bargain sale. And at the end nobody is forgotten. There are no loose ends.

Reed is mainly famous today for his "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's" but, good though that is, my own favourite Reed books are not school stories at all. Both "Cock House at Fellsgarth" and "The Willoughby Captains" tend slightly to stodginess. I have never had much doubt that Kildare and Monteith of St. Jim's were based on "The Willoughby Captains" (which may be the reason why the theme was dropped

from the Gem after early days) and I fancy that the background of St. Jim's was inspired by "The Cock House at Fellsgarth".

Like many of my readers, I expect, I have in my library the whole of Reed's output, and love them all, with the possible exception of "Sir Ludar" which I have never been moved to read. My favourite, if it matters at all, is "Dog With a Bad Name", closely followed by "My Friend Smith". T. B. Reed died at Christmas time 1893, still in his prime. It must say something for a story like "Three Guinea Watch", written in 1880, that I can read it and be charmed with it nearly a hundred years after it first appeared.

THE LIMPING SAILOR

~~Some months back I mentioned Broadcast Records~~ which were very cheap, good, and popular in the record shops between the wars. This led some readers to recall Woolworth's 6d. records, many of which were surprisingly good. Michael Perry writes to tell me that the Woolworth's record label was "Embassy".

It reminds me that Woolworth's also sold some good books at low prices. A series which Woolworth's sold at 6d. each was published by The Readers' Library Publishing Co. of Kingsway. Of small format, with stiff covers plus a dust-jacket, they were good value for money, and even now one occasionally comes across them in second-hand bookshops. One I value is "The Fleet's In" by Russell Holman, not, I think, because it is a particularly good story, but because it is the book of one of the last Paramount silent films starring Clara Bow, from the late twenties.

In the thirties, Woolworth's marketed books of larger format, with stiff covers and attractive dust-jackets, put out by the Modern Publishing Co. of Farringdon Avenue. The one of these which I have kept for many years is "The Limping Sailor" by Justin Brooke. Who he was I have no idea, but the name smacks of a pseudonym. Generally I find cheap thrillers unreadable, and just why I came to buy this one long ago I can't think. It is, in fact, a remarkably fine thriller, very much of the Edgar Wallace school. It holds the interest throughout, with a large haunted house on the Essex marshes and weird and wonderful happenings, all of which are satisfactorily explained at the end. The

mystery of the identity of the chief criminal and of the chief detective remains a mystery till the last chapter.

The setting of the Essex marshes is excellent, and the writer seems to me well-acquainted with the Blackwater coast and such places as Burnham-on-Crouch. His only slip is referring to Tollesbury as a "pretty little town" - it's only a tiny village - and mentioning that the London express drew up in Tollesbury station. Tollesbury had a railway station in those days, but it was at the end of the Kelvedon to Tollesbury Light Railway, and no London train ever ran on its metals.

All the same, "The Limping Sailor" is immensely readable. Having just dug it out from my book-shelves, I have enjoyed it again as much as ever. The dust jacket has the price 2/- printed on it, but it is possible that Woolworth's sold it for less. I am surprised that a writer as good as Justin Brooke, whoever he was, did not find more expensive-looking publishers to present his work.

TAILPIECE

"They're as bad as animals," said someone in my daily paper, referring to the louts who spread terror and destruction around before, during, and after football-matches. What an insult! To animals.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

Danny's Diary

MAY 1927

Early in May somebody deposited a large trunk in the left-luggage office at Charing Cross Station. Three days later a dreadful smell seemed to be coming from the trunk. When it was opened, they found it contained the cut-up body of a woman.

Mum says I ought not to read such things in the paper, but how can I help it when it sprawls across the front page. Besides, it's exciting. Even more exciting than Sexton Blake.

The Paul Dallas series has continued in the Magnet. In "The

Complete Outsider", the Remove chums get fed-up when the Bounder's hatred of Dallas begins to interfere with the progress of the junior cricket.

Last of a fine series was "The Boy Who Found His Father". Mr. Dallas turns up with scarcely a penny in his pocket. Yet Dallas prefers to go with his real father, in preference to accepting anything further from Mr. Vernon-Smith. And when Dallas finally leaves Greyfriars, the Bounder is sorry that he did not behave a bit better to Dallas. This series has made a lovely school story, written with much restraint.

"Bunter the Bold" was an amusing single interlude. Bunter disgraces himself by running away from a Third Form fag, and the Remove sends the Owl to Coventry until he can redeem himself. But the end of it all is beastly for Bunter. Last tale of the month was not by the real Frank Richards. Called "Fish's Burglar Hunt", it relates how Fisher T. Fish sets himself up as a detective.

All taxi fares in London have been reduced by 25%. But it is still much cheaper to ride on the L. C. C. trams where the fare is 2d. All The Way between 10 and 4 o'clock.

In the Schoolboys' Own Library this month I bought "Harry Wharton's Downfall" which is an old Magnet tale in which Wharton loses the junior captaincy to Bulstrode. The other S. O. L. is one of the St. Katie's stories, but I didn't buy it as I don't care for Michael Poole.

Petts Wood at Chislehurst has been opened to the public as a memorial to William Willett who thought out the scheme of putting the clocks on an hour in summer - British Summer Time, to be exact.

The exciting and unusual series about Harry Gresham has continued in the Nelson Lee Library. The opening tale of the month was entitled "The Haunted Schoolboy". The question is, is Gresham really seeing strange things or is he imagining it all?

This series ended with "Handy Cures A Coward", and the history of the mystery is explained. Gresham's mother was insane as the result of the zeppelin bombs during the war. He hadn't seen his mother since he was five years old, but always, as he grew older, he felt that he might carry the taint of insanity too. However, Mrs. Gresham has a brain operation, and all comes right at the finish.

A new St. Frank's series has opened with "The Fresh Air Fiends". Somebody starts the idea for a reason, but the boys like the idea - no lessons, no tight-fitting Etons to wear. And Handy gets hot persuading everybody what a good idea it is. The Headmaster's sister persuades her brother to let anybody go under canvas during the hot weather. But her husband, the Head's brother-in-law, has bought Holt's farm, and plans to search on it for Roman treasure.

The American aviator Charles Lindbergh flew from New York to Paris in 33½ hours. He came to London and received a tumultuous welcome there.

In the Gem the month's first tale was the final in the silly series about the faddist Head, Dr. Crankley. Entitled "The Jape of the Term", it was mainly a lot of exaggerated business over rivalry with the Grammar School. Dr. Crankley leaves at the finish.

Then "Wally's Secret Society" and a sequel to it, "The Hidden Hand". The secret society is the Crimson Dagger, and the fags, with headquarters in the crypt, set out to punish anybody who offends them. Too silly for the Gem.

In the last week of the month the real Martin Clifford was back in an excellent and serious tale about Cardew, Levison, Tickey Tapp, and cricket. To protect his pal Cardew, Levison allows himself to be expelled, and he is locked in Nobody's Study for the time being. This story is entitled "The Loyalty of Levison" and it continues next month.

Doug bought a Union Jack and gave it to me. It was called "The Case of the Disqualified Derby", an exciting tale of how Blake and Tinker intervened in the greatest Turf swindle ever known.

At the pictures this month we have seen Bebe Daniels and Wallace Beery in "Volcano"; Jack Holt in "The Sea Horses"; Dorothy Gish in "Neil Gwyn" (Dorothy in a British film, the one that opened the Plaza Cinema in London some time ago); Milton Sills in "Men of Steel"; and Betty Balfour in "Blinkeyes".

A man named Robinson has been arrested in connection with the Charing Cross trunk murder.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Schoolboys' Own Library No. 51, "Harry Wharton's Downfall" comprised a red-Magnet story of the same title from the spring of 1911 plus another red-Magnet story of six weeks later. Both stories were heavily pruned, and lost a number of chapters in

the reprinting. The theme was that of Bulstrode becoming junior captain in place of Harry Wharton. It would surely have been preferable to present one long story complete than a hybrid of chunks from two stories.

An interesting factor is that the same two stories had been presented in the same way in a Boys' Friend Library of 1917 under the title of "On The Warpath". In the latter case an episode from a third story was tacked on at the finish. The B.F.L. was in very small print, and, consequently, a good deal longer than any tale in the S.O.L. If the S.O.L. reprint was actually taken from the B.F.L. reprint (and if not it is an odd coincidence that extracts from identical tales were selected) then it was, so far as I recall, the only time a B.F.L. tale was transferred to the S.O.L.

Apparently the work of Hamilton in the B.F.L. was overlooked, which is surprising when one considers how Hamilton material was being gulped up and swallowed by the reprint system, eventually leading to the death of the Popular. Many excellent Hamilton tales in the B.F.L. - e.g. "The School Under Canvas", "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays", "After Lights Out", "Rivals of St. Kit's", "Boy Without a Name", "Rivals & Chums", etc., would have formed welcome material for the S.O.L., and would have eased the drain on supply and demand.

Bulstrode played a large part in the red Magnet, but later on he dropped from the stories, and was not mentioned in the stories of the thirties. Absurdly enough, an editorial reply in the latterday Gem announced that "Bulstrode is the Remove wicket-keeper" - which was unlikely in the circumstances.

S.O.L. No. 52 was "Under Roger's Rule", a St. Katie's story from a series written by Michael Poole which had featured in the Gem in the early twenties.)

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

A good many of the Mysteries of the Detective Weekly have now been solved and my thanks are due to some of my old contributors for their help in this respect. The remaining mysteries may be solved sometime in the future or else they will remain mysteries forever.

I hope you will enjoy the different type of articles this month. They are by our well-known contributors. Next month I hope to use a very good article by Mr. Dennington, it will probably use all the space available but I am sure will be welcome to all our readers.

THE WRONG SIDE OF THE LAW

by Cyril Rowe

I wonder if it ever crossed the mind of readers of the Sexton Blake Saga how often the great detective operated on the wrong side of the law? Oh yes, quite obviously with the best of intentions and all for the frustration of crookdom, this was to be understood. But still ...

Were all the revolvers, rifles and shotguns that he used all licenced? and were they always used in real defence, or were they provocative, contrary to the law, which only allows the usage in the former case. How often did he break and enter, use jemmys and skeleton keys?

How many times did he cross frontiers, or leave this country indeed, without the formality of passport for himself and Tinker, and how did he finagle affairs for Tinker when quite a lad in earlier tales (before he became the respectable Mr. Carter), so that he could drive cars when under age and even pilot an aeroplane.

Goodness knows how many times he broke the quarantine laws by taking Pedro in and out of this country and abroad and nothing said. These however, are conditions that papers for younger readers took in their stride and were quite happily swallowed and ignored by the readers who were probably mostly unaware that any such rules of law applied.

But I can refer to much more serious breaches of the law and downright criminality in some cases which I enumerate below. They do however concern Blake more in his role as explorer and adventurer rather than in his stricter detective personality.

The author who makes hay with Blake's reputation is Cecil Hayter and Blake's accomplice is Sir Richard Losely, onetime schoolmate of Blake and in most of the tales in question the Colonial Governor of Musardu in West Africa, aided by Lobangu, Prince of the Ethaia, not all of whose joint adventures were strictly speaking, legal, and would today have had considerable international repercussions. Nevertheless, despite this observation and what is to come, I observe and maintain that the Hayter opus is one of the best, most thrilling and well-written sections of the biography of Blake. "The Place of Fire", U. J. 652, Blake finds a book on a barrow recounting the experience of an old Roman Pro-Consul in Mwaa in East Africa, recording gold, silver and jewels,

an Italian follows the directions but cannot escape with the treasure. Blake proposes an expedition. "Of course" he says "there may be no loot". Rather reprehensible but off Sir Richard, Blake and Tinker go, together with Lobangu and after thrilling adventures - come away with the loot. Well it was only taken from savage uneducated tribesmen, in adventure story terms this is never considered theft.

U. J. 672. The Mystery of the Inari Treasure.

Once again the same actors are involved, this time seeking James Merton (on behalf of his brother, Sir Eustace) who has gone hunting this treasure and got himself in trouble. They duly rescue him and share the treasure. In this adventure Blake breaks a warriors neck quite matter-of-factly and in both tales many black opponents go down to rifle fire and spear thrust...

U. J. 696. The Treasure of Sonora.

Another variation of the theme, using the same protagonists. In this tale Phelim an Irishman recounts how he helped in a South American State revolution escaping with the cast-out President Don Jose, carrying with him scores of cases of gold bars, each case containing some £5,000 worth. They have to be sunk to escape the hands of the counter revolutionaries. Blake & Co. recover it after the usual adventures and share it. No nonsense about returning it to the country's treasury where it should belong.

U. J. 795. The Moon of the East.

Pat Grierson, old pal of Sir Richard's goes out to China and pinches this precious stone - Moon of the East, hides it when he is collared, and though he cannot get away, he gets a message through to Sir Richard with a map. As you will expect, off they go, rescue Grierson and come off with the stone. Well, maybe you really cannot rob Chinese, coloured rascals as they are!:

U. J. 863. The Mystery of La Perousse

La Perousse, a French naval man, was sent out in 1785 to discover Australia (or thereabouts) with massive treasure on board to pay for and establish a French colony. He is wrecked. All these years after our customary companions find it and retrieve it. Again no question of the French treasury. The tale ends with Sexton Blake saying "Tomorrow we'll get the loot on board and head back for London. Pedro misses the

sniffs, of London, don't you old chap?"

U. J. 953. Missing at Lloyds.

A variant of the above. During the first World War the Uralia was carrying three millions in bar gold and in trying to escape from a U-boat wrecked herself and sank in fifteen fathoms off Valdez Island. This was in Spanish territorial waters, but Sir Richard is not deterred by any illegality in this though he did get a quasi title to her by standing three Lloyds underwriters a drink. Well of course the same old gang do have adventures and retrieve the gold and the yarn ends with Sir Richard saying "This is where we go home and buy old Lobangu a dress suit and take him to the Savoy on the proceeds of the loot". And it was so.

U. J. 992. Sexton Blake - Gun runner.

The very title of this story discloses the shady side of things. Sir Richard & Co. engage to smuggle guns and ammunition to Don Gonzalez a South American revolutionary.

"How" said Sir Richard "are you for a little filibust ring expedition? If we can make a pot of money, if we don't we may get something in the 'boiling oil' line."

Well of course they take the risk and win out gaining a nice lot of mining concessions, gold, silver, copper, tin, bismuth. Can we call it the rewards of virtue? But do read the tales and don't forget the more truly detective tales of Cecil Hayter, such as The Abbey Mystery No. 605, On War Service No. 645, The House of Secrets No. 664, the Moorhouse Mystery No. 681 and many more.

A LESSER-KNOWN CRIMINAL

by S. G. Swan

"Tall, erect and well-knit, with a fine head crowned with close-cut iron grey hair, round which the gaslight seemed to make a sort of halo. His trim moustache was iron grey too and so were his eyes. His eyes had a way of looking hard in consequence, but not when he smiled and he wisely smiled often."

This is a description of one of the lesser-known stars in the criminal firmament which accompanied the Sexton Blake Saga. He was the grandiloquently-named Captain Horatio Peak, D.S.O.

We first meet with this gentleman in a story entitled "The Man Who Changed Places, or the Mystery of Convict 308" which ran serially

in the Dreadnought commencing with No. 72 dated 11 October, 1913, and ending in No. 84, 3rd January, 1914.

The story deals with the escape of a convict, one Robert Harling, from Princetown Gaol, where he was serving a sentence for a crime for which Horatio Peak was responsible. The plot is too complicated to give in detail here, suffice it is to say that Harling discovers a bundle of civilian clothes and is about to undo them when a stranger attacks him. After a brief fight the stranger's demeanour changes and they shake hands. Harling explains his needs and asks for money. The stranger gives him the clothes and a bunch of seals - all he possesses - and Harling goes on his way. At a lonely cottage he finds food and drink and exchanges the pruning knife he had brought from prison for a large carving-knife. Later an old man is found murdered in the cottage and Harling's pruning knife directs suspicion towards him. Harling confronts Horatio Peak and threatens to kill him but is stopped by the intervention of a girl who turns out to be Harling's own daughter, who does not know Harling is her father. The glib, hypocritical Horatio Peak succeeds in persuading Harling that he is his friend and offers him a hiding place. Then by a shameful piece of double-crossing, he induces the girl to betray the escaped convict's whereabouts. But it is Sexton Blake who has come down on his trail and, having heard his story, lets him go and takes a hand in the game of unmasking Captain Peak. (This story was reprinted in the Sexton Blake Library No. 7, with the title reversed, i.e. The Case of Convict 308 or, The Men Who Changed Places. J.P.)

It turns out that Peak has a wife who is described as a dipsomaniac that would be called an alcoholic in these days - driven to drink by his treatment of her after he had run through all her money. At a public meeting this neglected woman makes a scathing denunciation of her husband, saying that he was never a Captain but only held subalton's rank in a Colonial regiment of militia and from that, after one brief year, he was dismissed for foul-riding in a regimental steeplechase. He never heard a shot fired in war in his life.

Afterwards, in their home, Peak makes a murderous assault upon his wife which is frustrated by Sexton Blake.

Incidentally the convicts name was altered to Carling when the

story was reprinted. Why, only the A. P. knew. Just one of their many mysterious doings. J. P.

The next story of Horatio Peak was in the Sexton Blake Library No. 27, "A Case of Blackmail", in which his knavish tricks are once more foiled by Sexton Blake. In this story Peak was apparently killed but he turned up again in S. B. L. No. 64, in which story he only plays a secondary part, the main villain being one Otto Wrangle, a German super-spy. Peak aids and abets him but Blake is on his trail and the Captain is sent back to prison and that is the last we are destined to hear of him.

This man had none of the attributes which distinguished other criminals in the Blake Saga, Horatio Peak was a treacherous coward and a despicable villain without a redeeming feature, yet the stories in which he appeared hold a certain fascination inasmuch as the author, E. W. Alais, was a story-teller of no mean calibre.

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

THE DIAMOND JUBILEE OF ST. FRANK'S COLLEGE by Jim Cook

It is 1917. The world is at war. London was being bombed. The battles at Passchendale, Cambrai and Messines were being painfully decided. The Russian Revolution was in a state of flux to finally collapse with an armistice with Germany. The United States of America declared war on Germany. The British Royal Family assumed the name of Windsor and gold sovereigns were withdrawn from circulation.

There was a proposal for British Decimal Coinage which was, however, quashed by a Royal Commission three years later.

The Bolsheviks seized control of what was to be known as the October Revolution.

1917 was also the year of the Balfour Declaration to provide a Jewish National Home in Palestine.

Amid all this welter of slaughter, revolutions, shortage of food and a fearful uncertainty of the future, there rose out of the fog of

despair a bright, cheery illumination that pierced the darkness of war-torn Britain. St. Frank's College appeared for the first time in the Nelson Lee Library.

Tales of school life and detective adventure were expertly blended by Edwy Searles Brooks. It was a joyous combination that brought relief in those dark war days. Although the reader was made aware of Britain's enemies yet the war was lightly touched on except perhaps when a temporary headmaster was charged with treason and conspiracy.

Stories about St. Frank's were eagerly looked forward to each Wednesday, the day of publication. And in spite of air raids and many other disruptions the Nelson Lee Library never failed to arrive. For one penny-halfpenny the reader was transported out of the miseries of a global conflict to a weekly short-term event at a public school where thrills and humour and mystery made life a little more pleasant in those troubled times.

Sixty years have passed; the ranks have thinned out. A coterie of Old Boys yet remain to read and read again those grand old stories about St. Frank's College. The tales are as fresh as the day they were published. This sense of timelessness raises St. Frank's College above the clutches of Time.

The year is 1933. The Nelson Lee Library has finished publication. It is as though St. Frank's wants no part in the ominous future that shouts daily from all directions. Created in a war to end all wars perhaps St. Frank's had prescience and understanding of a world about to be threatened once more.

1933. Concentration camps were started in Germany. Germany left the League of Nations. James Hilton wrote his *Lost Horizon*, and I. C. I. discovered polythene.

And so it went on. St. Frank's had closed its gates and the boys had gone on a long vacation. Copies of the Nelson Lee Library were being hoarded by collectors who were to receive the blessing later from many lovers of the St. Frank's yarns.

Sixty years have not dimmed the enthusiasm for reading these school and adventure stories about the boys of St. Frank's. The reason may well be because the tales were wholesome reading ... but perhaps it is because good stories are scarce and we should take care of them.

For myself, I hope there's a St. Frank's story within arm's reach when I am dying.

A FORGOTTEN SERIES

by R. J. Godsave

Any series which immediately followed one of E. S. Brooks' 'Greats' must inevitably appear dull and uninteresting in comparison. Such was the fate of the William K. Smith series written early in 1924 immediately following Dr. Karnak.

Very little mention has been made of this series over the years, no doubt due to the reasons given and also to the fact that at that period of the Lee it could be regarded as the 'odd man out' in the usual run of stories.

Much of the countryside around St. Frank's had been purchased by Mr. William K. Smith with the intention of building a number of large factories. A force of building workers had been imported from the United States, and with huts built for their living quarters greatly added to the detriment of the surrounding district.

By pressure brought to bear on the school authorities Mr. Smith was able to instal his own man as Head Master of St. Frank's which brought the junior school into conflict with Mr. Smith and his workers.

To many readers who had built up a mental picture of the surrounding countryside it was not pleasant to read of the destruction of this picture.

All this is on par with the demolition of the pre-fabs after the war, with the concrete foundation slabs left for quite a while with grass growing through the cracks. Many months had to pass before the ground was to recover its former state.

To my mind the Smith series was out of tune with the usual run of the stories at this time, and would have been more suitable to be included with the Nelson Lees which appeared at the end of the life of the Nelson Lee Library where one reads of a house and grounds surrounded by a strong wall guarded inside by savage dogs. This house and grounds was actually built on a part of Bellton Wood.

This type of story written by Brooks at that time may be the answer to the correspondent who wondered why the Lee Columnists seemed to suggest that St. Frank's ceased existence after 1929.

THE YEAR IS 1906

from Cyril Rowe

BACK NUMBERS WANTED. I am asked by E. S. Brooks of Windsor House, Langland Bay, Glam., to state that he will pay 2s/6d and exchange 120 clean copies of "Pluck" and the "Marvel" for a number of early Union Jacks and copies of the Boys' Herald. Will any reader who has these copies kindly send Mr. Brooks a postcard.

(Extract from Skipper's Weekly Chat,
Union Jack 145: July 21st, 1906.)

Is this E.S.B's first appearance in the old papers? I suggest so, knowing of his connection with his brother's work in the Welsh Theatre. If so, it certainly shows that, in his youth, he was interested in the old original Amalgamated Press weekly papers, and no doubt picking up ideas in studying the market for his eventual burst on the scene.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 215. TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

Last month Roger Jenkins commented on the ubiquity of Lovell in the later Rookwood stories. One wonders why an author like Hamilton made the mistake of overplaying some of his characters.

One like Lovell, or, indeed, Coker, was amusing and very welcome in small doses, but became something of a bore when starred in the same role for week after week and month after month.

Up till 1913 the Gem was easily the most popular of all the Hamilton papers, but then the circulation dropped. The Gem never recovered the lost ground, though the greater part of its lifetime was still yet to come.

I have always believed that the waning popularity of St. Jim's at that time was due to the glut of Talbot stories followed by series after series in which Levison and Cardew played the lead and overshadowed other characters whom readers had long loved.

Some C.D. readers may recall that I wrote, some years ago, concerning the Hamilton story "After Lights Out" which appeared in the Boys' Friend Library in 1917: "'After Lights Out' falls into three

natural sections, and it is a fair conclusion that it was originally written as three separate stories for the Gem. Just why, then, was it published in the B. F. L. ? We can rule out any idea that there was a shortage of stories for the monthly, though it is still possible that the editor thought it might give the B. F. L. a boost. On the other hand, it lessened the supply of genuine material available for the Gem. Is it possible that Pentelow would think such a shortage would not matter? Another possibility, perhaps unlikely, is that the editor may have thought the Gem was presenting a little too much Cardew and Levison.'

Many years ago, one heard a good deal about "After Lights Out", though it has long lost its impact, and it is rarely mentioned today. It is a curious thing, as we comment elsewhere in this issue of C. D. , that a story like this was never reprinted in the S. O. L.

One could add, that, whatever the editor and the writer might have thought at the time, the glut of Talbot tales and of Cardew-Levison tales were far from welcome with some Gem readers.

I cannot recall that the error of character overplaying was ever made with Greyfriars, though all three schools suffered from an over-abundance of new boys of all types, who were usually left straying around in the wings for the Who's Who and Prospectus addicts to collect together and make obvious the preposterous over-population of the Remove at Greyfriars.

By the thirties, Rookwood had long ended, and the real Martin Clifford was no longer called upon to write of St. Jim's. Frank Richards had learned from experience, and all through the thirties, though a number of new boys came on the scene, not one of them was permanent. The loose ends were more carefully tied up, and, after their brief hour in the limelight, the newcomers were consigned to oblivion.

Through most of the history of Rookwood there was too much Mornington, though it is doubtful whether this did any harm to the Rookwood story in general. Most people liked him. In fact, you had to like Mornington if you liked Rookwood, in the same way that it is pointless to say you disliked Billy Bunter while professing to like Greyfriars. For years, Rookwood was the home of melodrama, and the two missing heirs - 'Erbert and Erroll - who turned up in 1917 were at least one missing heir too many in one year, but they got by.

Lovell, however, was the type of character who could and did become irritating, and his prominence in later times may well have dampened Rookwood's popularity with the masses.

Though Frank Richards learned his lesson, it seems evident that Martin Clifford did not. The great prominence he gave to Arthur Augustus in the new stories of the final nine months of the Gem, and in the post-war St. Jim's, was really a mistake. Gussy had always been a fine and useful character at St. Jim's, but his mannerisms, like those of Lovell, could become tedious if Gussy was not a favourite of yours. Gussy was a favourite of mine, so I never found him superfluous, but some readers may well have done.

Hamilton believed, or publishers led him to believe, that Bunter sold the Bunter books. No doubt he believed that he could make a star of Gussy in the same way. In fact, neither Gussy nor Lovell was another Billy Bunter class of star.

* * * * *

THE HAPPY HIKERS

by W. O. G. Lofts

There used to be a very popular song entitled "I'm Happy When I'm Hiking". As with the song, the glorious outdoor exercise of hiking seems likewise a thing of the past. Its decline caused no doubt, by our beautiful countryside being made less and less available to the public each year. One has only to see the deep wounds across our many Counties with the new motorways and dual-carriageways to understand what I mean. Despite green belt areas, the days are gone when, in khaki shorts, haversack containing small tent and utensils, one could camp the night in a farmer's field, and then roam at will the next day in England's green and pleasant land.

Today most 'hikes' are in the form of weekend rambles, going by car, or camping at one spot the whole of the holiday. But no writer could possibly describe the scene better of hiking than Frank Richards.

Bunter's red perspiring face in sweltering hot summers toiling behind the Famous Five. Leafy shady lanes, with unshaven beery tramps lurking behind hedges, and the Co. more than a match for them. Those picnics, with a glorious spread, and wasps buzzing round the jam pot. Those cool bubbling brooks and streams, and yes, Bunter

again in comic relief being chased across a field by a bull who turns out to be a friendly cow! Almost every boy who read the Magnet wished he could have joined the Greyfriars juniors on one of their famous hiking tours.

C. H. Chapman was, in my opinion, also at his very best when illustrating a Greyfriars hiking series. Though curiously enough both he and Frank Richards were keen cyclists in their younger days, and were more content to eat up the miles of winding lanes by bike rather than on foot. Unknown to most readers, and admirers of Mr. Chapman, was that in 1932 he broke into the picture strip market with a series entitled "Happy Hikers" in the comic Merry & Bright.

Starting with issue No. 804, dated 3rd September, there was a full page strip of twelve pictures, relating the adventures of three chums, Tubby Pike, Mike, and Ike. Tubby who was an overlarge Billy Bunter type of fellow, but with the face and disposition of Tubby Muffin, was tremendously strong, and loved his food. He also sang in a deep bass voice. Mike was the tenor of the trio, and Ike the Hebrew boy played the Jews Harp with a definite squeak!

These happy hikers sang their way through the leafy lanes of England getting into all sorts of scrapes, and hair-raising adventures. Later they went abroad, and on a tour round the world. They eventually returned home from Cape-Town in the final episode in No. 839, dated 6th May, 1933.

It would be interesting to know Mr. Chapman's contributions to The Magnet during this period, as these illustrations must have taken up a great deal of his time. But whether the Greyfriars stories were neglected or not, Merry & Bright readers must have greatly enjoyed The Jolly Adventures of three Hiking Chums, Tubby Pike, Mike, and Ike on the Road.

* * * * *

FOR SALE: approx. 70 monthly C.D.'s, 1970-1975, seven C.D. Annuals, 1969-1975, Frank Richards Autobiography - Memorial Edition, several Howard Baker Greyfriars Facsimile Volumes, Magnet No. 1 facsimile, various Cricket and Soccer Books and Annuals - mint condition guaranteed all items. S. A. E. for details with offers -

HUNTER, GLENSHEE, ROSEACRE GARDENS, CHILWORTH, SURREY.

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 38. THE BEST WESTERN, THE BEST ROBIN HOOD,
& THE BEST CHIPS

We opened the new session with a big film from Warner Bros: Bette Davis and Paul Muni in "Juarez". I have heard it said that this was Warner's answer to M. G. M.'s "Gone With the Wind". The story-lines were similar, and "Juarez", though far behind "G. W. T. W." was, nevertheless, produced on sumptuous backgrounds, and was an excellent film which brought acclaim for Bette Davis though it is not much remembered now.

Next, a double-bill from Warner's: Pat O'Brien and Ann Sheridan in "Devils on Wheels" plus Bonita Granville in "Nancy Drew - Trouble Shooter". Followed by another double from the same firm: Tamara Desni in "His Brother's Keeper" plus Jane Bryan in "The Man Who Dared".

Then, from M. G. M., one of my own all-time favourites: Robert Donat and Greer Garson in "Good-Bye Mr. Chips". With some wonder, and a little shame, I have to report that on this occasion when we played the film, I was disappointed in it. I know the reason well. A few months earlier I had seen the play at the "Q" Theatre. I forget now who played Mr. Chips, but Pamela Nell was "Mrs. Chips". It was a superb play, very long, running to the unusual length of Four Acts. There was very much more in the play than in the film. The play had a sequence in which an assistant master fell in love with Mrs. Chips, a sequence which was not in the film.

Hence, when we played the film

first, I felt that it fell short of the play. After the war, when M. G. M. reissued "Mr. Chips", we played it again, and I loved every minute of it with the memory of the play dimmed by that time. I have seen it several times since, and enjoyed it more each time.

In comparatively recent years, "Mr. Chips" was made again as a musical, with two stars each of whom was miscast plus an updating which was grotesque. Even the real punch-lines were omitted from this modern disaster of the cinema. But Donat and Garson are unforgettable in the original.

Now a double bill from G. F. D.: The Crazy Gang back again, this time in "The Frozen Limits" plus Bob Baker in "Oklahoma Frontier".

Then a double feature programme from Warner's: James Cagney and George Raft in a famous drama of its day, "Each Dawn I Die" plus Marie Wilson in "Sweepstakes Winner".

This was followed by an exceptional double bill, both films from G. F. D.: Douglas Fairbank Jr. and Basil Rathbone in "The Sun Never Sets" (a real Boys' Own Paper attraction to delight our young heroes) plus Will Hay in "Old Bones of the River".

Then, another double bill from G. F. D.: Freddie Bartholomew and Jackie Cooper in "Man's Heritage" plus William Gargan in "The House of Fear". (Anybody remember a Sexton Blake Library of that

title? I think it featured Kestrel. I'm sure the film had nothing to do with the Blake story, though my mind is a blank about it.)

Then yet another from G.F.D. and this time the main feature was one of the best, if not the very best, of westerns ever made: Marlene Dietrich, James Stewart, and Una Merkel in "Destry Rides Again" (Dietrich sang an unforgettable song; Dietrich and Merkel fought an unforgettable fight; and Stewart was superb), plus the Dead End Kids in "Code of the Streets".

Now a double from Warner's: Joel McCrea in "Enemy Agent" plus Bonita Granville in "Nancy Drew and the Hidden

Staircase".

Then, from G.F.D., a British film which was very famous in its day: Leslie Howard with Wendy Hiller in "Pygmalion", the Bernard Shaw play, plus Richard Arlen in "The Man from Montreal".

We ended that term with a glorious adventure film in technicolor from Warner Bros: "The Adventures of Robin Hood" starring Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Basil Rathbone, and Claud Rains. Robin Hood has been portrayed many times, but this one was far and away the finest of the lot. One of the truly great screen occasions.

READING OF A STRANGE LADY

by Brian Doyle

In his fascinating article COINCIDENCE (April C.D.) C. H. Churchill draws a comparison between one of Dorothy L. Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey stories and a Nelson Lee yarn, as well as pointing out her mention of Sexton Blake and the fact that Wimsey's manservant is named Bunter. "All this makes one wonder," says Mr. Churchill, "whether Miss Sayers had been a reader of the BFL, SBL and The Magnet at one time."

Indeed she was. In her famous and lengthy Introduction to her classic anthology GREAT SHORT STORIES OF DETECTION, MYSTERY AND HORROR (First Series), published in 1928, Miss Sayers stated:

"We must not forget the curious and interesting development of detective fiction which has produced "The Adventures of Sexton Blake" and other allied cycles. This is the Holmes tradition, adapted for the reading of the board-school boy and crossed with the Buffalo Bill adventure type. The books are written by a syndicate of authors, each one of whom uses a set of characters of his own invention, grouped about a central group consisting of Sexton Blake and his boy assistant, Tinker, their comic landlady, Mrs. Bardell, and their bulldog (sic) Pedro. As

might be expected, the quality of the writing and the detective methods employed vary considerably from one author to another. The best specimens display extreme ingenuity and an immense vigour and fertility in plot and incident. Nevertheless, the central types are pretty consistently preserved throughout the series. Blake and Tinker are less intuitive than Holmes, from whom, however, they are directly descended, as their address in Baker Street shows. They are more careless and reckless in their methods; more given to displays of personal heroism and pugilism; more simple and human in their emotions. The really interesting point about them is that they present the nearest modern approach to a national folk-lore, conceived as the centre for a cycle of loosely connected romances in the Arthurian manner. Their significance in popular literature and education would richly repay scientific investigation."

That final sentence foreshadows the hundreds of learned articles on Blake lore which have appeared over the years in COLLECTORS' DIGEST:

And, in describing Dorothy L. Sayers' early years in her biography of Miss Sayers (SUCH A STRANGE LADY, published by the New English Library, London, in 1975), Janet Hitchman states: "By the time she was fifteen ... she had read every book in the house, as well as the novelettes and adventure stories borrowed from the servants. From somewhere she had collected a supply of Westerns and 'Dead-Eye Dick' stories, as well as the school stories of the time - mostly, of course, boys' school stories." Later Miss Hitchman writes: "So, in 1909, with a head full of 'Boys' Own Paper' ideas of a boarding-school, Dorothy arrived at Godolphin School in Salisbury ... what, of course, she had expected was a 'Greyfriars' for girls ... they were not in the least like Bob Cherry and Co."

The biography also includes the fact that Miss Sayers was an avid reader of Conan Doyle and Edgar Wallace in her youth. All-in-all, then, it would appear that Miss Sayers had been familiar with the old papers and school stories including, obviously, 'The Magnet'. So there seems little doubt that her choice of the name Bunter, for Wimsey's manservant, came as a result of her own early reading. And no doubt those 'novelettes' referred to, included a few Sexton Blakes. And could

it be perhaps that there was always a touch of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and even Lord Mauleverer about her most famous creation, Lord Peter Wimsey ... ?

The Postman Called

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

L. S. ELLIOTT (London): There were six Sparshott stories in the Merrett publications. The first "The Secret of the School" was issued as a "one-off" at 1/-. Then it was re-issued as No. 1 of a series of 6. The final one introduced Billy Bunter as a visitor to Sparshott, his first post-war mention. There were 13 Carcroft stories in "Pie Magazine" running from December 1944 till June 1947. These were later reprinted in the Australian "Silver Jacket", plus a few original ones.

M. KUTNER (London): I note in the March issue the eternal question of the greatest school story-writer continues. Amid the flood of juvenile reading in which I swam bravely (but always with the tide) I never attempted the definitions of best, better, or super, and doubt if I am capable of it even now.

As a boy I read everything from school, adventure and mystery tales, - girls' periodicals 'n all! without an ounce of selection, but loved them all.

Sometime in the dim and distant past I read "The Adventures of a Three Guinea Watch" and "Parkhurst Sketches" by T. B. Reid which provided a glow of happiness, the memory of which lives still, while having forgotten much other reading matter of that period. Does that classify Talbot B. Reid as better than Charles Hamilton or E. S. Brooks?

Reading should be for pleasure or instruction or both, let us not spoil the pleasure part of it by the taking of sides in critical judgment and fault finding.

L. ROWLEY (Truro): I must say how much I am in agreement with your Editorial comments under the headings of Talking Point and Cricket - and Hamilton. I have never read 'Eric' from beginning to end, but I have, like yourself, enjoyed Warren Bell, Desmond Coke and Hilton

Cleaver and would add Harold Avery, Michael Poole and Gunby Hadath to your list. They wrote good yarns that will not easily be forgotten by those who read them but, to me, Hamilton always came first and Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood would not be put aside for the more elegantly bound stories of the others. I suppose we grew with the stories that we read each week whilst the books gathered dust on their shelves. I think, too, that Hamilton had the gift of involving us in his stories; I have certainly thought of myself as a participant rather than a spectator.

Doubtless there are authors who wrote more splendidly on cricket - I'm not as qualified as you to judge - but Hamilton wrote convincingly enough for me and his games were certainly not lacking in thrills especially if Wharton or Vernon-Smith (or their doubles) were involved.

Bill Thurbon's 'Controversial Echo' and your reply on the Greyfriars curriculum had me wondering. Greek is taught at Greyfriars we are told on several occasions when, say, the Bounder or Bunter was sent to the Head that "the Sixth sat up and took notice, this was much better than Greek". We know, too, that Mr. Woose takes the boys for Art, Mr. Flatt for music, and Messrs. Lascelles and Charpentier cover Maths, Games and French. Sometimes I wondered who took the boys for Science but it was a passing thought and not a complaint. I feel that if that information was enough for me then it is enough for me now.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Mr. Woose of the early thirties became Mr. Woosey of the late thirties - presumably the same character, and an indication that backgrounds were not taken all that seriously by the author.)

E. REID (Charlton): In my opinion the artist, C. H. Chapman, has been greatly underestimated. He raised the Magnet to its high level by adding something of his own. I like his illustrations of the early and mid-twenties, but the best of his work occurred during the nineteen-thirties. He was brilliant at drawing the countryside, woods, rivers, and the like. As I am only 15 years old I obviously missed the real Magnet era by many years. I consider the only Companion Papers artist up to Chapman's standard was R. J. Macdonald, whose work I have yet to savour in any quantity.

I would like to thank you for a really splendid magazine which brightens up the day when it arrives.

COLIN HAZELHURST (Ellesmere Port): I have been reading the Loder as Captain series from the Magnet of 1925 and in the last issue the boys break up for Christmas. Wharton and the Famous Five go to Wharton Lodge and Wingate to his home which is just across the heath from Wharton Lodge. Now I was of the opinion that Wharton Lodge was in the South of England and I am sure somewhere in a later Magnet in a pen portrait Wingate came from Chester. Have I got my facts wrong or somewhere during the period of the Magnet did Wingate move?

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: As we observed last month, Hamilton suited his background details to the needs of the current series.)

H. TRUSCOTT (Deal): I read "A Controversial Echo" by W. T. Thurbon, with a certain amount of interested amusement. Mr. Thurbon's seriousness about this matter is, to my mind, overdone. But neither Mr. Thurbon nor the arguments against given by the editor seem to me to include the one thing which, so far as I am concerned is to the point: that Hamilton was writing about Bunter and that Bunter was in the Remove, or Lower Fourth. Leaving aside the fact that the idea of Bunter being interested in Greek is enough to make a cat laugh, Greek would not be in the curriculum of any lower Form. There is documentary evidence in some of the stories that the Sixth studied Greek with Dr. Locke; there is a reference, in a story which appeared during Ionides' brief stay at the school, and the title of which I cannot now recall, to Loder asking the Greek senior for help in a Greek translation. I do not think he got it, but he certainly asked for it - and the idea of Loder doing a Greek translation unless he had to is as funny (and ridiculous) as that of Bunter being interested in Greek. Surely Hamilton's reference was to the Remove's curriculum?

WANTED: Greyfriars Book Club Volume "The Making Of Harry Wharton" (the first ten Magnets) (1908). Reasonable price paid to complete collection. Price to -

C. R. KEARNS, 35 BURNISTON ROAD
HULL, N. HUMBERSIDE, HU5 4JX.

News of the Clubs

CAMBRIDGE

The Cambridge Club met at the home of Edward Witten on Sunday, 3rd April, 1977.

Jack Overhill, speaking as a writer and broadcaster of great experience, raised the question of the use by Charles Hamilton in his many pennames, of "ghost" plotters, and possibly sometimes "ghost" writers - apart from the Sub writers. He quoted Hamilton's apparent wide range of knowledge; Bill Gander, himself a Canadian, had once told Jack that he had never caught Hamilton out on his Canadian stories; there was a noticeable use of Egyptian terms and knowledge of Egypt in the "Bunter and the Pyramids" series. He also referred to Roger Jenkins' reference to the paucity of reference books in Hamilton's library. Speaking as a writer he referred to Hamilton's claimed output, and compared this with his own experience in writing novels, and the research required for an historical novel. His best known work "The Snob" had taken six months to write, but here he was being largely autobiographical. Even allowing for substitute writers he felt that in view of his claimed output Hamilton must have had help in his plotting either editorially or from "ghost" plotters. An interesting discussion followed. Bill Thurbon said that Bill Lofts and himself, working on G. A. Henty research, had found Henty saying that he dictated his stories to an "amanuensis" (good Victorian word!) and did not see them again until they were in galley proof. Bill thought this meant that Henty's amanuensis probably also did Henty's researches. The meeting returned again to Charles Hamilton as Jack made the point that in raising the question of the "ghost" plotter or writer he did not wish to make any criticism of Charles Hamilton, to whom he owed a great debt of happiness for the Gem and Magnet of his youth.

Bill Thurbon gave his list of the "Desert Island Books"; challenged to choose one only, after much thought he chose Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings". He also produced a copy of a 1915 Penny Popular showing how the Editor by promising a "great surprise" and printing replies to

correspondents critical of the Sexton Blake stories was paving the way for the introduction of the Greyfriars stories soon after. He wondered if the readers' letters were genuine.

Members enjoyed Edward's generous hospitality for which he was warmly thanked. Next meeting, 1st May, at 5 All Saints Passage.

MIDLAND

The March meeting commenced with the display and passing around of the eagerly awaited Collectors' Item. It was a mint copy of Nelson Lee 'Stage Struck Archie', dated 13 March, 1926. The back page carried a prime collection of evocative advertisements: 'Don't be bullied - height increased in 30 days - 5/- complete course', 'Wrist-watch - yours for 6d', 'Stop Stammering', 'My great offer - a bicycle from 2/-', 'Stamp Collectors Outfit Free'.

Jack Bellfield lulled the club members into a warm glow of anticipation by announcing a 'simple quiz': which proved, as is usual with such items, to be particularly tough, though fascinating, causing much dandruff to fall. Jack wound up the happy evening with a reading from the Brander series, illustrating a dramatic clash, a dual of words, between Brander, Quelch and Major Cherry.

Meetings, usually last Tuesday of the month, at Dr. Johnson House, Birmingham, anytime after 7 p.m.

LONDON

The weighty golden sovereigns that Waldo the Wonder Man was supposed to have carried, mentioned in Josie Packman's admirable treatise at the Ealing meeting, was correct in detail as Eric Lawrence expounded forth and proved that Edwy Searles Brooks was correct in his script. Thus the famous author was fully vindicated and this gave a fine start to the Kensal Rise meeting. A fine tape provided by Brian Doyle was about the English Public Schools as portrayed on film.

Bob Blythe read the anniversary of the newsletter, circa 1960. From the Water Lily series of the Magnet, Winifred Morss read a couple of extremely funny chapters.

The host of the gathering provided a fine quiz, this being won by Mary Cadogan. A puzzling competition by Larry Peters.

A discussion took place about a Jubilee of Saint Frank's College book and items for this are to be solicited.

Next meeting to be held at the Twickenham residence of Sam Thurbon. Kindly inform if intending to be present. Phone 892 5314.

Votes of thanks to Larry and Gladys Peters for a jolly meeting.

BENJAMIN WHITER

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No Northern Club Report received at time of going to press

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EYE ON MORCOVE

from T. G. Keen

Regarding Roger Jenkins' contribution concerning the 'School-girls' Own' and the girls of Morcove School, I do think that perhaps he has read, or knows, very little of the Morcove stories.

As a staunch reader and admirer of the 'Magnet', 'Gem', and 'Popular' way way back, but also of the 'School Friend' and the 'School-girls' Own', my own opinion is that the Morcove stories were far superior to any of the others.

Oddly enough, the characters Mr. Jenkins mentions, Polly Linton, Paula Creel, and Naomer Nakara, were three stock characters, who of course, did tend to become rather boring - Naomer especially. However, nobody (as far as I was concerned) became a bigger bore than Bunter, who was closely followed by Coker, Fisher T. Fish, and Peter Hazeldene of Greyfriars, and Trimble, Grundy, Bernard Glyn, and D'Arcy of St. Jim's.

I seldom tired of Talbot, Cardew, and Levison, but Bunter definitely made me forsake the 'Magnet', and even after a decade of reading the 'Gem', I found D'Arcy most unentertaining.

Marjorie Stanton, or rather Horace Phillips, with the splendid assistance of Leonard Shields made the Morcove stories very special, especially the early ones, but even from the beginning, the Morcove story only occupied the first fourteen pages or so, there were always three other stories. Not until 1931 were there a few longer, complete in one issue, stories of Morcove. Even with only fourteen pages, the

stories were more compact. Think of all the space taken up in the 'Magnet' by "I say you fellows", "Yaroooh", "Hallo, Hallo, Hallo", week after week!

I cannot remember "Morcove at the Winter Sports". With the stories becoming so involved with Jack Linton and Dave Cardew, I lost a certain amount of interest, but I still recall those early stories of Morcove School with fond affection.

Limited supply available of library-style glass-clear overjackets to protect your Howard Baker reprints from finger marks, grease and moisture. Also available, new type specially designed for paperback protection - will suit the Armada, Hamlyn and Goldhawk paperbacks. For further details, please send S. A. E. to:

D. SWIFT, 22 WOODNOOK CLOSE, LEEDS, LS16 6PQ.

EXCHANGE: "Greyfriars Crusader" for two other H. B. vols; two Greyfriars S. O. L's 191, Armadas. Sale or Exchange.

MAGOVENY, 65 BENTHAM STREET, BELFAST.

WANTED: Will pay £5 for "The School Museum Mystery" - Nelson Lee - old series - number 448. Also, the complete series of Barry Stoke's wife, Joyce, and the Chinese drug plot. Approx. number in the 400's, o/s. Please state price.

L. RICHARDS, 18 RETFORD COURT, THE PHILOG, WHITCHURCH

CARDIFF, CF4 1EE, Telephone Cardiff 612642

WANTED: H. Baker Magnets, vols, 18, 24. H. Baker's Holiday Annual, 1974. S. O. L's, Public School Stories (hardbacks). Brent-Dyer Books, Elsie Oxenham Books, Billy Bunter hardbacks.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND.

ESPECIALLY WANTED: Complete in good condition: Magnets 707, 795, 942, 999, 1111, 1112; Gems 604, 774, 792, 801. £2 each offered (over the odds but desperately required to make collection. Please help).

NORMAN SHAW, 84 BELVEDERE ROAD, LONDON S.E.19 2HZ

(01-771-9857)

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Mr. James W. Cook's new address is P.O. Box 16107, Sandringham, Auckland 3, New Zealand.

WANTED: "The Kanter Girls" by Mary Branch; "The Golden Deed" by Andrew Garve; "Lady Killer" by Shelley Smith; "The Woman in Red" by Anthony Gilbert.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, CROOKHAM ROAD

CROOKHAM, HAMPSHIRE.

FOR SALE: C.D.'s 1966, 1965, £4.50 each year. Turner's, Boys will be Boys, £2.50. H. Baker's Holiday Annual, 1973, £5.25. Tom Merry's Own (bb for Xmas), £2.50. Richards, Just Like Bunter, £1.75. Big Chief Bunter, £1.75. Four Pink Magnets, £4.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND.

HAMILTON BOWLED OUT?

The article under the above title which featured in last month's Collectors' Digest was by Simon Garrett. Mr. Garrett writes: "In retrospect, I should have qualified the last sentence (if only because it's difficult to prove a negative), and the whole article does look a little trenchant now. However, controversy has always seemed to me one of the delights of C.D. and it's a great pleasure to make a small contribution to this."

TAKE THAT!

says M. Lub

Re the controversy on school subjects at Greyfriars referred to in C.D. for this month.

There was a Mathematics master, Larry Lascelles, of course; though I cannot recall a scene from one of his classes in the Magnet stories. We are usually told that "the Remove ground at Mathematics". There is no reference to Trigonometry or Algebra. The Famous Five spend all their Prep doing Latin translation - seldom or never Maths. Dr. Locke, the Headmaster, taught Greek to the Sixth - they seem to be the only group to learn it, although Linley of the Remove is conversant with Greek - remember the series with a cigarette case marked with Greek letters requiring translation, which Linley did for the Famous Five.

Dr. Locke was a Doctor of Divinity although this fact is ignored in the Magnets appearing after the 1920's. We may therefore assume he taught Gospels if anyone did: there is nothing to guide us here. Nor is there reference to a Chapel though it is implied that scripture was read at Roll Call; if this was not done then the roll could just as well have been done at Dormitory?

There was no Music master to encourage Claude Hoskins - this seems peculiar. The one or two Art masters in the Magnet are villains disguised in order to enter the school, usually for robberies.

We have some proof that Quelch understood Greek, and could have taught it if necessary - see his frequent meetings with the Head for discussions on Ancient languages.

There is no reference to Science, Botany, or Chemistry. History and Geography were taught - but most of the sequences are comedy ones showing Bunter's ignorance of these subjects, or sequences involving ventriloquism or hidden persons, animals or objects in the cupboards. French is taught although these classes usually disintegrate into chaos - was French only taught to the Remove - we never hear of the Shell or the Sixth meeting Mossos.

Of the other masters, Hacker is described as a Classical languages master - references to Prout are scant, but one depicts him as a History master; Twigg and Capper are only vague figures.

We are told that Bob Cherry and Redwing were good woodworkers - where did they learn?

All the Famous Five and Vernon Smith swam well but there is no reference to swimming as a Greyfriars sport.

Wingate organised all sport at Greyfriars - Lascelles only arranged pick-up matches and boxing matches.

Finally: what on earth did the Cliff girls learn, and who taught them?

(Please don't all write and tell us! - Ed.)

COMING SOON: "CENTENARY SALUTE FOR PERCY F.

WESTERMAN, by Brian Doyle.