

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 31 NUMBER 366

JUNE 1977

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JUBILEE

In the past quarter of a century so many standards have been lowered, so many traditions which were once cherished have been lost, so many changes have been made and so many of them not for the better.

But our Queen has not changed in the 25 years which have elapsed since she came to the throne. The monarchy is more deeply entrenched in the love of the British people than it has ever been. God bless the Queen in her Jubilee Year. Long may she reign over us.

This month of June we shall all be taking part in the celebrations arranged to mark this very splendid occasion. In our own private world of the old periodicals which we loved, we shall be remembering our own jubilees.

In July it will be exactly 60 years since St. Frank's was created - the brain child of a man who is recalled in the affectionate memory of thousands all over the world - Edwy Searles Brooks. Nelson Lee and Nipper were, of course, created by Maxwell Scott many years earlier, but it was Brooks who sent them to St. Frank's and built up a magnificent cast to support the famous pair. In the summer of 1917, E.S.B. can never have dreamed that the characters he invented then would still be deeply loved by vast crowds sixty years on.

Mr. Alf Hanson, who drew a superb series of pictures dedicated to the various artists, for C.D. some years ago, has drawn pictures to commemorate the most popular St. Frank's series, and we shall commence the publication of this splendid new series of his artistic work next month. A great treat for everybody and especially for St. Frank's fans.

In August we shall reach the Cedar Creek Diamond Jubilee. "Frank Richards' Schooldays", as the Cedar Creek stories purported to be, came into the world exactly one month after St. Frank's. Cedar Creek featured for four years in the Boys' Friend, was reprinted in the Popular, and much of it reprinted yet again in many publications. Oddly enough, it was the only one of Hamilton's major creations to which he never added after the original series ended. I fancy this was probably due to the fact that it was fiction set out as biography. George Sellars, a long-time C.D. reader, who died a few years ago, always refused to believe that Hamilton was not really educated in Canada. As dear old George got so much pleasure from thinking it real, who were we to destroy his happy illusions?

BENDING THE LAW

In an interesting article which featured in Blakiana last month, one of our contributors wondered how many times Sexton Blake bent the law to suit himself. For instance, how many times did Tinker drive a motor-car while under the necessary age to hold a driving licence? Actually that question never occurred to me for my own favourite Sexton

Blake writers of the twenties and thirties always depicted Tinker as an adolescent in his late teens - the ideal age for Tinker so far as my personal tastes went.

But Tom Merry certainly drove a car in a story somewhere about 1909, and not much later I seem to recall that Arthur Augustus was also in charge of a car on the highway. And here we had two boys not much over fifteen. It was either the author writing tongue in cheek to please youthful readers, or, as I think possible, there may have been no age limit for a driving licence in those far-off days. In fact, I really have no idea just when driving licences first came in.

But I should think there can be no doubt that we had an absurdity in a substitute story of 1927 (Danny referred to it recently in his Diary) in which Fisher T. Fish bought a double-decker bus, ran a bus service, and actually drove it up to London. Whatever may have been the case in 1909, I would think that there were age restrictions by 1927 - particularly in the case of a bus - but I am not certain of it.

Sub writers often went from the sublime to the ridiculous in the Magnet. The themes would strike older boys as being absurd, but they might appeal considerably to the under-twelves, and this could be a reason why certain sub tales linger affectionately in the memories of some C.D. readers now.

I recall that, some years back, Mr. Laurie Sutton drew attention to a sub story - a Pentelow tale, I think - in which a footballer scored in a game by charging the goalkeeper, who was holding the ball, into the net. As Mr. Sutton pointed out, anyone acting in that way in a game today would be guilty of the most foul of fouls, but one wonders whether, just possibly, the basic laws of soccer may have been any different at the time the tale was written. Anybody know?

OH, WHERE AND NOWHERE --?

Mr. John Lewis has written to ask whether any reader can tell him just where, in Greyfriars topography, the village of Woodend is.

I very much doubt whether anyone can give Mr. Lewis the information he seeks, and I also doubt whether even Hamilton himself could have done. As we have often pointed out, background details varied so much according to the needs of a particular story, and I think

it unlikely that the author worked with any particular layout in mind. Down the years, topography changed enormously, but, in spite of the variations, we always found it convincing.

Each one of us has the whole map of Greyfriars more or less in our own imagination, and I reckon that no two imaginations are alike. Down the years I have seen dozens of different maps of the Greyfriars district - but they have always been dissimilar one from the other. Without question, the best of these maps was one by the nephew of Warwick Reynolds and published some years ago by the Howard Baker firm. But it would be impossible for any artist to cover every detail or to please everybody. Plenty of names which featured frequently in earlier times - the Black Pike, for instance, and the Shoulder - were never mentioned in later years, and even the distance between such well-loved places as Friardale and Courtfield was never consistent.

I advise my reader to mark in Woodend just where he thinks it should be on his map. He will get a pleasant glow of make-believe, and he is just as likely to be correct as anybody else.

TAILPIECE

Cricket lovers among my readers will have been as stunned and saddened as I am by the shoddy, horrid business concerning the English captain, a millionaire named Packer, and some others. Money talks too much these days, and the great god Cash is ruining so much in this Land of the Free.

THE EDITOR

DANNY'S DIARY

JUNE 1927

This month in the Magnet there has been what I think to be the most enjoyable Greyfriars series I have ever read - and that's saying something.

The opening story is "The Bounder's Win". Since Redwing left,

Vernon-Smith has become wilder. He makes himself Mr. Quelch's most troublesome pupil, and there are some joyous episodes. There is a bank robbery in Lantham, and later, in a wood, the Bounder sees the robber strip off his disguise and hide the money. The Bounder takes the money to the Head's study, and it is his most powerful trump card as an excuse for his disobedience. But the Bounder is staggered when he recognizes the Head's guest, Captain Spencer, as the bank robber.

In "One Against the School", the Bounder accuses Captain Spencer of being the bank robber, but nobody believes him. And the tension and excitement mount.

In "Hunted Down" there is a triumph for "the worst boy at Greyfriars". Captain Spencer is caught in the act at another bank, and the Bounder is responsible. An unpleasant position for Mr. Quelch, but very pleasant for the Bounder - and just wonderful for Magnet readers.

Last of the month was "Taking Up Trotter", a single story in which the page-boy comes into a sum of money. Skinner and Bunter mean to sponge on him, so they become very friendly - until they discover that Trotter's legacy is £100 in War Loan which he is not allowed to touch.

The Greyfriars stories are not very long at present, as there is also a St. Sam's story in the Magnet - Herlock Sholmes has been at St. Sam's this month - and a serial.

Sport is in the news. "Call Boy" won the Derby, and a sport called greyhound racing has commenced at the White City.

The two Schoolboys' Own Libraries this month have been "Driven from School" in which Bob Cherry is falsely found guilty of stealing a postal-order, and expelled, and a St. Frank's tale "Buying the Remove". The latter is an old story about Fullwood before he reformed. He gets elected as captain by bribery, until it is found out that the money he is throwing around is counterfeit.

The series about the Fresh Air Fiends has continued all the month in the Nelson Lee Library. The mysterious Sir Lucian Dexter threads his way through the story, and Roman gold is found. In fact, the unusual title to this tale is "Roman Gold". Next week "The

Schoolboy Fire-Fighters". There is plenty of excitement with a barn fire, Willy Handforth risking his life to get the horses out, a terrific storm, the Roman gold in the offing, and Sir Lucian prowling around.

"Farmers All" came next, with the Fresh Air fiends still having a good time down on Holt's farm. Enoch Snipe is the only one who doesn't enjoy himself. He finds out that turkeys can fight. This tip-top series finished at the end of the month with "The Treasure of Tiberius". Nipper & Co. get a thrill when they discover treasure trove, but some sinister outsiders are after it as well. But St. Frank's wins in the end - and Sir Lucian is wild with delight.

There are now 3,000 telephone kiosks in the country, which is handy if you happen to lose your way and want to phone for a bobby.

At the pictures this month we have seen Colleen Moore in "Irene"; Harry Langdon in "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp"; Gilda Gray in "Aloma of the South Seas"; Tom Mix in "The Great K. & A. Train Robbery"; Betty Balfour in "Cinders"; and Buck Jones in "30 Below Zero".

When we visited some friends at Catford, we went in a party to Lewisham Hippodrome (a lovely theatre) and saw Gracie Fields in a simply lovely revue "By Request". It was produced by Archie Pitt, and in the revue with Gracie was her brother Tommy and her sister Edith. Just before the last item in the revue, Gracie came on stage alone and sang "You Forgot to Remember". Lovely song and a lovely voice. Doug, who is a great fan of Gracie Fields, says that Tommy Fields shows the same talent as his sister Gracie.

The powerful series about Levison and Cardew has ended in the Gem with the story "For His Chum's Sake". Levison has tried to save Cardew from the blackmailer, Tickey Tapp, and has come a cropper. Levison tries to escape from the punishment room by climbing down the ivy, but the ivy breaks and Levison falls. At the end of the story, the clouds rolled by and all was well.

In "Baggy Trimble's Charity", there is surprise when Trimble is rolling in money, paying for feeds, and buying a motorbike. He is getting the money by means of bogus begging-letters.

"Grundy's Barring-Out" was a tale about Grundy's feud with Knox, and the final tale of the month was called "The Faithful Fag", a very

sentimental affair about Joe Frayne about whom we haven't heard anything for a long, long time.

The author and playwright Jerome K. Jerome has died this month at the age of 68. His middle name was Klapka, which is very unusual. One of his books was "Three Men in a Boat", and his most famous play was a nice one - Doug says it was an allegory - named "The Passing of the Third Floor Back". Repertory companies often perform it at Easter time.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Schoolboys' Own Library No. 53, "Driven From School" comprised two consecutive Magnets of the early summer of 1911. It was the story of Heath who plotted to get Bob Cherry disgraced; a tale clearly and closely based on the Archer-Shee real-life case. It had been reprinted in the very first Holiday Annual in 1919, and this edition of the H. A. was reissued by Messrs. Howard Baker not long ago.

S. O. L. No. 54 comprised two consecutive St. Frank's stories from the Nelson Lee Library of the autumn of 1922.)

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

A Quiz was conducted recently in the Junior Common Room and one of the questions was ... What connection has St. Frank's with Helmsford Castle? Only Solomon Levi knew the answer. When St. Frank's was altered from two Houses to four the architects decided to retain the Tudor style of 16th century England by transporting the ancient stone from the ruins of Helmsford Castle and using the stone for the new houses. Each granite block had been carefully relaid with perfection.

But what Levi was a little hazy about was the history of the old St. Frank's. The site on which the Ancient House still stands was originally a monastery, but only the few ruins remain. These ruins house some very strong and dry vaults and it is interesting to read of the time when a revolt broke out in the Lower School and the juniors using the vaults as a stronghold. An entrance to the underground ruins can be affected from the Moor quarries. But when the despotic Housemaster attacked the monastery from both entrances he was astounded the rebels

were not to be seen. Actually, another secret vault was used to hide the juniors and later they left this chamber and transferred to an old half-completed building on Willard's Island where they continued their struggle.

After the Quiz the talk strayed to secret passages and tunnels in and around St. Frank's.

Nipper recalled the time when he and Tinker, Sexton Blake's assistant, used an old stairway leading from the Ancient House tower right down to the basement. This secret tunnel wasn't known to many and most of those had forgotten all about it except Nipper. It must have been in existence for hundreds of years and probably used by the old Monks. The stairway, Nipper explained, has several secret doors at intervals, leading into different rooms. One door led to the Head's study, and there's a little spyhole which can be opened unseen from the other side. This episode occurred during the reign of terror caused by Howard Martin, headmaster.

Luckily, the old Ancient House wasn't affected when the school was rebuilt and the West House joined on. So the secret tunnels and passages remain.

Willard's Island can also boast of secret tunnels. It is recorded that a hoard of golden sovereigns was discovered by the juniors in a secret chamber on the Island that was hidden beneath stone stairs discovered accidentally by Nipper.

It is extremely unlikely further secret passages and tunnels will ever be discovered in the Ancient House now that it has been fully researched. But I think the old Moat Hollow house could still surprise us with new lights in dark places.

The Moat Hollow was built on the site of the old River House School, but prior to that it had been a private lunatic asylum. It is no wonder the villagers regarded the place as being haunted.

Some time later, after it had been closed as a private school, and after the notorious Grimesby Creepe had vacated it, Moat Hollow was used as a night club; a casino, in the cellars. Still later, Ralph Leslie Fullwood's cousin used Moat Hollow as a hideaway while he was on the run from the police. Yes, that famous - or infamous - old house is well worth exploring, having such a questionable history.

As far as I know there are no secret passages or underground

tunnels at the River House School. The three Houses there are of recent vintage.

The Moor View School for Young Ladies - school colours magenta and green - is apparently also devoid of secret panels and passages. But there are plenty of strange tunnels and passages beneath the old quarry workings, and as Bannington was a one-time Royalist stronghold and the seat of a bishop, what secrets remain to be unearthed there?

East Anglia may be famous for haunted houses but Sussex has the greater historical interest ... and St. Franks!

There are more castles in Sussex than ghosts in East Anglia although Handforth Towers in Norfolk would dispute this according to Handy.

The mention of haunted houses reminds me of Ezra Quirke and the cellars beneath the East House. It would never surprise me after everything connected with Quirke had been cleared up and his trickery exposed that some new secret would be discovered under the East House. The old College House has quite a history. It was almost totally destroyed by fire once and the boys were temporarily transferred to London. They returned to a rebuilt College House but some years later when a St. Frank's holiday party returned from the Sahara Desert they found the College House was now the Modern House and the Remove had been carved up into two sections -- the Ancient Fourth and the Modern Fourth.

The brother of Hussi Ranjit Lal Kahn, of Study N, West House, one Goolah Kahn, is destined to affect the Modern House next. Goolah is mixed up with some dangerous and fanatical political firebrands and as heir to the great Province of Kurpana he would in due course become the reigning Maharajah of the entire State.

He was not to know that more than twenty years were to elapse before the Indians were to get Home Rule.

It is interesting to point out at this juncture that a St. Frank's party were to experience one of the strangest and most fierce of all struggles later on in a bid to rescue Hussi from his captors in Kurpana.

To return to the present: a tremendous explosion had occurred in one of the caverns in the old Moor quarry which had been set off by

the fanatical Hindus. There are many caverns and vaults, long since deserted and disused, among the workings than can be reached from the ruins of the Monastery at the back of the Triangle at St. Frank's.

The explosion rocked St. Frank's to its very foundations. The Modern House tottered to destruction.

Later came the new houses at St. Frank's. Ancient House was joined to the West House and the Modern House to the East House. Somewhere beneath the Modern House and the East House the spirit of Alexis Titus, the one-time Greek junior who set the College House ablaze, may be hovering in desperation in its sense of futility. However, it is to be expected the Greek's vengeance was satiated when St. Frank's was totally destroyed by a falling airship.

Today, although St. Frank's has that smell of new buildings, yet it is still the old St. Frank's College of yesterday. The stonework is the same; the Triangle is as of yore. The shape remains to remind us all of the past. Old Josh Cuttle, the lodge porter, still grumbles and groans as he opens the creaking school gates each morning. The stentorian voice of Handforth still booms across the Squares and Willy Handforth may be seen chasing one of his pets that had decided to explore.

Dr. Stafford, the kindly old Head, his gown billowing from the breeze drifting in from the Channel, might be seen entering the Ancient House to confer with Nelson Lee.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 143 - Boys' Friend Monthly Library No. 555 - "Peril Camp"

In October 1936 the Schoolboys' Own Library began to publish three volumes a month, the last one always being a St. Frank's story. In addition to this, the Boys' Friend Library had also been publishing the occasional St. Frank's story, and "Peril Camp" (a summer story, incidentally), appeared in December 1936, making two St. Frank's reprints in one month, though the Boys' Friend reprints were usually from a much later period than those in the Schoolboys' Owns.

This story had the distinctive, bizarre situation that was so often the hallmark of a Brooks story: Half-Mile Meadow, adjoining St. Frank's, had been left to the school by old Jeremy Whittle, a fresh-air

fiend, on condition that the whole school lived an open-air life in that meadow for a complete calendar month. This condition had not appealed to the governors until it was discovered that Amos Whittle intended to open a saw mill on the land - and in those days things like planning permission did not exist! The conflict was thus clearly set out: Amos Whittle was scheming to get the school off the meadow and the school was determined to stay put.

Of course, it would not have been a Brooks story without some incredible patches: could Handforth really have obtained a driving licence at his age and could young Waldo really have been able to out-do the strong man in a circus and could Willie Handforth really have tamed a savage tiger with its paws on its victim? Despite all this, however, it was one of the better St. Frank's stories because of the sheer gusto with which the events were related. Brooks was at his best in dealing with mass reactions to adversity and he contrived to keep the pace of the action going with a variety of different situations which built up to an exciting climax in which Amos Whittle himself was moved to surrender the meadow when his victory had seemed certain.

One of the curiosities about St. Frank's was its ever-changing headmasters. This story took place when Nelson Lee had agreed to return as headmaster on a temporary basis after the affair of Dr. Inigo Scattlebury. I must here confess to having two particular aversions: I dislike Nelson Lee acting as a detective as well as a schoolmaster because I consider it impossible for anyone to be able to combine these two occupations, especially at a boarding school; and I dislike stories being told by Nipper because with the best will in the world they couldn't help sounding unctuous at times. Happily, neither of these two objections applies to "Peril Camp". It was related by the author in the third person and Nelson Lee kept himself deliberately in the background. The story was truly about the boys of St. Frank's and was all the better for being just that.

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BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I hope you will all enjoy this month's Blakiana. The article by Mr. Dennington is very interesting and his suggestion of a game, especially for a Sexton Blake meeting, is very original. I shall need some material for the Sexton Blake section of the Annual this year so here is an early request for you to get cracking with your pens and paper and let me have anything you can write as soon as possible. If left to the last minute there is a chance that it will be too late.

As the holiday season will be in full swing by the time you read this may I take the opportunity of wishing everyone a Happy Holiday.

S. B. L. RINGS THE SOCIAL CHANGES

by G. L. Dennington

Having an interest in modern social history, I recently sat down to study Sexton Blake titles to see how much they reveal of contemporary British society between 1930 and 1963. You could make a parlour game of trying to guess the year of publication from titles except that many readers of Blakiana know the dates of Sexton Blake Library issues anyway. Start with something easy like "The Coronation Mystery". It has to be 1937 or 1953. Or take the "Secret of the Seigfried Line". There was a song about that Line. You should be able to get closer than 1939-1945. A little more difficult would be "The Yank Who Came Back".

During the early thirties there was a number of S. B. L. titles which showed the Blake Saga was keeping up with the times. "The Palais de Danse Mystery" for example, was right there in the middle of what we now call the Golden Age of British Dance Bands. Ambrose, Henry Hall, Jack Hylton and many more. 1932 is the actual year. Also in that year "The Brooklands Mystery" written when the motor race course was in its heyday.

Do you know when Greyhound racing reached its zenith of popular following in Britain? Then you will be able to place Mark Osborne's story "The Dog Track Murders" correctly in 1934 or thereabouts. Not so well timed perhaps, is "Man on the Dole" for it appeared in 1938

cont'd on Page 19 ...

OUR BOYS' PAPER - OR A TIE FOR THE
SHORTEST RUN

by W. O. G. Lofts

There are quite a few boys papers that tie for the shortest run. That is to say, running for one issue only. To give a few examples, there were Boy (1891), Boys' Weekly (1867) and Kings Own (1897). Why a paper could only run for a single issue has always been a mystery to me. It has also baffled present day editors and publishers whom I have discussed the matter, for if one follows the usual trend and method of publishing, there should always be three or at least two numbers.

Whilst the first issue is on sale, number two is usually being printed. Number three is also being edited and prepared for the printer. In fact it would be impossible to calculate especially in the economics of a weekly paper how the sales had gone, before number two had already been printed, and ready for distribution! One can only conclude that the publishers may have lost their financial backer during the printing of the opening number, and decided to call it a day before they got deeper into debt. Another theory could be that the printer's bill for the first copy was far greater than the estimate originally given, and that the running costs would exceed the eventual returns. Killing the project before it almost got off the ground. (This actually nearly happening to the present-day Ally-Sloper.) But the last theory does not exactly hold water, when one considers that such an established and financially secure firm as The Aldine Publishing Co. had Boys Welcome (1897) and Our Boys (1897) which made only their initial appearance.

Another interesting discovery made recently in the one issue field was Our Boys' Paper dated 1st July, 1886, and priced three-pence. Published by Wilson & Whitworth at Romford, Essex, it was obviously intended for the educated semi-public schoolboy. Its motto was 'Suaviter in modo Fortiter' (Gentle in manner - Resolute in Deed) the editor in his chat titling himself 'Floreat'. Its contents included public cricket news, with an article by W. G. Grace, the bearded doctor of Gloucestershire, and possibly the greatest cricketer of all time.

A serial commenced 'My Escape From Dacoit's' which was of course to remain unfinished, no author's name given, though it reads in a Henty strain. There was a page of titbits of Natural History,

Cricket, School News, Wit and Humour, and a Poets Corner. Jokes included such old chestnuts as ...

What Jam will a schoolboy not eat?

Answer: Door Jam(b)

and

What sea reminds one of a pudding?

Answer: Battersea.

Our Boys' Paper obviously intended to have a longish run, as readers were invited to send a year's subscriptions. Schools were mentioned mainly in the Taplow/Maidenhead area of Bucks and Berks, and quite possibly it may have been financed by schools in that area. Though why it was published as far away in Romford is anyone's guess. To be quite fair it was a good readable quality paper of roughly a dozen pages, and its non-appearance must have disappointed many. It did at least achieve one record, and that was to tie with many others for the shortest run in the history of boys' literature.

* * * * *

PROBLEM FOR MISS PRIM

from E. Kadish

You won't believe this but, oddly enough, the very day after reading the query posed by Mr. Lub about the subjects taught at Cliff House School, I actually bumped into Miss Penelope Primrose, its revered headmistress, herself. She is still as dignified and gracious as ever, in spite of the passing of the years.

The encounter took place at a meeting in London. A lecture was being given - the speaker, Sir Herbert Skimpole, at one time Senior Lecturer in Neo-Determinism at Hamilton University. (You will, no doubt, recall his guide and mentor, Professor Balmucrumptet, still as lucid as ever in spite of his ninety-four years.) It was after Sir Herbert's brilliant speech that I actually met Miss Primrose. Her eyes looked strangely agitated behind the pince-nez which she still wears. At first I concluded that this was due to the stimulation of Sir Hebert's dazzling

rhetoric, but I soon learned that her dazed look was due to quite another reason.

She is in fact, a very worried lady. The Wind of Change, which has recently been blowing with hurricane-like force throughout the educational establishments of the U. K., had just sent a gentle zephyr in the direction of Cliff House. It appears that the curriculum in the old school is out of date, and pressure is being exerted on poor Miss Primrose by the Board of Governors, and the newly-formed P. T. A., to make the school more progressive, and to "up date" the curriculum.

For instance, it has been suggested to Miss Primrose that, in view of Mrs. Shirley Williams' recent assertion that there are too few women teachers of Maths, because they were never encouraged to study it themselves at school, she should greatly expand the Maths, syllabus at Cliff House. This she has agreed to do, and has placed Miss Bullivant in charge of the enterprise, feeling that she is just the person to encourage the girls to take more interest in New Mathematics.

There will be other changes too! The current syllabus in Religious Education, with its emphasis on Christian values, is to be replaced by a course on comparative religion, pride of place going to the study of Islamic culture, in deference to our current national pre-occupation with the Oily - as well as the Holy! - places of the Middle East. A completely new and exciting subject is also to be introduced:- Environmental Studies. In connection with this, special field trips are to be organized, and Barbara Redfern and Co. are to join forces with Harry Wharton & Co. for these trips. Miss Primrose feels that this co-operation between the two schools should produce some interesting results. Bearing in mind the emergence of Mrs. Margaret Thatcher as a possible future Prime Minister, it has also been decided to introduce the study of Political Science at Cliff House, and Head Girl, Stella Stone, is considered to have great potentialities as a political leader. Who knows what heights she may attain in the future!

On the other hand, of course, some subjects may have to be dropped, as being inconsistent with the new dignity and status of women. Needlework and Cookery are being abandoned, much to the disappointment of Marjorie Hazeldene and Dolly Jobling, respectively; and Miss Primrose has set her face resolutely against any form of Sex Education.

She feels that neither she nor her Staff is quite capable.

I felt desperately sorry for poor Miss Primrose when she had finished telling me of the proposed changes to the curriculum. Quite clearly, pressure is being brought to bear on her to carry out these reforms. I have even heard it whispered, in certain quarters, that if she is not sufficiently adaptable, the Governess may merge Cliff House with Greyfriars as a comprehensive bilateral school. Masters and mistresses would have to commute between the two schools, in that event, and it is rumoured that Horace Coker of the Fifth at Greyfriars has offered to lend Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout his motorbike for this purpose - although there is no record of their reaction.

Let us hope that this dreadful state of affairs does not come to pass! Why can't the education authorities leave well alone, I wonder.

* * * * *

OTHER PEOPLE'S OPINIONS

EDWARD REID writes: I am writing to express my views on what must have become rather a tiresome subject in the C. D.

Firstly, re Mr. Lub's article this month, a chapel was mentioned in former day Magnets, behind which disagreements were settled.

Secondly, why irrelevancies of this nature should attract so much attention I cannot understand. Whether the Remove were grinding at maths. or toiling reluctantly at English History under Quelch's gimlet eye, neither had any affect whatsoever on the story content. Further, being a schoolboy myself, I consider that Charles Hamilton's intention was to draw the reader's attention away from an academic atmosphere with which he/she would be, probably, too well acquainted. (The Magnet being aimed primarily at schoolgoers age.) Although a great many Greyfriars stories were set actually at the School, Hamilton was careful not to allow his naturally 'breezy' style to become burdened with heavy educational stress in any way and, although a very few incidents revolved around a Bunter or Coker 'howler' in the form room, one felt that these were included to provide comic relief or merely as padding. Trivialities of this kind would mar a Magnet tale and prove a source of enjoyment only to 'prospectus type' readers.

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several years after the worst of the Depression but there were still many people looking for work. (Some young men had never had a job since leaving school until the war began in 1939. Out of evil came good as it was the beginning of a new life to those who returned. J. P.)

One might be forgiven for thinking that the "A. R. P. Mystery" was a war-time yarn. In fact it appeared a few months before war started. It reflected wide-spread concern with air-raid precautions following the Munich crisis. The war itself produced little response in S. B. L. titles for the remainder of the 2nd series. Perhaps the publishers thought it would all be over by Christmas 1939. But Autumn 1940 witnessed a few stories on the domestic aspects of the conflict including "The Blackout Crime", "Secret of the Evacuee" and "Observer Corps Mystery".

A change of policy regarding war themes must have occurred in the Editorial Office with the issue of the third series in 1941. In the first 100 titles at least 40 contained some reference to the war. No. 1 kicked off with "Raiders Passed" by John Hunter and there followed titles on looting, absent or missing servicemen, occupied Europe, parachutists, firewatchers, conscript miners, the Black Market Quislings, war brides, demolition workers, etc.

In the immediate post-war period interest switched to demobilised servicemen and G.I. brides. Absentee servicemen still inspired a variety of stories, due partly to the continuation of National Service. "The Holiday Camp Mystery" came out when Butlin-type holidays were increasing in popularity although the first holiday camp opened in 1937 in bracing Skegness.

Pre-occupation with that universally maligned post-war character the "Spiv" showed in several titles - "Affair of the Spiv's Secret", "The Case of the Spiv's Secret" and "The Spiv's Mistake". But we are now in 1952 and the post-war austerity which bred spivs and black markets is fast disappearing. Living standards are on the up-and-up, financed partly by credit, hence we find Walter Tyrer writing "The Hire Purchase Fraud". Later, one of the first instances of British working class youth giving itself an identity different from the older generation finds reflection in 1955 with John Drummond's "The Teddy Boy Mystery".

When "The New Look Blake" (4th series) emerged in 1956 titles received the Peter Cheyney treatment, which meant that not a great deal about the subject could be deduced from them. Cheyney stories were themselves becoming dated by this time so that the switch in style and format could be said to reflect the fashion of an earlier age. Consider Cheyney's titles like "This Man is Dangerous" (published 1936) and "Dames Don't Care" (1937) Compare them with the New Look Blake - "This Man Must Die" or "Torment was a Redhead".

Occasionally a trace of contemporary interests might still be read into some titles. For example "Danger on the Flip Side" in 1960 alluded to pop records then developing as part of a separate teenage culture. Or "Espresso Jungle" in 1959 which refers to the popular Espresso bars of the time and was possibly a "play" on the title of Wolf Mankowicz's musical of the time, Espresso Bongo.

If someone today were writing for the S. B. L. and giving them "traditional" titles there would be no shortage of contemporary themes. We might have "The Mystery of the Murdered Squatter" - done to death maybe by the owner of the property. Or "The Case of the Illegal Immigrant" - blackmail, drugs and murder to be sure with Blake developing a liberal conscience. Then we could expect "The Affair of the Midnight Muggings" or perhaps midday muggings would be more appropriate, and for a nice story set in the Middle East how about "The Riddle of the Hi-jacked Jet"?

The uncomfortable truth is that today's crime fiction can never equal or fully reflect the real horror of modern criminal violence.

AN AUTHOR AS PUBLISHER

by S. Gordon Swan

Among my collection of novels there is a number of non-Blake stories by Sexton Blake authors, such as Stacey Blake, Walter Tyrer, John Newton Chance (better known to us as John Drummond), Maurice B. Dix, John Hunter, Anthony Parsons -- to mention a few of them.

Recently I received a novel that must be something of a rarity: "The Lady of the Guns" by Andrew Murray, and published by Andrew Murray. Inside is a list of other books by this writer, and also some by Nicholas Islay. According to Messrs. Lofts' and Adley's books, "The Men Behind Boys' Fiction", this was a pen-name of Andrew Murray,

whose second name was Nicholas.

The hero of the story is Bruce Rayleigh, a King's Messenger, and it is a noteworthy point that he addresses his cousin, Gerald Falconer, by the nickname of Tinker. But I am sure that this is not a converted Blake story. The plot concerns a girl from the Middle East whose father was British Consul-General at Damascus for many years -- Sir Godfrey Lorraine, a name whose connection with the Middle East suggests that it owed something to Lawrence of Arabia.

Sir Godfrey had been sacked by the British Government for taking sides in native disputes and now he was negotiating to supply arms to the Christians of Syria to fight against their oppressors, the Druses. He had sent his daughter to London to pay for these arms, unaware that a Bolshevik named Stroski intended to divert the weapons to India where they would be used by rebels against British rule. Stroski was using Sir Godfrey and his daughter as catspaws.

If some of this sounds familiar, in view of the present-day strife in Lebanon, one can only assert that history often repeats itself. The yarn is told in typical Andrew Murray style, easily recognisable by those who have read the numerous exploits of John Lawless, Carlac and Kew.

One wonders how this publication venture fared. There is a suggestion at the end of the book designed to promote sales: "There are hundreds of isolated outposts of our Empire where the young British soldier keeps watch and ward. Time hangs heavily, and books are rare and sweet solace. There is a fleet that patrols all the waters of the earth,* and the young British sailor loves a 'yarn' to read.

"What better fate could befall any book that has been read and enjoyed than that it should go out to soldier and sailor and pass from hand to hand, blockhouse to blockhouse, ship to ship?

"Verb sap.

Andrew Murray."

* Whatever happened to it?

WANTED: Howard Baker facsimiles from No. 35 onwards with dust jackets. Must be clean.
LITVAK, 58 STANWELL RD., ASHFORD, MIDDX.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 216. ROYAL OCCASIONS

This year the Queen's people, all over the world, are celebrating Her Majesty's Silver Jubilee. Unfortunately, there is no longer a Gem or a Magnet to provide something special for Jubilee Day, but it is fitting to look this month at how Charles Hamilton, most loyal of the loyal, made memorable the Royal Occasions of his own day.

In June 1911, to mark the coronation of King George the Fifth and Queen Mary, he wrote "The King's Guest" for the Magnet. In the story Harry Wharton rescued from the sea a certain Crown Prince who was to be a guest of Britain for the Coronation. The prince's yacht had been wrecked off Pegg. The prince went to Greyfriars and once again Wharton proved his guardian angel, rescuing him from anarchists. Later Harry Wharton had a royal command to present himself, with the prince, at Buckingham Palace.

There was much cheering as the royal car, with the prince and Harry Wharton, drove through the mighty crowds. Wharton smiled as the cheers rang in his ears. There was conjecture among the crowd as to the identity of the lad. "And perhaps their cheering would not have been any less hearty if they had known him for what he was - a brave, honourable British schoolboy, who had risked his life to save that of a stranger, and whom, therefore, their King delighted to honour.

King George actually appeared in the story, and conversed with Wharton. Arthur Clarke, who illustrated "The King's Guest", showed Wharton kneeling before the King, and produced a splendid likeness of His Majesty.

Back at Greyfriars, Wharton told his friends what had happened at Buckingham Palace. "I kissed the King's hand, and then he made me get up, and shook hands with me," said Harry Wharton.

"Gee! If it was me, I'd wear a glove on that hand and never wash it again as long as I lived!" said Fisher T. Fish.

'Harry Wharton did not go quite so far as that, but his interview with King George the Fifth remained one of the happiest and proudest recollections of his life, and certainly His Majesty never had a truer or more loyal subject than Harry Wharton, who had saved the life of the

King's guest.'

That original and charming tale was never reprinted; Royal Occasions in stories were for the one occasion only, and became precious period pieces. They were never reprinted - with one exception.

The week after the Magnet's coronation story in June 1911, the Gem presented "Coronation Day at St. Jim's." The South Seas series was just over. The treasure-seekers had lost the treasure - it was now on the bed of the Pacific Ocean - but the boys had managed to retain just a number of Spanish doubloons which they had crammed into their pockets before the chest was lost. Those doubloons, disposed of by Lord Conway, had fetched two hundred pounds. It was in gold - glittering gold - two hundred gleaming coins marked with "the pleasant features of His Majesty King George the Fifth - two hundred golden quids." Tom Merry & Co. used their £200 in a giant Coronation Day party. Mingled into the story was a good deal of rivalry with Rylcombe Grammar School.

The South Seas series was reprinted in the Gem early in 1934, but the Coronation story was omitted for obvious reasons. But I made a note of the omission in my old brain-box. Quite early in 1935, the year of King George the Fifth's Silver Jubilee, I wrote to Mr. Down, the editor of the Gem, and suggested that the Coronation story of 1911 should become the Jubilee story of 1935. Mr. Down replied enthusiastically that it was a marvellous idea, and that it would be done. And so, in June 1935, appeared "Jubilee Day at St. Jim's." It did not need much editing. Just the word coronation deleted and the word jubilee put in its place.

Oh, one other thing. The golden sovereigns became rustling currency notes.

R. J. Macdonald illustrated the story in 1911 and in 1935. The two covers were very much alike, and it was pretty obvious that the artist had his 1911 picture before him when he repeated the illustration 24 years later - unless he had a marvellous memory.

But when a new Coronation Day came along two years later, there was no story to fill the bill for the Gem. But they did have King George the Sixth and his Gracious Queen on the cover, while the interior tale

was a reprint of that lovely old story "Brought to Book", reprinted under the clumsy title of "He Wanted to be Expelled".

The Magnet was able to celebrate two more Royal Occasions. In June 1935 "Up For The Jubilee" wound up the Easter Holiday series concerning Jimmy, the Fox, which introduced Jack Drake, the assistant of Ferrers Locke, the detective. This was one of those occasions when Hamilton introduced topical events into current series, with a good deal of pleasure resulting therefrom for the reader. It was a habit which lasted the author over quite a few of the best years of the Magnet, and it gave the stories an aura of reality. It was the sort of thing which provided drawbacks when a series was reprinted, but as this series was never destined to be reprinted, the point never arose in this case.

Two years later, in 1937, we had "Billy Bunter's Coronation Party" which, though not actually part of the Seahill Park series, was a natural sequel to it. A very jolly tale with plenty of patriotic flag-waving and a quota of coincidence such as pleases all but the most lofty of us. One of the nicest tales of the latter-day Magnet.

Charles Hamilton always rose to these Royal Occasions, bless his heart.

God Bless the Memory of Charles Hamilton. God Save the Queen.

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CENTENARY SALUTE FOR PERCY F. WESTERMAN by Brian Doyle

Amidst the justifiable excitement surrounding last year's Centenary celebrations for Charles Hamilton, the Centenary of another fine and prolific boys' writer was almost completely overlooked - that of Percy F. Westerman (1876-1959).

And, although his many adventure stories no longer appear to be in print, there cannot be many C.D. readers who have not enjoyed at least one or two of his books over the years. They can often be found in secondhand bookshops or jumble sales nowadays - and in the 1930's there were usually around 40 of his titles constantly in print.

Percy Francis Westerman was born in 1876 into a family which had strong naval traditions. Unfortunately, poor eyesight thwarted his attempts to join the Royal Navy and, when he left Portsmouth Grammar School at 18, he worked as a clerk in the Portsmouth Dockyards. He

devoted much of his spare time to sailing and began to contribute to such publications as "Yachting Weekly" and "Motor Boat Magazine".

His first book for boys was A LAD OF GRIT, published by Blackie (like most of his subsequent stories) in 1908 and came about when Westerman betted his wife 6d. that he could turn out a better boys' story than the one he had been reading aloud to his small son. He won his bet with the successful publication of A LAD OF GRIT, which was set in the time of Charles II's Restoration in 1660. Further historical stories followed, rather in the Henty tradition, including THE WINNING OF THE GOLDEN SPURS and THE YOUNG CAVALIER.

It was also around this time that he contributed his first serial to the "Boys' Own Paper" - THE TREASURE OF THE 'SAN PHILIPPO' in 1911. It was, as the title suggests, a sea story, and from then on, Westerman concentrated upon sea and naval stories, interspersed with flying yarns and, perhaps most memorably, stories featuring strange aeronautical craft, such as THE AIRSHIP 'GOLDEN HIND', THE DREADNOUGHT OF THE AIR and THE FLYING SUBMARINE.

Apart from his numerous 'individual' titles, there were also several series, including those about the Sea Scouts (including THE SCOUTS OF SEAL ISLAND, SEA SCOUTS ABROAD, and THE SEA SCOUTS OF THE 'PETREL'), about 'Standish of the Air Police' (including STANDISH GETS HIS MAN, STANDISH HOLDS ON and STANDISH PULLS IT OFF), and about his novel hero 'Alan Carr' (including ALAN CARR IN COMMAND, ALAN CARR IN THE ARCTIC and ALAN CARR IN THE NEAR EAST).

During the First World War, he also wrote several topical war adventures, including THE THICK OF THE FRAY AT ZEEBRUGGE, TO THE FORE WITH THE TANKS and ROUNDING UP THE RAIDER. He gained valuable experience for his background-writing, by working on Coastal Duties, then as a Navigation Instructor in the newly-formed Royal Flying Corps, during the Great War.

By the 1930's, Percy Westerman was one of the most popular boys' writers in Britain. Indeed, when the "Daily Sketch" conducted a national poll in various children's public libraries in the 'thirties, he came top. Pathé also made a short film about the man and his work.

Westerman also became a regular contributor to the famous "Boy's Own Paper", writing five serials for it between 1933 and 1940 (and also wrote for the wartime and post-war smaller-format B. O. P.). He also contributed to other papers and magazines, including "Chums", "Captain", "Scout" and "Modern Boy".

Percy F. Westerman, a tall, athletic and invariably-fit man, went on writing until he was around 80, two of his last books being THE JU-JU HAND (1954) and JACK CRADDOCK'S COMMAND (1958). When he died, at the age of 82, in 1959, he had published close on 200 books (several of which were collected in three special 'Omnibus editions'), plus numerous articles and short stories. They were translated into many languages and achieved sales of 1½ million copies. At one time Commodore of the Redclyffe Yacht Club, he lived for many years at Wareham, in Dorset.

The works of Percy F. Westerman belong on the bookshelves alongside those of George Henty, Charles Gilson, Herbert Strang, Frederick Brereton, Harry Collingwood, and other fine writers of sea, air and land adventure.

Let us give him a grateful and affectionate, if slightly belated, salute, on the occasion of his Centenary year in 1976.

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BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 39. EVACUATION OF AN AUDIENCE

And now our resident boys were moved away from Surbiton to a quieter area - a charming little hamlet named Peasmarsh, not far from Godalming. This was to last for the duration of the war. A much safer area than Surbiton, it provided the occasional excitement as on one night when a flying bomb roared over, cut out, and fell near Charterhouse, doing considerable damage to that famous public school. We had regular cricket fixtures with Charterhouse, and enjoyed those particular games immensely.

The removal of our resident boys from Surbiton could have posed a problem for the Small Cinema, though in fact it never did. We had a kind of unwritten law from early days with the film renters that our motion picture shows were for boarders who did not attend public cinemas in term time, and therefore we were offering no competition to the commercial cinemas in the neighbourhood. It was never observed, and our film contracts were always exactly the same as those which passed between the commercial

cinemas and the renters.

All the same, with the resident section of the school now distant, the reason for our cinemas's existence lessened, and we had less programmes for a time. Most days, I travelled between Peasmarsh and Surbiton by car, and those Peasmarsh boys who were preparing for exams and other older lads also went daily to Surbiton for their classes, some travelling with me by car and some going by train.

At Peasmarsh we had a very large hall which would have provided facilities for a permanent operating box, and I often toyed with the idea of installing a cinema there, but life was so uncertain in those days, and it never came to anything.

Occasionally in those war years, we put on programmes of films supplied by the Ministry of Information, attended by certain branches of the civil defence services. We often included M. O. I. films in our own school programmes.

That evacuation term, two months had gone by before we resumed normal business in the Small Cinema. The first show was a double-feature programme from Warner Bros: Ann Sheridan in "Angels Wash Their Faces" (no doubt a spin-off from the film "Angels With Dirty Faces" which we had played some time earlier) plus a little British frolic, Max Miller in "Hoots, Mon!"

Next another double from the same

firm: James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart in "The Roaring Twenties" plus Bert Wheeler in "The Cowboy Quarterback". To wind up that term we presented yet another double from Warner's: Jane Wyman in "Private Detective" (not, I fear, Sexton Blake or Nelson Lee) plus Max Miller in "The Good Old Days". A few years earlier we had played a Will Hay film with the same title, but I expect the stories were quite different.

The following term was also rather short-weight so far as our cinema programmes were concerned. They did not start at all until mid-term, and all came from Warner Bros. This was probably due to some uncertainty on the railways due to air-raids, which might have delayed delivery of film from other renters. But Warner's dispatch department was now at Teddington, and it was a fairly simple matter to go by car to Teddington to collect programmes. All the same, the Universal News came by rail, but, of course, a delayed newsreel was not comparable with a delayed feature.

Our first programme comprised Ann Sheridan in "It All Came True" (I recall it as a charming romance) plus Barry K. Barnes in a British thriller "Two for Danger". Next came John Garfield and Pat O'Brien in "Years Without Days"
cont'd overleaf ...

FOR SALE/EXCHANGE: Books Tom Merry Caravanners; Cardew's Catch; Fortescue of the Fourth. Many others, Billy Bunter, etc. Edgar Wallace's Bulldog Drummond; Jack O'Lantern; Spring-Heel Jack; Just William. Many school from 1930. Early Biggles; Children's Annuals; Film Books.

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

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA continued

plus John Payne in "King of the Lumberjacks."

The following week brought a western in technicolor: Dick Foran in "Heart of the North" supported by over an hour of short subjects including three Porky cartoons.

Next, James Cagney in "Boy Meets Girl" which I forget entirely, supported by an excellent and original little thriller, May Robson in "Granny Get Your Gun".

Last programme of the term was another double-feature affair consisting of a British comedy: Marie Lohr in "George and Margaret" plus Priscilla Lane in "Baby, Be Good." I forget "George and Margaret" but it was the film version of a stage play - and stage plays seldom transferred too

successfully to the large screen. In one way it was reminiscent of "Rebecca" and "Edward, My Son" in that the characters named in the title are never seen on stage or in the picture at all. I saw the play "George and Margaret" at the "Q" Theatre, probably before the film was made. It was a family story, and George & Margaret were two guests who were expected but never appeared. I recall it for it was the first time I ever saw that great character comedienne Irene Handl - she came on for the first time about two minutes before the final curtain as a new maid named Beer. She opened and shut her mouth in a conversation which was intentionally quite inaudible to the audience. I forget whether she also appeared in the film, but I expect she did.

The Postman Called

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

DON WEBSTER (Bideford): Some years ago I forwarded to the late Charles Hamilton a copy of a B. F. Library called "King Cricket" - (an abridged version of the serial which ran in "The Boys' Realm" in 1907) asking him to autograph and return to me. I also included a story I had written with a cricket background, in which Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent became estranged, but due to a wonderful last wicket partnership against St. Jim's, the breach is healed. Mr. Hamilton duly returned my book and in a telephone conversation remarked -

"I liked your story - wish I'd thought of that plot. However I'm not as "au fait" with the finer points of the game as you are, though I do read the scores occasionally."

So there you are! It seems doubtful if he played cricket seriously. The late Herbert Leckenby let me read a copy of a Boys' Realm containing an instalment of - King Cricket. C.H. certainly knew

his players! I'll bet sales were good that year. In conclusion I can only refer to my article in the 1966 C.D. Annual which sums it all up. How's that?

M. HALL (Walton-on-Thames): I am a keen Hamiltonian and have been since I was "captured" by the "Magnet" many years ago.

However, keen though I am, I am not blinded to the fact that other authors of boys' stories wrote many fine tales and created some first-rate characters. The stories of St. Frank's in the "Nelson Lee" were always enjoyable to me and his stories of the boys on holiday with Lord Dorriemore appealed rather more than when the boys were at St. Frank's.

R. J. LEWIS (Wirral): The author of 'Biography of a Small Cinema' No. 38 made a very remarkable statement when he wrote that "Destry Rides Again" was one of the best, if not the best western film ever made.

Until the advent of "Shane", with exceptions such as "Stagecoach" and "High Noon", the general standard of westerns was, compared to the present-day, poor. Indeed James Stewart's "Who Killed Liberty Vallance" was a far superior film to his "Destry Rides Again".

I am afraid our small cinema manager has missed seeing quite a number of classic westerns made in the last twelve years.

J. E. MILLER (Brighton): Congratulations on another excellent issue, and not least on Brian Doyle's piece about La Sayers. Like yourself and a small elite band of C.D. writers, Mr. Doyle can always be relied upon to inform as well as entertain, and I look forward to his article on Westerman. I was also much interested in your reference to the old Readers' Library series sold by Woolworth's. I, too, possess a few of the illustrated film stories, including, oddly enough, "The Fleet's In". Though, as you say, one may still pick up these books as second-hand bargains, they are much sought after by film buffs. Some years ago the Cinema Book Shop near the British Museum was offering some very tatty specimens at up to £2.50.

Miss JUNE ARDEN (Leeds): I should like to say how very much I enjoy the Digest - not only the Magnet, Gem and Rookwood parts, but anything about the Old Books which I and my brothers read with such joy

so many years ago. I do agree with you that the background of several Talbot Baines Reed's stories must have inspired Frank Richards. You did not mention "The Master of the Shell". I loved it.

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News of the Clubs

MIDLAND

The April programme included a hilarious collection of schoolboy howlers read by Win Partridge and a quiz 'Sayings and Quotations' compiled by Jack Bellfield. There was much book talk and browsing and as usual an Anniversary number was on display; Magnet 272 of 26 April, 1913, The Schoolboy Money-lender - 64 years old to the day. The collector's item consisted of the first three numbers of Collectors' Digest. The time passed all too quickly and soon after 9.30 p.m. the happy party, with considerable reluctance, left to wend a way homeward.

It is perhaps fitting to mention that the Midland Section of the Old Boys' Book Club has been in existence 25 years. It can scarcely be imagined that when Jack Corbett founded the club he thought it would still be a going concern 25 years hence. It is a remarkable tribute to the magic of Charles Hamilton's writings, that collecting and reading and discussion of his work should have such a lasting grip on people's minds.

The club has never had a large membership but has certainly had its moments. Distinguished guests have included Maurice Down, one time editor of the Magnet, Chapman, the well-known illustrator, Len Packman, Roger Jenkins of the London Club, the charming Una Hamilton-Wright, Herbert Leckenby founder of the C.D., and others too numerous to mention.

CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at 5 All Saints' Passage on Sunday, 1st May, 1977. Mike Rouse gave an absorbing talk on collecting Cigarette cards. He described the genesis of his collection in the gift he received as a small boy of a collection which had belonged to a man killed in the War, and of his career as a collector. He spoke about the Collecting hobby generally and its development in recent years. At first he had bought old albums, but later had collaborated with the London Cigarette Co. in the design of albums, with transparent plastic pockets, through which both the face and the reverse of the card could be seen. He thought it was advisable to build up collections now in view of rising prices. He produced a series of his albums showing cards of the 1914-18 war period and earlier - these were passed round the members present to their great admiration, and many nostalgic memories were recalled at some of the fine early series with their brilliant colouring. Mike mentioned a story that shortly before the last War it had been discovered that the German Embassy was buying up sets of "British Warship" cards for use by the German U boats in ship recognition.

Bill Lofts and Bill Thurbon gave outlines of proposed articles based on their recent researches on George Alfred Henty. Bill Lofts concentrating on the Henty family and G. A. Henty in later life, and Bill Thurbon on the puzzling question of whether Henty was really born, as he claimed, at Trumpington near Cambridge. The researches of Jack Overhill and himself had produced some contradictory evidence.

Bill Lofts also produced some interesting items on films of the 1913 period.

Bill Lofts also reported that a further supply of the catalogue of Old Boys Books which he and Derek Adley produced is available.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to Bill and Mrs. Thurbon for their hospitality. Next meeting will be on 12th June, at 20 Wingate Way, the home of Vic Hearn.

LONDON

Bob Blythe, chairman for the Diamond Jubilee Year of St. Frank's College, duly obliged by winning Norman Knight's excellent Nelson Lee Quiz.

The Thespian hosts of the Twickenham meeting, Sam and Babs Thurbon, had recorded on tape a splendid interview of Martha Bardell at Sexton Blake's Baker Street chambers.

For the Hamiltonians, Millicent Lyle conducted a competition whereby nearly all present joined in to compose a six word telegram to Buckingham Palace regretting that the following characters were unable to accept the invitation to attend, Wibley, Vernon-Smith, Huree Singh, Fisher T. Fish, Mrs. Mimble and Mr. Prout. Some very amusing wires were composed and Larry Morley, Sam Thurbon and Graham Bruton were adjudged the winners, receiving a Jubilee medal, (chocolate) as their prize.

Bob Acraman gave details of forthcoming Howard Baker publications and read excerpts about Herbert Leckenby from the S.P.C. Winifred Moss spoke of her efforts re talking books for the blind.

Votes of thanks to Sam and Babs for wonderful hospitality. Greyfriars, Wokingham, on Sunday, 12th June, is the particulars of the next gathering. Eric and Betty Lawrence are the hosts. Phone 034 46 4626. No Hamilton Library at the next meeting.

BENJAMIN WHITER

NORTHERN

9 April, 1977 and 14 May, 1977

Our April meeting was hit by a number of mishaps. Falling on Holy Saturday, it found several members absent, some through illness and others unavoidably committed elsewhere.

To make up, as it were, we had a bumper attendance at our May meeting. For this Jubilee year Mollie introduced the first item by looking back to 1958, the Golden Jubilee year of the Magnet, in which year there was a 'Greyfriars Herald' competition won by the Midland Club. Our own effort came second, and from it Geoffrey Wilde read to us two items - 'The Great Deck-chairs Mystery' (a 'Herlock Sholmes' story) and 'The Case of the Rival Detectives' (featuring Bexton Slake and his assistant, Slinker),

After refreshments we continued our nostalgic mood and Geoffrey Good read to us the opening chapters of our own 'Magnet' - written by Club members a number of years ago.

And as our Secretary had not even heard of the Clubs in the days when the Northern 'Greyfriars Herald' and the Northern 'Magnet' were written, he feels that he can objectively remark on the merits of these publications and congratulate the authors on their high literary standards.

And as the Midland 'Greyfriars Herald' won first prize nineteen years ago he would congratulate those writers. There is, indeed, a wealth of talent in the Clubs!

FOR SALE: Comic Annuals, Lion, Radio Fun, Knockout, Victor, Eagle and others.
S.A.E. for full list. R. G. ARNOLD, 83 Canterbury Tower, St. Mark's St., Birmingham 1.

The Grand Summer Number of Golden Fun (No. 7) features Wilson The Wonderman, an article and bibliography on the great super athlete of the story papers by W. O. G. Loftis and D. J. Adley, Will Costain on Radio Fun, and a biography-appreciation of George and Terry Wakefield by Alan & Laurel Clark. Plus all the usual features! Please send 65p + 14p postage for this biggest ever 40-page number to:

A. & L. CLARK, 1 LOWER CHURCH STREET
CUDDINGTON (near AYLESBURY), BUCKS., HP18 OAS.

WANTED: C.D's for 1965, 1966. H. Baker Magnets, Volumes 18, 24, S.O.L's, Magnets, Elsie Oxenham, Brent-Dyer books, Bunters, Van Dine's, Pow-wow Murder Case.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN.

WANTED: Ravens - 726, 727, 740, 758, 764, 795, 798, 800, 804, 805, 807, 810, 824, 825, 826, 827, 829, 831, 832, 846, 850, 853, 872, 916. Will buy or can offer some 1936/7 Wizards and Skippers (two of mine for one of yours) in exchange.

P. J. HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, KING'S HEATH, NORTHAMPTON.

SALE: Black Bass Library, Nos. 1-37, £10; Nugget Library (new series) Nos. 1, 10, 14, 18, 22, 24, 26, 43, 46, 52, 58, 63, £4; Holiday Annual 1921, £4.

38 ST. THOMAS'S ROAD, PRESTON, LANCs.

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JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN. (Tel. 491716)

OTHER PEOPLE'S OPINIONS

L. WORMULL writes:- The topic of the finest school-story writer still holds sway, I note. Once it was between Hamilton and Brooks, now I see the range has been extended. "Eric" was the first school story I read, and I still possess a boyhood copy. I wept buckets in those days, today I find it laughable. Religion and sickly sentiment aside, much of it was extremely well-written, and I think the concluding paragraph could hardly have been bettered. In recent years I have attempted to read some of the authors mentioned in your April editorial, but not one gave me the same amount of pleasure as that derived from reading Hamilton. If he was not the greatest then let's say Hamilton Rules - O. K. ?