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IT'S GOOD TO BE BRITISH

During the Jubilee celebrations I often felt proud to be British, a sentimental stirring of the heart which I have not experienced for a very long time. As the Archbishop of Canterbury observed, on Jubilee Day, we are fortunate to have on the throne a woman of such sterling character as our Queen. Watching her on various occasions during Jubilee week, on the T. V. screen, I felt my admiration for her and for her consort ever increasing. We are also lucky to have the B. B. C. whose presentations in that great week were just wonderful, and, I reckon, the world's best.

This land is also lucky in the periodicals which were to be found in profusion on the bookstalls in the first 40 years of this century. And we are fortunate in the men who wrote for those periodicals and for those who illustrated them.

This month the spotlight turns on one of the greatest of those

men, Edwy Searles Brooks, for it is exactly sixty years since his St. Frank's was born in July 1917.

Our cover this month, drawn by our own gifted artist, Mr. Henry Webb, pays tribute to St. Frank's and the boys of that famous school.

Looking back on the illustrious run of the Nelson Lee Library, one wonders why Nelson Lee and Nipper were turned over to Brooks, who made the characters more popular then ever and very much his own. Was it an editorial plan, or did the project come from Brooks himself? One wonders also why the earlier stories were written in the first person, narrated by Nipper, with all the limitations that that style of writing imposes on a weekly storyteller - and why, with the passing of time, the change to more orthodox writing for the genre came about.

And, yet again, why did the end come just as it did in the early thirties?

Maybe our Lee experts have answered these questions in days gone by, but, if so, I have missed them.

In any case, sixty years later, we salute E. S. Brooks, bless his heart, and think ourselves lucky that St. Frank's was created all those years back, and still lives on today in the affection and admiration of the great crowds who love the school, the characters, and its amazing creator.

BIOSCOPE

Some years ago I recommended, to those of my readers who are interested in very early cinema history, a book entitled "Gone To The Pictures" by Hilda Lewis. It is a romantic novel, and it concerns a young woman who makes a career of cinema management and film production in the early years of this century, and there is a great deal of cinematic interest. One has to allow for some mistakes, of course. The writer speaks of Chaplin films in 1912, and of "The Exploits of Elaine" in the same year, whereas Chaplin did not make his first film till late 1913 and Elaine was not made until 1915. Also, she says that in 1914, just before the war, she was impressed by Griffiths' "Birth of a Nation", whereas, in reality, it was not released in the States till late 1915 and in this country in 1916.

However, that's all beside the point. The writer speaks of all cinemas of those early days, up till, say, 1910, as being in blackedout shops and all called Bioscopes - or Penny Bioscopes. I wonder whether that is correct. There is, I believe, a cinema in Victoria, London, today, named the Bioscope, but I never recall coming across that name for a cinema when I was a lad. There were Gems, and Populars, and Scalas - but no Bioscope.

So I wondered whether Miss Lewis might have taken the name from America. After a bit of research, however, I cannot find the name in American history. It seems that in the States they called their early cinemas nickelodeons.

I do remember, however, that in the lesser quality music-halls, when I was a youngster, they always had "the Bioscope" in the programme. This usually came at the end of the variety show, and would consist of a newsreel a week or two old. Occasionally, possibly if the variety bill was a bit short-weight, they would show a two-reel comedy. Miss Lewis, in her book, says that the "Bioscope" in the music-hall programmes was put on just to clear the house quickly, but I doubt this. A theatre in the dark is not likely to have the crowd moving very quickly, though it is true that some would not bother to stop for the film. More likely, I think, it was cheaper to show a film than to book an additional variety act. Anybody remember the Bioscope?

THE BOTTOMLESS CUP

Someone writing in the paper recently was assuring us that we are all much better off now than we were ten years ago. I agree that some of us are - but equally I am sure that some of us AIN'T.

There are quite a few things which I used to be able to afford and take for granted, and I can't afford them today.

Having paid £1.08 for a quarter pound of coffee last week, I shan't be surprised if coffee very soon joins the long list of things now beyond reach.

When I was playing for the Bunter show at the Shaftesbury Theatre some dozen years ago, I used to get a marvellous lunch for a few bob at the Piccadilly Corner House, and at the end of the meal you had the "bottomless cup" of coffee for one shilling. That is, you could have the

cup filled for just as many times as you liked - time after time, if you were thirsty, - for just a bob. The "bottomless cup" of coffee was a feature at all the Corner Houses, and the service was splendid. Why on earth did they close the Corner Houses down? I suppose a Packer, with mountains of money, bought them up.

Anyone remember the bottomless cup?

TAILPIECE

As many readers know, Madam was in hospital for her second eye operation during June. Our grateful thanks to the large number of C.D. readers who sent her "Get Well" cards and cheering letters, and to those who telephoned to enquire as to her progress. Though it will be a month or two before she is her old self again, I am thankful to say that she is getting on very nicely.

Mr. Softee, naturally, missed her a lot. When I was in the house, while Madam was away, Mr. Softee seldom moved far from my feet. I think he was making sure that I did not disappear too.

Preparations are now in hand for the 1977 Collectors' Digest Annual, and many first-class articles are already in hand for our famous Year Book, the C.D.A. I hope to tell you a bit about it next month.

THE EDITOR

Danny's Diary

JULY 1927

In two thousand years there have only been thirteen occasions when a total eclipse of the sun was visible in this country. And one of those occasions was last week. It was very exciting indeed. I think the amazing thing is that scientists not only know that this sort of happening is going to occur but that they know the exact time it will be down to a minute.

To mark the occasion, the Union Jack published a story entitled "Eclipse" about a crime that was committed just as the eclipse was

taking place. Doug bought it, and gave it to me.

It is exactly 900 years since William the Conqueror invaded this land, and a total eclipse of the sun is said to have taken place at that time.

The first story in the Magnet this month was "Bolsover's Brother". Bolsover Major doesn't bother about his minor until that minor is in danger of being expelled for stealing two pound notes from his form-master, Mr. Wiggins. Then the major makes a false confession in order to save the minor. But absent-minded Mr. Wiggins had accidentally enclosed the money in an envelope which he had sent away to a tourist agency. Neat little tale, this one.

Then some more tip-top "Bounder" stories. In "The Bounder's Good Turn", he is misunderstood for a good turn he tried to do for Hazeldene, and, as a result, there is bitter blood between the Bounder and Harry Wharton. The sequel, "Smithy's Way" is a grand yarn in which Vernon-Smith makes Wharton look a fool, and later sets some toughs on to Wharton, and, finally, joins Wharton in a fight against his own toughs. Splendid stuff all the way.

Next, "Bunter, the Bad Lad" was a change from the Bounder tales for a brief interlude, but as it wasn't by the real Frank Richards, it wasn't a change for the better. But the last tale of the month is a real winner. "Smithy's Pal" is, of course, Tom Redwing back on the scene after a long absence. The Bounder cut detention in order to go to see his old pal, when he heard that Redwing was back at Hawkscliff - and Mr. Quelch found himself in a sooty booby-trap, due to Bunter being "such a fool - ahem", as Wharton explained to the Head later on.

This month the King and Queen opened the new Gladstone Docks at Liverpool, and another exciting event is that the L. N. E. R. is running express trains non-stop from King's Cross to Newcastle.

In the Schoolboys' Own Library this month I have had "A Rank Outsider", which tells how Lumley-Lumley first came to St. Jim's as a new boy, and "The Terror of the Third", which told how Handforth Minor arrived at St. Frank's.

There is a new comedy on at the Aldwych Theatre in London. It is called "Thark", and the stars are Tom Walls, Ralph Lynn, and Mary Brough.

The trial has taken place this month of Robinson, a man accused of murdering a woman named Minnie Bonati, and leaving her body in a trunk at the left-luggage office at Charing Cross Railway Station.

The Gem kicked off this month with a Cardew story "Saved from the Sack", a hotch-potch of an affair about a missing necklace. It left me cold. Next a couple of linked stories about Gussy in a feud with Mr. Selby: "Gussy the Rebel" and "Gussy Sees It Through". Staying away from school, Gussy lodged at the home of Grimes, the grocer's boy, for a time. The theme was not too bad, if it had been more warmly written.

And then the real Martin Clifford was back for the start of what is apparently going to be a holiday series of Tom Merry & Co. in Canada as the guests of Wildrake at the Boot Leg Ranch. I suppose this is a bit odd, in a way, as the Rookwood series set in Canada are now running in the Popular. At any rate, if the St. Jim's series is as good as that, nobody will complain.

In "Kit Wildrake's Peril", Gussy is kidnapped in mistake for Wildrake. The villains are Rube Redway and Poker Pete. But Wildrake tracks down Gussy, and he goes free at last. The last of the month was "Westward Bound" which told of the adventures of Wildrake's party till they arrive at the Boot Leg Ranch at the end of the tale. And Gussy, who is prominent throughout, proves himself an expert horseman. The series continues next month. And very welcome it is.

Sexton Blake is now back in the Popular, in some fairly long stories. A good one this month was "The Mystery of the Theatre Box".

At the cinemas this month we have seen a good thriller, Ivor Novello in "The Lodger"; W. C. Fields in "It's the Old Army Game"; Monte Blue in "Across the Pacific"; Beatrice Lillie and Jack Pickford in "Exit Smiling"; and Johnnie Hines in "The Brown Derby".

In the Nelson Lee Library there has been, all the month, an exciting series in which the chums go to the Congo in the company of Lord Dorrimore. In the opening tale, "St. Frank's in the Congo", the bearers deserted them, and the party were alone in the jungle.

In "The Congo Quest", the boys find a plantation fitted with a modern power-station, and peopled by slaves. Umlosi is rescued by the party - but now Irene & Co. are missing. Next "In The Cannibals"

Grip". The lost girls are re-united with the rest of the party, but they are all ambushed by natives. They are rescued by Otto Lerenzo who wants them as slaves. Next "The Slaver of Kalala", and they are made to work on the plantation and power-station. Willy Handforth escapes, but is re-captured and staked out to be eaten alive by ants. But the party rescues him and bars out in the power-station.

Final of the month "The Jungle Barring-Out" in which the St. Frank's party is overcome and captured by the natives. All very thrilling.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Offhand I would have declared that there was never a month in Schoolboys' Own Library history without a Greyfriars story - and I would have been wrong. There was no Greyfriars story in July 1927. No. 55, "A Rank Outsider" comprised two consecutive blue Gems of midsummer 1910. No. 56, "The Terror of the Third" comprised two consecutive stories from the late autumn of 1922 in the Nelson Lee Library.)

* * * * *

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Nelson Lee Column
(DIAMOND JUBILEE YEAR)
1917  1977 

ST. FRANK'S

A Jubilee is a la mode
(As June the Seventh clearly showed),
And so to Edwy let's give thanks
For Sixty Years of bold St. Frank's!
For Nipper, Handforth, Nelson Lee,
For Fun and Thrills and Mystery!

Mary Cadogan

SIXTY GLORIOUS YEARS

by C. H. Churchill

On 28th July this year we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the advent of St. Frank's college in the Nelson Lee Library.

What a great pity that no correspondence was found on this subject amongst E.S.B.'s letters given to Bob Rlythe by Mrs. Brooks. How interesting it would have been to have read how the plan was evolved and how E.S.B. set about it. One wonders, did he draw up a list of the characters needed and then put names to them? Then, in his mind, imagine the structure of the school, the various forms, the studies, the masters and then the lay-out of the buildings, etc.? Also the surrounding countryside?

Those of us who read the Nelson Lee over the years until its demise and then, with no fresh adventures to come, reread and reread over and over again all the old stories, will never cease to be grateful to E.S.B. for all the pleasure he gave us. His gift of writing kept us enthralled and almost caused us to think that St. Frank's really existed and was not merely a figment of his imagination.

Will any of us ever forget the memorable characters he invented - Handy & Co., Christine & Co., Fenton, Morrow, Fullwood, Pitt, Browne, Sir Montie and the dozens of others too numerous to mention? Shall we forget the local topography, the many places where actions took place? Bellton, Bannington, Caistow, the old mill, the quarries and Willard's Island? I think not.

Then consider all the holiday adventures where we visited, shall we say, with Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore and members of St. Frank's all sorts of foreign places and learned many things about them which we did not know before. By this I mean his descriptions of the Amazon, coral islands, the desert, Canada and hosts of other exotic parts.

Yes, we have had a real feast of adventures, school, mystery, foreign travel by sea and air, not to mention all those ghostly occurrences at Christmastime to chill our bones during the long dark evenings. And all this without moving from our chairs so to speak.

WHY TRACKETT GRIM BECAME A
PRIVATE DETECTIVE?

By James W. Cook

Unrequited love and being sent down from Oxbridge were the main reasons why Trackett Grim took to private investigations. His agile brain and a doting father had prepared him set to be a general in a short army career, but he disdained this for the love of a young parlour-maid. Love's labour was lost when Grim found he was playing second fiddle and he threw himself into the Thames. But a friend of his aunt, chief-inspector Dustpin of the Yard, fished him out and urged him to fight crime as a private detective.

Thus it came about that Trackett Grim was installed in rooms in Bakers Inn Road, London, W. and his first case led him to Billingsgate where suspected poisoned fish were being sold. A successful investigation meant being retained by the Ministry of Ag and Fish and Grim was well on his way to a long and viable career.

It was while Grim was searching old fish boxes that he came across a sleeping boy. Now Grim needed an assistant very badly and he decided this was to be him. He soon had him awake and, slinging him across his shoulder, raced from Billingsgate to Bakers Inn Road in less time than it takes to write.

The new assistant was named by deed poll by Grim and from that day the world became aware of Trackett Grim & Splinter, crime busters extraordinary, of Bakers Inn Road, London.

Grim's next case was a very dangerous assignment that took him and his assistant to the Friendly Islands in the South Pacific where drugs were being disseminated. The Islands were far from being friendly for spears met Grim and Splinter as soon as they jumped off the plane. But Grim just plucked the spears away and in no time was hobnobbing with the prime minister who gave him details of the drugs that were the bane of his crime prevention department. It needed only a spark to set Grim on the trail, and after rescuing Splinter from the top of a coconut tree, they entered a cave on the far side of the island from which Grim had detected a certain aroma. Trackett Grim's sense of smell had tracked down a load of Hasish - trade name Hashish - and a grateful Island government gave Grim and Splinter the freedom of the Friendly Islands.

After returning to London, Grim found a queue awaiting his unrivalled services who preferred Grim to any other investigator. Trackett Grim's marvellous successes had burst upon the world, and crooks were on the point of emigrating when they saw the crowds of clients lining Bakers Inn Road.

Such was the mighty deductive power of Trackett Grim that he soon polished off the horde of customers to their eminent satisfaction and within minutes Grim and Splinter were fast asleep undisturbed by the roar of the traffic and the long flight from the South Seas.

From that day Trackett Grim and his nimble assistant became household words. Peers of the Realm; foreign governments all sought Grim's ability to solve their troubles; but Grim's first attention was always to his country's needs, and the honours and medals that were bestowed on him soon began to pall with the result that Grim had to donate them to the British Museum.

Because of the lack of recognition by his headmaster at Oxbridge for Grim's wonderful talents the wizard of Bakers Inn Road never accepted a case from a public School. Grim's attitude toward public Schools was very cool and only an order from the Monarch would induce him to apply his investigative powers if he was so ordered.

Parlour-maids were also his bete noire: they were always his first suspect whenever he was called in to a country mansion or a large town house. Grim never fell in love again. He never had the time. His services were demanded at home and abroad continuously. One day he decided to take Splinter to Southend and laze on the beach and challenge Splinter to a race along the pier; but a bomb threat to blow up the pier had Grim investigating instead. Unhappily for Grim's short holiday the bomb threat was a hoax and by the time the hoax was discovered the sun had sunk in the west and it was time to return to London.

To avoid the crowds at Fenchurch Street station who had learnt of Grim's Southend adventure and were waiting to welcome him, Grim and Splinter jumped the train at Barking and took a taxi to Bakers Inn Road where bags of mail cluttered the doorway to his chambers. The whole world was desirous of obtaining the services of the renowned London private detective.

To escape the amazing publicity that following his every success Trackett Grim found it necessary to disguise himself each time he went to the cinema.

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

As you will note one of the articles this month is an anniversary number and I must apologise for not putting it in the May issue which would have been more appropriate.

Have any of you started on your articles for the C.D. Annual? If not now is the time to begin so that I can let our Editor have the material in good time. There is no need to write long screeds, just a page or two will do nicely so that there is a variety of contributions.

GREAT STUFF THESE SPECIAL OCCASIONS

by Raymond Cure

Yes, great stuff, be it a wedding anniversary, silver, ruby or golden; or that great event of receiving a telegram from the Queen on one's 100th birthday, an occasion we all look forward to. Blackpool

cashed in on it too last year with special do's as 1976 was the centenary of the formation of the Blackpool Borough in 1876. All of which led me to our very own celebrations, the grand 30 years of our Collectors' Digest, though it would be the year of Our Lord 1957 when I saw my first copy and now, through the kindness of a friend, I have been able to read copies much earlier than that.

Now you may know or not, but in the merry month of May 1929 it was the anniversary of the Centenary of our Police Force. The Editor of the Union Jack knew it and so did Mr. Coutts Brisbane. Together they cashed in on it hence the birth of the Sexton Blake epic "One Hundred Years After" billed as a topical story of the Police Force Centenary 1829 to 1929 and written by Mr. Brisbane.

"This week" says our U. J. editor "the Metropolitan Police, the first and finest in the land, nay in the world, celebrate their 100th birthday and here is a specially written story of Sexton Blake's part in the great event - the U. J.'s tribute to the Men in Blue".

Now as every editor knows, a little of something on the outside is only to draw attention to what is on the inside, so our cover picture depicts a policeman in 1929 uniform and one in 1829 uniform. In the background marching police in various types of uniforms, spectators number thousands, but, consternation, above the milling throng, way up in the sky hangs a huge black blob which seems to be cause for alarm. From the first chapter there is an element of mystery. When Sexton Blake gets wind of a strange motor-cyclist doing strange things it leads him to investigate and when Sexton Blake does just that he usually uncovers something. In this case the "something nasty in the woodshed" turns out to be a kind of I. R. A. gang. A group of Anarchists intent on causing damage to the aforesaid "Metropolitan Police the first and finest in the world". As the story approaches its climax the cast blossoms out into thousands. Marching police, cheering spectators, celebrating this great event. Overhead in a clear blue sky a small moth-plan zooms into view and just as quickly zooms out again leaving a huge black blob sailing towards the massed crowds. What terrible fate is about to befall our Police Force? What awful calamity overhangs those cheering admirers? What steps can Blake and Tinker take at this late hour to save the day or have they already taken steps? Well, in the words of the newsboys of

the 1929 period as they rush down the streets with their placards swinging in front of them: "Read all abar't it" you may wish to do so. You may have a copy of the Union Jack in your possession, if not, try to borrow one from the Sexton Blake section of the London Old Boys' Book Club. Union Jack No. 1336, dated 25th May, 1929, "One Hundred Years After" by Coutts Brisbane.

UNUSUAL SETTINGS

by S. Gordon Swan

Colourful settings have been a feature of the Sexton Blake Saga since its inception in 1893. From the conventional country house, the haunted mansion and the dark precincts of Limehouse and Dockland to the sinister streets of Chinese cities and the sometimes explosive atmosphere of South American republics, the backgrounds have been many and varied. The more exotic settings were described by writers with firsthand knowledge of their subject.

But some of the stories have been set in most unusual venues, such as the Monastery of St. Aloysius, in the heart of Quebec. On the track of gold smugglers who were conveying gold across the Canadian border into the United States, Sexton Blake found himself in the midst of Trappist monks who had taken a vow of silence. The only inhabitants allowed to speak were the abbot -- a tall man of considerable girth -- and a sixteen-year-old novice known as little Brother Hilarius.

Blake soon found that a gold mine had been discovered in the district, that the precious metal was being transported across the frontier by aeroplane, and that the abbot, whose face was hidden by a cowl, was involved. In due course, the revelation was made that the "abbot" was an old enemy of Blake's, Janssen the Moonlayer, who, having taken refuge in the monastery, had imprisoned the real abbot and impersonated him, a not very difficult task, in the circumstances.

The atmosphere of the monastery was well conveyed, and the tolling of the bell every quarter of an hour proved a source of grievance for Tinker. Eventually, of course Blake rounded up the smugglers and Janssen was captured, Corporal Nevin of the R. C. M. P. playing a big part in the affair.

This character of the Moonlayer is one about whom little seems to have been written, yet he was an original conception. He was

described as having "a great blonde beard, which was the first feature to be noticed about him. (The beard was shaved off when he impersonated the abbot.) His hair, too, was akin to a lion's mane, and his eyes -- they were of a chilled-steel blue, set rather closely together. His features were aquiline; his nose was like the hooked beak of an eagle. Apart from his size and girth, he looked to be possessed of enormous strength." A man of education, yet at times coarse and brutal.

This was the only long story in which he ever appeared, for it was published in THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY under the title of "The Secret of the Monastery". There had been several previous exploits recorded in THE UNION JACK, but this particular story marked his last appearance. Incidentally, he was the only recurring character created by S. Gordon Shaw; although this author is credited with the "Furg the Fur-Man" series, I am convinced that that was originally the conception of the ill-fated Eric W. Townsend.

Another tale in a strange setting was "The Cleopatra Needle Mystery", wherein three young men met at Cleopatra's Needle on the evening of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations and agreed to meet again at the same spot in thirty years time. Much happened after this second meeting and Sexton Blake was drawn into a complicated maze of crime.

One of the three who met again, John Smith, was proved to be an impostor, and Blake believed the real John Smith to be incarcerated in a private lunatic asylum. It was in this latter venue that the main part of the story took place. With the help of two doctors and a magistrate Blake was "certified" and placed in this fraudulent institution where he met adventures grave and gay.

The humorous aspects were provided by a vacuous young man called Peter Varceyt and by another inmate known as Heems, whose speciality was making up doggerel verse involving the name of the historical personage he believed himself to be at the moment. But it was this latter individual who was also responsible for a stark episode in the later part of the story.

When Blake's identity was discovered he was locked in a padded cell and Heems, in homicidal mood, was thrust in upon him. In the ensuing struggle Blake overcame the lunatic and tied him up with his own

braces. Then Heems, in a lucid moment, succeeded in committing suicide and Blake was left alone with the corpse.

In the end, when Blake was about to be killed, Tinker and the police came to the rescue, the real John Smith was discovered and the villains were captured and met their deserts. The three friends met again at a dinner to celebrate the end of the trial.

There we have it: two detective stories, one laid in a Trappist monastery in Quebec, the other in a private lunatic asylum in England. It would be hard to find two more strange or contrasting environments, or better examples of the variety provided by the Sexton Blake Saga.

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 144 - Magnet No. 452 - "The Stolen Study"

Charles Hamilton used the idea of the stolen study on a number of occasions, and the common theme was that the heroes were delayed in returning to school, which gave some objectionable characters the opportunity to seize the cherished room for themselves. St. Jim's had featured such a story two years earlier, in Gem 341, at the end of a holiday at Eastwood House, which the juniors prolonged by pretending to be ill. When they did return, it was to find that Levison had taken possession of study No. 6. It was all perfectly logical and in a way it was poetic justice for their attempted deception.

The Magnet story lacked this logical sequence of events. The story (dated 7th October, 1916) began with the Removites at Lantham Junction, returning from what was really a non-existent holiday, since all the Magnet tales for that year were set at the school. The Famous Five were delayed in a somewhat amazing manner: they shared a railway compartment with Bunter and a General Popham, and when the General started acting in a high-handed manner they incited Bunter to ventriloquise various animal noises. The General eventually suspected Bob Cherry and boxed his ears, whereupon a fracas arose, and the General persuaded a constable to arrest the Famous Five and take them to the police station.

Study No. 1 in the meanwhile had been annexed by Bunter,

Bolsover major, and Fish, and the American junior was astute enough to enlist Loder on his side. The remainder of the story dealt with the way in which the new occupants of this study got on together, and the various devices used to persuade the squatters to move out.

In 1916 the Magnet was beginning a lurch on a downward path, with increasing reliance upon substitute writers and a generally unhappy atmosphere in many of the genuine stories. "The Stolen Study" was a cleverly-constructed plot after the weak opening, but it was not a pleasant tale, and it was not agreeable to see Wharton engaging in the same type of trickery that the usurpers were employing. There can be little doubt that the wartime atmosphere had affected Charles Hamilton and oppressed his spirits, and it was to be many years before the Greyfriars stories recovered their equanimity.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 217. THE VARIED BOUNDER

Fifty years ago the Magnet presented the 3-story series starring the Bounder of Greyfriars, and introducing a guest of the Headmaster, one Captain Spencer.

It was a beautifully-written piece of work, ushering in the period of Magnet history which most students of the old paper consider its Golden Age.

Throughout Magnet history the Bounder was always a leading character, and, in some ways, one of the best character gems in the whole of school literature. But, as the years swept by, there were many phases in the characterisation of Herbert Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder of the Red Magnet was too incredibly wicked. Typical of the period was the series in which the Bounder plotted and brought about the departure from Greyfriars of all the Famous Five, culminating in the famous tale "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out", when Bob refused to be expelled.

Though that famous series is a precious period piece for old boys and a novelty for wondering new boys, it was not really a very happy time for the reader. The Bounder was too bad to be true, and

the whole thing was unvarnished melodrama.

By white cover days, the Bounder had reformed. The reform, like that of Levison of St. Jim's, did not carry conviction, though it probably pleased schoolboys of the day. It was too sweeping, for a time.

Later, in the Kenya series of 1931, for instance, the Bounder had become harsh, his presentation too brittle. The harshness and the brittleness continued through the thirties until, in the latter-day Magnet, we found a Bounder who was altogether too callous and too worldly to be altogether convincing.

But, in 1927, in the Captain Spencer series in particular, we find a Bounder who was not wicked as in early days, not callous as in later days, but merely a wild schoolboy, reckless of consequences, spiritedly cunning, and astonishingly lovable.

Yet the lead-up to the Spencer series had been the Dallas series of earlier in the year, in which the jealousy of the Bounder had been understandable, in a way - too true to be bad, as it were - but his spite, malice and cruelty had not made too happy reading, fine though it was. And the Bounder lost the steadying influence of his pal Redwing, who left Greyfriars in that series.

What brought about the subtle yet enormous change in the presentation of the Bounder, when Captain Spencer came over the horizon? The reason is not hard to find. The Bounder of mid-summer 1927 coincided with the heyday of the Magnet author, who suddenly reached the glorious peak of his powers.

Perhaps the Captain Spencer series has lost some of its old impact today. The theme of the criminal who was a respected inmate at Greyfriars became a little hackneyed as years went by, even though it never lost its charm for the inveterate Magnet fan. The rebel who managed to take the rise out of his form-master was met on quite a few occasions. But never was it so brilliantly, so joyously handled elsewhere as it was in the Captain Spencer series.

True, Harry Wharton had been a rebel a couple of years or more earlier, and had defeated his form-master who seethed with bitterness. But that series, magnificent though it was, was heavy drama, with the reader never really in clover.

In the Spencer series, the reader gurgled with delight as the Bounder made a fool of Mr. Quelch. And was held spellbound as Vernon-Smith, accused of being a wild young liar or something like it by the powers-that-be, played trump after trump as the series progressed to a triumphant climax for the Bounder of Greyfriars.

The Bounder tales of that period of Magnet history were vintage champagne which intoxicated the reader, and firmly placed Greyfriars as the greatest school in boys' stories - a position which it still holds today. That wet, dreary summer of 1927 was not reflected in the stories, when the magic of a great writer made sunshine all the way for those lucky enough to be boys at that time.

* * * * *

REVIEWS

THE BOUNDER'S REBELLION

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker: £4.50)

Here we have the first eight stories of one of the finest and most varied series that ever appeared in the Magnet - the 1934 Smedley series. Herbert Vernon-Smith had been in constant trouble with the school authorities for some time. Not only did he cause the most bitter anger in the heart of his form-master, Mr. Quelch; he also lost the confidence, and, apparently, the affection of his father, the rich financier. So much so that Mr. Vernon-Smith decided to disinherit his son unless that son mended his ways, and to bequeathe his vast fortune to a nephew, Lucius Teggers.

Whether the previously indulgent Mr. Vernon-Smith was acting out of character in becoming "the Roman parent" so suddenly, and whether the hard-headed financier would have been so easily hoodwinked by his unscrupulous nephew, are thoughts which are beside the point. For without these happenings, one of the most outstanding Greyfriars series could never have been written.

One of the Magnet's longest series ever, it is beautifully written and rich in variety. When Mr. Quelch is compelled to leave Greyfriars for a time, owing to ill-health, his place is taken at the school by Teggers, in the name of a real schoolmaster, one Eustace Smedley.

After several enchanting chapters set at the school the scene changes to Wharton Lodge for the Easter holidays, where Bunter is an unwelcome guest and Mr. Quelch is a welcome guest - welcome, at least, to everybody except Bunter. And in one unforgettable sequence, Mr. Quelch and Mr. Smedley come face to face - with Mr. Quelch on the side of the Bounder for once. And for a few chapters the scene is even switched to France - with the scheming Mr. Smedley on the look out to deliver the coup de grace to his young rival.

The Greyfriars fellows nickname Smedley "the Creeper and Crawler" which is too much of a mouthful, though a minor detail. Another minor detail is that the overall title to

this volume is not all that good. Too abstract. But the contents are magnificent.

Everyone who loves Greyfriars at its very best will want to have this book - and its companion - on his shelves.

BUNTER THE HYPNOTIST

Frank Richards .

(Howard Baker: £4.50)

The main part of this volume is taken up with the final six tales of the splendid Smedley series, and the overall title in this case is far too misleading. The "hypnotist" of the title is nothing whatever to do with the Smedley series.

When Mr. Vernon-Smith comes face with his nephew, Lucius Teggens, and discovers that he is also his son's form-master, Mr. Smedley, the impact is terrific. Truly, the reader gets what he has been waiting for over many issues. A superb climax, even though, with a less skilful writer, the reader might have wondered that the shrewd Bounder did not suspect earlier.

It's a treat for all who love a good school story, packed with drama and unexpected twists.

The volume is made up of two pleasant, and much lighter Magnet tales of some years later. In one, Coker gets the impression that Bunter has hypnotic powers, and in the other James Walker, the prefect, comes up against Tom Brown, and is firmly put in his place.

A delightful book,

THE HOWARD BAKER SUMMER OMNIBUS 1977

(Howard Baker: £4.50)

This is the type of book which everybody enjoys. Exploring it is like investigating a Christmas stocking in December or dipping in a bran tub for the surprise treasure.

For the Gem fan, there are two issues. The first is an issue from 1937 containing "Rival Caravanners" which was reprinted from the blue Gem of 1914 when it had the title "The St. Jim's Caravanners". Tom Merry & Co. had already had one summer holiday; they returned for the autumn term; after which they enjoyed this little caravanning adventure. Hamilton wrote much better caravanning tales later, but this one is interesting for the period in which it was written.

The other Gem comes from 1930 and contains "Good-bye to Etons". Hamilton wrote very few stories for the Gem between 1927 and the start of the reprint era in 1931, and the puzzle really is that he wrote anything at all for the paper at this time. At any rate, he returned to dispense with the Eton suit for his characters. The change was not too good for the Gem, for its artist, Macdonald, was far better at depicting boys in Etons than in the sports jackets which St. Jim's boasted. Actually, it didn't last long, for Etons came back with the reprints.

A fascinating item is a Nelson Lee Library of the 1928 period, blown up to Magnet and Gem size - and beautifully done, one might add. "St. Frank's at the Fair" has Brooks in holiday mood.

The Magnet is represented with three consecutive stories of mid-1938; entertaining yarns with Loder engaged in a feud with the Famous Five. The third of the stories has some

toothsome sequences featuring the nuts of Highcliffe and their form-master, snobby Mobby.

The Rookwood tale "Jimmy Silver Does the Trick" comes from the very last Holiday Annual, dated 1941. I cannot trace its origin, but it does not seem to have had its birth in the Boys' Friend. It could be a hybrid of a couple of the Rookwood stories which featured in the Gem (mainly from substitute writers).

To wind up the programme we find a delightful story from the Magnet of 1933 "Down With the Tyrant". The tyrant is the prefect Walker, and there is plenty of fun and excitement.

Altogether a grand book, providing lots of entertaining reading plus much to think about for the one who likes to consider school story-paper lore at the same time that he reads. As always with these books, the production is first-class.

BILLY BUNTER'S BANKNOTE

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker: £4.50)

This volume contains a collection of Magnets from the year 1932. The star attraction is the 5-story summer term series in which a scoundrel named Dandy Sanders is trying to get possession of the loot from a bank raid which has been hidden up the chimney of Study No. 1. Though the plot spreads a little thinly over five stories, with the rascal making varied efforts to obtain the plunder and failing each time, which makes the series repetitious, the writer is in sparkling form, and there is much to entertain the reader in many of the varied sequences. Looked at these days, it is fascinating as being a foretaste of what readers had to come in the later years of the Magnet. In fact, it was probably the first of the type of series which was to become the rule rather than the exception as time went on.

The volume is completed with three joyous single stories from earlier in the year 1932. Each of these has Coker at his best in varying moods. The real gem of them all is perhaps the one about Gosling's vanished sovereigns, which is superbly original. But a real rib-tickler is the one in which Coker "backs a horse" - and Mr. Prout croons: "Mentally defective!"

Shields, the artist, is in great form in most of the yarns, while Chapman draws the St. Sam's illustrations with verve.

THE BULLSEYE

(Howard Baker Special: £12)

This is a gorgeous volume. It contains the first ten issues of that marvellous old paper of 1931, "The Bullseye". For some reason, maybe a psychological reason, The Bullseye in the original is scarce and hard to come by, showing that its readers did not save it for posterity. Like the girls with their own papers, there was no sentiment obviously in the Bullseye reader. He wanted his quick thrill, after which one macabre issue was cast away to make way for the next.

Eerie, weird and wonderful, utterly and gloriously outrageous, too far-fetched for words, the tales are staggering in their extravagance. They will delight adults for ever and ever. And the illustrations have to be seen to be believed.

Very much the son of "Fun & Fiction", "Bullseye" is a real chip off the old block. The relationship is unmistakable. The stories look similar, and in many cases are probably

the same. The plots are grotesque, which is, of course, their charm. It was the same with Dad. The artists, mainly J. Louis Smythe and G. Wakefield (both equally supreme in this type of thing, just as they were in Fun & Fiction) are magnificent, and, as in that paper, it is almost impossible to tell who drew what out of the two of them.

As I said at the beginning, this volume is gorgeous. A real bullseye!

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 40. THE WIZARD OF OZ

After a couple of terms during which the number of our programmes had been much reduced, we were fairly well back to normal.

Our opening programme in the new term consisted of a double-feature one from Warner Bros., comprising The Dead End Kids in "On Dress Parade" plus James Stephenson in "Calling Philo Vance".

Next came an excellent double show for boys from G.F.D.: Basil Rathbone in "The Tower of London" plus Jackie Cooper and Freddie Bartholomew in "Two Bright Boys".

This was followed by another double show from G.F.D.: Kenny Baker in a musical "The Boys From Syracuse" plus Richard Arlen in a B.O.P. type drama "Mutiny on the Blackhawk". I recall "Boys From Syracuse" because we had a breakdown and lost sound during one performance, and I had to send out an S.O.S. to our Service Engineers, and they were with us in a surprisingly short space of time. When we got going again, I recall leaving out a couple of thousand feet, in order to catch up time, but I have a feeling that it wasn't much of a picture so it may not have mattered a lot.

Now a double show from Warner's: Olivia de Havilland in "My Love Came

Back" which sounds romantic, plus Edith Fellowes in "Pride of the Blue Grass".

Next from G.F.D.: Will Fyffe in "Neutral Port" plus Charles Bickford in "South to Karanga". Next, from G.F.D.: a musical, "A Little Bit of Heaven" starring Gloria Jeans, the new singing star who was supposed to be an answer to Deanna Durbin, though I don't think she lasted long on the screen, plus Johnny Mack Brown in "The Bad Man of Red Butte", which probably reminded me of the Rio Kid.

Now came a double from G.F.D.: John Mills in a forgotten British drama "Old Bill and Son" plus Ralph Bellamy and Margaret Lindsay in "Meet the Wildcat". Then, from Warner's, came John Garfield in "Saturday's Children" plus Glenda Farrell and Allen Jenkins in "Torchy Blane Playing With Dynamite". The Torchy Blane films, of which we played quite a few, were typical second-feature material, but, so far as I remember, quite good within their limits.

Next from G.F.D.: Randolph Scott in "When the Daltons Rode" plus the Dead End Kids in "You're Not So Tough".

We wound up the term with something special from M.G.M., and, for the time being, we were not playing so many

Metro films. This was the famous and unforgettable "Wizard of Oz" starring Judy Garland and a great cast. As everybody knows, once Judy gets to the Land of Oz the film is in technicolor - and marvellous pastel shades at that - but the first thousand feet or so are in black and white. When we played it on its original release, the opening sequences were in sepia, changing to technicolor when Oz was reached. When, some years later, M. G. M. reissued the film, the opening was in black and white. It has, of course, been reissued many times since (and it is possibly always on release now), but they never went back to sepia for the first reel.

(This brings to my mind another M. G. M. film: Jeanette Macdonald in "Maytime" which was all in sepia when we played it on its first release, but all in black and white when it was reissued a few years later.)

"The Wizard of Oz" was very late in getting release in Britain. In fact, as I mentioned some months back, all American films had much delayed release dates now, owing to the fact that the prints took up valuable cargo space in the ships.

So "Wizard of Oz" burst on the screens of a war-weary, and tightened-belted Britain, and it was just what the doctor ordered. The nation rose to it.

According to the biographer of Judy Garland, her career was faltering a little just as the Wizard belatedly came to Britain, and its terrific success over here gave a mighty new boost to the delightful Miss Garland. It gave her a great love for Britain which she never lost to the end of her all-too-short life.

The colour and the songs, "Over the Rainbow" and "We're Off To See The Wizard", the inspired cast, and the tuneful star, make the film linger in my memory as one of my favourite musicals of all time. I know somebody will write and tell me that I'm hopelessly old-fashioned and not "with it" and that dozens of better films have been made in more modern times with improved techniques. I can only reply - not for me, sir! Give me the good old Wizard every time.

In passing, "Wizard of Oz" was made twice as a silent film, once before the First World War by the Selig firm, (not even the most senior of our readers is likely to remember this one), and again in the mid-twenties with Larry Semon as the Tin Man and Oliver Hardy as the Scarecrow.

* * * * *

SALE: Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, 1931, 1938, £6.00 each. B. B's-Own, £2.50; Tom Merry's Own, £2.50; Holiday Annual, 1973, £4.25, H. Bakers; Gem No. 3, £3.00; C.D's, years 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, £4.00 each year. Captain, Vol. 25, 1911, £4.50; Chatterbox, 1920 Vol., £4.00, (other years). Young England, 54th vol., £2.25.

JAMES GALL

49 ANDERSON AVENUE

ABERDEEN. Tel. 491716

The Postman Called

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

J. HODGE (Bristol): Your remarks in the May CD editorial about coincidence reminded me of an example I experienced a few months ago --

Looking back through CD Annual for 1966, and reading "Through the Years with the BOP" by Brian Doyle, I noticed the entry - 'W.H.G. Kingston - "Powder Monkey to Admiral" - a story of the British Navy'. Strange though it may seem to one as widely read as yourself, the author and yarn were quite new to me. I remarked to my wife "What a lovely title, they don't write 'em like that any more!'" and the matter was forgotten - or so I thought.

The following day my wife returned from a trip into town with a secondhand book which during a casual glance at the box outside a market bookstall had caught her eye. She thought the title seemed familiar, it was priced 18p and, on impulse, she bought it for me. Yes - it was "From Powder Monkey to Admiral", hard-back, in quite good condition.

Published by Henry Frowde, Hodder & Stoughton, it has a coloured frontispiece signed 'Arch, Webb', and is undated.

I wonder if any of our friends can satisfy my idle curiosity as to the date of this edition?

Anyway, the coincidence itself is curious!

S. GORDON SWAN (Victoria Park East): I wish to thank Brian Doyle for his comprehensive reply to my request for information about the authors of "The Man of the Forty Faces". The list of books about this character is particularly appreciated,

Mrs. M. CADOGAN (Beckenham): I admire Mr. Kadish's attempt to keep Cliff House alive in the 1970's but his time sequence seems to have suffered some disastrous shifts. I don't quite see how poor old 'Skimmy' has managed to grow up into 'Sir Herbert Skimpole' whilst Harry Wharton and Marjorie Hazeldene have remained young enough to continue as pupils at Greyfriars and Cliff House respectively. Also in the era of Shirley Williams and Margaret Thatcher it is impossible to imagine that dear old Dolly Jobling is still at Cliff House: sadly she

disappeared from the scene at the end of the 1920's. Similarly Stella Stone departed in the later 1930's, to be replaced as Head Girl by Dulcia Fairbrother. Anyway, the classroom scenes added little to the Cliff House saga, except as a setting for some of Bessie Bunter's howlers. In my opinion the only writer in the old papers whose realistic (or parodied) "lessons" added any spice to the stories was Hamilton.

EDWARD MURCH (Yelverton): I have just received the June number of THE DIGEST, and, as usual, it is like getting a letter from an old and valued friend.

On page 5 you raise the point as to whether a goal could be scored by charging the goalkeeper into the net. The short answer to this is: yes. It is only in comparatively recent times - when we began to play continental teams - that charging the goalkeeper has not been allowed. Indeed, in these days, the opposition is hardly allowed to breathe on him! I well remember a match between Plymouth Argyle and Wolverhampton Wanderers when the Argyle 'keeper - appropriately enough he was called Leiper - had caught the ball, and was standing with both feet on the goal line, and was shoulder charged over it by a Wolves forward. A goal was immediately awarded, and the decision accepted without demur. Today a free kick would be awarded to Plymouth Argyle.

I have watched Plymouth regularly from about the time I began to read THE MAGNET and GEM in the late 1920's. Alas, the journals are gone, but the Argyle goes on - even if we have just been relegated to the Third Division. But no doubt we shall bounce back again - if only the MAGNET & GEM could bounce back with us!

BEN WHITER (London): I was amused to read R. L. Lewis's criticism of the Small Cinema, and the statement about the fine westerns made in the last twelve years. He is entitled to his opinion, but what westerns of the past decade will stand the test of time? I wonder whether he saw the famous silent western classic "The Covered Wagon", which had its premiere at the London Pavilion, with a sort of prologue of a band of Indians on the stage. There are certainly other fine classic silent westerns beside the Tom Mix, Buck Jones variety. I think that the standard has dropped considerably in recent years.

In my files list, "Shane", "Destry Rides Again" and "High Noon"

all rank very high. However, the Small Cinema was a decided asset, and as one who only saw shorts there when club meetings were held at Surbiton, I only wish that my school had had such a desirable acquisition.

E. KADISH (Hendon): I can't say that I agree with R. J. Lewis that recent "westerns" are superior to those made years ago. Of course, "Destry Rides Again" was the first of the "spoof" western films, and, personally, I enjoyed it more than later and trendier examples. I thought "Shane" was rather over-rated. I suppose that one of the chief problems of running the "Small Cinema" was that many of the great films of the period would be unavailable for renting. For instance, none of the Astaire-Rogers films is mentioned as being among the musicals shown at the Small Cinema, and they deserve a place in cinema history.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Our articles do not pretend to cover the history of the cinema. They cover the life-story of the Small Cinema. The Small Cinema never found difficulty in renting anything it wanted, and films from all the major companies were played at different times. But it proved a better practice to be loyal to about three large firms in the long run. In fact, in the heyday of the cinema world, most of the commercial theatres adopted the same practice.)

M. HALL (Walton-on-Thames): What a splendid Jubilee week we have just enjoyed, but how sad to observe the lack of response from the publishers of today's comics.

Cast your mind back to the 1935 Jubilee and the 1937 Coronation. The Magnet, Gem and Modern Boy, plus copious other boys' comics, had specially drawn covers produced for these occasions, all splendidly patriotic and loyal.

Today what do we find in the boys' comics on this auspicious occasion? Almost nothing is mentioned in the current issues, only "Look and Learn" make the effort to note the Jubilee on their cover as far as I was able to discover.

What memories will today's children have to keep, unlike our generation, who can re-ignite our thoughts of the past great celebrations by looking again at the special issues of our favourite comics.

BRIAN DOYLE (Putney): Regarding your interesting item about Tinker, Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy driving motor cars and your

query about exactly when driving licences became law, you may like to know that licences in Great Britain were introduced under the Motor Car Act of 14th August, 1903, which actually became law on 1st January, 1904. The age limit for car-drivers was 17 and for motor-cyclists, 14. Before this Act, no age limit had existed.

Assuming Tinker's age to be around the generally-accepted one of 17 or 18 or so, he would have been quite within his rights to drive cars (and motor-cycles when younger). But Tom Merry and Gussy (and indeed any other schoolboy under 17 after 1904) could well have landed up in court under the stern eye of the 'beak' if they had been caught at the wheel!

Readers may also be intrigued to learn that the very first member of the public to be issued with a driving licence in Britain was a Mr. Richard Cain of Bermondsey, London - chauffeur and bodyguard to Prince Hatzfeldt, a cousin of the German Kaiser - on 28th December, 1903. Compulsory driving tests were introduced in Britain on 1st June, 1935 - a surprisingly late date, I think you'll agree ...!

News of the Clubs

MIDLAND

There was an improved attendance for the May meeting in spite of the daunting prospect of it being the AGM. The pill was sweetened by firmly limiting the time allocation for business matters.

Digging deep into his magic handycarrier, Tom Porter produced an anniversary number and a collectors item for members to browse through. The former was a Penny Popular (actually priced 1½d) for week ending 31 May, 1919, 58 years old to the day. The collectors item: a mint copy of 'The Girls of Headland House', a post-war publication, author Hilda Richards.

Members attention was drawn to a fascinating article in the Lancaster University magazine 'Comment'. Penned by a Jeffrey Richards (no relation) it was a centenary tribute to Frank Richards, with the apt title 'Billy Bunter's Father'. The evening was topped with a reading by Jack Bellfield.

LONDON

The annual gathering at Greyfriars, Pinewoods, Wokingham, was marred by inclement weather but this did not prevent a good attendance enjoying a varied programme which consisted of a discourse on the Modern Boy by Maurice Hall, a Greyfriars quiz sent up from Devon by Don Webster, (winner Winnifred Morss), readings of June 1960 newsletter by Bob Blythe plus a funny Trackett Grim story, Eric Lawrence reading "In Praise of Small Shops" that had been written by Basil Amps in the Reading Post, and a rendering of one side of the Floreat Greyfriars record.

Bob Blythe showed round drawings by Alf Hansom that will probably be used in the Museum Press's St. Frank's College opus.

Eric Lawrence spoke of Betty's visit to Madam in hospital and the good news of the successful optical operation.

Next meeting will take place on Sunday, 17th July, at Bob and Louise Blythe's residence, 47 Evelyn Avenue, Kingsbury. Phone 205 0732. Normal production of newsletter will be resumed shortly.

BENJAMIN WHITER

CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at 20 Wingate Way on Sunday, 12th June, 1977. The attendance was rather small. Vic Hearn played the second record of the B. B. C. "Fifty years of the B. B. C.", covering 1940 to 1972. This provided a feast of nostalgia as memories of the past came flooding back.

The rest of the meeting was devoted to a symposium on sports stories. Jack Overhill recalled the "Red Rover" football story in the pre-1914 "Comic Cuts"; he said he had never been very keen on the actual description of play in the sport stories in the Magnet and Gem, but had loved the atmosphere of the stories; the green fields, blue skies, white clad cricketers, and the playing fields generally. His own particular sport had been swimming. He has been an all the year round swimmer for over sixty years, and founder of the Granta Swimming Club. He was the second man to swim the crawl stroke in Cambridge. He recalled a B. F. L. "The Water Champion" about swimming, published in

1919. This story first appeared in the Boys' Realm of 1911, so that a story of the Crawl stroke had been published soon after its first use. He also referred to "Sportsmen All", and said he felt Frank Richards had made a mistake in letting Bob Cherry beat Tom Merry in the Boxing event.

Bill Thurbon followed with a varied selection of sporting stories, ranging from Roman chariot racing to motor racing; archery, fencing and shooting, Soccer, Rigger, including "Tom Browns Schooldays" and P. G. Wodehouse's "The Gold Bat", Surtees' immortal "Jorrocks" and Wodehouse's golf stories. He also mentioned the shooting matches in J. T. Edson's "Westerns", and the narrative sporting verse of Adam Lyndsay Gordon and of John Masefield. But he said his selection of the best sports story he had ever read was Rudyard Kipling's fine short story of a polo match in the heyday of the British Raj in India "The Maltese Cat".

Vic Hearn introduced a new note into the discussion by recalling the story of Cambridge United F.C., a story worthy of the football tales of the Boys' Realm and the Thomson Papers. Members agreed that this true life story of the rise of a junior club to the top of the Fourth Division of the League was as fine a story as any writer of football stories could have invented.

There will be no meetings of the Club in July and August. Next meeting on 4 September at 99 Shelford Road, Trumpington.

The meeting closed with a hearty vote of thanks to Vic and Mrs. Hearn for their hospitality.

NORTHERN

Saturday, 11th June, 1977

Chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened our meeting by reminding us that two years ago this Club celebrated its Silver Jubilee, but that this must be the first time that the Club had met during the Silver Jubilee of a monarch of this country. Geoffrey brought with him for our interest the Gem, Magnet and Sexton Blake for Jubilee Week 1935.

After Club business Geoffrey Wilde presented an appropriate item on 'Jubilees' including a question as to the Magnet series that were running during the Silver Jubilee year of George V.

Bill Williamson was winner and Ron Hodgson and Darrell Swift tied in second place.

Geoffrey Good then introduced and read to us Herbert Leckenby's article 'How my First Collection Started' from CD Annual 1949.

We then continued our reading of the Northern Club's own Magnet, 'Bunter's Television Service', written by Club members some years ago. Jack Allison read his own contribution, in which Bunter sends in an entry coupon for a competition to play the part of Gerald Champion on a TV programme entitled 'The Pseudo Magnet' ('those ripping school stories by Richard Franks'). Mollie followed on by reading her contribution. We find the excitement mounting and look forward to next month's instalment!

SALE/EXCHANGE: (v.g.c. apart from rusted staples & bracketed remarks) - S.O.L's: St. Jim's 66 (cover loose), 258, 260, Greyfriars 259, 261, M. Poole 52, 82, Schoolgirls' Own (4d) Libraries 170, 254, 288 (cover torn and loose), 342, 352, 358, 374, 439, 531, 546. Aldine novels, Racing 93, 105, Boxing 9.

WANTS include H. B. Magnets 1, 5, 7, 13. Offers or enquiries to:-

R. E. ANDREWS, 80 GREENWOOD AVENUE
LAVERSTOCK, SALISBURY, WILTS.

REVIEWS

THE GOLD BAT
THE HEAD OF KAY'S

(P. G. Wodehouse,
 Souvenir Press: £1.80 each)

A couple of splendid school stories to stir the hearts of all those who love real school stories with believable characters. "The Gold Bat", first published in 1904, is a story introducing rugby, with a secret society to tickle the sense of wonderment. It refers to "a mystic game of Tommy Dodd", which I find quite intriguing. This tale was run as a serial in the Boys' Friend of early 1923, under the changed title (for some reason) of "By Order of the League".

"The Head of Kay's", first published in 1905, tells of Kennedy, so much loved in the wonderful Blackburn's house, coming back in the new term, to find himself transferred to the despised Kay's house. Oddly enough, one, Jimmy Silver, features in this tale.

Both stories are highly recommended, and, at the price, are within reach of most pockets.

**NEW
SERIES**



by
ALF HANSON



Edited by Eric Fayne, Excelsior House, 113 Crookham Rd., Crookham, Nr. Aldershot, Hants.
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