

STORY PAPER  
**COLLECTORS DIGEST**

VOLUME 31 No. 369

SEPTEMBER 1977

**A MAGNIFICENT TALE OF ADVENTURE  
AT HOME AND ABROAD!**

**THE UNION JACK** 1<sup>p</sup>  
LIBRARY.



**SEXTON BLAKE** IN "ARMENIA"  
THE STRANGE CASE OF LIEUTENANT LORIMER

22<sup>p</sup>

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—STORY PAPER—  
**COLLECTORS' DIGEST**

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 W. G. GANDER

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 HERBERT LECKENBY

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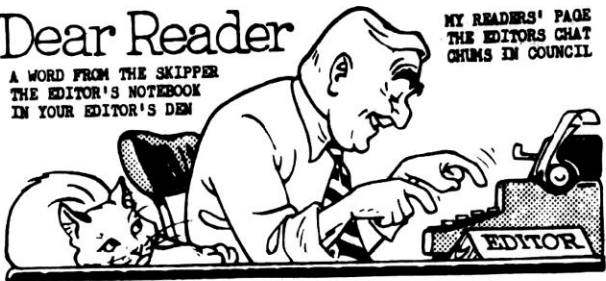
SEPTEMBER 1977

Price 22p

# Dear Reader

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

MY READERS' PAGE  
 THE EDITORS CHAT  
 CHUMS IN COUNCIL



## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

It is fascinating to come across the name of theatres which existed, had a period of fame when they were filled with enthusiastic audiences night after night, and which meant a great deal to generations of people who knew them and loved them. Theatres which promised to last for ever in those times before we were around to enjoy the entertainment they provided.

In the year 1908, a play entitled "Sexton Blake, Detective" was sent out on a tour of leading suburban and provincial theatres. In the

cast of characters were Sexton Blake, the celebrated detective; Tinker, Sexton Blake's young assistant; Pedro, the famous bloodhound; Inspector Widgeon, a Scotland Yard detective; Philadelphia Kate, an adventuress - and so on. The play was presented in Four Acts, and eleven scenes. Performances were once nightly, with one matinee.

The play seems to have opened at the Royal West London Theatre, Edgware Road, London. Now for many years I knew the Edgware Road fairly well, but I have never before heard of the Royal West London Theatre. It could not have been the Metropolitan, for that was a famous Music Hall in the twenties and thirties, and probably was under the same name right back before the first world war. Most of London's music halls were built in the decade before 1914.

Next week the play was at the Star Theatre, Liverpool, which some of our Merseyside readers may recall, and then, after that, at Shakespeare Theatre, Clapham Junction. I knew the latter building, but never went to a show there, I think. Then the play had a week at the Grand Theatre, Brighton-on-Sea. It may still be a theatre, though I never before saw the town given the On-Sea appendix to its name.

Then the Theatre Royal, Woolwich. Now where the dickens was that? I knew Woolwich Empire, Woolwich Hippodrome - both variety theatres in my time - and the Royal Artillery Theatre, where they presented excellent once-night plays. Could the Theatre Royal be one of those?

Now we find our play at the Theatre Royal, Smethwick, but as I have never been to Smethwick, the theatre there is merely a name.

Next, in succession, the Dalston Theatre, London (some of our London readers can surely tell us what happened to that!), the Royal County Theatre, Kingston-on-Thames, and the New Theatre Royal, Birkenhead. For the first time, our play has caught up with me. When I first went to live in the Kingston area, I decided to go to the pictures one evening, and I asked my landlady which cinema she advised. "Oh, the Super is by far the best," she told me.

The Super Cinema had once been the Royal County Theatre, and had been a splendid place in its day. As a cinema, like most converted theatres, it had rear projection, and it gradually fell behind the big new picture houses as they were opened. In the middle of one night it was

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blazing - in the late thirties, I fancy - and today a furniture store incorporates what the fire left of the famous old theatre.

Next week Sexton Blake was at the Theatre Royal, Preston - and there we will leave our play to continue its tour of those Number One theatres which were once the pride and joy of the townspeople who lived within visiting distance.

### WHAT PRICE WILLIAM?

"How much a week does it cost you to keep me, mother? I mean for food!" William asked his Mum in "William Does His Bit", published in 1941.

"I really haven't thought about it, dear. About fifteen shillings a week, I suppose," replied Mrs. Brown.

Fifteen shillings a week to keep William in food! In 1941! Today it costs us four times that amount per week to keep Mr. Softee.

If we took holidays, or went to cinemas and theatres, or drank beers and spirits, or ran a car, we wouldn't be able to afford Mr. Softee in 1977. But he's worth it. We wouldn't change him for all the lager in Benidorm!

I happened to take "William Does His Bit" out of my bookcase for a read the other evening. The book is in immaculate condition, so, although I suppose I read it when I first bought it (stiff-covered at 7/6 in 1941 - probably at least five times that price if bought at today's figures) it doesn't look as though I have ever read it since. What strikes me, on reading it now, is how the quality of the William stories had dropped in 1941 when compared with those of the twenties and thirties. The divine spark had dimmed.

### THE ANNUAL

With this issue of the Digest, we send you the order form for the 1977 Annual, due out in December in time for Christmas reading. Every year we are compelled to disappoint some readers who order too late. We cannot print many copies beyond the number ordered in advance.

Production costs in all phases connected with the Annual - and there are many phases - continue to rise inexorably. Trying to stem

them is like attempting to stem Niagara. While readers give the Annual their support, it will continue to appear. Our great band of loyal contributors are excelling themselves in their efforts to make this year's edition the best ever.

As usual, on the entry form, there is space for you to advertise your surplus treasures or to announce your wants, and, if you wish, to send your season's greetings to your hobby friends.

Your small ads help the Annual to keep afloat.

THE EDITOR

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**DANNY'S DIARY**  
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SEPTEMBER 1927

In a lonely Essex lane, somewhere near Billericay, a policeman was found murdered. He had been shot four times in the head and face. His name was P. C. Gutteridge. It seems clear that he stopped a car to question the occupants - and they shot him. It has now been discovered that the car was stolen from a Billericay doctor. It was found abandoned in Brixton the next morning. Let's hope that the police get the man, or the men, who committed this dreadful murder.

The series about Tom Merry & Co. in Canada has continued and ended in the Gem. I wish it had gone on longer. The first story this month was "The Schoolboy Cow-Punchers". Arthur Augustus can't throw a lariat, but he is able to give help to experienced cowboys in other ways when they are in need. The following week the series ended a bit abruptly with "The Japer of the Boot Leg Ranch". The joker is Monty Lowther, and his victim is Buncy, the cook. I have enjoyed this series, though it is not so good as the Rookwood in Canada series running in the Popular.

Now a new series has started which is not by the real Martin Clifford, but is obviously by the writer of the St. Frank's tales. Identical twins in appearance, Arthur Castleton is a good boy and Alan Castleton is a bad boy. Arthur goes to St. Jim's, and Alan goes to

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St. Frank's. But Alan's juicy reputation has preceded Arthur at St. Jim's, and he has a lot to do to win good opinions, while Racke & Co. expect much from him. Nobody at St. Jim's knows that Arthur has a twin.

The two opening stories of the series are "Under Gussy's Wing" and "The Boy Who Held His Tongue".

I have had both Schoolboys' Own Libraries this month. They are "The Greyfriars Sailors" in which Harry Wharton, as a result of Bunter's ventriloquism, finds that he has bought a wrecked schooner, and "The Scapegrace of Rookwood" in which Mornington is expelled, his uncle disowns him, and, in one sequence he comes outside the gates of Rookwood playing a barrel-organ. Two tip-top tales this month.

The news has just come that Charlie Chaplin and his wife Lita Gray have been divorced. They have two sons named Charles and Sydney.

It has rained and rained through most of the month. I shan't be sorry when the clock goes back, and we can pull the curtains early.

In the Nelson Lee Library, the series has continued concerning the feud between two forms at St. Frank's. The first tale of the month was "The Secret Societies of St. Frank's". They are the Ancient Order of Avengers and the New Klux Klan, and the feud becomes more and more intense and bitter. The things that the two societies do to each other are hair-raising. The series ended the next week with "Drummed Out of St. Frank's" in which the identity of the Mystery Unknown, who has been fanning the flames of hatred, is discovered. He turns out to be Bernard Forrest. The Head calls him an impertinent young jackanapes - and I don't wonder. So Forrest is kicked out of St. Frank's, and he says that he is glad to go. A very unusual series.

Then came the St. Frank's angle of the Castleton twins story. Alan, the bad boy, goes to St. Frank's, but Arthur's reputation has preceded him - so St. Frank's is in for a disappointment. The opening tale is "The Rascal of the Remove". In the next tale "The Spoofer of St. Frank's", Nipper and Co., who think they have Arthur, find out that the new boy is a hopeless dud at sport and a thorough young cad all round.

There is a new Musical Comedy called "The Girl Friend" on at

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the Palace Theatre in London, and reports are that it is good.

Britain has won the Schneider Cup in Venice. Good old us.

At the pictures this month we have seen Greta Garbo and Antonio Moreno in "The Temptress"; Richard Barthelmess in "The Amateur Gentleman"; Norma Talmadge in "Kiki"; Lillian Gish and John Gilbert in "La Boheme"; and W. C. Fields in "So's Your Old Man". Quite a good month.

In the Magnet, the great South Seas series has gone on. First of the month was "Bunter the Stowaway". On Mr. Vernon-Smith's yacht "The Golden Arrow", somebody has been taking blankets from Mr. Vernon-Smith's stateroom - and then Redwing is brutally attacked, and Black Peter's chart is stolen from him. And when Bunter is found nearly everyone believes that Bunter was the culprit - but Redwing knows that it was a man, not a boy, who attacked him. And Bunter is able to lay his hands on the chart. We all know, but the chums don't, that the culprit is Soames, the millionaire's valet.

In "In Southern Seas", they find Silvio Xero who has Ben Dance tied up in his canoe. And the party reaches the Marquesas Islands. In "The Whip Hand", the chums leave the yacht and carry on to seek the treasure, using a little copra-trading schooner "Aloha". And Redwing, who has suspected Soames for some time, is proved correct when they find themselves the prisoners of the man who was once their servant.

In the Popular there has just started the series in which Jack Drake joins Ferrers Locke, the detective, and becomes his assistant. They originally appeared in the Greyfriars Boys' Herald, so my brother Doug says. Also in the Popular there is the Fistical Four going strong on the Windy River Ranch in Canada, and the Algernon de Vere series about an upstart at Greyfriars.

And, as the month ends, it's still raining.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Schoolboys' Own Library No. 59 comprised two consecutive stories from the Magnet of very early 1909 and one story on the same theme from a few weeks later. A charming hybrid, not harmed by the minor pruning. S. O. L. No. 60, "The Scapegrace of Rookwood" comprised five Rookwood tales from the Boys' Friend of the summer of 1921. In the Boys' Friend, the series was interrupted by one topical tale concerning the big Scouts jamboree at Olympia. Hamilton himself wrote the early Ferrers Locke - Jack Drake tales which Danny was reading in the Popular fifty years ago. Later on, a sub writer took them over.

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The Castleton twins stories which ran simultaneously in the Gem and the Lee were, of course, written in both papers by E. S. Brooks. Brooks had used exactly the same theme many years earlier concerning the Fenwick twins, one going to St. Otwell's and the other going to Sandcliffe. The two stories were run as serials, simultaneously, I believe, in two different papers before the First World War. They were both published in the Boys' Friend Library about 1917 under the respective titles of "The Cad of the School" and "Scorned by the School".)

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# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I would like to thank everyone who has supplied me with Blake material for the Annual this year. Now I have to make an appeal for more material for Blakiana, I am running very short, a situation which has not occurred for many years. So pick up your pens and get out your typewriters and buckle down to some literary gems. A few paragraphs about your favourite crooks would be welcome.

I trust you will enjoy the poems by Mr. and Mrs. Swan.

MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH SEXTON BLAKE W. Thurbon

When I was a small boy, many long years ago, my father used to take the Marvel regularly and the Union Jack very often. I find it a sobering thought that it was in 1911, when I was eight years old, that I first picked up a Union Jack. My attention was caught by the striking cover picture of a horde of Zulu warriors on the march. This was U. J. No. 404 of 8 July, 1911, "The Flying Column". Certain incidents in the story remained in my memory particularly the battle scene, over the years until early in the 1950's I acquired another copy, alas minus that gorgeous cover. How much I owe to the artist who drew that cover which so attracted me, for otherwise I might never have met Sexton Blake and those two favourite characters of mine, Lobangu and Sir Richard Loseley, and became a fan of that master writer of adventure stories, Cecil Hayter.

Hayter of course, owed much to Rider Haggard and later to Edgar Wallace's "Sanders" stories - Lobangu began as a Zulu warrior but later developed traces of Wallace's Bosambo. But Hayter had his own

distinctive style, light and entertaining as well as thrilling adventure. I never felt that Rex Harding made a successful job of taking over the characters.

### SONG OF A COLLECTOR'S WIFE

The family was large so the house isn't small;  
He's got a big room and one side of the hall,  
Cupboards and shelves you could say without number,  
But people like you really can't call it lumber.  
There's Boys' Friends, Nick Carters and Union Jacks  
And hosts of old favourites there on the racks.  
There are myst'ries, adventures, detectives and crooks,  
A host to be cherished of wonderful books.  
If the collection goes on the way it is keeping  
I wonder how long in my room I'll be sleeping.  
No matter how many, they're a treasure to see  
And who's there to stop him, not interested me.

The collection is thriving:  
A knock at the door -- a parcel arriving.

BETTY GORDON SWAN

### THE IRRESISTIBLE TRIO

Blake, Tinker and Pedro, that irresistible trio;  
Their names are known to legions from London Town to Rio.  
They've investigated crimes and solved mysteries galore  
In England's homely setting or upon some foreign shore.  
Their exploits were recorded by a multitude of men,  
Writers from different countries but all masters of the pen:  
Murray, Teed and Evans, Parsons, Pierre Quiroule and Brooks  
All contributed their quotas to this rounding-up of crooks;  
Graydon, Chester, Brisbane and other authors, too,  
Baker, Maclean and Story, just to give them all their due.  
The world was a better place when the Man from Baker Street  
Provided regular adventures as a literary treat.  
Let us join our voices in a plea for the welcome return  
Of Blake, Tinker and Pedro and give them the praise they earn.

S. GORDON SWAN

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# NELSON LEE COLUMN

## I PREFERRED ST. FRANK'S

by C. H. Churchill

When Edwy Searles Brooks made his marvellous creation of St. Frank's College in 1917 he would probably have been astounded if someone had told him that in 60 years time his tales of that seat of learning would still be in existence in their thousands. Not that he wrote thousands of different St. Frank's stories, merely hundreds. Allowing, however, for the fact that many collectors of the Nelson Lee Library have hundreds in their possession, the grand total of issues still extant obviously runs into many thousands. As far as is known, at least three collectors have complete collections of the Nelson Lee Library containing St. Frank's stories. Further tales of St. Frank's appeared in other publications at times, for example the Realm and the 4d. BFL.

One might now ask - why have all these tales survived? Is it nostalgia? Is it because they were better than other contemporary literature? Or is it because they were different to the others? I personally think the latter is perhaps the most likely answer. As a boy I read everything I could find, St. Jim's, Rookwood, Greyfriars, Wycliffe - the lot. But I found I preferred St. Frank's, not because E. S. B. wrote better stories but because they were so different to all the rest. We had, on the whole, more exciting times at St. Frank's, floods, fire, detective adventures and all those new boys with mysterious backgrounds which Nelson Lee unravelled in due course.

I do not say that Brooks wrote better tales than Hamilton nor do I say the reverse, but obviously with all the Hamilton tales around, Brooks had to strike out differently for the sake of competition to get the N. L. L. to succeed. And I must say he did this brilliantly, to the great joy of readers of the N. L. L. One brainwave, I think, was that the early Lee stories were written in the first person, a great novelty. I know some people do not care for this sort of story but it must have been fairly popular or the Lee would not have survived.

Anyhow, after all these years I can still pull some Lees out of

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my bookcase and thoroughly enjoy myself reading them once again. If I could I would like to be able to say to Mr. Brooks - "Thank you for all the hundreds of hours of marvellous reading you have given to so many people over the years."

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

I travelled to St. Frank's by road for a change as it was such a beautiful day. It was also a chance to see the English countryside after a very wet June was giving way to what promised to be a sunny July.

After leaving Putney, I drove on to Kingston, passing through Esher, Ripley and Guildford. The Portsmouth Road well behind me Helmford was reached, and the next twenty miles would see me at St. Frank's. But I would pass through Bannington and Bellton before arriving at the old school.

As far as I know, July is not a month worthy of any celebration or event that would induce the good people of Bannington to put out flags and bunting; but Union Jacks were flying in the breeze, and decorated lamp posts along the High street was, I felt certain, not to welcome my entry.

Inspector Jameson, of the Bannington Police, whom I spotted in conversation with a local tradesman, explained the reason for the fuss as he called it. The gaily decorated town was honouring the Diamond Jubilee anniversary of St. Frank's College!

Apparently, this old Sussex town was unknown until St. Frank's began to appear in the news, and Bannington's mayor, Alderman Tobias Crump, had decided to be associated with the anniversary by spending a portion of the ratepayers' money and brightening up the town for the expected influx of visitors.

So I left Bannington wondering what Bellton had done to rise to the occasion. The old world village of Bellton was the more closely connected with St. Frank's than any other area, and I was hoping for something special. A large banner hung across the main street swaying gently to the wind. It announced in big, gold letters, ST. FRANK'S DIAMOND JUBILEE ... WELCOME!

And the sleeping village was thronged with more people than has ever been seen before. The little shops had received coats of brightly

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coloured paint and here and there on grass verges side shows had been placed together with stalls laden with drinks and things to eat. Even Bellton railway station was looking spick and span.

Bellton had certainly outdone Bannington in festal jollity. So it was with a strange expectancy that I went on to St. Frank's, wondering what was happening at the College after what I had seen in Bannington and Bellton.

Bellton Lane was decorated in its own natural beauty. Green foliage was in abundance and a more peaceful scene would be difficult to find.

And there was St. Frank's! The graceful, picturesque grey granite buildings rose in majestic splendour. Entering the main gates that led to the Triangle I did not know what to expect. Nothing had changed. The fountain in the centre still spouted water. Mrs. Poulter's black cat lay stretched out beneath the seat that circled one of the old elm trees. Old Josh Cuttle snoozed in his lodge, and even the very Houses seemed asleep as the poet remarked somewhere.

It then occurred to me that it was July and a time for the school's vacation. And perhaps a St. Frank's holiday party led by Lord Dorrimore, Umlosi and Nelson Lee, were all somewhere abroad in the thick of an adventure just like in the old days. My journey down had been for nothing.

But I needn't have worried. St. Frank's was certainly on vacation, but a note left for me that Josh gave me explained everything. It was from Nelson Lee. And it appeared hundreds of boys and all the masters together with the domestics were to arrange to collect at the old school in the evening for one huge celebration. A giant firework display was on the agenda and many well-known business men of Bannington were to attend. Plus such famous names that had been connected with St. Frank's in the last sixty years.

Chums from the River House School and adjoining grammar schools that featured in sporting ties with St. Frank's were also to attend. Mr. Lee's note mentioned that dear old Dorrie and Umlosi were expected.

The only other person I met was Mr. Crowell, the Remove form master, who was staying on at the school during the summer recess. It was a pity the lovely, sunny day, held a silent St. Frank's on this

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very special occasion. But the event coming as it did during the summer vacation when the school had broken up was unfortunate but the evening promised to be a never-to-be-forgotten one, and in my next letter I will tell you how we all celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of St. Frank's chronicled reign.

It was all a little mysterious deferring the St. Frank's festival until the evening, but the famous old College abounds in mystery and adventure. Perhaps it has something special to mark the auspicious occasion?

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 145 - Magnet 1560 - "Bunter's Big Blunder"

If Charles Hamilton's style deteriorated during the last years of the Magnet, his skill in the construction of plots remained with him until the end, and the story line in "Bunter's Big Blunder" could stand comparison with any of the better single stories.

It all began at Lantham Junction on the first day of the Spring Term. Hacker intervened to prevent Loder from bullying Hobson, and humiliated him by pulling him away by his ear. To get his own back, Loder decided to snowball Hacker in the dark, and donned Quelch's cap and gown as a disguise, but Dr. Locke, however, was the unintended victim of the snowballing. Bunter happened to be a witness of the affair and recognised Quelch's gown by some paint marks on it. The scene was thus set for Bunter to attempt to blackmail Quelch by threatening to tell the Head that it was the Remove master who had snowballed his chief. It was the type of extravagant farce in which Bunter was occasionally permitted to take the star role.

What was missing of course was the ironic style, the classical allusion, the amusing simile or metaphor, the original turn of phrase. The story was told in a business-like straightforward manner, with the humorous incidents related in such a matter-of-fact way that they quite failed to raise the reader's spirits or enable his imagination to soar. The glory had indeed departed from the house of Israel, as Charles Hamilton himself would have remarked a few years earlier.

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I have always had a general prejudice against the salmon-covered Magnets, despite the letters from readers like the one in No. 1560 stating that he thought them more impressive and cleaner than the two-coloured covers. The fact that serials had been abandoned ought to argue the popularity of the Greyfriars stories, but the lay-out was in fact inferior to earlier days, and it is difficult to read the print on the coloured covers. Even in the red-cover period the Greyfriars story was seldom printed on the covers. Perhaps it would be true to say that by 1938 both Charles Hamilton and the Magnet were growing a little weary.

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LETTERS FROM THE GREYFRIARS selected by Les Rowley  
ARCHIVES

The Library at Greyfriars is not only a repository for the thousands of finely bound and often exceedingly rare books whose serried ranks line the oak panelled walls; nor are the black letter manuscripts and other aged and cracking parchments the sole records of the School's history that have found sanctuary within its walls. Weighty tome and dusty calfskin well serve the purposes of the historian, and one well-known member of the School Staff has uncharacteristically so lapsed himself into the past that he has, on occasion, temporarily forgotten the pressing duties of the present.

It is not, however, to valued book or ancient manuscript that I now wish to direct the earnest reader's attention, but rather to correspondence of more recent date; a correspondence not without its modicum of interest. It is a correspondence that provides an insight into the day-to-day running of a great public school. Who knows but that these - I nearly said 'commonplace' but, of course, nothing is commonplace about Greyfriars - letters will one day take their place with the ancient books and scrolls?

Access was not easy to obtain. No collection could be more jealously guarded than the contents of this particular repository. The Headmaster, Dr. Locke, supported by the Remove master, Mr. Quelch, was not casually persuaded that I was engaged in serious research. Fortunately I was able to refer them to gentlemen of their own profession

who were able to vouch for my bona fides. To those gentlemen, themselves not unknown to the pages of this publication, I offer my thanks and this brief adventure into the life of the School so many of us love.

Mr. Henry Samuel Quelch to the Manager, Chunkley's Stores, Courtfield.

Sir,

Your account for the previous month is to hand, but before I forward a cheque in settlement kindly delete the item referring to Wednesday, 27th June. No goods were ordered by me on that date and the charge of 25/- for goods from your Provisions Department was not, therefore, incurred.

Yours &c

H. S. QUELCH

From the Manager of Chunkley's Stores, Courtfield, to Mr. Henry Samuel Quelch

Dear Sir,

The point raised in your letter regarding last month's account is not understood. The item referred to was one of our family size rich fruit cakes with marzipan icing and was requested by your goodself on the telephone.

I have questioned our delivery man and he is most emphatic in confirming that your instructions were carried out to the letter. As these instructions now seem to elude your memory it would, perhaps, be useful for me to repeat them here. The cake (you directed) was to be delivered to your study at Greyfriars between the hours of two-thirty and four in the afternoon when you would be absent, and the item was to be left on your study table to await your return.

Wednesday afternoons are, I understand, half-holidays for the scholars. Nevertheless the delivery of the cake was witnessed by one of the boys who was in the Masters' corridor at the time and you may wish to question him in order to verify delivery. Our delivery man has described the boy as being rather stout and wearing spectacles.

Trusting the foregoing will close the matter to our mutual satisfaction and assuring you of our best attention at all times.

I am &c

W. E. STINGHAM (Manager)

Mr. William Samuel Bunter, Bunter Villa, Reigate, to Mr. William George Bunter.

Dear William,

I hope that the castigation administered by your form master was as severe as it was deserved.

The burden of taxation at eightpence in the pound is sufficient evil in itself without my having to settle bills for costly comestibles. It is too late in the term for me to recover the amount by stopping your allowance so the loss must be reconciled in some other manner.

In your last letter (received unstamped) you inform me that you have received

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invitations from Lord Mauleverer and a St. Jim's boy named D'Arcy to spend the summer vacation at their homes. You ask that I augment your going away money in order to cover travel first class by rail and refreshments en route to whichever of your hosts you choose to visit.

Your hosts appear to be of sufficient substance to be collected by car. In the case of Mauleverer the question of your travel costs need not arise as he will doubtless wish to avail himself of the pleasure of your company for the journey to Mauleverer Towers. If your choice is D'Arcy I suggest you mention the matter to him and am confident that he will accommodate such a long standing friend as you claim to be.

In either event you will receive no travelling money from me, the resultant saving being used to defray the cost of the cake you ordered from Chunkleys.

Your father,  
W. S. BUNTER

From the Hon. Secretary, the Courtfield Discussion Group to Mr. Paul Prout.

Dear Mr. Prout,

Thank you for your recent letter in which you request payment of a fee for the talk you gave last month.

Our usual practice is to take up a collection at the close of a meeting and, from such funds, pay a nominal sum to the guest speaker. On this occasion it was impossible to follow this procedure as most of the audience left during the first hour. It is true that two gentlemen did remain until the close but, as both had slept during the major portion of your talk, it seemed unfair to approach them for a contribution.

Although no funds are available for paying a fee on this occasion I am sure that you will feel rewarded by the interest aroused by your discourse on hunting and shooting in the Rockies.

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Yours &c  
I. BOREHAM (Hon. Sec.)

Mr. Joey Banks, c/o The Three Fishers Inn, Friardale, to an Unknown Addressee.

You Young Rip,

Think I don't know your game? You owes me fair and square ten quid which you placed on Gay Goldfish in the 3.15 at Lantham last Saturday, since when I got not a word from you about settling.

Well, no one welshe on Joey Banks as you'll soon find out. You'd better be at the Prior's Oak, on Saturday, at three - with the cash - or else your schoolmaster will be the next one to hear from

JOEY BANKS

(NB: this document was annotated by a more scholarly hand, see below.)

Wingate: This note was found by Mr. Prout in the neighbourhood of the Fifth Form passage.

I very much desire to learn for whom it was intended, so kindly enlist the help of Loder, Carne and Walker in making enquiries. H. L. (Headmaster)

From Cecil Ponsonby, Esq., Highcliffe School, Courtfield, to Mr. Harold Skinner.

Dear Skinner,

Gaddy, Monson and I intend having a little game in the study tomorrow afternoon after tea, and wondered if you would care to join us. Stakes will start at two bob a trick but the skies the limit thereafter. You can let me know by ringing Mobby's number (it gives him quite a kick to think his phone is used by the nephew of a Marquess).

Expecting to hear from you,

PON

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BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 42. BROTHER ORCHID

We opened the new term with a double-feature programme from G. F. D.: Dick Powell and Joan Blondell in "Model Wife" plus Sigrid Gurie in "Dark Streets of Cairo". (I wonder whether the uncommonly-named Sigrid was of masculine or feminine gender.)

Next week, also from G. F. D., Loretta Young in "The Lady from Cheyenne", with a supporting programme of shorts.

After that, another double from G. F. D.: The Ritz Brothers in "Argentine Nights" plus Richard Arlen in "Lucky Devils". In this programme there was a coloured cartoon "Dangerous Dan McFoo", which was rather unusual in carrying an "A" certificate. Just why it got the "A" is far beyond my memory now, but it was immensely popular with our older boys, and, by special request, I gave it a return booking on at least a couple of occasions in the next six months or so. Until now, all, or at any rate, most cartoons had been in black and white, but from now on

colour became the rule, though the Porky cartoons continued in black and white for a time. As time went on we were to play so many M. G. M. and Warner Cartoons that they came to us immediately they were released, and even then, when there was nothing in the cartoon line immediately from either of those two firms, we had to turn to Columbia and played some Woody Woodpecker, Mr. Magoo cartoons, and others.

Next week we had a double show from Warner's: Eddy Albert in "An Angel from Texas" plus Clifford Evans in a modest British thriller "Fingers". Plus a coloured cartoon "My Little Buckaroo". Somewhere about that time there was a charming cowboy song named "My Little Buckaroo", which some readers may recall. A lovely tune and heart-tingling lyric.

Then another double from Warner's: John Garfield and Pat O'Brien in "Flowing Gold" plus Dennis Morgan in "River's End", and a coloured cartoon "The Little Lion-Hunter". All in all, an

exceptionally fine programme for young fellows.

Next, a double from G.F.D.: Vic Oliver and Sarah Churchill in "He Found a Star" plus Mischa Auer and a big cast in a musical "Margie". Vic Oliver and Sarah Churchill (Winston Churchill's red-headed daughter - I saw her many times in plays at "Q" Theatre) - were husband and wife in real life. I feel sure that Oliver was well-known in some other sphere, and I seem to think that he was a band-leader of some renown. No doubt somebody can give us a few brief details about him.

Now another massive double show from Warner's: James Cagney, George Brent, Jeffrey Lynn, Dick Foran, Dennis Morgan, Pat O'Brien, and Alan Hale (what a cast!) in "The Fighting 69th". Plus Wayne Morris in "Ladies Must Live".

Next, from Warner's, came one of my favourite Edward G. Robinson films, "Brother Orchid". This was the story of the gangster who took refuge from his enemies in a monastery, and, when he returned to his old life, felt the urge to re-join the brethren. Something like

Frank Richards of Cedar Creek sensing "The Call of the Prairies". A delightful film. The second feature was Wayne Morris in "Gambling on the High Seas", and the programme included a colour cartoon "Ceiling Hero".

Then a double-programme from G.F.D.: Irene Dunne and Robert Montgomery in "Unfinished Business" plus Dennis O'Keefe in a pleasant musical: "I'm Nobody's Sweetheart Now", plus a colour cartoon "Sioux Me".

Next, from G.F.D.: Bud Abbott and Lou Costello in "One Night in the Tropics" (personally I never cared for Abbott and Costello, though their films went down pretty well in the Small Cinema) plus a thriller, Leo Carillo in "Horror Island". After that a big James Cagney film "City of Conquest", first-class of its type.

Final programme of the term was a double one from Warner's: Errol Flynn in "Footsteps in the Dark" plus Ronald Reagan in "Murder in the Air". And a colour cartoon "Stage Fright".

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CRICKET

As explained to foreign visitors.

You have two sides, one out in the field and one in. Each man in the side that's in goes out and when he's out he comes in and the next man goes in until he's out. When they are all out, the side that's out comes in and the side that's been in goes out and tries to get those coming in out. Sometimes you get men still in and not out.

When both sides have been in and out, including the not outs that's the end of the game. Howzat?

(sent in by C. Churchill)

# NEWS OF THE CLUBS

## MIDLAND

26th July, 1977

An attendance of nine, which was good considering we are in the holiday period. Bob Waring made one of his rare appearances and it was good to see Win Brown and Ian Bennett amongst us again.

A highly entertaining evening ensued with Bob Waring leading the way with a short talk on F. Addington Symonds, one time editor of the Champion, Pluck, Young Britain and The Rocket. Bob read Addington Symonds editorial before he was sacked from that paper.

The Anniversary number brought by Tom Porter was Magnet 598, published on 26th July, 1919, and a very rare item, a Sexton Blake hardback.

In lively discussion, Wheeler Dryden was mentioned and the fact that he was a half brother to Charlie Chaplin and a descendent of John Dryden the classical dramatist and poet.

Correspondence included another £5 donation and a letter from Pat Hughes, on being made president of our club, telling us how much he appreciated the honour and Stan Knight's interesting letter of appreciation on being made vice-president.

We ended with a reading by Jack Bellfield from one of his favourite series, the Da Costa series.

This was Charles Hamilton at his very best, full of dialogue, brilliantly conceived and executed with the interplay of character on character rarely excelled by the great Charles himself.

Owing to holidays we shall not meet again until 25th October.

We take this opportunity of wishing all enthusiasts happy holidays with magic hours of reading the old papers.

J. F. BELLFIELD

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COMING SOON: COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL

Make sure to order in good time

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LONDON

Cricklewood with Bill and Marjory. An intimate gathering. Mary Cadogan brought along her copy of "The Best of Eagle," which she had reviewed for the Birmingham Post. A fine book, and a "must" for the genuine old boys' book collector. Mary Cadogan also reported on a forthcoming Howard Baker production, "Tiger Tim's Own."

Mary Cadogan also exhibited her treasured volume of School Friends, numbered 1 - 33. Furthermore, she read her essay for Golden Fun under the title "Girl Secret Societies." She also read a letter which could have been written by Hurree Singh.

Memories were revived when Bob Blythe read extracts from a newsletter of 1960. He also gave details of the St. Frank's Diamond Jubilee plaque, and further news of the St. Frank's book which John Wernham is producing.

Mary Cadogan read two more chapters of Les Rowley's admirable pastiche on "The Battle of the Beaks."

Josie Packman's Sexton Blake quiz was won by Norman Wright and Bob Blythe, while the former's Authors of Schools quiz was won by Josie Packman.

Next meeting is at 35 Woodhouse Road, Leytonstone, E.11, phone 534 - 1717. Hosts Reuben and Phyllis Godsave.

Grateful thanks to Bill and Marjory terminated the meeting.

BENJAMIN WHITER

NORTHERN

Saturday 13 August 1977

Chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened the meeting after arriving from Headingley where, he said, a certain gentleman had been doing what we were told could happen only in boys' fiction! Geoffrey said he had come away just as we were on the verge of beating Australia for the third Test Match in a row! The last time had been in March 1933 and Geoffrey had brought with him the Magnet published at that time.

Geoffrey said that Herbert Sutcliffe had been present at Headingly this afternoon. Now in his eighties and in a wheelchair, he had been a member of that winning team in 1933.

After our Library session and the exchange of news and views we launched into a rather novel presentation of 'Call My Bluff' for which six of us formed into two teams - Greyfriars and Cliff House. We regret to say (speaking as a Greyfriars man, of course) that Cliff House showed itself to have the better team!

Then a continuation of the reading of our Northern Magnet, 'Bunter's Television Series.' The chapters for this month were written by the late Jack Wood and read for us today by Harry Blowers.

At any rate, we have now discovered the whereabouts of Bunter and Wibley! Having been kidnapped, they are being kept in one of the caves under the rocky shoulder which dominates Pegg Bay and now, upon the scene came Sir William Byrd, still a Government secret agent and, as on an occasion in the past, he has a job for Wibley!

One might say, Frank (Northern Club) Richards at his best!!

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WANTED: B. B. and Blue Mauritius; Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School; other Bunters; C. D. Annuals 1946 to 1969 inclusive; Monsters, Mee's "I see All" (5 vols.); Magnets and Howard Baker Magnets; Oor Wullie and The Broons Annuals, before 1970.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN.

Telephone 491716

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FOR SALE: Modern Boys Nos. 66 and 203 (excellent copies) 80p each; No. 34 (medium-size series 1938) a bit rough 50p; No. 3 (very large-size series) folded, but a novelty 60p; Gems: No. 8 (New series) good copy but selotaped cover £1.25, No. 1105 60p, 1480 80p; 1414 (rough) 25p, 1107 £1; 770 £1; 820 (front cover missing) 50p; 771 £1; 784 £1; 834 75p; Popular 392 (some corners torn) 60p; Popular 96 £1; Magnet 38 £2; Magnet 730 (good copy) £1.50; Magnet 354 (rather rough and without covers, but story complete) 50p.

Write ERIC FAYNE. Postage and packing extra on all items.

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SALE: The Dandy Book 1950s £3.00; Beano Book 1953 £3.00; Boy's Own Annual £6.50; Chatterbox Annuals 1920 and 1919 £3.00 each; 4 Nelson Lees £4.00; Captain vol. 25 £3.50; CD Annuals 1970, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1976 £3.50 each; CDs, 1974 (4 issues) £1.50; 1975 (6 issues) £2.25

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN.

Telephone 491716

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WANTED: Howard Baker Magnet Facsimile No. 18. Mint condition. £10.00 plus postage.  
R. G. ARNOLD, 83 CANTERBURY TOWER, ST. MARKS STREET, BIRMINGHAM.

# The Postman Called

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

GORDON HUDSON (Chester-le-Street). I have just come across some books in the library by James Stagg. These were children's books issued by Dents and Hutchinson around 1962, one of which was entitled "The Valley of Silence." I wonder if this is the S. B. L. author?

I do not know whether you have seen the new paperback issued by New English Library, "Dan Dare Pilot of the Future." I have obtained a copy but I have not as yet commenced reading it. It is not clear whether this is a completely new story or whether it is adapted from the Eagle picture-story although it does have some of the original characters such as the Treen, and it contains a number of illustrations some of which bear Frank Hampson's name. To confuse matters Frank Hampson's name is on the title page but the only name on the cover is Angus P. Allen, but it impossible to say whether he is the author or the cover artist only.

TOM JOHNSON (Neston). You may like to know that part of my Greyfriars Suite, which I wrote for Frank Richards, was broadcast on Radio 4 on August 19th and 26th. The programme was about Charles Hamilton, written and presented by Benny Green; produced by David Allen. Various other artists are singing his songs and playing my Suite.

BILL LOFTS (London). Mr. Cushing must be new to the C.D. as I have certainly written about "Football and Sports Favourite" in the past. It is very rarely collected today. I enjoyed J. W. Cook's piece on Why Baker Street? But it is obvious that Sexton Blake was moved there because of the enormous appeal of Sherlock Holmes. Must as we admire Blake, one must accept the fact that Holmes is far far greater, and on a much higher plane. At least four Blake authors to my knowledge were in the British Secret Service - but not Gerald Verner. The Headquarters of M. I. 5 may in fiction be at Cambridge Circus, but when I last visited the top organisation it was some distance from there. Dixon Hawke the famous D. C. Thomson sleuth who started in 1915 and is still going strong, lived in Dover Street just off Piccadilly - an omission in Mr. Cook's otherwise witty piece.

LEN WORMULL. Although "Football & Sports Favourite" was a little too early for my own personal involvement, I can supply a few details which may interest reader R. H. Cushing. It was the largest and probably the most attractive of all sports papers, the covers particularly notable for their caricature of sporting personalities of the day. Some of the star writers included Alfred Edgar, A. S. Hardy, Walter Edwards, Percy A. Clarke, Malcolm Hincks, Don Gray, John M. Howard. Early in 1929 it was succeeded by "Boys Favourite", a sporting-cum-thriller type paper, which quickly came to grief.

H. E. SALMON. In this month's Digest - interesting always - I took particular note of the contribution by Cyril Rowe. What engaged my special interest was his reference to Henry St. John (Cooper) who, to me, at any rate, is among the top flight of writers of school stories. A very sensitive and 'telling' author in this field as witness two tales I would particularly quote: 'The School of Fear' (or Rob Randal's Enemy) and 'The Great Bar-out at Granwick.' I can read and re-read these with pleasure. Bought of course as a boy I have held on to them ever since, so you can see I prize them. Apart from the St. Basil series he must have penned a number of other 'single' tales of school life, which needless to mention I would very much like to acquire. Is it possible Mr. Rowe can help me?

Another author with undoubted understanding of schoolboy psychology was Henry T. Johnson. I hold a copy of the Boys Friend in which the story of 'The Crackpot of St. Crispins' is featured. A superb tale to my mind, and very reminiscent of H. St. J. This leads me to wonder whether the name is indeed a pen-name of the same author. Perhaps this will bring forth a comment.

DENNIS GIFFORD. Brian Doyle's article about Harry Hemsley as a comic artist co-incided curiously with my own rediscovery of this facet of one of my favourite entertainer's talent. I have just purchased a volume of "Comic Life" for the first half of 1910, and in the Grand Whitsun Number there is a strip signed "Harry May Hemsley." I had known of his career as a joke cartoonist, and indeed have one of his picture books based on his "radio family," but this was the first time I had come across an actual comic strip by him. This could qualify for an entry in my BRITISH COMIC CATALOGUE 1874 - 1974, with a little stretching of my

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But perhaps I should repeat for those who have not read the Introduction, that only regular and well-established strip characters are included in the Catalogue. However, for the sake of nostalgia and many happy memories of listening to "Elsie, Winnie and Johnny" on "The Ovaltineys" on Radio Luxembourg, and of course for their comic strip adventure in the Target Publication of the Thirties, I shall certainly include Harry May Hemsley in a Revised Edition. Incidentally, I have not traced any Hemsley strips in the comics Brian lists: Comic Cuts, Chips and Ally Sloper, and so would be glad to know of any titles and dates, please.

JOHN GEAL. I was between 10 and 13 years of age when the "Bullseye" took us boys by storm! EVERYBODY read it! We could not all afford to buy it, but everyone of us eagerly awaited every issue - so that the highly-prized copies were swapped, swapped and swapped again. I saw VERY tattered copies going the rounds week after week until they fell to pieces. This too is the main reason why the Thomson Papers of the late 20's and early 30's have a similar shortage; they too were passed from hand to hand many times as they were of the highest swap value during those years.

I did not retain my "Magnet," passing it on to relatives, but even if I had tried, I couldn't have swapped five Magnets for any one of the above papers. Sad, but true! The vast majority of the boys of that time wanted 6 - 7 stories for their money. The Magnet, Gem and Union Jack with the long story plus a short were out of the reckoning (luckily for the present-day collector) - and this is one of the reasons that so many Magnets survived. If they had had swap value, many more of them would have found their way on to the market.

To return to the Bullseye, it must have folded because of falling circulation. (I personally, in retrospect, put this down to the arrival of the Thomson's Hotspur a few months before the close, which had the glamour of a good new publication and so mopped up the money available.) But I remember we were shattered at the time. It was still in high demand in my locality and after the Bullseye stopped publication, it was still one of the most highly-prized swaps on the market for many months; in fact, until they fell apart with old age! This is what really happened - I WAS THERE!

REVIEWS"VERNON-SMITH'S RIVAL"

Frank Richards  
(Howard Baker: £4.50)

In this volume we have the first eight stories of the twelve-story series concerning Bertie Vernon, the double of Herbert Vernon-Smith. While it is incredible that a "double" who was not an identical twin could take another's place, and get away with it, it cannot be denied that stories of doubles at the schools always have an especial fascination for the reader.

Plot-wise, in this series, we really have a hybrid of the Tom Merry - Clavering series in the later blue Gem and the Smedley series in the Magnet. For Vernon, as well as being the Bounder's double, was working to get our hero disgraced and disowned by his millionaire father.

Without much question, this was Hamilton's finest series of the latter-day Magnet. It was also the last truly great series that the author was to write. With Bertie Vernon, Hamilton went over the hump, and the rest of the journey was down hill.

The cricket sequences are superb, and there is a peculiar piquancy about the last summer term at Greyfriars before the war changed everything. An English summer term was never to be quite the same again.

In my view, Redwing is the outstanding character study in this tense and exciting story. Unforgettable are the sequences in which Redwing, though far from suspecting the truth for a time, nevertheless sensed that he did not now like his chum so much as he had done for so long.

For the cricket fan, there is the clever contrast between the two cricketers, both stars in their own right. Bertie Vernon with the ball and the Bounder with the bat. And the slight wonder the team had when the expected star batsman had become a great bowler instead.

A marvellous series for all who love Greyfriars, drama and cricket.

"BUNTER THE LION-TAMER"

Frank Richards  
(Howard Baker: £4.50)

Here we have the last four stories of the Bertie Vernon series,

plus a return to the year 1936 for the first four stories in the Muccolini Circus series. A summer volume with a vengeance.

For the thoughtful reader, who knows his Greyfriars, it is clear that, as we commented recently in a Controversial article, the Bounder became too callous in the later Magnet. One no longer loves him, but remains loyal to him for old times' sake, as it were. And Bunter, instead of the lovable young rascal of earlier days, has become a repulsive young scoundrel.

Though the Muccolini series is behind the quality of that wealth of delicious nonsense, the Whiffles Circus series, Hamilton was never less than entertaining when writing about a circus. And there are a great many sequences of finely-written drama and excitement in the Muccolini tales which carry it along.

More credible, of course, than the Whiffles affair, we have Bunter knowing so many of Muccolini's secrets that he is able to blackmail his way into taking over the 1936 circus.

This was the period of the cover-to-cover Greyfriars tales and, whether or not they may have been just that little bit too long, there is much to delight the reader.

Apart from the fascinating reading matter, these volumes are beautifully produced and a credit to any connoisseur's bookcase.

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WISHFUL THINKING By W. O. G. Lofts

Boys writers in the middle twenties were undoubtedly very highly paid. They received £60 for a full-length Sexton Blake Library, original Boys Friend Library, or Schoolboys Own Library. £28 for the much shorter worded Union Jack, and roughly the same payment for a Magnet or Gem yarn. Some established authors received a little more by hard bargaining, and in this category came E. S. Brooks, who received more per word than even the great Charles Hamilton.

Many authors were so prolific that they could easily earn up to £60 plus per week. When one considers that the average wage for a working man in those days was £2 a week, with probably a wife and children to support - one can see that the boys' writer had a very lucrative income, and income tax at a considerable lower rate. Unfortunately,

many writers were just as colourful as the characters they penned, spending their income on high living, almost as fast as they received it. Some indeed, like Bunter, were always stoney broke, and did actually owe stories to their publishers. This was by subs in advance for stories yet to be written. As a consequence, some who wished to get out of the rut of writing juvenile literature, found it difficult to do so.

Charles Hamilton, when once asked if he ever thought of going on to higher things, replied to the effect "that there was nothing better than writing school stories." Whilst for us devotees it was a blessing that he penned such wonderful school stories - most of his fellow writers would strongly disagree with him. It was certainly the main ambition of most boys' authors to progress on to better-class literature, where the payment was much higher. Leslie Charteris, Alfred Edgar (Barre Lyndon of film-script fame,) Victor Canning, Roy Vickers, and even E.S. Brooks are just a few of the writers who succeeded in this higher plane.

Gwyn Evans, the brilliant Sexton Blake writer, was one who had aspirations to go on to greater things, but this time he really fancied himself as a poet! Whether his poems had sufficient merit, I'm not in a position to judge, but with tongue in cheek, Gwyn wrote a very amusing article in *Passing Show* dated 7th March 1925 entitled, 'Authors are like that,' in which he called himself "John," and described himself accurately as in real life 'a tall wispy fellow who lived in Kings Road, Chelsea apartment house.' A brief extract and probably the most amusing was as follows.....

For over a month, he had been turning out sensational boys' stories. Penny dreadfuls the magistrate called them. Glorious nonsense about immortal Deadshot Dick, Robin Hood and Hawkeye the Hooded Sleuth.

He had signed a contract to produce forty stories a year for the Monster Library. His salary was to be £1,000. He could write and write magnificently but it wasn't the stuff that sold, for John was a poet, and his verse was joyous, free, and unrestrained as the laughter of a child.....

Why Gwyn should mention the Monster Library which was in fact stories reprinted from earlier Nelson Lee St. Frank's serials is a mystery. E.S.B. it is known received £10 honorarium for each one issued, and also authors were paid for each individual story, and never by the method of contracts. Unfortunately for Gwyn - and come to that

a great many writers - they never really progressed from boys' fiction. Perhaps for us enthusiasts today, we should be thankful and 'joyous' that they did not do so.

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AN APPRECIATION OF PERCY F. WESTERMAN by Gordon Hudson

It was extremely interesting to read Brian Doyle's article "Centenary Salute to Percy F. Westerman." When I was at school in the early '50s Percy F. Westerman and Capt. W. E. Johns were two of my favourite authors. I read a good number of Westerman's sea stories, most of which were about the cargo-carrying fleet of Whatmore Duvant & Co. The names of all their vessels seemed to be prefixed by "Golden," and often the ships and characters appeared in more than one book. Two of the titles I remember reading were "Round the World in the Golden Gleaner" and "Rolling Down to Rio."

Some months ago I acquired "The Quest of the Golden Hope" and expected this to be a similar story. Rather surprisingly, however, it turned out to be a historical adventure, a kind of "Treasure Island," with pirates, murder and buried treasure, the type of plot which a few years ago would have been made into an exciting film.

In recent years I have tried to obtain Westerman books and I have managed to acquire a few at charity book sales. Most of these were sea stories either about the "Golden" line or sea scouts, but I have also met one of his other regular characters, Standish of the Royal Air Constabulary, for the first time. The first book I read, "Ringed by Fire," reminded me very much of Biggles, and made me wonder whether Westerman had copied John's famous character, or vice versa, or was it simply coincidence that they both had similar ideas?

As Brian Doyle mentioned, most of his books were published by Blackie, but during the last few months I have discovered titles published by other publishers, such as C. Arthur Pearson, S. W. Partridge & Co., and Dean & Son. Most of these seem to have been issued either during or shortly after the First World War, but I have one title issued by Ward Lock which seems to have been published after the Second War.

When I first read Percy F. Westerman's stories, they were still quite popular with boys. Now, however, no-one except older persons

seems to have heard of him, and this includes librarians. This seems a pity because, whilst some of the stories are to some extent dated, they are nevertheless fine yarns, and well worth reading or re-reading.

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EXCHANGE: Bound Vol. Penny Popular Nos. 27 to 52 (1913); Bound Vols. N. L. L. (OS) 312 to 327; 369 to 395; 500 to 525; 552 to 568. Also loose copies N. L. L. 140 to 195; 223 to 249. All the above in excellent condition. WANTED: Magnets, Gems 1910 to 1913.

G. PORTEOUS, 18 LON Y GROES, GABALFA, CARDIFF, CF4 4AB.

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WILL EXCHANGE my Annual collection for Magnets in good condition: Playbox, Pip & Squeak, Crackers, Bobby Bear, Wilfred's, Tiger Tim's Partridges Children, Hobby Annual, Tiny Tots, Cassell's, Rainbow, Teddy Tail, Micky Mouse, Felix, The Story Wonderbook, Leading Strings, Every Boy's Open-air Book, Granpop, Schoolboys' Adventure Book, Golden Fun and Story Book, Jolly Jacks, Champion. Also Film Annual and magazine. All before 1950. Many other types.

WATSON, OLYMPUS, SANFORD MILL ROAD, SPRINGFIELD, CHELMSFORD, ESSEX.

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FOR SALE: Twenty single issues Halfpenny Union Jacks, first series, from No. 30; £25 the lot or £1.50 each plus postage. WANTED: Union Jack No. 921; Magnets 795, 798 and Nos. between 775 and 1015.

H. W. VERNON, 5 GILLMAN STREET, CHELTENHAM, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3192.

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FOR SALE: Magnets - 45 fair rough copies; 1266, 1343, 1380, 1390 - 1400, 1457-60, 1469-78, 1493-95, 1615-20, 1622, 1626-28, 1632, 1634, 1637, 1650. Gems 1613, 1620 - £8.50 the lot, plus 50p postage. CD Annuals 1960-66, 1968, 1976. Bunter books 23, 31, 36. Bound Infants' Magazine (1915). Offers invited for these items. WANTED: SOLs 224, 246.

H. CLARK, 172 CAMP HILL ROAD, NUNEATON, WARKS.

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WANTED: H. Baker No. 35 - 37 to 51. Have for exchange for these CD Annuals 1951 to 1976. N. Lee Library 1st and 2nd Edition. H. Baker's Barring Out at St. Franks. H. Baker's Union Jack, Sexton Blake Catalogue, Boy Without a Name (Museum Press), The Mysterious X (Museum Press), Housemaster's Homecoming (Museum Press).

LITVAK, 58 STANWELL ROAD, ASHFORD, MIDDLESEX.

AN ECHO OF THE 'NINETIES

by S. Gordon Swan

A Christmas Double No. of The Union Jack in the last decade of the nineteenth century cost the exorbitant (?) sum of one penny, as the normal weekly issue was a halfpenny.

The number in question - No. 138 old series, publication date 10/12/96 - comprised 32 pages exclusive of the cover. The design on the front was made up of two pictures: one a patriotic motif with a youth - presumably English - holding a Union Jack, a Scottish boy playing the bagpipes while behind him is an Irishman waving a shillelagh. In advance of them is a three-boy band which looks as though it represents the navy.

The picture alongside this depicts a man half-rising in bed to survey a skeleton figure approaching him with upraised arms. Underneath is the caption: "With outstretched arms the fearful apparition advanced towards the bed." The artist's initials are appended: W.C.R. Could this have stood for W. Reading, the brother of "Val"?

At the bottom of the page is printed the following:

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY at Tudor Street and Primrose Hill, London E. C. - an unfamiliar address to Union Jack supporters.

This issue contained two long complete stories, a one-page story, several articles and the last page was devoted to "From the Quarterdeck, by the Skipper of the 'Union Jack'".

The first long complete story was "The Legend of Ravenswood", by S. Clarke Hook, whose presence in a magazine of this era seemed essential to its success. It was a Christmas story about an old mansion complete with ghost, as illustrated by the picture on the cover. Then followed a one-page tale by Melton Whyte, who had at least one Nelson Lee story to his credit.

The second long complete yarn was "Bravo! Blake!" by W. Shaw Rae. In this story one finds what is probably the first-ever reference to Sexton Blake's schooldays: "Sexton Blake had been educated at the Public School of Ashleigh," We are told that Blake was regarded as the hero of the school, held in greater estimation, almost in greater awe by the small fry, than the Head Master himself, so that he was popularly known as "Bravo! Blake!"

Altogether a good pennyworth, the Christmas Double Number from a far-off time, actually containing more reading matter than the 2d. U. J. of the nineteen-twenties. We shall never see the like of such periodicals again.

