

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 31

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OCTOBER 1977



22p

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(London O. B. B. C.)

This is the time of the year when evenings are drawing in, and the cosy prospect of reading by a crackling fire opens up nostalgic thoughts of happy days gone by. The library has been able to purchase some more Magnets and Gems recently and we are close to possessing a complete collection of the genuine Hamilton stories in these papers. Postage rates go up but we have pegged our charges at one penny for a two-month loan of a Magnet or Gem.

Although more than a thousand books are out on loan (which shows that some people can't have too much of a good thing) there are still more than a thousand in stock for you to choose from. If you are interested in becoming a postal borrower, please send me 18p in stamps for a copy of the library catalogue (or 22p if you are impatient and prefer first-class post). Address your envelope to Roger Jenkins, 8 Russell Road, Havant, Hants., PO9 2DG.

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Boys' Friend 3d library 288, "The Boy Without
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STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR
 Founded in 1941 by
 W. G. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST
 Founded in 1946 by
 HERBERT LECKENBY

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WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

The Dreadnought is a paper for which many of us have a keen affection, and copies are sought to-day, usually unsuccessfully, for the paper is a rarity. As I mentioned in an article a few years back, the student of the Dreadnought comes across quite a few oddities. Possibly one does that with any paper which struggled for existence.

The Dreadnought started out from the "Fun & Fiction" stable. The editor of Fun & Fiction stated on one occasion that Fun & Fiction had the largest circulation in the world. Recalling that, later on, the name of Fun & Fiction was changed to "The Firefly" and its price was reduced from a penny to a halfpenny, one is rather suspicious of that

circulation claim. Nevertheless, one cannot get away from the fact that The Dreadnought was launched as a sister paper, on similar lines.

In 1912 Dreadnought began in Boys' Friend size. After a few months it was reduced to Fun & Fiction size (that is, Magnet size sheets), and began again at No. 1.

With the outbreak of war, the paper called itself the Dreadnought and War Weekly, and began yet again at No. 1. Fifteen weeks later, the editor went into the fighting services, and the paper came under the control of editor Hinton, who, inexplicably, returned to the old numbering, so that what should actually have been No. 15 became No. 136.

Charles Hamilton once wrote that Hinton had a fetish for re-publishing his, Hamilton's, old stories. "I wonder that the readers did not get sick of them," he commented, modestly.

Be that as it may, Hinton immediately introduced the old Greyfriars stories into the Dreadnought, and those copies are keenly sought - and have been for years. He omitted the first Magnet tale (possibly because it had been run as a serial in the Penny Popular in 1912), and kicked off with the arrival of Bob Cherry.

What was very odd indeed, in a paper so war-conscious and anti-German as the Dreadnought, was that Hinton reprinted those old peace-time tales about the arrival of the aliens at Greyfriars - the pupils of the kindly German Herr Rosenblaum, with a contingent of German boys led by Hoffman. In passing, Greyfriars did not save the Dreadnought, which passed into happy memory with No. 159, some six months later.

There was yet another curious factor. Over several weeks, Hinton advertised a forthcoming new series of stories from "one of the leading writers of the day". Early in May, the editor gave big coverage to "The Hit of the Season" as he described it. The world-famous author was S. Clarke Hook, and he had written a splendid new series of brand new characters, Dan, Bob, and Darkey, especially for the Dreadnought. Watch for the opening story.

After which there was never any further mention of Dan, Bob, and Darkey, in the Dreadnought.

However, some six months later in November, the adventures of Dan, Bob, and Darkey commenced in the Boys' Friend. They were

very similar to the Jack, Sam and Pete tales, though in the new series two of the three chums were black men.

Dan, Bob, and Darkey went merrily on their way until the middle of March, when next week's story of the three chums was announced as "A Strange Errand". Don't miss it!

However, readers did miss it, through no fault of their own, for "A Strange Errand" failed to appear. That week the editor announced that, owing to paper restrictions (it was then March 1916) the size of the Boys' Friend had to be reduced. "For the convenience of the printers the famous series of stories by S. Clarke Hook has had to be held over for the time being," Which, of course, may have been true, but seemed a bit odd yet again.

I cannot trace whether Dan, Bob, and Darkey ever turned up again to resume their interrupted journey, but so far I haven't found them. I fancy they had gone for good from the Boys' Friend.

THEY'RE OFF!

Plenty of readers have written to tell me about a horse named "Sexton Blake" which has caught the fancy of punters. It brings to mind other race-horses similarly connected with the old papers and their characters, and especially the famous "E. S. B." which I am sure turned out profitably for some of our Lee fans.

My readers have sent my thoughts wandering over the Sport of Kings, Nat Gould, the Bounder, - and all that. Only once in my life have I ever attended a race meeting. That was some twelve years ago when I went with a little party of friends to Hurst Park.

Looking down the sporting page of my newspaper, I found that a horse named "Wayland" was running in the final race. I must have five bob on that, I decided. I backed horses in all the earlier races of the afternoon. They all came in as "also rans". Then came a terrific thunder-storm. We were all soaked to the skin, and so we abandoned the last race and went home.

The next day I saw in the paper that "Wayland", which I had intended to back but didn't, had won.

Apart from that little adventure on the road to ruin, my only sportiness was a few bob on the Derby every year over countless years.

I won just twice. Once on a horse named "Pearl Diver", which had appealed to me on account of fond memories of a story entitled "Ocean Pearl" which featured in a Chambers' Reading Book of my far-distant schooldays.

The only other occasion I won was when a horse named "Larkspur" came in first. I backed it in memory of a gorgeous book for boys - "Contraband Tommy" - in which the leading character was one, Tommy Larkspur. I still have the book.

THE 1977 ANNUAL

Last month I mentioned some of the star attractions in this year's C. D. Annual, due out in mid-December. Along with them, Bob Blythe looks at the vital links between Edwy Searles Brooks and his readers; Mary Cadogan takes note of how the old papers went to war in 1914 and 1939; Mr. Buddle features in his latest adventure which is entitled "The Everslade Empire".

We shall not be able to print very many copies beyond the number ordered in advance. Have you ordered your Annual yet?

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

DANNY'S DIARY

OCTOBER 1927

The clocks went back an hour on 3rd October, and, oh, irony of fate, it was on one of the hottest days of the year. The temperature reached 72 degrees, and the first week in the month was quite the longest period of nice weather we have had in the whole of 1927.

The marvellous South Seas series has gone on in the Magnet, the first tale of the month being "The Rival Treasure Seekers". Under the tropical sun, the boys set foot on Caca Island, to follow up the clues which will lead to Black Peter's buried treasure. But two desperate rascals - Silvio Xero and the ex-valet Soames - are ready to stop at nothing to get the treasure.

The next tale was "Blake Peter's Treasure". And just as the chums find it, under their spades, the cannibals, under the direction of Soames, start to attack their schooner. In the final story of this wonderful series, the chums get the treasure - pearls of great price - aboard the schooner, only to lose their schooner, and find themselves "The Greyfriars Castaways". But their grit and their cheerfulness pull them through. The Magnet's next story was a gorgeous bit of fun - "Skinner Tries It On", in which the chums arrive back at Greyfriars late for the new term, and find that, in their absence, Skinner and his cronies have taken over Study No. 1. And Skinner has managed to get a false report in a Southend local newspaper, to make it seem that Wharton went to Southend and not to the South Seas.

Last of the month was "Tom Redwing's Return" in which Redwing comes back to Greyfriars, and, owing to the finding of the pearls, is able to pay his own fees. And a new boy in this tale is one, Edgar Bright, who is cruel to animals, and who is also the son of an unscrupulous man who inherited a very large sum of money from an old Greyfriars master, who is believed to have left a later will. And Bright is at Greyfriars to try to find that will, if it exists.

Two young ladies have swum the Channel this month: Miss M. Gleitze and Miss Ivy Gill, the latter being a few minutes faster than the former.

At the cinemas we have seen Warner Baxter in "The Great Gatsby"; Douglas Fairbanks in a coloured film "The Black Pirate"; a gorgeous naval film "Second to None" starring Moore Marriott with Micky and Aggie Brantford; Harold Lloyd in "The Kid Brother"; and Syd Chaplin in "The Better 'Ole". All tip-top films.

Two good stories in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month: "Wingate's Chum" in which Wingate found, in a circus, the Head's long-lost daughter, Rosie Locke, and "The Drudge of St. Jim's", a story about Tom Lynn, a very honourable bootboy at St. Jim's.

The Castleton Twins series has continued in the Nelson Lee Library. In "A Rank Outsider", Alan Castleton is "sent to Coventry", so he gets his revenge by scheming to have Nipper, Handforth, and a few others, expelled from the school.

In "Staggering the School", Alan persuades the noble Arthur to

change places with him, and come to St. Frank's while Alan goes to St. Jim's. And Arthur sets out to redeem his brother's rascality, and Nipper & Co. start to like him. This is the last tale of the series.

Then a new and very eerie new series, starting with "The Stricken Schoolboy". Church visits a fortune-teller named Zuma, who seems to be alarmed at the boy's future. And Church is stricken by disease, though Handy buys up loads of chemicals to try to cure him. Next "The Doomed Schoolboy" in which St. Frank's is stunned to learn of the death of Church. But Handforth won't believe it, and declares that Church is still alive.

Last of the month is "The Miracle of Study D". Nelson Lee is hot on the trail of the two men who tried to murder Church, and Handy eventually saves his chum's life. The series will end next month, I think. E. S. Brooks certainly thinks out some wonderfully unusual plots.

After a wonderfully sunny and warm start of the month, October drew towards its end with very severe gales over the whole country. In Fleetwood there was enormous flooding, and over 400 people were made homeless.

In the Gem, the St. Jim's part of the Castleton twins series ended with two stories "The Changeling of St. Jim's" and "Under False Colours".

Then came a couple of stories in which Grundy was transferred to the New House, entitled respectively "The New House Recruit" and "Who Wants Grundy?" Final tale of the month was "The Spoof Champion" in which Racke beats all the stars in cross-country races. He does it by having Croke run the middle part of the races, but Manners happens to get a camera picture of Croke doing his middle bit.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Schoolboys' Own Library No. 61, "Wingate's Chum" comprised two stories from the early Spring of 1911. The title story "Wingate's Chum" told how Wingate found the Head's long-lost daughter Rosie, who had been kidnapped by a circus man named Lasalle. In the Magnet the sequel, which completes this S.O.L., appeared some week's later, and re-introduced Lasalle on vengeance bent. S.O.L. No. 62, "The Drudge of St. Jim's" comprised two stories from the blue Gem of the late autumn of 1913. The "drudge" was a bootboy, Tom Lynn, who was anxious to learn, and who had a heart of gold beneath his bootboy's uniform. In the Gem the two stories were separated by one of the best November the Fifth tales ever written.

* * * * *

NELSON LEE COLUMN

THE DOWNFALL OF ST. FRANK'S

by W. O. G. Lofts

One of the most controversial subjects over the years has been the real reason the St. Frank's stories failed. From an obvious successful commercial proposition in 1926, it rapidly went downhill. In 1932, and a ghost of its former self, it was incorporated into its main rival The Gem.

Many theories have been put forward for its demise, easily the most authentic coming from the man who should know - the author E. S. Brooks. In a letter published in an early C.D. he explained in a few brief sentences, that it all started with a change of editors in 1926. Because of this and new policies he quickly lost interest in writing the stories after this date.

Facts gleaned from other editors in office at Fleetway House at the same period bear out Edwy's statement to some degree. For the whole story, however, and events leading up to this, we really have to go back (no pun intended) to William H. Back who founded the Nelson Lee Library in 1915. Throughout the First World War, till around 1920, Willy Back controlled both the Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee Libraries. On his promotion to Editorial Director, it was decided that each individual Library should have its own editor. Len Pratt took charge of the S. B. L. and Harold Robert May - a former newspaper reporter of the N. L. L. Whilst May was a competent enough editor, he was extremely easy-going, and with E. S. B. being the sole author (excepting the reprinted serials) he let him have a free hand in the selection of plots and themes for stories. This was really a strictly unorthodox arrangement, as it broke the rules of what an editors duties were, - to discuss plots and ideas for stories, and lay down his own ideas of how the yarns should be written for the reader. But whether the rules were broken or not, the plain fact was that simply the circulation was healthy, the readers were happy, so was the editor, and even more so was the author E. S. B. But soon a cloud was to appear, and a black cloud at that. W. H. Back who suffered from asthma made one of his frequent

trips to the South of France for his health, and died suddenly out there on the Riviera. Still being a youngish man, his death was so unexpected that the A. P. had not even bothered to groom a successor. Many senior members of the staff were hoping to step into his shoes, and for some considerable time there was no real supervisor at Fleetway House. It was probably a shock to everyone, when Percy Montague Haydon, a junior member of the staff, was appointed to the post.

Things had got very slack at the Amalgamated Press during the period of no real Head. Some editors, like the readers they catered for, were schoolboys at heart in playing practical jokes on one and other. Harold May was their prime target! One editor in recalling those happy carefree days at Fleetway in the twenties nicknamed The Nelson Lee Office 'The Games Room', but it was all good fun, and never any malice intended. This horseplay had been noticed by 'Monty' as he was nicknamed, and although he disapproved he had no authority to stop it. With his promotion and experience of discipline in the Army, he soon put a stop to it. He simply moved Harold May far away to another department, where he remained in almost obscurity until he left in 1932.

Alfred Edgar, his successor was a man of stronger character, keen, ambitious, and like E. S. B. an established writer, who in later years was to become more famous than even our author! He made it clear from the start that Edwy's free hand in selecting themes for stories would cease, and all tales in the future would be under his guidance. On instructions from 'Monty' he was to push Handforth more and more into the limelight. The logic being that a character called 'Bunter' had made the Magnet, and so Handy could eventually make the N. L. L.

Instead of gaining readers, however, it seemed to lose them. What was even worse was that even our author began to dislike the character to some extent. Even worse still, he lost interest in the writing of the tales. New boys were introduced, such as K. K. Parkinson that were not a hit with readers, and so the circulation went more and more downhill. Alfred Edgar, shrewd as ever, and seeing that he was not succeeding, went over to the Bullseye where he wrote some of their famous serials. Later he went free-lancing, eventually becoming quite a famous playwright under the name of 'Barre Lyndon'.

In post-war years and in Hollywood he always flatly refused to discuss his own account of his Nelson Lee Library days, and he died in 1973.

Alfred Edgar was replaced by H. T. (Jimmy) Cauldwell a man like Edwy with an inventive mind. His editorship was of such short duration, that when contacted some years ago he just could not recall anything about it. H. W. Twyman, the U. J. editor around this time, and who had worked with him in the same office, remarked dryly 'That he probably did not want to remember it'.

Montague Haydon then handed over the ailing Nelson Lee Library to C. M. Down's department, with instructions for him to try and raise the flagging circulation. There was no disputing Mr. Down's dislike for St. Frank's when I met him in the sixties. Probably more suprising was his equal dislike for E. S. Brooks. One can perhaps understand the former, as after all, it had been the main rival to his Magnet and Gem for many years. But in general his animosity seemed to stem from his experiences with him in the early days. The type of letters (as published in the C.D. some years ago) by E. S. B. of continually making excuses for non-delivery of manuscripts and others making requests for more money were in his eyes degrading, and he strongly disapproved of such conduct. The outcome was that he handed over the Nelson Lee Library to Hedley O'Mant to edit, and as we all know it shortly closed down and was incorporated into The Gem.

It seems obvious, on the evidence, that the decline started with the removal of Harold May, which confirms our author's statement in an early C.D. But it is also a fact that in the early thirties many A. P. papers were losing their circulations, due to the ever growing threat of the D. C. Thomson papers. The famous U. J. and Gem were two casualties. No one so far has revealed what the exact circulation of the N. L. L. was - or how it compared to other famous boys papers. Whether it would have survived very much longer than 1932 - with E. S. B. writing in complete harmony with his editors - is a matter of conjecture.

* * * * *

STILL ESPECIALLY WANTED: Complete in good condition - MAGNETS 707, 795, 942, 999. Gems 598, 774, 792, 801. £2 each offered (over the odds but required); Nelson Lee old series 1 to 90, your price paid. NORMAN SHAW

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BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I would be most grateful to receive some material for the Christmas issue of the Digest. At the moment I am very short of suitable articles, so please take up your pens and get to work. The articles need not be very long ones, in fact short ones are welcome as they give a variety to Blakiana. I look forward to hearing from someone.

A MAGNET TO ATTRACT BLAKE FANS

by S. Gordon Swan

A very long time ago, while standing in a cinema queue, I heard two boys discussing the adventures of Sexton Blake in *The Union Jack*. One was an obvious admirer of the great detective, while the other belonged to the breed of captious critics. "It's all impossible", scoffed the latter. "Sexton Blake is in London one week and in Africa the next."

This might have been a valid argument in those far-off days, but in our jet-age Blake could arrive in Africa in less than a week. Apart from that, however, it did not occur to the scoffer that, although the paper was published weekly, the exploits recorded in two consecutive weeks might have occurred months apart.

This reminiscence is relevant to the presence in Magnet No. 818 of Sexton Blake. One would have expected to see Ferrers Locke at Greyfriars in the story "Disgraced by His Father;" (October 13th, 1923.) His absence is explained by the serial which appeared in that issue: "The Brotherhood of the White Heather", dealing with Ferrers Locke's adventures in Russia. Had he been introduced into the Greyfriars story some smart Alec -- more than one, in all likelihood -- would have written to the editor pointing out the impossibility of the detective being in two places at once; like the boy I overheard, ignoring the probability that the two events happened at different periods.

The Greyfriars story may be summarised as follows:

Dick Russell, a boy in moderate circumstances, is expecting his father to arrive at the school and is astonished when his parent, immaculately dressed, is driven up in a sumptuous Rolls Royce. Mr. Russell explains his sudden affluence by announcing that he has become

private secretary to an immensely wealthy man, Mr. Gordon Gummer, who has entrusted highly confidential papers to Mr. Russell's care.

After his father leaves, Dick Russell decides to take a number of his chums on a charabanc trip and writes to Mr. Russell for money to finance the venture. He receives no reply and when later he telephones his home there is no answer from the number.

Dick and the Famous Five resolve to go to London on the Wednesday half-holiday and investigate matters. On arriving at Dick's home they find every evidence of a hurried departure on the part of his father. At this juncture the entry of two Scotland Yard men further complicates the issue. Mr. Russell is wanted for embezzlement and treason -- selling important papers to foreign governments.

Back at Greyfriars Dick Russell is tormented by the cads of the school and he tries to run away but is restrained by the Famous Five. The next development is when the chums go to see Dr. Locke and ask him to solicit the services of Ferrers Locke. When Dr. Locke announces that the detective is in Russian, Vernon-Smith says: "There's still Sexton Blake, sir;" and offers to pay the great detective's fees. I quote the story:

"Thus it was that Sexton Blake, probably the world's most famous detective -- for Ferrers Locke rose to fame after Sexton Blake -- received in audience no less than seven juniors from Greyfriars."

Sexton Blake loses no time in his investigations. He thoroughly searches the Russell home and finds a slip of paper stuffed into the toe of a slipper which the wearer had found too large. The words on that paper lead him to a man named Judo at a cottage in Biggleswade. Judo pretends to be deaf and dumb but Blake traps him into speech and eventually learns that Mr. Russell is in Courtfield. After handing Judo over to the police Blake and the juniors proceed to Greyfriars.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter, fancying himself as a detective and hoping to claim the reward which has been offered for Mr. Russell's capture, wanders aimlessly round Courtfield and thence to the coast in search of the missing man. He spots a swimmer in the sea whom he thinks he recognises as Mr. Russell. Bunter looks for Mr. Russell's clothes and, on finding them, is turning out the pockets when the wanted man suddenly appears.

Mr. Russell, knowing Bunter, bluffs the fat junior into believing that his disappearance is all part of a Government plan and that Gordon Gummer is the man to find. He promises Bunter a title if he will keep his mouth shut. Bunter returns to Greyfriars and, as might be expected, blurts out to Sexton Blake and the Famous Five that he is expecting a title by co-operating with Mr. Russell, whom he has found.

Blake locates the missing man and in due course he is brought to trial. It transpires that he had found that his employer, Gordon Gummer, was a spy and an embezzler, and it was he who had driven the rogue from the country without a single paper in his possession. But these papers had been stolen in turn by Judo and without them Mr. Russell could not prove his innocence.

Sexton Blake finds the papers in Judo's cottage and Judo confesses that Russell was only a tool in Gummer's hands. Gummer is traced to Vienna and revealed as one of the most thoroughpaced scoundrels in the world, while Dick's father is completely exonerated. And in this fashion Sexton Blake became associated with the famous school in Kent.

Incidentally, the Ferrers Locke serial, "The Brotherhood of the White Heather", is stated to be "by a well-informed person who, for obvious reasons, takes the pen-name of 'X'". But those familiar with the author's style will recognise it as the work of Andrew Murray, a writer not usually connected with Ferrers Locke.

SEXTON BLAKE VERSUS THE I. R. A. A Phantasy by Don Harkness

Sexton Blake, the celebrated criminologist of Baker Street, gazed from the window of his consulting room. A drizzle of rain was falling that bleak December afternoon. Pedestrians hurried along under gleaming umbrellas or stood in the doorways of convenient shops waiting for a break in the weather. Suddenly a tap sounded at the door and Mrs. Bardell entered.

"Which Defective Suspector Coutts wishes to infer with you" announced the worthy housekeeper in her quaint English. Stifling a smile, Blake bade the good soul to usher in his visitor.

Detective-Inspector Coutts acknowledged the detective's greeting and flung himself dejectedly into one of the comfortable saddlebag chairs. Absent-mindedly he reached for the decanter of Blake's excellent whisky

and poured himself a stiff tot, and, while he drank it, Blake seated himself in the opposite chair and waited patiently. That the C. I. D. man was rattled was extremely obvious and Blake had a good idea what it was all about, but bided his time. As the stimulant began to take effect Coutts recovered some of his old equanimity. "Confound it Blake," he blurted out, "Somethings got to be done about these I. R. A. bombings. This senseless killing and maiming of innocent people has got to stop". "I am in complete agreement" said Blake quietly, his keen grey eyes deeply troubled, "but how are we to accomplish it? We are not dealing with known criminals whom we can keep track of. We are dealing with ordinary men, and yes, women, who plant bombs which injure or kill people who are in no way connected with the religious or political views of the perpetrators". Coutts leaned forward until he was perched precariously on the edge of his chair. "The newspapers are giving the Yard a dickens of a time and the Chief Commissioner is letting me know it. I'll admit that thanks to Splash Page the Daily Radio is trying to show what we are up against, but the rest of the press is having a field day at our expense. Instead of editorial writers asking why we don't do something and offer helpful suggestions, we might just get somewhere. What do they expect us to do. Arrest everyone with an Irish accent. Search every suitcase carried by the public. Interrogate every driver who stops his car outside a restaurant or department store?

"If you tried any of those things" said Blake sympathetically, "the same editorials would scream infringement of civil liberties and human rights. The sensation seeking rags are doing as much harm as the terrorists themselves, in spreading fear among the public". "By the way, where's young Tinker?" asked Coutts glancing round the room. "Out doing some Christmas shopping" replied Blake. "He should not be very --" Blake was interrupted by the slamming of the front door and footsteps hurrying up the stairs. "Guv'nor" cried Tinker excitedly, bursting into the room. "Three I. R. A. terrorists have bombed the Savoy Restaurant and I managed to trail them to their hideout and - " "Here hold on young 'un, take it easy" said Blake, his calm voice belying the surge of excitement he felt at this startling piece of news. "Start at the beginning and, he added, you might say hello to our visitor." "Sorry Coutts", said Tinker, "I did not see you. Besides I was all het

up about this bombing business. You see I was walking along Regent Street near that swanky new restaurant The Savoy, when I saw this old car pull up outside and three men get out. They seemed to be in a hurry and the youngest one kept glancing back over his shoulder at the car and it took the other two all their time to keep him from running. Well, after the recent spate of bombings it wasn't hard to figure out what was going to happen, although I wasn't absolutely sure, of course. I yelled out for the people to keep clear of the car as it contained a bomb and you should have seen everybody scatter. Luckily the men who had been in the car could not see that it was me who called out because of the shopping crowds and so I was able to follow them. I was afraid that they may have had another car waiting, but they hadn't. They boarded a bus and I followed. Just then I heard this terrific explosion. The bus driver seemed inclined to stop but the passengers had the wind-up and yelled at him to keep going, which he did. The bus was pretty crowded so I had no trouble making myself inconspicuous. When we reached Fulham they got off and so did I. Luckily I had some parcels so looked like any other Christmas shopper and was able to follow them without them getting suspicious, although they glanced back several times. They entered a cheap hotel called The Wellington. I hung around at the end of the street to see if they came out again but they did not so they must really be staying there. Then I managed to grab a taxi and here I am." While Tinker got his second wind Coutts was on the telephone to Scotland Yard with the information he had just received. Five minutes later all three set out in the Grey Panther followed by two squad cars from the Yard filled with detectives specially trained to deal with terrorist bombers. The cars weaved their way through the peak hour traffic with some difficulty but finally reached their destination. The men were discreetly deployed to cover the hotel front and back, by Coutts who then led a group of armed men, through the hotel entrance. At the sight of Coutts' C.I.D. card the manager told him that the three men with Irish accents, were in room No. 10. Several men were detailed to remain on guard at the desk and much to his disgust Tinker was told to remain with them, while Coutts, Blake and six policemen proceeded quietly along the passage to the room where the terrorists were. Listening at the doorway, a murmur of voices

could be heard but they were too low to distinguish what was being said. Coutts beckoned to a couple of burly policemen who charged the door, which flew open. The three men seated at a table, leaped to their feet, clawing for their guns. One managed to fire at Coutts but Blake quickly struck the gunman's arm and deflected the bullet. The ensuing struggle was short but violent and came to an end with three pairs of handcuffs on the wanted men. Later, after he had filed his report and completed other formalities, and after Tinker had positively identified the men, Coutts was once again seated in Sexton Blake's consulting room enjoying the warmth of the fire and one of Blake's fine cigars. "Well Blake, that takes care of three of the cold-blooded scoundrels, thanks to Tinker's quick thinking" said Coutts. "Yes" answered the Baker Street detective, "unfortunately they are only a drop in the ocean. I am afraid there will be others to take their place."

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 146 - Gem 293 - "The Rag-Time Schoolboys"

In the early days Charles Hamilton wrote a number of stories revolving around musical entertainments. A famous one which comes readily to mind from the Gem is No. 235, "Tom Merry's Concert Party", which was reprinted in the last Charles Hamilton Companion Volume. More dated, however, was No. 293, "The Rag-Time Schoolboys", which was never reprinted in the Gem, no doubt because it featured a type of music that was then long out of date.

There is a definite fascination about the description of England in the late summer of 1913, the year before the cataclysm. It is a picture of houseboats and regattas, of petrol launches and of course the rag-time band. Lowther and Manners were both pupils of Mr. Flatt, the music master of St. Jim's (surely he was also Hoskins' music master at Greyfriars?). There can be little doubt that Manners' preference for the music of Mozart and Beethoven in fact reflected Charles Hamilton's own musical taste, and the discordant noises from Lowther's rag-time band which were said to resemble the music of Wagner, Richard Strauss and Debussy also reflected the author's own aversion to the more modern

composers of serious music.

The story was a light-hearted one of inter-house rivalry, with the School House juniors under the impression that Figgins was also forming a rag-time band to play at the Regatta, whereas he was in fact forming an eight to row against Abbotsford. The New House juniors were all the time one jump ahead of their School House rivals, and this in itself added another touch of novelty to an amusing triviality.

At the end, the rag-time band (whose opening musical notes were printed at the head of the story, probably a composition of Charles Hamilton himself), played across the water so that they could be heard by those on Lord Eastwood's houseboat. Gussy then asked his father, who did not know the identity of the musicians, what he thought of their performance. "Yes, I could hardly help hearing it, Arthur", said his lordship; "but one must not complain. To most of the people who come to the regatta there is probably something amusing, and even pleasant, in such terrible noises. And others must be willing to submit cheerfully for the pleasure of the majority."

It only goes to show that, in the sphere of popular music at least, there has always been a generation gap!

* * * * *

MORE LETTERS FROM GREYFRIARS

ARCHIVES

from L. Rowley

From Sir Hilton Popper, Bart., to Dr. Locke, The Headmaster, Greyfriars School.

Dear Headmaster,

Not for the first time have I occasion to draw your attention to cases of trespass on my property by the boys of my old School. During the past week there have been two more instances, one by Vernon-Smith of the Remove and the other by Coker, a Fifth Form boy.

Vernon-Smith, who was apprehended on the Popper Court game preserves, had a lighted cigarette in his mouth which, on being told he would be reported, he removed and blew a cloud of smoke into my face. To this insolence he added the further one of saying "Go and eat coke, you old goat!" Is it possible even today, when the standards of education are on the decline, that the Chairman of the Board of Governors may be so addressed by a young ruffian?

Coker, who was found trespassing on the island in the Sark, had the effrontery to question my authority and resorted to fisticuffs when my man Joyce tried to remove him. This boy continued to resist whilst being conducted by four gamekeepers to the mainland.

It had been my intention to demand the expulsion of both these boys but I am not a hard man and have decided that floggings, very severe floggings, will suffice. I hope that I

shall learn in the near future that both sentences have been rigorously carried out.

I am &c

HILTON POPPER, Bart.

From Dr. Locke, The Headmaster, Greyfriars School to Sir Hilton Popper, Bart.

My Dear Sir Hilton,

Thank you for your further letter of complaint in which you allege trespass on your property by boys of the School. I have investigated both cases and the following are my findings.

Vernon-Smith admits both the trespass and to smoking but has said that his insolent remarks were uttered under duress as you were thrashing him with your riding crop at the time. He has mentioned to me that he may intend informing his father of this so that proceedings may be instituted against you for common assault. I would add that there was adequate support for his story when I examined the marks on his arms and shoulder. I myself am of the opinion that this boy has been punished more than enough for his offences and since you, a Justice of the Peace, would not welcome unpleasant court proceedings, I am sure you will share that opinion.

Neither do I intend to take any further action with regard to Coker, and although I cannot condone violence I must make allowance that Coker was entitled to act in self-defence against superior force. Although the island is commonly known as 'Popper's Island' this is no confirmation of titular right to possession. On the contrary, ownership has been in serious dispute for many years and, indeed, the sole reason for the island being placed out of bounds was to avoid petty complaints about trespass - be they real or imagined.

In regard to future cases may I, with respect, insist that you do not take the law into your own hands? Complaints of real substance will always be carefully considered by

Yours &c

H. H. LOCKE (Headmaster)

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 219. ONE "OTHER" SCHOOL

Fame and fortune came to Charles Hamilton because he perfected the art of writing long, long series about the same schools and about the same characters who never grew up. One can easily slip into the error of thinking that he was the originator of the long-running school stories, telling tales of the same ageless boys for year after year. Such was not really the case. As a contributor to our columns said, in our August issue, "There Were Other Schools".

For a long time before St. Jim's was invented, H. Clarke Hook was writing school stories of Lyncroft. The leading character was a schoolboy nicknamed 'Specs'. I have had a number of these for many years, and have never read even one. From the fact that I cannot

recall them ever being mentioned in C.D., I can only conclude that they did not "click". If anyone had ever loved them, they would surely not be forgotten now. But they ran a long time.

I also have had for many years, a considerable number of the Wycliffe stories which Pentelow wrote under his pen-name of Jack North. Some people, undoubtedly, liked the Wycliffe stories. Herbert Leckenby was one.

Mr. W. Hubbard, in an article in Collectors' Digest Annual some 18 years ago, suggested that the first Wycliffe story appeared in Pluck at the end of 1907. Had that been correct, the Wycliffe characters would have post-dated Tom Merry by some nine months. In actual fact, Wycliffe began at the very start of 1907, and so had been running for several months by the time that Tom Merry turned up at St. Jim's.

And the leading character of the Wycliffe juniors was Merry. That seems somewhat curious, does it not? It has not been easy to find out what was the christian name of Merry of Wycliffe. Pentelow plunges on for page after page and chapter after chapter without mentioning Merry's christian name. In fact, you could get a long way into a Wycliffe tale without even the name of the school being mentioned, so you might wonder at which school you were passing your time.

Mr. Hubbard states that Pentelow's Wycliffian Merry was named Harry. This does not seem to be so. In an early Wycliffe tale, "The Rise of Bowker's House", he is named as Thomas Merry.

Mr. Hubbard may have compiled his article by reference to reprints in the Boys' Friend Library. It is possible that the name may have been changed from Tom Merry to Harry Merry in those reprints.

One of the five Wycliffe chums was an Indian, Sinhji.

As time went on, it seems that time also started to go on at Wycliffe. Boys got older, and apparently some died or were killed - a Pentelow propensity, maybe for the sake of sensation, these tragic demises. The boys getting older could have been to make a difference from the Hamilton schools which were sweeping the market.

Hamilton's amazing success came in a field which had been cultivated and tried out by others before him. Hamilton won hands down, because he wrote so very much better, and, so far as I can see, because he worked harder. Wycliffe and Lyncroft appeared at intervals

of a few weeks in Pluck, but St. Jim's and Greyfriars appeared every week in the Gem and Magnet. And, clearly, the worth of Hamilton's writing in Pluck, at intervals, had attracted the attention of the powers-that-be, so that they rewarded his skill and his effort with papers of his own - first the Gem and then the Magnet.

Many have assumed that Hamilton was very bitter towards Pentelow, and that assumption came about from some of the extravagant things which Hamilton wrote when he was infuriated at the dog-in-the-manger attitude of the A. P. in the early post-war years. But, as I have commented before, the evidence seems to point to an amicable arrangement between the two men during the few years when Pentelow was editor of the Companion Papers.

Is it not much more likely that any bitterness was on the side of Pentelow? His own school, which was in the field earlier, limped along in the wake of the Hamilton schools which continued to sweep everything before them. Hamilton became a powerful sun in the sky where Pentelow's little star was outshone.

Pentelow's Merry and his Indian boy wilted and were forgotten, as Tom Merry and Hurree Singh became boyhood heroes for the young readers of the time. And everybody knows Tom Merry and Hurree Singh today. Who knows or cares that Pentelow once had his own Merry and Sinhji?

Success breeds jealousy, especially on the part of those who are overshadowed. And Hamilton was successful with a vengeance.

Mr. Hubbard in his very readable article suggested that Jack North really wrote for older boys, and that his Wycliffe might have been more successful had it appeared in a paper like "Chums".

Everything is possible, but I think it unlikely. Browsing over the earlier Wycliffe tales I get the impression of heavy sentimentality, lumpish humour, and a lack of descriptive writing, which would be more likely to appeal to younger boys than to older. Perhaps the real judgment is that the Hamilton schools have lasted, and will go on lasting, while Wycliffe is only remembered in the bright glow from Hamiltonia.

* * * * *
WANTED: Greyfriars Book Club Vols. 3, 6, 7, 8 and H.B. Magnet Vols. 23, 29, 41, 44, 45.

JOHN GEAL, 11 COTSWOLD ROAD, HAMPTON, MIDDXX.

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMANo. 43. CAGNEY IN COMEDY

Our opening double-feature programme for the new term came from G. F. D. It comprised a British thriller - Leslie Banks in "Cottage to Let" plus Baby Sandy in "Bachelor Daddy".

Next, also from G. F. D., came Arthur Askey in "I Thank You" supported by Lloyd Nolan in "Mr. Dynamite". Also in this programme was a colour cartoon "Little Brother Rat".

After that, from Warner Bros., came George Brent in "South of Suez" plus William Lundigan in "The Case of the Black Parrot".

The following week, also from Warner's, brought a historical drama in technicolor: Bette Davis and Errol Flynn, and a number of Warner stars, in "The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex". Whether it was historically sound is uncertain, but it was superb entertainment. Supporting it was Brenda Marshall in "The Singapore Woman".

Next, from Warner's, was Dennis Morgan in "Kisses for Breakfast" plus Thomas Mitchell in "Flight from Destiny".

Then, from Warner's, a fine, tough drama: Humphrey Bogart and Ida Lupino in "High Sierra" supported by Jeffrey Lynn in "Money and the Woman".

Then one of my own favourite James Cagney films from Warner. This was "The Strawberry Blonde" in which his two leading ladies were Rita Hayworth and Olivia de Havilland. A gentle, delightful comedy set at the turn of the century. On the face of it, Cagney was

miscast as a colourless dentist; in fact he was superb, giving evidence of his genius. He was, I suppose, so versatile that it was impossible to miscast him. The theme song, "The Band Played On", ran throughout the film, and I recall that, when we showed it, the words of the song, accompanied by a bouncing ball to conduct the cinema audience in singing it, came on to the screen immediately after the final credits and the caption "The End". Our audiences, who had stood in readiness for the National Anthem trailer, found themselves singing "The Band Played On". A fine film.

There was no second feature to "Strawberry Blonde", but among the shorts was a colour cartoon "Detouring America".

Next, a double from Warner's: Jeffrey Lynn in "Underground" plus William Lundigan in "A Shot in the Dark". A good all-round thriller programme.

Next, yet another double from Warner's: Edward G. Robinson in one of his very best, "This Man Reuter", a dramatised documentary, immensely entertaining, plus Eddie Albert in "The Great Mr. Nobody".

Then, next week, from Warner's: Merle Oberon in "Affectionately Yours" plus Arthur Kennedy in an exciting boxing drama "Knockout". The following week, once more from Warner's, brought Ronald Reagan in a big air film "International Squadron" plus Wayne Morris in a neat chiller "The Smiling Ghost". And a

cartoon "Malibou Beach Party".
Final of the term, Warner's yet
again, with a musical: Priscilla Lane in

"Million Dollar Baby" which stood alone
supported only by a few shorts. Whether
it was a good film I cannot say, for I have
long forgotten it.

* * * * *

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

CHRIS WHITE (Newbury): I have just been reading $\frac{1}{2}$ d Gem No. 39
(1907) "The Diabolists". What a wonderful picture on the centre page -
not numbered - of the Matron holding a smoking candle, collecting the
diabolo sets from the sleeping juniors. I remember the diabolo craze -
everyone had a set. And Haley's Comet, too. The earth was supposed
to pass through its tail. I was afraid to go to sleep.

E. N. LAMBERT (Surbiton): It was a crisp sunny morning on a day in
early December last year that I made my usual walk across the park -
a walk that I had made many times throughout the years to work.

My thoughts ran through the years. This was an experience
that I witnessed on leaving school at the last time, wondering what I had
now in store before me after a life bound up by routine - leaving many
colleagues that over the years had become my friends.

I thought of my schooldays. Yes, indeed they were the happiest
days of my life. Then my thoughts turned to the Gem and Magnet
papers when I first read them in 1927. It must be wonderful to be Tom
Merry and Harry Wharton who unchanged by time, remained ever youth-
ful, and stayed at St. Jim's and Greyfriars without the remotest thoughts
of leaving school - and least of all retiring from the world of commerce.

Charles Hamilton captured the art of eternal youth.

B. HAMBLET (Hoylake): I am sick to death reading about the passing
of Elvis, yet a few days later a couple of lines was all that could be
spared for the passing of Elsie Carlisle, who sang for Ambrose in the
1930's.

(I, too, was sad that the death of Elsie Carlisle received such scant mention. When we were
young, she made our lives brighter with "No, no, a thousand times no," "Home, James, and
don't spare the horses", and "Gertie, the girl with the gong." - Ed.)

P. HANGER (Northampton): I look upon "Bunter's Big Blunder" as one of the most enjoyable stories I have ever read. I cannot even begin to imagine what is meant when it is written that it "failed to raise the reader's spirits or cause his imagination to soar."

I emphatically assert that at every reading of this wonderful story, my spirits have soared, and upon reading almost all Magnets of the thirties, one always wonders to what new great heights Frank Richards will soar. It is acknowledged that the plot is first-class, and in my opinion a good plot is far and away the most important factor to a good story. "Ironic style, classical illusions; amusing simile or metaphor; original turn of phrase." All these do have their place, but without a good plot to hang them on, I would rate their value as quite small.

Miss E.K. (Liverpool): I agree with Roger Jenkins that the change of colour of the 'Magnet' cover was not a successful move. I stopped taking the papers some time in 1938, in the old yellow and blue cover days, but still cherished my collection of 'Gems', 'Magnets', 'S. O. L's' and 'Holiday Annuals' from 1933-1938, which I turned to for light relief when I had colds in the head, or was recovering from end-of-term swotting for exams and Higher School Certificate. What was my chagrin, you may imagine, when I returned home in 1941, faced with a hard-working long vacation, queuing for rations, helping to restore some order after the May blitz on Merseyside, etc., and found my collection had been given away by an elder sister to her fiancé's nephew!

BILL LOFTS (London): Up to the age of 10 I lived opposite the Royal West London which was in Church Street Market just off the Edgware Road. From a first-rate theatre and attended by King Edward VII it gradually deteriorated until in the thirties it was showing B films and having wrestling on Sunday afternoons. It was bombed during the last war and now the site is a local library. I have great nostalgia for the old 'West' and they showed films projected from the back which was unusual - or so I have been told.

Henry T. Johnson and Henry St. John Cooper were very different authors indeed; and the latter generally considered to be far superior in the school story field.

M. S. FELLOWS (London): Sigrid Gurie was of the feminine gender. Very much so! She was born in Brooklyn, U.S.A., of Norwegian parents. She had honey-brown hair and blue eyes. When she was studying art in England, she met Sam Goldwyn who told her that if she visited Hollywood he would give her a test. She went; took the test and landed a leading role opposite Gary Cooper in her first film, which was "The Adventures of Marco Polo" (1938).

Vic Oliver's real name was Victor von Samek. He was born in 1898 and he died in 1964. As well as being a well-known comedian he was also a fine pianist, violinist and conductor. He was born in Austria but spent a long time in this country. He was associated with Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyon and was in the Hi Gang film in 1941.

BEN WHITER (London): The Dalston Theatre near the Junction Station of the old North London Railway line is now, as is customary in this day and age, a Bingo Hall. What the interior looks like I cannot state but from the outside it looks very dilapidated. The change over from being a live theatre to a cinema must have taken place in the late 1920's. I remember seeing the famous silent film, A Waltz Dream there.

VICTOR GILES (Barking): Please persuade Les Rowley to seek permission to delve further into the Greyfriars archives. The correspondence brought to light in this month's "Digest" is undoubtedly of great historical interest - apart from being a delight to read!

* * * * *

"Yesterday's News" offers following at 95p each, or £9.95 per 12, post paid; Ally Sloper's Half Holiday (1880's), Funny Folks (1870's), Scraps (1880's), Young Men Great Britain (1870's), Gentleman's Journal (1860's), Boys Of England (1880's), Comrades (1890's), Fun (1890's), Fliegende Blatter (German humour weekly (1890's), Pictorial Comedy (c 1900), Chums (1900's-1920's), Girls Own Stories (1920), Girls Own Paper (1920's, 1930's), Comic News (1860's), Nelson Lee Library (late 1920's), Figaro In London (1830's), Dick's English Library (1890's), London Times daily newspaper (1830's to 1940's), News Chronicle (1939-1945), Daily Mail (1914-1918), various women's weeklies (1918-1950's), Young Ladies Journal (1880's-1900's), All Sports Weekly (1920's), Tales For Little People (1930's), Boys' Realm, Boys' Herald, Boys' Friend (1900's), Hobbies Weekly (1920's, '30's), Meccano Magazine (1926-1940's), Scout (1900's-1920's), Thousands of other items from 1330's to 1970's at higher, and lower prices. Send for free, comprehensive catalogue to: "YESTERDAY'S NEWS",

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G. HARDAKER, 14 ACREGATE, LITTLE DIGMOOR
SKELMERSDALE, LANCS.

WANTED: Billy Bunter and Blue Mauritius. Other Bunters, C.D. Annuals, 1946 to 1969. Monsters, Cor Wullie & Broons Annuals, before 1970. Chums Volumes, S.O.L's.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN
Tel. 0224 - 491716

SALE: C.D. Annuals 1970, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1976, £4.50 each. Captain Volume 24, £5.00. Dandy Book, 1950's, £3.50. Eagle Annuals, 4 & 11, £2.00 each. Bunter Hardbacks, £2.00 each. Two Nelson Lee's, £2.00.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN
Tel. 0224 - 491716

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

CAMBRIDGE

The Cambridge Club resumed its meetings after the Summer break on Sunday, 4th September, at 99 Shelford Road.

The Secretary and Jack Overhill reported correspondence received from Bert Vernon of Australia, John Edson, and Jack Doupe. The Secretary drew attention to an article by Bill Lofts in the August "Antiquarian Bookseller" on collecting the works of Edgar Wallace.

Mike Rouse gave his selection of "Desert Island Books", which he would take if restricted to ten. He produced a varied list, covering the theatre, musical comedy, and films, volumes of "Knockout" and "Wizard" annuals, a volume of "Chips" for 1936, and a very interesting and finely illustrated special souvenir programme for the second anniversary performance of "The Arcadians". Members spent much time revelling in this feast of interest and nostalgia, since Mike had

brought along nine of his ten selections, and a wide ranging and animated discussion followed.

Jack Overhill reported that a volume of previously unpublished work by East Anglian writers, to which he had contributed, would be published on 3rd October.

Members were then entertained to one of Mrs. Overhill's splendid teas. Much regret was expressed at the absence of Bill Lofts, whose Bunterian feats on such occasions are the admiration of his fellow members.

After tea Jack Overhill played the second tape of his broadcast autobiographical talks; this sequel to "A regular snob" had been specially asked for by B. B. C. listeners to his previous talk, and was his 51st broadcast. Entirely unscripted, "Marriage on a shoestring", held his listeners enthralled, and led members to discuss their own lives and experiences, the meeting ending as a quiet gathering of friends exchanging memories in quiet harmony, breaking up reluctantly only at the call of "times winged chariot".

NORTHERN

Saturday, 10th September, 1977

It was an unduly wintry evening for the time of the year and yet there was a goodly gathering of the faithful.

The first item on the programme was a talk by Jack Allison on 'The Persuasiveness of Frank Richards'.

'We accept him,' said Jack, 'as an absolute authority on his subject - our criticism is reserved for the sub-writers, but we have no criticism for Hamilton.'

In a sub-story, said Jack, Bunter robs the Head's safe to steal the silver to sell for cash - but this is not Bunter - Bunter is not dishonest - except, that is, in the matter of tuck!

Hamilton could make us accept the character and whatever he is doing - however unlikely the one or both may be.

And Jack went on to give us an example of what he meant and read to us excerpts from Magnet 1517. Here Quelch is acting in a very un-Quelch-like way - his over-severe punishment in form and then his relenting and rescinding them. And this behaviour is occasioned because his second cousin twice removed has gone off the rails!

Were we aware, asked Jack, what was a second cousin twice removed? And, on the blackboard, Jack proceeded to illustrate this relationship.

In short, the whole incident of Quelch's reaction was absurd - yet not manifestly so, for such was the skill of Hamilton's writing that we could accept it without question!

Darrell Swift followed on with an account of his recent adventures in London and in Maidstone - and he brought us back a stick of rock - purchased, he said, over the very counter where Frank Richards bought his tobacco!

And, finally, another instalment of 'Bunter's Television Series' read to us by the author, Ron Hodgson.

LONDON

The highlight of the Leytonstone meeting was the display of the four samples of the St. Frank's Diamond Jubilee plaques; colours were green, blue, brown and black, the latter shade being chosen by the majority present. Then the forthcoming opus of John Wernham with hopes of it being ready by November, and the excellent discourse on the Peculiarities and Oddities of the St. Frank's saga as portrayed in the Nelson Lee Library. To cap these three items, Timothy Bruning gave a quiz that had some Greyfriars, St. Frank's and therocratic questions. Eric Lawrence was the winner and our fifteen year old member from Sporle is to be congratulated on such a fine effort.

Jim Nelson brought along a fine drawing of Landru, "The Lady Killer With the Beard" which was drawn by R. E. Forest and which appeared in S.B.L. Fourth Series, 403. A copy of which, Josie Packman had on show. Roger Jenkins read his paper on the characters of Bunter and Wibley.

Bob Blythe read excerpts from a newsletter of 1960 which described one of his meetings held at Neasden and Ray Hopkins read the concluding chapters of Les Rowley's "Battle of the Beaks".

Hearty votes of thanks were accorded to the hosts, Reuben and Phyllis Godsave, who despite the bread situation put on a very fine feed.

The St. Frank's luncheon party will take place at the Rembrandt on Sunday, 13th November, next. The price of the function is £5 and

early bookings will oblige.

BENJAMIN WHITER

FRANK LAY IS DEAD

It is with the deepest sorrow that we record the death of Frank Vernon Lay. Frank, who has been a keen Collectors' Digest reader since the very start, and who has often contributed splendid articles to our pages when his health was good in days gone by, died on Tuesday, 20th September, after a very long and painful illness.

His great interest was the Nelson Lee, but he was knowledgeable and had wide interests in other aspects of the hobby. Of a delightful personality, with a whimsical humour, he had a large range of friends who will feel his death as a very personal grief. He was in his early sixties.

The news of this great loss to the hobby reached us just as we were going to press with this issue. Next month we shall include a further appreciation. Collectors' Digest offers its deepest sympathy to Mrs. Lay and to the family.

SPECIALLY WANTED: Champion No. 103; Union Jack No. 921 and before No. 736; o/s/N. L. L. up to No. 92; Magnet Nos. between 775 and 1015; Strand volumes Nos. 33, 34, 39 and other volumes after No. 40 (not after year 1928). Please write first.

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

32 Boys' Own Paper 1951 to 1953; many early First Edition Edgar Wallaces from 1920; Angela Brazil Omnibus of School Stories; the Illustrated London News, 12 copies; Life International, 2 copies 1963; Buster's Huckleberry Hound, Eagles, Film Funs, Hotspurs, Rovers, Beans, Dandys, Walt Disney Weeklies, Toppers, School Friends; Knockout, Lions from 1947; Boys' Own Paper 1931; Analog Science Fiction. Will exchange or sell.

OLYMPUS, SANDFORD MILL RD., CHELMSFORD, ESSEX.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

by R. J. Godsave

One of the fears which must beset all authors of weekly papers is the dread of drying-up in ideas and plots. Unlike the author who

having finished a novel can then take a welcome rest, the weekly paper author is often denied such relief.

As an author develops his characters a subtle change is made giving them a strength which was not possessed at their introduction. It is this change which gives writers greater scope in both ideas and plots.

It would, perhaps, be more accurate to say that E. S. Brooks more than developed the character of E. O. Handforth in the new series of the Nelson Lee. The change in the Handforth of the old series is so marked that they could easily be thought of as two separate characters created by Brooks.

The first St. Frank's Lee No. 112, o. s. "Nipper at St. Frank's" introduced Handforth together with other Removites. He was presented as being somewhat of a brawny clown. As Brooks got into his stride and developed his characters Handforth was portrayed as a rather simple and kindly junior underneath a rough exterior. By all accounts he was beloved by the readers of the old series.

Although he figured in many of the old series issues he never dominated the stories. The last word in obstinacy and argument he was generally shown in a favourable light. Such was his make-up it was no surprise to find that a sentimental streak was evident in his relationship with his runaway married elder sister against her parents wishes in the Clement Heath series.

How different was the cold calculating Handforth of the new series. Although he could be admired for his quick decisions and lack of fear, he could not be regarded with the affection which was given by readers of the old series. It is possible that the ownership of the Austin 7 forced the pace which took him out of the ranks of the normal Removite and placed him in the forefront in the writings of E. S. Brooks during the latter years of the Nelson Lee.

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