

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

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JANUARY 1978



BOYS CINEMA
WEEKLY

22P

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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENT:

Did psychology play any part in what papers we liked and what papers we didn't like years ago? I must confess that I very much doubt it. Intelligence, decidedly yes! The quality of one's taste, again yes! I would say "yes", in addition, to the effect upon our reading of whether we were industrious or lazy.

But psychology, mmm! It is fashionable to profess to believe that some young man maims and robs an old lady, not because he is a brute and a thief - and thinks he can get away with it - but because his

Aunt Matilda made him eat rice pudding when he was eleven. But your editor is not fashionable.

In a recent editorial I commented that I never found the B. O. P. anything but rather dull. Our reader, Dr. J. Doupe, who now lives in the Canary Islands, has written me: "I have my suspicions that the real answer is given by your own aside: 'My old Headmaster and his staff recommended it to us.' A clear case of the antipathy to constituted authority which is a part of all healthy adolescent development.

It is an interesting theory, but it wasn't true in my case. I very much doubt whether it would be true in the case of many boys of my schoolboy years, or for very many years after. I was not anti-establishment, and I cannot recall any contemporary who was. I don't think I was ever one to cut off my nose to spite my face, by refusing to read at home some paper which delighted me, but which I would not accept because Authority recommended it.

Goethe observed that you can tell a man's character by the things he laughs at. I have an idea that, in the first forty years of this century, you could get a good idea of a boy's type from the papers which he bought and read week by week.

That I, personally, found the B. O. P. rather dull, is no reflection on the worth of that journal. To enjoy the B. O. P. a boy had to be studious, intelligent, and, perhaps, refined. I was none of those things. I was lazy, happy-go-lucky, and took the line of least resistance. I am sure that is why I was eager for the Gem and neglected the B. O. P. It was nothing at all to do with psychology. It was just my indifferent taste.

THIRTY YEARS OF THE CLUBS

Last month I mentioned that our club movement reaches its Pearl Jubilee in February. I spoke also of the 3rd club meeting which was held at my home in Kingstone-on-Thames on 2nd May, 1948.

Mr. Ben Whiter, the superlative secretary of our London club, has sent me the following details:

"As regards your query re the Surbiton meeting on 2nd May, 1948, there is a photo on the front page of C.D. No. 18, for June 1948. The picture was taken by John Robyns. The attendance apparently was

as follows: R. Blythe, L. Packman, J. Robyns, J. Geal, C. Holland-Skinner, F. Keeling, B. Whiter, M. Hall, M. Haswell, B. Haswell, E. Fayne, J. Parrott, Bob and Eileen Whiter, V. Page. You yourself acted as chairman of the meeting.

"There was a debate on Greyfriars and St. Jim's versus St. Frank's; the late J. Baguley's letters in C.D. were discussed. There was a quiz on the old papers, won by Bob Whiter with M. Haswell second. Both received parcels of Gems and Magnets as prizes.

"Len Packman gave a talk on the Popular, and you yourself gave a brief review of the Gem. Madam and her helpers must have served the refreshments. The meeting terminated at 10 p.m."

Mr. Whiter concluded with the comment: "Future meetings at this venue ended by the company wending their way round to the 'Small Cinema' at the Grove Road address, the history of which is now running month by month in C.D."

They did indeed. Later on I will look up the little programmes which the Small Cinema put on to provide a tail for those particular club evenings.

My thanks to Mr. Whiter for his information, and also to Mrs. Packman, who telephoned me with recollections of that far off occasion in May 1948. One of Mrs. Packman's cherished possessions is the photograph taken on that occasion. She has promised to lend it to me, and I hope it may be possible to reproduce it in the Digest during the next month or two.

THANKS TO MY READERS

At the time of writing this editorial, a fortnight before Christmas, my heart is being warmed by a flood of cards and a wonderful galaxy of good wishes for the festive season, from my reader friends. I shall not be able to reply personally to them all, but I take this opportunity of expressing to you my deep gratitude for all your kindly thoughts, so beautifully expressed.

Thank you, too, for your congratulatory messages concerning this year's Annual, which seems to have rung the bell for its 31st consecutive year. We may be able to find space for a few of your comments on the Annual next month.

CORRECTION

Last month, in a review of the new St. Frank's Jubilee Companion, we quoted the price as £3.30 including post. Mr. Blythe asks us to correct this. The price is £3.50 including postage and packing. The book can be obtained direct from Mr. Blythe. We understand that it is selling well, which is good news.

THAT OLD HORNET AGAIN

As has happened before at this time of year, the sting of my editorial is in the tail. All through 1977, the general production costs of C.D. were creeping ever upwards. Now our printers tell me that an increase of 10% is essential on basic charges to help to meet their rising overheads.

As most of my readers understand, it is necessary for C.D. pretty well to cover its cost if it is to continue regular publication. Therefore, with regret, I have to announce that the monthly price of C.D. must rise by two pence commencing with our February issue. It saddens me and dismays me to have to say this sort of thing every twelve months or so. Maybe the New Year will bring a change of things for us all. How happy we would all be if, above everything, inflation was reversed.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

DANNY'S DIARY

JANUARY 1928

I like a good western film - Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson, and Ken Maynard - but I have never cared for western stories. In fact, I don't think I have ever read any. Till now! A splendid new series of western stories, written by somebody named Ralph Redway, has started in the Popular, and now I'm guessing and calculating that I love every line of them. The first tale is called "The Rio Kid" - he is a Texan outlaw, and in this story he saves Sheriff Watson, who has sworn to

capture the Kid, from a vicious band of scoundrels. The second story is called "The Brand Blotters", and the Kid gets on to the gang which has been stealing cattle from his old boss, Mr. Dawney, of the Double Bar ranch. Tip-top stuff, and I'm yearning for more.

Also in the Popular now is a Greyfriars series about a strange new boy named Jim Lee, and a series about a lot of kidnapping going on at St. Jim's.

As the New Year came in, the cold spell gradually ended, and there was bad flooding at Reading, Maidenhead, and other places in the south. An abnormally high tide caused terrible flooding near the Thames in the City of London, and 14 people died in the floods, some of them as they slept in their beds, at Deptford, Putney, and Hammersmith.

A couple of reasonably good tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library - "The Captain's Minor", which told of the arrival at Greyfriars of Wingate's young brother, and "Sir Japhet's Heir", a Rookwood tale about a new boy, Beresford-Baggs.

Not a very exciting month at the pictures. Norma Talmadge in "Camille" had my mum weeping, but was not in my line; Ivor Novello in "Downhill" was good, and Syd Chaplin in "The Missing Link" misfired for me; Dolores Costello in "The Third Degree" was not bad, and Lillian Hall-Davies in "Roses of Picardy" was a bit too sad again. But Buck Jone in "Good as Gold" was good, though not so good as the Rio Kid.

Some people must like the present stories in the Gem, or they wouldn't go on publishing them. As for me, I go on buying it, and hope for the best.

"Kidnapped" was the sequel to the Digby kidnapping, and actually was the final tale last year. The January tales are: "Grundy's Great Adventure", something about Mr. Railton's colonial nephew, Stanley; "At War With the Grammar School" and "The Triple Alliance" are two tales about school rivalry; lastly, "Grundy the Prizefighter" is about Grundy joining a circus.

The War Office has abolished the lance as a weapon of war - so there will be no more army tales about Lancers.

Just before the new term started, Doug took me to London and we saw the new naval musical comedy "Hit the Deck" at the Hippodrome, and I loved it. The stars are Ivy Tresmand, Sydney Howard, Stanley

Holloway, Alice Morley, and Billy Rego. Some lovely songs including "Hallelujah" and "Sometimes I'm Happy". After the show we went in the Lyons Corner House in Piccadilly, and had Steak and Kidney pudding with vegetables followed by a banana split. I don't know what the pud cost Doug, but the banana splits cost 9d. each. Lovely.

A great month (and, I hope, a great year) began in the Magnet with "The Mystery of Wharton Lodge". The Christmas vac is still on, and Billy Bunter goes out of his way to befriend a waif named Ralph, who has done him a good turn. A delightful holiday yarn.

In "Billy Bunter's Convict", still on holiday at Wharton's home, Bunter comes across an escaped convict in a hut. Then, with the holidays over, Mr. Twigg is absent ill, and his place as master of the Second Form, is taken by a Mr. Gilmore. And, stunned, Bunter thinks that he recognises Mr. Gilmore as the convict whom he saw during the vac - Convict 19. The next tale is entitled "Convict Nineteen". There is a reward of £50 for information leading to the recapture of the convict, and Bunter is sure he knows where the convict is, but nobody believes him. However, Mr. Gilmore is certainly very much like the convict in looks, and in "The Form-Master's Foe", the convict kidnaps Mr. Gilmore, who is his half-brother, and takes his place at Greyfriars. But, at last, the Famous Five begin to see light, and they manage to free Mr. Gilmore and trap the convict. A neat little series, with any amount of good laughs in the telling of it.

There is a new play on at the Savoy Theatre in London. It is called "Young Woodley" by a writer named Van Druten, and it was banned for a time as it is about a senior schoolboy who falls in love with his Housemaster's wife. I can't think that any of us would fall in love with our form-master's wife, for she is a bit awful. Her name is Sarah, but some rude boys call her Sal, but not to her face. I am one of the rude boys.

There has been a bad factory fire at Norwich, and three women were burned to death.

The great barring-out series has continued and ended in the Nelson Lee Library. First tale of the year is "Nipper Sees It Through". The rebels are attacked by a gang of hooligans who use very rough methods to try to quell the barring-out, but Nipper and his pals use a

hose to good effect. The series ended next week in fine style with "Victory for the Rebels". The real causes of the trouble, Merrell and Marriott, are brought to book, but not before there is another confrontation with General Carfax. Excellent series.

Next week another new series started with "The Boot-Boy Baronet". Sir James Potts finds himself boot-boy in the Ancient House - he is known as Jimmy Potts. He has an unpleasant surprise when he finds that, at St. Frank's, there is the son of the man who ruined his father.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Schoolboys' Own Library No. 67, "The Captain's Minor" comprised a Red Magnet of the same title of the early Spring of 1913 and included the sequel which appeared a month or so later. No. 68, "Sir Japhet's Heir", comprising a series of six Rookwood stories of the Spring of 1920, was a tale of upstarts and snobbery of the type which was rather common at Rookwood down the years.

Sydney Howard, the British comedian mentioned by Danny this month, had fame come to him late in his career as a result of his part in "Hit the Deck".)

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

The joys of Christmas are only just over but we Blake fans are extra lucky where Christmas is concerned as here we have two more articles to enjoy. These reached me too late for the December issue of the C.D. so I thought you would be pleased to have a second Christmas Blakiana.

I should like to once again thank all those good people who have sent me material for Blakiana throughout the past year and I look forward to your continuing help in this New Year.

A KNOCKOUT OF A CHRISTMAS

by John Bridgewater

At Christmas time we like to look back, like Scrooge, on Christmas past, though for us the reasons are perhaps rather different. The Christmasses we revive in memory need not have any special claim to remembrance, it just happens that a particular one crops up when chatting or looking over some copies of the old papers. The Christmas

which I came upon unexpectedly was that of 1950 when browsing over a few KNOCKOUTS, known as the Happy Family Comic.

Having come across a Christmas I had to see just what Sexton Blake and Tinker were doing in those far off days. They were in the early stages of an adventure in the east. It started on 16th December and Christmas found Blake and Tinker in the air. My first Knockout gives a synopsis of "Sexton Blake and the Hidden Enemy" as follows:-

"Kalgat armies are invading the eastern country of Sanchu. Sexton Blake and Tinker are given the task of finding a traitor who is aiding the invaders and possesses an atom bomb. They are flown secretly to Sanchu in a British jet plane." As soon as they land they are set upon by a Sanchu patrol who think they are spies. Escaping in the patrol's truck they are immediately under shell fire and then strafed by Kalgat fighter planes using cannons. The truck is wrecked but an untenanted tank is nearby. They set off in this but come under Kalgat gunfire which wrecks a bridge and the tank falls into a river. This leads to their capture by Sanchu soldiers and they are now due to be shot as spies. A timely air-raid frees them and eventually they are able to get on with the job they came to do. The finding of the traitor and foiling of his plots takes up to 31st March. The story ends with the shooting down of General Wong, the traitor, who has been flying a fighter plane over the Sanchu capital. But he has already dropped his atom bomb by parachute and it gets caught up on the corner of a temple tower roof. Blake lands his fighter plane in the city square and aided by Tinker hauls the bomb on to a balcony and renders it harmless. The bomb is thrown into a deep water-filled gorge in the mountains just in time for Blake and Tinker to take part in the victory parade, the invaders having been driven out of the country completely defeated. The story ends with Tinker looking forward to a good sleep in the plane going home so that he can tackle next week's tussle with "The Golden Scorpion" with all his usual vim and vigour. I think you will agree that Blake and Tinker had a real "knockout" of a Christmas in 1950.

SEXTON BLAKE'S CHRISTMAS TRUCE

by Derek Smith

The approach of Christmas 1924 found Tinker in an uncharacteristically gloomy mood, "Just another eleven days to Christmas,

guv'nor, and our plans are sure to be spoiled, as they were last year."

Since Christmas 1923 had been spent battling with the Flaming Spectre of Cloome - one of Waldo's most extravagant and outrageous incarnations - Sexton Blake was inclined to agree. When John Graves, the uncle of Mademoiselle Yvonne, arrived with an invitation to his country house at Winfield, a Christmas truce was suggested. Though sharing the festive board with a dozen or so of his old enemies was about as peaceful a project as dining with a collection of Bengal tigers, Blake agreed, with Mademoiselle Yvonne's consent, to extend further invitations to some very dubious characters. The final list, however, included only two doubtful or shady guests - Dr. Huxton Rymer and his faithful companion, Mary Trent.

The "Doc", as he was known in the underworld, was the criminal equivalent of Sexton Blake, in that his advice regarding the commission of crime (as was Blake's advice as to its detection) was eagerly sought and paid for at a price that would have satisfied even the most fashionable Harley Street specialist.

Unknown to Blake, Rymer was in criminous contact with two of the detective's old adversaries. They were Hermann Klein, whose downfall had been recorded in "The Winfield Handicap Case" (Union Jack No. 980), and George Marsden Plummer, once more returned from the dead. Both were thirsting for revenge. Since Rymer took the pragmatic view that a nice profit was infinitely preferable he took no active part in their schemes. Instead he sportingly accepted Blake's offer.

Meanwhile, John Graves and Mademoiselle Yvonne were welcoming their guests to Winfield Grange. The spirit of the season, however, seemed somewhat lacking: somebody put a .45 calibre bullet through the host's hat. Later, Sexton Blake and Tinker were attacked by a murderous monkey in the Grey Panther: only the lad's quickness of brain and hand averted a fatal crash. Rymer was suspected of violating the Christmas pact, but the real villain was George Marsden Plummer, last seen at the wrong end of his own Death Ray. Since he now appeared, in best barn-storming style, only as a face at the window, Tinker was momentarily certain he had seen a ghost.

The supernatural soon proved to be the least of their dangers. Plummer was combining business with his own perverted pleasure by

leading an armed raid on the country house. Blake was the primary target, but the specially recruited gang of twenty desperadoes expected a rich haul from the guests in their criminal coup.

Fortunately there was a plentiful supply of weapons in the gun-room, and with Blake as leader the men at the Grange were ready to defend themselves. A furious gun battle was soon raging on two floors. Blake, to his own surprise, found himself fighting shoulder to shoulder with Huxton Rymer to repel the invaders. In the aftermath, the doctor's medical skill was needed to aid the wounded Tinker.

Rymer had, in fact, behaved quite well. Torn between his friendship with Plummer and his obligation to Blake, he had, with Mary Trent's approval, finally thrown in with the defenders against the bandits. Thus the pact had been a success, though it had not guaranteed a peaceful Christmas Eve. Plummer had, as usual, escaped unseen; Klein and three gangsters were dead; and five of the nine prisoners were severely wounded. Still, the defenders had survived unscathed, and now, as Christmas morning dawned, most traces of the battle had been removed.

Sexton Blake held out his hand to Huxton Rymer. "The two men gripped hard, and then, as Yvonne and Graves came forward to do the same, Rymer ... looked full into Mary Trent's eyes. And in that moment he, too, saw the flash of a woman's soul, and he would have been a clod if he had not realised something of the love that was in that soul for him. And just then, from somewhere in the distance, the sound of joyous bells came echoing sweetly across the still, frosty air, ringing out the joyous message of Christmas."

"SEXTON BLAKE'S XMAS TRUCE" (Union Jack No. 1105, Dec. 1924)

* * * * *

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NELSON LEE COLUMN

ISIRIUM

by R. J. Godsave

The summer holiday series of the Nelson Lee Library for 1924 was the fascinating Sahara desert story written by E. S. Brooks. In this series Brooks gave a truly wonderful insight into the life and happenings of ancient Rome. It is a fact that the vast ruins of the city of Timgad in Algeria built by the Romans on the edge of the Sahara desert, and now an existing monument of Empire by ancient Rome, was fair proof of a more fertile land in those days of Roman colonisation than in this present day.

In authoritative circles it is thought that rivers once ran across the desert, and that the Romans actually grew wheat and other cereals in what is now very much a sandy waste. In view of this historical fact Brooks had something to build his story on.

It all started with Sir Crawford Grey, who with Lord Doriemore, Umlosi and the two juniors, Jack Grey and Reggie Pitt formed an expedition for the purpose of being on the look-out for specimens - for quaint, unusual types of birds and small mammals. Unfortunately, during the journey across the Sahara, Sir Crawford and his party gained the impression that they were being followed and watched by savage tribes as they approached the more remote parts of the Sahara. Eventually this impression proved to be true and they found themselves over-run, captured and taken further into the desert by their captors.

Lack of news at home caused Nelson Lee to form a party to find out what had happened to Sir Crawford's expedition. He was greatly helped by a Canadian millionaire - Mr. Travers Earle - who had built what was to be literally a ship of the desert. A large ship on caterpillar wheels which would be capable of riding on the sand and climbing rocks if that proved necessary. This large ship enabled the St. Frank's juniors and the girls from Moor View School to join the party which was to go to the rescue of the missing ones.

Sir Crawford and his party, although not harmed, were forced to travel farther into the desert with their captors. Eventually they came upon a range of mountains with a secret gorge which was apparently

familiar to the tribesmen. At the end of the gorge was a city of ancient Roman architecture, inhabited by descendents of the Roman legions who had originally colonised and built this secret city.

It would appear that an arrangement with the descendents of the original Romans and the tribesmen had been made, no doubt of the purpose of supplying slaves of any unfortunate persons who traversed the remote regions of the desert.

By following the trail left by the tribesmen, the ship of the desert - named the Conquerer - forced an entry through the gorge and were in due course united with Sir Crawford and his friends. They were all the somewhat unwelcome guests of the Emperor Titus of Isirium. Since the inhabitants spoke Latin there were no bars to any communication regarding language.

Brooks now had the foundation for an exciting story of a secret city of ancient Rome which had remained unspoilt by the passing centuries. Chariot racing and the skills of the gladiators were shown in the large amphitheatre. Displays of gymnastics also took place which were enjoyed by the inhabitants of Isirium. The darker side of these Roman activities took place - thrown to the lions appeared to be one of the scenes enjoyed by the Emperor Titus and his followers.

It is unnecessary to add that Nelson Lee and his whole party crossed swords with the Emperor. Apart from the historical interest the whole series was absorbing in the extreme, and marks Brooks as an individualist from the writing point of view.

Incidentally, Ena Handforth, the younger sister of Edward Oswald was introduced to the Nelson Lee readers in this series.

MORE ON BROOKS'S CHARACTERS

from Esmond Kadish

Mr. Gayle's comments on the influence of Charles Hamilton in the creation and development of E. S. Brooks' St. Frank's characters inevitably raises the familiar point about Hamilton's supremacy in this particular art. No doubt he influenced many of the other Amalgamated Press writers besides Mr. Brooks; what, I think, distinguishes Hamilton, and puts him head and shoulders above the others, is his ability to create colourful characters, and one of the great joys in reading his stories is to watch them grow and develop throughout the years. All this, of

course, has been put much more adequately by other people in the pages of the "Digest".

Brooks himself had a marvellous facility for developing a tautly-written, fast-moving plot, almost like a film-script, with more than an element of "sci-fi", at times, but he was, I feel, less interested, and, perhaps, less successful in creating and developing characters.

"Handy", for instance, was a rather tiresome and obtrusive character (my apologies to the gentlemen who recently wrote praising him). There was always a touch of the bully about Handforth, and I'm not too sure whether his "straight-left-to-the-jaw" approach was morally sound, even when defending the right, or helping the oppressed. Many of Brooks' other characters, as Mr. Gayle has indicated, are borrowed from Hamilton or Wodehouse, but even some of his "original" creations remain curiously undeveloped. Solomon Levi is, naturally, of interest to me, although his characterisation containing some of the usual misconceptions about Jews (I haven't seen this myself, but I've been told that Solly once made a reference to "gefiltered fish" in the "Nelson Lee", and it would be interesting to know if Mr. Brooks had any acquaintance with Jewish people - if the reference is true!) I cannot agree, either with Mr. Gayle that Tom Burton - the "Bosun" - could have been successfully developed. His main use was to utter appropriate "nautical" language, such as "Swab my maindecks!" whilst rescuing the juniors, from an island about to be submerged under the waves, by swimming to the mainland for help, or by patriotically trouncing an upstart American youth in a cross-Channel race. He was, like Johnny Onions - the circus boy - useful in certain settings. Even the Moor View girls were similarly "undeveloped" - if I may use the word in this connection! - although they were the most true-to-life of all the schoolgirls in boys' fiction - sporty, "modern" and contemporary, without being unfeminine.

In my opinion, the two most interesting of Mr. Brooks' characters were William Napoleon Brownie (whom Mr. Gayle has referred to) and Vivian Travers. Brownie with his unflappable manner and archaic mode of speech, might have been developed into an interesting kind of junior detective (perhaps he was, indeed, so featured). Travers was a sort of Bounder - Cardew - Mornington character, less obviously caddish than these three, without their sudden flashes of temper, and, of course,

with his own code of conduct. Perhaps the publication in the 'thirties of "The Schemer of St. Franks" in the Boys' Friend Library - an original story by Mr. Brooks - indicates that the author himself had some interest in the development of this character.

As for Mr. Brooks' adult characters, one of my favourites must surely be the striking Umlosi, Lord Dorriemore's African "aide-de-camp" - warlike but dignified, and with a manner of speech that was definitely individual!

* * * * *

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?

No. 2 - William Wibley

by Roger M. Jenkins

Wibley was one of the last permanent characters to arrive at Greyfriars, in April 1914, to be exact. He overheard a rehearsal of the Junior Dramatic Society and rushed to save Nugent from Wharton's threats. As Wibley claimed to be a good actor it is rather odd that he should have been taken in by such expressions as "Hand me the dagger and his blood shall flow!" Nevertheless, he proved his acting ability in the same number of the Magnet, and in doing so he provided an example of the exaggerated claims made on behalf of schoolboy actors, since he successfully masqueraded as Mr. Capper (albeit by artificial light) and also as Wharton's down-and-out cousin George, when he was utterly unrecognised by everyone, even in daylight.

Anyone who has had anything to do with amateur theatricals knows that grease paint is applied in such a manner as to give a grotesque effect by daylight but a natural effect by stage lighting. To assume a totally different appearance (as Alec Guinness did when playing Fagin) may be possible in artificial light - and even then he was aided by a false nose and whiskers - but acting as cousin George in Magnet 322 was quite unbelievable.

Of course, Wibley's most famous impersonation was of Monsieur Charpentier, to some extent acceptable since the French master was short in stature, and the beard and glasses helped to project a different personality. When, however, Wibley was expelled for such an impersonation in No. 1536 and returned to Greyfriars as a new boy, Archibald Popper, it was utterly incredible that he should not have been

recognised, since he had darkened his eyelashes and eyebrows, padded his clothes, put elevators in his shoes, worn a wig, and assumed a pasty complexion. Even if all this passed muster by daylight, one can hardly credit that it would not have been noticed in the Remove dormitory, especially as the new boy would never have dared to wash his face.

In the last year of the Magnet Wibley had a big part to play. He dressed up as Mr. Quelch to startle Mr. Lamb, but sensibly kept seated in order to conceal his lack of height, and the imposture was attempted after dark. In the very last complete series Sir William Bird asked Wibley to masquerade as Sir William so that his departure on a war-time mission would not be guessed by those watching his movements. No doubt the beard and the monocle helped, but artificial lines and wrinkles would surely have been detected by daylight.

Of course Charles Hamilton was in a quandary over his schoolboy actors. He could not write a story about a successful performance by the Remove Dramatic Society because it would have lacked a proper climax: after all, conflict, opposition, and surprise are essential ingredients of any story. On the other hand, impersonations of real people are rarely convincing, and to assume the personality of some unknown youth like Archibald Popper and sustain it for weeks is equally incredible. At Rookwood Putty Grace dressed up as a woman and pretended to be the abandoned wife of Mr. Manders: although the situation was farcical it was an imposture which necessitated such a radical change from Putty's ordinary appearance that it seemed acceptable. Greyfriars was perhaps a little more staid than Rookwood, and as a result the impersonations in the Magnet were often unbelievable.

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Has anyone got an enamel Advertising Sign they don't want. Will collect if not too far away. Best wishes to all C. D. - ites.

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S. O. L's and several Gem Xmas numbers for out-of-print novels by Yonge and Trollope, "Claverings", "Three Clerks", "Thompson Hall", etc.

CHARLES VAN RENEN

BOX 5121, WALMER, PORT ELIZABETH 6065, SOUTH AFRICA.

JACK'S THE BOY by D. Swift

I recall as a schoolboy, the two books "Jack's The Lad" and "Jack of The Circus" being issued by Spring Books. I remember thinking at the time, that these two books were rather out of the "ordinary" for Frank Richards, whom I associated solely with the works of Greyfriars and St. Jim's. I had come across the Bunter and Tom Merry books, but I had never even heard of "The Magnet" or "The Gem", never mind seen copies of either publication.

It is only recently that I managed to obtain a copy of the first in the trilogy of "Jack" stories - "Jack of All Trades" - and reading the three books as one continuous story, I feel that Charles Hamilton really started to develop a fine character.

Although a complete story, "Jack of The Circus" does end leaving one thinking what becomes of Jack in the future, for to my knowledge, no further stories were published.

I see in the publication "The Letters of Frank Richards" - which I have recently obtained - Charles Hamilton writes to one correspondent to the effect that he liked Jack Nobody so much, that he had written four books about him - so, one asks the question, what happened to the next story? As it was, a number of years elapsed between the publishing of the first book by Mandeville Publications and Spring Books' works. It would seem that at least one manuscript was in the hands of some publisher, waiting publication. No doubt this manuscript - there were no doubt others - is lost forever. I wonder if anyone can throw any light on this?

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Charles Hamilton told me that his main recreation during the war years was writing stories of Jack Free. He added that he had written well over two hundred stories of Jack, and that the manuscripts were packed away in a drawer. "I wonder whether they will ever see the light of day" - or something in that line - was his comment to me.

It is obvious from this that he had decided in his own mind that Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood were gone for good. After the war, he made the discovery that his loyal old readers had long memories, and what they wanted was his old schools. I have never had any doubt that he would much have preferred to see great success for his new creations - Carcroft and Jack Free - but they never rang the bell. A few Jack Free stories were published, some as solo items in hardbacks and some in Annuals. It would seem that they were picked out from his stock of manuscripts indiscriminately, and, in my opinion, this accounts for the lack of continuity which is puzzling and irritating to those who try to read the Jack tales as a series.

Clearly, the vast majority of the manuscripts were never published, and it is intriguing to wonder what became of them.)

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BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 46. SECRETS OF LIFE

All of our main features this term came from Warner Bros., though there were plenty of short subjects from other renters.

Our opening programme was a double-feature one, comprising Boris Karloff in "Enemy Agent", supported by Peggy Cummings in "Dr. O'Dowd".

The following week brought George Brent in "The Man Who Talked Too Much", supported by Irene Rich in "Everybody's Hobby". After that we had a single big film, Thomas Mitchell in "Three Cheers For The Irish" with a programme of shorts.

Then a very big bill, with two big pictures, George Brent and Ann Sheridan in "Honeymoon for Three" plus Ronald Reagan in "Code of the Secret Service". Also in this programme was the first of a magnificent nature series "Secrets of Life", made by Gaumont British and distributed by G.F.D. This was a long series with a new one released at fairly frequent intervals. It covered flowers, animals, insect life, and anything one could think of in that line. Superbly photographed, with excellent commentary, each film in the series was of about 2,000 feet, running for about 20 minutes. I forget whether we booked the entire series, fixing in our own playing dates to suit our convenience, or whether each one was booked separately. Probably the former. These films could not avoid being immensely popular with

all ages. Our opening film in this series was entitled "Swan Song", and others we ran during this term were "The House Painter", "Home Life in the Marshes", "Far and Wide", and "Kings in Exile". But I find these Secrets of Life shorts figuring in our programmes over a year.

Also in this bill was a coloured cartoon "Sniffles Bells the Cat" which was the try-out forerunner of the Tom & Jerry cartoons which we were soon to be playing immediately they were released, and which were far and away the most popular cartoons we ever played.

Next another double-feature programme: The Lane Sisters in "Four Mothers", with Bonita Granville in "Nancy Drew, Detective".

Then came a very famous film in its time: Humphrey Bogart and Sylvia Sydney in "The Wagons Roll at Night", supported by Jane Baxter in "The Briggs Family". This was followed by George Raft and Ann Sheridan in "The Road to Frisco", with a big programme of shorts. The following week brought a musical: Zorina and Eddie Albert in "On Your Toes", which sounds like ballet, and probably was.

After that, another double show: Bruce Cabot and Constance Bennett in a popular western "Wild Bill Hickok Rides", plus Ronald Reagan in "Smashing the Money Ring". Also in this bill was a

coloured cartoon "Hollywood Steps Out". Almost all cartoons were in colour now, but the Porky cartoons, of which we played a great many, were still in black and white.

The following week brought John Garfield and Raymond Massey in "Dangerously They Live", plus Van Johnson in "Human Sabotage".

Next came a single big picture, Henry Fonda in "The Male Animal" which I have long forgotten, with a full bill of shorts.

Then one of the most charming and heart-warming of James Cagney films,

* * * * *

The Postman Called

"Yankee Doodle Dandy" in which he portrayed George Cohan. The film included such toe-tapping songs as "Her Name Was Mary" and "Over There". Cagney made a number of splendid musicals, but this was, I think, the best of them all.

Finally a big film in its day, and an exciting one, Humphrey Bogart in "All Through the Night", with the supporting shorts, which always included, of course, the Universal News.

(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS SERIES NEXT MONTH.)

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

W. LISTER (Blackpool): May I say that I appreciate the drawings of "what might have been" in the realm of the Monster Library. Kind of whets the appetite.

A. MATHESON (Wick): I now have a closer connection with the comic world as, in August, my oldest son started work as an editorial assistant with D. C. Thompson in Dundee, and is at present working on Dandy. As I was brought up on Thompson productions, and Dandy was the first comic in which I read a thriller story, I am very pleased about it. I haven't stopped reading comics since.

TONY GLYNN (Manchester): I know you now turn a blind eye to how the popular press treats old boys books, etc., and after 25 years as a journalist, I am still outraged at the ignorance most of my colleagues show in regard to what is, after all, a picturesque branch of their own profession. Anything goes and no depth of ignorance is too deep to plumb when it comes to dealing with the field where, if subjects such as literature, art or science are under review, some care is taken because the real experts will easily catch you out.

One paper showed the same old form the other day in a review of

"The Best of Eagle". According to the reviewer, when the youngsters read the first "Eagle" in 1950, "comics" such as the "Magnet" and "Gem" seemed not to matter much any more.

No need for me to tell you where the youngsters of 1950 stood in relation to the "Magnet" and "Gem" and, isn't it strange how, when it comes to snatching the names of well loved "comics" of yesteryear out of thin air, it's always "Magnet" and "Gem"?

JAMES HODGE (Bristol): Although pro-Hamilton and very pro-CD, I agree with Mr. Dalton that contributions do seem loaded (even overloaded) in favour of 'Blake', Brooks and Hamilton. I have read more Hamiltonia in the past three years than in my entire boyhood. Perhaps one has to grow up to appreciate the general excellence of his writing; perhaps it is to my shame that my youthful favourites were Boys' Magazine, Bullseye and the Thompson Big Five. Certainly I recollect that among my young fellow-ignoramuses, 'Magnet' and 'Gem' were NOT good 'swap' material. In those days, long before I knew he was Richards, Clifford et al, the Hamilton yarns I really enjoyed were those of "King of the Islands" in 'Modern Boy', a paper I did not otherwise care for. Curious how, among all the millions of words written in CD about Hamilton, little mention is made of Ken King.

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): I was most interested in the Xmas card reproduction on the back of the C.D. Denis Gifford tells me that he bought some similar a few years ago in a junk shop. The characters were not I think of The Bruin Boys but of another set that appeared in the Puck/Sunbeam group of comics. To my knowledge they were never advertised in the comics, but were commercialisation and probably sold in Woolworths. Other comic items keep turning up, and my sister remembers having once a Tiger Tim's paint-box.

L. LASKEY (Brighton): As a matter of interest, Mr. C. H. Chapman lived in the house opposite my home in Croham Valley Road, South Croydon, for a time before the War. The reference books tell us that he lived in the Reading area for most of his life, but he was certainly at Croydon around 1938. I was only a small boy and I did not know him personally. However, I was very friendly with a schoolgirl who lived

next door to the Chapmans and she told me that she had been in the house and seen drawings of Billy Bunter everywhere. I have a mental picture of the artist standing at his front door, greeting a caller, and wearing a white artist's coat. He must have been happy in his work, for he lived to a ripe age.

F. STURDY (Middlesborough): I came across one of those here-today gone-tomorrow hardbacks in this case, Mammoth Story Book (Beaver Books) and found within, together with a Ken King yarn and a Felgate ditto a St. Jim's story, "The Ghost of St. Jim's". Drawing up a chair I expected to be transported back to 1911. Not so. The ghost or the "Black Monk" turned out to be Cardew. Is this tale in view of its seventeen chapters a re-titled "Gem" effort or perhaps a "Holiday Annual" original story?

The story is a genuine Hamilton contribution and I am sure this tale is not a "Specially Written" for the aforesaid "Beaver Books".

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: I do not think I have come across Beaver Books. But "The Ghost of St. Jim's" is probably the tale of the same title which appeared in one of Mandeville's "Tom Merry's Own Annuals" in the fifties. Probably the other items are from the same source. Rather run-of-the-mill stuff, I seem to recall.)

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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.

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COLLECTORS' BOOK-FINDING SERVICE. Send your wants list with s.a.e. Report sent when located. Always wanted any 1st Edit. by Brent-Dyer, Oxenham, Nesbit, Fairlie-Bruce. Juvenile, General Fiction + Travel books for sale. S.a.e. for list.

MRS. TWIGGER, 37 HENRY ST., KENILWORTH, WARWICKSHIRE.

* * * * *

Magnets WANTED: 10, 134, 136, 158, 162, 167, 171, 181, 200, 215, 217; also H. Baker Vol. 18, your price paid. 1,000 different Magnets for exchange ONLY.

MURTAGH, 509 WINDSOR AVE., HASTINGS, NEW ZEALAND.

News of the Clubs

MIDLAND

Meeting held 29th November, 1977.

This was the best attended meeting of the year, eleven members being present. A new member, Vincent Loveday of Worcester, was introduced and soon made himself at home. He is obviously a lover of the old papers.

There were two Anniversary numbers on display - Magnet No. 616, 29th November, 1919, and A Nelson Lee Library for the same date.

A novel form of discussion was introduced by Tom Porter. He took onto himself the character of an official from the Ministry of Transport, about to close the Courtfield to Friardale line because of financial losses. Tom invited members to give him reasons why it should not be done.

There was, of course, only one reason for Hamilton devotees. It would wreck the background which along with the characters are part of the charm of Charles Hamilton's work. There was a lively and amusing discussion along these lines.

Owing to the generosity of Ron Gardner, Jack Bellfield had at last obtained his missing Hamilton hardback, "The Rivals of Rookwood". He gave a reading from the famous chapter 30 where Lovell tells Manders what he thinks of him on the telephone.

A session of Greyfriars Bingo was played towards the end of the evening. Its creation is that of Tom Porter. Christine Brettell and Geoff Lardner were the winners.

There will be no meeting in December. The preparations for Christmas clash with it and attendance would sure to be affected.

We wish all those who love any or all of the old papers a Happy New Year.

J. F. BELLFIELD, Correspondent.

CAMBRIDGE

We met in festive mood at the hospitable home of Chairman, Vic

Hearn on Sunday, 4th December, Bill Lofts being in the chair.

Host Vic Hearn opened the programme with one of his entertaining record quizzes, this time of famous comedians, and many brows were wrinkled as members strove to recall the names of voices from the early years of radio, before the coming of the ubiquitous "box". Bill Lofts won, followed by Edward Witten. Various members then added to the festive season spirit by reading Christmas stories of their own selection. Edward Witten began with an extract from "Pickwick" on Christmas at Dingley Dell. Jack Overhill read one of his unique Christmas articles, later broadcast, about his early boyhood when his older brother had proved to him that Father Christmas did come if you hung up the pillowcase. Vic Hearn read a story from the "Jester" Annual of 1937, building up to an entertaining denouement. Bill Thurbon recalled the story of the Wise Men from St. Matthew's Gospel, and read short passages from the first, Christmas, play from Dorothy Sayers' "Man Born to be King" plays.

In the various discussions Bill Lofts said that undoubtedly the greatest writer on Christmas was Charles Dickens. Opinions were exchanged on the readability of George Alfred Henty; Bill Lofts said he was being consulted by a national newspaper on various readers' enquiries, and also being asked to trace family trees. Danny and Bill discussed recent writings on "Spring-heeled Jack".

The meeting broke up with hearty thanks to Vic and Mrs. Hearn for their hospitality, and with the exchange of heartfelt Christmas and New Year greetings.

LONDON

The ultimate meeting of the St. Frank's Diamond Jubilee year took place at Gladstone Park where Sarah, Daniel and David Baddiell did the honours as hosts. A good attendance had a very enjoyable time. Roger Jenkins obliged with a couple of chapters from Gem number 250, 'Nobody's Study', Bob Blythe read chapters from N. L. L. 35, 'Handforth's Ghost Hunt', Roger Jenkins and Bob Blythe re-enacted their famous debate of 25 years ago, St. Frank's, Success or Failure, with Mary Cadogan filling in the effects, Winifred Morss read the Trackett Grim story, "Fearsome Fred, the False Teeth Fiend!" which is published in the

St. Frank's Jubilee Companion, Thelma Bradford was first with the anagram, "Seasonable Greetings to All" from the Voices of Tape Quiz and Bill Norris won Millicent Lyle's quiz.

Mary Cadogan spoke of the tape recording done for Joe Wark in which she was assisted by Alex, the story being from Magnet 461, "The House on the Heath" and also Mary displayed the excellent Yuletide greetings card from Alf Hanson which depicted a girl or two from Cliff House and Morcove Schools.

More Companions and plaques were distributed and there was a feed that was greatly enjoyed. The Baddiell family were suitably thanked at the conclusion of the meeting.

The first meeting of 1978 will be on 8th January, at 5 Queen Anne's Grove, Ealing, London, W.5. Kindly inform Bill and Thelma if you intend to be present.

BENJAMIN WHITER

NORTHERN

Saturday, 10 December, 1977

A cold, wintry evening, but gaiety at Greyfriars when members met for their Christmas Party.

The most delectable confectionaries were available and in quantity enough to supply even the most Bunterian appetites!

And a word-game to begin with in which the clues were presented around the walls. Jessie Barlow, Geoffrey Wilde and Bill Williamson tied with 23 each and - being gentlemen at Greyfriars - Jessie Barlow was declared the winner.

There followed a Bunter Drive - always popular and ever a delightful feature at our parties. First came Bill Williamson with 154 and second Geoffrey Wilde with 142.

Then, for those having thrown the die to produce the required six, a parcel to open with knife and fork - and the bar of chocolate contained therein to consume with the same!

And a picking-up-peas-with-a-straw competition, after which Ron Hodgson was declared sucker of the year!

Then, especially for our guests, we played the final game in our

'Call My Bluff' series in which the finalists, Cliff House and Rookwood, took part. The result was a tie, each team having gained three points.

And, before late refreshments and farewells, a missing names game in which various newspaper and magazine advertisements were passed around, each with the name of the product cut out. The problem, of course, was to guess the missing name. Top came Marion Wilde with 21, followed by Vera Good with 20. One could see, remarked Chairman Geoffrey, what it was that the ladies read!

Then, once more, home for the Christmas holidays!

From the Northern Club - hearty Christmas greetings to all our friends!

* * * * *

WANTED: "Billy Bunter In Brazil", published by Charles Skilton: must be in good condition complete with dust jacket. Other first editions of Bunter books also wanted. I also require: "Tom Merry's Annual/Own" No. 1 and No. 3, "Billy Bunter's Own" No. 2 and "The Lone Texan": Sparshott Series No. 6 and Headland House Series No. 4 along with MASCOT "Schoolboy" and "Schoolgirl" Series. Also wanted, stories of "Lynwood" and "High Lyn" published by J. B. Publications, of Stretford.

I am willing to buy the above items, or have for exchange Howard Baker out of print volumes 21, 23 and 24 plus G.H. A. for 1974.

I also have for exchange or sale, various other Hamiltonia including Bunter books and small number of "MAGNETS" and "GEMS".

Please contact:

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

Telephone: LEEDS (0532) 671394

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NOTICE

Will the person who had the forethought to buy up all the spare copies of Howard Baker Vol. 23's (The Joker of Greyfriars) and so cause untold anxiety throughout the collecting world; relent, and supply a copy (at a reasonable price) to one who, through his own laziness, missed the opportunity to complete his collection. Should he so do, I swear I will not divulge his name to ANY OTHER COLLECTOR - contact -

JOHN GEAL, 11 COTSWOLD ROAD, HAMPTON, MIDDX.

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HOWARD BAKER volumes wanted (Greyfriars & St. Jim's).

LEESE, BUNNY HILL, COSTOCK

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WANTED GREATLY: Magnets 755, 762, 768, 769, 831, 833, 850, 865, 871, 888, 902, 941, 948, 949, 951, 985, 995. Many before 498. Good prices or generous exchanges.

J. DE FREITAS, 648 STUD RD., SCORESBY

VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3179.

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ESPECIALLY WANTED: complete and in good condition: Union Jacks 493, 512, 529, 548, 555, 594, 599, 633; SBL's 1st & 2nd series; Magnets 707, 795, 999, 1111, 1112; Gems 604, 774, 792, 801, 954, 970, 990, 1206. Will pay over the odds for these; please state price.

NORMAN SHAW, 84 BELVEDERE RD., LONDON, SE19 2HZ.

(01-771-9857)

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REVIEW by Mary Cadogan

THE MORECAMBE & WISE COMIC (Script by Denis Gifford;
BOOK illustrated by Terry

Wakefield: Corgi Carousel
Books Ltd: 50p)

This new paper back is a joy. It is crammed with cartoons by Terry Wakefield, who was of course a favourite with so many of us in the 1930's for his irrepressible Laurel and Hardy strips in Film Fun. Appropriately the stars of this book are Morecambe and Wise, who are natural successors to Laurel and Hardy in their exuberance and geniality. They skip through the pages with the same anarchic innocence of the Film Fun characters, and Terry Wakefield's work has lost none of its verve over the years. Denis Gifford's script lives up to the pictures in charm and wit, and the whole production is a collector's item.

The only negative note is one's own sad reflection that for many years Terry Wakefield's extraordinary talents have been neglected by the publishers of today's children's comics. What a shot in the arm the Wakefield style and panache could bring to these! Terry is of course linked with the hobby in another area besides Film Fun. In that comic he continued the Laurel and Hardy strip in the tradition created by his father - who also was responsible for the illustration of some of the Rookwood stories, and of serials in the early School Friend.

* * * * *

TIME TRAVELLERS

by S. Gordon Swan

Some remarkable feats were achieved by the heroes of our early periodicals, but surely the most astonishing was that accomplished by two characters whose adventures were recorded in PLUCK for several years. The two in question were Dick Britton and Zena Race, who made

their debut in a story which ran serially in this paper -- "Queen of the Prairie".

Dick Britton came from England to find his uncle, only to discover that the latter had joined an emigrant train which was destroyed by Red Indians. At the scene of this disaster Dick met a young girl named Zena Race who was being pursued by Redskins. Both of them escaped and became firm friends.

Previously, Dick had incurred the wrath of an outlaw, Arizona Pete, who mortally wounded Zena's father because he would not reveal the secret of a vanished mine. Dick promised the dying man, Texas Tom, that he would look after Zena, and with his last words the girl's father told Dick where to find the papers containing the secret of the mine. From then on ensued a series of adventures and perilous situations which resulted in the finding of the mine but the ultimate loss of the gold in a cataclysm.

Incidentally, at this period the feminine interest in PLUCK was notably strong, doubtless to encourage girl readers. (Compare these stories with the tales which appeared in the early numbers of this paper.) Girls played a big part in the William Spearing yarns which were running at the time. The relationship between Zena Race and Dick Britton was an innocuous one, but no doubt modern writers would exploit its sexual connotations to the full. However, in those days we were happily unaware of those implications.

After "Queen of the Prairie" finished a long series of short stories followed, running for some years with an occasional interval. One would imagine the period to be laid in the Wild West of the last century, though no particular time was mentioned until some later episodes, in which Zena and Dick were helping runaway slaves in the South escape from the more brutal plantation-owners. This would fix the period as pre-Civil War, or mid-nineteenth century.

In 1914 an amazing thing happened. In PLUCK No. 519, dated 10th October, 1914, appeared a story entitled "Through the Enemy's Lines" by Reginald Wray. Here we find Dick Britton and Zena Race involved in The Great War, pitting their wits against the Germans instead of the Red men.

Most of us have heard of time travel, thanks to movies, T. V.

and H. G. Wells. How did these two popular characters achieve this astonishing transmigration from one century to another? The author offered no explanation, neither did the editor. Are we to conclude that Dick and Zena were pioneers in time-travelling without being aware of it?

P.S. Apparently somewhere along the line Dick and Zena were married. In PLUCK No. 506, appeared a new series, with a foreword by the author: "Tired of civilisation, Dick Britton and his lovely young wife, Zena ... have returned to the wild, free life of the boundless West."

However, it was not to be long before they were back in "civilisation", battling with the Hun. S.G.S.

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DEAD MEN'S GOLD by George Beal

Something like fifty years ago, an aunt of mine used to give me annually a copy of Warne's Pleasure Book for Boys, which was one of those bumper-type books which were so popular in those days. They were nice, fat volumes, printed on very thick, white, fluffy paper, which had an enticing, new-bookish smell. I daresay copies are not rare today, for they were less ephemeral than boys' papers, and in well-regulated households, copies tended to remain on bookshelves, rather than being consigned to dustbins, like other, more transient publications.

After so many years, one's memory for such trivia becomes a little dimmed, but I do recall that two volumes of this entertaining annual contained certain quite similar short stories, which I believe actually started at the beginning of the book. The first, I think, was called 'Bell Island', which dealt with a mysterious island lying somewhere off the mainland, and just within sight. At certain times, and in particular weather conditions, a distant bell would be heard from the island, and this produced superstitious awe in the heart of one old sea-dog, who was wont to sit on the seashore, yarning to two boys, the central characters of the story.

After some discussion, the boys persuade the sea-dog to accompany them to the island, in an effort to discover the secret of the bell, which, according to the old salt - called Jemmy or Jeremy, I think - was tolled by the ghosts of shipwrecked mariners. The story naturally goes into much more detail, but suffice to say that the adventure ends with the discovery of a Spanish galleon trapped inside a cave, and whose

bell tolls with the rise and fall of the water entering at the cave mouth. There are skeletons aplenty, and chests of gold to be had for the taking. No question about the law of Treasure Trove in those days! In one cabin sits the figure of a Spanish worthy still clad in his sea-going finery, a skeleton, of course, writing with a bony hand in the ship's log.

How successful was this story may be judged by the fact that in the following year, the author was responsible for another, with almost precisely the same plot, called 'Galleon Island'. I enjoyed them both immensely, and looked forward to reading another of the same kind in the following year, but it was not to be.

Now, the point of all this preamble is that just recently, I came across a book called 'Dead Men's Gold', by a writer named Roy Bridges. This is a full-length novel, and the plot is remarkably close to the two short stories I mention above. A similar island - called 'No Man's Island' - lying off the coast of another island, has a ghostly bell. There is even a Jeremy, who is superstitious about the origin of the sound. However, the two boys of the story make the journey to the island alone. There, lo and behold, is a trapped Spanish galleon, locked for centuries inside a cave. There, too, are skeletons, and even a Spanish gentleman wearing the remnants of his old finery, sitting at a table, with a decayed volume in his skeletal hands.

The novel, which has no date, was published by Hodder and Stoughton in their 'Man and Boy Books' series, the story being set in the islands north of Tasmania, or Van Diemen's Land, as it is referred to in the book. There are no illustrations, except for the title page and frontispiece, which are in full colour, probably a reprint of the jacket, now missing. The book is cheaply bound, and I would judge that it had been published in the late twenties or early thirties.

Neither Brian Doyle nor Bill Lofts mention Roy Bridges in their biographical works, although in the former case, T. C. Bridges is listed as having written a book called 'Dead Man's Gold' - almost the same title, but one which has probably been used many times by different authors.

In view of all this, I feel impelled to pose the question: "Was there some sort of plagiarism?" And if so, who plagiarised whom? The writing in the book is totally dissimilar to that of T. C. Bridges.

It has a much more literary style, if somewhat florid and flamboyant at times. Here is a sample passage:

"The cabin was lit with a faint green light from the blurred windows, and the sun coming in through the broken door. It had a central table in it; above it a swinging lamp wrought curiously in yellow porcelain and bronze. At the table a figure sat in a great carven chair - a figure that might seem the very presiding spirit of the dead galleon - and for the moment it bore a curious semblance to life. Its shrivelled face was turned towards us; its beard was yet upon its chin, its moustachios curled and pointed; its hair curling about its shoulders. We marked the outlines of the proud Spanish face, ere, at the full coming in of the air, it seemed to change suddenly and die to dust. The hair and beard floated away like ash before the draught; the face grinned horribly at us - shrivelled, mummified, decaying speedily in the air. The body had worn a splendid cloak of blue and gold - colours that seemed to fade before our very eyes, and cloth that shrivelled on its form, and fell to powder about it. It had a draggled ruff about its neck, a rust-spotted coat of mail and leather upon its breast; its legs were hidden from us by the table. Before it a decaying book was open; a book it seemed of some devotions, for the dead man's claws lay between the parting of the leaves. There were metal rings lying loosely on the outspread fingers - rings that seemed of old gold, and had dull red and green jewels in them, and pearls like the eyes of dead fish."

I cannot remember who was credited with the two Warne's stories. George E. Rochester springs to mind, but I am probably totally wrong in this. On the other hand, it should not be difficult to find out, since almost certainly, someone will have the books in their possession. Of course, the plot has most likely been used before, too, but I was struck by the many points of very close resemblance, and I am still wondering who wrote which, and in what order.

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PAINTING TO BE EXHIBITED

Mr. N. M. Kadish writes us as follows: "I do not know if any Hamilton enthusiasts would be interested, but I am submitting a painting depicting "Billy Bunter and the Famous Five of Greyfriars School" this December. With any luck it should be hung. The exhibition is at the Mall Galleries in the Mall, close to Admiralty Arch. It lasts from 3rd January till 12th January, and the times are between 2 and 7 p. m."

DEATH OF ANNIE ALLISON

It is with sadness that we record the death of Annie Allison whilst on holiday at East Grinstead, on Tuesday, 22nd November.

Ever the staunch supporter of her husband, Jack, in his pursuit of the Hobby, Annie was a regular attender at meetings although she was not a member of the Club.

Annie was a pleasant, quiet, unobtrusive person, but always well to the fore when there was work to be done. And in her own neighbourhood she was ever ready to help anyone in need.

At Club parties and at refreshments time at meetings Annie found her place at the kitchen sink. Perhaps it is not a bad epitaph to record that she was one who served.

Annie and Jack were both 'outdoor' people and it was on one of their holiday walks that Annie collapsed. She never recovered consciousness and died in hospital a few days later.

Annie was a devout person, possessed of a quiet faith, in which faith she lived and in which she died.

She lived a full life - in her home, in the Church and the community. Her friends at the Club and in the Hobby will greatly miss her in the days to come.

To Jack we send our condolences and our deepest sympathy.
May she rest in peace.

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Magnets 1927 to 1932 WANTED. Magnets for exchange. Pre-war Children's Annuals, etc., for sale. S. a. e. for lists.

JOHN BECK

29 MILL ROAD, LEWES, SUSSEX, BN7 2RU.

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THE EDITOR

wishes his readers everywhere

A PROSPEROUS AND VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR