

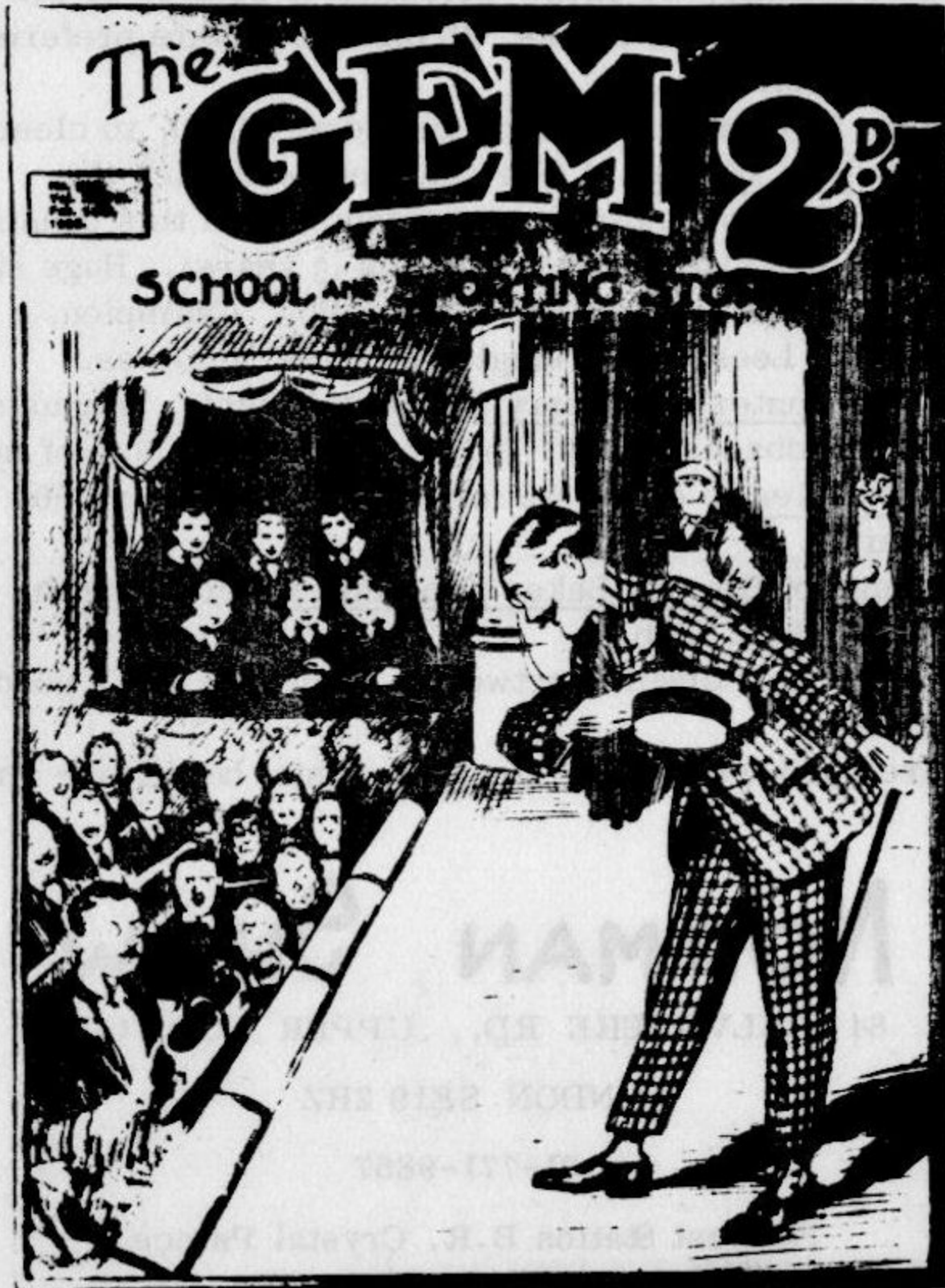
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STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 32 NUMBER 376

APRIL 1978

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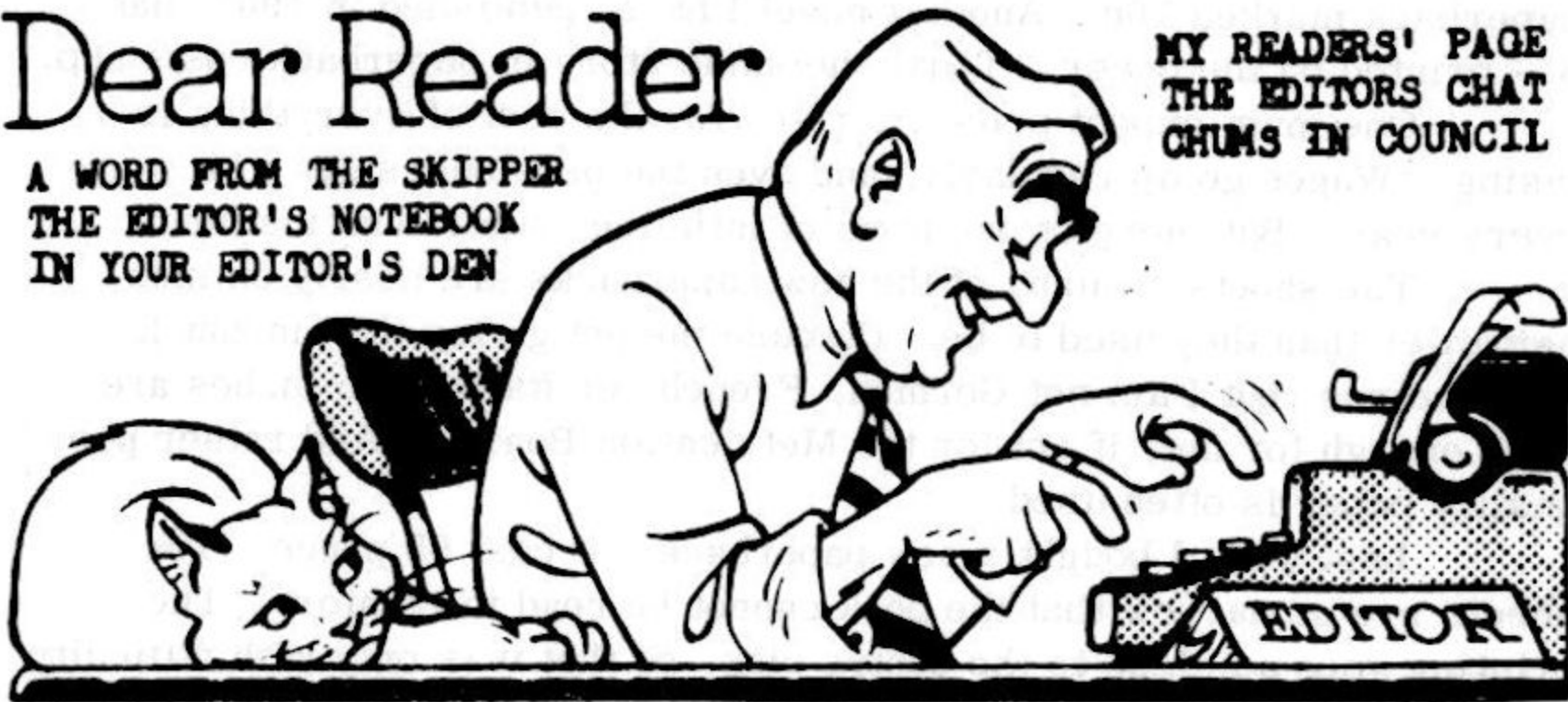
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Dear Reader

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

MY READERS' PAGE
THE EDITORS CHAT
CHUMS IN COUNCIL



INFLATION BY STEALTH

In spite of the Government's claim to have inflation under control, it seems to me that prices keep going up and up. A few year's back I wrote to a national newspaper deploring the price of 3p for a hot cross bun. As a result, to my surprise, buns were sent to me by various bakers from all over the country, asking me to sample them and to agree that all of those particular buns were indeed worth 3p. I replied to all the senders, with thanks for the buns, but expressing the opinion that no bun was worth 3p.

This morning, about four years later, perhaps, the shops in the little town near my home displayed hot cross buns at 6½p each. It seems to me that anyone who pays 6½p for one bun needs to have his head examined.

Excluding British Rail, nowhere is inflation apparently so rampant as in the world of books. The cost of paper has risen enormously in recent years, as has the cost of labour - plenty of people are now paid more than they earn. Heavily rising prices of books are inevitable, which is part of the reason why so many of the book-shops are now stacked with paperbacks.

I have a paperback, plainly printed on the cover with the price 2/-, from the year 1959. That same story I saw last week in a new paperback marked 70p. Another novel I have, published in 1967, has 5/- printed on the cover. Today the same story in paperback costs 90p.

One must expect prices to rise, for the cost of everything is rising. Wages go up regularly, and even the pensioners get a bit more every year. But there is one form of inflation, subtle and insidious.

The sheets of many of the new paperbacks are nearly an inch narrower than they used to be. (Excuse me not giving the amount in millimetres, but I am not German, French, or Italian, so inches are good enough for me, if not for the Metrication Board.) And rather poor quality paper is often used.

Last week I bought a new paperback. It cost 95 pence. The sheets are so narrow that the book cannot be read in comfort. The printing goes up close to the centre pins, so that it is only with difficulty that one can read a complete line. One has to guess at a lot of it, and the pleasure of reading is lost. Before I had fought half-way through that paperback, it had burst at the seams and was falling apart. And that particular paperback is no isolated instance.

That is what I call inflation by stealth.

MAGIC NAMES

Last month two contributors to our Blakiana column found themselves on the same wave-length, each being enthusiastic over the names of the many characters who made up the Sexton Blake saga down the years.

Are names of characters really all that important? Yes, of

course they are, but I have a feeling that characters in the various long-running sagas did not get their long-lasting names owing to the brilliance of their creators - or by magic. It was familiarity which made those names so essential and irreplaceable.

One of our contributors made the rather quaint comment: "Pride of place must go to the name of Sexton Blake, surely the most unique in the annals of writing."

Can one name be more "unique" than another? I shouldn't have thought so. I must confess that I have never heard of another Sexton. But then, I haven't heard of another Sherlock, either.

It is intriguing to wonder what gave rise to those two rare names in the first place.

FAIRY TALES

Ever since the end of the war this country has been harassed by an army of "reformers" who have been for ever improving our way of life, according to their cranky ideas. Perhaps it would be as well if we looked round now and then to see what they are making of the land we love.

Those of us who are, or have been, schoolmasters, may possibly be excused if we are bewildered at what the reformers have made of education, and at schools which seem to be preparing the men and women of tomorrow for anarchy. For those of us who know that careful marking of pupils' work is one of the most important duties of any teacher, it is staggering to learn that modern instructors are told to ignore spelling and grammatical errors - in fact, not to bother to mark work at all - as it upsets a child's ego. And a Headmistress was reproved for having mental arithmetic classes in her school.

One can only take a generous view and assume that some people in authority in our country have gone mad.

Charles Hamilton only once wrote a series about masters on strike - at Rookwood. He never repeated it, perhaps thinking it was too far-fetched. He should have lived a few years longer.

The stories we have long loved, about school life in establishments where learning and discipline have their proper places, would surely be catalogued as Fairy Tales if published today.

THE EDITOR

DANNY'S DIARY

APRIL 1928

In the Cup Final at Wembley a crowd of 90,000 people, with the King and Queen, saw Blackburn Rovers beat Huddersfield Town by 3 - 1.

A good story in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. It is "The Man from South America", a holiday adventure in which the Greyfriars chums are spending the Easter holidays at the home of Hazeldene's uncle in Devonshire. Marjorie and Clara are there, too.

The other story in the S.O.L. this month is "The Blott of Berrisford" by Michael Poole.

An excellent single story in the Nelson Lee is "The Mystery of the Poisoned River" in which all the fish die in the River Stowe, and when a boy falls in the river he turns yellow soon after they have got him out. Unusual and exciting.

Then the start of a new Handforth series in which he displays a lot of very bad temper and gets into trouble with everyone, his chums included. The first two tales of the series are "All His Own Fault" and "The Outcast of the Remove". The series continues next month.

Madame Tussaud's, the famous waxworks, was burned down about a year ago. It has now been re-built, and the new Tussaud's has opened again to the public with all new figures. Doug says that I will be there one day - in the Chamber of Horrors. He was cross because somebody sent him a birthday card on 1st April, and he thought it was me. (It was!)

Only a fair month in the Magnet, really. The two stories which wound up the unusual Crum series were great, but the last two of the month were not written by the real Frank Richards.

The Crum series continued with "The Schoolboy Hypnotist" in which Crum turned his attentions on Sir Hilton Popper. (A dice game called "The Bunter Hunters" was given with this issue of the Magnet, but it really seemed a waste of space.)

The last tale of the Crum series, "The New Boy's Enemy" was great reading. Crum's pal is Lord Mauleverer, but Crum makes an

enemy of the Bounder, who, by a dirty trick, causes the break-up of Crum's friendship with Mauly. A wonderful and touching tale, very well-written, I thought.

"In Merciless Hands" was extra-long and extra-boring. Wharton and his uncle are kidnapped, but Bunter gets into the affair and saves them with his ventriloquism. I found it pretty awful. Last of the month was "Bunter's Prize Essay" in which Bunter entered a manuscript from Mr. Quelch in a newspaper's essay contest. Not by the real Frank Richards, but not bad, with a few fairly amusing moments. Trouble is, nobody else gets the story quite right. The counterfeiters always drop a number of blots.

Shields's pictures have been just great all the month.

In "The Modern Boy", the Ken King serial has continued all the month. Bully Samson charts a canoe to go after Ken, who is held up on the island of Faloo. Samson captures the "Dawn", and sails away leaving Ken King and his friends stranded. Kit hides on the island, waiting for Samson to return and search for the treasure. At last Samson arrives. Good adventure stuff.

A new series of flying stories by G. E. Rochester has started in Modern Boy.

At the pictures we have seen Adolphe Menjou in "Evening Clothes"; Alice Terry in "The Magician"; Harold Lloyd in "Safety Last"; Chang in "Epic of the Jungle"; Betty Balfour in "Little Devil-May-Care"; Charlie Chaplin in "The Pilgrim"; and Rin Tin Tin in "The Hills of Kentucky".

"Trailing the Kid" is the first Rio Kid story in the Popular this month. Judge Shandy of Butte finds out that it is very dangerous to try and trick the Kid.

In "The Call of His Race" the Kid is captured, out on the plains. Hank Harker is the lawman who gets him. But, next week, in "A Life for a Life", a tenderfoot who was once helped by the Kid, now gets the chance to repay the Kid the debt he owes. Last of the month is "The Bully of Salt Lick" - all beautifully written and great reading.

In fact, for my money, the Popular is the best paper on the market at the present time. Other series in the Popular concern Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake; Mick the Gipsy at Greyfriars; the Stoney Seven

at St. Jim's with Gussy trying to pop his watch - one of the funniest St. Jim's tales ever written, and the series about a barring-out on the island in the river near Rookwood.

I hope the Popular goes on in this terrific style. But nothing - not even the best things - last for ever.

Browne and Kennedy, the two callous brutes who murdered P.C. Gutteridge in Essex last year, have been sentenced to death, at the end of their trial.

There have been some bits in the newspapers that some cinema films may talk very soon. Sounds a bit cranky. I don't think I would like it.

A silly lot of stuff in the Gem all this month. "Grundy's Movie Camera" was a present from his uncle. Cardew became junior skipper in "The Slacker's Awakening" and gave it up in "Cardew Comes a Cropper". In "Japing the Fifth" Kerr disguises himself as a detective and arrests Cutts for dangerous driving. And the Rookwood serial plods on its weary way. In one instalment the Rookwooder disguise themselves as girls and beat Bagshot at football.

I might mention that the Schoolboys' Own Library entitled "The Man from South America" was a long story, and it was set in very small type indeed. Dad said I would ruin my eyesight.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 73, "The Man from South America" comprised two consecutive stories from Easter 1910. This story had previously been reprinted in the Boys' Friend Library. The very small type, referred to by Danny, was a rarity by 1928. I wonder how many of us were told that, when the type was so small, we should ruin our eyesight. I wonder whether any of us did just that. I think not.

An irony that Hamilton at this time was writing Ken King for Modern Boy and Rio Kid for the Popular - while the sub writers had almost completely taken over the Gem and two sub tales appeared in the April Magnet. It looks very much as though he may have felt the need of a change, in the same way that stage folk kick against being type-cast. Yet few stars improve their lot in the long run when they try to change what the public has come to love.)

* * * * *
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BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

As you will notice from the following article, we are to be indebted to the B.B.C. for a Sexton Blake serial in the Autumn. I have added a little note to the article by J.E.M. which speaks for itself.

Our indefatigable investigator, Mr. Lofts, has come up with an article about our famous artist, the late Mr. Eric Parker. I have looked through all the S.B.L's I possess, from 1923 onwards and the earliest cover drawing I can find by Mr. Parker is No. 198, 2nd series, dated 4 July, 1929. At least it looks very much like a drawing by the Master. Nos. 203 and 204 both dated 1 August, 1929, are undoubtedly Mr. Parker's work. If anyone can pinpoint any earlier drawings I should be very pleased to know.

SEXTON BLAKE AND THE EXCITING AFFAIR OF THE TV SERIAL

by J.E.M.

Blakian Televiewers will no doubt be glued to their sets this Autumn. According to a Sunday newspaper report, the B.B.C. are putting on a six-part serial, probably starting in October and to be broadcast on Sundays. Especially pleasing is the promise of a good "old" Sexton Blake with Tinker (not Edward Carter) Mrs. Bardwell (not Paula & Co.) and just possibly, Pedro.

Blakians will recall that a few years ago they enjoyed an ITV series based on original Blake stories which, by and large, were excellent. Gwyn Evans' Mr. Mist saga, for instance was delightfully transferred to the small screen. By contrast the B.B.C. have commissioned an original story by Simon Raven with Julian Amyes directing.

Mr. Raven is of course, an eminent modern novelist and Television writer, extremely sophisticated and totally uninhibited in the treatment of delicate topics. But we are assured that sex and such will not sully Blake's latest TV incarnation. Do we, however, really need Mr. Raven's undoubted creative gifts in this context? He is, for example,

quoted as saying that his story is a bit of a romp. Does this mean that he regards his enlistment in the ranks of Blake authors as a bit of literary slumming? In any case, if we are going to be given the true Baker Street flavour what was wrong with adapting as ITV did, a true, original story?

But I am carping. We must judge the pudding by its flavour, and whatever the result, the B.B.C. are to be congratulated on promoting the return of a much-loved English institution to the screen. Perhaps the Beeb will even deserve our thanks for enlisting the services of such a distinguished - and no doubt, extremely expensive - writer.

(N.B. by Josie Packman. I understand the story will introduce Chinese villains. What better villain could they have used than Prince Wu Ling of Union Jack fame. In my opinion, no one could possibly outdo Mr. G. H. Teed for his Chinese tales of long ago. I also wonder whether Mr. Raven has ever read any Sexton Blake tales. He may learn something to his advantage if he studied the Blake Saga.)

ERIC PARKER AND THE SEXTON BLAKE

LIBRARY

by W. O. G. Lofts

Recently an editor of an Art magazine wrote to me requesting details about Eric Parker the famous Sexton Blake artist. Seemingly, he was writing an article about this popular illustrator, and I was able to help him a great deal. Not only was I familiar with much of his output, but I knew the man personally, having mixed with him at many social functions not only at Fleetway House, but down Baker Street as well!

Regarding E.R.P.'s Sexton Blake output, probably as most readers know, he first illustrated for the Union Jack in the story No. 995, "Eyes in the Dark" dated 4th November, 1922, and written by the creator of Count Kew, Andrew Murray. When it came to pin-pointing his very first S.B.L. cover I must admit it had me stumped. For some explained reason this (as far as I know) has never been recorded before in any article or title listing. One chronicler wrote some years ago that 'he started in the early thirties', but this has been proved to be incorrect. Chris Lowder, that great admirer and collector of G. H. Teed stories, informs me that he has a cover drawn by Eric Parker published in August 1929, and of course he could have been illustrating much earlier than this date.

Unfortunately I don't have a file of S.B.L.'s to trace his work

back, and it would take me far too long in the time I have available in the British Museum. Therefore it would be most interesting to hear from fellow collectors with long runs of this popular Library to trace the earliest Parker cover they can find. Personally, and in theory I'm inclined to think that Eric possibly started to draw regularly in the 1928/29 period, and when Arthur Jones the main artist, switched his output to the new weekly paper, The Thriller. When one thinks about it, the S.B.L. illustrators seem to have been sadly neglected in the columns of Blakiana, and it would be most interesting to hear more about them. For instance how many different artists illustrated the S.B.L. monthly from its beginning?

Curiously, there is another unexplained mystery and it concerns why Eric Parker ceased to draw the S.B.L. covers in the early fifties. It seems to be generally accepted that he stopped with the coming of the 'new look' and W. Howard Baker's editorship around 1956. This is simply not true, as another artist had taken over some three years before in 1953, and by 1955 was drawing 90% of the covers - and was believed to be an Italian. Why Eric stopped illustrating is simply not known, and one kicks oneself for not asking E.R.P. when he was alive. Perhaps he just got tired of doing them after so many, many years, or else with the gradual modernising of the stories, the editor thought that a change was needed.

H. W. Twyman, the U.J. editor - himself an art critic, thought a tremendous lot of the work of E.R.P. and his favourite quotation was that the illustrator made the paper sell just as much as the author. The enormous popularity of Eric Parker over 30 years seems to have made his theory a very accurate one.

* * * * *

WANTED: H.B. facsimile No. 46, "The Popper Island Rebels".

FOR SALE/EXCHANGE: C.D. Annuals 1966, 67, 68, 69. Magnets Nos. 1182, 1335, 1397, 1445, 1452, 1454, 1467, 1542, 1544, 1590, 1592 to 1597, 1677, 1680, 1682.

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Nelson Lee Column

THE MYSTERIOUS DR. KARNAK

by N. Gayle

Karnak - a name (if you will pardon the pun) to conjure with. A name that has, I imagine been synonymous with sinister mystery and murderous intrigue for over half a century to St. Frank's fans. Not one of those boring super-villains whose massive crime organisation threatens yet again to strangle the civilised world in its tenacious grip, nor yet a supreme individual unique in villainy and evil. No, nothing quite as trite as that; he was a man with great weaknesses and strengths, but a real flesh and blood character who, with a suitable stretch of the imagination, we could BELIEVE in. He was evil, yes, undeniably a piece of crafty intellectual scum, but as he stands he gives rise to two tributes to the skill of E.S.B's writing; firstly, that Brooks could make such an implausible character at a boys' school plausible, and secondly, (and this is what puts Karnak head and shoulders above the average scissors and paste villain of a two-penny adventure magazine) the character in seven short issues underwent changes and a subtle shift of emphasis, thereby changing our attitudes to him accordingly. We learn to fear him, hate him, and finally pity him. This is why he comes alive in our imagination.

The Dr. Karnak series is a great series, arguably one of the greatest, but it is flawed. However on re-reading it (this time out loud to my wife), I found myself concentrating upon the details more, gaining a better insight into the story, and have since as a result, begun to wonder whether the blame for its faults cannot be more squarely laid at the editor's door rather than the author's. The subject of debate is, what was Karnak's purpose at St. Frank's, and why did he go to such lengths to create an aura of mystery and fear? ... If I may take the reader through my thought processes, perhaps he or she may arrive at better conclusions than my own.

On my first reading of the series, I found it frankly unsatisfactory. There seemed to me at the time no real explanation of WHY Karnak went to so much trouble to convince certain juniors of his mysterious powers and of the truth behind his solemn warnings. He was even careful

enough to esconce his grotesque and pitiful negro helpmate in Bellton Wood in the Christmas holidays, BEFORE he was due to arrive at St. Frank's. What was his object? ... What did he gain from it? ... At the time, I found no satisfactory answer to these questions. However, as I mentioned before, on re-reading it, I saw things that had passed me by previously; I had in fact missed the point. Without making it very clear, Brooks has achieved a remarkable psychological study of an unbalanced egoist who WOULD do these things simply to put himself in the limelight, to have himself talked about in dark corners, to cover himself in a make-believe charisma of fear and superstition. It was an inner compulsion that made Karnak act as he did, and only some deep-rooted feeling of inadequacy could explain this, for unlike EZRA QUIRKE, Karnak's trickery was only skin deep; he WAS after all, a brilliant scholar, and he DID have certain hypnotic powers coupled with a disturbingly compelling nature. The irony is of course that his talents and powers were enough in themselves to achieve any kind of worthy position at St. Frank's had he wished it, and E.S.B. stresses these attributes throughout the series. However, this on its own was obviously not enough, and the rest was prompted by a twisted mind that must have felt itself inadequate and in some way inferior.

What then, are we to make of the editor's 'blurb' on the first page of O.S. 451? ... I quote:

"... This olive-skinned gentlemen (Dr. Karnak) had deliberately played upon the superstitious fears of the juniors IN ORDER TO RAISE AN OUTCRY AGAINST CERTAIN EGYPTIAN OBJECTS EXHIBITED IN THE MUSEUM, SO THAT THEY WOULD BE REMOVED FROM THE SCHOOL AND GIVEN OVER TO HIM. For what purpose he wants to gain possession of these ancient historical objects remains to be told, but a clue to the mystery is contained in this story you are about to read ..." (My capitals.)

Well! This is frankly staggering. There is no mention of any such plot throughout the entire series on the part of Dr. Karnak to hint, ask, demand or threaten, that these curios should be given over to him, even in the story that these remarks prefaced. When the emphasis of the tale shifts to Karnak trying to evade his enemies, we hear nothing more about these curios; indeed, he seems to lose all interest in them,

and certainly makes no attempt to take them with him when he goes. It is almost as if this editorial resumee is about a plot to a different story. This really is quite extraordinary, and calls for some explanation. The only theory that I have formed - a tentative one - is that here we see by mistake a glimpse of what might have been the original plot to the story which E.S.B. outlined to the editor, but afterwards changed as the story took shape in his mind and on paper. Nothing else I can think of can account for it. But how such an editorial blunder could have occurred is quite beyond me. I would be very interested to hear from anybody that could put me on the right track, and possibly even confirm or deny this theory outright. Because in some ways, this could be the biggest mystery in the story of all.

FACT OR FICTION

by R. J. Godsave

In the early days of the St. Frank's Nelson Lees the summer holiday adventures were sometimes the sequel of the previous autumn series. Such was the case of the El Safra treasure stories which were in a sense the continuation of the Jack Mason series.

After exciting adventures in the North African desert, a sand-storm in which Nicodemus Trotwood nearly lost his life, the treasure was found in the shape of a bag of uncut stones.

It was the intention of the St. Frank's party to go in Lord Doriemore's yacht the 'Wanderer' for a trip to the Canary Islands, from thence to Madeira, and then to the Azores. A regular holiday trip had been on the programme.

Unfortunately, other searchers had also been on the track of the treasure, as the St. Frank's party were very much made aware of this fact during the crossing of the desert by both air and caravan. A Captain Nixon in revenge for his failure to obtain the El Safra treasure stowed away in the 'Wanderer' while it remained in the port of Agabat before setting off for the Canary Islands.

The happy St. Frank's party now all united were unaware that Nixon was aboard, and it was during a heavy storm that he was able to overpower Mr. Clive, the first officer of the 'Wanderer' and steer the yacht onto a small island in the mid-Atlantic. After much trouble with Nixon, who had jumped overboard when the yacht went on to the rocks,

Nelson Lee, who had had the aeroplane converted into a seaplane, was able to contact a liner homeward bound for Plymouth who was able to take care of Nixon and also tow the yacht off the rocks which had suffered little damage.

With the original plan being scrapped the yacht was now free to journey home and should arrive in London within a matter of days. Again the yacht suffered a violent storm on the homeward journey with the result that the propeller-shaft snapped and the 'Wanderer' drifting well off course.

In o. s. 220, 'The Sea of Doom', E. S. Brooks gives a graphic description of the Sargasso Sea into which the yacht had drifted. Until the repair was made the yacht could do nothing but drift farther into the masses of seaweed which abounded in the area.

It is the custom in this progressive age to debunk old founded beliefs and ideas. In the reference books I possess it clearly states that the Sargasso Sea is a section of the Atlantic Ocean. It lies S. of Bermuda and extends eastwards. It is distinguished by the masses of brown seaweed that floats therein, especially the weed called *Sargassum bacciferum* which is washed from the coast in great masses.

Columbus, who discovered and named the sea 'Mar de Sargaço' the sea of seaweed, must have had a good reason for so doing. Recently, I read a small booklet issued by Reader's Digest Association called 'Fact or Fiction' a dossier on old beliefs that die hard. It states that this section of the Atlantic Ocean so choked with seaweed is greatly exaggerated. In 1910-11 a Norwegian research ship, the Michael Sars, searched in vain for the Sargasso Sea. The crew found, as many sailors before, an expanse of sea below the 40th parallel, between the Azores and Charleston, South Carolina, where conditions are favourable for the growth of *Sargassum bacciferum* and other species of seaweed and floating algae.

I cannot believe that Columbus would have taken the trouble to name that section of the Atlantic Ocean if signs of seaweed were so little in that particular area. Also I do not believe that E. S. Brooks would have written his story if he thought that the Sargasso Sea did not really exist.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 222. THE RECURRING DECIMAL

With a writer as prolific as Charles Hamilton, writing several stories every week of his long career with the Amalgamated Press, it is not surprising that we find certain themes repeating themselves.

Occasionally, as occurred with a theme like that of the Gem's Oliver Lynn series and the Magnet's Dury series, many of the details were so unnecessarily alike, as we observed some time back, that one almost felt that the author was being a little lazy. Not that it mattered a lot.

Nowhere is the recurring theme more in evidence than in the plot where "A" is seeking to disgrace "B" in order that "A" may benefit under a certain will instead of "B". It is remarkable that it was in the Magnet where this theme was used so often. I cannot recall that we find it at all in the Rookwood span, and it only occurred on two long separated occasions at St. Jim's. But in the last 12 years of the Magnet it became the recurring decimal with a vengeance. And usually there was an unscrupulous solicitor lurking somewhere in the background.

Despite the repetition, these series were among the finest and the most satisfying that Hamilton ever wrote.

In 1928 Da Costa went to Greyfriars with the express purpose of disgracing Harry Wharton. The slimy solicitor was Mr. Gedge. Wharton was to inherit a fortune under the will of a Mr. Cortolvin, an old friend of Wharton's uncle. A Captain Marker was Wharton's rival for the fortune.

In 1934 came the Smedley series in which Eustace Teggers takes a post at Greyfriars in order to be on hand to disgrace Vernon-Smith in order that the Bounder's father should disinherit his son in favour of the relative, Teggers.

In 1935, Coker's cousin, Caffyn, came to Greyfriars to disgrace Coker, in order that Miss Coker should disinherit Horace and make Caffyn her heir. And in 1938, Bunter's relation, Carter, came to Greyfriars to disgrace Bunter so that William George should not inherit the wealth of a rich relation and that wealth should go to Cousin Carter in due course.

The following year, 1939, came the series in which the Bounder's double, Bertie Vernon, actually took the place of the kidnapped Bounder, with the distant view of inheriting the millionaire's wealth some day. But this was a variation of the recurring theme, and we can ignore it here.

So the theme which recurred, lock, stock and barrel, is to be found in the Da Costa series, the Smedley series, the Caffyn series, and the Carter series.

Which was the best of them? For me, unquestionably, the Da Costa series. I regard this one, not only as some of Hamilton's greatest work, but also as one of the finest school stories ever written.

The cricket background, though it was incidental, added greatly to the charm. Furthermore, it was a long novel, developing throughout. The change which took place in the Eurasian, Da Costa, under the influence of his new environment, was brilliantly portrayed. And the shrewd, if biased, assessment by Inky, who was able to read the character of the Eurasian, was equally brilliant and gave an added lustre to a superb series. Hamilton never surpassed this story in his distinguished career, and nor, in my opinion, did anybody else.

The Smedley series, also, developed in a similar satisfactory way, and it is notable for its variety of backgrounds against which the plot was played out. If one is a carping critic, the Smedley series was not flawless. It was most unlikely, from what older readers of the Magnet would remember, that the hard-headed millionaire would have disinherited his only son in favour of a distant relative. Permanently, at any rate. And Lucius Teggers would have known this.

In addition, one would have expected the sharp Bounder of Greyfriars to have become suspicious of the motives of the form-master who was trying to disgrace him.

By 1935, when Caffyn came on the scene, an era had ended. No longer was a plot to develop through an entire series. No longer was characterisation to be modified by environment or happenings. From now on, the plot was laid out in the first story of a series, and each succeeding story was to be practically complete in itself. In each story, Caffyn tried to disgrace Coker - and failed.

The same method or lack of method was there in the Carter series

of 1938. One could have missed a story or two and lost nothing of the plot. Each week Carter tried to disgrace Bunter - and failed. No doubt plenty of readers found this entirely satisfactory - those who liked to be in clover from one week to the next might prefer not to be kept on tenter-hooks, waiting for a whole week to see what was going to happen.

There was great entertainment and plenty of variety in both the Caffyn and the Carter series - but the development of plot was missing. In this way the series of the latter-day Magnet differed from those of what some of us like to call the Golden Age.

As I said earlier, I can recall no use of this theme in connection with Rookwood, but there were two occasions, far apart, when it was used at St. Jim's. And in each case, Tom Merry was the heir.

In 1914 (repeated in 1937, the only time, oddly enough, that it was reprinted) Tom Merry was the heir to the South African millionaire, Mr. Brandreth. Gerald Goring was his rival, and Goring sent Clavering, who was Tom Merry's double, to take Tom's place in the Shell while Tom himself was kidnapped. And Clavering was at St. Jim's to get himself expelled in Tom Merry's name. The flaw in this series was the fact that in real life it would be impossible for one boy to be so like another that he could take his place and deceive even his most intimate friends. In addition, the series, typical of the era, was too compressed. But it is notable as containing, in a few chapters, some of the most tense and dramatic sequences of Hamilton's entire career. (Here we had Manners and Lowther experiencing, as Redwing was to experience in the Bertie Vernon series years later, an instinctive dislike of their former chum. Surely Hamilton must have had the Tom Merry's Double series in mind when he constructed the Bertie Vernon story.)

Mr. Brandreth was soon forgotten, and by 1939, when the theme turned up again in the Gem, Silverson was planning to disgrace Tom Merry in order to take Tom's place as Miss Priscilla's heir.

As I have said before, this, too, was a flawed series, for Hamilton never grasped the opportunities it offered. Miss Fawcett had never been depicted as wealthy, and anything that she might bequeathe would hardly be worth the elaborate scheme which Silverson operated. We had the same construction as in the latter-day Magnet, with Silverson plotting in each story and being foiled as the story ended. It could have

been a wonderful series had Silverson succeeded for a time and the faith of Miss Fawcett been tested.

In conclusion, I have been guilty of the adult appraising yarns written for and delighting boys in their early teens. I talk of a yarn being flawed because Clavering was Tom Merry's double, in the same way that Bunter's ventriloquism and Wibley's and Kerr's impersonations are regarded as flaws by some of us. But we are the ones who are guilty of absurdities, for masses of fine tales for youngsters could never have been written had the author bothered himself about such things.

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REVIEWS

THE SCHOOLBOY TOURISTS

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker: £4.50)

Here we have a delightful volume, full of the promise of Spring, and living up to its promise.

The main attraction is the sparkling Easter Holiday series of five stories from the Spring of 1933. The theme is that of the party which went on a cruise, thinking they were honoured guests of the skipper (in this case, Billy Bunter's cousin, Captain George Cook), only to find that they are expected to pay their way. Frank Richards used this theme three times. Its first appearance was with his Rookwood characters in 1925; this, too, was on a yacht as is the case with the series we are now reviewing with the Greyfriars chums in 1933; finally, in a post-war Bunter book the theme surfaced for a third airing. (For those interested, an appraisal of all three occasions featured in a Let's Be Controversial article, "It Will Go Down, Of Course" in the Digest of August 1975.)

Those who know the Greyfriars and the Rookwood series, plus the post-war Bunter story, will enjoy deciding which was the best, or whether there was nothing to choose between them.

The novelty, and, perhaps, the charm, of this particular Greyfriars series is that each story in the group is individual, linked only by the ship "Sea Nymph". A treat for those who enjoy the less demanding holiday series.

In the supporting programme is a pleasant pair from the early summer of the same year, 1933, in which the Bounder is in trouble and "sent to Coventry" - not for a bad deed but as the result of a good one.

Final item in a strong bill is a single story from the autumn of 1929 in which "Skinner's Shady Scheme" has the result of disgracing Mark Linley in the eyes of his form-master.

THE HOWARD BAKER EASTER OMNIBUS 1978

(Howard Baker: £4.50)

One of those pleasant miscellanies in which variety is the spice of life. The opening

item in the programme is a 3-story series from the Gem of late autumn 1921. The St. Jim's stories were pretty short at this period, so the three tales make a potted barring-out series, as it were. It is none the worse, one might add, for the fact that any form of padding is completely non-existent here. Figgins & Co. bar out against Mr. Ratcliff in the New House, and the novelty is in the unexpected twist of the rising being put down by Tom Merry and his pals of the School House. Light-weight stuff, no doubt, but pleasant enough reading for the fans.

St. Frank's is represented by "Handforth's Holiday Flirtation" which will please Handy enthusiasts. The Nelson Lee Library is blown up here to Magnet size, which may make it a little unreal for the Lee follower, but makes easy reading for aged eyes, enlarging the size of the original print.

"Saved from the Sea" is a fine tale from the Magnet of late 1930, and tells of an adventure which befell the Greyfriars chums on their way home from China. An epilogue to the China Series, and well worth while.

An excellent Rio Kid story comes next, taken here from a later Holiday Annual though it featured originally in the Popular of 1928. Also from a later Holiday Annual is a rib-tickling Rookwood short - one of those things which Rookwood did so well, in which Lovell devised a method of cheating in class. It came originally from the Boys' Friend of early 1923, the original title being "Lovell's Wonderful Wheeze".

To wind up an attractive bill of fare there are a couple of exciting holiday stories from Easter 1931. A man named Wilmot takes the law into his own hands to deal with an American named Poindexter, with the final scene being played out near Wharton's home - at a haunted mill near Wimford.

A long article is contributed by Mary Cadogan who, in her usual readable style, takes an appraising look at the stories contained in the book.

Something to please everybody in this volume. Great stuff for the holidays.

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AN "OLD BOY'S" REMINISCENCES - No. 1

by B. R. Leese

I am seventy-three, and consider myself an "old boy" - mark you, there is a difference between an "old boy" and an old man. Frank Richards was eighty-six, but I think he remained an "old boy" throughout the years. I have a library of some three thousand books on diverse subjects, plus many novels ranging from Dickens, Dumés, Harrad, etc., to present-day best sellers - and yet I still find untold joy in browsing through the tales of my boyhood, especially the works of Chas. Hamilton. Some friends look upon this as a sign of approaching second childhood. Far from this being the case; to me the main reason is the nostalgic factor bringing back the caternasion of carefree boyhood days. What

greater joy can an "old boy" experience!

I have been a collector of books and papers from childhood, my collecting habit was first developed before I could read, by collecting tramcar tickets, then on a higher scale to cigarette cards, "Cries of London", "Dominion of Canada", etc., finally maturing with old boys' weeklies and other books. My first volume was a Sunday School prize called "May's Cousin", a slim book about a child's visit to her Granny, and then came "Grimms Fairy Tales"; this latter transported me into the "never-never" land of fairy fantasy - and I became a bookworm from that day onwards. I was probably seven or eight years old at the time.

Soon afterwards a friend who was interested in my sister and who was several years my senior, gave me a copy of the "Boys' Friend". I was quite a time reading it, but how my imagination was motivated! Serials entitled "Britain At Bay" and "Britain Invaded" thrilled me to the marrow. I was "hooked" to the "Green 'Un" for a number of years afterwards. I remember "Mystery Island", "Trail of the Redskins", "The Land of Terror", etc., by Duncan Storm, followed by "Boys of the Bombay Castle", but I was not enamoured with these adventures of Dick Dorrington & Co. Famous Maurice Everard gave us "Polruans' Millions", the "League of Seven" and many others, all thrilling yarns for boys. Another serial I enjoyed was "The Circle of Thirteen", the author I have forgotten. (I am writing these notes from memory of over sixty years ago.)

The highlight of the Boys' Friend, however, was the introduction of the Rookwood school stories, (early 1915 I believe). I was carried away with the adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co., and Tommy Dodd, and Jimmy along with Tom Merry have been my favourite schoolboy characters throughout the years, although Lumley-Lumley, Levison, Cardew, Vernon-Smith and De Courcy of Highcliffe have interested me from a different angle.

This same senior friend introduced me to the "Gem" just before the first World War, and I still remember the first Gem story I read, called "At the Eleventh Hour", and even today, sixty or more years later, I can visualize the blue cover illustration, showing Gussy rushing into Big Hall at the eleventh hour to save Tom Merry from a flogging.

I think it was during 1915 when the first Magnet came my way,

again ex gratia from my senior friend. I think the story was called "The Midnight Marauders". I enjoyed it but thought the illustrations were not so good as those of the Gem. The schoolboys looked too angular and "grown-up", miniature men. However, I got used to them, although I always preferred Macdonald, and as I look back today, Chapman's style is synonymous with the red Magnets of my early days.

I remember in one "Editor's Chat" we were told that twenty thousand copies of "Rivals & Chums" had been lost on a ship torpedoed while voyaging to the U.S.A.

During 1916 I operated a "swopping" system, and persuaded a boy who attended another school to act as my agent, while at the same time I combed my own elementary school for "swops". The Penny Pop. came my way, but while I enjoyed the early adventures of Tom Merry & Co., I was not keen on Jack, Sam & Pete, and I think Sexton Blake also appeared. It was from the first week in January 1918, that I became a regular "Penny (Three halfpence) Pop" fan, with the introduction of the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co.

About this time the newsagents counters fairly sagged with boys' literature, new ones seemed to be published every other week, and Miss Sharplin (my newsagent) always tempted me with every new paper, and invariably I fell for it. I had the first fifty or more Nelson Lee Libraries, and enjoyed the "Green Triangle" series and Professor Zingrave, but confess my interest waned when Nelson Lee & Nipper went to St. Frank's. I did not like the first person writing style, and Nelson Lee and Nipper, to me seemed out of place in school yarns. However, everyone to his or her taste, St. Frank's became very popular as E.S.B. developed his characters, and they were some of the best "swapping" material.

My sister read the "Girl's Friend" during 1915, and I followed the serials of Mabel St. John and W. E. Groves with great interest, one of W. E. Groves was called "The Broken Doll" and was published when the song "You called me Baby Doll a Year Ago" was going the rounds. It was all grist to the mill with me.

I read "Union Jack" for a period, Prince Menes, etc., but the detective yarn was not my forte at that period of my life, even though I enjoyed "The Great Cheque Fraud, featuring Geo. Marsden Plummer, which ran as a serial in "Pluck"; and there were Will Spearing stories

too, which I read avidly. I think the last issue of the old "Pluck" contained a full-length story of Dr. Huxton Rymer, the front cover - if my memory serves me correctly - shows Rymer struggling with an octopus in the depths of the ocean. I remember the first Sexton Blake monthly Library being published in 1915, but the only S.B. Library I read was "Sexton Blake in Berlin", during the first World War. I was on edge as he made his way in a train through Germany, especially after I had read of Hun atrocities in the weekly "War Illustrated", (a lot of it propaganda I think).

I was never really interested in comics, but the "Jester" and "Comic Cuts" were good "swops". The former ran a serial called "The Dauntless Three", while C.C. ran one called "The Red Rovers". They were rattling good boys' yarns! I only read three serials in the Gem, "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays", which I thought only fair, "Twins from Tasmania", about Flip & Flap Derwent, and which I thought very tame, and "Goggs Grammarian", which I thought was next to putrid.

(Another article in this series shortly)

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BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 49. RETURN OF THREE ALL-TIME GREATS

We opened the term's shows with "Larceny Inc." starring Edward G. Robinson, from Warner Bros. I forget it completely, but, like nearly all of Edward G's films, it was, I feel sure, a winner.

Next, from M. G. M. came Abbott & Costello in "Rio Rita". I suppose this was a re-make of the Bebe Daniels musical which we had played many years earlier from Radio. We played a number of Abbott & Costello films from Universal, but I think this was their first M. G. M. subject. In the supporting programme was "Mrs. Ladybug", a coloured cartoon.

Next, also from M. G. M. came Micky Rooney with Donna Reed in "The

Courtship of Andy Hardy". There had been a number of Andy Hardy films - too many, perhaps - but I think this was our first. I never cared for them much, though some of our older boys liked them. In the supporting bill was a coloured cartoon "The First Swallow". I notice that in this programme we included a double-length Universal News, though goodness knows why.

This was followed by Kathryn Grayson in "Seven Sweethearts", a musical from M. G. M., and included in the supporting bill was a M. G. M. Barney Bear coloured cartoon "The Prospector Bear".

Next a double-feature show from Warner's: Humphrey Bogart in "The Big Shot", plus Dennis Morgan in "No Place To Go".

The following week brought yet another double-feature show from Warner's: Dennis Morgan and Ann Sheridan in "Wings for the Eagle", plus Brenda Marshall in "Highways West".

Then another double show. The main feature was "A Yank At Eton" starring Micky Rooney and Freddie Bartholomew. I seem to remember that this was quite good, and the Eton Boating Song, used as theme music, was irresistible. In support, from Warner's, was James Cagney in "Calling All Girls", an attractive collection of songs and scenes from the Warner-Busby Berkley musicals, most of them starring Cagney, and quite first-class. The same sort of thing that made "That's Entertainment" a great success in the seventies. Also in the programme was a Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon "The Field Mouse".

Then, from Warner's, came a fine Musical: Gloria Warren, Kay Francis, and Walter Huston in "Always in my Heart". The song of the title was delightful, and lingers in my head still. In the supporting bill was a Secrets of Life item "The Water Baby" and a Bugs Bunny colour cartoon "All This and Rabbit Stew".

This was a time when new releases of American films were often subjected to long delays - shipping space was required for other purposes - and all the renters included plenty of reissues of past successes in their new lists. This term we gave return dates to three of the all-time greats from M. G. M. - three films which always

have a place in my favourite dozen of all time.

We now played a return of one of these - the magnificent "San Francisco", starring Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, and Jeanette Macdonald. We had played it first some years earlier, and, as on the original screening in the small cinema, it was enormously popular. In the same bill was a M. G. M. coloured Pooch cartoon - "Officer Pooch".

The next week, from Warner's, brought James Cagney and Bette Davis in "The Bride Came C. O. D. " In the same bill was a Secrets of Life item "Old Blue".

Then another big 'un from the past, from M. G. M.: the superlative "Mutiny on the Bounty" with the superb Charles Laughton, Clark Gable, and Franchot Tone. (This was re-made years later in an infinitely inferior film.) In the same bill was a Tom & Jerry colour cartoon "The Alley Cat".

The following week brought yet another magnificent reissue. This time it was the unforgettable "Captains Courageous" with Spencer Tracy giving the finest performance of his career, and Freddie Bartholomew and Micky Rooney quite splendid as the two boys in the story. Truly, they don't make them like this any more, alas. In the supporting bill was a coloured cartoon "Little Cesario".

Our final big picture for the term was Richard Greene in "Flying Fortress" from Warner Bros. I have a feeling that this was a British picture.

Somewhere about this time, the big renters started issuing their own trailers of all their films. It is surprising they had not done it earlier. Previously we had

taken trailers under contract for all our bookings, from National Screen Service in Wardour St. Now we booked them direct from the renters, and the renters, having all the resources at their disposal, made longer and better trailers. The trailers for all our bookings now came along from the renters a week or longer ahead of the

playing dates of the features. We had used hundreds of trailers from N. S. C., but now we only went to them for National Anthem trailers, and for certain special "prestige" items which he had made and screened (for fun) from time to time.

(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS SERIES NEXT MONTH)

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The Postman Called

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

GEORGE BEAL (London): I am indebted, and most impressed, by the prompt replies both from Bill Lofts and Brian Doyle to my little piece on Roy Bridges, etc.

The name of C. Bernard Rutley was well-known to me in my youth. However, the information so far available impelled me to look further into the matter. Roy Bridges has a far greater claim to fame than I had imagined. To add to Brian Doyle's interesting details, perhaps I may append the following:

Royal Bridges (his full name) was born on 23rd March, 1885, a member of an old settler family, whose history is told in the autobiographical THAT YESTERDAY WAS HOME. He published thirty novels, as well as other works. He never married, and lived until 1952, when he died at Sorell, Tasmania, on 14th March. His sister, Hilda Taggie Bridges, born in 1881, was also a novelist, writing mainly on light adventure, as well as children's stories.

JAMES HODGE (Bristol): Your comment, in March C.D., on the recent death of Turner Layton brought back memories of being taken to the Bristol Hippodrome by my parents in the early thirties. Layton & Johnstone were 'top of the bill'. We sat in the 'gods' and I recall the final song, with the stage, far below, in darkness but for a single spotlight on the two artistes and the grand piano; the song was "River, stay away from my Door" and it brought a standing ovation. I also had some records of them, my favourite being "Always". Remember it? ...

'Not for just an hour, not for just a day,

Not for just a year, but Always.'
Truly, as you say, incomparable.

D. J. MARTIN (Southampton): I see someone has beaten me to it. A bound volume of Mr. Buddle stories would be very enjoyable to have. I intended mentioning the matter when next I wrote, so perhaps we can look forward to the possibility.

The comments made by Danny on the weather and on matters extraneous to the actual papers mentioned are always so very interesting.

I enjoyed the recent E. S. Brooks eulogy, but, no matter what anyone says, his writing doesn't reach the heights of Hamilton at his best. I think of Bunter expounding on the giving of Christmas presents in the Courtfield Cracksman series. This, for me, is a classic unsurpassed by Dickens in Pickwick.

JIM COOK (Auckland): The Annual never departs from its intense attraction. One or two have mentioned that some pieces in it do not rightly belong to the purpose of our hobby, but it may well be that you do not get the full quota of hobby articles. I am thinking of the article "Pink Furniture". As one correspondent wrote in his letter ... "what on earth has this to do with our hobby?" Still, although I haven't yet read this article perhaps there's some reason why you put it in.

H. HEATH (Windsor): I have a soft spot for Sparshott. No. 1 of the series, "The Secret of the School", was the first story I read from the famous typewriter since the last Magnet in 1940. The only Carcroft I have read was "The Carcroft Cad", the second one to appear in Pie. On the admittedly meagre evidence I have (2 Sparshotts and 1 Carcroft) I feel that Sparshott was much superior. I still think that Hamilton's "Courtfield Cracksman" is the greatest story I have read amongst his many priceless items.

DENIS GIFFORD (London): I have formed the Association of Comic Enthusiasts (motto: Be an Ace!). I have devised a method whereby each month members will receive "Comic Cuts", a news-and-views letter with scope for correspondence, advertising, and news of up-to-date comics and books on the subject, together with a series of separate sheets which when collated will ultimately form the British Comic Encyclopaedia.

This partwork will cover such separate sections as artists, authors, characters, publishers, annuals, free gifts, newspaper strips, and so on. Membership is £5 per annum, and may be sent direct to me at 80 Silverdale, Sydenham, S.E.26 (made out to A.C.E.).

HOWARD SHARPE (Melbourne): The career of Collectors' Digest is more successful, sustained, and amazing than most of the books and papers which feature in its articles. The quality of these articles and the enthusiasm of the writers never flags.

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News of the Clubs

MIDLAND

The weather for our February meeting was almost as grim as that of January, but there was an improved attendance. There were numerous apologies.

The great item of interest was Christine Brettell's Charles Hamilton Exhibition on display at Blackheath Library where she works. An indication of the interest engendered was the fact reported by Christine that practically all Hamilton books were out being read by the public. West Bromwich Library is borrowing the exhibition for display during the month of March by kind permission of club members who had loaned out items and Charles Hamilton's niece, Mrs. Una Wright, who has provided souvenirs of the great man's life.

Ian Webster distributed copies of The Best of the Magnet and Gem to members. He said he had bought a dozen. This publication appeared about 8 or 9 years ago. It is very good, but contains a substitute story about Bolsover and his minor.

Stan Knight sent his usual letter full of interest and giving an account of his wide reading of Edwy Searles Brooks.

The Anniversary number on show was Magnet No. 629 published on 28th February, 1920.

Among the topics of discussion was the discrepancies often found in Charles Hamilton stories on the distance from one place to another.

It was agreed it was a wonder there were not more considering the astronomical amount of writing he did.

A reading by your correspondent of the first two chapters of The Ezra Quirke series was the next item. It was agreed that Brooks was a master at building up an intense atmosphere.

The meeting broke up at 9.30 and we wended our way homewards through the inhospitable rain and damp, but it had been a very worthwhile evening.

JACK BELLFIELD
Correspondent.

CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at 98 Campkin Road, on Sunday, 5th March, 1978. Mike Rouse reported on the present position of arrangements for an open meeting to be held in May.

Vic Hearn gave a survey of "The Champion", with special reference to cricket stories. He said that at about the age of nine, when he had switched from "comics" to boys' papers, then generally known as "twopenny books", the first thing that attracted him to The Champion was the "Colwyn Dane" Detective tales. He had found in the sports stories, of which the Champion mainly consisted, a range of sports outside the football, cricket and running he had played at his school. This range included Ice Hockey and Speedway Racing, then known as "Dirk Track" racing.

This item was much enjoyed and Vic was thanked for his researches, which prompted members to recall their own cricketing exploits.

Jack Overhill had promised a surprise item, and produced his file of the "Club Newsletter" and "Owl", papers which had been produced by Deryck Harvey in the first years of the Club's existence. Arrangements were discussed for a club visit to Neville Wood in June. The members congratulated Edward Witten on his excellent and most enjoyable tea, to which they gave full justice.

Mike Rouse produced copies of his new book, to be published by the Oleander Press on the following day - "Cambridgeshire in early postcards". This aroused much interest; one particular comment being that practically all the men and boys in the pictures were wearing hats!

He also showed a delightful set of coloured School Reward Cards on nature subjects, issued in 1909 by the Ely Education Committee.

Edward Witten then ran a quiz covering stage celebrities, politicians and authors.

A discussion arose about the old Festival Theatre on Newmarket Road, Cambridge. The Secretary recalled the shows in the late 1920's and early 1930's, and some of the later well-known stars who had appeared there, including Flora Robson, Ninette de Valois, Curigwen Lewis, and many others. Jack Overhill recalled the old Cambridge Hippodrome and shows he had seen there. The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to Edward for his hospitality.

LONDON

A welcome return to the Ashford, Middlesex residence of Isaac Litvak after an interval of thirteen years saw one of the most enjoyable meetings that the club has experienced during the thirty years of existence. There were twenty-two members present and all enjoyed a very interesting programme.

The main item was a discourse and debate, the subject being the actual school series versus the home and overseas holiday series. Everyone present except for two of the ladies, expressed their views and both the two main authors, Frank Richards and Edwy Searles Brooks, had their writings duly criticised. The elucidations of those who took part were right to the point.

Eric Lawrence, in the chair, read the Guardian piece entitled "Beastly Luck For Pupils", which dealt with the closing of a comprehensive school tuckshop due to pupils preferring their tuck to the school dinners. Last month, Winifred Morss borrowed a copy of the Boys' Magazine from Mary Cadogan's Miscellaneous Library and now gave her thoughts on the book. This is a new procedure and other members will be borrowing the lesser known books, perusing them at leisure and then at the next meeting, give their views on the books.

Bob Blythe read excerpts from newsletter of March 1961 and followed up with a Trackett Grim story, "The Affair of the Missing Athlete" and then conducted an Eliminator quiz.

Votes of thanks were accorded to Isaac and his helpers. Next

meeting will be held on Sunday, 9th April, the venue will be given in the April newsletter.

BENJAMIN WHITER

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FOR SALE: Valliant, 167 copies from 15.6.63 to 6.5.67. 1965, 1966 complete. Victor, 209 copies. Nos. 83 - 324. Hornet, 139 copies. Nos. 2 - 191. Complete from 121 - 191. Offers.

J. HART, 9 CHESTNUT DRIVE, BEXLEYHEATH, 01 303 7125.

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Would like to exchange for Magnets of the 20's and 30's, complete year of the Champion and Modern Boy, with give-aways still inside comics. Would also be interested in fair price for them. Have also many Film Annuals of 30's, 40's and 50's for sale.

BILL WATSON, OLYMPUS, SANDFORD MILL RD.

CHELMSFORD, ESSEX, 72570.

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WANTED: "The Man With the Glaring Eyes" by A. Blair, No. 538, S.B.L. 2nd series. "Zalva the Brave", "Zalve & Selim" by Alfred R. Phillips - The Thriller, Nos. 217, 323, 326.

D. WESTCOTT, 30 EDITH RD., BARONS COURT, LONDON W.14.

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FILM STORIES IN PLUCK by S. Gordon Swan

The impact of the movies was making itself felt in England in 1913 and was destined to affect the periodicals of the day. PLUCK was among the first to manifest this trend and in issue No. 474, dated 29.11.13, appeared the first of a series of stories based on contemporary films. The story was entitled "Blood will Tell", an adventure of Buffalo Bill, and, although no author's name was appended, the literary style was unmistakably that of the ubiquitous W. Murray Graydon, who wrote several others.

In due course the tales were illustrated by actual photos from the films. It is a pity that in some cases no cast of players was included as this would have been of particular interest today, especially to film fans of long standing. As far as I am concerned, in certain pictures I have been able to identify a silent screen actor called Stewart Rome who later appeared in character roles in the "talkies".

These yarns must have been popular since PLUCK began to

publish two in one issue and sometimes three, one of them occasionally being printed as a serial. Authors' names were often attached now - Murray Graydon, Edgar West, W. A. Williamson, Beverley Kent and others. The name of Tom Mix also began to appear as being featured in cowboy stories.

In No. 507 there was a page of photographs of film stars, only two of which were familiar to me - Alice Joyce and Anna Nilsson (the latter was seen very briefly in Gloria Swanson's comeback movie of 1950, "Sunset Boulevard").

But now came the autumn of 1914 and The Great War had broken out. The number of film stories diminished and war yarns supervened, even the regular Spearing tales having a wartime flavour. One could find an occasional tale of Broncho Billy but mainly the paper was devoted to Will Spearing, Dick Wallace, war correspondent (who once appeared in a Sexton Blake Library by W. Murray Graydon) and a war serial by John Tregellis.

In the autumn of 1915, by which time people were doubtless beginning to tire of war, revival of interest in film stories was inspired by the advent of the great Charlie Chaplin - who **died** recently.

These comedy tales were written by two authors -- Sidney Drew, who was not unused to slapstick humour, and, of all writers, Jack Lewis. Admirers of his subtle and ingenious plots involving Leon Kestrel might find it incongruous that he should apply his talents to describing the misadventures of Charlie, but this he certainly did.

PLUCK was no longer dominated by film stories; instead, we were treated to the exploits of George Marsden Plummer, Dr. Huxton Rymer, and even Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee. In a reversion to the film theme, we were given sporadic adventures of Broncho Billy and then appeared the serial of the film, "The Great Cheque Fraud", which introduced Sexton Blake and Plummer.

I don't think any other of our favourite periodicals devoted so much space to film stories, though I remember that "Charlie Chaplin's Schooldays" ran in another paper - THE BOYS' REALM, I believe. How different was the later PLUCK from its original format, with its "comrade" yarns by S. Clarke Hook, its Captain, Cook and Engineer

tales (again the 3-comrade theme) and its school stories by H. Clarke Hook and Jack North.

It is certain that modern film tales would not be suitable for adaptation to a paper like **PLUCK!**

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NEWS OF THE CLUBS - STOP PRESS

NORTHERN

Saturday, 11th March, 1978

Harry Barlow chaired the Meeting in the absence of Chairman Geoffrey Wilde, and Mollie Allison presented the first item.

Mollie talked to us about the Crum series (Magnets 1050 - 1052), remarking on the similarities between this and the Bertie Vernon series.

Henry Christopher Crum and his father both possess hypnotic powers - Mauleverer is a witness when Wingate is persuaded to throw his ashplant out of the window instead of punishing Crum for cigar-smoking!

Mollie then read to us from Magnet 1051, in which Frank Richards manages to put in his own ideas about the use of (in those days!) King's English and the dropping of aitches!

Bunter, under the 'fluence' exerted by Crum, starts to drop his aitches!

Mollie's reading included the amusing incident where Mr. Quelch seeks to make Bunter say, "Henry Herbert Higgins had a happy holiday" and "Horace hung his hat on a high hook in the hall", to which Bunter inevitably replies, "D - d - did he, sir?"

A piece of classic Hamilton humour!

Jack Allison followed with a talk entitled, 'A Manner of Speaking' in which he referred to the disappearance of dialect and the influence of American slang on speech. He included a reading entitled, 'T' Inscription ower t' Dooar'.

Finally, by Jack, a continuation of his Twenty Questions game.

Next month (8th April) is the Annual Meeting. All will be welcome.