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JANUARY 1979

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DAVID NIXON

We were saddened to learn of the sudden death, not long before Christmas, of the famous stage and TV illusionist, David Nixon. I knew him well over six weeks, some fifteen years ago, though it seems like yesterday.

He was the star of the last of the Bunter stage shows, "Billy Bunter Meets Magic", at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London, a play which opened for a 4-week run on 23rd December, 1963. I had many a chat with him during rehearsals, and, of course, during the run of the show. He told me once that his favourite of all the old papers was the "Popular", and regretted that it was so many years since he had seen a copy. I took him a few copies and asked him to accept them, and he was delighted.

Though I saw it so many times, I forget the story-line of "Billy Bunter Meets Magic". I see from the programme that Nixon played the part of a character named Captain Hartley-Wright, and he made many appearances during the performance. In the second half, he had a lengthy solo spot, when he presented a number of excellent illusions, during which I had the pleasure of playing the piano accompaniment.

He was a lovable man, gentle and gentlemanly, and everybody seemed fond of him. Clearly his engagement in the Bunter show that year was in the hope that a star of his calibre, a popular TV personality, would help to bring in the crowds. I don't know whether it was entirely successful in its purpose.

He commanded a large salary, and he stipulated a run of at least four weeks, which is too long for the Christmas matinee season. The Shaftesbury is a large theatre, and we played to packed houses during the first fortnight. But, once the schools had started for the new term, the matinee attendances fell away, as they were bound to do, and even the packed Saturday afternoons could not compensate fully for the slack days at the end of the run.

It was, at any rate, the last of the Bunter stage shows. Ever increasing costs were no doubt a factor in killing the goose that had laid golden eggs for a number of Christmases. It was a pity, for the shows were good fun for the youngsters, as well as for those with warm memories, at Yuletide.

One likes to recall that a star of Nixon's quality featured in the saga at the end. The British theatre is the poorer for the passing of David Nixon.

One final thought occurs to me. I write these lines on a day when railway services in the south are chaotic, due to another unofficial strike of some sort by railway workers who seem intent in killing off the goose which lays their golden eggs. I used to travel by train every day between Surbiton and the different theatres where I was playing for the Bunter shows. I should be very sorry and worried if I had to go daily to a theatre by train now, fifteen years further on.

VOL. 33

C.D. is old-fashioned enough to be proud to carry its serial

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number at its mast-head, betraying its age, every month. With this issue we start Volume 33. In a way it is startling.

This magazine has already lived longer than the Magnet, the memory of which it has done so much, down 33 years, to keep alive. It is interesting to speculate how much the Magnet would have been recalled now, in 1979, had C.D. not come over the horizon, way back in 1946.

Very soon, C.D. will have lived longer than the Gem, Hamilton's longest-running paper. That, indeed, is an intriguing thought.

C.D. itself has changed but little down the years. It depends on and thrives on the affection and loyalty of its readers. If anything, that affection may be warmer now than it has ever been, if the tone of the letters I receive every year is anything to go by. In one of the first letters of 1978, Mr. T. Hopkinson wrote: "Keep the old mag going, no matter what! I would hate to be without it".

And, thousands of letters later, at the end of 1978, Mrs. Mary Cadogan wrote: "C.D. gives us a little touch of Christmas, right through from January to December every year", and Mr. Edward Murch said: "The C.D. seems to get better and better and better as time goes on."

C.D. has always been gently but not wildly nostalgic. It has never been trendy. It has never advertised. If it ever had to do so, it would have had its day.

Inevitably, the hobby has changed a little in recent years. Many of those whose memories went back to the very beginnings of the main papers have passed on, taking their memories with them. Those who remain to carry on have a responsibility to make sure that the lovely old spirit of it all is unspoiled.

Today nostalgia is big business. Its harsh modernity contrasts with the real thing. A glut of anything undermines its value. So, a wee touch of nostalgia, as opposed to a storm of it, can be satisfying and delightful.

But I'm wandering in the twilight from the wood fire. C.D. moves into 1979 - and Vol. 33. I wish all my readers the very best of everything for 1979. The last year of the Seventies. How they have sped by!

THE EDITOR

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# Danny's Diary

JANUARY 1929

I was expecting to see Sir Daniel Penlerick in the New Year Honours List - or, at least, Daniel Penlerick O.B.E. (Old Boiled Egg) - but there is no New Year Honours List. Owing to the illness of the King, it has all had to be postponed.

In the Modern Boy there is an interview with Jackie Coogan, who had been in this country. There is a picture of him with an oil-can, beside the Flying Scotsman engine. They say he is the highest paid boy in the world. Lucky him, I say - but Mum says, poor boy!

The opening story of King of the Islands is "Bully of the South Seas". The bully is Jabez Wild, but Ken King is more than a match for him. Next "The Last Chance" in which the bully sets a problem for Ken, but Koko, the fuzzy-haired bo'sun takes a hand. Then "The Sailor's Secret". The sailorman is Jim Daunt, escaping from his enemies, and bringing with him trouble and excitement and the secret of a hidden treasure.

Final of the month is "Bars of Gold": "In a cabin aft, there was a skelton sitting at a table, with a rusty sword in his hand, and by his side a chest crammed with bars and bars of yellow gold." Ken King hardly believes the story, but Dandy Peters, the rascally trader, does. Great adventure tales.

Also in Modern Boy there is a new series of motor-cycle racing stories by Alfred Edgar. The flying series about George Porson, by G. E. Rochester, has ended.

There has been a railway smash at Ashchurch, near Tewkesbury, not very far from the scene of the Charfield disaster, and similar to it, in that a driver over-ran signals in fog. But there was no fire, and the train load was light. Four people were killed and a good many injured.

The first story in the Magnet this year is "Under Bunter's Thumb". Bunter finds a letter which the prefect Loder has written to a bookie, and our fat friend makes use of the hold he has over Loder. Romping fun.

The next tale, "Bunter, the Big-Game Hunter" was not by the real

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Frank Richards, and that's rare in the Magnet these days, thank goodness. Bunter is made to believe that his uncle is taking him to Africa.

But in the third week the Magnet blossomed out in even greater glory. There are free gifts which consist of three coloured metal motor-car badges and an album to keep them in. The three badges to start with are the Standard, with its Union Jack motif; The Minerva, a Belgian car, and another British car, the Alvis. There is a new editorial page entitled "Come into the Office, Boys!" a new serial "The Black Hawk" by G. E. Rochester, and a new series of St. Sam's tales in the centre pages. But, most important of all, is a wonderful new Greyfriars series starting with "From School to Hollywood". Fishy's father has a finger in the film pie of Hollywood. He plans to take a group of Greyfriars boys to Hollywood to make a public school film, but the Head thinks it is to be an educational trip. But Bunter finds out the secret - so he has to be included in the party. The party is a bit of a mixed bag, but Vernon-Smith and Coker & Co. are necessary I'm sure to keep the fun and excitement going.

The second story in this magnificent new series is "Bound for America" It's gorgeous - the best ever.

Everybody is talking about the enormous success of the English cricket team now out in Australia. We have never done so well. Our captain is the splendid young cricketer, A. P. F. Chapman, and the young fast bowler, Larwood, is making the Aussies sit up. But Australia also has a prizepacket - a new young player named Don Bradman, who hasn't been long in first-class cricket. But it's England's tour with a vengeance, and I hope we win the Ashes. We shall soon know.

The opening story in the Gem is "Under Suspicion" in which Manners is accused of stealing a postal-order. The real culprit was Cutts. Next "Talbot's Sacrifice" about Talbot and Marie Rivers, and their past. We have been here before.

"Up Against It" brings startling news. A new school for girls, Spalding Hall, is opened near St. Jim's - and Cousin Ethel goes there as a pupil. I suppose it had to come. Finally, "Gussy Lends a Hand" in which Gussy befriends the porter, Taggles. In the end, Taggles gets the sack, and starts his own barring-out.

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One of the Schoolboy's Own Libraries this month is "The Schoolboy Ventriloquist", a lovely and exciting tale in which Bunter is mistaken for Lord Mauleverer, and is kidnapped. It comes from the very early Magnet.

At the pictures this month we have seen Clara Bow in "Red Hair"; Alan Hale and Robert Armstrong in "The Leopard Lady" which is a good mystery story of circus life; Betty Balfour and Syd Chaplin in "A Little Bit of Fluff"; Moore Marriott in "Victory"; John Barrymore in "Tempest"; and Carol Brisson in a boxing film "The Ring".

Dad took Mum and me up to the Savoy Theatre in London to see a new play which has just started, "Journey's End" by R. C. Sheriff. I didn't like it much. It was all in a wartime dug-out near the front, and I found it dull.

The Popular has been wonderful again. "Ructions on the Sampson Ranch" was the opening Rio Kid story. The Kid has taken a job on the ranch. Sampson, the owner, is unable to pay a mortgage on his ranch, and Lawyer Files is about to foreclose. But the Kid provides the money, from his gold-mining adventure, and so becomes a partner in the ranch. Next week in "Shanghaied" the Kid is carried away by the crew of the Pond Lily, and is given the rope's end by the brutal Captain Shack.

Next week in "Turning the Tables" the Kid succeeds in outwitting the brutes of the Pond Lily. In the final tale of the month "The Rio Kid's Revenge", the Kid takes Captain Shack away to the Sampson Ranch to make a cowboy of him. Poetic justice.

Also running in the Popular is the St. Frank's series about the Boy From Bermondsey, Jack Mason. Just started is the St. Jim's series about Tom Merry being expelled and the school barring-out to support him. This was a Christmas series when it appeared in the Gem, so it's rumour that they don't start it till January in the Pop.

The famous magazine, the Boys' Own Paper, is fifty years old this month.

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(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 91, "The Schoolboy Ventriloquist" contained a few chapters from a 1910 Magnet entitled "The Cliff House Guest" and the whole of another Magnet "In Borrowed Plumes" from the end of 1913. The two parts did not really blend too well, but, in its time, the second story was superb and must have delighted the boys of 1913.

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Later on, the theme became a bit hackneyed. The second S. O. L. of the month, No. 92, was "The Freak of St. Freda's", which had run in serial form in the Popular. Though there were several tales about Posher P. Posh (all serialised in the Popular) written by G. E. Rochester, he was a little out of his element with school stories. His work of this class, always very near to farce, always reminded me of the school tales by Sidney Drew, and I, personally, never liked them.)

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# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

By the time you read these words Xmas will be over and the New Year begun. I hope everyone enjoyed the Christmas Festivities.

The article by Raymond Cure is one of two that he sent me all about Crystal Balls, etc. The second one will appear next month as a continuation on the theme. I trust you will all enjoy this excursion into what one might call the 'Occult'. Would some of you like to let me have a little article on your opinion of these contributions to Blakiana.

## "OF BLUE BOWLS - CRYSTAL BALLS AND THOSE THAT DEAL THEREIN"

by Raymond Cure

I suppose, even to the end of my time, I shall always be attracted by the sight of a fortune-teller sitting behind his or her crystal ball. A sight often seen in Blackpool during the holiday season, and sometimes seen on the covers of various types of magazines.

You know the type of thing, there in the foreground the Crystal Ball, usually on a special stand and hunched behind it the robed form of the soothsayer. Usually the artist adds a touch of mysticism by providing a light mist to envelope the scene. I have such a picture before me now. It is on the cover of Union Jack, No. 1112, dated 31st January, 1925, entitled "The Adventure of the Blue Bowl" the initials E.R.P. beneath the illustration. The Blue Bowl replaces the crystal ball, the hunched figure and the mystic mist remaining true to form. More of this in a while.

You will understand my 'yen' for the Crystal Ball when I tell you that back in the 1920's and 30's my mother was a well-known fortune

teller, going by the name of Madam Elliott. So we had a crystal ball, no mystic smoke mind, and so far as Ma and I was concerned we never saw anything in it. If we did it was only as to where our next meal was coming from. For a year or two Dad was a dying man and with no work for the healthy, he had no chance. I was around 11 years old when Ma took up crystal gazing at 6d. a time and our little family - Ma, Pa and I began to eat. Instead of soup and bread we saw rabbit on our plate and an occasional chicken. Even today when people ask what I think of fortune-telling, I always reply "It can put a meal on a hungry man's plate". Ma had no hand-outs in those days, from the Government or anywhere else (except the pawn-shop). However, enough of my history; I merely wanted to put my readers in the picture regarding my interest in the crystal-gazing cronies of which Prince Menes appears to be one. Not that he has a crystal ball on show. In its place and fully exposed to the keen Union Jack readers is the Blue Bowl, our soothsayer crouched over it in the prescribed manner. It appears that this chappie behind the steaming Blue Bowl is none other than Prince Menes. Now that smoke enshrouded Blue Bowl is really something, the mystery man really had the goods there. None of your crystal gazing customers at 6d. a time. He could whip your senses away from you in a few minutes and for free with that thing. But there he was, Prince Menes, supreme head of the Order of Ra, the Egyptian sect of which he is High Priest. A mysterious organisation whose activities had just become known in the West. Founded many thousands of years ago by a person of the same name - Prince Menes, brother of Menetakhman, the ruling Pharaoh of the time. Our Prince Menes is a re-incarnation of the aforesaid Menes. So you will gather Ma was no match for him.

Now if you were a beautiful damsel such as Miss Alysia Dennison or Mlle Yvonne and this chappie got you around his blue Bowl, you would vanish - they did! Blake's job was to find them, he did! Still, stick to the crystal ball folks, in all ma's years nothing like that happened. Well, here you have two tales of mystery and adventure and the Occult. By the way, I have not told you the real truth about the Blue Bowl. Sexton Blake and Tinker found out how dangerous it was - the hard way. Read all about it in U.J's 1112 and 1113.

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CROOKS IN LOVE

by S. Gordon Swan

Several of the criminals in the Sexton Blake Saga had female accomplices, notably George Marsden Plummer and Dr. Huxton Rymer. However, as the stories in which they appeared were written before the permissive age -- perhaps fortunately -- these associations seemed to be purely "business" partnerships, leaving the reader to assume that a more intimate relationship prevailed.

In "The Boy Without a Memory" by John W. Bobin, published in 1919, we find Plummer working with Kathleen Farland, alias Kitty the Moth, who prides herself on the fact that she is the only woman the master criminal has ever worked with. This is rather contradicted by a story from the same author in *The Union Jack* of the previous year, in which Plummer was associated with an adventuress called Lucille Masters. When G. H. Teed took over the character, Plummer found a new partner in Vali Mata Vall -- not to mention Muriel Marl.

But Plummer actually in love is another matter than these liaisons. I can recall two instances when the master crook found himself in this condition. In the first case I must rely on memory of a story I read about sixty years ago, for I do not possess a copy of "The Man with the Green Eyes".

I recollect that Plummer was on a ship that was torpedoed and that he got ashore with another man who died. Plummer found that the latter was wearing a false beard and was evidently an impersonator. The criminal himself took over the impersonation and went to England. There he met a girl whose name escapes me but with whom he fell in love. In his present guise he could not pursue any courtship of her, so he assumed another identity. The name of Leslie Fastness occurs to me in this connection. Needless to say, his intentions were thwarted and he did not marry the girl, but escaped from custody at the end. I imagine that this was the last Plummer story that Norman Goddard ever wrote, indeed, it may have been the very last Sexton Blake story by him before he was killed in the Great War.

Plummer was again to fall in love, this time with an American girl in Virginia, in "The Hooded Riders". Ruth Carstairs would be owner of a copper mine when she was twenty-one. At present the mine was being managed by her half-uncle, Reuben Burke. Plummer, who

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had escaped from the custody of Sexton Blake and Detective-Inspector Martin in San Francisco and made his way to Arizona and thence to Virginia, came to work at the mine and fell in love with the girl. He saved her from the unwelcome attentions of the mine-manager's son and had a fight with the manager himself, who saw the criminal's eyes turn green and, recognising him from a description in a newspaper, communicated with Sexton Blake. It transpired that the girl herself was in love with the owner of a neighbouring plantation, Norman Barrymore, so here we have a three-cornered situation.

Oil was discovered in the mine and Plummer made a truce with Burke and his son, vowing he would get Norman Barrymore removed from the scene. Burke sent a telegram to Blake cancelling his previous message but Blake ignored it, smelling a rat. Meanwhile, Plummer recruited some men to pose as Ku Klux Klansmen and kidnap Barrymore, who was rumoured to have negro blood. The plan was to marry Burke's son to Ruth, but Plummer decided to double-cross his partners and marry her himself. He promised to save Barrymore's life if Ruth would marry him -- Plummer -- and was on the verge of consummating his scheme when Blake and some genuine Klansmen arrived to upset his plans. Still, Plummer got away again to plot another day.

A character who may be remembered only by those who have read Blake stories published before 1920 was Kathleen Maitland, better known as Broadway Kate (probably based on the notorious Chicago May). She was the widow of Ezra Q. Maitland, an American crook who was shot in the Tower. In "The Case of the International Adventurer" she joined forces with Aubrey Dexter, a criminal who had fought in the war and been invalided out of the army. After stealing some gold and getting it away from England in a tramp steamer, Dexter was embarrassed by professions of love from Broadway Kate. He had no intention of getting further involved with her so, taking advantage of an outbreak of typhoid on the ship, he faked his death with the connivance of the rascally skipper. A coffin was carried ashore on a lonely island and Broadway Kate remained beside it while the skipper went away, ostensibly to hurry up his men with tools to dig a grave. The grieving woman suddenly realised he was a long time returning and discovered to her consternation that the ship's boat had left and she was marooned. With the aid of a screwdriver the

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skipper had conveniently left she opened the coffin and found some logs of wood wrapped in sacking in lieu of a corpse. Also there was an apologetic letter from Dexter regretting his action, hoping that she would be picked up by a passing vessel and informing her that he would deposit a considerable sum to her credit under another name in a London bank. Needless to say, Broadway Kate's love speedily turned to hate, but she was to have her revenge. The steamer was caught in a storm and wrecked; Dexter, a survivor, managed to get ashore -- only to be stabbed by Broadway Kate and his body washed away.

This was also the first story in which Glory Gale, the girl reporter, appeared. She had followed the crooks and was a prisoner aboard the steamer. Dexter released her from captivity and she was able to capture Broadway Kate after the latter had stabbed Dexter. She was able to hand the woman over to Sexton Blake and Detective-Inspector Martin, who arrived in a yacht belonging to one of Blake's friends. So ended Kathleen Maitland's love affair with Aubrey Dexter.

She faded out of the picture but Dexter was destined to survive until the nineteen-thirties. In later years he, too, acquired a lady partner, Sonia Yoseff.

\* \* \* \* \*

WANTED: C.D. No. 382 (Oct. 1978). New Year Greetings to Eric, our Editor, Ben, Roger and hobby friends everywhere.

E. THOMSON, 6 RITCHIE PLACE, EDINBURGH, EH11 1DU.

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WANTED TO PURCHASE: Good price paid. Pink Boys' Realms including the complete serials "Hal Read, the Running Man", and/or "The Web of the Spider", and/or "The Curse of the Curzons". Bound volumes preferred; must be in good condition.

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# Nelson Lee Column

SHERLOCK HOLMES and NELSON LEE

by C. H. Churchill

I have just read a book written by Michael Harrison entitled "In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes". It was published by Cassells originally in 1958 with a second edition in 1959. It reconstructs the background of life against which Holmes lived. I found it most absorbing and think that any Sherlock Holmes fans who have not yet read it should endeavour to remedy this as soon as possible.

The interesting point I wish to make is this - on page 239 where the writer describes how Holmes often went to St. James's Hall to attend musical concerts, I came across the following -

" - but I feel that Holmes, with his intense interest in all types of humanity, might as well have attended "A Monstre (sic) Musical and Dramatic Fete" in St. James's Hall, as one of the more refined concerts. Sample: "New Comic Ditty" (first time) Glycerina (Words by Nelson Lee, Esq., the younger.)

The writer then put an asterisk and on the bottom of the page gave the explanation for the asterisk. It says -

\*It is curious but "Nelson Lee" was the name of a fictional detective whose adventures - at 1d. or 2d. a week - delighted schoolboys of many generations.

So, apparently, the author, Michael Harrison, knew of the Nelson Lee Library and one might assume read it as a boy.

Just as a matter of interest, the St. James's Hall and Restaurant mentioned opened in 1858 and cost £60,000. It extended from Piccadilly to Regent Street Quadrant, entrance to the building being had from both streets. It was demolished in 1905 and the Piccadilly Hotel now stands on its site.

This is just a sample of the information contained in this excellent book. Also included are many photographs of different parts of London, taken round the turn of the century, the time when Holmes

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and Watson were dashing about in Hansom cabs and "the game was afoot".

THE OTHER DETECTIVE

by S. Gordon Swan

Many admirable articles have been written about G. H. Teed by Josie Packman, Christopher Lowder and others, but these were mainly devoted to his work in The Sexton Blake Saga. Little has been said about his stories in The Nelson Lee Library -- at least, in recent years -- except for an article by Reuben Godsave in the C.D. Annual for 1961, which dealt with part of the 3-story series about the Crystal Urn of Atlantis.

Various authors contributed to the first twenty numbers of the N.L.L., Teed and Brooks among them; then these two ran the paper between them until St. Franks took over, with the exception of two isolated stories by A. S. Hardy and Maxwell Scott. All in all, Teed contributed thirty yarns, some of them of a highly imaginative nature and some mystical in the vein of the four original Prince Menes stories which appeared in The Union Jack.

I remember buying No. 1 of the N.L.L. -- I was always keen on Number Ones and Double Numbers of different periodicals -- then I neglected this new library until I saw No. 26 in a newsagents and was at once attracted by the design on the cover. The title was "The Crystal Urn" and the tale dealt with a sacred vase dating back to the days of the legendary continent of Atlantis. The Lid of this urn was found in Yucatan while the urn itself somehow found its way into the possession of the late Lucrezia Borgia. I write from memory as I have no copies of this series. This discovery suggested a link between the two continents.

The theory of Atlantis has always fascinated me and I believe that it once existed -- or, at any rate, that an advanced civilisation existed before recorded history. I have personal reasons for this belief, having witnessed demonstrations of the kind that Menes conducted when he hypnotised the priestess Zanona and led her back into the past to trace various incarnations of the treacherous priests who betrayed him centuries before.

To return to the N.L.L. Mademoiselle Miton (The Black Wolf) intruded into this series of stories. She was an adventuress who had encountered Nelson Lee before. There was no romance as in the case

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of Blake and Yvonne, but there was more than a hint that she had a yen for Lee, to employ the modern idiom. In this instance she owed her life to Nelson Lee when he rescued her from the priests of Wady Pera in the Atlas Mountains. These priests had come to recover the urn from alien hands.

G. H. Teed wrote another 3-story series with an occult flavour, dealing with *The Genghis*, *The Mystery Man of Lhasa*. This sinister character was equipped with dangerous powers and threatened dire destruction to the West until his plans were circumvented by Lee and Nipper.

Three other stories by Teed were among my favourites. One was "The Clue of the Raincoat", which featured Dr. Mortimer Crane, a character somewhat in the Huxton Rymer mould. This episode took place in New York and environs and Teed's descriptions of the locale showed an intimate acquaintance with the environment. Another classic story was "The Broken Vase" which incorporated an ingenious method of murder. The murderer presented the vase to his intended victim, knowing it contained a deadly poison gas, then played a violin outside the victim's house until he struck the note which shattered the vase by sound vibration and disseminated the poison fumes.

The third tale was "The Great Air Mystery", in which Nelson Lee, as an aviator, was abducted and taken to a secret city in North Africa. This was part of a plot by an individual who desired to start a new civilisation and conceived the idea of founding a race by kidnapping airmen whom he deemed the type necessary to his scheme, being adventurous, daring and courageous. Several girls were also abducted as essential adjuncts to his fantastic ideals. Needless to say, he was thwarted by Lee and Nipper.

G. H. Teed was in great form in these Nelson Lee tales and seemed more imaginative than in his Blake stories of the same period, save for the excellent Menes yarns. Elsewhere I have written of the five Nelson Lee-Teed serials which appeared in *The Prairie Library* (three of which introduced Huxton Rymer, two of them in collaboration with *The Black Wolf*) and were, no doubt, originally intended for the Nelson Lee Library.



The Genghis series	N.L.L. Old Series 36, 40, 46.
The Clue of the Raincoat	" " 71.
The Broken Vase	" " 83.
The Great Air Mystery	" " 86.

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PRINTERS' ABJECT APOLOGIES - OMITTED FROM THE 1978  
C.D. ANNUAL

Seasonal Greetings to all readers of the C.D. everywhere. Best Wishes to all my correspondents and hobby friends, especially at Northern O.B.B.C. and Miss M. Harlow, Rosemary Keogh, John Kirkham, Maurice Hall, Bert Holmes, Laurie Young, Norman Shaw, our Editor, John Robyns, Nic Gayle. In Australia, John Bartholomew; in New Zealand, Mabel McKay; in the U.S.A., Jim Iraldi. ESPECIALLY WANTED: Magnets 1343, 1402 and 1403 and many numbers below 1322 - in good condition, suitable for binding. Various Hamiltonia for sale or exchange.

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

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When your Xmas stocking's mildewed -  
Gone limp where presents spilled -  
Don't pine: On Xmas Eve just stick  
It up and get it filled. JOHN BURSLEM

\* \* \* \* \*

WANTED: Original Drawings by Chapman and Macdonald, Howard Baker Magnets, Vols. 18, 21, 22, 23, 29, 38, 39; Greyfriars Book Club Editions, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4; B. B's Barring Out, Bunter Out of Bounds (with DJ's).

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVE., ABERDEEN. Tel. 491716.

\* \* \* \* \*

Warmest Seasonal Greetings to our esteemed Editor, bless him; to Tom and all Midland Club friends; Uncle Ben and all the London Club; to Cyril Rowe, Albert Watkins, New Zealand and especially to Henry Webb and family.

STAN KNIGHT, CHELTENHAM.

\* \* \* \* \*

Wilson is alive and well and may play for Scotland in the next World Cup.

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JOHN BARTHOLOMEW, 77 EDDINGTON ST., NORTH ROCKHAMPTON, QUEENSLAND 4701, AUSTRALIA, sends greetings all hobby friends in Australia and England, for Christmas and best in 1979.

\* \* \* \* \*

Felicitations everyone, especially Josie, Bob, Stan, Bertie. FOR SALE: Friends, Realms, Chuckles, Lees. S.a.e. list.

ROWE, LINDENS  
HORSFORD, NORWICH, NR10 3AN.

FOR SALE: Mint Modern Boys bound in half years, 1928 to 1931; many illustrated Hamilton stories; £30 each volume plus postage. Ring MAURICE HALL, Walton-on-Thames 24848, Christmas Greetings to ALL Collectors, especially Eric Fayne our hard-working Editor.

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OUR CLASSIC SERIAL. We bring you a new "classic" serial, well over seventy years old, when Jack Blake was the king among schoolboy characters and Tom Merry and Harry Wharton were still waiting in the wings.

### THE MISADVENTURES OF MARMADUKE

Jack Blake sat on the table in Study No. 6 in the School House at St. Jim's, with a thoughtful expression on his face. Herries sat on the window-sill, his hands in his trousers pockets, staring at him.

"The question is," Blake remarked reflectively, "what are we going to do with the afternoon? The ground's not fit for practice. Figgins & Co. have gone off somewhere, so we can't get up a row with the New House fellows. What are we going to do, Herries?"

"Don't know," said Herries.

Blake drummed with his heels on the legs of the table.

"There's poor old Arthur Augustus still in the sanatorium, with the cold he caught in that beastly castle," he said, "and Dig's gone off to see a sick relation. I don't know why his relations want to fall sick on a half-holiday. Hallo, Kildare!"

Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, put his head in at the door.

"I see you're not busy," he remarked. "Will you do me a favour?"

"Rather!" said Blake promptly. "A million, if you like."

"One will be enough," laughed Kildare. "I want you to go down to the railway-station at Rylcombe, and meet

a new boy who is coming to St. Jim's. Will you go?"

"Like a bird!"

"The train will be in at three. The Head asked me to send someone, as the new kid is coming into our house. You youngsters could meet him all right, and bring him up to the school."

"What's the new chap's name?"

"Smythe - Marmaduke Smythe."

"What a stunning name! And he's coming into the School House?"

"Yes, and I expect he'll be put into this study at first - at least, till D'Arcy's well. Some of the studies are being papered now, and there's nowhere else to put him at present. Now, you'd better cut off, as it's a long walk to Rylcombe. You'll see to him all right, Blake? I can trust you?"

"You can rely on me," said Blake. "Now, Herries, the sooner we buzz off the better."

He slid off the table. The captain of St. Jim's was looking at him rather dubiously. He knew Blake of old.

"Mind, no larks, Blake," he said. "You're to bring the new boy straight to the school."

"Honour bright!" said Blake.

Kildare was satisfied. With a nod, he left the study.

"Seems sorter uneasy in his mind, doesn't he?" Blake remarked. "Just as if we would play any giddy games - solemn chaps like us. Come on, Herries. I wonder what the new chap will be like. If he's anything like his name, he must be a ripper."

The juniors took their caps and sallied out. It was a good walk to the village, so they set off at a good pace.

"Lots of time," Blake remarked, glancing up at the clock as they entered the railway-station. "Let's go on the platform, and wait for the train to come in."

The train was late, as it usually was at Rylcombe, but it came puffing in at last. Blake and Herries watched the passengers alighting. They were curious to see the new boy who was to share their study for an undefined period.

Half a dozen persons alighted from the train. Most of them were country people, and only one was youthful, so this must be the new boy for St. Jim's. They were not charmed with the stranger.

He was a lanky and ungainly youth, very expensively dressed, with a thick gold watch-chain and diamond studs. His face was pasty, and there was an expression of lofty haughtiness upon it which showed that Marmaduke Smythe's opinion of himself and of his own importance was an exceedingly good one.

"Porter - porter!" His voice was not musical, and he was evidently accustomed to speaking in the imperative mood. "Fellow, where are you?"

Blake and Herries looked at each other.

"And that's coming into our study," murmured Herries.

"I'll take him somewhere and lose him," said Blake wildly.

"Can't be did! Remember, you promised Kildare."

Blake walked up to the stranger. The latter was looking annoyed. He stared at Blake.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "Marmaduke Smythe, I suppose?"

"That is my name," said the youth.

"My name is Blake. I belong to the School House at St. Jim's. Kildare asked me to meet you."

"Oh? And who is Kildare?"

"Captain of the school."

"Oh! I don't know much about public schools. I have been educated by a tutor," said the new boy loftily. "I should have thought that Dr. Holmes would have sent a carriage - or, at least, a trap - for me. This is very negligent of him, and I shall speak plainly on the subject when I reach the school."

Blake stared at Herries. Herries leaned against an automatic machine and gasped.

"Mad as a hatter!" murmured Blake.

"Are you alluding to me?" asked Smythe, frowning. "I warn you that I require none of your impertinence, Hake, or Shake, or whatever your name is. Ah, here is the porter at last. How dare you keep me waiting like this?"

The porter grinned.

"Beg your pardon, sir," he said. "I didn't know it was a blooming hemperor who was calling me. If I'd known it was Tsar who wanted me --"

"Don't be insolent. I intended to give you a shilling, but now I shall give you nothing. You may not be aware whom

I am. I am Marmaduke Smythe, and my father is Smythe, the millionaire. I am accustomed to being treated with respect. Chake, or Blake, or whatever you are, you say you were sent to meet me? Very good. You can help the porter place my trunks on some vehicle."

And the new boy walked haughtily away.

"I'm dreaming!" said Blake feebly. "It can't be real. Where's he getting to now? Come on. I've promised Kildare to take the thing to St. Jim's, and I'll do it or die in the attempt."

The chums hurried out of the station after Marmaduke. He stood outside, surveying the shabby old station hack, with a disapproving expression on his face.

"Really, this is most inconsiderate of Dr. Holmes!" he exclaimed. "I cannot ride in that absurd and antiquated vehicle. Blake, here's half-a-crown for you. Go and find me a cab."

Blake looked at the half-crown extended towards him, and then at Marmaduke.

"Do you hear me?" said Smythe irritably.

"I hear you," said Blake. "I won't say what I think of you, Marmaduke, because it would take too long, and I should have to use shocking language. Get into that hack."

"I shall do nothing of the kind."

"Get into that hack!"

"How dare you address me in that manner? You are insolent. I have half a mind to chastise you."

"I don't believe you have half a mind," said Blake. "I don't want to hurt

you. I suppose you've been in the habit of bossing people about at home in Shoreditch --"

"Fellow, my father's mansion is in Park Lane."

"Petticoat Lane would be nearer your mark, I should think. I suppose you're rolling in money, and it's got into your head. For your own sake, I warn you that that sort of thing won't go down at St. Jim's. I've promised our captain to take you to the school. I'd rather drop you in a ditch. Get into that hack."

"I refuse!"

Marmaduke was interrupted. Blake seized Marmaduke by the shoulders, and swung him round.

"Open the door, Herries."

The grinning Herries opened the door of the hack. Marmaduke was struggling wildly, but he was as a child in the hands of the champion junior athlete of St. Jim's. Blake sent him into the despised vehicle like a bullet from a gun, and Marmaduke went down on his knees there.

"Come on, Herries. Porter, shove that trunk on."

Marmaduke scrambled to his feet. He turned on Blake like a wild cat and clawed at him. Blake got a scratch along the cheek that drew blood, and he gave a startled yell.

"That chap's dangerous! Sit on him!"

Down went Marmaduke again. Blake put his feet on the prostrate youth's chest, pinning him down.

"Shove your trotters on him, Herries. He's going to stay there till we get to the school," said Blake. "That will be a little lesson in respectfulness to young

gentlemen like us."

"Let me get up," roared Marmaduke.

"Not just yet, ducky. I'm afraid you'll get a clump from my boot if you move. There, I told you so."

Marmaduke, rumped and dusty and furious, lay still. The hack rolled away towards St. Jim's. The porter grinned after it, and the driver was chuckling on the box.

Blake's anger never lasted long, and in a few minutes he allowed Marmaduke to rise and sit down. The heir of millions looked far from grateful for this concession. He scowled like a demon.

"Feel better now?" asked Blake sympathetically. "If you stay at St. Jim's long, we shall soon cure you of being such a howling snob. You ought to feel grateful. You don't look it, though."

Blake entered into conversation with Herries, and the hack was passing along the lane bordering the castle wood, when Marmaduke suddenly tore the door open and leaped out.

The vehicle was not going quickly, but Marmaduke was clumsy, and he fell. He went with a splash into a deep puddle. He gave a yell, and scrambled up, smothered with mud from head to foot.

"Stop!" shouted Blake.

He leaped from the hack. His word was at stake. He had promised Kildare to bring the new boy straight to St. Jim's and it had to be done somehow.

Marmaduke, with a howl of defiance, bolted into the footpath through the wood. He did not know that this was a short cut to St. Jim's.

Blake sprinted after the flying Marmaduke, with Herries at his heels. The driver of the hack chuckled hoarsely,

and drove on. Marmaduke was almost through the wood when Blake's outstretched hand dropped on his shoulder from behind.

"Got you!" gasped Blake.

But he had not quite got him. Marmaduke put on a sprint and broke away, and ran into the road. Here the school was in sight. Marmaduke dashed across the road and tried to leap the ditch on the other side. At the same moment, Blake clutched his jacket.

The result was that Marmaduke pitched head foremost into the ditch, which was a deep one, and Blake, jerked forward by his fall followed him in. Herries halted and stared at them in dismay. Blake's head came out of the flowing, muddy ditch. He still had hold of Marmaduke, who was struggling wildly.

"Lend a hand!" roared Blake.

Herries lent a hand, and dragged Blake out, and between them they landed Marmaduke, gasping like a newly-caught fish.

"Well, this is a go!" said Herries.

All the fight was taken out of Marmaduke. He was soaked to the skin, caked with mud, and ornamented with festoons of green slime. Blake was not in much better condition; but he was triumphant. He took a tight grip on the new boy's arm.

"Take his other arm, Herries."

"If you'll excuse me, Blake, I'd rather not. He's a bit too whiffy for me to touch, after that ditch."

"Oh, all right! I think Kildare will be pleased. We'd better take the thing to his study, I suppose."

Herries chuckled.

"He won't be pleased if you do.

Better shove him under a pump or something first, and yourself, too, old chap."

"Stuff, I've got to report to Kildare, and he ought to know what I've been through for the sake of keeping my word."

And Blake marched the sullen and furious, but now subdued, Marmaduke, up

to the school gates, and still with an iron grip on him, marched him in.

(Come back to early in the Century again next month for another instalment of this Old, Old Story.)

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WHO WAS JOHN FINNEMORE?

by W. O. G. Loftis

In my schooldays, and hearing so much about the classical school story Tom Brown's Schooldays, I borrowed a copy from the Public Library. After struggling through several chapters I finally gave up, the prose and dialogue being too heavy for my youthful tastes. Disappointed, I returned the volume. Next to it on the shelves was a series of novels dealing with Teddy Lester's Schooldays. Borrowing several of these, I found the tales of Slapton School much lighter to read and to my taste. Within a short time I had borrowed and read all the six Teddy Lester novels. The author was of course John Finnemore who also wrote the very first novel about boy scouts The Wolf Patrol. Finnemore was in my opinion a semi classical boys' author, whose books sold in probably hundreds of thousands in dozens of editions. But what is really remarkable about all this, is that despite the enormous research into biographical details about boys' authors that have been published the last twenty-five years, not one solitary scrap of personal data is known about John Finnemore, or at least when he died. It was Dr. Jack Doupe in retirement in the Canary Islands who first drew my attention to this. Jack goes even further and makes a very strong case that John Finnemore was really 'Joseph Finnemore R.I.' the famous painter, and a writer of boys' tales in a minor way. His theory is based mainly on a large picture of John Finnemore that appeared in B.O.P., Vol. 41 (1919) when biographical details such as born in Birmingham 1860, etc., match those exactly of Joseph that are to be found in any Who's Who.

Investigation by myself shows that John and Joseph both started around 1898 in boys' literature. John's last book that was original was in 1939 the very year that Joseph died, the last named having three

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spinster daughters - one being Hilda who was also a writer for the B.O.P. Hilda could not have been John as she was only a small girl when his stories started. The possibility that 'John' could have been the brother of Joseph can also be ruled out as the latter only had one brother named William, who was not a writer. During his long career that spanned forty years, John Finnemore had two main publishers. W. & R. Chambers who published the Teddy Lester books and A. & C. Black. Both have been contacted, and unfortunately cannot help much as their old records have long been destroyed. The latter publisher is of the strong opinion that John Finnemore was the real name of the writer - which deepens the mystery. Brian Doyle in his Authors Who's Who states that both authors were different people, whilst in Men Behind Boys Fiction, we have a second initial 'E' after his name, that I believe came from some A.P. official record some years ago. Most of John Finnemore's stories were serialised in the early Boys' Realm, and I'm hoping to consult these records early in the New Year. This fascinating mystery reminds me strongly of the Druce/Duke of Portand mystery where two London personalities and both eccentrics were identical in appearance and still thought to be one and the same person. If John Finnemore was not Joseph Finnemore the famous artist whose works are in the Queens Collection, why is nothing known about John Finnemore, a splendid writer for boys?

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### BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

#### No. 58. TILL THE CLOUDS ROLL BY

We opened the new term with a glorious film in superb technicolor - glorious to anyone who loves animals like most of us do. This came from M.G.M. and was "Son of Lassie", with Donald Crisp, Elizabeth Taylor and Roddy McDowall in support of the canine star. A big supporting programme included a Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon "Professor Tom".

Next, a double-feature programme,

and a good one. From Warner Bros. came Rosalind Russell in "Roughly Speaking" plus, from M.G.M., Abbott and Costello in Hollywood. A coloured cartoon was "Henpecked Hoboes".

Then a big technicolor revue from M.G.M.: Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly and Judy Garland in "The Ziegfeld Follies". In the same bill was a Bugs Bunny colour cartoon "The Hare-Brained Hypnotist".

Next, from M.G.M.: Wallace

Beery and Margaret O'Brien in "Bad Bascomb". The supporting show included a coloured Traveltalk "Land of the Mayas" and a coloured cartoon "Flop Goes the Weasel". One of the lovely potted musicals was "Plantation Melodies". I wish I could hear them now.

The following week brought, from M.G.M., Lionel Barrymore in "On Borrowed Time". A Bugs Bunny colour cartoon was "Super Rabbit", a Traveltalk was "Modern Guatemala City", "Playing by Ear" was a Pete Smith, and a lot more.

Next, from M.G.M., came Kathryn Grayson in "Two Sisters from Boston", and a coloured cartoon was "I Love to Take Orders".

Next came another double-feature programme: from Warner's Helmut Dantine (whoever he was - or she?) in "Escape in the Desert", plus, from M.G.M., William Powell and Esther Williams in "The Hoodlum Saint". (In that order they feature in my programme sheet, but I think that we probably played Hoodlum Saint as first-feature. I see it was 8223 ft, in length, while "Escape from the Desert" was 7500 ft. Both films quite long.

Next week, from M.G.M., Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland in "Love Laughs at Andy Hardy", plus the usual varied programme with "The Mission Trail", a coloured Traveltalk, "The Diamond Demon", a Pete Smith, "Californian Junior Symphony", a potted musical, and a coloured cartoon "Bingo Crosbyana". Not to mention the News. Quite a show.

Then yet another double-feature show: from M.G.M., Butch Jenkins in a delightful film "My Brother Talks to Horses", plus, from Warner's, Charles Boyer in

"Confidential Agent". In the same bill we had a Fitzpatrick Travel Talk in colour: "Looking Around London". Evidently, Fitzpatrick and his team were on this side of the pond for a while, for the following week we were playing a Traveltalk "Over the Seas to Belfast".

The main feature the following week came from M.G.M. and was the big technicolor musical "Till the Clouds Roll By" starring Robert Walker and Judy Garland. It was the biography of Jerome Kern, Judy Garland appearing as Marilyn Miller. I don't remember whether it was good, but it was a very long film, running to 12,182 ft. A coloured cartoon was "Egghead Rides Again".

Next week, another Musical from M.G.M. This time it was Frank Sinatra, Kathryn Grayson, and Jimmy Durante in "It Happened in Brooklyn". I think this was the film in which Sinatra sang a song, very popular in its day, named "I Believe". (Another and different "I Believe" song came out a few years later, I think, with a religious flavour and the Sinatra one is forgotten now.) A coloured cartoon was "Comy Concerto".

To end the term, yet another double-feature programme. From Warner's, Barbara Stanwyck in "Indiscretion", plus, from M.G.M., Signe Hasso (what a name!) and Edmund Gwenn in "Dangerous Partners". A Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon was "Solid Serenade".

(ANOTHER ARTICLE

IN THIS SERIES

NEXT MONTH.)



CHUCKLES (1914 - 1923)

by C. Rowe

This favourite comic of mine started with a three-colour front page, a red and black centre spread and back page, and with eight pages on 10th January, 1914. Surprisingly, having had little time to build up a circulation before the outbreak of the First World War, it continued uninterrupted till 1st December, 1923, a total of 517 issues. Then it was re-named "Jungle Jinks" for a further 62 issues.

Why its limited success, and then its fade-out? I think it married two interests and provided two themes, catering for the juveniles with its comic pictures and for early teenagers with its stories. Witness the school stories by Charles Hamilton, and the serials which provided some three-quarters of the letter-press, the remaining quarter being a tale of rather more juvenile character.

I reason that, with the coming of printing in colour, the Amalgamated Press were trying their hand at a cross between the black and white popular comics, Chips and Comic Cuts, and the coloured ones of Puck and the more popular Rainbow. That is, a more mature infilling and at a popular price of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

Maturity showed in the Courtfield School tales of Charles Hamilton, the Ferrers Locke tales, and "The War Lord" by Michael Storm, with rather less interest perhaps in the serials by Harry Revel, i. e. the long-running "Adventure Island", followed by his "Middies of the Dauntless" and its sequel "Chums of the Sea".

Samways' "Teddy Baxter" tales of Claremont ran from before my earliest copy 119 as complete stories until 231 where my sequence breaks, and Dicky Royle at Belminster followed at least from 267 to 328 as complete tales, and in a serial from 329 to 369, whereafter Tom Figg, the ventriloquist, entered Belminster and complete tales resumed until the final issue.

In the early issues a more juvenile tale each week told of Captain Custard and his nephew Nib.

By 1915 the price was 1d. and Chuckles Colony, a half-page tale introducing all the pictured characters was running, the overlords being Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy, who were portrayed on the front page.

Loo Lummee, Tommy Traddles, Okay Pokay, Mustard Keen, etc., all played occasional roles.

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By No. 225, the price was 1½d. and on reaching No. 460 it became 2d. but the size was increased to 12 pages. Breezy Ben & Dismal Dutchy held the front page till animal friends, Pongo and his Merry Playmates took over in No. 286. In 350, Wendy, a schoolgirl, joined them and took nominal charge, but in 388 Breezy Ben came back and continued till the close, but the paper had, for some time, been going more juvenile.

There appeared an Editor's Page of jokes and tricks, and a number of serials were all aimed at younger readers. "The Fairy School", "The Cinema Princess" and others seemed more there for the six-year olds.

Chuckles Schoolship, a half-page tale in a series, on the lines of Chuckles Colony, was more robust. What was always pleasing was the little square at the masthead, which showed the various characters in the paper as the years passed by. And, of course, the cut-out puzzles and models on the back page, including Greyfriars School and St. Jim's.

Altogether a pleasant experiment, and certainly a success in its first six years, and never negligible, the small print of the final period giving an immense amount of reading matter, in each issue.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Is it certain that Hamilton wrote some stories for Chuckles? It is many years since I last saw a copy of Chuckles, but I read one or two of the Courtfield Council School tales and doubted whether they came from Hamilton's pen. Dismal Dutchy with Breezy Ben had some full page comic adventures in the closing months of the Boys' Friend. I wonder whether they were originals, or reprints.)

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FERRERS LOCKE

by Edward Murch

No-one would deny that the character of Ferrers Locke was directly inspired by Sherlock Holmes - the very rhythms of their names are the same - but how did Frank Richards come to call him Ferrers?

In my part of the country there is a Bere Ferrers and a Newton Ferrers so I asked the local library if the word had any specific meaning. All they could say was that the two places were once in the Manor of one William de Ferrers, and took part of their names from him.

Perhaps Frank Richards had been down this way, and the names had caught his fancy; but I think the chances are that he got the name from another source - one connected with Sherlock Holmes himself. In

an adventure called "The Priory School" Holmes tells us: "I am retained in the case of the Ferrers Documents ..." Was this then the source of the unusual Christian name?

Interestingly in the same story (significantly one with a school setting) Holmes anticipates Bob Cherry by exclaiming: "Halloa! halloa! halloa!" He does it again in the adventure called "The Golden Pince-nez".

Another obvious connexion with Holmes, of course, is that the Head of St. Jim's was Dr. Holmes. I wonder if the two were related?

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## News of the Clubs

### MIDLAND

Meeting held 28th November, 1978

Our November meeting was enhanced by members of the recently-formed Friars' Club, Bob Acraman, Len Berg and Brian Simmonds. Bob Blythe of the Friars' Club sent in an apology. He could not attend because of pressure of work.

In accordance with our usual custom we gave all three guests the opportunity of addressing the meeting and informing us how they became interested in the old papers.

Our usual feature, Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item were on display. The Anniversary Number was Nelson Lee Library No. 547 (old series), The Cellar of Secrets, one of the famous Ezra Quirke series, dated 28th November, 1925 and 53 years old to the day. The Collectors' Item was a volume of Nelson Lees, Nos. 53 to 65 and dated 10th June, 1916 to 3rd September, 1916. Our guests were very interested in this feature.

Bob Acraman had in his possession the original handwritten diaries of Herbert Leckenby.

He asked for permission to read a specimen of Herbert's school-boy memories. This was very amusing reading as it dealt with a curious schoolmaster named "Sam". Nobody seemed to know his other name, but he seems to have reduced work dodging and laziness to a fine art. He occupied most of his time in the classroom spotting winners which

came in last, from the sports page of his newspaper while the boys did very much as they pleased. He confiscated Herbert's copy of "The Marvel" and refused to return it to Herbert when asked. Herbert found him absorbed in it himself.

We entertained our visitors quite royally with refreshments, hot coffee or tea and luscious mince pies baked by one of our lady members, Christine Brettell.

A film showing Fleetway House the home of the Magnet and Gem, was provided by Bob Acraman.

Our next meeting will be on 30th January, 1979.

JACK BELLFIELD - Correspondent.

### CAMBRIDGE

The Club met on Sunday, 3rd December, at 20 Wingate Way, the home of Vic Hearn. We were pleased to welcome Mary Cadogan as guest speaker. Among notices the Secretary said that an article "Childhood heroes" by Mary and Patricia Craig, had appeared in a recent issue of T.V. Times and passed this round.

Mary fascinated the members with a talk on "some neglected authors". She recalled a letter from L. E. Ransome she had received in 1972 in which in thanking her for a letter she had written to him, Ransome said that looking back on the forty million words he had written of juvenile stories he had wondered whether his work had really been worth while, or had he just drifted through life. His closing sentence was "You have made a dull day bright for me". She recalled Geoffrey Wilde's remark, when writing of Brooks, that it is our loss that we are so blinded by the genius of Charles Hamilton, to the exclusion of other writers, that we fail to give them the full credit they deserve.

Mary recalled several lesser-known writers who had written girls' stories under pseudonyms, as well as boys' stories. In answer to questions she thought men wrote better adventure stories for girls than many women, since the women were inhibited by a "motherly" and more decorous attitude. In an intensely interesting and informative talk, enlivened by many quotations, Mary recalled among other writers Lewis Carleton, who had written as Louise Carleton and Elsie Trevor for The Schoolgirls' Weekly, including a number of circus stories. Another

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"forgotten writer" was J. W. Bobin, also a Sexton Blake author, who had written mystery stories for girls, including girl detectives, including "Sylvia Silence", and finally Valerie Drew in Schoolgirls' Weekly with her alsation dog "Flash", a wonderful animal who could rescue his mistress from many a tight corner, and finally solved several mysteries by himself! Mary recalled "The Secret Six" and other schoolgirl secret societies, who always seemed to meet clothed in cloaks and hoods in damp, stone chambers, where they carried out battles against bullying prefects and unpleasant Head Mistresses. John W. Wheway was a superb writer for girls; his girls' stories were probably better than his boys' stories. He took over as "Hilda Richards" in the 1930's. (Wheway was a great admirer of J. N. Pentelow, whom he described as a "good bloke".) Mary was warmly applauded for her talk. After enjoying Mrs. Hearn's lovely tea Vic ran one of his popular record quizzes on the 1930's. A most nostalgic item that set hands beating time while puzzled frowns appeared on faces as members strove to recall bands and singers. Edward Witten proved winner. The meeting closed with a warm vote of thanks to Vic and Mrs. Hearn and the exchange of Christmas greetings.

### LONDON

A jolly Christmas meeting at the Ealing home of Bill and Thelma Bradford. Eric Lawrence, in the chair, welcomed Don Webster the Devon Exile, Howard Veglio a new member and announced the good news that Norman and Sandra Wright had become the proud parents of Susan Elizabeth.

Horace Owen, our Blakianian, brought along his volume of Every Boys' Annual, circa 1885 which contains the story "The White Chief of the Umzimvuba Kaffirs". Thus solving Bill Lofts C.D. query.

Good progress was reported by the four librarians and now in the miscellany section, there is a copy of the facsimile number one of the School Friend for loan.

Humorous chapters from the Magnet series "The Kidnapping of Coker" were read by Roger Jenkins.

Mary Cadogan's reading and subsequent quiz was jointly won by Don Webster and Bob Blythe.

Bob Blythe's Musical Quiz was won jointly by Brian Doyle and

Larry Morley and with new member, Howard Veglio getting the anagram correct, this being "God Rest You Merry Gentle Persons".

Bill Bradford's Familiar Characters Quiz was won by Eric Lawrence. Bill had kindly provided prizes as did other members.

Don Webster's Repetition discourse was good and a discussion followed on this subject that crops up in most of the old boys' books. A very fine seasonable spread was available and the hosts, Bill and Thelma Bradford were accorded a hearty vote of thanks.

Next meeting at the Townswomen's Guild, 342 Hoe Street, Walthamstow, London, E.17, Sunday, 14th January, 1979.

BEN WHITER

### NORTHERN

#### Christmas Party held 9th December, 1978

Twenty members, friends and guests assembled for this convivial annual event and all enjoyed a full programme of fun and games.

Round the walls were puzzle pictures to tease us: they were provided by Jack Allison, but seem to have been devised by Monty Lowther! Picture: a man in Highland uniform. Puzzle: spot the race meeting. Answer: Ascot (a Scot - get it?).

Nigel Shepley offered a puzzle in sound - the sounds of voices from yesteryear. Politicians, comedians (the intentional kind), band leaders, film stars and our very own Charles Hamilton formed a nostalgic procession.

The food and drink were there in abundance, of course, and for the main entertainment of the evening we had a Bunter Drive - with a few mischievous amendments to the scoring in some rounds, just to keep the issue uncertain till the last moment.

A quiz organised as a team race was a novel and popular item, and another card puzzle and balloon football ensured a party in which time really seemed to fly. Before we knew it the time for farewells and "Merry Christmas" was upon us. It was all over too quickly; and now we look forward to our next get-together at the first meeting of yet another New Year.

Don't miss the date: Saturday, 13th January, 1979.

JOHNNY BULL

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FOR SALE - in mint condition - Thompson's Firsts (Rover, Wizard, etc.) and Tiger Tims comics (Baker reprints); £10 post free for the two.

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WANTED: Back issues of C.D. with any articles about P. G. Wodehouse. Please write to:  
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## The Postman Called

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

CHARLES CHURCHILL (Exeter): The picture on the cover of the Nov. C.D. brought back memories to me as I remember reading it as a boy. I think some crooks invented something to put in the heels of football boots which enabled the wearer to outpace everyone else and so score all the goals!! Blake and Tinker eventually put these gadgets in their own boots and played for England against the Crimson Ramblers, the crooked team, and the shock of this put the Ramblers to flight. What a plot! However it did not seem so silly at the time.

JIM COOK (Auckland): Apropos Maurice Hall's article in the Nov. C.D. on the gap in publication of the Magnet during the General Strike in 1926, the Nelson Lee Library got over the difficulty by dating No. 5 (New Series) as "May 29th and June 5th, 1926". The story deals with Empire Day Sports and Handforth's mania to buy British goods only. While this tale might go down well today for purely nostalgic reasons yet it can reflect with vivid awareness the old British Empire.

CLIFF SMITH (ST. Anne's): My, how the time flies! It amazes me

that the good old Digest is still going strong after thirty odd years. You deserve a medal.

GEORGE BEAL (London): In your December issue, Mr. S. Gordon Swan again raises the subject of Jules Verne. There was indeed a sequel to 'Clipper of the Clouds' (Robur le Conquerant), although this did not appear until 18 years after the first, in 1904, the year before the author's death. This was 'Master of the World' (Maitre du Monde), in which the character Robur also appears. From being something of a hero in the first book, he becomes a quasi-villain in the sequel. It is indeed Robur's plan to dominate the world with his flying submarine/road vehicle.

The film 'Master of the World', produced in 1961, was a travesty of the two books, but with much additional matter owing nothing to Verne at all. Films in general have not done justice to the French author, the producers always finding it necessary to dream up additional story material.

Books of Jules Verne which have been filmed include 'Michael Strogoff' (several versions, the first in 1914), 'Five Weeks in a Balloon', 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea', 'Around the World in Eighty Days'; 'From Earth to the Moon', 'A Journey to the Centre of the Earth', 'Master of the World', 'The Children of Captain Grant' (In Search of the Castaways), 'Rocket to the Moon', 'The Mysterious Island', and 'Mathias Sandorf'. There have, of course, been some TV versions.

It was during the year of publication of 'Clipper of the Clouds', 1886, that Jules Verne was attacked and shot by his own nephew, wielding a revolver. The poor young man was mentally deranged, and Verne himself was crippled by the incident.

FRED WESTWOOD (Oldham): When I was a boy during the 'thirties I had a book of boys' stories including a motor racing story by Gunby Hadath. This was unusual in that he wrote mostly school stories. I realise that it is unlikely that you have a copy of this book, but if you do know of it and can give me particulars, i. e. title, year and cover picture, I would be grateful.

JACK BERRY (Southport): May I take this opportunity of thanking everyone concerned with the production of our favourite magazine for giving me so many happy hours of nostalgic memories. I look forward to the C.D. eagerly each month and it never lets me down.

R. GODSAVE (Leytonstone): Many thanks for the C.D. and Annual which arrived together. It seems to be almost a miracle that these two excellent journals of the Club should be able to span the years and yet retain a freshness and delight to all who read them.

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Can anyone offer any Victor Gunn stories? Paper or hardbacks. Details to:-

C. H. CHURCHILL

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL READERS