

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

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Looking in the glass, Billy Bunter saw a handsome, distinguished-looking fellow, whose distinguished look was rather increased than diminished by the glasses perched on a fine nose. Any fellow looking over his shoulder would have seen a fat and dabby youth, with a little fat stub of a nose, and little round eyes blinking behind big spectacles.

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STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. G. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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WEATHER MEMORIES

Weather stirs the memory. As I write this, the south of England is in the grip of one of the most cruel winters most of us can remember. The snow is everywhere, the roads are ice-covered and a death-trap for the unwary. The wind is bitterly cold. A thousand passengers have been marooned in a couple of trains stranded in the heart of Kent. Their ordeal lasted for nine hours.

It was just such a day on 1st January, 1962 - the day of Frank Richards's funeral. I was going to that funeral, though people said it

was madness in that weather, and that I should never get there. Madam, like the dear soul she is, insisted on coming with me.

We left Surbiton at eight in the morning - a slow, slow journey to Waterloo. We crossed to Victoria. About noon we caught the first train able to leave that day for rural Kent. A couple of hours later we alighted in the still, silent, white world, somewhere between Maidstone and the coast.

It was the tiniest of villages. I recall that a cottager boiled eggs for us and made a pot of tea, so we were able to have a light meal. Over icy, skating-rink lanes, we walked to the crematorium, a half-mile or more distant.

It was getting dark in the winter afternoon before the funeral party arrived. At the service there were just Frank Richards's sister, his niece, his housekeeper, Madam - and I. Just one of his countless thousands of old boys in that small party of five mourners.

We didn't even know that we would get home that night. We walked back to the station, and, at long last, a train came. It was very, very late when we got home. But I have always been glad that I went.

It was just such a day as this ----

THE PIONEER

Last month we published a clever and entertaining article from the pen of Mr. Ernest Holman, in which he recounted the story of the "match" between the Amalgamated Press and the Thomson Publications over twenty years. Quite rightly, Mr. Holman gave full credit to three of our present day writers whose different works provided him with the information which made his own article possible. It is the kind of courtesy which all too many writers omit, these days.

While echoing the thanks to our modern researchers, I also think back to some of the pioneers at the start of it all. Starting really from scratch, they turned out some marvellous articles to which, I suspect, many of us turn today without bothering to give much credit to those who have passed on.

I have in mind a remarkable article by Herbert Leckenby which featured in the first C.D. Annual, 32 years ago. Entitled "100 Years of Boys' Weeklies" it listed most of the story-papers between 1822 and

1938, giving their opening and closing dates, their total scores, and the names of their publishers, along with other information. It must have been a colossal task in its day. Herbert Leckenby gave credit to John Medcraft and Frank Wearing, both of whom gave him valuable assistance. Herbert and his two assistants have all long passed on, but, while we remain who remember them, we can make sure that their great achievements are not forgotten. It might be worth reprinting "100 Years of Boys' Stories" in a future edition of the Annual.

OUR FEBRUARY ISSUE

Now and again we are lucky enough to come up with an issue of C.D. which rings a peal of bells, possibly from its variety and originality. When my letter-bag is a little larger than usual and readers' comments are a little warmer than usual, I get the feeling that we have hit the target we are always seeking. February was just such a month, in spite of the issue being a little late due to the severe weather and the glut of strikes.

Mr. John Bridgwater wrote: "The February issue of the dear old Digest is a real Bumper Number for me. A splendid issue." And dozens of readers wrote in similar terms, which naturally warmed my heart.

We are not always able to give the credit we should to our artists. It was Mr. Henry Webb who drew the much praised covers for our December issue and the Annual. Our February cover was drawn by the incomparable J. Abney Cummings, and this month's cover is the work of Leonard Shields.

THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

Cats are, of course, very intelligent. They are said to have small brains, but, if so, they evidently use them more than plenty of M.P's do their big ones. Mr. Geoffrey Wilde has an all-white puss (like our beloved Mr. Softee) named Jamie. Jamie is elderly - in fact, a Senior Catizen. And he is deaf. If ever he gets shut out, he bangs the flap of the letter-box on the front door until he obtains admittance.

Mr. Wilde observes: "A fascinating example of rationality in an animal who can hear nothing himself. I would reckon that in terms of

pure intelligence it puts him ahead of some of the pupils I encounter nowadays."

I'm sure of it.

The Princess Snowee takes good care of herself. She doesn't like the cold weather. As I have mentioned before, she often lies along the top of my desk which is against the windows. Between my desk and the windows is the radiator. I push the curtain down between the radiator and the wall beneath the windows.

The Princess arrives. Carefully she extracts the curtain from behind the radiator. With equal care she spreads the base of the curtain along over the top of the radiator. Then, with a sigh of relief at work well done, she spreads herself along the base of the curtain which she has spread along the top of the radiator. And she will lie there blissfully for hours in the heat.

We were wondering last night whether we ought to have a kind of muff made to fit along the top of the rad, for the benefit of H.R.H. You're quite right. There's one born every minute.

THE EDITOR

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THE TOLL OF THE WINTER

Recent weeks have taken from our midst a number of our hobby enthusiasts. We deeply regret to record the deaths of Mr. Bill Morgan, who belonged to our Midland Club for many years and who died at an advanced age; Mr. Wilfred Tittensor of Stoke-on-Trent, who supplied the Hamilton and Brooks plates which so many of us value highly; Mr. B. A. Staples of Loughton; Mr. T. O. Evans of Carmarthen. All had been C.D. readers for many years, and we shall miss their cheery letters.

OBITUARY

As we go to press I deeply regret to learn of the death of Mr. L. Marcantonio, following a massive heart attack. Mr. Marcantonio, who had recently moved to Moffat from West London, had been a loyal supporter of this magazine for many years. Our deepest sympathy goes to his widow, Mrs. Nora Marcantonio, and the family.

* * * * *

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DANNY'S DIARY

MARCH 1929

The New Year Honours List, which was delayed owing to the serious illness of the King, is out at last. Sir Jesse Boot, who started from one little pot of Cascara in the town of Nottingham and worked his way up to own a huge chain of chemist's shops all over the country, has been made Baron Trent of Nottingham. My own name is not in the list owing to an oversight.

In the Nelson Lee Library, the School Ship series has continued with "Hard Lines, Handy". The adventures in Australia go on, with fun and games in Sydney, Wangaratta, Porepunkah, and ending up in Melbourne.

The next story is "The Melbourne Test Match Triumph". Nipper & Co. are prevented from seeing the real Test Match, owing to the plotting of Gore-Pearce & Co., but they have a test match of their own - Young England v. Young Australia. The next tale is "St. Frank's in New Zealand", with Handy among the old geysers. He has all sorts of muddy adventures, but it's good clean fun for us.

Final tale of the series is "The Peril of the Pacific". The School Ship has a smashed propeller, and gets caught in a cyclone. Escape seems impossible, but all ends well in Jamaica, where the bananas and the rum come from. At the end of the month, they are back in England in "The St. Frank's April Fools". The girls of the Moor View School pull off the greatest April Fool's Day jape on record.

This year saw the 100th University Boat Race. Cambridge won it by seven lengths.

The South Seas tales in Modern Boy have been great this month. "The Little Red One" was a death spider, used by a rascally dealer named Schenk, who tried to steal the treasure Ken King won recently. "The Extra Hand" was a half-caste maroon, who put Ken's life in danger. In "Stand and Deliver" Ken found himself up against piracy on the high seas. "Monarch of the Atoll" is a single story about Monty Pullinger, a cadger who lives on a tiny island. Last of the month is "The Pearls of

Lukatu" in which Ken King is swindled into buying oyster beds, only to find that the pearls are home made. All good original tales.

At the pictures we have seen Lewis Stone and Maria Corda in "The Private Life of Helen of Troy", an elaborate film about motor cycles being ridden in ancient Greece - a lot of anachronisms like that. I didn't like it much; Conrad Nagel and Myrna Loy in "The Girl from Chicago"; Karl Dane and George K. Arthur in "Baby Mine"; Clara Bow and Richard Arlen in "Wings" (I loved this one); Norma Shearer and Ramon Novarro in "The Student Prince" (the story is a bit thin without the music that goes with it on the stage); Marion Davies in "Quality Street"; and Ivor Novello in "A South Sea Bubble".

The first story in the Gem this month is "A Split in the School", a sequel to a tale last month in which the Shell and the Fourth are at war. Then "The Schoolboy Fire-Fighters" in which a local house owner is very annoyed when the boys start their own fire brigade.

Next "Standing by a Fag", an odd tale starring Jameson, a minor third-former whom you come across now and then in very early Gem tales, with a Sixth-former named Hurlingham, a bully and rascal never heard of before and just brought on the scene so he can be booted out at the end of the tale. Then "Selby in the Soup" in which Mr. Selby has a feud with Manners, Mr. Selby is arrested, and Manners saves his bacon. A bit of a grind. Last of the month is "Fun on the First" - the "First" being the First of April.

The stories in The Thriller have been "The Man who Quit"; "The Story of a Dead Man" by Leslie Charteris; "The Croucher"; "The Crook in Crimson" by Edgar Wallace, featuring the detective, J. G. Reader; and "The Silent Six". They are not bad, and Doug buys them and passes them on to me, so I must not look a gift horse in the mouth, but I like Sexton Blake better.

Major Segrave, in his racing-car, Golden Arrow, has set up a record speed of 232 m.p.h. at Daytona Beach, Florida. You can't put the brake on a good Britisher.

The only story I had this month in the Schoolboys' Own Library is "Wibley's Wonderful Wheeze", which tells of the arrival of Wibley at Greyfriars, and how he proved himself a great impersonator and actor.

The magnificent series about Harry Wharton & Co. in America

continues in the Magnet. First of the month is "Harry Wharton & Co. in Hollywood". Lord Mauleverer makes a friend of a Mexican named Valdez; the chums stay at Long Beach boarding house; we meet Myron Polk, the great star of Perfection Pictures; and Coker mars Polk's beauty by punching him on the nose. In "Billy Bunter on the Films", Bunter is expecting a Sheik part but finds himself landed with something from Mack Sennett. Lovely reading.

Next, "The Hero of Hollywood", who proves to be Lord Mauleverer. Coker tries to be a hero, too, but it is a film scene which he interrupts with his heroics. Next "The Bootlegger's Revenge", but it is really Myron Polk who is out to punish Coker for punching his nose. The month ended with "The Film Star's Feud" and Mauly falls in love with Leonora La Riviere, but the fair Hollywood lady is already engaged. And Myron Polk is still at daggers drawn with the school party. Frank Richards has never written anything better than this. I hope it goes on for ever.

Once again the Rio Kid stories in the Popular have been mighty fine. The opening tale of the month is a single entitled "The Rio Kid's Hold-Up". The Kid overhears a plot between Schulz, the foreman on Widow Cassidy's ranch at Malpais, and the Hanson Gang. Schulz is to let the gang rob him of the Widow's money - and then share it with them. But the Kid steps in and holds up Schulz before he reaches the Hanson gang - and the Kid pays the money into the widow's bank account. Then a series, this month's tales being "The Unknown Raider", "The Kid on the Trail", "The Outlaw Rancher", and "The Ride of His Life". The Kid arrives in Gunsight to find that the whole of the cow-town is being terrorised by a masked gunman who claims he is the Rio Kid. So the real Kid decides to stay on and investigate. His investigations lead him to the Poindexter Ranch, and the Kid becomes suspicious of the rancher himself. Lovely western tales, and a real mystery. The series continues next month.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 95, "Wibley's Wonderful Wheeze" comprised the red Magnet of the Spring of 1914 in which Wibley arrived as a new boy, and another Wibley story from two years later in early 1916. The second story was remarkable in that Coker fell in love with Phyllis Howell, a character created by a sub-writer, though this story is written by Hamilton. Off-hand, I forget whether Hamilton retained Miss Howell three years later when

he created a new Cliff House for the School Friend,

S. O. L. No. 96 was "Berrisford's Liveliest Term" by Michael Poole, a story of a boy inventor. It had probably run as a serial in one of the papers.

The series of Rio Kid stories concerning the Poindexter Ranch, and also the story "The Rio Kid's Hold-Up" were published in an issue of the B. F. L. - No. 574, dated early summer 1937 - under the overall title "The Rio Kid's Revenge". As with all the Rio Kid B. F. L.'s, some of the individual stories were spoiled by drastic pruning.)

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

BY NO MEANS TEED

by Christopher Lowder

S. Gordon Swan (CD 385, Jan. 79) noted that little has been written about G. H. Teed and his contributions to the Nelson Lee Library - and since these total over a quarter of the stories up to No. 112 (when Brooks took over completely, and started the St. Frank's series), it does seem, on the face of it, a little surprising. However, 20 years' frustration has taught me that these very early issues are amongst the most elusive items in the entire field of boys' papers, and I suspect that the dearth of articles and information on them has not been due to any lack of interest, but simply sheer ignorance of their contents.

Certainly, this was so in my case -- until very recently when, happily, Norman Shaw and Bert Vernon between them managed to push virtually Teed's entire NLL output my way.

Treasure-trove indeed, to a confirmed Teed enthusiast such as myself, and, having had a chance to go through them, I entirely agree with what Gordon Swan has said. Teed's fantasy stories have always fascinated me, and the "Crystal Urn" and "Mystery Man of Lhasa" series are amongst his most imaginative fiction.

I would also strongly recommend two other stories: No. 73, "Blue Diamonds" (set in Labrador, and featuring a stunning scene in which Lee and his party are marooned on cracking ice in a howling blizzard), and No. 92, "The Man Hunters" (again set in the far North, but this time the Yukon, where at one point Lee and Nipper are pursued by over 200 Indian dogs, hunger-crazed, and a far worse peril than any wolf-pack). Both stories enabled Teed to give full rein to his immense descriptive powers.

However, one of the stories credited to GHT in the Nelson Lee Library Catalogue - No. 18, "The Case of the Duplicate Key" - brought me up with a jolt after reading only the first few paragraphs - since whoever did write it, it certainly wasn't G. H. Teed.

I've no space to argue this on the actual text - though sentences like "'Good heavens, it's a baffling enigma -- a mystery there is no unravelling!'" and "'You have been deceived -- cunningly deceived by the scoundrels who are in this affair, Warner," (Lee) announced, his voice trembling with unwonted excitement ...'" are about as un-Teedlike as you can get - but there are a couple of clues which might well ring bells with other collectors.

First, there's much talk of a "League of Twisted Snakes", which Lee had come up against "some years earlier". This would seem to indicate that Maxwell Scott was the author, and was harking back to characters he'd used before the NLL started.

On the other hand, Inspector Will Spearing is brought in near the end to help catch the crooks - and Spearing was of course Norman Goddard's creation (though other writers did record his exploits).

Finally, the last part of the final chapter - a sort of Epilogue - is written in the present tense as opposed to the normal past tense: "Three months have elapsed since the great raid upon the Milano Club, and before we write 'The End' it is necessary to allow the reader to peep into the drawing-room of Norman Warner's house upon a bright autumn afternoon ..."

This is actually what one might call 'present-tense-sentimentale', and was rather a habit of the older generation of Blake/Lee writers like W. Murray Graydon or J. G. Jones (though the story is certainly not by the former).

On the whole, I incline towards Goddard, though I'd hesitate to be dogmatic about it.

Incidentally (and slightly away from the Lee angle), Gordon Swan is dead right (CD 384, Dec. 78) when he rejects the SB Catalogue-listed author of Union Jack 1291, "The Legion of the Lost". I'd never read this story before, but again the first few paragraphs make it quite clear that the writer is anyone but G. H. Teed.

My own experience of the styles of the two writers Gordon Swan

suggests in Teed's place -- Pentelow or S. G. Shaw - is minimal, but I'd personally go for Shaw, simply because I don't believe Pentelow would be writing Blake material at that period.

So, two stories originally credited to Teed must be crossed off the list. I doubt, incidentally, that there was any financial jiggery-pokery involved here (though it often went on), but simply a mistake in transcribing the original AP records.

G. H. TEED and NELSON LEE

by Geoffrey Wilde

S. Gordon Swan writes in the January C.D. of Teed's contributions to the Nelson Lee Library. I wonder if Mr. Swan, or any other specialist, can tell me anything about the origins of another Teed/Lee story which I possess, and whose genesis has always rather puzzled me?

The story was published in the Boys' Friend 4d. Library in April 1936 (No. 523). The title is 'The Eye of the Dragon', with the under-
scription 'Nelson Lee and Nipper in China', and the illustrations are by J. H. Valda. It is certainly the authentic work of Teed, and a first-rate sample at that, but I have never been able to resist the impression that it was really a Sexton Blake story with the names of the hero and his assistant altered for some reason. Was it held over by the editor of UJ and then left stranded by the change to the Detective Weekly? In any case, why not publish it as an SBL? Or am I barking up altogether the wrong tree simply because I associate Teed so instinctively with Blake?

The BFL did publish some Lee stories at about this time by various writers, and there is no reason why Teed should not have been commissioned to write one. And yet ... it really does read like a Blake story!

Over to you, gentlemen.

THE BUILD-UP

by R. J. Godsave

The "Sports Mad at St. Frank's" New Series of the Nelson Lee Library in 1926 started the Editorial build-up of E. O. Handforth. Every cover of the eleven Lees which comprised this series, bore the drawing of Handforth. It certainly appeared to be a policy of the subordination of familiar characters of the St. Frank's junior school to that of E. O. Handforth. It is also of interest to find that the gift of an Austin

Seven motor car to Handforth from his Aunt Constance occurred in this series.

This new approach by the Editor was possibly one of the means of getting the Nelson Lee Library to be more in line with some of the more brash publications of that time, no doubt with the idea of increasing the circulation.

In No. 6 of this series, "St. Frank's goes Mad" is an advertisement informing the reader that back numbers of the "Monster Library", 1-5, could be obtained. No. 3 was entitled "The Tyrant of St. Frank's" and a short explanation was provided to the effect that a new Housemaster tries to subdue the Remove - including Handforth.

Actually this title was a misnomer as the new Housemaster was Colonel Clinton, D.S.O., whose rule only extended over the College House boys, and by no stretch of the imagination could he have any authority over the Ancient House boys - including Handforth. This title would be eminently suitable for No. 11 of the "Monster" Library which dealt with the barring-out against Mr. Howard Martin, Headmaster of St. Frank's. Whoever made out this advertisement had obviously never read No. 3 of the "Monster Library".

It would appear that a deliberate course was set to have Handforth mentioned at every conceivable opportunity, irrespective of the accuracy of a statement.

* * * * *
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BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Just a short preamble this month as the two articles are rather long. These are the ones I mentioned last month and I hope all readers will enjoy them. I do have a few articles in hand but would like to receive some more for future months.

TO JOSIE PACKMAN; IN DEFENCE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

by Edward Murch

In the November issue of CD you claimed that millions more words were written about Sexton Blake than about the snobbish Sherlock Holmes. You also said that Blake is the biggest money-spinner detective of all time. Much as I admire your loyalty to your chosen hero I must take issue with you on what you have said.

Did you mean that Sherlock Holmes was literally a snob; or that those who read him are snobbish? It is not clear. Let us look at the man first then. A snob would not have turned down a knighthood. A snob would not have taken up the cases of humble clients merely for the interest they gave him. A snob would have been sycophantic, and even Moriarty would never have called him that. A snob would never have shewn the profound sympathy with human suffering as Holmes did. A snob when talking about the Board schools would never have called them "beacons of the future". A snob would never have become internationally known and loved. No, no, and once again NO the greatest detective of all time was no snob, and it is not worthy of you to say that he was - if indeed that is what you meant.

If, on the other hand, you meant that the people who read and revere him are snobs then I must refute this too. The millions of ordinary people, like me, who have read about him, and will do so in the future are not snobs. Possibly because some of the intelligensia have taken a keen interest in him and his work caused you to use the adjective you did. If so this is unfair and illogical. Because a person is a repository of learning, a pillar of the Church, a successful author, a successful playwright: does that automatically make him (or her) a snob?

Of course it doesn't! Sherlock Holmes simply appeals to men and women in all walks of life, and will always continue to do so. Why? Because he is a great original; and like all great originals he inspires imitations. Even J.E.M. in his article "What's New" in July's C.D. admitted "that our particular hero was not the first fictional detective with hawk-like features and a Baker Street address".

Now what did you mean when you said that millions more words were written about Blake than about Holmes? If you meant that divers hands have penned stories with Blake as their hero I suppose you may be right - though goodness knows the Sherlock Holmes pastiche factories are flourishing for all they are worth, and the parody industry has always paid good dividends. But if you meant critical works and commentaries then Holmes wins hands down. "The writings about the writings" concerning Holmes go on for ever seemingly, and hard headed publishers are prepared to bring them out - and in hard back too. How many critical works about Blake have seen the light of print?

You claim that Blake is the biggest money spinner of all time but you offer no supporting evidence. When you take into account the numerous edition of the Holmes stories that have been published and add the sums received from these to the royalties received from films, stage-plays, wireless plays, television series - and even the ballot then surely his earnings must exceed those of Blake - and what is more these earnings are an on-going thing because he is a Classic. (A selection of his stories is included in the OUP World Classic Series.)

In the standard work "The Development of the Detective Novel" A. E. Murch (no relation so far as I know) devotes a whole chapter to Holmes. Alas, there is not even a footnote about Blake. Mrs. Murch says in this work that Holmes is "the most convincing, the most brilliant, the most congenial and well-loved of all detectives of fiction!" - a view endorsed by William S. Baring Gould (of the USA) in his monumental "The Annotated Sherlock Holmes".

Having said all this in defence of Holmes (who really does not need me to defend him anyway) let me send Sexton Blake and all who revere him, good wishes in his future adventures. He is lucky to have you as his champion - and I look forward to reading Blakiana in the future with as much enjoyment as I have done in the past.

Sherlockians are not snobs, you see!

SEXTON BLAKE & SHERLOCK HOLMES -
A CASE OF SNOBBERY?

by Roger Sansom

Recent suggestions in C.D. that snobbery prevented Blake being anthologised as a 'Rival Of Sherlock Holmes', and also that odd article in 'Radio Times' (a curious blend of well-researched fact and highly disputable opinion) which introduced the 'Demon God' serial, led me once again to consider the question of what debt Blake owed to Holmes. I dare boast that I am in a reasonable position to do this, as an avid follower of both detectives from about the age of ten, and for the last eleven years a member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, following 'Blakiana' over about the same period.

No-one would deny that Holmes is Blake's literary ancestor, and why should they want to? The whole field of twentieth century detective fiction owes so much to Conan Doyle, one could almost say that Holmes' successors must be either like him, or unlike him (e.g. short and fat like Poirot, a doctor, a priest, or whatever), but cannot be uninfluenced. Blake inherited the hawk-like profile, pipe, dressing-gown, Baker Street address - but not straightaway. At first he was described as burly and moustached, and definitely seemed a youngish man - but by the 'twenties, the climate of detective fashion (and remember Doyle was alive and writing) had fixed him with the familiar characteristics.

Let us turn to Holmes. The idolatory of sometimes very distinguished admirers has made Holy Writ of his adventures, but there was nothing 'up-market' about his beginnings. He was devised as the hero of a single novel (hardly full-length by modern standards) to be written by an impecunious young doctor, and part-time author. In it, his physical description bears little relation to the picture of Holmes we all have today. The author's father (whose notebooks have just been published) drew illustrations later which showed a bearded detective, and it is true that in a hirsute age, Doyle did not specify that he was clean-shaven. It was not until the Holmes short stories started to appear in 'The Strand' that Doyle became as influenced as everyone else by the splendid drawings of Sidney Paget, and started to describe a handsomer hero than before. His 'cap' became the familiar deerstalker of the illustrations, Watson's

heavy moustache got into the text, and so on.

I am not belittling Doyle's achievement - God forbid - just saying that all literary creations develop, and that they do not do so in isolation. I recently acquired some old 'Strands' with Holmes stories in, and they were an eye-opener. Nothing brash or juvenile certainly, but brightly-coloured, eye-catching, aimed at the station bookstall buyer. "Of course," I thought, "This was how Sherlock Holmes reached his first public - nothing staid or 'literary' about it." Exactly on a par with Union Jack or SBL, one might say.

Perhaps all this has occurred to me because I have been reading some of Gwyn Evans' early Blakes, and he is an author who consciously makes use of literary precedents. In one story I catch echoes of Stevenson. Elsewhere, Blake has long, nervous fingers - like Holmes. But, above all, this writer knows and loves Dickens, and his characters are 'drawn large', like that master's. In particular, he delights to identify Blake's landlady with Pickwick's Mrs. Bardell.

Now Mr. Philip Norman wrote in the press before the recent TV serial: "Blake ... acquired ... a landlady, Mrs. Bardell, who differed from her Holmesian counterpart only in bearing the name of Mr. Pickwick's housekeeper." Instead of looking for the point of difference, Mr. Norman should demonstrate the similarity - Mrs. Hudson in the Holmes stories has no characteristics in common with Mrs. Bardell that I am able to discern. Mrs. B's garrulous ancestors are to be found in Shakespeare, in Sheridan, in Dickens - but anyway, we hear equally eccentric use of language constantly around us. And that is my point - all writing draws on its environment.

This is the kind of unthinking 'snobbery' that irks Blake readers. Did a Blakian author ever call Mrs. Bardell by the wrong name? Doyle called Mrs. Hudson 'Mrs. Turner' once - he also gave Watson the wrong Christian name, as well as a wandering war-wound, and he persistently contradicts himself about dates. Because he had no literary snobbery about the stories - he was writing thrillers - he was less interested in the details than many of his readers.

It is often said - and the Radio Times article makes it a starting point - that Holmes deduced, while Blake went in for athletic crook-catching. In fact, Blake frequently detected with his intellect, as well as

his physical prowess. Now Holmes certainly claims, in "A Study in Scarlet", that he solves all his cases from his armchair. But does he? When he found his brainchild turning into the hero of a 'long run', Doyle ignored the early idea, as he did the physical oddness he gives Holmes in the same book. The stories are full of chases, disguises, struggles - who can forget the pursuit down the river in "The Sign of Four"? The detective is often in danger, and quite often puts himself outside the law. Doyle was far too exciting a storyteller to restrict himself to the study. Characters develop.

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 154 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 48 - "The Colonial Co."

Amalgamated Press publications were distributed throughout what was then called the British Empire, and the introduction of characters from the colonies was undoubtedly editorial policy, made with a view to maintaining a wide circulation for their publications. Greyfriars and St. Jim's had their fair share of characters from the Empire, but it was only Rookwood that had a Colonial Co.

Schoolboys' Own Library No. 48 was a miscellaneous collection of stories about these characters from over the water. Dick van Ryn, the Boer from South Africa (known as 'Dutchy') had been at Rookwood a little time when the story opened, and Pons had arrived only the week before. Charles Pons (known as Pong) was half French, from Canada, and Pankley had taken him off to Bagshot, pretending that it was Rookwood. Pons was accordingly classed as a duffer, and, no matter what his achievements (like the episode of the comic duel with Putter), it was a long time before he was able to live it down. This eventually happened when he more or less blackmailed his way into the junior football team, pretending not to understand the game, and then practically won the match for Rookwood.

The third member of the Co. was the Australian, Conroy, the only Colonial completely of British stock. Smythe read a paragraph in the Morning Post about an Australian millionaire called Conroy who was sending his son to a public school in the south of England, and the Nuts went out of their way to be friendly with him, Topham and Townsend even

Dr. Chisholm if the new boy could be allotted to their study. Just as Conroy was beginning to be disillusioned about the Nuts, they discovered that he was not the son of a millionaire, and it was not long before Conroy left study No. 5 and joined van Ryn and Pons in No. 3. The remainder of the Schoolboys' Own was devoted to their feud with Carthew.

Although in theory the idea of a Colonial Co. seemed attractive, in practice there was little part for them to play in the stories once the novelty had worn off, and later on they tended to become just names, to fill up the cast, though van Ryn was given ventriloquial powers to bring him into occasional prominence afterwards. I happened to mention the Colonial Co. to Charles Hamilton when I visited him, and he gave one of his throaty chuckles and remarked that their name would hardly be acceptable in the post-war world. Perhaps it is the very anachronism itself that makes us recall these Rookwood juniors when the names of many others have slipped from our memories altogether.

* * * * *

GREAT AUTHOR! GREAT STORY! GREAT BRITAIN! 75 years back.

THE MISADVENTURES OF MARMADUKE

Marmaduke Smythe came out of the housemaster's study with his hands tucked under his arms, and looking as if he were trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife,

"Poor brute!" murmured Blake.

"He's only got what he was asking for, but it's more his people's fault than his, I fancy. Let's speak to him."

"Better let the cad alone!" said

Herries.

"Oh, rats! A civil word won't cost anything."

Marmaduke glared at Blake as he came up. He was in a bad temper. He had tried to kick Mr. Kidd, when he was caned, and the housemaster had laid on the strokes well in consequence.

"I say, old chap --" began Blake.

"Don't speak to me," said

Marmaduke, "You are a low beast. I hate you. I hate this school, and I shall not stay here. Get away!"

Herries chuckled.

Marmaduke, who was in a towering passion, smote Blake across the face - a sounding smack.

Blake staggered, more surprised than hurt. His eyes blazed, but he checked himself. It was the knowledge that Marmaduke would be helpless in his hands that made him patient.

"You silly ass!" he said, rubbing his cheek. "You don't know what you're doing, and you'll get a bad enough time without a licking from me. Come on, Herries!"

"I say," exclaimed Herries, "you ain't going to let him off after he thumped

you on the dial, are you? He'll think you're afraid of him."

"Let him think so, then."

And Blake walked away. Marmaduke, who had never been forbearing in his life, did think as Herries suggested. He felt more satisfied in his mind as he proceeded in search of the headmaster. His appearance was so extremely odd that he was greeted with laughter wherever he appeared. He came upon Taggles, the porter, at last, and demanded information.

"Where can I find the headmaster, my good man?"

Taggles stared at him.

"Escaped from some blooming lunatic asylum!" murmured the porter.

"Where is the headmaster?" repeated Marmaduke angrily. "If you take me to him, my man, I will give you half-a-crown,"

Taggles looked at the half-crown, and decided that, lunatic or not, he might as well earn it, so he promptly guided the new boy to Dr. Holmes' study.

Marmaduke went in without the formality of knocking. Dr. Holmes was writing by the window, and he looked up, naturally surprised by this intrusion. When his glance fell upon Marmaduke, he dropped his pen in amazement.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed.

"I am Marmaduke Smythe."

"Ah, the new boy! Surely you have not come to the school in that absurd attire?"

Marmaduke burst into an account of his wrongs. Dr. Holmes listened, eyeing the heir of millions curiously the while.

"And why have you come here to me?" he asked, when Marmaduke had reached the end of his tale of woe.

Marmaduke stared at him.

"I have come to complain of my disgraceful treatment, of course," he replied. "I should think you might have guessed that."

Dr. Holmes half rose from his chair.

"Smythe, is that the way you address your schoolmaster?"

Marmaduke looked at him sullenly.

"If you had not already been caned, I should cane you now for your insolence," said the doctor. "It is clear that your training has been sadly neglected. When you speak to me you will address me as sir. Do you hear?"

"Yes."

"Yes, what?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you will, in future, knock at a door before entering a room. I mention that for your general guidance, as you will have no occasion to come to this room again, unless it is to be flogged. Understand that I receive no complaints of your housemaster's conduct. My confidence in Mr. Kidd is complete."

Marmaduke glowered. His complaint was not panning out as he had anticipated. It seemed that nobody at St. Jim's was inclined to admit his claims to respect as the son and heir of a man of millions.

"You had better return to Mr. Kidd and apologise for your rudeness," continued the doctor.

"Apologise!" gasped Marmaduke. "Unless he apologises to me, Dr. Holmes, I shall not remain in this school."

The doctor looked hard at him. He knew something about Marmaduke, and he knew how bad the results of an injudicious training may be.

"You do not know what you are saying, Smythe," said Dr. Holmes. "For that reason, I do not wish to be severe with you. It is rather from the boys than from the masters that I expect you to learn what it is most necessary for you to know. You may go."

Marmaduke did not budge.

"You may go," repeated the doctor, raising his voice.

"Then I am to understand that the boy who assaulted me is not to be punished?"

"Leave the room!" thundered the doctor.

"I want to know --"

What Marmaduke wanted to know he never had a chance to state, for the doctor jumped up and seized a cane, and the heir of millions bolted from the room.

"Dear me!" murmured the doctor, "If I did not know the unfortunate circumstances in which that youth had been brought up, I should think that he was mentally afflicted. Ah, Mr. Kidd, is that you? Come in. I have just seen the new boy in your house."

The master of the School House smiled slightly.

"I had come to speak about him, sir. You gave me some idea of what to expect, but I did not look for quite such a --"

"Exactly!" agreed the doctor.

"Such a -- There is really no word to adequately describe that peculiar boy."

"I fancy he has bullied his tutor at home," said Mr. Kidd. "He wishes to do the same here."

Dr. Holmes laughed.

"Yes, he will find the change a violent one, but it will be beneficial. The

most sensible thing his father ever did was to send him to a public school. You will do your best with him, Mr. Kidd?"

"If you wish me to do so, sir, certainly. But he speaks of writing to his father to take him away."

The doctor shook his head.

"He must not be allowed to do anything of the kind. He has come to St. Jim's, and he must stay for a term, at least, for his own sake. Unpromising as he looks at present, a term here may work wonders. Mr. Smythe seemed to be aware that he would give trouble, and asked me to do my best with him. I shall do so."

"I think it quite possible that he will attempt to run away, sir."

"Dear me! So bad as that?" The doctor pursed his lips. "I leave him in your hands with every confidence, Mr. Kidd."

"I will do my best, sir," said the housemaster.

He had rather hoped that the Head would let Marmaduke go. But as it had been decided otherwise, Mr. Kidd was not the man to shrink from an unpleasant duty. He meant to educate Marmaduke.

(Another Instalment of This Fascinating Story, from Early in the Century, Next Month.)

* * * * *

FOR SALE: H. Baker facsimiles: Vol. 7

"The Spectre of St. Jim's"; Vol. 2

"Expelled" (N. Lee); Sexton Blake "Crime at Christmas". £2.50 each inc. postage.

All in mint condition.

J. GODDARD, 44 BAKER ST.,
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BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 60. BLOSSOMS IN THE DUST

Our main opening film this term came from Warner Bros. and was Dennis Morgan in "God is My Co-Pilot", which sounds like an air film. A coloured Tom & Jerry cartoon in that bill was "The Milky Waif".

M. G. M. reissued "Johnnie Eager", starring Robert Taylor, and we gave it a return date in the second week of term. This was an excellent drama, and, at the time, was considered to be the finest gangster film ever made. A coloured cartoon was "Red Hot Riding Hood", and one of Warner's collections of delightful Mack Sennett excerpts was "Good Old Corn". An additional documentary was "London's Theatres", which sounds as though it might have been fascinating.

Next, from M. G. M., came Marsha Hunt in "A Letter for Evie". In a big supporting programme were two coloured cartoons: "Wild and Wolfy" and "Baa, Baa, Blacksheep".

Next week, yet another from M. G. M., this time a technicolor big 'un entitled "Easy to Wed", starring Van Johnson, Esther Williams, and Lucille Ball. A Tom & Jerry colour cartoon was "Quiet, Please".

The following week the main film came from Warner Bros., and was Paul Henreid in "The Conspirators". A Tom & Jerry cartoon was "The Cat Concerto", which won an Oscar as the best cartoon of its year, and it was, in fact, probably the best Tom & Jerry of all time.

Next, from M. G. M., a very famous tear-jerker in Technicolor: Greer

Garson and Walter Pidgeon in "Blossoms in the Dust". The memorable exchange in this one was when some snooty lady referred to "bad girls who have babies" and Greer Garson retorted "Bad girls don't have babies." A coloured cartoon in the bill was "Lonesome Lenny".

After that one came another Technicolor feature: Walter Pidgeon and Jane Powell in "Holiday in Mexico" from M. G. M. There were two coloured cartoons in the same bill: Tom & Jerry in "Flirty Birdie" plus "Swing Shift Cinderella".

Next week, from Warner Bros., Edward Arnold in "Janie" which is not even a name in my memory. In the same bill was "Daffy Duck in Hollywood". Some time back I believe I said that I fancied the Daffy Duck coloured cartoons came from Columbia. They didn't. They came from Warner's.

Then the only double-feature programme that term. From Warner's came Humphrey Bogart in "Action in the North Atlantic", and, in support, from M. G. M., Tom Drake and Dana Reed in "Faithful in my Fashion". A coloured cartoon was "Who Killed Who?"

The following week, from Warner Bros., brought Sydney Greenstreet in "Three Strangers". The coloured cartoon in the supporting bill was a Tom & Jerry: "Mice Will Play".

Next, from M. G. M., Dean Stockwell and Charles Coburn in "The Green Years", which was from Cronin's famous novel. In support was a Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon "Mouse in Manhattan".

After that, from M.G.M., came Frank Morgan in "Mr. Griggs Returns". There was one of the tip-top "Crime Does not Pay" items, entitled "Soak the Old" in the same programme, and we gave a return playing to Warner's lovely Mack Sennett pot-pourri "Happy Times and Jolly Moments." There was also a coloured cartoon, but the title missed being

recorded in my files.

The final show of the term, yet again from M.G.M., was Robert Walker and June Allyson in "The Sailor Takes a Wife". The coloured cartoon in a big programme of supporting shorts was "Lonesome Lenny". The Universal News was still played in every programme.

* * * * *

The Postman Called

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

FRANCIS HERTZBERG (Bebington): C.D. is a great monthly pleasure. I love storypapers of the 30's and comics of the 50's so much it literally hurts - a day never passes without a few pages of Eagle, a few chapters (usually Greyfriars or a Sexton Blake) of a story paper, and an article or so from a 50's Picture Post. They often seem almost the only things decent today.

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge): The Club agreed that I should write to you to raise a question raised by Jack Overhill, on which we felt more general information should be sought than merely the opinion of the Cambridge Club. What name should be used to describe boys' papers, especially those like "Chums" or the B.O.P., but also "Gem", "Magnet", "Marvel", "Union Jack", "Pluck", etc. Jack had, quite rightly, been annoyed when a journalist in the local paper writing on "The Best of Chums", referred to "Chums" as a "comic". I know the "media" (horrid word) call any boys' paper a "comic", and there was correspondence about this in the Telegraph just before their strike. Jack suggests "paper mags"; some time ago Vic. Hearn said that in the 1930's boys were quite well aware of the difference between a "comic" and what they called a "Two penny book". You and I would have been very indignant if someone had suggested in our young days, let alone now, that we did not know the difference between a boys paper and a comic. I know the position is not made any easier by some of the writers on the subject referring to anything that has an odd "strip" as a "comic", including the Daily Mirror of "Jane" fame, and some of the instructional strips in papers like the

"Shooting Times". But neither "Chums" nor the "Magnet" to take two examples, were "comics". We, in Cambridge, would be very interested to hear other people's views - someone may come up with a name that would really catch on, even with journalists.

J. P. FITZGERALD (Manchester): Have no regrets, dear Editor, the C.D. is well-worth every new penny. As dear old Bing used to say - "Positively therapeutic!"

ROBERT CUSHING (Hitchin): I am grateful for the pleasure given to me and to so many of my contemporaries through the medium of Collectors' Digest. Like old wine it improves with age, and this claim is surely supported by the loyalty of your readers. And yet another "annual" triumph in the form of the highly entertaining C.D. Annual which, with the passing of the years, goes from strength to strength.

ERNEST HOLMAN (Leigh-on-Sea): I have to confess to an error, I fear. Not a large one, as it happens. I chanced to look again at the Chart of the Papers Progress in C.D. Annual of 1973, after re-reading my 'Match of the Decades' which you kindly published this month. In the Chart, Vanguard is shown as finishing in 1925, but the correct date of 1926 is shown in the last Column and I was guilty of insufficient checking. Perhaps your readers will accept it as an 'own goal' by me! I noted, particularly, that Marvel features on the February C.D. cover.

Danny's mention of the Australian Escapologist, Murray, interested me. I remember seeing some of his 'impossible' escapes during my childhood and I actually met him during the war when he was performing at Ensa Concerts. He was getting on in years then but was as excellent as ever on the Stage.

JOHN BRIDGWATER (Malvern): Whilst writing may I say how delighted I am to see another serial starting. The first instalment got us off to what Editors used to call a "rib tickling" start. I look forward to more amusing antics of Marmaduke with keen anticipation. The serial is all the more enjoyable for being my first reading of this particular story.

Danny's Diary for February revived many pleasurable memories. The collecting of the metal pictures of cricketers with "Nelson Lee" and the car badges with "Magnet": I kept my sets for many years, but they

disappeared in the war. "The Thriller" and "Modern Boy" I remember with particular affection as these papers helped me through the all too frequent attacks of Asthma I used to suffer from in those days of 1929.

These revived memories and those of the well-loved Robert Donat mentioned in the "Biography of a Small Cinema" have made the February issue of the dear old "Digest" a real "Bumper Number" for me.

I just cannot thank you enough for such a splendid number.

* * * * *

News of our Clubs

MIDLAND

Meeting held 28th January, 1979

Due to the atrocious weather there were only six members present, but we were a very cheery band and the meeting was so enjoyable that we were glad we had not cancelled it.

Tom Porter, whose health is not very good these days, was absent and your correspondent took the chair in his absence.

The early part of the meeting was occupied by trying to solve a Hamilton crossword puzzle compiled by Vince Loveday, from Worcester.

Members were warned that Collectors' Digest was likely to be late this month owing to industrial action. What a plague this is at the moment!

Since our last meeting the death of Bill Morgan on the 11th January, has saddened us. Bill was over 80 years of age and declining health and advancing years have prevented him from attending in recent years. He was our oldest member and perhaps he was unique in one respect among Old Boys' Books enthusiasts. He actually purchased Magnet No. 1 from the shop in the ordinary way.

Geoff Lardner produced a copy of Firsts in Boys' Papers published by Chimera Pasner Co. It contains the facsimiles of papers such as No. 1 of the Adventure, Wizard, Beano, etc. It is a well produced book.

The usual reading followed coffee and biscuits. The biscuits were supplied by Ted Sabin. It was not taken from an old paper, but from last

month's issue of Collectors' Digest. The story, "The Misadventures of Marmaduke" so amused your correspondent that he read part of it to the other members. It shows Charles Hamilton already possessed that genius for amusing dialogue, which enthralled so many young readers.

We closed at 9.30.

We meet again on 27th February and we hope for better weather and a larger attendance, but the brave ones who turned up on 28th January deserve a special cheer.

J. F. BELLFIELD
Correspondent.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: In case of misunderstanding, your Editor was not on strike, nor were our printers. But strikes on the railways, plus the weather, made postal services terrible.)

CAMBRIDGE

We met at the Cherryhinton home of Adrian Perkins on 4th February, 1979. The Secretary reported that the January meeting had been cancelled owing first to the bad weather, and then to the serious illness of Edward Witten's brother. With regret he reported that Edward's brother had since died. The meeting passed a vote of sympathy to Edward.

The Secretary reported that Jack Overhill would reach his 76th birthday in the coming week. Members of the Club presented Jack with a birthday card, signed by all present, and wished him many more happy years.

Adrian Perkins then gave a talk on the history of "The Eagle". He told how the Rev. Marcus Morris had come to London in 1949 with the idea of a new publication for boys. The Hulton Press saw a chance to diversify into the juvenile market. Morris as Editor, with Frank Hampson as artist, launched the "Eagle". Its combination of colour, and of picture and story, made it an immediate success, and the initial sales reached an enormous total. Dan Dare became a household name, and the story of St. Paul the first of a series of true-life stories that thrilled the readers of the paper.

Finally, however, the A.P. took over "Eagle", Morris left the editorial chair, colour was dropped and the Eagle finally ceased publication in 1969. An animated discussion followed, and Adrian was

warmly thanked for his talk and for showing us his wonderful collection of the complete bound volumes of the Eagle, miscellaneous single copies, the Holiday Extras, colour proofs for the "registration copies", "The Best of Eagle", a set of the Eagle "single subject" books, and the Sunday Times Magazine article. Adrian also reported on the present position of the arrangements for the "Eagle Convention" in 1980. The Secretary asked to be relieved of the office owing to age, and to the general satisfaction of the meeting Keith Hodkinson agreed to be joint Secretary until the Annual Meeting.

Mike Rouse produced photographs of the club taken on the occasion of Terry Wakefield's visit, and a special cartoon Terry had drawn for the Club.

The next meeting will be on 4th March, at the Willingham home of Keith Hodkinson.

The meeting closed with a hearty vote of thanks to Adrian and Mrs. Perkins for their hospitality.

LONDON

Bob and Louise Blythe were the hosts at the Cricklewood Scout's Hut, another new rendezvous and they were rewarded by an attendance of 27 members. It was the 31st A.G.M. of the club and apart from Roger Jenkins being elected as chairman, all the rest of the officers were re-elected en bloc.

Roger Jenkins conducted a Magnet series readings quiz. This was done on tape and the initial letter of each of the series constituted an anagram of a Greyfriars character. This proved to be 'Temple' and it was Laurie Sutton and Eric Lawrence who gave the correct answer. Eric Lawrence's Grid Competition resulted in two wins by Brian Doyle, Bob Blythe and Bill Bradford whilst Bill Lofts, Ray Hopkins, Roger Jenkins and I had one apiece.

An excellent lecture by Mary Cadogan was illustrated by slides, Bob Blythe being the Projectionist. The lecture was entitled "Women and Children First". Bob Blythe followed this with slides that were taken when he and the late Len Packman visited Francis Brooks to collect the Edwy Searles Brooks correspondence that she said Bob could have. Two very good showings and greatly enjoyed. Then followed the news-

never get there. Madam,
th me.

- a slow, slow journey to
n we caught the first train
of hours later we alighted
between Maidstone and the

at a cottager boiled eggs
o have a light meal. Over
atorium, a half-mile or

on before the funeral party
Richards's sister, his
one of his countless
e mourners.
ome that night. We
train came. It was very,
s been glad that I went.

entertaining article from
ounted the story of the
ne Thomson Publications
gave full credit to three
ks provided him with the
e. It is the kind of
e days.

researchers, I also think
ll. Starting really from
les to which, I suspect,
much credit to those who

Herbert Leckenby which
o. Entitled "100 Years
papers between 1822 and

letter reading by Bob Blythe, the one being chosen was February 1962
and it dealt with the election of a new president. Next meeting will be at
342 Hoe Street, Walthamstow, on Sunday, 11th March. A hearty vote of
thanks were accorded to Bob and Louise and also to the other lady
helpers.

BENJAMIN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held 10th February, 1979

Even the sons of York could not pretend that we were meeting in
anything other than a winter of discontent, to which, indeed, several
regulars had succumbed. The Chairman was able, nevertheless, to
congratulate members on a substantial turn-out in adverse conditions,
and to welcome new member Tom Rhodes from Huddersfield. We also
congratulated the Secretary on his recent translation - expressible
literary terms, perhaps, as that from Staincliffe Cracksman to Vicar
of Wakefield!

Discussion time ranged from the usual collectors' chat to an
assessment of ITV's Dick Barton serial, agreed to be decidedly
superior to the BBC's Sexton Blake travesty.

Main items of the evening was a thought-provoking talk by Jack
Allison prompted by his re-reading of the Magnet's Arthur Carter series.
Jack, who is something of a Latin student, had been struck by the number
of episodes in this series which concerned extracts from the Roman
classics - whether handed out as impots or prescribed for Remove prep.
The unusual features, said Jack, were that the passages were very
precisely identified by Hamilton and that they ranged over a number of
authors beyond the traditional Virgil. Curiosity had prompted him,
therefore, to look them up. He had found each of them to have some
highly pertinent point (one or two were actually rather indecent!) which
was clearly wasted on the contemporary schoolboy reader, but equally
clearly provided a pleasurable bonus for the knowledgeable adult Magnet.

Many members confessed that "construe" passages from the
Magnet had always gone over their heads, though they had still enjoyed
the joke when Bunter perpetrated a howler; others suggested that an
author like Suetonius, though scurrilous, was still essential for the study
of Roman history - in a carefully selected edition, of course. All agree

that Jack had given us something to think and talk about.

A quiz, mainly on Magnet matters, was presented by Harry Barlow and won by Geoffrey Wilde with 39 points out of 40. Bill Williamson and Ron Hodgson followed with 34 and 33. We hear along the grapevine that Geoffrey is still kicking himself over that lost point!

Next meeting: Saturday, 10th March, but no library session - Mollie and Jack will be in sunny Australia. They could be starting a fashion.

JOHNNY BULL

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REVIEW

(by Fergus Horsburgh)

THE UNCOLLECTED WODEHOUSE

Edited by David Jasen
(The Seabury Press, New York
8.95 U. S. dollars)

This first of the posthumous P. G. Wodehouse books is a rare nostalgic treat for Wodehouse collectors and great fun for others who just happen to like a good laugh.

Editor David Jasen was an old friend of P. G., and in the early 1970's wrote the definitive authorized Wodehouse biography; he also wrote the only Bibliography and Readers Guide to the Master's major published works. During his research on the biography he came to see in the vast reservoir of "uncollected" Wodehouse output ample material for a re-issue of early newspaper and magazine articles and short stories not previously published in major anthologies. Sir Pelham was delighted at the idea - never did he say no to an extra royalty cheque! - helped Mr. Jasen with suggestions and promised to write an introduction. Alas, he died before writing it, six weeks after being made a Knight Commander of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II in a gracious gesture of forgiveness for his indiscretions during World War II. In 1941, after "he and the Channel Ports - formidable prizes of war!" - were captured by the Germans, he was persuaded to broadcast from Berlin a series of non-political, innocuous and humorous articles. With Bertie Wooster-like innocence, Mr. Wodehouse failed to grasp the fact that, although his broadcasts were in themselves devoid of pro-German propaganda, the fact that such a prominent man of English letters would speak on the German radio at all was coup enough for the Germans. But that was an old, old story, forgiven and forgotten by most for thirty years, and Sir Pelham rightly saw his knighthood as the happy ending to a sad story. After all, did not every Wodehouse story have a happy ending?

In place of the introduction that "Plum" - the diminutive of the more prestigious "Pelham" - never wrote is a foreword by his old friend and defender Malcolm Muggeridge, former Punch Editor who did so much to calm the anti-Wodehouse hysteria occasioned by the Berlin episode.

Most of Uncollected is from Mr. Wodehouse's early contributions to such English magazines as Punch, Strand, Pearsons, Grand and Answers, but there are a few snippets from the American Vanity Fair, which was taken over by Vogue in 1936. Vanity Fair, "devoted to society and the arts", was his principal bread-supplier in the early years of his marriage. Plum and Ethel were married in the second month of World War I, and lived happily ever after. This was the period when he began to be recognized on both sides of the Atlantic as one of the 20th Century's foremost humorous writers.

Readers will recognize techniques in these early writings - incongruous similies, whimsical inanities, outrageously mixed metaphors, farcial downplay of the over-righteous - which were later to be developed to the ninth degree in Mr. Wodehouse's long list of transatlantic best sellers.

Mr. Wodehouse's life-long habit of spoofing literary intellectuals is beautifully exemplified in a Vanity Fair article "The Alarming Spread of Poetry":

"Nobody ever thought of reading a book of poems unless the author had been dead a hundred years. Poetry, like certain brands of cheese, improved with age, and no connoisseur dreamed of filling himself with raw indigestible verse, warm from the maker."

An early version of today's truth in advertising ethic tells of: "The Dyspepsia of the Soul. Rather ... rubbish - Spectator. ... read these sporific pages - Outlook. Already in its first edition".

Some items of historical value to collectors are included: the seventh and last of the Reggie Pepper stories - Reggie, the prototype of the even zanier Bertie Wooster, who displaced Reggie; the first Keggs story - Keggs, the prototype of the immortal Jeeves, but there is a curious anomaly here. Mr. Jasen in his introduction refers to Jeeves as the most celebrated butler of them all. No-one knows better than Mr. Jasen that Jeeves, as Mr. Wodehouse himself explained many times, more in sorrow than in anger, was not a butler, but rather a gentleman's gentleman, that is to say, a valet. This reviewer suspects that Editor Jasen was himself badly edited here, as it is inconceivable that Mr. Jasen, the acknowledged master of Wodehousian arts, would make so elementary an error.

There is the purest ray of a gem for the collector in Mr. Wodehouse's first and last mystery story, "Death at the Excelsior", which was first published in 1914. This short story has an ingenious plot, cleverly told, but Agatha Christie may rest unperturbed. For the record, Dame Agatha and Sir Plum were members of a long-distance literary mutual admiration society, as each in turn dedicated one of their masterpieces to the other.

Mr. Wodehouse's genre - first, all the time and last - was comedy. No-one, not even Stephen Leacock, himself a Wodehouse admirer, would grudge him the title of The Twentieth Century's Funniest and Most Prolific Writer.

The present volume represents merely the outcroppings of a vast treasury; "Uncollected" stories, articles and essays in Punch and Vanity Fair alone, to say nothing of Colliers, Cosmopolitan, Titbits, Nash's, Strand, Playboy, Globe - the list goes on and on, run into several hundred. This must surely be but Volume I of the final Wodehouse saga.

RARE HAMILTONIANA: For Sale or Trade -- 11 out of the 15 issues of Pluck (1909, inc. one Xmas Double No.) containing the "Jack of the Circus" series by 'Harry Dorrian'. Neatly dis-bound, and in mint condition. All issues beautifully illustrated by Warwick Reynolds. 5 stories feature Greyfriars; 1 features St. Jim's. A charming and highly desirable slice of Hamiltoniana. Cash offers invited, but would prefer to trade for Sexton Blake, etc., items I'm after (see CD Annual 1978, page 118), and/or pre-1945 1st editions by Agatha Christie. All letters answered.

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

EDITORIAL COMMENT

On page 24, Mr. Thurbon asks for a collective name for Magnets, Chums, Union Jacks, and the like. Why should we want something different from the term used by the late Bill Gander, 37 years ago, and included in our own title? - STORYPAPERS. But nothing we say or do will influence trendy reporters and journalists.

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