STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 33 NUMBER 394 OCTOBER 1979

26p

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

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

COLLECTORS' DIGEST
Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 33 | No. 394 | OCTOBER 1979 | Price 26p

GLADYS COOPER

One of the most pleasant biographies I have ever read is the recently published one on Gladys Cooper (Heinemann) written by her oldest grandson, Sheridan Morley. Entirely lacking the sensationalism which characterises so many biographies these days, Mr. Morley's work is beautifully written, with no use for the vogue words of the seventies which so often grate between our teeth in the present brash age. I enjoyed every word of it.

Gladys Cooper's long life and distinguished career divides

naturally into two parts of about equal length. Up till the time she was forty, covering her career on the British stage, and her reputation as the British postcard queen. The first pin-up girl, she was probably the greatest also. Then, from forty to eighty-odd, which covered her career as a Hollywood film actress.

I never saw Gladys Cooper on the stage, but I can recall my mother mentioning her as one of the world's most beautiful women, as she undoubtedly was. In an old postcard album (a birthday present when I was six or seven) I even have one of the hundreds of postcards for which she was photographed.

But I have happy memories of Gladys Cooper in American films, mainly, no doubt, because she had a long contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and we played such a great number of M.G.M. films in the Small Cinema. As I remember her, she was always in character roles, playing elderly women, with immense success.

Gladys Cooper was born in the far distant year of 1888, and I found that one of the most interesting items (among a great many) was when the author drew attention to what was going on in that long ago year. Gladys shared her birth year with Irving Berlin, Maurice Chevalier, T. S. Eliot and Lawrence of Arabia. It was the time when the Jack the Ripper murders were alarming East End London, it was the year of the first-ever beauty contest, the year the Kodak camera was invented, and the year Dunlop patented the pneumatic tyre.

But, most intriguing of all, it was the year when electricity was installed throughout the House of Commons. Somehow, I did not think of electricity as being in use so long ago as that. (And, perhaps, my astonishment is partly due to the fact that we usually associate the House of Commons with gas.)

In passing, Gladys was born in Lewisham, but she would have been too early to have known the splendid Lewisham Hippodrome which we have occasionally mentioned in these pages.

UPWARD STILL AND UPWARD

By chance recently I drew from one of my bookcases my copy of Daphne Du Maurier's famous novel "My Cousin Rachel". When I bought it new in late 1951 it cost, as I see from the price on the dust-jacket,

twelve shillings and sixpence. I looked at the price with something like awe. Today - admittedly nearly thirty years later - a book of that type, from a popular author, would cost in the region of £5.

It set me wondering just which items have suffered the heaviest increases during the inflationary years. Anything in the publishing line has jumped enormously as we all know to our cost. Thanks to the anaesthetic effects of decimalisation, it does not really come home to us that we are paying something like nineteen bob for the two-bob paperback, though we may notice that the size and quality are not so high as of yore.

When I was doing my daily stint to Wimbledon, while Madam had her fortnight in the Atkinson Morley hospital there, I became acquainted for the first time since I left Surbiton some eight years ago, with London's evening papers. To my consternation I found that the cost for a paper had risen to two bob. I suppose that 80% of what I believe is called a tabloid, is devoted to advertisements, with lots of space going to sex films with suggestive titles, plus an awful lot of attention being given to television and pop. My day return fare (second class, of course) from Fleet to Wimbledon, was exactly £2. Eight years ago it was twelve bob.

Also in Wimbledon (and what has become of the dignified and pleasant Wimbledon I once knew?) I decided on a hair-cut in the period between the afternoon and evening sessions at the hospital. I found two shops where they proudly displayed their price lists: hair cut and shampoo £5. FIVE pounds to cut and wash a man's scanty locks. Who's mad? I found a "cheap" little shop. They "did" me - about a 12-minute job - for £2.50. The gentleman who did me reminded me a bit of Wun Lung, though I don't recall that he said the charge was "velly cheap".

My favourite tobacco is now done up in Metric tins, so that the familiar two-ounce tins contain less than two ounces. The price varies so considerably from shop to shop that I have no idea what the real price should be.

It's complicated, living in Britain nowadays, but I suppose that wages have gone up far more than prices, whatever they may be. While Madam was away, in the words of the old song, "The lawn we were

proud of is waving in hay, Your beautiful flowers have withered away; Where you planted roses, the weeds seem to say ---" and so on.

A friend of mine told me she was having an odd-job gardener in - he might be useful to me. Later, she told me kindly that he would NOT be useful to me. He charged £2 an hour, and did a little bit of weeding from which he rested frequently. The two hours cost her £4. I did not engage the gardener. After all, some weeds look quite charming.

THANK YOU, AGAIN

Madam is now home again, and is making steady progress, though, naturally, she has to take care. She knows, and I know, that her recovery has been due to the prayers and affection of her countless friends, so many of whom we have never even met. Bless you, one and all.

THE EDITOR

* *

OUR SONG TITLES COMPETITION

Our little fill-up item on the old songs last month seems to have tickled the memory buds of a great many readers. The following is the correct list of titles:
1. Love's Old Sweet Song; 2. Back Home in Tennessee; 3. Horsey, Keep Your Tail Up; 4. At the End of the Day; 5. Keep the Home Fires Burning; 6. The Broadway Melody; 7. In a Little Spanish Town; 8. Are we to part like this, Bill?; 9. Sally; 10. The White Cliffs of Dover; 11. Come to the Fair; 12. The Man on the Flying Trapeze; 13. My Blue Heaven; 14. Souvenirs; 15. Bless 'em All; 16. Smoke Gets in Your Eyes; 17. Home on the Range; 18. Don't have any more, Mrs. Moore; 19. I'd Climb the Highest Mountain; 20. The King's Horses (and the King's Men).

We have increased the number of little prizes to three, owing to a tie for second place, and £1 is being sent to each of the following:
Mr. E. Lawrence (Wokingham) who succeeded in giving a splendid 19 out of 20. The other two are Mr. D. Webster of Bideford and Mr. F. R. Lowe of Derby, each of whom managed to get 16 correct by the same post.

* *

DEATH OF JOHN TOMLINSON

We deeply regret to record the death of Mr. John Tomlinson of Burton-on-Trent who was a keen hobbyist and a C.D. reader over many years. His great favourite among the story-paper characters was Jack Blake of St. Jim's.

DANNY'S DIARY

The clocks went back on 6th October, so now the time has come for plenty of good reading, though I read all the year round.

The Nelson Lee Library seems to be going in for much shorter series these days. The latest is one which has run through October, and been completed in four issues. Bernard Forrest, who was expelled long ago, has come back under another name. The title of the opening tale is "In Another's Name". He is soon found out, but it's only part of a plot to get him re-admitted to the school as a hero.

In "Hero - and Cad", Forrest proceeds to show everybody that he has reformed, but he is really plotting to oust Nipper from the leadership of the junior school. Next week, in "The Whip Hand", Forrest finds that his plot is known to another cad, Gore-Pearce - and Gore-Pearce means to make things uncomfortable for Forrest.

Final of the month - and of the series - is "The Thief". Both Forrest and Gore-Pearce come to grief, and Waldo, the wonder boy, comes back into the picture to save them both. A novel series which I enjoyed reading.

There have been remarkable scenes in the old town of Reading, and the papers have been full of it. The inquest opened on the tobacconist who was murdered in his shop a few months back. There seemed to be a lot of people giving evidence to the coroner and they were convinced that the murderer was Philip Yale Drew, who was the star of the play entitled "The Monster" at a Reading Theatre that week. The coroner's enquiry lasted for nine days - a terrific time - and everybody was expecting the jury to bring in a verdict that Mr. Oliver had been murdered by Drew. But they didn't. The verdict was "Murder by some person unknown".

There were wild scenes in Reading, with everybody wanting to cheer and congratulate Mr. Drew. The publicity should make Mr. Drew's fortune for him. Some firm has dug out some old cowboy films which Mr. Drew made years ago, and they are being shown at the Avenue Pavilion Cinema in Shaftesbury Avenue, London, before going out to other cinemas.

In the Gem "The Man from Australia" is Trimble's uncle. Then, "Skimpole's Simple Savage", in which Skimpole adopts a savage from the Woolla-Woolla Islands. This tale introduces Alonzo Todd and his Uncle Benjamin - the first time, I reckon, they have ever appeared in a St. Jim's tale. A weird affair.

In "Leaving it to Gussy", the chums of Study No. 6 decide to redecorate their study. Final tale of the month is "Detained" in which there is a feud between Mr. Linton and Tom Merry. Mr. Linton courts Miss Finch, the Headmistress of Spalding Hall, and calls her "Heppy", short for Hephzebah. And Lady Peggy asks Mr. Linton to kiss her. Oh, dear!

The trial flight has taken place of the State airship, R.101. A marvellous airship, and Britain has built it.

We have been to the pictures quite a few times. We saw Clive Brook and William Powell in "Interference" which is a talkie. The silent films we have seen are Betty Balfour in "Paradise"; William Boyd in "The Cop"; Clara Bow in "Three Week-Ends"; and George Sidney and Mack Swain in "The Cohens and Kellys in Atlantic City"; and, finally, another talkie, "Show Boat" starring Laura La Plante and Joseph Schildkraut with some lovely music.

The Magnet has been just gorgeous all the month. I don't normally care a lot for Coker, but "Coker Comes a Cropper" is a dream of delight. It's the funniest Coker tale I have ever read. Coker has to bend over and take six, and he decides to disguise himself and make Mr. Prout "bend over".

Next, a lovely couple in which a new boy named Arthur Durrance comes to Greyfriars. He is an old acquaintance of Vernon-Smith's. The real Durrance is kidnapped, and an imposter comes in his place. But the Bounder smells a rat, and puts paid to the plot. Just fine all through. These two tales are "A Rogue in the Remove" and "The Schoolboy Detective". Finally, "Skinner's Shady Scheme" in which Skinner wrecks Mr. Quelch's study, and arranges matters so that Bob Cherry thinks the guilty man is Mark Linley. A pretty good tale.

A new talking picture "Bulldog Drummond", starring Ronald Colman, has just finished a 22-weeks' run at the Tivoli in the Strand. I shall hope to see it when it is released and comes round our way. It

must be good to run for so long.

In many ways, the Popular is my favourite paper these days. There is so much perfect reading in the way of old stories, as well as the new Rio Kid tales, by an unknown author, which are splendid. The latest Rio Kid series introduces the Kid, with a moustache to make him look older, turning up as the new owner of the Lazy 'O' Ranch near Packsaddle. He is ready to settle down. But the cowhands of the Lazy 'O' are a tough bunch of roughnecks under the leadership of the unscrupulous foreman, Barney Baker, who has run the ranch and lined his own pockets for a long time.

The Kid has to tame or get rid of the criminals in the bunch, while Barney Baker gets wounded when he falls into a trap which he has laid for the Kid. And when Mister Fairfax, as the Kid now calls himself, rides a wild horse, he wins the esteem of some of the better men in the bunch, and especially that of Long Bill, the wrangler. So all begins to look brighter for the new young rancher.

This month's tales are "The Rio Kid - Rancher"; "The New Boss of the Lazy-O"; "The Lazy-O Bunch"; and "The Kid Takes the Reins". The magnificent series continues next month.

Two lovely Schoolboys' Own Libraries this month. "The Schoolboy Juggler" is a story about Kipps of Greyfriars; "The St. Jim's Inventors" is a story mainly about Glyn. In this story he is a fairly new boy, and his home, Glyn House, is near St. Jim's. Funny how so many of them have their family name in the name of their home.

The Modern Boy is not all that hot at present, but I have it through the kindness of my brother Douglas. There are railway tales by Alfred Edgar; motor-racing tales by C. Malcolm Hincks; and an air serial by G. E. Rochester called "The Black Squadron". And masses of advertisements in the 28 pages.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 109, "The Schoolboy Juggler" comprised a red Magnet story from early summer 1913 entitled "The Schoolboy Conjurer" in which Kipps arrived at the school, plus a war-time tale of four years later, early 1917, entitled "The Prefect's Plot". The latter was a complete re-hash of a blue Gem plot in which Cutts pretended to be writing a play and got Digby to write part of it out for him, including a letter which Cutts intended to use criminally. In the Greyfriars tale it was Loder who pretended to be writing the play and Wharton was his victim. Kipps put an end to the plot.

S.O.L. No. 110, "The St. Jim's Inventors" comprised two very early blue Gem tales,

each starring Glyn. The first was "The St. Jim's Inventor" of early 1909, and the second "The St. Jim's Inventors" of a few months later in the same year. Odd to repeat the same title within a few months, one would think. In the second tale, Glyn invented a working model of Skimpole. Far-fetched but fun.

The Philip Yale Drew case was one of the most amazing in British legal history, being, practically, a trial by coroner. It had enormous publicity, and for a short time Drew attracted crowds, playing his old part in "The Monster" at Bristol Empire, the Bedford Theatre at Camden Town, Hammersmith Palace, and Islington Empire. Then the Opera House, Scarborough, just before Christmas, when the bombshell came for Drew. Mr. and Mrs. Lindo who had stood by him through his ordeal, suddenly announced that they were leaving for South Africa. He did very little stage work ever again, and lived for the next ten years on the generosity of friends. He died in 1940, and was buried in a pauper's grave in Chingford Cemetery. To this day, we do not know whether he was guilty or innocent of murder. But he was a heavy drinker, and sometimes violent when drunk.

One of our own readers, Mr. P. Cushing of Kimpton, recalls being at the performance at Hammersmith Palace, when Drew was briefly thriving on his notoriety.)

* *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I do hope you are enjoying the reprinted Dr. Huxton Rymer story. Please let me know if there is any other old article which you would like to read again, especially if you do not possess the original. Since last month's appeal for articles I have been very lucky and received some interesting ones which will be published in due course. Thank you all for your support.

THE DOCTOR HUXTON RYMER STORY

by Josie Packman

Part 3

Rymer disappeared abroad with his ill-gotten gains but soon gambled most of it away. In his years as a criminal he must have stolen or acquired in some way or another, a fairly large fortune but with his besetting sins of gambling, drink and drugs sank to so low a level that after certain happenings in Sydney he found it prudent to depart from that city, the only way being as a deck hand aboard the Japanese ship Kara Maru. The Kara Maru was plying as a passenger ship between Sydney and Hong Kong calling at Manila and various other islands on the way.

But she was destined never to reach Hong Kong on this voyage, neither were the majority of her passengers and crew. A hurricane hit the ship during its course through the Great Barrier Reef, but one man was able to escape from the wreckage carrying with him the beautiful rare crimson pearl which had already been the cause of much bloodshed and was destined to do so once again. This adventure was told in Union Jack No. 564, dated 1 August, 1914, entitled "The Crimson Pearl". This was another of the grand 80,000 word double numbers which were such a feature of the period. It was the length of these stories which enabled Teed to enlarge on the character of Rymer, especially where he fought to outwit Blake who was often on his track. Very few of these early adventures happened in England, they were mostly set in the Far East or South America with an occasional one in New York. The descriptions by Teed of the countries and terrains in which Rymer worked helped to make one realise the true bravery and courage which Rymer sometimes had to show, gave one the real key to his character.

The next four stories of Rymer's adventures are very good ones but as they are shorter tales, the themes are necessarily easier ones for Blake to settle. All four are, however, quite different in plot and location. No. 591, "The Mystery of the Banana Plantation" being a tale of chicanery in the financial world. No. 613, "Scoundrels All" is another version of the South American adventures but this time Rymer joins up with Beauremon again and other members of the "Council of Eleven". No. 618, "Sexton Blake, Pirate" is a good yarn about the activities of spies in war-time. Submarines and bullion abound and Rymer kills the spy early on in the story and makes his own plans for obtaining the bullion being sent from America to Germany. There is no doubt about it, these war years lent themselves to many a plot which would have been impossible in peace time. The last of this particular set of tales is recorded in No. 623, called "The Case of the 'Frisco Leper". This tale opens with a description of the great San Francisco Exposition. Despite the war raging in Europe the state of California had decided that the Exposition could not be postponed and it was because of this decision that the appearance in San Francisco of Dr. Huxton Rymer was to be of great moment. Rymer appears to fall in with a man who is apparently a leper and the Dr. treats him after discovering that the

disease was not true Leprosy, but Rymer's agile brain soon sees a way to make a profit out of this - Blackmail! For what city containing thousands of people visiting the Exposition could afford to let it be known that a case of Leprosy was in the city. But Sexton Blake also turned up in San Francisco bent on catching an escaped German prisoner of war, so of course Rymer's plans as usual go awry. No wonder he has sworn to kill Blake. Yet when he gets the opportunity he does not act - the remains of his streak of decency are still there - he really admires Blake for his persistence.

Our next tale is the last of Teed's Double Numbers. It is U.J. No. 685, "The Blue God" and introduces another of Teed's characters - Hammerton Palmer - who joins forces with Rymer in this tale of orchids and sapphires. Both very rare specimens.

Never before had the wonderful blue orchid been seen by white men, nor had the large sapphire embedded in an idol hidden deep in the jungles of Borneo. This is a magnificent tale and once again shows the courage of the one-time brilliant surgeon in venturing into the jungle where few had gone before him. But he is a true gambler and fighter who, when bested by Blake merely waits for the next opportunity to come along.

The last tale in this section of our story of Dr. Rymer is quite a good one although it seems to be a copy of the earlier gold bullion one but with a different setting. This is what we hear of the Dr. in the last paragraph of this story. "Coasting up through the Solomons was a schooner bearing Dr. Huxton Rymer and the rest of the scum who had escaped from Tahiti. Rymer had played for high stakes and had lost, but as he leaned over the rail smoking and watching the green water slush by, his face betrayed no trace of disappointment. He was too much of a gambler to reveal what he might feel, and when the hand was played it was to him dead."

So there we leave him until five years in the future when once again his adventures are chronicled in the pages of the Union Jack and the Sexton Blake Library.

To be continued

THERE'S NO ESCAPE FROM CRIME

by Raymond Curé

There's no escape from crime. At least that's the conclusion my

reading leads me to. North, South, East or West we are surrounded with it, and if you pick up a batch of Sexton Blake Libraries you will come to the same conclusion. One finds it in the most expected places and in the most unexpected ones, be it among tenement buildings, sunken gardens, Sunny Spain or Darkest Africa. One can well imagine crime planting its seeds among the Tenements and steadily growing until it bursts into full bloom. Tenement blocks seem to lend themselves to the development of crime, so when I pick up a book entitled "The Terror of the Tenements" to wit - Sexton Blake Library No. 566, dated 4 March, 1937, I turn not a hair, not that I have many to turn.

Now according to Anthony Skene there is a chappie around anxious to avoid the police on account of an unfortunate criminal past; please note that word "unfortunate", it leads one to think that this poor gentlemen is not a red-blooded criminal but a victim of cricumstances. You know how it is when your luck runs out; he finds himself faced with a fresh charge - that of murder! And if you have an ounce of compassion in your body you will agree that's not just bad luck - it's something chronic.

No job, sick wife, visit to a moneylender; you get the picture? We're on the way down and we reach bottom when we are accused of murder. After that there's not a cat-in-hell's chance for him or wouldn't have been, except that Sexton Blake seizes that cat by its tail and flings it over his shoulder. After that our friend's luck changes - verdict - not guilty, new job, loving wife, moneylender exposed, food in larder. Good show sir! A great tale full of human pathos.

By way of a change in order to get away from those tenement blocks let's take a walk round the beautiful gardens of Stiltley Manor. We exchange smoke and grime for sunshine and flowers but crime is still with us.

It's Donald Stuart who brings crime among the sunshine and flowers to our attention in his excellent story "The Riddle of the Sunken Garden", S.B.L. No. 581, dated 1.7.37. Now I want you to enjoy the change of scenery after the tenement experience, so here is his first paragraph:

"It was one of those mornings in early spring, in the country the swollen buds were bursting stickily into leaf and in the gardens and parks

the golden trumpets of the daffodils swayed gently in the light breeze as though the sun overhead had spilled lakes of yellow fire."

Now take a good deep breath of this lovely Spring air because you are going to need it. You may have left the tenements but not the shadow of crime for in a sunken garden of Stiltley Manor lies a corpse - name of Norman Cassell - stabbed to death. In no time a suspect is found and because the poor chap had been sworn to secrecy he finds himself in a real hot spot. Sexton Blake does clear the matter up but you get the feeling that not only should you steer clear of the tenements but of the sunken gardens and travel further afield in search of peace of mind.

How about Africa! Let Rex Hardinge be our guide through that land of excessive heat, the land of half the creatures in the Blackpool Zoo. The land of carrion-birds waiting for you to die and willing to provide you with a free funeral service, also the land of the creeping horror that scares even the witch-doctors half out of their wits, the land of blue skies and star-lit nights and dare I mention it land of murder! There is a drawing of a gentleman slumped in a chair with a knife in his back to prove it, he's dead alright. More of this crime is revealed in S.B.L. No. 597, dated 4.9.37 entitled The Mystery of the African Expedition.

Let's try a trip to Spain. All aboard the "Spy from Spain" S.B.L. No. 606, dated 6.1.38, and we have as companion the person of the name of Hon. Ronald Purvale, a man who thrives on danger, a real double-fisted he-man and our Ronnie was doing his stuff (with the aid of Sexton Blake) while James Bond, 007 was still being pushed round the park in his pram.

As we are all aboard what's better than a walk on deck? Trouble is, according to John G. Brandon, I quote: "Stretched out on the deck, near the hatch, was Maguire's body and one glance at it was sufficient to show that the man had been literally hacked to death."

I give up! As I said at the beginning there is no escape from crime. Tenements, Gardens, Africa or Spain, across them all strides the shadow of crime.

However, it's good for business. If there was no crime there would be no Sexton Blake and if there were no Sexton Blake there would

have been no Union Jack or Sexton Blake Library and that means no Blakiana in the Collectors' Digest. There is no escape from crime but if it leads to the four tales I have just mentioned I mustn't complain.

* *

Nelson Lee Column

THE OLD AND THE NEW

by R. J. Godsave

It is rather difficult for one who was, more or less, brought up with the Old Series of the Nelson Lee Library to accept the New Series with the same enthusiasm as was given to the old. There is no doubt that to many readers of this period 1917-1926 the Nelson Lee became more than just a weekly paper, as were other papers to other readers.

In many ways the St. Frank's stories by E. S. Brooks from o.s. 112 were somewhat above the heads of the readers for whom they were written. There was always a serious streak running throughout the series, which was somewhat inevitable as a natural follow-on from the pure detective stories of the Nelson Lee prior to o.s. 112.

The actual commencement as a regular reader of the Nelson Lee is important. A reader who started to become a regular reader in the New Series would probably see that the Old Series was so very unlike that he or she would not be interested to the same extent as one familiar to the Old Series.

The fact that St. Frank's was increased from two Houses to five Houses towards the end of the Old Series was, perhaps, the major cause of the great difference which exists between the two series, apart from the increased size of the Lee.

It must be remembered that during the 1920's there was not the distraction of television and radio which exists so much today. The old papers of that period undoubtedly became a part of the lives of the boys and girls, greatly to their benefit.

COMPARISONS

by N. M. Kadish

I have often considered Edwy Searles Brooks' stories as good and as interesting as those stories by Charles Hamilton. Edwy Searles

Brooks, particularly in his Christmas at Raithmere Castle, No. 137 - 139, 1st n.s. the opening story of this Christmas series, creates an atmosphere in keeping with the rest of the series. 'Ye'd best not go near that place, young gentlemen! There's ghosts there and there'll be nothing but tragedy if you enter those grey walls!" The work by Charles Hamilton, "Billy Bunter's Christmas", 1191-1194, starts off with a bang with Bunter under the seating - bilking the company and saving Lord Cavandale's life - as well as several times after - the shot in the Park in the dead of night - with the swining of the heavy poker and the shot in the Picture Gallery. There is only one ghost story in this series, as far as I cam remember, "The Phantom of the Abbey" (1193) as well as the attack on Ferrers Locke, "The Ghost Walks".

In the case of E.S.B., his stories are full of ghostly atmosphere, the footsteps in the night, the hidden room and the movement of furniture as well as the ogre and dancing fairies and a vanishing feast table before Fatty Little. In the case of Charles Hamilton we have comedy too, which I do not think happens in the E.S.B. stories. "How dare you tell me such foolish falsehoods!" Shake, shake, shake. "Grooh! Yarooh" spluttered Bunter, wriggling furiously. One minute Bunter was yelling frantically in the driving seat of the car; the next he was grovelling in the snow. (The Phantom of the Abbey, 1193)

There is a definite plot in Charles Hamilton's stories, but so differently in E.S.B's work with his Mr. Roger Morley, who is saved by Mr. Rotherton and with the use of a beamless projector with the small projectors placed round the castle of Reginald Pitt.

Both stories appeal to me and both are readable, one author winning on atmosphere and the other on the plot with a certain amount of comedy such as Bunter's dressing for dinner with his dinner jacket split up the back.

* *

It's Not So Far Off Now! Coming Soon, God Willing!

THE MIGHTY FOUR-HUNDREDTH NUMBER OF COLLECTORS' DIGEST. 400. It doesn't seem possible, but it is! 400.

Keep your eyes peeled ready for it! As if you wouldn't.

SERIOUSLY, THOUGH ...! by Ernest Holman

From time to time, I have - no doubt, in company with others - often pondered on name pronunciation when reading the 'Old Papers'. In over thirty years in the 'chalk profession' several of the character names have cropped up in reality - and the variety of accepted name-sounding has been quite interesting.

In the Twenties, Greyfriars & Co. provided many re-enactments of stories with fellow schoolboys - we usually adopted Churchill's policy of keeping the pronunciation as close to the spelling as possible. Winston's 'Nazzies' sounded no stranger than our own boyhood renderings of 'cave', 'dee-arrsey', 'Carpentear', 'River Rile', etc.

Ignoring any historically-presumed correctness of names, most families will settle for their own sounds. After all, my own surname has always sounded the 'L' - completely ignoring the example set in a near-similar instance by both Sherlock and the Headmaster of St. Jim's! (There was once a member of a Class who called me Mr. Human - but the other members saw no reason for such a courtesy!) Recalling to mind several students carrying story-character names, I have encountered quite a few 'derivations': Blundell: Generally accented on the first syllable but sometimes on the second. (Actress Joan Blondell always accented Dell.) Bolsover: Bowl-sover as well as Bol-suvver. Chisholm: Chiz-em the most frequent but once it occurred as Chiss-home Coker: Twice as in Poker and once as Cooker. (Author Desmond Coke always pronounced his name as Cook.) Courtenay: Generally as Caught-knee; once I was faced with Coor-ten-nay. Dalton: Mostly Dawl-ton but once or twice the first syllable as in pal. (Calton always had this 'pal' sound.) De Courcy: Surprisingly, met with more than once, with such offerings as De-coor-see, Dee-cur-see and Decca-see. Gore: Gawer as a rule but sometimes Gurr. Herries: As both Herreez and Herriss. Kerr: Equally as Cur and Car. Lefevre; Encountered twice; once as Le-fever and again as Le-fev. Levison (or Leveson): Levvyson or Leeveeson, of course; but there was a Le-veeson. Lowther: Much variation here; first syllable as in Lo or Cow; second syllable both soft and hard as in Bother and Thermal. Mauleverer: Doesn't really belong here, as I have never met this name, which to me was always

Maul-ever-rer. Hubert Gregg, however, once raised the possibility of Maule-ver-rer (similar to Marlborough.) Quelch: Encountered only once and pronounced as in squelch. (Tom Dutton's frequest mishearing was always Welsh.) Talbot: Tawl-but mostly; sometimes the first syllable (see Dalton) as in pal. Wingate: Usually an obvious one but I did meet up with Wing-ate.

Before I start to turn too many molehills into mountains, however, it may be as well to cry 'cavy' or 'packs'. In order, therefore, to avoid too much emphasis on the serious, it might not be amiss to get down to an extreme.

What would Fisher T. have ejaculated if he found his surname spelt as Ghoti. Huh! Well, why not? GH as in cough (F); O as in women (I); TI as in nation (SH).

Ods fish!

* *

REVIEWS

TOM MERRY'S PARTY — Martin Clifford
(Howard Baker: £4.95)

This volume contains an extremely pleasant collection of Gems from late 1937, and includes the last of the issues with the red, white, and blue covers. The main feature on the bill comprises three stories of a four-story series which first appeared in the Gem as long ago as 1909, and related the adventures of Tom Merry and his friends during a holiday in France. These stories were published far out of sequence in 1937, due to the fact that by some amazing decision, the double-length Christmas story had been reprinted in the Schoolboys' Own Library only a couple of years earlier.

The first story of the series was separated from the others in 1909 by a substitute story. When reprinted in the thirties (the only time the series as a whole had been reprinted) the first story was separated from the rest by a space of four years. That opening tale does not appear in this new revival.

There were curious aspects concerning the series, and they are fully discussed in a Let's Be Controversial article No. 188, "Enduring Strangeness", which we published in C.D. No. 326 (Feb. 1974). Readers may like to refer to it.

The stories, and especially the double number, are drastically pruned from the originals, but Gem stories were very long in 1909, with a good deal of padding, and the pruning does not mar the development of the main plot.

An attractive story is "Tom Merry's Minor" (named "Tom Merry Minor" in late 1913). Tom Merry rescues a monkey from the ill-treatment of a frowsy villain whom the boys call

Fur Cap.

"The Worst Form at St. Jim's" comes from the Spring of 1915 when it was entitled "Master Marie". Mr. Selby, master of the Third, gets a ducking and is obliged to take time off from his duties in the Third Form. He is replaced by Nurse Marie Rivers, which makes sense if you recall that it was written in war-time when masters were in short supply, and if you think of Miss Rivers, as I do, as being rather older than her friend, Talbot. Plenty of fun, though not in the same street as "The Limit", a similar tale of 1911.

Next, in chronological order, comes "Editor Grundy", named "The Rival Weekly" in mid-summer 1915. Grundy puts out his own magazine to compete with Tom Merry's Weekly - being Grundy, he thinks he can do it better and drive the original Weekly out of business as well as airing his own views. A typical Grundy tale, with quite a few laughs.

Finally, "Gussy's in Love Again" (it had the rather better title of "Gussy and the Girl" in late 1915), in which Gussy falls for Dorothy Fane, who is a lady "portah" at Blankley's stores. He is cured by the arrival of Miss Fane's fiance who drives a van for Blankley's. Good enough to keep you chuckling all through it.

The Gem at this time, 1937, was serialising certain very early Magnet tales, and they make a welcome supporting programme in this attractive volume. A happy treasure trove for the Gem fan.

BILLY BUNTER'S CONVICT — Frank Richards

(Howard Baker: £4.95)

Another delightful volume, this time containing seven Magnets from the Golden Age of Frank Richards. The main attraction is a 3-story series which started off the year 1928 with much promise. Bunter, at the tail-end of a Christmas Vacation at Wharton Lodge, comes across an escaped convict when he is sheltering from the winter rain. When the new term starts at Greyfriars, there is a new master, a Mr. Gilmore, for the Second Form. Bunter is convinced that Mr. Gilmore is the escaped convict - and there is a reward of £50 going for information leading to the capture of the convict. A well-told and well-plotted series - the sort of thing that the author always handled so well.

From a few weeks later in the same year comes a tip-top pair in which Bunter buys a twenty-guinea bicycle for three pounds - a big bargain, until it transpires that the vendor of the bike had stolen it from De Courcy of Highcliffe. It gives Ponsonby the chance of scoring off his old rivals of Greyfriars. A gorgeous couple of stories which explain why Hamilton is considered by many of us to be the finest school story writer of all time.

"The Prefect's Secret" is a single story from late in the previous year, with Loder at his most villainous. A fine tale. Finally, "Coker's Brain-Wave" from the year 1924. Coker thinks a stage hypnotist may compel Blundell to give him, Coker, a place in the form football eleven. It may not be the best of Coker, but it contains plenty of rib-tickling situations and dialogue to tickle the palates of Coker fans.

A joyful collection, beautifully produced, to take its place on your shelves.

NEARING THE END — Our Classic Serial

THE MISADVENTURES OF MARMADUKE

Marmaduke had met with nothing but misadventures in the School House. He had found life hardly worth living there. But he soon found that, uncomfortable as his late quarters had been, they were far preferable to the New House.

Kerr's idea for the education of Marmaduke was adopted cheerfully by all the New House juniors. Not a lad there but was willing to knock Marmaduke flying in so good a cause.

The educating process started in the study. Figgins & Co. were doing their preparation. Marmaduke, having by this time learned what it was like to be flogged, did not dare to neglect his prep, much as he would have liked to do so. It had been a squeeze for three to work simultaneously in Figgins's study. Naturally, it was a harder squeeze still for four, and it could only be managed by mutual concession. Marmaduke had about as much idea of conceding anything to anybody as of flying.

"I want more room than this," he said, glaring round. "How can you expect me to work when you take up half the table. There ought to be a larger table here. Give me more room at once."

"I'll give you a thick ear if you don't shut up!" growled Figgins, looking up irritably from a difficult passage in his Caesar.

"You must give me more room. One of you can do his work on a chair or a locker. I am not accustomed to such discomfort."

"Will you shut up?"

"No, certainly not. You are a set of low brutes --"

Marmaduke was interrupted. Figgins reached across the table and thumped. Marmaduke jumped up in a rage. Kerr let out his left with promptness, and the heir of millions rolled on the floor. He got up slowly, breathing vengeance. His eyes wandered to the poker in the grate.

"Mind!" said Figgins warningly. "Any more rot, and out you go."

Marmaduke made a clutch at the poker. Thereupon Figgins & Co. laid hands upon him and hurled him forth from the study, and he went spinning down the corridor.

Figgins slammed the door. Marmaduke rushed back to it and began to kick it fiercely. Pratt put his head out of his study.

"What's the thundering row about?"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Marmaduke.

Pratt gave him one look, then he came out of the study, and with a scientific right-hander sent Marmaduke spinning.

"That's what you want, you bounder! Want some more?"

Marmaduke did not want any more; and Pratt went back to his room feeling satisfied with himself, and that he had deserved well of his House.

Marmaduke picked himself up and wandered off disconsolately. He wasn't

cured yet, by any means.

"Hallo! Anything the matter?" asked Jones, meeting him in the passage.

Marmaduke stared at him haughtily.

"Don't speak to me," he said. "You're a low lot of -- Oh!"

Jones hit out, remembering his instructions from Figgins's study, and he walked on, leaving Marmaduke sitting down.

Marmaduke rushed after him, full of fury, and rushed right into Monteith, who was coming out of his study. Monteith staggered back, but only for a moment. He clutched the new boy and shook him violently.

"What do you mean by running into me, you little whelp?"

"Let me go, confound you!" exclaimed Marmaduke. "How dare you take hold of my collar!"

Monteith stared at him blankly for a moment; then a curious grin came upon his thin, sour face.

"Ah, I see they haven't cured you in the School House!" he remarked. "If you think you're going to carry on in the same way in this House, you're making a big mistake, my lad. Come into my study."

"Shan't!"

Monteith jerked him in and took out a cane, and gave him a thrashing on the spot. Then he kicked him out of the room. Marmaduke crawled away. Decidedly the New House was a change for the worse. He went out into the quadrangle, miserable enough, but as obstinate as ever. A tradesman's boy was leaving the rear of the New House. Marmaduke's eyes brightened at the sight of him. An idea had come into his mind. He hurried towards the youth.

"Stop a minute," he said, with unwonted civility. "Look here, here's half-a-crown for you. Will you take a telegram and send it off from the village for me?"

"Rather!" said the youth, eyeing the half-crown, and then Marmaduke, with surprise.

"Then wait here a minute while I write it."

Marmaduke scribbled on a leaf of his pocket-book and tore it out, and gave it to the youth, with another half-crown. Money was nothing to the heir of millions, and he badly wanted that telegram sent. The errand-boy whistled as he saw that the address was to Mrs. Smythe, Park Lane, London.

"I say, this 'ere ain't a joke, are it?" he asked.

"Of course it isn't," said Marmaduke haughtily. "I am not in the habit of joking with menials."

"Do you want your blooming 'ead punched, cocky?"

"I beg your pardon," said Marmaduke, fearing for the fate of his telegram, and swallowing his snobbishness for once. "I am sorry. Take this two-shilling piece. You will be sure and send the wire, won't you? It's important!"

"Right y'ar!" said the boy, and went off whistling.

Marmaduke went back into the New House, satisfied with himself. Whether his father would have fetched him away at his demand he was not sure, but he had no doubts about his other

parent. His doting mother would never allow her dear Marmaduke to remain anywhere where he was not happy. If only the errand-boy sent the wire! And surely he would not fail, after being so liberally rewarded for it beforehand. No, he would not fail.

Marmaduke's hours at St. Jim's were numbered. He carried his head higher than ever when he walked into the New House again.

"Hallo, chappy!" said a junior good-naturedly, as he noticed Marmaduke's air of satisfaction. "Have you lost twopence and found a tanner?"

Marmaduke stared at him loftily, and turned away without speaking. He could afford to be as insolent as he liked now. But the New House junior had Figgy's instructions in mind; and a clenched fist laid Marmaduke neatly on the mat, there to consider himself.

"Want any more, you cad?" demanded the junior, dancing round with flourishing fists.

Marmaduke didn't want any more, and said so.

"Then don't you put on any more airs with me, my lad!"

Marmaduke mumbled vague threats and took himself off.

(THE FINAL INSTALMENT OF THIS OLD, OLD STORY WILL APPEAR NEXT MONTH.)

* *

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 67. SOME OF THE BEST

The opening film this term came from Warner Bros. and was Humphrey Bogart and Barbara Stanwyck in "The Two Mrs. Carrolls". To be honest, I cannot remember anything about the film (seeing films from the operating box is very different from seeing them from the stalls, even though one may see them through several performances), but I remember seeing the play earlier at the Brixton Theatre, a fine home for drama which was right opposite the Empress Music Hall, Brixton. (And Brixton was an attractive place years ago.) "The Two Mrs. Carrolls" was the story of a famous painter, who got away with murdering his first wife, and slipped up when he tried to repeat the trick with his second wife. A good psychological thriller, in fact - but, to anyone, it was startling miscasting for anyone like Humphrey Bogart.

According to reports, Bogart hated it, and so did everybody else connected with it, and Warner's agreed to scrap it and never release it. However, over two years after it was completed, Warner's released it in the States, and some while later it was released over here - and we played it. Once more according to reports, it was a disaster, but that may be an exaggeration. As I said earlier, I cannot remember the film or how it went down at the Small Cinema. But it was undeniably a very, very odd piece of casting.

In the same bill was "Bad Ol' Putty Tat", a coloured Tweety Pie cartoon,

and there was one of the lovely community singing items "Let's Sing a Song About the Moonlight".

By a coincidence, the following week also brought a film made from a play, and my experience has been that films made from plays were seldom very successful. Too static, maybe. This one also came from Warner's, and was Ronald Reagan in "The Voice of the Turtle". I recall seeing the play at "Q" Theatre, but memories of the film are dim, though I would fancy that Reagan, in his turn, was miscast. The odd title referred to the turtle-dove, and I seem to fancy that it is a quotation from Song of Solomon. The picture, I seem to reckon, was a comedy of young 'lerv'. In the same show was a second feature entitled "The Grass is Always Green" starring Chill Wills (did anyone really have a name like that?) but my records do not include the renter of this one. It was probably Warner's. A coloured Bugs Bunny cartoon was "Acrobatty Bunny".

Next, from M.G.M., heavy drama with John Garfield in "Body and Soul". The supporting programme was all in colour and included a new Tom & Jerry cartoon "Mouse Cleaning".

Then, from M.G.M., came Margaret O'Brien in "The Unfinished Dance" in Technicolor. A coloured cartoon was "Little Rural Riding Hood".

The following week brought a good boxing film, Wayne Morris in "The Big Punch" from Warner Bros. A coloured cartoon was "Hop, Look, and Listern".

Next week Margaret O'Brien was back again, this time with Dean Stockwell in the delightful M.G.M. film "The Secret Garden". Very effectively, the film changed to technicolor for the scenes in the garden, in the same way that colour was introduced when the magic land was reached in "The Wizard of Oz". A coloured cartoon in the supporting bill was "King Midas Junior".

Now came a double-feature programme - and a magnificent one. From Warner Bros. came Jack Carson in a delightful Musical "April Showers", which told the life-story of the composer of that lovely old song (plus plenty of other popular numbers), whoever he was. I forget. The second feature was a real winner. "Some of the Best", put out by M.G.M. to mark their Silver Jubilee, and containing extracts from the films of that famous firm over the past 25 years. In recent years, they have released a similar concoction entitled "That's Entertainment", and I think it likely that a good deal of "Some of the Best" footage was included in "That's Entertainment".

The two films made one of our best programmes of all time, and, as if they weren't enough, there was also a Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon, "Dog-Gone Tired".

In fact, the whole term was a high-water mark for shows, so I am only half-way through that particular term, but my space has run out. I will continue with the rest of the term's films, which included "Green Dolphin Street", said to be M.G.M's most spectacular production since "Gone With the Wind", next month. (ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS SERIES NEXT MONTH.)

News of the Clubs

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 8th September

First meeting of autumn - how short summer has seemed! The usual gathering met at the Swarthmore Centre to exchange news and views on hobby matters and others.

The Chairman had brought his copy of Frank Richards's Autobiography, in which, he reminded us, there is a chapter entitled 'Vesuvius'. It relates how our gallant author had descended the crater of the volcano, gathering material for the Magnet. (Presumably No. 218, published in 1912.) Geoffrey, who had just visited the mountain on the 1900th anniversary of the destruction of Pompei, pointed out that a descent of the crater would be impossible - or at any rate fatal - today.

Darrell Swift, and several other members, had seen an interview with Gerald Campion on television, and Darrell had indeed brought a recording of the occasion for us to hear.

To wind up the programme we had a session of Jack Allison's ingenious variation on Twenty Questions. Two teams each had an object to identify in the usual manner, except that they were not really limited to twenty questions - it was a race to see which team found its required answer first. The added point was that between the two objects there was a hobby link, so if you listened to the questions the other team was asking you might get a clue as to the object your own team was after. In the first round, for instance, the two objects were gosling (a bird) and trotter (a sheep's or pig's foot). They could also jointly be regarded as members of the domestic staff at Greyfriars.

The result of the contest was a draw. My own team did offer to play a decider, but our opponents suddenly pleaded a pressing engagement.

JOHNNY BULL

LONDON

Two highly successful gatherings took place during the fine weather in the first half of September. The first of the two meetings

took place at the White Hart Hotel, Sonning on Thames, where twenty-eight members and friends enjoyed a very good luncheon party. The function was in honour of Eric Fayne who for twenty years has been the editor and publisher of the Collectors' Digest and the Collectors' Digest Annual. Unfortunately, Eric was himself unable to be present owing to the recent indisposition of Madam now happily getting back to good health. However, Eric was with us in spirit and the first toast was proposed by Josie Packman which was to the Collectors' Digest. An excellent reply was given to this proposal by Roger Jenkins. The President of the club, John Wernham, then addressed the gathering. He spoke of the excellent work put in by Eric Fayne and as a worthy tribute, the admirable souvenir menu cards had drawings of the St. Jim's juniors enjoying themselves on the River Thames in the Old Bus and Elizabeth Ann boats. Winifred Morss proposed a toast to all the various hosts and hostesses that have made available their homes for the many meetings during the thirty-two years of the club's existence. The cuisine of the White Hart was outstanding and with ample time to enjoy short walks along the towpath indulging in convivial conversations, the day out by the river was a great success. C. H. Chapman's two daughters were guests. A week later, came the get-together at the Leytonstone residence of Reuben and Phyllis Godsave. Once more, a good attendance and graced by fine weather. Excerpts from the Women's Hour B.B.C. radio programme of 3rd September were played over by Mary Cadogan who appeared in the show and met several show business people that remembered the old books and papers. "Figgins and Co's New Master" was the Gem of March 1912, number 213, that Ray Hopkins gave a very humorous reading from.

Eric Lawrence's Cryptic Quiz that required the names of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and St. Frank's juniors was jointly won by Roger Jenkins and Timothy Bruning. The host, Reuben, then conducted his own Double Letters Surname quiz and this resulted in a triple tie between Josie Packman and father and son, Arthur and Timothy Bruning.

Jim Cook of Auckland, N.Z., had sent eleven names of St. Frank's environs tradesmen. Thus a match between Bob Blythe and Reuben Godsave took place. The latter was the winner with most correct answers.

Bob Blythe read extracts from the September 1962 newsletter which told of the first Gem catalogue produced by the club.

Next meeting at 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, SE22, Phone 693 2844, on Sunday, 14th October. Bring your own food, but Josie will provide tea.

BENJAMIN WHITER

* *

A WIZARD WORLD

by J.E.M.

For most C.D. readers the world of the Wizard, Adventure, Rover, Skipper and Hotspur is simply not in the same universe as that of the Magnet, Gem, Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake storypapers. Why do the D. C. Thomson publications find so little favour with us? Is it because most C.D. enthusiasts were never Thomson readers? Or is it because Thomson aimed at a younger audience than the AP weeklies and, for some reason, we don't wish to recall our earliest pop lit? A touch, perhaps (dare I say it?), of snobbishness?

For a brief period around the age of nine, I was certainly a happy captive of the Thomsons, though later, of course, becoming a staunch Hamiltonian, and even stauncher Blakian. That was roughly half a century ago and it would be interesting to know if other hobbyists have memories of the Dundee fiction factory in that period. Just how many of Thomson's larger-than-life creations are still remembered, I wonder?

Most of us know - if only at second hand - the Black Sapper and his underground burrowing machine and, at a pinch, can perhaps recall Morgan the Mighty or the Wolf of Kabul ("Clicky-Ba" must surely ring a bell - or score a hit). But what about the Kentucky Twins or Tiger McTaggart of the Secret Service? The latter's debut, I recall, was accompanied by a spate of free gifts. ("For the next six weeks you can collect the real metal Secret Service bages, each with a different code, given only with this paper" - or words to similar effect.) Then there was Bandy Walker, the "no-gun" sheriff who carried short throwing clubs in his boot tops instead of wearing the customary gun-belt and six-shooters.

Science fiction had its place, too. Huge mutant insects - the

"Gi-Ants" - were waging war on mankind long before sci-fic films like "Them" exploited the same theme. One must also mention the Smasher who was not, as a younger generation might suppose, a nubile young lady of exceptional physical charms but a giant robot which really did go around smashing up the environment. In fact, the list of D. C. Thomson's supermen, bug-eyed monsters and malevolent machines was almost endless.

Looking back, I suppose it all seems like a diet of cheap doughnuts and ginger-pop. However, unlike the picture-strip papers which succeeded them, the early Thomsons did require you to read and, in this respect, Wizard, Adventure et al lined up with the Magnet and Gem as aids to juvenile literacy. I can certainly recall a number of poor and underprivileged boys who probably would never have cultivated any sort of reading habits outside school had it not been for the Thomson papers.

As to their content, the Thomson tales were perhaps no more far-fetched than a lot of the material found in AP papers, especially in the penny comics like Chips and Jester, which do seem to find a warm corner in the hearts of C.D. readers. In any case, even the AP 'twopennies' - not excluding the works of Hamilton himself - could be pretty fanciful at times. If the Thomson stories were not strong on subtlety or literary "style", it can't be denied that they had pace. Like the early films, they may have been crude but, by golly, they moved. The illustrations likewise, whatever else they lacked, did not want for action. Thomson's storypapers, in fact, satisfied a hunger for simple excitement and wild fantasy necessary to every youngster at a certain age, and their large circulations and staying power surely bore witness to the fact.

One thing, alas, that this defender of those lurid and irresistible periodicals must admit. Their colourful characters came at us thick and fast (five papers a week, each with at least half a dozen "rattling" yarns in it!) that it is hard to remember in which paper any one of them appeared. Of those I have referred to, there is no doubt that the Black Sapper belonged to the Rover. I think Tiger McTaggart, like the Wolf of Kabul, was a Wizard product. But what about Morgan; and those Gi-Ants; and the Smasher; and the Kentucky Twins; and that

no-gun sheriff? And so many others. To just which of those affectionately remembered papers did each belong? Of course, half a century ago it didn't really matter. In those days we were all rovers and skippers seeking vicarious adventure in a truly wizard world ...

* *

The Postman Called

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

H. L. MARRIOTT (Northampton): The September Collectors' Digest is excellent. The best book value in Great Britain.

J.E.M. (Brighton): Another fine issue of C.D. Its highlight for me was Christopher Lowder's reply to S. Gordon Swan on The Maclaren-Ross article. It was extremely sad that Mr. Swan's death was reported on another page of C.D., but I am sure if he had read Mr. Lowder's comments he would not have taken them amiss.

A perennial complaint of all hobbyists is that writers and critics tend to despise the old storypapers and what is generally called "down-market" fiction. What a cause for rejoicing, then, as Mr. Lowder reminds us, when a serious journal takes our interests seriously, as The London Magazine did with its publication of The Maclaren-Ross essay on Sexton Blake.

R. J. LEWIS (Neston): I wonder if any C.D. readers can supply me with some information regarding the author of a book I have in my possession? The author's name is F. W. Robinson, and the book in question is entitled "The House of Elmore", and published by Hutchinson & Co.

It was presented to my mother, for her proficiency in scripture knowledge, back in 1908. Though today it would be considered a strange gift for a girl of only 13.

The author, in my humble opinion, writes most competently, with a fine sense of atmosphere. I don't know in what category the book should be placed, romance possibly but of a most grim and harrowing kind.

Other books by the same author, presumably also published by Hutchinson, were:- "Christie's Faith", "Carry's Confession", "Under

The Spell", "Milly's Hero".

R. H. RHODES (Dewsbury): I felt I had to tell you of the strangest coincidence. The September S.P.C.D. came in this morning and it was, as usual, seized upon with avid interest. I started on Barry Macilroy's article "Danger's Child" (S.B. 487) - well, on the table by my bedside was a book from the Library Service - "Dishonourable Member" by Jack Trevor Story published by Cedric Chivers Ltd. of Bath. It must be the same story. It is in the first person and the narrator is named as Bill Gladstone instead of Sexton Blake. It is now priced at £5.40 - and honestly I wouldn't have it given. The only reason it got to us is that it is in big print which is all my wife is able to read.

* *

COLLECTORS OF THE FIFTIES

by W. O. G. Lofts

News that enthusiasts of the Eagle - the boys' picture story paper, are to hold a convention to celebrate the 30th anniversary of its birth in April 1980, brings to mind sharply how such papers issued in the fifties are now collected today.

Apart from Lion and Tiger, and the various picture Libraries, another weekly much in demand these days is the revised School Friend in its picture strip form. Reverting back to the Eagle, this Dan Dare paper has certainly had enormous publicity over the years, mainly the blurbs stating that it sold over a million copies weekly. This may have been true for the first issue, but once it had lost its initial appeal (mainly through constant changes) it steadily went downhill, so that when finally I.P.C. took it over from Odhams, its weekly sale was only 25,000! which must have been one of the biggest slides of circulation figures in boys paper history. The School Friend likewise claimed a million copies for its opening number, though it never slumped so badly as the Hulton venture, it was finally incorporated into June.

The fifties also saw some very popular hardback books for girls, which are much collected today. Blackie's 'Alison' series by Sheila Stuart (Mrs. Mary Gladys Steel Baker) were so successful that fifteen stories published and seven reprinted. These were extremely well

written, and in the Charles Hamilton mould. They dealt with the adventures of Alison and Niall Campbell - brother and sister - set in the Highlands amid the glens and lochs of Scotland. As their Uncle was a former secret service agent, an element of mystery was in the excellent stories. Another was the 'Susan' series by Jane Shaw (Jean Shaw Evans) of which at least eleven are known to have been issued by Collins. It would be most interesting to hear from younger readers if they collect these hard cover books. It is also fascinating to see in the fifties how most boys' papers broke away from the old tradition of the word 'Boys' in the title, now having the name of birds or beasts, whilst I was much amused by a girls' paper editor who told me that the use of girls' names was a new idea. Obviously he had never heard of Betty's Paper, Polly's, Pegs, Eves, Pams, Ruby and Poppy's - which all appeared long before the Second World War.

* *

DUE OUT IN MID-DECEMBER. The Favourite Annual.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL FOR 1979. Packed with articles and stories from your favourite writers. We will tell you more about it next month.

* *

WANTED: 1920 Holiday Annual (original) in good condition.

WARWICK SETFORD, 155 BURTON ROAD, DERBY, DE3 6AB.

* *

SALE: Bound Vol. S.O.L's 229, 230, 231, good condition, £7 including postage.

JOHN GODDARD, 44 BAKER STREET, POTTERS BAR

HERTS. POTTERS BAR 59555.

* *

H. Baker Vols. FOR SALE. Gem No. 3, Magnet Nos. 30, 44, 45 - £2.60 ea. Out of print Nos. 8, 29 - £3 each. Union Jack, No. 2, Nelson Lee, No. 2, H.A. '73, all £2 each. Post 65p ANY No. in Parcel. Also 6 William Books, £1 - £1.50 each, plus post. S.A.E. full details or ring (01) 979 4141 (Evenings) to reserve.

JOHN GEAL, 11 COTSWOLD ROAD, HAMPTON, MIDDX.

CAN ANY COLLECTOR supply me with any of the following numbers: Nelson Lee (old series) 1, 2, 11, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 28, 29, 32, 35, 38, 39, 44, 45, 47, 49, 51, 53, 57, 58, 84, 88, 93, 98, 99. Magnets: 285, 288, 305, 347, 355, 386, 409. Gems: 185, 188. If preferred, have large number of items for exchange. Many thanks in advance.

PORTEOUS, 18 LON-Y-GROES, GABALFA, CARDIFF.

Tel. Cardiff 62860

* *

SHERLOCK HOLMES - anything always wanted (including Herlock Sholmes in Greyfriars Heralds).

48 SHALMARSH, BEBINGTON, WIRRAL, L63 2JZ.

* *

Collector wants MAGNETS, S.O.L's, S.B.L's, UNION JACKS, GEMS, NELSON LEES. Purchase, sell or exchange.

MARRIOTT, 27 GREENVIEW DRIVE, NORTHAMPTON 711874.

* *

URGENTLY WANTED: Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, 1920, 1940; Dandy, Beano Annuals, "Lord Billy Bunter".

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN.

Tel. 491716

* *

WHY I LOVE BOOKS

by Arthur Holland

There is a real companionship in a treasured book. Our companionship and friends in life grows dearer with long and intimate acquaintance. So do the companions and friends we find between the covers of interesting books.

In books we have the richest treasures on earth. Through the medium of good books we are enabled to converse with the wise and the great. With the inspired writers of the Holy Bible the historians, biographers and poets of the past and present. Through them one comes in touch with the greatest minds of all times, the noblest men and women who have lived, through them also, our own eyes are opened, and our souls inspired.

As we grow older, we sometimes find ourselves reading books we enjoyed as a child, and delight in going back into the world of fantasy

because we remember in that world interesting and unusual things happening.

In my childhood seventy years ago, I was thrilled with the English comic paper, such as "The Jester", "Chips" and "Lot O' Fun" and was much interested in "Arthur Mee's Children's Magazine".

Then I went on to "The Magnet", "The Gem", "Pluck" and "The Union Jack". I was very fond of the annuals such as "The Chatterbox", "Chums" and "The Boys' Own Annual".

Then to such authors as Gordon Stables, Manville Fenn, R. M. Ballantyre, W. Ainsworth, Rider Haggard, Jeffery Farnoll, Robert Stevenson, Charles Dickens, Walter Scott, Arthur Conan Doyle, H. G. Wells, A. Dumas, E. R. Burroughs and many others.

Literature covers a very wide field, a field which has no ending. Books are not altogether impersonal things. Somebody wrote them. Somebody lived, burnt the midnight oil, struggled and toil to put into a book that which please and help us.

One who never learns how to read a good book will never become much of a thinker. The happiest person is the one who thinks the most interesting thoughts. It has been truly said, that without a love for books, the richest man is poor.

* *

REVIEW

THE RISE OF THE PLUTOCRATS by Jamie Camplin. (Constable) 1978

The Kaiser was surprised to note that his uncle Edward VII sometimes went boating with his grocer. The grocer of course was Sir Thomas Lipton, founder of a chain of grocery stores, maker of Lipton's Tea, and one of the plutocrats who rose to prominence toward the end of the nineteenth century and who had a large say in the affairs of the British Empire (or perhaps more particularly the UK). The plutocrats were men like Lipton (tea) Dewar (whisky) Lever (soap) Rothschild (finance) and the Press barons, Beaverbrook and Northcliffe. But apart from a handful, these men are now almost forgotten, and the personal power and influence they once commanded through their wealth is now exercised by the corporations that finally overwhelmed them. However they reigned for something like 40 years and nothing was ever quite the same again. The plutocrats were men who saw the possibilities in commerce, industry, finance and newspapers. They worked very hard creating empires which eventually turned around and swallowed them whole. They had social and political ambitions, and attempted with some success to buy their way into positions of power. They were above all, survivors. They had to be. They were not popular with either the landed gentry or the working class. Too much money was concentrated in too few hands. The pursuit of power became the theme that directed the lives of the plutocrats. Power in economic affairs, in society, and in politics. As our hobby is closely tied to the fortunes of Lord Northcliffe, the look into his era, the results, ambitions and lives of him and his ilk make fascinating reading. Well worth borrowing from your library if you haven't got a copy of your own.

D. REED

Edited by Eric Fayne, Excelsior House, 113 Crookham Rd., Crookham, Nr. Aldershot, Hants.
Litho duplicating by York Duplicating Services, 12a The Shambles, York.