

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

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IN ANOTHER'S PLACE!



SIR HILTON IN THE WARS!

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28P

Recently purchased, quite a large number of Magnets and Gems. Wants lists appreciated. Lots of Union Jacks, Detective Weekly and S.B.I.'s, although these are low in 1st and 2nd series now.

Jack, Sam and Pete. Special offer in June and July. 20 J.S. & P. stories in B.F.L's and Marvels, etc. for only £10! (post extra). Other B.F.L's, over 1,000 in stock with a few duplicates from £1.10 each OR £90 per hundred, my selection.

Regret, do not have time to present lists. Stock far too large, so your wants lists much appreciated. Lees. Good stocks of present and bound vols. Old series £1.50; others £1.10 each.

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Will be closed for business towards end of July. Details later.

Bibliographies on William, Rupert, Henty, Old Boys' Books, etc., authors, very useful to the collector.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

All C.D. articles provide food for thought, which is, of course, their main purpose. Every month a number of items catch my eye, and I make a note of them, intending to dwell on them for a moment in my next editorial. Then, sometimes, something else crops up, so readers are spared my musings.

In our recent special number, Mrs. Josie Packman entertained us all by looking at the 400th story in the Sexton Blake Library. Mrs. Packman noted that it was a story by Pierre Quiroule, and commented that "he was one of our Editor's favourite writers of Sexton Blake

stories".

Josie was quite right. I have all the Pierre Quiroule novels bound on my bookshelves, and have always liked them better than anything else in the Blake saga. All the same, it has been obvious that the Grant-Julie stories have been out of date for years. And that dating is due, not to anything in the style of writing, but to the combination of the English man and the French girl who epitomised the "entente cordiale" between England and France. It is difficult to become enthusiastic over that basic theme in these days of the Common Market.

At intervals since the mid-thirties I have travelled all over France, but I never saw much sign of the ordinary Frenchman having very friendly feelings for the ordinary Britisher. I never found the warm friendliness in France which one met in other European countries.

Pierre Quiroule created Grant and Julie early in the twenties, and the theme worked well for a good many years, though I fancy that the cooling off of actual friendship between the French and the British was in process all the time. Possibly the cause was historical. And after the war the difference was still more marked, which is a bit remarkable when you come to think of it.

I love Grant and Julie still, and Bertrand Charon, and their relationship with Blake, Tinker, Pedro, and Mrs. Bardell is perfectly portrayed. But I wonder whether, even in their heyday, the Grant-Julie link may not have been a bit unreal.

JACK, SAM & PETE

Last month, Mr. Nic Gayle contributed a delightful article on those grand old characters, Jack, Sam and Pete. It is pleasant, indeed, to see proof that they are not forgotten, and that one of our younger writers has caught up with characters whom our fathers loved. But two comments of Mr. Gayle's made me wonder whether he has quite got them in correct perspective.

He says that "the unpalatable fact for most of us is that they were the biggest money-spinners that the Amalgamated Press ever had, more than St. Frank's, Sexton Blake, or Greyfriars".

Why on earth should it be unpalatable to us? In fact, it isn't in the least. Nor do I believe for one moment that the Hook tales were

bigger money-spinners than the Hamilton characters.

Pete and Co. were very popular for a time, early in the century, probably because they were the first lot featured week after week in different adventures. Up till then, characters had been here today and gone tomorrow.

Jack, Sam & Pete, appearing weekly, became part of the family. They started off about 1901, and by 1906 it is obvious that there was a demand for more, for the Jack, Sam & Pete 3d. Library was started to bring them more often, and in longer tales, to their admirers. But very soon that 3d. Library became the Boys' Friend 3d. Library, and the Hook monopoly was at an end. It seems that they fell before the Hamilton stories in due course.

I suggest that Jack, Sam & Pete were never a rival for popularity with St. Frank's, or Hamilton. In their little day they made money, but they were too much of an acquired taste to provide robust competition. And Hook made the mistake of overplaying Pete, the funny black man, and the tales became too farcical for the serious reader.

When the Penny Popular started in 1912, it is obvious that it included stories of what were the Amalgamated Press's most popular characters at that time. These were Tom Merry, Sexton Blake and Jack, Sam & Pete. As time passed, it was clear that the last named were very definitely the third partners, although they lasted longer in the Penny Popular than Sexton Blake did.

The Pete tales were, presumably, reprints from the Marvel, though it is a long time since I checked them. The Marvel always offered two complete tales, plus a serial. The Pete story formed one of the two completes, though, after earlier days, it seemed to be what we might call the "second feature" in the bill.

Mr. Gayle refers to a reprint of a Penny Popular, and claims that the Pete tale "was rendered nonsensical by mutilation", and he adds "Imagine a complete Magnet or Lee series reduced to ten pages".

It is an inaccurate comparison, though I imagine that Mr. Gayle may have intended to compare a single Magnet or Lee story though he referred to "series". No doubt the Pete stories suffered some pruning, but I would doubt whether many Marvel stories ran to more than ten pages. In the Pop, the print was often smaller, and I would think it rare for a Pete tale therein to run to as many as ten pages. By the time the

Pop was four years old, the Pete tale was very much in the nature of a fill-up, one would think, for the popularity of the famous adventurers had long faded.

All the same, they had a splendid run, looking back to early days, and we are grateful to Mr. Gayle for turning the spotlight again on those lovely old characters.

TOP OF THE POPS?

At a recent meeting of our Cambridge Club, Mr. Keith Hodgkinson gave a talk on school stories, and, at the end, according to the report, "he was able to grade them into order of merit".

Neither P. G. Wodehouse, who wrote that superb "classic" of school and cricket entitled "Mike", nor Desmond Coke, whose "Bending of a Twig" is probably the most true-to-life piece of schoolboy characterisation ever written, succeeded in making the "top eleven". Which seems very odd indeed.

In fact, Hamilton only squeezed in by a whisker, and is contemptuously placed at No. 10. Curiously, he is lumped with the substitute writers, which makes one wonder whether Mr. Hodgkinson can tell butter from marge. One also wonders which section of "Hamilton and the subs" he read. And whether, indeed, he is not contemptuous rather of the medium than of the writers for same.

Does Mr. Hodgkinson really believe that Harold Avery (8th) or Michael Poole (4th) ever wrote anything which came within miles of Hamilton's two rebel series, the stories of Da Costa and Stacey respectively, or delicious little sketches like "Too Good for St. Jim's"? Well, it seems he does.

Plenty of C.D. readers will find accord with Mr. Hodgkinson when he places Brooks as "Top of His Pops", even though the story selected for special mention, "Rotters of Whitelands" is a new one to some of us.

Mr. Hodgkinson is reported to have summed it up by expressing the view that "Brooks wrote stories, while Hamilton's tales were a series of incidents". As to what that means exactly, your guess is as good as mine.

I wish that Mr. Hodgkinson would turn his address into an article

for the Annual, for, though some of us might not agree with all his views, they would give us that food for thought which I mentioned earlier.

THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

"I spoke about that Mr. & Mrs. Blackbird who built a nest in the honeysuckle outside our dining-room window. They hatched three babies and got them off, flying about the world. That was weeks ago.

Then, suddenly, Mr. & Mrs. Blackbird came back, and got ready for another family, with four new eggs in the old nest.

Those people who live with me were surprised that birds should use the same nest more than once. But I say, what can you expect, with property the price it is?

I haven't been very well, having lost my appetite for a time. My royal physician (they call him a vet) came to see me three times, poked me about, and did some impertinent things to me, but says I seem to be all right. And my appetite is coming back."

THE EDITOR

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Danny's Diary

JUNE 1930

Two famous newspapers have amalgamated, and have come out as one paper under another name. The "Daily Chronicle" and the "Daily News", both dailies, have married and are now called the "News Chronicle". We had the Daily Chronicle for as long as I can remember, but Mum says she doesn't like the new one nearly so much. She may get used to it.

In Modern Boy there is a new cricket serial "Captain of Claverhouse", a sequel to "Cloyne of Claverhouse" which ran last summer. It is supposed to be written by England's 27-year old star cricketer, Wally Hammond, but I am always suspicious when they say some famous person or other has written a story.

Modern Boy is a bit dull at present, with so much space given to

advertisements and to competitions and ways of getting "free" gifts, which are spread all over the place.

The Derby was won this year by the Aga Khan's horse "Blenheim", and the King and Queen were at the race. A few people in London actually saw the race in London while it was being won, and reports are that one could easily pick out well-known personalities. This was by means of a new invention by a Mr. Baird which he calls television. He invented it in 1928, and has been working on it ever since. Some people at the Baird headquarters in London were able to see the Derby as it was run all those miles away.

Some people forecast that, before long, every home will have its own television box and be able to watch all sorts of things all day long. Dad says that when that time comes he will emigrate.

The Popular, like Modern Boy, has a glut of advertisements, free offers and competitions. Scraps of Rookwood run alternatively with scraps of Sidney Drew's Calcroft. There are scraps of Greyfriars. All the old artists except Chapman have gone. The too-long tales about Ferrers Locke continue every week, as do the tales of the Popolaki Patrol in Kenya by Charles Hamilton. This month's African tales are "In the Land of the Cannibals", "The Cunning of a Bushman", "The Death House", and "Saved by his Son".

I suppose I shall give up the Pop soon. I only keep buying it every week because it must surely get better again soon.

The great sportsman, Sir Henry Segrave, has been killed this month on Lake Windermere while trying to break the record.

In the first Test Match at Nottingham, England beat Australia by 93 runs. In the second Test March at Lords, Australia beat England by 7 wickets.

Order your Gem early! It will contain "Dizzy Desmond - Daredevil" by Martin Clifford; "One Ton Willy" in another thrilling adventure by Cowboy Johnny Carter; "Chick Chance - Adventurer" by Robert Murray; The Wigga-Wagga Boys; The Oracle's Cheeky Chinwag with the Editor; Professor Pimple's Trip Round the World.

Either the Gem is getting even more awful or I'm getting old.

In the opening month "Dizzy Desmond - Daredevil" is Kildare's cousin.

Next week "The Schoolboy Airmen". St. Jim's buys its own planes, and the boys, including Grundy, fly them. The Head is dying from a dread illness. Dr. Harvey, the St. Jim's doctor, shakes his head gravely. "There is only one man living who could save Dr. Holmes's life, and he is at the Concorde Hospital in Paris. With him to perform the operation, Dr. Holmes' life could be saved."

Tom Merry's face was white, but his eyes were burning.

"The plane", cried Tom Merry hoarsely. "I'll fly to France and bring Dr. Rivoli back."

"You do not know what you are saying!" said Mr. Railton. "For one thing, there is a storm brewing. Listen!" A peal of thunder rumbled across the sky outside.

"I don't care!" Tom Merry's eyes were gleaming fiercely. "The Head shan't die! I'm going to take that plane up, storm or no storm. If I don't get to France tonight - if I crash - I'll at any rate know I've tried."

And he does it. But after he was better, the Head decided on no more flying instruction for St. Jim's. Staggering stuff!

And even more staggering, the next tale was a simply lovely one by the real Martin Clifford entitled "A Knock-out for Knox". The best new St. Jim's tale for ages and ages.

Final of the month "Speedmen of the River". Yet another Glyn invention - a speedboat this time. Pretty weak.

At the pictures this month we have seen Jack Holt, Lila Lee, and Ralph Graves in "Flight"; a musical film "Gold Diggers of Broadway" with some nice tunes including "Tip-toe through the tulips with me" and "Painting the clouds with sunshine"; a silent picture "The Flying Fleet" with Ramon Novarro and Anita Paige; a magnificent talkie, George Arliss in "Disraeli" (it is films like this that make it certain talkies are here to stay); Clive Brook in "The Return of Sherlock Holmes", and in this programme there was a Mickey Mouse cartoon "The Jazz Fool" and, finally, George Arliss in another fine one "The Green Goddess". British stage artists are much sought after in talkies on account of their good speaking-voices.

A young woman named Agnes Kesson was found murdered in a ditch at Epsom on Derby Day. The police are conducting a big enquiry.

In the Magnet, the series continues about gangsters trying to

kidnap Fish on account of his father becoming rich through cornering pork. First tale this month is "Catching Fish". Fishy gets carried off from school in a Saratoga trunk.

Next, "The Mystery of the Poplars". Fishy's father tells Dr. Locke that, as his son was kidnapped from school, he, the Head, will have to pay the ransom demand. "To put it short," writes Mr. Fish, "you've lost the boy, and you've got to get him back. If it costs you money, that's your funeral, not mine."

But, owing to a letter he gets from his Aunt Amy, Harry Wharton becomes thoughtful about a lonely house named "The Poplars" near Wharton Lodge in Surrey, which is being rented by a rather strange American gentleman. And so Fishy is found at last. And the Head is so grateful that he gives Wharton and his friends a week's holiday at Wharton Lodge. And the bottom fell out of the pork market in any case, so Fishy is safe from further kidnap.

Next "Pop of the Circus" with the chums still on their extra holiday in Surrey where they see Walker's Circus. The circus boy performer, Pop, has been left a lot of money, so Sir Hilton Popper becomes interested in him and decides to send him to Greyfriars.

Last Magnet of the month is "Waking up Greyfriars", with Pop at the school. The series continues.

Some people in parliament have been pressing for a Channel Tunnel, but it was turned down by a small majority. Dad says that if ever they are mad enough to build a channel tunnel, he'll emigrate. The second time he's talked of emigrating this month.

Two fine tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library. "The Schemer of the Remove" is Skinner. He strikes down Loder, and Wharton is suspected, but Skinner is found out and expelled. In the end he comes back to Greyfriars. "Glyn's Mechanical Marvels" are a working model of the bulldog, Towser, and a bowling machine to help cricketers. Rib-tickling tale; very different from the silly one about Glyn in this week's Gem.

EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 125, "The Schemer of the Remove" comprised the whole of a red Magnet "For the Honour of His Chum" from the autumn of 1911. The Magnet tales were very long at this time, running to 20 chapters or more, so that just the one story could surely have been sufficient for this S.O.L. A very fine tale indeed. However, at the end of the story: "Skinner left Greyfriars the next morning - the old school knew him no more,

and was glad to know him no more." Skinner was, in fact, away from Greyfriars for nearly two years, returning in mid-1913 in a story entitled "Standing by Skinner". This story could, and should, have made another issue of the S. O. L. As it was, they took nine chapters from it and tacked them on at the end of S. O. L. No. 125. It explained Skinner's return to the later Magnet fan, but it unbalanced the first highly dramatic tale, and much useful reading material was wasted. An example of the bad editing for which the S. O. L. is, at times, notorious.

S. O. L. No. 126, "Glyn's Mechanical Marvels", comprised a blue Gem "Towser Minor" from early 1912, in which Glyn invented a mechanical bulldog, plus most of a blue Gem "The Inventor's Rival" from a year earlier. The invention in the second case was a mechanical bowling machine to aid cricketers. The story of the bulldog was reprinted in the Gem in the thirties; the story of the bowling machine was not.

Danny's quotation from the Gem sub story could almost qualify for a place in "Gems of Non-Hamiltonia.")

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BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Science fiction films are all the rage again these days so I thought the article by J. E. M. might be very interesting as it shows that Sexton Blake was always up-to-date. Many of these so-called science fiction ideas are now true facts. I agree most heartily with Roger Sansom's ideas on Sexton Blake films. Its time we had a decent one and at least there are enough plots in the Sexton Blake Library to make a really good series of TV plays. I think this has all been said before but there is no harm in reiterating the true facts.

BLAKE THE CINEMA SLEUTH

Roger Sansom

Now that major films seem to be rediscovering older heroes - why not a new Sexton Blake picture? The craze for tongue-in-cheek seems - dare I say this? - to have worn itself out, and been replaced by a more sensible interest. After the slapstick 'Batman' series of the 'sixties, we now see a splendid revival of 'Superman'. Following several tongue-in-cheek Sherlock Holmes films, there is a no-nonsense treatment in the recent 'Murder By Decree'. So why not Blake? I don't know who I'd cast nowadays. Ten years ago, I wrote a piece in C.D. about the one Blakian film I have ever actually been able to see myself, and in passing named a fine actor who'd have suited the part superbly. Alas, he has

died tragically in the interim, and never did tackle it. Ah, well. I suspect from the general reactions to the BBC serial, that readers have some clear ideas what type of actor they don't want to see play Blake. Anyway, I've been having a look at the credits of some of the films made in the past.

The earliest screen Blake I found - in silent days - was C. Douglas Carlile, who had taken the part on stage at the Bedford. Despite playing Blake on stage and Holmes on screen, the excellent Arthur Wontner seems not to have done things vice versa. A pity. I believe he also made a record as Blake. I wonder if copies exist?

In the 'thirties, George Curzon played the detective in a series of short films. I'd always known this - but I certainly hadn't expected to find him supported as Tinker by the diminutive Tony Sympton, familiar today as a player of white-bearded 'characters'. How interesting to see these films now! Indeed, there is no lack of intriguing supporting names. Donald Wolfitt crops up in one of the Curzon films. In another, "Sexton Blake and the Hooded Terror" (1938), the once-famous name of Tod Slaughter appears in the cast. I had it fixed in my mind that he had also played Blake on stage, but when I came to check that for this article, I couldn't discover where I got this from. Can anyone clear up the point? Curious if it is so, because another screen Blake of a few years on, David Farrar, plays Granite Grant in the same film! And Greta Gynt is Mlle Julie. It was based on a Pierre Quiroule story, and scripted by A. R. Rawlinson.

Farrar's promotion to the title part came in "Meet Sexton Blake" in 1944. I remember a still from this film being used to illustrate a 'new look' S.B.L. of the 'fifties, when I started collecting. It has a notable supporting cast which includes Kathleen Harrison as Mrs. Bardell - fascinating casting - Gordon McLeod and Cyril Smith as Venner and Belford, Ferdy Mayne ... and last on the list is the fifteen-year-old Jean Simmons. The film I saw ten years ago - at the cinema on Waterloo Station, now gone - was "Murder at Site Three" with Geoffrey Toone as Blake. My memory isn't checking out too well, for I thought Barbara Shelley played Paula Dane; however, she's billed as another character.

One last version of a Sexton Blake story that I looked up is ...

well ... a little different. It's "Mix Me A Person", filmed with Adam Faith. And the original (an S.B.L. from the Baker era) has been re-written so that the detective becomes a psychiatrist. And she's played by Anne Baxter!

P. S. by J. P. There were quite a number of plays about Sexton Blake, they are listed in the Sexton Blake Catalogue Supplement. The last one was a play written by Donald Stuart with Arthur Wontner as Sexton Blake and presented at the Prince Edward Theatre in September 1930.

I tried to get the Record people to re-issue the one called Murder on the Portsmouth Road, but they were not interested.

SCIENCE AND SEXTON BLAKE

by J. E. M.

Does a dash of science fiction improve the flavour of a detective yarn? Did battles with death rays and mysterious chemicals enhance the reputation of Sexton Blake? Certainly, Blake was always at home with modern technology - he was flying aeroplanes for example almost as soon as they were known - but how did he fare when he tangled with tomorrow's inventions? It is worth having a look at the effect of scientific romance on the famous case-book.

An early chronicle to bring Blake up against the wonders of the laboratory was written by Anthony Skene for the Union Jack in 1923. Entitled X-ine it concerned one of those deadly discoveries "hitherto unknown to science" as the phrase goes, which posed a criminal threat to society. Starring the ever-popular Zenith, this story was probably Skene's first shot at detective sci-fic and, over the next ten years, he followed it with a number of others, one of the last and best-known being the Crime Zone which appeared in the Detective Weekly. This introduced a fabulous ray capable of disabling all electrical devices within range and providing Zenith with yet another spectacular aid to villainy. Between X-ine and The Crime Zone came yarns like the Mystery of the Mechanical Men, The Rain Maker and The Gold Maker, all stories whose titles speak for themselves.

Skene, of course, was not the only author to be fascinated by the fantastic, although he was probably as closely identified with sci-fic as G. H. Teed was with glamorous young ladies.

Other Blakian scribes to venture into the field included Houghton Townley who introduced an underground burrowing machine long before

the Black Sapper tales in the Rover (or the same kind of machine in the Thunderbirds TV series), W. Shute whose story Plummer's Death Ray had a classic sci-fic theme; Gwyn Evans who created Mr. Mist, a direct descendant of H. G. Wells's invisible man; and Ladbrooke Black who penned a fanciful tale about a mad scientist bent on stealing life itself for the old, from the young.

Some of these stories were entertaining enough but, in the end, mostly failed to convince. Whether Blake was fighting a sinister secret ray, an elusive mechanical mole or a man who could literally disappear into thin air, the "willing suspension of disbelief" became almost impossible. For, if each wonder-invention was as good as the author claimed, then a thousand Sexton Blakes would hardly have been a match for it. Too often, it all looked like a case of an irresistible gadget meeting an invincible sleuth.

Of the authors already referred to, the joker in the pack was surely Gwyn Evans who, of all people, needed no fanciful gadgetry to make an exciting and appealing story. Evans, perhaps better than any other Blakian writer, could create live and convincing characters and this is what good detective fiction is all about; for crime is as old - and as new - as human nature.

A story like Evans' The Masked Carollers for instance, which contains nothing more mechanically fanciful than a motor car but is full of memorable characters, reads as well today as it did in 1932. The vanishing Mr. Mist, on the other hand, wears badly in spite of his creator's skills. Fortunately for us sci-fic was a rare departure for Evans whose stories usually presented a recognisable even homely, world with a very human Sexton Blake - a "super" man, perhaps, but not a Superman. Indeed, at his best Evans gave us a second Sherlock Holmes but with an added dimension: a brilliant sleuth who was also a warm and sympathetic human being. And the mention of Sherlock Holmes reminds us that his creator rarely took science and technology beyond the detective's own laboratory bench.

You will have to search the Holmesian saga very hard for any reference to the cinema, the radio or the aeroplane, though Holmes was at work well into the 1920's. The hard core of the Holmes stories was always crime in its human aspects and I feel that Sexton Blake, too,

flourished best when he left science alone - especially the futureistic kind.

(Stories referred to: The Case of the Human Mole, S.B.L. 2nd series No. 91; X-ine, U.J. No. 1038; Plummer's Death Ray, U.J. No. 1093; The Mystery of the Mechanical Men, U.J. 1188, the Mr. Mist stories, U.J. 1277, 1278, 1280, 1281; The Strange Affair of the Rejuvenation Club, U.J. No. 1300; The Rain Maker, U.J. No. 1505; The Gold Maker, U.J. No. 1510; The Masked Carollers, U.J. No. 1521; The Crime Zone Detective Weekly No. 26.

(May I add that G. H. Teed not only created young ladies but long before Skene and Evans were thought of he wrote four wonderful tales about Prince Menes which introduced science at its best because all the mechanical things he introduced became true. These tales appeared in U.J.'s No. 722, 723, 728 and 731 in 1917. J. P.)

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

ADVENTURE UNLIMITED

by William Lister

Adventure! which according to the dictionary can work out as - a remarkable happening, a risk, a bold exploit, etc., while to be termed an adventurer means you are one who seeks adventure, or you are one who lives by his wits. Fair enough; I suppose that in an adventurous situation it would help to be quick witted. Speaking for myself I am not the adventurous type and some would go as far as to say I am not quick-witted either.

Not that I object to adventure, that is, from an armchair; and where better to find it than among the boys of St. Frank's? Join them with the blessing of Edwy Searles Brooks on any one of their holiday adventures, be it a holiday in London or in Africa, or the strange land of Northestria, Mordania, or the South Seas. You will find adventure unlimited. Even in the Christmas holidays you will share the thrill of secret panels and scarey things that go bump in the night.

At the moment, I am thinking rather of the Easter and Summer holidays. Let the sun shine and guess who pops us? That's right; Lord Dorrimore and, as likely as not, Umlosi. Now this Lord Dorrimore is

a right lad for holidays; none of your week in Blackpool or picking winkles under the pier. Not for him the thrills of the Big Dipper or a paddle in the sea; no sir, he had to do things in a big way. With Dorrimore, whether he took you by land, sea or air you always journeyed in the biggest and best mode of transport you could ever see, complete with all mod-cons.

If you're not a reader of the 'Nelson Lee' I could draw you up a brochure of all the places Lord Dorrimore went to that would give you a yen for the wide open road; fans of St. Frank's are already aware of them; there's nothing in the 1980 holiday brochures coming off the production line to compare with a Dorrimore holiday, master-minded, of course, by Edwy Searles Brooks himself.

Dorrimore had the wherewithal to cover the whole of any expedition. I don't remember ever reading whether he had a wife or not. If he did, I think she must have settled for the quiet life as his idea of a holiday wouldn't suit my wife and I doubt whether it would suit yours. However, it suited the boys of St. Frank's. Let Lord Dorrimore breeze through the gates of the old school and everybody smelt a holiday in the offing. A thrill-packed, danger-ridden, fantastic holiday, the like of which you or I have never seen.

At the moment I am all packed up and settled nicely in my old armchair ready to be whisked away along with Lord Dorrimore and the boys of St. Frank's on the magic carpet of a "Monster" edition of the "Nelson Lee" to the land of Mordania (Monster Library No. 17).

In case you haven't heard of Mordania, don't worry, Dorrimore himself says only one in ten people have even heard of it. I can believe that. Nice little place, this Mordania. Situated in a very hilly region, its capital high on a rugged mountain, and ruled by a king, and the prince. It's a lovely little place and you should be able to settle down for a nice quiet week or two. EXCEPT ... for the dreaded Targossa. TARGOSSA!! I don't suppose you've heard of them; however, if you've heard of the I.R.A. or Liberation Revolutionary Army, or People's Liberation Army or any of these trade names for murder, blackmail, bus burning, knee-capping or bomb planting, then you've heard of TARGOSSA. They are all the others rolled into one. A secret society of the four star variety. If you're inclined to be evil you could learn a lot

from them. In their endeavour to take over our Mordania, they've kidnapped the Royalty.

Things look bad for the honest, upright citizens of Mordania, things look good for the gun-toting, bomb throwing, evil lads of the Targossa. Until . . . a storm tossed airship blows that way unloading Lord Dorrimore, Nelson Lee and the boys of St. Frank's and not even the Targossa can stand up to that lot. Result - collapse of the bad lads, release of the kidnapped Royalty, and the end of a thrilling holiday.

Having arrived safely home, I shall shortly embark on yet another holiday that could be hot-stuff, "Schoolboy Treasure Seekers" (Monster No. 1).

I don't know how the reader's holidays works out. Usually mine glides along quite nicely, except the time we went for a sail.

"Any more for sailing" shouted the boatman at Falmouth, with the sun shining. A number boarded the maritime vessel provided, including my wife, her mother, 82 (at the time) and myself. What a happy crowd we were until midway across. The sun vanished, the wind whipped up the waves, the rain fell. The crew drew a large canvas covering overhead to protect us from the elements. Some of the elderly ladies whimpered, the mother-in-law struggled to the side of the vessel, I thought she was trying to get off and grabbed her, however she only felt sick. We never arrived at the destination; they brought us back, said it was too rough to proceed. We believed them and were duly thankful. The rest of the week we all stayed clear of sailing. But then not everybody has the stamina of Lord Dorrimore and the St. Frank's boys.

THE TRIALS OF E.S.B.

by R. J. Godsave

There is no doubt that both E. S. Brooks and the Editor of the Nelson Lee Library worked extremely hard in their efforts to increase the circulation and hold the interest of existing readers. The Monster Library, Nipper's Magazine and the excellent drawings of St. Frank's and public schools up and down the country by E. E. Briscoe are sure proof of this. All this helped to put the Nelson Lee in the forefront of the old papers in the earlier part of the 1920's.

Brooks did much to encourage his readers to write to him with suggestions regarding the St. Frank's stories. In so doing he was

undoubtedly making a 'rod for his own back' by allowing his correspondents to almost dictate the direction in which the Nelson Lee Library was to go. In many ways he bent over backwards to please those who wrote to him. That he regretted his action is made known in "Between Ourselves", o. s. 538, where he states that in future he would not ask for any suggestions regarding the forthcoming St. Frank's stories, and the Editor would not entertain any suggestions for maps and portrait galleries.

In actual fact he promised too much. So much depended on the success of the St. Frank's League, which depended so very much on the membership growth in order to get the League launched in the way so hoped for by Brooks. It was an ambitious scheme, perhaps too ambitious, which would cost quite a lot of money in its fulfilment. All these ventures cost money, and unlike the Monster Library they would not recoup any of the cost.

It was unfortunate that the Map of St. Frank's and district should have been so definitely promised to the readers of the Nelson Lee Library. Postponement of dates given as to the publication of the map only caused disappointment to readers. Brooks went so far as to give a firm promise as to its appearance.

The wish for any venture to succeed has the tendency for one to 'gild the Lily' often without realising it. One can only sympathise with Brooks and the Editor in their difficulties.

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 163 - Magnet No. 899 - "Playing the Goat"

The junior eleven at St. Jim's was wholly representative of the Middle School, Fourth Form and Shell, School House and New House, a situation which reflected the fact that these were all likeable characters with whom the reader could sympathise. At Greyfriars, on the other hand, the Shell was seldom heard of and the Fourth Form was largely composed of lofty incompetents. This focused the stories on one form alone, the Remove, and it was often overlooked that the junior eleven at Greyfriars was really a form team. In "Playing the Goat" this point was brought out quite clearly.

The star of the story was Vernon-Smith, and as Charles Hamilton wrote, "There was an ineradicable kink in his nature; every now and then he would break out into blackguardism, and exhibit all the unpleasant traits that had once made him thoroughly disliked in the Remove." No. 899 began with Vernon-Smith asking Wharton to accompany him to the Feathers as there might be a row and he wanted someone to stand by him. The request was not altogether surprising as the first Rebel Series had ended some two or three months previously, but naturally enough Wharton did not care to be reminded of it. One thing led to another, and eventually the Bounder was dropped from the cricket team.

In order to spite the others, Vernon-Smith offered his services to the Fourth Form eleven for their match with the Remove, and here began a delightful description of how Temple wanted a good player but was too haughty and vain to acknowledge it. Charles Hamilton was exceptionally gifted in his accounts of matches. It was no part of his plan to give a blow by blow description: instead he showed how players reacted to events and situations. The way in which Temple handled his new recruit was written with a most perceptive insight into human nature.

The story gives the impression of being the second number of a series of two, though it is in fact complete in itself. Nevertheless we should like to know what impelled Vernon-Smith to kick over the traces at this particular time, what caused the row at the Feathers that brought him back to Greyfriars with a bruise under his eye and a cut lip, and what Mr. Quelch said to him when he returned in that condition after calling-over. The nearest we get to knowing what happened is in the title picture, which consists of two vignettes, the first showing the Bounder at a bar with a cane tucked jauntily under his arm and a glass of some murky liquid in front of him, the second showing a cricket scene with Vernon-Smith hitting out at the wicket. C. H. Chapman had some defects as an artist, noticeably his tendency to cross-hatch instead of drawing in backgrounds, but a number of his illustrations in this issue are particularly effective in providing some background atmosphere, and it is pleasant to record a tribute on this score. 1925 was far from being a disappointing year in the Magnet.

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 WANTED: C.D. Annuals 1976 - 79, pre-war School Friends, Schoolgirls' Own Libraries,
 Museum Press, "Vanished Schoolboys", H. B. Holiday Annual 1979.

MAGOVENY, 65 BENTHAM ST., BELFAST.

REVIEWS

GREYFRIARS FOR GROWN-UPS

Lawrence Sutton
(Howard Baker: £5.95)

Though Greyfriars pushes itself forward in the title, claiming all the kudos with sublime cheek, I daresay there are nearly as many extracts from St. Jim's stories as from those of the Kent school.

Somebody once said that you can judge a man's character by the things at which he laughs. Undoubtedly you can judge a man fairly accurately by the stories which he prefers to read. And Mr. Sutton clearly believes, with a good deal of reason, that you can learn a lot about an author by what he has written.

In this book we find a collection of gems from the pen of Charles Hamilton, and they make fascinating and satisfying reading for the Hamilton addict. They are collected under no less than 41 different headings. It is, perhaps, surprising that so many of them come from the earlier years of both the Gem and the Magnet, for it is always assumed that a writer improves as he gets to the pinnacle of his powers, and, as old age takes over, his powers of expression deteriorate in quality. Hamilton was certainly at his wittiest and his most pungent in his middle years.

Mr. Sutton introduces each section with a few comments of his own, and, though one may not agree with every conclusion that he reaches, he writes very pleasantly with an economy of words. Furthermore he does not attempt to write cleverly with a lot of jarring verbiage so beloved of many modern writers. The whole thing makes a very worthy offering to set before a king.

I would have liked to see just one short chapter devoted to a bit of the musical prose which makes the early Rio Kid tales outstanding, and maybe a descriptive passage such as occasionally made such lovely reading in the Ken King tales. But one can't have everything, and Mr. Sutton presents a collection which has something for everybody. A pleasant ramble here over familiar and unfamiliar paths.

Mary Cadogan and the author make pleasant, if rather well-worn, introductions - at this late stage Hamilton can well get by without any introduction at all, one would think.

On the book's covers and the dust-jacket, a number of celebrities give their opinion of Frank Richards, and some nice things are said, even if you are not over-excited by what celebrities think of Hamilton. But Mr. Bob Monkhouse warms our ageing hearts when he says that "Frank Richards is not simply the best in the field. He is the field. He is a Magnet. He is a Gem." And so say most of us.

A charming book to pass the hours, and well-worth selecting as your special gift to you.

WILLIAM - a Bibliography

Lofts & Adley

Though this work gives the impression of being unnecessarily complicated in places, it will be a useful guide to the collector of Richmal Crompton's stories of the lovable scamp William. It traces the earlier stories to their beginnings in Home Magazine and the Happy

Mag, and goes comprehensively through to later years when inflated costs made the number of stories included in each book less and less while prices went up. The first stiff-covered collections, way back in the early twenties, cost a mere half-crown apiece.

With this nicely-printed bibliography one will be able, in most cases, to find in exactly which volume to look for the particular story one is seeking at the moment.

I would like to have seen included a list of Miss Crompton's main characters, and the titles of the tales in which to find them. For instance, at the moment I am intending to re-read the tale which featured the amusing Miss Poll, the saucy lady who was offended when snooty village types didn't ask her to entertain at the summer Fete. I shall still have to sift through my dozens of William books to find her.

Miss Crompton often commented to me on the first William tale she ever wrote: "William Goes to the Pictures". According to the bibliography, the first one published was "Rice Mould". Obviously, she wrote a number of stories in readiness for publication, and the first one chosen to go into print was not the first one from her pen.

Messrs. Lofts and Adley include the full text of the only William story which was not reprinted in book form, though it featured in the Happy Mag. In my opinion this is, very definitely, not by Miss Crompton at all, and, if I am right, it is of very exceptional interest as the one William sub tale.

Fine for the William fan, this book, and especially for those who get a kick out of tracing the origins of things in general. It is available from Mr. Norman Shaw, at £3.50 plus postage.

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BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 75. ON THE TOWN

Our first orthodox programme of this term brought us a main feature from M.G.M. This was a Musical "That Midnight Kiss" in Technicolor, starring Mario Lanza and Kathryn Grayson. I can't remember anything about it, but I daresay it had its moments.

A coloured cartoon in this bill was "Cheese Chasers" and a coloured travel talk was "Enchanted Islands".

Next, from Warner Bros., came Gary Cooper in "Distant Drums", a long film in Technicolor. I fancy it was a tale of the American Civil War.

A delicious Mack Sennett pot-pouri, from Warner's, was "Stop, Look, and Laugh", in the same programme which also included a Bugs Bunny cartoon in colour "Long-Haired Hare".

Then a delightful bit of adventure from M.G.M. in "Kim" with Errol Flynn, in Technicolor. This could hardly miss in the Small Cinema, and our audiences loved it. In the same bill was a coloured Tweety Pie cartoon "Putty Tat Trouble".

Next, from M.G.M. a pleasant western "Ambush" starring Robert Taylor. Less lush than so many preceding shows,

and none the worse for that, probably. A Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon in this bill was "Jerry and the Goldfish", and a novelty was entitled "When Grandpa was a Boy" which sounds intriguing.

Then, from Warner Bros., "Break Through" with John Agar. This was a war film, but I forget everything else about it. A Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon was "The Flying Cat".

Next, from M.G.M. "Kind Lady" with a cast which included Ethel Barrymore and Angela Lansbury. This was a film from a stage play, and I seem never to have learned that a good play almost never made so good a film. I had seen this one at "Q" Theatre on the stage - a story of quite remarkable tension in which an old lady finds a number of confidence tricksters gradually taking over her home with her a prisoner in it. It was terrific as a play. For the film they had moved it back in time and set it, so far as I recall, about the turn of the century. As a film it was not too bad, but much of the tension was absent.

A Bugs Bunny colour cartoon in this bill was "Windblown Hare". A second colour cartoon was "Swallow the Leader".

Next, from M.G.M., Montgomery Clift in "The Search" an excellent film of the early-post-war period concerning an American soldier and a war orphan. One needed more than one handkerchief for this one. A couple of colour cartoons in the same bill were "Symphony in Slang" and "Hippety Hopper", and a Pete Smith novelty was "Curious Contests".

Next, from M.G.M., "Task Force", in Technicolor, an over-long war film (11, 210 ft.) with Gary Cooper and a big

cast which included Wayne Morris and Jack Holt. A bit stodgy, I seem to remember. Two lovely coloured cartoons in the same bill: a Tom & Jerry "Slicked-Up Pup", and a Tweety Pie "Tweet Tweet Tweety".

Next a giant Musical from M.G.M. - one for which the critics really put the flags out. This was Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra in "On the Town". It ran for many months at the Empire, Leicester Square, and the crowds flocked to it. It was a kind of sequel to "Anchors Aweigh" which I, personally, liked much better. A story of three sailors in New York for a day's leave. "The finest musical ever made" raved the critics - but I never cared a lot for it. I found it garish and noisy, which may reflect my poor taste. I should add that some five months later, when I had a big house-party over Christmas, I put on a big show on the night of Boxing Day - and booked "On the Town" for a return visit.

In the original showing it had a supporting bill which included a Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon "Sleepy-Time Tom".

To wind up the term we played, from Warner's, a long British film in Technicolor "Captain Horatio Hornblower R.N.". The stars were Gregory Peck and Virginia Mayo, with a big British cast in support. Rather a disappointment, I seem to recall.

The supporting bill was possibly better than the main attraction for it included a Mack Sennett pot-pourri "Love's Intrigue" and a Droopy coloured cartoon "Droopy's Good Deed".

(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS SERIES NEXT MONTH)

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

MIDLAND

Our April meeting was another jolly get-together enjoyed by all.

The Anniversary Number on show was Gem 168, "Saints v Grammarians", dated 29th April, 1911, and 69 years old to the day. Two Gems, 167 and 168 were reprinted from the Boys' Friend Library Nos. 30 and 38.

A discussion on "Your favourite Character" took place and as expected choices ranged from Bob Cherry to Skinner and most members agreed Ponsonby always fascinated them.

Refreshments with hot coffee and cream cakes provided by Joan Golen, were thoroughly enjoyed. Joan was thanked for her generosity, as was Tom Porter who provided this month's postage on the newsletters.

Two games were played; "20 questions" and Greyfriars Bingo, but we were overstaying our time and a rap on the door reminded us of it. The winners were Christine Brettell and Vince Loveday. This occasioned no surprise. These two seem to win almost all games we play.

There will be no July meeting this year, but one in September.

Thus ended another very jolly and enjoyable meeting and we hope the recent good attendances can be kept up.

JACK BELLFIELD

Correspondent.

CAMBRIDGE

We met at the home of Vic Hearn on Sunday, 27 April, 1980.

The Secretary read his report on the past year, which had been a successful one with a varied programme.

It was agreed to hold a special celebration on the week-end of 23-24 May, 1981, to mark the tenth anniversary of the Club. The Secretary reported that the annual visit to the home of Neville Wood had now been arranged for 22 June, and it was agreed to hold an extra meeting of the Club on Sunday, 1 June, 1980.

Adrian Perkins reported on the very successful Eagle Convention, and kindly presented members of the Club with souvenir programmes of

the event.

Bill Thurbon gave a review of the newly published book on G. A. Henty, "Held Fast for England", by Guy Arnold.

After enjoying Mrs. Hearn's excellent tea, the meeting continued with a talk by Keith Hodgkinson on School stories. He had decided to read or re-read the considerable number of school tales included in his collection. Generally speaking, he had found them very good, and in many cases as fresh as ever. He thought that interest in school stories had run on from "Tom Brown's Schooldays" until the 1950's. His reading had suggested that school stories could be divided into two classes: The Talbot Baines Reid to Gunby Hadath type; and the Hamilton; "Red Circle"; type. By the late 1950's the traditional public school story had largely disappeared. He had naturally had to omit many authors from his study, e.g. Wodehouse and Kipling. Of the large number he had read for this study he was able to grade them into order of merit. He gave his grading in reverse order, with many explanations for his choice which space ordains must be left out of this report.

11th place: Red Circle and other Thomson Schools.

10th: Charles Hamilton and the substitute writers.

9th: Alfred Judd; 8th: Harold Avery; equal 7th: Hylton Cleaver and Herbert Hayens (the latter he found very easy to read); 6th: John L. Roberts for his Greystone stories in the B.O.P. 5th: Gunby Hadath; 4th: Michael Poole. 3rd: Richard Bird, "absolutely absorbing", he appeared to cater for different age ranges by including both senior and junior boys in the same stories. 2nd he placed "Kent Carr", actually a woman writer who had written first-rate stories for the B.O.P. But first in his list, as No. 1, he placed E. S. Brookes, especially when writing as 'Reginald Brown'; he specially praised "Rotters of Whitelands", a story based on a St. Frank's original. He expressed the view that Brookes wrote stories, while Hamilton's tales were series of incidents.

Vic Hearn then gave an extremely interesting talk on "Regression", illustrated with recordings, of people who, under hypnosis, appeared to call up memories of past existencies.

The meeting closed with a very warm vote of thanks to Vic and

Mrs. Hearn for their hospitality.

LONDON

Twickenham's usual Maytime meeting lived up to its predecessors. Glorious weather, nature at her best, a large attendance and a happy and jolly entertainment side. The local member, Millicent Lyle, obliged with one of her excellent features. Members were given groups of Greyfriars Characters and those competing had to give Pop group names to them. Some very original names were submitted and these caused great laughter and amusement.

On tape, Babs Thurbon gave a conversation between Mrs. Bardell and her sister, Mary Ann Cluppins, which took place in the kitchen of Sexton Blake's Baker Street consulting rooms. Also on tape, Sam Thurbon gave a rendering of an interview between Marjorie Cherry and the ageing Mr. Quelch. The latter finished up in the same vein as Goodbye Mr. Chips when the Remove Form Master said he had had a large family of boys. Two very good items from the hospitable hosts of the meeting. The Magnet reading by Winifred Morss about the Bounder and his pater was greatly enjoyed.

Brisk sales took place, Rembrandt menu cards, John Wernham's latest publication effort, Laurie Sutton's book - Greyfriars for Grown-Ups, whilst Bill Bradford had quite a lot of Hamiltonia, C.D. Annuals and the like for disposal. A most pleasing visitor was Jo Doyle, Brian's wife, who had been so ill. Finally, Laurie Sutton played over the radio tape that reviewed his book.

Next meeting at Greyfriars, Hollybush Ride, Wokingham.
Phone 034 46 4626. Sunday, 8th June. Eric and Betty Lawrence hosts.
Bring own food.

BENJAMIN WHITER

SOUTH WEST

The Club met at the home of Tim Salisbury on Sunday, 27th April, and it was good to have Bill Lofts company once again. His talk on Leonard Shields, the famous Magnet illustrator, and on 'the history of Comics' and their artists was most interesting.

After tea, we had a talk by Brian Walker, a professional comic

artist, book illustrator and well-known in this part of the country as a cartoonist on the Bristol Evening Post. We learnt how a comic is produced, etc., and were able to look at some of his original art work. This visit was arranged by Jack Parkhouse.

There were eleven of us at this meeting and it was nice to meet Mr. Charles Churchill who had come up from Exeter. The London Club members will know the Misses Dawkins who are now living near Taunton and came along to join us.

Mr. Churchill took a photo of us all in the garden and after a lot of cheery talk and discussions, also looking at items on display we closed the meeting, hoping to get together again in early October.

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 10th May

The Chairman welcomed the usual loyal gathering on a beautiful May evening. In his opening remarks he touched on two news items. One concerned two lionesses that had wandered into a school: many members would recall 'A Lion at St. Jim's', said Geoffrey. The other passage, which dealt with fanatical Muslim students, was not in fact a topical news item at all, but taken from one of the Sexton Blake classics of G. H. Teed, a writer who fifty years ago had foreseen the present state of ferment in the Middle East with uncanny prescience.

Main items of the evening was a talk by Keith Atkinson on 'How I Became a Collector' - and very interesting it was too. He had started to read some of the Thomson papers as a boy, and then discovered Magnet and Gem, but for a short while only, as the War soon supervened and the papers ceased publication. Later he somehow raised the money to buy an exciting satchelful of Rovers from a schoolmate, and then the contents of an even more remarkable satchel, one containing Gems from the period 1919-20. He recalls how he subsequently came to sell some of these to a Mr. E. Fayne of Surbiton.

Like so many of us, Keith went through a period in early adulthood when he put away childish things, but in time recovered all his boyish enthusiasm for those well-remembered story-papers; and so, gradually, to contacts with others in the collecting fraternity, to the C.D., and to membership of the Northern OBBC. A number of details

in his reminiscences echoed the experience of some of the rest of us. For instance, he had once let pass the opportunity to pick up a ten-years' run of the Magnet for just over £100 because at the time it was a tidy sum and Keith had a young family to bring up.

This was a very enjoyable talk, and members hope Keith can be prevailed upon to speak to us again before long.

As usual, there were refreshments, old copies to browse over, and plenty of animated conversation; and Harry Barlow was delighted to buy a volume of originals from 1925. A happy meeting wound up at 9.15.

JOHNNY BULL

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The Postman Called

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

IAN BENNETT (Leicester): Is it not incredible to realise that C.D. itself has been running so much longer than all the papers it celebrates? My own particular favourite, Modern Boy, ran only from 1928 till it became a casualty of the second world war in 1939 - a mere eleven years all told - and I had it only from 1935. Approximately one quarter of the time I have been a reader of C.D. The mind boggles!

C.D. serves as a singular link with those far-off days, and the papers we all loved so much in our early years. There is nothing like them on the market today, and their standards, plus the memory of those who wrote for them and illustrated them, are kept alive solely by the regular appearance of C.D. whose contributors perpetuate all that the old papers stood for.

G. W. MASON (Torquay): Congratulations on having knocked up four centuries with the C.D. wicket still intact. Many thanks for that wonderful 400th issue of a great magazine.

D. J. MARTIN (Southampton): I have just read the 1979 C.D. Annual and must agree with your correspondents that the Annuals get better year by year. However, I am surprised that some of your more erudite readers have not taken Mr. Buddle to task. As a fourth generation Dissenter I am bound to point out to him that the words "Time like an ever-rolling stream ..." are from the pen of Isaac Watts, a native of

Southampton, and not Wesley. They come in the hymn "Our God our help in ages past" and characterise the author's power to convey with such economy of simple words the hope and trust of Mankind. I trust you will forgive my pointing this out, and must remember to "pour contempt on all my pride" (from his most famous hymn).

JOHN GEAL (Hampton): I find "Danny's Diary" very interesting as it's now the period of my childhood, and it's amazing, it mentions items of news of the time that I had forgotten completely, but in reading Danny the memory comes flooding back. It was during the years 1929-30 I was trying the Gem, not realising that it was going through its worst period. I couldn't stand it! - and was put off it for the rest of the paper's life. I never went back to try again until after the war and the OBBC started, and I then read other much better periods, but I still find that early dislike hard to overcome.

Mrs. M. GIBSON (Geraldton, Australia): For some time I have particularly wanted a copy of the recording "Ma Belle" taken from "The Three Musketeers" the very fine musical presented, if I remember correctly, at Drury Lane pre war with I believe Dennis King in the leading role. If Mr. Hunter or anyone else has a copy of this record, and would be kind enough to record it on a cassette for me I would willingly pay all expenses in this connection including of course postage here to Australia.

Re the article of Mr. Wormull, 'Voyage of Fantasy', I too sometimes dream I have discovered a shop that sells the old papers, mostly the girls magazines, so he is not alone with his dreaming, usually there are all the books I want which I eagerly purchase, only to awaken and find it is just a dream, to my disappointment.

I really do look forward to receiving my copy of the C.D. each month, even when, as recently, the February one arrived a week before the January edition, such is the deterioration in public service these days, so different to the time when the old papers were published. Why is it that, as the world 'progresses', service gets worse and worse? Maybe thats why so many of us enjoy the nostalgia of the old times when life seemed safer and happier, even though we worked longer hours and much harder.

Love to Princess Snowee from my two pets, Whisky and Rusty, our mischievous cats.

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NEW BOOK

(Review by Jack Hughes)

PANEL BY PANEL. An illustrated History of Australian comics by John Ryan, published by Cassell Australia \$20.

This is the first book to trace the History of comic strips in Australia, from the artforms beginnings in Melbourne Punch and The Bulletin. Here we meet The Potts, Ginger Meggs, Fatty Finn, Bib and Bub, The Blimps, Ben Bowyang, Bluey and Curley, Wally and the Major, Boofhead, Air Hawk, Snake Tales - and a host more. John Ryan of Brisbane with considerable expertise, traces the History not only of the strips that graced the pages of daily and Sunday newspapers and magazines, but also looks at the mergece, pre-war, of comic books, with their post-war boom and later problems of increasing costs and censorship leading to their demise. Kazanda, Wocko The Beaut, Middy Malone, The Lone Avenger, Tim Valour, Captain Justice, The Scorpion, Yarmak and The Panther to name only a few.

The text is packed with facts and biographies, and an extensive index makes this a standard reference work.

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THE GIVE-AWAYS

by W. O. G. Lofts

I can well remember in 1933, and as a boy of nine, my father handing over to me a free comic he had found in his Daily Express on Saturday morning. I was delighted, as my pocket money was very limited in buying new comics in those days. I looked forward to getting this supplement entitled 'The Daily Express Children's Own' every Saturday, and how disappointed I was after it faded out after only eight issues. Many, many years later I was greatly surprised to learn that Scottish readers were far more fortunate, the supplement having a run for over a year - but why this was so has never been satisfactorily explained.

Most of the popular newspapers had their free children's give-away - the first being The Daily Sketch with Uncle Oojar in 1921, followed by the enormously popular Pip, Squeak & Wilfred in the Daily Mirror. But easily the most popular was Teddy Tail in the 'Boys and Girls Daily Mail' which ran for $4\frac{1}{2}$ years, 1933/7. The most curious thing being that with the exception of Rupert all the other characters have long been gone, and this bear only featured as a tiny strip in the Daily Express supplement - drawn by an artist who was to say the least crude.

The free comic supplement started with the American Sunday newspapers in the last century, and so far traced the first issued in England was in the womans Home Chat in 1898 entitled 'Playbox' - much later to be a girls comic in its own right - after appearing in several other publications. Pearson's also followed suit with 'Nursery Age' - though the contents were really for the older boy and girl. The boys paper, Boys Leader, gave away a free comic entitled 'Funny Pips' in 1903 which ran for 16 issues, whilst probably the most interesting and best remembered was 'Ovaltiney's Own Comic' given away free with the Bath publications comics 'The Rattler', 'The Dazzler', 'Target', 'Chuckler' and 'Rocket' - though I have often wondered why such a high-class and famous firm as Ovaltiney should have employed the poorest artists to illustrate their commercial concern. Many other firms followed suit, such as Birds Custard, Lyons, Gibbs Toothpaste, Cadbury's, and even Lilley and Skinner who gave away a comic when one bought a pair of new shoes. Boys papers even gave away midget comics at times, and what reader does not remember the Nosey Parker small comics given free inside the Rover in the middle and late thirties?

Despite enormous research in this field, I'm convinced that quite a number of free supplements remain to be discovered especially those in the twenties. Only early this year Wimpy Bars were giving away free to customers their own production with the so apt name of "Muncher" and featuring Mr. Wimpy the Beefeater. Whilst I expect it delighted the children of today, I don't think it could have given such a thrill as The Daily Express Children's Own did to me in those days of the early thirties.

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SALE, postage extra: Holiday Annual (1934) £5; Howard Baker Annual (1980) £3; Howard Baker Gem Volume, No. 1, £3; 39 Gems (1939) £1 each; 9 St. Frank's S.O.L's (1939/40) £1 each; 38 Champions (1936/7) £1 each; Billy Bunter's Own (1953) no dust cover, £1; 124 Modern Boy (1930/5) no Hamiltonia, 70p each; S.O.L. 377, The School Squadron, 50p; S.O.L. 350, St. Jim's, no cover, 50p; 3 Raymond Glendening Book of Sport, 50p each; 42 Collectors' Digest, 1973/9, 10p each.

P. HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE
KING'S HEATH, NORTHAMPTON.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: S. O. L. with covers, 269, 271, 272, 275, 290, 302, 308, 314; without covers, 183, 191, 199, 201, 202, 206, 222, 224, 228, 230, 240, 248, 257. GHA, 1925, 1927, 1928. Chatterbox Annual 1929, Champion Annual 1926, T. Merry Annual, No. 1. Hardbacks, T. Merry of St. Jim's, 1949; Trouble for T. Merry. C. D. complete years, 1971 to 1979 inclusive. S. a. e. for details.

R. PAYNE, 69 HIGH STREET, HEADCORN, KENT.

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REVIEW

Held Fast for England; G. A. Henty, Imperialist Boys' Writer

by Guy Arnold (Hamish Hamilton, 1980; £8.95)

This book is useful for anyone studying Henty. The best section is its summary of Henty's boys' stories. The biographical material is not very complete. The author acknowledges information he has received from the Henty Society Bulletins, and from Bill Lofts's articles, but he makes no reference to the problems about Henty's actual birthplace raised by the researches of Bill Lofts, Jack Overhill and myself. In a way, one wonders for whom the book is intended? Not for the biographer, and the bibliographical material is too scanty for the real collector, who requires much more detailed information about the various editions and publishers. Nor does Arnold do much to set Henty in his proper position as a writer of historical stories. Perhaps the author's real purpose is indicated by his sub-title, for he is fairly free with the terms "imperialist" and "racist". But in this case I would make the same criticism of Arnold, as I did of Henty himself when comparing him with more recent writers of historical tales. Henty lacked a "sense of or feel for 'period'". In the same way I think Arnold's use of the terms "imperialist" and "racist" show a lack of understanding of the period in which Henty was writing. Those of us whose memories go back to the pre-1914 days know that most people then were proud to be members of the British Empire. I have noticed that most of the Newspaper reviews of the book are rather cool.

The book, however, does make one interesting point. Writing on Henty's American stories Arnold says "The really fascinating aspect of Redskin and Cowboy is that Henty managed to write a first-class western a generation before Zane Grey and a whole subsequent family of writers began to tackle the subject".

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