

STORY PAPER  
**COLLECTORS DIGEST**

Volume 35

No. 410

FEBRUARY 1981



Recently purchased, 46 vols. - these comprise Boys of the Empire, Boys Comic Journal, Aldines Half Holiday Library, Cheerful Library. Large, bound volumes, some a bit damp stained, but otherwise good. The lot to clear £200 - !! Post extra.

Not in my line - Wisdens, 25 vols., 1950 to 1977, v.g.c. Many with dust wrappers, offers please, for the lot.

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There's so much to offer, lists not possible of course, but your wants carefully seen to. Always keep in touch.

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# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by  
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

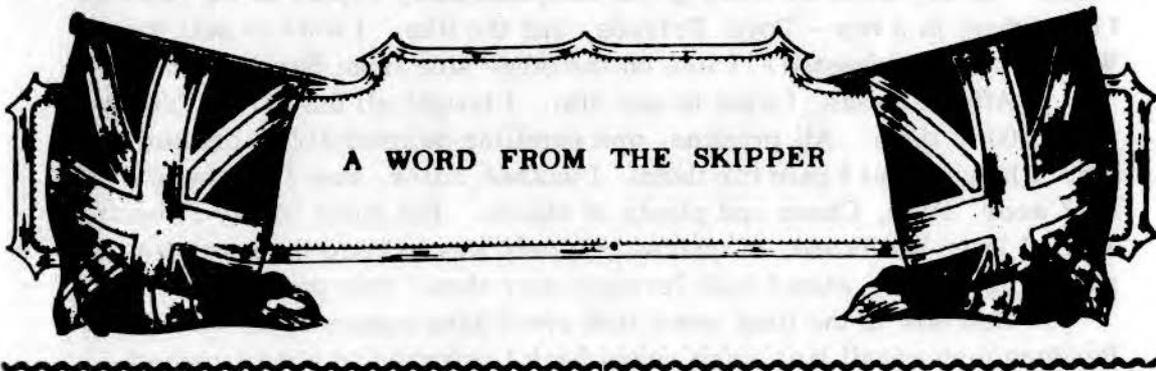
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## A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER

### PATIENCE

Patience is a virtue; possess it if you can;  
SELDOM found in woman; NEVER in a man.

Long years ago, my only sister, considerably my senior, used to quote that old tag to me frequently. It is a well-known saying, of course (and I feel sure a true one), but I have no idea from whence it came originally. Anybody know?

A collector needs plenty of patience. Many, many times in the course of a twelve month, collectors write to me and tell me that they

are losing heart. The Magnets, the Lees, the Union Jacks, the Gems they are seeking just remain hidden and refuse to turn up.

"Is it worth while going on?" they write and ask me. And my answer is always "Yes, yes, a thousand times 'yes.'"

Suddenly, unexpectedly, items turn up out of the blue. And the longer you have been trying to get them, the more joy you feel when your dreams come true at last.

I have been collecting since the mid-thirties - a very long time - and there were times when I thought I would never get the collection together for which I hoped. And then something would happen like this. My telephone rang at Surbiton.

"I used to be an artist with the Amalgamated Press," said a man's voice. "Every week we were given complimentary copies of the papers. I have them in a box - Boys' Friends, and the like. I want to sell them. Would you be interested? I live on the other side from Surbiton station."

After classes, I went to see him. I bought all his Boys' Friends - about 300 of them. All pristine, and smelling delightfully of printer's ink. I forget what I paid for them. I wished, later, that I had bought all the Cheer, Boys, Cheer and plenty of others. But those lovely Friends, which I later had bound, of course (the only way to keep them pristine), remind me today, when I look lovingly over them, that patience pays.

And now to the final proof that everything comes to he who waits. Readers may recall that some years back I referred to a book named "The Kanter Girls" which I had been seeking vainly for many years. It belonged to my sister early in the century when she was very young. When I came along, she used to read aloud to me. Often from the Gem - and sometimes from "The Kanter Girls". I loved it.

Then, one day, in a moment of weakness, she lent "The Kanter Girls" to a friend. It was never returned. There is a lesson there. It is unwise ever to lend books which you value. Even with the best-intentioned people, there is a chance that you have seen the last of your treasure.

Years later, my sister and I spoke of "The Kanter Girls". I made up my mind to try to get it, though the hope seemed slim. My sister didn't know the author's name. She didn't know the publisher's name. She didn't know the date of publication. As the book had been

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read to me, I wasn't even sure of the spelling of the girls' name in the title. "Was it Canter or Kanter?" I asked my sister. She thought it was "Kanter" but she couldn't be sure.

From 1945 onwards, I tried hard to obtain "The Kanter Girls". I advertised from time to time, and kept the ads going over periods of time. No result. I asked countless booksellers. I rooted through second-hand bookshops. No result.

Then, some years ago, I mentioned it again in C.D., this time in an editorial. My good friend, Mr. Ray Hopkins, traced it in the British Museum, and found it had been written by Mrs. L. M. Branch. Another good friend, Mr. Bill Lofts, also went to the British Museum, and took a photostat of some pages from the book, and sent them to me.

As a result of their efforts, I was able to give more particulars to several firms who were seeking the book for me.

My nephew has also been trying to get the book for me. He is a postcard collector, and he was in touch with an Exeter firm who specialise in old postcards. They also seek out-of-print books for clients. My nephew asked them to try to trace "The Kanter Girls". Way back in September they telephoned him that they had drawn blank in this country, and had come to the conclusion that there was no hope of getting it in Britain. Would he like them to try in the States? Certainly, said Lynton, my nephew.

Before Christmas, the Exeter firm telephoned my nephew again. They had had a phone call from the States. "The Kanter Girls" had been traced. Did my nephew still want it? Certainly he did. By air or sea? By air, said Lynton.

I knew nothing at all about all this then, of course. But, on Christmas Eve evening, when we came to open our presents, I had one parcel clearly marked: "To Be Opened Last".

I wondered what on earth it could be, but never dreamed of the truth. And when I opened it, my heart nearly failed. There it was! "The Kanter Girls", the book which I had sought for countless years, and which I had almost given up hope of ever seeing.

I rushed to phone Lynton, who was at his home in Kent, and heard the full story of "The Kanter Girls" - the lost heiresses who had been traced after so many years, and rushed to me by air for Christmas.

(Actually both Lynton and his brother spent the week-end before Christmas with us at Excelsior House. "The Kanter Girls" had reached him on the Saturday, only an hour before he left his home to come up to Hampshire.)

I have taken the space to tell that story, as an encouragement to any collector who may be losing heart. Believe me, everything comes to he who waits. Go on being patient.

### BLANKETTY BLANKET?

Father Francis Hertzberg writes us as follows:

"I of course cannot agree with the blanket condemnation of comic papers. Both now and then there was and is far more good than bad in these. The superb Wakefield Laurel & Hardy in Film Fun, Foxwell's Tiger Tim and Bruin Boys, and no less today's continuing Lord Snooty and Desperate Dan: and of course the wonderful coloured Christmas numbers - no, these are treasures which do only good, and raise the spirits; there is room for both these and the story papers, and we must not disparage them because some of us believe they killed off the Magnet and Gem."

Since when did C.D. ever go in for blanket condemnation of real comics? Some of the finest articles ever written on comics and their characters have appeared, down the years, in the Digest and its Annual. The magnificent cover of our most recent Annual portrayed those dearly-loved comic characters "Weary Willie & Tired Tim". In 1978, our Annual cover collected together a big number of old comic favourites at a Christmas party. A strange way to carry on a "blanket condemnation of comics", is it not?

What we do condemn, and have always condemned, is the blanket covering of all the old papers under the name of "comics".

I have in my personal collection a vast quantity of Butterfly, Firefly, Funny Wonder, Puck, Rainbow, Favorite, Chips, Comic Cuts, Chuckles, Lot-O-Fun, Comic Life, and plenty others. I even have two large, beautifully bound volumes of "Knockout" which I bought week by week in early post-war years, and a volume of a comic called "Sun", similarly acquired.

I do not buy "comics" today, but I accept Father Hertzberg's word that modern comics are as good as the real comics that I loved as

a child.

As for the homily that "we must not disparage comics because some of us believe they killed off the Magnet and Gem", it surely is very muddled thinking. It has never occurred to me for a moment that the demise of the Gem and Magnet early in the war had anything to do with comics. I don't believe it now. I would be surprised if many of our readers believe it either.

THE EDITOR

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# Danny's Diary

FEBRUARY 1931

It has happened, and though I have been expecting it for some time, it has come as a bit of a shock. With the very first issue of the month, dated 7th February, 1931, the Popular has ended. And with what a weary whimper it has ended!

The only old favourites in at the finish are Greyfriars and Rookwood. The chunk of a Greyfriars tale is from a Magnet of fairly recent times, and not by the real Frank Richards. The chunk of a Rookwood tale is an old one about Gunner. The other chunks are tales of third-rate series which are not being carried on, though the Popular is being replaced by a new paper called the Ranger. From the advertisements about it in the Popular, it won't attract my tuppences.

There has been an earthquake this month in New Zealand, of all places, and the town of Napier is almost entirely destroyed.

The new King of the Islands series has carried on through the month in Modern Boy. The first tale this month is "The Mystery Island". A girl named Aileen Craye has been playing ghost in a bungalow on the island of Loya. Ken solves the mystery of the island, and supports Aileen when he discovers that she is trying to keep the rascal, Barney Hall, at bay.

Next tale is "The Lagoon of Loya", and the island is attacked by savages from the Solomon Islands. Next - "Kit Hudson - Mutineer". Up till now, Ken King and Hudson have been firm friends, but now there is a break in their friendship. Last of the month is "Hunters of the

South Seas" in which the break between the two friends seems to be complete. Hudson leaves the old ketch to stay on Fufa Island with Aileen Craye and her worthless brother, Monty. And the Dawn sails away. One of the best Ken King series so far, and it goes on next month.

Lovely times at the cinemas in the old home town this month. Evelyn Laye in "The Luck of the Navy"; John McCormack in "Song of my Heart" which the ladies love. Bebe Daniels in a modest little picture "Love Comes Along". A truly gorgeous musical, all in colour (they call it Technicolor now) entitled "The Vagabond King" starring Dennis King and Jeanette Macdonald. They sing together beautifully, and there are some grand songs including "March of the Vagabonds". Another musical with the tenor singer John Boles "Song of the West". I greatly enjoyed Gary Cooper and Beryl Mercer in "Medals". William Powell and Jean Arthur were great in an exciting film "Street of Chance". And another all-colour giant musical was "Hold Everything", starring Joe E. Brown and Winnie Lightner. Gorgeous month.

In London they are busy building a new Underground Railway which will run from Hammersmith to Northfields, and some of the excavation work is turning up some real historical finds.

The Nelson Lee Library is not all that hot at the moment. No series, just now - and a bit too much farce. The first tale of the month is "The Fighting Fags" in which a new boy named Ward goes into the Third Form - and becomes a power in the school. There is also a detective thriller about Nelson Lee which introduces the crook they call Night Hawk.

At half-term I spent the week-end with my Aunt and Uncle and my cousin Robin. We went to the Theatre Royal in Aldershot on the Saturday evening and saw a play entitled "Sexton Blake". It was very good indeed, and it was by a Blake writer named Donald Stuart. I am not sure whether he wrote the play or just a story on which the play was based. There was a cast of 15, and the part of Sexton Blake was played by C. Douglas Carlisle.

The first Gem this month contains "The Vengeance of the Hawk" in which a threatening message is sent to Cardew's grandfather, Lord Reckness, who lives in Deepdene Lodge. Trimble helps to expose the villain at the bottom of it all.

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Next week brought "Gussy the Optimist" which also starred Skimpole. Then "The 'Rabbit' of the Shell", a pretty awful tale, about a weird new temporary master in the Shell, with Grundy as a detective. All bits and pieces. The St. Jim's tales are not very long these days, with adventure series being used as fill-ups.

Then "The Taming of the Tyrant" with Dr. Holmes reported as resigning and Ratcliff made the new Headmaster. There is a Sir Burnleigh Coke in the tale to confuse it all. So silly. Surely the Gem isn't going the same way as the Popular.

There is another splendid Rio Kid story in the Boys' Friend Library this month. It is called "The Rio Kid's Gold-Mine".

Captain Malcolm Campbell has broken all records at Daytona Beach, reaching 246½ miles an hour. Late in the month Campbell was knighted by the King.

The series about Tatters has continued through the month in the Magnet. The first story of the month is "Chivvying Chumley". Tatters and Carne, the prefect, have fallen foul of one another. In the next tale "The Voice of the Tempter" Carne listens to Chumley's cousin, Rackstraw, who promises a reward to Carne if the prefect can bring disgrace to Chumley. But Hurree Singh is suspicious, and the sharpest eyes at Greyfriars are watching Carne.

Next week, in "The Amateur Rogue", Carne finds it hard to plot against Chumley with the Famous Five for ever on the prefect's trail. Final tale of the month is "A Rogue's Remorse" in which the rascally plotter of the Sixth faces ruin and is saved at the last moment by his enemies, the Famous Five. So Carne gives up his plotting - but Rackstraw is not beaten yet. A series, full of interest and it continues next month.

Two excellent tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. "Stand Firm, the Rebels" is a barring-out tale in which a Mr. Carnforth becomes Head in place of Dr. Locke. The other one is "Chums of the Backwoods" about Cedar Creek. Cedar Creek, which ran in the Popular for several years, is always first-class.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S. O. L. No. 141, "Stand Firm, the Rebels" comprised a 3-story series from the Magnet of the Spring of 1922. Original titles were "When the Head Resigned", "The Sixth-Form Rebellion" and "The Greyfriars Barring-Out". Not a strikingly good or

well-remembered series, but noteworthy owing to the fact that it was the seniors who rose first in rebellion. The Cedar Creek tale, No. 142, came from the series which appeared first in the Boys' Friend and which was reprinted almost in entirety in the Popular.

The end of the Popular seemed to come very suddenly, though there were signs for some time that the editor did not know which way to turn. There is little doubt that it was the S. O. L., taking great gulps of the old stories without any sensible planning which finished off the Pop. The Ranger, which replaced the Popular, does not seem to have won lasting affection. After running for just over two years, it started again at No. 1 as a larger-sheeted paper, to run for a further couple of years or so. It ended in the mid-thirties, and never seems to be mentioned now.)

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# BLAKIANA

conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Although a little late I should like to say thank you to all my friends who sent me charming Christmas and New Year wishes. I have just this one more article written by our late friend, Gordon Swan, not long before he died, but I am sure you will all enjoy it.

And now I must ask for more material. At the moment I only have enough for the next issue of the C.D., so do please get out your pens and paper and rack your brains for something to write about. Just an article on your favourite character will do nicely, or comments on the Blake articles in this year's C.D. Annual.

## HE APPEARED IN THE UNION JACK

by S. Gordon Swan

As a teenager after the Great War I was enthralled by a story called "The Adventures of Jimmie Dale" by a Canadian-born author, Frank L. Packard (published by Cassell & Co. Ltd.). I had never read anything quite like it before. True, it was about a gentleman crook and they were numerous at this period - Raffles, The Lone Wolf, Anthony Trent - but this one also masqueraded in London's underworld as Larry the Bat and his sign-manual was a grey seal left at the scene of the crime.

Justification for an article on this writer in The Collectors' Digest is to be found in his association with The Union Jack: no less than three of his novels ran as serials in that famous periodical - "The Wire Devils, Jimmie Dale and the Blue Envelope Murder and The Devil's Mantle".

Jimmie Dale's father had been a safe-manufacturer and Jimmie,

with his acquired knowledge of safes, set out to baffle the police and the underworld more in a spirit of adventure than anything else. But he had been detected by someone while ransacking a jeweller's safe and that someone - a mysterious girl known to him only as The Tocsin - held the threat of exposure over his head. From then on he was compelled to dance to her tune. She sent him letters instructing him how to circumvent the machinations of other crooks, but she never appeared in person.

A similar theme was introduced some years later in Bruce Graeme's "Blackshirt" stories, which always seemed to me a carbon copy of Frank L. Packard's idea.

Eventually Jimmie Dale discovered The Tocsin's identity, but the plot of the whole story is too involved to outline here. There were four sequels to this book, all published by Hodder and Stoughton, and readers of the original novel might have been surprised and/or bewildered to find that in "The Further Adventures of Jimmie Dale" the locale was now New York instead of London.

It is fairly obvious that the background was always the American underworld but for some reason Cassell & Co. Ltd. saw fit to change it to London. I have an idea the book originally appeared as episodes in one of Cassell's Fiction Magazines. The reason for this change of venue is a bit mystifying in itself. Possibly at that time the publishers thought an American background might not appeal to English readers, so someone went to the trouble of exchanging American streets and suburbs for English ones. St. James Club in New York became St. John's Club in Piccadilly. (Was there a St. James Club in London?) Today, when the market is flooded with stories containing American backgrounds, American dialogue and American spelling - even in books printed in England - such an idea is hard to grasp.

Frank L. Packard was very popular from the Great War onwards through the twenties and thirties. At least three of his books were filmed, the most notable being "The Miracle Man", which brought the great Lon Chaney into prominence. Other players in this picture, whose names will be remembered only by long-term film fans, were Thomas Meighan and Betty Compson.

In later books Packard abandoned the American underworld for

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adventure-mystery stories laid in the Pacific and China Seas, one of the best of these being "The Locked Book". I suppose this writer is largely forgotten today for I have never seen his stories re-issued in paperbacks, which is something to be regretted.

### STORIES IN THE FIRST PERSON

by D.H.

Stories appearing in such publications as "Chums" and "Boys Own Paper" were often told in the first person, generally when they were laid in the 18th or 19th centuries. This device I found acceptable, perhaps because once the story or more often, the serial was finished so too was the character.

But when the "Nelson Lee" published weekly with the same characters set in the same location, namely St. Frank's, I found it hard to acclimatise myself to having Nipper telling the stories at one stage. For this same reason I never really enjoyed this mode of storytelling in the "Union Jack" which, mercifully, was not very often and only once do I recall one author having Blake himself relating the yarn. However, there are exceptions to every rule and I really enjoyed one first person related story. Across the Atlantic, Raymond Chandler wrote all his private eye stories in the first person and perhaps for this reason I found them really enjoyable. Also I liked his style - fast-paced and thrilling and at times humorous. Just as G. H. Teed did not start out to be a writer, but became one through necessity, so it was with Chandler. He was born in Chicago, educated in England, at Dulwich College and returned to the U.S. In the early thirties he was an executive in five oil companies. Came the Depression, the oil companies collapsed and Chandler had to find another source of income. Luckily for us he chose writing hard-boiled detective stories for the pulp magazines, naming his private investigator Philip Marlowe. The stories had short, pungent sentences which propelled it along with no time wasted. He wrote in a style that Gwyn Evans anticipated years before Chandlers stories began to appear in the "Black Mask" magazine in the U.S.A.

Evans used it in the story entitled "Gun is Guns" in U.J. 1173, to introduce a new character - Ruff Hanson - an American private detective. This story had Hanson telling the entire first half of the tale.

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Sexton Blake did not come on to the scene until the second half of the tale, which was told alternately by Splash Page, Tinker and Ruff Hanson. The story began in New York with Ruff Hanson being engaged on a case which took him to Damascus where he met up with Sexton Blake. They were both after the same man but for different reasons and each claimed him. This resulted in some friction but at the end of the story they were firm friends.

The previous week the Editor of the U.J. in his Round Table chat told his readers that Ruff Hanson, the American investigator was an absolute novelty; not only a new character but a different one who told his story in his own words in a most engaging style. The Editor concluded - "You will like Ruff Hanson but most of all you will like the story as a whole, the snap and movement and action of it. Truer words were never spoken (or rather written). Letters the Editor received later on proved this. Readers accepted him wholeheartedly. Gwyn Evans' use of the first person style of writing was justified to introduce a new character in a novel fashion, but in subsequent Ruff Hanson stories he reverted very wisely to the conventional style of relating them in the third person.

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### DEATH OF NICHOLAS THROCKMORTON

We very much regret to record the sudden death of Mr. Nicholas Throckmorton, who, in recent years, has lived at Biddenden in Kent. Mr. Throckmorton, who, until his retirement, was a Civil Servant, was a regular and enthusiastic reader of this magazine since its beginning. He would have been in his middle-sixties at the time of his death.

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SALE: Oor Wullie, Broons Annual, £2 each. Two Crompton's "William" books, £1 each; "Biggles" title, £1; H. Baker Magnets, £4.50 each; C.D. Annuals, £4 each; Bunter hardbacks, £3.50 each.

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POPULARS from June 1928 to October 1930 required. State issue numbers available and price.

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# Nelson Lee Column

INTRODUCING ----

by William Lister

Most people are familiar with the caption "Introducing ----" whether it be in the realm of the cinema or in that of the weekly story-papers. Sometimes the person introduced "catches on" with the public, and, in later years, while watching an ancient TV film you say to yourself:- "I saw him or her in 1933, and he or she is still around". In another case, you may see someone who strikes a chord in your memory as one who never "caught on".

This also applies to fictional characters in weekly periodicals.

Students of the history of St. Frank's or Greyfriars could point to certain characters, launched by their respective authors - characters who faded out. Among those who have stayed the pace are Sexton Blake (an all-time long-runner), Nelson Lee, Handforth, and Billy Bunter.

There is a school of thought which considers that Brooks made too much of Handforth, and that Hamilton overplayed Bunter. I don't think that any writer set out thinking "This character will be a wow! I must plug him for dear life." What really happened was that certain characters "took on" with the reading public. Editor and author realised it, and they supplied the demand. It is the demand that causes the author to create the supply. He won't suit everybody - but who does?

All this arises from the St. Frank's tales that I have lately been reading. They are bound and listed as "Introducing De Valerie" comprising four tales published in 1918 and entitled "The Mysterious Schoolboy", "The Case of the Japanese Schoolboy", "The Mystery of Moor Quarry", and "The Secret Menace". (Old series Nelson Lee 132 - 135.)

Into the background of a gang of orientals who call themselves "The Circle of Terror", led by Professor Zingrave, Lord of the Circle of Terror (doesn't it make your blood run cold?), E. S. Brooks places his new character, De Valerie. The supporting cast included Nelson Lee, detective (disguised as a schoolmaster) and his assistant, Nipper, in the role of a schoolboy. The theme was that the Terror Circle, led

by the wicked Prof. Zingrave, are bent on rooting out Nelson Lee and Nipper. You might say that our oriental gentleman, hearing these now famous names, would say "Me no likee!"

Did they manage to scrub out that famous pair? In fact, all this took place in 1918, and Lee and Nipper are still with us, and Nelson Lee became an experienced housemaster while Nipper was leader of the Remove, as the calendar approached 1940.

Four exciting cover pictures whetted the reader's appetite. A sinister stranger pressing his attentions on a St. Frank's boy; a Japanese schoolboy, bound and gagged, in a musty attic; three lone figures perched amid Grand Canyon-type scenery; and, finally, the exciting snow-time cover depicting a blizzard, with a schoolboy, amid the blinding snow, leaping from his bicycle on to the running board of the villain's car.

OO'ER! It shouldn't be allowed! But it all goes to make up a sensational four-part series. Bear in mind, it was written in the early days of E. S. Brooks's St. Frank's saga. It's good, but, as the years passed, Brooks got even better.

And the new character, De Valerie? He made the grade all right, and was still around in the closing days of the Nelson Lee Library.

#### A DOMINANT CHARACTER

by R. J. Godsave

It would appear to be a great pity that Vivian Travers joined the St. Frank's Remove as late as 1928 in the middle of the 1st New Series of the Nelson Lee Library. His first appearance was in No. 90, 1st New Series, "The Schoolboy Baronet" along with Sir Jimmy Potts.

Travers, like Napoleon Browne, was a character who went his own way regardless of the opinions of others. Such characters as Travers and Browne were inclined to dominate the scene at the expense of others.

Had Travers been introduced in the old series then it would seem that E. S. Brooks would have had to make some alterations in his writings. On the other hand, I do not think that Travers would have made his mark in the old series as his mode of speech and actions would not have fitted in. In the 1st New Series which was written in a somewhat different style to which the reader had become familiar, Travers would and did

fit in. In other words he was at home in the 1st New Series which he certainly would not have been in the Old Series.

Vivian Travers comes under the heading of being 'grey', that is neither very good nor very bad. He had a certain charm which made him rather popular with those with whom he came in contact. Although an occasional smoker, he was a great asset in the junior sports teams.

As with all dominant characters the author cannot ignore them, and so they are more in the 'limelight' than some of the more established quieter ones.

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 167 - Gems 753-8 - Gussy the Runaway Series

Early in 1922 Billy Bunter ran away from Greyfriars to avoid well-deserved punishment, and he took refuge at St. Jim's and Rookwood in turn. It is a little surprising that, a few months later, Charles Hamilton should have used a very similar theme for the Gem. Knox of the Sixth had boxed Gussy's 'yah', and Gussy horsewhipped Knox to avenge his dignity. When Mr. Railton proposed to cane him, he decided to retire from the school for a while, and so his wanderings began.

Each week saw Gussy in a new setting - Greyfriars, Highcliffe, Cliff House, Rookwood, and Rylcombe Grammar School - it being necessary for him to move on as his true circumstances became known at each school. Really, the St. Jim's stories were too brief, running to about nine chapters a week (despite an editorial promise in No. 752 of 'an extra long story next week of St. Jim's) and it was difficult to develop plots in so short a space. The result was a rather jumpy effect, events moving sometimes too fast for the reader to take them all in. Perhaps the two most successful stories were the episodes at Highcliffe and Cliff House. At Highcliffe, Ponsonby discovered Gussy's situation and attempted to use it for his own ends, and there was a fine vignette of the Caterpillar and his reaction to this. At Cliff House, Gussy jumped over the wall to escape Kildare and Darrell, and he was ignominiously ejected by Miss Bullivant.

The series was reprinted in S.O.L. No. 176, entitled "Gussy the

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Runaway", but there was considerable abridgement, many of the St. Jim's episodes being omitted and the Highcliffe story was left out in its entirety. In addition, one or two descriptions were brought up to date: in the space of the ten years between the original story and the reprint, the sixth-formers had ceased to wear tail coats! Nevertheless, Miss Bullivant was still described as being a former suffragette, and the artist still depicted her in Edwardian clothes, with a skirt reaching almost to the ground. It is a curious fact that the S.O.L. illustrations seemed to be a mirror image of those in the original Gems, everything facing in the opposite direction.

Possibly the most interesting facet of the series was the way in which Gussy's character was depicted. His assumption of dignity was absurd, but his determination carried conviction and he never lost the respect of the reader. In addition there were episodes which revealed the magic touch that was to flower fully in the Magnet's Golden Age, as when Baggy Trimble assured the others that Gussy would never return and offered to fill the vacant space in Study 6 himself (Gem 755) and when the juniors went in a deputation to the Head and came away with a flea in their ear (Gem 756). Above all, the series must be unique in that it provided a link between all the Hamiltonian schools that had each, at some time or another, had stories written about it in its own right. Charles Hamilton was proudly parading before the reader all his six famous schools in turn. He had every right to feel proud of the astonishing variety they displayed.

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REVIEWSDE VERE AND THE SILVER SCUD

Frank Richards  
(Howard Baker Book Club  
Special: £15)

"Set a beggar on horseback and he'll ride to the devil" was the observation of a wise old gentleman long ago. He probably meant that no snob can be compared with the one who has bettered himself in the materialistic sense.

Timothy Perkins was the son of an under-footman. When his father came into a fortune, Timothy turned up at Greyfriars as Algernon De Vere in a 4-story series which occupied the Magnet in the summer term of 1922. Even his name must have sounded a little too upstartish to be true, one would have thought.

Like most tales of upstarts, this little series contains some sequences which present uncomfortable reading, but there are some good cricket descriptions, and some interesting characterisation with Mauly in the picture, showing perhaps the difference between real gold and the imitation stuff.

This series is followed by an amusing trifle "Bunter's Raffle" in which Bunter raffles a gramophone which he has bought on easy terms of which he has made only the first payment. How Bunter never changed his quarters from Greyfriars to Borstal is one of those puzzles of literature.

Then comes the 5-story series which all readers, I imagine, will regard as easily the star turn on this bill of fare. Lord Mauleverer takes his closest friends on a yachting trip on board the "Silver Scud". There is a kidnapper, with the sinister name of Gideon Gaunt, on the look-out for Mauly all the time, and when the background becomes that of the yacht on the boundless ocean, the kidnapper is still there lurking about somewhere. The outcome of the plot is never predictable, even though, to the real Hamiltonian, the inclusion of a character named Poynings inevitably sets a bell ringing.

An excellent series. Quite one of the best of the middle-period Magnet.

The overall title of the volume seems ambiguous. De Vere has nothing whatever to do with the Silver Scud. However, production is tip-top, as with all these Howard Baker "Specials", and there is especial interest from the stories coming from the end of an era. The Silver Scud stories formed the last complete series of the White Cover Days. The Greyfriars stories are shorter, and therefore tauter, with no excessive verbiage. Well worth a place on your shelves.

HARRY WHARTON'S FEUD

Frank Richards  
(Howard Baker: £5.95)

This attractive volume contains seven Magnet stories from the Spring of 1926. This was a time which could be aptly regarded as the overture to the Golden Age of the Magnet.

For "starters" we have "The Mystery of the Head's Study", an amusing little frolic in which Bunter finds himself locked in Dr. Locke's room, and uses his ventriloquial powers with hilarious results.

The main course is provided by the 4-story Pedrillo of the Circus series. Here we have a type of "missing heir" plot in which Pedrillo, an acrobat in Zorro's circus, turns out to be the cousin of Hobson of the Shell. Though, basically, all these years later, it seems at first glance, to be on familiar lines, there is much originality in the way the yarn is handled, and it is pleasant to see Hobson and Hoskins, two well-drawn characters, well in the limelight for once. It provides excellent entertaining reading.

Finally we come to the sweet in this excellent meal. A couple of stories which give the volume its overall title of "Harry Wharton's Feud". It is too vague, as, during his long career, Wharton was engaged in several feuds in different outstanding series, and one might wonder which particular feud this one refers to.

The feud in this case is with the French master. Mossoo, from an easy-going little master, turns into a Tartar, and he and Harry Wharton fall foul of one another. Tales starring the Remove captain are always of great interest, and this one is no exception.

For the statistically-minded, these two tales about the French master comprised the serial "Poor Old Mossoo" which featured in the closing weeks of the Popular, to which our Danny referred recently in his Diary.

A superb and attractive meal to set before a king. When you finish it yourself, you will feel well satisfied with life and will be anxious to congratulate the chef - Frank Richards.

\* \* \* \* \*

## OUR CLASSIC SERIAL FROM EARLY IN THE CENTURY

### THE REFORMATION OF MARMADUKE

Blake had hit upon the truth. There was no doubt about that. The more Study No. 6 thought about it, the more certain they felt. Of late Figgins had been practising his singing with a disregard for everybody within range of his powerful bass, and Wynn had made his cornet audible to many sufferers in both houses.

New House juniors had been seen in all sorts of places, spouting from Shakespeare, or practising doubtful notes on various instruments. Now that Blake had hit upon the secret, he was surprised that he had not thought of it before.

"It's as clear as daylight," said Blake. "We've got to bag the programme, and then bag the concert. Tonight is

Monday. By Friday we've got to have the programme by heart, and everything ready. I'll see about the lecture-hall."

"How will you manage about the lecture-hall?"

"Ask Mr. Kidd to see to it with the doctor."

"Think he'll do it?"

"Yes, he's a good old sport and he'll do it like a bird," said Blake confidently; "and at the same time I'll make sure whether Figgy's booked the hall for Saturday night."

"How?"

"By asking for it for Saturday myself."

"Good!" chuckled Herries. "And

the sooner the quicker. "

And Blake was off to the housemaster's study a few minutes later. Mr. Kidd, the housemaster of the School House, was a genial man, and he liked Blake. He gave the junior a cheery nod.

"What can I do for you, Blake?"

"If you please, sir, I should like to ask you a favour," said Blake.

"Certainly."

"We're thinking of giving a concert, sir."

"Oh! I did not know you were musical, Blake."

"Oh, yes, sir," said Blake. "I play the mouth-organ --"

Mr. Kidd laughed.

"Ahem! And you are thinking of giving a mouth-organ recital?"

Blake coloured.

"No, sir. It's a big concert. Half the School House will be in it. We're going to do the thing in style, sir, and I thought --"

"Go on, Blake," said the Housemaster, with an amused smile. "If I can help you in any way, you can rely on me, my boy."

"Thank you, sir," said Blake, encouraged. "We thought you might ask the Head for us, sir, to let us have the lecture-hall to give the concert."

"Hum! When will you want it?"

"Is it wanted for Saturday night, sir?"

"Yes, I fancy it is," said Mr. Kidd, with a smile. "Mr. Ratcliff of the New House seems to have been asked a similar favour by the boys of his house."

Blake's heart bounded.

"The New House cads - I mean

kids - have asked for the hall for Saturday night?" he said breathlessly.

"Yes. The Head mentioned as much to me."

"Then can we have it on Friday night, sir?"

"I daresay you can, Blake," said Mr. Kidd. "You had better not tell me any of the details. If you are really thinking of giving a concert, I will ask the Head about it."

"Thank you so much, sir," said Blake gratefully. "Would you be kind enough to come to the show, sir? No charge for admission."

The Housemaster laughed heartily.

"I will certainly look in during the evening, Blake."

"Thank you, sir! And would you mind if I got your name on the bill? Under the distinguished patronage of Arthur Kidd, M.A. Oxon," said Blake eagerly.

"You have my full permission," said the Housemaster, laughing.

"And I can be sure about the lecture-hall, sir?"

"I think so, Blake. I will speak to the Head this evening, and as he has already granted it to the New House for Saturday evening, I am sure he can have no objection to your having it for Friday evening."

Blake thanked the Housemaster, and hurried away to tell his chums. They executed a war-dance round Study 6.

"It's proof positive!" said Digby. "We shall knock them silly by giving the same concert the previous evening and asking them to it. I can picture Figgy's face when he gets the invitation and a programme enclosed."

The four chums shrieked at the idea.

"But we haven't got hold of the programme yet," said Herries.

"That's so," agreed Blake; "but, you see, there must be some in Figgy's study, and all we've got to do is get hold of one."

"You're thinking of raiding the study?"

"Well, the programme won't come

to us all on its lonesome, will it?"

"I suppose not."

"And if the mountain won't come to Mahommet, Mahommet must buzz off to the giddy mountain," declared Blake. "I'm going to burgle the New House tonight."

"Take care Figgins & Co. are out of the way, that's all!"

(MORE OF THIS OLD, OLD  
TALE NEXT MONTH)

\* \* \* \* \*

### BRIEF HISTORY OF "THE POPULAR" (which ended exactly 50 years ago this month)

It was on Friday, 11th October, 1912, that "The Penny Popular" first graced the bookstalls. It appeared every Friday for a good many years, and in the early twenties the publication day was changed to Tuesdays.

The Penny Popular consisted of 32 pages and, for the first four years, contained three tales of, respectively, St. Jim's, Sexton Blake, and Jack, Sam, and Pete. One is safe in assuming that the three stories were of the most popular characters which the Amalgamated Press had at that time. It is significant that a serialisation of the first Greyfriars story ran for five weeks from No. 18, after which Greyfriars did not appear again for some four years.

Early covers were extremely distinctive, with a picture from each of the three stories in the issue. This continued till No. 71 when a full-page illustration replaced the 3-picture layout. Now Tom Merry and Sexton Blake were on the cover alternately, most of the pictures of both characters being done by Macdonald.

There was no Editor's Chat until No. 72 when a chat column appeared under the heading "Between Ourselves".

The first real change in policy came with No. 222, January 1917, when Sexton Blake was dropped and he was replaced by Greyfriars. The opening tale was "The Making of Harry Wharton" (the first Magnet story)

which had been serialised in the Penny Pop four years earlier. About this time, the number of pages (all green) was reduced from 32 to 24, and a little later to 20.

In April, Jack, Sam & Pete said good-bye for ever to the Popular. Their final tale was "Pete's Motor-Bike". They were replaced by what were advertised as "the early adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co.", and no doubt were accepted as such at the time. It was not till years later that I discovered that they were not early Rookwood tales at all, and it was only in recent times that I traced them as portions of Hamilton's old Cliveden series.

So the Penny Popular became the "all school story paper".

Christmas 1917 brought the only Double Number in the history of the paper. Then, in March 1918,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  years after its birth, the paper came to a close - a genuine victim of the paper shortage.

Less than a year later, on Friday, 24th January, 1919, the paper was back - probably the first to return. The name was still "The Penny Popular" though the price was now three-halfpence. The programme was the same - reprints of old stories, but with No. 17, the sub writers took over completely, with "entirely original stories" of the three schools. The Greyfriars set lasted the longest - two years. There was a long and boring series in which the chums toured the counties playing cricket, and this unlikely lot was followed by the introduction of Dennis Carr, who led the juniors, and even became captain, over a long period.

The St. Jim's sub tales soon ended, however, and the old Rookwood tales were resumed. With No. 84, new series, the paper became just "The Popular".

With No. 107, "Billy Bunter's Weekly", a four-page centre "supplement", started a long run, and, absurd though it was, it had many attractions.

With No. 161, new series, a prosperous phase started. The paper was increased to 28 pages, and the Cedar Creek tales started their complete run. With No. 271, the covers were printed in blue instead of black ink, and for a year or two we had what was the most attractive period in the paper's history.

In the summer of 1926, another change was made, with the covers in red, white and blue. Sexton Blake came back for a time, after a lapse

---

of twelve years. Tinker did not feature in these tales.

That remarkable character "The Rio Kid" came on the scene with No. 469, early in 1928, one of the few newly-written attractions of the Popular's twenty year run. Excellent stories which must have converted many readers to "westerns".

Later that year, the old St. Frank's tales came on the scene and stayed for just short of twelve months. Ferrers Locke detective stories featured from time to time in the autumn years of the paper.

By April 1930 the regular reader sensed that all was no longer well with the paper. There was a lack of consistency in the story programmes, and even the illustrations lacked quality. When the Rio Kid departed, after a continuous run of over two years, it was the first nail in the coffin. The Kid came back, some three months later, for a further twelve weeks, and then left for good.

Comic strips and facetious editorials indicated the path the paper was going. The paper was dead, though, for a few weeks, it would not lie down, carrying on with a hotch-potch of short stories.

The most amazing thing was the rapid deterioration. In just a few months it changed from a popular paper to a feeble also-ran. In its final months it was completely enfeebled, and it can have been no surprise to anyone when it ended in February 1931.

It is possible that it came under indifferent new editorship, but it is pretty clear that the killer was really the Schoolboys' Own Library which was lapping up old Hamilton material indiscriminately, without much rhyme or reason.

There was a total of 914 issues from 1912 till 1931.

\* \* \* \* \*

SALE: Old Girls'/Boys' and Comic Annuals; O/P Baker volumes; original Magnets; also 1950's magazines (detective, classics, etc.). For full list, large s.a.e.

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WANTED: Pre-1968 Beano, Dandy, Topper, Beezer Annuals. Oor Wullie, Broons Annuals. Pre-1966 Thriller Picture Library. Original drawings by Chapman, Macdonald.

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BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 82. LOOKING BACK (conclusion)

Of cartoons, we played many hundreds. In early days we had a few Disneys - Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, etc. - released in those days by Radio Films (who also sent us the Micky McGuire comedies. He became Micky Rooney later on.) But the greatest favourite of all was the Tom & Jerry series. As soon as their title came up on the screen there was a great roar of joy from the audiences. We played scores of them. Second favourite was "Tweetie Pie" from Warner's. "Bugs Bunny" (Warner's) was never so popular, nor was Barney Bear (M.G.M.). But the cartoons were generally popular, and we never missed having at least one, and frequently more, in every show.

So great was our demand for cartoons, from M.G.M. and Warner, that we played them all dead on release, and, I suspect, on occasion, ahead of release. To fill up, we occasionally had to fall back on some cartoons from Columbia. A few Popeye cartoons came from Paramount in the early thirties.

And, just to wind up, the three films which linger most joyously in my memory.

They were "San Francisco", "Captains Courageous", and "Mutiny on the Bounty". All were of the late thirties. They reissued them after the war and we played them again. Other films which we gave return visits to were "Good-bye, Mr. Chips", "Barretts of Wimpole St.", "City for Conquest" and "Johnnie Eager". And probably a few others.

Memories crowd back. The Jeanette Macdonald films, and especially "Maytime"; the George Arliss films; "The Wizard of Oz"; Joan Crawford in lots; Bette Davis in any amount; heart-stealers like "Ring Up the Curtain" with adorable Alice Brady, and "Our Vines Have Tender Grapes" with Edward G. Robinson; the delightful Marion Davies; Barbara Stanwyck; Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly, Erroll Flynn, the Marx Brothers, Margaret O'Brien. One must stop somewhere.

I have the pleasure of knowing that for 25 years I handled scores of the finest films ever made. I suppose that almost every great star of those years performed on our screen over the years, and when our curtains closed for the last time, the day of the great star was over.

\* \* \* \* \*

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# News of The Old Boys' Book Clubs

## MIDLAND

The December meeting was a Christmas party with a festive spirit much in evidence. The attendance was 19 people and one dog. Jack Corbett's dog, Smokey, insisted on signing the attendance book with his paw.

Two new members, Sylvia Haynes and John Look were allowed to address the meeting, and Jack Corbett, Founder of the Club, and guest of honour, also spoke. Jack Corbett reminded us of how he found an old Magnet used as packing material at his business. He started to advertise in the late forties, and quickly gathered a huge collection. To this do we owe the inception of the Midland Club, and Jack was delighted that the club is still thriving all these years later.

The Anniversary Number on show was "Bunter, the Bully", a Magnet dated 16th December, 1933, and 47 years old to the day.

A Lucky Dip of Christmas gifts was organised by Peter Masters. Some members were lucky in picking up rare items. Harry Evans, now over 80 years old, was the founder of the feast, and the sum of £20 was received from our President who is a postal member.

The Midland Club extends seasonal greetings to O.B.B.C. enthusiasts everywhere.

JACK BELLFIELD (Correspondent)

## LONDON

An enjoyable time was had by all present at the January Walthamstow meeting. Bill Lofts continued his discourse on the answers that he obtained from his advertisement that he placed in the press asking for letters from those who wrote to the Companion Papers. On this occasion it was replies from some of the Irish readers. Typical Irish humour was expressed and which evoked much laughter from the company present. Reverting to the South African letters, one of the most interesting was the one from the couple who had read the famous Water Lily series of the Magnet and on a visit to England hired a cabin cruiser and made the same cruise up the River Thames.

Bob Blythe, back in better health, read extracts from the January issue 1963 of the newsletter which dealt with the visit of Edwy Searles Brooks to the Christmas 1964 meeting. He then followed this reading with another one about Tracket Grimm, the story being entitled "The Man With the Green Nose".

Josie Packman conducted a quiz on the Sexton Blake features that appeared in the 1980 Collectors' Digest Annual. Bill Lofts had the best memory.

Bill Bradford exhibited a pack of Sexton Blake playing cards.

The A.G.M. will take place at 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, on Sunday, 8th February. The lunch party will take place at the Rembrandt on Sunday, 12th April.

Votes of thanks to the three tea ladies concluded a very jolly meeting.

BEN WHITER

#### CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at the home of Vic Hearn on Sunday, 4th January. Arrangements for the meeting to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Club in May were further discussed.

Bill Lofts recalled his various researches, as illustrated by dedications and inscriptions in various books for which he had supplied material. He thought that his detective instincts had first been aroused as a schoolboy of ten when a master at his school used to read Sherlock Holmes tales to his class on Friday afternoons. He recalled, after listening to "The Blue Carbuncle" asking the Master where Sherlock Holmes lived. Being told "221 B Baker Street", the ten year old Bill set out from school and went to Baker Street, to try to find 221 B. After one or two enquiries which met with short answers he was asked by a kindly policeman what he was doing at that time of the evening in such a fog. Being told by Bill that he was looking for 221 B, Bill was told by the kindly policeman that Mr. Sherlock Holmes was away on a case; Bill made his way home, looking carefully at every cab he passed, this was still an era of horse-drawn cabs, in the hope of spotting Holmes returning. He found his observation useful in the war when attached to the Intelligence Corps. Bill found a copy of S.B.L. Library 426, "Riders of the Sand" by Pierre Quiroule. After the war he got in touch

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with Quiroule, who gave him a signed copy of the book. Queries in early Collectors' Digests had set Bill off on finding out the answers; in many ways a matter of asking the right questions of the right people. He spoke of his researches at the Amalgamated Press. Bill kept his audience interested with an hour long talk. Mike Rouse produced a selection of the latest Christmas Comics. Bill Thurbon gave the answers to the Christmas Quiz. After enjoying Mrs. Hearn's excellent tea Vic entertained and puzzled the club with a musical quiz on the 1930's. Members enjoyed this item very much, especially the rhythm of the 'thirties tunes. The meeting closed with a warm vote of thanks to Vic and Mrs. Hearn for their hospitality.

\* \* \* \* \*

## The Postman Called

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

JIM COOK (Auckland): With reference to Ernest Holman's article in the Nelson Lee Column in the November C.D., in which he states the late Ross Story wrote one St. Frank's story ... actually she wrote two - both of which I possess. They were "The Kidnapped Schoolboy" and "The New Boy" ... the latter inscribed ... "for Jim Cook who also loved St. Frank's".

I did try to get these accepted for publication, but after a first rejection ceased to submit to other publishers. Wholesome literature isn't wanted these days.

GORDON HUDSON (Chester-le-Street): Devotees of Waldo the Wonderman will probably be interested to learn that he is still going strong. When I was looking through the new Tornado Annual I discovered that he is in a Victor Drago story, "Fun at the Fair". This particular story is in picture strip form, although there is another Drago story in words. I find this a bit of a coincidence because I have just read the first Waldo story (borrowed from Mrs. Packman) which was also set in a fairground. No doubt the author, however, is well aware of the fact.

Fr. F. HERTZBERG (Wirral): I have been re-reading my beautiful copy of the Foulis edition of 'Ian Hay's' Lighter Side of School Life (1915), and noting the Greyfriars connections. There is the quotation - anent the

Head - 'a beast, but a just beast'; the Head also shares Quelch's dislike of parents and telephones. The correspondence reproduced includes a letter from a Bunterish parent in the City (to 'Grandwich School'); there is one from a brother at Oakshott; the apologia of the recipient of the poor report includes references to mistakes therein by the master, and the lack of justice he receives - all reminiscent also of the Bunter tribe; as is the loving mother, who also partakes of Coker's Aunt J.; there is additionally an aunt at The Laburnums, Surbiton, who sends a present which, described as 'something of greater value than usual' turns out to be on the lines of that which WGB received in his Christmas Carol (1935). The splendid Baumer pastel illustrations portray 'The Headmaster of Fiction' very like unto Prout, but with Bunter trousers; 'The Intellectual' is close to Alonzo Todd; 'French Master of Fiction' is indeed a Mossoo, and that 'Of Fact' resembles Lascelles. Although there is a chapter on school stories, these are in fact books rather than magazines and there is no reference to Greyfriars. If there is an influence, which way was it - did FR imbibe or vice versa? (Incidentally, the Just Beast rises again in the first Red Circle story ever, contained in Hotspur's first issue in 1933.)

LESLIE HOLLAND (Royton): The 1980 C.D. Annual is another outstanding success. All the articles are well up to standard. If I had to confess to a favourite, it would be Cliff Smith's "Personal Thoughts and Memories", mainly because his experiences were so similar to my own - down to being a cricket lover and a supporter of Lancashire. Many of his favourite Magnet series are also mine, including the Stacey series, the best of all "doubles" stories.

ALAN STEWART (Burnham-on-Crouch): Many thanks for another super year of the Digest, and don't feel concerned at having to increase the price. I'm sure we all appreciate how difficult it must be with the never ending rising costs.

Remember when the C.D. was 1/6d. (in real money), postage was 2d, which made the C.D. nine times the price of the stamp. Now, with the latest increase in postage to 14p, this means the Digest is near enough only twice the cost of the postage. That's something to mull over when you are worrying about a 2p increase - just keep our great little paper

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running and we will all be happy.

HARRY MARRIOTT (Northampton): I thought the Annual outstanding, and the most interesting I have read. Being a dog lover and owning a Cocker Spaniel named Titus Oates, I found "Mr. Buddle's Adopted" particularly enjoyable. "Some Thought on the Adventure Story" by W. T. Thurbon turned out to be very enlightening, and I now know who Dr. Morrison and Mr. Hart were. Jack Overhill gives a good insight to the good old days. The Annual is well balanced and covers a very wide range of reading.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Dozens of letters, containing heart-warming comments on the 1980 Annual, have been received, and we may be able to quote from some of them next month. Very sincere thanks to all those who have written. In our December issue we published, anonymously because it lacked the writer's name, a charming article entitled "The Christmas Vac". We can now disclose that the article was written by Mrs. Irene Radford. We hope, as time goes on, to have some more from Mrs. Radford's talented pen. Mrs. Radford says: "Thank you for a lovely Christmassy C.D. It gets better all the time, and it is worth every penny.")

\* \* \* \* \*

### ON THE ARTISTS

by A. J. Standen

Just a few thoughts on some of the artists who used to illustrate our favourite papers of days gone by.

To me, the "Marvel" always meant H. M. Lewis, although he only drew Jack, Sam & Pete for the few final years, and at that time, about 1919, I had never heard of J. Abney Cummings, who had drawn them for many years previously.

The artist for the "Magnet" was C. H. Chapman, with Macdonald for the "Gem", again first impressions being strongest, although we all know that Leonard Shields and Warwick Reynolds were much the better. The third man to illustrate Rookwood in the B.F. was J. W. Wakefield, and because his style was associated in my mind with "Butterfly" and "Merry & Bright" he did not seem to me, even at that time, to be suitable for Jimmy Silver & Co.

The 1000th number of "Union Jack" printed photos of "Val", H. M. Lewis and Arthur Jones, as being the leading artists in the paper, although there were of course others.

Being brought up on these, as it were, and not having even heard of Eric R. Parker at that time, he seemed almost an interloper and indeed I never cared for his "poster like" coloured covers, especially of the S.B. Library. His best work, in my opinion, was in black and white in the last years of U.J. and early D.W.

On the other hand, I accepted J. H. Valda almost at once, as I was already familiar with his work in my favourite "Champion".

\* \* \* \* \*

FOR SALE: "Meet Mr. Mulliner" (1st edn.); Chums 1935/36; Young England, vols. LIII and XLII (1921). £5 each plus postage. S.a.e. first, please.

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NORTHERN O.B.B.C.

Saturday, 13th December, 1980

A bleak winter's evening, but a cosy gathering of us at our accustomed venue where once again we were able to borrow our books, to chat and bring ourselves up-to-date with the latest Hobby news.

A delightful feature of our meetings is the quoting from letters received from members far away. There had been many expressions of sympathy on the death of Geoffrey Wilde both to the Club and to Geoffrey's widow, Marion.

We were sorry to hear of our Christmas Card artist Alf Hanson's bad accident - a chip pan had caught fire in his kitchen - but it seemed his burns were less severe than at first supposed. We send him, through this magazine, our good wishes for his speedy recovery.

Mollie produced an interesting quiz, in the form of a letter addressed to 'Dear Angela ...'. There were numerous gaps in the text

and the required words were names, mainly of the old periodicals, and some of Hobby characters. And within the typed text were hidden yet more names!

Out of a possible score of 23 Bill Williamson came first with 12 and Keith Atkinson second with 6½.

Northern Club members, regrettably, did not excel themselves on this occasion!

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A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE HAMILTON STORY from H. Heath

I have just read the Rogue Rackstraw kidnapping series from the 1922 Gem. It is one of the best Gem series I have ever read, and there is certainly a strong element of mystery running through it.

However, for true mystery, I consider that Hamilton's best did not feature St. Jim's, Greyfriars, or Rookwood. That honour goes to his "Sussex Man" series which involved Len Lee at Oakshott School, which ran in the Modern Boy, later reprinted in the S.O.L.

There were four good suspects as to the identity of the "Sussex Man" - Mr. Silverson, Mr. Surtees, and Mr. Bullivant - all masters at Oakshott - and a fourth whose identity was not obvious for some time.

As regards the "Rogue Rackstraw" series, I rate this extremely high, and, for mystery alone, it beats anything on similar lines; and that certainly includes my great favourite, the "Courtfield Cracksman" series.

\* \* \* \* \*

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