

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

Volume 35

Number 412

APRIL 1981

POPULAR

papers are able to obtain some of the best stories on the market; that is why "The Favorite Game" is in full of good stuff. In 10 hours is suitable reading for all, from clever detective cases like "Victor Grand," to humorous yarns, such as "Popular

PROVERBS."



The Firefly 1/2

No. 61

PRICE ONE HALFPENNY

MARCH 27, 1915

LAZY LEONARD AND LIVELY LAURENCE, THE LADS OF THE VILLAGE.



1 "Laurence looks 'n' good Leonard. 'That's a steady job on the wheel! It was as though there's going to be a horrible accident!" "Don't worry about their troubles!" called Laurence. "I wish what's coming our way! We may as well run them as far business driving! Clutch hard!" So Leonard heavily stepped the steering wheel at the same time, while Laurence threw himself upon the rolling lid of each and giggled with him.



2 "Good one! Let me look!" called out the boys. "Now for the bright idea!" "What—already?" gasped Laurence in surprise. "We don't actually need it!" "But we may as well get on the way as we've got to walk a little way!" "I know what!" called Leonard. "But we may as well get on the way as we've got to walk a little way!" "I know what!" called Leonard. "But we may as well get on the way as we've got to walk a little way!"



3 And so they proceeded they entered the painted hall of over the street and said, "Hello! Hello! we've been friends!" called Leonard, showing the bundle through the hole in the door. "They're also taking their walk!" called Laurence, as a little boy sitting on the street floor. "The whole is walking, old man!" "Yes, the servants were getting really surprised! And wasn't they pleased!"



4 "Oh, yes, 'I hope!" they had to pull up and repeat to the boys. "The difficulty of some of them had a pump with him!" called Leonard, stopping himself. "The whole of them in the village, all he had to do was to get the painted servants. For the ladies to be so surprised!"



5 "Yes, yes, yes!" they had to pull up and repeat to the boys. "The difficulty of some of them had a pump with him!" called Leonard, stopping himself. "The whole of them in the village, all he had to do was to get the painted servants. For the ladies to be so surprised!"



6 "Then the last message from the boys and do a little while later, the boys. As I said, the boys had a pump with him!" called Leonard, stopping himself. "The whole of them in the village, all he had to do was to get the painted servants. For the ladies to be so surprised!"

30p

Far too many duplicates and "fair condition" copies in stock. These cover most of the Boys' papers. Can quote really "knockover prices" for copies of my selection in orders of 50's and 100's. Particularly large stocks of Magnets, Gems, U.J's, Lees, Young Britain's, Marvels, Modern Boys, Detective Weekly, Thrillers, Populars and others.

Some numbers seem to be in larger quantities than others, these are the ones I wish to reduce.

Complete range of Howard Baker Facsimiles Book Club Specials available. Even have some second-hand ones in fine condition.

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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W. H. GANDER

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A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER

A FEAST OF READING

A friend of mine over very many years I always called "Agatha Challis", shortened, inevitably, to "Aggie". Now, from whence did the name "Agatha Challis" come?

It was, in fact, a character in a serial entitled "Friendless" in a comic paper which I enjoyed as a small boy. It appeared in "Butterfly & Firefly", in the year or two after those two lovely old comic papers were amalgamated in the First World War. My sister read the instalment to the entire family each week when I carried the paper home.

Of course, one associates those heart-warming, large-sheeted

comic papers with such characters as Dreamy Daniel, Portland Bill (later more respectable as Butterfly Bill); Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy; Constable Cuddlecook; Homeless Hector; T. E. Dunville, Little Tich; Laurel & Hardy; Tom, the Ticket of Leave Man (later, more respectable as Tom, the Merry Menagerie Man); Pinky & Patsy of Patacake Palace; Marzipan, the Magician; Waddles, the Waiter; Beatrix Buttercup; K. N. Pepper, the King of the K'Nuts; and loads more. How the very names touch the heart-strings.

But, though those names live far down the tumbling years, my memory of "Agatha Challis" reminds us of the wealth of reading material there was in those pink, or green, or white productions.

One of the most famous of comic serials was, of course, "The School Bell". I fancy it was the late Len Packman who did a fine article on that outstanding serial for the C.D. Annual long ago.

But, apart from the serials, there were much-loved characters in long-running series. Bonnie Bluebell, who had magic gloves, didn't she? Jolly Jack Johnson, who was a boy mesmerist, and who, I feel sure, featured in one of my favourites "Merry & Bright" (lovely name for a comic); Cheerful Charlie Brown, who, I think, was a ventriloquist in the Butterfly; Val Fox, who had a parrot, I seem to recall, and who was a detective who charmed the years in Puck; and a lady I have mentioned from time to time, "The Woman With the Black Heart" (she had a heart tattooed on her forehead), in that less orthodox but very memorable "Fun & Fiction". What marvellous reading-matter they provided, week after week, year after year. And, of course, there were the Orfis Boys, Horatio Pimple and Philpott Bottles.

I think we must reprint just one of those old tales over a month or two. Who would you like? Charlie Brown? Val Fox? Jack Johnson? Bluebell? The Woman with the Black Heart? Drop me a line and let me know. I'll reprint the one most demanded by readers.

It occurs to me that I was not being flattering in calling my friend "Agatha Challis", for Agatha was what was called, in those days, an adventuress.

MAGIC NAMES

In his excellent article we publish this month, Mr. Bill Lofts

refers to the love felt for the old "Amalgamated Press". Does any name in the present world of publishing for Youth conjure up the same joy that the A.P. conjured up for us?

So many of the grand old names have disappeared. We had soft spots in our sentimental hearts for the Great Eastern, the Great Western, the L.M.S., and even for the South Eastern & Chatham. Who today has a soft spot for British Rail?

Does "London Transport" give us the same sense of home as the bus with GENERAL or THOMAS TILLING on the side, or the tram with L.C.C. in large letters (plus the name of the manager, Aubrey Llewellyn Coventry Fell)?

Would you feel for the modern Civic Hall the same glow as when you saw EMPIRE or HIPPODROME picked out in lights? And is an evening in Studio Four or Screen Three as entrancing as one in the Kinema, the Scala, the Plaza, Golden Domes, or lots of others?

If you are a Skinner or a Mellish you may think sometimes of Wild Woodbines, Craven A, Black Cat, or even the common or garden Gold Flake at twenty for a bob. And, as you queue at the till in the elaborate supermarket, do you ever remember the Maypole or the Home & Colonial?

Not so long ago, in the pleasant TV series "It's a Knockout", Aldershot was one of the competing teams. Everybody in the English-speaking world has heard of Aldershot - but the team appeared in the programme as Rushmoor, a name which doesn't mean much even to those living in the immediate district. And Middlesex, who won a cricket county championship under the good old name, doesn't even exist, due to the activities of bureaucrats.

I suppose it makes sense to those now growing up. It doesn't make sense to me.

PROGRESS!

Have you come across any of those fearfully heavy doors to shops or public libraries and the like? Old dears (and plenty younger dears, too), with a bag of shopping in one hand, find the other hand inadequate to open them. The door that needs a tractor to pull it out of your way.

Have you come across the glass windows or doors which are

invisible till you smash your nose on one as you go forward? I saw a shop in Reading recently which bore the warning "Go carefully. This glass is closer than you think!"

Have you come on the big book and stationery shops where it seems they sell everything in that line, but you can't find anyone to tell you whether they have a copy of "Enquire Within" in stock?

In Farnborough one Saturday I asked a middle-aged gentleman whether there was a branch of W.H. Smith in the town.

"No, we haven't a W.H. Smith in Farnborough," he told me. He added: "We've got a prison, though!" When I looked surprised, he went on: "This is IT!"

IT was the new, covered-in, shopping centre.

I hear that a 25p postal-order now costs an extra 20p for the privilege of buying it. That is, nine bob for a five bob postal-order. If that's not legalised robbery, I don't know what is. That's progress.

And, still progressive, it now costs more in postage to send this magazine to some parts of the world by air mail than the price of C.D. itself. That's progress.

When Britain led the world in the manufacture of motor-bikes, there was a law as to how much noise they could legally make. Something to do with the number of decibels we could stand assaulting our ear-drums. Now that the Japanese have taken over, the machines make a colossal din, unheard of in our younger days - and authority turns a deaf ear. That's progress!

If you have come across any similar examples of progress in the beautiful eighties, drop us a line and tell us. Maybe I'll make a list of them, and add some more of my own.

CHILDHOOD LASTED LONGER!

The Daily Mail columnist, Lynda Lee-Potter, recently wrote in a thought-provoking article:

"We've lost so much that was sensible, such a lot that was useful and too much that was pleasurable"

"Oh, for the return of Girls Crystal, in which nubile 14-year olds yearned only to play the game, keep a stiff upper lip, not let down the side, and make the second eleven on Saturday afternoon, not the

butcher's boy in the evening. Angela Brazil and Dorita Fairlie Bruce were our gods, childhood lasted longer, and anybody under 17 who wore scent was sappy."

Yes, indeed - childhood lasted longer. Thank goodness.

TAILPIECE

I mentioned last month that Gordon is an uncommon name these days, and tried to bring to mind one among our readers, since dear Gordon Swan left us. Our reader, Mr. Harrison, of Bristol, is a Gordon.

I remember, as a youngster, walking along a long road in Eltham, and seeing a brass plate on a door - Dr. Gordon Latimer. I thought - "What a lovely name that would be for a Headmaster in a school story!"

Many of us, as children, thought we could write school stories like Frank Richards. I went straight home and wrote a school story, with a Dr. Gordon Latimer as the Headmaster. The story, of course, was awful. I wonder whether there are any descendants of Dr. Latimer in Eltham today.

THE EDITOR.

* * * * *

SALE: C.D. 41 - 118, CJL 1951, SPC 1961/5, 1973: offers. WANTED: C.D. 119 - 350, CDA 1955, 1960/1, anything relating to Sherlock Holmes, please state prices required.

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* * * * *

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WANTED: Thriller Picture Libraries, Greyfriars Holiday Annuals (originals), 1941, 1920. Magnets, red series, 1 to 396; blue and white series, 397 to 769. Monsters, Elsie Oxenham books, Crompton's "William The Lawless".

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVE., ABERDEEN. Tel. 0224 491716

DANNY'S DIARY

APRIL 1931

It is now possible to send letters and all sorts of mail to Australia by air. AIR MAIL commenced on 4th April, when the plane carrying letters for Australia left Croydon Airport for the first time. It will make a great difference to the time a letter takes to get there. By air will take twenty days, as against the thirty-four days which it takes a letter or a parcel to go by sea. The air mail stamp is a few coppers more, but it's worth it.

The Modern Boy is not all that hot at present, though it has some interesting pictures and articles. The stories now are a series about big game hunters in Africa by F. A. M. Webster; a western series about a Boy Sheriff by John Hunter; and the air serial "The Amir's Ruby" by Percy F. Westerman.

In the Boys' Friend 4d Library there is another Rio Kid story. No. 283 is "The Rio Kid's Revenge" in which a black outlaw, known as Black George, is responsible for many holdups and robberies. At the end, the Kid exposes "Black George" as a rancher, Poindexter. This story was a series in the dear old Popular not so long ago.

The King of Spain, King Alfonso, has been in London on an official visit, and he received a warm welcome from the London crowds. My brother Doug keeps singing the song which goes:

"Oh, the ladies do go on so,
In the land of King Alfonso."

The London Coliseum, that huge variety theatre near Trafalgar Square, has ceased presenting Variety, and is now staging a very big musical production entitled "White Horse Inn". It stars Clifford Mollison and Rita Page. I would like to see it.

Another new play in London, at one of the smaller theatres, is "Black Coffee", by the lady thriller writer, Agatha Christie. F. L. Sullivan stars in it. There are now nearly fifty theatres in London.

The Nelson Lee Library started the month with "The Peril of the Moor", which tells of an April 1st joke which went wrong at Edgemore Castle, and continues the story of Viscount Skeets Bellton. The second

yarn of the month is "St. Frank's by the Briny", a story of the Easter Holidays.

Then the double-length tales of St. Frank's started, and Edwy Searles Brooks is back with his own column called "Between Ourselves". The first long tale, in a new travel series, is "By Submarine to the Pole". Lord Dorrimore is determined to be the first to reach the North Pole by submarine. The submarine doesn't reach the Pole, as the chums find themselves in Northestria in the Polar Regions. And in Northestria everything is back in the Middle Ages. The St. Frank's boys have been there before in an earlier series.

Mr. Brooks is asking his readers to send him their photographs which he will publish on his chat page, so I'm going to send him mine. When I told Doug he laughed fit to bust.

At the pictures this month we have seen Ruth Chatterton in "Sarah & Son" (I like Ruth Chatterton's films very much); Walter Pidgeon in "Lady of the Rose"; Warner Baxter and Myrna Loy in "Renegades"; Leslie Fuller in a rather awful British film "Kiss Me, Sergeant"; George O'Brien in "Last of the Douanes"; Lupino Lane in "The Yellow Mask" which is a musical thriller written by Edgar Wallace; Marion Davies in "The Gay Nineties"; Conrad Nagel and Charles Bickford in "Dynamite", a long two-hour film and very exciting; Richard Barthelmess in "The Dawn Patrol" which I saw before at the Tivoli in the Strand in London (it is a magnificent picture); and Ann Harding and Mary Astor in "Holiday". In that programme there was a Laurel and Hardy gorgeous comedy "Aerial Antics".

Frederic March was in "Sarah & Son" with Ruth Chatterton, and I like him very much, too.

Rum bag of tricks in the Gem. In "Who Sacked Selby?" it is Cardew who put a sack over Mr. Selby. Cardew is up before the Head, but Tompkins comes forward and tells lies, saying he saw somebody else, whom he didn't recognize, doing the sacking. But Cardew had done a brave deed on the ramparts of the Abbey, so everybody said Tompkins did right in telling lies to save him. A Rookwood story is "Fed-Up With Rookwood" with more about Monty Manders.

Next week, "Down on Grundy's Farm", with Grundy the owner of a farm and working on the land. "Expelled - By Request" is the Rookwood

tale, with Monty Manders departing.

Then "Fatty Wyn's Legacy", which is an old haunted mansion named Marlow Grange. "Chums Divided" is the Rookwood story, in which Jimmy Silver leaves an unfinished letter with the words "I wouldn't want Lovell --" (in connection with an outing). And Lovell is offended. Actually James had written "I wouldn't want Lovell to be left behind."

Final of the month is the start of a series, it seems. In "Linton is Revolt", Mr. Linton is sacked for stealing the school funds. Wow! The Rookwood tale is "Tubby Muffin's Windfall" in which Muffin finds a brass lizard which he sells for sixpence. This one also goes on in a series.

"Autumn Crocus" is another new play which has opened in London, at the Lyric Theatre. It is by C. L. Anthony, who is a woman. It is her first play, and they say she has a big future to look forward to.

William Herbert Wallace has been tried for the murder of his wife, Julia. He was found guilty and sentenced. There is to be an appeal.

Two wonderful stories in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. "The Nabob's Peril" about the Greyfriars chums in India, and "Jimmy Silber & Co. Out West", about the Rookwood chums out on the Windy River Ranch in Canada. The ranch belongs to Silver's uncle, Mr. Hudson Smedley. Very different from the lukewarm new Rookwood tales in the Gem now.

Another marvellous month in the Magnet. All the stories cover a holiday at Wharton Lodge over Easter. The first two tales are "The Man from the States" and "The Mystery of the Mill". They start at Greyfriars where we meet a rascally share-pusher named Poindexter, who has swindled Mr. Prout. He is being hunted by a man he has defrauded, named Wilmot. The whole thing comes to a head in the old mill at Wimford, where Poindexter is hiding.

Next, "Coker's Holiday Capture". The Famous Five are being bullied by Coker who is on holiday near Wharton Lodge. Help comes from an older boy named Dick Lancaster, and he is taken home to meet Wharton's uncle at the Lodge. But Lancaster is really a cracksman nicknamed "The Wizard" and he is in league with the Weasel. Wharton Lodge is burgled, and Coker believes that the criminal is Lancaster,

who is staying at "The Bunch of Grapes" in Wimford. Final of the month is "Coker's Desperate Venture" in which Coker is still trying to prove that Lancaster is a criminal. However, Lancaster saves Coker from drowning, and, after that Lancaster is a "splendid fellow" so far as Coker is concerned. And at the end, Lancaster turns up as a new senior in the Sixth Form at Greyfriars.

The series about Lancaster continues next month. It's grand.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The famous India series delighted Magnet readers for eleven weeks in the summer of 1926. Inexplicably, the first four stories of the series were omitted in the S. O. L., where the series was presented over two months. The first one, in April 1931, "The Nabob's Peril" comprised three tales originally entitled "On Perilous Seas", Harry Wharton & Co. in India, and "Bound for Bhanipur".

In 1923, the Fistical Four of Rookwood spent the best part of the year in Canada, and it is possible that it may have been intended to be a permanent setting for the chums. The entire story was covered in four S. O. L's, the first being No. 146, "Jimmy Silver & Co. Out West" which included the opening six stories of the long series from the Boys' Friend. "The Rio Kid's Revenge" was reprinted a second time in the B.F.L., under the same title, a few years later.)

* * * * *

WANTED: "BOY'S CINEMA". Any issues (approx. in the 20's) with chapters of Warner Bros. first serial (1921) "THE LOST CITY". Good condition. Please send prices first. Fifteen Chapters. Will take singles.

HOWE KEYSTONE CINEMA, BOX 2, P.O. ALBERTON

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* * * * *

Howard Baker facsimiles for sale. Gem, Vols. 2 and 7; Magnet, Vols. 40 and 57; all excellent condition, £3.25 each. Greyfriars Book Club, Vol. 10 - the first ten "Bullseye", absolutely MINT in slip case, £7.75. Golden Fun Magazine devoted to Comics Nos. 1 to 10 (all bar current issue). Mint condition. COMPLETE RUN, £3. All post extra.

WANTED: G. B. C. Vol. 15 and 18. Also story by DESMOND COKE - "The Bending of a Twig". Please ring to reserve.

(Evenings) 01 979 4141

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WANTED: School Friend, Schoolgirl, Girls' Crystal, Schoolgirls' Own, Schoolgirls' Own Library, and other girls' papers (not comics) and annuals.

A. T. LINES, 14 WALTON DRIVE, KEYWORTH, NOTTS.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I am very pleased with the response to my plea for articles and I thank you all very much. I have enough for the next four months, but that does not mean anyone can sit back and forget about writing something. Ha Ha. I just hope you will enjoy this month's Blakiana.

THREE NEAR ESCAPES FOR SEXTON BLAKE

by Ray Hopkins

The unpleasant Mrs. Casement reports the theft of her diamonds from her Hotel Olympa suite. In response to her ungracious request, Sexton Blake has three near escapes. He slides rapidly down a hastily improvised rope of knotted bed-sheets. He reaches and retains a foothold on a window sill beneath just as the sheets, cut from above, topple past him and fall to the ground far below.

From a narrow verandah above the street, Blake watches his quarry through a chink in the curtain. A passing motor-bike backfires loudly and the man inside the room jerks his head toward the parted curtain. He sees Blake's watching eye and fires. Later, Sexton Blake regains consciousness, after receiving a blow on the back of his head, to find himself tied to a grand piano leg. Both his wrists and ankles are tightly secured. His sense of smell tells him that the carpet is soaked in paraffin. An inch-long piece of candle burns in the centre of an oil-soaked handkerchief.

Blake discovers the address of the thief is an accommodation address and the crook never calls for his mail until the proprietress informs him. So how does he know when to make a pickup? Ten pounds loosens her tongue. She releases one of a number of pigeons he has left for the purpose! The detective follows the pigeon in a plane. But the missing diamonds are fakes, Mrs. Casement having hidden the real ones in order to obtain a windfall from her insurance company. Ironically, her real diamonds really are stolen from her solicitor's safe where she had hidden them.

Finally, some puzzling aspects of the case are cleared up when Sexton Blake confronts the crook. He had had the right man but had been

looking for the wrong name. F. C. Alderton, an Australian, was due to come in to a fortune on his 30th birthday. His brain had been affected by a car smash and his valet had taken over the role of the master, subjugating the Australian. Blake is instrumental in getting Alderton's memory back in working order. The final denouement is the reason for Gilbert Chester's story being entitled, "Stolen Identity". All the facts and all the excitement recounted above can be found in UNION JACK 1527, 21 January, 1933.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF CONVICT 1843

by William Lister

"I shall be released from here on the 23rd of March". Convict 1843 repeated this prophecy on several occasions. Warders, along with the prison Governor, were content to let him ramble, they knew better.

On the 23rd of March after sixteen years of serving a life sentence the Home Secretary released Convict 1843. On that very day Paul Cynos stood at the door of his cell his bag packed even before the Warder came to tell him. How did Paul Cynos know that the Home Secretary intended to free him from his life sentence before the Governor of the Prison himself knew?

"The Seven Sons of Cynos", Union Jack No. 1289, 30 June, 1928, reveals the answer to these questions, sufficient for our purpose is the fact that this is our introduction to the amazing Convict 1843.

Now when I saw the Life and Death of Convict No. 1843, I don't propose to give you the date of his birth or any such mundane details. The fact is I don't think I can, the narrator of this and the following six tales covers at the most his entrance on the stage (already related) and later records his death. For the most part, readers of fiction will know that there is no such thing as the date of birth of their favourite character. Not even the Mastermind TV programme could come up with answers to these questions. What was the date of birth of Sexton Blake, Dr. Fu Manchu - Billy Bunter - Nelson Lee or Sherlock Holmes? If you want early information you have to ferret. This Paul Cynos, Robert Murray's title "The Seven Sons of Paul Cynos" pre-supposes that this chappie has had a little family life, or more than a little. The fact that he and his wife reared these seven little boys was no mean feat. Picture if you can our Paul coming home from work or making his way to the football match

with his little brood behind him, a right family man was Paul when -
wham! Falsely accused - thrust into prison for sixteen years, no longer
Paul Cynos, but Convict 1843 until that day already mentioned when he
stepped out of those prison doors. Back to his home no longer interested
in anything but in "Revenge". It is this revenge that brings him into
conflict with Sexton Blake (along with his seven sons), of which I leave
the telling to Robert Murray in seven complete Union Jack tales, bridging
from June 1928 to November 1929, embracing "The Seven Sons of Cynos",
U.J. 1289, "A Million in Gold", U.J. 1927, "The Mystery of the Black
Van", U.J. 1312, "Are you Paul Cynos?", U.J. 1327, "I Defy!", U.J.
1338, "King's Evidence", U.J. 1350 and finally "Retribution", U.J.
1359, when the curtain falls on poor Cynos.

The title "Are you Paul Cynos?" brings to mind the days when
leading newspapers had thousands of Blackpool holiday-makers walking
around asking "Are you Lobby Ludd?" and waving their favourite
newspaper before your eyes, continuing "I claim the £5 reward". I was
mistaken for Lobby Ludd on more than one occasion, but then you went
around asking everybody in case you missed him.

If you contact Josie Packman of the Sexton Blake Lending Library
you will be able to fill in the life of our convict, it remains for me to
quote Robert Murray's account of our convict's demise. 'The swift
waters had swallowed up Paul Cynos and the crumpled remains of the
car. Already a gang of men with ropes and grappling hooks were busy
dragging the bed of the stream - not till two days later did they find what
they sought. "A terrible end" said Tinker, "but the best thing that could
have happened to him. "'

* * * * *

SALE: Public School stories, hardbacks, £2 each. H. Baker Magnets, £4.50 each. Five
Bunter, P. B's, £1. Bunter hardbacks, £3.50. Chums Volumes. Girls' School Stories,
hardbacks, £1.50 each.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN

Tel. 0224 491716

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FOR SALE: Sexton Blake Nos. 351, 168, 176, 196, £2 each.

JOHN GODDARD, 44 BAKER ST., POTTERS BAR, HERTS., EN6 2EB
POTTERS BAR 59555

Nelson Lee Column

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

by R. J. Godsave

It was a visit by Sir Rupert Manderly Bart., who called upon Nelson Lee at his rooms in Gray's Inn Road in July 1917 for the purpose of asking Lee to investigate the disappearance of a Mr. Thorne who was Housemaster of St. Francis' College, a big public school in the south of England. Sir Rupert, who was Chairman of the Board of Governors of the college, had known Nelson Lee for some years. During the conversation that followed he was informed by Lee that both he and Nipper were 'marked down' by a Chinese secret society the Fu-Chang-Tong for immediate death as both had fallen foul of the Tong during past investigations. If, however, they could adopt new identities, and live for six months in a totally different sphere of life, they would be safe from attack. It was Nipper who thought of the idea that if Nelson Lee was to become Housemaster while investigating the affair of Mr. Thorne's disappearance and Nipper become a lower school scholar for the six months then it would be possible for both of them to survive the threat of the Tong.

With the agreement of Sir Rupert, after some pressure had been put on him, with only the Headmaster being aware of the true identity of the new Housemaster - Mr. Alvington and the new junior - Richard Basil Herbert Bennett. The arrival of Mr. Alvington and Bennett was recorded by Nipper in No. 112 o.s. of the Nelson Lee Library. It was in the summer of 1918 that during Captain Burton's summer holiday trip in Lord Dorriemore's yacht that the true identity of Mr. Alvington and Dick Bennett was revealed by Lord Dorriemore in a moment of forgetfulness to the other St. Frank's guests. Now that the death threat was no longer held over their heads, there was no reason as to why they should not take up the profession of detective and assistant and operate from Gray's Inn Road, London.

Nipper had always been aware of the possibility of a return to Gray's Inn Road, as he had frequently told his chums that such a decision was up to the gov'nor. No. 166, o.s. 'By General Request'

gave the answer to Nipper's fears. Such was the feeling of the whole school when Nelson Lee informed them of his leaving the school to take up detective work, that a petition was presented to him asking him not to leave, but continue to be the Housemaster of the Ancient House. Such was the popularity of Nelson Lee that the petition was more of a request for him to stay at St. Frank's. Never had Lee thought that such a thing could happen, and the petition affected him much more than he thought possible. He had made many friends in the locality such as Dr. Brett and the Reverend Goodchild and Nipper had made his mark in the junior school that he soon decided that such were the ties of the school and surrounding district that he could not return to his old rooms in Grays Inn Road. At the same time it was found that there was plenty of detective work to be done in the vicinity of St. Frank's. Actually No. 166 o. s. was the first of a short series of four Lees in which Lee found himself in a tussle with the Circle of Terror who were operating in the neighbourhood.

THE BLUE CRUSADERS

Bill Thurbon writes:

I was interested to see from the footnote to "Danny's Diary" that Brooks wrote stories of "The Blue Crusaders". I think the original Blue Crusaders began before the 1914-18 War. I remember a serial called "Blake of the Blue Crusaders" in the Boys' Realm when this restarted after the Great War. I think the original stories were by A. S. Hardy.

"A SPOT OF MILITARISM"

by Charles Churchill

In January and February 1919, E. S. Brooks came up with one of his ace series of stories. I am referring to the Colonel Clinton tales in Nelson Lee old "small" series, Nos. 187/194.

Mr. Stockdale, the Housemaster of the College House, having to be away ill for the new year term, the school governors were inveigled into appointing a Colonel Howard Clinton, DSO., in his place. The Colonel had an enviable record in the war (1914/1918 one of course) for bravery and leadership.

He turned out to be absolutely hopeless as a Housemaster, however, still living as it were in the army. He attempted to introduce extreme military discipline amongst the boys and even engaged one, Sergeant Donnell, to help him in this respect. The latter soon proved

himself to be a real bully and eventually was given his marching orders by the Head. This caused a terrific row between the Colonel and Dr. Stafford with the honours even but the last straw was reached when the Colonel made the boys don a ridiculous uniform to go on a march through the village. At the last minute the Head appeared and put a stop to the proceedings. Another row developed and the Head eventually dismissed the Colonel.

In revenge, the Colonel hatched a plot to disgrace the Head by arranging for himself to be murdered and the Head to be accused of the crime. Nelson Lee being on the scene meant, of course, that the scheme came unstuck, and Dr. Stafford vindicated. I will not give away the whole plot in case anyone would like to borrow the series from Bob Blythe's Nelson Lee Library. To anyone not yet having read the series I would suggest they do so as I can thoroughly recommend it as being one of the most unusual plots to appear in a story paper for boys. I know one can say this ad infinitum about Mr. Brooks stories in the Lee, but this particular series is really something.

Thinking about Colonel Clinton and Sergeant Donnell, I can recall coming across one or two people just like them during my career in the army in the war! :

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 169 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 338 - "The Price of Loyalty"

The later SOL reprints of St. Jim's stories often contained one or two single stories from the Gem as well as a series. The placing of these single stories varied: sometimes one would come at the beginning and the series would follow, whereas in other cases the reverse process was followed, as with "The Price of Loyalty".

This series (which came from the Gem of 1927) was one of the last to feature Study No. 9 whose ill-assorted trio were one of Charles Hamilton's most striking creations - the whimsical, reckless, sometimes unscrupulous Cardew, the cool-headed, shrewd Levison, and the loyal, unimaginative Clive. Cardew had encountered Tickey Tapp, who had returned to the neighbourhood, and he had been unwise enough to give

him an IOU for £20 to cover losses at poker. When the story began, Cardew had already pawned his watch and diamond pin in order to raise the money, but he later found to his dismay that Tickey Tapp was not going to be content with £20 and was suggesting £100, to be paid by easy instalments. Levison intervened on his own initiative without telling Cardew and, although he was successful, he was caught coming back to St. Jim's and sentenced to be expelled.

The series provided a fascinating display of Frank Levison's unreasoning faith and Clive's equally blind conviction that Ernest Levison was innocent, as opposed to Cardew's cynical acceptance of Levison's apparent guilt and hypocrisy. It also showed how Cardew, having been provided with the necessary clues, was quick-witted enough to fit the pieces of the jig-saw together. It is sad to reflect that this was almost the swan-song of Study No. 9 at St. Jim's.

The single story was an amusing tale in a completely different style, one of the three Gems that Charles Hamilton wrote in 1930. Although Grundy was never a favourite character, this particular tale was written in a vein of high comedy, the choicest episode being when he decided to play tricks in Mr. Linton's study. Dr. Holmes came to discuss Euripides and sat in a pool of glue, and the Income Tax Inspector was astonished when Mr. Linton, who had delayed paying his tax, found himself unable to open his desk-drawer to get out his cheque book, not realising that Grundy had screwed it up. Gussy went to sympathise with Grundy after he had been flogged, and told him that allowances should have been made for the fact that he was practically an idiot. All in all, SOL No. 338 provides a taste of what might have been had not Charles Hamilton to all intents and purposes given up writing for the Gem after 1927.

* * * * *

SBL third series, fine condition, only two or three issues missing. Please write with offer. Also C.D. 1968 to present, almost complete run.

15 OAKLEIGH COURT, CHURCH HILL ROAD

EAST BARNET, HERTS.

* * * * *

WANTED: SBL 411 (1958), Baker Street Gazette (Maclean's). 48 SHALMARSH, BEBINGTON, WIRRAL.

Back to Spacious Edwardian Days with Our Classic Serial.

THE REFORMATION OF MARMADUKE

Marmaduke Smythe was down the next day as usual, little the worse for his perilous adventure in the deep and icy waters of the Rhyl. But the most casual observer could have seen that there was a change in the "boulder".

Marmaduke saw things in a truer light at last. He had, when he first came to St. Jim's, acted very badly towards Blake, and Blake, pitying his folly, had treated him patiently. Now Blake had risked his life, for the sake of the boy who had never had a kind thought of him. And the truth was borne in upon the mind of Marmaduke that he was fortunate in having an opportunity of turning over a new leaf.

Figgins & Co. were mainly engrossed by the coming concert. Not the slightest suspicion did Figgins have that Blake had learned what was coming.

Mr. Kidd had obtained the Head's permission for the lecture-hall to be used as a concert-room for the School House musicians, but that was not mentioned to the New House. Figgins thought that things were going on swimmingly; and so did Blake. Frequent rehearsals were held in Study No. 6 over in the School House.

The time at Blake's disposal was short, but he was the boy to make the most of it. He made his comrades work hard. Herries was driven through "Down Among the Dead Men" again and again, till, as Dig said, it was enough to make the dead men turn in their graves. Digby practised his flute till his comrades fled from the sound of it. Blake cake-walked all over

the School House, and, forgetting himself on one occasion, cake-walked when Mr. Lathom called him out before the class, and was given lines by the astounded master.

The sketch, newly christened "New House Funniosities", was mapped out by Blake, and the chums filled it in with a great deal of care. It was a caricature of alleged New House manners and customs, and it was certain to go down well with the School House portion of the audience.

D'Arcy seemed rather hopeless at first with his song, for he insisted on lisping all through it, but Blake finally said it would make it all the funnier.

Then there was the scene from Shakespeare. The chums soon had most of it by heart, and delivered their lines in a creditable manner.

The march from "Lohengrin" came from Blake's mouth-organ as well as if Richard Wagner had composed it for that instrument. Mellish and Walsh came out strong as Jack Point and Elsie Maynard in the duet from Sullivan, Mellish making up as a quite charming girl. A Hebrew dealer in Rylcombe supplied the costume.

All was in full swing by Tuesday evening.

"We've got to give a decent entertainment, or the grin will be against us," said Blake.

"It will beat what those New House wasters would have given, anyway," said Dig. "If you like, I'll give another solo on my flute, instead of that mouth-organ business. That's rather rotten."

Whereupon Blake offered him a thick ear, if he wanted one.

During Friday Blake took all of the New House juniors into the secret. Meanwhile, the programme, based on that issued by Figgins, was drawn up, and a great number turned off on Dig's copying press.

On Friday evening all was ready.

Figgins, all the time, was going on in the even tenor of his way in blissful unconsciousness. He had fixed a final rehearsal for Friday evening, and when the Co. went to the study in the New House for prep, they decided to go through their programme instead of preparing for the morrow's lessons.

"We've got to have it all perfect by tomorrow night, kids," said Figgins. "Won't Blake be ready to tear his hair when he sees the programme?"

"They've been very quiet in the School House lately," remarked Kerr. Kerr was a canny Scot, and given to being rather suspicious of Blake. "I wonder if they've been getting up to anything."

"Let 'em! Whatever they do, this concert will knock 'em," said Figgins complacently. "Blake will be ready to kick himself for not thinking of it first."

"They may try to bust it up by making a row," Pratt remarked.

Figgins laughed.

"I've taken care of that. I've got Mr. Ratcliff's promise to attend, and they won't dare to be obstreperous in the presence of the housemaster."

"Good old Figgy! We've done them this time, done them brown!"

There was a tap on the door.

"Hallo!" called out Figgins.

"Come in!"

Jack Blake walked into the study.

Figgins had not expected that.

Kerr was in his feminine garb for the Sullivan duet, and Wynn had his cornet on his knees. The Dramatic Society was caught in the act, as it were. Figgins jumped up hastily.

"Hallo! What do you come stalking in here like that for?" he exclaimed angrily. "Why can't you keep on your own side?"

"Don't be rude!" said Blake.

"I've come over in the friendliest spirit in the world to do you a good turn."

He looked round him with a grin. Wynn had carelessly put his cornet behind a chair, and Kerr was looking very sheepish in his strange attire.

"Hallo! What's the little game, Kerr?"

"Mind your own business," snapped Kerr.

"What do you want here?" growled Figgins.

"I've come to give you an invitation."

Figgins face relaxed somewhat.

"Is it a feed?"

"Sit down, Blake, old chap," said Fatty Wynn, with sudden politeness.

"Thanks; but I'm not going to stay a moment. I've got to get back, as I'm stage-manager."

"You're what?"

"Stage-manager," said Blake, with a sweet smile. "It isn't a feed, it's a concert."

"A what?" howled Figgins & Co.

"We're giving a concert," said Blake calmly. "The Head has let us have the lecture-hall for the evening to give it

in, and --"

"What concert? Which evening?"

"This evening," answered Blake.

"We want all you fellows to come. We invite the whole of the New House, en masse. The School House will all be there. Mr. Kidd has promised to attend, and I hope the Head may look in."

Figgins & Co. looked at one another in a dazed sort of way.

Blake laid a sealed envelope on the table.

"There's the programme," he said.

"They'll be given away in the hall, but I

thought you might like to see what was going to come on. Ta-ta!"

And he left the study before any of the New House juniors could reply.

They heard him whistling as he went out of the New House. A deadly silence reigned in Figgins's study. Blank dismay had fallen upon the New House Dramatic Society.

(More, next month, of this Old Tale

from the time when the

Century was Young.)

* * * * *

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

MIDLAND

Meeting February 1981

Considering the hazards of travelling after the recent snow, we did very well to get an attendance of twelve members. This included Vince Loveday's wife who had not previously come with him.

Joan Loveday was asked to address the meeting and said she had become interested after reading her husband's books.

Our Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item were on display. The A.N. was Magnet 472 dated 24th February, 1917, and 64 years old to the day. It was a sub written story entitled "The Great Fat Cure". Not all sub stories were badly written. The C.I. was No. 1 of the Greyfriar's Herald and bore the date 20th November, 1915.

A discussion led by Geoff Lardner was on the disappearance of Bulstrode, a prominent character in the early Magnet, from the Greyfriars stories. Someone said he was described as leaving in Magnet 794, but this was not certain. Strangely enough he was mentioned in the last Bunter Book, "Bunter's Last Fling".

There were two readings. Your correspondent read from the

latest Howard Baker issued, "Tales of Bendover College" and Ivan Webster read from Magnet 875.

After refreshments provided by Joan Golen, Vince Loveday and Tom Porter, a game of Greyfriars Bingo was played with Ivan Webster the winner.

Best wishes to Old Boys' Book Clubs everywhere.

J. F. BELLFIELD - Correspondent.

CAMBRIDGE

We met at the home of Adrian Perkins on Sunday, 1st March, 1981. Arrangements for the 10th anniversary of the foundation of the club, to be held on 17th May, were discussed.

Jack Overhill gave an interesting talk on Barring Outs. Jack took as examples a Greyfriars and a St. Frank's series. The Greyfriars series was the "Rebellion of the Remove" series. Jack described these in outline and commented on the care with which Frank Richards had developed his plot. Jack thought the only weakness was that Dr. Locke should take a reference in Quelch's History of Greyfriars to a tyrannical Headmaster, as referring to himself. Jack felt this series was outstanding, too, in the part played by Lord Mauleverer in taking the leading part throughout the series, overshadowing Harry Wharton and other characters. Jack had not been so impressed by a six part St. Frank's series. While interesting, he felt the plot to be more "contrived" than the Greyfriars series, and the mixture of detection and barring out did not fit altogether easily into a coherent series. While Jack had enjoyed this, he felt the Richards' series to be the better of the two.

A wide ranging discussion followed.

After enjoying Mrs. Perkins' hospitable tea the meeting settled down to a talk by Adrian on competitors to "The Eagle" in the '50's. Before beginning Adrian read out an article by Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig on the newly issued "Girl" as compared with its Hulton similarly named predecessor of the 1950's. Adrian produced specimens of the "Eagle" and also of its rival "The Express Weekly". While this was in similar format to the "Eagle" it was printed on a rather cheaper paper.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to Adrian and Mrs.

Perkins for their hospitality, and to Adrian for his interesting display of "Eagles".

LONDON

An excellent discourse on her visit to India was given by Mary Cadogan at the Walthamstow meeting. Mary read extracts from C.D.A. 1971, which dealt with Hurree Singh and Da Costa and some more from the Greyfriars Book Club, Volume Four, which contained the India series in facsimile form. When a girl, Mary often cherished the ambition to visit India and at long last it materialised and thus the excellent talk which was greatly enjoyed by those present.

Copies of Mary and Patricia Craig's book, "The Lady Investigates" were available and there was many Press cuttings for perusal, mainly very good reports. Also exhibited was a copy of John Wernham's latest publication, "The Morcove Companion" which has been compiled by Mary Cadogan and Tommy Keen.

Harry Wharton's Sacrifice was the title of a Greyfriars story that Jack Corbett of the Midland Club had sent and it was ably read out by Ray Hopkins. A very good effort by Jack and greatly appreciated. Ann Clarke was the outright winner of Bill Bradford's Quiz. Extracts from the newsletter of March 1964 was the Memory Lane reading by Bob Blythe, it dealt with a meeting held at the Putney home of Brian Doyle, who, incidentally hopes to be in attendance at the May meeting.

Next gathering will be the Rembrandt luncheon party on Sunday, 12th April.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Our 371st meeting was held on Saturday evening, 14th March - eleven members being present.

Harry Barlow introduced a talk given by Joe Wood on "My Collection". Joe did say that his collection was virtually nil, as he had borrowed many items from Harry over the years. As a freelance writer, Joe had been able to establish quite an impression of "The Magnet" and the writings of Frank Richards over the past fifty years. Many characters could be classed as "round", i.e. those who played an important part in a

story and "flat", those who had no real significance. In the writings of Frank Richards, all his characters were "round" in that they all seemed to play a very important part, even if they did not immediately seem relevant to a particular story. Comment was once again made on the fact that it appeared stories in "The Magnet" had an adult point of view, with a high moral tone. It was also assumed readers were intelligent. He rounded up by saying he doubted if any writer for young people could compare, in this day and age, to Frank Richards.

After refreshments, Harry Barlow presented us with a quiz, which had very amusing results at times (even if unintentional) - which is often the cases with Harry's quizzes! We were given some very simple clues and we had to guess Hamiltonian characters. The second half of the quiz was based on incidents in the "Loder For Captain" series. A very enjoyable meeting ended at 9.15 p.m.

Our next meeting is our A.G.M. to be held on 11th April. Visitors are always welcome.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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A CHANGE OF NAME

by W. O. G. Lofts

Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) started it all with Answers in 1888, his new publishing firm then named Answers Company Ltd. Its growth was so enormous, plus moving continually into bigger premises that by 1893 the name was shortened to just Answers Ltd. Back however to 1890 with the firm's entrance into juvenile fiction - a subsidiary Company was launched entitled Pandora Publications which such famous boys papers and comics includes Chips, Comic Cuts, Union Jack, and Marvel - all at the price of one halfpenny! Girls and woman's papers were covered by yet another imprint Periodical Publications.

In 1896 when the group bought out W. B. Horner Ltd., owners of the famous Horners Penny Stories, the whole set-up was renamed Harmsworth Brothers Ltd., and it was not until 1902 that they changed their name to the world famous Amalgamated Press when they were situated in offices in Fleet Street near Ludgate Circus. After several more moves, they finally settled in the then new Fleetway House building in Farrington Street - alas now no more. Here was not only the biggest

publishing house in the world, but surely also the home of the greatest loved papers of all time. The mind really boggles when one tries to list them all. Magnet, Gem, Popular, Boys' Friend, Modern Boy, Nelson Lee, Champion, Triumph, Boys' Cinema, Boys' Friend and Sexton Blake Libraries. Schoolgirl papers such as School Friend and School-girl; wonderful comics as Rainbow, Tiger Tims, Puck, Sunbeam, Playbox, Bubbles, Film Fun, Kinema Comic, Radio Fun, Crackers, Larks, Butterfly, Funny Wonder, Joker. A host of Annuals including probably the most collected and loved of all time, The Holiday Annual. Adult publications such as Picture Show - the list is really endless of old favourites found in every single home.

By 1920, with now over 5,000 employees, plus over 100 different titles, they became even larger after buying out James Henderson & Co., apart from taking over many smaller firms such as Trapps Holmes Ltd. 1922 saw the death of the founder, Lord Northcliffe, so with a reshuffle of Directors it then became known as Amalgamated Press (1922) Ltd. 1926 saw yet another change of title when they bought out Cassells publications that included Chums - they then becoming Amalgamated Press (1926) Ltd. The coming of the Second World War had unfortunately killed off most of the pre-war favourites through paper shortage - and so when in the early fifties Chips, Comic Cuts, and Champion also finished it was in 1959 decided to modernise the old name to Fleetway Publications Ltd.

1964 saw the old Daily Mirror group now known as International Printers Ltd. take over Fleetway, and it became that name with variations till the present day - now known as I.P.C. (Magazines) Ltd. with offices in a huge skyscraper block at King's Reach, the south side of Blackfriars Bridge. The old firm of Odhams Properties who took over Hultons (1938) and who became Long Acre Press in 1959, were in time swallowed up by Fleetway Publications.

When starting in the hobby in the early fifties, I met a very old editor, who claimed that he had started on Answers way back in the 'nineties - and his days at the firm were the happiest of his life. Generations and millions of old readers would also echo that sentiment. The old Amalgamated Press especially gave them the happiest reading that one could ever wish for. Dozens of wonderfully produced papers

and comics.

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The Postman Called

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

BILL LOFTS (London): I agree that Chapman and Macdonald have always been accepted as THE artists for the Magnet and Gem. After all, they illustrated more issues than any other artists. However, there are quite a number of Shields fans in our own circle, and, whilst it is true that this popular artist was not faultless, Chapman, too, had his faults. Chapman's drawings of boats were almost laughable.

I would agree that Warwick Reynolds was not at his best in the Gem, maybe because (according to his nephew) of the tight schedule and haste involved. But in the field of nature - animals and birds - he had no equal. It is interesting to note that C. M. Down, the editor of Gem and Magnet whom I met several times, much preferred Shields to Chapman, and, whilst accepting that Macdonald was the best Gem artist, was lavish in praise of Warwick Reynolds's work in general.

HAROLD TRUSCOTT (Deal): Many thanks to Darrel Swift for reminding me. He did, indeed, once tell me that he enjoyed the Bunter TV series, and I had forgotten this when I wrote the article for the Annual. But he remains the only one.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: I would think that most of us were fairly excited when Greyfriars, of a sort, went on TV, and that most of us enjoyed it, even though we may have been critical at times.)

Miss E. MAGOVENY (Belfast): I found an old book recently, in Hall's, near Smithfield. It was a story, "The Border Legion" by Zane Grey, which I first read in the twenties. Zane Grey was my favourite writer of Wild West tales. I believe he died during the war years.

MAURICE KING (Slough): I was delighted to see the list of Mr. Buddle stories in the Annual, as I very much enjoy them. However, I have been unable to trace the following in any Annual: "Mr. Buddle's Hair-Shirt", "Merry Christmas, Mr. Buddle", "Mr. Crayford Passes By", "The Boy in the Corner", "Mr. Buddle Laughs Last", "Mr. Buddle's Greatest".

As far as I can see the only Annuals without a Buddle story were 1962 and 1968. Could you pop a note about this in the C.D. when convenient?

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The stories mentioned by Mr. King appeared in the monthly C.D. Quite a few years back now.)

J.E.M. (Brighton): May I say how sad I was to see the concluding instalment of your 'Small Cinema' series? This has been, I am sure, one of C.D.'s most popular features, a valuable and fascinating record of the cinema's golden days as well as a first-class invitation to delicious nostalgia. We are all going to miss 'Small Cinema' very much.

Much gratitude also for the valuable history of the Popular in February's C.D. I regret that I saw little of the Pop as a younster (it disappeared too soon for me to become a long-standing reader) but it did introduce me to Rookwood and to at least a handful of stories about the imperishable Rio Kid.

Most of all, I enjoyed the account of your acquisition of a long sought after book. I know exactly your feelings because I have shared them and strongly support your view that no collector should ever lose heart. The longer the wait, the harder the search, the greater the final joy.

S. WHITEHEAD (Hythe): Did you know that Hotspur finished in January, merged with Victor? Also, have you seen the new Thomson paper, "Buddy", out on Thursdays? A lot of reprints in it, e.g. "Wolf of Kabul", "Iron Fish", "Limpalong Leslie", "Jonah", etc. In a Woolworth's sale I picked up Biggles Annual No. 1 at 65p, sale price.

BRENDAN JOHNSTON (Moreton): Although a confirmed dog man myself, I was tickled by Princess Snowee's tale to her Mum. After three attempts to catch her playmate, maybe she was trying to tell you something. A little field mouse is a very pleasant little perisher, perhaps -- or knowing her master's predilection for Tom and Jerry ----

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"EXCITING FREE GIFT IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE!" by J.E.M.

We all remember announcements like that from the old comics and story papers. "Exciting", "super", even "bumper", free gifts came

at us thick and fast, especially in the late nineteen-twenties and early thirties. These were the vintage years of give-aways, the publishers' answer to hard times and hard-up readers. I suppose we even came to expect such handouts. Certainly no new paper dared show its face on the newsagents' counters without a special gift to launch it. (At a time when weekly spending was often a choice between story paper and sweets, Bullseye showed real ingenuity in presenting with its first issue a slab of toffee!)

My own memories of free gifts are remarkably vivid, which must say something for the cunning of circulation managers and promotion experts. The earliest give-away I can recall was a "flicker" book animating the antics of Charlie Chaplin and presented, appropriately, with Film Fun. Another juvenile treasure from around the same period came with D. C. Thomson's Wizard: a series of shield-shaped "secret service"(!) badges, each bearing a different code and linked with a story about an intelligence agent called Tiger McTaggart. I don't suppose I shall ever forget either Agent McT. or those badges, though they are now more than half a century into the past.

Usually I was not much of a collector of anything in series. I could never stay the course, possessing at that time what a well-known advert. used to call a grasshopper mind. I did have an older cousin, however, with the doggedness of the true collector who acquired two whole series of photo cards depicting scenes from World War One. About fifty pictures in all, they were presented with the Triumph which went in a lot for war stories (one such, I remember, was "With Fighting Mac At Arras" by Herbert Macrae).

How many Hamiltonians, I wonder, recall The Magnet's free gifts? Among these were pictures of famous cricketers, as well as a curious trio of offerings in the summer of 1930. Over three successive issues we received a toy glider (it flew very nicely, I recall), a tiny camphor-propelled boat and a catapult-launched boomerang. What any of these had to do with the image of Greyfriars we shall never know, though any object that moved was a popular give-away with all story papers. Tin cut-outs, especially of locomotives, were also strong favourites. One of the AP papers presented a series of car badges and I recall how excited I was by those still famous symbols: Bentley, Lancia,

Bugatti et al. The Thomson papers went in for noise-makers of various kinds ("Astonish your friends with the Whistle Warbler" - or whatever it might be called) as well as masks, mini-comics and simple conjuring tricks.

It was not always clear what age or intelligence levels were being aimed at by some of these gifts but there is no doubt that the Blakian story papers as well as The Thriller saw their readers as at least semi-adult. On one occasion the Union Jack presented free razor blades as did its successor, Detective Weekly. With its Number One issue, the DW actually gave a small pocket wallet to hold stamps, miniature playing cards and - should you have any - ten bob notes! The Thriller rewarded its readers with a free key-ring and chain in an issue devoted, perhaps appropriately, to a story about A. J. Raffles.

The variety of gifts from the old papers was, in fact, quite remarkable. Did such offerings do anything for circulation figures? I just don't know but, in a period now often compared with those old "depression" days, the free gift movement seems to be with us again. A national newspaper article co-authored by Mary Cadogan earlier this year, dealt with the launching of a girls' story paper - and, yes, the paper's Number One contained the obligatory "exciting free gift".

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MORCOVE REMEMBERED

by Mary Cadogan

February of this year marked the Diamond Jubilee of Morcove School and the "Schoolgirls' Own", and I'm sure the C.D. will not want to let this pass without paying tribute to Horace Phillips (who as Marjorie Stanton wrote the stories) and to Leonard Shields, who made Betty Barton & Co. the prettiest of all the Amalgamated Press school-girls.

When I started to read the Morcove stories towards the end of the 1930's, the "Schoolgirls' Own", alas, had already ceased publication. I made the acquaintance of Betty & Co. in rather truncated serials at the back of the Cliff House paper, the "Schoolgirl", and of course in the monthly "Schoolgirls' Own Libraries". Happily, however, I have since acquired a large collection of weekly "Schoolgirls' Owns", including the
 cont'd. on Page 31 ...

The Schoolgirls' Own



NOT WANTED! "You can clear out, Betty Barton!" exclaimed the snobbish girl. "We've no use for Council School kids here!" (See "Scorned by the School!" in this issue.)

22

first and the last issues, with their beautiful blue and orange Shields's covers.

Many of us will always remember with affection the glorious chums of Study No. 12: Betty Barton, the Fourth Form Captain, madcap Polly Linton, the elegant duffer Paula Creel, Naomer Nakara the 'dusky imp', musical Madge Minden and artistic Tess Trelawney. And we'll never forget those fearful sneaks and baddies - Ursula Wade, Cora Grandways and Audrey Blain.

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REVIEW

THE MORCOVE COMPANION

Mary Cadogan & Tommy Keen
(Museum Press)

The weekly paper, "The Schoolgirls' Own", began its career sixty years ago, relating the continuous adventures of the girls of Morcove School. The paper lasted for a splendid fifteen years, but Morcove went on for a few more years in another paper.

It seems probable that Cliff House, in the School Friend, was doing well, so the publishers decided on a sister publication.

This charming book is put out to mark the anniversary of the Schoolgirls' Own Weekly, and tells the story of Morcove. With a wealth of superb pictures, it has immense appeal.

There is an excellent appraisal of the career and work of Horace Phillips, who, as Marjorie Stanton, created Morcove and wrote most of the stories. His links with Cliff House and the School Friend are traced. The suggestion (surely apochryphal) is revived that Hamilton's work in the very early School Friend "didn't strike quite the right note" with girl readers. This is unlikely, as I have pointed out before. The Amalgamated Press knew all the facets of Hamilton's work, its brilliance and its shortcomings, and, in any case, five stories in five successive weeks were obviously far from sufficient time for girl readers to have expressed an opinion on them. The first School Friend could barely have been in the shops by the time that Phillips took over Cliff House.

I am intrigued to see that, in the opinion of our writers of "Morcove Companion", Phillips had some melodramatic effects in the style of Mrs. Henry Wood, and that, later on, with the introduction of a boys' school near Morcove, there were "deeply emotional involvements". It is all an intensely fascinating appraisal.

The superb Leonard Shields who, with his artistry, did so much for Morcove, receives well-deserved acclaim for his illustrations. He is compared with the School Friend artist, Dodgson, who is said to have contributed "rather quirky pictures" to the latter paper. I don't know what "quirky" means, but I hope it's nothing rude.

"Morcove Through the Years" kept me reading on, entranced, and, for those who know

the stories well, it must be a joy. There is a Who's Who of the main characters, and a number of attractive items, culled, possibly, from some sort of "Morcove Gazette".

It shows how real these characters must have been to girls, all those years back, when we find "Confessions" which tell us that Betty Barton's lucky day is Wednesday, Polly Linton's favourite flower is the rose, Naomer Nakara (aged 13½) has a black cat as her favourite pet, and Paula Creel's favourite holiday is "a nice, westful cwuise, bai jove".

Morcove ended in a copy of the Schoolgirl, dated early 1938, so far as weekly presentation went, but a new Morcove tale featured in the S. O. L. Annual later in the same year.

It's all grand stuff for our Morcove Old Girls (and for plenty old boys who will buy it for their sisters and read it themselves).

It ends, wistfully enough, with the statement that "like Cliff House, Morcove was never revived after the Second World War". (And I could have sworn I have a yellow-jacketed hardback entitled "Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School", published 1949, in my bookcase.)

SPECIAL NOTE! Make sure of your copy of "The Morcove Companion". This delightful little book cannot be bought in the shops. It is obtainable only from The Museum Press, c/o 46 Overbury Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 2PY, at £1.50 inclusive of postage and packing.

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OUR CORAL JUBILEE YEAR

Come next November, if we are spared, Story Paper Collectors' Digest will reach its 35th birthday. Looking back or forward, thirty-five years is a very long time indeed. Longer now, probably, than the life of any of the dearly-loved old papers, the memory of which the Digest exists to perpetuate.

Mr. R. H. Cushing of Kimpton writes: "In common, I'm sure, with all subscribers to C. D., I find incalculable the pleasure I derive from such a modest outlay. A never-ending source of pleasure; the characters of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood, live on in your excellent publication. Like 'Alice', they are immortal - and just as unreal - but what is a modicum of unreality set against a welter of crime, sadism and explicit examples of man's inhumanity to man, which frequently masquerades as "entertainment" in the book and television industry? Thanks a million for a unique service - "Collectors' Digest"."

And Mr. William Lister of Blackpool writes, by the same post: "Each copy of C. D. seems better than the one before."

Thank you for such wonderful encouragement, which helps to keep the good old C. D. carrying on.

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Good price paid for MAGNETS 1068, 1087, 1127, 1133, 1134 and many others before year 1930, suitable for binding.

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