

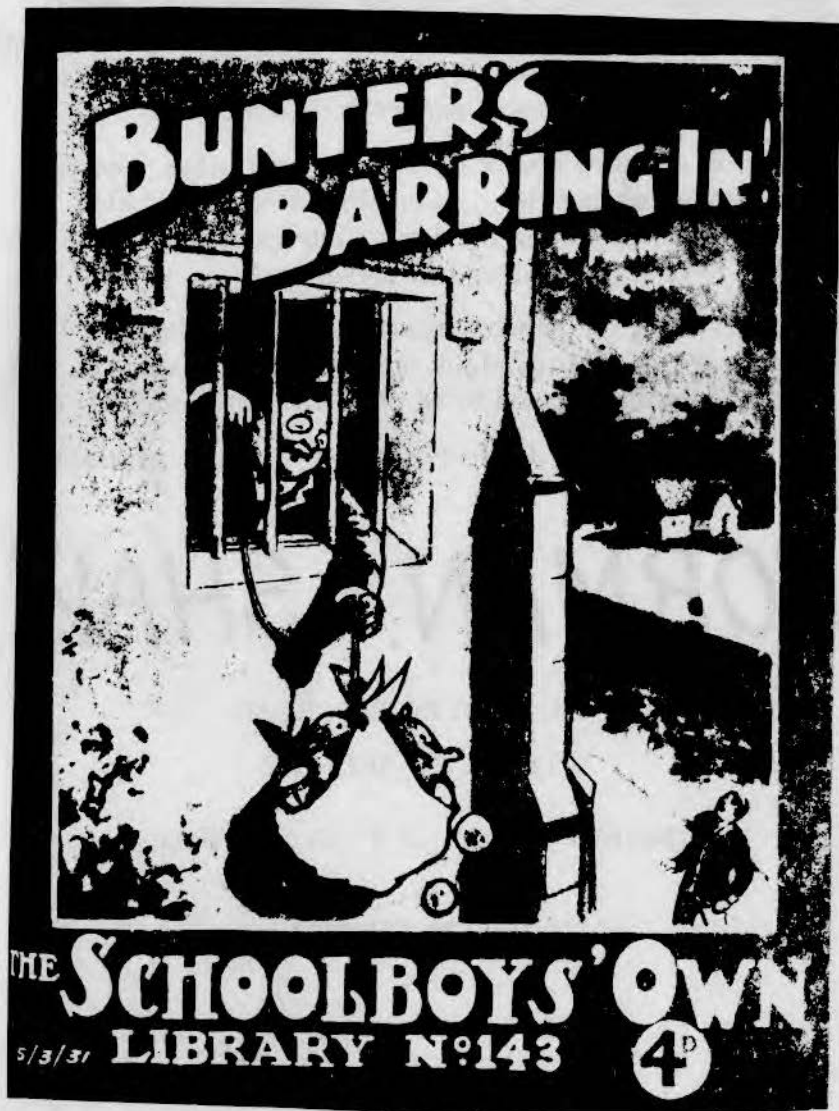
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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOL. 36

No. 428

AUGUST 1982



34p

Special clearance offer of Reading copies Magnets (salmons) and Gems (small format), £30 per hundred, each or mixed. SOL's (some minus covers), £30 per hundred. All at a ridiculous price, but just have too many duplicates. Would consider offers for earlier ones and other Boys' papers. My selection only. (Post is extra.) Good/v. good copies available of course, as usual. Hundreds of bound volumes of various boys' papers and comics.

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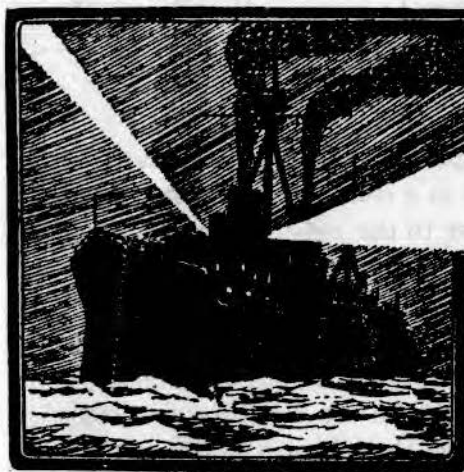
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No. 428

AUGUST 1982

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A Word from the Skipper.

You do not lose your friends in time of difficulty. You merely discover who your friends are.

SOMEBODY SAID --

As I browsed over our July issue, two items lingered particularly in my memory, for the simple reason that they made me think over them. One was the delightful piece in our Nelson Lee Column, where our contributor, Mr. Len Wormull mused over the "Between Ourselves" section in the Nelson Lee. It seems that "Between Ourselves" was conducted by the famous author, E. S. Brooks, himself, and various names, very familiar to us today, cropped up, some on a good many occasions, 50 and more years ago.

Without any doubt, "Between Ourselves" was popular with readers of the Lee, and, some years back in a Let's Be Controversial article, we considered whether such a column, though so popular with readers, was really a help or a drawback to the author himself.

An author would probably be influenced by the letters he received, yet the proportion of readers who write to an author or to an editor must be a very small fraction of the total readership. Yet persistent readers, though small in number, can influence an editor or an author, as I discovered myself long ago in connection with the Gem, and, later, with the Sexton Blake Library.

Readers - the handful of persistent ones - or even just one persistent - might succeed in causing the author to give another lease of life to a character he has dispensed with. This, at any rate so far as Hamilton was concerned, was never a marked success. Sequels are rarely, if ever, so good as the original. The character, Valentine Outram, starred in a consecutive couple of splendid tales in the blue Gem. Some years later Outram was revived in a double-length story which was not markedly good, and far inferior to the original appearance. Jim Valentine was a Magnet character who was brought back on the scene, when he would have been better left in his original little niche in Time.

I cannot help feeling that a column like "Between Ourselves" was of great fun and interest for readers, but perhaps not so good for the author, who would have been better tapping away on his machine without external influence. Which means that I am glad that Hamilton did not attempt to run a column which invited readers to express opinions.

The second item which lingers in my memory from last month also comes from the Lee Column. At the end of his heart-warming item on The Good Old Nelson Lee, our contributor, Mr. J. H. Mearns, commented that St. Frank's stories "did nothing to restore the flagging fortunes of the Gem". That is one of those statements which can often be accepted as true by default. There is no evidence at all that the fortunes of the Gem were flagging in 1933 and 1934. The paper carried on for quite a few years more after St. Frank's said farewell to it - in fact, until the war brought down its curtain as it did for so many other famous papers.

SCHOOL STORIES

Writers of articles in magazines and newspapers often assure us that the day of the public school story is long passed. That the school story is dead as the dodo. If that is true, then the dead school story is taking an enormous time to lie down and rest in peace.

For books and articles on school stories of all types continue to be written in a never-ending stream, and often the writers of those books and articles do not seem to have more than superficial knowledge of their subject. They write on the subject simply because they know that the school story is something of great interest to thousands of people. In fact, the school story is not dead at all. It is very much alive.

For me, the most true-to-life of all school yarns is Coke's "Bending of a Twig". Professional writers seldom mention it at all. Yet it is vivid and true, and like real life in school, sometimes has its monotonous patches.

They accept "Tom Brown" as a classic, and they deride "Eric" simply because that sort of thing has been done down the years. They copy one another, and it is the fashionable thing to do.

As a youngster I always found "Tom Brown" a bore but greatly enjoyed "Eric". Actually the characterisation in "Eric" is first-class, and Wildney, in particular, is one of the most outstanding of all school-boy creations.

Finally, we hear that 4 of the Bunter titles, published by Skilton soon after the Hitler war, are to be re-issued in mid-September. We wish them luck. Slightly disturbing for some of us will be the information that they are "edited for the modern child - keeping the essential flavour of the writing . . ." A new artist has replaced the old favourites. The price will be £4.95 for each book, which will have 11 full-page illustrations. We hope they do not approximate too much to a well-known TV series of modern times.

OLD MOORE

Even when I was a child he was known as "Old" Moore, so the famous Mr. Moore, with his celebrated Almanack, must be very aged indeed by this time. He was, to be accurate, Dr. Moore, I believe, and his Almanack is reputed to be nearly 300 years old. I saw one in a shop

this morning, looking exactly as it did when I first knew it long years ago. (Thank goodness some things don't change.) Of course, the price is different. It was a penny in the twenties. Now it is the equivalent of five bob. Perhaps the mathematicians in our midst can work out the percentage increase. It's so fashionable to talk in percentages.

THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

"My gov'nor read out a letter from his morning newspaper. Some gent asked how he could stop cats trespassing in his garden. He had spent a fortune on deterrents, but still the cats came. Could anybody tell him how to stop them? I could! Get a cat of his own. No cat ever trespasses in MY garden. They don't call me the Boss Cat for nothing, in this neighbourhood."

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

DEATH OF VERY ELDERLY AUTHOR

News has just come to hand of the death of Cecil Henry Bullivant - better known to old timers as 'Maurice Everard' famous writer in A.P. papers in the early days. He was also editor of 'Boys' Herald' and managing editor of The Captain. A kind, very co-operative type of man, he was 98 years old, and possibly may be the oldest boys' writer in history. By all accounts he certainly was the most affluent, by shrewd investments in property, art, and antiques - as well as rare pieces of china.

In answer to many queries quite a number of authors are still going strong. G. R. Samways (87) and W. W. Sayer - 'Pierre Quiroule' (90) when last I heard a short time ago.

W. O. G. LOFTS

* * * * *

FOR SALE: Wonder Book of Railways (pre-war) £3; Daily Mail Annual for Boys, 1944, £1; Chatterbox Annual (1940?) £1; For the Sake of His Chum, 1926; Adventureland Annual, 1925, £3; Collins Boys' Annual, 1957, £1; Wonder Book of Comics (1950's) £2; Edgar Wallace books, pre-war, £1 each; Every Woman's Doctor Book, pre-war, £2; Leading Strings, 1931, £3; Chandin Masterpieces in Colour (no date) £3; Sherlock Holmes (all pre-war) £1 each; Many salmon Magnets £1 each; Magnets (spine-taped) 1920's: 50p each.

S. a. e. OLYMPUS, SANDFORD MILL ROAD

CHELMSFORD, ESSEX

Danny's Diary

AUGUST 1932

A great month all round. In the second week of August, King of the Islands is back in the Modern Boy in the finest series I have ever read about him. A sick man's gabble - he is a pearler named Ben Keefe - hinting at a great hoard of pearls, the greed of an unscrupulous Chinaman named Wu Fang, the cunning of a white man, Dandy Peters who is one of the greatest scoundrels in all the South Seas, the efforts of Ken King of the Islands to defeat the two villains - all makes a mighty fine adventure story. The titles so far are "The Quest of Wu Fang", "The Sea-Cat's Prize", and "The Chase of the Sea-Cat". It all continues next month - and I can hardly wait.

Gosh, it's been hot this month. The hottest day of the year so far was on 19th August when the temperature rose to an amazing 96 degrees. A real blazer.

We were away for a fortnight, visiting my Gran and Auntie Gwen at Layer Marney for our holiday. We had a day in Clacton where I went in the water swimming about in the warm sea, and another day Mr. Twosaint, a friend of Gran's, took us out in his Austin Seven and we spent the time in Ipswich. This is a very nice town with a very big trolleybus system. After tea we went to the Regent Cinema in Ipswich and saw Edward G. Robinson and Loretta Young in "The Honourable Mr. Wong" which was very good. We didn't get home to Layer Marney till nearly eleven. In Clacton we went to the concert party on the pier, and one of the ladies in the show sang a tuneful new song "Have you ever been lonely? Have you ever been blue?"

Other pictures we have seen during the month have been Constance Bennett and Ben Lyon in "Reputation"; Victor McLaglen and Elissa Landi in "The Devil's Lottery"; Arthur Wontner as Sherlock Holmes with Ian Hunter in "The Sign of Four"; Richard Dix and Mary Astor in "Lost Squadron"; and Ruth Chatterton and Paul Lukas in "To-morrow and To-morrow". All very good indeed.

Two lovely tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. "The Cruise of the Silver Scud", a gorgeous holiday series in which a mysterious man named Gideon Gaunt, with a sinister long nose, is out to do away with Lord Mauleverer. A splendid tale of exciting mystery, in which you wonder who Gideon Gaunt really is on board the ship. He turns out to be Edgar Poynings, the mate. As I had met other Poynings's who were villains, I had rather suspected him.

The other tale is "The Outcast of Cedar Creek", and it is a long time since I read a Cedar Creek story. Frank Richards, suspected of theft (Yen Chin was the guilty one) runs away from the Lawless Ranch and has some grand adventures with Black Pequod, the horse wrangler; with Bronze Bill, the gold miner; and with the Black Sack gang. Finally, he rescues Lord St. Austell, who gets Frank to go home again. Tip-top tales, both of these.

The Newspaper Library of the British Museum has now been transferred to Colindale, where there was an opening ceremony.

First story of the month in the Nelson Lee Library is "The Grey Bat", a thriller, plus a short St. Frank's tale "The Japers Japed", about the new Headmaster, Fighting James Kingswood. Next week, another tec tale "The Prisoner of the Temple", introducing Lord Dorrimore, plus a St. Frank's "shortie" called "Detective Handy on the Trail".

Then a long tec tale "The Case of the King's Spy" plus "The Fighting Head of St. Frank's". Finally, "South Seas Loot", and a short about St. Frank's "Archie's Awakening". Sadly, I have to say that the old Nelson Lee isn't what it was!

Poor Mauly is properly in peril this month. In that S.O.L. the wicked Poynings was dogging Mauly to get ransom money out of him. And now, in a new series in the Magnet, a Greek scoundrel named Kalizelos is chasing Mauly in order to get from him the golden scarab of A-Menah which, somehow, holds the clue to a fortune. And that is in the holiday series which starts in the first week of August. It is entitled "Billy Bunter's Bad Luck" for the opening tale. Bunter is mistaken by Kalizelos for Lord Mauleverer. However, all goes well, and Mauly makes up a party to visit Egypt. In the second story "Southward Bound", they find themselves in constant danger when they reach Egypt to search for the treasure.

Next, "Harry Wharton & Co. in Egypt", with fun and games and dangers on the Red Sea. And Mauly finds himself shut up in a sarcophagus which is an Egyptian coffin. A really cute character is Hassan, the dragoman. Final story of the month is "The Lure of the Golden Scarab". Sir Reginald Brooke is in charge of the party, and his friend is the wealthy Hilmi Maroudi. It's all very exciting and a fast-moving series. It continues next month, and I hope it goes on a long time.

In the Boys' Friend Library there is a long story of King of the Islands called "Galleons Gold". I read it not so long ago in Modern Boy, all about a demented seaman babbling over ingots of gold to the skipper of the Dawn.

For the first time an amplifying system has been installed in St. Paul's Cathedral in London, with microphones and loud-speakers, so now everybody will be able to hear what the Dean is saying.

A gorgeous month in the Gem. It kicked off with a very long, cover-to-cover story entitled "Sacked from St. Jim's". Tom Merry is accused of paying Black George to kidnap Figgins on the day of the House Match. Did Tom do it, or is it a frame-up? The real villain is Tom's relative, Philip Phipps, who is trying to blacken Tom in the eyes of Miss Fawcett.

Next "Tom Merry & Co. on the Spree", the start of a tip-top holiday series. Dr. Holmes arranges for a big party of his boys to go on an educational cruise on the S.S. "Condor", with Mr. Ratliff in charge and Mr. Railton as second in command. Next week, "All Aboard the Condor". In it, the chums have a tour of Southampton, and Mr. Macdonald, the artist, shows them on a tram going under the famous Bar Gate, but he shows no overhead wires and no trolley pole.

Then "The Floating School" continues with the adventures on the Condor. It's a grand tale, and the series continues next week. I hope it's a long series.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: "Sacked from St. Jim's", the extra-long story of 1932, had originally been two separate stories "Expelled from St. Jim's" and "Tom Merry's Camp", held over inexplicably from the early halfpenny period of the Gem. "Tom Merry & Co. on the Spree" had been "The Head's Surprise" in 1908. "All Aboard the Condor" was originally "Tom Merry Afloat". "The Floating School" had once been "St. Jim's at Sea". The last named three stories were part of the 6-story series, the first real series in Gem history, and

probably Hamilton's first holiday series. Quite excellent in parts, it suffered a rather silly anti-climax after the ship was wrecked.

S.O.L. No. 177 comprised the 5-story summer holiday series of the year 1922, at the end of the white cover period.

S.O.L. No. 178, "The Outcast of Cedar Creek" comprised a selection of about 9 stories from the fine series of 17 stories which brought the Cedar Creek yarns to an end in the Spring and early Summer of 1921 in the Boys' Friend.

The Boys' Friend Library "Galleon's Gold" comprised a 6-story series, taken from the very long second Ken King series in the Modern Boy. This particular B.F.L. comes from stories which were published in Modern Boy in late 1928 and very early 1929.

Ipswich was one of two towns in the country which, in 1926, adopted trolleybuses in a big way. Many years later, the tram and trolleybus towns changed over to buses, owing to the cheapness of petrol. I suspect that in 1982 they may wish they hadn't!

For many years the trams in Southampton passed under the narrow Bar Gate in the town centre. In later times, perhaps in the mid-thirties, the road was widened, and the ancient monument was left in the centre. New tracks were laid, and the trams passed on either side of it.)

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

Have form-masters a sense of humour? Certainly not any of mine were. But perhaps the occasion never arose in my case to spark off a moment of humour from my form-masters.

Mr. James Crowell, the Remove form-master at St. Frank's, seldom displays flashes of wit for the benefit of the Remove, but the other day when History was the lesson, he had reached the period of the reign of Queen Anne, daughter of James, Duke of York, and related Anne's love of horse racing and other outdoor sports.

And as Mr. Crowell delved deeper into the ups and downs of poor Queen Anne he arrived at the point when she died. But if the juniors were sanguine enough to expect that that was the finish of the lesson they were wrong for Mr. Crowell went on to describe the burial arrangements that posed some problems.

At forty-six the Queen was said to weigh upwards of twenty stone.

And when three years later she died she was monstrously fat, so much so that her coffin was almost square.

Perhaps it was just coincidence that the form-master appeared to look only in the direction of Jimmy (Fatty) Little each time he looked up from his book. But I suppose Mr. Crowell had to look somewhere as he expounded those historical facts.

But whether he was in the mood to deliver some helpful advice by frightening Fatty Little into thinning down there were good reasons for believing so for Mr. Crowell enlarged on the subject of overweight people in history. He went on to relate the case of one Daniel Lambert who was born in Leicester in 1770. He succeeded his father as Keeper of the Gaol. From then on Daniel's bulk increased rapidly. During this time he had become sublimely corpulent. In 1793 his weight had been thirty-two stone. When he was pensioned in 1805 he weighed over fifty stone!

In 1806, went on Mr. Crowell, he came to London. For the journey he had a carriage specially constructed. Eventually, he died at the Waggon and Horses Inn, Stamford, July 1809.

If Fatty Little was aware of the many glances the form-master was giving him perhaps Jimmy's thoughts were on the next meal. And the fact that Daniel Lambert's coffin was 6 ft. 4 ins. long, 4 ft. 4 ins. wide, and 2 ft. 4 ins. deep did not prevent Fatty Little being the trencherman he is when the time came to eat.

AN ABRUPT END

by R. J. Godsave

It was unfortunate that the Monster Library should have ceased publication at No. 19 at a time when such favourite old series of the Nelson Lee Library as the coming of Archie Glenthorne, the Schoolboy Crusoes, which would have probably have graced the pages of No. 20 had its life been prolonged for a few months.

Although the Communist School series was the last reprint of the Lee in the Monster Library, the football series which featured Reggie Pitt should have been the last reprint if the chronological order of the Lee had been strictly adhered to.

It would appear that there was not enough support for the Monster to carry on. Perhaps the scheme was too ambitious, and no doubt too costly. A fine three colour cover with inner drawings by 'Val' made the

Monster extremely attractive and good value for 1/-d. per month. Careful editing was required to prevent irrelevant material appearing which sometimes occurred in the original Nelson Lees.

To many of the Lee readers of the mid 1920's the earlier series were completely unknown, and likely to be so, as at that time back numbers were virtually unobtainable. In these circumstances the Monster was a great gift to all the Lee readers. Its end came suddenly with No. 19 in the May of 1927, when the readers were invited to buy No. 54 of the Schoolboys' Own Library which featured the St. Frank's boys in 'Buying the Remove'. Previously the next monthly issue of the Monster Library was advertised with an applicable drawing at the end of the book. It was a shock to the faithful reader who was quite unprepared for such an abrupt ending of this remarkable venture into reprints of the Nelson Lee Library.

* * * * *

COMPUTER Print-Out of HOWARD BAKER MAGNETS

Mr. Bob Acraman has, with the aid of his own computer, produced a print-out of Magnets reissued by Mr. Howard Baker, with indications of the source of each story. Let Mr. Acraman explain it in his own words:

"In view of the interest shown in the above computer "print out" while we have it held in the memory of the computer, I am making it available to any collector on just this one occasion providing 30p is sent to cover the cost of computer paper, postage and packing. A brief description - it is a 6 ft. long "print out" of every single Magnet number and the numbers of the Howard Baker reproduction Bond, Book Club or Annual. The numbers and relevant reproduction are shown in four 6 ft. long columns. Thus we have at a glance the exact position to date of well over 1,000 Magnet numbers and its relevant reproduction counterpart. Where no counterpart exists a space is left by the number that a reproduction may be written in when it is published. No "print outs" will be held spare and a copy can only be sent while it is in the memory of the computer."

Any reader desiring a copy should drop a line, with 30p, without delay, to Mr. Acraman whose address is 49 KINGSEND, RUISLIP, MIDDSX.

* * * * *

FOR SALE: Sexton Blakes 1st/2nd series; also Union Jacks.
S.a.e. with WANTS.

Laurie Young, 211 May Lane, Birmingham, B14 4AW

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I must thank all the contributors to Blakiana for the material they have sent me after my plea for more. The article by J.E.M. about the artist F. B. Harnack is most interesting and I am sure we should all be pleased for his research into the matter. I spent quite a long time looking through my Union Jacks for any reference to Mr. Harnack, but could only find the one item also noted by J.E.M. in Union Jack No. 1497. Can anyone help with further information?

THUMBNAIL EXPERT: A Tribute to F. B. Harnack by J.E.M.

"A tribute to whom?" I can almost hear you ask, though if you were a reader of the Union Jack or Detective Weekly you know Mr. Harnack well enough. Or, at least, you know his work.

F. B. Harnack was the artist who, for a number of years, contributed those thumbnail sketches scattered throughout the text of the stories. Against the main illustrations, especially those of Eric Parker, they were humble enough additions. Rather like those tiny bits of gelatine sprinkled on a bowl of rich trifle. But, just as the trifle is never quite the same without such decorations, so the Blakian chronicles might have been rather less without Mr. Harnack. Anyway, his drawings were important enough for his name to be included in the artistic "credits" of at least one issue of the UJ - and alongside the great Parker at that.

Rarely more than an inch or so square, Harnack's embellishments were realised in the simplest outline or silhouette. Yet, occasionally, they achieved atmosphere and depth. A menacing, shadowy figure; a gloomy shop-front; a slumped body in an alley; a ship on the distant horizon; a car whose headlights stabbed the dark - such cameos could genuinely catch the eye.

It would be silly to make too much of these modest little offerings but they did become a part, however small, of the total visual package of the old Blake journals. And, like so much minor graphic art, they probably made most of their impact almost without our noticing.

I have failed to discover anything about F. B. Harnack himself, beyond the information that he probably lived in Worthing for part of his life and that, as one might guess, he was a fairly humble ranker in the vast army of AP artists who stamped the image of Sexton Blake on our memories every bit as firmly as the writers themselves. Perhaps some other Blakian can tell us more about this intriguing miniaturist?

MADAMOISELLE YVONNE - CONSULTANT

by Raymond Cure

According to the dictionary the word consult means to seek counsel, to seek advice, to seek information. I suppose under this definition one is able to find a consultant for every occasion. There are a number of cases where you could need a consultant. In the case of your health - a doctor, your teeth a dentist, your finance - a banker, or regarding a matter of law - a solicitor. You can even go so far as to consult a fortune-teller. My own mother was a Blackpool fortune-teller in the 1930's and forties. At the amazing price of 6d. and 1/-- and producing your hand, you could obtain advice about the future, for 2/6d. the Crystal Ball went into things a little fuller.

As we are about to consult Sexton Blake, the famous upholder of the law we must consider the hiring of a private detective. According to the fiction writers it was a common thing from around 1888 and 1940, hence Sherlock Holmes, Dixon Hawke and Sexton Blake or whoever you preferred to consult. There was no closed shop. Any detective could put his sign board out, or, as in this case her, sign board. It is not so today, most people rely on the local police or Scotland Yard, or if you wish to see what your wife or husband is up to - a Private Eye.

For the purpose of this article we are considering the time when there were some real full-blooded detectives around. You paid your money and got results. One thing could be said for that happy band of detectives, they were not enemies, they were rivals but friendly rivals. Mind you it was not unusual for a female to nail her board up, at least in 1922 the period of our story. As I said it was a friendly rivalry, so friendly that when a lesser light had a difficult case he or she would turn to the greater light for help and advice. Consultant Mlle Yvonne being the lesser light and Sexton Blake being the greater light. It was the

"Affair of the Patagonian Devil" which had her stumped. Don't misunderstand me, Mlle. Yvonne was not after your money, she intended taking cases only from women too poor to pay, a right noble sentiment. Trouble is, you never know what turns up in the world of detection and in this case it was the Patagonian Devil, worse luck.

Full marks to the author (G. H. Teed) for his first chapter, following the prologue. It would never occur to me to base a spooky chapter in the setting of a beautiful April evening, surely nights of fog - thunderstorms - gales - heavy rain are needed to set the stage for a creepy scene. Not so! The author builds up thrills of a supernatural nature amid this setting. Quote:-

"She made her way back and turning out the little night light, crossed to the open window and gazed on the garden beneath. It was a beautiful starry night. There was no moon, but by the light of a myriad stars she could make out different items in the garden, and even the grounds beyond". In a spring setting like this he builds up a spooky chapter. Now for the Patagonian Devil, you hear him before you see him and its not a pretty noise. Quote:- "Following the thud came a slow scraping noise as though some creature were dragging its useless limbs across the floor. The sound stopped but only for a few seconds and when it came again it was accompanied by a sharp panting sound like the heavy breathing of an animal. Yvonne was not a nervous person, but the scraping, panting sound at the door at that time of night made her shiver with cold. She picked up her automatic . . ."

Before you are through with this chapter there are more supernatural thrills, you even catch a brief glimpse of the Patagonian Devil, howbeit only his hand. As Jimmy Saville would say "How's about that then".

For reasons of space and because this does not presume to be a review of the story, but merely an appreciation of it, I close, but not without giving you a fleeting glimpse of the Devil. "Tinker opened the door. The next instant he drew back with a sharp sensation of nausea and revulsion at what he saw. In there was something he had never seen before. It was human yet not human. It crouched at one side of the small, half-dark room, snarling and mouthing at him like some ghastly nightmare of evil. The room was filled with the mephitic stench of the

Thing. With a hideous throaty whine it launched itself full upon him. Next moment it was clinging to him with both feet braced against his thighs after the fashion of a lynx. Its arms were about his neck. " End of quote. At this point I bid my reader adieu.

Once again Mlle. Yvonne - Consultant. U.J. No. 963, dated 25 March, 1922. Look it up in your collection, or borrow it from the Josie Packman Sexton Blake Library. You'll be delighted!

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 235. THE EVERGREEN CEDAR CREEK

Fifty years ago this month Danny spent 4d. on a copy of No. 171 of the Schoolboys' Own Library, entitled "The Outcast of Cedar Creek".

So did I. Seeing the reminiscence in Danny's Diary, I looked out my own copy. Like most of my S.O.L's it is elegant, unfaded, untarnished. The colours of the cover glow, the pages even give off a faint scent of printers' ink. It might have been bought yesterday. Sweet memories carry me back to that glad time when periodicals of that type, in profusion, were available in the shops for young people.

This story contains a selection from the very last Cedar Creek series of all, a series which ran for seventeen weeks, until the lights dimmed over the prairies - and the curtain fell. The hero, Frank Richards, suspected of robbing his Headmistress, Miss Meadows, fled from his uncle's ranch, to escape going within the walls of the "tough" school to which Rancher Lawless was proposing to send his nephew.

For the adult reader, this last, long series is the finest of all the Cedar Creek saga which had run since 1917. The last seventeen tales appeared in the early summer of 1921. Frank Richards, on his own, met with various western adventures, and became a young cowhand rather than a schoolboy. One can see something here of the Rio Kid, waiting in the wings or concealed in the brushwood, until he should make his debut some seven years after the end of Cedar Creek.

This copy of the S.O.L. does not contain all the 17 stories, of course. It was a pity they did not publish the whole section in two separate editions. A sequence is omitted in which Frank came upon an

old friend, Mr. Penrose, who had once edited a newspaper in Thompson, until his shifty methods had caused him to leave the district and gallop into the sunset. Frank met up with him now, and Mr. Penrose proposed to start a new newspaper, for which Frank (the budding author) was to write a weekly story. Once again, Mr. Penrose proved shifty and vacillating, so we said farewell to him for the last time.

Another section omitted told of Mr. Lawless offering a large reward for anyone bringing his straying nephew back to the ranch. The reward tempted one or two rascals to get on the trail, with another adventure or two for Frank.

It is a pity (for those in the know) that some of the tales were omitted, but for those not in the know, this S.O.L. reads well, and provides hours of splendid entertainment.

Some eleven years ago I made an appraisal, in this Let's Be Controversial series, of the entire Cedar Creek saga. The standard of these western tales was high. Most successful, probably, were those which related western adventure as opposed to those of Canadian backwoods school life; least successful were those concerning the very unlikely Hillcrest School conducted by Mr. Peckover.

The series had run in the Boys' Friend for four years. It was the only one of Hamilton's main series to which he never added in later years. Yet it was immensely popular, as is amply proved by its constant reprinting in the years that followed. In the whole lot there was only one substitute tale. All, except the solitary sub tale, were reprinted in the Popular (much of it was reprinted twice in this paper), the Gem, the Holiday Annual, the S.O.L., and the B.F.L. Then why did it end in 1921 in the Boys' Friend?

The final story of the saga, "Frank Richards's Resolve", is intriguing for Cedar Creek fans. Frank had been of service to Lord St. Austell, who had been kidnapped by the Black Sack gang in that final 17 story series. The earl wanted to take Frank back to England, send him to university, and set him on the road to realising his ambition of becoming a great author.

Here was a natural ending for the saga. Had Frank accepted, it would have been a splendid wind-up to Frank Richards's career in Canada.

But Frank turned down the offer. The call of the prairies was too great, according to the author. And so the door, which should have been slammed, was left open so that the series could be continued at a later date. It never was continued. But the ending inclines me to the view that the decision to end the series was not made by Hamilton.

It is pretty obvious that the publishers wanted Hamilton back where he belonged, in the Gem and the Magnet. Only a month or two earlier, Hamilton's own rather sub-standard Greyfriars series in the Boys' Herald had been stamped upon. Now Cedar Creek had gone.

It was an absurdity that the A.P.'s star author should, for so long, have been providing fare for the Boys' Herald and the Boys' Friend, while the Gem and Magnet, whose lives depended on their school stories, were fading under the weight of a long run of indifferent substitute tales.

The departure of Hamilton from the Herald had been followed by his return to the Gem. After Cedar Creek ended, he was back, in August, in the Magnet with a caravanning series.

From now on, the cream of his work was to provide an Indian Summer for the Gem. Though he was to give less attention to the Magnet for a year or two, the main fact was that he was back, at last, after a long, long absence.

So we can remember Cedar Creek with happy gratitude. We can also be very, very thankful that it ended when it did.

But you and I and Danny never forgot the School in the Backwoods, and especially we recalled that last great series, given a fresh peep at life in S.O.L. No. 171, "The Outcast of Cedar Creek".

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A SUBSTITUTE'S TRY - BUT I WASN'T
CONVERTED

by Laurie Sutton

In the July C.D. Mr. F. R. Lowe refers to three Magnet stories which he believes to be sub-written - Nos. 730, 787 and 853. Briefly, 730 and 853 are definitely subs, and I had strong doubts about 787 when I read and analysed it some years ago, and would like to read it again after an interval of some 15 years.

Although the published lists of sub stories are vastly informative, and we owe a tremendous debt to the research of Bill Lofts, it should be

realised that these lists are not quite complete, nor completely reliable (a few numbers have the wrong authors' names appended).

Magnet 853, although not sub-listed in the Magnet Companion, was listed as a Stanley Austin story in Bill Lofts' original C.D. Annual Magnet subs' guide.

Regarding 730, although Charles Hamilton wrote a Greyfriars rucker story in 1910, he certainly did not write this one, with its references to Tommy Brown, Squiff Field, and Davey Morgan. Neither could C.H. have written the following, in 1922: "Coker, who showed promise of being a really good (rucker) player".

The author of 730 informs us that Highcliffe already had a rucker team. However, the Remove scratch XV beat them 17-13, after being 13 points down at half-time:

"Go it, Bunter!" cried the Greyfriars spectators.

"Bless my soul! He's going to score a try!" roared Mr. Quelch, who had been following the game with great interest.'

Billy Bunter did indeed score a try, but the author did not convert me to the belief that he was the genuine Frank Richards. The astonishing thing is that none of our regular experts appear to have remarked on this unlisted sub effort earlier!

* * * * *

HAEL - AND FAREWELL

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: I little knew what a Storm I was arousing when I penned that little comment about Innis Hael to tag on to that Danny's Diary a few months back.)

CHRISTOPHER LOWDER writes: Oh, dear. It's never encouraging to discover that what one has always assumed to be one's own dry, laconic wit, can go down with others not lightly but with all the characteristics of a lead balloon. And although I don't want to take up any more valuable space, I feel I must hastily explain to Ernest Holman and Tony Glynn that all that stuff about Charles H. Snow, H. Winter Gale, C. Vernon Frost and Claude Rains was -- well, you know ... a mild piece of whimsy, a flippant trifle, something not to be taken seriously; in short, a joke (I mean, Claude Rains?).

What must be taken seriously, if only to set the record straight, is that the man who called himself Michael Storm was also the man who used the pseudonym Innis Hael (and the sharper-eyed reader will have noticed long before now the connection between the word 'Hael' and the word 'Michael!'). The S. Clarke Hook entry in Men Behind Boys' Fiction was

an error (such things do happen), as my colleagues Bill Lofts and Derek Adley are only too happy to admit.

When I first read the Alan Wayward series it was immediately **apparent** that the stories were not by Hook; stylistically, they were poles apart from the Jack, Sam & Pete stories. By a lucky chance I had just finished reading a number of Union Jacks by Storm, and I was convinced the Wayward stories were in fact by the same writer. However, I was only able to prove this by an even more lucky chance -- when, researching something else entirely, I stumbled across a cancelled AP cheque for the first of the Wayward stories (£11-11-0) made out to the woman who called herself 'Mrs. Storm'. Other cheques came to light: some to Mrs. Storm, some to Michael Storm. I then discovered the original Gem payment details **where all seven stories** were marked down as being by 'M. Storm'. And if S. Clarke Hook were to rise from the grave, affix me with a basilisk-like glare and say "You're wrong; I wrote the Alan Wayward stories", I'd tell him he was a liar.

On Tony Glynn's point (and at the risk of sounding an intolerably tedious know-it-all), Charles Horace Snow wasn't Harry Sinclair Drago. Drago was an American, born in 1888; Snow (b. 1877) was almost certainly British, and spent a large portion of his life hammering out Westerns for the firm of Wright & Brown, both under his own name and under the pseudonym 'Charles Ballew'. He probably wrote in between 80 and 100 Westerns, 25 or so of which (under the Ballew byline) featured the character Rim-Fire.

W. O. G. LOFTS writes: I was surprised that Messrs. Holman and Glynn took Chris Lowder so seriously. Chris was writing tongue in cheek just to show the curious trait of Ernest Sempill in choosing the elements for pen-names of his stories. One could add 'Alan Gale' which is authentic. Many years ago I did find that 'Innis Hael' was credited to S. Clarke Hook by some official source, consequently it was recorded in Men Behind Boys Fiction as a result. Much later events seem to indicate that the stories in the Gem at least were penned by Ernest Sempill (Michael Storm).

Despite over 30 years of research on and off, the whole question of the mysterious 'Michael Storm' is as baffling as ever. By all accounts there is no record of anyone dying abroad under both his names in the period 1909. The Boys' Friend Library, 'The Death Drums' has never been traced elsewhere, which gives the impression that it was specially written, though no record exists as to who got paid for it. There was another Sempill - Charles Ignatius who as a writer up to at least 1930 used the name of 'Michael Storm' - and who was a high official in the Kenya Police. I feel certain he must have been either the son, or near relative of the original 'Michael Storm' - and familiar with his pen-names especially that of 'Innis Hale'. He certainly had the qualifications to write about Africa, and the Grey Messengers. Investigations are continuing until the whole mystery has been resolved.

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NEXT MONTH the much-loved CHUMS will be 90 years old

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

MIDLAND

June 1982

Only nine members attended our June meeting. Things might have been worse except for a visit from three Firars Club members who are also members of the Midland Club.

Our usual features - Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item, were on show. The A.N. was Nelson Lee Library No. 160 (old series) title S.O.S. or "Tricked by Wireless" published on 29th June, 1918 and 64 years old to the day. The C.I. was No. 1 of "School Cap". This was one of the many short-lived publications which in the early post-war years tried to capture the spirit of the Magnet and Gem, etc. It was dated 6th August, 1953.

Bob Acraman has been doing some research and produced sheets of paper showing the full list of Magnets published and information as to where Howard Baker has reprinted them and in what volumes. It is believed Howard Baker will reprint every Magnet ever published eventually. They were 30p each.

A game of Greyfriars Bingo with Tom Porter and Joan Loveday the winners was followed by refreshments with coffee or lemonade and some excellent assorted biscuits provided by Joan Loveday.

A discussion took place where members were asked, "What quality in Charles Hamilton's stories attracted you apart from the story?" It was an excellent discussion and every member made a contribution.

A reading by your correspondent followed. Here was Charles Hamilton exercising that precious right of criticising governments - and it was very funny indeed.

The dates of our next two meetings are 26th August and 28th September.

JACK BELLFIELD (Correspondent)

LONDON

High summer at Ealing, a splendid tea served in both the hall and the garden and in the former on the walls, various old boys' books which later on had to be named, a customary competition that is always conducted by the host, Bill Bradford. Roy Parsons and Chris Harper were the joint winners.

Tony Rees' poem was one on the 'Boulder' which everyone enjoyed.

An essay on Hamilton Domesticity by Arthur and Miriam Bruning and read by the latter was well received and caused great amusement.

Millicent Lyle's six characters that she would like to have at a dinner party were Katy Carr, William Wibley, Clara Trevlyn, Rupert de Courcey, the Little Mermaid of Hans Anderson and Dick Whittington and not forgetting the latter's cat. Millicent mentioned the recent "Brains of Britain" when one of the questions was "Who were the Famous Five?"

From the book "The Heirs of Tom Brown", Brian Doyle read the chapters that were devoted to Charles Hamilton.

Bob Blythe read the account of the June meeting at Cricklewood in 1965 which told of a visit by Miss Edith Hood.

Larry Peters' quiz was won by Roy Parsons and Chris Harper.

There will be no library transactions at the Maidstone meeting, Sunday, 8th August, tea and coffee will be provided, but those attending, kindly bring your own picnic lunch.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held: Saturday, 10th July, 1982

Although a warm summer evening, only nine members were present - holidays and the train strike had obviously taken their tolls. Our big disappointment was that Bill Lofts could not be with us - owing to the train strike. We look forward to seeing Bill at some early future meeting.

A report was given to the Members who had been unable to be present on 17th June, when Keith Hodkinson from the Cambridge Club had visited us and showed his excellent film "The Boys' Own Paper". This had been greatly appreciated by all Members and a good evening

had been enjoyed. We had also welcomed Bob and Betty Acraman who had been touring the country.

Our Secretary reported that we had recently heard from our President, Hubert Gregg who informed us that he hoped to perhaps attend one of our meetings when in the area.

A copy of the Howard Baker publication "Collectors' Pie Number 2" was passed round for inspection and comments were noted concerning the insertion of a list of all Magnet facsimiles re-produced so far. This was of great help to the reader and researcher. However, some inaccuracies had also been noted.

After refreshments, Keith Atkinson presented his novel game "Greyfriars Scrabble". Each person was given an envelope containing many letters - the idea being to make as many Greyfriars names as possible - the maximum being twenty. It was a simple game - except it was a case of getting the right names at random, otherwise the score of twenty could not be achieved. Needless to say, it provided a great deal of amusement and almost succeeded in keeping quiet Harry Barlow who always has some comment to make during these games! Keith Smith was the winner with nine names correct out of the twenty.

Our next meeting will be on Saturday, 14th August, at the home of Michael Bentley (unusual for us to stray from our normal venue) and Michael will be presenting a film show of British and American comedy film exerpts. All those wishing to avail themselves of transport, should meet at 6.30 p.m. outside our normal meeting place - The Swarthmore Education Centre, Leeds 3.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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The Postman Called

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

F. STURDY (Middlesborough): Recently I read a 1950's "Sun", which you will recall was publishing St. Jim's yarns at the time. Tom Merry was accused of trouble-making, and his friends were trying to get to the bottom of it all. The story read quite well, and could have been accepted as an example of early Hamilton style. Tom Merry's friends became too persistent in their do-gooding. And, in what hit me like an Exocet

missile, Tom Merry shooed them off with "Scram!"
These revisionists! Scram indeed, circa 1909.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: These revisionists, indeed! Even worse was when they had Dr. Chisholm ejaculating "Rot!" in a reprinted Rookwood story.)

GORDON HUDSON (Co. Durham): I have obtained the first issues of the new Eagle. What a feeble effort it is. It is nothing like the old paper. Not only is it all in picture-strip form, but some of the stories are illustrated by photo-pictures with not a single drawing in them. It looks as if Fleetway are unable to find artists capable of illustrating the stories. I don't know whether it will last very long, but I do know that it has disappointed a good number of people who were expecting something better. When I went into the local paper shop for the first issue the newsagent told me: "It's not the Eagle that we read".

HAROLD TRUSCOTT (Deal): Concerning "Lucky for Parkinson", I have never had the slightest doubt that this story is genuine Hamilton, nor have I now. As to Mr. Keen's question "Is there such a story?", about Peter Schlemihl, the answer is that there certainly is. It was written, under the title "Peter Schlemihls Wunderbare Geschichte", by the nineteenth century German writer Adalbert Chamisso, who also wrote, among other things, the eight poems that Robert Schumann set in his song-cycle "Woman's Life and Love" (Frauenleben und Liebe).

I quite agree with R. Cushing's estimate of "A. J. Wentworth, B.A." and if he will turn to the C.D. Annual for 1975 he will find that I devoted half of an article on "Adult School Stories" to a consideration of its merits.

BEN WHITER (London): With regard to the First Stop Clapham Junction theme. In the Silver Blaze story, Holmes and Watson went to Exeter from Paddington, not stated how they travelled to Tavistock. When returning to London with Colonel Ross, they passed Clapham Junction and proceeded to Victoria. As you state, both Doyle and Hamilton got their terminii wrong and I think that this subject was the theme of an article in an issue of the Sherlock Holmes Journal. In the Silver Blaze story the race was the Wessex Cup and later on changed its name to the Wessex Plate. However, a very good story.

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): Neil Beck's question, "Where do I start him off?" is certainly thought-provoking. Of course, it all depends at what age young David starts reading his "Magnets" and, also, what his tastes will be at the time. Recalling my own experience, I started off at eight and a half years old with the "Gem". At that tender age, it seemed jollier, more light-hearted than the "Magnet", although, inevitably, advancing years changed the preference! Still, a humorous "Gem" series might be a good idea for "starters". Remembering my own childhood delight in stories which featured characters from all the Hamilton schools, how about "D'Arcy the Runaway"? (I didn't, of course, read this when it first appeared!) Then there is the delightful "Old Bus" series of 1923, with Tom Merry and Co. on the river, which, surely, would not fail to amuse young David.

As for an introduction to the "Magnet", it would be better, I feel, if Hamilton's longer series were put on one side temporarily, and preference given to a short holiday series like the "Cavandale Abbey" stories of 1930, the "Mauleverer Towers" series of the following year, or - my own favourite! - "The Mystery of Wharton Lodge" series of Christmas 1933. In this last-named series, Bunter is prominently, but not tiresomely, featured.

THOSE GOOD OLD DAYS

by Ernest Holman

Once again, thanks for latest C.D., promptly arriving this morning. At first glance, the name of Holman seemed to be (like the World Cup and Wimbledon) on all channels!

Len Wormull need have no qualms about quoting an ESB reply to me in the Nelson Lee of fifty years ago. In fact, I would say 'Thanks for the memory, Len!' Perhaps the memory of what I used to write to Mr. Brooks may not now be with me, but the remembrance of those times certainly remains.

I wrote frequently to the author and often received a reply from him, typed on his double-coloured ribbon - and some snippets would receive mention in his Column. ESB's weekly chat show was, I think, at its best in the later 1920's. I used to find great interest in such items as "The other day when I looked in at St. Frank's and ..." (and so on).

He did in those days try to bring himself together with his readers. I remember, too, a weekly column supposedly run by Handforth (probably an Editorial effort). This would be about 1928 or so and, as a schoolboy, I would even write to the great EOH. Once or twice, the great man would deign to reply in his column. They were definitely days of enjoyable innocence and fun.

Len's article, in fact, set me thinking about those 'good old days' - days of reading, watching sport and 'going to the pictures'. Winter memories of Leyton Football Club reaching the Amateur Cup Final three years running; summer days at the Leyton County Ground, where Hobbs, Sandham, Sutcliffe, Holmes, Hendren, Hammond, Mead, Makepeace (and so many others) all 'did their stuff' against the Essex bowlers; throughout the years there were also Chaplin, Tom Mix, Harold Lloyd, Valentino at frequent intervals at the local cinema. All places within a short distance of my home. Indoor entertainment featured, amongst many, Magnet, Gem, Nelson Lee, Popular, Union Jack, Thriller, S.O.L. Great days to recall; and a mention in the same CD as Len's article brings up the subject of homework:- yes, I suppose many of us - including Danny - must have managed that aspect of life IN ADDITION.

I know one thing for sure - I am ever appreciative of the fact that my teens came in the late twenties and early thirties.

Last, but not least - how I agree with Mr. Tom Porter that life without CD is not to be thought of. Good luck from everyone in regard to your breastplate!

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Will a kind collector enable me to read a copy of GEM 878, "Saved in Secret"? I will pay top price to buy, borrow or pay for a photostat copy of the St. Jim's story. I have plenty to exchange of all periods of Hamiltonia, if preferred. Also need Gems: 816, 822, 839, 841, 935, 936, 952, 1014, 1018, 1019, 1020, 1034, 1035. Good condition. Absolute top price here.

SMYTH, P.O. BOX 366, MONA VALE, N.S.W. 2103, AUSTRALIA

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Some members of the Cambridge Club are most interested in the variety of material recorded on audio-tape held by printed ephemera collectors subscribing to the Collectors' Digest. Perhaps such collectors would care to drop me a line via the Cambridge Club's assistant Secretary, Bill Thurbon, 5 All Saints Passage, Cambridge, CB2 3LS.
A. B. PERKINS

HAMILTON INTERNATIONAL

by Simon Garrett

The recent 40th anniversary of the fall of Singapore recalled references to the base in the 1927 South Seas Series.

"Among other sights, the Greyfriars fellows had a look at the immense new naval base under construction, and they found it interesting enough; and as they were not old enough to be tax payers, they did not bother about the millions that were being flung away in that far corner of the East. Mr. Vernon-Smith explained to them that that immense base was necessary for the defence of the Empire, according to the best military and naval intellects available.

"You see the next war, if it comes at all, will be in the air," said Mr. Vernon-Smith, "so naturally they devise a naval base to meet it. But, bless you, they might have made it a cavalry barracks! I'm rather surprised they didn't, really."

Prophetic?

Not really. Samuel Vernon-Smith took no account of carrier-based aircraft and in any case he was only echoing traditional British attitudes to defence expenditure.

But Hamilton's passing references to international affairs are to me among his most absorbing passages.

I especially enjoyed Jim Valentine's sardonic account of Latin American revolutions in the Brazil series, which many people will find very relevant today.

"Fellows who don't like work like to have the spending of the taxes in their hands. Any man in Brazil would rather be a patriot than hoe on a coffee plantation. Even in our own country, I believe, a lot of fellows would rather sit in the House of Commons than push a truck or drive a train."

Also in the Brazil series, Mr. Frulo's entertaining if embittered account of how Perfidious Albion broke the Brazilian rubber monopoly:

"Rubber in Brazil is, as you say in English, knock on a head with a kybosh. The riches, they fly! Once we spend with both hands and the money come and go quick and easy. Now we take a buckle in the belt! And all because they smuggle away our seeds! Yes!"

Explaining the destruction of surplus coffee to keep prices up,

Mr. Frulo's comment was:

"... the brains at the top are what you call wonky! Governing persons use the chin instead of the brainbox."

The juniors had a brief encounter with the Spanish Civil War in the Schoolboy Smuggler series where Hamilton was strictly neutral.

This time the local expert was Valentine Compton, who pointed out that: "Most people in Spain, of course, are on neither side, and would be glad to see both mobs of scrapping swashbucklers kicked out of the country," whilst even Bunter said "I don't know t'other from which, but they're all a lot of murderous beasts!"

As in the Latin American revolutions, then, Hamilton shows a refreshing refusal to stand up and be counted on other people's business.

Yet, as if to refute one of George Orwell's charges, he debated the merits of imperialism itself in the China series, using the Hong Kong issue.

Johnny Bull thought it "rot to expect the natives to like it" and "... how should we like the Chinese to bag the Isle of Wight and turn it into a Chinese port?"

Wun Lung loyally retorted that it was "Plenty safe to live under Blitish flag. Keepee plenty money along Hong Kong Bankee."

Ferrers Locke took a fairly balanced view, but sternly concluded that "A country must learn to govern itself decently before it can demand to be respected by foreigners."

Interestingly he distinguished Hong Kong from the rival enclaves held by the German, Portuguese and Japanese "land grabbers".

Portuguese Macao, as a gambling metropolis, naturally had a bad press ("Precious example for white men to set the Chinese") and it is enough condemnation that Bunter preferred the engaging decadence of Macao to the thriving industry of Hong Kong.

Actually, "Dagoes" were probably the most despised of all foreigners in boys' story papers between the wars. It is ironic that the Portuguese held more tenaciously to their Empire than any other Western country!

There were countless other references to overseas economic and political issues, often prompted by the overseas Greyfriars characters and connections.

Through Fisher T. Fish, for instance, we stray into US prohibition and racial tensions with California's Spanish minority. Both factors play a major part in the Hollywood series plot.

Mr. Vernon-Smith's business interests in Africa lead to an adventure based on a border dispute with Mussolini's Ethiopia.

Hurree Singh and the India series was interesting on the subject of native principalities and their relations with the Raj, in fact the adventure turned on rival views of this relationship.

Monty Newland was occasionally linked with the period's anti-semitic movement but this was an awkward theme and not followed through.

I wonder how many contemporary readers skipped all this (to me) interesting content and how many learned from it, as it was presented in such an attractive way.

Today, at least, Hamilton's digressions on to a wider stage form a fascinating example of the "unwitting testimony" of a popular writer; which can be far more revealing than the often prejudiced pictures of more respected authorities and historians.

Broadly conservative, but by no means uncritical of the Establishment and often mildly satirical of it, he is a far cry from the right-wing conspirator depicted by Orwell.

As an avid reader of both, I should think they had far more in common than either realised.

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EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY writes Len Wormull

Every picture tells a story, it is said, and the delightful July cover drawing by Henry Webb recalled to mind an early incident. It reminded me at once of Magnet cover No. 1207 (The Man From The States), and it was this particular copy that was at the centre of a little joke at my expense. My family knew that I was "unapproachable" on Magnet and Nelson Lee days, and most weeks I was fortunate to receive the papers a day early. I remember rushing home from school expecting to see the above Magnet, only to find it missing. You know the feeling, collectors, when you have narrowly missed a scoop. Frustrated. The newsagent was one of the street-trading kind, and not available until the next day. Gloom and despondency. A little later my sister held up the missing Magnet, to laughter all round. It had been hidden under a chair cushion! I had to laugh afterwards, but at the time it was a jape I failed to appreciate. What an influence those old papers had on our young lives.

FOR FIDO

by

MARY CADOGAN



When I first read the Cliff House stories in the 1930's Bessie Bunter's pet was a beautiful Pekingese called Ting-a-Ling. (Her parrot which had been featured in the early School Friend seemed by then to have been phased out.) There were lots of touching and heart-warming stories about Ting-a-Ling.

He was a lovable and mischievous scamp, who had been circus trained before becoming Bessie's pet. His antics not only entertained Bessie and her chums, but once even helped to get his mistress into Hollywood films as part of a girl-and-doggy double act.

I always liked Ting-a-Ling, partly for his own engaging qualities and partly because he brought out the best in Bessie. Many years after I had first made the acquaintance of Bessie's pet in the Schoolgirl, Alex, Teresa and I acquired a real life Pekingese who not only closely resembled Ting-a-Ling physically, but had a similarly lovable nature. We called him Fido (after my first fictional doggy favourite from Tiger Tim's "Co.") which seemed much more suitable for him than his high-faluting kennel name - "Golden Wonder of Philorth".

Fido, of course, means faithful - and our little peke more than lived up to his name. For twelve years he gave us his wholehearted and unswerving affection, his joyous company and cheer. Over the years the pretty black markings on his fawn face had changed to grey and then to white - but we had hardly noticed. To us he always had the joy and freshness and friskiness of a puppy until very recently, when we noticed that he slept longer and had become quieter. Then, at the end of June our darling Fido left us - he died of heart failure and old age, but faithful to the end he gave us a last big brown-eyed look of devotion and a last feeble tail-wag as we tearfully held him, and said our loving

goodbyes.

In the Cliff House stories Bessie often cried for Ting-a-Ling when he was ill or in some dreadful scrape or another. And now I weep for Fido, and write for him this little tribute. Fido - like Ting-a-Ling - will not be forgotten.

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"ANOTHER CHANCE TO SEE ..."

by James Hodge

The second appearance of 'The Phantom of Cursitor Field', in 'The Bullseye', ended with No. 104 of that famous 'blue blood'. Or did it?

I recently came across evidence to the contrary among the contents of a jumble-sale book stall, from where I bought a book entitled 'Supernatural Stories for Boys', published by Hamlyn in 1968, second impression 1971, third 1972.

Among the stories is one - 'The Phantom of Cursitor Fields'. Without access to the original 'Bullseye' stories, I am unable to tell how much of a re-hash is this version. The location is still the gas-lighted alleys of Old Cheapside and we have our erstwhile friends Mr. Jolly, the young constable Bob Bryan and, of course, the Phantom who, demonic and elusive as of yore, leads everyone a merry dance. The villain of the piece is Sir Gordon Murgatroyd, baronet, rich, arrogant and Mayor of the Fields, and a man with a dark secret to keep.

After many alarums, the climax comes when - wait for it! - BBC TV is doing a documentary on the Phantom. Sir Gordon is saying his piece before the cameras when the Phantom itself materializes in the studio and before millions of viewers denounces Sir Gordon, due to some infant-swapping centuries before, as an imposter and declares John Bryan, father of our young hero Bob, to be the rightful baronet.

With hazy, but fond memories of a boyhood favourite, I found this oddly unevenly up-dated version rather depressing; gaslight and TV do not, for me, make a compatible mixture.

The original 'Phantom' was, I believe, written by Alfred Edgar. In this instance, authorship is credited to one 'Henry Pope'. Acknowledgements for permission to print is made by Hamlyn to Fleetway Publications. Acknowledgement is also made for four further stories, among them one

by 'Jeffrey Gaunt' who, according to Lofts/Adley was Geo. E. Rochester. But - that's another matter for another time.

* * * * *

I SHALL NEVER FORGET VAL

says A. W. Hanson

The article "Cooking Up The Story" by Chris Lowder in last year's C.D. Annual gave a pen-picture of one of the many great artists of the old boys' papers. J. H. Valda was one of these. He contributed some of the best covers of all time - those which featured in the 19 Monster Libraries.

No. 1, "The Schoolboy Treasure Seekers" was a taste of things to come. The next one, "The Boy from Bermondsey" is realistic, showing a new boy entering the school gates, and showing well-known St. Frank's characters instantly recognisable. "Expelled" showed the school steps, with Nipper looking exactly as one would expect him to look. Singleton is shown remarkable in "The Spendthrift of St. Frank's".

Most impressive of all is "The Voyage of the Wanderer", with a painting of the tide up. Dick Goodwin "The Boy Who Vanished" looks just as one had imagined him. Then a really superb cover to "The Prisoners of the Mountains". All the same, what really converted me to the St. Frank's stories was "The Boy from Bermondsey", with the St. Frank's fellows looking so true-to-life.

I can't forget Valda in the Champion Annuals, 1924 and 1925, as he illustrated "The Land of the Shadow Men" and "The Peril of the Clockwork Men". I find that Valda did some work in the Detective Weekly in the thirties, but these pictures were only a shadow on the real Valda.

Without any question, his best period was in the twenties. Did you know that, at that time, he illustrated prolifically "History of the Nations" for Hutchinson's 50 magazines?

I, for one, would have liked to know of the life and background of this great artist.

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NEXT MONTH the much-loved CHUMS will be 90 years old