

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOL. 36

No. 430

OCTOBER 1982

૨૮

એલું નામ વિલિયમ



વિલિયમ અદેખા અને અંધ
મદનના બાણનો શિકાર બન્યો.

‘ હા, હવે બધું બરાબર સમજાયું. ’ તેણે ખાતરી

34p

The latest from Lofts & Adley! The Boys', Girls, and Children's Annual Catalogue. Now ready, the results of over twenty years research. Large size A4 (11 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ "), 152-pages with lists, dates and reference numbers from Victorian days up to 1980. Invaluable to all types of Annual Collectors. Typed and being large size, easy to read, this unique and very first Annual Catalogue sold only by me. Price £5 + postage extra.

Here's a real bargain! Girls' Friend Library (3d.) 69 bound vols. as new original file copies, beautifully bound in two-tone cloth. Pollie Green, etc. A gift at £35 + post for the lot! Worth treble! Too many in stock, good Champions, 1945-50's, 100 for £25!

Surplus copies "Gem Index", $\frac{1}{2}$ price, £1.50 each. Howard Bakers. McCalls "Greyfriars Guide". A comprehensive Who's Who, What's What and Where's Where, £7.95. Also all H. Bakers Facsimiles Book Club Specials in stock.

Blue Magnets & Gems. Special offer of fair reading copies, 50 for £50, less than $\frac{1}{2}$ price! Coloured, early, same price. From 1934 coloured to approx. 1937, 50 for £30. Small format Gems and Salmon Magnets. Reading copies, 50 for £25. All my selection.

So much to offer! Come and see "Aladdin's Cave" you are most welcome and see for yourself! Please ring first. Give yourself a treat!

NORMAN SHAW

84 BELVEDERE ROAD
UPPER NORWOOD
LONDON, SE19 2HZ

Nearest B.R. Station - Crystal Palace

Tel. 01 771 9857

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 36

No. 430

OCTOBER 1982

Price 34p

(COPYRIGHT. This magazine is privately circulated. The reproduction of the contents, either wholly or in part, without written permission from the Editor, is strictly forbidden.)



A Word From The Skipper.

LET'S LOOK BACK FOR A MINUTE --

So many people have written to say how much they enjoy the long look back at the extracts we publish now and then from the very early extracts from Danny's famous Diary that I'm beginning to feel a bit jealous. After all, the Skipper was writing, too, twenty years ago. So what about a brief look back and see what he had in his bonnet at that time. Down the years the editorial column has covered almost everything from Magnets to murder, from Champions to cinemas, from Populars to pets. And readers just seem to like it that way, otherwise

they'd have sacked me long ago.

So! A brief peep at "A Word from the Skipper" of October, 20 years ago. One item concerned the lovely coloured comic paper "Puck". I had unearthed a copy of Puck, dated apparently about 1912. I was greatly impressed by the colour, the illustrations, and the wealth of first-class reading matter for children. A feast of enjoyment, in the best of taste, for all youngsters.

I had shown the coloured comic to a man on the staff of one of our great weekly illustrated magazines. He told me: "It would be impossible to produce a paper like that today!"

"You mean," I had queried, "that it would cost too much to produce? That there would be no market for it?"

"I mean," he replied, "that it couldn't be done! It's a lost art!"

Another item in that Skipper ramble concerned Pedro, Sexton Blake's famous bloodhound. The Sexton Blake Library that month published the first Pedro story for ages and ages. It was entitled "Killer Pack". I commented that it was a well-written story which should please all lovers of detective tales. But, I added: "It will be judged by our readers, not so much on its quality as a story as on the manner that the return of the grand bloodhound has been handled." I added a reminder that "the S.B.L. costs only one shilling".

A third item mentioned that "Mr. John Wernham is collecting material with the aim in view of starting a Charles Hamilton Museum in Maidstone ..."

Is all that really only twenty years ago? Indeed it is! Seems much longer, doesn't it?

BUNTER FOR THE POP AGE

Considering that the updated versions of four post-war Bunter books, originally published by Skilton, are not due for publication till September 27th, and reviewers are usually asked not to review before publication date, there seems to have been a lot written about them and quite a few of them being passed round early in the month. Published, as written, in 1947, at 7/6, the new versions are £4.95, which seems steep for the modern boy's pocket-money, but probably isn't in this decimalised age.

I am a little puzzled as to why it was considered necessary to revise the texts or replace the illustrations of R. J. Macdonald in these new books. Gilding the lily never appealed to me much. I have yet to see anything, (including my beloved Bible), which has really been improved by the know-so-much better brain of the modern reviser.

The lady who did the revising for Bunter is quoted as saying: "It was necessary to get rid of some of the racist attitudes to Hurree Singh. You simply can't have someone being called a nigger and always with a dusky smile."

Something in that, of course. But so far as I recall, it was only those clearly depicted as caddish and careless of the feelings of others who, in 1947, used the term "nigger". I reckon there are just as many people about, in real life in 1982, who could be equally offensive. Or are we a bit more hypocritical now, in spite of the enlightenment they boast about which came in with the permissive society. As for the "dusky smile", I think that rather charming. Obviously not intended to be offensive. Quite the reverse. And how many times was a dusky smile mentioned in one book, I wonder?

The reviser added, it seems: "If kids are to read Bunter instead of him becoming a legend, then the publisher has done the right thing."

That gave me a chuckle. Not much of a legend about Greyfriars and Hamilton at the moment. The false picture of Bunter as nothing but a greedy, fat boy who made weird noises has been painted by modern writers who have churned out articles on him by the hundred. That picture has been accepted by those who know no better. In dozens of tales there were splendid pieces of characterisation in connection with the Owl, but it is 40 years since the last Magnet was published. And 40 years ago some of the reviewers may have been toddling about in rompers.

Of course, I'm prejudiced. I haven't seen the books yet. They may be a dream of delight for young and old. I hope so.

THIS MONTH'S COVER

Long year's ago my old friend, Richmal Crompton, took me up to her bookcase where she had proudly displayed a number of her William books printed in foreign languages. She asked me to select any one for myself, which I did, and she inscribed it for me and

presented it to me. I forget what the language is, but, on our cover this week, we reprint a picture from it, with the caption, so no doubt you will recognize the language at once.

The artist is, of course, the splendid Thomas Henry, in one of his earlier portrayals of William. Many years later, when the earlier books were reprinted, he drew new pictures of the same events re-set in a modern world. The modern version of putting new wine into old bottles. How seldom anything in the line of literature is improved when trendy folk set about updating it.

THE ANNUAL

Much sweat flows in the editorial office at present as everything is geared and agog for work on the 1982 C.D. Annual. In these costly days it will not be possible to print many extra copies to allow for late orders. If you want an Annual in December, please order early. Have you ordered your Annual yet? The final date for the acceptance of small advertisements or announcements is the last day of October.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

Danny's Diary

OCTOBER 1932

On 1st October, which was a Saturday, we put the clocks back an hour. So summer is over. At first, when the clocks go back, we always seem to be plunged into winter, but there are plenty of compensations. After all, cricket is finished for another year, and our English team will soon be off to Australia. And it's lovely to sit beside a roaring fire, reading the Magnet, or making toast with bread on a long fork, ready for tea. And it seems just right to go off to the pictures in the winter, with a bag of American Gums in one pocket and a pennorth of hot chestnuts in the other, but one feels a bit guilty about sitting in a cinema when the sun is shining.

Something rummy happened in the Modern Boy's first issue for October. There was no King of the Islands story, though it had been

announced the previous week. And there was no explanation for its non-appearance, though we are in the middle of an exciting series. Did they just leave it out for some reason? Or did Charles Hamilton, the writer, have the toothache and be unable to get it ready in time? I dunno - and nor do you!

At any rate, all was well with the second issue of the month. It was "Island of Pearls". And, as well as pearls on that island, there are cannibals who collect people's heads. And that scoundrel, Dandy Peters, is also after those elusive pearls. So it looks as though Ken and his pals are in for a frightful end.

Next - "The Beach of Terror". What a lovely title! It means death to go on that fearsome island, Aya-ua, but the pearls act like a magnet, so on the island they all go. Then, next week, "Ken King Steps In". Wu Fang, the wily Chinese, gets the pearls, and Ben Keefe, the sailorman who knew the secret, is taken by the cannibals to be made ready for the cooking-pot. And, as the tale ends, Ken King is ready to take a hand to save the white man.

Last of the month is "In the Head-Hunter's Lair". Kit Hudson is invited to visit the island devil-doctor, the old fiend who smokes heads in his spare time. But Ken, with brawny Koko, goes as well. What will happen next? I've got to wait a week before I find out.

The Modern Boy is pretty good now. There is a new series about Captain Justice, with his second-in-command, Dr. O'Malley, who have remarkable adventures with two strange airships at 20,000 feet. Alfred Edgar is back with another series about motor-bike racing. When Modern Boy is in doubt, it always falls back on Alfred Edgar. His tales aren't too bad, either. The Captain Justice tales are by Murray Roberts. And there is a serial "Who Sails With Me?" by Maurice Everard, set in the olden days. A pretty good twopennorth.

Ken King also features in "Pirates of the Pacific", one of this month's Boys' Friend 4d. Libraries. This was another long adventure concerning Ken falling overboard and getting into the hands of cut-throats. This was a series I well remember in the very long second series about Ken which ran in Modern Boy several years ago. This is B.F.L. No. 355.

Another B.F.L. I had this month is "The Rio Kid's Return". It

is the series where the Rio Kid goes back to Frio to try to clear his name - or to make himself a nuisance to Sheriff Watson. Simply lovely story. This is B.F.L. 356.

The good old Nelson Lee Library seems to be a bit in the doldrums these days. It doesn't know whether it's coming or going - and neither do I. The opening tale is an adventure affair starring Nelson Lee, Nipper and Umlosi, entitled "The Island Above the Clouds". The St. Frank's serial about the new Headmaster, James Kingswood, comes to a close.

Next week brought "The Plateau of Peril", about an island above the clouds, with Nelson Lee and Handforth and Lord Dorrimore, etc. Also a St. Frank's serial "Cock o' the Walk" about Handforth as form captain, which seems to be an old story rehashed. The third week brought "Land of the Lost" which is more about the fantastic island, plus more of the Handforth serial.

Next week "The Scarlet Death" with adventures in the Sargasso Sea. All right, if you like this sort of thing. And more of the old serial. The month ends with "The Cavern of Doom", which goes on with the adventure story, plus the St. Frank's serial.

This month there has been a special service at St. Paul's Cathedral to mark the tercentenary of the birth of Sir Christopher Wren who designed the wonderful building.

And a local newspaper, the Hereford Times, is just 100 years old. Fancy them having local newspapers a hundred years ago.

Good tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. The Greyfriars one is "The Gipsy Schoolboy". He comes to school as Mick, and, at the end, turns out to be Maurice Angel, the long-lost brother of Angel of the Fourth - and a millionaire. Whew! The other tale is "The Terror of Rookwood". He is the nephew of the Headmaster, named Gunter, over from the Wild West, and he turns out to be a fearful character. He also turns out to be a fake.

A great month in the Gem. Lovely tales and all extra long. The opening yarn is "Cousin Ethel's Birthday", which Figgins in particular sets out to celebrate in secret. So does D'Arcy.

Next, "Tom Merry & Co. at the Zoo", an exceptionally witty tale when the boys have a day's outing. Then "The Fighting Fag" which

tells of the arrival at St. Jim's of Gussy's brother, Wally, destined to be an outstanding character. This was followed by "The Sixth-Former's Secret" in which Darrell falls in love with Signorina Colonna - Pauline - who is appearing in opera at the local theatre. A bit sloppy this one, but I reckon lots of chaps wept salt tears over it. All right for a change.

Last, "Boy Scouts of St. Jim's" in which Ferrers Locke sets another detection competition for the scouts. Tom Merry is the winner, but Wally D'Arcy plays a big part. Gorgeous month.

The French have launched the "Normandie" at St. Nazaire. It is the world's largest liner.

Some tip-top shows at the cinemas. One thing about the dark evenings, the pictures come into their own. We have seen this month Tom Mix in "Destry Rides Again"; Warner Baxter in "The Amateur Daddy"; and then the best picture of the month, Johnny Weismuller and Maureen O'Sullivan in "Tarzan the Ape Man", a wonderful spectacular film. Ralph Lynn and Tom Walls in "Thark", the film of the famous Aldwych comedy about a haunted castle. The whole stage cast of Mary Brough, Robertson Hare and Claud Hulbert are in it. It is written by Ben Travers. The first hour is very funny, but it wears thin towards the end. Another splendid film was James Cagney with Joan Blondell in "The Crowd Roars", a motor-racing story. Finally Joan Crawford and Robert Montgomery in "Letty Lynton", a good melodrammer. In the final programme was what must be Laurel & Hardy's best comedy to date, "County Hospital".

In the Magnet there is now one of the finest series I have ever read - and I have read masses of fine series. The opening tale is "The Worst Boy in the Form". And, wonder of wonder, that worst boy is Harry Wharton. In the space of a few chapters of the new term he is plunged into terrible disgrace, and all through the scheming of that rotten prefect Loder. A terrific tale. Next week "The Rebel of the Remove". Loder is scheming to disgrace the fellow who knows some of his shady secrets, but Loder can't scare Harry Wharton. Not half he can't for the next story is "Harry Wharton Declares War". But it's against Mr. Quelch that Wharton declares war - and Wharton wins the first round.

The series continues with "The Schemer of the Sixth". The

schemer is Loder, and his villainy is a surprise even to himself. Final tale of the month is "The Way of the Rebel", and in this story luck - married to pluck - comes the way of our hero.

A lovely, lovely series. I hope it goes on for ever. Well, for a long time at any rate, though it will be grand when Wharton becomes his old self again. The series goes on next month.

In the Union Jack this month I had "The Four Guests Mystery" by Robert Murray. One of the four guests murdered Lucien Droon. Behind a locked door they found him in a room no-one could have entered, no-one could have left. Then I had "Crooks Divided", a story of the Criminals' Confederation, and yet another tale by Robert Murrey. Finally, "Crooks' Cargo" by David MacLuire, a story of gun-runners, in which the Spanish government appeals to Sexton Blake for help. All good stuff this month.

In the Ranger there is a new series by Frank Richards about a school named Grimslade. I had a couple of them, but was not too impressed. Not a patch on good old Greyfriars.

I end on a sad note. The trams in Mansfield have been scrapped, and are replaced with motor-buses.

NOTES ON THIS MONTH'S DANNY

The 1932 Gems mentioned by Danny this month had run consecutively in the late autumn of 1908. "Cousin Ethel's Birthday" had been entitled "D'Arcy's Secret" in 1908. By that time, Ethel Maynard had become Ethel Cleveland. "Tom Merry & Co. at the Zoo" had originally been entitled "The Joker of St. Jim's". A lot of the fun in this delightful romp was Gussy's efforts to tell a "shaggy dog" story. I once described this tale as "wispy as gossamer - and utterly charming".

"The Fighting Fag" had been named "D'Arcy Minor" in 1908. "The Sixth-Former's Secret" had been "Darrell's Secret", and "Boy Scouts of St. Jim's" was originally "The Scouts of St. Jim's".

"The Rio Kid's Return" which Danny read in the B.F.L. in 1932 was published yet again in the B.F.L. in December 1937 under the same title.

S.O.L. No. 161, "The Gipsy Schoolboy" comprised the 6-story series from the Magnet of the autumn of 1923. Though the Magnet stories were comparatively short in late 1923, six stories were still too many to be crammed into one S.O.L. The series is rather heavily pruned in the S.O.L., and, considering this, it reads surprisingly well. Unbelievable, but one of the best of the "missing heir" themes down the years. Hamilton's stories were still first-class, even with some of the irrelevant sequences cut out.

S. O. L. No. 162, "The Terror of Rookwood" comprised a 6-story series from the Boys' Friend of autumn 1915 when the Rookwood tales were at their longest. They fit snugly into this S. O. L.

This Rookwood series about Gunter has the strangest history of anything in the Rookwood saga. The six tales from late 1915 were squeezed into ONE short story in the Popular in the very early twenties, under the title "A Bad Egg". It was an absurdity unequalled. A few years later the entire series featured in the Popular, and turned up yet again in this S. O. L. in 1932.

"Tarzan, the Ape Man" was unquestionably the best Tarzan film ever made, produced on super-production lines. M. G. M. made a good many more Tarzan's with the same stars, but nothing up to the quality of this one. It was said that a good deal of the footage of "Trader Horn" was transferred to this Tarzen epic film.

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I trust you will all enjoy this month's items in Blakiana, as you will note, the item about Marie Galante is taken from the 1955 C. D. Annual, so far as I can remember nothing else has been written at such length about this character. The books in which she appears will be available from the lending Library in the New Year.

MARIE GALANTE - VODOO QUEEN

by Josie Packman

Part 1. Repeat from 1955 Annual.

One of the mysterious and exciting women ever to have appeared in the "Union Jack" and "Sexton Blake Library" was the glamorous Marie Galante, worshipped and feared throughout the West Indies by the superstitious negroes under the name "Voodoo". Who was she? Where did she come from and why was she known as "Voodoo". The answers to these questions were supplied by the late George Hamilton Teed.

The history and background of Marie Galante was first related in a Union Jack story entitled "At the Full of the Moon" (U. J. No. 710 dated 19th May, 1917) in which it is revealed that the name of Marie's father was Bob Kidd, who ran one of the notorious drinking dens in Port au Prince, the capital of the island of Haiti. Marie was the daughter of Kidd and a Creole devil-woman, who disappeared into the jungle taking the child with her.

Years later, terrible things started happening in the jungle, for the dreaded Voodoo raised its ugly head when several young white men mysteriously vanished after becoming acquainted with Marie Galante. It was the disappearance of one such white man that brought Sexton Blake and Tinker within the toils of this exotic woman, and their experiences in the secret Voodoo Rendezvous in the Haitian Jungle were horrifying. They achieved what they had set out to do - to rescue one of Marie Galante's dupes.

This story was apparently written as a single (non-series) yarn but some five years later there appeared in the "Union Jack" No. 984 dated 19th August, 1922, a story called "The Voodoo Curse", introducing "a new character, Marie Galante". Probably Mr. Teed thought his earlier story about Marie Galante would have been forgotten by then, as in this new one there is no mention of the original characters or of Marie's parentage. However, "The Voodoo Curse" is a fine story and relates the first meeting of Marie Galante and Dr. Huxton Rymer.

Rymer was not really interested in the secret Voodoo practices, he was seeking to fill his pockets with some of the hidden wealth of the island of Haiti. But he also became caught up in the toils of this beautiful witch. For Marie Galante undoubtedly was a witch and by her witchcraft held the negroes of the West Indies under her spell. At her bidding mysterious deaths occurred amongst the small white population of Haiti, the plantations were destroyed and stocks of goods mysteriously disappeared, until finally the mere whispered name of Marie Galante was sufficient to cause the planters to be fearful of further disasters.

Into this weird country with its atmosphere of mystery and horror, came Dr. Huxton Rymer, ready and willing to learn from Marie Galante how to create a Black Empire, with Marie as Queen and all the wealth of the white men's plantations ready for the picking.

It had long been a secret desire of Marie's to create this Black empire, and when Rymer appeared on the scene she realised he was the very man she needed to aid her in this scheme. Swiftly the call went out for a gathering of the Voodoo worshippers on the night of the next full moon, on which night Rymer was to be initiated into the barbarous rites of Voodooism.

But once again Sexton Blake was on the trail of this Devil-woman.

He and Tinker were again visiting the West Indies and became involved in the planters troubles. There had been whispers of this strange white man who had recently come to Haiti and gained the confidence of Marie Galante, so Blake resolved to go into the jungle in an endeavour to find this stranger. His feelings on discovering this man to be none other than Huxton Rymer were of horror and he entreated Rymer to leave Haiti and all the loathing of Voodooism. But alas, Rymer had awakened in that weird, exotic woman something that was to cause him endless trouble in the future. It was not love, it was the fierce passion of the jungle with which she would shackle him.

Black was at least successful in drawing Marie Galante's horns so far as the planters troubles were concerned, but on his way homeward his thoughts were frequently of Rymer and this woman. Would that uncrowned Queen of serpent worshipping Blacks enslave the outcast man of science, or would Rymer fight this evil spell and let the spirit of the white man conquer? Only time could tell . . .

ALONG THE (PROUD) TRAMLINES

by Gordon Hudson

Being interested in tramcars, I remember becoming curious when I first saw the title *The Proud Tram Mystery*. I thought that here was a Sexton Blake in which a tramcar must have a major part. But what was a "Proud" Tram? Was the adjective being used in a similar sense as it sometimes is with ships, imparting a human attribute to an otherwise inanimate vehicle? I didn't know, but since then I have always wanted to read the story. Recently I obtained the *Proud Tram* series from Mrs. Packman and was halfway through when it was mentioned in the C.D. Editorial. I have now read all six stories, but I now feel let down after all my expectations.

When I read the opening story - *The Proud Tram* by Gilbert Chester, I was extremely disappointed. Not only was the tale rather poor, but the tram was simply a red-herring. The vehicle having stopped at the depot entrance, the opportunity was taken to deposit the bodies of the dead Alfred Mowbray Proud and the unconscious Sexton Blake, onto the upper deck from the roof of an adjacent building. The tram really had very little to do with the story.

In the other tales the tram played a much larger part, although

in only two was it of any real importance. In *The Crook Crusaders* by Anthony Skene the vehicle was a regular meeting place for a gang-boss and his lieutenants, whilst in the *Witches' Moon* by Donald Stuart, a code scratched into the paintwork of the upper deck revealed the hiding place of loot from a robbery.

It seems rather surprising that out of the six stories the authors of five decided that Alfred Mowbray Proud, the nomenclator of the series, was a criminal. In four stories he was a member of a gang, (in two of which he was married with a poor, suffering wife). In the fifth one, *Fear Haunted* by Gwyn Evans, he became a murderer having accidentally killed his nagging wife after an argument. I suppose in this case one could feel some sympathy for him because, although he was a waster and a layabout, he was not a regular or vicious criminal as in the other stories. The one exception was in "*Revolt*" by G. H. Teed. Here Alfred Mowbray Proud was a kindly sympathetic man, trying to help his sister-in-law, the long-suffering wife of his evil brother who was at that time organising a prison break-out. Alfred Proud became involved in the events of the story simply because he was carrying out a promise to his brother to redeem certain articles which had been pawned.

In five of the stories the authors introduced some of their regular characters:- *The Proud Tram* - Gilbert and Eileen Hale; *The Crook Crusaders* - Zenith; *Revolt* - Roxane; *Fear Haunted* - the Onion Men; and *Blind Luke* - Waldo; all with varying success. I feel that possibly in only two (*Revolt* and *Blind Luke*) was this of advantage where Roxane and Waldo played important parts. In *The Crook Crusaders* Zenith played an improbable part when he and Tinker rode in a speedway match, although it served as fair introduction to the tale. *Fear Haunted* is difficult to assess in this way because Gwyn Evans interlaced two current series. As well as being the fifth *Tram* story it was also the third *Onion Men* story. It is not easy to decide to which series this would best belong, although this is not strictly necessary in any case. Donald Stuart did not introduce any regular characters - if indeed he had any - and I feel his story is probably better because of this. Perhaps some of the other stories might have been improved if the authors had left out their characters, although no doubt the readers at the time were looking forward to their own favourites.

An editorial note in the second last issue brings forward some interesting background information. The editor relates that the final tale was to have been supplied by Robert Murray, but that after writing half he had suffered from illness and had been unable to complete it. Instead a last minute request had been made to E. S. Brooks who conceived and wrote his story in three days. And a very commendable effort it was.

This made me reflect over two points. First, if the editor wanted all six stories to appear in consecutive weeks, why didn't he wait until all the manuscripts were in front of him before launching the series? Could it be either that he was already short of copy or alternatively that he felt the Union Jack urgently needed a boost in circulation which he hoped this series would bring.

Secondly, if, as was stated Robert Murray's story was already half written, was it ever completed and printed, and if so, is it possible for it to be identified?

Neither question is of course important to the series, but as in all good detective stories - and especially with Sexton Blake - the mystery is there to be solved.

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

"THOSE COVERS AGAIN"

by C. H. Churchill

I very much enjoyed reading the article by J. H. Mearns in the July C.D. Nelson Lee column, especially his remarks regarding the art work in the later larger size Lees. However, what I would like to ask Mr. Mearns is, how many of the old small series Lees has he seen? He mentions the Ezra Quirk ones (Oct/Dec. 1925) as if the art work in these was the highlight in Lee illustrations.

One must remember that at this time the Lee was already over ten years old and as I have practically all of these I can assure Mr. Mearns that I could show him piles of these of which the covers are infinitely better than anything the new series threw up. And I include a

lot of the pre St. Frank's ones, too. If anyone wants to see the best drawing of Lee himself I suggest he has a look at No. 62 old series, "The Amazing Case of the Lost Explorer" a Jim the Penman tale. A fine cover in red and blue showing Lee, resplendent in evening dress, about to enter a door.

Referring to the new larger books, I have just had a look at the "Death of Church" series (Oct/Nov. 1927), and really the covers are almost all mediocre. Hardly any background at all. This may have been the "In" thing at that time, but it can never compare with the covers of around the 1921 era. What about that beautiful drawing on the cover of No. 305, "Adrift in Mid Air"? And the attractive No. 320 "The Montana Mystery"? No cover in any boys' paper would come up to the best of this period, and even Eric Parker's Union Jack covers grand as they were, could not match such as No. 305 of the Lee.

At a recent meeting of the S.W. club I gave a short version of the history of the Lee and handed around a sample of these fine drawings and all present agreed with me that they were absolutely first-class.

I do not claim that all the old Lees were superbly illustrated but the standard from 1920 onwards was excellent. There was such a variety of designs and colours. Some weeks we had red and blue, then yellow and blue and then again various shades of blue.

Some while ago R. J. Godsave wrote an article on the Lee covers especially mentioning Sept/Dec. 1922. This was a period when we had each week an entirely different design as mentioned above and they were grand.

As regards the drawings inside the Lee, well, the sketch of Lee and Nipper inside the cover of No. 77 new series is in my humble opinion a disgrace. They look awful. The drawings of the other characters are poor too. The boys seem to be all clothes! Let anyone look up No. 340 old series if they want to see a good drawing of both Lee and Nipper and they will find it.

I'm sorry, Mr. Mearns, but I cannot agree with your remarks that the best Lee art work was in the period 1931/2.

GOLD HUNT

by Esmond Kadish

I've never been a great fan of the Thomson papers. It's not - let

me hasten to add - that I consider myself "superior" - I'm all for people reading whatever they choose. It's just that, for me, a story is only as good as its characters, and I have to be able to identify with them, otherwise there is no magic. Not that I analysed it in those terms when, as a boy, I selected the "Magnet" and "Gem" rather than the "Wizard" or the "Hotspur". Not even "Red Circle" won me over, although I did try hard to get interested, especially as practically all my schoolmates seemed to be reading the Thomson papers.

However, there were occasional, brief periods when I did become "hooked". I can recall buying a copy (No. 3, I think!) of the short-lived "Red Arrow", and reading "The Wolf Man", and, in the thirties, during a summer holiday in Bournemouth, the "Rover" attracted me for a few weeks. There was a serial involving a Martian invasion of Earth. Pretty small beer, I fancy, for today's youngsters, reared on sophisticated "sci-fi" of the "Star Wars" variety, but Martians, armed with deadly ray-guns, seemed, at the time, novel and exciting to me. Running concurrently, there was a Western serial, "The Revolt of the Cherokees", which fired my imagination. "Cowboys and Indians" was a popular theme in those less-complicated days, and, as Denis Norden recently remarked on T.V., owning a cowboy or Indian suit was the height of ambition for many a small boy in the inter-war years. At any rate, that redskin saga provided me with abundant material for boyish fantasy in that sunny, pre-war holiday in Bournemouth, in the early thirties, when such things as beach concert parties, and Punch and Judy shows, still happily existed.

I was reminded of all this when I read the 1929 "Arizona Gold Hunt" series in the "Nelson Lee", recently. A Punch and Judy show figures in the run-up to the series, a pleasant little story entitled "Bank Holiday in Brighton". The owner of the show is Hookey Webb, an ex-seaman who, as his name implies, sports a hook instead of a left hand. The St. Frank's juniors help him over a spot of bother, when his little enterprise is nearly destroyed, and he tells them of a remarkable gold strike made forty years previously in the Arizona Desert. He had been forced to abandon the gold by hostile Indians and, ever since then, had been looking for someone to finance an expedition to reclaim it.

The obliging, and seemingly ever-affluent, Lord Dorriemore

agrees to "grub-stake" the expedition, thus enabling a party of St. Frank's boys and Moor View girls to turn up in the vicinity of "Circle City", Arizona, in the next issue of "Nelson Lee". The party also includes Nelson Lee himself, as well as Dorrie, Umlosi, and an experienced desert guide, Dicky Siggers. The expedition, which sets out from Circle City, is handsomely equipped, but the party soon finds that the local Apaches are suspicious and hostile. This hostility, which soon becomes open, convinces Nelson Lee that he must lead a separate party in search of the gold, and leave the youngsters behind in the comparative safety of the base camp. They are highly indignant, and Irene Manners overhears Handforth - tactful, as always! - saying that the boys have been left behind because the trip was unsuitable for the girls, and, therefore, both sexes must be left in camp, in case the girls feel disappointed. The girls are furious at being blamed for this, and decide to form a mini-expedition of their own, and catch up with Lee's party, without telling anyone. The Apaches trail the girls' party, and trap them in a ravine. The boys, and Lee and his section, join forces with the girls in the ravine, and, later, retreat to a cave, where they are besieged by the Apaches. After some skirmishing, a providential flood overwhelms the Indians, and frees the St. Frank's party. Subsequently, the "cliff of gold" is found, but the Indians kidnap Irene - owing to Handy's falling asleep on sentry duty! A remorseful Handy has to perform his solo-rescue stunt, and dispose of three unfortunate redskins, (--- his fists shot out like sledge-hammers") before the treasure is secured. The Apaches' enmity, it transpires, was because they believed that, if the gold were removed, disaster would inevitably befall their tribe.

The Moor View girls play a vital part in the development of the plot, but, in the end, Mr. Brooks seems to put them firmly in their place:- "--- while their spirit was willing, they were not physically capable of undertaking a trip of this kind without adequate escort". At another point, Irene says to a chum, "Steady, old girl! The boys had to get us out of difficulty, and we've been shown that we girls are pretty useless when it comes to an adventure of this kind. It's up to us to obey orders now". Hm - well, it was written over fifty years ago!

All the same, it's a very readable, fast-moving, adventure story, and one I certainly enjoyed. If the notion of Indian attacks in the twentieth

century sounds unlikely, then what's the good of a Western without hostile redskins? The desert setting is picturesque, and the old prospector, Siggers, and his pals, seem authentic. It's a bit sad, though, when one considers that this was to be the last of the foreign adventure series featuring the St. Frank's characters, before, early in 1930, a change in editorial policy caused the - in my opinion - unfortunate switch to detective stories.

* * * * *

BRING ON THE CLOWNS

by Len Wormull

Frank Richards was no respecter of persons when it came to laughs. All was grist to his mill, even the mighty Harry Wharton & Co. If anything, they were especially marked down. And not without good reason, for make no mistake, japers, the "Five" were famous also for having their legs pulled. Fishy would doubtless have gone further and called them the "dumbest galoots in town". The chums often said that Bunter should have been in a home for idiots, but, my goodness, how our fat man made them look certifiable candidates at times. True it took a bit of make-up and impersonation to do the trick, but once transformed the Co. were like lambs to the slaughter. To best illustrate let's go over to Courtfield Common, the temporary home of the World-Famous Whiffles Circus.

The Co. had quite liked Mr. Whiffles on their first meeting. When they meet Whiffles The Second, alias Bunter, they quickly change their minds ...

"I say, you fellows --"

The fellows looked at him. That style of address was so like Billy Bunter that it rather surprised them from Mr. Whiffles.

"I'm thinking of putting on a new turn," said Bunter calmly. "I'm going to call it the Queer Quintette, or the Famous Five Freaks ... You with your features, Cherry, and your feet ... And Inky, with his grate-polish complexion ... And Nugent with his milk-sop face ... And Bull with his face like a bulldog ... And Wharton, with his swanking airs ..."

"Take the offer," said Bunter. "I'll put you on as star turn, as the Five Frabjous Freaks. You wouldn't have to make up for the part. You look it."

What the "Famous Five Freaks" thought is contained in Magnet

1069. Suspicion? Not the slightest. With all his exaggeration, Bunter was working on the right lines! The more he practised his big deception the more it became apparent that here were the perfect foils for Bunter The Clown. Shall we call them "The Five Stooges"? Coincidentally, "Whiffles" and Chaplin's film, "The Circus", were released the same year (1928). Just my opinion, but I thought Bunter's performance the funnier of the two.

Muccoloni's Circus may have just missed the Magnet's golden age, but on my laugh-ometer it more than justified a place. Some of its funniest moments came when Bunter, disguised as the "Great Guglielmo", tells the fortunes of the Famous Five. But not before a piece of silver had crossed his palm! What the "Maggic Krystal" revealed deserves a special place in the Laughter Hall of Fame. Predictably, the Co. are wearing their favourite blinkers for the occasion. Not content with dragging up their past "unpleasantries" with each other, Bunter predicts Highcliffe to win the next soccer match! Asked for news of a missing schoolboy named Bunter, he gazes reflectively into the crystal ... 'I see a handsome boy - up-standing, athletic, brave as a lion --'. Incredibly, the chums fall for his ventriloquial "He, He, He" cachination, and go chasing an imaginary Bunter. "Heehaw" would surely have been more apposite.

If Bunter was the Clown Prince of laughter, then spare a thought for that dependable stand-by comic - Horace Coker. A lesser clown, no doubt, but a clown for all that. Here he is getting in on the act, in true Make 'Em Laugh tradition ... Coker to Nobby Nobbs (Whiffles): 'So you're the funniest clown in the universe, are you? Sure you don't mean the funniest ass? Nobby: 'No, sir. The funniest ass in the universe is just going in. Keep right on!' Touché.

What laughs we had at the Circus - drama too - and how sad when the Big Top came down. Still, there was always tomorrow and the likelihood of another wending its way towards Greyfriars.

* * * * *

FOR EXCHANGE: I have lots of hard-to-get Hamiltonia, including B.F.L. Nos. 30, 38, 46, 153, 367, 413, 513, 517. Also lots of green-covered Gems; also 35 C.H. Gems in the rare 1923-27 bracket; plenty of Rookwood B.F. weeklies; long run of mint Rangers, etc., etc.
WANTED: Gems 816, 822, 935, 936, 952, 953, 1014, 1018, 1019, 1020, 1034, 1035. Rangers (small) 100 to 105. N.L. (o.s.) No. 130.

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

THE ROOKWOOD STORIES

by W. O. G. Lofts

I was most interested in Laurie Sutton's article in the September C.D. for as Laurie says - the pin-pointing of the substitute tales was done in the early days of the hobby by Bill Gander, Gerry Allison, and touched on by our editor in several articles. It seems to me that Rookwood short stories were probably far harder to write, and more easy to detect than say long Greyfriars and St. Jim's - but to give something new on this angle I can at least give the official record of the authors of substitute Jimmy Silver & Co. stories, that does agree with our enthusiast findings.

823, 828, 856, 881, 888, 913, 916, 917 were all written by R. T. Eves who was editing The Boys' Friend up to that date. In 1919 he went on the new School Friend. 912 is given as by Charles Hamilton.

934, 942 were by C. M. Down the new editor. 943 by S. E. Austin. 950 inserted in long series, but not part of it no record exists. 957 was by G. R. Samways. 967 by Hedley O'Mant - the sub-editor. 970 by Noel Wood-Smith. 975 by Hedley O'Mant, 976 by C. M. Down. 977 and 978 which were a couple of tales of Peele blackmailing Lovell seems to be Charles Hamilton, as no other authors name is given. 1010 was by Hedley O'Mant. No record of another name than the genuine author to 1012.

The last editor of The Boys' Friend was W. E. Pike, when many years ago he admitted to writing two of the later Rookwood tales. Records seem to bear out his statement as 1205. The South African Match, and 1242 The Rookwood Boat-Race Party are credited to him. These tales for some reason have not been reviewed - maybe not available at the time.

I would agree with Laurie that readers should make up their own minds on any particular story, but at the same time it is nice to know that official records do confirm the majority of collectors' theories.

* * * * *

SALE: C.D. Annuals, 1970, '71, '73, '75, '77; £3 each. Greyfriars Holiday Annual, 1927 (original) £12. Bunter hardbacks, £5 each; 12 Edgar Wallace Thrillers, lot £5. Several R. Crompton "William" Books, "Wm. & the space Animal".

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVE., ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND

Tel. ABERDEEN 0224 491716

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 236. THE "ERRATICS" OF ROOKWOOD

Particularly welcome this month is the contribution of Mr. Bill Lofts in which he lists a number of stories which, according to old Amalgamated Press records, were written by substitute writers for the Rookwood series in the Boys' Friend.

Such lists are, and always have been, of great value and extremely useful. Mr. Lofts has never claimed that the lists might not have an error here and there - occasionally a clerk might add or omit a name, either by carelessness or accident, - but the errors are rare.

I would not agree with all Mr. Lofts' comments in this month's contribution. I would not agree that Rookwood sub tales are easier to detect than those of Greyfriars and St. Jim's. After living with all three schools for goodness knows how many years, it is my experience that, for the most part, the Rookwood sub tale is far harder to detect. The reason for this is that a large number of the genuine author's tales of Rookwood were run-of-the-mill yarns.

Rookwood has long been held in very high esteem by the Hamilton scholar. This is mainly because so many of the author's finest plots first saw the light of day at Rookwood in the Boys' Friend. To mention but a few, there was the Rookwood kidnapping series of 1918 which had an unsurpassed eerie quality which made it unforgettable, even though the theme was repeated in the superb Rogue Rackstraw series in the Gem a few years later, and the Magnet's Krantz series which came a poor third; the barring-out on the island in the river; the floating boarding house series which was of high quality at Rookwood, but gave one the sense of "d  j   vu" when it turned up again in the Magnet. And, of course, a few like the exceptional Masters on Strike series which remains peculiar to Rookwood.

But the Rookwood characters were mainly very ordinary. The boys were you and me and the lads we went to school with. Real characterisation was slight, and that factor made them easier to copy and the copies less easy to detect.

There are occasions when, to find the erratics, one has to employ the system of literary analysis which Mr. Laurie Sutton uses so

successfully.

Mr. Lofts is right when he says that short stories are harder to write. They are. There is no question about that. But the Rookwood tales, whatever their length, were not really short stories in the accepted sense. They were merely episodes in one story of giant length. The characters did not have to be described in any way; they were already there and well-known; the background did not have to be sketched; it was already there; the writer of a Rookwood short story had none of the problems encountered by, say, Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Neil Bell, and many other brilliant short-story writers.

In our Postman Called section this month, Mr. Ernest Holman refers to the conclusion arrived at by Danny that a Boat-Race tale was interpolated in the Rookwood Durie series after the series was completed. In a reply to Mr. Holman, whose letter was received much earlier, I give the view that Hamilton probably wrote the extra story, though I am of the opinion that the extra tale sticks out like a sore thumb in the short series concerned.

In passing, the Boat Race tale in this Durie series is not the same one "The Rookwood Boat Race Party" referred to by Mr. Lofts, which was written several years later.

* * * * *

REVIEWS

THE GREYFRIARS ACTORS

(Howard Baker: £7.95)

"The Schoolboy Actors" is the overall title given here to a 5-story Magnet series of the year 1920. It is a collection sometimes referred to as "The Cinema Stars series" or the "Wingate's Love Affair series". It is also the series in which Mr. Quelch speaks "haughtily".

1920 was a bad year in both the Magnet and the Gem. The real Frank Richards only wrote a small proportion of the year's stories for each paper. Soon he came back to his first love, the Gem, and wrote some splendid stories to provide that paper with its Indian Summer. And, once Cedar Creek had ended in the Boys' Friend, he gradually came back to take matters in hand in the Magnet.

When, as a boy, I read the Cinema Stars series in the Magnet I considered it another lot of sub tales in the Magnet's worst year.

In the very early hobby days, the experts of the time seem to have accepted it as a genuine series. John Shaw, soon after the end of the war, made what was probably the first list of substitute tales in the Magnet. He did not include this Cinema School series. Roger

Jenkins, in his magnificent History of the Magnet, accepted it as a genuine series, though, possibly, as a rather odd one.

Then, one day in 1969, Mr. Philip Tierney wrote to me: "I am still not convinced, despite what the experts say, that it was Charles Hamilton who wrote the story."

Mr. Tierney's comment caused me to read the series again, after all the years, and, as a result, I discussed it in a Let's Be Controversial article - No. 137, "The Magnet Love Story of 1920", in the Digest dated August 1969. In the following months, we published letters from readers who were interested. Geoffrey Wilde, Syd Smyth, and Gerry Allison all agreed that it was a sub series. Gerry Allison was always a most reliable critic. He was a reader of great discernment, and I doubt whether he was ever mistaken on "the feel" of a sub story, when the grit crunched between the teeth.

And there the cast rests. If you like an exceptionally fast-moving story, with lots of plot, and plenty of sentimentality, you may find yourself in your element with this one. I am glad that Mr. Baker has now republished this famous story, for you can make up your own minds. Be fair. Read the Magnets first. Then turn to the Let's Be Controversial article, and see how far you are able to agree with me concerning it.

The volume opens with two stories from late 1919 around the Bounder and Redwing, with Skinner as an evil genius in the background. A superb pair, and there is no doubt about the origin of these two.

Another story "Both Bunters" comes from late 1924. On familiar lines, it is nevertheless great fun. Probably the last Magnet tale in which Wally Bunter appeared, and it is heart-warming to think that he made his farewell on similar lines to those on which he had seen introduced, years before.

The last item in the volume is "The Prefect's Plot" from 1926. It may make you weep a little, or have a number of hearty chuckles, according to how you are built. So it may provide something for all.

An intriguing volume - one to make you think a bit - and well worth a place in your library.

THE GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY

ANNUAL 1983

(Howard Baker: £7.95)

A charming book, sumptuous in its infinite variety, and perfect as a Christmas present for your favourite nephew.

Last in the volume, but first for me, is the Christmas 1935 Gem containing "The Mystery of Nobody's Study", a story which had been just "Nobody's Study" in the Gem Christmas Number for 1912. A double-length story in the old Christmas Double Number, it runs from cover to cover in this 1935 Gem. An eerie, tip-top tale, full of the wonderful atmosphere which Hamilton knew so well how to create.

A Magnet from late 1919 contains "The Rise and Fall of William Gosling", a delightful little yarn of much originality and lots of fun.

"The Ghost of Travis Dene" is provided by the Nelson Lee Christmas Number for 1929.

A Christmas romp with Handforth at Travis Dene, and packed with Christmas fun and adventure. Blown up to larger than life size, these Lee reproductions are particularly attractive to those whose eyes have done a great deal of reading in their time.

"The Sneak of the Shell", originally entitled "A Sneak" in far-off 1907, from the halfpenny Gem, is a delight to the Tom Merry fan. A treat for the Sexton Blake enthusiast is "The Crimson Smile", a Christmas tale from the late-1932 Union Jack. Written by Donald Stuart, it is one of the finest tales of the closing years of that wonderful old paper.

An issue of the Popular always has the drawback that one is almost certain to find oneself in the middle of different series from the famous Hamilton schools. But any issue of the Pop is a joy, and this one is no exception, ringing so many bells in long memories.

Further variety is found in the 1940 Christmas issue of The Schoolgirl, with a Cliff House tale entitled "The Mystery of the Tolling Bell", with a Bessie Bunter who is rather different from the Fatima so many of us knew in earlier times.

Perhaps the most fascinating item of all to the historian is "Bunter's Baby", and it was a happy little stroke of genius to include it here. Written by Herbert Hinton, who was then editor of the Magnet, it was based on a very early Magnet Hamilton story. The old tale was a rather silly one, "Harry Wharton's Ward", and Hinton's version of it was a good deal more credible. Inexplicably, Hinton lifted whole patches of dialogue, word for word, from the Hamilton tale, and there is but little doubt that it was this stupid piece of plagiarism which earned Hinton the sack from the A.P. The story is discussed in a Let's Be Controversial article "The Strange Case of Bunter's Baby", in the Digest for June 1970.

This Annual, as every Christmas Annual should, has something for everybody and everything to charm somebody. A lovely volume for the run-up to Christmas.

* * * * *

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

CAMBRIDGE

The opening meeting of the season at the home of Malcolm Pratt, at Lode, had 13 members present including a welcome visitor in Darrell Swift.

Items of business reported included receipt of a letter from Mark Jarvis, who expressed interest in the Club's notice in a recent "Digest" concerning tapes and hoped to join the club; reports that a copy of the Newsletter with John Edson's article had been sent to John; that copies of the Newsletter had been deposited in the "Cambridge Collection" at the Central Library, and would continue to be deposited

there. The Librarian in charge had been very interested to see these and expressed warm thanks for the gifts.

Congratulations were offered to Mike Rouse on the publication of his book on "Coastal Resorts of East Anglia" and his subsequent T.V. and radio appearances.

Darrell Swift showed an advance copy and dust jackets of the four Quilter Press publications of Bunter books.

Roy Whiskin gave a most interesting talk on Anthony Buckeridge and his Jennings and Rex Milligan stories. He said that, apart from Enid Blyton, Buckeridge had been the most successful author since the war. The Jennings stories, in comparison with the public school stories of the pre-war period, had been about a preparatory school. Buckeridge, himself, was a school teacher, with an East Kent connection. He taught at a preparatory school until after the War, then began a career as an actor. As a schoolmaster Buckeridge had told stories to the boys in the dormitories, Jennings becoming a favourite character. Jennings stories began on Children's Hour radio, and more than a hundred Jennings plays appeared on Children's Hour until that series finally ceased.

After enjoying Malcolm's lavish tea, and admiring Keith's photographs of the Sweffling Visit, and of Jack Doupe among his books, Roy continued with a tape of a Jennings play. Members also took the opportunity of admiring Malcolm's collection of "Biggles" books, and other works, including his "Westerns".

All too soon the demands of London trains caused the meeting to break up with warm votes of thanks to Malcolm for his hospitality and to Roy for his talk.

The afternoon was made memorable also by a violent thunder-storm and torrential rain, in spite of which Keith safely deposited the London bound members at Cambridge Station in time to catch their homeward train.

LONDON

There was a good muster of 'Chums' at the Leytonstone residence of Reuben and Phyllis Godsave on an afternoon that made the tea interval out in the garden, very enjoyable. "Many Odd Spots" was the title of a St. Frank's discourse given by the host. Reuben stressed the absurdities

that appeared from time to time not only in the stories but in the illustrations. A fine effort by Reuben.

Josie Packman read a short treatise on two Sexton Blake authors that Jim Cook had sent.

From Gem 1649, Winifred Morss read a couple of chapters from the issue, the title being "Sauce For The Gander" which featured Monty Lowther.

Mary Cadogan gave a talk on the post-war Bunter books that Skilton's and Cassells published, now to be re-issued and adapted for a new generation. Mary gave out her notes which will be in the Birmingham Post and the unanimous feeling of the meeting, as the original text has been considerably altered, that the books would not be appreciated by genuine scholars of Hamiltonia.

Bob Blythe's item was taken from the St. Frank's School Ship series and the cyclone that the boys endured in the Pacific Ocean.

Bob's reading "Down Memory Lane" dealt with the August and September meetings of 1965. The latter dealt with the luncheon and tea party at the Nayland Rock Hotel, Margate. The number of persons attending was forty, including Miss Hood.

Votes of thanks to the hosts were accorded and it was announced that the next meeting will be at the Information Centre, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, on Sunday, 10th October. Tea available, but bring own tuck.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held on Saturday, 11th September, 1982

An attendance of 14, on a very pleasant September evening, gave a very warm welcome to our special guest, Bill Lofts. One of our other members made the journey from Bolton.

Some good news came to hand - there is a possibility that we may be able to continue having our monthly meetings at the Swarthmore Centre. It was feared, that owing to new security arrangements, we would have to find alternative accommodation.

Four copies of the new Bunter titles to be published by Quiller Press were passed round for comment. They have been edited for the "younger person in mind", but our members did remark they certainly

did not sound like Frank Richards' writing. Still, it was hoped they would be a success.

Michael Bentley had returned from his holiday, and had met Gerald Fishman in New York. Best wishes were sent to all at the Northern Club.

Our guest, Bill, gave two most interesting talks - telling us how he became involved in the hobby. Bill stated that the Northern Club has a great deal to be proud of - the great Herbert Leckenby, who started Collectors' Digest, was a Yorkshireman, and fond memories of two of our other well-known members were mentioned - Gerry Allison and Geoffrey Wilde. Bill said that as a boy, The Magnet was not his favourite paper.

After refreshments, Bill continued with an amusing story concerning his adventure as a young boy, in trying to locate the home of Sherlock Holmes! Apparently, in search of 221b Baker Street, he met with all sorts of obstacles - from being chased by an irate food-stall holder brandishing a large knife, to the friendly policeman, who, with a twinkle in his eye, informed the young Bill that Sherlock Holmes was away on a case, and anyway, the house was a pretty dull looking sort of place! Bill should get along home, as it was dangerous in the fog!

Bill was given a hearty round of applause for his talks, and for visiting us. We hope to see him again, very soon.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

* * * * *

The Postman Called

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

GEORGE LEWIS (Worcester): Can you tell me the rough dates when the following went out of circulation: Lloyd's Sunday News; Topical Times; John Bull; Passing Show; Answers; Strang Magazine; Argosy Magazine? In addition, was John Bull absorbed with Passing Show, and did the sporting paper Topical Times issue free glossy pictures of sporting personalities of the day?

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: I can't answer our reader's questions. If anyone can supply an answer, it might be of general interest. And what happened to Pearson's Weekly? I remember its pink cover on the stalls when I was small.)

RAY BENNETT (Codsall): I thought the July issue was above the usual high standard and after reading the Editorial, I'm glad I'm not the only one with 'unconsidered trifles' round the house which have survived the upheavals of changing address. For example, in a large folder of OBBC sundries I have a letter from you dated 25 April, 1948.

Your contributor F. R. Lowe must have spent some time in research for his short, but most original item, "Thirsty".

Danny's Diary goes from strength to strength and appears to be a general favourite. Now when he first came on the scene, I wasn't too keen on him, and said so in C.D. 190 of Oct. 1962. My knuckles were soundly rapped by five correspondents in Nos. 192 and 193, but after twenty years I've mellowed somewhat (or has Danny?) and I'm now one of his fans!

ERNEST HOLMAN (Leigh-on-Sea): Re Rookwood sub stories. What is the position of No. 1086? This was the third of four stories about Lucien Durie. I read the series earlier this year as reprinted in the Popular. Danny remarks (page 88 of the Rookwood volume) that no mention of the events in 1086 ("The Rookwood Boat-Race Party") occurred in the final story, saying that it was probably written into the series after the completion. Did Hamilton actually write it, or was it a sub?

Looking at page 88 of the Rookwood volume, it seems the printer left out several stories. I have some scribbled notes gleaned from somewhere that a Cuffy single and the first two Durie stories were in the Boys' Friend of March 1922.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT): It would certainly seem that the Boat Race story was inserted after the Durie series was completed by the author. The evidence points that way. The Boys' Friend ran a Boat Race Issue in March 1922, and Hamilton, who may have written the story, may have been asked for a Boat Race tale. So he brought in a Durie sequence while the pals were at the Boat Race, and turned what was intended to be a 3-story series into a 4-story one. The Rookwood tales were very short indeed at this time, and it wouldn't have taken Hamilton long to dash off the additional tale and embrace the Race.

I have looked up the Rookwood volume, and Mr. Holman is right. Inadvertently - and it is impossible at this late stage to guess how it happened - three stories are omitted from the list given for March 1922. They were originally covered by Danny, and can be found in the section in his Diary which we printed in C.D. for March 1972.)

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): Yes, as you say, dear George Arliss was an excellent actor and a delightful personality. Other films of his that I remember were: "The Last Gentleman", "Cardinal Richelieu" and his last, "Dr. Syn". They don't make 'em like that any more - actors or films!

LESLIE ROWLEY (Penzance): How much I agree with you about George Arliss in your editorial in this month's "CD". It has been a cause of much curiosity on my part why the television companies give us so much rubbish when the fine character acting of the star is left in the limbo of classical celluloid.

I remember all the films that you list, and would add two other titles "The Guv'nor" and "The Green Goddess" in which I believe Arliss also starred. Perhaps they did not rank equally with those masterpieces "Disraeli", "Voltaire", "The House of Rothschild", etc., but they carried first-class performances.

An enterprising master at my school organised groups to go and see these films. Are there such thoughtful schoolmasters today, or such first-rate films either? Perhaps someone may see your editorial and put in a word for these films to be shown - to the delight of you, me, and a lot of other people.

DENIS GIFFORD (Sydenham): C. J. Brown (CD 429) remarks that it is a pity he did not hold on to his No. 1 of Dixon Hawke entitled "The Three Chinamen" dated 1911. It is indeed, as he must have owned a totally unique "first"! I researched this title very thoroughly for the entry in my BRITISH COMICS AND STORY-PAPER PRICE GUIDE, and discovered No. 1 of DIXON HAWKE LIBRARY (to give the correct and full title) was published in 1919, on the 14th of July to be precise, and was entitled "The Flying Major"! It occurred to me that Mr. Brown may have been thinking of the DIXON BRETT LIBRARY, one of the Aldine series, but I note also from my PRICE GUIDE researches that No. 1 of this series was not published until 1926 (30th October) and was entitled "The Black Eagle Mystery"! Finally I checked through the complete juvenile publishing chronology for 1911, which was issued a while back by the Association of Comics Enthusiasts, and found no first issues of any

library remotely connected with this character or type. So either Mr. Brown recalls a publication history has failed to record, or his memory is playing him several tricks.

JAMES W. COOK (New Zealand): Why do some of the members in our hobby get so irascible whenever the Nelson Lee is mentioned? I might understand Tommy Keen's instant dislike of the N.L.L. when he tried to get interested in the stories, but he has no need to be so emphatic that amounts to making us who love the tales as morons. It was a sorry day when the Nelson Lee became an uninvited guest of the Gem; I would have rather had seen the finish of the N. Lee completely. In any event, it was I think a bad judgment of editorial policy to foister the N.L.L. on to Gem readers. Mr. Keen expresses the view that the subject re the amalgamation of the Nelson Lee and Gem should now be considered closed. Then why did he bring it up? No, it was because the Nelson Lee Library happened to be mentioned and the usual venom spurted out from members who have never really read fully the saga of the N.L.L. There are certain papers in the hobby I never liked to read, but I defend the right of those who love them to have their say. Mr. Keen says the Magnet and Gem dominated his existence. I hope he has read the editor's Leader in the current (September) C.D. warning us to "take good care that it (our hobby) does not become an obsession".

BOB BLYTHE (London): Your correspondent D. V. Withers wanted to know when both Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee were dismissed. He will find the answer in N.L. (old series) Nos. 336-348, "The Communist School".

C. R. KEARNS (Hull): Don't ever let anything stop you from publishing the C.D. Annual. Whatever would Christmas be without it? I always save it for Christmas Day.

DONALD LANG (Glasgow): The C.D. is so fresh and original every month, and I particularly enjoy Hamiltonia. Especially I liked the article on Hamilton's references to international affairs. Being interested in history, I always liked to pick up what was being said about current events and society in general.

MAURICE KUTNER (London): So, according to Danny's Diary, it was in 1912 that the publication days were fixed for my purple period, circa 1919, which were:- Monday - Magnet & Boys' Friend; Tuesday - the Marvel; Wednesday - Gem & Nelson Lee; Thursday - Union Jack and Friday - Penny Popular. With the impatience of youth I discovered a shop where I could obtain my favourites on the eve of publication day and the added pleasure of having them on display nice and flat on the counter and not having them creased by insertion into those horrible wire "paper racks".

SALE: Biggles; Just William, £1 each. Annuals: Bobby Bear 40's, Hotspur 1968, Eagle 65, Adventure, Mickey Mouse 40's, Rupert 59, Jack & Jill 59, John Wayne 53, Uncle Mac's 40's, Toby Twirl 50's: £2 each. Taped-spines Magnets 1930's, 1935's, 1937's, 50p each.

OLYMPUS, SANDFORD MILL RD., CHELMSFORD, ESSEX

HAMILTONIAN LIBRARY

(London O.B.B.C.)

Evenings are drawing in, lamps are being lit, and coal fires will soon be warming the studies. Can you resist the pull of Greyfriars and St. Jim's at this time of the year?

All the Library's copies are original Amalgamated Press issues, many of them from the collection of Charles Hamilton himself, kindly donated by his housekeeper, Miss Edith Hood. (You can usually identify these numbers because the serial pages have often been torn out to use as spills to light his pipe. Anything can be forgiven a famous author.)

There are over 2,000 Magnets, Gems, Populars, Schoolboys' Owns, and Boys' Friends to choose from. Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, Cedar Creek, Grimslade, Packsaddle, the Rio Kid, King of the Islands - the list is endless, but they are all waiting to make your acquaintance, or renew it. When the Library was founded in 1953, we charged 1d. for a weekly paper and 2d. for a monthly one. Nearly thirty years later, the charges are 1p and 2p respectively. Would that the Post Office were as anti-inflationary as the Library!

If you have not seen the Library catalogue, please send 31p in stamps to me - Roger Jenkins, 8 Russell Road, Havant, Hants., PO9 2DG.

P.S. We are still trying to obtain Gems 935 and 1348. If anyone can assist we shall be very grateful.