

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

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No. 431

NOVEMBER 1982

WHEN JEMIMA CAME TO MORCOVE

by
MARJORIE
STANTON



34P

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THE SECRET OF THE BOOKCASE

I have bragged for a great many years that I possess in my collection practically everything ever written by Talbot Baines Reed, including his early quite delightful essays and trifles. I make the same brag about the works of Charles Hamilton, Agatha Christie, and several other famous writers.

My main bookcases are built into alcoves. This means that the shelves are deep, and there is considerable space behind the books which line the front of the shelves behind the glass doors.

Like you, I do a tremendous amount of reading - too much, maybe, for ancient eyes. A day or two ago I decided to read again "The Galloway Case", one of my Andrew Garve collection. I searched and could not find it anywhere. It occurred to me that it might have got hidden from view in the spaces at the back of my bookcases.

So I started a search. I removed several volumes of Gems and groped into the hidden spaces in the rear. I have often come across a

long-lost treasure in those secret caves. Yes, my fingers closed on a book. I drew it forth.

It turned out to be a story by Talbot Baines Reed - one that I had long forgotten I possessed, one that I could not recall ever seeing or hearing of before. And yet I had bragged that I had everything that Reed had ever written. Some time, some where, I must have bought it - but goodness knows when.

The story is "Follow My Leader" or "The Boys of Templeton". A fat book, beautifully printed, with one of those lovely covers with an embossed picture and title and author's name also embossed in gold-leaf. Those superb covers have long disappeared in the wake of Progress. Some Progress! But what would it cost to fit a cover like that to a book today!

There is a label stuck on the fly-leaf. It gives the information that the book was awarded, on 31st July, 1915, by the Ipswich Education Committee, to one, Arthur Hughes, for General Proficiency. I wonder what because of Arthur Hughes. Presuming that he was, say, 14 years old when the book was presented to him in 1915, he must be a man of 80 if he is still living. I wonder whether, just possibly, there is an Arthur Hughes in the Ipswich telephone directory today. Maybe one of our Ipswich readers would have a look.

I drooled over that treasure which the hidden depths of my book-cases had given up. A kind of "Mary Rose". Could I - jaded, sophisticated, tough, modern as tomorrow as I am - really settle down to reading that old, old school story from the man who, many of us believe, was really the sire of the great school story age of the first forty years of this century? Maybe I was sick to death of strikes, demonstrations, football fan violence, wearied by what passes for music now, bored by the noise and nastiness of so much in these nineteen-eighties. So, three nights ago, I started to read "Follow My Leader" or "The Boys of Templeton".

I have now finished it, and I enjoyed it immensely. It is an excellent school story, and I recommend it to anybody who can get a copy. Those old stiff-cover school stories are not too difficult to obtain, and not too expensive. A good dealer might be able to supply a copy.

Reed's best stories - "The Adventures of a 3-Guinea Watch",

"My Friend Smith", and "A Dog With a Bad Name" are not really school stories at all, though they all start at school. But the actual school tales, "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's", "Willoughby Captains" and "Tom, Dick, and Harry" are classics of their kind, and "Follow My Leader" is equally as good. I am delighted - and staggered - to find that I have it in my collection.

I find that Mr. Brian Doyle refers to this story in his splendid "Who's Who of Boys' Authors", published nearly twenty years ago, and it may be that at that time I sought and obtained the Reed story which was lacking in my bookcase - and then forgot all about it.

My copy of "Follow My Leader" is illustrated with a number of full-page colour pictures. The anonymous artist is good, although, in one picture, he shows the hero in the story out in the town in mortar-board and gown. I believe that, long ago, schoolboys used to wear mortar-boards (Macdonald, in the blue Gem, showed Rylcombe Grammar School boys in such headgear) - but I cannot think that they ever wore scholastic gowns.

In passing, I still haven't found the Garve book yet. I'll search again when I get the time. I'll yank out some volumes of Magnets, or Modern Boys, or Dreadnoughts, or Populars - who knows? - I may find some more long-forgotten treasures in the neglected recesses of my bookcases.

THE "IMPROVEMENT"

I have just been reading Mrs. Cadogan's review of the cut and updated versions of four of the post-war Bunter books which are just published, complete with changes to make Frank Richards more "attractive to the younger reader".

The ejaculation "Oh, my hat!" has become "Oh, gumboots and gaiters!" Harmless enough, but surely that is just change for the sake of change.

"You fat rotter!" becomes "You filthy rat!" and "Hang cricket!" has been altered to "To hell with the match!"

I wonder what Charles Hamilton, who had the gift of creating evergreen stories and characters, would think of his Smithy saying "To hell with the match!"

SLOWING DOWN?

Scores of delightful letters have poured into Excelsior House in recent weeks. They have been read with deep appreciation. Each deserved an answer. Very few have received one, I am ashamed to confess.

Maybe, as one gets older and older, one slows down, though I seem to keep on the go all the time. But if I took time off to reply to those delightful letters, the November C.D. would not be out till December, and the new Annual might not show up till February. Which would be sad.

So, please accept my apologies if I have not written to you lately. And, please, don't stop writing to me.

THE ANNUAL

Your favourite writers have surpassed themselves in this year's Annual. Last year a number of readers were too late in ordering an Annual, and had to be disappointed. Have you ordered the 1982 Annual yet?

OUR 36th BIRTHDAY

This month, November 1982, C.D. celebrates its 36th birthday.

THE EDITOR

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SALE: G.H.A. 1930; Baker volumes; Playbox; Film Fun and Radio Fun Annuals; Classics Illustrated; Comics & Annuals of 1950's, Schoolgirls' Own Libraries 1930's; plus others. Full list sent for 25p cheque/P.O. deductible against order.

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Danny's Diary

NOVEMBER 1932

The latest series about Ken King of the Islands ended with this month's first issue of Modern Boy. This has been the seventh series about Ken King, and there have been twelve stories in it. The story is "Feast Night on Aya-Ua". The cooking pots are all ready on the cannibal island, and the white men are trussed up ready to provide the feast. And then the skipper of the "Dawn" arrives with his crew. This has been an excellent series.

Modern Boy has started a new series by Geo. E. Rochester, concerning the adventures of young Peter who lives alone on a barren island of the Hebrides with a traitor. Until some other strange people arrive. The opening tale is "Traitor's Rock". Frank Buck writes a series of true jungle stories. There is a new series about Horatio Hayween on a crazy ranch, but these stories are a bit too silly to appeal to me much. And Maurice Everard's serial "Who Sails With Me?" completes the bill. Less attractive now Ken King has gone from the Modern Boy again.

The weather has been wild this month, and there has been a disaster at sea. The Grimsby trawler "Golden Deep" overturned when seeking shelter in Norway, and the crew of 13 lost their lives.

Perhaps the Gem hasn't been quite so good as usual this month - for one thing I am sure that the real Martin Clifford did not write one of the stories - perhaps he needed a little holiday so someone else obliged him - but there has been a lot of fresh charm, as always. All the stories have been very light.

The opening one for the month is "The Guys of St. Jim's". Miss Fawcett arrived the day before to give Tom Merry a tip to spend on fireworks. And the main story is about 5th November frolics, and is great fun. Next came "Wally, the Runaway". Wally D'Arcy had the misfortune to biff Mr. Selby with a football, so he ran away to London, and has numerous adventures till Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Arthur Augustus follow him and take him back to St. Jim's.

The next tale is "Fatty Wynn's Prize Porker". It is set on a farm where a prize pig reminds Fatty of sausages, and it reminds his friends of Fatty Wynn, so they call the pig Fatty the Second.

The final story was the one I think is not by the real Martin, though it is not a bad yarn, about Gussy and horses. It is called "The Schoolboy Jockey". At one time we had lots - far too many stories - not written by the real Martin, but these new Gems really contain old stories and it is surprising to see a fake model turning up among them.

Two good tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. "The Boy With a Secret" is a new boy, Jim Lee, who is sent to Greyfriars by his guardian, a gang-leader and crook named Ulick Ferrers, to become friendly with rich boys and to spy out the land for the thieves when the time comes. But Lee doesn't like the job, and so refuses to make friends with anyone.

The other S.O.L. is "On the Western Trail", about the Cedar Creek chums, Frank Richards & Co., on holiday and the adventures they meet in the Wild West.

There has been an accident on the railway at Watford. A train, in fog, dashed into a number of platelayers, killing five men.

Mrs. Mollison, who used to be Amy Johnson, left Lympne in an attempt to fly solo to the Cape of Good Hope. She did it in four days, which was ten hours less than the time she took on the same journey last year. Wonderful Amy!

Some truly lovely evenings at the picture palace this foggy month. The best of all was a grand film named "So Big" which starred Barbara Stanwyck. She had a small son (played, when he was small, by Dickie Moore). She used to say to him "How big is my son?" and he would stretch his arms wide and say "So big!" But when he grew up he went to Chicago, got in bad company, and became a wastrel. His Mum said to him now: "How big is my son?" and he, knowing what a rotter he had become, just put his hands very close together and answers: "So big!" Bette Davis has a smallish part as his lady friend. A glorious picture, this one.

We saw Elissa Landi, Myrna Loy, and Ralph Bellamy in "The Woman in Room 13". Also a very creepy film entitled "The Lodger" from a book by Mrs. Belloc Lowndes (I hope I've spelled her name right).

The Lodger is suspected to be Jack, the Ripper. Whew! Ivor Novello starred in this one, with Elizabeth Allen, Jack Hawkins, Kynaston Reeves, and Barbara Everest. I don't often care much for British films, but this one was tip-top.

Then there was Marian Nixon and Ralph Bellamy in "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm", a joyous tale. Elissa Landi (again) and Paul Lukas in "Burnt Offering", a rather thin comedy. Finally, a rollicking picture "Jack's the Boy" starring Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge - another very good British film, so I reckon they are on the way up.

The Nelson Lee Library continues with its programme of long detective-cum-adventure yarns which leave me a bit cold. The month opened with "The Claws of the Hawk" which is the final story in the series about the lost island inhabited by cave men, and shows the defeat of the tyranny of Black Hawk, the pirate.

Next week brought "Desert Foes", with perils for Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore in the Syrian Desert. Next, "The King Comes Back", with the disappearance of the King of Dalmania. Finally, "The Treasure of Hunger Desert", set in far-off Tibet. The Handforth serial "Cock of the Walk" has continued all the month, but it is really a rum programme to set before chaps brought up on St. Frank's tales.

In the film world, Walt Disney's Silly Symphonies are now being made in colour for the first time. Some are now in the West End, and will be at our local cinemas soon.

I only had one Union Jack this month. It is called "Sexton Blake's Understudy" and it is by E. S. Brooks and introduces Waldo, the Wonder Man. Waldo is Blake's deputy, temporarily. Mildly exciting. There is a quaint serial running in the Union Jack. It is entitled "The Next Move", and G. H. Teed wrote the first instalment, Gwyn Evans the second, Robert Murray the third, and Anthony Skene the fourth. With the fifth instalment, Teed will be back on the bridge. A kind of a freak interest, I suppose, but I haven't read enough of it to judge. In fifty years time, some clever person may be able to sum it all up. Who knows?

The Nobel Prize for literature has been awarded this year to the British writer, Mr. John Galsworthy. He was the author who wrote the long, long series about the Forsyte family with his opening novel about them in 1906. He wrote a lot more about the Forsytes, I believe.

The real event of the month is the Magnet, where what may be the finest ever series of Greyfriars is now running. The opening story of the month is "The Glorious Fifth at Greyfriars", with Harry Wharton continuing the feud with Mr. Quelch and his despicable satellite, Loder, the prefect. Against a background of bonfires and fireworks, it is a gorgeous treat. Next, "Hunting for Trouble", with Wharton living up to his reputation of being the worst boy in the Remove.

Then "The Scapegrace of the School", with Wharton going from worst to wusser. Finally "Nobody's Pal". All of Wharton's pals have deserted him until he has only Lord Mauleverer left. But soon he falls out with Mauly - and regrets it when it is too late. This magnificent series is beautifully illustrated by the wonderful artist, Leonard Shields.

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NOTES ON THIS MONTH'S "DANNY"

S. O. L. No. 183, "The Boy With a Secret" was the 5-story series from the Magnet of very early in 1923. When it originally appeared in the Magnet, the first story of the series was separated from the rest by a substitute tale nothing to do with the series. One of those mysteries which occurred from time to time in the Companion Papers. Surely the only reason here can have been that the second tale in the series was not at hand from the main author. One would have thought, where a series was concerned, that the editor would have required the whole series in hand before he published the opening tale, but it seems, from the evidence, that this was not the case.

S. O. L. No. 184, "On the Western Trail" was a collection of a few Cedar Creek tales to make up an issue. This was the last Cedar Creek tale to appear in the S. O. L. The series surfaced again briefly in the closing months of the Gem, years later.

The 1932 Gem tale "The Guys of St. Jim's" had been "The Fifth at St. Jim's" in late 1908. "Wally the Runaway" had once been "The Disappearance of Wally". "Fatty Wynn's Prize Porcher" was originally "Fatty No. 2". "The Schoolboy Jockey" had the same title in 1908. These tales had been consecutive in 1908, with the exception of the Christmas tale, which was left over in 1932 and picked up the following month. In early times, the Gem's Christmas Double Number always appeared in November.

"The Schoolboy Jockey", written by C. M. Down, was a substitute tale. The Gem's first sub story, and probably the first sub tale in the whole of Hamiltonia.

"So Big", the Barbara Stanwyck film which charmed Danny in 1932, was the sort of thing that charmed picturegoers in those far off days, and packed the cinemas most nights. "So Big" was made again many years later, long after the war, with Jane Wyman in the leading role. As almost always, it did not come up to the original, in spite of (or because of) its increased footage.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Just a short preamble this month as the items are a little on the long side. Many thanks to all those who have recently contributed articles and I now have enough to last a few months, but keep up the good work please.

VOODOO QUEEN, Part 2

by Josie Packman

After the disastrous setback to her plan for a Black Empire, Marie Galante appears to have left the West Indies, and when next heard of she is in South America, involved in more devil's work. These nefarious operations eventually necessitate her coming to England, whereupon Blake intervenes and the frustrated Marie Galante is forced to leave the country.

Strangely enough, Marie Galante - so far as I can see - is the only adventuress who does not appear to have any affection for Sexton Blake. It is Dr. Huxton Rymer who has awakened the slumbering passions of this beautiful Creole, and her visit to England was partly in pursuit of Rymer and partly to obtain his assistance in the devilry she was engaged upon. This adventure is recorded in Union Jack No. 1050, 24 November, 1923, entitled "The Case of the Six Rubber Balls". Incidentally this story is somewhat disappointing after a fine beginning. I rather feel that Teed's manuscript was much longer and that it was intended for a Sexton Blake Library, the editor, however, deciding otherwise and pruning down to fit the U.J.

Some year or more after her return to her native country Marie Galante is fated to become involved with Rymer in another plot, related in Union Jack No. 1110, dated 17th Jan. 1925, under the title of "The Treasure of Tortoise Island". A friend of Blake's contracts one of those mysterious Eastern diseases, and Rymer is apparently the only man capable of effecting a cure. Blake arranges for a meeting with Rymer who agrees to undertake the case (at a price of course). Rymer still seems to be under Marie Galante's spell for he decides that the climate of the West Indies is more suitable than England for his treatment to

take effect.

On arrival in Jamaica Rymer makes it generally known that he wishes to see Marie Galante. This becomes whispered all round and Rymer knows that sooner or later it will reach the ears of Marie Galante in Haiti, and that she would either come to Jamaica or send for him. Dr. Huxton Rymer had every intention of playing the game with his patient. He was being well paid for the job, in addition to which, he was always interested in a strange disease he could fight and conquer. But the exotic Marie attracted him like a magnet and when he receives word as to where to meet her the evil influence of this 'devil woman' brings his criminal streak to the surface.

Without neglecting the patient in any way, he and Marie evolve a plan to swindle the sick man of his last penny. Unfortunately for them, however, they overlook the fact that by keeping the patient practically a prisoner, and not sending any of his letters to his wife back in England, they had aroused suspicions in the mind of that good lady who promptly went to Sexton Blake for his advice. Meanwhile, other circumstances have already arisen to make Blake himself suspicious, and this, coupled with the lady's lack of news from her husband decides him to go at once to the West Indies taking Tinker with him. From a jealous seaman, who had also fallen under the evil spell of Marie, Blake learns that once again Rymer is mixed up in her schemes. From previous experience Blake guesses that a visit to the old Spanish Galleon outside Kingston will most probably provide him with a clue as to their whereabouts and sure enough it does. But no sooner had Blake and Tinker set foot in Kingston the word was passed to Marie and a trap set for them.

Alas for Marie and Rymer, once more their plans are doomed to fail. Although ambushed by Voodoo-maddened blacks, Blake and Tinker fight their way out of the trap and in the fighting Rymer is shot. Blake immediately takes advantage of this and forces Marie Galante to give up all the wealth the pair have stolen, and also to bring back the patient from the small coral island where he has been imprisoned, together with the papers containing Rymer's notes on the case. Only then does Blake allow her to take Rymer, although he is so badly wounded it does not seem possible that he can survive. However, Blake knows that Marie

Galante will fight to save Rymer's life if she possibly can, and he and Tinker set out for home with his old friend, who is now on the way to a complete cure.

Thus, once again Marie Galante is left to survey the failure of yet another of her evil schemes ...

To be continued

NO FANTASY, PLEASE, WE'RE
BLAKIANS!

Some controversial thoughts from J.E.M.

Our very earliest reading was a trip to never-never land - a search for pure magic, whether in the company of Peter Pan or Tiger Tim. And, of course, we had to move on. When, later, we looked for more earth-bound excitement, some of us found ourselves on a road that led, via story-papers of the D. C. Thomson type, to the more realistic world of Sexton Blake in the A.P. periodicals.

I, for one, will not forget the jolt of novelty when I first read the famous U.J. "Tram Series" in 1932. Here were exciting, well-written accounts of detective adventure that could have come (well, almost!) from real life. Alas, I soon learned that fantasy could raise its head even in Blake's case-book. Just when I thought I had left that kind of thing behind, I encountered a character who went in for rain-making, gold-making, wearing X-ray spectacles and organising tank attacks on the centre of London. Of Rumanian descent, this chap wore evening dress at all hours of the day (an old Rumanian custom, perhaps?), kept a Japanese servant and smoked opium cigarettes. For good measure, he was also an albino ...

Yes, it was Monsieur Zenith - who else? - and what a pity that his creator, Anthony Skene, almost drowned him in such exotica. With his melancholy smile, his cavalier courage and unwavering code of honour, Zenith had more than enough personality to attract us, without the fancy trimmings and impossible adventures.

Another figure brought close to ruin, in my view, was E. S. Brooks' Rupert Waldo, the so-called Wonder Man. A lovable rogue in the Robin Hood tradition, he was afflicted with some odd characteristics - the strength of ten, immunity to pain, and an agility to make an Olympic athlete envious. It was hard to suspend disbelief in such a figure when

he operated in otherwise realistic settings. Sexton Blake versus Robin Hood, yes; Sexton Blake versus Superman, NO. Fortunately, there was enough basic Waldo left to survive all handicaps and, naturally, I still recall him with immense affection.

From time to time, Blakian authors far more realistic in their approach than Skene or Brooks were tempted into fantasy. G. H. Teed, master of tales with authentic foreign backgrounds, ventured at least once into the realms of the occult. Gwyn Evans, in his "Mr. Mist" stories, revived an unconvincing version of H. G. Wells's Invisible Man and, on another occasion, wrote a yarn about an army of criminally controlled robots!

The real trouble with this sort of thing was the position in which it placed poor old Sexton himself. How could he convince us that a mere mortal, however gifted, could do battle with re-incarnated ancient Egyptians, invisible men and other fantastic marvels and always emerge the victor? In fact, many of the more fanciful themes would have been more at home in the Wizard or the Rover. It is worth keeping in mind that the Blake periodicals were supposed to appeal to adults as well as adolescents.

The best of Blake's adventures did, in fact, stay within the bounds of possibility (if sometimes only just!). Donald Stuart, perhaps, was the true master of mystery with an everyday background. But quite spectacular themes could still carry the smack of realism. The Criminals' Confederation stories provided a good example. No U.J. or S.B.L. yarns ever generated more excitement - or popularity. And, in a world which has seen international skulduggery of every kind, no-one could argue that the Crim. Con. was an implausible fantasy.

Well, there it is. I shall always be an unrepentant believer in a "realistic" Blake! How do other Blakians prefer their stories: down-to-earth - or fancy?

(FOOTNOTE: I believe staunch Hamiltonians have more than once condemned the fanciful in their own field, e. g. Alonzo the Strong Man, Bunter's ventriloquism, etc. It would be nice to have other non-Blakian views on the "real" versus the "fantastic". J. E. M.)

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RAYMOND CURE writes on GWYN EVANS in the 1982 C.D. ANNUAL

Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

There never will be another junior like the Greek boy who came to St. Frank's some time ago. Titus Alexis was a boy with a vile temper. Being new to St. Frank's and unaccustomed to British ways, he had been treated with extreme leniency. But he harboured in his mind a hatred against the Head and the whole school for sending him to Coventry after a brutal and cowardly attack on Nipper.

For that outrage the Head had punished Alexis. Had Dr. Stafford suspected at the time that a terrible malice was seething in the Greek boy's breast, and what was to follow, it would have resulted in the removal of this undesirable alien there and then. In the years to come Titus Alexis would have been diagnosed as a psychopath.

There were very few expulsions from St. Frank's. Very few. But sometimes there was no other punishment than to expel. Probably into the dear old Head's thoughts a little sadness would be born following a sacking for it somehow meant he had failed in his capacity as headmaster; but expelling Alexis was a different matter for the Greek set fire to the old College House at the height of his insane hatred causing that famous old building to be totally destroyed. Events subsequent to this has been faithfully recorded elsewhere.

Titus Alexis was definitely an Anglophobe. No reason was ever stated why, and one wonders why he came to St. Frank's at all in that frame of mind. New boys sometimes take time to settle down, but in the end they soon fall in with the free and easy style and carry on.

The writer remembers his first day at school very well for he struggled and wept and refused to be parted from a sister who had taken him. Later he found himself on the floor waking up from a sleep of utter exhaustion. When the time came for him to leave school and go out into the hostile world he was sorry to go and has been unhappy ever since for he loved school.

Perhaps therein lies our desire to read about St. Frank's. It may well be we never wanted to leave school really, and we find reading

about schools like St. Frank's a kind of surrogate substitute to take us back. After all, it is not the world we imagined it to be when we swotted in our class-rooms.

THE LEE IN WAR-TIME

by R. J. Godsave

When Nipper first came to St. Frank's in July 1917 under the name of Richard Bennett the first World War was still raging and has a further 16 months to go before hostilities came to an end. It is rather surprising to find that rationing of food commencing with sugar was introduced as late as June 1917.

The St. Frank's stories almost ignored the war as though it was not happening. The only direct reference to the war was an appeal to buy War Bonds, and also a request for readers to fill in a printed order form for the Nelson Lee Library and hand it in to the newsagent. This order form usually appeared on the back cover with the warning that owing to the shortage of paper only a limited number of the Lees would be printed. Incidentally a serial running at the back of the Lee was entitled 'In the Grip of the Huns' a tale of thrilling experiences in Germany.

Although Nelson Lee was engaged in Secret Service work in the Hunter series only indirect references to the war were mentioned. Handforth called Mr. Hunter a Hun to his face. In the 'Remove in Revolt' No. 150 o.s. Nipper picked up a piece of paper which Mr. Hunter had dropped containing German words.

Although rationing was in force in Great Britain it did not seem to apply to St. Frank's. In No. 167 o.s. 'The Moor House Mystery' dated 17th August, 1918, Handforth is rescued from a perilous situation when he climbed the ivy on the Ancient House wall in order to retrieve a ball which had lodged in the gutter instead of going over the roof as Handforth intended. His rescuer was the Duke of Somerton who had only been at St. Frank's since the beginning of the new term, and seeing Handforth hanging from the gutter had bravely helped him to safety. The upshot of this incident was that the duke was invited to a gorgeous meal in Study D.

I do not know when rationing ended after the Great War but No. 198 o.s. 'The Bullies League' dated 22nd March, 1919, was mainly devoted

to a decision by Starke and his friends in the Sixth to force the remove to fag for them instead of using Third Formers. In this issue Pitt and Grey are chosen by Starke and Wilson as their fags with strict instructions to have tea in Starke's study for the return of Starke and Kenmore and their guests. Everything must be ready by 5 p.m. to the minute or trouble for the two Removites would swiftly follow. How the juniors bought the rottenest of eggs, the rankest of butter and the stalest of bread and cakes makes good reading.

Strangely enough, No. 80 in the 1st New Series entitled 'Armistice Day at St. Frank's' appeared in 1927 when this country was not at war.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 237. THE FIRST SUBSTITUTE STORY

Exactly fifty years ago, Danny, enjoying the early days of the reprint period in the Gem, came across the first substitute tale he had encountered for quite a long time, either in the Gem or in the Magnet. The tale was "The Schoolboy Jockey", and it had appeared originally in December 1908. Written by C. M. Down, it was probably the very first sub story ever penned.

From the end of 1908, sub stories were to crop up from time to time during the next year or two. Most of them were omitted from the reprints. It is a little curious, perhaps, that the Jockey story should have been included in 1932, but by that time Down was editor of the Gem, and he may have a secret soft spot for it, naturally enough. That may have been the reason that he passed through another sub tale, "D'Arcy Minor's Chum", which was not one of his own pieces.

Down did not write a great many stories, and I have always felt that he was the most acceptable of all the many people who tried their hands at St. Jim's and Greyfriars. His stories are pleasant enough, without a lot of sentimentality. He never gave the impression of trying to make the characters his own or of trying to "take over" or to be clever. He seems to have written purely as a stand-in for the genuine writer.

The discerning reader, who knew his Frank Richards or Martin

Clifford inside out, had no difficulty in detecting, very quickly, when brass was being presented instead of gold. Most of us even as children were quite capable of picking out the erratics in the first chapter.

Clearly there had to be some sub stories. All but the very prejudiced would agree on that. It was a physical impossibility for one brain, one pair of hands, to churn out stories in a long-running series, thousands of words each week, without the occasional break. Minor illness would be bound to crop up now and then. Some holiday was essential unless the writer was to grow stale and jaded. The A.P. editors had to have something in hand in case the regular writer, for any reason, failed to come up to scratch.

Some readers, while accepting that premise, argue that the sub stories should not have appeared under the Hamilton pen-names. There is something in that. I would not have liked to see the stories presented under the names of the different authors concerned, for it would have destroyed illusion. In the early years of the Sexton Blake stories, they were all presented anonymously. In later times, the name of the writer (or, of course, his pen-name) was given for each individual story. It may have worked satisfactorily for Blake, though I wouldn't bank on it. In my opinion it would have ruined the St. Jim's and Greyfriars illusion.

There is, however, something in any argument that sub tales should have appeared anonymously. To publish them as written by Martin Clifford or Frank Richards was really cheating the juvenile public. (All the same, the practice has been followed in fairly recent times, with sporting stories being credited to famous sportsmen who would have been incapable of writing anything of the sort.)

I very much doubt whether Hamilton bothered in those early days. He may have got a kick out of reading what other writers made, now and then, of his creations. And nobody knew better than Hamilton that the sub stuff could not compare in quality with his own writing.

* * * * *

H. Baker Facsimiles for sale. All MINT or near. MAGNET No. 33, £4.50, -14, £5, -24, £6 - GEM No. 6, £6, -7 £4, Hol/Annual 77 and 78, £3.50 each. H/B Greyfriars LIB No. 1, £2. Chas. Hamilton Companion Vol. 3 (Mus. Press) Mint £2. Boys will be Boys, E. S. Turner (1948) Nr. Mint (no dust/cov.) £2. Single copies from "Dished" H/B Vols., Mint, send for List. Post EXTRA all items. Ring (01) 979 4141 to reserve (evenings).

JOHN GEAL, 11 COTSWOLD RD., HAMPTON, MIDDX., TW12 3JQ

TAKE ELEVEN

by Ernest Holman

There was quite a 'closed shop' appearance about Charles Hamilton's junior elevens.

Look at the names of Brown, Bull, Cherry, Field, Linley, Penfold, Singh, Todd, Vernon-Smith, Wharton; here are the Greyfriars regulars for football and cricket - all, mark you, from the Remove! In cricket, a visiting player often found the eleventh place there for the taking (usually at the expense of Ogilvy) - e.g. Arthur Da Costa, Ralph Stacey, Bertie Vernon.

At St. Jim's, selection was made from ALL available juniors. Both the Fourth and Shell of both Houses had players to offer. Even then, there were always the regulars for either sport: Blake, D'Arcy, Figgins, Kerr, Levison, Lowther, Merry, Noble, Talbot, Wynn. If Cardew was in form, the eleven was complete - either Redfern or Clive just missing out. Here, however, House matches provided opportunity for additional players and probably the same twenty-two took part in Shell versus Fourth games. Like to name them?

Rookwood juniors could also be chosen from two Houses - but only from the Fourth. Once again, the regulars popped up for soccer and cricket; probably the most frequent combination would be Conroy, Cook, Dodd, Doyle, Erroll, Lovell, Mornington, Oswald, Raby, Rawson, Silver. House matches provided two elevens - again, a task of some magnitude to mention by name, especially the Moderns!

At all three schools, the skipper would have a friend who was 'not quite good enough' - there were, in fact, many disappointments for Nugent, Manners and Newcombe.

Captaincy, naturally, played a big part in selection. Tom, Jim and Harry occupied these school positions. From time to time a football or cricket committee would meet but it was always the poor skipper, sitting with pen and sheet of impot. paper, who had to think out the team. In any case, thinking was only required when the circumstances of the story decreed that 'so-and-so' couldn't play. A junior was only a member of the cricket or football club if his subscription had been paid - I wonder how today's Student Union bodies would view the fact that, if you weren't in membership, you still had to turn up for compulsory

games practice!

The junior captaincy, though, was always a bit suspect. True, Greyfriars Remove were well coached in a short, quick-passing football style (carried out even more successfully by Arthur Rowe's Tottenham teams of the fifties!); but the choice of goalkeepers could be quite alarming. We were so often told that Field, Rawson and Wynn rescued their sides by stupendous saves - achieved by punching, kicking and heading the ball! (Your views please, Pat Jennings!) Would any skipper play such a 'keeper?

As for cricket - very often, four different bowlers would take the first four overs (Pardon, Mr. Willis?). Wynn and Inky were fast merchants - and presumably Jimmy Silver was, also, as he once broke the Head's window in a Larwood demonstration (see page 13, Magnet 1328). The fast bowlers could often 'break' from very wide of leg or off and hit the wicket - could, in fact, even send down a fast (disguised) slow delivery. (Australian Keith Miller occasionally got near to such deeds!) As for 'walking' - if a batsman was 'castled', a loud appeal arose; only when the Umpire's hand went up did the batsman leave the crease. Gussy, without fail, was always late in accepting such an unbelievable decision! Guidance from the captain would certainly seem to be lacking. Batting order was most inconsistent; running between the wickets was utterly reckless. A quick stroke to a fielder closing in rapidly frequently resulted in a run-out - or near run-out - in going for a **THIRD** run! Selection worries before the game may, of course, have disturbed the skipper's thoughts!

If I appear to have been over-critical, then let me say at once that 'the game's the thing'. Those games gave great pleasure to the readers - even more so to the junior players; all 'elevens' of them!

* * * * *

THE GOOD-BYE DATES

The following are the dates of the final publication of certain periodicals, concerning which there was an enquiry in last month's C.D.:

- Lloyd's Sunday News 9th Aug. 1931; Topical Times 30th Dec. 1939, John Bull 15th Aug. 1964; Passing Show 25th Feb. 1939; Answers 18th Feb. 1956; Strand Magazine 1950; Argosy 1974.
- W. O. G. LOFTS

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

SOUTH WEST

The Club met at the home of Tim Salisbury on Sunday, 26th September. Through indisposition and autumn hols. only eight were present.

We were pleased to welcome Bob and Betty Acraman who had come to stay in Weston-Super-Mare to attend our meeting. In no time the room was filled with Frank Richards presence - there stood the great man's typewriter, his tobacco jar, cine projector and other items from the Frank Richards museum. We were grateful to Bob for bringing all this down to put on show.

We were the first Club to have the reading of the English translation from Latin of 'Ultio Bunter', and the short story 'Spotted' which was written in Braille and transcribed so that we may all enjoy.

After a good tea and conversation Bob gave us a film show which included the 'Unveiling of the plaque at 'Roselawn' and the visit to Fleetway House before it was demolished'.

The meeting was over by 7 p. m. and once more many thanks to Bob for giving us an enjoyable and interesting time. Our next meeting will be in April 1983.

MIDLAND

The September meeting was attended by only ten members.

We were pleased to welcome Bob Acraman and his wife Betty. He showed us a number of interesting items. He had compiled a list of Gems with information on their reprints by Howard Baker. He had also Frank Richard's Latin story printed in the Times Educational Supplement, "Ultio Bunter" which had been translated into English by Jack Allison of the Northern O.B.B.C. These were sold at 30p per copy. Bob also read "Bunter's Birthday" which had been translated from Braille by a blind person.

Our usual Anniversary Number was on display. The A.N. Nelson Lee Library No. 173 (o. s.) "Expelled from St. Frank's" from the

Serpent series.

The C.I. was Dr. Peter McCall's "Greyfriars Guide" - surely a C.I. on years to come? This was chosen as a tribute to one who was helping to keep the hobby alive and is a Midland Club member.

Some time was spent in discussing Peter Masters' idea of a minute book.

A Bring-and-Buy sale is on the agenda for next month, but with the nearness of Christmas and the highly successful "Lucky Dip" I thought we should scrap it, but I was out-voted and it will go ahead.

Greyfriars Bingo was enjoyed by all and the winners were Peter Masters and Bob Wareing.

The reading was by Bob Acraman who read Billy Bunter's Birthday which had been translated from Braille. The reading was rather lengthy, but we were prepared to stretch a point as a tribute to Bob and indeed we had the curious privilege of listening to a story never heard by anyone but blind people before.

We were grateful to Bob and Betty for footing the bill for the refreshments, a great gesture on their part.

The next meeting is on 30th November and the Grand Christmas Party on 14th December to which all O.B.B.C. members are invited.

JACK BELLFIELD

CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at the Ely home of Mike Rouse on Sunday, 3rd October, 1982. There was a good attendance including Jack Doupe, who brought greetings from Ruth and Neville Wood. Mike welcomed members on their first visit to Ely, and invited them to browse among his collections.

Bill Thurbon said that the Club had learned with great regret of the sudden death of Deryck Harvey. Deryck had been one of the founder members of the Club, and for several years correspondent to the "Digest". Although of later years Deryck had dropped out of the circle he had corresponded with members still, and it was sad to think that his career had ended at the early age of forty-four.

The Club heard with great pleasure that Malcolm Pratt had been appointed Sub-Librarian and head of the staff of St. John's College

Library, and warmly congratulated him.

Members revelled in Mike's wonderful collection of papers, ranging over a very wide field from early "Boys' Friends" to the latest publications: "Lion", "Eagle" and numerous other papers found members gathered around their favourites, while others admired Mike's run of Ruperts and similar publications. Mike also had on show many items from his collection of film and theatrical material, postcards and programmes.

A particular highlight of the afternoon was Mike singing, to his own piano accompaniment, the song "Bessie the pride of the school", a giveaway supplement to a 1924 "School Friend".

During the afternoon members enjoyed Mike's lavish hospitality, and his frequent cups of tea, which provided welcome punctations to the proceedings.

Members felt this had been one of the red letter days in the Club's history, and Keith Hodgkinson moved a very hearty vote of thanks to Mike for his hospitality and splendid entertainment.

Driving home from Ely we enjoyed a splendid sunset across the distant fenland, a perfect end to a perfect day.

LONDON

Cyril Rowe was the distinguished visitor at the East Dulwich meeting and he conveyed the good wishes of Eric Fayne and Madam. New member was Mark Jarvis whose main interests are works of Charles Hamilton.

An interesting Anagram set by Chris Harper was won by Roger Jenkins, but Laurie Sutton solved the initial letters of the answers, these being Gem, Puck, Ranger and Pilot.

Mary Cadogan projected a good slide show, the subject being the lady detectives and, with a few male sleuths, for good value, thrown in.

A discourse on Chums was rendered by Bill Bradford and he illustrated his talk with some of his Chums collection. Bill stated that the adjective to describe the contents of Chums was "thrilling".

Winifred Morss read a couple of chapters from "The Toad of the Remove" series. Featuring Sir Hilton Popper and the way Frank Richards wrote the excellent text would be better reading for the present younger

generation than the new issues of post war Bunter books.

The Down Memory Lane reading by Bob Blythe dealt with the October 1965 meeting at Leytonstone.

Next meeting will be held at the Townswoman's Guild, 342 Hoe Street, Walthamstow, E17. Tea will be provided, but bring your own tuck with you. The date is Sunday, 14th November.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held: Saturday, 9th October, 1982

The good item of news was that we would not have to leave our regular meeting-place after all. It was strange indeed that the night we got that news, we were in fact meeting elsewhere - on the rare occasions that we do hold get-togethers away from the Swarthmore Centre. Fifteen people were present at the home of Michael Bentley for a "relaxation programme" in his splendid mini-cinema.

We were pleased to have extra guests with us that evening - some members brought along wives and friends and one visitor had even arrived from Surrey. All were awarded a drink at the "bar" on assembling and very convivial chat took place. By 7.30 p.m. we ascended to Michael's cinema - and a very impressive sight it was, too. We were shown a 15 minute film of old cinema advertisements for comics and story papers (nothing for GEM or MAGNET, though) and this caused interest and discussion. Following this, we had a film lasting over an hour, "The Golden Age of American Comedy". All the old favourites were there - Laurel and Hardy, The Keystone Cops, Harold Lloyd, etc. Although not strictly "in keeping" with the theme of the Old Boys' Book Club, it made a relaxing and interesting programme and we were grateful for the change.

Then members retired to the living room, where Michael's wife had provided tea and cakes, and once again, everyone was able to chat. All too soon, it was time to leave - but not without extending grateful thanks to Michael and Janet Bentley for their hospitality and kindness.

It was decided that next month we would not have an organised programme, but Members were asked to bring along any item(s) of interest. There will be plenty of opportunity for informal discussion.

As always, visitors are welcome to our meetings which will continue to be held at The Swarthmore Education Centre, Leeds 3 - commencing 6.30 p.m., on the second Saturday of each month.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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The Postman Called

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

Miss E. KEYLOCK (Liverpool): I was interested to read Tommy Keen's article "The Other Eric". Of the school stories he mentions I read "The Hill" many times in my late teens, having graduated to H. A. Vachell through his "Quinneys" stories published at that time in such monthly magazines as "Strand". As a picture of life at Harrow, late in the last century it was particularly good. The characters were human enough for me to acquire the two sequels a few years later, i.e. "John Verney" and "Lord Samarkand", in order to see what happened to the main characters.

As for "Tom Brown's Schooldays" and "Bending of a Twig", I have always considered these to be school stories for grown-ups, although the latter has a good deal of appeal to modern teenagers, as it is written in a far more twentieth style by a man who earned his living as an author in much more competitive days than Thomas Hughes did. I have always regretted that I have been unable to acquire any more of Desmond Coke's output, in particular "Confessions of an Inveterate Collector" which I gather is auto-biographical. Thomas Hughes' book is much more of a tract, as he wrote it partly as a tribute to Dr. Thomas Arnold, and, of course, as a picture of the brutality of life at many boarding schools in the 18th and early 19th centuries, which Arnold strove to ameliorate.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: "Bending of a Twig", "The Worm" and "Stanton" are adult studies of school life, but Coke's "Worst House at Sherborough", "The House Prefect", and "The School Across the Road" are splendid school tales to appeal to older boys.)

Mrs. M. H. WOODS (Scarborough): Your editorial in the 1969 C.D. Annual contained a particular home-truth; it applies even more in the new eighties than in the late sixties when it was written. We are seeing

our old traditions swept away, some of the beliefs we held to be true and good being derided, and even the dividing lines of language blurred so much the meanings are turned upside down within the notions engendered by the trendies and the freaks. Listen too long to them and one begins to wonder if good and evil really are interchangeable. Oh, yes, we need something constant and durable - and the knowledge that we are not alone in that need.

Carry on digesting!

BILL LOFTS (London): A point that I should have made about substitute writers writing about Rookwood, was that whilst many had been brought up on Greyfriars and St. Jim's as schoolboys from as far back as 1906 - Rookwood did not start until 1915 when most had given up their boyhood reading. Consequently, unless they had avidly read the set-up and known the characters as well as the other schools, the tales would have been far harder to write about. I would agree wholehearted with our editor in that the characterisation was shallow to say the least, and not having the depth of say Harry Wharton or Tom Merry. Indeed for years I have contemplated writing an article on my own boyhood ideal boy - Jimmy Silver - which may have impressed me in later life to always to 'keep smiling' and be pleasant to everyone - but find it extremely difficult to get my teeth into anything. Another strange fact is that whereas I avidly read Rookwood as a boy (reprints in the S.O.L.) I just cannot get absorbed today - mainly due to the lack of real characterisation.

DARRELL SWIFT (Leeds): I have just returned from a week's cruise on the Thames, with five other Greyfriars fans - including Bill Lofts. We followed the route of the boys in the "Water Lily" series - but only got as far as Oxford in the week. It was a most enjoyable holiday, and as you can imagine, there was plenty of hobby chat!

BEN WHITER (London): I trust that you received some information re the newspapers and periodicals question that was asked in C.D. In my extreme youth, nearly all the working class had at least two Sunday newspapers; many delivery rounds were done by those who wanted to augment their poor wages of that period. One newspaper nearly everyone took in was Lloyds Sunday News which eventually dropped Lloyds and was known as the Sunday News.

Only seven Sunday newspapers are now published in London. During the 1920's there was even the Sunday Evening Telegram, but it did not function very long.

A. J. NEWELL (Clwyd): I do hope that my notes to you will not become a tedious bore, the C.D. puts me into such a mellow mood of nostalgia that I feel I must write to thank you for making me aware - in an especially unpatronising manner - of days and happenings that to others like myself seem to be just that much more worth remembering than some of the events of today which will form tomorrow's memories.

I must confess that the retentive powers of my mind are somewhat diminished so far as detailed analyses are concerned, but at the same time I seem able to refer in contemplation to a very broad spectrum of life as it was so many years ago.

This is especially true when the recollections are "triggered" by odd references - such as in the October C.D. where mention is made of "Tarzan the Ape Man", "Thark", and "County Hospital". Further comment then upon "Normandie at St. Nazaire" (was it really fifty years ago that this beautiful ship was born?).

I used to take, among other weeklies, the Magnet and the Gem in the 30's. They are more than just papers. They are a compendium of yesterday, a repository of happy reminders, awaiting only the gentle chivvying of "remember when" to awaken them. It is the "remember when" that comes to me, within the pages of C.D. and for this, and for much more, I thank you for your efforts and express the hope that they may, for a very long time to come, elicit grateful reminders such as I have tried to express in these few lines.

PHIL HARRIS (Montreal): I felt a certain affinity with Alan Stewart. On his own statement he is the same age as I - read all the same periodicals, with the exception of "Scout", which I just could not get into. But the pay-off was his recollection of the second-hand shop with the stack of the old papers. Two streets over from where we lived in the East End of London, there was a "rag and bone" shop. Any old rags, bones and jam jars they would buy for a few pennies. Being on a corner they had two windows, and one was always crammed with the old papers and comics, which sold at two for a penny. I am speaking now of the

early to mid-twenties. On the opposite corner was, indeed, a cat's meat shop. Who can forget the smell - and the flies, especially in the Summer - BUT they also had back numbers of our favourite papers. So, we sank our pride and "patronized" the store. We couldn't avoid it really. Mum always seemed to need "two pennyworth" of cat's meat for our two cats, which meant we "killed two birds with one stone". But I do agree with Alan. The papers we picked up in the cat's meat shop did, indeed, smell to high heaven, and were not allowed inside the house for too long a period. But, all in all, they were great days.

NIC GAYLE (Budleigh Salterton): The review of the Greyfriars Film Stars series intrigued me. I've not read this series yet - it awaits me on the bookshelf - but as I happen to have many old C.D's, I looked up your 1969 article with its excellent (and to my mind, convincing) analysis, together with the ensuing correspondence in the following month. I can only say that I shall be extremely surprised if I find it to be by Hamilton. I felt also that the late Geoffrey Wilde's comments were particularly pertinent: that though the individual phrase or sentence can deceive, the overall 'feel' cannot. Whatever, this is probably the only 'sub' series I shall ever read with relish; the sauce of controversy makes for a tasty dish!

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REVIEWS

"THE PLOTTERS OF ST. JIM'S"

Martin Clifford
(Howard Baker: £7.95)

This attractive volume opens with a 3-story series, in three consecutive weeks of early in the year 1922. This was the Indian Summer of the Gem, and 1922 was the best year of the paper for ten years. This is a Levison-Cardew series in which a villain named Dandy Carson emerges from the murky past of the father of Ernest Levison. A tale of kidnapping and poisoning, with a Doris Levison who is a trifle too demure or frantic with worry, it is undoubtedly on the melodramatic side, but it is satisfying reading.

The fourth tale in the volume is a single starring Tom Merry. It was particularly welcome in 1922, for Tom Merry had been sadly neglected by his creator for many years past. Even the title of the tale, "The Hero of the Shell" is the phrase by which Hamilton had always referred to Tom Merry in blue cover days - but those were far distant. So "The Hero of the Shell" was a nostalgic treat for the old Gem reader in 1922.

Now the volume leaps forward fifteen years to the Gems of 1937, but the stories themselves go back to the First World War days of 1915. "The Toff's Darkest Hour", originally entitled "The Call of the Past", is the tale which introduces Marie Rivers for the first time, with her villainous father, the Professor, lurking in the background. Marie turns up as Nurse March, in the St. Jim's sanny. Second in the series is "The Boy They Betrayed", originally "Cast Out of the School". Third and final tale in the 3-story series is "Standing by the Toff", formerly "Loyal to the Last". This is the famous tale in which Tom Merry finds Talbot destitute on the Thames Embankment.

Read now, this series comes over much, much better than it can have done in early 1915. Marie Rivers reform still seems a wee bit too precipitate to be credible, but the whole thing is powerful and beautifully related. In the war years Talbot was very heavily overplayed, and, unfortunately, the glut of Talbot stories at this time dealt almost exclusively with spectres from Talbot's past.

Isolated in this volume, this three-story series provides superb reading.

Final in the volume is a trifle "The Mystery of Mossoo", named "Looking After Mossoo" in the Spring of 1915. For some reason the French masters were always hard up, and the St. Jim's Mossoo has to make use of a pawnbroker, which gives rise to a plot by the evil Levison and the nasty Sefton. Some good writing and balance in this one.

A tip-top volume for the Gem fan, highlighting some of the choicest moments in St. Jim's history down the long years.

"THE GREYFRIARS PICNIC"

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker Special)

This lovely nostalgic volume contains ten consecutive halfpenny Red Magnets from the summer of that far-off year 1909. At that time, Charles Hamilton was pouring all of his highest quality work into the Gem, which was double the size. He may have used the Magnet then for recreation, for light-hearted frolics. Those frolics are a joy to those who wish to be transported to another world, a fairyland of delight.

For me, the work of Arthur Clarke, who was the Magnet illustrator for some years, is gorgeous. Even at the time he was drawing, the pictures of Clarke must have been old-fashioned - years behind their time. Yet he was superb; he almost made the early Magnets as much as the Greyfriars stories did.

Cliff House, in these tales is featured extensively. Most of these stories have a secondary plot. A favourite of mine from long ago is "The Shipwrecked Schoolboys" which introduces that one-legged seaman, Captain Stump, who was to be stumping around near Pegg Bay for some years to come.

"Rival Scouts" features Trumper & Co., who figured substantially in the Magnet in those times. Billy Bunter's ventriloquism comes in pleasantly, now and then.

"Harry Wharton's Ward" is the featherweight but agreeable story which, many years later, Hinton was to plagiarise. His tale, "Bunter's Baby" has been published recently by

Howard Baker, and was considered in our review in C.D. last month. The "ward" of the original tale is "Toddles", the baby whom Wharton bought for £10. "Toddles" makes token appearances in one or two subsequent yarns in the volume.

The final three stories in the volume comprise a series in which Cliff House, the building, suffers the complaint which one associates with the jerry-builders of more modern times - subsidence. So the Cliff House girls are accommodated at Greyfriars, and conduct "The Invasion of Greyfriars". It's all unlikely, but you sigh with nostalgic glee as you suspend belief. Bulstrode, an excellent character who was dropped long before the end of the Magnet, is "The Bully of Greyfriars" and behaves badly towards the young ladies who are guests in the boys' school. St. Jim's boys make a welcome appearance in a couple of tales, which must have added to the verisimilitude in those early days.

A real period piece, this volume, with some of the Magnets most rare and joyful stories from the beginning of it all. A joy to have in your bookcase.

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PROOF POSITIVE

by Laurie Sutton

In the October "Let's Be Controversial" Eric Fayne remarks on the fact that there are some errors in the official lists of substitute authors.

As it happens, I was able to obtain conclusive proof two days after reading Eric's words, when I attended a meeting of the London OBBC on Sunday, 10th October. At this meeting our Nelson Lee authority, Bob Blythe, showed me the carbon under-copy of Gem 1054 ("Japing the Fifth") which he had obtained, with a mass of other MSS, personal letters, etc., from Edwy Searles Brooks' widow, Frances, after the death of the St. Frank's author. Bob Blythe, together with the late Len Packman, had been invited to Edwy's home, where they were able to sort through the vast collection of the author's original work.

If readers will refer to the C.D. Annual for 1964 they will find that the authorship of Gem 1054 is "officially" credited to editor C. M. Down. It should be noted that Bob Blythe also has the carbon-copy of the original MS of Gem 1050 ("Cardew the Knight Errant"), which is also credited to C. M. Down in the official lists.

Before this recent discovery I was puzzled by Bill Lofts' Rookwood sub authors detailed in the October C.D., in that 975 was credited to Hedley O'Mant and 976 to C. M. Down. Since both 975 and 976 featured japing with Pankley & Co. of Bagshot school (at a time when

Rookwood sub stories were the exception) it would seem pretty clear that they came from the same pen.

Incidentally, I am afraid Bill Lofts was in error in stating that the Rookwood stories in Boys' Friend 977 and 978 were a couple of tales of Peele blackmailing Lovell; that pair of tales appeared in 978 and 979. In fact 977 ("Tubby's Golden Dream") was, as I listed it, and as Danny's Diary indicated, a sub story. I am grateful that Bill's list confirmed every one of my other Rookwood subs.

The main point of this article must be, however, to prove beyond any shadow of doubt that there are some errors in the official lists of substitute authors. This is obviously no fault of Bill Lofts, who has provided masses of information on authors that nobody else could have provided. Nevertheless Bill must accept that official information is not in every case conclusive proof of authorship.

* * * * *

ANOTHER CLIFF HOUSE

by Tommy Keen

To we devotees of Hamiltonia, the very mention of Cliff House School conjures up visions of Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevlyn, Phyllis Howell, Barbara Redfern, and Bessie Bunter, with Marjorie as the ideal girl friend of the early Bob Cherry, and perhaps, Harry Wharton. Then, when Cliff House was finally allowed to appear as a school, quite apart from any Greyfriars associations, in "The School Friend", and later in "The Schoolgirl", Barbara Redfern & Co. became almost as famous as the intrepid Harry Wharton & Co. Rather strangely however, Barbara Redfern, the Captain of the Fourth Form at Cliff House, was seldom mentioned in the Magnet, although she was a Frank Richards invention, and Marjorie Hazeldene, in the School Friend, became almost a boring personality.

Enough of OUR Cliff House! I now discover another scholastic establishment with the same famous name, and to make it more bewildering, situated somewhere in Kent.

Glancing through the Nelson Lee facsimile (New Series No. 34) in the Greyfriars Holiday Annual 1982 (Howard Baker Press edition), I casually noticed the serial story then running, "Sons of the Men of Mons", and from the introduction to the story, the words 'Cliff House School'

almost leapt from the page. Immediately I was attracted. The story is supposedly, of the period after World War 1, and the hero, Jack Bennett, with his two chums Tom Lee and Buster Kirk 'fall into the thick of the fighting around Cliff House School', but this Cliff House is a boys school, to which Jack Bennett & Co. belong.

Canterbury, Wye and the Chilham/Maidstone roads are mentioned, so the author was definitely treading in Frank Richards' territory. How very odd, I thought, glancing at the date of the Nelson Lee - 25th December, 1926 - as by that time OUR Cliff House would have been almost as well-established as Greyfriars and St. Jim's.

The author - Roger Fowey! Again I think, how very odd!

* * * * *

WANTED: Sexton Blake Second Series: Nos. 453, 606 and 572. PLEASE NAME YOUR PRICE.

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TRAILER

A few tasty "Tasters" for the 1982 C.D. Annual. ROGER JENKINS writes "TAKE A SINGLE WITH BUNTER". HAROLD TRUSCOTT contributes "MYTHOLOGY AND FACT". ESMOND KADISH entertains with "HILDA & MISS TIMMS". LESLIE ROWLEY on the top of his form with "THE LAST LIGHT HAS BEEN EXTINGUISHED, THE LAST DOOR HAS BEEN CLOSED". MARY CADOGAN writes on "GIRL GUIDE GRIT". WILLIAM THURBON asks "WILL THE REAL ROBIN HOOD STAND UP?"

And there is much, much more in this year's Annual.
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