

**STORY PAPER  
COLLECTORS  
DIGEST**

Vol 36

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December

1982



34p

H.W.

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# STORY PAPER

# COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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## Round The Yule - Log With The Skipper



### RIGHT MERRY CHRISTMAS

I wonder whether you were all like me, and did not want to spend your Christmas anywhere but in your own home. As a child, when my maternal grandmother was alive, we went once or twice to have Christmas at her home in the country, and, somehow, I always felt a little cheated on those occasions. I liked Christmas at home, when, in the weeks before Christmas, there were all the preparations in hand for the festive occasion. The puddings were made, the mincemeat and the

lemon curd were made, the paper-chains and the holly and mistletoe were hung up on the walls. There were log fires, and games like Consequences and Happy Families in the evenings - and on Christmas Eve we hung up our pillow-cases in readiness for the Christmas presents. So much of that was lost when Christmas was spent away from home.

And we were conservative in our taste for Christmas reading. We liked a homely Christmas, and, no doubt, a luxurious one. We didn't mind whether it was at Wharton Lodge or Mauleverer Towers so long as there was snow, a log fire, and, perhaps, a little bit of eeriness in the background. I felt cheated myself if the author rang the changes instead of the Christmas bells. Two Magnet Christmases I particularly disliked - the one at Hilton Hall in 1934, where escaped convicts seemed out of place at Yuletide - and the one spent on a smuggler's yacht in 1936.

All the Christmases of blue cover Gems up till and including 1913 were a delight, even though three of them were set at the school itself. But after that there were so many sub Christmases which were not worth considering. Of the real Martin Clifford Christmases, one that failed for me was the Christmas Barring-Out at St. Jim's in 1922 - the Gem's first coloured cover Christmas. There was no Christmas spirit in a Barring-Out.

### BODYLINE

Danny reminds us this month that it is exactly fifty years since the Bodyline Bowling affair made the 1932-33 England tour of Australia one of the most acrimonious in the whole history of cricket. In fact it was a sensation only equalled many years later when a certain Mr. Packer came over the horizon, and the whole future of the game, as we loved it, was threatened.

Even today, the bodyline affair is a controversial subject. Personally, I always thought it a pity that it occurred. It was claimed that Jardine packed a half-dozen fieldsmen on the leg-side of the wicket, and the only object in doing that was to bowl at the batsman so that he had to play towards those fielders if he wanted to make a stroke.

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Batsmen were hurt and tempers ran high. That grievous tour brought about the total retirement of the captain, D. R. Jardine, and it made both Larwood and Voce very unpopular. Even Bill Bowes of Yorkshire shared that unpopularity for a time.

Plenty of slow bowlers set a leg-trap, but that is something quite different from fast bodyline.

Personally, I think that anything intimidatory is very much to be deplored, and a great disservice to the great game. All the same, I rather doubt whether Larwood's activities in that 1932-33 season were any worse than the antics of plenty of fast bowlers since the war.

### AND NOW IT'S NEARLY CHRISTMAS

Hard on the heels of this Christmas Number of C.D., all being well, our famous Annual will be arriving at your front door in the hands of your favourite postman.

And, at this time, Madam has particularly asked me to thank those overseas readers who send along such splendid stamps on their letters, and especially Mr. Jim Cook who always makes a really decorative display of stamps on his envelopes. Surely the N.Z. stamps must be the finest in the world. The stamps are all passed to Madam who passes them on to certain groups for their fund-raising for good causes.

Finally, my beloved Madam joins with me in wishing you all a very Happy Christmas, with the lights of love and friendship glowing in your homes. And may the New Year bring very great joy and happiness to you all. God bless you, my very dear friends.

THE EDITOR

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SEASON'S GREETINGS to my chum of "Chums" Bill Bradford from - ROY GOODMAN

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\* \* \* \* \*

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# Danny's Diary

DECEMBER 1932

1932 has been a terrible year for weather. Temperatures were below normal during most of the summer, and it has been a very wet year, too. There hasn't been one flake of snow anywhere in the whole country from 1st January till 31st December. And a jolly good job, too, says my Dad. Dad's are very peculiar, sometimes.

But our English cricketers out in Australia are enjoying lovely hot weather, but it seems our hosts out there aren't enjoying our hot bowling. We are very anxious to win back the Ashes which the Australians took from us in England two years ago.

The First Test started in Sydney on 2nd December, and the air has been boiling ever since. Jardine's men won the Test, but there is a great outcry against Larwood's bodyline bowling, as they call it. They say that he bowls at the batsman instead of at the wicket, and it is mighty dangerous. The 2nd Test started in Melbourne at the end of the month, so I don't know what will happen.

The Modern Boy is a bit tame at present. The long serial "Who Sails With Me?" has ended in December, and a new school serial "The Danes of Danehouse" by John Beresford has started.

The National Gallery has gone back to its old and proper name of Tate Gallery. Some silly people in parliament changed the name for no reason at all except to be clever, so it is good to see it is the Tate Gallery again.

Cobtree Manor, in Kent, reputed to be Dingley Dell of the Pickwick Papers, had been almost destroyed by fire. The Maidstone Fire Brigade managed to save two wings of the famous house.

The Gem has been great this month. The first story is "Tom Merry & Co. at the Fair". I wouldn't really have thought there would have been open-air fairs in December, but I expect I'm wrong. At the fair there is a boxing booth, and Tom Merry takes on the "Chicken" and wins £1. Skimpole plays a biggish part in this tale, and there is

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some very amusing dialogue. Next week "The Rival Scouts" which are Tom Merry's patrol and Figgins' patrol. They join forces when Cousin Ethel is in danger.

Then came the enlarged Christmas Number and "The Ghost of St. Jim's". I have read it before some time, but it is fine to read it again. The ghostly monk goes Tap, Tap, Tap as he goes around. It is really Binks, the page boy, playing ghost. He has been reading American shockers. Lovely Christmassy tale, though it is set at the school.

Then the start of a new travel series, beginning with "America Bound". It starts with Tom Merry home at Laurel Villa for the Christmas vac. Tom gets a cable from his eccentric uncle, Gabriel Poinsett, a millionaire. Mr. Poinsett is the brother of Tom's mother, whom Tom did not remember, but she had been Mr. Poinsett's favourite sister. He wants Tom to go to Arizona, so Tom gets up a party for the trip. Finally "Tom Merry & Co. in New York", and the series is going with a great swing. It continues next month. Grand.

I have had some Union Jacks this month, my brother Doug being in a festive mood. First story was "The Hunted Man" by Reid Whitly. Sexton Blake comes on a bizarre mystery, which leads to lots of adventures. Next came the enlarged Christmas Number with "The Masked Carollers" by Gwyn Evans. The milkman's egg was directly concerned with the curious conduct of the masked Christmas waits.

Then a Christmas story by Donald Stuart entitled "The Crimson Smile". A nice seasonable mystery tale. Finally "Men of the Mask" by Gilbert Chester, which brought 1932 to a close. It has been an excellent year in the Union Jack.

This month the Lord Mayor of London has opened the Southern Railway's newly electrified line from London to Brighton and Worthing.

Better news about the Nelson Lee Library. Nelson Lee and Nipper are back at St. Frank's. The opening tale is "The Moat House Mystery". A burglary in a London flat and a brutal murder in Moat Hollow near St. Frank's are linked, so Nelson Lee thinks. The series continues with "The Hidden Peril". All the clues point to Mr. Stockdale, a St. Frank's master, being the guilty man, but Lee thinks there is a hidden hand behind it all.

Next "Archie's Christmas Party", in a lonely house in the New Forest. Strange and fearful adventures for the boys. This continues with "The Haunted House". To this house of dread comes Nelson Lee, determined to clear up the mystery. Final of the month and last of the year is "Nerki the Sorcerer". Nerki works black magic in that sinister house. And that brings a good month to a close - and, alas, the spell is ended.

Gaumont British has just bought the Dominion Theatre in London, and Gaumont is now the largest cinema chain in Europe.

And, speaking of cinemas, there has not been anything very much on in our local cinemas. There is never much on in the month or so round Christmas, because people are too busy to go to the pictures. This month we have been to see Robert Armstrong and Lila Lee in "Radio Patrol"; Jackie Cooper and Chic Sale in "When a Fellow Needs a Friend"; Ramon Novarro in "The Impossible Lover"; Janet Gayner and Charles Farrell in "The First Year" (my Mum liked this one); and the best of them all is Spencer Tracy and Ann Dvorak in "Sky Devils", a spectacular air film directed by Howard Hughes.

Like he always does, Doug bought me the new Holiday Annual for Christmas. It isn't as good as it used to be by a long chalk, but the star turns for me are two very good old stories. "Saved from the Sea" is obviously a very old, and long, Magnet story, and "A Yankee at St. Jim's" is a very old Gem tale in which Fisher T. Fish of Greyfriars visits Gussy.

There are two Rookwood tales in this Holiday Annual, and both are third-rate and not by the real Owen Conquest.

Doug likes Agatha Christie books, and I bought Doug her new one "The Thirteen Problems". This is a book of 13 short stories, all featuring a village lady detective who is named Miss Marple. The book cost 7/6 (my Gran gave me the money), but I read it before I gave it to Doug, so all was not lost. Simply tip-top stories, too.

Dad always takes us to a theatre at Christmas time, and they usually let me choose the show. London has been well off for Christmas shows this year, and I was hard pressed to choose. There is George Lacy in "Mother Goose" at Daly's; Leslie Henson and Fay Compton in "Dick Whittington" at the London Hippodrome; and "Peter Pan" at the

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Palladium. But I plumped for "The Sleeping Beauty" starring Naughton and Gold at the Lyceum, and we are booked to see it on the day after New Year's Day.

The Greyfriars story in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month is "The Phantom of the Highlands" which is the story where Mick Angel (Mick, the gipsy) takes a party to his haunted castle in Scotland. The other S.B.L. is "The Secret of Drere Manor", a pretty awful tale, not by the real Martin Clifford, which has Wildrake entertaining a party at another haunted house somewhere or other.

The truly perfect school series in the Magnet about Harry Wharton as a rebel has ended at last. The first tale of the month is "The Spy of the Sixth" who is Loder, attempting to make more trouble for the rebel. "Saved by a Scapegrace" tells of Wharton saving from expulsion Dicky Nugent, the young brother of his estranged friend. At the end, Wharton turns down Nugent's suggestion that they should bury the hatchet and be pals again.

Final of the series is "The Runaway Rebel". Wharton runs away from school to avoid expulsion, but he saves Mr. Quelch from a watery grave in a flooded cave, and everything in the garden, at long last, is lovely. A wonderful series out of the top drawer.

Then a new series starting with "The Boy from the Underworld". He is Jim Valentine, a clever forger. He saves Mr. Quelch, who is wandering in the woods after his taxi is wrecked when he is on the way to be a guest at Wharton Lodge. Valentine stays at the Lodge for a time, and then Mr. Quelch takes him to Greyfriars.

Last tale of the year is "The Kidnapped Schoolboy". Wharton is the kidnapped one, his kidnapers being the criminals who hope to exchange him for their juvenile forger. At the end of this tale, they are all back at Greyfriars, and are surprised to find Valentine there as a new boy.

An exciting event on Christmas Day. The King broadcast a wireless talk to his people. Speaking from Sandringham, King George the Fifth said "I speak from my home and from my heart". This is the first time the Monarch has spoken to his people by wireless, and everybody hopes it may become a regular thing each Christmas from now on.

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NOTE ON THIS MONTH'S DANNY

Of the Gem stories Danny was reading fifty years ago, "Tom Merry & Co. at the Fair" had the same title in late 1908. "The Rival Scouts" of 1932 had been "Tom Merry - Scout-Leader" or "The Plot Against the Head" in December 1908, the second part of the original title being something of a misnomer. (The plot was only a minor event in the story.) "The Ghost of St. Jim's" (a hackneyed title) had been the same in the 1908 Christmas Double Number. A light but excellent eerie story. The tapping monk, forgotten for so many years, received another airing in a post-war St. Jim's tale published in one of the Annuals of the fifties; a poor echo of the original, one might add. "America Bound" in 1932 had been "Tom Merry's Voyage", the last story of the year 1908. "Tom Merry in New York" had the same title as the opening tale for 1909, when it had been illustrated by Warwick Reynolds, who was to become a regular Gem artist in the later years of the First World War.

The latter series, about Tom Merry in the States, was really the second real series the Gem offered, and probably the author's first overseas travel series. This series is oddly reminiscent of the opening stories of the Magnet's Hollywood series of much later times.

Of the Holiday Annual stories mentioned by Danny, "Saved from the Sea" had been "Cast Up By the Sea" in the Red Magnet of late 1913. In early days in the Magnet, Hamilton wrote a great many tales introducing the sea, shipwrecks, caves, and so on, and they all read delightfully. He must have had a great love for sea stories. "A Yankee at St. Jim" in the same Annual had been "Gussy's Guest" in the blue Gem of the autumn of 1913. It was reprinted yet again in the Gem of 1937 under the inferior title "The Boy Who Knew Everything".

S. O. L. No. 185, "The Phantom of the Highlands" was an odd amalgam. It opened with a 5-chapter sequence taken from "Bunter the Bold", a Magnet of mid-1927, and then followed on with the 3-story Christmas series of late 1923. It unbalanced the story. It would have been far better to have spread the main three stories so that they occupied the available space.

S. O. L. No. 186, "The Secret of Drere Manor" was dreary indeed. The 4-story series from the Gem Christmas of 1926, it was heavily pruned, but nothing could have harmed it.

The Magnet's superb Rebel series of 1932 had a natural ending with the penultimate tale of the series, but the author carried it on for one more story to give the traditional rescue and resultant ending of bad feeling. I once suggested to Charles Hamilton, nervously, that the last story made a slight anti-climax. He was indignant. "I never wrote an anti-climax in my life," he said vigorously. When the series was reprinted in the S. O. L. years later, the final story was dropped, and the series was wound up with "Saved by a Scapegrace". However, we can be quite sure that nothing of this sort in the S. O. L. was done for aesthetic reasons.

Danny's reference to the sub stories of Rookwood in his Holiday Annual reminds us how very little Hamilton ever wrote again about Rookwood after that school ended in the Boys' Friend. From time to time there were new Rookwood tales in the form of serials and short

stories in the Gem in the late twenties and thirties, but almost all of them were sub stuff. Several of those sub serials were reprinted in the S.O.L. Idly, one wonders what was the reason.

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# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN  
of 27 Archdale Road, London, SE22 9HL

I have put my address in this month's Blakiana as I understand a number of new members are not familiar with it. Anyone wanting to borrow from the Sexton Blake Library should apply as soon as possible before Christmas to beat the Postal rush.

I would like to take this opportunity of wishing you all a Happy Christmas despite the predictions of a cold and snowy one, which I hope won't happen.

IT IS COMING! (A Sexton Blake Christmas  
Item)

by Raymond Cure

Christmas is coming. It only comes once a year, but it is coming. With the coming of Christmas other things come too. Such as Christmas cards, presents, parties and carol singers. It is a pleasant time withal. It is a time that stirred the mighty heart of Charles Dickens, it is a time that fills the air with carols, the happiest of songs, it is a time that puts a little more on the tables of the old and poor and more than ever on the tables of the rich. It is a time when doctors and nurses drop the roll of the prim and proper to don paper hats and cheer the hearts of the sick. Christmas is the best of times and once again it is coming and bursting out all over, it fills the air with nostalgia.

For a reader of the Collectors' Digest or friend of the Old Boys' Book Club Christmas is the time for spending an exciting Yuletide among fictional characters of the days of their youth. Amazing characters they are too, created by such stalwarts as Edwy Searles Brooks, Charles Hamilton, to say nothing of creators and sustainers of that prince of detectives - Sexton Blake.

Many and varied were the settings of those cases of Sexton Blake,

Tinker and Pedro, none more looked forward to than those that appeared during the Christmas season. One or two authors specialized in Yuletide "Blakes". To my mind Gwyn Evans knew how to blend Sexton Blake into the festive season more than anyone. It is really not showing the Christmas spirit to envy those that have a collection of Union Jack Christmas numbers, but one does. As a possessor of Mr. Howard Baker's Sexton Blake Union Jack No. 2, "Crime at Christmas" at least gives me the chance of a perennial dip into some of the Yuletide doings of our famous detective. "Crime at Christmas" is but the heading of what could be termed as a menu of Christmas "Fare". The contents listed, as follows: "The Mystery of Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Pudding" cooked up and served by the Union Jack on 12th December, 1925. "Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Eve" prepared and delivered by the Union Jack on 25th December, 1926. "The Affair of the Black Carol" was on the table by courtesy of the Union Jack by 19th December, 1927. "The Crime of the Christmas Tree" to tickle your palate and served piping hot on 15th December, 1928, again produced by the Union Jack Caterers of top detective tales.

For the benefit of those wishing to sample such Yuletide Fare from their own collections I give the numbers in rotation, No. 1157, No. 1210, No. 1260 and No. 1313. The whole cooked up by Gwyn Evans.

And now by way of 'afters' Howard Baker presents "The Pauper of Pengarth Castle", U.J. No. 1131, and "The Curse of Pengarth Castle", No. 1132. As these were presented for your consumption on 13th June and 20th June, 1925, you may wonder what they are doing on a Christmas menu. A glimpse of the ghost of the Hooded Monk as depicted on the cover will provide the answer. Edwy Searles Brooks was the 'chef' on this occasion. Now in order to whet your taste-buds for these tales the editor recommends the fare in the quote now given:

"A real Xmas Story and a Real Detective Story Too! or a Jolly Xmas Detective Tale" or in 1928 this is the only story published combining the mirth and jollity of Christmas with a well-told detective yarn. A combination both rare and refreshing. Sexton Blake at his Yuletide best.

In my opinion the editor of the Union Jack knew how to plug his

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wares. True to his word he provided for us tales worthy of the Yuletide season. Christmas needs its parties, it needs Holly and Mistletoe, it needs turkeys and puddings, it needs ghosts, it needs horse-drawn carriages, it needs characters of the Charles Dickens type. It needs snow, lots of it, it needs Christmas trimmings, cards and trees. It needs them and in the above collection it gets them. So if you happen to be looking for a Christmas containing all the season's ingredients plus exciting and thrilling detective tales, shop around for "Crime at Christmas" or the individual copies from Josie Packman's Library.

### VOODOO QUEEN - Part 3

by Josie Packman

Although Huxton Rymer had stirred the passions of the beautiful Marie as had no other man, she still held to her dream of being Queen of the Black Empire - and Queen she truly was in her own Haitian jungle. But strange tales had reached her of a wonderful negro in the North, one Ceasar Lorraine, known to all North American Negroes as the Black Emperor, and in her dreams she saw herself ruling those millions as well as her own Black Republic. If she could also rule Ceasar Lorraine, what power would be hers!

So Marie left the jungle and travelled north, and at her own chosen moment met the Black Emperor.

Now, Ceasar Lorraine truly appeared to be an Emperor, for he was the controller, in that part of the world, of a vast criminal organisation whose headquarters were in New York City, trafficking in human lives being the latest venture.

At that time the United States Government had recently begun the 'quota system' for immigrants, and many undesirables from Central Europe and Italy were thus legally excluded from entry into the States. Ceasar Lorraine was able to overcome their difficulties - at a price - and very profitable this human merchandise had become. Marie Galante was only interested in this business because of the money, for she still had in mind the union of the blacks in the North and South, with Lorraine and herself as leaders, and wealth would help her in attaining her desire. For this reason she entered fully into the game with Lorraine. But Marie Galante seemed fated in her schemes for one load of human goods was brought across the Atlantic by none other than

Huxton Rymer.

It was now some time since Rymer, having recovered from his wound, had left Haiti. In the meantime, he had, as we all know, met Mary Trent who was the first woman he had really made his partner and together they had bought an old tramp steamer and sailed round the world having many adventures on the way. Now Rymer needed money again and having accepted the offer of 200 dollars a head for transporting illegal immigrants to New York, he left Mary at home and sailed for the U.S.A. with 500 men packed into his ship.

No-one was more surprised than Rymer to find Marie Galante in New York, but they soon got together and evolved a scheme to double-cross Ceasar Lorraine and rob him of a large portion of his ill-gotten wealth. Their plans started off alright but nemesis in the form of Sexton Blake was on their track. The U.S. Immigration Authorities were becoming increasingly worried about their agents inability to trace the 'Master mind' behind this illegal entry, and resolved to send one of their ablest men, Bryant Kennedy, (who was also Blake's New York Agent) to England and ask for Blake's help that end. After many weeks of patient enquiry Blake finds the Underground route, and he and Tinker travel to New York on the very ship that Rymer controls.

Blake sets out to smash the whole organisation of the Black Emperor, and finds that the negro also controls the illegal trafficking of drugs. Nothing seemed to him more ghastly than the selling of these evil drugs to the young people of the States, for it was the wealthy youngsters who bought the stuff new sensations.

The whole story of how Blake achieves his object is related in a wonderful yarn called "The Black Emperor" in S.B.L. (2nd series) No. 52, dated 30th June, 1925. At the finish Rymer returns to England although Marie Galante tries hard to persuade him to go with her. But this time the link seems broken, for Mary Trent is the woman who calls him. So Marie returns to Haiti alone, but she knows that the call of the jungle will drag Rymer back to her at some future date . . . .

To be continued

OMNIBUS EDITION

by Gordon Hudson

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Although Sexton Blake has been my favourite detective for a long

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time, there are several others whose exploits I have enjoyed at different times.

As a lad I had several favourites and I remember wishing they could all appear in the same story. Besides Sexton Blake, there were Colwyn Dane and Slick Chester from the Champion; Dixon Hawke and Tommy Burke from Adventure; Dandy McLean and Sgt. Brooke from The Weekly News; and Martin Speed with Sam and Susie Spry from the Scramble; with possibly Jack Keen from Film Fun.

I had to work out how they could all meet and I decided that a spy story would be best. If there was a large organisation, each detective could deal with one part and they could meet together to report and share theories. This meant that possibly small parts of the same dialogue would appear in the different papers. It would all have to be put together most carefully to ensure that one paper did not run ahead of the others, but that all episodes would appear concurrently.

Of course such a situation was not possible, for there were three different publishers involved: Amalgamated Press for Sexton Blake, Colwyn Dane and Jack Keen; Thomsons for Dixon Hawke and Dandy McLean; and Gerald G. Swan with Martin Speed. Nevertheless, the thought still intrigues me occasionally that bringing together all these rivals would make an extremely interesting story as well as providing a feast for story-paper detective fans.

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# Nelson Lee Column

## A CHRISTMAS SCENE

by William Lister

The outside of the castle while of imposing structure has always looked grim and foreboding to me. The sort of place one would associate with ghosts, ghouls and hobgoblins, and indeed it is reputed to have had its fair share of these.

But then I have only seen it in the depth of winter, its storm-battered walls piled high with snow drifts and the wind howling and

shrieking round its turrets while surrounding trees stand starkly on the skyline, their branches reaching out like spectres groping through the night.

Probably a summer visit would lead to a different impression, but for the most part the owner and his guests are far away during the summer holidays - New York or some corner of the South Sea Islands.

However, what little I have seen of the inside of the castle has a different effect; just the place for huge Christmas parties - hosts of happy guests - waggon-loads of mistletoe and holly - the very atmosphere charged with the sparkling joy of Christmas.

It is very evident that the main dining hall was built in more spacious days. As I cannot see the ceiling from the angle of my view, I take my impressions from the height of the massive door. It must be in the region of twenty-five feet high.

The walls of oak-panelling reaching towards the ceiling are broken at about sixteen feet by an oak balcony that surrounds the four walls, no doubt to give spectators a view of the dancing or other entertainment of that day. (Before we could get all that kind of a thing on a 19" T.V.) Draped from the sides are moulding flags, green with age.

Around the walls beneath the balcony are portraits in huge frames of long-forgotten ancestors and to my right a large open fireplace in which no doubt is a burning yule-log, while on my left two suits of armour are standing, like men on guard, their spears glinting in the electric light.

On the floor a tremendous carpet, covering the main body of the hall, is itself nearly covered by the oak table on which stands an abundance of Christmas fare.

A large turkey is visible at the end of the table nearest to me and a little further along a Christmas pudding of considerable size.

The round type of pudding we used to know, boiled in a copper boiler (not the upturned basin type so common today).

On the far right a group of teenagers are entering the room, the first-comers standing amazed at the feast spread before them. These were the guests arriving to partake of the Christmas dinner, none other than the boys of St. Frank's and the Moor View girls. Fatty Little to the fore is clearly hypnotised by the food he can see.

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This is all I can see. No doubt in the oak-panels are secret doors leading to other parts of the building and providing a happy hunting ground for the producers (usually crooks) of ghosts and ghouls and things that go bump in the night.

And where - my reader may ask - can such a Christmas scene be found? And I may answer exactly where I found it; on the coloured cover (now fading, alas) of the Nelson Lee Library for Xmas, 25th December, 1925, No. 551.

Depicting a section of Lord Dorrimore's Castle, well-known to all St. Frank's fans, and in the years which were to follow the scene of many exciting Christmas adventures.

### CHRISTMAS RECOLLECTIONS

by C. H. Churchill

As I have pointed out before in previous articles, come Christmas and readers of the Nelson Lee Library could always rely that Edwy Searles Brooks would again rise to the occasion and give them a most excellent seasonable story full of thrills and humour. Almost without exception a first-class story or small series of stories came along.

This year I would like to give a small excerpt from one of them, No. 447 old series "The Ghost of St. Frank's" dated December 1923. It will just go to show how cleverly he could build up the tension out of nothing and thrill the reader, the mark of an ace author.

In the story, a party of Juniors are spending Christmas at St. Frank's as the guests of the Headmaster. It would take too much space to explain why this was so and in any case would be beside the point. It was evening and the Juniors were in the drawing room in the Head's house after supper, Dr. Stafford having gone away. Telling stories had been suggested and a number had been related. Reggie Pitt winding up with a really creepy one. It was a piece of fiction he had read in a magazine that week, but he told it in such a mysterious and gripping way that at the end everyone was feeling rather uneasy. At this point it was considered bed was the best place in preparation for an early start the next morning. Now let me quote from the story -

But it's an absolute fact that the creepy ghost stories had got nearly all of us in a condition of nervousness that was obvious. Some of the fellows made painful efforts to appear

indifferent.

"Who-who's going out first?" asked Watson carelessly.

"Yes, it is a bit dark and gloomy in the hall," I chuckled. "Come on, you chaps, pull yourselves together. There are no such things as ghosts. And St. Frank's isn't haunted, anyway."

I opened the door, and we all passed out into the cold, gloomy hall. Most of the fellows were talking rather noisily - the sound of their own voices evidently serving as a bracer.

"Ghost stories," said Archie, as we went along the hall - "ghost stories are rather priceless things to read on a summer's afternoon, lolling by the river. I meant to say, a chappie doesn't mind that. He laughs at the dashed things. But at Christmastime in a big place like this, with dark corners looming in the offing, and so forth, it's a bit on the fowl side."

"Dry up about ghosts!" growled De Valerie.

"Oh, absolutely!" said Archie. "Rather! I was only just remarking that those stories about rattling bones, and what not, are calculated to make a chappie on the bally jump. What should we do, for example, if a headless spook suddenly whizzed forth out of the surrounding gloom?"

Archie's cheerful babbling did nothing to alleviate the general nervousness. And we had just got to the foot of the great staircase when Tommy Watson glanced upwards towards the blackness of the upper corridor.

He caught his breath in, went as pale as a sheet, and stood as though frozen.

"Look-look!" he panted hoarsely.

"What-what is it?" gasped Church.

"Oh!"

There was something in Watson's tone that made the other fellows nearly jump out of their skins. I caught Tommy by the shoulder, and he gave a great gulp.

"Steady!" I said sternly. "Don't be an ass, old man!"

"Something moved up there!" breathed Watson chokingly. "Some-something white! Oh! It's-it's coming down! Look out!" he added in a scream.

Before anybody could move, a streak of whiteness glided noiselessly down the staircase - a swift flash of something unaccountable. It was a white, silent glimpse of an intangible thing. It shot by, and was gone into the gloomy depths of the hall before we could recover.

"A - a ghost!" muttered somebody hoarsely.

"Oh! What-what was it?" said Watson, his teeth chattering.

"Well, you chaps must be in a rocky condition," I said grimly. "Don't be such blithering idiots. Fancy getting scared over a cat!"

"At cat!"

"Yes - Mrs. Poulter's white Persian cat!" I said, with a laugh. "It's just about time we all went to bed, I think!"

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The excerpt opposite ended in a comical way, but in the remainder of the story there were quite a few really gripping episodes that were not so comical.

If anyone wants to read a really first-class Christmas mystery story, borrow this number from Bob Blyth's Nelson Lee Library and they will thoroughly enjoy it.

IN MEMORIAM: Edwy Searles Brooks, born St. Martin's Day  
11th November, 1889 - Died 2nd December, 1965  
Requiescat in Peace

\* \* \* \* \*

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 180 - Magnets 1139-42 - Courtfield Cracksman Christmas

Christmas means the Magnet, with snow and frozen lakes outside and roaring fires and festivities inside, and a Magnet Christmas at its best is one at Wharton Lodge. It comes as something of a surprise to realise that it was not until 1929, in the middle of the Courtfield Cracksman series, that Charles Hamilton provided his first full-length Christmas at Wharton's home.

The first number was the run-up with a number of different features, the most seasonable of them all being the purchase of a Christmas present for Mr. Quelch. The gift was a Chunkley's Christmas pudding which, it was hoped, would make the Remove master more amiable and which would be returned to the form to eat. Unfortunately, Skinner substituted a jack-in-the-box for a pudding, and all Bunter got was a caning. The number ended with Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh leaving Bunter stranded on the railway platform at Courtfield.

From this time onwards, it was plot and counter-plot as Bunter attempted to insinuate his way into Wharton Lodge and the other juniors tried to make him come unstuck. Every single incident was absolutely novel and highly amusing, from Bunter spoiling Colonel Wharton's ghost story by yawning, to the discussion about Christmas presents between

the fat owl and the Famous Five. When Wharton tried to frighten Bunter away by dressing up as a ghost, Bunter forestalled him by locking his host in a wardrobe. When Bunter decided he had a cold and stayed in bed, ringing the bell for servants all day long, it was Bob Cherry who dressed up as a doctor and prescribed an effective cure. When the Famous Five moved on to Cherry Place before Bunter woke up, it was Bunter who tracked them down by making enquiries at the railway booking office.

Bunter was at his least obnoxious at this time. It is true that he referred to Wharton's uncle and aunt as old fossils, and he tried to borrow money from Wells, the butler, but it could be said with accuracy that the reader was induced to sympathise with him, on the whole, and to hope that he would succeed. In any case, Christmas with Bunter is always highly entertaining. Possibly the most obnoxious act he committed was bilking the taxi driver on a trip to Dorchester, but Nemesis caught up with him, and he left Cherry Place in an unfounded fear of arrest.

A Magnet Christmas demands a mystery, and behind this festive foreground there lay the continuing puzzle of robberies, with two new characters - Barnes, the Head's chauffeur, and a mysterious square-jawed man who turned up in many places. Dr. Locke was a guest at both Wharton Lodge and Cherry Place, and it comes as rather a shock to realise that Dr. Locke was Head when Colonel Wharton and Major Cherry were boys at Greyfriars. Although the mystery element continued throughout the Christmas holiday, it was never more than a background to the seasonable jollities, but it was neatly integrated into the plot, especially when Colonel Wharton recognised Barnes as Poynings, a man he had known in the last war.

As we look back on this celebrated Christmas of 1929, it is still possible to feel amazed at Charles Hamilton's inventive genius, to be entranced with the mellow humour of the style, and to be highly entertained by the absorbing narrative. Nothing ever surpassed the superb quality of this magical quartet of Christmas stories. They are a sheer delight to read and read again.

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HERE WE GO AGAIN

(More on the Sub Question)

W. O. G. LOFTS writes: In view of the hundreds of thousands of written entries in the old Amalgamated Press records, I've always accepted the fact that some errors are bound to occur. By the same token I will always accept official records, rather than supposition and theory - which has proved so wrong in the past. Over the years official records have confirmed the majority of collectors' views and established authorship from the writers own records.

I've been quite aware of the E. S. Brooks manuscripts for some time, having the excellent Nelson Lee Library Catalogue. In evidence so strong as this, of course I'm prepared to accept that the St. Frank's creator was the author. This in a way does confirm Mr. C. M. Down's statement to me that some sub writers were paid well in advance for certain stories - he 'buying' them (like Pentelow) and then eventually getting payment - hence his name for them. In many cases, so much revision, rewriting and subbing was required that it would be almost impossible to define the original author. Many substitute writers I have met could not recognise their original work, so I cannot see how others can today.

In closing the subject I don't think it at all unlikely - or unusual - for two writers to be involved in a two-part series. Apart from the famous U.J. 'Tram' series Magnet No. 566 was written by the cigar-smoking office boy Will Gibbons. No. 567 the second part of the New Boy 'Benson' series was written by John Nix Pentelow.

PETER HANGER writes: I am sure that Laurie Sutton is right when he doubts the veracity of the official lists.

I am convinced that even in King of the Islands there are "subs". There are several single stories that were not published in the B.F.L. reprints, and this is usually a good guide. Then there is "Galleons Gold". I am convinced that this is not genuine Hamilton. Jim Daunt is just not a Hamilton name.

One story about which I have always had the gravest possible doubts is 1317 "After Lights Out" (Magnet).

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This story has always grated. I don't like the story and there are not many of Charles Hamilton stories I can say that about.

Furthermore, 1316 shows the Greyfriars men back at Greyfriars, but 1317 opens with "the clans gathering" at Courtfield. Surely Frank Richards would not have made that mistake?

Then there is the Gem story "The Housemasters Mistake" recently published by Howard Baker. It is my opinion that this is a "sub" and there must be plenty of others.

You have written many times that as children we were quite capable of picking them out.

I wish to challenge this. I know that at twelve years old I could not. Although I did spot a similarity of style between Owen Conquest and Frank Richards on the strength of one S.O.L. (The Sneak of Rookwood). But I put this down to authors writing for the same library, for the same editor, so it was quite natural for the stories to be alike.

I would also like to challenge the assertion that there had to be sub stories. Both Magnet and Gem were Libraries so there is no reason why stories of any type could not have been used.

And I see no reason at all why the "subs" could not have used their own (pen) names. In fact, if they had any self respect they would have insisted upon it. Charles Hamilton cannot escape blame either for he ought to have insisted upon it.

ERIC FAYNE adds:

"The Housemaster's Mistake" of the 1924 Gem is the story in which Mr. Ratcliff accuses Cutts of theft. Mr. Ratcliff is wrong, and Cutts demands - and gets - a public apology. In my view this is one of the best single stories in the later part of the Gem's Indian Summer, a brilliant little school tale. If we are doubtful about the origin of this one, then we cannot be certain about any Gem and Magnet tale.

I do not profess to know a great deal about King of the Islands. Masses of sub tales were published under the author's pen-names of Frank Richards and Martin Clifford. But I do not believe that sub tales were published under the name of Charles Hamilton himself.

So far as I can recollect, I have never said that all children could tell a sub story from a genuine one, any more than all adults can. But certainly some could and did.

Mr. Hanger says that as the Magnet was a Library, tales of any type could have been published. Plenty papers got by with a variety of stories, admittedly. But how long does he think that the Magnet would have lasted without Greyfriars?

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# News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

## MIDLAND

In October an attendance of only seven members was our lowest for a very long time.

Nevertheless it was that sort of comfortable, cosy meeting that everyone present enjoyed without getting excited about anything.

Our usual features - Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item were on view brought by Tom Porter from his collection.

The A.N. was Nelson Lee Library (o.s.) No. 177, "The Serpent's Redemption" the last story in a fine series. It was dated 26th October, 1918, and thus 64 years old to the day.

The C.I. was also about "The Serpent", (Pitt) was No. 2 of the Monster Library. These wonderful full-length reprints (without cutting) were published at 1/- each in the twenties. A shilling was a lot to a boy in those days so that only 19 were published.

The biscuits for the refreshments were provided by Vince Loveday. After the refreshments Ivan Webster read an extract from Magnet 1215. Wharton succeeds in making Loder look a complete ass as he has a proof that he only thrashed Pon because that cad was catapulting his respected form-master. Ivan was warmly applauded for his effort.

Geoff Lardner and Christine Brettell were winners in our famous game, "Greyfriars Bingo". These two are always among the winners. Nobody knows why.

A discussion followed based on the idea of Dr. Locke choosing six Junior prefects to help with discipline in the lower school.

The next meeting is on 14th December, our Grand Christmas party. All O.B.B.C. members of all clubs are invited.

JACK BELLFIELD - Correspondent.

CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at the home of Adrian Perkins on Sunday, 7th November, 1982. The Secretary reported that Chairman Vic Hearn had been in hospital, and was still unwell, and the members present signed a "get well" greeting card to send to Vic. In the absence of the chairman the Vice Chairman, Mike Rouse, took the chair. Bill Thurbon reported that he and Jack Overhill, on behalf of the club had sent a birthday card to Jack Doupe, who, in his letter of acknowledgement, gave an account of his book-seeking foray among a large circle of book dealers, which had been very successful.

Mike Rouse circulated copies of the "Mail on Sunday" strip paper.

Bill Lofts gave a talk on "Rupert" of the Daily Express. He recalled the comic strips that had appeared in various newspapers from the later 1920's onwards, including the Daily Mirror's Pip, Squeak and Wilfrid. Children's interests in these were governed to a large extent by the newspaper their parents took. In Bill's family his father's choice had been the "Daily Express".

Mary Tourtel's husband was on the staff of the "Daily Express", and after the "Mail" began Teddy Tails, it was suggested to Tourtel that the Express should also have a strip. Tourtel's wife, Mary, was interested in drawing for children, and so she began drawing Rupert; the rhymed story being written by her husband. Rupert became more and more popular. There had been a Rupert Club complete with badge. There was now a large number of Rupert Collectors. Bill also explained the great efforts which were made by Derek Adley and himself in bringing out the Rupert Index, a task made very difficult by lack of dates, etc. The Index had been a great success, the Managing Director of the Daily Express had been very impressed, and the Rupert Index had appeared in foreign language editions. He mentioned that Rupert once had a monkey "Beppo", but "Beppo" had to disappear, since so many children wanted a monkey for Christmas. Roy Whiskin said he knew a boy who actually got a monkey for Christmas through "Beppo"!

Bill was warmly thanked for his interesting talk, particularly since he was speaking impromptu, having been unwell during the week, and was also suffering from the results of a fall.

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Adrian then began a Quiz on radio programmes - tantalisingly leaving the answers until we had enjoyed Mrs. Perkin's excellent tea.

The meeting closed with a warm vote of thanks to Adrian and Mrs. Perkins for their hospitality.

### NORTHERN

Meeting held on Saturday, 13th November, 1982

Thirteen members were present on a chilly and wet November evening. A special welcome was given to Nandu Thalange, our youngest member having a weekend break from his course at King's College, London.

Harry Barlow had brought along a number of books for sale - and most of these were snapped up as "bargains".

An article about the Vintage Magazine Shop was passed round. Also, a copy of Wisden Magazine was of special interest to members, as the new assistant editor is Simon Wilde, the son of our late Chairman. Simon is well-known to many Northern Club Members as he on occasion attended meetings with his father.

Mention was made of the recently published book "Heirs of Tom Brown", in which a chapter entitled "The Pop School Story" discussed Greyfriars and Co. It was felt that the authoress was not really fully conversant with the writings of Frank Richards.

After refreshments, Geoffrey Good read two articles from the C.D. Annual of 1973 - Jack and Mollie Allison's "The Telephone Box Was The Wrong Colour" and "The Ballade".

Our next meeting will be our Christmas Party, on Saturday, 11th December, at 4.30 p.m. for 5.00 p.m. Our venue is the usual place - Swarthmore Education Centre, Leeds 3. All friends are invited: if you would like to attend, please 'phone Mollie on Leeds (0532) 756615.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

### LONDON

Varied interesting items were given at the Walthamstow meeting. Millicent Lyle talked on Louisa May Alcott and Mary Cadogan put on show several souvenirs that appertained to Millicent's talk.

These consisted of a "Schoolgirl" issue of 1934 that had an instalment of "Little Women", a volume that told of "The Story of the Alcotts" and half a dozen beautiful postcards. Mary gave a discourse on Elsie Jeanette Oxenham and illustrated the talk with a book by Monica Godfrey on the writers many books. A new member, Joan Salter, is a devotee of Elsie Oxenham.

Tom Wright told an amusing story of an eccentric character who went by the name of "Baby Elephant".

Bill Bradford's six dinner guests were John Meredith, Timber Sahibby's Robert Harding, Captain Catin, Harry Davies the flying Beetle, Henry Samuel Quelch, and Robert Budd alias the Rosebud. A stag party, as Bill said.

Laurie Sutton won Roger Jenkins' Greyfriars Grid competition.

The Xmas meeting will be held at the Ealing Home of Bill and Thelma Bradford on Sunday, 12th December. A full tea will be provided. Kindly inform if intending to be present: the address is 5 Queen Ann's Grove, W5 3XP. (Tel. 579-4670)

BEN WHITER

We are sorry to hear that our dear friend Bob Blythe, of our London Club and of Nelson Lee fame, is having to endure a spell in hospital. Readers will join with C.D. in wishing Bob a speedy return to good health, and hope that he will soon be back with us again as good as new.

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WANTED: Richmal Crompton's "William The Lawless", "William The Superman", Richards "Lord Billy Bunter", "B. B's Beanfeast", "B. B. Does His Best", Magnets, pre-1930. Following FOR SALE: C.D. Annuals 1976, 1978, 1979, 1980, mint, £4 each.

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

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Could any reader tell me please in which Penny Comic and on what dates the series "Nick o' the River" appeared?

A. HUGGINS, "SOUTHWOOD", SOUTHGATE, HORNSEA, N. HUMBERSIDE

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FOR SALE: Quantity of Adventures, Hotspurs, Rovers and Wizards, 1947 to 1955, in very good condition. Stamped addressed envelope for details:- POWLES, 10/67 ELM PARK GARDENS, LONDON S.W.10 9QE. Tel. 01-351-3341

# The Postman Called

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

TOM PORTER (Cradley Heath): The SPCD and the Annual have become so entwined into the very fibre of our being that their passing would be as big a shock to your supporters and friends as was the loss of the Magnet in the middle of May 1940.

I remember as if it were only last Saturday morning visiting my newsagent in Cradley Heath - it was a sunny morning - to buy Magnet 1684, "The Battle Of The Beaks" only to be told that the paper had ceased publication.

As the newsagent put it graphically, "It's stopped Mr. Porter!" I was stunned with the surprise of it, so sudden, too. I can only hope that both SPCD and the Annual will be with us for a very long, long time to come.

The October issue of SPCD (430) is another very fine number. Indeed, your "track record" for this year is outstandingly good. I do not find one single weak issue among them, and so offer you my very sincere congratulations.

BEN WHITER (London): Re the letter from Phil Harris of Montreal. Lilian, brought up with seven brothers, had to fag for them, and one of her tasks was to go to the local Cats' Meat Shop, which also sold comic papers, and get a copy of the Jester. Also to bring a twopenny bar of Cadbury's Milk Chocolate. That happened in Canning Town, East London, so Mr. Harris's memories are authentic.

M. S. FELLOWS (Kingsbury): C.D. seems to get better and better. Long may you continue to edit such a delightful magazine!

In your November editorial you express some surprise that schoolboys might have worn scholastic gowns. The prefects at Owen's School, which used to be at the Angel in London, certainly wore a 'half-gown'. This reached almost to the knees, unlike the masters' gowns which were of the conventional length for academic dress. Now that the school has moved to Potters Bar, things may have changed, as this old foundation (1613) school has now, alas, 'gone comprehensive'. The school was founded by Dame Alice Owen who, on the archery butts on

that site, had an arrow shot through her hat and founded the school for 'thirty poor boys' as a thank-offering to God.

I very much agree with the sentiments expressed by Mrs. M. H. Woods in the same issue and with those which you yourself express from time to time of how the old order changeth giving place to very little of quality that is new. Thank goodness we still have our old papers to read to remind us, if that is at all necessary, of better times. Some of that old excitement I felt at the arrival of the "Gem" and the "Magnet" in my youth is still experienced when your much esteemed "C.D." arrives every month.

Thank you for all that you do to enrich our lives.

J. H. LOOK (Southall): The Annual always gives me great pleasure, and the monthly gives the best of beginnings to each month. How different our Magnets and Gems were to the trash youngsters are served with these days.

BILL LOFTS (London): I can well remember a former sub-editor on The Companion Papers telling me "that during the First World War, when all the regular staff were away - finding at the back of a draw a manuscript of the start of a St. Jim's story dealing with Tom Merry and roller skating". At first he thought it was a missing Charles Hamilton tale as its writing was so good, but was told by Pentelow that it belonged to C. M. Down. Indeed, C. M. Down was reluctant to talk about his work on the Magnet and Gem, mainly because at that time Charles Hamilton was still alive, and he knew his extreme distaste for anyone who had written about his characters.

Down certainly remembered The Schoolboy Jockey, as he proudly showed me cups he had won in his younger days for horse-riding and at the local hunt where his Father was a J.P.

When one thinks about it, he was the only member of the staff (apart from his War-Service) on the papers from the first to the last, and knew everything about Charles Hamilton's writings. A stand-in indeed. He wrote most of the Rylcombe Grammar School tales in The Empire Library. The short Greyfriars tales in Chuckles - as well as our editor's discovery some years ago of even sub tales in the Harry Dorrian stories in Pluck. It is true that Hinton's name was bracketed

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with his at times - but Hinton was I feel never a writer of any great merit, and most of this writing was by Maurice Down.

Miss J. ARDEN (Leeds): I was reared on Talbot Baines Reed. The books belonged to my brothers, and I loved them, especially "The Master of the Shell". Now I shall try and track down "Follow My Leader". Many Happy Returns to C.D. on its 36th Birthday.

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): "Fantasy or realism?" asks J.E.M. in the Sexton Blake section of this month's "Digest". Well, as far as Charles Hamilton is concerned, I must admit that I rather like the "Alonzo the Strong Man" series. As Roger Jenkins correctly points out in "A History of the 'Gem' and 'Magnet'", Hamilton "subordinated the plot to the characters", and Mr. Jenkins refers to "the manner in which the strong men used their new found muscular power, Alonzo Todd becoming fussy and interfering from the best of motives, and Bunter becoming downright tyrannical from the worst of motives". This is what makes the story work for me - it's not so much the fantasy itself, (although that is a novel and enjoyable departure in a Hamilton plot), but the effect of the newly-acquired "superhuman strength" on Lonzy and Billy.

I agree with J.E.M., though - I don't like my favourite detectives mixed up with pure fantasy, although a touch of the mysterious and exotic may add colour to a conventional plot. Speaking of Mr. Brooks' Waldo the Wonder Man, I'm just in the process of reading the "Young Waldo" series of St. Frank's stories in the 1929 "Nelson Lee". Stanley Waldo has all the "superhuman" qualities of his famous father. It's all rather unconvincing, although, to be honest, I would probably have enjoyed it much more if I'd first read it as a schoolboy.

I did like the cover illustrations on the October and November C.D's. What is that writing beneath the William picture? Is it Thai or Siamese, or one of those languages from S.E. Asia? Jemima Carstairs on the current cover looks like a feminine version of the great Arthur Augustus. A much shrewder character, of course, is "Jimmy".

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**Mrs. J. GOLEN (Streetly):** Of course you know how much I am looking forward to having the latest C.D. Annual, and I hope Mr. Buddle will be making a welcome re-appearance. It would be a lovely idea to have all the Mr. Buddle stories in one volume - I expect you have heard that suggestion before. They are always so gently readable and I just love them.

**(EDITORIAL COMMENT:** Mr. Buddle is back this year in a new adventure entitled "New Term at Slade".)

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**REVIEW**

by Mary Cadogan

TAKE A COLD TUB, SIR! is a truly gorgeous history of the Boys' Own Paper by Jack Cox, the magazine's editor from 1946 until its closure in 1967. It is an entertaining, atmospheric and affectionate account of the policies of various editors, and of contacts with readers, authors and illustrators. How fascinating, for example, to learn that Gunby Hadath wrote fiction for every editor from first to last of the B.O.P., and that he had been a schoolmaster at a Dorset public school before giving up teaching for full-time writing. Interesting too that Harold Avery (how I loved his school stories!) wrote for the paper for over a quarter of a century; that 'Kent Carr' and B. J. Chute were both, in fact, lady contributors, and that Captain W. E. Johns - whose Biggles stories in the B.O.P. produced 'cascades' of enthusiastic letters - used to send the editorial staff presents of game - 'very gamey ... too' - from Scotland. The book includes pictures and notes about many other famous contributors, including Jules Verne, Baden Powell, Talbot Baines Reed and Arthur Conan Doyle.

There are lots of nostalgic dips into

**JACK AND JOHN:**  
**Their Friends and their Fortunes.**  
 BY MRS. EILOART,  
*Author of "Ernie Elton," "Tom Dunstone's Troubles," "Archie Blake," etc.*  
 CHAPTER I.—JACK.



*Above: the decorative heading of the serial story Jack and John from the first issue of B.O.P. showing cheerful Jack Carstone, aged thirteen, with his 'merry eye and open sunny face'*

the stories, of course, and those stern columns of advice urging cold douches and dumb-bells as cures for 'evil habits'.

The family atmosphere of the B. O. P. and its appeal to several generations is frequently emphasized; the book's most heart-warming anecdote is one that concerns Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, who apparently confided to the author of TAKE A COLD TUB, SIR! that she had been 'a lifelong fan' of the paper. She told him how during her childhood she would creep downstairs on the B. O. P.'s delivery day to 'purloin her brother David's copy, and only give it up to him when she had read it right through ...'

The Boys' Own Paper could have no higher recommendation than that - and TAKE A COLD TUB, SIR! (Lutterworth £8.95) does full justice to this deservedly celebrated periodical.

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REQUIRED. Any Wizards or mags with stories about the Smasher or Iron Robot. Will pay your price or exchange for other comics.

FOR SALE: Magnets of all dates, £2 and £1 each.

BILL WATSON, OLYMPUS, SANDFORD MILL RD., CHELMSFORD, ESSEX

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SALE: C.D's complete years '65 - 70 and '76 - 80, £2 per year. Also 50 copies from other years, £4. Offers for the complete collection. 3 C.D. Annuals, 1963-65, £3 each or all 3 for £8. Nelson Lee 1st New Series, 51-60, £5 and 2nd New Series, 1-10, £5. The following as new:- Billy Bunter Picture Book, £3; Holiday Annual 1967, £2; Best of Magnet and Gem, £1.50. Postage extra or collect by arrangement only.

J. P. HOBSON, ST. MARY'S SCHOOL, CHART LANE  
REIGATE, SURREY, RH2 7RN

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WANTED: BFL 333 and 337 ("Chums of Ripplingham" and "Rivals of Ripplingham"; 237. SOLs 64, 70, 136, 188.

MEARNS, 4 OGILVIE PLACE, BRIDGE OF ALLAN  
STIRLINGSHIRE, SCOTLAND, FK9 4TE

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ANNUALS: Range Rider 1962-3; Schoolboys' Album 1959; Bumper Book for Boys 1945; Film Fun 1955; Lion 1958. Many more, £1 each. Also Biggles, Just William, £1. 1945 onwards comics 50p each. S. a. e.

OLYMPUS, SANDFORD MILL RD., CHELMSFORD, ESSEX

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MORCOVE, TOO, HAD CHRISTMAS

by Tommy Keen

Greyfriars, St. Jim's, St. Frank's, and Sexton Blake will certainly all be remembered by their respective admirers, and maybe Cliff House too, this Christmas time, and thinking that perhaps the school I so much admired might be overlooked, I mention (and remember with affection) the lovely Christmas series which appeared in the Schoolgirls' Own, starring the delightful girls of Morcove School, Betty Barton & Co.

The title of the Morcove story for each special Christmas issue had the right seasonable flavour, "One Christmas Night" (1921), "The Treasure of Castle Garth" (1922), "The Christmas Fugitive" (1923), "Their Fateful Xmas Day" (1924), "The Xmas Truce" (1925), and so on. Marjorie Stanton's (Horace Phillips) stories were always immensely readable, but at Christmas (as with Frank Richards' Greyfriars tales), the atmosphere was truly festive, snow, frost, and ice outside, warmth and merriment inside, but with, of course, the essential Christmas mystery. Ghosts did not often crop up in the Morcove stories, but there were loads of secret panels, and strange noises, with Madge Minden and Tess Trelawney vanishing from the first Christmas scene, and Trixie Hope making a sudden disappearance in the 1922 series.

The illustrations by Leonard Shields, were always superb at Christmas time, with Betty & Co. looking absolutely charming in their party attire, away from the usual gym slips, and black hats.

Linton Hall, the home of Betty's greatest chum, Polly Linton, was often the rendezvous, and in the 1925 story, "Their Xmas Truce", Madge and Tess were again featured, but through a misunderstanding, were not on speaking terms. Therefore, a truce was decided upon over Christmas, as they were both Polly's guests, and although this made for rather sad reading, by the next issue, "When Christmas Brought Goodwill", all the misunderstandings were cleared up, and to end the holiday, a few days were spent in London. With a New Year visit to the Pantomime, 1926 came in on the right note.

As with the Magnet, the orange and blue covers of the Schoolgirls' Own, seemed to be even more entrancing at Christmas. Leonard Shields, and C. H. Chapman at the Festival Season could do no wrong (at least, not for me).

Morcove, though isolated from the rest of our famous schools, being situated in North Devon, had an appeal, which was quite its own!