

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

Vol. 37

No. 435

MARCH 1983

No. 1 of Our Companion Paper The "KINEMA CONIC." Now on Sale! C.



No. 15, Vol. 1.

(Every Tuesday.)

April 24, 1929.



This week's Film:—"A-TENTION TO BUSINESS."



1. Hey, what a crowd! All the funny old Film Fun favorites off to the train for a spin. And they just filled up a carriage nicely, thank you. All the whole ahead of them. And, of course, everybody cried: "No room in there!" All the Film Fun's silents here in! They ain't! No they popped off and got in anyway they could. Good - can, cattle trucks, or any old where. And that was that.



2. Well, if. AT THE OTHER END - His what awful young chaps are Ben and Charlie? Wouldn't believe it? They'd got a lot of air balloons, and painted the faces of all the favorites on them, and held them up against the windows of the carriage! No wonder that the lads at the other end were said: "Dabbed!" they cried. "Dun!" Packed the suitcases, and these ones have done it on the cash!



3. But merrily laughed Ben and Charlie as they jogged it off out of the station with the air balloons, bearing the faces of Anselmo, and Hubo, Marie Osborne, and Fatty Arbuckle, and all the stars, on these balloons. And merrily they cried: "Aha! That's it! We dibbled 'em!" But little they knew that the other young chaps were up and doing! No!



4. But one of those heavy suitcases had been used a hat pin from the lady who parveyed past were hung in the retro-banquet room, and he slipped up and punctured the old balloons, much to the amazement of Ben and Charlie. "Pop! Pop!" went the balloons, to the loud and heavy echoes of "Ma, ha, ha!" from the villagers up stage.

(Continued on page 20A.)

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COLLECTORS DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 37

No. 435

MARCH 1983

Price 34p

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THE ROLLING STONE: The End!

On another page this month Mr. Bill Lofts records the sad news that Pierre Quiroule (the Rolling Stone) has passed on at the wonderful age of 91 years. Mr. Lofts wrote to me: "Perhaps you will add your own editorial comments. After all, I think you discovered him long before I entered the scene."

I think that is correct. I know for certain that it was through me that Pierre Quiroule returned to write more new Sexton Blake stories in the few years before the Second World War.

Till I came on the Pierre Quiroule stories I was never an avid reader of Sexton Blake, as I mentioned last month.

When I was a lad my father was a skipper in the Customs Service, stationed at Gravesend. Daily he took a customs steam launch (one of them was a very fast vessel named the "Tartar"), going from Gravesend to North Woolwich every day, sometimes on to Canning Town, and occasionally down the estuary to Sheerness. In my school holidays he would often take me afloat with him, and I loved those outings, when he went on duty at 6 a.m. and came off duty at 6 p.m.

I used to take a book with me, and, while the ship was tied up somewhere, I would sit on the bridge or in the wheelhouse reading. One early morning I said: "Dad, I haven't brought my book." He gave me 6d. and indicated a tobacconist's shop where they also sold newspapers. "See if they've got something you might like in there," he said.

I went into the shop. They hadn't much in the reading line apart from newspapers, but there was a rack with a few monthlies on display. Nothing looked very attractive to me, but I purchased a Sexton Blake 4d. Library entitled "The Mystery of the Turkish Agreement". I didn't expect much from it, but it was something to read.

It turned out to be an excellent story, introducing two characters who were new to me - Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie - with plenty of detection and a Secret Service background. Here was a quality of writing, a mastery of description, and a talent in creating atmosphere which was unusual in stories of this class.

In those days all the Blake stories were published anonymously. I watched the advertisements for more stories of these characters. In the next few years a new story by the writer appeared every few months, and each was first-class. I bought them all as they appeared.

And then, suddenly, they stopped. Months, maybe years, went by. It looked as though the Grant-Julie saga was ended.

One day I wrote to the editor of the S.B.L. and asked what had become of Grant and Julie. I had a courteous reply, and then, one day, came a letter from him to advise me that a new Grant-Julie story, entitled "The Man From Tokio" would be in the shops soon. When it came out I bought it, and prepared to enjoy myself. By now, the names of the writers were being given. The author of this one was Warwick

Jardine.

Before I had finished the first chapter I knew for sure that it was not written by the original writer. The "feel" of it was all wrong. Talk about the Hamilton schools' sub-writers being evident to a reader who was familiar with the real thing. It was exactly the same here in the Sexton Blake Library.

I wrote to the editor. He replied: "Unfortunately the author of the original stories is no longer writing for us."

I replied: "Then re-publish his old stories!" And they did just that.

The first reprint was "Dead Man's Gold", originally entitled "The Secret of the Frozen North". The author was named as Pierre Quiroule. Now, for several years, reprints came along at regular intervals. They never republished the first two, and, in fact, those first two were inferior to later stories as I found when I obtained them many years later. Nor did they republish the third one "The Turkish Agreement" which is surprising, for it is a fine novel.

After years of reprints, Pierre Quiroule himself came back, and wrote a number of new stories for the S.B.L. in the few years prior to Hitler's war. And, as time went on, I was in contact with the author himself. He was a fascinating correspondent, and loved to reminisce over his old stories. In recent times I have long been out of touch with him.

No Blake writer ever gave pen-pictures of Sexton Blake, Tinker, Pedro, and Mrs. Bardell superior to those of Pierre Quiroule, and very, very few equalled them. His own characters, too - Mlle. Julie (delightful always, sometimes calling herself Mme. Coralie Standish); Sir Vrymer Fane, head of the Secret Service; Pom-Pom, Julie's Abyssian servant, devoted to her as we all were; and even Inspector Bramley of Scotland Yard.

In my bookcase today I have bound copies of every one of Pierre Quiroule's Sexton Blake Libraries, some of them dating back to the twenties, plus several hardbacks which appeared under his own name of Sayer or under the Pierre Quiroule pen-name. Oddly enough, all the hardbacks are purely run-of-the-mill stuff. I keep them surely for sentiment. It was as a Sexton Blake writer that he was supreme.

THE GREAT GAME

What on earth are they doing to cricket? The days of Da Costa, Stacey, and Wodehouse's "Mike" seem far distant.

The glut of fast bowling, with spin all but eliminated from the game is the result of too many limited-over matches. The disputing over umpires' decisions makes it clear that "Playing the Game" is old-fashioned now. Into the same category comes the shouting for l.b.w. by eleven players, when no more than two can possibly have any idea whether the appeal is justified. This, to my mind, is a form of umpire-intimidation. The time will come when, if the appeal does not go their way, they will march round the ground waving banners.

The crowds banging beer-cans are possibly merely a reflection of the times in which we live, but the last straw is surely on the camel's back when the players wear fancy dress and run around the field looking like refugees from some Musical Comedy at Barnards' Theatre, Chatham.

Too much money and too little real dedication - too much sponsoring with television moguls running the show - seem to be the causes. Who could imagine the great players like Hutton, Bradman, Wally Hammond, and Cowdrey, frisking about the field in beach pyjamas and carrying on like this latest lot do? Give me club cricket in future - I'm fed up with the professionals.

THE EDITOR

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WANTED: Richmal Crompton's "William" books, 1st editions, particularly "thick" editions; Thriller Picture Library; Johns' "Biggles" books, 1st editions, with o.w.s.

SALE: Greyfriars' Holiday Annual, original, 1920, other years; Bunter books.

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

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OUT NOW! GOLDEN FUN No. 13! Features celebration of Gerald Swan Publications/I Flew with Eraddock and more! £2.35 + 26p postage. Also: THE ROVER INDEX. A listing of 27 years of Rover stories, 1945-1973. An invaluable reference work. £1.75 post free.

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FOR SALE: Magnets; H.B. Facsimiles; Skippers; S.B.L's, etc. Tel. (0604) 711874.

Danny's Diary

MARCH 1933

A great month in the Gem. The opening story is "Tom Merry & Co. in Liverpool", a delicious affair. Digby gets permission to take a party to Liverpool to meet his uncle from Ireland, Mr. Murphy. After reading this, I should like to go to Liverpool. Tom Merry saves the life of a waif named 'Erbert who is in danger from a street accident. Later, 'Erbert proves his gratitude by saving Tom Merry from a gang of thugs.

In the next tale "Smuggled to School" the chums return to St. Jim's, taking with them 'Erbert, whom they smuggle in as a new boy. Dr. Holmes is expecting a new boy named Bernard Glyn, and takes it for granted that 'Erbert is the new boy, Glyn. Tom Merry and Gussy had raised his fees between them, and had paid those fees over to Mr. Railton. It comes out in the end, and 'Erbert is allowed to stay on at St. Jim's. This was really very rum, considering that 'Erbert thought that History and Geography were things to eat. All very rum - but lovely reading.

In the month's third tale we had "The Schoolboy Inventor" when the real Bernard Glyn arrives at the school. He invents all sorts of weird and wonderful things, including a chair for unwelcome visitors. Herr Schneider sits in it.

Final of the month is "The Taming of the Tyrant" which introduces Glyn's home, Glyn House, near St. Jim's, plus his pretty sister. Mr. Ratcliff suddenly becomes good tempered and pleasant. He has fallen in love with Edith Glyn. She turns him down at the finish, but Ratty is a changed man - for the time, at least.

Unbelievable stuff this month, but so very lovely.

A very startling thing has happened in South West London. There was a great explosion in a factory at Mitcham. Some houses are so badly damaged that they must be demolished. A boy was killed, and many people are injured in the explosion. An enquiry on the cause of it is going on.

The Nelson Lee Library has started again at No. 1, new series,

and they are re-publishing some of the very early St. Frank's stories which, I find, are more attractive than the later ones as they are related by Nipper. The first story this month is "Kidnapped". A new boy at St. Frank's is kidnapped, and Nipper tells of the exciting fight to rescue him. The next story is "Tried By His Form", in which Nipper is found guilty of a brutal attack on a new boy.

Then comes "Nipper's Triumph". Nipper is shunned by his form-mates in a sequel to the previous story, and fights his way back to popularity. Last story of the month is "The Housemaster's Peril". Nelson Lee, the Housemaster, is a marked man, doomed to die at the hands of an unknown assassin. All good tales this month. They seem to have followed the example of the Gem in going back to earlier times.

Another extension to the London Underground system has been opened, this latest being on the Piccadilly line which now carries on from Arnos Grove to Enfield West.

And Mr. Roosevelt has been inaugurated as the new President of the United States. Bet Fisher T. is pleased.

We went to see friends living in Catford, and in the evening we all went to the first house at the Lewisham Hippodrome for a lovely variety bill which included Alexander and Mose who are black-faced comedians; the Trix Sisters, who are dainty entertainers; Billy Bennett who calls himself "Almost a Gentleman"; and Albert Whelan, a delightfully quiet Australian whistler. Grand show.

Two good stories in the Schoolboys' Own Library. "The Greyfriars Rebellion" tells of Mr. Quelch being dismissed from his post, and the Remove rises in protest. Mauleverer buys an old manor house named "High Oaks", and opens it as a school to accommodate the rebels. Far-fetched, but happy reading. More of it to come next month. The other S.O.L. is "For His Brother's Sake", which is a tale of St. Dorothy's by Charles Hamilton. I have always felt sure that Charles Hamilton is really Martin Clifford in disguise. In this story Sydney Redfern goes to St. Dorothy's where his beloved and much-admired elder brother is a prefect. But Arthur Redfern, the elder brother, is really a wastrel. Good tale, but I like St. Jim's and Greyfriars better.

At the pictures this month we have seen Loretta Young in "Working Wives"; Gracie Fields in "Looking on the Bright Side", which

is her second talkie; a really lovely one, but so very sad, is "Smilin' Through" starring Norma Shearer, Leslie Howard, and Fredric March. A fairish British film is "Wedding Rehearsal" starring Roland Young, John Loder, and Merle Oberon. A simply terrific and eerie thriller is "The Old Dark House" starring Boris Karloff, Charles Laughton, Melvyn Douglas and Gloria Stuart. Just marvellous. With this one was a coloured Mickey Mouse "Barnyard Olympics". Claudette Colbert and Olive Brook in "The Man from Yesterday" is a kind of modern Enoch Arden story, but feeble. Jack Oakie and W. C. Fields in "Million Dollar Legs", a kind of Olympic Games story which is not very funny though it also has Ben Turpin and Billy Gilbert in it. Buster Keaton in "Speak Easily" which is not a patch on his earlier pictures, or so I think. Marion Davies and Robert Montgomery in "Blondie of the Follies". This one also has Jimmy Durante, and is pretty good. Tom Mix in a western talkie "My Pal the King". Also in this one is a boy named Mickey Rooney, and I am sure he is the same boy who was called Micky Macguire in a long series of 2-reel comedies.

In Modern Boy, the series about Biggles, the flying ace, has continued. This month's yarns have been "Secret Orders" which concerns a lost German flyer; "The Decoy", when Biggles comes up against an enemy decoy, planned to lure him to destruction; "The Boob!", where Biggles has to act as a kind of nursemaid to a new recruit; and "Battle of Flowers" when the recruit, Algernon Montgomery, tries a spot of gardening until things start to happen to his flowers. (Flying-Officer W. E. Johns, who writes the Biggles tales, has also contributed the new serial "The Spy Flyers" in the Gem.)

In Modern Boy there is also a series running by James Dixon about two youngsters travelling in California, and a series by John Allan about the Dandy & Co. who are cast away on a South Seas island. There is also a serial "The Exile", set in the days of Napoleon, by Vice-Admiral Evans.

This month an Imperial Airways liner "City of Liverpool", on the London to Cologne service, caught fire and crashed at Dixmunde. Everyone on board was killed.

Southend Pier has been cut in two by a barge which crashed into it in a gale. I hope they repair it before the summer. Southend wouldn't

be Southend without its pier.

I went with a school party to see "Oliver Twist" at the Lyceum in London. Franklyn Dyall and Mary Merrall are the big stars in it, and it is a very good production.

The first story in the Magnet this month is the final tale in the Jim Valentine series. Valentine flies away to Brazil in a plane, so he finally escapes from the police and also from the criminals who wanted him back in the gang. The series has run for eleven weeks, rather too long, but it has had a lot of good parts in it. At the finish Harry Wharton & Co. plan that one day they will have a holiday in the far land of Brazil, and meet Jim Valentine again. I wonder if Frank Richards has something up his sleeve.

Next week an amusing light single story "Wibley's Wonderful Wheeze". Then another single tale "Popper's Unpopular Prize". Everybody has to enter for Sir Hilton's prize. Harry Wharton gets a share in it, but, alas, for Bunter.

Finally "The Schoolboy Impersonator" in which Nugent punches Mr. Twigg when he finds the master dealing with Dicky who has thrown an orange at him. Luckily for Nugent, the master is Wibley in disguise. Good fun.

NOTES ON THIS MONTH'S "DANNY'S DIARY"

S. O. L. No. 191, "The Greyfriars Rebellion" comprised the first three stories of the 7-story High Oaks series of the Magnet of early 1928. This series fitted well into the S. O. L. No. 192 "For His Brother's Sake" comprised the serial "Redfern Minor" from late 1909 in the Boys' Realm. It was reprinted first as a complete story in the Boys' Friend Library of late 1917 - the era of very small print in the BFL. I have not checked, but I have little doubt that the S. O. L. version of 1933 is considerably pruned. Those Realm serials were mostly very long.

In his article in the C. D. Annual, Mr. Christopher Lowder commented on the high income which Hamilton usually earned during most of his years with the A. P. In 1909 he was writing a long complete story for the Gem and another for the Magnet, plus the "Redfern Minor" serial (and its sequel) in the Boys' Realm, and, in addition, a number of complete stories for the Realm. And even that may not have been the total. The man's output was truly amazing.

Of the 1933 Gem stories, "Tom Merry & Co. in Liverpool" had been "Tom Merry in Liverpool" in 1909. "Smuggled to School" was reprinted under the same title as in 1909. "The Schoolboy Inventor" had been "The St. Jim's Inventor" in 1909. "The Taming of the

Tyrant" had been "The Form-Master's Secret" in 1909. In the past we have drawn attention to the fact that Bernard Glyn had been mentioned in a sub story "The St. Jim's Terriers" which appeared in the Gem in 1909 (it was not reprinted) one week before Glyn arrived at St. Jim's in the genuine tale. It would seem that the sub writer must have read the genuine story in manuscript form, unless there was some other explanation beyond our ken.

Of the films which Danny mentioned in his March diary, "The Old Dark House" has always been regarded as a comedy-thriller classic, imitated hundreds of times since, but never equalled. I believe an attempt to re-make the film was made by Hammer Films in recent times, and that the effort is best forgotten. Norma Shearer had made "Smilin' Through" as a silent, some ten years earlier, and it was made again, years later, with Jeanette Macdonald in the leading role.

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Death of 'Pierre Quiroule' (W. W. Sayer)

It is with deep regret that I have to record the death of the famous pre-war Sexton Blake writer 'Pierre Quiroule' on November last at Winkfield, Berks. He had been in ill health for some years and was aged 91. He wrote his first Blake yarn in 1919 entitled "The Case of the King's Spy" when he introduced Granite Grant. His second tale introduced Mademoiselle Julie a French Secret Service agent, when from then on the pair were to feature in probably the best written of all the Blake yarns. I met Mr. Sayer at his home some twenty years ago, and then mainly in London at the Victory Club at Marble Arch where I spent some enjoyable evenings. He will be greatly missed by me - the same as his tales were greatly missed by Sexton Blake readers - when he branched out into other fields of journalism.

W. O. G. LOFTS

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GRAND RETIREMENT SALE. Publishers file volumes 1906 - 21, Marvel, Boys' Realm, Fun & Fiction, Cheer Boys Cheer. Odd copies & runs, NL o/s 57 - 140, Magnet 986 on, Thriller, D.W., B.O.P., Penny Pictorial, Boys' Book Collector, E.W's. War of Nations and novels. 1968 on - Comics, annuals, Thompsons, T.L's, Times Science, Great Newspapers. Many various and film books. Still want Boys' Magazine 317. S.a.e. for list, mint and bargain items.

BRIDGWATER, 58 SPRING LANE, MALVERN LINK, WORCS., WR14 1AJ.

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WANTED: Any condition, to buy or to lend to read - "Gem" (new series) 242; Schoolboys' Own, 16, 24, 38, 39, 40, 44, 52, 55, 56, 58, 64, 66, 72, 86, 90, 99, 114, 120, 123, 149, 157, 163, 165, 177, 179, 180, 181, 187, 198, 205, 213, 230, 231, 236, 254, 319. I will pay top price.

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BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Well here we are at the third month of this year, doesn't the time fly! I hope you will have enjoyed our recent articles in Blakiana, but I am now coming to the end of my supply of material, so will someone please try to write an article for me for future use? Just a little mention of how you liked the Marie Galante story would do nicely to help fill the pages. However, when I look through my pile of C.D's I feel a great wonder that so much has been written about Sexton Blake and feel that there is not much more to be said, but even now the Sexton Blake fans' points-of-view can be welcomed.

MARIE GALANTE - VOODOO QUEEN

by Josie Packman

The next we hear of this pair of adventurers is in connection with the looting of a pearl bed.

In S.B.L. No. 265, dated 4 December, 1930, "The Secret of the Thieves Kitchen", is related how some years earlier a group of marine biologists had the idea of transplanting pearl oysters from the Pacific to the West Indies, the clear waters around the little island of Santa Margarita being chosen for the scheme. This proves to be a great success and Marie Galante (who has not to hear of it) is only waiting the right moment for looting the oyster beds. For the full realisation of her plans, however, she needs a strong man, and thus we find Rymer involved with the 'Voodoo Queen' once again.

During the time that had elapsed since the pearl beds were first planted, Stephen Meldrum, one of the three men who originally started the scheme, had been swindled out of his share of the profits, for whilst on a business trip to England he had been informed by his partners that the scheme had failed. He was offered a few hundred pounds as being his portion of the so-called selling price, but later, on returning to the West Indies, to his surprise he found the pearling beds showing very profitable results. He certainly had been swindled and on discovering that Sexton Blake was visiting Kingston, Meldrum resolves to seek his advice. In the meantime Blake has discovered that the Voodoo Queen and Rymer are still up to their old tricks. Rumours had reached him

that these two adventurers were very interested in these mysterious pearl beds, and on hearing Meldrum's story he decides to make a few investigations.

Together with Tinker and Meldrum, Blake visits the old "Spanish Galleon" as he has done in the past when seeking information as to Marie Galante's whereabouts. The "Galleon" is of course the haunt of the sweepings of the West Indies, and the three white men are ready for any trouble which might arise. Trouble comes alright, for the first two persons they see on entering the outer room are Marie Galante and Rymer. Marie's tigerish passions are aroused at the sight of Sexton Blake, and in the island patois she screams her orders to the blacks. Pandemonium immediately breaks out. The huge Negro behind the bar throws a bottle at the swinging lamp, and in the gloom a fierce battle ensues. The three eventually manage to escape, and after this attack Blake decides to try once and for all to end this alliance between Huxton Rymer and Marie Galante. He could do very little about the latter, for any attempt would result in a "black uprising". Rymer however, he could arrest and take back to England. Blake succeeds in clearing up the case of the pearl beds for Meldrum, but during the final battle Marie and Rymer manage to escape in her schooner once again and the detective's plan to take Rymer back to England is foiled ...

The final story in this saga of the Voodoo Queen appears in S.B.L. No. 376, 2nd series, dated March 1933 and is entitled the "Isle of Horror" and never was a title more apt, for truly the island of Haiti was one of horrors. To this isle fled the absconding financier Evar Kreezer, in his own yacht, taking with him his ill-gotten gains and, as a prisoner, Sexton Blake - whom he had attempted to bribe when Blake had confronted him with his crimes. Marie Galante is quite willing to take Kreezer's money, and for a large sum offers her protection to the island. So into the black hills and jungles of Haiti Kreezer is taken and Sexton Blake as well; for Marie conceives the devilish idea of a human sacrifice during the Voodoo rites at the next full moon.

And now, for the first time, another well-known character comes into contact with the Voodoo Queen. This is Roxane Harfield who at that time was sailing in her yacht through the Carribean. Tinker arrives in Jamaica and is able to contact Roxane. They learn that Blake is on his

way into the interior of Haiti, along with Kreezer, who by this time has also become a prisoner of Marie. This evil woman intended to have all the wealth Kreezer had brought with him, and would torture the man until he revealed where his cache was hidden.

In the meantime, Tinker and Roxanne, disguised as blacks, have mingled with the crowds on their way to the Voodoo ceremonies, and after many horrifying adventures are able to rescue both Blake and Kreezer. After the tortures he had experienced in that ghastly jungle Kreezer was only too glad to return with Blake, knowing full well that years of imprisonment were lying ahead of him.

Marie Galante is finally beaten, her hold on the blacks slackening because she has not produced the human sacrifices that have been promised. Only time would tell whether their fears and superstitions would be overcome, or whether the Voodoo Queen would still reign.

The End

THE TWYMAN LETTERS (Part Three)

by W. O. G. Lofts

'Twy' knew Sexton Blake authors better than anyone. Not only did he handle their work for years, but also met them socially, and helped with their domestic, private, and financial problems. There are some collectors who are only interested in the stories - and care nothing about the author themselves. Others thirst for any little detail about their favourite author - in the biographical sense. It is also most interesting to know the editor's opinions of some of our favourite Blake writers which will be covered in the next few instalments ...

"I was most interested to learn that you had recently met Edwy Searles Brooks, next time you see him, give him my kind regards. I always had a very high opinion of his work on the Union Jack, and consider him one of my best authors. You say that Edwy was surprised to learn that I am still alive, well I could say the same for him, as I believe he is several years older than me! You certainly have me puzzled, when you say that Alfred Edgar took over The Nelson Lee from Harold May - first I have ever known about it. I knew Edgar very well indeed, by daily contact. A very clever writer, he was one of the very few Blake authors who really made a name for himself in later

years. He wrote a play entitled 'The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse' that was a great hit at the Haymarket Theatre, made a lot of money, and went out to Hollywood to write film scripts.

The person I think who took over the Nelson Lee Library was H. T. (Jimmy) Cauldwell, and I should remember this clearly enough, because The Nelson Lee Library was produced in the same set of rooms, or department at that time. Certainly I can say with complete confidence that Jimmy Cauldwell was producing the N.L.L. because they had moved his desk for some reason into a corner of my office - where he stayed for months and months, editing the Lee in my actual presence ...

"Yes, Coutts Armour was an Australian, big chap with a beard, who walked around like a swagman with sack on his shoulder - usually filled up with books he had bought down the Farringdon Street market. "Coutts Brisbane" and "Reid Whitley" were two of his pen-names I first met him when I was editing Detective Library in 1919 in the same office as The Robin Hood and Praire Libraries run by Len Pratt - who afterwards ran the Sexton Blake Library for 35 years. Armour claimed to have originated from famous English family steeped in history - hence his great interest in historical matters which he was a specialist, and really had good knowledge of this subject generally. Only trouble was that his A.P. Robin Hood stories were marred here and there by a kind of heavy-handed whimsicality he couldn't somehow bear to forgo.

Armour's character was Dr. Ferraro - certainly not all that popular as so many of the others. I don't know the circumstances how he took over Gunga Dass from H. Gregory Hill, probably when Hill died in 1932. At that time I had far more important things on my mind - the change of Union Jack to Detective Weekly!"

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Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by An Old Boy

By way of a change I decided to go by road to St. Frank's and arrive there about the time the juniors were at Tea. But coming into Guildford a thick fog had sprung up and this made further travelling by road impossible. So I left the car outside Guildford railway station and waited a considerable time for the London train that would, hopefully, take me to Bannington where I could get the Branch line train for Bellton. But a great delay again at Lewes caused by a Signal failure made it one of those days when if things can go wrong they will.

However, when the express reached Bannington it came in with a roar of escaping steam and a great clanking of pistons and connecting rods as if to show it had finally made it.

After making enquiries I found I had to wait an hour for the Bellton Branch line train, so I decided to walk the three miles to St. Frank's. It was a cold and frosty morning and very, very early. With just enough light to see my way; but even so, I must have drifted a little for I encountered some farm workers on their way to the fields.

I recognised Joe Cathpole, Farmer Holt's foreman, a familiar figure around these parts and well-known to the juniors at St. Frank's.

With typical country humour they wished me a Good Morning and directed me to a short cut to St. Frank's for which I was very thankful for I would have ended up at Edgemoor.

Dear Heaven, I thought; how do they do it ... so jovial amid such awful surroundings at such an hour in such weather! From my little knowledge of farm work these men would be weeding mostly at this time of the year judging from the garden forks each were carrying. And they would leave their warm cottages and their loved ones to come out to this raw morning and all for a mere pittance knowing Farmer Holt.

Men like these farm workers are the true salt of the earth.

When I arrived at St. Frank's the light was much better. Old Josh Cuttle, the School porter, opened up the lodge gates for me and after explaining my unusually early arrival and Cuttle's version of the

cont'd on P. 18 ...

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decline and fall of present-day standards, I made my way across the Triangle for Mr. Lee's study.

Culinary noises from the domestic quarters were signs of preparing breakfast, and there's nothing like the aroma of bacon on a cold and frosty morning to welcome a visitor! I couldn't but help making comparisons then. The cosy school, the prepared breakfast and the comfort made me think of those hard-working employees of Farmer Holt at work in that cold morning in the fields. They are the real heroes.

As usual, Nelson Lee was up betimes and the approach of Christmas had me asking what were his plans. It appeared Lord Dorrimore had invited a crowd to Dorrimore Hall in Kent, although it had previously been known as Dorrimore Castle.

Mr. Lee was not expecting any mysteries that always seemed to be associated with Dorrie's Christmas festive occasions, but perhaps the famous housemaster-detective was being premature. We shall see.

DORRIE and UMLOSI

by C. H. Churchill

Apart from the St. Frank's characters and of course Nelson Lee and Nipper, I would say that the next most popular names to appear in the Nelson Lee Saga would be Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi. The Moor View girls arrived rather late in the old small series whereas the aforementioned two originally appeared in O.S. No. 105 dated 9/6/17 in a story entitled "The Ivory Seekers". This was before St. Frank's came on the scene and they turned up again in No. 119 O.S. dated 15/9/17 in "The City of Burnished Bronze". This latter story came after St. Frank's started in No. 112. In those days St. Frank's did not appear every week but in between had various detective adventures published.

These two numbers were more adventure stories than detective ones and were described as being from "Nipper's Note Book" series in which were included some very good detective stories.

In No. 105, Lee Dorrie and Nipper travelled to Umlosi's own country, Kutaland in Africa, where he was a minor chief. By the end of the story he was the Chief!! I described this story some time ago in the C.D. so will forbear doing so again. It is interesting, however, to read again Nipper's description of these two people who became so popular with Lee readers. Dorrie, he said, was about 45 although he

looked younger, and as to why he was not on active service (it was wartime remember in 1917) Dorrie said -

"Oh, I'm tired of rottin' about. That's just it, Lee. I'm fed up to the neck with hangin' round, doin' nothing. They wouldn't have me in the Army - wouldn't look at me! Just because two of my fingers got chewed away by a frisky lioness - and because I'm over the age. Unadulterated piffle, I call it!"

He plaintively showed us his right hand. Two fingers were missing, but the hand looked businesslike, nevertheless.

Lord Dorrimore was an old friend of Lee and Nipper but they had not then met Umlosi. This meeting was described on pages 10 and 11 -

We were jawing on the hotel verandah, and we now had time to inspect his Highness Umlosi. "His Highness" certainly fitted well, for Umlosi was a giant of about six-feet-eight. I don't think I've seen many finer natives.

He was wearing nothing except the "moocha" round his middle, and a fine necklace of lions' claws. His skin was dark, and shone like burnished copper. Here and there I spotted long scars - the relics of past battles. Assegai wounds, I suppose. I saw, too, that he was what the Zulus call a "Keshla". That means a ringed-man. The Kutas had somewhat similar customs.

"We are pleased to meet thee, Umlosi," said Nelson Lee gravely. "My father, he of the shimmering eye, hast told me much of thee, O white man," said Umlosi. "Thou art even as a wizard in thine own land. Thou canst find evildoers where others fail. I greet ye, Umtagati, my master."

Lord Dorrimore grinned.

"That's your new name, Lee," he chuckled. "You're 'Umtagati' the wizard."

"And as for thou," went on Umlosi, turning to me, "I shalt call thee Manzie, since thine eye is of water - "

"Don't you call my eyes watery!" I said indignantly.

"Thou mistake me," went on Umlosi gravely. "Thine eye is as the liquid water. It is deep and pure, and thou hast a mighty courage. I see deeply into thy heart, and know that thou art great in everything but body. And thou wilt grow even greater, for thy years are few."

No. 119 O.S. was also an African adventure, but set in the north of that great country in the Libyan desert. Again it was an excellent story, well-written and full of interest, containing a good account of a sandstorm.

In the years ahead, Lord Dorrimore was frequently featured in the N.L., usually at Christmas time when he accompanied a St. Frank's

party to various stately homes for the Christmas holidays. And sometimes Umlosi was there as well.

The main stories featuring these two intrepid characters were in the summer holiday series however. Many parts of the world were visited ranging from China to America and the Arctic to the Antarctic.

Every year about late June Dorrie suddenly turned up in the stories and any Lee reader was then struck by the thought - Ah! a summer holiday adventure is at hand! Goody! goody! And they were never let down.

* * * * *

BAGS

by Eric Wafer

There are many things which have, for me been part of the fascination of the old stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, St. Frank's, etc., over the years. One of these is the little ways in which the illustrators have attempted to portray the personalities, or position in society of the characters in the stories.

An example of this is the nether garment worn by the boys - bags, as they were wont to call them, or as they are often referred to here in Australia, strides, duds, pants, dungers, daks and no doubt others that I can't bring to mind.

Bunter, of course, had the tightest pair of trousers in Greyfriars, but beside this they seemed to be somewhat unique in that they were of a rather loud chequered bags.

These were Fisher T. Fish, Alonzo Todd, (not quite so loud) and, yes, Sir Hilton Popper in a complete suit of checked "plus fours" as they were called, I think.

On Bunter's part, one is inclined to interpret some indication of a desire to be "loud" on the Fat Owl's mind - a little on the crude side, poor taste and all that? In the case of Fishy, this would also apply, but with Alonzo I suppose it would be more likely to indicate eccentricity generally. The garb of Sir Hilton was no doubt common enough in the day, for a country gentleman dressed for the rough work of keeping "young ruffians" out of his woods and off his island!

As to the striped trouser brigade, there was Vernon-Smith, Lord Mauleverer, and, yes, Coker, too sporting stripes. One could take this as an indication of their wealth, and perhaps in Smith's case a touch of

putting on side? In two of these cases one could read into their stripes a sign of an overbearing personality, aggressiveness going with striped bags. Certainly not so in the third case! I can also recall that prince of japers, Carboy sporting stripes. In his case one suspects it was just to highlight his mercurial personality.

A little surprisingly, the foregoing theories fall down when applied to the boys of St. Jim's, because I can recall nearly all the main characters wearing striped trousers at one time or another - even Tom Merry! Jack Blake in particular seemed to have a propensity for them.

The chequered bags brigade, though, more or less sticks to the theories previously propounded - fat villains like Trimble, fat trenchermen like David Wynn and so on.

Isn't it all part of the delicious fun of the old stories, though?

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 238. CONCERNING TROUSERS, ET CETERA

Our Australian contributor's item this month, turning the spotlight on that very essential garment, a pair of trousers, is off the beaten track and interesting.

When I was at school, a long time ago, we called the garments "trucks", and I have an idea that Martin Clifford used that term in the St. Jim's stories in the blue Gem - and, perhaps, elsewhere. When I was a youngster, boys remained in shorts very much longer than they do today. Even in midsummer, in these times when children mature much earlier, alas, than in the days of old, you see tiny boys of six and seven running around in long 'uns.

Personally, I have never cared a lot for trousers. Even now, in the sere and yellow leaf, I always get into shorts when ever it is possible.

I remember Danny's old Gran, that dear old lady who lives in Essex, asking him whether he didn't get chapped knees. I forget what Danny answered, but I don't recall getting chapped knees myself. Maybe we were tougher in the good old days.

Chapman is usually credited with having provided Bunter with his check trousers, though it was certainly Hamilton who made them the

"tighest trousers at Greyfriars".

The artists, of course, made many additions to the author's descriptions of what the boys wore. It was Shields, one of whose illustrations adorned our January cover, who put the Greyfriars boys - and I would say, quite correctly - into school blazers. And Macdonald, after the Eton suit was abolished, who put the St. Jim's juniors into lounge jackets and thereby jettisoned much of the charm of the Gem's illustrations.

It seems, too, to have been Shields who abolished the pigtailed of the two Chinese boys, dispensed with their flowing robes, and turned them into normal boys from the Far East in a large English boarding school.

Way back in Edwardian days, it is probable that one thought of a Chinaman with a pigtail and loose garments. But it always seemed rather unlikely that a boy would be accepted into an English school with a pigtail and garish clothing. Schools were insistent on a proper uniform, and exceptions would rarely, if ever, be allowed. And my experience is that the average boy was proud of his uniform, and liked it that way.

Many will recall a fascinating early Magnet tale in which Bulstrode cut off the pigtail of Wun Lung. More true-to-life, possibly, was a story in the early School Friend in which Augusta Anstruther-Browne cut off the long plait of Miss Bessie Bunter.

I feel quite sure that a boy wearing a monocle would not have been accepted at a school like St. Jim's - or at any other school, for that matter. If he had a weak eye, he would have been required to wear spectacles with suitable lenses. Yet Wakefield provided Smythe with a monocle, with no reason at all except that he was a dandy, and at times even Mornington was shown with an eyeglass on the totally inadequate grounds that he was supercilious in the stories. At times, the artists took too many liberties.

The author provided Bunter with big glasses - they had a part to play in the stories - but it was Shields and not Hamilton who portrayed Fisher T. Fish in horn-rimmed frames. Glasses actually were surprisingly rare in the Hamilton schools.

Hamilton, in fact, gave little attention to telling us what the boys were wearing. It was the artists who filled in the details, often with

reasonable success.

* * * * *

YET ANOTHER 'FRANK RICHARDS' SCHOOL by W. O. G. Lofts

Until recently, I honestly thought that all of 'Frank Richards' post-Second World War writings were known. Certainly all of his pot-boiler obscure schools for equally minor publishers have all been recorded in the pages of the C.D. at one time or other. Schools such as Carcroft, Sparshott, Headland House, Topham, Tiptale, High Lynn, Barcroft, Felgate, and probably St. Kates - all probably written for a few guineas a time to try and supplement his dwindling resources - until he was given permission to resume writing about Greyfriars in the Bunter Books.

Yet, it was a correspondent in Canada that was to enlighten me that there were obvious 'Frank Richards' writings still unknown to us in post-war years. A relative of the famous Victorian writer George Manville Fenn sent me some loose sheets of 'Frank Richards' contributions found amongst the papers of his cousin Clive Fenn - the son of the already mentioned famous boys writer. Clive who had died in 1953 aged 85, was a personal friend of 'Frank Richards' a friendship that seemed to have stretched back to when Clive worked in The Magnet Office - his job being answering the readers' letters. As well as being a boys' writer contributing to many publications Clive Fenn was a Naturalist, contributing as well as having some connection with a new monthly bird Fancier paper entitled 'In Your Aviary'.

No doubt his 'connection' had 'Frank Richards' writing in the initial number an article entitled 'To the Little Savage' being addressed to boys who tormented birds - yet I would have thought that only lovers of our feathered friends would have bought such a publication! After number two issue the title of the magazine was changed to 'Feathered Friends' when a serial commenced in three instalments - 'Flip of the Flying Trapeze' by a Sydney Roberts - whom I must suspect was our author. Not only being fond of circus themes I seem to recall a Flip in a Magnet series! No. 4, dated December 1949, could be said to be a 'Frank Richards' issue as there was not only a photo of him, but a word competition, and story entitled 'Uncle Comes for Xmas'. No. 5, dated

January 1950 was seemingly the last issue having a school story of Cunliffe School 'No Pudding for Podger's'. Published by H. Brentnall of Leek, Staffs., it was a very poorly printed publication, but at the same time extremely interesting to record further post-war contributions from our favourite author.

* * * * *

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

MIDLAND

In January we started 1983 with a modest attendance of 10, but a very enjoyable meeting. Tom Porter, our chairman, had organised it splendidly.

On display were our usual Anniversary Numbers and Collectors' Item, comprising Nelson Lee Library No. 190, entitled "Under the Heel"; dated January 1919, plus Monster Library No. 3 dealing with the famous Colonel Clinton series. Also on display was the latest Gem publication from John Wernham's Hamilton Museum Press.

We have appointed a new minute secretary, Peter Masters, and he is already doing a first-rate job.

Joan Golen once again paid most generously for the refreshments, and another piece of generosity came from Tom Porter who paid postage on the club's Newsletters. With a club of more than forty members at 12½p a time, this was quite a sum.

Two games, "Take a Letter" and "Break the Code" were played, and the winners were Christine Brettell, Vince Loveday, and your correspondent.

There were two readings, from, respectively, Ivan Webster and Your Correspondent.

We ended our evening with a discussion on the topic "Should the Greyfriars masters join a union?" Varied opinions were given, and there were references to the Brander Rebellion and the High Oaks Rebellion. We might have continued this, but time ran out so we stood not upon the order of going but went at once.

Good luck to all O.B.B.C. members everywhere.

JACK BELLFIELD (Correspondent)

CAMBRIDGE

We met at the home of Jack Overhill on Sunday, 6th February, 1983. This was a very special occasion in the history of the Club for members had gathered together for a celebration to mark the eightieth birthday of Jack Overhill which occurs on 10th February. It was a great pleasure to the members of the Club present to be joined on this occasion by Jack's son Jack as a very welcome visitor.

Chairman Vic. Hearn is recovering from the effects of a painful operation. Members were pleased to learn that Vic is hoping to be sufficiently well to attend the March meeting. In the absence of Vic Vice-Chairman Mike Rouse was in the chair.

The chairman, on behalf of the Club, presented Jack with a king size Birthday card bearing the signatures of all the members present and gave Jack the joint birthday greetings of all those present. He then called on Bill Thurbon to present the Club's birthday present to Jack, an address book containing as its first entries the addresses of all the members of the Club - in making the presentation Bill referred to Jack's wonderful series of typed diaries, entered daily for over fifty years, and expressed the hope that ultimately these would be deposited in the Cambridge University Library, for these marvellous diaries in the course of time would be as valuable to future students of social history, as were those of Pepys and Evelyn - he pictured the thrill of a social historian of the 22nd Century opening these volumes and finding such a wonderful picture of working-class life in the 20th Century. Keith Hodgkinson then presented Jack with a special birthday cake, made by Mrs. Hodgkinson, suitably adorned with a portrait of Jack. The Chairman recalled sundry happenings that had occurred in 1903, including the first Marconi message and the first aeroplane flight.

Jack Doupe talked on a neglected writer of boys books in the early years of the century, Thomas Tanden Jeans. Jeans was a doctor who, on qualifying joined the Navy as a Surgeon. Jeans books were: "Ford of H.M.S. Vigilant"; "Mr. Midshipman Glover R.N."; "Gun Boats and gun runners"; "A Naval Venture"; "On Foreign Service"; "John Graham, Sub-Lieutenant R.N." and "The Gun Runners". Jack was warmly thanked for his talk, and gave Jack Overhill a copy of a Jeans book to mark this

special occasion.

Mike Rouse produced a photograph of Ely Football Club in 1904, showing his grandfather as Captain.

After enjoying Mrs. Overhill's ever generous hospitality, and the birthday cake, Edward Witton ran a quick quiz on Entertainers. Jack Overhill commented that the present century had been a wonderful period to live through - beginning with the horse and cart and ending with men on the Moon.

Jack was then persuaded to "reminisce" over the past in many experiences and directions - proving as ever an intensely interesting talker on many subjects.

The Chairman thanked Jack, and Mrs. and Miss Overhill for their hospitality and the meeting broke up, after also thanking Keith Hodkinson for the great labour he had put into organising this meeting.

So a very happy meeting, on a very happy occasion, ended with the departing members expressing the hope that a similar gathering would take place on Jack's ninetieth birthday.

LONDON

The 35th A.G.M. of the London Club was held at the East Dulwich address where the inaugural meeting took place in 1948. A list of those attending that meeting was read out and commented on.

Roy Parsons was elected chairman for 1983 and the rest of the officers were re-elected en bloc, Bill Bradford being the temporary Nelson Lee Librarian.

The Memorial to the two founders of the Club, Len Packman and Bob Blythe, will take the form of a medium size bell whereon the two aforementioned names will be inscribed, as will future award names, plus suitable scrolls.

Josie Packman exhibited a copy of the Detective Weekly that was featured on the T.V. show "Looks Familiar". The show also featured an issue of the Modern Boy. These two papers were probably supplied by Denis Gifford who attended a Beckenham meeting a year or two ago.

Winifred Morss read two humorous extracts from a Magnet and a Gem.

Mary Cadogan gave a short talk on her piece in the Birmingham

Post about the new film version of The Scarlet Pimpernel. A discussion followed on the colourful character and the film versions that have been done.

Memory Lane extract was read by Bill Bradford and was about a Dollis Hill meeting in 1965.

Next meeting at the Library Centre, Ealing, on Sunday, 13th March. Bring tuck, but tea will be available.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held: Saturday, 12th February, 1983

After a belated wintry spell, it was good to see 12 Members present on a pleasant evening.

Keith Smith had brought a copy of "Stimulus" - an English text book he is using in his class at school. It asks students to compare various writings, comparisons being made between Anthony Buckeridge's "Jennings" and Frank Richards' "Bunter". Strangely, a quotation had been given from "Bunter's Last Fling", the final book published by Cassell which was not in fact, written by Charles Hamilton!

Mention was made of the oncoming B.B.C. T.V. programme of 60 years of Children's television, in which an excerpt from "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School" would be shown. A copy of Howard Baker's "Greyfriars Holiday Annual for 1940", was shown and comment was made concerning the change of cover design - i.e. not following the actual cover pattern. All Members were disappointed in the latest production.

Jack Allison gave an entertaining talk on "St. Valentine's Day" in the Magnet. Jack could not recall any talks been given about St. Valentine - mainly because the subject never appeared to occur in the Magnet. By selecting various copies published as near as possible to 14th February, Jack was able to relate various discourses between certain characters - the first being from the very first Magnet of 15th February, 1908 and the initial conversation between Colonel Wharton and Harry. In all, seven examples - many humorous - were given from Magnets from 1908 until 1940.

After refreshments, Darrell was able to present a slide-show of "The Water Lily" trip on the River Thames, which took place from

25th September until 3rd October, 1982. Five O.B.B.C. Members went along, following the route of the boys in "Six Boys In A Boat". Bill Lofts had kindly sent along his full account of the trip. Graham McDermott had sent the slides and we were grateful to our Chairman, for providing the projection equipment.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

* * * * *

The Postman Called

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

ERIC LAWRENCE (Wokingham): Reference in Danny's Diary (Jan. '83) to the 1932/33 England cricket tour of Australia brought back many memories to me. I was ten years old at the time and remember clearly the impatience with which I awaited the arrival each day of The Star newspaper and the "on-the spot" accounts of the tour matches written by (or ghosted for, as I knew later on) the great Jack Hobbs.

But surely Danny was mistaken in referring to Pataudi as a Marquis. This gentleman was an Indian Prince and he was always called The Nawab of Pataudi - affectionately shortened to "The Noob" by his playing colleagues and also, I believe, by the Australians. The same title was also used by his son who was captain of his country in post-war cricket.

An amusing story was told in 1932/33 which illustrated the degree of personal dislike generated by the England captain Jardine amongst the Australian public during that so-called bodyline tour. Apparently Jardine, while batting in a minor fixture out in the country was being pestered by flies. During a lull between overs, he was seen using his batting gloves to swipe vigorously at these obnoxious insects, when a voice from the crowd called out, "Hey there Jardine, you leave our flies alone, they're the only friends you've got - nobody else likes you!"

Possibly apocryphal of course.

D. V. WITHERS (Poole): In a recent issue you mentioned the trams going underneath the Bar Gate at Southampton. I have a postcard actually showing a tram going under. Just one little query. I have read a preview of "Billy Bunter in Brazil" (Magnets 1461 - 1468). I also have

a copy of the same title in a Cassell's hardback issued 1949. Is this a re-hash of the original which featured Jim Valentine whereas this edition is built around Lord Mauleverer and his cousin, Brian?

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The post-war story was a different one from the 1936 Magnet series. For some reason, I never, personally, found any of Hamilton's stories set in Brazil particularly attractive. The series in the 1939 Gem, set in Brazil, was probably the worst story in the last year of that paper.)

R. GOODMAN (Queensland): I read with interest the remarks of Rev. Hobson of Reigate on Chums. Although Chums has been my great love, I find that B.O.P. had a lot in its favour. The two papers seem to have been aimed at different types of readers and the stories by Gibson in B.O.P. seemed (to me) to be superior to those he wrote for Chums. What does the Rev. gentleman think?

Mrs. J. PACKMAN (East Dulwich): The Detective Weekly was divided into three sections: 1st a run of new Sexton Blake tales; 2nd a run of tales without Sexton Blake, and the final section contained all reprints of Union Jack and B.S.L. stories mostly re-hashed and shortened. No doubt this accounts for the lack of real interest in the paper. I did several articles on the paper some years ago - must look up the C.D's and find out in which they appeared.

PHIL HARRIS (Montreal): Ben Whiter, who responded to my remarks re buying old comics and boys' papers at the local cats' meat shop, hit the nail right on the head when he pin-pointed the location as Canning Town, East London. We lived in Malmesbury Terrace, and the cats' meat shop I refer to was on the corner of Malmesbury Road and Baron Road - at the back of the Wesleyan Church. I wonder how close friend Ben lived to this location. I would be interested to hear.

Now for the Digest Annual. Just great - a real tuck hamper of goodies - and your contributors and your good self deserve the greatest credit. Mr. Buddle was at his best in "New Term at Slade". Every article was brimful of interest. The "Girl Guides" by Mary Cadogan brought back memories. My sister kept the art plate of H.R.H. Princess Mary for many years. She was a regular reader of "Schoolgirls' Own". In your introduction you wrote that your "ageing bones" told you that

many of your readers would write and say that this year's Annual is as good as, or better than, the best of the C.D. Annuals. I would subscribe to this opinion, and, I guess, by now, that your "ageing bones" have been fully vindicated. But - perish the thought that you abolish the introduction.

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge): May I call attention to an error in Mr. Lister's interesting article on Lord Dorrimore in the Nelson Lee columns of the February Digest? Mr. Lister says "H. G. Wells triggered off prehistoric thrills with his 'Lost World' ". But Wells did not write the "Lost World". This was the work of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It first appeared as a serial in the Strand Magazine, and Doyle and three of his friends appeared in a photograph to illustrate the beginning of the story. It was said that Doyle modelled his Professor Challenger on Rider Haggard's Professor Higgs in "Queen Sheba's Ring". True or not there is no doubt that Reginald Wray pirated from both "The Lost World" and "Queen Sheba's Ring" in his two serials - a lost world one in the "Boys' Friend" and "Phantom Gold" in "Chuckles" for his "Professor Kendrick Klux".

Wells wrote "The War of the Worlds" and "The War in the Air", but Doyle found the Lost World.

T. KEEN (Thames Ditton): I agree, the B.B.C's production of "East Lynne" was excellent. Yes, there was a talking film, made in 1931, starring one of Hollywood's most beautiful actresses, Ann Harding, as Lady Isobel. Conrad Nagel took the part of her husband, and Clive Brook was the debonair Captain Levison. The angelic/atrocious (take your pick) Little Willie, was an American boy named Wallie Albright.

To another subject - the latest production from the Museum Press. The illustrated Gem Story is absolutely delightful, all those marvellous covers.

PHILIP TIERNEY (Grimsby): I was recently quite intrigued to read for the first time "The Greyfriars Christmas Party" (Magnet No. 516, and certainly not by Charles Hamilton) in which a number of Greyfriars and St. Jim's juniors from abroad spend their holiday at Greyfriars with Mr. Prout in charge.

It must seem contradictory to say that what really interested me

was the fact that it is, in my opinion, the most boring Greyfriars story I have read in fifty years. I might even read it again.

I can think of one or two sillier Greyfriars stories by substitute authors, but nothing so utterly dull.

R. M. JENKINS (Havant): Your query about the pronunciation of "Levison" was in fact answered by Charles Hamilton. He said it was to be pronounced as written. He added that if his name had been Leveson then the pronunciation would have been Lewson. The mysteries of the pronunciation of English surnames are definitely of an arcane variety. I once knew some people called Hogsflesh who told me it was to be pronounced in the French manner as Ho-flay.

HAROLD TRUSCOTT (Deal): Referring to Gyles Brandreth's letter in the Times, even he did not counter the statement that in Hamilton's work Mr. Quelch never explained why he was giving a caning. I have never read a Greyfriars, or St. Jim's or Rookwood story, where (except occasionally in the case of such masters as Mr. Ratcliff or Mr. Manders) the culprit was left in any doubt as to why he was being punished. And, in fact, in the two extracts quoted in the Times article, the one from the original story has quite as much explanation from Mr. Quelch to Bunter as to why the latter is being caned as does the re-written version. The latter is merely a weaker and characterless paraphrase of the original.

Grateful thanks to many readers who sent along details of the silent Fox film of "East Lynne", released in this country in 1926. Alma Rubens played Lady Isobel and Edmund Lowe was Archibald Carlyle. The very beautiful Alma Rubens died in misery of drug addiction while still only in her early thirties. For so many of them, the huge money they earned brought nothing but misfortune.

FOR SALE: Champions bound vols. 1 - 7; Thrillers bound and unbound; Nelson Lees, Gems, Magnets. S. E. L's; Boys' Friend Libraries (S. B. stories). Good condition. All periods.

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A FISHY PERIOD

by Laurie Sutton

Although one must be very careful in assuming sub stories (when they have not been generally accepted as such) without very careful reading (and re-reading) Peter Hanger is right, at least, in concluding that "Bunter the Cavalier" (Magnet 897) was a substitute story.

Around the same period he can add "Playing the Goat" (899) and "Buck Up Bunter" (900). He can also be suspicious, at least, of 873, 893, 896.

"Playing the Goat" has several "give-aways" that could never have been written by Hamilton. "Dear me! I haven't dropped into a Salvation Army meeting by mistake, have I?" asked the Bounder. "... blowing off your mouths," "Even William Walter Dabney was against him." I don't know if the author got that last name from Pentelow's Gallery, but I am certain that Hamilton never used those Christian names in a period of 40 years.

Having said that, the numbers listed are quite good imitations as far as the general style is concerned - far superior to Cook or Samways. Possibly Stanley Austin, C. M. Down?

I doubt if there is a genuine story in between the vintage series of Sahara, Bunter's Bunk, Rebel, Ragged Dick, Bunter Court, Prefects, and we have to go on to 942 for the next clearly genuine single.

Single Hamilton stories were very much the exception at this time, and there were only four more before the 1,000 landmark - 971, 973, 992, 996.