

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

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No. 436

APRIL 1983



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The Man of the Wheel.



THE REMITTANCE MAN

What, exactly, was a remittance man? I was a child when I first read the Cedar Creek stories. I enjoyed them and loved them then - and still do, even though they do not get a lot of notice these days. This was the only one of Charles Hamilton's main series, written in this case under the name of Martin Clifford, to which he never added in later years. The series ran for about four years, and there was just one sub story in the entire lot. It was the late Gerry Allison who brought to light that single sub tale, and it was remarkable that it ever came to be published. This little par,

however, is nothing to do with that.

The Cedar Creek series was responsible for many professional writers, seldom outstanding for their accuracy, passing on the erroneous

idea that Charles Hamilton was educated in Canada. He wasn't! It was pure fiction. Even among our own number, the late George Sellars, sentimentalist to the core, always insisted that he was positive that Hamilton had been educated across the pond.

The tales were beautifully written, even though they lacked the conviction and atmosphere of the much later Rio Kid stories. There was no outstanding characterisation anywhere to be found at Cedar Creek. Probably Vere Beauclerc, the Remittance Man's Son, was the only character who struck a mildly original note. Like so many of the Hamilton characters, Beauclerc seemed to be motherless. And his father was a "remittance man". As a child I wondered idly what a "remittance man" was. I still don't know exactly.

Presumably he is a black sheep in a good family - someone the family wanted out of the way to save themselves embarrassment. So they sent him to the colonies, and posted a "remittance" every month to pay for his living expenses, on the understanding that he stayed there.

But I'm only guessing.

TIMES CHANGE!

In the Slade story in our recent Annual, the author commented: "Not so long ago Mr. Buddle would have thought it impossible that he would ever have found a paper so important in his life as the Gem had become".

It was no exaggeration really. Mr. Buddle, of course, discovered the delights of a paper well on in life. Most of us discovered our favourite papers when we were children. We had no idea then that those papers would become so important to us as they were destined to do. Yet it is over forty years since the Magnet and Gem ended; it is fifty years since the Union Jack ended; it is nearly as long since the much loved Nelson Lee Library published its final issue. Yet those papers are still just as important to many of us today as they were a lifetime ago. For some reason, they have provided a rock, a lifebouy, or, perhaps, an anchor down the years. Clearly they had something which is indefinable.

Something which is missing today. Maybe the lack of that something is the reason old people are frequently afraid to leave their homes

after dark, why senseless vandalism is seen almost everywhere one goes, why a number of people have told me in recent weeks that their homes have been broken into, burgled, or wrecked.

What is there these days which will provide a permanent anchor or rock or lifebuoy for today's boys and girls in fifty years' time?

An old Latin tag reads: "Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis". A rough translation would be "Times change and we change with them". Partially true, like all generalities, but not completely so. For we shall go on loving those old papers of ours till the end, and be thankful that we had them in our formative years.

BREAD UPON THE WATERS

Not having any masochistic tendencies, I rarely read any of the articles or stories which I wrote for C.D. or the Annual long ago. However, a month or two ago I had reason to refer to our Annual for 1971, and, while browsing through it, I read again, after all the years, an article entitled "Tinkle, Tinkle, Little Star" which I had contributed to that Annual.

In that article I related how, in my far-off misspent youth, I had a consuming ambition to play the piano for a musical accompaniment for a favourite film, in some cinema. I told how I managed to fulfil that ambition, and, over a number of months, played 3-day stints at cinemas in Eltham, Muswell Hill, Wimbledon, Sunninghill, Leytonstone, and Hampton Court. I rather enjoyed re-reading the article and re-living some rather delightful, at the time, adventures.

The first coincidence came a couple of days later when Mr. Maurice Corkett, who belongs to our London Club, rang me up on the telephone. He had belately acquired a copy of the 1971 C.D. Annual, and had read "Tinkle, Tinkle, Little Star". It had fascinated him because the first cinema at which I played was the Cinema in Eltham, and Mr. Corkett lives near that very pleasant part of Kentish London. Mr. Corkett belongs to a museum society in the area, and the society has been ferretting out the history of cinemas in the area, and has, in fact, published a delightful booklet on the subject, which Mr. Corkett sent me. Mr. Corkett read my article at a meeting of the society, and, very courteously, asked me whether I would have any objection to a copy of "Tinkle, Tinkle" being placed in the archives of the society. Naturally,

I was very happy to agree.

But the big coincidence came a few days further on. At the time when I played, as an amateur, in the different cinemas, I always asked the manager for the week's playbill poster, to keep as a souvenir. When I wrote the article in 1971, I looked out the playbills, and had some of them photographed to accompany the article. I could not find one of the Eltham Cinema, however, and decided that, either I hadn't had one at that theatre or it had been lost down the tumbling years.

Then, just a day or so after Mr. Corkett's call, I happened to be delving through a drawer of treasures, and there, near the top, was the Eltham Cinema's playbill. Still folded, dropping apart at the same folds in which it has lain for over fifty years. I dropped a few lines to Mr. Corkett and told him of my find, that I was going to restore the bill with great care, and that when it was done I would send him a photograph of it. Mr. Corkett was delighted. He wrote me: "I would be very grateful to receive a photograph. With regard to the actual bill itself, if the time should ever come when you feel that you could part with it, then the Eltham Society would be so pleased to provide it with a permanent home". And Mr. Corkett sent me a splendid photostat showing a lovely clear picture of that very first cinema where I achieved my ambition all those years ago.

Clearly, that poster will be far better off with the Eltham Society than deteriorating in my drawer. I told Mr. Corkett so, and, carefully packing the delicate relic, I sent it to him. He is going to restore it, and present it to the society in Eltham, and he is going to send me a photo of the bill. If it is sufficiently clear, I will reproduce the picture as a novelty in C.D.

Nothing to do with Old Boy's Books, of course. Except that Monty Lowther once had the same ambition, and acheived it, just as I did.

THE EDITOR

STILL WANTED: Sexton Blake Second Series No. 453 "On the Midnight Beat" and No. 572 "The Crime in the Kiosk". Both by John G. Brandon. Name your price. J. Ashley, 46 Nicholas Crescent, Fareham, Hants., P.O. 15 5AH.

Danny's Diary

APRIL 1933

There is a new William book out. It is entitled "William the Rebel" and I have had it as a present from my Gran and Auntie Gwen. There are twelve separate stories in it, and every one is very good. One I especially liked is "The Outlaws and the Penknife". Ginger's Aunt Amelia, who had not seen Ginger since he was a baby, has come to live in the neighbourhood.

"She was, in Ginger's eyes, a clean slate, on which he could write a glorious tale of non-existent virtues and reap such a golden harvest as dutiful nephews may expect from high-minded, if rather short-sighted, elderly aunts."

"William and the Watch & Chain" is a scream. Robert's latest girl friend, Honoria, thinks courage is the finest quality in the opposite sex, and William causes Robert to have a high old time. Another very funny one is "It All Began with the Typewriter". This time Robert seems to have proposed marriage to Cornelia, but it was a mix-up on William's part. All glorious fun. The new edition of the book, which I have, costs 7/6. I expect a cheaper edition will come out later on.

Cambridge has won the Boat Race for the 10th year in succession. Good old Light Blues.

The first story in the Gem this month is "The Mystery of Eastwood House" in which the chums go for a week-end to D'Arcy's home and meet with a strange adventure. Mr. Railton needs a holiday so he accompanies the boys. Rum! Next week "The Coming of 'Kangaroo'" which tells of the arrival of the Australian boy, Harry Noble, at St. Jim's.

Then "Well, Hit, Wallaby!" which continues the adventures of Kangaroo, who turns out to be another Don Bradman on the cricket field. Next week brought "Chums on the Road" in which Tom Merry and Co. set out for Coventry on their bikes, and have much fun and adventure en route. Finally "The Rival Schools" which tells of the rivalry between St. Jim's and the Grammar School. Two new boys set out for the Grammar School - Jimson Major and Jimson Minor - but they look

suspiciously like Tom Merry and Kerr. A sequel to this one comes next month.

Automatic traffic lights have been installed in London at Trafalgar Square, so the next time I go in my Rolls, life will be easy for me. And, while still on the road, a big new one has been opened. It is called the North Circular Road, and it was opened by Lord Rochdale. The road of our dreams. I hope it won't become the road of our nightmares.

Two good tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. "The School Without a Master" is the sequel to one of last month's S.O.L.'s, with a school run by a rebel Remove Form who won't go back to Greyfriars until their sacked form-master, Quelch, gets his job back. The second tale this month is "The Captain's Enemy", another story of St. Dorothy's, by Charles Hamilton, and a sequel to the other story last month.

The King and Queen have been to see their first talkie. It is a British film named "The Good Companions". They said they liked it a lot.

Terrible air accident this month. The United States aircraft "Akron" crashed into the sea, with seventy-four people out of seventy-seven on board losing their lives.

The Nelson Lee Library is still publishing early stories of St. Frank's. First tale "The House of Mystery", with Nipper and his pals having a good look at Bridge House to uncover its secrets. Then "Rivals of St. Frank's", a tale of the rivalry between the Ancient House and the Modern House - Monks and Fossils - at St. Frank's. Next on the list, "Under Arrest" - a St. Frank's Sixth-former is the one arrested. Then "The Mystery Master" tells of the arrival of a new tyrant master - Mr. Kennedy Hunter. Finally "The Tyrant of St. Frank's". More about Hunter, the Hun.

The Cup Final at Wembley took place at the end of the month and a huge crowd saw Everton beat Manchester City by 3 goals to nil. And the West Indies have just arrived over here to play the cricket Test Matches.

Summer time came in on the 9th, and we put the clocks on by an hour.

In Modern Boy there is a new series of Captain Justice stories. Captain Justice is on the trail of the arch-fiend, Dr. Calamity - wow! - who has a mysterious Tower under the sea. All very thrilling if you like that sort of thing. George E. Rochester has a new series "Cowboys of the Air". From saddle to cockpit makes a change for two cowboys, but somehow it's hard to think of cowboys in aeroplanes.

The Magnet, the Ranger, and the Modern Boy are all giving away Free Art Plates, but free gifts never worry me much. I wouldn't buy a paper just for the free gift, would you?

At the pictures we have seen Irene Dunne and John Boles in "Back Street", a rather sad picture about a married man who really loved a different sweet lady for twenty years. "The Midshipmaid" was a British film starring Jessie Matthews. Will Rogers was in "Down to Earth" about an angel who comes from Heaven to give help to somebody. Joan Blondell and Stuart Irwin in "Make Me a Star" is very good indeed with a grocer's clerk going to Hollywood and becoming a film star. Lots of stars in this one, including Zasu Pitts, Ben Turpin, Maurice Chevalier and a crowd more Paramount bright lights. A British film was "Happy Ever After" starring Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge; very funny in parts. With this one was a new Laurel and Hardy two-reeler "Scram". Finally "One Way Passage" starring William Powell and Kay Francis, about a dying girl on a sea cruise who falls in love with a crook who is being taken home to serve a life sentence in prison.

During the Easter holidays I took Mum up to Holborn Empire and we saw a lovely variety programme which included Geraldo and his Band, Lucan and McShane who were a scream as Old Mother Riley and her daughter, Kitty, and Linga Singh with a terrific magic show.

And speaking of variety shows, that wonderful variety theatre, the London Coliseum, has closed as a variety theatre. In the final week was Lily Morris, her first appearance at the Coliseum. Sir Oswald Stoll always thought her too common for Coliseum audiences, but I love her, and, according to the newspapers, she is a great hit at the Coliseum. The Coliseum is becoming a cinema, and is opening next week with "King Kong".

Gorgeous month in the Magnet. The first tale "All Through Bunter" is a dream. Bunter sees an armchair at a sale which he thinks

is marked £1 - 5s, and the Co. buy it. But the real price is £15, alas. But that armchair has its own secret. Then comes an Easter Holiday series starting with "Billy Bunter's Easter Cruise". He invites lots of his friends for a cruise on his cousin George's wonderful yacht. But it turns out that they are paying guests. Then "Greyfriars Chums Afloat" with Coker coming aboard. "Saved from the Sea" is more about the cruise on the Sea Nymph. Final of the month is "The Schoolboy Tourists" with the ship reaching Gibraltar. The series goes on next month.

Why, with stories like this, the Magnet needs to give free gifts, is quite beyond me.

NOTES ON THIS MONTH'S 'DANNY'S DIARY

S. O. L. No. 193 "The School Without a Master" comprised the final four stories of the High Oaks series of the Magnet of early 1928. This second portion sustained some pruning, but, all told, it fitted well into the medium. A series of restrained length in the first place. S. O. L. No. 184 "The Captain's Enemy" had been a serial, a sequel, from the Boys' Realm of late 1909, "Arthur Redfern's Vow".

The reprinted Nipper stories in the Lee had come from 1917, and the Hunter, the Hum series from 1918.

Of the 1933 Gem, which Danny was reading fifty years ago, "The Mystery of Eastwood House" had been "Tom Merry's Week-end" in the early summer of 1909. The next story (separated originally by a substitute tale) was "The Coming of Kangaroo" in 1933 and had been "A Son of the Empire" in 1909. The Gems of 1909 had been very long indeed, running to an average of twenty-one chapters. A slight cloud came over the reprints for a while, with considerable pruning taking place and some stories losing five or six chapters. The Gem in 1933 had lots of advertisements, some of them full-page, and many items which were quite uninspired and which, one would think, the average reader ignored and would have preferred discontinued instead of the story being cut. There was an additional and inexplicable happening in connection with "The Coming of Kangaroo". A new piece was written in, in which Kangaroo had made friends with a real kangaroo in the guard's van on the train. He persuaded the owner of the kangaroo to let him take the animal with him when he left Rylcombe station, to astonish the boys and the natives. This stupid and incredible addition was solely, apparently, to let the artist, Macdonald, depict the new boys leaving the station followed by a kangaroo which was carrying his suitcase. To cut the original tale, yet add this piece of nonsense, makes one wonder whose brain was behind the business.

The sequel "Well Hit, Wallaby" had been "Tom Merry's Sub-Editor" in 1909. For once, the changed title was an improvement. "Chums on the Road" was originally entitled "Sent to Coventry", and "The Rival Schools" had been "Tom Merry's Triumph" in 1909.

The last story had been re-written for the 1909 Gem from a long Boys' Friend Library

story of 1907, entitled "Tom Merry and Co.", republished by the Hamilton Museum Press a couple of years ago, and still available, incidentally, at £5 which includes postage. It was the very first story to introduce Rylcombe Grammar School. The second half of the story appeared in the next Gem, both in 1909 and in 1933, and no doubt Danny enjoyed it in May 1933. But that is still in the future, Dannywise.

* * * * *

DEATH OF BLAKE AUTHOR DONALD BOBIN

Donald Bobin died last December in Southend, Essex, at the age of 71. He was the son of well-known Sexton Blake author, John William Bobin, who under the name of 'Mark Osborne', wrote many stories for "Union Jack", "Detective Weekly" and the SBL. Donald Bobin worked for the A. P. for some years during the later days of the "DW" in the late-1930s, and it was he who re-wrote, cut and up-dated all the reprinted early Blake stories. He also wrote one original Blake story for the "DW", No. 344 titled "The Banknote Bandits". During the '30s he also wrote extensively for the "Girls' Crystal" and "Schoolgirls Own Library" under the name of 'Shirley Holliday'. He worked for a time as secretary to another Blake writer, John G. Brandon. From 1939 until his retirement in 1978, he ran Victory Bookshops Ltd., in Southend. His father had died also in Southend, in 1935, with 97 Blake stories to his credit.

BRIAN DOYLE

* * * * *

OLD THEMES

M. S. FELLOWS writes: Josie Packman feels that "so much has been written about Sexton Blake and feels that there is not much more to be said". It is perhaps worth remembering that some of us became readers of C.D. rather late in its history. We have missed a great deal about Sexton Blake, and other characters, from Charles Hamilton's pen and that of other writers, so that a re-working of some of the old themes about Blake and his authors, Greyfriars, St. Jim's, will not come amiss so far as some of us are concerned. I, for one, am content if your contributors keep writing about our favourite story papers. It does not have to be "new" - merely interesting. I read everything in the magazine and the annual and have never yet been bored. I am not an expert on anything, but I love learning from those who are. Thank you for providing me with such fine entertainment.

* * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by Josie Packman

Just a short preamble this month as the articles are rather on the long side. I shall be pleased to receive any articles for future use, getting rather low on material for Blakiana.

THE TWYMAN LETTERS. Part 4

by W.O.G. Lofts

In 'Twy's' view easily his two best writers were Gwyn Evans and G.H. Teed. He thought so much of their popularity with readers, that he was quite prepared to put up with their inconsistency of writing, as well as at times somewhat slapdash ways. Indeed it could be said that Teed was regarded as his Star author, so much so that when he was in difficulties with the French authorities, which may have meant his Union Jack readers being deprived of his services for a while - 'Twy' went over the Continent to Paris to get his release.

In character Gwyn Evans and G.H. Teed were opposites. Gwyn was a tall beanpole type of Welshman with a boyish face. Happy-go-lucky and carefree - this could be seen in his Sexton Blake stories which were light and humorous in tone. When in funds he gave lavish parties to his hosts of friends, not caring for the morrow. When he died in 1938 aged only 39 a collection at Amalgamated Press produced such a small amount, that the collector had to make up the amount for a wreath. Such is the fickleness of human nature - when many had been his best friends when in funds.

George Hamilton Teed was a Canadian with a loud rasping voice that could be heard over the din of loud conversation at any Public House. Hard-bitten and tough he could have easily been type-cast as a 'heavy' in any film. He had travelled the world, been sheep farmer, even served as bar-man chucker out at a honky-tonk. His knowledge he put to give real colour in his stories, as well as drama, whilst his writing was first-class and on a higher tone than most other writers. He died on Xmas Eve in 1939 aged 61 at Whitechapel, London. It must be said that Teed was far more careful than Evans with his scripts, and 'Twy's' anxiety about him was more of his periodical long disappearances from the scene of writing. His remarks refer to

Gwyn Evans . . .

"I no more than anyone would seek to discount the story-telling of Gwyn Evans, in fact just the contrary, for it was because I estimated his work so highly that I bought his stories so often, and the stimulating gusto of Evans was not lost on me. But it is a fact - and unrecognised fact - that Gwyn's manuscripts meant to me a lot of corrective work that was unfairly left for me to do. He was incredibly slapdash and irresponsible in these matters. Also, I was sometimes disappointed that the story hadn't turned out as brilliantly as it seemed in the first place. I say 'first place' because nobody will ever know, and I myself have forgotten, all the hours I have sat with him in pubs and places hammering out the details of an idea that I had given him for a story or series. The 'Onion Men' and 'Mr. Mist' were two that come to mind; there must have been many more from first to last, including some of the highly-esteemed Christmas stories. And, apart from initiating and polishing the story itself, there was the presentation of it in the paper, with all sorts of little ideas and garishings that seem to all add up to the Golden Age of the Union Jack.

I was much amused to see that Maurice Bond in the first Vol. of the Collectors Digest praises, and picks out a paragraph of Gwyn Evans which was my very own. He quotes a passage which is in my own typical if inferior style, and this maybe also gives my opinion on those who claim to identify an authors style by just reading through a few paragraphs". . .

WHAT WAS - and still is - Sexton Blake's Appeal

by Cyril Rowe

I think truly that the slogan 'For Readers of all Ages' was true throughout the run of the Union Jack. It was less so in the last few years, in my opinion, but youthful readers, if still continuing in their loyalty, had grown up with the years, so it still applied.

It was less correct when applied to the Sexton Blake Library and certainly not so when Blake moved to Berkely Square. I have my doubts that in this new situation he was inevitably for readers of any age, or those who had a quality of discernment of a 'real yarn' in them as opposed to the more evident intent to indulge in (drag in maybe) sex appeal.

However, here again with the S.B.L. in its earlier stage regular readers who could find the copper that rose to two pence, found in the Union Jack many crook opponents of Blake, who could be enjoyed in S.B.L. on there several and probably rarer appearances. Thus I assume that the odd 4d could be used to the individual reader's advantage, so giving various age groups the material they most enjoyed. In such a manner they were providing critical judgment to be brought in.

Undoubtedly I think the publishers were operating for a junior market on the whole, though older readers and people from lower backgrounds who would shy from fully intellectual authorship (so to speak) had their perhaps limitations enhanced by the tales, and on the whole good tales that were provided and so increased total readership considerably.

Moreover this was the only publication that was specifically sold under this slogan, no matter what other periodicals were issued by the same publishers and largely also, the total readership of any journal was to some way controlled by the nationwide level of general education. As an instance I may interpolate that I had two uncles born about 1975 who could never read or write so the market had to be supplied by not too abstruse material for general education for all had only had some 20 years when the U.J. started. But more material to the slogan claim is the actual authorship of the tales and the range intellectual and geographical of the tales themselves.

Always was the struggle between good and evil, which remains eternal. The fact that criminals remain uncaught was due to the editorial department realising when they had found a winner in certain characters, which avoided pressing the authors for a new line. It also meant familiarity with the character by the reader and kept his attention and his weekly subscription.

The international scene of events again led to interest through a large range of people from other climes, apart from interest and purchase in the countries themselves.

Furthermore, we had the issues that were pure detective yarns, clues followed and correct deductions made which appealed to one type of reader. We had other tales in which the adventure type was to the fore, which appealed to others and a mixture of the two wherein the deductive process was coupled with a location in the world which was unusual. We had also tales which, when studied closely, were impossible, the semi-magical and fantastic which could appeal to the younger element, whom the eligibility of the solution did not deter him from enjoying the events as they rolled along.

All throughout were coupled with the knowledge that even in the local place (and I know some that were discribed faithfully) lived some subscribers who enjoyed their homely turn of fame, or line of trade or sporting activity. Yes, surely the byline in the Union Jack was true.

Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by An Old Boy

Question: Why was Yung Ching, of the Remove, sent a small, stuffed pig from his relatives in China?

Answer: Because this year according to Chinese tradition is the Year of the Pig. Consequently Chingy had to explain to all and sundry why he received the Pig. The Chinese lunar calendar consists of cycles of 60 years in five simple cycles of 12 years each. Each of the 12 years is named after a creature, beginning with the rat, then the ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog and lastly pig.

According to the Chinese the Year of the Pig, is a year of plenty when money circulates again, business, industry and travel opportunities improve and people can savour the joy of living again - like the proverbial pigs in clover.

So this year St. Frank's can look forward to a very successful time. Or perhaps I should say Study R and Chingy's chums.

While Yung Ching was celebrating the New Year in February, the rest of the school carried on whose New Year's thoughts were probably very much dimmed by now.

But several juniors wanted to know their particular creature as per the Chinese tradition. And so did I!

It seems as I was born in 1908 each succeeding year of 12 makes my animal the Monkey. And the Chinese junior kindly told me the Monkey of the Year of the Pig is an unsettled time... and that I should try to curb my overtly ambitious tendencies. For which I thanked Chingy very much.

Pity old Ezra Quirke is no longer at St. Frank's; it would be interesting to hear the arguments Quirke and Ching would foment.

No doubt there would be a visit from Wun Lung of Greyfriars to St. Frank's to celebrate the New Year of the Chinese.

Perhaps from neighbouring St. Jim's too... although I am not quite sure if St. Jim's has a Chinese Junior

Meanwhile St. Frank's carries on the even tenor of its way.

Football, the king of winter sports dominates the sporting scene, but the cricket bats are well oiled and ready for the summer game in a few months.

Already there is talk of the Easter holidays and plans for visits. But of course such plans are always premature.

A strange thing about school life is that while there is a great desire to leave it at holiday times the eventual return is just as welcome.

During my school years I was as eager as the next to depart from the Groves of Academe, but it was always so nice to get back to enjoy another term. Those days the most unexpected things happened. A barring out or a new House-master with strange ideas might appear to disturb life... or perhaps one of Lord Dorrimore's famous holiday jaunts might turn up.

Often, oh so very often, one likes to go back and reminisce. Only the other evening in the Common Room the subject was about japes... the biggest jape of all was perpetrated by the Moor View girls... and St. Frank's have never lived that down. It was the time the girls took over St. Frank's as the boys returned from a holiday party. That jape will go down in the annals of the school as one that cannot be beaten.

BARRING-OUT

by R. J. Godsave

Prior to the latter part of the eighteenth century 'barring-outs' at the major public schools usually consisted of scholars taking possession of a single schoolroom, to barricade the doors, and shout abuse at authority from the windows. The latter part of this century saw a change of pattern in the outbreaks of revolt to massed resistance to any form of tyranny whether real or imagined.

A connection between the French Revolution with the American Boston riots and the English public school massed revolts would be quite unthinkable were it not for the fact that they all happened at the same period of history. The year 1768 saw the first real revolt against authority at Eton.

The first St. Frank's Remove revolt written by E. S. Brooks - it could hardly qualify as a barring-out - was against the tyranny of

Mr. Kennedy Hunter, M.A., who acted as a temporary Housemaster of the Ancient House in the absence of Nelson Lee who was on secret Government business. Owing to the close watch Hunter and his helpers kept on the Remove it was impossible to organise the revolt as it should have been. The main defence system had consisted of a wall of faggots above the old vaults beneath the monastery ruins which were situated in a corner of the Triangle. Mr. Hunter had played a trump card by throwing petrol over the faggot wall and had burned the defences down.

It was only by Nipper remembering a secret chamber which opened out from the main vaults that the Rebel Remove had been able to escape the vengeance of Mr. Hunter. It was left to Hal. Brewster of the River House School to suggest a more permanent place of resistance on Willard's Island by occupying the building which was known as Willard's Folly.

The second revolt against authority was that of the Howard Martin series. This was a real barring-out, well considered and organised by the Remove Rebels. The West Wing of the Ancient House building being selected by the juniors comprised of the Remove dormitory, a few box-rooms, and one of the kitchens below with a large store-room which contained a large quantity of food.

By putting a barricade at the end of a corridor shut the rebels off from the rest of the House upstairs. The same applied to the section. The juniors had shut themselves in a kind of backwater which was peculiarly suited for their purpose. The boarding-up of the back door and all the windows gave complete security. Unlike the Hunter revolt the Remove were in a strong position in all ways to defy the bullying Headmaster.

Towards the end of 1921 Brooks wrote one of his best Lee series, that of the Communist School series. The barring-out of part of the Remove by some juniors who had come under the influence of Timothy Tucker was by returning to St. Frank's before the school holidays were actually over and taking possession of the Ancient House. With the Royalist who supported Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee opposed to the Rebels who desired the dismissal of both Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee and who were in favour of Mr. Hugh Trenton being appointed in place of Dr. Stafford as Headmaster. As the Remove were divided in their loyalties it could not be classed as a complete barring-out.

There were, of course, other revolts during the long life of the Nelson Lee Library, but I do not think they ever came up to the revolt against Mr. Howard Martin, Headmaster. This series was reprinted in the Monster Library. No. 11.

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 183 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 204 - "The Missing Schoolboy"

Gem stories on the whole fitted more happily into the Schoolboys' Own Library than did the stories from the Magnet, mainly because after blue Gem days the weekly St. Jim's tales grew much shorter. Certainly, the three Gems from the autumn of 1925 slotted very neatly into Schoolboys' Own No. 204, and the adventures of the new boy, Sidney Troope who had just inherited a famous racehorse Koh-i-Noor, made a compact and acceptable volume.

Greyfriars series often opened at Courtfield station on the first day of term, but it was something of a novelty for a St. Jim's series to commence at Wayland Junction, especially as several chapters were devoted to this opening scene. Troope was chloroformed in a railway compartment, with Trimble hiding under the seat, and when the train stopped at Woodend the kidnapper claimed that his son had fainted, and but for Trimble would have got away with it. Kidnapping was not a common theme in the Companion Papers, and this one had the stamp of originality, at least.

Baggy Trimble played a prominent part in this series, and in this connection it is interesting to turn up a letter that Charles Hamilton wrote to me in 1951:

"Baggy owed his existence to the fact that Bunter was such a 'draw' in the other paper: but though he was the work of my own hands I never liked him much: the real truth being that an author should never imitate even himself. He had to be differentiated from BB and all the differences seemed to turn out badly for him."

Baggy was extremely unattractive in this series, making the wealthy Troope (whose life he claimed to have saved) his special chum, and borrowing extensively from him. The middle number of the series

contained sections that were pure comic relief, explaining how some of the juniors, taking pity on Troope, contrived to put an end to this beautiful friendship. There is no doubt that Baggy, with his boasts of Trimble Hall, where the Prime Minister, two Princes, and some ambassadors stayed ("A fairly decent lot!" said Trimble airily), was far more detestable than Bunter in his tales of Bunter Court, if only because Trimble seemed to possess a vein of slyness that turned this kind of bragging into downright lying instead of mere fatuous idiocy.

In the last number of the series Troope was in fact kidnapped, and at this point Wildrake became the star, displaying his knowledge of tracking to good effect. Wildrake was a pleasant enough character, and no doubt helped to maintain the Gem's sales in Canada, but there can be no denying that he was overplayed on many occasions. Here, his tracking was preceded by a logical analysis of the situation, with the result that he was really the only junior to think and act in this number. Nevertheless, despite these criticisms, "The Missing Schoolboy" was both competent and original, and in its Gem version in 1925 it was probably even more welcome amongst a welter of substitute stories.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 239. FROM GOVERNESS TO GUARDIAN

Generally speaking, writers of school stories had no need to do anything more than sketch in lightly the backgrounds of their school-boy characters. In most cases, in fact, no family background at all was necessary.

However, a long running series, something of a saga, was rather different. With some stories featuring episodes which occurred in the family circle, the reader needed to know more about the leading characters, and, as weeks became months and months became years, Hamilton added to those details, and the backgrounds of the main characters were often pretty well described. But, in the case of Tom Merry, the background picture, even now, is rather obscure.

In an excellent new book of St. Jim's stories recently published by Howard Baker (we review the volume in C.D. this month) there is a story entitled "Tom Merry's Bodyguard". This story is a

reprint of "Trouble for Tom" which originally appeared in the Gem in 1913. If any of us were around in 1913, I'm sure we enjoyed it immensely, and, after all, it was written for youngsters. Now, as very clever adults, we turn a more critical eye on it, which is really unfair. Basically, we can see it is rather a silly story, but even we have to admit that it is light-hearted, warm-hearted, and full of action from start to finish.

Only one small piece is pertinent to this essay, though. Somebody refers to Miss Priscilla Fawcett as Tom Merry's "aunt". Tom Merry replies: "Miss Fawcett is not my aunt. She was my governess, and is now my guardian".

We know nothing of Tom Merry's parents. Both had died before Tom turned up at Clavering. We know he had an uncle or two. It seems curious that a governess should have been appointed guardian to a boy.

We really know nothing of Miss Fawcett's background. In Victorian and Edwardian times, a governess was, almost without exception, one of the genteel poor. Almost without exception, she was reasonably well educated, but impoverished. In the household, a governess was neither Upstairs nor Downstairs. She was not regarded as a servant, yet she was not a member of the family. She was in between, and, according to the nature of her charges, her life might have been no bed of roses.

Yet Miss Fawcett, once his governess, became Tom Merry's guardian. It was rather unlikely. Who was Miss Fawcett? The background of the lady is unusually obscure. She had lived for years in India, according to "Tom Merry's Bodyguard", which was the reason she was so superstitious concerning fortune-tellers.

Was Laurel Villa her personal property? Or was it provided by the Merry family? It was not luxurious, but it must have been a very nice home, from the description Hamilton gave of it in the Gem's first Christmas Number. She kept servants, though not a large staff. If she owned a lovely country house like Laurel Villa, why did she have to become a governess?

To obtain entry to a school like Clavering (in real life, at any rate), Tom would have needed to have attended a good preparatory school for a year or two, or, at least, to have had a good male tutor. Did he?

It is improbable that his governess could have coached him into Clavering.

Who paid Tom Merry's fees? An uncle? Yet when, in early days, Miss Fawcett lost her money owing to the scheming of a member of the Crooke family, Tom had to leave St. Jim's, and very soon found himself adrift in the slums of London.

There was an uncle, General Merry. There was a very wealthy uncle, Mr. Poinsett, who lived in the western United States. He had not seen Tom Merry since the boy was a baby. Now Mr. Poinsett paid for the boy and his companions to visit him in the Far West, so that he could decide whether Tom was worthy to become his heir.

There was a millionaire, Mr. Brandreth, who had been a partner of Tom Merry's father, and he was to make Tom "Heir to Millions". Mr. Brandreth had a nephew named Goring, who had disgraced himself. With the aid of "Tom Merry's Double", Goring set about trying to get Tom expelled from St. Jim's and to supplant his rival in Mr. Brandreth's eyes. That was all in blue cover days.

Years later, in the Gem's final autumn, Silverson was a rival, this time for Miss Fawcett's moneybags. From whence came Miss Fawcett's money? Did she really have enough to make Silverson's elaborate plot worth while?

So the snooty adult sees it all as a little incredible, while at the same time admitting that those tales of Tom Merry's vicissitudes made some of the loveliest reading in the Gem - or in any paper, for that matter.

Surely there must have been a great romantic story in the past of that elderly and eccentric spinster, Miss Priscilla Fawcett. It was never necessary for Hamilton to relate it. In fact, the various peeps into Tom Merry's background which Hamilton gave us only served to obscure the picture and make it more and more inexplicable. But what superb reading those "peeps" provided down the years.

Maybe, some day, some novelist will tell the romantic story of the young Priscilla, her loves, her disappointments in life, which led up to the time when she bestowed all her great affection on her beloved ward, Tom Merry. Surely there was the mystery of a "Jane Eyre" or the brooding romance of a "Rebecca", hidden in the lost years

of Miss Fawcett's lifetime.

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REVIEWS

THE GREYFRIAR'S CHRISTMAS

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker Special: £16)

This is another of those lovely books with its roots set firmly in halcyon Edwardian days. In other words, eight issues, consecutive, of the Red Magnet when it was published at one real halfpenny, and including two double numbers for which the price was increased to one genuine penny.

It would be idle to claim that these stories show the famous author at his complete best: his finest work of the period was going into the well-knit, carefully-plotted stories he was writing every week for the Gem at that time. But these old Magnet tales are joyful, inconsequential, and a delight for our sentimental souls from start to finish.

The volume opens with one of the double numbers, "The Fifth at Greyfriars", a whizzbang of a story, in the early part of which the famous "faddist form-master" of those days, who was a stand-in for the Remove while Mr. Quelch was absent, is leaving and Bob Cherry makes an hilarious speech to welcome back Mr. Quelch. Next "Bunter the Detective" makes allegations against Tom Brown in a novel little bit of whimsy.

Then "The Circus at Greyfriars" belongs to Senor Tomsonio, and introduces such popular characters of those days as Clotilde, Samson the Strong Man, and Joey Pye, the clown. This tale was an advertisement for the circus series then running in Pluck, mainly written by Charles Hamilton, though we detected that the story from the series which we printed in C. D. years back was written by C. M. Down. "The Smuggler's Cave" is one of those delightful affairs by the sad, sea waves in which Frank Richards excelled himself at that distant time.

Then the 1909 Christmas Double Number, containing a very famous, and frequently reprinted story, "Billy Bunter's Christmas Dream". The story was not particularly Christmassy - school had not yet broken up - but, as in so many early stories, there is a double plot and plenty of fun and excitement. For years, Clarke's cover to this tale was very familiar to old readers, being many times reprinted. "The Greyfriars Skaters" gets in the mood of winter, and introduces the Cliff House girls.

"The Greyfriars Sweepstake" tells its own tale in the title, with a familiar plot, but the villainous Carberry helps to load us with nostalgia, though Harry Wharton is slightly theatrical in his condemnation of sweepstakes. After all, there is nothing so very heinous, even in 1909, in a "sweep", providing it is efficiently run. Of course, this one wasn't.

Finally, the last of the old year, and a Christmas story set at the pre-Wellsian Wharton Lodge, with a crowd of Greyfriars boys and Cliff House girls present, plus a Christmas pudding competition.

A superb volume, to leave you a little misty-eyed, and with a mild heartache for the

good old days, though you have enjoyed every minute of it. Once more, Arthur Clarke's gentle, quaint, old-fashioned illustrations add enormously to the overall charm. Clarke, for years, had been a constant illustrator in many A. P. papers. Whenever an older reader comes on one of them, whatever paper they appear in, the characteristic work of Clarke makes that older reader think instinctively of the early Magnet.

In passing, in the opening tale, the Head signs himself "J. Locke". It must have been quite a few years before he became a "Herbert".

"TOM MERRY'S BODYGUARD"

(Martin Clifford:
Howard Baker £7.95)

This volume of superb St. Jim's stories is something of a paradox, in that the newest issues contain the oldest tales.

The book opens with a 3-story series from the Spring of 1922 - the Gem's finest year since blue cover days, and an Indian Summer with a vengeance. This is an exceptionally fine series, worthy to figure with the best of all time. Stories about the seniors were almost always first-class, and this one stars Darrell, the prefect, who, in the aftermath of a calf-love affair, is suspected of a theft of £60. Wildrake takes a hand, and Cutts was the guilty man.

Now the volume goes forward in a bound to the year 1936 and the Gem's reprint period. "For the Honour of St. Jim's" which had been entitled "The Rascal of St. Jim's" in 1913, is a splendid tale, and, incidentally, the very first one to feature the iniquitous Tickey Tapp, a rogue who, with his gambling-den, turned up from time to time in years to come at all the Hamilton schools. Lumley-Lumley has a big part in this story, and there is even a brief sequence featuring Vavasour, a new boy from a few weeks earlier, though he disappeared from the scene very soon. Down the years, every yarn in which Tickey Tapp appeared was tip-top.

Next in the volume (and in sequence) comes "They Called Him a Coward", the most famous of all substitute stories, originally under the better title of "Misunderstood" in 1913. The writer was E. S. Brooks, who had previously written for the Gem a series of short detective tales under the pen-name of Robert W. Comrade. "They Called Him a Coward" is not a bad story, though it lacks the subtle warmth of the genuine article, and it was detected as a sub tale for as long as I can remember, which is a long, long time. The theme seems a bit hackneyed now - the boy who neglects one rescue to go to another which is hidden from the eyes of onlookers. At any rate, Hamilton himself, in later years, used the same theme, both at Greyfriars and Rookwood. The curious thing is that this was the story where Manners won his famous camera for bravery, and Hamilton used that camera many, many times as years went on. Quite a mystery.

Next story is "Tom Merry's Bodyguard", named "Trouble for Tom" in 1913. We have a peep at this story in the current "Let's Be Controversial" article.

And finally an excellent scouting tale, very popular in its day, "The Curl ew Patrol Wins Through", entitled "The Rival Patrols" in 1914. For some reason, in the reprints, they leaped forward a year for this story which appeared originally just before the outbreak of the First Great War.

This happened to be a period when pruning of the old long tales was very slight indeed, or non-existent. A truly magnificent treat for the St. Jim's enthusiast - and for anyone else.

GREYFRIARS SINCE THE MAGNET

Lofts & Adley

This is a handy little publication for the inveterate Bunter fan. The amount of research in its compilation must have been colossal, and frustrating at times, chasing up various stories and pictures and tit-bits about Bunter and Greyfriars from here, there, and everywhere. Stories from Skilton, Cassell and Mandeville are listed completely, plus reprints in Armada, Four Square, the Comet, Knockout, and many other sources. The Bunter plays in the West End receive notice, and details are given of post-war artists who carried on.

Some of it, obviously, is mere trivia which did little good for the reputation of the hobby, if you look at it from a hobby viewpoint. It shows what an immense industry built up around the rotund figure of Billy Bunter after his creator passed on - and, indeed, before he passed on, when all was grist that came to his mill. This book states that Hamilton was paid an honorarium of £5 a week while the Bunter strips appeared in Knockout. In a letter to me from the author himself he writes that he was paid £2 per week, though it is unimportant.

Alas for our pride. There is no mention of Story Paper Collector's Digest. I could have sworn we published a few bits about Greyfriars and Billy Bunter.

But there is plenty of useful information for the collector, and it is very worth while. Privately published at £1.25 plus 12p postage, the book can be obtained only from Happy Hours Unlimited, Leeds. (See ad. in last month's C.D.)

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FOR SALE: Magnets, Gems, Nelson Lees, Sexton Blakes £1 each. Biggles, Just William £1. Boys' Magazine 1930 £1.50 each. Children's Annuals £1 each. S.A.E. to Olympus, Sandford Mill Road, Chelmsford, Essex.

FOR SALE: Two bound vols. Gems Nos. 200-299 - no covers but condition v.g. Holiday Annuals 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1933, 1937. All very good condition except 1920. RARE C.H. B.F.L.'s 30, 38, 46, 153, 367, 413, 513, 517. Modern Boys Nos. 1-73 in 3 mint vols. Smyth, P.O. Box 366, Mona Vale 2103, N.S.W., Australia.

WANTED: C.D.'s Nos. 13, 15, 27, 91, 217. Eagles Vol. 2 Nos. 16, 12, 11, 9, 6, Vol. 3, Nos. 22, 12. Vol. 8 No 21. Good prices paid. Mr. Simmonds, 4 Nutfield Road, London, N.W. 2 7EB.

GEMS AND MAGNETS (original and facsimile) for sale, also Baker volumes, plus others by Brazil, Oxenham, etc. SAE for list to Neil Beck, 54 Barons Way, Polegate, East Sussex, BN26 5JJ.

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News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

MIDLAND

An attendance of only eight members at our February meeting was disappointing, and a bitterly cold evening did not help.

Items of especial interest on display were Nelson Lee (old series No. 194 "The Colonel's Secret", the last of the famous Colonel Clinton series) was our Anniversary Number and the Collectors' Item was Nugget Library No. 48 "The Sign of the Red Claw", a Nelson Lee and Nipper story.

We are behind with our Newsletter owing to the illness of Christine Brettell who types the master copy. We shall probably send a double posting in due course.

A game of Greyfriars Bingo saw Vince Loveday and myself as the winners. A reading by your correspondent was taken from "Billy Bunter's Rebellion", No. 4 of the Howard Baker S.O.L. style publications. They were lovely books with printing and format excellent, but too expensive so they did not sell well.

A discussion followed on the topic "Should the boys of Greyfriars have a representative on the Board of Governors?". The members present all answered "No". Geoff Lardner, who is Principal of Sandwell 6th Form College, said it was not legal for anyone under the age of 18 to sit on school governing bodies.

Our April meeting (the A.G.M.) will be held on the 26th of the month. Good wishes to all O.B.B.C. members everywhere.

JACK BELLFIELD
(Correspondent)

CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at the home of Tony Cowley on Sunday, 6th March. Chairman Vic Hearn was still unwell and unable to be present. In his absence vice-chairman Mike Rouse was in the chair. After the formal business had been transacted it was reported that Jack Overhill and Bill Thurbon had been invited to make a short broadcast on Radio Cambridge,

Bill commenting admiringly on the professional way Jack, the veteran broadcaster, had so competently handled the "mike".

Host Tony Cowley gave an intensely interesting talk on word-processors and micro computers. He pointed out that we were now on the threshold of something new and exciting! That the pen, typewriter and filing cabinet could all now be replaced by the word processor. He pointed out that the action of picking up a pen would possibly take one second; the capacity of the computer could extend to one million operations in that same second. He illustrated that with the variety of sounds that could be made by the computers action at various speeds, a volume of sounds that increased with the speeds until they passed beyond the capacity of the human ear. To the joy of members he then produced, in the form of a letter to Edward, an example of how a whole series of letters could be sent out to people, apparently in personal form simply by changing the name of the addressee. If Edward, who unfortunately was not present, gets a letter from "Amanda" he will now know the sender! Tony completed his demonstration by presenting members with profiles of members of the Club. Warm thanks were expressed to Tony for his marvellously entertaining talk and demonstration. After enjoying Mrs. Cowley's gorgeous tea the meeting re-assembled. Mike Rouse gave a footnote to his recent talk on East Coast Entertainers by recounting his discovery of a copy of Douglas Byng's autobiography, which had led to correspondence and then a meeting with Douglas Byng, who would be ninety on the 17th of this month.

Tony Cowley, who is at the moment working on some of Jack Overhill's broadcast tapes, then played part of Jack's splendid autobiographical tape, "marriage on a shoestring". A marvellous evocation of life in Cambridge sixty years ago.

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

LONDON

The new rendezvous at Ealing was very well attended and the reward for the 25 present was a very interesting programme.

Larry Peters had obtained a fine bell and there was a general discussion as to what engravings should be placed thereon. It was agreed that it will be a fitting tribute to the co-founders of the club, Leonard

Packman and Bob Blythe.

Memory Lane reading by Norman Wright was from newsletter of January 1966 and dealt with the passing of Edwy Searles Brooks. It also dealt with the Christmas meeting at Cricklewood.

A reading by the 1983 club chairman, Roy Parsons, was appreciated and it dealt with Clarence Cuffy's goalkeeping efforts.

Bill Lofts gave his very fine "Billy Bunter and the Knockout" effusion which Bob Blythe asked Bill to do for the London Club.

Mark Jarvis read a humorous Jennings story.

A forthcoming booklet in connection with "Help the Aged" will contain a Grefriars piece by Brian Doyle and this was read out by Brian.

Next meeting at the Walthamstow venue on Sunday, 10th April and as usual bring own comestibles and Thelma and Gladys will make the tea as they did at Ealing.

BEN WHITER

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The Postman Called

LESLIE HOLLAND (Royton). An old R.A.F. pal of mine lent me a copy of "The Cock House at Fellsgarth" recently. It was fascinating to read it again after nearly 50 years. My original was a Sunday School prize. They always had to be school stories for me, although I was also very fond of the William books. Richard Bird, Gunby Hadth, and Hylton Cleaver were my favourites, although the only survivor today from my prizes is a book named "Off His Own Bat" by a man named St. John Pearce. It is a school and cricket story.

I used to enjoy a series of hardbacks, borrowed from the public library at that time, under the general title of "Teddy Lester's School-days", but I cannot remember who wrote them.

You must find the work of producing the C.D. worrying at times, even though it is a labour of love, and I cannot thank you enough for providing this spot of pleasure every month. I feel the same way about Roger Jenkins's library, upon which I have been liberally drawing for some time now. Keep up the good work with C.D. All your readers are truly appreciative.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The Teddy Lester stories were by John Finnemore and many were serialised in the Boys' Realm early in the century.)

JOHN LEWIS (Neston): You are most certainly correct with regards to the pronunciation of Levison as being "Loosen". As you are no doubt well aware people in the mid-17th century usually spelt words as they were pronounced, and Sir Richard Leveson's name is written down by Thomas Malbon in his account of the Civil War in Cheshire (1651) pp. 164, 166, as:-

- (i) Sr Richard LEWSON
- (ii) Sr Richard LEWSEN

FRED GRIFFIN (New York): When I visited Circus World in Florida I met an Englishman and his wife. I was telling him about the "King Pole" circus magazine of Britain, but he had never heard of the periodical or of the Circus Fans' Association of Great Britain. Did you know it exists? If you, or any of your reader friends, want to join the Association, write to the Secretary at 9 Vicarage Road, Haydock, St. Helens, Merseyside.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Charles Hamilton very obviously loved circuses. I, too, love a circus, providing there are no wild animals performing. I can never believe that they can be trained without cruelty. Mr. Griffin sent me two lovely pictures from the King Pole magazine, showing the London Palladium and the London Hippodrome, both being theatres which were originally built as circuses, though before out time. I remember going as a youngster to see Pearl White in the flesh in "The London Revue", and the Hippodrome, which gave a long run to the naval musical comedy "Hit the Deck" was always my favourite theatre in London. The picture of the Hippodrome, taken before the first world war, I would think, shows surprisingly little change, externally, from the facade presented the last time I was in that part of London. I presume that the interior, though, was gutted, when they converted it into a theatre-restaurant.)

R. GOODMAN (Queensland): Your remarks in C.D. touch many a chord of memory! For instance you recently mentioned a paper called "Puck": now this was my first experience with such papers and I still recall its excellent presentation. This was back about 1912. My first volume was 'Chums' for 1910 at the tender age of 4½, too young to appreciate it fully but liked it so much that with exceptions of volumes for 1911, 1913, and 1915 I was presented with Chums each Christmas up to 1924.

CHAS. VAN RENEN (South Africa): I am busy reading Thackeray's

'Pendennis' again and I notice that on an earlier reading I made some references at the back of the book to the amazingly large number of names and quotations appearing in this work that Hamilton used in the companion papers. To quote a few:- Grey Friars School (and inevitably there was a Grammar School as well), Towzer, Morgan, Wilkins, Kildare, Potter, Skinner, Claving, Pynsent (wasn't that the name of Wharton's tutor at home?), Wapshot, Bagshot, and references to "The Bull of Bashan", "The Medes and the Persians" and "Improving the Shining Hour", etc., Major Pendennis was continually urging his nephew in the novel to familiarize himself with the names of the ancient noble families in Debretts. There is a Blenkinsop - didn't this name appear in the "Gem" as well? Interesting - is it possible that our old friend cast his eyes over this work inter alia, when preparing his cast for "The Magnet" and the "Gem"? Yes, I too came across a Lord Mauleverer in "Cranford" and a "Green Man" pub in "Scenes of Clerical Life". Would this be a fairly common name for a pub in the British Isles?

What a world of pleasure there is to be found between the covers of a good book! My mother used to read to us at night just before retiring. Will I ever forget "Joseph's Little Coat", "Eric, or Little by Little" and "Oliver Twist" which she introduced to us when I was just a little mite! In later years, besides my piles of "Magnets", "Gems", "Populars", "S.O.L.'s", "Picture Shows", "Picturegoers" and the "Holiday", "Chums" and "Picture Show" annuals I had a large collection of the novels of E. R. Burroughs, Sapper, Peter B. Kyne, Zane Grey, Hall Caine, Haggard, Talbot Baines Reed, Harold Avery, Gunby Hadath and other favourites of the time.

BILL LOFTS (London): Perhaps I can be excused in the error of Topical Times when I say that the last number in the British Museum Index and files was 1050 dated December 30th, 1939, when the Supervisor informs me that was the last issue registered with them. Of course I accept Denis Gifford's last issue in May 1940, and can only conclude that with acute paper shortage around that time, plus D. C. Thomson being a Scottish firm, that copies were cut in print orders and only distributed up North or no further than the Midlands. Though this is only theory. In any case I'm most grateful to Denis for pointing this out, as in perusing the 1939 issues I found stories of Sanders of the River (Edgar Wallace) not recorded

before in our Bibliography. Unfortunately he may have great difficulty in compiling the details in those missing 1940 issues!

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LITTLE FOLKS ANNUAL

by Don Harkness

About a year ago, I went rummaging through a second hand shop selling old furniture, crockery, old books, etc., and came across an annual which I nearly passed over, called "LITTLE FOLKS", as I thought it was meant for children of tender years. The front cover depicted a very young boy and girl riding on a pair of fluffy yellow ducklings on a lake. However, upon opening the book, I discovered it was for the older boy and girl.

The title page described "LITTLE FOLKS" as "the Magazine for Boys and Girls, edited by H. Harkin Williams". It was Volume 113 and published by Amalgamated Press in 1931. In size it was narrower than the Holiday Annual and ran to 528 pages printed on glossy paper. It was also profusely illustrated by drawings and pictures.

Stories were mostly by women such as Dorothea Moore, Frances Cowan and Christine Chandler while the men were represented by D. H. Parry, Peter Martin and Rowland Walker.

As well as fiction there were articles like "Films of the Month" told by Marjory Collier, titles included "Forward March", "Raffles", and "White Hell of Pitz Palu". Then there was "Pets and Pastimes pages", "Locomotives of the Steelways; Then and Now" and "Pages for Music Lovers", to name a few, and for good measure four short plays were included.

"LITTLE FOLKS" appears to have been a monthly magazine of about 40 pages as far as I can fathom. If anyone has more definite information I'd be pleased if they'd write in, also saying how long the magazine ran for.

THE WRYKYN TRILOGY

by Ernest Holman

Round about the turn of the century, P. G. Wodehouse introduced readers into his World of School. The stories appeared in such publications as 'The Captain', 'The Public School Magazine' and 'Chums'. In the short Edwardian era, most of them came to light again in book form. (Not all - the 'Chums' serial had been written pseudonymously and was never republished; and a further set of unpublished stories is mentioned below.

Beckford, Eckleton and Sedleigh schools made one appearance each in book form; St. Austin's merited two books. It was, however, left to Wrykyn to give any suggestion of a 'saga'. Three books appeared with Wrykyn stories - 'The Gold Bat' in 1904, 'The White Feather' in 1907 and 'Mike' in 1909. In actual fact, the third Wrykyn and the Sedleigh stories formed the contents of 'Mike' - today, they are separate publications, with 'Mike at Wrykyn' as the title of the relevant story here.

'The Gold Bat' featured the final place in the Rugger team against Ripton, the clue of the lost miniature found on the scene of a disfigured statue and a mysterious organisation known as 'The League'. 'The White Feather' was about the school coward who funk'd a fight with the village lads and finally redeemed himself by winning a boxing contest for the school. 'Mike at Wrykyn' introduced Mike Jackson, his elder brother Bob, a cat-shooting youth named Wyatt and - again - the question of filling the last place in the school team. Would it be Bob or Mike for the Ripton cricket match? In the end, of course, they both played!

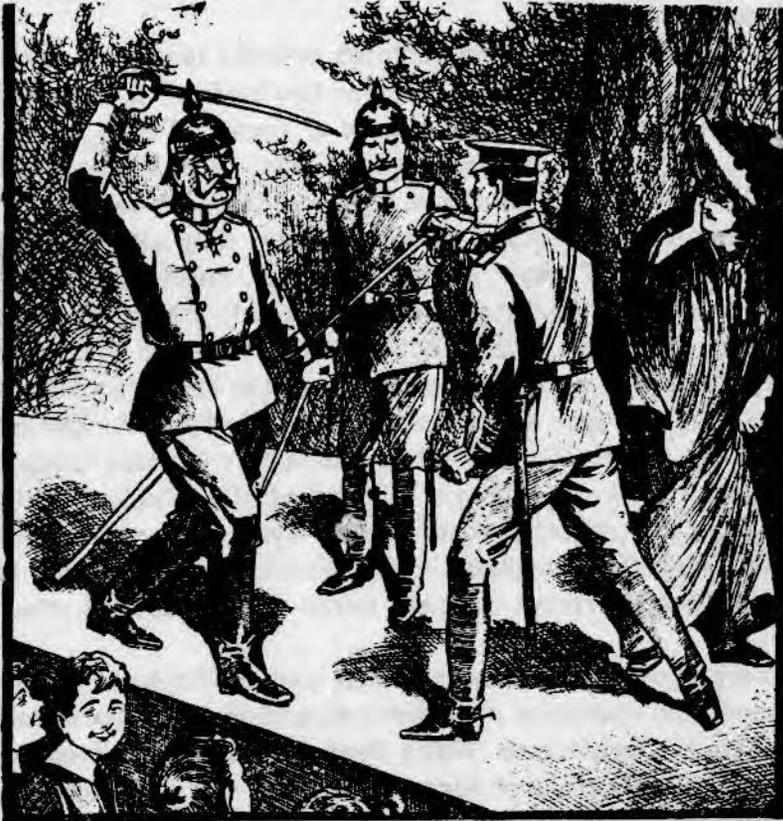
There should have been a fourth book of Wrykyn. Short stories of this school had appeared in various magazines and Wodehouse himself stated (in the preface to 'White Feather') that he wanted the Publishers to give them book form - "but they were light on their feet and kept away!"

Wodehouse also gave Wrykyn a chronology. He placed a year and a term between 'Gold Bat' and 'Feather' - and the short stories as occurring in that 'between' period. It was the only time P.G. ever accurately timed his chronicles - I defy even that very strange breed of Sherlock Holmes sequencers (with whom I have never agreed!) to 'date'

the numerous Wodehouse events during their long reign. The author himself soon gave it up - in 'Mike', characters who had previously left were back at the school.

What about those Wrykyn short stories? Is there, today, an enterprising Publisher who will round them up and put them between covers? Always admitting that the 'rounding up' would be quite a task.

So many names live on from nearly one hundred Wodehouse books. Wrykyn is by no means the least of them!



Valentine drew his sword and gallantly faced the two, and there was a clash and clang of steel. The audience were keenly interested now. "Go it!" they shouted. "Chop him, Kaufmann!" "Slice him, Wharton!" (See Chap. 9)

COVER OF THE DREADNOUGHT, early 1915, with newly-drawn picture by Chapman to illustrate the reprint of old Magnet Greyfriars story.