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**COLLECTORS DIGEST**

VOL. 37

No. 439

JULY 1983

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## THE ART OF READING ALOUD

When I was tiny - too young to read for myself - my sister used to read the Gem to me. As I grew older we had family sessions of reading at my little home in greenest Kent - green in those days - when my sister read aloud to us all, two or three evenings a week. She would select novels, or, sometimes, a serial from her weekly papers. Some of those serials were amazingly good.

Many years later, when the resident boys of my school in war-time were evacuated into the countryside, I carried on that tradition.

Most nights, we would gather round the fire in winter or elsewhere in summer, and I would read aloud from a book while the boys had their suppers. It became a ritual, and there were very few nights that the reading session was missed. It was a popular custom, and I quickly discovered that it was essential to pick a book which lent itself to reading aloud.

Reading aloud is very much a lost art in these days. It has been swept away by television churning out hour after hour of entertainment or whatever you call it.

I can recall a large number of the books which I read to the boys in those war years. There was "The Limping Sailor", an exceptionally good mystery thriller, sold in those days in a Readers' Library handled only by Woolworth's so far as I know. There was "My Friend Smith" which is arguably Talbot Baines Reed's finest story. There was Agatha Christie's "Ten Little Niggers", but little known at that time. There was "Contraband Tommy" a first-rate tale of Dartmouth or some such establishment. This was by one Charles Gleig, and I do not recall ever coming upon him elsewhere than in my hardback edition. Anyone know anything of him? And from the Magnet there was the first Rebel Series.

Oddly enough, for reading aloud, the Rebel series of the mid-twenties was not particularly successful. It was far too long for the purpose. The interpolated sequences in all long series tend to slow down the progress of the plot. And some of the ejaculations, like "Ha, ha, ha", "Yaroooh", "Grooh", and the like have the effect of making the reader feel, and perhaps look, just faintly ridiculous.

So, long, long ago I decided that the Hamilton long series are unsurpassed for private reading, but are not ideal for the purpose of reading aloud.

### DELAREY

Delarey was a Pentelow character, and, as such, never earned much love from anybody. It always seemed to me to be the height of cheek when a sub writer introduced a character into the stories with the intention that he should be permanent.

We always suspected that Pentelow introduced the name of Delarey into a number of Hamilton stories. Well, maybe he did. But

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it's just as likely that he didn't. Pentelow was Hamilton's editor in those days. Hamilton may well have thought to please his editor. It paid to be on good terms with the man in authority.

### THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

"Lots of you have missed me shoving my paw in. You've written to my boss and said so, for I'm seen your letters. I've been squeezed out for months, but I'm glad that you never forgot me.

I've been keeping well, thank you. I lost my appetite for a while. Wouldn't touch all that tinned stuff. Then they put me on to steamed whiting, since when I have never looked back. And I have my saucer of hot top-of-the-milk every night, when the boss brings it upstairs to me when I have retired.

I like elections. A lady with an orange rosette called and said to my Mum: "What a magnificent pussy-cat! I adore pussy-cats." And a gent with a red rosette in his buttonhole called and told my boss: "She **MUST** be a thoroughbred! What superb marking. Yes, we have several at home. She looks so intelligent so will know how to vote. Ha, ha!" And another gent with a blue rosette said to my boss: "What a really lovely cat. Beautiful, stately, - how proud you must be! A Princess? Well, well - you can see she has royal blood --"

There's nothing like an election for letting them know how beautiful their babies - and their pets - are."

THE EDITOR

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### GREAT AND VERY SPECIAL EVENT

Congratulations to our splendid couple of our London Club, Bill and Thelma Bradford - on the Gift of a new Granddaughter. And congratulations, too, to Great-Grandfather Ford.

Congratulations, too, to the lucky little New Leading Lady on having such wonderful Grandparents and such an extra-special Great-Grandfather.

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# Danny's Diary

JULY 1933

From this month there is a big change in public transport in London - and for quite a long way round London. No more General buses; no more L.C.C. trams; no more Thomas Tilling buses; no more Southmet; no more Bexley Council trams; no more West Ham trams. They are all pooled in one big concern - the London Passenger Transport Board (what a mouthful!). It's going to cut out waste and make for better services and cheaper fares all round. Or so they say. All the old names have ceased to exist. Even the London Underground. Lord Ashfield is the new chairman for the new LPTB.

The first story in the Nelson Lee Library this month is "In the Shadow of Expulsion". Poor old Handforth is accused of theft and expelled from St. Frank's. And then brother Willy gets to work, with surprising results. Next week brought "The Castle of Fear", which is an old Spanish castle built near St. Frank's, with a bodyguard of lions, tigers, a moat, and dangerous traps. So Nipper & Co. go on a tour of exploration. This story introduces Waldo, the wonder man, and his son, Stanley Waldo, the wonder boy of St. Frank's. This story continued next week with "The Brotherhood of the Brave", when the Waldos and the St. Frank's chums put paid to a dangerous gang. Final in this series is "Waldo - the Gang-Buster". A very thrilling series.

The last tale of the month in the Nelson Lee is "China Bound" which is the start of a series of the St. Frank's boys on holiday.

Two big fires in the north this month. The Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, one of the most famous concert halls in the world, has been destroyed by fire. And the Pavilion at Morecambe has also been burnt to the ground.

Mr. and Mrs. Mollison (she was Amy Johnson) flew non-stop to New York, but their plane crashed at Long Island Sound.

The British Open Golf Championship has been won by Shute of the United States.

The first story in the Gem this month is "The Secret of the Tower".

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There is a light in the ruined tower at St. Jim's. And Gussy is missing from his bed in the dormitory at midnight. Tom Merry scents a mystery. It turns out that Gore, who was expelled last month, has left his home and his severe father, and come back to camp in the Tower. And he is allowed to stay on at St. Jim's. "Ructions at St. Jim's" stars Miss Fawcett. She has received anonymous letters threatening her and her home unless she pays £100. So she flees in alarm to St. Jim's - and she makes things hum there for a while. Then, in "Miss Priscilla's Body-guard", Tom Merry & Co. and Skimpole go with her to Laurel Villa to solve the mystery of the anonymous letters and discover the culprit.

"The D'Arcy Cup" is a dull tale about water-polo and is not by the real Martin Clifford, I'm sure. It has a different artist, too - I think Kenneth Brookes illustrated this one. I suppose a lot of people are on holiday at the Fleetway House.

"The Boy with Too Many Friends" is rather a strange affair. Tom's Uncle Fawcett arranges for Tom to take a party for a holiday in France, and everybody wants to go with him. But at the end, just as the party arrives at Rylcombe station, a telegraph boy comes up with a telegram: "Regret forced to cancel visit temporarily. Urgent business. Sorry short notice. - Fawcett". Very rum!

The world's largest dry dock has been opened at Southampton by the King and Queen. It is named the King George the Fifth Graving Dock.

In Modern Boy the latest series of Ken King of the Islands has continued, and has ended with the final issue of the month.

In "Wild Man of the Pacific", Ken is still on the desert island, with his boat gone - stolen. He finds a bottle which contains a slip of paper inserted in it by a lost millionaire. A clue to a fortune.

Then "The Isle of Surprises" in which the island on which Ken is marooned becomes alive with activity. "The Bully of Tonga" brings a change in the fortunes of Ken King, and at last he is in pursuit of the rascal who stole the ketch.

The series continues with "Chasing the Dawn" - with Ken's motor-boat chasing the ketch. Finally "Ken King's Luck" tells how Ken suddenly finds his luck has turned. He gets his ship back - and lots and lots of money. And that ends this little packet of stories about King of the Islands, and Ken, once again, leaves Modern Boy. It has been the eighth series

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since the King of the Islands stories started, way back in 1928.

A new series of Biggles tales has started in Modern Boy. This month's Biggles tales - tales of the Great War - have been "The Flying Professor", "Biggles's Joy-Ride", and "The Bridge They Couldn't Blow Up". These tales are by W. E. Johns. Captain Justice is also going strong every week, in stories by Murray Roberts. This latest lot are stories about outer space, but I'm not an outer-space kind of chap.

Rather less welcome is a serial, all in pictures, of "The Rio Kid". It's taken from an early Rio Kid tale in the old Popular, but I don't like stories in pictures.

Speaking of pictures, at the local cinemas this month we have seen Claud Hulbert and Rene Houston in "Their Night Out", a British film; Anna Neagle and James Rennie in "The Little Damsel", another British film; George Sidney and Charlie Murray in "The Cohens and Kellys in Trouble"; Tom Mix in "Rustlers' Round-Up"; Lee Tracy in "Private Jones"; Jessie Matthews in "The Man from Toronto"; Spencer Tracy in "20,000 years in Sing-Sing", a whopper of a film; and Bing Crosby in a big musical "The Big Broadcast".

After 20 years Great Britain has won the Davis Cup again for lawn tennis. The last fortnight of the month has been very hot indeed - a real heatwave. On the 26th of the month the temperature at Kew was 88, and, even at midnight, it was 78 on the roof of the Air Ministry buildings.

The Magnet has been just GREAT all the month. A real gurgle of fun is "Aunt Judy at Greyfriars". She is Coker's aunt, and is a bit of a Miss Priscilla Fawcett only more so. She visits the school, and this is lucky for she saves her nephew from being expelled for something he didn't do.

Then two very amusing tales - "Bunter's £100 Boater" and "Billy Bunter's Hat-Trick". Mr. Vernon-Smith has a £100 note blown away in the wind. It is picked up by a tramp who hides it in Bunter's straw-hat. But the tramp has a lot of trouble in trying to lay his hands again on that very precious hat. Then another amusing yarn - "The Shylock of Greyfriars". Fishy becomes the victim of a booby-trap, and sends in a bill for £4-3s for damage to his clothes. Finally "Bunter the Ventriloquist" which is quaint as being a Greyfriars tale largely played out at Rookwood. A GREAT month.

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In the Schoolboys' Own Library we have "Rivals for a Fortune" which is the third and last package about Da Costa and his efforts to disgrace Harry Wharton. This is fine, but I can't say as much for the very silly St. Jim's tale "St. Jim's in the Soup" in the other S.O.L. A new Head, Dr. Crankley, takes over St. Jim's and he is a faddist. I'm pretty sure the real Martin Clifford knows nothing about this one.

I had a Boys' Friend Library "Sexton Blake - Sixth-Former" by John Andrews. Not bad at all.

I'll end, as I started, on the L.P.T.B. A pity the change has come now, for the General Bus Co. was just experimenting with running buses on diesel fuel instead of petrol, while the L.C.C. had recently introduced a very modern tram. But these things happen.

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

S.O.L. No. 199, "Rivals for a Fortune" comprised the final three tales of the Magnet of mid-summer 1928. S.O.L. No. 200, "St. Jim's in the Soup" comprised the two "Cranky" sub tales from the Gem of early 1927. The SOL was completed with a third sub tale from the same period.

The formation of the London Passenger Transport Board in 1933 was the death knell for the trams, for the new Board was very anti-tram. Their aim was to get rid of all trams in the London area, and they made that clear. Actually, for a time, they improved the Bexley Council Tramways and the Erith Tramways by introducing at once a fleet of reconditioned L.C.C. cars on these services. Two years later, all that section had its trams replaced by trolley-buses. The areas served were Woolwich, Abbey Wood, Belvedere, Bexleyheath, Erith, Belvedere and Dartford. It must be admitted that both the Bexley and Erith Council Tramways were very run down systems. The Bexley cars rolled alarmingly, and the Erith cars made enough noise to wake the dead. Oddly enough, though the Dartford, Bexleyheath, Woolwich services were operated by Bexley Council, no trams ever ran at all in the actual town of Bexley.

Till the war, tram services all over London - some of them very fine systems - disappeared one after the other. The war brought reprieve for those in South London, where the cars continued to run until 1952.

Of the 1933 Gem tales, "The Secret of the Tower" had been entitled "The Haunted Tower" in 1909; "Ructions at St. Jim's" had been "Miss Priscilla's Peril"; "Miss Priscilla's Bodyguard" of 1933 had been "The Terrible Three's Test" in 1909; "The D'Arcy Cup", a sub story, had the same title in 1909; and "The Boy With Too Many Friends" had once been "Tom Merry's Trip". The five stories had run consecutively in the autumn of 1909.

As Danny indicates, "The Boy With Too Many Friends" was an odd story. Let us see what we wrote about it in the famous "History of the Magnet & Gem" (a book which is still available, incidentally, for those who don't possess it). We wrote:

"Tom Merry's Trip" was a peculiar story in 1909. It was still more peculiar that it was selected for reprinting in July 1933. Tom Merry's uncle invited him to take a party to France. At the end of the tale, when the party was seated in the train, a telegraph boy came along with a wire stating that the start of the outing was delayed.

There are two possible solutions to the mystery. Maybe the star author's "copy" was not ready to follow on with the series. More likely, the editor discovered that the series was to culminate in the double-length Christmas story, bringing the Christmas Number earlier than he wanted it. At any rate, in 1909, a sub story followed "Tom Merry's Trip", and then Tom Merry & Co. started off on the journey abroad which was to culminate in Christmas at the Chateau Cernay.

In July 1933 the story ended with the same vague lines about the trip being postponed. But, in this case, the actual visit to France did not take place in the reprints until more than four years later, when the Chateau Cernay story formed Christmas 1937. No doubt the hold-over was due to the fact the Chateau story had been published fairly recently in the S.O.L. But why publish the story in the S.O.L. at that time? And, even more pertinent, why publish the opening story of the series in the Gem of July 1933? At times, the Fleetway House moved in a mysterious way its wonders to perform. '

An idle thought. Mr. Fawcett was one of those unrelated "uncles". "He is Miss Fawcett's brother, but I always called him Uncle Frank," explained Tom Merry.

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# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

of 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, SE22 9HL

Here is Blakiana with the third part of Bill Lofts article on Eric Parker. I trust you have all found it extremely interesting. There is one more part to come next month. Any articles by other Blake fans will be appreciated.

## THE ERIC PARKER STORY - Part 3

by W. O. G. Lofts

Another unique skill of Eric Parker, was the Sexton Blake bust that in 1926, was given away free to readers in a token scheme in The Union Jack. This was the first attempt by Eric of sculpturing, and what a good job he made of it. When the original clay model had been completed and was waiting in the editorial office to go to the pottery it was still soft and inclined to sag, so a pencil had to be stuck up the back of the head to keep the nose part from slipping! About 850 busts were

made originally by Regali and Son of Clerkenwell - a place I visited some years ago now to have one old bust repaired. After the token scheme had finished, about 100 busts were still remaining in the office - so they were laid out like a wall. They gradually disappeared, mostly with the departure of hard-up authors who had visited the office - and were tempted perhaps of getting a free drink in exchange for them in the taverns of Fleet Street! Unfortunately, these busts were made of very cheap plaster, so that they were easily broken, and only about a round dozen are known to exist today. Amusingly in the fifties, some important Roman and Greek remains were found in the City of London - belonging to the Temple of Mithas. Not long afterwards there was a battered old broken Sexton Blake bust exhibited in a back street antiques shop window as coming from the newly dug up remains!

Once I asked Eric - "who was the best artist that the old Amalgamated Press ever had" - and he replied with his great sense of humour "Why Eric Parker of course" - but seriously he was always greatly interested in Warwick Reynolds the First World War artist, he also seemed to favour St. Jim's as he also liked the main Gem artist R. J. MacDonald with his boys with large French bows as he called them. He seemed to have no time, or ever wanted to discuss comic artists or the work of C. H. Chapman - he called him 'The Billy Bunter Man' - a name that the Greyfriars illustrator was known at Fleetway House. Eric did read some of the Sexton Blake tales he illustrated, his favourites being G. H. Teed and Rex Hardinge though I never got round to asking him, what he had read himself when a boy.

In the thirties, he extended his work even further, when he illustrated for Cassells "Chums" - and Pearson's "Scout", being also in the very fortunate position to turn work down - such was his busy schedule. The coming of the Second World War, meant the closing of many of the Amalgamated Press papers, but such was the high esteem of his work, that when the 'Detective Weekly' went, he was able to contribute to 'Knockout Comic', including later on in 1949 the Sexton Blake picture strip. Maybe he was also fortunate in the fact that the then editor of 'Knockout' was Leonard Matthews, who not only greatly admired his work, but both shared the same great interest in the Napoleon period of history. He certainly made great use of his authentic and expert

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knowledge in later publications such as 'Look and Learn', 'Thriller Comics', and the comic 'Comet'.

Around this period he also worked for the Ministry of Information like so many other artists who wanted to do their share of war work.

Around 1955 came another type of bombshell, when Len Pratt the editor of The Sexton Blake Library, retired after forty years service. Again - as in 1921 a new broom swept clean, but this time to Eric Parker's disadvantage, when the new temporary editor, David Roberts, employed new artists. Maybe to be fair, he was only acting on orders from a higher authority, as it was widely known that the image of Sexton Blake was to be altered to bring him up-to-date for the modern generation. Consequently, when eventually W. Howard Baker was appointed the new editor a year later, Parker had long left the Library, and was working in other departments at Fleetway House. One in a way must be fair to Howard Baker, for although he had strict instructions to modernise Blake, such was the demand by old readers for E.R.P.'s return that he did use him as much as possible on very special occasions. Certainly the most original drawing that Eric ever produced was a picture showing all the contributors at a party to celebrate the third anniversary of the New Look Sexton Blake. As I knew personally the majority of people in this illustration, I can vouch for the amazing likeness of all those present. It has often been said that our artist could not draw faces, with especially all his male characters having hatchet type of features, and this certainly proved them wrong. Howard Baker for instance was at least four inches taller than Eric Parker, and to see them in this illustration standing side by side, was exactly as I remembered them, and like looking at a photograph.

Whilst on the subject of drawing the likeness of faces, it is worth mentioning that Eric usually carried a stub of pencil in his pocket to illustrate any point he was making. I can well remember telling him how I thought that H. W. Twyman the 'Union Jack' editor, reminded me in some ways of Sexton Blake. My assumption being based simply rather tall, had a lean figure, and similar hair style that was receding at the temples - though 'Twy' did wear glasses that spoilt the image to some extent. Eric thought differently mainly on the facial structure, and drew me a small pencil sketch of how he remembered 'Twy'. As he had not

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seen him for over twenty years, and I had met him only a few weeks previous, the likeness was uncanny. This drawing was later reproduced on the cover of an issue of the Australian 'Golden Hours' magazine. Twyman's reaction in seeing the sketch was also most interesting ...

"When I first saw it, I wondered who it was supposed to represent, but few people know what they look like in profile, and are mildly shocked when they go to the tailors and see themselves in that tricky arrangement of mirrors. I am one of them, but from various indications in the sketch itself I soon tumbled.

They make it something between a portrait and a caricature, and the whole thing is very clever. It's interesting, and a bit flattering, that he should be able to carry in his mind's eye all this time the little characteristics that would build up what is, I feel, an essential likeness. No other artist of my acquaintance had such wonderful observation and dexterity - and I knew others besides A.P. men, who were, by far and large, just tradesmen. It happened I was the first to recognise Eric Parker's quality, and the first editor to buy his work, but I think his skill was wasted in the cheap market (though it was certainly developed there) and that he should have had a more distinguished career."

### THEY HATED TINKER

by Jim Cook

It had to come out! It has to be said! I've been holding it back for a number of years out of respect for at least two Sexton Blake writers who have now passed on. They were John Brandon and Anthony Parsons - both wrote an awful lot of Sexton Blake stories.

They both hated Tinker! Brandon said to Len (Pratt) one day that .. "Len, if only I could strangle that little --- Blakes 'ud be easy as falling off a log. What do you say, Anthony?" And Anthony Parsons replied .. "Me? I'd like to strangle the pair of 'em!"

I really have always wished Anthony Parsons had never written those words to me. We never care much to know that a favourite author hates his own characters. I do not know if such a feeling existed among other writers to our hobby papers. Edwy Searles Brooks always gave me his view that he loved his characters.

I am told that Pierre Quiroule, when he finished writing Blakes, ceased story writing altogether. He married a French wife which accounts for his nom de plume. In the first few weeks of World War II Anthony and Pierre had a "perfectly ghastly all-night binge in the West End" ... That was before, being too old to fly, Parsons went to M.I. 5.

At the time I was receiving letters from Mr. Parsons -- 1954 --

he told me Pierre Quiroule was keeping a pub just outside Windsor and that the last time Parsons saw Pierre the latter said there was more money in pub-keeping although his heart was still in the writing game.

Pierre always wrote an excellent story - largely because of the time he appeared able to give it. He would take three months or so over a single Blake, whereas the most "the rest of us can afford is about ten days to a fortnight ... and less if we can manage it."

At one time Pierre Quiroule worked for a News Agency ... Parsons - if he remembered correctly .. thinks it was Reuters.

It is interesting to know that Super Claudius Venner, of the Yard, and Parsons' central character along with Blake in many stories, was drawn more or less from life. Mr. Parsons knew exactly such a man at Scotland Yard who stole unblushingly everybody else's thunder and cashed in on anything and everything that was going. And he was never wrong. No matter how wrong he actually was he would literally tie himself in knots to prove that all along he had had the right idea, and if it hadn't been for him -- etc., etc.

In confidence, Anthony Parsons told me that the real -- in the woodpile for most of the Blake writers was Tinker. Tinker was the chap the writers had the most difficulty finding work for.

So after all these years we can now know that poor old Tinker wasn't wanted. I wonder if Sir Arthur Conan Doyle felt the same way with Watson ???

In a letter from Anthony Parsons' sister she tells how her brother was in the habit of putting a book on a table and leaning over it with his two hands on the table meaning to just read a few pages and would often stay in that position until the early hours of the morning, when he was then too stiff to move!

The decline in her brother's health began with the advent of the "new look" Sexton Blakes, she told me, and he had no inclination to continue writing.

Anthony Parsons died of lung cancer, accelerated, she was sure, by his excessive smoking and sedentary occupation.

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# Nelson Lee Column

THE ST. FRANK'S REPRINTS IN

FILM FUN

by E. B. Grant-McPherson

When I was eight years old, my mother bought me a copy of a Boys' Friend Library entitled 'Pots of Money' by Edwy Searles Brooks.

It was my first taste of St. Frank's, and I really went for it, but one thing puzzled me for quite a while, and that was the dual identity of Dick Hamilton and Nipper.

Little did I think then in those far off days that one day Nipper and Dick Hamilton would in actual fact, really become two different boys.

Yes. Amazing as it sounds, this did happen and leads me to the reason for the following article, the reprinted St. Frank's stories serialised in Film Fun from May to November 1961.

These stories, numbering four, were the last St. Frank's yarns to appear in print.

They consisted of two from the first New Series Nelson Lee, one from the second New Series and one from the serials that ran in the Gem immediately following the demise of the Old Paper. (See article in C.D. No. 424.)

The stories as they appeared in Film Fun were notable chiefly for the extensive shortening and alteration, although the basic plots were much the same many of the main characters were either renamed or their roles changed.

I have selected a couple of extracts that will give an idea of the sort of changes made.

The first example comes from the Lee story 'Handforth gets the Sack'.

Snipe gets coerced by Fullwood into copying the Remove exam papers but Handforth interrupts him before he can leave Mr. Crowell's study, there is a scuffle during which Snipe slips out of the window and Handy is caught by Mr. Crowell and taken before the Head, Handy, of course gets blamed and put in the punishment room pending expulsion.

His younger brother, Willy, assisted by the faithful Church and

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McClure play on Snipe's conscience getting him to own up to Mr. Crowell whence he is taken before Dr. Stafford and ends up with a flogging.

Whereas in Film Fun the tale now retitled 'The Shadow of Disgrace', while Snipe is still the villain, it is now Church who gets the blame, and Handforth himself who makes Snipe own up.

Not content with these alterations Mr. Crowell becomes a Mr. Benson and our respected Dr. Stafford changes his name to Mr. Kent.

The Nelson Lee told this episode in just over 1,000 words, but Film Fun gets it over in 500.

In my second example, from the Gem serial 'The Ten Talons of Taaz' we have the situation that I spoke or rather wrote of in my preamble.

In this original Gem story, the priests of Taaz who have the power to influence their victims from afar, are using this power on Sir Montie Tregellis-West as he plays in a football match.

Montie has just dribbled the ball past the two backs and with only the goalie to beat suddenly stops short and turning on his heel walks off the field.

Quote. Handforth stared at the retreating figure from the goal-mouth, Nipper, the remove captain and Travers were staring too.

'There's only one explanation dear old fellow' murmured Vivian Travers to Nipper, 'The call of Taaz' replied the remove captain.

In the Film Fun version, Sir Montie becomes Dick Hamilton, Nipper's surname is now Jenkins, but he is still Remove captain, Travers also has a change of name.

Quote. 'Shoot Hamilton shoot.' But Dick Hamilton, who had an open goal in front of him and the ball at his feet, deliberately turned his back and walked off the field.

Handforth stared at the retreating figure of Dick Hamilton, Nipper Jenkins the Remove Captain and Chris Travers were staring too.

To modern youngsters who were meeting the St. Frank's stories for the first time these were probably very good and acceptable yarns, but, to we of the old school I feel they were a proper shambles, the cutting must have been carried out with garden shears.

I feel sure Edwy can have had little or nothing to do with it, at least I hope not.

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KIDNAPPED

by William Lister

**KIDNAPPED!** with no apologies to Robert Louis Stevenson.

**KIDNAPPING** in days gone by was a very dangerous game. It was more so in America. You could pay for it with your life. Especially after the kidnapping of the 'LINDBERGH' baby.

You can get away with murder these days. There is no hangman's rope for murder, or even for mass-murder, (if you so wish) as the I.R.A. well know. So kidnapping, as such, is not so dangerous now. Recently there have been those trying their hand at kidnapping a horse.

So, it comes as no surprise, that in past years there have been those who attempted to kidnap the boys from St. Frank's, duly recorded by Edwy Searles Brooks in the Schoolboys' Own Library, No. 441 (No. 5), 1934, 'THE KIDNAPPED REMOVE' and the S.O.L. No. 447 (N.S.) 1934, 'THE ST. FRANK'S CASTAWAYS'.

The whole adventure began on a very pleasant morning, according to Mr. Brooks. Everything was bright and fresh and extremely alluring. The sun shone with glorious brilliance. The birds sang in the trees.

Before the day was over, the master and boys of the Remove were falling asleep at their desks. By day two; Nelson Lee had called in expert geologists, who suspected underground gases. Result - Remove to evacuate. ENTER - Lord Dorrimore who provides a Floating School.

Unfortunately, though the yacht sailed into the night loaded with schoolboys, as dawn came the scene changed. The day was grey, indistinct and chill. The fog showed no signs of lifting with the coming of daylight. It seemed to be just as thick as ever, circling round the yacht in seething masses.

Now comes the crunch! Though the yacht had sailed into the night with Lord Dorrimore and his staff in charge, it emerged manned by big-boozer Captain Briggs and his equally big-boozing crew, and a real gang of pirates they were, not a bit like Gilbert & Sullivan's 'PIRATES OF PENZANCE'.

The Remove - lock, stock and barrel (whatever that means) had been **KIDNAPPED**.

From there on, the pen or typewriter of Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks goes to work with a fury unbelievable. Upon the blank page before him

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there springs to life gun-battles with the pirates, storms at sea, the yacht's passengers and crew marooned; Smugglers - skeletons - treasure chests galore and with the 'Spectre of the Cavern' for a bonus.

All that, and more, until the day you return home to the peace and security of St. Frank's.

To write fiction you need a vivid imagination, a ready pen or typewriter, a command of words and grammar; the ability to conjure up themes and plots, with the speed of light; the patience to write and re-write; the grit to keep sending your material in, no matter how many rejects you get.

To reach success where hundreds of fans wait week by week for the further adventures of your schoolboy characters. To see your efforts spoiled by editorial interference. To turn to the world of paper-back and hard-back adventure and detective stories, and see success.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you,

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

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THE SHADY SIX

by Laurie Sutton

Ernest Holman regards it as unthinkable that six single "recognised" Magnet stories could be substitute stories previously unacknowledged as such. This seems to imply that every Magnet has been carefully vetted by a panel of experts in the past, and judgement pronounced.

The first sub lists, based on judgement of style, were produced by John Shaw, and were remarkably accurate on the whole, although Mr. Shaw admitted that there were some stories that he had not read. The accepted guide to sub stories these days is the official records extracted by Bill Lofts, but I have proved (as has been admitted) that there are many errors in these lists, both through omissions, and through the story being attributed to the wrong author.

A significant fact regarding the numbers I listed (873, 893, 897, 899, 900) is that they are all around the same period, and that Hamilton's contributions to the Magnet between numbers 855-942 comprised six series - of 8, 4, 10, 4, 8, 9 stories; the six stories I question are the only singles that anybody suggests as Hamilton in that long period. A further

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important point is that Magnets of this period were extremely rare and difficult to obtain.

Having said that, I must point out that two Gem stories that I alone identified (including authors) without any trouble at all (668, The St. Jim's Hunger Striker, by F. G. Cook, and 955, The Mystery Cricketer, by G. R. Samways) were both reprinted, as Gems 1624 and 1585 (buff Gems in 1938 and 1939 which just about every expert collector must have read whilst failing to identify subs that were about as obvious as those of Pentelow); and even Pentelow's Gem 386 was accepted as Hamilton until I identified it! If we want to make up the "unbelievable" figure of 6 unnoticed Gem subs we can add 99 (H. Clarke Hook), 281 (E. S. Brooks), 350 (HCH).

Eric Fayne's "Let's Be Controversial" on "Playing the Goat" regards this as an "excellent school and cricket story". Being an excellent story (opinions differ, as I gave it 4 out of 10 when reading it) does not prove it of Hamilton origin - there were good sub stories that were better than some of Hamilton's less inspired efforts. Although Eric and I agree on many classic stories and series (and in our amazement that readers of St. Jim's and Greyfriars failed to realise that Clifford and Richards were the same person) I recall that Eric was less than enthusiastic over two Gems that I consider among the most brilliant (Darrell's Secret, 37/1288, and D'Arcy's Adopted, 871).

The criticisms Eric Fayne makes of "Playing the Goat" (and of Hamilton) would, in my view, reinforce the conviction that the story is a sub. Surely the words that Eric states were put into Temple's mouth by Frank Richards were much more likely to have been written by a sub author who recognised that the set-up was absurd, rather than by Richards admitting it himself?

The fact that nobody has spotted - or bothered to say that they doubt - any of those stories does not make them "recognised" as genuine. Nobody has expressed a positive conviction that they are genuine, other than Eric Fayne's comment on "Goat" - which he evidently didn't find entirely convincing. Mr. Holman admits that he failed to recognise "The Barring of Bolsover" as a sub, yet I had no difficulty in doing so - despite the fact that I gave it 9 marks out of 10. Incidentally, "Bolsover" is 890 - right in among my six!

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Ernest Holman's remarks on the adding of material by Pentelow (conceit) and editorial staff (specific reasons) are quite irrelevant. Quoting an example of an exceptionally long chapter in a Hamilton story bears no comparison with the judgement of a whole story. The Smedley insertion to account for the cover picture I have previously mentioned, together with numerous similar insertions to explain a cover picture. Again, completely irrelevant to the style of a whole story; I don't fall into the error of judging a story on a single paragraph or quotation, and Mr. Holman can be assured that there is a lot more evidence than the very obvious quotes that I supplied.

Insertions were not made as a single phrase or sentence into a Hamilton story. It would indeed take a brave man to insert a derogatory reference to the Salvation Army into a Hamilton story - editorial staff would know Hamilton too well! Only a V.I.P. such as Pentelow, Griffiths, Hinton, or Down would ever have ventured to alter Hamilton's writing (as distinct from editing - cutting or inserting - for space reasons).

I gave it as a fact, rather than an opinion, that "Cavalier" and "Goat" are subs for exactly the same reasons that I stated factually that "The St. Jim's Hunger Striker" and "The Mystery Cricketer" were subs. I wrote my piece because another hobbyist had also spotted "Cavalier" as a sub. Nobody is forced to accept my findings. But don't let anybody assume that all stories that have not been recognised as subs in the past are necessarily genuine. There are quite a number of doubtful stories assumed to be Hamilton.

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CAT AMONG THE PIGEONS

by Peter Hanger

I hope I am not becoming too much of a pest and a bore over the question of sub stories, for I am afraid my latest speculation is really going to put the cat among the pigeons.

It is, in fact, none other than the famous Loder, Captain series. It is a good story, well-written, and within the Greyfriars tradition. Perhaps that is why so far, to the best of my knowledge, it has escaped suspicion.

What really set the alarm bells ringing was the fact that the series contains so little humour. And those of us who know Frank Richards

know how successful he is at introducing humour into drama. Furthermore, what small amount of humour there is, is not the satirical, delectable, subtle type so characteristic of Richards, and so conspicuously present in the Bunter Court series published a few weeks earlier.

Consider this passage from Magnet 929, page 10:

"I think Bunter was there, sir - in fact, I saw him --"

"I wasn't!" howled William George Bunter, in great alarm. "I was in my study at the time, sir. I was doing Latin verbs, sir. Besides, I begged the fellows not to touch Loder. I pointed out to them how disrespectful it was, sir."

"Bunter!"

"It's true, sir. I hope you can take my word. I was in my study, working hard at Latin, sir, and I never knew anything about it till afterwards."

Those of us who know Billy Bunter know jolly well that his second lie would be different from the first lie. That is his trademark.

There are also some unfamiliar names that to the best of my knowledge do not appear outside this series. There is Grant of the Third; Wynne, a First-Eleven footballer, whether of the Fifth or Sixth is not made clear; Laurence of the Sixth (now Lawrence as Tom and Molly of Cedar Creek); Carford Major of the Sixth. Presumably there is a Carford Minor, but I do not recall him either.

And what of Wingate Minor, the cause of the crisis? I do not remember him outside this series.

If I am right about this, and I am quietly confident that I am, then the real mystery is why are the official lists not 100% accurate? I can usually offer a theory of some sort, but on this occasion I am completely at a loss.

As always, I would value your thoughts on the matter.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Jack Wingate was first introduced in March 1913 in "The Captain's Minor", reprinted in S.O.L. No. 67 with another Wingate Minor story "Barred by the Fags", under the overall title of "The Captain's Minor".

It is years since I read the Loder, Captain series. It was not a favourite of mine, but I never saw reason to think it was written by anyone but Charles Hamilton.)

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 REVIEWS
 

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"A COCKNEY AT ST. JIM'S"
 Martin Clifford  
 (Howard Baker: £7.95)

This volume contains 7 Gems, not consecutive, from the year 1936, and it is a joy for every St. Jim's fan, and for every lover of top-class school stories.

"A Cockney at St. Jim's" and "The Cockney Turns Up Trumps" tell of the arrival at the school of 'Arry 'Ammond". Hammond, in later years, was modified, perhaps as the result of his St. Jim's training, but in these two stories of his arrival (they originally appeared at the end of 1913 as "The Cockney Schoolboy" and "Parted Chums") the question as to whether he could ever have been accepted for St. Jim's is purely academic. The stories are first-class reading, with the warmhearted Gussy proving a friend to the lonely new boy who found himself out of his natural element. There are several touching and extremely well-written chapters in the second story in which Levison, by means of a forged letter, manages to throw a rift in the lute of the friendship between the earl's son and the cockney. The theme was used again later (one recalls the Schoolboy Pug series) but never to better effect. A lovely pair.

"The Convict Hunters" was a reprint of "£100 Reward" which had originally appeared ahead of the cockney tales. The convict is one, Jonas Racke (no relation to Racke of the Shell who had not then been created) and the story gives Cutts of the Fifth a starring role. Tales starring Cutts are usually out of the top drawer.

Next in this fine collection comes "The Laugh's on the First Eleven". This particular Gem of June 1936 is of particular interest to me. I had pointed out to Mr. Down, the Gem editor, that "The Rally of the Rival Co's", a joyous tale of fun and games in a cricket setting in the year 1910, had never been reprinted. Mr. Down promised to look it up and reprint it. He did. It appeared as "The Laugh's on the First Eleven".

But the issue is also precious to me for another reason. I had organised a competition at the Modern School, Surbiton. Every pupil in the Sixth Form had to provide himself with a copy of the current Gem. They had to read the tale it contained, and then write a full criticism of it. I asked Mr. Down if he would judge the essays, and he was very happy to do so. So all the essays on the Gem were collected and sent to Mr. Down.

If you turn to the Editor's Chat in that Gem you will find Mr. Down's references to the incident. The following is part of his comment: "I had the pleasure of judging the efforts and selecting the best ones, and I must say the boys of the Modern School are adepts in expressing themselves concisely. The general opinion was that the St. Jim's story was wholesome and true-to-life, and, in these days when there is so much far-fetched boys' fiction on the market, it was a pleasure to read a story in which the characters and incidents so faithfully portrayed life at a Public School."

Next in the volume comes "Green as Grass", a better title than "Algy of St. Jim's" as it was called in 1914. A very amusing tale of a simple new boy who remained on the scene for a time but never starred again. There is some evidence that the author intended the story

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originally to be entitled "Green as Grass", but there was another full-length story extant at that time under that title.

"The Schoolboy Raiders" (it had the same title in late 1913) is a tale of rivalry with the Grammar School, and it has its moments. Finally another tale of rivalry, this time between the Houses at St. Jim's. "The Last Laugh" had been "Caught Napping" at the start of 1914, and it is well above average for this type of romp.

### "THE REMOVE TO THE RESCUE"

Frank Richards

(Howard Baker "Special": £16)

One never ceases to marvel at the sheer beauty of these "Collectors' Edition" special volumes published by Howard Baker. Produced with impeccable taste, they are the aristocrats of any bookcase. If the world lasts another 50 years (which I strongly doubt) there is no doubt that these lovely volumes will still be gracing the shelves of connoisseurs all over the planet.

This book contains 8 Magnets from the Red Cover heyday of that glorious paper. The first two stories come from the year 1908, when the Magnet was less than a year old and still at a halfpenny. "The Rival Entertainers" is a tale of the Remove amateur Dramatic Society. "Harry Wharton's Day Out" tells of a trip to Aldershot of all places to play football against the Loamshire Regiment. All as wispy as gossamer, and heart-warmingly charming.

Now a jump forward to January 1910 with the Magnet still at a halfpenny, and "Billy Bunter's Resolutions" tells of Tom Brown arranging a Rugby match. Amazing how Bunter came into everything, even in those distant days. It is clear that he made the Magnet, even though few people profess to like him. With "Wingate's Secret" a couple of months later the price has gone up to a penny and the size doubled. The "secret" of the title is a connection with a bank robber. The next Tuesday (rum to think of the Magnet appearing every Tuesday in those days) there was "The Remove to the Rescue" introducing the Cliff House girls in boaters and tight waists, and Highcliffe boys in mortar boards.

"Linley's Luck" is a prize he wins and seems to keep for himself. It transpires that he has used it to benefit his young sister Mabel. Real old lavender about this one, and none the worse for that.

"The Greyfriars Flight" is my favourite in the volume - the lovely old theme of boys adrift in a balloon. What on earth did it feel like? The chums, with the ubiquitous Bunter, go up in a balloon at a fair - and the balloon gets adrift. Up -- up -- up -. Really thrilling and breathcatching, with many adventures and a Lagden thrown in. This one runs to 21 chapters. What value for a real penny!

Finally - "The First at Greyfriars" - the First of April 1910. And 22 chapters this time. A feast of laughs - and a lump in the throat, too, I shouldn't be surprised.

These tales - every one of them - are gorgeous. Inconsequential and quaint. And the very quaintness is 99% of the charm.

A volume to be read and re-read - and treasured for ever.

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WINDS OF CHANGE BLOW THROUGH THE WILLOWS

by Mary Cadogan

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the publication of Kenneth Grahame's joyous classic for children (and adults!) of all ages, THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS. A more important date from the publishing point of view, perhaps, is 1982, when 50 years after the author's death the book went out of copyright. Not surprisingly we are now being treated to a rush of newly illustrated reprints and abridgements of the evergreen adventures of Mole, Ratty, Badger and Toad. There is even a sequel by Dixon Scott, called appropriately A FRESH WIND IN THE WILLOWS and published by Heinemann at £5.50. This is attractively illustrated in black and white by Jonathon Coudrille, and both author and artist have remained faithful to the idyllic spirit of Kenneth Grahame's original. There are amusing vignettes of Toad arranging a cricket match that misfires, and in this sequel he is no longer car-crazy but full of enthusiasm for aerial apparatus, which leads to his experimenting with ballooning and then absconding with someone else's aeroplane. Ratty, Mole and Badger are, as ever, the loyalist of friends, supporting each other and baling Toad out from his iniquities.

One of the most appealing of the reprints is the Hodder & Stoughton version. This large print and large page edition is excellent value at £4.95. It is superbly illustrated by Mendoza, whose pictures on every page in glowing colours reflect the pastoral brilliance of lovely settings like the River Bank, The Open Road, the Wild Wood, and so on. Because this edition is designed for younger children the text has been slightly, but sympathetically abridged by Barbara Sleigh.

Kestrel have produced the whole, original Kenneth Grahame narrative with lots of black and white line drawings and 12 colour pictures by John Burningham (£7.95). These lively, rather impressionistic pictures give further zest to many of the amusing and appealing incidents that we remember so well in the story. A similar edition is available in Penguin (minus the colour plates and slip-case) for 95p. I particularly loved Burningham's picture of Ratty leaning on his oars and stating reflectively to Mole that 'there is nothing - absolutely nothing - half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats...'. Quintessentially Kenneth Grahame, and part of our traditional English scene.

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SALE: Annuals 40's, 50's, 60's: Our Navy; Buffalo Bill; Jack & Jill; John Wayne; Uncle Mac's; Lion; Adventure Books; Chatterbox; Rupert; Hotspur; Range Rider; Rover; Hank the Mule; Treasure Island; Wonder Railways; many more. 50p each plus postage.

S.a.e. to "OLYMPUS", SANDFORD MILL RD., CHELMSFORD, ESSEX.

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WANTED: Sexton Blake Library 2nd series: 3, 20, 53, 57, 76, 101, 143, 151, 201, 214, 221, 266, 281, 316, 433, 453; Story Paper Collector 2, 3, 4, 9, 11, 31, 32, 50, 59.

H. OWEN, 28 NARCISSUS ROAD, LONDON N.W.6

# News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

## MIDLAND

There were only ten members present at the May meeting. Attendances have been disappointing in 1983.

The A.G.M. is necessarily devoted to business, though we kept the business side as brief as possible. Officials were re-elected en bloc, with the addition of two new appointments: Peter Masters as minute secretary and Vince Loveday as vice-chairman. We have three members in their eighties - Ted Sabin, Harry Evans, and John Look - and these were honoured with title, prefect members.

Although still in the black financially, we decided to double the subscription from £1 to £2. This was long overdue.

Thanks to Tom Porter the usual Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item were on display. These were Nelson Lee Library (o.s.) No. 207, "Under False Colours" dated 24th May, 1919, plus another Lee Library, No. 223, published in September 1919. This may be regarded as a compliment to Eric Fayne who reproduced the cover picture so beautifully in the May issue of C.D.

Refreshments were provided by Joan Golen, Joan Loveday (though absent she sent along lovely sausage rolls) and myself. Joan paid for the tea.

A game of Greyfriars Bingo was won by Joan Golen. She deserved it after her lovely refreshments. A reading by your correspondent had Coker well to the fore with his high-handed antics.

A discussion followed on Charles Hamilton's building-up of Bunter to a star over the years. Some complain of too much Bunter, but the publishers knew what brought in the money. It was a touch of genius by Frank Richards.

No formal meetings will be held in July and August, and Tom Porter will be grateful if nobody writes to him on club matters during those months. Our next meeting will be on 27th September.

Goodbye and good luck to all OBBC enthusiasts everywhere.

JACK BELLFIELD (Correspondent)

### CAMBRIDGE

The Club paid its annual visit to the delightful home of Ruth and Neville Wood on Sunday, 5th June. We were extremely fortunate in a splendid summer day.

After enjoying Ruth's excellent lunch in the sunshine of the garden, the club moved indoors for the meeting. Edward Witton was in the chair.

The Secretary reported that a card of greetings had been sent to Jess and Jack Overhill on the occasion of their diamond wedding.

This being the annual meeting of the club the Secretary made his annual report. This noted, with pleasure, the recovery from operations of Vic Hearn and Tony Cowley. But recorded with deep regret the death of Derek Harvey. The retiring officers were re-elected en bloc with thanks for their service. The Secretary reported on postal membership, and it was agreed that subscriptions should be unchanged for the coming year, except for postal membership, which would be settled at a future meeting.

Tony Cowley played a taped programme covering some thirty years of children's broadcasting programmes, which raised nostalgic memories. Neville followed with recordings he had made, including episodes of "The Golden Salamander", introduced with suitable sinister music.

Thereafter members, as usual, began their happy rambles among Nevilles bookshelves, especially among his still expanding library of detective fiction, while Edward enjoyed a feast of nostalgia among the records made by famous stars of the past.

After enjoying Ruth's magnificent tea, the time arrived, all too soon, to end our happy gathering, the majority of us back to Cambridge, and Jack Doupe en route eventually back to the Isle of Wight. After extending our grateful thanks to Ruth and Neville for their generous hospitality we reluctantly made our departure, bearing with us memories of one more glorious visit to Sweffling to add to those of the past.

### LONDON

The Greyfriars, Wokingham meeting invariably enjoys fine weather and once again those who made the journey to the club's country meeting enjoyed a really fine day. Intimate conversations were the order of the

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day both indoors and out in the spacious garden.

Tim Skipworth, an Oxford undergraduate, had made the journey from his college and after enjoying the proceedings left for Oxford with a fairly good supply of books. A lift to the station was provided by Joan Salter who is a graduate of Oxford.

Chairman Roy Parsons conducted one of his Acrostic quizzes and it was the host, Eric Lawrence, that gave the correct word of 'Courtfield'.

Roy read a humorous excerpt from an issue of the Armade paper-backs, the story being Bunter's Holiday Cruise.

Bill Bradford read the Memory Lane items from the April 1966 newsletter.

Ray Hopkins read some more funny adventures of Gussy the Runaway culled from Gem 756.

But the intimate get-together occupied most of the time and after rendering thanks to Betty and Eric Lawrence for their hospitality it was homeward bound with the knowledge that the next meeting will be at the Ealing home of Bill and Thelma Bradford on Sunday, 17th July. Kindly advise if attending.

BEN WHITER

### NORTHERN

398th meeting held on Saturday, 11th June, 1983

We had eleven Members present on an evening so typical of June during the past few years - it was cloudy! But, the meeting was anything but cloudy for we had a full programme to keep us occupied for 2½ hours.

Molly said she had eleven volumes of THE CAPTAIN she wished to find good homes for and it appeared that these were "snapped up".

We discovered, that owing to structural alterations, the Swarthmore Centre would not be available to us during the month of August: will intending visitors please note, that we shall be meeting at our Secretary's home, Thornes Vicarage, Wakefield - for the month of August, only.

Geoffrey Good had brought along photographs taken by his son, of the Greyfriars Model brought to our meeting by Bill Lofts, last month. The photographs looked really effective: the model being placed against an appropriate background.

Further to this, Keith Smith brought along the original copies of

CHUCKLES in which the layout plan for the school had been published. Keith also read out excerpts of stories from the comic paper, by Prosper Howerd - Harry Clifton and Co., of Bellminster School. An excerpt was given from Frank Richards' story of Claremont School, in which one of the masters spoke in verse. None of our members recalled any similar story by Frank Richards containing this "oddity". It was felt by members, that neither of the stories was by the real Charles Hamilton.

Darrell gave a talk on his recent holiday experiences in various parts of the world - but notably in New Zealand and Australia, where he had met up with a number of well-known O.B.B.C. members. In New Zealand, he met Geoff and Dolly Phillips, Jim Cook, Jack and Rita Murtagh, Don and Hazel Reed. In Australia he met Eric and Beryl Wafer, Revd. Jack Hughes and John Bartholomew. He had received kindness and hospitality from all these people and it proved how friendly our hobby really is. Best wishes to all members of the O.B.B.C. in Great Britain, had been sent along by all those in far-off lands. Seeing all the collections of the various people, made Darrell think that he was not away from home at all!

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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DEATH OF JOHN ADDISON

We regret to learn of the death of John Addison in mid-May. He was a member of our London Club for many years, and attended most meetings in earlier times.

He was a staunch Hamiltonian, and it is pleasing to know that his son, Martin, will retain and love his father's collection of Magnets.

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Our Number Two catalogue of old boys' books, is now ready. If you have not already received yours, then send along 2 x 12½p stamps for a copy. In stock: many Howard Baker second-hand copies, in mint condition - e.g. volume 19, THE GREYFRIARS HIKERS, £10.00 plus postage (not a reprint in limp covers - but hardcased in its original form). Also, GREYFRIARS SINCE THE MAGNET by Lofts and Adley - £1.37 including post.

HAPPY HOURS UNLIMITED, P.O. BOX IW3, LEEDS, LS16 6RB

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FOR SALE: Magnets; o.s. Lees; SOL's; Annuals; Sunny Stories; comics of 1950's. List 30p deductible against order.

JOHN BECK, 29 MILL RD., LEWES, SUSSEX. BN7 2RM

# The Postman Called

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

RON BECK (Lewes): I was greatly interested in the "Sandi" article by Ernest Holman. I, too, considered the Sanders stories one of my favourites. I never seemed to take to Edgar Wallace's crime stories, but have always enjoyed re-reading the Sanders series. According to my information there was a total of 15 books (12 by Wallace and 3 by Francis Gerard) and according to the Edgar Wallace Society the titles, dates and chronological order are as follows: 1. Sanders of the River. 1911. 2. The People of the River. 1912. 3. Bosambo of the River. 1914. 4. Bones. 1915. 5. Bones of the River. 1923. 6. Sanders. 1926. 7. Again Sanders. 1928. 8. Return of Sanders of the River by Gerard. 9. The Law of the River by Gerard. 10. The Justice of Sanders by Gerard. 11. The Keepers of the King's Peace. 1917. 12. Lieutenant Bones. 1918. 13. Bones in London. 1921. 14. Sandi, the King-maker. 1922. 15. The River of Stars. 1913.

Perhaps this information may help the Sanders fans. I'm sure there must be more than two of us.

FRED GRIFFIN (New York): The Nelson Lee tales were always my Number One school stories, especially the eerie, mystery ones like the Ezra Quirke and the Dr. Karnak series. Noted for the ingenuity of their plots, they always left one wondering what was coming next. I enjoyed E. S. Brooks and his American Note-book in the Nelson Lee of the nineteen-twenties. Since I have been living in New York I have found the things he wrote about, and the places he described, very accurate. The Boys' Friend Library "St. Frank's on Broadway", which I have read several times, was very enjoyable to an old boy like myself who knows the streets and avenues, and I have walked along them in my travels around the city.

BILL LOFTS (London): Our editor is quite correct. 'Nugent Minors Lesson' was a story originally written for The Boys' Herald. In fact it should have been used as the concluding tale in the Jack Drake v Frank Nugent series - but was unavailable at the time for some reason. So they substituted a substitute tale entitled 'Wun Lungs Pie' in its place.

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Hastily written by Arthur Aldcroft, this no doubt is the reason why in my opinion it was the worst Greyfriars sub ever written. In the 1923 Holiday Annual with Drake having left the school to become assistant to Ferrers Locke - they changed Drake to Rake. But, as Roger Jenkins pointed out some time ago - Rake also had left the school by this period. The Greyfriars Model was actually in nine weekly parts - followed by an even longer weekly part by a model of St. Jim's. As it was so easy to make a muck up of a part (my brother took four copies to eventually make a pair of steps) I think this may be the main reason why so few (if any) were completed). In those days there were no photocopying facilities, so any part incorrectly made could only be replaced by buying another comic. Just not on with limited pocket money.

JOE CONROY (Liverpool): I found Ernest Holman's article on sub stories to be very interesting (C.D. June). When he includes the Greyfriars Film Star series is he referring to Nos. 660 - 664 (which I have not read) on the later Hollywood series of 1929, Nos. 1092 - 1107 which I have read and certainly enjoyed. This series was praised in Danny's Diary some time ago. I can't see this series being by anybody else, but our Frank. As regards the theme of 'Playing The Goat' the same story was used in Magnet No. 1320, 'Barred By His Form' and strangely enough mentioned in Danny's Diary for this month (June). I do hope it turns out that the Hollywood series was not a sub!

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The lovely Hollywood series was not a sub. The series referred to in the article was a 5-story set of 1920. The latter was considered in a Let's Be Controversial article No. 137 "The Magnet Love Story of 1920" in a 1969 C.D.)

EDWARD SABIN (Rednal): I have no doubt you will be aware of the facts I am going to mention. A very interesting anniversary will occur later this year. 15th November will see the 90th anniversary of the founding of "The Marvel". It was, as you know, the first of all the companion papers.

The "Marvel" however, has another distinction. It was the first paper to have a Sexton Blake story in it. I believe that three Blake stories appeared in it before the "Union Jack" came on the scene the following April. A double distinction worthy of a passing comment, if not a short article. I know it takes some time to get these things done; that is why I have sent this letter in a little early.

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LESLIE B. KING (Chesham): I gather from your editorial remarks that your opinion of Warwick Jardine's prowess as an author is not high. So far as his Sexton Blake novels go, I feel I must differ over this. I have read several excellent Blake novels by this author, though not those featuring Granite Grant. My favourite Blake author was always Donald Stuart. He never failed to write a really gripping whodunnit, and he never had to rely on any leading supporting characters such as Granite Grant, Huxton Rymer, Plummer, Zenith, and the like.

I find I still possess one of Jardine's last Blake novels, No. 248 in the 8d. series published just after the war and entitled "Top Secret No. 1!", and this one, in my view, was very good indeed. May I put on record how very much I still enjoy C.D'.

R. GOODMAN (Queensland): I trust the C.D. will continue to flourish but am concerned to think what may occur once the older enthusiasts pass on. Like you, I deplore the passing of some of the cherished English ideals and heartily agree with your remarks about cricket, especially the one-day encounters with the deplorable gaudy uniforms and rules.

BRIAN KUTNER (Enfield): I look forward to receiving your fine magazine with the same pleasure as my father did before me. Keep up the good work.

F. STURDY (Middlesborough): Remarkably over the years, even from the days of "our Herbert" contributors close their articles with the statement - "In the near future I hope to give a list of the stories in this series . . ." After a deal of patience and impatience - nothing.

I was delighted when one contributor promised a list of Claremont yarns from World War I "Chuckles". I was less than delighted when I didn't get them.

I submit Mr. Editor that lists at so many numbers per month as space fillers in odd corners would serve a purpose. B.F.L. also comes to mind.

Lack of interest I cannot believe for one moment.

ESMOND KADISH (Hendon): Mrs. Cadogan's comments on "Also Ran" in this month's "Digest", were much appreciated. She is quite right, of course, in saying that Morcove's Betty Barton and Polly Linton were equally strong characters - Polly is certainly no "runner-up", and was

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frequently starred in the Morcove stories. Betty, with her favourite catch-phrase, "we'll manage", is calm, unflappable and tactful; "the madcap", in contrast, is often quick-tempered, apt to show her feelings and speak her mind.

I, too, love the Foxwell illustrations. To a dispassionate adult his Bruin Boys and Hippo Girls may seem a trifle ridiculous, but, like Mary Cadogan, I still find them delightful, and they touch a warm, responsive chord in me. So, too, does the humour in the drawings of Leonard Shields. The situations may seem exaggerated to match the incident he's illustrating, but his characters never seem caricatured, and show a shrewd observation of people and the way they behave.

JACK MURTAGH (New Zealand): I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have the C.D. to look forward to each month. It's quite a part of my life and has been for over 30 years. Keep up the good work.

By the way, re the advt. I had in the Annual about breaking up a large collection. Many who have replied to the advt. are under the impression that I am breaking up my personal collection of Magnets, Nelson Lees, Gems, Union Jacks, etc. This is most definitely not so. I am breaking up a collection of several thousand duplicates I used to hold for exchange. Exchange I have found will often obtain an item that money won't buy. However, I'm almost complete in all I want now so decided to dispose of all my duplicates.

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A MESSAGE TO READERS FROM THE EDITOR

Readers will be sorry to know that our dearly-loved "Madam", the First Lady of Excelsior House, has been very poorly in recent months. Our doctor is calling in a second opinion, and, in the next few days, will be bringing along a Specialist to the house. It is possible that my dear one may be sent to hospital for a spell, for observation and treatment, and, should that occur, it is possible that there might be a delay with our August issue. I shall do all in my power to keep up our regular distribution, but should a delay occur, I know that I can rely on your understanding and sympathy.

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