

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOL. 39

No. 446

FEBRUARY 1984



"PUCK" was a quality coloured comic paper which ran from early in the century till the start of the Hitler war. VAL FOX, ventriloquist and detective, with several of his pets, featured in short stories which were immensely popular over many years. Our picture comes from a 1918 copy.

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STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS DIGEST

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LEVISON OF ST. JIM'S - and GREYFRIARS

Fifty years ago, in his Gem, our Danny was reading stories which introduced a bad character named Snipe. Yet there had never been a Snipe at St. Jim's, and those readers of that day who were old enough to have read the blue Gem years earlier when the 1934 tales originally appeared must have been puzzled for a time.

Snipe was the famous Gem character Ernest Levison, given a new name for the time being. A jump had been made in the reprinting, and about a year of blue Gems had been omitted. During that year, Levison had been introduced. So, for some time, the actions and remarks of Levison in the stories were attributed to the horrible and unbelievable name of Snipe.

It was inexplicable in 1934. Looking back on it, 50 years further on, it is still inexplicable. But the change of Levison

to Snipe weakened many tales which were to appear during 1934 before the actual Levison was allowed to come on the scene.

It is probable that it was really nothing to do with Levison himself as a character. Levison had come on the scene as a new boy in a tale which was originally entitled "The New Boy's Secret" in the early autumn of 1910, and which was re-titled "The Boy Who Came Back" in the autumn of 1934. The latter title - the 1934 one - was weird and misleading in itself. It did not, of course, refer to Levison, who, at long last was allowed to appear as himself, but to a boy who came back from the dead. For Lumley-Lumley had died in the preceding story.

The new boy, Levison, had known Lumley-Lumley previously, and knew that he was subject to death-like trances.

But Lumley-Lumley had arrived at St. Jim's some considerable time ahead of Levison in the blue Gem, and the stories of the arrival of Lumley-Lumley had appeared in that year or so of tales which had been omitted.

So it seems probably that the change of Levison into Snipe in many months of 1934 may have been due to the delay in the arrival on the scene of Lumley-Lumley. But just what that reason was is obscure now as it was 50 years ago.

In fact, some enthusiasts may recall that Levison had another alias. He had been at Greyfriars for some seven months early in the red cover days of the Magnet, and he played a substantial part until he was expelled. One wonders, idly, whether, when Levison disappeared from Greyfriars the author had any intention of reviving him on the St. Jim's scene. Probably not. Two years or so went by before he turned up at St. Jim's - in the middle of the term - to throw light on the "death" of Lumley-Lumley. In any case, the longevity of the Hamilton characters was by no means established by 1908.

In 1926, No. 37 of the Schoolboys' Own Library was entitled "The Outsider of Greyfriars" and it comprised three stories from the first year of the halfpenny red Magnet. The "Outsider" of this S.O.L. was one, Langley. Langley was actually Levison under yet another alias. The reason for the name change was obvious here. For Levison, in 1926, was a leading upright character in the Gem.

(Continued)

WITH ADDITIONAL DIALOGUE BY ---

I am not suggesting that Charles Hamilton was on the same plane as Shakespeare, or that either was on the same plane as the Bible. But there is a link. Each was a profound influence upon me as a youngster, and I feel certain that the same factor applied to the majority of my readers. An influence which has gone on and one ---.

And there is another link. In recent times somebody has set about revising Hamilton's school stories to make them suitable for the youth of the eighties. We sit back in awe and scratch our heads in wonder, maybe.

Some fifty odd years ago, in the early days of talking pictures, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbank made "Taming of the Shrew", the first Shakesperian talkie. Pickford and Fairbanks starred as Kate and Petruchio respectively. The film was directed by one, Sam Taylor, who was also a screenwriter. Prominent among the "credits" was "by William Shakespeare with additional dialogue by Sam Taylor". Mary Pickford wanted that credit taken out, but Taylor persisted that it should remain.

When the film was released, that credit line caused hilarity, mockery, and derision throughout the film world and all over the normal world as well. It hit Taylor's career hard, and he never recovered from it. Declining all the time, he directed a few more films, his last being, I believe, one of the less-successful Laurel & Hardy features.

Today we are used to the endless stream of credits passing before our eyes at the close of some drab television film, with every dogsbody in the studio getting a mention, so any so-called credit leaves us cold. But it was different in 1930 when only the deserving got a credit line. Poor Taylor's "additional dialogue to Shakespeare" stuck out like a sore thumb, and was never forgotten.

Which brings me to the Bible. Before the last war, examining bodies used to advise that Religious Knowledge papers were set on the Revised Version of the Bible. I often wondered why, for the changes were very minor. It was only with the context questions that one might find a slight advantage from having studied the Revised Version. I never liked it. And still less do I like the absurd multiplication of Bibles today, the aim of which seems to be to destroy the literary quality of the real Bible I love.

I read somewhere that there have been no less than fifteen newly-written versions of the Bible since Hitler's war ended. The mind boggles. Who are the clever people who think themselves capable of improving on the old and much-loved texts?

You know the sort of thing. "In my Father's house are many mansions", improved by being re-written as "My Father's house has been converted into flats."

AND NOW FOR THE BAD NEWS

Last month we were preening ourselves on the fact that the old S.P.C.D. has reached its 38th year of publication. Now it comes time to face the facts of modern life, for the bad news is upon us.

With our next issue the price of this magazine must rise to 42p per issue. Here at the Editorial Office we work for love, as do our splendid contributors in the hobby. But S.P.C.D. is professionally printed, and we cannot expect our printers to work on that basis. They have their rising costs to meet for staff and buildings, and the cost of paper is ever on the upward trend.

We are faced with a steep increase in printing costs, and we are obliged to pass those on to our readers if the old C.D. is to carry on for a while.

Everybody knows how the cost of all books in the shops has rocketed in the past year or two. So far as C.D. is concerned, it is a considerable time since we last increased the price, and, as everybody knows, there are a great many expenses in the production and distribution of our magazine apart from the actual printing.

I try to keep our price down, for a great many of our readers are elderly people who have to count their pennies. One can only bring to mind a few other things that, these days, cost 42p - and weigh them in the balance.

Does the C.D. march on in spite of rising costs - or is it time to call it a day? The next month or two will show me very clearly what your verdict is.

THE EDITOR

Danny's Diary

FEBRUARY 1934

It has been a rather wonderful month, really, so far as the weather goes. Sunny and dry for most days. But in New York they have been having terrible blizzards, and I expect those blizzards may come here. We often get American weather after they have finished with it.

The King of the Islands stories are still going strong in Modern Boy. First tale of the month is "No Surrender!". Ken King is in the hands of the Secret Men of Tunaviva, but he boldly refuses to order Koko, his Kanaka bo'sun, to hand over the Dawn to the Secret Men. Next week came "Ken King's Mate Bobs Up!". Kit Hudson, mate of the ketch, comes to the rescue of his skipper.

Third of the month is "King of the Islands' Peril!". Poor Koko has a terrible choice - to surrender his master's ship or to see Ken King perish before his eyes. Final of the month is "Death-Trap of the South Seas." Ken, without any weapon, is bottled up in a dark, water-logged cavern, fighting for his life. Great stuff!

The Captain Justice series has continued throughout the month in Moder Boy.

There have been two by-elections this month - in Cambridge and in Portsmouth, and the Conservative candidate was elected in each town.

Some lovely films on at the local cinemas this month. We saw Ronald Colman and Elissa Landi in "The Masqueraders" which we liked, and, in the same programme, was a Mickey Mouse cartoon "Mickey's Mellerdrummer". Marlene Dietrich was in "Song of Songs", in which a girl is in love with a sculptor but marries a nasty old baron - what a stupid thing to do. My brother Doug loves Marlene, who is a new star from Germany. I told Doug "Marlene Dirttrack is on at the Regal next week"; and Doug said, loftily "Don't talk like a nasty little errand-boy". So now I know!

Bebe Daniels starred in "The Song You Gave Me", which was quite good, but really terrific was "Tugboat Annie" starring Marie Dressler and Wallace Beery. Those two clear the decks so that the young lovers, Robert Young and Maureen O'Sullivan, can

get married.

Pleasant, too, was "Paddy the Next Best Thing" with Janet Gaynor and Warner Baxter; the parents wanted a boy, but when the baby girl arrived they called her "Paddy, etc.", and she became a tomboy in New York. Everybody is raving about "The Private Life of Henry the Eighth", starring Charles Laughton, Robert Donat, Elsa Lanchester, and Merle Oberon. I wasn't all that keen on it, though it was funny in places. Also in the programme was "Mickey's Good Deed".

When we had a day in London we went over to the Edgware Road to the Metropolitan Music Hall and saw a lovely variety programme which included G. S. Melvin who was a scream dressed as a lady-hiker and singing "I'm Happy When I'm Hiking"; Louis Armstrong, a big black gentleman who plays the trumpet; Talbot O'Farrell, an Irish singer who sang "That Old-Fashioned Mother of Mine", and George Lacey, a little comedian who was very funny.

The King of the Belgians is dead, and some of our own Royal Family will be going to the funeral.

England have won the Third Test Match at Madras, and by doing so have gained the rubber.

On my half-term holiday Doug took me to Leicester for a long day out. The cheap day-return fare from London to Leicester is 7/-, but half-price for me.

In the Magnet the series has continued all the month about Krantz, the Old Boy of Greyfriars, and the mysterious kidnapping of Bob Cherry. First of the month is "The Mystery of the Vaults". The school is seething over Bob Cherry being whisked away by an aeroplane kidnapper, and there are tales of a sinister prowler in the old vaults beneath Greyfriars.

Next week brought "The Bounder's Folly". It seems that Major Cherry has invented a new war gadget, and the kidnapper wants the secret in return for Bob Cherry's freedom. And then, suddenly, Vernon-Smith, in his turn, disappears. Then came "The Vanished Schoolboys". By the end of this one, Tom Redwing had also disappeared.

In the last week of February came the last story in the series - "The Slacker's Awakening". The "Slacker" is Lord Mauleverer, and he is the one who solves the mystery, frees the captives, and brings Krantz - yes, he's the one - to justice. A mighty fine series.

Two good tales this month in the Schoolboy's Own Library.

"The Secret of Pengarth" is the Greyfriars one, with another spot of kidnapping, plus a strange old house on the coast of Cornwall. It's really a summer holiday tale, so it's rummy to publish it in February. The other tale is "The Toff's Sacrifice". Talbot of St. Jim's makes a noble sacrifice on behalf of his cousin, Crooke of the Shell.

Two more tramway systems have been scrapped this month. The Rhondda trams in Wales are replaced by buses, and the same thing has happened in Torquay.

In the Gem a new St. Frank's serial entitled "Treasure Isle" commenced in the first issue of the month. It is by Edwy Searles Brooks. Captured by cannibals. That's what happens to the St. Frank's chums when the Sky Wanderer, their flying school, lands on a Pacific treasure island.

The first St. Jim's tale in the Gem is "Falsely Accused". A new boy named Reginald Leslie comes to school - and all sorts of things start to disappear. The new boy turns out to be a kleptomaniac. Next, "Fatty Wynn's Thin Time". A wild bull comes to St. Jim's, and Fatty goes on a diet. Very light stuff.

Next week, in "The Fag's Secret", Joe Frayne starts to act strangely. It turns out he is trying to help his father, an escaped convict. Finally, the sequel, "The Cracksmen's Dupe", in which the burglar, Bill Frayne, is arrested. But the Head assured the school that the burglar had confessed that he was not really Joe Frayne's father.

The picture serial in the centre pages of the Gem has been replaced with Tom Merry's Weekly. It's an improvement, though it's not all that hot. Inferior to the Greyfriars Herald, I think.

A new Musical Comedy has opened at the London Hippodrome. It is entitled "Mr. Whittington" and it stars Jack Buchanan.

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NOTES ON THIS MONTH'S DANNY'S DIARY

S.O.L. No. 213 "The Secret of Pengarth" comprised three Magnet stories of the four-story holiday series of late summer 1923. They make an excellent S.O.L., though, as occurred to Danny, February was a curious time of year to run a summer vac. tale in the S.O.L. Sir Jimmy Vivian was the owner of the house of Pengarth. From time to time in the Magnet, Vivian had been prominent, though he never seems to have really rung the bell. This Pengarth episode may have been his last major appearance. The Pengarth story is pleasant in introducing

Levison, Clive, and Cardew of St. Jim's, who were on holiday in Cornwall while the "Old Bus" series was running in the Gem.

S.O.L. No. 214 "The Toff's Sacrifice" comprised the 4-story series from the Gem of January 1927. The Gem stories were never very long after blue cover days, and this series fits snugly into the S.O.L. format. A typical Talbot yarn, it makes pleasant reading, though it may have shone beyond its merit in early 1927. The real Martin Clifford contributed only a mere handful of tales in the years 1926-7.

Danny's reading in the Gem in early 1934 was rather a thin bag of tricks. The reprinting of the old stories was inexplicably erratic at this time, and, in order to make space for an over-large supporting programme, they were severely pruned usually.

The 1934 Gem tale "Falsely Accused" had been "Raiding the Raiders" in the Spring of 1910. The latter was an inappropriate title for this not very pleasant tale of a kleptomaniac. Twenty-one chapters in 1910, it was reduced to fifteen chapters in the 1934 version.

"Fatty Wynn's Thin Time" in 1934 had been "Fatty Wynn's New Wheeze" in January 1911. "The Fag's Secret" and "The Cracksman's Dupe" of February 1934 had been, respectively, "Joe's Champion" and "The Waif of St. Jim's" in the Spring of 1911. In this pair of tales it was proved that Joe Frayne was not the son of the burglar and convict, Bill Frayne. Then who was he? The ground was clearly being prepared for another missing heir series. It never materialised. One wonders why. Probably the busy author forgot all about him.

Those of us who rarely forget will be interested to recall that these two Joe Frayne stories form Schoolboys' Own Library No. 2, under the title "The Waif of St. Jim's". This was in the first month of publication of the S.O.L. in April 1925.

* * * * *

WOULD SOME KIND COLLECTOR of the Greyfriars Herald photostat the following pages for me: No. 12, page 16 and No. 15, page 4. I am anxious to complete the Benbow series. Will, of course, reimburse with cash or books for either photostat or original books.

S. SMYTH, P.O. Box 366, Mona Vale, N.S.W. 2103, Australia.

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Nelson Lee Column

A CERTAIN NEW BOY

by William Lister

It depends who you are and where you are. All of us have been new boys (or new girls) at some time in our lives, no matter how old we are now, whether it be at school or at work. Some new boys are lost in a crowd. Some are good mixers. Some stick out like a sore thumb. Some become leading lights.

Alf 'Uggins stood out like a sore thumb. One April day in 1923, Alf arrived at St. Frank's. He got a poor welcome. Rumour had it that Alf 'Uggins's dad was a bricklayer - even though a newly-rich bricklayer - and Alf was a born and bred Cockney. Because of that, Alf was a speckled hen, an ugly duckling, an odd man out.

Let's take a look at the birth and growth of a St. Frank's series. The title of the first story was "Alf 'Uggins Arrives" or "The New Boy at St. Frank's". Nelson Lee, April 1923, No. 409, by Edwy Searles Brooks.

Make no mistake about it. Men like Brooks and Hamilton worked hard. To be obliged to produce a new novel-length story every week must be hard work. It's easier, once you have decided on the plot. Plotting is the trouble. Have you noticed how often Brooks and Hamilton introduced a new boy or a new master into the background which had served for hundreds of other tales?

We have St. Frank's or Greyfriars basking in the sunshine. Everything is going on as usual, and then - bingo! They take a new boy, pop him down outside the gates, and you have the birth of a new series. The whole school is moved by the personality of the newcomer.

We have a high class school to which paters and maters send their well-brought-up sons to be brought up even better.

Brooks picks up a Cockney lad and dumps him down at St. Frank's. The cat is among the pigeons, and good enough to keep a series going from No. 409 to No. 414. Mr. Crowell, stern but fair, had to be sent on holiday to make way for the temporary Mr. Snuggs, who was a bigger snob than any of the boys.

If you've ever been on the wrong end of a snub, you'll sympathise with young Alf. I remember my first venture into the

world of romance, when just about 17. I was keen on my friend's sister, and, apparently, quite acceptable to her. We had tea at her father's bungalow several times. Things seemed to be going well. I made a date to take her to the Palace Picture (then under Blackpool Tower). All dressed up, and having saved three weeks spending-money for the occasion, I was left standing. I waited an hour, still hoping.

She avoided me in the days which followed. Then her brother told me. "You see, Bill, she lives in our brick bungalow. You only live in a caravan. It's not you she's dropped, it's your surroundings."

I'm older and thick-skinned now, but, at 17, it was my first taste of snobbery, - so I can feel for Alf 'Uggins. It is, after all, the experiences of real life which help you to enter into the spirit of the fiction you read. All of which leads up to my closing thought.

How far did the writers for the old boys' papers borrow from leading authors? In this case there is a touch of Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion", and H. G. Wells' tale "Kipps" (filmed as "Half a Sixpence").

In both cases the so-called lower class is suddenly thrust among the upper class.

However, the last tale of the 'Uggins series has a surprise ending. I never like giving away surprise endings. I will just say that if the main part of the story leans on Shaw and Wells, the ending has a touch of the age-old fairy tale of how the frog turns out to be a prince.

The Alf 'Uggins series is a great tale - a human tale - with a happy ending. And everybody is happy.

SKETCHES FROM E. E. BRISCOE

by R. J. Godsave

One of the most remarkable features to adorn the pages of the old series of the Nelson Lee Library early in 1922 were the wonderful sketches by E. E. Briscoe of St. Frank's College and the surrounding countryside. Apart from the beauty of the sketches it can be equally said that St. Frank's and its environs were practically brought to life. Unlike many of the old papers it was now unnecessary for the Lee readers to manufacture a mental picture from the printed word.

The Monastery ruins by E. E. Briscoe was the scene of the

first rebellion of the St. Frank's Remove again at the tyrannical House-Master Mr. Kennedy Hunter, M.A., who had taken Nelson Lee's place during his absence. On this occasion the Monastery ruins were chosen as a fortress by the Remove Revolution Army with bundles of faggots acting as a barrier on the firm ground of the Triangle. In the vaults below ground there was plenty of sleeping and general purpose space.

Mr. Hunter in desperation of a quick victory threw a quantity of petrol over the barrier with the result that very soon there was no barrier to defend the boys. Fortunately, the Removites were able to vanish into a secret cavern known to Nipper. Coming out of their hiding place at nightfall, Nipper met up with Hal Brewster and his friends from the River House School. It was Brewster's suggestions that solved the situation for the Removites, his idea was for them to go to Willard's Island and continue the fight.

Holt's Farm figured largely in the Petticoat rule by Miss Jane Trumble when she took over control of St. Frank's when the masters left owing to her interference. Briscoe's sketch of Caistowe entered into many of the St, Frank's series, especially in the earlier Lees.

A delightful sketch of St. Frank's seen from the River Stowe actually adorned part of the cover of o.s. 382 "The Price of Folly" printed in blue it made an attractive cover.

The Chapel, St. Frank's College with the Ancient House and Clock Tower in the back-ground gave an overall scene of the College. The Sketch of the College House was used as the cover of the menu of the 4th Annual Lunch Party of the Club at the Nayland Rock Hotel, Margate on Sunday, 4th September, 1966.

All of Briscoe's drawings of St. Frank's and surrounding district are shown in the Bibliography of Brooks' writings.

It is to the credit of E. S. Brooks and the editorial staff that additions of such graceful drawings by E. E. Briscoe were incorporated in the Nelson Lee Library.

WANTED: "Deep Down" by R. M. BALLANTYNE and anything pertaining to Pearl White the silent cinema Serial star.

JOHN ROBYNS, 14 Springfield Close, Phillack, Hayle, Cornwall,
TR27 5HH.

BLAKIANA

conducted by Josie Packman

I do hope the Blake readers will not mind having another Christmas article in February but I did not receive it in time for an earlier issue of Blakiana. The article was read by Bill Lofts at our Christmas meeting of the O.B.B.C. held at Bill Bradford's residence. The idea of a book or pamphlet being published for 1983 the 90th Anniversary has not been taken up so perhaps members will be interested in the idea put forward by Cyril Rowe of one for the 100th Anniversary. It will no doubt be done by one or more of your younger enthusiasts.

SEXTON BLAKE 1893-1993

by Cyril Rowe

"The Missing Millionaire" by Harry Blyth dated 13.12.1893 in the Marvel saw the first appearance of this noted character. We are now within 10 years of the 100th Anniversary of this. I wonder if the Old Boys' Book Clubs as a whole are considering making any effort to celebrate this event. If it was to be a publishing event, the effort should start early enough to give sufficient time for the job to be done. This of course, would depend upon what was decided on. I set out some ideas which would need corporate effort and/or corporate approval and corporate backing. To take the backing first one would need to know how much or how little of clubs funds could be used to bring the idea about. The amount would depend upon the worthwhileness of publication of such a book as was eventually written or compiled, and whether by one author (advised) or by several, and whether an edition mainly aimed at our own numbers or whether a larger readership was sought.

Now to the matter. I suggest it could be composed of such authoritative articles as our membership could supply and write. This would need an overall editorship and some degree of grammar correction, etc., etc., the more so if general publication was achieved.

The other type of compilation might be a collection of several Sexton Blake stories spanning the years to demonstrate the changes and versatility of the man and his authors.

This again I suggest would need a very comprehensive editorial introduction dealing with the development of the Blake Saga, i.e. a condensed resume of such articles as our membership could produce for re-shuffling into one authoritative foreword.

Well I throw it forward as a project to mull over. We have in our midst members who have already made the big world of publication. I name no names but wonder if they could advise if it came to anything.

Additional note by Josie Packman: I suggest that as a number of our Sexton Blake fans may not be around in 1993 they write an article for publication in this proposed publication and that such articles be kept by a suitable member of the O. B. B. C.

GWYN EVANS - XMAS STORIES

by W. O. G. Lofts

Whenever I hear the mention of Xmas stories, my mind instantly turns to three great writers. The immortal Charles Dickens - who in my opinion had no equal. Our own Charles Hamilton whom no doubt many others will applaud. But the third would be Gwyn Evans, an extremely talented and popular author in the Sexton Blake field prior to the Second World War. Charles Dickens by all accounts loved Christmas, when every year he held a big family gathering at his home near Portsmouth, as well as Presiding over the Xmas festivities, when he liked nothing better than to join in the fun and games especially with his many grandchildren. Charles Hamilton so I am told usually spend Xmas with his young sisters family, when not at Rose Lawn, when obviously he enjoyed the festive season. Gwyn Evans on the other hand - according to his wife, started his Christmas period on 1st December with more than the usual run of parties in Chelsea of the Bohemian kind, but at home, he greatly enjoyed like any other parent playing Santa Claus to his young daughter Patricia.

Charles Hamilton and Gwyn Evans were writing in the same era, when their styles were curiously of the same mould, extremely pleasant to read in a flowing kind, the characters seemingly alive to the reader - the essence of a born story teller - though in real life both were poles apart if one will excuse the pun. Hamilton was very short in stature, whilst Evans was well over six feet tall and thin as a bean-pole. Hamilton one could say led an extremely modest quiet life after his early travels - quite content to read, compile Latin cross-words, listen to classical music, enjoy Miss Edith Hood's cooking, as well as churn out his school stories. Evans on the other hand was an extremely colourful figure, whose exploits were to say the least unusual. Bohemian parties and other events that one can find recorded in many a writers reminiscences of Fleet Street. As a consequence he was often

behind schedule with his writings, that made him fall out with editors, but such was his popularity and demand, that many had to swallow their pride and put up with his unreliability. One of the editors was Harold William Twyman of The Union Jack, and it was he who had the idea of letting Gwyn Evans write a special Xmas story for his paper. To say that his tale was a great success would be putting it mildly, and Twyman earmarked him to pen the Xmas stories for future years as well as dubbing him the 'Charles Dickens' of The Union Jack.

Somehow Gwyn had the knack of putting over his Yuletide scene far better than any other writer in the Blake field, his descriptions of Xmas at Baker Street, with holly and mistletoe draped round the consulting room with usually Blake sitting in his favourite saddlebag arm-chair. Mrs. Bardell bringing in the steaming large turkey, plus the exchange of presents, when our favourite detective usually got a new dressing gown. The humour of Mrs. Bardell, with her malapropism expressions such as wishing Blake 'the codiments of the season'. The titles of his Xmas stories were 1210 'Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Eve' (where she was kidnapped and taken to a Mansion complete with a Xmas ghost) 1260 'The Affair of the Black Carol' (where Splash Page suggests to Blake that they should dress up in Dickens characters, and how they travelled to a Manor by stage coach with the tooting of horns). 1313 'The Crime of the Christmas Tree' (where the tree did commit the crime in an ingenious way). 1365 'The Mistletoe Milk Mystery'. 1417 'The Man Who Hated Christmas', and 1521 'The Masked Carollers' - but above all in the true spirit of Xmas Blake gave anonymously gifts to those wives and families he had put behind bars.

Gwyn Evans died in 1938 aged only 39, but his memory is still with us, so the toast this Xmas is to his immortal stories, and long may they be remembered and never forgotten.

WANTED: S.O.L.'s from No. 1 onwards to 350. Magnets No. 1 to 780, Nos. 1288 to 1350, any for year 1933. Also Crompton's, "William's", 1st Editions with D.W.'s.

JAMES GALL, 49 Anderson Ave., Aberdeen. Tel. 0224 491716

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 193 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 362 - "Manders on the Spot"

As the years went by, Charles Hamilton displayed an increasing tendency to return to series characters and resuscitate themes. It also appeared as if those characters who were created in the prime of his writing career were grasped at like straws when his powers of invention began to wane. Not only were individuals like Dick Valentine and Soames used again (and sometimes again and again) but schools were also revived: St. Jim's was given a new lease of life in the Gem in 1939 after eight years of reprints, and when the second World War was over one school after another was brought back, with varying degrees of success. Some subtleties, like the exact character of Cardew, had by that time slipped away beyond his grasp, but the original basic characters remained clear in his mind, and Rookwood's small stage was always vivid in his memory.

After the Rookwood series had ended in the Boys' Friend in 1926, the school was featured in serials at the back of the Gem from time to time. Originally these serials were by substitute writers, but in 1936 there were two serials in succession written by the master himself. The second one - "The Boy Who Walked by Night" - was workmanlike but hardly inspired, since the theme was far from novel. The first one, however, entitled "Manders on the Spot" had some original features. Both were reprinted in the Schoolboys' Own Library towards the end of its run.

No. 362 featured Lovell and presented all his somewhat unloveable traits in full compass. The Roke was frozen and the Fistical Four had broken bounds to go skating; as they returned they came upon Dr. Chisholm being robbed of a wallet containing £45.10.0d by a footpad called Slog Poggers. He was eventually cornered in Mr. Manders' bedroom and concealed the wallet in the lining of a winter overcoat with a view to recovering it at a later date. He was locked up to await the arrival of a constable, but he managed to escape when Lovell visited him, intending to find out where the wallet was hidden. As a result of this gratuitous interference, Lovell was gated for the rest of the term and he spent the time searching for the Head's wallet in the hope of getting his punishment rescinded.

The normal Rookwood cast was on the stage: the Fistical Four, Tubby Muffin, Mornington, the three Tommies, and also one of the later characters - Leggett. Perhaps the most interesting of all

was Mr. Manders, as interfering and spiteful as ever, but with the added touch that he was perpetually in fear of Slog Poggers who kept trying to steal his winter overcoat. The short episodes from the Gem were similar in length to some in the early Boys' Friends, and when reprinted in the monthly format they allowed regularity in the rise and fall of tension. "Manders on the Spot" might not have been one of the great Rookwood series but it was sufficient proof that the Hampshire school had life enough to survive long after its weekly appearances had ceased.

ALMOST TELEPATHY

by Tommy Keen

I have today (13th December) received my copy of the Collectors' Digest Annual, and as per usual, it is absolutely splendid. You, Dear Editor, deserve a medal.

My unusual haste in writing, is because I am absolutely fascinated by Harold Truscott's article, "Slips of the Pen" - fascinated, and delighted.

It is amazing, on reading this article, to find that his attitude towards the Greyfriars artists, is exactly the same as mine, and that, of course, is why I am so enthusiastic over the article.

Being utterly intrigued by the illustrators of the MAGNET, the GEM, and the HOLIDAY ANNUAL, it is less than a week ago, that at a mutual friend's home, I placed in front of Mr. W. O. G. Lofts (historian of the MAGNET, and almost everything else), the 1920 HOLIDAY ANNUAL, and asked him if he knew who drew the rather shattering illustrations for 'A Cliff House Comedy', 'Billy Bunter's "Bike"', and 'Against All Comers'. We gazed at the pictures in silence, but no answer was forthcoming. "Was there a Wakefield Likeness?", it was suggested regarding the Cliff House girls in 'A Cliff House Comedy', but to me there was no trace whatsoever of Wakefield's rather sweetly pretty girls of early Rookwood days.

I wondered if, like the maligned sub-writers, there had to be sub-artists, with some poor office worker being told that he could, perhaps, be a budding C.H. Chapman.

Mr. Truscott's remarks about C. H. Chapman are my own sentiments exactly. His blue and white MAGNETS, and the orange and blues of the 1920s, were pure Greyfriars, and although Leonard Shields was an excellent artist, even to making Harry Wharton &

Co. acceptable in the MAGNET stories' illustrations, his covers (with a few exceptions) were, to me, not quite satisfactory.

Another amazing coincidence, is regarding the illustration mentioned by Mr. Truscott, in the story 'Ructions at Greyfriars'. Whilst not discussing it for the same reason as Mr. Truscott, I had previously drawn Graham McDermott's attention to this picture, comparing it with the title picture of MAGNET No. 329 of 1914 - 'The Boy From the Farm' - where the illustration of Bunter is almost identical. And over five years between publication!

And again strange parallels of thought! Within the last two weeks, I have been loaned the Popper Island Rebelseries - although Sir Hilton Popper is not a favourite character of mine, neither can I enthuse over rebellion stories (there were so many of them) - and my first reaction on glancing through the stories, was one of distaste, after seeing those gruesome caricatures, attributed to the pen of Harold Skinner. Absolutely appalling, and I wonder who, at Fleetway House, could have approved of them.

From the same Popper Island volume, a blatant error in Leonard Shields' illustrations! In MAGNET No. 1378, Sammy Bunter of the Second is portrayed without spectacles, absolutely nothing like Sammy as we had learned to know him. Perhaps they had dropped off in the story! But no, and Sammy needed all of his vision to hurl the rotten orange at Coker. There were the 'devil's horns' too, like elder brother Billy's.

On many occasions, I dismissed C. H. Chapman's Greyfriars boys of the 1930s as being far inferior to his magnificent pre Shields drawing, but to the schoolboys of the 1930s, there would, of course, be no comparison. I have just received, for a Christmas present, the Howard-Baker volume of the 'Water Lily' series, stories I had not previously read, partly owing to my personal dislike of the salmon and blue covers, and although appreciating the gift tremendously, even as I glanced at the pictures, I thought to myself, "Oh no Mr. Chapman, maybe for the boys of 1939, but not for me".

ROY PARSONS wishes to inform his friends that his new telephone number is BROOKWOOD 80059.

TOM MERRY CAVALCADE (Serialised from a Long Ago C.D. Annual)1910

"They caught him as a result of a wireless message", said Mrs. Venner. "Truly wonderful", agreed Mr. Chadley. "Wireless will make crime unpopular - and will take all the peril out of sea travel."

"Do you think he will be found guilty, Mr. Chadley?" Chadley shrugged his shoulders. He said: "I see they expect the verdict tonight. There's not much doubt that he will hand".

"Poor little man." Mrs. Venner shook her head sadly. "It was a terrible thing to do - to kill his wife and cut her up, though it seems she was a dreadful woman. That Le Neve girl was to blame, and men are so weak - so very weak."

Chadley coughed. He drew a Gem from the pile, and laid it before his customer. He said: "A grand St. Jim's story this week, Mrs. Venner - 'A Shadow in the School'. It's very sad indeed. Lumley-Lumley dies at the finish, and Tom Merry cries. We never thought that Tom would every cry over the Outsider, did we?" "Oh!" Mrs. Venner's voice was hushed. "The Major will be sorry. Lumley-Lumley was a bad boy, but the Major says he had a lot of good in him. What a pity he had to die!"

She slipped the blue-covered paper into her muff, and went out into the October sunshine.

1911

"My daddy was marching in the procession", said Chris. "The Queen waved at me as the coach went by, and the King smiled at me. It was a ripping procession."

Ronnie Chadley grinned. He said, with all the superiority of his fourteen years: "I bet the King smiled at everyone - not at you in particular. Don't you think that our shop is the best decorated in the whole road, Chris? My father spent a sovereign on

bunting."

"It's pretty good", concurred Chris. He picked up the Gem, and placed his penny on the counter. "Coronation Day at St. Jim's - I bet Tom Merry and Gussy spent more than a sovereign on decorations, Ron."

Ronnie sniffed.

"They got their money when they went to the South Seas - they found a treasure out there, and saved the reward for their Coronation party." He leaned over the counter. "My father is taking mother and me to America next year. Perhaps I'll find a treasure in America."

"Will you be able to buy the 'Gem' in America?" asked Chris, curiously. "I wouldn't want to go anywhere where I couldn't buy the 'Gem'."

1912

"A real thriller this week", said Mr. Chadley. "Right up your street, Major. A Hindu comes to St. Jim's and tries to kill Tom Merry."

Major Venner exchanged his penny for the Gem, and glanced through the paper. "Tom Merry's Peril!", he said, quoting the title of the story. "That fellow Clifford certainly knows his geography. A remarkable man - I'd like to meet him." He folded the Gem, and slipped it into his pocket. "I hear we're losing you, Chadley."

The newsagent smiled self-consciously.

"I've been saving up for years, Major. My wife has a brother in New York, and at last I've saved enough for us to go out and join him there. I shall miss England, but America is the land of opportunity, so they say."

Major Venner grunted non-committally.

"Mrs. Chadley and my boy sailed yesterday, Major. Maiden voyage of the largest and most wonderful ship afloat." Chadley chuckled and rubbed his

hands. "Third-class, of course, but third-class on the Titanic is better than first-class on most of the others. I shall follow on in about a month - I've got to wind up the sale of this shop during the next few weeks."

The Major regarded the newsagent with a new respect.

"It's something to be proud of - getting your family passages on the Titanic", he said. "There's an article

on the ship in today's 'Morning Leader' - man claims that even God couldn't sink the Titanic."

"It'll be a bit of an anti-climax if she springs a leak when she gets to New York", suggested Chadley.

And both men laughed heartily.

(Next month - 1913)

REVIEWS

"THE ST. JIM'S CHRISTMAS BARRING--OUT"

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker Special Book
Club Edition)

This lovely volume contains the 9-story series from the Gem of late 1922 and early 1923. Many barrings-out came and went in the Hamilton papers in succeeding years, but nothing on the theme was ever better written than this one from the early twenties when it was new. Passing time did not help this series, for barrings-out became very familiar - almost hackneyed - but in its day it was superb.

Tom Merry is accused of theft in a brilliant opening story, and he is supported by 200 juniors in the barring-out which follows. The rebels held the School House throughout the Christmas vacation, which seems a very unlikely thing to happen. It would have been more believable set in the middle of some term. We get, perhaps, the atmosphere of a Hollywood extravaganza. The series would have been more convincing if staged on a less wholesale scale. It is a series which trips over its own extravagances.

Nevertheless it is vastly entertaining, and there are many novel situations, one, in particular, when Billy Bunter joins the rebels, and then tries to "sell" them out to Dr. Holmes. Packed with incident, it is a series supreme of its type.

The publisher of facsimiles of this period of the Gem is faced with problems. The St. Jim's stories, at this time, were comparatively short, running to 9 or 10 chapters only, eliminating a good deal of padding in the story telling, one might muse. But it meant that, of the 28 page Gem, only about fifty per cent of the paper was occupied by Martin Clifford. In order to accommodate the entire 9-story St. Jim's series, the publisher has cut away a good deal of the "full supporting programme". It may be added that the editing has been done with commendable skill. I imagine that very few readers will complain.

"The St. Jim's News" - always rather uninspired and inferior to the Greyfriars Herald - finds a place in the centre of most of these facsimile copies, and I reckon that readers today may find them of more novelty interest than the readers of 60 years back when they first appeared.

Finally, it is great to see another Gem series in this splendid format.

"BILLY BUNTER'S KICK-OFF"

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker Special Book
Club Edition)

If the previously-reviewed volume showed the Gem stories at their shortest, this volume provides a big contrast with the Magnet at its largest ever with 32 pages each week, and the Greyfriars tale at its longest, running most weeks to 20 and more chapters.

This volume is a season ticket - a permanent one for travel at any time - to take you back for a gorgeous time in the Autumn of the spacious year of 1910, with Frank Richards and Arthur Clarke providing unmatched and unmatchable entertainment. Papers without the glut of advertisements and bits and pieces which, years later, was to pass as a supporting programme. 1910, when the weekly paper was at its greatest, never to be the same again once the era had passed.

There are seven Magnets here, consecutive except for one omission. The opening two stories deal with soccer. In the second one, Highcliffe plays three Old Boys in their side against the Remove. Greyfriars counters by playing a professional footballer, Jack Neville. One wonders what the respective Games Masters were doing while all this was being fixed up.

Alonzo Todd is still being groomed for stardom at this time, it appears, for he is very much on the scene in the stories. Oddly enough, it is not an unwelcome presence. And how magnificently Clarke, the artist, gave him character.

The Cliff House girls and their school are on the stage for "The Cliff House Guest" (he is Billy Bunter). And we meet Billy Bunter's tailor, Mr. Twiddles, for the first and, possibly, the last time.

"The New Firm" gives us a taste of a new Co, comprising Wun Lung, Alonzo, Bunter - oh, dear. Completely and utterly inconsequential, but possessing a charm of its own. Alonzo is yet again starring in "The Duffer's Downfall" and the final story "The Head of Study Fourteen" is an introduction to that famous apartment which was to feature quite prominently in the Magnet of later years.

It is worth noting that Arthur Clarke signs most of the drawings in the Magnet at this time. Sad, for he had not so much longer to go.

A thoroughly happy and delightful volume which should please everybody.

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

LONDON

The spirit of Christmas was still in evidence at the Walthamstow meeting despite the fact that Twelfth Night had come and gone. A happy atmosphere prevailed, the tea ladies being very busy and a large box of biscuits, which Millicent Lyle had brought along soon disappeared like the one in the Masters' Common Room at Greyfriars after Billy Bunter had raided it. Mark Jarvis read Roy Whiskin's treatise on Anthony Buckeridge that appeared in Cambridge Club's Our Boys publication. Featuring that popular

character, Jennings, it was greatly enjoyed. Remember the anthology that Buckeridge produced some years ago and which contained a Frank Richard's story?

Reuben Godsave had sent along an Eliminator competition. Brian Doyle and Mary Cadogan were joint winners.

Following up Tommy Keen's reading last month, Mary Cadogan carried on with more chapters from the Xmas number of the School girls' Own 1921.

But the piece de resistance was Duncan Harper's Double Letter Competition of Wits. Some very good answers provoked hearty bursts of laughter.

Rev. Arthur Bruning read the Memory Lane feature that dealt with a Margate visit in 1966.

Next gathering will be the A.G.M. and this will be held at 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich on Sunday, 12th February. Tea provided but bring own viands.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Saturday, 14th January, 1984

A DARK January evening, with gusts of icy wind bringing hail and sleet and snow, but a small group of us assembled in the warmth and comfort of the City of Leeds Room for our 404th meeting of the Northern OBBC.

Jack Allison gave us two readings, the first from Richard Jeffrey's 'An Extinct Race' and the second from James Herriot's 'The Lord God Made Them All'. The passage from 'An Extinct Race' was on a deserted and decaying school.

The second piece concerned an Italian prisoner of war - Luigi - who caught and restrained a bullock by gripping its ear in order that Herriot and Siegfried could remove a tumour. He had chosen the reading, said Jack, because of the reference to Bunter which the passage contained!

We then began with the first two items in our new series 'My Choice' in which we are asked to bring along some item which is meaningful to us and then talk about its significance.

Geoffrey Good brought a copy of 'Great Expectations'. It was, said Geoffrey, the copy from which his form master had read to the form well over forty years ago. On his form master's death (at the age of 34) his mother had given Geoffrey some of his books -

this among them, together with four other Dickens titles in the same series.

Keith Atkinson had brought along 'The Flax of Dream' by Henry Williamson. The book consisted, said Keith, of four stories which tell the life of William Madison. The section he had chosen to read was an item about a school speech day. It reminded him of a similar speech day in his own school. They had even sung the same song that was sung by the boys in the story - 'O ruddier than the cherry...'

So out into the cold, cold snow. And for those of us without cars a dreary walk along dreary streets in dreary sludge to a dreary station ... And for one, at least, a dreary wait for a train that never came...

And was it worth it?

Well, what do you think?

CAMBRIDGE

Our opening meeting for the New Year was held at the home of Adrian Perkins on 8th January. The small gathering had a most enjoyable time.

Roy Whiskin gave an informative talk on American Comics and their English equivalents. He referred to the black and white reprints of the American Comics available in the 1940's and 50's. They were not sold by newsagents, but could be bought at Woolworths. He remembered particularly the advertisements for Daisy Air Rifles.

The publication of Comic Cuts in England had probably started the English Comics as we knew them.

Roy gave us particulars of the various famous characters which had been featured in these papers on both sides of the Atlantic. He passed round for inspection large numbers of specimens of the various papers down the years. Including one in 3D with coloured spectacles. Roy's talk was warmly applauded.

Tony Cowley played an extract from Neville Wood's tape of his experiences at Marlborough College.

After enjoying Mrs. Perkins's excellent tea, the meeting resumed. Adrian played a tape on the London Hippodrome and its stars, and this was followed by a hilarious recording of a Radio 2 broadcast on mistakes in Broadcasting.

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

The Postman Called

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

F. STURDY (Middlesborough): The activity of Christmas described by you would appear to be pretty general, as I recall. My Christmas sing-song is best remembered as belonging to the very early twenties when we bawled out, more or less in harmony, the tunes of Lawrence Wright, who, at that time, deluged the popular song scene; e.g. "Omaha", "Silver Star", "City of Laughter, City of Tears", "Bluebird", "Playthings", and so on. When we were reduced to exhaustion, a soloist would take over and entertain us with "No rose in all the world, Until you came...", or, perhaps, "The Battle March of Delhi" on the piano. Simple, satisfying stuff, which did not contain a symbolic message or a swipe at the Establishment. Our door remained unlocked, and muggers had not yet emerged from their slime. I am glad we knew those far-off days - but, like the Public School story, they are fast receding into the mists of time.

H. PEMBERTON (Manchester): Our wonderful little mag is worth its weight in gold.

JOE CONROY (Liverpool): Thank you very much for the Xmas edition of C.D. which is a sheer delight, as usual. Reading Roger Jenkin's article on Magnet 1038 with Wadham the butler at Wharton Lodge brings back the old argument of whether or not Frank Richards made notes because I read one story where the bookie at the Three Fishers was referred to as Bill Banks. Perhaps these were substitute tales.

I have always liked Wells as the Wharton Lodge butler.

DENIS HILLIARD (Nottingham): Normally I do not open the Annual till Christmas Day and by the time I have savoured the contents your heavy mail has already brought you the thanks of many. This year, however, I cheated. I opened the book when it was received, and digested some of its contents before the 25th. It is like a well-mixed pudding containing a fine mixture with gems instead of the usual sixpences. The editorial task has been particularly well done, and it was an inspiration to include the article on Holmes and Watson and Mary Cadogan's reflections on "The Scarlet Pimpernel". From my early examination I would say that this has been another winner.

Fr. F. HERTSZBERG (Bebington): I have just, after all these years, noticed that you date the C.D. Annual in the current year, rather, than as is usual with commercially produced publications, for the following.

A few notes - not 'carping criticisms': Certainly "Greyfriars" implies the religious house was one of Franciscans - but as the name also indicates, they were and are not, as Mr. Rowley has it, monks, but rather friars. And they don't have abbots. As these terms seem integral to the Hamiltonian canon, are we to assume that at some unrecorded period the friars left and their place was taken by a monastic order?

Mr. Holman, in his interesting review of the Holmes series, says that no-one has ever explained why CARD (the usual abbreviation for Cardboard Box: his usage of the first word of the story title is not general practice) was omitted from the first book publication. In fact several authors, including myself, have suggested it was a matter of delicacy - adultery and murder was a combination thought unacceptable in 1894. (Two additional points - the first American books publication included the story, but it was omitted from the second; and in Holmesian circles I am known as The Cardboard Boxer of Bebington, having adopted the title of the story which took place within seven miles of where I live.)

Interesting that Danny paid 6½d for an ounce of tobacco in 1913 - in 1959 I paid only slightly more than twice that, 1/3d.

Mr. Truscott comments on artistic 'slips of the pen'. Artists frequently read only the relevant paragraphs of a story, and so were quite likely to misrepresent details not there mentioned; it is amazing just how slapdash a job some artists get away with, whilst others, for no more money (often less, because, being slower they produce less) take great care and add much extra detail.

ALEX MATHESON (Wick): The old C.D. has brought me great pleasure throughout the year. I am now in the process of reading the Annual. It is one of the pleasures of Christmas. The opening paragraphs of Leslie Rowley's article set the scene for the feeling of winter, where I have felt the best stories of Greyfriars were set. I always liked the tales placed in a winter landscape and Frank Richardds' descriptions added to the effect. I must commend Esmond Kadish on the article on the Schoolgirls' Weekly. Something different for those like myself who don't know the paper. Finally,

the inimitable Mr. Buddle story without which the Annual would be much the poorer. A "winner" again.

LOVESEY ET AL ---

by J. E. M.

Another first-class issue of S.P.C.D. (though when has it ever been less?). As always, I much enjoyed the editorial and was delighted that you had found a Peter Lovesey novel to your taste. "The False Inspector Dew" is by no means Lovesey's best. He has written a number of really first-class crime stories set in the last years of the 19th Century, featuring Detective-Sergeant Cribb and his assistant, Constable Thackeray.

My own favourite is "Swing, Swing Together" (a college for the training of female teachers in 1889 is the starting point for this excellent yarn) but I have also enjoyed "Invitation to a Dynamite Party" (Irish terrorism in the 1880's); "Waxwork"; "Wobble to Death"; and "A Case of Spirits" (a lovely exposé of spiritualist charlatans in Victoria's day). Sergeant Cribb is a first-class creation and the social and historical background is also always first-rate. As an ex-teacher, Peter Lovesey does his homework! Perhaps other C.D. readers might like to know about these stories; they are all in paperback (Penguin).

On the subject of crime fiction, I have just acquired Lofts' and Adley's catalogue of the old Thriller. This is an invaluable reference to the actual stories, authors, dates, etc., though I found Mr. Adley's introduction slight and perfunctory.

It is guilty of at least one glaring omission. In its reference to the artists who illustrated the Thriller, it fails to mention Ernest Hubbard who was later to win world-fame as the creator of "Jane" in the Daily Mirror. Hubbard - unlike Arthur Jones - was a superb draughtsman and his work lent great distinction to stories of Raffles and The 'Saint' which appeared in the Thriller. Hubbard also did some very distinguished covers for the short-lived Thriller Library in the '30's', as well as some fine illustrations for the "Spies, Ltd." series in Detective Weekly.

May the Digest go from strength to strength in 1984 - though I'm blessed if I can see how it could possibly improve on its always excellent standard.

WILLIAM BROWN AND PENROD SCHOFIELD

by Jack Hughes

Some years ago I wrote that having just read the saga of Penrod I was struck most strongly by the similarity of the stories to those of the early William books. Whether anyone was interested enough in this suggestion to rush out and buy their copy of the Penrod Omnibus currently available and check for themselves I do not know. But I see in Little Cinema No. 50 (May '78 C.D.) that its chronicler read somewhere "that Richmal Crompton may have had the Penrod stories in mind when she created her William".

It so happens that some time back my friend Chris Hunt of Townsville University gave me a number of some years old magazines, and in one I came across an article by Francis Fytton entitled "William Brown and Harry Wharton". (London Magazine - May 1967.) After dismissing Harry and Greyfriars with a few sentences in the first three paragraphs he concentrates all his attention through 10 pages on William.

"Miss Richmal Crompton Lamburn who has never married says that the initial inspiration for her stories came from her brother John and thereafter from a nephew and a great-nephew, who have successively kept her up to date in dialogue: the Cromptons must have been an enchanting household." (p.11)

But what of my conviction that William was almost a carbon copy of Penrod? But then Mr. Fytton discloses:

"Not surprisingly the William stories were not inspired by the mainstream of children's literature in English, but from a radical American writer named Newton Booth Tarkington. He began writing for 'Harper's Magazine' at the turn of the century, which was almost half a century too soon for public taste, and published only three children's books: Penrod, Penrod and Sam, and Penrod Jashbur. The trouble was that Sam was a negro and so were several of his child heroes who were accepted on equal terms by eleven-year-old Penrod in such hectic games as 'bonded pris'ner': 'Strangely enough, the undoubted champion proved to be the youngest and darkest of all the combatants, one Vernon, coloured, brother to Herman, and substantially under the size to which his nine years entitled him.'

Penrod's den is not an old barn but a disused stable with a box 'eight feet high and open at the top, and it had been constructed as a sawdust magazine from which was drawn material for the horse's bed in a stall on the other side of the partition'. In this hiding place he constructs 'a home made elevator' for his dog Duke, who, like Jumble, is a mongrel. Penrod, like William (who is much given to quoting extracts from his epic 'Pirates of the Bloody Hand'), is an author ('Harold Ramorez the Roadagent or Wild Life

Among the Rocky Mountains') and he too has a dominating but pretty elder sister Margaret, who is nineteen... Tarkington's influence upon Miss Crompton... the result of reading Harper's during her childhood at the rectory." (pages 19, 20)

A MOLE AT GREYFRIARS

(Owing to the existence of a Mole among the personal staff of the Head of Greyfriars, our contributor, Leslie Rowley, is able to give you a peep at some personal correspondence of Dr. Locke.)

From the Area Head Postmaster to the Headmaster of Greyfriars School

Dear Headmaster,

Over a period of some considerable time my officers have been much exercised in trying to trace a number of postal orders that have been allegedly mislaid in transit by mail to a boy at your school. A Master Bunter is the instigator of these enquiries, the volume of which has now reached nuisance proportions.

I shall be most grateful if you would see the boy and advise him that he should contact the senders of these remittances (some of whom I gather are titled) and enquire if and when the remittances were despatched. On receipt of this information I shall be pleased to cause further investigation to be made.

I shall be further grateful if you would counsel Master Bunter to the effect that should his complaints be found to be of a frivolous or fictitious nature steps may be taken to obtain from him compensation for waste of Post Office time.

I am & c

Area Head Postmaster

From the Headmaster, Greyfriars School to the Area Head Postmaster

Dear Head Postmaster,

Thank you for your letter regarding Bunter of this School and the complaints that this boy has made in regard to missing postal orders.

I am concerned that a boy of this school should be the cause of unnecessary endeavour by the gentlemen under your supervision since the missing postal orders appear to be a figment of the boy's imagination.

On his behalf I ask you to accept apologies for the

inconvenience caused.

Certain action has been taken in the matter and I venture to predict that you will be given no cause for further complaint.

I am & c

H. H. Locke (Headmaster)

From the Headmaster's Secretary to The Administrator, Stonemoor Home of Correction

Dear Administrator,

Re: Meyer Brander, Esq.

Dr. Locke has asked me to reply to your recent enquiry regarding the above gentleman and the following is given without prejudice.

The curriculum followed at Greyfriars is, presumably, more academic and less disciplinarian than that followed at the institution which you administer. At this School most offences are awarded impositions, detentions and canings; only those of a most serious nature qualify for a flogging. Expulsions are rare and have been made only in cases of theft, gambling and the nocturnal breaking of bounds.

Under the temporary Headmastership of Mr. Brander punishments at this School increased both in number and in severity, flogging becoming the general rule rather than the isolated incident. Such draconian measures equalled and sometimes surpassed the tyranny endured in the public schools of a century ago. Such a sequence of events culminated in Mr. Brander's appointment being somewhat dramatically and suddenly terminated. It was at the time a point for consideration as to whether legal action should be taken against him; consideration that was finally influenced by the good name of the School being paramount to the possible scandal that the action would arouse.

Dr. Locke consequently feels that he is unable to recommend Mr. Brander for a post on your Staff and a senior master, Mr. Prout, who served under Mr. Brander's temporary headmastership, suggests that Mr. Brander should be reported to the Home Office for deportation procedure.

I trust that the foregoing will be of use in your decisions regarding this gentleman. I need hardly stress that what I have written should be treated in confidence.

I am, Sir

Yours & c

Secretary to the Headmaster

REUBEN GODSAVE DIES

With deep sorrow we record the death of our dear friend Reuben Godsave who was called to a higher life on 22nd January.

Reuben had been ailing for some years, and we understand that he had been in hospital for several days when the end came suddenly.

Someone, speaking to me of Reuben, commented "He was such a lovely character" - and those words are very true. Kind, generous, and loyal - he was one in a thousand. Everybody who knew him loved Reuben.

He dearly loved the London Branch of the Old Boys' Book Club, and he and his sweet wife Phyllis had entertained the club every autumn for a great many years past. The meeting at Leytonstone, with Reuben and Phyllis as the kindly hosts, was one of the highlights of the club year.

Here at Collectors' Digest he will be sadly missed. He is well-known to our readers for his scores of contributions down the years to our Nelson Lee Column. He was a joy to any editor's heart with his frequent literary essays, all of beautifully restrained length. Yes, we shall miss Reuben.

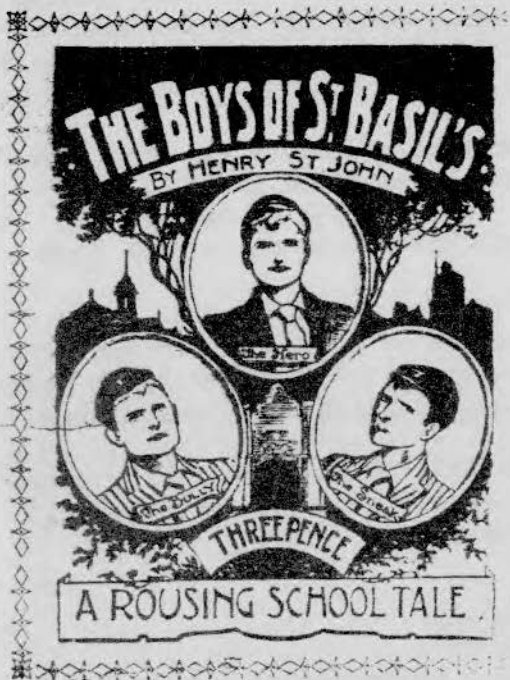
Our deepest sympathy goes to Reuben's widow, Phyllis, whom we have loved along with Reuben for so long. A further tribute will appear in next month's Collectors' Digest.

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TENDER HEARTED?

HAROLD TRUSCOTT writes: Mr. Keen has a tender heart, but there is one thing he appears not to appreciate in the Magnet and other similar stories. They are not only not real - they are a special type of myth, and only if they are accepted as such can they be properly appreciated. If we are going to have qualms of conscience every time Bunter's bullet head is knocked against a tree, or he is bumped or kicked, as just punishment for his misdeeds, obviously sitting through a Tom and Jerry cartoon is an impossibility. The whole point of such things is that no one gets hurt. That is the unreality that is real, and Hamilton knew this as well as anybody. You have to accept their world; it is no good putting them into ours.

The Newly-Published BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY
in the Autumn of 1906



- No. 5 "The Boys of St. Basil's" by Henry St. John. (Artist: Arthur Clarke.)
- No. 6 "Pete's Boyhood" by S. Clarke Hook. (Artist: J. Abney Cummings.)