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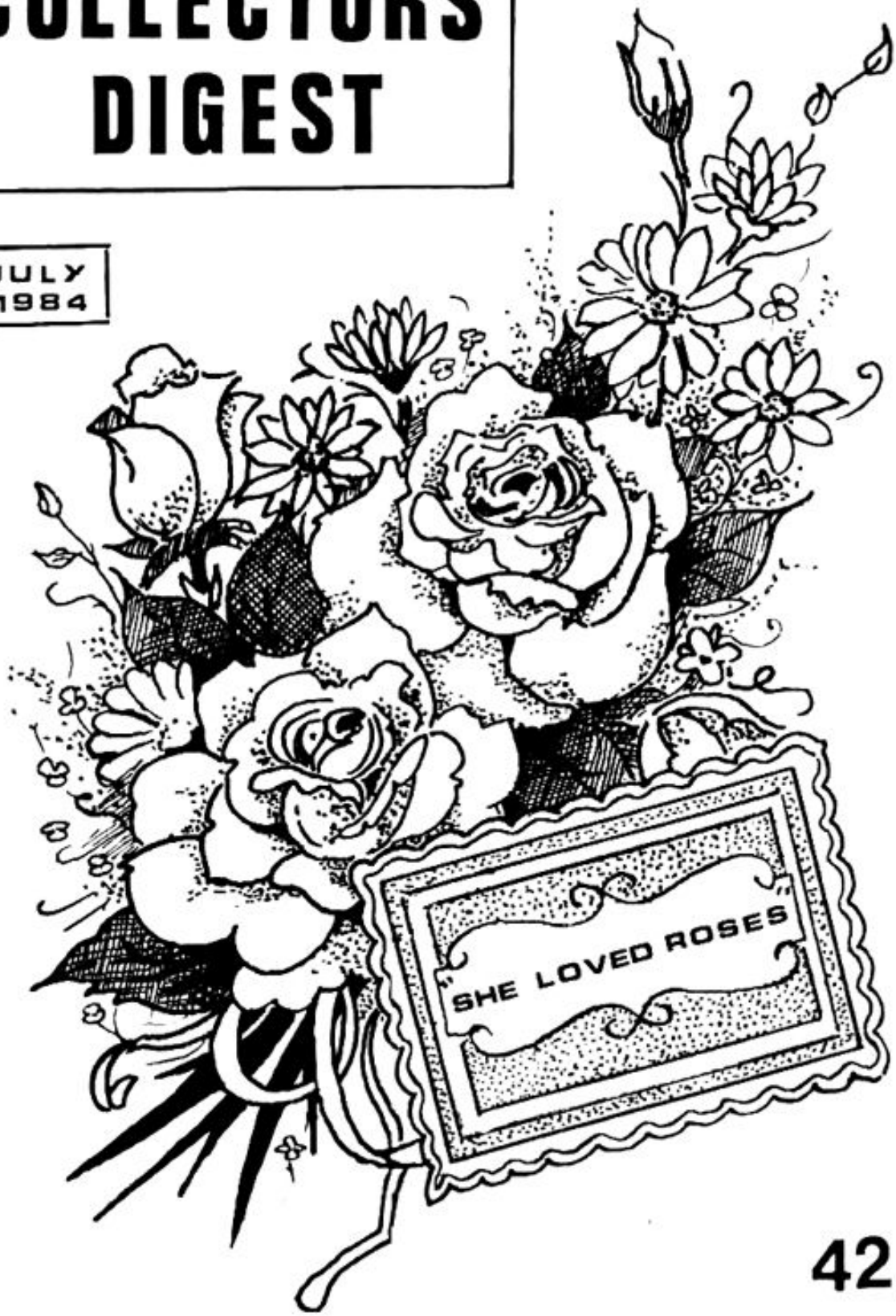

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MY THANKS

I have been deeply moved by the great wave of sympathy and understanding which has come to me since our readers learned of my bereavement. Up to the time of writing these few lines I have received over 350 cards and letters - from club members whom Madam and I have met many times, from readers whom I have never met, from Old Boys and Girls of the Modern School, from very old friends in Surbiton, from newer friends in the Church Crookham area, and from relatives, some close, some distant. All those messages of sympathy have comforted me greatly, for they are proof of the sincere and deep esteem which my beloved Madam earned so genuinely in her lifetime.

Please accept these lines as an expression of my grateful thanks to you all. As you will all understand, it is impossible for me to write personally to you to thank you, but I am very, very grateful.

Thank you, too, for the wonderful flowers which some of you sent. And thanks to those who were able to attend the memorial service. I know that those who were present at the Church service will never forget it.

It was a strange coincidence that, only a few weeks before she died, Madam said to me: "At my funeral service I want them to sing 'God Be With You Till We Meet Again'". And of course, we did sing it.

Several friends to whom I mentioned the incident have thought that she had a presentiment. I'm sure it was not so. We were chatting away happily, on that occasion, about hymns in general.

I have mentioned before in these pages, that, in the old days of the Modern School, we always had a Rally Service at Church on the Sunday, just before our annual Cricket Week commenced. We packed the Church with the latest generation of boys and girls, plus Old Boys and Girls, plus parents of the new generation and parents of past generations. Those Rally Services, down countless years, were unforgettable occasions.

We chose the hymns for the services, all old favourites - but, invariably, we always finished the service with the singing of "God Be With You Till We Meet Again". It had tremendous meaning for us then - just as it did at my beloved Madam's funeral service.

All the cards from the floral tributes were brought to me later. One of them read: "With fondest love from Jelly and Jonquil and all those boys and girls who over the years still remember 'Madam' so well". Jelly and Jonquil were my special names for two of my old Head Girls, so long ago.

The Princess Snowee keeps well at present, but I'm sure she misses her Mum very much. She is very affectionate, and doesn't stray far from my side, all the time. Maybe she is making sure that I don't leave her too.

Once again, my very dear friends, Thank You.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

"MADAM"

"MADAM"

Loving Thoughts from Eric Fayne

Madam was my stepmother. She and I made our home together for 44 years. She looked after me, and I looked after her, and we were devoted to one another. In all that time there was never an angry moment between us.

Madam was proud of her Yorkshire origin. She was born, and spent her childhood, in the Bowland district of West Yorkshire, not so many miles from the Lancashire border. In consequence, she always had a warm spot in her heart for Lancashire.

They were a closely-knit and loving family. There were four sons, spaced out over a long period, and then the youngest, a girl, arrived. They christened her Beatrice, though the name was generally shorted to Beta. And Beta spent a happy childhood in her much loved Yorkshire.

When our father told us that he had asked a young lady, considerably his junior, to marry him, I fancy that my sister and I may have been prepared to dislike her. If so, we were completely selfish, for my Dad had been a widower for seven years. However, as soon as we met her, any selfish feeling was ended. We found that we liked her enormously, and a warm liking soon became a real love.

At that time, my father was the skipper of a large sea-going yacht. His new wife, who had a great love for the sea, went with him on his voyages, and they were blissfully happy. Her sea voyages came to an end though, a couple of years later, with the

arrival of their splendid baby son. Their happiness was now complete, and, when my father was away on his trips, Beatrice stayed in their home, which they had set up in Parkstone in Dorset.

With the coming of the war my father's yachting days were ended. At Christmas 1939 we had a big family gathering at my sister's home in Gravesend in Kent. Towards the end of the holiday, when I was out for a little walk with Beatrice one day, I asked her how she and my father might care for the idea of entering school life, and coming up to Surbiton to live with me. I was intending to evacuate the residential section of the school into a safer area, way down in rural Surrey, and Beatrice would keep an eye on the welfare of the resident boys, and take charge of the catering side, while my father could make the very extensive grounds his own preserve.

She liked the idea enormously. Whether she had to persuade my father I do not know, but they were an enormous success in their new way of life. We already had, at Surbiton, a lady who was known and loved, simply as "Matron". So the new First Lady, in the section of the school out in the country, became known as "Madam". Everybody knew and loved her as just "Madam". Hundreds of old boys and girls out in the world today have the happiest memories of "Madam", and many of them have kept in close touch as the years have swept by.

Their fine son came with them into the school - a bit young, but he coped. As the years went by he became a sterling student and a great sportsman, and in his final year he became "Captain of the School". As a man he has followed an immensely successful career, a credit to his Mum and Dad and to his school.

Madam had had hospital training in earlier life, and it stood her in good stead now. If a boy was ill, she was a superb nurse. She was surely the world's finest cook. She was a gifted organiser. She could make order out of chaos with amazing speed. She was kind and generous - over generous at times, I am quite sure. She was a deeply religious woman. A genuine Believer. There was never a doubt in her outlook. She was a person who was fundamentally Good, without ever being over pious.

My father died in 1944 of a stroke. He came in from the gardens, saying he did not feel well. We got him to bed, but, though he lingered for a further day, he never spoke again. Madam hardly left his side during those tragic hours.

That was just before the "flying bomb" period started - one

fell near Charterhouse, the Public School, which was only a mile distant.

With the end of the war, the whole school, which had grown greatly during the war years, returned to Surbiton and Kingston. The bond of affection between my beloved Madam and myself grew stronger and stronger. It was a wonderful relationship. Recently, a cousin said to me: "You were always such pals". And I reckon that was the whole thing in a nutshell. I relied on her, and I fancy, she relied on me. She never let me down. I can only hope that she felt the same about me.

In the post-war years, I wrote and produced any amount of Musical Comedies and Revues with the "Excelsior Players", as we called our drama group in the school. Madam was always there - superb in her planning over costumes and the hundred and one things behind the scenes. Utterly unselfish and quite indispensable.

Then came the Hobby, and the Old Boys' Book Clubs. Madam had not known the old papers - children in villages somehow did not come on Gems and Magnets and School Friends like those in towns did. She loved books like "Jane Eyre", "Little Women", and, especially, the "Anne of Green Gables" series. When, a few years back, the whole of the Anne books were republished in hardback, I bought her the entire set, plus the "Emily" books by the same writer. Right till the end, she read the Anne books, over and over again, never tiring of them.

She loved our own meetings when the O.B.B.C. came to Kingston and, later, to Surbiton. Nothing was too much trouble for her. She rejoiced in the friendships she made in the hobby circle. She loved going away to meetings in later years for the joy of renewing old acquaintanceships.

She made and iced the huge cake for Billy Bunter, which was presented to him on the stage of the Victoria Palace one Saturday, just before the final curtain, when my small twin nieces made the presentation before the packed audience.

And when Frank Richards died, I said I was going to the funeral. There was ice and there was snow everywhere. It was the worst weather for many years. "I'm coming too", said Madam.

And she did. We didn't know whether we would get through, or, if we got through, whether we would get home that same night.

And at Frank Richards' funeral there were just four mourners - his niece, his housekeeper, Madam and me.

Those are just one or two warm memories picked out from a

thousand and more.

Basically Madam's general health was good, but she had a good deal of suffering in her time. Early in our period at Kingston, she stood on a chair in the stone-floored pantry. It tipped over, or collapsed, and she fell, injuring her spine. As a result of that, for the last 30 years or so, she had to wear a spinal belt throughout every day. She suffered much from arthritic pains from that accident onwards.

Madam had most beautiful hazel eyes, but one of them had been almost sightless from childhood. Soon after we came to Hampshire, the oculist unnerved her by telling her that a cataract had formed on the other eye. But a fine specialist told her that he would operate on both eyes, and that he had high hopes.

So she went into hospital at the time of the Queen's Silver Jubilee. The operation on the first eye gave her splendid sight in the eye which had been sightless. Then, just before Christmas, she went in again and had the second eye attended to. Once again it was a great success. Her sight was now better than it had ever been, to our joy.

A few years later came the brain haemorrhage, which kept her in hospitals for eight weeks. She made a wonderful recovery.

For a good many years she had varicose ulcers from time to time on her legs, and one treatment, penicillin, to which she was strongly allergic, landed her in hospital for two weeks last summer.

When we moved into rural Hampshire, she loved it, and so did I. She made a host of new friends, joined in the fellowship of the Church, and became very successful in the flower-arranging society which she joined. She had a gift for that sort of thing.

So, all told, these past thirteen years have been very happy ones. In the month prior to her death, she had been very much better in every way. On that Friday she was bright as a button. We went shopping together in the morning. In the afternoon, she worked happily in the garden. In the evening, she cooked our little joint for the weekend. We watched a couple of TV programmes. At 11.30, as on most nights, we listened to a fifteen minute radio religious programme from the continent.

We went upstairs. We exchanged a few kisses, and whispered a few words of love to one another, as we did every night without fail.

Less than three hours later she came into my room, switched

on my light, and said: "Send for the doctor. I'm dying".

I put out the emergency call for the doctor. I knelt by her bed-side, and held her hand. She said, clearly: "Pray for me". And then, a few moments later: "I love you".

And so my beloved Madam was taken from me.

She was a wonderful Pal, and she was a great Christian.

She was known very simply as "Madam", an echo of our distant school career, to hundreds of Old Boys and Old Girls of the Modern School, Surbiton - and to hundreds of 'Old Boys' and 'Old Girls' of the Old Boys' Book Clubs and of this magazine's readership.

In private, though, for many years past, I always called her just "Beloved". It sounds old-fashioned, and it became a habit, as pet-names do, but it came from deep, deep down in the heart. Life can never be the same for me again now she is gone.

* * *

A TRIBUTE TO C.D.'s FIRST LADY

from Mary Cadogan

I am just one of many who must feel that in Madam's passing we have lost a true and immensely dear friend. It hardly seems possible that her serene and loving presence is no longer there to help and cheer us all. She will be deeply missed, but at least we shall have the comfort of happy and long-lasting memories of her wonderful warmth and acts of kindness. My garden, for example, is at this very moment bright with flowers that have grown from cuttings provided by Madam, after I chanced to admire plants in her own garden. These flowers, lovely in themselves, will through the years be even lovelier as living reminders of our dear friend.

Tagore's words, 'In beauty of friendship, let there be laughter and sharing of pleasures' come to mind when I think of all my happy contacts with Madam. We have lost a friend, but the spirit of her many friendships will not die.

So, Au Revoir, dear Madam; may love and every blessing surround you - and Eric too, in his great loss

* * *

MEMORIES OF MADAM

by Roger M. Jenkins

I first met Madam, appropriately enough, at the Modern School in Surbiton Road where she acquired that soubrquet from generations of schoolchildren who boarded there. The year must have been 1949,

and I well remember winning one of Eric's fiendish competitions (more by luck than judgment) and being presented with a lovely cake she had baked. One of the mysteries of those times of rationing was how she managed to provide those scrumptious meals, very far from the dishwater and doorsteps of tea in Hall at Greyfriars. For many years an annual meeting at Grove Road, Surbiton, was the highlight of the London O.B.B.C. and it was consistently one of the most popular venues, with large numbers attending, sometimes topping fifty. No matter how many came, Madam could always provide more than adequate refreshments, with imperturbable calm and unstinted warmth of welcome.

One of Madam's greatest delights was her garden. At Surbiton there were over a hundred different rose bushes, and the Morning Glory was a joy to behold at the front door. At Fleet the garden, though not so big, was more rural, and she found great pleasure in her flowers until failing health forced her to curtail these activities. The art of flower arrangement was, however, one that she continued until the end, and any one who saw these artistic displays was immediately impressed by the skill that lay behind them all.

Madam's love of animals, particularly cats, was famous, though perhaps not so well-known was the serious accident she suffered when she fell off a ladder at Surbiton which she had mounted to search for a missing cat. For the rest of her days she suffered from the effects of this, but determination won through: she never allowed herself to be defeated, and she survived so many troubles that it seemed she bore a charmed life.

Travelling from the South Coast to meetings of the London Club, I regularly received invitations to lunch both at Surbiton and Fleet, and found it impossible to resist those unstinted helpings of delicious food that made all thoughts of dieting fly out of the window. Good old-fashioned hospitality was Madam's creed, and she delighted in seeing all plates cleared - and refilled. No guest of hers could ever complain about lack of attention or defective hospitality.

It was a profound shock to learn of her passing, and even now I can hardly realise that we shall never meet again in this life. I shall always treasure the memory of her kindness, her genuine concern, her desire to think the best of everyone, and her unbounded generosity. The world is a poorer place for her going.

- - -

(The incident of the ladder, referred to by Roger, occurred at Surbiton some 15 or 16 years ago, a few days before Christmas. Those who visited Excelsior House at Surbiton may recall that we had an 8 ft. wall all round the garden. Late on this evening, Madam and I had been watching a TV programme. She said: "I'll go and give Mr. Chips a call". Off she went, and I idly went on watching TV till I suddenly realised that Madam had been gone some time.

I went out into the garden, and heard Madam calling from the other side of the wall. It seemed that she had put a ladder against the wall, and went up with a torch. Apparently she saw Mr. Chips' eyes reflected in the torch light. He was in the adjoining garden. I fancy that she intended to go up on the top of the wall, holding on to the branch of a nearby tree, draw the ladder up the one side, and put it down the other. But whatever the plan may have been, it went wrong. It was a wet December night, and, as she stepped onto the top of the slippery wall, her feet slid away and she fell down heavily onto the other side.

I rushed for help, we broke down the gate of the next door garden and got in. We carried her back into the house. I telephoned for an ambulance, and it came soon after midnight. I went with her in the ambulance to Kingston Hospital, where she was x-rayed. Luckily no bones were broken. I fancy the surgical belt she always wore saved her from serious injury. The ambulance took us home just after 4 o'clock in the morning.

For some weeks Madam was in a good deal of pain, but she insisted that nothing was going to spoil Christmas for us. I got her some crutches from the Red Cross - and over Christmas, and for several weeks, this remarkable lady went on with her household duties - on crutches. - E.F.)

* *

Danny's Diary

JULY 1934

A new serial about St. Frank's, entitled "The School from 'Down Under'" has started in the Gem. A large crowd of schoolboy tourists from Australia, over in England with their parents for the Test Matches, take over temporarily the River House School to continue their studies under Australian masters. And Nipper loses no time in challenging the newcomers to a series of mini-Test Matches with St. Frank's. Bit far-fetched, but good fun and plenty of interest.

The opening St. Jim's story of the month in the Gem is "The Mechanical Man". It's another amazing invention of Bernard Glyn's. Next tale is "Tom Merry & Co.'s Regatta" in which Gussy upsets the owner of the island, and that gent decides to ban the regatta.

Then follows "Wally's Wily Wheeze" (not illustrated by Macdonald, this one) in which D'Arcy Minor sets out to ginger up Tom Merry's Weekly, the school magazine. Finally "The Marooned School", with storm and flood cutting off St. Jim's from the rest of the world, and Lumley-Lumley playing the hero's part. This one will have a sequel next week.

In real life the third Test Match with Australia has been played at Manchester. It lasted 4 days and the result was a draw.

The Grimslade stories have now ended in the Ranger. I never liked them much, but they were the best thing in the Ranger.

A most remarkable and gruesome thing has happened. Another body has been found in another trunk in Brighton. Police, searching for missing women as a result of the trunk at Brighton Railway Station, found a woman named Violette Kaye dead in a trunk in a house in the town. She had been living there with a man named Mancini, but he had disappeared. The police put out a country-wide search for Mancini, and he was picked up a few days later at Blackheath, where he was on his way to the Channel port to get to France. He has been charged with the murder of Violette Kaye.

A pretty good month in the monthlies. In the Schoolboy's Own Library is "A Film-Star's Vengeance", about the chums in Hollywood, and Harry Wharton's feud with the star, Myron Polk. This brings the marvellous Hollywood series to an end.

The other S.O.L. is "Handforth at St. Jim's", a title which tells everything. It says it is written by Martin Clifford, but it must be by Edwy Searles Brooks, and that, I should think, is a bit unsatisfactory for both writers.

There is another St. Frank's story in the Boys' Friend Library. This is "St. Frank's on Broadway", all about Nipper & Co. in New York. Another tale in the B.F.L. is "Allison of Avonshire", a county cricket story which ran as a serial in the Magnet last year, though I didn't read it.

Doug bought a Sexton Blake Library containing "The Phantom of the Pacific" by Pierre Quiroule, introducing Granite Grand and Mile. Julie.

Another new book by Agatha Christie is just published. It is called "Murder on the Orient Express". Doug has bought it, and says I can read it if I wash my hands each time I handle it.

The Mersey Tunnel has been opened by the King and Queen. It is the longest underwater roadway in the world, and a wonderful example of British engineering.

In Modern Boy, a new series of Captain Justice started with the month's first issue, the first story being "Justice & Co. - Castaways'. Justice and his comrades suddenly find themselves hurtled from Space into an African jungle - without food, weapons, or hope.

The Biggles stories still continue each week.

The sporting world has been startled by Kaye Don, the racing motorist, being sent to prison for four months for the manslaughter of his mechanic. And Madame Curie, famous for the discovery of radium or something of the sort, has died.

One evening we went to the first house at Lewisham Hippodrome. Lily Morris - I could watch her and listen to her for hours - was the big name to end the opening half of the show, and the whole of the second half was taken up with Petulengro and his 10 Lady Hussars - a band of lady musicians.

At the local cinemas we have seen "Man of Aran". This was a long documentary film, much praised, though I like a bit of story in my pictures. In the same programme was Mickey Mouse in "The Pet Store". Marlene Dietrich was in "Blonde Venus" in which she first comes on screen as a gorilla. A fairish affair, with Herbert Marshall and Cary Grant also in it. Maurice Chevalier is in "Bed-time Story", in which he has to look after an abandoned baby boy. Fairish. Spencer Tracey is in "The Mad Game", and Elissa Landi and Paul Lukas were in "By Candlelight", while John Boles and Margaret Sullavan are in "Only Yesterday". Ken Maynard in an exciting western "Flying Fury", and Clive Beatty in a circus story "The Big Cage".

The one I liked best is "Four Frightened People" starring Claudette Colbert and Herbert Marshall. Bubonic plague breaks out on a ship, and just four people managed to get ashore and trek through the jungle. Not a very good month, all told. They never have the best films on in July.

In the Thriller, they have started a series of short stories by Edgar Wallace. I may read some of them, as Doug buys this paper every week.

The new series in the Magnet concerning the expulsion of Billy Bunter, suspected of throwing ink over Mr. Prout, and the barring-out on the island as a result, has carried on through the month.

July's first tale is "In Open Revolt" which is really the beginning of the wild and woolly rebellion on the island in the river. Next "The Island Schoolboys", with all the Remove barricaded on Popper's island. Then came "The 'No-Surrender' Cricketers". Although they may be barring-out, Harry Wharton & Co. have no intention of cutting the cricket fixture with Highcliffe. But there is a spy in the ranks.

Finally, "The Secret of the Old Oak". One night a desperate man - a bank bandit, who will not hesitate to shoot - comes to the island. Fearfully exciting. The long series continues next month

Mr. Shields' illustrations to this series are simply beautiful.

The fourth Test Match against Australia was played at Leeds. It lasted for four days, and the result was a draw. So now the fate of the Ashes depends entirely on the last match which will begin at the Oval on 18th August. My word! That'll be a game.

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

The Gem story "The Mechanical Man" had been "The Jape Against St. Jim's" in the early summer of 1910. It was a sub story. "Tom Merry & Co.'s Regatta" (also a sub story) had been "The St. Jim's Regatta" a month later in 1910. "Wally's Wily Wheeze" had been "Well Played!" from earlier in 1910. "The Marooned School", the first story of another Lumley-Lumley pair, had been "For the Head's Sake", and came from a year later in the summer of 1911.

S.O.L. No. 223 "A Film-Star's Vengeance" comprised the fifth and final instalment of the 16-story Magnet Hollywood series of early 1929. S.O.L. No. 224 "Handforth at St. Jim's" comprised three stories from the 4-story series of the Gem of early summer 1928.

Boys' Friend Library No. 439 "St. Frank's on Broadway" was not advertised as a "new" story, as had been the case with a St. Frank's yarn in the B.F.L. a month earlier, so this may have been a reprint of the start of a series set in the States which appeared in the Nelson Lee in 1923. Our St. Frank's experts may be able to tell us.

Sexton Blake Library No. 440 "The Phantom of the Pacific" had appeared in the S.B.L. under the same title in the Spring of 1922.

* *

BLAKIANA

conducted by Josie Packman

"OLD WIFE'S TALE?" by James Hodge

Let me at once confess that as far as the Blake Saga is concerned I am the complete tyro, which is a posh way of admitting my total ignorance. Breaking the golden rule to only "Write what you know about", my only excuse is that Josie has said she is short of material for 'Blakiana' and that a public display of my ignorance may provoke the wrath of the experts to such an extent that her column will be replenished for the fore-seeable future; I am, if you like, a sort of sacrificial lamb.

Writing of Sexton Blake reminds me of, if you will pardon the expression, Sherlock Holmes. Apart from their very similar literary longevity and their depressant effect upon crime statistics, a major characteristic they shared was their apparent reluctance to acknowledge the existence of the opposite sex.

For Holmes, THE woman was Irene Adler and this not for love but because she had outwitted him; a cerebral passion whose only payment for services rendered to the King of Bohemia.

The women in Blake's life?. Well, I agree that his response to them was sometimes more a thing of corpuscles than brain cells and the appeal of Roxane, Yvonne Cartier and others did not just stem from their respective I.Q.s. As for that truly fatal femme, Marie Galante, any close encounter with her could well result in the blood running furiously in the far from romantic sense. With her, one-armed embraces were the mutual order of the day, your free hand held behind your back clutched an automatic to counter the stiletto she held behind hers - a striking similarity to the sex-life of the spider!

The point of all this (an you may justifiably think I could have got round to it quicker) is - What DID happen to Sexton Blake's wife?

The only reason I ask this simple question (apart from trying to help Josie, as I have already explained light years back) is that as I write I have in front of me a copy of 'The Saturday Book', No. 6, dated 1946, opened at an article on Sexton Blake written by one Mr. Reginald Cox, in which he quotes from a letter from Maurice Bond who, as all you older timers than me will recall, edited 'Blakiana' in CD in the late '40s. In his letter Mr. Bond states that "Around 1901-2 in an old companion-paper to the UJ" there appeared "A serial entitled 'King of Detectives' by an unknown author" and that "In this serial Blake was married and references to his wife were made from time to time".

I am, alas, a comparative newcomer to CD, and all this may have been investigated in the times before my time. Perhaps, then, to avoid piling on the boredom for any who have persevered this far, I might widen the scope of my curiosity a little and ask - Did Maurice Bond, in early CDs, ever expand on this alleged marriage of Blake? Who was (or still is) Mr. Reginald Cox (in his essay he avows himself a Blake devotee since 1918)? What was the title of the companion-paper to UJ, 1901-2, to which Maurice Bond referred?

Lastly, what DID happen to Blake's wife?

Or is it all, sadly, no more than my title-heading might seem to suggest?

FORTY YEARS OF SEXTON BLAKE - Part One

by W. O. G. Lofts

It does not seem possible that it is forty years since I first read a Sexton Blake story. Father time catches up with all of us in time though in this hobby of ours, we all like to remain Peter Pan's at heart. Curiously I did not read Sexton Blake at all as a boy, or indeed a youth. At the age of fourteen I put all my boyhood reading behind me, showing not the slightest bit of interest from then on. I devoted all my spare time to sport and especially athletics, as well as playing football and cricket. If not actually on the running track or field, I loved nothing better to watch cricket at Lords. Reading of any sort just did not appeal to me in the slightest.

I suppose it could be said, that I discovered Sexton Blake in a most unusual manner that is probably unique in our hobby. Indeed it may have come out top in one of the many polls M. W. Twyman editor of The Union Jack conducted amongst his readers in "how I discovered Blake". Today the S.A.S. army units are front page news, for either their efforts in Embassy sieges, or in the combat zones. Tough and highly efficient, they are actually far from being a new type of military unit, for I was in a similar group during the last war, in my case specially trained in jungle fighting to mop up the Japanese patrols, as well as the numerous snipers who usually hid in trees. They could exist for days and weeks on end on bags of rice, plus a few bottles of water. Indeed our special unit was far ahead of the infantry, when my special job with a big wireless pack strapped on my back, was to relay enemy positions back to our gunnery unit.

To carry this set in the steamy sweltering heat across firm narrow strips of turf in paddy fields, would have done credit to a tightrope walker, as well as carrying a bren-gun at the ready. After crossing such a field, and again entering dense jungle, hacking through the dense undergrowth with matchets to clear a path, we came to an obviously deserted village in a small clearing. It had obviously been previously occupied by Japanese troops by the various relics left behind. It was on the floor of a 'Basher' (native hut) that I saw in the dust a copy of an English paperback. On examination, I saw that it was entitled 'The Sexton Blake Library' and the authors name was 'Anthony Parsons'. Stuffing this in the large pocket in front of my jungle green trousers, I thought at least it would be something to read in one of the rare quiet moments of resting -when not on guard - to perhaps take my

mind off for a while the horrible thoughts of War.

* *

Nelson Lee Column

THE LAST FAREWELL by Jack Hughes

William Lister is a little premature in his 'goodbyes' to Exra Quirke (C.D. Annual '83). It is true, as Mr. Lister hopes, that Edwy Searles Brooks did not forget this eerie and quite remarkable character. The first appearance of Ezra led to a splendid Nelson Lee series, well worthy of reprint by Howard Baker as well as in The Schoolboy's Own.

The second series about Quirke, at Raithmere Castle, rather lessened the impact of this unique boy as he seemed rather to hover about in the edge of the crowd who went to make up the story.

But not forgotten Mr. Brooks brings him to the fore yet again. This time in Nelson Lee for October 17th, 1931, only a year to go before original or new stories of St. Franks would give way to repeats.

In Issue 91 we have the first of three stories. Their titles make obvious that the master has not lost his touch: The Riddle of the Seven Stars; The Curse of Osra; The Menaced Schoolboys.

The atmosphere is set at once:

'"Burrrh" shivered Reggie Pitt as he opened the great door of the Ancient House. "By jingo, it's blustery".

He was right. A roaring gust of wind sweeping across the triangle hit the Ancient House forcibly and the door was nearly torn from Pitt's hands.'

...' only the whining of the wind through the chestnuts could be heard. It was a pitch-black, blustery October evening'.

In a short while the chums will have seen Seven blood red stars grouped in the night sky; then 'with a hideous sort of fascination that held them' they see:

'The apparition, so red, so dim - and yet strangely enough, so clearly defined - was the figure of an extraordinary - looking man. They could see his rich flowing robe, his peculiar head gear; his mask like face and the eyes. They weren't like human eyes, for they glowed with a blood-red depth, and they had in them a relentlessness, a menace, which

was terrible to behold.'

However it was to be Browne and Biggleswade who would be the first to sight Ezra Quirke. In the centre of the Triangle, 'distinct in the flood of light from the Ancient House doorway which was wide open'.

'The figure was that of a boy of about fifteen or sixteen, but he was no ordinary looking boy. He was slim, and he wore a long black overcoat which made him look taller than he actually was. He was bareheaded, and his lank hair had been so rudely disturbed by the wind that it drifted over his head and over his face in matted untidy masses. The face itself was almost expressionless; pale to the point of chalkiness, mask-like, with flat eyes which stared unseeingly. But, most remarkable of all, an owl sat upon his right shoulder, its great eyes wide open and staring.'

Earlier, 'Vivian Travers, cool, immaculate and self possessed as ever' had received a package containing a strange ring, from his father who was in Egypt. The ring was once the property of 'Raamses, a venerable johnny who used to be High Priest of the Temple of Osra'. Bought from a coolie for fifty or one hundred pounds. "My father's a bit lavish that way." (One of the ancient treasures of Egypt bought for fifty quid. Generous indeed. I read somewhere that the site of Melbourne was bought from the aborigines for a few glass beads and some blankets by another enterprising white man.)

And so, Ezra will remain at the college for several weeks. He promises that only bad luck can come to the owner of the Raamses ring. Soon Travers is crippled in a footer match. And who is the man whom Ezra meets at night in secret? A man with 'a hideous face - a face which was twisted so grotesquely that the mouth was all askew, and there was an ugly scar running across the right cheek'.

Mystery and terror have come all unbidden to St. Frank's once again. In fact, as Travers said hoarsely, '"It's not one mystery - but dozens. They keep piling one on top of another. What can it all mean?"'.

Thus, we privileged readers of the Lee all those long years ago, did have that one last opportunity to meet Ezra Quirke. Then it would need to be the last farewell...
unless of course we wander down to Market Donnington and enquire at a certain cottage... he may still be there, practising his

hypnotism, petting his owl, planning new black magic.

* *

IN PRAISE OF MR. QUELCH by E. Baldock

Mr. Henry Samuel Quelch, M.A., master of the Remove Form at Greyfriars School. Very much a law unto himself within the framework of the governing system. Certainly the ultimate voice of justice in his own form, an oftimes good, yet sometimes recalcitrant selection of young gentlemen containing the widest spectrum of characters ranging from Skinner, Snoop and Stott through to such stalwarts as Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry and Lord Mauleverer.

All are well acquainted with his disciplinary foibles. All know, many to their cost, the gimlet eye which has seemingly the uncanny quality of observing in all directions at one and the same time. Many, in particular William George Bunter, are acquainted with that symbol of authority and correction the cane, which when wielded skilfully becomes an exquisite instrument to be avoided when possible. Yet all are unamimous in agreeing that although at times he is considered a 'Beast', he is also recognised as a 'Just Beast', and where his boys are concerned a worthy champion.

As a form master he cannot happily 'sport his oak'; he can only pray for a period of non-interruption in his leisure moments. The common room is, or course, neutral territory wherein for certain short intervals during the day one may seek immunity, although even here he may be prone to the verbal attacks of certain garrulous colleagues. But safely entrenched and concealed behind the pages of the 'Times' he will be in a fair way to being safe.

I like to think of Mr. Quelch quietly and snugly ensconced in his study after a trying day with his form, relaxing in dressing gown and slippers, seated at his desk, his typewriter before him - was it a Remington I wonder? - with a neat pile of old manuscripts and notes beside him and the delightful prospect of an hour or so working on his Magnum Opus, his celebrated (already) 'History of Greyfriars'.

Or, the day's duties behind him, enjoying a learned discussion on one of the more obscure translatory problems in Aeschylus with Dr. Locke in the Head's private sanctum, with - who knows - the port decanter oscillating between them. Or again, oblivious of the world at large, to Bunter and all the minor irritants encountered in his calling as a form master, with head bent over the chess board at the vicarage locked intitanic struggle with his long time

friend the Vicar. The guardian of souls and the keeper of youth engaged in silent and friendly combat. It conjures up a very pleasant picture of Mr. Quelch 'Off Duty'.

Then again, we see his angular figure attired in Homburg hat and coat, with swinging stick striding over Courtfield Common bent upon one of his long and solitary 'tramps' so dear to his heart. While the obverse side of the picture presents the same angular striding figure this time accompanied by a short, rotund perspiring gentleman manfully striving to keep pace and scorning to suggest a slightly lower rate of progress. That of Paul Pontifex Prout, the redoubtable master of the fifth form. One may suspect that Quelch with a certain grim satisfaction may indeed add an inch to his stride upon these occasions as a silent rebuke to his colleague's obese condition.

Thus in so many ways we see this well loved figure so familiar to us for upwards of eight decades, maintaining discipline in his own inimitable way. We see his 'crusty' features, over which softer emotions are very apt to play despite his reputed acidity. For many, especially those among us who, as Charles Hamilton so succinctly put it, are approaching the 'sere and yellow leaf'.

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

1924

The chara-banc, open to the sky, snorted along under the golden July sunset. Leslie Chadley was holding his baby daughter in his arms, and Lizzie sat beside him, a blissful expression on her face.

"It was the most wonderful experience of my life", she said to her husband. "When Ethel grows up, she will be able to tell all her friends that she went to the Wembley Exhibition".

"Yet she won't remember a thing about it all", commented her husband, "While I shall have corns on my feet for the remainder of my life. Still, it's been worth it".

The 'charry' stopped by the wayside, and the driver drew the attention of his passengers to some object of interest in the distance. He laid down his megaphone, the vehicle jerked into motion again, and the two dozen travellers resumed their conversation.

"Take Ethel for a while, and I'll read a bit of the 'Gem'", suggested Chadley to his wife.

"It's a peach of a story", said Lizzie, as the sleeping infant was transferred to her arms. "It's called 'The Housemaster's Mistake". Figgins hides a ten-pound note in Ratty's Livy, and Ratty accuses Cutts of stealing the money. Later on, Cutts ---"

"Elizabeth Chadley", said her husband, sternly, "will you kindly refrain from your usual pernicious pratice of telling me the details of the plot before I read it?"

1925

"It's the first really good story for months", said Leslie Chadley. "It's called 'The Mystery of Holly Lodge', it stars the Terrible Three, and Mony Lowther's uncle is kidnapped."

Major Venner frowned. He said: "Don't tell me the story, Chadley - it will spoil it for me". He lit his pipe and puffed at it contentedly, while the newsagent served a couple of customers.

After they had gone, the Major said: "The last good 'Gem' was that April fools story - 'Fooled on the First', wasn't it called? I read it the night Madame Tussaud's burned down".

"Tussaud's burned in March", reminded Chadley.

"It's not important." The Major picked up the 'Gem'. "My boy has qualified, Chadley. He can call himself Doctor Venner now. It's been an expensive business, but worth every penny we spent on him."

"Wonderful news, sir", said Chadley.

"We're celebrating tonight. Going to see 'Ben Hur' at the Tivoli in the Strand."

"I hear it's a fine film", said the newsagent. "The orchestra and the sound effects are wonderful, too, so they tell me. Lizzie and I will have to wait till it comes to the Picturedrome next door, if it ever does. It looks as though it will run at the Tivoli for ever."

1926

The three men who entered the shop were bent on mischief - Chadley could see that at a glance. He resolved to humour them. After all, discretion is the better part of valour.

"Yes, sir", he enquired of the man who was obviously the leader. They were all young men, probably no more than twenty, but they had the term loafer written all over them.

"Paper - and quick about it", said the leader. The other two stood a foot behind him, on either side of him, grinning.

"There are no papers during the General Strike", said Chadley, mildly. "Then what's this? Ask him if he's a strike-breaker, Charley-Boy", jeered one of the followers. He picked up a copy of the 'Gem', and waved it in the air.

Charley-Boy snatched up a second copy of the periodical.

"Yes, what's this, while the strike's on?" he shouted.

Chadley drew a deep breath. He said: "Don't make a noise, please - you will frighten my little girl. That paper is the 'Gem'. Papers like that are printed many weeks in advance - they were delivered to me before the strike began."

Charley-Boy read out the title of the story:

"'Figgins' Sacrifice'. Who's Figgins?"

"He's a character in the story."

"What's his sacrifice?"

Chadley compressed his lips. With an effort of self-control he said: "Money was stolen in the story. Figgins believed that his girl friend had taken it, so he tried to take the blame himself."

There was a burst of laughter from Charley-Boy.

"This bloke's a strike-breaker all right - a real blackleg. This is for you, Mr. Blackleg."

He produced a brick from under his coat, and hurled it at the shop window. There was a crash as the glass shattered into a hundred pieces. The second man swept papers and boxes from the counter to the floor. The third picked up the shop chair, and swung it round, smashing the electric light bulbs and fittings.

When, ten minutes later, two policemen entered, Chadley and his wife were forlornly collecting broken glass into a zinc bath.

"Who did it?" asked one of the officers.

Chadley shook his head.

"Strikers, perhaps. More likely hooligans, not strikers at all - louts just out to cause destruction. I'd never seen them before to the best of my knowledge."

The second officer said: We'll get 'em."

He spoke without conviction.

NEXT MONTH - 1927

News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

MIDLAND

Eleven members put in an appearance for our lively and interesting May meeting, which was the A.G.M. It was good to see Tom Porter inthe Chair again after his illness, and also Ted Sabin who is receiving hospital treatment.

A report from our treasurer, Ivan Webster, showed that our finances are healthy and means of investing some of the surplus, to gain interest, were discussed.

Tom Porter put on display Gem No. 954 "The Shadow of a Shame", 58 years old to the day, and a beautifully bound volume of S.B.L.'s, 5th series. Tom said that his wife was very fond of the S.B.L. when she was alive.

We continued the discussion of the possibility of Greyfriars being wiped out by a new motorway. All were against the idea.

A fine new game, by Vince Loveday, called "Hamilton Families" (based on "Happy Families") proved a great success. Those who finished with the most cards were the winners. Your Correspondent finished with just one card - typical of his luck at card games.

Meetings will be held on 31st July and 21st August for those who are interested and free.

Refreshments were excellent. Joan Golen and the Lovedays provided the eatables, and Joan Golen paid for the tea and coffee. We really should not let her do this. Next month, I will pay for the tea and coffee.

Best Wishes to O.B.B.C. enthusiasts everywhere.

JACK BELLFIELD (Correspondent)

CAMBRIDGE O.B.B.C.

The Cambridge Club met at the home of Bill Thurbon on Sunday, 3rd June. The Secretary reported, with deep regret, the great loss suffered by Eric Fayne in the death of Madam. Bill Thurbon had telephoned our sympathy to Eric, and he, and Jack Overhill, had written to Eric on behalf of the club.

This being the annual meeting of the Club, Keith Hodkinson and Vic Hearne gave their respective reports, as secretary and treasurer. Both these were very satisfactory; and they were respect-

ively re-elected with acclamation. It was agreed that the subscription should remain unaltered for nextyear. Mike Rouse had asked to be relieved of the vice-chairmanship. Thanks were recorded to him for his services. Edward Witten was elected Vice-Chairman.

Bill Thurbon spoke on Rider Haggard as a story teller. As a young man Haggard had spent some time in South Africa at the time of of the Zulu and first Boer Wars. On returning to England Haggard was training to become a Barrister. In the course of a train journey to London his brother bet him a "bob" (5p) that he couldn't write a story half so interesting as Stevenson's "Treasure Island", then just published. Haggard took the bet, and in six weeks had written "King Solomon's Mines". This went the round of the publishers and finally reached Cassells. They offered Haggard either £100 down for the mss. or a small royalty. On a whispered warning from a clerk, Haggard took the royalty. The book was an enormous success, and Haggard was launched on his career as a writer. His character, Umslopogaas was to inspire Cecil Hayter's "Lobangu" and "M'Wama", Brooks' "Umlosi", and Reginald Wray's "Phantom Gold" among many others.

In five years Haggard wrote four great stories: King Soloman's Mines", "She", "Allan Quatermain", and "Nada the Lily". Haggard was to write altogether 42 romances, 12 modern novels, and a number of works of non fiction.

After a short quiz by Edward members adjourned for tea. When the meeting resumed Keith talked about the annual volumes of the Boys Own paper, some of which could be found bound up with the supplements. He produced a large number of specimen volumes and single copies illustrating the effect of the wartime paper restrictions on the B.O.P. He spoke about the various stories, including Biggles, and a 1944 serial "Mariners of Space" which was the first B.O.P. essay in science fiction since it had published Jules Verne.

To great applause Edward then recited Stanley Holloway's monologue, "Albert and the Lion"!

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to Bill and Mrs. Thurbon for their hospitality.

LONDON

Fine weather was enjoyed by the score of members making the journey to the Greyfriars home of Betty and Eric Lawrence. It was

nice to see both Louie Blythe and Marjorie Norris at the gathering.

Reference was made by the chairman, Chris Harper, to the great loss we all had sustained in the passing of Madam of blessed memory. Eric Lawrence spoke of his attendance at the church service.

Down Memory Lane excerpt was read by Duncan Harper.

From the C.D. Annual of 1971, Chris Harper read Tony Glyn's article "Once there was a War". It mentioned the Knockout and the Knock Out Library and at the conclusion of the reading, a lively debate took place.

Helen McClellan's Autobiography on Elaeanor Brent Dyer was the subject of a tape played over, its title being "Behind the Chalet School". Once again a discussion followed and those members who are interested in girls stories should visit the Bethnal Green Musuem where the Jolly Hockey Sticks exhibition is now on show until 30th September.

Mention was made of the Oxford paper-back "London Particulars". Subtitled "Memories of an Edwardian Boyhood" it is written by C. H. Rolph. It mentions the Magnet, Gem and Boys' Friend. Eric Lawrence's Music Quiz was won by Thelma Bradford and in second place was Alan Stewart.

Betty and Eric were suitably thanked for their hospitality.

Next meeting at the Ealing home of Bill and Thelma Bradford on Sunday, 8th July, full tea provided. Kindly advise if attending.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held: Saturday, 8th June, 1984

Geoffrey Good had brought an article that had appeared in "The Times", concerning old boys' books: Harry Blowers produced a copy of "This England" for Winter, 1983, in which appeared an article - illustrated - being a tribute to comic artists. He had also brought along a copy of "Yorkshire Life" for Summer, 1976, in which appeared an article about our hobby and the Northern Club in particular, on the occasion of their celebrations of Charles Hamilton's centenary of his birth. This article was considered to be amongst the best ever printed: often, facts are wrongly given or the whole article is "tongue in cheek" or very flippant, when written by someone not really involved in our hobby.

Jack Allison paid a tribute to Madam and although he had never

met her, referred to at least one letter from Eric Fayne which truly indicated that Madam played a very important role in the production of the C.D. Jack mentioned that the present issue of the C.D., marked a great achievement - the 450th issue and referred to the 400th edition in which the Northern and London Clubs joined forces to produce a special inserted tribute to our Editor. Jack read the poem we had composed for that tribute and asked us to find the misprint - but none of us was able, and it seemed that Madam had liked the poem "mistake or no mistake"!

Keith Smith read an article that had appeared in C.D. number 167 in which William had appeared at the London O.B.B.C.! All a bit of fun - but was a follow up to Darrell's comments about the successful William Meeting that had been held in Nottingham on 28th April, with 40 people attending. Amongst those speaking, were the niece of Richmal Crompton, and the daughter of Thomas Henry the illustrator - and Bill Lofts had talked about the William Bibliography.

Reference was made to a publication entitled "Novels and Novelists" in which reports were given of some publishers' assessments regarding the works of authors. It was interesting to note the comments re. Frank Richards first post-war Bunter book "Billy Bunter Of Greyfriars School" and a book by G. A. Henry. F. R. had been awarded 1 out of 5 for literary merit, and G. A. H. 3 out of 5. For characterisation, F. R. 2 out of 5, G. A. H. 1 out of 5. For plot - F. R. 2 out of 5, G. A. G. 1 out of 5. It caused some discussion, but as no-one was a follower of G. A. Henty, there was no way in which we could get our teeth into the subject!

To conclude, Keith played a tape of Noel Coward singing "Mad Dogs and Englishmen" and we had to try and associate this with our hobby. It seemed, that in his autobiography, Noel Coward had stated that he had been a keen reader of "The Magnet" and the stories of Frank Richards.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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With regret we have to inform readers that, to keep pace with rising costs, the price of C.D. must increase to 47p from our next issue.

* *

The Postman Called

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

RONNIE HUNTER (Ventnor): I was interested in the reference to the tune "MOTHER'S SMILE" mentioned by "Danny" in his Diary for May 1934. By sheer co-incidence I picked up a 78 recording of this tune, together with various other 78's, in some Auction rooms in Freshwater about a couple of months ago. The 78 I picked up of "MOTHER'S SMILE" is the version by Debroy Somers Band, Columbia dark blue label (10 inch), No. CB108 (a 1930 recording). I can't quite "place" the vocalist (who is un-named on the label) but the tune is certainly a pleasant, catchy, bright and breezy one - and the words tender. The tune on the reverse is "THE SACRED FLAME" (Theme song from the Talkie "The Sacred Home"). The vocalist for this latter tune is named on the label as Dan Donovan. As you know I have been collecting 78's of 1920's, 1930's, etc. Dance Band, etc. music for many years and my collection goes from strength to strength.

JACK HUGHES (Queensland): Thanks to Len Wormull's piece in C.D. 419 in which he recommends the reading of James Hilton's MURDER AT SCHOOL, and because Editor Eric commented on this story in C.D. 421 with a note that there had been a title change, I have been searching the second hand book stalls these past two years in the hopes I might have a chance to read the book. Now I discover that it is still in print, and from Dover publications, New York, I have just received a soft cover edition of WAS IT MURDER? Anyone wanting a copy, your search is ended. Dover Publications Inc., 180 Varick Street, New York, N.T., 10014. Cost $3 plus post.

LESLIE E. KING (Chesham): Despite everything, I do hope you will continue to edit and publish the C.D. I look forward so very much to receiving it each month. It is a nostalgic light in an otherwise disturbed and not very happy world for me - and, no doubt, also for many others.

GEOFFREY CRANG (Buxton): You have Princess Snowee, and I know what comfort animals can and do give. You also have your great work with C.D. - and WE NEED YOU.

CHARLES CHURCHILL (Topsham): In the footnote to Danny's Diary, you mentioned that B.F.L. No. 435 "Schemer of St. Frank's", was advertised as a new story. According to Bob Blythe's Nelson Lee Guide, this was an original story. I have never read it, but, if it is anything like another "original" entitled "The Idol of St. Frank's", it's pretty awful, and, as I pointed out in an article in C.D. some while ago, "Idol" was certainly not by Brooks, though he may have provided the plot. What would you think if you read a Gem in which D'Arcy was in the Fifth Form - things like that. This is the sort of thing occurring in "Idol of St. Frank's".

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: "Idol of St. Frank's", of course, appeared in 1922, 12 years before "Schemer of St. Frank's".)

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HOLIDAY FROM SCHOOL by Ernest Holman

From time to time, a change from reading the school stories of the Companion Papers occurs; when this happens, my immediate choice is generally Wodehouse. At other times, the Sherlock Holmes stories are selected.

On less frequent occasions, however, I like to have a re-dip into 'other' yarns that form my own favourites. Within the past two years or so I have taken some of these from the shelves and once again thoroughly enjoyed them. I wonder how they measure up with other readers' choices?

Talbot Baines Reed is not everyone's selection and, apart from ' St. Dominics', there are only two that really appeal to me: 'Cock House at Fellsgarth' and 'Master of the Shell'. These two I always find very readable; other TBR books make little appeal, especially the very over-stressed coincidences in 'Dog With a Bad Name'.

Edgar Wallace used to form much of my reading in the late 20s and into the 30s. Nowadays, however, I find his mystery stories have generally lost the grip that once existed. I have always believed that Wallace was at his best when writing plays; the only novels of mystery of his that I now turn to are, in fact, the stories of some of his plays. I would include here 'The Ringer' and 'The Fightened Lady'; plus the horse racing story of 'The Calendar', a good drama instead of a mystery. (Perhaps with memories of the early issues of 'Thriller' the stories of J. G. Reeder are quite good, for an occasional perusal.) Outside of

Wallace's usual patter, the 'Sanders' stories are my especial favourites; so, to a lesser extent, are the amusing events of the Cockney Tipster, 'Educated Evans'.

Other recent readings have included Conan Doyle's 'Lost World' and James Hilton's 'Lost Horizon' and the short but fascinating 'Chips'. The volume of 'Bulldog Drummond's Four Rounds with Carl Peterson' came off the shelves not long ago. So, also, did a three-story volume of Rider Haggard. 'King Solomon's Mines' always seems to go down well, although I think that 'Allan Quatermain' is by far the better adventure story. 'She' is not a great favourite, though I read it because it comes in between the two previously-mentioned tales in the volume. (It is possible that the land of 'eternal youth' in 'She' might have been at the back of Hilton's mind when he penned 'Lost Horizon'?)

'The Prisoner of Zenda' has a prominent place amongst re-reads, although (as with 'Quatermain') I find the sequel 'Rupert of Hentzau' the better of the two stories. Wren's 'Beau Geste' is a generally good read. (I obtained from the local Library a little while ago the two later stories that made up a trilogy, 'Beau Sabreur' and 'Beau Ideal', but would not want them as possessions.)

Of more recent date than the foregoing, I have been looking again at the James Herriot chronicles. I have also just completed a re-reading of a story by John Harris entitled 'Covenant with Death'. This is far removed from any other stories mentioned herein: nevertheless it is compelling reading, telling the story of Kitchener's Army from formation up to the Battle of the Somme.

I am now a very long way from the Hobby sphere; well, it's never difficult to return there. Whenever I read 'something different' I always turn immediately afterwards to the Companion Papers. As Bob Cherry would remark, after a long adventure trip abroad, 'It's jolly to get back again!'.

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TINKERING

by Francis Hertzberg

I did not mean to 'confuse the issue' about the Bunter re-hashes, and certainly did not say anything which could be taken as support for the 'tinkering and tampering'. Readers who remember my words about new money equivalents in C.D. will know what I feel about such changes! But I did write, and Mr. Kadish apparently

agrees, that, sadly, there is need for some pruning - a practice indulged in from the earliest Hamiltonian days by editors of re-printed stories. Mr. Kadish's other point is intimately related. He asks "Why... are we all so obsessed with changing every thing?". The political tinkerers and tamperers who took away our stability by depriving us of our roots were either ignorant of the value of such roots - or they were very well aware of that value, and realised the only way they could build their Brave New World was by destroying them. Interestingly, as your original Editorial comment which provoked my words, this thirst for change is not only a secular phenomenon restricted to one country - it is found throughout the Western world, and in religion also. Indeed the coincidences are so many that it is hard to think it can all be mere random chance: can it really be coincidence that (one example from many) the thousand year Latin Mass should have been destroyed in the same year that the death-warrant of our thousand year counties was signed? Or that in both cases an examination of the strict legal position, as opposed to what we have been led to believe, shows that no legal destruction actually took place? (The subject is dealth with in my ROOTS publications, available for a stamp.)

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MEMORIES by Horace Dilley

What a feast of nostalgia is brought back as each month I read "Danny's Diary". Fifty years ago I was then in my teens but my schooldays roughly occupied the 1920's. Items, for instance dealing with a cricket test match, what was on at the cinemas, and other notable events, flash back to mind. And of course, the titles of the stories in the "Magnet", etc.

Memories are made of this. Travelling back through the tunnel of time, I can well remember playing football over our local common. We had no recreation ground as such in those days. We would go over there after tea and the first thing was to pick up sides. There were usually a couple of lads who were tailor made to act as the captains. One invariably owned the football and if he didn't act as captain,then there was no game! The teams were selected next. One to each side from the assembled company and when it got to the fag end (which usually included me), the lads were hardly worth including.

Not all of us had football boots. I had managed to pick up a second hand pair, which pinched here and there, and even if I

didn't enjoy the game, I got quite a lot of pleasure in taking off the boots. For shin pads we had "Sexton Blake's "tucked into our socks - for some reason or another, it was seldom a "Schoolboys' Own Library" was used.

I recall so well the host of other school games we played. During the season, conkers, were a popular past-time. Conkers were sometimes baked in the oven - this was reputed to make them more tough.

Hopscotch in the playground. The better positions in the playground went to the bigger lads who had a way with them, and they invariably put their initials at the foot of the squares and woe betide any younger lads if they were caught having the temerity to use their territory.

Of course the Magnets and Gems, etc., were widely read by the lads (and also the girls) and there would be a lot of swapping going on in the playground. Now and again, one of the bigger bully boys would pick on a timid lad and use him as an "unofficial" fag.

Cigarette cards were immensely popular. I can recall so well the sets of 50 I had. "Cries of London", "Do you know?", "Struggles for Existence" and then I can recall some beautiful silk flags of the the nations given away with one of the brand of cigarettes.

Marbles was a popular playground activity. A whip and a top was an active sport. It was not possible to play this game in the playground, because it wasn't big enough and in any case other children would soon kick the top over. However, we often used to play in the roads and although the surface left a lot to be desired, we often kept spinning for a long time. Motor vehicles were few and far between and the only interruption we got (and I lived in a market gardening area) was when a horse and cart came ambling along and even then we were able sometimes to keep the top going using the other side of the road. We sometimes used a squat top called an hobblededick. (I don't know whether that is spelt right or not.)

When I pass through the village in these days - the roads are very busy - I can remember all those years ago the Sunday open air services of the Salvation Army with their band. They were held at the various "T" junctions in the village, and it was seldom that they ever had to move to let any traffic through.

Looking back, all the games we used to play were so simple - they cost practically nothing - but what pleasures they brought to us. We had no radio - no television - none of the other modern

amusements. By and large we behaved ourselves. We had the "Magnet" and the "Gem". We had the "Nelson Lee" and the "Popular". We couldn' afford to buy the lot but we swapped them around. And, of course, what excitement it caused when we went to the cinema on the odd occasion. They were great days... almost enveloped in the mists of time... but not quite.

So it is that "Danny's Diary" has sparked off these old memories for me...it could well be that is why "Collector's Digest" has to go on.

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LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY by William Lister

Long ago and far away, the district near Blackpool, known as the Fylde, was also known as Windmill Land. I say "long ago and far away" because, over 60 years ago, when as a boy I used to cycle round to see them, they were derelict even then.

Most have now ceased to exist. A few remain. For instance, the Marsh Mill at Thornton, which has been restored.

And what, the reader may ask, have windmills to do with Nelson Lee and the boys of St. Frank's? But those who know the Monster Library and the Schoolboys' Own Library will have come across the St.Frank's windmill. If St. Frank's needed anything as a background to the school's adventures, then St. Frank's got it. Due to their creator and benefactor, Edway Searles Brooks, St. Frank's got a windmill.

I' m glad, for windmills are fascinating things. Even after 60 years I can remember standing a few yards from a rather ramshackle building - a windmill - the ghost of its former self. Bathed in the light of the full moon, ghostly is the word for it. I stood transfixed, expecting any moment to be surrounded by bats and supernatural beings.

The Windmill that was provided for background scenery in "The Fighting Form of St. Frank's" seems much akin to its Fylde brothers. Let me view it through the eyes of E.S.B.

"It was a somewhat ramshackle building, standing on the moor, but still thoroughly weather proof and plenty of room in it."

However, in this case one gets a better view from the cover illustration. Standing on huge wooden beams, surrounded at a reasonable height by a circular wooden verandah, it is in a dangerous state of disrepair. Windows are of varying heights.

Through these windows appear the head of a Third Form school-

boy, reminding one of those chimney-pot affairs which you fill with peat and then grow strawberries through certain holes.

Probably, during the long history of St. Frank's there have been other descriptions of this windmill, but I use only that provided in "The Fighting Form at St. Frank's (S.O.L. No. 4) in which is recorded the story of the Third Form rebellion. The days when Willie Handforth led his supporters to the old mill to make a last stand against the evil schoolmaster, Mr. Marmaduke Muggles. The old mill became a fortress in this story.

The tale itself has certain merit due to the character of Mr. Muggles. Apart from that, the theme of rebellion has already been covered in various episodes concerning the Remove.

It is the use of the old mill that caught my attention, and, by the way, if there is a derelict old mill standing on a lonely moor, visit it on your own on the night of the full moon, and be not surprised if the mysterious figure of Ezra Quirke, the schoolboy magician, drifts towards you. It's moon magic.

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