

# STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOL. 39

No. 457

JANUARY 1985



A clenched fist came through the open window. It crashed on top of Bob Cherry's hat, crunching it over his ears. "Now clear off, the lot of you!" snapped the occupant of the carriage. "You're not coming in here!"

FIRST DAY OF TERM. The Magnet's Caffyn series of 1935.  
Artist: Leonard Shields.

47p

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# COLLECTORS DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by  
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

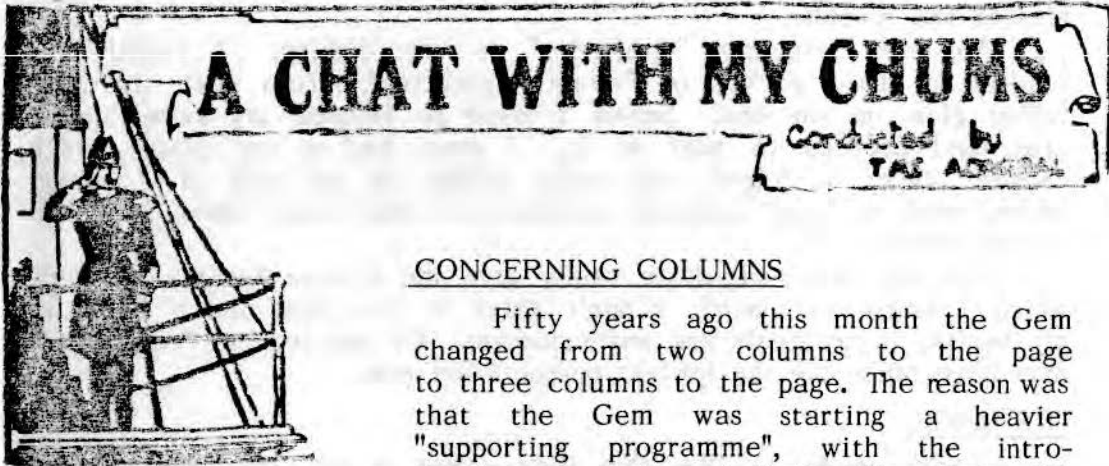
VOL. 39

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Price 47p

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## CONCERNING COLUMNS

Fifty years ago this month the Gem changed from two columns to the page to three columns to the page. The reason was that the Gem was starting a heavier "supporting programme", with the introduction of stories of Packsaddle along with the St. Frank's serial.

According to the Editor of the day, a three-column page was easier on the eye for reading, and it enabled more reading matter to go in the pages. With regard to the improvement to the eye I am not so sure, but, with the short sentences employed by Charles Hamilton - a whole line frequently going to just a one word ejaculation - "Ow!", "Leggo", not to mention single-line descriptions like "Bump" or "Crash" - and even longer ejaculations like "Bless my Soul!".

The 3-column layout had been introduced in the thin-copy days later in the First World War. It remained with the Magnet right up until the end, well over 20 years later. But the Gem

reverted to the two-column layout in the early summer of 1921, and kept it till the start of 1935.

If, as the editor claimed in 1935, the 3-columns were easier on the eyes, one wonders why the Gem changed back to two. Personally, I liked the two-column presentation better. It seemed to give more reading matter, at the expense of class - and it did that - but the two-column layouts had a charm all their own.

### LUDICROUS

In the national paper which I read they published a letter recently from a juvenile in his early teens. This precocious juvenile was "horrified" to see a small child pretending to puff away at a "sweet cigarette". This "ludicrous" sweet should be banned, bleated the juvenile.

Ah, me. Another "do-gooder" in the making. I recall how I loved a little packet of "sweet cigarettes", often with the red-toffee glow on the end. Surely I loved to flourish my sweet cigarette, and pretend to puff at it. I even had a toy pistol which banged away at "caps", and little bombs on the end of a string, which, with a "cap" inserted, produced a loud bang when they hit the pavement.

Did my sweet cigarette really give me a love for my old pipe which I enjoy so much? I don't think it has done much harm to my health, if my years are any criterion. Of course, the "cap" pistol may have made me the lawless person I am now.

### IT'S MAGIC

You're going to like this item. Not a lot, but you're going to like it.

A week or two ago one of my nephews brought me a volume which he had recently bought, though goodness knows what he paid for it. It's so rare that I've never heard of it before. The volume comprises a 6 months' run of the weekly periodical "The Magical World". This was a paper -2d weekly - for the profession - for those artists who entertained with magic acts, ventriloquism, and the like, from the business side of the footlights. When theatres HAD footlights. I miss them on stages nowadays.

The run of the volume covers the period from the start of November 1910 till the start of May 1911. I knew the "Stage" and the "Era" well, and, of course, the Kine Weekly - all trade papers.

But I had never before met up with the Magical World. I wonder how long it ran. It was obviously thriving in 1911.

This was the heyday of the British Music Hall, just before motion pictures took a real grip on the entertainment world. The book contains articles on various theatres and entertainers. And it is full of newsy items which held me enthralled, as did the advertisements.

Every week, in Magical World, there is a list of theatres in London, the provinces, and abroad, detailing the speciality acts engaged to appear there. I find these lists quite fascinating, bringing to mind, as they do, lovely old halls, most of them now long gone. Here is a short selection from one week's list:

ST. GEORGE'S HALL. (Mr. Maskelyn, Mr. Devant. Magic show.)

ALHAMBRA. (Bi-Ber-Ti, comedy conjurer.) The Alhambra was a truly beautiful theatre, a Stoll house, which was pulled down to make way for the Leicester Square Odeon.

OXFORD MUSIC HALL. (Frisco & Hambo, comedy conjurers.) I never knew this as a Music Hall, but it became a cinema in its last year or two and I recall seeing Buster Keaton there in "The General". It was pulled down, and the Oxford Corner House built on the site.

PALACE. (The Juggling McBanns.) The very first Bunter show in the fifties was staged at the Palace.

HOLBORN EMPIRE. (Coram, the military ventriloquist.) Ended by a bomb during the war.

KINGSTON EMPIRE. (Chris Vam Vern, the magical surprise packet.)

Kingston Empire would have been brand new at that time, for, the last time I was in the town, you could see the words EMPIRE 1910 painted high over the supermarket which replaced it.

LEWISHAM HIPPODROME. (Cull-Pitt, the bunkum magician.) A very large and beautiful theatre, actually in Catford.

BRIGHTON THEATRE ROYAL. (Horace Goldin & Co. in "The Merry Magician".) Many years later I had a resident pupil at school whose mother was with the Horace Goldin Co., and was the "feet" part in Goldin's "Sawing Through a Woman" illusion. When Goldin played Kingston Empire, a large party of my boys attended a performance as guests of Horace Goldin.

MANCHESTER EMPIRE. (Chung Ling Soo, the Great Chinese Magician.) Years later, in 1919, he was accidentally shot dead at a 2nd house performance one Saturday night. It was then revealed that



he was not Chinese, but an Englishman.

NEWCASTLE PAVILION. (The Great Lafayette.) The following week, Lafayette, and several of his company, were appearing at Edinburgh Empire, and were burned to death in a great fire there. He was buried in Edinburgh after a big show business funeral.

SOUTHAMPTON HIPPODROME. (Houdini, the Impossible Possible.) Houdini was evidently on a long tour of this country, for his name appears at different theatres every week throughout the book. At Barnard's, Chatham, he was challenged by a group of sailors from the Dockyard, but won hands down. It is surprising to find a star of his magnitude at Barnard's which, though very popular, was a cheap and definitely a No. 3 house. It is possible that Stoll's Chatham Empire had not yet been opened.

In passing, I wonder if any old-timers remember a silent serial in the cinemas - Houdini in "The Master Mystery".

THE EDITOR

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# Danny's Diary

January 1935

Very early in the month Dad took us all to the Circus at Olympia. It was a wonderful show, with some very clever dogs, some uncannily clever chimpanzees, and some exceptionally clever acrobats who made me hold my breath.

Just at the present, the Modern Boy is not all that hot. There is a western series about the Curly "Q" ranch, but it is a bit farcial, and not nearly so good as the Rio Kid yarns. Another series tells of the adventures of Percival Ulysses Woodger who is exploring America with only five cents in his pocket.

Biggles is there with his "Flying Crusaders", and these are war stories by W. E. Johns. G. E. Rochester contributes a series about Grey Shadow and his boy assistant, Peter, with detective work and British Secret Service larks.

The monthly Libraries have been pretty good. In the School-boys' Own Library the Greyfriars story is "Coker Comes a Cropper", telling how Mr. Prout is being blackmailed by a villainous man called Mr. Tighe, who holds a cheque forged by Captain Eustace Prout, the form-master's nephew. The St. Jim's story is "The Rebels of

St. Jim's" which is the concluding story about the Christmas barring-out. The barring-out is over Tom Merry being expelled for theft.

In the Boys' Friend Library I had "The Lost Lagoon", which is a King of the Islands story. A lagoon is teeming with pearls, but only a poor castaway knows where it is, and a murderous Chinaman is trying to drag the secret from him.

In the Sexton Blake Library I had a Pierre Quiroule novel named "The Slaver's Secret", starring Grant and Julie with Blake and Tinker. Parts of it are set in the Middle East round the Red Sea. Doug also bought me another S.B.L. entitled "The Rush-Hour Crime" by Anthony Skene, and I enjoyed it very much.

Some lovely films at the local cinemas this month. What is advertised as the fastest-moving film ever made is "Fog Over Frisco", starring Bette Davis, about an heiress who gets murdered.

Mum liked "Born to be Bad" but I was a bit bored. A story of mother-love in "The Affairs of a Gentleman".

We all enjoyed "Treasure Island" starring Wallace Beery, Jackie Cooper, and Lewis Stone, all about old pirates' charts, a long sea voyage, a mutiny, and buried treasure. This one has been run as a picture-serial in Modern Boy, telling the story with scenes from the film. "Unfinished Symphony" is the English-speaking version of a German film starring the opera singer, Marta Eggerth. I found it heavy-going.

Clyde Beatty was good in "The Lost Jungle". A pretty good musical was "She Loves Me Not", starring Bing Crosby and Miriam Hopkins, about a girl who is witness in a murder trial. She takes refuge in a men's college. To wind up the month there were "Grand Canary", starring Warner Baxter, and Warner Oland in "Charlie Chan's Courage". Oland, who used to play heavy villains, is really tip-top as Charlie Chan.

In the Magnet the Christmas series at Hilton Hall has ended with "The Fugitive of the Moor". The convict, who has been haunting the Hall (he is a relative of the butler, Walsingham) has been rounded up, while Bunter, who was blackmailing Price over a letter, has had justice catch up with him too.

Next week came the start of a new Coker series, and it is really tip-top. The first story is "Coker's Cousin Comes to Greyfriars". The new boy is Edgar Caffyn, who, with the help of a rascally solicitor named Sarle, is out to get Coker disgraced, and himself, Caffyn, replacing him as Aunt Judy's heir and favourite.

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Next came "The Mischief-Maker of the Remove", with Caffyn working hard to make trouble for Coker. Harry Wharton & Co. save Coker from serious trouble. Next came "Down on His Luck", which brings Aunt Judy to Greyfriars, while Coker, blundering as usual, seems to give his rascally cousin every assistance. The series goes on next month, and the enjoyment of myself is terrific.

At the very start of the month, in the United States, the trial has been going on of Bruno Hauptmann, accused of the kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh baby. The baby was stolen from his nursery in the Lindbergh home, by means of a ladder outside the nursery window. A huge ransom was demanded, and Lindbergh paid this through a mediator, at the same time keeping the numbers of all the notes, but the baby was not returned to his parents. The baby had been stolen in March 1932, and a few months later the decomposed body of the child was found, only four miles from the Lindbergh estate.

The numbers of the notes were widely circulated, but it wasn't till the autumn of last year that a note turned up at a New York petrol station. It was traced to Hauptmann who was arrested. They found that the ladder used in the kidnapping had been repaired with wood taken from Hauptmann's attic.

The trial is still going on, and they say it will last several weeks yet. It all reads like a Sexton Blake story, and the accounts make tense reading in the papers.

The Gem started the month with "Figgy's Dark Hour". The father of Figgins of the New House, is arrested for allegedly absconding with money from his bank, and Figgy finds staunch supporters in his old School House rivals. Next came "He Didn't Play the Game" with Knox trying all sorts of shady tricks to get himself a place in the St. Jim's Football Eleven.

With the third issue of the month, there was an increase in the supporting programme, and the pages are now divided into three columns instead of two. "The New Firm at St. Jim's" is an excellent tale, telling of the arrival of three scholarship boys - Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence. Finally, "Figgins Holds the Fort" in which the New House has a barring-out against Mr. Ratcliffe.

The St. Frank's serial is "The Secret World" telling of the St. Frank's boys on a trip to the Antarctic. They get around.

Now, in the Gem, a new series by Frank Richards has started. They are western tales about Packsaddle, but they are a bit farcical. The opening two tales are "The Tenderfoot of Packsaddle" and "The



Hold-Up at Packsaddle". I don't like them a lot so far. Not a patch on the Rio Kid tales.

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

We have been critical of some S.O.L.'s, but No. 235 "Coker Comes a Cropper", the first in 1935, was an excellent specimen. It comprised one of the funniest of all Coker singles from the Magnet autumn of 1929 - the story in which Coker had to bend over and take six of the best, and decided to make Mr. Prout, in his turn, receive six whops (the story lost one irrelevant chapter in the re-telling), plus the pair from a few weeks later in which Coker, inadvertently, saved his form-master from the attentions of a blackmailer. The final pair were only very lightly pruned.

S.O.L. No. 236 "The Rebels of St. Jim's" was the closing part of the 9-story Christmas Barring-Out series of the Gem of early 1923. Four tales are included, with one of the series being omitted, though the omission of the one story does not really affect the S.O.L. version.

In Danny's Gem of 1935, "Figgy's Dark Hour" had been "When a Boy's Down" in later 1911. "He Didn't Play the Game" - a clumsy title - had been "For His School's Sake" two weeks later at the end of 1911.

"The New Firm at St. Jim's" had appeared under the same title early in 1912. It was astounding that the new boys, Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, should have shared the same name as two boys - Owen Redfern and Lawrence, who, with Hurree Singh, made the three leading heroes of Netherby School, later transferred to Beechwood Academy, in the Marvel of 1907-8. It shows pretty clearly that Hamilton never bothered to keep records.

The final Gem story in January 1935 "Figgins Holds the Fort" had been "The Great Barring-Out at St. Jim's" in the following week in 1912. This was almost certainly Hamilton's first barring-out story. There were to be crowds more as the years went by.

Presumably "The Slaver's Secret" in the S.B.L. of January 1935 was a reprint - Pierre Quiroule did not start writing new Grant-Julie tales for the S.B.L. until quite a bit later on - but I cannot trace when it originally appeared, and I have not a copy of any original of it in my Sayer collection. Can the Blake experts tell us? If "Slaver's Secret" was a reprint, when, and under what title, did it originally appear?

In passing, I see that the editor, in one of those early 1935 Gems, refers to a loyal reader, a certain Eric Payne. I have no recollection at all of the little event to which Mr. Down referred in that editorial.

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WANTED: S.G.O.L.s by Hilary Marlow. Nos. 181 "Custodians of the Caves"; 189 "Peggy on Her Own"; 297 "Rivals of the Riverside".  
RAY HOPKINS, 18 FOXHUNTER DRIVE, CADBY, LEICESTER,  
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# BLAKIANA

FORTY YEARS OF SEXTON BLAKE - Part Five

by W.O.G. Lofts

George E. Rochester only wrote one Sexton Blake story in 1945. No. 104. "The Riddle of the Missing Wardress", but what an excellent tale it was! I often wondered why he had only penned this solitary story, and when I eventually tracked him down, living in very poor circumstances in a bed sitter behind Victoria station I learned the answer. The Sexton Blake Library was in those days simply a closed shop, Len Pratt the Editor having his regular contributors who were churning stories out month in and out, and it was extremely difficult to get a foot in on a regular basis. John Hunter, Walter Tyrer, John Drummond, Anthony Parsons, and Gilbert Chester were known as The Famous Five, whilst Rex Hardinge and Lewis Jackson could be added to make it the 'Lucky Seven'. Maybe a writer was fortunate enough to get an odd tale accepted, but then future manuscripts would be found 'not up to standard', returned for revision which put the author off, and he sought fresh markets. I got the same explanations from George Rees, Derek Long, Joseph Stamper, and R. C. Elliott in meeting them, so his statement must be true.

George E. Rochester really fascinated me, certainly more than many other writers I have met. A writer of over 70 novels, and writing in many fields of fictions, by all accounts he should have been living in a large house, with his own library of books. Yet he was living in a basement flat with a wooden kitchen table, bunk bed, and two old chairs the only furniture, and he had come right down in the world since the loss of his wife. He was of medium height with a shock of grey hair that reminded me of Raymond Massey the famous film star. Serving with the R.F.C. during the First World War, he was an officer flying bombers, was shot down, made P.O.W. and on his return to England worked as a golf caddy before starting writing for the B.O.P. His flying stories were authentic and brilliant, and he told me also a lot about the 'Captain' W. E. Johns who elevated himself in rank for his Biggles yarns.

I may be wrong, but George E. Rochester, was the only writer (of the same period) whom Frank Richards spoke of when he told me in a letter that he used to read his serials at the back of The Magnet, he liked his style that smacked of fresh air. My memories

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of George E. Rochester are sad ones, in typing out details of his career in his battered old Remington -probably older than Charles Hamilton's. Rochester died in a R.A.F. hospital in 1966 aged 68, a sad and lonely man.

## SHERLOCK HOLMES AND SEXTON BLAKE

BY J.W.C.

The worshippers of Sherlock Holmes can put one over the devotees of Sexton Blake because the anniversary of Holmes' birth is commemorated at an annual dinner on 6th January in New York according to Ivor Brown in his biography of CONAN DOYLE published by Hamish Hamilton, London.

Perhaps one day somebody with equal fervour may trace the birth of Sexton Blake although having had so many writers to record the Blake saga it might give rise to many arguments.

Holmes had the one creator. Unlike Blake who had at least a hundred sub writers. So it is going to be very difficult to name a date for Blake's birthdate. We know which year he was created, but lovers of the Sacred Writings of Sherlock Holmes have, "with the aid of the stars" worked out January 6th.

But we who have followed the cases of Sexton Blake have one thing in our favour; not one Blake author ever, to my knowledge, ever wanted to kill off Blake as did Doyle with Holmes.

It is true Tinker was the bete noire of many Blake writers for the reason it wasn't always possible to find work for Tinker to do; but never did a Sexton Blake writer get "heartily sick and tired of his Hero" as did Conan Doyle.

As most of us know, Doyle had to bring back Holmes, after he had killed him off, by the volume of public protest.

Yet Holmes was not like the father figure Blake was. Holmes was too distant as a family man, and Watson will never in my opinion outclass Tinker. Yet the Holmes saga continues with each generation and our very own Sexton Blake is retiring deeper into limbo.

I suppose the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes appeared in a better class of periodical although Doyle had the dickens of a job selling A STUDY IN SCARLET, his first Holmes' tale.

While today the cult of Sherlock Holmes continues to flourish, our own Sexton Blake saga is dying. We have no Christopher Morley who could found a group like the "Baker Street Irregulars" and plan an annual dinner in honour of Sexton Blake's birthday.

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We have no Sexton Blake tavern as does Holmes. And mention Baker Street and at once it is linked with Sherlock Holmes.

Yet I dare to state that Blake had as many devotees if not more than Holmes. Millions of words recording the chronicles of Sexton Blake appeared weekly and monthly to an avid readership for over forty years, but one can only assume the stories did not find their way into such channels that were made up of people with a higher social standing.

Again we have a definite address for Holmes at 221 Upper Baker Street. At least one of our members who wrote a few Blake stories, Rex Dolphin, qualifies Blake as living at No. 23a Baker Street; as does W. Howard Baker in SBL 22.

The pity is that time is running out. Perhaps the S. Blake experts may still come up with a birthday.

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# Nelson Lee Column

"IT'S THAT WINDMILL AGAIN"

by William Lister

In a previous issue of "Collectors' Digest" I had occasion to point out the many and varied objects and personalities that, even after their (more or less) demise, still have a huge following in this year of Our Lord, 1984.

Personalities, real and fictional include: Rudolph Valentino, Elvis Presley, St. Francis of Assisi, etc.; to say nothing of Sherlock Holmes, Sexton Blake, Billy Bunter and the boys of St. Frank's. It is the latter I have in mind in considering the windmill.

Objects have their following too. Train enthusiasts, Aeroplane enthusiasts, Vintage car enthusiasts, Old picture postcards, stamps, coins, medals you name it and it has its devotees.

There is a society whose main interests are Windmills and it is no secret that St. Frank's has a Windmill of its own. Having a Windmill is, no doubt, an asset to any author. Being a writer and producing the weekly wordage that Edwy Searles Brooks did, you can always do with a little background scenery to fall back on. What with starting to sort out the plot and the theme and inventing dozens of schoolboy characters and bringing them all to life so that they still live after you are dead, is no mean feat. However, having invented them all, you have to prepare somewhere to live. In this



case the magnificent building of St. Frank's. But you still need room to expand so the surrounding countryside appears. Bannington Moor which is approached through Bellton Wood gives rise to a Windmill reputed to be 100 years old and one-time housing a number of rebel schoolboys. On another occasion it had been occupied by some rascals, and now once again that Windmill is coming to the fore in "The Kidnapped Schoolboy" (No. 315) Schoolboys' Own Library.

Chapter three gives us a clear view of the mill, under the heading "The Mystery of the Mill".

If it pleases the reader, we shall now take a trip through Bellton Wood and over Bannington Moor in the company of Nipper and a few friends. We shall proceed with caution as Nipper and Co. are on the trail of two doubtful characters. They take a short cut, down the lane, through a break in the hedge, so entering the deep recesses of Bellton Wood. The light of the moon filtered through thin clouds giving enough light to see. Eventually coming out of the wood we find ourselves on the edge of Bannington Moor. The Moor stretching along, a bleak expanse of country without a tree, with hardly any roads. The men were leading Nipper and Co. along with ourselves straight to the old mill.

The old mill from where we can see what appears to be a ramshackle affair and is practically a ruin, not often visited by anybody, but now once again it was to be used.

The men left the door open, there was a gleam of light as if a match had been struck. The light of a candle flickered. Then everything became dark.

However, at this point we have reached our destination - the mill. So now we gather that it is practically a ruin, after standing there for many, many years, probably a hundred, according to Edwy Searles Brooks, and deserted altogether for the last sixteen years. It was sporting a rotten ramshackle door. Right at the top of the mill a tiny window, just a little square, sank deeply into the woodwork. The sails, though old, appear to be strong.

At this stage, you had better hold tight. What happens now reminds one of the Harold Lloyd film "Safety Last".

Nipper (anxious to see what the two bad lads are doing high up in the mill) runs forward, grasps a sail just as the wind begins to move it. Foot by foot we see Nipper making his way up the framework of the sail till he reaches the axle. Yet to see through



the uppermost window he still had to climb the next sail horizontally. Nipper hung face down by his legs to peer through the window. The room which Nipper remembered as old and rotten had been repaired and strengthened. At the side of the two villains was the bound body of Dick Goodwin, the kidnapped schoolboy. Suddenly the sail moved - downward, creaking, and carrying Nipper with it.

From this moment Edwy Searles Brooks moves his pen quickly. The ruffians are scared by the noise, Nipper is scared. His companions are scared. Everybody is on the move.

At this point we shall leave them. We only came to see the Windmill. The cover of our story gives an artist's impression of the St. Frank's Windmill.

### THE SCHOOLBOY REPUBLIC

by J.W.C.

An editorial footnote in the November C.D. to "DANNY'S DIARY" mentions the above St. Frank's story. This tale has an amazing history. It first appeared in the BOY'S REALM 2nd series Nos. 332-339, then reprinted in BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY 2nd series No. 110 - to be reprinted again in BOYS' FRIEND 2nd series 455! But the story had its original in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY o.s. 529-536. The St. Frank's Holiday Party was on its way to the South Seas in the Wanderer and her course was taking her towards the West Indies and the Caribbean Sea. She would pass through the Panama Canal, and then the wide Pacific would lay ahead. But on arriving at the Panama Canal it was found to be closed. It was due to a landslide. All shipping was held up. The uninspiring surroundings determined a move and the Party took a trip up the coast to Santa Monica, at Costa Bella. On that very day they arrived a revolution broke out and the story shifts from the Nelson Lee to the Boys' Realm and then to the Boys' Friends in the 2nd series.

This was the one and only St. Frank's Holiday series that contained another series to be recorded in another Paper.

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E. S. Brooks as Robert W. Comrade penned for The Dreadnought ... 25-27 "Scorned by the School" 37-48 "The Cad of the School". Both these were reprinted in BOYS' FRIEND LIB: 1st series. BFL: 504 "In Trackless Space" "Nipper at St. Frank's" and "Curtis of the Fifth".

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

BY Roger M. Jenkins

No. 199 - Magnets 1043-9 - High Oaks Series

1928 was a year in which Charles Hamilton's skills in plot construction and characterisation were approaching a zenith, although it must be admitted that the supreme lustre of the Golden Age was not fully attained. The High Oaks series is a perfect example of the strengths and weaknesses of the period.

The series began most promisingly with Mr. Quelch immersed in writing his History of Greyfriars and, for once, quite forgetful of the clock. The Remove were so noisy that the Head intervened, with the result that an awkwardness arose which Skinner was able to exploit. The reason for Skinner's resentfulness was convincingly depicted, and the analysis of his character was masterly in its imagery - "Skinner brooded on it, hugged it, almost gloated over it, as if his injury was a sort of precious jewel he could not bear to part with". Coming across a piece of Quelch's History referring to a headmaster who was held in dislike and contempt for his interference in form matters, Skinner contrived to bring this to Dr.

Locke's notice. The Head thought it referred to himself and sent a note requesting Quelch's resignation. When this was refused, he sent another note dismissing him.

Of course, Charles Hamilton was skating on thin ice here. Dr. Locke could not suppose that Mr. Quelch even knew the offending note was lost, and he could scarcely expect a resignation without offering a reason to the Remove master. Nevertheless, events were so exciting and tumultuous that it is possible to overlook these improbabilities. One of the main contributors to the excitements was Lord Mauleverer, who was granted the leadership of the Remove rebellion that ensued. It was he who put the form's case to Dr. Locke about their support for Mr. Quelch, it was he who provided funds for the purchase and upkeep of High Oaks, and it was he who masterminded much of the campaign, especially in moments of crisis. Of course, it was necessary to bring him to the fore because of his wealth, but it was handled in such a manner that all this appeared to be a natural extension of his character, with his innate laziness still appearing frequently.

But it was Mr. Quelch whose character was mainly on view. We were informed that he was a saving man with private means, and that he had sometimes toyed with the idea of opening a school and becoming Headmaster, and that High Oaks had caught his eye.

When he was dismissed from Greyfriars he took up residence at the Courtfield Hotel, and was by no means inclined to accept Maul-everer's offer to become Head of High Oaks, and it was not until the final number in the series that he agreed to do so.

Perhaps the greatest satisfaction arises from the sheer variety of incidents in the High Oaks series. There was no repetition, and very often incidents ran over from one number to another, with the result that there was a distinct impression of an organic whole. High spirits, trickery, plot and counter-plot abounded, and the resolution of the crisis in the final number was handled with consummate skill. Who can tire of the Magnet when all human nature is on such magnificent display?

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## THE SAILORMAN'S SON

(This was a Let's Be Controversial essay of nearly 20 years ago. It is apt to reprint it now as Howard Baker has just re-issued the third Redwing series, which was probably the most memorable of all the Redwing series and it was, in addition, one of the finest school stories every written.)

Redwing was the last prominent character to take his place in a permanent capacity. During the war years there had been a glut of new characters at the Hamilton schools, particularly at St. Jim's, and the Gem never really recovered from it. Possibly, in creating new members for his cast, the author was taking the line of least resistance. The serious fault lay in the fact that he did not remove these new creations from the scene when they had served their purpose. Hamilton did not make the same mistake when the Magnet reached its Golden Age.

Maybe the only new permanent character after Redwing was Angel, who featured in one or two series down the years, but, not being in the Remove, did not intrude too much on the normal stage.

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Erroll of Rookwood was the prototype of Redwing. Both were extremely attractive characters, though Greyfriars owed more to Redwing than Rookwood owed to Erroll. Erroll played a star part in many fine series in the three years after he was created. Then he was allowed to slide into the background. No such later neglect was to be the fate of Redwing.

Redwing, right from the start, was a cleverly constructed character, offering far more scope than Erroll ever did, even though Erroll started off on similar lines. Redwing, with his seafaring background and his cottage home at Hawkscliff, was picturesque with a tang of the sea. He was poor, which made him a tremendous contrast to Vernon-Smith whose great friend he became. Charles Hamilton never failed in presenting an attractive study of Redwing, the steady, decent type, of high moral fibre, always free from mawkishness and always winning our sympathy.

It was inevitable, of course, that the substitute writers should seize upon Redwing. The ideal friendship between the millionaire's son and the poor sailor boy offered the chance of treacly sentimentality which lesser writers could not resist. Fortunately, there was not too much of this, probably because Hamilton himself always kept Redwing well to the fore. And Hamilton himself was too great a writer ever to allow sentimentality to mar his stories in the slightest. I very much doubt whether sentiment as such had any place at all in the personal character of the creator of Tom Redwing.

So Redwing never suffered at the hands of the substitute writers in the way that Talbot of St. Jim's did. Talbot had great potentialities which were never fully exploited by Charles Hamilton. Other writers took over Talbot and Marie Rivers and overwhelmed them with sentiment. But neither they nor even Charles Hamilton himself could ever conceive Talbot other than involved with some tedious, repetitive echo from his past.

The sailor's son was on an even keel right from the start and throughout his long history. It is, perhaps, uncertain whether Hamilton recognized the potentialities of Redwing at the time of creating him. If he did, then the Clavering series was the result of an extremely clever piece of thinking. Before the Bounder of Greyfriars could become the close chum of a poor sailor boy, that same poor sailor boy had, in some credible way, to become a Greyfriars man. So the Clavering series provided the means of bringing the young sailor into the Remove at Greyfriars.

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Clavering, who looked much older than his years, wanted to join the army, but his guardian had destined him for Greyfriars. He happened to meet Redwing, who was anxious to have the benefit of a good education. The two boys changed places. Clavering went into the army as Private Redwing, and Redwing went to Greyfriars and became Clavering of the Remove. This was a delightful, well-balanced series with nothing to strain the credulity. By 1918, the army was not particular as to the men it received; there was no bothering about credentials. And Redwing's father was away, probably lost at sea in a torpedoed vessel. There was nothing far-fetched in the exchange of identities. By the time that the series had run its course, the Bounder was devoted to Redwing in his own rather tortuous way, and the millionaire's son was able, by methods cleverly thought out by the author, to ensure that the sailor's son was a fixture at Greyfriars.

The series, as time passed, about the scholarship which, anonymously, Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith founded, with conditions favourable to Redwing's winning it, made fascinating reading. And, inevitably, the time came when the volatile Bounder flung the facts into the face of his sensitive sailor friend. The Bounder redeemed himself, and saved the friendship, in a splendid tale, little-quoted today, entitled "Fallen Fortunes".

The history of this remarkable and endearing friendship was thorny. Early in the Golden Age of the Magnet came the wonderful South Seas series which brought the superb Soames into the saga. With an overture of what looked like a final quarrel between the millionaire's son and the sailor boy, Redwing set off in search of a treasure which had been bequeathed to him by a distant, roving relative. And when he found the treasure, he was, at long last, able to pay his own fees at Greyfriars. A sequel to the South Seas series was told at Christmas time, with the Bounder and Redwing kidnapped and held in a cave - stories which were well-told, colourful, and exciting but which lacked the real Christmas atmosphere.

A decade and more passed by before the Bertie Vernon series graced a golden summer. This one has not the same appeal as some of the others, though it was carefully planned and told. The Bounder was too callous to win any sympathy by this time. His brittle harshness irritated, and marred the stories. But Redwing was portrayed brilliantly, and he alone placed the series in the above-average class.

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The author, in fact, never failed to ring the bell with Redwing, whether the boy from Hawkscliff was wondering whether he was really good enough to fill the place in the team which the Bounder was demanding for him, or whether he was feeling that he no longer liked the fellow who was supposed to be the Bounder but had dropped all the Bounder's old wild habits.

My own view is that Tom Redwing was one of Charles Hamilton's greatest character studies. At the time of his death, the author was half-way through yet another story concerning Redwing and the Bounder. It was not a great one, though it had its moments as far as he went. Just how he would have finished it, not one of us can know. We do know, for certain, that he would never have wound it up in the welter of sentimentality which spread over it in the closing chapters which were tacked on to what the creator of the sailorman's son had left behind him.

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## REVIEWS

### "BUNTER, THE PUNTER"

Frank Richards  
(Howard Baker: £9.95)

Not a very good overall title for this volume, and one can only assume that the publishers hoped that the magic name of Bunter would play its part. Actually, "Bunter, The Punter" is the last story in the volume, and it was, in fact, the opening story of the long series where Billy Bunter went to St. Jim's as Wally, and Wally Bunter went to Greyfriars as Billy. Wally became Billy, and found himself heir to the unholy mess which Billy had made for himself at Greyfriars during this "Punter" yarn.

However, that is a detail. It is a superlative volume, containing eleven copies of the Magnet from that "tighten all belts" far-off year of 1918. The main attraction is a 4-story series concerning Redwing. This was the third of the Redwing series, and the finest of them all. Beautifully plotted and told, it is visible proof, if proof is needed, that Hamilton was the world's finest school story writer. Arguably, it is the finest series that had appeared in the Magnet up till that time, and it is one of the finest of all time.

Beside this magnificent Redwing series, the other tales in the volume fade somewhat, but they are worth-while reading. "Coker's Campaign" is a plan to get Wingate to resign the captaincy, and that his place should be filled by a better man - Coker. It's good fun.

"The Missing Masterpiece" is a musical composition by Hoskins, and it is one of the funniest Magnet tales of the period. A serious couple of tales relate the experiences of yet another new boy - one, Hilary - whose father is a "conscientious objector". A trifle over-sentimental, and, of course, dated, these two have their moments.

"Coker's Latest" is when he takes up ventriloquism, and "In Spite of Himself" shows the unpleasantly-named Snoop in a new light. Anxious to be worthy of his soldier father, Snoop reforms in a weak way, a theme which was extended when the Bunter changeover series just round the corner, took the stage.

A magnificent volume, with the Redwing series, out of the top drawer, and a supporting programme which is worthy of it. And there are even several Herlock Sholmes stories among the extracts from the Greyfriars Herald. The whole ensemble is a treat for every Greyfriars fan.

THE INTERNATIONAL BOOK OF COMICS  
(reviewed by Derek Adley)

Denis Gifford (£6.95)

For me, this book is one of the best of its kind to be published for a long time, and at a price that is a bargain at today's standards.

Whilst the narrative traces the history of the comic from pre Victorian days to those published for the present generation, its great appeal lies in the illustrations. And what a feast of them there are. Hundreds of them, mainly in colour, showing the front pages of all the glorious comics that have delighted children - and grown ups - for well over a hundred years.

It must be said that the book does lean heavily towards those from America, but I found this to my liking as I grew up with both the English and American comics. I loved Smokey Stover, Dick Tracy and Tarzan as much as I loved Pa Perkins, Homeless Hector and Laurel & Hardy. Especially delightful is the section on newspaper strips with illustrations of the year books of Dot and Carrie. The Japhet Book and Nipper Annual. From America a similar section on the traditional funnies 'Bringing Up Father', 'Moon Mullins' and 'Popeye'.

'A Comic for all Seasons' deals with the famous Pearsons publications Christmas Comic, Spring Comic, Summer Comic and Seaside Comic. It also leaves one seething with desire to own those wonderful issues.

One only has to peruse the contents page to see how well it spans the subject and years.

Sunday Funnies, Comic Supplements, Jungle Jinks with Tiger Tim, Mickey Mouse, Sherlock Holmes, Tarzan of the Comics, Crime Comics, Horror Comics, Superheroes, Give-Away Comics, Sport, Cinema and right up to date Spin-Off Comics from the TV, Doctor Who, Star Trek and Six Million Dollar Man.

If you love comics this book is a must. Produced exclusively for W. H. Smith, with 256 large pages. I understand it is on sale simultaneously in Australia and America.

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NEW YEAR GREETINGS and Best Wishes to all my overseas friends.

CHARLES VAN RENEN  
SOUTH AFRICA

# The Postman Called

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

BILL LOFTS (London): I quite appreciate the enormous task Maurice Hall had in indexing all the articles in C.D. A few years ago I did my own article Index and it took me a considerable time. I don't blame Maurice for getting confused on my first contribution. This was actually extracts from a letter I had sent to Maurice Bond then editor of Blakiana - that I had no idea would be published. In my own files it is listed as 'letter extracts published in Blake section'. Roger Jenkins also could claim two extra articles as he compiled two indexes for Vols. 1 and 2 that are bound into my first two years. Certainly Maurice has done an extremely useful job that will be useful to many.

Many thanks for the C.D., a really most interesting number. 'Coming Thro' the Rye' piece was interesting about dear Madam, and, as you say, it was quite old - 1875. As far as I can gather the reprint was in 1915 - or the only volume I have located - but then as you say the film was 1916, the volume you have must be later if it has pictures of the film 1916 or 1917.

Some years ago now I had to do some research pertaining to Stewart Rome who wrote in Boys' Cinema. I did find that his real name was Septimus William Ryott.

M. S. FELLOWS (Kingsbury): "Danny's Diary" gave me much pleasure, as always. I well remember some of the films mentioned therein. I remember well "The Ghost Train" and Jack Hulbert in "The Camels are Coming" in which I think he sang "The Flies Crawl Up The Window", a song I sang interminably and drove everyone in the family quite mad with it. I think Anna Lee was in that picture. She must have been 19 when she made it. She is now 70, and, I have heard about her occasionally from Lois Laurel, Stan's daughter, who is a friend of hers. She turned up in "The Sound of Music".

The "TOM MERRY CAVALACADE" was excellent. I remember that I cried without ceasing when King George the Fifth died. I was 12 at the time! I don't think I really knew why I was crying, except that it seemed to me to be the end of something very important and that something of my childhood had gone forever.

Please carry on creating the kind of pleasure that we find in C.D. It is very much needed by me and many like me who find it increasingly difficult to understand the world in which we live. It is good to know that there are others who share the same values.

DEREK SMITH (Clapham Park): I was interested in your reader's comments on the 'Thirties' films mentioned in Danny's Diary. The 1931 version of THE GHOST TRAIN starred not Claude, but his brother Jack Hulbert as the seemingly "silly ass" detective. It was by far the best of the film versions of Arnold Ridley's classic thriller, but it's unlikely to be screened again. John Huntley, the train film historian, told me he had discovered that the negative of the film had turned to jelly in its can and no prints are known to exist.

There is better news of the Evelyn Laye films, as both EVEN-SONG and PRINCESS CHARMING have been screened recently as part of the "MADE IN LONDON" seasons at the Museum of London. Miss Laye, as charming as ever, attended the performances as special guest.

ERNIE CARTER (Hillsdale, Australia): "Tom Merry Cavalcade" is a masterpiece. I enjoyed it again greatly after all these years.

RONNIE HUNTER (Ventnor): Our Skipper's "From the Quarterdeck" (C.D. - November) struck an unexpected but pleasant chord from way back for me. Namely his reference to that old British silent film Starring Henry Edwards. 1917 was, admittedly, a bit before my film-going days since, after all, I was only born in 1913. But later on, around 1927 or 1928 I guess, I saw several Henry Edwards silents variously titled "The Flag Lieutenant", "Further Adventures of the Flag Lieutenant", etc. which, combined with lots of other factors, helped to set ablaze the spirit of adventure (which, I have to confess, was always latent within me from a very early age) and eventually sent me away to sea in The Merchant Navy,, later still to various other activities in "Furrin parts".

It took me a very long way back to hear the name Henry Edwards mentioned again after so many years and I wonder if any other "C.D." old timers can still remember those "Flag Lieutenant" silents, how they stirred the blood and how they made you more impatient than ever to get into that dark blue suit and the old brass buttons.

Fr. F. HERTZBERG (Hr. Bebington): I'm going to have to give up S.P.C.D. (joke: no possibility) - I can't take the strain of the constant agreement! I recently discovered the Benbow stories were magical; then the Indies loomed up and boring old adventure stories (suitable for the children of that time, and no doubt many adults

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now, but not a piece with the earlier Benbow). Now I find this is also the opinion of Let's Be Controversial.

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# News of the Old Boys' Book Clubs

## MIDLAND

10 people attended our November meeting, including Patrick and Patricia Fahey, two newcomers. It was a lively and amusing evening.

Ivan Webster had visited Mrs. Williams, sister of the late Ted Sabin, with flowers, and also bought his small collection of books which included the Howard Baker "special", "The Making of Harry Wharton". Johnny Hopton bought it for £5 and very generously gave it to the club library - a grand gesture.

The Anniversary No. on display was Nelson Lee, dated 27th November 1920, entitled "Barred by the Head" - 64 years old to the day. The Collectors' Item was a bound volume of Nugget Library No. 32, "The Secret of the School" by Chas. Hamilton - a very rare item.

Refreshments, solid and liquid, were provided by Joan Golen. There is no end to Joan's hospitality, but we must pay our share at times. Tom Porter introduced a new game - "Names in Greyfriars". This was followed by a reading by Ivan Webster from an old copy of C.D., which described a get-together in 1967 of the Midland, Northern, and Merseyside Clubs. It brought back memories, rather sad ones for me as my mother died that same week, and I could not attend.

A discussion followed on the topic "If Greyfriars were destroyed where would you have it re-built?" The answers were varied, but, personally, I would not have it re-built. Classical education is not much use in a technical society. We need technical colleges. Yet I still love reading the Magnet.

I gave a quiz of 15 questions. In order to speed up things, members called out the answers, at Tom Porter's suggestion. I had intended to revive an old custom and give a prize for the winner, but this will keep.

The next meeting is on 29th January. A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to O.B.B.C. members everywhere.

JACK BELLFIELD (Correspondent)



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CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at the home of chairman, Vic. Hearn, on Sunday, 2nd December. The Secretary reported that he had received a message from Edward Witton, who was in hospital, but hoped to be home during the coming week, after an operation. Following the clubs Christmas custom all members present made contributions to the programme. Vic Hearn talked about the Meccano Magazine, illustrating his talk with a fine set of Christmas numbers. He drew attention to the models shown in various issues of the magazine, and spoke of its wide cover of subjects, and advertisements. These included offers of exchanges, includes "Magnets" and "Triumphs", Stamps, etc. Bill Lofts talked about writers of Christmas stories, recalling Dickens, Gwyn Evans (Christmas Sexton Blake stories) and G. R. Samways. Jack Doupe showed an animated film cartoon which he had prepared and illustrated himself, while Tony Cowley produced a hilarious "sideways look at Christmas" tape that produced shouts of laughter. Jack Overhill described a Christmas school disappointment as a small boy when he received a dolls' tea set. But he also recalled Christmas carol singing, and how as a small boy he had been puzzled by misinterpreting certain carols; e.g. "Wild Shepherds" and "No Hell". Roy Whiskin, a keen "Jennings" fan, described going out to spend Christmas money gifts on the first Anthony Buckeridge story. Adrian recalled listening to Orson Wells in "The Third Man", and Bill Thurbon recalled an early Sexton Blake story "The Coster's Christmas", and also referred to the special Christmas editions and Annuals, including Beetons of 1887, which included the first publication of Sherlock Holmes in "A Study in Scarlet". After enjoying Mrs. Hearn's splendid Christmas tea Vic read a Christmas story from a Funny Wonder Annual. Then Keith Hodgkinson, showed slides of "Casey Court" from "Chips", followed by similar types of illustrations from a number of other books and comics. He concluded with a superb series of covers of numerous papers: "Chaterbox", B.O.P., Chums, Marvel, Pluck, Magnet, Union Jack, and many others, ending with "The Gem".

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

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LONDON

Situated between two Greyfriars cut out figures, the bust of Sexton Blake smiled benevolently down upon the record attendance at Bill and Thelma's Christmas meeting at their Ealing residence.

Brian Doyle told of his first meeting that he attended at Cherry Place, Christmas 1959. Thus a quarter of a century ago and to celebrate the anniversary, he provided a bottle of sherry for those present who partook.

Roger Jenkins gave his customary Xmas reading, a couple of chapters from Magnet 1453 which dealt with Tom Redwing's father.

Norman Wright read extracts from the Union Jack story "Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Eve" by Gwyn Evans. Chris Harper's telegram quiz provided some very original wires.

The covers of several old boys' periodicals, were on display in the Hall where the very excellent repast was set out. The titles of the books were hidden and Roy Parsons was the winner with most correct answers.

Bill Lofts gave a good discourse on the history of Annuals and illustrated his talk with several of Bill Bradford's specimens.

John Wernham had brought along a supply of the Christmas Companion which went like Bill and Thelma's hot cakes.

Millicent Lyle had been brought along to the meeting and thanked all those who had sent her letters and signed the get well card.

A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Bill and Thelma for their very good efforts in making possible such a happy gathering.

Next meeting at the Walthamstow venue on Sunday, 13th January 1985. Tea provided but bring own viands.

BEN WHITER

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WANTED TO PURCHASE: Bound pink Boys' Realms and green Boys' Friends.

R. W. STORY, 34 ABERDEEN CRESCENT, BRAMALEA, ONTARIO,  
CANADA, L6T 2P9.

BRAVO BUNTER!

by Irene Radford

Everyone knows that Billy Bunter is a fat, prying, greedy little beast, who snoops tuck from the studies, tells the most awful fibs, and causes no end of trouble with his mischief making; but - does he always get credit where credit is due?

For instance, who saved Harry Wharton & Co. from the cannibals, by making an idol speak with his ventriloquism, when they were lost in the Congo; and again when they were cast away on a South Sea Island?

Who saved Ferrers Locke's life in China, when he was captured by the Red Dragon Tong, and left tied up in a lake with water up to his neck, in Tang Wang's garden?

Who saved Lord Cavandale's life at least four times, from a secret sniper?

And who guessed that Hurree Singh, who had been kidnapped by a rascally relation, was a prisoner in the ruins of an old temple in Bhanipur?

And once again, who found Mauly tied up in a secret room in the turret at Mauleverer Towers, after he had been kidnapped for ransom by his valet Orris?

But best of all, who, after giving information which led to the capture of some thieves, received £50 reward, and gave all the money to his mother who had been ill, so that she could have a holiday at Bournemouth? - BUNTER!

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REPRINT RUNS

BY Ernest Holman

Although I would hesitate to use the word 'vintage' in describing any Reprint period (such a Gem year, to me, would be 1922) I nevertheless found much of interest in Mr. Laskey's article. In particular, I found myself trying to think up other continuous times of Reprints for the schools mentioned. I believe the selection of the Gem 1936 as the best year for the various Gem reprints is a good one.

My thoughts then turned to the Popular. Although I have to rely mainly on assorted notes and memory, I would hazard a guess that during the second half of the Twenties, when Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood and St. Frank's were all appearing weekly in that publication, was probably a good time for continuous Reprints. Just how long they all ran together, and whether any 'subs' crept in, I cannot say - but there must have been quite a good, reliable

succession of yarns then.

Reprints, of course, really bring to mind the monthly issues of Schoolboys' Own Library. There were probably only about four months when Hamilton did not have a Greyfriars story on offer; generally, they would be accompanied by a St. Jim's or Rookwood yarn, although there were spells when the latter two schools missed out for a while. Perhaps the longest period of time for good Reprints would be from late 1936, when three issues began to appear monthly. From that time onward, until about the end of 1939, Greyfriars was always there and each month for the most part would be joined by St. Frank's and St. Jim's or Rookwood.

The best spell of all, to my mind, would be the period of 16 months, from Spring 1931 into the summer of 1932. During that time, Greyfriars was a regular; St. Jim's and Rookwood would be other other Library, on alternate months. Only in May 1931, when the St. Jim's Reprint was finished off with the addition of a 'sub' and September 1931, when St. Jim's and Rookwood were missing, were there any 'hiccups'.

Those 16 months, to me, form the best continuous run this Library ever offered. Some memorable series were reprinted.

Rookwood gave us the 'Way Out West' series, plus the Island rebellion affair (when Dicky Dalton was sacked), the Prefects' strike and the Montmorency tales.

St. Jim's provided series of Seven Schoolboys and Solomon; the Schoolboy Pug (Oliver Lynn); House Rivalry; the Cardew Cup; Dirk Power and Gussy the Runaway.

Greyfriars series were the visit to India (with the first four original tales omitted); De Vere; Roger Quelch; the best of all holiday tales, the Redwing Treasure Quest; Coker Kidnapped; Bob Cherry as a swot; the Game Kid; the outstanding Paul Dallas events and Vernon-Smith against Captain Spencer.

There was never such a long, continuous concentration on the three schools at any other time in the Library. Anybody not in possession of the originals but owning the S.O.L.s mentioned above will undoubtedly have quite a collection. If the 1936 Gems mentioned by Leslie Laskey are also in the Chest, then the owner really does have a Reprint Treasure Store!

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"Write it for boys, not for their grandmothers"  
-with this maxim, George Andrew Hutchison ensured  
the success of the Boys' Own Paper.

An article by Peter T. Vicary appeared in the issue dated January 1980 of the "Essex Countryside" on the life of George Andrew Hutchison - the man who guided boys' newspaper for thirty years. First published on 18th January, 1879, the Boys' Own Paper was connected with Essex right from the start through the residence in Leytonstone of its first editor George Andrew Hutchison. Just over a century ago, he and his family moved into a large detached house in Browning Road, known as "Ivy Bank" with a garden by the side of the former Green Man Pond on the edge of Epping Forest and Wanstead Park nearby - a most pleasant situation.

In the Early years of the last war a friend of my brother was bombed out of his house in Leytonstone and was housed by the council in "Ivy Bank" which had been renamed Hutchison House and used as a children's Home. My wife and I were invited to tea soon after my brother's friend and his wife had settled in. I recall the lofty rooms which were now divided into flats for the purpose of rehousing bombed-out families, also the large pond which ran alongside the garden. The pond and the house have now disappeared, the former being transformed into a sunken garden, the latter being the site for a tower block.

George Hutchison became a determined printer's apprentice and soon acquired the general knowledge and technical skill necessary to become a competent sub-editor. A religious man, he became engaged in evangelistic work in the open air and in the lodging houses of the East End. He was closely associated with the work of Dr. Barnardo and was consulting editor of the home's magazine Night and Day.

He married Elizabeth Jane Brown of Bow in 1866 and the Hutchison family appear to have moved from their Hackney home to Leytonstone in 1874 when the Fillebrook estate was being developed. He was closely connected with the Fillebrook Baptist Church of which he was a founder member.

In the 1870's through compulsory education the demand for children's magazines escalated, but many parents were disturbed by the prevalence of unwholesome reading matter. To counteract



this the Religious Tract Society at length published The Boys' Own Paper under the direction of their general editor Dr. James Macaulay. Probably the BOP would never have got off the ground had not Mr. Hutchison being called in as acting editor, and it was he who shaped its future from the very first issue. Asked if such a paper could succeed, he replied "Yes, if it is written for boys and not for their grandmothers".

He gathered round him a fine team of writers such as R. M. Ballantyne, W. H. G. Kingston, G. A. Henty, Jules Verne and Talbot Baines Reed, whom he "discovered" as, later, he did Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Variety was the magazine's great asset. Specialists of the highest calibre were used, such as Captain Webb on "How I swam the Channel", Dr. W. G. Grace on Cricket, Maskeleyne on conjuring, and Edward Whymper on mountaineering. The correspondence column was a popular feature although the editor's replies were seldom gentle. "No one with your handwriting could hope to get a job in a bank. You would use up too much paper!".

The BOP, not depending on piety or sensationalism, was the Christian answer to the "Penny Dreadfuls" or weird fantasies of macabre violence. One wonders if Hutchison knew, while he combatted "The Demon Barber of Fleet Street" kind of literature, that Edward Lloyd lived but a few miles away - in the Water House, Walthamstow. Lloyd had been the chief publisher of these cheap tales in the 1840's and the first sponsor of "Sweeney Todd"! Nevertheless, the BOP went from strength to strength. For one penny it had to appeal to boys of all ages and classes.

Because of heart trouble George Hutchison had already partly retired from the BOP a few months before he died on 11th February, 1913. One gathers from the obituaries that he was a man with laughter in his eyes who retained his bright boyish nature to the last; it was this youthful spirit which made his young readers feel that he was in full sympathy with them.

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FOR SALE: Set of 19 Monster Libraries £200. Set 21 original Holiday Annuals £200. 400 different old series Nelson Lees £1.50 to £2 each. Over 1000 early Gems and Magnets from £1.50 up. Also out of print Baker Press volumes. Postage extra.

MURTAGH, 509 WINDSOR AVENUE, HASTINGS, NEW ZEALAND.

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NORTHERN

Christmas Party held on Saturday, 8th December, 1984

We had nineteen members and partners with us on a fine evening. We were pleased to see Jack Allison back with us after an absence of two months owing to illness and it was good once again, to see Harold and Phyllis Durden.

Making a very welcome return visit, were "The Rochdale Players" (!) Such was the success of their presentation two years ago, we had asked them to visit us again to perform in their inimitable way. For over one and a quarter hours they presented a lively pot-pourri of Greyfriars items. It was snappy, amusing and superbly performed. A very amusing presentation indeed and we all felt that it was a shame that other O.B.B.C. branches could not have been with us that evening to share in the enjoyment and fun. A hearty round of applause was awarded to the visitors who had made the journey especially to see us, from the other side of the Pennines.

Geoffrey Good presented a wall-picture guessing game "The Stately (and some not so stately) Homes of Greyfriars". Geoffrey had used excerpts from "The Magnet" to illustrate the homes/areas in which some of the characters lived. With illustrations and pieces from "The Greyfriars Rhymster" this proved to be a very enjoyable game and it was obvious that the Club's Secretary had put a lot of hard work into the research.

There were eatables galore - all the traditional Christmas Faire, pork pie, sandwiches, sausage rolls, Christmas cake, cheese, trifle - a feast that would do more than justice to a study feed in the Remove.

How time flies when an enjoyable time is being had - it was already turned 9.00 p.m. and we had been present since 4.30 p.m.

We at Northern Club take this opportunity to wish all readers of the C.D. a Very Happy and Peaceful 1985.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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REVIEW"THE OUTLAWS OF THE SCHOOL"

Frank Richards  
(Howard Baker Book Club  
Special)

When, in the Annual, Mr. Buddle found himself dreamily in 1913, he found something unusual about the atmosphere. He decided on the reason - No Petrol Fumes. The reader luckily finding himself with this new Howard Baker Special volume may be equally puzzled. Then the reason will come to him - No Bunter.

For in this volume, which comprises seven consecutive Magnets of late 1911, Bunter does not star at all, and he is mentioned but little. And, without belittling the Owl, plenty of readers will welcome the change.

The title story is a famous one, the yarn in which the Remove rose up against the senior and established the Form's right to be exempt from fagging. Famous, not because many Greyfriars fans had read it, but because the event contained in it, was often referred to it in Magnet stories of later years.

"Sent to Coventry" is an excellent tale which, in later times would have been extended into a series. It introduces a good character study in Mr. Lang, a temporary master who has but little sympathy for or understanding of boys, and who had chosen the wrong vocation.

"An Ungrateful Son" introduces yet another new boy - there was a glut of them in 1911. This one is Cyril Vane, a cousin of Bob Cherry, whom Bob describes as a "worm". "Football Foes" is a high quality story of school and soccer, and "A Schoolboy's Sacrifice" is another slant on the theme of the Nugent Brothers.

"By Sheer Grit" is the first Penfold story, in which the cobbler's son arrives on a scholarship. He meets with plenty of snobbery, and an amusing twist is that one of the worst snobs is Gosling, the porter. An indication that there is as much snobbery in Coronation Street as in Mayfair.

The final tale in the volume is "The Bully's Chance", the bully being Bol-sover, and the question arises as to whether it is true that all bullies are cowards.

This magnificently produced volume is particularly welcome as containing all orthodox school stories. Nothing extravagant or very far-fetched, and even quaintly old-fashioned for that reason. Which makes it all the more welcome. A tip-top slice of Magnet history.

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"COMIN' THROUGH THE RYE"



JOHN WERNHAM writes:

I was interested in your comments about the old film "Comin' Through The Rye". Hepworth made two versions, one in 1916 and a much more ambitious venture in 1923. Alma Taylor took the lead in both films but there is no mention of the male lead in his book "Came the Dawn" although it might well have been Stewart Rome. Apparently it was a chap called Shayle Gardner in the later film but he is not mentioned very much, apart from this one film, as a member of the Stock Company.

Those were great days in the cinema business in which Hepworth played a leading part although he did not survive the advent of sound films. He was very successful and many famous names were associated with his company.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Mr. Wernham sent us the picture taken from the later film, shot at Walton-on-Thames. We have had a big postbag on the book and the film, and we thank all who wrote.)