

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS DIGEST

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No. 1 of NEW STORY PAPER.

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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The Man of the Wheel.



THE SCHOOL FOR SLACKERS

This month's helping from Danny's famous Diary reminds us that it is exactly 50 years since Charles Hamilton introduced his stories on the School for Slackers in Modern Boy. The whole of High Coombe School is against its new Headmaster, Mr. James McCann, whose middle name should have been "dynamite". Most antagonistic of all to the new man is the Fifth Form, where the "dry rot" in the school seems the most deeply rooted.

The new Head sets about introducing firm discipline in his determination to get rid of the "dry rot". The great drawback to the series as a whole is that the new man never succeeded in his object. It was a theme which would have been more successful in a serial or a long complete story than in a series. For it to be really satisfactory the Head should have won in the end,

with a new wave of energy and keenness rolling through High Coombe. It never happened. The Head never succeeded, the problem always left unsolved to make way for a further series.

In fact there were only two series of School for Slackers in Modern Boy, both of them in 1935, a total of about 20 tales. This does not suggest that it was ever particularly popular, which makes it rather strange that Hamilton, twenty years later, wrote a few stories for inclusion in the various Mandeville Annuals, extending the little saga of the slack school.

It seems likely that Hamilton got the idea of the live-wire Head, McCann, from the Talbot Baines Reed story "A Dog with a Bad Name". In that story, which Hamilton would have read as a youngster, Bolsover College was suffering from chronic "dry rot". A new Head set about gingering things up. Sport became compulsory. Bolsover played rugby football (Hamilton, in the Red Magnet, introduced a school named Bolsover where they played rugby), and the result was that a great lazy lout of a fellow took part in an inter-school game in which a younger, smaller, and lighter boy was seriously injured. (This was an unlikely happening, and showed that Reed was not really knowledgeable about the type of school of which he was writing.)

The fellow who caused the injury to the younger boy (Young Forester) was named Jeffreys. He became a school teacher as the story progressed and his class had fun in a history lesson concerning the notorious "Judge Jeffreys". Hamilton used the idea in a barring-out series round about 1918. In Reed's tale there was a Raby and also a Trimble.

In fact, one can link Hamilton with Reed in so many ways that it is pretty certain that Hamilton used Reed's ideas. Actually a story mentioned by Danny a month or two back, concerning the master Mr. Wodyer who became affianced to Edith Glyn, was reminiscent of Reed's book "The Master of the Shell".

THE PEN-NAMES

It occurs to me that Hamilton's pen-name of Ralph Redway was the only one to which was only accredited the one series - the Rio Kid. All the other major pen-names were used for something apart from the stories which made them famous.

Of course, in the beginning, it was curious that the St. Jim's stories in Pluck were first of all printed under the by-line Charles

Hamilton. When St. Jim's was transferred to the Gem to run on and on, the credit went to Martin Clifford. I have mentioned before how I wrote to the editor to ask: "Is Martin Clifford actually Charles Hamilton who wrote the early St. Jim's stories in Pluck?" And the Editor replied: "Your assumption is quite correct".

In the middle of the First War, the Cedar Creek tales were credited to Martin Clifford, possibly to give readers the cosy idea that Frank Richards' school life was being chronicled by his friend and colleague, Martin. One imagined Frank and Martin sitting together and Frank rattling on about his life in Canada while Martin jotted it down in shorthand.

Owen Conquest, who was created as the creator of Rookwood, was later credited with the Benbow series. But Frank Richards was neglected until the thirties, which perhaps suggests that his popularity had blossomed later. In the thirties he was credited with Grimsladein the Ranger and with Packsaddle in the Gem.

In a way, it seems a little odd that Packsaddle was not given to Ralph Redway, though the Packsaddle tales were inferior to those of the Rio Kid.

Though I never doubted right from the beginning of the Rio Kid stories in the Popular of the late twenties, that they were the work of Hamilton, I have always had the feeling, because they were so convincing, that there was something hidden about the actual origin of the Kid tales - something which we are never likely to fathom.

WHERE IGNORANCE IS BLISS?

Did you see the panel game "Odd One Out" in which three competitors were asked to name the connection between the three words "Gem", "Magnet", "Eagle". Not one of the competitors was able to give an answer. So the compere, Paul Daniels, gave them the answer (an incorrect one): "They are the names of children's comics".

When you think of the millions spent on this country's education; well!

THAT QUOTATION

Last month I quoted the closing lines of a poem, the source of which eluded me. A great many readers have written me that they have searched high and low to trace the quotation, but without success. Our loyal contributor J.E.M. of Brighton wrote: "My wife and I have spent some (not unhappy) hours trying to track down the lines of poetry you quote, going through any number of anthologies, diction-

aries of quotations, etc., but without success. We do hope someone will be able to help you. We all know how sad - or annoying - it can be not to trace the source of some well-loved lines or piece of prose".

Actually someone - the only one, at the time of writing this editorial - was able to provide the answer. The last C.D. had only been out a couple of days when I had a telephone call from Mrs. Margaret Rowe of Church Crookham. "I've found your quotation", said Margaret. And so she had. It comes from "The Graves of a Household" by Mrs. Hemans. A sad, but rather lovely little poem, which, long ago, I knew by heart. Mrs. Rowe tells me that she found it in an old book of quotations.

It isn't in my modern Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Which shows that many of the old books had something which is lacking in the modern stuff. Thank you, Mrs. Rowe - and everyone who searched.

PRICES UP AGAIN

I very much regret - and am embarrassed to announce - that to meet rising costs the price of C.D. must go up to 52p from our next issue. Inflation is one great curse of today, and it would never have been so bad had not some Chancellor had the idea of giving us decimal currency instead of Shillings and Pence. We look back with yearning at the period from 1922 to 1930 when the price of the Gem and Magnet remained static at tuppence. I thought of that when, in the town today, I saw a big notice up in a baker's shop - Special Cheap Offer - Doughnuts, 50p for 4. Half-a-crown each for a humble doughnut which was not so long ago was seven for sixpence.

THE EDITOR

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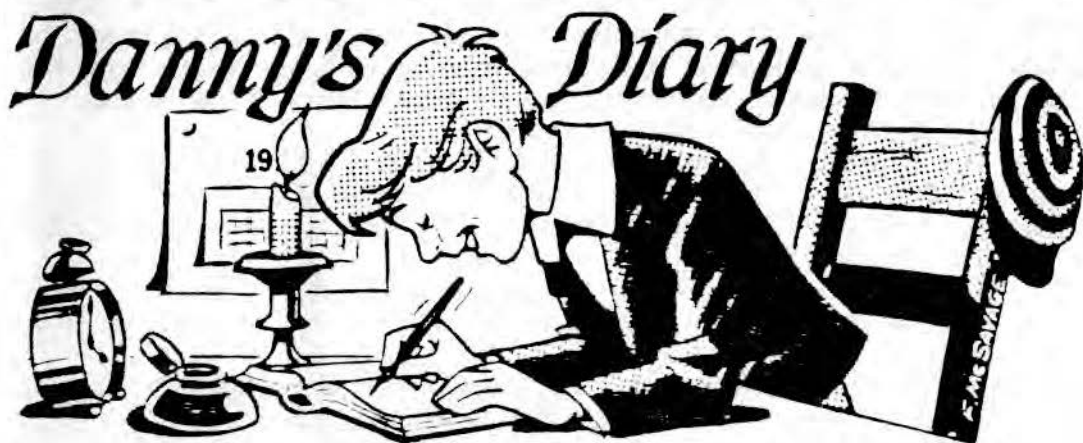
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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH: Living in the past has one thing in its favour - it's cheaper.



MARCH 1935

"Modern Boy" is beginning to look up again, and there is a big improvement in the programme. There is a new series about a new school by Charles Hamilton who writes the King of the Islands stories. The first tale of the new series is entitled "The School for Slackers". High Coombe is a school where the chaps are a lot of slackers, and the masters aren't much better. A new Head arrives. He is named Mr. McCann, and he is determined to wake the school up and make big changes. The Fifth Form is the slackest of the slackers who are led by Aubrey Compton. The Captain of the School is Tredegar who is a tired ass who doesn't bother about his duties. The only fellow who is in any way keen is Bob Darrell.

Second tale of the series is "The Fighting Head", and he finds that most of the masters, led by Mr. Chard, are against him. The boys nickname the new Head "The Blighter".

Third and last tale of the month is "Rebels of the Fifth", when the new Head issues his challenge: "Knuckle Under or Get Out".

I don't know yet whether I like this series, but one can say for it that it's different.

Modern Boy has had three "Stories of the Film" this month, telling the story-line of popular new films, and illustrated with some stills from the films. This month they have had "Bulldog Drummond Strikes Back" which is a United Artists film starring Ronald Colman; then "The Count of Monte Cristo" which stars Robert Donat; and finally "The Iron Duke" which is a British film starring George Arliss.

Also in Modern Boy there is a series about Porson's Flying School by George E. Rochester; a series about Captain Justice by Murrey Roberts - Justice is fighting to help a Young Rajah who has lost his throne; and a Biggles series by Flying-Officer W. E. Johns.

It's a pretty good two-pennorth now.

The Old Boy mentions some of the latest books: "Bookworms" by Ah Yu Wun Tu; "This Man is Mad" by Izzy Reelly; "Love's Labour Lost" by B. Gonser; "Knocked Down" by E. Rosa Gyne; and "An Easy Catch" by William Issitt. (Wow!)

The L.N.E.R. has set up a new train record doing the journey from London to Newcastle in 3 hours 57 mins., and the return journey in 3 hours 51 mins.

Sir Malcolm Campbell has also been breaking records, driving his Bluebird at 277 miles an hour at Daytona Beach, Florida.

The first tale in the Gem this month is "The Schoolboy Hypnotist". A new boy, Horace Barber, comes to St. Jim's, after making St. Kate's too hot to hold him. He is put into the same study as the Terrible Three in the Shell. Barber seems a harmless, likeable sort to start with, liable to be put on by his form-fellows. But he turns out to be a mesmerist, and so is able to give orders which his victims cannot disobey. In the end he makes St. Jim's too hot to hold him, too.

Next tale is "His Honour at Stake", in which Figgins is put into a dangerous position through the activities of Levison. Tom Merry & Co. stand by Figgy, and Cousin Ethel turns up and puts everything right at the end.

Then comes "The Faithful Fag" who is Joe Frayne, who is loyal to his rather shady fagmaster, Langton of the Sixth. A good serious tale, this one. Final of the month is "His Convict Brother". Convict 79 is on the run. His brother, Lynn of the Fourth (Who's he?) is ashamed of his convict brother. "Is that how you speak to me, Arthur? As Heaven is my witness, I never touched the stolen bonds".

In the end, Tom Merry & Co. stand by the convict, and Ferrers Locke comes on the scene and puts things right.

The Packsaddle Bunch series, and the St. Frank's serial "The Secret World" continue in the Gem, and take up a good deal of space so the St. Jim's tales are shorter.

Four goods trains were in collision at a place named Kings Langley. A lot of rolling stock was destroyed in the crash, and one of the train drivers was killed.

A good month in the local cinemas. "Viva Villa", about a real life Mexican bandit is an exciting and elaborate film, with Wallace Beery playing the bandit. It's a bit shuddery in parts, but very exciting, and it is playing to packed houses all over the country.

Fredric March and Constance Bennett are in "The Affairs of Cellini", about a lively nobleman in Florence long years ago.

Anna Neagle is in an excellent British film "Nell Gwynn" about the days of Charles the Second, and I also enjoyed Warren William in "The Dragon Murder Case". Gregory Ratoff was in one called "Forbidden Territory" and Dolores Del Rio was sumptuous in "Madame Du Barry".

The King of Siam has abdicated abroad, and, over here, the Prince of Wales has set up the King George the Fifth Jubilee Trust to help young people.

The Magnet has been absolutely tip-top this month as usual. The opening story "The Fifth Form Mystery" continues the Caffyn series. Kipps, the boy conjurer, plays a big part in this one, which is a change for we seldom hear of him. Owing to Kipps's conjuring, Coker gets accused of theft, much to the delight of Caffyn, though his delight doesn't last long.

Next comes the last story in the Caffyn series, and it is called "Coker the Reformer". Coker takes Caffyn in hand, and Aunt Judy comes to Greyfriars. It is an hilarious tale. Mr. Sarle, the old rogue of a solicitor, is exposed for the scamp he is, and finally Aunt Judy decides to keep an eye on Caffyn and takes him home with her.

Then came "A Schoolboy's Secret", the start of a new series featuring the Hazeldene family. Peter Hazeldene's uncle disappears from the bank where he is employed. He comes to Greyfriars secretly. The series continued with "Honours Even". Harry Wharton & Co. shelter from the rain in the porch of the woodcutter's cottage, and are startled to find that Uncle Hazeldene is hiding there. Next in the series comes "The Sleuth of Greyfriars" with Coker deciding to help the police. He makes a hash of things, and Uncle Hazeldene is still on the run. The series continues next month.

Way down in well-to-do Bournemouth a retired architect named Rattenbury has been murdered. His wife, who was 25 years younger than her husband, was the worse for drink when the police were called. Mrs. Rattenbury has been arrested and also arrested is a nineteen year old "houseboy" who worked in the family home. His name is George Stoner. The case has taken big headlines in the papers.

In the Schoolboys' Own Library the Greyfriars tale is "The Shylock of Greyfriars". It starts off with an episode about Fishy as a money-lender among the fags, and then becomes part of a long story about Mr. Hiram Fish becoming a millionaire and his son kidnapped by gangsters, led by Barney McCann of Noo Yark. This one will go on in the next S.O.L. The St. Jim's story in the S.O.L. this month is "Tom Merry's Enemy" who is Percy Knox, a cousin of Knox of the Sixth. This new Knox is very strong and a splendid footballer, and he takes the junior captaincy from Tom Merry, which seems most unlikely for a new boy. The story is not by the real Martin Clifford, it's pretty awful, and I'm sorry I spent my 4d on it.

In the Sexton Blake Library there is an excellent tale entitled "The Forest of Fortune", featuring Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie. It is set in the Malay Peninsula and is fascinating.

Another S.B.L. I had this month is "The Downing Street Discovery" by John Brandon, introducing R.S.V. Purvale.

In the Boys' Friend Library I had "Biggles Learns to Fly", about the War Years. It must have been one of the very earliest of all the Biggles stories and I expect it was reprinted from Modern Boy.

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NOTES ON DANNY'S DIARY FOR MARCH 1935

S.O.L. No. 239 "The Shylock of Greyfriars" comprised an amusing story, which had the same title, from the Magnet summer of 1929, plus the first two stories of the 5-story series concerning Fishy held to ransom by gangsters from early in the summer of 1930. The latter, series was, like many Fishy series, a bit over-written, but good fun and entertaining providing one suspended belief and took it with a grain of salt.

S.O.L. No. 240 "Tom Merry's Enemy", a 3-story substitute series from the first three weeks of 1927. It is hard to understand why sub St. Jim's tales were selected occasionally for the S.O.L.

The Pierre Quirole novel "The Forest of Fortune" which Danny read in the S.B.L. in March 1935 had previously appeared under the same title in the late summer of 1924.

The 1935 Gem story "The Schoolboy Hypnotist" had appeared very early in 1912 under the title "The Terrible Three' Recruit". (The theme of this one had been extended into the Crum series in The Magnet). The 1935 Gem "His Honour at Stake" had been "Their Dishonourable Chum" a week before the hypnotist story early in 1912.

"The Faithful Fag", an excellent Langton story, has been "A Disgrace to the School" nearly 2 months after the hypnotist tale in 1912. For "His Convict Brother" they had gone back for "Disowned by His Brother" which had appeared in the Gem at the end of 1911.

The coming of the Packsaddle stories, along with the St. Frank's serial, was the cause of considerable pruning of the St. Jim's tales now for some time to come, which was a pity, for the 1912 tales, now due for selection, were some of the finest in the blue Gem. An additional annoyance, especially viewed all these years later, is the space taken up by piffling short features. For instance, every week they published details and "League Tables" concerning games on the football field for the Eastwood Shield and the Glyn Cup. For any but the most starry-eyed, these were absurdities, as schools were introduced which, so far as the real author had told us, had never met on the sports fields. Also, names like Talbot (not yet at St. Jim's in 1935) and Levison, (still a shady wastrel in 1935) were named as scoring goals in these absurd "tables". Without these silly features, a couple of chapters could have been left intact in the reprinted Gem stories.

"Viva Villa", seen at his local cinema by Danny in 1935, was a spectacular production from M.G.M. It played to big business everywhere, though it was on the violent side and sadistic in parts. I recall it was voted "great" when we played it in "the small cinema", the history of which I wrote for C.D. some years ago.

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FORTY YEARS OF SEXTON BLAKE

By W.O.G. Lofts

Part 7

"Pierre Quiroule" is really an excellent pen-name for a crime/detective writer to have, as there seems something mysterious about it.

When translated from the French into English meaning "The Rolling Stone" the reader can still conjure in his mind the author being a person who had travelled widely, having the right experience to write colourful, authentic stories set in distant lands.

The first story I read by this talented author was "Riders of the Sands" where I felt I was once more in Egypt (where I once did ride a camel) for a few short weeks before going on to the very Far East. The story mainly set in the sands of Africa was colourful, gripping,

and extremely well written.

The author - real name Walter William Sayer - whom I met some years later had not travelled further than France, obtaining his descriptions and customs from various guide and text books from local libraries.

I was really astonished, the same as I was when I learned that Frank Richards had never been to Egypt, India, China, Brazil, or the South Seas, and Africa for his Magnet series. Likewise he had obtained local colour from the numerous books on travel on his shelves at Kingsgate.

It was whilst working as second cashier in a Bank in Fleet Street, that gave him the first idea of the vast amount of money that could be earned by writing stories. Such top class Blake writers as G. H. Teed and William Murray

Graydon who had an account at his bank were regularly paying in sums of in excess of £100, whilst his own salary (with an enormous responsibility) was about £2 a week.

Later meeting W. H. Back, the then Director of Juvenile Publications, gave him his chance when he wrote a number of stories featuring Detective Inspector Spearing in 'Pluck' - later he entered the Sexton Blake field. His own creations Granite Grant and Mademoiselle Julie - who worked with Blake - were introduced proving very popular with readers.

His writing was of such a high standard that probably he was the only writer told to write down a bit to suit the type of market he was writing for. His own view on some writers, was that they did not seem to know how to use words correctly. They seemed to just put words and phrases into a sort of sausage machine, and come out with



various formulas.

His Blake story from the S.B.L. "The Mystery of No. 13 Faverham Square" was adapted into a film in 1936, the Premier being at the old Ritz Cinema in Leicester Square - but retitled "Sexton Blake and the Hooded Terror" - whilst a short story featuring Blake that he wrote for the London "Evening Standard" was syndicated throughout the world.

"Pierre Quiroule" was fairly tall and thin, with a hair style similar to the great detective himself. Curiously, when one thinks about it, with the exception of John Hunter, most Blake authors were tall and lean as if writing so much about Blake had ingrained some of his features and build on them. A Londoner, I always thought he still had a faint cockney accent, though he could speak French fluently.

He was extremely fit for his age, having cold baths and long walks around London till he was about 88. In the late sixties, he thought it a good idea to start an old-Blake writer Club. Len Pratt, the editor, unfortunately showed not the slightest interest, nor did the rest of the authors still in the land of the living. Gerald Verner (another tall lean build alike to Blake - and who always wore a long brown old overcoat winter or summer) did at least reply, but wondering if an Annual dinner could be included - free!

In the seventies an old aunt of 'Pierre Quiroule' died. Among her effects was an old log books, written by a Captain Clutterbuck of the Royal Navy whilst in a French Prison during the Napoleon's Wars. His ship had been sunk, and he was allowed to write the log providing it was in French. Our writer had the task of translating this into English for possible publication, but this was never completed. Towards the end of 1982, he became ill and died shortly afterwards not long short of his 90th birthday.

He left for posterity his excellent Sexton Blake stories, that will be still read by many generations of new readers in the years to come.

THE SEXTON BLAKE SOUND FILMS

by Larry Morley

Browsing through my copy of "British Sound Films - 1928-59", by David Quincan, published by Batsford Books, I came across the following list of films featuring Sexton Blake. I place them in chronological order.

"SEXTON BLAKE & THE BEARDED DOCTOR" (1935), directed and produced by George A. Cooper. Screen play by Rex Hardinge from his novel "The Blazing Launch Mystery". Running time: 64 minutes.

"Improbable crime thriller, reminiscent of a silent serial. A famous violinist is found dead, and Sexton Blake (George Curzon) suspects foul play. A sinister bearded doctor (Henry Oscar) threatens a girl and a young man with a similar fate if they refuse to sign away the dead man's effects. Blake uncovers a plot to defraud an insurance company. Tony Sympton plays Tinker. Donald Wolfitt was also in the cast. M.G.M. release.

"SEXTON BLAKE & THE MADEMOISELLE" (1935). Directed by Alex Bryce from a novel by G. H. Teed. Running time 63 minutes. A better Blake adventure in which Blake (George Curzon) is asked by a financier to recover some stolen bonds. He finds his employer is a crook, and that the bonds were stolen by a girl posing as "Mademoiselle, to avenge the ruin of her father by the financier. Tony Sympton played Tinker. Cast included Raymond Lovell and Ian Fleming. M.G.M. release.

"SEXTON BLAKE & THE HOODED TERROR" (1938). Directed by George King from a novel by Pierre Quiroule. Running time 70 minutes. Blake (George Curzon) tackles the hooded terror, a world-wide crime organisation and its mastermind known as "The Snake". Blake unmasks the villain, played by Tod Slaughter. But concentrating on rescuing the beautiful Julie (Greta Gynt) from a hideous fate, Blake allows the Snake to escape to scheme another day. Tinker again played by Tony Sympton. Cast includes David Farrar, who himself was later to play the part of Blake. M.G.M. release.

"MEET SEXTON BLAKE" (1944). Directed by John Harlow based on characters created by Harry Blyth. Running time 80 minutes. Sexton Blake (David Farrar) and his assistant Tinker (John Varley) are asked to recover photographs and a ring stolen from a man killed in an air raid. They discover the pictures contain the formula for a vital metal of which the ring is made, for aeroplane construction. Cast includes Kathleen Harrison as Mrs. Bardell. A British National film.

"THE ECHO MURDERS" (1945). Directed by John Harlow, based on characters created by Harry Blyth. Running time 75 minutes. Blake (David Farrar) is called to Cornwall by James Duncan, who has been killed by the time that Blake gets there. Acting on information supplied by two petty thieves whom he blackmails (Really' My comment.) Blake not only unmasks the murderer but links Duncan's death with a Nazi plot to set up a base on the English coast. Cast includes Dennis Price. A British National film.

"MURDER ON SITE THREE" (1958). Directed by Francis Searle, based on a novel by W. Howard Baker. Running time 68 minutes. Following the murder of an R.A.F. security officer at an inter-continental missile site on the east coast Sexton Blake (Geoffrey Toone) and Tinker (Richard Burrell) use a truth drug to expose the site's security chief and one of his colleagues as spies. Cast includes Barbara Shelley and John Warwick. An Exclusive Films release.

ERIC FAYNE adds: Mr. Morley's list is fascinating and evokes many memories. I don't know about the later ones mentioned, but the Blake films distributed by M.G.M. were purely "quota quickies" with but little to recommend them. They were produced to meet the needs of the British Film Quota Act, which had become law in the middle thirties. To meet Renters' Quota, every renter had to distribute a certain percentage of British made films every year. To meet Exhibitors' Quota, the cinema owners had to screen a certain percentage of British films every year.

It was not generally regarded as a very good law, for it meant that renters and exhibitors had to trade in films with no incentive as to quality, and it pushed up the price of the more desirable productions made in this country. By releasing the Blake quickies, M.G.M. were helped towards their quota, even if few cinemas booked them, while the cinemas which booked those films met their quota needs if nothing else.

We played "The Bearded Doctor" in the Small Cinema, not for quota reasons - we did not have to bother about that law in a private cinema - but purely for the name Sexton Blake in the title. All I can remember is that it was pretty poor



A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by An Old Boy

If there is one thing I would like to research more than any other about the personalities at St. Frank's it is Nelson Lee's history. But short of asking the great man with a direct question about his early life - his schooldays, etc. - I doubt if I ever will find out; and there is no guarantee Lee would tell me if I asked him for the schoolmaster-detective appears to be a timid man and not given to

'blowing his own trumpet'.

All the same, one cannot help feeling inquisitive about him when one considers all that he has done for St. Frank's from the time he and Nipper first came.

That Nelson Lee had had a University education is obvious for he would never have occupied the position he holds, but was he a failure as a graduate since the Church and school-mastering - and perhaps to become a private detective - were regarded as the natural refuge for graduates without special qualifications? And would this apply to the rest of the Head's staff? I don't suppose I will ever know; and what is more I don't care.

But since I was a member of St. Frank's many years ago some changes have inevitably taken place and I will write about one in particular.

A Debate had been arranged between Helmsford College and St. Frank's and the subject was "Are Private Schools Elitist?".

Since Helmsford is a little lower down in the table of Select Schools compared to that of St. Frank's, such a Debate would have been unthinkable many years ago; but times are changing and social structures are beginning to crack. Whether for good or ill remains to be seen,

Many of the scholars at Helmsford College come from lower class families and the arguments they offered in the Debate could not be faulted. One point they made was that the St. Frank's members had their entry to College ready made due to the social standing of their parents. Getting into Helmsford was due to sheer hard work. Space prevents me describing the arguments for and against, but it was an interesting and thought-provoking time.

Another Debate has been fixed for a future date and the subject is to be on Flogging. "Should flogging cease to be a form of punishment?". Well, some time ago when St. Frank's was run by women teachers flogging did cease, but it is doubtful if that form of punishment enhanced the loyalty to the school by its absence. Perhaps there is still faith in 'spare the rod and spoil the child' maxim.

Looking at some old records that were unearthed by Phipps I was surprised at the very low salaries schoolmasters got many years ago. Mr. Crowell, for instance, received £150 a year. We have come a long way since those times. But are we any better off? One cannot help making comparisons now and then, but however did old Crowell manage on £3 a week? I am afraid to ask him!

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

by C. H. Churchill

While travelling the leafy lanes of Devon lately and also the streets of nearby towns, I have been very surprised at the number of names of streets and places that match up with the names occurring in the old papers of our youth.

I had never thought about this before, but passing through Honiton recently my eye was caught by a famous name on a road sign. It was "Rookwood Close". This made me think, as they say, and I have now discovered many more of these coincidences if I may so describe them.

Still with Rookwood, we have in Exeter a Newcombe Street, a Silver Terrace and a very old close called "Little Silver". We also have Knowle Drive (Minus an S from Knowles). As for Topham, well I live at Topsham!

Moving on to Greyfriars, I have found on a road up towards the moors a "Greyfriars" Cottage. I feel I must make an excuse to call here one day and make a few enquiries! Still with this famous college, a few years ago a gentleman named Quelch called into my brother's shop and ordered a suit of clothes. Referring to our esteemed Charles Hamilton, in Exeter we have an "Earl Richards Road". Very appropriate, I think.

As to the Gem alas! all I can find is St. James Church and Digby hospital. And as for poor old Cedar Creek all I can find is Cedar Road in Exeter. I could, of course, quote "Bury Meadows Pleasure Ground" for Miss Meadows, if I had the nerve!!

The greatest number of matching names concerns the Nelson Lee Library, however. Here they are:-

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| St. Francis Church in Sidmouth | ..... | St. Frank's |
| Glenhorn Road in Exeter | ..... | Archie |
| Bennet Close " " | ..... | Nipper's alias |
| Clifford Close " " | ..... | Mr. Clifford |
| Clinton Avenue " " | ..... | Colonel Clinton |
| Hamilton Road " " | ..... | Nipper's real name |
| Church Lane " " | ..... | Walter Church |
| Cecil Road " " | ..... | Cecil De Varlerie |
| York Road " " | ..... | Roddy Yorke |
| Clifton Street " " | ..... | Julian Clifton |
| Hart's Lane " " | ..... | Augustus Hart |
| Heath Road " " | ..... | Chubby Heath |
| Stafford Road " " | ..... | The Head |

cont'd ...

Quarry Park Road in Exeter The old quarry on the moor
 Mill Lane " " The old Mill on the moor

Not forgetting the Sexton Blake and the Union Jack, we have a Baker Street in Exeter. Just to end up with a pat on the back for yours truly, we have a Churchill Road in Exeter too.

* * * * *

REVIEW

"THE EXPULSION OF HAROLD SKINNER"

Frank Richards
 (Howard Baker Special) £18

Here we have another of the lovely Howard Baker Book Club Specials to give grace and charm to your bookshelves - and to delight all Greyfriars enthusiasts. This volume contains 7 Red Magnets, consecutive apart from the omission of a Christmas Double Number which featured in another volume, from the end of 1911.

These stories are a rarity in that they are but very little known, and few of them have ever been discussed or appraised. Bulstrode is Captain of the Juniors, and he and Bolsover, both dropped from the Magnet in later years, play substantial parts in several tales. There are several unfamiliar names among the cast, at least two of them acting as disposable fodder.

In the opening story "For the Honour of His Chum" Loder is attacked in the dark by Skinner, but Wharton is blamed. Frank Nugent, in an attractive role, manages to clear his chum, and at the end of the tale Skinner is expelled. The author observes, finally: "Skinner left Greyfriars the next morning, and the old school knew him no more - and was glad to know him no more". A couple of years later, Frank Richards changed his mind, and Skipper was back on the scene.

"His Last Match" has an original plot, and is, in fact, rather an odd story altogether. Linley, entering for an exam, tries out his signature on a sheet of paper before signing the entry form for the exam. Bunter gets hold of the odd sheet with the signature, and passes it to Bolsover, and it is converted into a receipt for £1 paid, apparently to the one who signed it, for making sure the team loses a football-match against the Second Form.

"The Stolen Cup" has a Removite Ferney - a youth who, reminiscent of Binks, the St. Jim's pageboy, has a penchant for lurid American fiction. The Cup vanishes, after Ferney has not bagged a place in the soccer game against Redclyffe. Ferney, created as expulsion fodder, is kicked out at the end.

"The Downfall of the Fifth" is good fun, concerning the rivalry between the respective Amateur Dramatic Societies of the Remove and the Fifth. "The Duffer's Return" - he is, of course, Alonzo Todd - is a title which betrays the gist of the plot, and is typical, enjoyable Alonzo stuff.

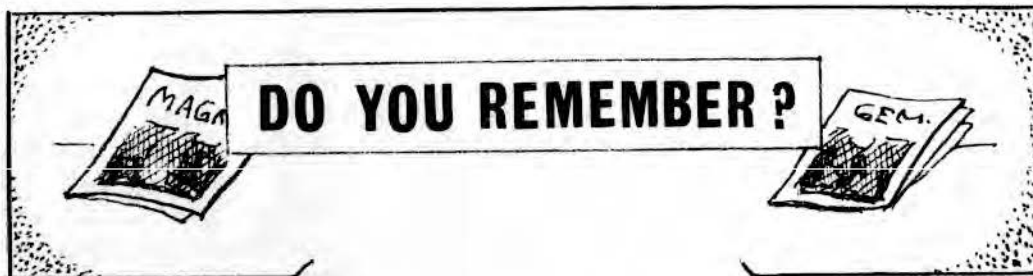
"Against His Father's Wishes" is another tale with an original plot, and an unknown leading character. Talbot of the Fifth (I wonder how many different Talbots there were in Hamilton's creations - like the Wilmots and the Lagdens) wants to enter for the De Courcy Scholarship exam - but his father forbids it. An older brother suffered a mental breakdown, owing to overstudy, and is, unknown to the Greyfriars Talbot, in an asylum. At the end, Talbot disappears to take

treatment.

Yet another original theme turns up in the final tale - "By Order of the Form" in which the Remove fellows throw their weight about and act as reformers. Wun Lung has a part in this one, depicted in flowing robes by the artist (most unlikely garb in an English Public School). In the end, Wingate brings the Remove back to earth.

A superb set of tales. Nowhere will you feel "I have been here before". Most of the stories are distinctly unusual. A rare and lovely volume for the connoisseur.

* * * * *



DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 201 - Gems 713-715 - School House v. New House Series

A distinctive feature of St. Jim's was the story of hilarious ragging, feuding, and japing, which, apart from a few early Magnets dealing with the Aliens' School, was never associated with Greyfriars at all. The rivalry between the two houses at St. Jim's, and between that school and Rylcombe Grammar School, was essentially good-natured and introduced a competitive element that was entirely without the malice displayed by Ponsonby of Highcliffe. It is a matter of individual taste which type of rivalry is more interesting to read about, but there is no denying that this type of St. Jim's story was on a rather lower emotional plane and possessed none of the "bite" of more dramatic stories that were able to etch themselves into the memory.

The series in Gems 713-715 began and ended rather suddenly and, though there was a natural development - the New house triumphant, Study No. 6 incompetent, and Tom Merry finally victorious - there was no real climax, but just a series of incidents, some of them extremely amusing in themselves but none of them really memorable as a whole, and Tom Merry's victory came about by luck

rather than judgment. At the beginning, there were episodes that were far from new: Gussy was deceived by a fake love-letter, and a study door was screwed up. Later incidents were more imaginative, but as usual there was resort to stock devices, like false telephone calls and spurious newspaper advertisements. Quite the most engrossing episode was when Cardew pretended to disguise Gussy as Mr. Ratcliffe and sent him off to the New House begged like a tramp. This was a trick that was hopeless from the start, and this is possibly why it seems to be the highlight of the series.

The Gem was on the up grade in 1921 but the St. Jim's story was seldom allotted more than about eleven pages in double columns, and this accounts for the episodic nature of the stories, to some extent at least. This series was not quite the last of the stories about feuding - Wacky Dang was still to come - but there is a feeling that this School House v. New House series was already slightly dated when it did appear, with its talk of former suffragettes, for example. The editor described the series as "among the raciest and most buoyant we have ever had" and referred to a reader of fourteen years' standing. Loyalty was one quality the Gem could never fail to command at this time, even when some of Hamilton's contributions were not quite up standard. What was to happen near the end of the decade, however, was another story altogether.

* * * * *

COMPUTING WITH THE MAGNET

by Duncan Langford

I feel fairly sure that there are few readers of C.D. who are very interested in computers. After all, our hobby is not - thank heavens - particularly fashionable, or one of those modern hobbies which seem to generate piles of glossy magazines. Old boys book collecting appeals to those who have a more long sighted view of things; who perhaps feel that not everything new is necessarily better. Nevertheless, in the hope that others may have attempted to blend an interest in computing with an interest in the old papers I felt that a description of how I combined my collecting of the Magnet with a more recent enthusiasm might be worth recording. For those who know nothing of computers, it may also produce a few surprises!

Although I had then been a Magnet collector for some time, in 1978 I sold my collection of 1300 copies to buy one of the first personal computers available - a PET 2001. Although I regretted my decision several times over the years since then, now that I can again

begin building up those 1683 copies, I have found that I can involve my computer as a wonderful aid to an (aspiring!) collector of Magnets - and, of course, all other old boys' papers.

My computer system is now a disk based Apple II; this consists of a computer with type-writer keyboard, a television monitor, printer, and two disk drives, which are used for storage.

There must be many ways in which business programs may be used for collecting, but my use of the Apple is based on a lengthy program I have written especially for Keeping track of a Magnet collection. This in its current version enables at a touch of a key details on any copy of the Magnet to be displayed: title, author, date, and a description of the main story. If the copy is in my collection, the program will additionally display when the Magnet was purchased, how much it cost, what condition it is in, and from whom it was purchased. This information is available on any one of the 1683 copies within two seconds!

In addition, the program will keep track of all the Magnets I manage to collect. It will list to the screen or to the printer 'Wants Lists' for any selected year or years, with or without a heading, depending on whether the list is for internal use or to send away. It will also generate similar lists of Magnets actually collected!

When a Wants List is printed out, details of it may be permanently saved, so that any time a duplicate list may be recalled to the screen or to the printer.

It is possible using this programme to spend happy hours flipping through screens full of information; but an additional and unexpected pleasure I have found lies in the use of the programs data to allow analysis of Magnet titles.

One of the longest tasks involved in writing the main program lay in typing out the titles of every Magnet, but now this information is available to the computer, much may be accomplished from an analysis of it.

The useful Howard Baker Magnet Companion volumes (1971, 1977) contain a complete list of Magnet titles; but what about a list of all the titles featuring Billy or Wally Bunter? Astonishingly, there are 203! Through such manipulations of this title data, it is possible to check out any number of minor points you may have wondered about - I've always felt that there were many titles using 'Vengeance', for example; I was surprised to find that there were only 13. Did you know that 'jape' only occurs in a title seven times, and Harry

Wharton features in merely 55 titles? I have the numbers to prove it!

I do realise of course that title analysis is really peripheral to our hobby; after all, Frank Richards wrote the stories, and the editor the titles; still, a computer makes this sort of study so easy, it really is tempting to check on the most trivial detail.

If there is another Apple II user who reads CD and collects the Magnet, I'd be delighted to send them the disks containing my program, but in the meantime I've lots of copies to collect, which will take a long, long time. Now, until the next parcel arrives, I wonder how many substitute stories featuring Coker were written between, say, 1915 and 1929...

* * * * *

DID THE ORIGINAL "REMOVE" REMOVE? by Tommy Keen

"He tore himself free, and glared around!"

Such is the reading underneath the illustration on the cover of MAGNET No. 1. He, of course, is Harry Wharton, the new boy at Greyfriars, and the angry mob of schoolboys returning the glare are his fellow members of the famous Remove Form. Quite a large form, the Remove, we Greyfriars addicts have always supposed, and certainly by 1918, in MAGNET No. 559, when Richard Hilary arrived (he being the final member, as far as we recognise our Remove), the number of boys was not far off 40 (39, according to historians, but this may be wrong).

Therefore, as most of the members of the Remove whom we learned to know, arrived after the opening number of the MAGNET, who were the angry, bullying crowd, who faced the hot tempered and sulky Harry Wharton.

There was of course Frank Nugent, who was to become Wharton's first friend at Greyfriars, and who was, in No. 1, acclaimed as being the best boxer in the form, an honour which was soon to disappear, and characters mentioned in the first couple of issues of the MAGNET as already belonging to the Remove were George Bulstrode, Peter Hazeldene, Dick Russell, Skinner, Trevor, and Billy Bunter. But who were all the others? Treluce, a crony of Trevor's, may have been one, but all the boys we learned to know (admiring, or hating as the case may be) arrived in a rush after Harry Wharton's stormy arrival.

There was Bob Cherry (No. 2), Hurree Jamset Ram Singh 6),

David Morgan (8), Micky Desmond (15), Smith Minot (32), Stott (35), Wun Lung (36), Ogilvy (43), Mark Linley (45), Snoop (45), Tom Brown (86), Herbert Vernon-Smith (119), Alonzo Todd (125), Fisher T. Fish (150), Johnny Bull (151), Percy Bolsover (182), Lord Mauleverer (184), Dick Penfold (194), Monty Newland (216), Dick Rake (258), Kipps (268), Peter Todd (271), Wibley (322), Squiff (343), Piet Delarey (432 - who really did not count, as he was a J.N. Pentelow creation), Jimmy Vivian (471), Tom Redwing (517), and Napoleon Dupont (540), Richard Hilary (559).

This leaves a few shadowy boys who were mentioned occasionally, but they were so nondescript - not even Christian names, such as Leigh, Lacy, Barr, Benson, Jones Minor (whose name did appear after many years, under an illustration in Magnet No. 789, "Billy Bunter's Boat Race Party" in 1923), King, Carlton, and finally (but with an e) Keene.

These characters evidently meant nothing, they did not ever appear in the accepted 'Who's Who in The Remove', and vanished from the scene without being noticed. Sadly, however, Bulstrode vanished during the 1920s, a pity rather, as he was a far more interesting character than the boring Bolsover. Rake faded away, and Hilary did not feature again after his initial appearance, as for Alonzo, when did he actually leave Greyfriars, as although he cropped up in many stories during the 20s, they were all sub writers' tales.

Vivian, Dupont, Trevor, Treluce, Morgan, and Kipps, were almost 'dead wood', and by the early 1930s, the stage was almost completely taken over by Bunter, Harry Wharton, and Vernon-Smith, plus of course the numerous new boys, who came - and went.

Pity the lesser lights did not shine a little more brightly, it would have been enjoyable at times to read of adventures befalling Rake, Morgan, or Treluce, or for that matter, even Peter Todd. But it was not to be, and our Remove was now complete.

But who were the original Remove?

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THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

A lot of people have been writing in and asking my Ed (short for Editor) how I am and what has become of my corner lately. I'm purr-y. It's nice to be popular. I'm very well, thank you, in spite of the awful winter of snow and ice. I spend a lot of my time spread across the radiator against Ed's desk. He puts a thick towel over the radiator and the heat comes through very nicely. I'll write some more next month.

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NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS BOOK CLUBS

MIDLAND

Nine members braved a night of drenching rain to be present at our first meeting of 1985. It was really better than expected after the poor attendances of 1984, except for our Christmas meeting with an attendance of 19.

With Tom Porter absent there was no Anniversary Number for January, but your correspondent brought the latest of the Museum Press publications, "Charles Hamilton's Christmas", a lovely volume but rather expensive. Vin Loveday was chairman in Tom Porter's absence. The ladies and Johnny and Betty Hopton provided the excellent refreshments. Joan Golen and Joan Loveday provided tea and coffee and eatables.

Ivan Webster read a chapter from a November 1918 Magnet, where Coker is trying to become a ventriloquist. Hamilton Happy Families, a new game invented by Vin Loveday, was greatly enjoyed. Joan Golen was the winner. As usual, I finished with no cards at all.

Vin had taken trouble with the preparation of a beautifully typed quiz of 24 questions. I got 18 right. I cannot remember the winner. The final item was a 15-question quiz dictated by your correspondent, and, reviving an old custom, I offered a prize won by Vin Loveday. The most amusing question concerned Turkey Tuck of Carcroft, when ordered to write out Quatis Artifex pered 500 times wrote just one line.

Good wishes from the Midland Club to all lovers of the old papers.

JACK BELLFIELD (Correspondent)

CAMBRIDGE

The Cambridge Club met at the home of Bill Thurbon on Sunday 3rd February, 1985. Apologies were received from the Chairman, who was unwell.

After the routine business Bill Thurbon talked about good and bad scouting, and it's place in History. He spoke of the peculiarly British Army title of Chief-scout-master, a rank held in the British Army from the beginning of the 16th century until at least 1674. He then broadened his theme to cover old Testament Scouts, Joshua, Gideon, David, through Hannibal, Ghengis Khan, and Wellington's Peninsular War scouts, to American and African scouts, including Mosby in the American Civil War, Custer and Fetterman's disasters in the Indian War, Isandhlwana, and the death of the Prince Imperial, via Burnham in the Matabele and South African Wars, to scouts and snipers of the two World Wars.

Edward Witton followed this up with a Quiz on Music Halls and Music Hall Artists. After enjoying Mrs. Thurbon's tea, the meeting resumed with a brain teasing musical quiz by Keith Hodkinson. This produced some 30 puzzling questions, which tested members memories to the full, the final winner being Roy Whiskin.

LONDON

"Goodbye to Greyfriars" was the title of a fine reading by Les Rowley which he had based on the last unpublished Magnet story. He read a couple of chapters and will continue the story at a subsequent meeting.

Bill Lofts gave an excellent discourse on the Thriller.

Rosemary Beenham conducted a missing words competition taking a poem by Richard Lister that appeared in one of Howard Baker's facsimile reprints. Mark Jarvis was the winner.

Duncan Harper conducted a Sexton Blake quiz and gave a discourse on Zenith the Albino. He illustrated it by specimen copies of the Union Jack that are in the club's Sexton Blake Library. Duncan's Sexton Blake's quiz was won by Terry Beenham.

With the excellent feed in the "Rag", all cakes and tarts made by Suzanne, those who had braved the wintry weather had a very enjoyable time thus bringing Chris Harper's term of office as chairman to a happy conclusion. Mark Jarvis is the 1985 chairman and all other officers were re-elected.

Next meeting at the home of Mary and Alex Cadogan on Sunday, 10th March, full tea available, kindly advise if intending to be present.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held on Saturday, 9th February, 1985

On a cold evening, we had a smaller than usual turnout to our 418th meeting - but it was a convivial gathering of the seven brave souls that ventured forth.

A large proportion of the time was spent in discussing the celebrations that we might envisage for the 35th anniversary of the founding of our Club: some of the members that were present at the very beginning are still regular attenders. We recalled that 10 years ago, we had celebrated our silver jubilee by having a dinner party and we looked into the possibility of our doing something on similar lines on this occasion. We thought we could make an afternoon of the procedure with various people coming along to give talks, etc. We could even continue into the evening for those who wished to stay behind by having a film show and late meal. Any arrangements stemming from our discussion, would be announced at an appropriate time in the C.D.

Keith Atkinson, our Anagram Quiz Expert, presented his latest effort: we had to unscramble the names of some well-known (and some not so well-known!) characters at Greyfriars and St. Jim's. The initial letter of each name, when read down the list, would show the name of a well-known person. It turned out that the well-known person was a member in our own Club! Bill Williamson was the winner. Keith presented an absorbing quiz and it kept us quiet for almost an hour!

Harry Blowers was asked to leave over his prepared item, as we were running short of time.

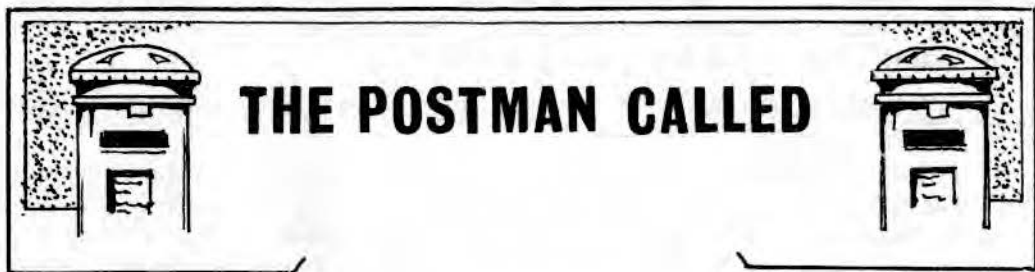
We are always pleased to welcome readers of C.D. and friends from other clubs at our venue at The City of Leeds Room, Leeds Parish Church, Kirkgate, Leeds, 2.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

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WANTED: Detective Weekly 42, 43, 161, 176, 178, 179, 214, 228, 229, 230, 233, 234, 235, 246, 311, 379. Buffalo Bill Novels first small 4d series.

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



W. T. THURBON (Cambridge): There were some very interesting points raised in this month's "Digest". Duplicators; the original one, referred to in "The Scout" etc., was the Hectograph, some sort of a gellatine mixture I think that was poured into a flat tray. You then wrote your message with a special ink - I think you first rolled your positive face downwards to print the writing on the hectograph; you then put your copy paper on the print, sheet by sheet, and rolled this over the print on the hectograph. If you were lucky you got a series of prints from this. When I joined the College Office in St. John's in 1920 we had a flat bed Allam's duplicator. You had wax stencils, wrote on these, which we put on a metal bed, with a metal stylus. You then put these on the duplicator screen, and rolled ink on to screen, and when it was well inked you ran off copies, again sheet by sheet. I remember the Chief Clerk, who at one time had also been sub-Librarian, telling us once that he had just run off the positive on to the hectograph, which was resting on a chair, when a fairly heavy weight, elderly fellow came in and sat down on the hectograph!

Danny mentions the Tithe War in his diary. I remember this very well, since in the 1930's I was in the Bursary which dealt with estates and tithe rent charges. Tithes were originally paid in kind; later this was commuted to a money payment. After a long slump in agriculture the Great War increased the income of farmers, and correspondingly also the value of tithe; this was good for the farmers, but the slump between the end of the Great War and the beginning of the World War made farmers complain about the value of Tithe. In the end, by the Tithe Act most tithe was commuted over a period - but it was a great headache in the 1930's.

With regard to Mr. Elliot's comments on "The Thriller", our report naturally had to be weeded down. I am well aware that Leslie Charteria wrote a number of stories for "The Thriller", though my

interest waned after the first numbers. But I do remember that one story by Leslie Charteris in an early "Thriller" was later republished as a "Saint" story with the ending changed.

J. F. BURRELL (Bristol): As a new subscriber to Collectors' Digest I greatly enjoyed my first issue.

I was interested in the mention of the Greyfriars Map on page 20. During about the last 10 years of The Magnet, Greyfriars was always consistently placed in relation to Courtfield with the common coming in between. Popper Court is usually consistently placed although it is doubtful if a pub like The Three Fishers would have been allowed there, particularly if Popper claimed to own the island he would also claim to own the land on which The Three Fishers was placed.

The weak points would seem to be the River Sark and Pegg. In both the Magnet 1672 map and the Butcher prospectus the Sark seem to flow parallel with the coast which is only a mile or two distant, this is geographically unlikely. In the stories one gets the impression that to go to Pegg you pass somewhere near Friardale but both maps show it to be in the opposite direction. Both maps also show Pegg to be very near Courtfield which is, perhaps a bit nearer the sea than is usual for a market town. With Courtfield so near to the sea a logical result would be for it to expand towards Pegg to make one sea side place. In the way that Southend began as the South end of the village of Prittlewell.

Maybe CH did not intend to be consistent in his geographical locations and may have varied them to suit. On this theme the Sark is sometimes shown as having barges passing along, but not always.

EDWARD BALDOCK (Cambridge): I was interested in your remarks concerning the hereafter in the February 1985 issue of the Collectors' Digest. They immediately called to mind a fragment expressed by Charles Hamilton on one occasion when he was reminating upon the same subject. He opined that our earthly demise must be rather like 'changing trains on a long journey'. Changing trains, terminating one phase of a pilgrimage and embarking on a new and exciting experience. Personally I am convinced that when we do finally 'shuffle off this mortal coil' it is but the closing of a door, the turning of a page with another chapter lying before us.

BILL LOFTS (London): In answer to L. S. Elliott, the Cambridge report was brief, and what should have been written was that Edgar

Wallace first story in The Thriller was a serial 'Red Aces' featuring Mr. J. G. Reeder. Certainly I am quite aware that the character appeared years earlier. Leslie Charteris's Saint stories were all used later in book form as well as several other characters used - but changed to The Saint.

In answer to Simon Garrett, the Pentelow booklet published in 1969 did not contain anything new about the war-time Magnet and Gem editor. In fact Irving Rosenwater was a friend of the late Bill Hubbard who brought him along to a London Old Boys' Book meeting, where he gleaned most of his information from members present.

I don't think that Mr. Rosenwater unearthed anything new about Pentelow's pen-names than were discovered long before I even entered the hobby - as well as all his writings in The Boys' Friend Library and elsewhere. What did contain fresh material - mostly of a biography nature was published by Cambridge Club in a large booklet some years ago now.

* * * * *

CLIFF HOUSE IN MANY GUISES

by Mary Cadogan

It was interesting to read so much about Cliff House in last month's C.D. It is true, as both Mrs. Margery Woods and Mr. Esmond Kadish point out, that Cliff House has during its long career been presented in many different guises and by several different authors. In answer to Mr. Kadish's query about the authorship of FORBIDDEN TO BE FRIENDS, I attributed this to John Wheway in the CHARLES HAMILTON CHRISTMAS COMPANION because he told me himself that he had written it. I knew that the story appearing in the 1937 SCHOOL FRIEND ANNUAL was a reprint of a 1920s SCHOOL FRIEND tale - and that therefore it might more probably have been written by L. E. Ransome, the regular Cliff House author of that period. However, as it was a story that I liked very much (it was the 'lead' story in the first SCHOOL FRIEND ANNUAL that I ever owned), it was one of the Cliff House adventures that I particularly discussed with Mr. Wheway. Of course, in claiming authorship he might have undergone a lapse of memory; after all, the story was written long ago, and he had produced so many stories over the years. It is also possibly true, as Mr. Kadish has suggested, that Wheway simply revised this story (and the other 1920s story that appeared in the 1938 Annual) from Ransome's originals. Or they may indeed have collaborated sometimes, as each very much admired the other's works, and they were long-standing colleagues.

In answer to Margery Wood's questions about the Merlin Cliff House reprints, there were four of these in all, and I give below details of the contents:

BESSIE BUNTER AND THE MISSING FORTUNE (comprising edited versions of the following SCHOOLGIRL stories) -

BAFFLED BY JEMIMA (201, 3/6/1933)

THE SECRET OF THE SEASHORE (202, 10/6/33)

WHEN CLIFF HOUSE LOST HOPE (203, 17/6/33)

BESSIE BUNTER AND THE GOLD ROBBERS (comprising edited versions of the following SCHOOLGIRL stories) -

MABS MUST NEVER KNOW (245, 7/4/1934)

THE CAPTAIN THEY SCORNEED (246, 14/4/34)

THE VERDICT OF THE FORM (247, 21/4/34)

ALL TO SAVE HER CHUM (248, 28/4/34)

BESSIE BUNTER AND THE SCHOOL INFORMER (comprising edited versions of the following SCHOOLGIRL stories)

BABS' NEW TERM TASK (216, 16/9/1933)

WITH BABS & CO. TO AID HER (217, 23/9/33)

BABS MUST FIND A WAY (218, 30/9/33)

BESSIE BUNTER JOINS THE CIRCUS must, I think, as Margery Woods suggests, be a reprint of the Schoolgirls' Own Library Story, BABS & CO'S CIRCUS TASK (No. 524). I regret that I don't have the individual issues of the SCHOOLGIRL which correspond to this so can't give details. However they must have been stories published before No. 237 (10/2/1934) because that is when the sequel to that first Circus series began. (The sequel comprised SCHOOLGIRLS 237 to 239, which were also published eventually in a SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY edition - No. 645 BABS & CO'S. CIRCUS QUEST.)

It is a tribute to the inventiveness and expertise of the various Cliff House writers that some of us, so many decades later, are ferreting out and fathoming the mysteries of this sometimes dramatic, often touching and sometimes humorous saga of one of our favourite schools!

AND MORE ON THE SUBJECT

by Esmond Kadish

I don't know whether this is of any help to Margery Woods, but "Bessie Bunter Joins the Circus" originally appeared in the SCHOOLGIRL (Nos. 181-183) in January 1933; "Bessie Bunter and the School Informer" in Nos. 216-218 in September 1933; "Bessie Bunter and the

Missing Fortune" in Nos. 201-203 in June 1933; and "Bessie Bunter and the Gold Robbers" in Nos. 245-248 in April 1934. These MERLIN paperbacks were probably reprinted from the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY versions. The average number of parts, written by John Wierway for the SCHOOLGIRL in a Cliff House series was there, during the period 1932-36, and this seems to fit - with some small alterations - quite nicely into the S.O.L. and MERLIN books. However, the "Gold Robbers" series (S.O.L. 694) extended to four parts in the SCHOOLGIRL, and this has been hacked about quite a bit in the MERLIN version, and, presumably, in the S.O.L. which I haven't seen.

I don't know the real identity of JOAN INGLESANT either, although there was a time when I thought it could be a pen-name of one of the A.P.'s two lady-writers, ALMA BULEY or ALICE STAFFORD. "JOAN INGLESANT" wrote tales with such romantic-sounding titles as "DULCIE DANCES THROUGH" or "DAWN OF DERELICK CASTLE", and his (her) work must have particularly appealed to schoolgirl readers. No doubt someone will know the real name.

There were so many "brother-and-sister" names amongst the writers in the Old Papers that one might well suspect the A.P. of favouritism. There were IDA and IVOR MELBOURNE, GERTRUDE and VICTOR NELSON, RHODA and RONALD FLEMING, HELEN and WILLIAM GIBBONS, HAZEL and VINCENT ARMITAGE, and others, no doubt! Obviously, literary talent runs in the same family.

* * * * *

"JOAN INGLESANT"

By W. O. G. Lofts

In answer to Margery Woods interesting piece - the above author hid the identity of Draycott M. Dell prolific writer and editor of boys' stories at the old Amalgamated Press. Believed to be a relation of the famous authoress Ethel M. Dell he was fond of stories with a historical background. Used many pen-names such as 'Piers Anson', Stephen Thompson, and others just gleaned, and had some connection with Oswald Dallas. Was editor of Chums 1926-39 and also editor for a while of Young Britain.

In the girls' fiction field wrote also as "Ellen Draycott", "Ellen Shirley" and others. The dedication of his book to 'Reginald Thompson Eves' was the first editor of SchoolFriend - later to control all the girls' papers as well as Champion/Triumph group. R. T. Eves was killed with his wife in a car crash in 1972.

Personally I think the story published in book form was original as it would not then infringe any copyright held by A. P. for I have checked the Schoolgirls' Weekly records - but I could be proved wrong.

In answer to Esmond Kadish query - John Wheway told me that he never wrote any Cliff House before 1930 - or at least in 1926. I think he was editing the Annuals in 1938 and could easily have revised earlier stories by L. E. Ransom. In the Cliff House saga, no-one so far has discovered the Bessie Bunter tales reputed to have been written by Stanley Austin - or maybe Will Gibbons. Austin's son had a volume of them, but contact was lost, with his address.

Draycott M. Dell died in 1940 aged 52.

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