

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Vol. 40

AUGUST 1986

No. 476

ANSWERS' 1000th No. NOW ON SALE.



PLUCK

SPECS' MISTAKE.

A Splendid School Tale By H. CLARKE HOOK.

THE IMPOSTOR.

A Thrilling Story of English Trunk Forrest. Detective

1^D

GO BACK! ROARED THE ANGRY MAJOR. "DO YOU HEAR ME? GO BACK!" IT WAS TOO LATE. SPECS AND THE THING
HAILED AT THE ROPE, AND THE NEXT MOMENT HARKLE RANGED INTO THE POMPOUS OLD GENTLEMAN'S CHEST. See p. 264.

NO. 143 VOL. 6. NEW SERIES

52p.

Special Offer of GREEN GEMS & RED MAGNETS (fair or minus covers): 50 for £50: my selection. Many hundreds. Better condition and with covers would sell at £4 to £5 each at least. Some of these also available at £4 each.

SECOND-HAND BAKER FACSIMILES: to reduce stocks. Fine condition but my selection: 6 for £20 plus postage. Out-of-prints at various prices. Full stock of New Facsimiles and Book Clubs.

Good selection of over 10,000 hardbacks. Annuals including GHAs, Chums, BOAs, Young England, and many others.

Prairie Library ex-file copies 1 - 57; Buffalo Bill and Nelson Lee. In 3 volumes and 2 singles £60 the lot. 1919/20.

The Sport Library ex-file copy (Jan.-June 1913) fine condition: offers.

Bound vols. Lees: all series except 3rd. Half-years. Bound vols. Gem and Magnet and thousands of single issues including the early ones.

POPULARS thousands but not bound: £1.50 each. NEWNES BLACK BESS LIBRARY from No. 1: £1.25 each.

Over 100,000 boys' papers and comics in stock.
YOU NAME IT!

Visitors most welcome, but please ring first! If you can't make a visit, a good prompt postal service is available. You pay on receipt of goods. Your lists of wants please.

N O R M A N S H A W

84 Belvedere Road, Upper Norwood
London S.E.19 2HZ
Nearest station: Crystal Palace BR
Telephone 01-771-9857

STORY PAPER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

VOL. 40

No. 476

AUGUST 1986

Price 52p

(COPYRIGHT. This magazine is privately circulated. The reproduction of the contents either wholly or in part, without written permission from The Editor, is strictly forbidden.)



ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR WATSON!

At the present time, for the general interest of C.D. readers, we are presenting a few chapters from the very first Hurree Singh story ever written, a story dating from 80 years ago. The Nabob was the very first Greyfriars character created, though his first appearance was made at Netherby and not at Greyfriars. I read occasionally in the later Magnet that it was Bob Cherry who affectionately tagged the nickname of Inky on to Hurree Singh. This was not so. The nickname originated with Knowles of Netherby.

A year or two later Hurree Singh turned up at Greyfriars, with the same regal titles, the same quaint English. Along with

the similarity of style, it must have been obvious to an early generation that Charles Hamilton, who created Hurree Singh, and Frank Richards who wrote the Greyfriars stories, were one and the same person.

In the same way, the early St. Jim's stories were credited to Charles Hamilton, yet when St. Jim's arrived in the Gem with the same characters, the stories were credited to Martin Clifford. Once again, it must have been obvious to that generation, if they thought about the matter - and most of them did - that Charles Hamilton and Martin Clifford were one and the same person.

That generation could not have needed a Sherlock Holmes to point out to them, that if Frank Richards and Charles Hamilton were one and the same, and if Martin Clifford and Charles Hamilton were one and the same person, then Frank Richards and Martin Clifford and Charles Hamilton were all one and the same person - which meant that, for the discerning, the Magnet and Gem were coming from the same amazing writer.

At Netherby the two leading chums were Owen Redfern and Lawrence. Early in Gem days, after Netherby had bitten the dust, three new leading characters arrived at St. Jim's - Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, the "new firm" at St. Jim's. So Hamilton took the names of two leading characters at Netherby and re-introduced them as three new characters at St. Jim's. Hamilton's penchant for duplicating names was quite extraordinary as well as endearing.

I have mentioned before how, as a youngster, I acquired a number of old Plucks containing St. Jim's stories credited to Charles Hamilton, at a second-hand bookstall in Gravesend market. I wrote to the Gem editor and asked him whether Charles Hamilton, who wrote the Pluck stories was really Martin Clifford who wrote the Gem stories. The editor replied "Your assumption is quite correct".

SWEET IS THE USE OF ADVERTISEMENT?

There is a move afoot to abolish the TV licence fee and to replace it as a source of revenue for the B.B.C. by advertising.

I don't watch a great deal of TV myself. I pick and choose just what appeals to me. But as a comparatively small TV watcher I still feel that the licence is very good value for money. Not a lot over £1 per week for continuous daily entertainment, if one wants it. Personally, I should hate to see advertisements on the B.B.C.

Yesterday was carnival day in the little town near my home.

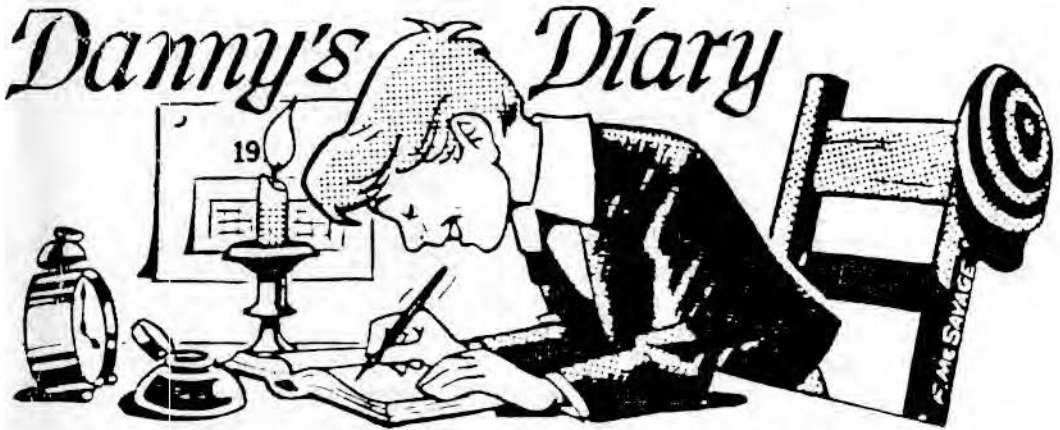
In the town, somebody was selling blown-up balloons. When I came to catch my bus, a woman with a small boy was also waiting. The small boy was holding one of these balloons.

"How much do they charge for those balloons?" I enquired of the proud mother. She shrugged her shoulders and said, a little ruefully: "£1 each".

I was staggered, even though I am acquainted all too well with today's prices. It made the £1 odd a week for TV seem small.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *



AUGUST 1936

An astonishing thing has happened. My Dad has bought a second-hand car. It is a Hillman Minx, one year old exactly, and it has cost him £80. I feel very proud indeed. My Dad had to take the new Driving Test, and Mr. Barty, of Crooner Motors, who sold him the car, taught him to drive. My Dad told Mr. Barty that he would only buy the car if he passed the test. But my Dad passed the test all right after only two or three lessons on the roads.

Dad says he will only use the best petrol in our car - it costs 1/6 a gallon - as cheaper grades at 1/3 would be bad for the engine. So at school I speak quite proudly about "our car".

The month's first Captain Justice story in Modern Boy has been "Prisoner of the Swamp". Midge, who has set out to rescue

the gallant Captain, has come unexpectedly on the place where Justice is held prisoner. Then came "Ghost in the Sky". In his hour of defeat, the enemy of Captain Justice proves himself a very good loser. That was the last story in what has been a very long and very good Captain Justice series.

Then, after a gap of a week or two, Captain Justice is back in a new series. The first story of the new lot is "The Hunted Millionaire". The millionaire fears for his life, and he flees for protection to Captain Justice.

The new Biggles serial is "Biggles in Africa". I am reading it, but I am not really a Biggles fan.

Also in Modern Boy there is a new series by John Hudleston about Thunderbolt, the great wild horse of the Blue Mountains, and Larry Doone, the champion cowboy catcher of wild horses. It is a novel series. Another series is "Nick of the Newsreels" which is unusual, being about the adventures of newsreel cameramen.

The great French aviator, Louis Bleriot, has died this month. He was the first man to fly across the English Channel from Dover to Calais.

A lovely month in the Libraries. There is a Pierre Quiroule novel in the Sexton Blake Library entitled "The £100,000 Insurance Swindle", and it is one of the finest Sexton Blake stories I have ever read. It doesn't feature Grant and Julie, but Bertrand Charon plays a big part in the plot. He is from the French Crime Bureau. For some reason they have changed his name to Bertram in this tale, but goodness knows why. He was always Bertrand, and it certainly sounds more French. There is a lovely eerie chapter in which Tinker goes down in a lift, and it doesn't stop. It continues going down and down and the temperature gets hotter and hotter. There is a logical explanation, but whenever I go in a lift in future I shall think of Tinker in the ever-descending lift.

Another S.B.L. I had this month is "The Man with the Glaring Eyes" by Allan Blair. It is set mainly in Wales, and it is pretty good, though not a patch on the Quiroule story.

I had two Boys' Friend Libraries. One is "Jack, Sam and Pete in Africa" by Clarke Hook. It must be a very old story for there have been no new Jack, Sam, and Pete tales for years, I think. The other B.F.L. is "Chums of the Bombay Castle" which Doug says once ran as a serial in the old Boys' Friend weekly.

In the Schoolboys' Own Library the China series continues with "The Mandarin's Vengeance" and it is absolutely great. Harry

Wharton & Co. are nearing China, but the Mandarin Tang Wang and the Red Dragon Tong menace them at every turn.

The St. Jim's S.O.L. is "Camp and Caravan" about the St. Jim's chums touring with a motor caravan, but it is not by the real Martin Clifford and is a bit of a waste of fourpence.

A truly marvellous month in the local cinemas with some really outstanding films to see. The month started off with an excellent musical "King of Burlesque" starring Warner Baxter, Alice Faye, and Jack Oakie - a backstage story of the type I always like.

Then a really magnificent British film "Things to Come". Based on the book by H. G. Wells, it lasts for two hours and is not a minute too long. It looks into the future and concerns a war in 1940 which is followed by plague, strikes, rebellions, and the world becomes a truly awful place to live in. It includes a trip to the moon in a space rocket. It has a wonderful cast headed by Raymond Massey. Magnificent spectacle - and it's British. But it makes me nervous of 50 years time. Goodness knows what life will be like in 1986 if I'm still around.

Ruth Chatterton (one of my favourites) was in "Lady of Secrets", and Tom Walls, Ralph Lynn, and Robertson Hare were in a light British comedy "Pot Luck".

Douglas Fairbanks Junr and Elissa Landi were in "The Amateur Gentleman", set in Regency times, when an innkeeper's son poses as a boxer in a travelling fair to clear his father's name of theft. Fred Macmurray and Joan Bennett were in "Thirteen Hours by Air", and Shirley Temple was in a coy little picture "Girl in Pawn".

I didn't like Laurel and Hardy in their full-length film "The Bohemian Girl". The comic stuff was slow and the singing was awful. A fairly good little British musical was "Soft Lights and Sweet Music" starring Ambrose and his band.

Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers were tip-top in "Follow the Fleet" about two sailors on shore leave who meet up with two girl singers and there is a romance. It's a bit slow to start with, but there are some good songs. Also with this one there was a Laurel and Hardy two-reeler "Thicker than Water", and the prize pair are right back on form.

One night Doug and I went to Holborn Empire and it was a lovely bill including Freddie Forbes and Angela Barrie, Charlie Kunz at the piano, and G.S. Melvin who came on dressed as a girl guide and sang "I'm happy when I'm hiking".

Going back to the Laurel and Hardy film "The Bohemian Girl". Thelma Todd also appeared in this one, and it has proved to be her last film. She was recently found dead in her car with the engine running, and she had died from the poisonous fumes. There is a suspicion that she was murdered by gangsters, and the American police are still conducting their enquiries into the case.

The Gem has been notable this month for some exceptionally fine stories. First of the month is "The Shanghaied Schoolboys". Tom Merry & Co. go for a day at the seaside where they are shanghaied and taken away to work on a tramp steamer, the Ramchunder. Next came "St. Jim's on Strike". Herries' bulldog, Towser, chases the Head across the quad, and the Head is so cross that he bans all pets. And the boys go on strike.

Next came "The Traitor". The St. Jim's cricket First Eleven is due to play an Australian touring side, the Wallabies. Cutts gets a place in the St. Jim's team - and gambles on the result of the game. Next, a great school drama, "The Black Sheep's Dupe". Cutts is due to pay his gambling losses, and he makes friends with Digby in order to use Dig as his dupe. Cutts pretends to be writing a play, and he gets Digby to copy the script of the play in which there is a letter from a boy confessing to owing £75 on a gambling bid. Finally "The Coming of the Toff". Talbot arrives at St. Jim's. He is a cracksman, and he is recognised by Joe Frayne from his old days among criminals in Angel Alley.

The early Magnet stories are still also running in the Gem, and it is a mighty fine paper all round.

Mum gave me the money, as it was Doug's birthday, and I bought him the latest William book, just out. It is entitled "Sweet William", and I have enjoyed it very much. I think it has the finest William stories for some time.

Perhaps the funniest is the opening story "William and the Wonderful Present". William's brother Robert buys a string of beads for the birthday of Dahlia Macnamara, but somehow she gets Mrs. Bott's magnificent string of pearls by mistake. So, for a time, she thinks she has a wonderful present, and that Robert is a delightful young man.

Two other exceptionally good stories in "Sweet William" are "Uncle Charlie and the Outlaws" and "A Spot of Heroism".

In the marvellous Magnet the series has continued all the month about Bunter running away from school to join Muccolini's Circus. Signor Muccolini is a spy, and Bunter knows it, so Bunter

THE HAUNTED CIRCUS!



has a hold over the oily signor.

The opening story of the month is "The Haunted Circus". Nobody in the circus knows that Bunter is a ventriloquist.

Next comes "The Rascal of the Remove". "Purple Peter" will win the big race prophesies the Crystal Gazer at the circus. And Hazeldene takes his word for it, without guessing that the crystal gazer is Bunter in disguise. After that came "Not Wanted at the Circus". Nobody wants Bunter in the circus, but nobody knows how to get rid of him.

Then the plot thickens with "The Signor's Secret". Spying is a dangerous game for Signor Muccolini. Final of the month is "The Hero of the Circus", Bunter gets some cheap glory in this tale, but Ferrers Locke is now on the scene so perhaps the end is in sight. But we have to wait till next month to find out what happens.

I wonder whether Frank Richards took the name Muccolini

from that old scamp of a dictator Mussolini.
The second test match with India was a draw.

- - - - -

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

S.O.L. No. 273 "The Mandarin's Vengeance" comprised 3 more stories from the Magnet's China series of late summer 1930. S.O.L. No. 274 "Camp & Caravan" comprised 3 stories of the Gem's 5-story holiday series of the summer of 1926. It was a sub series, and one of the mysteries of life is why any sub stories at all were chosen for reprinting in the S.O.L.

The Pierre Quiroule story "The £100,000 Insurance Swindle" had been entitled "The Black Limousine, or The Case of the £100,000 Policy" in the Sexton Blake Library of the Spring of 1926.

The 1936 Gem story "The Shanghai Schoolboys" had appeared under the same title early in 1914. The 1936 story "St. Jim's on Strike" had been "The Strike at St. Jim's" in the early summer of 1913. The 1936 story "The Traitor" had been "Playing to Win" about the same period in 1913.

"The Black Sheep's Dupe" had been "The Black Sheep" in the autumn of 1913. An exceptionally good story, this one of Cutts pretending to befriend Digby in order to get him to write a letter. Hamilton used the same theme, many years on in the Magnet, but I forget the title of the Magnet or when it appeared. Anyone remember?

"The Coming of the Toff" had been "The Toff" in the Spring of 1914. For many, the Toff became their favourite character and a turning point for the better in the Gem. For some, including myself, it was sad that the Toff was to be so heavily overplayed.

* * * * *

Read all about Frank Minnitt (Billy Bunter's artist) and see a rare previously unpublished letter from Charles Hamilton in the latest 40 page issue of GOLDEN FUN (No. 16), the nation's leading magazine about British comics and story papers! £2.65 plus 34p post. Write (or telephone 0892-23095) for news of other exciting GOLDEN FUN publications: Alan and Laurel Clark, 24 Arundel Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent., TN1 1TB.

* * * * *

MAGNETS WANTED to build up collection. Various numbers between 1 and 1683. But must be in immaculate condition. Not guillotined or sellotaped, torn or dirty.
FR. G. GOOD, THORNES VICARAGE, WAKEFIELD, WEST YORKSHIRE, WF2 8DW. Telephone WAKEFIELD 374009.



ALWAYS THE BRIDESMAID - BUT NEVER THE BRIDE?

by W.O.G. Lofts

Part 3

Apart from writing about Nelson Lee, 'Maxwell Scott' had also created other detectives such as Kenyon Ford, Vernon Read, and Martin Dale - some for rival publishers. He also was one of the Sexton Blake writers, penning stories as it were that were in a sense a rival to his own creation! In 1896 however, he had some serious disagreement with the editor of 'Pluck' and so moved over to the firm of Pearsons for a while. Nelson Lee was of course dropped from the paper. Later on, he was astonished to see in 'Pluck' a story featuring Nelson Lee that was not from his pen! So he promptly wrote direct to the top - Alfred Harmsworth - pointing out that the character was his own creation, and received a prompt apology from the great man.

Later on this incident probably had a great bearing on whom was top detective at Fleetway House, and concerns a man who was responsible for the building up of Lee's greatest rival.

William H. Back had started as an office boy on the early Harmsworth boys' papers including 'Union Jack'. By 1900 he was editor of that paper. A very striking and astute looking man he had well chiselled features, with very keen sharp grey eyes. In films he could have been type cast as a detective - whilst H.W. Twyman a later Union Jack editor told me that he was so clever at crime deduction, that he would have been a great asset at Scotland Yard. In fact Charles Hamilton in the early days of his school stories met him in the corridor at Fleetway House, and was so struck by his ideal detective looking appearance, that he based Ferrers Locke his own creation on him.

In 1904 William Back decided that it would be a good idea and policy to feature a regular detective each week, and so chose Sexton Blake. Nelson Lee had also come into consideration, but taking into account that Lee was not their copyright - whilst Sexton Blake was. Plus that they would have dozens of writers at their disposal to vary his tales and adventures. Perhaps one should explain here that Harry Blyth had sold his first Sexton Blake story to include the copyright of the character - whilst Maxwell Scott had not sold the copyright of Nelson Lee. Sexton Blake then had a regular paper with stories weekly, written in time by better and better writers including Michael Storm and the brilliant G.H. Teed who were on a par with 'Maxwell Scott's expertise.

SEXTON BLAKE WINS

Jack Adrian writes: Your readers -- and not only Sexton Blake enthusiasts, here and abroad -- may be interested to know that I've edited a Blake anthology, which will be published by Dent in the Fall. Entitled Sexton Blake Wins it contains six long stories (three from the Union Jack, three from the Detective Weekly) plus two shorts culled from the Blake Annuals. It also contains the famous Pierre Quiroule story "Sexton Blake Solves It", which was only ever published in the Evening Standard in 1936, under the aegis of Dorothy L. Sayers. Other authors represented are G.H. Teed, Gwyn Evans, Anthony Skene, Donald Stuart, Robert Murray, Rex Hardinge, John Hunter and Anthony Parsons. It will be published in Dent's 'Classic Crime' paperback series at around a fiver, which doesn't seem too bad to me, considering it'll be a pretty hefty tome: 460 pages in all.

* * * * *

FOR DISPOSAL: 174 copies of "C.D.". Will accept reasonable low offer plus postal cost.

ROBYNS, "TREWELLARD", 14 SPRINGFIELD CLOSE, PHILLACK, HAYLE, CORNWALL, TR27 5AW.

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY books required. Very best prices for 1st/2nd series in good condition.

TERRY BEENHAM, 20 LONGSHOTS CLOSE, BROOMFIELD, CHELMSFORD, ESSEX, CM1 5DX.



RECOLLECTIONS AND COMPARISONS

by Jim Cook

What a blessed gift is memory. Life would be very dull without it; good times, hard times, all contribute to create that pensive mood we are all subject to. And I think those Christmas adventures of the juniors of St. Frank's will always highlight our reminiscences as we ponder the passing years... sometimes with regret, sometimes with pleasure.

I now live in that part of the world where compared with the season at St. Frank's the climate is topsy turvy. Mental images of the juniors getting ready to depart for Tregellis Castle and the thick snow promises plenty of skating... of the telegram arriving as the boys are on the point of leaving St. Frank's for Cornwall and the consternation on their faces at the news scarlet fever had broken out among the staff cancelling the invitation... of the Duke of Somerton's instant solicitous desire to help and invite them all to Somerton Abbey, one of England's oldest piles, an enormous place - a great, turreted castle with surrounding parks and estates and a permanent staff numbering hundreds.

This great mansion could quite easily absorb and accept another twelve juniors besides the many guests already invited.

And don't forget, there is a Somerton! Authors of fiction are usually very careful of names and places for libel laws have no favourites.

But we have to picture Somerton Abbey as the limousine deposits the schoolboys upon the wide terrace which fronted the magnificent building. With windows ablaze with light and the joyous welcome... this is the real Yuletide setting.

Of course, there is a ghost. No Christmas story isn't worth

recording otherwise. But that's only incidental. It's the beautiful atmosphere that is created that lingers for many years afterwards. Troubles and stress take no part during these holiday times, and they are pushed into limbo.

If one's circumstances doesn't allow to match the food always associated with Christmas, perhaps one can share the benison of missing the after effects.

Yet who can forget Dickens' Christmassy scenes and the impoverished and hungry children; of the little MATCH GIRL who had to sell her matches for a cruel father; but there was the comparison... one extreme from another; tables burdened with food that only Christmas can provide; the frozen lakes surrounded with coloured lights and skaters gliding in all directions...

And so we read and transported ourselves to those havens of ecstasy while the words drifted away till the next story came.

Reality took over, and our world returned all too quickly. Somerton Abbey and all the ancestral homes that featured in the stories about St. Frank's will never fade. Only humans fade although en passant those Yuletide adventures make us feel quite youthful again.

I once visited Somerton. Somerton Abbey was there for only my eyes. But I could easily picture that Christmas scene when the juniors were there; the snow-filled roads, the feast and the gaiety. Happiness doesn't necessarily have to be purchased; you can read it.

ANOTHER GOLDEN OLDIE

by G.H. Churchill

Continuing the theme of my article in September C.D. re "Nipper's Note Book" series in the Lees of 1917, I would like to call attention to the second story of that series - No. 97 "The Manor House Mystery" dated 14/4/17. If one wants a good baffling mystery with plenty of thrills - well here we are!

The story opens in Bristol (in a heat wave) and Lee and Nipper, having just solved a local mystery over the past few days, were sitting on the balcony of their hotel whiling away the time until their train left for London. It was early afternoon.

Suddenly a waiter approached and informed Lee that a Mr. Howard Freeman wished to speak to him for a short time. Lee, being in no hurry, agreed to see him. Mr. Freeman told a stange tale. About a fortnight earlier his father, a widower, was found dead about halfway along the drive from the road to their mansion,

Thirtle Manor House. It was found that he had died of poison apparently caused by a small wound in his wrist... Young Howard was adamant that his father had not committed suicide as he himself had, the previous evening to coming to see Nelson Lee, been chased by a mysterious "thing" while coming up the long dark drive to the house. As this problem seemed attractive Lee agreed to go to the Manor House at once and investigate.

That evening Freeman's sister was passing up the drive in a trap driven by an employee named Bates when the horse was frightened by a dark shape which attacked it and he was thrown to the ground. Miss Freeman dashed for the house to raise the alarm. When Lee and Nipper searched the drive they found Bates unconscious, suffering from a bite. Lee declared he had been poisoned.

The story goes on from here with some hair-raising events such as a large snake prowling about and Lee and Nipper also attacked by a strange shape. Let Nipper's words give you something to think about - "Even as the bright beam of light shot out from my torch, a harsh terrifying snarl went up into the air. I just caught a vision of something covered with fur - something which it was impossible to recognise. And it was grey - a dirty, ghastly grey.

Then the torch was torn from my hand and everything was dark. I felt my heart leap tremendously, but I had the presence of mind to lunge out. It was the instinct of self-preservation, I suppose. My fingers encountered some rough fur - and it was stone cold! This, alone, made me shudder. Cold! I clutched some of the fur, and I felt it tear in my grasp. Then I pelted away!!"

I will not tell you any more in case this has whetted your appetite for more and you may like to borrow the tale from the Nelson Lee Library run by Bill Bradford. Don't forget. No. 97 old small series. I urge you to do so if you have not the item in your own collection. It is certainly worth reading, but not on a dark evening with the window open beside you!!

* * * * *
 WANTED TO PURCHASE: Skilton/Cassell Bunter Hardbacks and Howard-Baker Magnet Volumes, odd items or suitable collection. Also William Books and Girls Stories by E.M. Brent-Dyer and Elsie Oxenham. Contact: COLIN CREWE, 12b WESTWOOD ROAD, CANVEY ISLAND, ESSEX. Telephone: 0268 693735.

THE THREE FISHERS

by Edward Baldock

The inimitable and worthy Dr. Johnson has stated (according to Boswell) that: 'There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn'. It will be observed that the good Doctor emphasises the term 'good'. He would, no doubt, be the first to acknowledge the existence in his own day - as is the case in these latter times that there are taverns - and taverns, good and indifferent, middling and rather disreputable, and downright dens of iniquity. It is into this last category I feel we may safely consign that seedy hostelry designated 'The Three Fishers' hidden among the trees on the banks of the River Sark near Friardale in Kent.

As a house of refreshment and entertainment it must be said that the 'Three Fishers' in its large neglected garden by the river Sark leaves much to be desired. A general and all-pervading air of dilapidation is all too prevalent; a run-down and less than welcome appearance greets the view of any visitor unfortunate enough to wander into its precincts. On warm days, the french doors, looking out on to the wilderness of tangled undergrowth comprising the garden, will be open, not so much to give ingress to the fresh breezes from the river as to allow the fumes of cheap cigar smoke, beer and spirits - among other unpleasant odours - to escape. A peeling sign, sadly in need of renovation and depicting three hunched figures angling from the banks of the river, proclaim the name of the house. Creaking dismally in the wind, it certainly does not inspire confidence as to the possible comforts and amenities - if any - within. This is the headquarters and 'main office' of one Joseph Banks who, it may be said, fits to a nicety the general air of frowziness permeating the surroundings. Joseph is, so he describes himself, a turf accountant, with a marked tendency towards flashiness of dress and adornment. Much in evidence are cheap watch chains, large rings and horseshoe tiepins. He presents on the whole a less than alluring spectacle, being usually unwashed and in need of the attentions of a razor about his jowls, and exuding an oily and insinuating exterior.

Shakespeare has said in Henry IV part I: 'Shall I take mine ease in mine inn but I shall have my pocket picked'. It is possible that such a blatant outrage would not be committed at the 'Three Fishers' - at least not with such crudity. Nevertheless Joey Banks and his seedy associates are certainly not above extracting currency

of the realm from young 'bounders' from the school by other almost as disagreeable tactics, e.g. wagers on billiard games, cards and 'backing the illusive winner' which seems always to have the unhappy propensity of failing to justify expectations.

The billiards room, a large low-ceilinged apartment containing, in addition to a full-sized billiard table over which hang four heavily shaded lamps illuminating brilliantly the green baize of the table beneath a rack of cues, a score-board, a few chairs and a half dozen framed sporting prints adorning the walls complete the furnishings. In a dim corner the light glints upon various coloured bottles behind a small bar whence one may obtain refreshment of an alcoholic nature. This is the social centre of the 'Three Fishers' - completely and utterly 'out-of-bounds' to all Greyfriars fellows. Here Joey is most likely to be found, except on race days at Wapshot and other nearby courses. Here he will while away the time usually in his shirt-sleeves with an evil-smelling cigar belching smoke from his mouth, knocking the pills around (in 'Three Fishers' jargon), and waiting for whomsoever may chance to wander into this doubtful 'paradise'.

In the background there is a pot-man and a bar-man who comprise the permanent staff. The distinction between the two is vague but doubtless both have their time-honoured functions. Suffice to say both are heavy-jowled, distinctively beery in countenance and horsy-looking individuals; both exude a general air of seediness, and both carry a distressing odour of stale bar-room and even staler tobacco.

And yet the 'Three Fishers' is without doubt a temple of sorts - even Dr. Locke the revered Headmaster of Greyfriars, steeped in the classics himself, would hardly deny the supposition. For here is worshipped with all due solemnity and regularity the great but effeminate god Dionysus, or as he is more widely known, Bacchus, by the clinetele; while Madame Nicotine is certainly not without her devotees. Small wonder that this unsavoury retreat is strict 'tabu' to the nearby Greyfriars fellows. There is recorded, however, many escapades and narrow escapes interwoven throughout the story of the old school. Herbert Vernon Smith, among others, being extremely cognisant of the topography of the house and its more likely routes of 'getting clear' in emergencies.

To the imaginary lounge in the garden on a warm afternoon, the cheery sound of chatter and laughter from fellows passing along the towpath just a few yards away, and the shouts of other chaps

disporting themselves in various river craft, would appear pleasant indeed. It is odd to think and observe such jolly and wholesome activities rubbing shoulders with a world so diametrically opposite - the decent and the despicable running side by side. As Mr. Prout would probably say with a preponderance of verbosity, plus an unusual flash of perception, 'It is all part of the strangely interwoven tapestry of life my dear sir'.

Yet, while we in our inmost hearts realise that without this 'den of ill repute' we should have been denied many thrilling and exciting episodes in the past. NO orchids to add to your wreath of vine leaves 'Three Fishers' - but, remain with us - ad finem.

* * * * *

REVIEW

GREYFRIARS VERSUS HIGHCLIFFE

Frank Richards
(Howard Baker Special: £18)

In those far distant days, very early in the year 1914, the author - and the editor and the publishers of the Magnet - could never have dreamed that some seventy years later their work would appear in the luxurious surroundings and trappings of these superb Howard Baker "specials". What a pity that none of them are around to savour it all.

This latest volume comprises the first six Magnets of the year 1914, when weekly papers were at a stage of quality which they were destined never quite to see again.

Perhaps the most outstanding story in the volume is "Trouble with Highcliffe". It mainly concerns the rivalry between the two schools, with Mr. Mobbs, the irascible Highcliffe master, being on the receiving end of a snowball which contains a stone. It works up in a splendid crescendo, and there is excellent character work as the temperaments of masters clash.

"Ructions in the Remove" has Herr Gans, the German master who was later to disappear from the stories, in a starring comedy role. "Held up" is a thriller type, familiar in the red Magnet, with an outside gang raiding the school "The Right Sort" introduces a new boy named Algy Darrell, who seems a thoroughly decent fellow till, intriguingly, we discover that he has a secret and that he is paying Bunter "hush money".

"Bunter's Black Chum" centres largely on a famous black footballer who plays for a local team. For some reason the dark gentleman appears to be a close friend of Bunter's. When the Greyfriar's First Eleven is short of a player, Bunter's black chum is remembered, and there are fascinating developments.

The final story in the volume, "The Factory Rebels" is a sub story, but it has its interesting moments and it is certainly worth inclusion to keep the sequence complete.

Some luscious stories from the old days, and really luxury binding to give them a fitting setting. What more could one ask for?



FAIR PLAY

A Splendid School Tale.

By CHAS. HAMILTON.

(here is the Second Chapter of the very first Hurree Singh story ever written, 80 years ago)

Hurree Singh's arrival at Netherby caused quite a flutter in the Third Form which he honoured with his presence. In spite of Knowles's scepticism on the point, he was, in reality, a nabob in his own country, and princes, even dusky ones, were not common in the Third Form at Netherby.

And the new boy was decidedly a character. His extreme politeness was only equalled by the peculiarity of his English, and, his knowledge of that language was fearful and wonderful.

His education in India had left a good deal to be desired, but he was blissfully unconscious of the fact, and so it did not trouble him.

But his nature was so kind and so obliging that the boys could hardly help liking him, though his extreme simplicity led many of them to play practical jokes upon him.

There was probably only one boy in the Form who disliked him and that was Knowles, who never forgave him for being the unintentional cause of his downfall at the hands of Owen Redfern.

The coming of the Indian added considerably to the gaiety of the Third Form. The masters did not know exactly what to make of him. His English was the despair of Mr. Lumsden; but Mr. Lumsden's worries were as nothing to those of Herr Schwan, whose business it was to

drive German into the heads of the Netherby juniors, and who found the task extremely difficult in the case of Hurree Singh.

Herr Schwan, as a matter of fact, never had a very pleasant time with the Third. They did not like German, and they did not like the Herr. He was a sharp-tempered little man, with a way of rapping knuckles with a pointer when he was irritated.

"Dis is te most stupid class as hefer was," he exclaimed one morning. Knowles had been exasperating him by some purposely stupid answers, and had been sent to the bottom of the class. "Now you- vat is your name?" He pointed to the youthful nabob.

"Yes Sir. Hurree Janset Ram Singh, sir."

"Mein gootness: Vat do you know of Sherman?"

"I have been earthed in that beautiful language, Sir", said Hurree Singh. "My tutor, a distinguished native graduate of Bengal University-----"

"Vat does te poy say? You have been vat!"

"He means grounded, sir", ventured Redfern, smothering a laugh.

"Ach! You will take te sentence vich tat Knowles cannot understand. I say to say, mein poy, tat sentence. Haben sie hunger? Vat is te English of tat?"

Hurree Singh cocked his head thoughtfully. Herr Schwan rapped his desk with his pointer.

"Are you hungry?" he exclaimed impatiently. "Do you understand?"

Hurree Singh looked surprised.

"Yes, Sir; I understand. No, thank you, I am not hungry."

"Vat do you say?"

"I am not hungry."

"Te poy is a fool!"

"Pardon me, sir, I have only answered your question", said Hurree Singh. "You asked me if I were hungry and I replied that I was not. As a matter of fact, I made a very good breakfast this morning."

The class were giggling, and the Herr rapped his desk again.

"Hurree Singh, is tat stupidity or impertinence tat you mean?" The nabob looked deeply pained.

"I trust that you could never suspect me of being impertinent, Sir!" he exclaimed. "I make it a most universal rule to maintain decorousness of manners even with personages of most unpleasant tempers."

The Herr breathed hard. He gave a long look at the dusky face of the nabob, but read only the most complete innocence there, and passed on to the next boy.

But Herr Schwan was a conscientious little man, and presently he returned to the charge. He was looking a little dangerous now, and the boys were very careful, and the nabob was a trifle nervous as the German master's eye singled him out again.

"Hurree Singh!"

"Yes, sir."

"You have heard vat I have just said."

"Yes, sir."

"Den repeat it!"

Hurree Singh wrinkled his brows.

Das ist der--der--"

"Das ist der wige Gesang!" rapped out Herr Shwan.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, tell me vat tat line mean, and nod keep on saying 'Yes, sir,' like vun parrot!"

Hurree Singh looked worried. For

the life of him he couldn't construe that line, but he did not dare to say so as the Herr was looking so bad-tempered.

"Vell, are you dumb?" asked Herr Schwan sarcastically.

"No, sir."

"Den tell me vat I ask you."

"Yes, sir."

"I will gif you vun chance before I use te pointer."

"Yes, sir", grasped Hurree Singh. It was at that moment that Knowles came to the rescue. He dropped a pen, and stooped to pick it up, and whispered to Hurree Singh as he did so:

"Shall I tell you?"

Hurree Singh gave a gasp of relief.

"Oh, yes, please!"

"It means 'get your hair cut'", said Knowles with perfect gravity.

"Oh, thank you!"

And Hurree Singh, never doubting, brightened up wonderfully.

"Now, mein poy", snapped Herr Schwan, "Vill you tell me?"

"Yes, sir. Get your hair cut."

For a moment the class was astounded, and Herr Schwan stood as if petrified. The Herr was somewhat vain of his hair, which he wore longer than is customary, and curled and scented. It was a common subject for jokes at Netherby, but no one had ventured to joke the German master himself about it before.

"Vat did you say. Hurree Singh?"

"Get your hair cut, sir", said the nabob cheerfully.

The whole class burst into a roar. Hurree Singh looked round him in amazement. He had not the faintest idea of what the juniors were laughing at. The German master made two strides to Hurree Singh, his fat face red with rage.

"You--you impertinent poy!" he gasped. "Come out here-- come out at vunce!"

Hurree Singh looked dismayed.

"What is the matter, sir? You asked me!"

"You tell me to get mein hair cut! Mein gootness! Poys, if you do not leave off to laugh, I will punish te whole class!"

He shook his pointer at Hurree Singh.

"Get mein hair cut! Mein gootness!"

"Well, it would do the fat old donkey good to have that mop off, anyway!" muttered Knowles.

"Did you speak, Knowles?"

"No, sir."

"I tink tat you speak!"

"Certainly not, sir!" said Knowles, feeling rather alarmed. He had not expected the Herr to be so quick of hearing. "Hurree Singh will bear me out, sir. I didn't say anything, did I, Hurree Singh?" The nabob looked at him in astonishment. He did not quite grasp the fact at first that Knowles was telling a deliberate lie to get out of a scrape.

"My respectable friend", exclaimed Hurree Singh, "surely that is a remarkable incorrectness of the remembrance. I distinctly heard you say--- Oh, oh!" Hurree Singh broke off with a yell as Knowles, in alarm, pinched his leg as a hint to keep quiet. The German master glared at them.

"You heard Knowles say 'Oh, oh!'" he exclaimed.

"No, sir! I uttered that ejaculation because someone has just pinched me, and caused me a sudden and excruciating anguish", said Hurree Singh.

"Knowles, step out here!"

"But, sir -----"

"Step our here!" said Herr Schwan, in a voice of thunder. Knowles, giving Hurree Singh a dark look, reluctantly obeyed.

"Now, Hurree Singh, vat did Knowles say?"

"Pardon me, sir", said the nabob, "it has just occurred to me that Knowles might object to my informing you that he alluded to you as a fat donkey, and so, if you will excuse me, I will not repeat his remark." The classed yelled, and the German turned as red as a turkey-cock.

"You call me a fat donkey, Knowles? And you tell likes like vun Ananias!"

"I-- I didn't sir, I---"

"Hold out your hand!"

Knowles had to obey, and he received a couple of stingers on each hand, and he went back to his seat with his hands under his arms, looking as if he were trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife.

The caning of Knowles relieved Herr Schwan's feelings a little, and he let Hurree Singh alone after that. When the class was dismissed, Knowles jostled against Hurree Singh as the boys went out.

"'ll make you sit up for that, you nigger!" he whispered fiercely. Redfern shoved him aside.

"Come and have a look at the footer, Hurree", he said, passing his arm through that of the Indian boy.

And he marched the Nabob off to Little Side, leaving Knowles to plan vengeance.

(MORE OF THIS OLD STORY

NEXT MONTH)

"THE LADY INVESTIGATES"

Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig

(Oxford Paperbacks: £3.95)

A georgous read and a glorious wallow in nostalgia for the likes of us. That's how we would describe this book which first flowed from the gifted pens of our very own ladies about 5 years ago and which deservedly now has a second outing in paperback format.

Our talented girls cover, in their own inimitable style, the lady tees of early days in the works of Wilkie Collins and many others with a pleasant peep at the daunting Miss Van Snoop; they pass to more modern times with an affectionate look at Miss Marple and the works of Christie, Sayers, and the rest of treasured memory, and end up with a scan of recent novels by P.D. James.

But you can see where their hearts are, and rightly so - with Yvonne Cartier in the Union Jack, plus the ladies of the Schoolgirls' Weekly, the School Friend, and the rest. The illustrations are a sigh of delight, and our own Miss Evelyn Flinders gets a look-in.

It's all absorbingly delightful and delightfully absorbing. If you missed it first time round, grab it this time while copies last in the shops.



NEWS OF THE OLD BOYS BOOK CLUBS

MIDLAND

11 members turned up for our June meeting. We were delighted to see Vin and Joan Loveday. They now live over 100 miles away. Tom Porter is still not well enough to attend and Ivan Webster took the chair.

A start was made to the evening's entertainment with a quiz given by your correspondent. Some very old Collectors' Digests were given as prizes.

Refreshments were provided as usual by Betty Hopton and the Lovedays with tea or coffee provided by Ivan Webster.

Christine Brettell provided another interesting quiz. It was the kind of quiz where even if your score is low you have learnt a lot.

Ivan Webster gave a reading from Magnet 1314, part of the Bunter's Easter Cruise series. It was very amusing.

A discussion on which character each member preferred to Bunter was set going. Amongst our members not everyone prefers the Magnet to other old papers. This was borne out when members were questioned.

All best wishes to all O.B.B.C. members. Happy holidays, everyone.

JACK BELLFIELD (Correspondent)

LONDON

Bill Bradford commenced proceedings at the July meeting, which was held at the Ealing Liberal Hall, with a reading from newsletter number 212, dated January 1971 and then followed this

reading by another one that was taken from Gem 1060. It dealt with Handforth's stay at St. Jim's and E.S. Brooks was the author. However, it was enjoyed by the company present. Brian Doyle came up with an unique quiz which he called "Brief Romances and Arrivals". There were two winners, Tommy Keen and Les Rowley.

Christ Harper entertained the gathering with an excellent reading from a Guardian Weekly article by Derek Brown about the famous old boys' book author Percy F. Westerham. The title of the article is F. Westerham Pulls It Off. Two fine hard-back copies of the author's books were on show and Chris stated that he had 135 titles of Westerham's stories whilst Bill Bradford has 104.

Finally, Les Rowley read another chapter from his Greyfriars opus which was entitled "Prout Knows How".

Next meeting at Bill Bradford's Ealing residence on Sunday, 10th August. Full tea available, kindly notify if intending to be present.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held: Saturday, 12th July, 1986

The holiday season showed evidence of taking toll, resulting in our having only ten members present.

Paul Galvin had recently collected from Barnsley, a generous donation of some books in lovely condition for our Club Library. Mrs. Rhodes wanted her deceased husband's collection to go to a good cause: our Secretary was asked to write to thank her on behalf of the Club.

David Bradley, Paul Galvin and Darrell Swift, reported on their plans for a meeting of the fans of W.E. Johns - this to take place in Leeds on 15th November, 1986.

Keith Smith read an article "Collecting Old Boys' Books" from a 1966 copy of "Boys' World Annual". The writer was obviously very conversant with our hobby, for it was a most factual and correct item with plenty of foresight for the years to come, for the writer talked about the increasing value in the near future of the old papers.

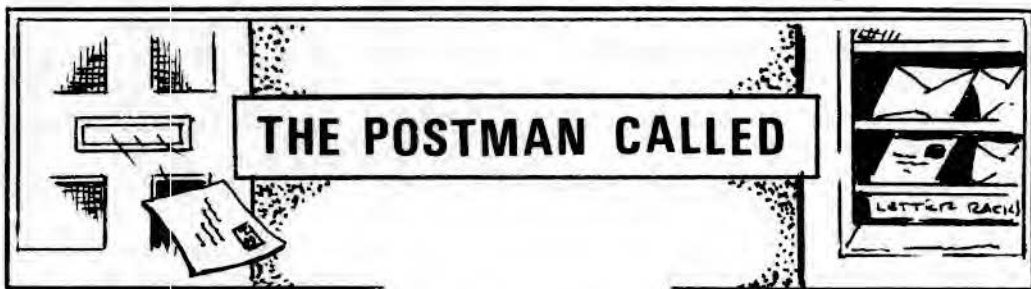
After refreshments - kindly provided by Peter Plowman - Harry Blowers presented a "middle-names" quiz.. Geoffrey Good was the winner.

Darrell presented "Skilton The Benevolent and Bunter The

Bold" giving a brief history of the involvement of Charles Skilton the publisher in the first Bunter books. Mr. Skilton had really been a pioneer in our hobby and it was perhaps through him, that such a great interest continued. After the war, Charles Hamilton was lost without his Bunter writings so it had been a pleasure for him to tap out the Bunter stories on his faithful Remington. The Bunter books had revived an interest in the Greyfriars stories since the demise of The Magnet. We felt that we had to say "thank you" to Mr. Skilton for his initiative, gamble and positive approach - without him, we felt that after the war, Charles Hamilton would not have been the great man he was.

JOHNNY BULL MINOR

* * * * *



JAMES HODGE (Bristol): Your current Editorial comments about shopping, metrication and postal idiocies find me in full agreement.

Not only was shopping easier 50 years ago, it was also a great deal more pleasant, indeed often quite a sociable affair. How often do you run across sociability in a supermarket?

As for metrication, I insist on asking for my paint in quarts and pints and my tobacco in ounces - I know I don't get 'em but I still persist. I recently ordered a quantity of chip-board cut to sizes in feet and inches - and took unrepentant pleasure watching the supplier frantically trying to convert it all into metric and then back again into Imperial, he meanwhile mumbling "All our stock is in metres" to which my unsympathetic rejoinder was "My requirements are not"!

As for the depravities of the Post Office - what price a system where a letter posted in Wells, Somerset to an address in that same city goes to Bath to be franked and then back to Wells for delivery.

JOHN LEWIS (Neston): I think Danny had better keep to Boys' Story Papers and films, and refrain from commenting on Tennis. His bold statement that the 1936 Wimbledon Championships were exciting is far from the actual fact, for 1936 was not a vintage Wimbledon year.

The Men's Singles Final was a tragedy. Perry held his service in the opening game of the match which went to deuce ten times, and lasted eight minutes. That was the end of the match, for his opponent, Von Cramm, pulled a muscle in his thigh in the second game and could not run any more. He sportingly went through the ceremony of finishing the match because he knew that it was to be the last time Perry would ever be seen at Wimbledon. He actually won two games by means of his service alone, and in the annals of Wimbledon, Perry beat Von Cramm 6-1, 6-1, 6-0, whereas against a lesser sportsman the result would have read 1-0 retired.

If, however, the Wimbledon of 1936 was not a very exciting one, it was, from a British point of view, our big year, as England won every event except the Ladies' Singles. Indeed this year, for good measure, Perry also won the U.S. Singles for a third time, and our men successfully defended the Davis Cup, beating Australia by the odd match in five.

Alas! fifty years on British tennis seems to have lost its way, and we can only dream of the years 1933-36 when Perry and Austin ruled the courts.

HAROLD TRUSCOTT (Deal): In answer to Mr. Thurbon's query, The Tunnel American title Transatlantic Tunnel) was made in 1935 and released in 1936. It was a Gaumont-British film, with an Anglo-America cast which included the Americans Richard Dix (the nominal star of the film), the fine character actor Walter Huston, fresh from Rhodes of Africa, also an English film, as an American President, and George Arliss. The film was a re-make of an earlier German thriller, and was directed by the English Maurice Elvey. Arliss, of course, was not American.=

P. GALVIN (Barnsley): The Terence Cuneo article with illustration was especially interesting to me as I am a W.E. Johns enthusiast. I remembered Cuneo was one of the few people who illustrated the Biggles books apart from Howard Leigh and Leslie Stead. The only book he illustrated so far as I know was "Biggles in the Jungle",

first published 1942. I have not seen the dust jacket but the colour frontispiece is a lovely example of his work.

JOE CONROY (Liverpool): Congratulations to Bob Whiter for a very fine article on Terence Cuneo. I greatly enjoyed it.

JACK WALES (Cilcain): In this retrogressive age, these are a few of my unfavourite things:

Food wrappers which even Hercules could not tear open; matches which snap, gutter (not burn) and strike - perhaps - once in a box of 23; newspapers which ooze ink on everybody and everything within 600 paces; teas, coffees and soups made from powdered chemicals and dispensed by machines into flimsy paper cups which arrive upside down or tilted at drunken angles; shop assistants who call me Dad, Squire, Friend or Mate and tell me: 'There you go!'; dwarf bobbies who need two-way Dick Tracey sets to talk to a mysterious 'control' to find out which street they are patrolling; spiked hair in day-glo greens, yellows and reds - for men; fish and chip suppers eaten with wobbly, two-pronged mini-forks from plastic wallets which are discarded at bus-stops or inside telephone kiosks; telephone kiosks without glass, directories, coin boxes and telephones; travel inquiry offices which appear to remove telephones from hooks between the hours of 8 - 6; electric tin-openers which don't; electioneering pamphlets through my letter box from 394 candidates at each and every local, regional or national poll; salad-dressing and sauces in obscene sachets; do-in (sic)-yourself kits with at least 10 pages of destructions in 14 or more languages; computers; kiss-me-quick hats and brown ale bottles as standard issue for passengers on motor coaches (bring back the charabanc!); experts on sporting and scientific subjects on television; sausages made with soya beans; waiting in post offices for a stamp while 1,567 other customers are taxing cars, drawing pensions and arguing about sub-section 137 (d) of the latest Green Paper; and moaning creeps, like me, who write to sound off in the columns of every publication in the land.....

BILL LOFTS (London): The piece in Blakania is interesting this month. Personally I have no doubt that the Blake writer pinched the story from Miss Christie, and that it had appeared earlier in some magazine. I certainly have seen her work in old magazines, when apart from this, collections of short stories or anthologies

nearly always come from the mentioned source. Some Sexton Blake writers have been found guilty of plagiarism in the past pinching whole chapters from Edgar Wallace and Sax Rohmer novels, when apart from this Agatha Christie in answer to a query once on whether she was influenced by Sexton Blake in her younger days - replied 'that she had never read a Sexton Blake story in her life'.

The author of the Union Jack story in question was Jack Lewis otherwise 'Lewis Jackson', and I'm certainly surprised at him doing such a thing, as prior to this event his name and reputation has been excellent. He died in the late fifties.

EDWARD BALDOCK (Cambridge): I would like to record my enjoyment of F. Hertzberg's excellent article 'Oasis' in the June issue of C.D. He echoes so many of my own long held sentiments and feelings and, I suspect, not a little antipathy towards the Orwell school of thought. We certainly live in a brave new world, but is it I frequently wonder quite so brave as that which we are trying to perpetuate in our own small way month by month in the old journal.

Danny mentions in his diary the Chinese adventure series 'The Menace of Tang Wang'. I too look back upon this series which I read in the weekly issues of the Magnet, not the S.O.L. in which one was, I believe, likely to find somewhat edited versions of the original tales. It was a splendid series containing, for me at least, genuine menace. I recall in particular Harry Wharton's unpleasant experience in the great Pagoda, with his retreat from floor to floor; this episode projected the elements of real danger. Alongside this series I would place - this is quite a personal choice - the 'Arthur Da Costa' series which seemed to embody a very real atmosphere of time and place - that Magnetian timelessness which seemed so all-pervading in certain of the Greyfriars tales. They were quite unique.

* * * * *

WANTED: £8 each offered B.F.L. 1st series Nos. 30; 38; 235; 237; 288; 328. Gems 248; 249. St. Frank's Bibliography.

S. KALAMUOKIS, 11 WESTON AVENUE, NARWEE, N.S.W.
AUSTRALIA.

I WONDER

by Bill Wright

With World War II ending the glorious thirties, many boys papers and comics either merged, or worse, closed for ever. However, the mark that they left lived on, insofar as their readers remained members of the various clubs and societies. An immediate example of this is my own membership of the 'Knockout' Birthday Club. As all 'Magnet' readers will know, the 'Knockout' did, in fact, incorporate their favourite boys papersome of the friends I made as a result of my 'K.B.C.' membership, are still proud of the association.

Now I have recently unearthed some mid-thirties 'Funny Wonders', and was fascinated by reading of the 'F.W. Secret Society'. There was just one condition to become a member, and that was to become a regular reader. A badge to show the world your society status was printed in an issue dated 14th September, 1935. This was to be cut-out and pasted on cardboard. It featured Charlie Chaplin raising his bowler, in a seated position so that his shoes were graphically exaggerated, with soles/heels having F.W. prominently displayed on them. This badge was then worn in the button-hole on the left lapel of the coat. Seeing another member in the street, one would challenge the other with the PASSWORD. Now, if the correct answer was not given, it was assumed that the unfortunate member had not bought the current issue. On making this judgement, the challenger could insist on the badge being removed because entitlement to wear it was finished. (How cruel.)

I can vaguely remember some of these challenges being made, and not knowing of the society was quite bewildered by both challenge and reply. Now, so many years later, - all is revealed. Each week, generally above 'Horatio Pimple's' article, (He was the office boy), appeared that weeks password. Soon all over town and village could be heard the shouted challenge, "ZIMBARA" and the reply, "MALIKI".

In conclusion, I wonder what was the reply to "BIDOOOLA"? Could it possibly have been "KABEEZA"?

* * * * *

THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY

by Esmond Kadish

An entry, in a thirties' edition of the "Writers' and Artists' Yearbook", which summarily dismissed the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY as "reprinted matter", was, strictly speaking, only seventy-

five per cent accurate! In fact, one of the four monthly numbers was usually described as a "new and original story", while the other three issues consisted of material (suitably edited, or ruined, according to one's point of view!) which had previously appeared as serials in the schoolgirl companion papers. From time to time, a Morcove story would also appear, and, from June 1935, John Wheway's Cliff House tales from the SCHOOLGIRL were introduced", in response to hundreds of requests".

Naturally, for C.D. readers, the SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY, with its Hamilton reprints, has tended to claim the limelight, but, nevertheless, the S.G.O.L. had an appeal of its own. I can recall seeing the four issues on the "first Thursday of every month", sitting in their wire-racks in the local paper-shop, side by side with their red-and-blue-blazered schoolboy brothers, their spanking-new yellow-and-black covers looking as bright and perky as a jar of Colman's mustard. Note that the S.G.O.L. cover only had one colour - yellow - to compare with its more-privileged brothers, but it made up for this with some inventive title designs, which gave a certain variety to its appearance.

The first sixty-four page issue appeared in October 1922. This was advertised in the SCHOOL FRIEND as "a tale of the girls of Rockliffe School". (The same issue of the SCHOOL FRIEND also advertised the first issue of PLUCK, incidentally.) I must say that I've never heard of Rockliffe School before, but Leonard Shields drew the cover for No. 1, and the second issue, the following month. In February 1923, there were two numbers:- No. 4 was "a splendid new story of the girls of Morcove School", and No. 5 was "Castaway Jess", which sounds like a reprint of the first serial in the SCHOOL FRIEND of 1919. The following month saw the first Cliff House story to be published in the Library.

In the early thirties, the library increased its size to a hundred pages, and entered - for me - its most interesting period. Old favourites, such as the characters created by Reginald Kirkham:- Lily Lane, May and June Reece, and the Greenhill twins, appeared fairly regularly. There was also the occasional Morcove story, but these had dropped so far behind that there was a gap of about nine years between the original and the reprint. The contrast between Shields up-dated thirties cover and his original title illustration from the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN of the twenties, was often striking, as feminine styles had changed considerably in the interim.

With the introduction of Wheway's Cliff House tales in 1935, the two famous girls' schools began to appear much more frequently in the Library, at first on alternate months, and, finally, appearing monthly. Thus, in December, 1937, delighted readers were offered no. 613, "Babs and Co.'s Old-Fashioned Christmas", and no. 615, "The Boy Who Marred Morcove's Xmas". Cliff House and Morcove together - at last the S.G.O.L. had achieved "equality" with the S.O.L. and its monthly Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, and St. Frank's offerings!

In this potted history of the S.G.O.L., one can make only brief reference to some of the more interesting items. One such was "Scamp and Co." (no. 488), by Ida Melbourne (L. E. Ransome). "Scamp" was, of course, a dog, and this was a collection of animal stories, which had first appeared in the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN. The original illustrations, drawn (as far as I can tell) by G. Dodshon, were included. Mr. Dodshon's drawings for the Cliff House tales in the SCHOOL FRIEND, have attracted some criticism, but these animal impressions are delightful. One of the stories in the collection was "Binkie and the 'Scamp-Dragon'", and "Binkie" (a kitten!) gave her name to the stray tabby-cat, who appeared at our front door, mewing for food, and, subsequently, graciously condescended to stay permanently in our humble abode - with my mother's kind consent, of course! Other "complete" stories featured in the Library were "Patsy Never-Gro-Up" by Rhoda Fleming (Ronald Fleming), and "a collection of detective stories" by Peter Langley (Mr. Fleming again), entitled "Noel Raymond versus Rosina the Baffling".

Like the S.O.L., the S.G.O.L. disappeared in May 1940. A Cliff House and Valerie Drew story advertised as two of "next month's numbers" never materialised. Ironically, the Valerie Drew story would have told how the intrepid girl detective had once failed the plans of a master-criminal to create a world war! Unlike the S.O.L., however, the S.G.O.L. reappeared after the War - back to sixty-four pages, and with a new, coloured cover. Familiar pen-names: Hazel Armitage, Ida Melbourne, and Renee Frazer (Messrs. Wheway, Ransome, and Fleming, respectively) appeared right up to the Library's second demise, although - alas! - Cliff House and Morcove had vanished for ever, except in our affections. All the same, the SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY had outlasted its peers!

ORWELL'S MAGNET

by Simon Garrett

Edward Baldock's interesting article in C.D. 474 prompted me to revisit the famous Horizon essay and Hamilton's spirited riposts.

In one detail, Mr. Baldock misrepresents Orwell. I have two editions of the article, both of which say 'the boys are even allowed to wear what clothes they like' (my italics). It may be a misprint, but seems a more logical thing for Orwell to have written in 1939. In fact, as Mr. Baldock says, there are minor variations on a basic uniform, Bunter's trousers being the most obvious. Interestingly, in the red Magnets, caps are often worn indoors: does anyone know if this was then considered good form?

I too enjoyed Orwell's essay whilst rejecting much of its content.

It is untrue that 'class-friction, trade unionism, strikes, slumps, unemployment, Fascism and civil war' are not mentioned. Such themes cropped up frequently in the Magnet, along with feminism, race relations, big business, defence, imperial policy, revolution, you name it.

These topical issues were often treated quite seriously and by no means always from an 'establishment' angle. Even the old public-school emphasis on the classics is often gently mocked by Charles Hamilton. Mr. Vernon-Smith, in severable memorable scenes, derides the practical value to his son of the Greyfriars curriculum, and admits that Herbert is only there for the social polish and useful contacts' Dr. Locke's scholastic research is ironically said to be of great potential interest to as many as half a dozen learned gentlemen at Oxford.

Much of the above is only incidental to the main plots, but provides a major part of the appeal for adult collectors.

In the SWOBBC we have often confessed to concentrating on the topical asides whilst skimming through the juvenile horseplay passages; probably for the original readers it was the other way round.

Finally, in fairness to George Orwell, we should remember that as a busy journalist he could hardly be expected to steep himself in hundreds of Magnets to absorb all these nuances. The CD reader's 'research' is a labour of love. For anyone outside the hobby it would be an intolerably boring task, yet, despite all this, Orwell gave us a much fairer and intelligent survey than the general run of silly-season stories in the media today.

* * * * *

OOR WULLIE, 1940, collectors' item £125. Bound volume early Magnets 1922 and Penny Populars 1922; offers. Bunter Books, D.W.; Greyfriars Holiday Annuals (originals); S.O.L.'s.

J. GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND.
Tel. Aberdeen 0224 - 491716.

- - - - -