

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 33 NUMBER 392

AUGUST 1979



BUNTER THE BILLIONAIRE!



VERY AWKWARD FOR BUNTER'S IMPOSTOR GRANDPA!

(A Screeningly Funny Scene in the Splendid Long Complete Screen Tale of the Issue.)

26p

SPECIAL OFFERS FOR AUGUST

I had a good response to my June advert. but still have several lots of some available. These include 100 Magnets for £90, 100 Gems for £90, 50 Champions for £40, 50 Boys' Mags. for £40. Boys' Friend Library, 50 for £40, 100 Detective Weekly for £75, 100 Thrillers for £75, 100 Modern Boy for £75, Nelson Lees, 1st, 2nd & 3rd new series, 50 for £40. Union Jacks, 50 for £50, 50 asstd. comics, £40, 50 S.O.L's, £40, 50 mixed Boys' papers, £40. 50 Sports Budget £30, 50 Pilot £40, 50 Young Britain £30, 50 Marvel £30, 50 Triumph £30, 50 Ranger £30. All good copies. My selection. Fair copies at lower prices, i.e. I could give 100 salmon Magnets, my selection, £40! Have over 5,000 of these. Lots of single issues, etc., at my usual prices.

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STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. G. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 33

No. 392

AUGUST 1979

Price 26p

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MUSIC HALL

In these columns, in recent months, we have touched upon two long-gone places of entertainment - the Canterbury Music Hall and Gatti's.

I have just been reading a newly-published book entitled "The Spice of Life" by Patrick Beaver. I found the closing chapters, devoted to the Victorian Music Hall, extremely entertaining and interesting. According to the author, there was but very little public entertainment of any kind when Queen Victoria came to the throne, but, at the time of

her death, almost every town of any size at all had its own Music Hall or variety theatre.

Apparently the first of these music halls was in Lambeth, attached to a public house named the Canterbury, whose landlord was named Charles Morton. Presumably, the famous Canterbury Music Hall was built later on, and it became one of the most popular venues in London. It had become a cine-variety theatre by the time that I knew it.

Not so far away, a Mr. Gatti (he sounds a bit Italian) built a lower-class hall, and there, according to some historian of the time, "we middle-class people mixed with the costers and got drunk together like brothers and sisters". That, too, was a cinema, when I stood outside and fumed going in.

Another one mentioned, and of which there is a fine interior drawing, was a much more classy house named the Oxford Music Hall on the corner of Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road in London. I went there just once - to see Buster Keaton in "The General". It's music hall days were long over. In the thirties they pulled it down, and Lyons Oxford Corner House was built on the site.

Finally, the Bedford at Camden Town, where I once saw a touring revue, the title of which I have long forgotten.

In passing, there is a full-page picture of Vesta Tilley, and I am informed that her real name was Matilda Ball. At the back of my mind I had the idea that I once saw Vesta Tilley, but as (if the book is accurate) she lived from 1864 till 1952, I cannot have done, for she would have been about 60 by the time I was going to music halls. It must have been some other lady smoking a cigar and wearing trousers.

An interesting book, if you come across it at your local library, though the author fatuously persists in explaining what the money he mentions is in today's ghastly decimal currency. Does he really think that anyone who reads his book is unlikely to know, to his cost, that 6d. is $2\frac{1}{2}p$ and that $10/6$ is $52\frac{1}{2}p$? And so on. Only very small children can have no knowledge of money when it was worth something.

UNION JACK FOR THE FAMILY

Early in 1915 certain Amalgamated Press periodicals were offering special charms - Tipperary Horseshoes - given away to readers

in exchange for three coupons and a penny stamp. The three coupons could be clipped from any three of the following publications - Girls' Friend, Family Journal, Penny Pictorial, Home Companion, Woman's World, Weekly Friend and the Union Jack. Not one of these publications was a children's paper. All were papers for the adult members of the family. It is a proof that the Union Jack was intended for an older age group than Gem, Magnet and the like.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Since 9th July, our beloved Madam has been seriously ill in hospital. As all my kindly readers will understand, this has caused very great disruption at Excelsior House. I was well ahead with this August issue so that I hope there will be no marked delay in publication. It is possible, however, if Madam's illness is prolonged, that there may be delay in September. If so, please be as patient as you can. And send up a prayer for her and for those who love her so dearly.

THE EDITOR

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Mr. PAT CREIGHAN

Our reader, Pat Creighan, had the misfortune to lose his very dear wife just after last Christmas. Mr. Creighan found it difficult to adjust to life after that cruel blow. He just did not feel up to writing to any of his friends in the hobby, who may be wondering why he doesn't write. If any of his old friends will write to Mr. Creighan, it will give him the chance to make a reply. His address is 25 Belgium Square, Monaghan, Eire.

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C.D. ANNUAL FOR 1979

If you have any thoughts which you think might be of interest to readers of the Digest Annual, put those thoughts on paper. Send your articles along now for the Annual 1979.

* * * * *

WANTED: Bullseye (A. Press); Boys' Magazine (Allied Newspapers); Scoops; and all other comics/papers with Science-Fiction stories.

RON HOLLAND, P.O. BOX 43, PORTSMOUTH, HANTS.

DANNY'S DIARY

AUGUST 1929

I am a little sad. King of the Islands has ended in the Modern Boy. The editor says that the ketch "Dawn" has been laid up for repairs. He doesn't say that Ken King will be back, but I hope he will.

The first story of the month is "Cabin Boy of the Dawn". The new cabin boy is Sululo, a black man who saved Ken's life in the previous story. But Koko, the bo'sun is very jealous of the new cabin boy. The next story, "Foes of the Dawn" continued with the bad feeling between Koko and Sululo. Then, in the final story, "The Secret of the Banyan", a huge banyan-tree, old and hoary, has a great surprise in its trunk for the shipmates of the "Dawn".

And that's the lot. In place of Ken King there is a western series by John Hunter, and an air serial entitled "The Black Squadron" by George E. Rochester.

The Graf Zeppelin has flown from Germany and landed in the United States. The journey took 55 hours. Then this giant airship flew round the world in 21 days. Everybody seems to think that airships will be the most favoured mode of travel in the future.

The Nelson Lee Library seems to be just a little bit "bitty" these days, with a number of short items like Handforth Replies in which imaginary or dotty readers write and ask him questions; Gossip About St. Frank's, which means things heard and seen by Edwy Searles Brooks; a St. Frank's Questionnaire; and the St. Franks's League Corner, conducted by the Chief Officer, plus a serial. But the St. Frank's tales are as good as ever, and this month the chums and their girl friends are on a gold hunt in the Arizona Desert. Lord Dorrimore has spared no expense on the trip. The party started out on his yacht "Wanderer" and then continued by train to Arizona. The first tale is "The Arizona Gold Quest". The next tale "Into the Redskins' Trap" finds a band of Apache Indians waiting to strike at the pale-faces. Next week in "At Grips with the Redmen", we find the holiday party trapped in a cave by the Redskins, and smoke pours into the cave as it gets

hotter and hotter.

This exciting series is only a short one, and it ends with the next tale "The Schoolboy Goldseekers". As the party gets nearer to its target - the cliff of gold which Hookey Webb has told them about, a terrible thing happens. Irene is taken as a hostage by the Indians. And it is Handy who saves the day. It is unusual to find a travel series so short these days.

There is a holiday series in the Gem, set in a lonely old house in Cornwall. Tom Merry & Co. are there with their girl friends, Ethel Cleveland & Co. of Spalding Hall. The house is called Penperro House, and the first tale is "Who Kissed Ethel?" It's Trimble, hiding in the box-room, who kisses Ethel.

The second tale of the series is "The Secret of the Cave". There is a skeleton, and Lady Peggy, and a hidden treasure. Next tale, "On the Trail of the Treasure", and there is a scoundrel named Gilbert Renfrew, who is after the treasure. Last of the series is "The Prisoner of the Rock", and Tom Merry gets carried away on a kite. And Ethel sobbed. I don't wonder.

Final tale of the month, is "Grundy's Treasure Hunt". This one is back at St. Jim's, and at the end of the yarn Trimble believes that he has found the treasure.

Towards the end of the month Dad and Mum and I went to stay at a place called Prittlewell in Essex, not far from Southend-on-Sea. Dad was only there for the week-end, but Mum and I had the whole week there. My brother Doug was away with his scouts.

We often went to the Kursaal, and we also went down the longest pier in the world, walking down and coming back on the train. We had some nice weather, and I went in swimming at Shoeburyness. Several times we rode the circle round the boulevards on the toast-rack trams. We went to the pictures several times. At Garon's Cinema we saw Clara Bow and James Hall in "The Fleet's In", a lovely Paramount film. At the Kursaal Cinema we saw George Bancroft in "The Docks of New York", and at the Strand Cinema we saw a talkie, "Black Waters", starring John Loder and Mary Brian. We went to the Palace of Varieties one night, the chief acts being Fred Barnes, who is described as a matinee idol, and Johnson Clark and "Hodge" which was a

ventriloquial act. A pretty good show.

I liked Southend, and was sorry to go home at the end of the week.

Other films we have seen during the month are Paul Page and Lola Lane in "Speakesy"; Al Jolson, May McAvoy, and Warner Oland in "The Jazz Singer" which is part talkie; Jack Holt and Agnes Ayres in "The Donovan Affair", and Clive Brook in "The Perfect Crime".

While I was at Southend I bought a Union Jack. It was a good tale entitled "King's Evidence" in which Sexton Blake and Tinker were pitted against Paul Cynos, who had been unjustly sent to prison, and who swore vengeance against judge, jury, witnesses, and the police. Very exciting. I took this book back for Doug to read. I also took him the new H.M.V. record of Jack Payne's band playing "I'll Always Be In Love With You" from the new talkie "Syncopation". It's a lovely song. Doug has a Columbia portable.

Both the new Schoolboys' Own Libraries have been good this month. One is "Just Like Coker" and the other is "The Rival Patrols" about St. Jim's and scouting.

A Mr. Perry has crossed the Channel from Dover to Calais in seven hours on a motor-cycle fitted with floats. What will they do next?

The Magnet is just terrific - a wonderful August in Magnetland. The opening tale is "Chums on Tramp" and continues the hiking series with the trike, Methuselah. This one introduces Coker. Unfortunately, the next week brought the final tale of the hiking series, "The Mystery of Methuselah", and the chums find out at last why so many people, including Ponsonby & Co. of Highcliffe are anxious to get hold of Bob Cherry's trike. The ignition tube is made of platinum.

But the holidays are not over. The Famous Five continue their vacation at the home of Nugent's uncle, Sir Richard Ravenspur of Ravenspur Grange in Oxfordshire. There is a sinister nephew there. He is Cecil Ravenspur who dislikes the Greyfriars boys. And a butler named Packington. And there is mystery, and eeriness, and --- murder. It's a bit like Edgar Wallace, and I love it all.

The next week brought "The Unseen Foe" and an Inspector Cook is called in to find out who is trying to murder Sir Richard. And at the end of the tale Inspector Cook lies with a bullet in his heart.

Next week, "The Mystery of the Grange", and Inspector Garnish

of Scotland Yard is called in. And this week the tale finished with Inspector Garnish dead.

In the breathtaking last line of this week's story, Packington, the butler, announces, in his smooth voice, "Mr. Ferrer Locke has arrived, sir."

A magnificent series, and I'm feverish for next week - though I have my suspicions as to who the murderer is.

A new operetta by Noel Coward has opened in the West End of London. It is called "Bitter Sweet" and it is on at His Majesty's Theatre.

The Rio Kid continues to win his way in the Popular. In "Saved by an Outlaw", the Kid rescues a Texan girl named Joan Valence from Mexican kidnappers. Next week, in "Fallen Among Foes", the Kid takes Joan back to her friends, but the friends are not pleased. In fact, Pedrillo tries to kill the Kid but gets killed himself. The next story "Hitting the Trail" found the Kid still amid perilous adventures in connection with his rescue of Joan Valence. And that story ended the Kid's time in Mexico.

Next week the Kid is back in Texas. He is taken prisoner by Cactus Pete and his bunch, but an old friend of the Kid's, Chief Many Ponies, is near to give aid to the Kid. And in the month's final tale, "A Debt Repaid", Chief Many Ponies is able to help the Kid who had helped the old Indian long ago.

The St. Jim's Old Bus series, the Greyfriars Arab series and the Rookwood Silver Cloud series are all continuing as holiday tales in the Popular. There is also a South Seas series of Dick Polruan and Crusoe Island. I fancy it was once in the Boys' Friend.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: So Danny has reached the end of the first series of King of the Islands in Modern Boy. This series had run for eighty weeks, including the opening serial of twenty instalments, credited to the pen of Sir Alan Cobham. There were to be a goodly number of further series of Ken King, but never again one so long as this run of eighty consecutive issues.

S.O.L. No. 105, "Just Like Coker" comprises parts of two stories of the Spring of 1914. These were "Coker's Plot" in which Coker managed to arrange a match with the famous Trojans cricket eleven, and "Rough on Coker", of a fortnight later, in which Coker dressed as a convict and was arrested by P.C. Tozer. S.O.L. No. 106, "The Rival Patrols" came from two stories of the Gem of early summer 1909. This S.O.L. is examined in this month's "Let's Be Controversial" article.

In August 1929 Danny was enjoying the Ravenspur Grange series in the Magnet. A few years later a very heavily, and very badly, pruned version of this series appeared in S.O.L. No. 229. The four stories of the series were compressed into one S.O.L., and the entire sequence about Inspector Garnish was omitted. As a result, the story did not make sense, and this particular S.O.L. was a disaster.

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BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

By permission of the Editor I am reprinting as a serial the article on Dr. Huxton Rymer which appeared in the 1973 Annual. I have had several requests for an article on Dr. Rymer from people who are unable to obtain a copy of this particular Annual, so will you all bear with me for the next six months as the serial will last that long? There will of course be other articles included in Blakiana as usual. I would be grateful for some material for this year's Annual so make this a "holiday task" please.

THE DR. HUXTON RYMER STORY

by Josie Packman

Part 1

This is the story of a vivid personality created so perfectly by one of our best Blake authors - Mr. G. H. Teed, that the great Doctor always seemed to have been a real living person. A man pulled in two directions - the great Surgeon striving to help his fellow men with his wonderful command of the new surgery he himself had helped to create, and the quite equally great criminal, using his twisted but brilliant brains to plan the outrageous crimes related in the Sexton Blake Saga.

The story of his decline and fall covers a period of some twenty years, but his real character emerged in the early stories of his adventures and battles with Sexton Blake.

Dr. Rymer came of a good family and had been sent to Vienna for his medical and surgical training early in the century. At that time in history Vienna was the "Mecca of Medicine", nowhere else could a young doctor of Rymer's ability have learned his trade as a surgeon. He was the first to discover and practice, the delicate hip operation which was to revolutionise modern surgery. His discoveries were sensational and given to the world through the Franz Joseph Hospital in Vienna where his services were sought by Royalty and commoner alike.

Then, suddenly and mysteriously, the Master disappeared, he was seen no more by the pupils who carried on his teachings. Why had this man deserted his chosen profession? Was there a kink in his brain which caused him to relinquish all that he had worked so hard for? From a brilliant surgeon he evolved slowly but surely into a no less brilliant criminal, destined to end his career in disgrace and imprisonment. The seeds of good and evil were implanted in this man at birth - who could say from which parent he inherited them - or was it from his ancestors, for "the sins of the fathers are visited on their children unto the third and fourth generation".

Yet in spite of these criminal instincts Rymer could still immerse himself in medicine. In the story called "The Sacred Sphere", U.J. No. 529, we first hear of his treatise on "The Emanations of Radium in Relation to their action on Cancer and the Curative Power Thereof". A description of Rymer where - on board a deserted ship on a raw cold December day - he was so engrossed in his writings that he noticed nothing of his sordid surroundings. Several times in the many stories about Dr. Rymer written in future years, this profound treatise was mentioned but eventually in the late 1920's this theme was dropped by the author and Rymer became a skilled operator in anything he undertook.

In the meantime many fine stories of Rymer adventures were published, quite a number of them in the famous Double Numbers of the Union Jack. Altogether there were 76 tales in which Dr. Rymer appeared, more than some so-called best-selling authors produce in a lifetime. These are the ones published in the Union Jack and Sexton Blake Library and one solitary tale in the Boys' Friend Library. To get a real picture of the Dr. we need to divide these tales into three sections, as follows:

The first section covers the period from 1913, No. 488 of the Union Jack to No. 692 in early 1917.

The second section began in 1922 when the author - Mr. Teed - returned from his war service and world wide wanderings to start writing for the Sexton Blake Saga again. In my opinion this section lasted until the end of the first series of the Sexton Blake Library in 1925 and correspondingly with the same period in the Union Jack.

The third section covers the remaining years until the death of

Mr. Teed in 1938 and were among the more modern and sophisticated tales. Not that they were any better than the early ones, but were brought up-to-date and written in gangsterish style as apparently ordered by the then editor.

Before beginning with Rymer's first meeting with Sexton Blake, I feel impelled to mention the tale of Dr. Rymer which appeared in 1916, in No. 11 of the new Sexton Blake Library and shows his characteristics to advantage. It is a strange and haunting story of the grim battles in war-torn France and particularly of the happenings in a small Field Hospital back of Nancy run by a surgeon of the greatest genius. "Lt. Col. of the Army of France" is his rank and on his breast there is attached the ribbon of a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour. Lt. Col. de Loulay is the name by which the French Government knows him and the name by which the lesser surgeons speak of his wonderful surgery with bated breath. No more brilliant handler of the knife is there in all the French lines than de Loulay. Yet little do any of his associates dream that de Loulay hides the identity of Dr. Huxton Rymer, once the most brilliant surgeon of Europe. Yes so it is. Yes after many of the adventures of which I am about to tell you, Rymer had ended up in France and joined the French Army and in so doing had nearly won back his self-respect and had worked hard for the lives of broken and wounded men who had arrived at the small hospital, without thought of anything else, his criminal career forgotten amongst the horrors of the Great War, and the knowledge that he held in his hands the relief of suffering for so many of those men. But even in this environment temptation looms and once more the Dr. has to fight against the evil in him. This is a sad story and involves the loss of the last son of a French nobleman, an almost lost inheritance and stolen jewels. It is also one of the few tales in which Rymer joins forces with Baron de Beauremon another of Teed's creations. No other Rymer adventures appeared in the Sexton Blake Library until 1922.

To be continued

NOT SO WEAK

by S. Gordon Swan

Much indignation is expressed by arch-feminists today about sexism in literature, particularly juvenile story books. Mother is

depicted as being confined to household duties and daughter looks on wistfully while father and son are engaged in manly activities. None of the females are allotted participation in anything but drab domestic occupations.

A lot of this is nonsense and is belied by the tales in our own beloved papers. If one takes the Sexton Blake Saga alone one finds refutation of this line of argument. Who could accuse G. H. Teed of portraying Mesdemoiselles Yvonne and Roxane as negligible quantities in the exploits of the Baker Street detective? Was Mademoiselle Julie an ineffective member of the cast?

There are many other instances of women and girls who played a notable part in the stories. Apart from the female crooks (though who can ignore the predatory Eileen Hale, the glamorous Vali Mata-Vali and the exotic Marie Galante?), there are a number of feminine characters who played very active roles in Sexton Blake's career.

Cora Twyford, for instance. In her one appearance in The Union Jack this girl detective practically stole the limelight from Blake and Tinker. Elsewhere, in Pluck and The Boys' Friend, she was as famous as her brother Kit, with whom she was in partnership. Nobody could say she played second fiddle to anyone.

The many tough blondes and brunettes in Gilbert Chester's tales were far from negative in the author's portrayal; Anthony Skene's Julia Fortune was both appealing and courageous; while even Murray Graydon's French girl spy, Roma Lorraine -- a predecessor to Julie -- was enterprising and audacious and never swooned once.

Outside the Blake Saga one could quote Zena Race, the Queen of the Prairie, a Western heroine who appeared in a serial and a long series of stories in Pluck. It is true that she had to rely on the assistance of Dick Britton on occasion, but who doesn't have to depend on someone else at some time in their lives?

There are several other characters of the allegedly weaker sex who are worthy of mention, but enough has been said to indicate that, as far as our favourite periodicals are concerned, the accusation of sexism is unjustified.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

An unprecedented surge of chauvinism broke out at St. Frank's the other day that was more in the nature of an enquiry about what overseas boy wore to establish identity with his particular country of origin.

I list here the boys who took part in this impromptu parade dressed so that what they wore would indicate as near as possible their home of birth plus any emblems or insignia that might help to give clues. Of course, they were all masked and otherwise disguised from their usual apparel.

Boy No. 1 wore a thistle; No. 2 appeared holding a cornstalk; No. 3 sported a boomerang while No. 4 held a maple leaf. Then No. 5 came into view holding a picture of a Kiwi bird; No. 6 was more circumspect; his 'cover' showed a drawing with clocks in a square. Next was No. 7 whose disguise was a collarless Kurta. No. 8 appeared wearing a Yumulka and No. 9 a leek vegetable. No. 10 strode along with a cine camera and No. 11's hair was twisted into a long queue down his back.

No. 12 was a puzzle to many as he was completely covered. The only clue he gave was to appear with no shoes and toddle. No. 13's 'image' was a Springbok. And finally, No. 15 held a shamrock. No. 14 was disqualified because his land of birth had already been demonstrated.

The 'show' was held in the junior common-room on a rainy afternoon. There are no prizes for naming the boys who represented their countries, but to those who are very familiar with the St. Frank's cast it shouldn't be too difficult to name the characters. Oh No. 7 was a little more helpful by way of recognition; he had a red Tika mark on his forehead.

- - -

Here are the names of the boys: No. 1 Arnold McClure;
2. Jerry Dodd; 3. Charlie Bangs; 4. Clive Russell; 5. Alec Duncan;

6. Ulysees S. Adams; 7. Hussi Ranjit Lal Kahn; 8. Solomon Levi; 9. Morgan Evans; 10. Justin B. Farman; 11. Yung Chung; 12. Sessue Yakama; 13. Herbert Vandyke and finally No. 15, Terence O'Grady.

For those not familiar with the boys at St. Frank's I list the countries of the boys in the order they are written: No. 1 Scotland; 2. New South Wales; 3. Queensland; 4. Canada; 5. New Zealand; 6. New York; 7. India; 8. This junior preferred race for obvious reasons; 9. Wales; 10. California; 11. China; 12. Japan; 13. South Africa and 15. Ireland.

Any complaints send to me at St. Frank's College, Bellton.

A STRANGE OMISSION

by R. J. Godsave

When E. S. Brooks introduced the Moor View Schoolgirls to the readers of the Nelson Lee Library in 1923 he could have little realized the impact it was to make in the years to come. The Moor View School, so aptly named, occupied the large house on the edge of Bannington Moor known as the 'Mount'. Additional buildings had been added to house the fifty or so pupils.

Once the home of the novelist Howard Ridgeway, the 'Mount' had once been the centre of one of Nelson Lee's tussles with the Circle of Terror and Jim the Penman.

No. 436 o.s. 'A Rod of Iron' contained the first story in which the Moor View girls featured. At the same time, it does seem rather strange that the introduction should be made right in the middle of that exciting and rather violent series relating to 'Buster' Boots and his five friends who came from Kendis College to become scholars at St. Frank's.

John Busterfield Boots and the other five had arrived at the beginning of the term and were boarded in the College House. Boots was a well built and powerful figure, and his efforts to rule the junior section of the College House with the idea of eventually becoming Captain of the Remove makes thrilling reading. By knocking out Nipper in a boxing match to decide who was to be Captain of the Remove he achieved his ambition. The substitution of a damp blanket by one of Boot's friends caused Nipper to have a bad cold which was the main reason for the knock-out.

Now that 'Buster' Boots was Captain of the Remove he instituted

a reign of terror against all who opposed his rule. This was a rather thrilling series, and it would almost seem as though the Moor View Schoolgirls were slipped in by accident, although they certainly played an important part of the later Lees of this series.

A Foreword by the Editor in every one of the nine Nelson Lees of the 'Buster' Boots series gave a brief outline of Boots' progress and of Nipper's anti Boots activities. He also invited his readers to enter a Footballers' Names competition which was to start very shortly.

Whether the Editor did not approve of the entry of the Moor View Schoolgirls into the pages of the Nelson Lee we shall probably never know, but not one reference to the Moor View School was made in his Forewords.

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 230. THE GIRL SCOUTS

Fifty years ago our friend, Danny, of Diary fame, was reading the newest issue of the Schoolboy's Own Library, entitled "The Rival Patrols", and he seems to have enjoyed it.

Who on earth planned what was to appear in the S.O.L.? The selection of tales at times borders on the astounding or the abysmal. There were scores of first-class tales available - those of 1911, arguably the Gem's best year, and 1912, were never touched, and one can bring to mind any amount of short series and single yarns which would have been admirable for the purpose. Yet one finds quite a number of substitute St. Jim's and Rookwood tales down the years in the S.O.L. The only reason can be that the editor of the S.O.L. did not know his job or the stories so well as we do and did.

So, in August 1929, we find "The Rival Patrols", a curious amalgam of two run-of-the-mill stories of the summer of 1909. The first of these stories was "Skimpole's Discovery", and just a few chapters were selected to give an incongruous opening to "The Rival Patrols". It is an odd story, really. Skimpole's discovery was that he was a healer - he could will people not to feel pain. But, unfortunately, he himself felt the pain when he was given the cane.

One can see how dated it all really is by the fact that Skimmy's

favourite science author is named as Professor Krustykrumpet (changed, of course, to Balmycrumpet in the S.O.L. of 1929).

Even in that early story there is the pleasant interlude of gentle satirical humour:

"Skimpole was immersed in thought. That was nothing unusual, for Herbert Skimpole was a genius. At all events, he said he was, and he had the information first-hand. Words of six or seven syllables, of which the other fellows did not even know the meaning, rattled off Skimpole's tongue at lightning speed when he was fairly going. He could tell you the history, past, present and to come, of every word ending in "ism". With excited face, and eyes gleaming through his big spectacles, he would hold forth for hours together on the subject of Socialism, which was his favourite. But he would sometimes give Socialism a rest in favour of Determinism, and it was even believed that he understood Ibsenism."

Much of that paragraph was deleted in the S.O.L. of 1929, including any reference to Socialism. By 1929, that particular "ism" was no longer a matter for fun in a school story.

Eight chapters from that eighteen-chapter story of 1909 formed the opening for the 1929 S.O.L. (In the reprint period, the major part of "Skimpole's Discovery" appeared in the Gem, under the changed and pretty awful title "Skimpole's Will-Power Won't".)

"The Rival Patrols" in the S.O.L. was completed with almost the whole of a Gem story which appeared two weeks after the Skimpole story. This was entitled "The Boy Scout's Rivals".

This dealt with the movement, new in 1909, of Girl Scouts as opposed to Boy Scouts. Hamilton was early on the scene with the theme, making Arthur Augustus particularly anxious and worried that for girls to be in a scout movement might not be seemly, especially as Cousin Ethel, who is spending a holiday in Rylcombe with a sister of Macgregor of the Sixth, is interested in the Girl Scouts. These two girls have formed their own patrol, named, oddly enough, the Curlew Patrol.

"You see, Cousin Ethel is taking up the new Gal Scout wheeze," remarks Arthur Augustus.

And later: "A man being so much supewiah to a woman in

intellect, is bound to look after her and give her friendly advice. Ethel takes a thing up out of enthusiasm, and it's the duty of a chap who has a largah outlook and a largah expewience of the world to see that it's all wight."

And still later: "There is an old maxim about wesisting the beginnings," said D'Arcy sagely. "I wegard it as necessary for a woman to wemain in her place. There is no need for them to come out into the scwamble, you know. They should be pwotected fwom that sort of thing. It would be absolutely howwid for women to get into Parliament, you know, when you considah what kind of boundahs they would have to mix with there."

So Charles Hamilton, Cousin Ethel, and Co. were in at the start of the Girl Scout movement. Just when they changed the name to Girl Guides I do not know, but not long before the First World War there was a serial "The Girl Scouts" in the Girls' Reader.

By 1929, of course, they had long been Girl Guides, and so the change was made in the S.O.L. of 1929.

Frank Monk, Carboy and the Grammarians were in the story, with Frank Monk the leader. Gordon Gay has not been created in 1909.

Read today, the story has all the inconsequential dialogue and whimsical humour which is much of the genuine charm of the blue cover era in the Gem. We read it as a period piece, and enjoy every line of it. But it happened to be a story which had dated a great deal by 1929, and it was undoubtedly a strange choice for re-printing in the S.O.L. As we have observed, "Skimpole's Discovery" turned up again, in full, in the reprint period of the thirties, but "The Boy Scouts' Rivals" was passed over and never saw printers' ink again.

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHO

Bill Lofts

According to Francis Warwick, he was an avid reader of the Magnet when a boy and knew all the characters and set-up of the school as well as anyone. At the time I was in correspondence with him in 1961 he still had in bound Volumes his original copies from No. 1 onwards. It was on the strength of writing serials for The Gem, that C.M. Down asked him to try his hand at some school stories. He wanted to write Greyfriars yarns, never being a reader of the Gem, but was told that Charles Hamilton was then writing all the stories. No

wonder then that he could not really get into the right atmosphere, though all his new creations, and to be fair to him were approved by the editors. It does seem that the Gem office was pushed for stories, as Warwick remembers quite clearly when in America, getting a cable-gram asking him to write a 25,000 word story as soon as possible. He did this in twelve hours starting at 8 in the evening and finishing it by the same time in the morning. I asked Mr. Warwick specially if there was any adverse criticism of the stories at the time, and he replied that as far as he knew there was not - but then the Gem circulation had sunk so low that old readers of the true tradition would have packed up the paper anyway.

* * * * *

REVIEW

ROOKWOOD

(The Hamilton Museum of
Maidstone: £3.50)

This is the fifth Charles Hamilton Companion, and it deals entirely with Hamilton's third great school, Rookwood.

Danny's Rookwood, edited from Danny's famous Diary in Collectors' Digest, covers the entire Rookwood saga in the Boys' Friend from start to finish. When Danny ended his coverage of the Boys' Friend, at the time when that school departed from the Green 'Un for good, many readers said how much they would like to have the Rookwood items by Danny in one book. So here they are. It should be a useful reference work for the fans, and of absorbing interest to those who do not know the whole story of Rookwood but have a love from the school.

Mr. Breeze Bentley, who was very popular with readers of C.D. Annual years ago, is present in this new volume with an article on the Fourth Form at Rookwood which featured in an earlier edition of our famous Annual.

Roger Jenkins contributes an article on the Rookwood Stories in the Schoolboys' Own Library. Apart from being a fascinating appraisal, it is of great value to the researcher and collector.

Mary Cadogan adds a bit of feminine charm with a peep at the Fair Phyllis, Jimmy Silver's cousin. Eric Fayne also contributes a few observations on the Rookwood history.

Readers will delight in "The Vanished Schoolboys", an eerie and exceptionally good mystery series of five stories which appeared in the Boys' Friend of late 1918. This was the first Rookwood series to be illustrated by Wakefield. In this book we have the Schoolboys' Own version of this outstanding thriller story. Here the "Old Boy" of Rookwood - he has lost an arm in the war - who comes to stay at the school, is named Captain Langton. In the original version, as you will find if you refer to Danny's Rookwood of 1918, he was Captain Lagden - a favourite Hamilton name for a wrong 'un. It was probably the recurrence of Lagdens which caused them to change the name in the S.O.L.

The book is liberally illustrated, and outstanding are some old-time pictures of Rookwood, mainly drawn by Briscoe.

You may be a bit startled by the picture of "The Rookwood Waxworks" at the end of

the preface. The artist is Arthur Clarke who died some years before Rookwood was created. It is, in fact, a picture from a Boys' Realm of 1907 and illustrated "The Cliveden Waxworks". The stories in the Penny Popular of 1917-18, which were advertised as "early adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co.", were nothing of the sort, as we discovered and reported in C.D. some years back. They were fragments of the old Cliveden stories, by Hamilton, which featured in the Realm. We mention this just to keep the record as straight as possible, as Gussy would say.

Altogether a great book, especially for the Rookwood fan, which surely means most of us.

Please note. This volume cannot be ordered at the shops. It can only be obtained direct from the Museum Press, 30 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone. A remittance for £4.00 should be sent to cover cost and postage.

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MUSINGS ON MARMADUKE

by D. Lang

I was very interested to read last month's instalment of 'The Adventures of Marmaduke'. I have recently started work at a children's home, and some of the 'new boys' act exactly as Marmaduke.

The episode where he ran away was almost a blow by blow account of what occurs from time to time. Several incidents and descriptions were very true to life: the threat to run away when punished; the defiance when confronted and the sudden bolt; the chase; the sympathy of onlookers for the runaway and embarrassment of the pursuer; the hysterical struggling; and finally the necessity to sit on the still 'unco-operative' individual if all else fails.

I was impressed by Charles Hamilton's insight on individuals in society. I am beginning to understand why his writing, which seems light reading, is held in such esteem. It occurred to me that perhaps his early writing is more realistic than latterly when his schools became worlds of their own. Nonetheless I am increasingly coming to appreciate Charles Hamilton's insight into human nature. I wonder where he made his observations if he was occupied for most of his lifetime in writing.

* * * * *

WANTED, to complete collection: Magnets Nos. 779, 822, 948, 949. FOR SALE: 20 C.D. Annuals, £3 each; 200 C.D.'s, 20p each; 300 Nelson Lee Libs. (all from 1st new series), 75p each. 3rd new series Sexton Blake Libraries, 120 issues, £1 each; wide variety of Annuals £8 each; Edgar Wallace hardbacks, £1 each. All items plus post & packing. All items complete and good condition. H. W. VERNON, 5 Gillman St., Cheltenham, Victoria, Australia 3192.

When the author was very young - and most of us weren't even born.

THE MISADVENTURES OF MARMADUKE

Mr. Kidd's eyes flashed with anger.

"You locked this boy up in the box-room, to pass the night in that cold, dark place?"

"I did, sir!" said Herries. "Shut up, Blake! Blake was against it, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Kidd. "And you and Mellish --"

"Mellish only held the light. I did it. It was my idea entirely."

"You may go back to your seat, Mellish."

Gladly enough Percy obeyed. He was not of the stuff that heroes are made of, and he never could stand a caning.

"And now, Herries, explain why you committed this inexcusable outrage."

Herries was silent. If the facts were told, Marmaduke could hardly escape expulsion from the school, and that was serious.

"You do not speak, Herries. Am I to understand that you had no reason for this action, and that it was simply a wicked practical joke on a new boy?"

"No, sir; it wasn't that."

"Then you had some other reason?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I am waiting for you to tell me what it was."

Herries looked at Blake, and remained silent.

"Herries --" Mr. Kidd's tone was dangerous. "--- have you nothing to say?"

"The fellow was such a howling, rotten cad, sir!" said Herries at last.

"I am aware," said the housemaster, "that Smythe is in some respects a peculiar

boy, and has given his form-fellows reason to resent his conduct, but that cannot excuse such a barbarous action as shutting him in the box-room for a night. Have you nothing to say in extenuation for your action, Herries?"

The whole Form was breathless. Herries did not speak.

"Very well," said Mr. Kidd coldly. "I shall take you before the doctor. You may be expelled."

Herries gave a start. Jack Blake's face flushed. He felt that he must speak.

"Herries had a jolly good reason, sir," he exclaimed. "We were all in it as much as he was. That chap is a dangerous beast, and that's why we shut him in the box-room."

Mr. Kidd turned to the grinning Marmaduke.

"Smythe, you have told me that you were dragged to the box-room and shut up there by the boys of the Fourth. Had you done anything to provoke them?"

Marmaduke's grin vanished, and he looked uneasy.

"Tell me the whole truth!" exclaimed the housemaster sternly. "We are wasting time. What happened before you were taken to the box-room?"

It was no use telling a lie when half the form knew the facts. Marmaduke tried to brazen it out.

"I had punished that boy for his insolence," he said, pointing to Blake. "He has made himself very disagreeable to me."

"You punished him? Do you mean

that you fought with him?" demanded Mr. Kidd incredulously. "I cannot imagine your hurting him much."

And the Form grinned at the idea of the pasty-faced heir of millions hurting the champion athlete of the School House in a fight.

"I did not fight him," mumbled Marmaduke. "Fighting is low."

"What did you do, then?"

"I chastised him with a cane."

Mr. Kidd looked angrily incredulous.

"Don't be a fool boy! Do you ask me to believe that Blake allowed you to chastise him with a cane? Tell me the truth!"

"I have told the truth!" said Marmaduke sullenly.

The bewildered housemaster turned to Blake.

"What does this boy mean, Blake? Did he beat you with a cane, as he says?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did you come to allow him to do it? I do not believe you are the kind of boy to take a thrashing, and then revenge yourself in such a cowardly way as by shutting your enemy up in a cold box-room for a whole night."

"I was asleep when he went for me, sir," said Blake reluctantly.

It was out now. Mr. Kidd's face changed. He understood, and his face was like thunder.

"So that is the truth, Smythe? You attacked Blake with a cane while he was asleep?"

Marmaduke was sullenly silent.

"Was that why you shut him in the box-room, Herries?"

"Yes, sir. The brute isn't safe!"

"This is a serious matter," cried Mr. Kidd. "I am very glad I have got to the bottom of it. I have never heard of such a cowardly, un-English piece of brutality! You have provoked me in many ways, Smythe, but I have tried to overlook it on account of your peculiar upbringing. This cannot be overlooked. I am afraid you must leave the school. Come with me."

He marched Marmaduke off with a grip on his collar.

"Resume your places, boys," said Mr. Lathom.

The belated lesson commenced, but less attention than was usual was given to it. The boys were wondering what was to happen to Marmaduke.

"Jolly good thing if he's expelled!" muttered Figgins. "You get a nice lot of wasters in your house, don't you, Blake?"

"I wish you had him!" snapped Blake.

Figgins grinned.

"We never get anything like that in the New House, kid. The Head knows where they ought to be, and he shoves all the funny animals into the School House. Quite right and proper, too!"

"It's no use grumbling, Blake," said Kerr. "You've got such a lot of funny specimens in the School House that one more won't make much difference."

Blake breathed hard. A thought came into his mind, and his eyes flashed.

"You're wanted in the headmaster's study, Blake."

Blake rose from the form. He made his way to the study of Dr. Holmes, still with that peculiar gleam in his eyes which indicated that an idea was working

in his brain. He found the doctor alone. Marmaduke had been locked in a room, after Mr. Kidd had explained matters to the Head, while his fate was deliberated upon.

"I have heard a most astounding story, Blake," said the Head, "I wish you to tell me exactly what happened last night. There is no use in keeping anything back now," he added kindly, "as I know the whole story."

Blake explained what had happened.

"Let me see your shoulder, please."

There was no help for it. Dr. Holmes's brow darkened as the sight of the terrible black bruise.

"That will do, Blake. It was manly and kind of you to wish to say nothing about it, but a matter like this cannot be passed over."

Blake replaced his jacket, and then stood hesitating.

"You may go," said the doctor.

"May I say a word, sir?" stammered Blake.

"Certainly! What do you wish to say to me?"

"I hope you won't expel Smythe, sir."

(Another Instalment of this old tale Next Month.)

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 65. CRAZY NIGHT

Our opening feature this term came from Warner Bros. and was Ronald Reagan in "Stallion Road". I have a feeling it was good, but even the title eluded me until now. In the supporting bill there was a Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon "Fin n' Catty", and several novelty items, one of which was a delightful Community Singing fifteen minutes, "Let's Sing a Western Song" from Warner's.

Next week, also from Warner's, brought Joan Leslie in "Janie Gets Married". There were a number of Janie films over a year or two - modest but entertaining enough. The supporting bill included a coloured cartoon "Hiss and Make Up".

The following week brought Robert Mitchum in "Pursued" (I came across the campaign sheet for this one recently) from Warner's. A varied supporting bill

included a coloured cartoon "Little Tinker", a 3-Stooges comedy "Pardon my Clutch", a Pete Smith novelty, "Have you Ever Wondered?" and a 20-minute musical "Famous Bands", plus the News.

Next, from M.G.M., Paul Henreid, Katherine Hepburn, and Robert Walker in "Song of Love". A big one, in its day, I'm sure, running for over two hours. A Barney Bear coloured cartoon in this bill was "The Bear & The Hare".

Then from M.G.M., Norma Shearer and Robert Taylor in "When the Door Closed", which sounds great, though I do not remember what it was about. In the supporting programme was a Tom & Jerry cartoon "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Mouse".

The next week brought the delightful M.G.M. production "Little Women", starring June Allyson, Margaret

O'Brien, and Mary Astor. This lovely film was in technicolor.

Then, also from M.G.M., Jeanette Macdonald in "Serenade". I'm certain it was unforgettable, but I have not kept a record of who was Jeanett's leading man in this one. A coloured Barney Bear cartoon was "The Bear and the Bean", and a musical item was "Forty Boys and a Song".

Next, from Warner's, Gary Cooper in "Cloak and Dagger". In the bill there was a coloured cartoon "Back Alley Oproar", a potted western "Wagon Wheels West", and a technicolor documentary "South American Sport".

After that came Margaret O'Brien in "Lost Angel" from M.G.M. A Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon in that bill was "The Truce Hurts".

Next week, also from M.G.M., came Van Johnson and June Allyson in "Two Girls and a Sailor". This was the longest picture of the term, 11,177 ft., running well over two hours. A coloured cartoon in this bill was "Half-Pint Pygmy".

The following week brought, from Warner's, Barbara Stanwyck and Errol Flynn in "Cry Wolf". I remember this as rather a good psychological thriller, though Errol Flynn was rather miscast as a sinister menace, even though it turned out at the end that he was not the real menace. I recall one sensational moment when Barbara Stanwyck, very nervous, opens a door and finds the sinister menace standing in the immediate doorway. At every showing, this brief item sent a whistle of alarm through the audience. I saw the film again, at a public cinema, and this piece had the same effect on the audience.

A coloured cartoon was "Hamateur Night".

Finally, we came up with the big idea - a Crazy Night, as we called it. (I fancy that the Crazy Gang shows may have been going strong at that time in London, though I'm not sure. At any rate, something gave me the idea.) I booked the craziest programme I could think of, to keep the audiences rocking. The big picture came from M.G.M., and was the Marx Bros. in "The Big Store". There was a coloured Tom & Jerry cartoon (from M.G.M.) entitled "Old Rocking-Chair Tom". There was one of the glorious Mack Sennett pot-pourris (from Warner's) entitled "Pie in the Eye". And there was a 3-stooges comedy (from Columbia) entitled "Mummies Dummies". The only serious ten minutes in the whole show was the News, and I even inserted all sorts of odd bits into that to make it quite mad.

That programme could hardly fail with an audience of young people. And, throughout the three hours, all sorts of weird and wonderful things happened.

It was the most smashing success we ever had. Normally, at this period, we were giving three performances - one on the Sunday evening and two on the Monday. On this occasion we had to give a couple of extra shows, to accommodate so many who wanted to go through it all a second time.

A stunning success. We never repeated the idea, probably on account of the enormous amount of advance preparation which it entailed.

(Another Article in This

Series Next month.)

NEWS OF OUR CLUBS

MIDLAND

June 1979

It was not altogether surprising that the attendance was low at our June meeting. Several members, who usually put in an appearance, were on holiday.

The meeting however, was excellent; full of good humoured banter and vintage discussion on the old papers.

Several members were critical of the severity of the punishments to which the boys were subjected in the Hamilton schools. Geoff Larner, who is Principal of Rowley Regis Sixth Form College recalls the really direful effects of two hefty swipes on the bags. Yet six was a commonplace and the boys soon recovered. The time given for the large number of lines was quite unrealistic. It was impossible to do them in the time suggested by the story.

There was also a lively discussion on the new series of Charlie Chaplin films about to appear on BBC 2. Our youngest member preferred Buster Keaton.

Coffee was again provided by Ivan Webster, one of his many generous gestures to our members.

Our usual feature Anniversary number and Collectors' Item were on show provided by Tom Porter, who seemed much recovered from his recent illness, though he still has to take things easy. These were:- Magnet 1532, published on the 26th June, 1937 and 42 years old to the day and the Collectors' item was a bound volume of Nelson Lees (old series), Nos. 79 to 91 from 9th December, 1916, to 3rd March, 1917. These fine books produced the usual fascinated interest.

A reading by your correspondent was taken from Chapter 8 of Magnet 1521 and shows Coker minding somebody else's business as usual.

The final item was a game invented by Tom Porter. Six small slips of paper were given out with the fore names of well-known characters from the stories of Charles Hamilton and Edwy Searles Brooks. The players try to provide the correct surname. There was

just time for two rounds. The winners were your correspondent and our youngest member, Christine Brettell.

We meet again on 31st July.

JACK BELLFIELD - Correspondent.

CAMBRIDGE

The Cambridge Club paid their annual visit to Ruth and Neville Wood at their delightful home at Sweffling. The day started brightly, but for a while appeared rather stormy, but the weather cleared and we had our traditional sunshine. After enjoying the usual lavish lunch we spread ourselves to enjoy the wonderful Aladdin's cave that is Neville's home. Some gathered round Neville's wonderful collection of 78 records. Others wandered and browsed in the fine collection of Detective stories, including Neville's great collection of Sherlockiana. Strands, Captains, Boys' Own Papers, Chums, Union Jacks, the special volumes of the Companion Papers, and many other rare and interesting items formed a feast of interest. Members of the Club who were paying their first visit were astonished at the variety of Neville's collection. Their reaction being that of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon "behold, the half was not told me". Bill Thurbon was pleased to find in Neville a fellow enthusiast of war gaming. The bright sunshine welcomed us to tea on the lawn, enlivened by wide ranging conversation. Much interest was aroused by the discovery that Neville and Ruth had been friends of J.R.R. Tolkien, the author of "The Lord of the Rings".

Neville's Siamese cat, having recognised some of us as former visitors, gave us an approving welcome, and settled down with Mike Rouse to enjoy an afternoon's music.

It was a reluctant party that in the end tore themselves away and departed for Cambridge, expressing the warmest thanks to their hosts for a most delightful day.

LONDON

A fine summer day for the run out to the Walton-on-Thames residence of Maurice and Mrs. Hall on the occasion of the July meeting. Graced by fine weather and the added amenity of a beautiful garden, an excellent attendance had a very enjoyable time.

Two fine dissertations were given, the first one by Bill Lofts all about the Fleetway House which must be the location where most of the more popular old boys' books originated from. Bill's knowledge about the editors, artists, authors and all the rest that went to make up the wonderful team that produced the many fine periodicals that emanated from the building that was known as the Fleetway House. He was accorded a great ovation at the conclusion of the thesis. After Bob Blythe had read extracts from the July 1962 meeting which dealt with one of the many happy Surbiton meetings, the host took over disquisition on High Coombe, the School for Slackers which must rank as one of Frank Richards great works. Commencing with an extract from Modern Boy 371, Maurice gave a good treatise on High Coombe and occasionally referred to the bound volumes of Modern Boy that he possesses. He was accorded a great ovation at the conclusion of his talk. Thus two very fine treatises that went towards making an enjoyable time and with the delightful garden to partake of the tea, a hearty vote of thanks was given to the host and hostess.

Next meeting at the Cricklewood Scout Hut on Sunday, 12th August. Sunday, 2nd September is the date of the Sonning luncheon party. The cost of this function is £5.50.

BEN WHITER

NORTHERN

Meeting held 14th July, 1979

Twelve members were in attendance on a pleasant summer's evening, among them the Minutes Secretary, whom the Chairman was happy to see in his accustomed place after a three months' absence.

Darrell Swift had brought a newly-acquired volume of red Magnets for us to see and also a pile of those now rare treasures, the St. Frank's Monster Library - including the famous 'Boy from Bermondsey'. After adopting the minutes and hearing Mollie's monthly report the meeting also heard that Darrell had recently visited Frank Richards country. He passed round to us two photographs which he had taken in the village of Hawkinge, one of the ancient church and the other of the nearby gate, both of which landmarks are mentioned in the China series. Magnet scholars who care to pursue the reference

will find it in Chapter 2 of Magnet 1178.

First item on the programme proper was a reading with commentary by Harold Truscott. The chosen extracts were taken from the story "What Happened to Bunter" in the 1927 Holiday Annual, and they displayed the egregious fibbing Bunter at his most amusingly outrageous. As the speaker observed, with his typical perceptiveness, the story was also interesting as yet another example of the flexibility and variety the author brought to the detail of stories whose basic groundwork had been used before.

Harold retires this summer, and will no longer be living in the North, where he has been a welcome guest for so long. The Chairman conveyed to him the best wishes of all Northern members and expressed the hope that we shall continue to see him from time to time at our functions.

After refreshments, another reading from the Master, this time by Mollie Allison - who happily will still be living up North with us! Next meeting, Saturday, 11th August.

JOHNNY BULL

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The Postman Called

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

JIM COOK (Auckland): I notice these days in the C.D. there's hardly any comment or criticism that was a feature in the early editions. Does that mean everybody is satisfied? If it does then it could mean apathy. I wouldn't like to think what the C.D. contains each month is taken all for granted.

Surely everything that is written in the Digest isn't satisfactory to all? Or is it that the art of letter writing is dying out?

I notice in your Let's Be Controversial, No. 228, your subject is "Absent Friends". Similar gaps in appearance of characters occurred in the St. Frank's stories from time to time and this often urged irate readers to write to the editor demanding to know what happened to the 'lost' characters. It was a pity such a stock answer meant the character(s) had left the school and consequently the author never used them again since he couldn't play fast and loose with his readers.

But I don't think Hamilton, Brooks, etc., really cared all that much on the permanence of their creations. But Brooks did on one occasion bring back an expelled junior by a ruse that passed the Head. Evidently it all depended on the popularity of a character whether he was worth a reincarnation.

What a lovely old world our authors must have lived in! They shuffled their characters' personalities at will; they changed scenes according to the moment and incidents to fit their thoughts. If beautiful weather was necessary then lovely sunshine was created. Funds were 'arranged' wherever the story demanded as were times of hardship. Were we ever affected by what we read? I call to mind a St. Frank's series that has been catalogues as The Flood Series and each time I read this and later went out I was surprised to find it wasn't raining! Such was the impact this story had on me.

JOHN GEAL (Hampton): Many thanks for the latest C.D. I note it was posted at Aldershot on the 3rd and I received it on the 14th!! And they say the Post is back to normal!

Re your comments on "The Adventures of a Three-Guinea Watch", I recently picked up a copy and re-read after what? - maybe 45 years, and it still reads well.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Our correspondent is referring to the June issue, all copies of which were posted on the 3rd. The July issue was posted on the 8th. In both cases copies by second class mail took weeks to arrive, instead of the few hours of the bad old days. One July copy by First Class mail took an unbelievable twenty days to be delivered. Admittedly it was in the Midlands, and there was a bomb scare - but, even so, twenty days for a First Class letter seems horrendous. It isn't only in Britain, though. Ireland has just had many weeks with the Postal service non-existent, and similar things have happened in Australia and Canada. Last year's Annual to Australia was heavily delayed by a postal strike. After the strike was over the authorities were in no hurry at all to move the back-log of mail and such movement as there was did not seem to be carried out with much method or urgency. Air-mail copies went through without delay. The result was that I was inundated with letters which said that so-and-so had received his Annual (by air mail) but "mine has not arrived. Where is it?"

Naturally the gross inefficiency of post-offices is beyond my control, and it is an awful, nagging worry which I could well do without on top of everything else.)

BILL LOFTS (London): I was most interested in S. Gordon Swan's article on the Comedy of Errors regarding the London Magazine Sexton

Blake article. I certainly wrote to the editor at the time pointing out the most absurd mis-statements, and I think I got an equally absurd reply. The author claimed to have got his material from a Blake author (not named) and said that his facts must be accurate as coming from someone who had actually written the stories! The fact is that a number of old Blake authors whom I have met, are as hazy as anyone on the history of the great detective. I have seen some of their efforts at writing articles about Blake, and they have been pretty poor stuff. The late Frank Vernon-Lay also wrote up to the editor, but as far as I know never got any reply.

R. J. LEWIS (Neston): I have been reading the 'Toad' series of 1927, and cannot understand why Hamilton repeatedly mentions Ernest Levison's shady past at Greyfriars. It reads as if Levison had never returned to the school since 1908.

Four years previously, in the 1923 'Levison Returns' series, frequent reference had already been made regarding Levison's earlier Greyfriars career. Surely the author had not forgotten what he had written in 1923 when he came to write the 1927 story.

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FROM SAM THURBON. I have been greatly heartened by the good wishes and kind thoughts of so many members of the club and wish to thank them all most sincerely.

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FOR SALE: Modern Boy 1935 - 39, 90 copies; G.C., £50; Eagle Vol. 6, bound, absolutely mint, £18; Eagle Vol. 8, bound, absolutely mint, £18; Eagle Vol. 7, bound, except for No. 16 which is available separate, absolutely mint, £18; Eagles loose: Vol. 6, 29 copies, g.c., £8; Vol. 9, No. 37 missing, g.c., £16; Vol. 12, No. 1 missing, g.c., £16. All plus postage, or will exchange any for Mickey Mouse Weeklies of equivalent value. Please write first. (No reply if items are disposed of.)

C. WILLIAMS, 32 CASTLES ROAD, MOORABBIN

3189 VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA.

* * * * *

HOLMES FANS: "The West End Horror", Meyer H. & S. 1976: new with wrapper; a few copies, £3 each, post paid/exchanges as previous issues C.D.

41 SWALECLIFF AVE., MANCHESTER M23 9DN.

WANTED: 1920 Holiday Annual (original) in good condition.

WARWICK SETFORD, 155 BURTON ROAD

DERBY., DE3 6AB.

WANTED: Greyfriars Book Club, volumes 2, 3, 4; Howard Baker Magnets, Vols. 16, 17, 18, 21 to 26, 32, 50 onwards; "Lord Billy Bunter"; Monsters.

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HOBBIES by W. O. G. Lofts

Recently a collector asked me why I had never included Hobbies amongst the boys papers listed in our various catalogues through the years. As a boy, he had bought this weekly, and made many useful things from the excellent articles in its pages. My answer was simply that it could never in any sense be considered to be a real boys paper, as it never to my knowledge contained any stories. (Unlike "Mechanical Boy" which at least did have an Edgar Wallace serial). A few boys I knew in my youth did buy "Hobbies" who were interested in making rabbit hutches, and other practical things. My own tastes were drawing,

painting, and sport, and so for me then "Hobbies" held no interest. The only thing I can remember making when a boy was the then so popular wooden scooter, from a plank, screw eyes, ballbearings, and a bolt. In any case I have always considered that "Hobbies" was a paper for the general public, and a perusal of some of the files of its run, does seem to confirm this ...

"Hobbies" started on 19th October, 1895, priced One Penny, and was described as being a weekly Journal for both sexes. It was published at "Bouverie House, Salisbury Square" which later was revealed to be H. Marshall & Son. Its contents in the opening issue included:

Fretwork and Inlaying in Wood. Photography for beginners. Hobbies that pay. Stamps & Stamp Collecting. The Magic Lantern, and how to make slides. Bazaars and how to decorate them. Cycling, Football and Athletics, a Fretwork model of St. Paul's Cathedral. Venetian Ribbon, or bent iron work. Weekly Presentation Designs. An electric scarfpin, and a free presentation fretwork pattern with each week's issue.

Hobbies was undoubtedly a highly successful commercial proposition, running to 3,648 issues, and incorporating Wireless World during its run. After 25 issues of a new series which started in 1966, when it had changed to monthly, it finally folded up in the July/August issue of 1967. Most certainly an interesting paper for boys with a practical mind, but in no sense a boys' paper as we know it. There was an Amalgamated Press "Hobbies" boys' Annual in pre-war days, but this I am almost certain had nothing to do with this other concern.

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COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL FOR 1979
(The 33rd Edition of this World-Famous Book)

All being well, the order form for the 1979 Annual will be included with the September issue of the Digest. Order early to avoid disappointment.

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