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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Vol. 27 No. 318

June 1973

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NIPPER

Maxwell Scott created Nipper in a serial "Nelson Lee's Pupil," in the Boys' Herald of 1903, nearly a decade after he had created the famous detective Nelson Lee. There seems little doubt that Nipper was based on the original Tinker.

I have been browsing over "Nelson Lee's Pupil," and found it

fascinating. Scott wrote well, and was popular, even though his tales, read today, seem a little wordy and a bit too action-packed. But, on the whole, they stand the test of time very well indeed.

Lee is reputed to have saved Nipper from the streets, which probably means that he saved him from poverty. For the browser, the origin of Nipper seems a little obscure, though loose ends are possibly tied up for the reader who has the time to read the story throughout.

When, at their first meeting, Lee was about to reward Nipper, the lad "drew himself up, and waved the proffered coins away with an air of lordly scorn."

"Sir," he said, "the ancient Romans had a proverb - Absque argento omnia vana - without money, all is vain. That is not my motto. I prefer the Italian maxim - Vera prosperitate non aver necessita - true wealth is to have no wants. For these, and other reasons, I feel it incumbent upon me to decline your well-meant offer of pecuniary emolument. Au revoir!"

There was evidently more in Nipper, the waif, than met the eye.

When the serial ended, six months later, its closing words were: "Nipper at the present is at a well-known preparatory school in the west of England, from where, in due course, he will doubtless proceed to one of the big public schools, and afterwards to one of the universities. Whether he will ever again assist Nelson Lee in any of his cases is a question which time alone can answer."

Like most of the serials of the times, "Nelson Lee's Pupil" was of great length. It is fairly certain that it was pruned when it appeared, a few years later, in the B. F. L. Providing the pruning was skilfully done, it could have been an advantage.

LEGEND OR REALITY?

Several readers have sent me a cutting from a TV weekly magazine in which Hubert Gregg is quoted as saying: "Frank Richards created hundreds of characters under his various pseudonyms for different comics, notably the Magnet. He died without achieving his lifetime's ambition: to make £3,000 in one year."

Our reader, J. A. Wark, is astonished that Gregg should have used the word "comic" when referring to the Magnet. "Surely he should

have known better?" remarks Mr. Wark - a sentiment with which most of us would agree.

My correspondents are puzzled at the bit about Hamilton being disappointed that he never earned £3,000 in a year. I, too, find it difficult to believe, and I wonder from whence came this bit of information. If it is true, it can only have originated with Hamilton himself, but it seems to me to be not the type of thing that a man of breeding would say to anyone except someone very close indeed. And Hamilton was a sensitive man of breeding - and a bachelor.

Even though £3,000 a year was a very large income in those halcyon days, it seems likely to those of us who are fully acquainted with his enormous annual output, that for a large part of his career he must have earned very much more than that.

Down the years all sorts of rumours concerning the writer have gone the rounds, and plenty of them, like the fallacy that he was educated in Canada, have found their way into print and become part of a legend. I cannot help feeling that this latest bit, about the unachieved £3,000 per annum, is just another bit of legend with no substance. If all the inaccuracies which have been printed, in newspapers and magazines, were put together, they would make a giant fairy tale book all on their own.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

DANNY'S DIARY

JUNE 1923

What an awful summer! It has been the coldest and wettest June for 80 years. What a land to live in! It has played old Harry with the cricket and the summer term.

But we have seen a couple of lovely revues at the Empire. Billy Caryll and Hilda Munday were in "Zip" and this was grand. At the start, all the cast came down a long helter-skelter on the stage. Billy Caryll plays a drunk in some of the scenes, and, though I don't really like drunks on the stage, he was very good. Hilda Munday is very pretty and sings nicely. Another revue we saw was "Jingles" which

starred Charles Jones and Hylda Baker. Hylda Baker is a very little thing, and made me laugh a lot.

"Levison's Triumph" was the final story in the Magnet of the Levison at Greyfriars series. Gadsby of Highcliffe plotted and almost disgraced Levison, but the Caterpillar saved the day. A lovely tale with some good cricket bits. At the end, Levison went back to St. Jim's. Then came the 800th issue of the Magnet which contained a rather silly tale entitled "The Haunted Camp." Because the ceilings came down, the Remove went under canvas with Mr. Quelch, by the sea.

"The Greyfriars Day-Boarder" was Cecil Thresher, the nephew of Major Thresher. Thresher of the Remove had a pretty sister. Wibley does some impersonations, and a genuine Gainsborough played a part, if anybody cared much. I didn't.

"Bunter's Barring-Out" was another dreary tale which I had a real job to struggle through, with Bunter doing all sorts of impossible things. Final of the month was "A Puzzle for the Remove" about a new boy named Willesley. Willesley is the "puzzle," due to the fact that there are actually identical twins. Pretty third-rate. The last one will go on next month as a sequel or a series. I hope it doesn't last too long.

So, a poor month in the Magnet, after a good start. The mystery artist is still doing the Magnet covers, and each issue also contains the Greyfriars Herald and a tale of Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake.

There is a marvellous new story in the Sexton Blake Library. It is called "The Outlaw of Jugo-Slavia" and it stars Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie.

Steve Donoghue has won the Derby, giving him three Derbies in succession. His winning horse this year was Papyrus.

At the cinemas we have seen Norma Talmadge in "The Voice from the Minaret;" Lewis Stone in "Romance of the Rosary;" Mae Bush and Richard Dix in "The Christian," from a book by Hall Caine; Marion Davies in "When Knighthood was in Flower;" and finally "One Exciting Night" which was produced by D. W. Griffith.

The first tale in the Gem this month was a perfect school story. It was called "Trimble's Acution." A senior, leaving St. Jim's, holds a "leaving sale," and makes a nice bit of cash out of it. So Trimble

collects up some odds and ends - and announces that he, also, is leaving. A truly great Gem.

Next month, in the Gem's 800th number, we had "Levison's Return." Levison has been away at Greyfriars, and some spiteful chaps make sure that he has trouble when he returns to St. Jim's. The story the following week was a sequel "Clearing His Name," and brings the Levison series, played out at St. Jim's and Greyfriars, to a splendid close.

The next two stories were a bit of an anti-climax. In "In Another's Name" and "Impostor and Hero," Mr. Lathom's nephew, Mark, whom the schoolmaster has never seen, is supposed to come to St. Jim's, but Ginger turns up and pretends to be Mark Lathom. No great shakes, these two.

The price of the Daily Telegraph, and also of the Times, has gone up from 1½d. to 2d. Most things are going down in price.

The largest submarine in the world has just been launched at Chatham. And Mount Etna is in eruption. I reckon it is a wonderful sight.

There is a new weekly book out called Wireless Review, and Doug is taking it regularly. He is cracked over wireless.

Rookwood is still going strong in the Canadian West in the Boys' Friend. In "The Bad Man from Texas," Jimmy Silver & Co. rounded up Poker Bill, an outlaw who was a menace to the little town of Mosquito. Next week "The Rebel of the Ranch" was Baldy, the cook - who is a kind of grown-up Tubby Muffin or Billy Bunter - who makes plans which come to nothing.

An excellent tale in this grand series came up in "The Cowboy's Secret." Jimmy rendered Skitter Dick a great service when the handsome cowboy found himself in a very tight corner. The sequel to this was "The Gold Brick" in which Jimmy turned the tables on Mr. Sampson Smith who came from California to arrest Skitter Dick. In the final tale of the month, Lovell fell in love with Miss Clare Luttrell, the lady owner of the Sunset Ranch. The tale was entitled "The Boss of Sunset Ranch." But it turned out that Miss Luttrell is engaged to Mr. Smedley, Jimmy's cousin.

In the Boys' Friend there is a new serial "The Golden Buddha" by



Nelson Lee Column

FEATURING
ST. FRANK'S

THE EDITOR'S DECISION

by John Tomunson

In my seventeen years of reading the C. D., I have not seen any mention of one particular instance I can recall of delaying tactics regarding a story by Edwy Searles Brooks.

His second original story for the "Schoolboys' Own Library" was "The River House Rivals," in 1926, during the period of the General Strike, which a little further delayed its appearance in the shops.

Fairly early in 1925, in "The Nelson Lee Library," E. S. B. promised his readers a story for the "S. O. L." Later in the year (evidently after enquiries by readers) he said he had written the promised St. Frank's

THE NELSON LEE

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2ND



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tale but that it rested with the editor if and when it made its appearance. It appeared at the time I previously stated. So, you might ask, why all the fuss?

The reason for the "fuss" is as follows:-

When he wrote the story he had two Houses - Ancient and Modern - the heroes were all in the Fourth Form, Reggie Pitt was junior-captain as Nipper had temporarily left the school and the leader of the cads of Study A was Ralph Leslie Fullwood.

Before "The River House Rivals" appeared, the Houses became four - Ancient, Modern, East and West - the juniors were divided into Remove and Fourth; Nipper (Dick Hamilton) was again junior-captain, and Ralph Leslie Fullwood had reformed, his place in Study A being taken by the infamous Bernard Forrest, the new chum of Gulliver and Bell.

In "The River House Rivals" there were only two Houses, Reggie Pitt was junior-captain, and - Bernard Forrest, "of the Fourth," was leader of Study A.

I had always maintained that when E. S. B. wrote the story Fullwood was the cad, along with Gulliver and Bell, who consorted with the Hon. Aubrey De Vere Wellbourne, Coates, and Carstairs of River House, and that, either by the author himself or the editor, "Fullwood" was altered to "Forrest" in every case, to make the tale appear as up-to-date as possible, and the other discrepancies had to stay.

To Hamiltonians this matter will appear of no account, but it may, I hope, meet with the interest of St. Frank's lovers. I do not see any reason to be considered wrong in my belief. After all, in the St. Jim's reprints in "The Gem" the name "Levison" was changed many times to "Snipe," and in at least one story to my knowledge, to "Crooke," to make it appear that Levison had not entered the school at the time.

SHORT ST. FRANK'S

by Harold Truscott

The Holiday Annual was started by the AP obviously as a vehicle primarily for Hamilton's stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood, with the occasional one of Cedar Creek. What other stories it carried were mainly not about school. There were certain notable exceptions: a number of short school stories by P. G. Wodehouse, three superb

St. Katie's stories by Michael Poole, one equally fine example, "Baxter's Bath-Chair," which appeared anonymously but was actually by Geo. E. Rochester, one or two of Duncan Storm's Bombay Castle tales, and the subjects of this article. The annual very soon became the Greyfriars HA, which did not, of course, preclude St. Jim's and Rookwood. It did mean Hamilton HA. I have no great grumble about this, since, along with very interesting reprints, Hamilton wrote specially for it some of his finest stories, such as "The Bunter Cup" and "What Happened To Bunter."

But two Brooks rarities appeared, in 1932 and 1936, respectively, in the form of short St. Frank's stories: "The Rivals of St. Frank's" and "Handforth's Windfall." Both are brilliant, the first especially so. Its plot, which could easily have become cumbersome, is handled with fine mastery within the brief span, and emerges the better for the brevity. There are also very welcome touches of humour in the dialogue, with a quiet suggestion unusual in the longer St. Frank's stories. Starting with an attempt by a rival St. Frank's faction to purloin a hamper belonging to Handforth, it involves the Moor View girls, who pinch the hamper from Willy Handforth & Co., who have snaffled it while the rivals are scrapping. The girls get a temporary last laugh, for they also successfully pretend to be shocked and horrified at finding Handy & Co. fighting. But tables are turned, with the aid of Hal Ralston of the River House school. A comprehensive cast! It is easy to see how the plot could have become unwieldy. In fact, its handling is as light as a feather, and the centring of the story on one incident and its consequences beautifully controlled.

"Handforth's Windfall" is equally controlled and economical. A malicious practical joke by Bernard Forrest, in which expensive furniture ordered by Mr. Pyecraft is relabelled for Handforth, who is expecting some furniture from his father and therefore opens the form-master's crates, ends in Handforth's receiving a battered old armchair from home, which proves to have some sovereigns hidden in it. Last laugh for Handforth.

One interesting point: "The Rivals" features a group of Removites known as the 'Red-Hots,' who have come from another school and are led by Kirby Keeble (K. K.) Parkington. Did Brooks invent these for

this story, or do they figure elsewhere? I have not encountered them in the Nelson Lee stories. It is a thousand pities that Brooks was not encouraged to write more such stories, short and pithy, with a master's touch in this difficult medium, or that the 'Lee' format did not allow for them. Perhaps Howard Baker could be persuaded to reprint them in one or other of his annuals.

* * * * *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

SEXTON BLAKE - GALLOPING GOURMET

by R. Cure

I like reading stories, I also like writing them. Of course you start from scratch when you decide to write a story and pick up hints as you proceed. A useful tip I found was "notice how to start and finish your story by noticing the beginning and ending of each story you read" so I do and so I did when I read "The Affair of the Empress's Little Finger" in the Union Jack of 14 April, 1925, No. 1121. Whoever the author was he had decided to hang his story on the use of an accident. (The tale is noted as being by G. H. Teed - JP.)

With these opening words "It certainly wasn't Tinker's fault, even the victim, when he recovered consciousness, acknowledged that" and with the first chapter heading "The Collision, the Captain and the Chink" we swing into an exciting story with a good plot.

(Budding authors are warned how important the plot is and good outstanding characters is a must.)

The Captain and the Chink afore mentioned are the boys to keep your eye on. Now take a look at the Captain. "When Sexton Blake had hallooed several times the back door of the house opened and an elderly man with a wooden leg hobbled out."

A wooden leg? Yes, you have guessed it's the Captain. In the 1920's when most of us were much younger and had stars in our eyes, every man with a wooden leg was a sea-faring man. (Something to do with the sharks I think.) The one-legged man spat out tobacco juice-Shiver my timbers he said, Dang it all, I sailed the seven seas for

forty years and more. Readers of Collectors' Digest would guess that as soon as they saw the wooden leg. Of course, lots more about our Captain if you read "The Affair of the Empress's Little Finger."

Now for the Chink. "Blake heard a liquid voice behind him, he swung round and there in the shadow by the polished turtle shell, was a Chinaman, smiling blandly, as if he had been there all the time, nor could Blake be sure he hadn't. Bear in mind that in 1925, we school-boys were as starry-eyed about Chinamen as we were about men with wooden legs. They were mysterious men - pawns of Dr. Fu Machu. Men who ate queer foods. Times have changed. In most towns and sea-side resorts Chinese Restaurants are as common as Fish & Chip shops and any Tom, Dick or Harry can have a Chinese meal, and why not? see how it "Sent" Sexton Blake. "And the dinner, Blake caught a sniff of it before it was brought in, and closing his eyes could quite easily imagine he was back in Canton." Now, in case there are any Galloping Gourmets among my readers, I am going to give the recipe that tickled Blake's nostrils. (Found on page 7 of our tale.)

"There was wine-vapour duck and Kinkle chop-suey, why-shon pigeon and lobster soaked in golden liquid, gold cash chicken and tiger skin pigeon eggs trimmed with bamboo shoots. Some of the ingredients of these dishes are lily flower, bamboo shoots, water chestnuts, bean sprouts, birds nest, sesamum seed oil and Chinese cabbage, not to mention Wak mein and Chow mein and Soya sweet. All this followed by Chinese Ginger and old, old Brandy." Sexton Blake must have had a good digestion.

Now if you should order this meal at your local Chinese restuarant it might cost a bomb, so, if you cannot afford it I believe you can buy a packet of Chow mein. As for me I prefer fish and chips.

Well, where were we? Oh yes, we had the start of our story in the collision, then our characters, Tinker, Sexton Blake, the man with the wooden leg and the Chink. Now the plot which is composed, as all good detective stories are, of dirty doings. These were murder, opium, a dead Chinaman and of Tinker (nearly throttled by another Chinaman).

Amid all these thrills we have learned that Blake likes a good Chinese dish, and now our story reveals (on page 18) that he is also a master of the Chinese language. "Blake began to distinguish the

characters as actual symbols in the Chinese language, characters of the classical grade and therefore known only to the highly educated Chinese. In his study of the language and literature Blake had devoted a vast amount of time to mastering every phase of it. There is in the written language, about 226 letters or forms not understood by the average Chinese. Remember this story was written in 1925, nowadays there is a common form of Chinese taught to everyone. According to our story Blake knew enough Chinese to read Confucius in the original tomes. By considering the opening words of the story and noting the characters and studying the plot, my readers will realise that here is a good tale. So now there is one thing left to do - note how the author draws to a close.

"And now, come my lad, to bed. Tomorrow we must send a cable to Sir Gordon, said Blake, and I suppose the Captain will turn up, I think we have a slight surprise to give the old man."

THE END OF THE TRAIL

by W. O. G. Lofts

And so finally the trail has ended.

After nearly twenty years of investigations and research in various periods I have finally solved the Lewis Carlton mystery. I have established that he died at Yeovil in Somerset on 11 November, 1967, aged 78.

This is most galling and disappointing to say the least, not only to myself but other Union Jack enthusiasts, as obviously authentic information has now been lost for ever, especially on the inside happenings in that interesting "pink" period.

This was the era when Michael Storm creator of that great foe of Sexton Blake's - George Marsden Plummer, had not long appeared, and when many other great characters pitted their wits against Blake. The late expert on Sexton Blake, Walter Webb, always maintained that Lewis Carlton was the last link in the chain if only he could be contacted. What is really frustrating about the whole affair is that I had been given a clue in the sixties that Mr. Carlton was living in the Yeovil area, but all enquiries brought a blank. The red herring in this case being that I only discovered recently that his real Christian names were George Edward. The Lewis was tagged on by himself for writing purposes.

Editors, agents, official records, and even friends knew him as Lewis and rightly assumed that this was his correct name.

Born in Lambeth, South London, and not in Devon as once recorded, he was the son of the identical named George Edward Carlton, a local Insurance manager. Around 1910, Carlton joined the Amalgamated Press and held several editorial posts including that of the Union Jack already mentioned. He was also the last Editor of the Boys' Journal and it was in these pages that he wrote a serial featuring Sexton Blake. Later he left Fleetway House to go on the stage, where because of his youthful looks, he is presumed to have played the part of Tinker in the Sexton Blake stage plays. He resumed writing as a freelance in the late 1920's, mainly writing girls' stories under the name of "Louise Carlton," as well as three Sexton Blake Libraries:-

1st Series No. 146	The Monomark Mystery	June 1928
2nd " No. 359	The Night-safe Mystery	November 1932
" " No. 395	The Case of the Stranded Touring Co.	August 1933

It was during the early thirties that he formed a syndicate writing pool, which consisted of himself, John G. Brandon, J. W. Bobin and his son Donald Bobin, though what stories they wrote or what names they appeared under are now lost in the mists of time.

Lewis Carlton is also known to have written Dixon Hawke stories for the D. C. Thomson press as well as odd stories in A. P. papers.

It is however, hoped to still contact a relative of Lewis Carlton in the near future, when perhaps some fresh biographical details will be brought to light. Obviously Lewis Carlton must have had a very interesting literary career.

OTHER AUTHORS' CHARACTERS

by Anon.

When a Sexton Blake writer created a character it nearly always appeared exclusively in the stories that he wrote. Of course there were exceptions. Some which come readily to mind are Mrs. Bardell, Pedro, creations of William Murray Graydon, Tinker introduced by Herbert Maxwell and Inspector Coutts by Robert Murray Graydon. As these characters were an integral part of the Sexton Blake Saga they

could hardly be limited to the stories of their creators.

However, if the author of a very popular character died, the character would naturally enough be kept alive by assigning another author to continue on with it. It was only on rare occasions that a living author had his original characters used in stories by other authors. Before looking at several instances where this did occur, let us establish which author created what character.

One of the longest running characters in the Union Jack was George Marsden Plummer created by Michael Storm, back in 1908, in "The Man from Scotland Yard," U. J. No. 222. When Storm ceased writing Norman Goddard took over in U. J. No. 365 with "The Cotton Corner." In 1914, J. W. Bobin wrote a Plummer story entitled the Workings of Chance, U. J. No. 536, and from then on he and Goddard took turns in writing about Plummer until Goddard's death in 1917. J. W. Bobin under the name of Mark Osborne continued until 1922. Then in 1923, Plummer took on a new and more sophisticated life under the facile pen of G. H. Teed in U. J. No. 1041, "The Hawk of the Peak." With the exception of one story (Plummer's Death Ray by W. Shute), he continued to write about this fascinating character to the end, the final tale being "Honolulu Lure" U. J. No. 1503, in 1932.

Anthony Skene (G. N. Philips) wrote the first Zenith story in 1918, entitled "A Duel to the Death," U. J. No. 837, and the last in 1932, "The Goldmaker," U. J. No. 1510.

Jack Lewis in 1915 introduced readers to Leon Kestrel in "The Case of the Cataleptic," U. J. No. 620.

Andrew Murray created Professor Kew in 1913, for the story "The Aylesbury Square Mystery," in U. J. 511.

We will now see how these characters were taken by one author and either combined with his own or used exclusively by him.

Anthony Skene in 1922 wrote a story entitled "Threatened by Three," U. J. 956, which featured his own creation Zenith, Teed's Yvonne and Lewis' Kestrel, providing quite a variety of talent for one story. A short time later in "In League Against Him" Skene teamed Zenith and Kestrel again with another Teed creation Wu Ling.

Also in 1922, J. W. Bobin wrote "The Case of the Cultured Pearls," S. B. L. No. 208, 1st Series, and used Teed's Yvonne and

Plummer. Still in the same year and not to be outdone Teed himself combined his own Huxton Rymer with Zenith Kew and Plummer, a formidable array of characters to pack into one story which had the intriguing title of "The Thousandth Chance" and, incidentally also happened to be No. 1000 of the Union Jack.

(Apropos the Editors' remarks in the previous weeks' U. J. this story "The Thousandth Chance was specially written by G. H. Teed for U. J. No. 1000. The full list of characters was - Sexton Blake, Tinker, Mlle Yvonne, Uncle Graves versus Dr. Huxton Rymer, The Three Musketeers, Prince Wu Ling, Mary Trent, The Black Dunchess, Leon Kestrel, Zenith the Albino, George Marsden Plummer and Professor Kew. This U. J. also contained photographs of the various artists and a coloured cover by Mr. Eric Parker.

The coloured presentation plate of Sexton Blake was by Arthur Jones. The covers of U. J.'s Nos. 1 and 2 were also reproduced. J. P.)

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 109 - Gem No. 233 - "Tom Merry's Legion of Honour"

Charles Hamilton's writings were always pervaded by a strict sense of morality, but he seldom made the mistake of overtly preaching to his readers. He once explained his attitude in a letter to me, in which he said, "I have never liked the idea of sermonising young people; but it has always seemed to me that a writer for youth should merge some moral hints imperceptibly into his story - though certainly not to the extent of making it unreadable, as so many writers in my own boyhood unhappily did." The title of Gem 233, "Tom Merry's Legion of Honour," at first sight seems incompatible with Charles Hamilton's expressed aims, but the story was actually a comedy until the last chapter.

Tom Merry held a secret meeting in the woodshed, and his TMLH badge aroused great interest. Digby suggested it stood for "Tom Merry Likes Herrings" and Glyn was sure it meant "Take Monty Lowther Home." Comic misinterpretations of these initials were suggested throughout the story, but Tom Merry declared that membership was to be

earned by a noble, generous, or daring action.

It is not difficult to see faults in the construction of this story. In his anxiety to maintain a humorous tone, Charles Hamilton allowed the tale to degenerate into a miscellaneous series of comic incidents: on separate occasions both Mellish and Knox were each convinced that the TMLH were assassins, the New House rivals were squirted with red ink and pyro, and Redfern dressed up as a young lady in distress to make game of the would-be rescuers in the Legion of Honour. Each incident was amusing enough if taken on its own, but all together they did not add up to a coherent whole.

Those who like an intimate atmosphere may enjoy a story which centres upon the old-established characters, with a look-in for newcomers like Joe Frayne and the "New Firm" of Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, but collectors who possess No. 38 of the Boys' Friend Library can see how a competitive yet co-operative, feeling was portrayed in a much more skilful way: in that story "Tom Merry's Conquest," each was hoping to qualify as leader of the group, and a developing series of incidents carried the plot through to a triumphant conclusion. Gem 233, on the other hand, just fizzled out with Redfern diving into the river Ryll to save Towser's life, an act which earned him the presidency of the Legion of Honour. Considering how boring Herries' bulldog was, I should have been quite content to see the last of the tiresome creature, which only goes to show that I should never have been allowed to wear the coveted TMLH badge.

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 182. BRIC-A-BRAC

The foundations for St. Jim's were laid in 1906, those for Greyfriars in 1908, and those for Rookwood in 1915. The super-structure for each school was largely added in later years, while certain portions of the original foundations were chipped away and disappeared as dust down the sands of time.

Johnny Bull, in early days, played a concertina. Herries of St. Jim's was no mean performer on the cornet. I should not like to say

just when Bull's concertina and Herries's cornet disappeared, but it was fairly early.

Herries's bulldog, Towser, and Wally D'Arcy's mongrel, Pongo, remained as part of what we expected at St. Jim's. But, at Cliff House, which had its foundations in the Magnet, the super-structure was added in the School Friend, where Bessie Bunter turned up with a pet parrot, while one of the star girls - I think it was Barbara Redfern - had a pet marmoset. Bessie, in early days, was a ventriloquist, like her brother. I have a feeling that Bessie's parrot disappeared along with her ventriloquial gifts, as the School Friend grew older, and that the marmoset went with them.

Monty Lowther was very keen on the stage in early times. In 1911, arguably the Gem's greatest year, there appeared the fine potted school novel "Stage Struck," in which Lowther ran away from school to join a rather seedy touring company. This was the tale which introduced the well-worn and broken down actor-singer, Horatio Curll, who featured in some stunning tales of all the three great Hamilton schools. A few years later, Lowther's affection was transferred from the stage to the moving pictures. Once again we met Mr. Curll, now a relief pianist in the local cinema. Now we learn that Lowther is also a pianist (in very early Gem times Tom Merry played the piano), and Monty feels, though just why is uncertain, that by playing for the films in the picture palace, he is getting nearer to his ambition of being a film actor.

And, from now on, Lowther never loses his love for the films.

Billy Bunter, in the early Magnet, was constantly reminding his attackers that if they broke his glasses they would have to pay for them. Glasses, in those days, of course, only cost a fraction of what one has to pay for "free" glasses under the health service now. I wonder just when Bunter last worried about getting his glasses broken.

Van Ryn was a ventriloquist of the early Rookwood, a gift which he is never reported to have exercised later on. In the original structure, Classics and Moderns at Rookwood wore different caps, a feature which quickly disappeared.

The quaint outfit of Wun Lung and his brother probably owed more to the artists than to the author. But the author was undoubtedly

responsible for the unlikely coolie English spoken by the boys of a wealthy Chinese father. English public schools would not have allowed boys to wear Chinese garments, any more than they would have allowed a fourth-former to wear a monocle. But Gussy's famous eye-glass carried on till the end, even though we heard a little less of it, I fancy. And, though I do not recall Frank Richards dropping the flowing Chinese garb, Shields, the artist, unobtrusively depicted the famous Wun brothers in the school uniform which they would assuredly have been required to wear.

Wun Lung, like a good deal of the original basis of Greyfriars in the first decade of the Magnet, was quite incredible. But Wun Lung was one of the reasons I love the early Magnet.

It is interesting to speculate as to why Charles Hamilton created Barbara Redfern and Mabel Lynn to be his leading ladies at Cliff House in 1919, in the School Friend. Cliff House dated from 1908, with Marjorie and Clara as the main characters. Yet, in the School Friend, he demoted Marjorie and Clara to supporting roles and bit parts, while Barbara and Mabel were his new stars.

I do not recall Marjorie and Clara ever playing very big parts in the S. F. during the time that I knew it. But they remained the stars of Cliff House in the Magnet. Barbara and Mabel did appear briefly in the Magnet, but they never supplanted the much loved Marjorie and Clara, and, I think, were scarcely mentioned after the later twenties. For which most of us, perhaps, are thankful.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE GOLD CHAIN SERIES
OF 1937

by J. Wallen

Hero of Highcliffe, Ponsonby's despised enemy, the Caterpillar's faithful chum. Frank Courtenay was all of these. He was also the chap that Mr. Mobbs the Fourth-Form Master disliked intensely. "Snobby Mobby" always felt that Frank Courtenay despised his mean, narrow minded nature, in spite of Courtenay's respectful attitude.

"Snobby Mobby's" pet was Ponsonby. "Mobby" worshipped the aristocracy, and purred with delight whenever Ponsonby told him that one of his titled relations had inquired after his health.

The unscrupulous "Pon" naturally made great use of "Mobby." An excellent example of this appears in the Magnets "Quelch's Gold Chain Series" of 1937. "Pon" has captured Quelch's gold chain off Bunter. The Fat Owl had taken it from his Form-Master's desk for an idiotic jape. "Pon" thinks of the idea of spreading the rumour

that Courtenay could have taken the chain as he happened to be in the Guest Room at the time of the supposed theft, only a step away from Quelch's study, waiting for Harry Wharton & Co. When "Pon's" rumour spreads and insulting writings begin to appear, Courtenay brings Ponsoby to task. The embittered "Pon" decides to let the Watch Chain be discovered in Courtenay's study, and after hiding it, goes to "Mobby" and suggests searching Courtenay's study. He says that the honour of the School matters to him, and that he would not like to see Courtenay marched off by a Policeman. It is agreed it would be better to keep the matter quiet if possible, and Courtenay's study is searched.

Ponsoby here has manipulated "Mobby" in a unscrupulous manner, and if not for a timely intervention by Bunter, his plot to make Courtenay out as a thief would have succeeded. Despite the Caterpillar's knowledge that "Pon" is behind the plot.

On the whole this series was little more than run of the mill material, livened up a great deal by the presence of the elegant Caterpillar, and the schemings of the devious Ponsoby.

* * * * *

The Postman Called

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

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge): In reply to Mr. Mason. I know the passage from Latimer to which he refers, and indeed quoted it in an article I wrote for an early Annual. All this proves, however, is that the Robin Hood tales were well known in the 16th century. The earliest dated reference to Robin Hood is in an edition of "Piers Plowman" dated 1377. A reference in the "Scotichronicon" at one time believed to be earlier is now generally agreed by Scholars to be part of Walter Bowers' addition of c. 1450. There has been 400 years of research since Latimer's sermon. The major problem about Robin Hood is that though there are references to outlaws in many medieval chronicles (e.g. the 14th century Polvilles) no Chronicler has so far been found who refers to Robin Hood as his contemporary. There are candidates for the original Robin Hood: Robert Hood "Fugitivus" mentioned in the Pipe Roll of 1230; a possible follower of Simon de Montfort; the tenant of Wakefield Manor, possibly involved in the rising of the Earl of Lancaster in 1322, who may also be the Robert of Robin Hood, Valet, at the court of Edward II, c. 1324. But there is no certain identification. There is also a school of thought which regards Robin Hood as a mythological figure connected with the wood gods or the witch cult. But whether or not there was a real Robin Hood is buried under the ballads and legends, many told of other figures from Hereward onwards also, and in this sense the figure that has come down to us is, as Keen says, "the creation of the ballad muse," complicated by Scott's unhistorical "Ivanhoe." For

recent studies of the Robin Hood legend see Professor M. Keen's "The Outlaws of Medieval Legend" (Routledge 1961) and Dobson and Taylor "Medieval origins of the Robin Hood Legend; a reassessment" in "Northern History," Vol. VII, 1972, University of Leeds.

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): G. W. Mason is incorrect in assuming that the Cambridge Club concluded that Robin Hood was a pure creation of ballad muse. Far from it. This theory was given by our secretary's thesis, and certainly not accepted by myself. Indeed, about ten years ago I was commissioned by Leslie Charteris to investigate the whole truth of Robin Hood - which meant several trips to Nottingham Castle and Sherwood Forest. My findings were printed in a 20,000 word essay in THE SAINT MAGAZINE, and my final conclusion was that certainly in recorded history there was an outlaw named Robin Hood, but whether he accomplished all that was credited to him is of course a different matter.

E. G. SHORTHOUSE (Holmer Green): It was nice to read W. O. G. Loft's letter about the origin of Tiger Tim.

The following is from "The Christmas Book" (published I think in the late 1940's). John L. Bott of the Amalgamated Press writes: - "Tiger Tim ... how was the character born? Who invented the name? In this case the character was born some time before it appeared regularly in the Rainbow and it was born by accident. That well-known illustrator, the Irishman, J. Louis Smythe, was called upon by an Editor to picture an incident from a story. The passage chosen was where the heroine stepped from her carriage and entered a house ... 'followed by her tiger, Tim.' And Louis Smythe unaware of the fact that in this instance a 'Tiger' signified a page-boy or youthful attendant, drew instead a small, striped tiger promenading serenely upright upon its hind legs. The Editor gasped, laughed, but mentally noted for future use a new attractive character. How attractive that character was can be vouched for by the generation who since then have enjoyed his picture and story adventures."

It sounds a very nice story and maybe one that will bring a twinkle in Mr. Loft's eyes.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

CAMBRIDGE

A meeting of the Cambridge Club was held at 3 Long Road, on 13th May. Bill Lofts presided, and welcomed Molly and Myra Allison and Elizabeth Taylor of the Northern Club.

Correspondence included a letter from John Edson, announcing he had permission to produce Tarzan type stories, from a collection in the U.S.A. asking about exchanges.

Chairman, Danny Posner, announced that he had been asked to arrange an exhibition from his collection at the Cambridge High School for Boys.

Molly Allison then gave a talk on the history of the Northern Club, and on her own collecting interests, and Myra gave a talk on Herbert Leckenby. Both were warmly appreciated.

Deryck Harvey then fascinated the meeting with a tale on Tarzan from the original Edgar Rice Burrough's tale, through films T.V., American and English magazines and comics to the latest reprints - members' mouths watered as Deryck produced books and magazines galore, all containing Tarzan items, and shared his frustration at the difficulty of keeping pace with the modern reissues.

The meeting warmly welcomed the news that the London Club had in view a visit to Cambridge, and began a discussion of preliminary arrangements.



NORTHERN

Meeting on Saturday, 12th May

Ron Hodgson, though absent, was nevertheless able to present us with a quiz, which, in the words of Chairman Geoffrey Wilde, 'taxed our brains and our pride.'

Questions ranged from 'What is the number of the current issue of CD?' to 'In what river was the school ship Benbow anchored?'

Geoffrey Wilde came top with 20 out of 37 and Bill Williamson

second with 16.

Then came a reading by Jack Allison from the Howard Baker Magnet volume 'My Lord Bunter.' It had been hard to make a choice, said Jack, and he called to mind a ballad which his father often sang about a cavalier who didn't marry because he loved them all! Jack said he felt the same about choosing a Greyfriars reading.

Jack referred to Frank Richards' skill in making the impossible situation seem plausible. He read from the second Magnet in the series of how the Famous Five in a slow railway train are nevertheless able to observe Bunter seated in a Rolls with Sir Peter Lanchester whilst a Ford gives chase.

Bunter sits in the Rolls with apparent nonchalance whilst the bullets whiz around him! An amazingly brave Bunter ... or so it seemed until the answer was revealed!



LONDON

There was a distinctive flavour of Nelson Lee and St. Frank's at the Twickenham meeting held on 20th May. Host, Sam Thurbon, read passages from a January, 1930, issue of the N. L. L., which was supposed to be written by Vivian Travers. This was very amusing. Highlight was the rendering by Bob Blythe of his "Likes and Dislikes." Needless to state what school and its characters were featured in his elucidation. The chairman, Mary Cadogan, welcomed new member, Leslie Marcantonio, who went home with a supply of Nelson Lee Library material. Bob Blythe gave his customary reading from an old newsletter of 1956 vintage, Sam Thurbon read the last chapters about Jack's the Lad story that appeared in the first post war Tom Merry Annual, Winifred Morss read passages from Gem 47, which dealt with Tom Merry and Co., in the Chicago stockyards, Millicent Lyle read some extracts from a book published in 1884, entitled "Ada and Gertie," which was written by Louise M. Grey and then there were two competitions. Don Webster's Underground Stations Quiz had Millicent Lyle the winner. Roger Jenkins' popular Names in Squares Quiz was won by Don Webster after a play off with Eric Lawrence. Roger wishes it to be known that there will

be no Hamilton Library transactions at the Wokingham meeting on Sunday, 17th June. If intending to meet your fellow members at this gathering, kindly let Eric Lawrence know.

The excellent attendance were unanimous in their hearty vote of thanks to Sam and Mrs. Thurbon for such a very happy time.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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COMPARISONS

by Deryck Harvey

I'd like to be controversial. John Geal, in "They Had Style" ("Collectors' Digest," April 1973) puts down modern comics in comparison with the story-papers of yesteryear. I'd like to speak up for them.

Our reading matter, claims Mr. Geal, had style. Well, we'd all like to think so. To us, they all looked and even felt different. And at the time, they seemed everlasting, positively indestructible. We mourn them still.

But you know, nostalgia is an unreliable yardstick. In time, nothing glows quite so brightly as a treasured item from the past. And if we simply point to the papers of today and those of 30 and 40 years ago and say: "Look, that's the difference!" I think we're partly missing the point.

Every day and age, I submit, evokes its own nostalgia, and I can't see how one can fairly be compared with the other. Just as we remember "The Magnet," "Adventure" or "Film Fun," today's comic-readers are likely to retain their affection for "Valiant," "TV Action" and "The Mighty World of Marvel."

You don't think so? Today's comic-papers are all picture-strips, and therefore insubstantial? I'll agree that they are, but nostalgia becomes all-embracing and I'm sure many collectors must have found that it doesn't necessarily take quality into consideration.

Personally, I couldn't have cared less whether Leeds United or Sunderland won the F.A. Cup this year. Deep down, I knew that the real winners were Burhill United, managed by Baldy Hogan, whose weekly trials and tribulations were recorded in the "Adventure" during

WHEN THE SCOUT WAS GREAT

by O. W. Wadham

The 1920 decade were great years for the Scout. The founder of the popular adventure story paper, Robert Baden-Powell was knighted in 1929, and that closed a most successful decade. A five colour photograph of Sir Robert was offered to all readers for simply filling in a coupon at the end of the magazine and sending three pence for postage. In the number dated 24th August, of 1929, there were also several columns by Sir Robert and several news photographs.

No less than six writers contributed to the Scout in the issue of 24th August. Sidney Strand, Christopher Beck, Percy Westerman, W. J. Seymour, Robert Leighton, and Eric Townsend. The paper was of course priced at two pence, and had nice three colour cover. There must have been many outside the Scout movement who took the Scout regularly. The clever illustrated cover saw that it caught the eye. Priced at sixpence a book BOY'S LIFE OF THE CHIEF SCOUT, by E. K. Wade, was also on offer. Just when the radio and talkie boom was striking in England the Scout got into things in a big way. A slow decline set in in the 1930 decade.

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FOR SALE: Boys' Favourite Lib. No. 12 "Century-Hitter from Nowhere" by E. R. Home-Call (excellent copy) 20p; Bullseye No. 73 (excellent copy complete with free gift enclosure) 75p; Marvel 60-page Christmas Double Number for 1912 (very good copy) 45p; SBL's 426 "Stop Press Homicide," 445 "Mission to Mexico" (excellent copies) 25p each; Hamilton Sparshott series No. 4 "Looking After Lamb" 25p; more early BFL's: No. 6 "Pete's Boyhood" (good copy but without original covers) 30p; 173 "Goalie Pete" (excellent copy but without covers) 15p; 122 "Pete's School" 35p; 305 "Tracked Through the Jungle" (good broadside copy but without covers) 15p; 47 "Gilbert Nameless" by Morton Pike (excellent copy minus back cover) 35p; 194 "Everybody's Favourite" by Artherley Daunt (story of the music-hall combine) good copy, 40p; 637 "The Schoolboy Adventurers" (Bombay Castle story by Duncan Storm) 40p; 70 "The Captain of Abbotsrag" (by the author of Brooks of Ravenscar" (good copy) 50p. Gems 1102, 1103, 1104: £1 for the 3 copies. Strand Magazine Jan. to June 1895 (binding needs repair) 25p; Penny Pictorial (containing short Sexton Blake story) 75p; 5 good copies of Pluck (1907-1910) 65p for the 5 copies. Rough coverless copy of Magnet No. 15 (Wharton's Operatic Company, story complete) 30p; coverless copy of Magnet No. 116, Billy Bunter's Vote, 60p.

Postage extra on all items.

Write ERIC FAYNE with s.a.e.

was worth anything like £300. "I wouldn't pay 'im (John Mackworth, the author) in washers," he said. But that's not a serious criticism. Tom Hallas was always refusing to pay all sorts of people - from Stanley Baldwin down - in washers in those days. He read the first episode and would have nothing to do with the twelve which followed. But it wasn't a bad tale - not the "BEST, ORIGINAL, MODERN STORY" the editor made it out to be - but not bad.

The Terribore - owner-driver-inventor Count Fhurgo - was one of those mechanical moles J. E. M. told us about in his fact packed article in the February 1972 issue (No. 302) of the Collectors' Digest. J. E. M. called them 'subterrines' - machines which drilled their own way underground - and, as J. E. M. pointed out, they were FAR FROM BEING ORIGINAL by the Thirties.

They weren't new to 'The Modern Boy.' Captain Justice's Professor Flaznagel had invented an 'Aquacrawler' in 1934. It was an under water tank for joy-riding about the ocean bed. But, when the Aquacrawler, lost in fathoms of mud, came up against a wall of rock the Prof. told his fellow adventurers not to worry. As he put it in that pithy way of his, "... the projecting nose of this craft is in the form of a flanged metal cone. Revolving at high speed it can bore a tunnel through solid earth at the rate of ten feet per minute, flinging the debris behind it as it advances." A quick flick of a switch and 'they were advancing, penetrating the earth like a auger eating into soft wood.' (Modern Boy Old Series, No. 356, 1.12.34, page 12.)

John Mackworth's and Murray Roberts' subterrines were practically identical. If Flaz, and Fhurgo had ever met while driving through hill and dale in their respective drills the first thing they would have said to one another would have been "Snap." Mr. Mackworth explained how the machine went about 'flinging the debris behind it as it advances.'

The earth, stones, bank vault wall, whatever the drill was biting into, passed through the machine and blasted out, finely shredded, through a wide exhaust funnel at the rear. Earthworms do something similar, but in a quiet, unspectacular way. It was as well to be civil to the Count when you were aboard his craft because people who crossed him were apt to be ejected through the exhaust funnel along with the other

rubbish.

The story line was NOT ORIGINAL for all our Editor's fine promises. By 1936 every right thinking British boy knew what any subterranean owning foreign crook would do as soon as he'd nosed his way across the bed of the Channel and up into Kent. He'd make a bee-line for London. He'd be after either the Crown Jewels or the Gold in the Bank of England. The Black Sapper, who, as Mr. Lofts reminded us in the 1971 Collectors' Digest Annual, has been honeycombing the clay foundations of Central London since 1929, had already had a go at the Crown Jewels. Perhaps the Count had read about it in the Rover; anyway he opted for the Bank of England's Gold.

Although thwarted by our youthful heroes, Dick Trant and George Bassett - 'both members of a great public school' - and hindered rather than helped by Perry, a convict he'd got out of Dartmoor, the Count finally smashed his way into the vaults of the Bank of England.

Perry's job was to put out of action the alarms and safety devices on the strong room door. Once that was done - and it needed all his burglar's skill - the Count had no trouble punching holes in the door.

While the telescopic arms of the Terribore were loading the subterranean with gold bars the Count gave us the history of his invention. He'd been working on it for a long time; from the early days of World War I.

The Terribore (Mark I this would be) could have won that particular war for the Central Powers, but a bomb from a British aircraft on the Castle of Groinek 'demolished workshops, apparatus, process formulae, and a half completed machine. Worse than that, it injured the man who carried the most secret and essential details in his head.'

That man was Fhurgo - hereditary overlord of the State of Groinek, Count of the line of Fhurgo, 15th Baron of Orclastic - and now, after twenty years, he's repaired the damage and come to settle the bill. He reckoned that all the gold in the bullion vaults would just about cover it.

He was getting all this off his chest to a Senior Official of the Bank of England (who by a strange coincidence was uncle to Dick Trant) and it turned out that the S. O. of the B. of E. (by a strange coincidence) had been the observer of the R. F. C. plane which had raided Groinek. He was the very bloke who'd dropped the bomb which blew up the Count.

The S. O. of the B. of E. was daft enough to boast about this - 'there was a mocking glint in the Englishman's eye' - and the Count, understandably piqued, shot him. 'In his wild rage the foreigner had fired almost point blank at his head.'

And that was the end of that episode. But the following week I found out it was only a flesh wound. An Elastoplast and an aspirin later that S. O. of the B. of E. was back on the job of putting Montagu Norman right about the ups and downs of the Pound and we heard of him no more.

From then on the story turned into the saga of the Count's desperate efforts to get out of England with the gold. What with the Navy, the Army, the Air Force, the Secret Service, Scotland Yard, our lads Dick and Harry, and the convict Perry, harassing him, sabotaging him and generally mithering him, he just couldn't make it.

His subterranean was turned over to the Royal Marines, he had one last desperate struggle with our heroes, and when he fell into the sea and was dragged under 'by the swift running tide,' nobody gave a tuppenny (2d.) damn. As Perry put it, "'E's half-way to 'Olland by now, with the lobsters startin' to nibble!'"

In 'The Modern Boy' (Old Series, No. 471, February 13th, 1937) 'The Menace of the Terribore' came to an end. Our Editor didn't waste much time on long farewells. He dusted off his superlatives and told us that one of the biggest things of the year was coming our way. Next Saturday we should meet 'TABU DICK, THE BOY WHO MUST NOT BE TOUCHED.' "Get down to the newsagents early," he chivvied us, "before the inevitable rush clears out the entire stock."

Tom Hallas was pleased.

I said, "What was wrong with 'The Menace of the Terribore'?"

He said, "It was boring."

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing one or more of the following: GENS 817, 826, 828, 832. BOYS' FRIENDS issues between Nos. 1182 and 1256 (Inclusive). Good copies essential.

ERIC FAYNE,

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