

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 28 N° 331

JULY 1974

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By John Tregells.

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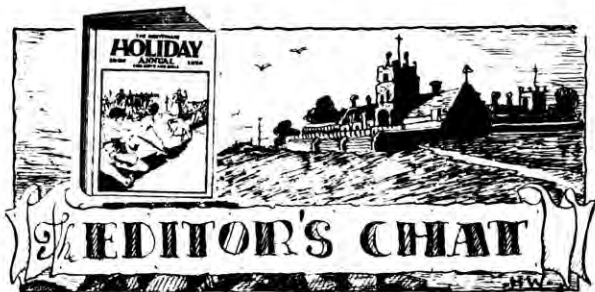
Vol. 28

No. 331

JULY 1974

Price 16p

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A COUPLE OF ADS.

Two advertisements caught my eye in the past month. One was from a large grocery chain. They showed a photograph of one of their stores, taken years ago, with the caption; "Were it not for our profits you would still be shopping in places like this." Or words to that effect.

Very impressive, of course. A nightmare to think that but for

the large profits of grocery stores we should have no more queues at the tills, no more excessive wrappings for which we pay and cast into our dustbins, no more tuppences off things of which we are in the dark concerning the real price, no more paradises for the shoplifter whose activities do not worry the store owners as all losses in this line are passed on to the customer. An advertisement which makes us think must be a gem indeed.

The second ad was for a big store in Kingston-on-Thames. It mentioned reasons why people should go to Kingston-on-Thames. One was the store. Another was the "historical interest" of the town. Certainly there is a lot of history tucked away in that once pleasant Surrey town. There are not many signs of history left since the developers got to work. Still, there are high blocks, and complexes, and precincts. A wag in the local paper recently referred to it as Concrete-on-Thames. It is no longer the lovely old place from which Tom Merry & Co. set off in their "Old Bus". Still, you ought to see the giant new Tesco - that should be attractive to visitors from overseas. I believe there is one old building left on the edge of the open-air market where Queen Anne looks down from her pedestal. There may even be a preservation order on the old building. That won't save it if a developer decides to knock it down. What's a hundred pound fine compared with the gigantic profits which these developers make? And, of course, I don't suppose they live in the horrors they create. They probably have their villas in Barbados.

LUCKY SHERLOCK

"You think a man must be well-to-do if he smokes a seven-shilling pipe?" said I.

"This is Grosvenor mixture at eightpence an ounce," Holmes answered, knocking a little out on his palm. "As he might get an excellent smoke for half the price, he has no need to practise economy."

Sherlock Holmes fans may recognize that as an extract from "The Yellow Face".

I recall that when I was a youngster my father carried on about the Chancellor of the day who put $\frac{1}{2}$ d an ounce tax increase on pipe tobacco, causing his St. Julien to rise from $10\frac{1}{2}$ d an ounce to 11d.

Yesterday I bought a 2-ounce tin of my own favourite tobacco - not one of the most expensive by any means. It cost exactly £1. So the increase of tax in the last Budget must have been 10p or two bob on the ounce. My pipe-smoking days are numbered.

ODDITY

I have come on a B. F. L. for the year 1929 - "Goalie Pete", a tale of popular Jack, Sam and Pete, by Gordon Maxwell. It seems that Maxwell was Walter Edwards, and he re-wrote a number of the old J. S. & P. stories in the middle twenties. I am puzzled. Why on earth was it necessary to re-write stories of proven popularity like the many hundreds written by Clarke Hook? And, if "Goalie Pete" was a re-written story, why should it be published under the name of the man who for some reason or other merely adapted it? Reminds me a bit of "The Pallisers" on TV where the adapter seems to get more credit than Trollope. It seems wrong to see J. S. & P. credited to anyone but their creator.

THE LETTERS OF FRANK RICHARDS

Work on our new publication is going on apace, and we hope it may be ready for dispatch by early September or maybe earlier. The long delay since we first remarked on the plan has been due to the paper shortages, the constant industrial unrest, and terrifying inflation. As readers will understand, anything of the sort needs a lot of thought these days, for we could so easily come a cropper.

It may be possible to include the order form with this issue of C. D. If not, it will come with the next number. Publication is so much a hit or miss business, and costs are heavy. We shall only be printing a limited number of copies. It will help a lot if you will send your orders in early, in order to give us a guide as to just how many copies to print. At the moment, I have no idea at what the cost of a copy will be, but it will be included on the order form.

We think that our enthusiasts will enjoy seeing the famous author in many moods - moods which disclose his personal tastes and his general outlook. And, here and there, lively points to make us think - points which we shall, no doubt, discuss in due course in this magazine.

THE EDITOR

DEATH OF ANTHONY SKENE

By W. O. G. Lofts

News has only just reached me of the death of popular Sexton Blake writer, Anthony Skene, during the Summer of 1972. He was in his 88th year. Born at Mile End, London, (real name George Norman Philips) his first story in the Union Jack featured his famous character Zenith the Albino, who soon was to become one of the most popular figures ever to pit his wits against Blake. He eventually wrote roughly 125 Blake yarns. Mr. H. W. Twyman former editor of The Union Jack, thought highly of Skene, and so did the majority of his readers. An excellent writer, and so another old link has gone from the past.

* * * * *

DANNY'S DIARY

JULY 1924

Peele, with the key of the safe in his own pocket, has got himself locked in the Head's safe, and it was Dr. Chisholm himself who closed the spring lock of the safe without knowing the boy was inside. Death by suffocation will occur soon, and the only one who could save him is Victor Gaston, the new French master at Rookwood, who Mr. Greely has been dismissed for saying is the bank robber, Felix Lacroix. So started the last story in the Gaston series of Rookwood in the Boys' Friend. The tale is called "The Price of the Past".

The next tale was a slight topical one, "The South African Match", to fit in with the Test Matches now being played against our South African cricket visitors.

Then a rib-tickling little tale, "All Lovell's Fault", in which Lovell decided that £1 was missing from the cricket fund of which he is treasurer. Tubby Muffin is blamed - but it was all due to Lovell's being a dud at figures.

Finally "A Hero By Accident". Cuffy, hiding in a tree in the woods, fell out of the tree on top of a footpad who was robbing Sir Theophilus Pratt. Later, the school is asked to find the hero, but Cuffy does not come forward to explain that the act of heroism was

accidental - and Rookwood is left until next week, still wondering as to the identity of the unknown hero.

There have been two big murder trials this month. Vaquier was tried and found guilty at Guildford Assizes of the murder of Mr. Jones, the licensee of the Blue Anchor Hotel at Byfleet, and Patrick Mahon, at Lewes Assizes was found guilty of the murder of Emily Kaye on the Crumbles at Eastbourne.

There have been two railway accidents this month. Four women were killed and 30 people injured when two trains collided at Edinburgh, and at Glasgow an engine over-ran the turntable and hit a wall, killing two men.

In the Nelson Lee Library the series has continued concerning the new Head, Dr. Beverley Stokes, and the mystery surrounding his pretty wife. First tale was "A Schoolgirl's Word of Honour" which starred Irene Manners and the girls of Moor View School, who play cricket. Next came "The Robber of the Remove" in which Archie Glenthorpe is the victim of a midnight robbery. Next came "The Snake in the School" in which the mystery of Mrs. Stokes is cleared up. She is a drug addict owing to the drugs she had to take as the result of an illness.

Finally came "The Camp in the Desert" in which the St. Frank's chums set off for a summer holiday adventure in a remote part of the Sahara Desert. All very thrilling stuff which keeps us all on the alert for what will happen next.

We have seen some good pictures at the cinemas this month. They have been Betty Compson and Henry Ainley in "The Royal Oak"; Carmel Myers in "You Are In Danger"; Clara Bow in "Maytime"; Tom Mix in "Three Jumps Ahead"; Alma Taylor in "Coming Through The Rye"; and Kenneth Harlan in "The Virginian". There was also a very funny comic film: Stan Laurel in "When Knights Were Cold".

The opening tale in the Magnet, "Drummed Out of Greyfriars" is an odd affair. A man named Plummer persuades Bunter to make collections on behalf of the Unemployed Benevolent Fund. It is suspected that Bunter pinched the money, and he is expelled by the Head and drummed out by the Remove. He turns up with a hurdy-gurdy organ and a monkey; is knocked down by Coker on his motor-bike; ends up in hospital; then Plummer comes round the wards as a kind of benefactor,

and Bunter recognizes him and drops on him. Very, very weird. Also weird was "The Schoolboy Domestic" in which all the domestic staff at Greyfriars had the flu, so the juniors did their work.

"The Parting of the Ways" was the first story of one of those excellent Bounder-Redwing series. Vernon-Smith is dropped from the team and Redwing gets his place. By trickery, the Bounder causes Redwing to lose the train for Rookwood, but the Bounder plays in the game and helps to win the match. In "Sentenced by the Form", Redwing moves out of Smithy's study, and Smithy's trickery comes to light and is dealt with by the form. The series continues. All great stuff for Magnet readers.

A new Sexton Blake Library "The Case of the Kidnapped Legatee" features Granite Grant and Mlle. Julie. It starts in Northern India and then transfers to London and Kent. Great reading, even more entertaining I think for adults than for boys.

There is a new monthly paper issued at 7d - the Merry Mag. The editor is said to be the comedian Leslie Henson.

First tale in the Gem this month was tip-to. "The Hero of the Hour" was Cardew, and it was a sequel to last week's story. Racke is trying to blackmail Cardew into losing a game.

After this delightful tale, "Grundy's Feud" was very long and pretty awful. Funny how the long tales nowadays are always pretty awful. Grundy's feud is with Knox. Grundy is out of character, and Knox only escapes expulsion, I expect, because the real writer of the tales would be cross if someone else scrapped one of his characters.

There have been a great many tales in the Gem, complete in themselves, especially quite a few in the last year. "The Housemaster's Mistake" is one of the best. Figgins, off on leave for a couple of days, hides a banknote in Mr. Ratcliff's Livery - and Mr. Ratcliff accuses Cutts of stealing it. When Cutts is proved innocent, he demands a public apology - and gets it. A dream of a tale - one of those which puts Martin Clifford well out before anyone else.

"Tom Merry & Co. in Camp" is the first long tale of a holiday series, but it is disappointing, as it is not by the real writer. It's to cash in on the Boy Scout gathering at Wembley Exhibition. Very sub-standard entertainment, I think.

And in real life the overseas scouts, gathered under canvas at Wembley, went to Buckingham Palace to meet the King and Queen.

There has been a bathing fatality at Bantam in Devon. A Bristol schoolmaster and four boys have all been drowned on holiday there.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The Vaquier trial was the last one to be held at Guildford Assizes. Judges and counsel had been critical of it for a long time. It was next door to the Guildford Music Hall which stood on a corner, and the entrance to the Assize Court was also shared as part of the entrance to the theatre. After Vaquier, the Assizes were transferred to Kingston-on-Thames. I never knew the Music Hall at Guildford. When I was there in the forties it still looked like a theatre but was actually a Co-op. The Assize Court next door was a theatre for plays, and I saw "Rebecca" there. Today both buildings are a giant Co-op with every mod-con.)

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

The fourth part of Ken Bailey's article on sleuths appears this month in which he regrets that he has only read two of the Philo Vance epics. No doubt Ken will be pleased to know that the Tom Stacey Publishing Co. is issuing many reprints of pre-war detective and other stories, amongst the current list are two by S. S. Van Dine. The very first two - The Benson Murder Case and the Canary Murder Case. All these reprints are obtainable from the local Libraries. If anyone is interested they could look at one of these reprints and see just which tales are listed on the back cover. I only wish that some of the long double number Union Jack tales of Sexton Blake could also appear in a similar reprint.

At this time of the year it would now be appropriate for me to ask for articles intended for the Annual to be thought about. I am sure our Editor would be pleased to know well in advance just what material he will be receiving from our band of Blake enthusiasts.

Blakiana continued over ... JOSIE PACKMAN

In the senior school, two of the Cliff House prefects, Connie Jackson and Sarah Harrigan, were cast in the bullying mould of Gerald Loder. Unprepossessing in appearance, and unscrupulous by nature, they constantly managed to pull the wool over Miss Primrose's trusting eyes' but happily Barbara, Clara and Marjorie always eventually got the better of them.

Part 4THE NEW YORKERS

"William Powell as Philo Vance in the Greene Murder Case" proclaimed the poster in the foyer as I trod eagerly on soft carpet into the dim cosiness of the small local cinema. So came about my first meeting with the academic American investigator. (I also recall that this same day had been somewhat gloomy because of the death of my favourite goldfish.) S. S. Van Dine's character appears as a rather serious young man not long from the university. His interests cover art, Egyptology and the like, which places Vance on a plane considerably higher than the morons in the pulp magazines. He is the sort of fine fellow whose cigarettes are monogrammed, rides luxuriously in a Pierce Arrow and is always impeccably dressed. He has made a fine art of flicking a non-existent speck from his discreetly smart lounge jacket. Almost ten years elapsed from the occasion of seeing Vance on the screen and reading his adventures in a book borrowed from the local Library. I have read but two of the cases which is lamentable for I never seem to see any of Van Dine's books anywhere nowadays. The stories are elegant and scholarly but of slow tempo, patience being a necessary virtue to carry the reader through to the last act. Anyone with a penchant for rapid gallops from corpse to corpse is advised to keep well clear. The stories are also notable for the provision of copious footnotes designed to guide the less erudite reader in subjects beyond his ken. So copious are these notes that the said reader might well become confused and lose the thread of the tale after his labourious study of the helpful but digressive information. Yes, Philo Vance is for the highbrow alright, but in this day and age who wants that kind of mental exercise? Raymond Chandler and Co. have a lot to answer for.

To be continued

"CHERCHEZ LA FEMME"

by J. E. M.

"Look for the Woman" is a cliché which has a rather special meaning for the saga of Sexton Blake; for if there was one respect in which Blake differed from that other great criminologist of Baker Street,

it was in his relationships with the fair sex. Sherlock Holmes had said that for him there was only one woman. For Sexton Blake there seems to have been dozens, and the list appended to this article is no doubt far from complete (it certainly does not include modern dollies like Paula Dane and Marion Lang of the so-called "new" Blake era). Of course all the ladies listed were romantically involved with Blake. Some in fact, like the chilly, ruthless Fifette Bierce, or the savage exotic Marie Galante, or the lethal Madame Clothilde, were often out for his blood. Even so it must be said that being against the law was no bar to amorous entanglements with Sexton Blake. A considerable number of the Blakian ladies operated outside, or at least very close to the edge of, the law - surely a somewhat startling fact of reflect upon.

Of the many dazzling females who fell in love with Blake, a remarkably high proportion had their affection returned. The extraordinary thing in the circumstances is that not one of them ever succeeded in winning the detective for herself alone. There will be no shortage of psychological explanations, these days, for the curious pattern of Blake's relationships with the opposite sex. Even in less sophisticated times it must have seemed to many Blake fans very odd behaviour on the part of their hero to succumb so often - and so willingly - to the embraces of beautiful women without any sort of real commitment. It can hardly be said that he never met the right woman. In fact, on the evidence of his own declarations, he met the right woman all too often. He expressed a strong attachment to any number of these females, from Lillie Ray, Lais Dowson the earliest of his romantic encounters, to Roxane Harfield whose famous torrid interlude with Blake on her yacht is too-well-known to need rehearsal here. The range and choice of womanhood available to him was, in any case, enormous. Apart from his long-running associations with ladies like Roxane and Yvonne Cartier and his sensational encounters with June Severance and Olga Nasmyth, there were many other less celebrated femmes fatales whose strong affection he aroused at one time or another. Straight from the English top drawer for example, came those two aristocratic lovelies, Lady Marjorie Dorn and the ex-Wren Lady Emily Westonholme. Tiring no doubt of the home-grown, Blake also became involved with Princess Lara, a blue-blooded and exotic refugee from a Turkish Harem. A less

exalted creature from a similar background was Farina, while a little further East there was that episode with Biwi, a Hindu, also devoted to Blake. In the Far East itself, Blake had a memorable meeting with Nhin Kee, a half-caste beauty of dubious background from Saigon. And so the list grows, literally on a world wide scale.

Our hero's failure to settle for some sort of permanent liaison, or even marriage, with one of the many attractive women he met was, perhaps, not really his own fault. On the one hand his authors were anxious to show that he was capable of ordinary human feelings. On the other hand, they recognised that any exclusive relationship with one woman would have been ruinous to his image as a cold, calculating hunter of villains. But this was trying to have the cake and eat it and Blake's inconclusive encounters with the opposite sex must have been a source of embarrassment to a good many readers.

Providing female accomplices for the criminal characters in the Blake stories - Mary Trent for Huxton Rymer, Mata Vali for Plummer, Broadway Kate for Ezra Q. Maitland and so on - was reasonable enough and, no doubt, helped to establish an adult audience for the Saga. But to have the great man himself taking such a warm-blooded interest in the opposite sex was surely a serious error; (even Sherlock Holmes lost a little of his glitter in the shadow, or rather the aura, of Irene Adler). As the creator of so many of Blake's leading ladies, the author who must take a great deal of blame for the Casanova image is G. H. Teed, though he was by no means the founder of the romantic Blake tradition.

Perhaps one of the most appealing and memorable of Blake's adversaries was Gwyn Evans's creation, Miss Death. Even she finally shuffled off this mortal coil in the detective's arms and we are told that every year since her tragic end he has made a pilgrimage to the grave of this gallant if misguided girl. This side of the grave or beyond, it looks as if Sexton Blake was always the ladies' man.

Ladies encountered by Sexton Blake (in alphabetical order): -
La Balafree, Fifette Bierce, Biwi, Yvonne de Braselieu, Nita Caraccio (Red Nita), Yvonne Cartier, Mme. Clothilde, Mercedes Dahn, Miss Death, Claire Delisle, Gloria Dene, Farina, Isabel de Ferre, Julia

Fortune, Camille Despard, Lady Marjorie Dorn, Lais Dowson, Denise Drew, Marie Galante, Glory Gale, Mme. Goupolis, Eileen Hale, Roxane Harfield, Mlle Julie, Nhin Kee, Elsa Von Kravitch, Princess Lara, Fay Lorne, Fay Linder, Kathleen Maitland, (Broadway Kate), Judith Major, Muriel Marl, Vali Mata-Vali, Lady Molly Maxwell, Mlle Miquet (The Butterfly), Olga Nasmyth, Nirvana, Thirza Von Otto, Lillie Ray, June Severance, Jessica Slessor, Sandra Sylvester, Mary Trent, Cora Twyford, Lady Emily Westonholme.

(Acknowledgments to many Blakian experts but especially to S. Gordon Swan, Walter Webb and, above all, Editor Josie Packman.)

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

INVITATION TO A MURDER

or THE UNEASY ALLIANCE

by Len Wormull

It should have been happy ever after for St. Frank's fans. Popular Edgar Fenton had just won through after nearly getting the sack. Fine for the school captain, but the reader had his own immediate problems. Staring at him was the startling preview of things to come - a blueprint for murder. St. Frank's had but one week to live! How vividly I recall that unhappy turn of events in 1930, just when the old school had come to mean so much to me. It was the brutal finality that shocked: St. Frank's razed to the ground, a burnt-out ruin, with a blazing airship straddled across it. Fantastic even in death - but who wants a dead school? Mind you, schooling with St. Frank's was rather like sitting on a powder keg: anything could happen, and most times did. It was all part of the uneasy alliance. Even so, it seemed inconceivable that we should lose what was easily the better half of the school-detective relationship. "Rogues of the Green Triangle" laid bare the priorities, shamefully and without compunction. It was the day Edwy Searles Brooks broke faith with his readers.

Professor Cyrus Zingrave was an obvious choice for the job. Only one man had frustrated his terrorist plans - Nelson Lee - and here was the chance to hit him where he lived, so to speak. The bomb attempt in the Triangle, as opening gambit, was proof of his sincerity.

'Operation St. Frank's' required more drastic measures, however. Britain's latest in airships, R202, provided just the answer. In a simple hijacking operation Zingrave takes command, with surprise flight guests - Nelson Lee, Nipper and Handforth. Losing the first round, our heroes are to be thrown to their deaths on top of St. Frank's. Handy decides otherwise, causing the shot to be fired which in turn sets the airship ablaze. The school looms ahead ...

Down below St. Frank's awaits its doom, cleared of all occupants. "This looks pretty rotten, you fellows," said Vivian Travers, while William Napoleon Browne, placid to the end, recites: "A murky outlook, brother Horace." Then the airship 'settled on the top of St. Frank's like some creature with a vile brain. It had all seemed so deliberate.'

And, of course, it was. With St. Frank's utterly destroyed and our trio incredibly unscathed, the way was clear, at Nipper's suggestion, for a Detective Academy for public schoolboys. "Why not, says Lee, Scotland Yard is collecting University men." In a day of surprises there was yet more to come. Among the chosen band of crime fighters were - wait for it - those insufferable cads: Forrest, Gulliver and Bell. Nelson Lee thought perhaps he could reform them! It was the final absurdity.

Predictably, Lee and his cubs had their victory. Shattered readers had their debris. The crime-busters marched on regardless. But not for long. A remarkable thing - nay miracle - suddenly happened. By public demand, no doubt, it was Carry On St. Frank's! Produced from the ashes by Stimpson & Douglas (Builders) Ltd., to give them their due. Hope springs eternal ...

"Pretty smart work, you chaps", remarked Duncan, the New Zealand junior. "Everything's exactly the same - studies, dormitories, Common-rooms. Even the same kind of furniture. You might think there'd never been a fire. It's wonderful, how they've restored the old place."

Gallant words, but oh so misleading as it all turned out. The kiss and make up had a nondescript flavour, the edifice we saw had a marked resemblance to those spurious schools which proliferated in the adventure papers. But don't blame the builders, it was the fittings that were wrong. Could it have been a return to old times?

Some twenty years after St. Frank's was behind him, the author was asked who was to blame for the destruction. His reply was a shocker: "I can't remember exactly, but most likely it was the Editor's idea." What cannot be denied is the ruthless thoroughness with which Brooks killed off his creation, leaving no margin for a plausible come-back. And the evidence suggests that no such return was envisaged. It was the price readers had to pay for their superstar detective. As Dr. Morrison remarked to Lee: "If this disaster to the airship had not happened, you would have been killed. Far better for the school to be burnt to the very ground."

If architect and headmaster could hold their old school in such low esteem, what chance did a new St. Frank's have of survival?

BIKE STEALING IN BELLTON

by R. Hibbert

The commonest crime in Crewe, Cheshire, is bicycle stealing.

I know this because the Chief Constable told me. He told me in his annual report printed in the 'Crewe Chronicle'. Bicycle stealing first, murder practically nowhere.

Things were the other way round in Bellton, Sussex, where St. Frank's College was situated. The most serious crimes flourished in that district, possibly because there was only one policeman, P. C. Sparrow. Crewe has a lot of policemen, policewomen, police cadets and a police station about as big as Centre Point, all of which must give your professional criminal pause, as they say.

We don't know if crime was rife in Bellton before Nelson Lee turned up. I wouldn't put it past P. C. Sparrow to turn a blind eye to the most heinous goings on, but once our school-master detective had settled in he noticed that there was a lot of it about. "There was a hint of mystery in this district," he says on page 20 of 'The Nelson Lee Library' (Old Series) number 166, 'By General Request'.

It may well be that Great Detectives are provided, by the fates, with Great Crimes. Certainly Nelson Lee found as many in Bellton as ever he'd found in Gray's Inn Road. He went to St. Frank's to investigate the disappearance of his predecessor as Ancient House master and that turned out to be a case of kidnapping.

Soon Nelson Lee was up to his eyes in Bellton and district crime;

kidnapping, murder, blackmail, escaping convicts, shanghaied school-boys, arson; everything there is in the Newgate Calendar; everything except rape - and bicycle stealing.

The one time a bicycle disappeared everyone - especially Nipper - thought it very odd. Murder and mayhem the boys of St. Frank's had got used to, but on the evening a pushbike wasn't outside the shop where its owner had left it Nipper decided that crime in Bellton had plummeted to a new low. As he said in chapter 7 of 'Nelson Lee' (Old Series) number 184, 'The Secret of the Gold Locket' "It was certainly unusual for a bike to be pinched in Bellton" and he began furiously to think.

Actually the bike had been 'borrowed' for a very good reason and the owner got it back in an hour or two so its loss was never reported to P. C. Sparrow.

I should like to see his annual report. It would go something like this most years:

- Treason - one case
- Offences against the Official Secrets Act - two cases
- Murder - three cases
- Attempted murder - seven cases
- Kidnapping - six cases
- Arson - two cases
- Bomb outrages - one case
- Illegal Immigration - (see Appendix I - 'Mass Parachute Drop on St. Francis' College by the Yung Fu Tong')
- Assault and battery - fifteen cases
- Burglary - nine cases

And it would go on and on, as sordid a list of crimes as you can imagine, but it would end up triumphantly -

- Rape - No one's complained
- Bicycle stealing - NIL.

* * * * *

READY VERY SOON:

THE LETTERS OF FRANK RICHARDS

Selling Boys' Realm, Boys' Friend, Boys' Herald (early 1900's), Union Jack (1881), Scout (1908/09, and 1917), Marvel (early 1900's), Ally Slopers Half Holiday (1880's), Snapshots (1890's), Aldine's Half Holiday Library (1890's), Chums (1900's to 1920's), Nelson Lee Library (1920's), Sexton Blakes (late 1920's), Gem, Magnet (1930's), Film Fun (1925), Kinema Comic (1925), Kinematograph Weekly (late 1920's), Comic Cuts (1931), Chips (1938), Little Folks Annuals (1880's), Adventure, Rover, Hotspur, Wizard Annuals (1930's), Merriwell and Nick Carter paperbacks (USA, 1920's), Fantastic Adventures (USA, 1940's, 1950's), Mechanix And Inventions (USA, 1930's), Girls' Own Paper (1930's), Picturegoer (1950's), Strand (1892-1913), Modern Wonder, Triumph, Modern Boy, Buzzer, Wild West (1930's), Young Britain, Rocket, Pal, Pluck (c WW1), Buffalo Bill (1912-1925), Aldine Wild West (1920's), True Blue (early 1900's), Diamond Library (1912-1920), AP Robin Hood (c 1920), Nugget Library (pre 1914), Boys' Friend Library (1917-1923), Champion Library (early 1930's), Railway Magazine (1908-1915), Hotspur, Champion, Wizard, Rover, Adventure (1930's to 1950's), plus large selection of newspapers, and magazines from 1640's to 1950's.

Send for free catalogues:-

Ed Jones

43 DUNDONALD ROAD

COLWYN BAY

DENBS.

No. 120 - Gem No. 130 - "The Terrible Three's Cricket Match"

One of the mysteries of the blue Gem is the reason why Charles Hamilton introduced Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the American boy, known as 'the Outsider'. The early harmony of the tales was shattered by the advent of Lumley-Lumley and (later) Levison. The gain achieved was a new feeling of bite in the stories and a new source of conflict for the plots, but it was a gain achieved at a great cost.

"The Terrible Three's Cricket Match" was a summer holiday story, with incidents on the train and at Laurel Villa, where no less than ten guests were accommodated in Miss Fawcett's little home. A cricket match was played against Figgins' team, but the Terrible Three referred to in the title were probably Cousin Ethel, Phyllis Monk and Vera Stanhope who played for Tom Merry's side, and the real focus of interest was Lumley-Lumley's first meeting with Cousin Ethel. A conversation between the two of them can only be termed archaic:

"I should think you'd be reading a novel."

"My mother does not like me to read novels."

"Or newspapers anyway."

Ethel smiled.

"I am not allowed to read newspapers even if I wanted to; and I certainly don't."

Why Charles Hamilton should have taken over the paraphernalia of pre-Victorian literature with its contempt for the novel (and its romantic themes of true heirs being kidnapped by gypsies) is little short of astonishing, even for 1910. Ethel is here depicted as nothing less than a prig, whereas in earlier tales she had shown a sense of humour and even playfulness that put her in quite a different class from the perennially anxious Marjorie Hazeldene. Possibly Ethel is deliberately presented as somewhat old-fashioned in order to make a more effective contrast with Lumley-Lumley's brash assurance, and to pave the way for similar meetings in future stories.

The story was reprinted in 1934 in Gem No. 1368, under the more appropriate title "The Complete Cad". It became an Easter holiday story, but of course in those days cricket at Easter was not so unusual as it is today. The conversation quoted above was sensibly

omitted, though Ethel still maintained she was forbidden to read novels even if the ban had been lifted on newspapers. What was most incongruous was probably the horse-drawn brake in which the cricketers travelled from Laurel Villa: this was necessary to the climax of the plot, but it is certainly odd to realise that while Bob Cherry was being kidnapped by aeroplane in the Magnet, the juniors were still driving about in horse-drawn carriages in the Gem. A schoolboy myself at the time, I certainly regarded the Magnet as an up-to-date contemporary paper and the Gem as something of a museum piece - but I continued to read them both, nevertheless!

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 192. POLISHED NONSENSE

Charles Hamilton wrote to me twice concerning the Herlock Sholmes stories. His first claim I accepted without any reserve whatsoever for it was obviously true. He said: "I invented the character, Herlock Sholmes, rather irreverently, I must confess. I wrote all the H. S. stories in the first Greyfriars Herald, and I believe that readers liked them. The paper ended so unexpectedly, owing to the shortage of raw materials, that some stories were still in hand. They were printed in one of the other papers later on - in the Magnet, I seem to remember."

Actually it was one of the latter which we reproduced last Christmas in C.D. But, on a later occasion, Hamilton made the claim; "I wrote all the Herlock Sholmes stories". That particular claim I took with a grain of salt. After all, on one celebrated occasion he claimed to have written every Greyfriars tale in the Magnet. I felt it likely that this claim about Sholmes might have been too all-covering, and that it was probable that sub writers wrote some of the Sholmes tales of later years.

Now, however, I have come to the conclusion that I may have done the famous author an injustice, and my change of heart comes after examining the series of shorter Herlock Sholmes tales in the revived Greyfriars Herald of 1920, in the Magnet and in the Gem. I have no doubt now that these were written by Hamilton.

Mr. Bill Lofts has sent me a letter which he received long ago from the author Stanton Hope. Mr. Hope mentioned that he wrote some Herlock Sholmes stories.

My view is that he was mistaken, and Mr. Lofts agrees with me. As Mr. Lofts said, it is possible that Hope actually wrote and submitted some Sholmes stories, but they were never published.

The Sholmes series are clever little tales. Their content, with their smoothness of reading, is pretty remarkable considering their extreme brevity.

The original series consisted mainly of skits on actual Conan Doyle tales - for instance, we had "The Sign of Forty-Four", "The Freckled Hand", "The Yellow Phiz", and "The Bound of the Haskervilles".

Irreverent they undoubtedly were, as Hamilton himself admitted, but they were delicious fun, and one wonders how the author was able to churn them out and keep up the standard as he did. Later, however, it was merely the characters who were caricatured. Here we saw many of the author's own pet opinions peeping through, some of them to quite a remarkable extent.

The one we printed in December showed Hamilton's views of high-ranking civil servants, and a chuckle over bureaucracy was a feature of the tales throughout.

Anything American was also a figure of fun, and, apart from the Rio Kid, Hamilton seems to have a poor opinion of anything which originated on the other side of the pond. In the Hollywood series, he made Coker say: "They're a republic and proud of it. Like being proud of a broken nose or a cauliflower ear". By putting the words into the mouth of Coker, Hamilton disarmed his critics, but other instances made it clear how his views lay. There were several little tales enough to put the reader off Chicago canned beef for life. The stolen American car was another case in point. Sholmes was certain the stolen car would be found within half a mile of the theft. "The thief had driven it off at high speed. The result was inevitable. Half a mile from the robbery I came across the wreck. I hired a barrow to wheel it home."

And the following, which is so positively libellous that it makes one gurgle with pleasure. A young man is missing. Sholmes sums up the case:

"The missing heir left his father's house with the declared intention of becoming a pirate. But, in these prosaic days, Jotson, pirates are things of the past. He could not become a pirate in the old fashioned sense of the term. Imagine for a moment, Jotson, that Captain Kidd and Morgan the buccaneer, and Blackbeard the Pirate, were living in these days, what would be their natural resources, since piracy is no longer practicable on the high seas?"

I reflected for a moment.

"I suppose they would become candidates for the House of Commons", I suggested.

"True. But you must remember that this disinherited young man was not in a position to do so. With the keenest desire to become a freebooter, yet lacking the necessary capital to set up as a politician, there was only one resource for him - to become a house-agent."

In one rib-tickler, which nevertheless strikes a chill note all these years later, Sholmes is called in by Dublin Castle. "Sinn Fein outrages have now reached the culminating point, or the patriotic movement has now become formidable, whichever you like. Police-stations have been burned; policemen have been potted; banks have been robbed; life and property generally rendered unsafe - but that is nothing out of the common - the climax has now been reached. A distinguished official has been kidnapped by the Sinn Feiners. What their intentions are is not known. They cannot blow his brains out --"

"Why not, Sholmes?"

"I have mentioned that he is a distinguished official, Jotson. The feat would therefore be impossible."

"Most true!"

And, a little later, "We put up at the village inn, which, for some reason unknown to us, had not been burned to the ground."

Great little gems of farce, they are brilliant in their variety of theme and for their po-faced audacity. And even in our Utopia of 1974 - even in the peace and joy, contentment and purity, beauty and brotherly understanding which we are blessed with in this modern age - we can find, if we are still irreverent, that some of the things which Hamilton ridiculed fifty years ago have not changed so very much in spite of all. A superb writer's means of employing an odd hour,

chuckling away to himself, and making for himself the odd teener,

Two things puzzle me still. By using the ancient Mr. Spooner we can trace most of the characters. But who on earth did Hamilton have in mind when he created Inspector Pinkeye? And who was the great artist who did the rib-tickling and so appropriate illustrations to all the wee tales? He helped to make the series.

* * * * *

And, because it's summer (or should be) here is one of Hamilton's little gems which we hope will pass a pleasant tea-interval.

THE MISSING CRICKETER

Shakespeare - a well-known playwright - has very truly observed that one man in his time plays many parts. This is particularly true of my amazing friend, Mr. Herlock Sholmes. During our residence together at Shaker Street I had the opportunity of witnessing many of his roles - indeed, I have even seen him lurch upon a roll. But the case of the missing cricketer brought to light a fresh side of his variegated character, to my increasing astonishment and admiration.

Sholmes was glancing over the morning paper when Sir Filbert Duxegg, the captain of Dudshire County, was shown in by Mrs. Spudson. The strange disappearance of Mr. H. Walker, the champion bat of Dudshire, was then absorbing public attention.

Sholmes, I knew, was interested in sport. He was an expert at shove-ha'penny, and at marbles he had few equals. On horses his opinion was final; he knew why Squared Jim had won the Swindleton Handicap, and why Nobbled Nick had lost. With his usual judgment he had backed Welsh Rabbit for the War Stakes. But I was yet to learn that his knowledge of

cricket was equally extensive and peculiar.

He glanced up over his paper, with his penetrating glance.

"Good morning, Sir Filbert," he said.

The visitor gave a start.

"You know my name!"

"Evidently," said Sholmes, carelessly turning over the newspaper, upon which a photograph of the Dudshire captain appeared. "Pray be seated. You may speak quite freely before my friend Dr. Jotson."

I gazed at Herlock Sholmes with silent admiration. With no clue but this photograph under his eyes, he had recognised the captain of Dudshire at a glance.

I could see that our visitor was impressed. This nonchalant display of my amazing friend's powers had given him confidence in Herlock Sholmes.

"You have called in reference to your missing batsman, I presume?"

continued Sholmes.

"That is the case," Sir Filbert leaned forward eagerly. "Today we play Slopshire, and if Walker is not found we

shall never pull through. Yesterday he disappeared --"

"Without leaving a clue?"

"He was last seen in the dressing-room. Nothing was found there but an empty bottle --"

"Was there any distinguishing label on the bottle?"

"A label bore the name 'Johnnie Walker'. The police surmise that it may have contained some intoxicating fluid."

"It is possible."

"Mr. Sholmes, our only hope is in you."

Sholmes glanced at his watch.

"At what time does the match begin today, Sir Filbert?"

"Ten-thirty."

"And it is now half-past nine. You have not been in a hurry to call in my services," said Herlock Sholmes, with a touch of irony. "You relied on the official police, no doubt. However, if your only hope is in me, it is up to me to justify your faith. Dudshire will win the match today, Sir Filbert."

"Then you think --" exclaimed the baronet eagerly.

"I do not think; I know. By the aroma that floats in at the window, I judge that your car is waiting below. Let us be off. Rely upon me, Sir Filbert. I have, as a matter of fact, backed Dudshire to the extent of eighteenpence, and if they should be beaten today the financial results to me will be serious. Allons!"

We hurried down to the car.

In a few minutes we were whizzing through the busy streets, en route for the Dudshire County Ground. It had been my intention that morning to attend the funeral

of one of my patients, but I was too keenly interested in Sholmes' work to think of it now.

The Dudshire ground was already crowded when we arrived.

The visiting eleven undoubtedly counted upon an easy victory, in the absence of Dudshire's champion bat. But they reckoned without Herlock Sholmes.

The bottle was produced. Sholmes examined it, and his expression showed that the scent emanating from it was familiar to him.

Sir Filbert watched him anxiously. Sholmes spoke at last.

"This bottle contained spirits," he said. "Walker has been spirited away."

"The stumps are already pitched," exclaimed Sir Filbert, in despair. "Mr. Sholmes, can you do nothing for us?"

"Everything!" answered Herlock Sholmes quietly. "I have said that Dudshire shall win. Play me."

"You!" ejaculated the Dudshire captain. "Come then. There is no time to be lost."

I could scarcely believe my eyes when Herlock Sholmes ran lightly into the field, bat in hand, to open the innings for Dudshire. Accustomed as I was to the versatility of my amazing friend, I was not prepared for this development.

But I watched with confidence. And my confidence was soon justified. It is safe to say that such cricket had never been played before on the Dudshire County Ground.

From the first ball of the first over, Sholmes was master of the situation.

He opened brilliantly, with a beautiful right swing to the wicket-

keeper's nose, and there was a cheer from the Dudshire crowd. Then he gave a miss in baulk, modulated rapidly into C minor, and potted the red, amid growing enthusiasm.

Eager eyes followed him as he charged square-leg, boxed the compass, and, with an obligato entirely on the G string, took a header, and scored a bulls-eye on the pavilion clock.

Dismay fell upon Slopehire, utterly unaccustomed to play of this quality.

But Sholmes was not finished yet. Without stopping to take the rest, he huffed his opponent's king, and in less time than it would take to recite "The Charge of the Gas Company" reached high-water mark,

and put the lid on. Then there was enthusiastic clapping, as he jazzed with amazing velocity and cannoned off the cushion.

Little more remain to be told. Nonchalant as ever, Herlock Sholmes checked with the knight, and trumped the ace, amid thunderous cheers.

He was borne shoulder-high from the field.

* * * *

"Well, Jotson?" he said, with a smile, a few hours later, as we took our seats in the train for London.

"Sholmes!" I gasped.

It was all I could say. There were no words in which I could express my admiration for my friend's astounding abilities.

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 4. TRAILERS, NEW ERA & JOHNNY HINES

Now we started to book trailers to announce our Forthcoming Attractions. There were two firms then in competition for the supply of trailers - National Screen Service, much the larger, and British Screen Service. For years we had a full contract with N. S. S. to supply trailers for all our bookings; they also made hundreds of "special announcements" for our use, and supplied our National Anthem trailers. The latter, of course, never really wore out. We just replaced the old one occasionally with a new one for the sake of change.

It was not until many years later that the big companies, probably suddenly realising that they were losing a big source of revenue, put out their own trailers. These were longer than those put out by the

trailer firms, and, if one ran trailers (as we always did) one booked them on the normal film contracts. The trailers came along a week in advance of the playing date of the main film.

In passing, I still have the trailer of "~~Share~~ Leave", our first feature.

I see that it was in our third term that we ran our first New Era film. New Era was a British firm which released big documentaries, and every one of them was first-class. The one we ran this term was "Ypres", and it must have been exceptionally good for I notice that we retained it, after showing it for two performances on Friday, and screened it again on the Sunday. It must have been a long film, too, for on the Friday all we showed with it was the serial (Ben Alexander

in "Scotty of the Scouts") plus a trailer advertising that our next show would be Dorothy Mackaill and Lowell Sherman in the naval production "Convoy", the latter a First National film.

Later we were to show a number of other New Era productions - I recall "The Emden" and "Q-Ships". When I come to our playing of "Q-Ships" I shall relate a novel little experience I had in connection with same. Those New Era documentaries were splendid productions, with magnificent photography. Maybe, one day, they will turn up on TV.

Last month I mentioned how First National took Harry Langdon from Sennett, and presented him in full-length features.

Another comedian in First National Films was one named Johnny Hines, the first one we playing starring him being entitled "Stepping Along". Johnny Hines has been long forgotten, but I have never forgotten that film. In this one he was a racing motorist, and it was great entertainment. The film was in black and white, but the car throughout the film was brilliant red. It was particularly effective in the long shots, with the red car racing over mountain roads or across plains. Goodness knows how it was done. In later years, we showed plenty of films in part-technicolor; for instance, "The Wizard of Oz" was in sepia until Judy Garland arrived in Oz; and, in "The Portrait of Dorian Grey"

the portrait was in technicolor in a black and white film; but I never saw again anything to compare with the car which was bright red in a black and white setting through "Stepping Along". Apparently a lost art.

To this day I still have a few frames of film showing the red car, cut out from that production.

Other First National releases we played that term were new Richard Barthelmess films "The White Black Sheep" and "The Amateur Gentleman"; two more Ken Maynard westerns "The Unknown Cavalier" and "The Overland Stage", and two new Dorothy Mackaill pictures, "Convoy" and "The Lunatic at Large".

Another one which, I fancy, was rather delightful in its day, was a Graham-Wilcox release "Owd Bob", which starred Will Fyffe, Ralph Forbes and Red Wull, the dog. A British film, this one.

* * * * *

WANTED: Comic Cuts and The Jolly Comic, both 1930-39.

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The Postman Called

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

LEN WORMULL (Romford): I would like to say how much I am enjoying the Biography series. I had no idea that St. Dominic's had been filmed. My earliest memory of a school film was Young Woodley, played by Frank Lawton. He also played the part on the stage. About 1929-30 I would think, and probably a talkie. A mild love affair between Roger Woodley, prefect, and the Housemaster's wife. It results in him being removed from the school and losing his chance at Cambridge. I have a very faint memory of seeing the silent Sorrell and Son, with H. B. Warner and Nils Asther. The schooling of young Sorrell plays an important part in the story and St. Benedict's, to which he goes, was not unlike Highcliffe in the snob sense. A sound version was made in the mid-thirties, again with Warner in the lead, but this time with Hugh Williams as the son. Newcomer to films, Louis Hayward, also had a part.

JOHN McMAHON (Uddingston): Twelve years ago dear old Gerry Allison introduced me to the C.D., how often have I blessed him for this! What a comfort the C.D. is in this mad old world; what a pleasure it is, to read a magazine with no news of car bombs, pollution, redundancy, etc.

S. GORDON SWAN (Western Australia): I am late in commenting on the article, Mental Attic, by Ernest Holman, and may have been anticipated by others nearer to headquarters.

Donald Stuart's story of his play, "Mr. Midnight", appeared in UNION JACK, No. 1422, dated 17th January, 1931. The cover was a photographic portrait of Arthur Wontner as Sexton Blake. Perhaps Mr. Holman's recollection of a vivid green cover refers to the same author's "Green Jester", which was published in No. 1379, 22nd March, 1930.

As for the Sexton Blake record, "Murder on the Portsmouth Road", with Arthur Wontner again playing the great detective, I still have a copy of this, but can't remember when or where I acquired it.

MRS. M. CADOGAN (Beckenham): I must spring to the defence of

Miss Penelope Primrose and point out to your correspondent, Mr. Kadish, that her April Fool's protest recently published in C. D. was no muddle-headed missive. It is true that the odious Marcia was expelled from Cliff House in the middle of the nineteen thirties: however, in the very last Cliff House story ever published (apart from the Merlin reprints and the still-running comic strip in I. P. C.'s 'June') Marcia had obviously been re-instated, on the indisputable authority of Charles Hamilton himself. His hard-back book, BESSIE BUNTER OF CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL (published as late as 1949) shows Marcia continuing her unpleasant activities as a member of the Cliff House fourth form. Barbara Redfern has to give her the stern warning: "If there are any cats present, let them hereby take warning to keep their claws well inside their paws."

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Miss Bellew married and became Miss Hartley in the School Friend. But Miss Bellew was back in the post-war Cliff House. The wedding had been so secret that Chas. Hamilton had never heard of it. In the same way he had never heard of Mr. Linton's retirement in the Gem.)

C. LOWDER (London): Brief plaudits to Les Rowley, my favourite Hobby writer. He's always worth reading, but his series 'Through Other Eyes' is splendid stuff. He's not afraid of poking a little gentle fun at Hamilton and his characters, where others treat the stories as Holy Writ. Best so far, I think, was the Manager of Chunkley's Stores, which was right on the button, and very amusing. More, please.

H. TRUSCOTT (Huddersfield): There is absolutely no evidence that Langdon's business sense was bad, as far as the making of films was concerned. Your contributor assumes that only five of the six films were made, and in this he follows James Agee, who tacitly supports this view by referring only to five. But all six were made, within the time, two years, specified in the contract. Agee says, having referred to five out of six films, that First National then terminated the contract, implying that they were dissatisfied and did not allow Langdon to complete the contract. This has been repeated by other critics. Why do not these people ever check their copied texts before they copy them? First National did not terminate the contract; Langdon terminated it by completing it. The six films were "The Strong Man", "Tramp, Tramp,

Tramp", "Long Pants", "Three's a Crowd", "The Chaser", and "Heart Trouble". "The Chaser" is the one of which your contributor is not aware, apparently. I would have thought that getting the number of films called for in one's contract completed in the time allowed is pretty good producing. Like so many oft-repeated criticisms of this, that or the other artist, Langdon's "failure" as a producer is a myth. And of these six films, two, at least, "The Strong Man" and "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp", are admitted to be among the world's greatest screen comedies. The one I personally rate the finest of these six is "Heart Trouble". I have seen disparaging criticisms of this film by people who have never seen it!!! In my late teens and early twenties I saw this film some forty-five times, and therefore still know it pretty well.

(Eric Fayne replies: I have never read any work of James Agee, or, so far as I know, ever even heard of him. I have never read any work, either, in which it was suggested that Langdon only made 5 of the 6 films for which he was contracted. My observations were a purely personal inference, and it is a coincidence if other writers have come to the same conclusion. As our cinema was playing practically the whole of First National's output at that time, and we only played 5 Langdon films, it seemed likely that F.N. only released 5. Eighteen months later, when there were still some silent cinemas, but silent films were no longer being made, First National reissued their Langdon films. We gave them a second run ourselves, but, once again, there were only 5 - the same 5 which we had originally played.)

* * * * *
FOR SALE: Magnets Nos. 1460 to 1469 (condition varies from good to roughish), £2.60 for the 10 copies; No. 466 "In Hot Water" (without covers) 50p; Nos. 1467, 1491, 1492: 50p each. Boys' Cinema, Nos. 366 and 368 (1926-1927) good copies, 50p each; also No. 363 with torn corners, 15p. Rainbow Annual, 1935, 40p.
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News of the Clubs

MIDLAND

Usually the least popular of the year, the May meeting, which is also the AGM, was attended by ten members and proved to be a successful evening. After the usual soul searching, summing up and presentations of verbal bouquets, the tone of the proceedings could be described as one of quiet confidence and well worth the pilgrimage.

Everyone was delighted to find a young man at the helm - the new chairman is Warwick Setford; Ivan Webster has taken control of the strings of the club purse and Tom Porter was elected vice-chairman. The latter had once again delved deep into his collection to display an anniversary number (Magnet 1005 dated 21. 5. 27, Bunter the Bold) and a collectors item BFL, 1st Series, King Cricket by Charles Hamilton, published 1. 8. 13, an edited reprint of an earlier 1907 Boys' Realm story.

AGM matters all neat and tidy, the company settled to enjoy a reading from The Battle of the Beaks (1974 version) chapter 5, Trouble in the Formroom, by Warwick Setford.

Meetings (excluding August) 7.30 p.m., Dr. Johnson House, Birmingham.

NORTHERN

Saturday, 8th June, 1974

After the Library Session and general business we discussed the forthcoming Howard Baker publications. Members felt it was to be a rather exciting programme and hoped it would have the support of all readers.

Then a game in which we were all called upon to exercise our artistic talents. Each of us was given a slip of paper on which was written the title of a Magnet story which he had then to illustrate, and from the illustrations we had to guess the other titles! Order of merit was given to the artists in accordance with the number of those who

linked their efforts with the correct Magnet titles.

Tying in first place came Geoffrey Wilde, Mollie Allison and June Arden, each of their illustrations having been recognised by nine members.

There followed two readings by Geoffrey Good (inevitably, said Geoffrey, from *The Magnet*). The first, from the *Courtfield Cracksman* series, was about Bunter's adventure with Nugent's alarm clock (and a 'whopping' for the owl from Mr. Steele!) and the second from the *Wharton the Rebel* series in which Loder and Quelch discover that Wharton's crackers were the sort usually associated with butter and cheese!

- - -
LONDON

Members gathering at the High Summer meeting at Greyfriars, Wokingham, were very pleased to have Eric Fayne and Madam once again in attendance. Thus we had Eric conducting once again another game of his "Consequences", that original and amusing competition that covers the whole range of the hobby. The winners on this occasion were Bob Blythe, Josie Packman and Mary Cadogan, and each was awarded a souvenir of the occasion.

Eric Lawrence, conducted his "Cryptic" quiz and the winners were Josie Packman, Eric Fayne and Ben Whiter.

Mary Cadogan gave a treatise on the Mabel St. John character, Polly Green, who appeared in the pages of "Girls' Friend", "Girls' Reader", and "Girls' Home". How very versatile is our Mary!

Laurie Peters provided a good quiz and the winners were Ray Hopkins, Bob Blythe and Josie Packman.

A scrumptious tea was served by the hosts, Eric and Betty Lawrence, and with Madam performing the pouring of the tea, the excellent repast was greatly enjoyed. Afterwards the company adjourned to the garden for photographs.

Next meeting at 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, S. E. 22, on Sunday, 21st July. Hostess Josie Packman. Phone 693 2844.

Votes of thanks to Eric and Betty terminated a very enjoyable meeting.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

CAMBRIDGE

Meeting held 16th June. The Secretary reported that he has booked a stand for the Cambridge Leisure Fair on 26th August. Bill Lofts gave a talk on Comics, from Ally Sloper to post-war papers. He believed that comics in the later period were aimed at a more juvenile audience, instancing Puck of 1904 compared with Puck of 1930. The success of the Bruin Boys in Rainbow led to a spate of animal comic characters. A discussion followed over members' own memories, attention being drawn to the fine serials in the early "Chuckles".

The Secretary read a paper on adventure tales, pointing out the influence on later writers of such authors as Rider Haggard and Conan Doyle. He finished with a resume of Jack, Sam and Pete, in their hey-day among the most successful of A. P. stories. It was a pity that Clarke Hook did not stop them after 1914.

A discussion followed on Charles Hamilton's status as a writer. Deryck Harvey felt that E. S. Brooks was over-rated by some admirers. Bill Lofts said that while Hamilton was always courteous and helpful to correspondents, Brooks tended to be brusque and difficult. Bill Thurbon suggested this might be due to the fact that until the end Hamilton remained proud of his characters, while Brooks, when he reached hard-back status preferred to forget his boys' stories, and, in any case, was not the creator of Nelson Lee.

WANTED: MAGNETS 1661, 1666, 1670, 1671, 1672, 1673, 1676, 1679. SOL's 384, 390. Sale/Exchange: 57 loose copies Modern Wonder, 1937/8.

R. E. ANDREWS

80 GREENWOOD AVE., LAVERSTOCK, SALISBURY, WILTS.

BOUNDERESSES and BITCHES

Part One: At Cliff House School

by Mary Cadogan

When Herbert Vernon-Smith entered the portals of Greyfriars in 1910, he not only provided Charles Hamilton with inspiration for 'boulder' stories for the next three decades, but also, it seems, became a model for some of the writers of the girls' papers. AUGUSTA ANSTRUTHER-BROWNE, who came into the Cliff House saga in The School Friend in 1919 (though not a Charles Hamilton creation) shared with Vernon-Smith a double barrelled surname,

and a reckless personality. She smoked, played cards for money and broke bounds at night to attend local dances: also Augusta was not above the use of strong scent and face powder, and going around with a rather jazzy set of friends in fast cars. Defiant of all adult authority, she was aided and abetted by an unscrupulous father, who had managed at one time to get a hold over Miss Primrose. (Again, shades of the boulder's early days at Greyfriars when the Head, Dr. Locke, was under Mr. Vernon-Smith's thumb.) Augusta's main claim to fame was her vicious cutting off of Bessie Bunter's plait, and subsequent expulsion. Her father then immediately lost his fortune and Augusta, repentant, managed to return to Cliff House disguised, in the false name of Olive Wayne. By the simple expedient of cropping her hair, donning a pair of spectacles and twisting her ankle so badly that she developed an almost chronic limp, her transformation remained undetected by her former class-mates. It even survived the close confines of dormitory life, when presumably the spectacles had on occasions to be removed.

MARCIA LOFTUS, a Charles Hamilton 'baddie' who appeared in the first issue of *The School Friend*, was of the lank-haired, greasy-complexioned variety of sneak and toady: like her collaborator, Nancy Bell, she could always be relied upon to try and upset the exemplary applicarts of Barbara Redfern & Co. In the 1930's, when John Wheway was writing the Cliff House stories, he brought in LYDIA CROSENDALE and faded out Marcia and Nancy. Lydia, in common with the other female nasties, had 'cronies' rather than chums, and Freda Ferriens and Frances Frost connived in all her malicious schemes, for whatever pickings they could get from the rich Lydia by their fawning and flattering.

Lydia had the makings of an intriguing character - handsome, complex and wayward, as well as just plain bitchy! But by the middle of the nineteen thirties she had settled down into a very conventional and totally bad hat, to be superseded in the boulderess stakes by DIANA ROYSTON-CLARKE. Diana was a daredevil on the same lines as Vernon-Smith and Augusta Anstruther-Browne, even, as readers will note, sharing the same double barrelling of a commonplace surname, and a self-made, go-getting, extremely wealthy father, who managed to obtain power over all the Cliff House governors, and compromised dear, kindly Miss Primrose. Diana, like Herbert and Augusta, inherited her male parent's ruthlessness (bounders and boulderesses never seemed to have mothers) which she enhanced with a touch of finesse totally lacking in her father. She had slightly flamboyant, but fascinating taste in clothes - wearing those luscious 'thirties cape-sleeves and long, flared skirts: her platinum blonde hair waved back from a perfect oval face, and was tossed haughtily around in regular protest at restraining influences like staff and prefects. In common with Vernon-Smith she had a quick and uncertain temper, and was her own worst enemy: when goaded by what she considered to be the 'goody-goody' qualities of Babs & Co., Diana would flash her violet eyes alarmingly, and wildly dilate her nostrils. Also she had a strange habit of yelling 'Yoicks!' in moments of emotional stress or great exuberance. Like the Greyfriars boulder, she was sometimes a rival for the leadership of the form, prepared to dazzle or to buy her way when necessary, whether the object of her craving was the form-captaincy, a chance to break into films, to star in swimming galas or ice-shows, or to ride the finest and most famous horse in a gymkhana.

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