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VOLUME 33 NUMBER 389 MAY 1979

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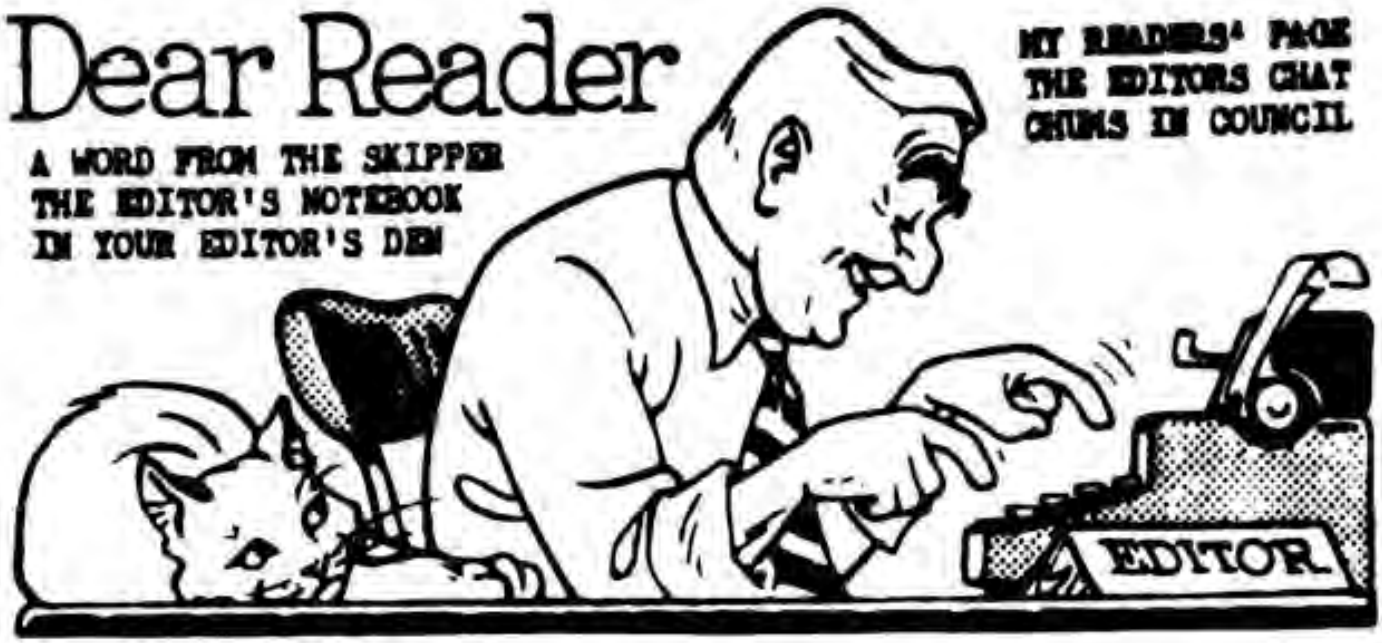

WATCH IT!

"Do you happen to know the time?" the charming lady asked me the other day as I walked down to the town. It is a question which, by an irony of fate, I seem to be constantly asked.

Turning pink, I gaze at a bare wrist for inspiration. I stammer that it would be nearly ten - it was ten to ten when I left home - and I feel acutely embarrassed. For I never wear a watch. I haven't worn a watch for countless years. Watches are meant to go - but they never go on me.

When I was a small boy, my father gave me a pocket watch. At

that time I wore a garment called a waistcoat. I have never worn one since. The watch was slipped into what was called, I think, a fob pocket. As I ran home from school, the watch hopped out my pocket, fell on the ground, and the glass was smashed.

Thoughtlessly, I put the watch back in my pocket. By the time I got home, both the hands had rubbed off in my pocket. In sorrow my father pointed out that it would have cost a bob or so for a new glass. But to have new hands fitted would cost many bobs.

That particular watch went - with a vengeance. But, down the years, wrist watches have never gone on me. It may be that I give off some form of electricity which stops the watch, or it could be that I wave my arms about a lot, or that I applaud too much at a show or a cricket match, and the watches don't like it. Long, long ago I gave up wearing watches.

The last one I bought was when I was playing for a Bunter show at the Shaftesbury Theatre, London. It was dark in the orchestra pit, and I needed to know the time as the show progressed. I bought a wrist watch with a luminous dial. It went all right, by the side of the piano, and served its purpose. It stopped when I fastened it round my wrist.

After the run of the show, I gave it to a youngster. Today he drives trains on the Southern Region when he isn't busy striking. I wonder whether, on him, the watch proved more reliable than the train service.

The most delightful "watch" story is "The Adventures of a Three-Guinea Watch" by Talbot Baines Reed. Full of contrivance and coincidence, it has charm for everybody who enjoys a bit of sentiment.

Tubby Muffin was given a watch by his Uncle Muffin for his work in getting a party of Rookwood boys on Uncle's floating boarding-house where they helped to capture a crook and police found loot, for which there was a substantial reward offered. Back at school, Muffin's watch disappeared. I think it was Jimmy Silver who pointed out that watches are made to go - and Muffin's went.

Billy Bunter also had a watch which disappeared. Maybe it was Bob Cherry who observed that it was not surprising that a rolled gold watch "rolled away".

ODD CURIO

One of the most extraordinary items in my collection is a book entitled "Strange Suspense Stories". The measurements are slightly above Magnet size; it has a paper cover on which the price 2/6 is printed; there are about 90 pages, unnumbered, and the quality of the paper is coarse. 95% of the contents comprise stories told in pictures, the sort of thing so beloved by modern students. The artists are not named, but the drawing strikes me as being quite good of its type.

There is, of course, nothing extraordinary in all that. What is remarkable is that the book contains two Wild West short stories, each featuring a character named Slick Dexter, written by Frank Richards. Both stories appear well up to the front of the book, and each is in very small type. They are typical Rio Kid material, and it is probable that Frank Richards touched up a couple of his old Ralph Redway yarns for the purpose.

On the last page, we are informed that the work is printed by the Racecourse Press of Hove for G.T. Ltd., S.E.1. I do not recall coming across either, before.

The book is a strange setting in which to find Hamilton writings, but many of us had the impression that in the post-war years all was grist which came to his mill.

ONE THOUGHT

None of my thoughts is important, I admit, but the same thought recurred three different times just before Easter. One was when I saw people buying hot-cross buns at 8p each. (It is only a very few years since I was expressing astonishment at such buns at 3p each. In six years their price has nearly trebled.)

Secondly, a recruiting advertisement for the police force, in a newspaper, "To join us you should be at least 172 cms tall", and, in brackets, apologetically (5' 8"). Anyone would think it was a recruiting notice for the Foreign Legion.

Finally, a notice in a men's outfitters: "Salesperson Wanted".

The unimportant thought: How daft can we get?

THE PRINCESS SNOWEE'S CORNER

Mr. Geoffrey Wilde writes to this corner:
"Jamie is highly sensible of the honour of a mention in your editorial columns, but asks me to point out that he is, in fact, still a youngster. It is not old age but genetic misfortune which is to blame for his affliction.

Jamie is not 'deaf' as usually understood. He belongs to that proportion of all-white cats whose nervous system has no hearing supply. His has always been a world totally without sound, though you would hardly guess it. He purrs, he has a wide vocabulary of miaows - and he knocks to be let in. And he is still learning new ways of communicating. You for one, Mr. Editor, will not be surprised to know that I talk to him constantly."

THE EDITOR

* *

Danny's Diary

MAY 1929

The Post Office has issued special stamps this month to mark the Universal Postal Union Congress which is being held this year in London. They look very smart on our letters and postcards.

The opening story in the Nelson Lee Library is entitled "Mutiny" and it is a sequel to the April Fool's Day story of some weeks ago. It is great fun. Nipper & Co. find out that a cranky food professor is going to give a lecture to the Moor View girls, and the boys think it a good chance to get even with the girls - but their plan comes unstuck. The following week was "The St. Frank's Menagerie". The menagerie is Willy Handforth's idea, but the animals escape, and Archie Glenthorpe wakes up to find a leopard purring on his bed.

Next week, "Handforth's Holiday Flirtation". It's the Whitsun Holiday and Handy falls in love with Margaret Winston, who turns out to be the unwilling member of a gang of thieves. Finally, the start of a new series. The first tale is "The St. Frank's School Train". Meals,

lessons, sleeping and even canings - all on a train. But, when it starts off, Handforth & Co. lose it, and have to chase it. The first tale is set mainly in Essex, though it ends in Suffolk. A neat idea, to catch those who love trains, and those who will like to see their own home towns mentioned in the series.

The start of this month was unusually windy, and on the 7th there was a terrific gale all over the south, with winds of 60 miles an hour. Much damage was done, and my Mum's hat was blown off.

The Ken King South Seas stories, in Modern Boy, have been just great this month. First story is "Keeper of the Pirate's Hoard" in which Krell, the rascally Dutchman, tries to blow up Ken King with dynamite, but blows himself up by accident. In the next week's tale "The Return of the Raiders", the pirates come back to the island where Ken is marooned. In "The Whip Hand" the following week, the young skipper holds his own against the pirate gang.

Final story of the month is "To the Rescue of Ken King". Kit Hudson sets out to search the lonely Pacific Ocean in search of his old friend, and succeeds in finding him and rescuing him.

All the month in The Modern Boy, there have been glowing advertisements for a new cricket serial which is being written by Walter Hammond, the 25 year old Gloucestershire and England cricketer. It is to be called "Cloyne of Claverhouse" and it starts as a serial next week, in June.

At the pictures this month we have seen Dorothy Gish in "Tip-Toes"; Betty Balfour in "Monkeynuts"; Ronald Colman and Vilma Banky in "Two Lovers"; Milton Sills in "Burning Daylight"; Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell in "Street Angel"; Richard Barthelmess in "The Noose". One of our cinemas has gone talkie and opened with Al Jolson in "The Singing Fool" which was on for a fortnight. Mum and I went to see it - it is only part-talking - but we like the silent pictures better with a nice orchestra. Mum says that talkies are only a craze like pogo-sticks, and won't last.

With the start of the month in the Magnet, the wonderful series about Hollywood ended. It has run for 16 weeks, and I think it must be the Magnet's longest series ever. The last tale is "Farewell to the Films". Myron Polk makes one last attempt on the life of Harry

Wharton - and Wharton returns good for evil, so the two part friends at the end. I am going to miss this marvellous series such a lot.

It was a terrible anti-climax to be back at Greyfriars next week, and what made it even worse, the remaining stories were not written by the real Frank Richards. I don't begrudge him his holiday, after the wonderful Hollywood series. "The Masked Terror" brought in Sir William Cherry (I didn't know that Bob Cherry had a bart for an uncle) and a masked stranger with a gun. "Billy Bunter's Blunder" was in using his ventriloquism to cause trouble between Mr. Quelch and the Rev. Lambe. It was a good idea, and the real Frank has used it sometimes. Quite a good tale. Finally, Fisher T. Fish was "The Shylock of Greyfriars".

The King has left Bognor at the end of his convalescence, and has gone to Windsor Castle. He has personally ordered that in future the seaside town shall be named Bognor Regis. What a lovely idea!

In the Gem the first story is "Friendship or Duty?" and it is the final tale in a series about Tom Merry as school captain.

Next "A Traitor in the School" in which Gordon Gay becomes a pupil at St. Jim's. The theme continues next week in "Condemned by the School". Last of the month is "The Boy Who Wanted the Sack" in which Gay leaves St. Jim's and goes back to the Grammar School.

They are giving away coloured cards - Marvels of the Future - in the Gem. One of them is a steam railway train which does 200 miles an hour.

In the Schoolboys' Own Library I have had "The Bounder of Greyfriars" which is tip-top, and "His Own Enemy" which ran as a serial in the Gem not long ago and was not by the real Owen Conquest.

The Rio Kid is going great guns in the Popular. In "A Night of Peril" the Kid stays for the night in an inn in the Mexican mountains, and meets great peril. Next "The Bandolero". He is Rafael Gonzago, a bandit who rules the mountain passes with a rod of iron - till the Kid comes along. Next "The House of Don Balthazar", another wonderful tale set in Mexico.

Also in the Popular are the Len Lee series of St. Jim's; the Rookwood series where Mr. Greely sets up his own school, sponsored by Hansom's father; a Greyfriars series about a treasure in the vaults

and a new games coach named Blagden who is after it; and a St. Frank's holiday series about Castaway Island.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 99, "The Bounder of Greyfriars" comprised two stories from the Magnet of April 1911, starring Vernon-Smith and the Cliff House girls. There was plenty of cricket in the second tale. The first story was originally "The Greyfriars Wheelers" and the second (a fortnight later) was "Last Man In". Typical Bounder stuff of early days and first-rate reading. Though both tales lost a chapter or two, the welding made an excellent story. "His Own Enemy", S.O.L. No. 100, was a sub tale serialised in the Gem, starring Mornington, and had not much to recommend it. Whoever wrote "Cloyne of Claverhouse", it was almost certainly NOT Wally Hammond. An article on "Cloyne", plus our editorial comments on the matter, can be found in the C.D. Annual for 1965. "Cloyne of Claverhouse" was re-published anonymously, some years after it was serialised in Modern Boy.)

* *

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

I do hope you will all enjoy the article by James Hodge, a newcomer to our Sexton Blake Circle. His humorous style of writing is just what we need to brighten up our rather dreary existence. Of course by the time you read this maybe the weather will have changed and we can get out into our gardens for a bit of exercise in the sun. I also hope you will like Mr. Swan's latest article as it definitely has a link with our Sexton Blake and the author Cicely Hamilton. She did indeed write quite a number of Union Jack tales the first appearing in 1906. We are indebted to Mr. Swan for once again reminding us about the ladies in our Sexton Blake Saga.

FORGOTTEN STORY

by S. Gordon Swan

It has been my privilege recently to acquire a book called "Theodore Savage" by Cicely Hamilton (published by Leonard Parsons of Devonshire Street, London, in May 1922). This author, as Sexton Blake fans know, was the first woman to write stories of the great detective in the early years of this century and has several Union Jacks to her credit. She also wrote numerous tales for boys in the old periodicals under the name of Max Hamilton. In Messrs. Lofts' and Adley's book her first name is given as "Cecily", but on the title page and cover of this particular novel it is spelt "Cicely".

Although I was in England when this story was published I must admit I had never heard of it before. Presumably it has been long forgotten yet it is worthy of resurrection, for its message is peculiarly applicable to today's troubled world. Below the title is the description "A Story of the Past or the Future".

Definitely in the category of science fiction, it is the story of a future war which in some respects was prophetic of World War 2. I don't know if Cicely Hamilton lived long enough to see that holocaust but the graphic accounts of death from the air and the destruction caused by fire-bombs is grimly reminiscent of the blitz. True, the ultimate devastation she envisaged did not come about in the last war, but it could do so in a future war -- if it did not destroy mankind completely.

Theodore Savage, a civil servant, was in the North of England, separated from the girl he loved, when refugees began pouring northwards from the stricken south. Bands of starving people fought like wild beats to get food and no man or woman was safe. Theodore himself became a refugee when the camp in which he was stationed was bombed out of existence and he fled to a secluded spot, accompanied by a Cockney girl who had attached himself to him.

Civilisation as we know it had collapsed; there were no newspapers and there was no means of knowing what was going on elsewhere. Theodore lived by hunting and fishing; the girl Ada was little help, being town-bred and always bemoaning the vanished world of trams and cinemas. Inevitably their relationship developed into that of man and wife, despite their mismatched characters.

When it became evident that Ada was to have a child, Theodore set out to find help. After his discovery of deserted villages and devastated country he came upon a small community living under primitive conditions. He explained his needs but they were suspicious of his motives, as they often had skirmishes with rival communities. He was asked what his occupation had been before the Ruin -- if he had been a scientist or could make machines. He was tempted to lie about this and proclaim that he had been more than a mere clerk, but decided to tell the truth.

It was fortunate that he chose to do this: had he admitted scientific knowledge the community would have put him to death, for

science and knowledge were blamed for the Ruin that had come upon the earth. He was compelled to give an oath that he would forswear all knowledge and memory of the old ways and then was admitted into the community. His wife was brought down to live with him and his children grew up in ignorance. The achievements of the lost world passed into legend: bombing planes became the fiery dragons of folk-lore and the new generation regarded these things as we regard the myths of the ancient world.

This is only a bare outline of a book of profound thought and wisdom - solid reading, for there is a minimum of dialogue -- but a book too good to be neglected. It deserves reprinting.

"THE BEST IS YET TO BE?" by James Hodge

I have just finished reading six Blake stories, one after another. The devotee of this column will stir irritably, lift an eyebrow, shrug a shoulder and cast a justifiably smug eye at the massed ranks of Union Jacks, Detective Weeklies and S.B. Librarys upon his bookshelf.

Exhausted by these contortions, he will yawn and mutter "So what?"

Dear devotee, I will tell you "So what". Will you allow me to draw your attention to a few words of mine in 'Blakiana' for June 1978. You will no doubt remember the item; not for its literary quality, alas, but rather because you will recall snorting at the time "What the devil is Josie Packman thinking about to waste time on this rubbish?"

The same thought may, it is true, be occurring to you again now. Nevertheless, like the sixty-a-day man who has just given it up, I am insisting on telling you all about it. You will remember, there was this H.B. facsimile "Crime at Christmas" sitting on my bookshelf, not opened since the day I bought it second-hand.

Then, on several dark February evenings of this year, when the wind whistled eerily through the skeletal TV aerial and the driven snow clogged the plastic guttering of my ancestral semi-detached, I made my first aquaintance with Sexton Blake, Tinker, Mrs. Bardell, Splash Page, Inspector Coutts and an engaging villain named Waldo the Wonderman.

I am not going to give away my age but for those who love a mystery to unravel (and you most likely would not be reading this column

if you did not), let me say this -- if I live to the year of Big Brother I shall have only to hang on twelve months more to qualify for my Old Age Pension. From one point of view it is, perhaps, late in the day to start wearing an "I Like Blake" badge in my lapel, also, to afficianados like yourselves, a Johnny-Come-Lately like me who can only thus far claim so slender an aquaintance with the Saga may seem a subject more for pity than congratulation.

Yet, my friends, perhaps I have something now which so many of you have no longer. You have for so long sipped the nectar and supped on the honey and, though the taste has never and likely will never stale, you HAVE grown accustomed to it. For me, the delights are still to come, my journey of discovery is only just beginning. All those golden years are yet untravelled country to me, wherein I have still to meet all those authors and characters you know so well and write of so knowledgeably.

I am not an Hamilton defector. For me Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood will always be my first love. Yet few of us ever marry our first love, though it always retains a special place in our hearts.

For me, then, you 'Blakeophiles' may agree that "The Best is Yet To Be". I understand that the Great Man's adventures span in excess of eighty years; that's a great past and, for me, I think he's got a great future. I have a lot of catching-up to do; Mrs. Packman, dear lady, I understand you have facilities for those wishing to borrow ....

S. GORDON SWAN writes:

Christopher Lowder's article, "By No Means Teed" makes the point that early issues of the N. L. L. are very hard to obtain.

The two stories he mentions, No. 73, "Blue Diamonds" and No. 92, "The Man Hunters", were fine examples of Teed at his best. I have never read No. 18, "The Case of the Duplicate Key", but the quotations from it definitely illustrate that Teed never wrote it. The final paragraph written in the present tense is very un-Teed-like, and more likely to have been written by Norman Goddard, and is still more reminiscent of one who followed in his footsteps, John Bobin, a writer who later modernised his style.

As regards U. J. 1291, "The Legion of the Lost", I still maintain that J. N. Pentelow could have written it. It was published in 1928, and in 1927 two stories by Pentelow were included in the Sexton Blake Library, 2nd Series, No. 95, "The Three Masked Men", and No. 101, "The Cleopatra's Needle Mystery". However, authorship of "The Legion of the Lost" may be determined one day.

Geoffrey Wilde's query respecting Boys' Friend Library No. 523, "The Eye of the Dragon", (published April 1936) is one that unfortunately I am unable to answer, though by now someone else may have provided the solution. In the nineteen-thirties many Sexton Blake stories were reprinted as Nelson Lees or Ferrers Lockes and I did not bother to keep them because I had the originals. "The Eye of the Dragon" may well have been one of these but I cannot recall whence it was derived. Often these "deBlakinised" yarns were marred by leaving in the names of Blake or Tinker instead of substituting Lee and Nipper or Locke and Drake.

* *

Nelson Lee Column

"THOUGHTS ON VICTOR GUNN" by C. H. Churchill

When recently browsing through the list of novels by E.S.B. (under the pen-name of Victor Gunn) in Bob Blythe's Bibliography of his writings, I was struck by one or two oddities. Of the 42 titles listed quite a few were re-written from stories published earlier in the Thriller, D.W., U.J. and Dixon Hawke with two from the N.L. 2nd new series. It seems that Mr. Brooks sought around rather a lot in trying to find suitable material for re-writing.

Most of the first dozen or so were in three parts, that is they consisted of three entirely separate adventures of Inspector Bill Cromwell. This is understandable, being re-written from mainly the D.W. and the U.J. Two of the full-length novels were each re-written from one N.L. 2nd new series, so they must have been greatly lengthened from the original stories.

Considering the number of single detective adventures (apart from any series such as the Green Triangle, etc.), that E.S.B. wrote for the early Lees it seems odd that only one was used for re-writing as a Victor Gunn novel. That was old series No. 96, "The Vengence of Parteb Singh" one of the Nipper's Note Book series of single stories. It was included as the middle part of "Road to Murder" and was almost word for word with the original N.L. story except, of course, that Cromwell and Lister were substituted for Nelson Lee and Nipper. Naturally, too, Johnny Lister's racing car took the place of Lee's motor bike and side-car. The other two parts of this novel came from the D.W.

Bob Blythe shews that "Nice Day for a Murder" was re-written from Dixon Hawke, No. 301, "The Circle of Silence" published in 1931. I believe, however, that this story originally appeared in the N. Lee 2nd new series, No. 10, "The Fateful Wager" in March 1930. I do not have a copy of this Lee in my possession but read it years ago and feel sure I am right.

All the remainder of these Victor Gunn stories are originals and excellent they are, and in my view all the better for being one long continuous story instead of three smaller ones.

My favourite of all is "Nice Day for a Murder" as it portrays the irascible Bill Cromwell in conflict with an unpopular early colleague of his, "Baldy" Ingles. Reading of the interplay between these two characters is highly entertaining.

BROOKS AT HIS BEST

by R. J. Godsave

An unusual feature of a series written by E. S. Brooks in the Nelson Lee Library in early 1922 was the introduction of two new scholars for the Remove, a protege of Dr. Stafford who eventually became a Removite, and an adult who became one of the great characters in the Lee saga. In addition, the newly formed St. Frank's Cadet Corps made an important appearance. As a crowning piece to this series the wonderful drawings of St. Franks as seen from various angles by E. E. Briscoe were included in Nipper's Magazine.

Of the juniors, the most important was Archie Glenthorne who was introduced in o.s. No. 352, "The Coming of Archie". With his valet Phipps they were to enliven the pages of the Nelson Lee with those conversations between them which are generally thought to be modelled on those of Bertie Wooster and Jeeves, P. G. Woodhouse's creations.

The other junior was Enoch Snipe, an unprepossessing boy whose appearance was very much against him. His back was somewhat hunched, he had a long neck and a head that projected with a habitual foxy expression with red-rimmed watery eyes. He soon earned the nick-name of the 'Worm'.

Dr. Stafford's protege was a boy around 15 years of age who pushed the Headmaster away from a falling tree during a severe gale which did much damage to the Ancient House Remove dormitory. He

was, at that time, known as John Martin and lived rather unhappily with a Mr. Jenkins in Caistowe. From enquiries made by Dr. Stafford he was really the son of old John Willard who had built a partly finished edifice on the island in the River Stowe. He died before he could finish the building which was locally known as Willard's Folly. Although he had been a fairly big landowner he appeared to have died penniless.

It was Nipper's suggestion that the Cadets could camp on Willard's island which was taken up by the school authorities who promised to give all the camping equipment required. Had not this suggestion been agreed it would have meant thirty boys being sent to Yexford College until repairs to the Ancient House had been completed. As it was the Cadets could attend lessons at St. Frank's in the usual way. With Handforth as sergeant the Cadet Corps was in danger of emulating 'Fred Karno's Army' although with Nipper as C.O. this danger did not happen.

With flooded ground and swollen river caused by the gale, Nipper & Co. together with Handforth and Co. rescued a box floating by the island during a boating trip around the island. They also rescued two seafaring men who had been marooned up a tree which was sticking up from the river. The box was found to contain a message and clues of a treasure from old John Willard. Unfortunately, the men together with a Mr. Hudson, who was young John Willard's uncle, was also after the treasure. How the Cadets were turned off the island by the steward of the Glenthorne estate, and how Archie Glenthorne rose to the occasion which allowed the Cadets to return, makes good reading.

After much trouble from Hudson & Co. Nelson Lee was able to solve the clues from the rescued box and John Willard inherited a considerable fortune which enabled him to return to St. Frank's as a paying pupil.

This was a series of much action and variety into which E. S. Brooks put his very best efforts in the making.

* *

SALE: Greyfriars Holiday Annuals (originals), 1925, 1926, 1931, 1939. Every Boys' Hobby Annual 1927. Blackies Boys' Annual, Wodehouse's "Jeeves & Feudal Spirit", "B.B. & Blue Mauritius".

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 155 - Holiday Annual for 1926

There is a fascination and charm about the early Holiday Annuals, brought about largely by copious illustrations and supporting material like poems and chatty articles about Hamiltonian schools, as well as Billy Bunter's Annual that appeared as a separate item in the centre of the volume. Unfortunately the stories themselves were often second-rate in quality and many were by substitute writers, which means that beneath the glitter there was a good deal of dross. The 1926 Annual was not, perhaps, the best of them all, but it had some worthy component parts that merit consideration.

The minor items were not too auspicious. A tale of St. Katie's by Michael Poole is not everyone's cup of tea, nor are Sidney Drew's tales of Gan Waga. A school story by P. G. Wodehouse added a touch of class, but alas it was only two chapters. The Rookwood item was, as it so often happened, a substitute story, which was a little surprising since there were then ten years of Rookwood stories available for reprinting. There was a genuine Cedar Creek story, with the seasonable title "Snowbound".

It was Greyfriars and St. Jim's, however, that really kept the flag flying. A reprinted tale about Wibley impersonating Mr. Eugenio Mobbs and caning Ponsonby & Co. provided a humorous touch, whilst the St. Jim's reprint was that rather curious story of an anonymous letter of insults sent to Mr. Linton; the handwriting expert who was called in had no hesitation in identifying Grundy as the author when he was in fact innocent, but Dr. Holmes had such faith in the expert that Grundy was sentenced to be flogged.

The 1926 Annual was undoubtedly distinguished by the two stories specially written by Charles Hamilton, both of which were slightly unusual in that an element of fantasy was allowed to creep in each. "The Schemer of St. Jim's" was about Glyn's invention of a Death Ray, told with no little amusement, but still hovering on the verge of science fiction. "Lucky for Parkinson" was about that studious Removite, destined to win a Balliol scholarship, but really desirous of playing in the Greyfriars football team against Rookwood. He sat disconsolately in

his study reading in German the story of Peter Schlemihl who was haunted by the Man in Grey offering untold treasures in return for a signature in blood. Suddenly the study was filled with a bluish light - and Parkinson got his wish, scoring fifty goals for Greyfriars in one match! It need hardly be added that the Man in Grey did not carry off Parkinson, but one thing is certain: he was never heard of again in any other Greyfriars story!

* *

ECHOES ON "BESSIE"

LES ROWLEY: The point you make about Hamilton being unwise to create Bessie Bunter is a very valid one. After my sister had finished reading her School Friends they were passed to me to keep me occupied after I had read the Magnet of the week. My feeling then was that I had had a surfeit of Bunters and could well have done without the young lady. I know that my sister thought that Bessie spoilt the stories and it was largely for this reason that the Schoolgirls' Own replaced the School Friend as my sister's choice a couple of years later.

The girls of Cliff House, Bessie included, have had a more enduring existence as 'incidental' characters in the stories of Greyfriars and it is possible, I suppose, that this increased the number of girl readers for the Magnet. Be that as it may, W. G. Bunter was too much Bunter for me and I could have done without either his brother or his sister. It was nice, however, to have the more attractive young ladies around.

ESMOND KADISH. As far as Cliff House is concerned, I agree that Charles Hamilton's writing is rather stilted, he had after all, a typical Edwardian attitude to girls and women, and tended to place them on the pedestal that was reserved for the "fair sex" until "unfeminine" behaviour lost them due regard. He was still calling Clara Trevlyn "Miss Clara" as late as 1937!

Bessie is, indeed, in many ways, a carbon copy of her brother, and yet there are times, in Mr. Hamilton's stories, when she develops an appeal of her own. That 1935 or '36 picture by Leonard Shields of Bessie jammed in the window of the woodshed, with Miss Bellew pulling and "The Bull" pushing, shows a situation which I personally, found funnier than I would have done if Billy had been there instead - although I haven't actually worked out why.

Certainly Bessie appears rather shrewder in Mr. Hamilton's writings than she does in some of the later "substitute" stories in the "School Friend". Billy is always obtuse and insensitive, but has his own brand of cunning, whereas Bessie, in some of the "School Friend" stories of the late 'twenties is given lines to say which make her appear almost intellectually sub-normal.

So, please give my congratulations to Miss Bunter on the occasion of her sixtieth birthday. I would have sent her a hamper, but I understand that Miss Bullivant has put her on a strict diet to get her weight down - so bad luck, Bessie!

W. O. G. LOFTS: Charles Hamilton unfortunately never wrote his side of the Cliff House affair, and my own lengthy writings in the past in the S.P.C. and C.D. columns have been mainly views expressed by School Friend and Schoolgirl editors, and writers of the Bessie Bunter stories. Certainly I'm inclined to agree that the full story will now never be told. I'm at a loss to understand for instance of why Hamilton was so incensed with the whole affair, when it was the Magnet editor who stopped him writing for The School Friend. Yet he speaks of such glowing terms about him in his Autobiography! Mr. C. M. Down told me this himself in a personal interview some years ago. Personally I did not mind the introduction of the Cliff House girls in the Magnet tales - though like most boys I never had a crush on Marjorie Hazeldene! A point missed is that the original Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School was written for the Boys' Friend Library in 1918, and this gave Reg. Eves the idea of The School Friend. These tales were later used in School Friend Nos. 9 and 11. Information supplied only a few years ago suggests that Stanley Austin also wrote some Cliff House stories - which would be worth reading, if located.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Mr. Lofts's point that Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School was originally written for the Boys' Friend Library of 1918 is interesting, and I had not heard it before. I find it difficult to believe, though, that the story eventually became Nos. 9 and 11 of the School Friend. More likely, I would think, that the story became Nos. 1 and 2.)

* *

REVIEWS

TOM MERRY'S BEST

Martin Clifford
(Howard Baker: £4.95)

Here is another St. Jim's treasure to add to your bookcase. It comprises eight Gems from late 1935 and early 1936. That, of course, was in the middle period of the reprints, and the stories come from the later Golden Age of the blue Gem. Each yarn is superb in its own way, and this collection provides splendidly varied reading.

With one exception, all the stories originally appeared in late 1912 and early 1913. The exception was "The Kidnapped Headmaster" (originally entitled "Held to Ransom" in late 1911), and it was entirely through me that it was reprinted in March 1936. I got in touch with Mr. Down about it - not on account, I must confess, of any special quality in the story, for I had never read it - but because it seemed a pity that items from the Golden Age should be omitted. Mr. Down replied that he would have it looked up and would use it, and, of course, it eventually appeared, long out of sequence. It is, in fact, an excellent little thriller, with Dr. Holmes kidnapped by gangsters, though they may not have been called that in 1911.

"The Plot Against Tom Merry" (originally entitled "The Prefect's Plot" in the autumn of 1912) is one of my favourite blue Gems. The prefect is one, Bingham, who was created for this one story as expulsion-fodder. He was expendable. There is a delightful sequence in the tale in which Miss Fawcett sees the Headmaster to protest against the expulsion of Tom Merry.

(For the interest of those who may happen to follow the Slade stories in the C.D. Annual, "The Prefect's Plot" was the story brought to Mr. Buddle's mind in "The Everslade Empire" of a year or two ago.)

"D'Arcy, the Tec" (originally named "Hard Times" in November 1912) is an amusing story. The chums of Study No. 6 are stony, and Gussy becomes a detective to earn some money. It is one of the funniest tales Hamilton ever wrote. (Once again, Mr. Buddle fans may recall that it was the memory of this lovely old Gem story which caused Mr. Buddle to laugh in church, in the middle of the Head's sermon, in one of the earlier Buddle stories.)

"St. Jim's on the Warpath" (originally "At Grips With The Grammarians" in very early 1913) is a story of rivalry with Rylcombe Grammar School, and will appeal to those who like a light frolic.

I am taking the stories in their original chronological order, which now brings us to a magnificent pair of holiday adventure yarns, concerning a treasure hidden in an Adriatic Island. These are, "Clue to a Fortune" and "The Treasure of Santa Maria" (entitled respectively "Tom Merry's Discovery" and "The St. Jim's Adventurers" at Easter 1913). In later years, they would have made a series of a dozen issues, and they are none the worse for being a compact bit of adventure in 1913 and 1936.

The man with the secret of the treasure was named Marco Frulo in 1913, and for some quite inexplicable reason he became Maro Lugui in 1936. I have often puzzled as to why the change was made. Both stories were long, and the first one lost a chapter or two in the 1935 reprint. The second one, fortunately, ran cover to cover in 1936, and so we had the whole thing. A treat for everyone.

Next the clumsily titled "Getting Even with Ratty" (named "The Scamps of the School" in the Spring of 1913). A delicious tale, and always a great favourite of mine.

Finally "Tom Merry's Great Jape" (entitled "At the Eleventh Hour" in the autumn of 1913) which was unusual in having Mr. Lathom well to the fore. (This is yet a third story which Mr. Buddle recalled for some reason or other in an Annual tale named "The Spirit of Slade".)

Altogether, a splendid collection for the St. Jim's enthusiast. Apart from the first of the treasure hunt stories, the pruning is insignificant and nothing is spoiled.

What will strike the average reader, I fancy, is how much better the abstract, and often charming, titles of the blue Gem were than the new ones supplied, for no good reason at all, to the same tales in the mid-thirties. Another thought, which comes to any reader of stories from the blue Gem, is that so many of the tales would have been extended into lengthy series in later years. The compact nature of the plots made the Gem a smash-hit success in the days when the tales first appeared.

BILLY BUNTER'S OWN (Howard Baker: £4.95)

This is an "Annual" type volume, with a varied collection of delicious items. There

are three white-covered Magnets. One of them, the top of this bill in all likelihood, is "The Hero of Greyfriars" from the spring of 1916. The theme is slightly hackneyed, in that an impostor - in this case, Billy Bunter - steals the kudos due to the real hero - in this case, Bob Cherry - who saved Sir Hilton's niece from being run over by a train. It is the classic story in which Bunter draws up a bill of "damages" for Sir Hilton - "Eton jacket soiled by contact with tender." It was magnificent fun in its day, and still has lots of charm.

There are two typical Coker tales: "Coker's Conscript" from Easter 1916, and "Catching Coker" from the summer of 1919.

"Mornay's Master-Stroke" is an original Rookwood tale, lifted from the 1924 Holiday Annual.

Mary Cadogan contributes a happy article "Those Endearing Young Charmers" which serves to introduce No. 2 of "The School Friend" of 1919, the second of the four stories which Hamilton wrote for the paper. Dodshon's pictures will touch plenty of sentimental hearts.

Once again we have a Nelson Lee Library blown up in size to Magnet proportions - and extremely well done, one might add. A boon to the possessors of eyes which have seen a lot of service. The story is "The Mystery of the Poisoned River", an excellent 1928 single which, incidentally, was the first St. Frank's tale I ever read. Years later, it was run as a short serial in the Gem. A novel yarn.

There are two consecutive Gems, from the autumn of 1937 - "Skimpole the Benevolent" and "Skimpole's Scrape". These two tales were from the blue Gem of late 1915, when they were entitled "Skimpole's Windfall" and "The Last Hope". By the end of 1915, the blue Gem was long past its zenith, but these two connected tales are among the best of the period. Skimpole gets a cheque for £20 as a reward for an article in "The Flying Times", Like a good socialist, he spends the money on the poor as well as on the spongers. Then it turns out that he has received the money by mistake, and he has to pay it back. So, in the second tale, Tom Merry & Co. get up a "benefit" for Skimpole. Good fun, a neat and original plot, and good entertainment.

All told, we congratulate Billy Bunter for his own selection for our enjoyment.

* *

Electric Trams, Muffin Men, Iron Hoops - and a story that was new way back early in the Century

THE MISADVENTURES OF MARMADUKE

Marmaduke was still continuing his victorious career. Everyone he met shrieked and fled. He was bewildered and enraged. Boots and other articles were hurled at him, and he was hurt. He did not know in the least where he was going, and he found himself soon as the door of the house-dame's room.

Mr. Taggles was there, explaining to Mrs. Tuffy the awful apparition he had met in the corridor, and the dame was listening with sniffs of disbelief . .

"A norful sight!" said Taggles. "Fancy a objeck six feet 'igh, with a face like a corpus, and flaming eyes, and breathing fire --"

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Tuffy. "You have been drinking, Taggles!"

"I haven't touched a drop for more'n hour, Mrs. Tuffy. There was fire coming out of its mouth and nostrils, and it was shrieking like one o'clock. Hellup! There it is!"

Mrs. Tuffy turned a startled glance to the door. There was Marmaduke, and the house-dame gave one look at him and fell in a faint.

There was a shout in the passage. Marmaduke fled again, but this time he ran into a strong pair of arms which closed on him. He struggled and kicked wildly.

"Quiet, you young ass!" said the voice of Kildare. "What are you playing this silly game for, frightening the maids?"

"Let me go!"

The captain of St. Jim's dragged Marmaduke into the light, and a crowd collected round him.

"What is it?" gasped Darrell.

"It's that new kid" Kildare said, shaking Marmaduke violently. "Smythe, how dare you play this silly trick? Answer me at once.

"I don't know what you're talking about," yelled Marmaduke. "I believe everybody in this school has gone mad. I won't stay here to be insulted. Let me go."

"How did you get into that state?"

"What state?"

"Don't you know the state your face is in?"

"You let my face alone. It's nothing to do with you."

Kildare's expression changed.

"I fancy he doesn't know what's the matter," he said. "Somebody must have fixed him up like this, though I don't see how it could be done without his knowing it."

"It's all right, Kildare," said Blake, who had just arrived on the spot. "He's been asleep in our study, and somebody painted him while he was sleeping."

The captain looked at him sternly.

"Your handiwork, Blake, I suppose?"

"No, Kildare, honour bright. It gave me an awful shock when I came in and found him looking at me over the top of a chair. I thought it was a goblin."

Marmaduke was beginning to feel alarmed. He twisted himself loose from Kildare's grip and rushed to the nearest glass. He staggered back in affright at what he saw reflected therein.

"Cheer up, Marmy!" said Blake. "It's only someone been painting you while you were asleep. Don't mind me smiling."

"This is an outrage!" gasped Marmaduke. "I will complain. I will not stay in this school."

"Don't be a fool!" said Kildare grimly. "Go and get that paint cleaned off your face. It's a practical joke, that's all."

The captain walked away. He went to the housemaster's room and explained that Marmaduke had been a victim, and Mr. Kidd, who had carefully selected a nice, strong cane, put it away again.

It took Marmaduke some time to

get all Kerr's handiwork off his features. He scrubbed at it, in a fury, vowing vengeance the while. He believed that it was Blake who had painted him, and it was upon the leader of Study No. 6 that he vowed vengeance.

. . . . .

The next day Marmaduke made his appearance in the Fourth Form. He had come downstairs sore and savage. The breakfast of the Juniors was not much to his fastidious taste, and afterwards, having still a cavity to fill, he had gone to sample some of the eatables packed in his box.

He was munching contentedly while the rest of the Fourth marched into the Form-room, and a couple of boys were sent to hunt for him. Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form, looked at him sternly as he came in between Mellish and Herries, a helpless prisoner.

"Where have you been, Smythe?"

"In the dormitory," growled Marmaduke.

"What have you been doing?"

"Eating."

"Eating when you should have been in form! What do you mean by this conduct?"

Marmaduke made no reply.

"Do you not know when to appear in Form?" asked Mr. Lathom mildly. "Were you not told?"

"Yes."

"You should call me sir!"

"Sir!" snarled Marmaduke. "I wanted something to eat. The grub here is beastly. Nothing like I have been used to."

"Sir!" snapped Mr. Lathom. He was a good-tempered little man, but Marmaduke was trying.

"Sir!" said Marmaduke.

He sat down at a desk. He listened, as the lesson went on, in mingled ill-temper and uneasiness. The Head has been unwilling to put a boy of his age in the Third. Dr. Holmes had explained things to Mr. Lathom, who was prepared to take a great deal of trouble for Marmaduke's sake. The difficulty was that Marmaduke himself wasn't prepared to take any.

When the lesson was over Marmaduke went straight to the school gate and climbed over. Just as he put his leg over the top, there was a shout in the quadrangle.

"Hi, there! Come down, you young himp!"

It was Taggles, the porter. Marmaduke took no notice. He scrambled over the gate, and in a minute more he was running down the road towards Rylcombe.

(Another instalment of this Old, Old Story next month.)

* *

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Mr. Stan Knight's new address is 36 Overbrook Drive, Cleevemount Estate, Cheltenham, Glos., GL52 3HR. (Note: This address is for correspondence only.)

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 62. LADY IN THE LAKE

Our opening feature came from Warner Bros. this term, with the sinister Sidney Greenstreet in "The Verdict". A coloured cartoon was "When I Yoo-Hoo" and a three Stooges comedy had the awful title "They Stooge to Conga".

Next week, from M.G.M., brought Van Johnson and June Allyson in "High Barbaree" with a Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon "Trap Happy".

The following week, also from M.G.M., had Robert Montgomery as the star attraction in "Lady in the Lake" from a novel by Raymond Chandler. This was a very unusual film in that the whole story was told from the view of the hero of the tale. It meant that the only time we saw the hero was when his reflection happened to be caught in a mirror in a room or reflected in the glass of a shop window. It seemed a bit of a waste of a handsome young star like Robert Montgomery. I did not care a lot for the film, I seem to recall. As the story was told and photographed it was a novelty, but, so far as I know, it was an experiment never tried in any other film. A coloured cartoon was "Henpecked Hoboes".

Next week, from Warner Bros., came Ida Lupino in "The Man I Love". There was a big supporting bill which included two 2-reel comedies and a coloured cartoon "Mysto Fox".

Then, from M.G.M., Marshall Thompson in "Gallant Bess" in Cinecolor. A film about a horse, I fancy, and bound to be popular. A coloured Droopy cartoon was "North-West Hounded Police".

The following week our main attraction came from M.G.M. and was Walter Pidgeon and Claudette Colbert in "The Secret Heart". I am not certain, but I think this may have been the film version of a play which was very popular at that time. A Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon was "Cat Fishing".

Next, from Warner's, Ida Lupino in "Devotion" plus a big bill which included a coloured cartoon "Foxy Flatfoots".

After that, from M.G.M., came Lionel Barrymore in "Cynthia's Secret" which is only a name to me now. Yet another Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon was "Springtime for Thomas".

The next week brought, from M.G.M., Laurel & Hardy in "Bonnie Scotland", which was probably pretty good, though the two comedians were not at their best usually in full-length features - I preferred them in 2-reelers. There were two coloured cartoons in a big supporting programme - a Tom & Jerry entitled "Part-Time Pal" and another entitled "Red Riding Hood Rides Again".

Next, from Warner Bros., came Barbara Stanwyck in "My Reputation". In the same bill there were two coloured cartoons "Hot Footlights" and "Cockatoos for Two".

Final feature of the term came from M.G.M., and was George Murphy in "The Arnelo Affair". A Tom & Jerry coloured cartoon was "Solid Serenade", and there were two three Stooges comedies. As the three Stooges went, I would think this was one too many, but I daresay the double helping went down with the youthful audiences.

The Postman Called

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

HAROLD TRUSCOTT (Huddersfield): One or two points arising out of the March C.D., from the Holmes-Blake discussions. It's a personal point, but, then, a good deal of what makes the C.D. interesting is personal points, isn't it? I grew up with the Sherlock Holmes stories, and I think I have read the whole canon quite a number of times; I also read, at the same time, a great deal of Sexton Blake, although not so much in recent years. I admire both, but in different ways. But neither is my favourite fictional detective. The excellence or otherwise of Blake as a pure detective depended, I have always thought, a good deal on who wrote the story - and there were strikingly different levels of excellence: not so much in story value, although this varied quite a bit, as in straight detective work. I think that this item varied also in the Holmes stories, not, obviously, for the same reason. Holmes' way, too, of looking from the window, or at someone who passed him and Watson in the street, and reeling off the items that obviously made the man a plumber, or a fishmonger, or whatever it might have been; so often these items could have been explained in half a dozen different ways; and usually there was no proof, only Watson's admiration. Doyle's writing at times irritated me, too; too often melodramatic and even sometimes downright bad. Less so in his other work, the Challenger stories, although these have a little of the melodrama, The Tragedy of the Korosko, which is excellent, Gerard, also good. On the other hand, I have tried three times to read The Firm of Girdlestone and have had to give it up each time as unreadable. I have noticed, incidentally, that Holmes addicts rarely mention any of Doyle's other writing.

FRANCIS HERTZBERG (Nr. Bebington): Sexton Blake is back again - in the new Tornado comic, disguised as "Victor Drago". Tinker is Spencer, Pedro has become Brutus, and the Grey Panther is the Silver Ghost. Only Baker Street remains itself. One pair of names remains the same. Edgar Hollis, the thriller writer, has two butlers - of course called LOFTS & ADLEY.

LES ROWLEY (Truro): I remember the Canterbury Music Hall and

believe that I was first taken there to hear Josie Collins sing. Was it not very near one of those giant viaducts over which the railway to Waterloo ran?

I think that it is right to call the Magnet, the Gem, the Nelson Lee et alia, 'story papers' for stories are what they contained. I always thought of 'comics' as questionable aids to literacy. The act of following a series of pictures to understand a story was I reckoned (at the lofty age of ten) for the very young. I was certainly proud that I had 'graduated' from the comic to the story paper, and would have been indignant if anyone had referred to my beloved Magnet as a 'comic'. It is a sad reflection that the story papers are no more but the comics multiply and now appeal to a higher age group than hitherto.

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge): Maurice Hall in the April C.D. asks "if the Hamilton papers are not comics, what are they?" The short answer, as you said in the preceding C.D., is "story papers". When I was a boy, we were quite clear about what a comic was. If we asked for a comic, we meant "Rainbow", "Puck" or "Chuckles", etc. If we wanted, say, "Union Jack", "Marvel" or "Boys' Friend", etc., we called them books.

A collector should know the difference between a comic, a story paper and a magazine, and should use the right terminology, however ignorant the "media" may be about "comics".

JACK OVERHILL (Cambridge): I keep wondering why Story Papers as a name for our old favourites has eluded me for so long. There it was staring me in the face and I've puzzled my brains to think up something when I've been referring to them. And one way and another over the years that's been considerable, all the writing I've done. Impossible to call them collectively 'Boys' Weeklies' - there were the monthlies; and it was the same with the several names I've thought up: something was always wrong with them. Stumped, I've sidled round the problem in various ways. A pity when the short cut was right in front of me.

I've read of a Chinese proverb: NONE IS SO BLIND AS HE THAT CAN SEE. Seemingly, it's right.

Anyway, as you rightly point out, STORY PAPERS is undoubtedly the right name for them. So damn the trendy journalists -

most of them don't know what a split infinitive is, let alone the fused participle - STORY PAPERS it is for me.

LEN WORMULL (Romford): The Canterbury was my father's favourite Music Hall, and I remember him taking me as a boy. I cannot say which came first, the railway or theatre, but certainly the siting was most unfortunate. I believe attempts were made to muffle the noise, but the rumblings still leaked through. One of the most famous of music halls, it ended ingloriously as a cinema. My last visit was shortly before the war, not for the films strangely enough, but for a certain musical act on the same bill. The train effects were there to the end, as I remember. It passed on some years ago, and I believe there is a commemorative plaque on the site.

Recently I came across some old notes on the Trocadero cinema, mentioned years back in C.D. I note that it opened on Monday, 22nd December, 1930. The films were: "Bed & Breakfast" with Richard Cooper and Jane Baxter (Dir. Walter Forde), and "The Storm, with Lupe Velez and William Boyd. On the stage were Lilian Burgess, top of the bill, and the O'Gorman Bros. I well remember the latter, but cannot place the former.

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News of our Clubs

MIDLAND

Meeting held 27th March, 1979

Reasonable travelling conditions on a showery night pushed our attendance up to ten. These included Bob Acraman and Len Berg.

With visitors present it was a meeting turned over entirely to discussion. Bob Acraman, who said the Nelson Lee China Series had always interested him, brought a worn copy of that series and also the original manuscripts from Edwy Searles Brooks.

A fact previously unknown to most of our members was that Howard Baker was at one time an author himself instead of the publisher we now know him to be.

The usual feature, Anniversary Number and Collectors' Item was on show. These were, Anniversary Number - Gem No. 59, The Rival Editors, dated 27th March, 1909 and seventy years old to the day and the Collectors' Item was a bound volume of early Nelson Lees of 1916 vintage, No. 66 to 78, dated 9th September, 1916 to 2nd December, 1916. These old papers evince great interest.

Coffee and jam doughnuts were provided by Ivan Webster for refreshments. I enjoyed the coffee, but several members, not because they do not like jam doughnuts, but probably because the jam doughnuts do not like them, declined. Bunter does not suffer from indigestion but many of us at our age do. Still it was generous of Ivan to bring them along.

On show were the dust jackets of the next two Howard Baker reprint volumes, Billy Bunter's Own Annual and Tom Merry's Own Annual. Owing to his close connection with Howard Baker, Bob Acraman get these in advance. They looked inviting.

With the light nights now ahead of us we may expect better attendances.

JACK BELLFIELD - Correspondent.

CAMBRIDGE

We met at the home of Edward Witten on Sunday, 1st April. Bill Thurbon reported that John Edson had recently published his 100th book for Corgi, "J.T's Hundredth", an anthology of his main characters, including stories for the Thomson Papers, including the story line for a picture strip in Victor. Mike Rouse reported that he had recently found on his bookshelves a paper back book he had bought some years ago, and inadvertently failed to read at that time. He had read it, and found that not only was it an outstandingly good adult story, but also it had appealed very strongly to his schoolboy pupils when read to them; there being frequent requests for re-reading the opening chapters. Keeping the book in a plain cover Mike read some extracts to the Club, then challenged them to identify the author. Prompt identification from several members was Jack Overhill, the book being "The Snob".

Adrian Perkins reported that Anglia Television was considering a programme in the "Bygones" series on Comics; film was to be taken

in Danny's shop, and Danny suggested that a member of the Club should be present when this was being done to talk about the Club. It was agreed to ask Bill Lofts to represent the club.

A Quiz caused furrowed brows as members sought to recall their Hamilton lore and struggled to disentangle Morcove from Cliff House! After a neck and neck contest Bill Thurbon emerged winner by one point, due principally to his memories of his favourite among Sexton Blake's lady friends, Mlle Yvonne.

Edward ran a Quiz on Music Hall Entertainers; this proved very popular. Jack Overhill drew attention to I.T.V. Dick Turpin serial. Bill Thurbon then gave a talk on the sword and the development of the art of fencing, with quotations from various "cloak and sword" stories; an interesting discussion followed, a number of authors being recalled.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to Edward for his hospitality. Next meeting on 6 May, at 5 All Saints Passage.

LONDON

Bill and Thelma Bradford must have been highly delighted with the excellent attendance that graced their Ealing home on 8th April. For those who had missed the very good Bessie Bunter telecast on B.B.C. T.V. Nationwide on the 5th April, Mary Cadogan had brought along a tape recording of the lovable duffer's 60th birthday and photostat copies of the article that appeared in the Guardian by Mary and Patricia Craig. Furthermore, the slides that the B.B.C. screened will possibly be shown at a future meeting of the club. Roger Jenkins, the Hamilton Librarian, announced that the famous Frank Richards classic story of Highcliffe, "The Boy Without a Name" in the Boys' Friend Library, was now available for loan thanks to Darrell Swift of the Northern Club who had provided a copy. The grateful thanks of all present were accorded to Darrell and which were recorded in the minutes.

Bill Bradford had thought up a very good Greyfriars characters quiz and competitors were provided with a grid that had all the letters of the alphabet thereon and had to put down the names of all pupils, masters and characters that appeared in the Greyfriars saga. Millicent Lyle was an easy winner.

Maurice Corkett read an excellent discourse which he entitled,

In The News. This treatise was culled from his scrapbook which he had added all the newscuttings, etc., over the years.

'Price' was the initials of the Magnet series quiz that Roger Jenkins conducted and a worthy winner was Eric Lawrence.

Ray Hopkins read some humorous chapters from the Nelson Lee series which dealt with the arrival of the Trotwood Twins, Nicodemus and Cornelius at Saint Frank's.

Bob Blythe read extracts from newsletter of April 1962.

Bill and Thelma were suitably thanked for a very pleasant meeting and with Sam and Babs Thurbon present to remind everyone that their home at Twickenham would be the venue for the 13th May gathering. Kindly inform if intending to be present.

BENJAMIN WHITER

* *

WANTED: Magnets Nos. 779, 822, 833, 871, 948, 949, 982; also The Champion No. 103.

H. W. VERNON, 5 GILLMAN ST., CHELTENHAM

VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3192.

* *

FOR SALE: Magnets 1181, 1322, 1338, 1388, 1391, 1442, 1443, 1448, 1450. Tatty condition, readable copies. £4.50 the lot plus postage.

ERIC LAWRENCE, GREYFRIARS, HOLLYBUSH RIDE

WOKINGHAM, BERKS.

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FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: GHA; 1921, 1925, 1927, 1928, 1937. Tom Merry's Annual No. 1, A Champion Annual. SOL; 176, 191, 199, 201, 227, 228, 230, 232, 238, 242, 248, 257, 259, 261, 302. S.a.e. for details of condition to -

R. PAYNE, 69 HIGH STREET

HEADCORN, KENT

* *

SHERLOCK HOLMES - anything always wanted (including Herlock Sholmes in Greyfriars Heralds).

48 SHALMARSH, BEBINGTON, WIRRAL, L63 2JZ.

MORE ABOUT CHUCKLES

by W. O. G. Lofts

I was interested to read Cyril Rowe's recent article on Chuckles. Cyril is of course quite correct in how it started off in 1914 catering for the oldest age group, and then through the years ending up into almost the nursery age group of children.

Chuckles was a comic of the Companion Papers group, that included Magnet, Gem and Boys' Friend. Its controlling editor was H. Hinton - but the editor on the comic was Lewis Ross Higgins, a welshman and being of a gigantic size. According to editors he had been an editor on various papers since almost a teenager, and was the model on which Billy Bunter was based. Higgins was a very jolly man with a very loud fruity laugh, that it was said used to echo round the corridors of Fleetway House. Hinton once stated that "Higgins was probably the most clever artist in England", and whilst this may be an exaggeration there is no doubt he was very talented. He was the art critic for Punch, and other glossy journals, and his own art-work can be seen in the early Herlock Sholmes stories in The Greyfriars Herald, and he was also the artist 'Frank Nugent'.

Higgins died after a long illness at St. Albans in 1919, being only 34 years old, and during his long absences from the paper his chief sub-editor W. Stanton-Hope took over the comic.

Chuckles was probably most famous for its one page Greyfriars tales usually featuring Dick Trumper & Co. of Courtfield County Council School, where surprisingly they sometimes scored over the Famous Five. Many years ago, and in 1956, I wrote to Charles Hamilton about these stories, and whether he had written them. He replied to the effect that he had and "like the elephant who never forgets gave me the title of one of them 'The Yankee's Race'.

However, many years later, and in meeting C. M. Down the Magnet editor, and Stanton-Hope I learned that this was not so, as the majority were written by the former editor. Later still when I was able to peruse official records, I found this was correct, though Charles Hamilton did write one solitary tale entitled "The Yankee's Race", so at least Mr. Hamilton's memory was correct in this case. Stanton-Hope however, enlarged on the mystery by stating that Charles Hamilton was

invited to write the series of 37 numbers, but after the first decided that the payment of £2.2.0d. was not enough. But then why his story was held up to No. 35 is one of the mysteries that will never now be known.

* *

WANTED: B.B's Bargain, Greyfriars Book Club, Vols. 1, 2, 3, 4; H. Baker Magnets, Vols. 18, 21 - 23, 29, 38, 39; Monsters, Modern Boys, Holiday Annuals, 1922, 1941.

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NORTHERN CLUB: No report received at time of going to press.

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LEN WORMULL writes: MODERN BOY is receiving Danny's attention of late, and at the time he writes (1929) the paper was still in its infancy. As all new papers were an exciting event, I remember hastening to buy this one on its arrival, only to be flatly disappointed. Perhaps I wasn't modern enough, or didn't give it a fair chance, but we never did make it together. For this reason, I once turned down a sizeable collection for sale at bargain price. Yet a strange thing happened on the way to the Boys' Friend Library. Here it was that I discovered Ken King and his chum, Kit Hudson. I was so taken by these tales of the South Seas, that they quickly became a most treasured possession. And here it comes. I had no way of knowing that their author, Charles Hamilton, was writing my favourite Magnet tales under a name he preferred to his own. A man of many disguises, as it turned out, yet imitating no-one. Strange that he should captivate me in two different fields of writing. Or is it?

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