

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

No.221 Vol.19

Price 2/-

MAY 1965



Our Blakiana conductress, Josie Packman, and W. Howard Baker

Taken at a special Sexton Blake Press promotional party at the Carlton Tower, Cadogan Place, London S.W.1., on 8th February, 1965.

Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 19

No. 221

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Price 2s. Od.



A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER.

THE CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER

Few of us, probably, will have experienced anything but a mild regret at the passing of the Children's Newspaper. It did, however, receive a good deal of attention in the national press, and the Daily Mail devoted its leader column to it on Easter Saturday. The Daily Mail saw the passing of the Children's Newspaper as a sign of the times. IT IS NOTHING OF THE SORT.

Arthur Mee, who did some wonderful things for children, sponsored something of an "also ran" when he founded the Children's Newspaper. It was stodgy and uninspiring all the days of its life. The children of the nineteen-twenties liked it no more and no less than the children of 1965. I would be surprised if more than a handful of youngsters ever bought it for themselves.

When I was a boy at school, free copies were handed out from time to time by the school authorities. It was a "nice" little paper, but "niceness" was never enough for boys and girls of any period.

Our mild regret is occasioned by the breaking of yet another link with the old days. The Children's Newspaper is apparently to be amalgamated with Look & Learn. In spite of its dullness, it deserved a better fate. Better far for it to have died a death which was as dull and as nice as the life it had lived.

The Daily Mail sees something more in the passing of a stodgy little periodical. It sees children asserting themselves at long last.

The child (according to the Mail, obviously meaning the child of the heyday of the Children's Newspaper, if it ever had a heyday) was not expected to speak unless spoken to, and even then was not supposed to have any views that could conceivably interest an adult, naturally spent his childhood waiting to be a grown-up. The implication is quite inaccurate. Those of us who were children in the years following the first world war were not suppressed. The restrictions applied to Victorian children had long passed away. We had some discipline at home and at school, but most of us spent our childhood in happy and carefree fashion, doing very much what appealed to us.

Where have all the children gone? asks the Mail, and answers its own question: "They have simply decided to turn into people sooner than we were allowed to."

Utter rot! Most children are handicapped today by having too much money, too little discipline at school, and no discipline at all at home. But that they are any happier or more responsible than we were, I just do not believe.

The great puzzle is how and why the Children's Newspaper managed to keep going for 46 years. It was a memorial to the great Arthur Mee, but nothing else. Better by far to have kept the Magnet going. But probably the amount of paper devoured by the C.N. was negligible.

RISING COSTS:

Mr. Brown, the Minister of Economic Affairs, has often exhorted firms to absorb rising prices and not to pass on those rising costs to their customers. Mr. Brown undoubtedly has something there, but, unfortunately, the rising costs are so frequent and regular that the time comes when absorption reaches saturation point. It seems to us that few firms run the risk of even approaching saturation point.

Since the price of COLLECTORS' DIGEST went up in January 1961, the magazine has constantly been absorbing rising costs. The imminent rise in postal charges is inevitably going to be a heavy blow to C.D. economy. The increase in the cost of actually mailing the magazine will be a detail, but, in addition, a goodly number of packets and very large parcels have to pass between the editorial office and our printers at York. And, in the course of our editorial duties, we often send out as many as one hundred letters a week.

Printed stationery is possibly not essential, but the prestige of the magazine demands it. Our last lot of printed stationery worked out at near 1½d per sheet. Now there will be the 4d stamp. And how many envelopes does one get in a shilling packet?

We ought not to spare space in this chat column to quote self-

evident truths. But what a nice place to live in is the world of 1965 - for those people who can demand and get constant rising wages. It is a more worrying place for those with static incomes.

THE EDITOR

DANNY'S DIARY

May 1915

On May 22nd there was a most terrible railway disaster at Quintin's Hill near Gretna Green. There is to be an enquiry, but it seems that it was due to the carelessness of signalmen.

A troop train from Larbert to Liverpool ran into a local train which was standing on the same lines outside the signal box. A minute later the Scotch express from Euston, running under clear signals at high speed, crashed into the wreckage. The troop train was gas lit, and fire broke out at once. It all happened early in the morning, but the fire raged on all that day and the following night. A great number of people lost their lives, and this is the worst disaster which has ever occurred on the railways of Great Britain.

An exciting month in the Gem. The first tale was "The Hero of the Hour," the last of the series in which Talbot was expelled at midnight for something Gore had done. Gore was very ill, and confessed in his delirium, so Marie Rivers learned the truth and called Dr. Helmes. They found Talbot working in Chamus's Circus, where he had done much good to a drunken lion-tamer.

The next story was "Grundy of the Shell" in which a bullying new boy arrived at St. Jim's. We also met Wilkins and Gunn with whom Grundy shares a study. Grundy bullied everybody, but at last Tom Merry took him in hand and managed to give him a licking.

They have now started what they call an "International Match" in the Gem. The first of these stories was "Kildare for St. Jim's," and represented Ireland. Kildare's cousin, Micky, who was in the army, had got into trouble and owed somebody £50. It worried Kildare a lot, but Tom Merry found out, and persuaded his uncle, Mr. Peinsett, to send him £50, which was passed anonymously to Kildare.

The next story, featuring Scotland, was "A Son of Scotland." Mr. Kataliff had been hoarding gold, which was very unpatriotic in war time. Craik of the New House stole the gold, and managed to get the blame landed on Figgins. Kerr, the Scottish boy, found out the truth, and Craik was expelled. I liked this tale very much.

The Gem and Magnet have been giving away a miniature copy of the Boys' Friend, and there are prizes for the readers who assemble the copy in the best way.

The Cunard liner "Lusitania" was sunk by two German torpedoes early this month. Over a hundred lives were lost. There is a bit of a mystery about it all, for several famous people who travelled by the liner are said to have received advance warnings that it would be sunk.

There have been a number of zeppelin raids in May - two on Southend, one on Ramsgate, and one on London. Quite a few people have been killed.

We always know when there is a zepp raid on, for all the street lights go out. I can see a street lamp from my bedroom window, and I always look out before getting into bed, to make sure that the light is still on.

We have been to the pictures every week this month and seen some good programmes. A Selig film entitled "The Spoilers" was quite good, but the best picture in the programme was Charlie Chaplin in "His New Job." This was the funniest film I have ever

seen. Charlie has joined the Keaney company. This comic was shown at every one of our three cinemas in the town.

We saw Henry Ainlay in "The Colonel of the Red Hussars." It was a Famous Players film and was very good. Another time we saw Mary Pickford in "Mistress Nell" and it was lovely. Albert Chevalier in "The Bettle" carried an awful warning for everyone who saw it.

Mae Marsh in "The Outcast" was another good one this month.

They used to say that the pictures would kill the music halls, but Doug says there seems to be more than ever. We made a list of all the London music halls he could think of. This is the list: Alhambra, Leicester Square; Camden Theatre, Camden Town; Canterbury, near Waterloo station; Collins at Islington; Empire, Leicester Square; London Coliseum; London Hippodrome; Metropolitan in Edgware Rd; Oxford in Oxford St; London Palladium; Paragon in Mile End Road; London Pavilion; Royal, Holloway; Shepherds Bush Empire; South London; Surrey in Blackfriars Rd; Willesden Green Empire.

The Magnet has been reasonably good this month, but I did not care much for the first story "The Mystic Circle." Leder was terrified by coming across, painted on a wall, a circle with the letters L.W. in the middle. These initials stood for Lucas Judd, a villainous old acquaintance of Leder's. I thought it all a bit creed.

Then came "The Schoolboy Acrobats" in which Charlie Chungum, the son of a circus proprietor came to Greyfriars. I have come to the conclusion that Frank Richards and Martin Clifford are the same man, for Chungum's Circus also appears in the Gem this month. Of course, it seems impossible that one man could write two long tales every week, but its remarkable.

In "Murree Singh's Peril" Inky was kidnapped, and a lot of the boys, who were doing amateur dramatics, went about disguised as Hindus. Rather a mixed-up affair, but a bit exciting.

Best tale of the month was "Heroes of Highcliff" in which there was a burglary at Highcliff and Pensonby tried to make out that the Greyfriars chums were responsible. Then Courtney, who used to be called Clare, and De Courcy took a hand.

Fisher T. Fish's scheme in "The Punishment Policies" was based on Mr. Lloyd George's national insurance plan by which the workers get ninsence for fourpence. Fish insured the Removites against lickings and lines, but his plan went awry in the end.

The editor of the Magnet ran a competition for ideas for increasing the circulation of the Magnet. The winner was a reader in Blackpool. The editor is in trouble with some of his readers who tell him he looks young enough to be in the army.

Jessie, our old maid, who now works in a munitions factory, came to see us one day. She brought me all the new editions of the Boys' Friend & Library. They were "On His Majesty's Service," a story of Nelson Lee by Maxwell Scott; "The Mystery of the Diamond Belt," a Sexton Blake story; and "Pete's Hun Colony," a Jack, Sam, and Pete tale by S. Clarke Hook. I didn't like the last one, so I swapped it for the Dreadnought with my pal Lindsay.

It was very pleasant to see Jessie again. She was wearing very nice clothes, a big hat with cherries on it, and had red stuff on her face. After she went, I heard Mum say to Dad that she hoped Jessie was not living in Sin. I've never heard of the place, but I know Jessie doesn't live there. She lives in Woolwich.

The Dreadnought had an old Greyfriars tale called "The Faddist Form-master" and it was good. There is a new serial in the Dreadnought called "Sons of the Empire."

There has been a strike of 10,000 men on the L.C.C. trams as they want more pay. The L.C.C. has retaliated by telling all the men who are of military age to return their uniforms as their services are no longer required on the trams.

Doug goes on buying me the Boys' Friend. He is a kindly sole. The first Rockwood story this month was "Jimmy Silver's Fix." Tommy Dodd & Co tie Knowles up in a sack, and Knowles tells lies to the Head by pretending that he heard Jimmy Silver's voice while he was being attacked.

Next week was "The Fall of the Mighty" in which Smythe's cricket team picked up a

licking at St. Jim's. As a result, Smythe was deposed from the captaincy, and in the election which followed, Tommy Dodd became junior captain of Rockwood. This was because Smythe & Co voted for Tommy.

In "Smythe's Little Sweep," Adolphus got up a sweep-stake and, though Smythe tried to cheat, Jimmy Silver won the money and gave it to the Red Cross.

Last of the month was "The Moderns' Mistake" in which the scouts of the Modern side sought a German spy, but the spy they caught was Jimmy Silver in disguise.

The Rockwood tales so far are all on the light side. Mr. Macdonald has illustrated them all.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The Gretna catastrophe, referred to by Danny, remains to this day the worst railway disaster ever in this country. We find Doug's list of music halls intriguing but had never previously heard of the Willadean Green Empire. What happened to it? Does any of our north London readers know? "The Faddist Form-Master," reprinted in the Dreadnought, must surely be the most frequently reprinted Magnet story of all. We recollect it in the Magnet, the Dreadnought, the Popular, the Gem, and the Schoolboys' Own Library. Any comments?)

RESULT OF APRIL COMPETITION

A large entry made this a fascinating contest. The following is the order of the extracts as placed by the popular vote:

1st 15, 2nd 14, 3rd 16, 4th 18, 5th 17, 6th 13.

The intriguing factor is that, for the first time in these contests, the St. Jim's extract is voted first. St. Jim's also figures in third place. Quite a result for St. Jim's.

The prize of £1 is won by JACK COOK, 178 Maria St, Benwell, Newcastle-on-Tyne, who placed the first 3 extracts in their correct order. A book award goes to R. J. GODSAVE of Leytonstone, who was the nearest runner-up.

MAGNETS FOR EXCHANGE: DOUBLE NUMBERS: Harry Wharton & Co's Holiday, House on the Heath; 1919 Wally Bunter, 1932 Wharton Rebel Series; RED MAGNETS, 337, 344, 348, 349, 352, 373; BLUE/WHITE, 411, 439, 444, 449, 454, 464, 468, 496, 528, 534, 541, 551, 561, 598, 604, 712, 724; BLUE/YELLOW, 937, 1018, 1039, 1042, 1091, 1188, 1220, 1226, 1236, 1237, 1241, 1244, 1245, 1268, 1280, 1297, 1298, 1300, 1314, 1318, 1319, 1320, 1321, 1324, 1326, 1327, 1328, 1342, 1345, 1346, 1348, etc.

WANTED (THREE FOR DOUBLES, TWO FOR REDS, ONE FOR OTHERS) 969, 975, 976, 977, 995, 1032, 1034, 1041, 1042, 1061, 1063, 1064, 1082, 1096, 1097, 1121, 1125, 1141, 1167, 1168, 1169, 1170, 1180, 1181, 1182, 1187, 1209, 1210, 1211, 1212, 1214, 1216, 1217, 1218, 1219, 1351. MANY OTHERS BEFORE 1220. OFFERED, £10 for 30 MAGNETS before 1932 (state numbers) Pro-rata oddments.

Laurie Sutton, 112, Repton Road, Orpington, Kent.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22

IN AND AROUND BAKER STREET (6)

By WALTER WEBB

The Survivors

How many of the authors who entertained us in the old "U.J." are still alive and kicking today? It's an interesting question, which, had it been put 32 years ago, when the paper finished its long and meritorious run, would have revealed the fact that quite a considerable number of its early contributors were still in the land of the living, and, moreover, were hard at work increasing their output. But time, especially 32 years of it, can bring about much havoc in the lives of writing folk, and it is possible at this juncture to point to but a mere handful of those chroniclers whose work we so admired in the days when Sexton Blake was in his prime.

Looking well back - right into the halfpenny series to begin with - it is apparent that we find no survivors here. That series ran from 1894 to 1903, and with the death of Charles Hamilton recently the last remaining link with that era was snapped for all time. An author who contributed to the $\frac{1}{2}$ d "U.J." would, if alive today, be at least in his 80's, and I cannot think it likely that there are any of these writing folk still alive and languishing in well-earned retirement today.

Scanning the following years - 1904 to 1911 - there does not appear to be any survivors during this period either. On to 1912, and the records for that year show for the first time a famous name - Edwy Searles Brooks, surely that of one of the most popular Sexton Blake writers of all time. It's a long trek back - 53 years to be exact - and it makes him the oldest surviving member of the old Blake clan, an occasion, in all truth, for our heartiest congratulations and warmest thanks for very many years of sustained, well-planned, and invigorating Blake writing.

There is another name in the year's list - that of W. A. Williamson - but there is some doubt as to whether he is still alive, so nothing definite can be said about him. A similar query must go alongside the name of H. Escott Inman also. All the authors who were

contributing between the years 1913 - 1918 inclusive, with the exception of E. S. Brooks, of course, are dead. 1919 saw the débuts of Anthony Skene and Michael Poole, both of whom are, happily, still alive, so this makes them our second and third oldest surviving members respectively. In 1920 W. W. Sayer, better known to us as "Pierre Quiroule" made his bow, and as he is also still living, he becomes our fourth in line. 1921 brought first F. Addington Symonds and then Alfred Edgar from the wings, and they were followed in 1924 by H. W. Twyman, and John W. Wheway. No. 9 arrived in 1928 in the shape of Rex Hardinge. No. 10 was Gerald Verner, who, as "Donald Stuart," entered the ranks in 1930, closely followed the same year by Francis Warwick, who completes the team at No. 11.

When you consider that well over a hundred authors contributed to the "U.J." during its 1894 - 1933 existence - 39 years in all - those of its survivors number very few indeed. Working out the percentage as accurately as possible by discarding all pen-names, I have arrived at the interesting conclusion that out of every ten contributors only one has survived the ravages of time.

Further, that out of all those who contributed to the "U.J." in the first 18 years of its run not one known survivor remains alive today. As far as our little band of survivors is concerned, may it be a long, long time before its depleted ranks are still further encroached upon as a result of the remorseless march of old Father Time.

A Tribute to E.S.B.

In the whole history of the boys' papers there were few authors who even remotely approached the tremendous output attained by Edwy Searles Brooks. A talented writer whose feats of penmanship have hardly been adequately lauded in these columns, E. S. Brooks was writing Sexton Blake stories for 29 years during which time he just failed to complete a century of stories of the Baker Street detective, his score at the close - to use a cricketing phrase - being 98 not out.

It is 24 years ago since Mr. Brooks wrote his last Blake story, and today, in sharp contrast to his peak period days, his pen moves very slowly indeed across the foolscap on the desk before him, and the names of Berkeley Gray and Victor Gunn, which he uses as pen-names, appear more rarely with each passing year. But although the pace has slowed considerably, as, inevitably, it had to, the quality of his novels remains as high as it ever did, and nothing, I feel sure, would please his old "U.J." and "N.L.L." fans more than his decision to write again for us in the new venture launched by Mr. W. Howard Baker.

Two stories at the very least would be most welcome to raise that aggravating-looking 98 to the comfortably rounded figure of 100 - still not out!

Recently some very interesting comments have been made in respect of Brooks's talents in contrast to those of Charles Hamilton, though it seems to me that so rich in this respect were both writers that no solution to this problem can be arrived at. The difference between them can best be expressed by comparison of two star players on the soccer field. The one whose ball control and artistry brings roars of admiration from the crowd as opposed to that of the more direct methods of the other, who, by sheer speed and a deceptive body swerve, outstrips the opposing defence. The approach work is different, but the result is the same. Similar controversy has raged in other fields during the past few years. The cricket field, for example. Read Hobbs for Hamilton, and Bradman for Brooks. Who was the greater batsman? Experts on the summer game have argued the question in book, newspaper, and periodical, time and time again, and not one writer has furnished proof that either one was better than the other. Alternatively, read Hastings for Hamilton, and Birkett for Brooks, and you are faced with one of the toughest legal problems of all time. Sir Patrick Hastings or Norman Birkett? Two of the most brilliant advocates who ever practised at the Bar in the whole history of the criminal courts. No legal expert has ever found the answer to this one, either.

So with Hamilton and Brooks. Each ran a weekly paper practically off his own bat, as it were, for year after year, and, according to their editors, with manuscripts so neatly typed and with hardly a correction that very little adjustment of their work was necessary. A significant fact, this, speaking volumes for the skill and enthusiasm with which both approached their work, and making it abundantly clear why both authors were so highly esteemed by their respective admirers. Enthusiasm in a writer is instantly detected by the reader; it is caught up in his mood, and he reacts to it as he would a stimulant, his interest in the story increased tenfold in the knowledge that what he is reading is a sample of his author's best efforts to please him and the rest of the readers. On the other hand, the jaded contributor soon leaves the imprint of his weariness on his reader, though I can say, in all truth, that neither Hamilton nor Brooks ever left that impression on me during the many years I was reading their stories.

The fact that the N.L.L. closed down before the MAGNET is, of course, no guide at all in comparing the merits of the two writers.

The failure of the little magazine was due not to inferior contribution but to faulty administration, and E. S. Brooks was still writing at the top of his form for the UNION JACK at the time of the closure of the paper he had made so popular. To judge fairly is to judge both writers at their peak. Brooks, a long way behind Hamilton in craft made up the leeway in originality and imagination, and some of his series in the N.L.L. were, in my opinion, as a regular reader of both papers, equally as good as some of Hamilton's best in the MAGNET. In fact, it is to the MAGNET that I would go to sum up this question - by quoting just two words, which comprised that of a title in No. 1414, in 1935, and which read just simply, "Honours Even!"

Humour from "The Round Table"

The "U.J." was by no means a comic paper, but it was good for a few chuckles now and then, particularly in its correspondence columns. Some letters from readers, whose tastes bordered on the extravagant, doubtless brought involuntary grins to the faces of the editor and his assistants. Like this one, for example, from a Mr. William Davies, of Auckland, New Zealand, who wrote:

"There are a few things I want to know about the UNION JACK.

- (1) When did the first number come out? (2) How old is Sexton Blake?
- (3) Could you put a map of Baker Street in the "U.J."? (4) Why not put in a photo gallery?
- (5) What is Tinker's age? (6) Has a story been written with Blake in New Zealand?
- (7) What was the name of the first "U.J." and what date was it? (8) Could you print a map of Blake's house?
- (9) Why not have an editor's chat, where you could talk to readers?
- (10) How many copies are printed every week?
- (11) Why not let Blake himself relate the stories? (12) Make the stories longer.
- (13) More pictures. (14) More Blake. (15) Free photo of Blake. Well, that is all I want to know."

And, no doubt, an amused editor thought it was about time, too! A few more questions and Mr. Davies would have had the whole Round Table to himself that week. Yet, although his ninth query was irrelevant, one obtains food for thought from his sixth, for, come to think of it, although Blake has been all over the world, I cannot recall one story devoted to a case which took him to New Zealand.

(continued)

FOR SALE: 200 Detective Weeklies; 2 Vols. 'Chums' 1893, 1933/5 and 1921.

J. LENNARD, 24, SAXON CROSSWAY, WINSFORD, CHESHIRE.

HAMILTONIANA

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 87. THE BLOT

There is but little doubt that when Greyfriars was created in 1908 it was intended that it should be entirely different from St. Jim's. Martin Clifford and Frank Richards were intended to be two distinct personalities. It was a plan which was completely successful for the following five or six years.

There was no real reason in those early years why any reader should have believed that the stories of both Greyfriars and St. Jim's came from the same pen. True, boys from one school visited the other, but that could easily have been a working agreement between friendly authors, and, in fact, when Tom Merry and Co visited Greyfriars, for instance, they were made subtly different from the Tom Merry and Co whom we met in the Gem.

There was a striking dissimilarity in the characterisation at Greyfriars and St. Jim's. There was a marked variance in the types of stories of the blue Gem and the red Magnet. For the most part the Gem stories were better written; they were more exclusively school stories; there was a quality about them in those days which might have appealed to a slightly more intelligent type of lad than that which followed the Magnet. The red Magnet stories, excellent though a great many of them were, were more raggedly written, more disjointed and episodic, more emphatically tales of schoolboy adventure than straightforward school stories; even, perhaps, less credible.

It would be hard to think of a character like the early Wun Lung finding a place in the St. Jim's cast in those days. Fisher T. Fish was an exaggerated piece of work, ideal for Greyfriars. He would never have fitted in at St. Jim's. The proximity of Cliff House, and the introduction of the girls, assured a vast difference in presentation.

Even between two such freak characters as Skimpole and Alonzo Todd there was a wide gap. The simple, gentle Alonzo was constructed purely for fun; Skimpole was used more for satire which would appeal to older readers.

It was not until the Magnet was apparently shooting ahead - and as I have made clear in recent months, I am by no means sure that this was

not designed by Hinton - that we find the schools converging, and it became evident that Greyfriars, Rookwood, and St. Jim's all had the common author so far as the general run of stories was concerned.

It is difficult to see just why the author or the editor (or maybe both) suddenly decided that because a piece of characterisation had been successful at Greyfriars, it would be equally as successful at St. Jim's and Rookwood. In fact it was never so successful. The repetition of plots in later years did not matter at all, for each re-telling of a familiar plot had an interest of its own. It was the duplication of characterisation that was the real blot on the Hamilton story.

It had no effect at all on the Magnet, but I do not doubt that the Gem suffered greatly. The arrival of the St. Jim's version of Bunter is the first sign we get of how the wind is blowing. Baggy Trimble struck a false note at St. Jim's from the start. I cannot believe that any Gem reader of that age was happy to find an indifferent echo of Greyfriars come permanently into the St. Jim's cast.

If there was any lesson to be learned, and I think there was, the author did not learn it. Some kind of an echo of Bunter appeared in every Hamilton school series from that time onwards. Tubby Muffin turned up at Rookwood, Tucky Toodles on the Benbow, Chunky Todgers at Cedar Creek. Right down to modern times, there was always the echo of Bunter in a Hamilton series. It was an unhappy mistake. Billy Bunter of Greyfriars was a delightful and inspired piece of work. His echoes in other stories marred those other stories.

The reformation of the Bounder of Greyfriars was an excellent move, though the earlier helpings of it were over-sentimental. But as the Bounder settled down to an intriguing mixture of black and white, he became one of the finest pieces of characterisation in any school literature. Yet the same plan, carried to St. Jim's was not equally successful. For one thing, it was too much of an echo; for another, the new Levison became a new character entirely. It was far from convincing in the long run.

Most readers have a soft spot for Coker of Greyfriars. I have yet to find anyone who found anything remotely lovable in Grundy, the Coker of St. Jim's. Both Trimble and Grundy were blots which should have been erased from the Gem.

The spoiled younger brother theme had been successfully handled in the Magnet. It was more useful in the case of the School Captain with his reckless young brother, but the many stories of the vicissitudes of Frank Nugent with the wayward youngster, Dicky, had their points of appeal.

Here, again, we found the same characterisation carried into the Gem. One can hardly fault the actual stories of Reggie Manners. The "Brother's Keeper" series of the war years was probably the most powerful that ever appeared between the white covers. But the itch comes in the copying of Magnet characterisation, and the fact that the mantle of Frank Nugent fell on Harry Manners who was hardly the right one to receive it.

It is clear now, though it may not have been evident at the time, that the effect of this transfer of characterisation on the Gem was considerable. To some extent it lost its individuality. To some extent it also lost its dignity. The carbon copies from Greyfriars - smeared like most carbon copies - with their retinue of minor characters, swelled an already heavy cast, and made it unwieldy.

The Gem was never quite the same again, and the saddest thing about it was that it was quite unnecessary. The basic structure of St. Jim's was sound without any help from Greyfriars, and, as we have pointed out before, the carbon copies from Greyfriars took the lime-light from so much of St. Jim's own original characterisation.

Surely yet another reason for the decline of the Gem after 1915.

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 85. TURN OF TIDE

ROGER JENKINS: I am absolutely certain you are right about the Gem being much more popular than the Magnet in early days. For the first two years of the Magnet's life it was a $\frac{1}{2}$ d paper (double numbers excepted), whilst the Gem was 1d every week at this time. You do not provide customers with double length stories every week if they are not prepared to pay double for them.

Furthermore, the Gem provided series stories in great quantity: one has only to think of the trip to America and the Floating School to realise that long series were published in quite early days. The Magnet had very few series indeed in red cover days - indeed, I get the impression that the Magnet stories were written after the Gem story was finished, and in weeks when the author was very busy the Magnet had to suffer. This would certainly account for the very high standard that the Gem consistently maintained and also for the varying quality of the Magnet stories in early days.

It seems to me that anyone who has read a great number of early Gems and Magnets and who has an appreciation for good writing must

come to the conclusion that the Gem came first until 1915, when, as you say, Rookwood was born. In 1926, when Rookwood ended, Greyfriars came first. So, much as I love the Rookwood stories, I am certain that the Golden Age of the Magnet could never have come about until Rookwood was dead and the Gem had become a back number.

JOHN WERNHAM: From the age of about nine I have always felt more at home at St. Jim's rather than Greyfriars and I have always considered the Gem to be the superior publication - in the hands of the real author. The Gem was more classical in style and touched on depths of feeling which would have been out of place in the breezy, extrovert atmosphere of Greyfriars. It is unlikely that the Levison character would have developed, as we know it, had he remained within the pages of the Magnet and it is quite impossible to imagine how Mr. Quelch and his unruly Form would have made out against the mellow background of St. James's College!

The Magnet became more popular as the years went by because it had popular appeal while the gentler, more subtle stories of the Gem became less fashionable and gradually lost ground to the ever-growing bulk of Bunter, until the Magnet became a vehicle for the exploitation of this one character alone and to such an extent that there was some danger of becoming rather tired of the eternal guzzlings and gurglings. On the other hand there can be no doubt that the Greyfriars saga is unique and the creation of the Fat Porpoise has added something to our vocabulary. Perhaps the style of the Gem was better suited to the slower tempo of the pre 1914 period, although there was a gleam of the old magic when Martin Clifford returned to the Gem in 1922 which had lost none of its impact. I believe that Charles Hamilton himself considered the Gem to be the more favoured ground wherein he had attained, at times, the highest literary standards, in his chosen medium.

It is difficult to see why the advent of Rookwood should upset St. Jim's more than Greyfriars and it would seem that the editorial decision to employ substitute writers in the Gem to the almost total exclusion of the genuine author contributed to its decline to a much greater extent. Of course, the Rookwood stories closely resembled the style of the Gem which may account for their quiet success, so that, in a sense, it could be said that the circulation of the Gem was shared with that of Rookwood.

My own guess is that the true value of the old blue Gem will begin to emerge as time goes on and will outlive the popular appeal of the Magnet and others of the same kind, when future critics turn

their attention to the history of Old Boys' Books.

GEORGE SELLARS: I agree with most of what you said about the decline of the Gem, but I believe it started in 1916. There were three Double Numbers in 1915. Charles Hamilton must have been working very hard indeed in that great year - one to remember for all of us who loved St. Jim's, Greyfriars, and Rookwood.

ERIC FAYNE adds: In this column last month Mr. George Sellars mentioned that Mornington was blinded in a fight with Lattrey, and I suggested that Mornington was actually blinded by a stone in a snowball thrown by Lattrey. Mr. Sellars' memory was better than mine, and I offer him my apologies. I have now looked up the original story. It is true that a snowball fight occurred, and Mornington was struck down by a stone in a snowball from Lattrey. When he recovered, Mornington sought out Lattrey to call him to account, and Lattrey, in his terror, struck down Mornington with a candlestick. The blindness resulted from this. I congratulate Mr. Sellars on his wonderful memory. One of these days he must call at Excelsior House, and I will provide him with a deckchair, a glass of pop, and the Blind Mornington series which he would dearly love to read again.

* * * * *

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 19 (New Series)

Jimmy Silver & Co enjoyed the run across the Atlantic, and still more the passage up the great St. Lawrence River. They gazed about them at new scenes with never-ending interest. Mr. Smedley and his party landed at Quebec, and the Rookwood juniors were allowed a day or two for exploring that ancient city. Then the railroad bore them westward - the railroad, not the railway, as Lovell was careful to explain to his comrades, Lovell having made further progress in the language. Railways were left behind in the Old Country. They had become railroads now, and luggage, at the same time, became baggage.

Many a long hundred miles disappeared under the wheels as the great train rolled westward. The Canadian-Pacific Railway was a novelty to the Rookwooders. Days and nights succeeded one another as the great cars rolled on. The first sight of the summits of the Rocky Mountains, in the dim distance, gave the Rookwooders quite a thrill.

"The Rockies!" said Lovell in an awed voice. "The real Rockies, you know!"

And the chums of Rookwood gazed and gazed, and Mr. Hudson Smedley

looked at them with a kindly smile. Rookwood School seemed a long way behind Jimmy Silver & Co now.

But before the Rockies were reached, the Rookwood party left the train. The great cars rolled on towards the Kicking Horse Pass and British Columbia; and Jimmy Silver & Co, in boots and riding-breeches and Stetson hats, with sun-browned faces, headed for the Windy River Ranch.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: So started Rookwood's Canadian series which was to last for no less than thirty weeks. The editor said: "It opens up a splendid vista of new and attractive possibilities." It is fairly certain that it was on the cards that Rookwood School might be abandoned altogether. The series ran from Easter till Christmas of the year 1923. It is interesting to consider how many of Charles Hamilton's earlier travel series were centred in America. He obviously had something of a yearning for that land which he never visited. There was a fairly lengthy series in the Blue Gem, set in the States. Towards the end of the first world war came the Cedar Creek series, in Canada, which won loyal supporters over some years. Then, in 1923, the Rookwood Canadian series. In 1927, Tom Merry & Co went to Canada.

In 1923, the greatest Hamilton travel series were still many years distant. Even the Rio Kid series, which was far more convincing, was five years away. Yet the Jimmy Silver in Canada stories were vastly entertaining, first-class of their type. They were probably superior to the much shorter Gem series of 1927. With the start of Jimmy Silver in Canada, the stories were doubled in length. And from this time onwards, the substitute writers featured more and more - and more - in the Gem.

In passing, note how the journey from England to the Rockies was dismissed in a few telling lines. None of the adventures en route, which were to be a feature of many later travel series.)

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Nelson Lee Column

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

CHANGING TIMES

By REG SANDERSON

In a letter I received some time ago from James Cook telling me of his intention to emigrate, he stated that what regrets he might have of leaving England, were because he was leaving the birthplace of Brooks - his memories of the Nelson Lee etc. - in short the England he knew of those days.

This theme has been prevalent during the 18 months reading I have had of C.D., not only the comparison of the books of our youth with the inferior publications to-day, but of the general lower standards of this neurotic, "speed at any price world" to what prevailed 35 years ago.

To all intents and purposes there appears to be sufficient evidence to support this theory. Take one outstanding example: the behaviour of football players and supporters, and the precautions that have to be taken to forestall what could virtually turn out to be riot conditions. But is it always fair to generalise out of hand like this?

In the struggling days of the 2nd New Series "Nelson Lees" there occurred occasionally odd editions which were equal to the best days of the paper; one such edition was No. 95 Second New Series entitled "St. Frank's in Disgrace."

Old readers will remember the Juniors were booked to play Bannington Hotspur in the Dorrimore League, but owing to trouble that had occurred between certain juniors, and some working class boys of the town earlier in the week, Nelson Lee had put the town out of bounds. After Nipper had pleaded with him he reluctantly lifted the ban to enable the match to be played.

In my opinion Brooks had no equal in those days in his ability to introduce realism into the writing of fictional football matches, and on this occasion he built up the incidents so cleverly and realistically that you might well have been reading an account of a present day match in next Saturday's 'Sporting Special.'

The match started between a completely divided crowd. An uneasy peace lasted for a time. Reggie Pitt on the wing repeatedly danced past the burly Bannington backs, till on one occasion he slipped on the uneven ground. A back rushed in to clear at all costs

but (as Brooks aptly put it) in doing so his boot went perilously close to Reggie Pitts' head. This started minor skirmishes between the St. Frank's supporters and Bannington supporters; the tension mounted, with Nipper, the Referee, and the Bannington Captain desperately trying to keep the peace until a disputed goal resulted in the whole thing becoming a riot.

Had Brooks had an insight into the future, or were such incidents not entirely unknown in those peaceful days?

* * * * *

THE TURNING POINT

By R. J. GODSAVE

After two years of its existence as a detective weekly, the Nelson Lee Library, in which the adventures of Nelson Lee and Nipper were chronicled, a tentative switch to school stories was made with both featuring as central characters.

This was in the nature of an experiment, as owing to a falling circulation it was thought that the success of the "Magnet" and "Gem" could be shared by the Nelson Lee.

In order, no doubt, to keep the readers of the detective stories and gain new readers with school stories, the Nelson Lee alternated the weeks with both types. No. 112 was the first of the St. Frank's stories written by E. S. Brooks to grace its pages. Entitled "Nipper at St. Frank's" it introduced this famous college and characters.

To keep the interest of both sets of readers it was announced at the end of "Nipper at St. Frank's" that the next week a magnificent story of the Circle of Terror entitled "The Abduction of Lady Marjorie" would appear. Immediately below this announcement it was stated that the week after, No. 2 of Nipper at St. Frank's series would appear.

This alternation went on to No. 128 when the St. Frank's stories took over the Nelson Lee completely. From this it would appear that with the school stories the circulation figures were rising.

Had the result been otherwise, then the Nelson Lee would probably have reverted to detective stories with Nelson Lee and Nipper leaving St. Frank's. Nipper informs the reader in the foreword in No. 112 that if both Lee and himself were able to survive for six months the death sentence passed on them by a Chinese secret society - which was the reason they sought sanctuary at St. Frank's - then by the laws of the Tong they were safe from attack.

"Nipper at St. Frank's" was reprinted practically word for word

in No. 1 of the Third New Series in 1933 under the title of "Nipper - New Boy."

The attractive cover of No. 112 by Arthur Jones depicts Nipper being carried in a spread-eagle fashion across the Triangle by Bob Christine and Co. with the college buildings making a fine background.

In the search for the reader whose interest was more in the school than pure detective stories, this cover must have been one of the means of attracting new readers, thereby increasing the circulation.

WANTED: C.D. Annual 1948; Populars, Union Jacks, Boys' Friends.

38, ST. THOMAS RD., PRESTON.

SALE OR EXCHANGE: GEMS 1601, 1612, 1613, 1614, 1619, 1622, 1627, 1628, 1633, 1635, 1636, 1637, 1639, 1640, 1649, 1650, 1504, 1505, 1506, 1507 (XMAS SERIES), 1520, 1311, 1315, 1316, 1344, 1345, 1346, 1353, 1082, 304, 399. QUANTITY WIZARDS & ADVENTURES 1939-1940.

WANTED: Magnets, Dixon Hawke Libs.

Offers to: J. McMAHON, 54 HOZIER CRES., TANNOCESIDE.

SALE OR EXCHANGE: Collectors item N/Lee O.S. "The Soldier House-master." 8 issues, good cond. Bound in fine black leather (gold lettering). "K.O. Comic" Oct. 15th, 1960 to 61, 54 copies, containing The Rookwood Tales. New (6d. each). "The Boy's Journal" (Brett Papers) 1879, 80, 81, 33 copies, good cond. (6d. each). 52 GEMS complete year 1935, binding cond. 14 GEMS run, excellent cond. 1542 to 1556, inc. Xmas No. 3 Tom Merry's Own Annuals, excellent cond. inc. 1st one. 2 Huge Boy's Vols. by Spring Publishers, Mint, The Big Parade and Target (both containing Hamiltonia) £1 the two. King Albert's Book, v.g. cond. 6/-. Dozens of hard backs, School, Adventure; many others, all kinds, by good authors. Vols. - Punch, History of England, Strand.

WANTED: Magnets, and Magnet No. 600; Nelson Lee 136 2nd New.

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News from the Clubs

MIDLAND

Meeting held Tuesday, 30th March, 1965

Despite apologies from Jack Bellfield, Win Brown, Joe Marston and Gerald Price, ten members assembled for this meeting at the Arden Hotel. Making a re-appearance after a few months were the Secretary and Madge Corbett. The programme started fairly late and the agenda had been arranged by the Chairman Tom Porter who introduced a discussion based on the latest issues of the Sexton Blake Library. This was "Does this new publication which has produced much controversy, and in a small way, some disappointment, come under the category of Old Boys Books?" There were various opinions, some for and some against. The format of the new issue was commented upon and generally agreed that this was superior to the so-called "Modern Blake." The Collectors Piece for this evening was Greyfriars Herald No. 1, November 1st, 1919. This introduced for the first time Jack Drake and the "Benbow" school yarns. Anniversary number was Magnet No. 1415, dated 30th March, 1935. Exactly 30 years old. The title of the story was "The Sleuth of Greyfriars." Several Boys Friend Libraries and two Sexton Blake Libraries were put for raffle and at least six of the members present were lucky to win. The meeting ended with a reading by Madge Corbett. During the night the Secretary affirmed his decision not to stand for office for the coming year, but will continue until the A.G.M. in May.

HARRY BROSTER Sec.

NORTHERN

Annual General Meeting, Saturday, 10th April, 1965.

Chairman Geoffrey Wilde, recovered from his recent indisposition, was back in his usual place to open our 15th Annual General Meeting, which was attended by 16 members. After the usual monthly business had been transacted Gerry Allison presented the accounts for the year. These were discussed, item by item, and it was generally agreed that they showed a very satisfactory state of affairs.

Election of officers was the next item. This did not take long, there being no new nominations, and all were re-elected, en bloc.

This month's correspondence included a letter from Tom Hopperton, who has had his operation, and we were all pleased to learn that he is in very good spirits. We hope he will soon be well on the way to recovery.

The proposed meeting with the Merseyside club at Manchester was then discussed. This has been fixed for Sunday, 4th July, at the New Millgate Hotel, where we have met on previous occasions. Lunch is at 1 p.m., followed by a meeting from 2 to 5, and then afternoon tea. We are hoping for another good turn-up, and, needless to say, any members of the London and Midland clubs who can make the journey will be very welcome.

There was then a general discussion on various topics, including the forthcoming B.B.C. television programmes starring Ian Carmichael as Bertie Wooster and Dennis Price as the inimitable Jeeves; and the new Armada Books shortly to appear. These will be very welcome, but some apprehension was expressed as to how the Greyfriars stories would be treated, after certain previous efforts.

Next was a quiz of 20 questions by Frank Hancock on general O.B.B.C. topics, and this produced a triple dead heat, Geoffrey Wilde, Bill Williamson and Jack Wood all having 14 correct. Then we had another quick quiz of 10 questions by Geoffrey Wilde on Greyfriars topics, Bill Williamson and Gerry Allison being the joint winners. An interval for refreshments followed.

To conclude the meeting we played over a tape recording sent to us by Jack Corbett of the Midland club, entitled 'A Greyfriars Fantasy,' compiled by Jack himself. Jack took us round Greyfriars, and some of the surrounding country so well known to Magnet enthusiasts. We were introduced to some of the leading characters, and the whole was cleverly linked by appropriate music and sound effects. It was well done, and Jack must have taken a great deal of time and trouble over it. This concluded the meeting - and so forward to a new year.

Next meeting, Saturday, 8th May.

F. HANCOCK, Hon. Sec.

LONDON

The jubilee of the Nelson Lee Library falls in the month of June next and it was most fitting that the first meeting in connection with this anniversary was held on Sunday, April 11th, last at the home of Bob Blythe. Quite a good representative gathering assembled and we got off to a good start with two satisfactory Hamiltonian and Nelson

Lee library reports. Unfortunately with Len Packman once again being indisposed there was not much information as to the Sexton Blake catalogue's progress. However if this was a Nelson Lee meeting, Hamiltonians were given the good news about the forthcoming publication "Prospectus" which deals with the personnel etc. of Greyfriars plus the school song. These details were given by Brian Doyle who quoted the items from the "Sun" newspaper. Brian then read some of his interesting gossip columns and drew attention to the Bill Lofts article in the current issue of "The Saint" magazine wherein "Chums" is mentioned.

A short quiz by Ben Whiter was won by Roger Jenkins. Two joint seconds were Don Webster and Winifred Morss. Bob Blythe rendered a reading from the "Gem" story "Twixt Life and Death" which was written by Edwy Searles Brooks. An impromptu subjects feature when items ranging from St. Sam's to Morcove were drawn out of the hat were given by the 13 remaining members. Each had one minute to elucidate forth on the subject they drew out of the hat. Everyone surpassed themselves, most could have gone on much longer than the time allocated to them.

A discussion on badges took place, reminiscently those present were reminded of 1952 when estimates were obtained and prices fixed only to be dropped owing to lack of support. However, a fine blazer badge can be obtained; our John Addison has a specimen, he was present at the meeting. Address as to where these can be obtained, a s.e.v. to the undersigned will give the information.

Roger Jenkins reported the following gifts to the Hamiltonian Library:

Kenneth Kirby, a quantity of Gems.

Frank Cockcroft, a donation of £5.

John Wernham, printed lists showing the latest additions and amendments to the Library. There are now 1600 items available to borrowers, and all are listed complete. The London Club expresses its thanks to those mentioned above for their generosity.

Next meeting to be held at Excelsior House, Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey, on Sunday, May 16th. phone ELMbridge 3357. Kindly inform host, Eric Fayne, if attending.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

- - - - -

MERSEYSIDE

In spite of a somewhat cold day the attendance was reasonable. Among the letters received was one from David Hobbs of the U.S.A. who made his contribution to the meeting by submitting a novel anagram.

Norman Pragnell gave us details of another "get together" at the New Millgate Hotel, Manchester, on Sunday, July 4th. Frank Hancock of the Northern Club is making the arrangements and we all hope that this meeting will be as good as the one held about two years ago. Unfortunately some of our members will be unable to attend because of holidays, etc., but nevertheless Merseyside will be well represented.

After tea we tackled David Hobbs' puzzle which I was lucky enough to win with Frank Unwin in second place. The last part of the meeting was devoted to a discussion on a subject taken from an article in the C.D. of August 1961, by R. J. Godsave called "Mutual Attachments." It dealt with the likelihood of close friendships founded at school continuing in later life. The general feeling was that these friendships tended to disappear once the link of the school had been broken. There would be exceptions of course, determined largely by geography and some common interest.

I would like to correct an error in last month's report. The quiz in which we "disgraced" ourselves was one on the films which had been made about Sherlock Holmes and Sexton Blake, not questions on Holmes and Nelson Lee. Our Nelson Lee stalwarts felt that their honour was at stake here.

Pat Laffey was the lucky winner of the draw for the quiz to be given at next month's meeting which will be held on Sunday, May 9th.

BILL WINDSOR

WANTED: Good loose copies or bound volumes containing any of the following: MAGNETS - 52; 131 to 149 inclusive, 195, 205, 237, 238, 239, 277, 318, 319, 353, 400, 417, 422, 435, 752, 753, 762, 763, 809. Most issues between 821 and 890, 900, 921, 924, 925, 936, 938, 940, 942, 943, 946, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996. GEMS: 493. Some issues between 801 and 832. Also Nos. 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998. POPULARS: 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474. EARLY PENNY POPULARS: Nos. 12, 13, 45, 47, 58.

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EDITOR'S LICENCE!

By W. O. G. Lofts

Editors of boys papers were not always strictly true in what they wrote in their editorials; as we now in adult age realise. It would be too strong a word to call them outright liars - but to moderate the sense so to speak - I would call it 'editors licence.' After all by such gimmicks they were only trying to boost circulation, and obviously at times livened things up.

Our own editor correctly pointed out recently the antics of H. A. Hinton who controlled the MAGNET/GEM group of papers. I do personally know for a fact that the scurrilous letters - and many accusing him of evading war service in the first world war - were made up by the sub-editor, as he told me! These letters did stir up the indignant loyal readers to write up in defence of their editor, obviously annoyed at what some (fictitious) beast of a boy had written.

Maybe readers will also remember the amusing letters breaking out in rhyme in the MAGNET and GEM from a boy named 'Jimmy R.' of Repton. This boy was none other than G. R. Samways the chief sub-editor - who it must be emphasised wrote them at the direct order of H. A. Hinton.

Probably the most common 'lie' was the introduction of a brand new author, when it was more often or not, an old one under a new nom-de-plume. GORDON HOLME, introduced in THE BOYS FRIEND in 1904, was in fact HENRY ST. JOHN, who had been a contributor from the first issues. The majority of stories also supposed to have been written by two authors in collaboration, were written by one person. Amusing enough, the great HAMILTON EDWARDS, a predecessor of H. A. Hinton, and likewise a great user of 'editors licence' - wrote a serial in collaboration with 'ALLAN BLAIR' entitled 'ALWAYS HONEST'. This did not live up to its title, as the latter writer penned all of it.

Two heads are better than one, may have been the idea for editors using joint authors' names, and may possibly have had a psychological effect on readers, who thought they were enjoying the work of two writers in one story. Personally, and I may be wrong, I should imagine it would be very hard to write a story in collaboration with another writer.

BOYS OWN PICTURE GALLERY of 1872, was probably full of the most whopping fibs that an editor ever penned in his editorials - and also for letting readers down. The most glaring case, of offering readers free gifts in the next issue, to make sure they bought the copy - and then not issuing them - takes some beating. And it was

no wonder the paper had a short life.

One could say that the editors of the most popular papers collected today THE MAGNET and GEM, told lies - not once but hundreds of times. Did they not promise readers that next week's story would be by 'FRANK RICHARDS' or 'MARTIN CLIFFORD,' and when it appeared, it was not by the rightful owner of the pen-names at all? One could also say that readers were cheated as well, and were in many cases given a far inferior story to what they expected.

UNION JACK readers will remember the splendid feature in the late twenties called 'The Proud Tram' series - where a different author wrote the story each week. This was 100% genuine, and E. S. Brooks was voted the best writer in a popularity poll. I do however, remember H. W. Twyman remarking to me a few years ago how a National newspaper had pinched his idea - claiming that their story by different writers was original. But Twy was wrong, as the MARVEL in 1894 also had this theme - so the U.J. idea was not new.

"There is something unusual about our story this week - it consists of four parts - each of which has been written by a different author. The editor has had the audacity to write the fourth part himself. But we think this a novel departure in low-price journalism - especially as the four parts form a complete and consistant whole.

Book One is by S. Clarke Hook.

Book Two is by Edgar Hope.

Book Three is by Captain Lancaster.

Book Four is by the Editor.

If the editor had phrased himself 'by a different named author each week' maybe he could have slept soundly at night - but most unfortunately, EDGAR HOPE, CAPTAIN LANCASTER, were pen-names used by S. Clarke Hook - whilst he even had the audacity to write the last part as well! Title of the series written entirely by S. Clarke Hook, aptly called, was: "Found Guilty, or The Treachery of a Friend."

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libs: No. 126 (1st series) The Great Diamond Bluff; No. 234 (1st series) The Secret of the Oblong Chest: No. 287 (1st series) The Outlaw of Yugo-Slavia; No. 455 (2nd series) The Outlaw of Yugo-Slavia.

ERIC FAYNE,

EXCELSIOR HOUSE,

GROVE ROAD,

SURBITON.

"EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS - KING OF FANTASY AND ROMANCE"

Some further details

b y

W. J. A. HUBBARD

From the various comments I have received both in private correspondence and through the pages of the C.D. Monthly it would appear that my 1964 Annual article "Edgar Rice Burroughs - King of Fantasy and Romance" has met with almost universal approval. The compliments expressed, have, in fact, been so kind that I shall find myself qualifying for the large size hat our Editor has recently discarded - please see "The Postman Called" in the March C.D. (how about a swop Eric?)

I must particularly thank Messrs. S. Knight and W. H. Broster for their comments conveyed to me through the February C.D. Mr. Broster is quite right when he states I have always endeavoured to write articles that are generally apart from the three main topics dealt with in the C.D. In doing this I can assure readers that no disparagement is meant to "Blakiana," "Hamiltonia" or the "Nelson Lee Column" for I have written articles on those subjects myself, although not all have been published. Variety is the spice of life, however, and the C.D. must endeavour to include all aspects of the hobby, however remote, if it is to carry on and increase its subscribers. I am certain you all wish our hard working Editor to make a little profit as a reward for his labours. I certainly do.

With regard to Mr. L. S. Elliott's contribution "The Burroughs Fantasy Saga" in the March C.D. and its most pleasant and complimentary remarks on my Annual article I was guilty of an oversight with regard to "Savage Pellucidar" which is made up of four stories and not three as originally stated. The final story of the four, "Savage Pellucidar," actually written by Mr. Burroughs in 1944 but not originally published in magazine form, for some reason or other, until 1963, gives its name to the actual story in book form.

The "Tarzan" yarn mentioned by Mr. Elliott, "Tarzan and the Castaways" actually consists of three stories "Tarzan and the Champion" (a short story) (1940), "Tarzan and the Jungle Murders" (a Novelette) (1940), and "The Quest of Tarzan" (a three part serial) (1941). It is said to be quite good. Another "Tarzan" story scheduled for early appearance, which has never been published before in any form is

"Tarzan and the Madman," written by Mr. Burroughs in 1940.

Mr. Richard A. Lupoff's Biography of Mr. Burroughs, "Edgar Rice Burroughs - Master of Adventure," is scheduled to appear this summer. Mr. Lupoff is the Editor of "Canaveral Press," the authorised hard-cover publishers of the E.R.B. books. Another really first class Biography/Bibliography of Mr. Burroughs that is still to appear and which is reported as outstanding is "The Wizard of Tarzana" by Mr. Vernell Coriell, who not only is Editor of two amateur magazines devoted to Mr. Burroughs and his work but is also the founder of an American Old Boys Book Club called "The Burroughs Bibliophiles," which seems to be a most flourishing institution.

The Science Fiction stories written by Mr. Burroughs' two sons, Mr. Hulbert and Mr. John Coleman Burroughs, in collaboration, were published in various American magazines in 1939/41. Mr. J. C. Burroughs also joined with his wife in writing another story "Hybrid of Horror" published in the magazine "Thrilling Mystery Stories" in July, 1940. Incidentally Mr. John Coleman Burroughs was also responsible for the only "ghost" story in the Burroughs saga "John Carter and the Giant of Mars" (1941), written in collaboration with his father and published in "Amazing Stories" in January of that year. This story has recently been reprinted, together with another novelette, "Skeleton Men of Jupiter" (1943) in book form under the title of "John Carter of Mars." It is very obvious, however, that the yarn is far below the usual Burroughs level and is full of facts that do not correspond with the other stories in the "Martian" series.

I confirm that "Pinnacle" have also published a large number of "Tarzan" paper backs. Other well known British publishers who have been associated with Mr. Burroughs' books are Messrs. Methuen & Co., Messrs. Cassell & Co., Messrs. George Newnes Ltd., and John Lane, the Bodley Head.

The particulars Mr. Elliott has given about "Tarzan and the Lion Man" being published in "Tit-Bits" are most interesting and it would seem that all the leading American Burroughs fans are quite unaware of the story's appearance in this publication. If Mr. Elliott will kindly let me have the relevant details through the Editor of the C.D. I shall be most pleased to pass them on.

Finally, I would challenge Mr. Elliott to produce an article on some aspect of Mr. Burroughs' work for the C.D. and would suggest he should take as his subject the "Tarzan" story "Tarzan and the Ant Men" and why the American and British editions of the story differed so widely. Should Mr. Elliott be able to unravel that mystery then

he will be entitled to a prominent place among admirers of Edgar Rice Burroughs' work.

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton-on-Trent): I have been very interested in Danny's Diary, particularly his comments on the Gem stories. I read a lot of them in the reprint days, and it proves what a haphazard way the tales were presented the second time. Besides Levison appearing several times as "Snipe," he had to be altered a few times to "Gore" and at least once to "Crooke."

(Such incongruities as appeared in the reprint period were mainly due to certain stories being omitted, which caused the seasons to pass too quickly. The designation of Levison as "Snipe," though it did not last long, was a blot on the reprint period, and one which the editor could and should have avoided. -ED.)

JOHN McMAHON (Uddingston): I enjoyed the article "Hence Beatlemania." I am one of the egghead brigade, and it makes my Scots blood boil to pay 4/- to have six or seven hairs chopped down. What a good idea to have a badge or necktie to link C.D. enthusiasts.

CHARLES DAY (Keighley): I have just finished the Sexton Blake story by Martin Thomas, and what a terrific story it was too. This was more like the old set-up with a vengeance. All it lacked was the "Guv'nor" touch from Tinker. For me - entirely satisfactory. I am looking forward to the first of the reprints. I do hope it isn't modernised. Anyway, hats off to Mr. Howard Baker and all concerned.

IAN WHITMORE (Shepperton): I recently acquired the Popper's Island series of the Magnet. I think it a fine series. Rebellion series have always been popular with me. I have never yet been able to obtain the "Judge Jeffries" series - still, that is part of the enjoyment of our hobby - looking out for the old papers and, like Christmas, the anticipation is often just as exciting.

STANLEY A. PACHON (Bethlehem. U.S.A.): I wish to tell you how I have enjoyed every issue of the Digest and the current Annual. A doff of the hat to Mr. Lofts for his untiring research and for his many fine articles and bits of information.

W.O.G. LOFTS (London): I certainly accept the editor's challenge - and will in the near future write an article on the GIRLS FRIEND LIBRARY. Although I can confirm Frank Shaw's quotation that Gerald Richard Mant Hearne wrote for the Aldine Robin Hood Library (actually under the pen-name of 'Richard Mant') I personally doubt if he ever wrote a Sexton Blake yarn - certainly I have never seen his name in official records going back to 1896. "George Richmond" I can confirm our editors statement that it was G. R. Samways - Mr. Samways also used the pen-name of "Paul Masters" in the GEM.

HENRY WEBB (Woodbridge): I was interested in the letter from Nicholas Bennett of London re. Roland Davies. - I do know of him - about 1940 or about that time he had a studio in Ipswich, and a lot of his original work was on show in the windows of Footmans big store. He started a cartoon film about a cart horse - called 'Come On Steve' but - it all fell through and he lost most of his money over the deal. I was told by my Art School Teacher at the time that I should go down to his studio and see if I could get work with him, because he was wanting artists. I was always getting into bother at Art School for cartooning, during the wrong lessons (margin drawings). That's about all I know of him. I'm not sure whether he still lives in Ipswich.

JOHN STEELE (Accra): I must say I like the style and lay-out of the new S.B.L. I hope it will be with us for a long time. But why the 5th series? I thought we only had 1st, 2nd, and 3rd - or was the "new look" period regarded as a 4th?

WILLIAM SHARPE (Australia): W. J. A. Hubbard was tough in his comment on the Annual. There are always articles, of course, that don't appeal to us for various reasons, and, vice versa, there are those which have a special appeal to us as related to our specialised interests. I think the broadening of our scope to take in the William books, Rice Burroughs, Leslie Charteris, etc, is a very good thing, and I am all for it, provided they don't take over the whole show. Not that I see any danger of that. I know you wouldn't allow it.

M. HALL (Penryn): I have the first four issues of the new S.B.L. and greatly enjoyed them, especially Nos. 2 & 3. What a thrill to follow the exploits of old Pedro again, just like old times. If these are a sample of the new Blake series, more power to Mr. Baker's elbow.

L. S. ELLIOTT (London): Re-reading the excellent article, by J. Maclaren-Ross, in the "LONDON MAGAZINE", November 1963, I am again reminded of his ignorance, of any real knowledge, of the "NEW - LOOK" authors. "PETER SAXON," "Wm. A. BALLINGER," "RICHARD WILLIAMS" and

"DESMOND REED" are all separate individuals to him, whereas, as is known to "S.B." enthusiasts, two, maybe three, are our editor W. Howard Baker, and "DESMOND REED," of course, covers a multitude of rewrites, etc.

Many well known authors, - JOHN CREASEY is an eminent example - now acknowledge their various "Noms - de- plume." I think this is better, and a more adult approach to the matter. After all, we are not in our kindergartens.

C. S. RAVEN (Ulverston): I do so look forward to receiving my copy of C.D. every month; it brings back so many memories of the "Old Days" when we could go out and get the Magnet, Gem, etc. As we grow older I think we appreciate the old papers more than when we were young. Do you think along these lines or am I being too sentimental?

R E V I E W S

"THE MAN WITH THE IRON CHEST"

Richard Williams

This is a very good and remarkable Sexton Blake novel. Good in its construction and the way it is put over, and remarkable in that in an otherwise all male cast - apart from a few filtrations by Mrs. Bardell - the only feminine role is played by an elderly Victorian of some 86 summers including the one in which she desires Blake visit her at her rambling old country residence in a remote corner of Sussex. Blake's peace with a particularly alluring stretch of English countryside is marred by the arrival of the drug-crazed delinquent grandson of his hostess, who, taking over the role of Robin Hood, attempts to impale him with an arrow.

It is the starting point of one of the most bizarre cases Blake and Tinker have had cause to handle, and they do so in the manner of their old Baker Street partnership days, when more often than not they had to rely on their own united efforts to bring to a satisfactory conclusion any case they found themselves engaged upon. For 007 and the ageless Hank Hanson this would, for obvious reasons, have been a disappointing affair; but to the less susceptible Blake it was a satisfactory if somewhat unremunerative assignment.

Almost - but not quite - a "U" certificate S.B.L., though of a merit which should speed the return of Richard Williams to the pages of the Library.

Walter Webb.

WANTED FOR QUESTIONINGWilfred McNully

Blake wakened to the sound of his telephone bell. In answer to his quiet "Sexton Blake here" there was a silence followed by the sound of a receiver being replaced.

Refreshed by a good night's sleep Blake dressed, shaved, took Pedro for a walk and then visited the butts belonging to Potts, McKindley, Boddy and Potts - bespoke gunsmiths.

He noticed that someone had left a standing man target in position, raised his Luger slowly, drew a bead on the painted heart on the target - and fired. A neat black hole appeared in the heart of the Standing Man - and the heart began to bleed.

From that moment Blake and his assistants worked against time in an attempt to prove that this was an accident and not the deliberate murder of a client by Sexton Blake.

"You've pulled off some near miracles in your time Blake" said Grimwald. "You've got to clear yourself of this charge - and you've got to do it in twenty four hours that's the most I can allow you."

'Wanted for Questioning' is the story of those twenty-four hours; a story packed with incident and excitement; hope, disappointment and sometimes fear; with the tension mounting as the hours ticked away, and Blake, Tinker, Paula and Marion followed clue after clue without success. Then a chance remark made by a stranger in a pub gave Blake the lead he needed to prove his own innocence and bring the true murderer to justice.

A story to suit all tastes and all ages.

Margaret Cooke

WE ARE WILLIE &
TIRED TIM OF CHIPS



Aligh here for good cheer!

LONG SERIALBy O. W. Wadham

One of the most interesting serials to appear in Chips was that great story drama, "The Ticket-of-Leave Man;" or "Shadowed By Scotland Yard." It was also one of the longest. Well under way in an issue I have dated March 27, 1909, it was still going strong in the

issue of December 10, 1910.

Does any collector recall how long the yarn lasted?

A Wonder Library reprint must have been severely pruned.

REVIEWS

Frank Richards

THE ARMADA GREYFRIARS BOOKS

(4 issues @ 2/6)

We have, in these columns, often said that it would be impossible to publish many of Charles Hamilton's greatest series in "book form" without pruning, and this worthy effort by Armada Paperbacks seems to be proof of it. It seems to us that two Magnet stories (of the length of the vintage selected) would fit snugly into one book. For that reason BUNTER THE RACKETEER (which is actually the newest of the stories), coming from two Magnets of 1936 (illustrated by Chapman) is probably the most successful from purely the reprint point of view. It is a well-written story of a robbery at Popper Court, with plenty of fun and action.

BUNTER'S HOLIDAY CRUISE covers three of the stories from the 5-story series of 1933 (illustrated by Shields). Bunter persuades the chums to go on a pleasure cruise, without disclosing to them that they have to pay for their board and lodging.

BUNTER AND THE PHANTOM OF THE TOWERS is the 3-story Christmas series of 1931 - one of the best Yuletide series of all. Unfortunately, the episode where Bunter finds the letter which bookmakers have sent to Orris is omitted, yet it has quite a bearing on the plot. THE TOUGH GUY OF GREYFRIARS is the 5-story series about Strong Alonzo, published in 1933 (illustrated by Shields, like the Phantom story). This was one of Frank Richards' rare ventures into fantasy, and a very successful one at that. Being the longest series, it suffers the most from pruning.

Not that the pruning is badly done. The stories are not mutilated like the Rookwood tales in the days of Knockout. Clearly a longish series, like Strong Alonzo, would have been more successful if published in two books. We would suggest that when pruning is done, as it obviously must be sometimes, a careful general shrinkage, particularly of some of the more facetious dialogue, would be preferable to the wholesale omission of of episodes.

On points these stories are real winners. The opening issues give promise, and we think they will be very successful.