

Collectors' Digest

Vol. 15
No. 169

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OF
CHIPS

JANUARY 1961



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THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

FOUNDED in 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Volume 15. Number 169.

JANUARY, 1961.

Price 1s. 6d.

Editor:
ERIC FAYNE,
Excelsior House,
Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey.

HOW THEY BEGAN

No. 1.

THE PENNY POPULAR

THE 1931 NUMBER OF THE PENNY POPULAR CONTAINS THREE SPECIAL ONE SHILLING STORIES
TOM MERRY NEW BOY! | THE CASE OF THE TREASURE HUNTERS! | VOLCANO ISLAND!



Early illustration of a doctor on his first day at Bristol



First published in October, 1912. For a number of years contained stories of Sexton Blake, St. Jim's and Jack, Sam and Pete. Owing to the war, was suspended in March, 1918.

Re-appeared on the bookstalls in January, 1919 and ran until February, 1931. A total of 896 issues. From 1920, or thereabouts, was known simply as "The Popular."

Chiefly a re-print paper, but will always be famed for presenting the new RIO KID stories from the pen of Charles Hamilton, under his pen-name of Ralph Redway.

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Sexton Blake Today

THE LATEST NOVELS IN THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY

Reviewed by Walter Webb

DANGER ON THE FLIP SIDE (No. 465)

JACK TREVOR STORY

A highly secret mathematical formula of international importance is the object of certain parties, including British and other intelligence services. The Syndicate is also interested. The secret, nothing less than a means of terminating all life on this planet, is contained on an ordinary gramophone record, which falls into the hands of two juniors of the St. Garlick's Remove during an educational tour of Paris. Thereafter, St. Garlick's forms the background of the struggle for possession of the vital formula in the seasonal atmosphere of a white Christmas.

It may appear to old readers of the MAGNET that the author had their favourite school in mind when he created certain characters for installation within the walls of St. Garlick's. Thus the name of the Renovative Bloater, might have been inspired by that of Fish, Mr. Welch born of Mr. Quelch, and the character of the fat boy, Crump, derived from Billy Bunter. Comparing the masters of the schools in question, the fact emerges that St. Garlick's enjoyed a diversion never at any time experienced by the masters of Greyfriars. The oft over-heated brows of Quelch and Prout were never relieved by the cool, soothing fingers of a Mille. Colette, a French matron, blonde and beautiful, who contributed materially both to the gaiety of life at St. Garlick's and to the interest of the case for Sexton Blake Investigations.

The author's admirers are likely to moisten their lips in silent enjoyment of this story, though any political Blake may number amongst his fans, are more likely to gnash their teeth in silent frustration!

Rating

Very Good.

DEAD MAN'S DESTINY (No. 466)

MARTIN THOMAS

How Blake's assistant came to be known only as just "Tinker" has been a matter of much speculation amongst S.B.L. readers for many years. Hitherto, Tinker's background has been very sketchy indeed. Now, here, it is vividly illustrated - and how!

Every now and again there rises above even the excellence of the modern Blake story one that is outstanding in every way - novels like "Last Days of Berlin," and "Sea Tigers." In this same category I place - "Dead Man's Destiny." Says Blake to Tinker: "Old son, I'm going to give you the best Christmas present you've ever had in your whole life!" In giving us the best Christmas story of Blake ever to be published in the S.B.L. author and editor have presented every reader with a similar reasonable offering.

It has everything - good characterisation, a sound plot; ingenious unfolding of same; humour; and some of the most moving passages I have ever read in a Blake novel. With but one notable exception, all the stars which have glittered from time to time in the Blake firmament are gathered in the detective's penthouse flat in Baker Street on Christmas Eve to celebrate the momentous occasion of Tinker's discovered parentage - Blake, Tinker, Paula, Merion, Louise, Millie, Mrs. Bardell, Coutts and Grimwald of the C.I.D., Splash Kirby, Beulah and Hazel the Gentle Giant.

This - for me - the story of the year, should bring a gleam of appreciation to the eye of even the sternest critic of the magazine.

Rating

Excellent.

GENERAL COMMENTARY

RESIDENT RASCAL. The suggestion by Michael Moorcock in the C.D. Annual for a resident crook is a good one, for we need a few stock villains to replace the old, out-dated ones lost to us - in some cases, regrettably - at the outbreak of war. The idea of Jack

Trevor Story creating such a criminal on the lines of a Waldo, a Raffles or even a Dirk Dolland, is a fascinating prospect, which would no doubt appeal to the majority. At least, no harm would be done in giving such a character a trial run. Of those criminals who have already appeared, the one by far who is most likely to attain any measure of popularity in my view is Orlando Dante. A unique and interesting type.

AN AGENT FOR CRAILLE? Old characters rarely regain their former popularity in a new era. In most cases they are - quite rightly - allowed to die. But I think in the case of Blake's former ally of the British Secret Service - James "Granite" Grant - this might well prove an exception. Today the S.B.L. is publishing stories the kind in which Grant regularly appeared. Political intrigue and the like. Six feet of brawn and muscle, the ex-king's spy would fit like a glove into such a narrative, as an agent of Craille's. He is the sort of character who moves with the times. Or, to be more exact, a character the times cannot outpace.

* * * * *

THIS MONTH'S COMPETITION

In February, No. 2 of our new "HOW THEY BEGAN" series will appear on the cover of COLLECTORS' DIGEST. You don't know which of the famous old papers will figure as No. 2 in the series. We invite you, however, to make a guess at the name of the artist who drew the cover which will form OUR cover next month. You don't have to guess the name of the periodical - only the artist. Jot it down on a postcard, with your own name and address, and send to the editor of the C.D.

If only one reader guesses correctly, a magnificent high-gloss photograph of the picture, 9" x 6", suitable for framing, will be awarded. In the event of more than one winner, a fine postcard photograph of the picture will be sent to the first SIX successful entrants. This month, ONLY ONE entry will be accepted from any subscriber's family. And, please, postcards only. Closing date: January 18th.

* * * * *

RESULT OF GREYFRIARS CUP CONTEST, 1960

This year's Contest was very kindly and ably judged by Mr. G. R. Samways, and the following is Mr. Samways' own summing up of the result:

"As the adjudicator of this contest, I should like to congratulate all the competitors upon the excellence of their entries. The standard of work was remarkably high, and all four issues of "THE NEW POPULAR" made interesting reading.

After careful examination of the entries, I have decided that the Greyfriars Cup shall be awarded to THE MIDLAND CLUB.

For all-round excellence, this production qualifies for the first place. The Sexton Blake story "The Chalk Pit Mystery" is ingenious and intriguing; the Nelson Lee story "Randforth Minor Puts Matters Right" shows conspicuous merit; whilst the amusing vignette, "Bunter's Breaking-Up Dream" is in the true Hamilton tradition, and completes a splendid trio of stories. May I add a word of praise for the neat and attractive

presentation of the production?

The nearest challenger to the winner is the London Club, with another excellent number, in which the Sexton Blake story "Face Value" is outstanding.

Highly commended are the Nelson Lee story "St. Frank's Return to the Congo" of the Northern Club and the Sexton Blake story "The Murder of Charles Latreay" of the Merseyside Club.

My warmest congratulations to the winners of this attractive contest. To the losers I would quote the old philosophic slogan:-

"THEIRS TODAY - THERE'S TOMORROW!"

Thank you, Mr. Samways. COLLECTORS' DIGEST congratulates our Midland Club on its well-won victory.

* * * * *

THAT "GREYFRIARS HERALD" ILLUSTRATION

BILL LOFTS writes us as follows:-

In view of George Sellars' interesting discovery of a Gem illustration under a Magnet title, I sent my copy of Greyfriars Herald No. 1 to Mr. G. R. Samways, wondering whether he could shed some light on the mystery. Mr. Samways' comments are as follows:-

"I am grateful to you for letting me see No. 1 of "The Greyfriars Herald." What happy memories it revives! My own share in the production included the Editorial, the alphabetical footlines, all the poems (including the verse librettos to Bubble and Squeak,) letters to the editor, the serial story, the prizefighting article, "Shots at Goal" and "The launching of the Herald." The Herlock Sholmes story in this first number was written by Charles Hamilton.

Regarding the error discovered by a COLLECTORS' DIGEST reader, I cannot recall whether this caused any fuss at the time. Editor Hinton was responsible for the illustrations which went into the Herald. He kept a lot of Magnet and Gem illustrations in a drawer, and had them reproduced from time to time. In this instance, I suspect, he hadn't a Magnet cover handy, so took a chance and put an old Gem cover under a Magnet heading. This reproduction was so small that Hinton obviously thought that the ordinary reader would not notice the substitution.

I doubt very much indeed if he, or even I, thought that some 45 years later there would be lynx-eyed collectors scrutinising thumbnail sketches and printed words and finding blunders. Had we foreseen this, we should probably have been more careful! This was certainly not the first time that old illustrations had been used in new publications, and to use old drawings obviously cut down production costs."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Lofts wrote us, congratulating Mr. Sellars on his sleuthing - and our "lynx-eyed reader" came forth with another discovery. Mr. Sexton Blake Sellars points out that the picture of "Harry Wharton" in the Editorial heading was actually a Macdonald drawing of Kerr, taken from the 1915 Gem "Son of Scotland."

Further to Mr. Samways' interesting comment, it is fascinating to mention that, at a recent meeting of the London Club, George Sewell produced two Magnet covers - one by Arthur Clarke from a Magnet of about 1909 and the second from a Magnet of the middle thirties, drawn by Shields. The covers were almost identical, and it was clear that, in this instance, Shields copied Clarke, line by line. One of these days, in the Digest, we

will produce these two covers side by side, for your edification.

A further instance occurs to us. A Pluck illustration for a "Specs" story of 1906 was actually used eleven years later to illustrate a Rookwood yarn in the Penny Popular.

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RESULT OF "WHARTON LODGE" COMPETITION

The 1st Prize in this contest is awarded to ROGER JENKINS, Havant, who gave no less than six of the correct adjectives in a single entry. The 2nd prize is awarded to FRANK UNWIN, who gave four in a single entry.

This competition looked a good deal easier than it was. Mr. Frank Richards wrote us as follows: "I am rather entertained by your idea of an acrostic on 'Wharton Lodge.' At first it seemed rather a poser to think up twelve adjectives for one noun. But this is the kind of thing I can do, like my Latin Parodies, sitting in my armchair with my eyes shut, and I found it amusing to think up a list. How's that, umpire?"

Here is Mr. Richards' list, which forms the correct solution to the competition. It also gives us, in 12 words, Mr. Richards' idea of Wharton Lodge.

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BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

I have been asked by a number of readers if I can make the lists of Blake titles and authors longer and more regular. The answer is: yes, I can, and will - but it will mean shorter articles. The "Gilbert Chester" story will run to about three instalments, so that for the first three months of this year the quota of Blake titles will be small. After that, however, the quota will be large, for I aim to complete both the 1st and 2nd series within the year - and some of the early current series as well if possible. I do emphasise that Blake articles apart from being shorter, will in no way be less interesting than (I hope) they have always been. Should it be that any material I receive is too long for one issue, it will appear in two instalments.

JOSIE PACKMAN

THE "GILBERT CHESTER" STORY

By W. O. G. Lofts

Foreword

Ever since my first acquaintance with the name "Gilbert Chester" now some 16 years ago, this nom-de-plume for a Sexton Blake author has always been of great interest to me.

The actual circumstances of how I first read a "Gilbert Chester" yarn are, indeed, a story in itself; but rather than bore the reader with too much detail they are briefly as follows:

In 1944 I was serving in the Army, in war-torn Burma. Whilst on patrol one day, behind enemy lines in the jungle, I came across a 'basher' (hut). With bren-gun at the ready I cautiously entered, and was most relieved to find no Japs in occupation! There were signs, however, that British troops had previously been there, for a number of old English newspapers and paper-backed novels were strewn about the floor in disorder. The occupants had either left in a great hurry, or else, tragically, they had been taken prisoner. One of these novels was a Sexton Blake Library, and this I picked up to read during my rest time. Its title, aptly enough, was "The Paper Salvage Crime" (3rd series No. 30) and the author's name was "Gilbert Chester."

This was the first Sexton Blake story I ever read, and the fine

tale with its crisp, semi-American flavour prompted me to become a regular reader of the Sexton Blake Library from then onwards.

Discharged from the Army and back in London, I was rather mystified at the absence of "Gilbert Chester" stories in the S.B.L. after "The Riddle of the Night Garage," in February 1949. I wrote to the editor - then Mr. L. E. Pratt - enquiring whether future stories written by "Mr. Chester" would appear in the S.B.L. His reply was, to say the least, most disappointing: "Gilbert Chester is quite well," he said, "but I cannot say if any future stories will appear from his pen."

Some years later, in 1953, I became a subscriber to the C.D. and was most interested to read, in an article by Walter Webb, that the real name of "Gilbert Chester" was H. H. Clifford Gibbons. (Subsequently I received confirmation of this from Mr. H. W. Twyman, former editor of the "Union Jack")

I then set out to try and locate this author, but despite assistance from Mr. Twyman in giving me "Chester's" last known address at Rickmansworth, Herts, and further help from George E. Rochester, the well-known boys' writer of flying stories, I never succeeded in finding him. I must have travelled hundreds of miles in search of this elusive author, but he seemed to have completely disappeared from the face of the earth. Then, as late as last August, it was whilst I was visiting Walter Webb in Birmingham that he kindly gave me the address of "Gilbert Chester's" daughter - Miss Molly Gibbons - who lived at Brighton.

By this time both Walter and myself had assumed, from certain facts at our disposal, that "Chester" had died some time within the last few years; and now, at long last, there seemed to be a likely prospect of my obtaining the information I had for so long been seeking!

I made a special journey to Brighton, only to learn - much to my dismay - that Miss Gibbons had moved to London some 18 months previously.

Another journey, this time to South London - not far from the home of Blakiana - and I found Miss Gibbons. From that moment my search was in every way ended.

In all probability the facts and data, in its wealth of detail, so kindly supplied by Miss Gibbons makes it the most interesting, informative and revealing 'biographical documentary' on a Sexton Blake author ever to be published - it is certainly the most intimate.

It is also pleasing to know that the little pieces I have written about "Gilbert Chester" from time to time are, in the main, factually correct.

Readers may note with some surprise that "Gilbert Chester's" year of birth is 1888, and not 1890 as stated recently by Walter Webb.

On Walter's own admission, this was a slip of the pen.

W. O. G. LOFTS.

"Gilbert Chester" was born at No. 3, Northcommon Road, Ealing, London, at 4.20 p.m. on 17th Aug st, 1898. He was registered Hornsby Clifford Gibbons, but at his christening (at Lindfield, Sussex) the name of Harry was added, after his mother's brother who died in his childhood. Hornsby was a family name on his father's side. His full name, therefore, was Harry Hornsby Clifford Gibbons.

"Gilbert Chester" was the eldest child of Dr. Clifford Gibbons, a West-end dentist, and Lillie Diana Gibbons, nee Benkert, an American lady born in Philadelphia of mixed Dutch and French descent. Dr. Gibbons' father, Sills Clifford Gibbons, was also a dentist, with a practice in the West-end and another in Brighton. He lived at Great Walstead, Lindfield, Sussex. His first wife ("Gilbert Chester's" Grandmother) was also an American, nee Martha Ward of Georgia. On the male side, however, the family is of Kentish stock. Thus, the reader can see that "Gilbert Chester" was quite correct in stating that he was half American.

Taught at home until the age of eight, "Chester" was then sent to Durston House Preparatory School, Ealing. Shortly after his 14th birthday he entered St. Paul's School. on the Science side (probably in the September of 1902), and matriculated at 16. Very keen on sports, particularly Rugger, boxing, swimming and water-polo, he had many a ducking from Field Marshall Montgomery, who also attended St. Paul's at that period. "Monty" however, was studying for the Army, and was nine months his senior. Montgomery was very well liked at the school, and was nicknamed "Monkey". In giving the reader this information, I should make it clear that Monty and Chester were only acquainted during the short time at this school; they were not intimate friends.

In 1904 Chester spent the longer summer vacation visiting some of his cousins in America. The journey took in part of Canada and was as far afield as San Francisco - not bad going, for those early days of the century! On his return he continued studying at St. Paul's, leaving at the age of eighteen.

The original idea of his parents was that "Gilbert" should go into partnership with his father as a dentist. "Chester" studied hard, and his examinations took him to the finals. During this time, he was, of course, obtaining quite a lot of practical experience in mechanics at his father's surgery at Stratford Place, London, W.1., and he now began to take a great interest in the "new" motor industry. Meanwhile although the time was passing quickly his father did not seem in a

hurry for him to take his final examinations. And thus it was that "Gilbert" decided to wait no longer; he would make a career for himself in the new profession in which so many enterprising young men were now entering.

Eventually he designed and produced his own light car (similar to the present day sports car - not an actual racing machine), calling it the "Atalanta". He was Managing Director of the firm, "The Atalanta Light Car Co." situated in the Woolwich area. The Company Secretary was N. P. Howieson, and auditor and, later, his brother-in-law.

About this time he started to write, and had several articles published in the Palestine Exploration Fund journal. He also wrote plays and novels for his own amusement and took part in amateur dramatics produced by Charles or John Hawtry - one of whom was a well-known figure on the London stage.

At the outbreak of war in 1914 he tried to enlist in the Navy, but was rejected owing to being a Draughtsman-Designer - a "badge-man", equivalent to a top-priority reserved occupation in the last war. After more than one abortive attempt to join he was finally accepted, in 1916, by the Army, but only on postponed service. He was, in fact, warned that he might never be called up - and he never was! On a Government Order he had to convert his motor factory into making shells. At the end of the war the Government contract naturally ceased, and as he did not have enough capital to re-convert the factory into car manufacturing, especially at a time of immediate post-war slump - he voluntarily wound up the Company.

Always fond of music, "Gilbert Chester" had been present at the birth of Rag-time during his boyhood visit to America. He played the piano, and, having taught himself the theory of music, composed for his own amusement. As a young man he went to see many Musical Comedies. He saw "The Merry Widow" starring Lily Elsie, many times - not just for the show but to study closely the music and orchestration. Somewhere about this time he met a Mr. R. C. Jenkins, who was producing pantomimes. For this Mr. Jenkins he wrote virtually the whole score for a production of "Dick Whittington" the only exception being one or two contemporary "pop" numbers which were interpolated in the show. He wrote this music under the pseudonym of "Clifford Warwick." One of the numbers which he played and sang was called "Back to London." It is believed that one of the many theatres in which this production may have appeared was the Watford Palace which, although a very small theatre, was on the circuit. The conductor, unfortunately, was taken ill more than once during the various performances of this show, and when this happened "Gilbert Chester" took over the baton. Although he

rightly protested that he was not a member of the Musicians' Union the orchestra were only too ready to accept him, no alternative being available at short notice; for without a conductor it would have been a case of - no music - no show - no pay!

In a previous short article on "Gilbert Chester" I wrote that he was related to Carroll Gibbons of the Savoy Hotel fame, but I have been informed by Miss Gibbons that there was no relationship at all. The information had been given to me in good faith, and the possibility is that as both of them were half American, and both conductors, with the same surname - my informant must have been confused by the amazing similarities between the two Gibbons.

Round about 1920, one of the most prolific writers of juvenile fiction in Fleet Street was Andrew Geoffrey Murray, who wrote under numerous pen-names. Tall and dark, similar in looks to the late Jack Buchanan, he also owned his own publishing business ("Nicholas Islay" was one of his hard-covered book names.) The circumstances of "Chester's" first meeting with A.G. Murray are not clear. An elderly author once told me that they were slightly related, but Miss Gibbons said that she was not aware of this.

"Chester" wrote a great deal for A.G. Murray, using the latter's name, for both the juvenile and women's fiction market. Later, more of the writing fell on "Chester's" shoulders when Murray became ill - and very eccentric! Binding this very tedious, "Gilbert Chester" finally decided to approach the Amalgamated Press about writing Sexton Blake stories in his own right.

(To be continued)

* * * * *

G. H. TEED'S FIRST STORY

By Walter Webb

The first published story of any author has a particular interest of its own. So what can one say about G.H. Teed's first Sexton Blake novel, "DEAD MEN'S SHOES"? Frankly, it was poorly done, and, to one fully accustomed to the author's well-known style, very difficult to believe that he really wrote it. The writing is immature, yet with slight promise of better things being accomplished when the author has gained more experience on having settled down in his profession. The fragility of the plot, and the subsequent lack of conviction of what there is of it, make - and there is no intention to pun - tedious reading.

But there was one little point of interest, this being the introduction of what the author termed "Detective Carter, the famous American

detective." The only famous U.S. detective was the well-known Nick Carter, believed to have been created by the late John Russell Coryell in the NEW YORK WEEKLY, somewhere in the 1880's, who was followed by the ill-fated Frederick van Renssalaer Dey, who committed felo de se in New York.

Not a theory, but a thought arrested in passing: Did G. H. Teed, in view of his introduction of what may have been intended to be the famous Nick Carter in his first Sexton Blake story, write stories of this character for the American market in the early 1900's? Certainly the author's considerable knowledge of America as demonstrated in "Dead Men's Shoes" and many more Blake novels, would have been of immense help to him in the turning out of such stories.

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SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY TITLES AND AUTHORS (1st series)
(continued)

No. 258	The Riders of the Sands.....(G. Grant, Mile Julie).....	W. W. Sayer
	(Reprinted in 2nd series No. 426)	
No. 259	The Case of the Woman in Black.....	A. Murray
No. 260	The Lighthouse Mystery.....(Dr. Ferraro).....	R. C. Armour
No. 261	The Earl's Return.....	W. M. Graydon
No. 262	The Rajah of Ghanapore.....(Gunga Dass).....	H. E. Hill
No. 263	The Case of the Trade Secret.....	J. W. Bobin
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No. 267	The Case of the Amber Crown.....(A. Steels).....	A. Murray
No. 268	The Secret of the Safe.....	A. Edgar
No. 269	The Mystery of Glyn Castle.....	L. H. Brooks
No. 270	The Affair of the Seven Mummy Cases.....	W. J. Bayfield
No. 271	The Secret Emerald Mines.....(Rymer).....	G. H. Teed
No. 272	The Case of the "Wizard" Jockey.....	W. J. Bayfield
No. 273	North of 55°.....(Lawless).....	A. Murray
No. 274	The Green Eyes.....	E. S. Brooks
No. 275	The Case of the Island Princess.....(Dr. Ferraro).....	R. C. Armour
No. 276	A Legacy of Vengeance.....(Plummer).....	J. W. Bobin
No. 277	The Oyster-Bed Mystery.....(A. Steels).....	A. Murray
No. 278	The Case of the Cabaret Girl.....(G. Grant, Mile Julie).....	W. W. Sayer
No. 279	The Case of the Cotton Beetle (Nantucket).....	A. Murray
No. 280	The Sun God.....	R. C. Armour
No. 281	The Face in the Film.....(Topper).....	O. Merland
No. 282	The House at Waterloo.....	E. S. Brooks

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS

ROBERT BLYTHE'S new address is 40, Ellesmere Road, Dollis Hill, London, N.W.10.

Nelson Lee Column

(Conducted by JACK WOOD)

First, may I wish all my correspondents, answered and unanswered, a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

During 1961 I hope we shall have many new "faces" in this Column, but what better at a time of natural sentiment and reflection than another chapter from the memories of the late Herbert Leckenby, to whom the hobby owes so much.

THE CAREER OF NELSON LEE

(Continuing Chapter 13 of MEMORIES OF OLD BOYS' PAPERS,
written by the late HERBERT LECKENBY in 1943.)

The new Nelson Lee Story was entitled "The Silver Dwarf" and it was a fitting successor to "Birds of Prey". In writing it Maxwell Scott must have been in his element, for not only would he have to study railway timetables, but Lloyds list of ship sailings as well.

"The Silver Dwarf" had the kind of plot which has been used many times and oft, the dispute over the rightful heir to vast estates. The title of this particular story was derived from a silver statuette which had stood on a mantelpiece in an ancestral hall. The all-important papers reposed in it, and the search for it when it disappeared took Nelson Lee and his villainous rival to the other ends of the earth. In Maxwell Scott's inimitable way first one and then the other was in the lead, and once more Nelson Lee faced death in the cause of justice and the right.

When the chase reached the antipodes "The Silver Dwarf" came to an end only to be followed immediately by a sequel or Book 2, with the title "The Missing Heir." In this the thrills were continued over the other half of the world, the return journey being made via New York.

The BOYS' REALM made its appearance about this time and it was not long before a Nelson Lee story was introduced, "Nelson Lee's Rival" being the title, and a French detective the rival. It was followed by another, "The Hidden Will". Both these stories were illustrated by Fred Bennett. I really should not attempt to criticise the artists, for, as I have said before, I could never draw a straight line. But I believe a famous man of letters once said one need not be a carpenter to criticise a chair, so I will venture to say I was disappointed when Fred Bennett was given the job of illustrating a Nelson Lee story. To

me, at any rate, his characters always appeared to look like tramps, even his society men reminded me of the broken-down 'swells' of the music-halls. As for the occasional women, I cannot believe they ever looked like he portrayed them, even when allowing for the fashion of the period. Anyhow, whether Fred Bennett had anything to do with it or not, these two stories did not appeal to me as the earlier BOYS' FRIEND serials had done. Still, it may be fairer not to blame Mr. Bennett at all but to suggest that perhaps Maxwell Scott was not in his usual form.

About this time the BOYS' HERALD joined the "Friend" and the "Realm" and in No. 2 "Nelson Lee's Pupil" was started. The pupil was Nipper, making his first appearance. He was destined to become as famous as his master. Unlike Sexton Blake with Tinker, Nelson Lee only 'found' Nipper once. To digress for a moment, I mean by this that when Cecil Hayter wrote his stories of Sexton Blake at school, and later at Oxford, for the BOYS' HERALD, the detective was supposed to have found Tinker during the run of the latter story. Yet, when in later life he had settled down to his chosen profession, he had brought to book many criminals and gone through countless adventures before there was any mention of Tinker, and then they met under quite different circumstances. And, of course, to make it more paradoxical the stories of Blake's pre-detective days appeared in the BOYS' HERALD at a much later period.

However, to return to Nelson Lee and Nipper. The boy was supposed to be a street urchin with a father known as Fiddler Dick. The plot of the story concerned a buried treasure, half of which belonged to Fiddler Dick and, after he was murdered, to Nipper. In Maxwell Scott's favourite fashion the chase took the characters roaming to foreign lands, including an island in the Pacific. In the end, of course, Nelson Lee adopted Nipper as his ward, under the latter's rightful name of Richard Hamilton, and in future stories he always played a part.

Harry Lane, an artist who did a great amount of work for the A.P. illustrated "Nelson Lee's Pupil". I cannot recollect him doing the same for any other Nelson Lee serial, however.

After a rather lengthy absence Nelson Lee returned to the pages of the BOY'S FRIEND in a story entitled "The Great Unknown." This was in Maxwell Scott's best vein, and once again Lee was up against a doughty adversary - Lockwood Beck, a famous scientist. In this story, too, Jack Langley, who played a prominent part in "Birds of Prey", was re-introduced and A. H. Clarke did the drawings.

So far, I have mentioned the stories in something like their proper sequence, for the earlier serials remain more vividly impressed on my mind, and in some cases I have copies to rely on. But from now on I make no claim that the stories I mention are in the order in which

"IF YOU WERE A READER OF "C
THESE COMIC FOLK SHOULD BE I
— BUT CAN YOU RECALL THEIR



"CHIPS" WHEN I WAS,
FAMILIAR TO YOU
THEIR NAMES?"
ASKS TONY GLYNN.



they appeared in the three papers, the BOYS' FRIEND, BOYS' REALM and BOYS' HERALD. Neither can I say I shall mention them all, for to a great extent I shall be relying upon my memory.

Anyhow, in the BOYS' HERALD No. 118 dated 21st October, 1905, there commenced "The Football Detective," the second Nelson Lee story to appear in that paper. The plot was on the old, old theme, the villain succeeding to the estates if only the heir is out of the way! But the atmosphere was a little different, for a good deal of the story concerned the doings of a First Division Association Football Club. To aid his investigations Nelson Lee actually played in the forward line of the club, Newport Rovers, and seemed to be quite a success. In real life of course he would have been somewhat a football veteran, especially for a wing man, for had he not been tracking criminals to their doom for over eleven years? But in the realms of fiction, of course, that is a mere detail.

This story was illustrated by 'Val' Reading, and he turned out some very effective front pages. He showed Nelson Lee to be quite a boyish, handsome chap, quite different from the keen, sharp-featured portrayal of A. H. Clarke. It was his first engagement on a Nelson Lee serial, and I placed him a jolly good second to Clarke.

About the same time there also appeared in the BOYS' FRIEND "The Black House." I have only a vague recollection of this story, but I do know that at that time I considered it only a poor one. The story started in No. 221. It was followed by "Detective-Warder Nelson Lee," commencing in No. 237. This again, in my opinion, was not up to the standard of the earlier stories.

Back to the BOYS' HERALD again, on the front page of No. 208 appeared a fine drawing by 'Val' depicting a scene from "The Iron Hand." This seems to be jumping ahead somewhat, for the 'Herald' was more than two years the junior of the 'Friend' in its penny status, but, as I have said, I cannot vouch for the proper order. Anyway, with this story Maxwell Scott was back in his best form. Once again Nelson Lee was at grips with a great criminal organisation, chief of which was one Paul Herman. An airship played a prominent part for the first time in a Nelson Lee story. It was rather a quaint sort of airship, for, despite the fact that at the time of the story airships were about as unusual as sovereigns are now, this one appeared to be able to cruise about the country without attracting any attention.

In "The Iron Hand" apart from Nipper, Nelson Lee had the help of two other detectives, Mackenzie, a Scotsman, and O'Brien, who, needless to say, hailed from Ireland; at least he had their assistance in the earlier part of the story, but in the course of it Maxwell Scott had

both of them murdered by the gang. He seemed to have them dismissed in rather casual fashion, or so it appeared to me. Nevertheless, it was a good story with plenty of action and thrills.

To be continued.

HAMILTONIANA

FAMOUS SERIES No. 3

THE BEGGAR OF SHANTUNG



"The Beggar of Shantung," the greatest story in Frank Richards' China Series, considered by most readers to be the finest travel series that the famous author ever wrote.

A grand colourful story in which Ferrers Locke disguised himself as a beggar from Shantung, in order to penetrate far into the heart of China, where the chums were prisoners of the mandarin, Tang Wang.

The artist - Leonard Shields.

HURREE SINGH -
THIRD FORMER

By Gerry Allison

Devereux was a mighty footballer, the captain of the

first fifteen of Netherby, and what he didn't know about Rugby wasn't worth knowing. It pleased him to see the youngsters so keen, and he gave them words of encouragement that were very gratifying to the Third.

Hurree Singh came in for most of the captain's notice.....

"My hat!" said Devereux. "If the Indian gets half a chance tomorrow, I wouldn't give twopence for the chances of the Fourth."

He patted Hurree Singh on the shoulder when he came off the field.

"You'll do, my lad!" he exclaimed. "If you keep on as you've started, you'll be a credit to Netherby. I shouldn't be surprised to see you captain of the first fifteen if you stay long enough at Netherby, my lad. You were born for Rigger."

I wonder if the above passage is as surprising to the majority of my readers as it was to me. Hurree Singh first came to Greyfriars in Magnet No. 6 when the boys of Beechwood Academy run by Herr Rosenbaum, were accommodated at the school. When they moved out, Inky came back and hid in a boxroom. When discovered, he was allowed to change schools. This happened in March, 1908.

Now a few weeks ago - just when I came out of hospital, my valued correspondent, Bill Thurbon of Cambridge, wrote and asked me when it was that Hurree James Ram Singh made his debut. I sent him the information in the preceding paragraph. Then came his reply: Dear Gerry, I think we are definitely on to something. This looks like another 'first' for the Marvel. With his letter, Bill enclosed a copy of No. 161 of The Marvel, which is dated 23rd February, 1907.

Besides a Jack, Sam and Pete story, this Marvel contains a "Splendid School Tale" by Charles Hamilton, entitled "FAIR PLAY", and it is from this yarn that the opening paragraphs of this article are taken. Yes; just as St. Jim's first made it's appearance in Pluck, so one Greyfriars character was first introduced in Pluck's companion paper The Marvel, almost twelve months before Magnet No. 1. was published on 15th February, 1908.

As this is a discovery of considerable interest, perhaps the many admirers of the Nabob of Bhanipur would like to read how he made his first appearance on the literary scene. The following comes from Chapter 1, of "Fair Play" which is entitled:

The Nabob comes to Netherby

Owen Redfern of the Third Form at Netherby School, closed his Virgil with a snap, and a sigh of relief. There was a buzz of talk in the Third Form room, and Redfern, hard at work in the midst of it, had found it somewhat distracting....some extremely interesting topic was being loudly discussed by a dozen juniors, and Redfern, now that his work was done, was curious to know what it was. He joined the group by the fire, who were surrounding a slim, light-haired youth, who appeared to be in possession of exclusive information..

"He's really here then, Knowles?"

"Yes, I tell you I saw him."

"Where is he now?"

"In the Head's Study."

"What's all this cackle about, anyway?" exclaimed Owen Redfern. "Who and what's in the Head's study, Knowles?"

"The new kid."

"Oh, the new kid? Nothing remarkable about that, is there?"

"There is about this one."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Nothing, only he's a nigger."

"A nigger!" ejaculated Redfern.

"Well, an Indian," said Knowles. "It's much the same, ain't it?"

"You've got a lot to learn, my son, if you think it's much the same," said Redfern, sentimentally. "You really ought to know better than that, Knowles."

"Oh rats!" said Knowles. "I don't care whether he's brown or black. I think it's a howling cheek of them to stick him in our Form."

"Rot!" said Redfern. "What's his name?"

"Oh, I've got that down fine!" grinned Knowles. "Hurree Janset Ram Singh!" How's that?"

"Come in, Hurree Singh," said Mr. Lumsden.

The portly form of the Third Form master nearly filled the doorway. He advanced into the room, and the lad who was behind him followed him in. Then the curious Third-Formers got a good look at him.

He was a youth of medium size for his age, slenderly built, with a skin of deep olive, and very large and brilliant black eyes. He was dressed in Etons, and wore a very large flower in his jacket. His dusky face was not exactly handsome, but there was an expression of good-nature and simplicity about it that favourably impressed the beholder. He carried himself very elegantly, and his manner was of the most agreeable politeness.

"My boys, this is your new Form-fellow, Hurree Singh," said Mr. Lumsden, with a wave of the hand.....

The Indian boy was left alone with his new Form-fellows. He was surrounded at once by eager seekers after knowledge.

"I say, Inky, where do you come from?" asked Knowles.

The Hindoo lad looked puzzled.

"My name is not Inky," he said in excellent English. "My name is Hurree Janset Ram Singh."

And that is our first sight and hearing of the boy who was later to become a member of the Famous Four, and then the Famous Five. His English did not remain excellent at Netherby, but did not deteriorate into the baboo-jargon with which we are so familiar. Here is one of his speeches:

"I speak English with the complete facilitation of the highly-educated, but it is a difficult language, and I may have with inadvertence used an incorrect expression, but I shall communicate with you more freely when I become accustomed to the idiots here."

In all the story there is not a single example of 'the ---fulness is terrific.' As to Inky's prowess at Rigger - the Third beating the Fourth by ten points to eight in the final chapter - this was never mentioned at Greyfriars, even when the Remove played Bolsover School at Rugby in February, 1910. (See Magnet No. 104 "The Greyfriars Fifteen.") But then, Hurree Janset Ram Singh was always a modest sort of chap.

BILLY BUNTER WORKS FOR THE KIDDIES

CITY STAGE PRODUCTIONS, the Directors of which are our old friends, Bernadette Milnes and Michael Anthony, gave the entire opening performance of "Billy Bunter's Swiss Roll" at the Victoria Palace, over to charity. They have also been helping to publicise the need and the good work done by the Bernardo Homes.

At a giant carnival parade through the streets of Ilford and Barkingside on Friday, December 16th, one of the most interesting floats consisted of a school scene with Billy Bunter, the Famous Five and Mr. Quelch.

A special newspaper, "Christmas Times," produced to aid this great charitable undertaking, gave much prominence to the Victoria Palace show. A number of free seats at the Christmas Eve matinee were given, under certain conditions, to purchasers of the paper.

A writer in the columns of the paper tried to explain Bunter to the readers. He wrote: "Billy Bunter appeared in the old Magnet and Gem comics that Grandad used to hide under his desk."

Unhappy man! No, we don't mean Grandad!

* * * * *

ILLINGWORTH KNOWS HIS GREYFRIARS

Did you see the cute Illingworth cartoon in the Daily Mail just before Christmas? A plump, familiar schoolboy, representing British Railways, was waving in the air a remittance for £400 million. There was simply the caption under: "Hurrah! You fellows! My postal order's come!"

Evidently Illingworth thinks that Bunter needs no explaining to the British public. Nor do we!

* * * * *

LONDON WELCOMES NEW BUNTER SHOW

In these days when there are so many sleazy television plays, salacious films, and smutty stage productions it is supremely refreshing to see a packed audience of children and adults cheering and enjoying every minute of BILLY BUNTER'S SWISS ROLL at the London Victoria Palace. That was this critic's reaction on the opening day of the show.

Every effort has been made to maintain the Greyfriars tradition and Maurice McLoughlin, who has written the play, has deftly used his experience to delight the kiddies and please the adults at the same time. He knows his Greyfriars. In the opening scene Frank Nugent is examining a camera, and he remarks: "It was given to me by Manners of St. Jim's." It has nothing to do with the play - but it gives a warm feeling to folk who remember the Gem with affection. Maurice, rather wistfully, said to me: "It means nothing to most of them, but I liked to pop it in." Don't you believe it, Maurice. I'll wager that thousands of adults, visiting the Vic, gurgled with delight when St. Jim's is mentioned.

This play is splendidly acted throughout. There is no flaw anywhere. The part of Billy Bunter is played by Keith Banks, and it must be admitted that any actor, taking over the part which Gerald Campton has played so well and for so long has a thankless task. Naturally, we awaited his portrayal with some nervousness.

It is pleasant to be able to report that he gives a very fine performance. Banks' Bunter is by no means an imitation of Campton's Bunter. Banks is less agile and less lissom than Campton, which is no real drawback. He is, perhaps, a little closer to the Magnet Bunter, rolling along rather than darting about as light as a feather. In appearance, the two Bunters are remarkably alike. I hope it is not ungenerous to mention that the old Bunter's infectious fat giggle is missed, but no doubt that will come along as the show progresses. The new Bunter has plenty of action in his fat person, too. At the interval the curtain falls after he makes a wild dash and catches a joint of meat hurled

high in the air.

We congratulate Mr. Banks on a grand performance of a most difficult role.

The Famous Five are more carefully selected than ever before. They are all attractive lads, full of schoolboy high spirits. Bob Cherry is fair and a real Bob; Wharton is dark and more of a leader; Johnny Bull looks like Johnny Bull; Nugent is quieter and more reserved than the rest; Inky, apart from his turban, looks like our Inky. The boys have more to do than ever before, which is all to the good. There is a delicious and quite brilliant sequence in which one boy after the other is stunned and tipped into a window seat. This new, more youthful Famous Five are a vast asset to the production.

Mr. Quelch is played by Robert Lankesheer, and he is nearer to the Quelch of the Magnet than any we have yet seen. In both mien and appearance, he is an excellent Quelch.

Keith Marsh gives an outstanding performance as a weary waiter, and he reminds one astoundingly of Mr. Pastry.

Michael Anthony, T.V. star and C.D. supporter, is grand as an unscrupulous race-course habitue. In horsy attire and sporting a monocle, he never puts a foot wrong. A superb piece of character work.

BILLY BUNTER'S SWISS ROLL is fast-moving, and the slick pieces of contrivance are well-rehearsed and executed. The plot tends, at times, to be obscured by the pantomime-type by-play, but hilarity is maintained throughout and there is not a dull moment. Youngsters of all ages will love it. The slap-stick finale, with Bunter eating the bird from the cuckoo clock may not be quite to the taste of Magnet fans, but the kids roar the house down. And it's the kids who count at this time of the year.

Decor and lighting are excellent, and Ellen Pollock has made a fine job of the production side. Incidental music to the play is written by our own Eric Payne.

* * * * *

GEMS OF HAMILTONIANA

Munch, munch, munch! Grunt!

Munch, munch, munch! Grunt!

It sounded something like a horse at fodder, and something like a porker at the trough. But, as it proceeded from Study No. 1 in the Greyfriars Remove, clearly it could be neither.

(Sent in by Peter Hanger, Northampton.)

The wide, deep river ran on with a steady murmur, and bubbled and sang through the rushes, and down the centre of the stream lay a golden bar of sunlight.

But nearer the rich, earthy banks the overhanging trees made a tremulous shade. In the clear water, the thick foliage was mirrored with flecks of golden light filtering in and dancing on the water.

(Sent in by Tom Dobson, Australia.)

"Please, sir," gasped Bunter, "it wasn't me who ragged your study."

"What?" snapped the Remove Master. "You should say 'it was not I', Bunter."

"Oh, sir," said the Owl of the Remove, blinking. "I never thought it was you. It stands to reason you wouldn't rag your own study sir."

(Sent in by Beryl Porter, Old Hill.)

(Book souvenirs are awarded for all items found suitable for publication in this column.)

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(In this series Eric Fayne touches on certain matters of interest to students of the Hamilton papers. He gives his own views superficially. If you will write to him, expressing your opinions, on the topics he discusses, he will summarise readers' views in a future issue.)

No. 46. WHEN IS A COMIC NOT A COMIC?

Reader John Jukes of Bournemouth has sent me a cutting from Hulton's WEEKLY POST. It consists of a letter written to the Editor of that paper by a reader named F. J. Moran who lives at Dunstable. Mr. Moran writes as follows:

THE DRAW OF THE MAGNET

If you value Mr. Severn's contributions and intend to print more of them, for goodness sake restrain him from referring to that venerable school magazine The Magnet as a "comic." The man is liable to lose his life, or, at least, suffer severe physical injury at the hands - or sticks - of those "Old Magnetites" who are likely to descend on him in fury and just wrath.

The literary pen of Frank Richards (I cannot call him Charles Hamilton) produced much more than a "comic". His characters lived, they were real, and a code of behaviour was portrayed which is sadly lacking today. When he took us on an overseas tour with Harry Wharton and Co., we were in those countries.

I am not altogether surprised at Mr. Severn being top in essays at school. He admits he read The Magnet. I have a friend who swears he passed an important examination in Latin through remembering a translation which he read in that magazine.

More power to your elbow, Mr. F. J. Moran of Dunstable.

Recently my feelings were similar to those of Mr. Moran. I called at the studio of the photographic artists who do a good deal of work now for COLLECTORS' DIGEST. A week or so previously I had left two Gems to be photographed for reproduction in the Annual, and I also left my usual injunction that great care was to be taken of the originals. When I called for the pictures, a young man of some twenty summers came to me and said politely: "Your pictures are ready, sir, and we have taken great care of your comics."

Sorrowfully, I pointed out to this ignorant young man that the Gem was not a comic. He apologised and asked "What is it then?" How would you have answered him?

I explained that a comic was a paper filled with funny stories in pictures, whereas the Gem was a paper containing long stories, published weekly for older boys. Later I took him a copy of Tiger Tim's Weekly and placed it beside the Magnet to emphasise the point. But I felt painfully inadequate and I wonder whether I convinced him.

How indicative it is of the times in which we live when, to youngsters, papers like the Magnet, the Nelson Lee, the Gem, etc., are

all "comics!" They know no better. Few, under the age of 25, have ever seen any paper comparable with those we loved - papers which we know, instinctively, did us a world of good.

From whence comes that all-embracing term of today - COMICS? Probably from the same source that has changed records to discs, films to movies, snappy songs to "pops", coffee houses and cafes to expresso bars. It is a trend that I, at least, view with uneasiness.

In our time, we rose from "Tiny Tots" to the "Rainbow" and thence to the "Magnet" or some similar paper. Today, youngsters become adults (or so they imagine) much more quickly. Overnight, they promote themselves from "Playhour" to "Lady Chatterley's Lover" from "The Sleeping Beauty" to "Beat Girl."

Maybe youngsters cannot be expected to enthuse over anyone so old-fashioned as Mr. Quelch. After all, every time he gives the Bounder a well-deserved "Six" he puts the clock back a hundred years.

It's just my point of view! What's yours?

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 44. SPOTLIGHT ON THE PAGES

EDWARD BLIGHT. You comment on Wally Bunter being appointed First Form Master at the age of 15 plus, and how very unlikely that such a thing could happen as a permanent appointment, and I quite agree, but it is amazing how such things did happen in real life. At a meeting of the Society of which I am President we had a lecture on "Schools and Schooling in the 19th Century" and we learned of Dame Schools, where children paid 1d a week, and of many instances where children of 12 years of age were put in charge of younger children. Recently, a lady who taught me, over 50 years ago, told me that she had started her teaching career when only 11, a post she held for two years before going away to have her own education completed and become a qualified teacher. Such things could not happen today, but they did when Charles Hamilton was putting Greyfriars into history.

RON HODGSON. I am just reading "The Saving of Selby" in which fags play a large part. I really enjoy this type of yarn - the fags make a change from the heroes of the Fourth and Shell. As Martin Clifford puts it: "In the Third Form at St. Jim's manners and customs were by no means polished. The celebrated Lord Chesterfield would have found himself quite out of place there. In the Third a fellow said what he thought, without stopping to think twice, as a rule. The result was that very plain English was spoken in the Third. There never was much room for doubt about what one fellow thought of another fellow."

GEOFFREY WILDE. I find myself in full agreement with your view on the part played by the fags in the Hamilton papers. They seldom became really dimensional characters, and while the spoiled younger brother gave rise to some excellent stories it was a pity that all the major 'minors' should have conformed to



this type. All in all, I think my favourite fag was not a Hamilton character, but Wally Handforth of St. Frank's; but I do retain a really soft spot for Flip, who seemed a genuine small boy and quite a touching figure.

JIM SWAN. Personally, I found the Wally Bunter - Form Master stories quite amusing. It must be pointed out that even Mr. Hamilton created far-fetched situations at times. Can you honestly believe that a whole school could be deceived in a new boy coming, calling himself Prince Bombo, who was really Bunter in disguise? This is far more fantastic, in my opinion, than bringing back Wally undisguised, for Wally was always a clever scholar. Student teachers were common in schools in the 20's.

HARRY BROSTER. The stories in which Wally Bunter, at fifteen or so, was put in charge of a form, even as juvenile as a First Form, were rather fantastic. What qualifications would such a lad have for teaching? As much training - or even more - is necessary for teaching the very young, as for training older students.

For more than 50 years Charles Hamilton has been giving us an almost perfect picture of an English Public School in his stories. Thousands of yarns have left in our imagination a realistic picture of these schools, their geography, their personnel, what they look like. Why spoil a run of glorious yarns by bringing in something which matters not at all, such as a First Form? Why bring in a set of very little boys? Are not Dicky Nugent and his set young enough? These beloved school yarns of ours are one of the things left to us which have not been spoiled by the changing times. Let's not spoil the picture by looking up little discrepancies like the point in question.

ERIC PAYNE adds: Teachers are born and not made. A hundred diplomas and degrees do not make a teacher of a man who is not gifted to teach. But I still contend that an unqualified lad would never have been appointed to teach at a school like Greyfriars. And Wally, though a clever boy, had only been a Removite!

* * * * *

Q U A N D A

(Our Questions and Answers Column)

ARTHUR HOLLAND (Australia). About 45 years ago, the Magnet and Gem each gave a lift-out supplement of a Who's Who, with information concerning the schools, staffs, scholars, routine, notes on the leading characters, and maps of the districts. It said on each cover that this supplement was compiled by the editor in conjunction with Mr. Richards and Mr. Clifford respectively. Was this correct?

ANSWER. FRANK RICHARDS replies: "Always happy to answer queries when practicable, but I fear this one has me beaten. I remember, of course, the Greyfriars and St. Jim's "Who's Who" but there were several of them at different times: one I especially recall in the Holiday Annual. Of course I must have been consulted about the details, but how many fingers I had in the pie I couldn't say at this date. Probably a little auctorial finger and a big editorial one. But our friend "down under" may be satisfied that at least I gave the lists the once-over. Any errors that may have crept in must be excused for I was very young at the time!"

WANTED: Gems for binding. 1220 - 1242, 1279 - 1294, 1356 - 1420, and 1497 - 1611, all numbers inclusive. Offers to
YORKE ROBINSON, CLIFF PAVILION HERNE BAY, KENT.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

MIDLAND

Meeting held 29th November, 1960.

With Beryl Porter only just out of hospital, Ray Bennett having his mother seriously ill in hospital, and George Chatham down with a chill, it was a very small assembly. There were apologies from Win Brown, Ted Davey, and Jack Bellfield, who had other commitments. But it was some consolation that among the seven present was Jack Ingram, after a very long absence.

We could not make plans for the proposed Christmas dinner, so the meeting got going with a quiz by myself. Tom Porter was most successful with this - 12 correct items out of 16. Following came Jack Corbett's account of the books he would take on his second visit to the desert island. These were - 1. The Edgar Bright Magnet series; 2. The 1923 Highlands series; 3. Gem (circa 1923) which featured Talbot, Gore and Tickey Tapp; 4. The Wharton Lodge Christmas series which followed "Bunter's Reformation" due to his reading Dickens' "Christmas Carol"; 5. Holiday Annual for 1941; 6. Tiger Tim's Annual for 1922 - Mrs. Bruin and the rest; 7. The Water Lily series; 8. The 1937 Magnet series of Frank Courtney and the Caterpillar versus Ponsoyby.

We managed to get in Norman Gregory's Introduction to a discussion on the humour of Frank Richards, with particular reference to the "freaks" of Greyfriars - Bunter, Alonzo Todd, Wibley, Wun Lung, Hurree Singh. Were their abnormalities too far-fetched? The discussion was worth more time, and will no doubt be continued at a future meeting.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE

Christmas Party

As has been the practice in former years, a Christmas Party took the place of the December Meeting and things certainly went off with a swing at our new venue in Thorn-dale Road. Formal business went by the board, and the large number present concentrated on enjoying themselves to the full in party games and quizzes, all of which were a huge success, and the honours were evenly scattered. Not the least memorable feature of this occasion was the refreshments which seemed to be without end and for which we were greatly indebted to Mrs. Unwin - she certainly made a grand job of it! We availed ourselves of this opportunity to make some small presentations to Don and Mrs. Webster, who were making their last appearance for the moment, anyway.

As usual, time was the enemy, and, despite the early start, the night flew over, and it was with regret we had to depart into the wintry gloom. We look forward to the next meeting on January 8th, when, as the result of some publicity in the local press, we are to be honoured with the presence of the noted Liverpool writer, Frank Shaw. A good start to the New Year.

FRANK CASE - Secretary.

NORTHERN

Christmas Party, Saturday, 10th December, 1960.

The Christmas Tea for 1960 was once again held in the Club room. It was the tenth since the formation of the Northern section of the O.B.B.C., and seventeen of us turned up for what proved to be a very enjoyable evening.

It was a real pleasure to welcome back Gerry Allison to the fold after his recent severe illness. Gerry, who was looking remarkably fit, tells us that he is making good progress and hopes to resume normal activities fairly soon in the New Year.

After a sumptuous spread, which Messrs. Bunter, Muffin, Trimble, etc., would have glorified in, Jack Wood greatly delighted us by producing our C.D. Annuals. The following toasts were then proposed, and drunk in some excellent home-brewed wine provided by Tony Potts:

Frank Richards by Geoffrey Wilde
The other Clubs and absent friends by Ron Hodgson
Eric Payne and the C.D. by Gerry Allison
The Ladies by Bill Harrison
Ron Hodgson, our retiring Secretary, by Frank Hancock.

Then followed a most enjoyable film show provided by Mollie Allison, during which some of us had the pleasure of seeing ourselves on the screen.

We then had a game 'Cross-country run from Greyfriars to St. Jim's, and vice versa' devised by Gerry Allison. St. Jim's ran out easy winners, the final placings being:-

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Ernest Levison | (Bill Williamson) |
| 2. Harry Manners | (Elsie Palmer) |
| 3. 'Gussy' | (Geoffrey Wilde) |
| 4. Hurree Singh | (Tony Potts) |
| 5. Tom Merry | (Frank Hancock) |

After an interval for further refreshments we had a session of '20 questions' sent in by John Jarman, and all referring to Greyfriars. The team, comprising Geoff Wilde, Elsie Palmer, Ron Hodgson, and Jack Wood were in top form and were successful with every one.

The evening was fittingly concluded by a reading from the seasonable Magnet 'Moat House' series by Geoffrey Wilde. Next meeting - Saturday, January 14th.

FRANK HANCOCK - Secretary.

AUSTRALIA

The atmosphere was perfect when the members foregathered at the Coronet Restaurant Sydney on Wednesday, December 14th. Soft lights, sweet music, delicious food, combined with good company made the Christmas party an assured success from the beginning at 6 p.m. until the last toast was drunk, regretfully, at 9 p.m.

Greeting cards from our friends in the Midland Club and Bill Hubbard in Kenya, were then passed around together with the Christmas issues of our old faithfuls, The Mersey Foghorn and The Midland Newsletter - and a very special greeting card from our newest postal member, Arthur Holland who joined us in spirit. Letters from our friends Ron Hodgson, Frank Unwin, Bill Gander and Gerry Allison were enjoyed whilst the members waited for dinner to be served and all the news from overseas was discussed with great enjoyment.

With appetites which would have put our friend Billy to shame, the members tackled the Christmas fare and silence reigned. A toast to the future of the club was then proposed by the Chairman, Syd Smyth and drunk with enthusiasm by those present, Victor Colby, Arthur Croser, Ernie Carter, Bruce Fowler, Stan Nicholls and Bette Pate. A vote of thanks was then proposed to the Secretary for her work during 1960 and the wish expressed that 1961 would see her filling the same position. The events of the past year, in club activities, were reviewed enthusiastically and plans discussed for the 1961 programme.

The candles on the table had burned low in a graceful cascade, the pianist had grown frankly sentimental and had brought back nostalgic memories to the members with some favourite selections of yesteryear by the time the dinner was ended, and it was with the firm conviction that this had indeed been the best Christmas get together to date that the members wished each other the compliments of the season at the conclusion

of festivities at 9 p.m.

And on behalf of all those present may I wish you one and all a Happy and Successful 1961, spent with good friends and good books in the true spirit of our wonderful hobby.

BETTE PATE - Secretary.

LONDON

The thirteenth Christmas meeting, held at East Dulwich, hosts the Packmans, was like its twelve predecessors, happy and jolly. 29 members were in attendance despite inclement weather and the Bennetts, who came from Tipton, Staffs voted it well worth the journey. Personal 'gratters' to the Midland Club in winning the Greyfriars Cup once again. Xmas quizzes by Bob Whiter and Bill Lofts, Xmas Novelty by Eric Fayne, a Cavan-dale Abbey reading by Roger Jenkins and another good reading by Winifred Morss were enjoyed by all present. A superb "Desert Island Books" selection by David Harrison was greatly enjoyed. The Xmas tea was very good; well done the ladies, Josie and Eleanor Packman, Norah Rutherford, Winifred Morss and Millicent Lyle. The Annual General Meeting of the club will be held on Sunday, January 15th, at a venue to be decided. Call-over came, and it was time to wend our way home once again with delightful happy memories.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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EDITORIAL



FRANK RICHARDS
11, FRODO



GERALD SMITH
2, LITTLE GRASS



FRED RUTHERFORD
2, BRAY



BETTY CURREY
1, BRAY



ALAN LYLE
2, BRAY

The year that has just gone was a good one in many ways for the hobby. COLLECTORS' DIGEST seemed to go from strength to strength, if we can judge from the kindly letters which arrived daily in shoals from readers. The ANNUAL was given an overwhelming reception, and glowing messages are still being received concerning it. Two new Greyfriars stories from Frank Richards sold, and are still selling, in great numbers in the bookshops. Rookwood made a welcome re-appearance in a well-known periodical, and it looks as though Rookwood has come to stay. Which is all very pleasing.

The closing months of the year were marred by the news of illness and spells in hospital for some of our old friends. Even now, Beryl Porter and Fred Rutherford are in hospital. Our first prayers of the New Year are that they may both be speedily restored to good health. An old friend, Hylton Flatman, is also in hospital, and we hope that he, too, may soon be feeling his old self again.

THE COMIC PAPER FLAVOUR. Last month we promised you that this January issue of the Digest would be of interest to comic-paper enthusiasts. Much of the flavour has been given by versatile Tony Glynn, who is responsible for our cover and centre spread. We all knew Tony as a brilliant young journalist. Now we know him as an artist of considerable ability.

THE EDITOR

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Yours Sincerely

(Interesting Items from the Editor's Letter-Bag)

ROGER JENKINS (Havant) I was interested in Bill Lofts' discovery about the song "On the Ball." It is referred to in Gem No. 155, when Herries says "Give us a decent footer song, Tom, and none of your blessed caterwauling about a moon in a garden." We are told that Tom Merry "sang the famous football song with a strong clear voice" at Glyn House. I wonder if it was as well known to the public at large as to the juniors of St. Jim's. I think the cover of the Digest Christmas Number really superb.

R.A. HUNTER (Brazil) Without exaggeration, the Digest seems to get better and better with each succeeding month.

JOHN FARRELL (Wigan) The Gem was and always will be my first love of the old Companion Papers. I started taking it in 1913 and readily remember the Reggie Clavering series, when, I remember, I could hardly wait each week to see if Tom Merry would be expelled. I also greatly enjoyed the Toff series.

JOHN STEELE (Accra) It may be of interest to Digest readers (as it was to me) to find that the work of E. R. Parker has been appearing in the "Soldier" magazine in which he has been illustrating escape stories over the last six or seven issues.

JOHN WERNHAM (Mainstone) I enjoyed the 1917 cover on the Digest Christmas Number. How well I remembered it! And the thrilling story! What a pity we cannot reproduce those thrills in later life and we have to make do with "touching a chord."

FRANK HANCOCK (Leeds) I think the cards referred to by reader Goddard, Derby, are the "Billy Bunter" series, issued by Maynards Ltd. There are 12 to the set. I have not seen any of them and understand they are very rare.

FRANK UNWIN (Liverpool) The article "Voyage of Discovery" by Ray Hopkins made me smile when I read E. W. Hildick's remarks about stories with a Secondary Modern School background. What a frightful thought! I wonder whether they realise that, although there are some fine lads in this type of school, the bad manners, selfishness, disloyalty to staff and school and lack of any standard of values of a vast number of them would certainly make this yet another "horror comic." I speak from experience.

KENNETH KIRKPATRICK (Geneva) I did not read Gems or Magnets when I was a boy - possibly because I started on Nelson Lee and seemed to stick to it. Perhaps this was a blessing in disguise, for I now find that I enjoy the Greyfriars and Rockwood stories as tales in

their own right and am busy trying to collect as many bound volumes as possible.

DONALD STURGEON (Burnley) I have really enjoyed every copy of the Digest and the nostalgic memories of the past. I think the subscribers and all who read the old boys' papers a grand bunch of chaps, and it's a pity most of the youths of today don't follow their example of honesty, healthy outlook and love of their fellow men.

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross) Many, many thanks for the grand Christmas Number of the good old C.D. From the beautiful Boy's Friend reproduction on the cover to the Editor's Letter-Bag on the last page it was a grand issue. The reproductions of old covers are so seasonable and, of course, the Greyfriars and St. Frank's story title illustrations are excellent. The Wharton Lodge Christmas story was most enjoyable. I'm so glad you were able to insert this with the help of your smaller type.

E. THOMSON (Edinburgh) What an Annual! Simply marvellous. A really magnificent edition.

(In our next issue we shall print a few views on the Annual as expressed in readers' letters. - ED.)

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ODDS AND ENDS

By Gerry Allison

OLD BOY'S BOOKMANSHIP! Whilst taking things easy this week, I read Stephen Potter's recent autobiography STEPS TO IMMATURITY. The expert on Gamesmanship and how to win without actually cheating makes several references to his boyhood reading.

After reminiscences on Canon Clark, editor of Chatterbox, and some "wonderful new school stories in The Captain, by somebody whose very name sounded as if it might belong to a popular boy in the first eleven - P.G. Wodehouse," Stephen Potter goes on:-

"Father was Chief Reader in those days. The best moment of the week was the arrival of our weekly comic "PUCK" one penny. Not a mere halfpenny comic like "CHIPS" but "PUCK" which had just started having pages in actual colour, the colours never quite fitting the lines.

Sometimes I would start waiting at four-thirty, although the papers weren't due to arrive till five. And then, there was "PUCK" lying on the doormat, new and stinking splendidly of printer's ink.

"Father!" Soon I was seated on his knee in the study, and there he would work through every page of it for me.

Saved for the last were the Adventures of Professor Radium, the inventor who discovered ways of peeling bananas by electrical X-rays, or going to Australia by underground slide, constructed with the help of mechanical moles. To make quite sure that neither of us would let our eyes leap ahead to look at the last pictures before we had read the

the first, father would fold the paper up very small, so that we could only look at each 'frame' separately, and in the right order. How marvellous to be read to thus. Father seemed to enjoy it as much as I did."

Dear old Professor Radium, whose adventures were featured in various other papers besides "PUCK." He and Scientific Silas of "COMIC LIFE" should be alive today to enjoy inventing things with atomic energy.

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KEY TO PICTORIAL QUIZ

Centre Pages: The characters, all of whom flourished in CHIPS in the 1930's, are Philpott Bottles, Chips office boy; Laurie and Trailer, the secret service men and their arch-enemy Crown Prince Oddsockz; Homeless Hector; Filmstruck Fanny; Ivor Klue, the great detective; Pa Perkins and his son Percy; Monty Monk; Hard-boiled Egbert and Billy Baggs with some of the kids of Casey Court.

The cover shows world-famous Weary Willie and Tired Tim, and Corny Chips, the paper's editor.

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WANTED: GEMS: 338, 339, 340, 356, 358, 359, 457, 459, 493, 549, 773, 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 979, 980, 984, 985, 986, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1116, 1126, 1129, 1133. MAGNETS: 45, 52, 134, 136, 138, 141, 195, 205, 238, 277, 318, 319, 344, 345, 346, 347, 353, 357, 358, 386, 388, 389, 400, 411, 417, 469, 439, 446, 422, 435, 719, 752, 773, 809, 834, 849, 850, 856, 858, 862, 863, 964, 965, 866, 968, 900, 921, 924, 925, 935, 936, 940, 942, 943, 944, 946, 948, 949, 951, 954, 955, 958, 965, 988, 996. POPULARS: 370, 385, 390, 396, 398, 452, 455, 461, 474.
ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

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