

COLLECTORS DIGEST
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Collectors' Digest

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Vol. 16

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THE EDITOR CHATS WITH HIS READERS

LOOKING AHEAD:

In these languorous days of mid-summer, while so many of you are enjoying yourselves on Britain's sun-drenched beaches, it seems incongruous to be looking ahead to December. By that time, the waters of the sea will no longer be tempting. The gentle zephyrs will have changed to icy blasts. You will need something to take your minds off the British climate - and, as you will have guessed, I am leading up to COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1962.

Preparations are now in full swing for the day when the postman will bring this giant Year Book to you. We are aiming to make this, the 16th of them, the finest of them all. I can let you have a peep at some of the jewels which this immense casket will contain.

RICHMAL CROMPTON, world-famous creator of the most lovable scamp in fiction, has written a special article for the Annual, and invites you to "MEET WILLIAM."

TOM HOPPERTON, renowned for some of our finest articles in the past, has written "RENDER UNTO RICHARDS —", which ranks with the finest he has ever done.

W. O. G. LOFTS brings us the results of a mammoth piece of research in which he gives the name of the writer of every substitute story in the Magnet. Entitled "THE NEXT BEST THING", this remarkable article is priceless.

One of our most brilliant writers and the most knowledgeable of all Hamiltonians, ROGER JENKINS, contributes a wow of an opus - "THE BUNTERS AT HOME."

TONY GLYNN presents us with a fascinating little masterpiece "CALL IT SCIENCE", in which he reviews the science fiction of the Thomson papers.

To delight St. Frank's fans, R. J. GODSAVE turns the spotlight on "WILLARD'S ISLAND", and looks back on some of the most famous stories of a famous and beloved school.

ARTHUR MOYSE reflects on the work of the artist "ALFRED CONCANEN." W. J. A. HUBBARD, our expert on the stiff-covered school tales, contributes a survey on the stories of school life written by P. G. Wodehouse.

SEXTON BLAKE fans will be well catered for as usual by members of the Sexton Blake Circle who contribute an anthology of items on the world's greatest and best known detective.

DANNY, who has become so very popular this year in Collectors' Digest, will feature in the Annual at the special request of countless readers. You will find an account of "DANNY'S CHRISTMAS" in the 1962 Annual.

ERIC FAYNE leaves factual matters to more worthy pens, and contributes a piece of fiction - a story of Tom Merry & Co and Ralph Reckness Cardew of St. Jim's, under the title "LATE SUMMER FOLLY."

The volume will be profusely illustrated, and you will be able to turn back for a while to the spring time of life by taking another stroll down MEMORY LANE.

These are some of the treats in store for readers of the COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1962. There are plenty more.

This month we send you the order form for the 1962 Annual. The costs of production are so heavy that it will not be possible for us

to print many copies to meet late orders. You will help us to plan ahead if you order in good time.

On the order form is space for any advertisement which you may wish to insert. Advertisements for the Annual cost 2d per word, serial numbers counting as one word. Quotations can be given for full-page or half-page announcements. It is unlikely that the Annual will pay for itself, but the more advertisements you send us, the narrower becomes the gap. And remember, the Annual provides a unique form of advertising. It will be read from cover to cover for many years to come.

As last year, the price of the 1962 Annual is 15/- plus 1/6 for post and packet. Send in your order forms, and make sure of your Annual.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL:

With this month's issue, our regular feature "Let's Be Controversial" reaches its 60th edition. It is perhaps some small achievement. It was originally intended that the feature should run for six months. It has, in fact, run for 60 months, or, to be more exact, for $5\frac{1}{2}$ years. In 60 different issues you have crooned with pleasure or gnashed your teeth with fury.

Sometimes it has seemed inevitable that the supply of themes would run out. That the well would run dry. But it never has. The main quality of Let's Be Controversial is that it makes readers think. It often makes them take up their pens and write. Sometimes they are in agreement; sometimes they are in disagreement. Sometimes they throw bouquets, sometimes they throw brick-bats. It doesn't matter what they throw. The main thing is that they throw something.

Nowadays some of our clubs select a theme which has been discussed in the feature, and further discuss it at a Club meeting. We are very happy that this should be so.

"Controversial", as many readers call it for short, seems even more popular now than when it started $5\frac{1}{2}$ years ago. It continues its harrowing, provoking way to please you or to annoy you - but, always, we hope, to interest you.

THE PEDRO STORY:

Some months ago we were privileged to give readers the welcome advance news that Pedro was returning to the Sexton Blake Library. The story which brings the grand bloodhound back is entitled "Killer Pack" and will be published in mid-September.

We suggest to our readers that they ask their newsagents to

secure a copy for them and then write to Collectors' Digest to let us know their views on the new story.

THE EDITOR.

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DIGEST READERS OVER FROM THE STATES

Collectors' Digest reader, Fred Griffin, is on a visit to this country from the United States, accompanied by his wife Mary, and son, Thomas, aged 10. Fred is one of our leading experts on Boys' Friend lore. Mary Griffin is an enthusiastic Digest fan, and always reads it first. She loves to see mention of people she has met.

RESULT OF OUR AUGUST COMPETITION

The correct solution of the three puzzles was 1. Caught Redhanded. 2. The Shadow of the Sack. 3. A Cry in the Night.

Many readers made some most interesting attempts (some of the suggested titles were quite weird) but only one reader managed to find two correct titles out of the three. The book award is therefore sent to R. J. GODSAVE of Leytonstone, who is fast becoming our most successful competitor.

THE LONDON C.B.B.C. - HAMILTONIAN LIBRARY

Librarian:

Roger Jenkins, "The Firs", Eastern Road, Havant, Hants.

OFFERS: on loan over 1300 carefully selected Magnets, Gems and S.O.L's to library subscribers. The arrival of some more postal boxes and an increase in stocks enables us to accept a few more postal members. Please send a 3d stamp and name of referee if interested.

FOR SALE E.F. Lib. 328 "Rivals and Chums" £3. (We are selling at a loss). S.A.E. please.

WANTED: Magnet No. 2 (£1 offered)

Magnets 751, 1029, 1032, 1142, 1144, 1150 (10/- each offered)

Gems 755, 763, 764, 789 (10/- each offered)

S.O.L's 169, 197, 203, 251 (10/- each offered)

DEAR OLD PALS

(Second Span)

By Tom Hopperton

G. W. M. Reynolds devoted a fair amount of time to denouncing the aristocracy as brazen-hearted leeches sucking the life-blood from Old England. He should also have castigated them for their appalling carelessness with their children. If one can judge from Victorian fiction, it was then highly dangerous to rush round a corner without a cautious preliminary peep. Otherwise, one was almost certain to take a nasty tumble over some kidnapped, abandoned or plain mislaid bantling of a peer.

Missing heir stories are doubtless as old as private property, but when the Gothic romance became popular towards the end of the eighteenth century the authors working for the Minerva and similar presses made an industry of them. The Gothic tradition passed into the hands of the penny-dreadful writers, who rescued a sight more children than even Dr. Barnado did, while Ainsworth, Dickens, Lytton and the rest kept the theme going in "respectable" literature. The flood reached its peak in the Boys' papers, and it would be a simple but tedious task to list a hundred such stories in the forty years between "Jack Harkaway" (one of them) and the early "Gen."

These tales were certainly easy meat for the authors, who reached down from the peg and without mental effort the basic structure of their plots, but it is difficult to condemn them: the public's appetite was insatiable. Even in opera "The Bohemian Girl" was the darling of the Saturday night "gods" for over a century. When George Lansbury was running "The Daily Herald", he brought in Theodora Wilson-Wilson to liven things up with a serial fiction of a socialist or left-wing slant. The good lady most originally delivered a Chartist novelette in which the hero was the mislaid offspring of some landowner or other: Lansbury, whose sense of irony must have atrophied, printed the stuff with his encomiums and, as far as I

remember, not one reader was moved to protest.

Small wonder, then, that all England hung breathlessly on the progress of the Tichborne case. Their favourite fiction had come to life "under their very eyes." The gross, bloated vulgarity of Orton the Claimant counted for nothing: the romance gilded even him and split the country into warring camps of furious partisans.

Nevertheless, any author in the twentieth century who resorts to missing heirs cannot grumble if he is automatically and unhesitatingly condemned of being idle on parade and of relying on the most hackneyed of plots. To do Frank Richards justice, this ruling does not appear to be applicable to him, or, at all events, not entirely. He seems more to take his stand with Eliza Cook when she (almost) said:

"I love it, I love it, and who shall dare
To chide me for loving that
missing heir?"

It is axiomatic that the introduction of a ventriloquist pins even the most aspiring author down to a low level, with the weary, stale, flat and unprofitable rehash defying any attempt to elevate it by good writing. This is certainly not the case with our present subject: there have been some very fine stories indeed on it, and Frank Richards considered that "The Boy Without a Name" is among his best work. It is significant too, that this was not turned out to meet a space schedule in a "weekie", but for "The Boys' Friend Lib." and presumably produced on amore. The subject obviously fascinated him. Between 1917 and 1920 Rockwood had no less than four series on it - Errol, "Erbert," "The Nameless Stranger" and "The Kid." This last was a black mark for Rockwood, revealing as it did the grave deficiency in Dr. Chisholm's truthworthiness as a headmaster. If he could not be relied on not to mislay his

own son, Cyril, how could he be regarded as a fit custodian of other people's? Furthermore, and at almost the same time, "Clifford Clive" was striving to put "School and Sport" on its feet with a tale very similar to "The Boy Without a Name."

It is a captious critic who demands new plots in school stories. Even so, without any unreasonable craving for novelty for novelty's sake, it can still be urged that certain of the old-stagers are now unnecessarily irritating and the missing heir is one of them. No matter how cleverly Frank Richards span his variations on the theme - and he even managed to land "The Bill" with a long-lost brother - he still had to depend on an initial basic improbability, while after each denouement Coincidence had to retire to seek the services of a bone-setter. Her celebrated long arm had been jerked out of its socket.

In the loose social fabric of the Middle Ages, the idea was not only probable but generally acceptable. Going outside fiction, the Duchess of Burgundy might have been induced for political reasons to accept Perkin Warbeck as her nephew, Richard, Duke of York, supposedly murdered in the Tower, but the King of Scotland had no finger in the Plantagenet family pie and must surely have been convinced of the truth of Perkin's claims to give him his daughter for wife. Even a hundred years ago the dreadful writers were still on safe ground, as proved by the Tichborne trial, but in any period during which Mr. Richards was writing he could not make a similar claim.

As each year went by the increasing organisation of society made the whole thing more and more improbable, until in these post-war years of regimentation and registration one would think it impossible to lose a kid at all. Yet when the first of the "Jack of All Trades" books appeared, that versatile youth so plainly bore the earmarks that I retired from the struggle and so never found out who dumped him and why. Well might "The Times" reviewer cautiously confine himself to "Mr. Richards has produced a period piece." In less cautious mood he could well have suggested that the subject had been worked to death and that it

would not be amiss to put a period to the period.

The most striking of Mr. Richards' stories in this vein was not, I believe, ever reprinted and is probably not too well known. "The Todgers Touch" (Boys' Friend Nos. 971-2, January, 1920) opened with Joseph Todgers so engrossed by "Lost Sir Charles, or the Mystery of the Missing Baronet" that when an advert appears in the Thompson paper seeking Marmaduke Fitzroy Arlington the romantic Chunky persuades himself, with a little help from Frank Richards and Co, that he is that mislaid sprig of the nobility. He jumps to the conclusion that Mr. Todgers must be "the faithful retainer" who had saved him from the kidnappers and seeks to drag from him "the secret of his birth." The incensed "retainer" whales him with a cowhide, whereon Chunky revises his opinion. Convinced now that Todgers Senior is "the myrmidon of the conspirators", he bunks for Montreal to "seek his birthright", meeting a horse thief on the way. That long arm takes another cruel twisting as this turns out to be Marmaduke Fitzroy and Chunky returns to a couple of painful interviews with Miss Meadows and the retainer-myrmidon.

"The Co. advised him to give up Gunten's circulating library and to give missing heirs and rightful marquises a wide berth, which really was good advice."

There seems to be a moral somewhere. I wish I could think what it is!

SPECIAL NEWS

STARTING NEXT MONTH

BRAND-NEW GREYFRIARS PORTRAIT GALLERY - the first for many years - specially drawn for COLLECTORS' DIGEST by world-famous Mr. C. H. CHAPMAN. Lock out for the first portrait next month.

A series you will treasure.

DANNY'S DIARY

SEPTEMBER, 1912

It's as clear as a bell now! I wondered why they had moved forward the publication days of the Gem and the Magnet - the Gem from Thursday to Wednesday, and the Magnet from Tuesday to Monday. I know why now. A new paper is coming out next month. It will be called "The Penny Popular", and I am looking forward to it very much. Its publication date will be Friday.

After the wettest and coldest August in living memory, September was fairly fine. We went off to Yarmouth early in the month for our fortnight by the sea. We travelled on the Great Eastern line from Liverpool Street, and our train was pulled by a huge blue engine. It was a very interesting journey, particularly when we got into Norfolk and saw all the windmills. I bought the Sports Library, which costs a halfpenny, at Liverpool Street station. It is a nice little paper, with a serial called "Get-There-Gunter", all about a cobbler's son who goes to St. Chad's School.

In Yarmouth we stayed at the Golden Sands Hotel overlooking the sea. It was a nice hotel run by Mr. and Mrs. Botherby. It had a large dining room with three bay windows, and in each bay stood a huge Aspirin in an art pot. Mrs. Botherby was very proud of her plants, and always sponged the leaves of the Aspirins every morning.

One day Mr. Botherby gave me the latest Boys' Friend 3d Library called "Nipper of St. Ninian's" by Maxwell Scott. I liked it very much.

We went in the sea most days, and they had bathing machines which were taken down to the water's edge by horses. I asked mum why they did this, and she said it would be rude unless we stepped straight out of the machine into the sea. Mum had a beautiful swimming costume with flounces and frills and lots of material, but Dad did not go in the water, owing to his dignity.

There is a fine big pleasure beach at Yarmouth. I got Dad to go



on the giant switchback with me, and he was quite angry about it. He said it was like having his appendix out without chloroform.

I had two Gems while I was at Yarmouth. Both were excellent. "The Spy of the School" was the perfect school story. Langton, the prefect, told a confidential secret to Kildare. Mellish overheard it and let it out, and Tom Merry was blamed for it. Wally D'Arcy played quite a big part in this story.

The other was "Rough on Ratoliff", in which Kerr disguised himself and pretended to be Mrs. Ratoliff. Great fun.

We had several rides on the top of the trams. We went out to Gorleston by tram, and another time we went to Caister. Lovely rides. At Caister, the conductor does not turn the trolley pole. The tram starts back and the pole reverses itself.

The Magnet stories have been much better this month than in August. I had two in Yarmouth, and Dad asked me if I thought he was made of money. The first was "The Hidden Horror" which was absolutely great. It was fearfully creepy. The boys found a derelict steamer with nobody on board. Doug says it was based on the Marie Celeste and Dad said it was based on the Flying Dutchman, and they argued for ages. I said I didn't care if it was based on the Clacton Belle - I thoroughly enjoyed it. Not half! The second story was "The Tuckshop Raiders" in which Smithy, Snoop and Stott raided Mrs. Mibble's shop, and the Famous Four were blamed for it.

We went to the Yarmouth Pierrots on the sands twice. They were very good. There was a good chameleon, and he sang, "Hold your hand out, naughty boy". It made me think of Mr. Ratoliff. A lady sang "The Ship That Will Never Return," all about the Titanic, and Mum used her smelling bottle. A stout man Dad said was a bass sang "If those Lips Could only Speak" and quite a lot of people were dabbing their eyes.

We went home in the middle of the month, as I had to get ready for a new term at school. To read on the journey I bought the Union Jack which was called "The Secret Slaves". It was all about the Congo, and the hero was a villain called George Marsden Plummer. It was exciting. Doug had the Dreadnought which has an unusual new serial called "Doom." What a title!

On September 17th there was a terrible train disaster at Ditton Junction, near Widnes, on the London and North Western Railway. The 5.30 p.m. express from Chester to Liverpool was signalled to cross from the fast to the slow line at Ditton but the driver misread the signals. He approached the crossover, which he was supposed to take at 15 miles an hour, at more than a mile a minute. The whole train left the rails, and the engine travelled a great distance on its side, struck a bridge, and broke in half. Six coaches leaped right over the engine, and immediately fire broke out in the wreckage from the gas lighting. Fifteen people were killed, and large numbers injured. Dad says it is high time that gas illumination was removed from all trains.

My cousin Robin at Aldershot sent me the latest Marvel. It contained a wild west story of Jack, Sam and Pete called "The Mystery of Fort Desolate" by S. Clarke Hook. Also "The Fighting Stoker", a story about Tom Sayers and the Fighting Parson, by Arthur S. Hardy. The Marvel has a new serial called "Britain at Bay". Doug says this was a serial in the Gem, and before that it was a serial in the Boy's Friend.

Coleridge-Taylor, the composer, died this month. It is a loss to the world of music.

We went to the theatre twice before I went back to school. We saw "Drake" a pageant play at His Majesty's Theatre. Lyn Harding was Drake and Phyllis Neilson-Terry was Queen Elizabeth.

We also saw "Everywoman" at Drury Lane. Gladys Cooper was "Beauty" and H. B. Irving was "Nobody". Both shows were good, but I liked "Drake" the better as it was more spectacular.

It was Dad's birthday this month, and I bought him a box of 100 Players' Cigarettes. They cost 2/3. Mum gave me the 2/3.

The two other stories in the Gem this month were "The Sentence of the House," about a new boy called Eric Lorne. Cousin Ethel was a friend of his sister. The other

story was grand, a tale called "The Prefect's Plot", in which the prefect Bingham got Tom Merry expelled. I had never heard of Bingham before. The serial "School Under Canvas", is drawing to a close, and a new one called "Birds of Prey" by Maxwell Scott is announced to start soon.

In the Magnet the two other stories were "Coker Minor - Sixth-Former", in which Coker's minor Reggie went to Greyfriars, and was so brainy that he was put in the Sixth. This one, I am almost certain was illustrated by Arthur Clarke.

The other story was "The Greyfriars Insurance Co.", in which Fishy got an idea from our Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George. The fellows paid Fish a penny a week and he insured them against breakages. All went well until somebody started smashing windows. A smashing story. It was illustrated by Mr. Chapman.

.....And Yorkshire has won the County Cricket Championship.

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

Service while you wait. What the other chap, who came in after you, gets.

WANTED: "School and Sport" and "King Cricket"; also Christmas Double Numbers of Magnets. J. A. WARK, GREENSTONE, CLYDE STREET, KIRK, DUNOON, ARGYLL.

WANTED: Populars 1919 - 22; Nelson Lees. 38, ST. THOMAS ROAD, PRESTON.

WANTED: Greyfriars Herald's Nos. 1, 36, 38, 44 - 50. 5/- each offered for any of these numbers in good condition.

L. PACKMAN, 27, ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

IS OFFERED for Magnet No. 245 "For His Mother's Sake." Must be in good condition.

MISS J. LYNE, 11, WOODLAND GARDENS, MUSWELL HILL, LONDON, N.10.

WANTED: S.O.L.'s Nos. 60 and 68. Magnets Nos. 829, 862-865, 867, 868, 874, 869, 879, 884, 886, 897, 900.

DR. R. WILSON, 100, BROOKFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.

WANTED: S.O.L.'s 42, 258. Nelson Lee No. 130 (old series). Your price paid plus postage. The advertiser has some S.O.L.'s, Nelson Lees, Gems and Magnets for exchange only. BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.

WANTED: S.O.L. 58. B.F. (Green 'Un) 762, 764, 780, 1042, 1257, 1264 to 1298.
1 TIMBERTREE ROAD, OLD HILL, STAFFS.

MEMORIAL EDITION OF "THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FRANK RICHARDS". 25/-. Packed with interesting reading and many fascinating pictures, with a long supplement on Charles Hamilton's work by Eric Payne. Obtainable from any bookshop or direct from Collectors' Digest Office. The Editor of C.D. will mail the Autobiography to any address in the world.

WANTED: Unions Jack. Year 1917. Nos. 691, 693, 695, 702-4, 711, 717, 721, 725, 727, 732, 735, 736, 740. Year 1919 - 800, 820. Year 1920 - 851-856, 858, 861-863, 865, 870, 872, 875, 877, 885. MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27, ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by JACK WOOD

This month, Reuben Godsave has some interesting arguments to present. His views on humour, with specific reference to the St. Frank's saga, will be very controversial, indeed - particularly to the staunch Old Franciscan who may well wonder if the writer is talking about the same subject.

However, let the reader judge for himself.

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A JAUNDICED VIEW?

By R. J. Godsave

There is no clear definition of humour in a book or any rules about the introduction of it. Some books are called humorous because they set out with no other purpose but to make us laugh, and the more we laugh the greater the success of the book. It is easy to rouse a laugh, because nothing is easier than to think we are normal ourselves and see another person being ridiculous. But the intentionally humorous book is not often successful. The duty to laugh removes all desire to do so. Consequently, humour enchants us most when it is incidental to a serious book.

The humour which enchanted the readers of the earlier Nelson Lee Library was incidental, chiefly because the stories were not of a frivolous nature. This could not be said of the New Series issued in 1930, some of which I recently had an opportunity of reading. The St. Frank's part, which consisted of half a dozen pages, was deliberately humorous, and shewed a great deterioration from the earlier Nelson Lees.

The whole atmosphere of St. Frank's seemed to be that of a holiday camp instead of a seat of learning. Discipline was practically non-existent. Respect for a form-master other than their own was not shown by the boys. The fact that an author has to limit his story to a few pages can only result in episodes which appear trifling.

There can be no doubt that the creation of the Nelson Lee Detective Academy was perhaps the main cause of the weakness of these stories. To take the leading characters as Nelson Lee's assistants was to deprive

the St. Frank's stories of much of their strength. On the other hand, the Detective Academy stories were of a higher standard, and more or less, took over the Nelson Lee. The front covers depicted incidents from the detective stories.

To my mind, Brooks made a fatal mistake when he asked readers for suggestions, and endeavoured to carry them out. The result of this was the gradual decline of the Nelson Lee Library, the stories becoming unrealistic and far-fetched.

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And now, our writer recalls one of the leading spirits of St. Frank's, a character who one felt was Brooks's own favourite, created - or at least developed - with an eventual view to his leaving Lee and Nipper free from the problems of a scholastic existence.

KINDRED SPIRITS

It is recognised that human beings are neither good nor bad, but mixtures, and inconsistent mixtures at that. Some people are simple by nature, and others as naturally complex.

A good example of a complex personality is Reggie Pitt, during his first term at St. Frank's. How he wrecked Mr. Wragg's study at the River House School on his arrival and caused Wellborne & Co. to suffer for his misdeeds, makes good reading. He came under the influence of Jack Grey, another new boy, who arrived at St. Frank's in the second half of the term, and became a reformed character.

Personally, I doubt whether a genuine reform is possible. Basically, a person does not alter in any way during his or her life. Most of us cultivate a veneer, and any alterations are of a superficial nature.

What to some people would be an underhand trick, would to others, be a clever piece of work. Many people do not realise that their actions give offence to others.

The fact that some people are attracted to each other at their first meeting, would seem to bear out the theory that we are split into groups of similar tastes and thoughts.

That Reggie Pitt was influenced by Jack Grey and became great friends, would suggest that Pitt had not previously found his feet, or perhaps, I should say his group. His independent nature forced him the hard way.

Environment would also appear to be a factor in a reformation. In Fullwood's case, a South Sea trip on Lord Dorrimore's yacht, without

the company of Gulliver and Bell, brought the good in him to the top. Again, like Pitt, he came under the influence of a boy, namely, Clive Russell, who was not of his sort.

Fullwood was also helped in his change by Winnie Pitt, who became his friend. It has been said that women have an inborn desire to reform men. Their intuition, no doubt, tells them that in the majority of cases it is necessary!

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HOW I MET WILLIAM
(In a letter from reader JOHN STOKES)

Another (one of the many) joy-bringers in C.D. lately is the arrival of Ricinal Crompton's WILLIAM. William holds a very special place in my affection and memories.

Before I became really ill I had to go to hospital for treatment every Monday after school. It was a painful treatment, and for this reason I was always given a holiday from school the next day, Tuesday. At least, that was the official reason given by the doctor for my weekly holiday, but now I suspect that this was not the real reason. I believe now that the doctor knew that my days of physical activity were numbered and that soon I would be having a rough passage with my spine and lower limbs, so he planned that, before the shadows began to fall, I should have one gloriously free day each week, a day to remember in the dark years ahead.

Every Tuesday morning I would change into my scout uniform, collect my pocket-money, go down to the valley below my home, and get the bus to our Boy Scout reservation - a paradise of woods, rivers, glens and fields. As it was mid-week, I always had the whole 20,000 square acres to myself, for all the other scouts were at school. I would light fires, cook the food I had brought with me, make shelters, swim in the rivers, make friends with the birds and the rabbits. In a nutshell, I had a wonderful lone Scout day. About five o'clock, I would walk down the winding country lane to the seaside two miles away. I would have my tea in a favourite cafe, and then explore the beach, cliffs, and coast, until it was time to catch the train home at 7.45 p.m. But if it was very wet I would go to the local cinema, and one wild December evening I did this. One of the films, an old one re-issued, was "Just William's Luck". I loved it. After the show, I visited the big stores opposite the cinema to buy my Wizard and Knockout for the train journey. I told the friendly store-keeper about "Just William's Luck" and was amazed to learn that there was a series of books about William. The kindly man showed me his stock, and actually gave me "William's Crowded Hours," with the remark, "Son, you are the living image of William Graham who plays William in "Just William's Luck."

After this, my mother gave me the money to buy a new William book in Bray, the seaside town, every Tuesday. For me, William came alive and lived, in my imagination, in Bray. I even picked a house for William's home, and one for Ginger and all the other Cutlaws.

It is a long time since I last visited Bray in the flesh, but I go there in spirit every time I read a William story.

I have them all, and often re-read them.

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BLAKIANA

THE ROUND TABLE



Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN, 27 Archdale Road,
East Dulwich, London, S. E. 22.

Another paper in which Blake and Tinker appeared was the early Nelson Lee. For this piece of information I have to thank my good friend James Cook of Wembley.

We now have to think about the C.D. Annual, and in this connection I would ask those of you who are members of the Blake Circle to send me articles in this year's "Man from Baker Street." As with Blakiana, it has always been a case of the few stalwarts doing all the work. How about some of you who are real Blake enthusiasts helping us out for a change?

JOSIE PACKMAN

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(MORE) BATTLES ROYAL
By Victor Colby

S.B.L. 2nd series No. 65. "The Excavator's Secret" by Gilbert Chester.
Location: Aloft on a girder swinging from a crane, high above

the street, the villain and Blake astride the girder, Blake at the tipped down end, the villain at the central point of attachment to the crane hook.

The villain had only to slither at speed down the girder on to his foe, and sweep him from his precarious perch. Before Blake realised what was happening, the hefty form of his opponent came shooting down upon him, slithering along the I section girder, feet foremost. Blake, however, saw the heavy feet sweeping down upon him, guessing instinctively his enemy's plan. Quick as thought, he let go of the girder top, to drop like a stone, clutching at and gripping the lower flange of the section I girder. He fetched up with a frightful wrench at his arm sockets, which all but tore his fingers from their hold. Above him his opponent went shooting onward toward the girder's end. Too late he found that Blake had eluded him, and clutched desperately at the upper flange in a vain attempt to stay his rush. With a frightful scream, he shot off the girder's end and went crashing to the street below.

S.B.L. 1st series No. 155. "The False Alibi" by Coutts Brisbane.

Sexton Blake and Tinker were accompanying Inspector Harker through the slums of London at night.

Blake sprang into a defensive attitude as a couple of figures sprang from a corner with short, ugly clubs. One hooligan swung his club to brain Harker, but Blake's fist shot into the rough's jaw, spinning him around like a tee-to-tum.

More hooligans arrived and formed a threatening ring, complete with clubs, knuckle dusters and rubber piping. Tinker, after delivering a short jab to the stomach, sprang back, and sent his opponent reeling with a smashing left between the eyes.

The chief hooligan plunged at Blake, club raised. Blake fell back, clutching the man's wrists as he did so, thrusting his foot into his stomach. Using his knowledge of ju-jitsu, Blake came down with a thud on his back, keeping his head forward and at the same time jerking the man towards him, while he thrust hard with his feet. Like a bolt, the man shot over his head, crashing into one of the others with such force that both came down in a cursing groaning heap.

Another tough leapt at Blake as he lay on the ground, swinging his murderous weapon at Blake's head. Jerking his head aside, and shooting forward on his hands, he jabbed violently with his boot sole, and caught his attacker on the side of the knee, cleaving his legs from under him.

Harker gave a good account of himself, but Tinker was hard pressed. Two men were on to him, and only by a miracle did he dodge a murderous blow with a club. Like lightning he sprang aside, and dodging the vicious whirl of rubber tube aimed at him by the other man, he threw himself forward bodily, and his head came like a ram into the solar plexus of the club wielder. The lad followed this up with two short arm jabs to the same place, a sequence of blows which doubled the hooligan up, bringing him down to a writhing heap in the road.

Meanwhile Blake had wrenched a club from the hands of one of the fallen men, and with this he sprang at the remaining man attacking Tinker, and parrying the rubber tube, he fetched the club down upon his rascal's forearm sufficiently hard to elicit a howl of pain and to make the man's arm fall helpless to his side.

At this stage the ruffians scrambled to their feet, and fled, gasping and panting, in disorder.

One more our precious pair from Baker Street had emerged victorious from the fray, and were able to look forward to another spell by the fireside of their cosy consulting room, browsing and dreaming, and awaiting their next call to action.

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SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY TITLES AND AUTHORS (3rd series) (Continued)

| | | |
|---------|--|--------------|
| No. 325 | The Victims of the Devil's Bowl | R. Hardinge |
| No. 326 | The Men from Maybrick Road | A. Parsons |
| No. 327 | Murder in the Air | A. J. Hunter |
| No. 328 | The Case of the Forbidden Island | W. Tyrer |
| No. 329 | The Case of the Indian Watcher | A. Parsons |
| No. 330 | The Man with Five Enemies | R. Hardinge |
| No. 331 | The House of Evil | H. Clevely |
| No. 332 | The Riddle of the Green Cylinder | F. Warwick |
| No. 333 | The Prisoner in the Hold | A. Parsons |
| No. 334 | The Teddy-Boy Mystery | J. N. Chance |
| No. 335 | The Mystery of the Vanished Trainer | A. J. Hunter |
| No. 336 | The Case of the Returned Soldier | W. Tyrer |
| No. 337 | The Secret of the Roman Temple | A. Parsons |
| No. 338 | The Mystery of the Outlawed Black | R. Hardinge |
| No. 339 | The Strange Affair of the Shot-Gun Sniper | W. Tyrer |
| No. 340 | The Case of the Six o'clock Scream | A. Parsons |
| No. 341 | The Trail of the Missing Scientist | A. Parsons |
| No. 342 | The Case of the Two-Faced Swindler | J. N. Chance |
| No. 343 | The Mystery of the Mad Millionaires | W. Tyrer |
| No. 344 | The Crook of Tunis | A. Parsons |
| No. 345 | The Strange Affair of the Widow's Diamonds | H. Clevely |
| No. 346 | The Secret of the Man who Died | R. Hardinge |
| No. 347 | Without Warning | W. H. Baker |
| No. 348 | The Case of the Frightened Men | A. Parsons |
| No. 349 | The Case of the Legion Deserter | H. Clevely |

| | | |
|---------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| No. 350 | The Man Who Knew too Much..... | W. H. Baker |
| No. 351 | The Clue of the Pir-Up Girl..... | W. Tyrer |
| No. 352 | It Happened in Hamburg..... | W. H. Baker |
| No. 353 | Danger Ahead..... | W. H. Baker |
| No. 354 | Gangster's Girl..... | A. J. Hunter |
| No. 355 | Devil's Can-Can..... | W. H. Baker |
| No. 356 | By whose Hand?..... | R. Hardinge |
| No. 357 | Hotel Homicide..... | A. Parsons |
| No. 358 | Decoy for Murder..... | W. H. Baker |
| No. 359 | Frightened Lady..... | W. H. Baker |
| No. 360 | Flight into Fear..... | W. H. Baker |
| No. 361 | Dark Mambo..... | W. H. Baker |
| No. 362 | Broken Toy..... | A. G. Maclean |
| No. 363 | Front Page Woman..... | W. H. Baker |
| No. 364 | Inclining to Crime..... | A. Kent |
| No. 365 | Night Beat..... | A. G. Maclean |
| No. 366 | Requiem for Redheads..... | W. H. Baker |
| No. 367 | Assignment in Beirut..... | J. Stagg |
| No. 368 | Dark Frontier..... | A. G. Maclean |
| No. 369 | Woman of Saigon..... | W. H. Baker |
| No. 370 | Canvas Jungle..... | A. G. Maclean |
| No. 371 | Battle Song..... | W. H. Baker |
| No. 372 | Murder - With Love..... | J. T. Story |
| No. 373 | Nightmare in Naples..... | J. Stagg |
| No. 374 | The Season of the Skylark..... | J. T. Story |
| No. 375 | Silent Witness..... | A. J. Hunter |
| No. 376 | Mask of Fury..... | A. G. Maclean |
| No. 377 | Panic in the Night..... | re-written by J. Stagg |
| | (Original story by Jacques Pendower) | |
| No. 378 | Homicide Blues..... | re-written by A. Maclean |
| | (Original story by G. Gowan) | |

* * * * *

"WARWICK JARDINE"
By W. O. G. Lofts

I shall always remember with amusement how, with astonishment at the time, I solved a twenty-five year old mystery twice in twenty-five minutes.

For the benefit of readers who did not have the Digest when I wrote about this some years ago, I will relate it again in brief.

Until the middle of 1957, one of the most mysterious of Blake writers was "Warwick Jardine" who, since March 1932, had penned 31 stories. Other Blake writers whom I had met and talked to just did not know anything about him, but it was strongly assumed that "Warwick Jardine" was the pen-name of a well-known author.

One afternoon I had an appointment at Fleetway House with Mr. Jackie Hunt, a former editor of the "Detective Weekly" and one of the last editors of the "Miracle". The object of my visit was to try and get a clue that would enable me to trace "Gilbert Chester", who I had heard

was living in poor circumstances. In the course of conversation about Sexton Blake and old authors, I asked on the off-chance if Mr. Hunt knew "Warwick Jardine."

"Yes, of course I do" said Mr. Hunt. "His real name is Francis Warwick."

And so, although I came away unsuccessful in regard to "Chester Gilbert", I found some satisfaction in having found the answer to a long-standing mystery. Later, of course, I found that "Gilbert Chester" had died. Through the kindness of his daughter, however, I was able to reveal quite a lot about him in Blakiana.

Shortly after leaving Mr. Hunt I met Mr. W. Howard Baker, the genial editor of the Sexton Blake Library, in his office.

"I've just had an old Blake writer visit me," said Mr. Baker, almost as soon as I entered the room, "A Mr. Francis Warwick - but you probably know him better by his *nom-de-plume* of 'Warwick Jardine'."

Having thus obtained the answer to the "W.J." mystery twice within the same amount of minutes, the reader can see why I always look back upon that afternoon with some amusement.

Quite recently it was my pleasure to meet Francis Warwick, and to say that some of the information he gave me about himself was interesting would be putting it mildly. Apart from his work pertaining to Sexton Blake, I am sure that St. Jim's enthusiasts will be interested to know that at one time Francis Warwick had a big hand in the writing of St. Jim's stories for the "Gem."

Francis A. Warwick is the son of another well-known writer, Sydney Warwick, who had a prolific output for the A. Press in its early days. Although Sydney Warwick wrote a great deal for the early pink "Union Jack", Francis is fairly certain that his father never wrote a Blake yarn. Sydney Warwick died aged 83 at Torquay, Devon, in 1953.

With his brother, Alan Ross Warwick, young Francis was brought up in an atmosphere of reading and writing, and as a boy he was an avid read of the "Magnet." Although he loved the yarns about Harry Wharton & Co. their St. Jim's counterparts never had the same appeal to him. There is no doubt, however, that in later years Charles Hamilton's writings influenced him in his own literary efforts.

At the age of only 16 he had his first story published in the "Scout" - believed to be entitled "The Hatchester Centre-Forward" - and shortly afterwards his first story for the A. Press appeared in the green Boys' Friend in the form of a serial of an historical nature.

Many of his early stories were written in collaboration with his

father; they appeared mostly in the F. Addington Symonds' group of papers in the early twenties. "Frank Sydney" was the usual pen-name used in the "Champion" and "Pluck", though other pen-names were used as well - for at one period they were writing all three serials that were appearing at the same time. The editor did not like the use of joint names to stories written in collaboration, hence the use of the single pen-name in every case.

(To be continued.)

A Ecio Nite Out With Horatio Bottle

Dear Reeaders, remember me yor ole frend, Horatio Bottle? I was yor favorit offis-boy & weakly pal 4 donkys years in Chips (I can reveal a jernalistic seecret ear bi tellin you that the reason they stopt publycashion was becuz they erd that taters were goin up 2 a shillin a 6, ignorin ni sujeshtun that the name b changed 2 Crisps). Owever I was iley delited when the Mersy sideockshun of the ole boys book club ast me along 2 1 of there meatin, which they old in Liverpool. This went a long & weerysum jerney from ni country reysydense in the art of Whitechapel & it wos with sum trepydashun that I set off, & I wos releasd when the last lorry droppd me off by the club room. The meatin started about 1/2 pass 6, I didnt no any of the Members, oo lookd a pretty meesly lot, owever they maid me welcum when they erd I could pay the subscripshun & after they orl ast me if I ad any comics 2 give away free & grattis they got on with the procedns. There was games & kwizzes & Cross Sticks about geezers like Nelsony & lor morly Verrer & the terribul 3, & then they ad discushions on orl sorts of subjecks mostly wimmen of oom they orl seamed very fond, then a feller named box or case of sumthink sed e read a lot of comics when e was a lad, they made in laff fit 2 birst, judgin by is kisser it would take a lot of comic cuts to make in smigger now. E ast me 2 say a few words which I did 4 about 2 ours, but I think it wos a bit 2 eye brow 4 then, but when a feller corled Winsor brort the re-freshmintz they orl woke up with a lackrity, and 4 the next our orl that could be erd wos goble, goble, munchin & puffin & blowin, bein Liverpool blokes they seamed 2 ave a preferense 4 the scouse which wos in bottels, but they maid sure they left nothin else just the same, not even a crum. Then they ad another discushion on wimmen, & then Jack Morgan the Liberian sed ow about you blokes borowin some books, but most of them sed they didnt read anything but garth & vergil. Then a air of reslessness seamed 2 purvade the cumpny, & I erd I bloke say 2 the other it must B near Clothes Inn time, lets get goin we'll B 2 late & they orl rushed out with wurried looks on there faces, but not arf sew worried as Case when e discovered 1/2 of them adnt paid there subscripshuns, e sed it made is holiday prospecks look a bit dim. Owever the nite ended on a appy note with the 2 oo were left singin 4 e's a jolly good feller in my onner, although I must say I didnt feel so jolly by the time they got through singin, har, har. It was a enjoyabel nite 4 orl espeshully those oo couldnt atend, of which I shall B I next time. cheery O 4 now, yor pal, Horatio. p.s. there is a possibillity I may B able 2 go 2 the Middle And meatin on me way back 2 the metropopolis, they old it in the Hard Iron otel near the bull Ring in birmingham, it sounds a posh place, & theresould B sum smashin grub, I ope, will let you no in jew corse. H.B.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The above dropped through our letter-box one morning. We called in Tinker, who investigated, and is of the opinion that it was typed on Frank Case's machine.)

HAMILTONIANA



FAMOUS SERIES NO. 23: Series with Arthur Augustus D'Aarcy in the lead were always popular. This one appeared in late 1922, and the story from which our picture is taken was entitled "Trimble In Trade". Cussy bought a cheap pocket-knife from Trimble, and was later accused of damaging a precious volume belonging to Mr. Lathom. It was Cousin Ethel who later solved the problem. An excellent story of serious school life.
Artist - R. J. Macdonald.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 60. THE MYSTERY OF THE KID

"Whence he obtained the inspiration for these extremely good Western Stories remains a mystery." With those words I ended the comments on the Rio Kid in my postscript to the recently published "Autobiography of Frank Richards."

I have always regarded the Rio Kid stories which Frank Richards wrote in the Popular, under the pen-name of Ralph Redway, as his greatest achievement. They were unique. He never wrote anything else of the type which showed the same class. They were the only stories ever written by him in which I was unable to detect the pen of Charles Hamilton.

He himself stated that, so far as he knew, only one reader ever guessed that Ralph Redway was actually Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, and Owen Conquest. But even that may be misleading. That single reader may have been referring to the Kid stories in Modern Boy which, to the keen student, were something quite different.

The Rio Kid stories which appeared in the Popular from January 1928, for a run of about three years stood quite alone. Of their type Charles Hamilton never wrote anything else to equal them.

Ten years ago, in an article in Collectors' Digest Annual, I made a crude attempt to express my enthusiasm for the Rio Kid. I wrote as follows:

"These stories rang true. They were geographically exact to the last detail. The characters lived. There was never a false moment with the dialogue. The lazy Spanish atmosphere of Texas was blended right into the heart of the stories. Every single story in the entire series had an original plot which was skilfully developed under the hot Western sunshine. A reader felt that they were written by some cowboy who had wandered away from the ranges - some puncher with literary talent who had dropped his lariat and taken up the pen."

That paragraph of mine was awkwardly worded, but readers would have comprehended my meaning. There was so much real musical prose in the "Popular" Rio Kid stories - so many lilting descriptive phrases. How was it that Charles Hamilton was able to write so beautifully so convincingly, so accurately of the old West?

We know that he never visited America. Whence did he obtain all

the information necessary to give, in those Popular stories, such accurate details of the geography, of the types of punchers, of the Indians and their problems, of the cowboy slang, of the delightful bastard Spanish as spoken by so many, of the ranching work, of the stint of the sheep farmers, of the nesters, of horseflesh, and of firearms? When and where did he obtain the inspiration for so much of that musical prose?

Some ten years earlier he had written of Cedar Creek. The Cedar Creek stories were fine reading, but there was never any doubt who wrote them. He used largely his English school plots and his English school characters. They made excellent reading, and they were typical Hamiltonia.

But it needed a great deal more than a smattering of knowledge of the West for any man to write the Rio Kid stories.

There is more to it than that. The Rio Kid stories ended in the Popular in 1930. Nearly eight years later, in 1938, a new series of Kid stories by Ralph Redway commenced in Modern Boy. These were typical Hamiltonia of their type, very competently written, and made good reading, but there was a change. There was no sign now of the musical prose. The plots were familiar, almost hackneyed. One even was a re-hash of part of the Hollywood series in the Magnet. Worst fault of all, the stories were now anachronistically wrong. The Kid, set down in the Hollywood of sound pictures, was no longer real.

In 1938 I had no doubt that Charles Hamilton was writing the Rio Kid stories, but I did not then believe that the Popular stories had come from the same pen. Such was the change.

Whence came the knowledge and inspiration for the original stories? And why was the inspiration lost in 1938?

During the later 'thirties, our author contributed the Pack-Saddle stories to the Gem. There was nothing very attractive about them. In 1937 the Greyfriars chums went to Texas in a series which was inferior to other Hamilton travel series. The Rio kid was introduced into this series, but he was merely a name. Apart from that name he had no link with the lovable Kid we had known in the Popular.

It is possible that a gifted author could study the geography of the land in detail, both physical and historical; it is possible that he could read so many first-class authentic western stories that he could soak himself sufficiently in the atmosphere to write as the early Kid stories were written.

But when could Charles Hamilton possibly have found the time to soak himself in that way? We know his prodigious output. Is it possible that any man, writing every week to such a staggering extent,

could have found the time to read and study in a way that was necessary before he could tackle the writing of the Rio Kid stories? It seems almost incredible.

I must confess that at times I have felt doubt as to whether Hamilton's was actually the mind behind the Rio Kid. I often pondered as to whether the stories in the Popular were actually written by some man who had lived and breathed the atmosphere of the Wild West, and whether, by arrangement, Hamilton took them and re-wrote them, retaining the dialogue and detail.

Against this is the indisputable fact that Charles Hamilton himself loved the Rio Kid. When my article on the Kid appeared in that old Annual, Mr. Hamilton immediately sent me a long letter expressing his delight with it. He was touched and very happy at the praise I had given the Kid. I cannot feel that he would have loved the Rio Kid as he did, if he has merely put polish on somebody else's work. Yet the mystery remains.

There is perhaps one solution, though that itself has its own puzzle. Between 1928 and 1934, Charles Hamilton was at the peak of his powers. In the three years while the "Popular" Rio Kid stories were appearing, he was also writing the most charming of his Greyfriars tales. His great gift was in full blossom. But by 1938 it was evident to the keen student, that, though his stories in the Magnet were still competent and excellent, they had lost an intangible something.

We know, too, that by 1927 he had stopped writing for the Gem. We never knew why he abandoned the Gem in the later 'twenties. Could it be that he was trying to find a new string for his bow? Did he, in fact, write less throughout 1927, and give the time to soaking himself in Western lore in readiness for the birth of the Rio Kid?

It is, at least, possible, though it still remains inexplicable why he had lost the touch in 1938. To end as we started: "Whence he obtained the inspiration for those extremely good Western stories in the Popular remains a mystery."

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

* * * * *

LIVERPOOL'S TOM MERRY

By W. O. G. Lofts

I have never failed to be amused at reports in the National and the C.D. of real live persons having the same names as famous characters in our type of fiction.

A NELSON LEE arrested for speeding; a SEXTON BLAKE also charged with the same offence in South Wales. Another SEXTON BLAKE (whose first Christian name was actually William) charged with receiving stolen property in Newcastle - later acquitted.

Of Greyfriars characters, I knew of a boy named Harry Wharton at school, whilst the BOB CHERRY, BILLY BUNTER and E.S.B. racehorses have been mentioned several times before. I could add for interest, several greyhounds racing at Park Royal Stadium some years ago, with the registered names of BILLY BUNTER, BESSIE BUNTER, and THE BOUNDER. Obviously the owner or trainer was an old Magnet enthusiast. But probably the most amusing story of them all came from Mr. G. R. Samways some years ago, when a gentleman of the name of Herbert Vernon-Smith came storming up to the old Amalgamated Press Building in Farringdon Street.

Breathing fire and slaughter he accused the editorial staff of the Magnet of blackening his name, by the portrayal of the BOUNDER in the Greyfriars stories. Eventually appeased, he certainly caused some excitement at the time!

Some years ago, I mentioned in C.D. of other authors with the same name as our famous FRANK RICHARDS, and one of these was editor of a paper up in Liverpool. Our Merseyside friends seem to have had yet another personality of the same name as one of our favourite, and best-liked characters - in this case his name was actually TOM MERRY!

TOM MERRY it seems was a most brilliant and witty poet - and was known to all and sundry as LIVERPOOL'S DOCKSIDE POET in 1922. A photograph that I have seen of him shows an elderly gentleman in his early 60s - with a slight amusing smile on his face, dressed old fashioned and neat like Dr. Locke.

His work must have been known to practically all the general public, and his verses were much sought after by the Fruit Marketing Board, and other food advertising concerns. His posters were hanging up in all types of shops and hoardings mainly entitled 'TOM MERRY'S MERRY LINES', and were most cleverly and aptly composed like an example below.

Move with the Times
Say it in Rhymes,
Witty and Terse,
Say it with Verse.

continued...

EAT MORE FRUIT

An Apple a day keeps the doctor away,
Two keep the Nurse out of sight.
Banana's they say, taken three times a day
Ensure an enjoyable night.
An orange is best,
On retiring to rest.
Take another on rising you may,
Then at night if you dream
Of Strawberries and Cream
'Tis the end of a perfect day.

Obviously, the Liverpool Tom Merry takes more after DICK PENFOLD than the St. Jim's Sunny Tom, but it would be most interesting to know if any of our Liverpool friends can recollect anything more about their TOM MERRY.

* * * * *

EXPERTS FORWARD

A Hornchurch readers writes us as follows:-

"I wonder if you could clear up an ancient mystery for me. Many years ago I remember reading a Magnet I now no longer possess. It was entitled "Skinner's Supreme Sacrifice" - I remember it well. Briefly as the result of an escapade, Skinner and another boy found themselves hanging by their hands from a wooden beam high up in the roof of the deserted school chapel. Skinner deliberately releases his hold, and falls, risking either death or severe injury, in the hope of being able to help his companion. I cannot find that particular Magnet listed in the Magnet catalogue, though I distinctly remember reading it."

If any reader can help us to trace this story the Editor will be happy to hear from him.

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WANTED: GEMS most issues between 400 and 500. Most issues between 772 and 879. Also Nos. 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 989, 990, 992, 933, 998, 1129, 1150. MAGNETS 45, 52, 134, 136, 141, 195, 205, 237, 238, 239, 277, 318, 319, 353, 400, 417, 422, 435, 469, 706, 719, 751, 752, 762, 763, 764, 809, most issues between 821 and 890, 900, 921, 924, 925, 938, 940, 942, 943, 946, 949, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996. POPULARS 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474. ERIC FAYNE, SURBITON.

Old Boys' Book Club

MIDLAND

Meeting held July 31st, 1962

This was one of our best meetings and though we were sorry not to have Madge and Jack Corbett with us and our two Burton friends could not get along owing to illness, we had quite some compensation in being able to welcome Frank Case from Merseyside on one of his rare visits. In fact, Frank contributed an item to the programme which was in the hands of our vice-chairman Tom Porter. Very little formal business was transacted and we got down to the programme very promptly after seven-thirty. Nine members plus Frank were present, and all very much enjoyed the following items:

1. "Guess the Number" competition, won by Ted Davey, Prize No. 161 Modern Boy.
2. Quiz of ten questions won by Harry Broster, Prize another Modern Boy.
3. Collectors Items. This month Tom brought along "Monster Library No. 1. 168 pages of Nelson Lee in the South Seas, equal to eight of the usual N.L.L.
4. A discussion on possible reasons for the lower attendance at meetings.
5. Frank Case's "Acrostic". Norman Gregory "got home" first here. There were, besides, a word changing item and one when missing letters had to be filled in.
6. Distribution of "free" Magnets and "Modern Boys" from the library - thanks to Tom Porter this was functioning again. The raffle connected with the Library was won by George Chathan & the prize a "Tom Merry Book".
7. Tom Porter read an amusing episode from S.O.L. No. 373 "The Fighting Form Master". Some of Frank Richards' best humour featuring, of course, the one and only Bunter.

During the night there were available copies of the "Burton Mail" sent along by Joe Marston. This copy contained the will of Frank Richards.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

LONDON

The meeting on August 5th took place in delightful surroundings at the home of Eric and Betty Lawrence at Wokingham, appropriately named "Greyfriars". Although numbers were small, an enjoyable time was held, which made the journey worthwhile.

In the absence of the secretary, the chairman read the correspondence, including a letter from Edwy Searles Brooks declining to act as Vice-President owing to pressure of business.

Roger Jenkins gave the pleasing news that he had acquired "The Boy Without a Name" and "Rivals and Chums" for the club library.

Samples of the proposed notepaper for the club and librarian were passed round for inspection. Don Webster stated that the Gem catalogue was now ready for stapling.

We then enjoyed a lavish spread which Billy Bunter would have envied. The chairman thanked the hosts for their hospitality.

After tea we had a quiz from Eric Lawrence, won by Roger Jenkins. This was followed by Roger Jenkins' selection of Desert Island Companions - some admirable selections. The meeting concluded with a humorous reading from the Magnet by Marjorie Norris and proved most entertaining.

Next meeting - Sunday, September 9th at Bob Blythe's, 40 Ellesmere Road, Dollis Hill.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held Sunday, 12th August.

This was quite the most successful meeting for some time, with a large attendance, the only absentees being Frank Unwin, who was away on holiday, and Jim Walsh. We were pleased to see our youngest member, George Riley, who has been unable to get along to the meetings recently; we sincerely hope he will be with us regularly in future.

The usual agenda was not adhered to, in view of the presence of our two friends from the Midland section, Tom Porter and Jack Bellfield, who made the long journey to Liverpool by road; it is a tribute to their enthusiasm that the prospect of arriving home in the early hours of Monday morning failed to deter them from keeping a promise to be with us at our monthly get-together. Needless to say, we were all delighted to welcome them, and we did our utmost to make their brief stay as pleasant as possible.

Most of the evening was taken up in informal discussions on hobby matters, ranging over a large field, and many interesting points were debated with zest. Our guests furnished us with quite a few fresh angles on various topics, and the general conversation was so animated and sustained that some difficulty was experienced in finding time for a brief session of Bill Windsor's "Crisis Cross Quiz". As always this was a closely fought contest between the two teams and was much enjoyed by all those taking part.

All too soon, nine o'clock, and the end of the meeting arrived; rarely have we been so reluctant in making our departure as on this occasion, and our "good nights" had to be made hurriedly to prevent over-running finishing time by too much. Yes, a red-letter night, this.

Our next meeting will be held one week earlier in the month, that is on September 2nd, when we welcome the section's co-founder and former chairman, Don Webster - this promises to be yet another great night and we hope as many members as possible will make every effort to be present at the starting time (6 p.m.) to greet our old colleague.

FRANK CASE.

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 11th August.

Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde opened another well-attended meeting at 7 p.m. We were all pleased to hear that Gerry Allison continues to make good progress and may be back with us before long. In the meantime Molly Allison continues to discharge the duties of librarian.

After formal business and correspondence had been disposed of Jack Wood read us a very entertaining article from 'The F.A. Book for Boys' describing the football stories which had appeared in boys' periodicals down the years - football heroes, rascally managers, doped teams, etc., which aroused boyhood memories in many of us. Geoffrey Wilde had brought along a copy of 'The Age of Defeat' by Colin Wilson, and read a very interesting passage concerning the author's juvenile reading and the effect which boys' periodicals had on him. Then on to 'My Favourite Chapter' for this month.

It was the turn of our lady members, Elsie Palmer and Molly Allison, and Elsie began by giving us two chapters in contrasting styles from Magnet stories. The first was a very funny account of a rehearsal of the Remove Dramatic Society, the second a dramatic episode from the Vernon-Smith-Paul Dallas series; two examples of Frank Richards at his

and showing equal mastery in describing two very different episodes. Then Molly Allison followed with a reading of "William and the Ancient Romans", one of Richard Crompton's best stories about this well-loved character. It was all very much to the liking of the company; 'Ladies Night' was a great success!

Refreshments followed, and then we had a competition devised by Geoffrey Wilde in which we each had to compile a list of our eight 'Desert Island Companions' and a second list of the eight we thought would be the general choice. The winner being the one whose own list approximated most closely to this. Ernest Whitehead won a very narrow victory over Elsie Palmer, Geoffrey Wilde himself being third, and Tom Roach fourth.

Incidentally, we were all sorry to hear that Elsie may be leaving us shortly as she is considering taking an appointment in the South of England.

Another very enjoyable meeting terminated at 9.20 p.m.

Next meeting, Saturday, 8th September.

F. HANCOCK - Secretary.

YOURS SINCERELY

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

DON WEBSTER (Kew): I take up the cudgels (and I mean cudgels) on behalf of Frank Nugent. I thought of taking him along to Finchley to deal personally with his critics, but apparently they never read any early Magnets. Breeze Bentley, in his article in C.D. Annual, missed reference to Magnets 190 and 193.

These young readers wouldn't know that Nugent taught Wharton to box, always opened the batting and bowling for the Remove, and scored goals from inside right. Furthermore he is a good swimmer, runner and high jump champion. He licked Smithy in a fight in Magnet 294. With the arrival of more characters he had to make way in the team for them as one couldn't have all the Famous Five in the eleven. Finally, surely the greatest tribute of all was that Frank Richards modelled this character on himself - need one say more.

JIM SHEPHERD (Sheffield): The finest thing ever done was persuading the Amalgamated Press to re-print the early Gem stories. It enabled lots of us to get the old stories, where we should never have had a chance.

CHARLES DAY (Keighley): My mother, at 85 years of age, is an avid Sexton Blake fan and always has been. I imagine she must be one of the oldest readers. I am looking forward to the return of Pedro, and I hope it will be permanent. I enjoy most of the S.B.L. stories these days, but I think there is a pressing need for a few strong "regular" crook character. Dirk Dolland, the "Bat", I am sure could be revived, and I think that more full-blooded adventure could be put into the stories. When the Portuguese ship was taken over in mid-ocean a while ago, I was immediately reminded of the old Union Jack stories of the Criminals Confederation, and their floating headquarters.

J. C. DOYLE (Acton): I was delighted to read of Mr. Buddie and Meredith again. Am pleased to know that "Darry's Diary" is proving such a success. It is a charming new

2 BUBBLES

BUBBLES THE BOY CLOWN AND HIS PERFORMING TRUP



HOW THEY BEGAN. No. 21

English garden. We think that Chums in Council is a very cosy picture, but if it's a warm summer we are sure the chums would appreciate the warmth of an English sun to the warmth of an English fireside.

(Danny, in his enthusiasm, made a slip. We missed it ourselves and no other reader seems to have noticed it. Congratulations on your keen reading, Miss Lyns. Actually Danny is in good company. Frank Richards himself, in a post-war St. Jim's story, made

series which I hope has come to stay.

TONY GLYNN (Manchester): As a boy of nine I read my William books to the background music of bombs and ack-ack guns while sheltering from the blitz on Manchester. During that period I was involved in a road accident and sustained a "greenstick" fracture. When I had the plaster removed the event was celebrated by a gift for me: "William and the Evacuees". The mere title of the book brings back curiously bitter-sweet memories. Somehow I lost the book in the years which followed, but if anyone knows where I could obtain a copy of it - just as it was when I first read it - I should like to have one.

If the authoress of the William stories should read the Digest, I should like to say thanks for the way she kept my spirits up in those days. How well I remember the Outlaws, Violet Elizabeth Bott, Robert, Ethel, Hubert Lane - and Jumble.

(Miss Crompton reads and enjoys Collectors Digest. ED.)

MISS JILL LYNE (Muswell Hill): Danny stated that Dr. Holmes was pleased when Dalton Hawke solved a Grayfriars mystery. Did Danny mean Dr. Locke? Next summer, if it's a decent one, do take your Chums in Council out into the garden and discuss your problems under the apple trees in an

on a warm summer we are sure the chums would appreciate the warmth of an English sun to the warmth of an English fireside.

(Danny, in his enthusiasm, made a slip. We missed it ourselves and no other reader seems to have noticed it. Congratulations on your keen reading, Miss Lyns. Actually Danny is in good company. Frank Richards himself, in a post-war St. Jim's story, made

Trotter the St. Jim's page-boy. Our editorial headings are nostalgic flashbacks to the old papers, and are changed from time to time. Chums in Council comes from an old Dreadnought of more than 50 years ago. - ED.)

J. A. WARK (Dunoon): I was interested in the article on "Schoolboy Grit". I agree with the writer that the story lacked something, but always considered that the description of the cricket match at Lords was one of the best pieces of schoolboy-cricket writing. John Finnemore's "Teddy Lester" series were also exciting and the author knew his cricket, but there was one fault. Teddy never failed on the sports field unless an injury was the cause.

CHRISTOPHER LOWDER (Malvern): I agree with the Digest's summary of Mr. Frank Shaw's article. There was a faint air of contempt about that article, a patronising pat on the head. But a lot of truth was wedged into an excellent piece in the Radio Times. For instance, it was Charles Skilton's far-sightedness that brought back Bunter, not the B.B.C. - and the B.B.C. admits it, which is something. Also, that reviewer is not inquisitive about Hamilton's background or schooling - as so many people are.

RAY HOPKINS (High Wycombe): I enjoyed Bill Hubbard's discussion, but wished he had taken a later work of Gunby Hadath's than a 1912 opus. I never read Hadath at the right age, and only discovered him over the past few years. I have recently finished "Brent of Catehouse" a Chums serial of early thirties reprinted in book form some years later. I found it an interesting psychological study, and would imagine it not popular with pre-15 year olds on account of lack of action.

GEORGE BELLARS (Sheffield): Ben Whiter in his Echo refers to "Mason's Last Match" by Pentelow. "God Bless St. James's School" was described as the school anthem. I must admit this story one of the best by Pentelow. I read it a few years ago.

GERRY ALLISON (Ilkley): I enjoyed the August Digest from cover to cover. I was especially pleased with Bill Loft's article on The Girls' Home. I do not remember the paper at all, but the article delighted me none the less.

E. THOMPSON (Edinburgh): I was delighted with the August issue. All the articles were very good, the scene stealer being Danny's Diary.

ROBERT W. STORY (Canada): I continue to be thrilled more and more with each succeeding number of one of the very top magazines of our period for our tastes, to wit, Collectors' Digest. For me, its peak of perfection was attained with the May, 1962 number, which means that our editor has now set himself a monumental task of maintaining a really superb standard. "Danny's Diary" is really refreshingly delightful. Even the covers, always so very attractive, seem to have hit a new high standard. Briefly, C.D. is irreplaceable and never equalled.

(Many thanks to reader Story, and others like him, who continue to send us such heart-warming messages. - ED.)

MISINGS FROM A LADY READER

By Jill Lyne

"Danny's Diary" gets better every month, and we old fans simply lap up all the information he mentions about both persons and places. We have noticed that Danny is as artful as Meredith in his own way. Fancy sending a Sexton Blake story, which was too heavy for him, to his Aunt Florriell. This action of his gave our young fans some good

ideas about birthday presents for their own ancient relatives.

Danny also mentions that Martin Clifford pokes fun at the suffragettes. We have often wondered whether his dislike of modern independent females might be one reason why his female characters were usually so unrealistic and disappointing. (We know nothing of Cousin Ethel.)

Barbara Redfern was quite well-drawn and well-balanced. Bessie was too much like Billy in mind and body to be attractive to female fans. Marjorie Hazeldene was a goody-goody type. Clara Trevlyn was the "man" of the gang, a back-slapping, hearty type, the counterpart of our dear Bob Cherry. Of course, she could be moody like Wharton on certain occasions, and had to be soaxed by sippy Marjorie. What an odious bunch they made!

Betty Barton & Co in the Schoolgirls' Own were far nicer. Polly Linton was always the startling madeup, and Naomi, the arab girl, was a great character, with her mid-eastern characteristics. They had some very exciting adventures, yet they were themselves all that time, unlike Barbara Redfern & Co. who were the pale feminine shadows of their Greyfriars male acquaintances.

We feel that Mr. Lofts is quite wrong when he writes that, for reasons of tidiness women were not fanatic collectors. The truth is that most girls' story writers wrote girls' stories with boys in mind. We had girls behaving in exactly the same way as boys, and many women got tired of this attitude. We read of schoolgirl swimmers, cricket and hockey champs, great school captains, wicked prefects, and naughty fags.

This was the great weakness of the Cliff House yarns. Dulcie Grey was the Captain of the School and acted just like Wingate. Barbara Redfern was the junior captain and acted like Harry Wharton. Diana Royston-Clarke was Cliff House's Vernon-Smith, a feminine bouncer. And Barbara Redfern had a minor called Doris who was a scamp just like Dicky Nugent.

These Cliff House girls imitated the Greyfriars characters closely in a shadowy way, so no wonder that most girls preferred boys' stories. The genuine boy was much preferred to the female who was imitating him.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Only a half-dozen or so of the Cliff House stories in the School Friend were written by Charles Hamilton. If a Dulcie Grey became captain of Cliff House, this was an innovation in the later years. For a long time the captain of Cliff House was Stella Stone. The same applied to Diana Royston-Clarke. I had never previously heard of her. For some years the "bouncer" of Cliff House was Augusta Anstruther-Browne who featured in some excellent series. Another much later character was Jimina Carfax, who, according to editorial claims, was very popular in her time.

NEXT MONTH IN COLLECTORS' DIGEST

No. 1 of a Grand New Art Gallery of Greyfriars favourites, specially drawn by Mr. C. H. CHAPMAN, the famous Magnet artist.

Don't miss this sensational new attraction.

Sexton Blake Today

The latest novels in the world-famous Library,
reviewed by MARGARET COOKE.



WHITE MERCENARY, No. 505

Peter Saxon.

A chronicle of savagery and sin in the Congo. Civil war during 1961 when tribal hatred and lust for power caused the worst atrocities man's inhumanity to man could devise. Behind the scenes two groups of men worked against time - one group plotting to assassinate President Tshombe of Katanga and assume control of the Province; the other group striving to foil their plans with the help of Sexton Blake and Tinker.

Events moved quickly, plotter killing plotter before they could be brought to justice yet - "the dead can speak to those who know how to listen" said Sexton Blake. The murder of a chauffeur and the kidnapping of Kirby and a lady journalist gave Blake his first lead to the assassins, but proof of their identities was hard to obtain and Blake would have failed to save Tshombe but for Tinker's skill, imagination and persistence as a tracker.

A good story written with all Peter Saxon's skilful command of language. The novel has a strong political basis stressing the hatred felt by the people's of Katanga for the United Nations' Forces, and giving details of events, people and places.

THE RELUCTANT GUNMAN, No. 506

W. Howard Baker.

Bank Holiday Monday at Brighton - crowds - gaiety - and sudden death. An ex-convict returning to the scene of his crime to recover hidden loot, pursued by the "Big Fellows" thugs and hunted by Sexton Blake is forced to kill three people.

The story shows a strangely worried Sexton Blake afraid that failure to find the stolen money will cause the Insurance Companies to lose confidence in his ability to serve them.

The chase moves from prison cell to holiday resort, from crowded beach to dim aquarium with tension mounting steadily to the climax in an old cinema.

Good characterization, well sustained interest and a high standard of writing.

Both novels had excellent covers and the notes on author Peter Saxon were most interesting. Unfortunately, similar notes on W. Howard Baker were not included.