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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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VOL. 17.

No. 200



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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 17

Number 200

AUGUST, 1963

Price 4s. 0d.

200 CHUMS 200 IN COUNCIL

(THE EDITOR CHATS WITH HIS READERS)

To the sessions of sweet silent thought
Summon up remembrance of things past.

Shakespeare.

TWO HUNDRED UP

There's magic in numbers - but on the face of it there is nothing particularly magical in the figure two hundred. We have heard of folk who think only of Number One. We are told that Two's company, Three's a crowd. The most famous schoolboys in juvenile literature were Five in number.

Seven is supposed to be lucky. Thirteen is notorious as an unlucky number. When a young man reaches Twenty-one his father gives him a gold watch and the key of the door. A cricketer gets a round of applause when he is Fifty-up. There is great excitement when a human being approaches the age of One Hundred.

But after One Hundred, the magic departs. Once the figure One Hundred is on the board the song is ended but the melody lingers on.

Which is all a lot of mumbo-jumbo leading up to the TWO HUNDREDTH issue of COLLECTORS' DIGEST which is now in your hands. And because so many of our loyal readers think that there IS something outstanding in our reaching the figure TWO HUNDRED we have made it a Double Number. Many thanks to the large numbers who have sent in their messages of congratulations at this time.

At a moment like this, we think with gratitude of Herbert Leckenby

who started it all, and who produced no less than one hundred and fifty-four of our two hundred issues. We think of the contributors, the writers and artists, who have made two hundred issues possible. And we think of the loyal band of enthusiastic readers who have made those two hundred issues worth while.

And now that the Two-Hundredth is in your hands, your editor is sitting back to take things easy for a brief space - feeling and looking Two Hundred.

In the words of the grand old papers which we love so much - the next issue of Collectors' Digest will be the usual size and price.

SEXTON BLAKE YESTERDAY:

Last month, when we were reviewing the final issues of the Sexton Blake Library, we mentioned that, in case any readers had been unable to obtain these issues, we had acquired a number of each, and these were available at cost price plus postage.

Within a few days our supply was exhausted, and we found ourselves in the position of having to write to plenty of our hopeful readers to tell them so. A number of readers told us that, though they had a standing order with their newsagents, the latter were still unable to supply them.

It rather reminds us of London's last tram day. Londoners turned out in their thousands, on that summer Saturday in 1952, for a last ride on the trams. The last day had received plenty of publicity, and special tickets had been printed to mark the occasion. One would have expected that the entire fleet of cars would have been put in service to cope with the crowds. But throughout the entire day cars were being turned, one after the other, into the scrap yard at Charlton - while hundreds of people waited at every tram stop between the Embankment and Abbey Wood - waited for cars which never came.

When I drew attention to the matter in the Evening Standard, London Transport replied that they had been caught napping - they had never expected such crowds. What an excuse! What a way to run a public service!

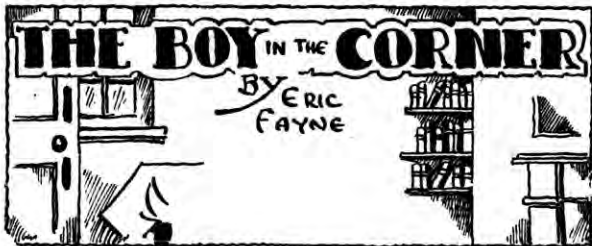
We seem to have wandered from the subject of the disappointed readers of the Sexton Blake Library. Or have we?

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

WANTED: Magnets 751, 752, 753. Good loose copies or volumes containing same. Also wanted: Early Penny Popular Nos. 12, 13, 45, 47, 48.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.



A STORY OF SLADE

Somewhere a telephone bell was ringing.

Mr. Buddle stood for a moment, his fingers still gripping the handle of his study door. For a moment he thought that the bell was ringing in the study which he had just left, but he realised almost at once that the sound came from further along Masters' Corridor.

He glanced up and down the corridor. Nobody else was in sight. By that time in the evening all the resident members of the Slade staff were either in the staff lounge or enjoying a light meal in the staff dining room.

The ringing of the bell was coming from one of the studies further on towards the green baize door which led to the Headmaster's private quarters.

Frowning a little, Mr. Buddle moved slowly along the corridor. He stopped at the last study in the line, the study of the Headmaster of Slade. From within, the telephone was sending out its urgent call for attention.

Mr. Buddle stood in uncertainty. Normally at this time in the evening the Headmaster's telephone was switched through to the extension in his own flat. The usual procedure had been neglected on this particular Wednesday evening, for Mr. and

Mrs. Scarlet had gone to Exeter to meet some old friends and were not expected to return to the school until the next day.

The shrill ringing of the telephone ceased for a moment, and then resumed with seemingly increased vigour.

Mr. Buddle grunted, sniffed, looked down the deserted corridor, and shrugged his shoulders. He opened the door of the Headmaster's study, switched on the light, and crossed to the telephone which stood on Mr. Scarlet's desk. Mr. Buddle lifted the instrument.

"Slade College!" he said.

"Thank heavens!" It was a female voice, dithery, and with the suggestion of a whine.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, Mr. Scarlet —"

Mr. Buddle interrupted.

"The Headmaster is away from the college this evening. Can you ring him tomorrow?"

"How vexing!" The lady sounded cross.

"Who is speaking? Who are you?"

"My name is Buddle. I am a master here. Can I help you?"

"Oh, it's Mr. Buddle!" The voice reverted to its whine. "This is Miss Honeycomb, Mr. Buddle. I regret that I have to make a report."

Mr. Buddle said something expressive under his breath. He knew Miss Honeycomb. Everybody at Slade knew Miss Honeycomb. She was the postmistress in the village of

Everslade, and she mistook for a sense of duty the mentality of a busybody. As soon as she mentioned her name Mr. Buddle knew that she would be making a report. She made a report, which was another name for a complaint, to the Headmaster of Slade at least once every week of term. Some boy had been rude to her in the post-office; some boy had nearly knocked her down with a bicycle; some boy had slouched round Everslade with his hands in his pockets; some boy had been seen with a cigarette in his mouth. Miss Honeycomb's reports were many and varied.

"What is the trouble, Miss Honeycomb?" demanded Mr. Buddle.

"I regret to say," came the dithery voice, "that I have seen two boys enter the Palais de Danse in Everslade. That place, Mr. Buddle, should be closed. It is a sink of iniquity. It is a hot-bed of immorality. Two boys from Slade have gone into that den. I am sure of it. I saw them with my own eyes. With my own eyes, Mr. Buddle, as I was on my way home to my bungalow after working late at the post-office. A half-an-hour ago, before it was quite dark. Brazenly, impudently, the two boys entered that so-called Palais de Danse."

Mr. Buddle breathed hard.

"How can you be sure they were Slade boys, Miss Honeycomb? Were they wearing school caps, the Slade blazers?"

Something like a snort came over the line.

"They were not! Would they be likely to go in that den of vice wearing school uniforms? Be your age, Mr. Buddle! But I can sense Slade boys when I see them. I am sure they were Slade boys. Big boys, too. Not children. Boys who should know better."

Mr. Buddle made a grimace.

"Thank you for letting us know, Madam."

"You will institute enquiries, Mr. Buddle? You will go into the matter at once? Do you promise me that?"

"I will conduct an enquiry at once," promised Mr. Buddle. He would have promised anything to be rid of that unpleasant, self-righteous voice.

After he had rung off, Mr. Buddle stood gnawing his lower lip for a few

moments. He glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece. It was twenty minutes to ten.

Mr. Buddle had been on his way to enjoy a light supper in the staff dining-room before retiring. He wished he had set off on that mission a few minutes earlier. Then he would have been beyond earshot when the Headmaster's telephone commenced to ring.

Mr. Buddle was a conscientious schoolmaster. If Slade boys had actually gone in to the Palais de Danse in Everslade at that time of night it was a serious matter. Mr. Buddle did not believe that the dance hall, so euphemistically named, was a sink of iniquity as Miss Honeycomb had described it. But it was certainly out of bounds for all Slade boys. It was undesirable for schoolboys to attend dance halls. It was strictly forbidden for boys to leave the school premises after the main gates were locked. Any boy caught in the commission of such a breach of the school regulations would be certain to be dealt with severely. Mr. Scarlet would be unlikely to take a lenient view of anything of the sort.

All the same, it was not really Mr. Buddle's responsibility. In the absence of the Headmaster, decisions were made by the Housemaster. But Mr. From, the Housemaster, was a married man, and it was almost a certainty that by this time he would have gone to his own quarters in another part of the school buildings. He would not welcome Mr. Buddle dropping in his lap a report which might put him to a good deal of bother and inconvenience, and, possibly, send him out on a wild goose chase.

Mr. Buddle was tempted to ask Antrobus, the captain of Slade, to run into Everslade on his motor-cycle, and make enquiries at the dance hall. But Mr. Buddle shook his head as the thought occurred to him. It was too much to ask of any prefect.

After a few moments' further thought Mr. Buddle lifted the telephone again and rang up Everslade railways station. With luck there might be a taxi waiting there on the offchance of picking up a fare from one of the late trains. A taxi was available and Mr. Buddle asked the driver to come to the side gate of the college as fast as he could.

Then, realising that he would inevitably miss his supper in the staff dining-

room, he put a call through to the house-keeper to request that cocoa and a sandwich should be left in his study in readiness for his return.

Five minutes later, Mr. Buddle, wearing a light raincoat and a trilby hat, was standing in the starry gloom of the July evening, waiting for the arrival of his taxi in the lane outside the college grounds.

Mr. Buddle's lips were compressed. Everslade was nearly two miles from the school. A pleasant enough walk through the winding Devonshire lanes in daylight, but not a nice prospect for a middle-aged gentleman after dark. Mr. Buddle was glad that he had been able to secure a taxi.

A few minutes more and a glow of light dancing in the leafy trees announced the approach of the taxi. Mr. Buddle stepped into the lane and raised his arm.

"Mr. Buddle?" enquired the driver.

"Quite!" said Mr. Buddle. "I wish you to drive me to the Palais de Danse in Everslade."

He climbed into the vehicle. If the driver was surprised to learn the destination of the middle-aged little school-master, it was too dark for Mr. Buddle to see the expression on his face. The taxi reversed, and set off on its journey.

Everslade was little more than a village, but it prided itself on being progressive as well as picturesque. Years ago it had been a dead spot after darkness fell, but nowadays, with electricity provided by the grid system, it succeeded fairly well in turning night into day. The Palais de Danse in the High Street - it had once been known as the Corn Exchange, though Mr. Buddle had never learned what activities went on in a Corn Exchange - was a blaze of light when the taxi drew up outside. A number of young people stood in the doorway chatting in the warm evening.

"Wait for me!" said Mr. Buddle to the taxi-driver. "I shall want you to drive me back to Slade."

He alighted. The young men and women stared curiously at the slightly self-conscious little man as he made his way into the vestibule. Somewhere a band was playing a lively dance tune. The clatter of drum and cymbal filled the hot air.

It was well after ten-thirty. Mr. Buddle was seated by the open window in his study, staring out into the darkness. A troubled frown corrugated his brow.

Ten minutes or more had elapsed since Mr. Buddle returned from his brief visit to the Palais de Danse in Everslade. Back in his study he had consumed his cocoa and a beef sandwich. Now he was waiting for the boy to whom he had spoken in the dance hall. He had left the boy to return to the school on his bicycle. Mr. Buddle had come on ahead in his taxi.

A few more minutes slipped by. The hands of the clock were creeping towards eleven.

There was a tap at the door, and Mr. Buddle called out:

"Come in."

The boy who entered was a sixth-former. He was tall, with a shock of tow-coloured hair. His features were rugged but not unprepossessing. He wore the Slade blazer of mauve, piped with white, over an open-necked shirt.

"Close the door!" said Mr. Buddle.

The tall boy closed the door, then moved a few paces into the room. He stood staring at the form-master.

Mr. Buddle rose to his feet.

"You have changed your attire since I saw you in that dance palace, Vanderlyn," he observed drily.

The boy looked self-conscious.

"Yes, sir."

"When I found you there you were wearing a sports jacket and a somewhat gaudy necktie," said Mr. Buddle. "You looked considerably older than when in your school attire. You cut quite a dashing figure, which was no doubt your intention."

The boy gave just the slightest shrug of his shoulders.

"Did you have any pass to permit you to be out of gates after lock-up?"

"You know I didn't!"

"You are well aware that a dance hall is strictly out of bounds for all Slade boys."

Vanderlyn slipped a hand into his trousers pocket. He looked over Mr. Buddle's head.

"Of course."

"Vanderlyn," said Mr. Buddle sternly, "you are not a prefect, but you are a

sixth-form boy - a senior. You are old enough to have a sense of responsibility. What on earth induced you to visit such a place?

Vanderlyn lowered his eyes and stared at Mr. Buddle.

"I get bored at school. I'm seventeen, sir. I'm too old to be here. I'm wasting my time. I want to get out into the world - doing things."

"That is for your parents to decide," retorted Mr. Buddle.

"I've had dancing lessons. I'm a good dancer. When I'm home I go dancing, and my parents know about it. I'm no good at games. I'm third-rate at class work. I shall never pass any exams. But I'm a good dancer - it's the one thing I can do well."

Mr. Buddle spoke curtly.

"That is all beside the point, Vanderlyn, and you know it. In going to a dance palace you have been guilty of a serious breach of school regulations. It is certain that Mr. Scarlet will take a serious view of the matter when I inform him to-morrow."

Vanderlyn nodded dismally.

"I knew the risk I was running, sir. I've no kick coming."

"It astounds me that a boy of your intelligence should run such a risk," said Mr. Buddle. "You had better get to bed now."

The boy turned away.

"Vanderlyn!"

The boy looked back with his hand on the door.

"Sir?"

Mr. Buddle regarded him thoughtfully.

"You had your bicycle with you. It has not been unknown for boys to scale the school walls after the gates are locked, but you can scarcely have taken your bicycle over the school wall."

Vanderlyn paused perceptibly before replying. Then he said:

"I went through the door in the wall."

"You mean," said Mr. Buddle, "that you used the gate to which only the masters and the prefects have keys."

"Yes, sir. Someone had left the gate unfastened."

Mr. Buddle stared hard at him, and

Vanderlyn did not meet his gaze.

"It was an odd circumstance, Vanderlyn, that the gate should be left unfastened on the very evening when you were to break bounds."

"Very odd, sir."

"Where is your bicycle now, Vanderlyn?"

Mr. Buddle's stare was penetrating. The boy shifted uneasily.

"In the cycle racks, sir."

"I thought it might be," said Mr. Buddle. "Good-night, Vanderlyn."

After the door had closed behind the sixth-former, Mr. Buddle meditated. The clock on the mantelpiece chimed eleven, and Mr. Buddle stirred. But he did not go into the bedroom which adjoined his study. He sat down again in the chair against the window. He leaned back. It was as though Mr. Buddle was waiting for something to happen.

A minute or two more ticked by, and then Mr. Buddle rose to his feet. He moved across to the bust of Shakespeare which stood on his mantelpiece.

"I wonder, William," said Mr. Buddle, "whether I have made a psychological error."

There was a tap on the door. Mr. Buddle patted Shakespeare affectionately, and turned round.

"Come in," he called.

The door opened and a senior boy came into the study. He was followed by Vanderlyn.

The senior boy who entered first was dark. A good-looking boy who normally had a friendly face and a wide, agreeable smile. There was no smile on his face now. He looked worried and ashamed. He was Michael Scarlet, the son of the Headmaster of Slade. Owing to that relationship, Scarlet of the Sixth was known to all and sundry at Slade by the nickname of Pinky-Mi.

Pinky-Mi was wearing a sports jacket and grey slacks.

Mr. Buddle raised his eyebrows in elaborate surprise.

"What is it, Scarlet?"

Pinky-Mi drew a deep breath. Colour flooded his face. He spoke in a low voice.

"You didn't see me, sir, but I was with Vanderlyn at the Palais de Danse

to-night."

"You, Scarlet? You were at that dance hall?"

Mr. Buddle sounded incredulous.

Vanderlyn broke in. His distress was very obvious.

"The stupid fool! He would come to you, sir. It wasn't Pinky-Mi's fault, sir. I ragged him into going with me. I fairly bullied him into it. He didn't want to go. He doesn't dance. He was bored stiff."

Pinky-Mi smiled faintly.

"Clear off Van, there's a good chap" he said.

"He only want to keep an eye on me," persisted Vanderlyn. "Sir, don't let the Head know about it. He'll skin Pinky-Mi alive."

Mr. Buddle shook his head and raised a hand.

"You must not speak of the Headmaster in those terms, Vanderlyn. Please go to bed now. Remain for a few moments, Scarlet."

Vanderlyn shrugged his shoulders despairingly. After a quick, lugubrious glance in Pinky-Mi's direction, he left the room, closing the door quietly as he went.

"Sit down, Scarlet," said Mr. Buddle.

Pinky-Mi seated himself on a chair against the table. Mr. Buddle shut the lower sash of the window, drew the curtains, and sat down in his armchair. He regarded the boy's troubled face.

"Scarlet," said Mr. Buddle, "I would have thought you the last boy at Slade who would break bounds to visit a dance hall, and I would rather have known that any boy at Slade went there than you."

Pinky-Mi did not speak.

"It was an incredible act on your part," muttered Mr. Buddle. "Why, Scarlet, in heaven's name did you do such a thing?"

The boy pressed the palm of his right hand against his forehead and slowly moved his fingers up into his dark hair.

"Ennuï, I suppose!" he said indifferently.

Mr. Buddle knitted his brows with annoyance.

"Just exactly what do you mean by that contemptible and stupid remark, Scarlet?" he said sharply.

Pinky-Mi was silent, and Mr. Buddle's expression softened.

"Vanderlyn said that he ragged you into going with him. Is that the truth?"

"I suppose it is, sir. I didn't want to go. I don't dance - dancing isn't much in my line. It's no excuse for me, of course. I'm not making any excuse."

"No, there is no excuse," said Mr. Buddle. "I dread to think of your father's distress and anger. I cannot imagine what steps he will take. On the face of it, your conduct is all the worse because your parents are away from Slade. You knew the Headmaster would be away from the school to-night?"

"Yes, I knew," admitted Pinky-Mi. "I might have gone in any case, but my father will think I was taking advantage of his absence."

"You can hardly blame him for thinking so," said Mr. Buddle. "You are a prefect. Vanderlyn is not. Even though he may have been the instigator of this mad act, you are the most culpable."

"I know," said Pinky-Mi miserably. He was very pale now; he looked blotchy under his sun tan. Mr. Buddle gazed hard into the pale face. An impatient anger at Pinky-Mi's folly fought a losing battle with the natural kindness of Mr. Buddle's heart. Mr. Buddle had known Pinky-Mi a long time.

Once he had been a pupil in Mr. Buddle's own form, and Mr. Buddle had always felt sorry for Pinky-Mi. It was far from honey to be the son of the Headmaster of Slade. Mr. Scarlet had always expected so much of the boy, yet had seemed to give so little in the way of affection or encouragement. Mr. Scarlet, perhaps inevitably, had always been the schoolmaster first and the father second.

It had been clear to Mr. Buddle for years that Pinky-Mi would have done better at another school where he would have progressed scholastically and socially as the result of his own natural gifts, and would not have been handicapped by having his father as his Headmaster. Possibly it was understandable that Mr. Scarlet could not conceive of his son having a better Headmaster than himself.

"You may wonder how I came to visit that place to-night, Scarlet," said Mr. Buddle. "A report was made to me by the Everslade postmistress. She claimed she

saw two Slade boys enter the Palais de Danse, which she described as a sink of iniquity."

"It's not that, sir. Miss Honeycomb was never young herself. She sees evil in everything, sir."

Mr. Buddle noted the stiff lip, the sad, resigned eyes.

"From the little I saw of that hall it seems reasonably well run, but that is immaterial, Scarlet. You, a prefect, trusted, and with privileges, have flouted the school regulations in the company of a boy to whom you should have displayed a better example."

"I know, sir."

"What puzzles me, Scarlet," said Mr. Buddle slowly, "is why you were in the company of Vanderlyn at all. You figure in all the school games and sporting activities. Vanderlyn does not. He is a strange fellow in some ways - almost a misfit in school life. One who will possibly be more successful when he gets out into the world."

"Van is a good chap, sir," said Pinky-Mi gruffly. "I like him a lot."

"I should have assumed, from general observation, that Antrobus, the school captain, was your closest friend at Slade."

"Oh, he is, sir - but Antrobus was digging to-night."

"You mean he was studying."

"Yes, sir. If Antrobus hadn't been digging, this would never have happened. I was at a loose end, so I went with Van. I let him call the tune."

"I presume that Antrobus had no knowledge of this escapade?"

"Good lord, no, sir!" Pinky-Mi grimaced wryly. "He'll have a pink fit when he hears about it."

Mr. Buddle almost writhed with impatience.

"Because Antrobus is studying hard for an imminent examination, you turn to a boy with whom you have nothing at all in common. You let Vanderlyn call the tune, Scarlet, but you will have to pay the piper. You have displayed a deplorable weakness, and your father will not regard weakness as any excuse."

"No, sir," Pinky-Mi spoke with a trace of bitterness. "The Head could never make allowance for weakness of any sort,

especially in his son."

"Be silent, Scarlet," said Mr. Buddle angrily. "It is unmanly to adopt such an attitude. Your father is a fine man. He will be utterly distressed."

"He will be more angry than distressed," said Pinky-Mi.

Mr. Buddle rose to his feet and paced the room. Pinky-Mi stood up, staring straight ahead.

Mr. Buddle came to a standstill at last before the senior. He cleared his throat uneasily.

"You let Vanderlyn take his cycle out through the door to which you, as a prefect, have a key. When I apprehended Vanderlyn in the dance hall I intended to bring him home with me in my taxi. He said that he had his cycle with him and would follow me at once. Naturally I reached the school ahead of him. I locked the door in the wall, leaving him to re-enter the school precincts by the same method he had used in leaving. Presumably you, too, had your cycle with you, and you admitted him with your key."

"Yes, sir."

"What an abysmal piece of folly!" burst out Mr. Buddle, his anger getting the better of him. "It is beyond belief, Scarlet, that you, with so much to lose, could act in this way. Inevitably you will forfeit your prefectship, at the very least."

Colour flooded into Pinky-Mi's face.

"These things happen," he muttered.

"Yes - these things happen - to people who have jelly where their backbone ought to be." Mr. Buddle glared at him resentfully. "You don't know it, perhaps, but both Antrobus and I fought with the Head two terms ago to gain you your prefectship. I hoped for so much from you, Scarlet. I hoped, one day, to see you captain of Slade when Antrobus goes. I shall never see that now."

Pinky-Mi caught his breath. He spoke in a muffled voice:

"You can't think any worse of me than I think of myself."

He turned and walked to the door. He turned round again.

"Is there anything else, sir?"

"Wait, Scarlet!" Mr. Buddle stood in painful thought. It was as though he were struggling to come to a decision.

"The Headmaster must know, Scarlet. It is my duty to see that he knows."

"Of course," said Pinky-Mi wearily.

"He does not return to Slade till noon to-morrow. Nobody in the school knows that I was called to that dance hall to-night."

Mr. Buddle seemed to be musing aloud. The boy waited.

"If I say nothing - if you and Vanderlyn go to him when he returns, and tell him what has happened - He would assume that you were making a confession of your own free will. A visit to a dance - it is reprehensible but not heinous - he might well take a lenient view. You must not, of course, tell him any falsehoods -"

Pinky-Mi's lips quivered. He drew a deep breath.

"Do you think that Vanderlyn will have told any other person that I apprehended him at the dance hall, Scarlet?"

Pinky-Mi's face was a little brighter.

"I'm sure he won't, sir." Pinky-Mi spoke quickly. "All the Sixth are in bed by this time. Van has his own bed sitting-room. I'll drop in and speak to him on my way to bed."

Suddenly Mr. Buddle felt very tired. He wanted to be alone, to puzzle out the problem in his own way.

"I'm not quite sure yet what I feel, Scarlet," he said gravely. "I wish to spare your father what pain I can, yet it is clearly my duty to make the report to him. If Vanderlyn had been alone, I should have made such a report. I am not justified in acting differently just because the Headmaster's son was also a partner in this dreary escapade. I may withhold my report, on the understanding that you and Vanderlyn make your confessions to the Headmaster to-morrow. Come to me after breakfast in the morning, and I will give you my decision then."

Pinky-Mi stood in silence for a moment. He opened his lips to speak, and then changed his mind.

"Go to bed," snapped Mr. Buddle.

Ten minutes later, Mr. Buddle performed his ablutions, and rolled into his own bed in his adjoining room. He was far from happy. Exasperation with and compassion for Pinky-Mi alternated in his mind. He dreaded

to think of the scene in the Headmaster's study the next day when the schoolboy approached his father, Mr. Scarlet might show mercy to any other boy in the school. On principle, he would have no mercy to show to his own son.

Normally Mr. Buddle read the current issue of the Gem in bed on Wednesday evenings. It was his weekly relaxation. The latest Gem had been delivered to him that morning by his newsagent, but Mr. Buddle did not feel inclined for it to-night.

All the same, Mr. Buddle took a Gem to bed with him. It was an old copy, one published many years earlier. Mr. Buddle had confiscated that old Gem from Meredith of his form. Meredith was a lad with a penchant for reading the Gem when he should have been doing other things.

Meredith's father was a collector of Gems, a connoisseur of Gems. Because he believed that the Gem was good for boys, he frequently sent some early copies to his hopeful son at Slade with the strict injunction that the hopeful son was to take great care of them.

That was where Mr. Buddle came in. When Mr. Buddle caught Meredith reading the Gem in class or when he should have been doing his evening preparation, that Gem was confiscated. Mr. Buddle then read that Gem with great enjoyment, and in due course it was returned to Meredith. It was a fairly regular happening in the cycle of events. Whether Meredith knew that Mr. Buddle had a weakness for the Gem, Mr. Buddle was not sure. He suspected that Meredith guessed.

Mr. Buddle adjusted his bedside lamp and lay back on his pillow. This Gem was entitled "Cast Out From The School" and it told of the misadventures of a new boy named Talbot. Mr. Buddle had read it before, a few weeks earlier, and greatly enjoyed it. He regarded it as a fine dramatic story, and he now turned to the closing chapter which fitted in with his mood to-night.

Mr. Buddle read.

"Talbot!" It was the Head. He swept towards the white-faced junior, his brows contracted, his eyes flashing. Never had the St. Jim's fellows seen their headmaster

look so angry and indignant. "Wretched boy!"

Mr. Buddle wriggled uneasily between his sheets. Talbot was suspected of theft, which was far more serious than the thoughtless escapade of Scarlet of the Sixth. But Pinky-Mi was a prefect, and his escapade was all too serious. When Pinky-Mi faced his father the next morning, Mr. Scarlet would not have flashing eyes. He would be utterly bitter and cold in his condemnation.

Mr. Buddle resumed reading.

There was a shout on the stairs. Tom Merry had been in his study. He came tearing down the staircase, his face lighting up.

"Talbot, old man. You've come back. I knew you would."

"Merry!" thundered the Head. "Stand back!"

"But - but, sir -"

"Silence! Do not dare to approach the wretched boy. I forbid you to touch him - speak to him."

Mr. Buddle raised his eyes from the printed page, and stared for a few moments at the black patch of the window. The sash was wide open at the bottom, admitting the cool night air.

Mr. Buddle meditated. The Head of St. Jim's in the story had forbidden Talbot's closest friend to speak to him. Would Mr. Scarlet exclude from his son the friendship of anyone like Antrobus who had passed through Slade with him? It seemed only too likely to Mr. Buddle just then.

Again Mr. Buddle turned to the story.

"Have you no shame - no sense of decency?" thundered the Head. "Do not tell me falsehoods, boy. You cannot deceive me now. I am not to be imposed upon a second time. You have taken advantage of my trust, and betrayed it. You have disgraced your school. You will go at once."

Almost stunned by the torrent of words that struck him like the lashes of a whip, the unhappy boy turned blindly and obeyed. He was condemned - condemned past hope. The great door swung to, and closed, and shut off the light behind him - and with

the light, hope!

It was melodrama, and Mr. Buddle loved it. When he first read the story, he had enjoyed it immensely, as he always enjoyed the Gem. Now it filled him with a sense of foreboding.

Was it possible that Mr. Scarlet would expel his own son for visiting the Palais de Danse in Everslade? It was possible. "Pour encourager les autres" as a French cynic once said in connection with the shooting of Admiral Byng.

As a conscientious man and a strict disciplinarian, Mr. Buddle knew that Pinky-Mi deserved punishment. But did he deserve an exceptionally severe punishment - "pour encourager les autres" - because fate had made him the son of the Headmaster of Slade?

Mr. Buddle felt that life had been a little unfair to Pinky-Mi. It was long before Mr. Buddle slept that night.

It was the next morning after breakfast. It still wanted thirty minutes before morning classes.

Mr. Buddle was standing in his study with his back to the fireplace.

"Close the door, Scarlet," he said. "Sit down."

Pinky-Mi did as he was bid. He crossed one long leg over the other and leaned forward a little.

Mr. Buddle scanned the boy's face thoughtfully. Somehow it looked older this morning - lined and harassed with care and embarrassment.

Mr. Buddle picked his words, speaking slowly.

"Scarlet, please answer me frankly. Had you ever been to that dance hall before last night?"

"Never, sir."

"Are you acquainted with any person, outside the school, who is a patron of the Palais de Danse at Everslade?"

Pinky-Mi shook his head.

"Nobody, sir." He shrugged his shoulders wretchedly. "I haven't really any friends or acquaintances outside the school."

"I accept your assurance on that

point, Scarlet. What about Vanderlyn?"

Pinky-Mi paused. Then he said in a low voice:

"I can't speak for Vanderlyn, sir."

Mr. Buddie sighed. He walked over to the window and stood looking out into the summer sunshine. He turned round.

"I am not sure, Scarlet," he said heavily, "whether I am doing right or wrong. I have decided that this matter shall end here. No report will be made to the Headmaster."

Pinky-Mi caught his breath. His eyes opened wide.

"Gosh, sir!" he muttered.

Mr. Buddie smiled very faintly.

"I do not disguise my opinion, Scarlet, that your action last evening was shocking. You deserve punishment, but, because you are the son of the Headmaster and he is a man of very high principles, I think that your punishment might be a little greater than you deserve, if the matter came to his notice. Furthermore, I should be sad indeed to be the instrument to bring pain and - and upset - into the life of your father and mother whom I respect highly."

Pinky-Mi stared at his feet. His lips trembled. He swallowed.

"From the look on your face this morning, I wonder whether you may not have been punished sufficiently already, Scarlet," Mr. Buddie said gently.

Pinky-Mi looked up.

"I have, sir!" he said, almost inaudibly.

Mr. Buddie clasped his hands behind his back.

"Before you go to your class, Scarlet, I have time to tell you something."

Pinky-Mi stood up, and Mr. Buddie went on.

"When I arrived at the Palais last evening I took a ticket, and from behind the velvet curtains which were drawn across the doorway, I scanned the dance hall. There were a number of couples dancing, and a band was playing on the stage. In a corner, near the stage, I saw a Slade boy seated at a small table. He did not look particularly happy. He looked, in fact, worried and bored. He was watching the drummer, and his feet were tapping to the rhythm of the music."

Pinky-Mi's look was incredulous.

"You saw me, sir?"

"I saw you, Scarlet. Then I saw Vanderlyn dancing with a young person. I passed into the dance hall, and intercepted Vanderlyn. I ordered him back to school, and told him to report to me as soon as he arrived."

Colour was flooding into Pinky-Mi's face.

"Vanderlyn reported to me as I had instructed him. He did not implicate you. I waited for you to come to me of your own accord, though you did not know that I had seen you."

There was almost affection in the look which Pinky-Mi gave Mr. Buddie.

"You expected me to come to you and make a clean breast of it, sir?"

"Under the circumstances I felt sure that you would come, Scarlet. The fact that you did - well, never mind. That is one of the reasons why no report will be made to the Headmaster."

Pinky-Mi seemed almost at a loss for words.

"You're a - grand chap, sir," he said impetuously.

Mr. Buddie shook his head.

"You did me - shall we call it a good turn - once, Scarlet," he said.

"Did I, sir? I don't remember?"

"No, I don't suppose you would remember," observed Mr. Buddie, "but there was an occasion when you helped me a good deal - by introducing your father to the periodical called the Gem."

Pinky-Mi chuckled awkwardly.

"Oh, that! It was nothing, sir."

Mr. Buddie shrugged his shoulders.

"You will give me your assurance that you will never visit that dance hall again while you are a pupil at Slade," he said stiffly.

"I wouldn't go again for a fortune," ejaculated Pinky-Mi.

"Quite so. I am more concerned about Vanderlyn. As a prefect, you will keep an eye on him, Scarlet. You will inform him that the matter is closed, but you might add a warning as to the narrow escape he has had."

"I'll do that all right, sir," said Pinky-Mi sturdily.

"Finally," went on Mr. Buddie, "I hope you will both understand that my decision

has not been an easy one to make. If your father should ever learn of my action, he will not be grateful to me. He will regard it as a breach of my duty. He will be intensely angry with me. It may cost me my post at Slade. I hope that you and Vanderlyn will remember that, if you are ever tempted to boast. Fortunately we are very near the end of term."

Mr. Buddle walked across the study and opened the door.

"Get ready for your morning class, Scarlet," he said. He lowered his voice a tone. "It may be that on this occasion I have not acted in a manner worthy of - shall we say - Mr. Railton."

He gave a sour, little smile.

Pinky-MI stood in the doorway. He wanted to say something but mere words meant so little, and they did not come easily.

He said at last, huskily:

"No, sir, not like Mr. Railton. More like - Tom Merry - maybe."

After Pinky-MI had gone Mr. Buddle went across to his beloved bust of Shakespeare on the mantelpiece. Abstractedly he moved his fingers over the bard's cold head.

"I wonder, William," he mused, "whether that boy realises we are not out of the wood yet. That woman might decide to ask awkward questions. Let's hope she doesn't."

Mr. Buddle stood for a while lost in thought.

At last he said, a little wistfully:

"If the good Lord had seen fit to bless me with a son like that, I would, I think, have made sure that he never went in fear of his father."

The clock chimed.

"Calamity!" yapped Mr. Buddle. "I'm late for class."

* * * * *

characters not his own and in imitation of Charles Hamilton. "The Pride of the Ring", however, is Samways pure, simple and unobstructed. By it he must stand or fall.

The style shall speak for itself, but a word about the plot is indicated. If you look at a Hamilton story, it is constructed as if - mentally, at least - the beginning and end had been contrived

Pride of the

by

TOM

HOPPERTON

Ring

The first issue of the original "Greyfriars Herald" was my introduction to that fascinating

school, and I remember it with gratitude. It was also my introduction to "The Pride of the Ring", by "Mark Linley", of which my recollection was so dim that not even subsequent possession of another No. 1 could revive it. I wish I could remember what effect "The Pride" had on me as a youngster: its impact on me as an adult is terrific.

It is now no secret that "Mark Linley" was Mr. G. R. Samways.

Now, there has been some criticism of Mr. Samways' style as a sub author, but let us be both fair and reasonable. No writer could possibly enhance his reputation in such a job, writing without even the credit of a by-line about

characters not his own and in imitation of Charles Hamilton. "The Pride of the Ring", however, is Samways pure, simple and unobstructed. By it he must stand or fall.

The style shall speak for itself, but a word about the plot is indicated. If you look at a Hamilton story, it is constructed as if - mentally, at least - the beginning and end had been contrived

first and sufficient relevant intermediate material woven to bring it to the required size. Against this, "The Pride" is a curious collection of oddments, and most things appertaining to the more sensational school stories have been jammed into it, sometimes more than once. It is certainly not unique in this, but it reads as if the original idea petered out too early and chunks of additional matter were clagged on (that's a good Northern expression!) to spin it out.

It begins: "Put up your hands! Put 'em up, and by jiminy, I'll give you the thrashing of your life!" Samways had not only mastered the Hamiltonian trick of beginning with an arresting bit of dialogue, he had bettered it. Hamilton rarely succeeded in sinking his teeth into the startled reader in this fashion. Note too the two exclamation marks in the first couple of sentences: there are lots more to come.

The speaker is Neddy Walsh, who has just arrived at Earlingham School to find a "hefty lout" twisting a fag's arms. Barker, the bully is described on Page 1 as both a Fourth and a Fifth-former, and in his first three speeches he stammers, shrieks, and splutters furiously. As Neddy incontinently thrashes him, he has some justification. The bystanders, being "conceited fops and unprincipled cads" mob Neddy and one "Dolly" Gray comes to his rescue. The melee is broken up by the arrival of the Headmaster, Dr. Mundy, who demands an explanation.

Barker, now demoted to the Fourth again, gives it. "If you please, sir", he said meekly, "we were endeavouring to teach this new boy - Squelch or something his name is - the error of his ways. He came in at the school gates smoking a particularly vile brand of cigarette, and on looking in his coat pocket I found this," holding up a small bottle of spirits. The Head concurs in Barker's oblique deprecation of Woodbines, because: "Good heavens!" gasped Dr. Munday. "You astound me, Barker! Drink, and in one so young! How revolting! This is doubtless the result of an upbringing in the slums of London, where the wretched boy was taught to drink almost as soon as he could speak!" "Boy!" thundered the Head. "Disreputable scoundrel and premature drunkard! Come to my study at once! Barker, you will kindly see that the intoxicating liquor you confiscated from the new boy is thrown away." "Certainly, sir" said Barker promptly. "Drinking is a thing we don't encourage, sir." This is so axiomatic that the Head doesn't bother to reply as he hauls Neddy away, and the printer took advantage of the break in the conversation to send out for a fresh supply of exclamation marks.

"The unworthy Head prided himself on the fact that he could make a

junior howl for quarter after three strokes." Not our Neddy, however, who absorbs twelve without wincing. "There!" panted the Head at last, "Let that be a lesson to you, reprobate!"

For some obscure reason, Neddy is now discontented with Earlingham and he and Dolly decide to run away. Barker gets another hiding for obstructing them and they run into their Form-master. "Boy!" shouted Mr. Cuttle. "Depraved blackguard! You dare to threaten me with personal violence!" ("Cor!" groaned the printer. "Another of them! Boy! More !!!s") Cuttle was even more surprised a few moments later when "he lay prostrate, emitting dire groans of anguish", while Neddy and Dolly make for London to look for jobs in a boxing booth.

It is already clear that Samwaysland was the deaf man's paradise. Speaking was at a discount: in five pages characters have found it tough on their vocal chords as they have stammered, shrieked, spluttered, panted, roared, muttered, snarled, rumbled, gasped, thundered, shouted and snapped.

Boxing booths not realising what they are missing, the chums have to seek work in odd jobs before Neddy meets that pug who taught him boxing, Bob Sullivan, and Bob fixes a fight for Neddy at the Ring. Just as he is polishing off a pro fly-weight there comes "in loud, resounding tones", "Stop! Stop this fight instantly!" You can tell by the exclamation marks whom it is, and when the officials and cash customers resent the interruption: "Fellow!" roared Dr. Mundy. "I want none of your insolence! No hooligan hands shall be laid on me!" He bears his prey "with black and bitter feelings" back to Earlingham, where he has just had Neddy hoisted for a record flogging when Sullivan and one Chumley (Why not Cholmondeley?), the editor of "Fair Play", burst in. "Put that birch down, you beetle-browed bully!"

They question the boys, find huge weals on Hobbs Minor's back, who "had received a castigation such as not even the galley-slaves of old were accustomed to experience", and by threatening exposure in the press compel Dr. Mundy to reprieve Neddy and apologise to the assembled school. After this the Head has a stroke, and I don't blame him.

Mr. Cuttle is appointed Head, Sullivan is made drill-sergeant, and a Mr. Fenn is brought in as Master of the Fourth. Neddy now announces that he is going to stamp out the prevalent smoking and boozing. "Who, pray," sneered Barker, "appointed you Captain of the Fourth?" "I appointed myself," said Neddy calmly, and to vary the monotony of bashing Barker solus, he proceeds to ratify his appointment by taking on Barker plus Lomax and Lee and walloping the lot. Barker gets

trimmed again for attempted pub-haunting and Neddy continues with the reformation of the school.

Earlingham was in such a bad state that it did not play games, but Neddy sends a challenge to Greyfriars, receiving Wharton's acceptance on a Friday for a match next day. Only then does he begin to collect a team. He rakes up five people who played before coming to Earlingham and ekes them out with six who have never played - including Barker, whose sole asset is "I've got a rough idea of the rules of the game, though." Neddy puts them through their paces on the Friday afternoon, and the great day dawns. Now, this just shows you how much attention you can pay to Frank Richards! He had been bragging for years about the Remove's football prowess, and the first time we get any independent, outside information on the matter we find Neddy's scratch mob run rings round Wharton and Co to draw 3-3.

The juniors now rest on their laurels while the seniors take over. Cuttle, the new Head, rousts up four masters in the dead of night. "Come at once!" he said excitedly. "I have been grossly assaulted by Hobbs (the School Captain) who was endeavouring to break bounds at this unseemly hour It is essential that we should lay that desperate scoundrel by the heels, ere he proceeds to further acts of violence!" They burst open Hobbs' bedroom door and settle down to await the roisterer. The Head finds a bottle which he opens and sniffs. "Brandy!" he cried aghast. "Our worst fears, my dear Snope, are confirmed. I little thought to see the day when the vile malpractices of the gin palace were introduced to Earlingham!" "To do Hobbs justice, he had only kept brandy in his bedroom in case of emergency". The Head doesn't stop to think that this is usual and reasonable among school-boys: he hurls the stuff from the window and "Yoop! What fathead threw that?" roared Hobbs' voice from the quadrangle.

"Hobbs was a curious kind of fellow." He must have been! After bowling over the Head to get out, he had nonchalantly proceeded to the Peal of Bells and now, drenched with brandy, he calmly swarmed up the ivy to his room. His nonchalance was dissipated when Mr. Snope set about him with a cricket stump and, after spending the night roped to his bed, he was expelled to "a unanimous roar of protest", "Shame!" Verney of the Sixth "sprang from his place". "This is monstrous!" "It's grossly unfair!" continued Verney hotly. "Hobbs is a jolly good fellow and you have no right to expel him."

Sad to say, Mr. Cuttle is impervious to this closely-reasoned rhetoric: he not only can expel Hobbs but does. The Sixth revolt, and after parading the village with banners inscribed "Down With Tyranny!"

"Three Cheers for Hobbs!" and "Freedom for Ever!" bar out in a cafe. Neddy rescues Barker, who has fallen through the ice, and "with something like a sob, Barker extended a limp and dripping hand. 'You're a white man, Welsh', was all he could say; but his look of gratitude spoke volumes." The Sixth drive off the masters and police with a barrage of rotten eggs. Molly Fenn (a sort of Cousin Ethel) is kidnapped by gypsies and rescued by Sullivan, to whom the Head promises any reward he wishes. He asks for the re-instatement of Hobbs, which the baffled Head grants but balances it by expelling the entire rest of the Sixth. The whole of the school rises in wrath and Cuttle backs down.

Barker's gratitude to Neddy now gives way at the welts and our hero finds him with five cronies (literally) belting Prince, a fag. He strews them to the ground and rushes off with the kid in his arms. This must have been one of Neddy's off-days, because "inch by inch the cads of the Fourth gained on their prey." Assisted by the hot-foot arrival of Dolly and a pal, the bullies end up thrashed again, while Prince has been so maltreated that he ends up in the san., where Barker, overcome by contrition, offers: "I'll be your friend for ever and a day - if you'll have me, that is." The fag goes to sleep holding Barker's hand. This is not, as you might suppose, a precautionary measure, because he had "a happy smile playing about his lips. As for Barker, he felt a different being. New and nobler thoughts were passing through the bully's mind as he kept his all-night vigil by the bedside of the slumbering fag."

Neddy is now matched with Ben Barnes, a touring schoolboy boxer, and on the day of the contest a Bunterish new boy arrives at Earlingham whose name turns out to be..... Wait for it! BEN BARNES! Once the confusion is sorted out, Neddy knocks out the boxing Barnes. Another newcomer is Benjamin Bartholomew Baraduff Binks, and what should he be with a name like that but Skimpole-and-water? If he doesn't excite the reader, he does the staff. "Boy! Binks! Idiot! Depraved blackguard!" raved the Form-master, beside himself with passion! The pedagogue was obviously out of place at Earlingham: he should have been at Eton or Harrow. Barker demonstrates his new and nobler thoughts by bullying Binks only to be — Don't blame me but here it comes again — thrashed by Neddy. Most people would have been overcome by the monotony before now, but Barker was a sticker. Binks runs away and is kidnapped by a couple of toughs. His mates, I regret to say, had no more sense than to rescue him and bring him back.

Barker, still being new and noble, causes a rift between Neddy

and Dolly by spinning a pack of lies, and inveigles Dolly into a smoking and gambling party which Neddy breaks up. And what happens to Barker? That's right!

Chapter 29 - the last - is headed "The Conquering Hero" and deals with the Public Schools Boxing Tournament. Tom Merry gets pushed out early, and the lightweight final has Robert Cherry, Greyfriars, and... who else but Neddy? But Neddy's face "was now drawn and haggard, and his eyes had a lack-lustre look." In the fourth round "the Earlingham fellow's face was positively ghastly by this time." Dolly Gray matters: "What ever's come over poor old Neddy?" He was no mug, this Dolly, to ask such a question. It had not escaped his attention that "Neddy's left arm hung limpy by his side." Greyfriars boxing was evidently as big a fraud as Greyfriars football, because Neddy knocks out Bob Cherry regardless, and then faints. Bob Sullivan leaps in the ring for a hasty examination. "Gentlemen," he said, with just a suspicion of huskiness in his voice, "Neddy Welsh has fought right through the final with a sprained wrist."

With that, Mr. Samways very wisely decided to call it a day, as anything even he could have added in continuation must have been a crashing anti-climax. But he had done enough, and I unhesitatingly proclaim "The Pride of the Ring" to be magnificent, the most superbly bad school story I have ever read. He was quite young when he wrote it, and it clearly reveals what a pity it was that he ever allowed the lambent flame of his developing genius to be cribbed, cabin'd and confined in the shackles of substitute authorship. If he had gone on his way unhampered, there is no saying what form the school story might have ultimately developed. Certainly it would never have been the same again.

* * * * *

FOR SALE: Two parcels of post-war periodicals, all dated 1949-1952. Parcel One contains approximately 20 Eagles including Nos. 1 - 11; Girl No. 1; 12 copies Boys' Favourite Library; 3 Arrow Schoolboy series; School Cap No. 1; School Friend Nos. 1 & 4; 26 Champions; 2 Hotspur; 4 Comets containing Greyfriars stories; "The Human Bat" by E. R. Home-Gall. Parcel Two contains approximately: 56 Adventures; 39 Rovers; 1 Radio Fun; Lion Nos. 1 & 2; 1 Beano; 3 Film Funs; 1 Knockout; 2 Dandy.

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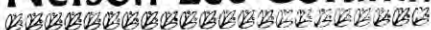
WANTED IN CLEAN CONDITION: "Detective Weekly" No. 4 onwards.

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Mr. A. Dacre's new address is:-

7, LEOPARD STREET, WALNEY ISLAND, BARROW-IN-FURNESS, LANCs.

Nelson Lee Column



Conducted by JACK WOOD

As we have a real bumper feast of good fare from a variety of chefs this month, my own remarks will be brief. But I can hardly let the great occasion - 200 not out - pass without a few comments.

First then, due tributes to the late Herbert Leckenby, who gave the innings so strong an opening foundation, and to my predecessor, Bob Blythe, for his equally solid contribution through this particular section of C.D.

Secondly, thanks to our editor, Eric Payne, and to the host of familiar contributors from among the Leettes, for their continuing sound batting which has kept the score moving steadily along towards what may well be a new record total.

And thirdly, my thanks to all those patient writers and readers who have waited so long to see their work in print, or for a reply from me. In apologising again for my failures to answer correspondence, I can only say it is entirely due to pressure of work which, as a working journalist, necessitates duties at all hours and no regular leisure.

I am, however, on the telephone, and available most evenings between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. or 10.45 p.m. and midnight if anyone wants to ring me up - reverse the charges if really necessary! Always glad to hear from you. And now, here's to the 300th edition!

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STICKING MY NECK OUT

By ROSS STORY

Being a comparative newcomer to the ranks of the O.B.B.C. it is sometimes difficult for me to assess just how much has been written about the Nelson Lee Library over the past fourteen years! Perhaps it is for this reason I often hesitate to write on any aspect of it, for I feel sure that whatever I may want to say has been said before, and far more efficiently. I enjoy all the contents of the C.D. but naturally the contributions which interest me most are those dealing with St. Frank's, St. Jim's and Greyfriars (in that order). And because I have enjoyed the works of both Edwy Searles Brooks and Charles Hamilton I have often been intrigued and amused at the fierce rivalry which exists between the two camps. However, it is a healthy rivalry (without it the C.D. might perhaps be likened to bread without salt!) so I now propose to stir it up a little more by stating just why I think Brooks was a better writer than Hamilton.

Perhaps the difference can be summed up in one sentence: Hamilton was an excellent writer of boys' stories; Brooks was an excellent writer who wrote boys' stories. It is surprising, looking back, to

find how mature his writing was and certainly not difficult to see how easily he made the transition from school stories to novels when the folding of the Nelson Lee Library forced him to turn to the adult market. Hamilton was fortunate in that he was able to continue writing his school stories long after the market had closed to his contemporaries - could he, however, have slid so smoothly and successfully from one sphere of writing to another, as Brooks did? I think not, and this along I think emphasises the point that Brooks was, technically speaking, a much better writer than Hamilton.

For example, what about this?

Stevens was not quite so halting. He was speaking more freely, with a great confidence. And with every moment his self-consciousness grew less. Mr. Noggs and Browne had become a blur, the whole auditorium was a mere space. Stevens didn't quite know whether it was filled or empty.

And then it ceased to be even a space. It became nothing. Mr. Noggs and Browne vanished. The footlights disappeared. Stevens found himself living in the actual scene portrayed in his father's play. And it was here that he revealed his genius as a true actor. He forgot where he was, and threw himself into his part so thoroughly that for the time being he became the individual he represented.

The test was a severe one, a terrible one.

But this mere boy of eighteen overcame the drawbacks. Absolutely alone, without any audience to play upon, without any stage support, he delivered that speech with overwhelming success. His gestures were superb, his expressions remarkable. Even his voice, untrained as it was, contained such inflexions and cadences that Mr. Noggs sat there, amazed.

He came back to earth; he knew that he was once again upon this cold stage. And his awkwardness returned. Flushed, breathless, he stood there for a moment. Then he leaped over the footlights and joined the others.

This is the kind of writing that does not need to have one word or sentence altered to fit the contemporary scene. It conveys in a few short, expressive paragraphs - with almost terrifying realism - the mental agony which any and every actor must have experienced at some time in his career. Put this story once more into print and between hard covers and I am willing to swear that it would hold its own any day with the best of them, either adult or juvenile. Brooks never 'wrote down' to his readers; in truth, I do believe that once he started to write he never stopped to consider that he was writing for

a (supposedly) juvenile market - which is perhaps the reason so many adults read the Nelson Lee in its hey-day (and still do!)

Hamilton and Brooks both were great writers of schoolboy stories - how else would the Magnet and the Gem and the Nelson Lee have endured for so long, not only in our memories but in cold hard print? But unlike Hamilton, Brooks never at any time made the mistake of sacrificing quality to quantity. I am well aware that in saying this I am "sticking my neck out" - in fact, I can almost hear the sound of knives being furiously sharpened by enraged Hamiltonians - nevertheless, I stand by what I say. Brooks was a better writer than Hamilton - and I think the above extracts (taken from No. 562 Old Series) go a long way towards proving it.

I shall now sit back and wait for the storm to break!

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

By NORMAN PRAGNELL

No. 1: The Destruction of St. Frank's

I wonder what would have happened, if, on one bright morning in 1930, thousands of ardent Magnet readers, having invested their weekly twopence, found that before they were half way through the story, Greyfriars College was no more, and that Harry Wharton and Co. had been evacuated to London. Consternation and roars of anger as hundreds of pens scribbled their protests to Frank Richards and to the Editor of the Magnet! And rightly so of course!

But it never happened to Greyfriars. St. Frank's was the unlucky school to suffer such a fate. Why, oh why, did it have to happen to our own favourite school? The writer of these notes would not have been unduly perturbed over the fate of Greyfriars, or St. Jim's, come to that, but on that Wednesday morning of January 25th, 1930, he was extremely upset. There was his beloved St. Frank's in flames, with a burning airship straddled right across it. Professor Zingrave was on the march again and St. Frank's was no more.

For an explanation of these events it is necessary to go back a few months and note the changes that were already occurring in the Nelson Lee Library. Those brilliantly dramatic stories such as the first Extra Quirke series, the St. Frank's in Disgrace, and the Sahara series, and many others that had appeared between 1923-1926 were no longer being written. In their place had come such rather nondescript series and single stories, like those dealing with the rivalry between St. Frank's and the River House School, and the 'Angors' series, - quite good in their way, but lacking the bite of those stories previously mentioned. Various hints dropped by both Brooks and the Editor foreshadowed the changes that were to come. Full scale detective stories were on the way, and had these changes been efficiently carried out they would, we believe, have been successful and led to an increase in the Nelson Lee's circulation. Whoever made the decision to destroy St. Frank's must bear the responsibility for the further decline of the Nelson Lee Library. Brooks wrote the story in which the destruction of St. Frank's was recorded, but it is doubtful if he was very happy about doing it. His own words on this subject are as follows: "The decision to destroy St. Frank's I can't remember exactly, but most likely it was the Editor's idea. I had to agree with a lot of things which went against the grain."

A far better idea would have been to have given the Nelson Lee two complete stories, one a school story, the other, a story dealing with the detective academy. With no

short stories for serials, both stories by Brooks could have been full length and readers would have had the best of both worlds. The continuity of the St. Frank's stories would have been carried on, while those readers who wanted the detective stories would have been well satisfied. However, these ideas were not to be, and the Nelson Lee suffered as the result. Brooks cannot be blamed, nor can the readers, although without doubt many of them wanted some change. The blame must be put squarely on the shoulders of the Editor at that time. No doubt he could not have cared less, to use a modern slang phrase. What a pity, when a more thoughtful and enlightened editorial policy might have prolonged the life of the Nelson Lee Library for some years.

In our next article we shall discuss the effect that we believe Kenneth Brookes' illustrations had on the Nelson Lee.

U M L O S I
 By Neil Beck

One of Lord Dorrimore's oldest and most faithful friends was an African native called Umlosi. Umlosi, the giant chieftain of the Kutana tribe, was a mighty warrior; a great friend but a terrible enemy.

It was in the 'Ivory Seekers' (OS 105), when we first made the acquaintance of Umlosi, that he succeeded to the chieftainship of his tribe by defeating his rascally half-brother, Patoomba, in combat.

This was also our first meeting with Lord Dorrimore although we were told that Nelson Lee already knew him. Straight away Umlosi christened Nelson Lee as 'Umtagati' (because Umlosi believed he had magical powers), Nipper as 'Manzie' (meaning 'water' because of his sparkling eyes, and Dorrie as 'N'Kose'.

Umlosi had many remarkable characteristics, including his phenomenal strength and his tigerish fighting qualities, but the most remarkable of all was his 'snake', as he himself called it. This was a sixth sense and was a sort of crystal ball; it told Umlosi of imminent danger, at which times he claimed that he saw 'red mists' - a true sign of forthcoming bloodshed.

His 'snake' was instrumental in rescuing Lord Dorrimore and Mr. (later Sir) Hobart Manners out in South Africa. Dorrie and his companion were attempting a Cape-to-Cairo flight in Manners' aeroplane 'The Wanderer of the Skies'. The 'plane had been seen over Bloemfontein but had disappeared between there and Johannesburg. The days passed and no news was heard and all hope was given up. Nelson Lee believed that the 'plane had gone off course and had been forced to land in the Kalahari Desert.

Umlosi's 'snake' said otherwise; it told him in his dreams that his beloved N'Kose was near at hand on the Veldt. Lee and Umlosi, accompanied by some Removites, journeyed to Vierstad and found Dorrie

and Manners imprisoned on an ostrich farm owned by a diamond-smuggler called Vanhoek. Vanhoek had lured Dorrie into landing and had stolen his 'plane so as he could use it to take his diamonds to Europe. Needless to say, Vanhoek got his just reward.

Another of Umlosi's attributes, his great strength, saved Nelson Lee's life in El Dorado, the city of the White Giants, in the wilds of Amazonian Brazil. The Ciri-Ok-Baks, the enemies of the friendly Arzacs, attacked El Dorado and one of their number climbed over the barricade and advanced on the unprepared Lee with his axe raised. Then... "he (Umlosi) grasped the mad man round the waist, whirled him aloft, as though he had been a mere child, and sent him flying down over the battlements." Truly a rival for Hercules or even the mighty Samson himself.

His fighting qualities were magnificently described in 'Kassker's Armada' (1st NS 39) when the usual St. Frank's party visited Northestria for the first time. When the enemy Gothlanders attacked, Umlosi "fought like a man possessed." His mighty spear wreaked great havoc among the invaders; "the enemy fell back before him, aghast, and the ground was littered with dead." From this it is obvious that no man was Umlosi's equal with a spear - he had no faith in modern instruments of war.

Umlosi, as black as coal, as tough as teak, as strong as an ox, was a great and mighty warrior and a true and faithful friend. Although on the very friendliest of terms with all the St. Frank's fellows his greatest friend was Dorrie - N'Kose - with whom he went through many a stirring adventure in the four corners of the world. Their travels together took them to both Poles, the South Seas, India, China, South America, the Sahara among other places.

All his qualities make Umlosi a very worthy leader of the Kutana tribe - a noble and honourable race who live in the dense forests in Central Africa - although it is doubtful whether he spent much time at home if he travelled all over the world.

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

By JIM COOK

St. Frank's College,
Bellton, Sussex.

The River House School has won a resounding victory over their St. Frank's rivals. The mystery of the smoke seen issuing from one of the chimneys at Moat Hollow has been gently explained in a letter from Hal Brewster. You will recall that Nipper examined Moat Hollow throughout in his investigation after smoke had been reported being seen at this famous and eerie old house but although a very careful search had been made there was no evidence of anybody having occupied Moat Hollow. The Remove were mystified and

Quirke's name cropped up again as it always does when unexplained events occur. But Quirke wasn't to blame at all. It was merely Hal Brewster of the River House paying St. Frank's a trifle owed them.

The astute Nipper was fooled up to the eyebrows and the Remove is clamouring for some reprisals. And it was all so simple. Hal states in his letter to Nipper - which suddenly appeared on the notice board one morning - that it was really Cyril Graham's idea and credit must go to him.* Nevertheless it was a great victory for the River House and if the juniors of the Lower School at St. Frank's are a little peeved at Nipper's inactivity, who can blame them. St. Frank's, and the Remove in particular, want action. Of late, the River House, led by Hal Brewster, have notched up quite a few scores in their friendly rivalry against St. Frank's and this recent display of superiority is smarting the Remove to action of any kind but Nipper still dallies. The Remove captain's policy of wait and see has always paid dividends but with the juniors in ferment after this latest jape I wonder how poor old Nipper is going to appease them.

In spite of the fortress that is Moat Hollow it seems there are chinks that any junior can squeeze through for Graham, a comparatively new comer to the district, managed to get in and put an object up a chimney. It was what is commonly known as a smoke bomb which Graham had made in the school laboratory and having wedged it up one of the Moat Hollow chimneys and fired it he had quickly disappeared and returned to the River House to await developments. He had not long to wait for the smoke was seen by myself as I trudged through the snow on my way to St. Frank's. But other juniors had reported it as Moat Hollow can be seen from the upper windows of the Ancient House and I think Cecil DeValerie had remarked on the strange occurrence. Nipper had insisted there was no smoke without fire and his diligent but abortive investigations into the mystery and the subsequent solution that crackled in Brewster's letter led to shouts demanding his resignation. But Nipper wasn't worried. He had gone through a period such as this many times before and no doubt, would do so again. Microbes like Teddy Long, Snipe and Core-Pearce shouted louder than most although one wonders how these juniors consider themselves involved.

Up to the time of writing Nipper has not retaliated and I have nothing to report on any scheme he has in mind. The awful winter is over and the countryside is shedding its bleakness and bursting out in colour. In fact, we were well into Spring when I left for London and Moat Hollow set in its gloomy and forbidding scene seems a thing of the past.

It was left to Reggie Pitt to extract revenge on the River House. In a letter to me he tells me Nipper has left St. Frank's with Nelson Lee for a time. They have flown out to New Guinea in response to an urgent call by Lord Dorrinmore. Dorrie is in no danger but the fact that Nelson Lee called at 10, Downing Street before leaving London gives Reggie to think Lee's meeting up with Dorrie is political. Recent disturbance in New Guinea was mentioned by Nipper to Reggie's enquiry about a telegram sent by Lord Dorrinmore to Lee, but Dorrie quoted "official assistance" and did not refer to trouble. As is usual when Nipper is unable to continue as skipper Pitt assumes the captaincy. He tells me that Nipper had promised him that the River House was going to be rudely awakened very shortly and Nipper had thought of an idea to wipe out that terrible Moat Hollow affair. But what Nipper's plan was we shall perhaps never know.

But Pitt cleared the slate and it may be some time before Hal Brewster and Co., get ideas of pitting their wits against the St. Frank's fellows. Reggie thought of the idea when he read in the Bannington Gazette that Farmer Holt was applying for help on his farm. An unusual amount of sickness had fallen on Holt's labourers and the passing bad weather demanded attention to the farm at once. So Reggie, out of the goodness in his heart, wrote to Farmer Holt and suggested his schoolfellows would assist in any work the farmer needed. And Pitt signed the letter Hal Brewster of The River House School.

Fortunately Pitt knew Hal's signature from letters that Brewster frequently wrote

* Cyril Graham arrived in No. 124, 15/9/1928.

to him on sports fixtures and having typed the letter on the typewriter in the senior Common Room he posted it to Farmer Holt. As much as he hated the idea of helping the unspeakable Farmer Holt, he felt the occasion was in aid of higher principles and let it go at that.

Thus it was that the next day being a Wednesday - and a very nice day too - several juniors could be seen during all the afternoon digging up Farmer Holt's potato field. The mechanical plough stood inert in a corner of the field, a victim of the very severe frosts. And the juniors battled on with their forks and spades much to the delight of a crowd of St. Frank's chaps who watched the angry forks and the sullen spades smite the ground. Dr. Hogge, of the River House, had been highly pleased that several of his boys had volunteered to assist Mr. Jeremiah Holt in his predicament. Holt had phoned at once when he read Pitt's letter and the farmer's attitude to schoolboys suddenly rose.

It rose to an affectionate level of fatherly love towards the River House boys. It wavered when the St. Frank's juniors appeared and cheered Brewster and Co. but strictly speaking Mr. Jeremiah Holt really should have thanked St. Frank's for this wonderful assistance to his very depleted labour force.

Poor Hal had succumbed at the onset for the letter Dr. Hogge had afterwards received from Holt was in Hal's authorised signature and a beaming headmaster congratulated a somewhat surprised crowd of juniors in their Common Room. Brewster had immediately seen Nipper's hand in the scheme but on this occasion he was wrong. He was not aware of Nipper's departure from St. Frank's.

And a reluctant crowd of juniors gathered in the quad under the benevolent eye of Dr. Molyneux Hogge and marched out to hand-plough Farmer Holt's potato field. Just as they reached Pelton's Bend the Hon. Aubrey de Vere Wellborne & Co. who had been included in the party made a sudden dash and ran through the hedge. But Handforth & Co., had spotted them and they were brought back and handed over to Brewster. Hal was feeling better at the thought that the honourables had not escaped the digging. The exercise would do them good although he couldn't see them being thankful.

A very tired and weary party left Holt's Farm as dusk descended and like the ploughman in the poem slowly wended their way over the meadows back to the River House School. St. Frank's had wiped out that terrible stain and all things were left equal. Hal Brewster & Co. were too tired even to think of reprisals but it behoved St. Frank's to be very careful from that moment for the River House were bent on revenge.

In the meantime Nipper is away with Nelson Lee and their absence is felt. I may have news in my next letter.

* * * * *

FORTY-THREE YEARS AFTER

By Frank Hancock

Recently I advertised for old boys books in a monthly Northern magazine, and received a letter from a Mr. W. Wells, of Luddenden, Halifax. He writes:

"One of my warehousemen found the enclosed copy of the 'Boys Realm' tucked away under a beam over what was usually a wool bin, where apparently a young woolsorter had lain on top of the wool pile and tucked the paper away for safety when he heard the foreman coming. The wool in the bin was then probably sent to scour, and there would be no way of retrieving the paper, where it has laid since 1915 till now."

The 'Boys Realm' is No. 690, dated (continued on page 34)....

Chips - in the year 1916

By LEONARD PACKMAN

The year 1917 - at which time I was a boy of twelve - is what I call my "purple period". To me, the juvenile publications of that particular year had a something about them (maybe the stories had more appeal, or perhaps I was taking a keener interest in them) that was never surpassed. The BOYS OWN PAPER, CAPTAIN and CHUMS, although very fine publications, had never interested me very much, but even they had a special attraction that year.

Incidentally, magazines such as STRAND, WINDSOR, FEARSONS, BYSTANDER etc., seemed to have that same "something" that year.

There is, however, one special publication which has always held pride of place above my "purple period", and that is CHIPS for the year 1916 - ILLUSTRATED CHIPS to give it the correct title. This publication, as I have mentioned in previous articles, was the very first paper I ever read; indeed, at the age of five I could not read, but I enjoyed looking at the drawings, and that which my little brain failed to grasp was soon interpreted by my dear mother.

As I have also stated before, from the day I saw my first copy until its demise in 1953 CHIPS was the only link with my boyhood that remained



CHIPS AS IT WAS IN 1916

completely unbroken through the years of adult life (and the responsibilities, pleasures and sorrows that come with it!)

The reason for my exceptional interest in this comic paper for the year 1916 is primarily because of the wonderful serial that ran from No. 1322 (Jan 1st) to No. 1365 (Oct. 28th) titled THE SCHOOL BELL. Those of you who read CHIPS at that time will remember that this serial - written by "John Edmund Fordwich" (Harold Garrish) was about a number of boys and girls who went to 'Bernard Street' Council School. The central characters were: Joe Peters (the main character), Arthur Selby, Edie Selby, Elsie Nobletts, Harold Rabbits and Percy Perks (the boy detective and his invisible bloodhound "Blakey").

The theme around which the story is written is that Joe, Peter's father is in prison for a crime which had not been intentional, and throughout the story both he and his mother have many ups and downs. Of course, everything turns out all right in the end, and with the two families, the Selbys and the Peters, both leaving this country for Canada, we find the story finishing like this:

"The final scene represents a ship leaving the shore of the Good Old Country.

"No one can ever experience seeing the home-land fading away into the distance without emotion - poignant emotion in many cases. For once one then experiences the love that inspires true patriots, let them belong to what land they may.

"It was growing dusk now, and a boy and girl leant upon the stern rail watching the lights of England sinking down into the sea.

"They had but a few minutes ago come up from below, having seen all luggage stowed away and everything made shipshape for their stay on board.

"Their parents, with the other members of their families, were on the upper deck.

"The wash of the waves gleamed away into the dim mystery of evening over the sea.

"They said nothing, but somehow gradually grew closer and closer to each other, drawn together by mutual affection in the midst of the great solitude.

"The boy's hand then gently took hold of the girl's, and so they remained, and so the great ship bore them away to their new life, hand-in-hand, and their parents, just catching a glimpse of them, smiled at each other."

Thanks to my good friend Tom Lambert for recently supplying the complete run of this paper for the year 1916 (I have sought it for

1/2 **CHIPS** 1/2



CHIPS AS IT WAS IN 1890

that runs all through the year. It is headed **DETECTIVE STORY-SERIES OF SCOTLAND YARD!** For those of us who had read stories of these two characters in past years in a series called **THE BLUE LAMP**, the new tales had a great attraction.

Another favourite feature (Speshul Every Weke) was **MI KOLLUM**, by Philpott Bottles (Orfis Boy to **CHIPS**). The illustrations, as well as the text, were delightfully amusing.

Every week of course relates on page one **THE SCREAMING ADVENTURES OF WEARY WILLIE AND TIRED TIM**, **THE WORLD-FAMED TRAMPS**. This was the main cartoon attraction of the paper, and each week found them with a new bright idea which nearly always had for its object the making of easy money.

The back page featured **THE CASEY COURT NIBS** (leading light Billy
(continued on page 40)...

over forty years!), I have been able to read the whole story once again after 47 years - and with an enjoyment I never really expected to find the same as I did when a boy.

The story has of course been reprinted twice - in **YOUNG BRITAIN** and **BOYS FRIEND WEEKLY**. In both cases, however, it was abridged, and without the original illustrations.

And now let us go through the year and pick out some of the "attractions".

In No. 1322, a "Happy New Year" issue, another serial commences in addition **THE SCHOOL BELL**. The title is **THE HAUNTED MOOR**. Written by "H. B. Richmond", this serial ran to No. 1349 (8 July), and was very good.

Tug Wilson 'tec (and P.C. Harry Screams) is a short, complete weekly story-feature

In the autumn of 1946 the late Herbert Leckenby was toying affectionately and continuously with the idea of starting a magazine to cater for the interests of story-paper collectors. The main reason, as he stated in the first issue of the Digest, was the illness of Mr. W. H. Gander which had caused the suspension of the delightful and famous Story Paper Collector, the magazine which had been posted off regularly from Canada by Mr. Gander for a number of years.

But, though the suspension of the Story Paper Collector was the main reason, it was not the only reason for the appearance of Collectors' Digest.

I had been corresponding with Herbert since the outbreak of war, and he had often mooted the idea of starting a magazine as soon as the paper supply got easier. I think it was inevitable that Herbert should father an English magazine in due course.

Herbert Leckenby was the ideal man for the job. In fact, I think it would be reasonable to say that, at that time, he was the only man for the job.

For any magazine to make a fair start, a nucleus of readers was essential. Herbert had that nucleus of readers within call. The clubs did not exist at that time. The merest gossamer linked a few people, with similar nostalgic interests. But Herbert Leckenby was a prodigious letter-writer. He maintained a continuous correspondence with a number of people who remembered the old papers, and he was always adding to that number by one means or another. His correspondents were to be the first readers of the new magazine.

Collectors

What

NOVEMBER 1946

172, Oerthif, Cardiff, South Wales.

"Blackburn" Section
H. Maurice Bond, Birkengrove,
H. Maurice Road, Wales.Telephone Exchange
NorthernMiscellaneous Section
Herbert Leckenby, 1 Registry,
Herbert C/o Central, York.

EDITORS:

20




The London Club is fortunate in having Bob Whiter to provide us with a drawing of Eric Payne, and all collectors are fortunate in having Eric as editor of the Collectors' Digest.

When Herbert died, there were many anxieties about the future of his magazine but he had chosen his successor wisely, and it is no disparagement to Herbert to say that the C.D. is now better than ever. The editor must have time, patience, tact, firmness, originality, wit, drive - and an ever-open purse. The London Club is proud to honour Eric Payne in this special inset, and to have this opportunity to sing the praises which he has deserved so richly. Long may he occupy the editorial chair!




NORTHERN SECTION.

Elusive phantoms, half-forgotten joys,
Receding further with the fleeting days,
Imperial treasures which were ours when boys,
Collectors' Digest calls from out Time's haze,
Fanfares the darling buds of bygone Mays.
Abiding link for those alone and mute,
Yielding warm contact in long cherished ways,
Ne'er flag this journal, love's devoted fruit.
Eric Fayne! with heartfelt thanks, your
labours we salute!



NORTHERN SECTION

E ntrancing shades our memories hold in store,
R ecalled, revived, in every lustrous page,
I nsist that we on youth re-ope the door,
C ollectors' Digest still defies Time's rage,
F ading from mind each month the cares of age.
A nd all of us, whom that enjoyment lures,
Y our guiding hand we pray will hold the stage,
N or lose that happy touch that thus ensures,
E ric Fayne! for all your work, our
gratitude endures!



The Editor sat in his swivel chair
A sweaty face and tousled hair
With a muttered curse he threw down his pen
And balefully glared round the editorial den.

There's a letter here from Leytonstone
A waste of a stamp, if the truth be known
Another requires Gem number one
Oh dear! Oh dear! what glorious fun!

As through the post he glibly tore
The queries piled up more and more
He looked around and saw with shock
That it was nearly eight-o'clock.

His desk now looked a sorry sight
He'd have to stay up half the night
And in the midst of all that muddle
It was his task to churn out Buddle!

* * *

Our Editor raised his weary head
And found that he was safe in bed
He yawned and stretched and thought with glee
Thank Goodness, I've finished the next C.D.

To dream like that is an Editor's fate
The greatest fear the deadline date
In spite of all the trouble and strife
They really enjoy their busy life.

And so it is that we ordain
To give our thanks to ERIC FAYNE.

R. J. G.

In the autumn of 1946 I was immensely enthusiastic over the idea. Throughout the twenty years that I knew Herbert, we always exchanged at least one letter every week, and usually more. In late 1946 most of our letters were concerned with the proposed magazine.

I liked everything about it with the exception of the proposed title. In that I foresaw a difficulty if ever the magazine should become well-known. In fact, the ambiguity of our title has produced a problem in later years.

However, no such difficulty existed in 1946 - or for a long time after.

Plenty of people in all phases of life think they would find it rather fascinating to run an amateur magazine. Plenty of people do so - in schools, clubs, and the like.

But plenty fall on stony ground, where they have not much earth .. and because they have no root they wither away.

It is one thing to start a magazine; it is quite another to keep it going. The editor must never allow his steampipe to grow cold. The magazine must take precedence over all other interests; it must be beyond holidays; it must be above the summer sunshine which calls one

Digest looked like

An Amateur Magazine devoted entirely to stony paper collecting hobby

THE COLLECTORS DIGEST

No. 1, Vol. 1
Price 1s. 0d

months

ago

00

into the open air to take things easy, and above the spot of flu or lumbago which lays low many a person but never the editor. The great essential for the success of any magazine is regularity. After Collectors' Digest began in 1946 it appeared at two-monthly intervals for a short time, but since the early Spring of 1947 it has never missed a month of issue.

There was no fear of Herbert Leckenby's steampipe growing cold. Collectors' Digest was the consummation of his life. It could be said that life began for him in 1946.

True, in the very early days he was able to run it as a hobby. A few years were to skip by before it became - as it is to-day - a full-time job, and an unpaid full-time job. But an unpaid full-time job which has ample recompense for every unpaid minute in the love and loyalty of its readers which are now found in every corner of the English-speaking world.

Herbert Leckenby launched Collectors' Digest in association with Mr. Maurice Bond of Cardiff, though it is quite obvious that Herbert did all the work, and Mr. Bond's share was limited to a few articles and a varying degree of enthusiasm.

It is indeed hard to see, at this distance, just how Mr. Bond came to be associated with Herbert in the matter at all. Certainly Mr. Bond put down £5 against any possible loss on the first Digest Annual. His £5 was forfeit, for the first Annual lost a good deal more than that.

According to an early Who's Who, Mr. Bond was a young man of 36 when the Digest was launched. In a Sexton Blake article which appeared in "The Saturday Book" for the year 1946 we find reference to "that foremost authority, Mr. Maurice Bond of Cardiff."

It seems that Mr. Bond operated a mobile library as his mode of earning a living. As a hobby, he ran what he termed "The Sexton Blake Correspondence Club". In the first issue of the Digest he published the names and addresses of his 21 members, and I am quite astonished to find that my own name figures as No. 21 on this list. I have no recollection of ever joining the club, and can only assume that my name was included on the strength of some letter or other which I wrote to Mr. Bond.

In the early days Mr. Bond conducted our Blakiana Column, but after a few years his enthusiasm seems to have waned and he disappeared from the magazine. It is indeed odd that a man who was described in a printed book of 1946 as "that foremost authority" should be sunk without trace a few years later. It is, at any rate, a very long

time since we heard anything about him.

"THE COLLECTORS DIGEST" No. 1 was dated November 1946. As is the case with most Number Ones, it is purely of novelty interest today, nearly 17 years later. In fact its amateur status was painfully obvious from any viewpoint. Yet, to those readers who are lucky enough to possess a copy, it is a pearl beyond price.

It consisted of 26 duplicated pages, including the cover.

Roger Jenkins, whose magnificent articles have been a big part of the backbone of the magazine down the years, was represented in No. 1 by "Reprinted Pieces" - a review of the Schoolboys' Own Library. Tom Armitage wrote "a short description of the Monster Library". "The Three Musketeers of Boys' Papers" was ascribed to "The Veteran," probably Herbert Leckenby himself. Blakiana comprised a few newsy items, and a crossword by Maurice Bond.

The "Letter Box" contained two letters which strike an odd note, and which give the impression that there will be plenty of controversy in the future. Both were from writers who used non-de-plumes.

"Pat" wrote: "Let me make a plea. Don't have too much in the magazine about those over-rated papers, the Gem and Magnet. I could never understand why there was so much fuss about them. Think of the padding in them with lines merely consisting of "Ha, ha, ha," "Dump," "Geroff" and the like. As for plots, why the same old ideas were served up about every three months. And surely there was far too much about that egregious ass Bunter. He was hardly a fit specimen to be a leading character."

Even more caustic was "Disgusted" who made the following comment: "Why should that washout John Hunter be allowed to disgrace the name of Sexton Blake?"

In our Yours Sincerely column, in the recent June issue of the Digest, a reader protested against what he termed "the growing amount of conclusory evidence of the old stories." It seems to us that readers were no less severe in their criticisms of the old stories, in C.D. No. 1, than they are in the Digest of 1963.

The early issues of the Digest cost 1/1d. including postage. It is a thought that the Digest could be mailed in those days for one penny. In March 1951 the price of the magazine was increased to 1/6d. In January 1961 it became 2/-, but by now C.D. had been increased to a permanent 32 pages.

Early in its career the Digest made history with its supplementary issue, No. 3a, dated March 1947. This issue was to warn readers of the presence of fraud in the collecting world. With some courage

Herbert Leckenby listed details of various cases of which he had received report, and some time later one of these "get-rich-quick" gentlemen was sent to prison as the result of evidence which Herbert supplied to the police. Fortunately, that large-scale type of fraud seems to have disappeared in recent years. Probably collectors are less gullible than they used to be.

Gentle, warm-hearted Herbert Leckenby was an excellent editor. His own interests were periodicals of late-Victorian and early-Edwardian times, and he held the scales with entire fairness among his readers whose main interests were with later publications. He built *Collectors' Digest* into the magazine it is to-day, with links all over this country and all over the world.

Paradoxically the *Digest* has never looked back - yet it is looking back all the time. We believe that, in the special corner of Heaven reserved for really nice people, Herbert Leckenby is proud of his brain child and of what it has attained. *Collectors' Digest* is a living memorial to a splendid Yorkshireman.

* * * * *

FORTY-THREE YEARS AFTER (continued from page 27)....

21st August, 1915, rather grubby, but intact. On the front page is an illustration from the serial, 'True Blue,' by David Goodwin, and there are also sporting serials by A. S. Hardy, 'The White Hope,' (boxing), 'Teddy Lester, Captain of Cricket,' by John Finemore, and 'The Rival Athletes,' by Captain Malcolm Arnold. Also a serial of school life, 'The Schoolboy Impostor,' by Andrew Gray, and 'Against the Odds,' which is described as an industrial serial, by Max Hamilton. There is a complete cricket story, 'Last Man In,' by Melton Whyte, quite a long editorial chat, and a football article - a very good pennyworth.

One can imagine the youth, comfortably settled on a pile of wool, eagerly reading this feast of boy's fiction, and shoving it hastily out of sight when he heard the foreman's footsteps. So after 43 years, it finds its way into my collection!

I sent Mr. Wells some modern Blakes in exchange, and hope he finds them of interest.

* * * * *

WANTED: Rookwood S.O.L.'s 170, 174, 182, 198, 202, 206, 220, 284, 308. Can offer 4 Film Funs 1939; 44 Perry Masons; Greyfriars S.O.L.'s 67, 85, 99, 121, 123, 129, 131. THOMPSON, 53, WALLASEY PARK, BELFAST 14.

BLAKIANA

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

NAME THE AUTHOR!

By Walter Webb

Part 4

WHO WAS SINGLETON POUND?

The last named in GROUP D. - Singleton Pound - presents something of a problem in so far as the Blake field is concerned, and, whilst it is highly probable that he wrote some Sexton Blake stories in the very early days, it has not been possible to obtain concrete evidence to this effect.

Quite famous some five decades ago, contributing regularly to all three well-known publishing houses - the AP, Cassells, and Pearson's - Pound is surprisingly not recalled by any editor, or anybody once connected with any of the three firms, so probably the name was a pseudonym.

Specialising in full-blooded adventure tales set in foreign lands, which he described with any amount of vigour and menty dialogue, Pound had his photograph reproduced in an early U.J. - or, rather, it would be truer to say that an artist was given the job of drawing it as faithfully as possible from the photograph, for, in those days, it was not possible to reproduce straight from the print because of the inferior quality of the paper. The fact that Pound had his likeness inserted in the paper at all seems to indicate that he was by no means an unknown member of the staff, for his features appeared in the distinguished company of such well-known writers as Henry St. John Cooper, W. Shaw Rae, S. Clarke Hook, Harry Blyth, Alec G. Pearson, and John G. Rowe, all of whom have been written about at some time or another in the various collectors' magazines. Of them all Pound seems to be the forgotten man. Yet, his work suggested that he was a quite worthy member of that star team of late Victorian writers.

Who was Singleton Pound?

MORE CLUES ON AUTHORSHIP

A clue to a late author's identity may sometimes be discovered

by noting the way he interpreted the smoking habits of the famous character he was commissioned to write about. Was Blake primarily a cigar smoker, a cigarette smoker, or was he addicted chiefly to his beloved briar?

Various authors have each had their own idea of what Blake particularly liked to smoke in the furtherance of mental relaxation or inspiration of thought. W. Murray Graydon, gave him his briar or a cigarette, whilst Norman Goddard, John W. Bobin, and Robert Murray all seemed of the opinion that Blake was a much fitter man mentally when smoking innumerable cigars, from which, according to Goddard, at least, he was constantly "flicking off the ash". On some of these occasions he was guilty of being quite careless of where it fell, much to the indignation of Pedro, who sometimes got the benefit before it had sufficiently cooled to be rendered harmless, and doubtless to Mrs. Bardell's wrath as well when she discovered the spray on her best carpets.

Generally speaking, it was a toss-up in those days whether it was the old briar or a cigarette which was chiefly to be found between Blake's lips - authors probably endowed the detective with their own individual smoking habits, and, if such was the case, the pipe smokers and the cigarette smokers among his old chroniclers must have been pretty well equally divided. The cigar smokers were definitely in the minority here, as was the solitary author who tried to give him a new look - with an old meerschaum!

It can pay the researcher well to take particular note of the dialogue that took place between Blake and Tinker in those far-off days. There is not much to learn from Tinker's, perhaps, for practically every writer had him addressing Blake as "guv'nor" or "sir", although there have been isolated instances when the assistant has departed from this mode of address and referred to his employer as "Mr. Blake". This conventionality on Tinker's part can be found in the work of Alec G. Pearson and Herbert Maxwell, who were given the job of resuscitating his ambitious comeback in the new, enlarged UNION JACK.

There was one author who departed so far from tradition as to have Tinker addressing Blake as "master". This reference is to be observed in the story, "The Stolen Gainsborough," (U.J. No. 191), on page 20. "What's the next move master?" asked Tinker: and, so unusual a departure was this from the usual trend that it forms quite a vital clue in the identification of other Sexton Blake stories by this writer, particularly as, via editorial channels, he has been

discovered as being Arthur S. Hardy.

Regarding Blake's dialogue, Tinker was the recipient of various expressions, such as "my boy," "my lad," "lad," and "young 'un,". The first two, being in more common use, can hardly be regarded as clues: but an author who came across with such exclamations as "Be careful, lad!" warned Blake: or "Be careful, young 'un!" does command the researcher's attention, for the simple reason that they would only be found in the work of a select few.

No doubt the affectionate term, "young 'un" will put those who remember their St. Frank's stories in mind of Edwy Searles Brooks, who, time and time again, used the expression on the occasions he had Nelson Lee talking to Nipper. Brooks of course adopted exactly the same procedure in his UJ and SEL stories, and often had Blake addressing Tinker in the same way. But, a careful survey of those early U.J.'s. prove that E. S. Brooks was not the only author who used the expression, "young 'un." As a matter of fact, Herbert Maxwell used the term for the very first time, and was followed by Cecil Hayter. Two other authors who used it were Edgar Joyce Murray and Harry Gregory Hill. Apart from these five writers, I know of no others who used the term.

The use of the word "lad" was used a lot by Stanley Gordon Shaw, and, I am confident, too, that Cicely Hamilton used this address in the few Sexton Blake stories she wrote before the popularity of her first successful play elevated her to heights which retarded her from further contributions of Sexton Blake, the writing of which she obviously had no further time for, and, if she had, would not have benefited her financially anywhere near the extent her stage work and playwrighting did.

The expression "laddie" is also to be observed in sentences of dialogue on occasions when Blake is speaking to Tinker, and would obviously be used in the case of a Scottish author writing Sexton Blake stories. The only known Scot who wrote Blake's was William Bayfield; but it would be risky to assert that he was the only one to have done so in those early days. There was a Scottish writer who wrote many stories for the BOYS' HERALD, FRIEND, and REALM, who may have contributed a few Blakes in his time. An editor who used his work tells me that he adopted a variety of pen-names, but, after such a long lapse of time, cannot recall even one of them. The name of this author will mean absolutely nothing to the collector, for, on not one occasion, as far as can be ascertained, did he ever use his real name.

What, then, were the pen-names of WARD MUIR?

(To Be Continued)

LOSELY AND LOBANGUBy W. T. Thurbon

That master writer of adventure stories, about whom so little appears to be known, Cecil Hayter is of particular interest to Blakiana as the creator of those two attractive characters Sir Richard Losely and Lobangu. Until recently I had always believed Losely and Lobangu to belong purely to the Blake saga. Even in the serial in the 1918 Union Jack "In the hands of the Head Hunters" (later reprinted as B.F.L. Nos. 429 and 433), Blake is always "off stage" and appears at the end to rescue Losely and Lobangu. But I have now found a Hayter serial introducing Losely and Lobangu which does not include Sexton Blake.

This serial is "In Search of the City of Gold" and it appears in volume 2 of Cheer Boys Cheer, published in 1913. (Cheer Boys Cheer, a brown-covered weekly later changed its name to "The Boys Journal" and became a casualty of the first War). The volume I have contains numbers 28 to 52, and the opening numbers contain the last six instalments of the serial.

Apart from Losely, who is a captive in the hands of the Senoussi and Lobangu, the remaining heroes are Eustace Dent, an Explorer, and his companion, a youngster named Aubrey Stone, nicknamed "The Imp".

I have seen only the last six instalments, but from the introduction to the first of these it is possible to complete the following synopsis of the story. Losely has been captured by the Senoussi and is held captive in their desert city of Kupra. Dent and The Imp set out to rescue him, and after various adventures join Lobangu in the desert. Disguised as Arab traders they make their way to Kupra; captured themselves by treachery they escape and make contact with a mysterious priest. They discover a civil war is raging between the tribesmen, the real rulers of the Senoussi, and the remainder of the tribesmen, led by the Emir and his lieutenant, the Caid, (a man educated at an English University). Already the priest has rescued Losely from the Emir and he makes a bargain with Dent. If Dent will capture the Emir for him he will release Sir Richard. Through secret passages Dent, The Imp and Lobangu make their way to the Emir's palace. There Lobangu fights a lion in the courtyard of the palace and with a prodigious leap seizes the Emir. Covered by Dent and The Imp he bears him away, and finally they take the captive Emir to the priest in the temple. The Caid and his followers attack the temple. The Imp succeeds in blowing up the Caid's reserve store of ammunition. The

Caid challenges Dent to a duel which Dent wins. The priest keeps his promise and releases Sir Richard, and after a visit to the secret Senoussi City of Gold the party are guided safely across the desert to civilisation.

This is an interesting Hayter piece. The character of Dent reminds me very much of Stern in Hayter's several times reprinted tale the "Quest of the Red (or Ruby) Scarab". B.F.L. 83, and printed at least twice in "Pluck" - the last time in 1913. The desert setting and the introduction of the Senoussi also show a resemblance to this tale.

But the character of "The Imp" raises an interesting speculation. There is quite a dash of Tinker about him. Is it possible that Hayter originally intended the story for a Union Jack Lobangu yarn, and that it was adapted either at his own or an editor's suggestion, as the Cheer Boys Cheer serial? And that "Dent" and "The Imp" were adaptations from an original intended to be Blake and Tinker? We shall probably never know, but it is an interesting line of thought. Does any reader of the Digest know whether Hayter wrote any other tales in which Lobangu and Sir Richard Losely appeared without Sexton Blake?

 'GEOFFREY ANDREW MURRAY' - By W. O. G. Lofts

Walter Webb queries this name as given in the 1959 C.D. Annual article 'Sexton Blake Authors Who's Who' - as the real name of the writer 'Andrew Murray' who penned the famous Carlac, Kew, and Lawless yarns in the S.B.L. and U.J. and wants to know on what basis this was compiled.

Well, this name was given as the writer of the stories from official sources - and it was assumed at the time (1958) that this was the real full name of the author. Indeed, several authors that I have met - stated that for some reason 'Andrew Murray' liked to be known as Geoffrey Murray and this seemed to confirm the official data. However, as Walter too has obtained from an official source that his full name was Andrew Nicholas Murray it is accepted as fact. I can well remember the son of Henry St. John Cooper showing me a bound book written by 'Nicholas Islay' - non-de-plume of Andrew Murray.

Why on earth Andrew Murray liked to be called Geoffrey is certainly a mystery - many stories were written under that name in other boys' fiction - maybe it was something to do with income-tax purposes, or an eccentric whim on his part - Murray as Walter has stated many times in the past became insane and died quite young.

Whilst on the Murray question, it is amazing how many writers named Murray were in evidence in the 1900-30 period, and it is little wonder how much confusion there is today on the actual authorship of stories. I have not as yet found the author's actual Christian names of the A. C. Murray, who wrote the very first Nelson Lee Library story, and like Andrew Murray wrote stories of a military nature. 'Sidney Drew' was of course Edgar Joyce Murray. Whilst the two Graydon's, William Murray and Robert Murray were known as a rule by their second christian names, and the latter especially wrote under it.

PARTICULARLY WANTED: S.B.L. (2nd) 596, 617, 638, 657, 671; numbers by John G. Brandon. Gems 1421-1425. Magnets 1513, 1511, 1515, 1556, 1561, 1673. Good condition essential. Numex exchanges available. Writes G. H. WILDE, 145 WENSLEY DRIVE, LEEDS 8.

CHIPS - YEAR 1916 (continued from page 29)....

Baggs), and each week found them up to some lark that was topical. Another regular feature of this page was MACHAGGIS.

The centre pages had six regular cartoon features: TODDLES (the big-booted comedian), HOMELESS HECTOR (the tail of a lost dog), TOM BOWLINE (our jolly Jack Tar), THE ARTFUL ALLIES (drawn by our soldier artist) and IKE AND MIKE (they're both alike).

No. 1338 is the EASTER HOLIDAY number. Philpott Bottles receives a love letter from his girl friend Sharlot Skroggins, in which she says she has made a new costume and would like him to call round that evening and see it on her. The illustration shows Sharlot wearing a sack with the words "coke bag" printed on it! Casey Court has an Easter Fair, whilst Weary Willie and Tired Tim are having a short holiday on the South-East coast - zepps or no zepps!

No. 1345 is the WHITSUN HOLIDAY number, wherein the CASEY COURT NIBS go to Cal-on-Sea (which was at the back of the Court) in the BARKING BELLE to get a whiff of the briny. (They do - and several other flavours too, including the soap works, bone factory and glue factory all lending their aid!)

In addition to the conclusion of the serial THE HAUNTED MOOR, No. 1349 also sees the commencement of a new serial THE GRIPPING HAND, by Harry Hughes (author of "The River Police" and "Lonesome").

No. 1353 is the SUMMER HOLIDAY number, with all the fun of the seaside.

In No. 1361 we have the opening instalment of the sequel to THE GRIPPING HAND, titled THE GOLDEN GIRL or FOR LOVE AND JUSTICE.

Another serial (following the conclusion of THE SCHOOL BELL) titled THE GREAT UNKNOWN, by Hubert Trelawney, begins in No. 1366. We also have Firework Fun in Casey Court!

No. 1369, dated 25.11.1916, is CHIPS XMAS DOUBLE NUMBER (1d). Weary Willie and Tired Tim are at Coughdrop Castle; Casey Court has a Merry Christmas; Philpott Bottles has a DUBBEL KRISMUS KOLLUM; Tug Wilson and Harry Screams feature in a story called THE CHRISTMAS CROOKS. There are an additional three short stories, "An Xmas Experiment", "The Christmas Kit", and "Their Lucky Day". Needless to say the other resident characters all feature in Christmassy episodes.

No. 1373 is the XMAS HOLIDAY number, with the Christmas adventures of Weary Willie and Tired Tim driving and conducting a tram. (Tram fans would like this. They would also like the illustration from the Tug Wilson story called SPRINGHEEL JACK showing a man changing from the top of one tram to another going in the opposite direction.) The

The Editor Has Important News For You Inside!

DAME

THE DOG
DETECTIVE!**CHIPS**THE FINAL ISSUE OF CHIPS IN 1953

larndriss) and Jimmy Durdles (the sun ov Mister P.C. Durdles, the wel-noan rozzer wot lives neckst dor 2 me in Biffins Kort).

Of course, I enjoyed everything in this wonderful $\frac{1}{2}$ d pink comic paper, but WEARY WILLIE AND TIRED TIM came first, with CASEY COURT a close second. This series was really cleverly thought out, and topicality was the keynote. Here are a few themes in which the artist excelled himself:

Casey Court Winter Sports, Xmas Pantomime, College for Young Gents, Munitions Factory, Poultry Farm, Academy of Music (C.D. reader T.J. would love to see this!), Fashion Parade, Lawn Tennis Club, Circus, Dairy-Farm, Waxworks and Lord Mayor's Show.

Having read CHIPS for so many years, I honestly think that quite apart from my personal feelings this particular period of the paper's life (1916-17) was the very best.

And now, to wind up, here are a few of the advertisements

Casey Court Nibs are given a grand Christmas Ball by Squire Baggs, in which all the gentry of Casey Court are there, including Lord and Lady de Smith, Mlle Sallino de Trottaire and the Marquis de Dustbin!

The final issue for the year (No. 1374) unfortunately leaves the serials THE GOLDEN GIRL and THE GREAT UNKNOWN unfinished. However, Philpott Bottles cheers us up by telling us about a party given by Mrs. Slapcabbage in her 'Ot Drink Serloon, which includes the following folk well-known to readers of MI KOLLUM: Horatio Pimple (Funny Wonder Office Boy), Sebastian Ginger (Comic Cuts Office Boy), Jerry Jinks, Dickie Dorber, Tubby Tomlinson, Sharlot Skroggins, Martha Niggs, Tilda Tabs, Lil Lobjot, Miss Beller Bottin (the dorter ov Mrs. Bottin, the wel-noan and-

larndriss) and Jimmy Durdles (the sun ov Mister P.C. Durdles, the wel-noan rozzer wot lives neckst dor 2 me in Biffins Kort).

throughout the year, some of which will perhaps bring back happy memories.

THE WONDER LIBRARY: No. 1 The Red Rovers; No. 2 The Prison Chaplain; No. 3 The Blue Lamp; No. 4 The Pride of the Potteries; No. 5 The Outlaw Princess; No. 6 It's Never Too Late; No. 7 The Girl from Gaol; No. 8 Hinton of the Rovers; No. 9 The Heart of No Man's Land (by J. E. Fordwich); No. 10 All Sorts (by H. B. Richmond); No. 11 The Ticket-of-Leave-Man (by J. E. Fordwich); No. 12 The Heart of the Slums (by H. B. Richmond); No. 13 The Grand Adventure; No. 14 The River Police.

"HARLENE" HAIR DRILL featuring the Misses Ellaline Terris, Yvonne Arnaud, Phyllis Dare and Shirley Mason.

FUCK, CHUCKLES (Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy), FUNNY WONDER (Charlie Chaplin), Comic Cuts (Tom the Ticket-of-Leave-Man - later the Menagerie Man), BOYS REALM, FAMILY JOURNAL, GIRLS FRIEND, ANSWERS (featuring "Robinson, V.C."), BOYS FRIEND (featuring John Travers Cornwell), MERRY AND BRIGHT (Little Tich and Phil Ray), RAINBOW, SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY (No. 21 The Golden Belts and No. 22 The Case of the Cashiered Officer).

* * * * *

ARE WE ALL BUNTERS?

by Frank Shaw

Ted Ray once said to me that no comedian could be a success who did not rouse some sympathy in his audience. When, after thought, I named a successful comic with whom one could scarcely have any fellow-feeling, Ted was able to show points where he did rouse this.

In the Greyfriars stories, we have heard, there was a boy with whom each young reader could identify himself. This was largely true. I know I was the Bounder for three terms and we had at least two Bob Cherries in the Fourth Form; doubtless Alonzo Todd had his secret real-life twin.

Of Bunter could it be true? He was just there to be laughed at and advance, by his villainies, the plot. He was, during the years I read about him, whatever of before or since, a character with no obvious redeeming feature.

I have been studying the "baddy" in literature (no, not for the STRAND, Mr. Hopperton, that magazine is no more - and don't mutter "cause and effect" - and, nothing to do with this, Mr. Hopperton! it was not Sir Winston who said "exuberance of his own verbosity" but Disraeli). I have found points of encounter for the reader in the

worst fictional characters.

Quilp has his sardonic humour, Raffles his cricket, Iago - well! - Dracula, um! But you get the point.

It is a fascinating study. Bunter yielded something to the research, not only answering Why do boys like him after all? but also why do we still like him in our nonage? His school-fellows whom he lied to and cheated, forgave him and he went with them to their stately homes, to Paris, to the Congo, to London, and was barred from no festivity or special occasion.

I am a modest chap myself but I like to tell stay-at-homes about my holidays abroad, though some were rather wearying, or to describe that big dinner which for some reason I spoke at, though it was deadly dull, to the lads at the canteen. Bunter was boastful. Do boys never give their fathers unpossessed heroic virtues or make their own surburban villa almost have the glamour of Bunter Court?

In the thinnest of men there is a fat boy trying to get out. The carnival is soon over, life is a long Lent. The fast should be, in imagination at least, broken by a feast, if only a dormitory spread or a study tea. If the feast be undeserved, as is Bunter's, so much the better, on this occasion, though normally we must deplore such anti-social conduct.

To the anarchist in all young boys, this success of the undeserving has an even greater appeal.

When the villainy was detected and punished another emotion was satisfied, the feeling, which dies hard, that, there should be justice in all things. Yet we feel sorry for the victim since our own deserving schemes are so often foiled.

We do not lie, like Bunter, but masters have often misunderstood us when we were being truthful - in our own way - as, indeed, Bunter is. Throughout life we find so many liars who are successful that it is comforting to find one caught and suffer for it. But really his lies aren't so bad, after all, they do no real harm.

Bunter is conceited, with little reason. Yet - those disguises, that very clever ventriloquism? We too have talents others cannot guess at, we always have had. He was a duffer at games but thought he was a champion. Well——. He was always going to fight but ran away. What's the sense in staying to get a good hiding from a bully? He even thought he was good-looking, that was why Wharton was jealous of him. Uncomely oneself, there were, one felt, unperceived good features; in later years, recoiling from the shaving-mirror, one yet asks, What has Cary Grant got, after all—? (continued on page 47)..

Danny's Summer Holiday

Being extracts from Denny's Diary for August 1913

At the end of the summer term I did not get a very hot report. I got by all right with my English, but for the rest they said I was a bit of a dreamer. The maths master said I was an expert at the art of two and two making five. Still, my batting average was 5.3, and I'm beginning to shine with off-breaks and daisy-cutters, so I don't complain.

Early in August we went off for our summer holiday, and we went to Southampton this year as Dad wanted to see some of the yachting. My brother Doug is in the middle of one of his love affairs, this time with a girl called Freda. He told Dad he thought he would stay at home but Dad said he thought he wouldn't. Doug said all right, then, he'd go, but he'd be leaving his heart behind, and Dad said that was all right with him. So all four of us went to Southampton.

We took the train from Waterloo, and it was a very nice journey through Woking, Basingstoke, and Winchester. We had our lunch in the restaurant car, and it was pleasant.

On the train, Doug had the summer double number of the Union Jack. It was called 'The Yellow Sphinx' and it contained a great warning of the peril the white people are in from the Chinese. It seems that in a few years time the world will be over-run by the yellow races. The story featured Yvonne, and a Chinese called Wu Ling.

In Southampton we had some rooms in a house which was owned by a friend of Dad's, on the Shirley Road. It was a large and very nice house.

I loved riding on the open tops of the trams in Southampton. The seats are back-to-back down the centre, called knife-board seats for some reason. It was very exciting going under the Bar Gate on the top of a tram. The electric wires come down very close, and passengers are warned not to touch the wires.

We all went for the opening of Cowes Week, sailing from Southampton to Cowes on a steamer. It was fairly smooth, but Mum is not a very good sailor. We saw the King win his first yachting victory with his old royal cutter 'Britannia'.

I had two cricket stories published this month in the Boy's Friend 3d Library. The first one was 'The School Under Canvas' which was a serial in the Gem not long ago. I had read it before, but it was nice to have it in book form. The other was 'King Cricket' which Doug says was once a serial in Pluck. That, too, is a very good story. The odd thing is that the first one was by Prosper Howard, and the second one by a man called Charles Hamilton, but I am quite sure that they are both written by Martin Clifford. Doug says it is quite possible, as authors often work under different names. But fancy Mr. Clifford making up names like Howard and Hamilton. Of course, I may be wrong.

I loved going on the Common in the evenings at Southampton. There is a lake on the Common where people sail their model yachts, and Dad bought me a nice model and Doug helped me to sail it. Nearly all the models, like mine, had electric lights inside, with torch batteries. As dusk fell it was a lovely scene with the model yachts illuminated on the lake, while the brightly-lit trams ran along the main road in the distance.

Dad's friend took us to the docks one day and we looked over the liner 'Olympic' which is the sister ship of the 'Titanic' which went down last year. It was very

interesting indeed, and we were able to have our lunch in one of the ship's dining-rooms.

Another afternoon we sat on the Common in deck chairs, and Mum had two papers. One was called The Weekly Friend, and it had a serial called "The Cinema Queen". It also had an article about Maurice Costello and Florence Turner, the big and beautiful film stars.

The other paper Mum had was The Girl's Home, and I don't see why she shouldn't, for Mum is far prettier and far nicer than girls like Doug's Freda. Mum was reading a story in The Girl's Home called "Little Miss Millions", all about a rich girl who went to a free council school.

I had Lot-O-Fun which had Dreamy Daniel in a seaside adventure on the front. It contained a serial called "The Boy with the Magic Ring" by A. E. Bull. This was about a boy who found a magic ring while he was walking over Hayes Common, near Croydon. The

boy changed himself into his Headmaster and his Headmaster into himself, and it was most interesting. Dad read it, and he said it was obviously based on a famous hard-cover story called "Vice Versa" by a man named Anstey.

One evening we went to the Grand Theatre and saw "The Girl Who Took the Wrong Turning" in four acts. It was very dramatic, and a lot of ladies wept copiously.

There was excitement during our stay at Southampton for two Australians, H. G. Hawker and a passenger, made an attempt to win the Daily Mail £5,000 for a sea-plane flight round Britain. After 1600 miles in 72 hours the plane fell in the sea near Dublin. Mr. Hawker, who is 22, has already created a British duration record by remaining in the air for 8½ hours, and he also set up a British altitude record.

It has been a

3 GRAND NEW "NUGGET LIBRARY" STORIES. OUT TO-DAY 1st EACH.



Vol. XV. No. 222.

August 19th, 1912.

From Our Magazine

A Lightning Adventure. Showing Dreamy's British Flight.



As the ship sailed on, the man looked out at the sea. He saw a small boat in the distance. He was very curious to see what was in it. He called to the crew to stop the ship. They did so. He went to the boat. It was empty. He was very surprised. He saw a small box on the deck. He opened it. It was a magic ring. He put it on his finger. He saw a flash of light. He was very surprised. He saw a man in a dark suit. He was very surprised. He saw a man in a dark suit. He was very surprised.



The man was very surprised. He saw a man in a dark suit. He was very surprised. He saw a man in a dark suit. He was very surprised. He saw a man in a dark suit. He was very surprised. He saw a man in a dark suit. He was very surprised. He saw a man in a dark suit. He was very surprised.



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good month in the Magnet. There have been 5 issues this month, and I had three of them while I was at Southampton. The first was called "The Sports of the School" and it was all about horse-riding. Dutton, the deaf boy, is the champion horseman, and he played a big part in the story. A new series of Greyfriars Lyrics started this month, some very good poetry. The first poem was on Harry Wharton.

The next story was "Self Denial Week at Greyfriars", and Lord Mauleverer's uncle, Sir Reginald Broke, decided to start a fund to build a cottage hospital at Friardale.

Then came the Magnet's Summer Double Number, with a coloured cover. There was a very long Greyfriars story entitled "Shunned by The Form", in which a new boy named Brandreth came to the school. But Snoop recognised him as a boy whose father was on the run from the police for theft. In the end it turned out that Snoop's own father was the thief, and he was sent to prison. You couldn't help feeling sorry for Snoop, though he is an awful rotter. Also in the Double Number was another long story "For Fame and Fortune" by Peter Bayne; an instalment of the serial "Mystery", and five pages of comic pictures.

Then came "The Nut of Greyfriars". Mr. Quelch was away from the school, and his place was taken by a lively man named Mr. Knutt. But he was really Lord Charles, who was a student being trained by the real Mr. Knutt.

Finally "The Schoolboy Shopkeepers" in which Mrs. Mible had to close her tuckshop because her small son had influenza. So Fisher T. Fish started a shop, and sold bad food which he had bought too cheap.

The Prime Minister has not been very enthusiastic about a new scheme for a Channel Tunnel. He thinks it would be risky for security, and it would cost 16 million pounds.

At the end of our stay at Southampton we saw the new ship which the London, Brighton, and South Coast Railway has built to run on the Newhaven-Dieppe service. It is called "The Paris", and it is claimed to be the fastest and most comfortable ferry boat in the world. It will carry 968 passengers, and will do the trip in 2 1/2 hours.

On the day before we came home we had a trip by train to Bournemouth for the day. It is a lovely town, with green and yellow open-topped, narrow-gauge trams. Part of this tramway is on the conduit system, like the London trams, and I had an interesting ride out on one of them. Doug and I went in the sea, too, which was quite warm.

And then we came home, with our summer holidays over for another year. I had a lovely time and got very brown.

There was a railway accident at Yeovil station when an express ran into the back of an excursion train from Paddington to Weymouth. The express was moving very slowly, but two people were killed and eight badly injured.

Five stories in the Gem this month - all of them good.

"Friends Divided" told of a new boy called Rook, and Monty Lowther made fun of him because he had red hair. It caused trouble among the Terrible Three, but in the end Rook saved Lowther who had fallen in a quarry on the moor.

"Playing to Win", a cricket story, was excellent. Cutts had a bet on the game that St. Jim's was to play against "The Wallabies". A villain named Crewe injured Langton so that Knox would play and be able to throw the game. But Kildare played Patty Wynn, and he helped St. Jim's to win with his bowling. There is a new serial in the Gem called "The Corinthian" by Brian Kingston.

"Figgins' Foe" was the scholarship boy, Dick Brooke. Figgins was jealous because Brooks seemed very friendly with Cousin Ethel, but Brooke was only coaching in Greek a boy called Rutton who was a kind of protege of Cousin Ethel. I wasn't so keen on this story, really, as it was a bit too sloppy.

"Wally on the Warpath" was another tip-top cricket story, about Wally trying to play in the house match, which he did in the end. "Figgins' Foe" and "Wally on the Warpath" were both illustrated by an artist called Warwick Reynolds. I suppose Mr. Macdonald is on holiday.

The last story of the month was "The Message of Mystery" and it was very good and very exciting. Tom Merry's uncle, General Merry, visited him, with a warning about a

dangerous Hindu called Hurree Das.

There has been no Summer Double Number in the Gem. I suppose the Gem doesn't need freakish things to make it sell.

Soon after we got home we had a letter from my grandmother who lives at Layer Marney, near Colchester. She had been to see the traditional opening of the oyster season at Brightlingsea, a custom over 900 years old. The Mayor of Colchester who is named Councillor Coats Hutton (what a name!), wearing his robes, led the proceedings by slinging the first dredge overboard in Pyefleet Creek.

And so my summer holiday is over, but there are several weeks yet before school starts again. While Doug was away, Freda found another tennis partner, and Doug is heartbroken. I must lend him my Gems. The Gem is better than any Freda.

* * * * *

ARE WE ALL BUNTERS? (continued from page 43)...

Bunter's ability to cook and enjoy food may strike a welcome chord in many of all ages. Surely, too, though the other fellow's love affair is often funny, but yours never, we feel most for the fat Owl when he falls for Cora Quelch and the other fellows chortle?

Also he couldn't spell or construe Livy. Can you?

As for his laziness are there not times we ourselves hide from ("Hullo, hullo, hullo") Bob Cherries who want us to play tennis, or take a brisk walk or make a fourth at bridge. I know I'm yawning at the moment. Are you?

* * * * *

More News from 'Rose Lawn'

by ROGER M. JENKINS

IT was
a warm,
sunny
afternoon
in June
when John

Wernham and I drove down to Kingsgate last. At the bottom of Percy Avenue the sea was dancing with specks of white, and a ship was to be seen gliding serenely towards the Continent. It was not difficult to see why Charles Hamilton found this comparatively secluded spot so charming.

We were going to be introduced to an elderly lady who had known Charles Hamilton quite well in recent years, and who had paid him regular visits to discuss Latin authors which had formed a topic of mutual interest. We were doomed to disappointment here, as she was taken ill unexpectedly, but we called on Miss Hood, as arranged, and our journey was far from profitless.

Miss Hood knew Mr. Hamilton when she was a child of nine at

Hawkinge. He was staying over the Post Office when he returned from the Continent in 1914, and he alternated between Hawkinge and a cottage in Bucks. There were many troops stationed near Hawkinge at this time, and even when walking across the fields one might be challenged with "Halt! Who goes there?" - words that often found their way into contemporary Magnets and Gems.

It was Mr. Hamilton who later asked Miss Hood if she would like to act as nursemaid to his niece who was then at Sandgate, an offer which she accepted. Charles Hamilton continued to visit Hawkinge, and after the war he had a bungalow built which he called 'Apple Trees' because of its fine orchard.

'Rose Lawn' was purchased in 1926, and the solitude it afforded was no doubt instrumental in bringing about the Golden Age of the Magnet which began at this time. Miss Hood succeeded the previous housekeeper in 1931, and they were both there all the time until the outbreak of war, with the exception of Christmas visits and certain trips to Hawkinge. Charles Hamilton had an impetuous nature at times, and would often decide to go to Hawkinge or return to Kingsgate on the spur of the moment. He would telephone for a car (he never drove himself) and off they would go.

Collectors do not need to be informed that Mr. Hamilton loved country life. He delighted in caravans, and the freshness of the river always appealed to him. As a boy he found great pleasure in floating down the Thames at Kew on a tree trunk. He also cycled, but this pursuit was ended during the last war, when all Kingsgate residents who were not obliged to reside there because of their work were ordered to leave. He returned to Hampstead Garden Suburb (houses were easily obtainable in London at that time), but he found the traffic conditions too harassing: he ignored a policeman and cycled across a busy cross-roads, only to be hauled back by an irate constable. After that, the bicycle was superannuated.

Until the war, Charles Hamilton worked steadily at 'Rose Lawn' every morning and afternoon, Sundays excepted. There does not seem to be any evidence to support the view that the Amalgamated Press supplied him with details for his plots. Mr. Down visited him only occasionally, and though his publishers certainly wrote to him regularly, and often suggested what type of series should follow the one then current, they did not provide him with skeleton plots. In any case, a man as gifted as Charles Hamilton was not likely to accept such detailed suggestions. Quite apart from a justifiable pride, he had a lively mind, and could work out probable sequences of action very

rapidly. Miss Hood says that often, when she was recounting some incident to him, she was interrupted by Mr. Hamilton who could tell her how the story was going to end.

Miss Hood could see a little of all his characters in him - he even had a sweet tooth, like Bunter. He was not fond of alcohol, but he was a great pipe-smoker, and she used to get him a pound of tobacco every week before the war. His short-sightedness may have been what is called tobacco-blindness, according to John Wernham. It is amusing to note that he talked occasionally of converting the house into flats when he grew old and was unable to walk upstairs.

We took stock of his collection of Magnets and Gems which had been up to London in 1940 and then back again later. Collectors may like to know exactly which complete series of Magnets he retained for himself. These were: the India series, Southern Seas series (as he called it), da Costa, Hollywood, Ravenspur Grange, Kidnapping of Fish, China series, Cavandale Abbey, Lancaster, Kenya series, Mystery of No. 1 Study, Hiking, Hazeldene's Uncle, Stacey, Warren, Brazil series, Muccolini's Circus, Tracy, Bertie Vernon, and Eastcliff Lodge. Obviously, the later ones were more likely to survive than the earlier ones, and the holiday series were special favourites with him: if these are excluded, the few term-time stories that remain assume a greater significance. It should also be recorded that the following series were complete but for one elusive copy: Carboy series, Court-field Cracksman series, 1932 Wharton v. Quelch, Flip, Valentine, Smedley, and Portercliffe Hall. There were hardly any Gems, and no Populars or Boys' Friends.

I have mentioned in an earlier article how badly many of the Magnets were treated: the author would obviously not treasure them as would a collector. Nevertheless, it was disturbing to see such treasures defaced by having covers removed and pages ripped out (probably to serve as spills to light a pipe). Some were creased when their short-sighted author sat on them!

We also looked through the collection of gramophone records, and Gwen Catley's version of the Mozart variations provided a pleasant background on the acoustic gramophone as we continued with our task of sorting. We noticed some Latin records, and also learned that the 12" L.P. record that Mr. Hamilton made a few months before he died will be issued in the Autumn. This will include some songs with Latin words, and also a recorded interview with Denzil Batchelor in which he explained how he came to write school stories. Illustrations by Mr. C. H. Chapman will complete what should (continued on page 57)...

OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

MIDLAND

Meeting held June 25th, 1963:

As a very welcome change from the poor attendance at last meeting there was a full muster of members to give the new Chairman for 1963/4 a good start. Thirteen may be unlucky but on this occasion we were jolly glad there was that number. Norman Gregory, myself, Tom Porter, Ted Davey, Jack and Madge Corbett, Win Brown, Win Partridge, Ray Bennett, Jack Bellfield, George Chatham, Gerald Price and Joe Marston. We were very glad the last two mentioned had put in an appearance as we had heard that Gerald had illness at home and Joe found it more awkward than in previous years. There was a good programme arranged but no quiz. The collector's items brought along by Tom were (1) A 1927 Magnet bearing the day and month of the meeting (11) The last two issues of the S.B.L. and as a contrast two very early S.B.L. Needless to say there was more interest shown in the last two, both in perfect condition for all their age. Refreshments came along early tonight and during that period the library raffle was drawn Gerald Price winning first prize and myself the second one. Guess the number competition was won by the chairman. After refreshments there was a talk by the Secretary comparing two groups of authors. The first - Talbot Baines Reed, Michael Poole, Warren Bell, Gunby Hadath etc. etc., who the Secretary said in his opinion gave a more realistic account of school life and whose characters, masters and boys, were more feasible than those of the other group headed by Charles Hamilton and Edwy Searles Brookes. It was agreed afterwards that an account of school life needed to be far-fetched to attract the youthful reading public the stories were intended for. Who could give them anything better than Frank Richards and Brookes who could make the fantastic digestible and readable. Even their freaks - and they used a few - were not so far-fetched as they could have been coming from other and less talented authors. The group headed by Reed and Warren Bell did not use freaks, nor were their yarns fantastic but the secretary maintained they were very readable and very popular. What yarn of school life has ever excelled "The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's"? As very few present had ever read that or any of the authors mentioned in the first group, I am afraid my points were lost. But it provoked a long discussion and was much enjoyed. There was another discussion introduced by Jack Corbett but details of that will have to wait till next report - I had to leave early.

HARRY BROSTER

MERSEYSIDE & NORTHERN JOINT MEETING

Manchester, July 8th, 1963

Twenty-seven enthusiasts from Leeds, Manchester, York, Liverpool and London gathered at the New Millgate Hotel for an extremely fine get-together. The party from Liverpool met those from Leeds at the Exchange Station and within a few minutes we were chatting in the hotel lounge. Lunch over we took our places in the very comfortable room arranged for us by the hotel. Geoffrey Wilde and the writer presided as joint chairmen, and the meeting was opened by Geoffrey welcoming all present. A special welcome was given to Bill Lofts whose arrival - at least to the writer - was most pleasing as many of us had not met him before. The writer, Norman Pragnell, then presented a small gift to Frank Case who, after thirteen years with the Merseyside Branch, has had to leave us to live at Nottingham.

Norman Pragnell then presented a quiz based mainly on Nelson Lee and St. Frank's lore. This was of the straightforward question and answer type and caused quite a few frowns on some faces. This was won by Bill Lofts who knows his St. Frank's well.

An excellent Hamiltonian talk was given by Gerry Allison. This was well received with many a chuckle. Gerry certainly knows his Charles Hamilton.

The writer was then given one of the well known "Office Boy" letters so popular in pre-war comics to read. The spelling as always was ten degrees worse than anything Bunter wrote, and our problem was to write part of this letter as the office boy spelt it. This caused many a laugh and two of the Merseyside members were among the winners, both being presented with prizes.

An article by Bill Loft on Edward Oswald Handforth was read by the writer. This was extremely interesting. The controversial aspect of Handforth's character as to whether he was a bully or not raised some considerable discussion. The writer who believes that Handforth was a bully was obviously in a minority, but is prepared to risk the wrath of one of our well known members on the South coast.

The last item came again from Gerry who gave us an amusing quiz based on the titles of stories from the Union Jacks, Nelson Lee and the Magnet.

Five o'clock saw tea being brought in and animated discussions soon broke out in all parts of the room until seven o'clock when most of us started to make our ways to our respective home towns.

Altogether a most interesting and enjoyable day, enjoyed by everybody with an added result of three new members being made.

We all look forward to another get-together in Manchester.

NORMAN PRAGNELL

Chairman, Merseyside Branch O.B.B.C.

NORTHERN

Saturday, 13th July, 1963:

Eighteen members turned up at 239 Hyde Park Road for our July meeting, and chairman Geoffrey Wilde expressed his satisfaction at this very good attendance for our Sexton Blake programme.

After the minutes and the treasurer-librarian's report, the secretary gave a short account of the very successful meeting with the Merseyside club at Manchester the previous Sunday. Displayed in the clubroom were some attractive drawings of the Greyfriars scene by Alfred Hanson, and some reproductions of the same by Cliff Archer - two new members who made themselves known to us at Manchester.

Gerry Allison then gave us the news and correspondence of the month, among which was a letter from Bill Lofts of the London Club saying how much he had enjoyed the Manchester meeting, Bill being able to make the journey from Birmingham, where he was staying for the week-end. The chief item of news, however, cast a depression over us all - the death of Vera Nicholls (nee Coates), one of our founder-members, after a long illness following a serious accident. So another old stalwart has gone.

Jack Wood then reminded us that the last Bunter book is due to be published on 12th December next - unless there are some more in manuscript form which we do not know of. There was a discussion on this subject, and also on the 'Wack of all Trades' manuscripts and the possibility of these ever being published.

Molly Allison then took the chair and read us two short Sexton Blake stories - one by Vera Coates and the other by Gerry Allison; thus making it quite clear that the Northern club's interests are by no means confined to Hamiltonians. Then Geoffrey Wilde took over and read us extracts from four Blake stories, very interesting, but of necessity short. We had to guess the author from the style of the writing, and Ernest Whitehead was the winner, these being G. H. Teed, Cecil Hayter, Rex Hardinge, and Anthony Skene. The last item of this very interesting programme was provided by Jack Wood in the form of an ingenious quiz - the names of fourteen characters from the Sexton Blake stories, whose nationality we had to guess, and eight titles minus one word, the missing word being a colour, which we had to fill in. This took us on to 9.15 when the meeting terminated.

Next meeting, Saturday, 10th August.

F. HANCOCK Hon. Sec.

LONDON

Aptly named "Greyfriars", situated amidst the pine woods of Berks, an ideal meeting place for the eighteen enthusiasts who met there on Sunday, July 21st. With Caversham not far away, host Eric Lawrence duly fetched the famous "Magnet" artist, C. H. Chapman, over to grace the meeting with his presence. Roger Jenkins, after reporting very excellent progress with his Hamiltonian library read a very amusing chapter from "Magnet" 996, "Bunter's Brainstorm", this story was, as all Hamiltonians know, reprinted twice in "S.O.L." 209 and 237. The chairman, Bob Blythe, not to be outdone, gave excellent news about the expanding Nelson Lee section of the library and followed it up with an equally amusing chapter from "Nelson Lee" 513, "Fooling the School". This featured one of Brookes most famous characters, William Napoleon Browne. A 200th C.D. Quiz, conducted by Ben Whiter was won by Bill Lofts and afterwards Bill told of his grand time with the Leeds and Liverpool club's combined meeting in Manchester. Good progress was reported on the preliminaries of the Sexton Blake catalogue. This from Len Packman who afterwards stated that he would be pleased to see a good attendance at his August 15th meeting at 27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22. 'phone TOWNley 2844. Let him know if intending to be present.

Thus a happy meeting and homeworks in one of the rare fine summer evenings, after thanking the hosts, Eric and Betty Lawrence.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

AUSTRALIA

As anticipated, the July meeting held on Thursday 18th, proved to be a standing-room only affair with a grand roll up to welcome Tom Dobson of Victoria.

It was good to have one of the foundation members Bruce Fowler back with us again after an all too long absence.

After Tom Dobson had made a suitable reply to the welcome extended to him by the secretary, members discussed the possibility of a revival of the Melbourne O.S.B.C. which had functioned a few years ago under the leadership of the late Sheila Stevens. Present indications are not hopeful but there is always the possibility that Tom's own enthusiasm may bring about this event.

An interesting proposition was put to members by Don Hartness who is an enthusiastic photographer. His suggestion to photograph collections and rare items in colour, either for slide or movie projection received a most enthusiastic reception from his fellow members.

Blake enthusiasts were well catered for so there was quite a great deal of correspondence dealing with the final issues of the S.B.L.

From another Blake enthusiast in West Aust. Gordon Swan there were four letters to provide a focal point for further discussion. Gordon has asked that all O.S.B.C. supporters write to Fleetway Productions in an effort to secure an occasional appearance of Blake in their other publications and this proposition was put to the members, some of whom have already acted on this suggestion.

Members were treated to a display of rare blue cover "Gems" dating back to 1908 and starting at No. 3. These had been brought from Victoria by Tom Dobson and the enthusiasm displayed certainly showed how much the Sydney members appreciated his thoughts. Another diverting item was then passed for perusal and discussion. Our postal member Arthur Holland of Wellington, had sent along "Eton and All That" from the Australasian Post and this set off discussion on interesting points of comparison with life at school as portrayed in the Hamilton yarns.

After the usual half hour in the local coffee shop as a fitting climax to a memorable evening, members wished Tom Dobson a pleasant journey home and voted this meeting the most enjoyable of this year's grand get-togethers.

B. PATE Secretary.

OUR COMPETITION

Way back in 1915 The Greyfriars Herald appeared as a separate antity and during the eighteen weeks before the paper shortage brought it to a close, the Tuck Hamper Competition was a popular feature on the cover of each issue. Here we re-produce one of them.

We invite readers to write their solutions on a sheet of paper, with their names and addresses, and post to the editor at Excelsior House. The editor has written out his own solution and it is now locked in his desk. Competitors who may possess those old issues are reminded that no reference has been made at all to the

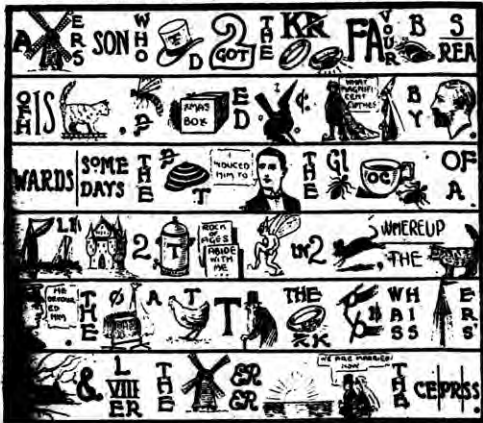
GREYFRIARS HERALD. 2

No. 2. Vol. 1.
Week Ending
Jan. 25th, 1916.

2

Edited by Harry Wharton a C of Study 1. Greyfriars School.

CAN YOU READ THIS PICTURE-STORY OF PUSS IN BOOTS?
OUR POPULAR ONE-WEEK COMPETITION FOR BOYS AND GIRLS!



solution which originally won the prize.

A prize of £1 will be awarded to the reader whose entry comes closest to that written by the editor, and a BOOK PRIZE will also be awarded to each of the TWO runners-up.

In order to give our overseas readers the chance to compete the closing date for this competition is September 3rd. The result will appear in our October issue.

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOESNo. 67 THE BRANCH LINE:

RON CROLLIE: Can we say categorically whether any of Charles Hamilton's branch lines were not worth while? I am not at all keen on stories of the old West, so obviously I don't consider the Rio Kid stories worth while. Cedar Creek was, of course, delightful. I can still recapture the old thrill by re-reading "How Father Christmas Came to White Pine." I agree that the Benbow stories were not marvellous, but I enjoyed reading Drake and Rodney's adventures at Greyfriars.

One branch line you do not mention - the Grimslade stories in the Ranger. Perhaps the less said about them the better.

BERNARD PRIME: I take the view that the substitute stories were necessary during that very long run of - what was it? - over thirty years. I don't think any writer could do what you suggest without a few breaks quite apart from occasional lapses in health, so I think we should have had substitute stories even without the branch lines. Occasional substitute stories were a good idea - the trouble is that there were far too many of them. Most Hamiltonians, I consider, take too harsh a view of them. But I like several substitute stories, Pentelov's, I suppose, being the best. "A Very Gallant Gentleman" was a fine tale, not by any means over-sentimental. Surely a good sub story was better than a poor Hamilton one. "A Very Gallant Gentleman" seemed to get that dark, terrible mood of the spring of 1918.

P. J. HANGER: The miracle of Charles Hamilton's work is that he had the ability to create worthwhile branch lines. Any other author would regard these as Main Lines, quite justifiably, too.

As there must be close on 1500 Greyfriars stories and a similar number of St. Jim's, no reasonable person can claim that the Main Lines were neglected to build the branch lines. Even Pentelov was a small price to pay for "King of the Islands."

RAY HOPKINS: I greatly enjoyed "The Branch Line." I had never before thought of Charles Hamilton's work in this connection but how true it is that had the branch lines not been run on to, so to speak, then the sagas of Greyfriars and St. Jim's would have been "all his own work" without those long arid spaces where the substitute writers were called in to fill the gaps. I have a sneaking hunch that I have a friendly leaning towards the Cedar Creek stories. I can only recall reading them in the "thin" Holiday Annuals of my youth, and I never did see them in any other form. I know some smaller towns in Washington State which have a certain likeness to the Cedar Creek backdrop. Also there is that feeling that we are reading of events that really did happen. This is only because the leading character is called Frank Richards. It has nothing to do with the fact that we know Charles Hamilton never set foot in Canada in his life.

ERIC PAYNE adds: There would not be much point in any reasonable person claiming that the Main Lines were not neglected in favour of the branch lines, for all the evidence shows that they were. It is immaterial whether the substitute stories were good or bad. The point is that, Charles Hamilton's output being the phenomenon it was, there need have been none. Whether that would have been desirable is beside the point. Grimslade was not mentioned in "The Branch Line" as it had no effect at all on the substitute question, the last substitute story having appeared earlier. "King of the Islands" was certainly a branch pertinent to the matter, but space only allowed us to consider the three branches to illustrate the argument.

In the interesting article which follows, Gerry Allison points out that there was at least one substitute story in the Cedar Creek saga. He is right, of course. I dare say there were a few others, too. It is so long since I read the complete series that I had forgotten.

SUB WRITER VISITS CEDAR CREEK!by GERRY ALLISON

In a most percipient article in 'C.D. No. 198', Walter Webb shows how it is possible to detect a substitute writer of Hamilton stories in six words. As a matter of fact, I once spotted a sub Rookwood yarn in five words.

Again quoting from the same number of 'Collectors' Digest' this time from "Let's be Controversial" - THE BRANCH LINE - Eric Fayne says - "In 1917 Charles Hamilton branched yet again, this time to Cedar Creek, writing every one of the 205 stories." And again: "Every story was excellent of its class, and Charles Hamilton wrote the lot."

Now Cedar Creek was a sheer joy, and a most worth-while 'Branch Line'. Confusion to any Dr. Beeching who would close it down. But alas, amongst the travellers on this line, we must include the - to me - obnoxious substitute writer!

I would refer you to the story "WANTED - A POET!" in No. 933 of the Boy's Friend, dated April 26th, 1919. When I read this tale, the cinder crunched between my teeth at the second line. I swear that this is true. The story begins:-

"Read it again, Frank."

Bob Lawless spoke quite excitedly.

Sound ordinary, doesn't it? But the girlish gush of that 'quite excitedly!' thudded like a lead half-crown. I read on, but soon the familiar depression settled down on me. Long before the ludicrous ending came, I knew! I Knew!! I KNEW!!!

I could prove what I say by a hundred quotations, but take this point. To Charles Hamilton, every character about whom he wrote was alive. Again and again his people just come to life as one reads. How could Gussy do anything mean?

Now one of the most fascinating boys at Cedar Creek is Vere Beauclerc - the son of an English wastrel, sent abroad as a 'remittance man' by the aristocratic relations he has disgraced by his dissipated ways.

But Vere himself is as much a real English gentleman as Lord Mauleverer - and he never forgets it. His speech is quiet and polite, and in invariably correct, almost polished English, spoken with courtesy and restraint. He is a proud, somewhat reserved lad, and a wonderful contrast to Frank Richards' other friend - the boisterous Bob Lawless - son of a Canadian rancher. Hamilton has thought him out

completely - a subtle character, almost as complex as Vernon-Smith of Greyfriars. And this is how he appears in the story under discussion.

"I ought to do rather well at that," observed Vere Beauclero, who completed the third of the famous trio at the little school. (As if we didn't know that after two years!) "You want to talk about soft carpets of pine-needles and warbling birds and nifty hemlocks——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Frank Richards.

"Well, you know what I mean!" growled Beauclero. "I guess you want to harp on about a full blooded center in the invigorating air of a morning ——"

"Cut it out, Cherub!" advised Bob, grinning.

"I tell you we've got to cellar that prize!" the Cherub snapped. "You don't seem to have got that notion into your thick cabeza yet!"

See what I mean? That growling, snapping character, with his "I guess," and "harping on," and "thick cabeza" might perhaps be Fisher T. Fish, but is certainly not the refined Cherub.

But none of the speakers are in character. Take these:-

"There is only one other school in the district, and," she added with a touch of pride, "you ought to be able to beat them."

When did Miss Meadows speak like that? Or even in one word:

"Galcoots!" added Eben Hacke furiously.

And now for the 'plot'. For some reason, Mr. Gunten - or 'Old Man Gunten' as he is referred to throughout - decides to boost Hillcrest School. He inserts an advertisement in the "Thompson Press" asking for poems to be written by scholars in the "backwoods schools". These have to be submitted to the 'Chicago Daily Monitor'. There is to be a prize - unspecified, but described in the advert as 'A bully gift for nix!'

Eventually the prize turns out to be a hamper of tuck, and Old Man Gunten promises his son Kern that he shall win it. For the result is to be announced and the prize awarded by a 'prominent local man'.

Frank Richards leaves the entries from the Cedar Creek scholars with Mr. Gunten - sorry, Old Man Gunten. At last the prize day arrives. A crowd of townspeople, all the roughs from the 'Red Dog' saloon, and the entrants assemble to hear the result.

We read:- "In Old Man Gunten's hand was a bunch of papers. He had gone to great trouble to type them all out, so that the writing should not announce the real identity of anyone. (What a subtle idea!)

At the last moment he changes his mind about letting his son Kern have the prize. He reads out one poem - the one sent in by Frank Richards - and announces that the winner is a Hillcrest boy - as he had hoped. "His name is - is Richard Bird!"

Of course, Kern Gunten 'shrills' "Way, you promised that I should

win!"

Old Man Gunten is then 'solemnly bumped' by the enraged crowd, and Cedar Creek and Hillcrest share the hamper of tuck. As much resemblance in the story to the local, rounded Hamilton plot as in the dialogue. Whether any other sub-writer visited the Thompson Valley, I can't say yet, but one did. And as he was a writer with a gift for versification perhaps you can guess who he was. I can!

MORE NEWS FROM 'ROSE LAWN' (continued from page 49)...

be a most interesting acquisition for any collector.

We passed Friends' House on our way back. This mansion was the original of Portercliffe Hall in the 1935 Magnet series. There is no doubt that there is much in the neighbourhood that is associated with the Greyfriars stories. A fruitful mine of information lies waiting to be excavated by the industrious researcher.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE: 100 Schoolgirl's Weeklies Mint. Collectors Item The Schoolgirl Cliff House Encyclopedia. B.F.L. 3d. Birds of Prey, Silver Dwarf, Missing Heir, Nelson Lee's Rival, Football Detective, Maxwell Scott. Football Fortune, Rivals of St. Kits, Secret of St. Winifreds, Charles Hamilton. Chums of Wycliffe, Larry & Co. Jack North. Sexton Blake's Honour, Woolwich Arsenal Mystery, Sexton Blake in Siberia, The Sleep-walker, Tiller & Tideway, Sexton Blake Clerk, Sexton Blake's Trust, The Coster King, The Mammoth Hunters, The Merry Mystery, all Sexton Blake. Many others before No. 200 by Henry St. John, Clark Hook, A. B. Harty, Sidney Drew, Cecil Hayter, etc. Scouts 1908-11 1930-5. Congratulations to C.D. on No. 200. Long may it continue to bring happy memories to us each month.

VERNON LAY, 52, OAKLEIGH GARDENS, WHETSTONE, LONDON, N.20

WANTED: CHUMS, bound volumes or consecutive monthly parts for 1921, 1923, 1925.
 HARRY MATTHEWS, 22 RUSSELL STREET, ST. LEONARDS, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

WANTED: Magnets Nos. 829, 873, 975, 882, 884, 888. S.O.L.'s Nos. 60 and 68.

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

WANTED: Good loose copies or bound volumes containing any of the following Magnets - 45, 52, 131 to 149 inclusive, 195, 205, 237, 238, 239, 277, 318, 319, 353, 400, 417, 422, 921, 924, 925, 938, 940, 942, 943, 946, 949, 951, 965, 967, 988, 396. Most issues between 821 and 890, 900. GEMS - many issues between 400 and 500. Many issues between 800 and 879. Also numbers 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 985, 989, 990, 992, 933, 998, 1129, 1150, 984. POPULARS - 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474. Advertiser has complete sets of Gem, Magnet and Popular but needs many good replacement copies before having final binding work done.

ERIC PAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Library (last series) No. 466 Dead Man's Destiny; No. 389 Frightened Lady. (Either to buy or borrow). DAVIES, 37, ELTON ROAD, KINGSWOOD, BRISTOL.

Yours Sincerely

Interesting Items from
the Editor's Letter-Bag

repeat humorous serials or rather I should say that it printed humorous serials containing characters who had appeared in other light-hearted adventures. Apparently Reginald Kirkham made a speciality of this humorous-type narrative. I wish that I could have discovered his name before he died. I rather shy away from "celebrity-hunting" but I think that I would have written to him to tell him of my appreciation of his work. I don't put him in the same category at all as Charles Hamilton and feel that probably he (Kirkham) was one of the unknown Amalgamated Press writers. It is just that he made me laugh when I was a kid that I feel that he was under-rated. I should like to know if he wrote any stories for boys and what pen-name or names he used.

J. TORKE ROBINSON (Herne Bay): "Sexton Blake" passes! What can one say? I had not read a "S.B." for nearly forty years when I took out a subscription for the new series. It seems like meeting an old, old friend only to have him taken away by "ill-health" when I was beginning to enjoy his company again. I wonder if we can look forward to seeing him again in another publication at some future date?

GEORGE McROBERTS (Belfast): May I take this opportunity to congratulate you and all the contributors upon the high standard of the old paper. Some of the articles that appear from time to time are really magnificent. May you be spared to continue the good work for many years.

ALAN STEWART (Bermuda): I am looking forward eagerly to our Bumper 200th Number, and may I say what a marvellous job you have made of our little monthly. I should not say "little", for C.D. has grown fat with "goodies", almost a Bunter in fact. Re the recent criticisms of the contents - this annoyed me intensely. I wonder if our members realise the difficult and arduous task it must be to produce the Digest, not forgetting the Annual. So Hooray for "Buddle", Hooray for "Late Summer Folly", and down with all malcontents. Yeh! Rotters!

B. E. HANBLET (Bootle): It is indeed sad to think that Sexton Blake has finished. I started reading him about 1948 and finished in 1956 when Blake was given a face lift which didn't appeal to me. I started getting the Library again about 6 months ago and enjoyed the stories although nowhere so good as say those written 15 years earlier. Also in my opinion there is no artist to touch Eric Parker. When he stopped drawing the covers in 1956 it was a sad loss. I don't think we have seen the last of Sexton Blake.

ARTHUR CARRIN (Rugby): The Digest for June was grand except for the announcement of the demise of the S.B.L. For me, the real

RAY HOPKINS (High Wycombe): I have discovered that Reginald Kirkham (under the names of Joan Vincent and Hilary Marlow) had quite a lot of his work published in The Schoolgirl's Weekly during the twenties and thirties. This paper appears to not have had a "resident" school which may be the reason for its not being retained by its readers. It contained school stories (run as serials) but never with a repetition of the same school. However, it did



Sexton Blake went when the Library was changed some years ago. Only the name was the same, nothing else. As for Tinker, or "Mr. Carter," he didn't mean a thing in the new series.

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton-on-Trent): It looks as though towards the end of the substitute run in the Gem, before the reprints began, one of the sub authors somehow got rid of Aubrey Raake, as well as dismissing Mr. Linton and adding Cyrus K. Handcock to Tom Merry & Co. In some of the tales of 1930 the cads of the Shell were Birkett and Crooke. While not joining in the general condemnation of the substitute authors, I think this sort of thing was going too far. Change for change's sake!

ARTHUR HARRIS (Llandudno): I was interested to see the article recently on Tiger Tim. I wonder if any of your readers remember Billy and Dolly Jumbo that ran in the Home Circle, 50 years ago. I just loved those two little elephants then and would love to see them again.



JOHN STEELE (Nigeria): The July issue is splendid. What enjoyable reading it makes, and the many excellent illustrations which are now appearing make it a very good two-bobs' worth. The article "On the Ball" by J. R. Hartagh brought me happy memories. This was our old school song (Feilding Agricultural High School N.Z.) and needless to say it was frequently sung with great gusto for it had a really rousing tune.

JIM SWAN (London): In the July issue (as good as ever) I note Peter Hanger's letter about the Wizard reaching its 2000th issue. I'll admit the numbering hasn't reached there yet, but No. 1 was published September 1922 (not 1923 as he said). That gives us 40 years 9 months which makes about 2116 weeks. During the war the Wizard, Adventure, Rover and Hotspur came out alternate weeks. Then in 1947-8 three times a month. From March 26th, 1949 every week. Scout and Chums each reached over the 2000th issue. The B.O.P. ended its weekly issues in 1913, and counting on with its monthly issues we have well over 2000 - nearer 2400. If the Magnet had gone on with publication it would now have reached 2860 issues. Makes one's mouth water.

JILL LYNE (North Finchley): John Upton's article on the Bunters was excellent. Congratulations on Mr. Chapman's splendid portrait of Skinner. It was terrific. Danny is better than ever, much to our delight.

M. A. MARKER (Upper Cwmbran): Fascinating! That is not the only complimentary word to describe it, but it's the first one to come to mind as I turn the pages of the Digest. Each page reveals some new pleasure. May I compliment you on the layout of the magazine. The variety of type, headings, and overall neatness and good taste certainly enhance the fine articles. May its monthly wave of nostalgia continue to sweep over me.

J. A. MARK (Dunoon): Looking back on sporting stories I used to read, I have hoped in vain for an article during the past year on such yarns and a discussion on the authors who turned them out. For football yarns, A.S. Hardy, Edwards and John Hunter were tops in my estimation. Horler was too bizarre in his approach to such writings and the phrases used in his description of a soccer match laughable. The County cricket stories were best presented by Richard Randolph - Pentelow, I think - using this pen name. How I enjoyed "Young Yardley", "Carden of Cardenshire" and "Smith of Rocklandshire", to mention but a few. In my humble opinion E. S. Brooks' description of cricket was terrible. Compared with Randolph, Finnermore and Hadath he just was in the also ran class in this sphere of writing.

THE SEXTON BLAKE FAREWELL PARTYby W. O. G. Lofts

On Friday, June 14th, a party was held down Fleet Street to bid farewell to Sexton Blake, on his retirement, and to drink his health on his coming marriage to Miss Paula Dana. Host was the genial editor of THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY W. Howard Baker (Peter Saxon) and guests included - Arthur McLean (and his half-brother 'Desmond Reid') Arthur Kent, Rex Dolphin, and many others who have played a big part in the presentation of the S.B.L. in recent years. After a slow start, the party got into its stride; and things livened up a great deal by the arrival of Eric Parker, complete with blue flower in his button-hole. Eric, whom I know quite well, looks as young as ever, and it's hard to believe that he drew his first cover over 40 years ago in the UNION JACK. (1922 'Eyes in the Dark' by Andrew Murray).

Copies of the first issues of Blake stories were studied during the course of the evening, and compared with the very last issues, and many interesting stories were told of experiences in writing, and illustrating Sexton Blake through the years, and it may be possible to relate some of them in future articles. An interesting fact brought to light was that Eric Parker based his interpretation of Blake on a commercial traveller he once knew at a club. This man looked the ideal Englishman, tall, lean, with slightly receding hair. Eric read many of the stories himself, and thought his favourite author was Rex Hardinge followed by G. H. Teed.

Later, the old traditional candle-lighting ceremony was held, in which the famous bust of Blake was placed in a suitable position, candles lighted, and a toast drunk to the King of Detectives, Sexton Blake.

What wonderful memories I have of the last ten years, and my active connections with Sexton Blake (I have played a bigger part behind the scenes in Sexton Blake Investigations than most people could ever realise!) and of tracking down many of the elusive authors. 'Pierre Quiroule' tall, lean, and light blue eyes, clad in blue dressing gown, and looking very much like Blake himself - and of meeting the daughter of the late 'Gilbert Chester' after many years of searching. Although Blake's adventures will no longer be recorded, at least he is still with us in spirit. Lastly, our thanks to W. HOWARD-BAKER for his great efforts these last few years, and success in his new ventures THE COLOUR-BACK Libraries.