

THE LAST OF WU LING!

THE UNION JACK. 1^P

MAY, 1964
Volume 18
Number 209



THE PIRATED CARGO.

A TALE OF SEXTON BLAKE & WU LING.

C
O
L
L
E
C
T
O
R
S

d
i
g
e
s
t

LONDON O.B.B.C. - HAMILTONIAN LIBRARY

Wanted - some good friends to help us complete series for the library. Can you assist with any of the following?

Magnets: 751, 820, 821, 822, 858, 859, 984, 1032, 1633.

Gems: 755, 780.

S.O.L.: 169.

Offered - a copy of our printed and illustrated catalogue to anyone who sends me two 3d stamps (NOT an SAE).

Hon. Librarian - Roger Jenkins,
"The Firs,"
Eastern Road,
Havant, Hants.

SALE: Boy's Friends, Heralds, Realms; Vols. Captain, B.O.P; Chums (Annuals, runs) Bunter books; Holiday Annuals 1927, 1929. Bound vol. Big Budget; other O.B.B.'s.

G. HARRISON, P.O. BOX 173, WAIROA, HAWKE BAY, NEW ZEALAND.

DISPOSAL:

Sets of C.Ds., Vols. 2 to 6, odd Nos. of Vol. 1. to 6. Many later issues. 'Dime Novel Round-Up' 1940-56 - several complete years. 'Collector's Miscellany' 1945-53. Bound Vols. 'Chums' 1894-1940. 'B.O.Ps.' 1890-1940. 'Captains' 1900-1920 (some vols. not in publishers covers). S.A.E. details:-

J. R. SWAN, 3 FIFTH AVENUE, PADDINGTON, LONDON, W.10.

'Phone: after 8 at night - LAD. 6759

FOR SALE: GEMS: 1559, 1579, 1580, 1582, 1589, 1585, - 3/- each.
SCHOOLBOYS OWNS: 123 - 10/-, 341 - 6/6.

THOMPSON, 53 WALLASEY PARK, BELFAST 14.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

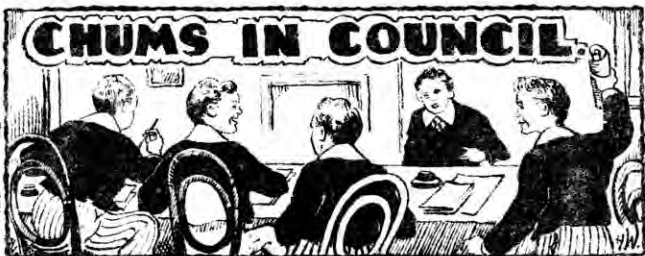
Vol. 18

No. 209

MAY, 1964

Price 2s. 0d.

CHUMS IN COUNCIL



WHAT ABOUT RAFFLES?

Does anybody know exactly how many short stories were written by E. W. Hornung featuring his famous character A. J. Raffles? My own volume seems oddly incomplete. Comprising fourteen stories, it starts off with "The Ides of March" which, fairly obviously, was the first one written. As one reads on, continuity is uneven.

Very soon Raffles is suspected by Detective Mackenzie, and all too soon we find Bunny Manders going to prison, while Raffles dies, even though the death is later proved a fake.

It seems to me that the stories in my volume were selected from a large number of stories of Raffles, though I have no proof that such is the case. I have seen Raffles on the stage, and also in at least two films. Presumably these were based on one or more of the Raffles stories, but each had the common factor of Raffles escaping from his flat by way of a secret exit through a grandfather clock. There is no reference to such a clock in any story in my volume.

The stories were written towards the close of the last century,

and even now, more than 60 years later, they make pleasant reading. Morally, the tales must clearly be suspect - we are invited to sympathise with the criminals and to hope that they "get away with it." To-day, of course, it is normal to sympathise with criminals and to pay scant attention to their victims, though fiction glorifying crime has been more rare in recent times. Until fairly recently, a film in which the criminal "got away with it" would be unlikely to pass the Board of Censors. Priestley, in his delightful play "Laburnum Grove" made his hero a counterfeiter (superbly played on stage and screen by the late Edmund Gwenn), but at the finish he left us with the idea that the law would probably catch up with the criminal ere long.

In late-Victorian and Edwardian times it was not rare to find criminals glorified. Cheaper fiction often presented convicts with hearts of gold, burglars who robbed the rich to give to the poor, and old lags who were heroes. Students of comic papers will recall Tom, the Ticket of Leave Man, and Portland Bill - gentleman who became more respectable as Tom, the Menagerie Man, and Butterfly Bill, as time passed. It is probable that the comic papers' dalliance with the underworld may have been responsible for the dim eye which some parents turned upon comic papers in general.

Raffles, the gentleman crook, cricketer and man-about-town, undoubtedly gave inspiration to other writers as years passed. Lancaster, who starred in one of the really great series in the Magnet, seemed to owe a great deal to Raffles.

In the nineteen-thirties, Raffles was linked with Sexton Blake in at least one story written by Barry Perowne. I think there were one or two others, but the one I recall, "Sexton Blake versus Raffles" was quite successful, even though Raffles was something of an anachronism in the nineteen-thirties. He needed a setting of hansom-cabs in a gas-lit London. Barry Perowne also wrote a fairly lengthy series of Raffles for the periodical "John Bull" (just after the war, I think), and these were surprisingly good, set as they were in the correct period. They were what we, in the clan, call substitute stories, but I was not sufficiently immured in Raffles lore to find comparisons odious.

ENGLISH, AS IT IS SPOKE AND WRIT!

Education authorities are perturbed at the large proportion of failures among candidates for the G.C.E. English Language examination. It is suggested that young people to-day fail in English because they

do not read - they either watch television or skim through picture stories. We think it a feasible suggestion.

It is further suggested that too much time is given in schools to teaching grammar. For ourselves, we do not see how one can expect good English if grammar is not taught. One can hardly be a successful writer without some knowledge of grammar, except, possibly, in the sphere of modern American thrillers.

The authorities are debating whether to take all grammar questions out of examination papers. Which, to our way of thinking, would be taking discipline out of the exams - in the same way that it has been taken out of most other walks of modern life.

Youngsters fail in exams because they have not worked hard enough. And that, after all, is the cause of most failures in life.

THE EDITOR

THE SCHOOL BELL

by L. S. Elliott

It might be of interest to those who find pleasure in odd items to consider for a few moments the famous story of council school boys and girls which appeared originally in CHIPS under the title of "The School Bell." This was prior to the first world war, but the story was reprinted twice, much later on.

YOUNG BRITAIN featured it as "Just Boys and Girls" in the early nineteen-twenties. In the last few weeks of THE BOY'S FRIEND (the declining period), after Rockwood had departed from its pages, "The School Bell" appeared yet again, this time under its original title.

SALE or EXCHANGE for Old Boys' Books

200 "School Friends" 1950-56. 250 "Picturegoers" 1949-60. 250 "War Illustrated" 1939-46. Complete Set (except 1) weekly and fortnightly parts.

CHAPMAN, 35, BARROW ROAD, BARTON-ON-HUMBER.

FOR SALE: 2/6 each. 49 Gems between No. 1557 and No. 1663.
Postage extra. S.A.E. first, please.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON.

DANNY'S DIARY

MAY 1914

Dad is hopping mad over the increase in income tax. Mr. Lloyd George presented his Budget on May 4th and the tax on unearned income has been raised to 1/4 in the £. For earned income the tax is 9d in the £. Dad says it's quite iniquitous, which must mean dreadful. There is a new super tax on incomes over £3,000, but that won't affect Dad.

The Magnet has been fair to middling again this month. The first story was "Coker's Plot" in which Coker made the Remove think they had got a cricket match with the Trojans - and then they eventually did get a match. This was the same plot as a story called "The Wrong Team" in the Gem some time ago, though that was about football. "Coker's Plot" was quite a good story, but I was bored with the next one, "The Uninvited Guests". Lord Mauleverer invited the Famous Five to spend a week-end in the country with him at a place called Live Oaks, but, by a trick, their places were taken by Bolsover, Bunter, and Skinner. Bolsover pretended to be Lord Mauleverer. It was a poor tale, I thought.

Then came another Coker tale, "Rough on Coker". Convict 44 escaped from prison, and Coker dressed up as a convict and was arrested by P. C. Tozer. "Cornered" was about Fisher T. Fish taking over Mrs. Mimble's tuckshop and charging huge prices for what he sold.

"The Boy from the Farm" was a good story, though it was a bad title. Sir Harry Beauclere did not want to go to Greyfriars, so he sent Jack Holt, who was his foster brother, in his place. Jack was a nice lad, but he dropped his hatches, so they called him "Sir 'Arry."

One Saturday early in May, Mum, Doug, and I went to Southend-on-Sea for the day. It wasn't quite certain for a day or two whether Doug was coming or not, but I was with him on the Friday evening (I had been fagging balls on the tennis court) when he told Freda that he was going.

I thought she looked rather sour about it. She fluttered her eyelashes and said: "Every person to his taste, Douglas. I'm afraid that I couldn't be seen at any resort on the East Coast except Frinton-on-Sea."

I told Doug afterwards that I thought Freda was fat enough to be seen anywhere, and Doug said: "Shut up, you!"

We had a lovely time at Southend. The return fare from Fenchurch Street terminus is 2/6, and we arrived at Southend at about eleven. The station is right in the middle of the town, and the railway bridge goes right across one of the main streets.

It was a sunny day and the first thing we did was to have a ride on the Boulevard trams. These are cars called toast-racks, and they do a complete circle, starting from the amusement park called the Kursaal. The cars go right along the sea-front to Thorpe Bay, and then turn inland to run through the Boulevards on reserved sleeper-track to Southchurch. We were told that this part of the Southend system was only laid down and opened last year, and whoever did it was most skilful. The shrubs and trees and flower-beds were set out in a most beautiful way, and in places the tracks swerved round very old trees which would otherwise have had to be chopped down. The cars took an entirely circular route back to the Kursaal.

There are a lot of trams in Southend, all painted green. Most of them are covered-in at the top, and on the 3 ft. 6 ins. gauge they look almost top-heavy. There are also some open-toppers, and, of course, the toast-racks.

We had our lunch in a little restaurant owned by a Mr. Garon. In the afternoon

we walked down the pier, which is the longest in the world. It took us quite a long time to reach the sea, for the tide goes out a very long way. We rode back on the pier tramway and it was pleasant.

Later on we went in the amusement park, and Doug and I rode on the Scenic Railway and also on another ride of the same kind called the Figure 8. I felt fairly sick afterwards, and Doug was quiet for a time.

Doug bought the Union Jack to read on the way home. It contained a story called "The Pirated Cargo" about Sexton Blake and Wu Ling. It seemed that Wu Ling was the Head of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle. Doug also bought me two papers. One was called The Favorite, and it had a serial entitled "Vengeance is Mine - or The Two Triangles." What a lovely title for a story! The other paper was the Boy's Journal which contained a serial called "The Honour of a Scout" by Horece Philips. There is an awful lot about scouts in all the papers just now.

The Derby was exciting this year for three outsiders had the first three places. Durbar the Second was first at 20 to 1. Last year a suffragette threw herself under the King's horse, so this year they took terrific precautions against the suffragettes.

Lord's Cricket Ground is 100 years old this month. It is called Lord's because it was laid down by a man named Thomas Lord.

One evening Dad took Mum to the New Theatre, and they saw Cyril Maude in a new play named "Grumpy." They enjoyed it very much.

The Gem has been excellent again. "Brought to Book" was the final series about Reggie Clavering, Tom Merry's double. It was a lovely story, and I wish the series had lasted longer.

"The Shaghaled Schoolboys" was quite good, but not so good as the tale of the same name in the Magnet a couple of years ago. Gussy took Tom Merry, Lowther, and Blake for a car run to the seaside, and they were kidnapped by the skipper of a boat called the "Ranchunder."

"Tried and True" was a fine tale. Mr. Brandreth wanted to make Tom Merry his heir, but he tested Tom to see whether he was worthy, and that infuriated Tom. At last, Mr. Brandreth pretended to lose his money, and that brought Tom on to his side.

"D'Arcy, the Ventriloquist" was a very funny tale in which Gussy paid Billy Bunter of Greyfriars to give him lessons in ventriloquism. In the last story of the month, "The Secret of the Island," Figgins played a big part. A gang was making counterfeit sovereigns in a cell on the island in the river which is owned by Squire Lunsford.

Caesar, King Edward's dog, has just died. They say that this dog walked along after the coffin when King Edward was buried a year or two ago. Afterwards, it attached itself to Queen Alexandra.

Mr. Lindsay gave me the last two Union Jacks of the month. One contained "The Boundary Raiders" which featured a gentleman crook called the Hon. John Lawliss. The other was "The Council of Eleven" which is written by the author of the Wu Ling stories. It is about a new gang of criminals at the head of which is Baron Robert de Beuremon. It's quite exciting, and Doug loved it, though it was a bit heavy for me.

I see that the Sexton Blake film "Clue of the Wax Vesta" is showing at the Grosvenor Picture Palace, Leeds; Cosy Corner Cinema, Lowestoft; and the Imperial, Commercial Road in East London. I wouldn't mind seeing it again.

Two of the Gems this month were illustrated by an artist named Mr. Briscoe.

 WANTED: ROVERS 698 - 772 (would be grateful for even one odd copy).

P. HANGER, 10, PARK SQUARE, KINGS HEATH, NORTHAMPTON.

WANTED: "Captain Justice" stories in B.F.L.

N. C. COURLAY, 48, COQUET TERRACE, NEWCASTLE-on-TYNE, 6.

BLAKIANA

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

UNFINISHED SERIES IN THE "U. J."

By S. Gordon Swan

IN "POISONED BLOSSOMS," (U.J. No. 1305, 20.10.1928), G. H. Teed introduced to us a new feminine character in June Severance, a girl with golden hair and violet eyes. Presumably the allure of Yvonne had gone stale, and it was considered the time was ripe to provide Blake with a new romantic interest. And what better venue for a romance to flourish than Honolulu?

When we meet her, June Severance (who possesses a rather unobtrusive mother) is involved with a dangerous Eurasian, Casper Nigan, and six diamond-studded ikons that once belonged to Catherine the Great of Russia. There is also a potential rival for Blake this time in the person of Captain Scott-Morgan, a former British military attache at the Embassy in Tokyo. Subsequent stories feature other criminals, such as Baroness Sophie von Ketzen and a large, sinister woman known as the Orchid.

But in 1929 G. H. Teed disappeared from the pages of the U.J., as he had done some years earlier, and was away for a year or more. I do not know what caused his absence on this occasion, but in the meantime Jack Lewis stepped forward as sponsor to a fascinating girl named Olga Nasmyth, who went under various aliases. I always thought Jack Lewis was more subtle in his handling of feminine characters than Teed. The intimate moments between Olga and Blake and her ingenious rendering of Sexton as "Tony," lent a sophisticated finesse to these stories somehow lacking in Teed's, good as his yarns were. June Severance and Nirvana seem colourless beside Olga Nasmyth and that earlier creation of Lewis, the incomparable Fifette Bierce.

Olga, like Yvonne, was actuated by the motive of revenge, but there were only three stories of her, running in sequence, and at the finish her revenge was incomplete. We never heard of her again; I often wonder why.

When G. H. Teed returned, he did not pick up the threads of June Severance's career, as might have been expected, so here we have two

series that were virtually unfinished. Instead of June, Teed gave us Middle. Roxane Harfield, who was definitely billed as Yvonne's supplanter. Roxane was a kind of Canadian Yvonne, with similar ideas of revenge, but more unconventional in her behaviour than her predecessor.

Perhaps Mr. Twyman could explain why neither June Severance nor Olga Nasmyth continued to grace the pages of the U.J.

The early thirties were the notorious years of the gangster era, when the exploits of Al Capone and his contemporaries headlined the news, and this influence became evident in the pages of the U.J., where practically every author turned his hand to gangster stories: Rex Hardinge, Edwy Searles Brooks, G. H. Teed, Gilbert Chester, Anthony Skene and others.

In "Sexton Blake Cleans Up Chicago" (U.J. No. 1435 - 18.4.31.), Anthony Skene wrote a story which was quite plainly intended to be the first of a series in which Blake journeyed to the States to clean up the criminal elements in crime-ridden Chicago. In this first episode Blake defeated a gangster named Al Tukes, and at the end of the story was about to commence a campaign against two other gangsters, Spinelli and Halloran. But we were never enlightened as to the details of this campaign. Some years later Anthony Skene wrote a serial for the "Detective Weekly" entitled "The Book of Fate." The concluding portion of this story took place in America, and one or two of the names mentioned therein also occurred in "Sexton Blake Cleans Up Chicago." It has always seemed to me that in this serial the author used some of the material intended for the unfinished series.

It is easy enough to surmise why the gangster series faded out. The theme was being overdone; practically all the Blake authors had dabbled in it, and the public was getting a surfeit of it in every direction. Doubtless for the same reason, Robert Murray's Spider - Dan Roper series remained incomplete.

For another series that was left in the air we come back to G. H. Teed. The last story of Nirvana (U.J. No. 1208 - 11.12.1926) introduced a sinister new character, Dr. Jourgens, the Black Magician of Ghent, who escaped at the end of the book. With his frightening occult powers, he would have continued to prove a worthy adversary for Blake, and one expected him to re-appear in later issues. Instead, both Nirvana and Dr. Jourgens vanished from our ken.

As in the cases of June Severance and Olga Nasmyth, one is left wondering why.

* * * * *

Sexton Blake - UNION JACK - Official Information

No. 6.

By W. O. G. Lofts

The creator of GRIFF THE MAN-TRACKER

"Christopher Stevens" was the name of the author given to the serial "Griff the Man-Tracker" or "The Exploits of Sexton Blake, Detective," which appeared in the ½d UNION JACK Nos. 356 to 373 (year 1901). We-Wee was also mentioned. This author was not the son of Charles McCluer Stephens as thought. His real name was JULIAN ROCHFORD and, as suggested by Walter Webb, quite rightly, he also wrote No. 283 "Shadowed by Sexton Blake (23.9.1899). Julian Rochford also wrote an excellent crime story, No. 271, "Forced Into Crime" which, curiously enough, featured Walter's home town of Birmingham. Many other stories appeared under his own name in the ½d UNION JACK. No other details are known at the moment about the creator of one of Blake's early assistants - that half-beast, astonishing assistant, Griff The Man-Tracker.

The Author of ½d UNION JACK No. 400

In this story Sexton Blake appears with an American sleuth by the name of Jefferson Hart, of New York. The rather long-winded title of "£10,000 Reward" or "Tracked Across the Ocean" gives a clue as to the theme of the story. For the record, one can now insert a brand new name as a chronicler of Sexton Blake, for this tale was penned by J. H. THOMPSON. The only other detail about this author I have at the moment is that he also wrote ½d U.J. No. 408, a non-Blake yarn entitled "To Conquer or Die."

The Last ½d Sexton Blake UNION JACKS

Probably the best of all the stories in this early series featuring our great detective was the last, "The Convict Hunt" (No. 450), the author's name being given as PAUL HERRING - his real name. It has been suggested that U.J. No. 420 "The Clue of the Freckled Hand" was written by Henry St. John Cooper, but it was in fact also written by PAUL HERRING. Whilst on the subject of H. St. J. Cooper having written Blake stories for the UNION JACK, I feel I should put the record straight for the benefit of those readers who collect material on all Blake authors. When I met the son of Mr. Cooper some years ago (reported fully in the C.D.) he told me during our conversation that his father wrote stories about Sexton Blake, but he could not remember titles of the stories as, quite understandably, it was over 50 years ago and I had to take his word for it. Despite details of previously unknown authors coming to light since that time, I must

confess that the name Henry St. John Cooper has still to be identified with a UNION JACK story; on the other hand, to be quite fair to this author it must be remembered that dozens of short anonymous tales of Blake appeared in the PENNY PICTORIAL and ANSWERS, and it is possible that he may have contributed to these papers.

SHORT LIVED WONDER

By O. W. Wadham

Some grand fiction appeared in the short-lived "Wonder Library" that commenced in 1915 and ceased publication after only 14 issues in May of 1916.

Priced at 3d. the "Wonder Library" stories were mostly reprints of the best serial stories that had been published in "Chips" and "Comic Cuts."

Two titles were issued each month, there were 120 pages of 80,000 word novels, and the coloured covers were most attractive.

Number one of the "Wonder Library" was "The Red Rovers;" but the 80,000 words would only be a fraction of what must have been many millions, for "The Red Rovers" ran in "Comic Cuts" for nigh on 40 years.

The last number of "Wonder" was a "Chips" serial many collectors will recall, "The River Police," a story of the silent Thames.

Another famous "Chips" serial was No. 11 - "The Ticket of Leave Man."

Other titles that some readers may remember as serials in "Chips," "Comic Cuts," or even in their companion comic, "The Funny Wonder," are: 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." No. 10: - "All Sorts." No. 12: - "The Heart of the Slums." No. 13: - "The Grand Adventure." The "Wonder Library" was boosted extensively in "Chips" until the end of May, 1916.

In all remaining copies for that year I can find no further reference to "Wonder Library" anywhere.

Perhaps it became a sudden victim to the Kaiser's war. It would certainly be most interesting to learn if any copies have survived, for those fourteen volumes must surely contain some of the best fiction from "Chips" and "Comic Cuts" in their most prosperous, truly golden years.

Hamiltoniana



DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 48 - Goldhawk Book No. 1 - "Tom Merry's Secret"

Last year when I was asked to make a contribution to the school fete, I cheerfully disposed of all but one of my Bunter books. I had always regarded them as pale echoes of a former magnificence, padded with irrelevant conversation, and irritating me with their inferior re-hashes of glorious old Magnet plots. But though I cheerfully gave away the Bunter books, some instinct warned me not to part with the St. Jim's stories. I found the Mandeville and Goldhawk books again today, quietly collecting dust in my bedroom cupboard. I blew the dust off the top copy of the paper-backs, and was immediately transported back a dozen years, to February 1952.

The Goldhawk books seemed a wonderful innovation in those far-off days. Some 23 chapters and 112 pages were very good value for 1/6d., and it seemed as though the Schoolboys' Own Library had reappeared. (Charles Hamilton told me, when I saw him later in the year, that he had wanted to write Greyfriars stories for this series, but Cassells were unwilling.) The covers of the Goldhawk books were pleasantly illustrated in colour, and members of the London Club urged that R. J. Macdonald should be employed. Sure enough, with No. 5 of the series there was a change, but it was C. H. Chapman who took over, oddly enough.

Somehow the post-war St. Jim's stories seemed more authentic than the post-war Greyfriars ones. It may be that Bunter required the light humorous touch that is associated with the Golden Age of the Magnet, whereas the humour at St. Jim's was usually mellow and sophisticated, not outrageously funny, and there was more often a serious vein to the story. Certainly, "Tom Merry's Secret" was serious enough, in that the Terrible Three captured Kildare in a sooty sack, in mistake for Knox. There were also amusing parts, usually when Gussy persisted in pursuing his own vendetta against

Knox because "he pulled my yah!" But the story could lay no real claims to greatness. Like most of the Goldhawk books, it was competent and readable, and did not annoy the reader by reminding him that it was a pale imitation of any particular earlier story in the Gem.

The series petered out after eleven numbers. There can be no doubt that St. Jim's, for all its inherent virtues, lacks the staying power that Greyfriars possesses. Some months later the unsold copies were remaindered by Woolworths at 9d a time, and Goldhawk books ceased to publish school stories by Charles Hamilton.

At the school fete, my Bunter books sold quite well, but there were some dissatisfied customers at the bookstall. "Don't you have any Tom Merry stories here?" asked the art master, peering short-sightedly among the school stories. The school secretary later made a similar complaint. "I never could abide Billy Bunter," she said; "we always preferred the Gem with its fine blue cover."

All of a sudden a ray of watery sunshine pierced the dark clouds, and I felt strangely re-assured about my decision to retain the Martin Clifford stories.

- - - - -

NO OAKS FROM THE ACORNS

By John Trovell

The remarks of the Editor, and reader Alan Stewart in the January issue of the Digest, regarding the series of Greyfriars stories now concluded in Look and Learn adequately expressed the general disappointment felt by the choice of material.

Unfortunately the series was advertised as Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School, which limited the scope for using the best of Frank Richards work, and as Eric Fayne made clear, criticism and suggestion had no effect, though my letter expressing precisely Alan Stewart's views, was at least briefly acknowledged.

A reminder of what could have been, was most evident, when to brighten the recent dull days, great pleasure and satisfaction was derived from reading two Magnets published in 1931, No. 1207 "The Man from the States" and No. 1208 "The Mystery of the Mill."

Elias J. Paindexter, a share swindler, is ruthlessly pursued by Reginald Wilmot, one of his victims with murder in mind. The Famous Five and Bunter become involved in the affair, and we journey from Greyfriars and Poppers Island, to Wharton Lodge and the old disused mill at Wimford, to witness the dramatic final scenes with the mill ablaze, and four of the juniors trapped on the upper floor.

The illustrations by Leonard Shields are excellent, particularly the title page of "The Mystery of the Mill" depicting the mill on fire, with Bob Cherry, Colonel Wharton, and Inspector Stacey running to the rescue of the trapped juniors.

A glorious mixture of excitement and tension blended with humour, no surfeit of Bunter, (in fact eight consecutive chapters in No. 1208 without him) and a thrilling climax, here surely is the type of story that would appeal to a young person today, and many more of equal merit and appeal come to mind, stories that could be re-published without pruning or alteration, stories that would do justice to honour the name of a great man.

We realize and deplore the fact that the readers of Look and Learn may have looked, but certainly did not learn the true genius of the master writer of school stories, and can only trust that at some future date they may have the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the real Greyfriars, that the more fortunate of us know and love.

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 75. POLISHED POT-BOILER

I have just read "Billy Bunter's Boat-Race Party" which appeared in the Magnet at the end of March, 1923. Though it is a readable little tale it can hardly be described as anything but a competent pot-boiler. For similarity of plot it can best be compared with the Coronation story of 1937, but what a difference there is between the two stories. The former is a rather tired little piece, just mildly amusing if one is in the mood, with nothing outstanding about it in any way. It makes no impact at all. The 1937 story is ten times as joyous, bubbling with fun, moving at a spanking pace to a deliciously contrived climax which leaves the reader sighing happily. Though both stories were written by Charles Hamilton, the difference between them is great.

The boat-race story has the uneasy combination of the Famous Five, Lord Mauleverer, Skinner, Snoop, Stott, and Fish making up a party with Billy Bunter. It was not a combination that could ever be successful. In fact, it was the sort of thing which Charles Hamilton avoided successfully in later years. Characterisation is not very satisfactory. Decent fellows have not, in real life, a monopoly of the virtues any more than black sheep have a monopoly of the vices. Birds of a feather may flock together, but it was unlikely that Skinner, Snoop, Stott, and Fish would all be cadgers in addition to

their other unattractive traits. In the end, the plot merely fizzles out, and the story is forgotten.

It was, in fact, typical of many of the stories in the earlier Magnet. In the early twenties, the Magnet was rather in the doldrums. Charles Hamilton was putting far better work into his Gem stories, in the same way that he had favoured the Gem between 1911 and 1914.

Yet a little later, in 1924, he was to produce the Sahara Series which was the finest travel series to date, and which, though it is seldom recalled to-day, had some magnificent sequences. There was so much worth-while writing in the Sahara Series that one tends to wonder why it is so neglected. It is just possible that the combination with the Cliff House girls did not meet with general approval. By the end of 1924, the first Rebel series was under weigh, and both these series remind us that the Magnet was at least in sight of the threshold of its Golden Age.

Most experts agree that by 1933 the Golden Age was ending, and that the stories from 1934 onwards often lacked that little extra something which the Golden Age stories had possessed.

It is true, but it would be unfair not to recognize that any deterioration in the stories can only be detected when the comparison is made with the Golden Age itself. All the stories of the later Magnet were written with a verve which made them vastly superior to those of the early twenties.

It can hardly be said that there were pot-boilers in the later Magnet. Certainly some stories were better than others, but every tale, whether it appealed or not to an individual taste, was carefully constructed and developed, and, in its own way, impeccably written.

"Billy Bunter's Boat-Race Party" was readable, because the author was incapable of writing anything which was not. But that story, and plenty others of the early twenties, give the impression that they were rushed-off in a hurry. It was this period, more than any other, which produced the polished pot-boiler.

As a pointer, it would be difficult to find good Gems of Hamiltonia in the Magnet of the early twenties. But in the later Magnet I doubt whether there is one story from which one could not produce several.

- - - - -

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 73. A QUESTION OF TASTE

ROGER M. JENKINS: You have summed up all the arguments concerning Tom Dutton quite comprehensively, leaving your correspondents very little to add. I agree with you that it would be incredible for a boy like that to be in a normal school. Every

conversation that he had revealed the fact that he completely misunderstood everything that was said to him, which means that he must have learned nothing in the classroom.

I am not quite certain whether jokes about deafness are in good taste, but I am sure that everything about Tom Dutton was decidedly unfunny. One could always be certain that he would take offence through mishearing and there would be a long conversation that would get nowhere.

I have always regarded Dutton as Charles Hamilton's only gimmick. He usually relied upon character to motivate action, but who knows anything of Tom Dutton's character, except that he was touchy? Lesser writers made extensive use of gimmicks, especially a widespread use of very out-of-the-way pets owned by schoolboys. I should wish myself class Dutton among the parrots.

W. O. G. LOFTS: I was most interested in your latest Controversial on poor Tom Dutton - personally I found him a little boring at times.

The following is what a former sub-editor on the MAGNET told me about it, as it puts your Controversial in a nut-shell, and knocks the poor taste theme.

"I don't think that Charles Hamilton was ever guilty of bad taste in making fun of an affliction such as deafness. Pentelow the war time editor was extremely deaf, and did not mind in the least stories made amusing by Tom Dutton's hardness of hearing. People always seem to get hold of the wrong end of the stick, about this. Actually it's not the deafness that one laughs at but the vanity of the deaf persons who refuse to admit that they are hard of hearing (in Dutton's case) and guess at what people say."

GEORGE SELLARS: Dutton has always amused me, especially in his cross-talk with his study mates. I think of him as similar to Alonzo, Bunter, and Fishy - all comedians on the Greyfriars stage. I never failed to laugh when reading of his amazing misunderstandings, many of which I thought he did purposely.

JOHN WERNHAM: Looking back I was never in difficulties about the Tom Dutton episodes. Slipping over a banana skin is good for a belly-laugh all the world over but it is a beastly uncomfortable thing to do. A Rag is enormous fun until somebody gets hurt. Bunter's short-sightedness was amusing but a blind Bunter would not be funny and I suppose Dutton was only just deaf enough to be funny without being tragic. After all Richards never laughed at the Dutton disability, he merely induced a state of exasperation in his schoolfellows and that is where the fun came in. These were stories about school life and the reactions of the characters therein whether it be matton for Dutton or swipes with a cane. No, Richards never lacked good taste.

PETER HANGER: I am sure that Greyfriars would have been better (if that be possible) without poor Tom Dutton. As you so wisely remark, he never contributed to the plot; indeed, quite the reverse; he always held it up. Not that that was necessarily a bad thing. There is no doubt that deafness is a much underrated affliction. Sufferers rarely get the tolerance and understanding they deserve simply and solely because so few of them will admit they are afflicted.

Aren't the criticisms of Charles Hamilton's language masters "off target?" I would have thought that the point of criticism was that persons who spoke such poor English would never have obtained a post at an English Public School.

GERALD ALLISON: I think Dutton was the biggest bore in all Hamiltoniana. He never developed as did all the other characters. He never appeared in the Form-room or Playing Fields - only in the study. And his mistaking just one word in each sentence for one which rhymed was 'humour' of the feeblest sort. I usually skipped the Dutton passages.

And yet, deafness can be made to provide deliciously funny scenes - quite kindly - as in the excellent example you give. One of my favourite poets is Tom Hood. In his parody on Those Evening Bells is this lovely verse.

The muffin boy has passed away,
 The Postman gone, and I must pay.
 For down below Deaf Mary dwells,
 She does not hear those Evening Bells.

* * * * *

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 7. (New Series)

Soames looked up as Bunter entered the deck-house. The boy's knees knocked together. The knowledge of what was in the coffee gripped his heart with terror; at that moment, he would have undone what he had done, had it been possible.

Soames gave the Owl of the Remove only a glance of contemptuous indifference.

"Put the tray down, and go."

Bunter sat the tray down on the little bamboo table in the deck-house, and backed away.

Outside, the sun was blazing down with the heat almost of a furnace, but Bunter felt cold all over.

He stood glued to the deck, blinking into the little house as Soames stirred the coffee.

Some irresistible power seemed to root him there.

He saw the sea-lawyer raise the cup to his lips, and drink off the contents. The sight fascinated him.

Soames put down the cup, and took a biscuit from the tray. Then his glance fell on Bunter outside the deck-house.

One look was enough; he did not need to speak. The fat junior scuttled away.

Billy Bunter rolled into the companion, with the sweat pouring down his fat face. Aching with fear, he groped his way down into the cuddy.

The Greyfriars fellows gathered round him. The look on his face alarmed them.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Bob Cherry.

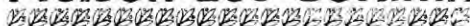
Bunter did not answer.

He sank down on a locker, his eyes glazed behind his spectacles. His hands were shaking as if with the ague. He leaned back on the locker, almost fainting with fear at what he had done.

And James Soames, in the deck-house above, was nodding over the chart, drowsy, and growing more drowsy every moment, in the grip of his own drug.

* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column



CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

SHEER ENJOYMENT

By J. Twells

My daughter - 13 - last Autumn discovered my "Nelson Lees." Brought up on "Princess" and similar magazines which as a rule contain only one short story and the rest picture strips, she has read most of the "Lees" three times over. I wish now that I'd kept all the "Lees" I bought, for once again I have savoured the magic of Brooks, enjoying to the full such stories as the Ezra Quirke series, the St. Frank's School Train, holiday in Northestria, the Christmas ghost numbers, the football and cricket series and complete stories like "Wembling at Wembley."

E. S. Brooks, for me, had (and still has) something which none of the other school story writers possessed, a flair for the unusual. I bought as many "Magnets," "Gems," and "Boys' Friends," as anyone, I suppose, but I used to get a little weary with the reiterated "Yaroooh!" "Yaas, wather," "The so-and-so fulness is terrific!," "Hello, hello, hello!," etc. The St. Frank's stories were always fresh and I was there, right amongst Brooks' flesh and blood creations, whereas with other authors I viewed their characters from afar - with the exception of Dick Dorrington and the boys of the Bombay Castle (why doesn't someone write about these colourful favourites from the "Boy's Friend"?)

To return to the "Nelson Lee," I reckon E.S. had a wonderful sense of humour. The sound of my daughter's merry laughter when reading some of his stories reminds me of when my mother, hearing me chuckling over these same tales, used to remark "It's Wednesday again, it's the 'Nelson Lee'!"

Something, I don't think anyone's commented upon was Brooks' style of writing. I used to find his habit of starting so many sentences with "And" and "For" quite fascinating, and his story endings "Little did the St. Frank's juniors realise what was destined to happen in the near future," would always leave a pleasant anticipation

in the mind of the reader.

Despite the many featurings of Edward Oswald and his chums, Archie and Phipps, William Napoleon Browne, Nipper and other juniors, despite all their upsets and adventures, I used to relish the moment when housemaster-detective Nelson Lee, the man the magazine was named after, would appear, so calm, with the crooks caught, the problems solved and smoothing out all difficulties.

Now, I have just dipped into my "Lees" and selected two at random. Opening the first, which is "The Schoolboy Mutineers" (No. 510) I find a conversation between Fatty Little and Archie Glenthorne -

"Be a sport, Archie, I'm hungry!" said Fattle Little eagerly. "Unless I have something to eat, I shall go all faint. I can feel it coming on now. I-I suppose you couldn't lend me five bob? Be a pal, Archie - you'll save my giddy life!"

"I mean to say, that's dashed interesting" said Archie. "Lives saved at five bob each, what? I mean, that's bally cheap, when you come to think of it. One life, five bob! I'm not so absolutely sure, old gas balloon, that your life is worth it!"

From "The Valley of Surprises" (No. 147 N.S.)

"We shall probably see Bradman playing this time" said Travers. "And Kippax and Richardson and Hendry and all the others" said Harry Gresham eagerly. "I'll bet Hobbs will turn out for England, too. What rot, saying that Hobbs wouldn't play in the last two Tests, after England had secured the Ashes! We heard that rumour before we came into the wilds. But if Hobbs doesn't play in the fifth Test, I shall be jolly surprised."

"No matter how good they play, I don't suppose they'll equal that marvellous performance in the fourth innings of the third Test at Melbourne" said Nipper. "By Jove! That was a performance, if you like! We saw some good play at Adelaide, but that first partnership by Hobbs and Sutcliffe in the fourth innings will go down in history."

* * * * *

FLASH - BACK

By Reg Sanderson

"We're in a terrible mess," said Nipper. "Here we are, marooned on the top of a crag, 800-ft. high - the lift shaft wrecked, the Ameer's soldiers prepared to bombard us with a battery of guns - and supplies are running short."

"I know," replied Handforth, "And I also know that we are due back at St. Frank's after another couple of issues of the Nelson Lee Library."

"I have heard it stated," said Nipper, "that if we lived in the Magnet we shouldn't get into these impossible situations. Life would be slower, but more realistic."

"Yes," said Handforth. "I was reading a month or two ago that it took Redwing at least a month to get Vernon-Smith back on the rails, filling four complete issues of the Magnet. You settled Travers in one chapter not long ago. I think we're moving too fast, and not near enough to real life."

"I have a recent copy of the Magnet here," said Nipper, taking it from his pocket. "Bunter is raiding Study Number One which has been laid out for a party. He scoffs two whole hams, a chicken, 3 pork pies, 2 plum cakes, a dozen pastries and a tin of biscuits in fifteen minutes. He doesn't leave a crumb. Later in the evening he raids the school larder because he is hungry."

"How often does that happen?" asked Handforth.

"Every two or three weeks," replied Nipper.

"Do the readers digest all that, as well as Bunter?" asked Handforth.

"Yes - and thrive on it," answered Nipper.

Handforth looked thoughtful.

"I'm worried," he said. "We ought to have been off this crag two chapters ago. Things are too slow. You have to be operated on by Nelson Lee for a gunshot wound in the next issue. It could all have been concluded in this issue. Things are getting too slow. We've a lot of catching-up to do."

"Catching up?" queried Nipper. "What with?"

"With the Magnet, ass!" replied Handforth.

* * * * *

ECHO OF AN ECHO

Writing to us recently in connection with a Let's Be Controversial article, FRANK UNWIN made an analogy between the Hamiltonian theme and the Nelson Lee Library. In this particular connection we felt that Mr. Unwin's comments and views would be more appropriate to our Lee Column, so we give them here. FRANK UNWIN writes:

If one compares the early E.S.B. stories with his latest ones (during the period when he "lost interest") one might be excused for stating quite firmly that these later stories were written by a very, very poor sub-writer. I refer particularly to the period when the obnoxious K. K. Parkington and his cronies reigned supreme at St.

Frank's - quite the worst St. Frank's stories ever written.

Yet they were written by Edwy Searles Brooks himself, when I felt certain that some terribly weak sub-writer had been employed. The point I'm trying to make is that a good sub-writer, during this sad period, might have proved a blessing to the St. Frank's yarns.

(That's Mr. Unwin's point of view! What's yours?)

Those CHAMPION AUTHORS

By W. O. G. Lofts

It is generally agreed that the 1963 C.D. Annual was the best produced so far. Packed with good things, and items, in the writer's opinion, to please and interest everybody.

Probably one of the most novel, and on a subject that has been much neglected in the monthly C.D., was Albert Watkin's - 'Analysing the Champion Library.'

Albert, in far off New Zealand, will be interested to know that I recently showed a former editor of the 'Champion Library' his article - and he thought it very good indeed. It has also been my pleasure during the last few years to meet personally many of the authors he mentions, and also for the benefit of John Gocher (April C.D.) give quite a few additional revelations on some of the mysterious pen-names.

Firstly - although it is correct that the majority of stories were reprints - there were cases of new original tales being published.

'Herbert Macrae' who had the honour of writing the first issue - and two dozen others - was a member of Amalgamated Press staff - where he edited girls papers. Real name C. Eaton Fearn - he also wrote under 'Peter Lang' - and died last year.

'Douglas Dundee', 'Dugald Moray' and 'Donald Dane' were the pen-names of Dugald Matheson Cumming-Skinner - a Scotsman who lived at Dundee - and quite a colourful character! Wrote a great deal for the Thompson papers in the early days and was greatly welcomed on the Champion and Triumph papers - because of his writing which was of a popular style. He died some years ago.

'Dick Shaw' real name H. Openshaw - still alive - but been out of touch with boys fiction for some time. Also wrote as 'John Gale'.

'Edwin Dale' and 'Rupert Hall' pen-names of course of E. R. Home-Gall - now living in Paris - where his Judy books are being televised.

'Cecil Fanshaw' real name C. H. Dent, still writes picture strips in modern picture libraries.

'Hal Wilton' real name Frank S. Pepper - who has written under his own name many times. Lives in Essex, and now writes picture strips.

Reginald George Thomas who wrote as 'Reg. Wilson' as said wrote a great deal for Thompson's - but a point not known before - is that he wrote for years the cream of the Red Circle stories in the HOTSPUR - a school which the writer fondly remembers in his youth.

More revelations will be given about CHAMPION and TRIUMPH authors at some future date, though I hope this satisfies the many old enthusiasts of the papers for the time being.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FRANK RICHARDS

(Memorial Edition) 25/-

Available from all booksellers, or direct, to any address in the world, from Collectors' Digest Office.

WANTED: Good loose copies or bound volumes containing any of the following: MAGNETS - 52, 131 to 149 inclusive, 195, 205, 237, 238, 239, 277, 318, 319, 353, 400, 417, 422, 435, 469, 706, 719, 751, 752, 753, 762, 763, 809. Most issues between 821 and 890, 900, 921, 924, 925, 936, 938, 940, 942, 943, 946, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996.
GEMS - Many issues between 400 and 500. Many issues between 800 and 879. Also Nos. 925, 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998. POPULARS: 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474. EARLY PENNY POPULARS: Nos. 12, 13, 45, 47, 48.

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

WANTED: Gems 799, 804 to 808, 810, 812.

TOM PORTER, 1, TIMBERTREE ROAD, OLD HILL, STAFFS.

News from the Clubs

MIDLAND

Meeting held 31st March, 1964:

For all this was an unlucky night to choose for a meeting, Holiday Tuesday, nine members turned up and had an enjoyable time. It was a late start but we managed some interesting items before the close. To start off there was Jack Bellfield's quiz. Ten groups of three - each group had an odd one out. Tom Porter won with nine correct. The secretary and Ian Parish tied with 8 each. Their prizes were a "Silver Jacket" each. The Anniversary number tonight was Magnet No. 1363, 31/3/34 (exactly thirty years old). Part of the Eustace Smedley series. Collectors Piece was B.F.L. No. 261, Second Series, date 6/11/30. Boss of the Blues - a St. Frank's Blue Crusaders story, reprint of Boys Realm (1927) No. 69 onwards. This was the Edwy Searle Brookes' yarn and not one of the original Arthur S. Hardy footer yarns so famous and so rare. The discussion which followed a talk by the secretary was to the liking of most of the members and there were some interesting opinions given on the subject i.e. "Why are their characters more famous and better known than their authors?" Except in maybe two instances - Dickens and Shakespeare - authors were much behind their creations in popularity. In fact some could be said to be practically unknown whereas their creations were known to all branches of the public. The secretary was afraid that sadly enough very few knew of Frank Richards outside the old boys' book world, but his popular fat boy of fiction Billy Bunter would live for ever. In fact like in other such cases, the name would come into the English dictionary meaning a greedy fat boy (schoolboy). The raffle first prize was won by Ted Davey and the second prize (another B.F.L.) by the writer of these notes. For all the rather disappointing attendance, an enjoyable programme.

W. H. BROSTER

Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held Sunday, 12th April, 1964:

We had two pleasant surprises at this meeting. The first was the visit of Alf Hanson, who is always a very welcome visitor, and the second was a tape recording from David Hobbs of Seattle, U.S.A. He spoke of his boyhood days in Liverpool, of the "Popular" and the "Magnet" and how he used to save his pennies in order to buy them. Many of us, I feel sure, must have had feelings of nostalgia as we sat listening to him.

With the return of the "invalids" we had an improved attendance and we were able as a consequence to make the recordings which had been postponed last month.

To try and get some atmosphere the microphone was left "live" during the tea break when the library business was conducted.

This was followed by the "Brains" Trust which consisted of Jack Morgan, John Farrell and myself. Although space prevents me from dealing with some of the interesting questions which were thrown at us, one did ask what changes we would like to see in the C.D. Among the various suggestions made was one which asked for more contributions about some of the old papers apart from the usual Magnet, Nelson Lee, etc. articles. In fact it was thought that a miscellaneous section devoted to this might be welcome.

Unfortunately the tape ran out all too soon, and we were unable to record for posterity Pat Laffey's quiz. However, it was decided to make another recording at a later date.

The quiz was won by Jack Morgan.

Next meeting, Sunday, May 10th.

BILL WINDSOR

Secretary.

NORTHERN

14th
Annual General Meeting, held on Saturday, 11th April, 1964:

We had a fine clear night for our 14th Annual General Meeting, and this was reflected in the attendance, which was back to normal proportions with 18 members turning up. Chairman Geoffrey Wilde paid tribute to the club on entering its 15th year, and to the members for maintaining interest at so high a level over so long a period.

Treasurer-Librarian Gerry Allison presented the accounts for the

year ended 31st March, and it was generally agreed that they showed the club to be in a very healthy position from all points of view. There was the usual varied and interesting batch of correspondence from far and wide, and also a donation of Sexton Blakes from a postal member, John Upton; another addition to our library which is greatly appreciated.

Jack Wood, in his news of the month, mentioned that another Bunter book, 'Thanks to Bunter,' is on the way, and there was a discussion as to the possibility of any MSS. left by Charles Hamilton ever seeing the light of day.

Election of Officers was the next item, and the Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, Vice-Chairman, Jack Wood, Treasurer-Librarian, Gerry Allison, and Secretary, Frank Hancock, were re-elected. Ron Hodgson and Keith Balmforth were elected Auditors, and two newcomers to office, Elsie Palmer, Deputy Vice-Chairman, and Molly Allison, Deputy Treasurer-Librarian, were also elected. This gave general satisfaction, for it has long been felt that some of the ladies should hold office - to lend a little glamour to the platform, as one member put it!

A good many matters were discussed, including the suggestion that library business should commence at six, or as soon after as possible, and the meetings proper at 6.30., so that members who have a long journey would not have to leave early, as often happens, and this met with general approval. There was a suggestion that we should consider the possibility of widening the scope of our programmes, and a meeting with the Midland club at Chesterfield was suggested, with the tentative date June 28th. In fact, we talked for so long about so much that it was discovered we had no time for the main feature of the programme, the Hamilton 'Character of the Month,' which was to have been D'Arcy of St. Jim's, the choice of Ron Hodgson, and it was agreed that this be postponed until next month.

Frank Hancock presented a 'Jumbled Names' puzzle which presented no difficulties for the experts, there being three correct solutions inside five minutes, Gerry Allison being the winner by a short head. Then Gerry gave us a quiz, consisting of 18 cryptic clues, the initial letter of each word spelling the title of the story, 'The Outcast of St. Jim's.' Geoffrey Wilde won this with 16 correct, although Ron Hodgson was first to guess the title. This brought our meeting to an end at 9.15 p.m.

Next meeting, Saturday, 9th May.

F. HANCOCK

Hon. Sec.

AUSTRALIA

The April meeting got away to a pleasing start when chairman Syd Smyth produced issue No. 7 of the club magazine. An interesting half-hour was passed as members discussed the contents which include articles by Messrs. H. W. Twyman and G. R. Samways. Copies of "Golden Hours" may be obtained now by remitting an international M/0 for 4/- to editor Syd Smyth, 1, Brandon St, Clovelly, N.S.W. Mr. Smyth wishes to apologize for the delay in production, but, as usual, subscribers will find the issue well worth waiting for.

Overseas letters were then discussed. They came from Bill Hubbard and our recent visitor, Jim Cook; a letter and photos from Bill Gander brought a breath of snow from Canada into Sydney's Indian Summer; Ron Hodgson and Harry Broster sent us news from England. Victorian collector Tom Dobson, whom we hope to welcome in July, sent a pleasant letter; from the Surfers' Paradise up north came a welcome letter from Harry Curtis.

Members tackled a quiz sent out by Norman Pragnell, and honours went to Victor Colby and Syd Smyth. Thanks to Norman for sending us this delightful entertainment, which was enjoyed by even the no-hoppers like myself.

The usual pleasant ending to the evening was consumed in the local coffee shop. Next meeting: May 14th.

B. PATE
(Secretary)

- - - - -
LONDON

Even if once again the weather was inclement, Bill Lofts was in great form when he gave the second part of his article "The Saint at Fleetway House," to an enthusiastic gathering at the Dollis Hill meeting on Sunday, April 19th. When he finished reading the article there followed a long discussion and debate on "The Saint" and Leslie Charteris. A most enjoyable period of the meeting.

Another discussion was on the subject of copyrights; nice to be enlightened on several points that most of us were ignorant of.

Bob Blythe, host of the meeting, was quizzed by Reuben Godsave, subject Nelson Lee and St. Frank's. Result an excellent attempt by Bob, the questions were really very difficult indeed.

Three games of 'Bingo' were conducted by Bob Blythe, winners

Laurie Sutton, Tom Wright and Don Webster.

Excellent reports were given by the two librarians, Roger Jenkins and Bob Blythe, whilst Len Packman stated that good progress was being made with the Sexton Blake catalogue.

The May meeting will be held on Sunday, 10th, at Ben Litvak's residence, 58, Stanwell Road, ASHFORD, MIDDLESEX. Phone MX. 53609. Kindly inform host if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

FOR CLUB SOCIAL SECRETARIES

The following items are clues to well-known characters in the old stories. Social secretaries may like to put the questions at their next meetings, and retain member's efforts until the following month when the solution will be published in C.D. The puzzle comes from Frank Hancock. We shall be pleased to publish the names of those who get the most correct answers at each club.

1. A bleak point of the compass found at more than one Hamilton school.
2. His name gives a misleading idea of his nationality.
3. Must often be tempted to take aim and fire at his leader.
4. Brightly coloured and found in the undergrowth.
5. We're not told whether they do actually attend such places of worship
 - (a)
 - (b)
6. Although his native land is far away his skin isn't of this colour.
7. Queer fish to meet at the school gates.
8. He most definitely is a cool one - each way, too!
9. Were he a prefect he would hand these out indiscriminately among the fags!
10. His real name is seldom mentioned, although such enclosures are common in the country.
11. Should do well in the high jump at the school sports.
12. His namesake in the farmyard is young, but he certainly isn't!
13. Sounds a fruity individual.
14. Common bird - and natural habitat.
15. Maiden lady, and a very proper flower.

16. This plump ex-film star once made us chuckle. Yes, that's right, it's
 17. Familiar evergreen, and its tough quality.
 18. There are always inquiring people ready to do this.
 19. Waterlogged ground in a menial capacity.
 20. His are rather more restrained than some of his companions.
 21. Should be able to prepare a tasty meal in the study.
 22. Often does this, we hear, when the three Tommies are after him.
 23. This unpopular senior has taken a few hard ones at the hands of our heroes!
 24. Probably wears one in wet weather when he goes out to lock up.
-

IN THIS
1932E FREE PLATE OF BILLY BUNTER!

The POSTMAN CALLED

INTERESTING ITEMS FROM THE EDITOR'S LETTER-BAG

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton-on-Trent): In a list of St. Jim's characters in the 1923 Holiday Annual there is mentioned one, Matthew Lucas. I have read many St. Jim's tales, both Hamilton and otherwise, but have never seen a mention of this individual.

STAN KNIGHT (Cheltenham): Re Mr. M. Hall's comment concerning the Wolf of Kabul stories now appearing in Rover-Wizard. I read these some years ago, but thought it was in the



BILLY BUNTER'S POSTAL-ORDER ARRIVES—AT LAST!

early 1950's, not the 1930's as he states. In fact I have a few Wizards of 1955 featuring Wolf of Kabul although not the series featuring the "Stoneman Walks." What a fine C.D. cover by Henry Webb!

JACK OVERHILL (Cambridge): How things come to mind with every fresh C.D. The references to authors and characters evoke all sorts of memories. Lately, in C.D. I've seen Coutts Brisbane's name mentioned. In 1922, I used to take the YELLOW MAGAZINE, a monthly which cost, I think, sevenpence, in the hope of its containing a story of his, about life on some other planet as a rule; so he must have been well in the van of science-fiction writers - excluding H. G. Wells, of course, who was on the go nearly thirty years earlier, and Jules Verne, even before that.

JULIUS LENNARD (Winsford): Why not a 2/6 monthly C.D. with two pull-out supplements of Slade School and Danny's Diary? Daft idea? Not at all! Think it over.

BEN WHITER (London): Hearty congratulations on the happy well-timed mailing of the excellent Spring Number of C.D.

ROGER JENKINS (Havant): I was delighted with the new Slade story. On reflection, I think it was because it featured the two main original characters, and the story revolved round one of the old papers. You must produce more like that.

JOHN WERNHAM (Maidstone)

Why do these 'other books' mean nothing to collectors and what is it in the Gem and Magnet that appeals? Like you I cannot even begin to guess. Why should we expect to understand genius? Nobody realised it during the greater part of Frank Richards' lifetime. Let me quote from an article in the Horizon, 1940 about another genius, not that it matters. "It takes time for genius to become what it really is. Talent alone does not seem to have to undergo the same time process before it can become apparent. Genius is at first like a tree that is too vast for human sight, and not only is it possible for it to remain a long time unseen in its entirety, but also it may be seen in a distorting light and, on account of the way the proportions of genius alter with time, will make its appearance only gradually, by means of a slow discarding of the qualities falsely attributed to it in the beginning. It can even change in varying aspects within itself in order to correspond to new developments in

human society; and it can and should be illumined by the whole of human experience posterior to its historical appearance."

LESLIE ROWLEY (Paris): Thank you for the new Slade story. I wonder if Mr. Buddle would have considered "Billy Bunter's Bargain" as a sub-story if it had been published in the Gem. Perhaps Meredith should read the Magnet as well as the Gem.

B O O K B I N D I N G

ALL TYPES OF BINDINGS UNDERTAKEN: BOOKS REBOUND OR REPAIRED:

Q U A L I T Y W O R K M A N S H I P

L. WARD, 3 HEATHERDENE CLOSE, MITCHAM, SURREY. Tel: MIT. 3837

URGENTLY WANTED: Gem No. 799. Can anyone help?

TOM PORTER, 1, TIMBERTREE ROAD, OLD HILL, STAFFS.

WANTED: Magnets Nos. 829, 873, 875, 882, 884, 888. S.O.L. No. 60.

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

RESULT OF GEMS OF HAMILTONIA COMPETITION

There was a very large entry for this little contest, and we are indebted to readers whose enthusiasm has made it such a success. The final order was determined by a system of points, and that final order, as determined by popular vote, is as follows, with the number of points obtained by each in brackets:

1st. 2. (196) 2nd. 4. (169) 3rd. 5. (161) 4th. 1. (158)
5th. 3. (149) 6th. 6. (139)

The Christmas extract (No. 2) was an easy winner, and held first place throughout. One wonders whether plenty of entrants were influenced by their love for the Christmas stories, but it must be admitted that the extract was altogether delightful. In passing, it was the only one which introduced Bunter, which seems to be an answer

to some people who "slam" the famous Owl.

Another item of note is that the two St. Jim's extracts come at the tail. Was it that these extracts were less worthy - or was it just that Greyfriars is more popular than St. Jim's and that influenced the vote? Your guess is as good as ours.

Two competitors, who sent in identical entries, tie for first place. As a consequence of the tie, we have increased the prize of £1 to 30/- which will be divided. A remittance for 15/- has therefore been sent to each of the following:

W. H. BROSTER, Primrose Cottage, Stone Lane, Kinver.

R. J. GODSAVE, 35 Woodhouse Rd, Leytonstone.

A book award is sent to each of the following, whose entries came next in order of merit:

BASIL ADAM, 28 Derwent St, West Benwell, Newcastle.

W. LISTER, 25 Burnside Avenue, Blackpool.

No competitor sent in a correct list of the titles from which the extracts were taken. Many told us that they knew them all apart from No. 3, which actually came from the famous Gem story "Tom Merry's Concert Party" (reprinted as "Tom Merry's Melody Makers").

TOM MERRY in "LOOK & LEARN"

We understand that there is a likelihood that some of the St. Jim's stories from the Gem will be reprinted in LOOK & LEARN starting in mid-summer. Providing the stories are not altered or too-heavily pruned, all readers will welcome the news. Further announcements in Collectors' Digest in due course.

GOOD-BYE, Mr. TAIL!

Many of the hundreds of readers who have visited Excelsior House in recent years will recall our giant pussy-cat, Bingo (Mr. Tail, as we often called him). Mr. Tail is gone - destroyed by the modern world in which he lived.

We didn't keep Mr. Tail as a pet. He honoured us by consenting to live with us. Mr. Tail was a lovely animal, and knew it. His thick coat was glorious in its unusual marking. His long tail was enormous. We always debated as to whether his father may have been a squirrel.

Mr. Tail was fastidious in his cleanliness. Invariably he had a bath all over after every meal. Never once, during the six years he lived with us did he ever disgrace himself in the house.

He would eat nothing but English pigs' liver. We always knew if our butcher cheated with foreign liver - for Mr. Tail wouldn't contemplate it for a moment. His weight was tremendous, but he was fit as a fiddle. In the winter of 1962 he had pneumonia twice, and cost a small fortune in vet's fees. He was worth it.

Regal though he was, he was affectionate, and his intelligence was amazing.

Yesterday, as soon as your editor started at his typewriter, Mr. Tail sauntered

into the den. The tapping of the typewriter was always a sign to Mr. Tail that the editor should get him a meal. But yesterday he didn't want a meal. He did something he had never done before. He sprang up on the editorial desk, picked his way through the mass of papers, and went to the window. He had seen "Madam" working in the front garden, and, as usual, wanted to join her. The editor did something he had never done before. He opened the window on the front of the house to allow Mr. Tail to pass through. Even as he did it, the editor thought of the traffic on the roads. But Mr. Tail seldom left the front of the house to go in the road, so it was only a passing thought.

Just three minutes later, "Madam" was calling that Mr. Tail had been run over by a car. She gathered him up and cradled him in her arms. A few minutes later he died in her arms. In death he was majestic and dignified as he had been in life. He made no sound after the accident. His lovely fur showed no sign of damage. Just a tiny spot of blood on the end of his nose.

The lady driver of the car had stopped. She was desperately sad. She drove Madam and Mr. Tail to the vet, just in case anything could be done - though we knew it couldn't. As Mr. Tail, cradled in Madam's arms, went to the car, his glorious tail was hanging down like a banner. They came back along. Mr. Tail was cremated yesterday.

To-day, Excelsior House seems empty - lifeless.

Mr. Tail, like the old papers we love so much, was the victim of the age. There is no longer any room in the modern world for the old papers - or the Mr. Tail's. They are crowded out.

The rush goes on, ever increasing. What chance has any Mr. Tail when he gets, as he must occasionally, among the rushing traffic passing between the lines of parked cars. The things we loved are gone for ever in the mad whirl of the modern world.

Mr. Tail is gone - like the Gem, the Nelson Lee, the Magnet, and the rest. Like them he has left an empty space.

QUERY FROM JOHN UPTON

I have often wondered about the important announcement that was to have been made in "The Magnet", No. 1683, which, as it turned out, was the last issue of the paper. The Editor said: "For several weeks now I have been working at top pressure on a scheme that would have appealed to every British boy and girl. In fact, all preparations have been made and the machinery was to be set in motion this week. Unfortunately, however, the acute paper shortage has forced me to postpone the scheme until some future date." It would be interesting to know what was in store for Magnet readers. The Editor further spoke of a "pleasant surprise" - but was this, in fact, to have been a further amalgamation, like that of "Gem" and "Triumph"? Has light been thrown on the scheme in C.D. in the past?

(In next month's Digest, Mr. W. O. G. Lofts sheds light on the above. -ED.)

WANTED: Back issues of Sexton Blake Library pre-2nd new series 437. Union Jack, other SBL material. Planning an amateur magazine devoted to Blakiana. Desire correspondence with collectors interested in writing articles for such an enterprise.

ALVIN FICK, FORT JOHNSON, NEW YORK - 12070 - U.S.A.