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COMPLETE  
SERIAL  
TALE

By  
FRANK  
MURPHY

TAMING OF HARRY.



HE WAS REALLY SORRY, BUT COULD NOT HELP LAUGHING.

Number  
213

Volume  
18

SEPTEMBER 1904

Price 2/-

# COLLECTORS' DIGEST

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 18

No. 213

SEPTEMBER, 1964

Price 2s. Od.

## IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN.



### THE WIND AND THE SUN:

Tastes differ. We don't all like the same thing. And, having got that brilliant piece of originality out of my system, I would add -- a good job, too. If we all thought alike it would be a dull hobby.

We get thousands of letters at the Digest office every year. Many of them are delightful. A lot of them make me purr. Some of them make me smile. A few I put on one side to read after a good breakfast has soothed me. Every day there is a mixed bag.

Some of our readers think there has been too much controversy of late. Brickbats have been flying. One or two readers think that disagreeable letters should either be cast out, or toned down before publication. In a happy family like ours, everything should be nice and cosy.

But little rows occur even in happy families. And when the little rows are over, there is no lasting ill-feeling. It's all transient.

I don't like disagreeable letters. When bottles are thrown, the editor, like the poor old ref in a soccer match, often gets one in the

neck. Does it really matter? A disagreeable letter seldom achieves its purpose. You remember the old fable, or course.

The Wind and the Sun each tried to make a man remove his coat. The wind blew a terrific, icy blast, bitter and intense. But the man wrapped his coat still more tightly round himself. Then the sun shone, warmly and persuasively, and the man soon took off his coat.

Which means, perhaps, that it is more effective to feel sympathy with a man who is misguided enough to hold an opinion different from our own, rather than to be angry with him.

To tone down readers' comments - to publish only the nice remarks - would be to emasculate the Digest. We don't want that. Even the nicest people in the world like to blow off steam now and then. It would be a shame to stop them.

No doubt we should all do well to remember that tact is the unsaid part of what we think. Even so, there is the risk that the writer of a letter or an article who tries very hard to please everyone and offend none could finish up by being very dull indeed.

And - let's whisper it - don't you think that the good old Digest has been livelier of late than in all the eighteen years of its existence? It's even a bit of fun to don one's halo and murmur: "Tut! Tut!"

#### THE ANNUAL:

Preparations are now well in hand for our giant Year Book - Collectors' Digest Annual. The order form for same comes to you with this issue of C.D. If you can order early, please do. We cannot print many extra copies to cater for latecomers, and we should hate for anyone to be disappointed.

There is room on the order form for an advertisement in the Annual, should you feel so inclined. Production costs are very heavy, and if we can get plenty of advertisements, each one will ease the burden on our anxious editor, and, we hope, serve you well at the same time.

Next month we shall let you into some of the secrets of this year's Annual.

#### THIS MONTH'S COVER:

Recently my good friend Bill Lofts spent an hour or two with me in my den. He happened to comment that Magnet No. 1 is the most famous and the best-known cover in the world, but it struck him that very few people knew what the cover of Magnet No. 2 was like. I fully agreed with him, and so this month's cover of the Digest is graced by a reproduction of the cover of Magnet No. 2, from way back in 1908. Bob Cherry arrived in that story, and the boys in the picture are Harry

Wharton and Bob. The artist was probably Hutton Mitchell, though the close-up effect and the firm lines are reminiscent of that fine artist, J. Abney Cummings.

GAME TO THE LAST!

Backs to the Wall! Splendid in Defeat! Fighting to the Finish! Down But Not Out! Great Too Late! Game To The Last!

No, dear friends, that is not a list of Magnet, Nelson Lee, or Gem titles. It is a collection of the type of press heading which we are accustomed to see describing England's test match performances. To be Game to the Last undoubtedly shows an excellent quality. But what a pleasant change it would be to see "England Smashing her way to Victory" instead of "Gallant England, Game to the Last."

This year's Tests have been disappointing, but they have had their moments, and, for the cricket enthusiast, cricket being the magic game it is, those moments have made it worth while. We have seen inexplicable tactics on both sides. We have seen what seemed to be perfect pitches on which the batsmen appeared unable to score, and the bowlers unable to claim wickets. We have undergone hours of excruciating boredom which would have murdered any game but cricket. Yet we have had moments of tense drama, moments of thrilling excitement.

And we forget the frustration and remember only the wonderful moments. Because we love cricket.

Maybe one has to be a little odd to love cricket. But probably one has to be a little odd to love old boys' books. So here's to the odds!

THE EDITOR

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS: RAY BENNETT'S new address is  
36, Barrington Rd, Olton, Solihull, Warwickshire.  
(from 19th Sept., 1964).

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WANTED TO BUY: Buffalo Bill 4d libs; Boys' Friend libs; and Union Jacks.

R. W. STORY, 34, ABERDEEN CRESCENT, BRAMALEA, via Brampton, ONTARIO, CANADA.

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SALE or EXCHANGE: Holiday Annuals 1920, 22, 36, 38. Exchange for S.O.L's, Nelson Lees, Magnets.

65, BENTHAM STREET, BELFAST.

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# DANNY'S DIARY

SEPTEMBER 1914

The war is an awful nuisance. All the boys' weeklies are packed with war stories and pictures. It fairly gives me the pip.

In the Marvel, Jack, Sam, & Pete have gone to war, and so has Tom Sayers. Only the Nelson Lee serial, "The Black House," seems to keep sane. In the Boys' Friend there is another new war serial by John Tregellis called "The Mailed Fist." There is a new Captain Handyman series in the B.F., all about the war.

The Magnet has a new war story called "A World at Stake" by W. Home-Gall, and this even starts at the beginning of the book now, where Greyfriars used to be.

It's war, war, war. Everything's full of it, and editors seem as pleased as Punch. The editor of the Magnet says he is joining up, and he hopes we will go on supporting the Magnet while he is away.

Worst of all, the papers are smaller. The Gem and Magnet are now 28 pages instead of 32. It's a swindle. I shall be glad when this rotten war is wound up, so that we can get value for money again.

The Gem hasn't been very great this month. The first story was "The Housemaster's Bodyguard," a kind of a thriller. A man called Munro, an enemy of Mr. Railton, came on the scene again. He was in a story some time ago.

"Levison's Last Chance" was about Levison wanting to play cricket for St. Jim's against Greyfriars, in order to please his uncle, a Mr. Bulkeley. This was a fairly good tale, and it looked back a bit, as Harry Wharton & Co remembered that Levison had once been expelled from Greyfriars. Doug says he remembers that happening in the Magnet a long time ago.

In "The Fighting Prefect," an old boy named Stoker comes back to cane Mr. Ratcliff, but Darrell, whom Mr. Ratcliff has prosecuted something awful, helps the New House master.

Best of the month was "The Secret Committee" in which Tom Merry & Co found themselves prosecuted by Mr. Linton (who was acting Head while Mr. Railton was away and Dr. Holmes was ill) and by some of the bullying prefects whom Mr. Linton favoured. So Tom Merry & Co got up a secret society and soon got their rights and their own back on the prefects.

A very unusual thing has happened. Paper money has been issued to replace sovereigns and half-sovereigns. The pound notes are called "Bradburies" because a Mr. Bradbury has signed them. The pounds are green and the ten-shilling notes red.

Miss Bonestoril came to tea one afternoon. She is Doug's girl, Freda, and she is awful. Over tea she was saying that her father was disgusted with the government for introducing paper money. She said it was insanitary, meaning the paper money, not the government. Mum said she didn't bother so much about that part of it, but she was afraid the little bits of paper might blow away.

So I said: "Why is it insanitary, Freda?"

Freda said: "You silly little boy. It's insanitary because dirty people will handle it, and then it will be passed on to us."

I was thinking it over, and Freda said: "In a few months this country will be a hot bed of disease."

Mum said: "But all money must get a bit infectious, Freda, yet we can't do without it."

Freda was quite cross. She said: "Not at all, Mrs. Penlerick. With gold or coins of any type, you can wash them in carbolic, but you can't wash paper-notes in carbolic."

So I said: "Do you wash all your sovereigns in carbolic, Freda?"

Freda was very angry. She said most boys were disgusting, but I was the most disgusting she had ever met. Then Doug got angry and said that he regarded me as revolting, but didn't think I was disgusting. And Mum said that if they regarded her son as disgusting and revolting they had better go away.

Freda said she wouldn't come to tea again until Mum apologized, and it wasn't much of a tea anyway.

After they had gone, Mum was angry, and sent me to bed, but I didn't mind, as it meant I couldn't do my French. We've started Chardenal this term. So I went to bed, and took "Through Thick and Thin" with me. That is a new Boys' Friend 3d Library about Tom Merry & Co., but it's a rotten tale, and I think Martin Clifford must have been worried by the war when he wrote it.

Later on, Mum brought me a cup of cocoa and some hot cheese on toast. She said: "You must try not to upset your brother, darling. He's older than you."

So I made up my mind to give Doug "Through Thick and Thin" as a present.

The Magnet has been better than the Gem this month, which is unusual. "A Cool Card" was a new boy called Sampson Quincey Ifley Field, whom Bob Cherry nicknamed Squiff, on account of his initials. Squiff comes from New South Wales which is a county like Kent in Australia.

"Ructions at Highcliffe" was a grand tale, and that also had a lot about Squiff in it. The next tale was "Spirited Away" in which an American millionaire's son called Sylvester came to Greyfriars. Being small, he went in the second form, but he was kidnapped by an American gangster named Five-hundred dollar Smith. He was rescued by the detective, Ferrers Locke. I think this is the first time Ferrers Locke has been in the Magnet, though he has often been in the Gem. Maybe Martin Clifford let Frank Richards have him in exchange for Levison, who was expelled from Greyfriars.

The last Magnet tale of the month was "Hard Up," and Squiff came into that a lot. Harry Wharton & Co got into debt and tried to raise the wind. I like Squiff all right, but I hope we don't get too much of him.

Doug says that if the war goes on, Freda may become a nurse, as she thinks the uniform would suit her. I'm sorry for our soldiers if she does. She'll be washing them in carbolic.

FOR SALE: 17 Comics, Firefly's, Merry & Brights, Jester, Sparks, etc. 5 Union Jacks 1912/14; 6 1d. Marvels 1906/8, Jack, Sam & Pete; 4 Penny Populars 1913-16 (Sexton Blake); 4 2d. Thrillers (1935); 39, Nelson Lees 1928/9; 12, 7d. Sexton Blakes; Prairie Lib. No. 23, 24, 25, (1919); Inas No. Gem 1938; SOL. 277 Frank Richards; SOL. 355 Martin Clifford; Boys Friend Lib. 439 St. Frank's in London; Boys Friend Lib 613 Charles Hamilton; Football and Sports Lib. No. 461; 2 Volumes Boys Journal (Vol. 1 and 2); Bound Volume Monster Library - Last 6 issues 14-19; Brand New Olympia (Splendid 66) Typewriter (cost £23). THE LOT (value over £40) - £34 (NO OFFERS) or separate - Typewriter £19. 0. 0. Old Boys Books £15. 0. 0. (Postage Extra)

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

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# Blakiana



Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

## THE MODERN BLAKE

By S. Gordon Swan

NOW THAT THE Modern Blake is no longer with us, it is possible to view it in perspective and assess its worth. To many readers in the 'fifties it must have been apparent that the Sexton Blake Library was getting into a rut, that some infusion of new ideas was necessary to lift the stories out of commonplace routine. The change, when it came, was too drastic. Overnight the Baker Street menage disappeared: the old house, so faithfully detailed in a two-page plan in one of the Annuals, seemed to be no more, probably demolished to make way for the block of flats in which Blake had his penthouse apartment. And his office was now in Berkeley Square, decorated by no less than three feminine assistants. Blake himself had undergone rejuvenation, something his admirers would not object to, though the Mephistophelian eyebrow seemed an unnecessary addition.

One notable feature was the absence of Tinker. He did not appear at all in the early stories, was not even mentioned. It was quite evident that he was to be dropped in favour of Paula Dane. No doubt in name and type he represented those "juvenile associations" which were anathema to the exponents of the New Order. Before the advent of the Modern Blake Tinker had been provided (by John Hunter, I believe) with the name of Edward Carter for the sake of convenience.

In regard to those so-called juvenile associations, by the way, the slogan of the Union Jack was "For Readers of all Ages," and this was an apt description. Though, in fact, many of the old stories were of an adult nature, and I am sure the phraseology employed on occasion by G. H. Teed and Jack Lewis was far from being in the juvenile class.

To return to the Modern Blake. Sexy covers appeared on the S.B.L. and sexy episodes featured in the stories, which also introduced brutal interludes and unpleasant adjectives such as "wet-lipped," the whole set-up being based on the tough American style. All the old authors

disappeared at one stroke, and unfamiliar names were appended to the stories. Presently, John Hunter returned with one yarn under the new regime, but made no further appearance; later, Rex Hardinge turned up with two stories, but unfortunately they were a re-hash of two old yarns, and we did not see any more of his work. This was a pity, as he had been in good writing vein prior to the change.

Later still, an old favourite in Warwick Jardine produced one story, but one noted with mixed feelings that it was revised by Desmond Reid. Surely at no other period in the history of Sexton Blake were so many stories revised by the editorial staff and reproduced as was done under the names of Desmond Reid and Richard Williams. One cannot imagine Robert Murray and G. H. Teed being subjected to so much revision. Those authors retained their individual styles, instead of being churned out in one pattern.

As the New Look progressed, the rough stuff was toned down, doubtless due to protests from staunch readers of long standing. And eventually Tinker, whose admirers must have clamoured for his return, re-appeared in maturer form (with increased girl-chasing propensities) his absence being attributed to the conduct of investigations in the North of England. In due course, Mrs. Bardell also came back, and became Blake's "daily" at the flat. Last of all, Pedro, who had been absent for many years indeed, made his comeback in a manner by no means pleasing to his fans. A far better story could have been written about the faithful hound than the one Wilfred McNeilly wrote.

As time went on, good stories emerged from the new format, particularly those which dealt with Blake's wartime activities. "The Last Days of Berlin" was something different from what readers of the saga had experienced before, and "The Sea Tigers" was even better, in my opinion. Ironically enough, there wasn't a woman in this story, which only goes to show that sex is not necessary to a good yarn.

Another author responsible for some good efforts was James Stagg, whose style was less staccato and less brutal than the others. Regrettably he vanished from the scene a year or two before the S.B.L. came to an end.

Old characters in Huxton Rymer and George Marsden Plummer were revived and fairly faithfully portrayed, although Rymer did not seem to fit into the atmosphere of "High Heels and Homicide."

Jack Trevor Story struck a new note in Sexton Blake stories. To some staid readers he might not have appealed, but his outrageous yarns provided a leavening of humour and he had an individual style. His more serious works, such as "The Frightened People," and

"Invitation to a Murder," were extremely good.

The majority of stories by Martin Thomas and Rex Dolphin maintained a high standard, but those under the editorial name of Desmond Reid were a mixed collection, some good, others mediocre. W. A. Ballinger's "This Man Must Die" stands out as a striking and unusual story. But Blake's dalliance with females would not gain the approval of long established readers who had made an ideal out of the detective. Blake had never been the austere, aloof character the modernists claimed; readers of his earlier exploits are well aware of his association with fascinating females; but these episodes were handled delicately and not with the blatant suggestiveness of the New Look.

One story that should have remained unwritten was "Danger's Child," by Jack Trevor Story. This began romantically enough with Blake going like a knight-errant to the assistance of an old girl-friend, but ended on the customary note of Trevor Story irony. What Blake fans would find unacceptable was the idea of Blake being the possible father of an illegitimate daughter. We wanted Blake human; he had always been so; but we also wanted him to remain someone we could look up to and idealise.

As Thirza Von Otto said to him years ago, as his hands went out to her: "Stop, Sexton Blake, I would not have you act as other men. You are, to me, as far above the common herd as that great planet over our heads. ....I have a woman's heart that you may have for the asking; yet you will not ask it now."

That is the Blake that we prefer to remember, the one that Thirza Von Otto saw and loved, who remained the man of her dreams and retained his integrity throughout. And that is the image that lingers in the memory. Loyal admirers hope it will be projected once again on the screen of contemporary history, in spite of the demise of the Modern Blake.

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Sexton Blake - Union Jack - Official Information

No. 9.

By W. O. G. Lofts

Lewis Carlton:

The reader who may imagine that W. O. G. Lofts is always successful in tracing authors, would be sadly mistaken! Indeed, probably the most disappointment I have encountered was in failing to trace Lewis Carlton once editor of the U.J. for a period before the first world war. He was certainly alive up to a few years ago - and believed in the Devon area - but exhaustive enquiries by Derek Adley and myself

make him elusive as some of the uncaptured members of the great train robbery; and if contacted he could no doubt be a mine of information on old authors, particularly "Michael Storm."

Probably the most astonishing fact in fathering all the authors of Sexton Blake yarns in the Union Jack is that apart from a short tale in No. 563 (1914) "The Case of the Strange Advertisement," Lewis Carlton never wrote any stories of full length for the paper! This is also greatly surprising when one considers that he was editor; as well as writing considerable stories under his own name and that of 'Claude Custer.' It was presumed quite wrongly some years ago that he had penned many of the Plummer yarns after the creator 'Michael Storm' and 'Mark Darran' - but as readers who obtain the Sexton Blake Catalogue will see, the correct names will be inserted, in the sequence of when they appeared.

To conclude this piece on Carlton; as now widely known, after playing the part of Tinker on the stage - because of his youthful looks - he returned to freelance writing, and wrote in a syndicate formed by John G. Brandon, John Bobin and his son Donald. All four collaborated in ideas and stories; and so the reader who studies styles of authors had better beware of their stories at times! Lewis Carlton also wrote a large number of girls tales under the name of 'Louise Carlton' - and lastly indeed wrote two stories of St. Jim's - which were published in the Gem Nos. 956 'D'Arcy's Night Out' and Nos. 975 'The Champion of St. Jim's.'

#### The 'Gordon Carr' and 'W. J. Bayfield' question

My good and old friend Harry Dowler, has written to the effect that it was he who first gave the information that 'Gordon Carr' was a pen-name of W. J. Bayfield. I couldn't agree more with Harry that the style is astonishingly similar, and also the theme of prison life. To be perfectly fair to Harry - I am not blinded by the fact that even official records can make mistakes, and also that authors - who were only human, could even have non-de-plumes to cover up their real identity as in the cases of 'Michael Storm' and 'Anthony Skene.' Such matters as why they did this, was purely their own concern and not ours. Further enquiries, make me still stick to my original statement - that they were two distinct individuals - as I have found another elderly author who remembers George or Gordon Carr as once a member of the editorial staff, and he also remembers W. J. Bayfield as a free lance writer. Even disregarding official records, I am bound to accept this as fact, and I must point out with due respect to Harry, and his wonderful knowledge of the old papers and authors, that he is

basing his statements purely on theory; and of the remarkable similarity of style - when even Walter Webb thought that the 'Carr' stories were by Bayfield. There is also the strong possibility that G. Carr being a member of the staff, copied Bayfield's style and themes. Certainly this is not the first time this has been done; or even better the theory that Bayfield gave the stories for 'Carr' to publish - on some arrangement between them.

It was agreed by the Sexton Blake Circle some years ago, that data coming from official sources, should be accepted as fact, or we would get nowhere in compiling authors and records. To give full credit to Harry Dowler and the late Herbert Leckenby, almost 98% of information they published on authors and non-de-plumes appearing at the start of this century has been proved correct by official records compiled at the time, and this high percentage is something which anyone should be proud of!

Murray Hamilton:

This is not a name to be found in the 'Union Jack' but THE THRILLER, and it is worth recording in the space I have left in this concluding item, of a story worth getting hold of, for those who collect material by Sexton Blake authors. This unique story was written half by Robert Murray Graydon - and the other half by G. H. Teed - hence the use of part of their names! THRILLER No. 489 (1938) "Made in America."

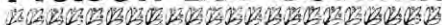
The only reason I can think of this strange partnership is that Robert Murray Graydon who started the story failed to finish it and G. H. Teed was given the commission to finish the task!

In conclusion this is the last of my series of articles, and all the fresh data will be included in the Sexton Blake Catalogue that is now in the process of being completed.

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, 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.

# Nelson Lee Column



CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

By Jim Cook

Before I settle down with my news about St. Frank's this week I would like to record an amusing incident which took place in the form-room just recently. Old Crowell, the master of the Remove, had succumbed to the flu virus and was confined to his bed. Dr. Stafford, already with staff troubles, had after some shuffling managed to get Mr. Pycraft to deputise for Mr. Crowell while Biggleswade took over pro tem the Fourth Form. The Head himself was taking Mr. Langton's duties - the sixth form master being another victim of the flu - and several other staff disturbances were taking place in the domestic quarters due to the sudden illnesses.

Now Mr. Pycraft, the ill-tempered master of the Fourth - was not amused by this change and neither were the Remove. And as lessons progressed it was becoming obvious that something had to break for Pycraft was getting more and more bad tempered. Lines were being dished out by the hundreds and the least trivial excuse was made for impots to be given. Towards morning break all-out total war had been reached when those two inoffensive twins, the Trotwoods, had been gated for the rest of the week because old Pycraft couldn't make up his mind which was Cornelius and which was Nicodemus. So in a fit of raging temper he imposed a confined-to-gates on them both for the remainder of the week. Nipper tells me the Remove was shocked by this harsh treatment on the juniors and after the break Nick Trotwood had brushed aside the sympathy that was showered on him and his brother by retaliating to such an extent that old Pycraft was soon wishing he hadn't been so jolly free with his gatings.

While Cornelius was afflicted with deafness and more or less took little part in the activities of the juniors his brother Nicodemus is a clever ventriloquist and because he uses his gift so very rarely one is apt to forget that he possesses the ability to throw his voice to

such remarkable extent that you are easily misled. Thus it was that Nick got revenge by using his powers to throw his voice and make it appear to come from Pycraft. Every word the form master uttered Nick echoed to make it seem that another voice was repeating it in the corner of the form room. This went on for some little time and even the juniors were mystified because nobody knew of Nick Trotwood's intentions. In the end, just before dinner, old Pycraft could stand it no more. He suddenly passed a hand over his brow and complained he was not feeling well and rather than allow the boys to catch his germs he would retire as he thought he had caught the flu.

So after another re-shuffle the rest of the day the Remove was taken over by Professor Tucker who devoted the time to the mysterious Universe. Even Bernard Forrest, I am told, found the fact that what is seen of the Milky Way through the modern telescope appears as it was a thousand million years ago, as very extraordinary and wonderful. Later on, Forrest was heard to remark that a horse named Milky Way was one that "owed him money." Maybe that is why Professor Tucker's talk was of interest to him. It surprises me why some juniors, while risking the sack so openly by backing horses, would quake in their shoes if they were found out. It's a kind of inverted heroism to effect indifference to expulsion while at the same time tremble like a leaf at the very thought of being found out.

Take smoking; any time you went into Study A you would notice in the fender a big screw of brown paper. This was always kept handy in the event of a master or a prefect coming suddenly on the scene. The paper would be quickly lighted and waved to and fro, filling the room with pungent smoke. It is a little precaution which has saved the rascals from punishment or worse. But why go to all these lengths just for a smoke. Still, Study A has a reputation to keep up. Gulliver and Bell never really got over the loss of Fullwood. That was a blow to them when Ralph Leslie joined the decent fellows. But I suppose if it were not for the bad ones you wouldn't appreciate the good ones.

I was surprised to hear of an inn called The Bull Hotel. I thought I knew all the inns around Bellton and Bannington but the other day Guy Sinclair and Simon Kenmore of the East House mentioned, in my hearing, to Parkin, another East House prefect, that they would meet Grayson, of the Fifth, at the Bull hotel. Well, there is a Bull hotel. I have since found out that it wasn't a well-known inn but if one were on the farther outskirts of Bannington you would pass it coming into Bellton. Anyway, it is only a small place as inns go and has a questionable reputation.

Nipper & Co. apologised to Study D for no apparent reason and Handy wanted to know why. A terrific din coming from next door to Study C had brought scathing remarks from Nipper & Co. about "that noisy elephant, Handy" when it was realised it was not Study D but Study B. Fights, scuffles and thuds and thumps were so commonplace in Study D that whenever they occurred Handforth & Co. were also blamed. But this time it was Study B. Claude Gore-Pearce, Hubbard and Teddy Long were going it hammer and tongs and even the change in direction had not been noticed by Study C. It was most unusual for Study B to be in a state of war but it was so. And Nipper & Co. forthwith went next door and apologised to Handy. Handforth didn't quite know how to take the apology.

Talking about Nipper I didn't realise how ruthless he can be with the juniors. The other morning before rising bell he had the chaps down on Little Side for footer practise. It was frosty, terribly cold and icy puddles were dotted all over the field. And the light was bad making it as dismal a picture as you could imagine. But when it was time for breakfast it seemed well worth the early rising for the juniors looked the picture of health. But Nipper has to be very severe in his running of the sports fixtures; you can easily imagine the scene in the junior bed rooms as he routs them out in the cold and unfriendly light of early morning to practise soccer. Edgar Fenton, the captain of the school, has similar troubles with the seniors but they have to buckle to when Fenton wants them to. His word is law and nobody has really hankered after his position as much as Nipper's. Fenton, as head prefect and captain of the school has the unenviable task of keeping the seniors in order, a job with doubtful honours.

Do you recall Jane Trumble? She once held the position as Headmistress of St. Frank's. That was some time ago but she was seen entering the Ancient House the other day and speculation is rife. St. Frank's has known Petticoat rule and I don't think it would be welcome again, but Reggie Pitt says he wouldn't be surprised if she didn't try once again to run the school. I doubt it though. The wonder of it is that she has the nerve to show her face again at St. Frank's after the disgraceful conduct she exhibited during her war with the juniors and the barring out against her authority. St. Frank's has enlarged since then. She ruled when the old school comprised just the Ancient House and the College House. These days she would have quite a handful trying to run the four Houses. But you never can tell with women. I wonder what bee she has in her bonnet this time.

(continued on page 25) ..

# Hamiltoniana

## THE END OF ANOTHER ERA

Mr. C. H. Chapman, who illustrates the Billy Bunter series, told us that he had been informed by the publishers that the latest Bunter story, due out about now, will be the last of the series.

But, at the end of the book, we found another title announced - "Bunter, the Sportsman." In consequence, we contacted Messrs. Cassell who gave us to understand that the future of the series is not yet certain. The last manuscript written by Charles Hamilton has been published. But, said Messrs. Cassell's representative, "there are a number of Frank Richards' television scripts which we may be able to have written up into stories." He added that they would be very sorry indeed if they have to decide to close the series.

So the future of the Bunter series is at the knees of the gods. What seems certain, however, is that there are no further original Greyfriars stories to come, written by their creator. In that sense, an era has ended.

To commemorate the post-war Billy Bunter series and their remarkable run, Mr. Chapman has sent us the picture, which he has specially drawn for Collectors' Digest, and which fills our centre spread this month. Also, we have asked our Let's Be Controversial Columnist to look at the series as a whole in his article. Finally, our book critic reviews in this issue the latest (and possibly the last) story in the Bunter series: "Thanks To Bunter."

We understand that a firm of publishers of paper-backed books is considering re-publishing the old Magnet stories in paper-back format - 4 copies a month at 2/6 each. If anything comes of this project, we shall notify our readers in due course.

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## LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 79. The Post-War Greyfriars:

The news that the latest title in the Billy (continued page 18)..



— SCOREBOARD —

1908 - 1964



Bunter series put out by Cassell's may be the last will be received by our readers with mixed feelings. Some readers may be sorry, some may be relieved. What does seem certain is that, if the series continued from a substitute pen, we should find the same mystery enshrouding the stories, the same resentment, the same heart-burning as happened long ago and which has never ceased, and never will cease, to send mighty ripples through the ranks of Charles Hamilton's old boys.

Fairly recently Roger Jenkins gave us his reasons for disposing of his collection of the post-war Bunter books. His criticism of the stories can hardly be challenged though it can be stated that they were written for youngsters who would have no knowledge of the great days of the Magnet - and they served their purpose well.

Personally, I could never bring myself to disposing of my post-war Bunters. Naturally I have them all, and the complete series looks rather delightful in my bookcase. Apart from that, I have an affection for them as the stories written, in the evening of his life, by the man who played such a large part in influencing my own life.

We should be doing less than justice to Frank Richards if we failed to realise and credit just how remarkable an achievement the post-war Bunter series was. At the age of 70 or a little over, he embarked on a new career - that of a stiff-cover book writer. So successful was he that the Bunter series ran to nearly 3 dozen titles, plus an extra one about Bessie Bunter of Cliff House. The size of the output was nothing new for Frank Richards. But the limitations of complete 60,000-word books was.

For something like thirty years he had been accustomed to the unlimited canvas on which his gifts were displayed to their best advantage. 300,000 words was nothing abnormal for a story - and 30,000 words, either way, made no difference. But now he had to complete his story in a fraction of the distance.

It can be said that he adapted his style amazingly well. His Bunter series were competent to the last.

The minor defects were seen in occasional irrelevant episodes which seemed to waste space; excessive dialogue; and the lack of originality in plot. Maybe Bunter was the fly in the ointment. Bunter had to figure in the title. He had to star in the story. Whether the author felt that his future now depended upon Bunter, or whether he was fulfilling a requirement of his publisher, we do not know. It seems likely that both author and publisher felt that it was Bunter who sold the book. They may well have been right.

Very few of the stories were in serious vein. So many light

tales brought the risk of sameness. Under these circumstances it is quite astonishing that the writer managed to introduce so much variety.

The first post-war Greyfriars story, so keenly anticipated, was a disappointment to the average old reader. There was no sense of occasion in the story. One chapter in reminiscent mood would have made the tale memorable. It was not there. The story was purely run-of-the-mill, with Bunter in a little series of episodes.

That first story showed us plainly that there was no sentiment in Charles Hamilton so far as his work was concerned. He loved writing, but he wrote to earn a living. Sentiment did not come into the matter - certainly not in anything like the way that it came into the outlook of his old readers.

He wrote solely for youngsters of a new generation who knew nothing of the Magnet. He was happy and proud that so many of his old supporters remained loyal to him and to his work, but he never wrote with them in mind. Evidence of this is found in the re-hashing of old themes which he knew old readers would remember. Too often he introduced Carcroft when he knew that his old readers would by far have preferred reference to St. Jim's or Rockwood.

I fancy that Charles Hamilton would have loved, in post-war years, to achieve success with something apart from his old Amalgamated Press characters. That would explain his hankering after Carcroft, which never rang the bell.

For the adult, the repeat, in potted form, of the old plots was unfortunate. It caused comparisons to be made, and, inevitably, the comparison was unfavourable to the new story on the small canvas. Such details as the unawareness of Greyfriars that it had a ventriloquist in its midst, and the ignorance of the cast that Billy Bunter had previously changed places with Wally jarred a little on the older reader. Against this, we must not forget that the author usually introduced some unexpected new twists to a familiar plot.

Probably those who criticise the post-war tales for lack of originality are being quite unreasonable. In writing school tales for 55 years, Charles Hamilton was unique. But there is a limit to the number of plots which can be adapted to school life. Any man with a gift for writing can write if he has his plot at his fingertips. The finding of new plots is the bugbear for authors only half the age of Charles Hamilton and whose output is a mere fraction of his. For us, as adults, to state that we have loved Greyfriars for thirty or forty years, and then to beef because the author uses plots from long ago in stories intended for youngsters is surely rather absurd.

I sometimes think that Hamilton, in his post-war tales, would have been wiser to go back to the blue Gem and the red Magnet for his plots, many of which were of appropriate length and could easily have been adapted. Probably he was more out of touch with blue Gems and red Magnets than his old readers were. In any case, he went back to 1919 for his Bunter's double story, and to the early twenties for the Congo series. Even an old reader would need a long memory to go back so far as that.

The new stories sparkled with an amazing gaiety. Never was there any indication that they were written by an aged man. Only on very rare occasions was there just the slightest indication that they came from an author who was not very closely in touch with the second half of the twentieth century.

Tastes differ so much, that it would be futile to attempt to say which was the best of the post-war Bunters. I enjoyed almost all of them, and value them. From a personal viewpoint, I would have no hesitation in naming "Billy Bunter Among the Cannibals" as the worst. This was the only time I ever recall that I found Charles Hamilton unreadable. I have read it half-way through on several occasions, but always abandoned it. To this day I have never read it to the end.

The story which the author, at the time of his death, had two-thirds completed, was one of the rare serious plots, albeit a hackneyed one - the wayward Bounder and the loyal Redwing. Just how Charles Hamilton would have finished it will probably be debated among readers for long to come. From the start it was not too convincing, but the original author might, and probably would, have saved it with a strong finish.

I repeat that, by and large, the post-war Bunter series was a splendid achievement. We old readers found faults - but the series was not intended for us.

Thousands of a new generation, at a time when the school story is out of favour, must have found the tales right up their street. Thousands who would never have known Greyfriars will now carry happy memories for a long, long while to come.

The post-war Bunter joins the Magnet and the Gem in assuring that the memory of Charles Hamilton remains evergreen.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOESNo. 77. FIFTY YEARS OF "THE TOFF"

**JOHN WERNHAM:** There can be no doubt that the idea of bringing a boy criminal into St. Jim's and then reforming him was something new in the history of the Gem and made an impression on the youthful readers of 1914 which is still remembered, and was never equalled by any other character introduced into the Hamilton schools. Although I was too young to recall the impact made by the original stories it has been described as "tremendous excitement" by people old enough to remember and it is small wonder the Amalgamated Press seized on the opportunity and followed up the initial success well into the following year. On this question of overplaying the character we must remember that had not Talbot returned to St. Jim's after the first series we should have missed some very fine stories and one of the best yarns that Martin Clifford ever wrote. There is no need to consider the hash or the sticky sentiment of the substitute writers and although it is true that the theme was never changed by the genuine author most of the later stories were well constructed and readable. It is difficult, also, to quite know what one could do with a reformed Talbot other than rake up the past. All the Hamilton characters had parts to play and one of the weaknesses of reformation is that the interest evaporates with the blossoming of the better nature. Levison was a sneak and was thus vastly more entertaining than Frank's big brother in the latter days and there are other well-known portrayals one could mention, but the shadow on the young life of Reginald Talbot was a much larger canvas and it is to the everlasting credit of Charles Hamilton that he could excite the emotions without descending into bathos and make us all love a child delinquent. The stories lose nothing with the years and when you remind me that it all happened fifty years ago I feel older than ever!

**CHARLES BAKER:** I remember the arrival of Talbot in Gem No. 334, "The Toff." Although only a schoolboy at the time, in 1914, I had already been a devoted reader of every number of the Gem and Magnet since 1910, but nothing I had ever read in either of the two papers had ever gripped me so much. After reading the last of the 1st four Gems, "The Parting of the Ways," I was one of the first, and there must have been thousands of other readers, to write to the Editor asking for more Talbot, and in due course we got them; first the "King's Pardon" Gem 351. But still we were not satisfied, we wanted more and more tales dealing with Talbot, and I know for a fact never had there been such a demand from readers as there was for Talbot.

Looking back after all this time, it seems to me that apart from the first four tales of the series, Levison really played the major character in the tales, and not Talbot, although of course Talbot was in trouble in each tale, and Levison's object was to save him time after time.

After the many times Levison had saved Talbot, readers felt something should be done by Tom Merry & Co. to give Levison another chance, as he could not now be such a cad, as he used to be, and readers in thousands, wrote in time after time to the Editor asking for Levison to be given a new start.

Well we got our new reformed Levison! But he was not a Levison we expected. Gone was the old power of detection, gone was his keen brain; he just became another fellow.

A new cad had to be found, so Cardew arrived, a character I could never stand at any price. Then we had Trible, or did he arrive first?

Well, what caused the slip in the circulation of the Gem in late 1915? In my view - The reform of Levison. Not what the readers wanted. The arrival of Cardew and Trible. The large number of sub-writers' tales, some awful rot. Above all the cover change from Blue to White.

Devoted reader of both the Gem and Magnet, even I at last, could not stand the sub-writers' tales any longer, and thinking at the time that the real Martin Clifford

and Frank Richards were dead, I gave up taking them at about No. 530 of each.

From time to time copies of the Magnet and Gem were bought perhaps every two or three months, in the hope that a mistake had happened, and that the real authors had started up again, but it must have been just bad luck that each time a copy was bought from 1915 until 1931 they proved to be by sub-writers, and each worse than the last. At last one day, waiting at a railway station a copy of Gem No. 1287, "The Fighting Fag" was bought, and found to contain the reprinted tale published many years before. It was, of course, the famous story dealing with the arrival of Wally d'Arcy at St. Jim's, and was written as every Gem should be written. A vote of thanks should be given to Mr. Eric Payne for bringing about the reprinting of all the first and finest tales ever to appear in the Gem, a debt we can never repay to him.

**DON WEBSTER:** As youthful reader of "The Gem" - always my first love - two series made a most profound impression on me, namely "The Toff" and the "Outram" introductory stories. I would add that the impact of these yarns was "terrific."

I agree with you that Talbot suffered through too much repetition, whereas Outram's re-appearance in the Christmas No. of "The Gem" for 1917 (No. 510) "The Shadow of the Past" seemed feasible.

Personally, I would have preferred the early Talbot series, plus that great story "The Housemaster's Homecoming" (when he could have been written out of "The Gem"). I would have been content to let it go at that.

My favourite "Toff" story: Gem 377 "For Another's Sake," in which Martin Clifford characterized Talbot, Gore and Dr. Holmes in "masterly" fashion.

To sum up - "Talbot was a toff" by nature." Need one say more.

**GEORGE BELLARS:** The early Talbot stories were first-class, but I think that "Housemaster's Homecoming" should have concluded the story, with the possible exception of "In the King's Khaki" and Gems 988 - 991, four fine tales about Talbot and his cousin Crooke. It is true that the editor and the substitute writers cashed in on Talbot. Personally, I think the last Talbot story "Through Thick and Thin" (post-war) was C.H.'s worst story about the Toff.

**HARRY BROSTER:** Your article on the Toff was very true. He could have been the best character at St. Jim's next to Ernest Levison, but that unsavoury past was repeated too many times. Actually he was an unreal character. No boy of 15 could be the leader of a gang of criminals. He should have been jettisoned like many other good characters. The Gem would not have missed him. As a schoolboy he lacked the glamour he showed as a gangster.

**LESLIE ROWLEY:** So John Geal (see "Controversial Echoes" No. 74) thinks it unfortunate that my kind of thinking is on the increase in the collecting world. Dear me! But what is my kind of thinking? A little less cynical and a little more balanced than Mr. Geal's, I hope.

I think that the collecting world like any other world consists of all kinds of people and, that being so, we have to show a great more tolerance of other people's views than has been evident in the "Digest" correspondence columns of late. I feel that when another's opinion does not agree with our own we should not rush into print with accusations of bad taste, arrogance, unpleasantness and ignorance. Neither should we, as John has attempted to do, give a pen portrait of someone we have never met.

The atmosphere of Greyfriars, the well-drawn characters of the boys and masters have certainly been known to me since childhood but I cannot agree that nostalgia for my youth is the only valid reason for collecting the "Magnet." I collect the Frank Richards' stories because I enjoy reading them - nostalgia alone would not coax me to read page upon page of close print. Because of this enjoyment I wish I could afford to possess every Greyfriars story that Frank Richards has written; unfortunately economy in space and expenditure will not allow this. For the same reason I have to

exclude substitute stories - many of which may be quite well written but do not entertain me as much as the genuine article. So I cast them out - not to the four winds or the dustbin, but to friends in the hobby, and, in the early days of my membership, to the Library. I do not exhibit my collection and I am at a loss to reason what prestige I would gather in Tokyo, Kuwait, Hanover or Paris if I did so! John's comparison of yours truly with a swanky art collector is far off the mark.

I think most of us like the hobby because it brings us together to share a mutual enjoyment not only of Greyfriars but of St. Jim's, St. Frank's, Blake and the rest. Let us share our nostalgia, our love for the stories and our interest in research, but let us share it as it should be shared - with understanding and sympathy!

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GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 11 (New Series)

Wharton was at the top of his form. He had had no chance in the first knock, but he had the chance now and made the most of it.

There were no "fireworks." He played himself in steadily and carefully, taking the measure of the bowling. His score did not go up by jumps, as Stacey's was wont to do, but it went up steadily.

Other batsmen came and went. St. Jude's bowling was good, and the fielding was keen, and the average of runs was low. Wharton, thoroughly set, could not be shited. He was feeling confident - the happy feeling of the batsman who has an instinct that it is "his day." One after another, men came out from the pavilion and trailed home again, and still Wharton was on the spot.

Seven down for 60 - eight down for 82 - nine down for 85! Last man in!

"Stacey!"

Wharton had the bowling. Stacey came out to the wicket; and there was a deep breath among the Greyfriars men.

"Fan me, somebody!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"If that cur lets him down -" muttered the Bounder.

Three wanted to tie - four to win! But Wharton had the bowling - and he was glad of it, as he saw the black and bitter face at the other end of the pitch. Stacey knew that he could not keep his wicket up - neither did he want to do so; he would gladly have thrown the game away to prevent his rival from scoring the winning hit. If the bowling came to him -

It looked as if it might. Once, twice, thrice, the ball came down, and nothing happened. Again it came, and again, and Wharton stopped it dead. The Greyfriars men watching from the pavilion were on tenterhooks. Every man knew that the game depended on the next hit. If the bowling came to Stacey - only a few hours ago the star of the team - the game was up! And the Bounder, at least, suspected

that, whatever the hit was like, Stacey would fail to make the running good.

The bowler seemed incredibly slow in getting going with the last ball of the over.

But it came down at last.

If Wharton failed —

He did not fail. He stepped out to the ball and it went. But Wharton did not run — Stacey had no chance of letting the game down! He knew that it was a boundary — and it was!

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(NEXT MONTH: There will be the second of our competitions in connection with this latest series of Gems of Hamiltonia)

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REVIEW

Frank Richards  
(Cassell. 11/6)

THANKS TO BUNTER

I should not like to hazard a guess at the number of occasions on which a firearm has sounded in the Courtfield Bank. The clerks in that part of Kent should be paid danger money.

In one of Charles Hamilton's last stories, "Billy Bunter's Bodyguard," it happened. We commented on that occasion that it seemed unlikely that a bank raider would rely on a horse and trap for a means of getaway after his raid.

In "Thanks to Bunter," the latest addition to the Bunter series, there is the sound of a shot in Courtfield Bank. This time the raider relies on Billy Bunter's bicycle to provide him with the means of escape. We are equally incredulous on this occasion.

Of course, this particular bank-raider has raided banks before and escaped on a schoolboy's bicycle, so habit may have given him proficiency. But eventually, like so many bank robbers before him, he is arrested within the walls of Greyfriars where he is acting as a temporary fore-master.

It will be seen that there is nothing very original in the basic plot, though there are quite a few original side items in the story.

There are many instances where the writer shows that he is fully acquainted with the Greyfriars background, and these should please the older fan. There is an amusing little sequence featuring Prout and Hacker. The Bounder and Coker, who play substantial, and not unpleasing parts, seem oddly out of character to those who have read Charles Hamilton for years. This is certainly due to the dialogue, but it is difficult to pinpoint just why they do not really ring true.

This is a readable tale, and it is certainly a good deal better than the previous Bunter offering, "Bunter the Stowaway." It can hardly fail to please youngsters, for whom it is written, and there is nothing in it to irk the inveterate Hamiltonians.

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FOR SALE: Pink Union Jacks Nos. 646, 671, 723. 3/- each plus postage. Fair condition. Boys' Own Annual 1934-5. 12/6 plus postage.

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

(NELSON LEE COLUMN - continued from page 14)...

I understand from Me. Nelson Lee an invitation has been sent to Edwy Searles Brooks on the occasion of an anniversary. The man who was responsible for chronicles and history of the old school has been asked to attend to receive an honour. I have only the barest details as Mr. Lee was called away to London before he gave me the full strength of it. I can't see old Edwy making the trip to Bellton but at the same time if an award is to be granted to him for his work then he should make an effort to go down. And if I know anything of those St. Frank's crowd they will get him down by hook or by crook. So for the moment that's all I can tell you.

Yours to a cinder,  
JIM COOK

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THE FLAW OF THE NELSON LEE IN ITS BEST DAYS

By Reg Sanderson

Re-reading Nelson Lees once again and viewing them from an adult angle, I consider Brooks portrayal of characters excellent, whether heroes, villains or non-descripts (with only one notable exception).

I liked his showing of Teddy Long, below par mentally and physically, living in constant semi-fear because of these failings, trying to curry favour by retailing news obtained by eavesdropping etc., I could easily appreciate his way of life!

I would now like to quote from James Cook's July "Letter from St. Frank's" -

"And Long getting bolder reached up and knocked Church's cap off his head. Had Handforth been with them, Teddy would not have dared block their path, but Master Edward Long always took chances when the odds were greatly in his favour."

What wonderful material for Roger Jenkins to get his teeth into.

What James Cook is telling us could be phrased somewhat differently (viz)

Church and McClure of average physical prowess had both had their spirits so completely subdued by their arrogant Lord and Master so that when he was not present even the approach of Teddy Long filled them with apprehension, although Long's courage was not normally sufficient to face a barking lap dog.

Brooks' portrayal of Handforth completely mystifies me. A person who will deliberately tear his best friend's laboriously written

imposition to pieces, imprison another boy so that he could take his place in the cricket eleven, and after such acts a few scowling apologies would promote him again to a lad with a 'heart of gold' leaves me bewildered. Admittedly he was shown in many heroics but there always seemed an air of self-glorification about them.

All this seems strange when Brooks' obvious talent was shown in all his other creations.

Did he use Handforth as his own safety valve! and towards the end, was his own increasing irritation portrayed through Handforth?

Handforth stood out as the one flaw in the good days of the N.L.L. and the more he was featured the more the flaw was made apparent.

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CALL A TRUCE

By H. Chapman

I have been taking the C.D. for several years now, and look forward to it with pleasure each month. In my opinion it has improved considerably during this time, largely due to the efforts of the Editor.

Although primarily a Lee fan, I am also interested and enjoy Hamilton stories, Blakes, etc. and I read the C.D. from cover to cover several times.

I have also had the pleasure of seeing a few of my own efforts in print, and although I have written solely for the Lee Column, this is because this is the subject I know most about and because from time to time there have been appeals for copy. In any case Hamiltonia seems well provided with contributors. For some time now, however, I have had a feeling of increasing irritation evidently shared by other readers (See A. Parsons No. 212 and J. Geal No. 211).

The constant references by some writers to "The Master," the exaggerated praise of his work and the continual and monotonous disparagement of the sub-stories (no matter who wrote them) is doing more harm than good to Hamiltonia and the C.D.

This is what has led to some of the St. Frank's fans becoming impatient and critical. I am in touch with some of them and I know they all read and enjoy Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rio Kid, etc.

The same cannot be said of some of the Hamilton fans, however, who have gone on record in the past as saying they do not like and do not read St. Frank's stories and think they would be better forgotten.

I would suggest that in future the hobby is treated as a hobby and not as a religion, and that we all get on with the job of making the C.D. as interesting as possible, trying to keep off each others horns as much as possible.

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# News from the Clubs

## MERSEYSIDE

### Meeting held 2nd August, 1964

As this meeting had to be held on a Bank Holiday Sunday it was not altogether surprising that the attendance was rather moderate, nevertheless there were enough members present to ensure a busy and pleasurable evening. Apart from John Farrell, enjoying his holidays, all the regulars turned up, and the number was increased by the presence of the writer of this report, Frank Case, on his first visit to Sefton Road since his departure from Liverpool.

Chairman Norman opened proceedings in extending a warm welcome to the visitor on behalf of all present; he hoped that this was but the first of more frequent appearances of an old and not-forgotten member. Frank was able to assure him that such would probably be the case in future. The correspondence was then dealt with, Norman having received quite a few letters from our friends, both at home and abroad. The next item was a discussion, this forming the second and concluding part of the tape recording to be despatched to David Hobbs in Seattle. The chosen subject was a rather ticklish one, based on correspondence and articles in recent numbers of "Collectors' Digest," involving certain factions of the Hamilton and Brooks fans in rather spirited exchanges of views. This was a most interesting debate, free from argument, as most of those taking part were in agreement.

Following refreshments, the library business, after which came a quiz submitted by Bill Windsor. This was a repeat of the one he devised some years ago, in which the answers had to be two rhyming words, such as "Chips" quips, a total of twenty questions. The intruder from Nottingham, emulating Robin Hood, pinched this with sixteen correct, closely pursued by Walter Pritchard and Bill Galley. The drawing of lots to decide the compiler of next month's quiz resulted in Walter Pritchard being the lucky - or unlucky? - victim. The final item was a very good debate on the fags of the various schools; whether they were necessary or not. It was generally felt that, with one or two notable exceptions, they had little influence on the plots or in the stories as a whole.

The meeting ended at nine o'clock, time being, as always, the enemy; we have almost six weeks to wait for our next meeting on 13th September, by which time most of the members will have had their holidays.

FRANK CASE

## MIDLAND

### Meeting, July 28th, 1964

Most of the members turned up for this meeting. This was Tom Porter's night and he commenced by giving us an entertaining report of his visit to the London Club Meeting held at the home of Eric Lawrence at Wokingham. From what he said and reading further reports of the same function in the August C.D. this was a howling success. The "Magnets" so generously given by our Retford member, John T. Mann, were put up for sale and eagerly disposed of. Discussions on their various contents took up a lot of time, however, and left little for the items arranged by the Chairman. The Anniversary

number bearing the day and month of the meeting was an early Magnet, No. 494 (47 years old) the title being "A LESSON FOR SKINNER." This was part of a magnificently bound volume from Tom's collection. There was a talk on binding and Tom gave us some very useful information on the subject. We were intrigued with the Collector's Piece which the Chairman had also brought along. This was one of the very early 3d Boys Friend Libraries. Date, January 1908. The first B.F.L. dealing with St. Jim's and Tom Merry. The title was "TOM MERRY'S CONQUEST." Boys Friend Libraries were much to the fore tonight as three of them were put up for raffle (proceeds to the Library). Ted Davey won two of them for first prize and second prize went to myself.

For a meeting so near to a public holiday, we had a very interesting couple of hours.

HARRY BROSTER

Secretary

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AUSTRALIA

Although the attendance was not as large as had been hoped, those who were able to be present at the Book Bargain Bazaar on Wednesday, August 3rd, accorded a very warm welcome to interstate collector, Tom Dobson, who was on his yearly visit from Victoria.

The Secretary passed around an informative article for perusal. Entitled "Comics in Transition" by John Holliday it had appeared in the "Sydney Morning Herald" dated 18.7.1964 and members were pleased to note that old favourites Sexton Blake and Billy Bunter received favourable mention therein.

Letters from overseas were read and a pleasant hour's discussion was enjoyed as members listened to news and views from their fellow collectors Jim Cook (New Zealand) and Bill Gander (Canada). From Jim came a cutting from the "Auckland Star" dated 27th July, '64 showing that our hobby interests are mentioned in all kinds of unlikely places. Here a reader was contending that the bloodthirsty stories in papers like the "Union Jack" and "Pluck" had not turned their readers into murderers and thugs, which of course is entirely our point of view too!

From New Zealand came a friendly letter from Geoffrey Harrison who wrote sometime ago because of his interest in the club's photograph which appeared in "People" several years ago. Geoff is interested in the photographic projects Don Harkness is undertaking and we are happy to say that very soon the photos Geoff has asked for will be on the way.

Harry Broster dropped in on us via the Mail Box with more news of the Chesterfield Re-Union and the always interesting tit-bits from the Midland Club's activities.

Closer to home there was news from Arthur Holland of Wellington - and a charming poem from John O'London's Weekly entitled "The Country of Books" which made a most appropriate introduction for our visitor who had brought along some of his special treasures for our enjoyment.

The next hour passed all too quickly as members passed around and discussed "The Monster Library No. 1" "Jack, Sam and Pete, B.F.L. No. 1" and two other rare items from the B.F.L., "Sexton Blake in Siberia" and "The Missing Heir" which was especially topical as it featured Nelson Lee in Australia. Our most sincere thanks to Tom for affording us this treat.

Grand finale of the programme was provided by Don Harkness who lent his photographic skill to capture the pleasure of this special meeting for absent friends. Very soon we hope to be sharing this evening with many of your folk now reading this report.

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 B. PATE Hon. Sec.

NORTHERN

Meeting, Saturday, 8th August, 1964

As the regular occupant of the chair, Geoffrey Wilde, was away on holiday, our deputy Vice-Chairman, Elsie Taylor, opened the August meeting. There was another good attendance, and we were pleased to welcome another new member, Lewis Wellox. All the

items for this month's meeting were supplied by postal members.

Gerry Allison reminded us that 88 years ago to the very day, on 8th August, 1876, a great man was born - the late Charles Hamilton, whose life work was probably the greatest single factor in bringing us all together at this and all the other club meetings. This month's correspondence included a letter from our artist member, Alf. Hanson, and we were delighted to hear that some of his strip cartoons have been accepted for publication by a girls' magazine, and will appear shortly.

Jack Wood had a couple of interesting items from the press - one telling how a headmaster had informed his prefects that they could have a few bottles of beer in their studies for personal consumption (Loder would be pleased!), and how yet another public school had abolished fagging.

The first item from the postal members was 'A Collector's Piece,' by Joe Williams, of Bristol, which was read by Jack Wood. This was an interesting account of Joe's boyhood reading of the old papers, which still give him great pleasure to-day.

Next was 'A Picture Puzzle,' by Alf. Hanson, which consisted of 16 cleverly-drawn pictures representing places in the various Hamilton stories; Rookwood, Pegg, Wapshot, Packsaddle, etc. John Hunter was the winner with 12 correct, Frank Hancock second with 10, and Bill Williamson third with 9.

After refreshments we had another very interesting paper by John Upton, and this was read by Frank Hancock. Two items on the subject of 'Desert Island Books' followed, the choices of Cecil Hardingham and Alan Deare, both of whom, if they were ever shipwrecked, would hope to be carrying a large supply of Hamilton stories in their luggage!

The final item of this novel programme was an ingenious word-building game, based on the surnames of Hamilton schoolboys, devised by Stan Alder. Myra Allison was the winner of this one.

Thank you, postal members, for your very entertaining contributions to our August meeting.

F. HANCOCK Hon. Sec.

Next Meeting, Saturday, 12th September.

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LONDON

There were fourteen members in attendance at the East Dulwich meeting on Sunday, August 16th. The smaller attendance being due to the holiday season.

No Hamilton library dealings as Roger Jenkins was on vacation. However, Bob Elythe gave an excellent report on the Nelson Lee Library and had a good supply of catalogues, second impression, for sale.

Len Packman gave a promising report on the progress of the Sexton Blake catalogue. He particularly stressed the good work put in by Bill Lofts, Derek Adley and Charlie Wright.

It was announced by Len Packman that Brian Doyle had heard from E. S. Turner, author of "Boys Will Be Boys," that the "Daily Telegraph" wanted him to do a feature on old boys' books for one of the future coloured supplements. Mr. Turner had contacted Len Packman and matters were being put in hand for various meetings and access to collections of Blakiana, Nelson Lee and Hamiltonia.

Three excellent quizzes were conducted by Bob Elythe, Don Webster and Charlie Wright while Bob Elythe read a Trackett Grim episode.

Len and Josie put on a good feed and an enjoyable time was had by all.

Next meeting is the one at Margate on Sunday, September 13th. Kindly let the Secretary know if intending to participate.

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UNCLE BENJAMIN

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NOTICE TO LONDON CLUB MEMBERS: The London OBBC Meeting for September will be in the

form of an outing to Margate. A 41-seater R.A.C.S. coach (colour: maroon with cream lettering) will pick up members of the party outside the front main entrance of Victoria Main-line Railway Station at 10 a.m. on Sunday, 15th September. Members are asked to be there at 9.30 a.m. to ensure that the coach leaves promptly. The party will proceed to the Mayland Rock Hotel, Margate, where lunch will be served at 1 p.m. After lunch the party will go (by coach) to Roselawn, Kingsgate. Later on the party will return to the hotel for tea and the meeting.

## The Postman called

(Interesting Items from The Editor's Letter-bag)

O. D. WADHAM (New Zealand): Regarding Walter Fleming's comment on my article on Wonder Library, I am sure he is quite right in concluding No. 13, "The Grand Adventure," was a reprint of a serial that appeared in Chips, Comic Cuts or the Funny Wonder.

And that "curious fact" about Nos. 15 and 16 being advertised on the back cover of No. 13 can be explained by good intentions that were frustrated. I have a complete set of "Chips" for 1916. In every issue until May 20 of that year the Wonder Library was extensively advertised. In all following numbers not a word about "Wonder" anywhere.

I feel sure Nos. 15 and 16 were never issued, but I am quite curious to learn what the titles of the stories were going to be. Can Mr. Fleming enlighten me?

DAVID HOBBS (Seattle): Altho' other illustrators were good, I never quite enjoyed the MAGNET, no matter how good the story, when Mr. Chapman's drawings were not used; to me, no one else's work was 'right.' The same of course applies to Mr. Macdonald's pictures in the GEN. I was always distressed when the story, and therefore the illustrations, brought the two schools together.

I would certainly subscribe to your Editorial Salutation to Mr. Chapman, wishing him many more years of good health and happiness, and thank you for so aptly expressing my sentiments in the name of all your readers.

E. J. DAVEY (Olton): As one of our club members remarked once:- "Bunter certainly made crime pay!" I myself feel that Bunter was starred too prominently in the later stories, even though I cheerfully admit that Greyfriars would have been infinitely poorer without him!

JOHN TROVELL (Colchester): The no quarter asked or given battle raging in the Nelson Lee Column, with the forthright determination of the Leeites and the skilful defensive work of Roger Jenkins, is providing a fiery contest, full of interest for the ringside observer. Possessing only three copies of the Nelson Lee, one hesitates to enter the ring and venture an opinion, but when the final bell sounds the contestants should be congratulated on a spirited battle that has given the Lee column a boost and added interest.

IAN WHITHORE (Shepperton): I have 4 of the Mascot Schoolboy Series published in 1947 and the titles are:- 1. Top Study at Topham; 2. Buvvy Binks on the Warpath;

3. The Dandy of Topham; 4. Sent to Coventry.

I believe these were issued weekly as No. 3 refers to Harry Vane's third week at Topham but the series seemed to come to an abrupt end with No. 4 although at 4d. I think the story in each booklet of 20 pages was jolly good value.

Incidentally, Tony Glynn has made on slip as the Headmaster of Topham is Dr. Chetwynd (not Dr. Carfax). Mr. Carfax is the Remove Form-master. (The Rio Kid's name was Kid Carfax. - ED.)

BERT HAMBLETT (Bootle): How about an article on Red Circle, Dixon Hawke, and Rockfist Rogan? It would make a change from those back-biting letters. I am as keen as anyone on Charles Hamilton, but I realise he had his weak points, and I don't tear my hair because someone makes a critical remark about him. Why can't everyone be friendly? Thank you for a most professional magazine.

GEORGE SELLARS (Sheffield): I greatly enjoyed Clarkson Rose's article. Did you hear him on the radio in Music Hall a fortnight ago? He was great. What a rare lad is Danny! His diary is full of interest, bless him.

STUART WHITEHEAD (Fakenham): Congratulations on C.D. which goes from strength to strength. Danny's Diary and Slade are my favourites, but I read every word, yes, even down to York Duplicating Services at the bottom of the last page.

GERALD PRICE (Birmingham): I was very impressed with the editorial in the August number. I read it just immediately before the leader in the Daily Mail recalling the outbreak of the Great War, and both articles made the same point regarding the wars being largely responsible for the type of society in which we live to-day.

(A number of readers have written pointing out the similarity between our editorial and the leader of the Daily Mail on August 4th. It was, of course, a coincidence. Our editorial was written in early July. -ED.)

E. W. W. STREET (Taunton): Your name was given to me by the British Museum regarding a query I raised over a number of stories - 13 Pony or Post-Chaise stories, the first one of which was written in 1886 and called "The Bristol Yogi Rat" (motto: Let There Be Truth) and other stories like The Black Bastard of Oxford, The Jockey Boy, The Cinder Facts, and the Ghosts of Davey Jones' Locker. All these horrible tales were cautionary, designed to be read by tiny children who attended the Post Chaise Schools and all over the country. I'm very keen to locate these stories and the author who was A. J. Davies. They were designed to put fear into boys who were made to read them. Can you please help me?

(Readers may recall that Miss Richmal Crompton, in her article in last year's C.D. Annual, referred to this type of story. If any reader can help Mr. Street, please write him, care of C.D. office. Your letters will be forwarded. -ED.)

## REVIEW

### "WILLIAM AND THE WITCH"

Richmal Crompton.  
Newnes's, 10/6

William, Richmal Crompton's bundle of mischief, is back to add glory to the year. In the new volume, the number of his adventures is reduced to five, though there is no reduction in the quality. If anything, he is more entertaining than ever.

That gorgeous mass of femininity, Mrs. Bott, features in two of the stories. She is one of Miss Crompton's most delicious confections. Probably the funniest story in the book is "Mrs Bott and the Portrait" in which the massive lady decides to have her picture painted with Violet Elizabeth. "Mother and child," as Mrs. B. wistfully observes. She can't decide on her artist, but it may be Tarquin Lane, related to the famous Hubert. Tarquin has done a rough sketch of Mrs. Bott and it has a vague look of Mrs. Gamp. Tarquin showed Mrs. Bott his sketch.

"And who is this meant to be, may I harsk?" she said grimly.

Another gem is "William the Psychiatrist" with which the whole tasty meal opens. The title story, which appears as number four in the list, is probably the least funny though it has its moments.

Miss Crompton is in sparkling form with "William and the Hoop-La Stall." She takes note of the "summer Saturday season" of the English village when fete clashed with fete, sale of work with sale of work, flower show with flower show. She might have concluded "William and the Hoop-La Stall" with the words: "This has been one of them!"

This latest William book should please everybody. It will rejuvenate the not-so-young, inspire the jaded, and, of course, be just the gift for your favourite nephew or niece.

The book is partially illustrated by Thomas Henry who died while it was in preparation. His successor, Henry Ford, who is responsible for the jacket and other pictures in the book, is good, making William & Co look rather younger, which is no disadvantage.

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EDGAR WALLACE MYSTERY MAGAZINE No. 2

(Micron 2/5)

No. 2 maintains the high standard set by No. 1. The story by Edgar Wallace is short, but shows the old master at his best. Outstanding, also, is a neat psychological thriller, "Mrs. Webber's Profession" by Jacques Pendower. "Cyanide City" in which Nigel Morland introduces his famous character Mrs. Pym, keeps the reader on his toes, and Rex Dolphin's "The Last Bandit" is pleasantly original. Martin Thomas shows himself a master of the short story technique in "Death Sentence," and William N. Fear achieves plenty of action in a longer tale "The Drug Smugglers." The True Crime story this month is re-told by T. C. J. Jacobs, who gives a fascinating account of the Wigwam Murder which occurred in the Guildford district early in the last war. A biographical account of the late Edgar Wallace is by no means the least interesting item in a tip-top programme.

Blakian fans will be interested to know that Eric Parker is working on illustrations for No. 4 of E.N.M.M., which will contain a 60-page whodunit, entitled "Killed with a Loving Kiss," from the popular pen of Martin Thomas.

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