

24 Collectors Digest

VOL. 18, No. 214.

OCTOBER, 1964



AUGUSTUS TOPPING
-CARETAKER



BUZZ



MERRY AND BRIGHT



NELSON TWIGG



LITTLE
DAISY
DAYDREAM



RAMBLING
ROSE



1 MERRY AND BRIGHT

G. HARRISON

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

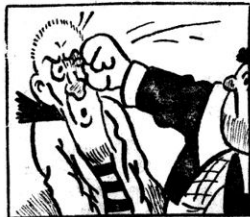
Vol. 18

No. 214

OCTOBER, 1964

Price 2s. Od.

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THE CHAMPION COMIC



ANOTHER STRIKING FRONT PAGE
THIS WEEK

IN YOUR
EDITOR'S
DEN

THE BABY AND THE BATH WATER:

In an extremely interesting letter, C.D. reader David Hobbs of Seattle makes the following comments:

"While this group of hobbyists finds pleasure in certain reading material of earlier years, and others, with equal nostalgia, admire different aspects of a way of life that "was," we all basically lament and seek to honour in the passing (if not to recapture) some of the essential refinements and niceties to which society, as a whole, had attained, despite the admitted prevalence of much that was not good. Assuming that progress implies a progressive movement upwards, it would seem that at least as much thought and effort should be applied towards the retention of the eminently worthwhile as is devoted to the removal or improvement of remaining inequities. But it doesn't seem to work that way. Instead, each generation fails to learn most of

what was valuable in the preceding one, so has to begin again almost at the beginning."

What a wealth of truth there is in what Mr. Hobbs wrote! So much that was bad in the old days has been scrapped with advantage - but so much that was good, too.

Progress we must have. Without it, our country would stagnate. Unfortunately, the baby is often thrown away with the bath water.

THE ANNUAL:

Here are some of the great attractions in our giant Year Book, COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL, which will be coming your way in December. Roger Jenkins gives us one of the finest articles he has ever written. Under the title "Magic Series," he discusses some of the gems of literature to be found in the Magnet. It is an article you will read time and time again. Our own Dr. Spilsbury of the old papers, Bill Lofts, comes up trumps with "And Every Story NOT a Gem" in which he gives the names of the writers of all the substitute stories which appeared in the Gem.

James W. Cook, whose "Letters from St. Frank's" are always so popular, gives us an intriguing story entitled "Monday Morning at St. Frank's." Frank Shaw says "It Was the Extras I Liked," and chats in his usual fascinating style on certain aspects of the old periodicals.

With the intriguing title "Gold Watches and Red Noses," Gerald Allison discusses, with delicious humour, those old, old advertisements. Robert Kelly contributes an article on the Magnet, and provides food for thought with some new slants on certain facets of some of the outstanding Greyfriars series.

How's that for a taster? There's plenty more to come. And remember, the entire volume is lavishly illustrated with pictures to touch your hearts. Have you ordered your Annual yet?

THE EDITOR

BOOKBINDING

ALL TYPES OF BINDINGS UNDERTAKEN:

BOOKS REBOUND OR REPAIRED:

QUALITY WORKMANSHIP

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

WANTED: Magnets No. 829, 873, 875, 882, 884, 888. S.O.L.No. 60
DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW. N.1.

OUR SECOND "GEMS OF HAMILTONIA" COMPETITION

Once again we invite readers to place six Gems of Hamiltonia in the order of their preference. This time, the items are the six from No. 7 (June C.D.) to No. 12 (this issue).

We ask our readers to consider each extract on its own merit alone, and NOT take into consideration the story or series from which the extract was taken. Given loose with this issue is the entry form for the contest. This coupon contains a grid marked A to F. Under A mark the number of the extract which you consider the most meritorious. Mark your second choice under B, and so on until you have placed all six extracts in your order of preference. Finally, in the few lines under the grid on the coupon, write a few words to explain what caused you to decide on the very best extract.

A prize of £1 will be awarded to the competitor whose entry comes nearest to the order as decided by the popular vote. There will be at least two additional book prizes for runners-up.

Closing date for the contest is October 21st. Following, to help you make your selections, is a summary of the six extracts.

No. 7. Bunter has put a drug into the coffee of the man who fills him with the utmost terror. Scared to the very soul, the boy watches as the man drinks. The extract is a brilliant cameo of coward's courage and of a man who never dreamed of danger from the fellow he utterly despised. It is an unusual picture of Billy Bunter, and, perhaps, one that Frank Richards never surpassed.

No. 8 (June) An "old boy" comes back to join in the study brew, remembering his own schooldays in years long passed. Ending with a typical Hamiltonism in the form-room, where the boys are yearning for classes to end.

No. 9 (July) A summer scene this time - seven boys in a boat on the Thames. Gussy on the high horse, and a piece of soft sawder which might have worked the oracle had not Gussy noted the wink which passed between Lowther and Manners. Ending again with the typical Hamiltonism.

No. 10 (August) The cowboy at bay, surrounded by his enemies. A fine sketch of the character of the Kid - portrayed in a few words. In any circumstances, he thinks of his horse's safety before his own. A crack-shot, he shoots only to disable, seldom to kill. With all hope long gone, the Kid is game to the last.

No. 11 (September) A brilliant little cricket sequence. Stacey comes to the wicket, prepared to betray his side rather than aid his rival.

And Wharton meeting the tactics of the traitor by hitting a boundary, thus putting out of his rival's reach the chance to let down his school.

No. 12 (this issue) A short sketch from what many consider the most eerie Hamilton series of all. The shock as the boy suddenly realises the identity of the kidnapper. No heroics, here. The boy is scared - and who wouldn't be?

DANNY'S DIARY

October 1914:

The old papers are going to pot. They're full to the brim with war. In the Gem and the Magnet put together there has only been one decent tale in the whole month. That one story was called "The King's Pardon" - and even that brings the war in.

Mum says it isn't that the stories are any worse. It's just that I'm getting older, and I'm not so easy to please as I used to be. It's not at all like that, of course. I always know a good story when I see one, and I always have. It's all the fault of the war.

There has been nothing much good in the Magnet this month. In the first story "Changed by Adversity," Maulverer thought he had lost all his money, so he started to work hard, but he was accused of cheating in an exam. In the end they proved he hadn't done it - and he found he hadn't lost his money. All a bit silly.

In "The Greyfriars Spy Hunters," the German master, Herr Gans, left Greyfriars for good, so that he could go back to Germany. A new master came, and he turned out to be - gosh! - a German spy.

In "Won By Pluck," the Greyfriars chaps tried to beat St. Jim's by raising more money for the Prince of Wales War Fund. The money they raised was then stolen - and Mark Linley was suspected, because he was poor.

"Fighting the Foe" told about Harry Wharton and Dick Trumper being carried away to a German destroyer, which had come off Pegg Bay. They were ordered to pilot the ship. I only yawned once during the story - but the yawn lasted all the way through the story. Wonder I didn't get my mouth stuck.

Last tale in the month was "The Photo Prize" in which Harry Wharton and Co got the craze for photography because a newspaper offered £10 for a prize. So-so.

The worst month in the Magnet I ever remember.

There's a change coming about in the two cinemas in our town. Plenty of the programmes still consist of a lot of one-reelers and two-reelers, but they are getting more very long films of three and four reels, which means that one picture can last nearly an hour. One of our cinemas has now got two projectors so they don't show the caption which says "End of Part One - Part Two will follow immediately."

This month I went to see Mary Pickford in "Tessibel of the Storm Country" which was in four reels. Another time I saw Ivy Close in "The Lure of London" which also was in four reels.

For three weeks in September our Kinema Grand had a wonderful new invention called Edison Kinetone which gave talking pictures. It was done with a kind of gramophone which was amplified, and the records were sinkronized with the screen. They changed the pictures every three days. I saw a programme of this sort which had talking

pictures called "Faust," "The Deaf Mute" and "Marie Lloyd at Home." I didn't really like them much, and enjoyed much better the ordinary films, "Bronco Billy Wins Out" and a Keystone Comic called "Our Country Cousins" which were in the same programme.

I think the talking pictures were popular, though, for they have come back for another fortnight this month.

The year's greatest cricketers were named this month, based on performances with bat or ball. They are J.W.H.T. Douglas; F.R. Foster; W.G. Grace; G. Hirst; J.B. Hobbs; G.L. Jessop; W. Rhodes; P.F. Warner and F.E. Woolley.

Doug often buys the Dreadnought and War Pictorial, as it is now called. It has stories about Bill Stubbs, the Cockney Hero, who is a soldier at the front.

Doug buys me the Boys' Friend when he is in a kind mood. It has a new series of school stories called "Fed-up With Football" by Horace Phillips. The chief character in these stories is called Loder. How ruddy!

There is also a new serial in the B.F. by Maxwell Scott about Nelson Lee and Nipper. It is called "On His Majesty's Service." The editor says that Maxwell Scott is a doctor, and he is very busy just now as so many doctors have gone to the front.

The first story in the Gem this month was "Tom Merry's Find." He found a baby in the woods, and didn't know what to do with it, so hid it in a basket. Levison found the basket, and then somebody else found it. It was awful piffle.

"Scouts to the Fore" was about the St. Jim's scouts who, in order to be original, went after some German spies.

In "The St. Jim's Airmen" Tom Merry & Co were carried away in a zeppelin which had come down near St. Jim's without anyone noticing it. The Germans were cross - donner and blitzen - because Manners took a photograph of it. Manners' photo might make them lose the war - achi! Mein Gott! When Tom Merry & Co got away from the Huns, they found Lord Conway in Italy. Spagetti! Sapristi!

In "Tom Merry & Co on Guard" the country was short of Territorials, so Tom and Co went guarding the railway in case there were any German spies about. There were!

Far and away the only decent tale this month was "The King's Pardon" in which Talbot, the Toff, came back to work on a farm at Abbotsford. He saved an express train from being wrecked by a German spy, so won his pardon. So far, he can't come back to St. Jim's as he hasn't any money..

There is a dairy in our town owned by a man called Schultz. He seems a harmless little man, and Mum says that he has lived in his dairy for more years than she can remember, and he is very kind to everybody. A crowd of people broke all his windows, smashed his equipment, and threw mud at his cat, in case he was a German spy. Doug says he ought to have hung a Union Jack in his window to show everybody he was British.

There is a new story in Comic Cuts called "The Girl Who Loved A Sailor." Martin Steel, the detective, still appears every Monday in this paper. The Red Rovers still play football, but they have all joined up. Tom, the Ticket of Leave Man, is still being chased by P.C. Fairyfoot. I hope they won't both join the army.

An amazing thought has just struck me. I wonder whether Bonestoril is a German name. It sounds a bit suspicious to me. I wonder whether I ought to make some enquiries.

WANTED: CHUMS Annuals before year 1921. Also O.B.B's and comics before year 1940.
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SALE: 65 Magnets 15/- - 1583 68.2.6d. Boys' Friend 3d. No. 106 2/- . Boys' Friend 4d. No. 303 2/- . 13 Young Britains 13/- . 30 Sexton Blakes years 1952-1955 6/- . 10.0d. 43 Sexton Blakes (new series) No. 4 to 148; 14 Sexton Blakes 4d, 44d, 6d No. 393 to 738 67.2.6d.

I. LITVAK, 58, STANWELL ROAD, ASHFORD, MIDDX.

Blakiana

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

I regret to say that unless any material is forthcoming by the end of October AT THE LATEST, Blakiana for November will be ONE PAGE ONLY.

Josie Packman

RETURN OF SEXTON BLAKE

As exclusively announced in Collectors' Digest a month or two ago, Sexton Blake is coming back. And at last he is to appear in a format which will do full credit to the man who, for so many years, must have been the most popular detective character in the world's fiction.

The new Sexton Blake Library will be full-scale paper-back editions. There will be two new issues every month at 2/6 each. The first two issues will be on sale in February next.

Mr. W. Howard Baker, the editor of the books to be published in this enterprise, gives us information which will surely warm the hearts of all our readers. Mr. Baker believes that the wheel of popular taste in detective fiction has come full circle. He believes that the public has tired of the sexy, hard-drinking, wise-cracking, American inspired "private eye," and is ready for a return to the typically English detective, making his shrewd deductions and following them up in the atmosphere which is beloved of countless admirers of detective stories. In the view of Collectors' Digest, Mr Baker is absolutely right. We hope and believe that the forthcoming series of Sexton Blake stories will be more popular than ever before.

There are many aspects of the new series which cannot fail to appeal and intrigue our readers. Gone from the stories will be the chromium-plated setting of Berkeley Square. The new look formula will be very much in the background. Though Berkeley Square Organisation will still exist, it will merely handle overflow work.

Sexton Blake himself will be back in Baker Street, with Tinker, as in earlier days. Pedro will be there, on the mat, at Blake's feet.

Mrs. Bardell will be there in charge of the domestic arrangements.

Blake has had his large Baker Street house converted into a number of offices which he has let off to various firms. Some of these firms, and their dubious activities, may well supply the material for some of Blake's cases. Blake's own flat is at the top of the building.

Pedro is making a come-back with a vengeance. He will be far more than an ornament on the mat. During the first six months, Pedro will be playing substantial parts in cases which will be worked out in Britain's countryside. Tinker, certainly, will be more the character we used to love, and less of the dame-chasing young man about town. Sexton Blake himself will be a man of high principles whom we can set, more or less, on a pedestal as of yore. Too much dalliance with sex and violence will be no feature of these new Sexton Blake stories.

Another most fascinating factor of the new Sexton Blake series is that one in four of the stories will be a reprint of a past masterpiece in the Blake saga. That is to say that of the twenty-four stories to be published in the first two years, six, at least, will be a reprint of a story which won acclaim between 1915 and 1963. If YOU have in mind any particular story which you loved long ago and which you think would prove popular in this day and age, Mr. Howard Baker would be pleased to hear from you. His address is 82, Girdwood Rd, Putney, London S.W.18.

The future is bright and rosy for Sexton Blake fans - and they are legion. We congratulate Mr. Howard Baker on his enterprise. Further particulars will be given in next month's Collectors' Digest.

The Daily Telegraph is shortly publishing an article by E. S. Turner, world-famous writer of the best-seller, "Boys Will Be Boys." The article will be lavishly illustrated in full colour.

Mr. & Mrs. Len Packman, our own Sexton Blake experts, have been visited in their home at East Dulwich by a number of Daily Telegraph photographers with a battery of cameras and bright lights. About forty photographs were taken of Mr. and Mrs. Packman's wonderful Sexton Blake collection, and, of course, of other papers dear to Digest readers. The famous "bust" of Sexton Blake is one of the most rare and cherished collections of Mrs. Packman. This featured in some of the photographs taken. It is to be hoped that plenty of the pictures will be used in the Telegraph's colour supplement. Watch for them.

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THE GORDON CARR - ALLAN BLAIR CONTROVERSY - - - by Derek Adley

I was most interested to read of the recent controversy over the name of Gordon Carr that Bill Lofts has discovered in official records.

Contrary to Harry Dowler's firm conviction that Gordon Carr was a non-de-plume of W. J. Bayfield, I am just as convinced that they were two different individuals. I have in my possession the two signatures of W. J. Bayfield and Gordon Carr, and although I don't profess to be a handwriting expert, they are in my humble opinion without question the hands of two different people.

In fairness to Mr. Dowler, however, I should point out that Mr. Bayfield was not the sole author who used the non-de-plume of 'Allan Blair' as Gordon Carr also wrote under this name in various publications including Boys Realm and Union Jack.

Personally I doubt if the whole mystery will ever be cleared up now, and it is a great pity that W. J. Bayfield is not alive to throw some light on the matter. Purely on theory I would say that Gordon Carr was the originator of the 'Allan Blair' pen-name, and W. J. Bayfield took the name over on Carr's death or sudden disappearance in the 1908 period. This may explain the fact of why some collectors including the late Herbert Leckenby and indeed Mr. Dowler have remarked in the past that 'Blair' was at his best in the very early days, and his writing greatly deteriorated in later years. The explanation being simply that G. Carr was the better writer!

I have no doubt that Mr. Dowler as an avid reader of the 'Allan Blair' stories can tell the style to a certain extent, but I would point out, without I hope causing offence, that he once wrote in the S.P.C. that 'Malcolm Doyle' was a non-de-plume of W. J. Bayfield. This has since been proved wrong by the late C. M. Hincks telling me it was his own non-de-plume and which was later confirmed by official records.

I am also doubtful over some of the other pen-names said to be those of W. J. Bayfield - in particular, Edgar West. I wonder where this information originated from?

In closing, I do not think that Mr. Dowler can be blamed for the wrong assumption that Carr and Blair were both non-de-plumes of W. J. Bayfield as there was definitely some obvious connection or, I should say collaboration, between the two authors W. J. Bayfield and Gordon Carr in the early years of this century.

A NEW PEN NAME OF E. S. BROOKS!

By W. O. G. Lofts

Undoubtably Edwy Searles Brooks' claim to fame in boys fiction was his brilliant school stories of St. Frank's in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. A factor, generally forgotten, is quite apart from this, he would still be remembered today for his large output of Sexton Blake stories in the UNION JACK and SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY.

Personally, I have always greatly enjoyed his stories, and his own creation WALDO THE WONDERMAN, who may have been inspired by a London coroner namely Dr. Waldo. All editors I have met have praised E. S. Brooks - not only for his error-free manuscripts, but for always getting his copy well ahead of schedule. One sub-editor on the Sexton Blake Library in the 20's, confessed that he looked forward to reading and enjoying his stories before they appeared in print.

Many Sexton Blake enthusiasts, I know, collect work of writers of the Baker Street detective in other fields, and that of course includes E. S. Brooks! Famous for his Victor Gunn and Berkeley Gray novels, and perhaps infamous for his work in the MAGNET and GEM substitute stories, though it should be recorded that Roger Jenkins personally praised one of his St. Jim's tales 'MISUNDERSTOOD', whilst I thought his Greyfriars yarn 'THE MYSTERY OF MAULY' quite good, and reasonably passable as a 'Frank Richards' yarn to boys at the time of publication.

The EDWY SEARLES BROOKS Bibliography produced by Bob Blythe was a godsend to collectors, as they could see at a glance his work in other fields. Bob would be the last person to claim that it was 100% complete, and in fact we both agreed that Mr. Brooks had probably penned more stories in the very early days than he had claimed. He must have done this to ensure a reasonable living! Starting his career in THE GEM in 1910 writing serials under the name of 'ROBERT W. COMRADE' he did very little writing indeed, until 1912, when his Sexton Blake stories in the U.J. appeared, plus of course his substitute work for the Companion papers already mentioned.

Information reached me recently, that E. S. Brooks was a contributor to THE BOYS HERALD and CHEER BOYS CHEER, and I lost no time in checking this information to see if it was correct. There have been one or two critics of 'Official records' lately in the C.D. - which have probably upset collectors' own pet theories, and in checking the 'Official records' in this respect it only proves how right documentary evidence which is legal and binding according to the publishers is. Mr. E. S. Brooks was indeed a contributor to these papers, and a check at the British Museum files quickly located his stories in question.

'NORMAN GREAVES' was a pen-name used by E. S. Brooks in THE BOYS HERALD AND CHEER BOYS CHEER. Stories so far located, are as follows:-
BOYS HERALD: 415 July 1st, 1911 till 425 Sept. 9th, 1911.

Serial "The Stowaway's Quest" featuring a British boy fighting against Rufus Crang and his Marvellous Hydroplane.

BOYS HERALD: 441 Dec. 30th, 1911.

Complete story "Flying to Victory, or the Rival Aviators" featuring

a Victor Maitland.

CHEER BOYS CHEER: No. 11 "The Malay Guide" - Complete story about Borneo.

It is quite possible that a series of detective stories were written by him, plus another long serial about Professor Steel and his phantom submarine, but these tales were anonymous and require further checking.

To satisfy the doubtful collector, who may say quite rightly that E. S. Brooks has never claimed to have written under that name, when he certainly remembered the 1910 'Robert W. Comrade' nom-de-plume, to use an expression which was recently criticised 'beyond all doubt', I wrote to Mr. E. S. Brooks, and his reply was as follows. The word 'CAN' in capital letters was the author's own wording....

"With regard to your query. You're asking me to go back a long way.... over fifty years. Strangely enough, I CAN remember writing under the name of NORMAN GREAVES, for a paper called CHEER BOYS CHEER, and I believe it was under the editorship of Horace Phillips. The name of the serial THE STOWAWAY'S QUEST is also familiar to me....and even Harry Bedford and Rufus Crang. I was quite a boy at the time..." So all you Sexton Blake fans who collect material of authors in other fields, can now search for any NORMAN GREAVES material. If I may be excused again for using the expression, I think I have safely established beyond all doubt that this was a pen-name of E. S. Brooks.

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TINKER - AS SEEN BY PIERRE QUIROULE

By Eric Fayne

Dr. Forneau reached for the register, opened it, and took up his pen. His pale green eyes surveyed Tinker from above the steel-rimmed spectacles that perched on the end of his stubby nose.

"Your surname is Smith," he purred; "and what is your other name?"

"My other name?" ejaculated Tinker. "Why do you ask that?"

A mere matter of form," was the airy response. "But it does not matter. One name is as good as another. We will say Maurice."

He wrote in the register, murmuring the name "Maurice Smith" to himself.

Then he looked up again and asked:

"And your age?"

Tinker was bewildered. He didn't know what to make of it. He experienced a sudden surge of irritation.

"What the deuce has my age to do with you?" he demanded.

"It is of no consequence," purred Dr. Forneau. "One age is as good as another." He smirked. It was evidently one of his stock jests. He added: "We will say twenty."

He wrote in the book, and then stole a glance at Tinker.

"Eyes blue, hair brown," he muttered.

Those few lines are taken from the Pierre Quiroule story "The Slaver's Secret." In them we find a glimpse of Tinker's appearance, as the author himself saw him.

The way the author presented Blake and Tinker made an enormous difference to the appeal of a story to the reader. I always thought Pierre Quiroule unsurpassed in the way he handled the two main characters. And his secondary characters - Granite Grant, Mademoiselle Julie, Sir Vrymer Fane, and Bertrand Charon were equally good studies.

Tinker, who drove Blake's Rolls-Royce, "The Gray Panther," was always depicted as a young man of approaching twenty.

Apart from the P.Q. stories, I was not an avid Blake reader, but I never read anything in the S.B.L. which neared anything like the same quality. I believe that, published now, they would be best sellers. The detection described and the skilful planning of the plots were superior to most modern crime tales. Maybe, one day, some astute publisher will re-issue them. Slight shrinkage would not harm them, for P.Q. was always verbose, but they would probably be more successful if no attempt was made to modernise them. They would win their way as stories of the roaring nineteen-thirties.

Part of their charm was the verisimilitude of the backgrounds. Seldom did P.Q. set a story in Ruritania.

Two stories I have recently re-read with great enjoyment are "The Mystery Box" and "The Mystery of No. 7 Bitton Court." Oddly enough, both these stories are extensions of old tales which once appeared in the Union Jack.

"The Mystery Box" has long been my favourite of all Sexton Blake stories. Thrills, humour, and clever detection are blended with an overall charm of writing, making an unforgettable tale.

The Bitton Court story is nothing like so good. It is possible to detect the original Union Jack sequences, written years earlier before the writer acquired the pleasant, readable style of later years. In consequence, Bitton Court tends to read unevenly, and parts of it jar. There is no such demarkation in "The Mystery Box."

Did any other writer, apart from Pierre Quiroule, utilise his old Union Jack tales in this way? Idly, too, I wonder whether the editor knew that the writer was using his old stories from the U.J. on which

to base new S.B.L. tales.

I think that, without doubt, Pierre Quiroule, was the most reprinted of all the Blake authors. Many of his old U.J. stories were extended into S.B.L. novels, and almost all of his S.B.L. stories were published twice in the S.B.L. It could be that someone, apart from me, regarded Pierre Quiroule as the greatest Blake writer of them all.

HAMILTONIANA

Do You Remember?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 51 - Magnets 997-1004 - Dallas series

1927 was in many ways a climax in the writing career of Charles Hamilton. The Rookwood series in the Boys' Friend had come to an end, and he was destined to write very few St. Jim's stories from this time onwards. Greyfriars, however, was only on the threshold of its fame and fortune in 1927: practically all the famous series were yet to come. The Dallas series, which ran from late spring to early summer was a remarkable collection of individual stories which augured so promisingly for the future.

This series was probably never bettered as a character study of Vernon-Smith at his worst. His father had befriended Paul Dallas, the son of an old friend, and sent him to Greyfriars. Vernon-Smith was bitterly jealous of the new boy, and was not slow in letting both the Remove and his father know his feelings. A grand climax came half way through the series, when Mr. Vernon-Smith took Dallas off to Monte Carlo for the holidays, leaving his own son at school, whilst Redwing decided to leave Greyfriars because the Bounder, in a fit of unjustifiable rage, taunted him with being the recipient of his father's bounty - the Memorial scholarship specially founded for Redwing to win. Having alienated the sympathies of his father, his best friend, and the whole of the Remove, Vernon-Smith was an outcast indeed - the lone wolf that Charles Hamilton could depict with sympathetic yet penetrating insight.

No holiday episodes were related, and in the very next number the new term had begun. A Head's inspection of the Remove studies was decided upon and, having advance notice of it, the Bounder planted some incriminating evidence in Dallas's desk, with the inevitable result that Dallas was expelled. Only the unexpected arrival of Ferrers Locke

managed to overthrow this plan, and the Bounder's cunning gradually became of less avail as his trickery became exposed. Eventually, Dallas's father turned up, and when Dallas decided to leave Greyfriars and go abroad with his father Vernon-Smith reluctantly came to believe that Dallas was not the pushing interloper he had so firmly believed him to be.

Charles Hamilton had a masterly control of situation. He once told me that when writing his stories he could imagine the expressions on his characters' faces as they spoke, the story was so real for him. In a story of jealous vindictive plotting, with many arguments between various characters, there is no room for a false move. Unless the author can convince all his readers that each character is re-acting to every situation as his nature impels him, the whole plot will fall crashing to the ground. There was not a single false note in this intriguing series.

Although Dallas left in Magnet 1004, the situation at the end of the series was far from resolved. Redwing's return was related in the famous South Seas series in the summer of that year, and Vernon-Smith's redemption was a gradual process. In Magnets 1007-1009 he was again featured as a lone wolf, but this time as the hero in a much pleasanter atmosphere, and so the way was paved for him to become the attractive young rascal that Charles Hamilton portrayed so well with the sure but light touch that lasted throughout the Golden Age of the Magnet. That deft touch disappeared, alas, after 1935 - but that is another story.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 80: THE HARD CORE

Long, long ago, I pointed out to the editor of the Gem that something in a story did not coincide with something we had learned in a much earlier story. He replied, in gentle reproof: "It is quite impossible to regard the story of St. Jim's as a whole."

But that, in fact, was what the hard core of St. Jim's, Greyfriars, and St. Frank's fans wanted to do. And it was for that reason that Gems, Magnets, and Nelson Lees were saved in such numbers, while other papers, which had no such continuing stories, were read and then cast away.

In real life, Harry Wharton & Co would not have been in the Remove for longer than three terms. We all knew that quite well. But common-sense was suspended when we read our favourite papers, year after year. We built and maintained our own illusions. So when we read some item

which gave the negative to something we had read years before, we felt annoyed about it.

Last month, in this column, I touched upon items which jarred in the post-war Bunter stories. Billy Bunter and Wally Bunter changed places in a fascinating series published in 1919 or thereabouts. In 1955, the same thing happened again - and nobody at Greyfriars recalled that it had happened before. Our hard core grumbled about that sort of thing. If it did not shatter our illusions it dented them. Were we unreasonable to have any illusions at all?

The classic example of long-term inconsistency was the case of Levison. He was expelled from Greyfriars, as Magnet readers knew, and as Gem readers were informed on many occasions in blue-cover days. Common-sense told us, as we grew older, that if Levison had been expelled from Greyfriars, he would never have been accepted at a school like St. Jim's. But we had no time for common-sense when we knew for a fact that he had been expelled.

And then, in the twenties, the rumour got around that Levison had been expelled from Greyfriars, and Tom Merry & Co were shocked (though they had known it all the time and so had we).

And it turned out that Levison hadn't been expelled (though we knew he had), and we accepted it, because it was a fine series, that one in the twenties, and it could never have been written at all if history had not been distorted to suit the occasion - and, of course, only the hard core knew the actual facts of the case.

There was a classic case in the red Magnet. Bob Cherry was expelled on the word of Vernon-Smith, though not long before Bob had been instrumental in saving the Head from the evil intentions of Vernon-Smith's father. The hard core felt that the Head was ungrateful to expel Bob. But if the Head had not forgotten what the hard core remembered, the author could never have written what was a sensational and outstanding series in its day.

For me, the Stacey series of 1935 was Frank Richards' greatest school story. It contains everything which makes the perfect school tale. But some have criticised the Stacey series on the ground that Mr. Quelch did not show the perception for which he was noted. He was acting out of character in preferring Stacey, a newcomer, to Wharton, whose sterling quality he knew down the years. And Mr. Quelch would never have made a favourite, as he did for a time in the Stacey series.

Is the hard core right? For the Stacey series, which many of us agree was Frank Richards at his most superb, could hardly have been written at all, had not Mr. Quelch proved himself a little less than

the perfect schoolmaster we had always known.

There were, of course, plenty of other little things of this kind which jarred the hard core down the years. Often, no doubt, it was forgetfulness on the part of the author, as in the case of Sefton who was expelled from the New House in the white cover Gem, and then turned up again in his old role of New House prefect as late as 1939.

Those who remained constant for year after year probably numbered a few hundreds compared with the tens of thousands who read the papers every week. One in fifty, maybe, knew when something was written into a story which refuted what had gone long before.

Was editorial and author's policy right in largely ignoring the hard core? To some extent it was, for many fine stories could not have been written had too much attention been paid to what had previously been related.

The point is whether the hard core was of service to the old papers in general and to Charles Hamilton in particular. I think it must have been, in the same way that supporters' associations and non-playing members are of benefit to sports clubs. The sale of Bunter books to the hard core may only be a drop in the pond compared with the total sales necessary to make the publication a success, but a sale of a few hundred books at 11/6 a time is not, at any rate, to be sneezed at.

I think Charles Hamilton might, with advantage, have remembered the hard core a little more often. A few reminiscences in a story always delighted the "old 'uns," but they did not often occur.

One of the most remarkable reminiscences occurred in a St. Jim's story in a post-war Tom Merry Annual, when the author referred to the occasion when Binks, the page, played ghost, and went round the secret passage giving the eerie three taps on the wall. The Binks story appeared in the Gem in 1908, and it was odd that it should be mentioned in a tale written fifty years later. Odd - but pleasant. It was, indeed, odd that Charles Hamilton should have remembered the occasion. Normally he did not seem to have much recollection of the stories he wrote in the blue Gem and the red Magnet.

As I commented last month, a few reminiscences in the first post-war Greyfriars story would have made a pleasant little pot-boiler into a memorable tale.

Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee are really outside the scope of this column, but the greatest instance of a snub to the hard core was found in the New Look of the Sexton Blake Library. The hard core was jettisoned. Whether it proved to the advantage of the S.B.L. is a

question.

I believe that there were some changes towards the close of the Nelson Lee. I am wondering whether those changes might have been part of the cause of the untimely end of a very popular paper. If our Blake and Lee fans care to send in any views on the matter, we will pass them over to the Blakiana and Lee Columns.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 78. THE RIO KID'S GOLD-MINE

ROBERT KELLY: The last place I expected to see "knocking copy" disparaging the Magnet was in the "Let's Be Controversial" column. You say that the best of the Magnet series could not be republished in book form without drastic pruning. While the economies of the book world might demand this, the results would be disastrous. How could one abridge the Stacey or the Bunter Court series without spoiling the overall effect? The Stacey series runs to some 360,000 words, but it is not a word too long. We can't have our cake and eat it. We can't say in one breath that Hamilton was the finest author in the field, and in the next that his best work would need drastic pruning before it could be published. There are, of course, a number of series that would benefit from abridgement, but it is because of this fact that they don't rate as Hamilton's finest work.

JACK COOK: The main reason why the Rio Kid tales were never published in book form is simply a glaring technical error on the part of the author. Brooks, too, was guilty of this. I refer to what is commonly termed "author talking." An author should never intrude his own personality, opinions, or statements into fiction. To do so draws attention to the author, and away from the story.

W. H. GOODHEAD: I cannot let the occasion pass without bringing to the notice of readers something which the writer of the Controversial appears either not to know or not to consider worth mentioning, - namely, that Frank Richards wrote a full-length western novel some years ago. I refer to "The Lone Texan," published by Atlantic Book Co. Many of my acquaintances think very highly of it, and there is one aspect which should interest another contributor to the August Digest. The owner of the Bar-Seven Ranch is Colonel Carfax.

JILL WALLACE: I can't agree with you about westerns. Even as a child I disliked them intensely. I can never understand why rough, ignorant bullies, who only had the intelligence to look after cows on hot, dusty plains, were ever made into heroes with a false history of heroics.

ERIC FAYNE adds: Reader Kelly clearly misinterpreted the article. There was no disparagement of the Magnet in Controversial No. 78. In reply to reader Cook, surely every writer projects some of his personality into his writings. I assure reader Goodhead that we have a copy of "The Lone Texan" at this office. Miss Wallace may be right about cowboys, but I wonder whether she has read any Rio Kid stories. Compunching needs plenty of intelligence and quite a spot of pluck. From the present price of beef, I should think cowboys are wealthy men, though things have altered since the Rio Kid rode the ranges. And, as we mentioned somewhere last month, the Rio Kid's name was Carfax.

GEORGE SELLARS: I don't like to criticise C.D., but there is a time when one is compelled to do so. Charles Baker wandered from the point. He wrote about a third of his Echo on the Toff, and then the other two-thirds carried on about other characters, reprints, and the decline of the Gem. Levison's reform had nothing to do with the topic, and Mr. Baker is well off-side when he states that Levison was a major character in most

of the Toff tales. There were only three Toff tales in which Levison played a part - "Saving Talbot," "Captured by Cipher" and "Winning His Spurs." Yet my short, modest article was cut short. Why? I do not like anything I said about Talbot cut out of my article. I repeat: Talbot is one of the greatest characters C.H. ever created, and every tale up to and including "Housemaster's Home-Coming" was first-class. The underlined part, I am sad to say, was omitted from my article.

EDITORIAL COMMENT: We are pleased to reinstate Mr. Sellars' under-lined Echo. He is right when he suggests that some Echo contributors wander from the point. They do, and they often send in Echoes which are more than twice the length of the parent Controversial article. Most Echoes are editorially pruned, and we select the items which are likely to be of the most interest to our readers. Mr. Baker's item was cut considerably, but we retained the portion which we thought would be of interest, even though it drifted away from the theme of the parent article. The editor's decision on such matters must be final. No doubt the old boy makes mistakes, but he does his best.)

ROGER JENKINS: I have followed with keen interest the recent little controversy about the substitute stories, and can possibly add to the discussion by stating my experience as Hamiltonian librarian of the London Club. In twelve years I have had 126 different people borrowing from the library, and at present about 50 borrowers have some 900 Magnets, Gems, and S.O.L.s. out on loan. These borrowers obviously represent regular and wide-spread reading of Hamiltonians. Of course, I cannot speak for all 126 borrowers, but I do know that I have never been asked for a substitute story, though times without number I have been warned never to supply one. On one occasion, when a substitute story crept into the library when I was not watching too closely, I received a well-deserved reprimand from an indignant reader, whereupon I refunded his loan money and removed the offending copy! From all this, I might perhaps be excused for wondering how many keen Hamiltonians actually do like the substitute stories.

I note that the Nelson Lee fans are not exhorted to enthuse over the Maxwell Scott stories, or the substitute St. Frank's stories in the Boys' Realm and Nugget Library. They quite understandably prefer the work of Brooks. I wonder when it is going to be admitted that the Hamiltonians are no less unreasonable in preferring the work of one writer, to?

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GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 12 (New Series)

For a moment they looked at one another, black suspicion and fear growing in the junior's face, mocking malice in the other's.

It was as if a mask had dropped from the face of Basil Lagden, so terribly and threatening was his look.

Jimmy did not speak. He could not, but his heart was sick within him, for at that moment he knew all.

He knew - he read in that terrible face as plainly as if words had been spoken - he knew, he felt, that it was by this hidden door that his chums had vanished from human sight - that the hand that had dragged them from the light of day was the hand of the man before him.

The silence was terrible while it lasted.

That moment seemed an age long to Jimmy Silver, while he fought with the fear that was gathering in his heart, and nerved himself to meet his danger - for he knew his danger now.

He moved - it was to make a spring for the door.

But even as he sprang the captain's hand closed on his shoulder, and swung him back.

"Not so fast!" Basil Lagden's voice was low, hissing through his lips, and his eyes burned at the junior. "Not so fast, my boy!"

"Let me go!" panted Jimmy.

The captain laughed - a low, soft laugh - as his grasp closed savagely on the junior's shoulder.

Hardly knowing what he did, Jimmy Silver struck at him, and strove to wrench himself free.

It was man against boy, but the man was one-armed, and Jimmy Silver was strong and courageous.

He fought for his liberty, panting.

But as he closed with the captain, a shudder of horror ran through him as a second arm was thrown about him, enclosing him in a deadly grasp.

The surprise, the horror of it, of feeling himself grasped with two arms by a man he had believed one-armed, almost overcame the junior.

The empty sleeve was still hanging, but from under the sleeve had come that sound arm, strong and sinewy, and the almost fainting junior understood that the empty sleeve was a cheat, a lie, and that he was in a powerful grasp from which there was no escape.

MORE HIDDEN LIFE

By John Beck

To follow up Tony Glynn's article on 'The Hidden Life of Frank Richards' (August C.D.), I would like to comment on the 'Mascot Schoolboy Series.' I have in my possession No. 5 in the series entitled 'The Dandy of Topham.' I wouldn't call it good Richards in comparison with the Magnet but by reading carefully it is easy to see the characters are styled on Greyfriars. The obvious of course being a fat tuck pilferer named Bunny Binks.

I also have a copy of No. 5 of the 'Mascot Schoolgirl Series' by the same publishers at the same price of 4d. It is called 'The Jape of the Term' by Hilda Richards, and the story is about the Fourth Form at St. Olive's featuring characters Pamela Duncan, May Carlew and Plump Peg Pipping. Here is a passage from the story that rings a bell:-

"I say, I never knew that you had jam-rolls!" said Peg, "I came to speak to you about something else. But I'll have some, if you like. I'll let you girls have something out of my hamper from Pipping Park - when it comes."

"When?" said May. "Do you mean if?"

"No, I don't," snapped Peg, "I mean when! Hampers get delayed in the post these days, you know. It may come any day from Pipping Park!"

"If any!" murmured May, and Pamela laughed. The St. Olive's juniors had heard a great deal from Peg about Pipping Park. It was, according to Peg, a most magnificent residence. Even Wentworth Hall, the stately home of Isolda Wentworth, the wealthiest girl at St. Olive's, was, according to Peg, a mere trifle in comparison. Peg was always on the point of receiving a hamper from Pipping Park. But that hamper never seemed to materialise.

I wonder, was Frank Richards trying to establish these new schools to take over

where Greyfriars and Cliff House left off? Without a doubt, lack of publicity of the stories must have cut the careers of these schools short.

A further interesting point, in 'The Dandy of Topham,' chocolates are referred to as 'stickies' but in 'Billy Bunter at Butlins' they are 'stickers.' Printer's error or a sign of changing times?

THE TERRIBLE THREE'S AIR-CRUISE

By W. O. G. Lofts

Editors have always held a fascination for me; maybe because it is they know everything about the papers under their control. Over the years it has been my good fortune to meet dozens of them, and to glean first hand authentic information for many of my articles.

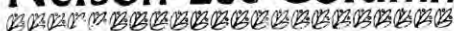
For me, easily the most interesting part of Frank Richards' Autobiography, was his account of his meetings with Percy Griffith, the very first editor of the MAGNET and GEM. I couldn't agree more with Mr. Richards when he stated that 'Percy was a most remarkable editor.' By all accounts he was a colourful character. He was also the mysterious V.C. in the Autobiography.

In Chapter VI entitled RIFTS IN THE LUTE, Frank Richards gives an interesting account of how the substitute stories started - a subject which has aroused so much discussion and controversy over the years. Maybe I could plead guilty to writing more than any other writer on the subject - not because I think any of their work as good as 'Frank Richards' but simply because their work is part of the history of the MAGNET and GEM.

"....Percy Griffith handed 'Martin Clifford' a partly written manuscript, which was a Tom Merry story, and had been written by a well-known newspaper correspondent on the DAILY MAIL - and briefly he wanted Mr. Clifford to 'touch it up here, and there, and to lick it into shape.' "You will get half the cheque!" said Griffith. He did not seem to hear the remark Martin made about the cheque. It was an emphatic remark."

Readers who have a copy of the London O.B.B.C. GEM Catalogue, will know that the above story was in fact GEM No. 77. "The Terrible Three's Air-Cruise" where Tom Merry & Co. were somehow carried off in a balloon, and that it was written by Ernest Brindle - rewritten by Charles Hamilton. This information was actually supplied to me by the late Herbert Leckenby, who on a visit to Charles Hamilton, asked him 'if Brindle was the gentleman in question' and probably misunderstood Mr. Hamilton's slight nod of the head as the affirmative. As Ernest Brindle was a writer of stories at Amalgamated Press Ltd, and a newspaper correspondent at the same period, this seemed to tie up, though I was greatly puzzled by Mr. C. M. Down telling me that he knew Brindle very

Nelson Lee Column



CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

ROOM FOR BOTH

By W. H. Broster

The controversy between the fans of Charles Hamilton and those who prefer Edwy Searles Brooks is getting out of hand. Common sense has given place to narrow-minded, and in some cases what appears to be stupid, stubbornness.

As one who is known to be not too fond of either, but having read much of the work of both, may I endeavour to get matters on a level keel? First, the followers of Hamilton outnumber those of Brooks. Hamiltonians will justify that (apart from asserting that he had more talent, which we expect) by saying his output was greater by far. We have to concede that point. C.H. was an older man than his rival, and had a good start. Many years start. Up to the time of his death, two years ago, C.H. was still writing. So is Edwy Searles Brooks, under other names.

E.S. Brooks followed on when Maxwell Scott died, using Scott's main characters, Nelson Lee and Nipper. He did it well, proving a keen rival to the various authors of the better-known Sexton Blake.

Maxwell Scott sent Nipper to school at St. Ninian's. This was a good school, in interesting surroundings, with some wonderful characterisation. The obvious thing for E.S. Brooks to have done when asked to start a school series for the Nelson Lee Library to compete with the flourishing Magnet and Gem would have been for him to follow on where Scott left off - at St. Ninian's, already established with a good "cast."

Nipper had already been there (in the Fifth Form). But, no! Orders were - a new personnel, based on the same lines as Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rockwood. He was asked to "crib." It was clear that it went against the grain. So, as a point for Brooks, I assert he showed brilliance in maintaining the high standard of the St. Frank's stories for so long.

If his personnel bore a distinct resemblance to those of Greyfriars and St. Jim's (acting under the orders of those who paid him,

and money counts) I again put my neck out and say that those prototypes of his were more feasible than those of Charles Hamilton. For instance, Montie Tregellis-West was more acceptable than Gussy of the Gem who, for all his good qualities, was hard for a fifteen-year-old boy to swallow. If any of us had a lad like him, it would be our duty to take him to a psychologist. He was nice, but just simple.

Passing to Charles Hamilton's masterpiece, Bunter. Who could swallow him? (Not even Jonah's whale!) Apart from his size, which no reasonable lad could attain without worry to his parents, he was simpler than D'Arcy. As a colleague of mine so aptly puts it, no normal school would accept a boy of his low standard, assuming they had some form of preliminary examination. Yet Brooks' fat boy, Fatty Little, was a trifle more human. Perhaps Fatty Wynn was the model in this case. We hope so.

Pitt, De Valerie, and Fullwood were more acceptable than Vernon-Smith.

Brooks' cast was a more numerous one than Hamilton's, and, all through, his prototypes were more feasible. Again, he did not repeat his themes like Hamilton. It is very true that here Hamilton showed his genius. He could give you the same mince time and time again, and you liked it. He made you like it.

There have been assertions that Hamilton's command of the English language was unique. There was not much wrong with Brooks', either.

Nipper, as a central figure, using the "first person," was rather boring to me, but when that was corrected he was but little behind Tom Merry. Harry Wharton won the popularity poll last year, but many think he is priggish. Tom Merry would count more with me, but I give the palm to Jimmy Silver of Rookwood as the perfect example of a schoolboy leader.

I consider Ernest Levison of St. Jim's to be Charles Hamilton's finest characterisation. He had everything natural to a typical schoolboy "bad hat." Beneath the evil, there was much good. In all the large personnel of St. Frank's there was none to come up to him.

In my opinion, Brooks scored over Hamilton in the size of his personnel. That cast was brought into story after story, right up to the finish. To illustrate my point, as the years went on the Greyfriars yarns concerned for the most part the Famous Five, and, of course, Bunter - and with them Vernon-Smith, Coker, Quelch, Skinner & Co. Ponsonby & Co from Highcliff had to come in. Who else was featured? Wingate? Temple? The lot we had on TV in that series which got worse as it went on.

St. Jim's was more entertaining. You had more for your money. There were two Houses and more Forms in the stories. Generally I prefer St. Jim's tales to Greyfriars. Rookwood, with a similar line of characters, was superior to both, but died too quickly. St. Jim's was not so bad, but Greyfriars was full of interesting characters who were jettisoned as time passed.

But Brooks got rid of very few and was able, from time to time, to use the large number left. Think of the Magnet travel series. Who went on these trips but Bunter and the Famous Five? Coker and Vernon-Smith popped up at times. It was very much the same with any holiday series in the Gem and at Rookwood.

But Lord Dorriemore and Nelson Lee took quite a little army with them when they travelled out of England. They needed that "little army" in Northestia and other places. Brooks did not forget the girls from Moor View, either. I suppose Miss Primrose and Charles Hamilton did not see eye to eye in these matters of "going away together," so we had none of that sort of relief in the Hamilton papers. Pity!

I have said that what Hamilton did, Brooks tried to do better, rather overdoing it in the process. In some ways his tales bordered on the fantastic, but he was writing for a juvenile public - and that's where I think things get out of hand in our O.B.B.C. world. We forget that what we liked when we were young is open to much criticism now.

The subject of substitute writers has become a distinct bore to the more sensible of our hobby. Charles Hamilton had such a demand to satisfy that the powers-that-be had to do their best to give the schoolboy readers what they wanted. Hence the poor, maligned substitute writer. The settings and the characters were what readers wanted. They got them. Could they detect the difference? Can the so-called experts of to-day - oh, so much wiser after the event - tell a good sub yarn from an indifferent one by the real "bloke?" I doubt it.

Brooks had no substitutes - or, if he did, only, and very seldom, towards the end.

More tolerance should be shown by both sets of partisans. Efforts are made to cater for both sides at club meetings, but it is a sad fact that Hamiltonia holds the sway, Greyfriars and Bunter still continuing as the main dish even then. I will state that in my own club, the membership of fifteen, which definitely includes five Leites, would be more but for the fact that members have left due to the fact that so much Greyfriars and Bunter have monopolised the programme.

Why not put Brooks on equal terms with Hamilton? One had the

larger output so had a bigger reading public. And neither was the "greatest" writer of school stories. They were great, but not the greatest.

It is up to the clubs to see that the programmes cater for all. Quite a number of our fellow hobbyists are knowledgeable on all old boys' book lore, and find interest in whatever subject is on the agenda. But it is with regret that I notice a minority who will not budge from their one "love." For them, it is Greyfriars or nothing. Nelson Lee, or "I am not in the least interested."

I say Greyfriars, and not Hamiltonia, because the Bunter fans outnumber all other sections. St. Jim's has a small consideration, Rookwood very little, and other Hamilton schools might well never have been thought of, for the attention they receive. The few would banish everything but Greyfriars if they had their way.

In fairness to the Nelson Leeites, this is not so with them. Our Brooksians experts can hold their own with the Hamiltonians.

Collectors' Digest caters for all to the best of its ability, even to the point of providing "sub" stories introducing the old favourites and the old familiar places. A point for the anti-hack-writer brigade to chew upon - a tirade against the poor old sub-writers, and a story by a "sub" in the same issue.

Summing up, a lot of this wrangling over the respective merits of Hamilton and Brooks and most of the condemnation of sub-writers comes from a narrow-minded minority who, being on the whole very knowledgeable hobbyists, could do a lot more to keep matters on an even keel. Tolerance for the other's view and helping to broaden the range of interest (which, however you look at it, is not excelled by any other hobby in existence) would be to the advantage of all.

MONSTER ENTERTAINMENT

By H. Chapman

The Nelson Lee said to the Monster: "You've had the best years of my life, you beast!"

Browsing through some back numbers of C.D. I came across the above line by R. J. Godsave which was a winner in a competition. Very neatly put I thought, and quite true.

I took the Nelson Lee for several years commencing with No. 158 O.S. which was the first story in the first Holiday Series, later reprinted in Monster No. 1 as the "Schoolboy Treasure Seekers."

For the past four years I have been borrowing those that I had not already read from the O.B.B. Club, so that there are now very few

from No. 158 onwards which I have not read, once at least, and some I have read a dozen times.

Although I think nearly all the Old Series were very good I am sure that (with one or two exceptions) those which appeared in the *Monster* were very rarely equalled and never surpassed.

It perhaps seems strange that I should prefer the earlier stories, as some of the most interesting and entertaining characters were not introduced into the stories until several years later. Archie, Phipps, William Napoleon Browne, Travers, Quirke, Mr. Arlington Wilkes, the Moor View Girls, etc., were all late comers.

Why then do I prefer the earlier stories? There are several reasons.

1. They were told in the first person by Nipper, a style of which I was always very fond. This style was dropped later. Nipper became "Hamilton" and seemed to become just another schoolboy like the rest.
2. The stories were on a smaller more intimate scale. Each series was written round one character (usually a newcomer possessing some unique ability, or surrounded by some mystery) with Lee, Nipper & Co. Handy & Co., Fulwood & Co., Christine & Co., taking the chief supporting roles.

During the long run of the stories, however, Mr. Brooks introduced so many good, new characters, that some of the old favourites had to take a back seat. The new ones were so popular that I cannot see how the author could have left them out.

3. There was always a more or less strong detective element in the early series, and if Lee was not the central figure he kept appearing from time to time and he and Nipper always solved any mysteries that were going. Nipper reminded Lee from time to time that they were not just Master and Pupil, but Detective and Assistant, and that he did not mean to be left out of any of Lee's adventures.

Lee's role gradually grew smaller, however, and the detective element was left out of the stories altogether. Lee seemed to become just another schoolmaster and was often not mentioned for weeks at a time. The title of the paper was changed to the "Nelson Lee Library of School Stories."

4. In the early series we only had "Handy" in small occasional doses, and he was very amusing, but later he became the central figure and the stories were written round him week after week, so that we got far too much of him.
5. During the long run of 15 years the St. Frank's stories achieved in the Nelson Lee, it was, of course, necessary to repeat various

themes. Holiday Trips, Barring Outs, School Trains, etc. We looked forward to these and enjoyed them immensely. Even when repeating an old theme, however, Mr. Brooks always tried to give it variety and to go one better, with the result that the later series seemed to become just a little more far-fetched and imaginative than the early ones, although only occasionally did he tax our credulity too much.

To sum up therefore, I think the Old Series were all very good with possibly the following best of all - "Schoolboy Treasure Seekers (Monster 1), Blacksheep of the Remove (2), The Tyrant of St. Frank's (3), Boy from Bermondsey (4), The Bullies of St. Frank's (5), Expelled (6), 'Neath African Skies (7), St. Frank's in London (8).

The First New Series was good without achieving the previous standard, but the Second New Series were mostly very inferior. So I think the Nelson Lee was right when it accused the Monster of taking the best years of its life.

It is a pity it did not take a lot more. These grand old stories might then have been much easier to get hold of to-day.

A NEGLECTED COMPANION

By O. W. Wadham

In that complete and captivating "Catalogue of Comic Papers" in the 1963 Collectors' Digest Annual authors W. O. G. Lofts and D. J. Adley have listed one that calls for some comment.

The comic in question is Jungle Jinks, and it began life on December 6, 1923, as a new Companion Paper to the Gem, Magnet, Popular and Boys' Friend.

For a Companion Paper it was born in a reticent atmosphere most unusual when Editors of the papers in question had something new to offer. In fact, the only announcement of the birth of Jungle Jinks I can find is a small 16 line paragraph on page 2 of the Gem for Dec. 1, 1923. The Magnet of the same date ignores the arrival of Jungle Jinks completely. The Gem hails the new Companion Paper in these words: "Jungle Jinks is the title of my new Companion Paper for the younger chums... Jungle Jinks will please everybody, young or old, with its rare budget of stories, jokes, competitions (with money prizes), tales from the zoo, and, in short, all the fun of the fair." The Editor went on to say that a free packet of toffee would be given away with number one. The price of the paper is not stated.

It would be interesting to learn if any collectors have copies of Jungle Jinks. As a Companion Paper to such a popular periodical as the Gem it should be interesting - especially as it is likely very few readers of the other Companion Papers have ever heard of it.

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, 459, 705, 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. **GENS** - 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 PERRY POPULARS:** Nos. 12, 13, 45, 47, 58.

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

News from the Clubs

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

In the absence of Chairman Syd Smyth on holiday the Treasurer Ernie Carter took the chair and opened the meeting at 6.15 p.m. on Thursday, August 20th, at the club's very convivial clubrooms at the Book Bargain Bazaar.

The usual enthusiastic atmosphere prevailed as the secretary read correspondence from Harry Broster who, with his never failing interest, keeps us informed of hobby activities in the Midland club.

Business matters having been settled in connection with the position of club finances and the possible purchase of a collection of Hamiltonia, members spent the remainder of the meeting in general discussion. One question raised was "What does make a book a classic? which naturally sparked off some diverse opinions. Also the fact that the well-loved "Biggles" and "William" books are being withdrawn from quite a few children's libraries in Australia aroused considerable comment.

Some further photos were taken by Don Harkness at the conclusion of the meeting before members adjourned for the usual cheery session in the nearby coffee shop.

Next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 17th.

B. PATE Secretary

MIDLAND

Meeting held 25th August, 1964

There were eleven members present to enjoy a fuller meeting than we have had of late. We were all pleased to learn that Ivan Webster away on holiday in Bournemouth had been lucky in acquiring 70 S.O.Ls. With what he acquired a few weeks ago at Sutton Coldfield Ivan must be compiling quite a collection of these handy size old boys' books. Another gift to the library was announced by the Librarian - this was a number of "Magnets," the donor being our Wallheath member Patrick Hughes and making up a total of 200 Magnets now open for borrowing by other members. Thank you, Pat. Tom gave us a delightful talk on a very popular Hamilton character - Cousin Ethel. "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays" the well-known but scarce B.F.L. - Tom had brought along his copy - has been reprinted twice since first appearing in the Empire Library in 1911; it ran as a serial in the Gem in 1915 and then was published as a complete yarn in 1917 in the B.F.L. We heard all about Ethel's schooldays at St. Freda's, her friendship with the temperamental Dolores Pelham and her devoted admirer George Figgins of St. Jim's. The one and only "Gussy" featured prominently in this classic tale of Martin Clifford's. This was Tom's night and he saw to it that it was a full programme. Two games were introduced, "Find the title" and "Twenty Questions" and were much enjoyed. The Quiz took the shape of a 'solo affair.' Ian Parish was on the receiving end and acquitted himself very well with the answers. Needless to say he got his 'Remove' from the Third Form to the Fourth on the strength of it. Anniversary number was Magnet No. 498 - "The Greyfriars Organizer" - date 25th August, 1917. A wartime 'Coker' yarn, full of fun and excitement as most Coker stories are. The Collectors item was a famous Levison 'classic' the St. Jim's B.F.L. No. 383 - After Lights Out or Expelled from St. Jim's. There was also a discussion introduced by the Chairman "Why was Pensonby depicted as so utterly bad?" As can be expected, this

brought forth many interesting opinions from most present. The raffle first prize went to George Chatham, 2 B.F.L. and second prize to the Treasurer.

Next meeting should be as interesting, according to the schedule, and will be held on Tuesday, 29th September.

HARRY BROSTER Secretary.

LONDON

On Sunday, September 13th, a party of members of the London Club, plus Gerry and Myra Allison of the Leeds club left Victoria Station by coach and journeyed to Margate. Graced by fine weather the journey was very enjoyable especially along the M2 motorway. Arriving at the Nayland Rock Hotel, Westbrook, the party were met by John Wernham, president of the club, Roger Jenkins and Miss Hood. The latter, it will be remembered, was Frank Richards' housekeeper for many years. Also meeting the party was Maurice Black, our Margate member. After the usual convivial greetings the party sat down to an excellent lunch. The fine souvenir menu cards were the gift of the president of the club, John Wernham. Len Packman proposed the toast to the O.B.B.C., Roger Jenkins proposed the toast to the visitors to which Gerry Allison suitably replied.

After lunch, the meeting took place. Excellent business and progress was the report by the Hamiltonian librarian, Roger Jenkins. A letter quiz conducted by Roger was greatly enjoyed. Gerry Allison simply romping away with most of the answers. Gerry had brought a picture card quiz with him and it was Bill Lofts who solved the most. After an enjoyable meeting, tea was served. After tea leave was taken of John Wernham and Roger Jenkins and the remainder of the party boarded the coach for the short journey to "Roselawn" at Kingsgate. Here, thanks to the kind invitation of Miss Hood, we inspected Frank Richards' study and other rooms that the great author used in the latter years of his life. Time the enemy and with farewells to Miss Hood, also grateful thanks, the journey back to London commenced and it was a happy throng that alighted at the various destinations.

Next meeting at 35, Woodhouse Road, Leytonstone, London, E.11. Phone MARYLAND 1737. Hosts Reuben and Mrs. Godsave.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

NORTHERN

Meeting held 12th September, 1964

The Chairman was back in his accustomed seat for the September meeting, but another holiday month found several stalwarts missing, including Club officers Gerry Allison, Frank Hancock, and Elsie Taylor. The relatively small gathering, though, permitted an intimate atmosphere, with opportunity for personal conversation and for browsing through a number of items - mainly Blake - that Ernest Whitehead was letting go; and there was an appropriately relaxed air about the evening's programme, too.

The meeting first heard the correspondence arising out of the Chesterfield trip (quite entertaining, this) and the Treasurer's report, presented by Molly Allison. Discussion of business matters and the month's hobby news followed.

Jack Wood then gave us the first of the evening's main offerings: a miscellany that ranged freely over hobby literature and threw up many provocative thoughts and suggestions on the way. Jack's readings included extracts from the Magnet's India series, the new Wodehouse, the latest Bunter book, and a newspaper cutting with a link to the early career of Sexton Blake.

Next item was a St. Frank's quiz supplied by Jack Farrar, who had also sent along three modern SBLs as prizes. The answers, read out after the tea interval, proved our resident maestro the expected easy winner. With a mere 23 points out of 24, though,

Jack hardly felt he deserved a prize, so the three Blakes went to Geoffrey Wilde (17), Harry Barlow (13) and Bill Williamson (11).

We concluded, again on a St. Frank's note, with a reading by the Chairman of two extracts from E. S. Brooks' Northeastria series, chosen to show first his power of exciting narrative, and second his sense of descriptive atmosphere.

Quite a change this month: we hope for a full turn-out again in October when we begin what promises to be a particularly interesting winter programme.

Next meeting: October 10th.

JOHNNY BULL

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held Sunday, September 13th:

Holidays again caused a slump in attendance and this, coupled with John Farrell being off sick, resulted in the most sparsely attended meeting of the year.

Nevertheless the quality of those who were able to be at the meeting was high and once again we had an enjoyable time. As Norman Pragnell was basking in the sunshine of Brittany I deputised as Chairman.

The subject for discussion was taken from last month's controversial echo in C.D. This was prompted by the news that a firm is contemplating publishing four monthly paperbacks of the old Magnet stories. Whilst the general feeling of the meeting was that this might be welcome as far as members of the O.B.E.C. and Hamilton fans were concerned, there was a doubt that such a venture would not attract a sufficient number of readers to make it a financial success. One book a month, it was felt, might come off, but not four. Needless to say we all hope to be proved wrong.

This led to the question of other writers producing stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, etc. after the death of Charles Hamilton. This was discussed at great length, and although none of us on Merseyside get 'hot under the collar' over substitute writers we nevertheless felt that to continue that policy, now that the G.O.M. himself has left us, would not be quite the right thing to do. (Eric Payne always excepted, of course.)

This month's quiz was introduced by Walter Prichard and we had to identify characters by clues; I managed to win this one with Jack Morgan second.

I was pleased to receive a 'phone call from George Riley, who is now quite settled in Barnsley. He wished to be remembered to everyone at the meeting, and we all send him our best wishes and hope that, in the not too far distant future, he may be able to attend a meeting.

Next meeting October 11th.

BILL WINDSOR

*The
Postman
called*

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

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge); I wonder if it is going to be possible in the coming year to get some articles on the adventure stories in the Marvel, Pluck, Boys' Friend, Boys' Journal, etc. Also, if anyone has the material available, an article on some of

the Brett and other earlier papers would be entertaining.

PETER HANGER (Northampton): I am sure your columnist was right in saying that Rio Kid stories would make good selling novels, and I am equally certain that this would apply even more so to King of the Islands. Westerns are ten a penny, but Ken King is unique. Have you noticed that the Wizard portion of the Rover & Wizard is beginning to shrink? I suppose this means that the Rover will be the last survivor of the books we knew as boys.

JACK OVERHILL (Cambridge): With reference to Tony Glynn's inquiry concerning the name of Quelch. It is not unique. Mr. William Henry Quelch 14 Union Road, Cambridge, was our baker over fifty years ago. He is now retired, his business taken over by a Mr. Webb, but he still lives at the same address, and at the age of 84 is still pretty hearty. There are others bearing that name in Cambridge and Cambridgeshire.

JOHN UPTON (Southend-on-Sea): A delightful cover this month. They always are, but it was grand to have the chance of seeing "Magnet" No. 2. And the very fine centre spread from Mr. C. H. Chapman. Thank you for a splendid issue.

More power to the elbow of Leslie Rowley on p.22 - he summed up my feelings on that subject exactly. Is it really necessary to take a hobby so seriously that harsh words have to be flung about? When the Editor is accused of bad taste I think it's time to call a halt - or rather, some time before that! Or am I perhaps taking these remarks equally too seriously?

A. FENNER (Highams Park): The cover alone of this month's issue was a joy in itself, so please, do you think that we could have more of the old covers of Magnets, Gems and Nelson Lees?

W.J.A. HUBBARD (Nairobi): I notice that the tendency to refer to matters that were discussed some years ago is still prevalent among your more recent writers. This is particularly marked in the July C.D. They must really get hold of some back numbers and catch up with their reading. With regard to Mr. S. Gordon Swan's article "Rogues Who Never Returned" he might like to know that the character of Dr. Gorlax Ribart was invented by a Dr. W. H. Jago who only wrote the one "Union Jack" story. Dr. Jago was a ship's Doctor who after delivering his story sailed away on his ship and never re-appeared at Fleetway House which explains why the character was never heard of again. No doubt Dr. Jago visited the Seychelles, the venue of the story, on his ship on more than one occasion.

GRANVILLE WAINE (Swindon): In the film released by the Kalem Co. in 1915, True Boardman took the park of Stingaree, and he was wearing a monocle during the whole of this film which incidentally was a serial. I have a photograph of True Boardman complete with Bushranger rigout, monocle included.

Mr. Wadham refers to the "Wonder Library." Perhaps the following information may be of interest to him and other readers of C.D. The information is taken direct from copies of the various papers listed in my collection: No. 13 'The Grand Adventure' reprinted from 'Chips' serial of 1915; No. 10 'All Sorts' reprinted from 'Chips' serial of 1915; No. 12 'Heart of the Slums' reprinted from 'Chips' serial of 1914; No. 3 'The Blue Lamp' reprinted from 'Chips' serial of 1914; No. 9 'Heart of No Man's Land' reprinted from 'Comic Cuts' serial of 1915; No. 1 'The Red Rovers' reprinted from 'The Wonder' serial of 1913; No. 11 'Ticket of Leave Man' reprinted from 'The Wonder' serial of 1913. Nos. 15 and 16 never did appear.

Miss E.B. FLINDERS (Hitchin): I heartily agree with Mr. H. Chapman on 'Call a Truce.' The hobby is being spoilt for me and others by the aggressive attitude of a few Hamilton followers. Apart from that, I like Collectors' Digest very much. It always surprises me that it can go on, year after year, and remain so interesting.

ARTHUR V. HOLLAND (Australia): Many thanks for making such a good job of C.D. I look forward to each issue with pleasant anticipation, and believe that the interesting covers add considerably to my enjoyment.

JOHN McMAHON (Glasgow): This month's cover (September) was superb. It makes one wish that he had the early copies of the Magnet. I don't understand anyone taking the needle over old books. I love them all and am most grateful to be able to recapture them via C.D.

JAMES W. COOK (New Zealand): Reg Sanderson is not alone in his dislike of Handforth of St. Frank's. All the rotters, cads, and bouncers there dislike him too.

LARRY MORLEY (Handwell): I'm glad to see the healthy arguments and controversy between the Hamilton and Brooks fans which has developed over recent months. This kind of thing makes a welcome change. I must admit that some of the writers of letters take the subject too much to heart. After all, we are only dealing with boys' writers; not the greats, like Scott, Fitzgerald, or D. M. Lawrence. If I remember correctly, Roger Jenkins compared Charles Hamilton with Dickens, which is pure nonsense.

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