

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 19 Nº 220

APRIL 1965

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Four issues will be published in May.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 19

No. 220

APRIL, 1965

Price 2s. 0d.



A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER.

THE PURPLE HILLS

We know that distance lends enchantment to the view. We would not question Campbell on that entirely accurate statement. When we look back, we tend to remember only the best of that far-off yesterday. We sigh happily at the thought of sitting with one of our favourite papers before a glowing fire in a cosy room. We forget how cold our bed-room was when we toddled off to roost. (Though we were probably none the worse for the cold bed-room.)

But though, for us, Time tends to embellish the receding scene with rosy tints, there is no doubt that younger people to-day are given distorted ideas of many features of the past.

Central heating certainly has its advantages (when it is efficient, as it isn't always!). One joy of the modern world is to sit facing, on the left a television set, on the right a radiator. But for many of us the coal and wood fire, on the left, and the latest Magnet, in hand, took some beating.

It is incredible to the young that anybody could ever have enjoyed a silent film. That is because the projection of talking films is very much faster. A silent film, shown on a sound film projector, is ridiculous. To make an old silent film anything but ludicrous, it has to be re-photographed with inevitable enormous loss of quality. In consequence, the majority of people have forgotten just how entertaining some of those old films were.

Not so long ago I saw what was advertised as Charlie Chaplin's famous comedy "Shoulder Arms." In fact, it was only a fragment of that famous film. In the middle was a chunk from an old Chaplin Keystone, and a sub-title announced that "Charlie was dreaming in the trenches." The whole thing only ran for twenty minutes. Small wonder that the youngsters said: "What ever did Mum and Dad ever see in that when they were children?"

One can sympathise with Chaplin who has apparently often taken action against small firms who have released mere chunks of his old materpieces while advertising them as the real thing.

The same principle certainly applies to the old stories. Since the war we have often seen grossly mutilated chunks of reading matter, announced as the work of Charles Hamilton. We have even seen stories in which he had no hand at all passed off as his work. We know, because we remember or because we still possess masses of his real work. But the modern youngster is given a distorted view of the past, and can be forgiven for saying: "Mum and Dad must have been cracked ever to have liked tales like that."

For this reason we are looking with great interest at the forthcoming publication by Armada Paperbacks of some of the finest Hamilton series. It is a splendid project, and should be a great success if, as Armada assures us, there has been no mutilation of the stories. We are keeping our fingers crossed.

WHAT A MARVELLOUS IDEA!

With such words or similar, plenty of readers have acclaimed the suggestion by a correspondent in last month's "The Postman Called" column that a badge or necktie should be made available to link hobby enthusiasts. Anything of the sort would not be very difficult to arrange, at no excessive cost, providing a sufficient number of our readers supported the plan.

A badge in the form of a brooch would obviously have the advantage of being available to our ladies. On the other hand, a tie would be more permanent, as brooches are easily lost. Possibly a tie with the badge woven into the broad end. Or even possibly a hobby tie and a brooch as well.

It is an attractive idea, certainly worth further consideration.

HENCE BEATLEMANIA!

At my barber's, a day or two ago, two very small boys had just had their hair cut. The elder handed 5/- to the barber.

"I want another two shillings," said the barber.

"Mum thought it was 2/6 for our haircut," piped the small boy.

"Three and six!" said the barber sternly. "Run home and get the other two bob."

I was lost in reflection. When I was a child it cost threepence, or even tuppence, to have my hair cut. Even during the war a child could have a trim for fourpence or little more.

To-day it costs a mother, with two boys, seven shillings to have their mops attended to. No wonder we find it difficult at times to distinguish boys from girls in 1965.

Old boys' books are not the only items where the price has rocketed beyond recognition.

WHAT ABOUT THE GIRLS?

A lady C.D. reader has been trying to get information concerning an old Girls' Friend Library entitled "The Twins of Twyneham." So far she has been unlucky.

One of our ladies at Excelsior House has asked me whether anyone remembers an old story (she thinks it was in the G.F.L.) entitled "The Do or Dare Girls" or "The Do or Dare Club." Does anyone remember?

In the next Annual, some particulars about the Girls' Friend Library plus a list of titles and authors would be of interest to many. We are wondering whether this might be beyond the powers even of our Mr. Lofts. It has certainly been beyond us for many years.

THE EDITOR.

OUR THIRD "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. 13 (November 1964 C.D.) to No. 18 (this issue).

We ask our readers to consider each extract on its own merit alone, and NOT to 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 one or two book prizes for runners-up. Post your coupon to the editor to reach him not later than April 18th.

HAMILTONIANA ~ ~ ~

THOSE SUBSTITUTE STORIES

By J. R. Murtagh, New Zealand

I have read with a great deal of interest the various comments in recent C.Ds. on the substitute stories in the Magnet and Gem.

While I agree that it is a pity that many of these stories were ever written, they were as Roger Jenkins said in the Jan. 1965 C.D. a necessary evil.

What I do not agree with is that they should be ignored as not being worthy of collection. I feel that they form an important part of the complete story of the life of the Magnet and Gem. Though, usually, the stories are inferior, this does not mean that the illustrations on the covers and inside are also inferior. The opposite is very often the case. Many fine illustrations appear in the substitute issues and this also applies to the Editor's chats and various other departments.

Then we get happenings in the substitute stories that alter the overall history of Greyfriars and St. Jim's. One very well known instance is Magnet No. 520 "A Very Gallant Gentleman" in which Pentelcow killed off Courtney of the Sixth. Nobody is happy about this but it is part of Greyfriars history whether we like it or not. A poor story, but I would say a must in every collector's file.

Another reason that makes the substitute stories worthy of a place in one's collection is for reference purposes. From time to time, discussions crop up about different substitute stories such as the recent remarks by Laurie Suttor on the authorship of some of the substitute stories and at such times it is interesting to look out the stories if one has them. In Danny's Diary various stories are mentioned. Here again it gives a collector much pleasure to look up the issues even if they are sub stories.

Another interesting point I have found is that when buying Magnets and Gems the substitute stories are no cheaper than the genuine ones. They seem to be just as hard to get. In my own collection of Magnets, I only require 11 issues to complete the run of blue and white copies and 3 of these are substitute issues. Of the 27 issues I want to complete my run of Yellow Magnets 13 are substitute issues. It seems to me that the majority of collectors do not part with their substitute stories and a point that seems to add proof to this is that when

I knew a list of substitute stories was to appear in the 1962 C.D. Annual, I had an advert inserted on page 91 which read "Substitute Magnets Wanted, cash or will exchange genuine Hamilton Magnets or other papers for them. Result - not one single reply. To me this seems to verify what I am now sure is correct, that the majority of collectors collect all issues of the Magnet and Gem regardless of whether they are genuine Hamilton or not and thereby get the complete picture of the Greyfriars and St. Jim's history if it could be called that.

With the Hamilton Library it is natural that members with so many hundreds of genuine stories to choose from, ask for these. I would myself, until such time as I had read all the genuine Hamilton stories. But without the substitute stories the record is incomplete.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 86. THE DEBT

I have not read the Autobiography of Compton Mackenzie, but according to Mr. Frank Shaw (whose letter appears in our "Postman Called" column) Mackenzie speaks of being lucky to live in the palmy days of the B.O.P. so he "escaped wretched papers like the Magnet."

I don't know Compton Mackenzie's age, but I assume that he was very much an adult long before the Magnet was conquering British boyhood. It seems possible even that Mackenzie really doesn't know very much about the Magnet. I don't know whether he explains just why he considers the Magnet a wretched paper. Perhaps he doesn't know either. It might even be one of those "Wah! I have spoken!" comments in which some folk indulge and feel no need to qualify.

Mackenzie says (once again, according to Mr. Shaw): "Billy Bunter's author was closer in touch with today than the really good writers of school stories in the nineteenth century."

I am not sure whether the stress on "good" is Mackenzie's or Mr. Shaw's. I do not know, either, whether Mackenzie mentions the names of those "good" writers of the 19th century which he had in mind. Perhaps he doesn't. People who generalise often don't. They expect us to take their word for it.

A final extract from Mr. Shaw's letter: "Mackenzie gives deserved praise to T. B. Reed (to whom Richards never acknowledged his debt)."

It may be that the comment in parenthesis is Mr. Shaw's own.

I can't for the life of me see what debt Frank Richards can possibly have owed to T.B. Reed. I can't fathom what form that alleged

debt is supposed to take. I have read the entire output of both writers so I daresay I can judge fairly well between them.

Reed's total output was not large, and less than half comprised school stories. Of these there were "The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's," "The Willoughby Captains," "The Cock House at Felsgarth" and, at a pinch, "The Master of the Shell."

What is Frank Richards supposed to have got from that lot?? To suggest that the enormous Hamilton output stemmed from those few stories is, in my view, ridiculous.

So far as I know there is no proof even that Hamilton ever read Reed. It is quite likely that he did. He may even have said that he did. He can't have gained much beyond enjoyment.

Hamilton's style was peculiarly his own - which was why it was so successful - which is why so many writers copied him with the passing years. He might have got the "Who's Cock House at St. Jim's?" idea from "Cock House at Felsgarth." He might have got the Kildare-Monteith theme from "Willoughby Captains." There is no proof that he did. He may have got a few ideas from other writers, Reed included. And why the heck shouldn't he? How many writers have not got ideas from other authors now and then? Precious few.

And while we are talking about debts, what about the debts of other writers to Charles Hamilton? What about those who earned a living by writing about the very characters he had created? What about the countless writers who copied the style and system which he had developed so successfully? Did they ever acknowledge the debt which they owed him? No, sir!

Did any man do more than Charles Hamilton to entertain and inspire young people? Was any writer so generally loved for so long a time?

How many people have acknowledged their debt to him? We might ask ourselves that question before we dwell on his imaginary debt to Talbot Baines Reed.

The B.O.P. was a more "classy" paper than the Magnet. To write for the B.O.P. gave a writer a snob advantage over a man who wrote for the cheap weeklies. Charles Hamilton overcame that disadvantage when he won his way to the top as the world's greatest writer of school stories.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 84. THE CHARM OF ROOKWOOD

JACK OVERHILL: In this month's C.D. you ask if any old stager

remembers what effect the Rookwood stories in the BOYS' FRIEND had on him.

I first read the GEM in November 1914 (TOM MERRY'S WAR FUND); I was soon reading the MAGNET, DREADNOUGHT and PENNY POPULAR for the Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories. At the time I was an errand-boy out of school hours (3/- a week for 35 hours a week). I was urged by advertisements in the Companion Papers to take the BOYS' FRIEND because of the new Rookwood stories. I took it and was charmed by them.

Why? you ask. I don't know. I liked the name of the school; and I liked the name Jimmy Silver and that of Lovell, his henchman. But I think fundamentally it was to do with the lighthearted nature of the stories. Affection for Rookwood lingered. It was there when I was buying my son the S.O.L. twenty years later, in the 1930s.

DON WEBSTER: Oh yes. Rookwood had a charm all its own. Somehow Coombe Station seemed to possess that touch of our English countryside.

You ask if any reader immediately took to The Boys Friend with the advent of the Rookwood tales in 1915. I did, for one (in spite of its ungainly size) and retained my interest for many years until the long Wild West series turned me into an 'occasional' purchaser. Rookwood seemed to be the 'happy medium' between St. Jim's and Greyfriars. Jimmy Silver and Lovell provided a strong contrast, but my favourite, if any, would be placid Arthur Newcome.

What better series could one ask for than "The Masters' Strike" series - not repeated elsewhere I think.

GEORGE SELLARS: I have always had a soft spot for Rookwood ever since I discovered that charming school in 1915. I missed the first few stories (but I have read them since in reprints) and enjoyed reading them for about eight years. I think there were more humorous stories than dramatic ones and Mornington was my favourite character, only second to Jimmy Silver. I think some of Charles Hamilton's best stories were about "Morny" especially a series when he was struck blind in a fight with Latrey and I still remember those grand stories I read fifty years ago. Another great series was the kidnapping of the Fistical Four by the German, a Mr. Lagden. Of course the first barring-out story was Gem 212 "The Great Barring-Out at St. Jim's." I must say I can't ever remember reading a dull story about those very cheery chums of Rookwood.

ERIC FAYNE adds: The Rookwood Barring-Out was, as we stated, the first Hamilton barring-out series. "The Great Barring-Out at St. Jim's" had appeared several years earlier (and it was a far better tale than the Rookwood set), but the St. Jim's specimen was only a single story;

the actual barring-out, like Bob Cherry's Barring-Out of a short while after, was over in a few chapters.

To be strictly accurate, Mornington was blinded by a stone in a snowball thrown by Lattrey

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GEMS OF HAMILTONIA

No. 18 (New Series)

"You will repeat this sentence after me, Bunter - 'Henry Herbert Higgins had a happy holiday.'"

Bunter fairly jumped.

He gazed at Mr. Quelch, his little round eyes bulging in amazement behind his big glasses.

Had Mr. Quelch told him that a pie had been missed below stairs, Bunter was prepared to advance the theory that it had been taken, dish and all, by the housekeeper's cat. Had Mr. Quelch told him that Wingate of the Sixth had missed a cake from his study, Bunter was ready to suggest that it was one of those daylight burglars you read about in the papers. Had Mr. Quelch informed him that Mrs. Mible, at the tuckshop, had complained about an over-due account standing to Master Bunter's debit, the Owl of the Remove might have attributed it to the good lady's imagination, or even to the stout which Mrs. Mible took, not because she liked it, but because the doctor ordered it.

Had Bunter been accused of anything, in fact, he was ready to deal with the matter with a disregard for veracity as complete as if he had been specially trained for the diplomatic service.

But when Mr. Quelch told him that Henry Herbert Higgins had had a happy or an unhappy holiday, or whether he had had a holiday at all, Bunter was fairly flabbergated.

He blinked almost dazedly at Mr. Quelch.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libs: No. 126 (1st series) The Great Diamond Bluff; No. 234 (1st series) The Secret of the Oblong Chest; No. 287 (1st series) The Outlaw of Yugo-Slavia; No. 455 (2nd series) The Outlaw of Yugo-Slavia.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON

WANTED: Copies of "CHATTERBOX" for period up to 1914-1918 War.
Offers to:-

J. A. RUSSELL, 20 MELVILLE GARDENS, BISHOPBRIGGS, GLASGOW.

BLAKIANA

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

IN AND AROUND BAKER STREET (5)

By Walter Webb

They Wrote in Collaboration

Writing partnerships in bygone days were not at all uncommon, and, at least one UNION JACK serial was written by two very well known authors, who shared a famous pseudonym. They make an interesting and imposing list, though to give them all would be to take up much needed space; however, here are those who were, in some measure, connected with Blake as contributors, or were writers of reprinted stories which appeared in the Blake papers:

ROBERT and MARIE CONNOR LEIGHTON, (husband and wife); the DOUGLAS WALSH's, (husband and wife; she was NORAH VAWDREY, a contributor to the women's papers); MR. and MRS. E. C. HEATH HOSKEN, (husband and wife; she was Coralie Stanton, a well-known subscriber to Hamilton Edwards's various papers); "Andrew and Geoffrey Gray" (A. C. MURRAY and J. G. JONES - both Blake writers); "Andrew Gray" and "Ambrose Earle" - ditto; "Roland Spencer" and FRANCIS WARWICK - the former being GEOFFREY PROUT; LADBROKE BLACK and THOMAS COX MEECH (who wrote singly and in harness as "Paul Urguhart"); HILARY ST. JOHN SAUNDERS and JOHN PALMER (who wrote as "Francis Beeding"); and LT. COL. CYRIL NEILE and GERARD FAIRLIE (author and inspirator respectively of the character of Bull-Dog Drummond).

"Francis Beeding" was the author of the U.J. serial mentioned in the opening sentence.

The Carrs and the Murrays of Fleetway House

Looking through the many juvenile periodicals of long ago, the researcher quickly becomes conscious of the many similarities to be found in the names of the men given as authors. There were, he discovers, enough writers named, or pen-named, Carr and Murray at Fleetway House at one period to have half-filled the Remove form at Greyfriars! An exaggeration? By no means, as the following list will prove, commencing with the Carr's:

GORDON CARR, GEORGE CARR, HOWARD CARR, KENT CARR, ADAMS CARR,

ERNEST A. CARR, and DARGAVILLE CARR.

And the Murray's:

WILLIAM MURRAY, GEOFFREY MURRAY, ROBERT MURRAY, G. C. MURRAY, MARR MURRAY, (except for one letter, almost a combination of the two names!), ANDREW MURRAY, A. C. MURRAY, and EDGAR JOYCE MURRAY.

And if you threw in the many Hope's and Gray's, there would have been enough to have actually filled the Remove, and here, commencing with the Gray's, were the full names of the writers in question: Andrew Gray, Geoffrey Gray, Gilbert Gray, Professor Gray, Henry Gray, Cecil Gray, W. E. Stanton Hope, Capt. G. A. Hope, Walter Hope, Edgar Hope, and Edwin S. Hope.

DARGAVILLE CARR was definitely a real name, and he was closely associated with Alfred Harmsworth in the very early days. An Irishman, he married a Miss Gordon, daughter of a Dr. Gordon, rose high in the firm, and eventually became, like Robert Leighton, a director of ANSWERS.

On the other hand, "Adams Carr" was a pseudonym, and, although it may not have appeared as the name of an author in any of the boys' papers, it certainly did in some issues of ANSWERS. It was bestowed upon Douglas Walshe on occasions when that writer had other material of his appearing under his own name in the same number. Arthur Bax, the editor, chose "Adams Carr" as the pen-name, and a colleague has recalled that Walshe was rather annoyed about it - or pretended to be - because, at that time, he possessed a car, American make, which was called an "Adams." Walshe, in his pleasure of possessing such a means of conveyance, denied to many of his kidney in those days, had talked about it quite a lot, and probably thought that his editor was poking fun at him.

Regarding Gordon Carr, this could have been both the real name of an employee at the firm and the pen-name of a writer, or writers. Harking back on the Carr-Bayfield dispute, my view is that it was used to cover the identities of two men - not working separately, as suggested, - but writing in collaboration under the same pen-name, with Bayfield being part-author in every instance. After careful study of the work of Frederick Atkins, otherwise "Fenton Ash," noting the way his dialogue was set down, with particular regard to certain ejaculations he was wont to use over and over again, and his style generally, I feel confident that the early stories under the G. Carr byline were, in actual fact, written by Atkins and Bayfield in collaboration, with G. Carr, when necessary, revising the finished product of the two writers. The name of G. Carr on the payment cheque might be explained in several ways; i.e., that he acted as

agent for the two writers; that the authors used his name as their nom-de-plume, or that he actually worked with them on the stories, and, by mutual consent, received the cheque which was afterwards split three ways.

The UNION JACK was a misfit

A periodical carrying the slogan that it is written for readers of all ages is doing no such thing. What the editor really means is that he is publishing stories primarily for his youngest readers in the hope that they will appeal also to the more unsophisticated of his adult readers. A periodical must fall into one of two categories - the juvenile or the adult - and no editor can reasonably expect to print stories acceptable to both age groups.

In presenting crime stories for boys and girls, the various editors of UNION JACK were labouring under the necessity of having to exclude en bloc that which is, and always will be, synonymous with nearly all acts of crime and violence - the sex element. Such was the inflexibility of this censorship of its contents that the "U.J." was, in both text and illustrations, a model of respectability. In fact, had certificates been issued to all its stories during the period of its long life on the same basis as those affixed to the films which are exhibited for public entertainment today, there is no doubt that quite 99 per cent of them would have qualified for the "U" label.

The policy of publishing stories of adult characters of both sexes but in such manner that the normal relationships between them had to be toned down to a pitch more in keeping with those friendships existing between boys and girls of immature years, made the "U.J." something of a misfit among the boys' papers of its day, and it speaks volumes for Blake's drawing power that he appealed to both the young and the not-so-young in equal measure for as long as he did. This juvenile approach was of course quite right and proper in a paper intended to inspire the interest of the young; but, from another viewpoint, the adult reader, with his worldly-wise outlook, who liked more realism in his literary menu, such ingenuous treatment of the stories might not have been to his entire satisfaction.

When one things back to all those glamorous young ladies, who intermittently crossed the "U.J." stage, and were, according to their various conceivers, imbued with any amount of sex appeal, it seems somewhat ironic that they should have been denied the opportunity of exploiting it. Rather like starring Brigitte Bardot in the title role

of a film of "Alice in Wonderland." But, that iron curtain, manufactured by Lord Northcliffe at the very outset of his campaign against the penny dreadfuls, effectively protected the delectable young women of the Blake Saga against the possibility of any physical attack upon them proving successful. The defences placed at the disposal of the Blake heroine were impregnable. She might, if married, lose her husband; if single, her fiance; either way, she would be allowed to lose her jewellery, or other valuables; from her wearing apparel a hat, or shoes, maybe; but let any author have the temerity to deprive her of her dress, or skirt, in any encounter with an amorous villain, or have her lose the said garments for any other reason, and that enterprising chronicler would most probably have been banned from writing Sexton Blake yarns for the rest of his career. Such was the position in Lord Northcliffe's day, and which remained so until that iron disciplinarian's death in 1922.

But, by 1928, the wind of change was blowing pretty strongly through the editorial office of the "U.J." and it was soon obvious that a complete reversal in policy was in active being, and that the Blake stories in future were going to be written from a more adult viewpoint. Just how adult they were going to be we little dreamed! The two razor blades which were given free with the first and second issues of the Lola de Guise series could not have cut the Blake devotee more deeply than the sight of his favourite character in the humiliating position of appearing to be manhandling a pretty girl - Lola - in her bedroom, when she was attired in nothing more substantial than a flimsy nightdress and wrap. The suddenness of it all was quite shocking, and the reader who, up till that moment, had regarded Blake as something of a woman-hater - which, it must be confessed some authors did tend to make him appear - must have had their illusions rudely shattered. After all, we "U.J." readers were not accustomed to seeing such pictures on the cover of our favourite magazine following 35 years of publication when not a solitary picture of Blake in the company of an undressed glamour girl was allowed to be exhibited. Then to get three of them in succession, all the same time, made one wonder what was lurking in the editorial mind. One explanation only, apart from the obvious one, which was an attempt to boost the circulation, can suffice to explain such a display of window dressing. It was the snapping of the last thread - the complete breakaway from the juvenile market with one of the most startling series of Sexton Blake stories ever conceived by an author and editor.

At last, the old "U.J." had found its level. No longer was it a

misfit among the boys' papers; in fact, it wasn't a boys' paper any more - not with Lola de Guise on the stage and Mademoiselle Roxane and the new-look Marie Galante waiting in the wings. What grand reading their exploits made! And what colour, atmosphere, and glamour they brought to the somewhat sombre pages of the Blake papers. Maybe some of these ingredients can be transferred to the pages of Blakiana in the near future.

(continued)

"BARRY PEROWNE" Boys Writer

By W. O. G. Lofts

When our editor Eric Fayne asked in his editorial for data on the Raffles stories, he received a vast amount of letters on the subject, far too many to be printed, but notable in absence was the fact that "Barry Perowne" wrote a great deal of boys' fiction - apart from his Sexton Blake yarns featuring the gentleman cracksman, and those in THE THRILLER.

I always believe in giving credit where it is due, and it should be recorded that Derek Adley can lay claim to first discovering the real identity of 'Barry Perowne' - namely Philip Atkey, after nearly six months of research, which ended in the reward of enjoying personal correspondence with the author. I should add that even editors were sometimes unaware of the writer's real identity, as his work was mainly handled by agents.

Mr. Jackie Hunt, former editor of the DETECTIVE WEEKLY and on the staff of the U.J. and S.B.L. at various times, first suggested the idea of having Raffles against Sexton Blake, and was indeed responsible for other Blake items (the subject of another article).

Philip Atkey was the nephew of Bertram Atkey a well known thriller writer in the early part of this century. As a boy, he loved the stories of P. G. Wodehouse (Mike) in THE CAPTAIN and revelled in the stories of Hylton Cleaver in CHUMS and the Captain F. Shaw stories (illustrated by S. Walkey) of the sea. He was also a Nelson Lee enthusiast! In 1924 or 1925 at the age of only 16 he started writing stories for the BOYS MAGAZINE - about a bunch of characters called 'The Queer Kids.' Later he wrote for the George Newnes CRUSOE MAGAZINE edited by A. C. Marshall, later called THE GOLDEN WEST. He also wrote Western stories under the familiar 'Barry Perowne' pen-name and 'Wyllis Adair'.

He penned many of the 30,000 word Newnes DICK TURPIN LIBRARY, and of another library which needs checking. THE MODERN BOY also had

railway mystery stories from his pen - and other tales yet to be traced were under the 'Philip Mostyn' pen-name.

As already well known he wrote four stories featuring our own favourite character SEXTON BLAKE against the idol of millions - the gentleman crook RAFFLES.

R E V I E W

"SLAYING ON THE 16TH FLOOR"

Arthur Maclean
(Mayflower 2/6)

Those readers who complain that there is still too much sex in the Sexton Blake Library are not likely to be offended by this story. The first nine chapters are set on the 16th floor of a London skyscraper so perhaps it is paradoxical to say that it is a long time before the tale "takes off." And even when it does, it does not fly very high. A man is dead. He has either committed suicide or been murdered. The club-footed man, who compels Blake to investigate the case, makes it clear that he wants the detective to find a murderer.

It is a whodunnit, rather involved with a lengthy flashback, and the killer is not revealed till the end. Sexton Blake and Tinker are attractively presented, Superintendent Venner and Splash Kirby make appearances, and Mrs. Bardell is her bonny self. The story should provide reasonable entertainment for most Blake fans. It is a reprint of a novel previously entitled "Find Me a Killer." Readers will decide for themselves whether it was worth revival. E.F.

FOR SALE: 18 copies of Harmsworths Children's Encyclopedia by Arthur Mee 1922 mostly without backs. Could be bound. Also 7 copies of Cassell's "British Isles" 1904 containing very old plates, black and coloured. £2 plus carriage.

PAT LAFFEY (Merseyside O.B.B.C.) 32, GALSORTHY AVE., LIVERPOOL, 21.

WANTED: NELSON LEES, O.S. 419, 420, 456, 478, 488, 533, 550, 551.
1st New: 9, 189; 2nd New: 36, 130, 131, 141, 156; 3rd New: 2.

Details to: NORMAN PRAGNELL, 33 BRAE ST., LIVERPOOL, 7.

WANTED: Magnets (1930-1935), Gems, Modern Boys, Bullseyes, Champions, Thrillers (all 1930-1940). Write with particulars of price etc. to:-

R. T. RUDD, 431 HILLCREST STREET, WEST VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

By Jim Cook

A lively discussion was in progress in the Junior Common room one evening when I looked in to speak to Nipper. The subject was about the rascals of St. Frank's, past and present. I didn't stay as Nipper wasn't there but as I had seen Bob Christine in an argument with Handforth I looked up Bob the next day to find out what went on. I ran Bob to earth in the Tuck shop and he told me about the debate. It seems that the Head had asked Fenton, the school captain, for a list of boys, about a dozen, who could comport themselves with dignity at a coming event at the school and Fenton had decided that Nipper should assist by choosing a few juniors from the Lower School as he understood Dr. Stafford to mean fellows of mixed ages.

When the word got round that "twelve good men and true" were being selected somebody, Bob thinks it was Reggie Pitt, wrote down some of the worst characters he knew and this created an argument at once on the relative evils which could be credited to certain juniors and seniors. So De Valerie made out a rough chart, something like a business man's guide to his sales, and he began by putting Handforth's name at the top. That caused trouble straightaway.

However, a list was made out which was both amusing and informative. As it had been decided to include all former bad hats De Valerie and Reginald Pitt were very near the top in the column of past shady characters and to those juniors who were practically new comers to St. Frank's it was an eye-opener. Such juniors as Adams, Gresham and Duncan of Study J in the Ancient House were amazed when Val and Reggie exposed their former status. As The Rotter and The Serpent, respectively, they both had made their debut at the old school to the sound of hisses, but later on, when they had associated with the decent chaps, they had changed their ways and it was only the snobs and the cads who ignored them. But I have never really been able to classify De Valerie. He is so unpredictable. You feel that if you found him out in something shady or not exactly legal you wouldn't be as surprised as you thought you'd be. Walter Starke, a Sixth form prefect, expelled some time ago, heads the list for the seniors. This exalted position brought a number of enquiries from those boys

who had not known Starke. The infamous exploits of the rascally senior were "dug up" and I recommend the history of Walter Starke to those who are about to take the downward path in the belief that a finer existence can be reached.

Harold Frinton, another Sixth form Prefect, is also mentioned. He is now in the West House and a quiet and reformed being. But his history while not as bad as Starke's is every bit as wicked, for Frinton lived a life of crime unequalled in the annals of St. Frank's. Some of the juniors were sceptical about this senior's exploits in the old days but the records are there to prove it. They read like a chapter from Wynward Readé's "Martyrdom Of Man."

I don't think Pitt actually knew how far his humorous list of "twelve bad men and untrue" was going to stretch but others were making lists as well and these when correlated were finally soused down, as Tom Burton termed it, to what Vivian Travers called a Rogue's Gallery. The next time I see Travers I shall explain to him a Rogue's Gallery is a collection of photographed persons mainly criminals.

Bernard Forrest and Gore-Pearce were level with Kenmore and Grayson, and Gulliver and Bell were just below alongside Marriott and Merrell. George Fullerton, 3rd Form, East House, was Willy Handforth's contribution from the fags. Then came Enoch Snipe of Study 15, East House, Guy Sinclair, Sixth, East House, Shaw and Parkin, seniors, East House, and lower down, in order of merit, as Bob put it, Cyril Jesson, Sixth, Modern House, Teddy Long, Remove, Ancient House, which finished that part of current rotters at the school.

Another junior who had been expelled had a thick red line beneath his name; he was Titus Alexis. Another round of explanations was followed by a few scoffers who didn't believe a boy could display such a vile temper but there it was; and I don't think St. Frank's will ever have another junior to equal the Greek boy in cruelty, spite, and viciousness.

Two more juniors who had left St. Frank's were cited. Claude Carter and Gordon Wallace. The former left the school in dire disgrace, but Wallace at once stepped into the leadership of Study A when he arrived. Forrest having been expelled a week before, Study A needed a leader and Gordon Wallace filled the opening admirably; he was that type. But he didn't reign long for he returned to the River House School soon afterwards from whence he had been transferred.

Although Fullwood's name had not been included in any of the lists Arthur Hubbard of Study B, Ancient House, indignantly demanded it should be in. Evidently Gore-Pearce and Forrest had forgotten Fullwood's old ways but Hubbard had not. Then came arguments on just

where Ralph Leslie should be placed. Actually, Bob explained, the thing had got out of hand and the matter was getting beyond personalities. He said he saw Fullwood wince when the one time leader of Study A had his past raked up and all eyes were on him. Bob reckoned Fullwood was not so much embarrassed as he was disgusted by the turn of events and he rose from his chair and left the room.

In the end Nipper came in and put a stop to it. Apparently it was one of those evenings when the weather outside was cold and wet and fellows were at a loose end. Any diversion that came along was accepted with alacrity but this one had misfired.

Later I ran into Nipper as he left Study C and asked him what the mystery was about the Head's desire for a dozen fellows of integrity and honour. But he didn't know and neither did his governor, Nelson Lee. Which is strange, for usually Dr. Stafford values Mr. Lee's opinion very highly.

Much as I would like to ask the old Head about it for this report, I'm afraid I must remain in the dark until the news gets out. I suspect that because Mr. Lee is not aware of the Head's intentions there can be nothing to it. Had it been something special, Nelson Lee would have been informed and so would Nipper get to know as well.

EZRA QUIRKE

By William Lister

Coming across an old bound copy of Nelson Lee's (1928) I note the following from the editor's "Weekly Pow-Wow."

"Chums get ready to cheer! Ezra Quirke is coming back! Who is Ezra Quirke? ask new readers. People always seem to be asking Mr. Brooks to bring Quirke back into the stories. Is he somebody extra special? He is somebody extra special - take your editor's word for it. "Quirke is one of the most amazing characters created in schoolboy fiction!" "

This could have been just an editor's 'blurb' but viewed from a distance of 37 years, he was right.

Until a few years ago, when I first came in contact with "Digest" I had not heard of or read or known that any N.L.'s. still existed, but if I spoke of it to any who had ever read it, they always said "Do you remember Ezra Quirke - Handforth etc.?"

Yes! there was something about these characters that stuck, after all those years. And now I have been happily engaged in re-reading this series from Bob Blythe's loan library. (One complaint and one only - the print seems smaller after 37 years or so.)

But I echo the editor's words in 1965 "Quirke is one of the most

amazing characters created in Schoolboy fiction."

After reading the friendly arguments between Hamilton House and Lee House over Bunter, Handforth, etc., may I chime in and ask "has Hamilton House the like of 'Ezra Quirke'?" I am not saying they have not, but just "have they?"

ROBERT BLYTHE writes: Just a brief note to answer your correspondent Charles Day (C.D. March) concerning the titles "Historic Boys" and "Stories of Famous Days," by E. S. Brooks.

I must confess that these titles have often puzzled me. Mr. Day's query made me decide to go to the fountain head, as it were.

I therefore spoke to Mr. Brooks about them and he confirmed that he had not written them. He had known of the existence of them but he was only a boy at the time. He also assured me that they were not written by any relation of his. So the name E. S. Brooks is purely co-incidental.

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DANNY'S DIARY

April 1915

The first story this month in the Gem was called "Loyal and True" and it was the Gem at its very best. Kouri Rao was the star of the story. He had suddenly become pro-German and anti-British, and it was clear to Figgins that somebody was poisoning his Indian friend's mind. The culprit was a German-Swiss who kept a tobacconist's shop in Rylcombe. A grand tale.

I was not very keen on "A Waster's Reward." Crooke accidentally set fire to a barn where he knew a young loafer was in the loft. Crooke thought the loafer had been burned to death. I never got really interested in it.

Then came the Spring Double Number with a coloured cover - 52 pages, costing 2d. The long story, entitled "Winning His Spurs," was all about Talbot, and in my opinion this was really two separate stories about Talbot, which were joined together to make one long tale for the Double Number. In the first half of the tale, Tom Merry disagreed with Talbot and Maris Rivers who both thought that Hookey Walker had reformed. In the second half of the tale Talbot managed to foil the crew of a German zeppelin.

"Path of Dishonour" was another Talbot story in which Gore got himself into difficulties by going to Tickey Tapp's gambling den.

In the next tale "For Another's Sake," Talbot helped Gore, but at the end of the story Talbot was expelled at midnight. Poor Talbot must have the hardest luck of anyone in the world. On balance, it has been a fine month in the Gem.

Jack Johnson must be feeling sore. He was defeated by Jesse Willard, the cowboy boxer, in a 45-round contest at Havana for the Heavy-weight Championship of the world. Jack Johnson is a very strong coloured man. Quite a change for him to lose.

There has been a zeppelin raid on Tyneside, and another on the east coast with bombs being dropped at Maldon and Southwold. On another night the zepps did a lot of damage at Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds.

Doug's goodness of heart is standing the strain and he continues to buy me the Boys' Friend every week. The first issue this month was another giant number. The free art plate was called "Battle on the Land" and the picture on the glossy coloured cover was of the "Circle of 13" story about Harvey Keene, detective. They now give the name of the author of this series. He is W. Murray Graydon.

The last story of the Rookwood barring-out series was "No Surrender" and it was first-chop.

Then came the last of the giant numbers. Rookwood, drawn by R. J. Macdonald, was on the coloured cover, and the free art plate was "Don't worry, mother" drawn by Val Reading. The Rookwood tale was called "The Impostors." A friend of Mr. Silver invited Jimmy Silver and Co to spend an afternoon at his house, but Tommy Dodd and Co took their place - and ate the feast.

The third Rookwood tale of the month was "The Slackers of Rookwood" in which Adolphus Smythe and the junior eleven were defeated by Greyfriars at cricket.

Then came "The Prefect's Plot" in which Jimmy Silver overheard Knowles planning with Joey Hook to lure Bulkeley away so that he would not be able to play in a cricket match. Jimmy set down the facts in a letter which he asked Neville to keep for him.

In the next story "Backing Up Bulkeley" we saw how the plot against Bulkeley was foiled. I love the Rookwood tales, and there is plenty of tip-top reading in the Boys' Friend.

Doug also gave me the Easter Double Number of the Union Jack. This contained a very long story about Sexton Blake called "The Vengeance of the Eleven." In it, Blake was captured by his enemies, tied up, and set loose alone in an aeroplane. It was

exciting, but it seemed an intricate way of murdering anybody.

Princess Mary's birthday was this month, and she was 18 years old. The King, with Lord Kitchener, inspected a small arms factory at Enfield.

We went to the pictures several times. Once we saw Elizabeth Risdon in "Florence Nightingale." Mum liked it, but I thought it rather sloppy. But I liked the Keystone comic called "Mabel at the Wheel." Another time we saw the handsome young actor, H.B. Warner, in "The Ghost Breaker." In this programme we also saw a screamingly funny Keystone called "Mabel at the Wheel," and John Bunny in his last comedy "How Cissie Made Good." John Bunny is dead, and Mum thinks it is not nice to see pictures featuring people who are dead.

There has been a lot of anti-German rioting in London, and a big amount of looting. There is to be more tax on beer and spirits. Perhaps men will drink less, and so do less rioting and looting. Bread has gone up to 8½d a quartern loaf.

The Magnet has been moderate this month. The first story was "Carried Away" in which a zeppelin dropped bombs round Greyfriars, and then came down on the Pike so that the crew could do some repairs. Harry Wharton & Co and Fisher T. Fish found it, and were carried away to France in it. Fish demanded to be treated as a neutral subject. Eventually the Greyfriars boys found themselves in the firing-line.

"The Fall of the Fifth" was a Double Number with a coloured cover (52 pages for 2d). It introduced Courtenay and the Caterpillar who featured in "The Boy Without a Name," but it was rather a mixed-up affair, all about amateur theatricals at Eastwood House. This issue also contained a play, based on the story called "Captured at Last" in the Magnet in February.

"Special Constable Coker," the next week, was all right for those who like Coker. Finally we had "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" in which Johnny Bull came back to Greyfriars. It was really a tale about the weakness of Hazeldene. Towards the end, Johnnie Bull's ship foundered off Pegg. Harry Wharton rescued Johnnie from the boiling surf, and Hazeldene helped, so he retrieved his honour.

I have forgotten to mention that the Gem double number gave away a free copy of the Greyfriars Herald, the Remove amateur magazine. It was good fun.

It has been proved that the Germans used poison gas at Ypres, so our soldiers are being issued with respirators. The Allies are making good progress in the Dardanelles.

I have asked Doug why he does not join the army as a Colonel. I told him that he could always put his age on a bit as the recruiting officers do not ask questions. Doug said that when he wanted my advice he would ask for it. Still, I hope the war will be over before Doug is old enough to go. I shouldn't get the Boys' Friend every week if Doug was in the army.

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MORE ON HOOLIGANS

By Tony Glynn

Mr. L. M. Minty asks about the origins of the word "hooligan" and its connection with a comic character.

He is correct when he ascribes the term to the early part of the century, for it was much in the news in 1900 and 1901, when the activities of a rowdy Irish family living in Shoreditch caused all street roughs to be given their surname, Hooligan.

There are thousands of perfectly respectable Irish Hooligans (and Houlihans) all over the world and it is unfortunate that this name should have acquired such rough neck connotations. For the symbolic female figure of Ireland is Caitlin ni Houlihan, a tragic young girl who stands with bowed head, weeping for the wrongs visited upon Ireland.

An expert on hooligans was the journalist Arthur Morrison, who died in 1945, with a long record of newspaper work and authorship behind him. During the 1914-18 war, Mr. Morrison was a correspondent at the front, but he made his mark long before that. In the nineties, he anticipated Conan Doyle by writing a series of detective stories in the "Strand." His hero was Martin Hewitt, a private investigator whose memory is overshadowed by that of Sherlock Holmes who appeared in the same magazine a few years later.

Morrison wrote two books dealing with London low life in the nineties, "Tales of Mean Streets" and "A Child of the Jago," the Jago being a disreputable part of Shoreditch, now vanished.

To obtain material for his books, Arthur Morrison lived in the depths of the worst portions of late Victorian London and he knew the life of these places at first hand.

In 1901, he contributed an article to the Pall Mall Magazine. Its title was "Hooliganism" and he points out that while "hooligans" were imagined by some people to be peculiar to that period, they were in fact present in every generation under different names. If Mr. Morrison was alive in our time, he would certainly see Teddy boys and mods and rockers as the modern incarnation of the hooligan. Indeed, almost all he wrote in 1901 might be applied to the young ruffians of our own day.

Such influences as board schools, evening classes, music halls and the South African war were blamed for hooliganism, but Morrison poured scorn on all these arguments. Note how horror comics, television and the fear of nuclear war have been blamed for producing our own hooligans.

Morrison had no time for the airy notions of the newspapers of the day.

"The Hooligan," he wrote, "is a mere unlicked cub of a peculiarly vicious type, and he flourishes more openly of late by reason of his long immunity from licking."

As for the comic character, Hooligan, I feel that Mr. Minty must be referring to "Happy Hooligan," created by Frederick Burr Opper, who began cartooning for the New York Journal in 1899.

"Happy Hooligan" flourished until Opper's death in the 'twenties. He was an aimless little man with patched trousers and he wore an old tin can for a hat. Happy constantly tried to do good turns and always wound up in trouble. He was the eternal "fall guy" who set out with good intentions and wound up in the middle of a disaster.

Incidentally, "Happy Hooligan" is mentioned in one of the great American novels of this century, John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath." Tom Joad, the central figure of the novel, who has served time in the Oklahoma state penitentiary, tells of a fellow prisoner nicknamed "Happy Hooligan," whose attempts to escape finished in Hooligan-ish climaxes, as when he slid down a rope from the cell block to land in a bag held open by waiting guards. Opper was dead and the strip finished by the time Steinbeck wrote his novel, but Happy was fully established in American affections.

Whether the genuine "Happy Hooligan" appeared in "Nuggets," I can't say. It might be that the character was stolen from the American original. Opper worked for William Randolph Hearst, a pioneer in developing comic strips and, since another Hearst strip, "The Katzenjammer Kids" was borrowed in this country in the form of "The Terrible Twin" in "Comic Cuts," possibly Happy came in for the same treatment.

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A FEW IDLE DREAMS

If only

By Evelyn Pepys

Most of us like to day-dream occasionally in our leisure moments and speculate on what might have been. We Old Boys' Book enthusiasts do our fair share, for we have so much to look back on. A few odd, disconnected ideas persistently float in and out of my subconscious mind, such as it is... Boy, fill up the inkwell and cut me a new goose quill...

Bookies usually receive short shrift in the Hamilton stories, and rightly so, for a bookie who takes bets from a schoolboy, especially a junior schoolboy, is a rogue. Nevertheless, few characters are all black or all white, and if only a bookie could answer back, after being called a contemptible cur and a disreputable blackguard, "You know, young gents, Mr. Gower 'asn't always lost. 'E's 'ad some good wins with me, and when 'e's won I've always paid 'im, and 'e's been ready enough to take the money. 'E won ten quid last month when Team Spirit come up in the National. Now 'e owes me, and 'e's welshin'."

My first love was the Boys' Friend, although I was never very keen on the colour or the format. If only it had been Magnet size, on white paper. . . (why didn't someone in the A.P. think of making the switch when it became obvious the paper was losing its appeal - the facilities were there; Young Britain had packed up. . .)

St. Frank's always took second place to the Hamilton schools in my reading. But there is one thing I envy the St. Frank's enthusiasts - the Monster Library. If only there had been a Monster Library of Greyfriars, Rookwood and St. Jim's stories, how we would treasure copies to-day.

The twenty-odd Holiday Annuals published between the wars contained a large number of amusing SHORT stories about the Hamilton schools - short enough to be printed in full even by a modern publication such as Look and Learn. If only that clot of an editor had looked through the Holiday Annuals instead of taking full-length Magnet yarns and hacking them to pieces.

Juvenile publications to-day consist mostly of pictures, reflecting the reading habits of the rising generation. If only the schools drilled the brats in the three R's, like they used to drill us, maybe some of the old papers could be revived.

Charles Hamilton lived to a good old age, and continued writing quite well almost to the last. If only the gods had bestowed on him the ability of Peter Pan to stop growing older when he was about 55, so that he could have continued writing at that level.

If only war hadn't broken out in 1939.

(The man's bonkers. He'll be writing next, "if only we could still buy a new Magnet for 2d. every Saturday. . .")

TOM HOPPERTON ILL

We regret to learn that our old friend and colleague, Tom Hopperton, is in hospital following an operation. Tom has been contributing outstanding articles to Collectors' Digest and the Annual ever since both publications started. Readers will join with us in wishing him a speedy return to perfect health and strength.

ANOTHER BOOKSHOP TRAGEDY

By George Sellars

Over forty years ago, that is to say in 1923, there was a bookshop in Langsett Road, Hillsborough, (near where I used to live), Sheffield, owned by two brothers called Colley. As soon as anyone entered the shop, stacks and stacks and still more stacks of books were to be seen piled high up nearly to the ceiling, and shelves all round were stacked with all the old favourites - Robin Hood, Dick Turpin, Buffalo Bill and numerous Aldines, B.F.Ls., Union Jacks, Nelson Lees, and, of course, the best of them all, Gems and Magnets plus plenty of the old comics. A collector's Treasure Trove. It was very unfortunate indeed for me that at that time I was not interested in any O.B.B. and I sold all my Gems plus some Holiday Annuals (the first 3), at least about 500 Gems, and what a price I got for them, 2d. for 1 dozen, and all the lot went at that price. Even now after all that time, as I am writing these words, it makes me feel queer and very sad indeed, but strangely enough I continued to read the Gem every week pretty regularly until the end.

Nearly all my books were in mint condition, but in those days boys' papers were sold and bought very cheaply and exchanged also, and there were many second-hand bookshops in Sheffield at that time. New books of course were very cheap indeed. Today I know only one second-hand bookshop (in the city market) where I often go browsing around the hard-back books, but sad to say there are no old boys papers.

NEWS from the CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 28th February, 1965

Members present T. W. Porter, N. Gregory, I. Webster, I. Parish, J. Corbett, J. F. Bellfield, W. Partridge, W. Brown. Apologies from Madge Corbett, R. V. Bennett, G. L. Chatham, E. J. Davey, G. P. Price and from the Secretary, W. H. Broster. Items for the evening were as follows:- Anniversary number was Magnet No. 1410 dated 23/2/35 - 30 years - one of the Edgar Caffyn series. Collectors item was School Friend No. 1 dated 17/5/1919. From Tom Porter's recent acquisition of 260 School Friend. The Chairman then read a chapter from the Magnet No. 1410 featuring Horace Coker at his funniest.

"Throwing the book" was introduced for the second meeting by Jack Bellfield. There was a discussion introduced by Tom Porter "Was the Holiday Annual worth publishing." The earlier ones seemed to be so in most opinions but doubts about the later ones. Greyfriars Bingo was the last item.

TOM PORTER (correspondent
P.P. Harry Broster)

AUSTRALIA

Club Secretary, Bette Pate was extremely pleased to welcome members to her home on Wednesday, 10th March, when a special meeting was held in honour of the "Greyfriars Fantasy," the tape recording sent out so generously by Jack Corbett.

Summer weather made cool drinks welcome and whilst these were being enjoyed correspondence was read out by the secretary. Two welcome letters from Jim Cook in New Zealand started the ball rolling with plenty of items for discussion since Jim's letters are always so knowledgeable and his ideas provocative. And in his usual generous way Jim had sent over two most impressive photos of New Scotland Yard, the present gracious building and the proposed new edifice to be occupied in 1966..... this plus a condensed history of the famous institution was of great interest to the Blake enthusiasts present.

News and views from the two Bills took us travelling to Canada and Kenya and from Harry Broster's inimitable newsletter, members were able to share the activities of the Midland folk. Nearer home came news from Jack Hughes of Brisbane, who hopes to renew acquaintance with his Sydney friends when he heads south on March 18th.

Then in a cool lamplit atmosphere members sat back to enjoy the star turn of the evening. With Syd Smyth operating his fine tape recorder the "Greyfriars Fantasy" came through beautifully. The next hour took the Australian collectors on a delight-filled journey to the land of their youth to meet there the friends brought to enrich their lives by the talented mind and pen of the one and only Charles Hamilton. Most definitely this recording caught the true atmosphere as it was most evocative of the Greyfriars scene with the musical background blending effectively. All present were extremely impressed with the last tribute to "The Master" and most appreciative of the talented folk who had made this pleasurable sojourn possible. This gift tape will be added to the Golden Hours Library with gratitude to our good friend Jack Corbett for making the whole thing possible.

An enjoyable meeting was brought to a reluctant close when supper was served by the hostess.

B. PATE

Hon. Secretary

NORTHERNMeeting held on 13th March, 1965

A number of regulars were unable to attend this month's meeting, chiefly because of indisposition, including Geoffrey Wilde and Frank Hancock. Elsie Taylor took the chair, and Jack Wood read the minutes of the previous meeting sent on by the Secretary.

Gerry Allison gave the monthly reports as Treasurer and Librarian, as usual. We have purchased 31 new Gems for the Library this month. Among this month's correspondence was a letter giving the sad news that Tom Hopperton is ill in hospital, and we all wish him a speedy recovery.

Gerry also gave the talk this month, which was something of a novelty, the subject being that prolific writer of boys' stories, G. A. Henty. Gerry had much of interest to say about him, not least being the fact that no less than 30 of his books are still in print - a remarkable achievement for an author who produced his work in the Victorian era. Gerry concluded with a reading from 'A Carnet of Horse,' which had for its setting Marlborough's Continental campaigns; it was a very realistic account of a duel, and it was easy to see why Henty is still a name to conjure with.

Next we had an interesting quiz 'Spot the Runners,' sent in by John Jarman. Molly Allison won this, and the prize was a copy of 'Chips' presented by John.

Tom Reach had recorded the B.B.C. broadcasts of the interviews with the various members of the London club, and brought his tape recorder along. He played them over to us during the interval, and it was pleasant to hear the views expressed and listen

to some familiar voices.

We ended with another interesting item sent to us - 'Hidden Treasure,' by Eric Fayne. Ren Hodgson won this, Less Hall being second.

A most interesting meeting, and I'm sure the absentees, when they read the report, will wish they had been there.

Next meeting, Saturday 10th April, is the Annual General Meeting.

PETER TODD

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held Sunday, 14th March.

Among the correspondence received were letters from Eric Fayne, Bette Pate, Bill Gander, and a Mr. R. Roberts of Widnes. The latter reached us as a result of the London club broadcast, and was an enquiry for membership. Den Webster will be pleased to learn that he is still helping to recruit members for Merseyside.

In addition, Norman Pragnell received a letter from a Mr. Kirkham who was, in fact, one of our members some years ago. He has expressed a desire to rejoin the club. These transfusions of new blood are always welcome. Since the departure to "foreign" parts of Frank Case and George Riley (who telephoned me prior to the meeting to wish us well), we have been looking forward to new members coming to replace them. We hope to welcome both Mr. Roberts and Mr. Kirkham at our next meeting.

Regarding the reprinting of some Magnet stories in May it was decided to purchase these copies for the library. What happens after will depend upon the quality of the books.

There was a discussion on the new issues of Sexton Blakes, and Frank Unwin read aloud some extracts from one of them, "Murderer at Large." Members very much regret the emphasis which the Sexton Blake stories still put on sex. All agreed with Eric Fayne's comments in a recent C.D. editorial that these new stories are puzzling. All hope that the premises of the pre-publication publicity may be fulfilled, and that we may again see the wholesome type of story as offered in the pre-war years.

After this discussion, Norman Pragnell distributed papers which bore a number of squares, each square containing a letter. We had to find from these as many of the names of old periodicals as we could, using each letter once only. There were four winners: John Farrell, Frank Unwin, Pat Laffey, and Jack Morgan.

Bert Hamblett presented questions on Sherlock Holmes and Nelson Lee. Here we disgraced ourselves, Norman Pragnell and Frank Unwin each scoring 3 out of 13.

Finally Norman asked us to write down the name "Wharfen Lodge," and then to think of a suitable adjective to describe the dwelling, beginning with each letter contained in the name. John Farrell and Frank Unwin were the winners.

Next meeting: Sunday, April 11th.

BILL WINDSOR

LONDON

Once again at East Dulwich 20 members met and this time both the Packmans were present, Len being very much better in health, although he left early. However, with the sincere thanks of all these present for the fine work he has put into the forthcoming Sexton Blake catalogue.

Bill Lefts gave an interesting talk on "The Bullseye," illustrating with fine specimens of both the subject paper and various others connected with it. Members were reminded that a few years ago Bob Whiter had a complete set of "The Bullseye" which was on display at the Weed Green meetings.

Both sections of the library had excellent reports from their librarians.

Den Webster rendered a quiz, which came from the Merseyside club. The winner was Bob Blythe. Second place was shared by Bill Lefts and Nicholas Bennett.

Len Packman gave the most meeting places in a quiz set by Ben Whiter. He received a Bunter book as his prize.

Ray Hopkins' selection of a chapter from Magnet 1031, "The Toad of the Remove," as a reading item fairly brought down the house, the dialogue between Bob Cherry, Tubb and Paget being extremely funny.

Finally Reuben Godsave conducted his "Twins" quiz. Eric Lawrence was first with the complete set of answers.

Brian Doyle, in the chair, conducted the meeting well and stated that next weekend in the I.T.V. Backdrop programme some of the old papers will be featured.

Next meeting will be held at 40, Ellesmere Road, Dollis Hill, London, N.W.10., on Sunday, April 11th. Kindly note the date, second Sunday this time owing to Easter Day being the third Sabbath. Kindly let the host know if attending. In view of the jubilee of the Nelson Lee Library next July, this meeting should be interesting.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

R E V I E W

"THE WITCHES OF NOTTING HILL"

W.A. Ballinger
(Mayflower 2/6)

Stories of the occult with their lurid descriptions of gruesome religious ceremonies, their casts of unhealthy-minded characters slinking with sinister purport in an aura of moral depravity and evil, are not ingredients everybody would select as part of their reading menu. Until I emerged from the fog of superstition which blanketed the opening chapters I thought that I was going to be disappointed in a Ballinger story for the first time.

The author, however, uses the occult as a means to the plot rather than the base of it, and with Blake, Tinker and Pedro getting hot on the trail of the murderer, things soon begin to go wrong for the old firm. First, Tinker is pushed over a cliff, and is presumed by Blake to be dead; then Blake himself is trapped by the murderer and secured in a refrigerator with Julia Humboldt, an attractive secretary, whose nearness invariably sent the temperature of her employer soaring several degrees. In the circumstances Blake might have wished her capable of adjusting his own blood pressure to meet the needs of the moment. Then, freed by Tinker after being almost frozen to death, Blake is soon pitchforked into the blazing shambles of his own Bentley in a startlingly original climax.

Pedro, enjoying less of the comfort of Baker Street than he has for a long time, is now putting in quite a deal of compulsory overtime; and Coutts - old George to his unofficial friends - also plays a part. It is difficult to express just how good it feels to have these two old favourites back to their former prominence in the stories.

* * * * *

Walter Webb

THE POSTMAN CALLED

(Interesting items from the
Editor's Letter-bag)

STANLEY SMITH (Ipswich): I must take issue with you concerning the new Sexton Blake books. In my opinion, it is just not true to suggest that they cannot be faulted in any detail. I will admit that the stories are well written, that the format (generally) is good, the characterisation far better than any we have had for some years and that the whole thing is just that little bit more like the old Blake. But, but, but - why, eh why, is it necessary to continue "peppering" the yarns with suggestive similes, unnecessary interpolations of a physical character and what I can only consider as cool and calculated insults to the feminine sex.

I want the new Sexton Blake books to be a success as such as anybody. I am convinced, though, that this can only happen if the stories are dragged out of the mire and dirt of the so-called "New Order" and raised again to the high standards of the best of the "Old Order." Let's have some honest-to-goodness detective stories again - a real "whodunnit," for example.

I do like Danny. Possibly it's because we are much of an age - or it may be just nostalgia. Whatever it is, I always have a most enjoyable time reading his diary - with to me, personally, extra enjoyment because of his constant references to the Essex countryside.

(In fact we did not suggest that the new S.B.L. could not be faulted in any detail. Our comment referred to the advance publicity. -ED.)

NICHOLAS BENNETT (Londen): Could you give me any information concerning Roland Davies. He drew for the Holiday and Champion Annuals in the early 30's. His drawings are mainly to do with motor-cycle racing.

(Can anyone help Reader Bennett? -ED.)

FRANK URWIN (Liverpool): Am I behind the times? Am I extremely narrow-minded? Or is it just that my kind of Sexton Blake yarns need not dwell on immorality, or sex for sex's sake?

JOHN MANN (Retford): What a marvellous idea - to have a tie or badge to link those interested in the hobby! I, for one, would be delighted to buy one when they are available.

(Many thanks to large numbers of readers who wrote on similar lines. See comment in Editorial. -ED.)

MISS DOROTHY ROBINSON (Leeds): Danny brought back wonderful memories in January. I knew a boy who was just starting to be a reporter for the North Leeds News, and he ran a small column on the "Pictures." He used to call for me. I remember him reporting on "Trey of Hearts."

(Does any other reader remember "Trey of Hearts?" According to Danny it was a serial or series of those far-off days. -ED.)

KEN BALL (Lincoln): Did you notice that Danny referred to a story by George Richmond in the Boys' Friend? Would that be Mr. Sawways?

(We should think it almost certainly was. -ED.)

VIC COLBY (Australia): The contents of the Annual were magnificent. It makes one wonder how such a thick book could be produced so full of new and exciting material. One would think that the supply of informative articles dealing with a limited specialised field would have dwindled from a steady flow to an exhausted dribble, but

there is certainly no evidence of this in the Annual. I don't know how you do it, but am mighty grateful that you do.

W. K. MACEE (Wirral): Although my collection of St. Jim's stories is confined to B.O.L.s, I can still clearly recall the period in the Gem history from 1931-1936 when it featured reprints of the pre-1914 St. Jim's stories and one of the stories in this period strikes me as being a perfect example of how a contemporary touch can be added to an old yarn. If my memory is correct this story appeared sometime in the middle of 1933 and featured Kerr in one of his celebrated "disguise" episodes. At one point he was batting in a cricket match and - I think it was Gere - was sent a bouncer which was described as "a typical bit of bodyline bowling." "Bodyline bowling" was, of course, a flashback to the Larwood tour of Australia a few months previously - but the original story was written about 1912.

JIM HERRILLS (Alberta): The latest Annual is excellent. I never cease to be amazed at the amount of painstaking work that goes into these publications. Such excellent work could only be done by people who truly love their hobby. Everybody concerned should be highly commended.

W. LISTER (Blackpool): Re Mr. Acraman's letter, I mentioned this badge idea over 2 years ago. Good to see it mentioned again. I feel sure readers would be enthusiastic and forward their cash in advance to finance the plan for a badge or tie. But it would need mentioning once or twice in C.D. in order to get enough interested. Once they knew something was in the offing, readers would be keen.

L. M. ALLEN (Bournemouth): I was most interested in the article "Tillie's Punctured Romance" in this month's C.D. The Reller Skating Rink sequence is still one of the funniest things I have seen on the films. I still have part of the original first reel of the other film mentioned - "His New Job" and should be pleased to send anyone interested a dozen frames from this film on receipt of a s.a.e. These give quite good pictures when mounted for a Slide Projector.

S. PERRY (Cuffley): To me the finest articles in C.D. seem to be the Editorials - so full of common sense. You may now resume wearing the size 7½. Arguments always seem to bring such interesting articles and letters, as in the case of the rivalry between Brooks and Hamilton supporters. Why anyone should suppose that the rivals are getting annoyed, I fail to understand. To be called a retter by a friendly rival is surely not too terrible. At my old school (St. Jim's, of course) the New House fellows were always "retters" and the School House "cads" never failed to tell them so. Yet they still remained Rivals and Chums. I always considered that Brooks wrote a better detective story than Hamilton, but C.H. always had him beat with a school story.

FRANK SHAW (Liverpool): Margery Allingham mentions a friend of her father's who wrote school stories - Gerald Richard Mant Hearne. An Irishman, he did Sexton Blakes and Robin Hoods. Compton Mackenzie in his autobiography speaks of how lucky he was to live in the palmy days of the B.O.P. "So I escaped wretched papers like the Magnet." But as Billy Bunter was still going strong "his author was closer in touch with today than the really good writers of school stories in the nineteenth century." He gives deserved praise to T. B. Reed (to whom Richards never acknowledged his debt). And did you hear Denis Norden on TV say that he preferred Sexton Blake to Bond?

FOR SALE - Red Book for Boys (Strang) 1925; Big Book for Boys (Strang) 1925 and 1928; Blackie's Boys Annual 1928 (?); Boys' Budget (Blackie) 1929 (?) Offers?

MILLER, 50, HILLSIDE GROVE, LONDON, N.14

THAT FELLOW HOOLIGAN!

By Arthur Hennis



HAPPY IKE WITH THE BUNSEY BOYS

When I first saw that article from the Minty Bookcase I thought he was referring to that rather likeable character from America drawn by F. Opper that appeared in the "Big Budget," known for a time as Happy Hooligan, the Hooligan family in "Nuggets" being completely unknown to me until Frank Pettingell's enlightenment in last month's "C.D." Nevertheless it seems likely that the "Nugget" Hooligan might have given the inspiration for this later character and to prevent any infringement was known in this country as Happy Ikey Hoogan. His first appearance under that name was in the "Big Budget" in July 1900. His appearance was rather spasmodic at first. In June 1902 he was joined by his brother Gloomy Gus and they appeared regularly until when 1904 came the "Big Budget" gradually lost its comic pictures and became more of an all story paper.

So after the "Wonder" began, this same Happy Ike with his tin hat made his appearance in that paper, too. That was in 1902. In the "Wonder" which became the "Jester and Wonder" Happy Ike was joined with the Bunsey Boys and they became a firm favourite for some years after. These were drawn by Leonard Shields.

It is rather singular that in January 1905 the "Big Budget" gave notice that the illustrations in the paper were copyright in Britain and the United States and any publication in the United Kingdom reproducing same in any form without permission is liable for infringement under the Copyright Act. Did this refer to Happy Ike I wonder.

R E V I E W

BUNTER, THE SPORTSMANFrank Richards
(Cassell. 11/6)

In spite of the rumour that there were to be no more post-war "Bunters," the latest and 37th of them is in the shops this month.

"Bunter, the Sportsman" should appeal to many boys. My duty is to assess its likely appeal to the adult Greyfriars fan, and that is more difficult. Most adults will find that it passes a pleasant enough hour or so, and will probably enjoy sifting the basic improbabilities.

The tale starts well. Vernon-Smith and Bunter go for a midnight car trip. The car is wrecked, and the boys have to walk home to Greyfriars. As they near Hogben Grange, where a robbery has just been committed, the thief, pursued by Sir Julius Hogben and his staff, hides a ruby in the pocket of the jacket worn by Bunter who is taking a nap under the trees.

The plot centres on the search for the missing ruby, but the story is not aided by a number of slapstick chapters in the middle.

Though Greyfriars boys wear blazers, as Mr. Chapman, the artist is careful to make evident, Bunter, in order to look distinguished, borrows a succession of Mauleverer's Savile Row jackets, which he slits up the back to make them suit his girth. It is rather hard to see how anyone could expect to look distinguished in any jacket, ever one created in Savile Row, slit up the back.

It is also perhaps a trifle incredible that Mauleverer, who seems to own plenty of jackets, should bother to send for repair a specimen which, apart from being slit up the back, also had part of its collar torn away and obviously was so well-worn that it had a hole in the pocket.

The tale tends to be slightly complicated, though there is nothing really to bother the intellect. The introduction of Hogben Grange is a neat touch which gives authenticity of a sort. Mr. Prout's references to his days in the Rockies plus the introduction of Bulstrode will be pleasing to many who love the red Magnet. But I fancy that Charles Hamilton abandoned both Bulstrode and the Rockies, long, long ago.

"Bunter, the Sportsman" is a pleasant enough little story, and there is nothing really to jar on the Greyfriars man who remembers the old days. The author has clearly tried hard to keep the old atmosphere, to avoid anything which might clash with tradition - in short, to please us. These points are worth remembering.

