

COLLECTORS

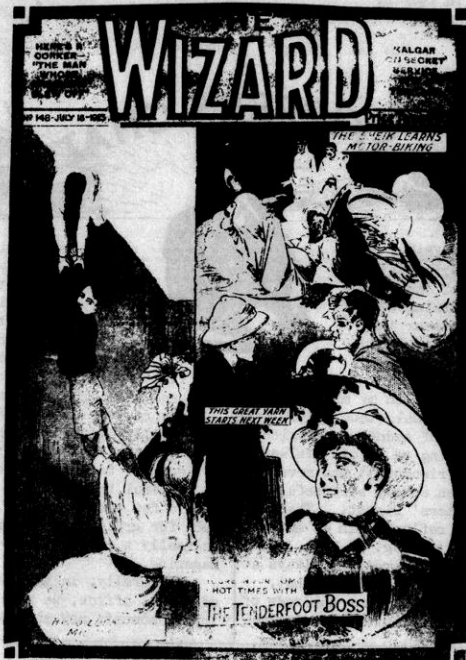
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VOL. 21

No 241

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Collectors' Digest

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 21

No. 241

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR

As I write this, the sands of the old year are running out. As we stand near the gate, it is timely to look back for a few fleeting moments.

As I wrote in my message to you in the Annual, though 1966 had a good deal of sadness, occasioned by the passing on of old stalwarts and loyal friends, it has nevertheless been a very successful year for Collectors' Digest. That success is reflected in my mountainous letter-bag.

My great regret, as always at this time of the year, is that, though I send out many hundreds of letters in the course of a twelve-

month, it is not humanly possible to answer everyone who writes to me. It is not any unwillingness on the part of the spirit which leaves plenty unanswered. It is just

the limitation of one portable Bluebird and one pair of hands.

My readers and friends are wonderfully kind. They accept the shortcomings of their editor with patient and tolerant smiles, and I am grateful that they do. And if just a few take the old C.D. very much for granted, that, in itself, is really a compliment to the magazine.

Naturally, in the untidy editorial office, we have our own trying moments now and then, so we

pucker up and whistle as the clouds roll by.

1967 promises to be an exciting year. Late in the Autumn, if we are spared, Collectors' Digest will come of age. In other words, it will celebrate its 21st birthday. Quite an achievement, though we say it ourselves as shouldn't. I wonder what we shall do when we get the key of the door. Shall we be staid and dignified, as becomes our age - or shall we let down our hair and make whoopee? There's plenty of time to make up our minds about that.

In the meantime, I wish all my readers a Joyful New Year, with Peace and Prosperity in the months to come.

THE EDITOR.

RESULT OF OUR DECEMBER COMPETITION

The odd word was SPAR. The following are the answers to the clues: 1. Brian Mauleverer. 2. Erroll, Wildrake. 3. Modern Boy. 4. Little People. 5. Bagshot. 6. Priscilla, Ethel. 7. Mornington, Outram. 8. Todd, Hazeldene. 9. Laurel Villa. 10. Bird, Ashplant. 11. Charlie Brown. 12. Pilot, Champion. 13. Fancy Waistcoat. 14. Rolling Stone. 15. Gore, Ogre. 16. Outlaw. 17. Substitute writer. 18. Brooks, Scott. 19. Frayne, Murphy. 20. Eton suit.

The new Agatha Christie novel "Third Girl" is awarded to MYRA ALLISON, Menston, Ilkley, Yorkshire.

The new Richmal Crompton book "William and the Masked Ranger" is awarded to NEIL BECK, Lewes, Sussex.

Consolation paperbacks go to R. Hodgson, Mansfield and R. Godsave, Leytonstone.

CHUMS COLLECTORS - 17 volumes for sale 1917 to 1939, also 1931 Holiday Annual. All prices negotiable. Stamp for list - GALLOWAY, 146a WHITE-HALL ROAD, GATESHEAD/TYNE.

WANTED: Magnets, Skippers, Hotspurs, Wizards, S.O.L's, Film Funs, Boys Cinema, Chips, Dandy, Magic - D. MALLETT, 24 BATCHELORS BARN ROAD, ANDOVER, HANTS.

SALE/EXCHANGE - 73 MODERN BOYS 1947-1928, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 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LET'S BE FRANK - RICHARDS

OR - I FEEL CHAMPION

By Ron Galloway

At the risk of being the central actor in a 'necktie party' organised by a mob of enraged Richards-ites, I quote the following editorial which appeared in THE CHAMPION Annual of far-off 1914:-

"It would be ungracious on my part to ignore the many kind references which are appearing in the Press respecting The Champion. Perhaps I may be forgiven for printing an extract from a notice which appears in the magazine of the Foundation School, London. - 'It (The Champion) is a condensation of all the best parts of a dozen other periodicals for boys, and contains, besides, some new types of article, of the greatest interest and value. There are of course the complete school story and the serial, the Scout's story and the adventure, but nothing is exaggerated. The hero of the school tale is not unbearable perfection, neither do the Scouts perform miracles. Besides, all these articles occupy only one quarter of the magazine. The rest of the space is devoted to hobbies and to really good general articles.

The Editor himself pays special attention to his 'Pictures of the month,' which are indeed, as declared, a record of events, achievements and discoveries, and cannot but appeal even to the dullest. A notable feature throughout is the excellence and number of the illustrations.

As the parched explorer, sickened by the muddy water he has been forced to drink, would seize with avidity a flask of pure liquid were it offered him. So should a boy, tired of Wharton and Merry, and Sayers and Blake, pounce upon The Champion. He has thirsted for it for years. Unique in the history of Schoolboy literature, it is an attempt - and one likely to be successful - to create a magazine on a set plan, at once interesting and good. And it may safely be predicted that, while the reader is a boy, it will be impossible for him to tire of it."

The Foundation School magazine was not kidding, because the Champion Annual was indeed a very fine publication, consisting of some 544 pages, handsomely bound in stiff covers with an embossure of a school rugby player on the front.

It contained four serials; one a fascinating account of a 'barring out' rebellion at an Irish School in the early 1800's, also a

(cont'd on p. 15)...

BLAKIANA

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

Walter Webb's review of Desmond Reid's "Death On The Spike" a recent Sexton Blake adventure, suggests that this author deserves "full marks and bonus points here for a welcome, if gruesome touch of originality" in that "the head of the unfortunate newspaperman (was) discovered impaled to a desk of rejected copy in the office."

But methinks this idea has been tried before, in a small office of the suite of rooms used by the magazine "Tidings" :

"The corpse lay on the floor its feet propped up by the drawer of the filing cabinet and it looked as though its head were pillowed on a pile of loose papers..... There was a good inch of clearance between the back of the head and the top paper..... The wire was the shaft of a letter spike.....its sharp point - so serviceable for impaling papers - was buried in the back of the man's neck just at the base of the skull."

Perhaps Desmond Reid is the other name of 'George Bagby' the author of "Red Is For Killing" published 1941 from which the quote is taken?

Jack Hughes
 Brisbane.

* * * * *

A BLOW AT BLAKE

By O. W. Wadham

Just before he died Bill Gander sent me several copies of John O' London's Weekly for 1919. In one, dated September 6 of that year, I was surprised to find an angry correspondent complaining about the conjunction of two famous names - Sexton Blake and Sherlock Holmes. Here is the hostile epistle from those yellowing J. O' L's, pages:

"Blood and Thunder"

Sir, - May I be allowed to raise objection to a phrase in "C.L.B's" article, "Blood and Thunder," in No. 19?

The phrase is this: "Incidents of the 'Sexton Blake' and 'Sherlock Holmes' type of literature." I strongly dislike this conjunction of names,

I presume "C.L.B." has read one or more of the "Sherlock Holmes"

series. Without having any paternal prejudice against the thrilling effusions in lurid covers which smother our bookstalls, I fail to see how anyone can compare one of these to the stories of a fictional character that made its impression on the public before "Sexton Blake" was thought of. With the exception that both are described as "detective" literature, the two have nothing in common. In the penny dreadfuls it is probably the sensational plots, escapes, and adventures that appeal to the juvenile mind. With Conan Doyle's famous character it is not the setting or plot that makes the story. It is the human, personal touch; Sherlock Holmes is the only thing that matters. And he appeals, not to van-boys and office-boys, as your contributor appears to suggest, but to grown, thinking men and women in search of light literature.

My experience of the tastes of growing lads is this. If a boy of fifteen is an eager devourer of the penny dreadful, he has very seldom read any standard books of a higher class. If, on the other hand, a lad prefers to patronize the local library and read Donovan, Doyle, etc., he does not usually care for the sensational weekly "thriller."

I am, etc.,

Wood Green.

H. G. W.

* * * * *

FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER

By Gerry Allison

We all have our favourite Blake author. George Hamilton Teed is perhaps the most popular. The editor of Collector's Digest regards Pierre Quiroule as the greatest of all. My own choice is Lewis Jackson. For an ideal representation of Sexton Blake and Tinker as I always imagine them, and for plots which do not disintegrate into chaos I regard Lewis Jackson as supreme. But for fifteen years there has been a fly in the ointment.

Just lately, I have been re-reading some Union Jacks, dealing with Leon Kestrel, the Master Mummer, and with what enjoyment words can hardly say. Just try 'Kestrel's Intrigue' (U.J. No. 922). The picture of Baker Street in chapter 3, is as vivid as any written about No. 221B in the same famous thoroughfare. And how do you like this pen-portrait of Detective Inspector Harker?

Sexton Blake, garbed in the shabby dressing-gown which had become by years of habit a sort of undress uniform, lay back in the chair, and peered thoughtfully through a cloud of smoke at the keen eyes and rugged face of the celebrated Yard man.

Edward Harker was not a man of unique methods, nor a genius in

investigation. But he had that form of genius which shows an infinite capacity for taking pains. In the pursuit of malefactors he was indomitable, persistent, relentless; and there was no member of the C.I.D. more heartily loathed and feared by the criminal fraternity.

In addition he had enough imagination to maintain a surprising admiration for the great private detective of Baker Street. He was above the paltry calumny and petty jealousy which marked the manner of some of his colleagues towards Sexton Blake.

In all matters of investigation he worshipped quietly at Blake's shrine, enjoying the friendship and confidence of the detective more than any other official of the Police Force.

Yes, Lewis Jackson is the man for me, and when I read the article by S. Gordon Swan on "Oddities in the Blake Saga" in the November issue of the 'C.D.', I was extremely grateful to him for elucidating a problem which has puzzled me for over 15 years, and for removing the above-mentioned fly from the ointment. I refer to his very interesting discovery about "The Man From Persia" (S.B.L. No. 244, 3rd series), ascribed by the publishers to Lewis Jackson.

I reviewed this story for Blakiana in Collectors' Digest No. 56, and felt at the time that it could not be a genuine Lewis Jackson story. It completely lacked the magic of that writer, although it did mention Leon Kestrel and introduce Inspector Harker as S. Gordon Swan points out. This is what I wrote in August 1951.

"In this yarn Blake falls into the simplest of traps, and his strategy made me squirm..... The best moment in the book was when the author referred to his old character "the inimitable Leon Kestrel." Bring him back, Mr. Jackson."

I once detected a substitute Rookwood yarn in the first paragraph, and much later Bill Lofts confirmed my opinion from his records. It is very gratifying to have this doubt about the authenticity of the authorship of "The Man From Persia" solved by the keen acumen of one of our worthy hobby members. Many thanks, Mr. Gordon Swan.

* * * * *

THE ROUND TABLE

Last month the C.D. reviewer of the Sexton Blake story "The Snowman Cometh" suggested that "everything is here to please the Old Guard." It is not unusual for our reviewers to talk about the impression a certain story is likely to make on the "old brigade" or the "old gang" or the "old guard."

Presumably they mean you and me, possibly some little set of "old

fogies" who enjoy a straightforward story of detection. I daresay there are plenty of young people with similar tastes, so I don't really see why we should be lumped together in this cosy fashion. Do the reviewers imagine us combing out our straggly white beards and staggering forth singing brokenly:

"Steady and strong, marching along,
Like the boys of the Old Brigade." ?

I don't quite see either why "The Snowman Cometh" should be regarded as of especial appeal to the "Old Guard" whoever they may be. The whole Blake Organisation plays its part in the story, including Paula, who, perhaps to add a bit of spice to the fare, is taking a bath when the ghostly snowman appears. She dons surprisingly little clothing before dashing off in pursuit in her car, through the snow and ice.

The Christmas party at Medleigh Towers includes, for no apparent reason at all, those lively modern criminals, the Duke and Duchess of Derwentwater. The Duchess is the only one who ever calls Blake "Sexton."

On two occasions, members of the cast of the story come forth with a sanguinary adjective which is only used by a member of the Old Guard when he drops an anvil on his big toe.

Mr. Desmond Reid, who wrote the story, has, in fact, a very modern turn of phrase. For instance:

"One little swine actually swung on my whiskers," gloomed Fallroy.
And: "The murderous swine!" Tinker gritted.

As verbs of speech, "to gloom" and "to grit" did not feature in the grammar books of we boys of the Old Guard.

So why suggest that this is a tale of especial appeal to the "Old Guard," Mr. Reviewer? I, personally, found it an interesting story. The atmosphere is good, suspense is well-maintained till the end, even allowing for a loose end or so, and the plot is undoubtedly original. Pedro, too, is portrayed very pleasantly.

But way back in the beginning, the author strikes a false note in a brief episode which is as silly as it is unnecessary. Sexton Blake is giving a staff party in his Baker Street flat,

"Marion Lang had contrived to slip an ice-cream down the back of Tinker's shirt." Assuming that Sexton Blake's staff comprises people of a normal sense of responsibility, this was surely a most astounding thing for any sane and well-mannered young woman to do.

But wait. Tinker is, not unnaturally, a trifle cross. Mr. Reid tells us that "Tinker hurled himself on the girl with some

intention of giving her some of the ice-cream treatment, too. Then a curious thing happened."

Mr. Reid is right. Very curious indeed. "With her warm young body abruptly in his arms the realisation came on Tinker that she was a vital, delightful, and disturbingly attractive young woman. And he did what any red-blooded, hot-headed and very slightly intoxicated young man would do. He kissed her."

According to the poet, it was the Spring which caused the fancy of we of the Old Guard "lightly to turn to thoughts of love." Old-fashioned, of course. All the same, I can't imagine the most modern of young men suddenly feeling the urge to make love with an ice-cream slithering down between his shirt and his shoulder blades at a staff party.

How did the kindly host re-act to all this. Well, "at the fireplace, Sexton Blake frowned faintly."

Luckily, just as it all threatens to turn into a real X-certificate affair, Tinker steps on Pedro's tail, and with the dog's howl the situation comes back to normal.

Marion, with a deft back-heel, sends Tinker staggering on to a couch. "Nark it, Master Tinker!" she cries.

Mr. Reid tells us that "Blake smiled." I'm afraid that if some lady at my next party shoves an ice-cream down the spine of a fellow-guest I shan't be so indulgent as Sexton Blake. I shall say "OUT!"

This episode about ice-cream, and the smouldering passion it causes when sliding down the vertebrae, is nothing whatever to do with the plot of the story. In fact, apart from this, it is quite a good average yarn. Of course, I am only speaking for myself - not for the whole of the "Old Guard."

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: MAGNETS: 131 to 149 inclusive, 205, 238, 239, 309, 328, 337, 356 to 358 inclusive, 435, 773, 850, 858, 862, 863, 864, 865, 868, 942, 951, 985, 988. GEMS: Some issues between 801 and 832, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998. POPULARS: 452, 455, 466, 472.

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

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO COLLECTORS EVERYWHERE. I WANT POPULARS, MAGNETS.

STUART WHITEHEAD, 12, WELLS ROAD, FAKENHAM, NORFOLK.

HAMILTONIANA

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 107. A PHARAOH WHO KNEW NOT JOSEPH

Why did Rookwood end as it did in the issue of the Boys' Friend dated April 24th 1926? We can discard any idea that the series ended at the wish of the author. If that had been the case, he would have said so in later years - and he never did say so.

Pretty obviously the paper was passed into the hands of a new editor - probably a man who also controlled Champion, Triumph, and Comic Life. It would seem that this gentleman decided that Rookwood had outlived its usefulness to the Boys' Friend. He intended to run the paper his own way with an entirely new group of stories.

So, in that last week-end of April 1926, a series which, in the view of most of us certainly, had been the backbone and main support of the paper for eleven years, ended without the remotest comment of regret from the editor. So far as I can trace, though the Boys' Friend ran on until the end of 1927. Rookwood was never once mentioned again in its pages.

This in itself was odd, for the editor usually allowed himself an entire large page for his weekly chat, and often had a section headed "Replies to Correspondents." Surely, from time to time, some readers asked "What's become of Rookwood?" or "Can't we have some more Rookwood?" But, if they did, the editor gave no sign of it.

For the observant, there had been signs in the paper for some time that changes were coming. About four weeks before Rookwood ended, Wakefield, who had illustrated Rookwood attractively for many years, disappeared from the pages. It was an unknown artist who completed the job.

Had the attraction of Rookwood lessened for the average reader? In reminiscent mood last month I called to mind how I bought a copy of the Boys' Friend, and was quite shocked to find that Rookwood was no longer therein. I remember the circumstance well, but it makes me realise that I had given up buying Rookwood week by week in the Boys' Friend. Yet for years I never missed buying a copy. It was always the Boys' Friend and the Magnet on Mondays.

I cannot think why I deserted Rookwood before the finish, for I well remember enjoying the Silver Cloud series which had appeared

during the previous summer. I don't think it can have been due to economy with my pocket money, for I was never one to save. It must have been that for some reason or other I found Rookwood less appealing.

A browse over the stories, all these years later, does not really show any deterioration in the general quality. I have never liked the Marcus Manders series of the autumn of 1925. The Christmas series about Lovell's Uncle Peter and the Spring series about Lovell as captain I did not read until much later when they featured in the Popular. They were not outstanding tales.

In the issue of the Boys' Friend which presented the final Rookwood story there was a full-page announcement by the editor. It commenced with the following: "Next Monday's Boys' Friend will be entirely reconstructed to meet the present-day tastes and needs of the boys of the British Empire. The familiar green paper (best for the eyes) is retained ---"

Announcements of modernisation or meeting the needs of a new generation are usually ominous, and nowhere more so than in the case of a thirty-year old paper like the Boys' Friend. It had happened before in the periodical world, and it was to happen again in the case of such papers as the Popular and Modern Boy. Almost inevitably the results were disastrous.

In a very short time the editor was advertising, in the pages of the Boys' Friend, for 5000-word stories which must contain "no situation or words which might offend parents or schoolmasters." What, then, had become of the fine team of writers which he had claimed was going to write for the Friend?

The early issue of the modernised "Green 'Un" were depressing, I should imagine, for anyone who recalled the heyday of the paper. Stories of "Ripplingham" were written by one, John Lance. Who John Lance was I do not know! He wrote two serials followed by some complete stories of the same school. They seem to be run-of-the-mill tales. One of the characters wore an eyeglass and said such things as "Bai jove, you fellahs! I'm weally dwenched!" How many of these writers ever had an original idea of their own?

The main attraction of the Ripplingham tales was that they were pleasantly illustrated by Leonard Shields. Later, John Lance did a series about Toppingham, once again illustrated by Shields and occasionally Saville Lumley.

This hotch-potch of a Boys' Friend continued for twenty months after Rookwood ended, so it may have appealed to some. By the start of 1927 it seems fairly obvious that contents consisted mainly of

reprints from varying types of papers. I have traced two of the series of complete tales as coming respectively from Pluck of 1905 and from the Wonder of 1913. The majority of the post-Rookwood B.F. tales were not accompanied by the authors' names.

In the early Spring of 1927 a serial entitled "His Convict Father," delightfully illustrated by J. Louis Smythe, commenced, and it ran on and on and ON till the last issue of the paper at the close of the year. I am not sure that this serial was a reprint, but it seemed odd fare for the Boys' Friend to offer, and was distinctly reminiscent of papers like the Jester or the Firefly.

Another serial "The B.A.T.S.," a tale of the school for Backward and Troublesome boys, may have had its first run in the Boys' Friend, but I feel that I have seen it elsewhere.

And, of course, "The School Bell," which was serialised in the Friend in the closing months, is an old favourite with many of those who have happy memories of the royalty among comic papers.

So the Boys' Friend ended as the bells were ringing out the year 1927. The saddest, and in my view the most disgraceful, factor in the whole history of this fine old paper, was that it died without one single word of regret from the editor. He made no comment at all on the closing of a paper which had appeared regularly since 1895 - a period of 32 years. Whoever he was, I can never forgive him for that. He merely said: "Next week, don't say Boys' Friend. Ask for TRIUMPH."

To-day, in a far less sentimental age, the national press would certainly publish articles drawing attention to the passing of a paper like the Green 'Un. As it did in the case of the Children's Newspaper and the Scout. Yet in 1927 the Boys' Friend, of which reams could be written, died without a murmur from anyone.

As a boy, I would have found but little to appeal to me in the last 20 months of the Boys' Friend. But now, nearly 40 years since the Green 'Un was on the bookstalls, it makes fascinating browsing. No doubt there are plenty of to-day's men who would find some delightful reading in those green pages.

In the last year, of course, pages of comic pictures had replaced some of the stories. There were full pages of Professor Radium, who was more famous elsewhere. And on one occasion at least there was a full-page of Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy.

We have never answered the question with which we opened this article. Why did Rookwood finish? Possibly because the Rookwood stories were so short, and the Hamiltonian enthusiasts did not feel inclined to buy a paper only a quarter of which gave them what they

wanted. Yet for long periods, the St. Jim's tales in the Gem were not so very much longer than an average Rookwood story.

Fairly obviously, the new editor did not want Rookwood. It is hard to think that it would have been denied to him had he wanted it. Probably he was a man who knew nothing of Charles Hamilton's third greatest creation. Just a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph.

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 106. CHRISTMAS FOR REMEMBRANCE

ROGER JENKINS: What memories you bring back, especially in your mention of John Medcraft! The hobby owes a great deal to him, more than perhaps is realised.

During the war, he visited waste-paper merchants all over London, and saved innumerable copies of the old papers from being pulped. I remember how he wrote to me, apologising for having to raise his price for Magnets of the early 'thirties from 6d to 10d! He used to send along mint copies, often with the free gifts still inside, and I possess some of these copies yet.

After the war, he introduced me to Herbert Leckenby, and so it was to him I owe my introduction to the magic circle of collectors.

DEREK ADLEY: I thought your article "Christmas for Remembrance" the most interesting one that I have read for years, and I mean that, for not only was I absorbed by your own experiences but it brought back many little things into my own mind. The time when my own mother, being in a temper with me, tore up my Magnet for Christmas 1939, and then, relenting, and seeing me upset, helped me tour the shops for a fresh copy. Little things like this, for no apparent reason, came into my mind.

GEORGE SELLARS: I must say that this Controversial is about one of your best. So much so that it has inspired me to relate some of my own adventures. First of all it was dear old Mac who first induced me to buy the Gem - his grand picture on the blue cover in March 1915. Sad moments, too, when I sold my whole collection for a few shillings (over 400 blue Gems) and some early Holiday Annuals. It wasn't till 1925 that I realised what I had done.

In 1929 a dear old lady asked me if I could write her a little song for the Mothers' Meeting Concert, so I obliged her with "Gussy" from "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays." I have never forgotten what I felt

like when, in a quavering voice, she recited it, and it nearly brought the house down. Another time I discovered Treasure Trove in the old market. I made two journeys to take home 320 papers, mostly Gems, Magnets, Lees, Union Jacks, and Jesters. I feel honoured that our dear editor is a chap after my own heart, and a loyal Gemite. I am glad he has achieved his great ambition of getting a complete run of Gems and Magnets. Nobody can deserve his reward more. I have a modest collection, but they are all real Gems by the "master;" also some early H.A's - and I am very happy with them.

I agree with you all the way in what you wrote about "The Myth of Greyfriars."

FRANK CASE: I particularly liked "Christmas for Remembrance." You certainly missed some snips, years ago, and I can well imagine you must often think with regret of those missed chances.

E. J. DAVEY: I found myself tremendously in agreement with your remarks about "The Myth." The Echoes in the December issue are interesting, too, and show how inevitably opinions vary on any topic. For example: Does the BBC ignore the clubs, or do the clubs shun publicity? Faults on both sides no doubt.

CHARLES DAY: I managed to get "The Myth" down on tape, though I must say I didn't quite like the reference to our infantile adult minds. Still, the opinion of one ill-informed person, expert though he was supposed to be, doesn't affect us one jot. Personally, I find our hobby gives me excitement, pleasure, and relaxation, and sometimes even a little sadness that the things we knew are no more and the world altered so much. That is why I regard C.D. as the key that unlocks the door to our lost world.

* * * * *

R E V I E W

"A STRANGE SECRET"

Martin Clifford

What is unquestionably the finest reprint of a Charles Hamilton story since before the war is not available in the shops at all. It is limited to 250 copies and is available only to club members and Collectors' Digest readers, and it is published by the Charles Hamilton Museum of Maidstone, Kent.

Of its type, it is certainly one of the best that the famous author ever wrote. It comprises "Under Gussy's Protection," the last

blue Gem story, and its sequel, "A Strange Secret," the first white cover Gem. By mid 1916, when these stories appeared, much of the gloss, oddly enough, had gone from the Gem. Though the author's work retained its unfailing competence, the charm of the blue Gem's yarns had somehow been lost as the blue cover went into its final months.

"A Strange Secret," however, was a return to the earlier type of story. A new boy, Valentine Outram, comes on the scene, and an amazing piece of scandal, originated by Levison, mars Outram's school life. There is a mystery about Outram which is well maintained until the close of the story. There is a splendid portrayal of the loyal Arthur Augustus, and there are many moments which oddly touch the heart. As we have observed before in Collectors' Digest, this tale, which must rank with the author's best, never appeared in the School-boy's Own Library, and it was reprinted only once after its original triumph.

The new book is a splendid job, well-printed, tastefully bound in hard covers, and delightfully and profusely illustrated by the work of the late R. J. Macdonald.

"A Strange Secret" is available at 6/- (including postage) from John Wernham, 30 Tonbridge Rd, Maidstone, Kent.

LET'S BE FRANK - RICHARDS OR - I FEEL CHAMPION (cont'd from p. 4)..

capital school story entitled 'Telford's Last Term' by the top-class author Harold Avery - illustrator W.H.C. Groome. A fine 'Western' called 'The Indian Vengeance' from the pen of F.B. Forester (any relation to Hornblower?) who also contributed several like serials to Young England about the first world-war period, and lastly a public school story 'Percy Geddes' by J. H. Whitehouse - illustrator Groome.

Fine 'Shorts' were contributed by Harold Dorning, H. A. Woolley, H. Hervey and many others, whilst there is a variety of articles on Sports, Pastimes, Pets etc., and Book Reviews.

I fear however that the prognostications of longevity of the London Foundation School for this periodical remained unrealised. I fancy there was a 1913 Annual (and possibly earlier ones) but perhaps Mr. Brian Doyle or some other enthusiast can enlighten us on exactly how long it ran, with information on serial authors, illustrators etc.



JANUARY 1917.

The old Greyfriars stories have now come into the Penny Popular. I am very glad of this, for I have never read many of them before, except just a few which I had in the Dreadnought.

The first Greyfriars tale in the Pop is called "The Making of Harry Wharton" about how Harry first came to Greyfriars. This story was in Magnet No. 1; it also once was published in the Penny Pop as a short serial. This new Pop also contained "Tom Merry & Co's Cinema," and a Jack, Sam and Pete tale called "With Fick and Lamp."

Next week, "The Taming of Harry Wharton" in which Bob Cherry came to Greyfriars; also "The Banished Schoolboy," a Lumley-Lumley and Grimes tale; plus "The Flooded Mine" (J.S. & P.)

Then "The Mystery of Greyfriars" in which Wharton failed an exam because Hazeldene snipped a button from his jacket; "The Raiders' Reward," a story of House rivalry at St. Jim's; and "Pete, the Knight Errant."

Finally "Chums of the Remove" in which the Remove sets out to punish Hazeldene; "The Champion of the Ring" in which a new master at St. Jim's, Mr. Harrison, is also a professional boxer; and "The Fisherman's Secret." (J.S. & P)

At present, the Pop has new pictures on the cover, but all the inside pictures are old ones. With the publication of the first Greyfriars story there was a free Art Plate of the Remove Form.

The Boys' Friend has been great all the month. Opening Rookwood tale was a scream. "The Canadian Junior's Conquest" was another in the series about the new French-Canadian boy, Pons. He is regarded as being rather simple. The Bag-shot fellows challenge him to a duel with pistols, intending to use blank shot. Pons and Putter have the duel. As the shots ring out, Putter gives a groan and falls. But Pons also groans and falls

DANNY'S

GRAND PRESENTATION



ONE AGAINST

(A scene from the splendid long Greyfriars tale)

A HAPPY & PROSPEROUS NEW

DIARY

ON PLATE INSIDE!

Henry Wharton's Arrival at 607.

Week End
 Journal 10th 1917

Popular



THE FORM!

Henry Wharton and Co. presented at the Strand

- and he is covered with "blood." Great fun.

In the B.F. there is also a new series of short tales called Rookwood Recollections, supposed to be written by different Rookwood boys. There is also a good series about Derrick Brent, the Schoolmaster Detective, by Victor Nelson.

Next week, another Pons story, "Held to His Word." Pons helped Jimmy Silver, and Jimmy, in his gratitude, promised to do Pons a good turn if ever he got the chance. By and by, Pons asked for a place in the football team against Bagshot. This was awful - for Pons had seemed to be a very bad player. However, Jimmy got a surprise when Pons played.

"Mr. Manders' Tea-Party" was amusing. Manders had the habit of sending out invitations from time to time, by printed cards, to different groups of boys to have tea in his study. He invited Jimmy and Co, in order to keep them out of a football game. But before tea started, Mornington had prepared surprises in Mr. Manders' study - and Jimmy & Co were blamed. Jimmy got his own back by getting hold of some of Manders' printed cards, and sending them out to different sets of boys who arrived unexpectedly for tea at fifteen minute intervals.

Final tale of the month went on with the Mornington - 'Erbert series. In "Scorned by the Fags," poor 'Erbert found himself much disliked by his form fellows, and he is not enjoying life at Rookwood.

At the local cinemas we have seen some good films this month including Dorothy Gish in "Sweet Seventeen;" Marguerite Clark in "Molly Make Believe;" Bessie Love in "Acquitted" and Douglas Fairbanks in "Facing the Music." Charlie Chaplin in "The Pawnshop" was a scream, while Ford Sterling in an old Keystone, "His Wild Oats" also had me in convulsions.

One evening at Camberwell Palace we saw a

YEAR TO ALL READERS

grand stage revue entitled "Peking to Paris" which finished up with a snowball fight between those on the stage and the audience, the snowballs being made of some sort of fluffy stuff.

The Gem has had some good stories this month though there is really too much of the Levisons and Talbot. In "Grundy's Guilt," an insulting anonymous letter was sent to Mr. Linton. A hand-writing expert, Mr. Spother, was called in and decided that Grundy was the culprit. But Racke was really the wicked one.

"The Wisdom of Gussy" was quite excellent, even though I get fed up with the Levisons. Gussy had the idea that Frank Levison should pretend that he was following his brother's bad examples. It made Levison Major sit up and take notice. A really excellent yarn.

"A Pal in Peril" re-introduced the new Italian boy, Contarini, nicknamed Jackeymo. Herr Schneider went off on a fortnight's holiday, and was replaced by a Mr. McCracken, who proved to be a German spy, out to kidnap Contarini. Quite a good tale. Last of the month came "Levison for St. Jim's" in which Levison was picked to play for St. Jim's juniors against Greyfriars, but Racke & Co did all they could to make it seem that Levison was still his old racketty self.

A new B.F.L. 3s Library is "Adrift in the Pacific." It is by Jules Verne who, I thought, died years ago, but I suppose he didn't. Brother Doug had a new Sexton Blake Library entitled "The Man With the Green Eyes." It was a neat tale introducing George Marsden Plummer.

This month there was a terrible munitions explosion in the East End of London. 69 people were killed, and hundreds were injured. There was also a train smash at Ratho, near Edinburgh.

In the Magnet "Getting Rich Quick" was a rather involved story about Fisher T. Fish and how he tried to make money on the Stock Exchange by buying Koko Kambang shares with other people's money. (No. 3 of the Greyfriars Gallery was George Wingate).

Next week "In Hot Water" was a sequel to the tale "Victims & Victors" of a week or two back. About the money which Bunter found in a wallet. It turned out to be counterfeit.

"The Deserter" of the following week was Bob Cherry's Cousin, Paul Tyrrell. A fugitive from the call-up, he was hiding in the Greyfriars vaults. But in a zepp raid, an incendiary bomb fell on the porter's lodge, and Tyrrell rescued Gosling from the flames. (No. 4 of the Greyfriars Gallery was Percy Bolsover.)

Final tale of the month was "Linley Minor." I wonder whether it is being too kind to say it was pretty awful. In this issue was

the Greyfriars Gallery No. 5 - Mark Linley. Also, the serial "Fourth Form at Franklingham" ended this week. I haven't read much of it.

Towards the end of the month I bought the Union Jack. The story was "The Lost Journalist" and it was a story about Sexton Blake in Salonika in search of a newspaper man named Robert Walton. It was pretty good.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

So, as Danny reminds us, it is exactly 50 years since that notorious tale "Linley Minor" was on the bookstalls. This, apart from "School & Sport," seems to have been the only substitute story to which Charles Hamilton referred by name. In the middle nineteen-forties, when his comments about the substitute writers were at their strongest, he observed, with bitter indignation: "One of them, in a story named 'Linley Minor,' introduced an obscenity." Whether he had actually read the tale we cannot say, but, if not, he had heard report of it.

It is a pretty terrible story. Heavy with sickly sentiment, hammy and completely unbelievable as to dialogue, and with a preposterous plot, it vies with "Sunday Crusaders" for the label of the worst tale ever to feature in the Magnet.

Gerald Linley, Mark Linley's younger brother, arrives as a new junior at Greyfriars. His parents have managed to raise the fees. He is a "snob and an outsider," with a remarkable gift of language for a boy of thirteen. He is in the "Cross Keys," when Skinner is apprehended outside that establishment by Mr. Quelch.

"Wretched boy!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "So this is how you spend the hours which should rightly be devoted to slumber! You have doubtless been visiting this low establishment!"

"I shouldn't dream of doing such a thing, sir," answered the cad of the Remove, lying glibly. "Ask the landlord."

'Mr. Quelch did so, but he got no satisfaction from Cobb.

"Your companion whom I actually saw vacating the premises will fare worse," said Mr. Quelch. "Now, Skinner, I command you to give me his name."

Then Skinner told a lie blacker than the blackest midnight.

"His name, sir," he said, "is Mark Linley."

So Mark Linley, without much enquiry into the rights and wrongs of the case, is expelled by a Headmaster who, from the way he spoke and acted, was mentally deficient.

Later on, the repentant Gerald has that inevitable fall from a

rope of knotted sheets, and sustains the inevitable broken limb and concussion. Skinner, inevitably in a tale of this type, rode through the dark and treacherous lanes to fetch a doctor, and the reader has to endure the inevitable night of fear that Master Gerald is going to die.

Mark Linley comes back of course, and sits by Gerald's bed.

"Gerald, old boy," said Mark, his voice faltering, "it was splendid of you to make a clean breast of things!"

"Not at all!" replied Gerald. "I was driven to it. And you, Marky? How have you been faring at home?"

"I had quite resigned myself to a life of slavery," said Mark with a smile.

One could understand Charles Hamilton's annoyance at his brain children being dragged through this syrupy bog of farce. But what did he mean by the reference to "obscurity"?

The actual item to which Hamilton referred came over halfway through the story. Phyllis Howell, riding her cycle in the dark, ran down Skinner.

'Skinner, who was sprawling in the roadway, staggered to his feet. He was smothered in mud, though, apart from a few bruises, he had escaped injury. But his expression was positively murderous.

"How dare you?" he roared. "It's like your confounded cheek to bowl me over like that!"

"You should have stepped aside," said Phyllis tartly. "You had plenty of time."

'Skinner gave a growl.

"It's always the same with you people who've got babies," he said. "You think you own all the giddy road. If you were a fellow I'd give you a jolly good licking."

"You cad!" said Phyllis.

Now, in a story which is as absurd and as shoddily-written as this one, nobody is really surprised at any piece of rubbish in the dialogue. Yet one feels instinctively that the piece about "babies" must have been a misprint. If it were not, then what on earth did the author mean? Is it possible that he intended Skinner to be referring to women who push prams willy-nilly along a crowded pavement or in shops, bumping into folk as they proceed? It really doesn't seem likely - except that the author didn't seem to bother about what was likely.

But if it were a misprint, then what was it a misprint of? Could it have been of "bicycles"? "It's always the same with you people

NELSON LEE COLUMN

(CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD)

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

By Jim Cook

I was in pensive mood as I glanced at the figures in the Triangle. It was a cold but sunny morning and I had gone to the School House to see Mr. Crowell to ask whether he would contribute an article to Collector's Digest but the form room was empty. I had come when the class was at break. And as I had approached the School House from the Head's private residence I was unaware that the school had left the classrooms and gone out into the sunny Triangle.

So it was with thoughtful eyes that I looked at the figures from the window of the Remove form room. Juniors and seniors were sunning themselves in the morning break and here and there were little collections of juniors while dotted about were boys who preferred to be alone. A swarm of fags could be seen gathered near the fountain in the centre of the Triangle urging a figure who was precariously balanced on the stone coping to maintain his hold or fall in. But my main interest was centred on the juniors who stood on the steps of the Ancient House.

There must have been a dozen of them in a group and they were all engaged in a friendly sort of discussion since Handforth was very much in evidence, and judging from the absence of waving arms and vigorous shaking of heads which is a feature of Hand's presence, I am sure the topic under discussion was not football. Handforth's views on soccer and the way it should be played seems always to be accompanied by noise.

I could see Nipper & Co., DeValerie, Singleton, Archie Glenthorne and Alf Brent, Sommerton, Fullwood and of course Handforth & Co. And I reflected on the amazing histories of these few characters alone besides others at the school. Some of these juniors, not yet in their twenties, had seen more life, had visited more places in the world, than most of us experience in a whole lifetime.

I rather like the philosophy of Cecil DeValerie who once told me he believes that whatever Fate has in store for you nothing will change your destiny. With Val it's a case of what is to be will be. And I suppose he's right.

One wonders why these juniors in particular should have been singled out for prominence while others I could see around the Triangle

were mere nonentities. There was Augustus Hart of Study P in the West House. With him were Owen Major and Farman of the same study. Wait though, Farman provided us with some exciting thrills when he came to St. Frank's. In fact, if I remember rightly without asking him, the leading lights of St. Frank's had a magnificent holiday adventure in America through Farman's arrival at the school.

A little knot of juniors outside the Modern House caught my eye. They were George Holland, Horace Crowe, George Webb and Albert Crooke. Behind them were Walter Skelton, Eugene Ellmore, Vandyke and Terence O'Grady. These boys were not fated to shine very brightly in the St. Frank's firmament and consequently they can easily be passed over. Likewise another cluster of juniors I could see lounging on the East House steps. These were Holroyd, Munroe and Peter Cobb; Turner Page and Harron. Looking pasty and weak were Merrill, Marriott and Snipe as they gossiped with Dallas, Steele and Freeman. But Armstrong whom I could see approaching them was a different kettle of fish. This junior had at one time a chance of occupying a prominent place in the Lower School for although full of bluster and self-importance there was, I think, sufficient strength of character in him to rule over the destinies of East House. But perhaps I am basing my view of him when he was more interesting in the old College House. In the old days when only the College House and the Ancient House formed St. Frank's the rivalry that existed between the two Houses brought out a more clear cut character of the boys and I shall always think the new St. Frank's with its four Houses rather tended to destroy the two-edged sword of rivalry that was always an interesting feature of St. Frank's.

I came to this conclusion as I looked at Timothy Armstrong. And I could give equal merit to Bob Christine who I could see on the steps of the Modern House. I am sure the new formation at St. Frank's made a great change in Bob for he was such an important figure in the old College House days. It is true that Buster Boots who took the captaincy from Bob is a more forceful kind of junior but Christine was endeared to us from the beginning and it is a pity to see old Bob fade out like this.

There were many other juniors dotted about the Triangle but most of them did not jog any memory that may have been aroused by reason of their exploits. I felt inclined to think of those boys who belonged to the old school; of the College and Ancient House days rather than those who were famous later on when St. Frank's was enlarged. It always seemed to me that a different era bloomed with the

coming of the four Houses; it cut off associations with the past in one sweep and we were expected to move into a new house that had been chosen for us rather than that we had selected. While it had been easy to emerge from the old Ancient House and cross over to the College House we now had to consider crossing over to three other Houses. And the consensus of opinion in both the Upper School and the Lower School was that a preference for the old way of life was desired. But progress was not to be denied and at the risk of disastrous change the four Houses came into being. Now there will always be four Houses at St. Frank's. And with the alteration came a change in some of the boys. Some went into obscurity others blossomed into leading lights. John Busterfield Boots was one of the latter. Ralph Leslie Fullwood changed as did Simon Kenmore. Fullwood dropping his old questionable ways for a more healthy outlook and Kenmore of the East House 6th getting to understand the juniors in a more friendly approach. Hart, Hubbard, Fatty Little, Timothy Tucker were only a few of the juniors that faded from the scene with the coming of the new school. Was it because they did not agree with the new idea and decided to fall back into the gloom of obscurity? Or was it because of the influx of new characters made possible by the larger space available? Take some of the new characters that came into the new school; Gresham, Alan Castleton, Wallace - who went back to the River House - Travers, Jimmy Potts, Gore-Pearce, Corcoran - who I would say usurped Armstrong's chance of being a junior captain of his House - Bangs, Evans, Waldo, K. K. Parkington and his set, Viscount 'Skeets' Bellton, King Victor Orlando etc.

Bernard Forrest came first of them all when the new Houses appeared. Most of these new arrivals had reason to occupy the front page because of their original make-up and other juniors who had been in the forefront till then had to take a back seat. Which was a pity I think.

Even Nipper agrees with me on this. He went so far as to hope for the day when something would happen to reduce St. Frank's to two Houses again.

But surprisingly places like Bellton, Bannington, Helmsford are just as they were when we first got to know them. By some Supreme Law these must not change or be allowed to alter in any way. Nipper, who is familiar with man made laws, says St. Frank's could revert to two Houses under a special dispensation. I'll have to think that one over!

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NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held November 29th, 1966

An attendance of nine members assembled for this meeting at the Birmingham Theatre Centre.

There was such a happy, lively atmosphere that it augurs well for the success of our Annual Xmas Party to be held next month on 20th December, when we shall attempt to out-Bunter Bunter with a "study supper."

Three letters were read from postal and other members. Stan Knight sent a long letter describing his contact with a representative from the Thomson papers in endeavouring to obtain copies of 'Secret' a new monthly magazine. Much to Stan's surprise he found these were reprints from women's weeklies.

Our usual features, Anniversary Number and Collector's Item were on display provided by Tom Porter. These were "The School Friend" No. 29 dated November 29th, 1919 and 47 years old to the day and Boys' Friend Library (Old Series) published 31st March, 1925 "The Barring Out at Haygarth." Tom Porter has the first 260 numbers of "The School Friend," but only the first five or six were written by Frank Richards under the pen name, Hilda Richards. "The Barring Out at Haygarth," was by Jack North (J. N. Pentelow) who seemed to specialise in barring out stories.

There was an introductory talk given by George Chatham on the topic, "Eric Payne, Editor of 'Collector's Digest.'" George is, as we know an editor himself of the Round Oak Works magazine "The Acorn" and it was a case of one editor passing judgment on another. Not that George's judgment was severe, for he was of the opinion that Eric Payne was doing a first-class job. He was well aware of the ticklish problems which inevitably arise when one has to meet a time schedule. He suspected Eric often had to get busy with his own pen to fill in gaps, as George himself had often done in his own capacity as an editor. There were criticisms from some members of the kind every editor must expect - those who wished to see their own interests figuring more prominently, but every editor must adhere to the principle - "the greatest good for the greatest number."

Ivan Webster introduced a game, "Likes and Dislikes." Each player wrote down in two columns his own particular likes and dislikes

in ten minutes. We had great fun when these were read out and some surprises were forthcoming. We learnt a few things about our fellow members and the game ended with many amusing wisecracks being bandied about.

The final item was Tom Porter's reading from a Greyfriars Herald feature - a set of pictures of particular points of interest about the Greyfriars fellows. These, Tom observed often helped to broaden one's knowledge of the Greyfriars background, items which were sometimes scarcely noticed in reading the stories.

Thus ended our last meeting before Christmas and we hope for a good turn out for our "Study Supper." The list of comestibles, as Quelch would term it, is very tempting and inviting and a good time should be had by all.

J. F. BELLFIELD

Correspondent

* * * * *

DEATH OF MADGE CORBETT

We learn with great sorrow of the death of Madge Corbett which occurred early in December. Mrs. Corbett had a heart attack during the autumn, but seemed to be responding to treatment. Unhappily, on December 3rd she had a further attack, and, though rushed to hospital, passed away.

Mr. & Mrs. Corbett were among the founders of our Midland Club, and have always been actively and usefully associated with it.

Collectors' Digest, on behalf of its readers, extends very deepest sympathy to Jack Corbett and to our Midland friends in their great loss.

* * * * *

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held on Sunday, 11th December

This was our Christmas meeting, and as this time of the year celebrates the birth of Christianity, those of us who attended hoped that this meeting would also see the re-birth of the Merseyside O.B.B.C. For some months now we have been, for all practical purposes, almost non-existent, and in fact we had reached the stage of wondering how to dispose of the assets of the 'dear departed'. The 'dear departed' however refused to lie down, and not only did it come back to life but it recovered with a vigour and enthusiasm which we have not seen for a long time.

The meeting opened with the correspondence. Letters had been received from Frank Unwin and Frank Case, and George Riley had telephoned just before the meeting. They all conveyed their best wishes and hoped we would survive. Pat Laffey tested our knowledge of the Liverpool shops, an appropriate topic at Christmas, and I just managed to get home by a short head over Jim Walsh.

Jim then proceeded to perform his annual function (his 15th in succession) of proposing a toast to the club and absent friends (of which we have too many). The next item was a film show and we enjoyed once again the antics of Laurel and Hardy and Harold Lloyd. Hot sausage rolls and mince pies followed, and refreshments over we turned our attention to the old time music hall and films. I also read to the meeting a passage in which no names were given but everybody had to identify as many of the characters as possible of the four schools from the clues given. Jim Walsh and Jack Morgan tied for first place.

It was then decided that what remained of the programme should be carried over to the next meeting which will be a Sunday, January 8th. I hope that some of our 'absent friends' will be present on that occasion. I would also like to take this opportunity of wishing all our friends at home and abroad a better than ever New Year.

BILL WINDSOR

* * * * *

NORTHERN

Christmas Party held Saturday, 10th December 1966

When the ladies arrived at 3.30 p.m. to prepare the Party Tea, the Club Room was warm and cheerful, the tables decked with flowers and Christmas favours prepared by the caretaker, Mr. Watkins. Soon members were arriving and at 5 p.m. twenty three sat down to a Yorkshire "knife and fork" tea, with delicious trifles and a superabundance of home-made cakes and pastries to follow. Each present was wearing a number drawn from a hat for mysterious reasons to be explained later. We were glad to see several ladies, and also George Riley, who now lives nearer to Leeds.

After tea, the table was cleared and the Library set out. Members were soon busy stocking up Christmas reading. The programme of games, etc. followed, and the party was divided into two teams (Nos. 1 to 15 and 16 to 26) and Gerry Allison presided over a "Who Said This" Contest. The quotations were a mixture of Hobby and general knowledge, so all were able to take part. Team No. 1 were first, the Question

Master second, and Team No. 2 also ran! A most seasonable reading from the current C.D. Nelson Lee Column, "A Tale of Two Yuletides," followed read by Jack Wood. The applause at the end was for the sentiments expressed and the reader both.

Twelve of the men now departed into the back half of the room to prepare for an animated play-reading arranged last month by the Secretary. The dividing doors made an excellent Curtain, and soon the rest of the Company was entertained by "The Fortune Teller" from the first Holiday Annual. Ingenious costumes had been devised by Harry Barlow as Wibley in the title role, and Jack Allison as Mr. Prout and Harry Lavendar as Hurree Singh (with darkened face) even sported an oriental dagger!

Whilst the room was divided the prizes were set out (all eatable) and first to select one was little Mandy Wilde, our Chairman's daughter who had just been fetched from another party. Lucky Mandy. Then, the reason for the numbers was revealed; as Gerry Allison said, "Prizes this year by chance and not by skill." Therefore, from No. 1 onwards, each one received his or her prize of personal selection.

We now were arranged into our two teams (re-named Greyfriars and Highcliffe) for a football game organised by Jack Allison (eleven each side appropriately enough). The ball was represented by the question asked, and the forwards had Hobby questions on the Valentine Series from the Magnet, and the back had general knowledge. The "ball" was punted back and forth, no side scoring a goal, until at last Skipper Geoff Wilde for Greyfriars with a snappy Valentine answer managed to put in the pill and (once again) Greyfriars Wins.

Now the time is pressing on, and the ladies once more get a sumptuous meal ready and we are able to fortify ourselves against departure into the cold night.

With final good wishes exchanged, and laughter resounding, another Christmas Party, and the 200th Meeting of the Northern Club is over.

Next Meeting: Saturday, 14th January, 1967. M. L. ALLISON

* * * * *

L O N D O N

The lure of the Yuletide meeting of the London club was greatly in evidence as 37 were present when the host, Len Packman, with his autographed card checked the figures with Uncle Ben. Len and Josie, ably assisted by daughter Eleanor and Mrs. A. Stanley, coped very well with the colossal catering task.

(concluded on page 32)

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

F. STURDY (Middlesbrough): The comics present a vast untapped field of research. The Hamilton theme, like Bunter, is becoming a little laboured now, splendid as it has been. How about Mr. Lofts unearthing the writer of, say, "Cheerful Charlie Brown" (was it in Butterfly?) and his companion, the mesmerist, of Merry & Bright? Who wrote the Tug Wilson, Tec tales, and "Adventure Island" in Chuckles? Which artist drew the Mulberry Plattites? And so on. I feel the success of Danny's Diary is due, in the main, to its variety and its wide scope.

E. J. DAVEY (Solihull): In the good old days of vintage Greyfriars, say the nineteen twenties and thirties, Bunter was kept in his proper place. Since the war however, Greyfriars has become a one man Bunter Band. Publishers and the BBC have made him a comic strip character like Homeless Hector (pictured in the November "C.D."), or the far famed Weary Willie and Tired Tim. Whereas in the "Magnet," Frank Richards's supreme genius showed how he could skilfully use a very farcical character like Bunter with discretion and restraint to produce probably the best, and certainly the funniest, school stories ever written.

To my mind probably the funniest Magnet series of all was the "Coker Expelled" one, (Nos. 1656 to 1658), even though the "Bunter" ones like "Reynham Castle," "Blackrock Island," and "Muccolini's Circus" - the latter a great favourite of mine - are extremely good.

FRED GRIFFIN (New York): I have just read two Lee S.O.L's - "The Ghost of Bannington Grange" and its sequel, "The Schoolboy House Breakers." Danny's Diary is really the best feature in the good old Digest. I look forward to it so much, and every month it brings back pleasant memories of things I had almost forgotten.

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge): I was interested in Mr. Lofts' article about the B.F.L. "Spence of the Spurs." But wasn't the name of the 'Spurs captain Grimsdell, not 'Grimsdale'? I have always been interested in the Spurs and believe I can still write down from memory the team with which they began their first season after the 1914-18 war.

Jacques

Clay

Pearson

Smith, Minster, Grimsdell,

Walden, Lindsay, Cantrell, Pliss, Dimock.

Do you remember those very good cricket tales in the "Boys Realm" in the '920s which introduced real County teams and players. "Smith of Rocklandshire," "Young Yardley," and others?

Incidentally, it is rather surprising, considering the great part Sport plays in the life of England that so few novels, apart from boys tales and thrillers, have been written around sport - and particularly Association Football. Even among short stories the really outstanding ones are few. For hunting there is, of course, Surtees. But the only outstanding tale that comes to my mind is Kipling's "Maltese Cat" - and the game is Polo.

CHARLES DAY (Keighley): I came across two Annuals. One, the first Champion Annual 1924, containing a long story of Panther Grayle (a character whom I had long forgotten) and two, the Schoolboys' Adventure Book, containing a story of Dixon Brett, another character from the past.

GEORGE SELLARS (Sheffield): What a splendid Christmas Number! Nice seasonable cover from Mr. Webb. Dear old Danny was on the top of his form, but I think he was a bit offside about "Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party." I enjoyed reading about all the Co's having a Merry Christmas together.

LINLEY MINOR (cont'd from page 20)...

who've got bicycles." Against that is the fact that the word "babies" is really not much like "bicycles." And, down the years, the Magnet published surprisingly few misprints. The proof-readers were obviously first-class.

It would be interesting to see what was made of it in later years if it was re-printed. But so far as I know, "Linley Minor" was never re-printed anywhere. Even the editorial staff must have realised that this one, like "Sunday Crusaders," should die a natural death.

20/- offered for the following in very good condition.

MAGNETS 848, 862, 876, 942, 959, 117, 1125, 1126, 1169 to 1174, 1191 - 1194. GEMS 423, 461, 564, 600, 841, 845, 847, 920, 923, 924.

My lesser-conditioned copy offered too, if needed, or will EXCHANGE Hol. Annuals 1920-28, Rookwood 'green una', Bullseye, Many S.O.Ls, Magnets ½ year 1929 loose good copies.

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S.B.L. REVIEWDEAD RESPECTABLEDESMOND REID

Drug-peddling, corruption of the young by unscrupulous adults, cold-blooded murder, and blackmail, are crimes which inspire all the loathing of which Blake's steely frame is capable, and in this assignment he is plunged into a regular orgy of it.

It all starts with a missing person, an American student, whose father commissions Blake to find. A purely routine job - or so it seems. But with Blake matters have a habit of developing rapidly when not only surface matter but undercurrents are explored in equal detail. The inexplicable murders of destitute characters, whose lifeless bodies are found floating in the Thames in London and the Seine in Paris, plus the unaccountable suicides of a number of young students in both cities, are factors which ultimately have Blake following the 'snow'-covered trail of the dope-running Dr. Reiner and that of a long, white-haired fanatic calling himself Bobo, self-appointed dictator of the fantasy world of a group of mini-skirted young females and long-haired males known as the 'Chelses Set,' among whom the blackmailing pair ply their vile trade. To the devotees of the who-dun-it type of novel the identity of Bobo is unlikely to present any problems. Both characters are well drawn and convincing, for such types are not uncommon in all the world's largest cities.

In these days when entirely original Blake novels get rarer and the hands that produce them get noticeably fewer, it is comforting to note the skill with which that limited number continue to keep the flag flying. To them one might pay a most apt tribute, based on the late Winston Churchill's famous wartime words, with certain variations, - 'Never in the field of Blake fiction was so much owed by so many to so few!' although the word 'many' in connection with the circulation figures will obviously bring a rueful grimace to editorial lips.

The curtain for 1967 rises on one of the best paperbacks, Blake and non-Blake, I have read for a long time, a reading pleasure giving way to irritation only when for one reason or another I was interrupted in my following of Blake's handling of the case.

WALTER WEBB

FOR SALE: GEMS 1938 and 1939 - 2/6 each. Last series Nelson Lees - 2/- each (rougher copies 1/- each). Postage extra. No lists available, but several dozens of each. S.a.e. first, please. Union Jack No. 694 - 5/- plus postage.

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"FAMOUS BARRING OUTS" by E. DAVEY

Having followed for years the numerous rebellions at St. Franks and other famous fictional public schools, I read N. Wright's article "Up The Rebels," with real interest.

One of the most famous was at Rugby in 1797, the Headmaster Mr. Ingles flogged a boy named Astley for lying, unjustly so, and a riot started. The door of the Head's house was blown open with a petard, the school bell was rung and fags sent in every direction carrying "Fiery Crosses" to raise the rebels. The boys then made a great bonfire in the Close, of desks, doors, books and masters' belongings. The boys withdrew to a place known as the island completely surrounded by a moat 6ft. deep. There was a drawbridge and this was pulled up after they crossed. While the magistrate read the riot act at the front, a crowd of horse dealers armed with long whips waded across the moat at the rear and captured the fortress.

The result was floggings and expulsion.

The "Great Rebellion" at Winchester in 1793 was one of the most successful. Dr. Warton, the Head, unjustly "gated" the whole school and eventually rebellion broke out. The High Sheriff, called in to restore order, found the outer school gates barricaded, the stones of the court torn up and carried to the top of the tower as ammunition and the parapet loosened to hurl against the enemy. Swords and pikes taken from the school walls were discernible, and the sheriff and his men discreetly withdrew, discretion being the better part of valour.

Next morning negotiations were entered into by Dr. Warton with the sheriff as negotiator. The boys capitulated on condition that there was to be a general amnesty and no punishments. Thus the scholars won the day and gained all they wanted, this being almost the only instance of such a result in the case of a serious rebellion at a public school.

I wonder how many people remember other school rebellions fact or fiction. What about the one in the story "The Three Prefects" led by the trio Steele, Alhouse and Brewer at Clevedon School, a real action-packed one where the rebels barricaded in the upper part of the school having commandeered the school's food supply and the asset of a secret passage that gave them access to the rest of the school.

I wonder how many other readers of the "Digest" have favourite

school rebellions?

LONDON CLUB REPORT (continued from page 27)

The entertainment side of the meeting, after John Wernham, president of the club, had distributed numerous copies of his latest opus, the pair of Gem stories known to collectors as the Outram Series and calling it the Jubilee Edition, started with Len giving a Gwyn Evans reading about Mrs. Bardell's Xmas Eve. Roger Jenkins followed with a clever Xmas puzzle. Brian Doyle then read his treatise on the Xmas Annuals, a stupendous effort and one that the B.B.C. intends to broadcast on the Home Service on Boxing Day. Following this Don Webster conducted his "Letter from Coker to Aunt Judy." This was thanking her for the Xmas present and competitors had to give words the way Horace Coker would have spelt them. Ron Beck and Winifred Morse were the joint winners. But in the writer's opinion, the treat of the evening was the final item, Bill Hubbard's "Finest Period of the Magnet." This lecture gave the period 1927-34 as the best, in Bill's opinion. A very fine lecture indeed and greatly enjoyed by the listeners.

Only one sad note at the meeting was the news given out by the chairman, Bill Lofts, of the passing of Mrs. Madge Corbett, one of the stalwarts of the Midland Club. Tributes were paid by several who had met her including the host, Len Packman.

Next meeting at the Richmond Community Centre on Sunday, January 15th, 1967. Directions as to how to get there will appear in the newsletter.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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HARDY ANNUALS: On December 27th Brian Doyle featured in the radio programme "Home This Afternoon." He was discussing Hardy Annuals, the Annuals in question being those volumes which helped to make Christmas for us before the war. Delightfully put together and beautifully delivered, the talk was a real treat for all who remember

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