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23

No.
271

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THE **CLAYTON GRANT** 2^d

The Clayton Grant Mystery

SEXTON BLAKE and "GRANITE" GRANT
in a real detective mystery complete in this issue.

Out Every Thursday
No. 1,182
November 19th, 1924.

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The Man of the Wheel.



WALK-ER!

Long ago I first came across the term "Walk-er" in a Gem which, in fact, bore the title "Walker!" So far as I remember, Kerr disguised himself as a new boy named "Walker," and there was a hidden meaning in the name - a meaning which did not become clear to the victims of the prank till later. "Walker," it seems, is an expression of extreme incredulity. I imagine it is never used today, and it must have been rare even at the time that particular Gem was first published.

I had long forgotten it, but it was brought back to my mind recently when I read Talbot Baines Reed's charming story "Reginald Cruden."

In that book the little slum waif uses the expression, obviously meaning "You can't take me in!" or, as we used to say, touching one eye, when I was a boy: "Do you see any green?"

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term dates back to 1811, and is a shortening of "Hookey Walker." Does anybody know who

or what "Walker" was, and where the term came from?

THOSE CRITICS

Tom Porter writes me as follows:

"I was interested to read what you had to say about the critics(?) of the reprinted Egypt series. I have not read one reasoned criticism of the series. Columnists seem to know that Billy Bunter on occasion says "Yaroo!" and that is enough to set them going. Their slipshod, thoughtless remarks are forgotten the day after they are written. Not so the old boys' books."

It seems to me that the drawback of any reprinting is that it gives these columnists the opportunity to repeat their well-known prejudices. For some reason or other that pompous bit from George Orwell seems to have become fashionable again, for all the critics have been quoting him. One, in the Financial Times, gushes how much he admires Orwell for the amount of reading he must have done to be able to write that essay of his. To most of us it seems a pity that Orwell did not do quite a bit more reading so that he would have had real knowledge concerning the subject of which he attempted to write.

Another, in a Midlands paper, mentions that Orwell "accused the Gem and the Magnet of encouraging snobbishness and cheap patriotism."

It is beyond me to find out in what way the old papers encouraged snobbishness. Neither George Orwell nor anyone else ever explained how they did it. As for "cheap patriotism," I'm not sure what that is.

It is clear that patriotism of any sort is all too scarce in this country nowadays. Britain is slipping because we have lost faith in ourselves. The headlines are claimed by a bunch of noisy nitwits who have no hope for the future and no pride in the past. So the angry young men of the B.B.C. have thrown out "Land of Hope and Glory" from the last night of the proms. How nice it would be if the angry young men themselves could be thrown out and dumped somewhere - anywhere away from Britain!

This country of ours has qualities and traditions which many other nations would almost give their souls to possess. Charles Hamilton believed in Britain. Many of the critics don't. So they slam the old Hamilton papers, of which, obviously, they really know very little. It's easy for them to gather a few pickings from Orwell. After

all, columnists must live. Don't ask me why!

THE END TOO SOON

Our Cheltenham reader, Stan Knight, has sent me a piece of verse which he came across in the Radio Times. The verse which came from the end of a book of short stories, had lingered in the memory of a lady reader of that magazine. I thought the verse rather charming. You, too, may like to have it.

"The End! Too soon the story ends;
But let us say before we go
That we have made so many friends
That otherwise we should not know.
Friends, that though in fiction's dress
We shall remember none the less."

Mr. Knight adds: "For us - helped in the remembering to no little degree by the varied pages of Collectors' Digest."

Well, that's the job of the Digest. To help you to remember!

THE EDITOR

WANTED GEMS: 805, 807, 817, 828, 831, 841, 852, 862, 866, 970, 980 in bindable condition - your price paid or 4 Gems of same vintage offered in exchange.

Available Now: Facsimile Magnet series, Bunter in the Land of the Pharoahs, 42/-. Orders being taken for Wharton the Rebel Series (due Sept.), Edgar Wallace Bibliography (July), £4. 4. 0.

Also from stock Sexton Blake Omnibus No. 3, 12/6, in short supply; No. 4, 12/6; No. 5, 21/-; and just published No. 6, 21/-. First hard-cover original story of Sexton Blake Driven to Kill by Rex Dolphin, 16/-, and orders can be taken for the next. Also available most Mayflower-Dell Sexton Blake paper-backs at 2/6 and 3/6 and Dean hard-backs 4 at 2/6. Paul Hamlyn paper-backs of Greyfriars and Cliff House (2/6) all available from stock.

F. V. LAY, 52, OAKLEIGH GARDENS
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OPENING INSTALMENT. Sixty years ago, P. G. Wodehouse had already made a name for himself as a writer of first-class stories of school life. He was also becoming noted for a delightful, whimsical satire which was to bring him countless thousands of admirers all over the world. This story, written over 60 years ago, is sought by collectors, but is almost unobtainable at any price today. Here it is, for C.D. readers, with the blessing of its famous author.

THE SWOOP

By P. G. Wodehouse

Clarence Chugwater looked around him with a frown, and gritted his teeth.

"England - my England!" he moaned.

Clarence was a sturdy lad of some fourteen summers. He was neatly, but not gaudily, dressed in a flat-brimmed hat, a coloured handkerchief, a flannel shirt, a bunch of ribbons, a haversack, football shorts, brown boots, a whistle, and a hockey-stick. He was, in fact, one of General Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts.

Scan him closely. Do not dismiss him with a passing glance; for you are looking at the Boy of Destiny, at Clarence MacAndrew Chugwater, who saved England.

To-day those features are familiar to all. Everyone has seen the Chugwater Column in Aldwych, the equestrian statue in Chugwater Road (formerly Piccadilly), and the picture postcards in stationers' windows. That bulging forehead, distended with useful information; that massive chin; those eyes, gleaming behind their spectacles; that tout ensemble; that je ne sais quoi.

In a word, CLARENCE!

He could do everything that the Boy Scout must learn to do. He could low like a bull. He could gurgle like a wood-pigeon. He could imitate the cry of the turnip in order to deceive rabbits. He could smile and whistle simultaneously in accordance with Rule 8 (and only those who have tried this know how difficult it is). He could spoor, fell trees, tell the character from the boot-sole, and fling the squaler. He did all these things well, but what he was really best at was flinging

the squaler.

Clarence, on this sultry August afternoon, was tensely occupied tracking the family cat across the dining-room carpet by its footprints. Glancing up for a moment, he caught sight of the other members of the family.

"England, my England!" he moaned.

It was indeed a sight to extract tears of blood from any Boy Scout. The table had been moved back against the wall, and in the cleared space Mr. Chugwater, whose duty it was to have set an example to his children, was playing diabolò. Beside him, engrossed in cup-and-ball, was his wife, Reggie Chugwater the eldest son, the heir, the hope of the house, was reading the cricket news in an early edition of the evening paper. Horace, his brother, was playing pop-in-taw with his sister Grace and Grace's fiance, Ralph Peabody. Alice, the other Miss Chugwater, was mending a Badminton racquet.

Not a single member of that family was practising with the rifle, or drilling, or learning to make bandages.

Clarence groaned.

"If you can't play without snorting like that, my boy," said Mr. Chugwater, a little irritably, "you must find some other game. You made me jump just as I was going to beat my record."

"Talking of records," said Reggie, "Fry's on his way to his eighth successive century. If he goes on like this, Lancashire will win the championship."

"I thought he was playing for Somerset," said Horace.

"That was a fortnight ago. You ought to keep up to date in an important subject like cricket."

Once more Clarence snorted bitterly. "I'm sure you ought not to be down on the floor, Clarence," said Mr. Chugwater anxiously. "It is so draughty, and you have evidently got a nasty cold. Must you lie on the floor?"

"I'm sporing," said Clarence with simple dignity.

"But I'm sure you can spoor better sitting on a chair with a nice book."

"I think the kid's sickening for something," put in Horace critically. "He's deuced roopy. What's up, Clarry?"

"I was thinking," said Clarence, "of my country - of England."

"What's the matter with England?"

"She's all right," murmured Ralph Peabody.

"My fallen country!" sighed Clarence, a not unmanly tear bedewing the glasses of his spectacles. "My fallen, stricken country."

"That kid," said Reggie, laying down his paper, "is talking right through his hat. My dear old son, are you aware that England has never been so strong all round as she is now? Do you ever read the papers? Don't you know that we've got the Ashes, and the Golf Championship, and the Wibbly-wob Championship, and the Spiropole, Spillikins, Puff-Feather, and Animal Grab Championships? Has it come to your notice that our croquet pair beat America last Thursday by eight hoops? Did you happen to hear that we won the Hop-skip-and-jump at the last Olympic Game? You've been out in the woods, old sport."

Clarence's heart was too full for words. He rose in silence, and quitted the room.

"Got the pip or something!" said Reggie. "Rum kid! I say Hirst's bowling well! Five for twenty-three so far!"

Clarence wandered moodily out of the house. The Chugwaters lived in a desirable residence which Mr. Chugwater had built in Essex. It was a typical Englishman's Home. Its name was Nasturtium Villa.

As Clarence walked down the road, the excited voice of a newspaper-boy came to him. Presently the boy turned the corner, shouting: "Ker-lapse of Surrey! Sensational bowling at the Oval!"

He stopped on seeing Clarence.

"Paper, General?"

Clarence shook his head. Then he uttered a startled exclamation, for his eye had fallen on the poster.

It ran as follows:-



Clarence flung the boy a halfpenny, tore a paper from his grasp, and scanned it eagerly. There was nothing to interest him in the body of the journal, but he found what he was looking for in the stop-press space. "Stop press news," said the paper. "Fry not out, 104. Surrey 147 for 8. A German Army landed in Essex this afternoon. Loamshire Handicap: Spring Chicken, 1; Salome, 2; Yip-i-addy, 3. Seven ran."

Essex! Then at any moment the foe might be at their doors; more, inside their doors. With a passionate cry, Clarence tore back to the house.

He entered the dining-room with the speed of a highly-trained Marathon winner, just in time once more to prevent Mr. Chugwater lowering his record.

"The Germans!" shouted Clarence. "We are invaded!"

This time Mr. Chugwater was really annoyed.

"If I have told you once about your

detestable habit of shouting in the house, Clarence, I have told you a hundred times. If you cannot be a Boy Scout quietly, you must stop being one altogether. I had got up to six that time."

"But, father --"

"Silence! You will go to bed this minute; and I shall consider the question whether you are to have any supper. It will depend largely on your behaviour between now and then. Go!"

"But, father --"

Clarence dropped the paper, shaken with emotion. Mr. Chugwater's sternness deepened visibly.

"Clarence! Must I speak again?"

He stopped and removed his right slipper.

Clarence withdrew.

Reggie picked up the paper.

"That kid," he announced judicially, "is off his nut! Hullo! I told you so! Fry not out, 104. Good old Charles!"

"I say," exclaimed Horace, who sat nearest the window, "there are two rummy-looking chaps coming to the front door, wearing a sort of fancy dress!"

"It must be the Germans," said Reggie.

"The paper says they landed here this afternoon. I expect --"

A thunderous knocking rang through the house. The family looked at one another. Voices were heard in the hall, and next moment the door opened and the servant announced "Mr. Prinsotto and Mr. Aydycong."

"Or, rather," said the first of the two newcomers, a tall, bearded, soldierly man, in perfect English, "Prince Otto of Saxe-Pfennig and Captain the Graf von Poppenheim, his aide-de-camp."

"Just so - just so!" said Mr.

Chugwater, affably. "Sit down, won't you?"

The visitors seated themselves. There was an awkward silence.

"Warm day!" said Mr. Chugwater.

"Very!" said the Prince, a little constrainedly.

"Perhaps a cup of tea? Have you come far?"

"Well - er - pretty far. That is to say, a certain distance. In fact, from Germany."

"I spent my summer holiday last year

at Dresden. Capital place!"

"Just so. The fact is, Mr. - er --"

"Chugwater. By the way - my wife, Mrs. Chugwater."

The prince bowed. So did his aide-de-camp.

"The fact is, Mr. Jugwater," resumed the prince, "we are not here on a holiday."

"Quite so. Business before pleasure."

The prince pulled at his moustache. So did his aide-de-camp, who seemed to be a man of but little initiative and conversational resource.

"We are invaders."

"Not at all," protested Mr. Chugwater.

"I must warn you that you will resist at your peril. You wear no uniform --"

"Wouldn't dream of such a thing.

Except at the lodge, of course."

"You will be sorely tempted, no doubt.

Do not think that I do not appreciate your feelings. This is an Englishman's Home."

Mr. Chugwater tapped him confidentially on the knee.

"And an uncommonly snug little place, too," he said. "Now, if you will forgive me for talking business, you, I gather, propose making some stay in this country."

The prince laughed shortly. So did his aide-de-camp.

"Exactly," continued Mr. Chugwater, "exactly. Then you will want some pied-de-terre, if you follow me. I shall be delighted to let you this house on remarkably easy terms for as long as you please. Just come into my study for a moment. We can talk it over quietly there. You see, dealing direct with me, you would escape the middleman's charges, and --"

Gently but firmly he edged the prince out of the room and down the passage.

The aide-de-camp continued to sit staring woodenly at the carpet. Reggie closed quietly in on him.

"Excuse me," he said; "talking shop and all that. But I'm an agent for the Come One Come All Accident and Life Assurance Office. You have heard of it probably? We can offer you exceptional terms. Now here's a prospectus --"

Horace sidled forward.

"I don't know if you happen to be a cyclist, Captain - er - Graf; but if you'd like a practically new motor-bike, only been used since last November, I can

let you --"

There was a swish of skirts as Grace and Alice advanced on the visitor.

"I'm sure," said Grace winningly, "that you're fond of the theatre, Captain Poppenheim. We are getting up a performance of Ici on parle Français, in aid of the fund for Supplying Square Meals to Old-Age Pensioners. Such a deserving object, you know! Now, how many tickets will you take?"

"You can sell them to your friends, you know," added Mrs. Chugwater.

The aide-de-camp gulped furiously.

Ten minutes later two penniless men groped their way, dazed, to the garden gate.

"At last," said Prince Otto brokenly, for it was he, "at last I begin to realise the horrors of an invasion - for the invaders."

And together the two men staggered on.

(TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH)

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A LOST CHARACTER IN "ANSWERS"

by S. Gordon Swan

BROWSING through some copies of Answers scattered over the period 1908 - 1911, one encounters a number of interesting items. For instance, there is the announcement of the result of a £200 story competition which was won jointly by two authors, Captain Dallas and Robin Forsythe. Captain Dallas, we are told, had achieved publication of some of his work back in the eighteen-nineties, but he had been prevented by military duties from pursuing a literary career until he won this prize.

His prizewinning effort was to appear in Answers' Library but the name of Captain Oswald Dallas was destined to become familiar to juvenile readers in later years, particularly in Chums, for which paper he wrote a great serial called "The Lake of the Purple Flames," a story in the Rider Haggard tradition.

In 1910 the Crippen case was in the forefront of the news, and Dr. Crippen's girl friend, Ethel le Neve, achieved world-wide notoriety. For Answers, Walter le Neave, her father, wrote his daughter's life story, with the avowed object of obtaining money to defray the legal expenses of his daughter's trial as an accessory after the fact. Mr. le Neave admitted that he inserted the "le" in his name because he was a professional singer, sometimes using the alternative "le Neve." Ethel stuck to the latter form of the name, which explains the discrepancy in spelling. I am under the impression that Ethel le Neve eventually came out to Western Australia and died here since the end of World War 2.

However, to the Sexton Blake fan, the most attractive items are the stories of the great detective which ran for some years in this periodical. These were even shorter than the tales in the Penny Pictorial which were published about the same time. As in the Pictorial, his offices are described as being in Messenger Square and Ticker and Pedro are conspicuous by their absence. The stories are

neat and concise, and some of them are very good for their time. The titles are not distinguished by bold headlines so that glancing through the book casually it would be quite possible to miss the fact that it contained a Sexton Blake story.

It is difficult to identify the authors of many of these yarns. I have read that Andrew Murray and Reginald Poole wrote a number of them, and certainly in some of the later issues it is possible to detect the style of Andrew Murray. Blake's journalist friend, Bathurst, who appeared in the Penny Pictorial, also rears his head in Answers, and Blake's man, Simmons, is mentioned.

In certain episodes the writing of Michael Storm becomes apparent, and in this connection a lost character emerges from obscurity. Like the redoubtable Marston Hume in the Penny Pictorial, this person would have achieved more prominence had she been featured in the Union Jack. The character in question is Mademoiselle Justine de Chevrac, whom I first encountered in Answers No. 1136 dated March 5th, 1910, in a story entitled "The Affair of the Burgravian Attaché." Justine was charming and elegant and used an elusive, haunting perfume. She was an adventuress who was always ready to help the underdog and sometimes infringe the law in doing so. It is also evident that Sexton Blake, while crossing swords with her, held admiration for the lady. In short, one can detect a distinct resemblance between Justine and another charming feminine character who was to make her *début* in the Union Jack three years later.

In view of G. H. Teed's association with Mrs. Michael Storm, it is not inconceivable that the character of Mademoiselle Yvonne owed something to Justine de Chevrac. Unfortunately, I possess only three brief stories of this elusive and seductive person, so it is not given to me to say what was the outcome of her duels with Sexton Blake. Nonetheless, with the grace and vivacity which characterised her exploits, she takes her place in the extensive portrait gallery of characters who have played their part in the Sexton Blake saga.

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE MEETS BILLY BUNTER

by J. R. Murtagh

Yes, this really did happen, in Magnet No. 818, dated 13th October, 1923. The title was "Disgraced by his Father," and the

story featured Dick Russell whose father was blamed for a crime which he had not committed, and who foolishly ran away from the law.

Vernon-Smith and Wharton stood by Russell, and Wharton suggested that they should see the Head and try to arrange for Ferrers Locke, the Head's cousin, to help.

Vernon-Smith went with Russell to the Head's study.

"Well, my boy?" said the Head gently.

"We want Ferrers Locke to find my father, sir, so that the matter can be brought to a head."

"You may be right, my poor boy, but Ferrers Locke is engaged on a case which has taken him to Russia. I am afraid he will not be able to help you."

"There's still Sexton Blake, sir," said Vernon-Smith, coolly.

And so, with the Head's help, an appointment was made with Sexton Blake, Smithy agreeing to pay the fees.

"Thus it was that Sexton Blake, probably the world's most famous detective - for Ferrers Locke rose to fame after Sexton Blake - received in audience no less than seven juniors from Greyfriars."

He agreed to take up the case, and went on to say:

"There is no question of fees. Years ago a very dear friend of mine was at Greyfriars School. He is now dead. You are Greyfriars boys - what I do, I do for the sake of my dear friend who held the good name of Greyfriars sacred."

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter had come across Mr. Russell who was in hiding near Greyfriars. Mr. Russell bluffed Billy Bunter into keeping quiet by telling him that he was working for Scotland Yard and that Bunter would get a title "Lord de Bunter of Greyfriars" if he kept silent until the case was closed.

It was not long before Sexton Blake detected Bunter's connection with the matter, and, together with Tinker, caused the Owl to blurt out all he knew. It was a moderately amusing chapter.

Eventually, Blake found Russell's father, and cleared him at the trial so that all ended happily, apart from the fact that Bunter did not get his promised title.

It will be of interest to readers to know that this story was one of five Magpies written almost certainly by Hedley O'Mant, who also

used the pen-names Hedley Scott and Robert Hawke. The Magnets were: 818 "Disgraced by his Father"; 980 "Heroes of the Air"; 991 "The Schoolboy Broadcasters"; 1152 "Nap of the Remove"; 1153 "Grease-Paint Wibley." Using the name Hedley Scott, he also wrote two Sexton Blake novels in the 2nd series. These were:

695 "The Mystery of the Missing Refugee"

648 "The Suspected Six"

At one time he was chief sub-editor of the Magnet, and later was editor of the Pilot and Ranger. He also wrote serials featuring Ferrers Locke in the Magnet, which may account for the remark I quoted from "Disgraced by his Father" - viz:

"Sexton Blake, probably the world's most famous detective - for Ferrers Locke rose to fame after Sexton Blake."

Possibly this was wishful thinking on the part of Hedley O' Mant.

* * * * *

THE CLAYTON MOAT MYSTERY

The cover of Collectors' Digest this month shows a reproduction of one of the most remarkable Union Jack stories. "The Clayton Moat Mystery" which appeared in 1924 was a specially written version of a by-plot in Pierre Quiroule's fine and famous story "The Mystery Box" which featured in the Sexton Blake Library in late-1920. Reading both, without a knowledge of the publication dates, one would assume that the Union Jack story was written first and that it was later enlarged into the S.B.L. novel which was splendidly written and far superior. It is, of course, possible that Clayton Moat was written first, and, for some reason or other, did not appear until much later.

Most if not all of the Quiroule "Union Jack" stories were adapted and extended into S.B.L. novels.

"The Mystery Box" was reprinted in the mid-thirties, and it is noteworthy as being the only one of the old Blake classics reprinted in recent times (under the title "The Case of the Bismark Memoirs").

"The Clayton Moat Mystery," much pruned and with the names of characters changed, appeared in the Nelson Lee Library. This was a rather shameful piece of subterfuge, and, in fact, one that is beyond comprehension.

So far as we know, Mademoiselle Julie never appeared in the Union Jack.

DANNY'S DIARY

**TRIANGLE
FINE ARTS**



**LILLIAN GISH
DAPHNE AND THE PIRATE**

Another of the posters Danny saw outside the cinemas 50 years ago.

led the naval part of the procession.

In the evening we went to the London Hippodrome, where Dad

JULY 1919

I shall never forget Victory Day, even if I live to be an old man of 45. It was on July 21st, and the whole country gave itself to a day of rejoicing for Peace. I felt so proud to be British. We all went up to London quite early in the morning, and bagged good positions near the Cenotaph in Whitehall. The Cenotaph is newly built, inscribed "The Glorious Dead." It is a temporary structure, designed by Sir Edwin Luytens, and it is much like what the permanent monument will be when it is built next year.

The great Victory Procession, led by Sir Douglas Haig, who was commander-in-chief during the war, was watched by huge crowds of people. At the Cenotaph, soldiers stood on guard with arms reversed. Admiral Beatty

had booked seats for us. The show was "Joy Bells," a really lovely revue. The star was George Robey, but the one I liked the best was Laddie Cliff. He was in a gorgeous scene with a huge cast. This scene was called "Swanee," and it featured a splendid new song "Swanee, How I Love You." I must get Doug to buy a record of it, and keep playing it on my gramophone.

I wasn't half-tired when I got home, and Mum didn't call me till 10 o'clock the next morning, and I didn't go to school till the afternoon.

I have gone back to the Nelson Lee this month. There is a series - a long one - where a big crowd of boys and girls have gone to Africa as the guests of Jack Gray on Sir Crawford Gray's sumptuous yacht. The tales I have had so far are "The Schoolboy Adventurers," "Neath African Skies," "Into the Arid Desert," and "The Treasure of El Safra." It is very exciting, and I am looking forward to going on with the series next month.

Doug has bought a Sexton Blake Library called "The Case of the Trans-Atlantic Fliers" which features Leon Kestrel. It is, of course, inspired by Alcock and Brown's flight, and I'm going to read it when Doug turns it over to me.

There is a most mysterious affair in the papers. A girl named Bella Wright was found dead in a pool of blood in a country lane in Leicestershire. There was also the dead body of a raven nearby which had died from gorging her blood. They thought at first that Bella Wright had had an accident, but later it was found that she had been shot. She had been seen riding along with a man who had a green bicycle - and now the police all over the place are seeking the man with the green bicycle. I wonder whether the mystery will ever be solved.

The Magnet seems to be slipping. It hasn't had any very good stories for quite a long time, and this month's were disappointing. I found it quite difficult to read the first one of the month, entitled "Bessie versus Billy." At the start Tom Merry of St. Jim's popped over to Greyfriars on his bike. Surely St. Jim's isn't near enough to Greyfriars for a bike pop. Tom Merry wanted to arrange a cricket match in which a team comprising juniors from St. Jim's, Rookwood, Highcliff, and Courtfield Council School should play the Remove. Of course, Tom Merry was able to arrange with the Heads of all those

schools for the boys to have two days holiday, and the Head of Greyfriars was pleased to put them all up. In the first innings, Tom Merry's team made 410. Bessie Bunter was also pilfering food at Greyfriars in this tale.

The next week brought up "Linley's Legacy." Some cads made Linley think he had been left £500 by a defunked uncle, and Linley spent some of it before he found he hadn't got it. But Mauleverer anonymously had £500 credited to Linley at the Courtfield Bank. When Linley asked Mauly whether it was he who was the anonymous donor, Mauly said no. The "white lie" worried Mauly for a while, but he soon got over it.

"Catching Coker" was the best of the month, and was funny. Coker advertised his services as a cricketer. Someone changed the advert, and Coker found himself sought by farmers who wanted a hard-working farmer's boy. All right for Coker enthusiasts.

Last of the month was "The Great Bunter Mystery." Bunter was collecting money for a "good cause." It turned out it was for his sister Bessie, who had been rebuked for greediness by Miss Primrose, and had run away from school. So ended a weak month in the Magnet.

The British airship R.34 has flown from England to New York. The journey took 108 hours. The airship is going to be the means of luxury travel now that the war is over. If anyone goes to America, the British pound is worth $4\frac{1}{4}$ dollars.

The 12-page Boys' Friend has been going strong this month, though the first Rookwood tale of the month was the worst one ever of Rookwood. Lummy knows who wrote it. It was called "The Tyrant of Rookwood" and told how a Dr. Snazlem became temporary headmaster of Rookwood and forbade all sports. It was a very long story alas! In this issue a new serial called "The Sports of St. Clive's" by A. S. Hardy started. It is illustrated by R. J. Macdonald, his first work since he came back from the war.

Next week Rookwood was back to normal, and a grand new series was on. First of the series was "Jimmy Silver's Day Out." A cricket match with St. Jim's was due, and, naturally, Smythe & Co. were not in the Rookwood team. But Smythe offered a large car, which his uncle had used during the war, with a chauffeur, to convey the Rookwood players to St. Jim's. Mornington warned against treachery, but Jimmy

was obstinate and accepted Smythe's offer. The result was that the Rookwood eleven was stranded far from St. Jim's, while Smythe & Co. stole the match and lost it.

Jimmy came in for much criticism for being taken in by Smythe, and the result was the next story "Jimmy Silver's Resignation." Mornington was voted the new junior captain of Rookwood. But, in the last tale of the month, "Mornington's Bad Start," he had promised Smythe & Co. places in the junior eleven if they persuaded most of the Shell to vote for him. So Jimmy refused to play in the team, and he and Morny had a fight. Mighty good school tale, this one.

Cedar Creek has been as good as ever. In "Chunky's Chance," Todgers felt the urge to be a hero, so he persuaded Dry Billy Bowers to be rescued. Chunky got some kudos, but next week, in "The Way of the Transgressor," Dry Billy tried his hand at a spot of blackmail, and Chunky was exposed.

In "Warned Off" a man came to Thompson from Chicago, selling agricultural machines. The snag was that, after he left the district, the people who had bought the machines could get no spare parts and no service. But Frank & Co. saved the Hopkins's from being taken in by the swindler.

Final of the month was "Five Hundred Dollars Reward." A mysterious rustler is causing loss and alarm in the valley, and everybody is seeking 500 Dollar Jones.

We have had some good films on at the picture palaces. My favourite, Ethel Clayton, was in "Broken Chains." Albert Chevalier and Florence Turner were in "My Old Dutch." Henry Edwards and Chrissie White were in "His Dearest Possession," a lovely Hepworth film. Mabel Normand was in another of her long pictures "The Floor Below." Mabel looks nice, but I liked her much better in the Keystones. Norma Talmadge was in "Panthea." Dorothy Gish (I'm dotty over Dorothy) was in a real ripper called "Battling Jane," and Douglas Fairbank was terrific in "He Comes Up Smiling."

The Gem is marvellous now. A grand caravanning series is running, and every story is tip-top. The opening tale was "The Schoelboy Caravanners" in which Gussy, trying to hire a horse for the van, was suspected of betting. In the end, Figgins & Co. pinched the

van and the horse. Hilarious.

In "Rivals of the Road," Tom Merry & Co. got their van back from Figgins, and had some high times with a tramp they named "Fur Cap." I've never seen anyone wearing a fur cap.

In "On The King's Highway," they sold off Gussy's clothes which almost filled the van - and Gussy was mortally offended.

Last of the month, Gussy, still sulking, came on a strange man who was burying something in a field at midnight. It turned out to be a stock of food from a war-time food-hoarder. This is a splendid series.

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 76 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 119 - "The Boy From New York"

Fisher T. Fish was one of the most frequently featured minor characters in the Magnet. Oddly enough, his character changed a good deal over the years (as was also the case with Bunter). In the beginning he was an ineffectual boaster, with no dishonest schemes or plans to get rich quick, and he was even a holiday guest of Wharton's. Later, during the first World War, when resentment was aroused by the United States declaration that they were too proud to fight, the national prejudice against Americans caused the author to portray Fish as a minor rogue, and his adventures of this period, completely lacking in hilarity, leave a nasty taste in the mouth when read today. Later still, during the 'twenties and after, Charles Hamilton seemed to have mellowed considerably, and though the dishonesty of Fishy's schemes was made quite clear we were nevertheless allowed an indulgent chuckle over his remarkable escapades.

"The Boy from New York" was a reprint of two Magnets of 1914, published before the war began to sour some of the stories. They represent a type of single story that Charles Hamilton seemed to give up after the war - one with a very complicated plot, with thrust and counter-thrust, all contrived in a most ingenious manner so that every piece fitted perfectly into place like a jig-saw puzzle. In the first story Mrs. Mimble was anxious to visit her sick father, and Fishy took over the tuckshop from her, doubling all prices in order to make a quick killing. How he enlisted the aid of Mr. Quelch and Loder to stop

horseplay in the shop, and how he eliminated Uncle Clegg as a trade rival by resorting to blackmail was all told in fascinating detail. The American junior was so clever in his schemes that the reader at times was almost tempted into thinking that he deserved to succeed.

Charles Hamilton declared that Fish's character was based on that of an American drummer, or travelling salesman. The second story certainly showed a complete understanding of advertisement techniques, as Fish displayed notices bearing the letters F.E.P. which he knew would intrigue the juniors, and which he refused to explain. The letters in fact stood for Fish's Easy Payments, a scheme for selling tuck on the instalment system. The difficulty of obtaining payments after the goods were eaten is one which might well have occurred to him in advance, but in fact the main troubles arose from quite another source. This was an entertaining story, but far less ingenious than the first one.

The single stories of Fisher T. Fish are so numerous in the Magnet that it is fair to assume they must have been extremely popular in their day. He often received something less than strict justice, and like many people guilty of sharp practice he was often surprised at the dishonesty of others. Nevertheless a clear distinction was made between Bunter and Fish. Bunter was allowed to get away with a great deal because he was too obtuse to realise the true significance of his actions, but Fish was only too well aware of what he was doing and had to pay the penalty of his unscrupulousness. Be this as it may, there is an undeniable fascination in reading about his ambitious schemes, and it seems likely that quite a few Magnet readers must have had a soft spot in their hearts for the Shylock of Greyfriars.

FOR SALE: 42 Picture Shows (roughly between 1946 and 1950). 1/6 each. 14 Souvenir Supplements from Picture Show, etc: (middle-thirties vintage roughly) 1/6 each. PLUCKS (1914) 30/- per dozen. Postage extra on all items. Book of British Film Stars (probably early post-war) 1/6.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON.

The Jester, 1931 - 34. 30/- per good copy offered.

WESTWOOD, 9 CHEVIOT CLOSE, CHADDERTON, LANCS.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 136. CARAVANNING WITH CIRCUMSTANCES

Circumstances was the horse.

In 1918 Charles Hamilton had written a first-class series of caravanning stories featuring the Rookwood heroes. One year later it was the turn of Tom Merry and his friends to roll along the highways and byways with a brightly-coloured caravan and a sleepy horse.

It is a question which was the better series, for both were first-class. Each made joyful reading, and each is full of the atmosphere of English country lanes before streaking cars made the atmosphere unbreatheable. Each is redolent of the England we knew as boys. Possibly the Gem series just has the edge because the individual stories were a little longer. More than that, within the Gem series there was a secondary series which was among the best things that Hamilton had done.

This caravan series of 1919 was the longest series, up to that time, that Hamilton had ever written for the Gem. It is, in fact, second in length only to the Silverson series which was not to appear till twenty more years of Gem history had swept into the past.

The fact that this immense eleven-story series appeared at all can be accepted as a pointer that all was not well with the Gem. After neglecting the paper for some years, Hamilton changed direction with the cream of his work, and it went once more to his first love. The Magnet, in 1919, became of secondary importance and even that spoiled darling, Rookwood, was to suffer a little wholesome neglect. Even Cedar Creek had to endure one substitute tale in 1919.

The three months in mid-1919 during which time Hamilton supplied every story for the Gem was the longest period that he had concentrated on the Gem for quite a few years past. No doubt Hamilton and the editor decided that the paper needed a boost. So Hamilton, possibly remembering the success of the Rookwood caravanning series of a year earlier, returned to the theme, and the Gem became his pet for quite a while. By the autumn, unhappily, the spasm was passed, and there was to be a long hiatus in the supply of Hamilton material, not only for the Gem but for the Magnet as well.

But at the moment, everything was lovely in the country gardens in front of the thatched cottages, and Gem readers settled down to enjoy this long and superb caravanning series.

What made this series really exceptional was a series of several stories within the caravanning series, in which Arthur Augustus fell out with his friends, and, innocently believing the best of everyone, became the guest - and the victim - of Cutts of the Fifth, and went to spend a long week-end at the home of St. Leger. This theme of the innocent guest was to be repeated later, both in the Gem and the Magnet, and always with unqualified success, but it was never better handled than in this striking series. All in all, it was probably Hamilton's most masterful writing for a long time, and it was enhanced by the addition of Charley, the stable boy of the St. Leger home, who was a convincing piece of characterisation.

The Gem reader must have felt that the tide had turned, and when R. J. Macdonald returned to illustrate the later stories in the series everything in the garden was indeed lovely.

It was nearly twenty years later that this series was reprinted, and in the Gem itself. When this was done, two of the tales were omitted. It is quite easy to see why they were omitted, but I remember commenting once that, with but very little alteration, the two yarns could have been made acceptable to the late thirties. I am not quite so sure of that now.

The first of the two omitted tales was "A Midnight Mystery." The caravanners were camping, without permission, in a field. For some reason or other, Gussy was walking in the field in the middle of the night. He came on a sinister individual who had dug a hole and was burying something in the darkness. Gussy was intrigued, and was also convinced that the strange digger was a criminal. The next day, Gussy insisted on informing the owner of the field what he had seen - and, to Gussy's astonishment, the man was violently angry - with Gussy.

Gussy was now certain that a crime had been committed, and that the man in the night had been interring a body. So when Tom Merry & Co. dug in the same place, and unearthed what seemed like a body, the horror was general - till it was discovered that the "body"

was a decomposing side of bacon. The midnight digger had been a war-time food hoarder, and his hoard had gone bad on him with the passing of time. The interment had been carried out with the intention of avoiding a clash with the police.

Now, whether the story could have been reprinted many years later depended obviously on whether something else could be substituted for the illicit hoard of food. The burying of food at midnight made sense in 1919. It would not have made sense in 1938. I can't think of anything which could have taken the place of the food in a 1938 story. Can you?

The second story of the omitted pair was entitled "Only Gussy's Way." Once again, it is easy to see why it was passed over 20 years later. It made fun of Nationalisation.

Even in 1919, the author was skating on thin ice, and no A.P. author but Charles Hamilton would ever have got away with it. Quite recently, Hamilton had contributed "Bunter the Bolshevik" to the Magnet. It was satire, but an extravagant little tale, much too far-fetched to please any but the very youthful reader. "Only Gussy's Way" was a very different kettle of fish, though, in some ways, the basic theme was similar. This was light and pleasant satire, and so well-written that it might have given offence to some parents - and probably did.

The caravanners arrived at a small town where a by-election was taking place. The Red Flag candidate was Skimpole's uncle. Skimmy was giving out leaflets. Monty Lowther took out a pencil, and made additions to the leaflet. The leaflet had announced: Vote for Chinn! Chinn stands for Nationalisation! Lowther added "There are only a million officials in the country at present. Nationalise, and have 20,000 more."

There was plenty more in similar strain, including some comments on the nationalised post-office. Hamilton, of course, had not much time for any politicians. The main platform of the opposing candidate was a crusade to "Hang the Kaiser." The author was impatient with any extremists, and wrote of them all contemptuously. But nobody but Hamilton would have got away with it in a tale for boys.

No doubt, for 1938 consumption, the political bits could have had something else substituted. Later in the story, Gussy showed

great admiration for a pretty land girl. There were no land girls in 1938, though there were plenty of women working on farms. A little careful re-writing could have made the story acceptable for 1938, but perhaps careful re-writing was unknown at the A.P.

Socialism and nationalisation were more or less regarded as the creed of cranks way back in 1919. Nevertheless it is possible that Hamilton was a little naughty to include what was, in effect, propaganda in any of his stories. It is immaterial whether or not one regards nationalisation as a panacea to ensure ever-increasing efficiency, ever-lessening costs to the consumer, and everlasting summer in industrial relations. Hamilton made his own views very clear in that story in 1919 - and Hamilton's work was immune from the publishers' blue pencil. He was unique at the A.P.

Maybe we have stumbled on the solution to a puzzle. Possibly "Only Gussy's Way" remained a canker at the hearts of some who were youngsters in 1919 and who got their own back later on by expressing their horror at the snobbery of the Gem and the Magnet and the untold harm those dreadful papers did for British youth.

THRILLER: 1 - 15, 18, 28 - 37, 39 - 210, 367, 371 - 589 WANTED.
DET. WEEKLY: Most numbers WANTED. C. DIGEST ANNUAL: 1948
WANTED. All good condition only.

REG GUEST, 35 THORNSETT ROAD, LONDON, S.E.20.

 WANTED in V.G.C. WIZARDS Nos. 1504 to 1515 incl.; 1517 to 1519 incl.; 1521 to 1550 incl.; 1606; 1608 to 1609 incl.; 1624 to 1635 incl.; 1658 to 1668 incl.; 1670 to 1697 incl.; 1715.

HAIGH, 6, ROWAN DRIVE, KEYWORTH, NOTTS., NG12 5DR.

WANTED: Copies of CHIPS containing serial, "The Red Inn," and LOT-O-Fun containing "Tim the Boy Jockey." Your price.

O. WADHAM, 12 MILITARY ROAD, LOWER HUTT, N.Z.

CAPTAIN: Vol. 1, 27 & 50 WANTED. Publishers bindings. S. BLAKE LIBRARY: 1st Series WANTED. All in good condition only.

REG GUEST, 35 THORNSETT ROAD, LONDON, S.E.20.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

YESTERYEAR

by R. J. Godsave

In many ways the Nelson Lee Library was unique. Few papers can change course in mid-stream and at the same time increase circulation.

The first two years of its life were devoted to detective stories written by various authors. At No. 112 o.s. the switch was made to school stories with detective interest, the sole author being E. S. Brooks.

To change from stories with world-wide travel to the confines of the St. Frank's district must have presented Brooks with difficulties. In effect crime had to be brought to this peaceful part of Sussex. This resulted in those fine short series of Nelson Lee's struggle with the Circle of Terror in the very early St. Frank's Lees.

As the Nelson Lee progressed with new scholars and temporary masters, usually accompanied with mysterious happenings, so an opportunity was given to Nelson Lee to investigate them.

The summer holiday series gave Brooks an opportunity to break away from the local scene and give his readers stories of the St. Frank's boys in foreign lands.

Perhaps Brooks was at his best in his South Sea Island stories. Having Lord Dorriemore's yacht at his disposal enabled him to transport his readers to coral islands on which the St. Frank's party had been stranded. His descriptions of palm trees, sandy beaches and blue lagoons were outstanding. Tropical storms, cyclones, etc., were brought to the reader with a vividness so remarkable that few authors could possibly equal it.

With the entry of the Moor View girls into his stories the holiday adventures presented a more balanced picture.

Again, with the Christmas holidays, Brooks was able to break away from St. Frank's. Snow and ice were the order of the day with a ghost being the order of the night.

Like many other papers which were eagerly looked forward to,

the Nelson Lee gave its readers the necessary break from every-day life which meant so much to the youth of yesteryear.

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THE MONSTER WILL GET YOU - -

by William Lister

In the very late twenties and early thirties there was a spate of horror films. The coming of the "talkies" was the cause. By this medium one could hear the groans, cries, screams, grunts and moans made by the sound effects men which along with the film were calculated to make your blood run cold. Horror films of those days usually starred Bela Lugosi or Lon Chaney. All manner of "monsters" stalked across our screens.

A recent Sunday newspaper commenced a series on the theme that horror films today had reached the limit and that these films unleashed upon the public were making our nation sick. Be that as it may; but if I remember rightly we couldn't get enough "monster" films to suit us in the thirties. "Lon Chaney's going to get you if you don't watch out" became a popular theme song throughout the nation.

However for a few years previous to this, 1925 to 1927 to be exact, nineteen other "monsters" had stalked across the nation and into the homes of "Nelson Lee" fans.

And in case anybody is getting alarmed let me hasten to assure you that these "monsters" were not the Hollywood kind. If you consult your dictionary you will find under "monster" the definition; "Monster, mis-shapen animal or plant. Imaginary animal compounded of incongruous elements as centaur, sphinx, griffin. Animal or thing of huge size."

And it is that kind of "monster," a thing of huge size that I now wish to consider.

If my reader has in his possession a copy of "The Monster Library" let him take note of the price 1/-. He will then understand why it is called the "Monster." The dictionary is right. It is "a thing of huge size." Never has so much been obtained for so little.

Imagine the thrill of a twelve or thirteen year old boy standing outside the newsagent with the very first copy in his hand. Look at

that cover. In technicolor, too.

The title "The Schoolboy Treasure Seekers" by Edwy Searles Brooks, and the three pictures that grace this splendid shillings-worth's cover. Here we see our schoolboy heroes tied and left on a desert island. "Umlohis Peril" - a huge coloured man tied to a stake protruding from the sea, while a giant octopus is reaching up to drag him beneath the waves. The third picture reveals a group of savages charging at a cave that contains the St. Frank's boys.

Edwy Searles Brooks certainly knew how to make things hum.

There was many a boy kept out of mischief while he perused his "Monster" and there were eighteen more to come.

I have noticed in some of the "Postbag" letters that some of our friends of "Hamiltonia," taking the "Nelson Lee" occasionally, could not get interested as the stories were disjointed, if you missed a copy or so.

Try a "Monster," a full series of yarns in one volume.

By the way, let me warn you, if one of these "Monsters" comes your way there is every reason to believe that "Edwy Searles Brooks is going to get you if you don't watch out."

Pardon me while I put my pen down to finish for the second time (first in 1925 and second 1969) my "Monster" No. 1, "The Schoolboy Treasure Seekers."

Where will I ever see such a thing of huge size for 1/- again?

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LIGHT ON THE LION LIBRARY

by O. W. Wadham

Writing on the early career of Edwy Searles Brooks in October COLLECTORS' DIGEST, Bob Blythe mentions the LION LIBRARY, and notes "a paper to be investigated, as this is the only reference to the paper in the archives."

In LOT-O-FUN dated November 27th, 1909, on page 3, there is a little enlightenment, a four inch long advt. for Henderson's LION LIBRARY.

It published detective and adventure stories, one of each in every number. The price was one penny, and it had a bright coloured

cover.

Four "magnificent new numbers" came out that November, 13, 14, 15 and 16. In number 13 was "The Fairfax Fortune," a detective yarn, and "Buffalo Bill's Fearless Stand." No. 14 was "Who Shot The Head Clerk?" (detective) and "Little Sure-Shot" (adventure). No. 15 had "Moving Marble Hands" (detective), and "Wild Kid" (western adventure). No. 16 contained "Mystery of the Parchways," a Maxwell Keen yarn, and "Silver Stars," was the adventure story.

So it would seem that if E.S.B. had achieved publication in the long-dead LION he would have shared equal space with another author. Another point in passing: Did the LION LIBRARY get beyond number 16? There is no further mention of it in LOT-O-FUNS of the 1910 period.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

SYDNEY - AUSTRALIA

The latest meeting of the Golden Hours Club was distinguished by the presence of our Secretary, Bette Pate. All members welcomed her heartily, and we hope Bette will be free to attend more meetings in the year.

Discussion and dinner ran parallel as usual, and once again the meeting produced a new publication. This was the bound volume of the Magnet's Egypt Series which was closely examined and all agreed it is a wonderful piece of work. And most wonderful of all that it is a fact in these days. Method of reproduction had us all intrigued, but nobody had the necessary knowledge to solve the mystery.

A C.H. catalogue was presented to every member even though we cannot use it - like D'Arcy it is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. Club publications have a remarkably high standard indeed. C. H. Chapman got a mention in our Sunday papers on his 90th birthday and the cuttings were produced.

The meeting broke up a little earlier than usual. The next one will be held on the last Tuesday in July at Cahill's Restaurant.

SYD SMYTH

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ENGLAND

Meeting held 20th May, 1969.

I cannot say as to readings on a barometer or a thermometer, but our attendance level has kept steady at 11 for the last three meetings. Perhaps this is a lucky number! However whilst I would repudiate with scorn any suggestion that I was superstitious or a betting man, nevertheless if a horse was named Billy Bunter and was also no. 11 on a race card, it would certainly be a shame not to do something about it. Indeed even breaking dormitory bounds for a midnight visit to Billy Lodgey at the Three Fishers, would seem most reasonable under these circumstances.

At this meeting we had the pleasure of welcoming another new member, Mr. M. F. Fellows of Leicester, whose main interests are the Magnet and Modern Boy.

An excellent item of news reported was that Tom Porter has now acquired no. 805 of the Gem, and thus has a complete set of this paper. Tom already has a complete run of the Magnet, as well as sets of some other papers with much shorter runs. Still even although there were only a quarter as many SOL's, nevertheless 411 is a very respectable total and would make an impressive array.

Being the annual general meeting most of the time was occupied with business, dull but necessary. There were no changes in personnel. The votes of thanks usual at the year end were carried with applause, including a special one to Jack Bellfield for his great services to the Club during the long period without an official secretary.

The anniversary no. was Magnet 1631, dated 20.5.39, the first of the "Boulder's Double" series. The Collectors' item was BFL no. 27, dated 4.10.07. A Sexton Blake story entitled "A Woolwich Arsenal Mystery."

For tonight's raffle the prizes had been presented by Bill Morgan and Tom Porter. Very happily the first prize winner, who thus had first choice of the three prizes available, was our new member, Mr. Follows.

Next meeting: Midsummer Day.

EDWARD DAVEY

Chairman and Secretary

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LONDON

We were again favoured with good weather for our Annual visit to Wokingham (Berks.) where our hosts were Eric, Betty and Graham Lawrence. Four car loads made the journey from London and some 21 members were present, including that stalwart, C. H. Chapman. Unfortunately, due to holidays, we were without Roger Jenkins and "Breezy Ben."

After the minutes of the previous meeting had been read, confirmed and signed and correspondence passed round, Bob Blythe read News Letter No. 14, June 1953, following on his Nelson Lee Library report showing us some £20 in hand. Bob was able to spread his Library out in full on this occasion as there was no Hamilton opposition.

Bill Lofts then told the meeting that sales of the "Egypt" hard cover Magnet series had exceeded 2,000, and a reprint was in hand. He added that the next series was expected to be "The Bunter Court" Series, which would follow "The Second Wharton Rebel Series." There would probably be a fourth series published. Bill then passed round a brochure re a new Edgar Wallace publication, and mentioned work was in hand on a new venture dealing with "The Men Behind Boys' Fiction."

Bob Blythe, not to be outdone, produced a copy of a Book he had received gratis from Ulverscroft Press of a Victor Gunn story "The Crooked Staircase" which would be on sale shortly, and was the forerunner of several more similar stories. (A great "fillip" for Nelson Lee fans.)

The meeting was addressed by Bill Hubbard who asked for more support and variation in presenting the monthly meeting arrangements. After discussion this was referred to next month's agenda, together with a discussion on Associate membership and Library facilities.

A sumptuous spread followed, after which one or two members took photographs of the group, in the garden.

Reuben Godsave set us a mixed Quiz, the winner being Bill Hubbard. Bill Lofts and Eric Lawrence shared second place, with Len Packman third.

Bill Hubbard gave us an interesting talk on "Tarzan and the Silent Screen" and promised us further details of this character at a later date.

Finally, Don Webster read an extract from a Cricket Story "The Two Substitutes" by Major Charles Gilson, usually known for his adventure stories in B.O.P. and "Chums."

The meeting closed with the Chairman thanking the hosts for their hospitality, and we wended our ways back to London in the evening sunshine.

Next month the venue will be at the home of Bob and Louise Blythe, 47, Evelyn Avenue, Kingsbury, N.W.9. (Tel. 205. 0732), so please let them know if you are attending.

D.B.W.

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NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 14th June, 1969.

As usual the Library was set out at the beginning of the evening, and also the new Egypt Series facsimiles were distributed to the members who had ordered them, and very pleased with them they were. What an excellent idea to make these beautiful copies, the old style and colours such a delight, and ready bound in attractive shining covers. They deserve every success, and we hope will be the forerunners of many.

Geoffrey Wilde now took his place in the Chair, and voiced our pleasure in seeing Jack Roberts, safely back from South Africa, with us again. And also Geoffrey welcomed on behalf of all, a new member, the Reverend Geoffrey Good, of Staincliffe, attending for the first time, saying he hoped he would enjoy the meeting and many more in the future.

After the Minutes, Geoffrey read news from postal members and friends (sent along for our enjoyment by Gerry Allison). Interesting comments came from Henry Webb and Philip Tierney (both on 'our' Magnet); Dennis Hilliard (about the new facsimiles); Mrs. Pauline Vaughan (appreciation of Frank Richards) amongst others. Tom Porter, of Midland, had also sent a paper cutting of an interview he gave, and we congratulate Tom on his complete set of Gems! We also had a copy of the "Leeds Graphic" with the picture taken at the March meeting, and a good page of fair comment.

The first item on the programme was a talk by our Chairman, and in his usual fluent and graphic way, Geoffrey highlighted for us some of the single Magnet Stories. He drew our attention to how the minor characters were rounded out in them, and to the unexpected traits revealed, e.g. when Bunter with £50 to spend sends it for Mrs. Bunter, who has not been very well - "Noc that the Pater is hard up! Oh, no!" And Geoffrey also read most realistically how Mossco, drenched in marking ink, is cut to the quick to think he is so disliked. And how the Famous Five reassure him, and of Mossco's endearing response.

Ron Hodgson now took up the Last Magnet to read to us in great style of Wharton's ill-fated start to the term. After a break for refreshments Ron continued and finally left off with Mr. Hacker hot on the trail of Wharton. We hope to finish the reading of this Magnet next meeting, and then shall look forward to our 'home team' efforts to continue it. (The first instalment from our good friend Cliff Webb of Wigan already to hand.)

Fourteen had been present, and we now took leave of each other until a month hence. Next meeting, Saturday, 12th July, 1969.

M. L. ALLISON

Hon. Secretary.

THE SIXTH SEXTON BLAKE OMNIBUS, now on sale, contains two full-length Sexton Blake novels; "AN EVENT CALLED MUDER" by Martin Thomas, and "MURDER GOES NAP" by Rex Dolphin. For reviews of these two stories, see back numbers of Collectors' Digest. The new Omnibus, smartly bound with attractive dust-jacket, is now on sale at 21/-.

The Postman Called

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

COMICUS: I agree with O. W. Wadham in his appreciation of that charming comic BUTTERFLY. But it was just because "Daring & Co.," "The Doings of Dr. Dread," and "Cheerful Charlie Brown" were not serials, but series of complete stories, which made the paper such a success. For the same reason it is still a 'good buy' today.

No. 1 BUTTERFLY has two complete tales, and the policy was maintained all along. The full history of "Daring & Co.," would make a fascinating article.

In September, 1909, BUTTERFLY No. 261 contained three complete tales - "Schoolgirls Three," "Charlie Brown," and "Gordon Barrington, Detective."

A year later Barrington had a girl assistant named Polly Smith - a girl from a Board School. The series was then renamed "Only a Board School Girl" with a picture of Polly as the heading. Most charming, too.

Then Polly married an ex-cracksman named Max Matmaddox who then called themselves Daring & Co. I would like to know what happened afterwards.

RAYMOND TAYLOR (Wolverhampton): I have been wondering why little or no notice is ever taken with the stories of Henry St. John and his St. Basil's School Series. These were tremendous favourites in my youth. "The Boys of St. Basils," "Bob Reddings Schooldays," "The Shame of St. Basils," and others. He also wrote some fine historical stories.

Another favourite set of characters that appear to be completely forgotten are Ferrers Lord & Co., by Sidney Drew:- "Wolves of the Deep," "Through Trackless Tibet," "Beyond the Eternal Ice." What memories they bring back!

Another boys' weekly of those days was the "Marvel." Two stories each week appeared for many years, featuring Tom Sayers and Jack, Sam and Pete.

Then there was the "Boys Own Paper." This never made any headway among the working class boys of those days. There seemed to be a lofty tone about it that was not quite the thing among us boys. We

liked something in our weeklies and comics that was more to our way of life. But the monthly part of the B.O.P. was quite an event, with its marvellous coloured plate each month. These are now collectors' items indeed.

Although the days I am writing about were hard and rough, we enjoyed every minute of them and the friendship among us was something entirely different from the days that we live in now.

STAN KNIGHT (Cheltenham): It seems a long time since we heard anything of Mr. Buddle and Slade, especially as we missed the Christmas story. I was glad to see another cover drawing by Henry Webb. He is a fine artist.

GERRY ALLISON (Ilkley): You rightly call advertising a scourge. From experience in my ex-job of clothing, I know how prices go up and quality down when advertising begins. Only this week we have read that advertising and packaging account for more than half the cost of cosmetics. Give me the old-fashioned commercial traveller.

Here is my experience of obtaining "The Who's Who of Children's Literature" by Brian Doyle. My Leeds book-seller, who is a club member ordered two copies from the Publishers. After writing four times, without even a single acknowledgement, he cancelled the order. Seven other bookshops in Leeds were no more successful. I then wrote to bookshops in various Yorkshire towns, but the book was simply unobtainable. Finally, I asked a dozen Northern postal members of the club library to try and obtain a copy for the club, and at last Alf Hanson found me a copy in a Manchester shop. In addition to the 63/- cost of the book, I spent 27/- in postages and telephone calls.

COLIN PARTIS (Grimsby): Like Brian Doyle, I belonged to the Cocoa-Cubs, ways back in the late thirties. I had a "cocoa-cub" badge, plus a leader bar, and eventually a "veteran" badge. I remember their magazine, and recall an article which related how the King and Queen had visited Bournville.

JIM COOK'S new address is Flat 87; 139, Greys Avenue, Auckland City, New Zealand.

DREAM OF 1912

by Len Wozmull

I have read with interest Bob Blythe's account of the early struggles of E. S. Brooks, particularly with regard to the editorial scene of long ago. One gets the impression that the editors of the day were apathetic and uncompromising towards the new writer - but was this really the case?

For a clear insight to the question let's put the clock back to 1912, a year in which Pearson's put out an excellent guide-book for writers. In a chapter on AMATEUR AND EDITOR the author (A. E. Bull) could hardly have put it better, and I quote:

"The amateur who has written his first story and who has had it back from half a dozen editors, will probably say "Nonsense! The whole thing is a clique. If you are in, you are in, if you are out, you are out. Genius has no chance. It is all friendship and 'play with your playfellows!'" The editor knows that the new writer regards things thus and, with a sigh, forgives him.

"The amateur judgment is wrong! There are three acts in the tragedy of the new author's story. Act I may be midnight toil with a fountain pen, and Act III the postman delivering a bulky envelope at the aspirant's door. They are both pathetic, and are deeply human expressions of hope and despair. But there is a middle act to the drama. That act is played in an editorial office where the editor or his acting sub deal with the manuscript. There is hope and despair here also; the hope of the editor as he opens a new contribution that he will find just what he wants, and his despair when he realises that he hasn't found it.

"The young writer can easily see his own side of the question. It would do him good if he could see the editor's as clearly. Here is the man in charge of the destinies of an important paper sitting in his office. A great deal of romance and mystery surrounds an editor in the popular conception. But to those who know him best, he is a remarkably transparent and simple-hearted creature.

"His main qualities are common sense and knowledge of human nature. He may or may not be a brilliant scholar. He may or may not have travelled or read extensively. These points are often unimportant. But the fact that he is where he is, is clear proof that he can read his fellow man like a book, and that he is just bubbling over with simple, sound, everyday common sense

"In all fairness, it should be stated that the beginner must not look for immediate great success in writing "long completes." Probably no branch of story-writing is so difficult to enter. Certain men and women are known for their special abilities, and editors are fearful of making changes or otherwise experimenting with their public

"The requirements in some papers are so exact that arrangements are often made for months ahead, and the only chance of the new writer may be in under-studying a regular contributor, writing his story for him when he is hard pressed with other work, or when he is taking his holiday, or suffering from that too frequent trouble of fiction writers nervous break-down.

"If you want to realise how a story - a serial story - should not be done, turn to any of the works of James Payn, a man who had a certain vogue in his time but who is now unknown. When George Newnes published his first serial in Tit-Bits he went to Payn, paid him £1000 for it, and before the story had run its course the circulation of the paper had dropped nearly fifty thousand copies a week. Payn took nine hundred words to introduce an incident, and one hundred words to leave you cold and uninterested in a poor climax."

COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL FOR 1969 is now in preparation. Have you an idea for a literary contribution stirring in your brain-box? Please send along contributions now to the Editorial Office.