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VOLUME 12, NUMBER 133

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JANUARY, 1958

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POSTAGE EXTRA

JANUARY, 1958

Editor: HERBERT LECKENBY,
12 Herbert Street,
Hull Road, York.

or

c/o YORK DUPLICATING SERVICES,
12A The Shambles, York.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

BUSY DAYS FOR A MAN IN "RETIREMENT" I spent most of the afternoons of December 12th and 13th down at the York Duplicating Services preparing the stacks of Annuals for post. They were a goodly sight, for once again the circulation beats all records. I put on one side two piles I was taking with me to Leeds and London and arranged for the rest to be called for by the G.P.O.

Next day I set off for what proved to be a right merry party of the Northern Section O.B.B.C. (see another page). Back home, a few hours sleep and then entrained for London Town. For once British Railways let me down. I had calculated on being there by about 2 p.m. giving me ample time to get to Wood Green. Alas! it was 4.30 when the train crawled into Kings Cross. Ladened with Annuals, etc., I made a dash for the Underground, and such was my hurry that I came a cropper on the escalator and finished the last half dozen steps on my back. I arrived at Cherry Place, tired and dishevelled, but I was soon in good form when I got amongst the cheery company already assembled there. It was worth every moment of that seven hours journey.

Then followed three of my usual hectic London days, visiting as many friends as possible, phoning others I hadn't time to meet. Particularly enjoyable was an evening with the Editor of the Sexton Blake Library and one of the popular authors, Arthur Maclean. We

were joined by Bill Lofts and Stanley Smith and were taken along to a famous hostelry in a quiet Kensington by-way, where all the staff were dressed in Dickensian garb. There was a real Christmas spirit, and one could fancy the ghost of Gwyn Evans was there.

Mr. Howard Baker told me, by the way, that a considerable change in the format of the S.B.L. is planned to take effect about July.

Whilst in town I heard that several members had received their Annuals; the York Duplicating Services and the G.P.O. had played their part once again - the Annuals were reaching their destinations in time for the festive day. Several others had gone off by air to distant lands.

I arrived back home in the early hours of Thursday morning. I could hardly open the door for the piles of letters and cards. There was also a telegram from Tom Porter of Cradley Heath. I knelt on the floor and read it. It said "Annual just arrived - superb production - Heartiest congratulations." I prepared a meal, looked at my cards, read the letters, more congratulations, then went off to bed tired, but oh so happy.

My Christmas was a quiet one but I wasn't really lonely for I had with me all my memories of a wonderful year's visits, and visitors, of old friends and of new ones who had come along to join the Brotherhood of Happy Hours.

* * *

GET TOGETHER "DOWN UNDER" A letter recently from Sydney Smyth bought news of a gathering in Sydney worthy to rank with our O.B.B.C. meetings here. Said Syd:

"Last night (December 13th) practically all the collectors in Sydney had a meeting over dinner and an informal chat in a private room afterwards. It was due to the efforts of Arnold Keena. I know you'll be interested so I'll give you a roll call: Arnold Keena, Bette Pate, Stan Nicholls, Bruce Fowler, Ernie Carter, Frank Jones, Vic Colby, Bill Hall and myself. Eric Copeman was unavoidably detained."

Interested? I'll say I was. Not so very long ago all those mentioned were strangers to each other, now they are all staunch friends and they are good enough to say that I, from my little home in York, England, played a part in bringing them together. No wonder I find life good in the evening of my days.

* * *

THAT BUMPER NUMBER. No sooner is this issue in the post than I shall have to get right down to the next one, the Greyfriars Golden Jubilee Number. At the moment very few contributions have reached me, but no doubt, now that the festive season is over, you will be sending them along. You have never let me down yet. Let's have your stories of how you first became acquainted with the Magnet, most famous of all boys weeklies. Tell us which are your favourite series and of the collections you possess. In fact, anything you can think of to make our February number worthy of the event.

* * *

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS. My heartfelt thanks to all who sent me cards. By every post for days before Christmas they came in shoals, enough to decorate every room in the home of

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENEY

SALE - 100 Boys' Friends (Green un - Rookwood period) between 747 and 1251. S.A.E.
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SALE - Magnet Series - 1312-6 (12/-); 1344-8 (12/6); 1349-53 (12/6); 1360-73 (35/0); 1374-82 (22/6); 1390-1400 (27/-); £6 the lot. Fair/good condition, complete (except two lacking centre sheet). Also complete run 1626-83, excellent condition in three binders, £7. Both lots together £12. (All prices post free). BUT: Offers of direct exchange for Hamilton S.O.Ls (in similarly good condition) preferred - 2 Magnets = 1 Greyfriars S.O.L.; 1 Magnet = 1 St. Jim's/Rookwood S.O.L.

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Blakiana

conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

I hope all my readers enjoyed a very happy Christmas. By this time the majority of you will have read your C.D. Annual, and I am sure you will agree that "Herbert" is to be thanked and congratulated on having provided us with yet another delightful feast of reading. When one stops to think of the amount of work entailed in producing a volume - and at the same time produce the C. Digest every month throughout the year - it will be realised what a wonderful achievement this is for ONE MAN'S LABOUR OF LOVE.

As regards the Blake Circle feature, I am pleased to say that a number of congratulatory letters have already been received. Naturally, we cannot hope to please everybody 100%, but at least we do our very best.

I am starting off the New Year with another of Walter Webb's "Blake Tours." Other features - as already promised in Blakiana - will appear during the coming months.

It now only remains for me to thank all my readers for their Christmas cards, and to wish you a very Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * * * *

ON TOUR WITH SEXTON BLAKE

By Walter Webb

Remember Mogollon? He wasn't among the better known criminal characters who opposed Sexton Blake, so perhaps, in many cases, the test of memory will prove too severe. Actually, he was a half-breed Indian, and the name - or rather the title - of Mogollon, meaning in English, "One-who-has-no-name", was bestowed upon him by the Apache Indians. Ordinarily, detective novels of Blake and those old boys' stories of Red Indian warfare are as the poles apart; but this extremely rare combination of the two is so refreshing in its novelty, and so interesting by reason of its undoubted authenticity, that it

richly merits inclusion amongst the most outstanding presentations of the detective's exploits. Time, then, to hit

(No. 4) THE FLAMING TRAIL

Author - Arthur Paterson

Mogollon was a millionaire and a mystery man of Chicago's commercial world. His rise to power had been rapid and as mysterious as the man himself. In the stockyards, grain elevators and various agricultural produce centres of the Middle and the Far Western States he wielded immense force and influence. His blood was a mixture of that of the Red Indian and White Man. But, powerful though he was, Mogollon craved even greater power. In Las Vegas City, on the prairie called the Big Horn Ranges, grew the finest grass from the Rockies to the Mississippi. On that rich grassland stock thrived magnificently, and since it could be shipped directly to the retail market from there it saved considerable expense, for elsewhere cattle before they were fit for eating, had to be taken at great expense to the Middle States first and fattened there. Mogollon had silently anathematized the necessity of paying the fabulous charges, and coveted the rich grasslands of the Big Horn Ranges to save the unnecessary expenditure.

Fired with this ambition, he sent Jacob Lant, President of the H.L. Company, the leading Corporation of the largest stock raising combine in the United States, to meet store-keepers and land-owners in Las Vegas City. Lant, at Mogollon's instructions, invited them, as holders of the larger portion of Las Vegas and its trade, to name a price to liquidate their claims and businesses and hand them over to the company he represented. But these men who valued their ranches as sacred family possessions on land their grandfathers had taken from the Sioux Indians, refused to entertain any sort of offer from Mogollon. It must be remembered of course, that this was not the Las Vegas City of modern times; it was not even the Las Vegas of the year 1929, when the story from which this summary is taken was published, but nearer the period when the author ran a sheep-ranch in New Mexico during the years 1877 to 1879.

Failure to make a deal with the settlers caused Lant to lose his temper, and he struck one - whose name was Ebenezer Death. This man was the son of Shedrach Death, who killed Mogollon's father, Sitting Bull. For that liberty, Lant was tied on the back of a mule, and sent back to Mogollon with instructions to that worthy that should he show his face in Big Horn Ranges he - Mogollon - would be strung up from the highest tree. Told of Lant's failure, Mogollon swore an oath. It was a solemn asseveration to wipe out completely every man, woman,

and child living on Big Horn. Into the frame of the author's own words let us insert our own mind-picture of this ruthless man, as he tells us that:

"He (Mogollon) was possessed of a weird face, flat, with high cheek bones, nose huge, and full in the nostrils; mouth wide, with prominent teeth - all showing evidence of Red Indian blood. Yet it was not an Indian's face. They grey eyes were wide apart, and the forehead above them broad and square. The lips were finely cut, and the teeth between white and well set. An Indian's are seldom regular, and never white. The eyes were cold, without feeling of any kind; the lips thin and cruel in a hard, unscrupulous face. His father was the greatest chief of them all; his mother was white, though Mogollon did not remember her."

Mogollon would certainly have succeeded in his treacherous intentions had not Sexton Blake been in New Mexico at that time. He and Tinker had come out West in order to save a young Englishman named Tommy Tunstall, the only white man - honest white man, that is - the H.L. Company employed, from being murdered. Blake and Tinker - not forgetting Pedro - had saved the lives of Tommy and his wife, Marjorie; but Blake had fallen into the hands of the Apaches, and Mogollon had instructed that Blake be bound and burnt at the stake. At the last moment the detective had been spared this horrible fate by Chiricahua, the chief of the Apaches. Many months ago Blake had lived in the old warrior's tent, and saved his life; then had come the chance to repay the debt he owed the detective, and Chiricahua had taken it.

Having left Carita, scene of their previous clash with Mogollon, Blake and Tinker were hunting in the Black Hills behind the Big Horn prairies, when they came upon the lifeless body of Chiricahua, the warrior having been killed by Mogollon as the price of his loyalty to the famous detective. The body bearing indications that the chief was not dead but left dying when Mogollon left him, Blake decided to play on the assumption that the half-breed could not swear to Chiricahua being dead, so changed his plans for an immediate return to England, and vowed first to avenge his old friend's death, and bring Mogollon to the justice he so well deserved - the hangman's rope!

With the aid of his make-up box, without which he never travelled, Blake made himself up into an exact replica of Chiricahua, and donning the Red Indian's clothes, followed the trail made by Mogollon after giving Tinker instructions to tell Chiricahua's son,

Coyotero, everything that had happened and to follow his trail though without taking any action until they got instructions from him to do so. Mogollon's trail took Blake over low hills covered with plantations of larch and spruce amongst which grew in great profusion wild cherry bushes and plum trees, flanked by the Big Horn Mountain, a wild, impassable waste of tumbled rocks amidst forests of cedar, fir and pine. In a stretch of knee-high sage bush, the disguised Blake saw Mogollon awaiting him amidst the rocks ahead, a rifle at the ready; but when the detective made it clear that his intentions were perfectly friendly and that he freely forgave him - Mogollon - for the attempt to kill him, it was on terms of cordiality that the pair made their way to the latter's settlement. Blake perceived that the Indians grouped round the rows of tents were Sioux, and what was most significant was the fact that they were on the warpath. One at least among them viewed the invited guest with suspicion. He was an evil-looking dwarf, as malevolent of visage as he was mangled of body, a malformation which had occurred years ago, when, having fallen into the hands of the Apaches, they had hacked and tortured him almost unto death before letting him go. His name was Cakowin.

From Moose Jaw, a Sioux, Blake learned of Mogollon's plan for wiping out not only the white settlers on Big Horn but the entire Apache Nation as well. This plan was the setting on fire of the Ranges when the wind was strong and then upon that flaming trail would the warriors of the Sioux set forth and annihilate the wives and children of the white men and the Apaches as the latter fought the fire to save their possessions.

At the first opportunity, Blake sought Tinker and Coyotero, and gave them hurried instructions in an endeavour to thwart the murderous march of the Sioux. As masses of heavy cloud, sailing low in an increasingly strong wind began to blot out the sky, Tinker went racing across the prairie to the nearest ranch. But the crafty little Cakowin, having followed Blake and guessed Tinker's mission, sped after the lad, overpowered him and, binding him hand and foot, carried him back to the camp and deposited him in one of the tents. Fortunately, quite by chance, Blake learned that Cakowin had followed Tinker, and was thus able to free his assistant from his predicament.

It was then left to the ingenuity of Blake and the young Coyotero to foil the evil designs of Mogollon and the dangerous meanderings of the mentally unbalanced Cakowin. From the mountainside where the camp was situated a stream gushed forth like a miniature Niagara and tumbled in a small river ~~at the~~ around which the tents of the Sioux were

pitched. Coyotero and some of his trusty Apache warriors by blocking with rocks the narrow channel through which the stream ran, diverted it from its proper course far and wide through the grass, completely flooding the lower levels for hundreds of yards. That done, Coyotero and his little band set off for the encampment of the Apaches. Soon, led by Bear's Claw, the new chief, a band of Apaches, five hundred strong, emitting the famous war-cry of their nation, tore across the prairie to give battle to the Sioux.

Meanwhile other forces were on the move. Tinker's cries when he had been attacked by Cakowin had been heard by a cowboy on the range, who had dashed to the nearest ranch - Ebenezer Death's. Thus it was that as the Apaches neared the encampment of the Sioux a dozen men of the Big Horn Ranges, having tracked Cakowin to the canyon, were creeping slowly forward under cover of the darkness.

Forestalled for the moment in his attempt to set fire to the Ranges, Mogollon was compelled to temporize with the more superstitious of his followers who believed that the spirits of the night had risen against them, and Blake sought to gain an advantage through this respite and by the fact that as an invited guest his safety was assured. But when the cunning Cakowin denounced him as Sexton Blake, the famous British detective, then Blake indeed was a doomed man. But succour was at hand. As Mogollon raised his hand to kill, so sped a bullet from the rifle of Ebenezer Death. Another shot, and Mogollon fell dead at Blake's feet. Ebenezer Death and his followers would have fallen victims of the vengeful Sioux had not the Apaches arrived in the nick of time and routed their old enemies.

With the death of Mogollon Blake's mission was at an end - one more triumph in a hectically adventurous career. And just in case it should be of interest, it may be stated that Blake was known amongst the Apaches as Black Panther, by which name, due to his courage and wisdom, he gained the respect and devotion of the entire Apache nation. Also of interest is the fact that this was Arthur Paterson's last Sexton Blake story prior to his death; indeed he had been laid to rest a year and three months before the publication of this, his last work. He was brother-in-law of William Allingham, the Irish poet, and his first book published in 1894, and died 16th January, 1928, aged 66 years.

* * * * *

Gunga Dass was also an Indian, but differed materially from Mogollon, except that both were equally ruthless and resourceful in

the methods they adopted against the forces of law and order. Blake's first encounter with the Hindoo crook in India forms the basis of the fifth article in the series. (W. Webb)

* * * *

FORTHCOMING FEATURES

More "How's Your Memory?" Teasers
 Union Jack Titles
 Picturesque Pars from S. Blake Papers
 Wal I'm Derved
 I Remember These
 The Idol's Eye

CONQUEST GOES HOME by Berkeley Gray

reviewed by Vernon Lay

The latest Conquest epic is in the real Conquest tradition and may be safely recommended to all Brooks fans. From the mysterious opening with an old man in a queer voluminous cape and battered tweed hat trudging down Park Lane to the main action centred round Altonmere Hall, the ancient home of Conquest's cousin, in the fells of Cumberland, and the revival of the ancestral feud between the Lawless Conquests and Black Roger Gaunt, of Hellwyth Mount, we are irresistably reminded of some of the vintage Waldo yarns. This story has everything we have come to expect from Brooks, mystery, bizarreness, excitement and that peculiar essence that has pervaded his best work from the never-to-be-forgotten days of St. Frank's and can be best summed up in the words "zest" - a "joie de vivre" (joy of life) reminiscent of a glass of sparkling champagne.

Rating

Brooks at his best.

WANTED - Magnets, Gems, all years but preferably pre 1925. Holiday Annuals, S.O.Ls. (Greyfriars stories) Any Condition considered. but price must be reasonable. M. GORDON, 113 NEWINGTON GREEN ROAD, LONDON, N.1.

HAMILTONIANA

compiled by HERBERT LECKENEY

Some time ago I told you about the two ingenious games Stanley Smith, Chairman of our Northern O.B.B.C. had invented. Well, when I was at 'Cherry Place' on the occasion of the December London Club Meeting I saw something else which gave me further cause to marvel at the skill and devotion on the part of a Club member. All over the room were displayed most striking stand-up cuts-outs of Greyfriars characters in the school colours. There were fifty or more, some of them as much as eight inches high. They were neatly labelled but that was really unnecessary for the great majority one could recognise at a glance. They simply staggered me, for they really have to be seen to be believed. They were the results of the hands and brain of Bob Mortimer. Gosh! I certainly devote a good deal of time to the hobby, but when I think of the work chaps like Stanley and Bob put in I feel like an idle fellow by comparison.

Bob, as I have mentioned before is on the staff of Bentalls, the great Kingston, Surrey store, and it is hoped that his figures will form part of a window display in connection with the Greyfriars Golden Jubilee celebrations. If it comes off I should certainly advise all those who can to wend their way to Kingston.

I salute you Bob, I was dead beat when I got to 'Cherry Place' after that tiring journey, but your display along with the cherry company assembled there acted like a tonic.

* * *

Now here's a message from Frank Richards. I'll take the opportunity of a sly dig at some of you who are rather lax in replying to letters; there are some, you know. Take an example from one who is senior to us all. We don't quite know how long it is since he passed into the eighties. What we are certain about is a hope that he will be spared to entertain us with his magic pen until he has long left the eighties behind him.

Rose Lawn,
Kingsgate, Kent.

December 12th, 1957.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Thanks for the C.D. --- good as ever! And special thanks to Eric Payne for his kind reviews of the new Tom Merry books. And his mention that the demand for these books is "enormous" is quite pleasant and agreeable. I am used to this with the Bunter books; but Tom has always seemed to lag behind William George hitherto; and it is quite a happy idea that he may now be catching up!

May I add a word to the many kind friends who have written and are now writing or about to write? I just love to read these letters, and do my best to answer them individually; but I am sure that my correspondents will understand that at times one just cannot keep pace. Every such letter is perused with pleasure, and very often I pick up a bright idea from some suggestion therein: and the more they come, the more pleased I am: and I would dearly like to answer them all, if it could be done. So I shall hope that every unanswered correspondent will be kind enough to take the will for the deed.

With kindest regards,
Always your sincerely,
FRANK RICHARDS.

* * * *

How here's a letter from Leslie Rowley, generous donor of the Greyfriars Golden Jubilee Cup, from his new station. Wherever you travel you find these Hamiltonian reminders and nice it must be too

British Political Agency,
P.O. Box 2,
Kuwait,
Persian Gulf.

My dear Herbert,

This is to let you know that I am dug in at my new address and am missing the Club Meetings very much indeed. Fortunately for me, the chap who shares this flat with me is an old reader of the "Magnet" and I am giving him every encouragement to revive his interest.

He thinks the "Digest" well produced and I'm sure when he leaves Kuwait he will get in touch with the Club. Met a chap in my line of business named Arthur Edward Lovell - his name is the Foreign Office List, and

there is a bank manager here named James Wharton.

I think every member of the Club I came in contact with really made me feel one of them. The London members certainly gave me some glorious memories and I shall not forget York, Jack Wood and yourself!!

Maybe I can get down to an article or two on the Greyfriars soon. Nothing up to Roger's standard of course, but you can tell me quite frankly if the stuff is too bad for the Digest and I shan't feel hurt.

Best regards,
Very sincerely,
LES ROWLEY

* * * *

Talking of the Greyfriars Cup, the effort of the four Clubs are now on their way to the judge, Bill Gander. All those who have taken part are naturally awaiting his decision with keen anticipation. Whichever Club wins I know the other three will extend their hearty congratulations. Contributions will appear in coming numbers of the C.D. There'll be sufficient to keep you interested for months to come for you can take it there are some jolly clever efforts.

* * * *

Now for the usual entertaining articles from those mainstays of Hamiltoniana - Roger Jenkins and Eric Payne.

* * * *

Which Do You Prefer?.....By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 3 - Arthur Augustus D'Arcy or Marmaduke Percival Egbert Bly?

Although Charles Hamilton never duplicated a character precisely, there were nonetheless certain types which could be picked out at any of his schools. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, however, was so distinctive a character that he seemed unique, and indeed was often alluded to as "the one and only." It may therefore come as a surprise to some collectors to know that at St. John's there was a Bertie Bly who bore a very close resemblance to his more famous counterpart at St. Jim's.

Bertie Bly was the son of a millionaire, distinguished by his flaming red hair and his immaculate wardrobe. He could say "Bai Jove!" and "Yaas wathah, deah boy!" as impressively as Gussy, and spent many anxious moment watching his "toppahs" meeting an untimely end. But, despite the superficial resemblance, Bertie Bly was not Gussy's twin brother: in several of the stories he showed some ability as a detective - in marked contrast to Gussy's woeful efforts in this sphere in early days - and Bertie was not averse from smoking a cigarette in a quiet spot. In short he was much more effectual and less idealised a character than Gussy.

The St. John's tales were by "Clifford Owen" who, as John Medcraft once pointed out, must have surely been closely related both to "Martin Clifford" and "Owen Conquest". The St. John's tales appeared in the Aldine Diamond Library in 1908-1909, some two years or more after Gussy made his first bow in the pages of "Pluck", but it seems practically certain that these Aldines were reprints of much earlier stories, probably dating from around 1903-1904. The style of writing is typically Hamiltonian but is definitely of an early vintage, and the episodic nature of the Aldine stories strongly suggests that they were edited reprints of early serials. Moreover, it seems unlikely that Charles Hamilton would have attempted to launch a character like Bertie Bly when Gussy was so well established. It seems practically certain that Gussy came on to the scene only when Bertie Bly was thought to have been forgotten. As Charles Hamilton has stated, in the early days he had not grown accustomed to the practice of resurrecting and reprinting his older stories without notice.

The first tale of St. John's was in No. 36 of the Diamond Library entitled "The Bully of St. John's" - a whimsical story of school life. The arrival of a new boy served to introduce St. John's to the reader through his eyes, as it were, but at the end of the story the new boy obtained his remove to a higher form, and Bertie Bly and his friends were henceforth left with all the limelight playing on themselves. This story was followed by "The Outsider" in which Bertie played a leading role and the "Dude of St. John's" in which he was still prominent but really played second fiddle to Alec Pierce, a cool and cutting Sixth Former with a caustic wit and an aptitude for engaging in burglary on his own account - a most exciting theme which, strangely enough, Charles Hamilton never used again. It need hardly be added that it was Bertie who was instrumental in bringing Alec Pierce to book.

There is no doubt that Bertie was a humorous character, but he lacked Gussy's simplicity and nobility of character, and so, however amusing his predicament, he could never quite attract the affection of the reader. One the whole, therefore, I consider Gussy much the better character. Which do you prefer?

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 8. Should Tom Merry, Wharton and the rest have grown up?

Gerry Allison writes:- "Your statement 'Of course the boys should not have grown up, the very thought is preposterous' reminds me of the inhabitants of Well's Country of the Blind, who were perfectly satisfied with their lack of sight, and thought the possession of eyesight a stupid and preposterous idea. How you under-estimate the GENIUS of our author! Had he decided to make the characters really live, how you would have scorned the suggestion that they should all have been Peter Pans."

Rev. A. G. Pound writes:- "The Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood stories belong to the realm of pure fiction, fantasy, fairy tale, romance, or whatever else you may care to call it. As such they are completely detached from 'real life'. The fact that Tom Merry, Wharton, and the rest are often identifiable with so many Toms, Harrys, and such whom one meets in ordinary life serves only to make this fantasy more effective.

In the realm of fantasy things usually happen as one wishes or would wish them to happen - and not as one often finds them unfortunately happening in 'real life'.

The future of Greyfriars characters is suggested most delightfully and convincingly in "The Old Boys' Dinner" which begins the 1932 Holiday Annual. Then Wharton, Bunter, Coker and others are described as they surely must be in twenty-five years from 'now'. (But that 'now' is infinitely elastic).

Of course, Figgins will marry cousin Ethel, and Cherry will marry Marjorie Hazeldene. They could not do anything else. Of course Wibley will become a great actor and Todd an eminent K.C. Of course Mr. Quelch will complete his 'History of Greyfriars'. All that will most certainly happen in this 'future'. But that 'future' will never come!"

Roger Jenkins writes:- "I think there is some superficial attraction

in the notion that the characters should grow up, and that a succession of Bunters, for example, would pass through the various forms of Greyfriars. But in this case, where is the main point of interest to be? At Greyfriars it was firmly fixed on the Remove, but under the suggested system it would have to be dotted about all over the school. In any case, many minors would prove no adequate substitute for their elder brothers - think of Nugent, Bunter, D'Arcy and Manners. And would we be prepared to see Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout grow old as well, and retire from the scene for good?

Surely it is the Peter Pan aspect which constitutes the magic for the stories, the knowledge that, whatever year of the Magnet we pick up, everything will always be just as we left it last time. Would we trouble to read it now if it were not so?"

Eric Fayne says:- "The above views are extremely interesting, but nobody has suggested, in connection with this hypothetical question, whether the stories should follow the original characters into young manhood and middle age, or whether they should be centred on a succession of newcomers to the schools. If, as Gerry suggests, I underestimate the genius of our author, it is because I regard Frank Richards primarily as a writer of school stories, a sphere in which, in my opinion, he is unsurpassed. Our author might be just as successful if he followed the vogue of these introspective days for outspokenness upon intimate matters, but, if he did, I don't think I should like his work so much. As it is, Tom Merry and Harry Wharton really "live" for me, and I ask for nothing more.

* * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(In this series, Eric Fayne touches on certain matters of interest to students of the Hamilton papers. He gives his own views superficially. If you will write to him, expressing your opinion on the topics he discusses, he will summarise readers' views in a future issue.)

No. 10. WE WHO IDOLISE!

While giving full credit to Harry Broster for his defence of Pentelow, with much of which I agree, I would point out, on behalf of the contributors to Controversial Echoes, that no reflection was cast on Pentelow's character, his knowledge of sport or his 'Galleries' to all of which Mr. Broster refers. The criticism of Pentelow was directed to him solely as a substitute writer for the Gem and Magnet.

I am not clear as to what Mr. Broster means in claiming that "J.N.P. was the best of the subs". If he means that Pentelow was the most gifted writer among the subs, this may be so. But, presumably, the substitute writers were intended to copy the style of Charles Hamilton so that readers believed that all the stories came from the same pen, and in my opinion Pentelow never even attempted to do this. Of all the substitute work, Pentelow's style is by far the easiest to detect, and on this basis I would assess him as one of the least successful of the subs, even though his stories may have been entertaining enough to some readers.

As I have said before, I was unperturbed by the polishing off of Courtney and Valence, but I cannot agree that Delarey, the Derwents, and Phyllis Howell were "more interesting people", or, in fact, that they had much worth at all.

Whether Pentelow, in writing at length on sporting contests, was giving the boys of his day, "what they wanted" is, I think, a moot point. In any case, those of us who write for the C.D. today do not view the stories as schoolboys. We write as adult collectors, with a reasonable knowledge of our subjects, and we assess the stories as we see them now.

Mr. Broster launches an attack on those who idolise. Certain members of our fraternity really love all the work of Mr. Hamilton, and tend to idolise their favourite author. They get pleasure out of this attitude, and write seldom if at all for the C.D., so what harm can they do, and who are Mr. Broster or Eric Payne to say they are wrong?

If, however, Roger Jenkins and I, who write regularly on Hamilton lore, indulge in blind worship of a deity which makes us incapable of fairly assessing the gifts of the substitute writers, then that very definitely is wrong, and our wise leader of York is also wrong in publishing the misleading articles which we write in our blindness. Both Roger and I dislike the work of the substitute writers, and we have never pretended otherwise. A review of our articles over the years would show that, at times, we have both criticised adversely some aspects of Charles Hamilton's work - surely odd behaviour for idolators. I suggest that most of my items in the "Let's be Controversial" series have carried some form of mild criticism, quite the reverse of idolatry.

Whether or not I fall into the idolising class, perhaps only our Editor is qualified to say, but I certainly do not like the stories by J.N.P. in the Magnet and Gem, though, as I have said before, I think

that he and other substitute writers played a useful part in the history of the old papers.

It's just my point of view. What's yours?

* * * * *

WHEN SILVER GAVE WHARTON RUM

By
E. V. Copeman

Silver offered Wharton rum and Wharton took it and drank. True or false?

Don't howl your protests because it's only too true! And from the inspired pen of the Old Master himself, too.

But the first James Silver was not the popular "Uncle James" of the Rookwood Classical Fourth. Nothing like him in fact.

This first Jim Silver appeared early in Magnet history in No. 267 in a story called CHUMS AFLOAT (which was reprinted in the 1938 Holiday Annual as MUTINY ON THE SPINDRIFT). Silver was a mutineer on a brig and is described as having "a swarthy face, gleaming black eyes, and with gold ear-rings in his ears." Despite the fact that he was a typical ruffian, his first act in the yarn was to rescue both Wharton and Bob Cherry from a possible watery grave; then, by the way of a "reviver" he offered the Removites a generous swig of rum!

Possibly for the only time in his career, "Wharton took a sip; he did not want to refuse the man who had saved his life. The spirit had revived him no doubt; but the mere taste of it sickened him."

* * * * *

The "Daily Mail" - Saturday, 28th December splashed a very frank and intriguing interview with Frank Richards, by Kenneth Allsop. It had a huge headline "I Say You Fellows, Old Bunter is 72!" and a cartoon showing Frank Richards pushing Bunter in a bath chair.

For those who wonder how the Owl's age is arrived at, the explanation by his creator is "I first invented him for a story in 1899, and he was 14 to set out with."

There will be a further reference to this notable article in next month's Golden Jubilee Number.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libs. 1st and 2nd Series; any numbers. Also Union Jacks 1917 to 1933. Boys' Friend Libs. 1st Series, No. 669, 2nd Series No. 79.

JOSIE PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

LONDON SECTION

The 10th Christmas Party Meeting was held, as now customary, at "Cherry Place", Wood Green. 31 members enjoyed all the usual ingredients plus many more. One very notable and welcome item was Bob Mortimer's cut out figures of the Greyfriars characters which he hopes to exhibit at Kingston on Thames in connection with the "Magnet" Jubilee next February. A grand sight indeed, thanks Bob for this wonderful preview. Grand quizzes, party games and good readings were on the agenda, with hot mince pies on the menu. Herbert was present with the "C.D. Annuals", too bad of B.R. to make him late, as Mark Johnson popped in for a short time and unfortunately had to leave ere our Herbert arrived. Good sales and exchanges, more of the new Tom Merry books collected, record borrowings from the Hamiltonian library reported; fine speech by Herbert, who passed on the greetings from the Leeds colleagues, who, by all accounts had a good Christmas party meeting of their own. 'Tempus Fugit', I say it did, many items had to be left for the next gathering which will be the Annual General Meeting at 27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22 on Sunday, January 19th. Host for this meeting will be Len Packman, Chairman elect for 1958. My word, what a grand talk he gave on the Christmas Double numbers of many of the old comics that he possesses. Space prevents the recording here of the other happy items at a very successful meeting with excellent catering by Eileen and Kathleen who were ably thanked on a proposition by Don Webster.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

* * *

NORTHERN SECTION CHRISTMAS PARTY - DECEMBER 14th, 1957

Once again hats off to the ladies, Mrs. and Molly Allison and Margaret Jackson for such a festive feed to put us in good fettle for the good things to come. What would we do without you?

Last year the petrol shortage prevented Brian Honeysett being with us. Fortunately no such emergency existed this time and right glad we were to see him after an absence of six years. He gave us a delightful talk on his collecting recollections. He was the youngest of us, but my word! he has had some books through his hands in his

time. His talk was the highlight of the evening and he received an ovation when he finished. Come again Brian.

There were games almost too numerous to mention - among them Stanley Smith's ever engrossing Criss Cross Quiz, a Twenty Questions session on novel lines born of the brain of Gerry Allison and a Down You Go game conducted by myself but the credit for which went to Frank Unwin of the Merseyside Club who had sportingly supplied all the material.

There were also toasts, a telegram from Frank Richards, more refreshments and chatter. Yes, verily a right merry evening, another milestone in the annals of the O.B.B.C. which gathers down Hyde Park Road.

HERBERT LECKENBY - Northern Section Correspondent.

* * *

MIDLAND SECTION MEETING - 25th NOVEMBER, 1957

A good attendance turned up to enjoy what proved to be a very nice change from the usual programme. Another grand film show, all in colour, and with the added attraction of appropriate music, plus the well thought out commentary of the member responsible, George Chathan. All the exotic scenery of the Riviera and the Mediterranean coast was shown, in particular what must be one of the most beautiful festivals in the world - the "procession of flowers". All present were enraptured and we are very grateful to George for this great show. Needless to say, very little was done in the way of ordinary business though the library continued its usual good service to the members. Thanks to Beryl's hard work. A contribution to the "Greyfriars Herald" Clubs Magazine was read out. Judging by its reception it was deemed worthy of inclusion. So far so good.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary

* * *

MERSEYSIDE SECTION - SUNDAY, 8th DECEMBER

There was an excellent attendance for our December Meeting and Christmas Party, which got away to an early start at 4 p.m. After the financial statement had been read, special mention was made by the Chairman of a purchase of Magnets, through the co-operation of the London Club. Our thanks are due to this branch for their help.

Final discussion took place on the "Greyfriars Herald" compet-

ition, resulting in complete satisfaction by everybody present.

At the conclusion of the business side of the evening everybody sat down to a splendid tea provided by Mrs. Webster, at the end of which appropriate remarks were made by Don Webster, Chairman, and Frank Unwin, Vice Chairman. Special thanks were given by Frank to Mrs. Webster for the work she has done for us during the last twelve months behind the scenes. After tea the writer presented his question and answer quiz (strictly non book club). Questions ranged from the name of Liverpool's bogy team to the names of three of Her Majesties Ministers. Some interesting, if not accurate answers were given. Prizes of two books were given to the two winners, Don Webster and Frank Unwin.

A fascinating old time film show was then given by Pat Laffey with a friend of his. One of Chaplin's early successes was shown, along with two short films dealing with hobbies.

Next a fresh edition of "Down You Go" and this time the writer's team had the pleasure of beating Don Webster's team by ten points to six, this being mainly due to Peter Webster being at the top of his form.

This was followed by three Christmas readings and here special mention must be made of the fact that one of the readings came from the current Sexton Blake story "Walk In Fear." The extracts proved that the Amalgamated Press are still turning out Blake yarns as good as ever they were. The evening finally ended with toasts, presented as usual most kindly by Jim Walsh. Altogether a fine afternoons and evenings entertainment, and there is no doubt everybody present enjoyed it to the full. Next meeting - Sunday, 12th January, at 7 p.m.

NORMAN PRAGNELL - Secretary, Merseyside Branch O.B.B.C.

C.D. ANNUAL - Corrections

Despite the greatest care one or two errors did creep in. Still there were a lot of words altogether. My apologies to those concerned. The mistake in Derek Gifford's name is one of those things you can only call inexplicable. (H.L.)

Page 47, 5th par. last line but one (dated 1921) should read (1941)

Page 49, 3rd par. first line "wirten" should read written

Page 139, Stafford, Denis should read GIFFORD, Denis.

Page 139, George Sellars' preferences should read 5 (b) (a) (c)

NELSON LEE COLUMN

by JACK WOOD

Nostaw, 328 Stockton Lane, York.

Phone: 25795

* * * * *

A Happy and Prosperous New Year to all my many friends, readers and contributors. I hope you all had a Christmas in keeping with those which have so often delighted us in the past in the pages of the Nelson Lee Library and other Old Papers.

First, may I apologise for one omission in my Collectors' Digest Annual article on the Prefects of St. Frank's. I wonder how many old readers recalling one of Edwy Searles Brooks's famous "get outs" after a reader had complained that Cyril Jesson had been left out of a current series of Portrait Galleries? Brooks's reply was to the effect that he did not remember anyone named Jesson, or else he must have overlooked him. Anyway, he would enquire next time he was in the Bellton district visiting St. Frank's.

Well, I forgot one of the West House prefects, Llewellyn Rees, who, as his name suggests, is a Welshman. I believe he was not a prefect in the early Two-House days, but apparently he must have been promoted when the school was expanded.

He was referred to as a prefect during the School Train series, or just afterwards when in his Gossip from St. Frank's, Brooks reported that Rees was interested in the forthcoming arrival of a new Removite, Morgan Evans, who had been involved with Nipper and Co when the School Train was in the Swansea area.

Rees, however, was a regular character in all the Sixth Form Portraits. He was a good singer and very popular at social events. Otherwise he was an ordinary sort of senior, with very little to distinguish him from a senior boy at any public school.

In that respect, he was no more outstanding than Leslie Stanhope, Cedric Taylor and other Sixth formers who were not prefects.

Secondly, I sent John Creasey copies of this year's C.D. Annual, and also of last year's in which it will be recalled there were suggestions for Creasey contributions to the new Blake Libraries.

Mr. Creasey has replied thanking me for the Annuals. Fascinating is his apt description for them.

Incidentally, Creasey admirers will find the January Creasey

Magazine of more than passing interest. It lists not only his forthcoming novels, but also the cheaper paper back edition which are being put out by Jay Books.

Thirdly, an old friend, who shall be nameless for the moment, has put forward a bright idea for a gossipy addition to our Column. I think at first look, that his scheme is a most interesting one and I hope we shall work out a plan which will prove interesting to everyone.

Fourthly, may I appeal to all Leeites for their help in the coming year so far as articles are concerned. Ideas for future Nelson Lee Columns will be more than welcome, for it is very difficult to know just what the readers want. Between Ourselves was always a popular section of the Library; what about something on similar lines so that I can budget for your requirements?

The Annual lists plenty of people with interests in the Nelson Lee Library, so surely some of them outside the normal half dozen or so "regulars" must have something of general interest to pass on to our comrades.

Once again, a Happy and Prosperous New Year to all.

160 S.O.Ls for Sale. "At School and Away" 7/6 (1900)
 87 1931 - 1934 "Magnets" - different £16-15-0 lot.
 1940 "Magnets" Bound 62/6. "Childs Companion Annual" 1912 12/0.
 "Clubs Annual" 1916 - 10/- . "Munsey Magazines" bound, 1918, 1919,
 1920. Hundreds pages. 10/- each. "Champion" 1947 7/-
 "Girls Golden" 1927 - 7/6. S.A.E. Lists,
 LANRESON, 44 BLEAK HILL ROAD, ECCLESTON, ST. HELEN'S, LANCS.

The Yorkshire Evening Post, December 23rd under a big heading said:-
 "Hillary and Co. have their cake and eat it, Billy Bunter on Ice. Sir Edmund in the Antarctic could not wait until Christmas before eating their tuck."

Another Casualty. "Truth" the famous weekly died with the last issue of 1957, after a run of 80 years. Its end was sudden for even the Editor didn't know there would be no paper to prepare for the first week of 1958. In the last number articles were announced for next week just as in Magnet, No. 1683 readers were told of a story which never saw the light.

(H.L.)

S.B.L. REVIEWSJANUARY 1958Murder Down Below (No. 397).....James Stagg

Every so often there comes along a case the solving of which proves so distasteful that Blake regrets ever having taken it on. As he readily admits, there is no justification for murder at any time; but in this instance, his sympathies are entirely with the perpetrator of the series of crimes he sets out to investigate.

Those who are reminiscent of the stories of the late G. H. Teed may recall that this famous Blake writer once seemed to have a fondness for the charming and picturesque North Devonshire countryside, embracing such beauty spots as Barnstaple, Bideford and Clovelly. James Stagg, in a story which emphasises the human side of Blake's characters, chose indetical surroundings here.

I found this novel wholly enjoyable, and should this prove to be an example of the fare to be provided in 1958 then a successful year is assured.

Rating.....Very good

* * *

Redhead for Danger (No. 398).....Arthur Maclean

Like its companion, this is another who-dun-it, but the result is hardly as satisfying as the author's previous effort, the excellent "FIND ME A KILLER". Events revolve around a Christian cup of great antiquity - The Great Chalice of Antioch - the creation of an unknown Greek silversmith. Or, to be more exact, the inner cup, of goblet, which forms both an essential and valuable addition to it.

Back at Blake's side at which he has not been the familiar figure as in the more palmy days, Tinker returns to form the old Baker Street partnership, with an unfamiliarly portrayed Inspector Coutts of the C.I.D.

After finding the beautiful, red-headed Eva Kastermann brutally murdered, Tinker finds himself following several false trails. Yet a more confident Blake finds his perplexed assistant a useful ally in the unmasking of the slayer. A workmanlike effort, but not the real Maclean.

Rating.....Good

THE YEAR IN BRIEF

The best novel of 1957? Well, in assessing the merits and demerits of the 24 stories which comprised the year's output, one is faced with some little difficulty because the current Blake story must be placed in one of at least three different categories: (1) MURDER and MYSTERY. (2) ACTION and THRILLS. (3) TRAVEL and ADVENTURE (as in James Stagg's stories of Beirut (No. 367) and Naples (No. 373))

In the murder-cum-mystery department, I unhesitatingly place Arthur Maclean's "FIND ME A KILLER!" in top place. For action and thrills "THE LAST DAYS OF BERLIN" was a fine example of vigorous, suspenseful writing. The quartette which gave me my greatest reading pleasure and which comprise my Top Four are as follows:- (1) "THE LAST DAYS OF BERLIN" (2) "FIND ME A KILLER!" (3) "THE SEASON OF THE SKYLARK" (4) "STAND-IN FOR MURDER" - the latter two being written by Jack Trevor Story and Desmond Reid respectively.

Three stories, in my opinion, failed to make the grade. They were "SILENT WITNESS" (No. 375), "PANIC IN THE NIGHT" (No. 377) and "CORPSE TO COPENHAGEN" (No. 385).

Making their debuts as Blake chroniclers were Desmond Reid, Jonathan Burke, William Arthur and Martin Thomas. With five novels in his first year, Reid made quite a notable entry into the ranks, and his story of that old established favourite, Dr. Huxton Rymer, was a most commendable effort.

Altogether a most successful year.

WALTER WEBB

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* * *

Edited by Arthur Maclean, the first issue will bring you, amongst many other things, a picture feature on David Farrar, film-land's Sexton Blake; pictures and print covering the new hostelry recently opened in London's Northumberland Avenue - the Sherlock Holmes; intimate pen portraits of some of the writers currently chronicling the adventures of Sexton Blake; and considerable 'inside information' on Nelson Lee and Dixon Hawke.

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FIRST LEONARD SHIELDS GREYFRIARS DRAWING?

Until quite recently I was always under the impression that the first time the late Leonard Shields actually drew any pictures of the Greyfriars characters was when he illustrated the never-to-be-forgotten Indian Series in the Magnet in 1926.

Actually, I find now that in my own collection I have at least one previous illustration this artist did of a Greyfriars scene, though it was not an illustration for a story. It took the form of a glossy sepia plate which appeared in the 1923 Holiday Annual facing Page 80 and entitled "FIRE-DRILL AT GREYFRIARS SCHOOL." Two characters immediately identifiable are Billy Bunter and Paul Pontifex Prout. Bunter is armed with two fire buckets, from one of which water is pouring over another unfortunate junior who has become entangled with the big hose from the nozzle of which in turn a fierce jet of water has caught the famous W. G. B. square in the middle of his fat spine! Prout's claim for the limelight in this picture is based on the fact that he is at the receiving end of a fire-bucket, one enthusiastic though unrecognisable junior having just flung the entire contents over him!

I wonder if artist Shields realised in 1923 that but three years later he would embark on quite a lengthy period of time and do his share in shaping the destinies of the well-known characters of Hamilton's famous Kentish School?

* * * * *

28 Derwent Street,
Newcastle on Tyne 5.

1st January, 1958.

Dear Editor,

First I must congratulate you on the excellent quality of the Collectors' Digest Annual, the article by Roger Jenkins - "The Golden Age of the Magnet" - was superb.

I must disagree with him though, when he says that the second series of "Wharton the Rebel" was better written than the first series. My mental picture of the various schoolboys at Greyfriars and especially Harry Wharton will remain with me forever through this first series.

However, we Magnetites must feel greatly indebted to Roger for his splendid article on the truly "Golden Age" of the Magnet.

(Letter unavoidably cut)

Sincerely, BASIL ADAM