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The COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL. 12. No 144

32 pages

DECEMBER 1958

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-THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST-

Vol. 12 No. 144

Price 1s. 6d.

DECEMBER, 1958

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

o r

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

From the Editor's Chair

Wishing all the Members of the
Brotherhood of Happy Hours, at
home and abroad, a Very Happy
Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

* * *

END OF THE TWELFTH YEAR! Yes, for a dozen years our little magazine, born under such modest circumstances, has caught the mails without fail in the first week of each month. In a letter from W. H. Bradshaw of Los Angeles I received the other day, he said "It only seems like yesterday that we were looking forward to the 100th number, yet in six months we shall be halfway through the second century." Yes, it's amazing how time seems to fly isn't it?

The year now nearing its close has been another eventful one. The most important happening, of course, was the Golden Jubilee of the Magnet in February. Our members celebrated in no uncertain fashion and got quite a lot of press publicity as a result.

So far as the C.D. is concerned, I have been happy in being able to welcome many new subscribers and the circulation is higher than ever it was.

I have also had the pleasure of seeing in York, two visitors

from overseas; Ronald Hunter from Brazil and Fred Griffin from New York. On my own travels I have visited all four Old Boys Book Clubs, and only hope I can make the same claim next year. And I have also been able to add to the reports those of our chums in Sydney. I wonder if I shall be able to say some day that I have been there too. What an entrancing thought!

Finally, on looking over the material before me, I find I have so much that I have decided to add four pages to this number. I hope you'll find it good from cover to cover.

* * * *

THE TWELFTH ANNUAL. All the copy has been safely gathered in, and as I write this the pages are being run off. Last month talking about the cover I said "We can safely leave it to Bob". Well when you see it you'll agree that my faith was justified. He has made a jolly good job of it, especially when you consider the difficulties he was working under.

The other night about 2.30 a.m. I finished reading the "proofs" of the Sexton Blake Circle's feature. I see Josie says in "Blakiana" that I had termed it excellent. Well, I feel that's an understatement. Anyway I know that I tumbled into bed contented and happy.

Now, however, there's just one thing that's worrying me a little. I've had to refer to it each year about this time, and that's the number of regulars who haven't actually ordered. Of course, I know they take it for granted I've booked one for them. All the same, I should feel easier if they confirmed it. However, if I don't hear those it refers to will find the Annual dropping through the letter-box just before Christmas.

* * * *

CHANGE OF ADDRESS. Gerry Allison is changing his abode, so would his many correspondents please note that from about January 3rd his address will be: 3 BINGLEY ROAD, MENSTON, NR. ILKELEY, YORKSHIRE.

* * * *

ERROR. In the October C.D. it was stated that the new Tom Merry books were to be published by Messrs. Charles Skilton Ltd. This was an error for the publishers are "Spring Books". Mr. Skilton tells me however, that his firm will be able to supply them.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

LETTER BOXREMARKABLE!

(I can't resist publishing this letter, for it makes me feel that the little C.D. does give a helping hand. Moreover, it once again proves that its readers can always be relied upon to give a helping hand. H.L.)

* * *

10th November, 1958.

5 Raleigh Gardens,
Brixton Hill,
London, S.W.2.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

Thank you for inserting query about "Tom Strong" in November C.D. I had discovered a lot about Gunby Hadath before the ad. appeared from Leonard Allen whose address you gave me and he sold me five of G. H's books. This ad. has so far brought three replies and the offer of four more books including the "Tom Strong" one which is called "Schoolboy Grit". It is all quite remarkable! Four weeks ago I knew nothing except the wrong title to a book I read twenty years ago and now I possess ten books and a good deal of information about his career. Thank you very much for your kind help.

Yours sincerely,

R. GUEST

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Blakiana

conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

I'm glad to say I now have some fine material in hand for the New Year. Amongst other things, this not only includes what I consider to be some of Walter Webb's best work but also Bette Pate's article originally intended for the Sexton Blake feature in the C.D. Annual. Bette's article was, alas, much too lengthy for the amount of space available, and I am therefore serialising it as from January.

Speaking of the "Circle" feature, Herbert Leckenby considers it excellent. Thus, with such praise, it is to be hoped that the "Circle's" contribution this year will meet with your approval.

And now, for the sixth Christmas number of the C.D. as your conductress of Blakiana, I wish you all once again a Very Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * *

TO OLD FRIENDS - AND THEIR FRIENDS

By Margaret Cooke

This is the season of the year when we look forward with joy to the coming Festival of Goodwill; plan to take a few days rest from our labours, meet old friends, re-live old memories, and discuss the circumstances which may or may not have changed our lives.

In between times most of us will renew our acquaintance with those old and cherished friends from the favourite books of our youth whose exploits have cheered our solitude, made less lonely the early days of life in new towns, or, have been the subject of many happy hours of friendly discussion with other fans.

Nelson Lee and Nipper, alas, live only in our memories and the tales of past years, but Billy Bunter has grown fatter and more famous than ever since he appeared on the silver screens of television sets. My own old friend, Sexton Blake, was rejuvenated overnight in 1956 when the publishers of his adventures made drastic changes in his character and habits in a desperate effort to gain new readers.

The austere recluse who lounged in a deep chair, clad in dressing gown and pipe-smoke, bringing his brilliant intellect to bear on knotty problems while his smart young assistant sallied forth in search

of more data, has become a gay, elegant, sociable habitue of night clubs and theatres. Lean, thoughtful, dynamic; attractive to women (but no judge of the sex) the new Blake believes in acting first and asking questions afterwards. He accepts only those cases which offer a challenge to his ability as a detective or arouse his curiosity. He does not hesitate to use physical violence when necessary but feels degraded if he has to fight in a public place. He hates crime but sometimes pities the criminal, and is grieved when his investigations cause heartbreak to the criminal's innocent relatives.

The old "Father-Blake" who stretched out his hand to guide, train and help a young assistant-son has become a quiet, understanding friend tackling the hard task of standing aside while a young adult makes his own life in his own way; sometimes amused, sometimes anxious but always determined not to interfere. Yet his concern and compassion for the love-torn Tinker who suspected that his girl friend was a spy ("Battle Song", S.B.L. No. 371), and his determination to rescue or die with a Tinker captured, tried and sentenced to death by the Dictator of a Totalitarian State, proved that the new Blake feels all the old one's affection and loyalty towards his associate (see "Passport to Danger" S.B.L. No. 391).

Blake the Individualist has become Blake the Collaborator, working hand in glove with other detectives all over the world, with Scotland Yard, Interpol and M.I.5. He lives alone in a flat on the floor above Tinker's in Baker Street, rents a suite of offices in Berkeley Square, has a pretty, young receptionist, a middle-aged book-keeper/typist with whom he shared war-time espionage work; and, after saving her life in 1956, has taken to himself one Paula Dane - to be his constant companion and his private, personal secretary.

The man who once boasted that he was "nosquire of dames" now gets a kick out of other men's envious glances when he dines and dances with this radiantly beautiful woman who loves him. He "admires and respects her above all women", is quick to resent any insult offered to her, and delights in her intelligence, which matches his own.

As a Secretary-assistant he finds her hard-working, efficient, sensible and courageous; as a companion she is charming, witty, poised, serene and truly feminine. She has faced death many times in his service; shared many unpleasant experiences, and proved her ability not only to defend herself but to rescue Blake and Tinker too. She fought and knocked out the girl whom she found searching her bedroom in "Nightmare in Naples" (S.B.L. No. 373), bound her with a silk

underslip, then revived a less wary Blake who had been coshed by a second searcher. In "The Frightened People" she shot one crook in the hand, disarmed his two companions, forced a fourth man to accompany her for his own safety, and - on the way out - rescued a captive Tinker!

Yet she can be afraid too, even as the new Blake knew the fear of death-by-drowning when he was coshed and pushed into the sea in "Murder Down Below" (S.B.L. No. 397). Paula was frightened by the sudden vision of a dead face in the ditch as the car sped by in "Panic in the Night", by the sudden rising of a bird in a wood in "She Ain't Got No Body", and most of all by the nightmare experience of waking from an hypnotic trance to find herself swaying over a railway track while Blake and Tinker fought frantically against the slip-stream to drag her back into the safety of an express train thundering through the night towards Edinburgh ("The Evil Eye" S.B.L. No. 415).

She has learned to understand Blake's moods and motives, to be generous when his work brings him into contact with other members of his staff, particularly with Tinker, now Junior Partner in charge of all cases in the north, and Head of the Records, Dark Room and Laboratory department at the Berkeley Square offices.

She has a great affection for this young man who was seriously injured two years ago whilst protecting her from kidnappers, but has never been tempted to "mother" him as she does Blake. Theirs is the ideal man/woman relationship for Detective Fiction, born of a common desire to serve Blake and to be as near to him as possible at all times.

For the first time in his life Tinker has a companion of his own age to share his cheerful outlook on life; his anxiety when Blake undertakes dangerous missions alone; his pride when Blake succeeds in cracking a difficult case; and his compassion for the "Chief", when the detective's urge to fight crime without counting the cost brings him to the point of exhaustion but will not let him rest. They work together in perfect harmony, each recognising the other's worth but certain of their own importance to Blake.

To my old friend Blake I wish long life and happiness with all the thrills and spills he loves, but fewer coshings in 1959.

To Tinker I wish success as a detective and as a chemist.

To Paula, Miss Pringle, Mrs. Bardell and Marion, I send my gratitude for their shining example of womanly virtues, and to Marion who is casting a speculative eye on Tinker I add "good hunting".

To Blake's truest and closest friends - the authors whose imaginations have given him such a full, active life in the service of Humanity, I send my greetings and my sincere thanks for nearly forty years of happy reading. To those who have retired from active service

with the S.B.L. I wish ease, happiness and good fortune. To Mr. Baker and his Merry Men of Farringdon Street, who are working so hard and so successfully to rehabilitate Blake in public favour, I say - may your characters grow in grace and favour for many years to come (I'd like to reach my half century as a constant reader), and may each of you become as famous, at home and abroad, as my friend Sexton Blake.

* * * * *

STORY IN A THOUSAND!

Highlights in a Memorable Old Xmas Number

By Walter Webb

A story in a thousand - yes; in the generally accepted sense of the word - not quite!

The story against which this laconic criticism is directed was that published under the title of "The Thousandth Chance", and was specially written by G. H. Teed to commemorate the occasion of the Union Jack's thousandth week of issue. In order to be strictly accurate however, it should be stated that this was the 1000th issue of the second series, for the U.J. published first in 1894, as a halfpenny paper, enjoyed a run of nearly 500 numbers before it attained the more dignified status of a penny weekly in its attractive new dress of pink, in October 1903. "The Thousandth Chance" appeared on 9th December, 1922, and since it happened that Yuletide was so near, was published as a combined Christmas and one thousandth number. Around it hovered somewhat sad memories, for, just a few months previously, Lord Northcliffe, who as Alfred Harmsworth, founded the UNION JACK among various other papers fondly remembered by a dying generation, had died in unhappy circumstances at the comparatively early age of 57. The memories of the impressive service at Westminster Abbey on that Thursday morning of the 17th day of August were scarcely dimmed at the time.

There was an impressive look about the particular story which forms the basis of this article, too. First, the cover, attractively drawn by E. R. Parker, in a pleasing combination of red and blue. This showed to the Blake admirers of that day their favourite character at his Christmas dinner, flanked on either side of the table by Tinker and Pedro. On the wall behind them are four framed paintings of the same number of characters, who were recognised at that time as comprising some of the most popular crook personalities of the era. Two of Teed's own created characters, and two by those immensely well-liked writers - Anthony Skene and Robert Murray. First a profile study of Zenith the Albino, cursed from birth with the stamp of the albino; the debonair

master-criminal whose daring and courageous exploits earned him a popularity second to none at his peak; Ysabel de Ferre, Black Duchess of Jorsica, the beautiful, raven-haired woman, who was even then attempting to wrest the presidency of the notorious Criminals' Confederation from the claw-like hands of the deformed and utterly evil Professor Jason Reece; Dr. Huxton Rymer, the famous surgeon turned crook, who had gained world-wide admiration in the successful hip operation he had carried out at the Franz Josef Hospital at Vienna; and Algy Somerton, a member of that ruthless trio known as the Three Musketeers. In Blake's right hand is a half-filled wine-glass, which is raised in a toast as he looks straight at the reproduced likeness of Rymer.

In addition to the eight extra pages, there was a free presentation plate of Sexton Blake in colour, drawn by Arthur Jones; and to make the number a real bumper one, the services of three popular artists of the day were commissioned to illustrate the story. More, their photographs were reproduced on pages 8, 24 and 28, opposite specimens of their work. The artists were Val Reading, Arthur Jones and H. M. Lewis.

The story told of Sexton Blake's great secret, a secret shared by Tinker and only one or two others. The discovery of that secret by one other - one of Blake's most implacable enemies - results in the death of a harmless old man, who, since he died in the service of the criminologist, sets the latter on the trail of the assassins guilty of the crime.

It is Christmas, and Blake and Tinker are spending Boxing Day at John Graves's place in Hampshire. A much concerned and devoted Yvonne is anxious for Blake's complete relaxation of mind from all problems appertaining to crime, for on medical advice he has been strongly urged to take a rest or suffer the risk of a complete breakdown, the result of many months of overwork and physical strain.

And no wonder! This was the era in which Blake was waging a long and unceasing battle with the many kings of crime - not forgetting a queen or two! - who, sometimes singly, sometimes in pairs, and occasionally in a body, harassed him continuously. A glance down the records for that year - 1922 - conclusively proves the point. On six occasions he was matched against those old and redoubtable opponents, Zenith the Albino, Professor Kew, Leon Kestrel and Dr. Huxton Rymer; four times he was called upon to match his wits against Prince Wu Ling and the Three Musketeers; three encounters with George Marsden Plummer; three tussles with the Criminals' Confederation, not forgetting relentless, unscrupulous foes in Count Ivor Carlac, Aubrey Dexter, Janssen the

Moonslayer, Waldo the Wonder-Man, and the exotic creature from the fetid jungles of Haiti, the high priestess of voodoo, Marie Galante, the octoroon, all of whom were met on one or two occasions. With many of these encounters taking place abroad it is not to be wondered that at the close of the year Blake was practically exhausted by his efforts to withstand the terrific assaults against him and by the power of his counter-attacks to offset them!

What was his great secret?

For many years Blake had been a collector, and in twenty years had accumulated a priceless collection of rare and valuable objects of all kinds - pictures, vases, caskets, scarce first editions and numerous other articles dear to the genuine collector's heart. And for the purpose of his hobby Blake had purchased a select residence in a quiet square off the Edgeware Road and given unto a Mr. Henry Crosby, an elderly man, one-time curator of a well-known museum, the responsibility of safe-guarding his veritable mine of wonderful art treasures.

It was a secret kept safe through the years, but had now been discovered, and by no less a person than Prince Wu Ling. Over now to Abbey Towers, in Sussex, the estate of Professor Andrew Butterfield, alias Dr. Huxton Rymer, crook and international adventurer. Here a number of Blake's greatest enemies are gathered together to plot the downfall of their arch enemy. They are Rymer himself, his attractive partner and one-time housemaid, Mary Trent, Wu Ling, Plummer, the Three Musketeers, Zenith, Leon Kestrel, Professor Kew, and the Black Duchess, Ysabel de Ferre. The spokesman is Wu Ling. His ambition, which is well-known, is the regeneration of China under a single control as it was under the Manchus. His present mission to Europe is to gain possession of the Ling-tse vase. This vase of which there is now only one in existence, is a symbol of power. To the Chinese group which possess it must come complete domination of China. And for Wu Ling only one group can unite the whole of China and ultimately overthrow the white races - the Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle, of which he is supreme head. The plan he has conceived and which he submits for their approval is the confiscation of Blake's treasures and an ultimate share-out of the proceeds. For himself he wishes nothing save one small article of little value to them but of immense portent to himself and all China - the Ling-tse vase.

The great plot is successful, for when the body of Henry Crosby is found in the Liffey, Blake loses no time in hastening to Dublin to investigate the motive for the crime. It should be explained here that it was an emissary of Wu Ling who killed the old man and threw his body into the river, exceeding instructions given him by the

prince, a liberty he later paid for with his life when he failed in his quest to find the vase for his imperial master.

On returning to London Blake's sorrow at the old man's death is matched by another shock - the theft of his priceless collection of art treasures. But, whilst the plotters are gloating over the success of their daring exploit and anticipating with keen enjoyment the general share-out, Wu Ling remains a thwarted, angry man. For when he examines what he believed to be the Ling-tse vase, he discovers it to be a fake. Knowing Yvonne Cartier to be in Blake's confidence, the prince turns his attention to her flat, in Queen Anne's Gate. The sending of the same emissary to the flat in order to search it for the vase is frustrated by Alec, Yvonne's chauffeur; so Wu Ling sends an ultimatum to Blake. Hand me the vase and in return I will divulge the hiding-place of your treasures, are his terms.

Sir Gordon Saddler, the "mystery man of 'Frisco", an 88 year old English baronet, who many years ago had kidnapped a Chinese princess from her palace and fled with her into the interior, had entrusted Blake with the vase. A trusted agent of the British Government, he was believed by all China, save Wu Ling, who had his own reasons for keeping silent, to be a Celestial, and was noted and respected for his great wisdom. At Sir Gordon's suggestion, Blake agrees to bargain with Wu Ling. But when the prince is free to take the vase he draws back, for Sir Gordon had attached a length of hair of the great and wise Confucius to the vase. It is explained in the text that the Ling-tse vase might be the symbol of supreme power but the sacred braid of Confucius' hair was the most revered object in all China, and not even Prince Wu Ling might lay desecrating hands upon it. Wu Ling accepts his defeat with characteristic dignity, and since he had given his word, Blake regains his unique collection. In fact, there is quiet dignity about the whole climax, when the kings of crime dispassionately and almost good-humouredly hand over the priceless proceeds. And the vase? This is given into the care of a Cabinet Minister, Lord Blackstock "until conditions become sufficiently stable in China for the ancient symbol to be given back to the ruling faction."

Those readers of that era with a particular liking for the Zenith and Kestrel stories must have experienced much disappointment at the small and subordinate roles their favourites were called upon to play here. Kestrel, as head of the powerful Kestrel Syndicate would be hardly like to play second fiddle to any of his own fraternity, even one so all-powerful as Wu Ling; and one feels Monsieur Zenith would have even stronger disinclinations, being essentially a free lance. Yes, both were quite out of their element here, and a better example

of mis-casting it would be difficult to improve upon. But Teed handled the other characters with whom he was not familiar adequately enough, and produced, if not a story in quite his best vein, then one which doubtless gave several hours of interesting reading to those for which his characters had begun to "live".

As for Sexton Blake, happy in the reflection that he had recovered his wealth, if a little sad in the knowledge that it was at the expense of the life of an innocent old man, it turned out a merry Christmastide for the rest of his stay at the home of John Graves was free and uninterrupted from crime.

Then, too, there was Yvonne.....

S.B.L. . REVIEWS

DECEMBER, 1958

The House on the Bay (No. 419)

Arthur Maclean

Sexton Blake in Singapore, at the time of its liberation from the Japanese. No doubt about it, these wartime adventures of Blake's are pulling out that little extra ability in the authors who chronicle them. As in Peter Saxon, so in Arthur Maclean.

When Eustace Craille has an assignment ready for him, Blake knows that it will be no sinecure; whatever else it is going to be that going will be tough - and dangerous. The destruction of the plan of an escape organisation to prevent Japanese war criminals from the consequences of their acts of bestiality during the occupation of Singapore and Malaya, and the contacting of all British Agents and the arrangements for their return to England, are the tasks set out for him in this particular case. But one agent - a beautiful Eurasian named Katherine Da Silva - has disappeared, and Blake is instructed to find her. He does - in a Japanese hospital, terribly disfigured and uncared for by a hospital staff callously indifferent to her suffering, and when she dies in his arms it is a Blake in grim fighting mood and in the unfamiliar tropical uniform of a British Naval Officer who dourly hunts her murderer, an Indian National Army Captain, asking no quarter, seeking none.

What secret did the package an Irish cabaret singer gave to the aged Lim Joo Heng for Katherine contain? And why did it provide the motive for her death? If you think that in dreading so many thrillers you have become hardened and so immune from what they have to offer, read this one! Powerfully narrated, it's a particularly fine effort.

Rating

Excellent

Returning from their tropical and perilous sojourn in Jamaica to the vastly opposite conditions of a wintry London, Sexton Blake and Marion Lang are looking forward to a home-coming party arranged in their honour by Tinker and Paula. But it turns out to be a pleasure deferred, for over London Airport, where the pair disembark, lurks the invisible shadow of one of Blake's most implacable wartime enemies - Michael Boland, otherwise Il Lupo, the Wolf. Il Lupo, a homicidal maniac, having escaped from Broadmoor, is on the run. Being the sort of man he is, one who excites her admiration and in whom she finds qualities her nondescript little husband can never hope to attain, Delia Lawson willingly throws in her lot with him. Boland's immediate plans for enrichment to the tune of no less than two million pounds in gold are closely entwined with Delia's hysterical outburst at the termini, when to all and sundry, she states that her husband has taken a time-bomb on the plane with him for the purpose of blowing it up. The plane, a B.E.A. Viscount, on its way to Rome is immediately ordered to return, a happening Il Lupo had banked on if his plans for the lifting of the gold were to have any chance of bearing fruit.

In the forestalling of the Wolf's gigantic coup all the organisation took part, though it falls to the lot of Miss Pringle on this occasion to prove that initiative and courage allied to a sound knowledge of tea brewing and efficient typing can be of great value to an agency, particularly that which is charged with the task of fighting crime. As in the previous year, W. Howard Baker rings down the curtain on the 1958 programme most satisfactorily.

Rating.....Excellent

WALTER WEBB

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE: The magazine section of the two S.B.Ls each contain a short Christmas story. In No. 419, D. Reid contributes an interesting little effort entitled "No Crime at Christmas", but it is the other "short" in the companion volume most likely to inspire the chief interest. It's a pleasant little fantasy bringing together characters both factual and fictional to "A Christmas Party" (which is the title, incidentally), and introduces such characters in the former category as Chief Detective Inspector Coutts, Superintendent Grimwald, Detective Superintendent Dukelow, Splash Kirby, Craille, Mrs. Bardell, Nelson Lee and Nipper, and of course, the Blake organisation, whilst in the other

category various authors of the New Order are maintained. As befits the spirit of Yuletide the Die Hard Collectors are invited along, though naturally are not portrayed in the happy picture of the gathering on the back cover, splendidly drawn by three talented artists. W.W.

WANTED URGENTLY: Sexton Blake Libraries, 1st series, Nos. 17, 105, 109, 197, 198, 201, 202. Sexton Blake Libs. 2nd series, Nos. 8, 25, 102, 111, 129, 213, 236, 243, 272, 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 495, 520, 667, Boys Friend Libs. 1st series, Nos. 10, 68, 102, 105, 107, 165, 229, 246, 669. Boys Friend Libs. 2nd series, Nos. 392, 396. Union Jacks, Nos. 881, 1041, 1098.

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

SALE/EXCHANGE: Vol. one. Union Jack (1880) Henty. Bound volumes "Magnets" also 150 loose Nos. between 1060 and 1683. O.S. Lee, singles and runs. 3 Holiday Annuals. Some duplicate Greyfriars S.O.Ls.

WANTED: Greyfriars material - Popular (new series). Please state wants. L. F. ASHLEY, 23 MOUNTJOY, BRIDPORT, DORSET.

WANTED: "Captain" volumes. Also any stories or novels by Gunby Hadath or John Mowbray. Also S.P.C. No. 33.

R. GUEST, 5 RALEIGH GARDENS, BRIXTON HILL, LONDON, S.W.2.

A Bumper Feast for Christmas in the Collectors' Digest Annual
Some items on the menu!

On Hearing the Greyfriars Chimes at Midnight.	Hail and Farewell
Hi Fag!	100 Questions.
Buffalo Bill and His Rivals	Just Where is Greyfriars?
1935-1937 Autumn Years of the Magnet	
Kalahari Secret.	Pentelow's Other Schools
(Nelson Lee)	
Men at Work.	Skinner, Snoop and Stott.
	The Packsaddle Bunch
	The Career of the Boys' Realm
The Fourth Form at Rockwood.	A Question of Origin
	The Collectors "Who's Who"

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THE TWELFTH ANNUAL AND THE BEST

*

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Have YOU ordered your copy?

Don't delay if you haven't.

PRICE 12/6

HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

I am indebted to Eric Fayne for the following very interesting item of news which appeared in the London "Evening News" recently.

Round about Christmas time I can picture some Londoners, at least, making their way along Shaftesbury Avenue. I should very much like to have the views of anyone who sees the production.

* * *

It's Absolutely Ripping.....BILLY BUNTER IS THE STAR by Bill Boorne

I say you chaps, here's some absolutely ripping news - Billy Bunter, the fat sneak of Greyfriars School, the Owl of the Remove, is to make his first appearance on the stage this Christmas. He will be seen - matinees only - at the Palace Theatre in "Billy Bunter's Mystery Christmas."

Thirty-five-year-old Gerald Champion, who lives in Chelsea, is married with a daughter of 13 and a son of 10, will be Billy Bunter on the stage, as he has been in more than 80 television programmes about him. This will be the first time Gerald Champion has been in the theatre since "Boys in Brown" at the Duchess some 11 years ago. And the last time he was at the Palace, in 1939, he was a call-boy for "Chu Chin Chow."

Billy Bunter will line up with the Famous Five - Harry Wharton; Bob Cherry; Frank Nugent; Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

I asked actress Bernalette Milnes, who is putting the show on with her husband Michael Anthony, if there would be any girls in the show.

She was almost shocked. "Girls?" she said, "the boys at Greyfriars never have anything to do with girls."

Mr. Frank Richards (real name Charles Hamilton) who lives at Broadstairs, and though approaching 90, is still writing, created Billy Bunter 50 years ago. He appeared for the first time in "The Magnet" (girls used to read it surreptitiously, too!) in February, 1908.

And as Martin Clifford, the remarkable Mr. Hamilton, who turned out some 1,500,000 words methodically and painstakingly year after year also wrote the famous stories about St. Jim's and Tom Merry in another boys' magazine, The Gem.

* * * * *

And these amusing pars. appeared in the "Northern Echo", 27/10/58. Can you guess who wrote them? Why, our own Jack Wood, of course.

YORK TUCKSHOP PLAN BRINGS OFFER FROM BILLY BUNTER: Billy Bunter, the famous Owl of the Greyfriars Remove, has asked me to pass on a "speshul" message of good wishes to the Governors of St. Peter' School, York, in recognition of their plan, which has received bylaw and planning approval from the Streets and Buildings Committee of York Corporation, for a pavilion and a tuckshop at St. Peter's.

The pavilion, he writes, does not worry him very much, except as a place for a nice quiet snooze while games are being played by more strenuous individuals "such as Bob Cherry", but he does welcome the scheme for tuckshop improvements.

As one who is an expert judge of tuck, he will be willing to come down to perform the opening ceremony and, of course, to sample the good things which he is sure will be on sale. The only thing that is stopping him is lack of funds. It appears that his many titled relations have once again left him in the lurch, and that his postal order is still on the way. If anyone would like to cash it for him, however, as a loan, he will be on the first train.

* * * * *

To proceed, the Sydney "Sunday Telegraph" of October 12th had no less than half a paper devoted to the activities of the Golden Hours Club. It carried a huge banner heading right across the page. "Yerooh!" shrieked the Owl of Greyfriars, and a Chapman illustration.

The article described the collections of several members and a good deal about the history of the Hamilton papers, not forgetting also tributes to Sexton Blake and other publications of the halcyon days. Thanks to Ernie Carter for clipping.

My word! our chums "down under" aren't half stirring things up for Syd Smyth was recently interviewed on television and I have just heard it was a huge success. I may have more to say about it next month.

* * * * *

And now to our popular regular features with the addition of another little puzzle with a prize. The generous donor prefers to remain anonymous, but you know him well.

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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 opinions on the topics he

discusses, he will summarise readers' views in a future issue).

No. 21. IS IT POSSIBLE TO REGARD THE WHOLE SET OF STORIES AS A SERIES?

The Editor of the Companion Papers once said to me: "It is quite impossible to view the stories in the Gem and Magnet as two giant series".

From his own standpoint, he was right. According to him, a generation of readers lasted only two years. In that case, permanent characterisation was unimportant; reminiscence meant nothing; it could not matter if plots were repeated lock, stock and barrel.

In fact, the Editor was wrong, for every one of us does regard the stories as giant series. To us, the Tom Merry of 1958 is the same sunny youngster whom we met at Clavering; the Harry Wharton of the Bunter books is the same fellow of uncertain temper who was "tamed" in the second issue of the Magnet. True, when we discuss characterisation, we prove our points by references which are, to some extent, isolated - but we sum up by looking back down the years to the very beginning.

Also, reminiscence counts greatly, and always has done. When the author himself looked back, he provided his older readers with great pleasure. The most remarkable example of reminiscence on the part of the author occurred only a few years ago, when, in a post-war Tom Merry Christmas story, Martin Clifford referred to the time when Binks played ghost, tapping on the School House walls from a secret passage - something which actually happened as long ago as Christmas Number of 1908. Reminiscence on the part of the author makes the characters live for us more than any other factor, perhaps.

It is, of course, obvious that both editor and author considered that they were catering for an ever-changing band of readers, as they were - up to a point. In view of this, the consistency of the author is quite remarkable.

All the same, the recognition of the stories as one great series obviously presented pitfalls for the writer. In Red Cover days, when the Bounder contrived to get all the Famous Five expelled one after the other, culminating in the classic "Bon Cherry's Barring-Out", many readers seem to have considered Dr. Locke guilty of base ingratitude as well as lacking insight. Only a short time previously, Bob Cherry has been instrumental in saving the Head from the results of the machinations of Mr. Vernon-Smith and Son - yet Bob was expelled because the Bounder's lies were believed by his Headmaster. Many years later, in the Gem, a rumour was circulated at St. Jim's that Levison had been expelled from Greyfriars. In an excellent story, the rumour was proved

untrue - but we old readers knew perfectly well that Levison had been expelled from the Kent school.

Messrs. Ratcliffe, Hacker and Manders all played their parts in episodes which would have rendered it a sheer impossibility for them to have continued on the staff of any real school.

Other examples of this sort could be quoted, but it is clear that too strict an observance of what had gone before would have made the author's task excessively difficult, and would, in fact, have denied us many powerful stories.

Was the repetition of outstanding plots a mistake? I don't think so - but I do think it would have been advantageous if the repeated plots had not been carried in quite such wholesale fashion from one school to another. The Rookwood version of the floating boarding-house featured Muffin, the Greyfriars version featured Bunter; Mornington ousted Jimmy Silver from the captaincy, and his prototypes, Vernon-Smith and Cardew, did the same thing at their respective schools; Cutts of the Fifth starred in the "Schoolboy Pug" series, Hilton of the Fifth in the "Game Kid" series; Levison was locked in a safe, Peele was locked in a safe.

I can, in fact, recall only one repeated theme with a marked difference, and I refer to this in my article in this year's Annual, so I will not anticipate same.

A good plot repeated was not unwelcome, but its cause would have been helped with a little more change in the trimmings.

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

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 19. DID ROOKWOOD HAVE SOMETHING LACKED BY GREYFRIARS & ST. JIM'S

ROGER JENKINS writes: "I think that what you say about the ordinary nature of the Rookwood stories is very true. When you come to think of it, most of the eccentric characters at Rookwood were but pale ghosts of their originals - compare Muffin with Bunter, Gunner with Coker, Mornington with Vernon-Smith, and so on. The substance of the Rookwood tales lay in the Fistical Four and the normal type of characters. Think, for instance, of the kidnapping of the Fistical Four by Mr. Lagden, or of the way in which Bulkely was obliged to resign the captaincy because his father was arrested, and you will see that many of the finest stories had no connection with the characters who were a little larger than life.

It is also interesting to reflect that Rookwood came to an end

in the Boys' Friend because of the change of editorship; Mr. Hamilton voluntarily put an end to the series which had done more than any other to keep the paper alive. There is something rather sad, and at the same time artistically satisfying in the thought that Rookwood finished at its very peak of perfection. Not for Jimmy Silver and Co. the sad fate of the Terrible Three - thrown to the sub-writing wolves, as it were - or that of the Famous Five, who kept going until 1940 like the good troupers they were, even though the standard of their performance was unaccountably slipping. Rookwood never had the chance to depreciate, and that may be the reason why Jimmy Silver and Co., are always welcome on a collector's bookshelf today."

GEORGE SELLARS writes: "I agree with a lot you do say about Rookwood. Nobody loves the Rookwood tales more than I do. But Blue Gems and Red Magnets, some white-covered Gems, and the Magnets of the 1930's, do not lack anything the Rookwood stories ever had. St. Jim's had, and still has, a charming atmosphere possessed by no other school.

Even so, I cannot remember ever reading a dull story of Jimmy Silver, for Rookwood was always written in such a breezy manner, leaving the reader, like Oliver Twist, asking for more. Frank Richards wrote many of his finest tales about Rookwood. I think 'Uncle James' famous motto 'Keep Smiling' is very delightful, and it is a favourite motto of mine."

ERIC FAYNE adds; Further to Mr. Frank Richards' most welcome comments on No. 18, I would, for the record, point out that I did not say that a critic should be dogmatic. I asked the question, "Are we too dogmatic in our writing for the C.D.?", and to this question, taking into consideration the compression we must accord all our articles, I answered "I don't think so."

* * * * *

URGENT: Would all those who propose attending the December Meeting at Wood Green, please write or phone Bob Whiter at BOW6793 from 9.30 to 6.0. Thursday's 9.30 to 1 p.m. except on Sundays?

* * * * *

FOR EXCHANGE: 100 Magnets, mostly pre-1934. Also 40 S.O.L's (1937-8) and 50 Gems (1937-8).

WANTED IN EXCHANGE: Magnets prior to No. 517 and Populars (new series) 101 to 568, especially Nos. 380 and 381. Please state exchanges available and send S.A.E. for lists to:-

F. COCKCROFT, HAWBER HOUSE, SILSDEN, NR. KEIGHLEY, YORKSHIRE.

ASK ME ANOTHER - No. 5.

1. What was memorable about the Gem Xmas No. for 1937?
2. Which Xmas did Harry Wharton & Co. spend away from Britain?
3. Where did Harry Wharton spend Xmas 1924?
4. Who was the chief character in the Gem's last Xmas Double Number?
5. Which new character, destined to feature in a long series, was introduced into the Christmas party of Magnet 1931?
6. Who played ghost, and was "laid" by Texas Lick?
7. What was the title of the first Xmas tale re-printed in the Gem?
8. Who prepared a phantom Christmas pudding?
9. In which Christmas series did Harry Wharton fight with Hurree Singh?
10. Who was instrumental in bringing Father Christmas to White Pine?
11. What did Coker's and Barbara Redfern's homes have in common?
12. Who was Jimmy Silver's Guest in the last Xmas Double Number of 'Boy's Friend'?

5/- to the sender of the best list of answers first received by the Editor. 10 points to his Club Branch, if any. Closing date

Answers to set No. 4

1. Cousin Ethel, on her initial appearance.
2. The Butterfly.
3. P. G. Woodhouse, "Mike".
4. Dennis Carr, a substitute writer's creation, played the lead in a long series of Greyfriars tales in the Popular.
5. "The Mystery of the Painted Room".
6. Lord Cavandale.
7. Johnny Bull.
8. A Vernon-Smith type of character at Cliff House.
9. A Schoolmistress for the Fourth Form.
10. Patacake Palace.
11. Rylcombe Grammar School.
12. The School for Slackers.

5/- has been sent to D. B. Webster, 23 West Park Road, Kew, Surrey. The Merseyside Club has gained 10 points.

Totals:- 20 point Merseyside. 10 points London. 10 points Northern.

* * * * *

FOR SALE: Railway Magazine 100 copies from 1898 to 1917. Railway and Travel monthly, 31 copies 1912-1917. Hutchinsons Britain Beautiful Magazines - complete volume - 50 copies. 1 bound volume of All the Year Round Weekly Journal conducted by Charles Dickens (1875) 1 bound volume Penny Magazine (1837) 1 bound volume Penny Magazine (1842). The first reasonable offer secures any lot.

J. SHEPHERD, 43 STATION ROAD, KILLAMARSH, NEAR SHEFFIELD.

QUIZZLE NO. 1

A	1							
B			2					
C	3	4						
D				5	6			
E			7					
F		8		9				
G			10					
H	11	12						
I		13						
J		14	15					
K				16				
L		17	18					
M		19	20					
N					21			
O		22						

The letters in numbered squares, if placed in sequence in the lower grid, will spell something which readers always welcomed.

CLUE DOWN: A. What Tom naturally expects at Laurel Villa. (1, 5, 9.)

CLUES ACROSS:

- A. Usually obvious when Mossco speaks or writes.
 B. Mr. Lascelles' speciality.
 C. Kildare of St. Jim's.
 D. Rogue, in both Gem and Magnet.
 E. One is painted at Eastwood House.
 F. 1907, 1939, 1958.
 G. Lord Reckness' grandson.
 H. There's a new one at St. Jim's.
 I. Rookwood boy.
 J. Of Man from whence Kerruish hails.
 K. This scamp has the Cross Keys at heart.
 L. Porter at Rylcombe station.
 M. She takes the blame, in a way, at Cliff House.
 N. Swell, at St. Jim's.
 O. Marjorie to Peter.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22					

Write on a postcard, the words in the lower grid and the answer to the Clue Down, and post to the Editor. 5/- for the first correct solution received. 10 points to club branch, if any.

* * * * *

EXCHANGE: 30 Magnets 517-549 for Magnets and S.O.L's. Sale - Chatterbox Annual 1923, 4/-. 2 B.F.L's Champion Library. 2 Aldines, 2 Buffalo Bills, 4/- lot. 2 Frank Richards' books, 2/-.

Postage extra.

E. NAGANY, 65 BENTHAM STREET, BELFAST.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

by JACK WOOD

Nostaw, 328 Stockton Lane,
York.

Phone: 25795

* * * * *

continued from last month:

There was the time when Hunter the Hun for a time was Head and his cruelty caused a rebellion. Colonel Clinton probably flashed across the detective's mind and most certainly would William K. Smith. Then there was a Mr. Trenton who used a drug on Dr. Stafford to cause him to lose all his finer feelings and bring out a savagery, animal like in its ferocity so that eventually Trenton was installed as Head - and it was on this same platform that Lee denounced him trapping him into taking his own drug.

And as Dr. Stafford sat down a fresh outburst of cheering greeted Mr. Lee as he took up the position from the headmaster.

"Thank you, boys" he smiled, as he raised his hand. "It seems such a long time since both Dr. Stafford and myself addressed you from this spot."

"It seems like years, sir!" shouted somebody.

"Yes, it does to me" he said. "But now we are all fully united once again I trust you will keep it that way. There are those who thought St. Frank's was a dead number, defunct, and out of date. There are certain people who would have us placed on the retired list, while other famous schools still basked in the glory that had long since been shared by St. Frank's. But I say we are still a force to be reckoned with, we have a tradition that defies concealment and as long as there is a St. Frank's College so shall we be there to defend it. Many people have tried to destroy us, and in spite of everything we have always pulled through. We shall go on pulling through, we shall go on and on wherever the English language is spoken. There will always be St. Franks!!!"

A tremendous burst of applause echoed high into the rafters, and it was some moment before the din eased. Nipper, who stood beside me, ran towards the front of the hall and jumped up on to the dais.

"Three cheers for the gov'nor!" he yelled, and they were given with such force that all other sound was blotted out. Edgar Fenton,

the school captain, had followed Nipper to the platform and his lips were forming words which were drowned in the great noise.

When later, in Master's Common Room the subject of Nelson Lee's reference to St. Frank's was brought up, Mr. Paget and Mr. Crowell agreed there had been some decline in new boys. In fact, for the very first time there were openings available in the Third Form. Mr. Stockdale and one or two more suggested St. Frank's, like other Public Schools, was experiencing a gap which would soon change and fill up. These gaps were brought about by fluctuating trends of thought which caused temporary changes.

Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi, Dr. Stafford and Mr. Lee looked in the Common Room and with Mr. Clifford, Barry Stokes, Mr. Pycraft and Mr. Suncliff to say but nothing of the French master there were quite a crowd.

When Dorrie was asked his plans for the future he replied he hadn't any. He intended just giving sufficient attention to his fortune to keep it intact and then he may search for new deposits of uranium which he suspected were to be found in the Kalahari. Or he may open up a rival detective agency in Grays Inn Road! As everybody knew he was joking, except Umlosi, we all smiled.

"Why, don't you think I could, professor?" said Dorrie.

"No" laughed Lee. And Dorrie's face fell in mock dejection.

A long time after I made my way to the Fifth Form passage where my bedroom adjoins that of Archie Glenthorne's. Night had come, a very long, long day was drawing to its close and a peaceful silence had descended on the old school. It was sometime before I could get to sleep. So much had happened, so many pictures kept filling my mind. I thought of my coming interview with Dr. Stafford, for I would have to explain the reason for my stay there.

* * * * *

This month, our resident correspondent at St. Frank's, Jim Cook, provides us with some more entertaining gossip from the old school whetting our appetites even more for the banquet to come in the C.D. Annual.

By a strange coincidence, a new book has just been published dealing with a lost city in the Kalahari. So, Mr. Cooke shares Mr. Brooks' flare for the topical it seems. This month, however, he writes:

Now that Dr. Stafford is once more Head of St. Frank's the old school is more like its old self. The pulse of the famous old college has quickened, an electric thrill runs through, promising a new lease of life. There is a will to win at sports...to make this season a

record of successes, at football especially.

I even saw Teddy Long practising with a ball on Little Side, and Archie Glenthorne making frantic attempts to push the leather past Handforth! But Handy was in one of his famous 'They shall not pass' moods, and even Nipper and Reggie Pitt failed to penetrate the mighty defence the leader of Study D had set up. And if this is a sample of future form then the forthcoming battle with Helmford College will be very exciting. For it appears from what I heard Helmford has a similar strong side.

As perhaps you know all boys are compelled to attend games practice, but for such highly disinterested fellows as Gore-Pearce, Gulliver and Bell, it must break their hearts to mope about the wide, cold field, watching other chaps get warm. These juniors simply have no idea about soccer, and when Mr. Freeman somehow got them in a side which included Marriott, Snipe, Merrell and Simons the result beggars description! But the fantastic truth must be told! Gore-Pearce actually scored a goal...he got the leather past old Handy! How he did it nobody seems to know. I had taken up position at the other end for I did not expect any play which demanded Handforth's attention. But the awful truth is that Gore-Pearce scored. I can only agree with Tommy Watson, and put it down to Claude's very bad temper!

* * *

I have always thought this time of the year when Autumn is on it's way out and winter is rushing along to take over, that it is a time when things are not particularly settled. Very few of us acclaim the intrusion of the dark, cold evenings after the beautiful sunsets of late summer, and it does seem to me that winter takes a long time departing. Not that this has been a summer remarkable for its glorious sunny days, for I have been told the River Stowe has more than once burst its banks during August owing to the very heavy rains. And there have been some unpleasant accidents to small craft running ashore down at Shingle Head. This part of the coast is very treacherous to shipping of all kinds when gales are about. Old Josh Cuttle tells me the weather has been rather awful while we were away in Africa. Hardly a day went by but that the Triangle was smothered with leaves and twigs brought down by the high winds and rain.

* * *

Practically the whole of the Lower School is bursting its sides over a joke played with Archie Glenthorne. The Genial Ass of the Remove has been confined to his luxurious study owing to his inability

to face a grinning horde of juniors and fags. Poor Phipps is for once at his wit's end. He cannot placate the young master. The young master refuses to see anybody, and maintains a frigid front at lessons.

Mr. Crowell tells me he doesn't mind in the least! This is the correct attitude that assists a Form master in his attempt to teach, and that if the rest of the Remove were as passive the duties of Mr. Crowell would be considerably easier! But this by the way.

Like most troubles it all began with a letter which Archie received from Joan Tarrant of the Moor View School. He had met Mudford in Bellton Lane and the postman, knowing the good natured Archie, had remarked "there was one for him", whereupon a shilling had exchanged hands and the letter passed over.

This letter contained all the ingredients to make him into a jelly. The wily Joan poured out some imaginary grief connected with her parents. All this I learnt afterwards, but at the time I was ignorant like the rest of the school regarding this letter. Anyway, it appeared Joan had written and told Archie that her parents had parted, and that her father was thinking of marrying again after the sordid details of divorce were forgotten. Her mother was pursuing a similar course, and neither of her parents had taken the poor Joan into account! She would have to leave the Moor View School in disgrace. She would be alone in the world, for even her brother had gone abroad. Nobody wanted her at all.

It was, no doubt, a pitiful tale, one that old Archie couldn't possibly dismiss. He did not dismiss it! For there was a topical flavour about it that most people would have accepted besides Archie. The Moor View girl had suggested Archie to look after her till things straightened themselves out; in other words he was to take her somewhere away from the stares of her school friends. But first they were to meet secretly and talk it over, if Archie was willing. And so the poor old ass fell for it. They met near the stile in Bellton Lane, two or three times after school and these clandestine meetings resulted in Joan Tarrant's scheme bearing fruit. They decided to elope. To elope to Gretna Green. That Archie's idea of the meaning of visiting Gretna Green was other than, well, to see a smithy, must be accepted. If Joan had rooted for Blackpool then Archie's reaction would have been the Tower.

He booked tickets for the journey and also reservations at an hotel. But Joan stipulated she would be following on in case they were seen. Archie saw the wisdom of this and duly agreed. But forces were at work which were strongly antagonistic to the couples deeply laid plans. Forces in the shape of the sharp eyes of Phipps.

Sensing the atmosphere created by his master, Phipps had followed

him the very time Archie had decreed as the last meeting prior to departing for Scotland. Phipps seeing Archie with the girl at Bellton station conjured up all sorts of things in the valet's mind, but trains meant journeys and when they were accompanied by a young rich man and a perky girl anything could happen! Phipps made sure that it didn't! Joan was to return to the Moor View School and meet Archie the next day at Gretna Green. Actually she had no intention. It was all one huge joke. A jape on Archie. And somehow, Teddy Long, the sneak of the Remove, had his fat ear open when Phipps returned with Archie. And very soon the little he had heard when Archie was explaining to Phipps got around like wildfire. It was distorted, enlarged and exaggerated, but eventually Nipper demanded an explanation. For this was a jape on the Remove, and Archie was a Remove chap. How Nipper solved the very delicate problem of wiping out the stain and hitting back at the girls of the Moor View School remains to be recorded.

My bedroom is next to Archie's which sort of gave me an advantage to see him, but even this neighbourly freedom did not permit me to see him. He refused my condolences. He refused to see anybody. He locked his door and shut himself off from the rest of the world. I mean to say, calamities and all that sort of thing! What would Marjorie Temple think? How frightfully frightful!!

* * *

Dr. Stafford, the headmaster, summoned me to his study the other day, and the call was not entirely unexpected as it was only natural he would want to know what the devil I was doing there. Yet as I knocked at his door I had the feeling so many juniors must have experienced when coming before such a personality - I had the sensation of being hauled before a judge to answer my crimes! I felt a loss for words - I felt inferior. As if I was a schoolboy myself, and having broke some rule, been exposed, and now I was on the carpet!

But the flush of misapprehension soon passed as the kindly old Head put me at ease. A well-built man, Dr. Malcolm Stafford has such a personality that cannot be ignored. His is a presence that dominates yet yields. A man whom, you are sure, will accept only the truth. Looking at him you may have been excused for saying he was a famous general, or a president of a great country if you had not known him. It is no wonder the whole school is jubilant at his return. That one man could bring about such a drastic change throughout the College is manifestly evident from the cheerful upheaval now being wrought.

My interview and its outcome will appear in my next letter.

Meanwhile the Christmas holidays is a topic that can be heard in the studies, the Common Room, and the Triangle. To say nothing of Mrs. Hake's tuck shop. For the mince pies I have seen displayed there are fake ones. Dummies. Still, it's a sign that Yuletide will be here very shortly, and that has set me thinking. I wonder if I shall be invited anywhere?

* * *

Well, I don't know the answer to that one. No doubt Jim's next letter will be enlightening. Meanwhile, here's wishing him, the lads of St. Frank's and all our readers a very Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

*** Old Boys Book Club ***

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB, LONDON SECTION: A highly successful gathering took place at the residence of Horace and Betty Roberts, Streatham, on Sunday, November 16th. The varied programme that was thoroughly enjoyed by all included two selections of Ray Bennett's idea, "Desert Island Books", the castaways being Charlie Wright and Millicent Lay.

The Mystery Debate went to many questions, some being very good ones. One appropriate one was about "Chums" and as copies of "Seas of Memory" were available what could the members wish for more. A couple of good quizzes by Bob Whiter and Don Webster, further discussion on the Greyfriars Cup, very good report of the Hamiltonian Section of the library by Roger Jenkins and Len Packman steering the meeting to a very successful close with grateful thanks to our host and hostess, not forgetting the fine Billy Bunter cake that was cut and distributed by Horace. Christmas December meeting to be held at 706, Lordship Lane, Wood Green on Sunday 21st. Kindly let Bob Whiter know if you are intending to be present. Phone from nine a.m. until six p.m. except Thursday when nine a.m. until one p.m. BOWes Park 6793. A very good programme has been arranged and several distinguished friends have promised to attend.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

NORTHERN SECTION MEETING, NOVEMBER 8th, 1958: Another eventful and successful meeting to add to the records. Gerry Allison gave an account of his visit to the October meeting of the London Club, a meeting he had without a doubt enjoyed.

Among matters discussed were the arrangements for the Christmas

Party, and the entries for the Greyfriars Cup contest. Some very promising stories were handed in.

Then we settled down to J. Breeze Bentley's annual talk. On such occasions we know in advance that we are going to hear something good and we certainly were not disappointed. This year Breeze took for his subject the many "Co's" of the three main Hamilton schools. For over an hour he talked without a single note, quoting for instance, without hesitation, the numbers of the studies in which the various trios etc., dwelt; a feat of memory, as you'll agree. Too, he had each character, good, bad and indifferent summed up to the last detail. Breeze hadn't finished for after refreshments he reeled off a Hundred Question Quiz! Some of us just caught our trains by the skin of our teeth. Yes, a very full evening.

Next meeting, December 13th, the Christmas Party starting 4.30 p.m. at 239 Hyde Park Road. Let's make it a record attendance.

HERBERT LECKENBY, Northern Section Correspondent.

MIDLAND O.B.B.C. MEETING HELD OCTOBER 27th: For all we were disappointed to have word that Jack Ingram and Win Brown were unable to attend, a representative company of ten regulars were on hand to enjoy a very good nights programme. This included as a special treat, another fine film display by George Chatham. Though it had no bearing on old boys book lore, this was up to the previous high standard with its fine colour effects and tip top scenery. This time we had another of George's holiday adventures! in the Hebrides and on the Scottish lochs. We wonder where George will take us next time.

A very intriguing quiz of mixed subjects, Hamilton, Sexton Blake and St. Frank's, twenty in all was then put forward by Madge Corbett. This was won by Tom with fourteen correct. Ray Bennett's contribution was a preliminary talk introducing his item for next month. It promises well as we have to debate, after Ray's introduction, whether the BLACK sheep of the stories were more interesting than the heroes who had no faults. He divided his characters into four groups, the black, grey, white and PRIGS. Norman finished the nights programme on a good note by reading the first chapter from the "Secret Seven" by R. S. Warren Bell. We are naturally looking forward to further instalments in the near future. A pleasant bit of news was that our Chairman had procured a copy of No. 1 Magnet. Also there was a report of some progress on the stories for the Greyfriars Cup and we were very glad, all of us, to know John Tom Luson and Joe Marston were planning to be with us on November 25th. Good show!!

HARRY BROSTER, Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE MEETING OF O.B.B.C. NOVEMBER 9th: This the club's 8th Annual Meeting was fairly well attended but several members were regretfully absent. The committee was re-elected as follows:-

Chairman and Treasurer - Don Webster. Secretary - Jack Morgan

Vice Chairman - Frank Unwin. Librarian - George Riley

"Status quo" with the exception that I have replaced Norman Pragnell who has relinquished the job due to pressure of work of a private nature. The Club is grateful to him for the work he did during his term of office. We were pleased to welcome yet another new member in Mr. Bill Greenwood and I think he enjoyed our meeting.

Following the normal routine business the final story (St. Frank's) on our entry for the Cup Competition was read out and I feel sure that we can be quite optimistic about our chances-in the final. Library business was then attend to and a further purchase of Blue and White Magnets was eagerly snapped up. We continued with a quiz along the lines of "Ask me another" which was presented by Frank Unwin. This was keenly contested by the three teams with the result that Greyfriars scraped home by a point to St. Jim's closely follow by St. Frank's.

This leaves Greyfriars still at the head of the table. The next meeting which will include an informal Christmas Tea will be held on the 7th December at 5 p.m. All members are earnestly enjoined to attend if possible.

JACK MORGAN - Secretary.

THE GOLDEN HOURS CLUB: Despite the soaring temperature and smaller attendance our meeting held on Friday, November 7th proved to be most enjoyable. Our Chairman, Arnold Keena, opened the meeting at 6.45 p.m. by welcoming two new members, Mr. M. J. McGrath and Mr. J. Porter, ardent Hamilton fans, and an old friend Jack Murtagh on a business trip from N.Z. A very friendly letter from Ron Hodgson was then read by the Secretary Bette Pate, and the details of the Christmas party for December were discussed. It was then announced that Syd Smyth, Magnet expert is to uphold the honour of the Club in a T.V. interview next Friday night at 7 p.m. when he will be interviewed by Gerald Lyons compere of "The People" on Channel 2, himself an ardent Magnet fan. Our best wishes to Syd for the great occasion and may it be the first of many. Jack Murtagh then entertained the members with a most diverting recital of the joys (and sorrows) of collecting as experienced by him in his hunt for treasures both here and in N.Z.....he will take back very pleasant memories of the two evenings spent with us here in Sydney and very much regrets such meetings are not possible in his locality. After a most enjoyable general discussion the meeting broke up, with regrets, at 9.30 p.m.

BETTE PATE - Secretary.

By W. O. G. Lofts

REX HARDINGE RETURNS: I am very pleased to announce the return of Rex Hardinge to the Sexton Blake Library after a long absence. His first story will appear in January, entitled "Consider your Verdict" - this will be something novel in the way of writing. Hardinge needs no introduction to readers, as his avid, and authentic tales of Africa are still collected by many people. In this his first tale of modern Blake a photograph of himself will appear on the title page. Now living near a place aptly situated for writing crime stories - Dartmoor; Rex Hardinge wrote his first Blake yarn for the U.J. whilst living in Africa.

Whilst on the subject of the modern S.B.L. I must mention of the great new feature to commence with the December issues entitled "Mailbag". This is a correspondence column, and will contain each month extracts from letters which readers have sent to the Editor and they come from remote places all over the globe, as well as in England. This new feature is on the lines of the old "Consulting Room Chart" which appeared in the S.B.L. in the 30s, which was so popular with readers. Having been given the privilege of seeing an advance copy, readers can take my word that it is very interesting indeed. Several of our own members are quoted in the first "Mailbag" feature, and Mr. Howard-Baker is to be congratulated in adding another fine addition to the continued success of the S.B.L. At the time of writing I have just been given to understand that in the January issue will be an article on the Sexton Blake Collectors connected with the O.B.B.C.

ARTHUR JONES: At the request of my good friend Bob Blyth I am pleased to be able to disclose a few details about the above artist who illustrated so many of the popular A.P. papers prior to the last war, including many of the Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake stories.

Arthur Jones was a Londoner, and lived at Wormwood Scrubs, not very far away from the famous prison, though he, in mentioning the locality of where he lived preferred to call it St. Quentins Park! He was of short build, stocky and had a ruddy complexion. He made no secret of the fact that he had copied his style of drawing from Tom Peddie, an artist very well known in many magazines just after the 1914 war. Jones, who was a great admirer of Peddie's work, was, unlike him, no draughtsman, and this was generally agreed by all editors who commissioned his work.

However, he certainly had a great flair for drawing sinister men in shadows, readers of the "Thriller" can certainly vouch for this, and he also had a great facility for colour illustrations. His facial drawings were like Eric Parker's all alike, and if one were to compare his drawings of Lee and Blake one would find them almost indetical. Yet, despite these flaws in his work it still was in very great demand.

When drawing in his studio or office, he always liked to work with his radio turned on full blast to blaring music, this seemed to give him some sort of inspiration. For one to have a radio at all in the early 20s was a novelty - and would be equivalent to one have colour television today.

His great interest and hobby apart from art - was motorcars, and he was fortunate enough to own quite a few in his time. Always tinkering and experimenting with them, he was in his own right a very skilled mechanic. Also a very keen motorist he spent much of his leisure time at Brooklands - the famous motor racing track.

He died some time before the last war, the exact date I do not know and the cause of his death; he was a very pleasant type of fellow, and a very popular artist with readers of the papers he illustrated.

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WANTED: Schoolgirls Own Annuals - 1932, 1935. School Friend Annuals. J. F. BELLFIELD, 24 GRAINGERS LANE, CRADLEY HEATH, STAFFS.

* * * * *

WANTED: Old series N.L.L's - 106, 252, 254, 294, 331, 332, 334, 328, 329, 357, 520, 521. School Boys Own - 4, 27, 54, 120, 212, 402.

TO SELL OR EXCHANGE: about 50 Thrillers.
E. McPHERSON, 1 ST. JOHN STREET, WELLS, SOMERSET.

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THREE SERIES OF THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY: Maybe it was necessary to break up the S.B.L. series into three. Roughly it would appear that the first series was aimed primarily at youthful readers, the second at "readers of all ages" and the third at adults. But how much more imposing it would be to see the actual number on each issue of the SBL. There were 382 issues in the first series, 744 in the second and (at the time of writing), 400 in the third. That means that THE SEA TIGERS by Peter Saxon is not No. 400 but is actually No. 1526! Taken from Odd Items of Interest by E. V. Copeman.

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