

The COLLECTORS DIGEST

JULY 1959
Vol. 13, No. 151

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-THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST-

Vol. 13 No. 151

Price 1s. 6d.

JULY, 1959

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

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From the Editor's Chair

THE 150th NUMBER: Well, all went off splendidly with this epic number. There was only one snag. When a copy was weighed it was found it was about a dram over 2 ounces which meant 4d postage instead of the usual 2d. The P.O. clerk said it was such a near thing that it might be chanced at 2d, but it might mean surcharges here and there. I didn't want that to happen, so I stuck on the envelopes 4d ones, expressing my opinion of Mr. Marples, as I patted each one.

However, I forgot all about that as letters of praise flowed in. It was the general opinion that the amateur authors had done very well indeed. We shall have to publish more efforts as space permits.

My thanks too, to those non-Club members who have helped towards the extra cost.

* * * * *

SWEET MEMORIES: On September 12th, 1948, at Eric Fayne's Surbiton home I attended my first meeting of the London Old Boy's Book Club. There I made the acquaintances of several of the pioneers of that now famous Club. I have not forgotten, and never shall, the thrills of that Sunday afternoon.

On the 14th of last month I was there again. The majority of those pioneers were there, together with many more who have joined us in the years between, some of them now leading lights in our circle.

Ben will be telling you of the events of that afternoon. All I will say is that I was very, very happy to be there.

Space will not permit to tell of all that happened during my

short, hectic week-end, but I should like to mention the pleasant surprise Len Paackman had laid on when I arrived at his home for lunch on the Sunday. There awaiting me was Haydn Salmon of Ipswich, with whom I had corresponded for years.

And, as a grand finale, a few hours before my homeward journey, I met D. M. Mackenzie (now 'Mac' to me), a Sexton Blake fan and one of my own generation. Over a meal we talked for two solid hours.

On my journey down I came across one of my brothers and his wife. They were setting off for Rome for a fortnight. I didn't envy them a bit. I shall ever be content to make my journey's end that place of a thousand happy memories - dear old London Town.

* * * * *

CONGRATULATIONS AGAIN TO THE SYDNEY CLUB: Thanks to Syd Smyth and Ernie Carter, I have received copies of the Sydney "People" containing a superb article. In my opinion, it's the best since the famous one in the "Leader" some years ago. It runs to four pages about the same size as the old "Picture Post".

It has a large headline "The Immortal Fat Boy" and needless to say, the Hamilton papers get a good show. But many more of our old favourites are mentioned and there are numerous reproductions of covers and front pages.

There are a few of the inevitable errors; it states for instance that Bunter did not appear in the early Magnets.

The highlight of the article is a delightful group photograph of our Sydney chums. With the valuable help of live-wire, John Davies of Vancouver, I hope to reproduce this photo in the Annual.

Hat's off to the Sydney Club!

* * * * *

THE ANNUAL: July again and the time for the Annual forms. I should like to make my usual plea - please fill in and return as soon as possible. It makes it so much easier for me.

I am happy to say that since the last one the C.D. has gained more new subscribers than in any one year before. I am confident that they will be wanting an Annual; in fact, I know some have bought back numbers. But to those who haven't yet seen one I should like to give them some idea as to what the Annual is like. It runs to about 140 pages, of the size of the Questionnaire form, and there's something like 100,000 words. An invaluable feature for new-comers is the "Collectors' Who's Who" which gives full details of our members' interests.

There will be lengthy articles on all aspects of our hobby. I can assure all new chums that it makes ideal reading for the Christmas fireside.

Now, ah me, that par. I wish I hadn't to write. But two months ago, I said there was still a considerable sum owing on last year's Annual. It bought some response, but not as much as I had hoped. What a pity I have to say it, but, there it is. Come on, those of you who have a guilty feeling, slip a P.O. or a cheque into an envelope.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

WANTED: S.O.L. No. 66 "The Mystery of Eastwood House" Price £3 0 0
 Or Gems Nos. 1504, 1505 "The Mystery of the Painted Room. £2 each copy.
 All copies must be in good condition. Also 'Gen' Nobody's Study' £2.
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POPULARS 370, 385, 390, 395, 396, 398, 418, 428, 452, 455, 461, 466, 474, 475.

PLUS for sale of exchange - Offers invited for about 48 magnificent mint copies of Nelson Lee S.O.L's. (packed in series)

ERIC FAYNE, "Excelsior House", Grove Road, SURBITON, SURREY.

(Note: it is regretted that, in error, it was not made clear last month that the numbers given in Eric Fayne's advert were Wanted ones and not copies for Sale of Exchange. My apologies to all who were inconvenienced. H.L.)

THINNING COLLECTION: For sale/exchange: Many choice items including Double Xmas Numbers (U. Jack etc.); B.F.L. (3d); S. Blake (1st); Bound Magnets (pink); Annuals; Greyfriars S.O.L's, etc. etc. Manuscripts by well-known Blake Author. POSTAL ENQUIRIES ONLY. S.A.E. 23 MOUNTJOY, BRIDPORT, DORSET.

Blakiana

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

The Union Jack article on Dr. Huxton Rymer reprinted in last month's Blakiana has brought me a number of letters of appreciation. I have therefore decided to do the same again this month; the character selected being that of an equally popular old favourite - George Marsden Plummer.

I am sure you will all agree that Walter Webb's CENTURY-MAKERS becomes increasingly interesting and informative. My only regret is that I have to keep you waiting a whole month for each instalment. However, they do say that "all good things are worth waiting for!"

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * * * *

CENTURY-MAKERS

(and a few other interesting statistics)

BY WALTER WEBB

INSTALMENT THREE

MAINLY STATISTICAL

Who was the first author to write 100 Sexton Blake stories? At the beginning of 1909 W. Murray Graydon was a red-hot favourite, with his colleagues trailing hopefully if not quite hopelessly, behind. At this point perhaps a little bit of stock-taking would not come amiss; at least, it would have the result of clarifying the position a little, since, maybe, it has become somewhat obscure. So far, then, 263 Sexton Blake stories have been published, as far as is known, these having been realised through a variety of publications, such as the UNION JACK, MARVEL, BOY'S FRIEND, JESTER, CHIPS, FUNNY WONDER, BOY'S HERALD and the BOY'S FRIEND 3d LIBRARY. Of these stories, the known authorship numbers 230; the occasions where an element of doubt exists total 8; the remaining stories - 25 - are those in which the author's identity is either not known, or else, through inavailability, the story could not be studied for purposes of origin.

Up till now 25 authors have taken the field, out of which number nine have dropped out, leaving 16 still in the running, though, in many cases, with no hope of achieving anything spectacular. With 53 stories Murray Graydon has a comfortable lead, for his closest challenger, Mark

Darran, is well behind with a total of 31 to his credit. Shaw Rae (23), Herbert Maxwell (22), and Beverley Kent (20) lie third, fourth and fifth respectively, with Cecil Hayter (11) and Arthur S. Hardy (7), bringing up the rear. It will be seen, therefore, that of the 263 stories published up to that time, Graydon wrote a fraction over one-fifth of them.

Graydon kept up the tempo in 1909, further increasing his lead with a yearly output of 14 stories, which included a short serial in the Boy's Herald, running to seven instalments, and entitled "The 'Ticket-of-Leave' Man", and a double-length Christmas Story - "Sexton Blake's Christmas Case." With Mark Darran only managing a meagre three stories, Graydon thus increased his lead to a majority of 33. Beverley Kent, with six novels, overhauled both Maxwell and Rae, and, with a total of 26, cruised smoothly into third place. Maxwell, for some inexplicable reason, did not contribute at all during that year, which was in sharp contrast to Michael Storm, who firmly established himself by coming along with 11 Blake stories of a very high order. The new recruit of Ravenscar and Abbotsrag fame had ability far above the ordinary, yet the possibilities which were most assuredly there were destined never to reach complete fulfilment, for the career of this colourful writer was to be abruptly terminated by an untimely call from beyond. But, happily, that colour was not to be entirely deprived from the Sexton Blake reader, for, even then, coming events were casting their shadows before them, and very soon, one particular shadow - that belonging to a most substantial Canadian of some thirty-odd summers - was destined to cross the waves of the mighty Atlantic. And by some strange whim, maybe of fate, perhaps of fortune, it was to transpire that the widow of the departed Michael Storm was to meet the man, who, perhaps due to that meeting, stepped so impressively into the shoes vacated by her husband. What transpired during that Atlantic crossing, whether Mrs. Storm's influence had any bearing on the coming writer's decision to take up a career of the writing of Sexton Blake stories, is a question that can never be satisfactorily answered.

1909 was easily Storm's best year, for not only did he contribute to well-written Blake's for the U.J. but found time also to submit a rather more than double-length Plumer novel "The Mervyn Mystery" to the Boy's Friend 3d Library, which he wrote specially - so it was said editorially - for that publication.

Another point of interest is that Arthur S. Hardy, with nine stories, had by far his best year as a writer of Sexton Blake stories, for, thereafter, his appearances were to be of a very sporadic nature, indeed.

There was no evidence of any new writer making his debut that year, which, apart from the good work of Storm and Kent, was a desultory one; and 1910 followed a similar pattern. This was the year marked by the passing of Storm, which, in view of his industriousness of the preceding year, must have caused a not inconsiderable jolt in the editorial sanctum. But, although Storm had died, the U.J. editor of that time had no intention that the popular character he has created should die with him. Plummer lived on, and well before the year ended his notorious exploits were being chronicled by a new hand.

But 1910 must surely go down in the records as the poorest year, by literary standards, of all, though it seemed that Blake's popularity was proof against even the mediocre and - in one or two cases - the drivel which was served up for human consumption during those fifty-two weeks which comprised his worst year!

And Graydon, striding towards his ultimate goal of 100 Blake stories, continued to outstrip all opposition until it became obvious that only a miracle could prevent him from attaining that objective. The end of the year saw the leading positions as follows: Graydon 83 stories; Darran 44, which included a double-length novel for the Boy's Friend 3d Library; Kent 30; Maxwell 25; Hardy 20.

Out of the first half-dozen issues which opened the 1911 programme, four were submitted by Graydon, who, by the end of April, had a total of 90 stories credited to him, and by pressing home his advantage reached the end of the year just one short of his century. Two debutantes entered the competition that year, one a very well-known author where boys' stories were concerned; so we welcome now (26) T.C. BRIDGES, who wrote "Ten Years Penal Servitude!" for issue number 155 of the Boy's Friend 3d Library. It was, as usual, published anonymously, but the information of authorship has come from the records at Fleetway House, leaving no question of doubt. Positions at the close of the year 1911: Graydon 99; Darran 51; Kent 33; Maxwell 28; Hardy 22; Hayter 15.

The other newcomer was (27) ANDREW MURRAY, who made quite a brisk start, and must have become extremely popular by reason of his good work throughout the year, for he was commissioned to write the Christmas Double Number for 1911, the result being that very good novel "The Wandering Heir." In all, Murray wrote seven stories in that - his first - year.

By the end of that Coronation year, which, regrettably saw the passing of Arthur Clarke, the popular MAGNET artist, who also illustrated a few Blake stories in the U.J., there were signs of activity

in the editorial department - a big move in the form of a recruiting campaign, to bring under the Blake banner new authors who would infuse some freshness and originality into stories which had become stereotyped and uninspired. It was a move which was to result in the introduction of a teen-age young man, destined to become one of the most popular boys' authors of all time; and another also remarkably young, who was to become more successful editorially than in the actual penmanship of Blake yarns. Then, there was a much older author, who was to introduce one of the most affectionately remembered feminine characters ever to hold a place in the Blake saga.

The prodigies of Blake authorship were beginning to arrive!

* * * * *

SPECIAL NOTICE

It is with much sadness and regret that I have just heard of the death of Gilbert Chester. Bill Lofts, to whom I am indebted for the information, has been seeking news of this fine writer for years. He has now definite confirmation as to Gilbert Chester's demise. Full details will be published in Blakina as soon as they are available.

Gilbert Chester will always be remembered for his character creations GILBERT and EILEEN HALE. He also took over the characters PROFESSOR KEW AND COUNT IVOR CARLAC, originally created by Andrew Murray.

* * * * *

GEORGE MARSDEN PLUMMER

(Reprinted from Union Jack No. 989 dated 23.9.1922)

In George Marsden Plummer, Sexton Blake is pitted against a man with a fertile and deductive brain falling only very little short of his own, so that when the two meet, one on the side of the law, the other against it, a strenuous and relentless battle of wits follows as a natural consequence.

But for an accident of birth, which placed two frail lives between, Plummer would have inherited an Earldom of Sevenoaks and its rent-roll of sixty thousand a year. Undoubtedly, a criminal "kink" exists in his brain, and in his earliest youth Plummer began to resent missing this inheritance, and felt that, for one with blue blood in his veins, to be compelled to work for a living was all wrong.

When quite a young man, Plummer joined the London Police Force.

Such wonderful detective ability did he show that, within a few short years, he had worked his way up to the position of detective

sergeant at Scotland Yard, and was looked upon as one of its most promising young detectives.

But then, envious of the rich persons with whom his work sometimes brought him in contact, Plummer no longer fought against the criminal impulses that were his.

He went crooked.

Knowledge gained in his detective work frequently gave him a hold over rich persons, and he commenced a system of blackmail which caused his name to become one of terror in a dozen honoured families; whilst instead of arresting criminals to whom he traced various misdeeds, Plummer forced them to hand him a half-share, or even more, of their hauls.

His inside information as to the workings of the Force enabled him for a very long period to outwit the official police, to amass ill-gotten wealth, and indulge in the extravagances he loved.

But at last Sexton Blake ferreted out the truth as to the double life he was leading, and, exposing him, sent him to a term of penal servitude at Bleakmoor Prison.

From there, George Marsden Plummer escaped, showing the skill and resource of a modern Jack Sheppard, and recommenced his criminal career.

Aiming at higher game than before, and working with an financier, one John Marsh, he planned huge swindles, which would have startled the whole civilised world had not Sexton Blake, in nearly every case, contrived to step in and nip his schemes in the bud.

Plummer's greatest asset in his nefarious exploits has always been his power of disguise and impersonation.

As a character actor he would undoubtedly have risen to the top of the tree. Let Plummer have an opportunity of studying a man for a short while, or of securing a good photo of him, and, provided the person in question is of a somewhat similar height and build to himself, it is in the master criminal's power to make up so that he becomes his living image.

An instance of Plummer's skill in this direction can be mentioned when, impersonating a certain detective-inspector, he actually returned to Scotland Yard, and for a week or more, filled the man's position there.

No one at the Yard had the least suspicion that he was not the official he impersonated.

Sexton Blake it was who first discovered the truth, after having an opportunity to look into the imposter's eyes.

There exists a peculiarity in these than even Plummer with all his cleverness in disguise, cannot alter. Normally they are steel-grey, but when he is angry or excited they have a habit of changing to a baleful agate-green, with the pupils contracting and dilating like those of an enraged cat.

The case mentioned, in which Plummer so daringly returned to the Yard, appeared in the UNION JACK under the title of the "Kidnapped Inspector."

It represents, however, but one of many instances where this master among criminals has employed his wonderful and amazing skill in "make-up" to help his colossal criminal plans.

 (Note: We regret that owing to the hold up of the S.B.L's due to the printers' strike, there are no reviews this month. However, here's some interesting comments in their place. H.L.)

The S.B.L. Mailbag Section
By W. O. G. Lofts

Easily the most interesting feature ever to appear in the present day Sexton Blake Library, is the Mailbag Section. This contains very interesting extracts from readers' letters from all parts of the world which had been received by its editor, Mr. W. Howard Baker.

This highly successful feature, I should say, was started mainly because of the many requests by readers for such a letter section, many of them no doubt, remembering the "Consulting Room Chat" and "Round Table" - readers' letters sections published in the old S.B.L. and Union Jack (Later Detective Weekly) in the mid-1930s.

Since the Mailbag first appeared in S.B.L's 419 and 420 dated December, 1958, letters, I am told, have increased at least ten-fold to the editor, and some of them which have been reproduced in the S.B.L. have been very interesting indeed. For instance, it is being revealed shortly that a Canadian Blake enthusiast is no less than 98 years old! Going to the other extreme, I recently wrote to another reader to answer a query he raised in Mailbag, and in his reply confessed to be only 11!

Another Mailbag letter which certainly stirred up a lot of interest, was written by that great Nelson Lee enthusiast in our circle, Norman Pragnell. Norman raised the query as to whether Lee would be featured in certain Blake stories in the future, and by the letters received and published on the subject which resulted in a draw I should

think, at least it proved that Nelson Lee was remembered very well by older readers.

Even letters from well know authors have been reproduced in "Mailbag". John Creasey had a letter published about a mythical interesting article written by yet another member of our circle Eric Copeman of Australia, whilst Jack Trevor Story the most popular of the present day writers in the Blake field, had a letter in last month's issue.

An old newspaper writer wrote to the effect that he first came to Fleet Street in 1895, and knew all the old authors and editors of that time - another reader from the North raised queries on old U.J. yarns published in 1909 and who wrote them - whilst a Blake Bust enthusiast related how he discovered it again, when believed lost, whilst digging it up in his garden, looking like an old roman relic.

In the words of many readers "The S.B.L. Mailbag Section" is worth its money alone, and I cannot agree more. After the first two issues each S.B.L. contained a different selection of readers letters in Mailbag - so when the printers strike is over, and the S.B.L.'s reappear once more, I can read with great interest the latest batch of letters to be inserted in one of the greatest features in the S.B.L. MAILBAG,

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libraries - 1st series. 11, 17, 37, 41, 105, 109, 111, 197, 198, 201, 202. 2nd series - 102, 111, 213, 236, 243, 272, 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 495, 520, 667. Boys Friend Libraries 3d - 1st series 10, 68, 102, 105, 107, 165, 229, 246, 669. 2nd series 392, 396. Union Jacks - 881, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1179, 1180
 MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

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HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

THE GREYFRIARS CUP CONTEST

THE ROOKWOOD CAROL SINGERS

By W. H. Broster (Midland)

continued from last month.

CHAPTER 3

Meanwhile the car had reached the Manor, and after the commotion, Bartle, Peele and Gower sat in the car. Peele had a thoughtful expression on his crafty face. "I say, Bartle, this might be a good thing for us." Bartle still looked frightened and glared at Peele. "I don't see it. What's old Mainwaring going to say and do when he finds out we might have been responsible. I suppose we were really." "Steady on, old fellow." There was a knowing look in Peele's eyes. "I handled that kid when we were carrying her to the car and up to the house. Look I am positively soaked." "What about it?" growled Bartle. "That little kid was unconscious and didn't see who saved her. I'm wet and whose to deny it wasn't me?" "You - why you were almost as scared as Cutbert." "Hardly." Gower scowled at Peele. "Alright, Gower, nothing intended. But look here Bartle, this could turn out to your advantage....you're old man's, I mean. If old Mainwaring thought one of us had saved the kid, wouldn't it be just the time to push him into letting your dad have the old house?" "By gad, you've got something there, but it's dashed rotten way of doing things really." Bartle was not such a rotter as Peele apparently. "Rats! It's easy worked properly. Those cads won't say anything, they won't know. And - if I know Jimmy Silver at all, and I hate the cad, one thing I am certain about, he won't come forward." "No-o-" Bartle was studying hard. "No, and it is equally certain Newcombe won't be coming forward too. They don't see eye to eye now, old Newcombe and the Squire." "The Squire?" "Old Sir George Mainwaring, of course. He is the Squire, isn't he?" And so the plot was hatched and details arranged.

The doctor's car had been in the drive some time now and he was preparing to leave. He came down the steps with the old man. "How is she sir?" asked Bartle. "Is she alright?" The old man looked shaken and worried. "She is still unconscious but Dr. Stule says she will get over it. Which of you young gentlemen am I to thank for saving her?" They had given him their account of how the child had fallen

over the parapet of the bridge. Bartle and Gower both looked at Peele. So did the old Squire. "You, you are all wet. You it is I have to thank for saving my son's child. How can I repay you?"

CHAPTER 4.

Jimmy got over his wetting in the river and apart from losing his cap everything was alright. The usual Christmas festivities were going on at full strength at the "Grange". Uncle Ned Newcombe was one of the best. Even Tubby Muffin was behaving himself. Perhaps the proximity of two pairs of heavy boots belonging to Lovell and Raby had something to do with that. Arthur Edward Lovell was less noisy than usual and generally the Rookwood quintette had a good time. The only thing to mar the pleasure of Jimmy Silver and Co., was the fact they could not approach Mainwaring Manor to see how the little girl was. The strained relations between the two old gentlemen prevented personal enquiries. True, there had been news brought by others, mainly by 'Toby Jug'. A jolly good sort was the rector and he was a great favourite with the five from Rookwood. "Any of you boys good at carols?" he asked them early Christmas Eve. "Yes, rather" exclaimed Lovell. "What're you grinning at you silly owls?" So I am, ain't I?" "Certainly, old man, certainly" answered Jimmy. "I don't think" muttered Raby sotto voce. Newcombe grinned and nudged Raby's arm. Lovell looked daggers at his chums. "I can sing too" squeaked Muffin. "I come of a musical family sir." "In the barrel organ business" chimed in Lovell, with the accent of the barrel part. Anyway, why do you ask, sir?" "Will you join the village choir for singing tonight. We make a round of all the big houses every Christmas Eve. Quite good fun and collections go into the village hall funds.

Arrangements were made and so it came about that eventually the large group of carol singers came to Mainwaring Manor. Newcombe looked uneasy. "I wish I could dodge it, you fellows." "You are too squeamish, old chap" quoth Lovell. "Old Mainwaring don't know you and in any case it's Christmas time and 'Toby Jug' is with us. Tain't as if we had brought your Uncle Ned with us". "No, perhaps you are right. Anyway, what's it matter. He's more or less turned Uncle Ned down" This was the last call but one, they were all due to end the night's good work at Uncle Ned's. So tired and cold the party gave their best Rap. Rap. The Rev. 'Toby Jug' beat a rat-tat on the massive door knocker. "Come in, come in, Rector?" The old butler was soon opening the door. "The master says all of you come into the hall." Into the Hall trooped the merry party of carollers. "Merry Christmas, Squire" boomed 'Toby Jug'. The Squire came forward, "Ah. A larger party than last year. Who are your young friends? I seem to know the caps their

Newcombe looked alarmed, but 'Toby Jug' just introduced them as some of the Rookwood boys of his acquaintance. "I have two Rookwood boys with me now" said the Squire. "One saved my grand-daughter's life" The Rookwooders stared, then involuntarily looked at Jimmy Silver. For a minute he looked puzzled, then his keen mind sorted out the puzzle. He shook his head at his chums. "But Jimmy, it was you" started Lovell. The Squire was explaining to the Rector, "One of these Rookwood boys staying down here, friends of Charles Bartle's son, got young Olive out of the Frere. Jolly fine effort. Perhaps you would like to meet them," He called through the doorway and out trooped Peele, Gower and Bartle. "Why, what the dickens" exclaimed Lovell. "Those cads! They caused the trouble at the bridge. "Sh, Sn" Jimmy nudged Lovell. "Easy old man, let things ride," he whispered. Sir George looked from one to the other. 'Toby Jug' looked puzzled. Tension was in the air. Just at that moment there was a discreet cough at Sir George's elbow. "Beg pardon, Sir" said the butler, "but the gamekeeper would like a word with you." The man came in. "Yes, Yes? What is it Jenks?" He was growing testy. "Beg pardon for interrupting your party, sir, but looking round the place where Miss Olive got in the river, sir, I found this 'ere cap." The young feller who pulled her out must have lost it." "Yes, by George, so he must. Here young Peele, is this your cap?" Peele looked uneasy and struggled to gain his composure. "Yes, sir, that's mine" he muttered. "Peele, sir, did you say Peele, sir?" began the gamekeeper. "But - but the name in that there cap ain't Peele, sir. You look for yourself, sir" Sir George stared at the Rookwood cap and turned it over. "JAMES SILVER" "Why, what the blazes? What is the reason for this? Your name IS Peele?" Lovell jumped forward. "Alright Jimmy, you can't hide it any longer. This is Silver sir, this fellow here. He saved your little girl and lost his cap in the rushes."

The guilty trio were slinking away, but at the door the voice of Sir George arrested them. "Wait, Bartle". They stood alarmed. With his arm around Jimmy Silver's shoulders the old man looked at Newcombe. "Listen to what I have to say to young Newcombe, Bartle, and then carry the import of it to your father." He turned to the amazed Newcombe. "Tell Ned Newcombe that Charles Bartle won't have the old farm house at any price. Neither will I sell it to your Uncle Ned. Instead, I make a gift of it to the village of Freresby. Your Uncle Ned can share with me in the expense of rigging it out for the village hall. And thank this lad for it all" and he squeezed Jimmy's shoulders. The Rev. 'Toby Jug' wrung his free hand with glee and there was a

ringing cheer from the villagers. Lovell clapped Arthur Newcombe on the shoulder. then turned to do the same to Muffin. But Tubby was away, happy downstairs.

"What a Christmas Eve," murmured Jimmy. "Might have been much different had it not been for the carol singing," said Raby. There were more carols, but none at Newcombe's house. Uncle Ned and his wife were fetched over to the Manor and what a night it was. Jimmy Silver was the hero of the hour and Tubby Muffin, fat and full almost to bursting point snored away in the kitchen.

The End.

* * * * *

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. 28. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

"I had written a great deal, and had grown quite accustomed to admiring my lubrications in print, when one day, soon after my return from Canada, I fell in with Martin Clifford.

I had known him years before; since when he had become a well-known author. I had a manuscript - a story founded upon some of my own schoolboy experiences - just complete; and I determined to show it to Clifford and ask his opinion.

He good-naturedly consented to read it.

Then he said: 'By jove, old scout, this is the stuff!'

'You like it?' I asked.

'Like it!' he repeated. 'My dear chap, there's only one man in existence whose stuff is better than this.'

'Whose stuff is that?' I asked.

'Mine!' said Martin.

Many readers will recognize the above as an extract from "Some Reminiscences" by Frank Richards, published in the 1000th issue of the Magnet. It is not certain, of course, that Frank wrote it - the Editors often took liberties - but I think he did. The article contains so much of the whimsical humour which we associate with Frank.

Surely no other author ever worked under so many pen-names as Charles Hamilton. Was this policy a mistake?

Almost certainly, it was not a mistake, yet the multiplication of noms-de-plume provided a puzzle for the perceptive readers. As a lad, I had little doubt that the best of the stories in the Companion Papers were coming from the same pen, yet, sometimes, I felt it beyond possibility that one man could write so much. For, beside the amazing output every year, there was the remarkable consistency of high quality.

Supposing all the author's work had been published under the name of Charles Hamilton. Should we not, almost surely, have been driven to the conclusion that clever "ghost" writers were at work?

Two other writers of immense output come to mind - Edgar Wallace and Charles Garvice. Garvice had a reputation for romantic tales, but he employed "ghost" writers whose indifferent work ruined his reputation. Obviously, the income from rubbish, published under the name which he had created, was the main factor in Garvice's estimation. Edgar Wallace did not employ "ghosts", but he churned out large numbers of pot-boilers himself.

The output of Charles Hamilton has been far, far greater than that of those two writers. True, Mr. Hamilton has written scores of pot-boilers, but they fade into insignificance when placed beside the many, many hundreds of grand stories made outstanding by magnificent characterisation and carefully devised plot and counter-plot.

Magnets of 1909 contain Greyfriars stories by Frank Richards, plus advertisements of St. Jim's stories by Martin Clifford and circus stories by Harry Dorrian. What's in a name? These three series were all subtly different in style as well as in theme. Apart from the fact that characters from one series were introduced into another, which might have been friendly gestures between co-operative authors, there was nothing very tangible to connect them.

As I observed in "Hail and Farewell", all the way down the years there was a difference in the presentation of St. Jim's and that of Greyfriars, characterisation, and dialogue were on different planes, with none superior or inferior to the other. Apart from one's instinct and common sense, there was little to cause one to disbelieve that two authors were at work.

There was nothing incongruous in "Cedar Creek", by Martin Clifford. This series was exactly the type we should expect from the St. Jim's chronicler - sometimes dramatic, sometimes humorous, always expert. Often the plots, the backchat, the whimsical comments were reproductions of the St. Jim's framework - an English writer's imagination of a Canadian school, yet never less than entertaining.

Messrs. Hamilton, Richards, Clifford and Conquest could never

have written the Rio Kid. It took Ralph Redway to bring the Wild West to us, with a charm and glamour which I, at least, have never found in any other Western stories. Apart from the excellence of the plot construction of every yarn, few readers could fail to find delight in the Ralph Redway's musical prose, his lilting picturesque dialogue, his impeccable atmosphere.

Martin Clifford and Ralph Redway, for all their skill, could never have written those colourful adventure tales of Ken King. That was Charles Hamilton's job - he was the past master of the thrilling adventure. Lovers of school stories are seldom keen on adventure tales, and vice versa. That was why Charles, Frank, Martin and Ralph all had their individual canvases to paint.

Certainly Owen Conquest wrote of the Benbow, which dovetails neatly with the style of Rookwood. There was no reason to doubt. Tucky Toodles might well have been Tubby Muffin's brother.

Conquest, the man with the magic touch, proficient, always vastly readable - producing the evergreen Rookwood, the less memorable Benbow. How right everything was, in our dream world of yesterday.

And they were all the same man. We have long known the secret of those halcyon years - and most of us, in our inner hearts, knew it all the time.

What's in a name? A good deal when, even now, after the secret of 33 years is a secret no longer, it seems that a false note is struck when we read "Tom Merry's Triumph" - a story of St. Jim's by Frank Richards.

What's in a name? When the name is Frank Richards, it has the same magic quality of "Open Sesame" - the key to the joys and delights of the past which live on for those of us who have been granted the wonder of appreciation.

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

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 26. SOMEBODY SAID (Second Spasm)

FRANK RICHARDS writes: In view of the comments of one of your correspondents in a recent 'Controversial Echoes' concerning 'Billy Bunter's Own Annual', readers of the C.D. may be interested to know that the issue in question sold 22,000 copies. In these days, when Annuals are almost as thick as the sands in the desert, this is very good going."

DON WEBSTER writes: "I find it rather difficult to deal with the current Controversials, for they are four in number and varied. I agree Bunter's ventriloquism is very far-fetched, and that the first appearance of a character in a series is usually the most outstanding in one's memory. Earl Wilson's comment is very true, for it is easy to criticise, and such criticism is not always constructive.

A good subject for a future Controversial would be "Do we derive as much enjoyment in reading old boys' books as we did in our youth?"

JOHN TOWLINSON writes: "I was interested to see you mention the Valentine Fox stories of 'Puck', which I very much enjoyed in my very young days. From what I remember, they were very good stories, and I have often wondered why nobody ever mentioned them. Thank you!"

J. TWELLS writes: "I took 'Puck' for many years, and used to delight in 'Val Fox - Ventriloquist, Detective'. I wonder who was the author.

These stories were very light-hearted, and featured Val Fox's pets, Uncle Pat, the parrot, and William the monkey. There was an enthralling serial by (am I right?) Draycott M. Dell, all about the Aztecs.

'Puck' finally lost its magic for me when H. Foxwell ceased to be responsible for 'Angel and Her Imps', and other cartoons."

JOHN JUKES writes: "As a contributor to the A.P. publications for over twenty years, I would like to write in support of Eric Fayne's statements in the May C.D. on the subject of the defunct papers and their oft debated circulations.

Two of the most obvious and important reasons for the killing of these journals was the depleted manpower caused by enlistment in the forces and the rapidly approaching control of paper. The personnel left behind carried on with great difficulty. The late Stanley Gooch, one of the most successful editors of A.P. comics, was himself a Special Constable in the West End during the war and many others filled in with Civil Defence duties.

After the war, Stanley Gooch told me that had conditions been normal, none of the papers would have been laid to rest, for they were all 'paying their way' - some more than others, of course.

On the matter of re-publishing the Magnet and Gem, I like to think that if the hard-headed business men who run the A.P. thought there was a likelihood of such papers 'catching on' in 1959, they would soon be organising publication. If such a thing ever came to pass, here is one readers who would be willing to buy.

Personally, I don't think it is a fair argument when some

members say that the A.P. should 'have a go' anyway and see what happens.

The producing of new papers involves tremendous labour and the fantastic cost of present time printing and distribution is the biggest deterrent of the lot. I for one, cannot see any prospect of papers of the calibre of the Magnet and Gem ever being revived, and it looks as if we shall have to be satisfied with what treasures we have got."

* * * * *

- THE "OLD FAT MAN" IS BACK ON TELEVISION -

On Saturday, 13th June, it was a treat to see, after too prolonged an absence, the return of Billy Bunter to B.B.C. Television in the first of a new series of plays by Frank Richards. If the subsequent items in the series maintain the high standard of the first production, this new series will be the very best that Frank Richards has yet given us in this medium.

"Bunter's Bargain", the opening play, was based on Frank Richards' recent school novel of the same name. Gerald Campion, as always, could not be bettered as the "old fat man" so much beloved of countless generations. He had less to do than usual, but he gave the flawless performance we have come to expect of him.

This new series, produced by David Goddard, gives great promise because the Famous Five are so much more happily presented than ever before. In the past, we have, perhaps, overlooked the fact that these roles, little more than stooges to Bunter, are extremely difficult to perform naturally, and must need intense rehearsal. This time there is no sign of under-rehearsal, and the Famous Five come across with great success.

"Bob Cherry" is now played by Cavan Kendall, a sincere and accomplished youngster who gave a memorable performance in the recent T.V. serial "Little Men." Whether he is the Bob Cherry of our pipe dreams is immaterial; he really acts, he delivers his lines perfectly, and in "Bunter's Bargain" he almost stole the show from the star. He actually did steal the leadership of the Famous Five from "Harry Wharton", a part restrainedly but quite competently played by a good-looking lad, Richard Palmer.

I shall be surprised if we do not see the "plum" lines of the forthcoming series being given to Cavan Kendall's "Bob Cherry," and that worthy coming more to the fore on T.V. than ever before.

I have not made up my mind about "Mr. Quelch", played by John Woodnutt. At present I would say that he worked hard, and was adequate, though I am puzzled as to why Mr. Quelch should go for a walk

attired as Sexton Blake might have been in 1909. He will probably improve as the series progresses, and I think he will be better than Kynaston Reeves, whose presentation of Quelch always seemed to me to be too old and fluffy for the sharp master with the gimlet eyes.

Congratulations to Frank Richards for a real winner, and.... welcome back to T.V., Billy Bunter.

* * * * *

QUIZZLE No. 8

A		1	2	3					
B	4		5						
C			6	7					
D	8	9							
E		10	11	12					
F		13	14						
G	15								
H			16	17					
I	18			19					
J	20								
K	21								
L	22	23							
M	24	25							
N	26			27					
O			28						
P	29			30					

(Don Webster greatly enjoys our Quizzes, but says they are too easy. He solves them in 10 minutes. We challenge Don to solve this one in 15 minutes.)

The letters in the numbered square in the lower grid, will spell out one to whom Hamiltonians owe so much.

CLUE DOWN: A. Tom Merry and Harry Wharton spent a vacation thus. (7,3,6)

CLUES ACROSS:

- Where on the map to look for Greyfriars. (5,4)
- Can Gerald Loder contain his? obviously!
- Tom Merry's is honest, Harry Wharton's is black, the Ric Kid's is red.
- To live with Wharton you would need a consonant.
- Purpose to find the Curlew Patrol.
- Kangaroo, man for Lord Eastwood.
- Jimmy Silver plays it.
- A brunt on the head of Hurrce Singh, sometimes.
- Should Ravenapur Grange have had an X certificate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

J. Is Fishy bony? Below, perhaps.

K. He was once too good for St. Jim's.

continued next page...

- L. Do you ever hear Co. address Mr, Hacker thus? Hardly!
 M. Present at Roll Call in Hall.
 N. Later I am to be useful in making a Greyfriars blazer.
 O. Leaving the sands of Pegg: (3,4)
 P. What have you againt me? A marked man, the man behind the scenes,
 twice round the globe.

* * * * *

Write on a postcard the words in the lower grid and the answer to the Clue Down. 5/- for the first correct solution received by the Editor.

* * * * *

RESULT OF QUIZZLE NO. 7: Solution to Clue Down - "Fine Work, Mr. Editor". Hidden words:- "Hundred and Fifty Not Out - Grand Score." First THREE correct solutions received from R. J. Godsave, 35 Woodhouse Road, Leytonstone, E.11; D. B. Webster, 23 West Park Road, Kew and J. Wood, 328 Stockton Lane, York, to each of whom 5/- has been sent. Total points - London 30 points, Northern 30 points, Merseyside 10 points.

WANTED: Magnet No. 799; S.O.Ls 60, 68. ½d. Gems 16, 37; Gems 279, 359, 364, 433; BF. Libraries 1st series 237 King Cricket, 334 Jungle Patrol, 383 After Lights Out, 497 Adventure Creek.
 DR. ROBERT WILSON, 100 BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

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 York.

Phone: 25795

* * * * *

This month, by way of a welcome change, we have another despatch from St. Frank's by our roving correspondent. Jim Sutcliffe's Random Recollections will be concluded next month, so over now to Jim Cock, who writes:-

(From your resident correspondent at St. Frank's College, Bellton.)

Now that I have the opportunity once again to tell you of what has been happening down here at St. Frank's, I really do not know where

to begin. The old school has seen some stirring times over the years; it has been threatened with destruction on more than one occasion; it has been damaged, fired and broken, but every time the old pile just stood there defying all. I suppose it will defy Time itself for the remarkable events which has happened here a few weeks after the Christmas vacation, makes me arrive at that observation unreservedly.

A period of quiet had settled in after the return from the holiday, and except for a poliomyelitis scare which originated in a rumour put around by that worst of all cads, Bernard Forrest, nothing unusual had occurred to disturb the schoolastic calm. That is nothing which might deserve a despatch...for among the everyday events here there is always something to record after the Fourth Forms has had its day, but space would not permit such detailed chronicles and so I must only send you the major items.

Well, there is a major item of the first importance. Briefly, St. Frank's has been visited again by the arch-crook, Professor Zingrave! And in style! Not only was St. Frank's and everybody connected with it due for extinction, but also the rest of England!! Here at St. Frank's was the starting point for what was to be the final round, the last throw by Zingrave to take control of the world! And it could only begin here, at the old school, because Nelson Lee was here and Nelson Lee had first to be eliminated! How it all began and the terrible time suffered by the boys of St. Frank's will be told separately. Nothing like it has been witnessed since the upheaval brought about by that German-American millionaire, William K. Smith, some time ago. Then the school was threatened with extinction only after the boys had fought against this foreign invader. But with the coming of Professor Zingrave, Nelson Lee demands action stations at once. You will remember that when I reported the return to St. Frank's of Dr. Stafford, I prophesied the old school would see some startling events. How true this was you will see when you read my account of the Green Triangle's ambitious plan to rule the world!

* * *

It is surprising how soon one gets back to normal after hectic events such as I have hinted. Here we are with glorious summer skies and a promise of holidays and once again St. Frank's will be "shut up" for a time. Lord Dorrimore has been down and speculation is rife about a trip somewhere in his favourite yacht, the Wanderer. By the way, I still haven't seen the yacht! I missed it in Africa, when it

was laid up in Leopoldville, and when Dorrie brought it safely out of the Belgium Congo and sailed for England I was invited on board when it docked at Tilbury. I had 'flu at the time and missed the opportunity. Later, when I got well, Dorrie had departed for South America. I believe he has tried to visit once more that El Dorado which they found many miles up the Amazon some time ago. I remember reading about that glorious adventure and the thrilling time the boys had in that strange city of the white giants. I wonder if Dorrie intends making another search for this dream city. He is convinced it is still there, and you know what Dorrie is like when he gets thinking like that.

* * *

I have to report that Nipper and Co., have failed miserably in their efforts to pay off those japes put over by the girls of the Moor View School. As Reggie Pitt explained, you don't know how to take girls, and so the retaliation was postponed. Handforth's ideas to 'hit back' would have resulted in mass expulsions!

I have mentioned the japes because several others have been reported to me. When Dr. Stafford casually looked out of his window one fine morning he was startled to see the body of a man by the side of the shrubbery! Apparently the man was dead. Quite dead! For he was minus his head! It would have been alright if Tubbs, the page, had not seen it too, but Tubby would have to go and shout it out. Some of the boys had been early risers and among them was Enoch Snipe. Consequently, it was all over the school in a matter of seconds. The Head's garden became the focal point. It held the entire crowd at St. Frank's!! Masters, pupils and domestics! Imagine the result of Nelson Lee turning over the dead man and the body crumbling in his hands! It had been a skeleton covered with old clothes to resemble a body and placed in such a way to look like a murdered man!! The school was buzzing for a long time and Mr. Crowell dished out lines by the hundreds, but when I saw Nipper he said it was still a mystery who had put the thing in the Head's garden. But the next day brought forth another mystery.

An old car had somehow got itself on the roof of the Ancient House! Scores of boys and their masters looked at it in bewilderment from the Triangle. It seemed an impossible feat and even Mr. Lee couldn't hazard a guess as to how the job was done. It was a very old car, so very old that old Miles, the carrier from the village, declined it as a free gift! In the end it was taken down piece by piece and removed to a rubbish dump. I would like along with the rest of the

school, to find out who were responsible for these japes, but up to the time of writing no evidence has turned up. The Moor View girls are ruled out as it was essentially a man's job.

Over tea in Study C, we came to the conclusion it was the work of the Hon. Wellborne & Co., of the River House who would most likely have sufficient money for such a jape. So, Pitt, and Jack Grey are going to make some discreet enquiries from Brewster and Co.

It's just like old times again at St. Frank's. How I wish you were all here with me.

(Hear, hear! - J.P.W.)

OLD BOY'S BOOK CLUB

LONDON SECTION. A lovely summer day for our meeting at Excelsior House, Surbiton, and our host Eric Fayne, seeing to it that we had a very happy time. Frank Lay, our Chairman, welcomed our Herbert, Sam Thurbon, Cliff Lettley and Norah Rutherford from Bristol, Haydyn Salmon from Ipswich, Roy Parsons from Hants and the indefatigable Bill Lofts.

Roger Jenkins mentioned that there are now over 850 books in the Hamiltonian section of the club library. A new list of the books in the Nelson Lee section will be in all members hands early in July.

Our Herbert then addressed the meeting and stated how he had happy memories of the Surbiton meeting of eleven years ago when he met most of us for the first time. He spoke of the increasing circulation of the "C.D." and shewed round a very good article from the Australian magazine "People" which had a fine photograph of our friends of the Golden Hours Club. Then Les Rowley presented the Greyfriars Cup to me on behalf of the London Club. We then went into the garden and a "Garden Journey" game resulted in Eleanor Packman Roger Jenkins, Roy Parsons and Bob Blythe finishing 1, 2, 3, and 4. The "Snakes and Ladders" quiz was won jointly by Roger Jenkins and Rev. John Dockerty. For the two games the prizes were drinking glasses etched with famous Hamiltonian characters, needless to say the games and the glasses were Eric's idea. The study feast was extra; thanks to Eric and the ladies was proposed by Don Webster. Roy Parsons quiz was won by Bob Whiter with Len Packman and Don Webster second. Roy, Herbert and Len won rounds of the Criss Cross quiz. Eliminator quiz, key word Carne, was won by Len Packman

and Ben Whiter and Don Webster third. A very happy meeting indeed and the next instalment will be at Hume House, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22, on Sunday, July 19th. Kindly let host, Len Packman, know if you will be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

NORTHERN SECTION MEETING, JUNE 13th, 1959. A beautiful summer evening brought along eighteen members to a truly memorable meeting. Outside the sunlit park gladdened the eye and all was happiness within.

For instance, one of our members had sent all his duplicate Magnets - between Nos. 26 and 1651 - for sale or exchange. A noble sight indeed. Talk about beesround a honeypot!

Another thing which delayed our start was the discussion of the new Billy Bunter series on T.V., which some members had seen before coming along. At last, however, at 7.15 - the Chairman called us to order, and the meeting began.

Secretary, Ronald Hodgson, gave final details for the Chesterfield meeting on June 28th, and Gerald Allison announced a new postal member for the library - John Farrar of Halifax, who is a Nelson Lee fan. Business over, we had four more contributions to our Desert Island Books symposium. These were as follows:-

Bill Williamson - The Vernon-Smith feud series; a volume of "The Boyd's Realm" containing the serial "King Cricket"; and volume 4 of "The Collector's Digest".

Ernest Whitehead selected a Rookwood S.L.O.; "Teddy Lester, Captain of Cricket" by John Finnemore and "The Waterlily Series."

Jack Wood being told he could not call the complete set of the N.L.L. a book, selected "Teddy Lester's Schooldays" by John Finnemore (again!) "Enter Psmythe" by P.G. Wodehouse and "Billy Bunter Afloat".

Finally, Stanley Smith, whose choice was, Holiday Annual 1928; Monster Library No. 8 and Talbot Baines Reed's "Tom, Dick and Harry".

After refreshments, Gerry provided a Cryptic Word Quiz, which lasted the rest of the meeting. Breeze Bentley, who incidentally, now wants only 14 Magnets to complete his set, was the winner.

Next meeting, Saturday, July 11th. G. ALLISON

MIDLAND SECTION MEETING HELD 25th MAY, 1959. Ten members, plus a visitor from London, attended this, the Annual General Meeting, when a very satisfactory balance sheet was produced by our Treasurer. Due to increased membership, mostly, Norman was able to announce the best profit since the Club's inception. Progress with the Library was reported by Beryl Russell and again attention was drawn to the preponderance of Nelson Lee Libraries we now possess and it was decided

to put up a number for sale, so will members please note. I was able to give also, a very comforting report on the Club's activities for the past year and which it was regretted, that we had to give up the Greyfriars Cup. We had done well with the T.V. Broadcast. Certain comments were made in reference to this T.V. Broadcast particularly the fact that we were alluded to as the "Billy Bunter Club", a title which the Club, as a whole, very much resent.

Our programme for the last two or three years show that we touch on many other subjects than Frank Richards' fat schoolboy. The Chesterfield re-union with our Northern comrades was an important business item and while it was regretted that certain stalwarts of the club had other and unavoidable commitments for June 28th, most of the crowd who had made the journey last two years, gave their names as certain starters. We are looking forward to June 28th.

The important part of the night's programme was of course, to elect the officers for the year 1959-60. A popular choice as Chairman and setting a precedent for our own club, and I believe for the other four also, was Madge Corbett, Tom Porter as per the rules of the Club, continuing as vice-chairman. There were no alterations in the other officers, Norman continuing as Treasurer, myself as Secretary and Beryl, Librarian.

Next meeting will be June 29th, the day after we return from Chesterfield.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE SECTION MEETING- 7th JUNE. Another good attendance in spite of one or two stalwarts away on holiday. Don Webster introduced several important matters for urgent discussion, including the joint Midland-Merseyside suggestions for this year's Greyfriars Cup Competition. Agreement has almost been reached, and the rules decided upon by the two Clubs will soon be ready.

Owing to the absence of one or two regulars, it was decided to postpone the tape-recording of greetings to our friends "down under" until the July meeting, when we hope that there will be a full attendance. It was yet another bumper programme, full of good things, and was even more hilarious than ever. Bill Windsor, Pat Laffey and the writer gave their choice of six companions on a desert island, and Pat, in rebellious mood, chose Ponsonby, Skinner, Loder, Racke, Cutts and Gore-Pearce, declaring forthrightly that any others would bore him stiff! Hmm! A classics quiz followed, entitled "Who Said What?" which proved rather tougher than was intended, though Bill Windsor did very well in winning, with George Riley second and Jim Walsh third.

