



COLLECTORS' DIGEST



VOLUME 14

JUNE 1960

NUMBER 162

TOM MERRY ON THE EIFFEL TOWER
(A specimen of the work of R.J. Macdonald)



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The Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED in 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Volume 14. Number 162

Price 1s. 6d.

JUNE, 1960

Editor:

ERIC FAYNE

Excelsior House,

Grove Road,

Surbiton, Surrey.

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From the Editor's Chair

OUR COVERS. Our covers seem to be pleasing you - a fact which pleases us. Our novel white cover in February, in which we gave you the picture of the Bunter party, was described by Geoff Hockley in New Zealand as the finest piece of duplicating he had ever seen. Bob Whiter's nifty and naughty little cartoon effort in April brought some hearty chuckles from readers. (It has been suggested in some quarters that the youth should have had Blakiana, and not C.D. on his blazer badge, but we disagree. At school when we had the cane, it didn't much matter whether it fell across our Blakiana or our Hamiltoniana - it hurt US just the same. Our Headmaster said it hurt him, too, but we had our doubts.)

Our Lot-O-Fun novelty offering in May brought happy comments from lots of readers. This month we bring you a typical Macdonald drawing from the Gem. The two schoolboys heading the page are drawn by Warwick Reynolds in his happiest vein.

Next month we have a very special treat for you. Our cover for July is especially drawn for us by Mr. C. H. Chapman, the world-famous artist. We feel sure that it is going to delight you all.

WHO'S WHO. The Who's Who will have reached you by the time you read these words. Publication was a little later than we had hoped, but readers have been very patient with us, realising that the work in connection with same was very considerable. Thank you all for being so understanding.

SEXTON BLAKE. Every month the Sexton Blake Library publishes tip-top novels of the world's greatest detective. We venture to repeat something we said as long ago as last December. Not many of the heroes of our youth are left to us, but we still have Billy Bunter and Sexton Blake. If we are worth our salt it is up to every one of us to support them with all our might and main.

THE EDITOR

WANTED: GEMS 313, 315, 316, 319, 320, 321, 322, 328, 331, 332, 333, 338, 339, 340, 356, 358, 359, 376, 385, 386, 387, 392, 457, 459, 493, 773, 935, 946, 948, 950, 951, 953, 954, 956, 964, 967, 968, 970, 976, 977, 979, 980, 984, 986, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1116, 1126, 1129, 1133. **MAGNETS:** 45, 52, 134, 138, 141, 195, 205, 238, 277, 318, 319, 325, 344, 345, 346, 347, 353, 357, 358, 386, 388, 389, 400, 411, 417, 469, 717, 719, 752, 773, 809, 834, 849, 850, 856, 858, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 868, 900, 921, 924, 925, 935, 936, 940, 942, 943, 944, 946, 948, 949, 950, 951, 954, 955, 958, 965, 967, 988, 996. **POPULARS:** 370, 385, 390, 396, 398, 452, 455, 461, 466, 474.

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

WANTED: Sexton Blake Library - 1st series - 11, 17, 37, 105, 109, 111, 198, 201, 219; 2nd series - 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 495, 520, 667, Boys Friend Library - 1st series - 10, 68, 102, 105, 107, 165, 229, 246, 669. 2nd series - 396. Union Jack - 689, 690, 691, 693, 695, 702, 703, 704, 721, 722, 725, 727, 732, 733, 736, 740, 743, 746, 749, 751, 752, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1388, 1390.

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

WANTED: The Popular: 127-135, 137, 138, 141-145, 147-159, 161-163, 166, 169-171, 174-184, 186-188, 190, 191, 193-201, 203-205, 207-211, 220-229, 231, 311, 313, 314, 316-318, 320-322, 325-334, 336-343, 345-347, 349, 350, 353-161, 380, 381, 388-398, 404, 411-415, 418, 428, 449, 451, 452, 454-456, 459-463, 465, 466, 469-488, 499, 518, 544, 545, 547-551, 556-558, 560-566, 568-571, 572, 577, 578, 581, 591, 596-599. S.O.Ls - 60, 68.

DR. R. WILSON, 100, BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.

WANTED: S.O.L's: 42, 65, 66, 162, 257, 258, 259. Nelson Lee Old series - 236, 291. Your price plus postage paid. The advertiser has some S.O.Ls, Nelson Lee, Gems and Magnets for exchange only.

BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.

THOSE ELUSIVE GIRLS' PAPERSA Peep into the PastBy W. O. G. Lofts

I was very interested in our Editor's comments in the April Digest on the rarity of the early girls' papers, and it is indeed surprising that so few are in existence today, as many of them had long runs - some of over 30 years.

"The Boy's Friend" which started in 1895 was so successful that in 1898 the Amalgamated Press started a sister girls' paper entitled "Girl's Best Friend", which, after a year, was shortened to "Girl's Friend." The size and format was very similar to that of the "Boy's Friend" except that the paper was pink, while the "Boy's Friend" was green.

Features in the first issue included: Smart hats and pretty frocks. Men who make nice lovers. Women to Copy - No. 1. Grace Darling. Dreams. A handsome figure - exercises for girls. Your Editor and his girl friends. "Behind the Footlights" by Beatrix Gwynne. Business for girls - No. 1, The post-office Telegraph Learner. Plus a long serial story entitled "Utterly Alone" (Anonymous)

In 1913, the format had not changed a great deal, but stories and authors which may bring back nostalgic memories were: "Mary of the Dairy"; "Sally of our Alley"; "The Girl in the Pink Sun Bonnet"; "Told by the Postman" (a series of stories); "Lizzie Lindsay" - the adventures of a Scotch lassie in London.

Authors: Mabel St. John; Effie Scott; Nora Pitt Taylor; William E. Groves; Paula Corri.

I am not sure what size the "Girl's Friend" finished at, but it did cease at issue No. 1628, dated January 24th, 1931, when it was incorporated with "Poppy's Paper."

"Girl's Reader" ran for more than 600 issues, starting large size in 1908, very similar to "Girl's Friend" in format and pink colour. By 1915 it was of the small "Gem" size with its main stories as follows: "Emma Brown of London, the Girl Who Defied the Kaiser"; "Queen of the Laundry". Principal author, once again, was the famous "Mabel St. John."

(Editor's note: Grateful thanks to Bill Lofts for the above most fascinating information. Stories I can recall personally are "The Girl who Lost her Beauty" and "The Ghost of Deepdene Grange" in Girl's Friend; "Lil, the Orange Girl" in Girl's Reader; "Pretty and Plain" and "Sent to a Reformatory" (both by Mabel St. John) in Girl's Home.

OLD FAVOURITES ON TELEVISION

I. A. Carbin of Rugby writes: "I see another character from the old boys' papers - the Modern Boy this time - has reached the T.V. status. I read the Modern Boy from No. 1 until about 1937, and "Biggles" was one of my favourites. I think it deserves a mention in Digest, for it is quite an achievement to rise from a Boys' paper to the T.V. screen. I can't imagine any characters from today's mags doing so."

There is no doubt that many of our readers have given a warm welcome to "Biggles". It has also been a great pleasure to see Sherlock Holmes on T.V. for several months past. Unfortunately, the Holmes stories come on very late in the evening, but those who have sacrificed their beauty sleep have been rewarded. These films were originally made about twenty years ago, but they wear extremely well. They are competently produced, and the only thing one might regret is that Holmes has been moved out of period.

Intentionally naive, they make most satisfying entertainment, and it is difficult to think of a better Holmes than Basil Rathbone.

Yes, it is a joy to see old favourites on T.V. Even Dr. Jimmy Edwards and Mr. Pettigrew remind one irresistibly of Dr. Birchmell and Mr. Lickham.

* * * * *

WANTED: Any issues of MONSTER LIBRARY. C.D. Nos. 1 to 48, C.D. Annuals Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4. Condition must be reasonable. S.P.C. Nos. 1 to 43. A. J. SOUTHWAY, P.O. BOX 4, BEACONSFIELD, C.P. SOUTH AFRICA.

WANTED: Magnets, Gems and S.O.L's.

I. H. DAVEY, 36, QUEEN'S ROAD, WHITLEY BAY, NORTH'D.

FOR SALE: Union Jack 92 copies between 1216 and 1531. 1/- each. Boys Friend 3d. Lib. Nos. 31, 81, and 132 6/- each. Boys Friend 3d. Lib. Nos. 18, 50, 60, 218 - no backs - 2/6 each. All plus postage.

WANTED: Aldine Turpins Nos. 77, 78, 80, 150, 124, 148, 165, 166, 167. W. H. CLOUGH, 3, FORTHILL GROVE, SALE, CHESHIRE.

WOULD COLLECTORS with copies of Popular, Gem, U.J., B.F. Lib, School-girls Own Library, kindly help me with data for my catalogues. All letters answered.

A. J. SOUTHWAY, P.O. BOX 4, BEACONSFIELD, CAPE PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA.

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tony glynn



Tony Glynn - enthusiastic C.D. reader and contributor to our pages - writes a column regularly in "The Irish Independent." Here is an extract from an article which he recently wrote for that famous newspaper.

* * *

Have you ever wondered what happened to Billy Bunter, Tom Merry, Nelson Lee, and hosts of other

heroes of the fiction of yesteryear? Well, although most of the magazines which carried the adventures of these modern folk-heroes have gone, the characters live on enshrined in the hearts of those who thrilled to their exploits in days gone by, and these folk have gathered themselves together into the Old Boys' Book Club.

It has members of all ages in just about every quarter of the globe. One of their number, by the way, is Irish actor, Dan O'Herlihy, who has found fame in Hollywood. The members of the O.B.B.C. are as youthful-hearted and friendly a group of people I've come across in a long time. They collect copies of the old magazines featuring their favourites, meet each other in social gatherings, discuss well-loved characters and stories, and swap memories and views in the Club's journal, "Collectors' Digest."

Prominent among members, incidentally, is octogenarian Frank Richards, creator of Billy Bunter, who is still writing Bunter stories - they have now achieved the dignity of hard covers - as well as T.V. scripts of Bunter's adventures.

Credit for founding this singularly good-natured brother-and-sisterhood (there are plenty of lady members) is due to an amiable Yorkshireman, the late Herbert Leckenby, who died last autumn aged seventy.

The adventures of mythical schoolboy characters, valiant detectives,

and comic paper characters such as "Weary Willie and Tired Tim" might sound trivial and passing things to some lofty-minded folks. But on such a foundation has an international fellowship of Peter Pan-ish people been built up. Those who would scorn the happy activities of the old boys' book collectors should pause to reflect on the fact that if some of the world's politicians could do what the late Mr. Leckenby did in the way of making for a "family" feeling among different people, the world would be a much more comfortable place.

Old copies of the periodicals which contain stories of their favourites circulate among members, who are quick to point out that stories dealing with upstanding heroes who always played the game, never took an unfair advantage, and gave a good example in general are much superior to the undesirable literature which is all too much in evidence today.

Say I - many happy years to all who remain young at heart.

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(Editor's note: Dan O'Herlihy - C.D. supporter, Magnet and Gem enthusiast, and famous film star, is now appearing in a West End cinema in his latest film "A TERRIBLE BEAUTY." See it if you can.)

ODDS AND ENDS
By Gerry Allison

METHODISH AND "THE MAGNET" "If you don't put that thing away, I'll jolt your head against the jamb!" The speaker was my father; the time was a Sunday morning before Chapel; and 'that thing' was a copy of the "Magnet". The threat, in forceful, Shakespearean English, was to knock my head against the side of the fireplace - the jamb.

We were Primitive Methodists, and my father was a local preacher. He was also a man who meant every word he said, and from that Sunday morning, my Magnets 'went underground' as it were. I read them in bed, at school, or at my pal's house, but never again at home, until after my father died. That was in March, 1919.

The above incident was recalled vividly to my memory by a passage in "The Methodist Recorder" for April 21st. It was in the column "As I see It" written by John Epworth. Under the heading, 'Journey into the Past', Mr. Epworth reminisces over the literature of his childhood, and after mentioning "Books for the Bairns" and "Tales for Little Folks" he goes on:

"FORBIDDEN FRUIT. But soon, (age about eleven-plus) there came the moment when in that paradisaical garden of Wonder, most of us Methodist children were forbidden the fruit of two or three most attractive trees. We were not allowed to read "The Magnet" or "The Gem", or the "Boy's Friend" and we took them home only under peril of their instant confiscation.

Why? I have never been able to understand why they were considered not quite right for us, for the stories were in their own way as clean and wholesome as anything in the

Nelson Lee Column

(Conducted by JACK WOOD, 328, Stockton Lane, York.)

Several complimentary messages have been received about Jim Cook's excellent letter from St. Frank's last month; we hope to hear more news from the old school in due course. Meanwhile, Charles Churchill resumes his recollections of some noted "singles" in the old Nelson Lee Library.

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FIVE-STARRED SINGLES OF THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY

No. 3. "The City of Burnished Bronze."

By Chas. Churchill

Those two popular and likeable characters, Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi, appeared dozens of times in the Nelson Lee Library, but only twice prior to the introduction of St. Frank's. The first time was in No. 105 "The Ivory Seekers" and the second in No. 119 "The City of Burnished Bronze." A year or two ago I reviewed the former in a C.D. Annual, and now offer a condensation of the latter.

On the cover is stated "Magnificent Detective Story", but actually there is no detection in it - it is an adventure story.

Reading it today, of course, one realises how improbable the story is. However, it was written in 1917, when there were very few aeroplanes, no wireless, radar and suchlike, and even the Atlantic had not been flown, so no doubt it did not seem improbable then, when distances had not shrunk to what they are today. Taking all this into account, the story is interesting and certainly out of the ordinary.

Chapter one opens with Nelson Lee and Nipper in the laboratory of their Gray's Inn Road abode, Lee busy on an intricate experiment. To their delight, Dorrie and Umlosi unexpectedly turn up. After greetings have been exchanged, Dorrie informs Lee that he intends to "cart him off to the Libyan desert before a week's out." Lee at first takes this as a joke, but Dorrie proceeds to unfold a tale which, briefly, is as follows:-

An old friend of Dorrie's, Lawrence Mannering, had, sometime previously, asked him to join an expedition into the desert in search of a dead city - The City of Burnished Bronze. Dorrie, being unable to accept then, had lost sight of his friend. Months later

he heard that Mannering had started out with someone else - a Professor Lyle - and that the expedition had been a failure. Lyle had managed to regain civilisation alone, announcing that Mannering had died in the desert. He was fitting out a new expedition to search again for the lost city. Dorrie then heard from some Bedouins that they had seen a mirage in the desert of a small unknown oasis in which was a lone white man.

Dorrie, who had taken a dislike to Lyle, became suspicious that he had marooned Mannering in this oasis and was intending to find the Bronze City himself, and reap all the glory plus any treasure that might be there.

After much discussion, Dorrie convinces Lee that there is something in the story and the latter agrees to journey to Egypt with Dorrie, and endeavour to solve the mystery.

Chapter two finds the party in Egypt, in the shadow of the great pyramid of Ghirzeh. A caravan has been organised, consisting of Nelson Lee, Dorrie, Nipper, Umlosi and twelve Senoussi tribesmen. A start is made and the caravan moves off for the oasis of Saawa, the first objective. Mr. Brooks then gives a very good description of desert travelling. Space forbids me repeating any of it here, but it is quite convincing, as any old hands of the Eighth Army in the last war, would concede.

On arrival at Saawa, the party camp down and eight of the Senoussi are dismissed, only four remaining for the rest of the journey. During the night, Nipper is awakened and surprises a marauder at work in an adjacent tent, which contains their stores. However, the intruder takes flight and all seems well, as he was considered just a sneak-thief. The next day the party sets off into the unknown.

The evening of the fourth day a sandstorm arrives and Mr. Brooks again obliges with a very realistic account of the occurrence.

After the storm passes, Nelson Lee proceeds to apportion drinking water to all, and finds to his horror that all their remaining supply was poisoned, obviously, now, the work of the intruder in the stores tent at Saawa. The party are staggered and realise that they will never reach the unknown oasis with no water, neither will they be able to return to Saawa, a four days' journey. All seems lost!

Some time passes and then Nelson Lee calls to mind his great knowledge of chemistry, and succeeds in restoring the water to a drinkable state by means of adding a mineral salt which was in their stores, and to the unmeasurable relief, the danger is overcome.

Next day, the caravan arrives at the oasis, and Mannering is discovered. He is almost delirious at the sight of his rescuers and confirms that it was Professor Lyle who caused him to be abandoned in the desert.

Chapter five describes the arrival of the party at the City of Burnished Bronze - a dead city, uninhabited for countless ages. All dismount in one of the big squares, but before any other action can be taken, a crowd of Bedouins pour from the semi-ruined buildings and succeed in capturing them by force of numbers. The three whites are imprisoned in a building and all again seems lost. Umlosi, however, turns up trumps, for he recovers from a blow which had rendered him helpless in the fight and proceeds to engage in a tremendous battle with a dozen Bedouins. With his spear flashing he eventually puts them to flight, and then releases his white friends. Having previously spotted Lyle going into a temple across the square, the four follow. Lyle suddenly appears before them, and on recognition, takes flight. The four find him fallen into an underground chamber and stunned by the fall. To their great surprise, this chamber contains a vast treasure in the form of precious stones. They find an inner room, but this proves to be empty. At this moment the door is slammed by Lyle, who has recovered, and the four are again imprisoned. However, in a very few moments the door is again opened and all are vastly relieved to find that their four Senoussi are their deliverers. Lyle is found lying dead outside, having been killed by these four.

Here is the end of the adventure. Lawrence Mannering rescued, Lyle dead, the Bronze City discovered and a great treasure to be shared. We read that Nelson Lee and Nipper decide that their share shall go to the Red Cross, a very deserving cause.

Once again I can congratulate Mr. Brooks on a most unusual Nelson Lee story.

HOLIDAY TIME

Your editor will be on holiday at Killarney and by the rough Atlantic at Galway Bay, for a fortnight commencing Whitsun. If you should be writing him during that time, your letters will be forwarded. He will endeavour to drop you a card in reply, though anything of importance will be held over till the end of his holiday.

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B L A K I A N A

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

Thanks to a very kind overseas friend of mine, I am now the lucky possessor of the first eight UNION JACK Yvonne Certier stories. These stories relate how she succeeds in her vengeance upon eight men involved in what was known as the "Jig-Saw Mine Swindle". Later in the year, I hope to write an article on this little series for 'Blakiana'.

Further to my remarks concerning the MAILBAG section of the Sexton Blake Library (April Blakiana), it may interest "Martin Thomas" and others, to know that the amount of material on the 'modern' Blake received by me from that date until now is one short article - appearing in this issue - which only just qualifies for this category!

Both Len and myself wish to thank the Australian branch of the O.B.B.C. for their kind remarks (Club report in May issue of the C.D.) in regard to Blakiana and the "Martin Thomas" article appearing in the S.B.L. MAILBAG for February.

JOSIE PACKMAN

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CENTURY MAKERS

(And a few other interesting statistics)

By WALTER WEBB

Instalment Fifteen Beginning the Chester Story

In the early summer of 1942 those readers who numbered Leon Kestrel among their favourite subsidiary characters had reason for much satisfaction, for his creator, Lewis Jackson, made a welcome return to the ranks of Blake writers after an absence of nearly ten years. A debutante that year (118) DELANO AMES, who came along with a story set on the Cornish coast and submitted nothing afterwards, was once married to the Australian-born authoress Maysie Greig. March 1943 heralded (119) JOHN PURLEY, a 43 year-old Worcester born free-lance journalist, another one-story writer, who was followed by yet another solo merchant, (120) JOHN SYLVESTER, a one-time newspaper reporter. Plymouth born and aged 41, his work can be seen in various volumes of CHUMS and copies of THE THRILLER. A 57 year-old son of Lancashire (121) JOSEPH STAMPER, wrote his first and only Sexton Blake novel two months later. He had written his autobiography, "Less Than The Dust" about ten years previously.

One imagines that the lack of regular contributors must have occasioned the S.B.L. editor no little anxiety, for, due to the war, the number of regular writers had been reduced to three - GILBERT CHESTER, JOHN HUNTER and ANTHONY PARSONS - too few in number to warrant peace of mind on his part; so to give the trio much needed support, (122) WALTER TYRER and (123) JOHN DRUMMOND were recruited and with Lewis Jackson also contributing at regular intervals the S.B.L. held its own in face of the increasing difficulties of a war which showed little signs of coming to an end. A new name on the cover was that of (124) PETER MERITON, a non-de-plume of John Hunter's, whilst that of (125) RICHARD STANDISH, appearing for the first time in December, 1944, was a pseudonym used by Richard Goyme.

Reading Gilbert Chester's account of "The Strange Case of the Footman's Crime", just prior to Christmas, 1944, sent our memories drifting back over the years to the more peaceful thirties and recalled Blake's many encounters with that engaging pair of young crooks, Gilbert Hale and his pert and impertinent wife, Eileen. Not for over ten years had Blake set eyes on either of them, and then in war-torn London he meets Hale, described now as "a well-dressed, good-looking man in the early forties." Those of us who read and enjoyed Blake's tussles with this young pair of audacious crooks must have been stabbed with a feeling of regret that they had been allowed to drop out of the stories, for, despite their introduction, it was obvious that the author had no intention of featuring them again in leading roles as of yore. Hale was in permanent retirement, living as he termed it "a humdrum and hopelessly bourgeois existence, but safe in moderately comfortable circumstances." Eileen, putting on weight these days, was occupying her time by breeding Pekes, which, in view of her character as Blake readers knew it, was extremely difficult to believe. Having thus stirred our memories in pleasant contemplation of past exploits, Gilbert Chester thrust the Hales back into final and complete retirement, though himself remaining in the spotlight by virtue of his challenge for the late Andrew Murray's position as the third highest compiler of Sexton Blake stories. Before the end of the year, Chester passed Murray's total with an aggregate of 166 stories, of which 91 had been published in the S.B.L. leaving him just nine short of his century for the Library.

Deaths, some tragic, though unconnected with the war but of sufficient importance to warrant press comment, occurred towards the end of hostilities, thereby snapping further links in the chain welding the old boys' books of the past to their fragile counterparts

of the present day. H. A. Hinton, one-time editor of the MAGNET, was killed in a railway accident in Weybridge.....another editor, Arthur Brooke, late of Pearson's BIG BUDGET, died from a heart attack two months later.....T. C. BRIDGES, who wrote a few early Blakes, passed on aged 76.....Crossing the road in Kensington, an old man was knocked down and fatally injured. Picked up, he was later identified as being Mr. E. Le Breton Martin, a journalist; at the A.P. he was known as "Martin Shaw" and may have been one of the early Blake crowd. All of which makes sombre reading, yet others were soon to follow, including Blake writers Crichton Miln and Maurice B. Dix.

Not for two years was the name of a new writer seen on the cover of the S.B.L.; then, in December 1946, came the first peace-time author to be introduced. He was (126) DEREK LONG. At this point it will be as well to give the latest statistics which are as follows:- Gilbert Chester (172); Anthony Skene (124); Lewis Jackson (79); Rex Hardinge (64).

With 97 novels for the S.B.L. alone, Gilbert Chester, at the age of 58, was heading fast towards the distinction of being only the second author to contribute 100 stories for the Library, W. Murray Graydon having achieved the feat nearly 20 years previously. Almost coinciding with Chester's century of S.B.L. novels came Anthony Skene's last story prior to his retirement, "The Man Who Lost His Memory", published October 1947. For the Library during an association lasting just under 27 years, he contributed 39 novels, his total aggregate, including the shorter tales in "U.J." and "D.W." being 125. Famous for his creation of Zenith the Albino, the name of Anthony Skene will be remembered for as long as the famous character about which he wrote so many hundreds of thousand words. In his retirement there was consolation in the fact that Rex Hardinge was now regularly engaged in turning out stories for the Library after an absence of five years due to the war; but this was more than offset in February 1949, when Gilbert Chester retired from the field, leaving a gap that was never adequately filled during the remaining days of the Old Order.

At 60 years of age, perhaps he considered that he had had enough, there is no evidence forthcoming to the effect that his termination was anything but voluntary - though, since it has been stated that he was living in very poor circumstances right up to the time of his death, one cannot help but wonder why he did not attempt to relieve the burden a little by continuing to submit novels for the Library, which, no doubt, would have been accepted as usual. Born in 1880, he began writing professionally in 1922, his skill in story-telling and plot construction being such that for four years he experienced no difficulty

in selling his work, which was written from Delamere Terrace, Paddington, just off the Harrow Road, Then, in September, 1926, came the first severe set-back - the rejection of a 25,000 word story and the subsequent necessity of its revision, an experience without parallel as far as he was concerned. Whether this was a U.J. story, is not known, but in those days the length of a story for that paper did average that number of words, and it may have been entitled "The Murwood Mystery", a story Chester is known to have written, but which did not appear - at any rate, not under that particular title.

The psychological effect on the author was disastrous, and precipitated a severe and prolonged attack of brain exhaustion and depression induced by several years of consistent overwork, the net result being that he found writing and concentration impossible, and had to seek rest and recuperation in the country. That he laboured under great inconvenience at Delamere Terrace is proved, for such was the noise and other distractions in that neighbourhood that he was compelled to do all his writing at night. Sleep in the day being next to impossible for the same reasons, his health became impaired, to such an extent that in order to dispel perpetual headaches, and other organic disorders, he had to dose himself as a means of executing his literary commitments. Under the circumstances it must be said that his work in both the U.J. and S.B.L. at that time was of a surprisingly good standard.

Like most authors who have been associated with the writing of Sexton Blake stories, Gilbert Chester wrote for the women's market, contributing romantic tales to weeklies like BOWBELLS and fortnightly magazines such as the VIOLET, who numbered amongst its contributors Blake authors which included G. H. Teed, Crichton Miln, Sidney Drew, F. Addington Symonds, Lewis Essex, and one or two others. One of Chester's feminine pen-names in the early days was "Agatha Murray" and for papers which catered for masculine tastes he was sometimes "Hugh Bolton", "Clifford Warwick", "Hugh Allen", "Frank Brendon" and "Andrew Murray", choosing the latter as a pseudonym, perhaps because it was as a deputy to the Blake author of that actual name that he owed his commencement as a U.J. writer. As is now well known, Chester's real name, which he never used in full as author, was H. H. CLIFFORD GIBBONS, and, since he used the name of Hugh for two of his pen-names, that may have been his real christian name.

In these columns just over two years ago, the birthday of the late G. H. Teed was given as 13th April, 1878. This information was based on facts supplied by Mr. H. W. Twyman to one of our columnists,

Bill Lofts. But, according to a written memorandum in the handwriting of Gilbert Chester, Teed was born over eight years after this date, as the details in the forthcoming instalment will reveal.

* * * * *

STAR of

by Keith Chapman

"It is high time we saw our hero on the Television screen....."

So writes Mrs. Philpott, a recent correspondent in the "Mailbag" section of the Sexton Blake Library. Well, as a matter of interest, Sexton Blake has in fact already made an appearance in this medium.

On Sunday, 18th August, 1957, at 10.5 p.m. Associated Television, the weekend I.T.V. programme contractors for the London area, televised in their "Film Festival" series the film "Meet Sexton Blake" which starred David Farrar as the detective and John Varley as Tinker.

In the "T.V. Times" for that week, the film was announced as follows:

"Sexton Blake investigates another murder. A body is found under rubble in a lonely London street. Strapped to the wrist is a portfolio, and on one of the fingers is a ring of strange Oriental design. Who is this man?"

Mr. Leonard Packman tells me that besides the Sexton Blake films (one of the earliest of which, "The Clue of the Wax Vesta", was shown as far back as 1914), there have been several Blake plays too. Mr. Packman recalls "Sexton Blake on the East Coast" which was performed in January 1916 at The Camberwell Palace in South London. Another Blake play, called "Hush Money" is mentioned as having toured the provinces, by E. S. Turner in his book, "Boys will be Boys".

.....Sexton Blake, star of Stage, Screen, Radio and Television!

(In the play "Sexton Blake on the East Coast" the part of Blake was played by James Duncan, and that of Tinker by Lee Gilbert. Pedro portrayed by Himself, also played a prominent part. These details are



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SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY TITLES AND AUTHORS (1st series)(continued)

- | | | |
|---------|--|---------------|
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| No. 144 | The Secret of the Hunger Desert
(Kew, Carlac, Lawless) | A. Murray |
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| No. 146 | The Vengeance of Three
(B. Wicketshaw) | W.M. Graydon |
| No. 147 | The Mystery of X.O.4 (Kestrel) | J. Lewis |
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Kew) | A. Murray |
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| No. 150 | His Son's Honour (A. Dexter) | J.W. Bobin |
| No. 151 | The Mystery Box (G. Grant, Middle
Julie)
(Reprinted 2nd series No. 432) | W.W. Sayer |
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Lepperman) | R.H. Poole |
| No. 153 | The Secret of the Glacier
(Nantucket) | A. Murray |
| No. 154 | By the Terms of the Will
(Laban Creed) | W.M. Graydon |
| No. 155 | The False Alibi (Kestrel) | J. Lewis |
| No. 156 | The Roumanian Envoy (Zenith) | G.W. Phillips |
| No. 157 | A Breach of Trust | W.M. Graydon |
| No. 158 | The Case of the Undischarged
Bankrupt (Lawless) | A. Murray |
| No. 159 | The Case of the Mill-Owner's Son | W.M. Graydon |
| No. 160 | Kestrel's Conspiracy (Kestrel) | J. Lewis |
| No. 161 | The Black Opal Mine (Lawless) | A. Murray |
| No. 162 | Gipsy or Gentlemen? (B. Wicketshaw) | W.M. Graydon |
| No. 163 | The Secret of the Frozen North
(G. Grant, Middle Julie)
(Reprinted 2nd series No. 416) | W.W. Sayer |
| No. 164 | The Golden Casket (Claire Delisle) | F.A. Symonds |
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| No. 167 | The Gnat | L.H. Brooks |
| No. 168 | The Case of the Cinema Star
(Lawless) | A. Murray |
| No. 169 | The Secret of the Six Black Dots
(Middle Julie)
(Reprinted 2nd series No. 423) | W.W. Sayer |
| No. 170 | The Affair of the Family Diamonds | W.J. Bayfield |
| No. 171 | At the Shrine of Buddha | W.M. Graydon |
| No. 172 | The Lady of Ravensedge (Kestrel) | J. Lewis |
| No. 173 | The Episode of the Stolen Voice (Dr. Ferraro) | R.C. Armour |
| No. 174 | The Man in the Grey Cowl (Nantucket) | A. Murray |

CUP CONTEST

(Last month's story in this series was written by Roger Jenkins of the London Club. Here is another entry in this contest.)

CHECKMATE, CARDEW

By Monty Lowther

Cardew of the Fourth is a decent enough fellow, in spite of his funny little ways - if you don't object to his funny little ways.

Like plenty of people who have a ready wit and a fund of repartee, he gets a kick out of making a fool of those who are not so quick on the uptake. He finds it not nearly so funny when the tables are turned, and somebody makes a fool of him. It's a common failing with clever folk.

Now my pal, Tom Merry, is the best chap breathing, but he's far too easy-going. He would walk a mile rather than hurt anybody's feelings, which is all very well, but I get mad when I see him only smile when a fellow, who isn't fit to clean his boots, delights in taking the rise out of him.

Cardew has the offensive habit of always calling Tom Merry "Thomas". Of course, Tom never seems to mind. Maybe he takes it from whence it comes. All the same, it gets my dander up to see that sneering ass making a fool of Tommy.

It doesn't matter where we are or what we're doing, Cardew will barge in gracefully, and call Tom "Thomas". He will say "Goodmorning, Thomas," or "Be careful, I think we're shocking Thomas," or "Of course, none of us can hope to aspire to the high moral code of Thomas."

As you will have gathered, Cardew is a bit of a nut. That's all right, so long as he isn't an offensive nut. When he is, I adopt the role of a nut-cracker.

Early last week, I was in Study No. 10 with Tom and Manners when Cardew put his supercilious smirk round the door.

He said, "Ah, I've found you at home, Thomas."

Immediately, I gave him a smile of welcome and replied: "Yes, we're all here, Ralphie."

I should mention that Cardew's name is Ralph, and, personally, I'd rather be a Tom than a Ralph, any day.

Cardew looked a bit surprised, but maybe thought that his big ears had deceived him.

"Pardon my intrusion", he said, lazily, "but I guessed you might have finished the list for the Greyfriars match. Am I down to play, Thomas?"

Before Tom could reply, I weighed in with "Yes, Ralphie, we couldn't manage without our Ralphie in the front line."

Cardew's whimsical insolence was a trifle shaken. He said, quite crossly: "I was speaking to the cottage loaf, not the crumb under the table." His old insouciance came back. "Please relieve my frantic anxiety, Thomas. Am I in the Greyfriars game?"

The others had cottoned on by this time. Manners grinned serenely, and said: "Yes, Ralphie, we don't want to choose you but we think you ought to play."

Even Tom rose to the occasion. He said: "You're in, Ralphie. So's Levison!"

I added, blandly, "Don't forget to give Levison the good news, Ralphie."

Cardew didn't stay to express his thanks. The door slammed quite violently as he took his departure.

Just before the bell rang for tiffin the next morning, we were standing in the quad, chatting with the gang from Study 6, when Cardew butted in.

He said, nonchalantly: "I crave a word with Thomas. I have had the misfortune to bag lines from Lathom, so I shall be a little late for practice on Little Side. While you, Thomas, are urging other more energetic youths to wallow in the mud, I shall be scraping away industriously with my pen."

Tom Merry looked cross.

"Must you bag lines when you know we've got to practice every possible minute to be in form for Greyfriars?" he demanded.

Cardew sighed. "Mea culpa", he said. "Forgive me, Thomas. These things happen."

"That's all right, Ralphie," I said, breezily.

Cardew glared at me, and Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle in his eye, and surveyed me in surprise.

"What did you call Cardew, Lowthah?" he asked.

"He calls Tom, Thomas, so I call him Ralphie. It's his name, isn't it? His maiden name!" I explained.

"Bai jove, that's vevy funnny." Arthur Augustus cackled like a hen. "Yaas, it's certainly his name. How vevy funnny! Don't you see the joke, Walphie?"

"The only joke I can see is a glass-eyed tailor's dummy," snapped Cardew. He turned on his heel and strode away.

"Rude Ralphie," called out Blake.

Cardew was obviously getting a bit rattled, and I thought he might think twice before he tried the "Thomas" stunt again. But the

little comedy wasn't quite over.

We licked Greyfriars on Wednesday, and after the game we were in the changing-room when Railton came in. Railton is our Housemaster, and he takes a big interest in junior sports. He spoke to Tom.

"Congratulations, Merry! Your team put up a fine show. I hope you will be as successful with your other fixtures this season."

"Thank you, sir" said Tom. "I've got a grand team, and Wynn is a trojan in goal."

"Thomas is too modest, sir" remarked Cardew, sweetly. "Leadership is the main factor for any side, and Thomas is such an inspired leader. A model, if I may say so."

"Sir," I put in, with equal sweetness, "didn't you think that Ralphie was superb on the wing? So fleet, so lissom."

There was a suppressed chortle among the fellows. Cardew reddened.

"Whom?" asked Railton, in astonishment.

"Excuse me, sir," I said, with feigned confusion. "I meant Cardew sir. We call him Ralphie."

"You do nothing of the sort," hissed Cardew.

"Well, well, it seems a stupid name, but never mind." Railton smiled. "You certainly did very well, Ralphie - I mean Cardew. You are a silly boy, Lowther. You are even getting me mixed up."

He left the changing-room, chuckling to himself. As soon as he had gone, there was a burst of laughter from the fellows, and Cardew stamped angrily out.

That was nearly a week ago, and Cardew hasn't called Tom "Thomas" since. Tom Merry grins, but says it was "too bad" to make a chap look an ass like that. That's Tom all over.

If there's a moral to this story, it's this. If a silly ass tries to make you look a silly ass, just make sure to show everybody that he's a sillier ass than you are. It pays in the long run.

Result of
"THREE YEARS OF CONTROVSERY"
CONTEST.

The best entry in this contest was received from Mrs. V. Nicholls, 44 Grosvenor Place, Leeds, to whom a book prize has been sent.

* * * * *

Sexton Blake Today

NEW S.B.L.'s REVIEWED BY WALTER WEBB

MAY, 1960

The Angry Night (No. 451)

W. Howard Baker

This was one of the saddest assignments ever to come Blake's way during the war. For he met Nigel, his scapegrace brother, again. Nigel's misdemeanours had wrought havoc in the proud heart of his father,

Dr. Barclay Blake, who would have wished for nothing other than that his career should have run parallel with that of his elder brother Sexton. But the criminal kink in Nigel was too strong; his will to combat it too weak. Little good comes from war, but it took one to bring to the surface that in Nigel. The campaign in Burma. There, as an agent for Craille, he played a hero's part and died in Japanese hands after discovering a gigantic plot against the British. Sexton Blake took the torch from his dead brother and successfully completed Nigel's assignment.

The epilogue describing the closing scene between Blake and his father is both brief and moving.

Rating.....Very good

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WITCH-HUNT! (No. 452)

Desmond Reid

A superstition - ridden village in Buckinghamshire is the scene of Blake's latest case. The primary cause for this is the presence amongst its inhabitants of Yvonne Esdale, the young and beautiful wife of Colonel Henry Esdale, an elderly ex-army officer. She is looked



upon as a witch, and is openly declared to be one by a villager nicknamed 'Simple Simon'. When this character plunges to his death down a dis-used well in a thunder storm, she is regarded as the cause.

The theme of crooks playing on the superstitious fears of simple country folk to feather their nests is not new, but the author has done a satisfactory job with his material.

The case starts at the foot of the green slopes of the Chiltern Hills, and ends in the grey and chilly waters of the English Channel.

Rating.....Good

* * *

GENERAL COMMENTARY

COVERS:

Two sharply contrasted covers this month, both well drawn.

MAILBAG:

Martin Thomas has been throwing many brickbats lately. In the direction of Blakiana mostly. Now, a lady correspondent tosses one back at him. And, by all accounts, has registered a direct hit; for she points out a major error in his latest novel, "Bred to Kill." In fact, MAILBAG this month features Mr. Thomas very prominently. He has two letters, one in each volume, in relation to the recent controversy and Bill Lofts mentions him in a letter headed "Fair play".

Did the cover of the April C.D. portraying a schoolmaster wearing a label S.B.L. whacking a schoolboy with the letters C.D. on the badge of his blazer give a strictly accurate interpretation of the author's criticism? Should "Blakiana" have been substituted for the letters C.D.? In my opinion, Bob Whiter's illustration was quite correct. For, surely, if you condemn the archaeological, you condemn it completely and absolutely? Is a pink-covered UNION JACK any less antique than a Red MAGNET? Discussions on those rare issues, substitute authors and the merits of J.N. Pentelow when wearing the mantle of "Frank Richards" are no less archaeological in outlook than anything that has appeared in BLAKIANA, and although, as Bill Lofts remarks, the author did not include HAMILTONIA in his scathing comments, the bullets which struck BLAKIANA ricocheted on to it, and, to a lesser extent on the N.L. feature as well.

COMMENT:

What directs editorial policy? Should an editor publish what he

thinks his readers should digest, or what they want to consume? Would an editor, faced with an over-whelming majority wanting the old Blake, be likely to turn his back on them and substitute the new for the benefit of the minority? To put it another way. Would the editor of the S.B.L. faced with the same situation in reverse, be likely to bow to the wishes of the diehards and revert to the old Blake again? The headache which was S.B.L.'s is now BLAKIANA'S.

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SEXTON BLAKE HITS THE HEADLINES

The newspapers gave big headlines to the part which a famous Sexton Blake author played in the capture of a convict who escaped from Dartmoor. Rex Hardinge, a prime favourite among the most outstanding Blake writers, has a writing hideaway at Bachelor's Hall, Princetown, about a mile from the prison. He was making tea in the kitchen when he spotted the clue: his breakfast ingredients had vanished.

"I know Sexton Blake would have done all sorts of marvellous things," said Mr. Hardinge, "but I just put on my coat and ran to the authorities. That's the best thing for anybody to do."

The police found the convict - an Italian - in a copse near the Sexton Blake author's cottage.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

ROBERT W. STORY is now permanently residing at 70, Berwick Avenue, TORONTO, 7, Ontario, CANADA.

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ADVERTISE IN THE DIGEST

Scale of Charges: Small advertisements are inserted in this magazine at 1d. per word. Serial numbers count as ONE word.

Advertisements in the Annual cost 2d. per word, serial numbers counting as one word.

Special quotations given for full-page displays.

* * * * *

HAMILTONIANA

GEMS OF HAMILTONIANA

This Wonderful New Book



NOW ON SALE!

"A gentleman's a gentleman in any walk of life," said Bunter. "I'm no snob, I hope. Fellows of really good families never are. A man named Carlyle said once that there was an endless dignity in labour."

"Lookers-on see most of the game" remarked Skinner. "He never did any."

* * *

Prout, majestic as he was, had more lateral than vertical development. He was tall sideways.

* * *

Coker was big, and he was burly, and he was beefy. Coker could have handled two Goslings easily, one with each hand. But Coker had a proper respect for age - and he was not going to hit Gosling, unless Gosling insisted upon it.

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(More to come)

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(This month, temporarily, Eric Fayne by-passes controversy and glances back to the beginning of the Hamilton story. As usual, he will welcome your views on the topic he discusses.)

No. 39. BACK TO THE BEGINNING

Edwardian volumes of **PLUCK** make entrancing browsing ground, and **PLUCK**, comprising 36 pages (Magnet size) for 1d was wonderful value for money. The bill of fare consisted of two long complete stories (usually a school story and another of adventure or detective work)

plus a serial and an Editor's page. The most prolific artist in its pages in 1906 seems to have been Shields, whose work at that time was promising if not outstanding, but there is ample evidence of Clark, Dodshon, Cummings and Macdonald. Print was fairly small.

One wonders what type of readers were entranced with PLUCK. Schoolboys in their early teens, probably. Education of the masses is supposed to have been bad in those days, but evidently large numbers were taught to read. Plenty of teenagers today seem incapable of reading. So much for the education of the Sixties.

The earliest school story by Charles Hamilton I can find is "Pledged to Silence", which appeared in the Spring of 1906. Thereafter his school tales featured fairly regularly in PLUCK, until the St. Jim's series began towards the end of the year.

A striking feature of the early Hamilton school yarns is that they related the adventures of seniors - the fifth and sixth forms. Even the St. Jim's stories in PLUCK told of the feud between Kildare and Monteith of the Sixth, and dwelt on rivalry between masters. It was not until the GEM started that Charles Hamilton concentrated on the adventures of junior schoolboys.

"Pledged to Silence" was no great shakes of a story, though even as far back as 1906, there was that magic readable quality which has been the main factor of Charles Hamilton's writing down the years. The notable point about the yarn is the amount of ground it covers in a dozen chapters.

The uncle of Jim Romyne has kidnapped Kit Clavering, a South African lad who was on his way to Northmoor School. Jim is sent to Northmoor under the name of Kit Clavering. On the last stage of his journey, he rescues Railton, Captain of the School, from drowning, taking that familiar dive from the bridge to save the exhausted Captain. At the school, he is placed in the Fifth Form, shares a Study with Owen Redfern, and makes an enemy of Wharton, the cad of the Fifth. There is a big cricket match against St. Olaf's and the new boy proves himself to be a "Ranji, a C.B. Fry and a W.G. all rolled into one." Finally, he admits his uncle to rob the school, Wharton brings about his exposure and at the finish the father of Railton becomes his guardian, and sends Jim to another school. We are told that Jim never saw his uncle again.

A pleasant, readable story, with inevitable loose ends. One is struck by the plot wastage, a factor which was to be evident for a number of years in the Gem and the Magnet. Twelve years later the plot of "Pledged to Silence" would have covered a series of at least six stories.

This tale was illustrated by Macdonald - a $\frac{3}{4}$ page rustic scene of the type in which Mac excelled, showing the boy gazing down into the water from the bridge.

A fortnight later came another Hamilton story, "Sent to Coventry" set at Rookwood College. Rupert Glyn is the school captain, George Wingate of the sixth is the hero, the cause of the trouble is Tommy Trimble.

So, in 1906, we find George Wingate in the sixth at Rockwood College, in 1907 we find George Wingate captain of Clavering, in 1908 a George Wingate is captain of Greyfriars. We have commented before on this inexplicable repetition of names.

A few weeks later our author offered a story of Melthorpe School, "The Master of the Fifth," and, later still, "The Lyndale First" which had a sub-title "From Fifth Form to Football League."

In mid-November came "Jack Blake of St. Jim's" - perhaps, for Hamiltonians, the most famous story ever written, though few have read it. The editor announced that St. Jim's would appear at fortnightly intervals.

The following is a complete list of the St. Jim's stories which appeared in PLUCK:

1. Jack Blake of St. Jim's;
2. Our Captain;
3. The Rivals;
4. The Swell of St. Jim's;
5. Staunch Chums of St. Jim's;
6. The Milverton Match;
7. The Mystery of the Housemaster;
8. Mutiny at St. Jim's;
9. Missing;
10. The Misadventures of Marmaduke;
11. The Reformation of Marmaduke;
12. The Shadow of a Secret.

Towards the end, the St. Jim's stories were appearing in PLUCK at intervals of three weeks - and, beside PLUCK on the bookstalls, lay a paper called the GEM. Some time before the series finished in PLUCK, Tom Merry was going strong at Clavering.

Now, in PLUCK, Charles Hamilton had a serial running, "The Rivals of St. Kit's" and Jack North's Wycliffe series replaced St. Jim's. Maybe some readers wondered what had happened to St. Jim's. At the end of June, 1907, the Editor printed a Special Note: "The famous Jack Blake, Augustus and Figgins & Co. are now appearing in the GEM, price one halfpenny, every Thursday." Jack Blake had been eclipsed - and St. Jim's had said farewell to Pluck.

Many of the PLUCK St. Jim's stories were re-written and published several years later in the Gem. The two stories introducing Marmaduke Smythe were re-printed in the early Penny Popular. Marmaduke featured in one or two new Gem stories, but he soon dropped into oblivion.

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOESNo. 37. CLICHE

BASIL ADAM. I sincerely believe we have lost a great deal with the disappearance of the story with a good moral tone. Granted, some of the stories at the beginning of the century may have been smug and sentimental, but at least they did not make a cult of brutality as many present day authors do.

We live in an age of violence, cynicism and the coarsest materialism, and this is reflected in the literature that floods out book-stalls today. The moral outlook of the nation cannot be very bright when one hears on so many lips the cliché "I couldn't care less", and smooth-faced politicians mouthing "We have never had it so good." Unless we return to spiritual values, "Play the Game" will never again be the theme in our books, and the nation will be that much poorer.

I took the high ideals of the Magnet for granted; I think the Gem ideals were made rather more obvious, that is all.

E. V. HUGHES. May I say how much I enjoyed the article "Cliche", adding that I agree with every word of it.

DON WEBSTER. Cliche is a word I abhor. You remark "the nation never had things so good," but I maintain the youth to today "never had things so bad" in the weekly literature line. No Gem or Magnet to teach them a moral code. Recently I visited the playing fields of my youth - hardly a cricket team playing there, and only a few football teams. The open air seems a thing of the past; T.V. has taken over. Life has too much to offer the youth of today. "Play the Game" - it is never educated how to do this. We could do with a few more Mr. Quelch's in our schools today - and more home discipline.

W. THURBON. I hope it's not just middle-aged reaction that causes me to find myself in very close agreement with your article "Cliche". Recently I saw the film "I'm All Right, Jack" and found it a very disturbing commentary on modern life. In this week's John-O-London's Weekly the leader writer rather joins us in deploring the modern lack of interest in reading.

BEN WHITER. It is disturbing to see the decline of Honour Bright in this "never had things so good" age. To the older generations the successful West End show "Fings Ain't Wot They Used To Be" sums up the decline of all the ethics mentioned in Rudyard Kipling's immortal poem "If"!

GEOFFREY WILDE. I heartily agree with your remarks on contemporary cliché and the loss modern youth has suffered in the passing of the old tags. I believe, though, that the whole code of "playing the game" suffered its death-blow long before the boys' papers ceased publication, or indeed before many had reached their zenith. The First World War killed it, as it killed so much in our civilisation, partly because its inhuman slaughter made mockery of all ideals and partly because it took such dreadful toll of the Public School product who tried to live up to them. "True Blue" and "Honour Bright" were clichés frequently heard in *Gems and Magnets* of the inter-war years, but they already represented a mode of conduct observed only by the few.

Now with another war to look back on and a Welfare State that emphasises purely material prosperity, we have dropped the pretence. We "couldn't care less."

HARRY BROSTER. I think you have hit the nail on the head again. You echo my own sentiments. So far as the youth of the world is concerned, the word "honour" hardly seems to exist. The literature which is available for them to buy hardly helps. The trouble is that money is too easily obtained, and life is too easy for modern youth. The days you mention - the golden days of the boys' papers - were a time when England's influence was felt all over the world, and, though a lot of people are socially better off today, I doubt if the world in general was any the worse off in those days.

GEORGE SELLARS. "Play up, Play up and Play the Game" touched a chord in my memory. I must have learned that poem by Sir Henry Newbolt when I was at school, and forgotten all but the tag. Those words, and "Honour Bright" have a special meaning for me, and if people and nations lived up to them, everything would be calmer and brighter. Charles Hamilton's immortal characters helped me, and thousands like me, to "Play the Game" through the years.

Continued from page 168

"Sunday at Home" - and infinitely more interesting! The interdiction did not, of course, achieve its object, and Tom Merry, Billy Bunter and the rest of that rascally crew became our dearer friends because we could only meet them in secret. Strange - and good - to think that the genius who conjured that magic world of Greyfriars into being so long ago, Mr. Frank Richards, is still happily with us,

Next week - Remember the B.O.P.?

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

MIDLAND

MEETING HELD APRIL 25th, 1960.

The illness of John Tomlinson prevented the attendance of the two Burton members and apologies were also to hand from Win Partridge, Mrs. Brown, Ted Davey and Ray Bennett. Naturally a rather small circle of enthusiasts met in "No. 5" Study for the last time before moving to our new club room in Edmund Street. Nevertheless, we hope these members along with others, will turn up for next meeting, May 30th, which is the A.G.M. Get well, John T.

We had a mixture of items for this agenda, Hamiltons, Blakiana and a talk by Norman Gregory on the life of G. A. Henty. The Hamilton item was a quiz of twelve Greyfriars questions by Jack Corbett, won by Tom Porter with eleven correct. The library raffle was won by Madge Corbett who was delighted to receive a Schoolgirls Annual with Morcove stories. Norman gave us a very interesting description of the life and work of George Alfred Henty. Born near Cambridge in 1832, educated at Winchester and Cambridge, his experience as a war correspondent in the Crimea war was of great value to him when writing his numerous war stories. These were mainly published by Blackie and Son, though the modern (abridged) versions are by Cassells and others. Henty was one time editor of the original Union Jack and had stories printed in both "Chums" and the "B.O.P.". He died in 1892 and his biography was written by his very close friend, another famous author of boys stories - George Manville Fenn. An interesting and very much appreciated talk by the Treasurer.

Tom Porter then started a discussion - do we get too much Sexton Blake nowadays? There were various responses to this and special mention was made that in contrast to Hamilton and Brooks, there were hundreds of writers of Sexton Blake yarns and in consequence the yarns were more varied and certainly were not "repeated" time and time again. Following this there was a Magnet reading by George Chatham.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE

SUNDAY, 8th MAY, 1960

It was good to see all the regular faces at this meeting. A special welcome was given to Pat Laffey by the Chairman. Mr. Laffey, one of our oldest and most esteemed members, has not been able to attend recent meetings through ill-health. Pat, in a few well-chosen words, thanked those members who had visited him and kept him supplied with Old Boys' Books. A short discussion on the Greyfriars Cup Competition followed and it was decided that four or five members should prepare three stories, so they can be discussed at a future date.

A very fine team quiz was then given by Frank Case, in which we had to locate thirty streets bearing the names of characters from the Nelson Lee, Magnet and Gem. This was won by Bill Windsor's team, who beat Don Webster's team by seventeen points to fourteen.

Another Old Boys' Book Quiz was presented by Don Webster. Here we had to tie up six series of popular phrases with boy's names, i.e. you can't see the wood for trees. Answer "Forrest" or as an alternative "Fullwood". This was won by George Riley with nine points followed by Bill Windsor with eight points.

Tea and library business followed and the last part of the evening was devoted

to a quiz by Frank Unwin. Here we had to tackle twenty five questions, dealing mainly with the Hamilton schools. This was won again by George Riley with twenty one correct. Bill Windsor followed with twenty correct. Altogether a very fine meeting with all the regular members present.

Next meeting - except for the writer who will be on holiday - Whit Sunday, June 5th 6.30 p.m. sharp.

NORMAN PRAGNELL - Secretary.

NORTHERN

14th MAY at 239, HYDE PARK ROAD.

Seventeen members present with regular Jack Wood absent on his Annual visit to Wembley. We were pleased to welcome Cliff Beardsell back to the fold after a long absence.

Geoff Wilde thanked Bill Williamson for his work as Chairman over the past year and said how very pleased he was to see the Greyfriars Cup on the table on his first meeting as Chairman.

The minutes, Treasurer's and Librarian's reports were dealt with together with a most interesting amount of correspondence. The Greyfriars Cup Contest for 1960 was then discussed and our budding authors promised to get down to work again.

The highlight of this evening was the beginning of the reading of "The Boy Without a Name". As you all know - a Highcliffe yarn and one of Charles Hamilton's best. Our reader for this month was Geoff Wilde and he really made the characters live. Next month Breeze Bentley is to carry on the good work.

After refreshments Frank Hancock gave us what he said was a nice easy quiz! Our usual quiz winner Bill Williamson was first again, followed closely by Gerry Allison and Breeze Bentley. For winning, Bill is to provide us with the next quiz.

R. HODGSON - Hon. Secretary

AUSTRALIA

Winter put in a very sudden appearance on Friday, May 6th, but Club members found the meeting at Cahill's Restaurant warm and friendly as always.

Main topic of conversation whilst dinner was being served was the first edition of the club magazine. Thanks to the untiring efforts of Syd Smyth, our Chairman, No. 1 of the "Golden Hours Magazine" has been produced, and members were loud in their praise of the sterling work done by all concerned in the production. A wide field of interests is covered, and it is hoped that the high standard of articles will be maintained in future issues. Any folk who would like to have a copy for their collection may obtain same by contacting Mr. Smyth direct at 1, Brandon Street, Clovelly. The cost is 4/0 (English) per copy (post free).

When a letter from Ben Whiter was passed round, members expressed their appreciation of his interest on their behalf in connection with the list of Magnet titles, and are now looking forward to the early arrival of this valuable addition to their collection.

Naturally, the Blake enthusiasts were anxious for the latest news on the Martin Thomas controversy. As yet, we have not had the opportunity to read Len's reply published in the current S.B.L.'s, but we take this opportunity of confirming our support of Josie Packman and her splendid work in Blakiana.

As always, the members spent a pleasant time browsing through "The Foghorn". Our thanks to Frank Unwin for keeping us up to date with all the news in such an interesting way.

For our Hamilton enthusiasts there was a newsworthy letter from Ron Hodgson with interesting details of the Greyfriars Cup. Thanks for the excellent description, Ron. Our

chaps have a very clear picture of this famous trophy now - and our congratulations to you personally for your article in the "Golden Hours Magazine" which we feel will be greatly enjoyed.

"Wanted" lists were then passed round, and some brisk bargains were struck - friendly relationships were re-established before the meeting broke up at 8.30 with the members looking forward to the next get-together scheduled for June 10th. Till then, cheerio to all our friends in England from the members "Down Under."

B. PATE - Secretary.

LONDON

There was no London meeting in May. The next meeting will be held at 35, Woodhouse Road, Leytonstone. (Host: R. Godsave). Date - Sunday, June 19th. The July meeting will be held at Excelesior House, Surbiton on July 17th.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

Yours Sincerely

(INTERESTING ITEMS FROM THE EDITOR'S LETTER-BAG)

ERIC LAWRENCE (Sunbury on Thames) I notice you are printing some of the entries for the Cup Contest. Whilst not wishing in any way to detract from the entry, in the March Digest, I feel that an error has been overlooked. You mention, in your note at the end, that memories of Magnet series are revived, but one statement in the story is incorrect, viz: "Prout's study had its woodwork entirely resurfaced after being painted by the secret society."

In fact, Prout was using Dr. Locke's study during his temporary reign as Head, and it was this study which was painted in the Secret Society series.

(Vernon-Smith was never very hot on speaking the truth. Let's hope that Quelch discovered the deception and gave him six. - ED.)

ALEX PARSONS (Tranmere) I think Charles Hamilton did more towards setting a standard of ethics than he will ever realise. O.E.B. enthusiasts are the most civilised people I have ever met.

G. R. SAMWAYS. I am sorry that Mr. F. Kirby has the impression that I was belittling Charles Hamilton - this was far from my intention. I yield to nobody in my admiration for his ability and genius. I merely mentioned a number of school stories that had given me pleasure. "The Hill", Vachell's story of Harrow, is certainly sentimental, but surely that is no defect in a story. As for "Jeremy at Crale" and "David Blaize", both are delightful yarns, bubbling with humour (how can anyone possibly call them humourless?) and written with an intimate knowledge of public school life. I would willingly add to my list of favourites "The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's", which Mr. Kirby justly praises.

I think these comparisons between different authors are invidious. We owe a debt to all of them for contributing to the general sum of happiness. What does it matter whether Warren Bell is superior to Gunby Hadsth, or Charles Hamilton is better than both? Personally, I love them all.

JAMES W. COOK (Wembley) What I think is missing these days from all the Blake yarns is the affection between Blake and Tinker. This father and son attachment was a main thrill in the old days, but like everything else, "fings ain't wot they used to be!"

W. J. A. HUBBARD (Kenya) Would it be possible, in connection with the next Annual, to reintroduce the practice of inviting readers to vote for their favourite articles? The system is invaluable to writers in assessing their work.

I was interested to read of London's move to counter the recent tendency of the Clubs to get away from Old Boys' Books and concentrate on the popular classics. Papers like B.O.P., The Captain and the Scout are very rarely the subject of discussion or lectures at the Clubs, and I think it a pity that such fine publications, which have played a part in moulding the characters of very many boys, are so badly neglected. It is not for the lack of the papers, either, for more than one collector has a fine collection of these books.

(It is unlikely that we shall revive the system of voting for preferred articles. Readers' letters, however, expressing their opinions on articles, are most warmly welcomed at this office. ED.)

JOHN TARRY (Ilford) Frank Richards has done more for the Youth of this country than all the youth clubs and organisations put together. It is high time that his sterling work down the years should be recognised.

I remember once being asked in Shanghai by a Hong Kong man whether there was a school-boy existing at Greyfriars' school by the name of Wun Lung. If so, had I ever met him? My answer was that I met him every week in the Magnet.

JOHN STOKES (Dublin) The cover and contents of the May Digest are absolutely SUPER!

BEN WHITER (Barnham Green) Coker's limerick in the latest Bunter book does not contain one spelling mistake. Who, at long last, has taught Coker to spell?

GEORGE BURGESS (Salisbury) I was delighted to read about Fullwood in the Nelson Lee Column, and I look forward to Mr. Cook's next St. Frank's news. I wish we could have in the Digest every month pen sketches of all the old favourites - Harry Wharton, Tom Merry, etc., and of course, the great man himself, Sexton Blake. What about a picture of Blake, Tinker, Pedro and Mrs. Bardell in this year's Annual?

STANLEY SMITH (York) With reference to the article called "The Rover's Choice". The magazine, "Rovering" lasted just over a year. There were 54 issues in the first series which ran from March 1924 till March 1925, and the second series of 6 issues finished May 9th, 1925. The last issue of all has a pink paper insert telling that this was the last issue "owing to lack of support."

In reply to Gerry Allison, "Good-bye, my Bluebell" was a popular Boer War song - the "Tipperary" of that campaign.

(Several readers have also sent us the above information. Thank you all. ED.)

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STANLEY SMITH - Change of address:- "Chantry Grove", Hadleigh Road, Ipswich, Suffolk. Telephone - Ipswich 51873

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