

The **COLLECTORS'** 1/6
Vol. 14 No. 166
OCTOBER
1960
DIGEST



“Mr. Collector—
man of many
Occupations!”

Bob
WHITE

BILL MARTIN

WORLD FAMOUS FOR OLD BOYS BOOKS

93 HILLSIDE : LONDON, N.W. 10.

Phone: ELGar 3230

Cables: SUPERB USED, LONDON.

CASH WITH ORDER

POSTAGES EXTRA

All books offered are always Pre 1940

23 Red Magnets. Bound Volume.
Year 1915. £20

119 Magnets, complete run 1425/
1543. £18

16 Red Magnets. Year 1912. £12

52 Magnets. 2 Bound volumes.
Year 1933. £25

49 Magnets. Year 1932. £22

21 Gems. Year 1911. £12

52 Magnets. 2 bound volumes.
Year 1933. £25

26 Gems. Year 1927. £4 10 0

44 Red Magnets. Year 1914. £40

26 Gems. Bound volume 673/698
£7 0 0

47 Magnets. Year 1917. £27

15 Gems. Year 1917. £4 10 0

40 Gems 1929 - 1934. £4

Bumper Bundle contains Magnets,
Gems, Aldines, Boys Friend,
Marvels. 60 copies. 90/-

Bumper Bundle contains Nelson
Lees, Prairies Libs., Populars,
Magnets, Gems, S.O.Ls. 40
copies. 62/6.

Nelson Lee Barring Out series.
Complete set. Hunter the Hun.
10 copies. 20/-

Bound volume Boxing and Wrestling
1952 - 1953. 40/-

12 Film Magazines, previous 1930
25/-

The Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED IN 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Volume 14. Number 166.

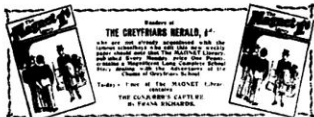
Price 1s. 6d.

OCTOBER, 1960

Editor:
ERIC FAYNE
Excelsior House,
Grove Road,
Surbiton, Surrey.

THE GREYFRIARS HERALD - A - Every Monday.

20 11 13



EDITORIAL



ERIC FAYNE
Editor



FRANK RICHARDS
Sports Editor



HARRY WHARSTON
Letter Editor



HERBERT LECKENBY
Fighting Editor



MARK LINLEY
Sub-editor

OUR STAFF.

WE HAVE ARRIVED

THE Monday we speak our little English and feel under the shadow of the sun and the shadow of the land will end in a better day for us in the future. In the weeks of the past, we have seen the Day we have spent in the Day, and now the Day has come.

It is in the past we have long considered in certain quarters on the streets of the West-south-west, but for of us ever dreamed that our work would be carried on to thousands and thousands of our fellow-citizens throughout the Empire.

OUR STAFF.

Editor Harry Wharston.
Sub-Editor Mark Linley.
Sports Editor Frank Richards.
Sports Editor Frank Richards.
Fighting Editor Robert Cherry.

The acquisition of a Fighting Editor may seem somewhat peculiar, but I may say, in explanation, that certain well-known persons are a broadsheet with the Greyfriars wish to want the proprietorship of this paper from my hands. I therefore appointed Bob Cherry with the task of doing and better instructions to show me-ments whenever they dare to show their loving face in the Editorial Office.

A CALL TO ARMS!

The last few pages of the Digest will give you a message of congratulation to our work for our long experience. It will be more that the old time will be more to our brains and work in order to get a better position for the new year. We will take our steps with the paper. A very little more, we would, but I think I do not want to say more to you that it is not given. The fact is we want the "Fighting Herald" to be the best, largest and most useful Fighting Journal in the world. We shall need readers, and they must be the best. Let the number be the foundation of a great and powerful journal, and they will see that you can think of Mr. Wharston at the Postway House, Postway Street, London, E.C. and if there is any more on them they will be published in the Digest. Let us, in spite of the fact that we are without, put our shoulders to the wheel and make this paper popularly read, famous and good and many readers so that the generation of the future, on peering back at these memories, may stand to be proud, may say of us with perfect sincerity.

If they were given in this date, "Yours, in true comradeship,"

HARRY WHARSTON.

HEAD ON ALPHABETICAL FOOTINGS

Normally, you expect to find our own, brand new, 1960 Editorial on this page. But variety is the spice of life, and this month, for a change, we bring you an Editorial from nearly 45 years ago. It comes from the Greyfriars Herald No. 1, published in November, 1915. That journal, costing a mere 3d. per week, had the real school magazine flavour, and it may well be the most unusual paper ever published.

With the aid of a magnifying glass, you may even be able to read some of the print, but, in any case, we hope that the sight of the page will provide a happy moment for you.

In case you are interested a further peep at that old Greyfriars Herald will be given you in the 1960 C.D. Annual.

* * * * *

From the Editor's Chair

"I'm not so young now as I was —
 My high noontide has gone.
 It seems ridiculous, and yet
 Old age comes creeping on.
 But what a challenge! I must try
 More folks to help and bless.
 I'll have to cram more kindnesses
 Into each day, I guess."

I came on those verses a few weeks ago, and, somehow, they reminded me very much of Herbert Leckenby. They seem to me to convey the very thoughts which he might have had in his last two years or so of life.

It is now OCTOBER - and it is a year since our old friend was taken from us with such bewildering suddenness, The soothing hand of time has eased the sense of loss, as Blessed Time always will. But, in this month of October, as the days shorten and the mists come down, we, who knew him so well, realise that his passing left a gap in our small world which can never be filled.

OUR MAGAZINE. Looking back over the past twelve months, we feel with some pride that COLLECTORS' DIGEST has never slid back. It would have been a poor memorial to our old friend if we had allowed it to do so. The C.D. was his baby, his strapping offspring. It is a joy to be able to guide the development of this bonny fourteen year old, and assure that it grows into healthy manhood.

A new editor, naturally, had some new ideas, and we believe that the introduction of these has pleased you all. But, basically, the C.D. remains the same. All the best features of Herbert's time, with their tried and sterling worth, have been retained. We like to feel that Herbert knows what we are doing with his offspring - and is proud and delighted.

A day or two ago, Richard McCarthy of far-off Queensland, wrote me as follows:-

"You are doing a wonderful job with the C.D., and poor Herbert would be proud of the way you are carrying on his work. The picture of Herbert in the Who's Who, and the short piece he wrote about himself set it off nicely, and it gives it a special value for all of us

who loved him."

Letters like that really "make my day."

THE FUTURE. As most of our readers appreciate, running the C.D. is a full-time job. There are a hundred-and-one incidental expenses, apart from the actual production costs of the magazine each month.

In Herbert's time, the C.D. lost money, so that he had to subsidise it from his own pocket. In the past year, the subsidising has had to be on a far larger scale than it was in Herbert's time. Actually, so far as this office is concerned, the matter of subsidising has been a minor detail. It has not bothered us unduly. We have regarded it as our contribution to a wonderful hobby.

It is a pleasure to be able to say that, with every passing month, our circulation has crept up a little. It has never dropped. The unflinching upward trend is most gratifying, but it would need a very large influx of new readers before the magazine could ever pay for itself.

It is for this reason that we announce, with extreme reluctance, that from January, the price of Collectors' Digest will be increased to 2/- per month. With the income of the magazine brought closer to outgoings, it will be possible to introduce improvements and novelties, to maintain the standard which we have set ourselves in the year gone by. From the hundreds of letters which pour in every month, we feel certain that no reader will regard this increase in price as an unjust imposition. We have no intention of making any profit; we just wish to give you the very best service possible.

Unexpired subscriptions will be adjusted from January, so that readers have no need to send in anything further until their expiry slips are received with the appropriate issues.

In conclusion, should any of our readers who may be pensioners, or on limited incomes, find the increase a hardship, if they will write to me and explain circumstances, arrangements will be made for them to continue to receive the Digest at the old price.

THE EDITOR.

FOR SALE: Billy Bunter Books, Bunter's Owns, Goldhawk Tom Merry books, Tom Merry Annuals. D. BROOKS, 40 WELLHOUSE ROAD, BECKENHAM, KENT.

The Telephone Number of TOM and BERYL PORTER IS CRADLEY HEATH 69630.

DON'T BE TOO LATE! When the time comes, there won't be many copies available to fill the requirements of casual readers.

Have you yet ordered your

1960 C.D. ANNUAL

This book - probably the most unusual publication in the world - will be packed with good things from COVER to COVER.

Here are just some of the items which will entertain and fascinate you this coming December:-

"THEY CAME FROM OVER THE SEA" Harry Broster's delightful article on the "Colonials" of the Hamilton Schools.

"SOME INTIMATE GLANCES INTO THE NELSON LEE" Ernie Carter of Australia contributes something which all Lee fans will revel in.

"THE PEOPLE WHO MADE 'The Champion'" From the pen of F. Addington Symonds, this magnificent article will charm you from the first word to the last.

"THE MAN FROM BAKER STREET" A section of the Annual, conducted by Leonard Packman and the stars of the Sexton Blake Circle, devoted to the world's greatest detective, and alone worth the cost of the entire Annual. Don't miss it.

"THE GREATEST REBELLION OF THEM ALL" Les Rowley, in topping style, turns the spotlight on the Brander Rebellion.

"NO END IN SIGHT" Eric Fayne in whimsical mood.

"THE TAGS OF HAMILTONIANA" One of the greatest and most remarkable achievements that has ever come to the Annual. Tom Hopperton, with editorial comments by Gerry Allison, has collected hundreds of the famous classical tags, with their sources, as used in the greatest school stories in the world.

"PIPPIANA-COLLOP THE SECOND" A superb article on Young Folks Tales and Tales for Little People, written by Otto Maurer. A feast of fine reading.

"THE GREYFRIARS RE-PRINTS IN THE POPULAR" A mammoth achievement from that master of mammoth achievements - Bill Lofts. A joy for the

statistically-minded, and of infinite value for all.

"AS I RECALL —" A wicked, witty, whimsical summing-up of the old Comic Papers. By Arthur Moyses.

"MIGHTY MEN OF THE SIXTH" Don Webster views, in entertaining style, the much neglected Senior forms.

"THE PHANTOM OF TREGELLIS CASTLE" Reuben Godsave writes on the most astonishing mystery with which Nelson Lee was ever concerned.

"THE REMOVE FORM AT GREYFRIARS" Frank Hancock takes a look at the 'Forgotten Men' of the famous school. Vividly he brings some of the old characters back to life.

AND MORE! The above list does not include everything. We have not the space to list all the mighty attractions.

The 1960 COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL, which has been in preparation for many months, contains MORE ARTICLES and STORIES, MORE PICTURES, MORE JOY than we can possibly describe in the space at our disposal.

DON'T MISS THE ANNUAL, OR YOU WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOURSELF.

* * * * *

MAGNETS FOR EXCHANGE: Nos. 1198, 1223, 1228, 1229, 1231, 1232, 1233, 1234, 1236, 1237, 1239 all in good condition. And Nos. 1455 - 1480 (twenty-six numbers) bound. One or two issues slightly the worse for wear, but all stories complete and readable. I am willing to offer the above in exchange on a 'two of mine for one of yours' basis if anyone has any pre-1931 Magnets to offer. Or I would accept Greyfriars Schoolboys' Own Libraries other than those dealing with foreign holidays, Brander rebellion, Flip or Pengarth.

Enquiries to: L. ROWLEY, BRITISH CONSULATE-GENERAL, HANNOVER, GERMANY, AEGIDIENORPLATZ 1

WANTED: The Popular: 127-135, 137, 138, 141-145, 147-159, 161-163, 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, 353-361, 380, 381, 388-398, 404, 422-415, 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, 5960599; S.O.Ls - 60, 68.
DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libraries. 1st Series Nos. 11, 17, 37, 105, 109, 111, 198, 201, 219. 2nd series Nos. 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 495, 520, 667. Union Jacks Nos. 689, 691, 693, 695, 702, 703, 704, 711, 717, 721, 725, 727, 732, 736, 740, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 798, 800, 802, 803, 809, 811, 813, 814, 818, 819, 820, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1390. MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

WANTED: S.O.Ls 42, 65, 66, 162, 257, 258, 259. Your price plus postage paid. The advertiser has some S.O.Ls, Nelson Lees, Gems and Magnets for exchange only.
BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN
27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich,
London, S.E. 22.



In addition to the promised contributions by Keith Chapman and Bill Lofts, there is room this month for quite a nice quota of S.B.L. titles and authors. From now on I hope to make good headway with this valuable information, and can at least promise another lengthy batch next month.

The indefatigable Bill has been hard at work on his sleuthing and with interesting results. These will be revealed next month.

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * * * *

"SEXTON BLAKE ANNUAL, 1961"
By KEITH CHAPMAN

In recent years frequent requests have been made in the S.B.L. Mailbag columns and elsewhere for the return of the Sexton Blake Annual. So, this being the time of the year when annuals make their appearances in the newsagents' shops, I thought it perhaps a suitable moment to try to envisage what might possibly be the contents of such a book if these requests were to be granted and today's team of S.B.L. writers and artists was to employ its talents in producing a New-Look Annual.

All good annuals should have a close relationship in atmosphere, appearance and editorial policy to the periodical whose name it bears. It ought to be representative of the contents of the periodical, should feature all its popular characters and regular items, and in style of



presentation be as similar as the different format will allow.

Bearing in mind then these basic principles, this is how I imagine a New-Look Sexton Blake Annual.

To start with the cover.

On the left-hand side would be a red strip occupying the same proportion of the total cover width as does the average-size red strip on the covers of the S.B.L. In the top half of this strip would be the book's title and year of publication in yellow lettering of the same style as is used in the S.B.L. red strip, while beneath the title would be the familiar Justice symbol. Further down the strip, in the lower half and in the position occupied on the S.B.L. cover by the price, would be a list of contributing authors.

The main part of the cover, like many S.B.L. covers, would be split up into a number of smaller pictures. Some of these would be scenes from the Annual's various stories while others would be of the characters appearing in them. The central picture would be one of Sexton Blake based on that by Marcus Stone which appeared in the Portrait Gallery Series.

A "composite" cover of this type would not only be representative of many S.B.L. covers, but would also solve the problem of which of the many excellent present-day artists should be chosen for the job, for a cover entirely by Eric Parker would perhaps not please the Caroselli or Symenoni fans, and vice versa. With a "composite" cover, pictures could be by different artists and, thus, everybody would be pleased.

The greater part of the New-Look Annual would be taken up by two more novels of the S.B.L. length; one with a setting somewhere in Britain, and the other somewhere abroad. They would be by two different authors, preferably with fairly contrasting styles.

Today, the average Fleetway Publication's annual has 192 roughly quarto-size pages, each of which takes about the same number of words as a S.B.L. page set in 8-point type. Thus the two novels would account for some 120 of the 192 pages.

The remaining pages would be taken up by short stories on similar lines to James Stagg's "The Million Pound Stakes" (see S.B.L. No. 379), short true crime articles of the type which appeared in the early Magazine Sections and Crime Casebook, and perhaps a "puzzle in detection" such as the one posed by Peter Saxon in S.B.L. No. 366 under the title "Death Calls for The General." Novels, stories, articles and other features would of course be arranged in a suitable order.

One of the short stories might be a Blake in Wartime story, while another could feature Tinker on a "solo assignment" (see the short

stories "No Tears for Belinda" and "No Crime at Christmas" in S.B.L. Nos. 418 and 419 respectively). Paula Dane, Marion Lang, Miss Pringle, Splash Kirby, Mrs. Bardell, Craille, Coutts, Grimwald, Dukelow - every popular character regularly appearing in the modern S.B.L. would be featured in at least one story or novel.

A frontispiece, if the Annual was to have one, might well be provided by a "still" from the new Sexton Blake film, while another pictorial page could be made up of reproductions of Blake as he had been portrayed by the artists of the various publications in which he has appeared, at different periods in his long history. At the beginning of the book would be an editorial, and at the end, naturally an advertisement for the S.B.L.....

By now I have probably reached a point where most of you will either be shaking your heads in dismay or frowning heavily. "No, no! You've got it all wrong! A New-Look Annual wouldn't be anything like this at all," you say. Well, perhaps it wouldn't. Perhaps it would be as you imagine it. And then again, perhaps not. Who can say? For, where the New-Look Sexton Blake Annual is concerned, there is only one thing we can be sure of; and even of that perhaps not absolutely. And that is, none of us will ever be proved wrong in our theories as to what it would be like.

For it is my guess that, even if circulation ever becomes large enough to justify one, there will never be a New-Look Annual.

Annuals are regarded as publications for children, and to my knowledge, with the sole exception of the Radio Times Annual, that is what in fact they all are.

Now, one of the earliest aims of New-Look policy was to establish the S.B.L. as adult literature. Previously it was looked upon by many merely as boys' magazines, and maybe correctly so - observe that until recent years the S.B.L. always used to be classified in that authoritative work, "The Writers and Artists Year Book" as a "juvenile publication."

In July 1958, Mr. W. Howard Baker said in an editorial report:

"The modern S.B.L. is the fulfilment of what so many Blake fans had hoped for in the past - a publication shed of its former juvenile affiliations and standing unique in its class as adult, realistic fiction of low cost and high quality."

Hence my opinion that we cannot expect an annual because it would appear to be a children's book, would be displayed by newsagents with all the other annuals - children's books - and would thus, if not in

fact, certainly in general belief, be a "juvenile affiliation" not in keeping with New-Look policy.

In conclusion, and perhaps in further support of my opinion, I will leave you with this question: Why has Mr. W. Howard Baker never published an answer to those Mailbag correspondents who in one way or another have asked "when can we expect a Sexton Blake Annual?"

- - - - -

(If Mr. Baker would like to say a few words on the subject, through the medium of Blakiana, I shall be delighted to hear from him. J.P.)

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE ON STRIKE!

By W. O. G. LOFTS

Mr. Ernest L. McKeag, the creator of that popular "Magnet" feature "Come Into The Office, Boys and Girls," recently told me a most amusing story concerning Sexton Blake. With old Blake plays and films - and the new Blake film - being in the news of late, I feel it worth repeating for the amusement and interest of our readers.

Round about the 1913 period there were a number of stage productions featuring Sexton Blake, and these plays were being shown at Theatres all over England. Knowledgeable readers will remember that a former editor of the UNION JACK, Lewis Carlton, actually left his editorial position to appear in one of these companies, in which - mainly owing to his youthful looks - he played the part of Tinker.

A youngster himself in those days, Mr. McKeag remembers quite clearly one such production being performed at the Grand Theatre, Byker, Newcastle. The actor who played the part of Sexton Blake, was, it seems, of a very temperamental disposition. After a dispute with the producers and management he walked out of the show, taking Pedro, who was also in the play, with him! Being devoted to his master, this dog - as the real Pedro would have done - went where Sexton Blake went.

The management, however, did not seem at all worried in losing their leading actor, for they promptly promoted his understudy. True, they had also lost Pedro, and a bloodhound would not be easy to replace at short notice, but he had such a small part to play in the production that maybe the audience would not miss him.....

That night, as the people were beginning to crowd round the Theatre for the evening performance, the "original" Sexton Blake was to be seen, complete with the faithful Pedro at his heels, distributing leaflets to the queues of theatregoers who were reading them with great interest. The pamphlet stated, in effect, that the real Sexton Blake

would not appear that night, and neither would Pedro; the actor who was taking the part of Sexton Blake was an imposter, and that they (the public) were being swindled to pay and see a substitute detective and no Pedro!

The paying public, it seemed, were taking great notice of the wording of this leaflet, for they were streaming away from the Theatre to seek their evening entertainment elsewhere. The management, who had been watching these proceedings with much concern and alarm, were horrified to see this happen, and after a hurried conference they approached the "original" Sexton Blake. There was a long consultation, the outcome being the actor's reinstatement - just in time for the first performance.

In this present era of frequent strikes in industry, it is certainly appropriate to report the time when Sexton Blake as On Strike.

* * * * *

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

No. 196	Payment Suspended.....	J. W. Bobin
No. 197	The Yellow Face.....	W. M. Graydon
No. 198	The Idol's Eye (Gunga Dass).....	H. E. Hill
No. 199	Tirker's Lone Hand.....	A. Murray
No. 200	The Four Trails (Wicketshaw).....	W. M. Graydon
No. 201	False Scents.....	W. J. Bayfield
No. 202	Terror Island.....	R. C. Armour
No. 203	Ambergris! (Jules Vedette).....	A. Murray
No. 204	The Secret of the Red Mountain (G. Grant, Middle Julie) (Reprinted 2nd series No. 436)	W. W. Sayer
No. 205	Through Fire and Water.....	R. C. Armour
No. 206	The Case of the Deserted Wife.....	W. J. Bayfield
No. 207	The Green Turban.....	W. M. Graydon
No. 208	The Case of the Cultured Peals (Yvonne, Plummer).....	J. W. Bobin
No. 209	The Derelicts (Laban Creed, Fenlock Fawn).....	W. M. Graydon
No. 210	The Motor-Coach Mystery (Kew, Carlac).....	A. Murray
No. 211	The Red Dwarf (Yedax the Dwarf).....	F. A. Symonds
No. 212	The Power of the Unknown (Foulis Landon).....	A. Edgar
No. 213	The Studio Mystery.....	R. C. Armour
No. 214	The Feud Beyond the Law (Humble Begge).....	A. Murray
No. 215	The Case of the Twisted Trail (Elspeth Drell).....	F. A. Symonds
No. 216	Sexton Blake in Silesia.....	W. M. Graydon
No. 217	The Case of the Rajah's Son (G. Dass) (Reprinted 2nd series No. 479)	H. E. Hill
No. 218	The Case of the Bendigo Heirlooms (Kestrel).....	J. Lewis
No. 219	The Ivory Screen (Rymer).....	G. H. Teed
No. 220	The Mystery of the Missing Journalist.....	W. J. Bayfield
No. 221	The Phantom of the Pacific (G. Grant, Middle Julie) (Reprinted 2nd series No. 440)	W. W. Sayer
No. 222	The Case of the Unnamed Film (Lawless).....	A. Murray
No. 223	The Baboon's Paw.....	R. C. Armour



H
A
M
L
T
O
N
I
A
N
A

*
*
*

*
*
*



R O O K W O O D

The main talking point this month, in the Editor's Letter Bag, has been the return of Rookwood. The following letter, from Frank Hancock of Leeds, is typical of large numbers:

"Exciting news in the Digest just received - that KNOCKOUT is going to feature Rookwood stories. Being on holiday this week, I went straight to the newsagent's and was lucky enough to get a copy of the previous week's issue. There is was - "The Fighting Four", Jimmy Silver's adventures at Rookwood School. I nipped into a cafe and read it there and then over a cup of coffee.

I haven't read the original version of this particular story, but it appears to me much as it would be in the Boy's Friend all those years ago. Certain modern words and phrases appear which Owen Conquest would not have used - 'clots', 'hoodlums', 'twerps', 'right now', etc., but this, I suppose, was inevitable, and is no real detriment. The illustrations are pretty startling to those of us who are used to the work of G. W. Wakefield, but I suppose Eton jackets are outmoded nowadays, and anyway we can't have everything.

They have been wise in choosing Rookwood stories for a modern boys' paper. The shorter, more concise Rookwood yarns will be more suitable for this purpose than the longer St. Jim's and Greyfriars ones.

Needless to say, I have given my newsagent a standing order for KNOCKOUT.

It seems to be the policy of the paper to present stories anonymously. I think they might add 'by Owen Conquest'. I would add interest and prestige to the series if this were done."

(The name of Owen Conquest has now been added as the Author of the stories. - ED.)

WAS THERE A "FIRST" AT GREYFRIARS?By W. O. G. LOFTS

I wonder if any readers of the Magnet were puzzled in their boyhood, as I was, by the fact that the First Form at Greyfriars never seemed to be mentioned in the stories.

"Surely you cannot start numbering the forms with the Second," I often used to muse. I must confess that at that time I was completely unfamiliar with the types of "forms" one associates with public schools like Greyfriars. I myself attended a school very much like that adorned by Dick Trumper and Co., for my school was under the London County Council, not far from the famous Lords Cricket Ground at St. John's Wood, London. Our forms were just called classes, starting with the First, the lowest, up to the Sixth, the highest. It was as simple as that,



(Illustration by JOHN JUKES)

* * *

The question of why there was no first at Greyfriars has still intrigued me in recent years, since my interest in the Greyfriars stories has been roused by my connections with the hobby, and now that, with due modesty, I can say that my knowledge has increased ten-fold from reading many of the older stories, published long before I was born.

Hamiltonians I have questioned have been vague on the subject, divided in their opinions, so it was evident I had to get something concrete from other sources.

Magnet editorial answers to readers certainly have not helped to clear up the mystery. For instance, in Magnet 394, I read: "There are 43 boys in the First Form at Greyfriars, and these boys are known as "babes."

Yet in other Magnets, with the replies obviously written by a different sub-editor, there is a complete denial of any First Form existing at Greyfriars.

The point now arises as to whether there was ever any mention in the stories of this mysterious Form, and, until recently, I was inclined to take the side of the "anti-firsts." The only mention I knew was in a series written by a substitute writer in 1922, when Wally Bunter became a junior master in charge of the First Form.

Quite rightly, the "anti-firsts" have a strong case here, for as Charles Hamilton did not write the series, the form could not be regarded as the genuine Greyfriars set-up.

Let me quote the writer of the series, Mr. G. R. Samways -

"I think this another case where the writer has been unfairly condemned for indulging in caprices of his own without justification. The truth is, I should never have taken it upon myself to introduce a First Form unless there was a precedent for it in the previous writings of Charles Hamilton. Having read all the early Magnets, I was quite aware of this; therefore if was quite in order to place Wally Bunter in charge of the babes of the First. He was, after all, little more than a boy himself - a sort of student teacher - and to give him a higher form would have meant pushing out one of the existing masters."

Mr. Samways has made an interesting point here, for if, as he says, Mr. Hamilton, in previous stories of the famous school, had clearly stated that there was a First Form, that would be the end of the controversy so far as I was concerned. After much research in the early Magnets, I have found that Mr. Samways was correct, and I follow with quotations from stories to prove the point -

Magnet 241. (1912) Theme of story: Reggie Coker, Horace's young brother, arrives at Greyfriars, and there is some doubt to which form he is to be allocated. "I suppose you are not anticipating being put in the First Form amongst the babes, are you?" demanded Coker, with a puzzled look at his brother. (Taken from chapter 6.)

Magnet 291. (1913) Theme of story: The Remove is considered by Dr. Locke to be getting too noisy, so he installs Walker, the prefect, to keep order in the Remove passage. "In their mind's eye, the Removites saw themselves reduced to the meek orderliness of the First Form." (Taken from chapter 1.)

Both stories, were, of course, without question written by Charles Hamilton, and probably the keen researcher could find other instances of the First Form being mentioned.

Now we come to the question of why the First was so rarely mentioned, and the most likely explanation was given me recently by a well-known Fleetway Publications editor, himself a keen reader of the Magnet years ago.

He said: "I never read of the First Form at Greyfriars, and it seemed to me quite natural that such a

R E V I E WBILLY BUNTER'S OWN 1960Oxonhoath Press - 8/6

This new edition of the Bunter Annual will be a welcome addition to many Christmas stockings next December, for it is packed with stories, profusely illustrated, which will fascinate youngsters.

There are two Greyfriars tales, and a very welcome little yarn introducing the Rio Kid. A short adventure story is set in Africa, and stars a character named Lyn Strong. This Hamilton character is not very well known, but he featured in a series in the later days of the Popular.

Two short items introduce respectively the chums of Felgate and the School for Slackers. As is general with this Annual, more attention is paid to quality than to quantity, but the kiddies will undoubtedly be delighted with it at Christmas time.

A puzzle picture is included unintentionally. The story HARD LINES tells of Skinner making surreptitious use of Mr. Quelch's phone, but the title picture shows a young man, wearing a master's gown, using the instrument. Somebody slipped up somewhere.

*
*
*

OUR PICTURE, with Billy Bunter blowing his own trumpet to remind us all to purchase his latest Annual, is especially drawn for this issue of Collectors' Digest by Mr. C. H. Chapman, world-famous for his Greyfriars illustrations.

*
*
*

— BETTER THAN EVER —

BILLY BUNTER'S OWN

FOR BOYS —
— & GIRLS —
BILLY BUNTER

SOUND VALUE for $\frac{8}{16}$

**BLOWS HIS
TRUMPET
TO
ANNOUNCE
HIS
"OWN ANNUAL"**

FROM ALL BOOKSELLERS

Continued from page 303

form did not exist. My old school was like Greyfriars in many ways, and the forms were similar. Starting with the Second Form, we had a Third, three forms in the Fourth, two in the Fifth, and one in the Sixth. Boys did not join the school until aged 14-15, which is the reason why so many junior forms were necessary. It was rare for a boy to start at the school at the age of 9 or 10. At that age they mostly had private tutors, and in the event of their joining the school at that age, their numbers would not warrant the existence of a First Form."

To be quite fair to Mr. Hamilton, who may now be alleged by some readers to have created a form and then dropped it, neither he nor the editors can have dreamed that the school and characters would be widely remembered 50 years later, and that especially Bunter would be a household word known to millions through the coming of T.V. Inconsistencies are, after all, to be found in many early stories. Readers of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories are still puzzling as to how many wives Dr. Watson had. But on the evidence I have shown, I feel that there was a First at Greyfriars, but the reason for its obscurity is a question that only Mr. Hamilton could answer.

To wind up, while looking through Magnet 513, which contained a good many details concerning boys, studies, etc., compiled by J. N. Pentelow, I came on the following amusing comment, which was rather unusual for him, for he lacked a sense of humour in his stories:-

"A book on Iceland had a chapter headed 'Snakes'. All it contained was this: 'There are no snakes in Iceland.' There is no First Form at Greyfriars and if you want to know why the Second is not the First I will tell you - when we are told why some railway lines have first and third classes, but no second."

* * * * *

Television Critique

BILLY BUNTER OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOL

BUNTER'S BICYCLE. Here we had Bunter buying a bicycle on credit, and the cycle dealer eventually wiping off the debt upon Bunter's agreeing to be photographed riding the bicycle, thus providing stability of the machine. There was a slight by-plot concerning a poem which the Remove had to compose for Mr. Quelch.

It is difficult to decide whether the author or the producer was responsible for the scene when, apparently, Mr. Quelch was tempted to take a joy ride on Bunter's bicycle.

Highlights were some shots of Bunter riding the machine up hill

and down dale through country lanes. The close-ups of the Famous Five while Wharton was reading his poem aloud, were good.

But the only thing that reminded us of much connection with the Magnet was the mention of a Moonbeam bicycle.

TOFFEE-HUNTER BUNTER. Televised on September 3rd, this episode was first-class. Gerald Campion, good though he always is, really surpassed himself with a Bunter slightly more restrained than usual.

Bunter was suspected of having removed from Mr. Quelch's study a literary article which the Remove master had written. Skinner was the real culprit.

Just a little irritating was a tendency of some characters to speak their thoughts aloud. Even a child viewer is usually intelligent enough to be able to see what is going on without the spoken thought being necessary. Expressions can speak for themselves if the producer knows his job.

Still, "Toffee-Hunter Bunter" is excellent entertainment, and it would be a carping critic who did not award it high marks.

It is sad to recall that John Hall - "Taplow" of the early "Whacko" series - once again played the part of Snoop, and had nothing to do and nothing to say. What a waste of talent!

BUNTER WON'T GO. Televised September 17th. Within the limits of the B.B.C.'s rigid economy, this episode was good. Bunter, sentenced to expulsion for an act unwittingly performed by Coker, refuses to leave Greyfriars. A carefully thought out and contrived little play, well written, and very amusing, it was spoiled by its poverty-stricken presentation. Dr. Locke, expelling Bunter with odd little flicks of his hand, may have been a dream of delight to the kiddies. He was a nightmare to me.

In a newspaper article, I read recently that Bunter is the most popular character on Children's Television. He deserves to be, and it is one up for the gifted author. Certainly, the poor old B.B.C. can't take much of the credit.

* * * * *

GEMS OF HAMILTONIANA

"Alley!" roared the Owl of the Remove. "I keep on telling you I'm not Bunter. I've never heard of the name before. I'm a Frenchman!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Et je don't want quelque cheek from garçons comme vous!" went on Bunter. "Cela est too thick! You're tres mauvais! Just remember

you're not in the Remove passage at Greyfriars now. See? I mean -
voyez?"

Sent in by R. J. Gadsave of Leytonstone.

.

Bunter did not like paying off old debts. It seemed to him rather
reckless extravagance.

Sent in by L. Todd of London, S.E. 15.

.

"And look here, Bunter," said Bob, "it pays to keep straight."

"That doesn't appeal to me," said Bunter, cheerily. "I dare say
that's how you look at it, Cherry, but I don't care whether it pays or
not. I just go straight because it's my nature."

Sent in by K. F. Kirby of South Africa.

.

(Book souvenirs have been sent to each of the senders of the above. If
you have a favourite GEM OF HAMILTONIANA, write it on a postcard and
send to the Editor. Your extract may come from any Hamilton story of
any period, and must be short. If the editor finds it suitable for
publication, you will receive a book award.)

* * * * *

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. 43. FULL CIRCLE

In our own little private world there are two schools of thought.
One group regards modern literature for youngsters as vastly inferior to
that of pre-war years; the second group calls this view old-fashioned,
and reminds us that we must move with the times. Both groups could pre-
sent a good case. But they could all talk at once till the cows came
home, and nobody's views would be changed and nobody would be convinced.

Modernity, naturally, need not mean violence, strong language,
squalor, and semi-nudity, but, say the anti-moderns, it often seems to
do so. A marriage of the present with the best from the past would
seem to be a happy solution, if it could ever be contrived.

Which, in an obscure way, brings me to the presentation of Rookwood in KNOCKOUT. Obscure, because there is, of course, nothing at all unpleasant in KNOCKOUT. It is a very jolly little paper for youngsters.

From time to time during its successful life (and I regret the absence of serial numbers which prevents one from seeing at a glance how old it is) I have come across KNOCKOUT, and it strikes me as being more attractive now than it has ever been. The spirit of Rookwood helps, of course.

Some months ago a reproduction of the old comic LOT-o-FUN appeared on the cover of Collectors' Digest. Len Packman gave us a happy little description of the paper as it was at the time of our picture - 1913. The front page of LOT-o-FUN, Len told us, was printed in black, red, green, blue and yellow; the back page was in red and black. Surely that description of LOT-o-FUN could be applied equally accurately to KNOCKOUT. In both publications there are stories and jolly pages of comic pictures. KNOCKOUT, certainly, has some narratives told in pictures, the sort of thing that has become all too common since the war, but, even years ago, picture stories were not unknown. For the life of me I cannot see any great difference between KNOCKOUT, 1960 and LOT-o-FUN, 1913.

The Rookwood story strikes me as being well presented, and I believe it is proving popular with readers of all ages. Yet, under the title of "Rivals of Rookwood", it appeared in THE BOY'S FRIEND in February 1915. True, the slang has been modernised, but I doubt whether this makes the story one whit more attractive to modern readers. It takes more than the sprinkling of a few "clots" and "twerps" to improve a Rookwood story. In fact, to me it seems like gilding the lily with rather cheap gilt. In any case, all public schools have their own slang, without adopting the expressions of the outside world.

Large numbers of our readers are enjoying this experiment and watching it with keen interest. Rookwood is the most suitable of all the Hamilton schools for this type of presentation, and I am glad that a start has been made from the very beginning of the Rookwood saga.

Those early stories were far from being the best in the splendid history of Rookwood. Pleasant enough reading, they were run of the mill school tales which continued for a couple of years or so. It is doubtful whether, when he was writing them, Charles Hamilton ever thought that Rookwood might one day be almost as well known and as popular as St. Jim's and Greyfriars.

A new generation is enjoying the early adventures of Jimmy Silver. Starting from scratch, as it were, he will succeed or fail on the merits of the Rookwood stories. If the experiment is a success, and the

stories continue, how will a new generation receive the far superior stories of Rookwood which are waiting in abundance? It depends a good deal on how they are presented. We've seen a good beginning, at any rate.

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

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 41. ME HAVE MEN ABOUT ME THAT ARE FAT

ROGER JENKINS. I think you do poor old Tubby Muffin an injustice when you dismiss him so summarily as someone who "had his own slight individuality." It is true that his personality did not, perhaps, hit the reader in the face like that of Bunter or Trimble, but after reading a few Rookwood stories I got to feel that I knew Tubby Muffin as well as I knew Fatty Wynn, and would certainly far rather have been at school with Muffin than I would with Bunter or Trimble. He was much more attractive than Bunter, though not so well drawn. He had some bad points, it is true, but he was always cheerful, generally well-meaning, and never the thundering nuisance that his fat counterparts were. I believe I am right in saying that the last Rookwood story in the Boy's Friend featured Tubby Muffin as did the last series in that paper - and I have yet to meet anyone who did not have a soft spot for the preposterous story of his cousin's floating boarding-house (which was later copied, not so well, for Bunter in the Magnet.)

FRANK URWIN. I think you are a little hard on Baggy Trimble. He is certainly a pain in the neck compared with the immortal Billy, but, as a boy, I thoroughly enjoyed reading about him. As a man, I realise what a ghastly young bounder he was, but that realisation comes so easily now. I doubt whether, as boys, we regarded Baggy as "sly and loathesome" - he was just entertaining. Therefore, on this point alone, your suggestion that his creation was not a wise policy is wrong.

DON WEBSTER. I am in entire agreement with your remarks concerning the fat boys in the Hamilton periodicals. You seem to have covered the ground completely in this aspect.

Whilst Baggy Trimble, in my humble opinion, possessed no redeeming features, Billy Bunter has a few - occasionally he has done a good turn or ceased to think of "grub" or of himself. He is as obtuse as Trimble was malicious.

Tubby Muffin, to me, was colourless - and a similar description could be applied to Turkey Toodles of the Benbow school. Fatty Wynn seemed an amazing athlete for his bulk, but food seemed to occupy his thoughts chiefly - maybe to create some honour for younger readers.

* * * * *

THE VICTORIA PALACE SHOW

It is now known that Gerald Campion will not be playing Billy Bunter in the stage show at the Victoria Palace this Christmas. Inevitably, this news has been received with some dismay. For a number of years now, Mr. Campion has been the perfect Bunter. Somehow he achieved the impossible, for there was a time when we all felt that Bunter, of all characters, was far too much larger-than-life for successful portrayal by any actor. Yet Mr. Campion is Bunter as we have always imagined him, and he has been, perhaps, the only Greyfriars character who has been portrayed in a manner that is completely convincing to those who know Greyfriars so well.

We understand from City Stage Productions that this year the part of Bunter will be played by Keith Banks, a young but very experienced character actor. It will be an exceptionally difficult and responsible task for the new Bunter. It is up to us to give him all the support - both moral and practical - that we can.

The success of the presentation at the Vic. will depend largely on the producer. The show has one of Britain's leading producers - Ellen Pollock, the celebrated dramatic actress, who has produced a great many famous successes. We hope that she knows her Greyfriars.

In the next issue of the Digest we hope to give particulars of the party which the Club will be arranging, and we trust that it may be even larger than last year's. This year the season only lasts a fortnight, so big crowds are expected at the Vic. during that short time, and it will be necessary to book early.

The play is to be named "Billy Bunter's Swiss Roll," and this year Billy goes abroad again, this time to Switzerland. Fuller particulars will be given next month.

WANTED:

GEMS 313, 315, 316, 319, 320, 321, 322, 328, 331, 332, 333, 338, 339, 340, 356, 358, 359, 457, 459, 493, 773, 935, 773, 935, 953, 954, 956, 979, 980, 984, 985, 1116, 1126, 1129, 1133. **MAGNETS:** 45, 52, 134, 136, 138, 141, 195, 205, 238, 277, 318, 319, 325, 344, 345, 346, 347, 353, 357, 358, 386, 388, 389, 400, 411, 417, 469, 719, 752, 773, 809, 834, 849, 850, 862, 863, 865, 866, 868, 900, 921, 924, 925, 935, 936, 940, 942, 943, 944, 948, 949, 955, 958, 965, 967, 988, 996. **POPULARS:** 370, 385, 390, 396, 398, 452, 455, 461, 466, 474. Scores of Magnets, Gems, etc., for exchange - or your price paid for good material. **ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.**

WANTED: **MAGNETS** below 1220. Good condition. Good price paid for issues required. **W. D. NEILL, 258, HORNBURCH ROAD, HORNBURCH, ESSEX.**

FOR EXCHANGE: the following choice items, for the most part in nice condition - Magnet series complete, Cravanning, Bunter Runaway, Congo (1922), Smithy vs Redwing, Sahara, Bunter Bunked (1924), Nos. 640 Bunter the Bankrupt, 682 Thin Bunter, 689 Deaf Bunter, 723 Xmas 1921, 776 Xmas 1922, 811, 854, 855, 873, 879 Trouble in the Co., 880 Harry Wharton's Xmas, 881 Friends or Foes and S.O.Ls 264 and complete Courtfield Cracksman, Bunter Court and South Seas series. **WANTED:** Magnet 1194 and Gems in reasonable condition - 436, 439, 445, 469, 478, 492, 509, 549, 676, 680, 689, 695, 716, 717, 723, 731, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 743, 749, 759/764 (complete series), 765, 768/772 (complete series), 797, 805, 827, 831, 935, 1035 and S.O.Ls (258 and 260), 168, 176. **CHARLES VAN RENEN, BOX 50, UITENHAGE, SOUTH AFRICA. WRITE AIRMAIL.**

FOR DISPOSAL: "Girls Crystals" 1945-7, "Champions" 1944-55, "Modern Boys" "Wonders" B.O.P's (loose issues) "Boys Mags," **ALDINES:** Boxing, Football, Dixie Brett, Buffalo Bill Novels (1930's), "Gems" "Magnets" (1914-19) (1930-39). **Aldine Annuals:** "Buffalo Bill" "Adventure" stories etc. (1936s) "Champion Annuals" all periods. "Skipper" "Triumph Annuals" 1940. **Bound vols. "Young Britain,"** contains Nos. 1 to 126 consecutive issues. S.A.E. Details - **J. SWAN, 3 FIFTH AVENUE, PAD. W.10. Phone: Lad. 6759.**

FOR SALE: 118 different copies of "The Schoolgirl" (all with Cliff House stories) ranging between Nos. 303 - 492 (1935 - 38), and including Xmas Nos. Excellent condition. 1/- each, plus postage. Also 6 copies of "Schoolgirls' Weekly" (1938) - all at 1/- each. Seven 1938 "Girls' Crystals" - 6d. each. 1956 C.D. Annual - 10/- . Or would exchange any of the above for "Magnets." **BRIAN DOYLE, FLAT 1, 122, BAKER STREET, LONDON, W.1.**

Sexton Blake Today

THE LATEST (SEPTEMBER) NOVELS IN SEXTON
BLAKE LIBRARY ARE REVIEWED BY WALTER WEBB

DATE WITH DANGER (No. 459)

MARTIN THOMAS

In days of old Beulah de Courcy would have been called a vamp. Men of a not quite so early generation would have labelled her a gold-digger. The male animal, contributing as he did, so materially to Beulah's zest for life, it was, perhaps, only natural that she should have no qualms in hiring herself out as a hostess, or contact girl, to a British company exporting atomic power stations, who were angling for the signature of a Brazilian industrialist, in competition with an American group after the same contract. Beulah expected easy pickings; but it was Beulah who was picked up - by the police on suspicion of murder.

To her saviour and benefactor, Sexton Blake, she would have proved her gratitude in a way which would have scandalized her cousin, Paula. It is Blake's misfortune that he is attractive to most women, though just what it was about him that impressed Beulah particularly might be due to one of two things, or a combination of both. His physical stature, maybe, or his financial status.

Narration, both unforced and unhurried, is excellent, but does not camouflage entirely the fragility of the plot.

Rating Good.

SOME DIED LAUGHING! (No. 460)

REX DOLPHIN

It's all the fun - and murder! - of the fair for Tinker and Marion Lang, when, in response to an appeal by a fairground showman to investigate sabotage, which is persistently taking place at his amusement park, known as Dreamland, they arrive at the little town of Bargate as deputies for Sexton Blake.

The murder of a man on the Ghost Train sets Tinker off to a grim start, with Marion little more than a rather timid spectator, clinging to his sleeve, yet not found wanting when the occasion arrives. It's a job Tinker has to tackle practically single-handed, for Inspector Fawcett, of the local police, exhibits a decided reluctance to enforce the rigours of the law against a hoodlum named "Rocky" Flint, and his followers, who introduce their own particular brand of hooliganism amongst the pleasure-seekers. It is left to Blake, making a belated appearance, to give Flint a taste of his own medicine, but it's Tinker who winds up the case, proving yet again, in the process, what an able, if less skilful, second-in-command he is.

No "world-shaker" this, but a conscientiously and well-written novel, albeit.

Rating Very Good.

GENERAL COMMENTARY

MAILBAG: This interesting section of the S.B.L. volume is made even more so this month by virtue of a letter in its columns written by Mr. G. R. Samways, who was actively engaged on the MAGNET many years ago. Mention of that paper, and also of the GREYFRIARS HERALD, sent one's mind rotating back instantly into the mists of the past, and some of the names Mr. Samways recalled in association with Sexton Blake will certainly be recollected by older followers of the character. One will readily believe that a full-length book would be necessary to cover adequately the ups and downs of the S.B.L. during its 45 years of publication.

More praise for Arthur Maclean's story, "Mission to Mexico", published last February, this time from Pakistan. It seems to indicate that another story of George Marsden Plummer would be a popular move.

COVERS: Caroselli contributes what will quite likely be considered his best drawing to date, in Volume No. 460. A picture by a new artist, Camps, adorns No. 459, and quite well done, too. Photographs on the inside front cover of both issues add to the attractiveness of each.

D O N ' T F O R G E T
T O O R D E R Y O U R

COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL 1960

THE MOST WONDERFUL ANNUAL IN THE WORLD

* * * * *

BEGINNER COLLECTOR wants pre-1930 Union Jacks, Nuggets, Rockets, Triumphs, Boys Magazines, Realms, Friends, Heralds, Leaders, Sport and Adventures, Football Favourites. Give details, prices wanted.

JOHN KING, 7 WHITE HART LANE, LONDON, N.22.

WANTED: Sexton Blake Library 1st series 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30. Union Jacks before 1916. Detective Weeklies 1938 only containing Blake stories. Fair condition. State price.

S. G. SWAN, 51 Beatty Avenue, Victoria Park East, Western Australia.

THIS MONTH'S COVER

It is a pleasure this month to welcome back to the Digest cover our own gifted artist, Robert Whiter.

Our little world, interested in old boy's books, includes people in all walks of life, linked together by their common hobbies. Bob shows this cleverly in his striking cover picture.

* * * * *
*
* * * * *

Nelson Lee Column

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

I have the difficult task this month of trying to fit a quart into a pint pot, so obviously the less from me the better. However, many thanks to old and new contributors whose work will in due course appear.

FIVE STARRED SINGLES OF THE "NELSON LEE LIBRARY"

No. 5. "THE COMPACT OF THREE"

By C. H. CHURCHILL

On October 20th, 1917, a detective story appeared in the Nelson Lee Library entitled "The Compact of Three." It had a most unusual introduction as I think you will agree.

The story opened with Nelson Lee and Nipper at tea in the Wayfarers' Club, Piccadilly. A gentleman approached their table and, apologising for the intrusion, introduced himself as Oxenham Browne. He said that knowing Lee was always interested in queer mysteries, he might like to hear of a very odd occurrence which had happened to him.

Being encouraged by Lee to continue, he said he had received by post that afternoon a bulky parcel, and on opening it, had been startled to find that it contained a human skull with a curious mark on the forehead. As there was no indication of the sender he had locked it away and come to town to confide in a friend of his. As this friend proved to be away he had dropped into the Wayfarers for tea, spotted Lee whom he knew by sight and approached on the spur of the moment.

Lee and Nipper agreed to accompany Mr. Browne to his house at Streatham and examine the gruesome relic. This proved, as Mr. Browne had said to be a human skull minus the lower jaw and with some gold stoppings in the upper jaw highly polished. On the forehead was a large crack and Nelson Lee remarked that obviously the man had been murdered by a severe blow or had met with a fatal accident. Nipper, meanwhile, was examining the label and discovered that the parcel was actually addressed to a Mr. Brown, 31 Stonham Place and not Mr. Oxenham Browne, whose address was No. 81 in the same street.

This, of course, made Mr. Browne very embarrassed and he apologised for bringing them on a fool's errand, owing to a postman's mistake in delivering the parcel to the wrong house. Lee suggested that they take the parcel to No. 31 and apologise for opening it in error.

The party went to No. 31, and Mr. Charles Brown proved to be a very

different type to his namesake, being rather fleshy, red-faced and dressed in an ostentatious manner. He thanked them brusquely, but when Lee remarked that the parcel contained a skull, he took it out and appeared completely bewildered. However, on spotting the gold filings, he suddenly changed face, and a look of fear came in his eyes. With a tremendous effort he regained control of himself and managed to usher the three from his house with no explanation.

Nelson Lee was thoughtful about the matter, but what could they do? Brown had obviously been scared at the sight of the skull, but as no explanation had been offered the affair would have to be dropped.

Mr. Oxenham Browne entertained Lee and Nipper to dinner, so they all cast the matter from their minds during a very enjoyable evening.

Early next morning Mr. Browne called on them with the news that during the night Charles Brown had been found poisoned and was in bed unconscious. Surprised at this, Lee decided to call around and endeavour to help the police in their enquiries. After being curtly received by the inspector in charge, he interviewed the doctor who had been called in, and who told him the details. Apparently Brown had been found by his servants just before midnight, on the floor of the library. The doctor had been summoned and he found Brown unconscious. As a phial containing a deadly drug lay nearby he had called the police. He said that they considered Brown was suffering from a seizure and he was inclined to agree because the drug was so potent that if Brown had taken any he would have died almost at once. All the same, he doubted if he would recover. Lee then interviewed Jenkin, the manservant of the house, and elicited the fact that nobody had called at the house the previous evening. Examining the library he found marks at the window suggesting that someone had entered the room that way. Going into the garden he found some odd footprints and formed the conclusion that they had been made by a man either with a limp or an artificial left leg. Lee and Nipper then departed, and succeeded in finding a taxi driver who had picked up a man with a false leg the night before and had driven him to Croydon. He took them to the spot where the man had alighted, and just then, to their amazement, a man with an artificial left leg crossed the road. As he answered the taxi driver's description they followed him to a house which he entered. They went in after him and found him in his room. When challenged, he threw a heavy volume at Lee and fled. Being handicapped by his false leg, he was soon overtaken by Lee who succeeded in persuading him to return to the house.

When Haines, as he was called, had cooled down somewhat, Lee told him he knew he was in Brown's Library the previous evening and that he was responsible for Brown's present dying condition. Haines replied

by stating that Brown was a murderer and one of the blackest scoundrels alive. Lee, intrigued by this, encouraged Haines to tell all, and this was his story -

Five years earlier, he, Brown and another man named Kenmore had gone in search of a ruined Inca temple in Peru reputed to contain a fortune in gems which, if found, they had compacted to share equally. When near the target, Haines had an accident - a bad fall - with the result that his left leg was smashed. He was given shelter by local Indians who saved his life by cutting off his leg. As he would be laid up for some time, Brown and Kenmore continued on their way, promising to return. Four weeks later Brown reappeared, alone, worn out and in tatters, with the news that Kenmore had been killed in a fight with Indians. Brown had escaped but lost his bearings and roved the forest for days. In the end he had stumbled on the ruined temple but no treasure was there, and so he had returned to Haines.

Later that day, Brown offered Haines a drink, but unnoticed by Brown, a small Indian child rushed past Haines and upset the drink when he had only taken a sip. As his throat commenced to burn he realised it was poisoned. When challenged, Brown admitted it and said the treasure was now all his. Haines then became unconscious. Being weakened by losing his leg, the sip of poison took full toll and it was months before he could move.

In the meantime, Brown disappeared and Haines realised that the whole story was false and that Brown had found the treasure. When he could get about he succeeded in reaching the temple and found, to his horror, a skeleton lying in the ruins. The cracked skull proved that Kenmore had been clubbed and as his Indian friends assured him there were no hostile tribes anywhere near, he knew Brown was responsible. He buried the skeleton, minus the skull, which he took away, thinking it might provide proof; he was determined to find Brown and confront him with this grisly evidence. He knew Brown would recognise the skull because of the gold teeth fillings.

He succeeded in reaching England, getting a false leg fitted and commenced his search. Largely by luck he located Brown and sent him the skull as a frightener. He followed it up by going to the house and bursting into Brown's library through the window.

Recognising him, Brown became nearly insane with fright and throwing down a phial he was fingering, suddenly collapsed on the floor. Haines swore he never touched him, but immediately left the room by the window and returned home.

His story was so convincing that Nelson Lee believed every detail. The three decided to go to Brown's house to see what was happening. On arrival they were greeted with the news that Brown was dead. The doctor informed them, however, that he had recovered consciousness shortly before and had succeeded in making a will leaving half of his fortune to Haines and half to Kenmore's widow. Thus, before leaving this world, Brown had made the only amends possible.

The police didn't take any further action as the doctor considered Brown had actually died of heart failure after a seizure brought on by fright.

Quite an interesting little story, but what an unusual opening - a skull sent by parcel post!

* * * * *

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

MIDLAND

Meeting held August 30th, 1960.

Holidays and business commitments kept the attendance down to ten - Norman Gregory, Tom and Beryl Porter, Ted Davey, George Chatham, John Tomlinson, Mrs. Brown, Winnie Partridge, Jack Bellfield and myself. A quiz set by Beryl - twelve questions, Hamilton and St. Frank's - was won by myself with ten right. It appears that Tom Porter had such a good time on his Desert Isle that he contemplates a return visit, and he gave us his eight selections for reading in his spare time. These were: 1. Monster Library No. 2 "The Black Sheep of the Remove"; 2. B.F.L. No. 383 "After Lights Out"; 3. Gem Xmas Double No. "The Mystery of the Painted Room"; 4. S.O.L. No. 138 "The Ghost of the Priory"; 5. S.O.L. No. 284 "Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party"; 6. C.D. Annual 1959, chosen specially for "A Game with Time"; 7. Monster Library No. 5 "The Bullies of St. Frank's"; 8. A volume of Magnets Nos. 954 - 961, containing Bob Cherry, Swot and Harry Wharton and Co. in India, among other fine series.

There was a lively debate following a talk by myself when I compared Talbot Baines Read's "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's" with school stories by Charles Hamilton, particularly drawing attention to the cads of these schools and the limit of wrongdoing. While I thought that the type of rule-breaking at St. Dominic's was feasible, that as exemplified by Loder, Carne, Knox, Carthew and Co. was a trifle far-fetched, and that the villainy of Ponsonby, Angel, Racke, and others was past the limit of credibility. In any case, no inspiration to the youthful public for which they were written.

This view was not very popular, but it provided an interesting discussion. The usual reading wound up a pleasant night's programme.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

NORTHERN

10th September, 1960 at 239 Hyde Park Road.

Tonight we had the final instalment of "The Boy Without a Name". As Geoff Wilde started this story at the May meeting, it seemed ideal that he should also give us the conclusion. And right well he did it too. What we want for next year is the sequel, "Rivals and Chums."

We heard again from Herbert's son and Raymond is now an honorary member of the Northern Section.

The Greyfriars Cup Competition was discussed and next month we hope to have all the yarns read out and voted upon, for their inclusion in "The New Popular".

After the refreshments and the usual natter we had a "code of number" game on Greyfriars and St. Jim's characters by Gerry Allison. It was Gerry's turn as he won last month's quiz and not Roger as I reported. My maths must have been at fault when totalling up the points, so may I offer my apologies to all concerned. Geoff Wilde was the winner this time and the last sentence in the August report can take its correct place here, with the inclusion of "a" after "seemed."

R. HODGSON - Hon. Secretary

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held 18th September.

Most of the "regulars" returned for the meeting of the Round Table, and it was a

great pleasure to greet a newcomer in Mr. John Farrell from Wigan, who apparently knows his St. Jim's and Greyfriars. Frank Urwin was Quiz-master for the night, and his first "adjectives" quiz, describing Mr. Quelch, was won by Don Webster, whilst the second one after the interval showed that Frank Case was well up in classical standard.

During the evening, two of the entries for the Cup Competition were read, and well received. The next meeting will be on Sunday, October 16th, commencing at 6 p.m. prompt for we hope to have a photograph taken and to welcome a distinguished visitor.

N. PRAGNELL - Secretary.

LONDON

After the "hols" a good gathering assembled, on September 18th, at the Neasden residence of Bob Blythe, where once again we had the experience of inspecting the complete collection of Nelson Lees. Bobb gave us a reading from one of these, "The Doomed School-boy," one of the Walter Church series. This was very well received by all present.

There was a long discussion on the Greyfriars Cup Contest, and with the donor of the trophy, Les Rowley, present, home on a short leave from Germany, this proved very interesting. Les was in good form as he shared third place in Eric Fayne's "Reading" competition, with Bob Whiter, L. Spicer and Eric Lawrence, the joint winners being John Addison and Roger Jenkins. Once again Eric had provided prizes, to "add to the fun", and entertained in the usual happy way in the distribution of same.

"Bygone Days of Boys' Papers" by C. R. Samways, read by Len Packman, plus a short Cricket Quiz added to an extremely jolly programme. October 16th at Wood Green, host Bob Whiter, is the date and venue of the next meeting. Kindly let the host know if attending.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

Yours Sincerely

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

JOHN STOKES (Dublin). I am very happy about the Rookwood story in Knockout. It is all new to me. The Magnet and Gem had ceased publications long before I began to take an interest in this wonderful and exciting world of ours, but I did manage to find a few very dusty old copies of both papers in the seaside village where I then lived. There were eleven copies, and the kind old lady who owned the shop let me have the lot for threepence. Later, one of my chum's dad loaned me some bound copies of the Magnet and Gem, and I became a Charles Hamilton fan for life.

STANLEY NICHOLIS (Australia). As a Talbot Raines Reed enthusiast, I was particularly pleased with Andrew Langman's article in the June issue of the Digest.

J. MERRILLS (Canada). It was a sorry day when the Magnet was so completely cut off, but hearing from you and becoming acquainted with the Digest, knowing there are other people in the world as interested in these old stories as I am, has turned back the pages of time and brought new life to this dull old world of T.V. Keep up the good work, for I am looking forward to many interesting issues of the Digest. Hoping I have not taken up too much time of your busy day.

continued..

(No. Mr. Merrills, letters from readers form the happiest part of my busy day. The more the merrier. Please write again soon. - ED.)

CLIFF SMITH (St. Annes). I would like to see more "Gems of Hamiltoniana" each month. Is it possible?

(We like to meet readers' wishes when we can, Cliff. The spirit is willing but the space is weak. Rely on us to do our best. - ED.)

FRANK CASE (Liverpool). The Digest seems to improve with every issue, and each and every word is read with great enjoyment, even down to the smallest "ad". Wish it came out weekly - but then I haven't got the task of producing it'.

LES ROWLEY (Germany). I'd like to pay tribute to the fact that the Annual articles by Roger Jenkins have saved me untold £ s. d. when I have made my purchases. I would not wish to spend a penny on the substitute writers or on a particularly dud series. In this sense old Roger's articles have been just the very thing.

RON HODGSON (Wakefield). Thanks for the tip about Rookwood in KNOCKOUT. They compare quite well with S.O.L. 119, "Jimmy Joins Up" which I borrowed from the Library. The slang is a bit jarring at times, but no doubt it is how the present day youngsters understand it. Hope the story goes down well, when we may get a continuation of Rookwood on a chance of St. Jim's and Greyfriars. One can always hope. The C.D. improves each month, with the illustrations etc., and I'm looking forward eagerly to the Annual.

JACK COOK (Berwell). Isn't the production of Bunter on T.V. amateurish? The cartoons especially are annoying—and surely there are more boys in the Remove than the six or seven we see. Crowd scenes in the quad would be welcome. Up till now there is no sign of Fish, Hazel, Redwing, Wun Lung, and the other characters who made the tales so popular. One gets tired of seeing Bunter, Famous Five, Smithy and Coker ONLY, and occasionally Lord Maulverer. So far as I'm concerned Mr. Quelch has never yet been portrayed not properly. Couldn't the B.B.C. carry things further with St. Jim's and Rookwood? A series on each school would be interesting.

LURIE SUTTON (Orpington). I think one of the reasons why Gussy was so lovable was that he could make one roar with laughter in one story and wipe away a tear at some noble action in another.

HAROLD LACK (Northampton). I must congratulate you on the high standard of the Digest - I know that Herbert would have approved. I look forward to receiving the Annual.

A. M. DAVIDSON (Muchalls). My sole collection is a bound volume of Jack, Sam and Pete (1909 - 1910). It includes one Pluck containing a J. S. & P. tale and a yarn called "Panic" - not about the comrades, but a sea mystery by someone "Hawk", - a non-de-plume.

STANLEY KNIGHT (Cheltenham). Each month the Digest seems to surpass all predecessors. I enjoyed the August cover featuring Lee. I haven't actually seen that copy, but have the S.O.L. reprint. I felt sure that Bob Blythe was too familiar to misname Jerry as Terry. Some of the Aussie cobbles must have wriggled at such an un-Australian name. I was delighted to learn that Rookwood was being reprinted in Knockout. I've always enjoyed what few of that school that I have come across. I soon put on my metaphorical knickerbockers and Eton jacket and collar, and tripped along to the nearest newsagent to ask plaintively for the Knockout. I notice that a Dick Turpin serial is running in the same paper. I wonder if this, too, is a reprint.

MAURICE KUTNER (Clapton). The Digest improves with each number. I have mentioned before that the 1/6 asked for it is like a drop in the ocean when compared with some prices asked for old boys' books. Many thanks for printing Herbert Leckenby's "Memories". This is real old boys' papers stuff by a real lover and enthusiast, and I am looking forward to much more of it. I suppose you couldn't see your way clear to subtitle this series "Escape from Bunter"?

- - - - -

ODDS AND ENDS

By Gerry Allison

POOR OLD BUNTER

Children's reading and eating are the subjects of articles in the September issue of "Family Doctor". Dr. Eric J. Trimmer, in an article on overweight children, states that nearly three-quarters of all the fat children have a fat father or a fat mother or both. He goes on: "Children who are unpopular or unhappy at school for any reason try to compensate by over-eating. Billy Bunter is the classic example."

SPLIT INFINITIVE

"The English-speaking world may be divided into (1) those who neither know nor care what a split infinitive is; (2) those who do not know, but care very much; (3) those who know and condemn; (4) those who know and approve; (5) those who know and distinguish." So says H. W. Fowler in "Modern English Usage."

Be that as it may, I got an unpleasant quail when I read; "It was no light crime to calmly ignore attendance in extra lessons" in "Handforth's Bad Day". N.L. Library, New series, No. 2. (See Chapter 9.) I do not want to start another quarrel, but can anyone quote on a similar example from the writings of Charles Hamilton?

* * * * *

TELEVISION CRITIQUE

BUNTER'S PARTY

This, the concluding play of the latest T.V. series, was televised on Saturday, September 24th. A potted version of one of the post-war Bunter books, the plot was just a trifle too involved for compression into 25 minutes. As an hour's entertainment, it would have provided excellent material. However, a small party watching it with this critic found it entirely to their liking, and laughed continuously, so it can be regarded as a good winding-up item for the present series.

* * * * *

WATCH FOR THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST great CHRISTMAS NUMBER!