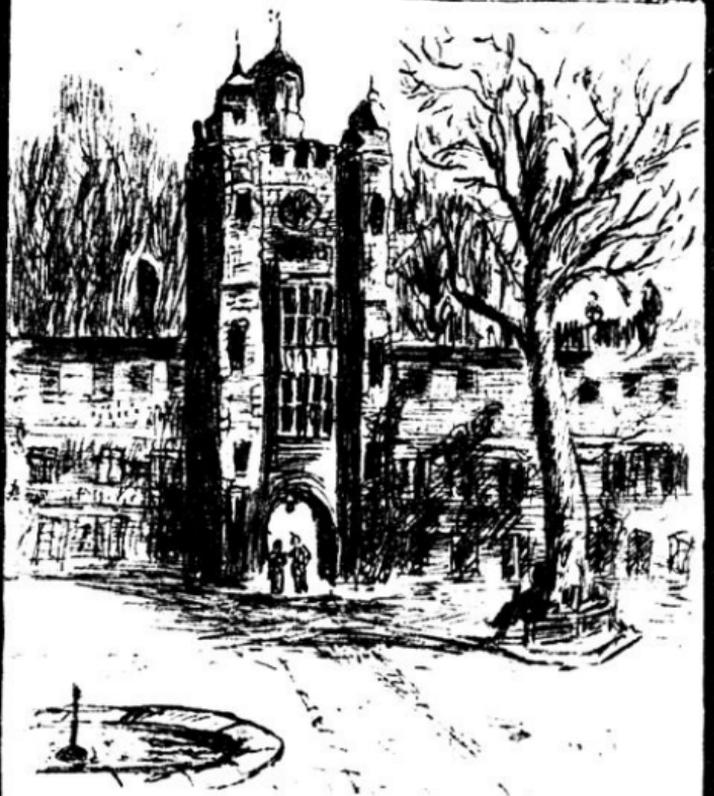


NIPPERS MAGAZINE

No. 14 VOL. 14 No. 167 of THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST No. 167
Edited by N. J. B. ...



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The Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED IN 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

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NOVEMBER, 1960

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

* * * *

WOT! NO SEXTON BLAKE ANNUAL?

Who said there isn't going to be a Sexton Blake Annual this year? Don't you believe it! Perhaps not in the style of those attractive volumes which appeared before the war - and for the life of us we cannot see why there should not be a great commercial success in this day and age, though that is beside the point.

But every year, a section of Collectors' Digest Annual is devoted to



EDITORIAL



FRANK NUGENT
Editor



H. VERDUCCI-SMITH
Editor



HARRY WHARTON
Editor



ROBERT C. EERY
Editor



MARK LINLEY
Editor

Sexton Blake, under the capable management of the Sexton Blake Circle. This year, the section is something quite exceptional, thanks to the hard work and devotion of Leonard Packman and his band of enthusiastic writers. It will, in fact, be a Sexton Blake Annual all on its own, packed from its first thrilling page to its last, with articles on the modern Blake, fascinating delving into Blake's incomparable history, statistical items, and even a delightful story introducing Tinkor and Paula. We won't spoil it for you by telling you any more. But Blake lovers have a treat in store. We can promise you that.

OUR ANNUAL. We have a warm tingling in our hearts which tells us that you are going to be delighted with COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1960. It was said of old that it is impossible to please everybody, and that only an ass would try. If so, we at the Digest office must be asses - for we have tried to please everybody - to include such a variety of material that there just MUST be something to suit every taste. The bill of fare includes articles, stories, verse, statistics - sentiment, satire, even sensations--pictures, new and old. We turn the spotlight on Hamiltoniana, Nelson Lee, the Henderson Publications, the Champion Group, Comic Papers, and, of course, Sexton Blake, modern and historical.

Just cast an eye over the list, in alphabetical order, of the contributors to the 1960 ANNUAL:- Derek ADLEY, Gerald ALLISON, Harry BROSTER, Ernie CARTER, C. H. CHAPMAN, Victor COLBY, Eric FAYNE, Reuben GODSAVE, Frank HANCOCK, Tom HOPPERTON, Peter HANGER, W. O. G. LOFTS, Otto MAURER, Michael MOORCOCK, Arthur MOYSE, Leonard PACKMAN, Bette PATE, Leslie ROWLEY, George SELLARS, F. Addington SYMONDS, Martin THOMAS, Walter WEBB, Donald WEBSTER, Robert WHITER.

If that giant list doesn't make your mouth water, then nothing will.

A final word of warning. We can GUARANTEE a copy of the ANNUAL to those who order by November 15th. We cannot print MANY extra copies to meet the possible demands of those who delay after that date. Don't be disappointed by failing to secure a copy of THE GREATEST ANNUAL IN THE WORLD.

OUR CHRISTMAS NUMBER. Next month, December, we shall bring you the Christmas Number of COLLECTORS' DIGEST. It will contain many special items with a yuletide flavour, including a feature entitled CHRISTMASSES at WHARTON LODGE. The cover, too, is something which, we think, is sure to give you all the Merry Christmas feeling - plus a nostalgic sigh.

GREAT NEW SERIES. In January, a great new photographic series will commence in COLLECTORS' DIGEST. Entitled "HOW THEY BEGAN", the new series will present every month the covers of the FIRST ISSUES, the Number Ones, of many of your favourite papers of the halcyon days.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

THIS MONTH'S COVER

Only the best is considered good enough for the cover picture of COLLECTORS' DIGEST. For this reason we congratulate a young artist who has reached our cover this month. He is a KEITH GODSAVE, who, at 15½ years of age, is almost certainly the youngest artist ever to have "made" the Digest cover page.

We invited Keith's UNCLE REUBEN to comment on "Nipper's Magazine" which is the subject of our picture. Here is what Reuben says:-

"Nipper's Magazine was a lively 8 paged supplement incorporated in the Nelson Lee Library when the price was increased to 2d in 1921.

Various articles were contributed by members of the Remove, including "The Problems of Trackett Grim" by Edward Oswald Handforth, which was a fairly regular feature. One page was devoted to Schoolboy Howlers, some of which were extremely funny.

A humorous series called "Peck's Bad Boy" accounted for about two pages.

It was due to the skill of the well-known artist E. E. Briscoe that a living picture of St. Frank's College was reproduced on the cover-pages of Nipper's Magazine. His sketches were really brilliant, and later in 1922 his sketches of "Our Public Schools" were printed at the back of the Nelson Lee.

Nipper's Magazine was gradually reduced in size, and finally faded away."

* * * * *

VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

By Ray Hopkins

A voyage of discovery sounds exciting, and not a little romantic. My own voyage, in fact, only carried me to the local library, but I am sure that my discoveries brought me just as much pleasure as if I had been seeking for treasure in colourful, tropic lands.

In BOOKS AND BOOKMEN, I came across an article entitled "The Modern Story" by E. W. Hildick, the author of the "Jim Starling" series. The writer tells how he tackles the special difficulties of writing stories set in modern day schools - difficulties which are not present in the traditional boarding school story. Here are three quotes from the text:-

1. "In the monastic remoteness of some moorland Greyfriars, isn't it only too possible for a runaway convict to pose as the new sports-master, whom he holds captive in a cave in a deserted quarry?"
2. "I had no wish to create a new type of school story, to turn the Chums of the Remove into the Mates of 3B, as it were."

3. "One wonders how long it will be before some modern Frank Richards comes along and begins to exploit it. ("IT" being the "Catalytic vitality of the secondary modern school background.")

In the same magazine there is another article entitled READING AS A HABIT. Here are some excerpts from it:-

1. "One thing that does strike me after examining the bookstalls for their current juvenile publications, is how very lucky we were who were born before the First World War." The writer, Austin Lee, then goes on to mention CHIPS, COMIC CUTS, MERRY & BRIGHT, LOT O' FUN, THE JESTER and RAINBOW.
2. "PUCK I always liked best of the two as there was a faint improving streak in the RAINBOW to which I was allergic, just as I was to the uplift of the BOY'S OWN PAPER. From the very first I preferred THE CAPTAIN, a magnificent paper, and CHUMS."
3. "I graduated quickly to the MAGNET, GEM and PENNY POPULAR, and a weekly whose name I forget which specialised in horror. It had wonderful and macabre illustrations of an Edgar Allen Poe type on the cover I remember as blue."
4. "Costing threepence were the BOY'S FRIEND LIBRARY, the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY, and the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. My favourite stories were those about Ferrers Lord, the Onassis of the period, and his chums with whom he travelled round the world in his luxury yacht (sometimes a dirigible). They included an Eskimo called Gen Waga who had a predilection for candles as a sweetmeat."

The author then goes on to discuss the hard cover books he read as a child. He believes the great thing is to develop the habit of reading in children, and says that "comics and children's papers and blood-and-thunders never did us any harm, and, in fact, were a necessary first stepping-stone."

* * * * *

ODDS & ENDS

by Gerry Allison

A letter from hospital

Dear Friends,

A week ago, on October 1st, I had an attack of coronary thrombosis, but so far have luckily managed to survive. I have now been in hospital one week and it will be a few weeks before I get home again.

The Editor has kindly permitted me space to inform my friends of this occurrence.

Firstly, I would like to thank all those who have already written

to me wishing me well. As I cannot write letters, perhaps they will accept this graceful acknowledgement.

Also I wish to apologise to the postal members of the Northern Section for an inevitable delay in their next packets of Magnets, Lees or Gems.

I am hoping to be home perhaps by the end of October, and then with the help of my wife, who like all OBBC wives is a Gem and a Marvel, will clear off the arrears as quickly as possible.

My greatest regret is in having to miss the London meeting on Sunday next, October 16th, for which rooms for my wife, sister and myself had been booked months ago. I shall, alas, also be absent from the Northern Section for tonight's meeting and probably the next.

A GODSEND

The October C.D. arrived yesterday. I have looked forward to its arrival with eagerness for years, but never with such impatience as this week. I can almost say it has saved my life.

I lay holding it in my hand for over an hour before I opened the first page.

Bob Whiter's delightful cover entertained me. How is this, Bob, for four other occupations pursued by Northern Members?

Breeze Bentley	Science Master	Shades of Rookwood
John Jarman	Bookie	Shades of Joey Banks
Elsie Palmer	Tuckshop Proprietor	Shades of Mrs. Mimble
Bill Harrison	Chiropodist!!!!	

I guess you could make an amusing cover of those.

With best wishes to everybody.

* * * * *

GET WELL, SOON

We regret to learn that Gerry Allison, popular contributor to the Digest and prominent official of our Northern Club, is in hospital at Otley, and that Mrs. Beryl Porter, of the Midland Club, is in hospital in Staffordshire. We wish both our old friends a very speedy recovery. Geoffrey Wilde of the Northern Club is suffering from a broken arm, sustained in a motor-scooter accident. We hope that he will suffer a minimum of discomfort, and soon be fighting fit again.

- - - - -

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

The old believe everything, the middle-aged suspect everything, and the young know everything.

Nelson Lee Column

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

I see that a new play in London has been written by Richard Hamilton! As Nelson Lee wrote several pantomimes and shows in the days of the old Sussex Theatre, it seems only right that Nipper should follow in his footsteps!

Back this month to the second instalment of the late Herbert Leckenby's chapters from his Streets of Memory, as told in his own inimitable style to Len Packman.

THE CAREER OF NELSON LEE

(Being Chapter 13 of MEMORIES OF OLD BOYS' PAPERS written by the late HERBERT LECKENBY in 1943. The first instalment appeared in the September issue of Collectors' Digest.)

I am not quite sure why I was off school in that month of June for the summer holidays were some distance away, but I have a faint idea that one of my younger brothers was laid up with measles. If that was the occasion, I know I gave him a kindly thought for not waiting until the holidays were due, for I had not the slightest objection to being told to keep away from school for a fortnight. Anyway, whether or not that was the reason, I know that after a few days at home I was packed off to the farm of an Uncle down in South Yorkshire. I cannot say that a country life ever appealed to me a great deal, but at least I had the chance to go to a country town just over the Nottinghamshire border. I took the opportunity eagerly. In addition to my Uncle there journeyed in the dog-cart, or trap, or whatever the vehicle was, a boy cousin and - worse luck - another Uncle, one I came to look upon as wicked an Uncle as ever appeared in the Babes in the Wood. He was my father's youngest brother, and could not have been very old at that time, but his views were very, very old-fashioned, even for those days, as I shall shortly relate.

On arrival at the market town my cousin and I were sent off to wander round, whilst the two uncles made their way to the market to sell corn, or maybe buy sheep or pigs. I had threepence or so in my pocket, the remains of the shilling I had been given as a very special occasion when I left home. I was in quest of something, too, but it had no relation to farm produce. We came to a newsagent's shop in the High

Street. I pressed my nose to the window pane, and fixed my eyes on the display within. There before me was No. 1 of the penny BOYS' FRIEND, an event I had been eagerly anticipating, with that exciting railway embankment scene from "Birds of Prey" on the front page. In I went and purchased it, also with another copper a TRUE BLUE with its vivid coloured cover. My cousin, eyeing them when I came out, scoffed, "Pooh, penny 'orribles." His hobby, I think, was white mice or rabbits

When we returned to our horse-drawn conveyance I pushed the paper well up beneath my waistcoat, out of the way. We set off on our six mile homeward journey, but, alas, horses did not trot as quickly as motor cars now run. After a while I grew impatient. The uncles' backs were to me, my host holding the reins, the "wicked" one alongside, bolt upright, and at leftwards to me. Chancing it, I drew forth my purchases and started to scrutinise the BOYS' FRIEND again. Then, as I tried to turn the page, the breeze caught it and fluttered the sheets. The uncle on the left happened to look round, fixed his eyes on the green pages - and me - and then said: "What have you got there? Let me see." He leaned over, grabbed the "Friend" from my hand and the TRUE BLUE from my knee and proceeded to examine them. He frowned in disapproval at the gorgeous cover of the 'Aldine' and pursed his lips at the scene from "Birds of Prey". "Where did you get these?" he demanded. "Bought 'em, of course," I grunted impolitely.

"You should have more sense than to spend your money on rubbish like this. You know very well your father would not allow you to, and would quickly put them in the fire if he caught you with them," he lectured pompously. "And I'm certainly not going to let you have them back." With that, he tore them across and flung them over the side of the trap into the road.

With blinking eyes and rage in my heart, I turned round and watched the torn green pages of the "Friend" mingled with the vivid coloured cover of the "True Blue", blow along the country lane until we turned a corner and they were lost to view. My eyes then bore into my uncle's back, and if looks could have killed his body would have toppled over the side of the trap and followed my papers into the road. And only the clop-clap of the horses hooves drowned what I was muttering about my father's younger brother!

Back at the farm in the evening, this uncle and my aunt pulled me up in the garden. I looked at them scowlingly. He said: "I was sorry I had to destroy those papers, but that kind of stuff can do young boys a lot of harm. Still, I don't want to deprive you of your pocket-money, so I will make good what you spent on them. How much

was it?" "Tuppence" I grunted. He handed two pennies over, and with a grudging "Thanks" I scuttled off, followed by my aunt's "Now be a good boy." I didn't say "Sez you," for needless to say gangster films were unknown then, but I thrust that twopence down into my left-hand trouser pocket away from the solitary penny in the right.

A few days later my visit came to an end, and I was escorted to a tiny village station and settled in a train which would carry me home. And the moment I reached the lights of my home city I made a bee-line for the nearest newsagents, wherein I purchased No. 2 of the BOYS' FRIEND and, to my delight, No. 1, the newsagent still having a copy left. And, to pay for my purchases, I plunged my hand into my left-hand trousers pocket, withdrew my uncle's twopence and planked that down on the counter. As, by the light of the shop window, I continued my inspection of the first of the penny series I gave a purr of satisfaction. All was well with the world. Young ras.al? Yes, I know, I was just an ordinary sort of boy.

That uncle of mine became a successful business man, and some time ago he passed on. After his death I was informed by his bankers that my name was mentioned in his will. The time for any benefits that may accrue is not yet; for my aunt, I am pleased to say, still lives on, but it would seem that he was not such a "wicked uncle" after all.

It is only because boyhood's little troubles can appear like tragedies that possession once more in 1943 of that No. 1 brought back to memory like a flash a trap bowling along a country lane on a summer's day in the long ago.

And now I think it's time I returned to Nelson Lee.

As I have said, "Birds of Prey" was a fine story. It was full of exciting incidents, from beginning to end. No sooner was Nelson Lee free from one desperate situation than he was plunged into another. Maxwell Scott did see to it that his detectives earned their fees. Some of that profession, we have heard, solved their cases by the aid of a pipe, a dressing gown and the consulting-room fire. But not Nelson Lee. He faced death many times, consulted numerous railway time-tables and travelled great distances ere he brought his quarry to justice.

Maxwell Scott, in planning his Lee stories, must always have had a "Bradshaw" by his side. The faithful reader became quite familiar with this kind of thing; a train leaves Newcastle at 1.47 and arrives at King's Cross at 6.58. A friend of mine used to check up on Maxwell Scott's timings, and never once did he bowl him out. Most journeys

of any distance were made by train, of course, in the early years of the century. Later, Scott naturally brought in the motor car, and in some of his stories, airships played a part. I cannot remember him making much use of the aeroplane, however. One thing I have noticed about his early stories is that he seldom thought of letting Nelson Lee take advantage of a trunk call. Telephones were fairly common in 1901, and the use of one on many occasions would have saved Nelson Lee a lot of trouble; but then, that might not have suited the story.

A. H. Clarke illustrated that first Nelson Lee serial, as he did many others which followed. As I have said before, I was always pleased to see him engaged on these stories. He best portrayed my own conception of the Grays Inn Road detective. One saw a sharp-featured, somewhat lank nosed individual, with a thin, firm mouth, intelligent and alert-looking; in fact, just what one would expect an intrepid, danger-encountering sleuth to look like. Other artists had different ideas; of that I may have something to say a little later. Fortunately, A. H. Clarke illustrated a good many of the Lee serials, in the BOYS' FRIEND at any rate. It may be only coincidence, but they appeared to be the best ones.

Anyway, "Birds of Prey" was a rattling good story, telling of Nelson Lee's titanic battle with the "Order of the Ring" and its three leaders, "The Chief", "The Squire" and the "Doctor". It was perhaps one of the first of the stories wherein a detective was at grips with some great criminal organisation, a type of story which became very popular.

"Birds of Prey" finished in No. 26 dated 7th December, 1901, but this did not mean that Nelson Lee disappeared from the pages of the BOYS' FRIEND. Far from it, for in the very same number a new story started. This issue, by the way, was the first double number since the BOYS' FRIEND became a penny. It was the Christmas one, and was enclosed in a gorgeous coloured cover.

To be continued.

* * * * *

1/- each offered by the London Club Library, for Magnet 751, Gems 549, 550 and SOLs 269, 275. Any reasonable (or even slightly unreasonable) price paid for "The Boy Without a Name" which is wanted as a companion piece for its sequel "Rivals and Chums" which we already possess. ROGER JENKINS, "THE FIRS", EASTERN ROAD, HAVANT, HANTS.

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"MEMORY LANE" - Special feature to play on your heart-strings.
IN COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL FOR 1960.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

They say that "all good things are worth waiting for," and in the case of the 'modern Blake' this could not be truer. This month's article by Margaret Cooke is a little gem. Margaret is honest and candid; she says what she thinks - be it disapproval or appreciation. In Splash Kirby's case, with the passing of time - and the adjustment of his character during that time - her opinion, like Kirby, has changed to the latter. At the time of writing this 'copy' the second part of the article is still to come; and I don't mind saying that I am looking forward to reading it!

JOSE PACKMAN

* * * * *

THE WIND OF CHANGE

By Margaret Cooke

"Except a living man, there is nothing more wonderful than a book" wrote Charles Kingsley, and I agree with him whole-heartedly. The skill and ingenuity of authors, their interpretation of the customs and foibles of ordinary mortals like myself, and the reactions of my fellow-creatures to the characters so portrayed have mystified me for more years than I care to remember. Kingsley added that writers "in these little sheets of paper speak to us, amuse us, terrify us, teach us, comfort us: open their hearts to us as brothers." I would add that in this day and age authors surprise us, confound us, occasionally disgust us and often annoy us. Even so, I obtain greater pleasure from a book in which the characterisation is good though the plot may be poor, than from one with a strong plot, swift action and weak, almost fantastic characters. This is true in particular of books which feature the same cast over a long period of time, as in the case of the Sexton Blake Library.

The change from the old traditional Baker Street manage to the new Sexton Blake Investigations, Berkeley Square, gave me a unique opportunity to observe new characters in the making and to appreciate the way in which those characters were introduced, developed and tailored to fit their appointed roles as they matured from unwanted intruders into established favourites. Paula Dane was one such character and

Arthur Kirby another.

Coming as she did, unexpected, unheralded, like a thief in the night, to steal Tinker's place by Blake's side, Paula earned our resentment and censure in those early days when she was merely the beautiful Miss Dane at whom all men cast longing glances.

As the weeks passed, however, and she began to exhibit courage, loyalty, consideration for her colleagues, energy and foresight, our hatred of this usurper began to change to grudging respect and, finally, to warm affection. Her easy comradeship for Tinker and her delightful wit and humour have since made Paula one of the most lovable characters ever introduced into the S.B.L.

Although her beauty shines as brightly as ever, her poise has been shattered in recent months by the arrival of another new character - one Beulah de Courcy Braid - Paula's beautiful, and much younger, man-eating cousin, who has strictly dishonourable intentions towards Blake, and exhibits a studied sympathy for the "ageing", anxious and jealous Paula. Blake, Tinker and Kirby find Beulah good fun and even Paula had to laugh when Kirby, in reply to Tinker's statement that Beulah seemed to be a "fly in the ointment" said she was one fly he would love to swat.

Looking back over his short life, I feel that I might have welcomed Arthur Kirby more warmly had not his advent been heralded in the pages of the Collectors' Digest (September, 1956) as the re-named Splash Page, a favourite character of the old Blake tales. I read the first Kirby tale with preconceived ideas of his character, expecting to renew acquaintance with a gay, smartly groomed and keenly intelligent young crime reporter; and was shocked to find instead an over-sexed, hard-drinking, middle-aged lout determined to force his company and his will on Sexton Blake at all times of the day and night. In the early books this inconsiderate 'friend' nearly choked Blake with cheap liqueur after a funeral, kept him awake and in agony all night after he had received a severe head wound, and made arrangements to take Paula to Paris with them without consulting Blake at all - arrangements which led Tinker into extreme danger and nearly robbed Blake of his young partner's services for ever.

Was this how the new Editor of the S.B.L. saw our old favourite Splash Page? In reply to my criticisms of the newcomer he wrote - "Incidentally, it was never intended that Kirby should be another version of Splash Page. Kirby stands on his own two feet, and always did." Once I realised that it was the role and not the character of Splash Page which had been revived I was able to see Kirby for what he was, a new, seedy and rather uncouth character with tremendous scope.

for improvement. And how much he has improved! The lout has vanished leaving a valued and loyal friend; a man of many virtues.

Described as a tall, broad-shouldered, deep-chested man with a crumpled face and untidy clothing, Kirby was introduced as an old friend of Blake's youth, a journalist and gossip-writer for the Daily Post, a man whose business it is to go everywhere and meet everybody to see and hear everything he can. He is a good listener, an expert questioner, and a good judge of humanity. Like Tinker, he judges without condemning and never forgets the human factor behind the news; the loves and hatreds, the hopes and tragedies of the people involved in the events. Kirby's phenomenal memory is a mine of information at Blake's disposal wherever a case has its roots in the past. When Kirby paints a picture of human error and frailty, failure or success, it is a true picture, showing all the facts.

As inquisitive as most of his kind, and untiring in his quest for news, Kirby has a touching belief that most of his kind of news 'breaks' in the vicinity of Sexton Blake and his assistants. He is a constant visitor to Blake's office and flat, so frequent a visitor in fact, that on one occasion Marion Lang, during Blake's absence, discussed the details of a newly committed murder with the Berkeley Square staff in Kirby's presence, quite forgetting that he was not "one of the family." He can, however, be trusted not to reveal anything he may learn in this way until he is given permission to do so by Blake or the police.

An incorrigible and incurable wolf, he considers himself Heaven's gift to women, and despite his claim that Paula is the only woman he has ever loved, never misses an opportunity to date a beautiful woman. At the same time, he is scared by beauty en masse, and needed Blake's moral support in a London Review. His wolfish tendencies are kept severely in check by the female members of Blake Investigations but Kirby is welcomed as a great and trusted friend by every one of them, including Mrs. Bardell and Millie, the Siamese cat.

When the grief-stricken Paula had to journey to Liverpool to investigate reports of Tinker's death, it was Kirby who put everything aside to accompany her on this nightmare mission and to comfort her during the even harder to bear interview with the Liverpool police. Yet, when their grief turned to joy and Paula was reunited with Tinker, Kirby stayed in the background, self-effacing and discreet. His reticence in leaving Blake to explain to Paula his connection with the actress who loved him, earned Blake's thanks, and the same quality has often made Kirby the confidant of those who would not confide in either Blake or the police, as in the case of Harvey Innes, the "literary spiv" - who

lost one author, and found five!

Kirby has become almost as much a part of the Blake Saga as Blake himself, flitting in and out of the pages as advisor, historian, assistant and, quite frequently, the person seeking to interest Blake in the troubles of other people whom Kirby knows. He seldom pleads in vain. Usually Blake is already interested in the cases. Kirby did not have to plead at all when his own amorous nature landed him up to the ears in trouble in Spain, Blake came to his aid unasked, and despite many difficulties Arthur Kirby lived to work and live, another day. A man of many faults and weaknesses? A truly human character, and one whom I hope to meet many times in the future in the pages of the Sexton Blake Library.....

(to be concluded)

* * * * *

PHILIP LINDSAY AND GWYN EVANS

By L. S. Elliott

Are you familiar with the work of Jack and Norman Lindsay, and the late Philip Lindsay? The father, Norman, was probably the finest illustrator and humorous writer to be produced by Australia in modern times. Jack, still going strong, is a great historical writer and translator.

Philip, who recently died in Sussex, is one of the century's most famous historical novelists, and he himself was a remarkable character. In his autobiography, "I'd Live the Same Life Over", he mentions an acquaintance of his. Here is an extract:

"The third of those I knew this night, GWYN EVANS, was never actually a close friend of mine, for I was not to see a great deal of him, although we have had amusing times together, while the tales about Gwyn's escapades are many and legendary.

"He wrote Sexton Blake stories, and wrote them exceptionally well, before the inevitable duodenal ulcer ripped his bowels and shut him for ever in a box under the earth; so tall and thin that one feared he would snap if he leaned too far, Gwyn spoke with a snarl that belied his good nature, his generosity, for during the spasms he had cash he threw it with the gesture of a very drunken king over any bar that would serve him."

Gwyn Evans, John G. Brandon, G. H. Teed, Gilbert Chester, the Murray Graydons. All dead. Only Rex Hardinge, John Hunter and Edwy Searles Books left of the old guard, and, from the latter, no more Sexton Blake.

Could not W. Howard Baker get Brooks away from Ironsides and Norman Conquest for long enough to give us a "Waldo" yarn?

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY TITLES AND AUTHORS (1st series)

(Continued)

No. 224	In the Shadow of Night	E. W. Alais
No. 225	The Great Explosion (Lawless)	A. Murray
No. 226	The Mystery of the Swamp	W. M. Graydon
No. 227	In the Grip of the Tong (Plummer)	J. W. Bobin
No. 228	The Hooded Riders (Plummer)	J. W. Bobin
No. 229	The Spirit Smugglers (Rymer)	G. H. Teed
No. 230	The Case of the Uncut Gems (Carlac, Kew)	A. Murray
No. 231	The Mystery of the Sunken Road (Dr. Ferraro)	R. C. Armour
No. 232	Lawless Justice	A. Edgar
No. 233	The Diamond Dragon (Rymer)	G. H. Teed
No. 234	The Secret of the Oblong Chest	W. W. Sayer
No. 235	The Taming of Neville Ibbetson	W. M. Graydon
No. 236	The Prisoner of the Kremlin (A. Steele, Lawless)	A. Murray
No. 237	The Mill-Pool Mystery	H. E. Hill
No. 238	The Eallen Star (Kestrel)	J. Lewis
No. 239	The Diamond Flood (Dr. Ferraro)	R. C. Armour
No. 240	The Case of the Crimson Lizard (F. Lord)	S. Drew
No. 241	The Trader's Daughter	W. M. Graydon
No. 242	The Case of the Paralysed Man (Steele, Lawless)	A. Murray
No. 243	The Crimson Domino (G. Grant, Mile Julie) (Reprinted in 2nd series No. 448)	W. W. Sayer
No. 244	The House of Ghosts	L. H. Brooks
No. 245	The Lama's Secret	W. M. Graydon
No. 246	The Were-Wolf of Elphinstone (Dr. Ferraro)	R. C. Armour
No. 247	The Case of the Vanished Husband	W. J. Bayfield
No. 248	The Golden Goddess (Gunga Dass)	H. G. Hill
No. 249	The Case of the Bogus Laird (Plummer)	J. W. Bobin
No. 250	Fingerprints of Fate	L. H. Brooks
No. 251	The Brigand's Secret	W. M. Graydon
No. 252	The Mystery of the Clock (Kew, Carlac)	A. Murray
No. 253	The Case of the Courtlandt Jewels (Rymer)	G. H. Teed
No. 254	The Sign in the Sky (Reprinted in 2nd series No. 520)	A. Edgar
No. 255	The Albino's Double (Zenith)	G. N. Philips
No. 256	By the Skin of his Teeth	R. C. Armour
No. 257	Lost in Cambodia (B. Wicketshaw)	W. M. Graydon

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FOR SALE (O.N.O.) 2 vol. Chums (1906/7, 1940); 14 Magnets (1931-2-3-4-5); 4 Gems (1922-5-30); 1 Nick Carter; 3 Union Jacks (1927-30); 3 Marvels (1910-21); 7 Thrillers (1930-5-6-8); 6 Modern Boy (1930-2-6-7); 2 Chuckles Comics (1921); 1 bound volume Aldine Football Novels; 5 Boys Realms (1919/20); 2 B.F.L. (No. 457, 595); 1 Champion Lib. (no. 95); 3 Film Annuals (1944/5-9). THE LOT 160/- (Post Free)

MR. J. LENNARD, 22 LARCH STREET, HIGHTOWN, MANCHESTER, 8.

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, 736, 740, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 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.

HAMILTONIANA

REBEL! Harry Wharton can kick against authority and stand the consequences longer than most juniors in the Greyfriars Remove. But the end is the same in the long run—authority holds all the trump cards. There's the rub!



FAMOUS
SERIES
No. 1

Above we reproduce the title picture from the greatest story in one of Frank Richards' greatest series - some think it Frank Richards' greatest achievement in a lifetime of great achievements. This is one of the stories of the famous REBEL SERIES of 1925. Harry Wharton, through a logical series of events, loses his friends, loses his position, loses his own self-respect. A brilliant series of the gradual decline of a boy of sterling character, unusual attributes, sound background - but with a temper which he had not learned to govern. He rouses the bitter dislike of his form-master, and the wages of his stubborn pride and animosity take the eventual shape of his inevitable expulsion from Greyfriars.

Without question, the most powerful and adult series that the Magnet ever presented, it ran from the autumn of 1925 into the winter of 1926. It was tense drama throughout, with little light relief.

The theme was repeated in 1932 in another brilliant series which made, probably, happier reading.

The artist was Mr. C. H. Chapman.

* * * * *

GEMS OF HAMILTONIANA

If contempt, as the eastern proverb declares, can pierce the shell of the tortoise, Baggy Trimble must have been better protected than a tortoise. The weightiest scorn and the heaviest sarcasm had no effect whatever on Baggy. Nothing lighter than a boot made any impression on him.

Sent in by Gerry Allison, Ilkley)

(Editor's Note: The above "gem" was sent to us by Gerry from his bed in a hospital ward. Commenting on the above item, Gerry wrote: "This sudden descent from the sublime to the ridiculous made me laugh out loud and wake up half the ward. What a TONIC Charles Hamilton is, God bless him!")

It is wonderful to think of Gerry having his lonely hours charmed in this way. We feel sure that the TONIC will work wonders, and that Gerry will soon be back in circulation again. The extract by the way, comes from the "Too Good For St. Jim's" series.)

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(Have you a favourite Gem of Hamiltoniana? If so, write it out and post to the editor. Book souvenirs are awarded for any item found suitable for publication in this column.)

* * * * *

CHARLES HAMILTON - SONG WRITER

By W. O. G. Lofts

Charles Hamilton's gift to mankind, was obviously the brilliant writing of school stories in which, in my opinion, he had no equal. It would be impossible to compute the hours of pleasure he has given to people in all walks of life, by his schools of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood, and the immortal Billy Bunter, now watched by millions of viewers.

Before Greyfriars came into existence in 1908, probably Mr. Hamilton had inspirations in other fields, as recently, whilst perusing a Vol. of old songs (dated 1908) in the British Museum, I came across the following song

"Charles Hamilton and Percy Harrison's Ripping Football Song"

'On the Ball'

Words by Charles Hamilton.

Music by Percy Harrison.

'Here's a cheer for the grand old game'
 'Here's a cheer for the men who play,'
 Here's a shout for the boys at Home
 And a yell for the lads away.

Hurrah!

Chorus:

On the ball! On the ball!
 Loud and clear it rings,
 Like a trumpet call.
 Here the shouts excited roll.
 Buck up there! Look out in goal!
 On the ball! On the ball!
 On the ball! On the ball!

There were two more verses, and the song was published by Woodford and Co., Hazelwood, Canvey Island, Essex. Price 1d.

I would like to know very much who Percy Harrison was and whether Mr. Hamilton can recollect the music of this song, as I am completely mystified as to where the music was published. The words of the song only were printed on the size of a C.D. page (one side). The song could be sung without fee except at Theatres and Music Halls and was Copyright. Whether the song was popular is a question which only Mr. Hamilton could answer.

* * * * *

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. SPOTLIGHT ON THE FAGS

Readers will have enjoyed a hearty chuckle over Bill Lofts' happy little article on whether the First Form at Greyfriars was or wasn't, not to mention John Jukes' delightful and rib-tickling illustration which adorns same. Bill has suggested that I might turn the Controversial eye on the problem. So why not? - and here goes!

For many, many years it has been accepted that there is no First Form at Greyfriars, though I have no doubt that Bill is correct in pointing out that, on isolated occasions in early days, Frank

Richards did mention such a form. At St. Jim's, I think, there was no First Form and no Second either. I cannot recall any mention of a Second Form at the Sussex school.

Though there is little doubt that the stories were entertaining enough to many readers, I have always regarded as fantastic the appointment of Wally Bunter as the form-

master of the First. For one thing, Billy and Wally are doubles, both aged fifteen plus. That factor was conveniently ignored, though the famous Doubles Series, which ran concurrently in the Gem and the Magnet over several months, had appeared not so long before. But even if one allowed the author licence to tack a year or two on to Wally's age, it was inconceivable that an unqualified and untrained youngster would have been appointed permanent form-master at a school like Greyfriars, even though the artist depicted him as wearing cap and gown. Whether Charles Hamilton ever accepted Wally as a form-master I cannot re-



call, but I think it unlikely.

It is, of course, true that Tom Merry became master of the Third while Mr. Selby was indisposed (in a famous Gem tale entitled "Mr. Merry") but the fact that there was no suggestion of permanency in the arrangement made it credible.

I was never very keen on the stories which introduced the fags, though I have a soft spot for Wally D'Arcy, Joe Brayne, and Flip. Flip, you will remember, regarded Billy Bunter as "such a fine feller" in a very readable series.

The fags of St. Jim's played a much more prominent part and were sketched with a firmer hand than those at Greyfriars. At Greyfriars only Nugent Minor and Wingate Minor starred, in almost identical roles.

Wally D'Arcy featured in many outstanding series and Joe Frayne was an interesting little character until he was eclipsed by the emphasis on the Three Minors.

Both Manners Minor and Levison Minor were cleverly drawn, but they were handicapped by being "typed" - almost invariably they played the same roles. Reggie was the constant worry for his brother, while Frank was usually frantic with concern for brother Ernest. Reggie was

too much the stock character to be remembered with much affection. Frank, certainly, has many admirers, and he played a striking part in many superb stories.

Generally speaking, I regarded the fags with much the same feeling that I had for Cliff House girls - all right in small doses, and useful to the writer in the development of some particular plots.

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

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 42. THE MAGIC OF YESTERDAY

HARRY BROSTER. Once again you echo many of my thoughts. We, who can look back to days when loyalty to school and pride in school uniform meant so much, can hardly view very happily the modern trend in these matters. Everything has changed, with gigantic acceleration, since the war. In no way is there any similarity to the way of life we knew.

As you say, we had the Magnet and Gem to take as examples. Modern youth has - what? Horror films, lurid comics, blaring records, no punishments, everything just ready to pick up. Loyalty is not quite dead, but a shabby thing when compared with the Frank Richards' type as personified in Tom Redwing and Lord Mauleverer. In a way I think that Pentelow outdid Frank Richards in writing of loyalty to "alma mater" but the Gem and Magnet set a wonderful example.

DON WEBSTER. Who can define the reason for the sustained interest in the Companion Papers? Not you or I, because tastes differ. Some readers abhor Bunter but like Gussy - others, vice versa. Charles Hamilton appealed to us at all ages because of his style of writing - we felt we were at Greyfriars or St. Jim's. The demise of the Magnet and Gem saw the end of an era in British boys' books, which can never return. Let us not be sad, but grateful that we participated in it.

RON CROLLIE. The various reasons which you suggest as possible explanations for the popularity of Mr. Hamilton's stories are, I think, all true to a very great extent. You ask why lads from all walks of life followed with delight the adventures of wealthy boys at public schools. To my mind, the answer is that in those days they had much in common with the boys of Greyfriars and St. Jim's - loyalty to one's school, even if it was the local council school, to one's cricket or football team, even if it was just Standard 4 playing Standard 3 in a public park. The despising of mean actions, bad behaviour - for years now, youth has been taught that none of these things matter. Loyalty to school? Nonsense, one school is as good as another. Turn out on Saturday for the football team? No fear! What did they ever do for me? Take no notice of the schoolmaster; he's just there to teach.

Youth did not acquire these new doctrines by itself. It was installed into young folk. Whether the Gem and Magnet would have done anything to combat this unfortunate trend is a matter for conjecture. I think it's a pity they were not allowed to try.

W. THURBON. It seems to me that we found in St. Jim's and Greyfriars a form of escapism which did not make us envious or dissatisfied. There was an atmosphere of morality and loyalty, which the companion papers helped to foster.

Northcliffe was genuinely concerned to set a moral tone in his boys' papers, and

patriotism was not then regarded as something queer, and dishonesty as something smart. I don't think a re-issued Magnet or Gem would succeed, for so many young people won't bother to read. For those who can and will read there are plenty of good cheap books, of a rather higher standard in some ways than the pre-war weekly. There is more money about for books, if people want to read.

We just can't explain why the Hamilton stories attracted us. I think that in his own sphere, like B.P. with the scouts, Charles Hamilton filled a need.

GEORGE SELLARS. The answer to the question is a simple one. Charles Hamilton is the best of all school story writers, and that is why we loved his charming tales so much.

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THE VICTORIA PALACE PARTY

The London Club has arranged to form a party to visit the Victoria Palace, London, on Saturday afternoon, January 7th. A large block of seats is being held for our use in the best part of the theatre. The show - BILLY BUNTER'S SWISS ROLL.

We hope that our party will be even larger than it was last year, and we ask all readers, from anywhere and everywhere, to come along and join in the fun. Seats are 12/6d each, and we understand that booking is brisk at the Victoria Palace. Come along, and bring mums and dads, aunts and uncles, the people next door, and uncle Tom Cobby and all - and the more youngsters you can bring, the merrier.

Places in the party can be booked through the Editor of this magazine. Let's make it a real meeting of Old Boys and Girls.

If any reader can display advantageously a double-crown bill or a card, advertising BILLY BUNTER'S SWISS ROLL, just let us know what you can use, and we will send it along while stocks of publicity material last.

* * * * *

S.O.Ls for sale. Greyfriars Nos. 143, 159, 161, 163, 173, 191, 203, 209, 211, 221, 225, 231, 239, 241, 243, 245, 253, 255, 263, 265, 267, 277, 283, 289, 292, 301, 304, 307, 310, 313, 316, (319, 322, 325, 328) (331, 334, 337, 340), (343, 346, 349, 352), (355, 358, 362, 364, 367, 370), 373, 376, 379, 382, 388, 391, 394, 397, 400, 403, 404, 406, 407, 409, 410. Note: Numbers bracketed together are bound together. St. Jim's Nos. 66, 72, 80, 102, 116, 126, 130, 200, 224, 350, 365. Rockwood No. 317. The 76 numbers for sale complete for £20. I apologise for the price but this is more than 10% less than I paid for them. All complete and in good condition - half a dozen lack covers. D. BROYD, 10 BEAN ROAD, BEXLEYHEATH, KENT.

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.

Sexton Blake Today

INTERESTING CHARACTERS FROM THE MODERN S.B.L.

By Vis Colby

No. 1. Simon Sherrington Fawcett

This man, one of the most interesting characters I have encountered in the pages of the S.B.L. appeared as a background figure in Arthur Maclean's "Mission to Mexico" (No. 445).

It seemed a pity that our contact with him was so fleeting. The elderly Fawcett was a man of money, and he acted as though he knew every dollar he owned by its Christian name. His wealth was increasing rapidly, but he had worn the same suit for 22 years, and had palpitations at the thought of expending a few bob for the renewal of his shiny pants. In fact, he had many of the characteristics of Scrooge McDuck of Disney fame.

Each night, on retiring, Fawcett devoted ten minutes of his valuable sleeping time to the Almighty. A man had to be prepared to put himself out a little for powerful friends. He talked to God as one business man to another, even giving his creator a tip or two from his advanced knowledge of the state of the Stock Exchange. He wanted to be on good terms with the Almighty, but to make it quite clear that if he, Simon Fawcett, couldn't take his money with him when it came his time to go, he had no intention of going.

OCTOBER
1960

THE LATEST NOVELS IN THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY
Reviewed by WALTER WEBB

OCTOBER
1960

Violence in Quiet Places (No. 461)

Jack Trevor Story

Whatever strange things might have occurred to Rupert Tate, a poet, in life was as nothing to what happened to him on his abrupt departure from it! His gruesome murder in the woods of Woolley, favourite trysting place of the Sixth Form girls from the village school, of which Marion Lang was an ex-pupil, sends the footsteps of her employer, Sexton Blake, rambling amiably in that direction.

Miss Wilderspin, spinster headmistress, wants both the name of the senior master cleared of the capital charge and the honour of the school over which she presides vindicated. Briefly, Blake has to prove whether Ambrose Charnock, the schoolmaster, is a hero or a murderer. A quite delicious trifle this, with Blake and Tinker investigating amongst a lot of leggy schoolgirls, with all credit to the author in producing out of it something which is enlightening, edifying and wholly enjoyable.

Rating Very Good

Journey to Genoa (No. 462)

F. Dubrez Fawcett

This is not a sequel to Peter Saxon's "Act of Violence" (S.B.L. No. 388, which was reviewed in C.D. No. 128); but it has certain connections with that particular wartime assignment of Sexton Blake's. Now, new developments have arisen. The treasure horde of Mussolini's is again the objective of certain parties, and political fireworks in the shape of more vital documents have to be recovered in order to avoid a possible third world upheaval. The secret of their whereabouts is in the form of a cipher, which it is Blake's job to find and take to Craillie's contact in Genoa, a top-expert on ciphers, named Varaze.

The climax is really startling, distastefully gruesome; yet who will deny its absolute fitting to a narrative the like of which Peter Saxon used to describe so well? The style and treatment is similar, though it hasn't Saxon's name on the cover. But - ?

Rating.....Very Good

GENERAL COMMENTARY

MAILBAG: It has become increasingly obvious in recent MAGAZINE SECTIONS that interest in the earlier Blake's is still markedly active, a fact which has prompted Bill Lofts, in a letter reproduced in "MAILBAG" this month, to invite correspondence on those authors who wrote for the S.B.L. in its more lucrative days. But a slight adjustment is necessary in regard to JOHN G. BRANDON. This well-known author-playwright died in 1941, not 1940, and the exact day and place of death, together with that of one or two more famous Blake writers, including GWYN EVANS, GILBERT CHESTER and G. H. TEED, is given in the forthcoming C.D. ANNUAL.

Praise of Martin Thomas's fine story of the occult "BRED TO KILL" continues to trickle in. From France, a correspondent would like another on similar lines, a suggestion which is enthusiastically seconded by this columnist.

The format of the Library is a matter of much speculation on the part of a lady reader of Notts, who is against any alteration of the S.B.L. in its present form. Any change which would prove the death-knell of the present attractively-coloured covers would, I'm afraid, prove the death-knell of Blake also - at least, in so far as his regular monthly appearances are concerned, and I am in complete agreement with Mrs. Jackson on this point.

A further unusual occurrence in Issue No. 462 is that a Mr. C. Lowder has three letters reproduced in its columns, two from an address in Worcester, and one from Hereford. Since two of his queries are likely to prove of interest to other Blake fans, they can be answered here (1) The first S.B.L. (Third Series) was - as Mr. Lowder surmised - published in 1941. The month was June, and the title of the story "RAIDERS PASSED!" Author was JOHN HUNTER, who introduced his famous seafaring character, Captain Dack, into the proceedings. (2) The S.B.L. stopped publication temporarily on two occasions, both being due to disputes in the printing trade. First occasion November, 1950, when no issues appeared. Second occasion April 1956, when a further two issues were lost.

CHRISTMAS ATTRACTION: A long, long time ago, the late CECIL HAYTER described the first meeting of Blake and Tinker, in a serial which ran in either the BOYS' FRIEND or the BOYS' HERALD. Now in one of the December volumes, MARTIN THOMAS gives his version of the historic meeting, and of Tinker's antecedents, so our Christmas fare promises to be particularly appetising this year.

PLAYHOUR

Readers will be interested to know that Colin Wyatt, staunch supporter of the Digest, is now drawing "Harry Hampster" in the "Harry on His Own" series in the periodical "Playhour."

Colin's first set of pictures appear in the issue dated October 29th, and thereafter his drawings will be a feature of the paper each week.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

MIDLAND

Meeting held September 27th, 1960

Apologies from Jack Bellfield, Win Brown and Ray Bennett kept the attendance down to twelve amongst whom were our two loyal members from Burton. Also I think a word of praise is due to Ted Davey who manages to put in an appearance if only for a few minutes. It was a good programme which Tom Porter had mapped out and thoroughly enjoyed by all. Beryl obliged with her list of Desert Island Books (second series, of course). Keeping up the tradition set by her husband she passed round for our inspection the following gems of literature - 1. "Biggles of the Canoe Squadron" by W. E. Johns. 2. "Sexton Blake's Schooldays" by John Andrews. 3. Greyfriars Holiday Annual for 1931. 4. "The Sea Tigers" by Peter Saxon. 5. "The Wisdom of the Simple" by Constance Guest. 6. Boswell's Life of Dr. Johnson. 8. "Billy Bunter's Barring Out." A very nicely varied selection and much appreciated by the rest of the members. There was no quiz tonight so we were able to get on to the next item, a discussion introduced by the chairman. Quoting from a recent John O'London's weekly which stated that Talbot Baines Reed during his lifetime, contributed no less than thirteen classics for boys, Norman said that the Victorian era produced many of these boys' classics - stories by such authors as Henty, Ballantyne, Kingston, Jules Verne, Gordon Stables, Edward S. Ellis in addition to Talbot Baines Reed. But in his opinion the very best school stories for boys began to appear in the Edwardian and early George V periods. The authors mentioned by Norman were Desmond Coke, Warren Bell, Hyton Cleaver, Gunby Hadath, Wodehouse and Elias amongst others, all of whom are still much in demand today and whose yarns are still being sold. Thus his idea of the Golden Age of boys periodicals was the pre 1918 era. We were asked to give our own opinions of what was the Golden Age.

The Library raffle was won by Win Partridge who was delighted as she said it was "the first time lucky." There was then a series of word games by Tom Porter and honours were shared by Norman, Joe Marston and Beryl. To wind up the evening, George Chatham obliged with a reading from "Rivals of Rookwood," very much to the taste of all present. We hope that the next meeting, October 31st (Tuesday) will be as enjoyable.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

NORTHERN

8th October at 239 Hyde Park Road.

This was one of the strangest meetings we have held for some considerable time. First, we learned that Gerry Allison was ill in hospital and unable to be with us. It may be some time before he is fully well again, but good wishes were sent to him for a speedy recovery. Thanks were also expressed to Myra Allison and Mollie Allison for shouldering much of the responsibility for carrying on the work of the section and of the meeting so ably.

Next, our Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, found himself in difficulties owing to a broken arm received when he parted company with a motor scooter on which he had accepted a lift. However, he managed to keep the meeting in order, and to read, after general business had been transacted, some Reflections of Frank Richards by Tom Hopperton - a work which provided much scope for discussion before refreshments.

Ron Hodgson, our secretary, was also unable to be present, but nevertheless a dozen members turned up, and after refreshments listened to readings of the entries for the Greyfriars Cup Competition; voting then took place and three of the four entries received were chosen for final inclusion. Discussion of suggestions for future Cup Competitions was deferred, though in addition to one put forward in a letter to the Club, another was made that Clubs might be given a series of unrelated articles, as in the famous Tram series, and asked to write a story round them.

JACK WOOD

LONDON

The October Wood Green meeting was agreed by all those who attended, to have been very enjoyable. Eric Fayne gave the good news that the "C.D. Annual" would be out earlier this year and that the visit of club members to the Christmas Bunter Show at the Victoria Palace would take place on Saturday, January 7th. George Sewell rendered a fine reading, a chapter from the "Magnet" entitled "Goodbye Greyfriars." "Gem" readers were given a reading by Don Webster from an issue of their favourite paper entitled "The Slackers' Awakening." Still concerned with St. Jim's, in Sam Thurbon's cricket game, Greyfriars were beaten by one wicket. Blake enthusiasts were given a reading by Len Packman from the Sydney "Sun Herald" about their favourite detective.

There were fine quizzes and the news that further catalogues were to be prepared. "Gem" and "Nelson Lee" titles, and that the November meeting would be at 35 Woodhouse Road, Leytonstone, E.11. Host Ruben Godsave. Kindly inform if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting - 23rd October.

It was a great pleasure to welcome Eric Fayne to this meeting, and it is to be hoped he felt the long and tedious journey from London was worthwhile. The Chairman opened the meeting, by introducing our guest, and also welcomed two new members in Walter Pritchard and Bill Holmes. Eric in reply stated how glad he was to be able to make this visit. There followed a discussion on the C.D. and the Greyfriars Herald Cup Competition. Frank Unwin then took over, his first Quiz dealing with Sexton Blake, being won by John Pritchard, a recent newcomer. Frank followed this by conducting "Twenty Questions" and Bill Windor's team were easy winners. Not one object reached the 20th question.

At the interval, Eric Fayne was unanimously elected Vice-President of the Club, whereupon he set us a clever contest, the honours going to Frank Case with Pat Laffey, Jim Walsh and Bill Holmes as runners-up. Jim Walsh rounded off the proceedings with a general quiz and Don Webster decided it was time he had a look in and scored most points.

So ended one of the happiest evenings we have had for some time, and Eric assures us his first visit certainly won't be his last. Next month we hold our delayed Annual Meeting - Sunday, 13th November, 6.30 p.m. sharp.

N. PRAGNELL - Hon. Sec.

AUSTRALIA

Although the attendance was not as good as expected, those members who for-gathered at Cahill's Restaurant at 6 p.m. on Thursday, October 20th for the monthly meeting spent a most enjoyable evening. The usual excellent dinner was followed by the equally enjoyable reading of letters from good friends overseas, with Frank Unwin and Harry Broster keeping us all in touch so well with their little newsy journals.

Three letters from Ron Hodgson were read with great interest, but those present were sorry to hear that Gerry Allison had been taken ill - hope you are well on the way to recovery by the time this report is published, Gerry and we send our best wishes to you to speed this event.

Highlight of the evening was a reading from several original scripts which had been featured in the S.B.L. Annual, twenty years ago. The Blake enthusiasts were naturally very interested in these treasures and felt it was a real scoop for them to have such rare items at the meeting.

Members were greatly disappointed to learn that the second issue of the Club magazine due to have been published last month, was not available, due to production difficulties. However, Syd Smyth hopes these will be overcome within a week or two and copies should be available at the next meeting to be held on November 17th. Any overseas folk wishing to secure a copy may do so by ordering direct from Syd Smyth at 1 Brandon Street, Clovelly - cost is 4/- (English) per copy and this includes postage.

A discussion was then held on the future programme of the club and it was decided that next month's meeting be devoted to planning and for this purpose a room is to be engaged at the Y.M.C.A. for the November get together. It was also decided that in view of the most enjoyable Xmas parties members had shared in the past, a similar arrangement would be made for this year.

Meeting closed at 8 p.m. by which time everyone had worn out their voice - blessed silence reigned at Cahill's.

B. PATE - Secretary.

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, 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.

"DID THE MAGNET DECLINE AND FALL?" - by Peter Hanger.

IN COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1960.

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

"THE ST. JIM'S PORTRAIT GALLERY" - by George Sellars.

IN COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1960.

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.

"DO YOU REMEMBER?" - by MARTIN THOMAS.

IN COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1960.

SEXTON BLAKE ANNUAL - Yes, really and truly!

IN COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1960.

"PLAYFUL PARODIES" - Fun in clever verse by Tom Hopperton.

IN COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1960.

Yours Sincerely

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

RHODA WILLMOTT (Egham) I still have a full-length portrait of Sexton Blake, issued about 50 years ago in Union Jack. It is as good as the day I bought it, for I had it framed years ago. I liked Blake and Tinker's adventures in the first world war, and I remember when Blake first took Tinker as his assistant. He picked him up off the street.

(Mrs. Willmott has read Sexton Blake's adventures for 50 years. A wonderful record, and we hope that she will enjoy reading of the great detective for many years to come - Ed.)

GEORGE BURGESS (Salisbury) I was just home for my lunch when the Digest arrived, and I found it so interesting that I enjoyed it much more than my lunch. Robert Whiter's cover (October) is a real gem. He has the right idea about we readers and our workaday life.

ROBERT STORY (Canada) The Digest gets better and better, like "soaring sales in a fast-growing organisation." Each number seems to be better than its predecessor. Who can ask for more? One dissentient note: I disagree with readers who like the finer print. I was never one to advocate for unnecessary eye-strain, and I think the regular type just perfect, and we should stick to that. I hope others agree with me and we stick to our regular type.

(Scores of readers have written approving the smaller type. We have no intention of adopting it entirely, but its use in certain sections gives you far greater reading matter, as so many readers have been quick to approve. - Ed.)

FRED GRIFFIN (New York) Congratulations, rather belated, on that very fine article on Ireland in the July Digest. I was thrilled by it, especially by the mention of Castlebar, which happens to be my native town where I had my early associations with the old boys' papers. The newsagent's shop you mention is called Wynn's. Could it be kept by a relation of Fatty?

BILL HUBBARD (Kenya) "Yours sincerely" and "Controversial" are going from strength to strength. They have made the C.D. a real live-wire little paper full of interest. I have made a suggestion to the Secretary of the London Club that it would make an interesting change for the Club to have a meeting while on a river or canal trip. A launch or small steamer might be hired, with meals available, and a really splendid Sunday, would, I feel, result.

GEORGE SELLARS (Sheffield) I have read the small print of the Greyfriars Herald reproduction without the aid of a magnifying glass. In that advertisement of the Magnet at the head of the page in question, do you see what I see? A 1915 GEM cover by MacDonald, and the story was "The Jew of St. Jim's". Very curious, don't you think?

(We have examined the Magnet advertisement and it appears to us that Mr. Sellars is right. If so, why on earth did the editor of that time use a Gem cover to advertise the Magnet? We wonder whether it was noted by any reader of that time - more than 40 years ago, - Ed.)

FRANK CASE (Liverpool) There would be absolutely no substitute for the C.D. if it went under, and we would certainly be lost without it.

(Thanks Frank. The C.D. is a bonny, bouncing youngster, and has no intention of going under. - Ed.)

BILL HALL (Australia) Keep up the good work - and how about a Young Folks' Tale reproduction on the Digest cover? I have a particular yearning to see again number 333 - "Betty at Hollyhock House."

(Has anybody a copy of No. 333 to loan us, so that we can assess its possibilities for reproduction? You, Bill, will enjoy Otto Maurer's wonderful article - plus two pages of pictures - on Y.F.T. in the Annual - Ed.)

W. H. GODDARD (Derby) Way back in the dim and distant past, about 1925, a firm manufacturing sweet cigarettes began to issue with their product a series of cards depicting scenes from Greyfriars. I can only remember seeing two different cards - one showing Billy Bunter and the other Fisher T. Fish. The cards were clearly the work of the Magnet artist of that period. Can any reader remember anything about them?

COLIN WYATT (Hornchurch) Bob Whiter's October cover is excellent. Well done, Bob!

CLIFF SMITH (St. Anne's) I particularly like the Controversial series, and one of these days I'll have to send you an opinion.

JOHN COCHER (Sudbury) I must congratulate you on the high standard which the Digest has maintained throughout the year. Especially good was the article Walter Webb did, dealing with the Sexton Blake Library which was a mammoth work for an amateur magazine and much appreciated by me. Your sleuth, Bill Lofts, is always of great interest to me - actually I am always more interested in the authors than the stories.

Naturally enough I am a great fan of Frank Richards, especially Greyfriars and Rockwood, but, dare I say it, Nelson Lee always left me cold. I just couldn't stand Handy who always ruined the stories for me. I am now a subscriber to Knockout so my newsagent probably assumes that my five-year old son is taking an interest in the more "adult" type of comic.

At a tender age, I discovered Greyfriars by buying a Magnet which contained that wonderful series dealing with Xmas at Mauleverer Towers. From that time onwards, I read the Magnet, Gem and S.O.L. with the Ranger and Holiday Annuals thrown in for good measure.

P. SMITH (Alford) It is interesting to note that the Dick Turpin story, now in Knockout, originally appeared in the 1d. Aldine Dick Turpin. The titles were No. 84 "The Tragedy of a Lonely Heath" and No. 85 "The Robbers of the Dead". Same characters - Dr. Brindle and Grassgreen, chief of Bow Street runners. These Aldine stories have apparently been reprinted for some years, for the first I found was in "Sun" December, 1956. It is odd for I thought that Newnes had the copyright for the Aldine papers.

(Oh, irony of Fate! It strikes us that there is a moral somewhere in this reprinting of such very old stories. - Ed.)

"NO END IN SIGHT" - by Eric Fayne.

IN COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1960.

"THE TAGS OF HAMILTONIANA" - by Tom Hopperton and Gerry Allison

IN COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1960.

THE GREATEST ANNUAL IN THE WORLD -

COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1960.

"WILLIAM AND THE OLD BOYS"

(The William books first appeared way back in the early "twenties," and they have been appearing at regular intervals ever since. Surely all of us regard Richmal Crompton's immortal "William" as one of the most delightful creations in Old Boys' literature. Miss Crompton has been loyal to one publisher - Newnes's. All of the William stories have been illustrated by the incomparable Thomas Henry. The early William stories were a feature of the "The Happy Mag," but William has enjoyed stiff-cover status for nearly forty years. With the passing of time, there has been a subtle change in the stories. The earlier books, though entrancing for youngsters, seemed to be written about boys, for adult consumption. In more recent times, they seem to be aimed more directly at the juvenile market. But, whether old or new, the William tales make delightful reading for the young in heart. Our contributor, Arthur Moyses, imagines William and his Outlaws attending a meeting of the London O.B.B.C. - Ed.)

William stirred in his chair. He had eaten, and he was bored, and his usual contempt for adults was beginning to show itself. In a whisper that rose shrill above the noisy conversation in the crowded room he demanded of Douglas: "When are they coming?"

Douglas, who was finishing the last of his cake, shot William a look of prim warning, for Douglas was a boy who believed that it was necessary at times to compromise with the illogical conventions of the world of his elders. But William's ire was not aroused and, though a kindly boy, he had no use for social conventions.

He turned to a gentleman in a clerical collar and demanded: "When are they coming?"

"Who?" asked the cleric, giving William a benign smile.

"The Old Boys!" William replied.

The cleric turned to Ginger and in a troubled voice asked, "How did you boys come to be here?"

"We were invited," said Henry, "William's brother, Robert, knows Mr. Fayne."

The cleric cast a sad look at Eric Fayne, who, unconscious of the situation, was guiding William's sister, Ethel, to the door.

William, who had sat silent during this brief discussion, again demanded in a raucous voice: "When are the Old Boys coming on?"

The sharpness of William's voice sent the room into silence and the only sound that broke it was the tearing of cloth as Jumble, lying in a circle of broken cake, chewed a chair cover. The owner of the chair cover stopped in the collecting of plates and gazed darkly and

dumbly at Jumble.

A pleasant young man came from across the room and standing over William said: "We're the Old Boys."

William was a boy with a strongly developed sense of logic and a passionate belief in elementary justice. The whole situation seemed to him to be nothing more or less than an ill-timed joke, and William detested adult jokes, for they always appeared to him to be completely pointless.

"You are men," he cried, and rising to his feet and with his voice growing louder with every word he pointed his finger into the silent company. "You're not boys, not even Old Boys. It's a swiz, and you could all go to prison an' be hung for making people come here when you said you was going to show Old Boys."

The pleasant young man said, "My name is Bob Whiter. What is your name?"

William gave the young man a look of unconcealed contempt and the young man blushed and merged into the silent crowd. Mr. Packman made his way towards William, and in a kindly but strained voice said, "We collect Old Boy's Books".

"Then where are the Old Boys you collect them for?" demanded William. "If there's no Old Boys, then you're all crooks an' you can go to prison an' be hung cos people who go around saying that they collect for Old Boys when there's no Old Boys, are like burglars and murderers and, and,...." William's knowledge of crime and criminals had exhausted itself after these two categories, but he was never one to let subject matter deter him once his imagination had taken hold of him. "They hung pirates at the yard arm cos they used to sink ships and steal bullion and make people walk the plank and I bet if the police knew you was going 'round saying you was collecting for Old Boys they'd take you away and put you on a ship an' I bet they'd hang you from the yard arm cos it's like stealing to say you collect for Old Boys when you don't have any."

William, breathless, gazed in triumph at his silent hosts and a plaintive voice finally could be heard whispering: "What ever made Eric invite them?"

"William's Robert's brother and he was invited by Mr. Payne" stated Douglas, and he finally finished the last of his cake.

During the whole of William's oration the Outlaws had sat in silent admiration of their leader, and now that William was sitting back exhausted in his chair, they felt it was up to them to come to his aid. An ironic voice murmured, "Hooray for Eric," and Mr. Payne began to protest feebly and to mutter, "How did I know?"

William had now regained his strength, and rising to his feet again he motioned to the Outlaws to do the same. Jumble rose after a final tear at the chair cover and with a cheerful wag of his tail left the circle of broken cake. William and the Outlaws made their way through the silent circle of people into the street.

"It was a swiz," said William, "and they're lucky we don't tell the police, getting people to come and see Old Boys when they don't have any."

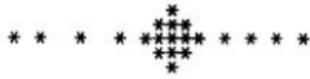
He picked up a stick from the pavement, and as they marched along he rattled it across the railings of the houses. An elderly woman tapped on her window with frustrated fury but the Outlaws were too happy to care. William threw the stick along the road for a barking Jumble to chase.

"The cake wasn't bad, was it?" said Douglas.

William thought this over and then, with a grin, said "No, the cake was all right."

They chased the barking Jumble along the road until they came to a breathless halt.

"Gosh! I bet Mr. Fayne and Robert have a row when they meet!" said William.



Special Reminder

Next Month

Collectors' Digest

GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER

Special Christmas editions of all our usual features.

Packed with seasonable items from cover to cover.

Special Christmas Pictures.

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A December to remember.



THE HERLOCK SHOLMES STORIES. Novel feature.

In COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1960

