

collectors digest

VOLUME 15, NUMBER 171

MARCH, 1961.

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Bob Whiter

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Vol. 15 Number 171

MARCH, 1961

Price 2s. 0d.

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

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EDITORIAL



FRANK NUGENT,
Art Editor



VERNON SMITH,
Sports Editor



JACK WHARTON,
Editor



ROBERT CHERRY,
Young Editor



FRANK LINLEY,
Librarian

Years ago, in my early days as a Headmaster, I received two letters one morning from two parents of rather similar names. We will call one Green and the other Brown.

Mr. Green wrote me that he had been promoted and would in consequence, be moving his abode to the west of England. Mr. Brown wrote that his wife had deserted him and had gone off with another man.

Without further reference to either letter I sat down and wrote a reply to each. I congratulated Mr. Brown on his good fortune, and told Mr. Green that I was sorry to learn that his wife had gone forth with another man. Then, with a song in my heart, I sent both letters to post. The result was both embarrassing and exciting.

That true little episode comes to my mind when I notice that I have in my files a number of Gems of Hamiltoniana and other items

with nothing to show from whence they came. So many people write me a pleasant letter and enclose with it perhaps, two or three items intended for the Digest. The letter goes into the Yours Sincerely file, and the other items go into other appropriate files. The letter bears the name and address of the sender; the other items do not.

Please, when sending me more than one item, see that your name and address is written on each. It saves so much trouble. That, in fact, is why we generally ask for Gems of Hamiltoniana and certain competition entries to be written on postcards.

NEW COVERS AND OLD COVERS. Our "HOW THEY BEGAN" series which commenced in January is proving an enormous success, as we felt sure it would. Next month the series will be back on our own cover with another large reproduction to set you yearning. This month our own star artist, Robert Whiter, is back with us with his clever and unusual study of the Rio Kid.

THE LES ROWLEY CONTEST. We hope that next month it may be possible to give further particulars of the forthcoming Les Rowley Contest, of which we made preliminary announcement last month. This contest will be open to all readers of the Digest anywhere in the world, and we hope that it will receive tremendous support.

THE EDITOR

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POT - POURRI

FRED RUTHERFORD

A Memoir by Clifford Lettey

I can scarcely believe Fred Rutherford is dead. Time has flown so quickly. Almost 8 years have gone since I first met him. An advert in the C.D. brought him to my door. Thence onward an unofficial O.B.B.C. started. Fred called regularly. Friday nights were set aside for these visits. Over innumerable cups of tea we would talk well past midnight. Always something new to say.

In May 1954, Fred suggested going to the London meeting. We arrived gone one o'clock in the morning! Bob and Eileen Whiter were wonderful hosts. This club meeting increased our knowledge and interest immensely. Back in Bristol our collections grew. We learnt how to prepare papers for binding - where to advertise - how to repair copies.

(Nora, his sister, did this marvellously.) Always and always more to do and talk about.

Then came our visit to the Xmas meeting (London 1954). Fred had the honour of bringing C.H. Chapman, the famous Magnet artist, to this meeting. The following year Fred realized an old ambition when he met Frank Richards in the company of Mr. Chapman. Several more London trips followed. We got to know the famous characters of the club. When we could not come we followed the report in the C.D. and saw it in our mind's eye.

Those who had the good fortune to meet Fred Rutherford must have been struck first and foremost by his fine gentlemanly manners. Such people as he, are very rare today. There was a nobleness in his nature too, reminding me of a certain character in the Gem. He would probably laugh at this thought of mine; but I am perfectly clear about it. Whether the Hamiltonian world of Greyfriars and St. Jim's contributed very much in the formation of his nature I do not know. He read it at an early age and loved some characters intensely. I feel I cannot say a truer thing about Fred Rutherford than this: that for me he commingled in his character the best elements of that happy world of by-gone youth. I am sure he would laugh again if he could read this - but I will abide by it.

We shall miss Fred very much. My wife and I will cherish the memories of those Friday nights. That Nora Rutherford will continue in the tradition is our fervent wish.

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All collectors who knew him will be grieved to learn of the death of Fred Rutherford on February 6th. Although he lived in Bristol, he and his sister were frequently in attendance at London Club meetings, and everyone who met him could not fail to warm to his frank, infectious enthusiasm for the Magnet and Gem. I well remember occasions, both at his house and mine, when we turned over the pages of the old books and his cheerful recollections seemed to fire my own enthusiasm even more. He possessed the rare gift of being candid without giving offence, and our future gatherings will not be quite the same without his welcome presence.

ROGER JENKINS

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THE FIRST BOYS PAPERS

By W.O.G. Lofts

Charles Dickens in "Barnaby Rudge" (chapter 4) mentions Gabriel

No. 1 of "The Boys' Friend" Library.

HOW THEY BEGANNo. 3

The first issue of
BOY'S FRIEND 3d LIBRARY

(The year, 1906)

* * *

Varder as saying 'I suppose that's out of the Prentice Garland or the Prentice Guide to the Gallows' - giving the impression that there were boys papers in existence at that period of history 1775. If there were, there certainly is no record of them in official files at the British Museum. The first boys' paper that I have been able to trace, was, however, only two years later in 1777. By some strange chance, and a most remarkable one, no copies are to be seen in this country! The only two copies known to be in existence are in the Libraries of Yale and Illinois in the U.S.A. The title of the paper was 'The Young Gentleman's Magazine' or Monthly repository of science, moral and entertaining matter." It was published monthly from January to June 1777, and printed for G. Kearrsly at No. 46, Fleet Street, London. At the end of the June issue 1777, the 'Conductors' of the magazine reluctantly announced the discontinuation of it through financial failure.

A very large gap of 22

years is now seen until the next boy's paper is recorded, and that was the last year in the 18th century, 1799. 'The Young Gentleman's and Ladies' Magazine' was its title, and its complete run of 12 monthly issues are to be seen in the British Museum. Similar to its predecessor it was edited by a Dr. Mavor and published by J. Walker of Fleet Street. The cost of the magazine was One Shilling, an enormous amount of money in those days, so one must conclude that only the sons and daughters of the gentry could afford to buy it.

'The Youth's Magazine' appeared in 1805, and had a monthly run for 62 years. 'Youth's instructor and Guardian' commenced in 1817, and ran monthly for 38 years. 1822 saw the start of 'The Youth's Miscellany' but this had a very short life, ending at the 18th issue.

'New Youth's Magazine' a pirate on the 'Youth's Magazine' had only a short run in 1824, finishing at the 10th number, but when in 1832 the 'Boy's and Girl's Penny Magazine' appeared, history was being made, as this was the actual first weekly magazine to appear to cater for the general juvenile public in England. This magazine is so rare that the British Museum only has three copies - Nos. 9, 17 and 18, but I am fortunate enough to have six issues, obtained some years ago, through the kindness of the late Mr. W. Lawson. This paper consisted of eight pages - size similar to the small 'Boys Realm' its contents were like all juvenile publications in the very early days - of a highly religious educational and 'goody-goody' flavour. Its publisher up to No. 18 was W. Howden of 194 Strand, when after that date it was published by C. Penny of 110 Chancery Lane.

A very interesting announcement in No. 21 states to a reader that the Christmas sale of this periodical was 'half a million three hundred and thirty five thousand' written in modern form making 835,000 copies being sold that week. If this was true then the 'Boys and Girls Penny Magazine' could easily claim to have had the highest circulation of all juvenile publications - even the 'Magnet' was only 250,000 at its peak.

Maybe it was this announcement of the high circulation figures that bought a new rival in the field in late June of 1833, as another firm of W. Strange brought out a similar type of paper with the reversed title of 'Girls and Boys' Penny Magazine.' Both the runs of these papers are uncertain, as I have No. 23 of the former (the last known) but while I am fortunate enough to have a long run of the latter paper up to No. 31, the British Museum can produce copies up to 36.

Boys' papers appeared more frequently after this date, and I have dealt with most of them in previous Annual articles. To a collector of old boys' fiction however, I must point out that the real blood-thirsty stories for boys did not appear until the 1850s - probably started with

the 'Penny bloods' in the mid-eighteen forties, but of these I hope to write in a later article.

STRANGE, DON'T YOU THINK?

by John Farrell

It so happens that the 1960 "Digest Annual" was the first I ever possessed, as I only became a subscriber to the "Digest" last year.

The "Annual" arrived about a fortnight before Christmas, and, of course, as soon as I laid hands on it, I went through it rapidly, glancing over the contents, and telling myself what a good time I was going to have reading it.

It then occurred to me that to enjoy the "Annual" as it was meant to be enjoyed, required the right time and surroundings. No dipping into it for the odd five minutes (which I was much tempted to do) but to have a whole evening, free from every other activity, to browse to my hearts content.

I there and then decided to put the Annual away until the evening of Christmas Day, when, after the children had gone to bed, and my good lady was busy with her own occupation, I could relax in front of the fire and thoroughly lose myself in "days of youth."

This idea, I am pleased to say, I carried out, sternly putting aside all temptation to steal a surreptitious glance at the Annual during the intervening period, and afterwards feeling that it had been the finishing touch which made a really enjoyable Christmas.

A few days after Christmas, I was struck by a very strange thought. What had taken place with regard to the Annual at Christmas, had happened, with some variations, a good many years before.

It so happened that at the end of the year 1913, I was just becoming acquainted with "comics," being a regular reader of Chips and Lot-o-Fun, which I bought from the newsagents, together with mother's Red Letter.

At that period, money was very scarce, and the two comics were my weekly quota of reading matter. I did receive another twopence on Saturday afternoon, which was hard-earned on Saturday morning by running errands and doing odd jobs around the house. This twopence was invariably divided into one penny for sweets, the other for the pictures, there being no more spending money until the following weekend.

At this time at school, quite a lot of "swopping" of comics took place, and I thus became acquainted with others as well as the ones I bought - "Comic Cuts" "The Jester" "Merry and Bright" etc. However, I noticed several dog-eared books as well as comics being handed round, and after a while, managed to exchange a comic for one of these. I thus, for the first time, met Buffalo Bill in the Aldine Buffalo Bill Library. What a thrill! What a revelation! I couldn't get hold of enough of them, no matter how grubby or dog-eared.

And then, on one of my visits to the newsagent, I saw the current monthly numbers of the Buffalo Bill Library laid out on the counter. Brand new, the first new ones I had ever seen, and simply begging to be read. But the price. One whole penny each. Where was I to get the price? I looked at them regretfully and tore myself away, wondering how on earth I could raise some extra coppers to purchase these precious books. I daren't ask for any more money at home, having already been told that I was lucky to get what I did.

From that day to this, I don't know how I managed it, but I did get twopence into my possession which had not to be accounted for at home; and now the visit to the bookshop and the purchasing of the two books. I shall always remember the titles "The Phantom Diggers" and "Buffalo Bill's Boy Pard.".

Now I must write of what happened in 1913, which is so similar to what happened in

1960, although there definitely is no connection between them.

On getting the two "Buffalo Bills" I thought to myself, I must enjoy these to the utmost, not trying to read them between lessons at school, (an old dodge), or with a candle in bed, but at a time and place where I could enjoy them thoroughly. After a great deal of thought, I decided to hide them under the lino in the sitting-room until Christmas, which was a couple of weeks off. Then after tea on Christmas evening, I would find a corner by the fire, and enjoy them to my hearts content. I did enjoy them too, perhaps all the more so, because of that little act of self-denial, which so queerly repeated itself so many years later.

WELCOME, ST. DOMINIC'S

By Andrew Langman

Talbot Baines Reed's "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's" began its run as a four-week serial on B.B.C. television on Tuesday, 21st February. It started well, and gives promise of providing most fascinating entertainment. Settings are excellent, though it is not quite clear why the story has been dated back to 1860. The Radio Times suggested that 1860 was the time of Reed's own schooldays, and that, in portraying St. Dominic's, he was writing about his own school. This, of course, was not really true, for he was never at a public school.

Casting of the serial seems exceptionally good, with the possible exception of Oliver Greenfield who is so big that he dwarfs even the adult characters in the play. It is pleasant to see a serious school story well done on television, and it brings home rather forcefully, the possibilities that are being missed for the production of a serious Greyfriars story.

Many readers will remember the silent film of "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's" which was released in the earlier twenties. That was a very fine production, or, at least, it seemed so at that time. The part of Stephen Greenfield in that old film was played by Micky Brantford, who, with his sister Aggie, appeared as juveniles with much success in British films at that time. It is many years since I have heard of Micky or Aggie Brantford (they appeared as children together in the naval film "Second to None" which had as its rather mature hero the actor, Moore Marriott, later to become famous as the old and toothless man in the Will Hay school sketches).

I wonder what became of the Brantfords.

KNOCKOUT FORGES AHEAD

KNOCKOUT presents an extremely interesting study these days. The policy seems clearly to be the presentation of more reading matter and less comic pictures, and this, in my opinion, is an excellent trend. We hope it continues. The stories presented are reprints of early successes, and this fact alone, should make KNOCKOUT a weekly must for everyone who professes interest in our hobby.

There cannot be much doubt that Rookwood has been a considerable success, and the presentation of these stories, since they began at the end of last summer, has been fascinating to follow. So far, two series have appeared, and a third one begins now in mid-February. We had the stories of Jimmy Silver's arrival which set the Boy's Friend on a new lease of life in 1915, followed by the "Disgrace of Bulkeley" series which appeared in the Friend in the early summer of 1918.

Generally speaking, the new presentation has been well done. Conquest fans may have felt some indeterminate irritation when reading them. Like eating a sausage roll from which part of the sausage has been removed, as it were. A feeling of something not quite genuine about the stories. This has certainly been due to the abridgment (quite skilfully done) and to the substitution, here and there, of the vernacular of the snack

bars for the idiom of the public schools. This substitution has lessened, however, as time has passed, and in the latest series it seems very slight indeed, which is all to the good. We have to remember, too, that the stories so far reprinted were a long way from being Owen Conquest at his best.

The new series, concerning a relation of Smythe, appeared in the Friend in the early summer of 1920. The titles were "The Nameless Stranger" "The Boy Without a Memory" "Smythe's New Pal" and "Charlie at Rookwood." Reprinted in the S.O.L. as "The Boy from Nowhere." A rather pedestrian story, in the old days, though it has its moments.

We urge all our readers to support KNOCKOUT these days. 4d a week is a small price to pay for following one of the most interesting developments of recent years.

ODDS AND ENDS

By Gerry Allison

SECOND ROUND. I related last month how Edward Greenfield of The Guardian received six of the best from Mr. Quelch for his review of "Billy Bunter's Swiss Roll." Perhaps the paragraph reporting the matter was seen by Mr. Hamilton. At all events, the following letter has now appeared in The Guardian.

Sir - I have seen a quotation from your paper, in which your critic described my schoolboy characters of Greyfriars as "hopelessly dated." Mr. Greenfield is, of course, entitled to his own opinion; but surely, in a responsible journal like the "Guardian" a writer should not state a personal opinion as a fact.

I find it difficult to believe that my "Bunter Books" would be selling thousands of copies today at 9s. 6d. a time, if they belonged, as Mr. Greenfield fancies, wholly to the past. I do not wish to argue the point with Mr. Greenfield. Are we not told, in the Good Book, *si contuderis stultum in pila, non auferetur ab eo stultitia ejus?* But I would recommend a verse of Prior to the editorial consideration;

Let him be kept from paper, pen and ink,

So that he cease to write, and learn to think!

Yours &c. FRANK RICHARDS.

The effect of those double-barrelled quotations must have been terrific. (If any Removite cannot construe the one in Latin, he may refer to Proverbs XXVII, 22.) But Mr. Greenfield made the amende honorable. He wrote:

The remark was intended as a compliment from a Bunter devotee of many years standing. The more "out of date" Greyfriars becomes in a fast changing world, the more attractive do its many virtues appear both to old escapists and young. Long may it continue!

ST. FRANK'S REDIVIVUS. I am pleased to see a remarkable growth in the popularity for stories about St. Frank's among library members. We have now three borrowers who ask for copies of the Nelson Lee only. And in the January C.D. a correspondent wished for more Lee material in the Annual. This is an excellent sign, I think.

WANTED: Any pre-war Annuals of Teddy Tail of the Daily Mail or any scrap books of cuttings from D. Mail of same.
N. YEAR, 42 FAIRWAY, YORK.

BLAKIANA

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

The response to my request for short articles and 'bits and pieces' about Sexton Blake has been somewhat disappointing. In fact, at the time of writing I have received only ONE. However, I am hoping that more will be forthcoming in the near future.

JOSIE PACKMAN

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No. 321	In Double Disguise.....	W. M. Graydon
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(End of First Series)

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No. 4	The Yellow Cat	H. H. C. Gibbons
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No. 16	The Clue of the Four Wigs	G. H. Teed
No. 17	On the Night Express (G. & E. Hale)	H.H.C. Gibbons
No. 18	The Adventure of the Albanian Avenger (G. Grant, Mlle Julie)	W. W. Sayer
	(Reprinted in 2nd series No. 512)	
No. 19	The Great Canal Plot (Wu Ling, Plummer, Menes, Black Eagle)	G. H. Teed
	(Reprinted in 2nd series No. 590)	
No. 20	The Case of the Two Scapegraces	W. M. Graydon
No. 21	Under the Eagle's Wing (Black Eagle)	G. H. Teed
No. 22	The Affair of the Diamond Star (G. & E. Hale)	H.H.C. Gibbons
No. 23	Black Cargo	W. M. Graydon
No. 24	The Case of the Press Photographer	W. J. Bayfield
No. 25	The Case of the Chinese Pearls (Rymer)	G. H. Teed
No. 26	The Barton Manor Mystery	G. A. Evans
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No. 29	The Affair of the Cross-Roads (G. & E. Hale)	H.H.C. Gibbons
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No. 32	The Treasure of the Manchus	R. C. Armour
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No. 34	The White Death (Cavendish Doyle)	W. M. Graydon
No. 35	The Case of the Mummified Hand (Rymer, Plummer, Wu Ling, Black Eagle, Menes, Yvonne)	G. H. Teed
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No. 43	The Riddle of the Lascar's Head	L. H. Brooks
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No. 45	The Ethiopian's Secret (G. Grant, Mlle Julie)	W. W. Sayer
	(Reprinted in 2nd series No. 532)	
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No. 50	The South Coast Tragedy (G. & E. Hale)	H.H.C. Gibbons
No. 51	The Prisoner of the Mountains	W. M. Graydon
No. 52	The Black Emperor (Rymer, Marie Galante)	G. H. Teed
No. 53	The Council of Crooks	W. J. Bayfield
No. 54	The Black Shirt Mystery	W. M. Graydon
No. 55	The Tangle of Terror	E. J. Murray
No. 56	The Mystery of Bullen Point (Dr. Ferraro)	R. C. Armour
No. 57	The Case of the Bogus Treasure Hunt	W. M. Graydon
No. 58	The Mystery of the Seaside Hotel	W. J. Bayfield
No. 59	The Case of the Silent Safe Cutters	H.H.C. Gibbons

No. 60	The Secret of Torre Island.....	R. C. Armour
No. 61	The Mystery of the Championship Belt.....	A. S. Hardy
No. 62	The Affair of the Missing Witness.....	W. M. Graydon
No. 63	The Case of the Lone Plantations.....	E. J. Murray
No. 64	The Adventure of the Silk Smugglers.....	R. C. Armour
No. 65	The Excavators Secret..... (Reprinted in 2nd series No. 620)	H.H.C. Gibbons
No. 66	The Yacht of Mystery.....	W. M. Graydon
No. 67	The Calcroft Case.....	E. J. Murray
No. 68	The Affair of the Trade Rivals..... (Dr. Ferraro)	R. C. Armour
No. 69	The Mystery of Hanging-Sword Alley.....	W. J. Bayfield
No. 70	The Menace of the Silent Death.....	E. J. Murray
No. 71	The Bloodhound's Revenge.....	W. M. Graydon
No. 72	The Riddle of the Lost Emigrant..... (Dr. Ferraro)	R. C. Armour
No. 73	The Riddle of the Russian Gold..... (Rymer)	G. H. Teed
No. 74	The Death Duty Swindle.....	W. J. Bayfield
No. 75	The Case of the Theatrical Profiteer.....	W.M. Graydon

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SEXTON BLAKE AND THE NELSON LEE LIBRARYBy Reuben Godsave

The brief entrances of Sexton Blake and Tinker into the Nelson Lee Library always seemed to me to bring an atmosphere of reality to the friendly rivalry of the two detectives.

In the Ernest Lawrence series, Nipper writes to Tinker suggesting that he (Tinker) should write to him at St. Frank's College with an invitation to attend a "party" with some of his friends. Actually the "party" would attend a boxing match in the West End of London in which Lawrence was boxing under the pseudonym of Young Ern. Perhaps Nelson Lee guessed what was behind the letter, for he allowed Nipper and his friends to be picked up by Tinker on condition that they arrived back early the following morning. Arriving at Blake's home the boys met Sexton Blake, who had arrived back from the North of England sooner than Tinker expected. After explaining the real reason for the visit, the boys were pleased when Blake was able to get a seat from themselves.

Another occasion was during the stay of the school in London, owing to a fire doing considerable damage at St. Frank's. Sir Montie Tregellis-West, having been kidnapped for ransom by two men, succeeded in escaping from the house of his captivity, and, in so doing, ran straight into Nelson Lee, who was about to go to the rescue of the lad. Then, in the darkness, both were savagely struck down by the kidnapers. Nipper, now worried by the absence of Nelson Lee as well as Sir Montie, took advantage of Tinker's presence - he had dropped in to tea - to ask for the help of Sexton Blake in investigating Lee's disappearance. Thus, following an exciting chase after a barge on the River Thames by Sexton Blake, with the assistance of the River Police, Nelson Lee and Sir

Montie were found; and although by that time the position of the captors had been reversed, they now being in the packing-cases which had originally contained Lee and Sir Montie, Nelson Lee was grateful for Blake's help in capturing the two kidnapers.

On the occasion of the return home of Nelson Lee and some of the St. Frank's boys from an enforced stay in Mordania, a small country in the Balkans, they were followed by two surviving members of the Tagossa, a powerful band of brigands which had practically been wiped out by the King's party with Lee's aid. The position was getting too hot, and Lee, knowing that Sexton Blake was in town, 'phoned him asking if he would send Tinker and Pedro round while the scent of the blood of one of the Mordanians was still strong, the latter having overpowered Nipper in a fight but leaving traces of blood. The trail led to an Underground station, and it was only by the booking-clerk remembering that a foreigner had booked to Golders Green station half an hour previously that Pedro was able to pick up the scent from that station, thereby enabling the two Mordanians to be captured.

These few instances show how Sexton Blake and Tinker had associations with Nelson Lee and Nipper from time to time, although the activities of each pair were recorded in separate libraries.

SEXTON BLAKE THE ETERNAL

(A short extract from a Chapter on Sexton Blake taken from Herbert Leckenby's "Memories of Old Boys' Papers.")

Many fascinating thoughts arise thinking back through the years to that day when Harry Blyth first penned the words "Sexton Blake." He would pen them, I suppose, for the chances are he would not possess a typewriter. Why did he choose the name? Blake is a fairly common one; but Sexton? Uncommon enough in very truth for a Christian name and probably never used elsewhere either before or since. When he evolved the plot he would little dream that in the years to come dozens of authors, some then not born, would earn fees for writing stories round the same name. Neither would he think that there would come a time when an actor would use the name on the stage, or that a shadow figure of Sexton Blake would flicker across a screen; and what is still more certain, is the fact that it would never occur to him that at a still later day millions of people all over the world would be able to hear the voice of "Sexton Blake" at one and the same time. No, he certainly would never have thought of that.

And in naming the hero for his little story, has it ever occurred to you devotees of the detective story that he set a fashion in detective names which had been copied many times since? Think of some of the sleuths who have at times been popular since that day in the 19th century: Nelson Lee, Kenyon Ford, Abel Link, Vernon Reed, Gordon Fox, Dixon Brett, Stanley Dare, Ferrers Locke, Derek Clyde, Martin Dale and oh, many more. All with two syllables for the Christian name, one for the second. Some sceptic may say "Why give the credit to the humble writer of the first Sexton Blake? Why not Conan Doyle? He had created Sherlock Holmes before that." Well perhaps so, but I prefer to believe that when other authors were choosing a name for their detective they instinctively thought of Sexton Blake rather than of Sherlock Holmes.....

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

HAMILTON

No. 48. Dovetailing

The Golden Age of the Magnet is notable for the way in which the series dovetailed together. The current series would have a more than nebulous link with the previous one, while the next series, waiting in the wings, would certainly be connected with both. It was a peculiarly satisfying system for the regular reader.

Oddly enough, none of these dovetailed series seems to be among the most popular, judging only from the number of times that different series crop up in the letters I have been receiving over many years. It appears that the series with the more definitely marked boundaries would be certain to be placed higher if a vote were taken. This could be due to the difficulty of finding a name for a series which really embraced several series.

One series of this type, brilliantly written, is mentioned seldom if ever, and I find it strange that this should be so. It appeared in 1932, and John Geal, writing about it in the 1949 Annual, called it the "Harry Wharton, Down on His Luck" series. Actually, John was referring to only part of the series, which passed on into the "Vernon-Smith, Skipper" series, the two being linked by an Easter holiday at Wharton Lodge. Here, then, we have three series which can hardly be regarded as anything but one long series. Yet nobody ever acclaims it. Each story was so beautifully handled that I feel it must have been very popular when it appeared.

It was a story of stock situations, which may spoil its impact now, though it would have hardly have done so for many readers at the time it was published.

Part One we can call the Harry Wharton, Swot, series. Harry inadvertently read part of a letter written by Colonel Wharton, in which the Colonel referred to "an ungrateful nephew." Harry assumed that the letter was about himself, and decided to dispense with his guardian's assistance. This was a stock situation, and misunderstandings of this type can become irritating. It was saved by some fine character pictures concerning Wharton and the Bounder. In one outstanding sequence the Bounder offered an absurdly high price for a



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cycle Wharton was selling, and Wharton chose to regard this as patronage. The bitter feud between Wharton and Smithy resulted, and near the end of the section, Smithy became Captain. Here was more repetition, for Cardew had ousted Tom Merry, and Mornington had treated Jimmy Silver similarly.

Frank Richards did not let the misunderstanding theme become tedious, and it was cleared up in the fourth story. But the feud continued.

Part Two, Easter Holidays at Wharton Lodge, near which the Bounder was living in a bungalow. One story gave us the familiar, but always attractive sequence of the bank raider who doffed his disguise in a wood. Another stock situation was the Bounder setting his followers to kidnap Wharton and maroon him on an island for the night - and getting Redwing instead. Cardew did the same thing in the Cardew, Skipper series.

Part Three, a half dozen excellent stories with Vernon-Smith as Captain of the Remove. So we had three sections dovetailing to make one series, with Frank Richards in excellent form.

If, as I have assumed, this series is not so popular as plenty of the others, what is the reason? Was it the fact that it was really three series in one, and we have found no collective name for it? Was it the repetitions of themes, for there were several?

Or was the S.O.L responsible? The series was very badly presented here. The story ended with the Easter Holiday sequence, the last tale being ruthlessly cut in its final chapters. The third part of the series was omitted entirely.

If some enthusiasts remember the tales only as they appeared in the S.O.L., it may well be that the poor presentation lessened the popularity.

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

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

NO. 46. WHEN IS A COMIC NOT A COMIC?

RAY HOPKINS. I, too, have had that annoying experience of hearing the dear old Magnet and Gem referred to as comics. What cheek! I believe that while the present day set of

mags for young people are referred to collectively as Comics, our weekly papers were never lumped together under one general heading, but were called individually by name. Today a child might say "I want to get my comics" and hold out an insistent hand for half-a-crown. In our young days we said "The Magnet's out today. Can I have tuppence, please?" We had to make do with fewer papers in those days, and 28 pages of reading took longer to peruse than the 20 pages of pictures which are the comics of today. I remember hearing the term Penny Bloods used to describe my own father's reading, but, so far as my own went, each paper was called lovingly by its own name.

MARTIN THOMAS. I mentally shuddered on learning that the pre-war story papers are now classified as "comics." Though I suppose anything is possible when "comic" is applied to graveyard shockers in the peculiar term "horror comics." These inversions seem quite common nowadays. Whereas it was once a compliment to describe someone as "square" the word becomes an insult in the minds of those whose musical muse is St. Vitus.

RON CROLLIE. It is my opinion that the all-embracing term, comics, is now applied to all young people's periodicals for the simple reason that the Boy's Book, as such, has practically disappeared. I doubt if there are half a dozen on the market today, and even these are beginning to take on some of the characteristics of comics, with stories in pictures. I am sure that there would be a market for papers for boys aged 12 - 15, but because they would make only a relatively small profit compared with women's papers, no publisher seems to be interested.

HARRY BROSTER. To us the Companion Papers were never comics because we had access to real comics. Maybe, in that score, we can feel sorry for the youngsters of today. They have plenty of what they term comics, and what comics they are. Briefly they are typical of the modern trend - a trend which can account for other things such as increase in crime, the senseless craving for pleasure, the reluctance to work. One could go on indefinitely.

We know what a real comic is, and we know the difference between the fun and a real comic. For that we can be thankful, but put down the answer to the question in point. It is the sign of changing times, and we cannot do anything about it. Maybe a good many Mr. Quelches, dealing out six of the best when needed, is the answer.

REVIEW

"BILLY BUNTER'S TREASURE-HUNT"

Frank Richards

Cassell 9/6

This, the 28th and latest of the Billy Bunter books, is Frank Richards at his brightest and best. Through a logical sequence of events Bunter becomes possessed of a mysterious parchment, bearing a message in Latin which seems to give the clue to a treasure hidden by one, Brother John, in the days when Henry the Eighth "dissolved the monkeries." The scene changes rapidly, and we visit Number One Study on the Remove Passage, the Fifth Form dwelling of Horace Coker, the eerie cloisters, the Popper's Island in the centre of the gleaming Sark. What more could a Greyfriars fan ask?

This extremely well-written and most readable story has star parts for Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Coker; Skinner and his seedy

toadies have their little hour; and the inimitable Quelch, the real Quelch, and the delicious Prout, the real Prout, are present to add delight to the tale.

It would be unfair to give the game away and tell you whether Bunter eventually finds his treasure, and we hope your will-power may be strong enough to stop you from having a peep at the last page in advance to find out.

"Bunter's Treasure-Hunt" is well up to the high standard of the series, and is highly recommended.

ROUND BRITAIN QUIZ

In mid-February a question, sent in by our Alan Stewart, was asked in the radio programme "Round Britain Quiz."

The question was: "Connect three schools with the names Clifford, Richards, Conquest and state who created all three." The programme had seemed dull and stuffy till this question came up to electrify the panel. The reply came with great enthusiasm and a good deal of very pleasant chit-chat concerning the Hamilton Schools. That the panellist knew his Hamiltoniana was obvious, and a listener would have liked the speech to have lasted longer.

Congratulations to Alan Stewart for his initiative.

GENS OF HAMILTONIANA

Sammy Bunter blinked through his spectacles at a fat figure that rolled in at the gates, and grinned. He recognized his major, whom he had not seen since the day the Lower Fourth walked out of Greyfriars. Sammy had not missed his major. In the Bunter clan brotherly love could not very well continue, as it had never started. But Sammy Bunter rolled down to the gates to greet his returning relative, with a fat grin on his podgy face.

From "The High Oaks Series."

(Sent in by John Houston, Belfast)

Claude Hoskins spent quite a considerable portion of his pocket money on music paper - which he immediately proceeded to deprive of its market value by writing music on it.

From Magnet 1304.

(Sent in by Peter Hanger, Northampton)

(Book Souvenirs are awarded for every item published in this column.)

INTRODUCING HARRY WHARTON & CO., OF GREYFRIARS, AND RALPH STACEY--

A DANGEROUS DOUBLE!



A real
black eye

By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**

FAMOUS SERIES NO. 5

"A Dangerous Double," perhaps the finest story of the famous Stacey series of 1935. This series is considered by most collectors to contain some of Frank Richards' very finest work, and it provides magnificent reading by any yardstick. Featuring Harry Wharton in the star role, and with superb cricket backgrounds, it could hardly fail to ring the bell with Magnet fans.

The artist - Leonard Shields.

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE TODAY

THE CURRENT NOVELS. We regret that, owing to the non-arrival of his advance copies, Walter Webb is unable to review the current Sexton Blake stories in time for this issue of Collectors' Digest.

The February novels are: "SHOT FROM THE DARK" by Philip Chambers. This is an up-to-the-minute mystery thriller featuring the whole of the Sexton Blake organisation, and introducing Splash Kirby and Inspector Coutts. "PURSUIT TO ALGERIA" by Arthur Maclean, a war story in which Sexton Blake is on the trail of a mass-murderer.

POP POLL. The Pop Poll, organised to find the type of story and author most favoured by B.B.L. readers, continues this month. A further category has been added to the list - Tough Thriller. If you have not yet voted, you still have a chance to do so.

PICTURES AND TITLES. Recently a writer in one of our contemporaries expressed a regret that the illustrations on the covers of the modern S.B.L. seldom depict a scene from the story within. We're by no means sure that he hasn't something there. There are exceptions, but usually the covers nowadays are symbolical of the story. This month, for instance, the cover of PURSUIT TO ALGERIA leaves no doubt that the book contains a war story. In the front is a tough and determined soldier with tin helmet and rifle. In the background another soldier has apparently just landed by parachute. A symbolical cover which might well attract the lover of war stories. SHOT FROM THE DARK has in the foreground a well-developed young lady, wearing an extremely low-cut evening dress. She is holding a revolver and looks capable of using it. In the background a young man lies, probably shot. Still further back are two stern-looking men, either detectives or criminals. This picture does illustrate an event in the story, but the presentation is on the symbolical side, suggesting the tough crime story.

A cover of a magazine is intended to attract purchasers. It aims, perhaps, at the casual window-shopper. Which would you consider the most likely to attract? The symbolical cover, or one presenting a scene from the story.

The titles of the stories have become more abstract in recent years - a glance at our BLAKIANA list of old titles makes that very evident. In the old days, the title usually gave some idea of the story. Many of the titles were melodramatic, which did not matter so long as they attracted. Glance at a few: "The House of Fear" "Solved in 36 hours" "The Case of the Man in Black" "The Great Museum Mystery". The modern title, however, is usually snappy and often witty. Look at the titles of the forthcoming March issues: "Something to Kill About" and "Assault and Pepper." Would you be more attracted by the abstract "Assault and Pepper" than by "The Case of the Man in Black"?

To sum up, do pictures matter at all? Do titles matter at all? We should be interested to know your views.

IS IT OUR ANTHONY SKENE? Last month Walter Webb, commenting on Blake authors who write for the B.B.C. drew attention to one, Anthony Skene, the latest recruit to radio and television. Walter seemed not to doubt that this Skene is the Blake writer who created Zenith, the Albino, Bill Lofts, however, in a letter to the Editor of the Digest, thinks that Anthony Julian Skene, the B.B.C. writer, is NOT the famous Blake writer. No doubt somebody will find out for certain in due course.

THERE IS A SEXTON BLAKE. Jack Cook of Newcastle-on-Tyne sends us a cutting from a Northern newspaper concerning a case in which a labourer named Sexton Blake had a brush with the law. "I'm my namesake's greatest fan," declared the real-life Sexton Blake. He has a son also named Sexton, and, according to the newspaper, "has followed the adventures of the legendary sleuth ever since he learned to read."

NaZTB Begins a Splendid New Series at St. Frank's.

THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY



Nipper Investigates the Strange Room in the Old Mill

THE STUDY OF MYSTERY

A story of school life, of the strange and the mysterious, of the old mill, of the study of the book, of the labor of God, the return of the...

(Cover re-drawn by
Keith Godsave)

* *

a share of them. "Nipper's Schooldays" I think, was the first of them; it appeared in the BOYS' HERALD, volume two. Others were "Captain of St. Ninian's" and "Nipper of St. Ninian's" in the BOYS' FRIEND and "The Fighting Fifth" in the BOYS' REALM.

These stories were on orthodox lines as far as I remember, with feuds between rival houses, unpopular masters, snobbish bullying of scholarship boys, and a certain amount of mystery and adventure. A chum of Nipper's at St. Ninian's was Dick Starling, another ward of Nelson Lee. He was one of the principal characters in one of the

NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by JACK WOOD

THE CAREER OF NELSON LEE

(Continuing MEMORIES OF OLD BOYS' PAPERS, written by the late HERBERT LECKENBY in 1943.)

Somewhere about this time Nipper was sent to school - oh no, not to St. Frank's where he spent so many years and had so many adventures, as told in the pages of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. No, the first school Nipper went to be educated was St. Ninian's. It would not have been far from St. Frank's either, for Maxwell Scott placed it in Sussex.

Nipper did stay there long enough to have plenty of thrills and to necessitate several serials for the telling thereof. Nelson Lee, perhaps, did not play a prominent part in these stories but they should be included, for his history would not be complete without them. All three papers had

detective's cases, but the title of the story in which he first appeared I forget.* ('Nipper's Schooldays' * L.P.) Later, however, he appeared to disappear from the scene altogether. At any rate, one never heard of him at St. Frank's when Nipper continued his education there some years later. Maybe that was because another author wrote of Nipper's adventures there, and decided to disown Dick Starling.

He was still at St. Ninian's, however, when "Britain Beyond the Seas" started in No. 353 of the BOYS' FRIEND dated 14th March, 1908. In the first instalment we are told in Maxwell Scott's precise fashion that certain events described therein took place "on Saturday, the 27th of July in the year of grace one thousand nine hundred and seven." I would lay any odds that the 27th of July of that year was a Saturday, for Maxwell Scott could always be relied upon to have details like that correct. He allowed nine months or so between the beginning of the events of the story and the publishing thereof, because the characters were about to travel the world quite a lot, and as their adventures were told each week there would be a gradual bringing up to date. Yes, the creator of Nelson Lee was always scrupulously careful in that respect, but I observe from the first instalment, which I happen to have before me, he had not reached the end of chapter two before he had Nipper "quivering with excitement." As I have said in an earlier chapter, Maxwell Scott would bring in that expression many times and oft.

"Britain Beyond the Seas" was on the lines of Scott's earlier stories, a kind of mixture of "Birds of Prey" and "The Silver Dwarf." Nelson Lee was this time at grips with the 'International Brotherhood of Anarchists' and the all-important papers with names of the members were concealed in a number of books. The search for these took Nelson Lee and Nipper once more wandering over the face of the earth.

Once again A. H. Clarke had the job of illustrating a Nelson Lee story.

Another story, which I find appeared quite some time before this, was "Nelson Lee in the Navy" in the BOYS' HERALD; in fact it ran in that paper before "The Iron Hand" starting some time in November, 1906. Here the plot was the attempt to learn the secrets of a new British submarine by a foreign power, the foreign power on this occasion being France and not Germany. I see that Leonard Shields did some of the illustrations, but I am not sure that he did the whole of it. One rather unusual incident concerning this story was that the week before it concluded, it occupied the front page position - something I don't remember occurring with any other story. Nipper did not join the navy.

"The Winged Terror" also ran in the BOYS' HERALD. As the title suggests, it was an airship story, and once again Nelson Lee had to

fight one of those criminal organisations with many members. He must have been getting used to them by that time.

Other serials of which I have a note are: "Detective Nipper" (BOYS' REALM), "The Golden Quest" (BOYS' FRIEND), "The Film Detective" (BOYS' FRIEND), and "On His Majesty's Service" (BOYS' FRIEND?).

"Nipper of St. Ninian's" one of the stories previously mentioned, appeared in the early months of 1913, so at that time Maxwell Scott had been contributing his Nelson Lee stories regularly for twelve years. I have mentioned 23, and there may be one or two others I have completely forgotten. My comments upon them are a little scrappy, but it is almost an impossibility to obtain complete details at this time of day thirty or more years after they appeared.

The great majority of the stories were re-published in the BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY in more or less abridged form. I have already related how some of them appeared again in the Library in 1938 under another author's name. That was, I think, about the limit.

With the coming of the First Great War (or shortly after the outbreak) Maxwell Scott seems to have given up writing serials about his favourite detective, but this was not the end of the name Nelson Lee. Far from it, for on June 6th, 1915, there appeared the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. It was destined to run for just over eighteen years, being amalgamated with the GEM on 19th August, 1933. It ran in four different series, 568 issues in the first, 194 in the second, 161 in the third and 25 only in the fourth.

No. 1 was a rather unpretentious sort of production, doubtless due to war time restrictions, and the story was entitled "The Mystery of Limehouse Reach." Now for years I was under the impression that until Maxwell Scott laid down his pen for good, no one else wrote a word about the character he had created; but evidently this was not so, for the first six stories were written by other authors, yet Maxwell Scott was responsible for No. 7 "A Mis-carriage of Justice." He also wrote numbers 8 and 13. He may have contributed one or two others, but that was all. It seems rather pathetic, seeing that he had not given up writing altogether, that he should play such a small part in the destiny of a paper bearing the name of the character which was the child of his brain. Probably it was due to the remorseless hand of time, but doubtless it gave him a pang to witness rivals weaving plots round the name Nelson Lee.

That first story, too, did not maintain the reputation he had built up, for it was very poor stuff. Who wrote it I have been unable to discover.

No. 20, "Twenty Fathoms Deep" was written by Edwy Searles Brooks.

In the years that were to follow he was destined to write far more words about Nelson Lee than even Maxwell Scott ever wrote. I think I ought to qualify that statement, however, and say he wrote more words under the guise of a Nelson Lee story, for in many of those in a later day the detective was a very shadowy figure indeed. However, more of that later.

No. 23 was the first of the League of the Green Triangle stories, the arch-criminal head of which was Professor Zingrave. It was entitled "The League of the Green Triangle." This criminal league cropped up quite a number of times in later years. E.S. Brooks wrote the stories and they were on the lines of Maxwell Scott's "Birds of Prey", "The Iron Hand", etc., though written in a more flamboyant style.

G. Hamilton Teed came along in No. 24, "The Case of the Tube of Radium" wherein Nelson Lee was up against the Black Wolf. Teed, of course, was already well known as an author of Sexton Blake stories. He wrote several more for the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, but from that time on E.S. Brooks almost held the field. He introduced two other characters, Jim the Penman and Eileen Dare, Nelson Lee's lady assistant. I don't think E.S. Brooks' name was mentioned in connection with these stories, and at, or about that time, he was writing under the pen-name of Robert W. Comrade. There were plenty of thrills and action in the three series he was contributing at that time, but there was something rather exaggerated about his style, something not quite natural in his dialogue that rather irked at times. Anyway, this type of story ran for over two years, and then, with No. 112, dated July 28th, 1917, there came a great change. Nelson Lee and Nipper went to the school of St. Frank's, the former as a master, the latter as a pupil, and they stayed there a long, long time. I say they stayed there, but actually, although that was supposed to be their home, every now and again they went a-wandering. But more of that anon. Perhaps it is not quite true to say that they settled down at St. Frank's with No. 112, for though that was the first story there were a few of the following numbers that did not deal with the school or the boys; for up to No. 129 St. Frank's appeared to be the scene every other week. The other stories, however, were also written by E.S. Brooks. Anyway, from No. 129 onwards the stories concerned the boys of St. Frank's for a great many years, about fifteen in fact. Each week E. S. Brooks submitted a story several thousand words in length, far longer than a Maxwell Scott instalment of a Nelson Lee serial.

To be continued.

FOR SALE: Collectors' Digest Nos. 63 - 149. 6d each. C.D. Annuals - 1954, 1957, 1958. 5/- each. Postage Extra.
NORMAN PRAGNELL, 33 BRAE STREET, LIVERPOOL, 7.

WANTED: Gems No. 1473 onwards and Boy's Friend Weekly (1919). Have 4d. Boys Friends (1896) for exchange.
S. PERRY, 13, LYNHURST ROAD, LONDON, N.22.

WANTED: Copies of Fun and Fiction, The Firefly, Bullseye and Surprise. Bound copies especially.
P. J. CHECKLEY, 16, DEERHURST ROAD, WHITMORE PARK, COVENTRY.

WANTED: Collectors' Digest 52 to 82. Populars, Boy's Friends Libs.
38, ST. THOMAS ROAD, PRESTON.

WANTED: S.O.L.'s 42, 162, 257, 258, 259. Nelson Lee No. 130 (old series). Your price paid plus postage. The Advertiser has some S.O.L.'s, Nelson Lees, Gems and Magnets for exchange only.
BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.

MODERN BOY wanted: 2 - 4, 115, 118, 145, 147, 150, 152 - 157, 159 - 164, 166 - 181, 183 - 192, 194 - 198, 200, 202, 203, 207, 208, 212 - 237, 239 - 244, 337.
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, 704, 704, 711, 717, 721, 725, 736, 740, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 793, 798, 800, 803, 802, 809, 811, 813, 814, 818, 819, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1390.
MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

WANTED: GEMS 338, 339, 340, 356, 358, 359, 457, 459, 493, 549, 773, 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 984, 986, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1116, 1126, 1129, 1133. MAGNETS 45, 52, 134, 138, 141, 195, 205, 238, 277, 318, 319, 344, 345, 346, 347, 353, 357, 358, 386, 388, 389, 400, 411, 417, 469, 439, 446, 422, 435, 719, 752, 773, 809, 834, 849, 850, 856, 858, 862, 863, 964, 965, 866, 968, 900, 921, 924, 925, 935, 940, 942, 943, 944, 946, 948, 949, 951, 954, 955, 958, 965, 968, 996. POPULARS: 730, 385, 390, 396, 398, 452, 455, 461, 474.
A thousand Magnets, Gems, Lee, etc., available for liberal exchange.
ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

(Latest visitor tour famous Inn comes from Australia in the charming person of Miss Bette Pate. This is what Miss Pate wrote in the visitors' book.)

We have in Great Britain the Welshman, who prays on his knees on Sundays and on his friends all the rest of the week; the Irishman, who does not know what he wants and won't be happy until he gets it; the Scotsman, who keeps the Sabbath and anything else he can get for nothing; and the Englishman, who regards himself as a self-made man and is always worshipping his maker.

(Bette doesn't intend us to take it seriously. She really thinks quite a slice of the folk who live on the shores of the English Channel and the North and Irish Seas.)

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

MIDLAND

We expected that this first meeting of 1961, in an entirely new clubroom, would be supported well, so we were disappointed at the small attendance. As Beryl was still in hospital it was obvious there would be herself and Tom away, Woe Marston had the 'flu and John T was working night shift. Jack Bellfield had a prior engagement, but it was thought that the other people would have made an effort on this special night. Still we had quite an enjoyable programme in the best room we have had to date. Apart from a talk on certain ways to attract new members and some other matters, there was little in the way of business, so after Minutes had been disposed of we got down to the first item which was a quiz by the Secretary; members were asked to give the names of the authors of forty "classics" not all old boys books, but all very well known. Norman Gregory was most successful with thirty two and John Bond came next with thirty.

Hedge Corbett obliged with her selection of eight books for her second visit to the Desert Island. It was mentioned that this item was getting a trifle worn out and as Hedge said, she could not see why she should make much change from the eight selection on her first sojourn, on this now familiar "tropical paradise." For the records the eight were in her own words (and no one could put them better):-

1. The Bible - something for every mood.
2. Song Books - Folk songs and Spirituals and Boosey's Contralto Songs.
3. Complete set of Gilbert and Sullivan Operas.
4. "Determined to Live" by Rev. Brian Hessian.
5. 1960 C.D. Annual and latest Who's Who.
6. "Harry Wharton's Downfall" 14 Magnets.
7. An early Holiday Annual, to read about other schools and boys of whom I know so little.
8. Complete Shakespeare. Here again something for every mood - sad, gay, drama, romance, murder, the lot!

After this, it was her husband's turn. He was down on the programme for a "Game". There was some speculation as to what form this would take, but eventually this turned out to be one of the best and most amusing to date. To complete blank spaces in a short story composed by Jack. We had to fill in the names of certain members of the Midland Club. Win Brown was winner of the money prize given by Jack and she very sportingly handed it over to Norman towards Club funds. Time left little over except for refreshments (served by the hotel staff) and a reading by George Chatham, introducing a favourite character of his - Wells, the butler of Wharton Lodge.

Next meeting at the Arden Hotel on Tuesday, February 28th. 7.30 p.m. prompt.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE

February Meeting

Once again it is a pleasure to record a well-attended meeting, all the regulars, with the exception of Bill Greenwood, being present. Even Bill Windsor, who is far from well at the moment, managed to be with us, when he had every reason to remain at home by the fireside.

We got off to an early start with the chairman's items, and the secretary's report, followed by spirited discussions on subjects of Club interest, which were many and

varied. After the usual break for refreshments we took part in a novel game called "Impromptu Speeches"; this gave scope for considerable hilarity on the part of everybody everybody except the victim, that is. Fortunately each member was in turn the victim, so the agony was evenly shared.

After a debate on a matter closely affecting the section, which was settled to the satisfaction of almost everybody, we participated in yet another game, this one being called "Opposites" submitted by Frank Unwin, which proved a little more difficult than was anticipated, nevertheless most of the contestants put up quite a commendable attempt at finding the answers.

The highlight of the evening, however, was the first of a series of readings from the old papers by individual members. Norman Pragnell chose a Nelson Lee story (one of the Northestia yarns) for his extract, a most excellent selection, which was read in faultless fashion, and, judging from the applause by the audience, this innovation is but the fore-runner of many similar readings at future meetings.

The meeting finished promptly at nine o'clock after the completion of library business, and the company dispersed well pleased with the evening's entertainment, as always.

Next meeting, March 12th (5.30 p.m.) Guest speaker - Frank Shaw. Be early!

FRANK CASE - Secretary.

NORTHERN

Meeting held on Saturday, 11th February, 1961

We were favoured with exceptionally mild weather for the time of year as we assembled at 239 Hyde Park Road for our February meeting. Fourteen of us turned up, and we were happy to find that Stanley Smith had been able to make one of his all too rare visits. Stanley both gave the talk and devised the competition which followed, and our expectations of an enjoyable evening were fully realised.

The talk dealt with old boys' books from early Victorian times to the present day, and was illustrated with some excellent slides depicting covers of various boys' books; some familiar, and others not so familiar. It was very interesting, and also rather nostalgic, as we saw the first and last, covers of the good old Magnet and Gem. Stanley is making a really comprehensive collection of these slide-covers; hence the title of his talk "Work in Progress."

The competition which followed was based on the length of life of various old boys (and girls) books and comic papers. Mollie Allison and Frank Hancock tied for first place.

The meeting closed at 9.15 after a most novel and interesting evening had sped by all too quickly.

Next meeting - Saturday, 11th March.

F. HANCOCK - Hon. Secretary.

LONDON

The thirteenth Annual General Meeting took place on Sunday, February 19th at Hume House, East Dulwich, hosts Ben and Josie Packman. After an address of welcome to all, the retiring chairman, Len Packman, conducted the election for Chairman for 1961. Josie Packman was elected un-opposed and Don Webster was duly elected vice-chairman. For the latter's election, the rule re vice-chairmanship was changed.

A varied agenda of quizzes, competitions and readings was indulged in, and all had an enjoyable time.

Meeting venues were fixed for most of 1961, the March one being fixed for Sunday, 19th at Brian Doyle's abode, "The Garden Flat" 13 Northbourne Road, London, S.W.4. Phone MACauley 7946. Full directions as to how to get there will appear in monthly newsletter, but kindly advise Brian if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

AUSTRALIA

The year's activities started well with a meeting at Cahill's Restaurant on 16th February when members gathered to discuss details for their appearance as guest speakers at the Cook Collectors' Society of Australia's monthly meeting on 24th February.

After an excellent dinner those present settled down with the letters from overseas. New Year greetings cards from the Northern Club, Jack Murtagh of New Zealand, and Victoria collector Tom Dobson were passed round as well as the 'Foghorn' and 'News-letter'.

Members were pleased to hear that arrangements had been finalised with Jack Murtagh for a tape recording to be made, starting with greetings from N.Z. and finishing with Australian comments. This is on its way across at the moment so should be completed some time in March or April and will then be posted to our friends on Merseyside.

Congratulations were extended to the Midland Club and to Harry Broster in particular, for their well-deserved success in winning the Greyfriars Cup, and also to those contributors whose stories received praise from the judges. We hope to join in the contest this year.

Our thanks to Ron Hodgson for the efforts he put in, as secretary of the Northern Club, to keep us well informed. Our best wishes to his successor. The remainder of the meeting was spent in co-ordinating the four speakers who will represent the Club at the Public Library on 24th February. Each will cover his own particular field in the hobby, starting with mid-19th century literature by Stan Nicholls, Blakiana from Vic Colby, Ernie Carter covering Nelson Lee and Syd Smyth upholding the honours for Hamiltoniana. After the treasurer, Ernie Carter, had given the financial report, the date of the next meeting was decided for March 23rd. The evening's business closed at 8.15.

B. PATE - Secretary.

Yours Sincerely

(Interesting extracts from the Editor's postbag)

ERIC COPEMAN (Australia) I like the way you're reproducing the covers on the front of the Digest. How about one of the old Monsters some time?

JIM SHEPHERD (Sheffield) The covers of the No. 1's are really tip-top. What memories they bring! You are keeping the old mag bang up to the mark.

JOHN STOKES (Dublin) When I saw our February cover my heart missed twenty-seven beats and my hair stood on end. I thought the School Friend had "taken over" our C.D. Don't you ever do the like of that again without proper warning.

J. LENNARD (Manchester) I send my thanks for many happy hours among my old-time "friends" and look forward to the next Digest with relish. Your covers are "the goods" and I wonder if I shall ever see covers of Boy's Realm, Monster, Jester, Puck, Chuckles, and the Firefly.

LARRY MORLEY (Hanwell) The January cover brought back memories of Chips. What a pity the grand old comic was stopped. Ah well, I suppose we have to give way to progress(?)

FRANK LAY (Whetstone) How heartily I agree with your remarks on "progress!" However, there are still bright spots and the continued existence of the C.D. and S.P.C. and the

bands of friends whom they bind together is perhaps the brightest. Whilst these bonds continue the old-fashioned ideals of loyalty and straightness will not die and we can all feel we are doing something to preserve them.

G. BURGESS (Salisbury) The plum of the February Digest is "Nipper" in Jack Wood's Lee Column. I was interested, too, in William Lister's item. It would be nice if one of our Lee fans could write an article on Ezra Quirk and his pet owl, and the strange things that happened at St. Frank's during his time.

J. H. BUSBY (Acomb) Some day I hope there may be an article on the single issues of the Magnet which contain such well-written stories.

L. S. ELLIOTT (London) In Film Fun there is a new serial called "The Silver Dwarf" featuring Jason Lee, detective and Mark Ryner. Unless my memory is at fault, isn't this a revision of the old "Silver Dwarf" and "Missing Heir" stories in the Nelson Lee, with the latter versus Mark Ryner?

CHAS. CHURCHILL (Exeter) Recently I obtained a book from a lending library. A light murder mystery entitled "Holiday with Murder" by Glyn Carr. To my surprise, on page 122, I read the following:-

"Thank's awfully," said the detective, "My grandfather was at school in England and collected some volumes called Gem and Magnet - school stories - which were bequeathed to me. I read a good deal in them when I was studying English."

Sir Abercrombie, himself not unfamiliar with Tom Merry, Billy Bunter and the rest of that once perennially youthful cast, now perceived whence Senor Pons derived part of his vocabulary."

To my delight, the rest of the story contains many phrases (put into the mouth of Senor Pons) which can only have been written by an old reader of Hamilton papers.

WALTER WEBB (Birmingham) Harry Dowler was, of course, quite correct about "Sexton Blake's Christmas Case" (C.D. February 1961). W. Murray Graydon is one of the certs in any U.J. or S.B.L. list - you simply cannot mistake his extremely dated and sentimental approach which is often obvious from the



HOW THEY BEGAN

No. 4

TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY, one of the most delightful papers for the young in heart. The year - 1921.

opening sentence. By a comparison of styles, it is obvious too, that Arthur Paterson and Arthur J. Palk were two separate individuals. Paterson died in London three weeks after Christmas 1927, and, so as far as I know, Palk is still alive in Australia.

WILLIAM LISTER (Blackpool) Some readers seem to think that Handforth featured too much in the later Lees. To my mind he was always a most outstanding character. Nipper was too good to be true; he could do everything perfectly; but characters like Handforth are as alive today as in the roaring twenties. The very fact that he featured so prominently is proof that there was a demand for him. One might as well suggest that our friends of Hamiltoniana had too much of Billy Bunter - as if they could!

F. ADDINGTON SYMONDS (Hendon) Congratulations on the general appearance and contents of Collectors' Digest. Every article is invariably so attractively set out that one feels compelled to read it, even if - as on very rare occasions - the subject does not specially interest one personally. The illustrations are superb. I wonder if you have ever thought of running a series of articles dealing with well-known editorial personalities, e.g. Hinton, Down, Twyman, Garrish; also some articles on the old papers about which one hears so little - Chums, Boy's Life, Boy's Best, The Scout (the latter in its hey-day, when it was edited by Haydn Dimmock.)

(We heartily welcome for consideration articles on any subject connected with the old papers. The wider the range, the happier we are - ED.)



(BETTE PATE, C.D. contributor, and Secretary of our Australian Club, in party mood.)

ROBERT MORTIMER (East Molesey) To my delight I saw a Tom Merry book for sale: "Tom Merry and Co. of St. Jim's," one of the early ones which I hadn't read. I have been reading it now, and thoroughly enjoyed it. Although my collection is mostly stories of Greyfriars, my first love was the dear old Gem, way back in 1912. It was grand to meet once again those lovable characters Tom Merry, Gussy, Figgins, and even sour old Ratcliff. They bring back such wonderful memories.

MR. C. H. CHAPMAN HITS THE HEADLINES

Recently the Norfolk newspaper "The Journal" devoted a page to an article on Mr. Chapman, the famous artist, with a delightful photograph of him which made one feel happy at once. Mr. Chapman was born at Thetford in Norfolk - and Norfolk is clearly very proud of its famous son.

In 1900 he celebrated his 21st birthday by getting a cartoon - his maiden effort - in "The Captain". During the next ten years his work appeared in "Daily Graphic", "Chips" and "Comic Cuts" and in "Boys' Own Paper" "Chums" "The Scout" "Boys' Friend" and in fact, nearly all the boys' papers famous in their day.

He worked on the staff of "Judy" a short-lived challenger to "Punch", illustrated by Ally Sloper, and joined the Amalgamated Press in 1911 as artist for "The Magnet."

Of this experience he remarks: "I look back upon those years as among the happiest of my life. Every week as I worked on those illustrations the boys and their masters became real to me. I joined in their adventures and shared their experiences. Of course, it meant a devil of a lot of hard work, but I got a great kick out of it because

there was always something new to think up."

Today Mr. Chapman never rides when he can walk, and he helps to keep himself fit with a cold morning bath all the year round. His hobby, when he has time for it, is landscape painting.

(The page from "THE JOURNAL" was sent to us by Mr. Leonard Hamby, also a son of Norfolk. - ED.)

T.V. STAR TALKS ABOUT BUNTER

by

Victor Welland, Jnr.

I was very interested in the feature by W. H. Goodhead "GREY-FRIARS ON RADIO" in last month's issue of "Collectors' Digest"! Mr. Goodhead mentioned that T.V. star Charles Tingwell, of "Emergency Ward 10" began his career at the age of 17, playing the part of Bob Cherry in an Australian Billy Bunter radio serial - "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School!" He suggested that further information on the subject would be very interesting, so I decided to get in touch with Mr. Tingwell, and enquire as to whether he could supply the information or not, as I for one would be very interested, and so would many other members of the 'Circle' I was sure.

It was not so very long afterwards that I received a very kind and interesting letter from Mr. Tingwell. He told me the radio serial was an adaptation of the Bunter stories, from one of the very popular magazines of that time. (Mr. Tingwell is not sure, but thinks that it was the Magnet!) It ran successfully on Australian radio, for many years, and is still repeated from time to time on country stations.

It was recorded in 1940 and was Mr. Tingwell's first professional job. He recorded the episodes after school hours. Readers who know the famous T.V. star Redmond Phillips, will be surprised to know that it was he who wrote and adapted the episodes. He also had a part in the cast! Mr. Tingwell is not sure how many episodes of the serial he recorded in those days, but tells me that it was probably about 40 to 50. Unfortunately, he had to leave the cast to become a staff radio announcer after leaving school. He says that he can't remember how many episodes were recorded after he left, but says that many of Australia's best known actors have worked on the serial.

To quote Mr. Tingwell's own words..."In some ways it was one of the early popular serials which helped to pioneer what was to become, a great post war industry. It is hoped someone will be able to start a T.V. serial soon, to help to do for T.V. what Billy Bunter and his pals helped do for Australian radio."

I am sure that we all thank Mr. Tingwell for this information.