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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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NO. 176

AUGUST 1961

HAT O'FLYNN

FLICK.

JEM PETERS

LESTRANGE.

BETLES.

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ODDS AND ENDS - FINAL EDITION

By Gerry Allison

OLD BOY'S COLLECTORS CONVENTION. At last it looks like coming off - the long discussed conference for members of our Hobby. The date planned is Easter 1962, and the venue Matlock, situated in the loveliest part of Derbyshire, at an hotel run by one of our circle.

During the day we shall have outings to local beauty spots - Chatsworth, Haddon Hall, The Peak, etc., whilst the evenings will be devoted to talks, discussions, games and competitions, with swapping sessions, and all the chinwag the heart can desire! 'JayGee' writes: "I like the idea. I had the first Science Fiction Convention at my hotel just after the war, and it is still remembered by all the old-timers of the S-F world. Their meetings have now grown into a great affair, where they take over a number of hotels in a town for their Annual get-together."

Watch the pages of the 'Collectors' Digest' for more news of this forth-coming event.

MAGNET NO. 884. No! It has not turned up. You will see an appeal elsewhere in this number for the bereft librarian. In a letter, Bill Lofts says: "This is really fantastic, Gerry! This number of the Magnet has been sought after by at least three collectors for many years. I can quite understand your dismay. Can your copy be identified, in case such a number is eventually offered to those collectors who have been seeking it for so long."

Well, that doesn't sound very hopeful, but I was always an optimist.

POSTSCRIPT TO THE POPULARITY CONTEST. At Chesterfield, besides the draw for the 23 runners - (Doreen Hodgson got Harry Wharton) - our 'resident turf-accountant' John Jarman, made up a book for the field. The odds he offered ranged from 6/4 on Harry Wharton, to 5000/1 on the whole of the non-Hamiltonian runners put together! John certainly knows his Popularity Stakes!

L'ENVOI. This column began in December 1959 as a tribute to the memory of my friend Herbert Leckenby. I wanted to do my little bit to keep his beloved 'C.D.' going.

But now as the Magazine stands four-square to all the winds that blow, thanks largely to its new editor, and as I am under doctor's orders to take things easy, I think the time has come to say good-bye. I have enjoyed writing these snippets each month, and hope they have pleased you. I would like to thank all who have written to me, even if in disagreement.

So now I will say - 'Good Collecting and Happy Reading.'

Yours sincerely,

Gerald Allison

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JACK WAS THE BOY!

By Tom Hopperton

Who was the most famous schoolboy of them all? Note the tense, and think twice before you say "Billy Bunter." Even if the younger Harmsworth did read "The Magnet" regularly he did not rename Fleetway House "Bunter House", but Edwin J. Brett proudly dubbed 6 West Harding Street 'Harkaway House', and Bracebridge Hemyng's identity was so far submerged in his characters that he was referred to as "Harkaway" by both his friends and himself.

Besides, Bunter is a mere stripling compared with Jack Harkaway, who is ninety this month. He began his extended race on 19th August, 1871, when the cover story of "Boys of England", No. 249, was "Jack Harkaway's Schooldays," by the author of "Eton Schooldays", "Life at a Public School", "The Hidden City", etc. His popularity was both striking and instantaneous. Brett did not follow his usual policy of waiting anything up to a couple of years before re-issuing a serial in

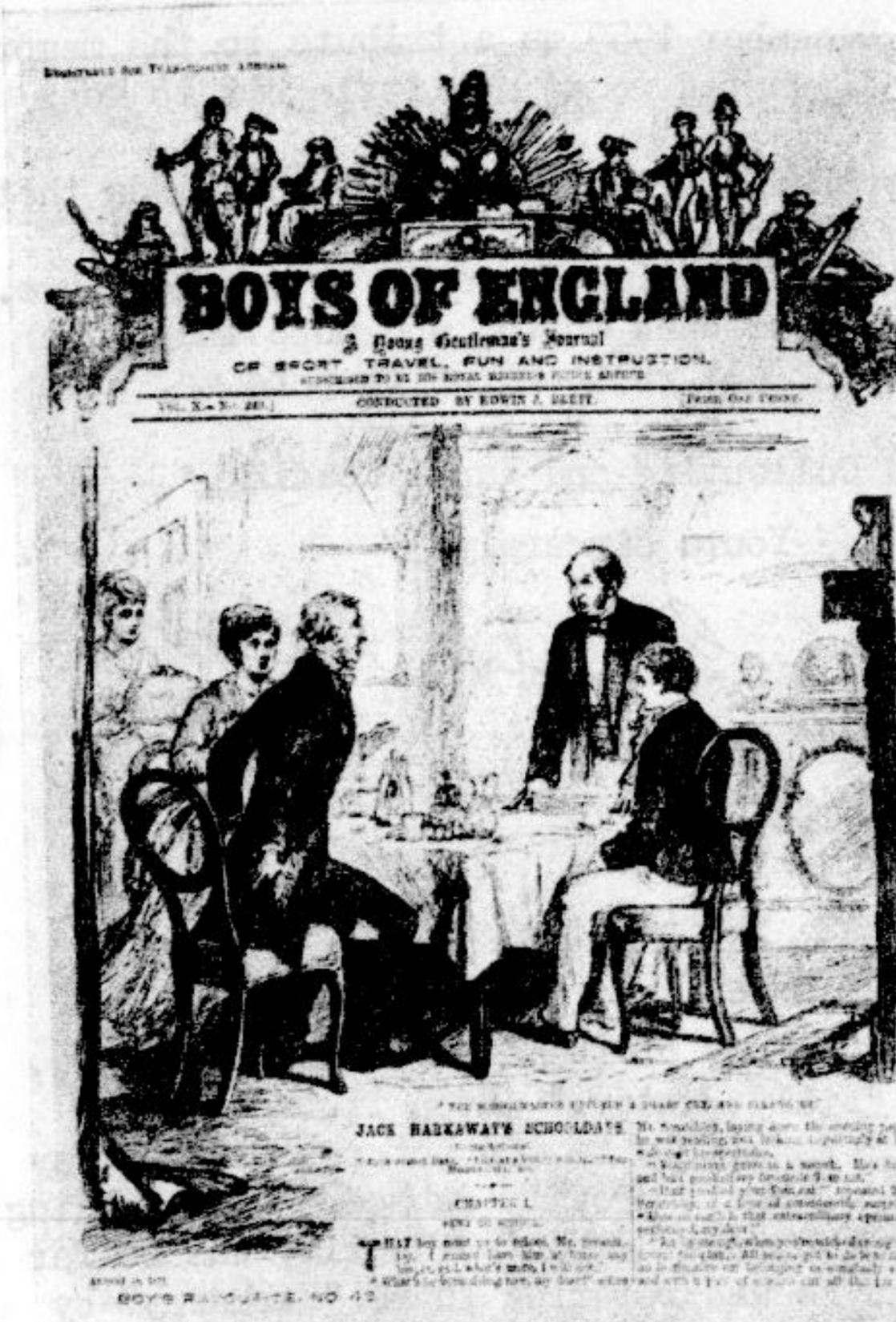
penny numbers. By October he had rushed out both the "Schooldays" and "Jack Harkaway After Schooldays" in volume form, although only about half the first story had as yet appeared in "Boys of England."

Even more convincing proof came from across the Atlantic, where the stories has been promptly pirated. The pirate, Frank Leslie, of "The Boys' and Girls' Weekly" was so impressed by the enthusiasm aroused that he hauled down the Black Flag and offered good dollars to tempt Hemyng to the U.S.A. with an exclusive contract. The salary - a reputed £10,000 a year - was then enormous, and can not often have been exceeded in later years. From 1873 to 1876, Jack disported himself among Redskins and pirates in the Western Hemisphere.

These American stories were reprinted here by the Emmetts, who did nothing to smooth their acrimonious rivalry with Brett by advertising: "The HOGARTH HOUSE edition of Jack Harkaway by Bracebridge Hemyng is the ORIGINAL EDITION fully illustrated - the cheapest, most complete and entrancing edition published." This was

pretty cool, as Brett had 16 volumes in his list, and they had only seven, but they did at least give Hemyng, with whom they were friendly, credit for his work.

This was just as well. Argument about substitute authorship did not originate with "The Magnet" and there were rumours that Hemyng's was not the only hand. There can be no real doubt in the matter, but Brett's



disingenuous tricks did much to cloud the issue. He was reluctant to share any kudos accruing from a story by naming his authors, and with Harkaway he went a step further. Right down to the 'nineties, each re-issue was headed: "Edwin J. Brett's Jack Harkaway, etc," and he was fond of such specious statements as that which ended "Harkaway and His Boy Tinker" (and did Harry Maxwell draw a hint from that for Blake's assistant?). "In bringing to a conclusion the long series of Harkaway stories, Mr. Edwin J. Brett ... (thanks the readers). To invent the plot and incidents has been a labour of love on the part of Mr. E. J. Brett..." The modicum of truth in this was that he had incensed

Hemyng by continual interference, but if the object was not to persuade the unwitting reader that Brett was the author, how can it be explained?

The "Schooldays" was kept standing in print for over thirty years, as were the companion volumes in which Jack went to Oxford, Australia, China, Greece, America, and most other of "the round world's imagined corners."

How many times they were re-issued in penny and halfpenny numbers baffles all reckoning. In addition, there is a mass of material which was never reprinted, poured out by Bracebridge Hemyng until his death in 1901, when Jack was creating havoc among the Boers.

There was an element of deception in this. No author had yet grasped that it was even possible, much less desirable, to keep a boy in the Fourth Form for fifty years. Heroes grew up, and Jack had so many adventures that he aged more quickly than most. By 1900, when he should nominally have been about forty-five, he was a white-haired old man, and it was his grandson who saved us in the Boer War. There were, in fact, three Harkaways, but it made no appreciable difference to the stories. If ever history repeated itself, it did with Jack I, Jack II and Jack III, and we can think of them collectively as Jack Harkaway - the most remarkable and outstanding success in boys' fiction of the nineteenth century, and the character held most in veneration by the sadly thinning ranks of his staunch followers.

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THE HARD COVER SCHOOL STORY CLASSICS

By W. J. A. Hubbard

No. 1. "The Bending of a Twig" by Desmond Coke.

"The Bending of a Twig" was originally published in 1900 and has been reprinted quite a number of times since, which leaves no doubt of

its popularity. As it is dedicated to the author's Housemaster at Shrewsbury from 1893 to 1899, it rather suggests it was possibly a maiden effort on Mr. Coke's part. If this is so then it is a remarkably fine one.

It concerns one, Lycidas Marsh, and his career at Shrewsbury School from the time of his entry as a new boy until the time he leaves as a Monitor and the Head of his House. The son of a poet - which explains the choice of name - he has never been to school or enjoyed the company of other boys before entering Shrewsbury, a disadvantage which his mother endeavours to correct by giving him a number of school stories to read. The opening chapters of the book, describing Lycidas' parents and home life, are finely written with some brilliant satirical touches. His attempts, at the start of his school career, to live up to the standard of the herces who feature in the school stories he has read are also very convincingly portrayed. Personally I suspect that many of the experiences of Lycidas Marsh are those of Mr. Coke himself.

Much of the charm of the story lies in the fact that Lycidas is portrayed as merely an average boy both in work and play. We read of no exceptional feats on the playing fields as these are reserved for the villain (so called) of the story - Russell - and they happen "off stage." The yarn is concerned with the curious duel between these two characters - a duel between an average boy - rather uncertain and unsure of himself - and a brilliant athlete who despises him from the very beginning. All the other characters - even the Housemaster, Mr. Alton - who gives Lycidas his chance to make good - are rather shadowy figures. The story is psychological and confirms to type in that there is no happy ending; Marsh and Russell remain opposites to the very end and there can be no compromise with them on any point. Yet the yarn is a realistic study of school life and is not by any means out of its element today.

"The Bending of a Twig" can be very fairly compared with such stories as "Martin Blaise" (E. F. Benson) and "Jeremy at Crale" (Sir Hugh Walpole), novels on school life which were never really intended for youthful consumption. It would therefore appear to be, to a boy, rather a dull yarn. As to its place in literature of this type, however, there can be little doubt, and if it really was a first book then it was the very worthy beginning to the career of a very fine writer.

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

This month's brilliant cover drawing comes from Harry Webb of Bury St. Edmunds.

Nelson Lee Column

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

With the holiday season now in full swing, thoughts turn naturally to the friends with whom one will go, or to those new friends one will make. Reuben Godsave has some pertinent observations to bring us concerning schoolboy friendships.

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MUTUAL ATTACHMENT

By R. J. Godsave

Many friendships formed at school do not endure beyond one's schooldays. Perhaps, this is because many of the so called friendships are a mutual desire to avoid that loneliness that can beset one during those impressionable years.

In the Nelson Lee Library, E. S. Brooks gave his readers various examples of friendships. That of Handforth, Church and McClure is one that I would say, would extend well beyond their schooldays.

A most difficult fellow to get on with, Handforth possessed virtues which counteracted his vices, if one can call obstinacy, hasty temper, etc., vices. Both Church and McClure were aware of this, and made the necessary allowances which was the keystone of their friendship.

Although Handforth knocked his chums about, he would not allow anyone else to do so, being fond of them both in his way. The majority of times, Church and McClure fell in with Handforth's whims and peculiar ideas. This saved an awful lot of trouble, and they were at hand to rescue him from some of the results of his follies. Thus, it was from a sense of duty to look after him that caused them to be an inseparable trio.

Another friendship which would last through the years is that of Nipper, Tregellis-West and Watson. I would say that it was based on respect for each other. Nipper had an extremely high opinion of the sagacity possessed by Tregellis-West. Watson, though not particularly bright, was a loyal friend.

In the earlier Nelson Lee's, Fullwood before his reformation, was the leader of Study A in the Ancient House and friendly with his study mates, Gulliver and Bell. This friendship would not last, as

Fullwood held them both, somewhat, in contempt.

Generally, the occupants of a study would form a friendship which would only last as long as they were in that study. If a boy disliked another inmate of the study, he would, if possible, move out or just tolerate the other. (I used to come in contact with a man who aroused in me a sense of dislike. But I found over the years of associating with him that he possessed certain qualities which I came to admire, and that subsequently, my sense of dislike vanished.)

Few school friendships survive into adult life, although there will always be the exception.

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MAGNETS FOR SALE. Numbers 1182, 1183 (sub-standard). Also numbers 1521, 1537, 1538, 1539, 1540, 1541 (average copies). Also 21 numbers between 1625 to 1675 (mint and near mint copies). G. LETTEY, 27 HEATHER CLOSE, KINGSWOOD, BRISTOL.

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SPECIAL FOR NEXT MONTH - "DIXON HAWKE AND THE THOMSON PAPERS." A treat not to be missed.

BLAKIANA.....

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

Further to our editor's opening paragraph in the July C.D. concerning Bill Lofts' interview with "Pierre Quiroule", it is with my grateful thanks to Bill that I have the pleasure this month in presenting the first instalment of his article.

Like Eric, I have always rated "Pierre Quiroule" as one of the finest of the pre-war Blake writers (my own collection of the S.B.L.'s includes all the original P.Q. stories and many of the reprints), and although I have known the author's real name for a number of years it comes as a pleasant surprise to learn that he is still with us ... I am sure that many of you will agree when I say it's a pity his stories are not!

* * * * *

JOSIE PACKMAN

I MEET PIERRE QUIROULE

By W. O. G. Lofts

"Let's go and see old Sexton Blake" said the newspaper man to Basil Reynolds, as they drove through the country roads of Buckinghamshire. His companion nodded, and soon they were speeding down narrow lanes and through small villages until they came to a hostelry. The host, "Sexton Blake", greeted them warmly. An elderly, most friendly sort of man, he was soon talking about his favourite topic, Sexton Blake, and all three enjoyed a most entertaining evening.

The host, nicknamed 'Sexton Blake', was a very popular writer in the 'twenties and 'thirties, especially for his stories featuring the famous detective. The reader who is not familiar with the name W. W. SAYER - his real name - will certainly recognise his nom-de-plume "Pierre Quiroule", in the opinion of the writer one of the most brilliant of all pre-war authors of Sexton Blake stories.

The above event happened as long ago as 1946, and with W. W. Sayer being described at that time as "an elderly man", it was more than likely that - like the great majority of old Blake authors - he had since passed on. A telephone call to the hostelry in question brought the disappointing news that 'Sexton Blake' was no longer Mine Host, and thus it seemed that another interesting story and fresh

information on Blake lore had been lost through the passing of time.

Perseverance, however, won the day. Reversing, as it were, the newspaper reporter's business as a seeker of news, I succeeded in tracing this reporter, who knew W. W. Sayer intimately but who had been out of touch with Basil Reynolds for years. He was now an editor on one of the Sunday newspapers, and within a short time I not only received the welcome news that 'Sexton Blake' was still very much alive, but lived in retirement not far from his former residence!

A bus ride from outside the historical Windsor Castle and through the heart of Windsor Great Park saw me almost outside the home of W. W. Sayer, and within a few minutes I was greeting 'Pierre Quiroule' in person and giving him news of old friends and colleagues of his in those Amalgamated Press days. Of medium height, lean build and fresh complexion (and with a hair style similar to that of Sexton Blake as depicted by Eric Parker), the most striking feature about him is his shrewd, light-blue eyes - which instantly reminded me of 'Granite Grant.' Extremely fit and active, Mr. Sayer looks years younger than would be expected of one who will be 70 early next year.

It will be readily appreciated that during the course of over three hours conversation, I not only learned many things of general interest but also quite a lot in particular concerning the writings of W. W. Sayer - alias 'Pierre Quiroule.' Here, then, for the benefit of readers of Blakiana, is a full account of that meeting and the information gleaned therefrom.

WALTER WILLIAM SAYER was born at Forest Hill, London, S.E. in March 1892 - a district, curiously enough, within a stone's throw of the home of our Conductress of Blakiana.

After attending several local schools, Mr. Sayer became a pupil of grey-coated Roan School at Greenwich Village. Good at mathematics and writing, he edited the school magazine. He probably inherited some of his writing ability from his grandfather, W. F. Sayer, who was manager of the Islington Commercial School, Frog Lane, New North Road, London (now non-existent) and formerly a master at Kingsland Birkbeck School. He was also a poet of some repute - his works are to be found in the British Museum. Strangely enough, the father of 'Pierre Quiroule' had no literary aspirations at all and was, for most of his life, an ordinary shipping clerk.

Upon leaving school W. W. Sayer went to work in the City at the Midland Bank which stood opposite the 'Cock Tavern' in Fleet Street, E.C. (These premises have since been demolished). Thus, at a very early age he was within a stone's throw of the mighty Amalgamated Press

where, in later years, he was to become so well known for his excellent work.

Mr. Sayer has an excellent memory and can well remember those 'king pins' of Sexton Blake writers in 1909 and 1910, W. M. Graydon and G. H. Teed, having an account at the branch of the bank where he was second cashier and paying-in large sums of money each week - sometimes around £100. When one considers what that was worth in relation to to-day, it will readily be seen what good money an author whose work was prolific in those days could earn. It was no wonder, then, that young W. W. Sayer - whose salary was only £2 per week - thought he would like to try his hand at story-writing, and his chance came when he met William H. Back, then a Managing Editor and later Director of the Amalgamated Press Ltd.

The very first stories that W. W. Sayer wrote were for the old paper "PLUCK" and featured Detective Inspector Will Spearing of Scotland Yard (it seems that stories introducing Spearing were written by a number of people). He also wrote for the GIRL'S REALM under the name of 'Bessie Ducane', the editor of this paper being none other than Crichton Miln, who penned hundreds of girls fiction stories under the name of 'Madge Crichton', and also wrote a single story for the Sexton Blake Library. Other contributions by W. W. Sayer were for TITBITS and TUBBY HAIG LIBRARY.

The first World War brought a halt to his writing career when he joined up and served his country on the battlefields of France. On demobilisation, he set up in a small office in Fleet Street as a freelance writer. Late in 1919 he was asked to write a story for the S.B.L. In this story he featured a character of his own creation - 'Granite Grant' - the title of the yarn was "The Case of the King's Spy," and it was published in the S.B.L. in 1920 (No. 110 1st series). Mr. Sayer is of the opinion that this was a very poor effort, though many readers - including myself - may beg to differ! He had no intention of continuing to feature 'Grant' in later stories, and so married him off to a beautiful actress; but such was the demand from readers for more stories of 'Grant' that he was compelled - by a 'twist' in a later plot - to make him appear a bachelor again. 'Mademoiselle Julie' made her initial appearance in his second story for the S.B.L. entitled "The Mysterious Wireless Message," and she and 'Grant' made the ideal pair of Secret Service agents. Neither of these characters was based on any person known to Mr. Sayer, though the type may have been known to him during his service in the war.

(To be continued)

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No. 493	The Red Boomerang (R. Purvale)	J. G. Brandon
No. 494	Murder on the Pier	H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 495	The Mystery of the Cashiered Officer (Plummer)	G. H. Teed
No. 496	The Touring Company Crime	A. S. Hardy
No. 497	The Crime in Carson's Shack (Mark Judson)	R. Hardinge
No. 498	By Order of the Tong (R. Purvale)	J. G. Brandon
No. 499	The Case of the Murdered Taxi Driver	W. J. Bayfield
No. 500	The Man in Brown	W. Shute
No. 501	The Case of the Stolen Test Tube (D. Tallon)	F. Warwick
No. 502	The Secret of the Glen	R. C. Armour
No. 503	The Truth about Lord Trench	G. Verner
No. 504	The Havana Mystery (G. Grant, Mdlle Julie) (Reprint of 1st series No. 363)	W. W. Sayer
No. 505	The Case of the Murdered Commissionaire (Purvale)	J. G. Brandon
No. 506	The Abyssinian Mystery	H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 507	The Secret Inquest	W. J. Bayfield
No. 508	The Soho Cafe Crime (G. Grant, Mdlle Julie) (Reprint of 2nd series No. 5)	W. W. Sayer

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WANTED URGENTLY: "Populars" 2nd series. Any issues between numbers 170 and 260. Very good price offered.

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

WANTED: S.O.L's 42, 258. 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.

WANTED: Populars 120, 153, 160, 162, 163, 168, 169, 217, 219. Any pink Union Jacks prior to 1917. Sexton Blake Libraries, first series 1, 2, 4 - 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 21 - 27, 29 - 32, 34 - 64. Fair condition; please state price.

S. G. SWAN, 51, BEATTY AVENUE, VICTORIA PARK EAST, WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

FOR SALE or exchange. Magnets, Gems, Nelson Lees, Penny Populars, Union Jacks, Champions, Sexton Blake Libraries, Boys Friend Libraries, Champion Library, Boys Realms, Greyfriars Heralds, All Sports.

F. VERNON LAY, 52 OAKLEIGH GARDENS, WHETSTONE, LONDON, N.20.

WILL ANY GOOD FRIENDS help me complete a collection of every GEM featuring Talbot? Your price gladly paid for any of the following numbers: 686, 687, 819, 820, 878, 879, 911, 940, 943, 944, 946, 988, 989, 990, 991, 1114.

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

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OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

THE CHESTERFIELD MEETING

(Reported by Harry Broster and Frank Hancock)

This was held at the Hotel Portland on Sunday, June 25th. Twenty attended, including one member each from Merseyside and London. For the record, the twenty happy people were Harry and Mrs. Dowler, John and Mrs. Jarman, Gerry and Myra Allison, Mary Allison, Elsie Palmer, Jack and Madge Corbett, Ron and Doreen Hodgson, Norman Gregory, Frank Unwin, Frank Case, Bill Lofts, Jack Bellfield, John Tomlinson, David Lancake, Harry Broster.

After an excellent dinner, the chair was taken by Norman Gregory, who expressed pleasure that London and Merseyside were represented. Gerry Allison suggested that we should consider holding a convention over a long week-end, or even a week, so that people from all the clubs could come to stay. It was generally agreed that a national holiday, Easter or Whitsun, would be most suitable for this.

Gerry Allison gave a reading from a Red Magnet, starring Alonzo Todd. A discussion, inaugurated by Harry Broster, followed on that vexed question of what we mean exactly by Old Boys' Books.

"Collectors' Digest" and its contents also came in for comment, and some members considered that Hamiltoniana, Lee and Blake topics were perhaps given too much prominence at the expense of other publications. On the other hand, it was felt that if this was so it was only an indication as to where the interests of the majority of readers lay. It was agreed that the relatively small size of the C.D. was a handicap to the Editor in this respect.

Next came a sweepstake based on the recent C.D. competition to find the most popular character in old boys' books. Each of us drew a slip bearing the name of one of the candidates, the winner, of course, not being known at the time of this report.

Harry Broster set a stiff quiz, won by Bill Lofts. A puzzle by Frank Hancock was based on school characters, and this was also won by Bill Lofts.

Once again, a grand reunion of Midland and Northern, but this time with representatives of the other clubs.

MIDLAND

Meeting held 27th June, 1961

Held in the Henley Room at the Arden Hotel, this was a good start for the 1961 - 2 year. We had the pleasure of welcoming Frank Case from Merseyside and Mr. Gribble of Birmingham. Further joy came in the welcome appearance, after a long absence, of Ray Bennett. The new Chairman, Tom Porter, gave a warm welcome to our visitors.

George Chatham provided the first item by a reading from a 1930 Gem, dealing with the amusing antics of Skimpole of St. Jim's. Joe Marston gave an account of his Desert Island selections which were as follows: (1) 1925 Champion Annual with an article on cricket by J. N. Pentelow. (2) S.O.L. The China Series. (3) Nelson Lee old series, "Jim the Penman." (4) C.D.A. for 1957. (5) Gem classic "The Return of the Toff." (6) Magnet "Bunter Court" series. (7) Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden. (8) Revised edition of the Bible.

Ted Davey gave us the first of a series of talks on Frank Richards' humour, starting off with a brief survey of Horace Coker, a favourite character with Ted. We were treated to some humorous incidents in the career of the Chump of the Fifth. Every minute of it was enjoyed, and we look forward to the second instalment. HARRY BROSTER, Secretary.

AUSTRALIA

This meeting on July 13th was one of the most hilarious to date, and it went with a swing from first to last. An animated discussion on the results of the C.D. Competition opened proceedings. Our congratulations to Brian Doyle for a truly amazing effort. Some of our members would like to know your methods, Brian, as they reckon it would bring them a fortune at the races! General opinion was pleasure that Harry Wharton had won, but many were not so enthusiastic over Billy's placing at second. Naturally, the Blake fans were pleased to see their choice so well placed, but surprised at Tinker's low rating. Great show, Eric!

We had an enjoyable half-hour with letters from friends overseas, including Ron Hodgson, Bill Hubbard, Frank Unwin, as well as our absent members Arthur Holland and Bill Hall. It was grand to see the old familiar "Foghorn" again, bringing news of the activities of our Merseyside friends.

A questionnaire received from the Directory of Literary and Debating Societies in London was discussed before completion by the secretary. It is hoped that some interesting contacts will result from this friendly gesture.

The rest of the evening was spent in preparing for the tape recording to be made at our August meeting. Sorry for the delay, folks, but we are not able to obtain the machine in July. We are having great fun doing it, and hope you will have even more in listening to it. The evening ended, as usual, in the local coffee-shop, with members toasting the hobby in fragrant capuchino, and making great plans for their theatrical debut in August.

BETTE PATE - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held 9th July, 1961.

This meeting, at Thorndale Road, was without doubt, the best we have had for a long time, the number present being remarkably high for what is generally a slack part of the year, due to holidays, etc. This enabled us to get away to an early start, which was just as well, in view of the many items on the agenda.

The Chairman's opening remarks were followed by the financial report, which was very satisfactory. Frank Case gave an account of his recent wanderings in the Midlands; this included the get-together at Chesterfield, the meeting of the Midland Section at Birmingham and visits to the homes of Joe Marston (Burton-on-Trent) and W. H. Goodhead (Derby). He was delighted with the warmth of the welcome received everywhere, and his only regret was that his fellow-members on Merseyside were unable to share his very pleasant experiences.

Many thanks are due to Jack Morgan, Norman Pragnell and Bill Windsor for furnishing us with a substantial number of books to replenish our library stock, which was becoming somewhat depleted. As a consequence much time was taken up by large scale borrowings, and we had to hurry on to other matters, not forgetting refreshments, of course!

The third round of the "Ask Me Another" quiz resulted in a convincing victory for Norman's team, who were in sparkling form, and the big lead held by their opponents has been considerably reduced, much to their dismay, no doubt.

As time was running short, certain items on the programme had to be postponed, and we finished with a short discussion on a subject mentioned in a letter from Bette Pate.

Our next meeting, at Bill Windsor's house, is on August 20th, a week later than usual, as we are hoping to have the pleasure of the company of Don Webster, and one of our original members, Edna Mervyn (Mrs. Nuttall), who is back home in Liverpool for a short holiday from Canada. We need hardly say how much we look forward to seeing them both again.

FRANK CASE - Secretary.

NORTHERNMeeting held 8th July, 1961.

Our July meeting was a little later than usual in getting under way, for which the Test Match at Headingley was responsible! Heartened by the news of England's great victory, brought to us direct from the ground by one or two late arrivals, we settled down to hear the chairman, Geoffrey Wilde's opening remarks, which were naturally concerned with the great topic of the moment, the result of the 'C.D.' popularity competition. Neville Vear was present to receive all our congratulations on winning the second prize. Three other Northern members also won prizes, Elsie Palmer, Bill Thurbon and Geoff himself.

Three of our ladies also won the prizes in the sweepstake held at the Chesterfield re-union, based on the 'C.D.' competition - Doreen Hodgson (Harry Wharton), Mrs. John Jarman (Billy Bunter) and Dorothy Robinson (H. Vernon-Smith).

Correspondence dealt with included a letter from our old colleague Tony Potts, telling us how much he enjoyed a London meeting which he attended, and another from Tom Hopperton, pointing out that this year sees the 90th birthday of Jack Harkaway.

The proposed 'Convention' which was discussed at the Chesterfield re-union last month, was also given further consideration, Easter of next year being suggested as a suitable time, and it was agreed that the Secretary should write to other branch Secretaries on this point.

Gerry Allison gave this month's reading of 'Rivals and Chums' by Frank Richards. After refreshments, Gerry obligingly continued this fine story at our request, which took us on to 9.15 when the meeting terminated.

F. HANCOCK - Secretary.

LONDON

The Cumberland turf was at its best in the very beautiful garden at Excelsior House on Sunday, July 23rd, when a large gathering met for one of the highlight meetings of the year. Eric Fayne, that ideal host, had everything laid on for our enjoyment and what a happy and jolly occasion it turned out to be. Sexton Blake supporters were pleased to see Howard Baker in attendance and to learn of the forthcoming new format of the "Sexton Blake Library". Eric provided two of his interesting items, "Down You Go" and "Out Of The Bag" plus fine souvenirs. Bill Hubbard rendered a good talk on P. G. Wodehouse, Don Webster gave his Castaway Companions, Bill Lofts a "Northern Quiz", Brian Doyle a general knowledge quiz, Horace Roberts sent along his Nelson Lee catalogue of what he has for loan, and Roger Jenkins did excellent business with his Hamiltonian library. An excellent tea was provided by Eric and the ladies. What more could we want? The good folk, who put the Xmas Bunter shows on were present. Probably another one this year. Thus the sylvan settings of the garden with the squirrels and robins, reminding one of Dr. Locke's garden at Greyfriars, was an ideal meeting place. The grateful thanks of all present were extended to Eric.

Saturday, August 12th, 5 p.m., is the date of next meeting at No. 9, The Glebe, Blackheath, London, S.E.3. Kindly let Horace Roberts know if attending by writing to his Streatham address or phone STR. 0499.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

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SEXTON BLAKE TODAY

WALTER WEBB reviews the latest novels in the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY

THE TELEVISION MURDERS (No. 479)

W. A. BALLINGER

There's been quite a fishy aspect about recent publications. Last month it was sardines and lobsters. This month we are offered lobsters and Crabbe and a sprinkling of shrimps. All of which does not quite add up to the whale of a yarn, though it's a jolly good one for all that.

When Jason Barnet was murdered during a T.V. performance, the only sympathy offered him was shared amongst those who never knew him.

Let down at the last minute on a date, a disconsolate Marion switches on and becomes one of the millions of viewers to witness Barnet's murder. Thereafter, being the only member of the firm to have seen the crime, she is entrusted by a paternal Blake to carry out a series of enquiries into the motive behind it. And does everything expected of her, including an interview with an eccentric artist, who makes a suggestion not expected - by an embarrassed Marion, at any rate.

The threat hovering over the West Britain Television Company is dispelled when Blake, not far behind his pretty aide, exposes the criminal mind behind the plot to destroy it.

Intelligent handling of an interesting theme and some deft touches of humour make this a very easy-to-read novel.

Rating.....Very good.

VOTE FOR VIOLENCE (No. 480)

GILBERT JOHNS

When offsprings view with unconcealed delight the murder of one of their parents then, obviously, that particular parent has been guilty of conduct justifying such an unnatural feeling in the souls of the children. And certainly Simon Fishers, despite his commanding position in the social sphere, inspired every shred of hate directed towards him both within and outside the circle of his family. Even money, which can buy most things and dispel others, could neither buy respect nor dispel the loathing many felt for Fishers. His wife, Thelma, wished him dead. So did his son, James and his daughter Sheila. John Spenceley, a young politician, threatened to kill him.

When Fishers was blown up in his car, death and suspicion descended on an unhappy and respectable family. Into its poisonous atmosphere came Blake, efficient and understanding, to pinpoint the killer.

In the top flight, this is a really grand novel - dramatic, suspenseful, neatly executed and well-written.

Rating.....Excellent.

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GENERAL COMMENTARY

SET-BACK FOR TINKER: In view of the strong appeal of the Hamilton characters, Sexton Blake's achievement of attaining 5th place in the POPULARITY CONTEST was commendable. On the other hand, Tinker's failure to rise above 16th place was an eye-opener - until you started casting round for reasons to show why such a huge margin as 347 votes should divide him from his chief. Then certain major factors become apparent to indicate why a once very popular boyhood favourite should fall so heavily from grace whilst another, who, at one time, resembled him so closely - Nipper, to wit - should cache over 100 more

votes.

The difference between the old Blake and the new is not nearly so marked as is that between the two Tinkers, of course, for, whereas Blake, save for being built on broader lines and with features more humorous than ascetic, is still, fundamentally, the Blake who earned our regard in the old days, Tinker's reconstruction has been drastic. No longer a youth, but a man, blonde, and - on occasion, a dumb one, at that - he suffers as Eric Fayne suggested last month, from the inconsistencies of those who handle him. We understand and admire Blake as a man who knows what he is doing and where he is going, but Tinker appears as a man at the crossroads, hesitant, and with no fixed objective in view. How otherwise can the reader sum-up when he finds him chaperoning Marion one month and chasing red-heads the next?

One feels - according to one's ideas on the subject - a certain amount of amusement at Tinker's efforts to gain the recognition he so obviously strives for, but this desire on his part does not exactly inspire affection in the hearts of the readers, the majority of whom probably feel that red-heads - and blondes and brunettes, come to that - should be Splash Kirby's particular pigeons and that Tinker should confine his attentions to the one who serves his chief so efficiently in Berkeley Square. Probably this is the reason why Tinker prompted so few votes.

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WANTED - MAGNET 884

As reported last month, the Northern Section Library has suffered the grievous loss in the post, of the above Magnet - "Slacker and Captain." It comes from the series which Eric Fayne has described as 'the greatest school story of the Century.'

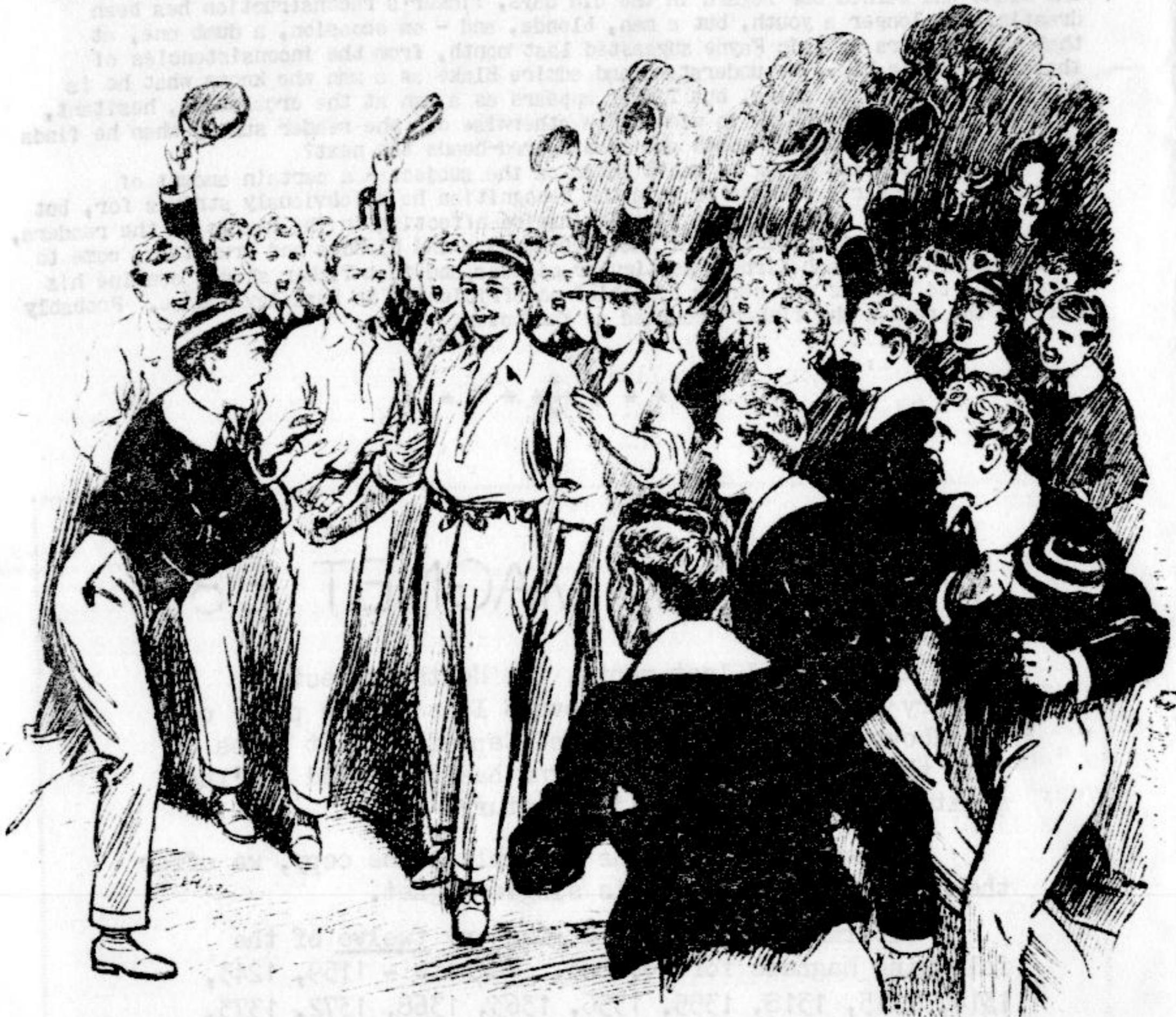
If anyone can help us to replace the copy, we offer the sum of £2-10-0 for this single Magnet.

Alternatively we would give any twelve of the following Magnets for No. 884. Magnets - 1159, 1243, 1314, 1315, 1318, 1355, 1356, 1363, 1368, 1372, 1373, 1383, 1386, 1390, 1393, 1394, 1395, 1398, 1400.

Please write to the librarian: Gerald Allison,
3, Bingley Road, Menston, Ilkley.

(Or 'phone Menston 3980).

HAMILTONIAN



"St. Jim's wins!" "Well bowled, Cleeve!" "Bravo!" The juniors surged round Cleeve and thumped him on the back and jabbed him in the ribs. Nobody at that moment would have supposed that Victor Cleeve was the most unpopular fellow in the school. (Chapter 10.)

FAMOUS SERIES NO. 10. High Summer - and cricket fever in the air. This month we bring you a Macdonald picture from the Victor Cleeve series which appeared in the Gem in 1928. It is notable as the only genuine series which reached the Gem's pages in that year.

THE WIZARD OF OZ

You have heard of the Wizard of Oz and "all the wonderful things he does!" It seems to us that the Wizard is an also-ran compared with Frank Richards. Mr. Richards' latest achievement is a Bunter story in Latin, "ULTIO BUNTER," illustrated with "stills" from one of the early T.V. series, and published in so eminent a publication as the Times Educational Supplement. Mr. Richards, commenting on it, makes the following observation;

"Actually, I wouldn't wonder if quite a number of schoolboys found it an agreeable change from Caesar."

We wouldn't wonder either.

The following is an extract from a recent letter from Frank Richards:

"The T.V. reviews in C.D. interested me very much. I thought 'Double Bunter' extremely well done. Gerald Campion at his best. Such slips as allusions to Mauleverer's 'father' instead of 'uncle' do not, of course, emanate from the author, and must have struck many viewers as odd, since Mauly couldn't be 'Lord' Mauleverer in his father's lifetime. Careless actors will do these things.

I like the review of 'Billy Bunter at Butlins'. But that 'tie-up' is quite imaginary. I have never met Mr. Butlin, though I had, of course, to obtain his permission to make him a character in the story. Holiday Camps are now so universally popular that it seemed a good idea to land Bunter in one: and even George Orwell, if he were happily still with us, would I think admit that the topic was not out of date. The coincidence of the monogram occurred to me as the groundwork for a 'comedy of errors.' The book was published unusually early in the year as especially suitable for holiday reading. Seaside sunshine would be a little out of place in the rain and fog of October."

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The introduction of a real person into the stories is not unique. Many years back, in an early Magnet, the late King George the Fifth had Harry Wharton presented to him, and chatted with the Greyfriars junior. It must have caused quite a sensation at the time.)

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NEXT MONTH. "GEMS OF HAMILTONIANA" and "LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL" will be back as usual.

THE MAN WHO CAME BACK

By Eric Fayne

At last I made up my mind to go back to St. Jim's. For weeks I had had that irrepressible longing to see the old school once more, to hear the boyish laughter, to feast my eyes on the loveliest sight in the world - the cricket field bathed in sunshine, and dotted with white-clad figures, while lads in bright blazers relaxed in the shadow of the trees round the boundary line. How my heart ached as the mental picture passed before me! Why had I waited so long to revisit the place which, secretly, I loved more than any other on earth?

Yet, with that intangible longing was intermingled a doubt, an uncertainty, almost a fear. For more than a quarter-century had gone by, and I knew that the old place must know me no more.

Carefully I took my old school tie from the mothballs, and, with tender, shaking hands I fastened it round my neck. Then I set off on what was to be the best or the worst day of my life.

At Wayland I changed trains. In the old days, we always changed at Wayland, leaving the main line express and boarding the little "push and pull" which chugged its way out to Rylcombe and beyond. I wondered whether the funny little train would still be running, whether it might have been swept away before that heartless juggernaut - Progress.

It was still running. Caked on the carriage windows was the same grime which had never been washed away in twenty-five years. On the seat of my compartment was a scattering of crumbs which I felt sure I had dropped when eating a sausage-roll as a fag.

At Rylcombe I caught a glimpse of old Trumble, the porter, changed but little with the passing of the years. He had always seemed elderly to me. He seemed no older now.

At St. Jim's I made my way to the cricket ground. The same. Yet how different. For a few exquisite moments I

stood still, and the years rolled back. In those few fleeting seconds I was back in my carefree boyhood, and ready to play for my House again.

I crossed the ground to the pavilion. Swarms of fellows in flannels were there, eyeing me with curiosity and with some resentment that I was invading their sacred sphere. Twenty-five years ago I could have joined in their chatter and talked loudly on school politics. Twenty-five years ago I would have been surrounded by cheerful pals. Now I was an interloper - less than a nobody.

With a beating heart and some temerity, I tapped a bright-faced youth on the shoulder. He turned and eyed me in cold surprise.

"Excuse me," I said. A frog rose in my throat, and I spoke nervously. "What is the game this afternoon?"

"The game, sir?" He cast a glance across the ground. "House match on Little Side, New House versus School House. No game on Big Side. The seniors are playing away."

"I see - a junior House match on Little side. I'm in luck, aren't I?" I smiled, and he raised his eyebrows in polite question. "By the way, I'm an old boy."

The ghost of a grin flickered across his face, and I wondered whether I had expressed myself badly. He nodded patronisingly.

"Oh, yes? Do you want to see the Headmaster?"

I shook my head.

"Not just yet. I'm an old School House man, by the way."

I felt his manner grow frosty.

"I'm so sorry." He flicked an imaginary speck of dust from his spotless white trousers. "Excuse me, sir. I'm wanted with my eleven."

He raised his cap and left me.

Several other white-clad figures passed by. I felt inexpressibly lonely. I even began to feel annoyed. Years ago, as a

School House prefect, I had been a blood, a great man - hero-worshipped. Then I enjoyed a pride which I have never experienced since. And now - now I found myself forgotten, neglected - a nobody.

A fellow approached me. He was completely sure of himself - as I can never be sure of myself again. His red and white blazer was thrown carelessly over one shoulder. He wore his St. Jim's cap on the back of his head, but with an air of authority. As I had once worn mine. His blue eyes twinkled in his sun-burned face, and I became acutely conscious of my own white, pasty complexion.

"Can I help you, sir?" he enquired. "Our game is about to begin. If you would care to watch the game from here, there are plenty of deckchairs ---"

"Are you a School House boy?" I ventured to ask, ignoring his invitation.

He pulled his cap a little further over his mop of curly hair, and regarded me curiously.

"Yes, sir. I'm junior House Captain as a matter of fact."

"I was a prefect once," I muttered. "I wore a cap like yours a long time ago - more than twenty-five years. I wonder what became of my cap. I wish I still had it."

He stared at me, and I - I, who had once snapped out orders on that very ground for immediate obedience - blushed under his keen, clean gaze.

"Didn't you look after it?" he asked coldly.

"Yes, I think I did for a time." I faltered a little. "But, you see, it was so long ago - things get mislaid or thrown away ---"

His clear blue eyes once more made me feel like a dead caterpillar in a helping of cabbage.

"You're an old St. Jim's man, and you didn't keep your school cap. What a pity! I don't remember seeing you here before, sir ---"

"No, this is the first time I have come back. You see, I live so far away - I am a very busy man - you see how things are?"

"I see." His tone showed me plainly that he did not see at all.

"I was a School House prefect before I left," I ventured timidly. "My name is Fayne."

His face crumpled into a smile.

"I'm a School House chap, sir. Tom Merry of the Shell."

I shook hands with him.

"I once made 63 in a school match when I was here," I volunteered, proudly.

"Oh, yes?" he said.

"I hope you don't think me guilty of lift," I added naively.

"Lift?"

He raised his eyebrows.

"Swank!" I explained.

"Oh! Roll!" he said, with a laugh.

"Not at all, sir."

I realised sadly that I was out of touch with St. Jim's slang.

"The School House was a grand place in my day," I murmured. "You don't know how lucky you are, Tom Merry. I think I'd give a year of my life to play cricket on Little Side again."

He regarded me curiously.

"Would you, sir?" He cast an eye in the direction of the group of fellows standing under the score board. With a word of excuse, he left me, and scudded across to his friends. I saw him standing in conversation for a couple of minutes, and a very elegant young cricketer, sporting a monocle, turned and scrutinised me. I saw him nodding to his skipper.

Tom Merry hurried back to me.

"We're playing New House juniors this afternoon," he said, "Would you care for a game, sir? Only a junior game, of course, but if you'd like a knock ---"

My heart thumped with excitement.

"I should love it," I replied, enthusiastically. "But -- I have no whites ---"

Tom Merry ran an appraising eye over me.

"I reckon we can lend you a pair," he said. "I'll send Lowther to snaffle a pair for you from somewhere."

"How splendid!" I yapped, in my joy.

"But I hope the New House skipper won't object. You see, I once made 63 ---"

Tom Merry smiled.

"I'm sure Figgins will be quite delighted," he said.

So I changed into whites, just as I used to do twenty-five years ago. In the changing room I chatted gaily to other members of the eleven, telling them of the things we used to do, and explaining how boyhood had deteriorated in the years since I was a lad. They listened politely.

The School House team batted first, and I was invited to go in third wicket down. As I crossed to the wicket a ripple of cheering came from the New House field. I thought this very sporting, for they must have realised that I was a rod in pickle.

A lad named Talbot was at the other end, and he smiled his encouragement. I waved my bat in the air.

"I once made 63 on this pitch," I called out.

I took middle and leg. Then I stood upright for a full survey of the field. A very stout youth named Wynn was bowling, and I felt that I should find it easy stuff. He had set his field very wide, and a thrill of pride passed through me to see so many fieldsmen way out near the boundary.

"Play!" called out the stout bowler.

The ball came down, and I struck wildly where I thought it was. A lump of turf flew in the air. The wicket keeper returned the ball. I smiled at him, a rather sickly smile.

"It's good to be back," I remarked, apropos of nothing.

"Of course."

He did not smile. His eye was on the bowler. I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw Wynn calling his field in closer. A youth named Redfern, handsome as a Greek god, fielding at old-fashioned point, came to a place which was decidedly new-fashioned right on my doorstep. Mid-on came to unpleasant proximity. Slips stood very near and very expectant. Nobody was posted near the boundary now. My first stroke seemed to have given our opponents the impression that I was a rabbit. I, who had once made 63 on Big Side. I gritted my teeth. I would show them.

"Play!" called the stout bowler.

Determined that nothing should defeat me this time - with a fixed resolve to show these fellows how we used to play

cricket in the old days - I lifted my bat. The ball whipped in from the off as though jet-propelled. I hardly saw it. I almost overbalanced with the impetus of the terrific swipe, and the clatter of my shattering wicket told me the worst.

There was a ripple of applause, which may have been for me but was probably for the stout bowler.

With burning cheeks, I made my way to the pavvy. As I took off my pads, Tom Merry came up to me.

"Hard lines, Mr. Fayne," he said kindly.

He had no intention of patronising me, but the irony of the situation struck me. I said no more of the 63 which I had once made.

Tom Merry declared when the score stood at 138. An Australian lad they called Kangaroo had accounted for 40 of these, and Tom Merry himself had scored 36. I began to wonder whether the present generation of St. Jim's fellows was so inferior, after all.

"I'm sorry I disappointed the side," I whispered to Tom Merry as we went out to field.

"Not at all," he replied. "Where do you usually field, by the way?"

"Oh, somewhere fairly deep," I said.

"You chaps will like to feel you have a good man to snap up anything difficult."

The skipper nodded, and tossed the ball to a rather supercilious youth they called Cardew. I wasn't particularly keen on him. I had heard him make an unpleasant remark after I bagged my duck.

Cardew set his field. He called out to me.

"Fayne, further out! Further round! I said further round! More round!"

Mechanically I obeyed him. Twenty-five years ago I would have been a big bug, giving orders. Now I was a mere nobody who had made a duck - taking orders.

Cardew was a spin bowler of quite considerable merit, and he was interesting to watch though I did not like him personally.

Once the ball buzzed out my way. I dived after it. As I ran, there was a patter of feet behind me. A youth named Blake passed me, gathered up the ball in his stride and returned it with a throw which I could not have equalled in a thousand years. This performance was repeated

several times during the next half-hour, during which time the bowlers called to me "Fayne, deeper, please!" or "Fayne, come in a bit!"

By and by, two New House men, Figgins and an Indian lad named Koumi Rao, became set and the runs mounted.

I suggested to Tom Merry that he should let me have an over, if the New House Skipper did not think the School House players were taking an unfair advantage.

It seemed that the New House skipper did not mind at all. Tom Merry tossed me the ball, and I set my field.

Figgins knocked 4 off my first ball, 4 off my second and 4 off my third.

Tom Merry began to look slightly anxious.

"Keep off the leg, Mr. Fayne," he called out, and there was a marked edge to his voice.

I sent down a full toss for my fourth ball, and Figgins got right underneath it. It soared over the boundary for six.

I was perspiring freely. How I got through that over I shall never know. The sixth ball of the over flew out of my hand and hit the square leg umpire on the chin. He seemed irritated, and I felt that my profuse apologies were inadequate.

The School House players, at the end of my over which had added 27 to the New House score, were still polite to me, but I sensed that their cordiality was wearing thin.

I retired to a place in the deep. Soon my chance came.

Figgins tried for another six, this time off the bowling of Cardew, but it was falling short of the boundary. A high, dropping ball was coming towards me.

"Mr. Fayne! Mr. Fayne!" came a roar of voices.

I squared my shoulders. I cupped my hands and backed. I would show them at last how we played cricket in the old days. Down, down. I backed, I ran forward. Down, down. Silence had fallen on the field.

My teeth were clenched. I would show them all something in the way of catches which they would never forget.. This

catch of mine should be the talk of the school for months to come.

I backed, I ran forward. And then my heart failed me. Still with hands cupped, I closed my eyes.

The ball did not touch my hands at all. It fell, with a hollow pong, clean on the top of my head.

I sat on the ground and roared like a bull.

They carried me to the changing room, and while the game was still going on, I folded my tent like the Arabs and silently stole away.

Which House won that memorable game I do not know. There was a heaviness at my heart in the knowledge that never again could I recall the days which are gone, the years which the locust hath eaten. Once I was a great man - a blood, with the power, authority, and influence of a king. I played my part for a time, all too short, in the world of school. The curtain fell, and I became a nobody. A nobody I must remain till the end of my days.

I have only one consolation. I was a St. Jim's man once.

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 50. MAKE ROOM FOR YOUR UNCLE SAM.

RAY HOPKINS: I think that those of us who read into the actions of Fisher T, Fish, a dislike of things American by Frank Richards, are taking the author far too seriously and forgetting that he is one of the great writers of humorous school stories. His comic masterpieces are, in readers' memories, almost invariably overshadowed by his gripping and suspenseful dramatic work and possibly it is for this reason that his comic characters are taken more seriously than Frank Richards intended when he invented them. Especially is this true of Fishy, a character it must be admitted who appears to have no endearing qualities but who, and this is important, is always good for a laugh. If he had a side we could admire how much less value as a comic character he would be. Another

criticism of this character is that no American in real life has ever been heard to utter in the staccato slangy fashion used by Fishy. But here again, Frank Richards was not trying to duplicate actual speech but only an approximation of it for comic effect. The author was, in fact, inventing comic sounds suggestive of some types of American speech. If he had Fishy talk in the way he would in real life, there would be little indication that he was "Transatlantic." Written English as she is used in Britain and America does not differ all that much, but the sound of it is different. Frank Richards' American Junior is given funny sounds to eject and therefore he is meant to be not taken seriously at all. To take Fisher T. Fish as an expression of Frank Richards' anti-Americanism is misinterpreting the author's use of this admirable foil to the "decentness" of boys like Wharton, Cherry, Nugent et al. He is, in fact, merely restating one of his beliefs which is that all foreigners are funny, therefore they must be portrayed in such a way as to accentuate their essential funniness and difference from the English characters who surround them. Think of Herr Schneider, Mossoo, Wun Lung and the aliens of the Friar-dale Academy; one and all are figures of fun.

RON CROLLIE: I agree with you that it is unlikely that Frank Richards is anti-American. Fish, in his earliest days, was not an unsympathetic character. He was boastful, inept, and clumsy, but he had redeeming features. In one story, Frank Richards states "The American junior was not without pluck" - and at the time of Bulstrodes attempt to regain the captaincy of the Remove, Fish was a supporter of Wharton.

One the other hand, there is plenty of evidence that Editor Hinton had anti-American bias, and it makes one wonder whether editorial pressure was put on the author to make Fish less attractive.

Personally, I would have been happier if Fishy's character had developed along the lines of the American boys you describe so aptly:- "precocious .. and very jolly fellows." No doubt there are American boys as bad as Fish, but for such a character to be portrayed as the only representative of his nation at an English school is not exactly a friendly gesture towards a friendly country.

COLIN WYATT: Strange to say, unpleasant though Fishy has sometimes been, I have never really disliked him. I would certainly never accuse Frank Richards of being anti-American just because of the way he handles this one character. I have always found Fish's exaggerated character rather amusing, and without him Greyfriars could never be quite the same place.

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TELEVISION REVIEWS

BUNTER GOES TO VENICE (July 1st): With its colourful backgrounds of the city of canals this was an entertaining little play. Gerald Campion, as usual, was perfect, and the lad who portrays Lord Mauleverer is good, and could obviously give a tip-top performance under better direction. The offence given to the irate Italian was sadly inadequate, for it was on the fact of Bunter throwing a paper bag over his shoulder that the rest of the play depended. Surely it should have been possible for Bunter to give much more positive cause for annoyance to the gentleman who later became grateful to the Owl.

All told, a novel and reasonably entertaining item.

BUNTER GOES TO NAPLES: (July 15th): Our critic missed this one, but general report is that it was not one of the best.

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ANOTHER T.V. REVIEW
on Page 31

EDITORIAL

FRANK NUGENT,
An Editor.VERNON SMITH,
Sports Editor.HARRY WHARTON,
Editor.ROBERT CHERRY,
Fighting Editor.MARK LINLEY,
Sun Editor.

"UNEASY LIES THE HEAD"

As Editor of COLLECTORS' DIGEST it is my job to give readers what they want, and to study the wishes of the minority as well as of the majority. My main guide is obtained from readers' letters, of which, in the past twelve months, I have received over two thousand. So far as I can judge, our programme meets with general approval, though an individual reader will comment "I should like an article on such and such a paper." Whenever it is possible I try to meet those wishes.

At the Chesterfield reunion, some readers offered criticism, as they were perfectly entitled to do, that the Digest does not give enough variety - that articles on other papers away from Hamiltoniana, Lee and Sexton Blake should be presented. I think (and every month I have the brain-searing problem of getting a quart into a pint mug) that we do touch upon a great many papers apart from our regular Columns. The only way we could give you more variety is by suspending the Columns. Would many readers want us to do this?

Each month, before anything else can be considered, I have to plot out the space for Blakiana, Lee, Hamiltoniana, and the Club reports. Then there are the news items and the reviews, which it is our duty to present if the Digest is to provide a record for years to come. And the advertisements, which are interesting and useful, apart from helping towards our heavy overhead expenses. The pictures are not essential, and they occupy space, but certainly large numbers of readers delight in them. "Yours Sincerely," inevitably cut to the bone, is an enormously popular item.

We could, of course, give you an occasional C.D. with none of the regular features, providing the articles were forthcoming on the "other papers." Our columnists might welcome an occasional holiday. Certainly they deserve one, though they never ask for it, bless their hearts. Their loyal support, in fact, is a warm comfort to your balding, greying editor. So where do we go from here? As I said earlier, my job is to please you.

By the way, in case you are in doubt, the full quotation part of which heads this item, is "Uneasy lies the head that wears the ice-packed towel!"

INITIATIVE: We were delighted to hear of the sweepstake which was run at the Chesterfield meeting on the result of our Popularity Poll. Anything of the sort is enormously encouraging and turns the spotlight on C.D. endeavours and undertakings. We congratulate and thank the gentleman who thought of the idea, and those who backed it up.

CLOSING THOUGHT: A reader writes to ask whether it is possible for him to borrow Sexton Blake stories from a club library. Most of our clubs have Hamilton and Lee libraries, open to borrowers, but we do not know of a Blake library. It might be worth consideration.

THE EDITOR.

SCOUTING ECHOESBy W. Thurbon

I was very interested in Mr. Lofts' article on "Scout". I think the first serial which appeared in it was "The Phantom Battleship" by Rupert Chesterton, but its most famous early story was "Boys of the Otter Patrol," the first of a series of scouting tales and the first of a number of patrols created by E. le Breton Martin. The Scout Book Club, which was launched just before the war, issued the Otter Patrol. In the foreword to the edition, it is said that a Mr. Frank Lamburn was given the task of getting together the material for the first issue of the paper, and he decided that a story with a strong scouting interest was the best way of attracting boys to the movement.

He therefore commissioned E. le Breton Martin (already a popular boys' author) to write a serial about a patrol of scouts. Martin was sent away to study scouting at first hand, and was given a copy of "Scouting for Boys" as a guide to the Chief Scout's methods. Thus the first scouting serial was born.

In addition to the authors mentioned by Mr. Lofts, I remember, from 1913, serials by Robert Leighton about the Canadian Mounties - especially "The Red Patrol" and Leighton's "Sergeant Silk" was nearly as well known to readers as was Dimmock's later Sergeant Dufsee. Percy F. Westerman was writing also before the 1914 war. Jack Hargreaves ("White Face") wrote a lot about woodcraft and Red Indians in the Scout of the early war years before he went off to found a movement of his own.

I am interested in Mr. Lofts' information about Horace Phillips and his connection with "Scout". "Cheer Boys Cheer" became, I think, the brown-covered "Boys' Journal", and this no doubt explains Phillips' serial "The Honour of a Scout" in that paper.

It is interesting how scouting stories appeared in all kinds of boys' papers up to about the early 1920's. There was Jack Finnemore's "Wolf Patrol" stories in the 1912-13 Champion; scouts at Greyfriars and St. Jim's; and, in the early 1920's, the excellent serial "Scouts of the Boghold Patrol" in Chums.

Then the stories seemed to stop, although there have been quite a number of literary references, en passant - e.g. Gladys Mitchell's detective stories. I suppose Scouting was ceasing to be a game and was becoming a movement.

Incidentally, among the artists was J. Abney Cummings, who illustrated the Jack, Sam & Pete tales in the Marvel.

Yours Sincerely

(Interesting items from the Editor's post-bag)



NOTE - Scores of letters have been received in praise of our last issue giving the results of the Popularity Contest. The Editor expresses his grateful thanks to all.

TOM HOPPERTON (Scarborough): Re June Controversial Echoes, Mr. Dinsdale is surely wrong in regarding Gussy's substitution of "w" for "r" as not being an impediment. I was at school with a boy who suffered in this way and I recall with some embarrassment how I laughed, in company with the class, when a fool of a teacher used to insist on his reciting "Wound the wagged wock the wagged wascals wan." I should imagine it is caused by inability to vibrate the tongue, but it must be admitted that people who would never smile at a stammerer might be amused by a Gussyish pronunciation.

NEVILLE VEAR (York): As regards the reasoning I adopted, which won me the second prize in the Popularity Contest, it seemed to my mind that several characters were an absolute

HOW THEY BEGAN. No. 10

No. 1 of "Boys' Cinema", a journal devoted, more or less to screen stories, illustrated with stills from the films. Commenced December, 1919 and ran till May 1940, a total of 1063 issues.

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must for the Top Ten. I was confident that Wharton or Bunter would be the top two, but which to place first I could not decide, but finally decided on Bunter. I also felt sure that Smithy, Quelch, Tom Merry and Blake would be high in the list. I could not make up my mind about Quelch who, I think, is a wonderful character, who made the Magnet as much as Wharton or Bunter. Sexton Blake, too, I felt would be high on the list. I obtained some idea of the general opinions of various characters by reading through a large number of issues of the Digest.

J. MARSTON (Burton-on-Trent): Congratulations on the very interesting competition which indeed confirmed who are the top favourites. I met Frank Case of the Liverpool club recently, and all that Herbert said of the Brotherhood is indeed true.

FRANK HANCOCK (Leeds); The result of the competition is certainly a triumph for Greyfriars. What gave it the edge over St. Jim's is, I believe, that it had Charles Hamilton's more exclusive attention, the number of substitute stories being less and re-prints non-existent. I think Rookwood's poorer showing is due to two factors: A. Its much shorter run. B. The unwieldy size of the Boy's Friend which, if it gave the paper individuality, certainly ensured that fewer copies would be preserved for posterity.

BASIL ADAM (Newcastle): The July number of Collectors' Digest is wonderful - the finest C.D. I have ever received.

GEORGE SELLARS (Sheffield): I did expect to see Talbot in the Top Ten. Nobody will ever convince me that any Greyfriars character is better than Tom Merry, Talbot and Gussy.

WALTER FLEMING (Chingford): I was fairly confident that Harry Wharton would top the poll. I have always thought him Frank Richards' outstanding character, and, outside the Nelson Lee Library, he was my favourite. Largely, I think, because he had some human faults, and Frank Richards could be relied upon to build a really good story round his failings as well as round his many good points.

JOHN GEAL (Kingston): When next you visit the OBBC please give them my regards. I still think of the old gang - keep saying I'll come along one day to renew the pleasure I had when meeting them regularly.

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WHAT OFFERS or EXCHANGES for other O.B.B. 34 (2d) Union Jacks,
 1922 on. 2 (1d) Union Jacks, 1914-15. 11 ($\frac{1}{2}$ d) Marvels 1897.
 1 (1d) Marvel 1915. 1 ($\frac{1}{2}$ d) Vanguard 1908. 9 (1d) Boys' Friend,
 1908. 1 ($\frac{1}{2}$ d) Boys Friend 1900. 1 Comic Cuts 1944. 1 number 1 Comic
 "Topper" 1953. 19 (1d) Boys Heralds 1910 - 11. 6 Mixed Boys Friend,
 and Football and Sports Libraries. 80, 7d, 8d, 9d, 10d Sexton Blake
 Libraries. 1 volume "Fun" 1862.
 J. LENNARD, 22 LARCH STREET, HIGHTOWN, MANCHESTER, 8.

HAMILTONIANA - T.V. REVIEW

BUNTER GOES TO NICE (July 22nd). This, the last of the present series, was artless but quite entertaining. The climax was a real rib-tickler, with Mr. Quelch stating that he looked in at the Casino, drew out his handkerchief, and a ten-franc bill fell on to the gaming table. He found the croupier pushing a considerable quantity of money towards him. On the strength of this windfall, Quelch stood a feed to his charges. Certainly not our idea of Quelch - but the laughter was irresistible.

BUNTER PLAYWRIGHT AT EDINBURGH FESTIVAL

Maurice McLoughlin, the writer of the Bunter stage plays, and keen Greyfriars enthusiast, has the honour of having a play accepted for the Edinburgh festival. The play "A LETTER FROM THE GENERAL" is being presented by a strong cast from 19th August till 9th September, evenings at 7.30, matinees Tuesday and Saturday. Any of our Scotch's readers, or others on holiday in the north, who enjoy a powerful, gripping story, should not miss this remarkable play. It is a far cry from the Bunter plays, and shows our famous reader at his very best.

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ALMOST THIRTY YEARS AFTER!

By VIC COLBY

Recently I scanned the contents of several of the latest issues of "Film Fun" to reach Australia, and noticed a series of stories called "The Happy Company", the names of the author and artist not being mentioned.

Looking at the illustrations, I felt sure they were drawn by Fred Bennett, but wondered whether he would still be alive and illustrating.

Within a matter of days, on browsing through a copy of the

1932-33 Chums, I beheld the originals of the Film Fun stories! Same title, characters, and illustrations, same coverage on each story. The author's name was given as Reginald Crunden, the artist's as Fred Bennett.

The Film Fun version of each story is somewhat abridged and a few words have been changed. The illustrations, are, however, identical.

It would appear that this series started in the Film Fun of 11/2/61, corresponding to the 1st Chums story of the series to be found on page 550.

I do not have a copy of Film Fun 11/2/61, but I do have the next 7 issues, and the "Happy Company" stories in these correspond to "Chums" stories Nos. 2 to 8 respectively.

As there were 24 stories in this series in "Chums", we can perhaps look forward to a similar number appearing in Film Fun.

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FOR SALE:

Film Annuals. Hollywood Preview 1946, Preview (10) 1947 to 1950, 1952 to 1954, 1956 to 1958. Picturegoer (8) 1950/51 to 1957/58, Western Film Annual (3) 1953/54, 1956/57, 1957/58. Picture Show (18) 1935 to 1939, 1941, 1942, 1948 to 1951, 1953 to 1959. Fan's Own Annual 1959, Film Annual 1948/49, Movie Review 1947/48 Stars Off the Record (undated), The Film Show Annual 5 different, no dates. Hollywood Album (9) 1, 2, 4, 6 to 11. Film Review (13) 1945/46 to 1957/58. International Film Annual No. 1. 1957, Daily Mail Film Annual 1947 to 1949. Picture Parade (2) 1951, 1952. Who's Who on the Screen 1957. All 5/- each plus postage. South African monthly Film Magazine FILM WORLDS No. 1 April 1957 to January 1961, complete (cost 2/-) - 46 copies. £2. 10. 0. plus postage. South African 1/- weekly film magazine STAGE & CINEMA, complete run Nov. 1954 to Aug. 1960 - 297 copies, also odd copies 1947 to 1954 - 78 copies. Offers.

A. J. SOUTHWAY, P.O. Box 4., BEACONSFIELD, C.P. SOUTH AFRICA.

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