

"THE GIRL WITHOUT A HOME." THE FINEST STORY EVER WRITTEN. SEE PAGE 2.

Merry And Bright ¹/₂ ²/₂

Vol. 15, No. 1

1961

CURLY KELLY, THE CHAMPION LAUGHTER PROVIDER AND SIDE-SPLITTER.



From the British and American comic strips of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The author is a well-known humorist and cartoonist. This is a collection of his best work, including many of his most famous strips. The book is a must-read for anyone who loves humor and cartooning.



Curly Kelly is a character who is known for his humor and his ability to make people laugh. In this panel, he is seen interacting with a man who is holding a large, round object. The man's surprised expression suggests that Curly Kelly has done something funny or unexpected.



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COLLECTORS DIGEST

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

FOUNDED IN 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 15

Number 179

NOVEMBER, 1961

Price 2s.0d.

EDITORIAL



THE ANNUAL, 1961. Work on the preparation of the 1961 Annual is in its closing stages. No effort is being spared so that we can bring you in December the finest issue ever of this popular publication. Our contributors, in sparkling form, have been real trojans. In fact, because space is limited even in the Annual, some articles of worth will inevitably be held over till another year. Such things cannot be helped.

Prominent among the outstanding attractions will be the **SEXTON BLAKE ANNUAL**, the section of the volume which is devoted to the world's most famous detective. And the illustrations throughout the Annual will be many and varied. We believe they cannot fail to delight you all.

One warning. The number of copies we can print is limited. Don't leave your ordering too late. We should indeed be sorrowful if any of our regular subscribers had to be met with the harsh words Sold Out.

BILLY BUNTER AT THE VICTORIA PALACE. The London Club is organising a party to visit **BILLY BUNTER SHIPWRECKED** at the Victoria Palace, on Saturday afternoon, January 13th. Any of our readers who can come along will be most heartily welcomed, and if you can bring friends, so much the better. Seats this year are 15/-, and anyone wishing to join the party should write to me, with remittance, without delay. Saturdays for the run of the show are already very heavily booked.

The part of Billy Bunter is being played this year by Peter Bridgmont, and early reports are that he is very good indeed. Further particulars of the rest of the cast will be given in our next issue.

THE EDITOR.

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HOW THEY BEGAN. No. 13

On our cover this week we bring you a reproduction of No. 1 of that much-loved comic paper MERRY & BRIGHT. Dated 1910.

* * * * *

R E V I E W

KNOCKOUT ANNUAL for 1962.....On sale at 8/6

With its large numbers of picture stories, not to mention the introduction of numerous adventures of the comic characters well-known to Knockout readers, this should be an attractive volume to the average modern-day child. It also caters for older and more intelligent youngsters, not to mention all adult Rookwood fans, by a number of good short stories. The most interesting item of all is probably the Rookwood Who's Who, which would seem to have been lifted from a Holiday Annual. It is quite delightful to see it, and it gives one the warm feeling that the old days are by no means dead.

There are two Rookwood stories, one featuring Putty Grace, and the other starring Gunner. It seems likely, from the length, that the sequence has been omitted from the Putty story, but in neither case is there any sign of the drastic pruning which so often spoils the continuity and grip of the weekly presentation of the Rookwood story in Knockout. Nor is there much evidence of change in the dialogue, and both stories read extremely well.

The years do not seem to have been kind to Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth. He is depicted as bald, corpulent, severe, and elderly. Maybe, however, the years are not responsible. It looks to us that it's just that the artist doesn't know his Rookwood.

This volume is well produced, and it is a must for Rookwood fans.

(Editor's Note: The Rookwood Stories in the weekly Knockout have now been discontinued. Let's hope they come back soon.)

M I R A C L E

By ROSS WOODS

(Editor's note: Ross Woods is the famous wife of a famous husband. In private life, she is Mrs. Jack Trevor Story. Though "Miracle" has Nelson Lee for its basic theme, we have placed it apart from the Lee Column, because we believe that every reader, whether a Lee fan or otherwise, will be delighted with this sincere and charming article.)

. . . .

Last month it was my birthday and I became suddenly thirty years younger. The alchemist who brought about this miracle was W.O.G. Lofts - Bill to you and me. He sent me, through the post, a pile of Nelson Lees and took me back into the world I'd known intimately years ago and thought I'd lost forever.

In my youth I was an avid reader of all the boys schoolboy papers on the market - the Gem, Magnet, Popular, Nelson Lee. I bought and read them all, from 1924 onwards. When I got married in 1938 I had a pile of Nelson Lees and Gems which reached from the bottom of the cupboard almost to the top! Then, tragedy of tragedies, my mother (no doubt thinking that as I was no longer a child the time had come to put away childish things!) burnt them.

I mourned them for years. I was twice married, had three children - the boy is named Lee! - had twelve books published; and still I never forgot the Nelson Lee. But it wasn't until Bill Lofts appeared on the scene - my husband brought him home! - that I realised it would be possible to read them again. Not only to read them but to acquire them. And with the first batch, back I went into the glorious nostalgic world of St. Franks.

None of the other schoolboy stories - and I read them all - held the same place in my heart as The Nelson Lee. To meet the boys of St. Franks again was like greeting old friends. Nipper, Handforth, Travers, Pitt, Fullwood, Archie, William Napoleon Browne - they sprang to life like characters on a stage. That magic world of the public school - the japes, expulsions, adventures; the rotters, cads, heroes and villains. The barring-outs, the reformations, the fantastic adventures at home and abroad. It was like opening a door that had never truly closed.

Of all the characters Edwy Searles Brookes brought so vividly to life, Handforth and Co. were my favourites. A story without the mighty

Edward Oswald was like bread without salt. He had his failings but they were very human failings. And they were far outweighed by his many good points.

When I read an article by Berenice Thorne, in which she described Handforth as a 'braggart and a bully' I felt a most unladylike desire to deliver one of his famous rights in person. Aggressive, obstinate, sometimes obtuse, but never a bully. The loyalty of Church and McClure proved that. And if Berenice has ever read the series where Walter Church was supposed to have died I don't think she would ever have been in any doubt as to the way Handy really felt about his two faithful chums.

I suppose if we Old Boys Paper addicts were asked wherein lay the magic of these stories we would reply 'nostalgia' for our own lost youth. But I think there is something else. I think there is the magic of returning to a world where there were no teddy-boys, no beatniks, no mixed-up teenagers forcing their egos and emotions and eccentricities upon us. Boys were truly just boys and the answer to all youthful problems was not a psychiatrist but a biff on the nose.

Looking back I believe now that my own writing, such as it was, was influenced by my early reading. The leading character was always dominant and forceful (Handforth?); the villains always had redeeming qualities (Travers?) I wrote Westerns - a strange choice for a woman, surely - and they were very masculine Westerns. Women were only introduced as a sop to the romantic reading public! (I remember that I resented the introduction of Irene and Co. into the St. Franks stories - the intrusion of femininity into a purely masculine world. Perhaps I was jealous - they seemed to have so many exciting adventures and my own schooldays were so horribly ordinary).

But whether for good or bad it was Edwy Searles Brooks who first inspired me to write - a mythical public school of my own, with mythical characters whose adventures were laboriously penned into twopenny exercise books.

Sometimes I see my son (twelve years old and occasionally worrying about nuclear weapons and Kruschew) watching me speculatively as I sit devouring - metaphorically - my Nelson Lees. He probably wonders what fascination they can possibly hold for me - solid, practical, matter-of-fact 'mum'. And sometimes when I sit watching him thumbing eagerly through his thriller comics and books on warships and space travel and rocket ships I feel a queer sense of sorrow. Somehow I feel that a generation of schoolboys who have never read about Greyfriars and St. Jim's and Rookwood and St. Franks have missed something truly wonderful.

DO YOU REMEMBER "THE BOYS' LEADER"?

By F. Addington Symonds
 Founder and First Editor of "The Champion"

* * * * *

Six weeks or so after the appearance of No. 1 of "The Champion", when sales were still rocketing, a colleague of mine at the Fleetway House said to me: "It's amazing! Who'd have thought that a return to the 'old-fashioned' type of boys' paper would have been anything but a failure in these post-war days?" That was in 1922, and he was referring to the fact that "The Champion" had been deliberately and obviously modelled on the old "Big Budget" and "Boys' Leader", both of which had died the death many years before, while more "up-to-date" papers like Thomson's "Adventure" now dominated the field.

"The Champion" was not merely successful. It was - and I say it in all modesty - an outstanding triumph, its circulation figures soaring week after week and month after month. And I believe that triumph to have been due to the fact that I had taken those two earlier journals as my model; not only for the quality of the stories presented but for something less tangible but no less important; something which was summed up in the slogan which "The Champion" adopted from its inception - "The Paper with the Personal Touch."

Arthur Brooke (A. C. Marshall), had that "personal touch" to an exceptional degree and infused it into every issue of his two papers, "The Big Budget" and "The Boys' Leader" which were my prime favourites as a lad. One sensed it not only in his editorial chats but on every page. From first to last throughout the years during which those papers appeared, it was manifested in that warm, sympathetic interest which he undoubtedly had in all his work and in every one of his readers; above all, in that burning enthusiasm which, as one great writer has said, is the genius of sincerity. It was a quality inherent in his personal character, for he was a great enthusiast and a generous friend as I know from personal experience

You catch the flame of it in every single issue of his papers, even today; and especially in No. 1 of "The Boys' Leader", which appeared as long ago as September 12th, 1903. As you turn the pages of that first number, you feel again the excitement of the Editor as he introduces you to the feast of truly wonderful stories and pictures which inaugurated this great paper and keeps its memory vivid among those who can still recall its appearance on the bookstalls.

Sub-titled "The Paper a Boy can Take Home," it starts off with the opening chapters of "Winning His Spurs" described as "A story of the Brave Black Prince," and written by Henry T. Johnson, with pictures by the inimitable "Val". This is followed by a page-article of great topical interest at that time - "The Schooldays of King Edward VII", who had recently come to the Throne. Then came "The Rival Bushrangers" by Donovan Mart, illustrated by G. M. Dodshon - a brilliantly written serial of adventure in the Australian bush. Next, an article, "How to Read Engine Lights and Discs" reflecting the hobby of so many lads in those days - a hobby which still persists today except that it has been transferred to motor cars! Then the once famous Sidney Drew contributes "a serial of peril and wonder" entitled "The City of Darkness", with drawings by A. Morrow; and, finally, there is "Lost in the Wide Pacific" by Jules Verne, pictured by Fred Holmes.

As an additional attraction, the paper contained an 8-page comic supplement, "Funny Pips", featuring on its front page the still famous character, Sunny Jim, and offering still more stories, among them "His Lordship of Ringmead School" by Claude Heathcote (father of Phyllis Panting, once editress of "Woman and Beauty" and now more familiarly known as Mrs. Digby Morton); and a story by that giant among boys' writers, George Manville Fenn, whose son Clive was a frequent contributor of "The Champion" and its associated journals.

The contents of that first number of "The Boys' Leader" formed the vanguard of many splendid serials and complete stories, the titles of which may well arouse nostalgic memories; Maxwell Scott's "The Iron Skull" and "The Red Hand", featuring Vernon Read, Detective; Sidney Drew's "That Terrible Term", which introduced Jack Redfern, Fatty Bonsor, Pilling, Towle, and even a boy named Bunter - all of Ranthorpe School; Raymond Lee's unforgettable story, "Beyond the Eternal Ice"; Stacey Blake's coalmining drama, "Black Diamonds"; Herbert Wentworth's fine railway story, "Vultures of the Line" ... Other well-remembered authors were Herbert Maxwell, Singleton Pound, Rupert Chesterton, Escott Lynn....

The illustrations, too, were always supremely well done and the artists included, besides those already mentioned, such favourites of the day as Arthur Clarke, Robert Strange, E. E. Briscoe, C. H. Chapman and many others.

As you turned the pages of this first number - or, indeed, of any of those that followed - you felt that the whole paper was "alive" in a way that was exceptional, even in those days, when editors worked for the love of the job and obviously enjoyed it. The spirit of enthusiasm radiated from every page, every picture; you had the feeling that the man behind it all was there, looking over your shoulder, pointing to this or that feature and sharing in your own excitement. To read "The Boys' Leader" was an adventure and a memorable experience.

At the end of the first year of the paper's existence, Arthur Brooke wrote: "I am a proud and happy editor, with a feeling of heartfelt thankfulness. My countless readers' help and kindly assistance have done much to further my aims and hopes, and to them I extend the hand of good fellowship and say, with all my heart "Thank you"." And at the head of his editorial chat - which was a regular feature - were the words; "Whenever you are in trouble or difficulty, write to me, and you may be sure I shall do my best to assist you. Not only do I wish to be your Editor, but I also want to be your true adviser and sincere friend." Such sentiments may have an old-fashioned ring about them in these brash, so-called realistic times; but they were not mere catchpenny phrases - they came from the heart of a great Editor who was also a great gentleman and a genuine friend, and I personally, can testify to the very real help which he gave to many of his readers.

He had, too, a flair for finding and nursing authors whose work was outstanding. Among his "finds" were such subsequently well-known writers as C. Malcolm Hincks, Malcolm Dayle, and a young man named Rupert Chesterton (already named in this article), whose "Chronicles of Crosfield College" were a notable addition to the many brilliant stories in the paper. Incidentally, Arthur Brooke himself was a writer of no mean ability and contributed many stories and articles to both his papers under the pseudonym of Carras Yorke.

Those of us who still remember "The Boys' Leader" are getting on a bit now; but though Anno Domini may be catching up on us, we are still young in heart; and, for this anachronistic but delightful youthfulness, we owe not a little of our great debt of gratitude to that most outstanding of old boys' periodicals which was proud to call itself "the Leader of all boys' Papers."

CAN ANY GOOD SAMARITAN HELP? Only one copy of MODERN BOY is needed to complete an entire set from No. 1 to the end. ONLY NO. 239 is needed. If you can help, please write to: DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS: RON HODGSON has now moved to "BLUE GABLES", 47 GORDONDALE ROAD, MANSFIELD, NOTTS.

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Please write Air Mail stating prices wanted to: MR. R. J. MCCARTHY, WETLANDS, AUGATHELLA,
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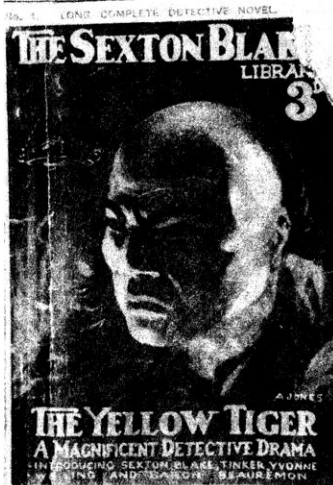
Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN, 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London.

HOW THEY BEGAN. No. 14

Here we have the very first issue of the Sexton Blake Library, dated late summer 1915. It is a real delight that this famous Library is still going strong.

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It will be noticed that the list of titles and authors is quite lengthy this month, and it will be observed that Blakiana is shorter than usual. This is no fault or wish of mine but purely and simply the old cry of "lack of material." I have been conducting Blakiana now for eight years, and although during this period there have been patches when 'copy' was scarce, it has never been so bad as during the past few months. If I do not receive any support in the way of material in the



next week or so, then next month it will be a case of titles and authors only.

JOSE PACKMAN.

THE OLD AND THE NEW

By Julius Lennard

I have just finished reading "Sexton Blake in Africa", a penny UNION JACK of 1905, which makes one wonder - "The Old or the New"?

In this exciting story Sexton Blake is at his best, while a very close second comes Pedro the bloodhound, the grand dog almost human, who has, alas, gone for good - or has he? Tinker, for me, is only a poor third, very boyish and nowhere near the Tinker of a few years later. We do not read him saying "Guv'nor" but "Mr. Blake", and it does seem rather odd.

The story is quite good, and to we old (?) -timers who remember such as Waldo (my favourite), Mdlle Julie, Kestrel, Plummer and the rest, the "old" stories are better than the "new".

I suggest - and it could be done - that the publishers of the Sexton Blake Library, one month, print one "modern" and one "old-time" story, put a voting form in the books, and have a ballot as to (a) Is the old as good as the new? (b) Would readers like one old and one new style of story each month? (c) Would they like two of the modern as now?

I, personally would like to see the end of "Sexton Blake Investigations"; I would like to see the female staff disappear; I would like to see Sexton Blake back in Baker Street, with Tinker and beloved Pedro, because my honest opinion after many, many years is - THE OLD IS BETTER THAN THE NEW.

Time may prove me right!

* * * * *

CECIL HAYTER

(The following is from a letter to me from Bill Lofts. J.P.)

I was most interested in your request for data on Cecil Hayter. As a matter of fact I myself have been working on this of late, but up to now I have not discovered much that is fresh. However, the following may be of use to you in Blakiana.

The only recollection that Mr. Twyman, late editor of the U.J., has of Hayter is spending a weekend with him. Hayter was a versatile man and, like Sir Winston Churchill, fond of brick-laying.

The second Christian name of Goodenough set me wondering when I saw, not so long ago, a mention in the paper of the death of James Hayter, the famous actor's father; his second name was also Goodenough.

A letter to James Hayter playing in "My Fair Lady" at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, brought the following very interesting reply:-

"Dear Mr. Lofts,

I certainly had no idea that a Hayter was the author of some of the Sexton Blake stories, which I read with very avid interest when a boy. Did this writer use a nom-de-plume or were they anonymous? I think they must have been either, or else I would certainly have noticed my own name on the stories!

I can tell you, however, that this Cecil Hayter could not have been as a writer suggests, a first cousin to Sir William Goodenough Hayter, because I am! His father and mine being brothers. None of the brothers had a son named Cecil. The family name of "Goodenough" does, however, suggest that there must have been a relationship somewhere. The name of "Goodenough" was, I believe, adopted first by my great-grandfather; after that date all the Hayter males had this name included in their Christian names.

What a great pity that my father has just passed away, as he would no doubt have helped you a great deal, as he was well up in family history. I do however, have a cousin who can help you, and I suggest perhaps you write to him, his address is enclosed. I do wish you most sincerely every success in your research on Cecil Goodenough Hayter, and should there be any connection with the family, I should be most highly interested to hear of it.

Yours sincerely,

HENRY JAMES GOODENOUGH HAYTER. (James Hayter)

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY TITLES AND AUTHORS (2nd Series)
(Continued)

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No. 649	The Secret at Sixty-Six Fathoms.....(Mike O'Flynn).....	W. S. Stanton-Hope
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No. 651	The Secret of the Snows.....	H. H. C. Gibbons
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No. 654	The Mystery of the Condemned Cottage.....	H. H. C. Gibbons
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No. 656	The Fatal Fortune.....(Kew, Carlac, Lawless).....	A. Murray
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No. 659	The Phantom of the Mill.....	L. Bidston
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No. 662	The Riddle of the Lost Ship.....(Capt. Dack).....	A. J. Hunter
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No. 666	The Great Air Swindle.....	J. Creasey
No. 667	The Sign of the Black Feather.....	H. E. Hill
	(Reprint of 2nd series No. 102)	
No. 668	The Monastery Mystery.....	H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 669	The A.R.P. Mystery.....(Raffles).....	P. Atkey
No. 670	The Man from Singapore.....(R. Purvale).....	J. G. Brandon
No. 671	The Harem Mystery.....(G. Dass).....	A. Parsons
No. 672	The Riddle of the West End Hairdresser.....	H. H. C. Gibbons
	(Reprint of 2nd series No. 131)	
No. 673	The 13th Code.....(Ted Flanagan).....	F. Warwick
No. 674	The Mystery of the Lorry Driver.....	L. Black
No. 675	The Burmese Dagger.....	<u>Original Author</u> A. Murray
	(Reprint of 1st series No. 102)	<u>Rewritten by</u> G. Verner
No. 676	The Great Trunk Mystery.....	R. H. Poole
	(Reprint of 2nd series No. 116)	
No. 677	Murder on the Ice Rink.....(R. Purvale).....	J. G. Brandon
No. 678	The Riddle of the Negro's Head.....	R. C. Armour
No. 679	The Case of the Stolen Police Dossier.....	W. J. Bayfield
No. 680	The Tour of Terror.....	J. W. Bobin
	(Reprint of 2nd series No. 112)	
No. 681	The Case of the Crook Rajah.....(G. Dass).....	A. Parsons
No. 682	In the Hands of Spies.....(R. Purvale).....	J. G. Brandon

No. 683	The Impersonators.....	(Rupert Waldo).....	E. S. Brooks
	(Reprint 2nd series No. 33)		
No. 684	The Riddle of the Evil Eye.....	(G. Grant, Julie).....	W. W. Sayer
No. 685	The Secret of the Cellar.....		W. Shute
No. 686	The Depository Mystery.....		H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 687	The Case of the Bogus Monk.....	(Plummer).....	G. H. Teed
	(Reprint of 2nd series No. 144)		
No. 688	The Riddle of the Ranch.....		F. Warwick
No. 689	The Man with the Jitters.....	(R. Purvale).....	J. G. Brandon
No. 690	The Hidden Menace.....	<u>Original Author</u>	<u>J. W. Bobin</u>
	(Reprint of 1st series No. 71)	<u>Rewritten by</u>	<u>G. Verner</u>
No. 691	The Mystery of the Missing Envoy.....	(G. Grant, Julie).....	W. W. Sayer
No. 692	The Case of the Rejuvenated Millionaire.....		G. N. Philips
	(Reprint 2nd series No. 145)		
No. 693	The Rubber Smugglers.....	(Plummer).....	G. H. Teed
	(Reprint of 2nd series No. 147)		
No. 694	The Secret of the Golden Horse.....		A. Parsons
No. 695	The Mystery of the Missing Refugee.....		H. O'Mant
No. 696	The Gunboat Mystery.....	(R. Purvale).....	J. G. Brandon
No. 697	The Secret of the Surgery.....		F. Warwick
No. 698	The Police Station Mystery.....		R. Hardinge
No. 699	The Great Taxicab Ramp.....	(R. Purvale).....	J. G. Brandon
No. 700	The Fur Raiders.....		H. H. C. Gibbons
	(Reprint of 2nd series No. 151)		
No. 701	The Mystery Militiaman.....		L. Black
No. 702	The Great Stores Mystery.....		W. Shute
No. 703	The Case of the Shot P.C.....	(Zenith).....	G. N. Philips
	(Reprint of 2nd series No. 155)		
No. 704	The Secret of the Sacred Ruby.....		J. Lewis
	(Reprint of 1st series No. 86)		
No. 705	The Terror of the Pacific.....	(R. Purvale).....	J. G. Brandon
No. 706	The Riddle of the Gas Meter.....		H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 707	The Mystery of Gold Digger Creek.....	(Plummer).....	G. H. Teed
	(Reprint of 2nd series No. 158)		
No. 708	The Secret of the Hulk.....	<u>Original Author</u>	<u>A. Murray</u>
	(Reprint of 1st series No. 63)	<u>Rewritten by</u>	<u>G. Verner</u>
No. 709	The Black Svastika.....	(R. Purvale).....	J. G. Brandon
No. 710	The Secret of Oil Creek.....		A. Parsons
No. 711	Sexton Blake Special Constable.....	(A. Dexter).....	J. W. Bobin
	(Reprint of 1st series No. 28)		
No. 712	The Man from the Jungle.....		R. Hardinge
No. 713	In the Grip of the Gestapo.....		W. E. Stanton-Hope
No. 714	The Mystery of Sherwood Towers.....		G. Verner
	(Reprint of 2nd series No. 152)		
No. 715	The Case of the Dictator's Double.....		W. J. Bayfield
No. 716	The Riddle of the Murdered Fisherman.....		H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 717	The Secret of the Siegfried Line.....		M. B. Dix
No. 718	The Eighth Millionaire.....	(Plummer, V. Mata-Vali).....	G. H. Teed
	(Reprint of 2nd series No. 165)		
No. 719	The Mystery of the Red Tower.....		R. C. Armour
No. 720	Crook's Cargo.....	(R. Purvale).....	J. G. Brandon
No. 721	The Black-Out Crime.....		H. H. C. Gibbons
No. 722	The Man from China.....		A. Parsons
No. 723	The Case of the Crimson Conjuror.....		G. A. Evans
	(Reprint of 2nd series No. 171)		

HAMILTONIANA



THE MYSTERIOUS SIGNAL! WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

FAMOUS SERIES No. 13

This month, though it is nothing to do with Guy Fawkes' Day, we bring you a picture of a rocket. We turn in fact to the much loved Cedar Creek series, which told of Frank Richards' Schooldays in Canada. Our picture is taken from "The Flour-Bag Gang", the first story in the type of series which Charles Hamilton handled so well when he was writing of the Far West.

ARCH-FOSSIL! - - - BICYCLE-PUMP PRODUCT!By Brian Doyle

Billy Bunter - as might be expected - gets a whole chunk to himself in a fascinating book just published by the Brockhampton Press at 25/-. It's called "Intent upon Reading" and is written by Margery Fisher. Her publishers describe it as a 'critical appraisal of modern fiction for children' and it is just that.

Miss Fisher discusses all kinds of children's stories, but it is a section of her chapter on 'School Stories' that will interest readers of the C.D. After discussing books by Anthony Buckeridge (the author of the 'Jennings' stories) and William Mayne (who writes about life in a Canterbury choir-school), Miss Fisher goes on as follows:-

"But now we must come to the arch-fossil, the original fly in the ointment - Billy Bunter. Pictorially speaking, it is not correct to speak of Bunter as a fossil, for he has undergone evolutionary change. The first illustration in which the fat boy appeared, on the title-page of "The Magnet" of March, 1908, is relatively normal. To be sure, Bunter is eating jam-tarts, but his figure is only that of an ordinary plump boy, his spectacles are of orthodox size. Two months later he has put on a little weight, in a picture of a picnic to which the caption is, 'It was certainly a mistake to leave Billy in charge.'

"And so the thing goes on. It is interesting to watch over the course of years as the artistic bicycle-pump is applied and Bunter gradually becomes the gross, grotesque figure which our children know from the pages of the last "Magnets" of 1940, from the frontispieces of the Bunter books still continuing and from the television screen.

"It is very different, however, on the printed page. Frank Richards conceived Bunter in 1908 as a character in a magazine story, a serial. He has been kept alive, virtually unchanged in age and temperament, from 1908 to the present day (with a break between 1940 and 1947). The chief virtue of Greyfriars School, as of other schools in comics of yesterday and today, is their familiarity. The stories rely on a few simple formulas of plot and character, instantly recognised, endlessly repeated. Hurree Singh's Babu English, based on the word 'terrific' and on certain self-coined abstract nouns, has never been changed; nor have the hearty ejaculations of Cherry or the mouthings of Bunter.

"Each of Bunter's familiar characteristics was taken from real life, as Richards tells us in his autobiography. His girth came from a Fleet Street editor; his spectacles from a relation who had goggled at Richards when he was a boy; his postal order gag came from an acquaintance who was always borrowing on the expectation of a cheque; his fat-uousness under cross-examination from 'an eminent public figure' of late Victorian times. Thus Bunter was born whole and immutable. At his very first appearance he was preoccupied with food, he used the onomatopoeic expressions like 'Yarooo' and 'Gerumph' which shatter television valves in hundreds of homes today.

"To be sure, in the early days he was an incidental bit of comic relief for the trials and heartburnings of Harry Wharton, designed to be the chief character of the stories. But that 'little chatterbox', 'little Bunter', 'the smallest boy in the form' (not sarcastic, then) had soon pushed himself forward; and now that the fat boy has been given a new lease of life in full-length books, it is the name of Bunter which stands for the series. They are the Bunter books, and it is his scrapes, infinitely blown-up from trivial incidents, which make the stories. For Bunter's appeal must come from familiarity in childhood. Nobody could approach in middle-age paragraphs like this:-

'Prime!' gurgled Billy Bunter.

Bunter did not find it easy to utter even that monosyllable. His capacious mouth was packed to capacity, with luscious, purple grapes. He gurgled happily through delicious grapes that seemed to melt in the mouth.

It was a happy fat Owl! Smithy, for once kind and sympathetic had done the thing well. That bunch of grapes was the biggest and best that money could buy. Probably it would have pleased an invalid - had there been an invalid, and had it reached that invalid. Certainly it pleased William George Bunter. His little round eyes were still red, and still exuded water, from the application of the onion, but otherwise, his fat face beamed

(Frank Richards. "BILLY BUNTER'S BOLT." Cassell, 1957)

"Nostalgia, alone, can carry you through this sort of thing. Pleasure remembered is worth having; but the books to look out for are those which can be picked up and re-read with new understanding, in middle-age, or which can revive a parent's interest in school stories by a new slant. These books will never become fossilized, although they may be written well within the boarding-school formula."

Miss Fisher goes on to say that "the boarding-school story can live now only in the hands of exceptional writers like William Mayne and Antonia Forest. It is the day-school story which has been most interesting in the past ten years or so, partly because the greater proportion of readers go to day-schools, partly because home and school can be neatly and profitably welded together."

The author also discusses school stories by such writers as Talbot Baines Reed, Richard Bird and L. C. Douthwaite, as well as more adult school novels by H. A. Vachell, E. F. Benson, Alec Waugh and Rudyard Kipling.

Everyone is entitled to their point of view and, in "Intent upon Reading," Margery Fisher gives hers. It is, all in all, an intelligent but all-too-brief survey of the Bunter legend, I suppose. Miss Fisher can't be expected to appreciate and enjoy the finer points of the Greyfriars stories as members of the O.B.B.C. do.

But to refer to the stories as being 'fossilized' - well, that's going a bit too far, don't you agree

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

BILL LOFTS: Investigation shows that Bunter had check trousers as early as Magnet No. 48, 1909, but there was nothing consistent in those days. Some weeks they were plain, other weeks striped - e.g. No. 86, check; No. 87 striped. The arrival of Sammy Bunter in Magnet No. 144, 1910, shows both Bunters in check trousers. Probably Mr. Chapman meant that editor Hinton told him to be consistent and always put Bunter in checks,

after Johnny Bull came on the scene in Magnet No. 151, 1911. But an examination of the sketches of Johnny Bull makes it hard to believe that Johnny could ever be mistaken for Bunter, as the editor seemed to fear.

GEORGE SELLARS: I remember Macdonald drawing two pictures showing Monteith, head prefect of the New House, in Etons. This was in "A Split in the Sixth", my first Gem. We have a lot for which to thank Mac, Chapman and Shields. Their illustrations were charming.

GEOFFREY WILDE: The man with the brush had an important part to play. Granted, the story's the thing; but I know that for me any Blake story not illustrated by E. R. Parker started off under a handicap. As characters and locale emerge from the realm of mere fiction and pass into legend, as they acquire tradition and mystique, so they acquire an almost physical realism in the mind of the reader. The perfect iconographer brings this vision to life, and crowns the legend.

Between 1930 and 1935, when the Magnet was at its zenith and the Gem reprinting its greatest triumphs, I think it is also true to say that both papers delighted the eye as at no other time in their careers. I preferred the Gem when it carried a Union Jack on its cover, and could never take to the pocket-size Gems. I rather regretted the salmon-covered Magnet, too - though by the summer of 1939, it had achieved a pleasing and harmonious cover that carried the title of the week's story.

J. YORKE ROBINSON: One man you failed to mention is Warwick Reynolds. In my opinion he was the greatest of the great team of artists who illustrated the Hamilton papers. His boys always seemed to be real people - just what public school boys should have looked like.

I admired the work of all the men who helped to bring the stories to life, but I think that the chaps in, for instance, Wakefield's illustrations, with the exception of hair styles, were all like peas in a pod. The finest drawing I ever saw was by Warwick Reynolds in the 1920 Holiday Annual - a scene drawn looking into Mr. Wick's tuck-shop in Coombe (unfortunately, the name WICKES appeared over the shop-window). The effect of reflected sunshine in the faces of the boys, and the shop cat in flight, make it an illustration of outstanding merit.

W. T. THURBON: I always admired the work of J. Abney Cummings who for so many years illustrated the Jack, Sam and Pete tales in the Marvel. His work began in No. 12 and continued until his death about 1920. He illustrated that grand serial "Adventure Island" in Chuckles. One of his weaknesses was in drawing rifles, but he had a wonderful gift of obtaining atmosphere of those "far away places with strange-sounding names." He was expert at drawing sailing-boats, which is understandable, since his obituary in the Marvel spoke of him as a keen yachtsman. He did a little work in The Scout in its early days.

P. A. WALKER: The real "king pins" of boys' periodical illustrations were surely H. M. Brock and Gordon Browne, mainly in The Captain. Brock had a beautiful line, and I recall the really exquisite drawing of historical costume and the hands. He had a finish which, in my opinion, is seldom achieved by modern illustrators.

I have always been an admirer of Warwick Reynolds, but he was much better at portraying animals than schoolboys. However, I consider that he did some excellent work for the Gem around 1918, and as this was when I first started to buy the Gem I have a soft spot for his work.

An artist whose work always astonished me with its careless appearance was the Nelson Lee man, Arthur Jones. Compare his work with that superb draughtsman Eric Parker. Fred Bennett had a beautiful line, as did E. E. Briscoe.

BASIL ADAM: I think that good illustrations do a great deal to help capture the atmosphere of a story, especially the more powerful Magnet series. I always have a clear mental picture of the illustrations for the 1925 Rebel series. For some reason they stick vividly in my mind.

MAURICE KUTNER: The reader who wrote that the Gem never seemed right without Macdonald's illustrations must have been introduced to the paper before or after my time. In my purple period I knew only of Warwick Reynolds. When he left, Briscoe illustrated for a time, and then Macdonald came back for good. Taken in conjunction with the bad sub stories around 1921, I lost interest in the Gem. I might not have done so if Reynolds had still been doing the illustrations.

JOHN WERNHAM: Certainly the artist and the author make a unit which disturbs the reader when it is broken. Macdonald could be very good indeed and I have observed solitary figures which deserved a better fate. I have thought that a composite picture could be made of some of his figure drawing - and backgrounds, for that matter.

RON CROLLIE: I thoroughly enjoyed "The Man With the Brush", though I cannot agree that there were ever too many illustrations. I do not think that the pictures ever really gave away the plot. Macdonald was undoubtedly careless. One thing that irritated me in his earlier work was the depicting of seniors, Fifth and even Sixth - in Etons.

Of all the artists, I think Mr. Chapman paid most attention to the details of the stories.

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: Boys' Weekly Reader, Vols. 7 and 8. Boys of England, Vols. 4 to 7, 9, 11, 12 and many later volumes. Boys' Standard, anything, volumes or odd copies. Boys' Miscellany, Vols. 1 and 2 and copies or information of anything after No. 74.
TOM HOPPERTON, COURTLANDS, FULFORD ROAD, SCARBOROUGH.

FOR SALE: CHUMS Annual 1933/34 (13/6). Holiday Annual for 1935 8/6. Volume containing six Rockwood stories, bound without covers 25/-. Bound volume containing 1 Greyfriars S.O.L., 2 St. Frank's S.O.L. and 1 Football and Sports Lib. 12/6. The Captain 1912/13, damaged but interesting volume 3/-. 1st Tom Merry's Annual 5/-. later Tom Merry Annual fair, 1/6. Postage extra on all items.
Write: ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

Andrew Langman, contributor to our columns, has just ended a holiday at our hospitable inn. This is what he wrote in the Visitor's Book:

Horse sense is what prevents horses for backing men.

Mademoiselle Julie is also enjoying an autumn holiday here. She signed the register Mme. Coralie Standish, and wrote the following in the Visitors' Book:

A Sexton is a man who minds his keys and pews.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

(Conducted by JACK WOOD)

I was sorry to see that our worthy editor had been underfire for the cutting down of the Column to a mere picture of a familiar NLL cover two months ago. He was placed in a difficulty owing to the fact that owing to pressure of other commitments and holidays I had been unable to forward him any copy; at the same time, there was some misunderstanding between us, because I had been under the impression in such cases - fortunately, very rare - the editor had in hand for use the entries of the recent competition - one of which, in fact, was used last month.

I hope that other entries will also be used in the near future, but any other contributions will always be thankfully received.

I would like this month to make a brief reference to the reprints that are now appearing regularly in Film Fun. Since the series started with the famous Silver Dwarf stories by Maxwell Scott, the reprints have comprised revised versions of the series in which Handy's father became involved with the Mafia; the series in which Snipe nearly got Handy expelled; and the current series, the Ten Talons of Taz.

The reprints are a curious hotpotch. Basically, the stories are unaltered, but in detail there are altered names of characters which makes the whole thing largely absurd. Why the names should have been altered I don't know, unless questions of copyright crop up. But even then, many of the names are unaltered, so that copyright has been broken anyway. Altogether it is a very odd business.

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THE BEST SCHOOL STORY?

By Christopher Lowder

"The greatest school story of the century", so says Eric Fayne of the 1925 Wharton Rebel series.

Now, I have never read this series, so I am not in a position to judge it. But before I had even heard of the series I happened to buy N.L.L. No. 29 (2nd series). It was called "The Cads of St. Frank's," and to me this is the best school story I have ever read.

(By the way, I have said elsewhere, that I wish that Nelson Lee

had not gone to St. Frank's. This does not mean that I don't appreciate or enjoy St. Frank's stories; on the contrary I do enjoy them. Actually No. 29 did not feature Nelson Lee.)

"The Cads" is a fine, powerful tale, worthy to be put between hard covers in my opinion.

Clive Russell has had a row with Ralph Leslie Fullwood. The reformed Fullwood thinks that Russell won a certain £20 by gambling, when in actual fact it was a present from Russell's pater.

Bernard Forrest, the cad of Study A, wants the quarrel to be kept on, because Fullwood, as a vigilante, locked him in a cupboard to stop him going into a roulette den. The way he does it is cunning and vindictive.

He lures Fullwood into the same gambling den and leaves him there with the £20. Fullwood thinks that Russell will be there and he wants to stop him. But slowly the old gambling instinct grips poor Fullwood and he watches the ivory ball click round the slots.

Forrest's revenge is pure psychology and he is certain that in the end the game will "get Fullwood" and he will disgrace himself by losing his friend's money.

Fullwood, who was watching the door for Russell's supposed entry, is slowly drawn to the roulette table.

"The ivory ball rolled lazily into one of the numbered slots of the roulette wheel, and Ralph Leslie Fullwood watched with complete fascination."

The end is near, Fullwood's face is flushed, he is fingering a £1 note, number 16 slot is winning uncannily every time, Forrest, lounging in one corner of the room with Gulliver and Bell, is certain of victory.

And he is right.

"He (Fullwood) took the £1 note out, and placed in on "sixteen". Just for that instant he was the old Fullwood in every way. He had forgotten everything that had happened recently. He only knew that he was beside this table, and that "sixteen" was consistently winning.

Click - click - click!

The wheel spun, and Fullwood found himself watching with blazing eyes, and with his heart thumping wildly within him.

Click - click - click!

The ivory ball went more slowly as it bounced over the metal studs. And then, with an almost deliberate action, the ball rolled into the "sixteen" slot.

Fullwood had won!

"Got it!" he ejaculated breathlessly. He stood there, gloating

and triumphant.

Well! How about that? To my mind a masterpiece of brilliantly tense description.

And the climax is even better.

Of course, Fullwood loses every cent of the money, and it is only then that Forrest tells him that it was all a trick to get him disgraced.

And it is then that E. S. Brooks really gets busy. He plays magnificently on the emotions of the two boys.

Fullwood, shocked, "his very brain going dizzy". He realizes that he is on the path into the abyss, his will-power has forsaken him and he has given in to the evil influence of "The table." He has disgraced himself and has been tricked into gambling away money that was not his.

"A put-up job" breathed Fullwood. "It's not true! You can't tell me -"

Forrest - the real cad of St. Frank's. Cool, cynical and gloating in his triumph - Satan himself, triumphant in his win over yet another victim!

"I mean what I say. That money wasn't won in this place at all. You've been quarrelling with Russell, haven't you? And about that twenty quid, eh? We told you he won it at roulette - but that was just our joke."

"Joke!" echoed Fullwood tragically.

Fullwood gets out of the club. His one desire was to be alone; so that he could think.

And, while he is walking back to school, Forrest and his cronies come upon him for a final "jeer". It proved their undoing.

These vindictive cads had plotted against him, and were the cause of his downfall.

"You curs!" panted Fullwood, harshly."Look out!" gasped Bell. "He's dangerous!"

It is now Fullwood who is cool - with the coolness of white hot anger.

"Forrest, I'm going to smash you!" said Fullwood, in a whisper. But it was such a whisper that Bernard Forrest backed away in fear.

"Don't be a fool!" he muttered. "Don't go mad -"

Crash!

....."You cads - you beasts - you hounds!" he panted as he lashed out. "You've been gloating, haven't you? Well now you're

going to howl!"

It was a kind of despair that drove Fullwood on. And it was despair, also, that caused Forrest to yell for help.

"Come on, you idiots!" he gasped. "Pounce on him! Drag him off! He'll kill me! Confound you, why can't you drag -"

The words were stopped by a sudden right-hander which took him on the mouth and gashed his lips.

It's the end of the line for Forrest and his cronies, for Fullwood is out for vengeance - and he takes it!

The cads of Study A were an appalling sight.

They looked as though a mob had set upon them

So Fullwood wreaks his vengeance. But he realizes that this is not enough. He has shirked the trust put in him by his friends at St. Frank's. He, supposedly reformed from his "old ways", had succumbed to "the wheel" and dishonoured himself.

More than once he half decided to halt - to turn back, and cycle as far away from St. Frank's as he could get. But he was always pulled up by the knowledge that such a course would be cowardly. Whatever his faults, whatever his shortcomings, he had never been a funk.

So he went on - knowing that it was too late to be sorry. He had had his night out, and the price was such that he trembled to contemplate it."

So ends "The Cads of St. Frank's." And what happened to Fullwood? I wish I knew. For this is the only one of that particular series that I have got.

I have left a great deal out, and no one can be expected to judge a story on a short article like this. But whoever reads this series, even this story alone, will, I am certain put it amongst the "greats" of school stories.

Footnote:

If anyone has this full series, I would consider it a great favour if they would lend it to me (minus No. 29). I will, of course, be happy to pay the necessary postage. As I told J. R. Swan, I am very impatient to know what happened to poor old Fullwood!

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Old Boys' Book Club

MIDLAND

It was nice to welcome Ray Bennett after a few months absence and good, too, to see John Tomlinson. There were apologies from Ted Davey and Mrs. Brown, and Madge Corbett brought good news of Norman Gregory, making excellent progress.

Tom Porter was in the chair and lost no time in starting the programme. A letter from John Bond was read by Madge. John had not been in the best of health lately. A sojourn in hospital so shortly after his return from Russia has not brightened things for him, but he promises to be present at the next meeting.

A Greyfriars quiz set by the Secretary was negotiated successfully by Tom Porter. After two word games by the Chairman, which proved very popular and extremely amusing, we sat back to discuss the latest series of Rookwood yarns in the Knockout comic. Jack Bellfield had introduced this topic and there were some very interesting opinions put forward. John T was indignant that the name of "Putty" Grace had been altered to Simple Simon. Jack Bellfield was of the opinion that these reprints of early Rookwood in the Knockout would encourage interest in the writing of Charles Hamilton though the comic strips of Billy Bunter did not help much towards that end.

After refreshments, there was a talk by Jack Corbett, which had to be curtailed owing to lack of time.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held 8th October, 1961.

Our meeting this month, as the guests of Jack Morgan, was a most pleasant one, and, despite the absence of one or two members, there were enough present to make things go with the usual swing. We were pleased to welcome back Pat Laffey, who has not been too well over the past couple of months; we greatly miss the company of such a regular as Pat, and we sincerely hope he will now be able to resume his place with us every month as of yore.

Most of the early part of the evening was taken up in informal discussions on a variety of subjects, not entirely confined to the old books, resulting in quite a lot of interesting conversation and points of view. We then had a repeat play over of the Australian tape, which sounded even better at the second hearing, and it will now be despatched to the other sections. We think they will agree it is a first-class job and a credit to our friends of the other hemisphere. Plans were formulated for another recording by the section in the near future, and we are hoping to improve on our initial effort.

After refreshments came a quiz by Frank Unwin; this was won by Bill Windsor, with Walter Pritchard and Jim Walsh dead-heating for second place - the honours, like the music, go around and around.

The evening ended for us a little after nine-o'clock; each month we seem to find it more and more difficult to tear ourselves away from the sociable atmosphere of

members' homes.

Next meeting, November 12th (6 p.m.) at Bill Windsor's. Members are asked to be as early as possible; there is a very full programme, and we would like to get off to an early start.

FRANK CASE - Secretary.

LONDON

Happy memories of the July Surbiton meeting were evoked when David Samuels brought along his projector to the East Dulwich meeting on Sunday, October 15th and showed members present the film he took on that jolly occasion. The film was in colour and as I have already stated that the garden at Excelsior House was at its best the result was an excellent and happy film. David was suitably thanked for his very kind effort.

Josie Packman was in the chair with Don Webster officiating. There were many enjoyable items. Jimmy Iraldi's 'Castaways' were a source of enjoyment and laughter; Tom Wright and Bill Lofts provided teasing quizzes; Roger Jenkins and Horace Roberts gave reports of their respective sections of the club library; Len and Josie put on an excellent feed and with a final 'Illuminator', we all went home in the fog happy to know we meet at Reuben Godsave's house, 35 Woodhouse Road, Leytonstone, London, E.11. (Phone: MARYland 1757), on Sunday, November 19th. Kindly let host know if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

NORTHERN

Meeting held 14th October, 1961

There was another good attendance of 14 members when Chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened the meeting at 7 p.m. We were especially pleased to have Norman Smith with us again, Norman being the original secretary of the Northern Section, and we hope he may be able to attend meetings regularly in the future. Apologies were received from Ron and Doreen Hodgson and Harold Busby, who were unable to attend this month.

Routine business was soon dealt with, and then Gerry Allison referred to our programme for the November meeting, when we hope to entertain Eric Payne, editor of the 'C.D.' It will include a special competition, devised by Gerry himself, in which postal members can also join, and it was suggested that we start earlier than usual, at 6.30 p.m. Gerry also pointed out that the following day was the 80th birthday of P.G. Wodehouse, whose output of course includes some very fine school stories.

Jack Wood's news this month included details of two new Bunter books to be published shortly and the new St. Frank's series which has started in Film Fun. Then Tony Potts, who is now resident in the London area, told us of a meeting he had attended at the home of Bob Blythe, and greatly enjoyed.

This month's reading of 'Rivals and Chums' was given by Geoffrey Wilde in his usual effective style. The story was not quite finished when refreshments arrived, and Geoffrey obligingly gave us the last chapter after the interval. This fine tale of Highcliffe School, with Greyfriars for once playing a secondary role, has given us all great enjoyment during the past few months.

The last item of an interesting programme was a quiz of 24 questions by Gerry Allison on old boys' books and comic papers, which was won by Frank Hancock, which took us on to 9.30 p.m., when another enjoyable meeting terminated.

Next meeting, Saturday, November 11th.

FRANK HANCOCK - Secretary.

AUSTRALIA

Members gathered at their favourite rendezvous at "The Bookshop" on Thursday, September 21st for their usual monthly get-together, and regular members were pleased to welcome back Bruce Fowler who has been absent for some time.

Syd Smyth as Chairman opened proceedings at 6.30 p.m. and announced that issue No. 4 of the Club magazine will soon be rolling off the production line - an interesting collection of items has been assembled and members were invited to volunteer as amateur printers as the club now plans to print its own magazine to overcome production holdups.

Overseas letters were then passed around and the news contained in the Merseyside Foghorn was discussed with interest. There was a big budget of news from Bill Hubbard who had generously sent details of several quizzes he had devised for the London Club meetings - no cricket scores here Bill, but our members enjoyed this unusual addition to their programme. Thanks to the generosity of Bill Lofts, members were able to view some of the films taken at the recent meeting at Excelsior House - some interesting personalities we'd like to meet in the flesh some day.

Members spent the remainder of the evening discussing the recent article written by Bill Hubbard for the C.D. - we are all looking forward to the future instalments, Bill, as they promise to be a most interesting offering from the bill of fare just published.

Ernie Carter, club treasurer, read the financial statement and the evening's business was completed very pleasantly in the nearby coffee shop at 8.45 p.m.

B. PATE - Secretary,

Sexton Blake Today

The October Novels in the Sexton Blake Library reviewed by MARGARET COOKE

ASSIGNMENT DOOMSDAY (No. 485)

MARTIN THOMAS

A book to suit all lovers of science fiction and of the occult written with all the Thomas skill and attention to detail. It is at one and the same time, a detective novel and a pamphlet on nuclear physics.

Sexton Blake is shown at his best fighting against the powers of evil and genius - become - insanity to save the world from extinction. Blake faces the task of defeating a maniac's plan to cheat death by escaping from the earth and time - in a way which would mean the end of every other living thing on the earth's surface.

Characterisation, dialogue and presentation are excellent as in all Thomas' books, the scene between Blake and the Black Magician, Gaspard de Montigny being particularly well-written. The pace of the action, however is slowed down at times by excess descriptive or technical matter, and the sense of urgency and horror spoiled by the introduction of sex interests.

Even so, this is a book which will give pleasure and interest to most Blake lovers and is well worth buying.

THE CORPSE CAME TOO (No. 486)

DESMOND REID

An evening out spoiled by driving rain - a pause on the way home to pick up an

unfortunate soldier - and a nasty shock for Sexton Blake and Paula.

"If I get an early night at home once in six weeks, I can almost depend on being called out by you on some wild goose chase halfway across London," said Coutts. One of Blake's eyebrows inched upwards in a frown. "I'd hardly call a dead body in the back of my car a wild goose chase," he said amiably.

Yet unravelling the mystery of the corpse's identity and its presence in his car took Blake half way across the world to meet frustration and interference from the Mexican police whilst Tinker and Paula continued the chase unrecognised.

A well-planned, well-written book, using an old theme with new variations, excellent characterisation and good dialogue. I doubt whether it lives up to the blurb on the advance notice but it is packed with action and suspense to the last paragraph. Blake, Tinker and Paula are portrayed as fine characters and a wonderful team. Those who like action, loyalty, devotion to duty and courage will enjoy this book with its tough savage theme and its contrast in characterisation.

YOURS SINCERELY

(Interesting items from the Editor's Letter-Bag)

CHARLES DAY (Keighley) I was pleased to see that Warwick Jardine has returned to the ranks of Sexton Blake authors. So far as I can remember, the last story by this fine author was "The Riddle of the Green Cylinder" in 1955. The Digest has now become a "must" in our household, and its arrival is just as eagerly awaited as was that of the Magnet, Gem, Union Jack, etc., in my young days. In fact, now I come to think of it, the Digest is my youth - set down there in black and white to be dwelt on at will and at leisure. Each issue always contains some happy reminder and more than a few surprises.

(The Book Souvenir which is awarded every month for the Star Letter of the month goes to the sender of the above - ED.)

RICHARD MCCARTHY (Queensland) You are doing a wonderful job with the Digest, and I really enjoy each issue.

WALTER WEBB (Birmingham) I thought the article on Puck exceptionally interesting, and look forward to reading others of a similar type in forthcoming issues.

E. V. HUGHES (Bognor Regis) Would it be possible to arrange, somewhere in London, an exhibition such as was staged, I believe, up North a few years ago? I am sure it would interest many.

KENNETH KIRBY (South Africa) I was very interested in your remarkable over at St. Jim's - five fours, one six and one wide, it sounds like. Couldn't you have bowled the last ball underhand? I have been reading some of the later St. Jim's stories - "Secret Passage" and "Silverton" series. Good they certainly are but not really comparable to Greyfriars. There is no St. Jim's master who comes anywhere near Quelch, and Tom Merry is a colourless conventional schoolboy hero compared with the really superb character of Harry Wharton, when Gussy is good he is very good indeed, but, like Coker and that unmitigated

nuisance Grundy, he can be a little too much with us. But this, I suppose, is absolutely fighting talk to a St. Jim's old boy!!

(We agree with you about Grundy, at any rate. - ED.)

ROBERT STORY (Toronto) I disagree with your sentiments re the advanced price of the Annual as making it a luxury and possibly dropped by a few. Firstly, the increase is really minimal, and should not be noticed that much by any of the regular throng. Secondly, this small increase is quite a bit overdue, as it was obvious from advanced cost of materials, etc., that the C.D.A. was being produced on a gamble whether the producer would end up on the debit or the credit side. The book is easily worth much more than is asked for it.

(Grateful thanks to reader Story, and dozens of other readers who have written in similar terms. ED.)

EDWARD THOMSON (Edinburgh) The Article "Appointment with Perpetual Youth" made grand reading.

Lo S. ELLIOTT (London) Have you noticed what a mess they are making of the St. Frank's stories in Film Fun? Names altered, characters changed. Even a character, Nipper Jenkins, in addition to the much played down "Dick Hamilton." I recently acquired a bound copy of Every Boy's Magazine, Vol. 1, produced by the B.O.P. office and edited by George Andrew Hutchinson, the then-editor of the B.O.P.

GEORGE BURGESS (Romsey) What are they doing to the Lee stories? Nipper and Dick Hamilton now appear to be two different boys, Jack Grey is now Alan Grey, Vivian Travers is now Chris Travers, Harry Gresham is now Peter Gresham. Both Travers and Gresham arrived at St. Frank's in the late twenties, and Travers was a bouncer at first. Many thanks to Mr. Lofts for his writings on Puck, that fine paper. What happy memories the article brought back.

(In these columns we have protested more than once against change for the sake of change in the re-presentation of the old stories. - ED.)

ROGER JENKINS (Havant) I was amused to see John Wernham's analogy. I always assumed that I was a cross between Quelch and Prout, combining firmness with benevolence. Since I have found out what my Sixth Form calls me, however, I have had reluctantly to change this rosy opinion of myself. I have now come to the conclusion that I must be a cross between Selby and Ratcliffe on one of their 'off' days, when plagued with indigestion and splenetic rage.

J. TWELLS (Rugby) Re Mr. Lofts' article on Puck. Before the first war the adventures of Angel and her Merry Imps were drawn by that excellent artist H. Foxwell. I remember how disappointed I was when another artist took over; the pictures seemed very poor compared with Foxwell's slick drawings. I cannot recall Val Fox ever being described as a boy, and surely his pets were with him at this period - pre 1915? I remember an exciting serial about the Incas by, I think, Draycott M. Dell.

RON HODGSON (Wakefield) I don't agree when you say that the Annual will be an "expensive luxury" - surely an inexpensive necessity would be nearer the mark. Very pleased to hear too, that there is to be another Mr. Buddle and Meredith adventure.

FRANK CASE (Liverpool) The Digest gets more absorbing every month. This hobby is

invaluable for introducing one to new friends.

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton on Trent) I am delighted to see there is an article on "Chums" included in the 1961 Annual - something I have been longing for, for a long time as it was my favourite paper, though the Gem ran it close.

ARTHUR HOLLAND (Australia) I'm greatly taken with the suggestion of an occasional Double Number of the Digest. In my boyhood, I looked forward to the Double Numbers of my favourite papers with keen anticipation - and I know I would experience the same thrill with the Double Numbers of the Digest.

DON WEBSTER (Kew) How nice to see this month's C.D. cover illustrated by Bob Whiter. Hope we shall see many more from him.

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross) I enjoyed Jack Wood's St. Frank's holiday adventure, and was amused to note in the final sentence that he was forecasting the shape of things to come in much the same way E.S. Brooks did in his St. Frank's stories. Bob Whiter on the cover was grand. The double-Bunter's expression is priceless, and, unlike Bunter, whose expectations never materialise, ours always do once a month - when the Digest cascades through the letter-box. Grand to hear the character of No End in Sight are to be again a part of the Annual. This will be a very popular item.

JIM HEPBURN (Blyth) I think the reproductions of the No. 1 covers are most attractive. They bring vividly to mind the day when they first appeared on the bookstalls. The standard of the C.D. is very high, and you and your contributors are to be congratulated on the variety of articles presented. I think that Let's Be Controversial is best of all. I was very glad to see the cover of No. 1 Nelson Lee.

NOVEMBER COMPETITION

C	L	E	D	P	J	M	B	S	P
R	E	H	S	R	L	S	P	E	R
O	A	I	L	U	N	U	E	O	U
T	R	D	T	E	O	C	S	L	E
K	G	H	U	N	B	K	I	P	C
T	T	E	S	B	C	K	K	P	U

See how many names of periodicals and comics you can make from the letters in the grid.

Pick the letters from anywhere in the grid, marking them off as you use them, and remember that each square may only be used once.

If you do not wish to mark your copy of the Digest, copy the grid on plain paper and mark off on that.

It is possible to find nine titles and use up all the letters in the grid - but send in

as many as you can find.

Each title comprises ONE WORD only.

A Special Book Prize - a fine brand-new volume for your library - will be awarded to each of the TWO readers who submit what are, in the editor's opinion the best efforts.

Closing date: November 18th.

THE HARD COVER SCHOOL STORY CLASSICSBy W. J. A. HubbardNo. 4. "Black Evans" (R. S. Warren Bell)

It would hardly be fair to admirers of the Hard Cover School Story to omit a book by R. S. Warren Bell from this series. The Founder/Editor of "The Captain" was an outstanding school story writer by any standards but a fact that is often forgotten is that he was a well-known novelist with very good books to his credit. His experience in this particular field undoubtedly helped his school stories for they contain many adult touches which often have such an odd attraction for the senior reader.

I have already spoken in this series of the accent on realism which was a feature of "The Captain". Warren Bell did not neglect this. In his own work and "Black Evans" is as close to an adult school story as the policy of this famous boys' paper could allow.

The story was first published in "The Captain" in 1911 and was later reprinted in hard cover form. In my opinion it is the best school story that Warren Bell wrote.

The hero is Fewlass Evans, a 17 year old Welsh boy in the Fifth Form at Christ's College, a minor public school somewhere in the Midlands. A typical Welsh individualist, mystical and puzzling, yet headstrong and violent, Evans is an interesting character for he is far from being the usual hero of school fiction. He smokes, does not hesitate to be evasive when questioned by authority, breaks bounds and has an uncontrollable temper which frequently mars his performances on the Rugger and Football field at both codes of which he is an expert.

Such a personality could hardly fail to come up against his Headmaster and the Revd. Edmund Talbot, M.A., realises this the moment he makes Evans' acquaintance. A young man, hard, ambitious and determined, he has come to Christ's College from a large private school of which he has previously been Headmaster and has brought a number of his old pupils with him.

The newcomers clash with the boys of Christ's College and Evans does little to improve matters although some of the Senior boys of both schools are willing for a compromise. The Revd. Talbot intends to make a success of his new Headmastership and he sets about improving the tone of the school. He achieves many reforms but naturally comes up against opposition, particularly from the boys. The Christ's College boys look towards Evans for guidance but he has not many of the

qualities of a leader, being too much of an individualist to have any friends and caring little for the tone and reputation of the school. Like a Headmaster at any real school Mr. Talbot wins round after round.

Realising that he can do little right in Mr. Talbot's eyes and sensing the Headmaster is submitting a case to the school Governors for his expulsion, Evans prepares to run away but before he can do so is sent for by the Headmaster to receive a lecture on his conduct to be followed by corporal punishment, which action has been decided upon by the Governors, much to Mr. Talbot's annoyance. Evans reacts violently to such treatment, but redeems himself and causes the Headmaster to have a change of heart when he plays a prominent part in tracing the whereabouts of a crippled boy who has run away from the College owing to bullying.

The story ends on an unsatisfactory and perhaps unrealistic note. Its chief feature to my mind however, is its atmosphere, for Warren Bell has somehow contrived to give us a convincing account of life at a minor Public School in the early 1900's. One feels that life at Christ's College was a trifle rough and hard by modern standards and the boys by no means the "saints" many authors of the time would have us believe. There is an impression that Christ's College was lacking comfort and the boys were on too tight a rein at times. But boys of a good social standard are often prepared to rough it and these factors were frequently found at real Public and Grammar Schools at this period.

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CHUCKLES' CLUB

GZUB XNT FHUIM XNTQ MDVRZFDMZ Z RSZMCHMF NQCDQ ENQ BGTBJKDR? HE MNS,
XNT RGNTKC CH RN ZS NMBD.

So wrote the editor of "Chuckles" to his readers in No. 174 of that old favourite Comic. To become a member of the Club, you had to send in your name and address, together with the names and addresses of two of your chums who were not readers of "Chuckles". It was important to point out which was your own!

"Upon receipt of your postcard" went on the editor, "I shall forward to you a splendidly coloured diploma, together with a confidential letter, and the key to our code, by means of which you will be able to decipher the secret message above. The diploma has been specially designed by one of the foremost artists of the day, and I guarantee it to dispel a fit of the blues, for on it figure Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy, our front page comedians."

I hardly think readers of "Collectors' Digest" will need a key to the code. Yours truly deciphered the 'secret message' in five minutes.

CoMiCuS.

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THOSE MISSING SERIAL NUMBERS

By Bill Lofts

Mr. J. Merrills in the September C.D. so rightly queried the reasons why Fleetway Publications have dropped the serial numbers from their most popular periodicals. A phone call by Derek Adley to one of the staff brought the comments 'that it was felt that it was unnecessary these days, as comics especially were so little collected and bound into volumes.' Educational periodicals and technical books were, however, and that is why they retained them. Libraries of course, still had the serial numbers as they were not dated. In general, it was thought that the date was sufficient.

As these comments only came from a staff member, and not a manager a letter to the Manager resulted in the following reply:

"With reference to your enquiry about serial numbers, these were dropped because all that is really necessary is the date. It is easy enough to establish when issues of a paper are not printed and I'm sure that on the whole, collectors, too, would know that say, from 19th June to 31st July, 1959, there was a printing strike."

Later when I had to call at Fleetway Publications to obtain back numbers of the Knockout for a friend of mine in the U.S.A. I raised the question to one of the staff in the backnumber dept.

W.O.G. 'Can you tell me why they have dropped the serial numbers of the 'Knockout'? I find it awkward when ordering back numbers.

Staff Member: 'Have they dropped them? I did not know. What difference does it make? You don't read the number.'

W.O.G. They have had serial numbers since 1892 on A.P. papers; there must be some sort of reason to drop them after 60 years".

Staff Member: Pretends not to hear me - and walks away to an imaginary

call - like Potter and Green getting away from Coker!

My own view is that it is just a policy of the new Daily Mirror group that took over the old Amalgamated Press- where sweeping changes have taken place in the last few years. The first explanation is reasonable in a way - but the second is really absurd. How would collectors in the future know that there was a strike on at a certain period. They would know at once by the serial numbers if they had issues missing, but by having a gap of dates, they obviously may think they have numbers to obtain.

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REVIEW

"BUNTER, THE VENTRILOQUIST"

Cassell's, 9/6

This is real vintage Greyfriars, to tickle the palates of the young and inexperienced, the middle-aged and blasé, the old and jaded. It is immensely readable for Greyfriars fans of all ages. Frank Richards has taken author's licence, and turned back the clock. Quelch is unaware that Bunter is a ventriloquist, Smithy is quite sure that the "old fat man" cannot imitate voices, and even the Owl himself has to practise before he reproduces Prout's fruity boom. But it's all great fun, and where Frank Richards leads, the reader follows unquestioningly. Mr. Richards uses his pen as the Pied Piper used his pipe.

Quelch is at his most gimlet-eyed and barking; Prout is at his most unparalleled; and when these two get at daggers drawn, one keeps on reading. It's a story to be relished at one sitting, and great entertainment. Well worth 9/6 of any man's money.

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COMING YOUR WAY IN DECEMBER

The GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF COLLECTORS' DIGEST
and
COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1961

Have you ordered yours? It's the World's Greatest Annual for touching the Heart Strings.