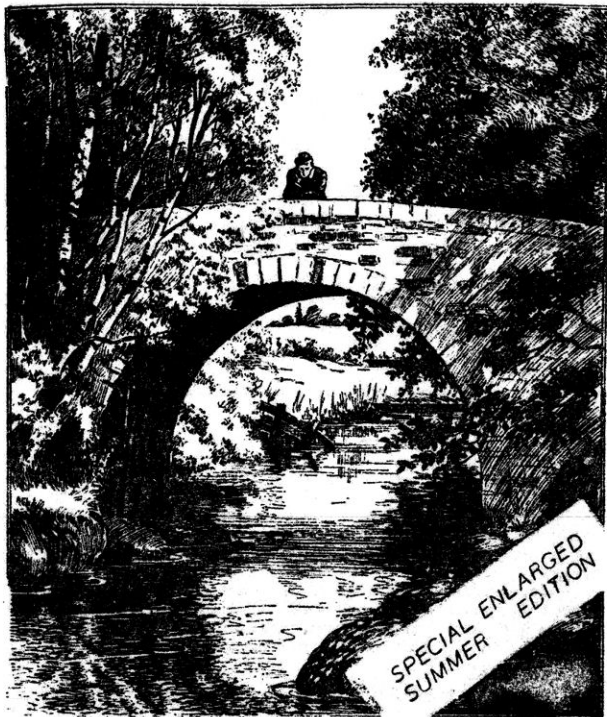


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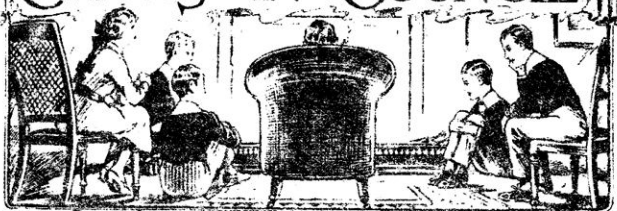
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CHUMS IN COUNCIL



THE EDITOR CHATS WITH HIS READERS

THE ROAD TO RUIN

Is it possible for our sentimental hearts to lead us from the straight and narrow path? Many years ago I bought one of the excellent Nelson series of juvenile books. Entitled "Contraband Tommy" by Charles Glerig, it told of a young lower-deck sailor boy who succeeded in changing places and identities with an obnoxious midshipman. The young sailor was named Tommy Larkspur. It is an exciting and unusual story and it always pleased me. It still has a place of honour in my book-case.

So, when I saw that a horse named "Larkspur" was running in the Derby this year, I was tempted to risk the hard-earned crown, each way, and the devil looked after his own. I like "Contraband Tommy" more than ever now. But what would Harry Wharton say?

THE 1962 ANNUAL

One of the highlights of this year's Annual will undoubtedly be

a remarkable contribution from that versatile young man, Mr. W. O. G. Lofts. He has listed every substitute story to appear in the Magnet, with the names of the men who wrote them. Mr. Lofts names no less than 19 substitute writers who contributed Greyfriars stories, and it is most intriguing to consider the different types of tales which these writers produced. This astonishing article is one of Mr. Lofts' finest achievements.

DANNY

In "Danny's Diary" we seem to have one of our most successful new features for years. Almost every letter which has reached this office from readers during the past two months has contained some kindly comment on Danny.

Just why has Danny proved so popular? He is merely a very human, rather ingenuous, not particularly intelligent boy of his time. Is he really much different from the lad who lives next door but one in 1962? Maybe his success is due to the fact that we rather like to look back, for a few moments now and then, on a more leisurely world that has gone for ever.

WE'RE IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Since January 1960 every issue of Collectors' Digest has gone to the British Museum. Readers will be happy to know that their own magazine is preserved for posterity.

THE EDITOR.

* * * * *

THIS MONTH'S COVER

In May we brought you an example of the work of the late R. J. Macdonald. This month we give you another piece of work from the same artist, but many years earlier. This picture was drawn in 1906, when he was a young man. Surely Mac was unsurpassed in this type of delightful rustic scene.

* * * * *

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

We never make mistakes.

* * * * *

MR.
HAIRBUDDLE'S
SHIRT

BY ERIC FAYNE

There was a tap at the study door. Mr. Buddle, seated at his desk near the window, looked up and sighed. Mr. Buddle had had a busy day, and he was tired. It was prizegiving day at Slade, and most of the afternoon he had spent seated on an uncomfortable chair in Big Hall where a number of Slade boys had presented an entertainment of sorts for the edification of the rest of the school and a couple of hundred visiting parents. Mr. Buddle's own form had performed excerpts from "Julius Caesar", but Meredith who played Casca, had completely spoiled the effect by treading on Mark Anthony's toga and ripping it from that gentleman's back. So the excerpts, to the rehearsal of which Mr. Buddle had devoted many hours of his spare time, were changed from tragedy to rollicking farce. As a tragedy, Mr. Buddle's production might have just got by. As a farce, it was terrific.

The seniors had presented a Greek play, and during its presentation Mr. Buddle found his chair growing harder and harder.

The entertainment had taken two hours and the following forty minutes were devoted to the prizegiving, with Mr. Buddle and the rest of the staff seated on hard chairs on the stage. Mr. Scarlet, Headmaster of Slade, had made a speech which seemed unending, and then the prizes and certificates had been presented by a governor of the school.

At long last it was over, and Mr. Buddle had fled, in the cool of the evening, to the solitude of his study, dodging many doting parents en route.

Only two more days to go and then the term would be over. How nice it would be, thought Mr. Buddle, if he could spend his vacation on an island where all boys were drowned at birth.

The tap at the door was repeated, a

little louder this time.

"Come in," snapped Mr. Buddle.

The lady who entered was about forty. She was plumpish, had beautifully waved golden hair, and wore a becoming frock of pale blue nylon. A white Dutch collar threw her striking hair into vivid relief. Mr. Buddle rose to his feet, stifling a grunt.

"Mr. Buddle?"

"Yes, madam! Can I help you?"

The pink cheeks of the newcomer creased into a smile.

"Mr. Buddle, you must drive me away if I am a nuisance. The last thing I wish to be is a nuisance. You must be busy, so near to the end of term. But could I speak to you for one minute - for one minute only - about Cedric?"

"Cedric!" echoed Mr. Buddle mechanically. The name rang a bell. He had heard it before. With a sinking at his heart he feared that he had a Cedric in his own form.

"I am Mrs. Meredith," said the lady in blue nylon.

Mr. Buddle's worst fears were realised.

"Please be seated, Mrs. Meredith. As you say, I am very busy, but ---"

"Of course you are busy. Aren't we all?" agreed Mrs. Meredith. She closed the door, and sank down gracefully into Mr. Buddle's armchair. "But if you can spare me one minute only ---"

She talked solidly for fifteen minutes. She spoke of herself, of her husband who had been unable to accompany her to the prizegiving, and of her son. Most of all, of her son. She clearly overlooked the fact that Mr. Buddle had other boys in his class beside her son.

"We do not spoil Cedric, of course," insisted Mrs. Meredith. "Certainly not. But he is very precious to us - very

precious indeed. I confess that he is precious to us. Of course, it is certain that we shall never have another son ----"

Mr. Buddle was about to express his congratulations but checked himself in time.

"It is practically impossible to spoil a boy like Cedric" explained Mrs. Meredith. "He is a remarkable character. To a large extent he has my personality and his father's brain. I know that some of our relatives consider that we indulge Cedric. Perhaps we do, Mr. Buddle - perhaps we do."

"Surely not!" murmured Mr. Buddle, glad to get a word in.

Mrs. Meredith smiled, opened the dainty handbag which was hanging at her wrist, and drew out a folded sheet of paper.

"The point is this, Mr. Buddle. In two days Slade closes for the summer vacation. My brother has promised to take Cedric touring on the continent for a month, including a week's visit to Paris. The holiday will be immensely enjoyable for Cedric, and, of course, educational. Our boy is thrilled with the idea."

"No doubt!" said Mr. Buddle,

Mrs. Meredith shook her head sadly.

"Unfortunately, Mr. Buddle, my brother imposed a condition. It is that Cedric shall have a reasonably good report at this term-end. His reports have not been very good since he has been at Slade. I regret to say. I think, perhaps, that he is not fully understood here, though he loves Slade. He did so well at his prep school. I saw the Principal of his prep school only recently and the good man assured me that his school really seemed a different place after Cedric left!"

"I am sure of that!" breathed Mr. Buddle.

"However, the main thing is that Cedric is happy here. His father and I do not bother so much about his scholastic progress. But my brother, Mr. Buddle, is an obstinate man - almost pig-headed, I might say. He will not take Cedric on this prolonged holiday abroad unless the boy has a good report. I begged my brother to be reasonable, and he relented so far as to say that he would take Cedric providing there is one - just one - redeeming item

on his report." Mrs. Meredith unfolded the sheet of paper which she had taken from her bag. "I have here Cedric's report for this term - Mr. Scarlett would normally dispatch it at term-end, but he allowed me to have it this afternoon. Mr. Buddle -" Mrs. Meredith looked reproachful. "Mr. Buddle, there is not one - not one redeeming item on this term's report."

"Your son, with a fine holiday dependent on a good report should have worked harder," said Mr. Buddle grimly.

"Well, yes, of course he should - but boys will be boys," sighed Mrs. Meredith. "Listen to these items, Mr. Buddle. They are so discouraging for a lad who has done his best. Religious Knowledge: 'This boy takes but little interest. He has no spiritual yearning.' Initialled A.B."

"My own initials!" observed Mr. Buddle.

"The next item also bears your initials, Mr. Buddle. English Language: 'Spelling careless. Composition indifferent. This boy has an excellent brain which he refuses to use.' English Literature: 'This boy refuses to concentrate.' Attention to Study: 'This boy is lousy.'"

"What!"

"Lazy!" corrected Mrs. Meredith. She coughed. "It's your appalling writing, Mr. Buddle. Doctors and schoolmasters are notorious for their dreadful writing, aren't they?"

Mr. Buddle grunted.

"The report is the same all the way through," went on Mrs. Meredith. "Chemistry: 'This boy is irresponsible. His experiments put the entire school in peril.' Initialled P.C."

"That is Mr. Crathie, the chemistry master," muttered Mr. Buddle.

"Mathematics: 'This boy has no head for figures. His conduct at times leads one to suspect that he has no head at all.' Initialled B.G. The Classics master has been positively facetious, Mr. Buddle. He has written 'This boy prefers to be at the bottom of the class as it is near the radiator in winter and the window in summer.' The French master has written 'Hopeless!'"

Mr. Buddle stirred uneasily on his chair.

"I suggest, madam, that you and his

father should have a serious talk with Cambric ----"

"Cedric!"

"Cedric!" agreed Mr. Buddle. "I am sorry that the lad should be disappointed over his holiday, but the fault is his own. Even so, Mrs. Meredith, surely the report is not all bad. At sports, for instance, your son is, I should have thought, above average ----"

Mrs. Meredith shook her head, and glanced down again at the report form.

She read out: "Sports and Athletics: 'Slack. This boy needs to develop latent sporting instincts'. Initialled R.C."

Mr. Buddle sat very still for a few moments. He regarded Mrs. Meredith thoughtfully, and then leaned forward and took the report form. He read it through. His brows knitted as his eyes lingered on the comment of the Games Master: 'Slack. This boy needs to develop latent sporting instincts.' Then the initials R.C.

Until this moment Mr. Buddle would have thought it quite impossible for any master to be unjust to Meredith of Slade. Meredith was a lazy, harum-scarum scholar; his general conduct left very much to be desired. But Mr. Buddle did not believe that Meredith was ever slack or lacking sporting instincts on the playing fields. True, Mr. Buddle did not take any interest in school games, but rumours of Meredith's prowess on the cricket ground had reached even Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Buddle did not like Meredith. The boy was far too troublesome in every way. But Mr. Buddle was kind at heart, and he had a strong sense of justice.

He rose to his feet.

"Mrs. Meredith," he said, "I think that possibly there has been a slight error in one of these items. I hope so, I will go into the matter." He paused, and then added: "The reports are, of course, carefully reconsidered by Mr. Scarlet before they are sent out. I think I can promise you that there will be at least one redeeming feature on the report when it reaches you. Please leave it with me now."

Mrs. Meredith rose, and held out her hand. Happiness was shining in her bright blue eyes.

"Mr. Buddle," she said impulsively,

"you are an understanding man. You know of course, that your boys call you 'The Gump'!"

"The Gump", ejaculated Mr. Buddle.

"It is a term of affection," said Mrs. Meredith. "I can only add that you are a very kind and understanding 'Gump.'"

Mr. Buddle was speechless as she took her departure.

.

A half-an-hour later Mr. Buddle made his way to the Sixth Form passage. He paused outside the Head Boy's study - the largest on the long corridor. There was a murmur of conversation from within.

Mr. Buddle tapped on the door and entered.

Antrobus, Captain of Slade, was sprawling in an armchair with his feet inelegantly resting on a bottom-up waste-paper basket. Also in the study, standing by the table and industriously oiling a cricket bat, was Scarlet, who, owing to his relationship to the Headmaster of Slade, was known to all and sundry by the nickname of Pinky-Mi.

At the unexpected appearance of Mr. Buddle, Antrobus hastily removed his feet from the waste-paper basket, and hoisted his big muscular frame from the armchair. Both seniors looked with surprise at the master of the Lower Fourth.

"I am glad to find you are here, Antrobus, and you too, Scarlet," said Mr. Buddle. "I would like just a word with you both concerning a boy in my form - Meredith."

"Yes, sir?"

Antrobus raised his eyebrows in polite enquiry. Pinky-Mi placed his cricket bat on the table, and wiped his fingers on a piece of rag.

"As Head Prefect, Antrobus, you will be aware that Meredith is rather a troublesome boy," continued Mr. Buddle.

"Very troublesome, sir," agreed the Captain of Slade. "A cheeky young devil, sir, though he has his good points. Is he in trouble?"

"Not at all!" said Mr. Buddle. He pursed his lips, while Antrobus and Pinky-Mi regarded him curiously. He went on:

"Though Meredith is a lazy boy in

class, and troublesome to a degree, I have always had the impression that he is sound and keen at his games. As Head Games Prefect, Antrobus, you will be able to correct me if I am wrong."

Antrobus answered without hesitation.

"Meredith is an excellent young sportsman, sir, and keen as mustard," he said. "He is one of our most promising juniors at cricket, and a good winger on the soccer field."

Mr. Buddle nodded.

"I thought so. You are, to some extent, responsible for the junior games, of course, so you know what you are talking about."

"I'm responsible to the Games Master, and I have plenty of contact with the junior sports." Antrobus refrained from saying that the Games Master of Slade was lazy, and left as much as he possibly could to the Head Games' Prefect. "I can assure you, sir, that Meredith is a fine young sportsman, whatever he may be like at his lessons."

"Quite so!" said Mr. Buddle with satisfaction. "You would say the same thing, Swarlet?"

"Certainly, sir, Meredith is a grand kid on the playing fields," said Pinky-Mi at once.

"Thank you boys, you have been most helpful," said Mr. Buddle. "That is all I wanted to know. Goodnight to you both."

The two seniors stared at one another as the door closed behind Mr. Buddle.

"What's in the wind?" demanded Antrobus.

"Dust!" replied Pinky-Mi.

.

Mr. Ronnie Crayford, Games Master of Slade, sauntered up Masters' Corridor, swinging in his hand a pair of wet swimming-trunks. After the prizegiving Mr. Crayford had gone to the school swimming pool, where he had been giving an elaborate display of diving before a small group of admiring seniors. Mr. Crayford enjoyed being the centre of an admiring group.

A tall, slim young man, athletic and sun-tanned, Mr. Crayford was quite nice-looking, and knew it. In the nearby village of Everslade he was accustomed to making feminine hearts flutter and he

enjoyed that accomplishment. At Slade he was generally detested by junior school. The seniors he made a point of meeting on their own level, chatting with them man to man, with a wealth of their slang and the frequent dubious innuendo. Some seniors regarded him as a jolly good fellow; others disliked him instinctively.

Mr. Crayford opened his study door, and was surprised to find his light switched on and Mr. Buddle seated on a chair.

"Ah, the good old Gump!" said Mr. Crayford. "How remiss of me to forget inviting you to make free with my study!"

He tossed the wet swimming trunks into a corner - they narrowly missed Mr. Buddle's nose - and perched himself on the side of the table.

"Can I offer you a glass of luke-warm beer?" he enquired.

"Thank you, no!" said Mr. Buddle.

"A glass of Eno's, perhaps?"

Mr. Buddle rose to his feet. He held two sheets of paper in his hand.

"I have come to you concerning Meredith's report," he said calmly. "You seem to have made an error."

Crayford lit a cigarette.

"Meredith? Who's Meredith?"

"Meredith" said Mr. Buddle, "is a boy in my form. You coach him at sports, so presumably he has not escaped your attention entirely."

"Oh, that smelly little nit! Hasn't he been turfed out of Slade yet?"

"If you will kindly be serious," said Mr. Buddle, "I shall be glad if you will glance at your entry on Meredith's report."

Crayford chuckled, blew a stream of smoke in Mr. Buddle's direction, and took the report. He glanced at it.

"Let's see! Sports - sports - yes, here we are. What have I written? 'Slack. This boy needs to develop latent sporting instincts.' Yes, that's right. What about it?"

"I think you have made a mistake," said Mr. Buddle.

Crayford scanned the paper with exaggerated interest.

"A mistake? A spelling mistake, do you mean? Good lord!"

"I do not mean a spelling mistake," said Mr. Buddle. "I suggest that your comment is neither fair nor accurate."

Crayford laughed pleasantly.

"Buddle, you can take your suggestion out of my study - and yourself along with it."

He held out the report form, but Mr. Buddle did not take it.

"I require you to alter that entry," said Mr. Buddle.

"What?" Crayford spun his cigarette into the grate, slid from the table, and towered over Mr. Buddle, "you require it! You REQUIRE it! You damned old fool, what do you know about the games? You don't know a goal post from a cricket stump. Get to blazes out of here."

"You would not swear in the Headmaster's presence, so kindly don't do so in mine," said Mr. Buddle imperturbably. "As I have just stated, I wish you to alter your entry on this report."

"Crayford stared at him.

"If you think you can dictate to me what I put in my reports you've got another think coming," he said. "What's it matter to you what I put about Meredith? The little beast is your hair shirt - you've often neighed about it in M.C. You hate the sight of him."

"You exaggerate, Crayford," said Mr. Buddle. "Meredith is a troublesome boy but I should never allow my personal feelings to colour the justice I mete to any lad in my form."

"Where's your wings, you pious old fraud?"

"Let me finish, please. I know for a fact that a special holiday for this boy is dependent on his receiving a moderate report."

"Do you mean that I've blued his chances of a holiday?" queried Crayford. "That's good news, old man. It's made my day."

"I daresay!" said Mr. Buddle. "You have not given him the credit he deserves, for I know that he is above average on the sports field. I beg you to change your entry on his report."

"I shall do nothing of the sort!" snapped Crayford.

"I think you will," said Mr. Buddle. Crayford was breathing hard.

"Who the hell do you think you are?" he demanded. "Meredith may be in your form, but I am in charge of games. Old

Pink would never allow you to interfere in my province, and you know it."

Mr. Buddle smiled sourly.

"I think you are malicious, Crayford," he said. He went on softly: "What has Meredith done recently to annoy you? Bowled you out at the nets, or expressed his opinion of you in your hearing?"

A bright flush suffused the Games Master's face.

"Clear out!" he said loudly. "Do you want me to complain to old Pink?"

"By all means!" agreed Mr. Buddle.

It was a clash of wills. Mr. Crayford was young, tall and strongly-built. Mr. Buddle was middle-aged and rather a little man. But Mr. Buddle was not afraid of Mr. Crayford.

"By all means!" repeated Mr. Buddle.

"In fact, unless you alter your entry on this report I am going at once to the Chief to place the matter in his hands. I shall tell him that Meredith is a sound boy at sports and that, in my opinion, your entry is false and malicious."

Crayford was white with anger now.

"Old Pinky would tell you to mind your own business," he shouted.

"Perhaps, but I think not. I am willing to put it to the test. I shall also take with me Antrobus, the Head Games Prefect, and Scarlet of the Sixth. Both these seniors will speak in high terms of Meredith's record on the sports field."

There were at least fifteen seconds of dead silence, while Crayford glared at Buddle, and Buddle stared back unblinkingly.

At last Crayford said: "I don't want to bother the Old Man. He wouldn't be pleased - so hear to the end of term -"

"Naturally!"

Crayford clenched his fists convulsively.

"Let it go, Buddle. You've no brief for Meredith. You loathe the little blighter. Parents take no notice of reports anyway. Clear out, and forget it."

"I have brought," said Mr. Buddle, "a fresh report form. You will fill in your entry, and I will have the form completed later. You may borrow my fountain pen, if you take care with the nib."

Crayford gave a forced laugh.

"Have it your way! What do you

want me to put? 'The Gump's little pet is a good boy at games?'"

"You will merely write 'Very Satisfactory' - and initial it," said Mr. Buddle.

Crayford took the pen which Mr. Buddle extended, and bent over the blank report form on the table. He wrote 'Very Satisfactory' against the printed words Sports and Athletics. He initialled the entry, and flung down the pen.

"Thank you, Crayford," said Mr. Buddle. He took up the pen, and screwed on the cap. Then, with the new report form in his hand, he turned to the door.

"I shall remember this, Buddle," said Mr. Crayford viciously.

Mr. Buddle looked back. "I am glad to hear it. The memory of this occasion may help you to act less unscrupulously in the future."

Crayford forced another laugh. "You stupid old dodderer!" he said satirically. "No wonder the kids in your form call you the Gump!"

From the doorway, Mr. Buddle looked at him.

"Crayford," he said with dignity, "I am indifferent to the fact that I have earned the nickname of the Gump in this School. No doubt you are equally indifferent to the fact that a number of boys refer to you as the Slug."

Mr. Buddle walked away, leaving the door wide open. There was a crash which rang down the corridor as Mr. Crayford slammed it.

.....

Late that evening Mr. Buddle sat down in his study to put the finishing touches to Meredith's report. The other masters, who had the doubtful pleasure of instructing Meredith in various subjects, had filled in their remarks in the respective spaces on the form. It had caused no comment. It often happened that, for some reason or other, a report had to be re-written.

Mr. Buddle took up his pen. In all but one of the spaces for which he was responsible, Mr. Buddle filled in the same comment as he had written on the first report.

At the space allotted to English Literature, however, Mr. Buddle paused and meditated. He scratched his balding head with the end of his pen.

Then he smiled sourly, and wrote: "Gives promise." He added his initials - A.B.

He rose to his feet, yawned, and addressed the bust of Shakespeare on his mantelpiece.

"I hope," he informed the bard, "that Heaven will forgive me when the time comes."

.....

It was breaking-up day. Slade was dispersing for the summer vacation. Many boys had gone already in private cars which had collected them, and several motor-coaches stood in the Close, waiting to take a number to Everslade railway station.

Mr. Buddle was strolling under the trees when a boy ran up to him. He was a soulful-looking boy, with golden hair and bright blue eyes. He wore the Slade blazer of mauve and white, and he snatched off his mauve and white cap as he spoke to Mr. Buddle.

"Good-bye, sir, I'm going now sir. I hope you have a grand holiday, sir."

Mr. Buddle smiled a frosty smile. He held out his hand, and the boy gripped it for a moment.

"Good-bye, Meredith. Have an enjoyable time, and don't forget all you've learned."

"I won't sir." Meredith ran his fingers through his golden hair. "I'm going abroad, I think, sir. Going to Paris."

"Good!" said Mr. Buddle. "Travel is good for us. It will improve your mind. There is plenty to be learned in Paris. You must visit the Louvre, the Arc de Triomphe, the Eiffel Tower, the ruins of the Bastille —"

"Oh, yes, sir, I shall see all those," said Meredith earnestly. "There's another place, too, that I wouldn't miss for anything, in Paris."

"Ah," said Mr. Buddle, "and which place is that, Meredith?"

"The Folies Bergeres, sir" said Meredith innocently. "They tell me it's

very instructive. Well, good-bye, sir. I mustn't miss the bus."

Mr. Buddle watched the speeding figure running for the bus, cap clutched in hand, and golden hair swept wild in the breeze.

"That boy," murmured Mr. Buddle, "is no Tom Merry."

He squared his shoulders. Term was over. The hair shirt was no longer torturing his flesh. It was good to be alive.

Mr. Buddle strode briskly away.

OUR JULY COMPETITION

Can you find the titles in the following clues?

1. Found to be a Communist in the factory. (Famous Gem title.)
2. The coalman has a dirty neck. (Famous Magnet title.)
3. Pussy on the tiles. (A fairly recent Sexton Blake Library title.)

When you think you have discovered the titles, jot them on a postcard or a sheet of paper and post to the editor. Our Book Awards for the best two solutions.

RESULT OF OUR JUNE COMPETITION

Our last little contest was evidently harder than it looked. Only one competitor came anywhere near the correct solution, and our Book Award therefore goes to

R. J. GODSAVE of Woodhouse Road, Leytonstone,

whose entry contained only one error. The correct solution was as follows:

- | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------|
| 1. Hacker | 2. Grace | 3. Manners | 4. Cuttle | 5. Reece |
| 6. Racke | 7. Church | 8. Temple | 9. Robert | 10. Cook |

RESULT OF OUR OVERSEAS (May) COMPETITION

The prizewinner in this contest is

CHARLES van RENEN of Uitenhage, South Africa,

whose entry was as follows:

On a glorious morning in the summer of 1924 I read my first Magnet ever. "Giving Bunter Beans" was a gem of a yarn. Fortune smiled upon me the day she dealt me a genuine Hamilton masterpiece to win me over to the good old Magnet for all time.

BLAKIANA

THE ROUND TABLE



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

"I wonder just how many papers there are in which stories of Sexton Blake have appeared?"

This thought came to me a few nights ago, when I was reading an S.B.L. I started to make a list ... "Marvel", "Pluck", "Union Jack", "S.B. Library", "Boys Friend Library", "Detective Library", "Detective Weekly", "Dreadnought", "Boys Realm", "Boys Friend" (weekly), "Boys Herald", "Penny Popular", "Penny Pictorial", "Answers" (weekly), "Champion", "S.B. Annual", "Knockout" (comic), "Jester", "Thriller Library" (modern).

Well, here are nineteen I know of for sure. If any of my readers can add to the list (with surety) I shall be very pleased to hear from them.

JOSIE PACKMAN

SEXTON BLAKE - ANCIENT AND MODERN

By S. Perry

When I was a lad I used to read the UNION JACK with great enjoyment; but the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY always seemed to me so very dry-looking, and I think I was half afraid of it - it seemed to be the "Grown Ups" book. The pictures on the covers of the U.J. seemed so attractive and the characters - "Waldo" and "Zenith" in particular - seemed so exciting. But the covers of the S.B.L. did not - to me at least - seem so attractive. They were mostly illustrated by Arthur Jones, no doubt a splendid artist, but to me always so dark and forbidding. And how was I to know that "A gripping detective novel" by the author of "The Matador's Fortune", "The Boy Without a Memory", "The Stolen Partnership Papers", etc., was as good and as exciting as those in the wonderful UNION JACK? The stories, although advertised as "for readers of all ages", seemed to be mainly for boys. Sexton Blake and Tinker were in all the books "Boys Realm", "Boys Friend", "Boys Herald", and even in the "Champion", which were without a doubt boys books, and most of those that "Sing the Praises" of Sexton Blake are those who read of him as boys. Now there is no Sexton Blake for boys!

Now, the point of all this is that nowadays the S.B.L. is so much more attractive than it was in those bygone years, and indeed it looks as though it could do with an "elder brother". There has been talk of a new format on the lines of "Fontana Books" and "Penguins". This would seem a splendid idea. What's wrong with "Blake Books", similar to all the other modern paper-backs? It would, I am sure, easily find a market and put him where he belongs - head and shoulders



above "Inspector West", "Inspector 'Ironsides' Cromwell", "Perry Mason" and the like. We might even have those authors John Creasey and J. N. Chance back again - and perhaps that most enjoyable, but, alas, almost forgotten and almost ignored author Edwy Searles Brooks, the man who helped so much to put Sexton Blake where he is today! (to say nothing of the hundreds of St. Frank's stories he wrote for the Nelson Lee Library). But we must not lose the present Sexton Blake Library. It is now such a friendly little paper, and could perhaps try to attract boys or teenagers and become once again "For readers of all ages." After all, it is the boys of today who will keep Sexton Blake alive for the next sixty-seven years - not us! Boys of today have almost nothing to read, so what a market there is for "Thrilling Detective Stories for Boys".

If a wonderful weekly like LOOK AND LEARN can be published for a shilling, surely a "Sexton Blake Library" will find its way into boys hands at one shilling per copy. In fact it is far easier for the youths of today to find a shilling than it was for most of us to find two-pence in the days gone by. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have four copies per month, or even one per week?

Mr. Lennard, in the April Digest, would like to know how many characters in the Modern Blakes we can recall from, say, five years ago. He also says we do not see the characters we saw then. We do still see some of them on occasions! Dear old Inspector Couitts is still with us; we have Splash Kirby; in February 1960 we had a smashing story of George Marsden Plummer; in April 1961 we had Huxton Rymer.

In new characters, surely Mr. Lennard has read of Eustace Craille? And what about Martin Thomas' Beulah De Courcy, and Jack Trevor Story's fascinating characters Dorothy and Agnes Murdoch? Mr. Lennard does not like "Sexton Blake Investigations", but if he reads the stories I am sure he must agree that Paula Dane, Marion Lang and Louise Pringle are characters that will be recalled and remembered for the past few years. Only quite recently Louise Pringle was the STAR in a very good story! Now it appears we are to have the return of Pedro. (What a shock it would be if they modernise him and he appears as an ALSATIAN).

In 1959 we had Christmas stories by Martin Thomas and Rex Dolphin, which I am sure pleased readers of the Old Order. What old reader could fail to enjoy "Dead Man's Destiny" (Dec. 1960), telling the story of Tinker? This is a "Must", Mr. Lennard, if you haven't read it! You say that Sexton Blake could never be old-fashioned. How would he look these days - still with a consulting room at Baker Street,

and with no receptionist but only Mrs. Bardell to answer the door? (She also is still with us, by the way). No beautiful secretary or typist, but only a young boy assistant struggling through the celebrated Index! Not very encouraging for a modern desperate client who wants the best for his money.

Please do not think I am sneering at the old stories, I am not. I loved them all, and still do; but new readers won't!

These days, to keep in business one must have offices and secretaries - Perry Mason has Della Street, Sexton Blake has Paula Dane; and even a modern dentist has a receptionist! Most modern detectives are from Scotland Yard, and have very large staffs to assist them.

No, Mr. Lennard. You belong to the Ancient House, and I belong to the Modern. Up the Mods!

* * * * *

AN ANALYSIS
By Christopher Lowder

Recently we read the description of a barber from a Gwyn Evans novel. This was from Victor Colby. Now let me give you Walter Tyrer analysing the fisherman (from S.B.L. 3rd series. "The Mystery of the Missing Angler." (No. 197))

Blake smiled.

"They are not men of war, Tinker" he said. "Far from it. They belong to the most peaceful specimens of the human race. They are fishermen, content to sit for hours by some placid stretch of water and watch a little wooden float bob gently up and down. Their wants are few. A can of bait, perhaps, a few spare hooks, and a net or basket for the specimens they secure, if they are lucky enough. And, of course, sandwiches and perhaps a bottle of beer kept cool by submerging it in the watery element. They don't even want companionship, apart from their own slow, contented thoughts. Admirable men, anglers, of infinite patience, and with no more guile than is necessary to deceive the unsuspecting fish. Few of the criminal profession pursue angling as a hobby, but then criminals are usually restless and passionate men."

A more discerning analysis I have seldom read!

And, incidentally, I think it would pay anyone, who has not read this particular book, to seek it out. For, apart from its ingenious and clever plot, Walter Tyrer has managed to instil into parts of it a certain peaceful charm that is rarely seen in the majority of Blake

novels; also a humour that is completely Tyrer's own. In fact, altogether, a very entertaining and enjoyable novel.

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY TITLES AND AUTHORS (3rd SERIES)
(continued)

No. 281	Crock's Deputy	A. Parsons
No. 282	The Secret of the Snows	W. Tyrer
No. 283	The African Hoodoo	R. Hardinge
No. 284	The Night Club Mystery	H. Clevely
No. 285	The Case of the Prince's Diary	A. Parsons
No. 286	The Secret of the Fated Family	R. Hardinge
No. 287	The Case of the Naval Stores Racket	W. Tyrer
No. 288	The World Championship Mystery	W. J. Passingham
No. 289	The Case of the Smuggled Currency	H. Clevely
No. 290	The Secret of the Indian Lawyer	A. Parsons
No. 291	The Mystery of the Body on the Cliff	R. Hardinge
No. 292	The Crime at the Fair	J. G. Dickson
No. 293	The Case of the Missing Nazi	W. Tyrer
No. 294	Destination Unknown	A. J. Hunter
No. 295	The Case of the Unknown Heir	A. Parsons
No. 296	The Girl from Toronto	H. Clevely
No. 297	The Mystery of the Arab Agent	F. Warwick
No. 298	The Case of the Ace Accomplice	W. J. Passingham
No. 299	The Mystery of the Swindler's Stodge	W. Tyrer
No. 300	The Case of the Nameless Millionaire	A. Parsons
No. 301	The Thieves of Alexandria (Capt. Dack)	A. J. Hunter
No. 302	The Secret of the Jungle	G. Rees
No. 303	The Riddle of the French Alibi	W. Tyrer
No. 304	The Case of the Three Survivors	H. Clevely
No. 305	The Secret of Sinister Farm	A. Parsons
No. 306	The Lodging-House Mystery	R. Hardinge
No. 307	The Secret of the Castle Ruins	A. Parsons
No. 308	The Voyage of Fear	R. Hardinge
No. 309	The Case of the Swindled Guarantor	W. Tyrer
No. 310	The Mystery of the Engraved Skull	W. E. Stanton-Hope
No. 311	The Car Park Mystery	A. Parsons
No. 312	The Crime on the French Frontier	A. J. Hunter
No. 313	The Heir of Tower House	H. Clevely
No. 314	The Case of the Second Crime	A. Parsons
No. 315	The Riddle of the Invisible Menace	R. Hardinge
No. 316	The Mystery of the Five Guilty Men	J. N. Chance
No. 317	The Crime at 3 a.m.	H. Clevely
No. 318	The Case of the Council Swindle	W. Tyrer
No. 319	The Secret of the Moroccan Bazaar	A. Parsons
No. 320	The Case of the Stolen Ransom	A. J. Hunter
No. 321	The Crime in Room 37	W. Tyrer
No. 322	The Case of the Wicked Three	A. Parsons
No. 323	The Case of the Criminal's Daughter	H. Clevely
No. 324	The Secret of the Suez Canal	G. Rees

THE "FLAN O'BRIEN" MYSTERY
By Detective-Inspector Lofts

I felt rather flattered at being asked to solve the "Flan O'Brien" Mystery in last month's Blakiana, though long before reading the account of the interview given on the T.V. I had already heard from Mr. O'Brien in person. Actually this interview was well known to me, and many people have written to me asking if I know the author and what stories he wrote.

I must confess that the mystery seems as big as ever, for in a letter to me Mr. O'Brien says the following:

"With regard to the T.V. interview, I did not see it either, as it was recorded. Living in Ireland, the programme cannot be received here. I do know that the B.B.C. took all day here, just for a few minutes interview! God knows what horror was eventually transmitted, but it must have been a jigsaw of unrelated shots and remarks.

So far as Sexton Blake is concerned, I cannot help you very much, as it is such a long time ago. I should point out that in innumerable writings on a great diversity of planes - and subjects, I have never once used my own name. I have had countless pseudonyms, and for reasons of my own it is sometimes necessary for me to mislead publishers."

So the reader can see, it is quite hopeless for one to try and glean the actual stories he wrote. I can only offer the following suggestions:

1. He did write Blake stories - but they were all rewritten by a regular writer.
2. He was the man who wrote stories by "Stephen Blakesly" - in the current series, the name of the author being given as F. Bond - but of whom no details are known.
3. He certainly has never written any Blake stories under the editorship of W. Howard Baker, for Mr. Baker knows all his authors personally.
4. Being a true Irishman it is possible that the mention of writing Blakes is real Blarney!

* * * * *

FORTHCOMING FEATURES

Battles Royal.....	by Victor Colby
"Warwick Jardine".....	by W.O.G. Lofts
Ramblings on Past and Present.....	by C. Lowder
Sexton Blake in Manchester.....	by J. Lennard

* * * * *

FOR SALE: Volumes containing the following S.O.L.'s bound without covers: "Captain and Tyrant", "Worst Form at Greyfriars" (the Loder-Captain series); "St. Jim's in Revolt"; "Billy Bunter Gets the Boot"; "Tom Merry & Co Declare War"; "The Fourth Form at Rookwood"; "Bunter of Bunter Court"; "Good-bye to Bunter Court"; (the Bunter Court series); "Coker, the Champion Chump". (Also contains "Raising the Wind" from which some vandal cut out some pages.) Excellent volume, apart from vandalism, containing some of Charles Hamilton's greatest series in fine condition. 40/- plus postage. (Letter first please, with SAE).

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WANTED: Greyfriars Herald Nos. 1 to 6, 9, 10, 20, 23, 24, 30, 31, 32, 36, 37, 38, 44 to 50. 5/- each offered for any of these numbers in good condition. L. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

EXCHANGE complete Bunter Court series (2 S.O.L.'s) for "Talbot's Christmas" or the Oliver Lynn series (1923). G. BELLARS, 1 HESLEY ROAD, SHIREGREEN, SHEFFIELD, 5.

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.

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WANTED: S.O.L. 58. B.F. (Green 'Un) 762, 764, 780, 1042, 1257, 1264 to 1298. 1 TIMBERTREE ROAD, OLD HILL, STAFFS.

HAMILTONIANA

FAMOUS SERIES No. 21

GOING — GOING — GONE!



This picture comes from "Billy Bunter's Campaign", a story in the Bunking of Billy Bunter series in 1924.

Bunter has been expelled, but refuses to go. In an effort to "un-expel" himself he takes refuge in a caravan at the very gates of Greyfriars. But Coker takes a hand, and the caravan lands, Bunter and all, in the pond at Friar-dale.

An entertaining series of the lighter type.

Artist:

C. H. Chapman

*

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FRANK RICHARDS

We learn with regret that the sales of the new edition of the Autobiography have been a trifle disappointing. We believe that readers of Collectors' Digest have given the work every support, and we know of large numbers who have joined our clan since the original edition was published who have purchased the Autobiography joyfully. In case any of our readers have not yet secured their copies, we would mention once again that it is a real "must" for the genuine enthusiast. It is a far superior book to the edition of ten years ago. In addition to all the former reading matter from the incomparable pen of Frank Richards, there are large numbers of extras pictures. The book also contains a lengthy supplement by Eric Fayne, giving a history of Frank Richards' pre-war and post-war writing, and there is a fascinating preface by the publisher, Charles Skilton. Should any reader find difficulty in obtaining the book from his local bookseller, the Autobiography will, on request to Collectors' Digest, be mailed to any part of the world.

We appeal to our readers to do anything in their power to help to swell the sales figures. There is one way in which a large number can help. Public Libraries do not normally stock a reprint of any work, but any librarian will obtain a copy on request. If you will ask your local library to get the book for you, even though you have your own copy at home, you will help the sales, and at the same time make sure that it is available at the library for future borrowers. Not only will this help the sales of the Autobiography, it will bring Collectors' Digest to the notice of any future borrowers who may not, so far, have heard of our magazine. And new readers are always welcome.

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOESNo. 57. THE MAN AND THE MOMENT

FRANK LAY: Apropos your remarks on reprinting the well-known Hamilton stories I feel that a reasonable re-hash would be preferable to new substitute writers. So much depends on the quality of the sub-editing. In most of the long series (the Stacey series, for example) there is much padding that could be dispensed with without interfering with the basic plot. I think an intelligent re-hash would commend itself to many who do not fancy the present Bunter books.

BOB WHITER: Unless we could be sure that the old stories would be reproduced without any cutting I would prefer them to let well alone. Even "modern" words substituted, as we have seen in some of the later renderings of the old stories, jar with me.

Today, publications for children are almost devoid of reading matter. Even papers like Hotspur being changed to picture-strip style supports the theory that Frank was the right man at the right moment. Still, we mustn't forget that the old master was quite an artist in his younger days. Perhaps, had he been born 40 years later, he might have told his stories in picture form. I can't really visualise it, but it's a thought.

RAY HOPKINS: Where you say "Men are needed who could write stories which would entertain boys and girls of the new education" I came to a dead stop and thought that in those days when the standard of education had not attained the heights to which it has grown today, young people READ (past tense). In these days they merely LOOK - at strip stories. Maybe these young people, who are more highly educated, do not take the strip mags at all. Then what do they read? "The Man and the Moment" does not give any of us much hope for a wholesale reproduction of Frank Richards' pre-World War Two work, but the reasons you give are entirely logical. The only way that the wonderful old stories could be presented in their original form without re-writing and ruthless cutting (which Heaven forbid) would be a reprinting of the stories en masse in a revived Magnet. This could be done, but will not, I fear, because the old A.P. is with us no longer, and the new owners of the copyright of all these wonderful stories would not consider putting out a magazine for boys to read.

* * * * *

WHAT DID BUNTER SAY?

By L. Todd

Some time ago, Derek Hart of the "To-Night" team, referred to Bunter as "the fat boy of Greyfriars, who said, "Yaroo!" and other extraordinary exclamations. He pronounced it with a short "a" so that is almost came out "yer-rooh". This seems to be the commonly accepted pronunciation, on the B.B.C. at least, because Gerald Campion also makes "yer-rooh" the sound by which the suffering Bunter expresses his anguish.

Mr. Quelch often told his erring scholars when they misconstrued that a great man like Virgil never wrote nonsense, and I feel it is safe to say that Frank Richards himself was equally incapable of writing absurdity. Nobody, not even the fatuous Bunter, would say "yer-rooh". Indeed, this cry of anguish was made, not only by ridiculous characters like Bunter, but also form heroes like Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton. Even the dignified Mr. Quelch himself was not excepted.

What, then, did they all say, as the blow fell and the boot thudded, and the muddy football made its impact. Well, in fact, exactly what you and I would say under similar suffering circumstances. They said, "Yar-oo!" The "r" belonged over to the "oo". It was needed, because suffering is expressed a little more by "yar" than "yah", but the "R" stays put.

I can prove this by reference to an early "Magnet" No. 290. The unfortunate Fisher T. Fish has just received a cricket-ball in his left ear, and he expresses his feelings in the following way:

"oh, oh, oh! Great Scott! Jumpin' Jehosophat! Oh, crumbs!

Yar-o-o-o-o-oh!

I'll forgive Derek Hart and everybody else, so long as they don't say "yer-oooh" again. After all, I went from six to eleven believing that the lovable Gussy said "Yarss wother" and loved him just as much.

* * * * *

THE GREEN EYE

By JOHN UPTON

CONCERNING A REVIEW. With reference to this item in the May issue of "Collectors' Digest", I see you do not mention in your comments on that spiteful piece of writing the factor of Jealousy! From his writings, we know that Frank Richards himself knew the effects of jealousy and bitterness on the human character, as well as their causes (e.g. Herbert Vernon-Smith, Hazeldene). And what an ideal figure the author himself was for malicious and jealous remarks! A man who could and did earn up to £3000 a year through writing millions of words of juvenile fiction of a uniformly high standard, which entertained, under his various pen-names, three entire generations of school children, both girls and boys. Yes - plenty of scope for the jealousy of those mediocre beings of the "would have if they could have" variety! And being jealous, what are they to fall back on? 'Lack of invention in the story-line' the suggestion that the stories were entirely padded out with Billy Bunter's cries and exclamations; the inference that the writing was poor. And when the sneers have been thrown, and the critics have doubtless set back, smugly satisfied and amused with their 'facetious' little bit of writing ... what remains, and cannot be denied? The hundreds of lively good humoured, skilfully plotted yarns of a man who could and did entertain millions with the aid of a typewriter - and an understanding of the human heart which his critics could not learn in half the span of his career. How easy to criticise - how impossible to emulate! The critics, perhaps, more than any of us, know the truth of that.

* * * * *

"THE SHADOW OF A LOST MASTERPIECE"

By Christopher Lowder

The last Magnet has always been a thing of mystery to me. And I expect everyone knows why! It is like Dicken's masterpiece "The Mystery of Edwin Drood"; we are left completely in the dark. In "Edwin Drood" we are left trying to puzzle out, if indeed Drood is dead or, if not, what has happened to him? But Dickens died before he could

finish his first real attempt at the detective novel - and the followers of the detective tale have mourned greatly ever since! True, there have been solutions devised by various authors, but, let's face it, these can never be the same.

My own copy of "The Shadow of the Sack" I purchased from Alex Parsons of Tranmere. But when I received it, I immediately wrote to him and said that there must be some mistake - this couldn't be the last copy. Why, there was no announcement of "the end of the trail" and, further, on the last page of the paper I had seen the "blurb" "for next week's story - "Don't forget to order your copy..." etc!!

You should have seen my face when I received his reply and found out that it WAS the last issue of the paper! To finish, when a serial had seen the light of only one instalment! And yet - how intriguing!

What meat for an excellent series! Sourpuss Hacker (who, incidentally, is represented in the Chapman illustration of the 1926 Holiday Annual, as quite a kindly old gentleman) really seems to have a down on poor old Harry Wharton. Admittedly, there is no one in Hacker's form who is anywhere near Wharton's standard, and probably Hacker was jealous of this irritating fact. Greyfriars masters, on the surface at least, never seemed to get on well with each other, and I can remember many delightful duels between Prout, that wonderful little man, and dear old Henry Samuel, with his bony magnificence!

But this story was a duel between Quelch and Hacker, and it was certainly not so delightful. Of course, Hacker seems to have the upper hand, since he has taken a certain note from Bunter, and the note is extremely compromising. It's one of those "no-names-mentioned" notes - and it's from one of the "lads" at the Cross Keys.

Needless to say, Bunter blabs! And, quite unknowingly, tells how he saw it fall out of Wharton's pocket during a scrap with one of Hacker's "crew". Obviously Wharton wouldn't dream of associating with anyone at the Cross Keys, and the simple explanation is that the note was for Price of the Fifth, and he gave it to Wharton to escape discovery from Prout. Naturally, when asked who the note was for, Harry won't say. It's a matter of principle, and Wharton stands firm even though the Shadow of the Sack looms very near.

And Quelch, that "downy bird" as Bob Cherry very often says, believes in him implicitly and stands by him in spite of Hacker's ridiculous suspicions.

It's a very entertaining tale by war-time standards, and, perhaps, because of war-time standards good triumphs. A ray of light and hope in the dark days of 1940, even the Editor tells us that in these hard days we will get only the finest fiction possible, to dispel those "Blackout Blues."

What a blow it must have been to thousands, when the Magnet did not arrive the next week. To we Collectors and, if I may use the word, Connoisseurs of Hamiltoniana, it is much more of a blow. This could have turned out to be another real masterpiece from the Hamilton typewriter. Not just an ordinary series, but, perhaps, much, much better than the ordinary. Even the title of the next story is intriguing - "The Battle of the Beaks!" A wonderful and mysterious title indeed! And made even more so when we don't know how it is going to turn out. Perhaps a Barring-Out series, or even a major rebellion strife at Greyfriars! Who knows?

Couldn't the needs of war have waited just a little longer? But no, perhaps not! But if only the Amalgamated Press had waited for a few more weeks.

And now all is lost since the Master has finished with this life and gone to that particular Paradise set aside for only the really great Authors. Perhaps he will meet Charles Dickens, and they will discuss their own particular "unfinished masterpieces." I don't know! Maybe, they might even have a little chuckle at the efforts of their respective enthusiasts to piece together the mysteries they have left to us.

The Australian newspaper "THE SUN" gave a five-column display to an enthusiastic review of "The Autobiography of Frank Richards". Headed in large type "THAT UNFORGETTABLE FAT FELLER", the article was illustrated with reproductions of no less than seven pictures from the Autobiography.

ANOTHER ARTICLE ON FRANK RICHARDS

Debunking the famous has long been a favourite literary pastime. From the glut of articles and particles, in recent years, on Frank Richards and his work the motto of many journalists must be "When in doubt, have a dig at Bunter."

The latest to enter the arena is Mr. Frank Shaw, who contributes an article "The Man Who Made Bunter" in the June NEW STRAND. It is interesting enough reading, though some of the criticism seems rather carping.

The following are a few extracts from the text of the article:

"Much is made by his disciples of Richards' erudition, but what Latin of his I have seen lacks distinction. And he would never tell anyone where he went to school.

"His stories are surprisingly scattered with quotations (did the first readers understand them?) but prove nothing but wide reading and a good Bartlett. Raby far too often said 'True, O King!'. Bob Cherry's cap far too frequently was like the 'plume of Navarre.'

"Hamilton was a better writer than his fellows in the cheap weeklies, but there have been much better school story writers. No-one will ever suggest that the stories were really written by Lord Passfield or Bertrand Russell.

"Written by Richards for money and published for the coppers of the boy in the street by Harmsworth they somehow make a fairy world in which many still want to live.

Mr. Shaw writes: "An Annual Christmas show and the B.B.C. saved Bunter..." As the first post-war Bunter book was selling in its tens of thousands in 1947, while Bunter did not appear on T.V. until 1952 and on the London stage till 1958, it is difficult to understand what Mr. Shaw means. Some of the criticism implied in the article might be fair for very early days. For instance: "Yet he often played truant. Editors were waiting for copy." This is certainly not true of the years following the first world war.

The two final parts of the article tend to leave the reader with a false impression:

"He was much travelled but he ruefully declared 'Monte Carlo was my spiritual home'. My hat, my giddy sainted aunt!

"Don't you ever want to do better?" he was once asked. Quite simply he replied, 'There isn't anything better.'

In actual fact, Mr. Richards was asked whether he never wanted to do anything better than writing for youngsters. It was to this question that he replied "There is nothing better."

Mr. Shaw gives the O.B.B.C. an indulgent pat on the head. He comments, "The Baker Street Irregulars of the Bunter Cult are in a national body called the Old Boys Book Club, which a civil servant started just after the war, having been inspired when he found an old Magnet on an Italian battlefield....

"They enjoy themselves, but they are most in earnest too. Even the 'study spread' must be authentic to the last jam-tart. (What do their wives think?)"

NO. 5, "GOLDEN HOURS" ready. Articles by H. W. Twyman, E. L. McKeag, (ex A.P.), etc.
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Sexton Blake Today

MARGARET COOKE reviews the latest novels in the famous SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY.

CARIBBEAN CRISIS (No. 501)

by DESMOND REID

Another excellent novel from the 'Reid' pen. Set in the heat, squalor and political unrest of a Caribbean island, this is a story of murder, mystery and corruption; of Blake's lone fight against the hidden forces of communism; and of an impossible "closed-door" murder.

Its polished style, good dialogue, mystery, pace and intrigue make this a memorable book and uphold the tradition of good literature connected with the name of Desmond Reid. Sexton Blake, working to discover the whereabouts of his son for Sir Gordon Sellingham and a list of communist agents for Craille, is shown at his best - daring, resourceful, intelligent, always one jump ahead of the enemy, believing nothing he hears and only half of what he sees in true British intelligence fashion.

A book to please all Blake lovers.

THE WEAK AND THE STRONG (No. 502) by ARTHUR KENT

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WANTED: Most issues between 400 and 500 Gems. Most issues between 772 and 879. Also Nos. 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 985, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1129, 1150. **MAGNETS** 45, 52, 134, 136, 141, 195, 295, 237, 238, 239, 277, 318, 353, 400, 417, 442, 439, 319, 706, 719, 752, 773, 751, 752, 762, 763, 764, 809. Most issues between 821 and 890, 900, 921, 924, 925, 936, 938, 940, 942, 943, 946, 949, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996. **POPULARS** 183, 190, 370, 385, 452, 455, 466, 474. Your price paid or liberal exchanges. Volumes bought containing any of the above issues. Good condition essential.
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NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by JACK WOOD

AGAIN TOO LATE!

By W. O. G. Lofts

In the June issue of the Nelson Lee Column, I queried the whereabouts of Julius Herman, who in my article entitled "AN INTERESTING NUMBER" I mentioned would be a most highly interesting person to meet.

Thanks to the great endeavours by those two South African enthusiasts Charles Van Renen and Ken Kirby - who if I may say so, would have done credit to the efforts of Nelson Lee on the same detective work! They located the widow of the late Julius Herman - who was able to fill in quite a few gaps about her late husband.

It seems that Julius died only a few years ago, and in the writers opinion it is a great pity that this research was not perhaps carried out say five years earlier. (There have been at least ten well known authors who have died in recent years, before I could contact them in connection about their own writings).

Mrs. Herman says -

'I knew that my husband had written school stories for the 'Magnet' and 'Gem' whilst studying at Cambridge (England) but I do not have any records about them...He never lost interest in those stories and papers, they were very dear to him, and after the last war he tried to persuade Mr. Frank Richards to make a start and publish them again. As far as I can recollect his answer was not very favourable.

I am very sorry that my husband, did not make your (to Mr. Van Renen) acquaintance during his life time, I am sure that it would have given him a great deal of pleasure in view of the mutual interest About the extent of the association between my late husband and the editorial offices - I cannot give you any information. Besides those school stories my husband wrote two books, one on Bernard Shaw, 'The Man and his work' published in 1918 under the pen-name of "Herbert Skimpole" and the other one "The Music of South African Life" by Julius Herman, M.A., Ph.D., published in 1926. This book consists of various essays.

Another old friend of Julius Herman - a Dr. Louis Herman - wrote to Mr. Kirby as follows:

"I knew Julius Herman at one time, and he once told me that he used to write stories for boys papers. He described to me, how he used to sit up all night, with wet towels round his head, writing under pressure. I believe that he wrote great numbers of these stories. If I recollect correctly, it was whilst he was at the University (Cambridge). He was of course a teacher, and in my opinion, not a very successful one; for it appears to have been, that he was one of those unfortunates members of our profession who cannot keep order in the classroom! (Shades of MOSSOO! W.O.G. L.)

So the outcome is that Julius Herman has been proved to have 'passed on' and the full extent of his writings will never be known, though the data gleaned from his widow and friend is interesting.

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Old Boys' Book Club

MIDLAND

Meeting held 29th May, 1962

Ten members were present at the Annual General Meeting and amongst them were the Treasurer Norman Gregory looking very fit after his long stay in hospital and also the Secretary after the absence of two meetings.

The main business of the evening was the election of officers for the coming year. As expected there was no change in the matter of the Secretary and Treasurer. By a unanimous vote, Jack Bellfield was elected chairman and Tom Porter, as per rules of the Club, reverts to vice-chairman and also accepted the position of Librarian, which has lain dormant since the death of Mrs. Porter last year. The Treasurer presented a very satisfactory report showing a slight profit over last year and was complimented on same. As he sportingly pointed out, some of those thanks were due to Madge Corbett who had carried on during his illness. Before the programme commenced, Jack Corbett reported the pleasant fact that Mrs. Hamilton Wright had promised to be present at the June meeting.

The "Guess the Number" item was won by Ray Bennett who also gave a very interesting talk on old boys' books of earlier years and queried whether there was any possibility of the better knowseries by Frank Richards and E.S. Brooks being re-published. An old topic much discussed but again there were many interesting opinions put forward. After the interval the Secretary's quiz was won by Joe Marston and Norman Gregory jointly. Followed the distribution of a number of "Modern Boys". Then the assembled company had the pleasure of seeing the last Magnet of all, No. 1683. Two readings wound up the programme. First a reading from 1924 Greyfriars Holiday Annual "In other People's Shoes" by Dick Penfold. In other words of Madge Corbett. Ted Davey contributed the second

reading - The Editorial from Magnet No. 1683. A full night's programme and much enjoyed. It had also been decided earlier in the night that we make no change in meeting nights and so it remains - the last Tuesday in each month (bar the one for December for obvious reasons). There was a reference to the Matlock Convention by Tom Porter and the Secretary who represented Midland at that very enjoyable gathering of the clans, gave a good account of all that transpired.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

LONDON

Another ideal setting for the London Club's meeting place this June was the Garden Flat of Brian and Mrs. Doyle at Clapham. Sunshine outside and the fresh green of the garden must have inspired Bill Norris with his selection of "Desert Island Companions". His list was Mark Linley, William Wibley, Paul Prout, Vernon-Smith, Dicky Nugent, Trotter the page, Towser and Skimpole. His reasons for having this lot were sound and the excellent company present enjoyed his remarks about them.

Millicent Lyle rendered a very good "Butlers and Tramps" quiz. Roger Jenkins being the winner. After his success in the quiz Roger delighted the members with a very fine reading from the "Magnet" South Seas series, the part where Bunter leaves to try and join the 'Boulder' on his cruise. This was greatly enjoyed.

Len Packman conducted his 'Greyfriars and C.D.' quiz. Bill Lofts a very easy winner of a very fine brain-teaser.

Don Webster conducted "Drop of the Hat" in which all present drew a slip from the hat and then expounded on the subject for one minute.

A very fine rendezvous indeed, what with the well lined bookshelves and the excellent repast that Brian and Mrs. Doyle plus Mrs. Doyle senior regaled us with.

Next meeting on Sunday, July 15th at Excelsior House, Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey. Host Eric Fayne. Kindly inform if intending to be present. Phone Elmbridge 3357.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held 10th June.

Despite the fact that this meeting was held on Whit Sunday, the attendance was quite good, only Jim Walsh being absent.

After the reading of correspondence, and the Secretary's report, there was discussion on various subjects, followed by a far-too-easy ecroscopic submitted by Frank Case; this was solved before one could say CaK ionAbno. Just as well no prizes were offered. Then came a team game of Criss-Cross Quiz set by Bill Windsor, the result being a tie of two games each for the teams led by Jack Morgan and Norman Pragnell. The decider will be played next month. After refreshments we took part in another of Eric Fayne's controversial issues, chosen once again by Jack Morgan, and this gave scope for some animated discussion, and many interesting points of view were heard and aired. The evening ended at nine o'clock with the library business, and we look forward to our next meeting on July 8th at the usual time.

FRANK CASE.

NORTHERN

There was a somewhat smaller attendance than usual on June 9th when chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened our meeting, probably because of the fine summer weather. No doubt the 'roses' match at Headingley also had something to do with it.

Routine business was soon dealt with, and then Gery Allison read us a selection

from correspondence received during the month, the chief item of which was a very interesting and amusing letter from our President, P. G. Wodehouse. Two new postal members were enrolled.

Jack Wood then aroused pleasant memories for some of us when he produced a brochure issued by Cassells advertising 'Little Folks' for November, 1922 (new serials by Frank H. Shaw and Christine Chaundler, short stories by D. H. Parry and Alfred Judd, 'Uncle Useful,' etc.)

A discussion on future programmes followed, and it was agreed that we should have a feature entitled 'My Favourite Chapter', commencing next month, two members to give readings at each meeting. A further suggestion, by Molly Allison, that we should have readings from the works of P. G. Wodehouse, was warmly received.

One of our postal members, Herbert Chapman, of Barton on Humber, submitted his list of 12 'Desert Island Books' and this was read in his absence by Ron Hodgson. It was a varied and entertaining list: 1. A Union Jack Volume of the Criminal Confederation series; 2. the second Harry Wharton Rebel series from the Magnet; 3. Any Gem, except one by a 'sub' writer; 4. The Sherlock Holmes short stories; 5. Treasure Island, by R.L. Stevenson; 6. Any Hercule Poirot story by Agatha Christie; 7. Eugene Aram by Lord Lytton; 8. A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens; 9. The Adventures of Raffles by E.W. Hornung. Mr. Chapman being a great St. Frank's enthusiast, the remaining three were all Monster Libraries, No. 1 The Schoolboy Treasure Seekers, No. 3 The Tyrant of St. Franks, No. 8 St. Franks in London.

An interval for refreshments followed, after which we had a session of "Twenty Questions" posed By Gerry Allison. The meeting terminated at 9.20 p.m.

Next meeting, Saturday, 14th July, 1962.

F. HANCOCK - Hon. Secretary.

EDITOR'S NOTE: We learn with regret that Gerry Allison, the popular skipper of our Northern Club has had to return to his lowly job just over a year ago.

We wish him a speedy return to perfect health. Get well soon, Gerry.

DEAR OLD PALS

by TOM HOPPERTON

The adult eye is not the most reliable instrument for measuring the merits of boys' weeklies. In the days when I was a legitimate customer I revelled in what I now recognise with a sigh as the three hoariest of imposters - the ventriloquist, the missing heir and the impersonator.

Among the many wonders of the world to make an impact on my wide-eyed innocence, ventriloquism must have been one of the first. I was barely out of pinafores when Val Fox was imposing on my credulity in "PUCK". Since then, I have heard every ventriloquist of note and far too many of no note whatsoever, always with a profound dissatisfaction. Only three of them produced anything more normal than the typical dummy's whine, while the sole adventurer to tackle "imitations" earned my reluctant admiration, not for results but for impudence. Considering the remarkable results achieved by a score of schoolboys, including such a fat ass as W.G. Bunter, this was not what one expected from the cream of the "halls".

Now all these wonder-working juveniles had a common ancestor. The author of Val Fox, whether paying a concealed tribute to his source of inspiration or simply making a thorough job of plagiarism, gives the lead - to Valentine Vox. Ventriloquism is, of course, a most ancient art. Anyone delving into the subject will end dripping with information about ancient Egypt, where it was credited with helping-out when oracular statues became tongue-tied, about even more ancient China, and about Eurycles of Athens and his pupils, the "belly-prophets" of still ancient Greece.

(continued on page 36)...

DANNY'S

DIARY



JULY, 1912

It has been really a wonderful month in the Magnet and the Gem. Quite a President has been created.

The month opened in the Magnet with "The Schoolboy Detective". He was called in to Greyfriars because both Coker and Hoskins had money stolen, and he discovered that the thief was the new porter, Cleeke. The boy detective is Dalton Hawke, the son of a Scotland Yard Inspector. I seem to have heard of him in some other paper, but I may be wrong. This issue of the Magnet was the first one for quite a long time to be illustrated by Arthur Clarke.

Next week was a simply terrific story called "The Stolen Schoolboys". The chums were shanghaied, and Harry Wharton was given the rope's end on his bare back. There was a picture of this on the cover. It was great. Doug says I'm a sadist, so I called him a socialist, so now we're quits. I don't know what either is, so honour is satisfied.

Then we had "The Circus Schoolboy" about Herace Nobbs, the strongest boy on earth,

who went to Greyfriars pretending to be Banthorpe. After this came an exceptionally good yarn, "Under Suspicion" which once more introduced Dalton Hawke. Mr. Capper, who is a philatelist, had a stamp stolen, so suspicion fell on the three philatelists among the boys - Ogilvy, Newland and the new boy, Banthorpe. But Dalton Hawke found out that the thief was Gadsby of the Shell, so Gadsby was expelled, and Dr. Holmes was very grateful with Dalton Hawke.

Mr. Chapman resumed illustrating the Magnet, after that one issue I mentioned as done by Clarke. Doug says he doesn't think that Clarke will be back any more.

On July 6th Mum took me to the last day of Henley Regatta. She wore a lovely hat like an eagle's nest with the eagle sitting in it. King George and Queen Mary attended in the Royal barge, towed by watermen with red liver. Thousands of oars were raised in salute, and I yelled my head off. We stayed for the fireworks, and everybody was in bed when we got home.

I bought Comic Cuts in Henley, but Mum was a bit shocked with Tom, the Ticket of Leave Man who had an adventure with P.C. Fairyfoot. She said I ought to get something more edifying than pictures of a convict on Ticket-of-Leave - but she smiled as she said it. I liked the story about Martin Steel, the detective, so I may buy Comic Cuts again.

Mum is a suffragette but not a military one. A woman threw a bag of flour at Mr. Asquith's car during his visit to Chester. Mum smiled about it, but the woman was fined five shillings, so I don't suppose she found it a smiling matter.

In the Oxford and Cambridge cricket match at Leeds this month both teams scored 221 runs in the first innings. It was quite indelible. A. F. Wilding, for the third year running, has become tennis champion at Wimbledon. Doug plays tennis, and he pays me to tag balls for him. It helps with my weekly book expenses. Doug also gives me his "Cheer Boys Cheer", and a new series of railway stories has started by Horace Phillips.

In the Boy's Friend there is a new serial called "Flying Armada" by John Tregellis. Dad says it's indelible to have a tale about war with Germany, because the Germans have always loved the British. He says it would be indelible to think they would send lots of their German bands over here to play if they didn't like us.

There was a terrible disaster at Cadeby Colliery, with a death roll of more than 80.

The Gem has been wonderful this month. First of all "The Whip Hand" in which Crooke blackmailed Tom Merry. The cover was by Macdonald as usual, but the inside pictures were by Warwick Reynolds. My pal Lindsay says that Reynolds is a very fine artist, and he is annoyed because I like Mac better. Of course, I haven't an artistic soul. I can't even draw a winning ticket in a raffle.

An unusual story was "An Affair of Dishonour" which started with St. Jim's seniors playing cricket against Ferndale. Kildare quarrelled with some of the Ferndale men - Lagden, Tunstall and Monson - and eventually Kildare fought Lagden and gave him a real pasting. But Lagden said a tramp had done it, and the tramp was arrested for assault and battery. So Kildare confessed in court, and the magistrate gave him a ticking off. It was a grown-up type of story and I enjoyed it.

Then came "The Limit" the funniest Gem I have ever read. A Miss Ponsobby was put in charge of the Fourth Form.

Finally, "Tom Merry's Legion of Honour," which was very good indeed. Next term I may start Danny's Legion of Honour at School.

"The Ethool under Canvas" is still going strong in the Gem. It gets better and better, and it has now introduced Herr Hentzel a German spy. It makes you think. Maybe a war with Germany isn't so indelible as Dad seems to believe.

WILLIAM THE GREATBy Derek Adley

Of all the articles published in the latest issue of the C.D. Annual the one that gave me the most pleasure was Gerry Allison's on "William." It was like the first discovery that I was not the only person in the whole world that collected boys' papers. Here was someone else who enjoyed a William book too.

This is a subject that has never been touched on before in C.D. which is a great shame, for to me the William books are of great nostalgic interest and in my opinion were an important phase in the history of old boys' literature for they were read by people of all ages in a similar manner to the Bunter books.

By coincidence, and to add to the delight of Gerry's article, on Christmas Day the B.B.C. Television screened the film version of the only long complete William tale ever written, entitled "Just William's Luck". The casting of Garry Marsh as Mr. Brown was excellent with Jane Welsh to smooth his ruffled temper as Mrs. Brown. A brief appearance of A. E. Matthews as the tramp was also quite convincing but I'm afraid that I was not impressed with William Grahame playing the part of William, for I expected a burlier and far more boisterous type of lad.

He didn't seem to have the command over the other "outlaws" as he should have had, but probably the reason for this is that, as with Bunter, a great deal of William's success was due to his portrayal by the artist that drew him.

Known widely as Thomas Henry, "Williams" artist was actually born Thomas Henry Fisher and he lives today in a hillside cottage near Melton Mowbray and is still active as an illustrator.

Thomas Henry as we know him best, illustrates individually each William book with great care and attention to the story and does not just use the same characature of William over and over again in different poses in the manner that so many other famous characters have been drawn.

Thomas Henry was first asked to illustrate a William story in Newnes "Home Magazine" in 1919 after someone else had had a go at it and failed to make the grade in the editor's eyes.

William has changed considerably through the years as so many other famous characters have done, (try for instance comparing Mickey Mouse through the years to the present day) but his face still remains the lovable William's.

Thomas Henry Fisher was born in Eastwood, Notts, in the house opposite that of D. H. Lawrence, and at the age of 14 was apprenticed as a lithogranger to Messrs. Thomas Forman & Sons, Newspaper Proprietors

and Printers. His first real job was to work on litho stones, for the original full colour production of the "Sailor" on the Players cigarette packet. Today Thomas Henry still draws a regular sports cartoon for the Nottingham "Football Post" and a weekly topical cartoon for the Nottingham Weekly Guardian.

Although he and Richmal Crompton have collaborated from 1919 it was not until 1954 that they actually met, at a dinner in Nottingham during the Book Festival of that year. They met as lifelong friends and yet strangers. Surely they must have toasted William, that boy of fiction to whom they owe so much.

Just as Richmal Crompton has written many novels of great merit apart from the William books, so has Thomas Henry proved himself a delightful water colour artist apart from his illustrations in line - in fact his luminous studies of the creeks of East Anglia alone would have made him notable, but it is "William" who has made him famous.

* * * * *

"JUST WILLIAM"

By JACK HUGHES

May I add a P.S. to Gerry Allison's delightful "Forever William" in the recent Annual?

His list of William books will need a slight adjustment as far as overseas readers are concerned. No. 21 "William's Bad Resolution" was originally entitled "William and A.R.P." whilst No. 22 "William - the Film Star" was originally "William and the Evacuees". These original titles still appear on these volumes in Australia, where the William books are printed (on inferior paper) for Dymock's Book Publishers by a Sydney printers. As yet William's Television Show and William the Explorer have not been locally published.

Also, for Gerry's list to be strictly accurate, I think mention should be made of another William book which was published by Newnes in August, 1939. It was called "Just William - The Story of the Film". The publishers note in this book is as follows:-

"The publishers desire to draw attention to the fact that the film "Just William" is not based upon the book bearing that title, which was the first of the William series. The stories which have been used for the film, and which are included in the present volume, were selected from six of the William books as providing a suitable sequence for the film."

Six stories were in this book and then 152 pages of script of the film followed.

The film was made by Associated British Productions and starred Dicky Lupino as William with Fred Emney as Mr. Brown and Roddy McDowall as Ginger.

I wonder how many Digest "William" fans saw this film?

EDITOR'S NOTE: This film was entitled "Just William's Luck" over here. It was released to the cinemas many years back, and was shown on BBC TV on Boxing Night, 1961. I commented to Miss Richmal Crompton that the book "Just William's Luck" was the only William which I have never bothered to read more than once, and she agreed that it was not "genuine William." The book was actually written from the film, though Miss Crompton added certain episodes of her own. Should any overseas reader find difficulty in obtaining any of the William titles, they can be mailed from this office to any part of the world.

* * * * *

TELEVISION CRITIQUE

WILLIAM FINDS A JOB (B.B.C. June 9th)

It is, perhaps, unfair to criticise a children's play. Also, individual mental pictures of beloved characters vary so widely that it must be admitted that producers have a difficult task. All the same, it is impossible to believe that the BBC, with their vast resources, could not have made a better job of bringing the Brown family to T.V.

It was a fragment from one of Richmal Crompton's delicious tales, and familiar to those who know the William books. On TV it never came alive at all except in the happy cameo of the artist played by Cardew Robinson. Robinson's talent and experience, in fact, showed up all the other shortcomings.

Ginger, Douglas and Henry were adequate, though I never got any idea of which was which. Mrs. Brown never gave the slightest impression of the kindly matron we know and love so well. Robert was too old for the adolescent whose amatory adventures convulse us in the stories. Ethel was too much of a teenager, and never showed the smartness and poise for which she is noted.

The lad playing William did his best, of course, but he was sadly miscast. He never remotely approached the William of Richmal Crompton and Thomas Henry.

WILLIAM, THE COUNTERSPY (B.B.C. June 16th)

Again we have a fragment from a familiar story by Richmal Crompton, adapted quite neatly. Robert gave a good performance, but, to this critic at least, the general miscasting remains all too evident. William looks far too much like a prospective spiv from the rougher section of any large city to suggest Miss Crompton's beloved bundle of wickedness. I still have no idea which is which of the Outlaws, but one of them, at least, would have made a far better William.

* * * * *

YOURS SINCERELY

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

KENNETH KIRBY (South Africa): My strongest approval of your timely remarks in April C.D. on this ridiculous question of who was the greatest school-story writer. Not only is there no doubt on the matter; there is no other writer who can even be called a competitor. Faults Charles Hamilton certainly had, just as Dickens did, but is there anybody of literary consequence who can really compare Galsworthy of Wells with him as a novelist? My two senior classes are doing "Henry Edmond" and "David Copperfield" respectively, and it has been brought home very strongly to me how much more humanity there is in Dickens despite his exaggerations and sentimentality. And so it is with C.B. The Greyfriars characters are real and living, even though their life is not realistic.

(The book award which goes every month for the Star Letter of the month has been sent to the writer of the above. - ED.)

H. R. HOOPER (London): I would be most grateful if you could publish the numbers and authors of the 2d Thriller Library and "Detective Weekly". So far as I know this has never been done.

HOWARD SHARPE (Australia): I greatly treasure the Charles Hamilton Memorial issue, especially the account of the funeral. That item is priceless. No. 200 does not look so distant now, and we, with you, will look forward to the satisfaction of fulfilling the second century.

EDWARD THOMSON (Edinburgh): Another grand Digest (June). I enjoyed all the articles, especially "Danny's Diary" and Gerry Allison's "The Magnet and the Modern Boy."

BEN WHITER (London): I see the critics are publishing the usual piffle about Frank Richards. I think that without a doubt he rated amongst the best school story writers. This, even if I may be the only old boy who has a letter from him ticking me off.

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross): What a lovely cover on the May Digest! I believe you have the original on display at Excelsior House, but those who have not been fortunate enough to see it will be delighted with this very spring-like view of our Tom. I must say that I

am enjoying "Danny's Diary". It is a treat to read of a boy who quite evidently loves reading as much as one did at that age. I like his straight-faced comments which cause the reader to chuckle. Fascinating to think of Arthur Wontner and Reginald Owen of whom one thinks as rather elderly actors, playing those energetic roles in Ben Hur.

BOB WHITER (Los Angeles): I liked the comments on that northern paper review. I, too, have always resented the "faint breath of patronage," as C.D. so aptly puts it, that these writers so often use.

In the article on "Handy", James W. Cook says there wasn't one redeeming feature about Bunter. How about his genuine love for his mother? This was shown on several occasions. I certainly don't agree with Mr. Cook's comment about "dispelling the gloom so frequently found in the Greyfriars stories."

GEORGE McROBERTS (Belfast): I think the standard of the Digest has greatly improved in the past year or so. Many of the articles are indeed very fine reading, and the cover work is splendid.

Miss JILL LYNE (Muswell Hill): I find Danny's Diary most interesting, and feel that at the same time it teaches a lot about social history. Mr. Allison need not feel too distressed at the reactions of his two young pals to the Magnet. Modern youngsters do not care for the great Dickens either. My own young relatives enjoy the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co but would prefer Billy Bunter in smaller doses.

R. J. GODSAVE (Leytonstone): I was interested in the experiment carried out by Gerry Allison in the hope of finding out whether the Magnet would find favour with the present generation. I seem to me that the answer the experiment gave is the only one possible, as the years are divided into eras by events such as wars. That the pace of life now is much quicker than before the war means that present-day youth has no knowledge of more leisured days, and cannot appreciate those times. For my part, whilst I read late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century books, I do not really appreciate life of that period, not having experienced it, and would not have bought them if they had again been published after the 1914-1918 war.

FRANK CASE (Liverpool): The Digest is still as enjoyable as ever. My! That was a violent letter over poor Frank Nugent --

PAT CREIGHAN (Eire) The June issue really rang the bell. First, my favourite contributor, Mr. F. A. Symonds, put in a welcome re-appearance, while the first issue of Comic Cuts on the cover set the scene, as it were, for a first-class issue. I would like to express my thanks to Blakiana for so detailed a reply to my query concerning the series in which Sexton Blake was supposed to be killed. Mrs. Packman certainly knows her Blake.

Mrs. MARY WALLACE (Whetstone): I never cared for Nugent and his weaknesses till I read some early Magnets from which I learned that he had once been a powerful fighting man and athlete. Mr. Breeze Bentley's article in C.D. Annual was excellent, but his reasons for Nugent's weakness did not seem logical to me. If Nugent was already established as a powerful fighter and athlete, how could newcomers push a good and regular player down to the bottom of the ranks? The reason for his weakness must have been his minor, Dicky.

(Surely physical prowess is only a minor detail when assessing strength of character. Nugent was never depicted as a very outstanding man at sport, but he was always straightforward, open, kind, and loyal, which, surely, was far more important. Very few Greyfriars fans would want Nugent any different from what he was. - ED.)

DEAR OLD PALS (continued from page 28)...

In times A.D., he will draw an infuriating blank right up to 1840.

It was then that Henry Cockton delivered to a delighted world "Valentine Vox the Ventriloquist". This was such an uproarious success that that man of brass, Edward Lloyd, immediately rushed out "Valentine Vaux", by "Timothy Portwine", and even this impudent and inferior piracy ran to 32 1d. numbers.

"Valentine Vox" is a most striking book. Cockton, as far as I can ascertain, had no previous work on which to build and presumably drew his inspiration from hearing some actual performance or other. Not only was he the absolute pioneer: in this, the initial attempt, he so completely developed the theme that not one of his horde of successors has been able to add a single credible detail. Note the "credible" Reginald Wray's Paul Verely is a fair example of the incredible increment. This Fourth-former could pitch his voice from a dormitory window, across a quadrangle, and into a master's study on the ground floor - hence the expression, "Pitching it a bit too strong".

Poor Cockton died young and without ever knowing that he had set in motion the most remarkable flood of piracy, plagiarism and imitation known in English literature (save the mark!). Boys' weeklies were hardly in existence before the authors were hard at it, the first of the many being "Silas the Conjuror" (and ventriloquist) in Beeton's "Boys' Own Magazine" (1855), and as the weeklies increased so did the ventriloquists. They certainly came as a novelty to each succeeding generation of boys, but the sad truth is that it was always Cockton, stewed, hashed, rissled and resurrected. There is no point in trying to list those in the Victorian weeklies, and if the crop seemed singularly thick in Amalgamated Press publications it was not because there was a greater percentage of such stories but simply because there were more papers and sooner or later most prolific authors turned to the lazy way of ensuring infallibly humorous copy.

In such surroundings, I suppose it was inevitable that Frank Richards should have his own ventriloquist. What was not so inevitable was that it should be Bunter, and the stories read as if he arrived at that eminence by accident. Quite a number of the early tales were practically an inversion of the "Sexton Blake, Wrestler" (Boxer, Milkman, etc) series, with the Owl attempting things like hypnotism with rather less than Blake's unvarying mastery. Ventriloquism was just one of these things, but while the other fads faded out in a week it remained. True, unlike his co-tenants of Credulity Hall, Bunter's powers did not show a miraculous flowering, either unexplained or after one lesson from a professional. He quite literally droned on for an extended period before Frank Richards promoted him to proficiency.

Having got him there, the author always seemed a little shame-faced about what he was vending to his confiding followers. Improbabilities, and for that matter impossibilities, were not unknown at Greyfriars and he glossed them over in a most convincing fashion: above all, he never revealed the joints in his armour by apologising for them. But Bunter rarely gave a display of his voice-throwing prowess without Bob Cherry trying to make the incredible acceptable by remarking: "It must be a gift. If it needed any brains, Bunter couldn't do it."

It was not only a gift from the author: it was a gift to him, and one that he did not neglect. In the context, it did not matter particularly that the ventriloquism was sheer balderdash, or that the Owl's "fat squeak" was so miraculously transformed in false production that he could cope with Quelch's "not loud but deep" utterance, or that he could and did earn his living as a circus performer. What does matter is that it was responsible for the only serious psychological flaw in Frank Richards' most famous character.

Bunter's normal command of the English language was at best elementary, even fragmentary: the stock comedy situation was that his nerve so disintegrated in a tight corner that he was reduced to incoherent jabbering and fluttering from one self-evident lie to another even more transparently futile. Mark the change when Bunter the Ventriloquist took over! He confronted the most trying and dangerous situations with a nerve so colossal that the Bounder's was mere putty beside it: he not only assumed Quelch's voice, he assumed Quelch's vocabulary as well.

That assumption was presumption on the author's part, and I believe that the Famous Five had a much better grasp of the situation than had their creator. Every time Bunter offered to give an exhibition of "my wonderful ventriloquism", they promptly threatened to kick him.