



collectors
DIGEST

VOL. 16 NO. 188
AUGUST 1962

BOB WHITER

2 1/2

Collectors' Digest

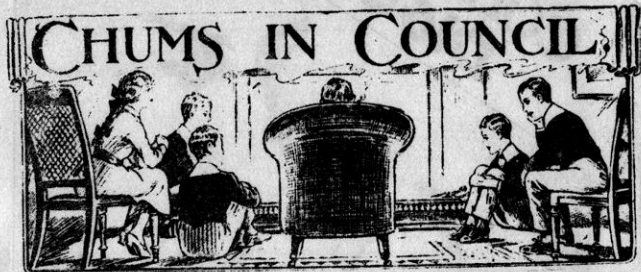
FOUNDED IN 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 16

Number 188

AUGUST, 1962

Price 2s. Od.



THE EDITOR CHATS WITH HIS READERS

A MORE LEISURELY WORLD?

In my last chat with my chums I referred to a more leisurely world that has gone for ever. I wonder whether that world was really so much more leisurely, after all. People in that world certainly worked very much harder. Boys and girls are far lazier today than they were then.

When I was five years old I went for a year to a little private school run by a stern lady by the name of Miss Herbert. Her charge was two shillings per week per pupil. No wonder she was thin.

But how conscientious she was, and how she made us work! I worked harder in that first year of my school life than I ever did again. She gave me a grounding for which I always blessed her, and which stood me in good stead through the lazy and lazier years which followed.

Today it is considered dreadful to give any real school work to youngsters before they are seven, yet the years between five and

seven are the ones in which they really want to learn. The desire to obtain knowledge dies all too quickly with children.

I walked a mile to school and another mile home. Did it harm me? Today, youngsters ride everywhere. Even a quarter of a mile makes a bus necessary. It's the same with parents. They are sadly disgruntled if they cannot park their cars on the doorstep of the Supermarket where they can do most of their shopping.

Homes today are filled with labour-saving devices. A seat in front of the telly saves a walk to the cinema. There's no need even to read. There are plenty of pictures to look at.

A more leisurely world that has gone for ever? I wonder.

OUR RUSTIC COVER

Dozens of readers have described our cover of last month as our finest of all time. I have lost count of the many scores of readers who have written in praise of that piece of work of the artist R. J. Macdonald as long ago as 1906. Many have said how much they would like a copy of the picture for framing. For any who would like it, we can supply from this office a photograph suitable for framing, or for your souvenir book, of that same rustic drawing, size about 8" by 6", with lustre finish, for the sum of 8/6d, plus postage.

Luckily for us it is a picture of a world which has not yet gone for ever. Such scenes are growing fewer, anywhere near the large towns, but it is possible, on one's travels, to come upon just such a rustic bridge, with its sleepy stream and its luscious trees.

REMARKABLE

"Splendid entertainment. The best film I have seen for years." So wrote the film critic in one of the dailies. Without exception his enthusiasm was echoed throughout the national press. Naturally one assumed that the film in question was one of the latest modern sex-travaganzas, or a pseudo-Biblical epic in glorious technicolor. But no. It was Harold Lloyd's "World of Comedy", composed of extracts from old silent films and of sound films made long before the war. It makes one think.

THE EDITOR.

* * * * *

WANTED: Boys Friend Library entitled "Through Trackless Space" by Robert W. Comrade; published about 1918-19. Good price offered for good copy of same. A. FRANCIS, 2/51, ELKINGTON STREET, BIRMINGHAM, 6.

GIRLS PAPERS - and especially
THE GIRLS HOME

By W. O. G. Lofts

In over ten years of being actively connected with our hobby, I have only known two female collectors of girls' periodicals.

The keen student can put forward many theories regarding this. Unlike boys stories, (especially Greyfriars), the majority of girls tales become very outdated. Women like to keep abreast with the times, and have a far more modern outlook on things than the male. Our editor put forward also a good theory some time back in the fact that women

are much more tidy than men. Girls' papers, once read, were never collected, but just cleared out as rubbish! Men also, in my opinion, are far more sentimental than women.

Grand New School Serial Starts Below



ONE HALFPENNY EVERY 14 DAYS

NEW SCHOOL SERIAL **MY LADY.** BY MARIE STANTON



B

the immortal Charles Hamilton under the 'Hilda Richards' pen name, who only wrote the first six stories - but what a wonderful creation it was to countless thousands of girls (and boys). Almost on a par was THE SCHOOLGIRL'S OWN with the delightful tales of Betty Barton & Co of Morcove School by 'Marjorie Stanton.' This of course hid the identity

The reader who thinks that not so many girls' papers were published as boys' is sadly mistaken. Indeed, if a list was ever published of all the girls' periodicals, it would probably be as lengthy as my 100 years of Boys periodicals published some years ago. Easily the most popular of the girls' papers collected today is THE SCHOOL FRIEND which featured Bessie Bunter and Co of Cliff House School. It is old history now, that this school was the creation of

of Horace Phillips, still alive and enjoying his retirement on his farm in the West Country.

So much has been written about these two favourites in the past, that for a change I would like to write about another popular girls' paper which appeared before the first world war. This I hope will prove interesting to the older collector, and revive many happy memories for those who remember the old GIRLS' HOME.

The first number of THE GIRLS' HOME appeared on March 5th, 1910. Priced only $\frac{1}{2}$ d, it was of BOYS' FRIEND size, and likewise green in colour. The main opening serial was entitled 'The Outcast of Crowthorpe College' written by that astonishing prolific writer of girls' serials 'Mabel St. John.' This of course was also 'Henry St. John' of the boys stories which the late Herbert Leckenby and Harry Dowler loved so much in their early days. 'Henry St. John's' full real name was Charles Henry St. John Cooper and for the benefit of new readers it is worth repeating the most amusing story his son told me a few years ago about his father.

St. John was the half-brother to that very famous actress Gladys Cooper, and was somewhat used to having requests from her ardent admirers to try and arrange a meeting. One day at his club, he was asked by a member for the usual introduction. He explained that Gladys was very busy with engagements. The member exclaimed 'I don't mean Gladys - I mean Mabel! I would very much like to meet her, because I enjoy all her stories so much.'

Page 3 of THE GIRLS' HOME had the usual feature found in all girls' papers - the beauty hints page, in this case entitled 'My Lady's Mirror' conducted by Madame Beale of beauty and toilet. The first beauty tip was 'How can I brighten my eyes,' and the advice of bathing them in cold water each morning would not be out of fashion today.

Other features included 'The Work Box' where useful information was given in the making of frocks which would be hopelessly outdated today. There was the usual editorial, with the friendly title of 'Amongst my Girls' whilst other serials filled up the remainder of the paper. 'Girls of the Empire' was a feature on the back page and short complete stories each week gave an interesting tale about some part of the mighty British Empire. No. 1 storyette was of 'Fay of Australia' followed in No. 2 of the adventures of a girl in Canada. These were written by Linda Hope, reputed to be a well-known colonial Novelist - which in my opinion was a pen-name of a boys' writer.

Some of the artists were well known to readers of boys papers. George Catcombe, who mainly illustrated the tales of 'Mabel St. John'

was I believe one of the very first illustrators of Rookwood in the BOYS' FRIEND. Wilfred Sayers, another of the early artists also did work for the 'UNION JACK' at times, whilst W. Reading and J. Louis Smythe, the latter of 'Fun and Fiction' 'Bullseye' and 'Film Fun' fame, need no introduction to readers.

Also like the BOYS FRIEND the Double Numbers of THE GIRLS' HOME were an attraction. Double the normal price and with a bright orange cover, they were packed with extra stories and features to interest the female mind. 'Our Favourites' was one of these, giving in story form the love romances of the heroines of famous songs. No. 1 being that immortal song 'Annie Rooney'. Another song though this time advertised in a Double Xmas Number of THE GIRLS' HOME for its companion Paper 'For-get-Me-Not' (an actual 4/- song given away free!) was 'One Xmas Day' words by Hugh Tuite and music by Edward Vernon. I believe that Mr. Tuite had some connection with the late Charles Hamilton in writing songs at one time.

The advertisements in the GIRLS' HOME would today make amusing reading. 'OATINE TOILET SOAP' - 10,000 tablets to be distributed free! was one such advertisement - and one had the usual competitions in word games and suchlike with handsome prizes as an award for the lucky winners. 'Why be Fat - when Phatolene Tablets will cure you absolutely,' was another regular advert.

It would be far beyond the space allowed for this article for me to relate about all the stories and serials in its pages, but it is worth mentioning the story entitled 'Handsome Harry - the Girl Man' which would certainly be regarded dubiously in 1962! This was the story of how a working girl masqueraded as a Man! Rather than submit to the attentions of her manager, Harriet Nash is dismissed. 'If only I was a man' she cries. Her brother had recently died, and his clothes which fitted her were still at the bottom of her trunk. Her eyes suddenly flame with an idea, and she cuts her hair short, puts on her brother's clothes, says goodbye to Harriet Nash, and becomes Harry Ashton! The following stories then describe her adventures in different 'Mens' occupations such as Tram Driver, all very amusing,

'Hetty the Harpist' by Mrs. De Winter Baker. 'The French Girl' by Grace Lindsay. 'Poppy of the Circus' by Henry T. Johnson. 'Bessie from London' by Mary Sherborn. 'Polly Green' and 'My Lady' by Mabel St. John. 'The Adventures of Madcap Meg' - Meg of the Sweetshop. 'The Merry Pierrots' dealing with the love romances of a sea-side Concert Party. 'The House on the Hill' 'Afraid to go Home' 'Her Phantom Lover' 'The Wedding Gown' 'The Pink Sunbonnet' 'The Talk

of the Village' - or the Village of Gossips, These are but a few of the stories which appeared up to the start of the first world war - many anonymous. 1915 saw stories appearing with a war flavour, such as 'The War Maids' and 'War Romances from the Front' whilst the feature of 'A Bad Girl's Diary' written by 'Peggy' would have made even Billy Bunter's or Coker's spelling look good.

No. 261 dated February 27th, 1915 was the last issue of the GIRLS' HOME when it was announced that it would be incorporated into 'Our Girls'. 'Our Girls' lasted until 1919, and this was then incorporated into 'Bow Bells' (a girls' paper - and not the Victorian paper of the same title.) Probably one could trace the continuation of the old GIRLS' HOME up to the present day girls' paper.

Girls' papers may come and go, but THE GIRLS' HOME will remain in the memory of many as a delightful paper in its period, and for many I hope this article will bring back happy memories.

* * * * *
* * * * *

THE OLD SERIALS

ARTHUR HARRIS of Llandudno writes us as follows:

"In Danny's Diary it stated 'There is a new serial in the Magnet, called "Twice Round the Globe" by Sidney Drew'. Is this a mistake? "Twice Round the Globe" by Sidney Drew appeared in the JESTER & WONDER from July 19th, 1902. An interesting thing about this is the announcement the week before:

Owing to certain characters in the wonderful new story "Twice Round the Globe" being personages of high political importance, we were informed that the story in its then form could not be published. Mr. Drew, after several interviews with legal chiefs, has succeeded in overcoming the objections, and the result is that "Twice Round the Globe" is even more thrilling than it was before. But these delays have prevented us from keeping our promise to place the story before our readers this week. It will, however, appear without fail in the next issue of the JESTER AND WONDER.

Danny was right. "Twice Round the Globe" did appear in the Magnet in 1912. It was, of course, new to the Magnet, and Danny would have no reason to suppose that it was not actually a new story.

Many of the serials of early in the century were given more than one airing. "Birds of Prey", "Britain at War", "Britain Invaded", "The Iron Island", "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays", most of the Drew stories, and many others were serialised more than once before they eventually appeared in the B.F.L. Oddly enough, the same title blocks and illustrations were usually used on each occasion,

The announcement in JESTER & WONDER, to which Mr. Harris refers, was almost certainly a stunt, but it is nevertheless interesting.

Sexton Blake Today

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

HIGH SUMMER HOMICIDE No. 503..... Arthur Kirby

One of the best S.B.L.'s of the year 1962. The book combines mystery, suspense and a clever plot, with a high standard of literature. It also continues the evolution of Kirby from play-boy newshound to serious responsible citizen - too serious to accept the amorous challenge of a lovely but dangerous woman. He was too busy coping with a sixth sense which was working overtime on his subconscious "creating a mental climate of grim foreboding." All the signs pointed to murder - the murder of his absent host.

With Blake's help and guidance Kirby began to investigate his host's movements prior to his disappearance and discovered enough evidence to warrant calling in the local police. The decision was Kirby's. Blake seemed curiously indifferent about the charge until later in the novel. Then he surprised everybody, including Kirby.

Excellent holiday reading and a novel which should not be missed by any Blake fan.

STUDIC ONE MURDER No. 504..... W. A. Ballinger

"Where's the Queen of Sheba" wailed P.O. as the animals walked in pairs up the gang-plank into the Ark. "In my films there has got to be a Queen of Sheba - its my trademark."

Unfortunately for Sir Peregrine Gore, the Ark sank and the Queen of Sheba fell a prey to lions on her way from dressing room to the bath scene. When Blake Investigations joined the party and Paula Dane became the new Queen of Sheba, she was hurled into the Anaconda pit by the saboteur spreading chaos, death and destruction through Studio One during the filming of The Deluge.

Paula - making a welcome return to star-character role in the S.B.L. - faced a series of perilous adventures with fortitude, ingenuity and courage; working alone on the Studic investigation, whilst Tinker did the 'leg-work'.

An excellent novel with a very high literary standard, good characterization, pace, originality and suspense. Ideal holiday reading, light-hearted, thrilling and thoroughly enjoyable.

Both novels have excellent covers. The Henry Fox cover for Studio One Murder is exceptionally good. Unfortunately the chapter sketches are not new. Both these novels deserved new sketches, as well as good covers.



DANNY'S DIARY

AUGUST 1912.

THE UNION JACK. 1st.

THE
LAW
OF THE
SEA.



After school broke up, I had three days with Mum at Aldershot, where we visited Auntie Florrie. One night we went to the Hippodrome there, and a comedian called Harry Champion was singing "Oh, what a mouth, what a norful mouth!" He sang very quickly, and Mum thought him rather vulgar.

But what I'm coming to is this. I would like to sing "Oh, what a month, what a norful month!" August in England! Yeow!

I've never know so much rain in all my life. If just rained and rained and rained. It pelted down like a cascade, day after day. The wettest August since 1880 somebody said in the Morning Leader. One day there was 6 inches of rain in Norwich in 12 hours. Eight thousand people were homeless, communications in the city were cut off, telephones and telegraphs broke down, and gas and electricity failed. East Anglia had it the worst, but it has been bad everywhere. The disastrous floods have cost Britain millions of pounds. A real cat's strop.

Luckily, we're not going away for our holiday till the start of September, but I don't suppose it will have stopped raining. Dad says the weather is due to all the flying machines buzzing about in the air. He says you can't mess about with the elements without upsetting the weather.

Of course, being stuck indoors with so much rain about gave me plenty of time for reading. My cousin Robin at Aldershot takes the Marvel every week. He likes the stories about Tom Sayers and the Fighting Parson. They are written by Arthur S. Hardy, and Robin says they have been in the Marvel for some years. There is also a story each week about Jam, Sam and Pete.

Robin is three years older than I am. He gave me the latest Union Jack called "The Law of the Sea", obviously based on the Titanic disaster. The picture on the cover showed a liner going down and people in a lifeboat among the ice-floes.

I think we ought not to grumble about the weather. This month there was an earthquake in Turkey. There were 6,000 casualties and 40,000 are homeless. Anything like that is worse than weather.

I have read the Gem for as long as I can remember, but this has been the very best month of all time. Five stories, too, as there were five Wednesdays this month. The first was "D'Arcy's Libel Action" which was a scream from start to finish. Gussy tried to learn shorthand, so he could act as reporter at meetings. He got mixed up with suffragettes, and then wrote a criticism of the Mayor of Waylands trousers. Mum read it and likes Gussy, though she thinks Martin Clifford is making fun of the suffragettes. Another smasher was "Tom Merry's Concert Party," and then they all went on holiday in "Tom Merry and Co in Ireland."

Then came two serious tales, the very best school stories I have ever read. One was "Stage Struck" featuring Monty Lowther and the other was "Bought Honours" in which Levison persuaded Gussy to cheat in an exam.

Dad brought me home "Chips" one evening. It has the largest circulation of any comic paper in the world. I like Weary Willie and Tired Tim and also the Casey Court Nibs, but Homeless Hector makes me laugh the most. He is a dog. There is a serial in Chips called "The Tramp Millionaire" about a wealthy man who goes to live in the slums. I suppose he is a philanthropist.

General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army died this month. Mum was terribly sorry, for she says the Salvation Army does wonderful work. He was buried on August 29th and huge crowds lined the route through the City of London as the funeral procession passed.

Earlier on, I earned eightpence for fagging balls for Doug and his friends when they played tennis. I was very extravagant. I bought two Boys' Friend 3d Libraries. One was "Sexton Blake, Spy" which was a bit heavy for me, so I sent it as a birthday present to Aunt Florrie. The other was a circus story "Canvas and Caravan" by Robert W. Comrade, and I found this good holiday reading.

I also bought the Holiday Double Number of Comic Cuts (it was double-price, one penny). It was good fun. I liked the story "The Eastmouth Pierrots" about Martin Steel and his twelve lady assistants. The Mulberry Flat-ites were at Ramsgate in some funny pictures.

I also bought a halfpenny ice-cream cornet, which was lovely, and a pocket-full of monkey-nuts for the other half-penny.

In Doug's "Cheer Boys Cheer" there is a new serial called "The Bad Boy of the Family." In it, the father says to his son: "A son who can rob his father is no son of mine. Out of my house and out of my life - and never darken my doors gain."

Now doesn't that seem silly! Even if he robbed his father, he was still his son, wasn't he? I wonder how he darkened his father's doors. I suppose he put dirty hands on the new paint.

Krupp's at Essen are celebrating a hundred years of making guns. They are making them for the Kaiser. But the Kaiser has his yacht racing at Cowes. It is called the "Meteor". Dad says it shows how he loves the British.

I am annoyed with the editor of the Magnet. He has started three pages of comic pictures in each issue. When I want comic pictures I buy a comic paper. The stories in the Magnet have only been fair this month. The first was "Harry Wharton & Co's Bank Holiday." The Famous Four and Mark Linley went on holiday to Mauleverer Hall, Lord Mauleverer's lovely home. While they were there they spent Bank Holiday in Blackpool, and they went to a concert party on the sands, and found Monsieur Charpentier on the stage singing saucy songs. A bit indelible, I thought.

Then came "Spoofing the School" and "The Kidnapped School". The first one brought in japing, a fake palmist, and reference to a treasure hidden by a smuggler called Captain Firebrace. In the second one, Mauleverer took six bus-loads of boys out for the day, and all the lot were kidnapped by a man calling himself Firebrace.

Next came "The Competition Craze at Greyfriars" Fish organised a competition to answer the question "Why did the chicken cross the road?" The answer was "To get to the other side", and Fishy won the prize himself. I asked my brother Doug why the chicken crossed the road, and he said "For some fowl reason!"

Finally, "The Form Master's Secret" in which Mr. Quelch's brother Herbert was accused of robbing a bank. He was cleared by Dalton Hawke, the boy detective. Goodness knows who illustrated this one. It was a bit like Clarke, but it wasn't him. It wasn't Chapman either.

So it wasn't a very remarkable month in the Magnet.

The Daily Herald is offering £1,000 for the best holiday snapshot. I have told Dad that he could buy me a Kodak vest pocket camera for 30/- and that I might get £1,000 out of it, but Dad only grunted. If he buys me a camera I shall take it away with me when we go to the sea for our holiday next month. I might get a picture of Mum in her new hobble skirt. I'd call it "Oh, you should see them shuffling along...."

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE - WHAT OFFERS. Rover bound volume 1-20. Rover bound volume 21-34. Dixon Hawke Library 10 nos. Newnes Dick Turpin 12 no. 20 volumes Chums, 50 volumes B.O.P. 10 volumes Scout. 15 volumes Captain. 100 Sexton Blake Lib. 1915-41. 150 Boys Friend Lib. 1915-41. 160 Modern Boys. 100 Boys Friends (not Rookwood). 80 Nelson Lees 1st new. 50 Nelson Lees old series. 50 Nelson Lees 2nd new. 200 Magnets 1350 to end. 100 Union Jacks. 12 Scoops. 20 Pilots. 10 Holiday Annuals. Avery The Cock-House Cup 5/-. Cleaver Captains of Dukes 3/-. Cleaver Lawson for Lord's 8/-. Cleaver Dawney Leaves School 4/-. Farrar Julian Home 8/-. Farrar St. Wimbreds 5/-. Bird Play the Game Torbury 5/-.

VERNON LAY, 52 OAKLEIGH GARDENS, WHETSTONE, LONDON, N.20. Hillside 6490.

WANTED: Thrillers, early Knockout Comics, Champion Nos. 12, 15, 29, 114 and the following books: "Florida to Fleet St." by T.C. Bridges; "Convict 1066" Berkeley Gray; "Ironsidies of the Yard" Victor Gunn; "Murder in Oils" John Newton Chance; "Baron" books by Anthony Morton; "Inspector West Leaves Town" John Creasey; "The Toff goes to Market" John Creasey; "Toff in Town" John Creasey; "No Royal Road" by David Farrar; "Richer Dust" Stanton Hope. Early CHUMS. Will pay good price or give copies of 1st and 2nd series S.B.L.'s in exchange.

VICTOR COLBY, 8 BERESFORD AVENUE, BEVERLY HILLS, N.S.W., AUSTRALIA.

FOR SALE: Magnets 1526, 1533, 1491, 1535, 1469. Holiday Annuals 1924, 1925 and 1930. Collectors' Digest Annual 1961. Autobiography Frank Richards (Memorial). Bunter Books 5, 20 and 27. Various Boys Own Papers. Offer to MR. CLIFT, "CLAREMONT", VICTORIA ROAD, HERSTMONCEY, SUSSEX.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: BARRY MACILROY'S new address is "Friardale" 80, Southwood Avenue, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey.

WILL EXCHANGE: "The Autobiography of Frank Richards" for a blue-covered Gem entitled "THE TOFF". Must be in good condition with original covers.

TOM SATCHEL, 63 CANTWELL ROAD, PLUMSTEAD, LONDON, S.E.18.

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.

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

BLAKIANA

THE ROUND TABLE



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

I regret that the S.B.L. Authors and Titles feature is omitted this month. The reason is that Ken left behind his immense book containing records (900 pages) and details of this and many other old boys books at the last meeting of the O.B.B.Club. There will be a double lot next month.

Thanks to Bill Lofts and Derek Adley, I am informed that stories of Sexton Blake have appeared in: "Boys Journal", "Chips", "Magnet", "Sports Budget" and "Knockout Annual." This brings my list up to 24. A Blake story also appeared in the "Evening Standard" but this I am excluding as it is not an O.B. Paper.

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * * * *

RAMBLINGS ON PAST AND PRESENTBy Christopher Lowder

"From the ominously coffin-shaped lid stared the garish representation of a woman; huge-eyed, with full red lips curved to a leer, into which subtly the craftsman who fashioned it had infused a terrible malevolence...

The Chameleon's voice came...

"Miss Deniston," he began, "allow me to present" - he paused - "the Iron Maiden."

..."An intricate pattern of six-inch, needle pointed spikes projected from the inner surface of the door."

The Chameleon went on, with a maniacal chuckle:

"An affectionate little girl, the Iron Maiden - loves to embrace her little friends!"

.....

The above extract came from "Horror House", by L. C. Douthwaite (S.B.L. 2nd series, No. 242) which, with a few others from 218-275, I received a little while back from my amiable friend, Jim Swan of Paddington. And, while reading those words, I wondered who had conceived the idea of the pre-war Blake as a stodgy, archaic, rather starched Victorian. Why, I even read in one letter in the S.B.L. Mailbag recently that someone was bored with a pre-1930 novel! Heresy!!

I suppose really this article is on the old, old argument on the merits of the old Blake and the new. And how old that argument is! I am sure that everyone who is a Blake enthusiast discusses it at some time or another - and probably loses a few friends in the process! Some of the people I know are very vitriolic about the pre-war Blake, and, equally, others are extremely sour about the New Look.

Still, it's good to have dissention. Me, I'm neutral on the subject, for I enjoy both types. Why, I can even make comparisons; like putting Anthony Skene against Martin Thomas, and I find the comparison quite agreeable (though I must say I would hesitate to put Zenith against Orlando Dante!)

Really, you know, that is the start of the trouble - comparison. You shouldn't start comparing the old with the new, it leads to all kinds of trouble. Times change, opinions change; and the only thing one can truthfully say is that they are different.

And, of course, there is the old grumble that the pre-war Blake was unrealistic - and how often I have heard that! But, must everything be realistic? Let us have a little phantasy about some things. Wasn't

it Keats who said: "Philosophy clips an angel's wings." How true, especially today.

I don't suppose that the extract I have quoted above seems very realistic to some - but how deliciously spine-tingling! You know that Miss Deniston will escape, you know that Blake will arrive just in time - but until that happens, aren't you gripping the arms of your chair in suspense? Anyway, even if you aren't, you must admit that it is good writing.

Usually when someone rhapsodies about pre-war Blake, you find that he is anti-modern Blake. Well, in my case - not a bit of it. On the contrary I am all for it. The Modern authors have created an excellent standard - consider the novels by Arthur Maclean, Howard Baker, Peter Saxon, Rex Dolphin and Martin Thomas; as well as such new authors as Philip Chambers and Wilfred McNeilly, who both show great promise, and talent worthy of the Blake tradition. In fact, I look forward to the third Monday of each month just as much as I do to the arrival of a parcel of pre-war papers. I am equally enthusiastic about both!

Yet there is something missing from the Modern Blake. There is no verve, no dash in the stories (watch your step, C.L., or the moderns will be down on your head like a ton of bricks!). No. What I mean to say is, let's have a bit of unrealism injected into the Library; not much, just a tone. What a pity cars don't have running-boards these days; in the old days they were worked to death by police or Our Hero leaping on to them! And what a pity trains these days don't sway, it added so much atmosphere to those fights on the night express across the Continent; you know, villains brandishing pistols in the corridor, and Blake somewhere on the roof, with a tunnel looming up from the distance; anyway, trains don't have corridors these days, do they?

Seriously though, is Blake getting a little too "hard" now? I hope not, for his sake. I've just been reading the extract about Nick Carter from Turner's "Boys will be Boys", and I shudder to think that that might happen to the oldest detective in the business.

One thing that sent my spirits soaring was the recent mention of the return of our old friend Pedro, that sagacious blood-hound. Well done, whoever thought of it! That is what people want - added interest. I am sure the circulation of the S.B.L. was boosted by the return of Plummer and Rymer; but, in the words of Wilfred Pickles, where are they now? The Rymer novels were good, excepting perhaps the last one; and Arthur Maclean's Plummer was well worth a return visit -

in fact, in my opinion it was one of the best of Maclean's many excellent novels.

The best thing, of course, would be the return of - not the Union Jack, as some people want - the Detective Weekly. Consider: you see on your bookstall that old yellow cover, and you pick it up and discover 24 pages of really good reading...an Editor's letter; the Round Table; crime articles; a full length Blake story (20 pages); a serial by a well-known thriller writer; up-to-date illustrations by the men who have so ably designed for the Modern Library (and, of course, Parker!); a page, or half-page, information column about past Blake writers - the 'greats' like Graydon, Teed, Blair, Skene, etc; information about all the modern writers... and I don't think it would break the directors of Fleetway Press to put all this, in the same pre-war size, at the modest sum of 6d.

I think that a modern D.W. would be a winner from the start - a weekly magazine devoted to a famous detective and suitable for the modern crime fiction reader, and the family.

Come to think of it, it would probably boost the shares in Fleetway Press, as well as interest in a rather neglected detective - too long neglected!

What started this rambling article, which I hope has proved constructive (by which I mean the start of discussion on certain subjects) as well as interesting, was my receiving those pre-war Blakes. And they have certainly proved a boon in this dreadful weather we have been having! So let me end by touching on a fairly representative book (from the point of view of excitement) from this little batch.

The one I am taking is Alan Blair's "The Kidnapped Witness" (2nd series No. 275).

The blurb of this exciting tale is on the first page - "An astounding drama of thrilling detective adventure surrounding an extraordinary exploit at the Law Courts."

First, there is a raid on the Old Bailey by a masked gang, in which a man on trial for murder is kidnapped; then Blake receives a bullet in his left arm; a Chief Inspector is drugged, then severely cossed with a loaded stick; Blake is drugged in a lift and the mechanism tampered with, so that he is stuck between two floors; then a poison dart is blown at him while he is in a taxi, on the way to Baker Street.

A magnificent blood-and-thunder, and certainly one of the best pre-war Blakes that I have recently read. But then, of course, Alan Blair (or W. J. Bayfield - what a help that list is!) is a true past-

master in the art of Blake writing, ranking with the early Graydon or Teed at his peak.

What a pity such "dire-doings" do not come Blake's way these days. Perhaps some past Blake writer will read this and stagger towards the dusty typewriter in the corner of the room - to fulfil my dream! Perhaps even a Modern Blake writer!

Who knows

* * * * *

BATTLES ROYAL
By Victor Colby

Ladies and Gentlemen, on my right are those two seasoned warriors, Battling Blake and Tornado Tinker. On my left, and opposing them, are the prettiest set of ruffians you could hope to meet in a day's march!

In this article, Blake puts aside his pipe and slippers, and Tinker his paste pot, and the dauntless pair sally forth as men of action, to engage the enemy wherever he may be found, on or under the sea, in the air, in many lands, with numerous weapons and against overwhelming odds. Battles royal with a highlight in every fight. Here are some of them.

S.E.L. 1st series No. 135. "The Mystery of the Turkish Agreement," by Pierre Quiroule.
Location: Algiers.

A perfect pandemonium of noise broke out behind Blake, and as if by magic, the gully began to vomit forth brown wriggling forms which crowded him menacingly. The screaming, gesticulating hordes followed him down the narrow passage. One dirty arab made a sudden dart at him and grabbed at his coat. Blake let fly with his terrible left. The man made a funny little gurgling noise, turned a somersault, and went hurtling into the ragged swarm that pressed close behind. Shouting with greater intensity, the swarm swept forward into reach of Blake's arms. Blake plugged away like a machine, the arabs going down like nine-pins. Blake was hemmed in by a barricade of living, writhing bodies. They seemed to drop from the roof and wriggle out of cracks in the wall to pile themselves up beneath the hammer of fists. One brown body dropped clear on Blake's head, he caught him by the legs and swung him like a battering ram at the strained furious faces that surged at him.

Suddenly the wall against which Blake had placed his back, collapsed with the thrust of his shoulders, and he was precipitated into a dwelling. The building was fired, but Blake burst through the flames as Tinker and Pedro arrived on the scene, the bloodhound flinging himself into the melee, biting and tearing at naked limbs. Driven to a frenzy by Pedro's relentless persecution, and pushed on by those in the rear, the natives scratched and tore at each other, fighting like demons, to get out of reach of the dog's savage jaws.

"Old Pedro's putting in some stout work" said Tinker, whistling him off the retreating enemy.

"Bully Boy" said Blake, fondling Pedro's great head, the dog licking his master's hand and whining with delight.

U. J. No. 124. "The Diver Detective"

Two men faced each other at the bottom of the sea. Sexton Blake and the villain. Both men wore diving suits and both had axes. The villain leapt forward and aimed a savage blow at Blake's neck. The detective parried it skillfully, and lunged out with a counter stroke.

With fierce blows, with swift circling, the fight progressed without either of the combatants receiving a wound. Indeed the first round would probably end the encounter, for a diving suit, once ripped open would place the wearer hors-de-combat.

By a feint, quickly followed by a heavy downward blow on top of the helmet, the villain sent Blake staggering backwards. He attempted to repeat the blow, but Blake rolled to one side and thrust out his hatchet to ward it off. The villain stumbled and fell on the keen edged blade of the upturned axe, and the jacket of his diving dress was ripped from top to bottom. Blake saw his antagonist struggle to his feet and make made efforts to rise up to the surface, but without avail. In a frenzy of fear the doomed wretch rushed along the floor of the sand and disappeared from view for ever.

S. B. L. 1st series No. 360. "The Case of the Jade Handled Knife" by G. H. Teed.

Location: Saigon, in a drinking den.

Having had his face slapped by one of the girl inmates, the half caste had gone livid with a terrible rage. His arms moved like lightning. One hand shot out and gripped the girl's throat, the other flew under his coat, and a long-bladed knife flashed under the smoking oil lamp. Up went the arm, and down came the knife, straight for the girl's throat, her eyes bulging with terror and fear of imminent annihilation.

And then, just as the point drove to its goal, Sexton Blake lurched forward and thrust his tumbler directly under the point of the knife, catching the blade within it the barest fraction of a second before it would have plunged into the girl's throat. The half-caste rallied, and drove forward, knife held low, ready to slit open the man who had balked him. Before the blade reached him, Blake, in his role of a drunken tourist, stumbled back, and while the half-caste was still on the forward lunge, his knee came up, then his foot, and suddenly as if the limb had been brought into play by a steel spring, his foot shot out catching the half-caste full in the stomach. The terrific impact of the blow drove the half-caste through the half swing doors into the street.

(More battles next month!)

ALICE IS ONE HUNDRED

A hundred years ago, on July 4th, 1862, a young Oxford lecturer, the Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson took three young girls, all sisters, on the river. Their names were Lorina, Edith and Alice. As usual, he told them a story. This one was about Alice going down a rabbit-hole into "Underground" - as he called it then.

Next day, on the London train, Charles Dodgson met the girls again and Alice begged him to write the story down for her. So he did, and it was published in 1865. He called it "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," and called himself Lewis Carroll.

A visitor to the parish church of Daresbury, between Chester and Warrington, can see the characters from "Alice" set for ever in the stained-glass windows. Lewis's father was vicar there.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by JACK WOOD

THE OLD MILL
By R. J. Godsave

One of the most picturesque sights to be seen in the countryside is that of a Windmill with its fascinating sails and shape. It is a great favourite as a study for the artist and photographer.

E. S. Brooks first introduced the old Windmill on Bannington Moor in No. 114, O.S. "The Boy from California." In this issue Justin B. Harman, a new boy, was kidnapped by his uncle, dragged through Bellton Wood to the old mill on the moor. A striking cover shews the mill and the kidnapped boy being forced into a motor car.

Although the old mill was in a rather derelict condition, it was still a serviceable place on the whole. For those whose actions were not quite above board, it made a good hiding place or temporary lodging.

When Norman Grell first came to St. Frank's as Jack Mason, his uncle, Simon Grell used the mill for the night, after stealing a golden locket which was proof of Mason's real identity and also the clue to a buried treasure in Africa.

Again the old mill came into the scene with the coming of Dick Goodwin. The cover had a fine drawing of it with Nipper clinging to the sail looking in at the lighted window. Nipper having previously been kidnapped in mistake for Goodwin and released when the men realised their mistake.

The mill figures largely in the Grimesby Creepe series. Kirby, one of Creepe's monitors, was imprisoned in the mill by the St. Frank's juniors in order that Nipper could impersonate him at Moat Hollow, in order to rouse the scholars at this school to revolt against the tyranny of Grimesby Creepe.

Many were the occasions during the life of the Nelson Lee Library when the old mill was used, and it proved a great asset to Brooks, who made the most of it. The same could be said of the artists who drew some exceedingly effective covers depicting the old Windmill.

* * * * *

HAMILTONIANA



SOME PERSON UNKNOWN.....

*The Most Remarkable School Yarn of Harry
Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars ever told*

BY FRANK RICHARD

FAMOUS SERIES NO. 22

"Some Person Unknown"—, one of the most brilliant stories of the brilliant Courtfield Cracksman series which brightened the winter of 1929-30 for Magnet readers.

From time to time during his career, Charles Hamilton introduced mystery and crime into his Greyfriars story, and this one was written when he was at the peak of his powers. A series of endless variety and mellow observations, it can be said that, of its type, the author never wrote anything better. A series which can be read and read again with sheer enjoyment from start to finish.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 59. SECOND TO NONE

"The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones." So wrote Shakespeare with some truth.

Collectors' Digest has commented in recent months on a few articles which have been published belittling the work of Charles Hamilton. Immediately a popular and successful man dies, his detractors get to work, showing their own skill in debunking the famous. We have seen it happen more than once.

While he lived, Charles Hamilton was well able to take care of himself. This may have restrained some critics who are now able to let themselves go. I must confess that some of the critics, with their generalities, aimed at taking the gloss from the memory of a well-loved writer, give me a pain in the neck.

Some of these writers have just been spiteful. We can ignore them as not worth bothering about. Others, in my view, make certain comments as a result of a very limited knowledge of the Hamilton story. Those of us who know the story, inside out, all the way down the years, make slips at times. How much more likely to make mistakes are those whose knowledge of the subject is superficial or limited to one particular period.

In an article in the New Strand Magazine a contributor wrote: "There have been much better school story writers." WHAM! So now we know!

Just whom did he mean? He gave us no clue. Other writers have vaguely suggested the same thing, but they, too, have omitted to mention the names they had in mind.

Who wrote better school stories than Charles Hamilton? We have asked this question before. On my book-shelves are all the school stories of Wodehouse, Read and Coke - plus plenty by Bird, Hadath, Farrar, Cleaver, Avery, Cule, Goodyear, Bell, Haydon, Smith, St. John Pearce. Are some of these the names which the critics have in mind? They all wrote school stories, many of them excellent, between stiff covers.

Farrar's "Eric" was a fine powerful story in its day. Wodehouse's best may have been "Mike", which is always a delight. Read's "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's" has deservedly lived down the years. My personal opinion is that Coke was the best of all the stiff-cover writers. His best - and grand reading they are - were "Bending of a Twig" and "The

Worm", but these were written for adults and would not appeal greatly to youngsters.

Do the critics ask us to believe that Charles Hamilton never wrote a better story than any of these I have mentioned? Have the critics, in fact, read enough of Hamilton's work to be anything like competent judges in the matter?

Of course Charles Hamilton wrote hundreds of pot-boilers which entertained, more or less, according to their themes. Of course his work is not above criticism. Of course he has his faults. But he also wrote scores of superb stories which are, in my view, unsurpassed and which knock spots off anything by the authors I have listed.

Take, for example, "The Tyrant Prefect" in the Schoolboys' Own Library. It is unrenowned, it is not quoted among the Hamilton "greats" yet what a glorious piece of school story writing it is! The pen pictures of Mr. Quelch alone are worth their weight in gold.

A correspondent in our Yours Sincerely column recently, asked whether any Hamilton school stories were "really outstanding" and added: "'Boy Without a Name', Outram Series, the first Wharton the Rebel series, 'Housemaster's Homecoming', the 'His Brother's Keeper' series, perhaps". It is enlightening to cast an eye on the stories he mentions and see how far back he goes and how much he ignores. "Boy Without a Name" was published on New Year's Day, 1915. The St. Jim's stories he mentions were published during the First World War. The Rebel series was published in the winter of 1924-25. So the correspondent was suggesting that the only outstanding school stories in the Gem appeared between 1914-1918, and that nothing very outstanding appeared in the Magnet after early 1925. Can we be blamed for wondering whether this correspondent has a very wide acquaintance with the Hamilton story?

But stay! Our simple immaturity may be the reason some of us regard the Hamilton stories as Second to None. A contributor to the latest Story Paper Collector writes: "All my favourites were written by Pentelow. I do think, however, that Charles Hamilton was the better writer for youngsters, he having a more simple style."

Where's my rocking horse?

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 58. CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS

ROGER JENKINS: I do not agree with you about the Loder-Captain series. I thought it an extremely well-written series, with an ingeniously contrived plot. The scene in which Wingate gets a Prefects' beating (and of course the events which lead up to it)

represents a remarkable discernment in Charles Hamilton's powers of characterization.

And how could you say that Bulkeley featured in nothing very outstanding in the Rookwood story? The series in which Frampton's uncle succeeds in getting Mr. Bulkeley suspected of dishonesty is probably the best of the stories about the Rookwood seniors and Knowles' cunning in getting himself elected captain of Rookwood still makes very interesting reading. (Incidentally, all this is yet another example of a Greyfriars series being based on an earlier Rookwood one.)

I think that to the average reader Monteith was nearer than Bulkeley to being just a name, but this is just an illustration of the waste of dramatic material for which St. Jim's is noted.

JILL LYNE: You state that you have a warm spot for Kildare and that you preferred him to Wingate who you thought was a wee bit pompous on certain occasions. To me, Wingate always appeared as a fair-minded type of fellow, and I have always liked him very much. I know nothing about Courtney, but Gwynne, Wingate's closest buddy, is a mere shadow, and does not shine as much as Loder, Carne, or Walker. I agree with you one hundred per cent that Greyfriars owes a lot to Loder and I confess to having a sneaking admiration for him.

BEN WHITER: I think Kildare the best of a very fine lot. "His rich tenor voice rendering 'God bless St. James' School'" - how well I remember that passage from one of the St. Jim's stories.

BOB WHITER: I never quite knew how to pronounce Bulkeley. As you say, an awkward bulky name. Do you pronounce the middle 'e'? Wingate was my favourite captain. Much as I liked Kildare, one felt he never quite received the same respect from the juniors as did Wingate. I never cared a lot for the Loder-Captain series either. Apart from the time the Bounder saved Jack Wingate from the sack, I didn't have much patience for Wingate and his minor stories.

LURIE SUTTON (on an earlier topic): I must dispute with Frank Lay when he writes of "padding" in the Hamilton stories. Material which does not advance the basic plot is not in itself padding. If the writing is fresh and enjoyable it cannot be classed as padding, which is boring and betrays the writer's lack of invention and ideas. I have yet to find any padding in Charles Hamilton's stories.

In the case of a series, new readers had to be catered for, and a summary of previous events given. Was ever an author more brilliant in working in a summary of what had gone before in such an unobtrusive and economical manner? Anyway, surely few people read Charles Hamilton with the idea of getting to the end of the plot.

ERIC FAYNE adds: Mr. Sutton is right, but all the same there were certain episodes which could be removed and certain dialogue which could be pruned without spoiling the story if some series were published in book form. Also the summaries of previous events could obviously be omitted. But the greatest Hamilton series were so packed with meat that I think few could be published in book form without wholesale pruning which would ruin them.

I agree with Mr. Jenkins that the Loder-Captain series was extremely well written. It contained some magnificent episodes. It never appealed greatly to me simply because I did not care for the theme of the erring minor. I think that Bulkeley is usually pronounced "Bulkerley".

YOU'RE RIGHT, MR. KIRBY

By E. J. Davey

My chief interest in the hobby is good old Greyfriars, although my main hobby is an interest in railways. I look forward every month to

the grand old Collectors' Digest. This little mag is always welcome and the various view expressed and the different features of the mag seem almost to hold up a mirror to Life, just as literature does. The novelist and the poet express men's thoughts, feelings, joys and sorrows and their success in doing this is probably the test of literary greatness.

These thoughts are engendered by that interesting letter from Kenneth Kirby of South Africa, quoted in the July number. Mr. Kirby says: "Of course Charles Hamilton is the greatest school story writer." How right Mr. Kirby is, incidentally following on the editorial comments in the April number.

Dickens wrote for adults; Hamilton for the rising generation. I personally am bored stiff by Dickens, and I am inclined, though by no means an Orwell fan, to agree with Orwell's essay on Dickens. But how completely Orwell misses the point in his other essay in the same volume entitled "Boys' Papers", in his references to the Magnet and Gem.

How right Mr. Kirby is! Just as Dickens mirrors humanity perfectly, however artificial the surroundings, so it is with Charles Hamilton's best work.

Also in the July number, hostile comments by one, Mr, Frank Shaw, are quoted. Here again, human nature is involved, and as this is imperfect even reasonably intelligent people have blind spots, likes, dislikes, prejudices, and convictions. Thus I think that Mr. Shaw is guilty of specious though plausible reasoning (in a word, sophistry) in this article.

No doubt Frank Richards liked writing for money (pots of it), but the plain fact remains that he did a job of work which he in particular could do supremely well. No doubt the stories were published for the coppers of the boy in the street. But this was not merely a capitalist swindle grinding the faces of the poor. He was supplying something which brought enormous pleasure to untold thousands, and even more, as illustrated by a recent talk on radio, his work must have had a powerful influence for good on character and behaviour.

* * * * *

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, 500, 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. ERIC FATNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

Old Boys' Book Club

MIDLAND

Meeting held 25th June, 1962.

Jack Bellfield commenced his first term as Chairman on a very pleasant note by welcoming Mrs. Una Hamilton Wright, the niece of Frank Richards, and her husband. Thirteen members had the pleasure of hearing Mrs. Wright read a number of her celebrated Uncle's unpublished poems. The themes of these were very nicely varied and full of humour we expect from Frank Richards. The world lost a very fine poet when the famous author decided to give his entire life to writing school stories for boys. An exceedingly pleasant hour was spent in listening to Mrs. Wright and it was most appropriate when to mark our appreciation Tom Porter produced a No. 1 and a No. 2 Magnet for Mr. and Mrs. Wright to inspect. There were other Magnets on view and a few Modern Boys distributed for the second month running.

Ted Davey won S.B.L. (No. 350) in a Guess the number competition and the raffle introduced for the first time this year was won by Madge Corbett.

After the refreshment interval, Mrs. Wright concluded a very fine evening's entertainment with two special items by Frank Richards - "Crossword Love" and chapter two from Magnet No. 1630 - "Six on the Bags".

It was nice to see Norman Gregory back again and also George Chatham, but we missed John Tomlinson and Ray Bennett.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held July 8th.

This was a most excellent meeting, with the largest attendance we have had for a considerable time. We were delighted to have Frank Unwin and Bill Greenwood with us once again after their long absence, and we look forward to seeing them regularly in future.

Following the formal business and the Secretary's report, we resumed our team game, which proved every bit as enjoyable as last month, when honours were evenly divided with two victories to each side. This time Norman Pragnell's team won by the odd game in three, the result being in doubt up to the final question. Thanks are due to Bill Windsor for providing such an entertaining test of general knowledge.

New additions to the library were soon in demand, including a number of books kindly loaned by Jack Morgan. After refreshments came another debate on a subject by Jack; this was Eric Payne's controversial issue on his pet aversions in the Companion Papers. It proved to be an ideal matter for discussion; everybody joined in with gusto, and many differing opinion were voiced. Only the passage of time brought the talk to a conclusion, and we anticipate with pleasure a repeat next month.

There is a possibility we shall be honoured with a visit by those two staunch Midland Section members, Tom Porter and Jack Bellfield, at our August get-together; if they can make the trip they are assured of a warm welcome.

Date - August 12th, 6 p.m. at Bill Windsor's.

FRANK CASE

LONDONFRANK RICHARDS' SISTER, GUEST OF HONOUR AT SURBITON MEETING.

The Annual Surbiton garden party meeting, likened by one member as the "Ascot" gathering of the year, was a very happy and jolly affair. Although the inclement weather prevented part of the meeting being held in the beautiful garden at Excelsior House, our host, Eric Payne, saw to it that we had an enjoyable time in the "Rag" of the home of Collectors' Digest.

Our President, John Wernham, was present, and he was in great form, together with Chairman Don Webster, in welcoming the Guest of the Day, Mrs. Harrison, sister of our esteemed late President Frank Richards.

Routine business was quickly and ably dealt with, and then the large company adjourned to the feed which we have all come to expect from Eric, Madam, and the lady helpers at these garden party meetings. Immediately tea was finished, and while we sat still chatting at our respective tables, a draw was made for two stalls, presented by Michael Anthony, for the second night of the new play "Brush with a Body" at the St. Martin's Theatre, London. The lucky winner was Millicent Lisle.

Afterwards it was Eric who conducted Fifteen Questions, Down You Go, and Out of the Bag between two teams, led respectively by Don Webster and Roger Jenkins. Roger's team romped home as winners, and Mrs. Harrison was called upon to present the prizes. Mrs. Harrison, in her turn, was presented with a lovely bouquet "with love from the London O.B.B.C.", the presentation being made on behalf of the club by Josie Packman.

Truly it was a very happy and memorable occasion, with Time the only enemy. All too quickly the clock moved to "lock up", and it was the moment for all to depart with the happiest memories. This we did after hearty votes of thanks to our host, Eric Payne.

Next meeting on Sunday, August 3rd at "Greyfriars" Hollybush Ride, Wokingham, Berks. Hosts - Eric and Mrs. Lawrence. Kindly inform if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

NORTHERNMeeting held 14th July, 1962.

The meeting opened at 7 p.m. and chairman Geoffrey Wilde welcomed another good attendance. As Geoff pointed out, however, one very familiar face was missing, Gerry Allison unfortunately having had a recurrence of the illness which laid him low last year. He has had a short spell in hospital, but is now home again and making steady progress, but it will be some time before we have the pleasure of seeing him at the meetings again. Our very best wishes for a complete and speedy recovery Gerry. Many people have sent him letters and get-well cards, including some of the youngsters who recently joined issue with him over Frank Nugent!

After formal business had been dealt with (the library and treasurer's report being in the capable hands of Molly Allison), we had the first of the 'My Favourite Chapter' feature, Jack Wood being the one to set the ball rolling. He began with the opening chapter of the first "Ezra Quirke" story, from the Nelson Lee Library - a splendid piece of descriptive writing which sets the scene for this somewhat eerie series. A chapter from 'Teddy Lester's Schooldays' came next, and Jack concluded with a few short extracts from the works of P.G. Wodehouse which were very much to the liking of his audience. Then Frank Hancock took over with a reading from a Rookwood story which described the antics of Arthur Edward Lovell at an auction - a fine piece of humorous writing in the authors' best vein.

We then adjourned for refreshments, after which we had a Bingo session, based on the names of Greyfriars characters, conducted by Jack Allison. The meeting closed at

9.20 p.m. Next meeting - Saturday, 11th August.

AUSTRALIA

A warm welcome awaited members when they arrived at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Stan Nicholls for the July meeting. Having braved the coldest night of the year and the jinx of Friday the 13th, the comfortable warmth produced by their host was much appreciated as the members gathered around the tape recorder.

Naturally everyone was impatient to hear the greetings from our London friends so all ordinary business was put aside as, like schoolboys, raiding the tuckshop, they devoured the treat in store.

Chairman Syd Smyth proved an excellent operator and reception was amazingly clear all through. We felt you were all in the room with us on this happy occasion. Naturally each member was listening for the voice of the folk they knew through their letters and the first hum of the tape was punctuated by their excited cries of "That's Don, good old Bill or Ben or Eric - he sounds just like his letters...." or "that's so and so - he wrote such and such". If only we could have recorded our comments, made spontaneously with pleasure as we recognised our friends you'd really have been able to see how much we did enjoy having the tape from our good friends of the London Club. There was such a wonderful feeling of warmth in your friendly greetings we didn't really need the room heater despite the temperature dropping to 40° outside. Naturally, we loved Brian Doyle's clowning on mike.... he gave a star performance and gave us a very pleasant surprise when he greeted us all by name. And need I say how much we enjoyed Bill Lofts in his unusual role of poet.

So pleasing to hear the ladies were well represented and we were astounded when hostess Mrs. Norris told us there were 25 members present sending us their greetings to us. But we didn't doubt her for one moment when we heard your combined farewell, particularly the very convincing Coo-ee which came through loud and clear.

One note of sadness only - we all echoed Bob Blythe's regret that our good friends Josie and Len Packman were unable to be with us via tape on this momentous occasion.

To complete this pleasurable occasion we played again the tape sent some time ago by our friends at Merseyside which was even better on this occasion because we have come to know them so much better in the interval. Then members settled down to hear the London tape for the second time, each one alert to hear the messages again which had interested them most. Altogether a grand treat, chaps, and we do thank you one and all for the trouble you took to make this possible. And very soon your greetings will be on their way to Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and later New Zealand, sharing your goodwill message amongst all the collectors "Down Under".

Chairman Syd Smyth then announced that copies of G.H. No. 5 Mag. are available and that he has secured a real scoop (top secret) for issue No. 6. Unfortunately No. 4 sold out completely and he wishes to apologise to all those folk who have requested back Nos. which are unavailable.

A grand evening was rounded off by a delightful supper served by our long suffering hostess Mrs. Nicholls to whom we extend our sincere thanks for making us so welcome.

B. PATE - Secretary.

* * * * *

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.

"THE HARD COVER SCHOOL STORY CLASSICS"By W. J. A. HubbardNo. 7. "Schoolboy Grit" (Gunby Hadath)

I cannot omit such a prolific and well known hard cover school story writer as Gunby Hadath from a series of this nature. He was before the reading public for very many years and was a man of parts for he began his career as a schoolmaster and was also a popular lyric writer. He was an all-round sportsman, being a fine rugger player as a young man and playing a prominent part in Club Cricket. As a cricketer he was good enough to play for the Wanderers and the Gentlemen of Surrey and also for the Authors v Actors at Lords along with P.G. Wodehouse.

I may upset many of his admirers when I state that in my opinion Mr. Hadath never wrote a really outstanding school story. He certainly wrote many readable and competent yarns but never at any time did he approach the standard of "The Bending of a Twig" or "Mike" to take two stories previously reviewed in this series. Perhaps he was too prolific and had to turn in too many pot boilers or he may have found himself restricted by the fact that he was, unlike some of the authors I have already reviewed, mainly writing for a schoolboy public. As a prominent writer for "The Captain" Mr. Hadath certainly never seems to have abandoned the "realistic" tone laid down by the editorial policy of that paper, and he never went in for heroics, but somehow, to the adult reader at any rate, he never seems entirely convincing as far as the long school story is concerned. With the short story, however, like Richard Bird and possibly Hylton Cleaver and Captain G. A. Hope, he was far more at home, but not always as a school story writer, despite the appeal of his amusing "Fozzle" yarns. Nobody, however, who ~~has~~ read such short stories as "Billy the Mug" (a story of Club Cricket) and "The Scarlet Parasol" (a story of County Cricket), can deny that Gunby Hadath could pen a dramatic story full of intense human interest and realism. I feel that it is upon such yarns that his reputation as a writer will always rest.

Having said all this then it would appear a trifle puzzling why I am reviewing a long story by Hadath in this series. I must confess, however, to having a soft spot for "Schoolboy Grit" although most Hadath fans seem to consider that his best yarn was "Sparrow in search of Expulsion."

"Schoolboy Grit" originally appeared as a serial in "The Captain" in April, 1912, as "Conquering Claybury", a more suitable title. It is a story with what is now a rather well worn theme - that of the

working class boy sent to a Public School on a scholarship. It is a pleasant yarn but there are times when it does not grip the reader and it is rather hard to state why this is actually so. The author does not overdo the snobbery which always seems to accompany a story of this type although there is the usual convention which insists on ~~the~~ the hero's best friend being highly connected socially and the son of a very rich man. A refreshing change to the usual procedure, however, is that the hero is not presented as an out and out cockney in speech, in print at any rate, the author stressing the point that Tom Strong was only liable to betray his origins when excited.

Yet ones feels that Tom Strong and his immediate friends, Patrick Derry and the Butterick Twins, were prigs. They keep religiously to the straight and narrow, they never tell "whoppers", are real little George Washingtons in fact. Even the bad hats of the yarn - Pringle and Brash - are no help. They are not even shown as competent sportsmen while Pringle labours under the further disadvantage of very un-prepossessing looks - a typical school story stock cad.

Of course, there are some good character studies but these are mainly the adult personages. Sir Patrick Derry, Derry's father, a rather tongue tied Irish baronet is the most interesting figure in the book, while there are quite believeable portraits of the Housemaster, Mr. Eagle and Mrs. Lascelles, the young master who makes the discovery that Tom Strong has unusual cricket ability.

The match at Lords between Claybury and Littleton School is probably the best part of the book. Here Mr. Hadath was on firmer ground and he gives us a first class description of a big school match. The fine stand for the last wicket and Tom's brilliant bowling in Littleton's second innings which wins his side the match after so many changes of fortune is tense and exciting and perfectly believeable. What a pity that some of the other parts of "Schoolboy Grit" are not up to the same high standard.

* * * * *

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

Frank Case has been staying at our hostelry, wandering in the nearby leafy lanes, and gazing from the rustic bridge into the sleepy, glittering waters below. This is what Frank wrote in the Visitor's Book:

You can always recognize a well-informed man. He holds the same views as yourself.

YOURS SINCERELY

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

ALEX PARSONS (Tranmere): Despite its dated style and what today seems to be a hindrance to the success of any modern novel, its high moral tone, I rate Farrar's "Eric" as one of the most moving and powerful school stories ever written. As I expect you know, the locations of the story were around King William's College in the Isle of Man. I never saw Scarlet Stack without thinking of Russell's ordeal.

CHARLES van RENEN (South Africa): I think Charles Hamilton must have been a great reader of Thackeray. Have you noticed how many surnames and place names peculiar to Hamiltonia occur in the pages of such novels as "Pendennis"? What a popular feature "Let's Be Controversial" remains! I observe it has been going strong now for over 5 years. Could you use your persuasive powers and get Roger Jenkins to give us more of his "Do You Remember?" shorts?

J. A. WARK (Dunoon): The first Magnet I read was called "The Fellow Who Funked" and was about Frank Nugent's supposed attack of cowardice. He was cleared, of course, but I think if the writers who condemn Nugent could read this yarn they would not have such a poor opinion of him. After all, did not Frank Richards say that the character of Nugent was based on himself?

TOM SATCHELL (London): In the Autobiography of Frank Richards, he mentions a period of the first world war, and goes on to say that Tom Merry and Co were concerned in an incident with a German zeppelin.

If my memory serves me right, I can remember it was a Greyfriars story and the yarn was entitled "Carried Away". Could you verify this?

RONALD NICHOLLS (Whitchurch): Could we have an article sometime about "Little Folks", which was published by Cassell's in the 1920's. I possess two Annuals of the above, and often look at them.

TOM LANGLEY (Birmingham): I feel I must write to you re the article by Tom Hopperton. He is a first-class writer and his article alone made the July C.D. worth the money. Can we have more of Tom, please?

PRICE ONE PENNY



Vol. 1, No. 1

SEPTEMBER 14, 1912

[THE LONDON STANDARD]

CONTENTS

THE GLORY AND RENOWN	By D. H. PHOENIX	No. 200
The Struggle For Great Britain	1-10	1-10
A Letter to a Friend	11	11
A Visit to the Roman Wall	12	12
The Roman Wall	13	13
The Roman Wall	14	14
The Wall in the North	15	15
The Wall in the South	16	16



HOW THEY BEGAN. No. 20

* * * * *

(Another article by Mr. Hopperton will appear very soon. - ED.)

LES TODD (London): I normally only read the adverts and Hamiltonians in C.D., but this month I glanced at "Mr. Buddle's Hair Shirt" and within a few lines the writing compelled me to go to the end. I greatly enjoyed it.

(But, sir! What a lot of tip-top reading matter you are missing every month! - ED.)

RAY HOPKINS (High Wycombe): That little Danny certainly throws out some fascinating tit-bits. I was interested to read that Horace Phillips, in 1912, was writing under his own name. And in 1921 or thereabouts he began the saga of Morcove. It is thought-provoking to wonder why he switched from boys' stories to the long series about the school on the Devon coast. Or perhaps it was Cornwall, though I seem to recall one had to change at Exeter for Morcove. He must have been a versatile writer to be able to write for both boys and girls.

ROSEMARY AND JOHNNIE LYNE (Finchley): Grown-ups miss the point. We acknowledge Nugent's good qualities, but feel a little of the devil and less "Lord Fauntleroy" will make him more attractive. We wrote this to Mr. Richards, and he agreed to build Nugent into his real strong former self. Nugent was depicted as a strong footballer in "Nugent Minor". Meredith is our favourite now.

(Meredith tells us he feels very deeply honoured. His own favourite is Little Lord Fauntleroy, he says, but we don't think he's altogether truthful. - ED.)

STAN KNIGHT (Cheltenham): Congratulations on another excellent number. What a pleasant surprise to have an enlarged number again. The cover is indeed a wonderful sketch by Macdonald - you can almost hear the rippling of the water and the rustling of the breeze. I wonder what dreams of the future are being thought up by the boy gazing into the mystic waters. Is he thinking of 50 years on - as we often think of 50 years back?

The jewels inside the casket are just as good, too. "Mr. Buddle's Hair Shirt" was just the thing for a holiday number.

TOM HOPPERTON (Scarborough): It is correct that Mr. Hamilton named Ernest Brindle as the first sub author, and not only to Herbert Leckenby. He was certainly wrong in the order of priority, and as long ago as 1951 Mr. Down stated that Brindle was not among the subs. This leaves me wondering if Mr. Lofts has found some other evidence, or if he is relying on Mr. Hamilton's statement and is unaware of the more reliable Editor's denial.

ARTHUR CARBIN (Rugby): A fine Summer Number of C.D. What a beautiful cover. A typical English scene often described by Frank Richards, and brought to the eye by the master R. J. Macdonald. The covers of C.D. in recent months have been unsurpassed any time.

I am hoping that Mrs. Story has her tales of St. Frank's published. It will be grand to see new stories of the chums of that famous school.

JACK MURTAGH (New Zealand): A splendid July number of C.D. and the cover is the very best of all the 187 so far printed with exception perhaps of the February issue.

W. HOWARD BAKER (London): Heartiest congratulations on C.D. It seems to get better every month.

MISS BETTE PATE (Australia): "Danny's Diary" had me gurgling in the train this morning. My fellow passengers thought I'd escaped my keepers. I adored Danny's "red livers". I'll never be able to look at a royal procession again without remembering this choice little treasure with a chortle.

MISS RICHMAL CROMPTON (Chislehurst): The Summer Number of Collectors'

Digest is delightful. Congratulations on "Mr. Buddle's Hair Shirt" which I found most amusing.

WALTER FLEMING (Chingford): The Digest improves with every issue. Congratulations on "Mr. Buddle's Hair Shirt". More please! I find Danny's Diary most interesting, so hope it will have a long run. Was most interested to read in June C.D. that Ross Woods has written a St. Frank's story. I hope it will soon be published.

* * * * *

BRUSH WITH A BODY

Collectors' Digest reader, Maurice McLoughlin, is well-known as the writer of the Billy Bunter stage plays. His latest play, BRUSH WITH A BODY, opened at the St. Martin's Theatre, London, on July 19th. It is described as a comedy-thriller. In fact it contains no thrills, but it bubbles with joyous comedy from the rise of the curtain till the finish. An Irish sweep finds a body in a chimney, and thenceforth tries a spot of blackmail on the owner of the chimney. It is all great fun.

Mr. McLoughlin is well served by a first-rate cast headed by Mary Merrall, Jack Watling, Bernadette Milnes, Gladys Henson, and Patrick McAlinney.

One or two critics have described BRUSH WITH A BODY as an old-fashioned play. Probably it is, for there is no sex perversion, no bad language. It's all clean as a new pin, and it provides an evening of sheer fun and enjoyment. No belly laughs, but one long chuckle. Take the whole family and enjoy yourselves.

WANTED: Union Jacks. Year 1917: Nos. 691, 693, 695, 702 - 4; 711; 717; 721; 725; 727; 732; 733; 736; 740. Year 1919: 800, 820. Year 1920: 851-856; 858; 861-863; 865; 870; 872; 874; 877; 885.

Mrs. J. Packman, 27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

FOR SALE: Bound vol. of B.O.P. for early 1936. 5/- plus postage.

S.A.E. first, please. Write Eric Fayne.