

COLLECTORS' DIGEST



JANUARY 1963
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WABWICK
REYNOLDS

Collectors' Digest

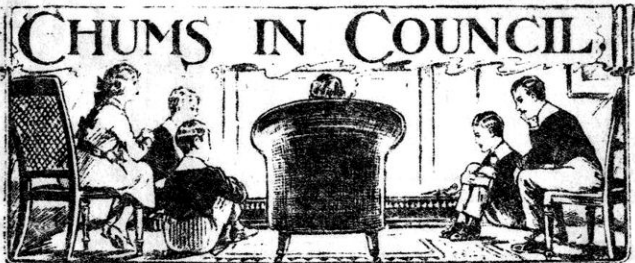
FOUNDED in 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 17

Number 193

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TRIBUTE FROM MERSEYSIDE

Many thanks to the very large number of readers who wrote us expressing delight with our recent Christmas Number. "THE MERSEYSIDE FOGHORN", the monthly Newsletter of our Merseyside Club, has made a welcome return, and it has the following comment to make:

"The Christmas Number of C.D. has arrived, and it is, without any question, the best ever. What warmth and nostalgia it brings! It seems impossible to re-create the magic and atmosphere of bygone Yuletides but this C.D. issues goes a very long way towards doing so. The only drawback is that the temptation to read it now, some weeks before Christmas, is too strong, when a little patience - until, say, Christmas Eve, would bring even greater enjoyment. The editor knows exactly what his readers want - especially at Christmas time."

Collectors' Digest is grateful to the Foghorn for so generous a tribute.

THE LONDON CLUB CATALOGUE

The new catalogue of the Hamiltonian Library, sponsored by President John Wernham and issued by the London Club, is a magnificent piece of work. Splendidly printed on fine art paper, with a number of superb photographic reproductions, it is more than a mere catalogue - it is a real collectors' item of great worth. If you have not yet secured a copy, we advise you to lose no time in doing so. We congratulate our London Club.

THANK YOU, ALL

On the three days prior to Christmas, hundreds of Christmas cards and letters poured in a mighty flood into Excelsior House. They brought the good wishes of readers and friends from all over the world. Every one of the cards was hung in the editorial lounge over the Christmas season, to give your editor a glad Christmas. But during those days your editor was "doing his bit" every afternoon at the Bunter show at the Queens Theatre in the West End, and filling up every other waking moment of the day in producing this issue of Collectors' Digest. It was just impossible to reply to all readers who sent along their greetings, and I take this opportunity to express my warm thanks to all who sent to me.

THE EDITOR.

"I SAY YOU FELLOWS"

At 10.30 in the evening of December 27th the B.B.C. broadcast in the Home Programme, under the above title, a discussion on the work of Frank Richards and something of an appraisal of the man himself. No doubt scores of our readers heard it. Those who did not missed a real treat.

Introduced by Alan Gibson, the programme contained lengthy comments by John Arlott, Dr. Kenneth Smith and Denzil Batchelor, with certain readings, by Headley Goodall, from the author's work.

All these gentlemen confessed to have spent a lifetime under the spell of Charles Hamilton - a spell which still remains with them. They are in good company. The programme left us with a real happy glow. In thirty minutes it was inevitable that many aspects of Charles Hamilton's work could not be touched upon. It was, however, one of the B.B.C.'s finest half-hours, and a magnificent tribute to the world's greatest writer of school stories.

THE MYSTERY OF TIGER TIM AND THE BRUIN BOYSBy W. O. G. Lofts

If any reader were to ask my favourite character, I would have no hesitation in naming dear old TIGER TIM and his fellow ERUIN BOYS. These lovable characters, which must have delighted millions of children in their first reading days, have always had a very soft spot in my heart.

What happy memories they bring back to me! Of myself as a small boy in the late 1920's and early 30's clutching my rather tattered and grubby penny comics - I could not afford the coloured twopenny issues. Going down to our local market book-stall and exchanging them at the rate of four penny comics for one coloured comic such as the RAINBOW and TIGER TIM WEEKLY, in which TIGER TIM and the BRUIN BOYS appeared.

Some years ago it was my good fortune to meet one of the first editors of the RAINBOW and he related to me how TIGER TIM and the BRUIN BOYS were created. This was printed in an issue of COLLECTORS' DIGEST for 1957 but for the benefit of new readers it is worth repeating.

"J. Louis Saythe, the well-known Irish Illustrator, whose work is best known in FIREFLY, FILM FUN, FUN and FICTION, BULLSEYE, was called upon by the editor to illustrate an incident from a story. The passage chosen was where the heroine stepped from her carriage and entered a house ... followed by her 'Tiger' named Tim. The artist, whose knowledge of old English names was limited, was unaware that in this instance a 'Tiger' signified a page-boy or youthful attendant; and he drew instead a small striped tiger, promenading serenely upright upon his hind legs. The editor gasped with astonishment, then laughed but he made a note of this comic animal for future use."

Illustrated by
BASIL REYNOLDS

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At the time of writing the above I was under the impression,

like many other collectors, that TIGER TIM and the BRUIN BOYS first appeared in the No. 1 RAINBOW dated 14th February, 1914. Thanks to Gerry Allison, however, I learned a little later that these characters had appeared earlier in the PLAYBOX ANNUAL for 1912, but at this time they were at MRS. HIPPO'S KINDERGARTEN. According to Amalgamated Press records the very first PLAYBOX ANNUAL was issued in 1908; but for some strange reason the BRITISH MUSEUM files state it was in 1912. In any case, so I am told, the 1912 PLAYBOX was the first time that TIGER TIM and the BRUIN BOYS appeared.

In searching through earlier Amalgamated Press publications, in an effort to trace earlier comic strips featuring these characters, I at length located some, but they did not appear in a comic! Like Ripley's famous BELIEVE IT OR NOT, they actually appeared in the first volume of ARTHUR MEE'S NEW CHILDREN'S ENCYCLOPAEDIA for 1910!

In Arthur Mee's famous work was a section entitled 'THE PLAYHOUR' which was intended, I suppose, to be a sort of relief from the other highly educational subjects. Included in the first few issues, which had been bound to form the yearly volume, was a comic strip entitled FROLIC FARM. A number of comic animals lived there, with names like PIGGY-WIGGY, JOHNNY BULL, NANNY GOAT, DICKY DUCK and ROMPING ROVER. These animals had a series of adventures on a farm owned by a Mr. and Mrs. BULL. This was, I presume, the forerunner of TIGER TIM and the BRUIN BOYS; a few issues later MRS. HIPPO'S KINDERGARTEN appeared with TIGER TIM and his other playmates. Both the above comic sets were drawn by a J.S. BAKER (JULIUS STAFFORD-BAKER) a well-known artist in many of the Victorian comic papers and the originator of CHIPS' famous CASEY'S COURT.

It seems, from readers' reactions, that the school of MRS HIPPO was very popular, for shortly afterwards, the comic sets were amalgamated and the FROLIC FARM animals joined MRS. HIPPO'S school, where gradually they were pushed more and more into the background - until they practically disappeared altogether. Never failing an opportunity to educate the young reader Arthur Mee had the script underneath the comic strips written in French as well as English - surely a novel way in which to teach the young reader the mysteries of the French language! The section of the PLAYHOUR incidentally was conducted by AUNT MOLLY, who also wrote the true amusing history of her dear old friend TIGER TIM, relating his days in the jungle before joining MRS. HIPPO'S school along with JOEY THE PARROT, GEORGIE GIRAFFE, JOLLY JUMBO, FIDO and the rest.

As already mentioned, J. S. BAKER was the first artist to portray TIGER TIM and obviously he has the prior claim to creating this character, even if it was suggested in the first place by the editor.

On contacting MR. J.S. BAKER, however (he is now aged over 90 and living in Norwich) I learned that he was in extremely poor health and obviously could not remember details about these famous creations. On contacting his son, also an artist, but a landscape artist, I found him much more informative. Disputing the earlier story on the origin of TIGER TIM he asserted that his father was the creator and that he was always very proud of this fact. He also claimed that his father was the originator of the comic animals in the comics and newspapers long before the days of MICKEY MOUSE and FELIX THE CAT. It seems, therefore, that the true story of TIGER TIM and the identity of the original creator will never be known, especially as my editor informant died last year.

If J. S. BAKER was the creator he certainly did not draw them for long, as within a year of the characters appearing in THE RAINBOW (where they had joined MRS. BRUIN'S BOARDING SCHOOL) they were taken over by another well-known illustrator, S. J. CASH, whose claim to fame was COMIC CATS. Shortly afterwards the most famous artist of them all started to draw them - H.S. FOXWELL; and I have no doubt that it was this artist who, by his fuller, more robust and lifelike characters made them as famous as they were to become.

Although J.S. BAKER was a first-class artist in his own field, his first drawings of TIGER TIM and his playmates were feeble, when compared with those I grew to know so well in the 1930's. It would be like comparing HUTTON MITCHELL'S BILLY BUNTER (Mitchell was the first artist of the MAGNET) to that of the famous CHAPMAN!

H.S. FOXWELL'S output for the RAINBOW and TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY was fantastic, though I am told there were several understudies who filled the breach during illnesses, holidays, etc. Such was the success of TIGER TIM that when the PLAYBOX started in 1925 they were there again; this time the girl counterparts, TILLY TIGER instead of TIM, once again by H.S. FOXWELL. In 1933 Foxwell left the Amalgamated Press Ltd and went over to the London DAILY MAIL to draw their famous character TEDDY TAIL. He died, I believe, before the Second World War.

The successor to the TIGER TIM strips was a B.O. WYMER, an artist of whom I confess I know very little - and, indeed, many of my comic editor friends know nothing at all about him. His work was a close reproduction of H.S. FOXWELL, and he carried on right up to the first casualty of the war when, through paper shortage, TIGER TIM'S WEEKLY finished in 1940. With PLAYBOX finishing in 1955 and the RAINBOW in 1956 dear old TIGER TIM was relegated to the back of TINY TOTS, drawn now by a host of different artists and a very wooden and pathetic little creature compared with the TIGER TIM I once loved so well. With the

end of TINY TOTS, this was, I believe, the last appearance of TIGER TIM.

There have been many arguments as to who was the greatest money-spinning character for the Amalgamated Press Ltd., and no doubt our old friends SEXTON BLAKE and BILLY BUNTER are well to the fore in this respect. WEARY WILLY and TIRED TIM, of CHIPS, ran for over 50 years it is true, but only in one comic and a penny one at that. But TIGER TIM appeared in three coloured comics, in strips and in stories, and these ran up a mammoth sale of nearly 400,000 copies a week. Nor must one forget the yearly Annuals which were very very profitable to the Amalgamated Press.

Do you remember the following (maybe a Christmas present in your younger days): PLAYBOX ANNUAL, TIGER TIM'S ANNUAL, RAINBOW ANNUAL, THE BRUIN BOYS ANNUAL, MRS. HIPPO'S ANNUAL? What happy memories they bring back to us all!

WANTED: "Chatterbox Annual" 1868, 1869, 1876, 1874, 1875, 1881, 1885, 1886. Victorian Children's Books with Coloured Plates, Christmas Annuals and Magazines. Old Xmas and Birthday Cards, Valentines and Scrap Albums.
ROBERT RAWSTORNE, "WHITECROFT", MANOR AVENUE, FULWOOD, PRESTON.

WANTED: Nelson Lees, Union Jacks, Thrillers, Detective Weeklies, Boys Friends, E.S. Brooks' S.O.L.'S; Novels by R. Service, Connie Morgan, J. B. Hendryx, E. R. Burroughs, Chums Annuals. All correspondence answered.
A. G. DAVIDSON, 193 RAE STREET, NORTH FITZROY, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA.

WANTED: S.O.L.'s and B.F.L.'s containing St. Frank's stories. Collectors' Digests 1950 - 1960. Fullest details to: NORMAN PRAGNELL, 33 BRAE STREET, LIVERPOOL, 7.

WANTED: Merseyside Branch O.B.B.C. requires S.O.L.'s containing complete stories of St. Jim's and Rookwood. Fullest details to:
NORMAN PRAGNELL, 33 BRAE STREET, LIVERPOOL, 7.

£1 EACH OFFERED for 1935 issues of THE SCHOOLGIRL as follows: Nos. 287, 311, 312, 316, 317, 318, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 336, 332, 333 and 334.
MR. N. LINFORD, 115 ALLPORT STREET, CANNOCK, STAFFS.

FOR SALE OF EXCHANGE: Magnets, Gems, Nelson Lees, B.F.L., S.O.L., S.B.L., Union Jacks, etc. Send your wants lists. THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL: "Boy Without a Name" and "School and Sport." VERNON LAY, 52 OAKLEIGH GARDENS, WHETSTONE, LONDON, N.20.

WANTED: Populars, Nelson Lees, Union Jacks, 38 ST. THOMAS ROAD, PRESTON.

WANTED: S.O.L. 42; Nelson Lee No. 130 (old series). Your price paid or S.O.L.'s, Nelson Lees, Gems and Magnets for exchange only. Would like to correspond with a reader who is interested in Xmas numbers of S.O.L. N.L. Gem and Magnet..
BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.

WANTED: Gem No. 799, B.F. (Green 'Un) 762, 764, 780, 1042, 1257, 1264 to 1298.
1 TIMBERTREE ROAD, OLD HILL, STAFFS.

Sexton Blake Today

(The latest Novels in the world-famous Sexton Blake Library review by MARGARET COOKE.)



THE MAN WHO KILLED ME
No. 513 - Arthur Maclean

A reprint of an earlier new look novel, but well worth a second reading. A strong plot, a well developed story, plenty of action and mystery, excellent characterisation and a surprise ending, make this a good book for Christmas.

A CORPSE FOR XMAS
No. 514 - W.A. Ballinger

Despite his staff's opinion that it was a "downright damnable impertinence and liberty" Sexton Blake accepted an olive branch from the Duke and Duchess of Derwentwater and arranged to spend Xmas with them at Dedleigh Abbey,

Here are the covers of the January issues which will be on sale in the middle of the month.

Suffolk. He longed for a real traditional Xmas away from crime and despairing calls for help - for snow and turkey, Christmas trees and crackers, parties and carols - and peace with all the trimmings.

As an odd assortment of guests assembled at the Abbey for dinner, snow began to fall and Sexton Blake began to relax - until they played an after-dinner game of murder and murder became as real as Christmas - sudden, agonising, and as inexplicable as a series of motiveless killings in far away London. Blake ceased to dream and went into action. An excellent book, full of incident and action; mystery and suspense until the final chapter when Blake exposes the leader of the English counterpart of the American "Murder Incorporated."

Both these novels are the first to appear in the new format, which apart from its much smaller size, differs very little from the old one. Disappointing for those of us who hoped to see the S.B.L. compete with Pan Books and similar paper-backs.

HAMILTONIANA

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 40 - BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY No. 383 - "AFTER LIGHTS OUT"

Before the days of the Schoolboys' Own Library, long stories of the Hamilton schools used to make sporadic appearances in the pages of the Boys' Friend monthly library. A number of these stories were by substitute writers: "School and Sport", "Through Thick and Thin" and "The Silent Three" come into this category. Another set of stories were by Charles Hamilton, reprinted from the weekly papers: "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays", "The School under Canvas", "Harry Wharton's Downfall" and "The Schoolboy Castaways," are four that come readily to mind here. There were, however, a handful of tales specially written for this monthly library by Charles Hamilton - something he never did for the Schoolboys' Own Library - and it is this group of original stories that comprise the Collectors' items.

The precedent was set by No. 30 "Tom Merry & Co" and No. 38 "Tom Merry's Conquest" both written in an ingenuous, simple style that mark them out as real period pieces. No. 288 "The Boy Without a Name" and its sequel No. 328 "Rivals and Chums" form a pair about Highcliffe, and are undoubtedly the most famous of all in this group. No. 413 "The Feud at Rockwood" is something of a disappointment, ranking as a very sub-standard Rockwood story, although written by the real Owen Conquest. On the other hand, "After Lights Out" in No. 383 is one of the rarest and most readable of the genuine stories.

For some obscure reason, the Boys' Friend monthly libraries were always undated. The dates can be traced by looking for contemporary advertisements in the Gem and the Magnet, but "After Lights Out" gives us some other clues to work on. It features Levison after his reformation, when Cardew and Racke have arrived at the school, and Mr. Railton has returned from Flanders with a damaged arm that causes him to pace the quadrangle at night - to the dismay of breakers of bounds. There is much talk of food regulations, but it looks as though the real wartime shortages have not yet arrived. From all this it would seem that the story was published in early 1917.

It is a tale of some merit, with glimmers of that diamond-cut-diamond quality of the best Levison type. Racke spreads a false account of how Levison accompanied him to the Green Man, with the result that Levison is dropped from the cricket team. After they have fought bitterly in Rylcombe woods, Racke is found lying insensible, having been battered by a cudgel. The real hero of the story is Levison minor, who gets the wheels turning that eventually prove his brother's innocence.

The only real disappointment is Cardew who, in the 'twenties, would have played a major part in the story of this type. Here he seems rather a shadowy figure, but that is only because we are judging the tale by the higher standards of future years.

Despite this, "After Lights Out" is a worthy acquisition for any collector's bookshelf.

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

Notice in the vestibule - Bachelor is anxious to meet lady who owns collection of Magnets, with a view to marriage. Please communicate with manager of this Inn, giving full particulars of collection.



— HERBERT VERNON-SMITH —

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 63. THE ICONOCLAST

Nobody seems to know whether the present publishers of the Bunter books intend to continue the series with new stories from a substitute writer. It appears that in early 1963 we shall see one new story by Charles Hamilton, and later in the year the story on which he was at work at the time of his death. Apparently this story has been finished off by another writer.

The keen Greyfriars fan is perturbed at the idea of the series being continued by a substitute writer. With the memory of substitute writers in the past, we wonder what kind of a picture Greyfriars may present in a few years' time.

I suggest that it was by no means the most gifted writers who necessarily wrote the most successful substitute stories. By which I mean that a man might be a fine author and yet be incapable of writing a Greyfriars or St. Jim's story which was acceptable to the keen fan.

There is a great temptation for the substitute writer to introduce his own characters and his own settings to make the series his own. And if a man destroys tradition, as he is tempted to do, his work will not be acceptable to those who may know Greyfriars better than he does.

This urge on the part of any substitute writer is human and understandable. He is using another man's characters and another man's reputation. The temptation to introduce change and thereby make the series partly his own, must be irresistible. Yet I think it fatal to submit to this temptation.

A reader, whose letter appeared in our "Yours Sincerely" section, spoke in glowing terms of the Cliff House stories written by John Wheway. Our reader referred to the many changes introduced by Wheway, and how "he made Bessie Bunter an entirely different character." I doubt whether our reader would have found himself holding a majority opinion.

As a youngster I read and enjoyed perhaps the first hundred or so School Friend stories. Years later I came on Cliff House again, and I found it unrecognisable. So many old characters dropped; so many new ones introduced; so much change for the sake of change. Worst fault of all, a boys' school was introduced near Cliff House, and this school provided the boy friends of the Cliff House girls. Stupidly enough, Greyfriars was never even mentioned in the Cliff House stories.

No doubt Mr. Wheway was happy. He had made the series his own. But at what cost to the circulation of his paper we shall never know. We only know that Cliff House, as a separate entity, did not long survive

Mr. Wheway.

Many of the substitute writers introduced their own characters and tried hard to make them popular. Mr. G.R. Samways took over the Greyfriars stories in the Penny Popular, reborn after the first world war. In many ways, I think Mr. Samways the most successful of all the substitute writers, for he knew his Greyfriars, and he tried hard to imitate the Hamilton style. But in the "Popular" stories, Mr. Samways introduced a character, Dennis Carr, who was starred for quite a long time. Naturally Mr. Samways had a soft spot in his heart for Dennis Carr. Equally naturally, there must have been a hard core of readers who found Carr a blot on the landscape. The Carr stories had a good run, but they stopped with a sudden jerk, to be replaced with the old Red Magnet stories.

A while back I was criticised for having led readers up the garden path in a very early Annual article by suggesting that Mr. E.S. Brooks wrote most of the Gem stories between 1926 and mid-1931. Said my critic: "Now we hear that Francis Warwick was generally responsible for most of the stories in this period."

In my reply I pointed out that, during the period in question, early 300 stories appeared in the Gem, and it could still be a fallacy to assume that Francis Warwick wrote most of them.

In Blakiana recently, Mr. W.O.G. Lofts contributed an article which showed that Mr. Warwick actually wrote 41 stories for the Gem.

Not a lot of stories, comparatively, but what a lot of change Mr. Warwick brought about. Spalding Hall, a girl's school was put down near St. Jim's and Cousin Ethel went there as a pupil. The Spalding Hall pupils became the girl friends of Tom Merry & Co. Mr. Lofts tells us that Bully Burkett and Cyrus Handcock came from Mr. Warwick's pen. So it was Mr. Warwick who now wrote of Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther and Handcock, the chums of study No. 10.

It appears to have been yet another substitute writer who swept away Mr. Linton, and replaced him with the ill-fated Mr. Pilbeam.

Mr. Warwick was undoubtedly an excellent writer in his own sphere - but he was not a good substitute writer. When my History of the Gem comparatively recently, appeared in the Annual, I did not know who wrote the stories, but I passed the opinion that the writer of the Spalding Hall and Handcock stories was the worst of all the substitute writers - not because he was inexpert with his pen, but because he destroyed tradition. I still think the same.

It is quite likely that any substitute writer, who takes over the modern Bunter series, may not face quite the same perils as the old

sub writers in the Magnet. I think it likely that hard-cover books rely more for their sales on casual purchasers, and less on the support of the loyal and true. It may well be that a new sub writer can be an iconoclast - and get away with it. We of the old brigade can only hope for the best.

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

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 62. THE IDOL

EDWARD THOMSON: I, too, feel that the O.B.B.C. would never have been heard of, had it not been for the beloved tales of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood. Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee, good as they were, would only have been pleasant memories of our boyhood and not quite good enough to have formed the "Brotherhood of Happy Hours" as dear old Herbert Leckenby called the movement.

JIM HEPBURN: I was with Frank Shaw almost all the way and have felt for a long while that many of our fraternity allow too much sentiment to sway their judgment of the literary value of the work of our beloved Frank Richards. However much Frank loved writing, his work was all on a commercial basis - words and time meant money - and no author could saddle himself with the burden of so many thousand words per week and expect to reach the pinnacle of writers such as Dickens, Haggard or Conan Doyle. Frank was a great writer in his sphere - his characters were all so much alive, and in our day, when reading took up so much leisure time, we grew to love them all.

The nostalgia this keeps alive is understandable, but I still think that we should keep an "even keel" and try to understand that writers like Frank Shaw are writing what they think and not being unfair, or have any intention of upsetting or incurring the wrath of members of the O.B.B.C.

(Our Controversial column has claimed that Frank Richards was Second to None in his own sphere. It has never compared his work with that of Dickens, Haggard or Conan Doyle, for the simple reason that no comparison is possible. All were supreme in their own line. So far as commercial basis goes - what other basis has any professional writer? - E.F.)

CLIFF SMITH: I know that I've a lot for which to thank Charles Hamilton. He entertained and instructed me during my formative years - God bless him. I'm sure that nobody can assess the impact for good he had on the youth of the last fifty years.

MAX LYNE: The battle with Frank Shaw is vastly entertaining; he writes well, and with much good sense; but I think this round goes to you.

MISS E. J. PATE: Three rousing Aussie cheers for Controversial No. 62. I was delighted with your rapier-sharp arguments. Bravo and Viva for your fair-minded outlook.

ARTHUR HOLLAND: For any reader to see idolatry behind your suggestion relating to Charles Hamilton's secrecy regarding his youthful background is absurd. Such a reader fails to distinguish between idolatry and loyalty. I agree wholeheartedly with your suggestion that we should respect Charles Hamilton's wish in this matter.

Whilst he was alive, I looked upon him as a friend of 50 years' standing, who brought much pleasure into my life through the medium of his pen. The high moral tone of

his stories helped to keep me straight in my teens, instilling me with the urge to "play the game" and set square in all things. Though he is no longer with us, I shall always respect his memory and be everlastingly grateful for help received. The sincerity of one's friendship can be proved by loyalty.

RAY HOPKINS: Yes, you are right. The word Idolater has an unpleasant connotation of a bowing, scraping individual and I also attach an added meaning to it (which may be my own imaginings or may stem from delvings into biblical readings when a very young person) of a fawning for the sake of gain. I think that we should not hurl the word Idol in the direction of Frank Richards at all. He appears to me to have been the most humble man blessed with this extraordinary gift of being able to invent several different microcosms of human life and to people them with characters with which we are all able to identify ourselves. That he was successful is shown that we can still enjoy going back into these little worlds and the fact that we are fatter and older than any of young characters is no deterrent to our being at one with them while we are silent partners in their adventures. If we can also thank Frank in our hearts for making us see that nasty little habits (such as lying and eavesdropping, to mention just two of the minor vices he portrays) should not be indulged in by ourselves, that is something that we keep to ourselves but we can still be grateful to him. We can also be grateful to fate (or whatever it is that guides us all) that made him proficient in this pleasure giving activity. After all, he could have been more proficient in some other field in which we, none of us, might have ever even heard of him. And had we not, we, none of us, would have had the pleasure of receiving monthly the good old C.D. and of being able to inundate Ye Ed with piles of correspondence so that the poor chap can do nothing but hustle out yet another edition of C.D.

BOB WHITER: I've always maintained that without Hamiltonia there would have been no O.B.B.C., no C.D. No S.P.C. The facts speak for themselves. We all know that Frank, as an author, had his faults. What author hasn't? I still say he was a grand writer - he never let his readers down; his heart and soul were in his work right till the end. Quite frankly I don't care if anyone criticises me for making an idol out of Frank Richards. From the age of eight, I found his stories one of the joys of life. They gave us something to live up to, even if we failed in the attempt. I am quite unashamed when I confess that tears came to my eyes when I heard of his passing.

GEORGE SELLARS: Mr. Sutton wants to think again. There is nothing phoney about the British Isles series. They were some of Martin Clifford's best stories, as were the "X" Magnet. Have you noticed that Charles Hamilton wrote a lot of circus stories in Gem and Magnet? His last story of circus life was "Jack of the Circus" in the "Jack of All Trades" series. C.H. must have been very fond of the circus.

(C.H. was very fond of all aspects of circus life - E.F.)

W.O.G. LOFTS: Regarding Syd Smyth's and Bob Whiter's comments - and the former's statement that I "have gone astray", I would like to say that I met Stanton Hope many times down Fleet Street in company with old editor friends of his. The conversation was obviously more intimate than if he were being interviewed by the Australian Club. To say that Hope was a nodding acquaintance of C.H. is ridiculous. C.H. knew Hope as far back as 1915, when Hope ran Chuckles and published short Greyfriars stories to give the paper a boost. In letters to me Hope mentions his collaboration with C.H. in the Herlock Holmes tales in the Greyfriars Herald. Later, when Hope was on the Popular, he gave C.H. authentic help in the preparing of the Rio Kid tales. It is well known in Fleet Street of Hope's expert knowledge on western affairs.

Hope's father was a shareholder in the A.P. Both were fond of travel, and Hope visited C.H. many times in France, which makes him far from a nodding acquaintance. Hope

.....
 knew that whatever he might tell the Australian Club would be printed in C.D. (which C.H. might read) and he was always extremely cautious in what he said.

(Charles Hamilton wrote less than a couple of dozen of the Herlock Sholmes stories, none more than about two thousand words in length. Surely we are not asked to believe that Hamilton needed the assistance of Hope or anyone else in the writing of those little efforts. I do not quite see why Hope should assume that anything he told the Aussie Club would be printed in Collectors' Digest. Comments made in Fleet Street would surely be more likely to come to Charles Hamilton's notice than anything he might say in Australia. In any case, why should he bother? - E.F.)

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BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS CIRCUS

The new play, running for a short matinee season at the Queen's Theatre, London, has plenty of colour, plenty of action - and plenty of noise. What more could youngsters ask for in a Merry post-Christmas show?

The casting of the Famous Five is more successful than ever before. For one thing the boys are of the right age. Harry Wharton is dark and serious; Bob Cherry, curly-haired, fair, and full of high spirits; Johnny Bull plump and stocky; Nugent looks the youngest of the lot, which is right, and is fair and bright-faced; Inky is no newcomer to a Bunter show, and is excellent, apart from his turban, which Hurree Singh never wore. It is evident that the casting director took very great pains to ensure that the Famous Five were just the thing. They are an attractive set of lads, and act with verve and conviction. In view of this, it is a pity that they do not have a little more to do.

The first scene, set in the gymnasium at Greyfriars, is theirs, and they make the very most of it. After that, pantomime reigns supreme - but it is very good pantomime. The story is wafer-thin. Colonel Wharton engages a small circus to give a performance on Boxing Day in the park of Wharton Lodge. Some crooks in the circus decide to rob the Colonel of his valuables, including a Rembrandt. (Maurice McLoughlin, like Mr. Buddle, has not forgotten his "Baffled".) It is likely that the show owes as much of its success to the producer as to the author. The split-second timing of the countless pieces of by-play have to be seen to be believed.

For the adult Greyfriars fan, the show is made by the opening scene and he may sigh that we cannot see a little more of Greyfriars. But he will be a curmudgeon indeed if he does not enter into the joyous spirit of the whole entertainment, and enjoy every minute of it.

For the third year in succession, Robert Lankesheer plays Mr. Quelch, and, without any possible doubt, he is the finest of all the Quelches. One would dearly love to see him as Quelch in a serious

.....

episode of the most famous schoolmaster in the world.

A truly remarkable performance is given by Michael Anthony as the clown. What a wonderful, versatile actor the man is! Those who recall him in a T.V. play early this year as a German Officer, and recently as a harassed father in a Dock Green episode, will be delighted, and not a little astounded, by his magnificent clown.

Peter Bridgemont never spares himself for one moment in the role of Bunter. He is hardly ever off stage, and his energy is breath-taking.

For the very first time in Bunter stage history, the feminine element is introduced; Bernadette Milnes plays the step-daughter of the rascally circus proprietor. Petite, winsome and altogether charming she gives a delightful performance.

For the carping, there are one or two slips which might have been avoided. Friardale Junction should obviously have been Courtfield Junction. The Ringmaster mentions that Colonel Wharton and his wife have gone out for the evening. And the boys look very business-like in their black and white football shirts while Greyfriars colours are blue and white. But only the ungenerous and the unreasonable will feel like carping.

Eric Fayne is at the piano during the show, playing his own compositions of Greyfriars music, plus a medley of popular songs.

The London Club has a party at the theatre for the performance on January 5th (a few tickets are still available at the moment of writing) and the Old Modernians' Association has a large party there on January 12th. If you are intending to visit the show during the remainder of the run, we remind you that it ends of January 12th.

And because the Famous Five are so good, we think we should give you the names of the players. Here they are:-

Harry Wharton, Gregory Warwick; Bob Cherry, Peter Saunders; Johnny Bull, David Griffin; Frank Nugent, Barry Henderson and Hurree Singh. Louis Aquilina.

With characteristic generosity, the Directors of City Stage Productions gave a special Premiere Matinee of "Billy Bunter's Christmas Circus" at the Queen's Theatre on Saturday, December 22nd in aid of the Lady Hoare Thalidomide Appeal. The Direction gave the theatre and the cast gave their services for this worthy cause, and a packed house enjoyed the show. A splendid Souvenir Programme was produced especially for the occasion.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

It gives me great pleasure to be able to say that my S.O.S. for material has been answered. I have already received several interesting articles, whilst others are on the way from overseas. Several readers have also written to me requesting the continuation of the Union Jack Titles and authors, where known, from the year 1914 and working backward. The last year published was 1915. May I take this opportunity to thank everyone for their assistance and to wish you all a Happy New Year.

JOSIE PACKMAN

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THE SENTIMENTAL TRAIL

By Victor Colby

How many of the avid readers of all things pertaining to our revered friend Blake, have failed to be thrilled by the creations of Stanley Gordon Shaw, to wit - Fury the Fur Man, and Jannsen the Moon-slayer, and have failed to revel in Sexton Blake's stirring adventures with them in the backwoods of Canada, Alasks and the Fering Strait? Not many, I know.

Like the clean sweet air from the vast, snow mantled forests of Canada so vividly portrayed in the stories themselves, Stanley Gordon Shaw's Sexton Blake narratives carried a freshness, clarity and colour so redolent of exciting atmosphere in the great outback.

If I may be permitted to introduce a personal note, I would like to take the reader back to an occasion in the year 1928, when as a boy, just turned 12 years of age, I was confined to bed with a painful attack of mumps.

To provide me with something with which to while away the long tedious hours, my beloved mother had arrived back home (Arncliffe, Sydney, N.S.W.) from her shopping expedition, with a copy of The Boys Friend Library, 2nd series 152, dated 5.7.28 called "The Roaring Trail!" by Gordon Shaw.

Depicted on the cover in red and blue was a bewhiskered cowboy, gun

held aloft, a wild look in his eyes, charging across the Canadian countryside on his plunging steed, with the form of a young man flung face upward across the saddle behind him.

How I enjoyed this picture, and the story it illustrated! They thrilled my young heart and introduced me for the first time to Stanley Gordon Shaw.

During the years that followed I looked back often on that day, picturing the cover in my mind's eye, and reliving that unforgettable story.

"The Roaring Trail!" was not a Sexton Blake story, but later I came to read and to enjoy the wonderfully adventurous Sexton Blake stories written by Gordon Shaw, and have always held them in high regard.

Just recently in 1962, a full 34 years after reading "The Roaring Trail!" I was privileged to receive from England without prior knowledge that this one would be sent, a copy of the self-same issue of "The Roaring Trail!" that had captivated me so many years before.

As I gazed once more on that charging figure on the galloping horse, with the background scenes of mountains and pines, memories came flooding in and I felt the years recede.

It was almost with reverence, certainly with warm affection that I handled this small book, whose image I had not seen in 34 years, and my delight was unbounded that once more I had a copy of my very own, this time to keep for good, for the fate of the first little copy I cannot recall.

Could I be sure there was no mistake after all these years? Well, I could soon find out. I could remember in the story from way back, right near the beginning of the story, one of the characters, a young man, speaking of a premonition he had.

"What's a premonition, Mum?" asked young Vic Colby, and he did not ask in vain.

So, in 1962, as I reached page 3 of "The Roaring Trail!" there it was, the word "premonition" just as I recalled it, now shorn of its mystery, but providing a positive link with the past.

Stanley Gordon Shaw, Sexton Blake author and adventure story writer par excellence, I salute you.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL ABOUT SEXTON BLAKE

Sexton Blake is a remarkable character. It is no exaggeration to say that he is unique. A character who has appeared regularly in new stories over 70 years, whose adventures have been told by scores of different writers of widely-different styles, and whose career has covered every aspect of crime in every corner of the globe, must be unique.

The Sexton Blake Library is a remarkable publication. It has been published for nearly 50 years, the number of issues per month varying from 5 to 2. It survived a certain vicissitude - a survival which above all else makes it unique. It did, in fact, change horses in mid-stream, a most perilous proceeding.

It is loosely accepted that, in the early nineteen-fifties, the S.B.L. changed from a juvenile to an adult publication. For any periodical to survive such a change is remarkable. Old readers may be antagonised and lost in too large numbers before reinforcements can arrive in the shape of new supporters. I can think of no periodical of prewar days which underwent a drastic change and lived long after to tell the tale.

But, in fact, to regard the change in the S.B.L. as one from juvenile to adult appeal is a fallacy. The Sexton Blake stories were never written for children. I strongly doubt whether there was any less adult appeal in the old stories than in the modern ones. It all depends on the tastes of the adult.

While I disregard the contention that the S.B.L. changed from a juvenile to an adult publication, we all know that a great change did take place in the stories. Sexton Blake changed from a private investigator into an organisation. Tinker changed from an adolescent into a young-man-about-town. A female staff was introduced to bring in colour and frills. The old background disappeared. A new realism took its place.

The biggest change of all took place in the presentation of Tinker - and here, I think, editorial policy slipped up. Tinker was far too popular to be turned into a stooge to be used for the purpose of light relief. All the world may love a lover, though I'm none too sure of this. But all the world is likely to be irritated by a young man who goes goofy in the presence of a leggy female with titian hair.

It would be unfair to suggest that the S.B.L. is loth to experiment. We have, in recent times, been given stories in the first person, which are disliked by some readers and appreciated by others. In the Pedro story we had the soliloquising animal. I am all for innovations of this type occasionally. They keep the Sexton Blake reader on his toes. In spite of this, it seems to be that we have rather a lot of the one type of story. Adventure and intrigue appear to be winning the day against the straightforward detection of crime.

The modern covers are superbly drawn and coloured. In the past few years there has been an equal balance between those which are blatantly "bosomy" and those which are not. The titles have quality, most of them being abstract. I have wondered whether, now and then, a less abstract title might be more tempting to the occasional reader.

The stories do not lack realism. Recently we had a man torn limb from limb by a mob. In another tale "the slave trader snatched a baby from its mother's arms and dashed its brains out on the nearest log. Then he fell on the mother." The description of a man-to-man fight in yet another story was not for the squeamish.

I am not suggesting that there is anything deplorable in such features. I am not proposing the emasculation of the good old S.B.L. But I do think it would be sound policy to cater as well for readers who prefer a little less violence plus a good slice of mystery and neat crime detection.

Though, personally, I have never found a Blake writer so entirely readable as the pre-war Pierre Quiroule. I think that the writing of the average Blake story today is of higher quality than ever before. Incidentally, though I enjoy reminiscence of past cases introduced into stories, I dislike footnotes giving the titles of such stories, I daresay plenty of readers like them. It is merely a personal whim.

There seems to be a hard core of readers who are not so keen on the lady members of the Blake organisation. Then, why the apparent insistence that these delightful females must feature in each and every story? Why not give an occasional story without them, and let Blake and Tinker work together on a case?

It is no secret that the S.B.L. is now in a period of trial. A larger circulation is necessary if the well-loved monthly is not to follow the rest into the realms of the "gone but not forgotten".

Whether the new format will do anything to help matters, I should not like to say.

I find it rather disappointing, with its very small print and its rather flimsy "feel."

This month Martin Thomas makes a welcome return in "Death in Small Doses". We have a soft spot in our hearts for Martin Thomas who is a keen Collectors' Digest reader, and who knows the Blake saga from A to Z. In addition, he tells a rattling good yarn.

I want to see the S.B.L. live on for many years to come. I am of the opinion that if one story each month was of the realistic type and the other more of the older type of straight crime detection, no possible harm could be done and much good might result. Here's to the S.B.L.

UNION JACK TITLES AND AUTHORS FOR THE YEAR 1914

No. 534	The Golden Calf	(Scorpion)	M. Scott
No. 535	The Mystery of the Monastery	(Kew)	A. Murray
No. 536	The Workings of Chance	(Plummer)	M. Osborne
No. 537	Plummer's Prisoner	(Plummer)	M. Osborne
No. 538	The Secret of the Well	(Scorpion)	M. Scott
No. 539	The Snake's Fang	(W. Garock)	Not known
No. 540	The Garden City Swindle		Not known
No. 541	Plummer's White Hope	(Plummer)	M. Osborne
No. 542	The Case of the Pewter Candlestick	(H. Garock)	Not known
No. 543	The Grey Domino	(Yvonne)	G. H. Teed
No. 544	The Death Cylinder	(Kew)	A. Murray
No. 545	The Case from the Clouds	(Scorpion)	M. Scott
No. 546	The Man who sold his Estates	(Plummer)	M. Osborne
No. 547	The Pursuit of Plummer	(Plummer)	M. Osborne
No. 548	The Case of the Radium Patient	(Ryder and Yvonne)	G. H. Teed
No. 549	The Gentleman Crook	(Ambrey Dexter)	M. Osborne
No. 550	A Bid for a Battleship	(Lawless)	A. Murray
No. 551	The Case of the Missing Britishier	(A. Dexter)	M. Osborne
No. 552	The Pirated Cargo	(Wu Ling)	G. H. Teed
No. 553	The Madman's Fortune		M. Scott
No. 554	The Boundary Raiders	(Lawless)	A. Murray
No. 555	The Council of Eleven	(B. Beauremon)	G. H. Teed
No. 556	The Sixpenny Doctor		M. Scott
No. 557	The Great Train Mystery		M. Osborne
No. 558	The Death Club	(Yvonne, H. Palmer)	G. H. Teed
No. 559	The Lost King	(Council of Eleven)	G. H. Teed
No. 560	The Mountaineer's Secret	(Council of Eleven)	G. H. Teed
No. 561	Arms for Ulster	(Lawless)	A. Murray
No. 562	The Sheep Stealers	(A. Dexter)	M. Osborne
No. 563	The Bogus Prince	(Lawless)	A. Murray
No. 564	The Crimson Pearl	(Ryder, Yvonne)	G. H. Teed
No. 565	The Land of the Golden Beetle	(Sir R. Losely)	G. Hayter
No. 566	Plummer at Sea		M. Osborne
No. 567	The Mystery Millionaire		M. Osborne
No. 568	The Case of the Blind Baronet	(Dexter)	M. Osborne
No. 569	The Mystery of Shamrock IV		A. Murray
No. 570	The Case of the German Admiral	(Lawless)	A. Murray
No. 571	A fight for an Earldom		G. H. Teed
No. 572	The Commerce Destroyer		M. Osborne
No. 573	The Sweaters Punishment	(Yvonne)	G. H. Teed
No. 574	The Case of the German Trader	(Plummer)	M. Osborne
No. 575	Made in Germany	(Lawless)	A. Murray
No. 576	The Refugee	(Council of Eleven)	G. H. Teed

DANNY'S DIARY



The Greyfriars Pantomime

A Splendid New, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and Lord Mauleverer.

- BY -

FRANK RICHARDS

JANUARY, 1913

I was in funds early this month. Some of my relations gave me money for Christmas, and my grandmother gave me an extra five bob at the end of the holiday. So I was able to buy a few more books than usual.

I spend threepence on the Boys' Friend Library which contained "Two Lancashire Lads" by David Goodwin. It was very interesting, about boys who often wore clogs. I would like a pair of clogs, but Mum says you can't buy them in the south of England, and Doug says he always thought I did wear clogs, because the whole house shakes when I run upstairs.

Before I went back to school, Doug treated me to a visit to the Playhouse where we saw "The Headmaster." It was a farce, and I couldn't help laughing. Cyril Maude was "Dr. Sanctuary."

I bought a Penny Popular which contained "Jack Blake's Recruit". This was a St. Jim's story, but the Terrible Three were not in it. It introduced a character called

Marnaduke Srythe, and it seems it was an old St. Jim's story which once appeared in Pluck. The Sexton Blake story in the Pop was "The House of Mystery" and Mr. Lindsay says this was the New Year story in the Union Jack for 1906, and it was then called "A New Year Mystery."

The General Bus Company has fitted a kind of cow-catcher to their buses to make the streets safer. If anyone falls at the side of a bus the wheels will not pass over them. Of course, all the trams have cow-catchers fitted in the front.

There were a lot of bullies in the papers I bought. In the Dreadnought there was "The Bully of the Barracks" an army story by Andrew Gray. In Cheer Boys Cheer, which Doug often buys, there is a new serial called "The Bullies of St. Clare" by Henry T. Johnson.

One day I bought a paper called "The Wonder." It contained a detective story about Paul Sleuth and his assistant, Dirk, and it also had a serial called "Daddy" or "The Convict Earl."

One evening Dad took Mum and me to the London Hippodrome to see "Hullo, Ragtime" by Max Pemberton and Albert De Courville. It was a lovely show, and it starred Willie Solar.

In "The Boy's Friend" there is a serial called "Tinker's Boyhood" all about Tinker's adventures before he became assistant to Sexton Blake. It's funny to call it "Tinker's Boyhood" for Tinker is still only a boy, though a big one.

Prince Albert, the second son of the King, has just passed out from the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth, with seventy other naval cadets. I wouldn't mind being a sailor. I like the uniform.

Mum takes a paper called "Answers" and in it there is a football competition. You get a prize of £3 a week for life if you can forecast the correct result of 16 league matches. Doug says it should be easy, as all teams win at home except those that don't.

The L.C.C. want to construct an underground tramway near St. Paul's Cathedral, but a lot of people think the increased vibration might cause serious damage. At present there are large cracks in the building so there are worried feelings about the future of Wren's shrine.

Neither the Gem nor the Magnet has been very good this month, though the Magnet stories were the better. First one of the New Year was "The Greyfriars Pantomime" in which Lord Maully hired a show to visit the school, and one of the playboys turned out to be a crook.

Then came "Fish's Fag Agency" in which Maully offered to pay anyone 10/- a week to fag for him, so Fishy started an agency by which fags worked for him at a half-penny an hour.

"Rake of the Remove" was a new boy, and the story was about a quarrel between Wingate and Loder. Lastly "Left in the Lurch" in which Dibbs, the groom, was dismissed for stealing from the pantry, and all the domesticated staff went on strike. Of course, it turned out to be Bunter who was the pilferer. With the second of these stories the editor has given a calendar for the year 1913 with the Magnet.

At the end of the month Dad took Mum to Covent Garden Opera House when Mr. Thomas Beecham presented the first production in England of Strauss's "Der Rosenkavalier."

The same night Doug took me to the pictures, and I loved it. There was a Selig film about wild animals; Broncho Billy Anderson in a western film by Essanay; a Vitagraph film with Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Drew; a Biograph film with a girl called Mary Pickford, something about a hat; a Nat Pinkerton detective film from Kalem; the Pathe Gazette which showed the latest Paris fashions in Pathecolour; and a Keystone comic which I liked best of the lot.

It has been the worst lot of stories in the Gem since I started taking the paper. "The New Boy's Secret" was about a boy called Denton, but I didn't like it much. "Winter Sports at St. Jim's" gave me the pip. "Tom Merry's Promise" was the best of the bunch, in which Tom saved an old couple from losing their home. "The Third Form Mystery"

was a third-rate affair where Lumley-Lumley gave Wally D'Arcy a monkey which stole things. Finally, "The Head's Prize" was £5 which the Head offered for the best model aeroplane. I think Martin Clifford must have been suffering from after-Christmas biliousness when he wrote this bunch.

For "The Head's Prize" the usual artist, Mr. Macdonald, drew the cover and one of the inside pictures. The other inside picture was drawn by some other artist, but it was only a football scene which could have illustrated any amount of stories, so I reckon it was just a picture the editor had in reserve.

So the Gem and the Magnet have made a bad start in 1913. What a pity after such a long run of wonderful stories in 1912! Doug says I'm unreasonable. I can't expect any writer to always be on top form.

Mum read a bit of my diary the other night. She quite liked it and says I may become a famous diabetic like that man Pepper who lived in Charles the Second's time. How funny it would be if, in about fifty years time, some ladies and gentlemen should read my diary. It seems indelible.

UP-TO-DATE

Acquiring an old sewing machine from her mother recently, a Pen-y-Fford woman found a yellowing piece of paper in the machine's drawer.

Shaped for a blouse sleeve from an 1898 copy of "The Funny Wonder", the cutting included a strip cartoon featuring "the new motor-cars", a story about submarines ... and "Startling Revelations from Stricken Cuba", a report from the Cuban war.

(We are indebted to Arthur Harris of Llandudno for the above cutting from a local newspaper.)

MEMORIAL EDITION OF "THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FRANK RICHARDS" - 25/- . Packed with interesting reading and many fascinating pictures, with a long supplement on Charles Hamilton's work by Eric Payne. Obtainable from any bookshop or direct from Collectors' Digest Office. The Editor of C.D. will mail the Autobiography to any address in the world.

.....
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WANTED: Union Jacks - year 1917. Nos. 691, 693, 695, 792-4, 711, 717, 721, 725, 727, 732, 733, 736, 74c. Year 1919 - 800, 82c. 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.

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NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by JACK WOOD

THE "MONSTER" LIBRARY

By R. J. Godsave

During the height of the popularity of the Nelson Lee Library, the Amalgamated Press issued in the November of 1925 a new publication - the "Monster" Library.

Roughly the size of the Magnet, the Monster averaged 130 pages and cost 1/-d monthly. Each book was a reprint of a famous series which had appeared in the Nelson Lee from 1918 onwards, and was equivalent to approximately eight of the Nelson Lees.

Skilful editing had streamlined the stories, cutting out the weekly resume which was incorporated in the original Nelson Lee stories. In one or two cases the story was slightly altered, the Ernest Lawrence series which consisted of eleven Nelson Lees being reduced to the normal eight.

A fine three colour cover by J. H. Valda decorated the Monster with a drawing by that artist at the head of the first page, depicting a scene from the story.

It was to many readers a "gift from the gods" in as much as back numbers were hard to get, and such clubs as ours did not exist.

That the Monster did not start at the beginning of the St. Frank's stories was unfortunate, as the famous "Hunter the Hun" series were not included. The first story in the Monster Library was entitled "The Schoolboy Treasure Seekers" this being the series commencing with No. 158 o.s. "Captain Burton's Quest."

In all, nineteen Monsters were published, which included such fine series as Colonel Clinton, the Martin barring-out and the Eldorado stories.

The last story was entitled "Rebels of the Remove" which was originally the Communist school series in the Nelson Lee which ended with No. 348 o.s. The Downfall of the Snake.

Instead of the familiar drawing advertising the following month's story, the reader - in No. 19 of the Monster Library - was invited to purchase "Buying the Remove" by Edwy Searles Brooks which would appear in

No. 54 of the Schoolboys Own Library.

Whether the publication of the Monster proved uneconomical or the circulation figures did not come up to expectation, remains a mystery. Although the life of the Monster Library was a brief nineteen months, it holds a unique position in the history of boys' books.

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LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

By James W. Cook

St. Frank's College,
Bellton, Sussex.

The sun was well down over the West House when Nipper and Co came into Study C, and after what seemed a very short time Tommy Watson was pouring out tea.

I must have arrived when the juniors were in funds for the table was laden sufficiently to invite Fatty Little!

The news from St. Frank's is that nothing has changed and plenty has happened. Nipper gave me enough material to fill a tome, and my greatest difficulty will be in selecting the best of these events that will interest the majority.

Perhaps if I mention what Nipper recorded in his diary under the heading "Buster's Bouquet", I won't go far astray. It all began, Nipper told me, when Timothy Armstrong of the East House, was heard to remark that the most beautiful of roses has its origin beneath mud, slime and filth. And Handforth, just to be argumentative, disagreed and looked to Church and McClure to back him up. But his study mates could find no valid reason for disagreeing with Armstrong's statement and for once deserted their leader. In the melee that followed Buster Boots of the Modern House, accidentally received a punch that was meant for McClure. This was hard on John Busterfield Boots who, as captain, had come over to discuss football! But this was a hazard visitors to the Remove Common-Room had to accept. After the rumpus had died down Buster, in a fit of revenge, dared Handy to send Irene Manners, his special girl chum in the Moor View School, a bouquet of flowers.

But Handforth declared in his matter of fact way that flowers were alright to look at but only silly asses gave them to girls. And Handy sniffed his disdain at the challenge as Buster Boots knew he would whereupon the great J.B.B. promised to send them himself and departed to his own House. Poor old Handy was trapped beautifully. For while he would rather forgo a term's pocket money than send the fair Irene a bunch of flowers, the alarming thought of Buster Boots doing so made Handy bristle with jealousy.

Now Nipper wouldn't have entered the episode in his diary had not Bernard Forrest and Gore-Pearce exchanged views on the subject. For out of their conversation a plot was hatched that threatened to alienate Handforth's affection for his girl friend. It was a typical Study A scheme to bring hurt or disgrace on a popular Removite and it very nearly succeeded.

.....

What had once been a beautiful bouquet of mixed flowers but were now dead and covered in dust and ashes lay wrapped in a sheet of newspaper on the table in Study A. Flowers were almost daily discarded by Mrs. Stokes, wife of Br. Beverley Stokes, and Gore-Pearce had employed young Fullerton, of the Third, to bring him a dead bunch of flowers as soon as they became available. Fullerton did not have long to wait, for his first pry into the rubbish bins behind the kitchens of the Ancient House brought him success and the five snillings Gore-Pearce had promised him. He also promised him something else if he didn't keep his mouth shut!

The next day a parcel, covered with tissue paper, which anyone would be forgiven

for assuming was a floral tribute, arrived at the Moor View School addressed to Irene Manners. The maid looked her surprised when Alf Summers, the street urchin of Bannington and a handy tool of the cads of St. Frank's, presented the parcel to her. Had Irene seen the delivery she would have become suspicious for none of her friends at St. Frank's would employ Alf Summers for such a purpose. But unfortunately she did not see the boy.

She received the parcel in the common-room and eagerly tore the tissue paper away while her close friends, Doris Berkeley and Marjorie Temple looked on expectantly.

It was Doris who looked at the card attached to the rotted stems of the withered flowers and stuttered into the awful silence "With love from Ted." With dozens of eyes on them Irene & Co., rushed away and the decrepit bouquet lay where Irene had dropped it in her amazement.

That same afternoon, which was a half holiday, saw arrangements made for one of the fiercest fights in the school's history. Handforth had been informed by Joan Tarrant, who had ridden over on her bicycle of the deadful insult. And when Handy had sped to see Irene he had witnessed such a look on the girl's face that sent him flying back to St. Frank's and crashing into Buster's study. J.B.B. strongly denied sending any flowers, dead or otherwise, and told him he had only threatened to do so as a joke to get Handy's back up. But Handy's slap on Buster's cheek fixed the appointment there and then. The battle was to take place behind the Gym later that afternoon,

Nipper, using a little common sense, knew that neither Boots nor Handforth would do such a caddish trick on the girls and he made a few enquiries. From the maid at the Moor View School he got a description of the boy who delivered the parcel and at once he knew it was Alf Summers. He sought that young gentleman at his home at the rear of Bannington and applied the logic that if money will shut a man's mouth more money will open it.

And from Alf Summers the trail led to Fullerton. Nipper just put Willy Handforth to deal with him. The truth came out.

A fight took place behind the Gym that afternoon - in fact two fights took place, but it was between Handforth and Gore-Pearce to be followed by Buster and Forrest. Nipper is definitely of the opinion that it will be a very long time before Forrest and G-P play their crude jokes again on Handy or Buster Boots.

FRANK NUGENT WAS LATE

When the curtain rose at the Queen's Theatre on December 27th, the Famous Five were a man short. Temporarily they became the Famous Four. It was a day of snow and ice, and Frank Nugent was fuming and fretting as he waited on Redhill station for a train which never came.

Fortunately, like the good pals they are the other members of the Co. covered up for him, but it was hilarious to hear Johnny Bull, referring to their preparations for the amateur dramatic society's presentation of Julius Caesar, say "I'm Portia, sir." Stocky Johnny would have made a sturdy Portia. No wonder Mr. Quelch looked surprised.

It was not until after the interval that Frank Nugent, flushed from hurrying or blushing with embarrassment, put in an appearance.

O F F E R S of S.O.L's and Pre-war FILM FUNS, please.

J. MARSTON, 168 NEWTON ROAD, BURTON-on-TRENT

Old Boys' Book Club

MIDLAND

Meeting held November 27th, 1962

There were apologies from our two Burton members, also from one of the newer members, Gerald Price, but it was nice to see Len Lidsey making his second appearance and enjoying it. It was a very good programme which Tom Porter had arranged though according to the various remarks, my quiz did not appear to be too popular (though it was strange that Norman got 21 of the 24 items correct and more than one of the others topped the dozen mark.) It still remains a mystery what our members read other than the Magnet and Gem? Mixing up a few old boys favourites with classics and well-known stories (a few currently seen on T.V. even) the identities of the authors were comparatively a mystery!! Anyway, just to show that they bore no hard feelings, they allowed me to win the "Guess the Number" competition. There was a short talk by Jack Corbett. He maintained that there were other incentives besides nostalgia to explain the fondness for Frank Richards' school yarns. In our young days though bound books (he mentioned as example Rider Haggard's yarns) were easily accessible from the public libraries, there were more leanings towards the weekly and monthly papers. What had they to offer that the library books had not? A lively debate ensued in which most members joined. Before we got on to Norman's discussion we had a "code" game devised by Tom Porter which was solved first by Ray Bennett.

Norman's talk was on "free gifts", the sort which were part and parcel of the advertising programme in the early and mid early Magnet and Gem days. He was able to produce a few which he had carefully hoarded and these naturally brought back happy memories to most of us.

There was a generous display of Magnets on the library table and we have to thank the Librarian for the gift of Modern Boys which were given as prizes throughout the night. Apart from what I, Ray and Norman had, George Chatham the winner of the library raffle had five of these in addition to a Bunter Book. Second prize which Ted won was a Bunter Book. To show his appreciation, George read a few humorous passages from Magnet No. 1661. Collectors items brought along by Tom Porter were a batch of Boys Realms 16 to 31 - early 1918, containing among other things - a Blue Crusader serial by Arthur S. Hardy. Quite a full programme considering we spent more time than usual on deciding the way our Xmas meeting (Tuesday, December 18th) was to consist - a dinner or a "study" feed. Last was favourite.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held December 9th.

This our eleventh Xmas meeting was a great success, proving to be equal to those held in previous years, and a really enjoyable time was had by all present. There was an almost full attendance, the only absent member being John Farrell, owing to indisposition, and we very much regretted his inability to take part in the festivities of the evening.

We got off to an early start, with Norman's opening general remarks on Section

matters; this was followed by the secretary's report and then came the sale of surplus library items; needless to say, these went like hot cakes. The ensuing library business was also brisk, with borrowers stocking up for Xmas holidays. Formal business was kept to a minimum, and the next item was the presentation of a gift to our hostess, Mrs. Windsor, as a small mark of our appreciation of her kindness and hospitality over the past year.

After refreshments, our founder member, Jim Walsh, followed his annual custom of providing wine and cigars, and toasts were drunk to "Absent Friends," etc. We then embarked on a varied selection of quizzes, etc., which made for tip-top entertainment. The first, a competition devised by Frank Unwin, was won by Pat Laffey. A seasonable extract from a Bunter book was splendidly read by George Riley, earning well-deserved applause. A team quiz by Frank Unwin was closely contested, the winners getting home by just one half of a point. Came yet another set of brain-teasers set by Bill Windsor, and once again the winner was Pat Laffey, who was in sparkling form.

The evening drew to a close in a discussion on a controversial remark made by a reader in the C.D. and various opinions were voiced by the company, without unanimity being achieved. Before the meeting ended, we were pleasantly surprised to receive a 'phone call from our former colleague, Don Webster, who wished our meeting well; we know he would like to have been with us in person on this special night, as in years gone by.

The next get-together, for which another good programme has been arranged, will be held on January 6th at 6 p.m. at the usual rendezvous.

FRANK CASE.

NORTHERN

Twenty-one members were present for the Annual Christmas Party on December 8th. The prospects had been far from auspicious, for dense fog had shrouded the north all week, but this had mercifully cleared by the Saturday, and something like our usual happy band was able to be present for the beanfeast. Unhappily, the fog had more permanently affected those who, like secretary Frank Hancock, are asthmatic sufferers, and we learned with regret that Frank had been obliged to stay at home.

The proceedings followed their traditional pattern when after an early start we sat down to the splendid study spread provided by the ladies. Their standard never varies, bless 'em; the fare was as tempting and as plentiful as ever. The Domestic Science mistress at Cliff House certainly knows her stuff, and her pupils do her proud!

After the feast came not the reckoning but a chance to relax and chat and peruse the library's Christmas offerings, and many famous series were borrowed to gladden the Christmas fireside.

The main event of the evening was a Bunter Drive, and the dice were soon whirling merrily. With a few currency notes in stake money on the tables the scene would have gladdened Bill Lodgey's heart. After our exertions we sat back and listened to a reading from an early Christmas Number of the Magnet.

Then we were put to work indeed. Jaak Allison decided to investigate why 50 years of Quelohy's tuition had not succeeded in getting anyone promoted from the Remove, and subjected us all to an examination to test our knowledge. If teasers of this sort are dished out at Greyfriars no wonder the pupils never graduate! We all passed some baffled moments in contending with a game of ingenuity and entertainment value, but eventually correct papers handed in, appropriately enough, by Harry Wharton and Mark Linley (in the person of the Chairman) and by Peter Todd (in the person of Jaak Wood.)

Supper and a toast to our President concluded the proceedings apart from the prize-giving - and happily there was something for everyone. Another happy and convivial party.

Next meeting - Saturday, 12th January.

JOHNNY BULL.

LONDON

It was Hamiltonia and Film Fun at the happy Christmas meeting at the Cricklewood home of Bill and Marjorie Norris. It was marred only by the news that Len Packman was unable to attend owing to illness. Those present wished him a speedy recovery.

Roger Jenkins, the Hamiltonian Librarian, reported that he had received a flood of letters of congratulation as a result of the new printed and illustrated catalogue which had been provided by John Wernham, our President. Library business had improved still further, and there were now 800 books out on loan. Library takings for 1962 amounted to over £33. Recent benefactors to the library were Kenneth Kirby, Maurice Kutner, Tom Porter, and D.C. Samuel, and the club placed on record its appreciation of their generosity.

Two Chaplin films and a Laurel and Hardy were ably projected by Marjorie Norris, with music dispensed by Bill Norris. Real film fun it was, judging by the mirth of the entire company.

Frank Vernon-Lay's "Desert Island Companions" he called "Under the Banana Tree". This was greatly enjoyed, and was one of the best renderings of this popular feature.

Marjorie Norris conducted a quiz, and, strange to relate, there were no losers. All twenty competitors gained a prize kindly provided by the hosts. The real winner was Roger Jenkins, who had previously given an excellent Magnet reading.

The Annual General Meeting is fixed for February 17th at Putney. Next monthly meeting is at Ben Litvak's home at 58 Stanwell Road, Ashford, Middlesex. Kindly advise host if intending to be present.

Chairman Don Webster stated how he had enjoyed his year of office, and went on to appeal to all who could do so to support the Bunter show at the Queen's Theatre, London.

With grateful thanks to the hosts, the meeting terminated at 7.15.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

YOURS SINCERELY

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

BERNARD PRIME (Senderstead): The October cover absolutely rang the bell. It was dramatically right in every way. It was bot sentimentally "laid on with a trowel", and was therefore infinitely acceptable to a discerning person. How interesting about those imitation Gems by Jardine. But what I want to know is who wrote many of the stories of the 1928 - 30 period not quoted in Mr. Lofts' interesting article.

Who could not enjoy and love Danny's Diary? A delightful boy! You can hear him speak.

H. CHAPMAN (Barton-on-Humber): Having grumbled in the past about the meagre ration of St. Frank's in C.D. I feel bound to write and thank you for the November edition. The picture on the cover is Handy to a *T*. Pleased also to see the reappearance of Jim Cook's St. Frank's letters. I have read stories by E.S.B. and C.H. since a boy and enjoyed them all, but always preferred the former (the old series, at least). I have only recently made the acquaintance of the Rio Kid and agree that they are very good.

W.H. GANDER (Canada): No doubt there will be others coming along in defence of Danny and his Diary. I just wish to add my voice to theirs. I hope it runs for a long time. Actually I do not think it can be compared with any other feature in the magazine - as to whether it is better than, or not so good as. It is DANNY'S DIARY and I like it! Thanks for the photographs of Rose Lawn; they bring home to us once again our loss.

MISS JILL LYNE (Muswell Hill): The reader who dislikes Danny made us mad. How could he accuse Danny of being a smug specimen? He is an alert, lively, artful, healthy-minded lad with an intelligent and keen interest in people and places in fiction. He is able to pass on priceless information to collectors. Above all, he describes so warmly the era to which he belonged. We shout from the housetops "long live Danny and his Diary." It's a monthly treat which enriches all our lives and we do not want to give it up or do without it at any time.

LARRY MORLEY (Henwell): C.D. gets better with every issue. Danny's Diary is fine, and what a great idea is the Greyfriars Art Gallery. I am seriously thinking of mutilating each copy and framing the pictures. It would make a grand collection.

TONY GLYNN (Manchester): Please pass on my congratulations to young Neil Beck. His piece on Willy Handforth was much enjoyed. It is refreshing to see that the old N.L.L. can make a strong appeal to a present day youngster - and how erudite Neil is in the St. Frank's field. The Brooks magic remains as effective as ever.

STANLEY KNIGHT (Cheltenham): How grand to be welcomed on the frontispiece by "Good Old Handy" and the old pile of St. Frank's in the background, and then to find 4 complete pages taken up with the Lee Column. A great article by Neil Beck on Willy Handforth. He has put into words what I have often though I should like to say. Willy is one of my favourite characters - not the least of his endearing traits being his love for animals. "Danny's Diary" is still the "tops." I like, too, the reproductions of the covers of some of those grand old papers.

NORMAN GREGORY (Birmingham): The Annual, like the Digest, is a "must" to we enthusiasts of the old papers, and, whilst I do not always agree with the contributors to it or the methods by which they have reached their conclusions, I still read it from cover to cover and I wouldn't be without it.

LESLIE HALL (Leeds): I send my appreciation of the Digest. The illustrations are very fine indeed, and, to a small collector like myself, they are a useful addition. I particularly like the new Greyfriars Gallery.

EDWARD THOMSON (Edinburgh): Roger Jenkins' "Return to Rose Lawn" was first-class. His description of dear old Frank Richards' home made wonderful reading. Roger is a grand writer, his articles always interesting. I felt I was really being shown round the Grand Old Man's home.

HERBERT HILTON (Oldham): Collectors' Digest is surely the world's most interesting magazine. And Christmas without the Annual would be neither happy nor complete!

ROBERT McCABE (Dundee): My thanks for the enjoyment I've had from reading C.D. during the past year. It's always a Red Letter Day when it arrives. I couldn't do without it now.

EDWIN COLDWELL (Huddersfield): Danny's Diary, which has received some adverse criticism is informative and amusing. In fact, C.D. is excellent. I would like to see some brief outlines of some of the old stories by Henry St. John, Duncan Storm, Victor Nelson, etc.

also an article on Jack, Sam & Pete. I am sure this would be greatly appreciated by those with small collections and with little hope of making their collections larger.

HARRY LAVENDER (Manchester): I am a great admirer of that wonderful artist C.H. Chapman and must confess that it was his drawings that first excited my interest in Bunter and Co., and later made me a regular reader of Frank Richard's stories. I imagined the Greyfriars characters to be exactly as Mr. Chapman portrayed them in his drawings.

ARTHUR CARBIN (Rugby): I think C.D. is better than ever, and the October issue, with its fine article by Roger Jenkins, together with the excellent photographs, was the best of a fine year. The Greyfriars Art Gallery is what might be expected from brilliant Mr. C.H. Chapman. This series is as good as any published in the Magnet or elsewhere. With Denny's Diary and the Gallery as regular features, together with all those other attractions one has come to expect in C.D., 1962 must certainly be the magazine's best year.

J. C. DOYLE (Acton): Delighted with yet another story about Slade. Poor old Buddle! He's certainly no match for Meredith. Looking forward to more of these two great favourites in the new year.

ROGER JENKINS (Havant): I am immensely pleased with the latest story of Mr. Buddle.

WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT THAT ANNUAL

JOHN UPTON (Southend): It surpassed all expectations. What a tremendous undertaking, and how magnificently produced!

JAMES COOK (Wembley): I think you have reached the acme of perfection with this issue, for it has everything! I congratulate you and thank you for a beautiful book of our hobby.

FRANK SHAW (Liverpool): What a treat is the Annual for 1962! I think there have been better years but it is a wonderful job just the same. I could have done with more about Hamilton. Some of the other stuff is fine but not quite right for this Annual, to my mind. Denny is splendid.

ROSEMARY LYNE & HILARY BOWMAN (London): It was glorious, and my friends and I just love reading it. We were disappointed at the non-appearance of our friend Meredith. We adore him, and would like to see him return in next year's Annual. He is the type of boy we would like to have at our Christmas Party.

RICHARD CROMPTON (Chislehurst): Heartiest congratulations on the Annual. It is a magnificent production.

GERALD ALLISON (Ilkley): Congratulations and thanks for another superb production. With what a wonderful feeling one holds the Annual and surveys the cover. A mingling of joy and sadness; delight and pain;

heart-warming nostalgia, and blissful expectancy. It is one of the truly happy moments of the year.

RON CROLLIE (Hornchurch): I intended to save the Annual for Christmas, but I couldn't resist reading "Danny" and "The Bunters at Home". I can only say that if the rest of the contents is even half as good as these two, I can look forward to a very enjoyable holiday indeed.

WALTER FLEMING (Chingford): The Annual gets better every year, and I think you and your team deserve a medal. The contents seem more varied than ever, so should suit everybody's taste.

TOM PORTER (Old Hill): Congratulations on the Annual. It is excellent in every way.

E. THOMSON (Edinburgh): With its abundance of good things and its most attractive cover, I thought it the best yet. "Late Summer Folly" with Cardew's desperate swim for life was really gripping. The clever blending of stories in "One Enchanted Evening", first class. The humour of "The Bunter's at Home", great. "Christmas with Frank Richards", "Danny's Christmas" and all the other articles make this a memorable edition.

BASIL ADAM (Newcastle): The finest Annual. The very first time that every article in the volume has been of interest to me. The illustrations are splendid, too.

GEOFFREY WILDE (Leeds): A very fine Annual for 1962.

GEORGE SELLARS (Sheffield): The Annual cover is a real smasher, and time stood still as I browsed through and was fascinated by the contents of this most charming and wonderful volume.

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A REMINDER! You have only a few days left to see

BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS CIRCUS

at

QUEENS THEATRE, Shaftesbury Avenue, LONDON.

Must end on January 12th. The funniest and most exciting of all the Bunter plays. Join the Famous Five in the Gymnasium at Greyfriars; on Friardale station; in the park at Wharton Lodge; and in the circus which Colonel Wharton has engaged.

For the young in heart of all ages.

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