

# Collectors' Digest

SPECIAL ENLARGED EASTER NUMBER

Vol 17

APRIL 1963.

No. 196.

2



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## My Readers' Page

### THE EDITOR'S CHAT

#### LOOKING BACK:

It is, of course, the basis of our movement. It must be the favourite pastime of readers of Collectors' Digest. The magazine which prides itself on being as modern as tomorrow, nevertheless has most of its roots in the past. The spotlight swings unceasingly over the various highlights of

yesteryear. There is something sad and something satisfying in it. In looking back, I mean.

It is pleasant, during a genial half-hour, to be wafted through space to the year 1912 to 1922 or 1937. We enjoy the trip, but few of us would wish to stay there. Going back is like a holiday. It would cease to charm if we were there all the time.

Like looking back on schooldays. We remember only the pleasant phases. We forget the hills, and how steep, at times, we found them.

We all know, unless we are hopelessly biased, that the life we know in 1963 is better and easier for everyone than it was forty years ago. In England today there is no reason for anyone to starve. There is no need for anyone to work long hours, or, in fact, to work very hard at all unless he feels so inclined. All too many, maybe, have no such inclination. No longer is it necessary for anyone to refrain from calling in a doctor on account of the bill which will follow. That, maybe, is the greatest advantage of living in 1963.

It is a mistake to dwell too much in the past. It distorts the

the present. And that is a pity. Some people are patronising in a kindly way to those of us who look back. Others openly sneer.

We talk of how cheap things used to be, and forget that a modern youngster can throw away half-a-crown without turning a hair, while we used to rack our brains in 1924 to find the humble tuppence which would buy the Magnet. Kids today, with their almost unlimited pocket-money, their free milk, their cheap meals at school, their unending entertainment on T.V., their trips abroad, and countless other blessings, would be lost, bewildered, if they suddenly found themselves set down in the England of the twenties.

The progress people are right when they tell us that we have so much for which to be thankful in 1963. We know it. We may agree with them when they tell us that the past is only useful when we learn from it and correct the mistakes so that the present may be so much better.

But if we who like to look back are often blind to the joys of the present, it can be said that progress people are often wilfully blind to things which were, in fact, better years ago.

On one matter, certainly, Digest readers are unanimous. Periodicals for the youngsters of yester year were infinitely superior to any papers on sale in the shops today. There is nothing in this modern world which comes within streets of the pre-war Magnet, Gem, Lee, Union Jack and the rest. If something approaching the quality of the old papers was available at our newsagents, the modern world might be a great deal better than it is.

No wonder that so many readers sighed happily over the picture on our March cover, even though, so far as the papers depicted went, it was rather a mongrel drawing.

OUR 200th NUMBER:

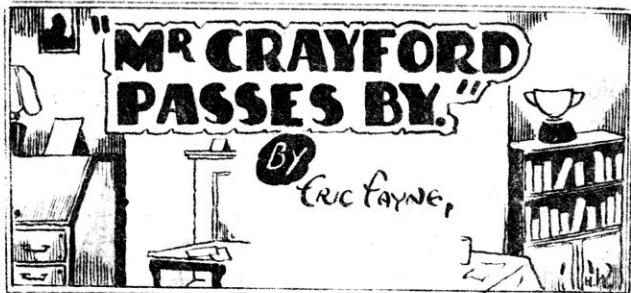
The current issue of the Digest is another of our special enlarged issues. The cover is drawn for this number by talented Henry Webb.

Many readers are writing to remind us that our 200th number is now not so very far away. They feel that we should mark the occasion with a double number. How does the idea appeal to you - always remembering that a double number would be double the price, and would take a great deal of filling?

THE EDITOR.

WANTED: S.O.L'S wanted (any school? also Sexton Blakes 2nd series Nos. 400 onwards and B.F.L.'s 600 onwards.

D. M. HILLIARD, 45 MOORBRIDGE LANE, STAPLEFORD, NOTTINGHAM.



It was early evening at Slade, and Mr. Buddle was seated at the table in his study marking English papers. Mr. Buddle's especial responsibility was the Lower Fourth Form, but he taught English to other forms as well, so a great deal of Mr. Buddle's spare time was occupied with the marking of papers.

How hard a schoolmaster's lot may be depends upon his own conscience and upon how seriously he takes his work. Mr. Drayne, the master of the Third Form, for instance, had plenty of marking to do, but Mr. Drayne seldom bothered to read the work written by his form, and merely contented himself with placing a red-ink tick at the foot of each page. It was not exhausting to Mr. Drayne, and it was quite satisfying to his form.

In contrast, Mr. Buddle read every piece of work carefully, and an essay, by the time Mr. Buddle had finished with it, presented the general appearance of an Ordnance Survey map.

Just as the telephone bell rang, Mr. Buddle was wrestling with an essay turned in by Brazenbean of his own form.

Brazenbean had written: "Being a sponge pudding, my sister poured golden siroop over her cooking, for her husband had a sweet tooth in the gas oven."

Mr. Buddle was grinding his dentures and scribbling a comment concerning unattached participial phrases when the telephone bell sounded. With a snort, he grabbed up the instrument.

"Buddle!" he snapped.

A cold voice came over the wire.

"This is the Headmaster, Mr. Buddle. Please make it convenient to come to my study without delay."

Mr. Buddle grimaced. He had been a master at Slade for many years and valued his post, but he often found the Principal of Slade a sore trial. However, Principals, like horses, had to be given their heads.

"I will come immediately, Mr. Scarlet" said Mr. Buddle.

He rose to his feet with a sigh, and stood for a moment contemplating the large pile of exercises still awaiting the attack of his red-ink pen. Then he left his study and made his way down the length of Masters'

Corridor. The Headmaster's room was the last on the corridor. Beyond it was the green baize door which led to the Headmaster's private flat.

Mr. Buddle tapped on the study door and entered.

The Headmaster of Slade was a large man. He sat behind a large desk in a large chair, with his large hands clasped across his large waistcoat. He spoke in a large voice:

"Come in, Mr. Buddle. Close the door"

Having already come in, Mr. Buddle closed the door.

Two masters were standing before Mr. Scarlet's desk. One was Mr. Fromo, the Housemaster. The other was Mr. Crayford, games master and gym instructor at Slade.

Mr. Buddle looked with some surprise at each of the three masters in turn. Middle-aged Mr. Fromo was gravely dignified. There were spots of high colour in his cheeks which seemed to indicate that he was struggling with some form of suppressed emotion.

Mr. Crayford was a young man in his middle twenties. Handsome and self-possessed, he returned the hard stare with which Mr. Buddle favoured him.

Mr. Scarlet's chair creaked as he threw his weight back on it. He regarded Mr. Buddle severely.

"Mr. Buddle," he said, "a report has been made to me by Mr. Crayford concerning one of your boys. It is quite serious."

"Indeed, Headmaster?"

Mr. Buddle shot a hostile glance in the direction of the games master, and Mr. Crayford's right eyelid closed slightly for a moment.

"Mr. Fromo has, in fact, been calumniated by one of your boys," said Mr. Scarlet.

Mr. Buddle drew himself up to his full height, which was not considerable. A gleam of war shone in his eyes. Mr. Buddle was always more than a little scared of the Headmaster of Slade, but any imputation against Mr. Buddle's boys was enough to lessen Mr. Buddle's nervousness. Mr. Buddle, after the manner of some parents, felt entitled to say and think what he liked about his own boys - but his resentment was high if anyone else said or thought the same thing. Mr. Buddle's boys, after all,

were Mr. Buddle's boys.

"Which boy?" demanded Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Scarlet frowned his disapproval. He said sharply: "Kindly explain to Mr. Buddle, Crayford."

Gentle mockery showed in the face of the good-looking young games master.

"The boy in question, Mr. Buddle, was Meredith of your form," he said.

"Meredith!" murmured Mr. Buddle. The gleam of war almost disappeared from his eyes.

"Meredith!" agreed Mr. Crayford. "You yourself have often described him as the most offensive youth in the school."

The gleam of war returned.

"Meredith has a hundred good qualities," snapped Mr. Buddle, momentarily forgetting a hundred bad qualities possessed by the said Meredith.

Crayford shrugged his shoulders.

"I happened to be passing by and I heard Meredith referring to Mr. Fromo in a disrespectful manner. His language was disgraceful. I thought it unseemly that any junior boy should speak in such a manner of the senior housemaster of this school."

"Quite right!" said Mr. Fromo forcefully. "I am obliged to you, Crayford, for bringing the matter to the light of day."

Mr. Scarlet was regarding Mr. Buddle thoughtfully.

"It appears," said Mr. Scarlet, "that some masters have been vexed by boys who arrive late for their meals in the dining hall. After the last staff meeting, Mr. Fromo posted a notice to state that any boy who presented himself more than five minutes late for any meal would henceforth not be allowed to participate in that meal."

Mr. Buddle nodded a trifle dejectedly.

"Quite so, Headmaster! I approved of Mr. Fromo's action. Some boys at my table have been strolling in to lunch quite ten minutes after the bell has rung. In fact, I believe that I myself broached the matter at the staff meeting."

"You did!" assented Mr. Fromo.

"So some of your own boys were late for meals, Mr. Buddle?" said Crayford gently. "Meredith, perhaps?"

"Meredith, occasionally, certainly."

Crayford smiled.

"I thought it likely. Meredith resented Mr. Fromo's new ruling. It is with

reluctance that I repeat the words used by the boy. He referred to Mr. Fromo as old Boko Fromo. He described Mr. Fromo as a - well, as apomous and interfering old has-been."

Mr. Fromo was red. He stared straight ahead in outraged dignity. Nature had blessed Mr. Fromo with a large nose, concerning which he was sensitive. It irked him that his nose should receive attention in this way.

Mr. Scarlet spoke mildly.

"You will agree, Mr. Buddle, that such vulgar discourtesy must be nipped in the bud at once."

Mr. Buddle breathed hard. He clasped his hands behind his back.

"I deplore discourtesy as much as anyone, Headmaster," said Mr. Buddle. "I would add that it is not clear to me how this matter came to Mr. Fromo's personal notice."

"I told Mr. Fromo," said Crayford.

"Why, may I ask?"

"I thought that the senior housemaster should know how boys of your form were speaking of him," said Mr. Crayford.

Mr. Buddle bristled.

"You mean, Crayford, that it was too good an opportunity to lose. You wished to make mischief and to wound Mr. Fromo at the same time."

Crayford shifted his feet uneasily.

"Nothing of the sort!" he snapped.

"In any case," said Mr. Buddle, "I presume that Meredith was not talking to you. Almost all schoolmasters acquire nicknames among their boys. We are lucky if we are dubbed with a nickname which is not too offensive. In Mr. Fromo's case —"

Mr. Scarlet lifted a hand.

"That is sophistry, Mr. Buddle. It may be impossible to prevent thoughtless boys from nicknaming their instructors. But discipline demands that action be taken if such nicknames are used in public."

"I agree with you, sir, entirely!" snorted Mr. Fromo.

Mr. Buddle nodded slowly. He glanced at Mr. Crayford. There was a sardonic grin on the games master's lips. It infuriated Mr. Buddle.

"I do not understand, Headmaster, why you have been troubled in this matter," Mr. Buddle spoke jerkily. "Mr. Crayford

has used a steam-roller to crack a nut. If he had reported the matter to me, I should have dealt with it as Meredith's form-master, and Mr. Fromo's feelings would have been spared."

Mr. Fromo sniffed.

"I do not like your metaphors, Buddle," he said. "I should hesitate to describe our Headmaster as a steam-roller, and I do not consider this matter so trivial as to be termed a nut."

Crayford spoke smoothly.

"I am sorry that you regard the matter so lightly, Mr. Buddle. In calling upon the wisdom and experience of our Headmaster, I felt that I was acting for the best. If he decides that the matter can be handled by the boy's form-master, no doubt he will instruct you accordingly."

Mr. Buddle set his lips grimly. Like many normally meek people he had a well-developed strain of obstinacy in his nature. Furthermore, he disliked Crayford intensely. With his obstinacy and his dislike working in unison, he would not give up easily.

"I can only say," he yapped, "that it seems undesirable to take too much note of conversation we happen to hear between the boys when they are obviously unaware of our presence. You were passing by, you say, Mr. Crayford. You heard these boys talking on the playing fields —"

"It was not on the playing fields,"

then —

"It was not in the gymnasium."

"Then where was it? In the toilets?" demanded Mr. Buddle, raising his voice.

Mr. Scarlet frowned, and tapped on his desk.

"Let us not forget our sense of propriety, please, Mr. Buddle" he said severely.

Mr. Buddle was quivering with annoyance, but he controlled himself with an effort.

Crayford spoke as though soothing a refractory child.

"I happened to be passing by in the Lower Fourth Form passage. Meredith was in his study with two other boys, Pilgrim and Garmansway. My attention was arrested when I heard Meredith refer to Mr. Fromo by the use of a nickname. He went on, in

derogatory terms, to criticise Mr. Fromo's new ruling concerning punctuality at meals."

"The boy - swore!" said Mr. Fromo with relish.

"Swore!" ejaculated Mr. Buddle. He stared at the housemaster for a moment, and then transferred his gaze to the games master. "Am I to understand that you claim to have heard Meredith using bad language - swearing, in fact?"

Crayford thrust his hands into his trousers pockets. He raised his eyebrows loftily.

"I certainly heard him use strong expressions. I had no intention of mentioning that point to the Chief or to you."

"Why not - if it's true?" hooted Mr. Buddle.

Colour flooded Crayford's face.

"Certainly it's true! I was averse to causing you concern at the language some of your boys use!" said Crayford bitterly.

"You were averse to causing me concern, yet you were not averse to causing Mr. Fromo pain. An odd argument!" retorted Mr. Buddle contemptuously.

Mr. Scarlet intervened.

"Slade does not use strong language, Mr. Crayford" he said coldly. "Should you be aware of any boy doing so, it is your duty to report the matter to me at once."

"I'm sorry, sir. I intended to remonstrate with the boy myself in private."

"Satan rebuking sin!" muttered Mr. Buddle, and Mr. Scarlet gave him a sharp look.

The Headmaster rose to his feet.

"I think," he said, "that we must send for Meredith. I presume, Crayford, that you told him you would be reporting his conduct to me."

"Certainly I did, sir." Crayford had regained his usual sang-froid. "As soon as I realised the gist of the talk in the study, I opened the door -"

"What?" The word came like a pistol shot from Mr. Buddle. "What? Do I hear aught? You opened the door?"

"Certainly I opened the door." Mr. Buddle almost panted with emotion.

"Are we to understand that you heard Meredith's comments through a closed door?"

That you were standing outside the study like a common eavesdropper, listening to the random chatter of the lads within? Good heavens alive -"

Mr. Buddle stuttered into momentary silence.

Crayford's countenance was dark with anger. He took a step towards Mr. Buddle, but Mr. Scarlet's icy tones cut between them.

"That was a most improper observation, Mr. Buddle. I will have Meredith here at once. Crayford, please send Meredith to me."

"Certainly, Headmaster!" said Crayford. He glared at Mr. Buddle.

"I request that Pilgrim be brought here also," bleated Mr. Buddle. "He is the head boy of my form, and it is alleged that he was a partner in this profane conversation."

Mr. Scarlet nodded.

"Fetch Pilgrim and Meredith," he directed.

Mr. Crayford departed. Mr. Scarlet sat down again at his desk and waved a hand in the air.

"Be seated, gentlemen. I think I shall not need to detain you long," he said kindly.

Mr. Fromo sat down, a picture of offended dignity. Mr. Buddle moved across the room and stood staring through the window into the darkness without.

Only a short time elapsed when there was a tap at the door and Crayford entered.

"Here are Meredith and Pilgrim, Headmaster," he announced.

Meredith and Pilgrim stood before Mr. Scarlet's desk. Mr. Crayford closed the study door, and stood with his back to it. At the window, Mr. Buddle turned round and gazed at his two pupils.

Both boys were wearing the mauve and white blazers of Slade. Both stood with their hands at their sides. Meredith, fair-haired, cherubic, stared in convincing surprise at his Headmaster. Pilgrim, dark, slightly taller, looked in dismay at his form-master.

"Meredith," said Mr. Scarlet sternly, "Mr. Crayford has made a report to me which has shocked me. I learn that you have traduced Mr. Fromo."

"Seduced Mr. Fromo?" Meredith's



honest blue eyes opened wide with alarm. "Ma, sir? Oh, sir! No sir! I don't know what the words means, sir, but I haven't done it."

Mr. Scarlet gave an irritable gesture. He glanced at Mr. Buddle.

"Is this boy of your form mentally defective, Mr. Buddle?" he demanded.

"The boy, sir, is a little simple, and rather innocent for his years," said Mr. Buddle, forgetting for the moment the criminal record of that golden-haired member of his form.

Mr. Scarlet coughed. The boy certainly looked simple and innocent, but Mr. Scarlet had met Meredith before.

"The word I used was traduced," said Mr. Scarlet. "You used an offensive nickname when referring to Mr. Fromo."

"Did I, sir?"

"Did you not?" thundered Mr. Scarlet. Meredith jumped in alarm.

"Oh, sir! No, sir! Yes, sir! I called him Boko, sir. Everybody calls him Boko sir. I think it's because of his nose, sir. But I'm always sympathetic, sir. I said 'fancy having a cold in that!'" Mr. Fromo rose to his feet.

"This interview is painful to me, Headmaster," he said. "With your permission I will withdraw. I am sure you will deal in exemplary fashion with this uncouth member of Mr. Buddle's form."

Mr. Scarlet nodded.

"I will see you later in the staff lounge, Mr. Fromo, and notify you of my decision in this matter. If, as seems indicated, this boy receives corporal punishment, I think you should witness it."

"Thank you, sir" Mr. Fromo gave a stiff little inclination of his head. "I am content to leave the matter in your hands."

Mr. Fromo, in high dudgeon, withdrew. After the housemaster had gone, Mr. Scarlet concentrated his gaze once more upon Meredith.

"You resented a new ruling made by Mr. Fromo concerning punctuality at meals. In consequence, using disrespectful slang expressions, you abused Mr. Fromo in the privacy of your study, speaking so loudly that you were overheard by Mr. Crayford who was passing by in the corridor."

Pilgrim spoke for the first time.

"Nobody was speaking loudly in the

study, sir. We were chatting as we did our prep."

Mr. Crayford addressed the Headmaster. He spoke very respectfully.

"Headmaster, I do not suggest for one moment that either Pilgrim or Garmanway was engaging in a disgraceful conversation. It was Meredith who was shouting out abuse against Mr. Fromo."

"I wasn't shouting," said Meredith sulkily.

"We were quite taken aback, sir, when Mr. Crayford came in," put in Pilgrim.

"When I was talking I didn't know that Mr. Crayford was outside with his ear glued to the keyhole," explained Meredith.

"Sir —" ejaculated Crayford sulphurously.

Mr. Buddle smiled. In anyone but a schoolmaster it would have been a grin. Whether a smile or a grin, it vanished as Mr. Scarlet suddenly looked up at him.

"Meredith!" Mr. Scarlet's voice was very deep. "I warn you that your punishment is likely to be very severe. Do not make things worse by impertinence to Mr. Crayford."

"Oh, sir!" moaned Meredith. He turned his innocent blue eyes towards his form-master. "Please speak for me, sir. You know me, sir."

"I know you, Meredith!" agreed Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Scarlet cleared his throat and said something under his breath. There was a moment of silence, during which Mr. Crayford fidgeted.

"Pilgrim," said Mr. Scarlet at last, "you are Mr. Buddle's head boy. Tell me, is swearing a common practice in your study?"

"Swearing?"

Both boys echoed the word at once. Both turned red.

"No, sir!" said Pilgrim.

"Oh, sir!" gasped Meredith. As usual, when under the stress of emotion, he ran his hands through his mop of golden hair. "Oh, sir, we don't swear. It's bad form, sir. My father says it's a sign of an inferiority complication, sir. He only swears sometimes, sir, like when he gets a puncture, sir. Mr. Crayford only swears at us on the sports field when he's angry, sir — and I always close

my ears, sir —"

"Silence, Meredith!" hooted Mr. Scarlet.

Mr. Buddle smiled frostily once again. "I protest, sir!" said Mr. Crayford in a grinding voice. "This boy is a disgusting little liar —"

Mr. Scarlet frowned, and drummed on the desk with his fingers.

"We don't swear in my study, sir," said Pilgrim. "I think Mr. Crayford means a silly bit of rhyme that Meredith was saying. It was just rubbish and Meredith didn't mean anything, but I suppose Mr. Crayford heard it —"

There was the slightest inflection of contempt in Pilgrim's voice, and Mr. Crayford gnawed his lower lip.

"A rhyme?" Mr. Scarlet lifted his hands in horror. "A rhyme? What was the rhyme? Repeat it to me immediately, Meredith."

Meredith turned a look of reproach towards Pilgrim.

"Oh, sir!" Meredith was gazing at the carpet now. "I don't like to tell you sir."

"You mean," said Mr. Scarlet in terrifying tones, "that it was an improper rhyme — something which you dare not utter in the presence of your Headmaster?"

"You might not understand, sir." mumbled Meredith.

Mr. Buddle was looking grim now. It was Mr. Crayford's turn to smile. He said smoothly:

"The matter is clear, sir, I hope, sir, that you will not compel Meredith to utter such a crudity in your study."

Mr. Scarlet stood up. He clasped the edges of his gown over his chest, and glared down at Meredith.

"Boy! Unpleasant boy —" Pilgrim broke in.

"It wasn't what you think, sir. It was silly, but that's all." He jerked Meredith by the arm. "Tell the Head, you clown!"

Meredith raised his honest blue eyes. His golden hair was tumbling over his forehead. He spoke in a low voice.

"Shall I tell you, sir?" "You may tell me, Meredith, if it will not offend the ears of any decent person," said Mr. Scarlet heavily.

Meredith threw back his head.

"I made it up, sir. I think I can remember it. I didn't mean it to offend any person's decent ears."

He recited:

"You come innee, late for dinnee,  
You are likelee to get thinnce,  
'Steard of puddee, jollie goodee —  
Ecko lickee — damsee quickee."

He added ingenuously: "It's kind of Chinese, sir."

There was silence in the study. Mr. Buddle folded his arms and turned away. After a moment Mr. Scarlet sat down. Pilgrim was staring straight ahead. Meredith had turned his sad eyes to the carpet.

Mr. Scarlet looked up at Mr. Crayford. "That was the — the rhyme you heard, Mr. Crayford?" he queried.

"Something of the sort, sir. It was the expletive which worried me, of course. It was preceded by invective against Mr. Fromo — and the use of the objectionable nickname."

"Quite!" said Mr. Scarlet. He turned his severe gaze upon the two boys. "I am displeased with you, Pilgrim. As Mr. Buddle's head boy you should discourage thoughtless disrespect towards a member of the school staff. However, as Mr. Crayford has made a point of exonerating you and Garmansway, I will content myself with warning you. As for you, Meredith, severe corporal punishment is indicated. In a moment I shall discuss with your form-master as to whether twelve strokes of the cane may be sufficient."

"Oh, sir!" mumbled Meredith. "I'm delicate, sir. It isn't it awful, sir?" My father would be very worried if he knew, sir. If you could content yourself by warning me, too, sir —"

"Enough!" rapped Mr. Scarlet. "You will prepare yourself, Meredith, to receive chastisement within the next half-hour. I shall send for you and you will be punished in the presence of Mr. Fromo. You will both now withdraw."

The two boys withdrew. As the door closed behind them, Mr. Scarlet rose. He spoke to Crayford.

"I wish to have a few words in private with Mr. Buddle, Crayford. I need

detain you no longer."

"Thank you, sir!" said Mr. Crayford. "I regret to have encroached upon your time."

As he left the study, he shot an enigmatic glance at Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Scarlet turned to the form-master.

"You will agree with me that corporal punishment must be meted to Meredith, Mr. Buddle?" His tones were unusually diffident.

Mr. Buddle gave a nervous little cough.

"I suppose so, Headmaster, but I do not like this affair," he said. "It is rather unsavoury. If boys feel that masters are creeping around with the object of listening to conversations, the relationship between staff and boys is likely to be impaired."

Mr. Scarlet made an irritable gesture.

"There is no question of anything of the sort, Mr. Buddle. I should be strongly averse to any practice of spying on the boys, but that is vastly different from maintaining a strict vigilance. A slack staff, Mr. Buddle - a lack of good supervision - would result in a slack, even a corrupt school. You must be well aware of that."

"I am aware of it, Headmaster," Mr. Buddle's face was troubled. "Had this conversation been heinous, I would have advocated strict measures, no matter how the information was obtained. But it was innocuous - or, at least, typical of schoolboy mentality."

"A school rule was criticised, Mr. Buddle. A master's physical feature was - er - made the subject for jest."

"Generations of Slade boys have used the nickname Boko when referring to Mr. Fromo, and he must be well aware of it," said Mr. Buddle.

"Possibly!"

"If we endeavour to stop boys inventing and using nicknames we shall be ploughing the sands," argued Mr. Buddle.

"Mr. Buddle," said Mr. Scarlet with an uncharacteristic show of patience. "We may agree that Crayford was a trifle tactless in handling this matter. It would have been better had he reported Meredith to you, but he saw fit to refer the occurrence to a higher authority, and so I must deal with it. Crayford is young, and he is over-conscientious, perhaps."

Mr. Buddle opened his lips to speak, but closed them again. He knew Crayford rather better than Mr. Scarlet did, but he could hardly claim as much to the Headmaster of Slade.

After a pause, Mr. Buddle said: "In considering Mr. Crayford and Meredith, Headmaster, I think we should not overlook the personal equation."

"The personal equation?" Mr. Scarlet's eyebrows were raised high. "That is a strange remark, Mr. Buddle. I do not follow you. You are not, I hope, suggesting that any member of my staff would be prejudiced by dislike of any lad?"

Mr. Buddle's lips tightened. He was, in fact, suggesting just that, but he saw the impossibility of making his point with the Headmaster of Slade.

"No, sir!" he said.

"Very good! It is your view, Mr. Buddle, that this matter should be overlooked for the reason that it was overheard by accident. I respect your opinions, Mr. Buddle, but this time I cannot subscribe to them. It is imperative, for the sake of discipline, that I support Fromo and Crayford."

"It is for you to decide, Headmaster," said Mr. Buddle stiffly.

"Undoubtedly!" Mr. Scarlet discarded his gown, and turned to the door. "I will now walk to the staff common-room and inform Fromo that Meredith is to receive chastisement. Under the circumstances, it may look better if you accompany me, Mr. Buddle."

"As you wish, sir."

The two masters walked together to the other end of Masters' Corridor. Outside the staff lounge Mr. Scarlet paused for a moment. Faintly they could hear the sound of someone talking within.

Mr. Scarlet threw open the door and entered. Mr. Buddle followed him.

Mr. Fromo, Mr. Drayne and Mr. Crathie were seated in arm-chairs near the small fire which was burning. Mr. Crayford was perched on the large table with his back to the door. Mr. Crayford was talking and every word reached Mr. Scarlet and Mr. Buddle.

"And Buddle called the old boy a steam-roller. Not a bad metaphor when you come to think of it. You should have

seen Old Pink's face. More like a con-  
stipated rhinoceros than ever —"

Crayford broke off. Fromo, Drayne  
and Crathie had risen to their feet and  
were staring at the Headmaster. In sur-  
prise, Mr. Crayford slipped from the table  
and turned round. His jaw dropped. High  
colour flooded his face.

For a moment or two there was dead  
silence. Then Mr. Scarlet spoke. His  
voice seemed to come from a refrigerator.

"Mr. Fromo, I have decided not to  
punish Meredith. After consideration I  
agree with Mr. Buddle that it would be un-  
ethical to discipline a boy for a conver-  
sation accidentally overheard. It is  
undesirable for the boys to feel that they  
are being watched and every item of idle  
chatter noted. I suggest, Mr. Fromo, that  
it is unwise to be too sensitive over the  
comments of thoughtless boys. Mr. Buddle,  
may I trouble you to convey a few words of  
solemn warning to Meredith of your form  
and to tell him that, on this occasion, the  
matter ends here."

"I shall be happy to warn Meredith,  
Headmaster," purred Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Scarlet turned and strode from  
the room. Mr. Buddle smiled a warm little  
smile.

"Goodnight, gentlemen!" said Mr.  
Buddle.

Walking with slow dignity, he followed  
the Headmaster.

Five minutes later Mr. Buddle  
looked in at Study No. 7 on the Lower  
Fourth Form passage. Pilgrim and Garmans-  
way were playing draughts. Meredith was  
sprawling in a shabby armchair, reading  
the current issues of the Gem,

The three boys rose as Mr. Buddle  
looked in.

"Meredith," said Mr. Buddle, "I am  
pleased to tell you that on this occasion  
your Headmaster has graciously overlooked  
your offence. You will not be punished.  
But —" added Mr. Buddle ominously, "next  
time —"

He left it at that.

Meredith's blue eyes were shining.

"Oh, sir, how kind everyone is at  
Slade! It's a wonderful school!"

Mr. Buddle withdrew, closing the  
door. In the passage, he paused for a few  
seconds. He heard Meredith's voice within  
the study:

"Trust the old Gump to see justice  
done!"

Shaking his head, Mr. Buddle walked  
slowly back at long last towards his study,  
to the pile of English exercises which was  
awaiting his return. As he walked there  
was the sound reminiscent of dried peas  
rattling in a colander.

Mr. Buddle was chuckling.

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#### YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

Tom Merry tells us to "Keep Smiling."  
But if you keep smiling it makes people  
wonder what you have been up to.

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WANTED: Magnets Nos. 1190-1209 (incl.)  
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JACK, SAM, AND PETEBy W. O. G. Lofts

Edwin Coldwell in the January issue of the Digest requested an article on Jack, Sam and Peter. Although I must confess that the last original story of this famous trio appeared as far back as 1922 - indeed a year before I was born, I will endeavour to give some new facts and data about three very lovable characters who delighted countless thousands of readers in their day.

The younger reader, who may assume that Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee were the greatest money-spinner's Amalgamated Press ever produced in boys fiction would be greatly mistaken. In the period 1900-20 Jack, Sam and Pete were household names, and it would be quite safe to record that the above trio were considered to be far greater than the Hamilton schools, and the two famous detectives of our own Blake and Nelson Lee sections.

The honour



Pete's dog, Rory, as portrayed in the Marvel by the great artist, J. Abney Cummings.

— — — —

of writing the very first story in the Harmsworth Bros. (later A.P.) venture into boys fiction was S. Clarke Hook in the 'Halfpenny Marvel' in 1893. The S. standing for Samuel and the most unusual second christian name was the maiden name of his grandmother - wife of a Governor of Sierra Leone - whose father was Dr. Adam Clarke - world famous translator of the Bible, and who was a friend of queen Victoria. Hook, as the reader can gather, had quite an influential background. He was also related to James Clarke Hook, R.A., and believed slightly related to Theodore Hook founder of JOHN BULL.

S. Clarke Hook was born at Highgate, London and was educated at Ewell College. He travelled a great deal round the world in his early days, and became an expert in the Spanish language, later using this knowledge to good use being a chief translator at the glass-works head office at St. Helen's, Lancs. (Where incidentally Walter Tyrer the famous Blake writer started work). Turning to juvenile fiction, he put his colourful travels to good use, though certainly not geographically correct.

The first story of Jack, Sam and Pete did not appear until the 23rd March, 1901 in 'Marvel' No. 385 entitled 'The Eagle of Death' or 'The Great Treasure Trail'. Jack Owen, a roving Englishman, Oxford undergraduate - six feet two inches tall, and a splendid specimen of a man, meets Sam Grant, a wiry looking American - hunter and trapper, and the best shot for hundreds of miles around. They meet Pete, a negro from Zanzibar in the store of a Bolivian mining camp. All three were penniless. Pete, who had been a strong man in a circus, was also a wrestler and boxer. The three discover a treasure worth nearly a million pounds and split the fortune three ways, lodge the money in the Bank of England and so the adventures of Jack, Sam and Pete begin!

A former editor of the Marvel told me not so long ago, that Hook took more liberties than any author he ever knew about the authentic regions of his stories - and the readers loved it! He would place an English pub right in the middle of the African jungle - and would have put Lions and Tigers in Iceland if it suited his purpose. The very elementary humour, and slapstick comedy exercised a charm on the readers of that time. Pete was also a wonderful ventriloquist and a singer. As a rule, he spoke in a weird type of broken English such as 'dat ain't right, old hoss' but when he practiced his ventriloquism in some strange way his speech became perfect! I can well remember the late Herbert Leckenby always relating to people that this was impossible - and readers may think that Herbert was right.

Following the meeting of the famous trio, they appeared in adventures all over the world, mostly in places remote from civilisation, where Jack would thrash the bully of some settlement camp in a fight, Sam would use his skill with revolver and rifle whilst Pete would throw the bad men through the windows of a saloon - or spank them over his knee with his enormous hand. In later years, the growing popularity of Peter made Hook write him up in much the same way that Frank Richards plugged Billy Bunter. Frank Richards incidentally, knew S. Clarke Hook very well and described him as a small, dark, dapper, extremely pleasant type of writer, with a black beard turning grey. Indeed, once Jack, Sam and Pete, as expert Gen readers will know, turned up in a St. Jin's story, where Pete's dog, Röry, nearly had a fight with Herries' bulldog. Later Tom Merry rescued Röry from the Hyde Park Serpentine.

Later, there were many series, and who amongst the older readers does not remember 'De Old Hoss', Pete's balloon, in which they drifted all over the world in various adventures. There was the Steam Man - an automatic man driven by steam - which unfortunately seemed to be always getting out of control, but Pete being a multi-millionaire could well afford to pay for the damage caused.

When the New Series of the Marvel commenced in January 1904, Jack, Sam and Pete were to be found in the opening number. Up to this date many artists had illustrated the characters - Val and Willis Reading, Fred Bennett, and R. J. Macdonald, but in No. 9 probably the best of them all started - J. Abney Cummings, and he played a large part in making the characters as popular as they were.

1906 saw the Amalgamated Press launch the very first of their Libraries - and what better way could they do so than start with 'THE JACK, SAM AND PETE LIBRARY,' to give a

60,000 word story each month on past serials featuring their most famous characters. But after printing several thousand copies of the first two numbers, the power that was thought a more general library to cover all tastes would be more profitable, so the title was altered to 'THE BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY' - though the famous three still appeared in many of the early stories.

1919 saw the Daring-Pollock Film Company complete a series of films featuring the famous trio, where Ernie Trimmington, a giant Negro from Bermuda, was perfectly cast as Pete, whilst a hero of World War I, Captain Daring, played the part of Jack.

Strangely enough, the decline of the characters started shortly after these films were made, accentuated it is said by the death of J. Abney Cummings, the artist who ideally portrayed him and also the introduction of a boy called Algy into the stories, who seems to have been greatly disliked by readers. A new generation of boys was also in force, and they would not accept situations and outdated stories which belonged to a period of some twenty years earlier. The characters had simply lost their appeal.

Many readers have for some strange reason been under the impression that the characters appeared right up till the Marvel was amalgamated into SPORT AND ADVENTURE in 1922, but they did in fact cease some months earlier. No. 940 in January saw a pathetic ending to a serial 'Pete's Circus' on the top third of the back page, and their closing words read like an epitaph.

"Dis is our closing night - may every happiness be yours frough life"  
said Pete.

"It is sad to part with old friends, but as Pete says, so it must be"  
said Jack.

"I join my comrades in their wishes" said Sam.

S. Clarke Hook retired in 1922 from writing and was awarded a small pension by Amalgamated Press Ltd for his services to them. His death has never been established and it is believed that he may have died abroad.

Attempts were made to revive the characters again in 1927 in the small 'BOYS REALM' where they were written by a mysterious 'Gordon Maxwell' not Hook but Walter Shute who revised old stories whilst in the 30's they appeared once again as 'Jim, Buck and Rastus' in the RANGER revised this time by Percy A. Clarke under a non-de-plume. (Shute and Clarke of course are 'Walter Edwards' and 'Martin Frazer' of Sexton Blake fame) but the characters never caught on again with boys so there we must leave Jack, Sam and Pete.

The reader will appreciate that it is impossible in the scope of one article to write all the history of these famous characters, but I hope I have given some satisfaction to many who still regard Jack, Sam and Pete with affection.

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FOR EXCHANGE: Marvel Xmas No. 100. B.F.L. 3d. No. 232 Tinker's Schooldays. Gem 501, 539, 641, 960, 961, 1030, 1040, 1043, 1050, 1293, 1384, 1385, 1386, 1412, 1501. Union Jack 40 numbers between 1078 and 1536 (includes 5 Xmas Nos.) N. Lee 40 numbers between 259 and 380. (also some new series). Monster Lib. Nos. 5 and 9. Greyfriar's S.O.L. a few spares. Magnet some early ones, between 349 and 900.

WANTED: A good collection of Magnets, mainly in the middle range. Also other Hamiltonians (pre-war). Good prices paid.

2603, TOWER PLACE, VANCOUVER 8, B. COLUMBIA, CANADA.

FOR SALE: 2 volumes of Schoolgirls' Own Annual 1924, 1927. Books by G.E. Rochester for sale 3/- and 2/- each. Stamps for sale or exchange. Wanted - Nelson Lees, S.O.L.'s, Magnets, Monsters. 65 BENTHAM STREET, BELFAST.

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by Josephine Packman, 27 Archdale Road,  
East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22

I am very pleased to say that - thanks to some of my good friends, I now have sufficient material for Blakiana in hand to last for quite a few months. To all those who have rallied round, and to others who I hope will do the same, I extend my grateful thanks.

JOSIE PACKMAN

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## FORTHCOMING FEATURES

HENRI GARROCK - THE SNAKE	by W. O. G. Lofts
THE ACTOR DETECTIVE AND OTHER EARLY U.J.'s	by Derek Adley
NAME THE AUTHOR (a series of articles)	by Walter Webb
DID CHARLES HAMILTON WRITE A SEXTON BLAKE STORY?	By W. O. G. Lofts

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## SEXTON BLAKE AND THE AMERICA CUP

by Victor Colby

The recent attempt by the Australian yacht Gretel, to wrest the America Cup from the United States and the challenge that has now been issued by Great Britain, makes the America Cup a topical subject.

Sexton Blake lovers will probably be reminded at this time of Sir Thomas Lipton, Shamrock IV and Sexton Blake's services to them both.

The circumstances are set out in Union Jack 569 of September 5th 1914 entitled "The Mystery of Shamrock IV".

Additional historical data is available in "The Lipton Story" a biography by Alec Waugh, published by Cassell & Co., and has been made use of in this article.

The cup, now known as the America Cup, was lost to America by England in 1851. Sir Thomas Lipton had unsuccessfully competed for it in 1899, 1901, 1903 with Shamrocks 1, 2 and 3 respectively, and had now



built his latest challenger, Shamrock IV, for a race set down for September, 1914.

So that America should have no inkling as to the kind of yacht being sent against her, the strictest secrecy had been maintained.

Only a fortnight or so before the departure of the Shamrock IV from Portsmouth for the Atlantic crossing and the Cup race, Sexton Blake had a visitor at his Baker Street consulting rooms that Blake had no trouble in recognising, for Sir Thomas Lipton with his stores, his teas and his yachts and his wonderful flair for publicity was a colourful and well-loved figure, and one that Sexton Blake was pleased to meet.

"How do you do, Sir Thomas?" said Sexton Blake as the two shook hands. "You wish to consult me?"

"Yes," Sir Thomas smiled, "to tell you the truth Blake, I am just a little anxious. I suppose you know that this year I have again sent out a challenge for the America Cup?"

Blake nodded his head.

"Everyone knows that, Sir Thomas," he said "and all wish you success."

The tea-magnate smiled.

"Ay, ay," he said, "I have certainly tried once or twice but I really think that this time with Shamrock IV, I am going to do something. She's a wonderful boat, Mr. Blake."

"I am delighted to hear it, Sir Thomas," the detective returned, "for if ever any man deserved success, you certainly do."

Blake was sincere in his words, for he, in common with every other Britisher, had a vast admiration for the dogged Scotsman who time and again had tried to win back the famous America Cup.

Sir Thomas Lipton explained that he had had a letter from a well-wisher in America to the effect that unscrupulous men from that country had evil intentions towards Shamrock IV. Precise details were not given, but Sir Thomas felt that betting interests could be behind this rascality.

Sir Thomas went on "I know you are a busy man, Blake, but I would like you to take on the responsibility of looking after Shamrock IV. She's quite safe so long as she's on the move, there's no chance of anyone getting at her then. But it's when she's moored for the night, or lying in harbour, that's the time you will come in useful. I don't for a moment think that my crew or skipper would be anything but diligent, but they're plain, blunt men, same as I am, Blake, and it is only a man like yourself, skilled in the way of criminals who would be likely to circumvent any attempt that might be made."

Sexton Blake wanted to know how long his responsibility would last.

"Not very long now" Sir Thomas returned, "you see I shall soon have to be getting her ready to cross the Atlantic. Within a fortnight we will have to come to an end of our sailing tests, and she will have to be got ready for the trip; I mean to sail her across if possible. But of course, I shall always have the steam yacht "Erin" close at hand to give her a tow if necessary."

"Then so far as I am concerned" Sexton Blake said, "my task will last say a fortnight?"

Sir Thomas agreed that this was so, and Sexton Blake accepted the commission.

It was to Southampton that Sexton Blake went with the intention engaging a small yacht with which he could take up a mooring close to that of Shamrock IV. Tinker was to join him at Southampton.

Fate decreed that the most suitable yacht for Blake's purposes, the "Firefly" was already hired to a man whom Blake knew well, the Hon. John Lawliss and his black servant Pete. Blake was not aware of the identity of the hirer, but visited the yacht hoping to make a deal, only to find it deserted. He promptly took it over, and with Tinker, set sail for Cowes on the Isle of Wight, Here he sought out Shamrock IV's mooring place, and having made himself known to the Shamrock's crew settled down to watch and wait.

The desertion of the "Firefly" by the Hon. John Lawliss and Pete, came about this way. Observing that a yacht called "Magda" had drifted from her moorings and gone aground, Lawliss offered his assistance, which was promptly accepted by the group of men on the "Magda", these men appearing to have little knowledge of yachting.

The "Magda" having been freed, its crew asked Lawliss to take charge and he agreed to do this because of his interest in this strange collection of men. He left the "Firefly" shipshape, intending to pick it up later, and sailed with Pete aboard "Magda" to Cowes, mooring at last only a couple of cable lengths away from Blake and Tinker's "Firefly". Shamrock IV's mooring being on the opposite side of "Firefly" to that now taken by the "Magda".

That night a violent scuffle broke out aboard the "Magda" and Tinker heard the splash of a man overboard. Tinker jumped into the water and saved the man who was about to sink and swam with him to the "Firefly", where he aroused Blake to assist him.

Great was the surprise of the two detectives to find the rescued man to be Pete, Lawliss' servant, a knife wound in the back, and weak from loss of blood. Brought around with brandy, Pete explained that Lawliss had been caught spying on a secret conclave of the "Magda's" crew

and promptly seized. Pete, coming to the rescue, had been knifed and was overboard before he could assist.

The Hon. John Lawliss had on occasion sailed dangerously near the wrong side of the law, but it had not prevented Blake from seeing much that was good in the young man. Lawliss' enterprises had been those of a reckless daredevil, enterprises that would show no personal gain but a great deal of personal danger. He was the sort of fellow who would never miss a chance of having an adventure.

As soon as possible, Blake swam to the Magda, and found Lawliss imprisoned in a space beneath the bows. He talked with Lawliss who told Blake the result of his spying, which had caused the crew such consternation.

"They have a couple of diving suits aboard here" Lawliss explained, "and as soon as they get the chance they are going to fix a mine to the Shamrock's keel, and send the yacht sky high."

The diving suits were of a new type, with air supplied by a chemical process, the apparatus being carried on the back, making the diver independent of the boat for three hours. The ring leader and an assistant would descend a weighted rope ladder, walk across the bottom of the water, using a luminous compass. The mine had floats attached to it and could be allowed to rise on a line until it touched the keel of the Shamrock, the line anchored on the bottom of the water, and the mine exploded by the setting of an internal time machine to a selected time. New York betting interests were behind this dastardly attempt.

Before hearing his story, Blake had intended rescuing Lawliss at once. Having heard it, however, he urged Lawliss to remain an apparent prisoner, until the attempt to harm the Shamrock was about to be made. He was then to free himself from the irons by unlocking them with the knife Blake had given him and leaving the Magda, he was to swim across to the Firefly, to warn Blake. This, Lawliss agreed to do.

Blake then visited the Navy, borrowed two new independent type diving suits, plus one diver, and awaited word from Lawliss.

When Lawliss eventually pulled himself dripping wet on board the Firefly, things started to move with a vengeance. Blake and the Navy man donned their suits, and as a faint glimmer from below heralded the arrival of the crooks beneath the Firefly on their way to the Shamrock, one leading the way, with light and compass, the man with the mine bringing up the rear, tension gave way to action. Blake marked the leading man and the Navy diver marked the man with the mine, and each dropped to intercept his man.

After a desperate struggle, the Navy man put his adversary out of

action and returned to the Firefly with his prisoner.

Blake, meanwhile, had the misfortune to trip over an anchor which gave his enemy warning of his presence, and a chance to get away and hide, and eventually return to his yacht by means of his luminous compass.

Blake and the Navy man had thwarted the attempt to blow up the Shamrock, but Blake found himself in dire peril, being without a compass and some distance from the Firefly because of his unsuccessful chase of his marked man and completely lost.

With his air supply nearly exhausted, a heavy pulse beating in his brain, breathing agonisingly difficult, weary, exhausted and numb inert feeling pervading his limbs, his eyes filming over with the strain for so long and so abortively seeking to find his way, he was very near death when he came upon a fish threshing on the end of a fixed line.

In one of its frantic moments the fish dashed towards Blake, who instinctively shot out his arm, wedging the fish under his heavy sleeve, Blake released the fish and pulling the line taut, went around in an ever-widening circle, hoping to come upon the anchor chain which must lead to the yacht from which the fishing line was attached. He found the anchor chain, cast off his heavy boots and climbed the chain. Fortunately he was seen from the deck as he broke through the water's surface, and was helped aboard and ably ministered to by his rescuers.

Sexton Blake was eventually re-united with his friends and desired only that the transatlantic crooks depart from England's shores without further opportunity for plotting and planning. By a clever ruse he scared them into departing on the very next ship.

Blake had an interview with Sir Thomas Lipton on board the "Erin" just prior to that smart steam yacht's departure with the jury-masted Shamrock IV in tow.

Sir Thomas was warmly appreciative of Blake's service and asked him to name his own figure. Blake, however, feeling it was his patriotic duty to do what he had, declined to accept payment.

A little later, the "Erin" with Shamrock IV in tow, started on her long journey. As she moved down Southampton Water, every vessel in the broad waterway gave tongue, siren, foghorn and bell clashing a farewell.

From the deck of a little yacht, three men stood watching the Erin until it vanished. They were Sexton Blake, Lawliss and Tinker, and they watched until the last feather of smoke from the powerful steam yacht died away.

Thus ends the story in the Union Jack, but history tells us that when the Erin sailed from Portsmouth in July, the Great Fleet was already assembling at Spithead. Before she was halfway across the Atlantic, she

had intercepted a message from a German cruiser announcing that war had broken out.

The Cup challenge now postponed, the Erin took Shamrock IV into sanctuary first in Bermuda and then into wartime liberation at a pier in Brooklyn. Returning home along, the Erin was utilised for war work and was eventually handed over to the Admiralty for patrol work and finally sunk in the Mediterranean as she hurried to the assistance of a torpedoed cruiser.

In July, 1920, after Empires had been overthrown, crowned heads exiled, and casualty lists had darkened every home, the Shamrock IV made her long postponed attempt at the America Cup at Sandy Hook and although beaten, came nearest to victory of any of Lipton's challengers.

Sir Thomas Lipton's last attempt was with Shamrock V in 1930, but although beaten, his fighting heart compelled him to challenge yet again, but death intervened before he could do so.

Today, on University Heights the mast of Shamrock IV marks the spot from which on November 11th, 1776 the English launched their successful attack across the river upon Fort Washington and forced the evacuation of Laurel Hill.

Sexton Blake of Baker Street has reason to be proud of his part in these stirring real life historical events.

\* \* \* \* \*

THOUGHTS ON BLAKE  
By S. Gordon Swan

With reference to Mr. Vernon Lay's article "Age Cannot Wither", I found this very interesting and informative, although in appendix 2 he attributes "The Mervyn Mystery" to Norman Goddard whereas elsewhere it is credited to Michael Storm.

Regarding "The Coster King" I should say it was written by E. W. Alais, particularly as it introduces a character called Joseph Humm, a footman whom Walter Webb mentioned in his series of articles as being a creation of this author. I seem to remember a U.J. by Alais "The Secret of the Allotment" which also brought in Joseph Humm, a footman.

As for "Sexton Blake - Foreman", I think here again Alais was the writer. In this story Blake assumes the identity of Bob Packer. In a later tale in the Sexton Blake Library - "Camouflage" - Blake again assumes this name as foreman of a project and there are certain descriptive paragraphs in each story which resemble each other.

"Sexton Blake, Steward" seems to me to be in the style of Allan Blair.

By the way, is it known who wrote U.J. No. 69 "Sexton Blake's First Case"? It is said to be by the author of "999" "Under Suspicion" "Behind a Mask" "The Master of Mystery" "The Scarlet Horseman" etc. Do these titles provide a clue?

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FOR SALE: Bound volume of Magnets containing Nos. 1049, 1050, 1081, plus 21 copies between Nos. 1226 and 1318. 24 copies in all. £4 4s. plus postage. Also Schoolgirls' Own Annual for 1925 4/6 plus postage. S.A.E. first, please.  
ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

# NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by JACK WOOD

A day or two ago the postman knocked at my door and handed me a package which looked intriguing. It was intriguing, because it was a copy of the London Club's new catalogue of the Nelson Lee Library prepared by Bob Blythe, who was my predecessor as editor of this Column, has one of the only two known complete sets of the Nelson Lee Library, and was one of the founders of the Old Boys Book Club.

The Nelson Lee Library catalogue follows the London club's equally admirable Magnet and Gem catalogues, and should prove an equally popular best seller. The price is only 3s. 6d plus an extra shilling for postage, and I can't think of better value for money anywhere.

For, in addition to an exhaustive list of titles of all the major Nelson Lee Library stories, Mr. Blythe has included the serials and the complete "cast" of named inhabitants at St. Frank's. No doubt there are omissions - one that springs to mind is that of Dr. Morrison Nichols, who was headmaster for quite a period after Dr. Malcolm Stafford. At the same time, Bob has done Franconians a service which is immeasurable and should, indeed, put Edwy Searles Brooks on the pedestal he so richly deserves in his own right as author and artist in words and imagination.

As if this was not enough, Bob has gone on to find, and list, much of Brooks' work in other papers as possible. It has been a year's hard work for him, but the result is a memorable addition to our knowledge of the hobby and particularly of one section of it.

Brooks, it becomes clear, had a wider output than many strict Hamiltonians would think, and it is good to get the record straight at last. Brooks, of course, is still with us, turning out the Norman Conquest and "Ironsides" Cromwell series of novels as, respectively, Berkeley Gray and Victor Gunn. It has been suggested to me on more than one occasion that somewhere or other he might also be turning out some Science Fiction, but that has never been proved - at any rate to my knowledge.

The new catalogue is excellently "framed" by a cover which features the St. Frank's College badge. No hobbyist should be without this addition to his library shelves - and that includes the Hamiltonians and

the admirers of all the other familiar authors.

Copies can be obtained direct from Bob Blythe at 40 Ellesmere Road, Dollis Hill, London, N.W.10. I hope to hear in a very short time that the original edition is out of print and that more copies are being duplicated. Well done, Bob, a major contribution to the Old Boys' lore.

\* \* \* \* \*

IN DEFENCE OF BROOKS

By Neil Beck

For a start I would like to say that I am not going to attempt to compare Edwy Searles Brooks with Charles Hamilton. This is something that is impossible to do. My opinion on the merits of these two is best summed up if I quote Addison from his Spectator Papers when he solved a problem for two of Sir Roger de Coverley's acquaintances when he said "There is much to be said for both sides" and made both parties happy. All I will say is that both Hamilton and Brooks had their good points and, similarly, both had their weaknesses.

Did Brooks have one eye on his crystal ball when he wrote his controversial 'fantastic' series? At times he may well have done, take, for example, the Sahara series where he introduced a Desert Ship (the 'Conqueror') and then only a while later we read in the Between Ourselves Column that somebody had tried to cross the Sahara in a similar machine. One point which sometimes escapes the pen of Brooks' critics is that he was writing for a young public who had no use for situations of the time but preferred stories of times and places that in real life could not be seen. Anyway, they were excellent reading material, so why worry?

The introduction of such situations has been a topic for much discussion over the years. Why, people have asked, did Brooks need to take his schoolboys to such places as Northestia, whereas the Hamilton schools enjoyed equal popularity in normal school situations? The answer is possibly that St. Frank's would never have achieved its popularity if the stories had been on the same lines as Greyfriars, St. Jim's, etc. In one Magnet series even Hamilton used a 'fantastic' situation which all his admirers seem to forget when criticising Brooks; the series was, of course, Alonzo the Strong Man - an excellent series.

Brooksian situations were exciting in the extreme, for our heroes were always doing something different, whether it was holding a barring-out or discovering a lost world.

Another anti-Brooks argument is that the Nelson Lee had a quick decline and fall and was therefore not as popular as the Hamilton papers. But how much of this was the author's fault? I like to think, rightly so I hope, very little if anything at all. The main fault lay with his editors and artists, the worst offender being Kenneth Brookes, no relation to Edwy I am pleased to say. For his illustrations were pathetic - they completely destroyed the image that readers had built up of St. Frank's characters. Handforth in particular; they were not so strong as those of earlier artists.

Brooks' writing in the Second New Series seemed to be strained as though he was being told what to write and not being allowed to exercise his own fertile brain. The natural rhythm of before was missing and in its place there was a kind of loose-jointed story which lacked his earlier punch and vigour, the most blatant example of this is the second Northestia series in comparison to the earlier series.

I hope that I have made no enemies in the Hamilton camp because of my comments, but I do hope that I have helped to clear the name of Brooks among the Hamilton admirers who, for the most part, are very much anti-Brooks.

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LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'Sby Jim CookSt. Frank's College,  
Bellton,           Sussex.

I have received my first set-back in my visits to the old school. Owing to the arctic conditions I could not proceed to St. Frank's after I had alighted at Bellton station and I stayed at the Station Hotel, opposite the station. Several feet of snow prevented the station hack from "running" me to St. Frank's and it was impossible to walk the distance so I lodged overnight as a guest of Mr. Josiah Beggin, the jovial gentleman who owned the hotel.

This small Inn hasn't been an important scene in many of the adventures of the St. Frank's juniors and this is remarkable for it stands immediately outside Bellton station and you just cannot miss it. But one is inclined to by-pass objects close at hand. Which is just what Nipper & Co did when they trudged through the deep snow to meet me. I had 'phoned from Victoria station in London, to tell them I would be on a certain train and they promised to meet me at Bellton station if they could wangle Browne's car. But when I reached Bannington the snow was so deep that the only vehicle suitable for such conditions was a sleigh and I knew they didn't keep one of those at St. Frank's!

A very severe winter had been experienced all over the country and Bellton had not escaped it. As far as the eye could see one great white mass covered the country and it was obvious the old school was experiencing hardships as were the rest of the colleges throughout the land. Mr. Biggin, who has a fat face and a fatter tummy, was unable to phone the school as his instrument was out of order due to the wires being down.

The next day although sunny was still very cold and I decided to walk the mile or so to St. Frank's. My greatest difficulty was locating landmarks with which I had become familiar and which were now obliterated by thick piles of snow. Bellton Wood, the river Stowe, and right up to Bannington moor was one white mass that blended with the general scene, while to the left Holt's farm, Moat Hollow and Bellton Lane merged as one. And there were no sign of life anywhere. Except for a thin spiral of smoke lazily ascending from one of the chimneys at Moat Hollow everything was cold, dead and still.

Eventually I saw St. Frank's in the distance and the old pile was very welcome sight. I could quite understand why Nipper had been un-



able to meet me the previous day for I expected him to think I had returned to London as the local train had been unable to run because of the drifts. But somehow they had managed to clear the line from Bannington to Bellton and I had come through. Even the inn-keeper was surprised to know I had come from Bannington by train.

Well, it turned out that Nipper, Tommy Watson and Montie did wait for me at the station after walking from the school. William Napoleon Browne's car was available but useless in the deep snow so they had, like true hosts, set out to meet me. It appeared Handforth & Co. had braved the elements and had made some purchases from old Binks in the village - Mrs. Hake having run out of supplies - and Handy had remarked on the trains running as he had seen the cotton wool puffs of smoke in the distance. As Church and McClure had also seen them Nipper then decided to go out and see if I had arrived. But he never thought I may have put up at the Station Hotel and consequently he missed me. He told me later that the hack which I had hoped to take me to the school was the same one that was used some time ago for welcoming "Mr. Wrott" a new Housemaster, who was in fact Nelson Lee. But I must get on with the news about St. Frank's.

I mentioned that I had noticed the chimney smoking at Moat Hollow and as far as the juniors were aware there was nobody living at the old house. Handforth wanted to investigate at once, but Cecil DeValerie suggested going up to the tower in the Ancient House and look from there. Not that they doubted my word. But Moat Hollow was always news and many exciting adventures had come from association with this sombre old house. A telescope had been obtained from T.T.'s uncle, Professor Tucker, and we all ascended the steps leading to the north tower. At least, we all wanted to, but only a few went up and Vivian Travers soon announced that smoke was definitely curling up from a chimney at Moat Hollow. And the place was supposed to be empty. And although Moat Hollow still had a bad influence and was shunned by the local villagers, Ralph Leslie Fullwood's idea that a tramp had taken refuge from the fierce wintry weather and had set a fire going was very feasible. But Reggie Pitt couldn't see how a tramp could gain entry as the walls surrounding the house were at least ten feet high and cruel spikes ran along the top of the wall making it doubtful that a tramp would take that chance. Perhaps I will be able to tell you next time I write who caused this mystery.

Things at St. Frank's as far as sport is concerned, are not the same. Big Side and Little Side are both under several feet of pure, virgin snow. The river Stowe is frozen over and Willy Handforth tells me that one just walks to Willards Island. The Moor View School has

its share of trouble too. Several of the girls were down with a mysterious germ and Miss Bond had forbidden all contact with St. Frank's as a precaution. Old Josh Cuttle, who is very happy with this state of affairs, has run out of salt, and as a result, the old Triangle is like a sheet of glass. Mr. Paget, the fifth form master is laid up after falling on the icy Ancient House steps and Nelson Lee has filled the gap and taken over the fifth.

But Spring will soon be here and things will be as you were at St. Frank's. All things come to an end, even the bad things.

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RESULT OF OUR MARCH COMPETITION

Scores of suggestions for a new name for our magazine have flowed into the Digest Office and we thank all who put pen to paper to join in the fun. Some names suggested would be just as misleading - for instance, Collectors' Fanfare - while others, like Boys' Magazines Monthly seemed too much of a mouthful, and were duplicated several times. We have selected the following for our books awards:

THE GERIATRIC JELNELIVREPHILE (sent in by Tom Hopperton), which for sheer horror, is unbeatable.

OUR YESTERDAYS, a delightful effort, sent in by Patrick Creighan.

MEMORY LANE MONTHLY, sent in by Herbert Holmes, makes a nice little link with the Annual.

Messrs. Hopperton, Creighan and Holmes will be receiving their book awards in due course.

WANTED: Schoolboys Owns 169, 174, 198, 202, 389. Rookwood Nos. before 174. Greyfriars Nos. before 130. Magnets 1139, 1120, 1111, 1072, 1078, 1035, 1028, 1027, 1013, 1011, 905, 963, 961, 899, 826, 809, 808, 807. Few old Film Funs, Kinema Comics for exchange. Magnets 562, 653, 722, 792, 817, 972, 1055. THOMPSON, 53 WALLASEY PARK, BELFAST, 14.

WANTED: Magnets, Nos. 860-1091 (incl.) 1093, 1100, 1103, 1109, 1112, 1116-1131 (incl.) 1151-1169 (incl.) 1172-1175 (incl.) 1177, 1180, 1182, 1186, 1189, 1195-1209 (incl.) 1223-1225 (incl.) 1245, 1246, 1248, 1251, 1252, 1254, 1257, 1260, 1261, 1271, 1288, 1290, 1295, 1307, 1309, 1310, 1314, 1318, 1321, 1325, 1342, 1346, 1347, 1420, 1424, 1482, 1489, 1495, 1498, 1501, 1504, 1505, 1579. Also wanted Schoolboy Own Libs. Have over 100 Magnets for exchange. F. HIGHFIELD, 106 PARK SIDE, HEAGE, NR. BELPER, DERBYS.

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 Fayne. 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.

# HAMILTONIANA

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 42 - Magnets 1111-1115 - Loder's Feuds Series

1929 saw the Magnet in its Golden Age. Nothing that Charles Hamilton wrote at this time was less than very entertaining, but it is undeniable that some stories were better than others. Where to place Magnets 1111 - 1115 in this hierarchy of value is difficult to determine.

The series is, in itself, very episodic. The first two numbers explain Loder's feud with Wingate and how he plotted to lure his enemy away from a cricket match with a fake telegram, a good Hamiltonian stand-by. No. 1111 comes to an end somewhat suddenly, but the following number finishes with a good climax, and the plot seemed resolved. With No. 1113, however, Loder's enmity turned towards the Famous Five, who had exposed his plot the previous week. Blundell saved the day for them, and No. 1114 is something of a digression, telling how a misunderstanding about his actions the previous week were cleared up. The last number of the series provided a grand climax with Loder foiled in the middle of the story, and - surprisingly enough - repentant at the end. It was an unusually moral series, despite the surface excitement of the drama.

It would be a fair judgement of this series to say that the parts are greater than the whole. Among the highlights were Doctor Locke and Mr. Quelch discussing Aeschylus (with interruptions) in the first number, the success of Hurree Singh's counter-move in the second number, and Mr. Quelch's adamant refusal to listen to Loder's accusations and his later satisfaction in joining the accused members of his form for tea at Courtfield in the last number. Over the whole series is deftly spun a web of humour, and of course quotations are as abundant as shells on the sea-shore.

Had this series been written a year later, it would have been even greater than it is. But we cannot expect perfection everywhere, and in this little quintet of stories the discriminating collector will find much to please him, much to amuse him, and plenty to satisfy him.

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— HURREE SINGH —

ECHO OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Mr. William H. Gill, who is a Barrister-at-Law, writes the Editor of Collectors' Digest as follows:

"I have read your excellent article in the "Autobiography of Frank Richards" and, being a friend of the late Charles Hamilton, I thought you would like to hear a few facts about him, of which he informed me some years ago.

He went to school in Berkshire, near Reading, but I never discovered which school. The topography and countryside of the Greyfriars stories are based on the villages and places on the Lambourn Downs near the Kennet Valley (the Kennet = Sark).

Hamilton spent a considerable part of his youth exploring this countryside, and he moved it to near Pegwell Bay in Kent for the purpose of his stories.

Did you notice that the map in the Autobiography is incorrect? The correct map was published in the Holiday Annual in either 1920 or 1921. In the Magnet map (reproduced in the Autobiography) Pegg is shown near Courtfield, whereas it is beyond Friardale. Also, Ashford and Dover are shown BOTH north of Greyfriars."

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOESNO. 64, ET TU, BRUTE!

R. J. GODSAVE: The substitute writings by contributors, using our favourite author's characters, are essential to the well-being of both the Digest and the Annual. That the gift of writing stories like those of Slade is given to very few is all the more reason for stories of a substitute nature to appear, if only to maintain the atmosphere of the various schools. It might be thought that our writers are taking a liberty in emulating the original authors, but as the Digest and the Annual are privately circulated, any liberty taken is greatly lessened. From a Leeite point of view, it would be a sad day if "Letters from St. Frank's" which could be termed substitute writing, ceased to appear due to editorial policy.

CLIFF LETTEY: I, in common with most collectors, dislike and reject substitute Hamilton stories. Least of all do we want them appearing in C.D. Annual. I think if a vote were taken, the majority would vote for the exclusion of all fictional matter. What we want are factual and helpful articles to assist collectors. For example, the articles of Roger Jenkins in particular were helpful to me in my early collecting days. Other stalwarts, among those not so well known, who helped me in those days were Eric Fayne and W. Lofts. A more recent series by Mr. Hubbard has stimulated an interest in hard-cover school stories. The collector does not want to read a wholly fictional tale of Greyfriars or St. Jim's written by another collector. If I wanted to read a substitute Magnet or Gem I would rather read an old one by Pentelov.

JOHN LITTLEWOOD: Because some of the members of the old Brigade were thoroughly sickened by some ghastly plots and characterisations by inexpert sub-writers that is no reason for them to condemn every story with Hamilton characters which comes their way. "Late Summer Folly" was well written and great care was evidently taken to keep Tom and his friends with exactly the same characteristics with which their great creator had endowed them. I personally thought that the use of modern expressions and modern sporting activities enriched the characters' actions. The great charm of the Hamilton successes was evident all through "Late Summer Folly" and I, for one, am longing to see more stories written about Tom & Co. in future Digests.

BOB WHITER: Speaking for myself I enjoyed "Late Summer Folly", but I think, to be honest, I'd prefer an article, or a story about Mr. Buddle.

D. WALLACE: I welcome fine dramatic stories like "Late Summer Folly". I thought the handling of Tom Merry and Co in their modern setting was most skilfully done as there was no change whatsoever in the characters of the St. Jim's boys and they had the very same endearing qualities, charm and individualities as they had in the good old Gem. The main point was that there was no tempering with the characters, and this satisfied me completely. We old lovers of Hamiltonia like to think of our favourite Hamilton characters as a set of living and adventurous Peter Pans, and because of this pleasurable chunk of self-deception we are delighted when our Hamilton characters appear in good stories of any era. It must be an absorbing plot, and "Late Summer Folly" definitely had this. I have often been bored by tramp, double or missing heir stories, but the surt-boards and modern expressions of the St. Jim's heroes held my interest from the very start. It would be a major tragedy if these clever stories were discontinued.

JACK OVERHILL: I remember Cardew coming to St. Jim's during the first world war (I never liked him) and when I read "Late Summer Folly" I thought him skilfully handled in a well-balanced, well-written story. But I felt you had made a mistake in publishing it in Collectors' Digest Annual. You, as editor, must not allow the magazine to deteriorate into that sort of thing. If you do, you will kill it. And that will be a sad loss to many of us.

HARRY BROSTER: Roger says that Buddle and Danny are safely anchored in the pre-war past. For that matter, are not the Terrible Three, Study No. 6 and Cardew? You did not create a fresh lot of characters or alter St. Jim's in the way that, for instance, the Modern Blake has been transformed. The criticism of substitute writers was caused mainly by the efforts of the misguided few who knew but little of their subject. They simply worked to order and filled a gap. The author of "Late Summer Folly" and "Odd Man Out" does not come anywhere near this category. In short, I like the St. Jim's yarns and I like Buddle. I think there are great possibilities at Slade. To my mind, these stories fill a gap - they are, at least, a change from articles and pages of data - often repetitive. I liked "Late Summer Folly". Do one with Figgins and Cousin Ethel for the next offering!

ARTHUR HOLLAND: I sincerely hope a story of one of our schools will occasionally appear in our beloved C.D. as well as in the Annual. I regard these yarns as special treats, and they are evidently enjoyed by a large number of readers. The imaginative writings of some of the contributors provides variety and adds to the interest. I often wish Jim Cock's "Letter from St. Frank's" was twice as long, and I'm sure "The Mystery of the Two Bottles" gave enjoyment to many. Though I'm an ardent Hamiltonian of 50 years standing, I believe we old-timers should guard against becoming too conservative. To deplore an occasional story in our periodicals after the manner of some, is really going too far.

(A further selection of readers' views on this topic will appear next month.)

# Old Boys' Book Club

## MILWAU

Meeting held 26th February, 1963.

Again a very interesting programme, but unfortunately only a very moderate attendance. The meeting starting rather late we had time only for a short quiz - one of nine - asking the members present to name as many boys at the principal Hamiltonian schools named Dick or Richard. This is a favourite Christian name of Charles Hamilton's and actually there are thirteen boys so called at Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood and Courtfield - none at Highcliffe. For the records (to bring in St. Frank's) there are two only at that School. We were asked to guess the number (or nearest) of a Modern Boy which was won by Norman - No. 260. Tom Porter introduced a novel idea - his Collectors' Item each month hence forward would be a very old boys' favourite with the date corresponding to the date of the meeting. In this case it was N.L.L. (O.S.) No. 299. "The Housemaster's Hat" dated 26/2/1921. One of the middle stories in the Ernest Lawrence/Smale Fox series. Another collector's item was a 66 year old Pluck No. 140 dated 23rd July, 1897. There was a game (Discovering the titles) and this was won by the writer - prize a Modern Boy. I also won the library raffle - two Tom Merry Gold Hawk paper backs. There was a free distribution of Modern Boys - Tom's generosity again. The "battle" was then on. For a time Norman Gregory has held his peace, but tonight he launched another of his good natured broadsides at Hamiltonia. His subject - "The Rio Kid".

Space does not allow for putting on record the opinions of members. Generally that the Bunter Books were very good re-hashes of some of these series which in themselves were inclined to be repetitive at times. But like all Charles Hamilton's school yarns very enjoyable.

Still further soothing the ruffled feelings of the staunch Hamiltonians, Tom Porters night-cap was a reading from Magnet No. 1599, the opening chapter of maybe the best of all Frank Richards yarns, the Tracy series.

HARRY BROSTER

## LONDON

There was an excellent attendance at the East Dulwich meeting on Sunday, March 17th, one new member, Leslie Clay, making his first visit. Bob Blythe in the chair, welcomed one and all and recalled the first meeting held in the same room about fifteen years ago. Going on he gave the facts about the Nelson Lee catalogue, 106 copies sold to date. With 314 papers, etc., in the library, he hopes to expand still further. Excellent progress was given by Roger Jenkins re his Hamiltonian Library.

Then came a discussion about compiling a Sexton Blake catalogue. This will be a colossal task but if it does materialise it will be a worthy companion to the other four efforts of the club.

Bill Lofts obliged the company by reading the first chapter of Magnet number one, which he had brought along with him. The contrast to this was the sale of copies of "Big Chief Bunter" a sort of Alpha and Omega? Don Webster conducted his Characters and Authors quiz, this being won by Len Packman and Bill Lofts with the ever faithful Charlie

Wright in third place. "The final Problem" of the Sherlock Holmes saga, played over on A L.P. record by the host, Len Packman, was enjoyed by all. Len and Josie had put on a grand study feed and with special studies for the two libraries and the feed what more could we ask for.

Next meeting at Bob Blythe's abode at 40 Ellesmere Road, Dollis Hill, London, N.W. 10 on Sunday, April 21st. Kindly advise host if you intend to be present and bring cup or mug.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

### MERSEYSIDE

#### Meeting held 10th March.

A most gratifying feature of this meeting was the very large attendance, in fact only the unavoidable absence of our usual regular, John Farrell, prevented us from having a 100% muster. John will be back with us next month, however.

We got off to a fairly prompt start with the secretary reading the financial report, which still gives cause for satisfaction and then came the chairman's remarks on general matters, one of which dealt with Eric Fayne's article in the C.D. on alternative names for this popular monthly. It was generally agreed that the coining of an adequately descriptive title within the limit of about three words was extremely difficult.

Norman then submitted a repeat of a competition which we enjoyed a few years ago; we were required to complete the final part of a story which he had written, and needless to say, this gave plenty of scope for originality and ingenuity. Frank Unwin was adjudged the winner as the result of a most creditable effort, although some of the other entries were also very good.

After refreshments and the library business we concentrated on a novel quiz, the work of Frank Unwin, who asked us to choose a cast from the Remove Dramatic Society for a production of "Oliver Twist". We had to put on our thinking caps for this one, as it called for a knowledge of both Dickens and Hamilton, but most of those present had a go, and the answers furnished were of a high standard. Pat Laffey took the honours in a close finish and was the recipient of a nice book presented by Frank.

A short but animated discussion on a topic mentioned in C.D. took us to the end of the meeting, most enjoyable, and all too short. The best meeting for a long time.

Our next get-together will be held on Sunday, April 7th and not April 14th as this is Easter Sunday, at the usual time and venue.

FRANK CASE

### NORTHERN

#### Meeting held Saturday, 9th March.

The weather had relented at last when our March meeting came round, and nineteen of us assembled in much better conditions than had prevailed for the last two meetings. We were especially glad to have with us again Elsie Taylor and Neville Vear who have been unavoidably absent recently.

Alas, the news of the month was mostly of a tragic nature, as our old friend Margaret Jackson and Harold Busby, one of our most popular members, had both died since our last meeting. This is indeed a grievous loss, both to the Club and to us all as individuals. They will be greatly missed. We extend our sincere sympathies to their loved ones.

Gerry Allison quoted a couple of interesting items from the local press, one to the effect that the Boys Own Paper which was first published in 1879, has been taken over by a larger group which is expanding its interests in this field (one wonders what they will make of it), and the other about the schoolboy who grew a moustache. The writer speculated as to what would have been the reaction in the Greyfriars Remove had Billy



Bunter grown one!

Then came a very interesting quiz on St. Frank's, sent by Ben Whiter. Our leading St. Frank's enthusiast, Jack Wood, was in fine form and answered nine out of ten very difficult questions correctly.

The talk this week was given by Molly Allison, her subject being the girls story papers, notably the School Friend, and the changes which took place at Cliff House after Frank Richards had set the scene there. Molly also referred to the authors of popular girls stories, such as Angela Brazil and Christine Chandler, and read extracts from a very interesting story 'Meggy Makes Her Mark' by Christine Chandler, which was published in 'Little Folks.'

Frank Hancock provided a puzzle consisting of 20 jumbled names, these being Hamilton characters other than 'regulars'. Winner - Geoffrey Wilde being the only one to guess them all.

After refreshments, another quiz of similar type sent in by Harry Lavender who was unable to attend this month. This was a real teaser and none of us was able to complete it, Geoffrey Wilde coming out on top. We have sent this one on to our London colleagues in exchange for the St. Frank's quiz aforementioned and will be interested to hear how they get on with it. Another enjoyable meeting terminated at 9.20 p.m.

Next meeting, - Annual General Meeting - Saturday, 13th April.

F. HANCOCK

#### AUSTRALIA

An extraordinary meeting was held on Monday night, March 11th to coincide with the visit of Rev. Jack Hughes of Brisbane, Queensland. Continuing his business of conference delegate with the equally absorbing pleasure of our hobby interests made his few days in Sydney particularly enjoyable.

It was with genuine pleasure that members of the Golden Hours Club welcomed Jack to their club room in the Book Bargain Nazaar, and for the next two and a half hours the hobby talk flowed without let up.

The wide field of interests covered by Jack's collection had something therein to strike a responsive cord for each and every member. Two items which attracted particular interest from our collector were the catalogue produced in such splendid style by the London club - now more than ever Jack is looking forward to adding them to his collection as he is particularly interested in Hamiltonia and Nelson Lee items. Also a supporter of the Bunter books, Jack is particularly attracted to the illustrations which of course have great sentimental value because they constitute a living link with the past - Jack tells us that the bookseller's assistant always has a most curious expression when he asks for these books ... she's not quite sure, but almost so! Still, he reckons it's well worth running this gauntlet to obtain them!

From reminiscences of the Champion and Chums, Jack returned to his first love, Hamiltonia and members were most interested to learn of his methods for storing and preserving his valuable collection - most folk know the odds one faces from mildew and dust but in tropical Queensland life is even more difficult for the ardent book collector. From all accounts Jack has the situation well in hand with his insect proof boxes inside a wide shelved cupboard. But amidst this scene of perfection there is one blot to mar his pleasure. One much sought after Magnet has eluded Jack for many years despite all his efforts and offers - No. 1385 is his hearts desire, so can anyone help to supply this one treasure ... we hope that this S.O.S. on behalf of our guest will bring this Magnet to Queensland to make his visit with us a truly memorable one.

Recalling his visit to England in 1954 Jack was able to give members first hand reminiscences of his meeting with Herbert Leckenby and the two wonderful days he was privileged to spend with this warm-hearted man who shared so much of his life with us.

Mention of the new format S.B.L. brought a responsive twinkle from Jack who entertained us with an amusing story from his country travels. As he pointed out

the print in the current Blakes is too small for adults to cope with - how did folk in the early days cope by candlelight? Staying in a farm-house during his country circuit several years ago Jack thought he'd find out - so out came his treasured travelling companion (Magnet or Gem) the candlelight was brought closer and Jack settled down to recapture past pleasures. A thumping headache convinced him our forebears must have had harder heads!

A half hour in the local coffee shop concluded a memorable evening and we say again "So glad you could join us Jack."

## DANNY'S DIARY

APRIL 1913:

My Grandmother and Auntie Gwen came to spend Easter with us, and Gran brought me some papers. She knows that I do a lot of reading.

One of them was the Penny Popular, which I can't often afford but like very much. It contained a cricket story called "Tom Merry and Co's Substitute", all about a new curate called Mr. Dodds who was a fine cricketer. Doug says that the story once appeared in the Gem when that paper only cost a halfpenny, and that it was then called "The St. Jim's Curate". Also in the Penny Pop was a story about Jack, Sam, and Pete called "The Dead City". I did not like this much, but one about Sexton Blake called "The Rajah's Bodyguard" was exciting. Mr. Lindsay told me that it was in the Union Jack in 1906, and it was entitled "The Steward Detective."

Gran also brought me the latest Boy's Friend Library, which was called "The Shame of St. Basil's" by Henry St. John. I have read quite a few tales about St. Basil's, and I always like them.

The third paper Gran brought was Chips, but there was a bit of an argument about this, as Auntie Gwen didn't think I ought to have it. She said that nice boys don't read comic papers, and it didn't make any difference when Doug assured her very solemnly that I wasn't a nice boy. However, Gran slipped it to me when Auntie Gwen wasn't looking, so it was all right. It had an interesting story - one of a series, I think - called "The Prison Chaplain", telling of a parson's adventures at the Gaol on the Moor.

The Cunard company has just disclosed particulars of its new liner, the Aquitania. It will be over 900 feet long, and will be the longest passenger vessel in the world.

The Gem has been first-class this month - every story a gem. In "D'Arcy's Dodge", Gussy accidentally punched Mr. Lathom on the nose, and ran away from school. He became an interpreter at the Royal Hotel, Wayland, and the story was a real scream all through.

"The Schoolboy Firefighters" was very good. Tom Merry formed a fire brigade, and it was useful when there was a fire at the Grammar School, and Mont Blanc was almost burned to death.

"Honours Divided" was excellent. A new boy called Cedric Lacy came to St. Jim's, and he was reported to be a great cricketer, so Tom and Figgins each tried to get him into their own Houses. Eventually, after Tom had bagged him for the School House, it turned out that he was not allowed to play cricket any more.

The last Gem of the month was grand. Tom Merry was "Under a Cloud". He had been seen going in to a public house, and he also insulted Cousin Ethel. In the end it turned out that Tom had a double named Reggie Clavering. A marvellous tale.

I had a day out with Doug on April 19th. He took me to the Cup Final at the Crystal Palace. Aston Villa were playing Sunderland. The only goal came in the second half when Villa forced a corner. Wallace took it, and Barber headed it into the net. So Aston Villa are the cup winners this year.

That evening Doug took me to the Savoy Theatre where we saw a not very funny farce called "Brother Alfred" by P. G. Wodehouse and H. W. Westbrook.

A good month in the Magnet. "Barred by the Fags" was all about Jack Wingate. In

"Bob Cherry's Chase", Bob's cousin, Paul Tyrrell was introduced again. He cheated Lord Mauleverer out of some money, so Bob and his friends spent their Easter holiday chasing Tyrrell across France, and they caught up with him at Monte Carlo.

"The Impossible Four" was very funny. All about the occupants of Study 7 - Peter and Alonzo Todd, Tom Dutton, and Billy Bunter. The last story was a Fisher T. Fish tale, called "The Schoolboy Moneylender". A jolly good bunch of stories.

Before Gran and Auntie Gwen went home, Dad took them to Covent Garden Opera House to hear Signor Enrico Caruso who has started a season there.

Terrible tornado in the United States, which has caused great damage and much loss of life in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Pennsylvania. Mum says we often complain about our own climate, but we don't have things like that to put up with.

## Sexton Blake Today

The Latest Novels in Sexton Blake Library reviewed by Margaret Cooke.  
(1/- each from any newsagent)

### CULT OF DARKNESS: S.B.L. No. 519

DESMOND REID

Another excellent novel from The Reid stable containing first class material and characterisation, mystery, horror, excitement and deduction.

Why was the death of a fat Englishman so important to a group of unpleasant people in Africa, and why did his diary contain initials instead of sentences? Who were the Unutterables?

Sexton Blake sought the answers to these and other questions in London and Africa, striving to connect a group of initials with people and organisations, conscious that failure to complete his task would mean danger to a large area of the world.

This is a tough thriller dealing with political intrigue, brutality, "dangerous eccentrics, paranoids and outright crackpots" used as dupes in a bid for world power. It is worthy of its place amongst the best S.B.Ls.

### SPEAK ILL OF THE DEAD: No. 520

RICHARD WILLIAMS

A very good whodunit with a cleverly constructed plot and counter plot. A number of excellently drawn characters form two groups of suspects whose actions help to sustain the mystery of Abe Hardcastle's murder. Why was he playing Easter Bunny and why did Blake find blood on toy money in another room?

As usual Mr. Williams gives good value for his readers money:- mystery, murder, an exciting chase, strong action --- and a surprise ending. This is a novel to suit all tastes. It has pace, action, suspense and drama; and shows Sexton Blake as we like him - strong, kindly, intelligent and virile - a very good book indeed.

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WANTED: Good loose copies or bound volumes containing any of the following - MAGNETS 45, 52, 131 to 149 inclusive, 195, 205, 237, 238, 239, 277, 318, 319, 353, 400, 417, 422, 921, 924, 925, 938, 940, 942, 943, 946, 949, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996. Most issues between 821 and 890, 900. GEMS - many issues between 400 and 500. Many issues between 800 and 879, Also numbers 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 985, 989, 990, 992, 933, 998, 1129, 1150, 984. POPULARS - 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474. Advertiser has complete sets of Gem, Magnet and Popular but needs many good replacement copies before having final binding work done. ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

**YOURS SINCERELY**(Interesting Items from the  
Editor's Letter-Bag.)

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JACK HUGHES (Australia): It has been a real treat to spend a little time each evening with the Annual since it arrived. Now, with the last page read, I have 12 months to wait for the next. It is a fine job, and it is hard to decide which feature I enjoyed the most. Danny always brings a lump to the throat for yester year; and Cardew and Summer Folly was a treat; perhaps a little more modern than the stories of Gem days, but somehow just right for an adult Gem enthusiast who just loves to enter the atmosphere of "school days".

FRANK HANCOCK (Leeds): Harking back to the Rio Kid. You know Hopalong Cassidy was the creation of Clarence Mulford, a clerk in Chicago. Not until he had published more than a dozen books about him, and was rich and famous, did he visit the West for the first time, a good many years later. It shows what can be done by a clever and imaginative writer who "does his homework". No doubt the old silent Western films, of which there were many even before 1914, starring such as W. S. Hart and Broncho Billy Anderson, were of great help to him.

JIM COOK (Wemley): Nelson Lee will be 70 years old come September 1964. Sexton Blake is very much older. And Bunter will go on for ever! There's nothing to-day which shows promise of such longevity apart from them. Unless it be Collectors' Digest.

DON WEBSTER (Kew): The reference to Charles Hamilton as the most prolific of all writers, in the Guinness Book of Records was spoiled for me by referring to the Magnet and Gem as "conics". Please somebody put them right for next year's edition.

W. K. MAGEE (Chester): I greatly enjoy the Digest and the Annual. They have revived happy memories of long ago when Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Nelson Lee, the Rio Kid, and King of the Islands were part of my life. My most vivid memories are around 1929 when the Greyfriars chums were in Hollywood, and St. Frank's were at the Test Matches in Australia. I can still recall my bitter disappointment when St. Frank's was burned down, and the long school stories seemed to have gone for ever in 1930.

GEORGE SELLARS (Sheffield): The March cover is easily one of the best ever to appear on C.D. I don't remember ever seeing that Macdonald picture before. The curious thing is the wide diversity of dates in the Gems, Magnets, and Boys' Friends depicted. For instance a Gem of 1910, the famous story of the Outsider's "death", and Boys' Friends of the 1914-war period.

CHARLES SKILTON (London): In regard to the interesting article on the Boys' Own Paper in the Annual, I wonder if you know that Percy V. Bradshaw, who is mentioned as a contributor but not detailed among the notes on authors, is, to the best of my knowledge, still alive (he is certainly still in the London Telephone Directory) and achieved some note as the Director of the Press Art School for many years. He might be worth contacting, as he was both author and illustrator.

JACK COOK (Berwell): Great thrill at receiving the Nelson Lee Catalogue which covers completely the works of E. S. Brooks. Though the late Chas. Hamilton is cited as being a most prolific writer, I wonder how many thousands of words Brooks has turned out. This will, of course, include his stories of Greyfriars and St. Jim's.

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