

FOR SALE

BY ORDER OF THE EXECUTRIX OF THE LATE BILL MARTIN'S
LIFETIME COLLECTION OF OLD BOYS' BOOKS

LOT 15 Offers requested for 132 loose copies of MAGNETS comprising Nos. 148 to 279, and including 3 Christmas Bumper numbers with covers except odd one, good condition; suitable for binding.

LOT 16 Offers requested for 116 loose copies of MAGNETS, comprising Nos. 281 to 396, and including 6 Special Bumper Nos. with covers; very good condition, suitable for binding.

LOT 17 Offers requested for 47 loose copies of MAGNETS, comprising Nos. 466 to 516 (except Nos. 469 and 513) with covers; excellent condition.

LOT 18 Offers requested for 44 loose copies of MAGNETS, all different, ranging between Nos. 202 and 299, with covers, except few. Majority in reasonable condition.

LOT 19 Offers requested for 80 loose copies of MAGNETS, all different, ranging between Nos. 300 and 396, with covers except three; includes 3 Bumper Nos. Good condition.

LOT 20 Offers requested for one unbound volume 33 of GEMS, comprising 26 loose copies Nos. 1038 to 1063, with covers. Excellent condition.

LOT 21 Offers requested for one bound volume of GEMS, comprising 25 numbers, includes 11 Christmas Nos. from 1927 to 1937; remainder all December issues. Excellent condition.

LOT 22 Offers requested for one bound volume of GEMS, comprising 40 copies Nos. 459 to 498.
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Well used.

PLEASE QUOTE LOT NUMBERS
POSTAL OFFERS ONLY AT THIS STAGE - NO CALLERS

Executrix - Mrs. I. Carpenter,
230, Watford Road,
HARROW, Middlesex.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

☆☆

☆☆

FOUNDED in 1947 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 17

No. 197

MAY, 1963

Price 2s. Od.



STILL LOOKING BACK: Last month I was doing it. Having picked up an Illustrated Guide to Brighton in a bookshop, I find myself doing it again this month. Looking back, I mean. It's becoming a habit.

Early in the Guide, I came upon the following: "Until recently the principal means of locomotion about the town for the general public was supplied by different systems of omnibuses, but these have now to a great extent been supplanted by electric trams, which are run by the corporation. Penny fares are charged and in the near future new routes are to be laid down." (Well, that's something quite new in announcements.)

In case that announcement attracts you to Brighton for a summer holiday, you may be glad to learn that THE GRAND HOTEL (facing the sea) offers "full boarding terms" at "10/6 per diem".

The Empire Theatre presents a "lightning programme" (whatever that is) every evening at 7.30. Prices from 4d to one guinea. There is a Buffet and Silver Grill "in the Dive under the Empire". (And there was silly little us thinking that a "dive" was something quite new!)

The Edent Theatre is the most popular in the town. It is electrically lit, and is the only theatre in Brighton where smoking is allowed. Prices 6d to two guineas.

If you feel like a ride in a Hackney Carriage, there are four types licenced in Brighton, viz: First-class carriages, drawn by one horse, and carrying four adults. Second-class carriages drawn by one horse and carrying two adults. Third-class carriages, drawn by hand, and carrying one adult. (Shades of Singapore). Fourth-class carriages, drawn by one or more goats, and carrying a child or two children. So there's no need to

be inactive in Brighton.

The woman always pays - even in Brighton. Here are the charges for bathing machines which are plentiful all along the splendid beach: For every Lady occupying a Machine for less than half-an-hour.. 9d. For every Gentleman occupying .. etc .. 6d. For every additional half-hour or portion thereof .. 6d. Children under 14 (if more than one bathe at the same time from one machine) each .. 6d. (If it's not an immodest remark, we shouldn't think the ladies had much of their half-hour left by the time they had undressed and re-dressed.)

If you send plenty of cards while you are on holiday you may be glad to know that the last post goes from the G.P.O. at 10 p.m. Letters posted no later than 4.30 will be delivered in London by 9 p.m. the same evening. Our postal services are wonderful.

The London, Brighton, and South Coast Railway has done much to increase the popularity of Brighton by its excellent and quick train services. The railway station, illuminated at night by electric light, is regarded as one of the finest termini out of the Metropolis. (So don't miss seeing the railway station if it's still there when you arrive.)

Brighton, to be viewed in all its glory, should be seen between three and four o'clock on a fine afternoon in the height of the fashionable season, which lasts from August to December. The Esplanade has been styled the "Rotten Row of the South".

It will be profitable to spend a half-day at Devil's Dyke, from the summit of which can be seen forty miles of the Weald of Sussex, one of the grandest views in the world. The Cable Railway is a distinct novelty, the cars of which, suspended on a cable, pass over the valley between two of the highest hills. Being only 5½ miles from Brighton, it is not a fatiguing walk to Devil's Dyke, if the visitor is so inclined, but wagonettes and charabancs run a frequent service.

And on the bookstalls you can buy - what? The Boy's Friend? Pluck? The Marvel? The Vanguard? Chips? Comic Cuts?

The date of this Guide to Brighton? Well, it's not given. But reference is made to a census of 1901, so it is later than 1901. But in the list of amusement houses,

there are no cinemas, so it must be - what - before 1910? Say 1905 or 1906? That's why we didn't tell you you can get the Gem and Magnet there.

By the way, we've been to Brighton many times, but never have seen the Eden Theatre or the Cable Railway. Do they still exist? Can any Brighton reader tell us?

THIS MONTH'S COVER: The Butterfly, which seems to have started its life in 1905, was a very popular comic paper in its day. At the time of our cover reproduction, towards the end of the first world war, another popular comic "The Firefly" had been



Illustration by ...
 You are all ...
 set of ...

.....
 amalgamated with it. "Cheerful Charlie Brown", pictured below (left) was one of the most delightful characters in the Butterfly.

THE DOUBLE CENTURY: We shall be marking the occasion of the 200th issue of the Digest by a very special number. Watch out for particulars as the days get longer and warmer.

THE EDITOR

THE ODD BODS ODD PAPER

by TOM HOPPERTON

In these days of mammoth multi-million publishing mergers, it is hard to conceive that within our own lifetimes men could rise to fame and affluence in Fleet Street from an initial capital limited to ability and impudence. John Cassell, a reformed drunken carpenter, not unknown in the dock, progressed through spouting on teetotal platforms to inducing a benign capitalist to finance a printing and publishing business. By the time the capitalist feeling somewhat less benign, had sold up our hero and taken a £20,000 loss in the process, Cassell had so publicised himself by sticking his name on his every production ("Cassell's Family Magazine", etc.) that other backers accepted him and by harnessing his undoubted abilities to the publishing side and keeping him away from the cash-box and ledgers they laid the foundation of the great publishing house that today produces the Bunter Books.

It had been clearly demonstrated by 1880 that no-one could really compete with Edwin J. Brett in the boys' fictional field. Brett was notoriously mean in his payments to authors, but Cassell now came up with a really brilliant idea for undercutting even Edwin J. - a paper that would cost nothing to produce bar the paper and printing. Yes, one sub-editor, armed with the week's journals, scissors, paste and a complete contempt for other people's copyright, and he had all that was necessary to put out "The Boys' Newspaper".

No. 1 appeared on 15th September, 1880, with sixteen 12" x 10" pages, closely printed in triple columns and without illustrations. Suitable items culled from the week's newspapers were relieved only by an article on first-aid and one on sport, a potted biography of James Outram, and reports of public school and university sporting events. The Editor laid it down that any story appearing would be a true one. It was quite competent, it was good value for a penny.....but!

The publishers must have felt there was a "but" also, because in No. 4 a single-page short story sneaked in, unsigned and with a headline no bigger than the chess column's, to be followed by similar shorts in Nos. 7, 10 and 11. Between Nos. 15 and 16, Cassell put out "The Miller and His Men", a special Christmas Number, excellently illustrated and, with any other heading, highly commendable. Under that title, however, it was an irritating, catchpenny swindle. It was not, as the unwary purchaser would imagine, the famous blood or even a re-working of it, but a collection of tales told Decameron fashion by a group of boys stranded in a mill during a snowstorm. The first long serial began in No. 17, "In the King's Name", which was also unsigned but, like the preceding shorts, was by George Manville Fenn. The paper then plodded on until No. 34, when its purchase by Mr. W. J. Ingram of 74 Fleet Street was announced.

This Ingram began life as a provincial newsagent, among whose side-lines was an agency for the then-famous Holloways Pills. Following a row with Holloways about his percentage of profit, he got a local chemist to make him up a batch of laxatives which, by a rare stroke of genius, he named "Old Parr's Life Pills". The Midlands, being constipated mentally as well as physically, was enchanted with the implied idea of a few sixpenny boxes not only curing its disorder but prolonging its life to 152 into the bargain. It swallowed both the advertising and the pills with such gusto that within a few years Ingram was in London, with sufficient cash to indulge his publishing aspirations by buying "The Illustrated London News".

.....
 These two oddities were bound to meet, but I have been unable to ascertain what

induced Ingram to dabble in "The Boys' Newspaper". The clearest proof that it was not a case of Cassell selling the novice a "pup" lies in the fact that he immediately began "The Boys' Illustrated News" - a course that Ingram, with the resources of "The I.L.N." behind him, could very well have followed for himself. Anyway, "The Boys' Newspaper" must have been successful enough to attract Old Parr's pal, and sufficiently so to convince Cassell that his original idea was worth pursuing.

When No. 35 appeared, Ingram had brightened it up until it was indistinguishable from "Boys of England" or "The Boys' Standard". "For the Glory of the School; by a Public School Boy" was promoted to the front cover, which was adorned by a half-page cut of a form-room riot. There were eight pages of fiction, well illustrated, and the usual features. The initial splash soon receded: the fiction was cut down and the inside illustrations dropped to two a week, most of them with a distinctly second-hand look about them, as if they had been dug up from the "Illustrated London News" morgue. Practically the only item of note in the paper's remaining months of life was the extra Summer Number in August, "Home for the Holidays", 24 pages for a penny, with stories by Paul Blake, Edward A. Norton, Horace Lennard, Keppel Brierly and Lucien Wolfe. It had also the earliest full-page advertisement I have seen in a boys' mag, one by E. Moses and Son of Minorities and Aldgate, the pioneers of slop clothing and notorious sweat-shop. There was none of the usual experimenting with contents and format common in sickly papers: "The Boys' Newspaper" simply drifted peacefully to its end in No. 78, having outlived "The Boys' Illustrated News" by six weeks.

Speculating why among papers of equal merit some failed and others flourished is usually an unprofitable pursuit: with "The Boys' Newspaper" there is nothing to speculate about. Cassell at the outset can only have aimed at a modest success, made possible by low production costs. Junior egg-heads are always with us, but not in sufficient force to maintain their own journal. "The Boys' Newspaper" was obviously one which would be bought for boys and not by them, and Cassell's stolid, lumpy front page would inspire parental confidence in its "improving" qualities. While the interior remained such as it was, Ingram's competitive and imitative change of cover destroyed this feeling. He produced a hybrid, and such things are notoriously sterile. Like that other hybrid, the mule, "The Boys' Newspaper" had neither pride of ancestry nor hope of posterity.

ARE LIBRARIANS HUMORISTS?

According to press reports, the librarian of St. Pancras has banned William, Biggles and Noddy from the seven libraries under his control. He thinks the stories are badly written and do not stimulate a child's imagination. Does he shudder to think of modern youth, after its nightly dose of sex and violence on television, being corrupted by the heroes who have been loved by generations of youngsters and adults?

It would be interesting to know just which stories this librarian does deem suitable for the juvenile readers of St. Pancras.

SALE: 3 bound volumes (1st, 2nd & 3rd year) The War in Pictures. As new. Offers.
ATKIN, 9 MALTBY LANE, BARTON-ON-HUMBER.

WANTED: Nelson Lee Libraries original "Ezra Quirke" series. S.O.L.'s (St. Frank's only).
Fulllest details to:- NORMAN PRAGNELL, 33, BRAE ST., LIVERPOOL, 7.

WANTED: MAGNETS Nos. 829, 873, 876, 877, 882, 884, 888. S.O.L.'s. Nos. 60 and 68.
Dr. R. WILSON, 100, BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW N.1.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Charles Churchill's address is now 72, SOUTHBROOK RD.,
COUNTERS WEAR, EXETER.

WANTED: Magnets Nos. 1190-1209 (incl.) 1212, 1303, 1307, 1317-1350 (incl.) 1431, 1510, 1526.
R. W. RICHARDSON, TOLMORTH JUNIOR BOYS' SCHOOL, DOUGLAS ROAD, TOLMORTH, SURBITON, SURREY.

MAY 1913: These modern dances! What anybody can see in them I can't think. Mum says they are fearfully ugly compared with the dances she used to do when she was young. Mum says

DANNY'S DIARY

they just wriggle and shake nowadays. It's awonder they don't put their spines out of focus. Of course, Doug says she's old-fashioned.

The latest craze is the Tango. Even the restaurants are running Tango Teas. There's a new song out called "The Spaniard Who Blighted my Life". Dad says he must be the man who invented the Tango.

Five Gems this month, and four of them were ripping. I did not care much for the first one "The Schoolboy Informer" in which Jack Blake found out that his cousin, Bob Collins, was secretly at Rylcombe Grammar School. It was a dull story.

But the next week, "D'Arcy the Suffragist" was a scream. With this issue they started a new St. Jim's Portrait Gallery, beginning with the Terrible Three, but they put Manners' name down as George, when it's really Harry. In a later issue they gave Kerr as Frank, but his real name is George Francis.

"Tom Merry's Discovery" and "The St. Jim's Adventurers" were splendid travel stories. Tom saved the life of a man called Marco Frulo, and he had the plan of a treasure on an island in the Adriatic Sea. So Tom Merry and Co went to Venice, and at the end of the second story they found the treasure.

"The Strike at St. Jim's" was funny. Towser chased the Head, and he was so annoyed that he banned all pets. So the boys went on strike.

It was quite good to go back to school for the summer term at the start of the month. It's the cricket term - and I love cricket. They say I've got to work very hard as I missed a lot of time last term with my chicken pox.

Doug doesn't like cricket much. He says tennis is better. What rot! I earn three-pence a week by fagging balls for him and Wobbly DeFrayne when they play tennis. It's an ordeal, but it buys some books. Love fifteen, love thirty, love forty - love-a-duck, they make me split my sides.

Accidentally I spilt a bottle of ink over Doug's tennis shoes, and he was petrified. He said he will have me up before Mr. Curtis Bennett, the new Chief Metropolitan Magistrate. So I said "Deuce!" He grabbed me and spanked me, and yelled "Advantage striker". He's an awful brute.

Mr. Lindsay gave me the latest Union Jack which contains a story called "The Case of the Suffragette Raid." It was quite exciting, all about a crook called Carlac, but Sexton Blake is a bit advanced for me. I sold it to Doug for a halfpenny.

In the middle of the month I went with Mum to the R.H.S. Flower Show at Chelsea, and we saw Queen Alexandra who was visiting it that day. In the evening we met Dad, and he took us to the Criterion Theatre to see the new revue "Oh, I say", which had James Welch as the star. It was nice, except that somebody danced the Tango. You can't get away from it.

By the way, when my Grandmother and Auntie Gwen went home, after they visited us at Easter, Gran gave me a half-crown and Auntie Gwen gave me threepence and her best wishes for a term of hard work at school. So I've been in funds for a while.

I bought Mum a copy of Answer's Library which contained a story called "The Orchid-Hunter's Daughter", illustrated by H. M. Lewis. The story was by A. P. Garland, and Mum said it was all about a girl who fought to save her father's honour.

I had a copy of Puck, which was quite good. There is a circus serial in it called "Twinkle the Little Star", and Doug roared when he caught me reading it. He's been calling me Twinkle ever since. Sometimes he is dreadfully sinnercal.

Doug treated himself to two copies of the Boys' Friend's Library. One contained "Deep Sea Gold" by Reginald Wray. It used to be a serial in the Gem. The other was

The Union Jack.

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SIXTON BLAKE'S OWN PAPER

THE PAPER
THAT IS
READ BY
READERS OF
ALL AGES

THE PAPER
PARENTS
CAN AND DO
SANCTION
IN THE HOME

ONE PENNY EVERYWHERE.



The Case of
THE SUFFRACETTE RAID



Order At Once!

"The Great Mining Swindle", a new story of Sexton Blake versus a criminal called Dr. Huxton Rymer. They never tell you who writes the Sexton Blake stories. I wonder why.

Mrs. D'Oyly Carte has just died. She and her husband, Richard D'Oyly Carte, produced the Gilbert and Sullivan operas.

Good month in the Magnet. I did not care a lot for the first story "Friars versus Saints", though it was a cricket tale. The second story of the month was "Standing by Skinner". A boy named Skinner had been expelled from Greyfriars a long time ago, and he tried to persuade the Head to take him back. At the end of the tale he was successful.

"Peter Todd's Chance" was a kind of sequel to last month's "The Impossible Four". Toddy got his own back on Loder, and then turned up for a licking, wearing a suit of armour.

"Wun Lung's Secret" was very weird. He was going to the Anchor Inn at Pegg and smoking opium with a Chinese seaman there. The last tale of the month was "Holding the Fort", in which Penfold's father, the village cobbler, was to be sold up for debt. He was saved by Lord Mauleverer.

The serial "Twice Round the Globe" has just finished in the Magnet, and a new one by Sidney Drew, called "Mysteria", has just started.

At the end of the month Doug took me to the Imperial Services Exhibition at Earl's Court. There were lots of model naval ships, and a model of the King's yacht "Victoria and Albert".

The Derby is run on the 4th of next month, and Doug says he

intends to put sixpence on Tango Prince. Goodness only knows what Martin Clifford would think about me if he knew my brother did things like that.

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE - Magnets, Gems, Nelson Lees, B.F.L., S.O.L., Union Jacks, etc.
Send your wants lists.

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

Nelson Lee Column

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(Conducted by JACK WOOD)

HE WROTE THEM ALL!

by W. O. G. Lofts

"It was suggested some time ago, in an article, that Handforth was a bully," I said mildly to the editor.

"Handforth a bully?" he roared, in a voice reminiscent of Edward Oswald himself, and banging his fist on the table. "Never! He was obstinate, aggressive, and a bit of a buffoon - but never a bully. I should know, for I was chief sub-editor of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY for many years and I personally read every story E. S. Brooks ever wrote. And jolly good the tales were, too - I came to love the characters and the stories just as much as the readers did."

And that was my most vivid impression of several recent meetings with a former chief sub-editor of the Library - when much fresh information was gleaned which I hope to impart to readers of this column from time to time. Although in the past I have contacted two former editors of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY (after Harold May retired in 1928) both were rather disappointing from the point of view that neither remembered much about their short editorship. Then an editor friend mentioned a colleague who was for some years on the LIBRARY itself and when I contacted him I found the results most rewarding.

One of the first questions I put to him was one which has never been satisfactorily answered from any quarter. Did EDWY SEARLES BROOKS write all the stories in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY featuring St. Frank's? Now it is perfectly true that Mr. Brooks has stated, in the past, that he did do so; and many older readers will remember the great controversy in early 1957 Collectors' Digests when Mr. Fred Gordon Cook claimed to have written some for the Library. These were not named, however, and it was generally felt that he was mistaken and that they must have appeared in the BOY'S REALM, where substitute St. Frank's stories did appear.

Now the answer I got from the editor was that certainly Mr. Brooks wrote all the stories which appeared during his term of office (approximately 1926-1930) but as he left the NELSON LEE LIBRARY to go

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on THE RANGER he could not say for certain what happened after that date. However, he promised to find out what he could from official records - in the hope of settling this mystery once and for all.

I am most pleased to be able to say that these records proved conclusively that E. S. BROOKS did, in fact, write every single story which appeared in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY featuring St. Frank's, from No. 112 onwards. However, other stories were specially commissioned from other writers, to be used in the event of Mr. Brooks failing to submit copy through illness or any other cause. These stories were written by the following authors: Fred Gordon Cook, E. J. Murray, Balfour Ritchie.

Regarding Mr. Cook, I feel that some sort of apology is due to him from those readers who believed him to have laid claim to work he did not do. Official records prove that he did write these stories and that they were not used elsewhere, as some readers may have assumed.

E. J. Murray was, of course, better known as Sydney Drew - who wrote some splendid school stories of his own creation in the early days. To many who might not be familiar with the name of BALFOUR RITCHIE, he was EDITOR of the famous BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY, and I must confess that although I knew the name well I did not know that he had written stories before. Revelation of his name, however, brings forward a very interesting point:

It was recently my good fortune to obtain for Mrs. Ross Story the rare copy of the BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY No. 633 entitled THE IDOL OF ST. FRANKS. Mrs. Story was quite firm in her belief that E. S. BROOKS did not write this story, claiming that it contained words and phrases which BROOKS had never been known to employ in any of his previous work. The following is taken as an example and it would be interesting to see if any other LEE fans share her opinion.

"Oh, Gerroff. Gerroff!" cried McClure. "We're not in our study now. Ow! Look out. That's my rotten head."

Handy had not been able to pull himself up in time. He was big and brawny. He had crashed into McClure and the latter had been knocked up against the hard brick wall of the doorway. It was a case of McClure versus the brick wall and the brick wall won. McClure received a nasty blow on the back of the head. It may have been cowardly on the part of the brick wall, but if it did not apologise, it certainly did not run away. There was nothing of a funk about that brick wall.

"Ow, my head!" yelled McClure, and clasped his untidy thatch of hair with his right hand.

(Mrs. Story states that she does not remember that Brooks ever used the expression 'Gerroff' at any previous time; and that the 'humour' of the brick wall was much too laboured for E.S.B.)

Upon reference to the title it was found that this story was "Specially written by the author of the Nipper at St. Frank's Stories now appearing in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, assisted by the Editor of the BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY." One could assume from this that Brooks supplied the plot and that the editor (BALFOUR RITCHIE) wrote the actual story.

In closing what I hope may be only the first of many articles giving new inside facts of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, I feel that readers of these popular stories should feel proud indeed to know that EDWY SEARLES BROOKS did write them all - and that he kept faith and schedule with the editors concerned. To those readers who, in the last few years, have written to me claiming that Brooks did not write such stories as "Saints Versus Friars" (2nd New Series 43); "Glutton and Goalkeeper" (2nd New Series 37) and "The Mystery Goalkeeper" (Old Series 497), I can only say that even the best authors have their "off" periods and it is generally accepted that BROOKS' writing in later years lacked the distinction and enthusiasm of those golden years of the Twenties.

* * * * *

ANOTHER FAMOUS DETECTIVE!

By J. TWELIS

"Look, siri" gasped Splinter. He pointed a shaky finger at the door. Trackett Grim spun round and stared. A horrible face was peering round the lintel, and Trackett Grim took aim with his revolver and was about to pull the trigger, when Sir Makeham Quiver gave a yell.

"Look out, you ass, he's only the butler!" roared the baronet. "Don't shoot him, or we shan't have any dinner!"

The preceding is an extract from "The Sign of The Scarlet Shadow!" a story of Trackett Grim and Splinter, supposedly written by Edward Oswald Handforth, but in reality from the pen of that humourist Edwy Searles Brooks.

I've been laughing once more at these funny stories which appeared in the "Lee's" "St. Frank's Magazine" from time to time.

Here are some more extracts that may cause a few chuckles -

"As Grim came opposite Lyons' Corner House, he halted abruptly. A savoury odour hit him amidst and he sadly jingled the coppers in his trousers pocket. Then he shook his head and continued his search for clues. He was on the track of a Harris' Sausage Shop."

"Trackett Grim halted, all his instincts on fire. Smoke even came out of his chest, but this was because he had put his pipe into his breast pocket. Even when Trackett Grim's instincts were all afire, he didn't actually burn."

"Trackett Grim lit another pipe, handing the old one to his visitor. These little acts of courtesy were never lost on Grim's clients."

"I am Professor Skatty," said the visitor. "My Skatty Monoplane is so wonderful, it will win the great race to-morrow."

"Not the two-thirty?" almost shouted Grim. "I thought Gold Braid was a certain snip!"

"The client looked round for an easy chair to sink into, but not seeing one, sat

down on a soap-box.

'My name is Theophilus Twiddle, I am being hunted by two Chinese Tonggs.'

'Ah, a pair of tonggs!' said Trackett Grim.

'And this morning, Mr. Grim' said his visitor, 'I was branded with a poker!'

'Trackett Grim wrenched open the door of a first-class compartment and they all bundled in. The Chinese Tonggen swarmed on the platform, brandishing knives, gnashing their teeth with helpless rage.

For they had only third-class tickets and before they could go and change them, the train had gone.'

WILLIAM BACK ON TELEVISION

If the present series of William playlets on B.B.C. television makes a more favourable impression than the previous series it is because Denis Gilmore makes a more convincing William than his predecessor. Up to the time of going to press the following playlets have been presented: WILLIAM THE PEACEMAKER (March 30th); WILLIAM AND THE LITTLE GIRL (April 6th); WILLIAM AND THE THREE BEARS (April 13th); WILLIAM AND THE SLEEPING MAJOR (April 20th).

All are adaptations from stories by Richard Crompton, but all, so far as their effect on us goes, sadly lack the joyous sparkle of the original stories.

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

BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.

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

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 PAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

MAGNETS AND BULLSEYES WANTED: I have duplicate Magnets and early Populars for exchange - or will buy.

J. YAFFE, 13, CEDRIC ROAD, Nr. CRUMPSALL, MANCHESTER, 8.

YE OLD CYNIQUE INN

If we don't restore our backbone by showing a stiff upper lip, our last legs will probably stare us in the face.

Hamiltoniana

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By ROGER M. JENKINS

No. 43 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 76 - "The Fighting Form-Master"

I once asked Charles Hamilton why he removed Mr. Bootles from the Rookwood scene after such a long innings. He replied that the Amalgamated Press were afraid that Mr. Bootles might get confused with Bunny Bootles, the fat boy of St. Kit's. This answer, though undoubtedly accurate, was rather unsatisfactory, as St. Kit's never became at all well-known, and readers were hardly likely to confuse a boy with a master. I suspect that Fleetway House fancied that Mr. Bootles was too old-fashioned, like Alonzo Todd who disappeared about the same time. Be this as it may, however, Mr. Bootles certainly did leave Rookwood, about half-way through that saga: this is a useful guide for determining the age of any reprinted Rookwood story - if it features Mr. Bootles, it is one of the older ones. We were told that Mr. Bootles had inherited a fortune and decided to give up schoolteaching, but in my opinion his gain was our loss. I always had a soft spot for Mr. Bootles.

The first half of Schoolboys' Own No. 75 contains an account of his immediate successor, a Mr. Cutts. Readers who are familiar with Charles Hamilton's fondness for type-names will not need to be told that Mr. Cutts was a little free with the cane, and his stay at Rookwood was brief. He was succeeded by Mr. Richard Dalton, who remained as Fourth-form master until the Rookwood stories ended.

The Fistical Four first saw Mr. Dalton fighting for a purse of fifty guineas at the Bunbury Ring. They had to cycle twenty miles over the downs to reach Bunbury, and my guess is that Bunbury stands not for Banbury but Newbury, which is the right distance from Rookwood's probable location in the North-East of Hampshire, and the topography is not altogether inconsistent either. (Mr. Gill's remarks about Charles Hamilton's boyhood having been spent in the Berkshire downland are reinforced by this.)

Richard Dalton was, of course, the counterpart (cont'd. page 15)..

DICKY NUGENT-



of Larry Lascelles of Greyfriars, whose earlier arrival was later reprinted under the same title in the Schoolboys' Own Library - "The Fighting Form-Master". Their introductions to their respective schools were very similar. Each rendered a service to the headmaster, as a result of which the unsavoury past was forgotten. The Rookwood version certainly wins on the score of sheer entertainment. An old boy came back to horsewhip the headmaster, and only Mr. Dalton was effective in preventing the threatened indignity.

Dicky Dalton was a bright and breezy young man of twenty-five who make a striking contrast with the other prominent middle-aged members of Dr. Chisholm's staff. He was keen and penetrating, a symbol of the new age after the first World War. But I am perverse. I would rather read about the shy, hesitating, lovable Mr. Bootles at any time.

Let's Be Controversial

No. 66: THE VITAL SPARK

Throughout the life of the Magnet Charles Hamilton presented readers of the paper with first-class stories - classics of their type. Tales of school life, or tales of schoolboy adventure. His style changed as the years flowed by, but his competence never varied. There was perhaps no single year in the paper's existence without something outstanding in stories - some milestone.

I have never disguised my opinion that Charles Hamilton was at the peak of his powers between, roughly, the years 1927 and 1934. Those intermediate years are notable, not only for the sudden upsurge in quality but for the remarkable consistency he maintained.

From 1934 onwards the competence was always evident, but the charm lessened. The Vital Spark was missing.

If it seems that I am suggesting that some deterioration took place, that deterioration is only evident in comparison with Charles Hamilton's own work. I firmly believe that if he had written nothing but the stories of the later Magnet, he would still be the world's greatest writer of school stories.

The Vital Spark was missing - or at least dimmed - but there were also changes. The series became a number of tales, all almost complete in themselves, in which the basic plot was not developed. In the Carter series, Carter wished to discredit Bunter, and each story told how he tried some trick and failed. Tracey wanted to leave Greyfriars, and each story told how he tried to bring it about and failed. The individual stories were excellent, but the drumming on one theme week after week involved the risk of tedium.

The Carter series was loosely based on the Da Costa series, but how different the two series were. The plot of the Da Costa series unfolded and developed, with amazing atmosphere of the cricket term; we saw the gradual change in the character of Da Costa under the spell of Greyfriars, the whole giant tale working up to a magnificent climax. The Carter series was static throughout.

A reader could pick up and be quite satisfied with any one story of the Carter series. But anyone reading one tale in the middle of the Da Costa series would not be

satisfied until he discovered what had gone before and what came after.

In what Roger Jenkins has so rightly termed the Golden Age of the Magnet, Charles Hamilton wrote with ease and obvious personal enjoyment. Magnetic charm flowed unceasingly in the stories. The writer seemed to have no care in the world.

I think the stories of the later Magnet were less effortless. Is it possible that school stories in general were losing some of their popularity, and some anxiety found its way into the author's mind? Or was he getting a trifle weary of a lifetime with school stories? I think both possibilities are unlikely. It could be, of course, that editorial policy now required the type of series in which each story was more or less complete in itself. But that would still leave certain aspects of the matter unexplained.

Just why was that Vital Spark lost? It seems to me that there is an obvious explanation.

The editor of the Magnet once said that a panel of men thought out basic skeleton plots which were submitted to the author to be written up into stories. There is nothing belittling to Mr. Hamilton in this. These plots would have been nothing without the skill of a brilliant writer to turn them into little masterpieces which could be read and read again with keen enjoyment. But the gifted author, without having to bother about the plot question, could pour all his skill, charm and imagination into his writing.

In my opinion there is no doubt at all that this panel existed for a long time, for common-sense tells us that it must have done. We know, and marvel at, Charles Hamilton's enormous weekly output. Our minds boggle at the drudgery at the typewriter, day after day, week after week, year after year. Just why did he condemn himself to this life of slavery at the machine? Was it for the financial reward? Or was it the dedication of a man inspired? Whatever the reason, we were the lucky ones. We reaped the harvest of his labour.

I contend that his enormous output, combined with quality, would have been a sheer impossibility if he had been obliged to think up all his plots as well as write his splendid stories. Even the most gifted writer has to pause while he thinks out his plots. And we know that Charles Hamilton never paused.

I believe that in the later years of the Magnet the panel system for supplying a proportion of the plots was abandoned, possibly at the author's own wish. Did he then have to supply all his own plots round which to weave his stories? Was this the reason why a plot which would have been covered in two or three stories in earlier times was now spread out to great length in the later Magnet so that some series overstayed their welcome? Was this why so many of the old plots were given a fresh airing in later days? I think it was. And I think that, in the turmoil for searching out his own plots and making them last as long as possible, our gifted writer lost a little of that Vital Spark.

Nowhere was the change more evident than in the travel series. The South Seas series of 1937 had its moments of greatness, but it is small beer when placed beside the earlier South Seas series with its impeccable atmosphere, its plot development, and the general charm of its writing. Let us place the Texas Series of 1937 beside the China Series if we have any doubt that some deterioration took place.

The most vivid contrast can be seen between the Victor Cleeve stories (the last series which Charles Hamilton wrote for the Gem until 1939), and the Silverson Series. In the Cleeve series we find smooth plot development, superb character work and summer term atmosphere, with convincing dialogue, all beautifully carried in four perfect school stories. The Silverson Series, with no plot development at all, based on a old theme, jerked and jumped from one story to another, all basically the same, for seventeen weeks.

I enjoyed the Silverson Series, the individual stories being written with unflinching competence. But it is surely impossible not to see that the Silverson Series lacked that something - that Vital Spark - which the Victor Cleeve series possessed.

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

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOESNo. 65: THE FOUR HORSEMEN

ROGER JENKINS: It is a challenging and fascinating pursuit to list one's aversions in Hamiltoniana. I personally seem to have dislikes that no one else shares. I can tolerate ventriloquists and impersonators, but for some reason or other I cannot abide stories about 'Tom Merry's Weekly'. I think it must be because they were all the same - some embarrassing insertion, put in by trickery, which landed the editors in the soup. I am also strongly averse to stories about pets, especially Pongo and Towser, perhaps again because the humour of these tales was so stereotyped. Finally, I heartily dislike type-names: Miss Bunn, the baker's daughter (whom Mauleverer fell in love with), and Mr. Tiper, the printer of Rylcombe, are obvious examples. Mr. Sands, the grocer, is not so blatant an example unless one recalls the habit of mixing sugar with sand to make it go further. These type-names are hallowed in eighteenth century literature by Fielding and his successors, but to me they always struck such a discordant note that they seemed to bring the stories down to the level of a comic strip.

JOHN WERNHAM: Although the first Gem I ever read was "Redfern's Barring Out" and I remember the story with some affection, I do not like barring out stories, or those which are entirely devoted to ragging. I do not like all sporting stories but, turning up just in time to save the innings after some hair-raising adventures en route is quite another matter. The best Greyfriars stories for me involved a storm over Pegg Bay or the lazy lapping of the river in summer time. At St. Jim's I preferred the stronger meat in such characters as Outram, Talbot and Captain Mellish. I like them all really.

BOB WHITER: You are right. The secret of it all was in the way the stories were told. I always liked the ventriloquist and the impersonator, however improbable they may have been. Both escapades appealed to us as boys because we would have loved to be able to do the same thing. I love cowboys, and didn't mind the school cowboy. I preferred Wildrake to Buck Finn. I liked Kit in the Bloor Xmas story, and, of course, the Rogue Rackstraw series. I also enjoyed the brief visit of Texas Lick in the Rookwood saga.

JOHN TROVELL: Credibility was the success of so many Magnet and Gem series, and any that deviated from this never had the same appeal. My particular aversion was Bunter's ventriloquism, and it persists even to this day. Wibley's impersonations, to a lesser extent, never appealed, and Strong Alonzo I try hard to forget was ever published. I am convinced that Charles Hamilton would have been even more successful without his ventriloquist, impersonator, superman schoolboy, or hypnotist, but an occasional missing heir had at least the virtue of authenticity.

LES ROWLEY: You have my firm support in the matter of 'cowboy' scholars - or for that matter cowboys of any kind, the Rio Kid included. My love is a school story, and the school story was Hamilton's metier, not outlawed cowboys nor South Seas adventurers nor juvenile vagabonds. The missing heir theme has, I think, provided some good series but I did not like the 'Alonzo the Great' series at all. It served to remind me that Greyfriars was fiction and disturbed a long sequence of pleasant dreams. Bunter as a ventriloquist is still within the realm of possibility and has always been acceptable to me.

No. 64: ET TU BRUTE (Further views)

RAY HOPKINS: I am prepared to read with enjoyment any new adventure of the old "& Co's." If you are taking a poll for or against "Late Summer Folly", you may put me down on the list as FOR. If you have another list which says Yea or Nay to Slade, you may include

me in those who say YEA. In other words, when your author finds time to invent another adventure involving any of our favourite old schools or of what is rapidly getting the favourite NEW school (Blade), then I say encourage him with a nice cup of tea, a silent room with a typewriter, and tell him to go ahead.

WALTER FLEMING: I read the Companion Papers regularly as a youngster, and always my only interest was in a good story. I certainly was not discerning enough to distinguish between Frank Richards and a sub writer. I realised early that Richards and Clifford were one and the same, but I was not really interested in that aspect. The real criterion was the quality of the story. So, more power to your elbow, and let us have more cameos like "Late Summer Folly".

DON WEBSTER: I sincerely hope that "Late Summer Folly" will not be the last of our "substitute" tales.

E. N. LAMBERT: Providing the substitute writer is an authority on the works of Mr. Hamilton, I see no reason why the famous characters should not live on in new adventures in this modern age. It is said that collecting enthusiasts fall into two types. I fear I am in the category of those who just love the old schools and characters and enjoy anything about them.

JILL LYNE: No harm can befall our much loved Hamilton schools and boys if they are handled by an expert who knows and believes in them as much as Charles Hamilton ever did. That is the reason why "Late Summer Folly" was such a great success and so very enjoyable. The Digest and Annual are both remarkable, and the factual articles are most interesting and informative, but I always feel they have an added sparkle whenever a Hamilton or a Buddle adventure appears.

L. F. ASHLEY: I think that "Late Summer Folly" was worth inclusion, for the ordinary contextual remarks do not apply in this case. I would say: 'Go to it - produce more!'

FRANK UNWIN: Sometimes, I'm afraid we sacrifice the substance for the shadow, and, for the life of me, I just cannot understand the objections against excellent short stories of the "Late Summer Folly" type. I enjoyed it immensely, and I hope you won't be persuaded to deny us the pleasure of further stories of this calibre.

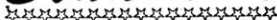
GEOFFREY WILDE: Charles Hamilton's life-work is complete, and a wonderful canon it is. It happens also to be the largest output of any known writer. What an extraordinary gluttery we are guilty of when even this will not do for us. What a curious compliment we pay him by imagining that the appetite can be satisfied when the magic is missing. If it can be said that others can supply the magic then we contradict ourselves: they can't, of course, not even the best of them. In general I am opposed to any attempt to "add" to the Hamiltonian canon, and feel we should resist as strongly as possible any suggestion of publishing "new" Bunter books by any other hand.

CHARLES CHURCHILL: I must join those who appreciated "Late Summer Folly". I thought it excellent, and hope you will not stop this kind of story in future. If a few people do not like the idea, they need not read!

POINT OF VIEW

Belfast reader, Miss E. Magevery, sends us an interesting letter in which she makes the following comment:
"I think Frank Richards was jealous of Pentelow. He never mentioned Piet Delarey (cont'd on page 23...)"

Blakiana



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

HENRI GARROCK - "THE SNAKE"

By W. O. G. Lofts

When Derek Adley and I jointly compiled a revised Sexton Blake author's Who's Who in the 1959 C. D. Annual, we made the following statement in regard to the authentic information published up to that date....

"Only in the event of an early UNION JACK official list coming to light do we feel that we could add to it. It is, however, our opinion that should such a list come to hand it will reveal many more at present unknown authors."

Now, although no such list has been brought to light - and it is doubtful if one ever will - it was with pleasure that we recently discovered the identity of several early UNION JACK Blake writers, thus confirming our statement.

One of the biggest mysteries regarding the early U.J. Blake stories has been the author who penned the Henri Garrock ("The Snake") series. Josie Packman has raised the question several times in Blakiana, and so I am glad that I can now answer the question.

The Henri Garrock stories were written by a clergyman, the Rev. Herbert Escott Inman. Thus, we have a new name to add to the huge band of Blake writers, and it is no wonder that many of the experts could not identify the style of writing and were baffled as to the identity of the author.

At the present moment I do not know a lot about the Rev. H. Escott Inman; he certainly wrote for other Amalgamated Press publications such as the DREADNOUGHT and BOY'S FRIEND LIBRARY (1st series), but his greatest claim to fame is that he wrote 40 bound Fairy stories, and also some school tales.

Here are details of the Henri Garrock series:

U.J. No. 524, dated 25.10.1913, THE TRAIL OF THE SNAKE

U.J. No. 527, dated 15.11.1913, WON BY A SHORT HEAD
U.J. No. 532, dated 20.12.1913, THE CASE OF THE PETROL SUBSTITUTE
U.J. No. 539, dated 7.2.1914, THE SNAKE'S FANG
U.J. No. 542, dated 28.2.1914, THE CASE OF THE PEWTER CANDLE-
STICK

ARGUMENT ON "ARGUMENT"

By WALTER WEBB

Ernie Carter's comments on those enthusiasts whom he refers to as the "so called" experts in connection with certain stories which have been the subject of conjecture in both Hamiltonia and Blakiana should not be allowed to go unchallenged.

Of course it is recognised that the official SBL List was a scoop for Blakiana and that its compilation and ultimate publication in the column was something that reflected creditably on both parties concerned. As a work of reference it is invaluable, and, being practically one hundred per cent accurate, can be referred to with the utmost confidence. This is freely admitted.

But - and this fact has to be faced - there is one solitary instance where a mistake has been made in recording. This is the substitution of the name of E. S. Brooks for W. Murray Graydon in No. 5 of the First Series, an error on the part of an A.P. employee that was doubtless spotted before payment to Brooks was made but probably overlooked when a correction should have been made for the records.

Ernie Carter's reason for Brooks being accepted as the author "although the style is not his" (to use his own words) is rather remarkable, as, after stating that the style of writing is Graydon's, thereby admitting that the latter must have been the author, he yet refuses to acknowledge this on the assumption that it might have been a joint effort and the cash divided. In this event Brooks must be accepted as the author. Well, if you argue on these lines you might as well credit Stanton Hope with the Rio Kid yarns, since, according to Bill Lofts, Hope gave Charles Hamilton help in their preparation and the latter merely wrote them!

It is all very well to reprove those contributors who have taken up the pen and have had the courage to make an assumption or to have expressed a theory, subsequently discovered incorrect, and then to calmly say that an error if discovered in the official records must be accepted as fact. In other words, we are being asked to acknowledge a printed untruth - obviously unintentional of course - as the truth,

and an author deprived of the credit of a story he went to great pains to write. I disagree emphatically on the principle that credit must always go to the author who writes the story and that such assumptions as joint authorship and cash divisions be disregarded until some sort of foundation is discovered on which to base them.

I am also rather puzzled at the statement that the A.P. would only pay for work submitted once, not twice, and then Stanton Hope's admission to the writer that he was the only author on the A.P. staff who got paid for the same work twice!

Ernie asks whether I doubt the existence of L. H. Brooks at all? Well, since the author has long since ceased to exist, I do, of course, but I understand what he means and must point out that I divulged his death in tragic circumstances in an article published in the C.D. a long time ago, after reading an account of it in the NEWS OF THE WORLD, so I had no reason to read Bill Lofts' article published a year or so later to discover this.

I remain quite convinced that the SBL stories bearing the name of L. H. Brooks were actually written by his brother Edwy, although in this case the entries in the official list should be allowed to stand since the stories were obviously tendered by L.H. and editor Len Pratt had no alternative but to accept them as his work. On the other hand, if Edwy presented the stories and used his brother's name this would automatically make L.H. a non-de-plume of Edwy's, and, since these have appeared in records before, the official list would be correct.

I have no disagreement with Ernie Carter on the Andrew Murray question, and whilst, on the evidence of the writing, I cannot believe that this author actually wrote the two SBL's credited to him, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that he did not, and I agree that the entries should stand. Ernie mentions 1924 as the year of the author's death, but he is a little out here, for Andrew Murray was still alive when the second of the two SBL stories was published in November 1928, although extremely ill mentally. He passed away three weeks later at Epsom, aged only 48.

In conclusion, a little point here needs clearing up. It has been mentioned before that Murray's real name was ANDREW NICHOLAS MURRAY. He was clearly the author of the famous Carlac, Kew, and Lawless yarns in both SBL and UJ. Yet he is referred to as Geoffrey Andrew Murray in the list of Sexton Blake authors in the ANNUAL.

In view of the fact that many collectors rely on these lists for their information, may one enquire on what grounds this information was based?

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THE ACTOR DETECTIVE - AND OTHER EARLY UNION JACKSBy D. J. ADLEY

When Walter Webb mistakenly presumed that Anthony Juan Skene - the radio and script writer, was the same person as the famous Sexton Blake writer and creator of Zenith the Albino, he had the good sportsmanship to admit that he had been in error.

I am sure that Walter, when he reads this article, will accept the information as official even though it rather conflicts with some of the information that he gave in his article in the 1956 C.D. Annual, "Sexton Blake and the problem of the Missing Authors". The information I give below is 100% correct as shown in the official A.P. records.

U.J. No. 111 "The Actor Detective" and U.J. No. 147 "Footlight Favourites" were both written by Frank Howell Evans - who penned many stories for Amalgamated Press Ltd. under the pen-name of 'Atherley Daunt' mostly of a theatrical nature. I can well remember how pleased Herbert Leckenby was some years ago when it was proved that Atherley Daunt was F. H. Evans, and not Arthur S. Hardy, who also wrote of the stage and was in fact an actor at one time himself.

This does therefore clear up the authorship mystery and rules out Alfred Barnard in this instance

Regarding another author mentioned by Walter, namely Alec G. Pearson, I can give proof that he was the author of U.J. No. 113 "The Post Office Detective" but I must dispel the theory that he also wrote under the name of Edgar Pickering.

This is a false impression for Edgar Pickering was the real name of an entirely different author and did in fact write U.J. 127 "The Motor Detective" and I understand he was quite prolific.

For the benefit of those who are interested in authors of the U.J. I have the official information as to several other stories as follows:

115 In Double Disguise	W. M. Graydon	381 A1 at Lloyds	A. C. Murray
145 Sexton Blake in Chicago	W. M. Graydon	398 The Derby Winner	A. C. Murray
165 Five Years After	W. M. Graydon	432 The Publishers Secret	W. M. Graydon
190 The Stock Exchange		493 The Diamond Dragon	G. H. Teed
Detective	A. C. Murray	506 The Ex-Convict's Secret	A. Murray
284 East and West	W. M. Graydon	512 The Yellow Sphinx	G. H. Teed
359 Sexton Blake Territorial	A. C. Murray	519 The White Mandarin	G. H. Teed

I shall be contacting my informant again in the near future and I would be pleased to hear from other collectors as to what ten U.J. titles it would be most interesting to prove the authorship of. Suggestions in this matter would be welcome as obviously I would prefer to discover the authorship of those U.J.'s likely to create the most interest amongst other collectors.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL OVER SEXTON BLAKE

For the past week or two my newsagent has had a big display of periodicals - humorous, thrillers, and the like. Upon enquiry, he told me that they are put out by an American firm - on sale or return. "If they were not on sale or return we should not stock them," he volunteered.

Also on his counter was a small display of British periodicals. The Sexton Blake Library was not one of them - as if you didn't know.

The "Sale or return" system is expensive to publishers, and it is understandable that they do not favour it. But a couple of months of the S.B.L. on sale or return

would boost the circulation enormously, and plenty of casual readers would become regulars. Surely it would be a cheap form of advertisement in the long run. Don't ask us why it isn't done. We just don't know.

Who's being careless? Last month we received the two different covers of the S.B.L., but each cover contained the same story - "Cult of Darkness". This month our copy of "Lotus Leaves and Larceny" is faulty.

Recently we deprecated the non-appearance so far of Sexton Blake on television. This month's story "Murder in Camera" tells an intriguing tale of an unscrupulous television producer who tries to capitalise on some of the cases of the famous detective. It makes fascinating reading.

Both stories are excellent thrillers this month and well worth anybody's money, but one thing about them irritates me. That is the switching from one name to another for one of the main characters. He is Edward Carter - Edward Carter - Tinker, - Edward Carter - Tinker - Edward Carter - Edward Carter. Why the heck do they do it? If he must be Edward Carter, why use christian and surname all the time? Why not make him Edward, or Carter, or Ted, or Ned? (Heaven forbid) But if every Edward Carter was replaced with Ted, the editor would have room for at least one more letter in his mail-bag.

In "The Impostor" (a most entertaining recent story) he was Edward Carter nearly all the time. Better than the constant switching from Carter to Tinker and back as in the two current tales.

But surely every reader thinks of him as Tinker, so why not use six bits of type instead of twelve? Wouldn't it meet the conventions to start with, for instance, "Edward Carter, familiarly known as Tinker, entered the room" - and then make it Tinker for the rest of the story? The switching from one name to the other must surely be irritating for old readers and confusing for new.

POINT OF VIEW (cont'd from page 18...)

or Philip Derwent, except in one story "Flap's Brother". I suppose he wrote it at the request of Pentelow. I think Pentelow wrote very good stories of Greyfriars and St. Jim's, and some of the other sub writers were not so bad. Do you remember "Billy Bunter's Legacy" - that was good, also the Castleton Twins series and the "Secret of Dreare Manor" in the Gem, both by E. S. Brooks."

Charles Hamilton made no secret of the fact that he resented some of Pentelow's actions as editor, but we think it most unlikely that Charles Hamilton was in any sense "jealous" of Pentelow. Personally we see no reason why Mr. Hamilton should be expected to use characters which substitute writers had introduced into his stories. In our view it was a colossal cheek for any sub writer to attempt to introduce permanent characters at another man's schools. It is even doubtful whether C.H. knew anything about such a character as Delarey. He can't have had much time for reading stories by substitute writers.

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OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

MIDLAND

Meeting held 26th March, 1963.

Ten members gathered at the Arden Hotel for this meeting which again turned out to be full of entertainment, though again mostly Hamiltonia. We started off with one of Jack Corbett's tricky quizzes. Seventeen items proved a trifle harder than usual and the Secretary and Chairman were joint winners with seven right each. Prizes - "Modern Boys". Madge Corbett won one - No. 216 in "Guessing the number". As promised last month, Tom Porter saw to it that this particular prize bore the same day and month as the meeting, that is, No. 216 was dated 26th March, 1932. As Tom termed it - "an anniversary paper" 31 years old today.

The Collectors Item for tonight was the London Libraries "Hamiltonian Catalogue". Much admired and those who had not seen it before made a note re acquiring one of their own. A like interest was accorded the "Magnet" Catalogue displayed by the Secretary.

Jack Bellfield read us his article on "Snobbery in the Hamilton Schools" which appeared in the Australian Golden Hours magazine No. 6. He gave his own reasons for his views, and asked for members' opinions. A good discussion followed.

The piece de resistance of the evening was in the capable hands of Ted Davey. There is not a more loyal admirer of Frank Richards than Ted Davey but I was particularly impressed by his honest admission of the palpable far-fetched freakishness of some of the characters in the Magnet, Gem, and Boys Friend. These characters were, of course, the unnatural Bunter, Coker (a firm favourite of Ted's) D'Arcy, Fisher T. Fish, and Alonzo Todd. In his opinion only Frank Richards could have made the freakishness of these impossible characters acceptable to his readers. This gift allied to his humour and fine English made Frank Richards the greatest of all school fiction authors. This absorbing talk kept us entranced till the interval, during which the Library Raffle was won again by the Secretary - lucky man who for the second time running won (besides more of these jolly "Modern Boys") a Bunter Book which he had not possessed.

HARRY BROSTER Secretary.

Having acquired at long last, due to the generosity of Frank Lay, a copy of "Fourth Mac", Harry Broster has now completed his collection of "Hagarth" Jack North stories, together with the full "Wycliffe" Saga and the two "Welstead" yarns - a good few cricket Randolph stories. There only remains the Ryle - Mapleton Rover football yarns to acquire.

MERSETSIDE

Meeting held 7th April.

It was a pleasure to see once again an attendance equal to those we have been enjoying for a considerable time; we missed the company of our two regulars, John Farrell and Frank Unwin, who were unable to join us on this occasion. The chairman opened the meeting by dealing with a number of points of club and sectional interest, and the secretary followed with the financial statement. Then came a long discussion on the problem of book purchase, which has been presenting us with some difficulty, in view of the depletion of our library stock. We find that the prices asked for the old

books, even those of no great value, are rather beyond our limited means, and, as far as we can see, there does not appear to be any easy solution to the problem. There can be no disputing the fact that one of the main attractions of the section is the library, and our aim is to provide a satisfactory one. Our chairman has devoted a great deal of time and effort in contacting possible sources of supply, and we are most grateful to him for the trouble he goes to on our behalf.

And so to the lighter side of the evening, in the form of another "tale-ending" competition, this time the work of Pat Laffey. A most original, yet credible, finale was submitted by Bill Windsor, and he was voted a clear winner in face of keen rivalry. After refreshments and the library business, we embarked on a general knowledge quiz, devised by Bill Windsor. This was not too difficult, all the contestants obtaining a respectable score, and the winner, Frank Case, just managed to scrape home in front of Walter Prichard.

Once again, time for departure arrived all too soon, and the meeting ended a little later than usual. A good programme has been arranged for the next get-together, 12th May, at the same time and venue, and we anticipate a full attendance.

FRANK CASE

NORTHERN

Meeting held 13th April.

Our Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, was unfortunately unable to attend our 13th Annual General Meeting, but Jack Wood was on hand to deputise in his usual able fashion. Three members were present who have been with the club since its inception - Gerry Allison, Bill Williamson and Harry Barlow.

After the usual monthly business had been dealt with Gerry Allison proceeded to a review of the accounts for the year ended 31st March, and it was agreed that these showed the club to be in a flourishing condition, receipts from subscriptions and library both showing a healthy increase. The library now consists of over 3,000 books, and it has been augmented by the gift of the late Harold Busby's collection - a generous gesture which we all greatly appreciate.

Copies of the accounts had already been circulated to postal members, and Jim Hepburn wrote congratulating us on a most successful year and suggested that all officers be re-elected en bloc. This was put to the meeting as a proposition, was seconded by Molly Allison, and passed unanimously, so it is a case of the old firm carrying on!

Correspondence during the month included a letter from Ben Whiter congratulating Jack Wood on his success with the St. Frank's quiz, and also expressing sympathy over our loss of two members last month. There were also letters regarding our proposed meeting with our Merseyside friends in Manchester, and the date was tentatively fixed as 30th June. There is to be a meeting later with our Midland friends at Chesterfield, the date for which is not yet settled. We are hoping some of them will be able to come to Manchester, if they are able to make the journey. If any of our London friends could also attend they would be very welcome, but we recognise the difficulties of travelling so far in their case.

There were one or two interesting items of news, notably that 'Billy Bunter's Beanfeast' is shortly to be issued in paper back form, and Jack Wood told us of the latest hard-back Bunter Book, 'Big Chief Bunter'.

We then had a most interesting competition, devised by Jill Lyne. A number of popular characters were arranged in pairs, and we had to decide which of the two we would rather have at a party, the winner being the one whose choice came nearest to the popular vote. When two very popular characters were paired the choice was most difficult - Lord Mauleverer and Marjorie Hazeldene, for instance, and equally so when they were not so popular - Billy Bunter and Horace Coker! The winner was Frank Hancock,

whose list was the only one to agree exactly with the popular vote.

After refreshments we had a reading from a Magnet story, 'Billy Bunter's Burglar,' by Jack Allison. Coker played the leading role in this part of the story, and Jack's rendering of the pompous Mr. Prout's speech was very effective.

The last item was a competition by Frank Hancock based on the surnames of Hamilton schoolboys, containing from three to eleven letters, and Jack Wood emerged the winner, being the only one to get at least two in each group. This most enjoyable meeting, the first of our new year, ended at 9.20 p.m.

F. HANCOCK Hon. Sec.

Next meeting, Saturday, 11th May.

AUSTRALIA

In holiday atmosphere members gathered for their April meeting on Thursday 11th. Chairman Syd Smyth opened the proceedings by passing around 4 copies of the Fleetway House Staff Publication 'The Record'. These had been sent out by W. O. G. Lofts whose articles therein on Bunter, Blake, Nelson Lee and Jack, Sam & Pete provided interesting reading as well as valuable additions for the lucky collectors who secured these items.

An announcement was made by the secretary concerning the scoop of the century made by N.Z. collector, Jack Murtagh. Hot on the scent of two outstanding collections from deceased estates Jack had tracked one of them down in a way which even Sexton Blake could not have bettered. And now he is the proud possessor of some 1,400 Rod Magnets, early Gems, Blue and White Magnets, all in beautiful condition, as well as a lot of S.O.Ls. - books Jack hadn't seen since he was a boy and he is still in a state of shock at his stroke of good fortune. Our heartiest congratulations.

Blake enthusiasts were thrilled to hear from Josie Packman that the first steps have been taken towards a Sexton Blake Catalogue - after finding so much to interest them on this subject in the really fine publication put out for the Nelson Lee enthusiasts its grand to hear that one day, in the not too distant future, we will have just such a catalogue.

The usual interesting budget of inter-state and overseas news was read out by the secretary. Jack Hughes wrote to express his pleasure at having been able to join members at their March meeting and from down south in Victoria, Tom Dobson writes to say he will be joining us in July - he has greatly enjoyed the tape recordings from the London and Merseyside clubs, particularly as he visited some of these folk during his trip to England in 1954.

The friendly 'Foghorn' from Frank Unwin and Harry Broster's newsletter, kept us up to date with club news from this part of the world whilst Ron Hodgson brought the latest events to us from the Northern Club folk.

Bill Hubbard's letter provided a basis for stimulating discussion, particularly his suggestion that efforts be made to revive the Victorian O.B.B.C. and promote the friendly rivalry between clubs which exists between Sydney and Melbourne. What about it you chaps down there! Are you interested?

From closer at home letters from Bruce Fowler and Arthur Holland were read

As the members were in such fine form their good performance in the quiz sent out by Harry Broster made an enjoyable finish to the meeting after the Treasurer, Ernie Carter, had attended to financial matters. All acquitted themselves creditably in this 'Name the Author' quiz of 24 questions, but Stan Nicholls was an easy winner.

The usual half-hour in 'Ye Olde Coffee Shoppe' provided a fitting finale to a grand get-together at which we met so many of our friendly, fellow collectors for whom the 'Welcome' mat is always out.

B. PATE Secretary.

LONDON

There was an excellent attendance at Dollis Hill on Sunday, April 21st, where the chairman, Bob Blythe, held another of his Nelson Lee gatherings, with the map of St. Frank's and its environs in a prominent position. He stated that the sale of the N.L. catalogues had reached the total of 115. Furthermore the library was doing good business and he had bought £4 worth of new material for his borrowers.

Roger Jenkins reported that over £50 had been spent on new books this year since the Hamiltonian library catalogue had been printed. There are now 1440 Magnets, Gems and S.O.Ls. for borrowers to choose from, including a copy of No. 1 of each of these publications.

Marjorie Norris' "Desert Island Companions" were a proper mixed bag - Vernon-Smith, Handforth, Wibley, Loder, Sexton Blake, Paula Dane, Dr. Watson and Mrs. Bruin. What a grand report Marjorie gave about her selections!

Two excellent Philpot Bottles readings were given by Len Packman from his famous bound volume of Chips. Bob Blythe read from C.D. Annual, 1951 "In the Beginning," the pre St. Frank's stories in the Nelson Lee Library. Don Webster's Missing Letters quiz, triple tie here, Eric Lawrence, Winifred Morss and Len Packman. Charlie Wright's Quiz, winners Eric Payne and Eric Lawrence, all went together to make an enjoyable meeting.

Next meeting at Bill and Marjorie Norris' place at 71, Olive Road, Cricklewood, London, N.W.2. Phone GLadstone 8148. Members intending to be present, kindly advise.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

THE HARD COVER SCHOOL STORY CLASSICS

By W. J. A. Hubbard

No. 9 "The Oppidan" (Shane Leslie)

It seems that another more or less hard and fast rule used by the writers of hard cover school story classics was to feature real schools in their yarns for of the previous seven stories reviewed in this series four featured real schools, two of them under pseudonyms. "The Oppidan" must therefore be added to the list for it is a story of Eton, probably the most famous public school of all.

Eton College has for long been a centre of controversy and public comment. Situated near the oldest and most famous of Royal residences, founded and extensively patronised by the Royal Family, it is internationally famous as a centre of education which has produced a large number of this country's most famous men. It is not surprising, therefore, that its opponents have rightly or wrongly attributed to the school a blase superiority which has often been resented by other schools, particularly Harrow.

There is actually a whole library of books on Eton. Many of these have described life at the school, with its extraordinary system of education and many unique customs but very, very few of them have been written on school story lines which is rather surprising. I have, in fact, in my search for books worthy of inclusion in this series of reviews only come across two such stories. One of them is the story at present under review while the other will, I hope, appear in the series in due course.

"The Oppidan" was first published in 1922. It deals however, mainly with a Victorian Eton during the period 1899-1903. It is also a tragedy of school life for it

closes with the death of the hero who perishes in a fire which destroys his House.

In my review of "The Loom of Youth" I pointed out the fact that the author did not hesitate to use real people, under the guise of pseudonyms, in his book. "The Oppidan", however, tells of real events*(2) and actually uses real people as characters in the book under their real names. For instance Dr. Edmund Warre (Headmaster of Eton 1884-1905), Dr. Hornby, the previous Headmaster and then Provost of Eton, Mr. Chandos Leigh (The Lower Master), R. A. H. Mitchell (The Games Master) and several other Eton Masters and employees all play more or less prominent parts in the story. Queen Victoria also makes a brief appearance and is referred to quite extensively "off stage". It is obvious that other characters are real people, then, alive, under the disguise of pseudonyms.*(3).

"The Oppidan" is unique in that the author uses a method of story telling that was practised extensively by such Victorian writers as G. A. Henty and G. Manville Fenn. For his book includes a complete outline of the history of Eton of the period and a better description of the school in its transition period from the dominance of the old classical methods of education to a more modern curriculum has rarely been written. This mixture of fact with fiction does not mar a first class book that grips the reader from beginning to end. Mr. Shane Leslie was obviously an old Etonian himself and I suspect that a good deal of his story is autobiographical.

Like other books of its type "The Oppidan" does not lack realism. There is an attack on the dominance of athletics for the hero and most of his friends are "saps" (the Eton word for "swots") of the first water. Considerable prominence is also given to the effect of religion on their minds and actions. It is a moot point whether religion, like politics, has any place in even a "realistic" school story. When it is treated sincerely and fairly as in this case I can see little harm in it being included. The really devout boy would appear to be very rare at any school, however, and my experience is that deep religious feeling is a transitory emotion among schoolboys. Another intriguing feature is that the hero's unknown sister, whom he never meets, is indirectly the cause of his death. Yet so well does Mr. Leslie write that the full details as to how this is brought about are only revealed to the actual reader.

In a long and most interesting preface the author outlines the difficulties of writing a school story more or less "true to life". He stresses that school life is often so dull and uninteresting and it is only with the aid of exaggeration and sensationalism that some form of plot can be worked out. The full details of his very interesting arguments cannot be given here but they certainly support a contention I have long held that the real school story is one of the most difficult types of yarn to write. Perhaps that is the reason why "The Oppidan", with a number of loose ends, never had a sequel.

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- * "Oppidan" means Town boy as opposed to "Colleger", the original foundation, the two sections into which Eton is divided.
- *(2) A fire actually occurred at Eton in 1903 and a boy died. The real event, however, had no connection with the happenings described in the book.
- *(3) Mr. Quills, the Games Master who succeeds R. A. H. Mitchell is really C. M. Wells, the famous Cambridge University and Middlesex cricketer, who was still a master at Eton at the time "The Oppidan" was written. Two members of the Royal Family, one of them a schoolboy also play a part in the story but their actual names are not mentioned. The incident in which they figure is, I understand, perfectly true.

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Yours Sincerely

Interesting Items from
the Editor's Letter-Bag

R. J. McCABE (Dundee): One of the pleasant things I like about Danny's Diary, the reader can put himself in Danny's place at one time and another. Delighted with the Greyfriars Gallery. I hope to see many of the lesser known faces in the future. Re my search for the current S.B.L., all I can say is that it would take Sexton Blake to find a S.B.L. in this town.

JILL LYNE (Muswell Hill): The cover picture of Tom Redwing was magnificent. Please congratulate the talented artist who drew this very fine portrait of the sailor of the Remove. It needed very little imagination to hear the wind whistling in the ears and feel the spray hitting the face as the boat rolled from side to side. The artist was able to convey Redwing's devotion to boats and the sea, and this was appreciated a great deal by fans who remember the old stories of Redwing when he was presented as a strong and active member of the Greyfriars scene and not merely a foil for the Bounder.

J. A. WARK (Dunoon): I recall a series about Bob Travers, a boy boxer, who travelled round the schools and met the champion junior fighting men in the ring. The series ran in the Boy's Friend, and must have been written just after the end of the 1914-18 war. The toughest fight engaged in by Travers was against Bob Cherry. Was this another series from the pen of Frank Richards, or was a substitute writer responsible?

(The series was credited to Herbert Britton, and a good many years back C.D. endeavoured to discover who Herbert Britton was. We were unsuccessful then, but he was one of the substitute writers. - ED.)

BETTE PATE (Australia): My award for the month (March) goes to "Valentine for Meredith" which I greatly enjoyed. I have a sneaky feeling that I like Meredith more than I dislike him, but of course my soft spot is for dear Mr. Buddle. Let's have plenty more of him.

JOHN TROVELL (Colchester): I have read with great appreciation the work of Mr. Roger Jenkins in your delightful magazine, and offer him sincere congratulations on his excellent articles. I feel confident that a contribution by Mr. Jenkins featuring that lovable character, Lord Mauleverer, would be welcomed by all readers. What joy and anticipation the languid Mauly evoked when he stirred himself from the depths of his study armchair, to quietly assist friend or foe in need, or to take efficient command of a form rebellion! Unfortunately my experience of the schoolboy earl has been confined to the 1928 issues of the Magnet onwards, and could Mr. Jenkins be persuaded to do "a Mauly" for us, no doubt he would be able to relate, in his capable manner, some of the earlier episodes featuring one of Charles Hamilton's most appealing characters.

RICHARD MCCARTHY (Australia): I enjoyed Victor Colby's article on Henry St. John Cooper for, as you know, he wrote for the early Champion when it was edited by Mr. F. Addington Symonds.

FRANK SHAW (Liverpool): I recently came by an E. S. Brooks Union Jack yarn of 1930 entitled "Village Vengeance". For one who cared but little for anything but school yarns, and now reads no fiction at all of this kind, it was first-class. Brooks could invent, and writes well and interestingly, though there are too many cliches and the ending is too neat. What an opening, though! Waldo is there, and lets himself be lynched by the villagers (and then revives himself), and altogether is a Wonder Man. No wonder old readers still recall him. I should think this is a better Blake than the current one, and Tinker is very human.

JOHN UPTON (Southend): I wonder if you can throw any light on the following par from the Daily Telegraph: "45 years ago there were vague plans to put Bunter into films. The turrets and tuckshop of Greyfriars never materialised at Elstree". That takes us back to 1915-17, when Elstree was barely established as a film centre. Is the par true, and, if so, which company was interested? It occurs to me that Granger's made a film version of "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's" in 1921, with Ralph Forbes. Has this film ever been mentioned in C.D?

(One can find reference to a possible Greyfriars film, in editor Hinton's chats early in the first world war. But Hinton's editorials were so unreliable and imaginative that it would be risky to accept that any such project really existed. In the thirties, editor Down

referred to a similar project, and here we are on much sounder ground. The silent film of "Fifth Form at St. Dominic's" has been touched upon in the Digest in the past. - ED.)

W. H. CLOUGH (Sale): The Annual seems to improve each year. One can so easily take the Digest for granted, but a second's thought brings home to one the care, thought, and hard work that goes to make the excellence of our magazine. Its arrival each month is eagerly awaited.

LARRY MORLEY (Hanwell): I wonder if Dr. Beeching is going to close down Friardale and Courtfield stations. If the railways have many passengers like Bunter, no wonder they lose money.

ROBERT WILSON (Glasgow): I am enjoying Collectors' Digest as much as ever. Mr. Buddle and Danny are outstanding and overwhelmingly nostalgic.

TONY HEYWOODE (Whetstone): Bully for Buddle! Another Slade hit for Collectors' Digest. When I was young I wanted to go to Greyfriars and join Quelch and H.W. & Co. Now in my second youth I desire, just as strongly, to enter Slade to be with Buddle and Meredith. Keep up the good work and let's have many more Slade yarns in future Digests.

Sexton Blake Today

LOTUS LEAVES AND LARCENY

S.B.L. No. 521

Philip Chambers

The story of a "tawny-skinned paragon of Siamese pedigree" named Millie - rat-catcher extraordinary to the firm of Sexton Blake. Investigations; of her adventures in a Chinese colony in Mayfair, of curiosity which almost killed the cat; and of her revenge on her enemies.

A witty, cleverly written story of murder and an ingenious method of robbery without violence or evidence of theft.

As usual, Mr. Chambers has given us good value for our money:- excitement, drama, and some excellent character studies.

This is a novel which should please all Blake enthusiasts.

MURDER IN CAMERA
S.B.L. No. 522

W. A. Ballinger



Mr. Herbert Wand's efforts to secure Sexton Blake's interest in and financial support for a series of T.V. films featuring the Adventures of Sexton Blake, seemed doomed to failure - until murder joined the company with a loud noise and a

startling blue flash. From that moment onwards Sexton Blake was intensely interested in the film-makers, especially in Mr. Wand's unsavoury past and equally unpleasant present.

Mr. Wand, he learned, had been responsible for the most abysmal failure in the history of film-making; would do anything for money; and had even less respect for human life than he had for the film medium.

Had he committed murder to sabotage his own series and claim insurance benefits or should he have been the victim? Was this murder by design or by accident?

Mr. Ballinger's excellent story introduces us to a crowd of suspects, all with strong motives for murdering Wand, before Blake finally unmasks the real victim.

(Review by C. D. Correspondent,
 MARGARET COOKE)

200 - - A MILESTONE IN COLLECTORS' DIGEST HISTORY - - TWO HUNDRED -
 WATCH FOR IT! - - 200 - WAIT FOR IT! - - - 200 - - -