

No 235. "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY.

# THE SCHOOL UNDER CANVAS!

A SPLENDID TALE OF CORDON CAY & CO.  
By PROSPER HOWARD



3<sup>d.</sup>

C  
O  
L  
L  
E  
C  
T  
O  
R  
S

D  
PRICE 2/-  
I  
JUNE 1963  
G  
\*\*\*  
E  
NUMBER 198  
S  
VOLUME 17  
T

# FOR SALE

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

LOT 23 - Offers requested for 1 bound volume No. 6 of 1d Marvels, comprising Nos. 231 to 257 inclusive. Good condition.

LOT 24 - Offers requested for 1 bound volume No. 1 of 'The Champion' with 354 pages. Good condition but cover marked.

LOT 25 - Offers requested for 3 large bound volumes of 'Nuggets' comprising 1 vol. containing Nos. 169 to 210, 1 vol. year 1902 and 1 vol. year 1903. All good condition.

LOT 26 - Offers requested for 16 individual book bound copies of 'The Boy's Friend' 3d Library - Nos. 36, 37, 39, 66, 73, 113, 116, 119, 135, 144, 146, 155, 160, 166, 169 and 182. All excellent condition.

PLEASE QUOTE LOT NUMBERS.

POSTAL OFFERS ONLY AT THIS  
STAGE. NO CALLERS.

LOT 27 - Offers requested for 94 loose copies of 'The Boy's Friend' 3d Library, Nos. 3 to 100 inclusive, except Nos. 8, 19, 30 and 51 with covers except odd one.

LOT 28 - Offers requested for 64 loose copies of 'The Boy's Friend' 3d Library, comprising 36 Nos. in 100 to 200 range, remainder above No. 200 - with covers.

LOT 29 - Offers requested for 98 loose copies of 'The Nugget Library' 1d paper backs with covers, comprising Nos. 1 to 100 inclusive, except Nos. 19 and 20. Some well used.

LOT 30 - Offers requested for 50 loose copies of 'The Nugget Library' 1d paper backs, with covers, comprising 42 copies Nos. 101 to 150 except for eight missing, and 8 copies above No. 150.

Executrix - Mrs. I. Carpenter,  
230 Watford Road,  
Harrow,  
Midx.

# COLLECTORS' DIGEST

☆☆☆

☆☆☆

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 17.

Number 198

JUNE, 1963

Price 2s. Od.



**LOYALTY:** Giant buildings and mammoth businesses dwarf the personalities of those who creep about in their shadows. The age in which we are living seems to be one without individuality, which is perhaps the main reason for the lessening of loyalty. When we were children we got a kick out of loyalty, especially the smaller loyalties. The stories we read taught us loyalty to our country, to our parents, to our school, to our team, to ourselves,

Most of us were intensely patriotic. We stirred deliciously to the strains of "Land of Hope and Glory".

Boat Race day was something special. We wore favours. If we possessed bicycles we decorated our machines with light or dark blue ribbons, according to which side we supported. It meant plenty to us.

Some of us rode on trams or buses for the sake of loyalty. If we liked to support the losing side, we took the tram and thumbed our noses at the snorting bus. If we felt superior we took the bus and looked disdainfully at the tram.

We rejoiced in our school colours. Members of other schools were regarded as rivals. Of course, we did - like Tom Merry meeting Gordon Gay. We supported our favourite cinema - "I always go to the R. pular."

We supported our favourite papers. We bought the Magnet or the Lee, and felt sorry for the partisans of the Marvel or the Bo.'s Realm. We felt that the editor of our favourite paper appreciated our support. He was always telling us he did. He was always asking us to get new readers. We felt we were part of the paper. We were helping it to carry on.

Today it is hard to be loyal to British Railways or London Transport. It is impossible to be loyal to a supermarket. The girl at the cash desk is almost a machine herself. It is not easy to be loyal to a cinema, when almost all of them are owned by two giant concerns linked together in some mysterious way. Could we sum it up by saying that a penny's not a penny any more? The soul has gone, to be replaced by grim efficiency.

The old papers had personalities. Modern periodicals have none. A multi-million concern does not bother whether we buy its papers or not - and some day another concern, with even more millions, will sweep the lot away, whether they want to be swept away or not. So why bother?

Competition has gone out of life, and loyalty has gone with it. Modern youth is the victim of our times.

OUR 200th ISSUE: In August will appear the 200th issue of Collectors' Digest. It is a milestone in our history and large numbers of readers have written to say that it is an occasion to be marked with a white stone. We feel the same about it. Therefore the 200th issues of Collectors' Digest will be a GRAND DOUBLE NUMBER. We hope that it will thrill you in the same way as the magnificent double numbers which the old papers gave us, long, long ago. Every effort is going into No. 200 to make it the finest issue of our magazine ever to come to you.

The price of this special issue will be 4/-. In the case of our regular subscribers, their yearly subscriptions will be set back one number. That is to say, if, for instance, your sub ends with No. 204, the record will be set back to 203 to meet the double cost of this issue. Any subscriber who does not wish to receive this "Special" should notify us of same in good time, and appropriate adjustments will be made. We believe, however, that all readers will wish to receive this great souvenir issue to mark 200 months of C.D. Casual readers and non-subscribers should note that this issue will only be sent out to order. If you are not a regular subscriber, order your copy in good time.

The number of copies we print will be strictly limited. More next month about our 200th SPECIAL.

THE EDITOR.

\* \* \* \* \*

OUR MAY EDITORIAL

Large numbers of readers have written to express their pleasure in our novelty Editorial which appeared last month.

Under the heading "BRIGHTON WAS A LOT OF FUN IN 1905", the EVENING ARGUS, which has the largest evening sale of any Sussex newspaper, reprinted our "Still Looking Back" item, though no doubt by accident the paper omitted to mention that the item came from COLLECTORS' DIGEST. It featured in the Argus dated 15th May.

The newspaper was able to answer some of our queries. The Empire Theatre is now the defunct Paris Cinema, while the Eden Theatre later became the Grand in North Road, and was closed in 1955. The Argus also mentions that crossing the Devil's Dyke by cable railway cost 6d for the return fare.

\* \* \* \* \*

WANTED: Copy of BOY'S CINEMA (No. 627) dated 19th December, 1931. Your price paid. Write Box D.H. C/O. COLLECTORS' DIGEST, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON.

WANTED: Volumes 1, 2 and 3 of Pugilistica. Will purchase or exchange. Have many old bloods. TOM LANGLEY, 340 BALDWIN'S LANE, BIRMINGHAM, 28.

WANT Magnets 808, 826, 899, 961, 963, 1005, 1011, 1013, 1027, 1028, 1035, 1072. Rookwood SOL'S 170, 174, 198, 182, 202, 206, 220, 284, 341, 308. Few old Kinema Comics, Film Funs, for exchange. Magnets 562, 653, 722, 792, 817, 972, 1055. Greyfriars SOLS 67, 85, 99, 101, 105, 121, 123, 129, 131. Monster LB. No. 12. Will be on holiday 8th - 15th June. THOMPSON, 53 WALLASEY PARK, BELFAST, 14.

WANTED: CHUMS, bound volumes or consecutive monthly parts for 1921, 1923, 1925. HARRY MATTHEWS, 22 RUSSELL STREET, ST. LEONARDS, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

SALE OR EXCHANGE: 217 CHAMPIONS Feb. 1942 (1050) to June 1946 (1272) only six missing, all in good condition. P. HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, KINGS HEATH, NORTHAMPTON.

WANTED: B.F.L. No. 407. For sale - Many 3d B.F.L.'S. 36 ST. THOMAS' ROAD, PRESTON.

WANTED: MAGNETS Nos. 829, 873, 976, 882, 884, 888. S.O.L.'S Nos. 60 and 68. DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.

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.

MAGNETS & BULLSEYES WANTED - I have duplicate Magnets and early Populars for exchange - or will buy. J. YAFFE, 13 CEDRIC ROAD, BR. CRUMPSALL, MANCHESTER, 8.

THE BUTTERFLY WAS DIFFERENT!

by Gerry Allison

The reproduction of Butterfly and Firefly on the cover of Collectors' Digest for May brought back many happy memories. A note inside mentioned that The Butterfly seemed to have started its life in 1905.

To be exact, Butterfly No. 1 bore the date September 17th, 1904. Perhaps a few words and some facts about this rather unusual comic paper would be of interest, for the Butterfly was different from other comics in various ways.

Firstly - and this was a sad defect - it had no Office Boy. One searched the pages in vain for the mis-spelt adventures so delightfully recorded in Comic Cuts by Sebastian Ginger, in Chips by the great Bottles, O.B., and in Chuckles by Bartholomew Bluenose. This was a serious loss, but there was always Cheerful Charlie Brown, the 'Original Boy Ventriloquist' entrancingly illustrated by Wakefield.

But a much more important difference between the Butterfly and the other weekly comics - at least for the first few months of its career - was its element of sauciness. The early issues of The Butterfly were rather naughty, and contained many illustrations of the kind usually seen in Photo Bits!

Number 1 of The Butterfly lies before me now. The title, in bold black lettering, is superimposed over a beautiful butterfly, spectral and shimmering, which extends from almost margin to margin. The page contains five 'frames' and all are illustrations of girls or women with superabundant curves. The first item is 'An Up-to-Date Schoolgirl's Letter' and shows a couple of mature teenagers, with large hats and flowing hair, making eyes at a handsome boy, despite the presence of a gorgon-like schoolmistress. This was the first appearance of 'Flossie' who featured in Butterfly every week onwards to No. 655, March 31st 1917. Flossie only disappeared when the Butterfly was merged with Firefly and began at No. 1 (New series) dated April 7th, 1917.

To continue with front page of No. 1 however. Another picture presented the Butterfly Corps. 'Fully equipped - not with any warlike intention, but sent out to capture a few thousand readers or so, for our bright little journal. Who wouldn't be captured by a corps like this?' (Quote).

The final frame is headed 'A Little Fatter Now' and the caption reads:-

The Coy One: "Do you remember, Dear Mr. Miles, when you used to call me your little Lena?"

He (absently) "Ah yes; a little leaner. That was long years ago, wasn't it?"

Besides the large butterfly on the cover, the pages of the paper were illustrated by many other pictures of lepidoptera, some with the faces and forms of attractive damsels, complete with coloured wings. Free gifts of pretty paper butterflies were sent to anyone who wrote and asked for them - "You can stick them into books, or on to letters when writing to a friend. I have already distributed 30,000 paper butterflies amongst my readers."

In No. 5 of this unusual 'Comic' the 'Butterfly Beauty Competition' commenced. In A Chat with Your Editor - who was apparently a large naked baby boy, equipped with four gossamer butterfly wings - we read:-

"Dear Reader,

In this number you will find many pretty faces. Now, I want you to pick out three which, in your opinion, would win prizes in a Beauty Show. Then tell me which pretty faces would win the first, second and third prizes respectively

The Editress of 'Forget-Me-Not' has marked a copy of Butterfly, and I heartily agree with her selection. This week I offer the sum of One Guinea as a Butterfly Beauty Prize."

The editor concludes his Chat by saying - "The Butterfly was a big venture, and is now a glorious success."

"It is the first time" he goes on - "that a high-class humorous paper of this kind has been sold for one halfpenny. There is plenty of room for a little paper like the Butterfly. It is different to all other humorous journals."

He was quite right too. For a matter of curiosity I counted the number of 'pretty faces' in that issue of the green-coloured paper. There were seventeen.

A few weeks later, a 'Miss Butterfly' has her own "Chat" and said, "I am sure all my readers, especially my girls readers, of all ages, will appreciate the tone of daintiness which pervades the pages of THE BUTTERFLY. There is nothing quite like The Butterfly."

But the element of sauciness gradually grew less and less, until at last - except for Flossie, the Butterfly was like most other comic papers. But it was always a 'good buy.'

.....

**OFFER OF GEMS FOR SALE:** Eric Fayne has recently had a very large volume of Gems broken down to extract certain copies he needed for his own main collection binding. He now offers for sale the remainder of the volume, comprising the following copies: 692, 693 - 700; 701 - 713; 715 - 726; 731; 733 - 735; 737 - 750; 751 - 754; 757 - 762; 765 - 767. 64 copies in all, including the following series complete - Camping series introducing Cardew; Sankey's Circus; New House Barring-Out; Racke, hero; Fifth Form Mystery series; the famous St. Jim's Kidnapping series; the Levison's Past series; the Stony Seven, and many other famous stories of a golden period of the Gem. All have been bound for many years and a number are bound without covers. Condition, with one or two exceptions, very good, but purchaser must understand that the group comprises the remnant of a broken down volume, Suitable for any collector who proposes to have the copies re-bound. Price £8 10s. plus postage. S.A.E. first, please. Write: ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON.

**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.D.L., N.L., Gem and Magnet. BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.

**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.

**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.

**WANTED:** Magnets Nos. 1083, 1084, 1087, 1088, 1089, 1559, GOOD CONDITION FOR BINDING PLEASE.

JOHN TROVELL, 16, BOURNE ROAD, COLCHESTER, ESSEX.

# DANNY'S DIARY

JUNE, 1913

Derby Day was a most tragic occasion. While the race was being run, when the horse reached Tattenham Corner, a woman rushed on to the course and threw herself in front of the King's horse, Anmer, ridden by Mr. H. Jones. The horse fell, the jockey was hurt, and the woman was seriously injured. She died soon afterwards.

My mother was distressed about it, for Mum is a suffragette at heart. She says there will be no more wars if women are ever given the vote.

Doug, who had sixpence on Tango Princee, did not win anything. Craganour was past the post first, but was disqualified for bumping. So the winner was Abcyeur, an outsider of 100 - 1.

The Gem has been very good this month. In the first story, Levison's father lost his money, so Levison had to leave St. Jim's, but he came back disguised as a boat-boy, and created much trouble. The story was called "The Schemer" and I loved it.

"Tom Merry's Special Number" was very good. I always like stories about Tom Merry's Weekly, and this one was first-chop. The best story of the month was "The Scamps of the School." The Scamps were the Terrible Three and they got up to any amount of pranks. They nearly had Nenny Ciss catch up with them, but Tom saved a child from being run over by a train, so they were forgiven.

The last story "Coward or Hero" was about a new boy, Roland Ray, and I found it very good.

In the middle of the month Mum and Doug took me to the Royal Horse Show at Richmond, and it was enjoyable. Richmond is a charming, sleepy little town, nestling on the banks of the upper Thames. The narrow streets are calm and quiet and peaceful, with hardly any traffic, for there are no trams. It is lovely country all around, and we had a special tea and some Richmond cakes called Maids of Honour at a pretty little tea-shop. Mum said the world seemed to slow down and be more restful in this slumbering little town by the gurgling river. I would not like to live there all the time, though, as I think I would find it too quiet.

Doug bought me "The Boy's Friend" to read on the train. It had two serials. One was "Tinker Abroad" and it is a mystery tale about Sexton Blake. The other was "The Fool of the Navy" by John Tregellis. He has written a lot of service stories. Of course, serials are rather unsatisfactory unless you are a regular reader.

Doug bought for himself the new Boy's Friend 3d Library called "Tinker's Schooldays". He seemed to be enjoying it.

And Mum had the 25th birthday number of "Answers."

One of the grandstands at Hurst Park race course was burned down, and the suffragettes were blamed for it. But Mum says everything gets blamed on the suffragettes these days. If we have a bad summer it will be the suffragettes' fault.

We went out for a picnic on Whit Monday and it was pleasant. I sprawled under a tree and read for a time. I had taken with me Comic Cuts which contained a series called "Caravan Chums" which was quite good. I also had the Union Jack which was given to me by my cousin Robin who lives at Aldershot, and who spent Whitsun with us. The Sexton Blake story was called "The Ex-Convicts Secret" and there was a new serial about highwaymen, "Dick of the Highways" by David Goodwin.

The battle cruiser "Queen Mary" has gone to Devonport for her trials. Mr. Churchill says she may be the last of her kind.



Very good stories in the Magnet this month. "In Direst Peril" was about a tiger which escaped from Muller's Menagerie. It seems that the porter at Friardale station is named Rumble. This is quite a coincidence as the porter at Rylcombe is named Trumble.

"His Own Betrayer" was a good dramatic story. A New boy, not any good at sports, came to Greyfriars. His name was Frank Cleveland, but the Bounder denounced him as Hubert Osborne, expelled from St. Wode's for theft. In the end, Cleveland had to give himself away, as he saved Bolsover Minor from drowning, thus proving himself a splendid swimmer.

Harry Wharton & Co. saved some sailors from a wreck in the tale called "The Schoolboy Dramatists" but the sailors lost all their belongings. So Coker, and also the Remove, had the same idea of staging a performance in aid of the sailors. Good fun.

"Quits" was another dramatic story. Major Cherry owed money to Mr. Vernon-Smith, who is a moneylender. So Bob had either to win a scholarship or leave Greyfriars. But



**A Ripping new Yarn of Tinker, the most famed boy in literature, introducing Sexton Blake. It deals with one of the most baffling mysteries ever yet published.**

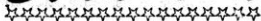
Bob saved the Bounder who had fallen over a cliff, so Mr. Vernon-Smith wiped out the debt.

In the Gem they have just started a new short serial called "The Cheer-Oh Chums." It doesn't seem very well written.

A chap at school gave me the latest Marvel which contained a Tom Sayers story called "The Fighting Cricketer". There was also a Jack, Sam and Pete tale called "Pete's Motor Polo Contest." It is said that polo on motor-bikes is sweeping America. I never seem to find anything interesting in the Pete stories, though the author tries very hard to be funny.

Mr. Woolworth is opening a store in our town. Every article in priced at 3d or 6d. It is something like the Penny Bazaar, though every item in that is supposed to be a penny.

# Blakiana



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

It came somewhat as a shock to me to find that this month completes my tenth year as Conductress of Blakiana. It only seems a short while ago that I suggested to our dear friend, the late Herbert Leckenby, that I might take on the job. Much water has passed under the bridge since that time ... I wonder what has happened to Harry Homer ... and Maurice Bond ...

There have been times when I have felt despondent through shortage of material, and on more than one occasion I have been on the point of giving it up. However, a decade is something to be proud of, and even if I have not pleased everyone - which, of course, is an impossibility - I have at least done my best.

The fact that I have been able to carry on is due entirely to the loyal band of supporters who have 'kept me going' with material. I do not propose to mention any names, but every one of you who has sent me material throughout these ten years has my grateful thanks; there are, however, two very good friends without whose many articles and valuable data I should most certainly have never been in a position to carry on, and it is fitting that they should be the two contributors this month.

Thank you ALL for a wonderful ten years - and may the next ten (D.V.) be just as wonderful.

JOSIE PACKMAN

-----  
NAME THE AUTHOR!

By Walter Webb

An article which recalls the varied writing styles of those anonymous, old-time Sexton Blake authors, and how certain clues to their identification as men to whom credit - or otherwise - should be given, in relation to those stories.

-----

How well do you remember the literary style of your favourite old-time author, or authors?

For instance, if you are a Hamilton fan, could you by glancing at just half-a-dozen words of dialogue in a MAGNET story tell whether Charles Hamilton wrote them or not? Let us take one of the most familiar passages in a Greyfriar's yarn as our example:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry exclaimed.

Now, would Charles Hamilton have typed out the above in his

manuscript? If you are one of the more observant of his admirers you should be able to reply readily enough that this brief sentence would have come from the pen of a substitute writer, for Hamilton, if using those words - which he very often did, of course, - would never have written them in quite that order. More of this anon, however.

One of the most fascinating pastimes which has faced the Blake collector during the past fifty years or so has been the attempted tracing of the authors responsible for the writing of those anonymous stories published from 1904 - 1930 in the old UNION JACK.

Gifted with the necessary patience, and, of course, the means necessary to indulge in this enjoyable form of relaxation, the reading of those ancient yarns takes on a new glamour - the reader, in the role of his favourite character, disregards alike the well-worn plot, the laboured humour and other situations which, in the light of this modern age, seem so farcical and is oblivious to all else excepting the task of making himself familiar with the style of the author whose story he is reading.

In this respect some authors dropped clues all over the place - W. Murray Graydon is a typical example - and it was chiefly in the way he set down his dialogue that a writer invariably gave away his identity. For, if he had any pet words or phrases in his vocabulary and was a fast worker they generally came out with monotonous regularity before he was even aware that they were in the text. Take the more prolific of them - Hamilton, Teed, Brooks, Goddard - how well one remembers the way they used to repeat themselves in those bygone days, making identification of their stories a fairly easy matter.

It sounds a rather incredible thing to say, but it is a fact that a clue leading to a past author's identity can be found by just noting the way he used the name of Sexton Blake. Today the use of Sexton Blake's full name is discouraged - editorial policy no doubt forbids the modern author in this age of slick, top-speed writing too frequent use of Christian names and other unnecessary details; but, way back in the early days of the century, no such restrictions were placed upon Blake's chroniclers, and they were free to use the character's full name as often as they liked. Of this concession, some, but not all, took advantage and a study of the situation reveals the interesting fact that the rival factions were pretty well equally divided - fifty per cent using the detective's full name, Sexton Blake, and the remainder his surname only. In other cases, one or two authors, like W. Murray Graydon, E. W. Alais and Cicely Hamilton, used both Blake's full name and surname only in equal measure, so it will be readily appreciated that in trying

to trace a particular writer the researcher's task is made much less difficult than it might otherwise have been.

From facts mostly gleaned from the Blake stories which have appeared under their names, here are some of the authors who generally referred to the character under his full name - Sexton Blake:

Norman Goddard, Dr. J. W. Staniforth, W. B. Home-Gall,  
Edgar Joyce Murray, T. G. Dowling Maitland and Jonas G. Jones.

Among those who, like the present day authors, used Blake's surname only, were:

William J. Bayfield, Ernest A. Treeton, Stanhope Sprigg,  
Gordon Anderson, E. J. Gannon and Alec G. Pearson.

As previously stated, a close study of an author's dialogue can pay dividends for the purpose of identification, as the brief sentence from a MAGNET story quoted at the beginning amply proves, although, in this particular instance, instead of leading to the identification of any one author as having written it, it does point conclusively to Charles Hamilton as not having done so; for it was a peculiarity of Hamilton's writing - or should I say, a system to which he rigidly adhered in his writing? - never to finish a sentence of dialogue with the verb in relation to the name of the orator - in this instance, Bob Cherry.

Therefore, Charles Hamilton would have written the above sentence down, thus:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry; the only difference of course being in the switching over of the verb in order that the sentence finished with the name of the character.

C. M. Hammill ... Ernest A. Treeton ... Fenton Ash. The first two were the real names of early writers; the other a pseudonym; yet all three had one thing in common - they were certainly Blake writers of a past decade, despite the fact that their names do not appear in any of the Blake lists of titles and authors so far published.

Facts appertaining to all three are quite interesting of disclosure, but must be left to a later instalment.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DID CHARLES HAMILTON WRITE A SEXTON BLAKE STORY?

By W. O. G. Lofts

As most readers know, Charles Hamilton started his writing career long before the Gem and Magnet began in 1907 and 1908 respectively. His output for Trapps Holmes & Co.

alone was simply fantastic. (See my article in May, 1962 C.D. "The First Greyfriars School.")

His first story for the Amalgamated Press, so far as I have been able to trace, was in the Halfpenny Union Jack No. 50 dated 6.4.1895, and entitled "The Corsair Captain" a tale of pirates. The next story in that paper was not until No. 171 (31.7.1897) entitled "Captain Nemo" Both stories, incidentally had the author's name under the story as being by Charles Hamilton.

The reader must, of course, remember that at this period tales of Sexton Blake in the UNION JACK were very few and far between, and Charles Hamilton's name most certainly did not appear in the few that were published. At a later date his name did appear more frequently as the author of numerous adventure stories and many readers will probably remember the tales in the Penny U.J. about the schools St. Cynthians and Fernley - reprinted in the Nugget Library many years later.

About this period, stories by a "Max Hamilton" also appeared and I can remember, with some pleasure, a few years ago confirming my good friend Walter Webb's statement that this was the pen-name of a woman, Miss Cecily Hamilton - who became a famous playwright in later years, and who has been suspected of writing Sexton Blake stories at the time when the author's name was not given. Mr. H. W. Twyman, former editor of the Union Jack (1921-33) can clearly remember asking a senior director if a woman ever wrote Blake tales, and was told that Miss Cecily Hamilton certainly wrote a few in the very early days. Unfortunately, the actual titles have never been positively identified.

Now, quite recently, it was my pleasure to learn (from an official source) the authorship of several of the early Penny U.J. Blake stories, including the writer of the Henri Garrook ("The Snake") tales, and I can now reveal to readers of Blakiana that U.J. No. 130 dated 7th April, 1906, entitled "The Circus Detective" was definitely written by a C. Hamilton. Unfortunately, I cannot glean the full Christian name, and thus it could stand for either Cecily or Charles!

It would be quite easy for one to say that this story was written by Miss Hamilton; but a word of caution is necessary, for I cannot remember the late Charles Hamilton ever denying he wrote a Blake yarn, and the circus was a favourite subject of his early writings. He used the name of "Harry Dorian" for a splendid series of stories in PLUCK at that period, featuring the sawdust ring, and one must also remember that he was writing this type of story long before Clavering, St. Jim's and Greyfriars became his chief output.

The reader may ask the question, cannot one tell by the style of writing, for Charles Hamilton's style was unmistakable? On this point I would say this; although it is true that such experts as Eric Fayne, Roger Jenkins and John Shaw could probably detect his school stories, it is a sheer impossibility for one to tell, with any conviction, his stories of totally different themes. He was such a clever writer that he could virtually adapt himself into a completely different person. To prove this, how many readers could honestly say that they knew Charles Hamilton was "Ralph Redway" or, indeed, "Frank Richards", "Martin Clifford", "Owen Conquest", or any of the other numerous pen-names he used in pre-war days!

It is rather frustrating to learn from an official source the authorship of a previously anonymous work, only to create, as it were, another mystery; but it would be very interesting to know if any reader of the C.D. was ever told by the late Charles Hamilton that he did not pen any Sexton Blake stories. Assuming that he never made such a statement, it could possibly be that "The Circus Detective" was his work.

-----

DON'T MISS: Collectors' Digest Number Two Hundred.

Great Summer Double Number. A Milestone in our History.

# Hamiltoniana

## REFLECTIONS

By John Upton

Through the library facilities of the Northern Section O.B.B.C. I have been able to renew my acquaintance with several well-loved "Magnet" series, including the Popper Island rebellion, the Jim Valentine series, the Egyptian series, the second series involving Harry Wharton's fall from grace, and the Brotherhood of Justice series of 1934. All have given me not only immense pleasure, but many opportunities for true relaxation; so rare in these days. After an interval of nearly seven years, I find these stories, with their skilful blend of drama and comedy, their subtle characterization, even more fascinating. Now, too, more than ever before, I realise just what a fluent style was Frank Richards'; always smooth flowing, always lucid, with frequent unobtrusive comments upon human character; its qualities and frailties.

I am reading now the famous China series of 1930, which I have not seen before. Undoubtedly the finest holiday series I have read to date, this demonstrates the brilliance of the writer with each successive story. It also proves quite clearly, to my mind, the truth of the argument that the greatest stories of Frank Richards could not be condensed without irrevocable damage. The further one gets away from his peak, perhaps, the more possible it might be to adapt, revise, condense. But for such a superlative work as the China series to be so treated would only do harm, in my view, both to the work and to the author's reputation.

In this series, there is one chapter which reminded me at once of that fine article "The Bunter's at Home," by Roger Jenkins, in the recent C.D. Annual. It occurs in the second story, "Peril from the East" (1176) and bears the title "For It!" This chapter, too, throws interesting sidelights on the Bunter family (at breakfast in this case), and in it Frank Richards gives full freedom to his propensity for dry and whimsical comment, using the Bunter family, no doubt, as his foils. We learn of Mr. Bunter, for example ...

"Mr. Bunter had eaten enough for only three, so far. When he had eaten enough for four his brow cleared and calmed. Like many middle-aged gentlemen, Mr. Bunter was better tempered after breakfast. He grunted, but his grunt was more placable.

"He looked at his watch, and there was a general rising of spirits when he rose from the table, as if they rose automatically when Mr. Bunter rose."

The cause of Mr. Bunter's discontent is confided ..

"Things were not looking up in the City. Mr. Bunter had bought rubber shares in expectation of the rise in those delusive shares which is bound

to come some time - but showed no sign of coming just yet. The tax-collector had called several times; and on the last occasion his remarks had been quite nasty. Mr. Bunter had read in the morning paper of a wonderful new system of roads that had been built in Palestine - and the previous day his Ford had nearly come to grief on a Surrey road that badly needed repair. This annoyed Mr. Bunter; he was even so unreasonable as to suppose that a British Government ought to repair British roads before they built new roads in Asia Minor; especially as they taxed Mr. Bunter to raise the money. Politicians, of course, moved in mysterious ways their wondrous to perform; and Mr. Bunter did not profess to understand what their game was. He even suspected that they were noodles who did not know how to do their job ...."

Mr. Bunter's irritation is further increased by the enormous food bills when all his progeny are at home. At school, though "Mr. Bunter did not wholly like drawing the cheques for their school fees ... there, at least, he stood to win. There was no doubt whatever that the Bunters, at school, ate their money's worth."



Roger Jenkins, in "The Bunters at Home" says that Mrs. Bunter is a somewhat shadowy figure, but in this chapter we do learn various useful details about her. She is "a plump and pleasant lady" who always agrees with her husband, "following the line of least resistance", her "chief occupation of a morning" being "to keep things smooth and pleasant as far as possible till the front door closed with a bang behind her lord and master." Her kindness is confirmed beyond all doubt when she protests: "But it is so nice to have William at home." She is undoubtedly, as Frank Richards expresses it, "an affectionate parent." And with all his opprobrious ways,

Bunter is given the virtue, perhaps his only one, of returning that affection. About to leave Bunter Villa to join Harry Wharton & Co. (unknown to them, as usual), he rushes back into the house to say goodbye to her. His farewells of his brother and sister are less solicitous ...

"'Going?' asked Sammy.

"'Yes,'

"'Hurrah!' said Sammy.

"'Fine!' said Bessie.

"'Yah!'

"'My dear William --' said Mrs. Bunter.

"'Goodbye, mums,' said Bunter. 'Go and eat coke, Sammy! Your hair's untidy Bessie! Good-bye, mums, old dear.'

"The Ford snorted away .....

Finally, Mr. Bunter, having regard for "the immense amount he would save on food

bills if Bunter stayed away till the end of the vac", gives him three whole pounds!

This chapter is slanted to a very adult viewpoint, it invites the young reader to relish a type of humour that is, as far as I know, unique in its inclusion in stories for juveniles. That many of the original youthful readers laughed with Frank Richards, I have no doubt, because the style itself is simple and recognisable, despite the references to income-tax, road construction in Asia Minor and so on.

There are many more examples, of course, of Frank Richards' interpolation of personal comment in his stories. I noticed one in a subsequent story in the same series "All Aboard for China," 1178 ....

"Not, of course, that a passport serves any useful purpose beyond providing officials with something to do. But officials must do something to keep up an appearance of earning their salaries. A traveller found travelling without a passport was likely to set a whole series of officials cackling like a flock of geese. He might be suspected of being a fugitive, criminal or a spy, for the official mind, of course, is quite blind to the fact that criminals and spies always have their passports in perfect order ....."

The inclusion of canny snippets such as this gives us vital clues to the personality of the man. More than this, in my estimation it may also be a basic reason for the criticism of his work which is so popular today. The author of sincerity, without any kind of hypocrisy or pretence, who obviously enjoys his task, and achieves it without studied effort to be clever - or even obscure - is such an easy target,

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 44 - Gems 759 - 764 - LEVISON'S PAST SERIES

Levison's career was indeed a chequered one. He was the only character to begin his schooldays at one Hamiltonian school and continue them at another. In No. 46 of the Magnet he had been expelled from Greyfriars for visiting "The Red Cow", though Dr. Locke later allowed him to leave quietly without the disgrace of a public expulsion. In No. 142 of the Gem he appeared as a new member of the Fourth Form, and achieved notoriety for having opened Lumley-Lumley's coffin to prove that he was not dead but only in a trance. This grisly scene was barely over when Harry Wharton happened to visit St. Jim's about a games fixture, and said, "I never intended to say a word about your being expelled from Greyfriars". This was not quite accurate, as Wharton very well knew, since he had been hauled before Dr. Locke when Levison was sentenced. Charles Hamilton appears to have suffered a curious lapse of memory here. At all events, Levison was the hero of the hour for having saved Lumley-Lumley from being buried alive, and Dr. Holmes agreed to let Levison stay even when he knew about his past career at Greyfriars - "I shall give you a chance, I hope you will prove worthy of it."

This somewhat contradictory background to the Gem series in Nos. 759 - 64 is really of little help, since this series quite accurately recalled the fact that Levison was not expelled from Greyfriars, but only forced to leave, while the events of Gem No. 142 were completely forgotten. The plot began when Baggy Trimble had an upset with the Levisons and he got hold of a garbled tale from Bunter about Ernest Levison having been expelled from Greyfriars for having stolen money from the Head. Levison of course denied this, but refused to complain to Mr. Railton, and everyone began to suspect the worst. At the end of the series Dr. Holmes was deeply annoyed that he should not have been informed of the fact that Levison had had to leave Greyfriars. His memory - like that of the readers - did not stretch back from 1922 to 1910!

The Gem series of 1922 really needs to be read in a vacuum, as though the earlier



stories did not exist. If this is done, it can be enjoyed for what it is, a competent and interesting tale of Levison's reactions to a sudden and unexpected blow. The blind faith of Frank Levison can be a little trying at times, but the whimsical loyalty of Cardew is always a joy to read about. The series had a great sense of dramatic purpose and unity, and at times even a particular episode was carried over from one week to another, thus giving the desired impression that everything happened in the space of a few days.

1922 had much to commend it, and Charles Hamilton told me, at an interview, that there was a great deal to be said for considering the years mid-1921 to mid-1923 as being the finest two consecutive years in the history of the Gem. But though the plots were good and the details well thought out, there was undoubtedly something missing. The long stories of the blue Gem afforded a more leisurely approach, and the upheaval of the war and Charles Hamilton's military service had robbed much of his work of its customary polish in the early 'twenties. It was not until the advent of the coloured covers that the Indian Summer of the Gem really began.

## -----

# Let's Be Controversial

### No. 67. THE BRANCH LINE

It is more than obvious that there need never have been a substitute story in the Magnet or the Gem. Charles Hamilton was perfectly able to have kept both papers supplied with new stories for every week throughout the lives of both papers. He had the talent and the stamina. He never dried up owing to indifferent health or to holidays. In fact, he was a demon for work. It is hard to think that he was ever very happy away from the typewriter.

It is easier to wonder that any man was able to churn out two long stories - one of Greyfriars and one of St. Jim's - each week. Yet we know that he did it, at different times, for long periods of time. He could have done it all the time, if he had been so inclined.

We had substitute stories in the Gem and Magnet, not because Charles Hamilton had dried up or was ailing or was on holiday, but simply and solely because he turned his talents on to branch lines.

In 1915 he branched away to Rookwood, writing himself all but a handful of this series until the Spring of 1926.

In 1917 he branched yet again, this time to Cedar Creek, writing every one of the 205 stories for the next four years.

In 1919 he took a third branch to the Benbow, writing every story for the next two years or more.

And while Rookwood, Cedar Creek and the Benbow were claiming

his attention, the substitute writers took command of the Gem and the Magnet. Rookwood and Cedar Creek, most readers will agree, were worth it. The Benbow was not.

The Benbow stories were purely run of the mill yarns, agreeable reading like all the writer's work, but lacking originality in plot or characterization. The only novelty was the fact that we had a school on a ship.

Oddly enough, in all of these branch lines, Charles Hamilton branches away to a branch within a branch, as it were.

For thirty weeks in 1923, the Rookwood chums went to the Wild West. That was a long time for school stories to be turned into westerns. The chums returned to Rookwood at long last, but I, personally, thought that the Rookwood series was never quite the same again.

The Benbow series branches in the same way. After a year or so, the ship was fitted out and went to sea in a long voyage to the West Indies. I have little doubt that that long voyage was a mistake. It was, at any rate, the end of the Benbow.

No criticism can be really offered against the long branch line into which the Cedar Creek series turned, forming what was to be the swan song for Cedar Creek. In the last series of all, in the Backwood stories, Frank Richards ran away from Cedar Creek, to meet with some delightful adventures which lasted for 17 weeks, and ended the long run of that unusual series.

A contributor to this month's Digest was reminded of this final Cedar Creek series by the events in a modern film. I felt the urge to look up the series and read it again. Much water has flowed under the bridges since I last enjoyed it.

Frank Richards was accused of theft and compelled to leave Cedar Creek. His uncle, Rancher Lawless, decided to send the boy to a distant school which handled hard cases - a rather drastic decision for an affectionate relative to make. Rather than become a hard case, Frank ran away from the Lawless Ranch. He fell in with rustlers who were planning to rob a brutal horse-dealer. He became a chore-boy to the horse-dealer. He met up with the thirsty Mr. Penrose, and became a partner in producing a backwoods newspaper until Mr. Penrose's thirst got beyond control. Wandering on as a rolling stone, Frank joined up with a gold-seeker, and accumulated a few hundred dollars which several sinister people tried to steal. He met with the Black Sack gang, and rescued an English nobleman, Lord St. Austelle, who was a relative of Vere Beauclerc. Finally Frank returned to Cedar Creek with his name

cleared. Lord St. Austells wanted to take him to England, send him to University, and set him on the road to authorship. But Frank felt "The Call of the Prairies" and stayed on at Cedar Creek.

So ended the Cedar Creek series. Charles Hamilton was never to write another story of the School in the Backwoods. One wonders why it ended then, for it must have been popular. Possibly the powers-that-be decided that Mr. Hamilton should once again concentrate on St. Jim's for a time.

Read today, these last seventeen stories of Frank Richards' Schooldays have lost little if any of their charm, which is remarkable when one realizes that they were written over forty years ago. Just here and there, on the rare occasion, they are mildly dated, by style. In the more dramatic moments, particularly where Frank is accused of the theft, the dialogue is stilted and old-fashioned. When a rascal is being thrashed brutally, "the schoolboy would fain have looked away." But it is only at rare moments that the age of the stories peeps through. With just the slightest amendment to dialogue in places, these seventeen tales could be issued as one story today and would make reading matter which would surely appeal to any modern boy.

No doubt when the stories appeared, readers were longing for Frank to return to Cedar Creek. All the same, the author was at his most successful when he was doing a "solo" turn of this type. The hero was in the limelight all the time. The Rio Kid stories, better written and more convincing, owed much of their success to keeping the hero in the lead with the supporting cast small and ever changing.

The entire Cedar Creek series, with the exception of about three stories, was republished in the golden age of the Popular. Those three stories were undoubtedly missed through the carelessness of some sub-editor.

Cedar Creek was assuredly a worth-while branch line. Every story was excellent of its class, and Charles Hamilton wrote the lot. Possibly the most memorable stories of the whole lot are the last seventeen in which Frank Richards appeared solo, and became a rolling-stone.

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

\* \* \* \* \*

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

On earlier topics.

LEN PACKMAN: I am quite happy to read and enjoy everything that appears in C.D. or C.D. Annual, but I must confess I would much rather read articles about the old papers and stories than what are virtually substitute tales - whoever writes them. When it comes to reading yarns about Greyfriars, St. Jim's and so on, nothing can give me greater

pleasure than re-reading the works of The Master; equally, I derive much pleasure in reading articles about the papers.

RON CROLLIE: I would like to stress how thoroughly I enjoyed Late Summer Folly and how much I am looking forward to more stories of this kind. Those who refer to this type of story as a "substitute" or "imitation" simply do not know what they are talking about. It is a version of the St. Jim's saga as seen through adult eyes, and it is as enjoyable to read as a well-written modern novel dealing with one of the ancient Greek heroes.

MAURICE KUTNER: Something you wrote in the February Controversial struck well home. It was "Hamiltoniana is a deep well - but it is not a bottomless well." You are so right, therefore my query anent modern "sub" writings shows a failure on my part to appreciate that a state of things cannot always be static, otherwise atrophy will set in. My remarks failed to appreciate the difficulty of the editor and his hard-working faithful band of contributors to find new material.

GEORGE SELLARS: I always enjoyed stories about ventriloquists, impersonators, rivalry, the circus, the boxing ring, and dear old Gussy's love affairs. I always felt sorry for Gussy, probably because I had such an affair when I was 14 years old. Last but not least, I like mystery and ghost stories of the schools, and, of course, cricket and football yarns.

(The Echoes on THE VITAL SPARK will appear next month)

-----  
HERBERT BRITTON

Last month in our Yours Sincerely column a reader sent in a query concerning stories of Redclyffe School which appeared long ago in The Boy's Friend. In an article which appeared in Collectors' Digest Annual for 1953, Eric Fayne queried the identity of Herbert Britton, who was credited with writing these Redclyffe stories. At that time nobody seemed to know.

We are now grateful to Mr. W. O. G. Lofts for the following information:

Herbert Britton was a pen name of Reginald T. Eves who started in the Magnet and Gem Department as far back as 1907! Later he was editor of The Boy's Friend in the war years, and founded "The SchoolFriend" in 1919. Later still he was editor of "The Champion" and "Triumph". The stories he wrote of Redclyffe school which brought in Greyfriars, St. Jim's, etc., in "The Boy's Friend" were certainly well written and they were believed at one time to be the work of Charles Hamilton by some collectors, until Mr. Hamilton denied writing them some years ago. Whether R. T. Eves wrote any Magnet and Gem stories has not been proved as yet, though a reliable source says it is unlikely!

The Redclyffe stories appeared in the years 1917/19 in "The Boy's Friend" and told of the adventures of a boy boxer, Bob Travers, who visited all the Hamilton major and minor schools in turn. These stories were followed by a series about Jack Jackson, and a further series about "Barker, the Bounder".

The writer aimed not very successfully to imitate the Hamilton style, but plots and characterization were hackneyed. So far as we know none of them was ever reprinted. They were adequate, but nothing more, and in our view any collector who thought them written by Charles Hamilton was not a discerning student of Hamiltonia.

-----  
The sketch of Bunter which appears in page 15 comes from the facile pencil of New Zealand reader, Geoff Harrison.

# Nelson Lee Column



Conducted by JACK WOOD

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

By Norman Pragnell

Of all the Boys' Books, which we read with so much interest, none, we think it true to say, had such a turbulent and chequered career especially in its last few years as the Nelson Lee Library. Between 1930 - 1933 there were so many changes in the style of the stories presented to its reader, that it was no wonder that the circulation dropped and many loyal readers were lost.

At the age that we first read the Nelson Lee it was too much for us to understand the ups and downs of editorial policy. We just accepted them without knowing the reason why. Since the formation of the "Old Boys Book Club" much information about these years has come to light, and we are certainly not so much in the dark as we were thirty years ago.

Those of us whose first love is the Nelson Lee Library have from time to time given our views on this subject, and have offered suggestions as to what might have saved the Nelson Lee from its demise in 1933.

Despite the continual changes in editorial policy there is no doubt that some of Brooks' best work came in this period in the life of the Nelson Lee Library. His style had reached a more adult stage and already showed the stamp that was to make Brooks one of the best thriller writers of our day. The evidence of this was to be seen in the "Dacca, the Devil Dwarf" and "Sargasso" series. Some of the puzzles will never be answered completely, short of a round-table conference with Edwy Searles Brooks and the various Nelson Lee editors present.

Nevertheless, some light can be shed on those years, and with our own knowledge plus certain information given the writer by Brooks himself, we propose to give during the coming months our view on this

period. Among the subjects to be discussed will be the destruction of St. Frank's in 1930, the artistic merits of Kenneth Brooks, the appearance and disappearance of "Between Ourselves", Brooks' interest, or lack of it, in St. Franks, and various other topics.

We may make mistakes in our articles - we hope not - but we do not possess such a full knowledge of the Nelson Lee as some members of the O.B.B.C. Nevertheless, we hope that the series will be of some interest to our Nelson Lee Column readers, and may even provide a little controversy.

The first subject to come under the microscope will be the destruction of St. Franks by Professor Cyrus Zingrave in No. 1, second new series, 1930.

\* \* \* \* \*

### DARKNESS OVER ST. FRANK'S

By C. L. Lettey

For readers who liked mystery in their school stories the Nelson Lee was preferable to the Magnet or Gem. As befitting such tales, many scenes took place during darkness. In fact it was surprising the number of nocturnal doings that occupied the St. Frank's boys. The author seemed in his element on these occasions.

How many times did we read that Nipper was abroad with his beloved guv'nor Mr. Nelson Lee around the midnight hour when all the other lads were abed! Dark doings in dusky places were quite a feature of the Lee. Hence the eeriness surrounding the St. Frank's tales. Indeed almost any series of these tales will reveal a considerable number of such events. As example take Monster Library No. 15 (The Boy Who Vanished) which was by no means an unusual example in this respect.

Nipper wakes as the clock strikes 12 and sees Goodwin leave the dormitory. To quote Brooks — "The moon sent out a dim, diffused light". Nipper follows him and gets a sack thrown over his head by two marauders. Later he escapes. Scene 2: The following evening. Goodwin returns from the railway station. "It was growing dark — the gloom was quite deep." Two figures leap out at him but are scared off by the arrival of Fatty Little. Scene 3: "a prematurely dark afternoon." Nipper and Co. explore the secret passage. They give Fullwood a scare. Scene 4: Fullwood leaves the dormitory when all are asleep and creeps through the gloom to open a grating for the marauders to enter St. Frank's. Scene 5: Handforth and Co miss their train from Bannington. We are told that "the evening was exceedingly dark with great masses of cloud." Handy makes a detour in the gloom with his usual series of

blunders. Scene 6: Goodwin has to go to Bannington. "It was quite dark already, clouds filled the sky." Waylaid and captured by the villains. Scene 7: Pitt and Grey cycle to St. Frank's. To quote Brooks again: "upon a dark stretch of road where the trees met overhead." They discover traces of the attack on Goodwin. Scene 8: Nipper and Co investigate. In a dark wood they see a hut. "— the gloom was intense." Goodwin is a prisoner inside. Scene 9: Kidnappers spirit Goodwin away near the sea. "The hour was between 2 and 3 in the morning — only the restless sea made any sound." Actually, pages 48 to 65 cover evening, night and the early hours of the morning. Hours of half-light and darkness.

Quite a large number of the St. Frank's tales had these "night scenes" woven into them — and this was not entirely due to the detective element. Edwy Searles Brooks seemed to be at his very best when writing of darkness over St. Frank's.

\* \* \* \* \*

"A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S"  
By Jim Cook

St, Frank's College,  
 Bellton, Sussex.

Before I left St. Frank's on my last visit, Nipper promised he would write and tell me the result of his investigation at Moat Hollow. You may remember that we saw a column of smoke coming from one of the chimneys and this caused quite a lot of speculation among the juniors for anything happening at Moat Hollow is always news. For each time this gaunt, odd house has been occupied it has caused a sensation round the village and somehow or other St. Frank's has been involved. Walter Church once promised me he would write up the history of Moat Hollow and present it to this magazine. I shall remind him next time I see him. I shall use a little strategy because Handforth, in his peculiar way, may want to do something similar and as the thin edge of the wedge introduce Trackett Grim to the Nelson Lee Column!

I was very surprised when I read Nipper's letter for they had found nothing at all, no signs of forced entry, no remains of anything in any of the fire grates, in fact, Moat Hollow remains just as its last resident left it, empty and deserted. But how did that column of smoke issue from its chimney? As Nipper states in his letter, had it been a tramp escaping from the severe cold he would never take the trouble to clear up everything after he left. There would be no need to. Yet everywhere, in every room, no evidence could be found that would show somebody had lived there. Nipper concluded that it was just one of those things, one of those things sent to try people in his profession. But it is not like Nipper to give up so easily for smoke was definitely seen rising from one of the chimney stacks at Moat Hollow. I saw it myself; so did a lot more juniors. And where there is smoke there is fire. I am very intrigued and will not let it rest there for I think Nipper is keeping something back.

During my last visit to St. Frank's I must have been in pensive mood for it struck me that a great host of juniors I saw in the school were never hardly mentioned in the chronicles. As I heard their names mentioned it was for the first time that such juniors were at St. Frank's to me and on reflection one can see how these boys were kept in the

background. They were, in short, nonentities. Like a chap who accidentally brushed against Hubbard of Study B in the Ancient House. Hubbard swept his apologies aside and said "that's alright, Burnett!" Now who is Burnett? I can quite easily ask Nipper, but one wonders why certain people are chosen as representatives in all walks of life. Have they something that others have not? Some trait, some quality, that will push them out into the open? A murderer will gain the public eye as will a hero and they will both go down in records as featuring in events but not, I assume, with equal honours. I thought about this as I looked at the retreating figure of Burnett. He was a quiet, studious fellow and like hundreds more at St. Frank's never had any reason for sharing the limelight. Unfortunately these people will never appear in records although it does seem a pity that one has to be different to be noticed. Cads like Gore-Pearce and Bernard Forrest are spotlighted mainly on account of their mean trickery which exposes them for what they are. Nevertheless they share the headlines of publicity.

I would rate Gore-Pearce just a shade in excess of Forrest for meanness. In his letter Nipper tells of Gore-Pearce's latest attempt to attain the role of chief cad of the Lower School. The other day, G.P. returned from the village with the startling news that Mr. Binks, the village grocer, and owner, of the tuck shop patronised by almost all St. Frank's fellows, had died after being run over by a car. The sad news was received as a blow for old Binks was very well known and popular with the juniors. Very shortly afterwards Gore-Pearce, was heard reporting the death of Mr. Sharpe, the village ironmonger, and such was the effect that Nelson Lee himself was staggered by the sympathetic attitude the school generally accepted the news. He was also staggered by the fact that only half an hour earlier he had been speaking to old Sharpe. He had been to make a purchase at the ironmongers and the shopkeeper had never looked healthier. It was a fact that Mr. Binks' shop had been closed down for the past few days and it was generally assumed the old chap had been ill; but old Sharpe's death was indeed a great surprise and a shock.

Nelson Lee, decided to make a few enquiries, and with Nipper went to the village. But the two gentlemen who had been reported dead were very much alive. Actually, the rumour of old Binks' death had begun in the village for somebody had noticed his shop closed down and put two and two together and made it five with the result that a malicious report had gone round that the old boy had died. Thus Gore-Pearce, eager to spread bad news not only killed off the old grocer but had thrown in old Sharpe as well. Of course, as soon as the detective arrived back at the school, he announced that the two gentlemen were very much alive. The only one who was not startled by this news was Gore-Pearce. He was entirely indifferent to the fact that old Binks was alive or dead and as he had invented the demise of the ironmonger he felt he had been cheated. But, as Nipper pointed out, where was the sense of spreading rumours like that, rumours that had no gain or profit in them for anybody, only sadness.

Nipper had decided long ago that Gore-Pearce had a kink. A dangerous kink. A fellow who gets satisfaction out of misery and misfortune suffered by his neighbours must have a kink of a very strange kind.

-----  
FOOTNOTE from JACK WOOD

This month we have welcomed back to the Lee Column two stalwarts who have been absent for far too long. I refer to Norman Pragnell and Cliff Lettley. We look forward to an interesting series of articles from the former, and to further work from the able pen of the latter. It goes without saying that Jim Cook's latest Letter from St. Frank's will be received with enthusiasm by all the fans.

-----  
**DON'T MISS: Collectors' Digest Number Two Hundred.  
 Great Summer Double Number. A Milestone in our History.**



# OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

## MIDLAND

Meeting held April 30th, 1963

Once again it was the "tried and trusted few" who attended this enjoyable meeting. The eleven who were present tonight we can always depend on seeing, unless illness or more important business prevents them turning up. It was suggested that we made this programme more informal and cut down at least one item. The Agenda for the evening had to be improvised due to the non-appearance of two of the "artists." The Chairman filled one gap with a Hamiltoniana Quiz of 10 questions mostly names of characters. The Secretary won by a "short head". Prize for this was a Modern Boy. Tom Porter obliged with the other item on the programme. Appropriately his subject for discussion was "membership" of the Club. Was there anything wrong with our programmes? Various opinions were given, everyone had different ideas, but all agreed that there could be more variation and we might be more inclined towards Hamiltoniana than was really necessary. There were other authors and other fields of discussion. The room could not be bettered. Ideas of increasing our membership were put forward. The Secretary put in a word about subscriptions. The newsletter sent out each month cost sevenpence-halfpenny each. The postal fees of 7/6 just covered a year's supply. We have one paying postal member who covers his newsletter (and generally sends a bit over). Another local member pays his full membership fee of 21/- every year and yet we have not seen him yet, family commitments prevents him coming along. A contrast to others, who pay not at all. Anyway, no subs, no newsletter.

Ray Bennett was scheduled for the main discussion and it shows his keenness and loyalty that he came direct from a hospital visit to give us a very interesting talk on Sexton Blake (for a change!) He compared the Modern Blake with one from the middle period and one from fairly early days of the S.B.L. Actually three he had read during the Christmas recess. I say three, it was very nearly only the two, he had second thoughts about putting the "modern" one on the fire. Which shows what he thought of the only remaining Old Boys' Book on the market. He compared this Modern Blake, a Christmas yarn, with one by Gwyn Evans. We enjoyed this talk and hope there will be others like it to follow.

Madge Corbett won the Guess the Number. 101 Modern Boy, this was her prize.

The Collectors' item for the night was a 43 year old Gem No. 690. The date (as that of the meeting) April 30th, but 1921 not 1963. The Raffle was won by Jack Bellfield who generously returned his prize of a Bunter Book (and a few Modern Boys) for re-raffle. Won this time by Madge Corbett. It was decided that we arrange to meet our Northern Club friends later on in the year and the Secretary will discuss the date with his fellow-Secretary. The Chesterfield re-union is always welcome to Midland members.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

## NORTHERN

Meeting held 11th May, 1963

Our Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, was back with us for our May meeting, although, as he remarked, the weather was anything but May-like. There was a good attendance, but sport

caused the absence of two regulars, Jack Wood being at Wembley for the Rugby League Cup Final, and Keith Balmforth playing cricket.

After the usual formal business Gerry Allison gave us the news and correspondence of the month, and we were pleased to hear from Stanley Smith, an esteemed member who is seldom able to attend meetings. Gerry also discussed the talk "Wodehouse and the Immortals" given on the B.B.C. Home service a few days before.

The proposed meetings with our colleagues of the other clubs was next on the agenda. The date for the Manchester meeting with Merseyside is now Sunday, July 7th and this has been definitely booked. We hope to fix a date for a meeting with Midland later, probably in September, and we are hoping some of them may be able to come to Manchester.

Our evening's entertainment began with a reading from a P.C. Wodehouse school story, "Lost Lambs" serialised in The Captain. This was a cricket episode, very well rendered by Ron Hodgson. Gerry gave a brief talk on the old comic papers, quoting from an article he had contributed to "The Story Paper Collector."

Refreshments followed and then Geoffrey Wilde gave us a talk about his recent holiday in Venice where he was in charge of a party of his pupils. We found this most interesting as Geoff constantly referred to copies of the Magnet and Gem which described the doings of Greyfriars and St. Jim's when they visited this famous city. This took us along to 9.20 or so, when the meeting came to an end.

Next meeting, Saturday, 8th June.

F. HANCOCK, Hon. Sec.

#### MERSEYSIDE

##### Meeting held 12th May.

The attendance at this meeting was quite good, the only absentees being Frank Unwin due to illness, and Bill Greenwood. We were, however, pleased to have the company of John Farrell once again after his lengthy and unavoidable absence. After the financial statement and club report by the secretary, the chairman submitted a number of items for discussion and consideration; these included the arrangements for the Manchester meeting in June, at which a number of our members will be present to take part in what promises to be a very enjoyable occasion, particularly as some of the Northern and Merseyside hobby friends will be meeting each other for the first time. Final details should be available at our next meeting.

Following the library and other business came refreshments, and then the members took part in a long and interesting quiz devised and conducted by Norman; this took the form of a mixed questionnaire on hobby, literary and general subjects which was most intriguing, without being too difficult. George Riley came out on top, a worthy winner of the book prize, followed by Frank Case, and Bill Windsor. Due to the length of this enjoyable contest, one or two items on the agenda had to be deferred to next month, and the meeting ended in discussion of an informal nature between ourselves.

We shall be without the company of our chairman, Norman, at the next meeting on 9th June as he will be on holiday, but a full programme has been arranged, and we are hoping to have a good attendance to carry on the good work.

FRANK CASE

#### LONDON

There were 21 members in attendance at the Cricklewood meeting on Sunday, May 19th., the presence of Bob Whiter, home for a visit from Los Angeles, made it seem like old times as there was also most of the old familiar faces present. Hosts Marjorie and Bill Norris saw to it that one and all had a very good time. Lawrence Morley gave his selection of the companions he would like to have on a desert island, these being, Tom Redwing, Bernard Glyn, Talbot, Mr. Prout, Rupert de Courcy, Vernon-Smith, Sexton Blake and Waldo.

Host Bill Norris conducted his easy quiz; joint winners were Bob Whiter and Eric Lawrence; joint thirds were Don Webster, Bill Lofts and Roger Jenkins. A humorous reading by Brian Doyle from a story entitled "Maddened by Mystery" was greatly enjoyed. Bill Lofts quiz was won by Dob Webster, the second place was filled by Len Packman and in the third was Bob Whiter.

Then the company had some more "Film Fun" which was projected by Marjorie Norris. The latter also took a film of the gathering out in the garden.

Excellent business was done by the two librarians, Roger Jenkins and Bob Blythe. It was agreed to make a start on the Sexton Blake catalogue.

The next meeting will be held on Sunday, June 16th, at Excelsior House, Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey, 'phone ELMbridge 3357, host Eric Fayne. Kindly advise if intending to be present. Given a fine day, this meeting should be one of the highlights of the year.

With grateful thanks to the hosts of the Cricklewood meeting, Bill and Marjorie Norris, the company wended their divers ways home, happy in the knowledge of another delightful time.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

### AUSTRALIA

We had a particularly stimulating meeting on May 16th. Chairman Syd Smyth reported that No. 7 of the Golden Hours Magazine is now in course of production, with the usual excellent variety of articles. Syd read to the meeting a pleasing letter from Frank Case, praising Golden Hours No. 6, which had been favourably received by the Merseyside Club when he shared his copy round at their last meeting.

Members are reminded that stocks of the current issue (and some back numbers are available) may be purchased from Syd Smyth, 1, Brandon St, Clovelly, N.S.W., Australia, at 4/- per copy. No collector should be without one.

The customary reading of correspondence was pleasureable. Jim Cook, noted for his famous Letters from St. Frank's, tells us that he is taking his family to the sunshine of New Zealand later in the year. We should like to tempt him to skip ship in Sydney, to become one of our permanent club members. Delightful letters were read from Harry Matthews of Adelaide, Ron Hodgson, Bill Hubbard, and Arthur Holland.

We concluded the meeting as usual in the local coffee shop, and, as Arthur Holland wrote recently, "the allusion to the coffee shop takes one's thoughts to the days of Addison, Steele, and Swift of the 17th century." There is certainly a literary flavour to the capuschino, and it's a grand way to terminate these monthly hours with the hobby.

Next meeting, Thursday, June 13th.

B. PATE (Secretary)

WANTED: Sexton Blake Library (latest series) 357 to 405; 410; 411; 425; 430; 433; 434; 435. To purchase or to borrow.

GORTHWAITE, 7, SHAKESPEARE PATH, MEADOWCROFT, STRATTON, SWINDON, WILTS.

DON'T MISS: Collectors' Digest Number Two Hundred.

Great Summer Double Number. A Milestone in our History.

SAMMY - and FRANK

It was a long time since I had seen the entire programme in any cinema - several years, at least. On this sunny day in early May I had no intention of spending over three hours in a cinema. The main attraction was, I knew, a feature entitled "Sammy Going South" but it did not interest me.

Besides, the film critic of my local paper had not been enthusiastic. He wrote: "There is not really enough to this film to keep an adult audience captivated. Young Fergus McLelland, although a handsome small boy, lacks some of the natural charm that characterises so many child actors in British films, but gives a generally likeable performance." I had forgotten, for the moment, that critics live in a little world of their own.

In any case, Sammy did not interest me then. But also on the bill were two items I thought I should like to see. One was the Royal Wedding in colour and the other was "Crazy Days" a collection of shots from very old silent comedies. So I paid my 3/6 and entered the theatre.

The Royal Wedding came on first. It lasted for 18 delightful minutes. Then came "Crazy Days" with many nostalgic sequences featuring Fatty Arbuckle and Buster Keaton demonstrating a lost art, the whole pleasant film being ruined by a continuous and more-than-usually fatuous commentary by Mr. Hugh Green. When Crazy Days ended I had been in the cinema for just over 45 minutes, and I was ready to leave. Still, I thought I would just sit on and see the first five minutes of Sammy.

The ushers now started to sell ice cream, drinks and goodness knows what. Each usher was besieged by an enormous mob, the whole seething crowd being picked out by a couple of spotlights. They were also selling hot sausages and I wondered idly how much grease was transferred to the cinema seats from patrons' contact with the sausages.

Now came 12 minutes of advertisements, in glorious colour. I can't recall what was advertised, but I mused as to whether some products would not sell better by reducing the advertising and also reducing the price.

More advertisements now - next week's great attractions. X-certificates, and the adult audience which cannot be captivated by Sammy is promised, next week, "the most daring bedroom scenes and the most startling dialogue ever to reach the screen."

Now "Sammy Going South" came on, and I prepared to leave. It was one of those very wide and very narrow pictures which give you the impression of watching something through a letter box.

I saw five minutes of it. I decided to stay for just another five. Nearly two hours later I was still there, and it came as quite a shock to see "The End" on the screen.

I found it an entrancing film from start to finish. I thought Fergus McLelland (who plays Sammy) the twelve-year old boy whose parents came from Northern Ireland, the most natural child actor I have ever seen. It is sad to think that he must grow up. I was proud to think that "Sammy Going South" was a British film.

Best of all it carried me back - a long way. It tells of a small boy who finds himself alone in Port Said, and who sets off to find the only relative he knows - his aunt Jane who lives in Durban, some 6000 miles south. Sammy gets there at last after some amazing adventures on the way. It reminded me of long ago when I was a very small boy listening to my sister reading aloud a story called "A Peep Behind the Scenes". In that story a little girl called Rosalie set off alone in quest of a relative.

More still, it reminded me of the last 17 stories in the Cedar Creek series, when Frank Richards, as a rather older boy, than Sammy, was accused of theft and left his uncle's home, facing amazing adventures for the 17 weeks which brought the Cedar Creek series to a close.

I had a glorious time with Sammy - and with the memories of Cedar Creek which would not be excluded.

All the week that Sammy was going South one saw that most unusual sight every

evening - the cinema queue. It was rather pleasant to think that plenty of folk still like a clean and charming story.

-----

*Yours Sincerely*

Interesting Items from  
the Editor's Letter-Bag

JAMES W. COOK (Wembley): Excellent though *Collectors' Digest* has matured since its birth I find it is gradually straying into fields other than those originally planned for. Strange names and events are creeping into what were hitherto corners sacrosanct in the hobby. I cannot reconcile the introduction of names like Slade or Mr. Buddle to the tender nostalgia which St. Frank's, Greyfriars and St. Jim's gives us. These "foreigners" seem to please a few of your readers but I simply cannot take Charles Churchill's dictum that "if people do not like the idea they need not read!" This painfully reminds me of the television moguls who assert that if the viewer doesn't like the programmes he should switch off. My answer to them and to Mr. Churchill is that we pay not to switch off and not to read but to view and to peruse.

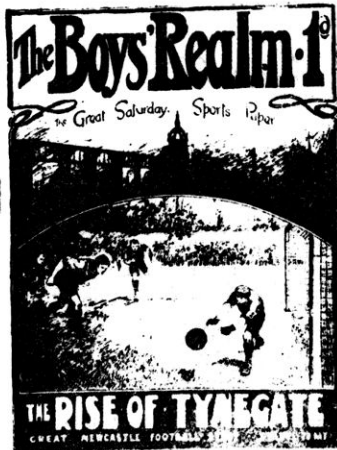
The hard-cover book also seems to enjoy space in C.D. which it has no right to. Another thing which annoys me is the growing amount of conclusory evidence of the old stories. Roger Jenkins has suddenly focused in his microscope tiny points of discomfort and blown them up as pet aversions. I am really thankful he is not a Nelson Lee fan. I would cross swords with him immediately if he began to use a rake with the St. Frank's history.

(Our reader overlooks one minor detail. With its modern format *Collectors' Digest* presents readers with double the reading matter in one issue than was found in one issue a few years back. In consequence, though we may have extended our scope a trifle, the reader who likes to read of only the old papers still finds just as much on the subject as he ever did and still gets full value for money. - ED.)

HARRY MATTHEWS (South Australia): My wife and I have just returned from a delightful holiday in Tasmania. What an ideal place for an adventure for Billy Bunter! The unspoiled bush country would quite possibly reduce some of his poundage if he was sent to clear some of the scrub. And, of course, there are very deadly tiger snakes, kangaroos, wallabies and other strange creatures.

ARTHUR MOYSE (West Kensington): I think that *Collectors' Digest* should try to broaden its field by giving more space to the newer comics and magazines. There is a whole virgin field there, who publishes, prints, writes, draws, etc.

EDWIN COLDWELL (Huddersfield): I found Mr. Lofts' article on Jack, Sam and Pete full of information and interesting facts, and the splendid illustration by J. Abney Cummings brought back many pleasant memories. For as long as I can remember there has been a shop in a main street of Huddersfield, bearing the sign, G. Marsden, Plumber. What is it that inspires an author to give a certain character a certain name? That shop was in existence



long before George Marsden Plummer put in an appearance.

**STAN KNIGHT** (Cheltenham): The recent issues of the Digest have been a sheer delight. The March cover caused a tug at the heart strings. The cover by Henry Webb for April was another superb effort - William to a T. And now the cover for May ringing the change again. What a marvellous reproduction of that 1918 Butterfly, and how clear all the details have come out. I very much enjoyed "Mr. Crayford Passes by." Please, whatever the critics may say, don't cease to give us more stories of Slade. They are always so well-written and enjoyable.

**RON CROLLIE** (Hornchurch): I liked Roger Jenkins' article on "The Fighting Form-Master". It recalled my confusion, as a boy, when I read the Rockwood stories in the 1931 and 1932 Holiday Annuals, both of which featured Mr. Dalton, and then the one in the 1933 H.A. in which Mr. Bootles was the Fourth Form master. I always liked reading the articles on the Hard Cover Classics. I hope that "Tom Brown's Schooldays" will not be omitted.

**E. B. FLINDERS** (Hitchin): I see you wondered why the Cliff House stories contained no reference to Greyfriars. Mr. Swainson, the editor of "The Schoolgirl" told me they were not allowed to use any Greyfriars characters in the stories. I don't know why. The boys' and the girls' magazines were not connected in any way, and were sometimes in different buildings.

**DON HARKNESS** (Australia): When in my previous letter I referred to the Magnet, Union Jack, etc., as "comics" I was using the terminology applied to them at the time of printing over 30 years ago. With the passing of the years I grant they have attained a certain academic standing entitling them to be called today, "story-papers."

(We assure our Australian reader that Magnets, Unions Jack and the like, were not called "comics" thirty years ago - in this country, at any rate. The word "comic" was then used for a paper which was, in fact, a comic. It is only in the past few years that the term comic has become all-embracing. It is apparently one of the less welcome imports from America, and we deplore the way it is applied to all juvenile

publications. - ED.)

PETER HANGER (Northampton): Danny was better than ever last month. What it means to those of that generation I can only begin to imagine. At first I agreed with Roger Jenkins about "Happy Family names" - until I remembered that my favourite newsagent was Mr. Read!

(My Sunday-school teacher's name was Mr. Diable. - ED.)

---

## Sexton Blake Today

### THE END OF AN ERA

We have reached the end of the line. The last of all the old boys' papers is going. The Sexton Blake Library, which commenced its life way back in another world, the year 1915, will appear for the last time in mid-June 1963. The first story was entitled "The Yellow Tiger." Appropriately enough, the last story will be entitled "The Last Tiger."

To mark the occasion, the editor of the Sexton Blake Library has collected comments from authors, artists, and others associated with the grand old periodicals down the years, and these will be a feature of the last two issues. Our readers will be anxious to obtain copies of these memorable issues, and we advise them to order them at once. They will become real collectors' items, especially as the numbers to be printed of these last issues have, for some unknown reason, been slashed. We doubt very much whether the demand for these issues can possibly be met, so order them, and hope for the best.

And so dies the last of the grand old periodicals. All will feel sympathy with Mr. W. Howard Baker, the S.B.L. Editor, at this time, for he has worked so hard to keep Sexton Blake in the shops.

In our opinion, this ending was inevitable, the system of distribution being what it is to-day. At present day prices, newsagents just cannot stock periodicals in the hope that they may sell. Yet casual readers cannot possibly be obtained unless periodicals are on display. Without those casual readers, many of whom would become regular readers, there is no replacement for the natural wastage of old regular readers as time passes, and so circulations must fall.

We believe that a new weekly paper, republishing the best of all the old Union Jack yarns, and priced say at 9d would have found a ready sale. But once again there can be no ready sale of anything unless the newsagents have them on display.

It is sad - indeed incredible - when one recalls the mammoth empire of old boys' papers which the Amalgamated Press used to control. And now the last of the few left in post-war years is going.

The final stories in the Sexton Blake Library, issued in mid-June, will be "THE SOUND OF MURDER" by Martin Thomas; and "THE LAST TIGER" by W. A. Ballinger.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE MAY NOVELS in the SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARYReviewed by Margaret CookeMURDER BY PROXY - No. 523

by Richard Williams

A stirring tale of murder by remote control, an underground organisation to help refugees, - and the obscure workings of a woman's mind. Was the murder in a jeweller's strong room committed to hide the identity of the thief - or just sadism to cover a hoax? Neither Sexton Blake nor the Police knew; the jeweller thought that he did, but the final revelation is a surprise for the reader. The novel is well-planned and the story has pace, mystery and plenty of action. The dialogue is excellent, as is the characterization. A book to suit all lovers of the S.B.L. old or new.

-----

THE GIRL WHO SAW TOO MUCH - No. 524

by Desmond Reid

When the lonely imaginative Doll Somers witnessed a murder on her way home from a cinema, her day-dreams became a prolonged nightmare. Her efforts

to avoid death at the hands of a murderer determined to destroy the only witness to his crime before she could meet Sexton Blake, took the girl from one incredible adventure to another.

This is a well-written, exciting book with a terrific climax - Blake at his most active best.

The characters are well-drawn and the story has pace and tension. Most of the interest is centred on the main character - Doll Somers - an unusual heroine for an S.B.L. but one for whom the reader must feel sympathy and affection.

Both books have excellent covers and an interesting selection of letters appear in the mailbag page at the back of Murder by Proxy.

\* \* \* \* \*  
\* \* \* \* \*



DON'T MISS: Collectors' Digest Number Two Hundred.

Great Summer Double Number. A milestone in our History.