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COMIC CUTS



H. WEBB.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

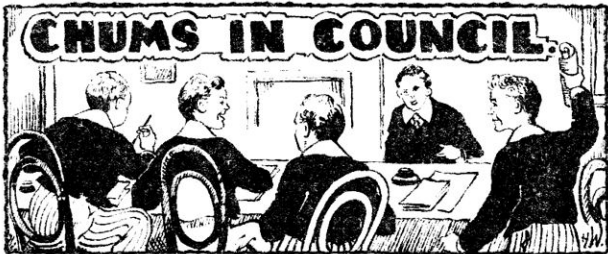
FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 18

No. 208

APRIL, 1964

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UNCHANGING WORLD:

This magazine links together people of similar taste and outlook. Undeniably, people who like looking back - and, in particular, looking back to one phase of the world as it used to be. A phase which has gone almost entirely to-day - the boys' book world.

We remember the time when the newsagents' counters were stacked high with papers of all sizes, styles, and titles - all aimed at boys. Women's papers were rare, girls' papers more rare. The boy was the spoiled darling of the first forty years of the century. Nowadays the woman's paper - American inspired, packed with advertisements, glossy - dominates British bookstalls to the exclusion of almost everything else. There is little for the child. It is an adult world. Children become adults very quickly. Too quickly.

We have seen many of the old traditions, which we used to cherish and in which we took pride, mocked in modern satire. We have reached a time when it is fashionable to exaggerate our own

country's deficiencies and to minimise its achievements. A time when smut is no longer recognized as smut but is accepted as Art.

We have seen prices rise - and rise - and rise, with depressing persistence. Our hair-cut has gone up to six times what it was twenty-five years ago. The public service vehicle which used to give us a ride for one penny now costs us four times as much for the same distance. The terrifying part of it is that there is no end in sight - no likelihood that prices will cease to go up - and up - and up. Yet in that unchanging world of which we were speaking, the price 2d remained on the front of periodicals which gave us undeteriorating value for money from 1923 till 1939.

We have lived to see reading replaced by watching. But the trouble with television is that it deadens imagination. The Greyfriars boys we saw on television were not the boys we knew when we were young. For television is humdrum reality, while reading is the stuff that dreams are made of. We grew up reading wondrously, in a boundless world which our own imagination evoked.

And that boundless world, unlike the modern world, is unchanging, which is most of its charm. And the faint smell of old lavender which hangs round it, only adds to its charm. Whenever we feel so inclined we can sort out our old papers and go back to that unchanging world where values are undistorted, honour is bright, its nice to be British, and to be a sportsman does not mean to be as temperamental as a film star or to stun the referee with a bottle.

It's not a dead world, either. For Tom Merry, Harry Wharton, Nipper, and Sexton Blake are still going strong in that unchanging world in which we sometimes live.

We're proud to belong to it. And Collectors' Digest is proud to serve and link together the people who are part of it.

SPRING IS HERE:

Oh, for an Enlarged Number of Collectors' Digest, now that April's here! It wasn't Browning who said that! It was Your Editor! As for this Enlarged Number, we hope you like it. We draw your attention to the competition in this issue, and we hope that all our readers will enter for it. In a contest of this type, a big entry is essential if it is to be a success. Naturally, only a few can win prizes - but the prizes are really minor details. Please back up by filling in your coupon and posting it.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

E N I G M A

(Under this heading, in last month's Editorial, we discussed the question as to why some old papers were collected and others were not, and we made particular reference to YOUNG BRITAIN, which was pictured on our cover. Here is how some readers have re-acted.)

L. S. ELLIOTT writes: Re your leading article in this month's "C.D." I cannot let your remarks re "Young Britain" pass without comment.

This was my first love in Boys' books and one of the best weekly papers ever produced, especially the first years.

I have written about it before, and had some correspondence with another collector not so long ago.

Apart from "Bold Robin Hood" probably the best "Robin Hood" story ever written - with Morton Pikes' later yarns in the "Popular" to rival it - there was Richard Essex' "Spartacus" - my first encounter with the great Slave Revolt in Rome.

George Carpenter wrote his autobiography; Shackleton's Scouts reported the Polar Expedition. Draycot M. Dell, Trevor C. Wignall and many other top writers were regular contributors.

School yarns, such as "Rise of the House of Usher," "Off his own Bat," etc. were of "B.O.P." standard.

It was one of a set of "Companion Papers," with Nelson Lee, Boys' Realm, Champion, Pluck and Rocket, when Magnet, Gem, Popular and Boys' Friend were another group. Later Pluck became Triumph and the style of stories in both Pluck and Champion changed, to compete with the Thompson Adventure, Rover, Wizard, Hotspur and Vanguard. Not, in my opinion, for the better.

I suppose, apart from B.O.P. and Captain, Young Britain was my favourite. Later, Nelson Lee, Magnet, Gem, Union Jack and Thriller were my regulars, and another great weekly, "Boys' Magazine." Another little-known but first class weekly was its short-lived companion "Pals."

"Young Britain" was one of the 'greats'. I once had them all and still have a few.

GEORGE SELLARS writes: Young Britain was a grand paper, and, in my opinion, was better than Champion, Wizard, and the like. My brother and I read Young Britain regularly for a long time. I believe the cover was in red, white, and blue. I had almost forgotten it till now.

JOHN UPTON writes: The comment in "Chums in Council," March 1964, on why boys tended to collect "Magnet," "Gem" and "Nelson Lee" rather than other papers, interested me greatly. It seems clear that many more children intended to retain collections of their favourite papers than were actually able to do so. This is probably just as true to-day.

My sister, who is seven years older than myself, took "Magnet" and "Gem" between 1937 and the end of the papers, and would certainly have kept each and every issue for a very long time but for the fact that our parents required her to pass most of them on to another child. Nevertheless, it was quite a large stack of "Magnets" and "Gems" that accompanied us to Hendon, London, from our home in Hockley, Essex, in the summer of 1940, whence a friend had invited us during the threatened-invasion period. This stack was left to be called for when we returned to Hockley early in 1941 - only to disappear not long afterwards, presumably as waste paper for the war effort. At any rate, it mysteriously vanished, although for some years afterwards I remained quite sure that it would somehow turn up.

In the meantime, little remained of my sister's collection by 1942, when I, at the age of nine, really began to find that unique fascination in the "Magnet" which, once found, can never be lost. We had a few numbers from several series - Tracey, South Seas,

Lamb and River Thames - and a few complete stories, such as "Black Prince of Greyfriars" and "The Bounder's Dupe;" and these issues, some thirty in all, I read and read again, together with a fair number of S.O.Ls., until the happy day in November, 1944, when I managed to acquire (at 1/6 each) a run of the dear old paper from the Secret Society series to the end. (A friend who had a similar run from the same secondhand shop was very soon re-selling them at 6d each.)

All this is quite irrelevant to the question: "Why were these three papers collected rather than others?" But I do feel that the history of my sister's magazines may be rather typical. Many children must have had to give their treasured issues away, somewhat against their will, or these were turned out in the annual spring-clean. Others, no doubt, kept them all in attics and lofts, where they were later forgotten, and left to gather dust - and where (perhaps) some of them remain to this day. (When moving last year, I found a pile of "Picturegoer" in my attic, the years 1952-3 complete, and another of "The Stage" for the same period, whose existence I had entirely forgotten.)

My nine year old nephew, following in the tradition of his sister and uncle, is very fond of the Bunter books. He takes "Look and Learn," and has some two years' issues in the binders which are supplied; and as I look through these, they lead me to wonder whether, if similar binders had been available for "Magnet" and "Gem" and other papers, more collections would have survived, simply because, within stiff covers, they would not have been relegated so easily to the dustbin - which must have been the fate of so very many.

Incidentally, during the war my father bought some nails on one occasion, and as he unwrapped them at home, I seized on the fragment of paper with a horrified exclamation. It was half a page from a "Gem." I went to the shop next day, only to find that the last of a consignment of boys' papers had just been used up for this purpose.

And I suppose it is for all these reasons that we have the high prices which flourish to-day....

CHARLES HAMILTON MEMENTOES FOR SALE

The following books are offered for sale to C.D. readers who may like to possess a memento of the famous writer. Each book belonged to him when he was a young man, and each bears his signature on the inside cover or fly-leaf. We invite any interested reader to make an offer for one or more of the items, and we should make it clear that high prices are not expected. The proceeds of the sale will be passed to the Hamilton Library of the London Club. If, however, the proceeds should exceed £2, the total amount will be shared equally among our English club libraries.

"Tristan and Isolde"; "Legend of the Holy Grail"; "Siegfried"; "Twilight of the Gods"; "Ring of the Nibelung"; "Essays, Dialogues, and Thoughts"; 3 volumes of Ruskin, only the first vol bearing the Hamilton signature; 2 large vols of Cassell's Russo-Turkish War, only one vol bearing signature; 2 vols "History of War between France and Germany" both vols bearing signature; "The Downfall" by Zola. The following are paper-covered: "Hernani"; "Les Huguenots"; "Mireille"; "Faust"; "Rigoletto"; "Le Chemineau"; "Lohengrin"; "Carmen"; "Siegfried"; "Master Singers of Nuremberg". S.A.E. to the
 Editor of Collectors' Digest.

OUR "GEMS OF HAMILTONIA" COMPETITION

For six months we have been presenting a new series of Gems of Hamiltonia. The sixth item appears in this issue.

Each one of these extracts was selected with considerable care and thought in order to present varying examples of the author's literary gifts. We now invite our readers to place these extracts in order of preference in order that we can decide, to some extent, which aspect of Charles Hamilton's genius had the widest appeal.

We ask our readers to consider each extract on its own merit alone, and NOT to take into consideration the story or series from which the extract was taken. Read through and browse over the six items, published under the heading GEMS OF HAMILTONIA in Collectors' Digest dated from November 1963 till April 1964. Given loose with this issue is the entry coupon for the contest. This coupon contains a grid marked A to F. Under A mark the number of the extract which you consider the most meritorious. For instance, if you think that Gem of Hamiltonia No. 4 shows the author at his best, mark a 4 under the letter A. Mark your second choice under B, and so on until you have placed all six extracts in your order of preference. Finally, in the few lines under the grid on the coupon, write a few words to explain what caused you to decide on the very best extract.

A prize of £1 will be awarded to the competitor whose entry comes nearest to the order as decided by the popular vote. There will be at least two additional book prizes for runners-up.

Following, to help you make your selection, is an article in which the various merits of the six extracts are considered and discussed. Closing date for this contest is April 23rd.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE SIX GEMS OF HAMILTONIA

No. 1. (C.D. November 1963) Here we have one of those brilliant little character cameoes for which the author was noted. A mild psychological study, perhaps. A boy who was deeply influenced by his environment and by the people with whom he came in contact.

"Loder hated him, but not because he was what he was." This sentence, taken out of context could be ambiguous, an ambiguity which could have been avoided by a pedantic writer. Hamilton was never pedantic in his writing. The ambiguity goes as soon as one reads on.

No. 2. (C.D. December 1963) Atmosphere, here. The atmosphere of the old-time Christmas dinner in the ancestral home of the wealthy. The main dish, followed by Christmas pudding, mince pies, walnuts,

candied fruits. Probably none of us ever had a Christmas dinner quite like that, but it made delightful, nostalgic reading.

The whole extract is a brilliant example of the use of overstatement for the sake of effect. Bunter had more and more and more turkey; he lost count of the number of helpings he had of Christmas pudding; he crammed in some dozen walnuts; he ate hardly a pound of candied fruits. "Hardly a pound". A thrown away example of litotes. So, in this extract, we get hyperbole and litotes mingled. Gloriously absurd, and deliciously satisfying to the reader. Note the use of short sentences, one sure indication of the master-writer.

No. 3. (C.D. January 1964) At first glance, there is nothing outstanding in this extract. But a study of it shows plenty. Atmosphere. The dark, ruined chapel. The lantern goes out. The boys are completely natural. They are not heroes, merely rather frightened schoolboys. The leader, feeling it his duty to lead, halts. The others halt too - reluctantly. The leader decides they must go back to investigate. The others are not keen. They think up excuses on the spur of the moment. The leader excuses himself: "I followed you - to bring you back." The others, indignant: "Wats! You wan like anything."

The leader goes back. "We can't desert the silly ass." The others follow him.

A brilliant little example of boys acting as real boys would in uncanny and unnerving circumstances.

No. 4. (C.D. February 1964) A skilful picture of a plump, kindly Chinese gentleman. The bland use of irony in the foreign gentleman's quaint English. The mild suggestion that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones. The pleasant, mutilated phrase, so dear to the heart of the writer: "Where there is a wheel there is a way, as you say in English."

An extract which conveys so much in a few lines. In passing, it is interesting to note the excessive use of the exclamation mark in this extract, a weakness which does, in fact, show itself in all the old stories, though the small print tends to obscure it.

No. 5. (C.D. March 1964) The author had the faculty for obtaining atmosphere with the use of few words. With this extract, the picture of the hilly country lane becomes a very real image in the reader's mind. The happy-go-lucky holiday scene is set. In discussing Methuselah, the author slips happily into a little gem of personification. The closing line brings the typical little dig at the brassy

bands which, at that time, were filling the cinemas with sound in the early talking pictures.

No. 6. (this month) This extract is unique. Within the story it comprised a very short, short story, complete, all on its own. It is unique for another reason. Charles Hamilton was the pioneer of the school story with the permanent, non-ageing cast. The boys never got any older. In consequence, the time never came for them to leave school. In this extract, a sixth-former, Sturgis, has completed his school career, and is leaving. I can think of no parallel at any of the Hamilton great schools. And Mulvaney is no hero. Just a typical schoolboy, looking after Number One.

NOTE: We wonder how many of our readers are sufficiently acquainted with Hamiltonia to be able to give the titles of the six stories from which the extracts were taken. If any reader thinks he can name them, we invite him to jot the six titles in order on a postcard, and send them to the editor. If we get any correct lists, we shall select at least one for a book award.

FOR OFFER: Definite offers only replied to:

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Schoolgirl's Own Annual: 1924, 1937. BFL 3d. "Tinker's Schooldays"
BFL (St. Frank's) 435, 439, 441, 447, 451, 455. CD issues. 12 before No. 200.
Union Jack: 40 issues between 1078 and 1502. also Xmas Nos. 1313, 1365, 1366, 1417, 1105.
Monster Lib. Nos. 5 and 9. S.O.L. (St. Frank's) 315, 318, 321, 369.
Gem: 501, 539, 641, 960, 961, 1030, 1040, 1043, 1050, 1293, 1384, 1385, 1386, 1412, 1501.
S.O.L. (Greyfriars) send for 'wants' with offers.) Exchanges preferred for these.
Magnet: about 20 before No. 1000.

Offers close at the end of the month in which this is published."

L. F. ASHLEY, CLEARWATER, B.C., CANADA.

WANTED: Gems 799, 804 to 808, 810, 812.

TOM PORTER, 1, TIMBERTREE ROAD, OLD HILL, STAFFS.

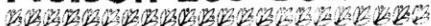
WANTED: MAGNETS, all numbers but particularly Hollywood, China, Loder captaincy, Mr. Lamb and Lancaster series. Your price paid plus postage.

256, TOWNSEND AVENUE, LIVERPOOL 11.

WANTED: ROVERS 696 - 772 (would be grateful even for one odd copy).

P. HANGER, 10, PARK SQUARE, KINGS HEATH, NORTHAMPTON.

Nelson Lee Column



CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

By Jim Cook

St. Frank's College,
Bellton, Sussex.

"You must have money, my friends! You can't do without it. Despise it, hate it, hide it, do whatever you may with it, but you'll find you will always need it!"

Thus Solomon Levi, of Study O in the Ancient House at St. Frank's.

I had popped my head into the Junior Common Room and Levi was standing on a table holding forth on the values of money. It was very interesting for the juniors were crowded round the Jewish junior and giving him their undivided attention. Evidently Levi was advertising one of his schemes for making profit - to himself. But as I closed the door and wandered away down the corridor I couldn't help thinking how true Levi was about the necessity for money. Fellows like Archie Glenthorne, Lord Pippington, Singleton, the Duke of Somerton to name a few of the wealthy juniors at St. Frank's hardly know the value of it yet Enoch Snipe and Teddy Long would regard a thin sixpence as a fortune. I think it was Goldsmith who said "Take a farthing from a thousand pounds, it will be a thousand pounds no longer."

Nelson Lee and Nipper are back. After nearly three months in New Guinea with Lord Dorrimore it was very nice to welcome them back to the old school.

Lee, looking very bronzed and fit, would not tell of his adventures with Dorrie, but Nipper made a remark about New Guinea being the cockpit of South East Asia. I tried to get him to enlarge on this statement but all he would say was that in the years to come New Guinea would be worth fighting for. So it looks as if Lee's visit to that part of the world was more political than anything else.

Nipper is once more in the saddle and I think Reggie Pitt was only too eager to hand the Remove captaincy over to him. Nipper is a born leader and can withstand the shocks of adversity. So can Pitt

for that matter, but Reggie is also captain of the West House and he had his hands full looking after the fortunes of his own House and being prepared for whatever Bernard Forrest was hatching for him in the Ancient House. Whenever Nipper is away with Nelson Lee Forrest does his ugly tricks to rule in Nipper's stead. And this time he obtained a large gathering of juniors to elect him captain. Decent fellows like DeValerie, Hubbard, Doyle and Travers fell under his spell, offered to support him, and Reggie had quite a task retaining Nipper's popularity.

For some time, there has been some uneasiness among the Remove chaps over Nipper's frequent departure from the school. In the old days of just the two Houses, the Remove was more intact. With five Houses comprising St. Frank's it is understandable that each House is isolated and therefore separate. I included the School House in the five as it forms such an important part in the daily life of the juniors.

Luckily, Nipper had returned in time to prevent any upsurge of feeling about electing a new captain. But it was a near thing.

Forrest has never held the reins of Remove captain but he's a dangerous junior. As dangerous as Gore-Pearce and a little more thorough. It will be quite a team if ever these two rascals join forces. They have done so in the past but each had his own particular iron in the fire and their strength was divided. Gore-Pearce would go to any length too to run as junior captain of the form but lately he has been passive. The school never forgave him for the part he played in the Earl of Edgemoor series. G-P's father was the guiding influence behind the plot to oust the old Earl but it was a terrible scheme to turn a very old gentleman out of his house.

But if I am not mistaken one of these days Forrest and Gore-Pearce will sink their differences and devote all their time and money towards knocking Nipper off his perch. Money, as Levi says, is necessary and most important, and Forrest and Gore-Pearce have plenty of it. They are not sons of well bred parentage but parvenu millionaires risen from the world's strife. And money can crack empires. If money can break Nipper's strength in the Remove then money will be used. But where money is of little use is where it is least needed. I don't think all the wealth the leaders of Study A and Study B can muster will keep them in any position that requires honour and good faith.

I am sorry my report deals with talk of money but Solomon Levi sparked off my thoughts on the stuff and after all it is very

interesting to bring up the subject at times. Do you remember the time when the Hon. Douglas Singleton bought a school for himself? He had oddles of the coin of the Realm and in a fit of pique purchased his own academy of learning.

* * * * *

CONCERNING E. S. BROOKS

Mr. C. LESLIE FARROW of Boston writes us as follows:

Just a few lines to say a big THANK YOU for what you have done for me. I wrote asking if we could have more information about Edwy Searles Brooks, the man himself, and also for information about the Monster Library. Much to my delight we had an article on the Monster Library, and I was so happy to read the article about Mr. Brooks' visit to the London Club. How I wish I had been there!

One thing rather puzzled me. He seems to have mentioned that, as a boy at school, he read the Magnet and the Gem. I understand that he was born on November 11th, 1889, so that when the first numbers of Magnet and Gem appeared one would assume that he would have left school. But why worry? We have had this magnificent article and all the information. Thank you so very much.

(Under his pen-name of Robert W. Comrade, Mr. Brooks was writing prolifically for the early blue-cover Gem by 1910. -ED.)

* * * * *

CALLING NEW ZEALAND

Our Lee expert, Jim Cook, is now living in New Zealand. His address is 22, Leslie Avenue, Sandringham, Auckland, New Zealand, and he would like to hear from hobbyists in that lovely part of the Commonwealth. We hope that New Zealand readers of the Digest will contact him.

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CHARACTER CHANGES

By S. Gordon Swan

WALDO THE WONDER MAN was a murderer in the first story in which he appeared. Certainly his victim was a blackmailer, but that does not alter the fact. In "The Case of the Five Hairs," (U.J. No. 798, dated 25.1.1919) Waldo fired at Blake with intent to kill, and narrowly missed a child. These things seem irreconcilable with the Waldo whom his fans remember; his earlier and more lethal exploits were conveniently overlooked by both Scotland Yard and Edwy Searles Brooks. Editorial policy may have been responsible for this metamorphosis, for through the years Waldo became a kind of Robin Hood - Sir Galahad, with the added advantages of phenomenal strength and imperviousness to pain.

Similar character changes are observable in others of the rogue's gallery in the Sexton Blake saga. G. H. Teed, in the closing years of the Great War, created a number of new characters prior to his departure for India. Among these were Marie Galante and Prince Menes. Relying on memory, I believe there was only one story of Marie Galante at this stage, entitled "At the Full of the Moon," in which this fascinating woman was described as a half-caste, the daughter of a white saloon-keeper and a native woman. Marie appeared to be under a Voodoo spell, but at the end of this yarn she showed signs of emerging from this state and becoming a good citizen (with a yen for Blake). Yet, when G. H. Teed brought her back into action some years later she had become an octoroon, and a dangerous threat to white supremacy with her dreams of a black empire. Nevertheless, she was one of Teed's best characters, a vital, colourful woman.

Prince Menes was another character who changed, and not for the better. In the original stories he was the reincarnation of the

twin brother of a Pharaoh who reigned some ten thousand years before, with the motive of revenge actuating him. Through the medium of a hypnotised girl, he traced the present incarnations of those ancient Egyptians who had betrayed him in a past life and attempted to exact vengeance upon them. In this phase he was a powerful and fascinating character. When G. H. Teed returned to the writing field he restored Menes to his readers, but a Menes who had deteriorated from his previous conception. He did not pick up the campaign of revenge where it had left off, and his background did not quite agree with the previous portrayal. The hypnotised girl no longer figured in the stories, and even his own description seemed different. He had become a sinister Easterner working against the West, a Wu Ling of Egypt, but a rather inferior Wu Ling. One could not picture the original Menes kidnapping Yvonne and other girls to fulfil the destiny of vestal virgins.

Another character of Teed's, Dr. Huxton Rymer, also underwent changes, but in his case they were possibly more consistent. At first Rymer was hard and ruthless; later he became more likeable and sometimes even fought alongside Blake in an emergency. This difference could be attributed to the softening effect of Mary Trent, who acted as a counterbalance to the sinister power of Marie Galante. But it is noticeable that, towards the end, Rymer was showing signs of ruthlessness again, a hardening of nature due, perhaps, to the continued failure of his schemes.

As several authors wrote of the adventures of George Marsden Plummer, some discrepancies are bound to emerge. It was Walter Edwards who departed from the established conception of Plummer by making him too showy and flamboyant, and also prepared to trade a vital secret to a foreign power. Plummer would never have done anything against England; this was particularly stressed in earlier stories, and I recollect one called "Plummer the Patriot," which emphasised this aspect of his make-up. When G. H. Teed took over the character in the twenties (although he appears to have written about G. M. P. in at least one story before World War One) he promoted Plummer to "ex-detective-inspector of Scotland Yard." So far as I am aware, Plummer never rose above the rank of detective-sergeant. I don't recall Teed ever mentioning his habits of nail-biting or smoking Green Larranaga cigars. And the fact that he had a silver plate in his skull from a trephining operation seems lost in the limbo of the past.

However, summing-up this criminal character who survived for

half a century, and taking into consideration the fact that a number of authors narrated his unlawful exploits, the overall picture of George Marsden Plummer is a fairly consistent one, even to his last appearance under the auspices of Arthur Maclean.

One character who provided material for three different writers underwent slight changes according to his chroniclers. H. Gregory Hill created the sinister, colourful Gunga Dass, the Hindu villain, portraying him as a man of high caste who had fallen from grace and become a thug. A master of hypnotism and disguise, he was one of the most dangerous antagonists Sexton Blake ever met. In the thirties some of the original yarns were reprinted, and then Coutts Brisbane took over the character.

It would seem that Gunga Dass provided a fertile source of inspiration, for Coutts Brisbane wrote three splendid stories featuring the deadly Hindu. Gregory Hill's stories showed a considerable knowledge of India, but this newer chronicler displayed even more. Yet, for some reason, he described Dass as a man of mixed blood; why, is not clear, unless it is because an author likes to leave his own imprint on a character created by someone else.

Where Coutts Brisbane left off, another fine writer with a good knowledge of India took over. In Anthony Parson's hands Gunga Dass was an elaborate schemer, but somehow less sinister and deadly than of yore. He was described as having a jaunty carriage and demeanour, and generally gave the impression that he was more Mohammedan than Hindu. Notwithstanding these discrepancies, the majority of Gunga Dass stories provide some of the most colourful and entertaining reading it is possible to find in the Sexton Blake saga.

I can think of no more characters who changed, but I can recall a number of whom we should have heard more, yet who never re-appeared, and these could form the substance of another article.

* * * * *

Sexton Blake - UNION JACK - official information

No. 5

By W. O. G. Lofts

Easily the most interesting articles that I have ever read on Sexton Blake, have been my good friend Walter Webb's C.D. Annual pieces for the SEXTON BLAKE CIRCLE in 1956 and 1959. Readers who may be fortunate to have these copies, may like to refer to them for guidance. Walter no doubt has studied the Blake stories in the $\frac{1}{2}$ UNION JACK extensively, and likewise I too have found it a fascinating

subject to ponder and query as to the identities of many of those mysterious authors who penned those historical early stories, which were the foundation stones of the detective we know so well.

Probably like Walter, until recently I had almost given up hope of ever solving these mysterious authors' identities - so many times, after tracing an early editor, or sub-editor on the staff of THE UNION JACK, I have had my hopes dashed, by the person in question either having recently died - or just cannot remember anything about the paper at all. The late Mr. G. Garrish was of course extremely co-operative in giving information, but as it has been proved memories of events over fifty years ago, can play tricks, and there is nothing so concrete as official records written at the time.

It is with great pride, and indeed satisfaction that from this source I can now clear up for all time the majority of mysteries surrounding the Blake authors in the ½d UNION JACK.

W. SHAW RAE:

This was definitely the real name of the author, and a completely different individual from Ernest A. Treeton, and Stanhope Sprigg as presumed in the past. W. Shaw Rae of course created one of Blake's assistants We-Wee before Tinker came on the scene. A full list of the stories written by this author will be given in the Sexton Blake Catalogue when it appears.

CAMPBELL BROWN:

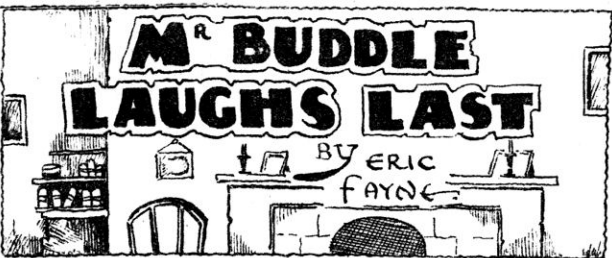
The real name of this author was G. W. BROWN, who was believed to have been a doctor, as articles from a Dr. G. W. Brown appeared in adult Harmsworth publications at the same period. He seems to have taken over the Sexton Blake stories from W. Shaw Rae - and wrote incidentally the last story of We-Wee which appeared anonymously 'Fortune Stone' No. 375, 29.6.1901. He also wrote of course as 'G. Wells Campbell', 'Carlton Braithwaite' (U.J. 380 Non-Blake yarn) and 'Alexis Graham' (404 U.J. Non-Blake yarn).

URGENTLY WANTED: Gem No. 799. Can anyone help?

TOM PORTER, 1, TIMBERTREE ROAD, OLD HILL, STAFFS.

WANTED: Magnets Nos. 829, 873, 875, 882, 884, 888. S.O.L. No. 60.

DR. R. WILSON, 100, BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.



A NEW COMPLETE STORY OF SLADE

Meredith laughed.

It started as a gurgle. It continued with a sound like steam escaping from a kettle of boiling water. It ended as a loud explosion. The laugh rang out and reached every corner of the Lower Fourth form-room at Slade.

There was, of course, nothing unusual in Meredith laughing. He was a bright, happy-go-lucky youth who laughed quite a lot as he went his bright, happy-go-lucky way through his schooldays.

But there is a time and a place for everything. Saturday morning was not the time, and the Lower Fourth form-room was not the place for a gurgling laugh which ended as a loud explosion.

Mr. Buddle was leading his form in English Literature. His subject was Tennyson's "Enoch Arden". Mr. Buddle had been talking for some time, and a pleasant, somnolent atmosphere had settled over his class. Mr. Buddle touched upon the probable sources of Tennyson's narrative. He analysed the characterisation - the strong and resolute Enoch, the constant and kindly Philip, the gentle and compassionate Annie.

As the minute hand of the clock crept round towards noon yawns became general

through the class. Some boys succeeded in keeping frowns of concentration on their brows while their thoughts were really far away, dwelling on what they proposed to do with their half-holiday that afternoon. A few lowered their heads and dozed. When Buddle got into his stride he became rather unobservant of what was going on around him.

Mr. Buddle was nearing the end of his one-sided discussion.

"We now consider the last two lines of this beautiful work," said Mr. Buddle. "Many students of literature regard these two lines as being the most outstanding example of anticlimax in the English tongue. That is not my view. Let me read you the closing lines in question."

Mr. Buddle lifted his book, and read dramatically:

"And when they buried him the little port had seldom seen a costlier funeral."

Mr. Buddle peered at his class over the top of his glasses.

"Are those lines bathos? No, boys, they are not!" Mr. Buddle shook his head and gave a dignified little smile.

"Those lines, boys, are effective as the close of a tragedy - a sense of relief and repose after the tragic stress and passion. Those two lines are not anticlimax - they are a sigh. The poet finds peace of mind, all passion spent."

And then Meredith laughed.

As Mr. Buddle's noble words ended, Meredith's gurgle dispelled the calm, the explosion of laughter which followed the gurgle shattered the atmosphere. Boys who had been dozing sat up and took notice.

It was a question whether Tennyson's closing lines in "Enoch Arden" were an anticlimax. There was no doubt at all that Meredith's laugh was one. Though Tennyson's passion may have been spent, Mr. Buddle's was just touched off.

Mr. Buddle glared at Meredith. He fairly bristled. Every eye in the form-room was turned towards the boy who had laughed.

"Meredith, obscene boy, how dare you?"

And Meredith laughed again. Another gurgling peal. His face was red as a peony in contrast with the gold of his mop of hair. His laugh rang out, a mixture of mirth and intense pain. He held his sides and shook.

If Meredith was red, Mr. Buddle was almost purple. The dreadful thought came into the master's mind that he, Mr. Buddle, was the cause of the outburst of hilarity. Had he somehow got a smudge of ink on his nose? Had some part of his clothing inadvertently been left unfastened? Mr. Buddle knew the cruelty inherent in boys. They would laugh at anyone's discomfiture.

"Oh, sir!" gasped Meredith.

He went off into another peal of laughter, and panted for breath. There was a pronounced titter through the class.

"Touched!" murmured Brazenbean.

Mr. Buddle's eyes glinted with anger.

"Meredith, you have dared to insult your form-master by laughing at something in the English lesson."

Sagging, exhausted, Meredith rose in his place.

"Oh, sir, it wasn't the English lesson, sir --"

"Then what was it?" demanded Mr. Buddle.

Meredith jerked a handkerchief from

his blazer pocket and wiped his eyes.

"Oh, sir - it was Gussy, sir --"

"Gussy?" hooted Mr. Buddle. "Who is Gussy?"

Meredith gurgled and sniffed. He spoke breathlessly.

"Oh, sir, Gussy set himself up as a detective, sir. He had a client come to see him, sir."

Every boy in the room was watching Meredith. Every boy was grinning. Mr. Buddle stood speechless.

"Gussy said, sir, that he didn't mind his case being dangerous, sir --" Meredith shook, and his face turned an even deeper shade of red. "He said, sir, that he always carried his 'twustay wevolvah--'"

Meredith quaked with mirth.

Mr. Buddle's countenance was a study. Out in the class, Shovel lifted his hand and tapped the side of his head with his index finger. Delighted grins were to be seen everywhere.

"And, sir, when Gussy said that, his client said 'A rusty revolver might not go off at the right moment.' Oh, sir, it was a scream -- Oh, sir --"

Meredith rocked with laughter once more. Tears were running down his cheeks. His face was the colour of a beetroot now.

Mr. Buddle snatched up his cane. He leaped from his platform. With a couple of bounds he crossed to Meredith. Lifting his cane, Mr. Buddle brought it down with a mighty crack on the top of Meredith's desk.

"Silence, grotesque youth!" roared Mr. Buddle.

Calm descended upon the form-room. Meredith had ceased laughing. His face was contorted. He held his sides in anguish.

"This is scandalous!" yapped Mr. Buddle.

He threw open Meredith's desk. Within, on top of the neat pile of school books, lay a periodical opened wide. Mr. Buddle turned a basilisk glare upon Meredith.

"As I thought, Meredith! Once again I find you guilty of reading puerile literature in my classroom."

Mr. Buddle seized the periodical,

closed it, and glanced at the cover.

"Oh, sir -- my Gem --" wailed Meredith.

"This," said Mr. Buddle, "is by no means the first time I have found you reading this pernicious publication during the lesson."

"Not that one, sir," said Meredith plaintively. "That one's called 'Hard Times', sir. 'I've never read it before sir. My dad only sent it to me this morning, sir."

"Pish!" exclaimed Mr. Buddle.

Still clasping the Gem, he strode back to his platform and mounted.

"Meredith," said Mr. Buddle, his voice very deep, "this obnoxious periodical is confiscated. For daring to laugh aloud during my English lesson you will be detained this afternoon and next Wednesday afternoon. This afternoon you will write me an essay on Tennyson's 'Enoch Arden'. You will bring that essay to me tomorrow morning after chapel."

"Oh, sir!" moaned Meredith.

"If ever again, Meredith, I find you reading this noisome magazine in class --" Mr. Buddle tapped the Gem ominously -- "I shall request Mr. Scarlet to inflict upon you the most severe flogging ever to be administered to any boy in the long history of Slade College. You may be seated, Meredith."

Woefully Meredith sat down.

"Class," said Mr. Buddle, "will be extended by fifteen minutes this morning in order that we may recapture the time which this obtuse boy has caused us to lose."

When class eventually dismissed, Meredith found that his popularity among his form-fellows had waned.

"It is an ill wind which blows nobody any good," observed Mr. Buddle that evening to the bust of Shakespeare in his study.

When Mr. Buddle went to bed, he took "Hard Times" with him. He had been justly incensed by finding Meredith engrossed in the Gem in the middle of the English lesson, but the event had its own compensations for Mr. Buddle. It had provided him with the light literature which he always found so satisfying.

For some time now Mr. Buddle had been a keen reader of the Gem. A new issue of the periodical was delivered to him every Wednesday by his newsagent, and Wednesday had become a red-letter day for Mr. Buddle.

But "Hard Times" was even more desirable, for it had a blue cover. The Gems with blue covers had been published many years earlier, as Mr. Buddle knew, and somehow he enjoyed the blue Gems even more than the later issues. Mr. Buddle had not read many Gems with blue covers. They were unobtainable in the shops. Every copy of the blue Gem which Mr. Buddle had read had been obtained by confiscation from Meredith of the Lower Fourth. "Hard Times" was no exception in this respect.

So Mr. Buddle adjusted his bedside lamp, and settled down to read. The story was hilarious from the opening lines. The author had really let himself go in a riot of rib-tickling sequences, bad puns, and slick humour, and Mr. Buddle found his enjoyment increasing with every column. It was obvious that the author had loved writing the story, and the reader entered into the spirit of it all.

Mr. Buddle grunted and gurgled and giggled as he read.

DETECTIVE D'ARCY

DR. GEM LIBRARY



D'Arcy bound the ruffian's wrists. He had captured the dreaded Anarch, the Brotherhood of Blood and Bone-chained, 'Sai Jove!' he ejaculated that they were the disguised Gram...

Tom Merry & Co were short of money, and it was Arthur Augustus who had the cosy idea of earning some. It was fantastically funny.

There was reference to a visit to St. Jim's by the celebrated detective, Ferrers Locke, who had managed to capture the elusive criminal, the mysterious 'X'. Mr. Buddle was delighted. He remembered the occasion well. In fact, the account of it had been contained in the very first Gems which Mr. Buddle ever read.

In "Hard Times", Arthur Augustus decided to advertise himself as a detective, and he succeeded in attracting a client.

Arthur Augustus would gladly have assumed the airs of a Ferrers Locke or a Sexton Blake. He felt keenly the need of a big bloodhound lying on the rug, or of a gentle Dr. Watson before whom his client could speak quite freely.

Mr. Buddle chuckled happily. He was unacquainted with Sexton Blake, but he knew quite a lot about Sherlock Holmes and Ferrers Locke.

Gussy's client were a motor-coat, with huge goggles covering up most of his face, and thick grey whiskers covering the rest.

"I deduce that you are a bachelor, sir, because a married man would not be allowed to go out in a dustay coat or a dustay car," said D'Arcy. "His wife would see that it was dusted. Am I wight?"

"Yes, certainly I am a bachelor," said the colonel. "I have never been married, not once in my life. It is a thing I do not go in for at all."

"And now to business, sir."

"You are willing to take up a dangerous case? To risk your life?"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway let me have the details, Colonel."

"Very good. My wife has disappeared," said the colonel.

D'Arcy jumped.

"Your wife?" he exclaimed.

Mr. Buddle shook with merriment. It was a long time since he had been so thoroughly entertained. He read on.

"I was really alluding to my mother," said the colonel in explanation. "The mistake was due to my agitation. My mother has disappeared."

"I am vewy sorry to hear it."

"Excuse these tears - even an old soldier feels the dreadful loss of his mother," said the colonel. "While I was in South Africa, fighting for the Empire, my mother was stolen by a gang of Anarchists."

"Bah Jovel! That was wathah a long time ago, wasn't it?" exclaimed D'Arcy, in surprise.

"Time does not check the flow of filial grief," said the colonel with a husky sob. "The police are useless. You must be aware of that, if you have perused detective stories to any extent."

Thirty-five years had dropped away from Mr. Buddle. He was grinning and chuckling like a schoolboy.

In the story, the colonel succeeded in providing Detective D'Arcy with such useful clues that Gussy decided he could find the missing lady without delay or difficulty.

DOUGHTY DEED!



together, and then rose gasping into the remorseless members of lay grasping at his feet. "Cap-omphantly. Little did he guess

no speak of it! Little did he guess

Thirty-five years had dropped away from Mr. Buddle. He was grinning and chuckling like a schoolboy.

In the story, the colonel succeeded in providing Detective D'Arcy with such useful clues that Gussy decided he could find the missing lady without delay or difficulty.

"You will venture to seek my mother?" said the colonel.

"Yaas, wathahi!"

"You will go armed, of course?"

"Perwaps I had bettah take my twustay wevclvah," said D'Arcy thoughtfully.

"Excuse me. A rusty revolver might not go off at the right moment --"

"Twustay, my deah sir -- I said twustay --"

Mr. Buddle roared aloud. He shook with uncontrollable laughter.

"Utterly ridiculous!" gurgled Mr. Buddle. "A brilliant writer! Superb comedy! Completely preposterous! Oh, dear!"

Mr. Buddle read on.

* * * * *

The chapel at Slade presented a peaceful, devout scene on Sunday morning. The Spring sun filtered through the stained-glass windows and fell across the Slade boys seated in the pews.

Every boy, senior or junior, was expected to attend divine worship on Sunday mornings. Most of them attended Slade's own chapel where Mr. Scarlet, the Headmaster, conducted what he described as a purely non-sectarian service.

The Lower Fourth boys, spick and span in their mauve and white blazers and sharply-creased grey slacks, occupied pews towards the front of the chapel. Mr. Buddle, like the Village Blacksmith, sat among his boys. He sat at the end of a pew, on the central aisle.

Mr. Scarlet was now half-way through his sermon. A good sermon helps people in different ways. Some rise from it greatly strengthened. Others wake from it refreshed. If anything, Mr. Buddle belonged to the second category.

Mr. Buddle sat and dozed as Mr. Scarlet let himself go concerning the deplorable materialism in the modern world.

"We need trust!" said Mr. Scarlet.

The word penetrated Mr. Buddle's drowsiness. It struck a chord in his memory. Trust. A trusty revolver. Mr. Buddle gave a silent, involuntary chuckle. To his horror he found himself thinking of Arthur Augustus and his client.

"If we introduce trust instead of

doubt into our lives --" thundered Mr. Scarlet.

Mr. Buddle heaved. He had a terrible desire to laugh. He began to feel dreadful. He looked around him. He tried to expel the trusty revolver from his thoughts. It was useless. His mind went back automatically to Arthur Augustus.

"Perwaps I had bettah take my twustay wevclvah."

"Excuse me. A rusty revolver might not go off at the right moment --"

Mr. Buddle gave a slight giggle, and smothered it. Several boys in pews further forward turned and looked at him. Mr. Buddle went red as fire. He frowned. He grimaced. He tried to adjust his mind. He concentrated on the preacher.

Mr. Scarlet was booming on:

"The Gospel tells us not to give undue consideration to the things of this world - not to lay up treasures on earth where moth and rust corrupt --"

"Perwaps I had bettah take my twustay wevclvah."

Mr. Buddle bit his lip hard. He fought a losing battle with his emotions.

"Excuse me. A rusty revolver might not go off at the right moment --"

Mr. Buddle laughed.

It started as a gurgle. It continued with a sound like steam escaping from a kettle of boiling water. It ended as a loud explosion. It rang through the chapel at Slade.

In the pulpit Mr. Scarlet's eloquence was stemmed abruptly. He stood in silence, staring in utter amazement at Mr. Buddle. Every eye in the chapel was turned upon Mr. Buddle.

He choked. He heaved. He had an internal fight, and then he laughed again.

Hastily Mr. Buddle rose to his feet. Covering his mouth and nose with his handkerchief he hastened down the aisle, giving several artificial coughs as he went. Only the clatter of Mr. Buddle's shoes on the tiled gangway disturbed the silence of the chapel. As he reached the doors he heard a murmur pass through the congregation. The doors closed on Mr. Buddle.

* * * * *

The morning service was over. As Mr. Scarlet left the chapel by the side door, Mr. Buddle approached him. Mr. Scarlet gave Mr. Buddle a frosty look.

Mr. Buddle's face was red. He spoke jerkily.

"Excuse me, Headmaster. I owe you an apology. I sincerely hope that my outburst of coughing in chapel this morning did not disturb you unduly."

"Your outburst of coughing, Mr. Buddle? Coughing? I was under the impression --"

"I was thoughtless, sir. I omitted to take my cough lozenges into chapel with me. A tickling in the throat, sir. I thought it better to leave."

"Very distressing for you!" said Mr. Scarlet drily. "I suggest that you visit the school matron for some sort of remedy."

"I will, sir," exclaimed Mr. Buddle. "I can only repeat my apology, Headmaster --"

"Pray don't mention it, Mr. Buddle!" said Mr. Scarlet.

The Headmaster walked away in stately dignity.

Mr. Buddle mopped his brow.

* * * * *

"Oh, calamity!" muttered Mr. Buddle.

It was nearly time for lunch, and Mr. Buddle was resting in the armchair in his study. He felt mentally exhausted, undecided whether to be ashamed of himself or tickled to death.

Charles Lamb once said that he "laughed at anything awful," and confessed to having laughed at a funeral. Now Mr. Buddle had laughed in chapel. He felt akin to Charles Lamb.

Mr. Buddle and laughter were not close acquaintances. Long, long ago, no doubt Mr. Buddle had laughed as much as any average schoolboy. But many years as a schoolmaster had dulled his sense of humour. He had clothed himself in dignity, and as the years passed it had hardened into a veneer of solemnity. Nowadays Mr. Buddle seldom laughed.

Yet the man who could sit through a film comedy without a smile creasing his face had now laughed in chapel. He decided that he felt none the worse for it. If anything, he felt a little better.

Possibly Mr. Buddle was on the verge of acquiring the gift - one of the most precious in humanity - of being able to laugh at himself.

In his armchair he chuckled, a trifle self-consciously.

There was a tap on the door.

"Come in," called out Mr. Buddle testily.

The door opened and Meredith entered. He closed the door and crossed to Mr. Buddle.

"My imposition, sir," he said, handing Mr. Buddle an open exercise-book. The golden-haired youth stood with his hands behind him.

Mr. Buddle ran his eye over Meredith's scrawl, reading the opening paragraph of the essay:

"Enoch Arden is a sad story. Annie is a gentle woman who commits biggery but she gets away with it because one of her husbands is on a desert island. The second husband gives the first husband a costly funeral and that cheers everyone up though they sigh. It is not an anticlimax."

Mr. Buddle shook his head ruefully.

"It's a lovely story, sir," said Meredith.

"It's a preposterous story," snapped Mr. Buddle. He blushed. "Oh, you mean 'Enoch Arden'. Yes, Meredith, I'm glad you appreciate the work of Tennyson."

There was a glimmer in Meredith's eyes.

"May I go, please, sir?"

"You may go, Meredith."

Meredith turned and walked to the door.

"Meredith!"

"Sir?" The boy looked back.

Mr. Buddle frowned.

"Under the circumstances - you seem to have understood the lesson - I mean, your detention for next Wednesday afternoon is cancelled."

Meredith's face lit up.

"Oh, thank you, sir. May I have my Gem, please, sir?"

"Your Gem? Certainly not! I haven't --"

Mr. Buddle nearly said "I haven't finished it yet," but he checked himself in time.

"That absurd periodical is confiscated, Meredith. You may ask me for it on the last day of term. Now go! The bell for

lunch has just started to ring."

Meredith went. There was a faint Gioconda smile on his innocent young face.

Hamiltoniana



GEMS OF HAMILTONIA (No. 6. New Series)

Sturgis of the Sixth was leaving St. Jim's.

Sturgis of the Sixth was nobody in particular.

But he was leaving, and when a fellow left, there generally was a sale of his belongings, and on such occasions fellows rallied round. Obviously, a fellow couldn't take with him, when he left school, a study carpet much the worse for wear, a screen that showed plain traces of fencing-foils and Indian clubs, a clock that wouldn't go, an oleograph splashed with ink, and other belongings of that kind. Probably his people would have stared at such a cargo reaching home.

Perhaps dear friends missed him when he went. On the other hand, perhaps his friends were pleased to see the last of him. They might say "Old Sturgis is gone," or they might say "Thank goodness that ass Sturgis has cleared at last!" In either case, it was felt a proper thing to look in at the sale and appropriate at least one article at twice its value.

Nearly all the Sixth had turned up at Sturgis' sale. Even Knox, the meanest fellow in the Sixth, had given a shilling for a pen-wiper worth a fraction of a penny. It was not the custom for a fellow to hold the sale personally. Another chap would act as salesman, and it was a point of honour to realise the highest prices possible. Mulvaney major of the Sixth had played auctioneer on this occasion.

Mulvaney was a business man born. After it was over he sought out Sturgis of the Sixth.

"No end of a success," he told him. "What do you think of seven pounds ten shillings?"

"Oh, jolly good!" said Sturgis.

"And here's the money, excepting a quid that you're going to lend

me till you see me again," said Mulvaney major.

And Sturgis pocketed six pounds ten.

* * * * *

THE LAST MAGNET SUB-STORY

By Laurie Sutton

For some years past I have been making a close study of the Greyfriars and St. Jims stories in the Magnet and Gem. As I have stated earlier, I have discovered that a considerable number of stories still generally attributed to Charles Hamilton are, in fact, the work of substitute writers.

How does one determine a substitute story? Some stand out clearly by an atrocious style of writing, faulty characterisation, absurd sequences, etc. But not all sub-stories are so easy to detect. Some authors (Pentelow for example) can be recognised by their own individual style and repeated use of certain cliches and phrases, so that once we have identified stories of that author we can "match up" other stories that have clearly come from the same pen.

In the case of Charles Hamilton, his writings cannot be identified in this manner. Although he had many mannerisms, and repeated phrases and quotations, we are faced with the problem that practically every sub-writer first studied his stories and obviously abstracted a list of his more common phrases and quotations. In the case of authors who wrote over a period of many years (Brooks, Samways, Pentelow, etc.) these quotes were eventually absorbed into their own style; so much so that, in 1928, when he had been writing St. Jims yarns for 18 years, E. S. Brooks in the "Handforth at St. Jims" series used many popular Hamilton quotes, including Rachel of old; guinea a box; corn in Egypt; he feared the Greeks; Medes and Persians; Aunt Sempronias; Stentorian shouts; his diminished head.

The only way of identifying a genuine tale is through an intimate knowledge of the author's style, characterisation, atmosphere, supreme humorous writing, dialogue of adult characters - in fact, the sheer class and craftsmanship. I find, for instance, that when I am reading a genuine tale it is rather like gliding along a smooth road in a Rolls Royce: when I get hold of a sub-story I am rocking and jerking down a rutty lane on Joyce's wood-cart. It is not just a matter of the actual merit of the story. Some sub tales are quite good, while some C.H. tales are not outstanding or do not appeal to me. But even in a poorish Hamilton story the craftsman's touch is still there to be clearly distinguished from inferior writers. After all, Don

Bradman sometimes made a duck, but he didn't take a stance like Horace Coker in doing so!

However, there are some stories which, although I am convinced they are subs, it is difficult to prove them as such. These stories often contain puzzling data that points to them coming from C.H., yet the general style and a mass of un-Hamilton phraseology suggests otherwise. My belief is that many of these stories were written from inside Fleetway House, either by editorial staff or by an author who worked with access to C.H.'s manuscripts, both published and unpublished. This would explain how a sub-story could take over immediately at a location set by C.H., and explains the immediate use of new characters by a sub-writer - or, in certain other cases, the use of newly-created sub-characters interpolated into genuine stories!

It is my belief also that substitute stories were from time to time used even when genuine stories were in hand - either to test readers' reactions or to keep a reserve writer (or writers) in training to assure the continuance of the papers in an emergency such as the illness (or death) of the star author. Careful reading convinces me that this went on right up to the year 1939 in the Magnet, although the Magnet imitations of the 1930's were not so obvious as earlier ones - probably because the writer was more soaked in Hamiltonian lore.

It is generally thought that the last Greyfriars sub-story appeared in Magnet 1220, published in 1931. My personal records, however, indicate the last sub. to be No. 1659, "Billy Bunter's Bargain," published 2nd Dec. 1939, (beloved by quiz-compilers as the number containing the list of Remove juniors in the Editor's chat). This is a good imitation, but an imitation nevertheless, as a close and critical study shows. The story itself is a thin one of how Mauly has his bike stolen by a tramp who paints it and sells it (on tick) to Bunter. Incidentally, Bunter's buying of a bike on tick from a tramp, his explanations to the Removites that it was a present from an uncle of varying names, and his request for a loan to pay the cost of carriage at the railway station is a carbon copy of a 1928 story (1056, "Billy Bunter's Bike"). Even the list of uncles George, William, Rupert, and Herbert appearing in both stories.

Unfortunately, to quote all the evidence I have abstracted from this story would require far more space than the editor could grant me. However, I advise all interested readers who possess this story to read it through slowly and critically. As a guide I will draw attention to various paragraphs that contain un-Hamilton-like

expressions and phrases. It will be observed that some of the expressions suggest C.H., but I have deliberately spotlighted these as typical examples of a common sub-writers habit - that of using a Hamilton quote, but with an unmistakeable variation of phraseology. I have placed an asterisk against some of the most glaring examples of sub-writing.

<u>Page</u>	<u>Column</u>	<u>Para.</u>	<u>First word(s)</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Column</u>	<u>Para.</u>	<u>First word(s)</u>
3	1	11	Perhaps	12	1	11	What
	1	16	Bunter*		1	13	He felt
	2	3	And tell the		3	8-9	This was
	3	2	"What		3	23	Four*
4	1	8-9	"And Mauly	13	3	13	"Well you
	2	15	Billy Bunter*		3	20	It's like
	2	24	So far	14	2	13	"Then you
	2	26	On second*	15	3	5	As the
	3	13	Five*	16	1	11	Smudge
5	1	8	That arm		1	17	His comrades
	2	11	Lord		1	19	But the*
	3	10	There was		2	23	Smudge, really
	3	28	"But we		3	17	He got off
6	2	3	There	17	3	14	What Billy*
	2	10	Billy Bunter was		3	27-8	Bunter had
	2	17	Today	18	1	11-2	A ghost*
	3	27	Billy Bunter was		2	15	The remaining*
	3	29	If Bunter		3	21	"Well, they're
7	2	5	Skinner	19	1	14	"Cabbageflage
8	1	6	That was	20	1	10	He was*
	1	8-9	Often he had		1	29	Now that*
	2	15-17	On a tag		3	15	"His" bike*
	3	7	It was*		3	22	Who are
	3	9	Breath*		3	24	Coker was
	3	16	"Beasts*	21	1	4	Coker met
9	1	2	And had		2	15	He fixed
	1	4	He trudged*		3	2	"It wasn't*
	2	6-7	Billy Bunter		3	13	The envelope
	2	8	Twice*	22	2	1	"Silence*
	2	21-2	But there*	23	3	17	Judging
	2	23	It was	24	1	13-4	He had
10	1	20	No earthly*		2	6	"33554447
	2	4	And Bunter	26	1	2-3	"Oh! I
	2	8	That, really		2	9-12	"Tain't"

<u>Page</u>	<u>Column</u>	<u>Para.</u>	<u>First word(s)</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Column</u>	<u>Para.</u>	<u>First word(s)</u>
11	1	2	"You lazy	26	3	19	Smudge
	1	14	Leaving				

Well, there we have it. I shall be very interested to have the comments of fellow-students of Hamiltoniana, and I feel confident that the majority of experts will agree with my findings.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 74. NO, SIR!

Mr. Laurie Sutton's article (in this issue) is extremely well-written, and it will undoubtedly provide food for thought for large numbers of our readers who possess Magnet No. 1659. He hits the nail on the head when he says, in effect, that one could sense a substitute story. It was by no means a matter of mere concrete internal literary evidence.

I have said before, and I say again, that I do not believe any substitute story in the Magnet or Gem would pass for genuine with the real expert. I do believe that some genuine stories, for various reasons, could pass as substitute work. To sum up - if there is any doubt, then it is a genuine story.

We have printed Mr. Sutton's examples and references as he gave them in his article, but I do not find them too easy to follow. With plenty of them, I really do not see what point he is trying to make. His article is novel and thought-provoking, though he may be making rather an undesirable precedent. There is probably not one genuine story ever written from which one could not draw similar conclusions by taking certain small items out of context.

It is my belief that Mr. Sutton is wrong in thinking Magnet No. 1659 a substitute story. It is typical of the Magnet stories of that period. It is, in fact, typical of many of the post-war Bunter books.

Mr. Sutton has selected items which he considers point to substitute writing, but it is possible to pick out dozens of little items which embody the delightful mellow writing for which Hamilton was justly famous. Here are just three which we have selected almost at random:

"It was a selfish world; and nobody ever seemed to realise that it was up to him to do these things for Bunter. Even Bob Cherry, who had been known to put in a whole half-holiday pottering with Marjorie...

Hazeldene's bike, never seemed to have a half-holiday to spare for Bunter's."

"Mr. Purkiss, as he tramped by the bridle-path in Redclyffe Wood, looked as if he was in want of some luck. He wore a shabby old overcoat that was too large for him. His boots were ancient, and held more or less together by twisted wire. His hat would have made a dust-heap look unusually shabby. His countenance indicated that he could not afford the use of soap. His fingers indicated that a nail-brush was far beyond his means.

Only in one respect did Mr. Purkiss appear to be able to spend money. There was an aroma clinging to him of mingled beer and tobacco, which showed that, somehow or other, Mr. Purkiss was able to obtain the unnecessaries, if not the necessities, of life."

"He did not want Quelch to see that little bill. Quelch was certain to order him to pay for that bike at once, or else return it to the vendor. Quelch was not likely to understand that that bike was now Bunter's, and that he could reasonably expect the vendor to wait till he received some postal orders he was expecting. It was clear enough to Bunter - but he had a misgiving that it would not be equally clear to Quelch."

Our extracts are probably worth no more and no less than Mr. Sutton's, but his task is more difficult, as he is trying to prove a negative.

It has been accepted that Charles Hamilton wrote every story in the Magnet from No. 1221 onwards. He certainly believed he did. So far, I can see no reason to think he didn't.

I can see nothing in Magnet No. 1659 to indicate that it is a substitute story. In fact, I'm quite sure that it isn't. It is an excellent story of its type, and if a substitute writer existed, capable of writing it, then it is at least surprising that we have never heard of him before. If we accept Mr. Sutton's views, we accept the possibility that the same writer may have been responsible for any of the Magnet classics. No, sir, I don't believe it.

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

WANTED: YOUNG BRITAIN No. 1 (June 11/19) to No. 232 (November 17/23), also BOYS' CINEMA No. 1 (1919) to 1929.

T. JOHNSON, 18 RABY DARK ROAD, NESTON, WIRRAL, CHESHIRE.

DANNY'S DIARY

APRIL 1914:

A day return on the London, Tilbury, and Southend Railway from Fenchurch St. to Southend-on-Sea costs 2/6. Mum has promised me that we shall have a day there soon, and I am looking forward to it.

Easter was rather late this year, and on Easter Sunday I had rather an ordeal. Mum, Doug, and I went to tea at the home of Doug's lady friend who is called Freda. Mrs. Bonestoril, Freda's mother, is rather a massive lady. She is shaped rather like an oil-funnel, and she wears a lot of jewellery so she jingles as she moves. When she shook hands with me she said: "S, this is Daniel!" It made me feel like an epidemic. She looked at my mother and said: "I don't really care for boys. They are seldom house-trained." I felt like barking.

Mum didn't back me up. She said: "I'm sure your daughter must be a comfort to you, Mrs. Bonestoril. Is she your only child?"

Mrs. Bonestoril said: "My one U-lamb. She is the dearest girl in the world." They all smiled nicely, and I said: "I think Doug finds her pretty dear," and nobody seemed to like that. There's no pleasing some people.

It was a warm day and we had tea on the lawn. Freda was dressed in all fluffs and frills and lay back in a deck chair with her legs crossed. She said: "Pass me the butter, Danny," but the butter was a bit loose on the dish, and as I passed it, it slipped off the dish and landed, sticking up, on the toe of Freda's shoe. She sat petrified, glaring at it. It all caused such a to-do.

I told Doug afterwards that if he gets a mother-in-law like Mrs. Bonestoril he will deserve all he gets. And Doug said the Bonestorils would never allow their daughter to marry into a family which contained a monster like me.

There was a train smash on April 14th when the Flying Scot crashed into a goods train on the North British Line outside Burntisland station in Fifeshire. The engine of the express was thrown over the parapet into a golf-links, and several carriages followed it. Two people were killed and twelve were injured.

In the Gem it has been one of the best months I ever remember. The stories have all been first-chop. "Desperate Measures" was the last tale in the series where Cutts became captain. Kildare was returning to St. Jim's, but Cutts wanted to keep the captaincy, so he employed fowl measures to try to keep Kildare away.

"Trouble for Tom" was a funny tale and I liked it. A gipsy fortune-teller told Miss Priscilla Fawcett that Tom Merry would be killed by a cricket ball.

In "A Dangerous Double," Reggie Clavering turned up again. He is a boy who is very much like Tom Merry and he caused plenty of worry for Tom. Then in "A Change of Identity," Tom Merry was kidnapped, and Clavering took his place at St. Jim's. The kidnapper was Gerald Goring, who stands to gain a lot of money if Tom Merry is disgraced. It is a grand series, and I am looking forward to the next story.

Mr. Lindsay has given me a big pile of Union Jacks, and Mum said I must show my appreciation, so I bought him a packet of 20 Wills' Embassy cigarettes which cost me 9d.

We went to the picture palace on Easter Monday, and saw a film called "The Clue of the Wax Vest" which is about Sexton Blake and Yvonne. I enjoyed it very much. In the Union Jack, the editor tells you every week where this film is showing. During this month it will be showing at the Bijou Theatre, Bexhill-on-Sea; Whitehorse Picturedrome, Stepney; Poole's Picture Palace, Ipswich; The Hippodrome, New St. York; Oxford Picture Hall, Erith; Picture Palace, Gooch St, Birmingham; Central Cinema,

Station Rd, Wood Green; Norman Road Cinema, St. Leonards-on-Sea; and Temperance Hall, Skipton.

The Union Jack is running a serial called "Orders Under Seal" which is written by Lewis Carlton from a film of that name.

Our tram conductors wear whistles round their necks. They look over the top of the car as a passenger alights, and then they blow two sharp blasts and let the whistle drop out of their mouths to the end of its chain. I think it must be very nice to be a tram conductor.

The Magnet hasn't been very hot again this month. "April Fools All" was meant to be very funny, but I thought it just silly. In one place it said "The Famous Five grinned loudly." I thought a grin was just an expression on the face. I didn't know it made a noise.

A new boy named Wibley came to the school in "Wibley's Wheeze." He wanted to act in the play "The Red Rover" which Wharton had written, but nobody thought he could act. He turned up, pretending to be Wharton's cousin, and deceived everybody, so they all agreed he was an actor.

In "The Runaway," Vernon-Smith stunned Leder and thought he had killed him, so he ran away from school. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry went after him and caught up with him at Dover.

"Harry Wharton's Diplomacy" was a strange title for the last tale of the month. I think Frank Richards meant it to be called "Master and Boxer," for those are the words the story ends with. A new master called Larry Lascelles comes to Greyfriars. Harry Wharton and Co go to Chilford to see a boxing match between Larry Lynx and Tim Tutton. Chilford was a town of considerable size with electric trams and an Empire and other signs of advanced civilisation. It also had a boxing ring.

Larry Lynx turns out to be Larry Lascelles, but it turns out all right, as at the finish he saves the Head from being punched on the nose by Tim Tutton.

Dad and Mum went to His Majesty's Theatre to see Bernard Shaw's new play "Pygmalion." Mrs. Patrick Campbell played a character called "Eliza Doolittle," but there has been a bit of a squabble as Mrs. Campbell didn't like using a very bad word in the play.

I have had Chuckles most weeks this month - it only costs a halfpenny, and Mum will often give me a halfpenny when a penny would be asking too much. Three Frank Richards stories this month in Chuckles were "Spoofing the Scouts," "The Silly Six" and "Bunter's Day Out" but I didn't care much for any of them. They were all a bit silly, like the April Fool story in the Magnet. Mr. Richards isn't nearly so good as Martin Clifford, these days. Oddly enough the Greyfriars tales in Chuckles seem to be illustrated by Arthur Clarke, who used to draw for the Magnet.

Before Easter, Doug bought me a Jester which contains an exciting serial about "Dr. Duval." But Doug hasn't bought me anything since Easter.

Burnley beat Liverpool (1 - 0) in the F.A. Cup at the Crystal Palace. The King presented the cup. This was his first visit to a cup final. The League champions this year are Blackburn.

(Picture above from N.Z. reader, Geoff Harrison)

CHIPS $\frac{1}{2}$ ^D

THE CHAMPION COMIC



"Pardon me! Is anybody in?"

The POSTMAN CALLED

INTERESTING ITEMS FROM THE EDITOR'S LETTER-BAG

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Mrs. U. WRIGHT (Sutton Coldfield): I was interested in a recent Digest article about Tom Browne - did you know that he illustrated some of my Uncle's stories? I have Tom Browne's COMIC ANNUAL for Xmas 1904 and 1905. In the former, my Uncle has a story "A Christmas Comedy" and in the latter "A Christmas Case," both illustrated by Tom Browne.

(Mrs. Wright is, of course, the niece of the late Charles Hamilton. - ED.)

M. HALL (Penrhyn): Mr. C. L. Farrow of Boston mentioned Falcon Swift and the Boy's Magazine and asked what happened to the sepia plates of football teams given with that publication. Recently I bought a number of these papers, and found a plate of Bolton Wanderers for 1926/27 in perfect condition. I expect you know that the "Rover and Wizard" is reprinting the old Wolf of Kabul stories from the Wizard of the thirties. Are these tales exact reprints or have they been pruned?

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross): Danny's clashes with Doug's girl friend are most delightful. I wonder if a girl of this generation would notice whether a boy was walking on what was, in those days, the correct side of his lady companion. I imagine, like so much else from the good old days, that this kind of courtesy has gone by the board. In any case, as Danny says, one had to keep one's sword arm free.

Congrats to John Trovell of Colchester on giving such an appreciative write-up to the new Greyfriars story "Penalty for Improper Use." His letter was appreciated very much after some that we have read complaining that C.D. should not be a vehicle for new writing of this type.

R. J. McCABE (Dundee): C.D. is eagerly looked forward to every month. Danny's Diary is really grand - must be a permanent feature now.

R. McCARTHY (Australia): One word describes the Annual - wonderful. It would be interesting to anyone, but to a lover of old Boys' Books it is a treasure beyond price. Albert Watkin's article was of special

interest to me for I have a complete set of the Champion Library, and was reading Champion and Triumph when the Champion Library started. I read most of the stories as serials in the two papers. Frank Lay's article on the B.F.L. was also of great interest. No. 635, "The Bells of Satadino" by Eric Townsend was the serial in No. 1 of the Champion. What a wonderful collection the seventeen Annuals are! Nothing would make me part with one of them, and they have a place of honour in my library near my well-loved collection of Triumphs and Champions.

T. A. JOHNSON (Neston): There were 271 issues of Young Britain, not 265 as stated in your Editorial. It started June 11th, 1919 and ended August 16th, 1924. I took it as a boy before turning to the Magnet in 1923, and always had a great regard for it. It contained some fine stories, particularly the Maxim Law detective tales, assistant Della Railton.

PETER HANGER (Northampton): Heartiest congratulations on the fine March issue of the Digest. I am looking forward to the new Slade story. I was specially pleased to see that photograph of Roger Jenkins. How about one of yourself now?

(Your ancient editor is not photogenic. -ED.)

JOHN GOCHER (Sudbury): I must congratulate you on the high standard which the Digest has maintained over the past twelvemonth. It is really the bright spot of the month, although I wish someone with sufficient knowledge would do a series on the authors who wrote in the dear old Triumph and Champion. These two papers seem to be neglected by everyone.

MAX LYNE (Blackpool): C.D. makes splendid reading. I look forward particularly to the next one, with a new Mr. Buddle story - having greatly enjoyed the others.

LESLIE FARROW (Boston): Please may we have some information on Football Fun (with Percy and Steve), All Sports, Sport and Adventure, Football Pictorial, Football Favourite, and Sports for Boys. Thanks to Josie Packman for Blakiana. What about a reproduction of the cover of "The Rainmaker" 1932, and "The Humber Woodyard Mystery" 1929? May you know the joy and happiness that C.D. brings to my heart! (The Union Jack will be on our cover next month. -ED.)

C. F. F. RICKARD (Canada): The Annual is fine. The Editorial I always enjoy. The few words embrace present accomplishments, old friends, loyal writers, and eyes to the front and the future. I like your mentioning Herbert Leckenby every year. I own one St. Jim's

Pluck, so I was delighted with the few chapters from the first one. The sketches "Around Greyfriars" appealed to me. And I always particularly enjoy the Slade stories where a Gem is the central character. You have "done it again," as they say, this year.

News from the Clubs

MIDLAND

Meeting held 25th February, 1964:

With the return of Norman Gregory (Chairman) and George Chatham who were absent last month plus the second appearance of our two new members, Mr. H. Webster and Mr. Ian Parrish, eleven members were present to make this, for all its informality, one of the nicest meetings we have held for some time. It was, however, strange not to see Ted Davey who generally manages somehow to put in an appearance whatever the circumstances. Tonight was one of those nights Ted had no control over. Strange too, not to see the two Winifreds. Gerald Price was present however and what with the new members the party did not seem so depleted. There was no lack of interest in the programme though no fixed routine had been prepared; there was the usual quiz, the collectors items, games, and good discussions over various points of view. The quiz was eight items all connected with the six main Hamiltonian Schools. Each item was a series of questions and in all there were 28 points to answer. Tom Porter was highest with 21. The quiz was compiled by the Secretary. The Collectors Item was the first of the St. Frank's Nelson Lee Library i.e. No. 112 Old Series. The title being "NIPPER AT ST. FRANK'S," by Edwy Searles Brooks. The Anniversary Number bearing the day and month of the meeting but 36 years old was "THE POPULAR" No. 474 dated 25/2/28. This, last like last month's collectors items, was of particular interest to the two new members who were also very deeply engrossed in a few C.Ds. and what looked like the last C.D.A. As before stated there was nothing arranged and conversation ranged from one thing to another, but mostly Hamiltoniana. The library raffle

was won by Madge Corbett who amongst other old boys papers, received a John Brearley B.F.L. There was a chat about old members and the possibility that some might be induced to return.

HARRY BROSTER Secretary.

NORTHERN

Meeting held on 14th March, 1964:

Chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened our meeting a few minutes before seven p.m., rather earlier than for some time past. We must try and keep up to this, as the tendency has been for the meetings to get off to a late start in recent months. The attendance was below average, probably because of the heavy rain which had persisted all day.

Gerry Allison gave us the correspondence of the month - a varied and interesting batch as usual - and one Scottish postal member, John McMahon, sent a donation of books for our library, including Boys' Herald, Dixon Hawkes, Skippers and Rovers; a most generous gesture which is greatly appreciated.

Jack Wood gave us a few interesting items, and reminded us that the new Bunter book, 'Bunter the Stowaway,' is due out at the end of the month.

This month's Hamilton character was Lord Mauleverer, the choice of Geoffrey Wilde. Mauly is usually the languid lord, to whom any kind of exertion is distasteful, but there is more in him than meets the eye. He can be energetic enough when circumstances demand it, and his shrewd eye sometimes notes things which the other fellows miss. Geoff's readings from the Tuckshop Barring-Out series, and the Franz Kranz series, illustrated this side of Mauly's character.

Then Gerry Allison gave us 'Nipper's Cricket Quiz,' which was won by Geoff. with 11 out of 12 correct. Gerry also gave a quiz of 20 questions sent by the London club. Jack Wood and Bill Williamson tied here, each having 14 correct. A break for refreshments followed.

The final item was a most ingenious exercise, devised by Geoffrey Wilde, which consisted simply of writing down the surnames of all the 'regulars' of the Greyfriars Remove, but in such a way that no name contained a letter included in the previous one - for example, Maulevere, Snoop, Bull, etc. This is most interesting - and difficult! Gerry Allison, who got as far as 18, was the winner, although Geoff., trying it out before the meeting, got a good deal farther. On checking, some lists contained one error, usually in the middle, which put them out of the reckoning.

Next month, Annual General Meeting, Saturday, 11th April.

F. HANCOCK, Hon. Sec.

AUSTRALIA

A warm welcome was afforded Queensland collector, Rev. Jack Hughes when he joined members of the Golden Hours Club at the special meeting held to coincide with his second trip to Sydney on March 13th. A good attendance with enthusiastic discussion provided an extremely interesting evening and we have been assured by Jack that he is already looking forward to being with us again in 1965.

First item on the agenda was the election of office bearers which resulted in the return of the current holders en bloc, Syd Smith, Chairman; Bette Pate, Secretary; and Erniss Carter, Treasurer.

Correspondence read by the secretary included the ever-popular "Newsletter" from Harry Broster who never fails to send on this regular news of the doings of our fellow collectors in the Midland Club.

From closer to hand there were news and views from Arthur Holland of Wellington, West Australian collector Gordon Swan and Harry Curtis of Queensland, all of which afforded stimulating ideas for discussion.

To bring everyone into the picture Stan Nicholls read again the interesting report which Bill Lofts had sent out to bring to the Aussie collectors all the details of Edwy Searles Brookes' visit to the London Club rooms. The remainder of the meeting was spent discussing the question and answers contained in this report with the inevitable tussle between Hamilton supporters and Brook-ites.

The usual pleasant half-hour in the coffee shop concluded an evening which had proved every bit as enjoyable as had been anticipated.

Next meeting Thursday, April 9th, at the Book Bargain Bazaar at 6.15 p.m.

B. PATE Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held Sunday, March 8th:

Whether it is old age or the fickle English weather I am not quite sure but the Merseyside Club has had more than its share of sickness during the last few months. Once again the attendance suffered because of this, the latest victims being Pat Laffey, John Farrell and Jack Morgan.

However, although we were low numerically the quality remained as high as ever and Norman Pragnell was able to report that at least financially we are still quite healthy.

We had intended to make some recordings at this meeting to send to David Hobbs in U.S.A. Owing to the thin attendance, however, it was decided to wait until next month when we hope to have a full house. I would like to appeal to all members who read these notes to make a special effort to attend. The "Brains Trust" will be revived next month and we hope that everybody will come along with plenty of ammunition.

The business side of the meeting over Norman drew our attention to what he described as a "deliberate lie" perpetrated in Magnet number 1544.

The Editor was replying to an enquiry by a reader asking if Martin Clifford and Frank Richards were one and the same person. The answer given was "No!" Enough to make Harry Wharton blush. ESB's recent visit to the London Club prompted Norman Pragnell to dig out an old C.D. number 35 published in November 1949, in which Bob Blythe had written an article on the History of St. Frank's. This article, it appears, was written as a direct result of ESB's first visit to that club. The article revealed many facts that were unknown to us before.

Norman introduced a quiz based on the popularity of many of the characters of the old papers among present day enthusiasts. C.D. carried out some research in connection with this some time ago and Norman's quiz was based on the result which showed some rather surprising trends. Bill Galley and Bert Hamblett tied for first place.

During the meeting we had a telephone call from George Riley and we were pleased to hear that he is settling down in Barnsley. I hope that at some time he may be able to pay us a visit.

Next meeting Sunday April 12th, 6.0 p.m. prompt.

BILL WINDSOR

LONDON

Although weather conditions were appalling there was a full attendance at the March Putney meeting. Truly an old boys' book club meeting; the host, Brian Doyle and his complete collections of "Chums," "Captain," and "Boys' Own Paper," on view for all to peruse. Len Packman being quizzed by Lawrence Morley on the comics, Roger

Jenkins doing great business with his Hamiltonian section of the library, Bob Blythe doing likewise with his Nelson Lee Section, Bill Lofts giving the first part of his article "The Saint at Fleetway House" and his account of his correspondence with the author of the "Saint" stories, Leslie Charteris, the up-to-date news of the progress of the Sexton Blake catalogue and the chairman, Len Packman displaying the latest Sherlock Holmes book. Something for everyone.

The Solo quiz was extremely difficult but Len acquitted himself very well.

John Bush won Don Webster's "Name Pairs" quiz, Josie Packman won the quiz conducted by myself and then came Bill Lofts reading and discourse on the "Saint" stories and how one of the first appeared in "The Thriller." Time passed all too quickly and after all the excellent programme mentioned above, including the break for tea, ably served by the ladies and the host and hostess, Brian and Mrs. Doyle, it was homewards bound in the sleet and rain.

Next meeting at Bob Blythe's residence at 40, Ellesmere Road, Dollis Hill, London, N.W.10. on Sunday, April 19th. Kindly notify if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

TELEVISION CRITIQUE

WILLIAM COMES TO TOWN (B.B.C. March 14th)

The BBC should never have presented William Comes to Town. It made us realise how scruffy their own William shorts were last year - and how good they might have been.

This film, made in 1948, was a great deal Richmal Crompton; some of it was just based on Richmal Crompton; but all of it was rollicking, tip-top entertainment. Nowhere could the lover of the William stories have a grouse, although, in one sequence, a monkey stole the show.

Surely a new William book must be due, Miss Crompton! That film made us hang our tongues out.

SHADOW IN THE SUN (Independent TV. March 16th)

Most television plays these days have no beginning and no ending. They are pointless chunks of dialogue between weird people in odd settings. How very different was Maurice McLoughlin's new play! A tense, moving story which held the interest from the first word till the last. Set in a girls' school in South Africa, it told of a tragic problem which faced the Headmistress, beautifully enacted by Anna Neagle. It was a splendidly balanced piece of drama, with many unexpected twists so that interest never flagged for one moment.

Entirely lacking smut, swearing, boozing, and neurotics it was far from a modern TV play's normal standard, so naturally the majority of the newspaper critics were cool or hostile. But most family people will have found it grand entertainment.

Congratulations to Maurice McLoughlin. We look forward keenly to his next.