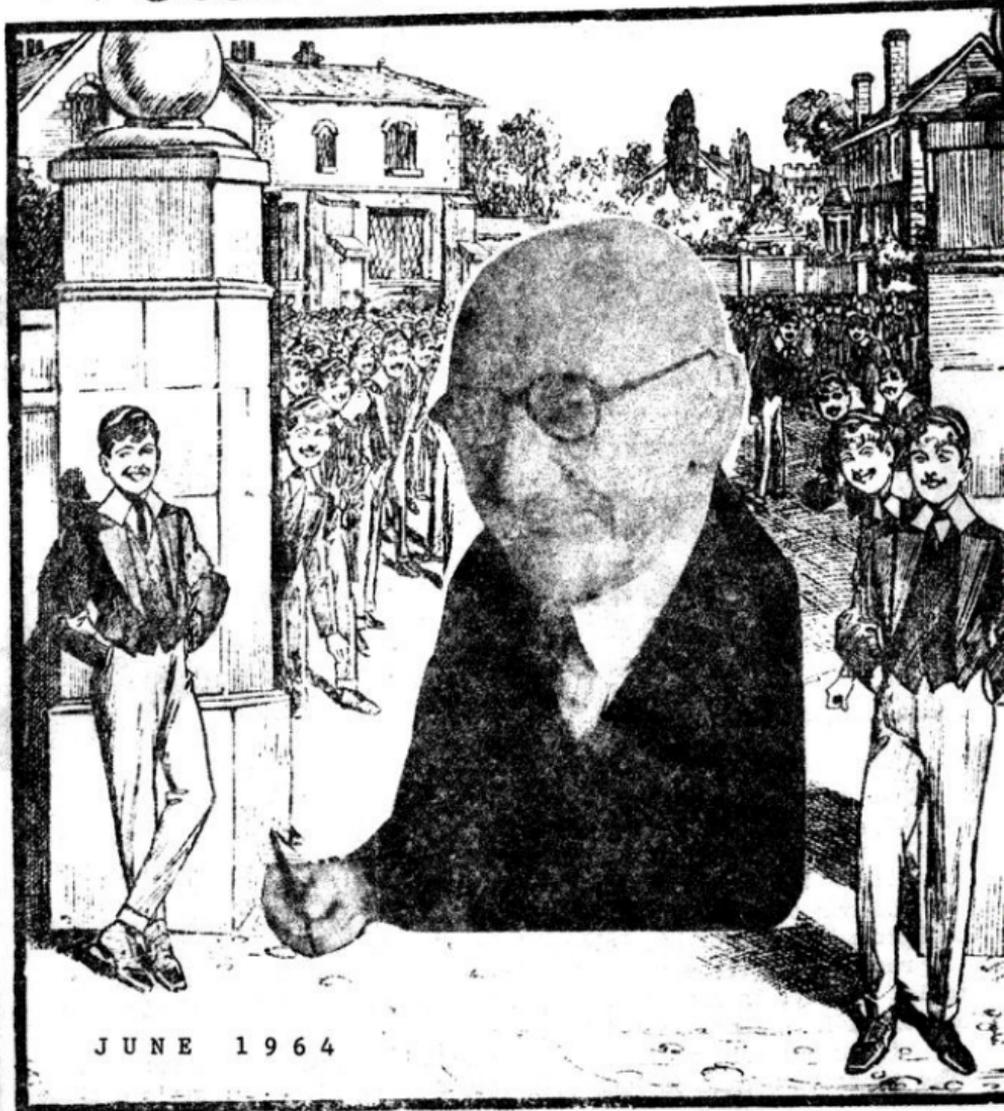


Volume 18  
No. 210

June, 1964  
Price 25¢

# COLLECTORS' DIGEST



JUNE 1964

# COLLECTORS' DIGEST

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 18

No. 210

JUNE, 1964

Price 2s. Od.



## THE EDITOR'S CHAT

### G.O.M. OF THE SKETCH-BOARD

We are happy and proud to dedicate this issue of Collectors' Digest to a great artist - Mr. C. H. CHAPMAN. And we are happiest of all in the knowledge that he is still with us and that he is still doing the work to which he has devoted the greater part of his life - illustrating Greyfriars.

On our cover this month is Mr. Chapman's portrait, set against a background of one of his beloved Magnet's covers. We are delighted to present a little article from his pen - an article in which he tells, simply, in his own words, a few of the highlights of his long career with the Amalgamated Press.

It is not hard to find the most poignant words in the article: "The great blow came on June 14th 1940 - I was given a month's holiday

- and said good-bye ----"

We can only guess at the heartache which came to so many on that day more than two decades back, but we know it must have been especially acute to Charles Hamilton and C. H. Chapman - the two who had given their entire adult lives to, respectively, the written word and the inspired sketch. Plenty of worlds fell apart in those times, but one does not need a vivid imagination to understand the tragedy which came to these two men. No longer young, they must have felt that their life-work was ended. Happily, time was to prove that it was by no means ended.

We have often paid tribute to Charles Hamilton as the most prolific writer ever to have lived. Now we can pause to think of one who must be one of the most prolific artists of the century. Mr. Chapman's work for the Magnet was enormous, and, as we know, the Magnet was only a part of his work. If Charles Hamilton was the phenomenon of the typewriter, then C. H. Chapman is undoubtedly the phenomenon of the sketch-board.

Mr. C. H. Chapman - Collectors' Digest, on behalf of its large band of readers - and in the name of old boys all over the world - salutes you. May you be spared to enjoy good health and great happiness, and to continue with your wonderful work for many years to come.

#### INSPIRED REMEMBRANCE:

This month our popular series "DO YOU REMEMBER?" pays a holiday trip. It leaves its familiar haunts in Hamiltoniana and will be found making a "guest appearance" in our Nelson Lee Column. Next month, when it reaches its fiftieth edition, DO YOU REMEMBER? will be back in its old place.

What an achievement? In fifty articles Roger Jenkins has inspired our memory on a great variety of subjects, and the series continues as one of the most popular in the Digest. We congratulate Mr. Jenkins - and we congratulate ourselves that we have been privileged to present this evergreen, smash-hit series of articles.

#### Mr. TAIL:

At least a hundred readers have written to say kindly things concerning the death of our famous puss, Mr. Tail, whose untimely end was referred to last month. It has not been possible to reply to them all, but the gratitude is deep and sincere. It is, perhaps, unrealistic to allow oneself to become too fond of any animal, as we did. But we find it heart-warming that the nicest folk in the world are also animal lovers.

CHANGE - FOR THE SAKE OF --

Recently I bought a paper-covered edition of "Night Must Fall," described as the book of the film. I remembered the spine-chilling eeriness of the pre-war play (in which Katherine Harrison made her name) and of the equally good film in which Robert Montgomery played the pathological Danny.

Now they have made a modern version of the film. I was not surprised to find the book of the new film a mere shadow of the old one. New characters have been added, the old ones altered, and sex has been smeared over the whole thing. It is no longer eerie. It is merely weary. Even the critics agree that the film has been spoiled by being rubbed in the modern kitchen-sink. For once I agree with the critics.

Why must producers take so many of the old stories and ruin them?

THE EDITOR

-----

## Memories of an Illustrator

By C. H. CHAPMAN

It was in May 1911, in the Magnet office, room 57 in the Fleetway House, that I first met Charlie Hamilton. I remember it as though it were yesterday. I was talking to Hinton and arranging details for the next Magnet cover. Charlie came in, we shook hands, we chatted for a while, and then he made for the door, bags all packed for the south of France. In the doorway he collided with Down.

I never saw him again until March 1952 when I spent a hectic day with him at his home at Kingsgate, surrounded by all the paraphernalia of the BBC recording outfit, plus Joy Harington, the producer.

After that I used to hear regularly from the dear old fellow, and our letters often crossed. Frank Richards was a great correspondent and I had difficulty in keeping up with his charming letters. He could write on any subject under the sun, and loved to do so - all carefully typed like the scripts of all his stories.

Way back in 1960 I was trying to reckon up how many of his yarns came my way for illustrating. When I had counted up to three thousand I gave up counting.

In 1945 I lost a very dear old friend in Leonard Shields, one of the finest line artists of my generation - and what a pal to work with. For years until the war, he did the covers and I did the inside drawings for the Magnet. Sometimes he would start a sketch and I would

.....

finish it to his instructions.

Since 1952, to spend an afternoon with dear old Hamilton was one of the greatest pleasures of my life. The only snag was that Kingsgate was such a long way from Caversham, where I lived.

From 1911 till 1926, including the first world war, I think I can say that I illustrated all the Magnet stories. This was a period of 15 years. When Shields took over I was switched to other A.P. ventures. But even so, during the time he was on holiday - and he had not the best of health in those days - I filled the breach in the Magnet, and the paper went along its merry course, week after week, month after month.

From 1936 until 1940 I worked only for the A.P., at their offices in Tallis Street - a full-time job, and the Magnet was at the top of its form. But the Gem seemed to have slackened down quite a bit, and the Magnet pictures and stories certainly gave it a boost.

The Holiday Annual was going well, and for twenty years I suppose I contributed as much work to it as anybody, and there were some good men drawing for the Annual and some first-rate authors, led by Frank Richards, keeping up the Greyfriars tradition and the standard of the Greyfriars stories.

The great blow came on June 14th 1940 - I was given a month's holiday and said good-bye to all my friends at the Magnet office, including Maurice Down, R. J. Macdonald, Len Shields, Hedley O'Mant, and the others with whom I had worked so happily for so long. I could never hope to work again with such a friendly association.

And in conclusion, here is the very last letter sent to me by my old friend Charlie Hamilton. I think it will interest Collectors' Digest readers:

Dear Chapman,

You wouldn't guess what a pleasure it was to find your letter on the mat this morning, with that marvellous drawing in it. Evidently you have taken your cue from Cleopatra: and age cannot wither nor custom stale your infinite variety! If I could draw as you do, I would ask no more of gods or men. How do you do it? That jolly picture is now pinned up on my study wall, eliciting a venerable chuckle every time I look at it.

I am glad to hear that you are now doing the pictures for the latest book, I shall look forward to seeing them, which I expect will be about Easter. I hope you will be getting busy too on BBO, for which I have lately turned in the remainder of the copy. I have written a short story in Latin for BBO, which - if the publisher doesn't kick too hard! - will go in, - rather an unique feature, I think, though the publisher may perhaps think it too much so!

Kindest regards, old boy, and may your pencil flourish as long as my  
Remington!

Very sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS

# DANNY'S DIARY

JUNE 1914:

Whitsun came at the beginning of the month - and I had Mumps. It wasn't very serious but it was painful for a day or two and I had to stay away from school for three weeks. What a terrible catastrophe, I am pleased to say.

Doug was annoyed because his lady friend, Freda, said that only common people have Mumps and it lowered her opinion of our family.

The Magnet has been good this month - much better than recently. The Whitsun number contained "The Wrong Sort" which was the second story about Sir Harry Beauclerc. In the end he was expelled for theft.

"The Missing Master" was about the new maths master, Mr. Larry Lascelles. He was a prizefighter before he went to Greyfriars, and now a gang kidnapped him to try to make him go back to the Ring.

"The Greyfriars Trippers" was a good story. Greyfriars had a special Founders' Day Holiday, and the chums went to France on a day trip. Hazeldene got into trouble gambling, and the Bounder saved him.

The final story was tip-top. Called "The Dark Horse" it told about Billy Bunter changing places with a cousin of his called Wally. Wally was Billy's double, and he spent his week's holiday at the school as Billy, and surprised everybody. I liked this story very much.

Early in the month we had a heat wave and it was broken by some terrific thunderstorms on June 14th. A man, woman, and child were killed by lightning when they sheltered under a tree on Wandsworth Common.

Doug went to the Horse Show at Olympia about that time. I would like to have gone, too, as I love horses, but I was still a bit Mumpy. So he went with Freda and Wobbly Defrayne and his girl, Lavinia.

The next day Doug went down with Mumps. He was speechless, partly with annoyance and partly with his face which was swollen on both sides. I had only had it on one side.

Most weeks I have had Comic Cuts. It doesn't change much, and is always good for a pleasant fifteen minutes or so. There is a new serial called "Lonesome" or "The Mansion on the Moor." It's about an innocent convict who escaped from prison. Seems a shame how the prisons are full of innocent men. Martin Steel and his Lady Assistants still appear in a story every week, and "The Red Rovers" are still going strong.

Doug had a letter from Freda in which she said she was sorry to hear about his disease, but she was thinking of putting her hair up in a bun, so would be in great demand from all the illegible young men. Doug was livid. He said I had no business to read his letter, but of course I had to read it to see whose it was.

In Chuckles they have had a Postcard Plot competition. Readers have to sketch out a plot on a postcard for a Greyfriars story, and they get a prize if Frank Richards uses the plot for a story in Chuckles. The first plot used is in a story called "To The Rescue," but it's not very good. The comic characters in the paper are quite funny. They are Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy, Rufus Rubberneck, and Boxo, the muscular marvel.

My grandmother sent me five shillings, so I bought Doug the Midsummer Double Number of the Union Jack which contained a long Sexton Blake story called "The Death Club." Doug said it was very sensational.

I bought myself the Boy's Friend which contains an exciting new serial called "The Legions of the Kaiser," and the Penny Popular which has a fine St. Jim's tale called "The Blazed Trail." It is a story in a lovely series about Tom Merry in the Wild West of America. Also in the Pop was a Sexton Blake story called "Tinker's Peril." I took

.....  
 this story to Mr. Lindsay who is the Sexton Blake expert. He told me that it was the second part of a tale called "The Mystery of the Mint" which appeared in the Union Jack about 1908.

Dad and Mum went to the Adelphi Theatre to see a musical play called "The Belle of Bond Street" which starred Sam Bernard and Ina Claire. Towards the end of the month Doug and I went to the pictures and saw "Moths," which was the life story of the novelist, Ouida. It was a long picture, being in 4 reels, or about 3,700 feet. I found it rather boring, but there was a lovely Keystone Comedy featuring Mabel Normand, Ford Sterling, and Fatty Arbuckle. This was called "A Muddy Romance." There was also a rather funny picture featuring John Bunny and Flora Finch.

In the middle of June the suffragettes put a small bomb in Westminster Abbey near the Coronation Chair. A bit of damage was done. That sort of thing seems very silly. The King's seat was a bit torn.

The Gem has been about average this month. The first issue was a special Scouting Number which contained a good St. Jim's tale called "The Rival Patrols." Then came "Algy of St. Jim's" which was about a boy called Algernon Blenkinsop who came to St. Jim's from Huckleberry Heath, and Miss Fawcett asked Tom Merry to keep an eye on him.

"Playing a Part" was very good. Monty Lowther took a part in a play, in order to help his old friend, Horatio Curll. Last story of the month was a bit of a thriller. Called "Ordered Off" it was about a strange Dr. Grenfell, who took an old house called The Pines.

Shocking news has just reached me. I've nearly split my sides with crying. Freda's got the Mumps.

-----  
**WANTED:** FAMOUS FIGHTS - Police Budget edition. These were weekly numbers which followed Famous Crimes and ran for two years.

TOM LANGLEY, 57 SANDGATE ROAD, BIRMINGHAM 28.

-----  
**WANTED:** Nelson Lee Libraries 1923 - 1933; Collectors Digests Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9; Schoolboys Own Libraries (St. Frank's); Boys Realms Nos. 64 - 80 (1927). Fullest details to:-

NORMAN PRAGNELL, 33, BRAE STREET, LIVERPOOL, 7.

-----  
**MERSEYSIDE BRANCH** O.B.B.C. requires small quantities Old Boys Books other than those by Hamilton and Brooks. Details to:-

NORMAN PRAGNELL, 33, BRAE STREET, LIVERPOOL, 7.

-----  
**FOR SALE:** Bound Volume "NELSON LEES" Nos. 1 to 25 inc. first New Series. Good condition. S.A.E. for details.

R. SANDERSON, 53 TRAP LANE, SHEFFIELD, 11.

-----  
**FOR SALE:** MAGNETS. 47 copies between Nos. 411 and 726. These are rough copies (some without covers) not for the collector or the connoisseur, at the bargain jumble price of 25, plus postage. Also the following at 5/- each: Nos. 430, 448, 449, 451, 454, 517, 518, 591, 594, 606, 608, 656, 662. Postage extra.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON.

-----  
**CHANGE OF ADDRESS:**

FRANK CASE'S new address is 3D, Trenton Close, Bramcote, Notts.

# BLAKIANA

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

I am happy to report that work upon the Sexton Blake Catalogue is now in full progress. It is of course an immense task and will take quite a while. However, now that the work has begun it is only a question of time before the finished product will be available.

The little piece in this issue about STACEY BLAKE was sent to me by Gerry Allison, and I am sure that all Blake lovers will join me in thanking Gerry for this information.

JOSEIE PACKMAN

-----  
SEXTON BLAKE and CRAIG KENNEDY, in THE DEATH RAY

By Walter Webb

The Death Ray was, as its name implies, an instrument of death and destruction, against which objects, both animate and inanimate, had no adequate defence. In the hands of a man unscrupulous enough to use it, he would be possessed of a power the like of which no single human being had ever experienced before. The pittance of their wits against those who would have used the Death Ray as a means of intimidation - by threats of elimination, no less - to gain their ends, and the ultimate destruction of the Ray itself, were triumphs second to none in the distinguished careers of Sexton Blake, the famous British criminologist, and Craig Kennedy, the American scientific investigator.

There is, of course, no record of Blake and Kennedy ever working together - it so happened that two detective story writers, one British the other American - hit upon a similar plot, and had their respective heroes heading for the same goal, although, since the Blake version appeared some ten years after the Kennedy episode, it may well have been that the author of the first named, Walter Shute, got the idea for his story from the other writer, the well-remembered American novelist, Arthur Benjamin Reeve, who, it may be needless to mention, gained fame by virtue of his conception of the character of Craig Kennedy. Of the two, the American version is the better known, and

was considered good enough to be made into a film, whereas the British one failed to gain any recognition outside Blake circles. Even so, comparison of the two is most interesting and forms the basis of an intriguing article.

It appeared that the English Death Ray was the more potent article, since, by correct focus, it could bring buildings crumbling down into dust, whereas the American invention took its toll on human life only. In the Blake version, the Ray fell into the hands of George Marsden Plummer, who, despite assurances by one of his former chroniclers, Norman Goddard, that he was a fervent patriot, yet held his country to ransom and threatened to sell the ray to a foreign power unless his demands were complied with. In the American story the ray was used by a notorious character rejoicing in the sobriquet of The Clutching Hand, a sinister, stunted figure, whose right arm was continually thrust forward in a perpetual clutch. This unpossessing individual was a constant menace to the lovely Elaine Dodge, Craig Kennedy's sweetheart, most attractively portrayed by the late Pearl White in the marathon serial of the old silent days, "The Exploits of Elaine."

"The Death Ray" was episode nine of that serial, and was shown at the Palace Cinema, at the corner of Kentish Town Road and Prince of Wales Road, on Thursday and Friday, the 23rd and 24th of December, 1915. Saturday was Christmas Day, and the cinema, which would ordinarily have opened for a children's afternoon matinee, doubtless held it on Friday, and one visualises the scene on that particular afternoon at the Palace as one of joyful anticipation on the part of the younger cinemagoers queuing outside the pay-office against a background of gaudily printed placards advertising the film. Young hearts without a care in the world; yet what a different picture it must have been in the homes of many of those carefree youngsters, as their mothers, with hearts made heavy with anxiety, hoped and prayed that the news they most dreaded to hear would never come.

For these were the days of the first world war, when the loss of some loved one in the senseless slaughter of British lives in the green fields and picturesque villages of France and Belgium plunged thousands of homes into the utmost depths of misery and despair. History reminds us that at no period was the nation in such sore need of escapism as at that particular time, when victory looked so far away and defeat so desperately near. 1915 was indeed a black Christmas - a Christmas of smouldering hatred against a ruthless foe, for allied to the huge losses on the Western Front was the utter failure of the Dardenelles campaign and the execution by the Germans in Brussels of the English

nurse, Edith Cavell.

Neither radio nor television in those days, so those at home had to seek relief from their anxieties outside their homes. The theatre, the music-hall, and the newly built cinemas were a boon and a blessing then, and among the stars of that era who did so much to uphold the morale of a long-suffering British public none did more to achieve this than America's leading lady, the pretty and talented Pearl White, who gave herself no respite in the making of those thrilling serials, which had audiences flocking to the cinemas in their thousands, worries and cares forgotten, if only for a while.

In his own sphere, Blake, together with his two assistants Tinker and Pedro, did his best too, and with the added advantage that, since his adventures were publicised through the printed word, they could be followed by the fighting men themselves, as copies of both U.J. and the newly launched S.B.L. found their way into the trenches.

To one privileged to have seen these old-time film episodes emerges a highly interesting fact. How much like E. R. Parker's conception of our own Blake and Tinker were the players who took the roles of Craig Kennedy and his reporter assistant, Walter Jameson. Jameson, played by Creighton Hale, was a fair-haired, boyish, fresh-looking young man, rather slight in build, and with a most infectious grin - he was Tinker to the life! Arnold Daly, who played Kennedy, would have made an excellent Blake, and, though you might feel inclined to criticise this claim on the grounds that the actor was somewhat too heavily built to have made an ideal model of the criminologist, in all other respects Daly looked quite the part. This is particularly so in his laboratory in the process of some intricate experiment, his intellectual face absorbed, a pipe with a curved stem between set lips, just like Blake's old briar, and with sparse hair brushed well back from a high forehead to form the now familiar V.

To the Death Ray. This was in appearance like an ordinary search-light, but with a gigantic cone attached in such position that the beam exuded from its smaller end, giving it a pencil slim shaft of extraordinary power. In daylight it was invisible, and, by its use, the Clutching Hand, harassed by Kennedy's persistent thwarting of his plans, endeavours to throw the detective off the trail. Elaine (Pearl White) receives a message warning her that unless she persuades her lover to leave the country by a certain time a passer-by will meet instant death outside Kennedy's apartment every hour until he does so. One man dies, and Kennedy is in a quandary; another is struck down on the sidewalk, and to relieve the feelings of a distressed Elaine, he

makes plans to leave for South Africa.

But, like Blake, the American sleuth is not beaten so easily. Disguised as members of the ship's crew, he and Jameson leave the vessel just before it sails, and contrive to be left behind. They make for Elaine's apartment, where, delightedly, she informs her lawyer of Kennedy's return. This being episode 9 and not the final one, she is in happy ignorance of the fact that the attentive, suave, and smoothly efficient lawyer is, in reality, the hooded monstrosity known as The Clutching Hand, so it is hardly surprising that Kennedy and Jameson eventually find themselves prisoners in a cellar of the gang leader's hideout. Elaine, hoaxed by a message purporting to have been sent by Kennedy, also finds herself a prisoner. Gagged, and with her wrists pulled behind her and held fast by one of the gang, she is forced to look down into the cellar whilst the ray is directed down towards the crouching figures of her two friends.

But it has to be conceded that Kennedy was just as adept as Blake in wriggling out of situations as ticklish as this one. In his hand he holds a secret weapon - a rounded object resembling an ordinary magnifying glass. It is a ray diverter, with the power of diverting the beam back to its source. As Elaine above struggles frantically, dragging her captor all over the floor in an attempt to free herself, Kennedy at length succeeds in getting his diverter in direct line with the ray. What happens then sends the disconcerted crooks into a panic, and, in the smoke-filled room, Elaine pulls free and commences to deal out destruction of the Death Ray, evading the frantic lunges of the Clutching Hand, who seeks to prevent her as police pour into the building, having been notified by the resourceful Kennedy in advance as to the location of the gang's headquarters. The Clutching Hand and his myrmidons escape, of course. It's the old formula - the pressing of a button, the fireplace folding back, and the gang escaping via a secret passage to freedom. Elaine, exhausted after her terrific resistance, no longer seeks to avoid clutching hands - they are Kennedy's, so she falls into them, and in the close-up she is seen hanging limply in the detective's arms as he whisks her out of the room.

The Clutching Hand was lucky - more so than the fanatical Plummer, who sought to dominate his fellow men by threat of extermination only to be foiled by Sexton Blake. George Marsden Plummer died from the effects of the very weapon by which he had sought to buy power - the Death Ray, itself.

And this recalls one of those inexplicable happenings which must forever remain a talking point of Blake affairs. Why, after only his

second Plummer story, did Walter Shute decide to kill off this long established character - a character, be it noted, who was also being used by two other authors, G. H. Teed and John Bobin, at that time. One feels that Shute had an incredible nerve to have deliberately put out of circulation a character he never conceived and so deprive two of his colleagues from writing further stories about him. Editorial connivance would, of course, eliminate him from all criticism, but that he was not asked to do what he did is evident by the fact that only a few weeks later G. H. Teed had to resurrect Plummer and offer a plausible explanation of his escape from death.

There may, or there may not, be any significance in the fact that Shute never again contributed to U.J., or its successor, DETECTIVE WEEKLY.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sexton Blake - UNION JACK - Official Information. No. 7.

By W. O. G. Lofts

A mystery surrounding the authorship of U.J. Blake authors has been what I term the 'half-discovered names.' To elucidate, when I was most fortunate enough to peruse Mr. H. W. Twyman's personal list of authors that he had kept in his period of editor, I found such 'half' names as 'Sapt' 'Young' 'Tyler' appended to tales. With these names being typed out nearly 40 years ago - and the three writers having only written four Blake's between them - it is understandable how Mr. Twyman could not recall today, anything about them.

Since the first publication of these names in a C.D. Annual some years ago many theories have been brought forward as to the correct identity. 'Will Young' who wrote in the BOYS REALM. 'Charles W. Tyler' who contributed in the Union Jack Supplement. W. Sapte - who wrote an early non-Blake yarn in the U.J. - and Arkus Sapt of Daily Mirror fame who saved the paper from extinction many years ago. Alas, for our theories - only one has been proved correct - by official records I have seen, and that is in respect to the latter - when U.J. No. 968 16.9.22 'Sexton Blake in South America' was written by Arkus Sapt. This writer also wrote quite a few stories in the pink BOYS REALM in the early 20's - one called 'Saved by Wireless' and many others of a thrilling nature.

The mysterious 'Young' - was Fred W. Young - a prolific author of stories in CHUMS - and other papers. The two U.J. tales he wrote were No. 1146 'The Scarecrow Clue' and No. 1330 'The Green Flash.' Another point of interest is that he penned a serial in the MAGNET entitled 'The Phantom Bat' under the surprising pen-name of 'Hedley Scott.' Some explanation is needed here, as this pen-name is credited to Hedley O'Mant - editor of the MAGNET, who carried on the Ferrers Locke tales after Charles Hamilton had ceased to write them. The only theory that I can offer is that rather than invent a new name they let the 'Hedley Scott' be used to cover all the tales of Mr. Hamilton's detective in the Companion papers.

U.J. 1095 'The Adventure of the Black Spider' by 'Tyler.'

The revelation of this author was a complete surprise, and Mr. Twyman had in his list a red herring if ever there was one. I can only conclude that the 'Tyler' was jotted down to cover the identity of some staff member who should not have been a contributor and wished to be under a non-de-plume. A similar case was 'Anthony Baron'

who was a member of a rival firm - real name Augustus Baker - now deceased - and who wrote U.J. 1107 The Secret of the Dutch Garden. This 1095 tale was actually written by a D. THOMAS - and I have no information whatsoever about him. I can hardly suggest that it could have been the brilliant Welsh bard and writer Dylan Thomas!

Other names which have always been something of a mystery have been solved to my satisfaction as follows:

'Stawford Webber' was a non-de-plume - real name was D. W. Pile. Mr. H. W. Twyman can remember him very faintly as wanting to be called this name, and originally called him 'Strawford Webber.' D. W. Pile was indignant about it! No records of his writing any other fiction apart from the DETECTIVE WEEKLY.

Wilfred Tremellin was the real name of the author, and a former Air-pilot in the R.A.F. - no connection at all with the above as reported some time ago. Wrote flying stories in non-juvenile fiction. Have yet to meet an author who knew him personally. Also wrote for CHUMS and Modern Boy.

David MacLuire: Also real name of the writer - nothing known about him except that like 'Stawford Webber' he also contributed to Detective Weekly.

- - - - -

IS THERE A THRILLER FAN IN THE HOUSE?

By L. S. Elliott

Remember the Thriller? One of the finest pre-war papers for stories of mystery, crime, and detection, published at the remarkable price of 2d. Each main story was said to be one-third of normal novel length.

A number of world-famous authors, like Leslie Charteris, made their name in the Thriller - and the Saint made his first important appearance there. One previous appearance only - "Meet the Tiger" - which, until his advent in the Thriller, passed unnoticed.

Do any readers remember the complete Sexton Blake story supplement of 20 pages, entitled "Midnight Gold" by Gilbert Chester, which was given free in the Thriller dated Feb. 15th, 1930?

- - - - -

From THE YORKSHIRE POST, 5 May, 1964

MR. S. BLAKE

Mr. Stacey Blake, of Gedling Road, Arnold, Notts, who has died after an eye operation was a well-known writer and artist. He was 91.

A number of his paintings are in Nottingham Castle Art Gallery. He had much

success with Sexton Blake detective stories which he wrote with a team of other writers. Mr. Blake was a keen cyclist and had pedalled through almost every European country, one of his longest journeys being from Nottingham to Athens. He leaves a widow and two daughters.

.....

(Stacey Blake wrote the following stories for the UNION JACK, all of which featured 'Captain Christmas':

No. 1237 The Case of the Oil Pirates; No. 1273 Rogues Afloat; No. 1274 The Case of the Kaffir King.

Two serials in the UNION JACK were also written by him

(year 1926) From Prisoner to President; (year 1928) The Isle of Strife.

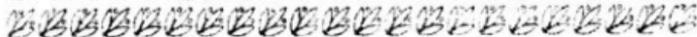
JOSIE PACKMAN)

RETURN OF SEXTON BLAKE

We understand that Sexton Blake stories will be back in the shops towards the end of the year.

.....

# Nelson Lee Column



CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By ROGER M. JENKINS

No. 49. Boys' Friend 4d Library No. 435 - "The Schemer of St. Frank's"

"I have thoroughly enjoyed writing this yarn," said Edwy Searles Brooks in Gem No. 1370 when referring to this 4d book, "and it is, in fact, a real school story, centred at St. Frank's itself. I have been writing about all the characters we know so well - chaps like Bernard Forrest and William Napoleon Browne and Vivian Travers - to say nothing of our favourite chum, Handforth..... From this you can imagine how I have revelled in writing this story."

"The Schemer of St. Frank's," which was published in June 1934, was the first of a number of St. Frank's tales in this library ("Others will follow in quick succession," said the author in the next week's Gem) but most, if not all, of these later stories were reprints. So No. 435 remains something of a curiosity, a new St. Frank's story written after the Nelson Lee ended, and possibly the last school story the author ever wrote to appear in a single volume. "It's a brand new yarn," said Edwy Searles Brooks a fortnight later, "a school story pure and simple, with cricket as the central theme." He made continual references to this story for weeks afterwards, even at the expense of ignoring other St. Frank's tales in the library, and he assured Clive Simpson that there was no need to be 'suspicious' of it. There could be no doubt that it was a new tale.

The story was unusual for a St. Frank's story in that there was no adult criminal - all the main characters were at St. Frank's, and Nelson Lee made no appearance at all. After an accident, Vivian Travers was forbidden to use a motor-bike by his father, and so, when Forrest discovered that Travers had disobeyed his father and was liable to be taken away from St. Frank's, he began to blackmail Travers in various ways. William Napoleon Browne, whom Edwy Searles Brooks mentioned in his advance notice of this story, played practically no part at all.

On reading a St. Frank's story for the first time in several years, I am struck by a number of points. The masters at the school give no impression of learning and scholarship at all: I think this must be because the class-room scenes that Charles Hamilton portrayed with loving care (to say nothing of the scholastic disputes between Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch) are entirely missing. In particular, Fighting Jim Kingswood, the Headmaster who addressed Fourth-formers as "you fellows," seems somewhat lacking in dignity. Edwy Searles Brooks said, "Personally, I think he is a much better headmaster than the kindly old Dr. Stafford. Times have changed, and Mr. Kingswood is an essentially modern man, young, virile, and a splendid mixer with the boys." I have the temerity to disagree with the author here, and I tried to raise this point with Mr. Brooks himself when he attended the London Club meeting last Christmas, but I was disappointed to learn that he had forgotten about the headmasters of St. Frank's, and so this discussion can never take place now!

Again, I am conscious of a strong antipathy to Handforth. There is no doubt that we were intended to like him, but I often thought his character got out of hand, and he was portrayed like a lout. For example, after his fight with Bernard Forrest in this story, we read this description of Handforth: "His left eye was puffy, his right ear was lopsided, and blood was smeared on his forehead and upper lip and chin. His clothing was more or less in rags." I should hardly think that "our favourite chump" was an apt summing-up here, even though he was morally in the right. Of course, anyone who dislikes Handforth is not likely to enjoy many St. Frank's stories, just as a liking for Bunter is necessary to get the best out of the Greyfriars stories. Possibly the trouble lay in trying to present such a character among the heroes of the stories. Coker, for example, was just ignored by Potter and Green when he became too exasperating - there were no bloody faces and clothes in rags at Greyfriars. Grundy, who was nearer in age to the leading characters at St. Jim's, was scarcely on friendly terms with them, but there is no doubt that he was less successful than Coker because he was younger. At any rate, there are occasions when Handforth seemed excessively brutal, and this has spoiled the story for me.

Vivian Travers, on the other hand, is a very different kettle of fish. He was portrayed at times very successfully, and, even if there seem to be one or two stages missing in the logic when he has his battle of wits with Forrest in this story, there is still sufficient attractiveness about his character to make the tale very readable. In

short, "The Schemer of St. Frank's" is one of those books that probably enchanted the faithful followers at the time but it was hardly of sufficient merit to win many new converts to the cause.

-----

MUSING

By H. Chapman

What a grand thing it is to be still young and full of youthful illusions, but what a disappointment as one grows older to have these illusions shattered; to find that Sherlock Holmes, whom I thought really did exist, (perhaps because his adventures were recorded in stiff covers) was only a fictional character like Lee and Blake, and to find that all those wonderful places such as El Dorada, Atlantis, the Sargasso Sea, etc., were only mythical or fictional.

Some of the A. Press authors, although writing some very imaginative stories about those places at times, seldom ignored the laws of nature. Invisible Men, Flying Men, etc. were avoided, as a rule. They did break the rule in one type of story, however. This was in stories dealing with ventriloquism. Billy Bunter and Nichodemus Trotwood were two of the star performers in this field.

Bunter, to my mind, was never convincing. In normal conversation he stuttered, became confused, contradicted himself, and generally tied himself into knots. When he put what he called his "wonderful ventriloquism into use, however, he suddenly became very artful, could tell a very plausible tale and carry on deception through successfully. To me this was quite out of character.

Nichodemus Trotwood, however, of St. Frank's, although rather a freak in appearance was a very brainy youth and quite capable of performing such tricks. Writing from memory, I think the most amusing story of Trotwood and his ventriloquism that occurred was in the Colonel Clinton series. St. Frank's fans who have read this series will remember that Mr. Stockdale, the College House Housemaster, had to leave for a time owing to ill-health and Colonel Clinton took his place. The College House boys were delighted to have a War Hero for a Housemaster, but he turned out to be a Military crank and made their lives unbearable. He turned the house into what he called the Barracks, and the scholars into soldiers and made them parade in the gaudiest of uniforms. He also brought an undesirable character, Sergeant Donovan, to the College to take charge of the juniors, to drill them and take them on route marches. He turned out to be a brutal bully.

The amusing incident I referred to occurred when he sentenced

(Private) Yorke to stand in the Triangle for a full hour in a freezing snowstorm with his hand at the salute. After a few minutes, however, Nipper & Co. substituted a dummy in Yorke's place and then hid themselves nearby to wait results. It was dusk at the time and snowing heavily, making visibility very bad. After a time Donovan went up to "Yorke" and warned him not to move until the hour was up. This was where Trotwood "did his stuff." He made "Yorke" answer back, telling him he was a rotten bully, etc. After some argument Donovan became so angry he knocked "Yorke" down. At this moment Clinton arrived on the scene and took charge. He too threatened "Yorke" who answered in a weak voice saying he was dying from exposure and that Donovan and Clinton were to blame. Becoming anxious, Clinton told Donovan to carry "Yorke" indoors, but when he attempted to do this "Yorke" began to fall apart. To their horror his arm came off, but when he kept on talking after losing his head, they began to realise there must be something "fishy" about things. They were sure of this a moment later, when the watching juniors, who had been almost bursting with merriment, could hold themselves in no longer, and let themselves go unroariously. Great was Clinton's anger when he found that he had been japed, but greater still was his relief when he found that "Yorke" was not really dying. Not knowing who was responsible however, he could not punish anyone. Trotwood was a great hero with the juniors after this episode. Told in Brooks' racy style and with more detail than I have been able to remember, it made very amusing reading.

I was very young when I read this story and enjoyed it immensely. Not being greatly bothered about the improbability or impossibility of what I read in those days I "took it all in." To give any more of the plot would spoil it for anyone who has not read the story of Colonel Clinton (old series No. 187-194) and may be fortunate enough to do so in the future, but it has always been one of my favourite St. Frank's yarns.

It was sometime afterwards that I saw my first real ventriloquist, complete with dummy. This was in a summer show on the sands. Of course, I expected him to make his voice come from one of the nearby donkeys, or from the top of the Scenic Railway. But no, all he did was sit with his doll on his knee. Certainly he could speak without moving his lips, and as the doll's mouth was only about six inches away and kept opening and closing it was possible to imagine the doll was actually talking. Poor chap, I thought, I suppose he is doing his best, but he is not as good as Trotwood. Complete disillusion was still to come. I came to realise in later days that the chap on the sands was quite a good

ventriloquist as ventriloquists go in real life, but I remember I thought it a very poor effort at the time.

Perhaps after all it is a good thing to keep one's youthful illusions as long as possible; a lot of children seem to "know all the answers" at a very early age these days. I can still enjoy these stories, however, although nowadays I have to take "a grain of salt" with them.

- - - - -

THOSE PARKINGTON STORIES

REG SANDERSON writes: If you take a weekly periodical for eight years (approx. 400 copies) you expect to have certain "off form" period of stories from time to time. During this period Brooks had given me plenty on the credit side to carry me through such runs. I had been well bolstered from the halcyon days of Dr. Karnak (who Nelson Lee described as a "Mountebank and a Charlatan with a flair for ostentation") such delightful phrases were common in the Nelson Lee in those days through the "Ezra Quirke" series, later the "Wilbey's Dog Series" with the second theme of the Remove playing Bannington Town, (Brooks was at his best in describing fictional football matches; he left Hamilton standing on this score) till the stories sank to an all-time low with the K. K. Parkington Period. I agree with Frank Unwin that they were by far the worst up to that date. Brooks appeared to have become so impatient and wearied of his characters that he intended to end it all as quickly as possible. (He lost me as reader at that time.)

The other "poor periods" were those when Handforth took charge completely. Featured occasionally, he was an admirable character; when a surfeit of him was presented he seemed to deteriorate to nothing more than an arrogant, noisy, stupid bully, who intimidated new boys and Church and McClure with physical violence to obtain his own ends. Recently Brooks stated that Alfred Edgar wanted him to feature Handforth as the "star" in every issue so that may have been one of the causes of the deterioration. I waited in vain for an issue where Bernard Forrest had an encounter with Handforth and Forrest was portrayed giving him a thorough beating. If one such story had ever been published and I had it in my collection it would have been my most treasured Nelson Lee of all.

CHARLES CHURCHILL writes: I think Frank Unwin has something here but it would have needed a first class sub-writer who kept the characters very close to what they were in the early Lees to save the day. He was needed, too, some while before the shocking "Parkington" era.

Reading the late Lees and then turning to the earlier ones, makes the reader wonder whether he is reading of the same characters at times. Even the language of the boys seems very different at times. A return to the original characterisation was required either by Brooks or a sub-writer, and also a return to the "balance" of the old stories. In other words not too much of dear old Handy, and a little more of Nipper & Co. in Study C.

JAMES W. COOK writes: The "Nelson Lee Column" seems to be invaded this month (May) with a couple of ignorant gate-crashers. Will Frank Unwin please understand that when Edwy Searles Brooks wrote the K. K. Parkington stories Brooks did so "under contract." It was the type of story the editor had selected with the anticipation of embracing a larger readership notwithstanding the fact that the policy at Fleetway House also demanded a Detective section in THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. Naturally the bigger readership envisaged by the decadent editor did not materialise. Had a sub-writer been

employed at all he would have been subject to the editorial policy prevalent at the time, so it's no good Frank Unwin, or anyone else, bringing up this hoary old coffin. The facts of the matter were buried in the casket long, long ago.

The years when Mr. Brooks had carte blanche with the type of story for the N.L.L. were those years when the Nelson Lee was at its zenith in popularity. It was when E.S.B. had to write "to orders" that the type of story such as K. K. Parkington emerged.

As the "Nelson Lee Column" is apparently in some measure for the benefit of Nelson Lee admirers I consider the short, sniggering senseless "FLASH-BACK" article an insult. It is irrelevant in its purpose and undesirable in its presentation. Who is this fly in the ointment that writes in a nightmare? Would he be a renegade Nelson Lee-ite who attempts to bolster up the Hemilton stories at the expense of the Nelson Lee? If so, he had better confine himself to those pages especially reserved to HAMILTONIANA. The NELSON LEE COLUMN can get along without absurd contributions like FLASH-BACK. I do not see such incongruous flippancies adorning other sections of the C.D. for the very simple reason they would not be published.

SALE/EXCHANGE: Sexton Blake Library (1st Series) Nos. 8, 63, 69, 76, 90, 100, 122, 129, 130, 131, 133, 134, 135, 141, 142, 171, 280, 351 (2nd Series) 17, 38, 77, 401.

WANTED: Blakes (2nd Series) 500-744.

P. M. KING, "HAVERCROFT," KIRBY ROAD, WALTON-ON-NAZE, ESSEX.

WANTED: Good loose copies or bound volumes containing any of the following: MAGNETS - 52, 131 to 149 inclusive, 195, 205, 237, 238, 239, 277, 318, 319, 353, 400, 417, 422, 435, 469, 706, 719, 751, 752, 753, 762, 763, 809. Most issues between 821 and 890, 900, 921, 924, 925, 936, 938, 940, 942, 943, 946, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996.

GEMS - Many issues between 400 and 500. Many issues between 800 and 879. Also Nos. 925, 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998. POPULARS: 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474. EARLY PENNY POPULARS: Nos. 12, 13, 45, 47, 48.

ERIC FAYNE, "EXCELSIOR HOUSE," GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

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

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

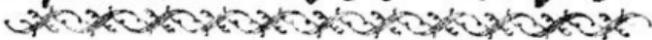
### BOOK BINDING

ALL TYPES OF BINDINGS UNDERTAKEN: BOOKS REBOUND OR REPAIRED:

QUALITY WORKMANSHIP

L. WARD, 3 HEATHERDENE CLOSE, MITCHAM, SURREY. Tel: MIT. 3837

# Hamiltoniana



The Billy Bunter Club;  
or what might have been!

By W. O. G. Lofts

"Old Boys Book Clubs - where they can discuss about Billy Bunter, and mainly other Magnet matters" exclaimed the advertising executive - whom I recently met down Fleet Street, and where we were discussing the hobby in general. "That is nothing new" he went on - "When I was a junior member of the MAGNET staff during its last days - plans had been made and completed, to form a world-wide organisation to be called 'The Billy Bunter Club' - but the paper shortage killed it."

Well, this was certainly tremendous news to myself; and I would think to any other collector, as this has not been known before, so straight away I started my investigations into the matter, and the results are as follows; .....

I expect that many readers of the MAGNET will recall the editorial announcement in issue No. 1683 when in 'Come into the Office Boys and Girls' it said.

"An Important Announcement that will appeal to every one of you will be made shortly ....

But, alas they were doomed to disappointment in the very last MAGNET to be published, 1684 - as it then stated...

"In my last weeks chat to you fellows, I mentioned that an important announcement was to be made in this issue of the MAGNET. For several weeks I have been working at top pressure on a scheme, that would have appealed to every boy and girl. In fact all preparations have been made, and the machinery was to be set in motion this week. Unfortunately, however, the acute paper shortage, has forced me to postpone the scheme until some future date. To put you wise now, as to what it actually was, would only tend to spoil the pleasant surprise that is in store for you - and you would not like me to do this - would you? Rest assured that it will not suffer in any way for the keeping."

---

This 'important announcement' then, was not free gifts as probably most readers have thought - but THE BILLY BUNTER CLUB. Indeed, a collector did ask me about this announcement some time ago, and I would give him the due acknowledgement in this article if I could recall whom it was! In making only a slight investigation about the matter to an editor - who did not really know - he suggested that it must have been free gifts, and that was that!

Membership was to be throughout the world - with a certificate (similar to the famous St. Frank's League') a badge with Billy Bunter of course portrayed. Chief Officers in every main town and City, and everything possible to have a world-wide brotherhood - where members could discuss and enjoy talking about their favourite characters in the good old MAGNET. To put the matter in its correct perspective - Members were to be encouraged to meet at 'Clubs' wherever possible, so one could say that this project which unfortunately was doomed, before it ever started, was a forerunner of the OLD BOYS BOOK CLUBS. Though I hasten to say, that all matters pertaining to Old Boys books are now discussed and dissected in the clubs we know so well.

Mr. C. M. Down, Controlling editor of the MAGNET, in a recent letter, confirming the above says...

"It was our intention to inaugurate a Billy Bunter Club, shortly before the paper suddenly closed down. No doubt it was this project which the editorials you refer to were intended to boost."

Mr. C. H. Chapman had already completed several sketches to boost the formation of THE BILLY BUNTER CLUB - and also had in hand several of a new series of the BILLY BUNTER CLUB picture strips. These were incidentally going to be used with the four outstanding MAGNET stories never published in a new project of a humorous magazine - where KNOCKOUT readers could also have joined THE BILLY BUNTER CLUB - but as this new paper also never saw the light of day, the whole project passed seemingly into oblivion until a chance remark by an advertising executive down Fleet Street.

- - - - -

### LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

#### No. 76. THE ART OF CONTRIVANCE

It would perhaps be true to say that with the India Series the Magnet commenced its Golden Age. With this series commenced a subtle difference in the presentation of Billy Bunter.

The Congo series of 1922 had been novel as the first of the long travel series, but Bunter had won no sympathy at all. It comprised six stories (ignoring the final yarn in which a black man accompanied

the chums to Greyfriars) but Bunter became tedious in his conceit and selfishness. In the Bunter Court series, though the reader was amused and entertained by the brilliant plot of the young rascal who managed to take over a mansion with its huge staff of servants, the fly in the ointment was the near-criminal tendencies of Billy Bunter.

With the India series we seem to meet with a rather younger Bunter; a lovable fool rather than a potential juvenile delinquent. Time and time again Bunter saves the situation, but it is fool's luck and not the brain of a young villain which brings about the happy endings. The 11-story India series (the longest travel series to have been published up till 1926) was really a giant framework for the activities of Bunter. Though he is still conceited and selfish, and his cowardice is rather over-played, he is no longer the loathsome character he presented in the first Rebel series of nearly two years before. I think that in the India series one begins really to love Bunter for the first time.

It has been suggested, I think, that the travel series rarely came alive till the chums reached foreign shores. I don't think I would subscribe to this view at all, but certainly it is not true of the India Series. The opening stories in which Wibley in order to secure a place in the cricket eleven, impersonated Inky, only to be kidnapped by rascals who assumed him to be the real Nabob of Bhanipur, made a splendid, exciting prologue to the series proper.

In connection with the China Series, Roger Jenkins has commented, very accurately, that many of the author's remarks on the state of China still retain their significance to-day, in spite of the upheavals which have taken place since the stories were penned.

The same is true of the India Series. As a whole, and as the result of the path which history has taken, the Series must be a period piece now. But some of the episodes, and particularly the sequences where Russia is not averse to stirring up trouble for the British, are oddly up-to-date and do not strike any note of a period piece.

For even those who are fond of Bunter, and I am one of them, it is clear that there is too much Bunter in this series, though it is a minor detail. The entire series is a masterpiece of contrivance. There is nothing derogatory in this statement. It was the contrivance in all the great Magnet stories which provided so much of their charm. Contrivance (which is another word, in a sense, for luck) seldom plays a very big part in real life. It is the lack of contrivance in so many modern television plays which makes them dead throughout.

Desmond Coke's "Bending of a Twig," rich in characterisation but

entirely free from contrivance, is the most true-to-life school story ever written. It is fine reading for the adult, but it is too near to life to be real entertainment. It is the unashamed contrivance of the Magnet's greatest which draws us back to them again and again.

The journey in the India Series is magnificently authentic. The geographical and the topographical details ring with truth. There is no doubt that they are true. Whence did they come, for Frank Richards never visited those places himself? As he tapped out that series on his typewriter he must have had by his side a list of the various details he was to work into the series. Some of them, no doubt, could have been obtained from guide books, always assuming that a man with so much on his plate ever had the time to secure and scour guide books. But many of them could have been found in no guide book. They were personal recollections of someone who had been in touch with the things recounted.

Did the author prepare the list himself? Or did someone else prepare those details, which the author blended brilliantly into the story as it progressed from place to place?

Charles Hamilton never told us. The secret died with him as other similar secrets died with him. We shall never know the answer. We can only use our own common-sense, and draw our own conclusions.

The India Series was not the Magnet's greatest travel story - but it was one of the greatest. The authenticity of the changing backgrounds is far superior to that of, for instance, the Texas series of the late thirties. Or perhaps I should say, the sense of authenticity. In earlier days I do not believe that Charles Hamilton would ever have made the mistake of placing the Rio Kid as an anachronism among the Greyfriars chums or as a similar anachronism in the Hollywood of talking pictures.

There is, of course, contrivance - and contrivance. It all depends how it is handled. The contrivance in the India series is delightful all the time.

Contrivance, skilfully handled, can be delicious. Clumsily done, it is just absurd.

- - - - -

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 74. NO. SIR!

LAURIE SUTTON: The extracts you selected to balance my own are all examples of familiar incidents that were repeated dozens of times in Charles Hamilton's writings (Bob Cherry's consideration for Marjorie, description of tramp, and Bunter's postal order expectations). An author who had been reading and studying Hamilton's work for years could easily write such paragraphs copying C.H. incidents. I give a short extract from the last "official" sub in Magnet 1220 to illustrate the use by an experienced sub-writer of a typical

Hamilton situation:-

' Tickets! All tickets, please!'

Billy Bunter quaked, as much as was possible in that cramped position under the seat in the first-class compartment....

....He waited for the moment when the official would depart. But Bunter's expectations were not realised.

The ticket-collector sat down in a corner seat, and put his feet up on the other one. Bunter heard the rustle of the leaves of a book, and the click of a pencil. The collector, having come to the end of a coach, was making official entries of some kind; and he made himself comfortable while he did so.

The Owl of the Remove fairly tumbled.

He made up his mind, there and then, to report the ticket-collector for cheek and inefficiency directly he was out of the present compromising situation. '

In 1939 there must have been many people on the A.P. staff with a great knowledge of the Magnet stories. Surely the A.P.: must have had an experienced reserve or emergency writer to ensure the paper's continuity? Such a writer would have found it imperative to write stories from time to time, whether published or not. I suggest that when the editor considered them of sufficient merit, or to fill a gap between series, or due to MS delays, they were, in fact, published.

It seems hardly right to say that if one accepts my views then a sub-writer could have been responsible for any of the Magnet classics. Whether or not 1659 is considered genuine, I can hardly imagine anybody comparing it with the classics!

But, as you say, neither of us can prove anything - we can only make our points and leave it to the reader or student to judge.

ROGER JENKINS: I think that Laurie Sutton's article presents unexceptionable arguments on the first page. I just happen to disagree with his application of the theory!

'Billy Bunter's Bargain' seems to me to be unquestionably genuine. It is true that an occasional simile or metaphor could be copied by a substitute writer, but I rely more upon the whole feel of the story. Moreover, a long sequence, like the one in which Bunter gradually spends the pound note in the tuckshop, could not be successfully managed just by lifting some odd mannerisms and tricks of style. It has the authentic tone of the real Frank Richards all through.

The fact that the story is based on the first number of an earlier pair of Magnet stories does not rule it out of court. Charles Hamilton had no objection to repeating themes, whether it was Bunter at the circus or Wherton v. Quelch. If Laurie Sutton likes to look inside the 1951 Tom Merry's Own, he will find yet another repeat of the tramp and stolen bicycle theme, entitled 'A Bargain in Bikes.'

But I think the most telling point is the one you made: if there were substitute writers in the Magnet after No. 1220, who are they, and why have we not heard of them before?

W. O. G. LOFTS: For a change I side with the experts, who have maintained from the beginning that Charles Hamilton wrote every Magnet story after 'Speedway Coker' until the end. To satisfy my own curiosity about this - and in compiling my Annual substitute authors' list - I personally perused the official records, and it is confirmed beyond all doubt that every single Magnet from 1221 until the last 1683 was by the hand of the master.

LESLIE ROWLEY: I have to thank Mr. Laurie Sutton and your goodself for providing material for the passing of a damp and grey Sunday afternoon investigating the former's contention that 'Magnet' No. 1659 contained a story that was not written by the late Mr. Charles Hamilton.

My vocation makes me rather a wanderer on the face of the earth and the amount of effects I can carry with me is therefore limited. For this reason my library of 'Magnets' is restricted to the stories that I fondly believe to have been the work of

the originator of Greyfriars; there is no room in my nest of Hamiltoniana for a 'cuckoo' - and the slightest hint that I am harbouring a such unwanted guest makes me sit up, take action and if necessary cast the intruder out!

Unlike Mr. Sutton I do not read the stories for study but solely for pleasure; this afternoon, however, I bestirred myself to follow Mr. Sutton's analysis of "Billy Bunter's Bargain" as I re-read the story.

This was an interesting way of passing the time; just that and nothing more for I came to the conclusion that the story was genuine. The passages to which this well written article drew attention rather confirmed than otherwise that my conclusion was the right one.

Mr. Sutton may well ask how a lazy reader like myself can qualify such a conclusion. Well, I also listen to music - again not for study but for enjoyment - and I am sure that if some well-loved composition contained over thirty faults in its interpretation, then I would notice some if not all of them. I can discover no false notes in "Billy Bunter's Bargain." It is true that I seem to have read a somewhat similar story, but then numerous Hamilton stories ring a similar bell in the dim recesses of the memory. One gets the same sort of thing in a Rossini overture or a Mozart concertol. But both the story and the piece are nonetheless the work of the master.

So, Mr. Editor, I must agree with what you say in "Let's Be Controversial and echo an emphatic "No, Sir!"

(There will be a further selection of views on this topic next month.)

-----  
GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 8 (New Series)

There was to be tea in Study No. 1. The Colonel was an old Greyfriars man, and had not forgotten Greyfriars manners and customs. He liked tea in the study when he came to see his hopeful nephew. Long, long years ago that very study had been Jim Wharton's, in the days when the grizzled old colonel had been a chubby schoolboy.

Storm and stress and wars in many lands had left their mark on Jim Wharton since those old days, but in many ways he was still, at heart, Jim Wharton of the Remove. His bronzed face was always bright when he sat down to the table in Study No. 1, to join in a "study brew." That was the time to put to him their plan, the chums of the Remove had agreed; and they were anxious to get to business. So their eyes wandered constantly to the form-room clock while last lesson proceeded, and Mr. Quelch imparted valuable information regarding the history of Rome.

"The grandeur that was Rome" did not loom very large in their thoughts just then; the twelve Caesars were indeed very small beer, and the invasions of the Goth, the Vandal, and the drawfish Hun left them quite uninterested. However, Mr. Quelch rang off at last, so to speak, and the Remove were dismissed, much to their relief.

URGENTLY WANTED: Gen No. 799. Can anyone help.

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

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

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

# News from the Clubs

## LONDON

There was an excellent attendance at the Ashford, Middlesex meeting to enjoy not only a very happy and jolly time but also the wonderful hospitality of Ben and Mrs. Litvak. The president of the club, John Wernham, was present, he making the long journey from Maidstone.

Excellent reports were given by the two librarians, Roger Jenkins and Bob Blythe, of the past month's borrowing. Len Packman spoke of the good progress made by the compilers of the Sexton Blake catalogue. A discussion about the possibility of a Frank Richards Companion ended with a unanimous decision that the task was too great to be proceeded with.

It was decided to have the outing and meeting at Broadstairs with a short visit to view Frank Richards' old study at Kingsgate. Laurie Sutton was quizzed by Brian Doyle and acquitted himself very well. These solo quizzes are very popular. Bob Blythe read "The Murder in the Muddy Marsh," an adventure of Trackett Grim; Laurie Sutton read a chapter from one of the Magnets of the South Sea series; and Don Webster read a chapter from the last Magnet, No. 1683, "The Shadow of the Sack." These three readings were greatly enjoyed by all.

We enjoyed the excellent repast that the host and hostess provided and as hitherto stated fine weather and a good programme all went together to make a happy meeting. Next meeting at Excelsior House, Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey, on Sunday, June 21st. Kindly let the host, Eric Payne, know either by letter or phone Elmbridge 3357 if intending to attend.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

- - - - -

## MIDLAND

### Meeting held April 28th, '64:

With apologies being sent in by Jack Bellfield, Ted Davey and George Chatham attendance was down to ten members. As no definite programme had been scheduled, the late start did not cause any inconvenience. The proposed re-union with our friends of the Northern Club was discussed. All present were very interested though the date suggested by Northern was not suitable to several members, the Sunday preceding that, June 21st, was more favoured and the Secretary was asked to put that forward to his opposite number.

Previous meetings were discussed and it was felt that this proposed re-union could be one of the best yet. Especially as there was not one held last year. As before stated, there were no fixed items, but certain subjects were discussed, most of them introduced by the production of the Collectors item and Anniversary Number brought along by Tom Porter. The first was the ever popular 'classic' by Martin Clifford, "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays." This never fails to create interest and no little envy. It was a very good copy and had taken Tom some trouble - and time - to acquire such a treasure. "BFL No. 367" - one of the very best of all Hamilton's yarns. The Anniversary Number was Gem No. 481 - 47 years old. The title was "Trimbles Triumph." Incidentally this was not a loose copy but part of a wonderful mint bound volume of Gems. After refreshments, there was a reading from Magnet No. 1635 "The Perfect Alibi" one of the Bertie

Vernon Series, 2nd story, Chapter 19. Very funny and showing Bunter at his funniest. Well read by Tom Porter. The Library Raffle was won by Ray Bennet, two very fine condition BFL.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

-----  
NORTHERN

Saturday, 9th May, 1964.

Library business commenced at 6 p.m. this month, and Chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened the meeting proper at 6.30., in accordance with our new policy of making an earlier start. There was an excellent attendance, although some members were caught napping and arrived late - including the Secretary. Two or three regulars were unavoidably absent, including Jack Wood, so Elsie Taylor was soon called upon in her new capacity. A very welcome visitor was Tom Porter of the Midland Club.

The most interesting item of correspondence this month was a letter from P.G. Wodehouse, who has presented us with a book of his complete short stories - a massive volume which has just been published in America. Next month we are having a special Wodehouse programme, and the book is to be offered as a prize.

The suggested date for our meeting with the Midland Club at Chesterfield has been brought forward a week - 21st June. Arrangements are in hand, and we hope for an attendance of from 20 to 24 members.

The Hamilton character this month was the great Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's, Ron Hodgson's choice, which was unavoidably held over last month. Ron read extracts from articles which appraised Gussy's worth as a stalwart of the St. Jim's saga, and a Holiday Annual story which brought out all his qualities of breeding, pride in dress, obstinacy, and kindness.

Next we had a novel item; an 'Elimination' Quiz by Molly Allison. This was based on the six letters S I L V E R, and we had to find six answers beginning with each letter - a junior, a senior, an adult, a Hamilton tag, a title, and a place - thirty-six answers in all, and quite a difficult test, especially as the only answers counted in the score were those which nobody else had, any duplicated by someone else being eliminated. The winner was Geoffrey Wilde with a score of 18, Gerry Allison being next with 16, and Tom Porter third with 14.

As the final item Gerry Allison read out Frank Hancock's quiz of 24 questions from the May 'C.D.' and 23 of these were answered correctly, the exception being No. 22. As far as one could judge, Geoff. had 7 answers, and Gerry, Elsie and Tom Porter 3 each, although exact scoring was difficult as in some cases several members called out the answer simultaneously.

Next meeting, Saturday, 13th June.

F. HANCOCK - Sec.

-----  
MERSEYSIDE

Meeting, Sunday May 10th:

Recent purchases of Nelson Lees, plus some books sent to us as our share of the proceeds from the sale of the Charles Hamilton Souvenirs, has helped to augment our library which is now beginning to show signs of returning to full health.

During a discussion it was suggested that copies of some of the other papers - Union Jacks, Boys Friends, Boys Realms, Champions, Thrillers, as well as some comics, might well be added, and it was agreed to insert an advertisement in the C.D. for that purpose. If anybody has any of these papers to dispose of at reasonable prices we would be interested.

We received a letter from John Farrell who has been in hospital and is now convalescing. We all hope that he will soon be fit again and able to attend the next meeting.

Other letters received were from David Hobbs who, we are pleased to say, has received the tape, and Frank Case and Mr. Lister of Blackpool.

This month's quiz was presented by Walter Prichard. It proved a real teaser and

was won by Bill Galley. Norman then asked us to write about 50 words on the series or story which had impressed us the most.

The Water Lily series appeared to be the most popular and on a vote Pat Laffey and Bill Galley shared first place for the best contributions.

Please note that the next meeting is on SUNDAY, 7th JUNE - NOT as usual the second Sunday in the month.

-----  
BILL WINDSOR

AUSTRALIA

A pleasant Autumn nip in the air made the book-lined club rooms at the Book Bargain Bazaar even more inviting than usual when members gathered for the May meeting on Thursday, 14th.

We were happy to welcome back Don Harkness who had been absent from recent meetings. Don gave us an interesting beginning to the programme by passing around a batch of photographs taken on a further visit to Bill Hall of Liverpool. His extensive collection was extremely well displayed and Don's photographic skill showed them up to great advantage.

Letters from Arthur Holland of Wellington, N.S.W. were read by the secretary....it's always good to hear Arthur's news and views for he is one of the club's most enthusiastic members with a wealth of knowledge to share. Arthur had sent down four copies of an amateur magazine "The Southern Flame" and these were perused with interest and compared with the C.D., with the latter winning more laurels for its really professional presentation. However, "The Southern Flame," now no longer in existence had had contributors such as Royce Clarke and Darcy Niland now, of course, both well known professional writers, as well as our own Arthur Holland to whom we send thanks for this glimpse into the world of amateur magazines.

News from New Zealand came from Jim Cook, who is settling into his new homeland with his collection of N. Lees. Jack Murtagh dropped us a line from N.Z. expressing interest in the report sent us by Bill Lofts on the E. S. Brookes interview.

From Harry Broster came the current Newsletter with an item of particular interest ....one of the prizes given at a recent meeting of the Midland club was a copy of the Australian "Silver Jacket." Several years ago it was our pleasure to welcome to our club the publisher of this enterprising little mag. Mr. Gorfain, so we were pleased indeed to hear that it had been selected as a suitable prize by our Midland friends.

After a lengthy absence from our circle of correspondents it was good to welcome back Frank Unwin from Liverpool.

A copy of S.P.C. No. 87 plus a letter from Bill Gander provided scope for an interesting discussion and this was followed by letters from Bill Hubbard of Kenya, Tom Dobson of Victoria and Harry Curtis of Queensland.

Final item of the agenda was discussed over a welcome cup of coffee - the date and place of the future meetings are to be changed and it is hoped that this can be decided at an early date so that the June meeting will not be unduly delayed and that the wishes of all members can be considered.

B. PATE - Secretary.

-----  
ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S PUZZLE

1. North;
2. Dene (Clifton);
3. Gunn;
4. Redfern;
5. (a) Church (b) Temple;
6. Brown;
7. Cuttle (Josph);
8. Cardew (card, e.w.);
9. Cutts;
10. Field;
11. Hop Hi;
12. Gosling;
13. Cherry;
14. Rookwood;
15. Miss Primrose;
16. Fatty Arbuckle (appeared in Film Fun or Kinema Comic);
17. Laurel & Hardy (appeared in Film Fun or Kinema Comic);
18. Snoop;
19. Marsh (St. Jim's page);
20. Manners;
21. Cook;
22. Leggett;
23. Knox;
24. Mack.

+  
+ + + + + + + + +  
+

# The POSTMAN CALLED

INTERESTING ITEMS FROM THE  
EDITOR'S LETTER-BAG

E. THOMSON (Edinburgh): The enlarged Spring Number of C.D. was splendid. One of the finest yet.

W. K. MAGEE (Wirral): Like most Magnet and Gem readers I also read the Union Jack, and in 1932 I won a prize of 10/6 in the Bardellism competition. About the same time I had a reply from E. S. Brooks in the Between Ourselves Column in the Nelson Lee.

JOHN GEAL (Kingston): I am enjoying the Gems of Hamiltonia excerpts very much, and it is amazing how familiar those are that I have read in the distant past. They must have made an impression at the time.

ALVIN FICK (New York): Congratulations on a notable achievement in the enlarged Spring number of C.D. I have enjoyed the special issue immensely, not the least reason for this being the delightful Slade story "Mr. Buddle Laughs Last." I rather think the C.D. readers had the last and perhaps the best laugh. Also I wish to commend the fine editorial message in "Unchanging World." Who could ask for a better credo for and justification of our little world of boyhood literature?

JACK COOK (Newcastle-on-Tyne): I have only one complaint. Could it not have been "Willy Handforth's Diary" or "Wally D'Arcy's Diary"? This Danny is a complete stranger. One's efforts should be devoted entirely to the characters of yester year, and not to one's own creations. Poor old Rockwood gets very little mention. Why not an occasional "Roving Around Rockwood" or something similar?

JOHNNIE LYNE (Finchley): I was sorry to hear about the sad fate of Mr. Tail. My two hamsters have just died too, so I know exactly how you must feel. But cheer up. Mr. Tail won't catch pneumonia in Heaven.

CHARLES DAWKINS (Nottingham): The Wolk of Kabul, with his Pathan companion Chung, did appear in the Wizard of the 30's. He was one of the many recurring characters of the period. Others whose names come readily to mind are Thick-Ear Donovan, the Red Macgregor, and Lionheart Logan. Other popular characters in the Thomson papers then were Catamount Jack, Morgyn the Mighty, Strang the Terrible, and Blue Dragon Pike.

TOM LANGLEY (Birmingham): The Police Gazette (Famous Crimes) was published in 104 parts about 1901-3. I have the two sets bound in two heavy volumes. Barry Ono described it as the "bloodiest of the bloods." It is!

GEORGE McROBERTS (Belfast): The magazine continues to improve. The standard is excellent. I look forward to each issue with the same eagerness as I looked forward to the old Magnet or Gem. Many thanks for such pleasant and nostalgic reading.

C. LESLIE FARROW (Boston): Does anyone remember Sports Pictorial, a paper after the style of the Daily Mirror? I think the first issue was in Boat Race Week, March 1922. I have a complete set of Railway Engines in their own colours, given with the Penny Popular in 1922. I wonder how many sets of these are still in existence. Not many, I

wager!

GEORGE SELLARS (Sheffield): The cover of Magnet No. 147 (Schoolboy Traitor) had nothing at all to do with the story. Someone slipped up badly there. I can only remember one story with Dutton in the lead - "Tom Dutton's Triumph." Some people have a poor sense of humour when reading about Dutton's adventures.

MAURICE KUTNER (Clapton): Thanks for the excellent reproduction of the Union Jack on the May issue; the pink paper was most appropriate. And a further helping of thanks for the fine reproduction of the 1919 Penny Popular. I never see that cover of Billy Bunter's Postal Order without a feeling of pleasure and nostalgia, a sweet sadness, in fact, and the discussions (I almost wrote "arguments") about sub-writers, who wrote what, and disclosures (and assumptions) concerning various authors which sometimes border on the finicky, fade into insignificance. Round about the year 1919 I read with little propensity for criticism, and enjoyed my reading all the better for it.

WALTER FLEMING (Chingford): I was interested in O. W. Wadham's article on Wonder Library. I recently received a copy of No. 13 "The Grand Adventure." I had never heard of this library before and found the story quite good. It is about a couple of convicts, wrongly convicted (amazing how many innocent men were imprisoned in the early part of this century) who escaped from prison and after many adventures finally proved their innocence. One of them turns out to be a real live lord - and marries a top-line stage star. It was well-written, and I came to the conclusion that it must have been reprinted from some of the earlier comics. One curious fact. Mr. Wadham says there were only 14 issues, but on the back cover of No. 13 a further two issues are advertised, Nos. 15 and 16. I wonder what happened to these.

(We wonder whether "The Grand Adventure" could possibly be the story "Lonesome" to which Danny referred in his diary in 1914. -ED.)

## R A F F L E S

Last month, in our Editorial, we referred to the famous character RAFFLES. Large numbers of readers have communicated with us on the subject, and two, in particular, have given us information which we feel worth printing for the enjoyment of all.

BRIAN DOYLE writes: The Raffles short stories originally appeared each month in "Cassell's Magazine," starting in 1898, when the magazine was edited by Max Pemberton. Advertisements for the stories compared them with those about Sherlock Holmes. The first one was, as you say, "The Ides of March." In Simon Nowell-Smith's fascinating history "The House of Cassell" (1958), the author states: "Hornung was faithful to the Belle Sauvage (Cassell's) through some years of obscurity until another publisher offered him a better price for his first collection of Raffles stories - collected from 'Cassell's Magazine' too - than Cassell's were prepared to pay."

This first collection, consisting of 16 stories, was published under the title "The Amateur Cracksmen" in 1899. Later, when Raffles was a household name, the title changed to "Raffles, the Amateur Cracksmen." In 1909 came a novel centring around Raffles and Bunny, "Mr. Justice Raffles," and this was preceded, in 1905, by "A Thief in the Night," a second collection of Raffles short stories (10 of them this time).

So it would appear that Hornung wrote a total of 26 short stories plus 1 novel about Raffles - all told in the first person by his friend Bunny. I would assume that this was the grand total as, because of the character's great popularity, any remaining stories appearing in "Cassell's Magazine" which had not been published in book-form, would have been fairly quickly, to 'cash in' on this popularity. (Cont'd page 32...)

# Recapturing the magic of Tom Merry, Billy Bunter and Sexton Blake

COLLECTOR OF OLD BOYS' BOOKS



Mr. C. C. Day, of Upwood Lodge, West Morton, with some of his collection of old boys' books and papers. The volume of the "Boy's Own Paper" is more than 80 years old.

C. D. reader Charles Day was approached by the Keighley Times for an article on the old periodicals. He came up trumps, and the newspaper gave the article the setting it so well deserved.

RAFFLES (cont'd from page 30..)

Further evidence is the "Raffles Omnibus" published by Newnes, which only contains the 26 stories and 1 novel already mentioned.

Hornung was, of course, A. Conan Doyle's brother-in-law. Doyle's early novel "The Doings of Raffles Haw" (1892) - and generally accepted to be the least good of his fictional work - might well have provided Hornung with the name of his gentleman-cracksman...

Turning to Barry Perowme: it was in the pages of the "Thriller," in January, 1933, that the first of the 'new adventures' of Raffles appeared, the first story being entitled simply "Raffles!" There were 12 further stories in the Thriller, all illustrated by Ernest Hubbard (later to gain fame for his 'Jane' strip in the "Daily Mirror"). Later, Perowme wrote four stories about Raffles and Sexton Blake. They were: SEL. (2nd series) 577. "Raffles versus Sexton Blake," SEL.601, "Raffles' Crime in Gibraltar," SEL.669, "The A.R.P. Mystery," and "Scoutlers' Cache" in "Sexton Blake Annual" (1st issues). Perowme also wrote several books about Raffles, published (appropriately enough) by Cassell's in the '30's. Titles included: "Raffles Under Sentence," "She Married Raffles," "Raffles in Pursuit" and "Raffles After Dark." Barry Perowme's real name, by the way, was Philip Atkey.

A series of radio plays about Raffles, adapted from the original book of short stories, was broadcast by the BBC in 1947, with the title-role being played by actor Frank Allenby.

LEONARD M. ALLEN writes: Regarding films the first appears to have been made in 1905 by an American company, Vitagraph, and featured J. Barney Sherry in the title role. John Barrymore was another Raffles, made by another American company in 1917, this, I think, would be an adaptation of the stage play as the grandfather clock exit was used. A third silent film turned up in 1927, again from the U.S.A. - Universal - with House Peters in the title role. I cannot remember seeing this but the Barrymore strikes a faint chord. Possibly there were also some English efforts during this period. Raffles, of course, was a must for the early talkies and I can remember quite clearly Ronald Colman as the Cracksman with Kay Francis and Fred Kerr. This would be around 1930, followed ten years later by a United Artists film with David Niven and Olivia De Havilland.

I have a copy of a Play Pictorial which includes some excellent photographs of the stage production of Raffles revived at Wyndham's Theatre on Dec. 23rd, 1914. The lead was taken by Gerald Du Maurier and cast included Kyrle Bellew, Hilda Moore and Murray Carrington. Apparently the play was originally produced at the Comedy Theatre on May 12th, 1906. This too included the clock escape route but, like yourself, I haven't found any mention of it in the stories. I suppose it was introduced primarily as a stage effect. The authors of the play were Hornung and Eugene Prestrey.

Hornung, I believe, wrote several other stories but I only remember reading one - The Camera Fiend, which I thought very poor stuff. I do remember a number of stories with Raffles as the centre figure published in The Thriller, possibly these were written by Barry Perowme.

Since writing I have had another recollection - of a character named Stingaree in a book of short stories which may have been written by Hornung. The setting was South Africa and Stingaree was a type of bushranger Raffles complete with monocle. A film was made around 1915 as a serial and I can remember seeing one or two episodes. Possibly I shall recall them quite clearly in a few years as the older one becomes childhood memories become sharper, it is what happened yesterday that cannot be recalled.

DEATH OF MRS. IRENE HARRIS

We regret to learn of the sudden death of Mrs. Irene Harris, wife of Arthur Harris who is famed as an expert on the early comic papers. Collectors' Digest expresses its deepest sympathy to Mr. Harris in his great loss.