

# COLLECTORS'

No. 226 Vol. 19

October 1965.

# DIGEST

"The Grammar School's Great Jape!"

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"I think this picture of mine ought to be hung in the Royal Academy," said Gordon Tadcote, with a fazed glance at his picture. "It is my ambition to be hung in the Academy. Don't you think I ought to be hung?" The three juniors grinned and nodded their heads.

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# Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 19

No. 226

OCTOBER 1965

Price 2s. Od.

WRITE TO ME ABOUT IT.



## SAME STORY:

Reports continue to flow in from readers who would buy the Sexton Blake Library if it were possible to do so.

My personal experiences

this month are illuminating. I had a dozen copies on order from my newsagent, who, incidentally, sells hundreds of general paperbacks. My S.B.L.'s never came in, though the newsagent fought tooth and nail to get them. On September 20th, we rang up the wholesalers, Messrs. W. H. Smith & Son of Bridge House, Vauxhall. The first excuse made was that the S.B.L. had not been published this month. Yet my newsagent had before him a number of copies which I had bought in Bentall's of Kingston. The next excuse was that Smith's wholesale department had received none this month. So, presumably, every newsagent in the land who uses Smith's wholesale department is without any S.B.L.'s this month.

I rang up Mr. Howard Baker who has tried hard to improve matters. His reply was: "There is really nothing more we can do about it."

Walter Webb writes me: "Being selective will not help the S.B.L., which is still striving for stability." Which is really cute. It doesn't matter whether you are selective or not when you can't buy the S.B.L. for love or money. The publishers clearly are quite satisfied with casual sales. For regular supporters they could not care less.

## THE LATE MR. J. S. BUTCHER:

In recent months we have had a great many letters concerning

Mr. J. S. Butcher, the author of "Prospectus." We can only say that, apart from what has appeared in the press, we know nothing of Mr. Butcher. It is indeed strange that during the nineteen years that C.D. has been linking the enthusiasts, we should never have come upon the name of the man whose book is now world famous. Even Bill Lofts, our most keen and penetrating of research workers, had never heard of Mr. Butcher until "Prospectus" came over the horizon.

Certain biographical details (possibly supplied by the publishers) have featured in some of the press items, but beyond those we are still in the dark.

Our own critic last month described "Prospectus" as a labour of love, and some sections of the press have referred to Mr. Butcher's life-long study of the Hamilton story. But, in fact, there is very little sign of original thought in the book. A great deal of the material stems from the items of that type which featured in the early Holiday Annuals and in the still earlier Who's Whos - items which never came from Charles Hamilton at all. For me, there is a strangely old-fashioned tang about "Prospectus," and I fancy that Mr. Butcher may have known his Magnet of the period 1917 - 1925, but less of the Magnet of the late twenties and the thirties.

One feels uncomfortable at being critical of a book posthumously published, but the sad feeling of a missed chance must be with most of us.

#### THE ANNUAL:

Roger Jenkins kicks off in this year's Annual with one of the best articles he has ever written: "Twin Series." Gerry Allison keeps the game going with a delicious item on the old competitions. Bill Lofts, far away from his usual métier, contributes a rib-tickling tale about how he once tried to write a story. Maurice Kutner is in top form with a superb article on "Popper's Island." Otto Maurer writes on "Roland Quiz" for the delight of all who enjoy a finely-written article. Derek Adley gives fascinating details of the Girls' Friend Library. S. Gordon Swan chats about the various female characters who have crossed the path of Sexton Blake. Those two popular Nelson Lee experts, R. J. Godsave and Charles Churchill, each contribute tip-top articles on the St. Frank's tales. Derek Smith brings back cricket memories from the days of our boyhood. Norman Wright spotlights "Sherlock Holmes." World-famous William is not forgotten, and William fans will be happy with "Gems of Richmal Crompton." And that's by no means the lot. Perhaps, in view of the fact that so many readers keep demanding a return of Mr. Buddle and Slade, I should



answered "The Boys' Friend is placed before 850,000 persons every week." I think that was a bit ambiggerous. But the next week the paper was headed "The paper with a million readers." Doug says it allows for everyone in a family of thirty reading it in turn.

There has been a bad accident in Birmingham. A tram going down Ashton Hill overturned. It was packed with people and one was killed and 36 injured.

The Gem has been pretty good this month. "A Soldier of the King" was the first story, and the editor said that though a lot of readers complained about "too much Talbot," he was sure everyone would like this tale. It was very good. John Rivers, the Professor, who had joined the army under a false name and won the D.C.M., now came on leave and wanted to see his daughter, Marie. But Croke put the police on to him. In the end the Professor escaped again into the great mass of khaki. A tip-top tale, even though it features cricket in October.

"When Duty Calls" told of Blake's 20-year old cousin who would not join the army because khaki did not suit his complexion. I did not care much for this one, though it was all right in parts.

"Grundy's Great Game" was fairly good, though I don't like Grundy. He advertised that he offered his services to any football team who would like him to play for them. It was very funny in places.

In "Well, Played, Julian" a magazine offered a prize for an amusing photograph. Levison sent in a picture of Mr. Selby falling in a ditch, but he sent it in Manners' name. At least, the picture was found in Manners' camera, and Manners was blamed. However, Julian managed to get Manners cleared - and Julian won the prize.

Final tale was "The Call of the Cinema" in which Monty Lowther became a pianist in a cinema, owing to his meeting up again with his old friend, Mr. Horatio Curll.

George Edwardes, manager of the Gaiety Theatre for 30 years, and producer of many of its famous musical comedies, has died this month.

In the middle of the month, there was the biggest zeppelin raid ever on London. A zepp passed near our town, and we thought we could hear the engines. 59 people were killed, and 114 injured.

The Magnet has been very odd during October. For one thing, we have been told for some time that Tom Merry's Weekly was coming out as a 4d weekly paper. Now, at the end of the month, it turns out that it is to be the Greyfriars Herald. Also, the editor is offering prizes for short stories and contributions to the Greyfriars Herald. How can it be a school magazine if Magnet readers write it? But the oddest thing of all is that the editor is offering a prize of £15 for a 30,000-word story of Harry Wharton & Co, and everybody who sends in an attempt will receive a suitable prize.

The Magnet has been altogether rather off-standard this month. The first story "Champion of the Oppressed" showed Coker standing up for the Remove against the bullying Loder. It was pretty good.

I disliked the next tale "The Sunday Crusaders" in which Skinner, Bolsover, Snoop, Bunter, and the like, set themselves up as the Pagans, who were anti-Christian. Skinner and Bolsover try to spoil a church service. They fall from the rafters. Bolsover manages to catch a beam and Skinner manages to catch hold of Bolsover's legs. Then Skinner lets go. Later on Bolsover asks the Head: "Oh, sir, will he be spared?" Awful!

I also disliked "Bunter's Anti-Tuck Campaign." Bunter persuaded Harry Wharton & Co that it was unpatriotic to eat good meals in war-time, so they all made do with sandwiches. Then they find that Bunter has been stealing from the tuckshop. A nasty, silly tale.

"The Midnight Marauders" was much better and quite exciting. Sir Hilton Popper disappears, and Harry Wharton finds out that German spies are getting into a secret cell by way of a hollow tree on the island in the Sark. In the month's last story "Straight as a Die," Paul Sydney, a new boy, is the ward of Ferrers Locke. Sydney has been a thief in the past. Now Snaith of the Shell steals, and managed to get Sydney blamed,

until Ferrers Locke himself takes a hand. Quite good, this one.

Doug had the second issue of the Sexton Blake Library. It is called "Illgotten Gains." Two criminals, Count Carlac and Professor Kew are in prison, and they find out a grim secret from another prisoner whom they murder. They do a very exciting break out of gaol.

The King has been hurt while inspecting the troops in France. A horse reared and came down on the King's leg.

And I have just heard that the famous cricketer, W. G. Grace, is dead. I never saw him, of course, but I suppose cricket won't seem quite the same now Grace is gone.

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R E V I E W

Martin Thomas  
(Mayflower 3/6)

SUCH MEN ARE DANGEROUS

The finding of the murdered body of a bunny girl in a burrow in the shade of the Mendips is the commencement of a strenuous time for Pedro. Opening the innings, he does all the scoring, establishing the when and who, leaving Blake, playing a passive role at the other end, to discover the why and wherefore of the crime. From this point it's detective work in the good old Baker Street tradition. From Berkeley Square the services of Marion Lang are requisitioned. It's off with the office trimmings and on with the scanty bunny costume, and Blake's pretty receptionist takes up her duties at the Gayton Park County Club.

What goes on in the club is above reproach. What goes on in the three underground caves on which it has been built is not, for it is here that a crazed physiologist carries out experiments on methods by which to alter the normal chemical routine of the body by genetic modification in order to adapt it to the atmospheric conditions of other planets, and with an utter disregard of the sufferings borne by his victims.

What I particularly liked about this novel was the minute attention paid to detail. Every place to which Blake travelled in the Bentley in the course of investigation - whether of major or minor importance - is named, including the various motorways. In my reading, this adds tremendously to the interest of the story, for there is nothing quite so fascinating as coming suddenly on a place which you had visited at one time, or have happy holiday memories of. Add to this the fact that the author has that little extra ability which makes his novels worth every penny of the forty-two his publishers ask for them, and the sum total is an S.B.L. of outstanding quality.

This has everything - excitement, suspense, horror, glamour, and even a little humour now and then. Definitely not to be missed.

Walter Webb.

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22

THE PERIL EXPERT

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By S. Gordon Swan

Even as a mere schoolboy, reading Sexton Blake stories half a century ago, I thought Murray Graydon somewhat old-fashioned in style. Moreover, his conception of Blake did not measure up to the masterful figure presented by Jack Lewis, G. H. Teed, Andrew Murray and others.

But I changed my opinion when I read "In Triple Disguise" (S.B.L. First Series No. 20). Here his writing seemed to reach a higher level; his Blake achieved a greater stature, and the background of Berlin carried an air of authenticity.

Reading many of his stories years later - a number of them new to me - it appears indisputable that he was an exceedingly good writer, despite his mannerisms and peculiarities. His use of the word 'bade' is too well known to need comment; his characters also had a habit of breaking off a sentence unfinished, particularly at the end of a chapter.

He had a gift of narrative and his descriptive powers were considerable. Here is an example of the latter, extracted from "In Wildest Africa," (B.F.L. No. 120).

"They had reached the borders of the Blue Swamp, without a doubt. There it lay close beyond them, under the purpling sky, a scene painted in such fantastic garish colouring that it was difficult to believe that it was a reality; a vast maze of brake and copse, of quivering bog and sward, of slimy pools and rank vegetation, of poisonous flowers and rotting logs, and dead skeletons of trees, all steeped in a luminous, sickly, yellowish-blue tint...."

This is not a Sexton Blake story, but it introduces an old friend of the detective, Matthew Quin, the wild beast hunter, and also Theodore Roosevelt and his son Kermit. The American ex-president was a popular figure at this time with big game hunting expeditions, for he appeared in other stories by different authors.

Primarily Murray Graydon must be regarded as an adventure story writer. His detective stories are not outstanding, although readable, and such mysteries as they concern are not difficult to fathom. Probably his best efforts in this field were:

"The Mystery of the Abandoned Cottage" (SBL. 1st Series No. 357)

"The Mystery of Monte Carlo." (S.B.L. 2nd Series No. 130)

"The Secret of the Flames." (S.B.L. 2nd Series No. 205)

to name a few.

It was when he took Blake and Tinker abroad on espionage or other assignments that he showed to best advantage. His knowledge of foreign cities and countries was extensive and amazing; Paris, Berlin, Rome, Vienna, St. Petersburg, - he seemed to know them all, streets and restaurants and landmarks. This same intimate knowledge is evident in his stories of England and Scotland as well; his descriptions of lonely parts of Devonshire and Dorset, Norfolk and the Highlands were remarkable and fascinating, bringing their remote beauty before the reader's eyes in vivid detail.

He might be classed as a 'peril expert.' Having extracted his heroes from a succession of dangers - murderous savages, rushing torrents, tropical storms and erupting volcanoes - after which they might expect a little relief from tension, some new menace was bound to arise. Indeed, one of his favourite sentences was: "The peril was not yet over."

A most prolific author, he turned out an astonishing number of yarns in addition to his considerable output of Blake adventures. He wrote historical tales, military tales, Buffalo Bill tales, stories of the French Revolution, the Boxer rebellion, the slave trade and the Hudson Bay Company. He even wrote about the Black Hand, the uprising of the Riffs and the Moplah Rebellion. He was responsible for many of the topical stories in the pink Union Jack and for stories of a war correspondent, Dick Wallace, in 'Pluck.'

Murray Graydon created a number of characters who appeared from time to time in the Blake saga and elsewhere. Inspired no doubt by Michael Storm's Plummer, he introduced a master-criminal in Laban Creed. In the beginning this crook had a colourful daughter, Torfrida, of whose subsequent fate I remain in ignorance, as she never appeared in the later stories. Then, of course, there was the notorious Basil Wicketshaw, who made his debut in "Their Great Adventure" (S.B.L. 1st Series No. 17). In this story his real name was given as Count Ivor Zuross, a Roumanian. (Rather contradictorily, in a later story, it was implied that Wicketshaw belonged to a noble British family.)

Charles Priest was another master-crook the origin of whose name is not far to seek. This character also appeared in a Derek Clyde story, while Laban Creed was brought into conflict with Will Sparing in the pages of 'Pluck.' Wicketshaw and Creed combined forces in one book, "Lost in Cambodia," (S.B.L. 1st Series No. 257). Wicketshaw's

accomplices, Gabriel Penterleith (sometimes Penterleigh) and Rupert Vole, were never far from their chief, and sometimes the ubiquitous Matthew Quin came into contact with them, as did that intrepid Secret Service man, Cavendish Doyle.

Murray Graydon also wrote about other detectives - Abel Link, Gordon Fox, Derek Clyde and Nelson Lee. The first two, I believe, were his own creations. But his own favourite character appears to have been Matthew Quin, for he can be encountered in the Boys' Champion, the Boys' Friend Library, the Boys' Realm, the Penny Pictorial, the Union Jack, the Sexton Blake Library and probably other periodicals as well.

This author's girls are apt to be dismissed as Victorian types who swooned at the slightest provocation. But this is not the case; while some undoubtedly fitted into this category, others were surprisingly sophisticated and enterprising. There was Roma Lorrain, the daring French spy who teamed up with Blake in "In Triple Disguise" (a forerunner of Mlle. Julie?); there was Bertha Wolff, a similar type but of German origin, who figured in "The Case of the Four Barons" (S.B.L. 1st Series No. 285); and Lossie Cameron, a tough Scottish girl who threw Tinker about with the facility of Honor Blackman in T.V.'s "Avengers." (See "The White Death S.B.L. 2nd Series No. 34). And one must not forget Flora Dalkeith, of "Rogues of the Desert" (S.B.L. No. 105) who eloped with a young emir in Constantinople and was indirectly responsible for the wholesale slaughter of a host of desert tribesmen before she was returned to civilisation. And there were sundry other minor heroines of different nationalities who were far from shy and retiring.

Early stories of Matthew Quin were published in a paper called 'The Boys' Champion' in 1902. Another early manifestation of Murray Graydon is to be found in a short story at the back of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d 'Marvel' No. 518. The title is "Unmasked" and it deals with a mystery solved by Abel Link, detective. The date is hard to decipher, but appears to be October, 1902.

In retrospect, Murray Graydon's work presents an odd mixture of experience and naivete, but there is no question of his skill as a narrator.

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THE BROWN STUDY

One or two items from September's BLAKIANA in the Digest have set me thinking. They come mainly from Mr. W. O. G. Lofts's tribute to the late John Hunter. Bill tells us frankly how, with less than

his usual tact, he wrote to sympathise with Mr. Hunter because Blakiana had called Mr. Hunter a "washout." Not being a C.D. reader, Mr. Hunter had known nothing about it previously. Where ignorance is bliss, etc.

Mr. Lofts attributes the washout comment to one, Maurice Bond, who conducted Blakiana in the long, long ago. To be quite fair to the memory of Mr. Bond, let us say that the washout business did not originate with him or with Blakiana, though it could be that Mr. Bond used the same description in Blakiana later.

In the Letter Box of Collectors' Digest Number One, there was a quote from a letter written under the pen-name "Disgusted." The quote was: "Why should that washout John Hunter be allowed to disgrace the name of Sexton Blake?"

"Letter-Boxes" in Number Ones are always suspect, and this was no exception. The "quotes" were actually invented by the editor, Herbert Leckenby. His motives were good, merely to stir up some of his readers to write in defence of Mr. Hunter, thereby supplying material for the new magazine. And it would never occur to him that Mr. Hunter himself would ever learn of the piece of caustic criticism implied.

Mr. Lofts suggests that nothing so caustic could ever feature in Blakiana or the Digest now? Could it? Well, one thing is very definite. Under no circumstances are critical comments from fictitious readers ever used to stir up feeling these days in the Digest. We have too many letters from genuine readers for us ever to need to create counterfeit ones.

Would C.D. ever publish such a caustic comment from a genuine reader? Probably not, though we like readers to have their say within reason. And a reader who is unfair will always get a back-hander from someone else in the next issue or so. Readers have a strong sense of fair play, as every enterprising editor knows.

For instance, "The Mind Killers" was slammed a month or two back. This month a reader praises it. And that's how things work out.

Mr. Hunter explained how he came to invent a name - Edward Carter - for Tinker. Tinker needed a name to sign in an hotel register. All right, though J. Tinker or even Tinker Bell might seem to answer the same purpose.

Mr. Hunter went on to explain that the name Tinker brought to mind a barefooted, homeless waif. Did it? When you were reading of Tinker in some of the greatest tales between the wars, did you think of him as a barefooted waif? Did you pause to wonder what name he had on his passport or what name he signed in the hotel register?

Did you picture him driving Blake's Rolls Royce with bare feet? Did you imagine him sitting, white-faced, pinched, and hungry behind the wheel? You tell us.

Mr. Walter Webb explained why it was nice for Blake to find Paula Dane. It "transformed him from the gaunt, ascetic, and somewhat lonely figure of the austere years." Did your pre-Dane Blake ever strike you as lonely? Or is it just possible that you liked him to be busy tracking crooks rather than "growing younger" in the company of Miss Dane?

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#### GREAT NEWS FOR SEXTON BLAKE FANS

A great Blake "classic" is to be published in the Sexton Blake Library in December. Pierre Quiroule, perhaps the greatest of the pre-war Blake writers, is coming back, bringing in his wake those two great characters, Granite Grant and Mademoiselle Julie. The story will be "THE LIVING SHADOW." It will be published untrimmed and unspooled.

The plot of "The Living Shadow" deals with scientific camouflage, a theme which, oddly enough, is far more credible in 1965 than when the story was written. In a magnificent chapter half-way through the story, Blake finds himself alone with the Shadow, in an old gas-lit mansion on Blackheath. It is a brilliant piece of writing - thrilling, amusing, and desperately eerie. It is not a tale to be read late at night - but it is a "must" for all lovers of good fiction.

No writer ever depicted Blake, Tinker, and Pedro more delightfully than Pierre Quiroule, and he is a past-master in fascinating the reader as Blake goes through all the gamut of detection till he gets his man. You mustn't miss "The Living Shadow."

\* \* \* \* \*

#### JOHN HUNTER

Mr. W. O. G. Lofts asks us to state that in his haste to pay tribute to the late John Hunter, he inadvertently slipped up. Hunter wrote 2 Blakes under the Peter Meriton pen-name, and a total of 57 Sexton Blake tales.

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FOR SALE: 20 St. Frank's Schoolboys' Own Libraries - 5/6 each.  
50 Nelson Lees, Second New, 2/6 each; 50 Nelson Lees, First New, 3/6 each; Collectors Digests, various numbers 1950-1960, 2/- each.  
Postage extra. NORMAN PRAGNELL, 33 BRAE STREET, LIVERPOOL 7.

# NELSON LEE COLUMN

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S - By JIM COOK

When football or cricket, among other things, are not the chief topic of conversation in the Junior Common rooms, you can depend on it that highlights of previous holidays adventures overseas will be the subject under discussion. And it is remarkable how often I hear the juniors recall their China visit when Yung Ching was kidnapped and Lord Dorrimore, Nelson Lee and the boys of St. Frank's went to the rescue.

Since these adventures have been set down in detail I don't propose to recall any exciting incidents here, but each time I go to St. Frank's I promise myself that I will rout out Yung Ching and interview him for Collectors' Digest. And each time I miss him.

But with the help of Willy Handforth and Co. I managed to find him sitting in the School museum, reading.

Yung Ching was smiling all over his yellow face as he looked up at me. It is impossible to tell what goes on in his mind for he will smile when he is angry just as easily as when he is happy. But he agreed to let me interview him and we left the musty museum for Study R in the West House. Both Doyle and Scott, Ching's study mates, were out, so we enjoyed a place to ourselves.

Larry Scott, the boy who never tells a lie, told me some time ago that Chingy hadn't altered one little bit since Scott first met him, but Scott came to St. Frank's nearly a year later than Yung Ching and the latter's arrival at St. Frank's was to be sparked off with some amazing adventures later in the South Seas. But the strange thing is Yung Ching was kidnapped again some time later by his father's enemies with the resultant journey to China by Dorrie, Lee and the juniors.

Thus this one character was involved in two major experiences that were to go down in the history of St. Frank's as the most exciting and most adventurous of the many trips abroad the juniors enjoyed. China can always be relied upon to provide a sufficient quota of mystery, and in the China series when Fu-Chow made his second attempt to hold Chingy as a hostage and force his father, the Mandarin of Hu-Kiang, to give up his lands, the struggle between the Oriental and Western minds followed in true fashion. It appears the chronicler first gave the name Fu-Chow and later as Foo Chow with a degree of

doctor added but Chingy assures me it is the same Chinese millionaire who figures in both adventures. As we sat there in Study R talking about China and its millions Ching expressed a thought that has been with me ever since. He said there were many such men today in China as Fu-Chow, powerful and relentless in their effort to swell China's bursting populations into a complete all-world Chinese domination. As long as there were men like Lord Dorrimore and Nelson Lee to bar their progress such dreams would be futile, but there will come a time when such indomitable spirits would be overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers and the peril from the East would be a reality.

Strangely enough, Yung Ching was booked to go to Holtdene College in Kent when he first arrived in England but it was decided to send him to St. Frank's. It was a wise decision for Ching came to the finest College in England.

It may not be generally known that the Chinese always put their surnames first. Thus to Anglicise this Chinese schoolboy's name would be Ching Yung. So when the juniors refer to him as Chingy they are calling him by his second name, which is an honour very few boys receive.

Feeling in Oriental mood I next sought out the Japanese junior Sessue Yakama. He came to St. Frank's surrounded in mystery too but a long time before Yung Ching. As he gets hardly mentioned in the famous exploits of the St. Frank's crowd I really wondered whether he still remained at the school. However, I found him allright in Study 4 in the Modern House. He occupies this study alone and I rather think he prefers it this way. There is a slight similarity between Chingy and Yakama in that they are both smiling and inscrutable whatever their inner thoughts may be but there the similarity ends.

While Yakama hasn't that air of mystery about him in spite of an obvious display of intrigue in his smiling face Chingy is mysterious without attempting to be. Thus you can feel at ease in the presence of the Jap but Yung Ching tends to set you thinking of dark and puzzling depths. Although the arrival of Yung Ching at St. Frank's followed by a kidnapping of that junior Yakama's advent at the school was the threat of death which was ordered by The Circle of Terror whose agents were in the district. This Organisation was well-known to Lee and Nipper long before they sought refuge at St. Frank's and before even St. Frank's history was being written, so Lee was well aware of this dreaded terrorist Circle.

I sat there listening to Yakama for quite a long time for it was very interesting hearing about the old days at St. Frank's when

DeValerie chummed up with Yakama and Val was known then as The Rotter. But it seems so sad to me that such characters could hold the lime-light so powerfully when they first came to the school and then later fade out into obscurity that something should be done about it. Unwittingly I have unearthed two such characters now and in the meantime I will look into other fallen idols of St. Frank's.

I don't mean those who get mentioned from time to time in the chronicles but rather those juniors - and seniors - who seem to have been spirited away from the school. There aren't many though who came to St. Frank's in a blaze of publicity and are now living in obscurity. Most of them have something to say for themselves and get into print, but Yung Ching and Sessue Yakama were really left out in the cold and I find it very interesting to winkle out these once famous names and listen once again to their interesting arrival at the school.

Before I left Yung Ching he gave me a message for you; it is...

"Qing ti wo wenhou nide jiaren"

which is Chinese for "Give my regards to your family." So to those who have families please accept Yung Ching's greeting.

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MAGNETS: Over 100 between 1916-1930, 7/6d each. About 50, 1934-40, 3/6 - 5/- each. Also several complete series, including Lancaster, 90/-; Brander £3; Pop-Circus 27/6d; Cavandale Abbey Xmas, £2. Several Greyfriars S.O.Ls. NELSON LEES: 112 old series, 1923-26, 4/- each; 193 1st New Series, 1926-30, 3/6d. each; 24 2nd New Series, 3/- each. MONSTER LIBRARY: 17 issues, 15/- each.

WANTED: Many Magnets before 1932 - 7/6d. each offered, or equal exchange same period. 10/- each offered for 913, 757, 880, 881, 884, 886, 887, 923, 926, 927, 928, 975, 976, 977, 999, 1000, 1043, 1048, 1070, 1071, 1141.

(S.A.E.) Laurie Sutton, 112 Repton Road, Orpington, Kent

WANTED to complete London Club's "Nelson Lee" Library, O.S. 112-156, 166-186, 399-407, 448, 449, 455. In case it may have escaped your notice, the London Club's "Nelson Lee" Library, with over 750 books, is available to ALL READERS OF THE C.D. LIVING IN THE BRITISH ISLES.

Write to me for details:

Bob Blythe, 40, Ellesmere Road, Dollis Hill, London, N.W.10

# h a m i l t o n i a n a

"I SAY, YOU CHAPS - BUNTER'S HIT THE NATIONAL HEADLINES WITH A BANG! AND THEY SAY HE'S TURNING INTO SOMETHING CALLED A 'CULT.' LET'S KICK HIM ALL ROUND THE QUAD BEFORE HE GETS BIG-HEADED....!"

By Brian Doyle

What a month it's been for lovers of Greyfriars!

Surely the venerable old place has never experienced such an intensive spate of publicity in its long history as it has during the last few weeks. And all sparked off, of course, by the great triple publishing event which brought forth the souvenir reprint of MAGNET No. 1, the final Bunter book, "Bunter's Last Fling" and J. S. Butcher's "Greyfriars School: A Prospectus" - and all in the same week!

All this was allied to a full-page feature in WEEKEND about old boys' papers and the prices they command these days; an illustrated five-page feature on old boys' papers and their history in BOYS' WORLD ANNUAL; an item in BBC TV's "Town and Around" programme, which showed the Fleetway presses actually printing the MAGNET No. 1 reprint; an interview in STV's "Day by Day" programme with London OBBC President John Wernham on the hobby; and the welcome and scarcely-believable news that Fleetway are to publish "Billy Bunter's Holiday Book" in October, followed by a regularly monthly series of MAGNET reprints. Riches indeed!

The National newspaper and magazine critics really went to town with lengthy reviews on the three Greyfriars publications. A round dozen leading publications devoted no less than 334 column inches and 11 pictures to the event - a rough average of 28 column inches and 1 picture per paper. To quote all the reviews would take up the whole of this C.D. and more. But here is a brief round-up of how some of the critics reacted to the news that Greyfriars - and William George Bunter - had reached the end of their long, long trail:-

OH CRIKEY! IS THIS THE END OF BILLY BUNTER? Greyfriars School, the only seat of learning which always had an upturned drawing-pin on it... its unique history."

A. W. Parsons, DAILY MAIL

THE LAST JAPE. .... I enjoyed going back in time to the world of Greyfriars School....above all, to the owl of the Remove himself....

Bunter still has his fans by the million, ranging in age now from 8 to 80."

Peter Grosvenor, DAILY EXPRESS.

EXIT BUNTER. Today marks the positively last appearance of the most famous character in schoolboy literature - and the thought will induce ... a pang of regret, to issue a soft sigh for our lost youth.... Frank Richards will have his niche in sub-literary history, for it is people who survive - and Billy Bunter.... was a person."

Robert Ottaway, DAILY SKETCH.

BILLY BUNTER ATE HERE. ....the ultimate accolade....Mr. Richards was....a story-teller....the compulsion is there....one must read on.."

Michael Hogg, DAILY TELEGRAPH.

GOODBYE TO BUNTER. Bunter is up to all his tricks....the excellent PROSPECTUS. ....the story's the thing and that has been one merit the Greyfriars' sagas have never lacked."

Ion Trewin, SUNDAY TELEGRAPH.

GREYFRIARS - MOST FAMOUS OF ENGLISH PUBLIC SCHOOLS. To generation after generation the most famous public school in Britain has been Greyfriars in the county of Kent. When Frank Richards died in 1961 he left a loving and living legend....the unquestioned genius of Richards. Most memorable....is William George Bunter....whose name is known to all in Britain....Cassell's have done Greyfriars proud. PROSPECTUS is a fitting monument to Greyfriars School and no close student of education should be without it."

TIME AND TIDE.

FAREWELL TO BILLY BUNTER. Greyfriars School has continued to be a delight to new generations of children and a haven of nostalgia for adults. Only the other day a Birmingham public library reported that 22 Bunter titles had been stolen from their shelves....this sad occasion."

THE BOOKSELLER.

BILLY BUNTER AND ALL HIS BATTLES ARE ENDED. ....Bunter was a figure of heroic dimensions. ....Bunter appeared on TV....though he never materialized convincingly away from the printed page. It was once said that Shakespeare had made King Lear 'too big to be acted' and perhaps there is a parallel in Bunter! ....three characters in English literature have passed into the English language: everyone knows what is meant if you refer to someone as a Shylock, a Romeo or a Sherlock Holmes. He might have added a fourth, for everyone knows what is meant if you refer to 'a proper Billy Bunter' ....I expect to meet Mr. Pickwick in Heaven....and how could it be Heaven without Bob

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Cherry's 'Hallo, hallo, hallo!', or D'Arcy's 'Yaas, wathah!' or that fat, fatuous and familiar voice bleating 'I say, you fellows....!?'

Alan Gibson, SMITH'S TRADE NEWS.

MAGNET NUMBER ONE....it's a joy that such a costly item is being made available....the first adventure of Harry Wharton is a delectable dish of adventure....a red-letter day for all Greyfriars School 'Old Boys' ....what a pity that my old friend with the runaway pen, Frank Richards, didn't live to see the day. I've read PROSPECTUS with enormous pleasure and wonderment....for thousands it (Greyfriars) is still the most famous school in the world."

Whitefriar, SMITH'S TRADE NEWS.

BUNTER WADDLES AGAIN. A famous ghost walks again this week. A very large ghost - perhaps the largest in the history of British publishing. His name is William George Bunter....who yarood and chortled his way to immortality....the reprinting of the first issue of the MAGNET will be hailed with wild delight....Hamilton created a dreamworld so vivid that it coloured the imagination of every boy who came into contact with it."

"....what remains of continuing interest is the fame as a national institution enjoyed by Billy Bunter. He is as well-known, and as generally accepted, as Sherlock Holmes himself...."

THE TIMES (Fourth Leader).

As if all this wasn't enough, Bunter and Quelch even became the subjects in a political cartoon by Franklin in the DAILY MIRROR on September 16th. The unmistakable figure of Bunter sat gorging tuck, his jacket labelled 'Exports' and his trousers 'Imports' - with an ever-widening space marked 'Gap' separating the two. Mr. James Callaghan, looking very schoolmaster-ish with mortar-board, was opening the study door and surprising Bunter in the act. The caption read 'Bunter's Latest Fling.'

And Arthur Pottersman, the literary critic of THE SUN, reported in a feature article that after the Dickens, Lamb, Sherlock Holmes, Bronte and Jane Austen cults, the latest one seemed to be the Bunter cult. The interesting paragraphs in this were the details - brief though they were - Pottersman gave about the rather mysterious J. S. Butcher, the man who wrote the PROSPECTUS and who had apparently never heard of the Old Boys Book Clubs. Pottersman wrote:-

"Mr. Butcher, born on Boxing Day, 1911, left council school at the age of 15 and went to work for 12/6d a week. At the end of his

life he was national inspector for a big tyre company. And I learn that he once told his publisher: 'Because I only went to a humble council school, I had a feeling of deprivation. I found pleasure from my earliest days in reading of public and boarding-school life which I could never hope to experience. With the help of Frank Richards' Bunter stories, I created my own world of schoolboy fantasy.'

"Mr. Butcher never actually met Frank Richards. He collected all his information from the Bunter stories. Much of his collection was destroyed during the war, but he had built it up again. The old MAGNET magazines lie now in the bookcase at his Romford, Essex, home."

The provincial newspapers were not idle during this 'Greyfriars Festival' either. Many devoted much space to reviews and feature articles. One, in the widely-read NEWCASTLE JOURNAL, gave up 76 column inches to a piece (spread over a large page) headed CRIKEY!! BILLY BUNTER TO BE HEARD NO MORE. The writer, David Taylor, went on to say: "...there is something endearing about the world of Greyfriars School. Its appeal is similar to that of Peter Pan and Bertie Wooster. So the publication of Frank Richards' last Bunter book is a considerable literary occasion. Greyfriars School....will survive as long as young people retain innocence and old men regret their disillusionment."

William George Bunter - wherever he is right now - is probably blushing for the first time in his fat life after hearing all this. And Frank Richards, his kindly, grand, great creator, is no doubt looking down on the furore he has caused, chuckling delightedly as he watches one of the fattest schoolboys ever, threatening to grow into one of the greatest minor literary cults of the century....

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: BUT - Collectors' Digest gave the first, and, because it knew what it was talking about, probably the only real appraisal of the works. The Daily Mirror described "Bunter's Last Fling" as the last and probably the best of the manuscripts left behind by Charles Hamilton, and spoke of the "dead Magnet and Gem comics." Maybe he was a very young critic. Some papers reproduced pictures from Magnet No. 1, but none mentioned that they were the work of a fine artist named Hutton Mitchell. They didn't know.)

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#### LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

#### No. 92. THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN SCHOOL STORIES

Did religion have any place in school tales? Most Victorian stories for youngsters had a religious slant. In fact, most of them

went out of their way to show that the wages of Sin was a very unpleasant end. Whether they did any good for youth may be a question, but it can be said that those stories which have lasted were well-written.

Dean Farrar's "Eric" preaches unashamedly. The sentiment is heavily laid on, and the woe of the young sinner is intense. Nevertheless, Farrar wrote well. Even a hundred years later one can appreciate the characterisation, and "Eric" contains many passages which charm and touch even to-day.

Talbot Baines Reed's tales mostly were lightly tinted with the brush of religion. But he wrote well, he never preached, and one comes upon the little religious items so unexpectedly that they probably did more good than an out-and-out religious approach.

Mrs. O. F. Walton wrote delightful stories for young people. They all had a deeply religious motif, but she wrote so well in her own particular style that she never seemed to be making a sermon. "A Peep Behind the Scenes" is a lovely little tale even in 1965.

I could mention many more. "How a Farthing Made a Fortune" is a little tale which lingers in my memory from childhood.

Which brings us to religion in our own old papers.

In the extract from his diary, Danny reminds us that the Magnet story "The Sunday Crusaders" is exactly fifty years old this month. To the best of my recollection it is the only story of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, or Rookwood which has a religious theme.

Whether I am sticking my neck out I do not know, but in my view this was an appalling tale, utterly unsuitable for inclusion in the Magnet. Let me make it clear that I do not condemn it on account of its religious theme. Basically the plot is a risky one for any boys' paper - the plot of a number of boys who profess atheism but who are brought back to the faith by a course of events set against a background of good boys and naughty boys. This plot, skilfully handled by a good writer, with light and shade replacing black and white, with a little bit of under-statement replacing the sickly preaching, might have made extremely interesting reading for the discriminating. But a theme of this type is thin ice over which the skilful writer must skim lightly for any hope of success.

The writer of "Sunday Crusaders" skates over the thin ice with all the grace of an elephant with roaring toothache. Small wonder that within the course of a chapter or two he is in deep water, with his readers shivering on the bank as they look on.

He overlooks that the Remove would include boys of all creeds.

He makes his "Pagans" the unpleasant boys of the form. His only subtle move is in making Peter Todd one of the Pagans, a slight advantage which is lost in a welter of sentiment midway through the story. All this might not matter if the writing were entertaining, but the hammy dialogue does not help things. Skinner's comments are intended for airy persiflage of the Cardew type, but they work out as heavy as a suet pudding.

Let us look at a brief synopsis of the plot of "Sunday Crusaders." At the start of the story, Skinner & Co are annoyed by the following notice placed on the board by the Headmaster:

"I have considered it desirable that all boys who have been confirmed shall attend Divine Service, Matins, and Evensong every Sunday until further notice. Herbert H. Locke."

One would not think that such a notice would effect every boy in the Remove, but apparently it does, from the way the story goes on. Chapter One continues with Skinner slating the editor of the Boys' Friend who has "ticked off" somebody who wanted to play football on Sunday. Thereupon, Harry Wharton & Co stoutly defend the said editor, which is really only just, for the said editor has been plugging the Magnet right, left, and centre for many weeks past.

In Chapter Two, Mark Linley receives a certificate from the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. He asks Bob Cherry whether it may be framed and hung up in the study. Later, Skinner smashes the frame, destroys the certificate, and writes on the wall such comments as "MOSES, THE MALEFACTOR" and "WITH JEHOSEPHAT IN JUDEA."

When Bob Cherry sees what has been done, he rushes to the form-room where the form is already assembled under Mr. Quelch. Bob seizes Skinner, and, in the presence of the form-master, yanks the cad of the Remove out of his seat, and "proceeds to hit out right and left with his big fists. He blacked one of his eyes, got in a telling blow on Skinner's prominent nose, and wound up with a smashing right-hander."

Thereupon Mr. Quelch flogs Bob, and follows up the flogging with an enquiry as to the rights and wrongs of the matter.

"What! You mean to tell me that Linley received a certificate from a society with such sound and manly principles, and that you ruthlessly destroyed it?"

"Ahem! We don't think much of societies like that, sir," said Skinner.

"Who's 'we'?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Myself, sir, and Bunter, and Bolsover, sir."

"Three of the most blackguardly boys in the Remove!" sniffed the form-master.

Would any form-master make such a comment to his class?

So Skinner formed his band of Pagans. They were Bolsover, Snoop, Stott, Fish, Bunter, Hazeldene, Morgan, Treluce, Wun Lung, and Todd.

So the author scraped the bottom for his Pagans - except for Todd.

"The Famous Five almost fell down. They could hardly believe the evidence of their ears. Peter Todd was an Atheist.

Don't throw in your lot with Skinner, for Heaven's sake! pleaded Wharton. It's madness to go against the Church!"

The following Sunday, Skinner went to the pictures. On his way out from the cinema "a hand was suddenly clapped on to his shoulder, and a voice which rang like a death-knell in the ears of the adventurous junior, exclaimed:

Skinner! What are you doing here?"

The intruder (said the author) was no less terrible a personage than Mr. Quelch.

Later on, Mr. Quelch roars at Skinner: "Do not presume to bandy words with me, Skinner. You are depraved, unworthy of the name of boy. But I find consolation in the fact that this will doubtless be your last night at Greyfriars."

The next day, the Head takes over.

"Boys, I have called you together this morning that I might make an exhibition of a boy who is nothing more or less than a viper in this school."

So Skinner gets a flogging, and roars (in his turn): "Oh! Yah! Yow! Help! Yaroop! Ow-wow-ow!"

For the next Sunday, Skinner arranges a football-match to be played against Ponsonby & Co in a private meadow.

In the middle of it, Bob Cherry and Mark Linley arrive, in the middle of their Sunday walk. "The sight of the game had almost stupefied Bob at first. Then he had been filled with sudden revulsion at the whole scene."

Bob Cherry thereupon fights Peter Todd and beats him.

"I'll shake hands with you, Todd," he said quietly, "when you've taken your stand for the Church."

Through a sort of mist, Todd extended his hand.

"Forgive me," he said simply. "I've been an utter fool. There's a lot to be said for going to church. It makes a fellow true blue."

That evening, the Pagans, instead of attending church as ordered, rob the tuckshop. The Bounder finds them in the dormitory, and makes them return the stolen food. Early the next morning, Wharton & Co make the Pagans "run the gauntlet."

The author then quotes the poet:

"So comes a reckoning when the banquet's o'er:

A dreadful reckoning, and men smile no more."

Finally, Skinner and Bolsover fill a tin with stones, and intend to take away the church bell and replace it with the tin. But when, up in the belfry, they have done this, they find that somebody has moved the ladder. As they seek a means of getting down, a plank gives way, and they both fall. Bolsover catches hold of a beam, and Skinner manages to grip Bolsover's legs. To save Bolsover, Skinner lets go.

Help arrives in the persons of Linley and Courtney.

"Killed!" echoed Bolsover, with a choking sob. "Oh, Courtney, Courtney! Killed! And he gave his life for me."

But the story is not yet over. There is still time to show Dr. Locke as a most astonishing Headmaster.

"Send for the best surgeon in the kingdom, if necessary," said the Head. "I care not what his fee is. That boy's life must be saved at all hazards."

Skinner's leg is broken, he has internal injuries, and an operation is performed on him. "But in the silent watches of the night that followed a change for the worse drew rapidly on. The breathing became a series of short, quick gasps, the lungs seemed choked."

The highlight of the story is yet to come.

"For a long time it seemed impossible that the boy would live, and the Head could not decide whether to wire for Skinner's parents, or wait for the doctor's morning visit. At last he decided upon the latter course."

Well, well! A boy has fallen from the roof of a church. His leg is broken, he has had an operation for internal injuries, he is dying in the night - and the Head of Greyfriars can't decide whether to notify the boy's parents. The miracle is that Greyfriars lasted after October 1915.

As I said earlier, "Sunday Crusaders" did not fail simply because it introduced religion. It failed as a result of shockingly bad writing, and because religion was poured over it like custard over a fruit pie. Often the remarks of the schoolboys were utterly unnatural and embarrassing, and the masters were impossible. Religion

was plugged to death. Linley went to the Church at the time of the accident because he had forgotten to put up the hymn numbers for a service. Mr. Quelch was in Courtfield because he had been acting as relief-organist at Courtfield Church. Even if one could take it all seriously, the sectarian nature of the tale made it an oddity.

Was it wise to introduce religion into any tale in the Magnet? One cannot answer the question by quoting "The Sunday Crusaders." But one can answer the question from observing the attitude of Charles Hamilton, the world's greatest exponent of the school story. He never introduced religion into his tales, but he invariably taught a high moral code which was good for every boy who read those tales, no matter what his creed.

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### CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

#### No. 90. THE THOUSANDTH MAN

LAURIE SUTTON: I thought "The Thousandth Man" Controversial on the friendship theme was really wonderful writing. The old songs you mention like "Friend O' Mine" certainly had some meaning in them, unlike the rubbish churned out these days. Mention of "A Dog With a Bad Name" also brought back memories. I always seem to get most out of something that leaves me feeling sadness or compassion - in books, music, plays, or opera. There is a Puccini one-act opera (Suer Angelica) that has me in tears from start to finish; and I recently saw "Good-bye Mr. Chips" at the National Film Theatre with much the same reaction.

I am sure that in my boyhood Gussy was a more real friend to me than I ever found in life, especially as my physical handicap had left me very shy and retiring.

GEORGE SELLARS: Friendship played a big part in many Hamilton stories. At Greyfriars, Wharton - Nugent, Cherry - Linley, and, the greatest of all, Smithy and Redwing. Even deeper was that between Erroll and Morningson. We must not forget the charming friendship between Figgins and Cousin Ethel. One of the finest was that of Tom Merry and Talbot. According to the poet, "Greater love hath no man than that he lay down his life for another." Tom and Talbot would have done just that for each other.

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#### GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 24 (New Series)

A taste for the immortal works of Shakespeare was quite a new taste on the part of his chum. Smithy was not much of a reading man.

and Shakespeare bored him. This was one of many little changes that Tom Redwing had noticed in his chum during the past week, and that perplexed him and gave him an odd sense of not knowing the fellow that he had thought he knew so well.

No doubt it was a change for the better if Smithy liked Shakespeare better than pink papers that dealt with the odds on the geegees. But it was not like Smithy, and Tom Redwing had liked Smithy as he was - with all his faults and failings.

Smithy had improved during the week that had elapsed since his cousin and double, Bertie Vernon, had left Greyfriars.

That was not to be doubted.

Shakespeare was a great improvement on "Racing Tips." It was a week since Redwing had scented cigarette smoke in the study. He knew that Smithy had not once been out of bounds during that week - a great change for the reckless Bounder. As for breaking out at night, Smithy seemed to have forgotten such escapades completely.

It was all to the good, and yet somehow Redwing felt and realised that he did not like his chum as he had always liked him. He blamed himself, for surely he should have been glad to see the reckless scapegrace of Greyfriars mending his ways. But there it was, and he could not help it.

Even now, when he asked Smithy if he were coming out, he was conscious of the fact that he really did not want Smith's company.

He had always wanted it, disagreeable as it often was. Now he did not - though he was loth to admit it to himself. But at the bottom of his heart he knew it, and it gave him a discomfited feeling of being a disloyal friend.

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#### FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS

Armada Books are doing a reprint of 10,000 of the Bunter titles of earlier this year, but in view of the proposed issue of a 1965-Magnet, Armada are contemplating no further titles in the Greyfriars series. A natural result of the big sales of Magnet No. 1 is the news that a form of Magnet Library, reprinting the old stories, will be on sale fortnightly at 1/3 from late October. There has also been a report, not yet verified, that the new Magnet kicks off with two substitute stories. How sad if this proves to be true - and HOW UTTERLY, UTTERLY LUDICROUS!

WANTED: 1d Marvel No. 393, single copy or in bound volume. Please quote. E. BLIGHT, 12 TREVARTHIAN ROAD, ST. AUSTELL, CORNWALL.

# news of the clubs

## MIDLAND

24th August, 1965

A happy and lively gathering assembled in the Stratford room at the Arden Hotel for our August meeting which was the best attended for some time.

Tom Porter was there with his two collectors items, "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School" being one of these and the other Magnet No.1123 for 24th August 1929, a story from the Ravenspur Grange series and incidentally unique in that Bunter is absent throughout. Nonetheless an excellent series.

The programme got under way with a quiz from one of our young members, Ian Parish. It was well received, but most of us found it a 'corker.' There was some amusing banter regarding the answers and some difference of opinion about their accuracy.

Tom Porter's well-known game followed. The titles of Schoolboys' Own Libraries were the solutions. Each member in turn calls out a letter and there are a certain number of spaces numbered off. The letters are filled in as they are called out. The idea of course is to have a shrewd guess when the letters begin to assume a pattern. There were two games and Ray Bennett and Jack Bellfield were winners.

The raffle organized by our librarian, Tom Porter, was then drawn and Ivan Webster won for himself a Popular and a Sexton Blake Library. Our rapidly expanding library is due to Tom's efforts in this direction.

The final item was a reading by Madge Corbett from Magnet 1633 entitled "The Bounder's Dupe" - Smithy aiming at getting his own back on Quelch for giving him 'six of the best' and on Wingate for reporting him for smoking.

Thus ended a happy and successful meeting and we look forward to the next one on September 28th at 7.30 at The Arden.

JACK BELLFIELD, Correspondent

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## AUSTRALIA

Once more the members of "The Golden Hours Club" are able to gather in the old familiar atmosphere which was such an important factor at previous meetings held at "The Book Bargain Bazaar." The new location proved most pleasing and as members explored "The Gaslight

Bookshop" prior to the meeting held there at 6.15 p.m. on Thursday, August 19th, one and all expressed the opinion that although the rendezvous had been renamed and re-located, there was still the same warm welcome extended by member Stan Nicholls, the proprietor, and the same beloved feeling of being at home amongst the familiar book-lined shelves from floor to ceiling. Our very sincere thanks to Stan for so generously making this possible.

Chairman Syd Smyth provided the highlight of the evening when he produced a copy of The Saint Magazine containing Bill Lofts' article on Robin Hood. Members were pleased to see his name given such prominence on the cover in most illustrious company and they felt that it reflected great credit on the hobby and was a well earned reward for his efforts in the field of research. Several of the members had read the article and all agreed that it was a really fine piece of craftsmanship and most gratifying that Leslie Charteris had personally paid tribute to Bill's talents, with which sentiments there was unanimous agreement.

As always Arthur Holland was with us in spirit and his news and views were read out by the secretary - and from Bill Hubbard came a newsy letter to add interesting items for the discussion period for the latter period of the meeting.

The Chairman wishes to tell all those folk who have written him concerning the "Golden Hours" that all articles are in hand for issue No. 8 and it is ready for production at the soonest possible opportunity.

B. PATE      Hon. Secretary.

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LONDON

It was appropriate that 23 members and friends left Victoria in a 'Claude Duval' coach bound for Margate and the Greyfriars countryside. A further five, the Hopkins, Wrights and John Bush, were picked up at Lewisham and away we went. Len Packman soon got busy, distributing copies of the fascimile Magnet number one. The weather was ideal and it was an interesting journey from both scenery and old boys' book topics. Chairman, Brian Doyle shewed around his copy of "Boys' World Annual" in which his own excellent article on the old papers appears. Arriving at the Nayland Rock Hotel, the party alighted and were joined by the five Becks from Lewes, Roger Jenkins from Havant, John Wernham from Maidstone, V. Clift, Bill Lofts and Mr. & Mrs. Peters, all of whom had made the journey either by rail or car. Guest of honour was Miss Hood, to whom we all owe a great many thanks for looking after

our late president, Frank Richards for so many years. Forty persons sat down to an excellent lunch. Afterwards Don Webster made a very fine concise speech and toasted the London Old Boys' Book Club. Roger Jenkins followed with an equally fine speech and then raised the toast to the guests. Len Packman gave a few well chosen words and John Wernham wound up the speeches by one of his own. He mentioned the Southern T.V. item to be telecast on Monday, September 6th, in the programme, "Day by Day," and mentioned the forthcoming issue at 2/6, the catalogue of the Frank Richards museum. Messrs. Packman, Webster, Brian Doyle, Bennett and Lofts were five volunteers for the quick quiz that Roger Jenkins conducted and that is how they finished except for the last two named and they tied for fourth place.

Then the company broke up to enjoy the sunshine and the amenities of Margate until re-assembling for tea at the hotel. After tea, our worthy scholar of old boys' books lore, Bill Lofts, expounded on some of the new forthcoming Hamilton publications.

All too quickly it was time for the return journey home. A most successful meeting and outing, excellent souvenir menu cards, Sexton Blake characters depicted thereon, the gift of our worthy president, John Wernham. Our two youthful members, Nicholas Bennett and Peter Kurowski, being able to purchase further copies of the fascimile Magnet Number One at the bookstall situated at the cafe etc. on the M.2

Next meeting on Sunday, October 17th at the home of Reuben and Mrs. Godsave, 35, Woodhouse Road, Leytonstone, London, E.11. Phone MARYland 1737. Kindly advise if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 11th September

The late holiday season found fourteen members present at Hyde Park Road for our September meeting. Secretary Frank Hancock was missing from his accustomed place, but the Chairman was back in his to welcome old friends and distinguished hobbyists J. Breeze Bentley and Roger Jenkins, who were in charge of the evening's programme.

This broke new ground: a nostalgic backward glimpse not at past periodicals, but at the old Leeds and Bradford tramways. Breeze refused to call his talk anything other than scattered recollections; but he always speaks from a prodigious memory and a voluminous fund of knowledge. An appreciative audience knew that he dealt with his subject as a true historian, and the great store of photographs with

which he was able to illustrate his survey added greatly to the interest. Half-way through the evening Roger further developed the evening's theme with an admirable cine-film, mainly in colour, of past journeys on Leeds trams. The tramways themselves are dead and gone, but Roger was able to show us a living history.

Prior to this we had all revelled in the unexpected thrill of inspecting a stall full of mint Magnet No. 1s. News of the forthcoming hobby publications aroused keen discussion, most of all, of course, the prospect of further Magnet reprints. The only dismaying news was that which hinted that the next numbers to be chosen would be sub stories. We are all unanimous in our support of any reprinting venture, but this is a sure way to forfeit goodwill. Well, all I can say is - I told them so!

JOHNNY BULL

Next meeting, 9th October.

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MERSEYSIDE

Meeting, 12th September:

There was another satisfactory attendance for this meeting. John Farrell was indisposed and could not make the long journey from Wigan, but it was good to have Jim Walsh with us once again, if only for a short time.

Bill Windsor was in the chair and there was so much to discuss that refreshments were in before we knew where we were. Appreciation was expressed of the re-appearance of the Foghorn which certainly keeps us in closer contact with members of other sections, as well as with our own Merseyside exiles. It was decided to hold all competitions, quizzes, etc. on a team basis, i.e. the members were divided into two sections - the Brooks Section and the Hamilton Section, and instead of book prizes points were awarded to the winners of the two quizzes. These were introduced by Jack Morgan and the writer, and the winners were Walter Pritchard of Hamilton and Frank Unwin of Brooks. At the moment the points position is that Brooks are leading by four points to three.

Most members had purchased their precious copies of Magnet No. 1, some several copies, and it was agreed to obtain a further six copies for the Section with a view to presenting one to any future new members. The number of press cuttings on this topic brought by Jim Walsh was indicative of the publicity the Greyfriars stories have been enjoying of late. It is hoped that Fleetway Publications will take due notice and cash in by publishing regular stories of the

(continued on page 32)...

# the postman called

(Interesting items from  
the Editor's Letter-bag)

A. J. SOUTHWAY (Cape Province): I took my Sexton Blake (current series) with me on holiday, and thoroughly enjoyed them all. I couldn't put down "The Mind Killers" until I'd finished it at one sitting.

JOHN McMAHON (Tannochside): How strange it was to read the number one issue of the Magnet. All the characters seem so different from those that I know and love. I'm sure that Frank Richards would have been delighted had he lived to see this great re-birth. Let's hope that the publishers will reproduce No. 2. It would be wonderful if we could look forward to another thirty-two years of Magnets.

JACK COOK (Newcastle): Magnet No. 1 contains what I believe to be Charles Hamilton's best story. The Greyfriars scene is not too crowded; the reader stays with the main character, and experiences the same conflicts. "Bunter's Last Fling" is surely a prophetic title for the last Bunter book. Was this Hamilton's own title?

(Indeed NO, sir! -ED.)

JOHN GUNN (Matlock): I would like to see a list of the Tom Merry and Billy Bunter Annuals (with the lead story) as it is difficult to tell whether one has a complete set otherwise.

STAN KNIGHT (Cheltenham): Many thanks for the 2 $\frac{1}{4}$  hundredth number of C.D. What a cheery greeting the Modern Boy frontispiece makes, as though we are being invited and made welcome to participate once more in the joys of scouting and camping. Another excellent number. The printing throughout is just right, the reading matter is just what we have come to expect and look forward to.

MAURICE KUTNER (Clapton): Have just bought a disappointingly slim Greyfriars School by the late J. S. Butcher, price 30/-. In comparison with this volume, the C.D. monthly and the C.D. Annual give excellent value for money, and one can only admire the policy of "price restraint" followed by the editorial board for so long, in a world of "grab what you can."

WALTER FLEMING (Chingford): Must compliment you on the way the Digest keeps up its high standard. I hope we shall soon be seeing another Slade story. I must agree with you and your correspondents about the distribution of the various book publishers. I have had similar difficulties in obtaining both Sexton Blake and the Armada books. (Slade will be back in "Mr. Buddle Meets the Magnet" in Collectors'

Digest Annual for 1965. - ED.)

RAY NORTON (Walton-on-Thames): Mr. Lofts gives the last S. B. Hunter story as "Mystery of the Vanished Trainer" No. 335, 1955. There were two after that: "Gangster's Girl" No. 354, 1956, and "Silent Witness" No. 375, 1957. He goes on to say there was one yarn under the Peter Meriton pen name. I have two: "Man from Madrid" No. 57, 1943, and "Affair of the Fraternising Soldier" No. 116, 1946. Making a total of 58 Blake stories, not 55.

NORMAN WRIGHT (Pinner): In the current C.D. you ask whether Charles Hamilton ever called Prout 'Paul Pontifex Prout.' Well, he did at least once. This was in the Who's Who published in the 1922 Holiday Annual.

(Charles Hamilton did not compile those Who's Whos which contained many names of which he had never heard. Actually we meant in a story, in the way that "Bunter's Last Fling" constantly refers to "Paul Pontifex Prout." - ED.)

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The humorous tongue-in-cheek style for which Mr. Story is well known is in evidence here, with an underlying note of seriousness and social comment for the more thoughtful reader.

More from this author please!

Ray Norton

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MERSEYSIDE REPORT (continued from page 28)..

immortal characters.

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FRANK UNWIN

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