

OCT. NOV.

Collectors' Digest

JANUARY 1966

THE GREAT LITTLE TICH appears this week on the Front Page of MERRY & BRIGHT, 2

VOL. 20



The Butterfly

No. 592. PRICE ONE HALFPENNY. JANUARY 15, 1914.

PORTLAND BILL'S IDEA IS "CARROT" HALL-MARKED.



1. Dear Mr. Editor and Readers: The other day I had a party to put over a wild carrot search. Very interesting it was, too, to watch the chaps from getting before over every one. But suddenly I found myself out of the line. "What that's not given that order?" growled a porter's voice. And he looked the old farmer out a pecker in the raspberry. "The best he'll get!"



2. There was the poor old farmer on his back, and first a snuff and here drawn on the subject of strawberries. He let it that's the only to do it? "And that's the expression?" "The Farmer's Fun, the Mole Hunter's too. It's other people's money I want, and it's not to be taken, without the strictest order before him. "She" he's naming this was? "I need it." "I'll see if I can't stop him?"



3. It didn't take a heavy search that we were very long to get on a whole. Two take and a look, to be given. I know it was then, but I happened to have a good one, and so on the line. "Kump! I tried, passing the individual on a jolly search that gave handle me. "Ting" it is a whole lot the tree I want, and had that carrot on that it could not escape the eagle eye of the snuff."



4. The search was on in a moment. After it is over. But I watched the carrot round the tree, and the donkey began a horn on against the southern bank. "Well, so did Portland Bill, who was looking on to the other end of the snuff's better. "Here's what the order" he put, looking hard to snap the snuff. "It's here, they." But there had all eyes on the carrot. Round and round the tree went it, snuff.



5. And as I've didn't stand so easily on the opposite side, he no happily left at the post. When a man, he was told to do, that? For the donkey's better he was round round and round him, till he had hardly room to walk over to or change his mind. "Now I know it!" he exclaimed. Round round the carrot, and round half-past five. And it wasn't till the long piece of rope had been all used up that I stopped.



6. There stopped, too, the old man. He had to stop where he was. All the rope came for him. Up dashed the old-fashioned farmer, and he looked me over a whole from ground. "What is wanted?" he asked, as I showed the tree I saw. Yours snuff, *Portland Bill*

No. 229

2/-

Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 20

No. 229

JANUARY 1966

Price 2s. 0d.

WRITE TO ME ABOUT IT.



SUCH A STRANGE LOT!

Recently I received from Australian reader Laurie Turner a press cutting from the Melbourne Sun. Entitled "The Way of the Grey-

friars Man," the writer, Keith Duncan "reviews the prospectus of a school which, he says, could be the envy of Gordonstoun or even Timbertop." Mr. Duncan speaks of how he loved the Magnet in the days of his youth. He says: "Even then I don't think I would have believed the future regarding the Magnet, that it would expire in 1940 because of lack of newsprint, and that 25 years after that there would be strange societies utterly devoted to its memory and that fantastic analytical books at high prices would be on the market."

The fantastic analytical books at high prices refers to "Prospectus" (it costs 48/- in Australia). The strange societies means US.

But Mr. Duncan kicks off with the following gem: "One of the great passions of my youth was a strange, thoroughly Edwardian comic called the Magnet." So evidently there is something strange about Mr. Duncan too. Anyone who regards the Magnet as a comic must be strange - not to say odd. Quite woodhead - I mean, Timbertop.

Of course, there is an Edwardian flavour about Prospectus - but there was nothing Edwardian about the Magnet of the nineteen-thirties.

COMPANIONS IN MEMORY:

I was rather taken with a passage in Agatha Christie's latest novel. It goes as follows:

"She knew quite well with her usual clear-eyed common sense, that what she wanted was simply to refurbish her memories of the past in their old original colours. Much of her life had, perforce, to be spent recalling past pleasures. If you could find someone to remember them with, that was indeed happiness. In a queer way, it made her come to life again."

What a wealth of truth there is in those few lines! There, in a nutshell, we have the reason for the continuing success of Collectors' Digest. Time and time again during any year I receive a letter from some reader who has found a new dimension in life from the good old C.D. People who, for as long as they can remember, have cherished memories of the old papers, and who think they must be rather "strange" for doing so. Then, suddenly, they found C.D. - and realised that hundreds of other people were doing exactly the same thing. A pleasure shared is a pleasure doubled. Countless, lasting friendships, have been made by way of C.D.

I do not mean, of course, that all C.D. readers are elderly people. The vast majority are people in their prime, and there are plenty who are very young. According to Longfellow, the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts. So, as we get older, our memories are long, long memories. And memories are all the sweeter when we have so many others to remember with us.

THE DEATH OF EDWY SEARLES BROOKS:

It was with the deepest regret and sadness that we learned of the sudden death, on December 2nd, of Edwy Searles Brooks. Mr. Brooks' writings can be found in the famous Companion Papers from as long ago as several years before the start of the first world war when, under the pen-name of Robert W. Comrade, he created the detective Frank Kingston and his assistant, Dolores. He wrote a goodly number of stories of Greyfriars and St. Jim's, and many, with reason, consider that he was the most successful of all those who deputised for Charles Hamilton.

It was, however, for his creation of St. Frank's with its cast of sterling characters in great variety, that he won immortality in our hobby circles. Since 1945 he has been engaged in writing detective fiction under the pen-names of Victor Gunn and Berkeley Gray, and though it is for St. Frank's that he will inevitably be most warmly remembered in our circle, there is no doubt that his later detective yarns, turned out so prolifically, will live on for many years to come.

And now he is gone - taken home to that special corner of heaven reserved for the few who did so much for the youth of Britain and the

world when we were young. While we remain, he will never be forgotten. Like Charles Hamilton, he leaves a gap which can never be filled - a niche which he made all his own. God bless his memory.

TWENTY YEARS ON:

With this issue, Collectors' Digest enters its twentieth year. The realisation comes with something like a shock that our magazine has been running regularly for a longer time than some of the popular periodicals of the past. But how time flies!

THE EDITOR

THEY CHANGED THE TITLE!

By W. O. G. Lofts

A few years ago in Blakiana, I wrote an amusing short item, where the Sexton Blake author, Ladbrooke Black, became so annoyed at the editor of the S.B.L. changing the titles of all his yarns - that he gave all his new ones the same astonishing title....

'By the waters of Babylon' !

The editor becoming exasperated in turn in having to think up a brand new title every time, in the end (most surprisingly!) compromised, and let the author have his own way, and the satisfaction of seeing his own original choice in print.

Editors, of course, have the perfect right to change any title of a story, as they think fit. After all it is their job, and I don't think that in all honesty they would change any heading, unless they could think up a better one. At a recent London O.B.B.C. meeting, I asked E. S. Brooks if he had any objection to the editors changing the titles of his yarns, and he replied to the effect that he did not mind in the least. Why should he? He got paid for writing it, and he was satisfied. That went, I should think, for the majority of authors who wrote juvenile stories.

It has been my good fortune to obtain recently quite a large number of original titles of boys' stories, and readers may like to judge whether their favourite author's title was better than the one as published by the editor.

Charles Hamilton, as is now well known, in his early days had the characteristic of nearly always ending his short adventure stories with the words of the title, though he dropped this habit, soon after commencing writing for the MAGNET and GEM. Most surprisingly, I have found very few instances of his Greyfriars and St. Jim's titles being altered - some so slight as to be hardly worth mentioning.

Two famous Holiday Annual stories were however changed - the first where Martin Clifford visited Greyfriars - and entitled 'A Great Man at Greyfriars!' Charles Hamilton originally called this simply 'Martin Clifford at Greyfriars.' Certainly to the point, and modest! The editor I don't think could be faulted here, as 'Martin Clifford' was indeed a great man, as far as boys' school stories was concerned, in 1924.

The other change was 'The Scientist of St. Jim's' in 1925, which was originally entitled 'Glyn's Death Ray.' Obviously the editor concerned thought the latter too lurid, though not having read the story I am not in a position to say whether the title of 'Martin Clifford's' choice was apt in connection with the plot.

John Nix Pentelow - war time editor of the Magnet and Gem - who still continued writing stories for the paper after he had ceased to be in control called one of his Greyfriars yarns in the Twin series in 1923 (803-805) 'The Cox and Box of Greyfriars' - which was altered to 'A Puzzle for the Remove' (803). Despite tag lists being published in recent years of hundreds of quotations, at the time of writing I am still not clear what the 'cox and box' is!

Charles Hamilton also used this expression at times, e.g. Magnet 843 'Pen's Pal' on the last line of page 12 'sort of Box and Cox arrangement' which gives the impression of juniors changing places. Perhaps our worthy editor can give an exact explanation at the end of this article.

E. S. Brooks, as already mentioned, did not care how they altered his titles - though also surprisingly very few were altered in the St. Frank's field. His Sexton Blake tales however were a different matter. U.J. 1131 'The Pauper of Pengarth Castle' was originally entitled 'Wonderful Waldo' - whilst his original U.J. yarn 'The Yellow Bricks' which was transferred to the S.B.L. was retitled 'In the Night Watch.'

G.H. Teed in U.J. 1096 called his story 'The Gold Mining Ramp' - which was altered to 'The Affair of the Yellow Bricks' - the editor must have liked that one! Colourful Gwyn Evans cribbed Robert Louis Stevenson in U.J. 1071 calling it 'Treasure Island' - the editor H. W. Twyman soon altering it to 'The Time Killer.' That famous Xmas U.J. number for 1924, Teed's 'Sexton Blake's Xmas Truce' was originally 'A Minute past Midnight.'

There are dozens of other changes I could quote, and should there be sufficient interest in this article, I could no doubt give more of them later. In closing it is worth recording, and reverting to

NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by JACK WOOD

The death of Edwy Searles Brooks, which occurred just too late for mention last month, will come as a great shock to his many admirers in all parts of the world.

He was, I suppose, one of the most under-rated of the many authors who have enthralled us by their stories over the years, over something like half a century or more, in fact. For too many, however, he suffered by being unfairly compared with Charles Hamilton, for whom duty meant he had to act as a stand-in writer on many occasions.

It was inevitable that - although he was admittedly credited with being one of the better and more readable "subs" - he could not bask too freely in an aura to which the Hamilton cult was grudgingly unwilling to admit him and the other substitute authors.

Credit, I feel, should be accorded to Mr. Brooks in his own right, as a writer who created an atmosphere entirely his own, one which even a past editor himself admitted no other author could hope to emulate. His creation of St. Frank's, of its many inhabitants, and the many and varied adventures the boys, with their girl chums from Moor View, enjoyed, should stand in their own right as masterpieces of invention and authorship.

His earlier work, however, stands equal comparison, whether under his own name or that of Robert W. Comrade. When the Nelson Lee Library was founded 50 years ago, it was not long before Brooks and G. H. Teed were providing all the detective adventure stories for the new library. We recall with affection Brooks's invention of such characters as Eileen Dare, Professor Cyrus Zingrave, and Douglas James Sutcliffe - Jim the Penman.

But the merging of detective and school yarns through the medium of Nelson Lee and the creation of the entirely new world of St. Frank's was Brooks' crowning achievement.

The stories flowed with ease and inventiveness from his prolific pen. They all held together as one giant tapestry so that one series followed neatly from another, and the general picture fitted clearly into one canvas. Edward Oswald Handforth, Willy Handforth, William Napoleon Browne, Archie Glenthorpe - and many, many others, - became household friends known throughout the world, loved and cherished in

happy memories.

Regretfully the saga had to end, but some of the characters lived on in a new form in the stories of Norman Conquest and Inspector Bill Cromwell from Berkeley Gray and Victor Gunn.

Now that saga, too, is ended. Another great author's world of fantasy, adventure and detective lore has passed into another orbit, and we shall all be the poorer for it. The stories will be read again and again, however, and the characters will live on in the memory, especially at this time of the year.

Where, I wonder, are all those thousands of us who joined the popular St. Frank's League? Where are all those whose pictures and letters appeared in Brooks's own personal column in the NLL, a chat which created and maintained a sense of personal relationship between author and reader not copied in many, if any, companion papers?

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That NELSON LEE COVER MYSTERY SOLVED

By W. O. G. Lofts

I was interested in the article in November C.D. on the mystery of that sudden change of title and cover of NELSON LEE LIBRARY No. 243. Not forgetting of course C. H. Churchill's further comments on the subject in December C.D.

The title that E. S. Brooks originally gave to 'SINGLETON IN LONDON' was 'THE SCHOOLBOY GAMBLER' - indeed, it is worth recording, that the majority of E.S.B's own titles were altered by the editor - but more about this at a later date.

According to my information, the sudden change of cover, plus the title, were at the express orders of the controlling editor. It should be explained that all proofs and illustrations had to be O.K'd. by him before going off to the printers - a usual practice which is still done today. It was felt by him - whether rightly or wrongly - that the title and original cover of Singleton playing at the tables was too 'lurid' for new readers and eagle-eyed parents who watched their sons' reading.

Knowing full well the high moral tone of E.S.B's. writing, when he like Charles Hamilton always showed the folly of boys playing the giddy ox, this may sound absurd - but there you are. Controlling editors did funny things at times - and as readers know, made some astonishing decisions - but the fact must be faced that they certainly had the power and authority to change anything at a moment's notice.

I can give no explanation for the missing chapter heading. Probably it was just a printers' error. I do, however, disagree that the substitute cover was probably the work of another artist than ARTHUR JONES. Apart from confirming from an official source that JONES was indeed the illustrator, my own knowledge of boys' paper artists would have recognised his unique style straight away. The men with slouch hats - spidery drawings - and shaded background are typical of the artist better known as THE THRILLER illustrator. I do agree that this hastily substituted cover - taken from a black and white drawing in the centre pages - may not be up to the standard of other normal covers, but as front covers go, it is not all that bad in my opinion.

* * * * *

"FATTY" LITTLE

By H. Chapman

Fatty Little was introduced into the St. Frank's stories in Nelson Lee O.S. No. 228 entitled "The Fat Boy of St. Frank's."

St. Frank's having been partly destroyed by fire the whole personnel of the College was transferred to premises in the heart of London whilst St. Frank's was being rebuilt, repaired and decorated.

This was a very exciting series, one of the best, and Little was only introduced towards the end.

There had not been a genuine fat boy at St. Frank's previously and he caused great amusement by his size, tremendous appetite and incongruous name.

Immediately he joined the College an attempt was made to get him to run away and appear in a travelling circus as a fat boy. Being promised unlimited supplies of wonderful 'grub' he almost fell for this, but his good sense prevailed at the last minute and he changed his mind.

Apart from his size and appetite Fatty bore very little resemblance to the Hamilton fat boys, Billy Bunter, Baggy Trimble, Tubby Muffin, being more like Fatty Wynn.

According to his description in the stories he appears to have been bigger, fatter, and with a larger appetite than any of them, even Bunter.

He does not seem to have been quite so unscrupulous as Bunter, Trimble, etc., in the way he acquired his eatables, however.

Like Fatty Wynn, he was always ready to beg, borrow, 'gate-crash' a feed, take part in a raid for 'grub,' and celebrate a special occasion with a big feed, but he did not stoop to pilfering in the

Bunter fashion.

Fatty (real name James, by the way) was a good natured honest, popular boy, whose only weakness was 'grub,' which he mentioned everytime he opened his mouth. Such phrases as 'great doughnuts,' 'by chutney,' 'great pancakes,' etc. occurring regularly in his conversation.

Apart from being a good goalkeeper, in which he was second only to "Handy" I cannot recall that he shone much as a sportsman.

He was, naturally, an expert cook, and always took charge of cooking and meals during barring-outs, camping and picnics, his efforts being much appreciated.

Fatty appeared more or less regularly in the stories. We were never allowed to forget him, although he did not take a leading part as a rule.

Perhaps the author was wise in this, as apart from his build and the way he could make food disappear, there was nothing very interesting or unusual in his character and he could have become a bore.

THEY CHANGED THE TITLE! (continued from page 5)..

Charles Hamilton once again - it is perfectly true that there were four Magnet stories awaiting publication when the paper ceased suddenly in 1940. 'The Battle of the Beaks,' 'Bandy Bunter,' 'What Happened to Hacker' and 'The Hidden Hand.' The second title would certainly have never appeared as such, but as 'The Meddler' in print. As I stated in a recent Controversial I don't think that Charles Hamilton was ever guilty of making fun of any affliction, even though the editorial staff were well meaning in not causing any offence to 'Bandy' readers.

("Box and Cox" was the name of a play written in fairly early Victorian times. One was a printer, the other a hatter.

For quite a number of years Charles Hamilton ended his Gem and Magnet stories usually with the words of the title, and, that being so, it is clear that the editor changed a good many titles. -ED.)

URGENTLY REQUIRED to complete collection:

SBL (2nd) 601, 617, 638, 669. (3rd) 96, 111, 148, 151, 158, 161, 164, 326, 348, 357. Also Brandons, Quiroules, Teeds.

MAGNETS between 1240 and 1300: mint copies of 1511, 1515.

Exchanges available.

WRITE: G. H. WILDE, 145 Wensley Drive, Leeds 7.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

SEXTON BLAKE REVIEWS

CORPSE TO CUBA

(Mayflower 3/6)

Arthur Kent

The Rhodesian problem and the guerrilla war in Vietnam has tended to make us forget the crisis in Cuba which nearly sparked off another world war not so long ago. This novel somewhat forcibly reminds us of it. This is not a detective story. There are no intricate problems for Blake to unravel - no mysteries; just a straightforward trek across Latin America, with the lives of two beautiful sisters dependent for their survival on his ability to outwit a rebel Cuban colonel, one of Castro's most trusted men. And, against a changing background of coffee and tobacco plantations, colonnades of waving Royal Palms, tree-lined boulevards, and skyscrapers, the shadow of Fidel Castro looms greyly the while.

The plot is simple. Blake goes to Cuba ostensibly as a special writer for a magazine, regarded as 'simpatico' by the Cubans, but primarily to act as chaperon to one of the sisters, Zita Chatterton, an Anglo-Cuban, whose parents lost all their property when Castro came to power. Her desire to meet Castro to arrange a financial settlement, however, is secondary to her determination to free her sister, Wanda, from the clutches of the rebel officer, who is demanding the huge ransom of a million pounds. In her quest she has an invaluable ally in Blake.

This is a "made-to-measure" for those readers who like Blake in a purely adventurous role in the old 'Ted' style, and, as a film, its naivety would assuredly have earned it a "U" certificate. Tinker, to the pleasure of many, no doubt, is also reminiscent of past days, being more of the youth than the sophisticated young man of the present day.

Taking a leaf - or, rather, a much used word of favourable import from the author's book - this, the first Blake of 1966, is really 'simpatico!'

Walter Webb

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"EVERY MAN AN ENEMY"

W. Howard Baker

An advert appears in a national newspaper for an unknown author to come forward and claim the royalties on a best-selling novel.

Five people answer the advert; within hours one is to die, violently.

Blake's job is to establish the identity of the genuine author before more killing takes place. He works fast, but the killer strikes again.

The first half of this book is set in London, but it's when the action moves to a house in the country, where Blake, Tinker, and all the suspects are to spend the Christmas that the story becomes a thriller of the traditional type.

This should please practically all readers, for the setting and atmosphere is reminiscent of the old Blake stories.

The two chapters where the five claimants are introduced individually are gems of characterisation, my favourites being Lavina Webb and Prout.

I enjoyed this book, and the reappearance, in a minor role, of one of the great criminal characters of the past, set the seal on the pleasure this story gave me.

The Berkeley Square set-up has been replaced by the Baker Street rooms, complete with Mrs. Bardell, and these changes plus the additional material, make this a vast improvement on the original edition published in 1957.

R. Norton

WHY SO TIMID?

GEOFFREY WILDE writes us: "There seems to be a tendency for the Blake ventures to hang fire. If they are going to be as timid as this, why bother to revive the S.B.L. at all?"

The current stories could nearly all run happily enough with a couple of other characters; why harp on the Blake tradition and then pretend nobody wants it? I am personally quite certain that the only tale that "dates" is the recent one that isn't quite up with the clock. Get a stage further back than that and it can all be viewed more objectively; the story is read for its own sake with, if you like, an "historical" setting - which the reader is perfectly happy with, so long as the story's good enough."

Mr. Wilde clearly has a point here; several points, in fact. Unless the strong characterisation of Blake and Tinker is maintained

(continued on page 21)...

HAMILTONIANA —.—.—

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 57 - Magnets 906-909 - Ragged Dick Series

Charles Hamilton had unerring skill in depicting the elderly bachelor, the lonely squire who lived in solitary state. Many times did we encounter Sir Hilton Popper, the testy old baronet whose estate was mortgaged to the hilt, but whose pride increased as his finances diminished. Sir Hilton was a continually recurring delight in the pages of the Magnet, but occasionally, for the purpose of a single series, we would be introduced to another landowner of consequence, and in the Ragged Dick series there was a fine sketch of Sir Henry Compton, so proud of his ancestral estates that he was prepared to go to any lengths to prevent his wastrel cousin, Roger Compton, from inheriting the entailed property. He even went so far as to choose a waif, Ragged Dick, and send him to Greyfriars as the grandson whom he alone knew to be dead.

The situation was not altogether satisfactory, from an artistic point of view. There is something a little more than far-fetched about the missing heir theme, as Tom Hopperton has justly pointed out (though it has a respectable ancestry, in that it was beloved by Sir Walter Scott and other romantic writers). Furthermore, the idea of an honest waif who speaks well and who would give up anything rather than be bribed is again somewhat incredible, even though Charles Hamilton cleverly used the unsettled economic conditions of the time to explain some of it away. In some respects the situation closely resembles that of Kit Erroll's when he first went to Rookwood. Nevertheless, it must be confessed that a love of honesty is an unexpected quality to meet in tramps and crooks. One can only say that Charles Hamilton had a romantic attachment to caravans, wind-mills, circuses, boats - and honest waifs (especially those who did not know their real parentage).

It was a very readable series. Written in 1925, at the dawn of the Golden Age of the Magnet, it had a zest and gusto that was often lacking in many contemporary Gems that he wrote. Since there were only four numbers in the series, there were no signs of flagging, no repetitions, and no redundancies. The surprise climax was written in the authentic style, as breathless and exciting as tradition demanded.

The illustrations to the series deserve special attention.

There is something about the Magnet drawings in the early years of the coloured covers that renders them highly distinctive compared with C. H. Chapman's earlier and later work. They were drawn with more than usual care, with plenty of detail and a minimum of cross-hatching, and it was also possible to identify individuals more easily than at any other time. Finally, it was curiously satisfying to see in a rectangle beneath each picture a small extract from the text, followed by phrases like "See Chapter 8." The drawings were definitely dated, but they did not have the air of antiquity associated with the illustrations in red Magnet days. All in all, the production of the Magnet in 1925 reached a highly satisfactory standard indeed.

GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 27 (New Series)

That he had shot the stag whose antlers decorated his study, Mr. Prout firmly believed; and the other masters believed as firmly that this was a delusion of Mr. Prout's. Coker's opinion was that Mr. Prout had bought those antlers second-hand; and it was just like Coker to state that opinion one day in the Fifth Form-room just as Mr. Prout was coming in to take his Form. If ever, on any occasion, there was anything into which a foot could be put, Horace Coker could be relied upon to put his foot in it.

Those mighty hunting days - if any - were over now, at all events, and Mr. Prout was now a rather irritable old gentleman who had not seen his toes, let alone touched them, for years and years.

Years had touched his form to riper grace, as a poet has expressed it poetically. It was considered, in the Fifth, that it would have been a good exercise to walk round Mr. Prout. Grizzly bears, whose forefathers had fallen under Mr. Prout's deadly rifle, would have found it a soft job now to avenge those slaughtered forbears. So far from climbing the Matterhorn, Mr. Prout sometimes found a little difficulty in negotiating the stairs at Greyfriars. On this particular day, Mr. Prout's principal corn had been shooting with as much activity as if it had been in practice for a Bisley meeting. Whatever might have been the case with Mr. Prout's rifle, there was no doubt that the shooting of his corn was deadly.

On such occasions, the danger-signals were easily to be seen in a redness in Mr. Prout's plump nose, and a glint in his eye. The Fifth Form knew the signs well, and when Mr. Prout's nose flew the danger-signal, the Fifth were accustomed to sit up and take notice, to give Mr. Prout his head, and to walk warily. Except, of course, Coker!

Coker's mission in life being to exemplify the ancient proverb that fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 93. THE EXCEPTION THAT BECAME THE RULE

ROGER JENKINS: I wonder if you are right in thinking that Rookwood was the sole reason for the decline in output of Charles Hamilton's Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories? I should be inclined to attribute it to the fact that he joined the army late in the war (as stated in the autobiography) and was probably not released until some time after the war ended. This would account for the floods of sub stories in the Magnet and Gem in 1920 for example. After all, in 1922-25, Charles Hamilton was able to cope with Rookwood, Greyfriars, and St. Jim's with reasonable ease.

I do not think that Charles Hamilton knew anything about the Greyfriars story competition, for when I wrote an article on this some ten years ago, he wrote to me as follows: "I have just read, with amazement, your article I am learning things I never knew before.... The letter you quote as having appeared (from Frank Richards) in No. 406 Magnet I have never seen or heard of before, and it is a lie from beginning to end. The statement that the "Winning effort" would be judged by Frank Richards is so impudent a falsehood that I can scarcely believe that you have it right, and that there is not some mistake."

I think that the indignant tone of this letter leaves no room for doubting that Charles Hamilton had no hand in this competition.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 95. THE ECHO LINGERS ON

"Controversial Echoes" are this month purposely placed ahead of "Let's Be Controversial," for the simple reason that Roger Jenkins' echo gives rise to a good deal of thought. Roger and I, of course, often discuss Hamiltonia. More often than not we are in agreement, but occasionally we do not see eye to eye, and then, always the best of friend, we agree to differ. Our friendship would be dull if we always thought in agreement.

From the few rather vague lines in the Autobiography, I always had the impression that Charles Hamilton did not do military service. It is even possible that he told me so himself. I now learn from

Mrs. Hamilton Wright that he was actually in the army for one day. He was called up, and, for health reasons, was discharged the same day.

I think we must accept that the varying neglects of Greyfriars and St. Jim's were due to the other irons in the fire. And Rookwood was the first of those other irons. From 1917, Hamilton was regularly writing Rookwood and Cedar Creek. By 1922, Cedar Creek had ended and the Rookwood stories were very short. The Benbow series, too, had ended as had Hamilton's brief association with the School Friend.

As a result, in 1922 there were only four substitute stories in the Gem.

In 1915, which was really the time to which Controversial No. 93 referred, the Rookwood stories were a good deal longer than they were in 1922.

To me, the Hamilton protests, as quoted by Roger, have a slightly hollow ring, but readers must, of course, decide for themselves. It will be remembered that, in connection with that curious competition for Greyfriars stories in the Magnet, I passed the opinion that "Charles Hamilton can hardly have been unaware that such a competition was in progress." Roger makes it clear that Charles Hamilton stated emphatically that he did not know about it.

Comments about that weird competition featured in quite a number of Magnets over several months. I must confess that I find it difficult to believe that an author would not want to see his work as it went into print. Roger Jenkins, reasonably enough, has said to me that even if Mr. Hamilton liked to look at the Magnet, he could still have avoided Hinton's rubbishy editorials. I can't help feeling that an author would like to see what an editor was saying about him and how his work was being presented. Surely Mr. Hamilton must have known how the editor was in the habit of using fictitious quotes supposed to have come from Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, or Owen Conquest. Is there nothing in the Hamilton saga to suggest that the author himself subscribed to the world of make-believe which the editor created?

Some years ago Charles Hamilton wrote me that, until I gave him the information, he had never known that the early Ken King was published as being written by Sir Alan Cobham. A biographical article was called "A Knight of the Air" and had the by-line: "A brief chat about the author of our serial story 'King of the Islands.'" And then: "Further amazing adventures await the King of the Islands, as Sir Alan Cobham will reveal to you in next week's instalment." And "Sir Alan Cobham's Great Yarn - Start Reading It Now." And so on, week after

These splendid yarns will make you laugh.

Cheerful Charlie Brown.

THE
ORIGINAL BOY
VENTRILOQUIST.



THIS WEEK:

THE MISSING PICTURE.

the Greyfriars Herald has fallen off, which doesn't sound too promising. You'd think that everybody would run to a halfpenny.

The Butterfly is a nice, cosy paper. It has pictures of Butterfly Bill on the front page, and Eggbert and Philbert on the back together with a big picture of Flossie the Flapper. In the middle there are Inspector Spot; Gussy Goosgog and his scooter; Dicky Doenut (who is really a copy of Charlie Chaplin); and Beatrix Buttercup. The stories are worth reading,

too. I like Cheerful Charlie Brown the best. He is a ventriloquist, and I always enjoy the tales about him. There are two other exciting series: The adventures of Daring & Co; and The Doings of Dr. Dread. Finally

Introduce this Engrossing Series of Stories to Your Friends.



THE DOINGS OF DR. DREAD

THIS WEEK:

THE THIEF!

DANNY'S

JANUARY 1916.

It's really wonderful what you can buy for a halfpenny. And Mum will often give me a halfpenny when a penny would be just a bit too much.

Almost every week I have the Butterfly, Merry & Bright, and the Greyfriars Herald which all cost a halfpenny. The editor says that the circulation of

DIARY

there is the serial, "Human Nature," and Mum always reads this aloud to us on Tuesday evening, the day the Butterfly comes out.

A most amazing thing happened in the middle of the month. Earthquake shocks were felt in parts

of the country, and particularly in Denbighshire. At Matlock several people are reported to have been thrown out of their beds.

I picked up quite a nice bit of pocket money over the Christmas, so I have been able to have plenty of books this month. I bought Pluck one week, though I never think this is a very exciting paper. Charlie Chaplin features in Pluck, and there was also the story of the film "The Man in Possession" which featured Billy Merson. I also bought a book called "Cinema Stars," price 2d, which contains 200 photographs of film stars. Dad said it was a waste of money.

In Chips, which is a halfpenny paper, there is a new serial called "The School Bell" about the boys and girls at a council school.

Some of the characters in it are Harold Rabbits, Arthur and Edie Selby, and Joe Peters.

I had a pleasant day out with Doug just before school started. We went to Woolwich and enjoyed looking

READ THESE ENTHRALLING YARNS OF THE FIRM OF:—



THIS WEEK:

THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF A LONDON TYPIST.

START THIS GRAND SERIAL AT ONCE.



A STORY OF INTENSE DRAMATIC INTEREST.

at the shops in Powis Street, and also browsing round Woolwich Market which is at Beresford Square. Then we went to the first house at Woolwich Hippodrome, a variety theatre on a hill. The top of the bill was Marie Kendall and she sang "Just Like the Ivy on the Old Garden Wall," a fairly old song. I think I would have preferred the revue at Woolwich Empire, but Doug said that nice people didn't go to Woolwich Empire. I had bought a small tin of pink salmon for 2d in Woolwich market, and Doug and I shared it for supper when we got home.

The editor of the Magnet has published a lot of letters from readers praising the Boys' Friend Library entitled "School & Sport." I wonder if he wrote them himself. "Jimmy R. of Repton" who is a good poet has sent the editor some poetry which says what a wonderful tale "School & Sport" was. It makes me downhearted for I thought it a norful tale.

There was a new girl at Cliff House called Phyllis Howell in "School & Sport," and the editor says that readers are clammering for more of her. He says we shall have plenty more of her - and that's a promise. It sounds like a threat to me.

There have been some bright stories in the Magnet this month. I thought that "Hazeldene's Honour" was an excellent school story. Snoop laid a bet with Ponsonby against Greyfriars winning a football match, and then tried to do some blackmail with a faked photograph of Hazeldene which he had taken with Penfold's camera.

Next tale - "The Schoolboy Speculator" - wasn't bad if you like Fisher T. Fish. Coker started a fund to send socks and shirts to soldiers, and Fishy bought them up from the shops and tried to make a profit. Quite ticklish in parts.

Funny how little things give a tale away. In "Bob Cherry's Challenge," the Co snowballed Loder, and Loder said "After this unparalleled exhibition you will each write out ten thousand lines before Monday." The tale introduced Tom Belcher, a young prizefighter from a series in the Boys' Friend. Belcher knocked out Loder, and Bob Cherry boxed Belcher at a music hall - and drew. And Phyllis Howell, the new favourite flapper, wrote Bob a letter to say she had watched Bob's brave fight and thought him wonderful. Fancy Miss Primrose letting her girls go to watch prizefights!

Then came two football stories which were passable. They were "The Colonel's Cup" and "Fought For and Won." Colonel Wharton gave a cup for competition among the juniors. The Remove won it. Not too bad, really.

The Boys' Friend keeps well up to standard. In the first of the

month was "The Rookwood Pantomime" in which Jimmy Silver & Co decided to stage "Alice in Wonderland." Quite a funny yarn.

Next week was "Jimmy Silver's Journal," a bit hack-kneed, really, in which Jimmy Silver started a mag like Tom Merry's Weekly and the Greyfriars Herald. Then came two stories about a German boy, Heinrich Cloutz, who came to Rookwood. Jimmy Silver befriended him, but he was a spy, signalling to zeppelins. These two tales were "Just Like Jimmy" and "The Hate of the Hun."

Finally, the Boys' Friend 21st Birthday Number - a lovely issue with a coloured cover drawn by R. J. Macdonald entitled "Dad's First Number." There was also a free art plate called "His Good Deed." A long complete story was "A Scoutmaster's Honour" by Patrick Carruthers. The pictures looked a bit old-fashioned so I think it was a reprinted story. A new serial by Duncan Storm was "Secret of the Seas." The Rookwood tale was "Scouts of the School" in which Dolly Chisholm lost her dog Fido, and the Rookwood scouts searched for it.

The editor of the Boys' Friend listed all the main authors and artists who had contributed to the Boys' Friend during its 21 years. They are: Authors: G. A. Henty, G. Manville Fenn, Jules Verne, Earl Roberts, W. H. Back, Stacey Blake, Sidney Drew, Mark Darran, Reginald Wray, Maxwell Scott, Herbert Maxwell, Henry T. Johnson, Lieutenant Craven Gower, Hamilton Edwards, Duncan Storm, Arthur S. Hardy, Owen Conquest, Henry St. John, J. Harwood Panting, Beverley Kent, David Goodwin, W. Murray Graydon, Allan Blair, S. Clarke Hook, Captain Patrick Carruthers, Captain Malcolm Arnold, Maurice Everard; artists: Harry Lane, T. W. Holmes, E. E. Briscoe, R. J. Macdonald, J. A. Cummings, Val Reading, G. M. Dodshon, Leonard Shields, C. H. Chapman, Arthur H. Clarke, H. L. Shindler, Fred Bennett, Philip J. Hayward, Albert Morrow, A. J. Gough, Vincent Daniel, W. M. Bowles, Fred Holmes, Arthur White, C. H. Blake.

And the following members of the B.F. staff are with the fighting forces: Lieutenant Panting, Lieutenant Down, Lieutenant Hope, Lieutenant Home-Gall, Petty-Officer Wood Smith, Bombardier Aldcroft, Corporal Boddington, Lance-corporal Collins, Corporal Pratt, R. S. Kirkham R.N., Private Twyman, Private Taylor, Private Harris, Private Shute, Private Lawrie.

We have seen some good pictures in the cinemas this month. With Sir John Hare in "Caste" we also saw the new Essanay Charlie Chaplin film "Shanghaiad." Also the last episode of "The Exploits of Elaine" which was entitled "The Cluthing Hand Exposed." When we found out who the Cluthing Hand really was it was a terrific surprise for us and

for Elaine as well. I won't put down who it was for that would spoil it for anyone who is going to see for themselves. "The Further Exploits of Elaine" has now started and this time there is a strange character called "The Shielding Shadow" but he is not a villain but a guardian angel for Elaine it seems.

We have also seen Elizabeth Ridsen in "Charity Ann," Mary Pickford in "Girl of Yesterday," Marie Tempest and Eddie Lyons in "Mrs. Plum's Pudding." With Victor Moore in "Chimmie Fadden" we saw Charlie Chaplin in "Charlie at the Show," but this was a Keystone and not a recent picture. At the end of the month we saw Henry Ainley and Chrissie White in "Sweet Lavender."

Though the Gem may not be quite so great as it used to be, it still has the best tales on the market. All the stories this month have been pretty good. In "D'Arcy's Daring," Gussy came across Mr. Selby on account of D'Arcy Minor. Gussy was detained, but hired a car to take him to Rookwood, being chased by Mr. Selby. Then Mr. Selby fell through some ice. Also in this Gem was a Christmassy tale called "After Many Years" by Reginald Thompson.

In "Grundy the Hypnotist," Grundy took lessons from a music hall performer named Dr. Hunk, who was a charleytone. Fairly funny.

"The Bounder of St. Jim's" was a new boy named Baggy Trimble. He and Gussy had met before, so Trimble tacked himself on to Gussy. Trimble is a bit like Billy Bunter, but not so good. He also came in to the next week's story which was called "Barred by the Study" in which Trimble tried to cheat over some charity collections. I don't dislike him, but there are altogether too many new boys turning up all the time.

Last story of the month, "In the King's Khaki," told of Marie Rivers' father, who used to be a cracksman called the Professor, being wounded in the army. Talbot's uncle, Colonel Lyndon, was going to turn the Professor over to the police, but he changed his mind. In this issue of the Gem, the serial "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays" ended.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: In the extract from his Diary published in our December issue, Danny said that he thought Will Evans, whom he quoted as appearing in the Drury Lane pantomime in 1915, was the actor "Pimple" of early British films. Mr. Leonard Packman tells us that "Pimple" was a Fred Evans, and give the information that in early 1917 this comedian was making "The Merry Wives of Pimple" for the Walturdaw Co.)

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BLAKIANA - "WHY SO TIMID?" (continued from page 11)...

- and well put over - they become merely names.

We are, at any rate, promised the publication of "The Living Shadow" and "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs" (The Mystery Box), and these are splendid imaginative tales. Their author, Pierre Quiroule, was unsurpassed for his characterisation of Blake and Tinker, as well as other cleverly constructed etchings of character. When these tales appear - and we believe they will appear very soon - we should all have in store some most fascinating ruminations and discussions.

HAMILTONIANA - LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL (continued from page 15)...

week, month after month.

And thirty years later the real author told me, with indignation, that he had never known about it before.

Is it really likely that Charles Hamilton did not know? Did his eyes never light on Modern Boy during the three months of Cobham's "authorship"? Did he never want to see the paper in which his new story of the South Seas was appearing?

If he did not, then we can accept that he knew nothing of that old story competition. But if his tongue was in his cheek when he wrote me about the early Ken King, it is feasible to think that his protests about the story competition were equally counterfeit.

Charles Hamilton was, without doubt, an amazing man. I have said more than once that I do not believe that sentiment over his work ever had any place in his make-up. But one thing is surely evident. If we accept that Charles Hamilton was so aloof from the presentation of his own work that he never bothered to see it in print, we also accept that he was merely an automaton, tapping away at a machine, day in, day out, with pride in nothing but the making of money.

You will think what you like - but I prefer to think that he was human, with a natural human pride in his work and the way it was presented, and with the human weakness of drawing the long bow when it suited him to do so. I loved his stories so much that I should be disheartened if I thought their author saw them as nothing but cheques.

Some of his comments to many of us in the early post-war years were undoubtedly soured by the unfair treatment which he considered he had received. Possibly we should not be disloyal to his memory if we accept those comments with a certain amount of reserve. He mellowed as time went by and real fame came to him. Those diatribes against

his old publishers and colleagues became things of the past.

Let's wind up on a different note. Recently our reviewer asked: "Did Charles Hamilton ever refer to Prout as 'Paul Pontifex Prout'?" The query was raised because the name Pontifex was used a good deal in the last two or three Bunter books.

Roger Jenkins and I searched fairly diligently in the modern Magnet without finding a Pontifex. At long last, it was Roger who struck lucky. He found a Paul Pontifex Prout in a Hamilton story - but a long time ago. The story was "The Persecution of Mr. Prout," issued in 1922.

There is not much doubt that a good many of those middle names found in the old Who's Whos were invented and supplied by whoever compiled the Who's Whos - and that was not Charles Hamilton. Whether Pontifex came about in that way we don't know. We do know that the creator of Greyfriars had little if anything to do with Pontifex after 1922.

Our reviewer is quite an observant lad, isn't he. Elementary, my dear Watson!

* * * * *

WELLINGTON WELCOMES NUMBER ONE

By O. W. Wadham

Surface mails surely take their time in this jet age. November 29 was the day Magnet No. 1 was advertised to appear on N.Z. book-stalls, and Wellington, the Capital City's, leading daily, the Evening Post, surely gave the event royal treatment.

A full half page, topped by an actual-sized reproduction of No.1, and large pictures of the Famous Five and Billy Bunter. Below was an excellent article "Most Famous Schoolboys in the World" by one J.St.J.

The writer concluded his article by saying only 150 copies would be available for the Wellington area, and more than half of them are going to Hawke's Bay (that's where collectors J. Murtagh and Geoff Harrison reside), so the other 69 copies should vanish in short order.

WANTED: MAGNETS: 1277, 1283; POPULARS (1922): 161, 162, 168, 170, 172, 173; S.O. LIBS: 184, 185, 232, 238, 242, 248, 252, 258;
CHUMS: before 1910.

38, ST. THOMAS RD., PRESTON

SALE: GEMS, POPULARS, B.F.Ls.

S.A.E. WHITMORE, 55 LOIS DRIVE, SHEPPERTON.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

AUSTRALIA

Members settled down in their now familiar surroundings at "The Gaslight Bookshop" on Thursday, 18th November to enjoy another grand get-together.

The evening got away to a good start when chairman Syd Smyth opened proceedings at 6.15 p.m. with a further discussion on the reproduction of Magnet No. 1. A letter from our good friend Bill Gander had raised some interesting points, and his details of discrepancies provided some stimulating discussions. Hamilton enthusiasts expressed great disappointment at the news that the other Hamilton projects have been deferred since this item had exceeded all expectations. One of our well informed correspondents has expressed the opinion, heartily endorsed by all members, that should these other "Magnet" productions ever get to see the light of day, then our respected Editor, or expert Roger Jenkins, should be offered the chance to select the stories most likely to appeal to a wide public and since they are also in the position to vet the sub writers, this would save the publishers from making further blunders.

On behalf of members the secretary expressed thanks to photographers Don Harkness for his services in making possible the sending of coloured photos of members in greeting cards to the four overseas clubs and other friends abroad.

A welcome visitor was the "Merseyside Foghorn" which Frank Unwin had sent along. Just like old times, Frank and we certainly enjoyed having you and the Merseyside news and views with us again.

The next hour was spent in bright chit-chat and learned discussion as letters from near and far brought other friends to join our cheery circle. There was Tom Dobson from Victoria, Arthur Holland from Wellington, N.S.W., Gordon Swan, Western Australia and Jim Cook, New Zealand from close at home whilst Harry Broster breezed in from the Midlands and Bill Hubbard sent news from Kenya to add to the evening's enjoyment.

The remainder of the evening was spent most pleasantly discussing possible locations and dates for the club's Xmas party.

B. Pate, Secretary.

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MIDLAND

Meeting held November 30th, 1965.

The atrocious November weather may possibly have kept our attendance at the meeting at the Arden Hotel down to nine, but reasonable travelling conditions on the night would suggest other reasons. However, Win Partridge, Ivan Webster, Jack and Madge Corbett, Norman Gregory, Tom Porter, Ian Parish, Ray Bennett and Jack Bellfield attended and formal apologies came from Ted Davey and George Chatham.

The anniversary number and collector's item were as usual brought along by Tom Porter. Gem No. 38, published on Saturday, November 30th, 1909, 56 years ago, was the anniversary number and it had been preserved in immaculate condition by Tom, whose care of his books is something to wonder at. One was bound to reflect on the world shaking events that have disturbed our peace since that copy rolled off the press, yet this fragile book was there preserved intact.

The collector's piece was "The Rivals of Rookwood," the only Rookwood story to appear in hardback form. It contains the celebrated telephone conversation between Lovell and Manders, one of the funniest episodes in the whole range of Hamiltoniana.

A reading from the acting secretary was from "Billy Bunter among the Cannibals."

A discussion on the topic "If you had a son, which school would you prefer for him, St. Jim's, Greyfriars, Rookwood or St. Frank's?" took place following the reading. A number of interesting observations were made. St. Jim's, it was declared, was the most business-like school from the academic standpoint, Rookwood the most snobbish and Greyfriars the most stylish and St. Frank's was not mentioned at all. Your choice, it was declared would depend on your taste and fancy. (As Sam Weller once declared on the subject of spelling.)

The meeting concluded with an oral quiz of a general nature testing the knowledge members possessed of the old books and proved that by and large we are a knowledgeable club.

We are now looking forward to December 14th when we have our annual Christmas Party. We hope for a good attendance at this, for we usually have a grand time.

J. F. Bellfield, Correspondent.

NORTHERNMeeting held December 11th:

A record gathering of 28 members and friends flocked to Hyde Park Road for our 16th Annual Christmas Party. The long, gaily-decorated table at which we all sat down to an excellent meal really resembled that in the familiar pictures of the Remove beanfeasts in the Rag.

Adding to the gay appearance of the room was a wide display of the old papers, whose cover illustrations formed the basis of our first party game. This was followed by an ingenious competition devised by Jack Allison, in which three teams representing Bunter, Vernon-Smith and Mr. Quelch engaged in a race to the Remove dormitory, starting respectively from the pantry, the Cross Keys and the Masters' Corridor. For once Bunter managed to leave the field standing, his team running home easy winners. Smithy's usual luck again saw him through, and he too got back to bed undetected, while Quelch surprisingly got no further than his study door. Perhaps just this once that gimlet eye was tolerantly averted in recognition of the festive season.

Ron Hodgson next took some colour photographs of the assembled guests and continued, incidentally, to snap some of us in unguarded poses throughout the rest of the evening. A nice comedy film-show that'll make some time! A Bunter drive followed next, and ten feverish rounds of dice-shaking put a keen edge on our supper appetite. During the supper interval Geoffrey Wilde challenged the men to solve a problem involving a waistcoat and a loop of cord. Some elaborate manoeuvres by Harry Barlow merely brought him back to the starting-point, but after several mental and physical tangles Alan Barker came up with the solution.

We wound up with a word-game from Gerry Allison, and then the prize-giving: no compulsory oration with this one, and a nice present even for those at the bottom of the form.

And so to 1966; next meeting, January 8th.

Johnny Bull

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MERSEYSIDE
Meeting - December 12th

This was our traditional Yuletide get-together, and Chairman Bill Windsor was delighted to welcome another fine crowd, though not quite up to November's standards. It was regrettable that John Farrell and

Bert Hamblett were both under the weather and unable to be present while Frank Case just could not manage the trip from Nottingham this time. We really missed them.

How better could we commence this meeting than with the feed? Mrs. Windsor had again done us proud, and sausage rolls, mince pies and cakes disappeared down capacious gullets in such a manner that even Bunter would have found it hard work to compete.

A delightfully nostalgic article written by John Farrell was read to the meeting, much to their pleasure, and this was followed by an unusual quiz on the famous pre-war dance orchestras which was won hands down by Jim Walsh who is no slouch at playing some of these instruments himself. For fifteen years Jim has proposed the toast of all our hobby friends, and of absent friends, and again he did the honours. The toast to 'absent friends' takes on a more poignant note each year.

Then came a very keenly fought Criss-cross Quiz which was narrowly won by the Hamilton section, and which closed the meeting on a very jolly note.

So another merry Christmas meeting came to a close. But there will be many more.

Amongst the jollity two very sad notes were struck. We extend to Frank Hancock's family our sincere sympathy on his death at a very early age, and also to his fellow-members of the Northern Section who have lost yet another loyal and hard-working colleague. And towards the end of the meeting we learned with much regret of the death of Edwy Searles Brooks. Two very sad losses indeed.

Next meeting Sunday, 9th January. We take this opportunity of wishing all members of our fellow sections and those overseas unable to belong to a section, a happy and prosperous New Year.

Frank Unwin

L O N D O N

By candlelight 39 members gathered together at the home of Marjorie and Bill Norris for the Christmas meeting. Amongst these was Bill Hubbard, home from Kenya, and Miss Hood, who had travelled up from Kingsgate. The latter had company on her homeward journey as John Bush had made the trip up from Whitstable. Roger Jenkins obliged with two chapters from the Cavandale series, very appropriate these with the Yuletide spirit. Don Webster conducted a quiz, his son Peter

had taped a passage from one of the Wharton Lodge Christmas stories and at the conclusion questions were asked and it was Winifred Morss and Bill Lofts who supplied the most correct answers. Millicent Lyle, Eric Lawrence, Jim Doyle and Nicholas Bennett shared third place. Bob Blythe read a couple of chapters from 'The Spectre of Handforth Towers' and 'Handforth's Ghost Hunt' from the Northestrian series.

Quite a good many present gave their views on their favourite Christmas series.

In the absence of Len Packman, happily getting back to good health, Charlie Wright distributed the first copies of the Sexton Blake catalogue, a stupendous production. Don Webster proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Len Packman, Bill Lofts, Charlie Wright and Derek Adley for their fine work in producing the catalogue. Bob Blythe seconded it.

Ray Bennett of Sollihull phoned his sincere greetings to all. The two Margate outing colour films were shown by Marjorie Norris and Charlie Wright had brought along a Laurel and Hardy film for projecting. A very enjoyable feature.

Charlie Wright reported that the Charles Hamilton record was a cracker. A playing over of it at the January meeting is contemplated.

(concluded foot page 30)

RESULT OF OUR CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

What the reason was, we don't know! Maybe the old-fashioned jig-saw puzzle tickled the fancy. Whatever the reason, there was an enormous number of entries for our Christmas contest, and some of the entries were most beautifully executed. To select just two winners from such a galaxy of talent was indeed a superhuman task. We have, therefore, added to the number of awards.

The new Christie novel goes to Miss N. Rutherford, Kingsbridge, Devon. The new William book goes to Leonard Packman, East Dulwich. Three additional book awards go to John Steele, Burma Camp, Accra; E. W. Cox, Bitterne, Southampton; John Beck, Lewis. We thank all who took the trouble to enter for the little contest.

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: MAGNETS: 32; 39; 40; 41; 42; 44; 45; 131 to 149 inclusive, 205; 238; 239; 309; 328; 337; 351 to 359 inclusive; 435; 752; 753; 762; 763; 773; 850; 858; 862; 863; 864; 865; 868; 921; 940; 942; 951; 985; 988. GEMS: 493; some issues between 801 and 832; 953; 954; 956; 975; 980; 984; 985; 989; 990; 992; 993; 998. POPULARS: 452; 455; 466; 474. ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE RD., SURBITON, SURREY.

THE POSTMAN CALLED (Interesting items from The Editor's Letter-bag)

ARTHUR V. HOLLAND (Australia): Although I was somewhat depressed by the antics of the Grand Old Duke of York, I was soon restored to a happy frame of mind upon reading the article on "Christmas Thrills at St. Frank's" by William Lister. I consider the series mentioned by him - Christmas at Rathmore Castle - to be one of the very best Christmas series of any school I have yet read.

CLIFF SMITH (St. Annes): I would like to pay tribute to Roger Jenkins for his excellent articles on Hamiltonia, which is, of course, my favourite. I have re-read his articles many times, and studied his style of writing. I'm not an authority on journalism by any means, but I can see how much he has improved over the years. His use of English has matured and he uses his wide vocabulary to punch home his points of view. I find myself agreeing wholeheartedly with his opinions in most cases.

B. R. LEESE (Costock): I love "Danny's Diary." I wonder who he is, and I envy his access to the information he gives us each month. His 1915 jottings have revived many boyhood memories.

JACK WOOD (York): The item about "Pimple" in last month's C.D. struck an unexpectedly topical note, as I was looking through our newspaper files for the usual pithy pars from 50 and 25 years ago when I found a curious reminder of December 1915. Our local picture theatre (now a multiple store) was showing a main film, "Jim, the Penman" (no stars named) and in the supporting programme was a "Pimple" comedy. At the Theatre Royal that week was "Diana of Dobson's," a play written by Cicely Hamilton.

GEOFFREY WILDE (Leeds): The TLS leader was certainly interesting, though obviously uninformed in certain particulars; but having in mind the astonishing accolade of a front-feature in so reverend a journal, how heartily I echo your November editorial. Magnet No. 1 reprint was a bold and imaginative gesture, and surely the response of press and public spoke for itself. How can one explain the mysterious mentality that now prevails at Fleetway? The goodwill, the nation-wide publicity was all there. It seems obvious to me that a golden opportunity has been missed.

(We ordered two copies of Magnet No. 1 in mid-December. The report came back: "Now Out of Print!" Isn't it amazing? - ED.)

L. S. ELLIOTT (London): Thanks for the Annual. My first three are: Frank Vernon Lay, Otto Maurer, and Mr. Buddle.

ALEX STANDEN (Stockport): Once again that great Combined Operation, the production and safe delivery of Collectors' Digest Annual, has been effected to the delight of Old Boys the world over. I was particularly pleased with the article on the old "Champion," my great favourite and in my opinion one of the best three "all round" papers for boys, the others being "Chums" and "Boys' Friend."

WALTER FLEMING (Chingford): You, your contributors, and your printers have all done a first-class job on the Annual. Congratulations on the Slade story which is very good indeed. Congratulations also to Vernon Lay for his excellent article on John Wheway.

L. M. ALLEN (Bournemouth):

Mr. Frank Shaw's enquiry in the December C.D. revived my memories of "Pimple" but I cannot recall or trace his appearance in one of the comic papers around 1915. He was appearing at this time on the Halls in a burlesque presented by Lew Lake, often at the same time as one of his slapstick films was screened at the local cinemas. Time permitting he would make a personal appearance at the cinema and deliver an appeal for the War Saving campaign. His popularity waned after the War and he toured for some years the No. 3 Music Halls in revues. The last time I saw or heard of him was in 1926 at the old Attercliffe Palace in a revue, "Stand at Ease," the highlight was a dramatic sketch in which he took the part of a gorilla! His real name was Fred Evans, a nephew of the famous Drury Lane comedian, Will Evans.

F. STURDY (Middlesbrough): Your contributor to the postbag from Edinburgh makes the mistake of many in referring to 'Exploits of Elaine' as the 'Clutching Hand.' He goes on to make a further one in giving the title 'The Hooded Terror' to a serial actually named 'The House of Hate,' which did feature Ruth Roland. Still, it was all very interesting. Other serials of the time were 'Trey of Hearts,' 'The Broken Coin' starring Francis Ford, Grace Cunard; Jack Holt and Eddy Polo in 'Liberty' and Herbert Rawlinson in 'The Black Box.' I saw them all and enjoyed them, though I suppose we would smile at them now.

JOHN BECK (Lewes): The new Annual is well up to the very high standard of previous years. I found Mr. Buddle very amusing and re-readable, but I missed 'Danny's Christmas.'

SEXTON BLAKE CATALOGUE NOW READY

This long anticipated catalogue, prepared with loving care by members of the Sexton Blake Circle, is now awaiting you. It is a veritable encyclopaedia of Sexton Blake lore, listing all the titles, authors, and leading characters of the stories in the Union Jack and in the Sexton Blake Library from the very beginning till the present day. There is also a wealth of information on the Sexton Blake adventures which featured in other periodicals. Beautifully produced, it sums up to a magnificent job.

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LONDON REPORT (from page 27) The venue of this meeting will appear in the next newsletter: date, Sunday, January 16th. One face missing at this meeting was John Wernham, our worthy president, a bout of 'flu preventing him making the journey. One touch of sadness at the meeting was the news of the passing of the famous Nelson Lee author, Edwy Searles Brooks. Also the passing of Frank Handcock, secretary of the Leeds Club and of Melville Thomas, our member in Newport, Mon. Suitable tributes and sympathy were expressed.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

OUR AUSTRALIAN CLUB HAD A PARTY!

(from Bette Pate, our Special Correspondent "Down Under.")

Sydney is a city in the eye of a hurricane, an all-enveloping explosion of towering new buildings changing the landscape with a rather frightening rapidity. This progress, admirable though it may be in many respects, robbed club members of their former charming rendezvous. Thanks, however, to the good services of our monthly host, Stan Nicholls, we were able to enjoy a truly delightful celebration on December 14th, at a quiet restaurant.

Eating, of course, was a major item of the evening's proceedings, but between the four delicious courses served in candlelit surroundings, there were varied dishes to suit the most exacting gourmet in hobby matters.

John Ryan and Peter Walters, enjoying their first Christmas with the club, were equally enthusiastic with the rest of us when the eagerly-awaited C.D. Annual was proudly presented by the secretary as the "piece de resistance" of the evening's entertainment. Everyone was pleased to welcome our old friend "Danny" to the festive board, and the comments made about our dear old friend would have been balm to his soul could he have been with us in the flesh as well as in spirit. We hope you are having the happiest of Christmasses dear "Danny," and thank you for all the pleasure you have given to your multitude of friends all over the world.

Naturally, "Mr. Buddle" received a warm welcome and some equally flattering compliments, for although he is a comparative newcomer to the ranks he has earned for himself a well-deserved place among the hierarchy of favourites. Warmest congratulations were extended to Victor Colby for his splendid article in the Blake field. Well written as always, and most informative, it was a welcome upholder of the Blake traditions.

All with different tastes to satisfy, found items of merit to satisfy them as the secretary passed round her treasured copy. One thing they had in common, however, was their unanimous opinion "The Greatest Show on Earth," and a very hearty round of applause for the outstanding talent and selfless devotion to the hobby shown by our one and only Editor. Thanks for keeping the flag flying and the sun shining over our little Empire, Eric, and may the year ahead lead to even bigger and better things for you and for C.D.

Greetings from absent friends swelled the chorus of voices round the festive board: Arthur Holland, far away in Wellington, N.S.W.,

whose entertaining letters have added so much to our enjoyment throughout the years; David Hobbs, ex-Liverpudlian, now in Seattle, whose card showed a picturesque old railway station with an ancient steam engine puffing through the snow - shades of Friardale.

No Christmas party would be complete without a visit from our old friend Bill Gander, dropping in with a flurry of snowflakes to add the perfect touch to the atmosphere of the gathering. Really grand to have with us, Bill, with our pleasure in your company a little dimmed by the news that the S.P.C. is nearing its last bow upon the stage it has filled so magnificently for so many years.

Fully satisfying was the company of Ron Hodgson, whose cheery letters keep us in contact with our friends of the Northern club, and also the company of Frank Unwin of Liverpool who sends interesting news and views from his part of the world.

From closer at home came some most interesting items on the Hamilton scene from Tom Dobson - once more, Bunter has made the headlines in the Melbourne "Age," whilst the Greyfriars Prospectus was given a good reception by the Melbourne "Sun." All welcome publicity to spread the hobby even further afield. Last but not least, a cheery greeting from our Queensland colleague, Harry Carter, whom we hope to welcome to our club room in 1966.

Members paid warm tribute to the memory of Edwy Searles Brooks when the chairman announced that this creator of so many of our favourite characters had died recently. And to the family and friends of Frank Hancock we wish to extend our sincere sympathy. We will always remember Frank for the time and trouble he took to give a helping hand to our club activities. His sudden death is not only a great shock but it is an even greater loss to his friends.



The Editor wishes his readers,

all over the world,

A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

