

# COLLECTORS DIGEST

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# CRACKERS

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# Collectors' Digest

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## OLD WINE:

Two readers, Messrs. Walter Webb and F. Cockroft, have suggested that we should reprint some of the articles, written long ago, by stalwarts, when the hobby was comparatively young. Our two readers have different reasons for making this suggestion.

Mr. Webb would like us to give more attention to the old "bloods." He certainly has a point there. It is rarely that we turn the spotlight nowadays on Victorian papers. This is mainly because the readers interested in Victorian papers are very few in number. All the same, it would be a pity to allow that aspect of the hobby to wilt and die simply for the want of looking after it.

Mr. Cockroft thinks we may be nearing saturation point in the matter of topics, and that to use old articles would lessen the strain on your editor whose job it is to fill the magazine.

Generally speaking, I am thankful to say that there is no difficulty in filling the Digest, and I think that we manage to keep interest alive, even though, inevitably, we repeat ourselves at times.

Mr. Cockroft suggests that readers might look forward to "This Month's Reprint" as a regular feature. One thing is certain. If we start a new feature, then one of the old ones will have to make way for

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it. There are other points to consider. Few of our present writers would wish to see their old articles reprinted, but many of those who have passed on wrote splendidly in their time. Our knowledge to-day is much greater than it was, say twenty years ago. In reprinting, there would always be a minor danger of giving a new birth to the old errors.

The majority of the great articles of the distant past were of great length - a great many of them were serialised. The serialisation of articles is unsatisfactory for several reasons, and it would be rare for Collectors' Digest to serialise any article to-day.

We will, certainly, present one of these old articles in the next Annual. I think it will be welcomed. So far as the monthly is concerned - well, it all depends on you. We try to give readers what they want. If you would like some of the old articles re-presented, write and tell me so - and let me know what you think I should leave out to make way for it.

#### A HUNDRED COMING UP:

In two months' time our "Let's Be Controversial" series will reach its one hundredth edition. This month, April, the series has in fact been running for exactly nine years.

Something like 100,000 words have been printed in the nine years of "Let's Be Controversial" - the equivalent of two hard-cover books of average length. Surely almost every aspect of the Hamilton story has been touched upon in this series at some time or other. It is quite a staggering thought.

Kindly readers have often told us how they would like to have the Controversial series in book form, and though that is hardly likely to happen, it is pleasant to think that such a book might make a fascinating volume.

In the June issue of Collectors' Digest, our eminent contributor Roger Jenkins, under the title "A Hundred Not Out," reviews the Let's Be Controversial series. We think you will enjoy looking back with him.

#### THE GREAT MARCH MYSTERY

Let us give credit where credit is due. Our postal services are, occasionally, wonderful. Unfortunately, they are also, at times, awful.

During the weeks preceding publication day, the envelopes for Collectors' Digest are addressed and stamped. Where a subscription has expired, a reminder slip goes into the envelope. Then, when the new magazines arrive, the envelopes are filled. The envelopes are

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tied up in bundles, according to the initial letters of the surnames of subscribers. A taxi is called, and all the bundles are carried away to the post-office.

Our March issues were turned over to the post-office on March 5th. Nearly a week later it became clear that many of our K - L subscribers had not received their copies. On March 11th I made enquiries at the post-office. By March 13th, our K - L subscribers were receiving empty envelopes, post-marked March 11th.

It is not possible to state with absolute certainty that we did not, by some aberration, omit to fill the K - L envelopes. Slip-ups occur in the best of regulated houses. But it really seems unlikely that we could have tied up a bundle of empty envelopes without realising they were empty. There is a point which the post-office should answer. Even if the envelopes were empty, they were still clearly addressed and stamped. Why did not they go forward in the usual way on March 5th, the day they were handed in? And why should they be postmarked March 11th, the day on which I started my enquiries? At the moment, the postal authorities have made no attempt to answer the question.

It seems to be a mystery beyond the skill of Mr. Wedgwood Benn. Maybe Sexton Blake could solve it. Though he often seems to be lost in transit too.

THE EDITOR

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NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK - MARCH 12 - 19

Amongst the book displays throughout Britain in connection with the above, was one in Menston Public Library, near Ilkley. This has been arranged by the librarian of the Northern Section Old Boys' Book Club, and consists of scores of books, story and detective papers, and comics, between the years 1900 - 1940.

Some of the items in the exhibition - all from the club library - include copies of Deadwood Dick, Buffalo Bill, Robin Hood, Union Jack, Greyfriars Herald, Holiday Annual. Many Magnets - including Nos. 1 and 1683, Gems, Boys' Friend Weekly, etc., and weekly comics, Chips, Butterfly, Jester, Lot-o-Fun, Rainbow, etc. etc.

In addition there is the Magnet Catalogue, the Nelson Lee ditto, and such up-to-date items as the Author's & Writer's Who's Who, the Greyfriars Prospectus, the L.P. record "Floreat Greyfriars" etc. etc. etc. Reports of the exhibition appear in most Yorkshire papers. Another score for Figgins & Co!

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ODD CHARACTERS FROM "COMIC LIFE"By O. W. Wadham

It could never be said that Butterball and Tall Thomas, those two front page characters of Comic Life in the golden age of comic papers, could ever be classed in the same degree of popularity as Weary Willie and Tired Tim; or even Dreamy Daniel for that matter.

As a keen collector of old comics, I have lately been studying 1919 issues of Comic Life, and I have come to the conclusion that Butterball's title was a misnomer.

The truth is that Butterball should have been fat-faced and clean shaven. He could then have glowed with buttery visage, and lived up to his name.

True, he was rotund enough, but all that face fungus the little man had could hardly be connected with a name like Butterball.

And his companion, Tall Thomas, was a disappointment too. Putting it plainly, he was too pot-bellied to be really funny. Too much he reminded one of a politician or a society "playboy." He could have been more bean-like to liven up those Comic Life front pages with Butterball.

In fact, looking over Henderson's coloured Comic Life after so many moons have moved away I have decided that two more appealing strips than Butterball and T.T. were worthy of being selected for front page honours.

First choice would be Pyjama Percy and Balmy Bill. Those two cheerfully odd looking fellows could have scored full marks with colour treatment.

Then there was that other most original character, Scientific Silas. Maybe whoever invented the helicopter got the idea from the head-gear Silas always wore. True he was never as funny as P. Percy and B. Bill, but he was much more original with his strange scientific escapades.

It could have been that Butterball and Tall Thomas were retained as rivals to Weary Willie and Tired Tim, so long "in the pink" in Chips. If so it was a mistake that must have been plain to the Henderson firm when Comic Life "took the count," while Chips was still in its prime.

Finally another thing stands out in contrast in Comic Life's last years: Uncle Funn, who conducted "The Editor's Corner." He was pictured as a middle-aged Mr. Punch type. Most other editorial writers were shown as much more boyish types altogether, and even elderly Mr. Chips looked far more cheerful.

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Comic Life these times is hard to come by, which shows it was never very popular, but it has had interesting possibilities, all the same.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Is the shortage of any old paper to-day any indication that it was not once popular? We think not. Comic papers are scarce simply because, like the Boys' Friend, their very size made them difficult to preserve. In addition, the comics were usually the properties of young children - and young children tend to destroy as they go.

It is not easy to come by copies of the old Champion, though very few people, admittedly, seem to wish to come by them. Yet the Champion is reputed (and I am not convinced of it) to have had a circulation far in excess of the Gem and the Magnet).

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CLIFF HOUSE

By Norman Linford

I thought the Annual was first rate this year and can well imagine the time and patience required to produce such a good result. In particular I thoroughly enjoyed the article on Mr. Wheway and the writings of Cliff House School. As Cliff House is of particular interest to me, following my advert in the Annual, I obtained a copy of BESSIE BUNTER OF CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL written by Charles Hamilton, post-war, under his pen name of Hilda Richards. This story I did not enjoy at all and was left with the impression, which has so often been expressed by other people, that it was really a story of Greyfriars substituing girls' names for boys. A lot has been written about Charles Hamilton's writings on Cliff House and that he had not the flair for writing for girls, but I would like to say that on re-reading the first six stories of Cliff House that he wrote in the School Friend in 1919 I think at that time he had the right approach. I think those first six stories were very good. To me another interesting thing is that in subsequent years when writing about Cliff House in the Magnet Mr. Hamilton gives the reader the impression that the only characters which mattered at Cliff House apart from Bessie Bunter, were Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevelyn. He hardly ever refers to Barbara Redfern, yet in his first six stories in The School Friend he gives very great prominence to her, Mabel Lynn and others. Finally, even Mr. Hamilton forgot the name of one of his characters when writing Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School by referring to Cissie Train when this should have been Cissie Clare.

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# DANNY'S DIARY

APRIL 1916

Easter came pretty late this year. I think it was almost as late as it could possibly be. We all spent Easter with my Mum's great-aunt Anne at Wimbledon, and I always had to change into my slippers in the hall, for she is a very particular lady.

On the Saturday we went to Wimbledon Theatre and saw a wonderful magic show called Maskelyne's Mysteries, from St. George's Hall in London.

On Easter Monday we went to a cinema called King's Hall and saw Alice Brady in "Cup of Chance" and Tom Mix in "The Stage Coach Guard." There was also a very funny Keystone called "Ambrose's Sour Grapes."

A rather awful affair occurred in Hereford this month. There was a fire during a children's matinee at the Garrick Theatre, Hereford, and 8 children were killed.

The Rookwood tales in the Boys' Friend have all been pretty good. Peele of Rookwood is a fine impersonator, and in the first tale "In Deep Disguise", he disguised himself as Mr. Bootles and laid bets with Joey Hook, the bookmaker. It was to embarrass Mr. Bootles.

"The Wrong Sort" the next week was a new boy named Lord Mornington. He arrived at Rookwood with his valet, Jenkins. Mornington reminds me of what the Bounder of Greyfriars used to be.

In the next story, "A Disgrace to Rookwood," Mornington caused a disturbance at a pub called the Peal of Bells, and pretended that his name was Jimmy Silver. Jimmy only just escaped a lot of trouble.

After this came "Jimmy Silver's Sacrifice," and I think this must have been written before the Mornington stories. Jimmy and Rawson were both in for an exam to win the Greek prize of £20 but Jimmy realised that Rawson really needed the money, so Jimmy failed purposely. Mornington was not in this tale, but he was back again in the month's final story "The Rival Recruits." Mornington hates Jimmy, and is all out to make trouble for him.

I think the Magnet has slipped downhill a lot since the white cover came in. This month's tales have been rather third rate, though the first one, "Micky Desmond's Luck" was passably good. Desmond found a valuable Sandwich Islands' stamp in an old album, and it was interesting as different people tried to get possession of it. The second tale "The Terrible Two" was quite stupid and made me feel cross. Two big fellows named Bob and Curly Williams joined the Remove and

were put in "Study 17 which happens to be vacant." They licked Harry Wharton & Co, and one of them even became captain of the Remove. Finally it turned out that they were old enough to join the army, and they had been put up to going to Greyfriars as a joke by Ponsonby. As if fellows could walk into any school like that! Utter rubbish, and a blot on the Magnet.

"False Evidence" was a peculiar tale. Mr. Quelch was knocked down and stunned as he stopped to light his pipe in the lane. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull were blamed for attacking him. All very unsatisfactory - and I'm sure Mr. Quelch doesn't smoke a pipe.

"The Upper Hand" was better, but rather melodramatic. A Mr. Black had replaced Mr. Lascelles. Wingate had a feud with Carne. A convict saved Wingate from death in the caves, and Wingate befriended him. The convict turned out to be Carne's father.

"Coker's Conscript" was passably amusing. Coker thought that a man named Filey ought to be in the army, so he set about making Filey join the army.

Drury Lane Theatre has become a cinema for a season. Doug took me there to see the film "The Birth of a Nation," which is said to be a real masterpiece by director D. W. Griffith. It was a very long picture, and quite exciting in places. The Ku Klux Klan came into it. The orchestra and the sound effects were great.

Dad was livid when he heard that Doug had paid 2/6 each for seats (and no half-price for me). Dad said: "A half-a-crown to see a film. You must be mad. You'll come to want."

A new serial entitled "The Diamond From the Sky" has started at our Popular Picture Palace. It features Lottie Pickford who is Mary's sister but not much like her. The serial is in 30 episodes, which seems an awful lot. Still, "The Exploits of Elaine" is in more than that number of episodes, but they had a second spasm called "The Further Exploits of Elaine" and now "More Exploits of Elaine" - so it's really three serials in one.

Doug has had the Union Jack each week, and it seems to be well up to standard. I like the tales about Leon Kestrel. The first and last of the month introduced Kestrel, and were called, respectably, "913; or the Case of the Aniline Formula," (Blake's little monoplane came into this tale again) and "The Affair of the Dutch Merchant."

I wasn't very keen on "The Place of Fire" which introduced Sir Richard Loseley and Lobangu, the Zulu. But "The Martel Square Affair" was a very good mystery yarn about a Turkish bath.

I had a Boys' Friend Library this month entitled "Charlie Chaplin's Schooldays," by Sidney Drew, but it was far too silly, and



I'm sure it is not a true story. I also had a Nelson Lee Library entitled "The Ship of Doom" which was about Nelson Lee in his fight with the Green Triangle, a band of crooks.

It has been a good month in the Gem, though I really wasn't all that keen on "Conscripts" of St. Jim's." It kind of made me feel a bit uncomfortable. Mr. Selby has been keen on getting all young men into the army, but, by a trick with a newspaper, the boys make him think that the army age has been raised to 51, and he is very nervous when he thinks he will be called up. It somehow didn't seem quite right that boys should make a man of Mr. Selby's age look such a fool.

"D'Arcy's Debt," though, was a dream of delight, when Gussy refurnished Study No. 6 on the hire-purchase system. A real gem. Julian and Mr. Moses played pleasant parts in this tale.

"The Eleventh Man" was a tiresome tale. Cousin Ethel got on the railway line in a fog, and somebody rescued her from a train. Levison claimed he was the rescuer, but it was really Lumley-Lumley. "The St. Jim's War-Workers" was good fun and very enjoyable. Owing to the shortage of man-power, due to the war, some of the boys took spare-time jobs. Gussy helped a chimney sweep, and finished up as a barber's boy. Quite a rib-tickler.

Lastly, "A Mission of Mystery," though it was not Martin Clifford's usual style, was very good and I liked it. Gussy was given a large sum of money by a mysterious Mr. Poppe, the only condition being that he had to spend all the money in three days. Quite a winner.

We're going to have some magic in our own lives, it seems. A committee has recommended the government to give us an extra hour of daylight every evening. It will be just marvellous if parliament can do this, and I hope they do. It will give me an extra hour for cricket in the evenings, though the farmers are against it as they say it will annoy their cows. If this magic thing happens, it will be next month.

Oh, and milk has gone up to 6d a quart. Prices are getting something awful.

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FOR EXCHANGE AND SALE: Four Holiday Annuals, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, in excellent to mint condition. Will exchange 3 of these for Gems 753 to 764. Will sell the fourth for £2.

Write: Box C.R. c/o Collectors' Digest, Excelsior House, Grove Rd.,  
 Surbiton.

# NELSON LEE COLUMN

(CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD)

## A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

By Jim Cook

Most stories end with a moral; mine starts with one. It is: NEVER HAVE A POLICE RECORD.

Jack Frinton, of the sixth, will never forget his lapse into crime for he will never be allowed to. The police will gently recall the time when he committed a series of robberies around the St. Frank's neighbourhood and although the thefts were of minor importance in comparison to the more serious burglary that followed Frinton was involved to such an extent that the Bannington police arrested him and charged him with the assault on a manservant.

It was a most brutal attack for a poker had been used and the man had terrible head injuries.

But as all the details were recorded under the title of "The Mysterious X" I won't delve any more into St. Frank's past history.

But it seems that history has repeated itself as it has a habit of doing. A series of robberies in Bellton, Bannington and the outlying districts had a familiar ring about them for in each case a card was left behind with an "X" printed on it and although the thefts were minor and of very little value to the thief Inspector Jameson of the Bannington police very naturally thought of Frinton of the sixth form at St. Frank's.

For Frinton had once committed a series of small thefts from houses and shops and had left a card after each crime bearing the legend "The Mysterious X." Thus Inspector Jameson could be forgiven for linking Frinton with the robberies for they had a similarity that at once recalled the "Mysterious X" crimes.

There is an old saying "Give a dog a bad name and hang him" which must of necessity enter into a policeman's training. Each criminal has his own hall mark and it is this that sends the policeman to him when a crime has been committed bearing signs familiar to the criminal's modus operandi.

Thus it was that Inspector Jameson was seen entering the Triangle at St. Frank's the other cold morning on his way to see Nelson Lee first and Frinton later. The inspector was a pompous ass and an arrogant officer but it was quite natural he would investigate Frinton's movements at the outset. Any police officer given similar

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clues would do the same.

The news of the inspector's visit went round the school like wild-fire. Chambers of the Fifth happened to be crossing the Triangle when the inspector arrived and Cuthbert Chambers mentioned it to Clive Russell, the Canadian junior, who passed on the news to Bob Christine, heard by young Billy Dale of the East House.

In no time at all everybody at St. Frank's knew of the inspector's visit and speculation was rife. Nipper, being Nelson Lee's assistant, was expected to explain why the police had come to the school but even Nipper was mystified. No startling events had occurred which would bring the police to St. Frank's and the old school was in one of its quiet periods when the hum-drum existence of school life followed day after weary day.

And so it was destined to continue in this fashion. For Jack Frinton, after a series of investigations and checkings, was proved to be in the clear. In face of Nelson Lee's exhaustive enquiries Inspector Jameson was convinced of Frinton's innocence and at the end of the day the inspector left St. Frank's a much wiser man.

But who would have thought Frinton was going to have his past raked up like this. Does it mean he will never be free from suspicion whenever robberies similar to those he committed himself are carried out? I'm afraid it does. But he has one comforting thought. With Nelson Lee behind him he need have no fear. The days when Frinton kept bad company are long since over and Lee knew it. But it didn't prevent Inspector Jameson making the routine enquiry which must automatically follow when cases bear a similarity.

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Dr. Stafford, the headmaster, has received £500 from an anonymous source. The other morning he found a long envelope in his mail with the money in fivers and a letter in it. It was addressed to him personally and requested him to "give the juniors a good time." As it was signed "wellwisher" the Head contacted Nelson Lee for advice.

But for once the famous schoolmaster-detective was at a loss. Just how do you give a junior school a "good time" with £500 sent anonymously? The money may have been stolen and the thief anxious to get it off his hands in a fit of remorse or a guilt complex; or it may have been a joke, although had the gift been in the form of a cheque the joke would have back-fired had the cheque been returned with RD written across it. For such would have been expected; but here was £500 in fivers - a hundred of them - real cash.

Accordingly, after consulting with Mr. Lee, the Head decided to place the money in his safe for the time being in the hope the donor would make himself known later. It isn't easy to give money away!

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Nipper has written to me about the weather at St. Frank's. It has been raining continuously for six days and many parts of the countryside are flooded. There is fear for a return of conditions similar to those which were recorded in the series under the heading "The Great Flood At St. Frank's" but Nipper assures me it could never be as bad as that again.

The Pine Hill reservoir, which supplies Bannington with its water, would never again burst its granite walls and flood Edgemore, St. Frank's and Bellton. It had been rebuilt to last a hundred years.

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PENTELOW'S SCHOOL STORIES

By Gerry Allison

Not everyone will agree with Laurie Sutton's opinion of Pentelow as a writer, or with his statement in the March "Collectors' Digest," that "actually, J.N.P. was quite out of his depth in writing for a weekly paper."

I wonder if Laurie has ever heard of the weekly paper "PLUCK," or read the superb stories about Wycliffe and Haygarth schools, which, commencing in January 1907, ran for many years therein?

They were later reprinted practically completely in some thirty odd copies of the BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY which is where I first read them. These copies of the B.F.L. are now among the most treasured items in my collection of old boys' books. That I am not alone in my estimate of Pentelow, the two following extracts will show.

HERBERT LECKENBY - COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL, 1952: "I shall always contend that in them (the Wycliffe stories), John Nix Pentelow, writing as Jack North, gave some of the greatest character studies, made life in a fictitious boys' school more realistic, and expressed some of the finest sentiment ever to appear in stories of their kind."

HARRY BROSTER - COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL, 1958: "Stories rich with humour, schoolboy pranks, the sins and sorrows of the average boy, in some cases pathos, but mostly all full of sport and adventure. Nothing too far-fetched in these yarns, just enough of that little bit of extra to make a good plot. Such stories were those written by that very versatile author John Nix Pentelow. ... I think he excelled with his school stories."

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Charles Lamb once suggested that we should sing grace before reading Shakespeare. Well, I certainly feel like singing the student's song GAUDEAMUS IGITUR (let us therefore rejoice) whenever I begin - once again - the marvellous sagas of Wycliffe and Haygarth! "Vivat Academia! Vivant Professores! Vivat membrum quodlibet! Vivant membra quaelibet, Semper sint in flore!"

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# HAMILTONIANA

## LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

### No. 98. FOR THE RECORD

It is four months since the Frank Richards long-playing record came on the market, and we have purposely refrained from taking a critical look at it until now. Plenty of readers have sent their impressions to us by letter, and almost without exception these readers, in the happy glow of possessing such a splendid memento of the G.O.M., have little but hearty praise for it.

In my view it is extremely good, but it is not beyond criticism, and I think it could have been a good bit better than it is.

The star of the record - Charles Hamilton himself - is superb. It is quite astounding to hear a man of 85 so fluent and confident. Plenty of the politicians, and others accustomed to public-speaking, who bore us on television with their "ers" and "ahs" and "ums," could find a lesson in the eloquence of this 85-year old genius.

Personally, I like the second side of the record very much better than the first. I am inclined to agree with our reader who wished that the song "Floreat Greyfriars" had been sung in English rather than in Latin. I think the song is put over too slowly and stodgily. A good lyric, set to a good rousing tune, and sung with brightness and spirit would have given everything an inspiring start and, later on, a striking finish. If, at the end, the song had come over as though from a distance, the effect would have been unforgettable.

I think it was an excellent touch to have a short reading from the commencement of the very first Greyfriars story, but, generally speaking, I think there was far too much reading on the first side of the record. It all depends, of course, whether you like to be read to or not. I delight in reading the stories for myself, but I am left cold by anyone else reading a chunk aloud.

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We can accept that the circumstances were exceptional, but, in that case, the reader should have been exceptional. For the most part he lacked adequate expression. There may have been a psychological advantage in the reader having a juvenile, rather high-toned voice, but deeper tones would have made for more interesting listening. The reader was accurate, but he became monotonous - and that should have been avoided at all costs.

He was best in the Hurree Singh extract, but he failed sadly as Quelch, and he made Gosling sound like a sprightly cockney.

If the reading of so many passages was necessary and desirable, and I question this, then the reading should have been done by a man who was also a dramatic actor.

Some years back I heard George Sewell - now a character actor, famous on stage and TV - read a Magnet chapter at a meeting of the London club. Now that was something exceptional, for George could both read and act. He managed to entrance, where the average reader bores.

Readings fail, of course, because the reader seldom puts across our own personal picture of the characters in question. And ejaculations like "Ha, ha, ha" and "Yaroooh" just manage to get by in print, but sound quite absurd and unbelievable when anyone tries to read them.

The whole record is extremely well edited, and the little musical asides are cleverly used. On the second side, Charles Hamilton's various comments are obviously replies which he made to questions asked by an interviewer. The interviewer did his job reasonably well, but not really well enough. His questions could have brought out a good deal more than they did.

The interviewer knew why the record was being made - but did he really know a great deal of the Hamilton story?

The record was made on account of the fame that came to Charles Hamilton since the end of the war, and on account of the publicity which Billy Bunter has received since 1945. It has been assumed by so many people, whose knowledge of the whole thing is superficial, that Billy Bunter made Charles Hamilton famous.

In fact, the post-war Bunter is merely a fraction of the Hamilton story. Fame came to Charles Hamilton in the post-war years, but it was earned long before the second world war.

Fame came to Charles Hamilton because, when it became possible for his stories to be published again, the "old faithfuls" remembered. They had never forgotten the great days of the Magnet, the Gem, the

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Popular and the rest. It was the "old faithfuls" who really brought fame to Charles Hamilton. Though the post-war Bunters were ostensibly written for a new generation, it was the "old faithfuls" who were responsible for the publicity which made them so successful. The post-war Bunter was nothing outstanding. The post-war Bunter, without our memories, would have been an also-ran.

Professionals, with their inadequate knowledge, have cashed-in on the phenomenon. Candidly, I doubt whether Charles Hamilton himself ever realised how much he owed to the "old faithfuls" - at any rate, if he realised it, he never admitted it. He, too, subscribed to the fallacy that his work on the post-war Bunter had brought him fame.

The record, excellent and heart-warming though it is, could have been so much better if the interviewer who asked the questions, had known the entire Hamilton story as we know it. If you or I had been asking the question, we should never have allowed the record to be made without reference to Tom Merry, Arthur Augustus, Jimmy Silver, the Rio Kid, Cedar Creek, Ken King.

Probably the record maker assumed that the buyers of the record would be the new generation which has taken Bunter to its heart. I, myself, have no doubt at all that most of the new generation have ignored the record, and that its main support has come from the "old faithfuls."

Perhaps this is all carping. It is wonderful to have the record at all. It is a magnificent tribute to the world's greatest boys' author. Maybe it is ungenerous even to think that it could have been a great deal better than it is. Or, maybe it was inevitable that something so keenly anticipated should vaguely disappoint.

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#### CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 96. THE ROSE (Further views)

NEIL LAMBERT: Opposing a reader's view, I must say that I find the more unusual names of characters in the Buddle stories much more fascinating than the common or garden variety of Smith, Jones, Baker, Roberts, Woods, etc. We come into contact with these names in every day life and into that glorious past age of schoolboy life it is pleasant to escape temporarily.

Antrobus, Irony, Restarick, and Vanderlyn are all out of the ordinary names and they make a vivid impression on the mind with the characters they portray.

It is interesting to note that Charles Hamilton did not introduce any Jones, Woods, or Smiths and the like into his stories (with perhaps the one exception of the notorious Vernon-Smith!)

Instead we have on the one hand our heroes D'Arcy, Wharton, Cherry, Tom Merry, Nugent etc., - pleasant sounding names, whilst on the other we have the cads, Skinner, Snoop, Racke etc., - objectionable sounding names which typified their characters.

One wonders if Bunter would ever have attained his world wide fame with a name like Jones or Johnson!

GEOFFREY WILDE: I was amused to see you taken to task for the oddity of the names in the Slade stories. I have always felt, in answer to the Shakespearean question, that there is a lot in a name. Imagine the detective called Billy Blake or the fat Owl Sexton Bunter - let alone substituting Gill or Clegg for the surnames. Personally I always like some distinctive touch in the names of leading characters that helps to confer real individuality, so I am all in favour of the touch of the unusual in Antrobus or Irony. As you say, it is often thus in real life: one of my classes contains pupils named Chowaniec, Stefaniuk, and Suchanowski.

Hamilton had in many ways a marked flair for names, and could moreover rely on his great skill of characterisation to lend even the more commonplace names a personal quality. One might compare Jimmy Walker of the Greyfriars Sixth with Hawk Walker of Packsaddle - the forename conveys the difference in character at a stroke. But his ability in this direction operated within a very limited range, and over the wide scope of Hamilton characters I would say far too few names have that saving touch of individuality; too many are cut from the same cloth. How many names at Greyfriars end in -er? And how many, when Quelch, Mauleverer, Vernon-Smith and perhaps another one or two have been set aside, have any really distinctive quality?

GERALD ALLISON: Nomenclature is a fascinating subject, but as long as the characters are interesting and alive, an unusual name doesn't matter. I find Alan Antrobus as real as Eric Kildare.

Here are the names of some of P. G. Wodehouse's schoolboy characters at Wrykyn, taken from Vol. XIII of "THE CAPTAIN":-  
Shoeblossom, J. R. Leather-Twigg, Clephane, Henfrey, Selwicke, Tibbit, Postlethwaite and G. Montgomery Chapple. All 'most unusual' as Alan Stewart would say, but all as convincing to me as Irony, Restarick and Antrobus.

LARRY MORLEY: I knew a fellow called Antrobus in the army. He came

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from Liverpool, and said it was not an uncommon name in the North-east.

I don't agree with you when you say that you prefer stories set in genuine surroundings. I could never get on with the travel series, and was always uncomfortable when I read of the boys going abroad. I find such places as Courtfield, Wayland, and Wharton Lodge real, and I prefer the Hamilton boys "on their own grounds." The only travel series I liked was the Holywood series, and then only because Coker was in the party.

GEORGE SELLARS: I think that Charles Hamilton was a genius to think out all the names he used in his stories. I always have a soft spot for Harry Wharton because, over 50 years ago, before I discovered the Magnet, my sister married a man named Wharton. They had two sons, but neither was named Harry. My nephews have married, and have sons, but none of them is Harry. I am still hoping that one day I may yet see a Harry Wharton in the family.

ERIC FAYNE adds: The travel series are outside the point in discussion. The Hamilton boys never went to mythical countries. But I would find Hampshire or Sussex more convincing than Loamshire or Eastshire.

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GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 28 (New Series)

The ketch tore on - at a pace that would have made Bully Sampson wish, had he seen her, that he was on board a "ten-cent yawl" rather than a heavy Dutch schooner with a bow like a Dutch cheese. The wind was stiffening every minute, and the Hiva-Oa men looked anxiously at the graceful cedar masts that were bending like whips under their load of canvas.

But King of the Islands had sailed the Pacific in every weather - he had been through hurricanes in the reef-ridged seas of the Solomons, through heavy gales among the shoals of the Paumotus, through a roaring typhoon in the China Sea. He knew to an inch what sail his craft would carry in any wind, he knew to an ounce what his sticks would bear. There was more than half a gale blowing when the sun dipped out of sight and darkness fell like a cloak on the Pacific.

It was not till the Polynesian crew were chattering with uneasiness, and Kit Hudson's face was grave, that King of the Islands gave orders to shorten sail. Koko, a figure of bronze, held on his course with one eye on the binnacle - not a slant of either eye at

the mountains of canvas overhead. His faith in King of the Islands would not have been shaken had Ken spread out his spinnaker in the teeth of a typhoon - not that King of the Islands was likely to do so.

Under short sail, the ketch still tore through the water, with a bone in her teeth.

Not a star gleamed in the sky; blackness, like a pall, lay on the Pacific. Red and green, the lights of the Dawn shone through the darkness as she tore on, with great billows heaving round her, and the spindrift lashing like whips at the faces of the men on deck.

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REVIEW

THE CHARLES HAMILTON MUSEUM (6/- by post)

It would be impossible to find a more fascinating or more worthy souvenir for the Hamilton collector than the illustrated brochure of the Charles Hamilton Museum at Maidstone. Printed on glossy art paper, lavishly illustrated, the book will be treasured by all the fans. It can be obtained for 6/- including postage from John Wernham, 30 Tonbridge Rd., Maidstone. The result should be long queues awaiting admission to the Museum every day in the coming summer.

A reader, writing in praise of the Museum Book, says "Apart from the C.D., I cannot remember when I had such good value for money."

To add to that would be gilding the lily.

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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; 472.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE RD., SURBITON, SURREY.

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WANTED: MAGNETS No. 10 and 54; 442; 617; 745; 761; 768; 771; 773; 774; 782; 784; 800; 806; 818; 835; 838; 841; 846; 847; 852; 854; 856; 859. Also GEMS: All years. Your price paid. Write to:-

JIM SWAN, 3, FIFTH AVENUE, LONDON, W. 10.

# BLAKIANA

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

First of all I would like to say how gratified the Sexton Blake Circle are at the way in which the Sexton Blake Catalogue has been received. There are now only 14 copies left, so that anyone who still wants one had better hurry up! A little later in the year the Circle will be sending to all purchasers of the catalogue supplementary pages which can be inserted at the end of the book without much difficulty. The information will contain, among other things, details of Blake films from the early days to date.

Several readers have written asking if I know anything about the Blake stories that appeared in the Penny Pictorial. I do, of course, already know this. I did in fact have some a few years ago. The period was 1908-9, and for the most part they were written by W. M. Graydon. I regret to say that lists of titles have never become available - and the same applies to the Blake stories published in Answers Weekly in 1910.

I have also been asked about the Sexton Blake Annual. There are only four of these - for the years 1938 to 1941. Practically all the stories are reprints from other earlier publications featuring the detective. Apart from their novelty there are two other good points about them: the print is nice and large, and the illustrations are by Eric Parker.

Small errors are bound to occur even after the most careful scrutiny. Thus, it has been pointed out to me that two Union Jack stories have been omitted from the S. Blake Catalogue. The details are as follows: (2nd series)

No. 345	The Colonel's Charger	by W. M. Graydon
" 1211	The Quest of the Limping Man (Character - Dr. Satira)	by R. M. Graydon

It will be noticed that the Blakiana section of the Digest is looking very 'thin' just lately. This is because I have no material in hand - and none has been forthcoming. All I can say is that if you wish Blakiana to continue, then it is up to you to provide the material!

JOSIE PACKMAN

THE SEXTON BLAKE CATALOGUEBy "Statistician"

Of all the catalogues produced by the London Old Boys Book Club in recent years - I would say (with of course due respect to the compilers of the others) that the SEXTON BLAKE CATALOGUE is far the best. In view of the tremendous amount of statistics in its pages it is really astonishing how few errors there are! This is due no doubt to the painstaking double-checking by Derek Adley/Bill Lofts/Charlie Wright/ and Len Packman.

I have been given to understand from Bill Lofts that this data was compiled some time ago, and since that date some additional information has come to light. As the majority of collectors, and those of course who have the catalogue, would like to keep theirs as accurate as possible - I have Bill's permission to release these additional details. Readers can therefore insert their own information which is as follows:

SEXTON BLAKE STORIES IN THE BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY (1st Series)

No. 165	Sexton Blake's Quest	Author	W. M. Graydon
No. 172	Sexton Blake Foreman	"	E. W. Alais

Additional B.F.L. since discovered...

No. 429	Through Unknown Africa (Lobangu)	"	Cecil Hayter
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UNION JACK additional details

No. 297	Sexton Blake Publican	Author is now known to be	
			E. W. Alais
No. 301	The Great Motor-Car Mystery	"	A. C. Murray
No. 845	Presumed Dead	"	R. H. Poole
No. 881	The Colour Line	"	R. C. Armour
No. 885	The Heir to Chiverton	"	S. G. Shaw

Bill tells me that although technically it could be assumed in a way correct that JOHN ANDREWS was a pen-name of H. A. Hinton controlling editor at Amalgamated Press at one period, it would be more accurate to say that it was an editorial name (as in the case of Desmond Reid) to cover a rewritten editorial old Blake story. Many editors had this task - mainly Percy C. Clarke (Martin Frazer) of Sexton Blake fame, Donald Bobin and W. J. Bayfield.

I have no doubt that the remaining few details missing from the catalogue will be available in time, plus of course the few errors

noticed! In this respect I would say, as in charge of an electric computer which is reputed to be infallible, errors still do occur! So, in closing, I will only echo the words of so many others - the Sexton Blake Catalogue was a magnificent job by all concerned in its production.

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R E V I E W

"The Deadlier of the Species"

Desmond Reid  
(Mayflower 3/6)

Mrs. Leslie, leaning forward in her chair, and with a hint of a tear in her eyes, said in a low voice, "Mr. Blake, you must find my husband. I can't bear to think of poor Herbert wandering around the country somewhere, ill and suffering, perhaps even starving." Her beautiful face reflected pain and distress at the thought.

Blake thought it seemed like a routine "Missing Persons" case, but decided to put Tinker on to making a few enquiries. It is not long however before the case takes on a definitely sinister aspect and a body is found under the most macabre conditions. Identification takes place and Blake's services are dispensed with, but there are many questions that remain to be answered, so without a client Blake and Tinker decide to carry on with the investigation.

Was the death accidental or otherwise?

On the day of Herbert Leslie's disappearance, another man who had no previous contact with him, also vanishes from the same area.

After much probing, Blake succeeds in elucidating the whole tragic affair, but not before another life is placed in jeopardy.

This is a first-rate story told without any 'gimmicks,' a detective story in the true sense of the word. Investigation all the way, without Blake or Tinker being involved in any violence.

It grips from the first page, and holds you right to the end.

I can't help thinking about the odd choice of title, because it automatically narrows the suspects down to two.

This is the third book in this present series by this author. Although this one has the editorial name of Desmond Reid and the other two took the name of Richard Williams, all three were written originally by Stephen Francis. The others were "The Sniper" and "The Man with the Iron Chest."

These stories are so successful I think some of the credit should be given to the original author.

Ray Norton

# NEWS OF THE CLUBS

## MIDLAND

Meeting held 22nd February, 1966:

There was a welcome improvement in attendance with ten members present.

This month we were able to stage our usual feature - Anniversary number and Collector's item provided as usual by Tom Porter. The Anniversary number was Gem No. 2 published on February 22nd, 1908 and thus 58 years old. The Collector's item was a Boys' Friend Library (Old Series), No. 544 entitled "Blake of the Blue Crusaders." Both these books were in excellent condition and evinced great admiration and interest from the members present.

Ivan Webster, our chairman began a talk, the first of a series to be given in the forthcoming months on "My Collection." He said he was interested mainly in Magnets, Gems and Schoolboys' Own Libraries. Starting late and almost from scratch he now had around 600 Magnets, 500 Gems and 120 Schoolboys' Own Libraries. He asked in passing if there was anyone with a complete set of Magnets. It was thought that one or two collectors might have complete sets and there were perhaps about a dozen who were nearing complete sets.

Madge Corbett in her own excellent style read a chapter from "Rallying round Gussy."

After this Ray Bennett showed us a copy of No. 1 of the Champion (New Style) but he was not impressed with it and neither were the members present. It was nothing at all like the old "Champion." A further point was raised by Ray regarding our hobby; there was no proper title as with some collecting hobbies for example, Philatelist - stamp collecting. Ray was of the opinion that a proper title was urgently needed to give dignity and status to our hobby.

The evening ended with a game of "Twenty Questions," which has not been played for a very long time. The victims were Jack Corbett, Ivan Webster, Norman Gregory, and George Chatham.

Winners of the raffle were Ian Parish and George Chatham. George wins so many times the raffle is becoming a mere formality.

Our next meeting is on 29th March and we hope for another good attendance.

J. F. BELLFIELD

Correspondent.

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NORTHERN

Meeting held 12th March, 1966

In an atmosphere slightly more Spring-like fourteen members assembled for the opening half hour of library, and chat, after which Dorothy Robinson had regretfully to leave. Chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened the meeting, and after the minutes, Treasurer-Librarian Gerald Allison gave his financial statement followed by extracts from his month's correspondence. These included comment from Tom Hopperton on the "Billy Bunter Name" question, and word from Roger Jenkins about the excellent Charles Hamilton Museum catalogue. Vice-Chairman Jack Wood read a cutting about the official library of comics in the library of Congress in Washington but these are only for students writing a treatise, or similar 'serious' purposes!

We settled down, with much brow wrinkling and muttering, to a quiz supplied to Gerry by the London Club. It was to eliminate pairs of words and leave one 'odd man out.' Everyone had a word over, but only Jack Allison had the right one - the word 'North.'

Geoffrey gave a reading entitled "The Idealist" - a story by the late Frank O'Connor, which depicted the trials of an Irish boy trying to live up to the ideals of the boys he read about in English schools; a superhuman task in an alien atmosphere, where even the teacher seemed affronted on being told the truth! Geoffrey's rendering was masterly - with a real Irish brogue.

We followed by a quiz of 30 questions handed to Geoffrey from Mr. Hancock, brother of Frank, and found in Frank's papers. To the unknown compiler we owe our thanks - it gave us much amusement. The questions were intriguing descriptions of names and places in the Hobby, which we had to identify. Refreshments arrived as we finished, and after restoring our strength, we had the answers. Geoffrey was first, followed by Bill Williamson, and Ron Hodgson and Harry Barlow tied for third place.

An envelope was then passed to several members for them to draw a name of a (fairly) dubious hobby character which they will have to defend next meeting in a 'Trial' which is to take place, but more of this next month. The time had come for us to bid good-night, and depart home after yet another happy meeting.

M. L. ALLISON  
Hon. Sec.

Next meeting 9th April, 1966, (Easter Saturday).

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting, 13th March

Eight members attended this meeting. As our total membership, including exiles Frank Case and George Riley, numbers only eleven, this was most satisfactory, although neither George nor Frank was present on this occasion. Feeling in a rather lazy mood we spent the evening almost entirely in discussion - the topics ranging far and wide, and embracing the various headquarters of the section, former chairmen and their little foibles, ex-members such as "Chilly" Chillingworth and Frederick Bowman, those who put in one or two brief appearances and disliked either our faces or the meetings, and the many correspondents over the years who have sworn their undying allegiance towards the hobby but have lapsed into mysterious silence when invited to the meetings. It has always been a source of wonder that so many "enthusiastic" hobbyists jib at travelling a couple of miles to join a section, when, from the tone of their letters, they would be prepared to take a jet plane. As the discussions were in a very light-hearted vein, we enjoyed our best laughs for months. Doddy could not have done better with his tickling-stick.

It was left to Pat Laffey to decide, towards the end of the meeting, that it was high time we got our heads down to some work. He produced a brain-teaser which brought us back to reality, although at that stage of the proceedings the old brain-boxes had almost ceased to function. There were four winners, with four correct answers out of six.

Our next meeting will be held on Easter Sunday, April 10th, when, in view of the Bank Holiday, we are hoping to see Frank Case, George Riley and Bill Greenwood. There will be Easter eggs as prizes.

FRANK UNWIN

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LONDON

Owing to the indisposition of Bob Blythe, the Dollis Hill meeting was transferred at the last moment to Cricklewood. And so 35 members turned up at the home of Bill and Marjorie Norris on Sunday, March 20th, amongst whom was Bob Blythe, happily recovering good health and able to give a good report of his Nelson Lee Library. In the chair for the first time was that stalwart of research and

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statistics, Bill Lofts. Bill welcomed the five Becks from Lewes and L. Elliott, the latter making his first meeting. Thanks were given to the hosts for taking over the meeting at such short notice.

More meeting venues were arranged and after Roger Jenkins had given a good report of his Hamiltonian library the Charles Hamilton museum booklet was discussed. It was generally agreed to be a fine publication, a collector's must. The reproductions in it were, in the opinion of all present, first-class. Order forms were enclosed in the March issue of "Collectors' Digest" and in the monthly club newsletters. It was proposed by Brian Doyle and seconded by Bob Acraman that a hearty vote of thanks be given to John Wernham for his work in producing the museum booklet. Needless to state, it was carried unanimously.

Len Packman brought along the last three available copies of his Sexton Blake catalogue. I think he had two left at the end of the meeting, so early application for these is advised.

Bill Hubbard gave a discourse on the "Magnet" Kenya series. Bill has spent a considerable number of years in Kenya and thus was able to speak with some authority on the subject of geography and location.

Following this Bill Lofts, with a copy of the original Magnet number one and also a copy of the fascimile reprint plus a copy of "Comic Reader," compared the two Magnets and shewed one and all the differences that are there.

Laurie Sutton's quiz was won by Eric Lawrence. Don Webster and John Beck were second.

Next meeting at Hume House, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London S.E. 22, on Sunday, April 17th. Kindly inform host, Len Packman, at his private address if intending to be present. A grand Frank Richards film show will take place.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

Australia Report - See page 28 ...

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TARZAN INFORMATION from FRANK LAY

Thanks to the researches of Mr. W. O. G. Lofts it is possible to say that the following is the accurate list of Edgar Rice Burroughs' reprints in Boys Cinema.

Tarzan of the Apes Aug. 14 to Nov. 6th, 1920, Vol. 2 Nos. 36 - 48  
13 issues.

Return of Tarzan	Nov. 13, 1920 to Jan. 15th, 1921, Vol. 2 No. 49 to Vol. 3 No. 58, 10 issues.
The Son of Tarzan	Jan. 22 to May 18th, 1921, Vol. 3 Nos. 59 to 77, 19 issues.
Jungle Tales of Tarzan	Dec. 31, 1921 to March 4th, 1922, Nos. 108 to 117, 10 issues.
The Beasts of Tarzan	March 11 to June 10th, 1922, Vol. 6. Nos. 118 to 131, 14 issues.
The Jewels of Opar	June 17 to Sept. 9th, 1922, Vol. 6. Nos. 132 to 144, 13 issues.

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## the postman called

(Interesting items from The Editor's letter-bag)

LAURIE SUTTON (Orpington): Please allow me, through the Digest columns, to apologize to Roger Jenkins for a statement that appears in the March C.D. in an article under my name. It is stated that Gem 386 appears in the Hamiltonian Library Catalogue, but I have since found that my memory was confused on this point.

J. P. H. HOBSON (Reigate): I was delighted to discover recently that THE ROVER is still being published every week in very much the same form as it was printed in the '30s when I read it as a boy, and my principal delight was to find that it is still full of stories to READ. There are no horrible strip picture stories in THE ROVER, and as far as I can discover, this seems to be the only boys' paper left with 32 pages of good reading matter.

As a schoolmaster, I dislike strip picture papers, except for very small children, and I am very pleased that there is one paper left which will supply a boy with several hours of reading matter each week. It is a pity that the Thompson Press never give the names of their authors, also, that they do not include a story about the Thompson Press detective Dixon Hawke and perhaps a school story, but we must be extremely grateful to them for providing the only weekly paper for a boy to read.

WALTER WEBB (Birmingham): I found the Annual quite interesting, particularly the John Wheway and Vanguard articles. But I would like the next number to be more representative. More articles about the "bloods." If contributors are not forthcoming what about reprinting some of those splendidly informative articles by the late John Medcraft,

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R. A. H. Goodyear and others on this period of the old boys' papers? My view is that if an old SBL is good enough to be reprinted, then an article equally good deserves a re-issue too.

PETER WALKER (Nottingham): May I say that I always turn first to the "Let's Be Controversial" article. This I have always found the most interesting and worth while "regular" of C.D. Considering the long innings of C.D. I am constantly amazed how many new aspects of the hobby are discussed month by month, and I certainly think that "Let's Be Controversial" sparks off many very interesting viewpoints.

TEX RICKARD (Canada): "Danny's Diary" is superb! I once had the bound editorial file copy of BFL 153 "The Silent Three" and agree that the story is practically unreadable.

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MILLICENT LYLE REMEMBERS

The O.B.B.C. has, by the death of Frank Pettingell the well-known actor, on Feb. 17th, lost a member who, although he never attended any of the meetings was very much one of the Club, heart and soul.

I was privileged to work with him for over a year in "The Reluctant Peer" at the Duchess Theatre, London, and during that time came to know him very well.

A kind and cheery Northcountryman, he had a passion for books which he bought extensively and even went to the length of erecting chalets in his garden in Mill Hill to house his ever-growing stock.

He was very interested to hear that I, too, loved reading and very kindly lent me innumerable books on all kinds of subjects but chiefly about history for which we discovered a mutual liking. Some remarkable early editions were among them, including large bound volumes of "Play Pictorial" dating from the beginning of the century and containing most interesting pictures of the first production of many famous plays, for he seemed to possess everything ever written about the theatre.

I once asked him why he never came to our meetings and he said "I'm a shy person really and not very sociable. The thought of having to talk to a roomful of people scares me. Even as a boy I hated the parties at Christmas and on birthdays to which I was invited and used to escape to a corner with a book."

With a book! Those three words describe him exactly.

His dressing-room at the theatre was far away up stairs so that when he came down to start the play he was in the wings for the duration of the performance. First came his dresser carrying his

spectacles, a clean handkerchief, his pipe and tin of tobacco, a box of throat tablets and a glass of cough mixture (for he was very "chesty"). Mr. Pettingell himself followed, armed with enough books to see him through any tedious wait.

We had many whispered discussions about plots and authors, ranging from Stanley Weyman and Captain Marryat to Conan Doyle and Elizabeth Goudge.

A clever actor, a sterling character and a good friend, I am glad to have known him and shall always remember him with real affection.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Very many readers have sent us happy memories of the late Frank Pettingell. It is impossible to quote from them all, but we thank those who have written. - ED.)

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NEWS of the CLUBS (late report)

AUSTRALIA

Meeting held March 17th:

Members met once again surrounded by friendly rows of books at Stanley Nichols' Gaslight Bookshop. For the first time in memory our secretary, Bette Pate, was absent, so the hard work was done, for once, by the President. Bette's mother was ill, and we all hoped that all will be well for the next meeting.

Letters were read, and special items were passed round, such as "Saturday Night," a Canadian magazine containing a Hamilton article with a minimum for errors; an amateur magazine from America named "Comic Reader" which contained an article on Golden Hours activities by John Ryan - and the Charles Hamilton Museum booklet which brought unqualified favourable comment from all. Also passed round was the dust-cover of the record "Floreat Greyfriars." This was the piece de resistance, as a record player had been brought along.

Someone remarked that the Hamiltonians have all the luck, so let's hope someone can preserve for the Nelson Leeites the associations of Edwy Searles Brooks's life.

We relaxed and listened to Floreat Greyfriars, and apart from a shudder or two from some at the mention of "Yaroooh" and "Ow," it was agreed that the main piece lived up to its name.

SYD SMYTH

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YET ANOTHER BUNTER

by Frank Vernon Lay & Ray Norton

"I really don't know how many stories I wrote for Trapps and Holmes, half-a-century ago, but certainly not fewer than a thousand," wrote Charles Hamilton in a letter to Tom Hopperton. Hamilton further wrote "so far from a 'serious and deliberate attempt to add the Vanguard's scalp to his belt,' that author had to guard with his left to keep the whole outfit from being landed on him: and could have written every single number if he had liked."

These quotations are inspired by the Editorial Feature on  $\frac{1}{2}$ d Vanguard in the 1965 C.D. Annual.

The first conclusion we arrived at from a perusal of the numbers from 65 to the end of the small series No. 137 is that there were quite a lot more Charles Hamilton stories under various pen-names and secondly, that from No. 125 to 132 with the exception of No. 130 he seems to have written every story.

No. 49 was the last  $\frac{1}{2}$ d Vanguard story to appear under the name of Charles Hamilton although there were two later stories of St. Kate's under the name of Frank Drake. It would appear reasonable to suppose that the editor of the Vanguard wished to disguise the fact that he was still publishing Hamilton's work, but whether it was by arrangement with Hamilton it is impossible to say. Hamilton says the pen-name "Frank Drake" was one among a good many so he was obviously aware of its use. As this is the period when he really commenced writing in quantity for the Amalgamated Press it is interesting to compare the stories with those he wrote for the Magnet and Gem and those he wrote for the Amalgamated Press prior to the Magnet and Gem tales, and it is most significant that they have much more affinity with his earlier work. From this it is an easy assumption that the editor of the Vanguard had a stock-pile of Hamilton stories which he gradually used up and in view of Hamilton's later colossal output this is easy to believe.

A further pointer to this is the following extract from No. 126 "Sent to Coventry" by Gillingham Jones.

"Better look for your filthy lucre, noble viscount," advised Bob, and Clivedale did so, and looked blank.

"Gone, eh?" asked Bob.

"Purse and all."

"By jove! this is getting interesting," said Bob. "Glad my new remittance hasn't arrived yet."

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"Mine hasn't either," Ned Ainslie said, "How about you, BUNTER and Chucks?"

"I had a postal order yesterday for a sov.," said BUNTER, sticking his podgy hand into his pocket. "I remember wrapping it round some jujubes. By ginger, it's gone."

"Have you been favoured, Spencer?" asked Bob.

The boy smiled patiently.

"I have nothing to lose. The thief knows that. My clothes have not been disturbed."

The date of this story is 28th September 1909 when Bunter was a leading character of the Magnet (see Magnet 76, 24.7.09. Billy Bunter Editor, and 81, 28.8.09. Bunter the Boxer etc). There is no doubt whatever that this is a Hamilton story, the hallmarks of Bunter and the character-study of Spencer, the poor scholarship boy upon whom suspicion wrongly falls, and the pen-portraits of Cecil Lord Clivedale and his father Lord Ravenspur are unmistakable pointers but is it feasible that Hamilton could have written it at the same time as the Magnet stories? Is it not possible that this was the early Bunter story that Hamilton said he wrote in 1899 and that it was held back by the editor of the Vanguard because of the Bunter stories by H. Philpott Wright, the last of which was No. 98 Melancholy Matt, 16.3.09. The succeeding Taffy Llewellyn stories were all being detective tales.

So we now have a total of 26 issues of the Vanguard which contain stories we can attribute to Hamilton, plus one or two possibles. Yet a bare 20% of the total stories does not seem to tie up with Hamilton's remarks quoted at the beginning of this article. With one exception, (and omitting several authors who wrote only a few stories,) the remainder of the Vanguard's authors, (C. L. Pearce, S. Clarke Hook, Stephen H. Agnew, Captain Addison, A. M. Burrage, John G. Rowe) are known to us from other papers.

The following completes the list of the Vanguard titles:-

1/2d Vanguard

- |     |                                      |                             |                       |
|-----|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 65. | The Dauntless Four                   | H. Philpott Wright          | continuation          |
| 66. | The Boys of Minerva House,           | C. L. Pearce                |                       |
| 67. | Surrounded by Perils.                | Philpott Wright             |                       |
| 68. | Comrades of the Fourth. (St. Kate's) | Frank Drake (Chas. Hamilton | continuation 67 etc.) |
| 69. | The Escape from Assil                | Philpott Wright             | "                     |
| 70. | The Fate of the Slavers              | "                           | "                     |
| 71. | The Return of the Dauntless Four     | "                           | "                     |
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