

# Collectors' Digest

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# Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

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JULY 1966

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## A WORD WITH THE SKIPPER

### RETURN OF OLD FAVOURITES:

"The scene was unchanged; everything was the same and yet everything was different. How different only those able to look back across the years of swift change can fully appreciate. Since that slow-going, ponderous age, civilisation has 'got the bit between its teeth' and has run away with itself, and the reins of precedent dangle hopelessly behind."

That metaphor comes from Pierre Quiroule's "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs," published this month - and Pierre Quiroule is a master of fine metaphor. The words of the above



passage are so true in 1966 that it would be easy to believe that they were written yesterday by somebody who was looking back to 1939. In fact they were written in 1920 - and the author was looking back at 1890.

The publication of this story is to 1966 what the publishing of Magnet Number One was to 1965 - a truly remarkable occurrence. These happenings occur because you and I and others like us believe that these stories from other days are very worth-while. They are published with some reliance on our support so far as we can give it, and we should all give that support if we hope for further like happenings in the future. Also, beyond that, "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs" is an excellent novel which everyone, Sexton Blake fan or no, will enjoy. One of our reviewers takes a critical look of the story elsewhere in this issue of the Digest.

Any good bookseller or newsagent should be able to obtain the book for you, price 3/6. Or you can order it direct from Press Editorial Services, 82 Girdwood Rd., Putney, S.W. 18. Or, as a last resort, from the Digest office.

#### A WORD ON MERSEYSIDE:

It should be a matter of some concern for all of us that the tide is not running too smoothly at the present time for the Merseyside Branch of our Club. And this at a time when all the other branches seem to be flourishing, and London is, obviously, bursting at the seams.

We have a great many readers who live within reasonable distance of Liverpool. It would be a real shot in the arm if all of these readers would join up with our Merseyside enthusiasts, and attend some of the meetings. There is something extremely satisfying in spending a few hours in congenial company, talking over the old papers, discussing the various aspects of the hobby, and joining in the various activities which form a club programme.

We hope that many of our loyal Lancashire readers who are not already attached to the club may be moved to give their support. Mr. Bill Windsor, whose address is 33, Sefton Rd., Litherland, Liverpool 21, will be pleased to give particulars, and you will be assured of a warm welcome from our Merseyside stalwarts.

#### SUMMER DAYS - AND LOOKING AHEAD:

There is a distinct flavour of summer in this issue of Collectors' Digest, so perhaps we are out of step when we look forward to December. However, if an Annual is to appear in December

it is necessary to think of it in July. We are not only thinking of it, but actually working hard on it. Even now, some exceptionally fine articles have been gathered in, and the next Annual is taking shape. We look forward to gathering in plenty more during the coming weeks, so please ink your pens, dust your typewriters, and put on your thinking caps. In between the Test Matches, of course.

OUR AUGUST ISSUE:

Owing to the summer holiday season affecting various phases of Digest production, it will be necessary for us to "go to press" rather earlier than usual next month. It will be greatly appreciated if our contributors and advertisers will send along their material as early as possible.

THE EDITOR

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## DANNY'S DIARY

July 1916

Now that both the Gem and the Magnet are reduced to 24 pages, the school stories must be quite a bit shorter. The Gem tales have been pretty good this month, but the first one, "A Schoolboy's Sacrifice," left me a bit cold in the tum-tum. It's a most peculiar yarn for Tom Merry does not come into the story at all and is only mentioned once. There is a terrific lot in the tale, but it is so sloppy that it makes you feel uncomfortable. The chief character is Wilkins, whose father loses his money, and Grundy plays a big part though he seems a different Grundy. All I can say is - if they have many stories like this, I shall save my penny.

Next tale was much better, though I don't like snobby stories. Mellish was "The Snob of the School," and he was ashamed of his cousin, Gerald Thompson, because Mr. Thompson was only a private in the army. Mr. Thompson comes to the school to see Mellish, whom he has never met before, and to save the soldier's feelings, Gussy pretends that he is Mellish. Unfortunately for Gussy, Mr. Railton was at the front with Thompson, and was a friend of his.

"Moneybags Minor" was Peter Racke, whose father had made war profits, so Peter's name was changed to Aubrey. Mr. Racke wants his son to be friendly with Lord Eastwood's son, but Gussy soon finds out the kind of fellow the new boy is. I get fed up with so many new boys coming into the stories. They are changing St. Jim's somehow. This was another "snobby" tale.

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"Too Clever By Half" was a good story, featuring St. Leger and Cutts. Major Stringer, a school governor, sees St. Leger gambling in the woods with a local rake named Griggs. But Cutts has a plan. St. Leger pretends that he was being rescued from the river by Trimble at the time when the Major saw the gamblers. But later on, Trimble tries a spot of blackmail.

I didn't like the last tale of the month, "The Schoolboy Reporter" in which Redfern ran away from school to join the staff of the Sussex Chronicle. There was more about newspaper offices than school in this one. But in the end, Redfern came back and made an enormous score for St. Jim's in a cricket match against Greyfriars. A new serial called "Cornstalk Bob" started in this issue.

Mr. Macdonald is a careless artist. A few months ago he drew Monteith in Etons. This month he drew St. Leger in Etons. But for "The Schoolboy Reporter" there was a new artist whose name is Warwick Reynolds. My pal Lindsay told me the artist's name. Lindsay's father owns the Fleetway House - or so he says.

Rookwood, in the Boys' Friend, has been top-whole, as always. The first tale "Bluffing the Bully" continued the story of the new boy, Higgs. He knocked Peele off the raft, and Peele hid underneath it, and everybody thought he was drowned.

Next week was a kind of step aside, for the story was not about Higgs. It was called "The Rookwood Redskins," and Tommy Dodd and Co were putting on a play called 'Lily of the Prairie.' So when three redskins attacked Knowles, the prefect, he was sure it was Tommy Dodd & Co. But it wasn't!

In "Jimmy Silver's Triumph" Mornington came back to Rookwood. This was the last story of the Higgs series, and Jimmy went into training so that he could defeat Higgs. A very exciting tale, for Mornington refused to be bullied by Higgs. When Higgs tried to bully him, Mornington smashed a teapot on Higgs' head.

Then came what is clearly going to be another Mornington series, for Mornington has declared that he will put Jimmy out of the captaincy. Mornington is beginning to shine as a bowler, but he is treacherous, and at the end of the tale, Jimmy resigned the captaincy.

In the last tale of the month, "Turned Out of the Team," Tommy Dodd became captain again. Morny hired a car to take the Remove eleven, and some others, to Greyfriars - do they really make motor cars as big as that? The Bounder of Greyfriars recognized Mornington as a chap he used to be friendly with. But once again Morny was treacherous as a cricketer, and it was Tommy Dodd's turn to put Morny

out of the team. A marvellous month at Rookwood.

There was a bad tram accident in the middle of the month. A tram overturned between the bridges at Paddington. Nobody was killed, but 70 people were injured which was bad.

We have seen some very good pictures this month at our local cinemas. Lillian Gish is very sweet new picture star. She has a mouth like a rosebud, and is nice to look at. Her picture "The Lily and the Rose" was a pleasant one, and Mum loved it. Also in this programme was a new Chaplin called "Police."

I wasn't so keen on Theda Bara in "Infidelity," though I like Theda Bara. But a good one was Billie Burke in "Peggy." Billie Burke is really a sweet little girl, and I quite lost my heart. I'm getting as bad as Doug.

Mum often reads books by a famous novelist named Charles Garvice. We saw one of his books made into a film named "Just a Girl," and the stars were Daisy Burrell and Owen Nares. There is a serial running named "Peg of the Ring" featuring Grace Cunard and Francis Ford. When I mentioned to Mum that Francis Ford has a face like a box, she said I mustn't say things like that, as I couldn't help it if I had a face like a box. Doug then said that I have a face like a squashed box, and I retorted that he is no choice packet.

The Magnet has been quite good this month. In "Monsieur Wibley," Monsieur Charpentier started backing horses with Mr. Banks, in order to send money to his nephew in France. But, when Mr. Quelch got wind of it, Wibley managed to convince Mr. Quelch that the punter was somebody disguised as Mossoo.

"The Other Bunter" was a tip-top tale which reintroduced Wally Bunter. Wally, a fine cricketer, was supposed to be playing cricket for the Remove. But Cousin Billy very nearly caused disaster.

"The Giant of Greyfriars" was a weak tale, and there have been one or two others with a similar plot. A Mr. Ransome, whom the boys nicknamed "Little Tich," became the new sportsmaster, but he was a fearful bully with weird ideas. After he got the sack, he played in a game for the First Eleven, and did wonders. Rather silly.

"The Schoolboy Farmers," in which the Removites went on the land to help a farmer at Fernford, was a pleasant little tale, even if it wasn't one to remember. But the last tale of the month, "Sticking to His Guns," was a real hit and one of the best. The Bounder, out late one night, saw a criminal, Slippery Jim. And when Inspector Flick comes to Greyfriars to warn the Head to look after the school plate, the Bounder recognizes Inspector Flick as Slippery Jim. Grand story.

I had a remarkable experience this month. In the market there is a stall which sells old Gems, Magnets, Penny Populars and that sort of thing for two a penny. I saw a very old Magnet, a halfpenny one - it was No. 35 - and the man had it in the 2 a penny heap. I pointed out to him that it wasn't right to ask a halfpenny for a very old paper which only cost a halfpenny when it was new.

He said "Kid, for your --- cheek (the dashes show a swear word he used) you can have it for nothing." I was mighty pleased.

The story was called "Harry Wharton's Scheme" and it was about Greyfriars trying out Mr. Willett's plan of putting on all the clocks by one hour. And that was written in 1908. Frank Richards seemed to think then that it was a cranky idea. I hope he has changed his mind.

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# NELSON LEE COLUMN

(CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD)

## A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

By Jim Cook

"The man's an utter snob!" snorted Mr. Pycraft, the ill-tempered master of the Fourth.

"Oh, I don't know, Pycraft, reticent perhaps..."

"Reticent? Really Goole, how you can reconcile an out and out snob ....."

The two masters of the East House at St. Frank's passed me as I turned into the main gate from Bellton Lane and entered St. Frank's College.

It was a very pleasant spring afternoon and warm enough for the two masters to wander out without overcoats. But the sunny weather had had no effect on Mr. Pycraft's habitual nastiness. Evidently some other member of the male staff had been under discussion as they drifted by me and it set me thinking. Of snobs.

As in most Public Schools, there is a form of snobbishness at St. Frank's which is part of its heritage. Perhaps ninety nine percent of the boys will not admit there is this form of judgment of social rank in evidence at the school, while the remaining one percent will glory in the fact.

But in any event, some form of reservation must be upheld to maintain the dignity of this great college, although you can't get

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away from the fact that some kind of favouritism exists in the matter of vacancies. St. Frank's has a recruiting list of pupils from their day of birth, and while this system may work with ease at Harrow and Eton it remains a problem at St. Frank's. And this poses a question. How do some boys jump the gun? By what means do their parents or guardians manage to overcome the great waiting list and enter their sons or nephews in front of others?

Nipper, himself, will agree he was not registered at the college at the time of his birth. Bernard Forrest will gloat over the fact he was expelled but returned by means of a trick perpetrated by his father to hoodwink the Head. And Nipper, with the aid of Lord Dorrimore, came back to St. Frank's in disguise after he had been expelled. He was sacked under the impression he had attacked a senior, but the fact that Dorrie was able to exert such influence whereby Nipper came back as a new boy almost at once does tend to show a form of snobbishness exists at the old school.

Recently Dr. Stafford, the headmaster of St. Frank's, was the recipient of £500 sent anonymously and under the suggestion that the boys were to receive the benefit. And the Head, in his wisdom, merely placed the money in his safe. His refusal to comply to the wishes of the mysterious donor soon brought about the desired result for within a week the headmaster had a visitor who admitted sending the money.

He was Mr. William Gore-Pearce. His explanation was that a successful business deal had swollen his banking account - or words to that effect - and Claude, his son, had suggested in a letter that a display of wealth among the boys greatly enhanced a fellow's standing at the school.

Gore-Pearce's smugness irritated the old Head for Claude's father was not a man of breeding; he had made his money from profits in a war-weary world and he never ceased to boast the fact. He accepted the money back not with reluctance but as though he had had second thoughts and was sorry for his moment of rashness. Dr. Stafford's explanation for not using the gift did not penetrate Mr. Gore-Pearce's hidebound indifference to the dignity of wealth and the parvenue millionaire left the Head's study with a smile he reserved for those who lost to him.

Now this form of snobbishness will never be tolerated at St. Frank's. Had Lord Dorrimore offered such a sum of money to be spent on the boys I doubt if even then the Head would have accepted it although with Dorrie there was such a simple sincerity you wouldn't

have looked for hidden motives. But Gore-Pearce's father was well known at the school and was generally despised for his treatment of the old Earl of Edgemore.

Nipper tells me Gore-Pearce is looking very subdued lately. Since Forrest ousted him from the leadership of Study A Claude has glissaded to a very minor position among the juniors and the millionaire's son has sought ways and means to raise his status symbol, hence the idea to his father for a gift of £500 to the boys with a view, of course, of Claude sharing his father's reflected glory.

I well remember Ralph Leslie Fullwood, before his reformation, using money in a similar way to buy favourable opinion, but it didn't last.

Gore-Pearce's star has dimmed yet darker since the news got around of his father's scheme to push his son into the social limelight, and from the cads only his money enables him to be on speaking terms with such nonentities as Teddy Long, Enoch Snipe and a few of similar kidney. For Claude had promised everybody the most glorious spread of all time, but the wise ones knew Gore-Pearce of old. As Reggie Pitt observed, Gore-Pearce never does anything without a reason. The great feast he was going to put on among other things which the £500 would buy was part of a plan, a scheme to have results in his favour. Claude's vision during the spree when he would boastfully announce that his father was the unknown donor did not materialise, and the fact that the juniors had lost their chance of participating in this great spending adventure really lowered his stock more than ever.

But Claude Gore-Pearce is a dangerous enemy. It would not surprise me to know he is planning something to raise his esteem with the juniors. He has openly admitted he will return to Study A and assume the leadership. But if Claude is dangerous Bernard Forrest is doubly so. Nipper is highly amused at the thought of Forrest and Gore-Pearce in open tussle for the dubious ruler of Study A, yet Nipper agrees there is some distinction accredited to the leader of any study although most of the fellows ignore this ambiguous title and live in complete harmony.

There is also talk of Fullwood entering the arena. This is very surprising for Ralph Leslie severed his connections with Study A a long time ago. But rumours persist and Fullwood is getting some very strange looks.

I asked Nipper if it was true that Fullwood was going back to his old ways and Nipper was very puzzled for something was going on

between Gore-Pearce, Forrest and Fullwood that the Remove captain had decided to get to the bottom of all the whisperings and rumours about this trio.

If it is true about Fullwood entering into a three cornered fight for the leadership of Study A than it will be very interesting indeed. For here you have money, brains and courage besides devilry to force the outcome. If wealth can win then Gore-Pearce will undoubtedly become Study A's new leader. If brains win then surely Bernard Forrest, the present leader of Study A, will remain in office. Courage? Well those of us who is familiar with Ralph Leslie Fullwood will remember the great uphill fight the one time bouncer had to face when he broke away from the cads and the rotters and went over to the decent chaps. Many prophesised it would never last; that Fullwood would go back to his smoking and pub haunting. It wasn't the fact that he didn't return to his former way of life; it was the ever present wish of his former cronies and the expectancy of his new friends plus the doubts and looks from the wiseacres that brought out the courage in Fullwood. He fought them all. And he won.

There is no smoke without fire. I can understand Gore-Pearce's fierce longing to be in Study A once more. I can see Forrest's point of view and his wish to remain. But I cannot place Fullwood's idea at the moment.

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That NELSON LEE LIBRARY MYSTERY

By W. O. G. Lofts

My information regarding the mystery of N.L. 243 came from a former sub-editor on the N.L./Boys Realm group of papers and so I see no reason to doubt its authenticity. Personally I think the only way these little mysteries can be solved is by contacting persons who were connected with the papers at the time in question.

To cover the points in Charles Churchill's article - I don't think it is correct to say that material had to go to the printers six weeks prior to publication date - nearer three the mark. With the MAGNET this six weeks would have been impossible - proof of this is that when the paper finished only three stories were in hand. What Mr. Churchill fails to appreciate is the inner workings of a large publishing firm. The controlling editor can pass the proofs and then for some reason change his mind afterwards. When one considers that thousands of pounds are spent on new publications and then they are simply written off before seeing the light of day makes the waste of a block seem a drop in the ocean. I could quote several

other cases where a title/cover/and story have had to be substituted at the last moment - one in the S.B.L. in recent years, which is really astounding. Before even consulting official records I was convinced that Arthur Jones did the cover in No. 243, as his style is unmistakable in my estimation. My remark that it was 'not too bad' was purely a personal opinion. To go further, once again in my own opinion, the best artist who ever drew the St. Frank's characters was C. G. Ambler who started in New Series No. 76, 16th October 1927. I think that the missing chapter headings are of so little importance, and probably due to some printer's errors that one is making a mole-hill out of nothing, whilst the showing of half the rejected cover in the BOYS REALM meant that it was probably too late to stop this.

I do however agree with Charles that my statements in two articles seem a little confusing and it seems that a gremlin has crept in either my proofs or the printers - in writing two articles in the same issue. What should have been said was "That E.S.B. had very few titles altered in the St. Frank's field" but in the S.B.L. and U.J. it was a different matter. Both Twyman and Len Pratt had their own firm ideas of what a proper title should be for the story in question. When one considers that Gwyn Evans once called a U.J. yarn TREASURE ISLAND - and G. H. Teed another YVONNE'S PASSION makes me think that editors were right to change them.

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WANTED: Copies of Puck and Puck Annual.

HEARN, 191, ARBURY ROAD, CAMBRIDGE.

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WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: MAGNETS: 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.

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# HAMILTONIANA

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 59 - Magnet 814 - "Montague the Mysterious"

No permanent members were added to the Greyfriars cast of characters after the first world war, the last being Redwing, Angel, and Hilary. After that time, new boys disappeared when their useful life was over. Generally speaking, Charles Hamilton used these new boys in a series (and, very occasionally, in two series), but sometimes in early days they lasted for one story only. One who made only a fleeting appearance of this kind was Montague Snooks, in Magnet No. 814.

Snooks was the son of a Surbiton solicitor with a passion for romantic novels about lost heirs. In the early days of the Gem, Binks the page had suffered from an overdose of sensational American literature, and Snooks was apparently another who found it difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction. He confided the most startling facts to various Removites about the mystery of his birth and early upbringing, but unfortunately the stories did not tally with one another. There was an amusing scene when he told Bunter about the glories of his ancestral home, Edgcombe Towers, only to receive an equally fictitious account of Bunter Court in return. It was, perhaps, not particularly pleasant for Snooks to realise that his behaviour put him on a par with Bunter.

The story, though slight, is entertaining, but it is very strange that Charles Hamilton should have parodied the missing heir theme in 1923, when his next Magnet story (a series which began five weeks later) was about the Mick the Gipsy, who turned out to be the long-lost brother of Angel. This was followed, in 1925, by Ragged Dick, who turned out to be the nephew of Sir Henry Compton, and in 1926 by Pedrillo of the Circus, who turned out to be Hobson's cousin Peter. It must surely be unique in the annals of literature for a writer to take seriously a theme which had just previously been only the object of his mockery.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 101. FOR SUMMER IS A-COMING IN --- AND CRICKET!

Many readers would certainly claim that Charles Hamilton was at

his brilliant best when writing about Christmas. Many readers reserve the softest places in their warm hearts for some of the Christmas series. That is partly due to sentimental memories of Christmases long gone, when Christmas really was Christmas.

So far as I am concerned, Charles Hamilton was at his best in the summer - and particularly in his cricket series. And few, if any, would deny that three at least of the author's greatest works were stories in which cricket played a large part.

This may be odd when we recall that in certain quarters he was being criticised as knowing but little about sport. As I have said before, I always found the cricket sequences completely adequate, so far as descriptions of the games were concerned - and, beyond that, he had the rare gift of being able to infuse the real atmosphere of cricket into those stories.

I feel sure that Hamilton must have had a deep love for cricket, otherwise I do not believe he could have written those wonderful cricket tales which he gave us. There is no record that he ever played the game, and I doubt whether he did. But he certainly knew a good deal about it, in the same way that he knew plenty about the Wild West without ever going there.

There was a fair amount of cricket in the blue Gem and the red Magnet, but nothing in any way outstanding. Oddly enough, in the first two years of Rookwood there were many stories of the grand old summer game. Most of those stories were excellent of their class, even though there was never, at Rookwood, any cricket story which lingers affectionately in the memory.

Cricket never sustained a part of St. Jim's as it did in those opening years of Rookwood. In the blue Gem there was a cricket week at Eastwood House, covered in two slightly scrappy tales. The only Gem cricket tales which were really memorable - and that, in a minor way - was in 1924, in a 3-story Cardew series. Short though it was, it was the first Hamilton series really to capture the spirit of cricket and the atmosphere of the game. Just why this series is not so well remembered it is hard to decide, for, along with the atmosphere, there was some fine characterisation. In addition, it was illustrated by R. J. Macdonald - and nobody - not even the superb Shields - could draw cricketers just like Mac could.

This little Gem of a series looked ahead to the fine cricket stories waiting in the wings, ready to grace the Golden Age of the Magnet.

And it is in the Magnet that we find Charles Hamilton in his

finest cricketing vein.

It is the atmosphere that is so remarkable in the three really great cricket series which appeared in the Magnet. The atmosphere of lazy summer days, bright sunshine, blue skies, green turf, red-brick pavilions - and human emotions - even though those human emotions are only those of the world of school. Drama, comedy, kindness, malice - while the tanned arms swing over, bat meets ball, and the blazered crowds cheer or talk cricket under the trees.

If Hamilton had never written anything but these three wonderful tales, he would still have been the world's greatest writer for boys.

In 1928 came the Da Costa series, superbly satisfying, even though the main plot was mildly contrived. A wonderful drama showing the gradual change brought about in a boy's character by environment. The cricket sequences are many - and superb.

In 1931 came perhaps the most pleasant series of them all - the Lancaster series. To some extent reminiscent of Raffles, insofar as the chief character was a burglar as well as a brilliant cricketer. But there the similarity ended, for cricket itself was a very distant background to any Raffles tale, whereas the Lancaster series was packed with cricket. As we know, the main players were seniors in the Lancaster tales, and that alone makes the series noteworthy even if there were nothing else.

As Roger Jenkins has truly observed, by the time that the Stacey series appeared the Golden Age of the Magnet had really passed. Yet, in many ways, the Stacey series was the greatest of them all. For many years I have maintained that Charles Hamilton's finest work of all time is to be found in the Stacey series. It is only when I go back to Da Costa or Lancaster that my faith wavers just a little.

I, personally, am quite satisfied that these three series - Da Costa, Lancaster, and Stacey - are by far the very finest school and cricket tales ever written since the world began. The atmosphere in all of them is so perfect that any man who loves cricket and completely understands the game is in his element. And that is remarkable from an author who was not a cricketer himself.

But - and here is the crux of the matter - these tales will be equally delightful to those unfortunate, deserted souls who detest cricket. They may even be converted.

Wodehouse's "Mike" and Coke's "The Worm" are mighty fine cricket tales, the nearest I know to Hamilton's. But both stories, and particularly "Mike" are for the cricket connoisseur. The appeal is far less for the non-cricketing man, and, because they are a little

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nearer to real life, both leave one vaguely dissatisfied at the end. Hamilton's tales are unashamedly fiction - he writes to entertain - and he succeeds magnificently.

With Da Costa and Lancaster, Hamilton was in magnificent form, playing his shots like an angel (surely they do play cricket in heaven?) and like a streak of lightning in the field. He was a Sobers and a Bland rolled into one. He went out of form as time went by, but found it again for the Magnet Test in 1935, rattling up a brilliant double-century with the Stacey series.

A few years later he came back to cricket for the Magnet of that uneasy period not long before the second world war. This time, with the Bertie Vernon series; he was not so successful. The old magic, the real magic, had gone. I have often wondered just why the Vernon series never quite became a hit for six. It had some wonderful atmosphere, it had some remarkably fine character work, and one could not fault the plot in any detail. And yet we cannot read and re-read Bertie Vernon as we do Da Costa, Lancaster, and Stacey.

Maybe the playing pitch was strong. Maybe there was a harshness somewhere in the characterisation so that the reader was never quite in clover. Technically the story was faultless, yet somehow it was not a happy series. Therefore it cannot compare with Da Costa, Lancaster, and Stacey. All the same, I feel sure that the only writer who surpassed the Bertie Vernon series was Charles Hamilton himself. Entirely competent, like all the tales of the later Magnet, this was probably the finest series of the closing few years.

In earlier times, Hamilton often introduced a cricket tale into his various holiday series set in England, and these pleasant interludes were, without exception, first-class.

On one point only would I criticise Hamilton cricket - all, or nearly all, of his games were double-innings affairs. It is, at least, unusual for one day matches to comprise double innings. In all the schoolboy cricket I have played in, or umpired, or watched, a one-day game has always comprised one innings each side. If the match ends early, as is not unusual, a second innings may be played, but the result is always on the first innings.

But, to modern eyes, even Wodehouse cricket is not beyond criticism. When Wrykyn played the M.C.C., the latter's wicket-keeper took off his pads and bowled many overs of lobs. Once, when I was a lad, I saw the Kent wicket-keeper, in a county match, take a couple of overs. But never, in all my life, have I seen lobs bowled in a good-class match - or in any match, for that matter. But, of

course, Wodehouse was writing in 1909 - quite a long, long time ago. Things may have been different then.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

W. O. G. LOFTS: Certainly there are no records to show what tales were more popular than others. Evidence can only be assumed by editorial comments from those who worked in the Companion Papers Office at the time of publication. If one disregards G. R. Samways in praising his own story; plus editor H. A. Hinton's boosting in his chats. Clive R. Fenn (who was in charge of the readers' letter section) W. Stanton Hope; L. E. Ransome; W. Pike; H. W. Twyman and R. T. Eves - have all through the years in discussing various stories, mentioned that School and Sport was popular with readers, and I only base my assumption of their independent comments. As an adult in reading School and Sport today, I personally don't dispute at all that comparing it with Charles Hamilton's two famous B.F.L. - it is like chalk with cheese - and just a string of sporting events. Mr. Samways told me that it was written strictly on the direction of H. A. Hinton the editor, who was trying to satisfy many readers whims who wanted sporting stories, so perhaps under the circumstances we may be a little unfair to G. R. Samways, who loved the Hamilton characters as much as any one in our hobby today.

Regarding Mr. Hamilton's dispute with Pentelow; perhaps it is best to follow Frank Richards in his Autobiography about this, and not dwell on unpleasant subjects. It is a fact that 'Frank Richards' either made great friends with people on the editorial staff, or simply disliked them. He was a great friend of H. A. Hinton; C. M. Down; Stanton Hope, who all wrote substitute stories. He was also a great friend of Arthur Clarke; C. H. Chapman; and R. J. MacDonald. Yet he disliked Hutton Mitchell; Percy Griffith; Hedly O'Mant, J. N. Pentelow; R. T. Eves; and even once remarked that that great artist Leonard Shields may have possibly illustrated the Magnet - so I assume that he did not like him too!

ROGER JENKINS: I think you are right in suggesting that we shall never learn the truth about the Hamilton-Pentelow dispute now. There can be no doubt, however, that Hamilton was bitterly incensed about Pentelow all his life, despite the fact that other editors published substitute stories, apart from Pentelow. There undoubtedly must have been something additional about Pentelow to cause such bitterness.

When Charles Hamilton was writing his autobiography, he intended to follow the advice of Hotspur in "Henry IV" and tell the truth to shame the devil. There was a chapter on J.N.P. written, which was subsequently withdrawn on the advice of friends, partly to avoid giving offence to any relatives Pentelow might have left, and partly to keep the tone of the autobiography mellow and serene. The offending chapters on Pentelow were transferred to the famous "locked drawer" and Charles Hamilton declared that some people seemed more interested in the chapters left out than those left in! What happened to the chapter in the locked drawer is a mystery, but presumably it was destroyed.

When I wrote an article on the Greyfriars Story Competition (which appeared in the Magnet during Hinton's regime) Charles Hamilton wrote to me to declare that he was certain that Hinton was not responsible, but that he was the victim of more astute rogues (viz. Pentelow). Every additional piece of information about the Hamilton-Pentelow quarrel makes it seem more and more interesting, but I feel we shall now have to rest content with tantalising glimpses.

PETER HANGER: The evidence that Pentelow held back genuine stories in favour of his own creations is quite indisputable. For witness how "A Very Gallant Gentleman" intrudes into the first Redwing series. While Hamilton was creating worthwhile characters, Pentelow was destroying them. Have you noticed that "A Very Gallant Gentleman" was No. 520? Surely the man was not conceited enough to regard this as a special story to celebrate ten years of the Magnet.

H. MACHIN: Re that very interesting article "Rift in the Lute," I have read both "His Highness" and "When Friends Fall Out," but failed to see any signs of genuine Hamilton writing in either. I found the dialogue harsh and stilted, and the style awkward and uncouth. I wonder if any other readers subscribe to this view.

BILL GANDER: It is surprising how opinions vary regarding J. N. Pentelow's ability as a story writer - apart from his venture into Hamilton sub writing. It seems that one either likes him a great deal, or else dislikes him a great deal. Here is something I do not remember ever having seen reference made to - the case of Gem 457 "All The Winners," and Gem 458 "In The Seats of the Mighty." The first written by Charles Hamilton, the second by J. N. Pentelow. Does this indicate co-operation, or could J.N.P. have discarded C.H.'s story and written one himself for the 1916 Christmas Number?

ERIC FAYNE adds: The Echoes this month are of unusually high interest. Mr. Gander certainly brings forward a fascinating item which I do not recollect has ever been discussed previously. The genuine tale in Gem 458 was set in the last week of term. In the closing chapters, Tom Merry & Co confounded Trimble by accepting his invitation to all of them to spend Christmas at Trimble Hall. It was quite a brilliant little tale in which Trimble, nonplussed at first, set about taking advantage of his prospective guests. Finally, in the last chapter, Trimble eluded them all at Laxham station, an event which all the prospective guests had foreseen.

Gem No. 459, a Pentelow tale, continued with Tom Merry & Co, as the train puffs out of Laxham station. This story is mainly set at Eastwood House, and it is very definitely a sequel to "All the Winners." Mr. Gander, in his final comment, poses a splendid question - and one to which, alas, there seems to be no answer at this time of day.

In reply to Mr. Hanger, Pentelow must have the benefit of the doubt. It is just possible that the new genuine tale to continue the Redwing series was not ready. Just possible. On the other hand, plenty of genuine tales of Rookwood and Greyfriars were published out of sequence at this time, and it is quite unlikely that Hamilton wrote tales out of sequence. It may, of course, have been slapdash editing, due to staff shortages.

I am rather with Mr. Machin over the two tales he mentions. Neither of them rings true, in my view, in parts.

I am still puzzled as to why all those editorial gents mentioned by Mr. Lofts remember enthusiastically the popularity enjoyed by one or two dreary sub tales over everything else.

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' THE WOLF CUB '

By Gerry Allison

Mention Wolf Cubs to anyone today and they will think immediately of a small boy with an impish grin wearing a long-sleeved green pullover and a 'cowboy' scarf. Few would know that this healthy and virile section of the Boy Scout Movement is now fifty years old.

On June 24th, 1916, the first Conference of Cubmasters was held in the Board Room at 116 Victoria Street, London - then the Headquarters of the Boy Scout Association.

Before then there had been 'Junior Scouts' under various appellations - 'Beavers,' 'Nippers,' 'Colts,' 'Trappers' etc., attached loosely to troops of elder Scouts. Baden-Powell the Chief Scout

(continued on page 23)...

# B L A K I A N A

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

No doubt some of our younger S.B. fans who have only recently discovered the fascination of our Hobby often wonder how Tinker became Sexton Blake's Assistant. I have, therefore, included in this month's "Blakiana" an article on Tinker written by a very good friend of mine - Miss Margaret Cooke, and trust that you will all find it interesting.

I would be grateful if some of my new S.B. fans could write me something about how they first became acquainted with S.B. and whether they have any favourite authors or characters. Don't worry about not being able to write as well as professional people - we are all amateurs. What I need is something suitable for Blakiana as I have no more material at the moment.

JOSIE PACKMAN

TINKER & CO

\* \* \*

By Margaret Cooke

In the early years of this century a young private detective named Sexton Blake took into his home, his life, and his business, an orphaned boy named Tinker.

So began a fictional partnership which has lasted for more than fifty years and is still active today.

To Blake the years have brought fame and fortune plus the constant devotion of a loyal, courageous and hard-working youngster. To Tinker, they have brought trouble, constant demands for personal sacrifice in Blake's service, and very little else besides Blake's devotion to him.

If Tinker has not gained much from life however, he has given much to life; good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over.

The reserved, studious Blake welcomed each new case as a battle to be won or a problem to be solved, secure in the depth of Blake's friendship for him and in Mrs. Bardell's care for them both, Tinker saw in each case the hopes and fears - and often the suffering of the people concerned.

When little Tikki of the Amatuli left his African jungle; suffered the agonies of sea-sickness as a cook on a tramp steamer bound for England; and arrived at Baker Street, clad in an old army great-coat and cloth cap, one bitterly cold, snowy morning to deliver Nyati's impassioned appeal for Blake's help in recovering their women from the land where animals kept men in cages; it was Tinker who sprang to the little man's aid when he collapsed while Blake sat still - engrossed by the problem. It was Tinker who said "We must help them" when Tikki had been taken to the spare-bedroom where he slept for nearly twenty four hours - on the floor.

It was Tinker, too, who gently tended the fever-stricken white girl who had followed them unseen, through swamp and forest, burning sun and terrifying storm, living on food stolen from the carriers packs for her by Tikki. The journey had been a horrible nightmare for Tinker travelling in the company of other men, all of them used to the jungle and swamp. His compassion for this frail girl from the softness of civilisation travelling onwards, desperately afraid and lonely, but driven by the urge to know the truth about her father, knew no bounds.

When they were overpowered and taken prisoner by the baboons led by their wild human king, it was Tinker who worked out a way of tying their bonds so that the men could walk without falling; and who helped them to keep going by chanting one - two, one - two until they were separated and forced into cages in a zoo.

It was Blake, however, who planned their escape. At the beginning of the long trek Tinker had shaved every day because he had read a book about white explorers who shaved and dressed for dinner each night - no matter where they were.

Blake remembered that Tinker had a treasured morsel of that shaving soap left, reserved for their return to civilisation.

He begged the scrap from Tinker, waited until Babiaan came round with his baboons to throw fruit to the caged men, and then had a fit!

It began with a shrill scream of terror and fury as soon as the soap had melted in his mouth. An ugly white froth appeared round his mouth, he shouted and postured, waving his arms in the air and hurling himself at the cage bars.

Babiaan, the baboons, and the prisoners watched, awestruck, as it continued with Blake grinning and grimacing; shrilling peal after peal of frightening, maniacal laughter - oblivious to Babiaan's threats and Tinker's pleading.

Blake twirled and leapt and pirouetted; round and round, head

and body flecked with white foam from his screaming mouth, falling - rolling over and over, and springing erect again.

It ended as suddenly as it began when Blake dived head-first into the bars, fell to the floor with a thud which shook the cage - and lay still, his body contorted, a hand across his face.

"You've killed him" was Tinker's heartbroken cry and Babiaan shivered at the prospect of telling the "mind" who ruled this place, that a white man was dead so soon after capture. The "mind" wanted to see Blake suffer.

He poked a long stick through the bars and prodded Blake who did not move. Babiaan levered him over with the stick and Blake thudded limply back to the floor. He fetched the key, unlocked the door, entered the cage and bent over Blake to prod him with his fingers. The next second Blake was on his feet smashing a hard fist into Babiaan's jaw and body with every ounce of weight and hatred behind it. Babiaan fell and lay as still as Blake had done. Blake stepped out of the cage, locked the door, kicked the baboons out of his way and released the others.

Outside the zoo they found huts, a bungalow and the Amatuli women working a platinum mine! Nyati settled his account with the "mind" - not as rumour said, the girl's father, and the zoo was razed to the ground.

(The Mystery of the Forbidden Territory by Rex Hardinge.)

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#### R E V I E W

#### THE CASE OF THE BISMARCK MEMOIRS

Pierre Quiroule  
(Mayflower 3/6)

This is a fine novel because it is so eminently readable. Pierre Quiroule wrote easily; in consequence, he reads easily. Though written as long ago as 1920, "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs" stands up worthily to comparison with any detective novel written in the last twenty years.

Inevitably, it will delight all those who have patiently awaited the reprinting of one of the S.B.L. "classics," long promised. But more than that. Because it is a rattling good tale, it should delight everybody who enjoys a well-written novel.

The story falls naturally into three distinct parts. There is a superbly-penned and fascinating prologue which lingers long in the memory because it is so steeped in the atmosphere of late-Victorian

London. It tugs quaintly at the heart-strings in the process of "looking back."

Then we move forward to modern London, with the environs of Old Drury Lane, behind the Strand, swept away and replaced with London's most beautiful present-day thoroughfare, the Kingsway. A thirty-year old secret, stumbled upon by a Thames lighterman while he is digging out an old anchor from the river mud, involves Blake, Tinker, and Pedro in a case with trimmings of murder, romance, and international intrigue.

Finally, the scene changes to one of the Stately Homes of Old England, near Tonbridge, in Kent. Here, once again, we get some tingling descriptive gems from a writer who is a master of his craft. And if there is just the slightest trace of a scent of old lavender in a man being proud and jealous of the good name of his dead father and of his family - well, it is a pleasant and cosy scent which will please all but the cynics.

Sexton Blake himself is the real hero of this story. His character and his talents are firmly drawn and attractively portrayed. One warms to him happily as the ingenious story goes smoothly and steadily on its course.

Those grand old favourites, Granite Grant and Mademoiselle Julie, though they really only make token appearances in this particular novel, are assured of a deafening cheer of welcome on their return to the Sexton Blake Library, and a good round of applause will even be accorded to that grand old man of the Secret Service, Sir Vrymer Fane. Not to mention an enthusiastic pat on the bonnet for the Grey Panther.

This story may attract attention as a novelty. As a tip-top yarn, however, it should earn resounding success.

Finally, a few comments on the technical side. Let it be said at once that Mr. Howard Baker, editor of the Sexton Blake Library, has done a fine job with its presentation. In recent years we have seen so many fine old stories ruined by ruthless pruning linked with change for the sake of change, that we tend to approach any new venture of this type with misgiving. In this case, our fears were groundless.

This story was originally about 80,000 words. In the new version it is possibly clipped by a thousand or two. Just here and there the dialogue is but slightly modernised, in no blatant way.

In the original, the "Vincent Sterne" sequences had considerable charm and certain rich comedy, but Mr. Sterne, that curious golfer,

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was the gum-chewing American of legend. In the new version, the Americanisms are smoothed away, and "Mr. Sterne" emerges with a new dignity. Even if a little of the comedy is sacrificed the charm remains, and, for modern reading it is really an improvement. It is, of course, a minor detail. Apart from these minute and sensible little bits of editing, the story is pure Quiroule.

In fact, it is better than the reprint of the story which was issued in 1934, for in that case the final chapter was drastically pruned. Now we get the last chapter as it originally appeared.

We will overlook the crass carelessness of the printer who, on the inner title page, credited the novel to Desmond Reid. That printer has already received an almighty rocket from Mr. Howard Baker.

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 'THE WOLF CUB' (continued from page 18)...

however, recognised that the needs of the younger boy were very different from his elder brother.

He therefore sought the co-operation of Rudyard Kipling, author of the Jungle Book. Kipling had already written books for Boy Scouts, and his help was readily given. Both men believed that the background of the stories in the Jungle Books was an ideal basis for character training. Not only did the stories encourage an interest in nature and outdoor activities, but the characters in them had a strict code of behaviour, loyalty, discipline, also fair play and clean living which could well be adapted to meet the needs of human society.

These values are laughed at today. During Whitsuntide a Yorkshire school was completely wrecked by a band of little boys of 9 or 10 - to whom no punishment could be given as they were so young. The age group covered by the Wolf Cub movement is 8 - 11.

Incidentally, in last month's 'Collectors' Digest,' I asked if any one could remember a boys' paper which came out on November 30th 1916. This, in fact, was the WOLF CUB published monthly by Pearsons. The contents included two serials, a detective story, 'The Old Wolf's Howl' by Baden-Powell. Florence Barclay - author of 'The Rosary' wrote every month. It was a delightful little paper.

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**WANTED:** Magnets 1277, 1283, 1466, 1644. Many 1935 and 1939.  
 Populars 1922. C.D. Annual 1948. Gems 1931-2.

# NEWS OF THE CLUBS

## MIDLAND

Meeting held May 24th, 1966.

This meeting was our A.G.M. and our first gathering at our new headquarters at the Birmingham Theatre Centre, Islington Row. There was almost a full attendance and also a very welcome visitor - John Mann of Retford, one of our postal members.

The A.G.M. is one of the necessary evils of all clubs and we had to get our noses to the grindstone in arranging our affairs and electing officials for the forthcoming year.

Reports were received from the club officials and the members present expressed their warm appreciation of what was declared to be a first rate team. Ivan Webster, our chairman over the past year was complimented on his work. Ivan is certainly one with drive and gets things done.

The treasurer, Norman Gregory presented his financial report and the substance of this was that during the past year considerable inroads had been made into the surplus money built up over recent years. This was caused by the exorbitant rental the Arden Hotel had charged for our room. Our cash in hand had been reduced from £17. 7. 8. to £8. 6. 8. This unpalatable state of affairs had been called to a halt by our timely action in moving to cheaper quarters.

Norman's competent handling of our affairs was approved by all.

The acting secretary did not feel it necessary to give a lengthy account of the year's proceedings. This had been done by the monthly newsletter. He had taken over from Harry Broster who was forced to retire and had done his best to keep up Harry's high standards.

The librarian, Tom Porter reported another successful year with increased borrowing and numerous additions to the stock of books.

On the resolution of Madge Corbett and seconded by Ted Davey the officials of the previous year were re-elected "en bloc." There was almost unanimous approval, but Ray Bennett pointed out that this was not permissible according to the constitution of the club. The chairman should be changed each year. However, members agreed that the constitution should be amended to facilitate the motion and this was incorporated in the original resolution.

We then had a talk from John Mann who said he was first and foremost a Magnet fan, but also read many other Old Boys' Books. He

showed us some 'mint' copies of the 'Boys' Magazine' which were much admired. His enthusiasm in coming 80 miles to visit us was very much appreciated.

A fine reading from Madge Corbett from the Greyfriars Herald No. 9 Old Series entitled "Bad for Bunter," completed the evening's proceedings, but we had time to look over the two collector's items brought by Tom Porter. These were No. 1 and 2 of The School Friend. No. 2 was published on May 24th, 1919 and was 47 years old to the day.

J. F. BELLFIELD  
Correspondent.

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### MERSEYSIDE

#### Meeting held Sunday, July 12th

Our programme had to be altered to accommodate an unexpected, but nevertheless welcome, item in the form of a tape which was sent to us, via Frank Case, of a conversation between David Hobbs and Bill Gander.

Bill Gander of course has become one of the pillars of our world-wide hobby through the publication of his Story Paper Collector, whilst David Hobbs is well known to many of us through correspondence we have had with him.

Very few of us are ever likely to meet them in person, and it is therefore some consolation to hear their voices.

It is not my intention to deal with the contents of the conversation in this report as I understand that Frank Case will be sending it to all the other clubs in turn. It will be sufficient for me to say that I hope it gives all our O.B.B.C. colleagues who hear it as much pleasure as it gave to us on Merseyside.

After we had heard the tape Bert Hamblett gave us an account of his visit to the London Club and he also brought back a quiz which was given at that meeting. We decided to try the quiz ourselves and this was won by Norman Pragnell, whom we were very pleased to see after his long absence.

Because of the tape one or two items originally included in the programme had to be held over until our next meeting which will be held on Sunday, July 10th.

BILL WINDSOR

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NORTHERNMeeting held 11th June 1966 - Saturday

A warm June evening, and fourteen members met for the first of our summer programmes. Outside - the vista of the "Moor" with its avenues of trees and smooth grass all at its freshest and greenest, and inside - also a feast for the eyes - the Library spread out with selections for all tastes. When, amidst cheerful chat, the returning and borrowing were ended, the books were cleared and Geoffrey Wilde took his place in the Chair. It was good to see that Breeze Bentley had been able to come, and also Dorothy Robinson, not forgetting all the "regulars." After the minutes, Gerry Allison gave his Treasurer's Report, and followed with extracts from his month's letters. These included a kind invitation, news of Sexton Blake films, a magazine article about our President, P. G. Wodehouse, with fine photographs, and "King Pippin" lore. Vice-Chairman Jack Wood had a copy of Berkeley Gray's "Curtains for Conquest."

The speaker of the evening - Bill Williamson - now took the Chair. Bill was telling us of his favourite writings. He traced his early memories and confessed that Greyfriars is his favourite scene. He did have a fine set of Nelson Lee, but returning to his old home to fetch them after marriage he found - alas and alack - the reader can guess! His comparison between Bunter receiving a letter with a remittance and D'Arcy doing the same brought murmurs of appreciation. Bill's best-liked series is "Bob Cherry's Barring Out."

Gerry Allison was our Quiz Master - and he had twenty quotations which his sister-in-law Annie read out to us. Ten were by Frank Richards and ten by P. G. Wodehouse, and we had to identify the author. And a surprisingly difficult task too. Joint winners with 14 right each were Geoffrey Wilde and Jack Allison, with Jack Wood with thirteen. Now Gerry had another teaser from Cliff Webb. Called 'One and One make One' we heard two descriptions which made a first name and a surname - whose? Geoffrey was again top with thirteen, and Bill, Ron Hodgson and Elsie Taylor all had twelve correct.

After the refreshment interval Mollie Allison handed each a paper bearing 64 letters arranged in a square. From these, 10 schoolboy surnames could be sorted out. The first to get the names right was Ron Hodgson followed by Bill Williamson. Now it was time to take our leave until the next meeting on Saturday, the 9th July, 1966.

M. L. ALLISON

Hon. Sec.

# THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

O. W. WADHAM (New Zealand): In that ever-excellent feature, "Danny's Diary," mention is made in April Collectors' Digest of a 30 episode silent movie serial, Lottie Pickford in "The Diamond From The Sky." Leading part in that film was first of all offered to Lottie's famous sister, Mary Pickford, but she declined to work in a serial picture, even though a salary of four thousand dollars a week was suggested.

Another point about "Diamond From The Sky" is that it was directed by William Desmond Taylor, who was murdered in Hollywood some six years later. That long Lottie Pickford effort was the cause of Taylor's rise to fame as a leading Hollywood film director.

DERYCK HARVEY (Cambridge): There has understandably been a difference of opinion about the reprinting of old articles. No feature writer likes to see old bones rattled before him, and Mr. Lofts certainly has a point that old mistakes might creep in again.

There simply must be room for new ideas to be worked into a magazine that maintains as high a standard as the C.D., however. How about character sketches of the present Blake authors? What about a lengthy article on W. Howard Baker? Can we not investigate the present policy of Mayflower Dell, who are putting out other series as written by Blake authors (I refer to the new 'Pinkerton's' series by Desmond Reid)?

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): There were 18 issues of THE BRITON'S OWN Library and this was given as a correction to Herbert Leckenby's article in the 1956 C.D. Annual. Wyeminster stories were written by I believe the editor of ALDINE PUBLICATIONS - a Walter Light - who used several non-de-plumes to other stories of the same school. With regard to G. A. Henty writing stories for the Amalgamated Press; Frank Vernon-Lay asked me to try and trace them some time ago, as he thought it had some historical importance. I must confess that although I have perused all through the early A.P. papers and have a complete record of every author, G. A. Henty's name does not appear, nor have I seen it at all in official records. Personally I would think that Hamilton Edwards, who wrote the editorial, was spinning a yarn a bit! (Apparently it was Hinton, not Edwards, who wrote the editorial. It is not clear why he should include Henty in his list, if Henty had not actually contributed to the early Boys' Friend. - ED.)

MAURICE KUTNER (Clapton): Perhaps you can kindly clear up one point, and so help one who has never seen the original Magnet No. 1. In the C.D. Annual for 1964 is a reproduction of the opening pages of the original Magnet No. 1, the first chapter being "Sent to School." Yet in the latter-day reproduction, the first chapter is "Sen to School." Which is the true and faithful copy? Has some talented hand inserted the "t" for the benefit of the readers of the 1964 C.D. Annual?

(No talented hand! Our reproduction was a true one. - ED.)

FRANK UNWIN (Liverpool): I'm looking forward to the new Holiday Annual (I wonder whether it will even remotely approach the quality of the old one) and the Sexton Blake classic. I hope I can obtain the latter.

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I'VE GOT PROBLEMS

Says Deryck Harvey

Really, there are times when I wonder what sort of hobby I have got myself into ...

I suppose it started when Fleetway issued the facsimile of Magnet No. 1 late last year, and Cassell's came out with the Greyfriars Prospectus at about the same time. Frank Richards and Billy Bunter were getting a lot of publicity, and as one who had never really seen enough of Bunter during an immediately post-war childhood, my appetite was whetted.

One thing led to another and before long I was rootling through old trunks in the attic. Imagine my delight upon coming across two Goldhawk "St. Jim's," 15 years old, and more than 200 third and fourth series Sexton Blakes, left over from boyhood and almost forgotten.

Very soon I was playing the Find-the-Blake game, searching endlessly in bookshops and newsagents' for the irregular issues of the new series Blakes. From one of them came details of "Collectors' Digest," and a subscription was a must; but that, of course, was only the beginning ...

By sheer chance the good editor sent a first, sample C.D. several months old, and that put me on to the four Armada paperback Bunters which were still available in the shops. It also caused me to save furiously for three C.D. annuals before stocks ran out.

Came Christmas, and I was spending record tokens on the Floreat Greyfriars LP; early in the New Year, I was enrolling in the Old Boys' Book Club; and then - and only then, oddly enough - I became aware of the Cassell Bunter series. Have you ever woken up with the realisation that you are about to embark on a book-buying scheme that will cost you about £20 as soon as possible?

Things have been going from bad to worse, or from worse to better, depending on which way you look at it, ever since. The Sexton Blake Catalogue and the Charles Hamilton Museum booklet were bargain buys, but then came my first real find: a second-hand Tom Merry picked up for 1s. from a market stall - I've been back to that stall a hundred times since!

By this time I really felt inspired. A brief meeting with another collector put me on to E. S. Turner's book, "Boys Will Be Boys," and although the publisher's stocks had run out, suddenly one day I found a copy staring me in the face in a library. Next, it dawned that Frank Richards' autobiography might still be in print - and it was! There could hardly be a better foundation for a growing collection of Hamiltoniana.

Well, that's about it. Not bad, you might think - 245 volumes on Blake and 23 items of Hamiltoniana in just on nine months. But, much more important, a whole host of new friends and an absorbing new interest.

Is it any wonder that I get up ten minutes earlier around the fifth and sixth of the month, when C.D. is due? Does it matter that I have already spent more on these books than I had intended? Could my wife be right in saying that I am addicted to a heady new drug, which serves to relieve me of part of my senses?

You see what I mean when I say I've got problems!

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NEWS OF THE CLUBS (continued from page 26)...

#### LONDON

The Garden Party meeting, which our host, Eric Fayne, organises so thoroughly each spring and summer, lived up to all the previous years. Roses in profusion, also hollyhocks, blackbirds singing and the friendly squirrels running round the borders. The beautiful Cumberland turf was very pleasing for the preliminary get-togethers and for the taking of numerous cine and still photographs that were taken by all the budding 'Harry Manners.' Truly an old English garden reminding one of Dr. Locke's at Greyfriars.

Then the move into the extensive room for the meeting. Here chairman, Bill Lofts, welcomed one and all. Among distinguished guests were Mr. Landsborough, late of Armada Books, Miss Edith Hood and our Tom Porter, that staunch supporter of the Birmingham club and who had made the long journey from Old Hill.

John Wernham, President of our club, addressed the meeting, stating how pleased he was to be present. He went on to thank everyone for their nice letters re his Hamilton Museum booklet, and then told of how he had obtained some books through his recent appearance on radio. Then he shewed photographs of Frank Richards, taken off the one in the museum booklet, and these are obtainable from him at 3/6 post free.

Various club matters were dealt with including the outing to Margate in September. Then the entire company adjourned to the excellent repast that Excelsior House is famous for.

After regaling themselves with appetising comestibles, it was Don Webster who proposed the hearty vote of thanks to the host, Eric Fayne, Madam and the lady helpers.

Back to the meeting room and the entertainment side of the gathering. Conducted by our Eric, a sort of marathon contest, several different games being indulged in. Mrs. Beck ably kept the scores and when the termination of the happy and jolly contest came it was Len Packman in first place. Don Webster was second, Charlie Wright and Roy Parsons joint thirds, I was fifth, Neil Beck was in sixth place and four seventh place runners were Reuben Godsave, Nicholas Bennett, Roger Jenkins and Brian Doyle. All were presented with very nice prizes including the scorer. In the excitement, we forgot to propose the hearty vote of thanks to our Eric for such a happy meeting; thus I will remedy it here. "Many thanks from us all Eric."

Next meeting at "Greyfriars," Hollybush Ride, Wokingham, Berks. The date, Sunday, July 17th. Host Eric Lawrence. Kindly inform if intending to be present.

Thus another milestone passed and the large company dispersed by car and rail. We passed the lovely green gardens by the clock tower where, on the way to the Old English Garden at Excelsior House, a band was playing reminding one of yesteryear.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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AUSTRALIA

The June meeting was held at Ernie Carter's home, in the midst of his huge collection and in the glow of a warm radiator.

After dealing with preliminary business, the next hour was spent listening to a tape recording of David Hobbs of Seattle's visit to Bill Gander's home in Transcona. We have all known Bill for so long, and it was a delight to sit in on this most entertaining tape. Warm club thanks to David.

Bill and David ranged over a wide variety of topics, and the visual was looked after by 3 beautiful colour snaps. It is to be hoped that Bill will decide, as David suggests, to visit his many friends in England one day.

Then our host brought out steaming cups of coffee. After this, some members left, while the remainder settled down to view Sunset Boulevard on T.V.

It is hoped that Melbournian Tom Dobson will be with us at our next meeting. Not too sure of the location, Tom, but will advise.

SYD SMYTH

SALE:

Holiday Annuals 1922 - 25 £1 each, plus postage.

MACHIN, 38, ST. THOMAS'S ROAD, PRESTON.

Nelson Lees (Old Series) for sale and exchange -

P. HARLEY, 214 SALTWELLS RD., DUDLEY WOOD, CRADLEY HEATH, STAFFS.

NOW IN ACTIVE PREPARATION - - - -

COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL FOR 1966.

WATCH FOR FURTHER PARTICULARS

YOUR HOBBY NEEDS YOU!suggests Norman Wright

I read with great interest the editorial article in the June issue of the C.D. on the future of the hobby, and speaking as "One who knows" I can comment on the "Younger generations" view of the hobby. The Australian reader who wishes to introduce "Batman" and "Superman" fans to Hamiltonia etc., will probably be overjoyed to learn that there is a nucleus of "young people" who are interested, and who do in fact take an active part in reading and collecting the old papers. At the last meeting of the London club there were over five members (including myself) who were under 18 years of age, and who all are very keen on the "Magnet" "Gem" Nelson Lee" etc.

I have been interested in the hobby for several years now and I am sure that I shall remain interested for many, many, many, years to come, and I am sure that this also applies to Nicholas Bennett and the other members of my age.

Probably the greatest barrier that prevents younger people taking an interest in the hobby is the very high prices that are asked for the old papers. Even club members sometimes charge what can only be called exorbitant prices.

In reply to this many members may say that these young members can borrow the books from the club library. But this is like saying that a person who is interested in coins can visit a museum and look at coins to his hearts content and never need to spend any of his own money on coins. This would be wrong, for interest in a hobby can only be sustained if one has a collection of one's own to browse through; this gives one a feeling that something has been achieved.

I therefore ask all C.D. readers to try and keep the prices of books as low as possible, to avoid selling books to dealers, and in doing so to prolong the life of the hobby and allow many more generations to enjoy the stories that they enjoyed. This plea will probably be in vain as there are those amongst you who buy the old books not for enjoyment but only to sell at high prices for a high profit. But at least I hope that a few of you may see the sense of my argument.....

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