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Collectors' Digest

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No. 11. EVERY WEDNESDAY. (Price 25 Cts., U.S.)
The Adventures of Sammy Smith, the Village Blacksmith.



No. 1. Good afternoon and welcome! Better not to introduce you to Sammy Smith, the village blacksmith and home-mechanic. One of the ablest in, and so popular as trips and excursions with the youngsters. Thus the day after yesterday, when the children coming home from school passed in at the smith door. "Hello and give with us, Mr. Smith," they cried. "I've got here" a small money. "I've got to see and had a good of business by supper-time."



No. 2. But Sammy had a heart as big as any of the boys in the village. "You're right," he said. "I'll see about it for you, boys." "It was one of a whole's collection of all the boys' money. "I'm prepared to the smith's door, and he had a good of business by supper-time. "I've got to see and had a good of business by supper-time."

"The Man in the Iron Mask!" A LONG, COMPLETE STORY OF **John Flood, the River Trawler.**



The figure in the iron mask crept up behind the unsuspecting detective. The girl watched the strange scene breathlessly.
 (A somewhat modified from the wonderful detective stories appearing in No. 7 of this Grand New Digest.)

Collectors' Digest

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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W. H. GANDER

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THE PITY OF IT ALL 1.

Some little while ago certain Authorities became anxious over the bad effect which our old friend William, Richmal Crompton's delightful scamp, might be having on Modern Youth. Though William has charmed youngsters of several decades without harming them appreciably, some librarians felt it necessary to remove the William books from their libraries.

Now some more Authorities are ill at ease concerning the harm which may be done by Enid Blyton's creations for young children. Black headlines in the national press inform us that these worried Authorities fear that modern



children are becoming "Noddy addicts." Just what the Authorities will do about it, we can't say at the moment. Maybe they will ban Noddy and Mr. Flod, and thereby ease the anxieties of alarmed parents.

In spite of these bannings, youngsters need not lack reading matter. Since the Authorities gave their blessing to filth, providing it is well-written filth, cheap paperback editions of pornographic stories, well within the pocket-money range of the average modern boy, are up for sale in plenty newsagents' shops. Maybe the Authorities won't be so disturbed when the William and Noddy addicts are replaced by sex maniacs.

THE PITY OF IT ALL. 2.

Last month, referring to the passing of the Boys' Friend in 1927, our Let's Be Controversial columnist had this to say: "To-day, in a far less sentimental age, the national press would certainly publish articles drawing attention to the passing of a paper like the Green 'Un."

We did not realise that his words were to be substantiated quite so quickly. At the time I am writing, "The Boys' Own Paper" has just died. All branches of the national press have carried articles on it; editors have devoted leaders to it; radio has reported it and commented on it; TV programmes on all channels have starred it. It has been quite a funeral.

To be quite truthful, I was never, even as a lad, a supporter of the B.O.P. So far as I am concerned, its main claim to fame was that it serialised Talbot Baines Reed's fine tales. Nevertheless I deeply regret to learn that the B.O.P. is no more. It is not merely that another link with the past has gone. It is also the fact that something more, worth while for young people, has been allowed to slip away from the world of youth.

One by one they have gone, until now there is very little left. It seems a pity that some government has not made a grant to enable one or two of these grand old papers to carry on. They have failed, not primarily from lack of support. I doubt, in fact, whether the B.O.P. ever enjoyed a very large circulation. They have failed owing to the insupportable cost of producing anything in the publication line these days. Costs - not lack of support - have been the killers.

Government grants go to Arts Theatres which cater for only a comparatively small proportion of the population. A grant to keep going some of the fine old papers for youngsters would seem to me to be equally worth while.

Most schoolmasters would testify to the absolutely staggering waste involved in the schools' free milk scheme. It should have been abolished long ago as unnecessary for and unwanted by ninety-nine per cent of the youngsters in this country. If a proportion of the colossal cost of the milk scheme was devoted to a grant to keep something worth-while going for the youngsters to read, our money might be doing some good.

THE PITY OF IT ALL. 3.

So now that famous old fictional character, Bulldog Drummond, has been tarted up in a new film according to the critics, and, apart from the name, there is nothing to connect him with the one who charmed

readers years ago. What a real pity that anything of the sort should be done!

I never read Bulldog Drummond, so my regret is merely general that these old characters cannot be left alone unless they are to be presented in a manner which will be recognisable to those who remember them with affection.

FREEZE A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW

It is a wonderful compliment to C.D. that so many of our overseas readers have been willing and anxious to receive their copies by air mail. This has meant, in most cases, that the cost of the air mail was more than the cost of C.D. itself.

But now, air mail charges are increased considerably. This will make the old mag quite costly for those who receive it in this way. It is only right to suggest to overseas readers that it might be a good idea to let their copies come by sea, even if it means a wait of a few weeks. Naturally, we shall be happy to continue to dispatch by air to those who feel it is worth the expense.

In passing, what a rocketing there has been of late in the cost of the parcel post. Evidently the freeze, of which we have heard so much, does not apply to the postal services.

THE EDITOR.

OUR PICTURES THIS MONTH

On our front and back covers this month we reproduce a throwaway, issued in 1912 to advertise the publication of a new paper "The Penny Wonder." This paper ran for 46 issues, and then became the "Wonder" and finally the world-famous "Funny Wonder." Shortly we hope to reproduce for your interest a similar throwaway published to introduce the Dreadnought.

WANTED: Second-hand Cricket and Football Books, Tours, Autobiographies; only volumes Cricketer.

SOUTHWAY, P.O. Box 4; Beaconsfield, Cape Province, South Africa.

WANTED: PIE MAGAZINES containing Carcroft Stories, The Lone Texan by Frank Richards, Sparshott Series No. 6. (Pluck will tell) and any others after No. 6. Will buy or exchange for Holiday Annuals or Magnets 1039, 1040, 1041.

P. HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, KINGS HEATH, NORTHAMPTON.

DANNY'S DIARY

FEBRUARY 1917

Food is getting terribly dear and scarce, and it is due to the war profiteers who are buying up lots of stuff and selling it at huge profits. They say that some people are becoming millionaires overnight.

The Gem and the Magnet have been reduced in size again, this time to 20 pages, including the covers. The pages are now divided into 3 columns instead of 2, and the illustrations are a good deal smaller. I must say that they are not nearly so attractive now.

Still, the stories are really the thing, of course - but I can't praise the Gem very highly this month. The opening story of the month wasn't bad. Called "Passing It On," it started off by Gussy being invited to a tea which turned out to be a war-tea - dry bread, a fourth of a sardine, and a fragment of a Brazil nut. To get his own back on the Terrible Three, Gussy enlisted the services of Levison, who sent an invitation to Tom Merry from a supposed colonel. The joke built up, and eventually quite a number of fellows, thinking to out-do Tom Merry, fell victims to the same hoax. This tale was quite amusing.

But the next tale, called "The Intruder" (this was the first of the 20-page issues), was grittily-written and not very easy to read. A new boy in the Shell named Parker was really a grown man of 30, and Talbot woke up one morning in the dormitory and saw Parker shaving. The following week's story was a sequel named "Arthur Augustus' Ally" in which Parker turned out to be a reporter hiding at St. Jim's from a gang of crooks.

Last of the month was much better, though when you read it carefully you could see evidence of prooing to make it fit into the smaller Gem. This was "Hard Lines For Levison" in which Levison was driven from his old study by the horridness of his old friends. So he and the newish boy, Clive from South Africa, went into Study 9 which happened to be empty. But Clive had borrowed "A Boy Without a Name" from Gussy, and when Gussy got the book back it contained a fragment of a letter in Clive's handwriting, in which Gussy was insulted. The fellows thought that Levison was up to his old trick of imitating handwriting, but Talbot proved that the villains were Racke & Co, who were out to disgrace Levison.

There is a sameness about the Gem these days. Too much Levison

and Talbot.

In the Boys' Friend 3d Library this month they have issued "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays" which I remember as a serial in the Gem, and Doug says that a long time ago it was also run as a serial in the old Empire Library, now defunked.

Rookwood, in the Boys' Friend, has been very good. First story continued the Mornington-'Erbert series. In "By Sheer Pluck," 'Erbert was having a bad time with the fags, but when Jones Minimus fell through the ice, 'Erbert went in for him and saved him.

"Tubby Muffin - Millionaire" was amusing. Tubby received a letter saying that his uncle Joshua had died, leaving him a lot of money. So Tubby was able to borrow plenty from his friends on the strength of his legacy. But one day, who should arrive to visit Tubby but his dead Uncle Joshua. Leggett has typed the letter on Mr. Manders' machine so that Tubby could borrow money and pass some of it on to Leggett.

Yet another new boy, this time "Conroy, the Cornstalk." Rumour got around that Conroy, from Australia, was the son of a millionaire, so all the nuts prepared to sponge on him. But Conroy was not really rich at all.

Final story, "The Colonial Co." comprised Conroy, Pons, and Van Ryn. It was a very funny tale indeed. The Colonials found themselves at daggers drawn with Carthew, the prefect. When they set out to soot him, they got Mr. Bootles by mistake.

Doug, as usual, bought the two new Sexton Blake Libraries. He gave me one of them, which was entitled "The Secret of Drake's Folly" or "The Miser's Hoard." It introduced Count Carlac and Professor Kew.

I asked Doug why some stories are published with alternative titles. He says it's so that if one doesn't click, the other may do. In fact he was very rude about it. He says that if my diary is ever published, they will call it "Danny's Diary" or "The Ravings of a Nitwit." What cheek!

This month in our local cinemas we have seen some exciting films including Norma Talmadge in "Children in the House," Wallace Reid in "A Selfish Woman," William Farnum in "Hoodman Blind" and Charles Ray in "The Deserter." I like Charles Ray very much. Both he and Norma Talmadge act for the new Triangle Film Company. There was also a new Charlie Chaplin comedy called "One A.M.," but Charlie was a drunk, and it wasn't as funny as he usually is.

There has been a big fire in Wimbledon High Street, and a lot of

shops have been gutted.

Three of the four tales in the Magnet this month have been good. In "Bunter's Big Brother," Bunter wanted to be able to brag about having a relative at the front, so Mr. Horatio Curll, a broken-down actor, now a relief-pianist at the Courtfield Cinema, is paid by Fish and Bunter to pose as the wounded Private Cecil Bunter. Mr. Curll was once a Gem character.

The first story in the Magnet of reduced size, with 3 column pages, was "The Fellow Who Funked." It is well-written, but rather a stale plot. Some Removites are attacked by a bunch of Highcliffe fellows in the lane. Nugent, who is on the top of a hill, bunks in the opposite direction. He is accused of cowardice, and goes on the high horse. Actually, he had been running to the aid of Trumper who, single-handed, was dealing with some more Highcliffians. In this issue was also Greyfriars Gallery No. 6, dealing with Johnny Bull.

Another new boy turned up in "Sir Jimmy of Greyfriars." Sir Jimmy Vivian, a distant relative of Lord Mauleverer, is found in the slums, and comes to Greyfriars as a junior. He turns out to be quite a prize-packet. In this issue Peter Todd was No. 7 of the G.G.

The last tale of the month could never have been written by the regular writer at all, but, all the same, the writing is pretty good, and if it hadn't been for an utterly stupid plot, it might have got by. Called "The Great Fat-Cure," it tells of Bunter making the acquaintance of a fanatic named Engensen, who plans to remove Bunter's fat. Later Bunter thinks he has been poisoned. He is taken in hand by a nephew of the Head, named Surgeon Neville Locke, R.N., who advises the Head that Bunter should be given a few days of very heavy eating. So the Head decides to give Bunter the run of the tuckshop. Complete rubbish, though the actual writing is a good deal better than a lot of the stuff these days when someone replaces the normal writer.

One evening, Dad took us all to the Alhambra to see George Robey and Violet Lorraine in "The Bing Boys are Here." It has been running a long time, and will soon finish. There are some lovely songs in it, including "If You Were the Only Girl in the World" and "Let the Great Big World Keep Turning."

And the price of "The Times" has gone up to tuppence!

In the Penny Popular, the Greyfriars story was "Aliens of Greyfriars" in which Hurree Singh comes to Greyfriars. Also "The Fugitive of St. Jim's" in which Lord Conway was accused of theft.

Next week (reduced to 20 pages) came "Rivals of the Remove" who

were the aliens once again. The St. Jim's tale was "The Gipsy's Warning" about Kit, who was sent to school by Lord Eastwood.

Then "In Hiding," in which the aliens left, but Hurree Singh stayed at Greyfriars, hiding himself away. "Out of His Element" was the sequel about Gipsy Kit. (The two St. Jim's tales were one story "The Gipsy Schoolboy" when they were in the Gem.)

Finally "Harry Wharton's Sacrifice" (for Hazeldene and Marjorie). St. Jim's tale was "The Ragging of Ratty" in which Kerr disguised himself as Mrs. Ratcliff. A scream, this one.

The Union Jack is also reduced to 20 pages, but I won't suppose the story is any shorter, for the print is very tiny now. Too tiny, I think. I had one copy this month entitled "A Case of Arson." This introduced the character named the Bat, and it was an exciting tale about an insurance fraud.

I also had a Nelson Lee Library which was entitled "Monn the Monster" which introduced Jim the Penman as well as Lee and Nipper.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Incredibly, the stories "The Intruder" and "Arthur Augustus' Ally," about the newcomer, Parker, were reprinted in the Triumph in 1940, following the end of the Gem. Also reprinted in Triumph were the early stories of Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn, though, equally incredibly, their names were changed.

W A N T E D: Hard Cover School Tales by Warren Bell, W. Cule, Harold Avery, Hylton Cleaver, P. G. Wodehouse, Richard Bird, St. John Pearce, Michael Poole, L. C. Douthwaite and others. Will purchase or make suitable exchanges for S.O.Ls. and Magnets.

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SALE: BUNTER BOOKS - 18, 35, 38; MERRY "Secret of Study;" Wizards, Rovers, Hotspurs 1954-1961.

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NELSON LEE COLUMN

(CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD)

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

By Jim Cook

No matter what part of the world you are in a tropical island with its hot, white sand, its waving palm trees and the blue waters of its lagoon all make it the end of the journey for those who seek paradise.

Such a place was once visited by the St. Frank's juniors some time ago during one of Lord Dorrimore's summer parties with the boys, although the visit was quite unintentional for the original plan had been a trip to the Pacific and the Solomon Islands which would embrace the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Actually this yachting trip was in something of a grim chase, a chase in pursuit of a number of powerful and villainous Chinamen who had kidnapped Yung Ching, the Chinese junior of the Remove. But it was while the Wanderer was steaming for Colombo that Fate took a hand and changed the course of events. One evening the air became oppressive and humid. It was so hot that it was an absolute effort to walk across the deck. The sea lay like a pond on every side, smooth, glassy, and - sinister.

In fact, the signs were for an approaching hurricane, cyclone and typhoon all rolled into one according to Dorrie who was very familiar with tropical weather. Well, the great storm came and such was its fury that Dorrie's yacht stood very little chance of survival. But even so, it was a submerged wreckage that caused damage to the steering gear and resulted in the Wanderer being out of action and left to drift helplessly while the storm raged with ever-increasing fury.

Later on masses of white foam in the distance were observed by the first officer Mr. Maitland and this was to be the great reef which eventually the Wanderer was to make for and which one half of the party were to be thrown upon and saved while the rest were thought to be lost in the yacht.

The events of this great storm and of the yacht's battle with the reef battle with the reef have already been chronicled by another hand* so I will pass over those terrible moments and describe the scene the next day.

The sun was shining with full, intense tropical glory. The heat

was considerable. Along a beach of pure, white sand many figures were sprawled out, some in pyjamas, but mostly in a few rags. And they were all fast asleep.

Nipper, who was the first to awaken, was so overcome by the vision of Paradise that he could utter only one word. Glorious!

I will repeat the description he wrote of that wonderful scene. "There lay the lagoon, a great sweep of calm, blue water. Over to the left the tints were of pure ultramarine- a deep, glorious blue. And yet only a short distance away the water showed like pure, sparkling sapphire, delicate and beautiful. And so clear was the water that had I been in a boat I should have seen the bottom, fathoms below, with the wonderful formation of coral branching here and there in the most intricate design."

"I was standing on a beach of pure white sand" he continued. "Such sands as one never sees except in an island of the South Seas. And in my rear there were coconut palms, hundreds and hundreds of them, some so close to the water that they bent practically over it, and their reflections were outlined."

This enchanting scene is so heavenly I feel I must carry on with Nipper's own words.

"Gazing out over the lagoon, I could see the barrier reef, perhaps half a mile distant. The water on the beach here lapped the sands in tiny, sparkling wavelets. But out there, on the reef, the great rollers roared and crashed amid a thunder of foam and spray. The legacy of the recent storm. But here only the faintest echo of the disturbance reached the sands.

And the light over beyond the reef was dazzling. It was a waste of sea and air, without a sail or whisp of smoke.

But nearer, everything was different. There lay the reef, with the snow white foam marking its position, and the spray glistening like diamonds in the sunlight. And the intense green of the palms, the white of the coral, and, predominating all the blue of the lagoon."

I make no excuse for quoting Nipper's fine description of this tropical island. No words of mine can better them. But it is only a fraction of the story that developed from this beginning of life on a desert island.

Amid all the beauty, colour and heavenly bliss of this enchanting oasis, a future was destined to replace this lovely scene with one of complete destruction.

The boys of St. Frank's never visited such a glorious spot again in their later adventures. Lagoon Island, as it was called, came

HAMILTONIANA

THEY WRITE AND SAY ---

I REMEMBER LEONARD SHIELDS says MAURICE KUTNER

Have just finished reading the C.D. Annual for 1966 and I honestly believe it to be the best value for money obtainable anywhere these days. With such an abundance of good articles, stories and illustrations, it is difficult to select any one item as being "the best." All praise and thanks are due to all concerned, from the hard-working Editor, the contributors, to the York Duplicating Services, in the making of this excellent volume.

For my own part I enjoyed Bill Lofts' article on Leonard Shields, an artist who first became known to me with a full-page tone illustration in the 1920 Holiday Annual showing the boys of the Remove, very inky and very busy on a coming number of the Greyfriars Herald. Little did I know then that within ten years his illustrations were to almost monopolize the Magnet. To those of us who were used to C. H. Chapman's work as an indisputable and eternal part of the Magnet, Shields may have appeared in the role of an interloper. My "purple period" of the Gem was concerned mainly with the illustrations of Warwick Reynolds and when in 1919 J. Macdonald took over permanently I felt most strongly that J. Macdonald was an unmitigated interloper and usurper of the worst order, not knowing at that time that he was in fact "the one and only original." Which merely means, I suppose, that children are not fond of sudden changes, and the world of youth should remain permanent and eternal.

I was very pleased to see the two pages of portraits by G. M. Dodshon from the School Friend of 1920. They brought some happy memories of a world that was young and happy and when it was easy to fall in love, in turn, with Marjorie Hazeldene and Barbara Redfern. To one of my diffident nature, Clara Trevlyn was a little too boisterous to enter into my secret yearnings. Also, despite any glances which may be cast in my direction, I must confess that I really did believe, at that time, that Hilda Richards was really Frank Richards' sister.

I WASN'T SO OBSERVANT AS DANNY says JOHN TOMLINSON

If Danny could tell most of the stories which were not by the genuine author, he was more observant than I. The only ones I could

tell were those by Pentelow, some of which Danny will be mentioning any time now, as he has got to the series about Philip Ignatius Parker-Roberts, the reporter passing as a schoolboy, which Eric Fayne, in the C.D. Annual for 1955, said were an example of tales which were almost unreadable.

I do not agree with this view, as I enjoyed them and would like to re-read them, a desire which I seem to have entirely on my own among Old Boys' Book lovers - but there it is!

There are a few St. Jim's tales by Pentelow that are enough to drive crazy admirers of that school. To be truthful, I have to admit that a big fault with that writer was to cram nearly all the important characters and many unimportant ones into one story.

A story of his I liked very much was a Gem of 1925 "The Knight of the Pump," which, however, contained the amazing statement that Clive had a ticklish time in Study No. 9, as there were Cardew with his wayward nature and Levison, "in whom the leaven of old" still worked. I'm sure Charles Hamilton never gave that impression of the reformed Levison.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 108. THE PUPPETS

Taine, in his comments upon Dickens, had this to say to the great Victorian author: "You will grasp a personage in a single attitude, you will see of him only that, and you will impose it upon him from beginning to end. Each of your characters will be a vice, a virtue, a ridicule personified; and the passion, which you lend it, will be so frequent, so invariable, so absorbing, that it will no longer be like a living man, but an abstraction in man's clothes. You do not follow the development; you always keep your character in the same attitude; he is a miser, or a hypocrite, or a good man, to the end, and always after the same fashion. Thus he has no history."

Desmond Coke, who wrote a handful of the world's greatest school stories, believed that those words of Taine could be aptly applied to the average school tale. In such a tale, the hero and his fellows commonly arrive set in a fixed mould of character. They are bullies, they are heroes; they are snobs or they are dandies; and in every possible circumstance the bully will bully, the hero will be heroic, and the rest will behave in accordance with the label fixed to them. It is inconceivable that the bully should have human feelings or fits of geniality; he is only fifteen but his character is fixed for life.

So with the snob. Although snobbery is a vice of late and gradual growth, the snob of these stories will refer everything to Birth; and this, in a community where all social bars are broken and each boy, inwardly proud of his parents, is outwardly ashamed of mentioning their very name.

I have often claimed, on the grounds of his immense output and the high quality of his work, that Charles Hamilton is by far the greatest writer of school stories the world has ever known or will ever know. Just how far would the words of Taine and the views expressed, probably tongue in cheek, by Desmond Coke, be true of Charles Hamilton?

By and large, they are true. The label tacked on to the boy at the start is still adhered to some twenty years or more later.

When we were youngsters it never occurred to us that the man who wrote to brighten our youthful hours was churning out stories like sausages from a sausage-machine. An author who has to produce an average of fifty-thousand words a week for year after year has little time for consideration, or characterisation, or style, and no time at all for revision. One like Charles Hamilton tapped away with the knowledge that whatever he wrote - good, bad, or indifferent - would be accepted and published without question.

Luckily for us, he was a genius who, in spite of the appalling conditions under which he wrote, was able to maintain a high standard of quality and a fair smattering of characterisation. It is a question whether, had he been able to devote a fortnight instead of a day to one story, it would have been any better than it was.

Particularly in the years before 1925 or thereabouts, Hamilton's weakness - as with all school story writers - was the inability to show that all the vices are not the monopoly of the bad characters any more than all the virtues are the prerogative of the good ones.

The underhand characters were always snobs. This was far from true to life. Generally, as all schoolmasters know, boys are not snobs. Often their parents are. It is the parents, not their sons, who want to keep up with the Jones's.

Yet, though the average boy is never a snob in the accepted sense of the word, there is a certain snobbish instinct in even the best of boys. One delightfully convincing sequence was in the Gem's Schoolboy Pug series when the chums of Study No. 6 could not hide their disgust at the bad table manners of the new boy. But this sequence was off the beaten track. In giving the chums something of a natural reaction, the author was portraying them out of character

so far as the stories went.

In recalling an episode from my own childhood, I am by no means suggesting that I was to be included among "the best of boys." I suppose I was about ten when I was very friendly with the son of my mother's charwoman. He was about two years my senior, and, though rough and ready, he was a very nice lad. He was one of a large family. Often he would come to tea with me, and I loved to see him enjoying himself. But on one occasion his mother invited me to tea with him.

My mother insisted that I should go. "But, Mum," I said, "Arthur eats with his knife, their house smells, and they eat margarine." But I went. From the fact that I still vividly recall that minor episode in my childhood, I imagine that my mother very effectively read the riot act to me on the subject.

I fancy that, though I showed that little bit of childish snobbishness in the privacy of my home, I would have made sure that it did not show in any way when I was in touch with the people whose feelings I might hurt. And I believe that most boys would be the same.

Rookwood, probably, was the most snobbish of all the Hamilton schools. When Conroy arrived as a new boy, preceded by the rumour that he was the son of a millionaire, all the caddish characters set out to sponge on him. There was no allowance for the fact that a boy might be a nasty piece of work yet still be anything but a sponger.

With the exception of Mornington who, very much on the lines of Vernon-Smith, changed from a complete villain to an entertaining mixture of black and white, there was but little character development during the eleven years of Rookwood.

Someone - I believe it was Proust - said that a man's character, compared with his character as a boy, was like the same coat worn inside out. By which I presume he meant that our characters as adults are the same, but just a little more shoddy than our characters as boys.

It is not strictly true. In real life, character changes with the passing of time. The schoolboy leader never becomes a leader of men. The boy who is a bully can become the most gentle of adults. The reckless boy can become a prudent man. Only the cunning, sly boy seems often to make a rather more cunning and sly man.

But time stood still in the school stories, even though Tom Merry went to the Franco-British Exhibition, the Wembley Exhibition,

and probably still pops into the Schoolboys' Exhibition. And if the boys are Peter Pans, it is absurd to expect character to change, in spite of Taine and Coke.

Nevertheless, characters did change with the passing of the years. The Bounder, from being an unbelievably bad boy passed through the stage of being an unbelievably good boy and emerged as one of the really great pen pictures of school fiction.

Alonzo Todd, smug, weedy, and ineffectual, was brilliantly portrayed when he gained unexpected power and showed the tyrannical intolerance of the reformer.

Even the character of Billy Bunter, though the finer points were lost in a welter of slapstick comedy, was handled sometimes with magnificent craftsmanship which is rarely noted today. Bunter, the abject coward, driving himself to introduce the drug into Soames's coffee, was a superb piece of writing in every way.

The genius of Charles Hamilton was seen in the way he uses the psychological moment to display the effect on a character of certain events or environment.

As adults, we may join with Coke - traitors that we are - and smile in superior fashion at the fact that the heroes were heroic, the bullies bullied, the cads were cadlike and cowardly. We choose to forget that when we were boys we would have hated changes to be made. When Harry Wharton went off the rails we longed for him to come into his own again. Levison, we thought, - or, at least, I thought - was reformed in far too wholesale a fashion. I have always preferred the old Levison. And so it was, all the way down the years. We hated change.

I think that, though Tom Merry was by no means Charles Hamilton's greatest character study, Tom Merry was without any question Hamilton's most successful character. For it was Tom Merry, by some magic quality which it is hard to pinpoint, who caught public imagination in a way which no other schoolboy character ever did, and set the author off on that tremendously successful career which was to follow the practice of keeping the hero at fifteen while his admirers became men, fathers, and grandfathers.

Many years later, Billy Bunter acted as a booster, and did much the same thing, though the success of Bunter was far more artificially contrived.

Secretly, Charles Hamilton knew what he owed to Tom Merry, and loved him dearly. As Roger Jenkins has noted, Tom Merry was the only character to whom Charles Hamilton always referred by his christian

name.

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 107. A PHARAOH WHO KNEW NOT JOSEPH

ROGER JENKINS: I am rather surprised that you should say that we can discard the idea that the Rookwood series in the Boys' Friend ended at the wish of the author. Some years ago Charles Hamilton wrote to me telling me that such was in fact the case.

His exact words were as follows: "After Hinton's time, Maurice Down edited the Boys' Friend, along with the Gem and the Magnet: but changes were made in the middle twenties: and the paper went to another editor: and as I thought I ought to stick to my chief, I ceased to write Rookwood. I was sorry to part with Jimmy Silver: but as it turned out, it had to come, for the Boys' Friend died a year or two later -- though whether the loss of Rookwood had anything to do with that, I am too modest to affirm."

Of course, there may be far more in this than meets the eye. I am inclined to think that Charles Hamilton decided to concentrate on Greyfriars: at any rate, the Golden Age of the Magnet began when Rookwood ended. It is pleasant to think that one, at least, of Charles Hamilton's famous schools ended its career by voluntary retirement.

W. O. G. LOFTS: How right you are! The editorship of the Boys Friend did change in 1926. I met him personally just before he retired from Fleetway a few years ago. He told me that Rookwood had just lost its appeal with readers, and it was decided to change the contents of the Boys Friend to meet the demands of the more modern readership. This editor I know was connected closely with many of the comic papers, and probably this is why so much comic type of material was published in his short time as editor.

Strangely enough, for years I was puzzled by the author 'JOHN LANCE' who incidentally had some yarns republished in the S.O.L. and it was only a short time ago that I discovered his identity. You have given me a golden opportunity to reveal that it hid the identity of E. Newton Bungay a prolific writer of serials for the comic papers. This editor did also say that the new format of the Boys Friend was unsuccessful as the readership declined, and in his opinion the paper should have finished around 1925. It was low in circulation then, and too late really to try and boost it up again with novel features.

BLAKIANA

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

THE NAME ONLY IS THE SAME!

By W. O. G. Lofts

Some years ago I wrote an article for the Collector's Digest entitled "Frank Richards" - Which Is Ours? In the article I pointed out the different people who had written under the name of "Frank Richards" other than the famous Charles Hamilton.

One of the main purposes of that article was to try to impress upon the reader the pitfalls of assuming there could only be one author with the same Christian name(s) or initials. It was therefore with great amusement that I found the compilers of information for the recently released "Frank Richards" gramophone record had credited Charles Hamilton with having written "Old Soldiers Never Die," a work that he most certainly never wrote.

I was greatly interested in S. Gordon Swan's recent article on Sexton Blake and Ellery Queen, in which he assumes that the writer L. J. Beeston who appeared in the Ellery Queen book of mid-1966 is the same writer who penned those early U.J. stories way back in the 1908/9 period. I do agree that some early U.J. stories were reprinted in the U.S.A. in the early days with the names of Sexton Blake and Tinker changed to an American detective, including one by L. J. Beeston. But they were all anonymous, and personally I would require more evidence before accepting that both writers were the same person. My own information about L. J. Beeston is that by a photograph of him published in Chums around 1900 he was already a middle-aged man, and that his writings were becoming somewhat outdated for that period. Personally, I could not read his dull stories, and find it hard to believe that his work could bring such praise from a magazine of such high standard as the Ellery Queen Magazine. On the other hand I may be doing Mr. Beeston an injustice, as he could well have written much better material for higher class magazines in the early days. He dropped out altogether in the 'twenties, and probably died during that period.

As so many Sexton Blake enthusiasts collect the works of their favourite writers in other fields, it is worth recording a few more 'The Name Is The Same' in connection with the hobby. It may surprise

readers to know that there have been at least fifteen different John Hunter's since the start of the 19th century. Our own Blake writer wrote very few books in other fields (considering his vast output), and I well remember asking him the reason whilst having lunch with him in his beautiful oak-panelled dining room. He thought that writing full-length books was completely unremunerative - unless by chance the author had a 'best seller.' Magazine stories (high class ones) paid almost as much, plus the fact that they could be sold again in the overseas market.

E. S. Brooks was a popular writer in the U.S.A. but no relation to our own famous writer of Nelson Lee, Waldo and St. Frank's. His first name, strangely enough, was Edwin - a variant spelling of Edwy.

Believe it or not, there have been two 'Pierre Quiroule's.' Both were thriller writers. The 'other' one wrote a lot in Spanish, so I cannot compare his style or merits with our own brilliant W. W. Sayer. Certainly he is not our popular Blake author - as Mr. Sayer told me when I visited him last year.

Probably the most controversial 'Name Is The Same' in recent years has been the 'Anthony Skene' B.B.C. writer. I can well recall Mr. H. W. Twyman, editor of the Union Jack, sending me a page from the Radio Times with a play by this author, and querying whether it was the same as the Blake author. Despite several letters to the B.B.C. no reply has ever been received, and had I not contacted the creator of Zenith - now aged over 80 and living in the Isle of Wight - who denied it was him, I would have sworn that both writers were one and the same, especially when a later play was by George Norman Phillips, the real name of 'Anthony Skene.' The coincidence is still most astonishing to say the least!

Hilary King was the writer of a few 3rd series S.B.L's which were written very well indeed. Until I discovered this name hid the identity of John Grierson Dickson, I had contacted another writer of the same name whom I was convinced was the same person. This other 'Hilary King,' who lived near Lords cricket ground, was greatly interested in his namesake, as one could well imagine.

George E. Rochester thought up the nom-de-plume of 'John Beresford' for some of his non-Blake stories, and was (as he related in his bed-sitter in Victoria) astonished when it was pointed out that there was a well-known writer of that name.

Genial W. Howard Baker, editor of the S.B.L., I know for a fact coined the name William Arthur Ballinger for some of his Blake yarns. (The surname is, I believe, the old English interpretation of his own

name). He was greatly surprised when I told him that there is a famous crime writer named W. or Bill Ballinger writing in the U.S.A. today. In London, only recently, an American editor friend bought an S.B.L. and remarked to me that he was interested to see that Bill Ballinger wrote Sexton Blake stories.

Ladbroke Black wrote under the name Paul Urquhart; but at least two other writers used this name, one of them being Thomas Cox Meech.

John Drummond is the pen-name of John Newton Chance, and yet at least two other writers have written books under that name.

Two others, not Blake writers: The Name Leslie Charteris appeared in Chums before the world famous creator of The Saint was born; Derek Adley saw a thriller story by Carlton Wallace in the London Evening News, and was disappointed when the author wrote to him saying he had no connection with the old Thriller writer.

I have probably only touched on a few names of writers with the same name as our favourites. So in closing, I would just like to say to the reader - beware before buying a book which you presume to have been written by one of your favourite authors. It may turn out that THE NAME ONLY IS THE SAME!

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S.B.L. REVIEW

AN EVENT CALLED MURDER

MARTIN THOMAS

Some authors excel in the purely thriller type of novel - a chain of exciting incidents linked together to form a conclusion of which the reader has anticipated before even the half-way stage has been reached in some cases. Nearly all the Blake authors of the past came into this category. But the writing of a genuine detective story of the 'whodunnit' type requires the extra ability of the author in keeping from the reader the solution of the mystery until he is ready to disclose it himself.

Here you are challenged to pit your powers of perception against the inventive genius of the author. Who killed Mike Glanville, horseman supreme, whilst competing in the Queldon Horse Trials on the Marquis of Queldon's estate?

Mr. Thomas plays fair in that he puts before you and gives equal prominence to all the suspects of which one is certainly guilty of the crime. He is obviously confident that you are not going to pick out the culprit until he is ready to tell you himself. And his confidence is by no means misplaced, for, although you might make a lucky

guess, it is a million to one against you being able to give a logical explanation of the crime. Blake's clues were a glass tumbler, an ash-tray and a ball-point pen. Your only clue lies in a report published in all the leading newspapers on the morning of 31st December 1965, obviously the source of the author's inspiration.

In the January issue a contributor was somewhat critical of the fact that we reviewers are too prone to accept a story as being of especial interest to the 'old guard.' Well, if any member of this community dislikes the fare offered here, in which the only violence is that of the speech of the craggy Splash Kirby - apart from the actual murder, of course - then I can only say that in their extreme views they are unlikely to be satisfied with anything the S.B.L. is likely to offer them.

Blake is masterly here, and in extending the same tribute to the author, I do not think anyone will accuse me of exaggeration.

Walter Webb

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S (continued from page 10)...

out of obscurity and with a volcanic finality departed into nothingness.

When the Triangle is covered in snow and the old chestnut trees have long since shed their leaves; when the icy north-east winds rattle the windows in the Common Room and the juniors embrace the warmth of their study fires, that is the time to remember tropical islands.

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: MAGNETS: 238, 239, 309, 328, 337, 356 to 358 inclusive, 435, 773, 850, 858, 862, 863, 864, 865, 868, 942, 951, 985, 988. GEMS: 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.

WANTED: GEMS: Nos. 1297, 1293, 1286, 1283, 1277, 1198, 1150, 1074, 1072, 1116, 1114, 1035, 1034, 1020, 1019, 1006, 1000 and many before this last number. Your price paid or I have many early Magnet and Gem duplicates for exchange only.

Write: LOFTS, 56, SHERINGHAM HOUSE, LISSON ST., LONDON, N.W.1.

NEWS FROM THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 20th December, 1966

Our annual Christmas party was attended by eleven members, which was quite a reasonable turn out.

The recent death of Madge Corbett, Jack's wife and a founder member of our club, was very much in our minds as the meeting commenced. Tom Porter gave an appreciation of Madge, which was followed by a period of silence when we pondered on her great services to our club and how she had enriched us all by her cheerful companionship. Jack Corbett was the great pioneer of our hobby in the Midland area and Madge had backed him up. No better combination can be envisaged than husband and wife working together on a hobby they both love. Tom Porter was peculiarly fitted to speak on this matter with feeling. Only five years ago he lost his own wife Beryl Porter, a kindred spirit with Madge. Both these lady members had added charm and grace to our meetings and we were cruelly unfortunate to lose them. The club, however, like the show must go on as we can be sure they would wish it.

The late arrival of John Mann was a pleasant surprise. He had had a great deal of trouble in finding our venue in the dark through the maze of Birmingham streets after a journey of 80 miles. John's enthusiasm in coming so great a distance to join us was very much appreciated.

Our usual feature Collector's Items and Anniversary Number was on view, although the usual business matters of our meetings were left in abeyance as this was the Christmas party. Tom Porter brought along Boys' Friend Library (Old Series) No. 588 'Prefect and Fag' by Jack North, a story of Jack Jackson and Co of Wycliffe. The Anniversary number was the Nelson Lee Library No. 498 (Old Series) for December 20th, 1924, 42 years old to the day. This was a Christmas story, "The Ghosts of Glenthorne Manor." Ivan Webster brought along a Schoolboys' Own Library No. 6, "Captain of the Fourth," a Rookwood S.O.L.

The table was loaded with good things to eat and Win Partridge who had designed table mats, for the occasion, did an excellent job in arranging the good things. Ivan Webster's celebrated pork-pie was the "piece de resistance" again as last year. There were not enough people cast in the Bunter mould and although many did full

justice to the meal there was a good deal left.

Win Partridge provided us with a game of anagrams on the names of places in Britain and this was most interesting. Norman Gregory and John Mann received souvenir cards of Greyfriars design drawn by Win Partridge herself, very skilfully done.

The meeting went on longer than usual for it was 10-15 before our party broke up.

We meet again on January 31st, 1967, a break of six weeks as we met earlier this month to avoid the Christmas week. We hope to see all members at the Birmingham Theatre Centre on that date.

J. F. BELLFIELD
Correspondent.

LONDON

The first meeting of 1967 was held at the Richmond Community Centre on Sunday, January 15th. Don Webster was the ideal host and made all the necessary arrangements whereby nearly 30 members had an enjoyable time.

Both librarians reported steady borrowings and it was stated that there were 7,000 from the Charles Hamilton library and 1,700 from the Nelson Lee. A long discussion took place on the care of the books and it was generally agreed that the club gave a service to borrowers that was second to none.

Several cuttings from various newspapers were shown round re the finish in publication of "The Boys' Own Paper."

One of the most entertaining quizzes we have had for some time was conducted by George Keppell. Four names were recorded as joint winners: Roger Jenkins, Winifred Morss, Larry Morley and Ben Whiter. A reading by Charles Wright of his essay on Sweeny Todd with reference to Charles Dickens was another highlight that was greatly appreciated.

Don Webster rendered a fine reading from the Lancaster series of the Magnet; wonder if Laurie Sutton has this series with him in Guyana where he is on holiday vide a postcard that was amongst the month's correspondence.

The Annual General meeting of the club will be held at Hume House, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, on Sunday, February 19th. The election of officers for the ensuing year will take place at this meeting. Kindly let the host, Len Packman, know if attending so as to facilitate the catering arrangements. Letters to 27, Archdale

Road, S.E.22. or phone TOWNley 2844.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 14th January, 1967

After the excitement of the Christmas Party the January meeting is generally quieter and the members present fewer. However, after Kenneth Whittaker had had to leave early the Chairman was able to welcome twelve others to the first meeting of 1967.

The minutes of the November meeting were read by the Secretary and then the report of the Christmas Party. Geoffrey then asked the Treasurer for his statement and correspondence. The figures showed that we ended 1966 with slightly more in hand than we started with, which is very comforting these days. Gerry had purchased a fine bound volume of "Magnets" - all in the 300's - a treat in store for us, especially the devotees of the older editions. Also Gerry had had a report from a member of a disappointment suffered by a very unsatisfactory exchange in response to an advertisement - a kind of trouble which has occurred sometimes in the past.

Some of us had heard, and enjoyed greatly, "Hardy Annuals" given on the wireless by Brian Doyle of London. Vice Chairman Jack Wood had a cutting from a Northern paper about the ending the publication of the B.O.P. which was described as a magazine "for boys who can read, and active hobbyists." We all regretted another great Boys' Paper going into the limbo.

Now the formal business was over, and we settled down to hear the programme about Greyfriars recently broadcast on the Third Programme. It was the first hearing for some of us, and though we could not agree with all that was said, as has been commented on already in various reports, (especially the reading of a sub. story!) it is good to feel that lively discussions of Charles Hamilton's writing is being kept in the public ear. And how grand to hear his voice again. We were indebted to Ron Hodgson who had kindly brought along his tape recorder.

Refreshments and chat came next, and then Gerry read out another Quiz from Cliff Webb - as intriguing as ever - which gave cryptic descriptions of schoolboys' surnames. The final count (out of 20) revealed Geoffrey Wilde with 14, Bill Williamson 12 and Tom Roach 9.

We owe thanks to both Ron and Cliff for making our evening so entertaining.
 M. L. ALLISON. Hon. Sec.
Next Meeting - Saturday, 11th February, 1967.

MERSEYSIDEMeeting held Sunday, January 8th

In spite of a bitterly cold evening the meeting was held, and as soon as the fire was stoked up the outside conditions were forgotten.

As this was the first meeting of the new year it was not inappropriate to dwell on the events of the past year. As far as the club was concerned, 1966 was not altogether a happy one. We have, however, survived it, and it is to be hoped that the future can now be spent in building up our strength again. Financially we are solvent, but it was thought that the library needed overhauling. We, therefore decided to dispose of some of our surplus books and replace them with others.

After the business part of the meeting was over we had a quiz on 1966. Questions were asked about some of the things which had happened, not only in connection with the O.B.B.C. but also in the world in general. This was won by Walter Prichard with Pat Laffey as runner up.

The next meeting will be held on Sunday, February 11th.

BILL WINDSOR

LONDON O.B.B.C. - HAMILTONIAN LIBRARY

We should be very grateful for offers of the following books, mainly to replace lost items or to complete series. Top prices paid.

GEMS: 594, 736, 780, 821.

ROOKWOOD SOLS: 6, 20, 36, 206.

MAGNETS: 384, 751, 820, 821, 822, 858, 859, 1071,
1072, 1074, 1075, 1474.

Library Catalogue - There are still a few copies of our printed and illustrated library catalogue, giving details of our postal service of some 2000 Hamiltonian items, all of pre-war vintage. This will be sent on receipt of a 6d stamp (not SAE) sent to the Hon. Librarian - Roger Jenkins, "The Firs," Eastern Road, Havant, Hants.

the postman called

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

A. J. SOUTHWAY (South Africa): I shewed the Annual to several people in the office who, though not interested in the Hobby (horror of horrors, some had never heard of the Fat Owl!) - were very impressed with the format and marvelled that the York Duplicating Services could produce such a fine effort. As one lady remarked upon seeing their address 'Well their work isn't a shambles at any rate!'

FRANK SHAW (Liverpool): The Annual is as good as ever. Probably the best Buddle story yet. I admire the ingenuity by which there is always a link-up with the old A.P. publications. Comicus is gear. I remember well that 1917 Penny Pop with that glorious plate of the Chums (they weren't all chums, were they?) of the Remove.

E. DAVEY (Christchurch): Someone at the B.B.C. obviously reads the Digest. In your November issue I begged for some Will Hay films on T.V. - and the result? As I sat down after a very satisfying Christmas dinner to look through my C.D. Annual, on the T.V. screen came, guess what? Dear old Will Hay, Moore Marriot and Graham Moffat in the hilarious "Oh Mr. Porter" ...truly a real Christmas present.

KEN ELLIOTT (Australia): Thank you for a wonderful year of C.D. The Christmas Number was really a smash hit.

GEORGE SELLARS (Sheffield): About the Annual, Roger Jenkins' article was O.K. but much too short, and "The Leaf" was a grand little fantasy, but the Slade story was rather disappointing as there was very little about the Gem story. By the way, I have never read that Gem story. The best Gem I ever read was "D'Arcy's Baby" in the 1920's.

The January C.D. warmed my heart. An excellent start for 1967.

PETER HANGER (Northampton): I enjoyed J. Swan's article on the Thomson papers. It is nice to know that someone has the same affection for them that I do. There is no doubt that they were intended for younger boys than the A.P. papers. This is well illustrated by a story called "Down With Home Lessons" which appeared in the Hotspur about 1937. Its title (like the titles of most Thomson stories) tells the plot. Can you imagine the sermons that would have come from A.P. editorial pulpits if this question had been raised in their columns?

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): Of course W. T. Thurbon's memory serves

him well. The name of the famous Spurs Captain should have been GRIMSDELL - a typing error on my part. In answer to Mr. F. Sturdy's letter on the question of writing an article on comic character and story artists and authors, I have been toying with this idea for some time. Great difficulty in compiling such an article is that so many many artists used to draw the same sets. Some even better than the original creators. To elucidate further, although Tom Browne was the creator of Weary Willie and Tired Tim, personally I think that the late Percy Cocking who drew the sets from 1909 until the end in 1953 a total of 44 years the real man who made them famous!

KENNETH KIRKPATRICK (Geneva): Congratulations on the 1966 Annual and, in particular, on the excellent Slade story which I enjoyed very much - perhaps even more so since the characters are rather more credible and show more signs of human weakness than those of the "Old Master," if I may be forgiven this sacrilegious statement. This, of course, doesn't mean that I don't still revel in the "classics," but sometimes one likes to turn one's eyes from those snowy peaks of virtue and truthfulness to more varied nuances of light and shade.

WALTER WEBB (Birmingham): I cannot quite agree with Bill Lofts over his official records - they are of immense value in tracing authorship, but obviously they are not proof against the ghost writer, and it is on this point which I and one or two other collectors disagree with him. Personally, I find these little arguments very welcome; it gives a collector something to get his teeth into, and, what is more important, it does the C.D. the world of good. Hamiltonia thrives on such controversies, hence its bright and lively tone; Blakiana, with the same tonic effect, could be equally as lively and interesting.

A. G. STANDEN (Stockport): The Musketeer on the Annual cover brings back memories of the silent film with Douglas Fairbanks, and also of that fine war and spy serial "The Dauntless Three" which ran from 1916 to 1919 in the Jester, and which mentioned "The Three Musketeers" before I ever read the immortal tale of Alexandre Dumas.

DENNIS HILLIARD (Nottingham): It was good to see the article by Jim Swan on the Thomson Papers, although he has omitted so many wonderful characters. For me, "Strang the Terrible" and "Chang the Hatchetman" will always remain long-lost friends.

RICHARD McCARTHY (Australia): I greatly enjoyed Collectors' Digest

throughout 1966. I would like to see a few articles on the good old Champion and the Triumph. And it would be really good if someone made a list of The Boys' Friend Library, for it contained stories from nearly all the boys' papers, and all the favourite authors' names can be found in it. (I believe that we published such a list long ago. If plenty of readers were interested, we could repeat it some time. -ED.)

E. N. LAMBERT (Chessington): Again the C.D. Annual has surpassed itself — the ingredients were a joy to consume and our Christmas fare would indeed be lacking without this yearly treat. It has become part of the Christmas scene, not to be read whilst commuting to and from our place of work or in any idle moment, but to be devoured in the cosiness of our home relaxing in an armchair beside the traditional Yule log fire.

Congratulations to the army of contributors and most of all to our Editor for the work he has put in to make the 1966 Annual again such a success. I hope Mr. Buddle and the adventures of Slade will go on forever!

COMIC CUTS COMMENTARY

By O. W. Wadham

Chips and Comic Cuts commenced a long life together in 1890 and closed in 1953, both 63 years young.

Undoubtedly the most popular of the pair was Chips, and that was due, in a large measure, to the famous front page tramps, Weary Willie and Tired Tim. If ever any other characters were on the front page I have yet to hear of them.

Comic Cuts had many front page funsters. First I can trace were Our Man Friday and J.J.J. Jimson who appeared together in issue dated Oct. 8, 1904.

John James Jerolomon Jimson (to give his full name) also shared the middle section of Comic Cuts in 1904.

A long, lean and hungry looking character, with a beard about two feet long, he would hardly raise a laugh nowadays.

How long he reigned I have no idea but by 1913 the most popular of all Comic Cuts front page entertainers, Tom, the Ticket-of-Leave Man, was going strong.

In 1930 Tom was absent from the pages. A juvenile pair, Algy and Sue had pride of place, but by 1932 Tom was back. This time as

Tom, the Menagerie Man.

For a short time in 1927 two young Mickey Rooney types, Sammy and Jackie, held the first page, but Tom, first as Ticket-of-leave Man and then as Menagerie Man, can lay claim to being the most popular cartoon character of Comic Cuts in its best selling days.

For many years from 1912 to about 1921, the back page always featured The Mulberry Flatites, four odd and always amusing funsters. The Comic Cuts Nigger Colony was also on Page 8, but never had the appeal of the vastly more amusing Casey Court in Chips.

For many years the middle pages had three other entertainers worth recalling. Pansy Pancake, the Comical Cook, Waddles, the Whimsical Waiter, and Chuckles the Clown.

I always think that Comic Cuts lost much of its appeal when the characters I have mentioned were discarded.

In the fiction field only one long-lived serial, The Red Rovers, will be recalled by old readers of what must have been the most successful of all black and white comics.

Not forgetting, of course the weekly column "Mi Wurd" by Sebastian Ginger, the "Offis-boy." He reigned as long as the famous "Red Rovers."

It would be interesting to learn the actual date the Rovers commenced in Comic Cuts. They were not in the 1904 issues. Two serials, "The Hawks of London" and "The Writing on the Wall," and two complete tales were the fiction in that ancient issue.

STARTING POINT

By R. J. Godsave

In many ways life becomes easier as one gets older. What was once considered important is in later life found to be of a trifling nature.

All this is denied to young people who have to make their way in the world. One of the greatest difficulties for them is to find a level with others. People have to be taken at their face value, which frequently results in hurt and disillusion.

This is, perhaps, why we enjoy the stories from the pens of Charles Hamilton, E. S. Brooks and other authors. Many are the stories of the uphill fight of a boy or girl during those difficult years spent at school. Our own early experiences must make us follow such a story with sympathy and understanding.

Some boys and girls are better endowed by nature at finding

their levels during those years spent at school. Thus, we find Harry Wharton, Tom Merry, Nipper and the like occupying the position of form captains. Others find different outlets in expressing themselves. Some by taking up sport, others by indulging in horse-racing and card playing with doubtful characters.

Such a boy as Hazeldene must have experienced the terror and fear which the threat of exposure by an unscrupulous book-maker would bring. By his own actions he is making life harder than it need be. On the other hand Vernon-Smith takes the same risks as Hazeldene, but for a different reason. Hazeldene for financial gain; Vernon-Smith for the thrill that forbidden activities give.

Charles Hamilton did not allow his characters to profit from horse-racing, also-rans were a common occurrence. E. S. Brooks took a similar line with the St. Frank's characters, although on one occasion Fullwood did win £88 on the Helmford racecourse, only to be swindled out of it by the book-maker.

The difficulties which young people encounter are undoubtedly the ingredients in character building.

BOY'S OWN PAPER WAS STARTED
BY THIS BAPTIST EDITOR

(From The Baptist Times, sent to us by
Mr. W. Lister of Blackpool)

The "Boy's Own Paper" which is to close down, was started in 1879 by a Baptist editor, Mr. G. A. Hutchison.

The paper was sponsored by the Religious Tract Society, forerunner of the Lutterworth Press, and for many years exercised a great influence on succeeding generations of boys, including, it is said, King George V and Stanley Baldwin.

Among writers who became contributors to the paper were Jules Verne, R. M. Ballantyne, W. G. Grace, Canon Doyle, Algernon Blackwood and G. A. Henty.

Mr. Hutchison was the man who gave the paper its great start and made it the most popular weekly for boys of all classes. It sold for 1d. and was the society answer to the then popular "penny dreadfuls."

Previously Mr. Hutchison had been the first editor of "The Baptist," started in 1872, a forerunner of the "Baptist Times." "The

Baptist" was later merged with "The Freeman" to become "The Baptist Times and Freeman."

There is a memorial tablet to Mr. Hutchison in Fillebrook Baptist church, Leytonstone, of which he was the founder and the first member, commemorating his work for Christian literature and especially the "B.O.P.," and "for the fishermen of the deep seas" through the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen whose magazine he started.

His daughter, Mrs. R. Parkinson, is still a member of the church at Leytonstone.

One of his sons, C. Grenville Hutchison, was for 40 years in charge of children's work at West Ham Central Mission.

The "Boy's Own Paper" was sold by the Lutterworth Press five years ago to the British Printing Corporation.

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE DIGEST

During January we received the following letter at Excelsior House:

"For some months past you have been mailing Collectors' Digest to Mr. P----. As Mr. P----died some time ago, the magazine is no use. Please cancel the arrangement at once."

With this letter was returned one copy of C.D., folded in 4.

I mention this letter as an example of what might be the cause of non-renewal of a subscription. On the other hand, it might be due to the obvious reason that the subscriber no longer desires to receive the magazine. It might be just forgetfulness. It might be hard times. It might be that on principle the subscriber does not bother to renew until the supply is cut off.

Naturally we don't know the cause unless we are told. When the magazine ceases to be mailed, readers usually write to us. Some write more in sorrow than in anger. Others write more in anger than in sorrow. Rarely does any belated subscriber blame himself.

Because, when we continue to mail for a month or two beyond the expiry of a subscription, we send another reminder slip with each issue, we sent out hundreds of reminder slips in 1966 beyond the number which should have been necessary. And, naturally, reminder slips cost money. In addition, when we send the magazine beyond the

subscription period, no renewal having been received, our filing system is thrown out of gear, and we have to give to book-keeping much valuable time which we can ill afford.

Clearly it is unbusinesslike when we send out C.D. beyond the period for which it has been ordered. Yet some people are offended if we don't. Are we being unreasonable to ask our subscribers, and we value every one of them, to renew promptly to ensure the uninterrupted arrival of the magazine early each month?

If it is not convenient to book several issues in advance a reader can always send to us just for the current issue at about the time he thinks it is ready. Plenty of readers do this very readily, with pleasure on both sides.

Most of our readers are wonderful in their help and loyalty. We are deeply grateful to them. C.D. is not a profit-making institution. Here in the editorial office we have much to think about, and our time is precious. Please help us to give you the best of service - by renewing promptly. But if you forget to renew, don't slam us.

THE EDITOR

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MISPRINT OR MALICE

Last month we commented on that strange piece about "babies" in the 50-year old story "Linley Minor."

Mr. W. O. G. Lofts has suggested that the word appeared as the result of a prank by a mischievous or malicious printers' assistant. Mr. Jack Murtagh of New Zealand thinks the word "rabies" might have been intended. Anyone jeered for having rabies might be likened to someone a bit potty.

We shall never know for certain, but it's one of those little items of mild interest. We must leave it as the Marie Celeste of the Magnet - a mystery of the seas (of ink).

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