

Collectors' Digest

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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W. H. GANDER

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Founded in 1946 by

HERBERT LECKENBY

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WRITE TO ME ABOUT IT.



DID ANY READERS

TWIGG?

One of our contributors to the 1966 Annual compared the tragedy of Herbert Bulstrode, of the early Magnet, with that of Edwin Russell who featured in

the Victorian tear-jerker "Eric."

Our contributor re-told the episode where Mr. Quelch and Mr. Twigg, master of the Second Form, went out into the night to find Herbert. But when the story "The Bully's Brother" appeared in the Magnet originally in 1911, Mr. Pyle was the master of the Second Form, and it was he who sallied into the dark night with Mr. Quelch. When the story was reprinted in the Schoolboys' Own Library, the name of Pyle was changed to Twigg, and our contributor evidently knew the story as it featured in the S.O.L.

It's just a passing thought, of course. But how fascinating it is to come on these little changes which were made down the years. I wonder just when Mr. Twigg was first introduced to Greyfriars in the Magnet.

AGATHA IN THE THRILLER:

It appears that world-famous Agatha Christie wrote one story for the Thriller. Whether she wrote more than once for that paper, I cannot say.

Can any reader let me know the title of that Christie story in

the Thriller? Even more important, has any reader a copy of it in his possession?

The Thriller must have been popular, for it ran from 1929 till 1940. Yet it seems to have been one of those papers which very few bothered to retain while it was appearing, and very few people, later on, try to obtain copies. It is a strange phenomenon that so many papers fall into this class. The papers which are the most sought today are those which were most retained long ago. It is impossible to determine just why this should be so.

MINT SAUCE:

Long, long ago, my sister said to an old lady: "Isn't the weather awful, Mrs. Binnie!"

Mrs. Binnie replied primly: "Not awful, my dear! Very unpleasant!"

Different people have different ways of expressing themselves. Some collectors advertise for "mint" copies of papers; some folk, with items for sale, might also describe them as "mint."

A good many years back I offered for sale a number of copies of the Schoolboys' Own Library in beautiful condition. I described them as mint. The purchaser wrote to me afterwards. He agreed that they were excellent copies, but claimed they could not be described as mint, owing to the fact that the pins had rusted.

The purchaser in this case was fussy - probably a good deal more fussy about descriptions when he was buying than when he was selling - but he had a point. So far as I remember, I never again used the adjective "mint" to describe any item I might have for sale.

It must be confessed that vendors sometimes put a rather elastic interpretation on that word "mint." Generally speaking, it is extremely unlikely that any loose copies of between twenty-five and sixty years of age could be classified truthfully as "mint." Anything mint is surely in condition as brand-new. But pins tend to rust, paper fades, age inevitably takes its toll. My advice to all collectors, if they have any very good runs, is to have them bound. It is the only way to preserve them indefinitely.

In my time I have seen some rather dubious copies classified as "mint." There is no excuse for false descriptions of items for sale, though there are times when vendors view even first-class material through rose-coloured glasses. It is really much better to describe a copy as very good, and give the delighted purchaser the chance to say it was even better than he expected.

All the same, purchasers are unduly optimistic if they expect to

obtain anything "mint" so long after the copies ran off the machines. "Very good" or "excellent" will sum up the virtues of the "mint" copy, and common-sense should prevent the purchaser from expecting more as a general rule.

OUR COVERS:

Many readers have written to express their pleasure at our novel "Penny Wonder" covers of last month. This month, on our front and back covers, we reproduce a throwaway issued in 1912 to advertise the new weekly "Dreadnought." This came from the "Fun & Fiction" stable and was originally a large-sheeted periodical. Soon it was shrunk to Magnet and Gem size, and in early 1915 it came under editor Hinton who was managing the Companion Papers. He introduced the early Greyfriars stories into its pages, without marked success, for in the summer of that year, before the paper shortage became apparent, the Dreadnought was amalgamated with the Boys' Friend.

THE EDITOR.

FOR SALE: Champion Annuals 1925, 1928, 1931, 1932. Schoolgirls' Own Annual 1925, 1927. School Friend 1936, 1938. Sunbeam Annual (A.P. comic) 1936; Jolly Jack Annual 1936; All 6/- each plus postage. Vol. Chums 1933 10/-.

L. MORLEY, 76 ST. MARGARET'S RD., HANDWELL, LONDON, W.7.

W A N T E D : Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: 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.

HAMILTONIANA

THE LATER BUNTER BOOKS

By D. R. W. Clutterbuck

A number of shocks await the reader who, after a quarter-century, returns to Charles Hamilton via the later of the Bunter hardbacks. Much has changed.

Since 1940 (when I last saw a 'Magnet') many Greyfriars characters have become strangers. Bunter himself happily has not, although he has developed some new and tiresome traits. The immortal Owl now persistently perpetrates malapropisms and spoonerisms. He says 'Mink' for 'Ming' many times in 'Bunter the Stowaway,' and talks of a 'mag' in his 'gouth' in 'Billy Bunter's Bodyguard.' Of course, Bunter always was likely to say almost anything when flustered but I do not remember this particular tendency in the 'Magnet' stories.

Quelchy has mellowed somewhat. He says, "If we were at Greyfriars, Bunter, I should cane you severely," but says it almost perfunctorily. Agreed, he is on holiday at the time. If the basilisk glare is not gone, it is at least switched on only occasionally and from force of habit. One cannot imagine another Wharton-Quelch situation developing very easily.

Nor is Mauleverer the same. Harder and more alert, he does not hesitate to tell Bunter, "I couldn't stand you," when the Owl tries to cadge a holiday. In the old days his lordship would have dodged behind every elm, vanished around every corner, rather than be so blunt - even to Bunter. Worse, he has acquired a staccato manner of speech: the old lovable drawling Mauly, loafing on the sidelines of Greyfriars life, is no more. (It is to be feared also that he is getting too pally with the Bounder.)

There are changes too in the minor characters. Wells, the butler at Wharton Lodge, has coarsened incredibly. His poise and suaveness gone, ejaculating "Huh!" at frequent intervals, he is more like Gosling than the dignified retainer I remember.

Hamilton's plotting remains as competent as, say, P. G. Wodehouse's if perhaps less complex. Another comparison can be made between the two writers. Wodehouse's work has grown less realistic with the years, Hamilton's more so. Wodehouse once gave us, as well as humour, the realism of life in a bank and of political meetings on Clapham Common. Not any more.

But now look at this scene from 'Bunter Comes for Christmas.'

Barred from Wharton Lodge, the Owl is moping at Bunter Villa. His father tells him brusquely to get a broom and sweep the snow away from the path. This will save the five shillings or so that Mr. Bunter would have had to give the occasional gardener. The scene is not a farcical one and we, as well as Bunter, are brought down to earth. This is the world of care and monthly bills. It is most certainly not the 'incitement to wealth-fantasy' complained of by George Orwell.*

Consider again Bunter's mispronunciation of 'Ming.' He persistently calls the vase 'Mink.' The reader consequently gets annoyed with Bunter and so does Quelch. I do not remember such minutiae of realism in the 'Magnets' of the 1930's. (Yet oddly enough I feel they might be found in the early 'Magnets,' of which I have only ever seen one or two.)

In keeping with this realism, a more sober atmosphere pervades the writing. Very noticeable is the drastic reduction of "Ha, ha, ha's!" which used to be sprinkled through almost every story. This is too bad: all those spontaneous laughs contributed to the gaiety of Greyfriars life. Even that professional cynic Noel Coward, who picked up a 'Magnet' in adulthood to find Harry Wharton & Co still merrily 'ha, ha, ha-ing and he, he, he-ing' after twenty-four years, confessed to a 'tender emotion.'⁶

Unless Hamilton deleted those laughs in order to save lines, it must be concluded that he was turning away from what he had come to consider mere frivolity. His changed style confirms this. The stories now unfold surely by means of longer paragraphs. Less extraverted, the characters play their parts not by spontaneous action instantly understood by a reader soaked in the Greyfriars background, but by being informative in their dialogue. Sometimes they are almost like actors in a play, which has no supporting description to assist the audience.

There appears to be more space given to thoughts and motives. It is interesting to compare 'Billy Bunter Comes for Christmas' (1959) with a story earlier by only 5 years and similar in plot - 'Billy Bunter's Christmas Box' in BILLY BUNTER'S OWN (1954). The later story is the longer and Hamilton has used the extra 20,000 words not to greatly complicate the plot, but to give fuller treatment to characters and situations.

Inevitably, one is emotionally attached to the Hamilton period when one first read him. Therefore I feel that he never surpassed his work of the years 1931 to 1935. Realising, of course, that someone will write a piece for Number 550 or so of 'Collectors' Digest'

* George Orwell's essay, 'Boys' Weeklies.'

⁶ Noel Coward, 'Present Indicative.'

proclaiming the incontestable superiority of the Bunter hardbacks!

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EDITORIAL COMMENT: The last few Bunter books, including "Bunter the Stowaway" should not be used as illustrations in any comparison of the work of Charles Hamilton. Another kettle of fish entirely is "Bunter Comes for Christmas" which was a Hamilton opus of his later years, based on his Magnet series of Christmas 1933. The stiff-covered version was pleasantly readable, but compared with the Magnet series was as "moonlight unto sunlight."

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 109 LET'S GIVE SILVERSON HIS DUE

In the November issue of Collectors' Digest, Roger Jenkins' gave a thoughtful and masterly survey of the Gem's Silverson Series. There was little if anything in that criticism with which I would really quarrel, but I wonder whether perhaps Roger has not qualified his veneer of praise for the series just a little too much. Would it be fair to sum up his view as "The series has the supreme quality of readability - BUT --"? Obviously it would, but it is also only fair to add that most of us would agree that a "but" is merited.

Nevertheless, I could not quite agree that this series "fails to hit the bullseye." I myself have read it many times, so quite clearly I enjoy it. It is not only readable. It is also re-readable.

My personal opinion is that Charles Hamilton was more successful with his stories of the 1939-Gem than he was with those of the latter-day Magnet. Probably because the Gem stories were shorter so there was less padding. I think I would go further and claim that the Silverson Series must rank with the Gem's best, even though it was far from being the greatest of all. I must admit that to some extent I am biased, insofar as I liked Tom Merry far better than Cardew. Another factor is that I liked stories in which the seven - the Terrible Three and the Study No. 6 four - were the star attractions.

That the series had its drawbacks is undeniable. There is no question at all that it could and should have been a great deal better than it was. It falls down, like most Hamilton series from 1936 onwards, over its episodic handling. It is too long, and the closing tales seem to provide evidence that the series was being extended to

last out the Gem. I have no doubt that it was. The Christmas Pudding episode was futile, and the closing story was unbelievable and far too contrived.

That it owes its basic plot to the Smedley Series is beyond question, and I once wrote that Smedley's efforts to become the heir to millions was much more credible than Silverson's efforts to secure Miss Fawcett's little fortune. I am not sure that I was right in that assertion. After all, in the long history of crime, there are plenty of instances of even murder being committed for what seem to be pitifully inadequate rewards.

It is immaterial that the Guy Fawkes masks episode recalls Magnet or Rookwood stories. Rehashing of items occurred scores of times down the corridors of Hamiltonia, without normally irking us too much, so we might well ignore that aspect of the Silverson story.

"Tom Merry is miscast as a rebel," muses Mr. Jenkins - and he is certainly right. But, as I pointed out last month, there were occasions when Hamilton adapted his characterisation to suit the needs of the moment - and he sometimes did it brilliantly. The characters were not so much miscast as acting out of character. Perhaps plenty of us, now and then, do or say something or other which is foreign to our normal natures.

In the first Rebel Series, Harry Wharton was portrayed far out of character when, condemned for misdemeanours he had not committed, he went to the Cross Keys to gamble with the wastrels there. Under the circumstances, we could not suggest that he was miscast, and few of us would describe that episode as unbelievable.

So with Tom Merry in the Silverson Series. Goaded beyond endurance, he became a reckless rebel. Not really incredible. Out of character, certainly, but not truly miscast.

I am a little uneasy when Roger comments that Linton is a shadowy figure compared with Quelch. It is impossible to refute the suggestion, for it is basically true. But then, Quelch is, in my view, the finest schoolmaster in school fiction. We can hardly compare any of the other masters with Quelch. No master at St. Jim's, with the possible and very rare exception of Selby on occasion, makes very good characterisation. It is my view that Linton, in the Silverson series, enjoyed his finest weeks in the whole of Gem history. Without switching on the sun I suggest that this moon is more than adequate, and, in fact, in the special circumstances of the series, a most attractive piece of work.

"Gussy," says Roger Jenkins, "is featured a lot, but he lacks

the power to amuse us in a surprising manner."

The fault, I think, was that Gussy was featured just a little too much, and when a character is overplayed there is a risk that he may become tedious. All the same, he provided quite a few rib-tickling moments, and I recall with tender warmth the delicious episode where he apologised to Mr. Railton for the soot booby-trap in the Housemaster's study. I cannot accept that Gussy was not entertaining in the Silverson Series.

"There are no false notes - it is just that the magic touch is gone." Roger really sums it all up in those two statements, and few of us would say him nay. With equal truth those two statements would sum up almost everything in Hamiltonia from the mid-thirties.

It may be that, with all its faults, I always had a very warm spot for the Gem. It may be that I was strongly biased in favour of stories of the Seven. It may be just my "ornery cussedness," as the Rio Kid used to say. But I always feel that Charles Hamilton got nearer to recapturing that "magic touch" in the 1939 Gem (except the South American series which was rather a tragedy) than in anything else he wrote in those restless few years before the Second World War.

I enjoyed, and still enjoy, the Silverson series, but I am always saddened to feel instinctively that it could be so very much better than it is. The knowledge must remain for ever that the author missed the bus with this series - or, perhaps, he never even tried to catch the bus at all.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 108. THE PUPPETS

GERRY ALLISON: What a fascinating question - "how can characters who never grow older, develop?" But it seems to me that until the later years when Hamilton's characters had become fully developed, they were changing all the time.

Take Fisher T. Fish for instance. At first he was a boastful Yankee type, but fundamentally a decent boy. When Bob Cherry was accused of theft, Fishy was one of the few who disbelieved the evidence. Then his perseverance in the production of the very first issue of the Greyfriars Herald - which incidentally was his idea - could only be appreciated by someone like Bill Gander.

It was after the American profiteering in the First World War had incensed Charles Hamilton against them that Fishy finally became the

mean money-lender.

The potentialities of the characters in the early stories of Greyfriars and St. Jim's were appreciated fully by J. N. Pentelow. His study of over 100 characters in his Greyfriars Gallery - which appeared in Magnets Nos 461 to 571 - is an amazing tour-de-force.

"Levison, we thought," says the writer of THE PUPPETS, "was reformed in far too wholesale a fashion." Which only illustrates the profundity of Pentelow's statement, quoted by John Tomlinson in the February Digest - "Levison, in whom the leaven of old still worked." Which shows that Pentelow understood human nature even better than did Levison's creator!

As Roger Jenkins has pointed out, the way Hamilton's characters re-act on each other, is the most vivid proof of their reality to life. I can get immense pleasure from merely imagining the meeting between two unrelated Hamilton characters. Say Tom Merry and Rupert De Courcy for example. How fascinating, the very idea!

GEORGE SELLARS: How right you are about Tom Merry! I agree with you that Tom was Charles Hamilton's most successful character, and in my opinion one of his favourites, too - and Gussy, Figgins, Wharton and Smithy, not far behind. Very few of his children changed since he created them, and those that did change became greater characters except of course Ernest Levison. Some great stories were written about and round this character before he reformed and they were the best about Levison. Also I remember, years ago, I was delighted when "The Outsider" and "The Bounder" changed and the latter, of course, became a very popular and interesting one indeed.

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THANKS FOR THE LETTERS

says John Wernham.

Since the publication of the Jubilee Edition of the early Charles Hamilton story, "A Strange Secret," I have received a great number of kind letters and it has become quite impossible to reply to these, individually. May I thank you all for your generous comments and say, in return, that it was great fun in the making.

Many of you have suggested that the experiment should be repeated with other famous stories and this might be done when time permits. In the meantime, a new publication is on the stocks and this is also a secret but not a strange one - we hope.

There are still a few copies of the Outram story left and if you have not yet received yours, then hurry - as they used to say - before it is too late!

BLAKIANA

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

SEXTON BLAKE AUTHORS' READING MATTER WHEN THEY WERE BOYS

By W. O. G. Lofts

One of my favourite questions when interviewing a Blake author is: What did you read when you were a boy?

This question has three very useful angles. Firstly, I would point out that authors who pen countless thousands of words are not always so voluble when it comes to conversation, and this question sometimes 'opens them up' so to speak. Secondly, the question can quite often give the interviewer (myself) some idea of how much the author was influenced by the writings of others in his early days. Thirdly, more often than not some anecdotes are related which will make very interesting reading in a subsequent article.

A short while ago a reader of the C. Digest asked if an article could be written about W. Howard Baker, the genial and popular editor of the Fleetway (and now Mayflower) Sexton Blake Library. Maybe some time in the future - but it must be respected that not all Blake personalities are keen on being written about. It was my great pleasure to meet W. H. B. or 'Bill' as he is affectionately called, way back in 1957. Born in Ireland of English parents, he is easily the most knowledgeable Blake writer and editor I have met in regard to his boyhood readings. 'Bill' was in fact an avid reader of the MAGNET in his youth, and carefully kept his copies through the years. His knowledge of Greyfriars lore in the 1936-40 period is equal to any in our circle, and many times we have spent hours in Fleet Street discussing various series and characters whilst waiting for some unpunctual Blake author to turn up as arranged. Incidentally, 'Bill' thinks that Charles Hamilton's best work was in this period - and he has read many of the earlier stories in the bound A. Press volumes.

Another great Magnet enthusiast I get was George Rees, who confessed to have 'ghosted' a lot in the Gwyn Evans stories when Gwyn was indisposed. Mr. Rees was very impressed by the first issue of the Magnet when he read it as a boy in 1908. He has since re-read

it so many times that he could almost recite it by heart! I do not know what Gwyn Evans read in his youth (he died in 1939), but I suspect he may have been influenced by the writings of Charles Hamilton, for his brilliant style is in many ways very similar. He obviously knew Mr. Hamilton, for he introduced George Rees to him on one of his (Mr. Hamilton's) rare visits to Fleetway House.

I was agreeably surprised when I recently learned from the now world famous writer John Creasey that as a boy he was an avid reader of the Boys Friend Weekly, featuring the stories of Jimmy Silver & Co of Rookwood school. Jimmy Silver was my own favourite school junior captain, but somehow or other I am never able to recapture today my youthful enthusiasm for 'Jimmy.'

It is now common knowledge that the late Edwy Searles Brooks was a lover of Charles Hamilton's stories when a youth, whilst Rex Hardinge has told correspondents of his love of Greyfriars and St. Jim's characters, and how he and other young friends used to act the parts in make-believe theatricals.

Warwick Jardine (Francis Warwick), who wrote many of the Gem substitute stories, was a very keen Magnet reader; and yet, astonishingly, he never read the Gem - and could probably have written far better substitute Greyfriars stories!

The late John Hunter always stood by Chums. He thought it was the finest boys' paper ever to appear on the market, although he did read stories about Tom Merry. It is worth recording (and in answer to Ray Norton's excellent C.D. Annual article) that John Hunter never considered himself a detective writer but a thriller writer - and there is a big difference, as any professional writer knows!

John Drummond (John Newton Chance) has only recollections of reading H. G. Wells when young. He was always keen on Science-fiction, so it is not surprising that he writes a lot of Science-fiction stories today.

Colourful Jack Treavor Story read Boys Magazine the pink Hulton paper, and also the Modern Boy. I remember with some amusement showing Jack a model railway engine (King George V.) given away with the first issue of the Modern Boy. Jack laughed, and with his great sense of humour said that I was "probably the only man in the world to produce that sort of thing on the counter of a Fleet Street tavern."

Arthur Kent and Arthur Maclean, two of the modern school of Blake writers, both read the dear old Wizard, whilst our collector colleague Rex Dolphin is one of the very few Blake writers who read

Sexton Blake when a boy.

H. W. Twyman, editor of the Union Jack from 1921 until the finish in 1933, never read - or at least cannot recall reading - Sexton Blake stories as a boy, which is rather surprising. "Twy's" favourite was the green Boys Friend Weekly, with its serials of the "Britain At Bay" type written by the favourite authors of our own affectionately remembered Herbert Leckenby.

Pierre Quiroule (W. W. Sayer) is probably unique in Blake writers, in that he has no recollection of ever reading boys stories at all!

Unfortunately the majority of the best known Blake writers died long before I was interested in the hobby. Indeed, many of them died when I was only a boy! I have often wondered what such 'greats' in the Blake field as Michael Storm, G. H. Teed, W. Murray Graydon, Norman Goddard and others read when they were boys. We shall never know now, but in the few Blake authors mentioned in this article I do hope I have listed a few for your interest.

Probably the greatest interest story on how much a boy's enthusiasm influenced him in later life concerns F. Addington Symonds, the first editor of the Champion and a fine Blake writer. In his youth Mr. Symonds was very fond of the Big Budget, and the paper made such an impression upon him that he not only based the Champion on the lines of the Big Budget but also engaged the latter paper's old editor on his staff. The fact that the Champion was a great A. Press financial success, running for over thirty years, may be indirectly attributed to the editor's early reading of a 'sound' boys' paper.

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GAP COMING IN PUBLICATION OF THE S.B.L.

Owing to the contractual difficulties between the present publishers and the Fleetway House, there will be a gap of about two months before the next story in the Sexton Blake Library is in the shops. The March story is reviewed this month by Walter Webb. It is expected that at least two months will go by before the issue following this particular story, and it is hoped that Blake enthusiasts will appreciate that the gap is unavoidable.

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S.B.L. REVIEWTHIS SPY MUST DIEPETER SAXON

There will be considerable mind searching among Sexton Blake devotees following the reading of this novel. Should subjects such as torture, sadism, masochism, lust, flagellation and all the paraphernalia which add up to the most detestable vices in the human race, form the nucleus of or become any part of the S.B.L? For my part, gruesome details of human suffering are anathema to my palate, and I dislike reading of such acts. On the other hand, these things continue to take place in our civilisation, and man's inhumanity to man has been traced down from Biblical times, as descriptions of bestiality, lust and violence in both the Old and New Testaments testify.

James Bond will always be remembered as one of the toughest, most indestructible heroes of modern fiction. The brutalities and the indignities to which he was subjected made one wonder how the human body could possibly withstand such treatment and survive. In this story Blake gets a real taste of the Bond treatment. There are passages which some of the old guard are going to find most revolting; against these are others which they will find quite interesting. As for instance when Blake, in reflective mood, feels a sense of relief from the exigencies of the Berkeley Square routine and feels a nostalgic longing for the days when he and Tinker worked alone. He has an uneasy feeling that his life is becoming more and more ruled by women these days.

Subordinate of Sir Montague Chambers, Chairman of British Industrial Developments, Blake's assignment is to penetrate the Iron Curtain and bring back to England a Russian and former British subject possessed of abnormal telepathic ability from a clinic in North-West Russia before the Soviet Union can exploit the man's power against the West. The only help Blake can count on is that supplied by the head doctor of the clinic and her daughter, whom he once helped escape from a German prison camp during the war. What Blake does not know is that the Russians are aware of his mission and that a trap is already laid for his arrival.

In carrying on where Ian Fleming left off, Peter Saxon has written one of the most violent, brutal, yet compelling Sexton Blake stories I have ever read. Of, at times, nail-biting suspense and unflagging excitement, this is definitely not for the squeamish.

Walter Webb.

HEAVY READING

by Gerry Allison

Whenever I feel particularly fit, I reach down from my bookcase, volume I of ROVERING. I need to be fit, because the book weighs exactly 8 lbs 4 oz. In all senses of the word it is the heaviest reading ever published for the young.

There are 1,620 pages in the volume, which contains Nos. 1 to 54 of the ill-fated companion to the recently expired Boy's Own Paper. But whilst the B.O.P. lasted for 88 years, Rovering ran for just 60 weeks.

Intended as a healthy magazine for the older boy scouts or Rover Scouts, the paper is as invigorating as a douche of cold water, and just about as enjoyable. Even more sexless than The Magnet the adolescent reader turns its pages in vain in search of any suggestion that there are such things as girls in the world. After long investigation, however, I found a picture of a female. On 'Our Picture Page' is a photograph of A Church on Wheels, and the caption - Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Morgan of Boston, U.S.A. take their motor driven church all over the country. Mrs. Morgan is an outsize 55, and her husband stands beside her with a bugle in his hands.

The title heading shows three scenes. An Olympic runner bearing a torch; a Scout paddling a birch-bark canoe down a Canadian river; and two Rover Scouts watching their billican boil. One is smoking a pipe!

The sub-title of the magazine is "A Weekly Paper for Young British Manhood," and inset below for the first 24 weeks was the well known verse from Sir Henry Newbolt's Vitai Lampada:

"This they all with a joyful mind
 Bear through life like a torch in flame,
 And, falling, fling to the host behind -
 'Play up! Play up! And play the game!'"

The contents are mostly out-door stuff about camping, with plenty of verses about the call of the wilder parts of the Empire.

"I have known its lone plantations, and its steaming palm-girt coast," and similar poems. (For one of these, "The Rover's Choice," see 'Collectors' Digest' No. 161, where it is given in full.)

There were even passages of Scripture 'To be learned by heart,' and articles such as 'The Call of the Road,' "On the Trail," "Campcraft and Woodcraft" and some fiction.

A. L. Haydon was the first editor, but in No. 54 - the end of Vol. 1 - G. R. Pocklington was the editor. He promises all sorts of good things in the many more volumes to come, but admits, that so far,

DANNY GOES TO SEE 'S

Being extracts from "DANNY'S DIARY" for March 1917.

One evening Dad took us all to see the new melodrama "Seven Days Leave" at the Lyceum in the Strand. It was a lovely and specktaclar play, and so exciting. Dad had an awful job to get tickets, for it is always sold out for every performance. Crowds of people who couldn't get seats had paid just to go in and stand. The critics say it will run till the end of the war, whenever that may be.

The first Rookwood story in the Boys' Friend was "The Upper Hand" in which the Colonial Co were at war with Carthew. Finally, Conroy & Co trap Carthew on his way back into the school from a visit to the Bird-in-Hand, and make him sign a paper before they let him in. So Carthew's teeth are drawn.

"A Traitor in the Camp" told how the Bagshot fellows were ragging studies and writing up insulting notices about Rookwood, inside Rookwood. Jimmy Silver was puzzled as to how they were doing it, but at last discovered that it was the work of Leggett who was being paid by the Bagshot Bounders.

"Lovell's Luck" was an odd tale. It read very counterfeitish. A new boy named Bishop, a strange type, was put in Jimmy Silver's study with the Fistical Four. Lovell's uncle sent Lovell a diamond from South Africa. It turned out that Bishop was only there to steal the diamond.

In "The Rookwood Paper-Chase" Jimmy and Mornington were hares. Jimmy hurt his foot in the race, but Mornington carried him in over the last few hundred yards.

In "Mornington's Chance," Jimmy



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was feeling kindly disposed towards Mornington, so gave him a place in the Bagshot match, and this annoyed Jimmy's friends. But in the game, Mornington behaved badly and was sent off the field.

There is a new serial in "The Boys' Friend" by Maurice Everard, entitled "The Luck of Polruan." There have been a number of these Polruan tales, but they have never appealed to me. There is also a new series entitled "The Sign of the Circle," about Derrick Brent, the schoolmaster detective.

This month a German aeroplane dropped bombs on Broadstairs and did some damage. Bread has gone up to 1/- a quartern loaf - exactly double the pre-war price. The cost of living has gone up by 94% since 1914.

A very good month in the Gem. I thought the first story "Down on His Luck" very good indeed and very original. Monty Lowther jeers at Racke because Racke's pa is a notorious war profiteer. But later, Lowther gets the impression from a financial paper that his own uncle, who lives at Holly Lodge in Hampshire, is also a war profiteer. The story gets around, and Monty believes that his own pals have been spreading the story. This was a quiet type of tale, but real good.

That rather awful Parker, a reporter, came back to St. Jim's in the next tale "Parker the Prodigal." He meant to get some "copy" from St. Jim's. A tiresome tale, I thought.

Another new boy turned up in "Cardew of the Fourth." It looks as though he is going to be a fixture. Ralph Reckness Cardew has heard about Levison from Skinner of Greyfriars, but Cardew is surprised to find a reformed Levison.

Cardew was "A Puzzle for St. Jim's" next month. He insults Redfern & Co, but later takes the punishment for something that Redfern had done. Finally in "Facing the Music," Cardew plays a dirty trick which nearly results in severe punishment for Tom Merry. When Cardew is found out, he is expelled, but then Redfern comes forward to let the Head know that he, Redfern, had been guilty of the affair over which Cardew had previously been unjustly punished. So this time Cardew gets off with a flogging.

I rather like Cardew, but there are too many new boys. I wonder whether Cardew will be a fixture at St. Jim's.

In the cinemas there is a new Japanese (or is it Chinese?) star. His name is Sessue Hayakawa. We have seen him in two films - "Alien Souls" and "Honourable Friend." We have also seen Frank Keenan in "The Bereton Case" and H. B. Warner in "The Raiders." There is also a very funny new Chaplin film called "The Vagabond."

Doug gave me the Union Jack this month. One was "Sexton Blake in Armenia" or "The Strange Case of Lieutenant Lorimer." It started in England, and then went to the war-stricken continent.

Then I had "The Black Rat" or "The Case of the Stolen Plates." This was set chiefly in Paris, and introduced Yvonne and a new character named Black Rat, King of the Apaches. Quite a novel, this one.

Next, "The Typewritten Clue" was a good mystery, set in the Midlands. Finally "The Emerald Necklace" or "A Marked Man" was about the stage and the greasepaint.

As if I hadn't had enough detective stories, I bought the Nelson Lee Library which contained a tale called "The Monk of Montessor" about Nelson Lee and the forger, Jim the Penman.

The first story in the Magnet this month was "The Herlock Sholmes of Greyfriars." There was an attempted burglary, and Coker fancied himself as an amateur detective. Fairly amusing.

In "Viscount Bunter," a so-called expert found out that the Bunter family was connected with the peerage - and Bunter adopted an Arthur Augustus accent. This was another amusing tale. Frank Nugent was in Greyfriars Gallery No. 9. There is no serial in the Magnet these days. Instead there are extracts from the Greyfriars Herald, and I think this an improvement. There is also a page of readers' photographs. I think I shall send in my photo, but Doug says that one more freak won't make much difference.

In "The Prefect's Plot," Loder pretends to be writing a play. He gets Harry Wharton to write a letter, as it would be written by a

boy in the play who owed money and was going to run away from school. Then, on the strength of the letter, Loder gets money out of Lord Mauleverer. I remember exactly the same plot being used in a Gem story.

I thought "The Greyfriars Flying Corps" a rather silly tale. Fisher T. Fish starts a flying corps, giving his supporters funny little caps, and supplying a weird kind of aeroplane. Far too silly for a paper like the Magnet.

I didn't like "Harry Wharton's Rivals," either. The rivals were Peter Todd and Bolsover, each of whom wanted to be captain of the Remove in place of Harry.

In the Greyfriars Gallery, Nos. 10, 11, 12 and 13, respectably, were Vernon-Smith, Squiff, Lord Mauleverer, and Harold Skinner. I am sorry to say that at the end of the month there was the start of a new serial - "In a Land of Peril," by Beverley Kent.

The following are this month's stories in the Penny Popular:

1. "A Jolly Half-Holiday" (in which Wharton becomes friendly at last with his uncle); "The Match of the Season" (called "The Wrong Team" in the Gem); "Raja's Roguery."
2. "The Greyfriars Ventriloquist"; "D'Arcy the Detective" (called "Hard Times" in the Gem); "Stormy Times" (Pete story).
3. "The Greyfriars Chinee" (the arrival of Wun Lung); "The Bogus Scoutmaster" (called "The Schoolboy Scouts" in the Gem); "Moving a Menagerie" (Pete story).
4. "The Cheerful Chinee"; "The New House Hero" (A Kerr impersonation story); "Pete's Lion Hunt."
5. "The Lad from Lancashire" (arrival of Mark Linley); "All Fools' Day at St. Jim's"; "Pete and the Smasher."

EDITORIAL COMMENT: "Lovell's Luck," mentioned this month by Danny, seems to have been the first substitute story of Rookwood ever published.

HEAVY READING (cont'd from page 15)...

Rovering has been "so to speak, feeling its way." Well it felt its way for another 6 weeks and finished on May 9th, 1925. The last issue admitted that Rovering was ending because of lack of support.

* * * * *

NELSON LEE COLUMN

(CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD)

A SCHOOL WITHOUT LESSONS?

By Len Wormull

A return visit to St. Frank's after a very long absence left me grappling with this problem: Why was the academic side of St. Frank's school life so sadly neglected?

Admittedly, I had my money's-worth. Countless trips to far-flung lands. Handy resolving his problems with "punch-ups." Sports Days, japes galore, feuds, new boys, rebellions - all good, rejuvenating stuff. Yet, absorbed as I was in my sojourn, something emerged which hitherto had escaped my notice. Where, I kept asking myself, was the School Curriculum? Echo answered "where"! As Archie Glenthorne might say, there's something murky about all this, old chappies. I mean, dash it all, a school without lessons! Well, not quite. In its last seven years I did see some semblance of school work in progress, although on those rare and fleeting occasions one had the feeling of an intruder - to be whisked away as quickly as possible to other spheres of action. To my knowledge, the beaks were never called upon to exert their erudite powers beyond a few historical facts. Regrettably, the focal point of school life - the classroom - was a classic example of lost opportunity. Never luminous, it must surely rank as the least-exciting part of the St. Frank's saga. Maybe the author was loath to tax his young readers with additional tutorage, or that he considered the subject lacked appeal. Whatever the reason/s, it can hardly be said that this 'scholastic establishment' lived up to its name.

Strangely enough, the image was marred for me more by Charles Hamilton than E. S. Brooks. My own vivid memories of Greyfriars stem from its superb classroom background. The author extracted the last ounce of ingenuity to expound his own pet subjects, and in so doing created what is undoubtedly some of his finest and funniest work. French and Latin were subtly blended with comic invention to make attractive reading. "Construe" signalled laughter (and how!) with Bunter or Coker the "victim." Lessons a chore? Not when I recall little "Brilliances" like the lesson-perfect Bounder showing off; the long-suffering Quelch "purring" over his favourite pupil, Mark Linely; the "baiting" of "Mosscoo," the French master; Bunter's ventriloquial trickery, or Prout inveigled into a discourse on the

"Rockies." Hamilton imbued his classrooms with the spirit of youth and great intelligence, combining fun with learning. They lived and breathed. And we could all identify with it.

Which brings me, rather wistfully, to where I began. My reunion with St. Frank's was a happy one, but the nagging thought remains - how richer it might have been if only the vast potential of the classroom had been touched upon. Perhaps readers with a longer memory than mine will prove me wrong, and substantiate the claim that St. Frank's College was a seat of learning. I hope so.

* * * * *

EXTREMES OF INTEREST

By R. J. GODSAVE

It is true to say that few of us like to read or hear of the activities of people in similar position in life to one's own. The normal life, with which one is only too well acquainted, is of little interest to a reader.

The novelist and story-writer, who has to cater for the masses in order to earn a living, write of the rich or the grinding poverty of the very poor.

Of all the stories revolving around boys' schools I do not recall one entirely devoted to life in a council school.

Both Charles Hamilton and E. S. Brooks occasionally introduced the council schoolboy into their stories, solely for the purpose of developing a plot, and not as a sop to the reader.

The famous holiday stories of the St. Frank's boys were only made possible by the wealth and generosity of such characters as Lord Dorri-more. The Christmas stories were generally centred at the homes of the wealthier boys.

This also applies to Charles Hamilton, who used Wharton Lodge - a sizeable estate - in many of his Christmas stories, with mystery and Bunter thrown in.

One of the charms of Hamilton's stories is the descriptive use of the country estate, which made possible the delightful drawings which accompanied this type of story.

That the stories of the wealthier people did not arouse any sense of envy bears out the opening remarks of this article.

* * * * *

SALUTE TO JIM COOK from Gerry Allison

A word of praise is surely due to Jim Cook, for the gallant way he keeps the flag of St. Frank's flying on the Nelson Lee Column. Almost single-handed now, he maintains that section of Collectors' Digest.

I would like to help him, but, alas, I have never been able to read the Nelson Lee, despite many attempts. It is, perhaps, like my cheek therefore to question Jim Cook's statement that, after the South Sea Series in the Nelson Lee Library, 1922 - "the boys of St. Frank's never visited such a glorious spot in their later adventures."

What about the serial "Treasure Isle," which ran in the Gem Nos. 1355-1365? The Nelson Lee Catalogue quotes this as an original story, and it appeared in 1934. Am I right, Jim?

BUFFALO BILL RIDES AGAIN

By G. W. Mason

Our old friend and hero, Buffalo Bill - Col. Wm. F. Cody - rides again! Gold Star Books of Capital Building, Derby, Conn., U.S.A., have issued pocket size, paper-back editions of Street & Smith's original dime novels. Each issue includes an original Buffalo Bill or Young Wild West story, plus a shorter "Wide Awake Library" story featuring The James Boys or Denver Dan or other similar characters. Each book averages 125 pages.

The attractive covers are glossy, colourful, lithograph reproductions of the originals, headed: "Every word of the original Collector's Edition." In some issues the original date appears. Number 234, entitled "Buffalo Bill's Tomahawk Duel; or, Playing Redskins at Their Own Game," is dated November 4, 1905, and the price is five cents. Wild West Weekly No. 91, is dated July 15, 1904, and entitled "Young Wild West and the Salted Mine." No. 170, - "Buffalo Bill's Fair Square Deal; or, The Duke of the Dagger's Deadlock" is reminiscent of James Henderson's "Snake-Eye's Doom" in No. 159 of the Wild West Library, although not the same story. Henderson issued four of these stories every month, including No. 164, "Red Tiger; or, Buffalo Bill's Leap For Life," which is a similar title to No. 100 of the Collector's Edition, "Buffalo Bill's Leap for Life, or The White

Death of Beaver Wash."

Buffalo Bill, with six shooters, knife and tomahawk, despatches redskins to their 'happy hunting grounds,' with an ease and accuracy reminiscent of his buffalo-hunting days. Young Wild West and his Whirlwind Riders are no less active in their battles with the border thugs. The James Boys are good space fillers. I quote:

"Open fire on them then, said Jesse.

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

"Crack!"

Rung out the four pistols of the Bandits. Unquote.

There are a host of other characters as colourful as the lithograph covers - Red river Bill, Apache Charlie, Bluejacket, to name a few; and Denver Dan, of whom it is said: ".....but I'll be chewed up if I ever see sech an allfired promiscuous fellar as this yer Dan. He's everywhar ter onct an' we ain't done a good job fur a month but what he's been into it an' spiled it fur us."

The publisher has listed 33 Buffalo Bill stories and 26 Wild West Weekly stories for 40 cents each, plus 5 cents a copy handling. A choice of both series, limited to certain issues, in packs of four, may be available in your local Boots, as in this area. It all depends on their method of distribution. The covers, as I have said, are excellent; so, good hunting, any Buffalo Bill enthusiasts. I wished Edward LeBlanc, the Consulting Editor for the series, could reproduce Magnets, Gems, Nelson Lees, Union Jacks, Boys Friends and other British old-time periodicals, complete with original covers, at similar prices.

EDITORIAL COMMENT: A number of readers have written us concerning these old American "bloods" on sale at Boots'. We thank all who wrote.

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 OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 31st January, 1967.

An attendance of 11 members was a good start to the New Year, particularly as there were two new members included in these, Ian Bennett who comes from Leicester and Mr. W. Morgan of Sutton Coldfield. Mr. Morgan had previously been a member of our club in the early 1950's.

A discussion was launched by Norman Gregory on the extinction of "The Boy's Own Paper" after a run dating back to the turn of the century and Norman displayed a souvenir copy of the first issue which has been published. It was generally agreed that it is a sad occasion when an old favourite passes out of existence.

With two new members amongst us it was felt that we should give them the opportunity to address the meeting and outline for us their particular interests in the Old Papers and introduce themselves to us generally.

Mr. Morgan, who is a retired schoolmaster surprised us by stating that he had first read the Magnet in 1908 and had actually browsed over copies of it in the trenches during World War I, but had found it difficult to read it in such circumstances. His interest had often been pushed into the background over the years, but always re-appeared when the pressure of work had eased. Now retired he had more time at his disposal.

Ian Bennett said his interest in "The Modern Boy," which was his favourite paper had been re-awakened by an article which appeared in "The Daily Telegraph," Colour Supplement which featured the old papers and he had started taking in "Collectors' Digest." Though he lived in Leicester he had a business office in Birmingham, which placed him within easy reach of our club. He was certainly very welcome indeed and it was hoped he would attend regularly.

Our usual feature, Collector's Item and Anniversary number were on view and Tom Porter as usual supplied the books. The Collector's Item was "A Strange Secret," by Martin Clifford. John Wernham has distributed copies of the fine Outram series to Hamilton devotees on a restricted sale and Ivan Webster had obtained a number of them for our members in addition to Tom's copy. The Anniversary Number was Magnet 312 which was published on the 31st January 1914, the year of

the outbreak of World War I. The usual lively informal discussion followed the passing round of these books.

The final item of the evening was a reading by the acting secretary from Magnet 1159, Bunter, "The Prize Hunter". This was a chapter from a single issue story showing the Fat Owl going in for a Latin prize in order to get £5 from his uncle. It showed Charles Hamilton at his most humorous and members had a really good laugh.

We meet again on February 28th at The Birmingham Theatre Centre.

J. F. BELLFIELD

Correspondent.

MERSEYSIDE

This meeting on 12th February gave notice that the Section is once again in very good fettle after the ups and downs of 1966. This was a heart-warming get-together, well-attended, and full of enthusiasm, and we have quiet confidence in our ability to keep the flag flying for many a long year yet.

The discussions were varied and most interesting, and the quizzes good. Pat Laffey's well-prepared quiz on finding the titles of Charlie Chaplin films from given clues proved too much for most of us, but not for Bill Windsor and Bert Hamblett, who finished first and second, respectively. Then Bill Windsor gave us one based on the usual school characters, and this was won by the writer, with Jim Walsh second.

It was decided to give a new look to the library by disposing of much of the "dead wood," and obtaining some good, new series of Hamilton stories, old series Nelson Lee, and, if possible, some good issues of the Monster Library.

But the main feature of this meeting was the determination of all members to consolidate our present much more optimistic position, and plan for a long-term future. The Merseyside Section is still very much in business.

FRANK UNWIN

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 11 February, 1967.

In weather unseasonably mild perhaps, but none the less welcome, sixteen members were able to get together for the February meeting.

After a busy library session, the Chairman opened the meeting at about 7 p.m. The minutes were read by the Secretary, and Gerry Allison gave his Treasurer's report, and he then proceeded to read extracts from his month's letters. A very interesting letter from Charles Garland (to whom Gerry had written loaning a "Marvel" after hearing Mr. Garland's broadcast on "Jack, Sam & Pete" recently) was enjoyed. Also three new postal members had been enrolled. There followed quite a long spontaneous discussion with many members joining in on various topics such as the amount of second hand bookshops in Dublin, the building up of some members' personal collections, the ingenious reasons Bunter advanced for getting out of lessons (usually without success!), the merits of the artists of the "Magnet" stories, etc. etc. At last Chairman Geoffrey Wilde wound up, and asked the Vice Chairman Jack Wood if he had any further news. Jack did not give further comment, but said he was pleased to introduce the speaker of the evening who was our Chairman Geoffrey himself. So business over, we settled down to listen.

Geoffrey's theme was what has been called "The Autumn Years of the Magnet." This was the time when Geoffrey was buying them as a boy. He recalled the great moment when the worth of the periodicals first dawned on his young mind and he gave the order - "These must be kept!" And so it came about - except during various crises in his life (accidents, etc) when he was off the scene - and then a copy would disappear. The way that the various series were linked together at that time was commented upon and Geoffrey gave two readings in his incomparable style, Bunter in the Mr. Quelch's watch-chain series, and later the fight between Larry Lascelles and Crocker, bringing out in the latter reading, the secret approval of the masters - Mr. Quelch, Mr. Prout and Mr. Hacker - in spite of their official disapproval! Refreshments came, and after the break, Geoffrey finished his very witty and enjoyable talk. The round of applause signified how much we had been enthralled.

It was now time to say "Goodnight" and depart homewards.
Next meeting: Saturday, 11 March, 1967.

M. L. ALLISON
Hon. Sec.

LONDON

A good muster of 32 members attended the nineteenth Annual General Meeting at Hume House on Sunday, February 19th.

(cont'd on page 28)...

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

WALTER WEBB (Birmingham): Gerry Allison's reference to Lewis Jackson's alleged story, "The Man From Persia" interested me very much. Another big question mark against S.B. authorship. Neither Mr. Swan nor Mr. Allison gave their views on the actual authorship of this yarn, and I am very curious as to whom that unknown individual may have been. Just as soon as I'm able, I'll have a shot at it myself when I dig the story out of my collection.

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross): It was good to have another visit to Slade after what has seemed a long absence. One likes the way the author ties in the events of the story with references to events that took place in the old papers. There is also a secondary satisfaction in reading the Slade stories, too. If a learned gentleman like Mr. Buddle can read with abundant enjoyment the Gem and the Magnet stories, then we who have more prosaic jobs should not feel that we are being childish in reading stories written for a lower age group than the one in which we find ourselves now.

I must mention the two chronicles of St. Frank's by Neil Beck and Jim Cook. It is a sign that the hobby will not die if members take the time to write fresh stories featuring the old characters. I liked the atmosphere of the summer game that Neil Beck worked into his yarn.

My Uncle remembered very clearly the East End munitions explosion of Jan. 1917 mentioned by Danny this month. "It was in Silvertown," my Uncle said. Danny certainly jogs the old memory in a most entertaining way. The theatrical and motion picture personalities he mentions always ring a bell at home, even those whose names, unlike Chaplin and the Gishes, are not very well known today. Good old Danny! I know I'm not alone in saying that I hope Danny kept writing his diary, even after he began to shave.

(Yes, it would almost certainly be the Silvertown disaster to which Danny referred. At the time Danny wrote, there would have been a clamp down on reports of the actual location, for security reasons, I imagine. - ED.)

A. W. HANSON (Manchester): As usual, I thought the Annual good, but I thought there was too much type all in the middle. I liked the articles by Cliff Webb and F. Vernon Lay, and especially the one by

J. R. Swan. This was really something.

CYRIL ROWE (Norwich): The note in the February Digest did not strike home, for I always renew promptly as I always shall whilst the contents are so admirably presented. Congratulations. I was late in the fold, but I've been catching up with back Digest material through my membership of the Northern Section.

G. ALLISON (Ilkley): What a fascinating cover for February! What would I not give for a dozen copies of The Penny Wonder? J. Louis Smythe's drawings are like a magic charm to me. And Controversial No. 108 is surely one of the best ever.

LEO HYNES (Newfoundland): Whilst years have come and gone, changes have taken place in styles of writing, and journalism has progressed to a pleasing degree. Yet the well-written stories of Greyfriars and St. Jim's will always remain unspoiled, and the proof of their worth is indicated by the fact that in my memory and in my library they remain, in modern parlance, "tops."

LONDON REPORT (cont'd from page 26)...

The retiring chairman, Bill Lofts, welcomed one and all and the host, Len Packman stated how pleased everyone should be to see Laurie Sutton, Marjorie Norris, Bill Hubbard and John Bush, all of them just recovering from indispositions. The minutes of the last A.G.M. were read, also read was the month's correspondence and the financial report given by the treasurer. Excellent report from the Charles Hamilton librarian, Roger Jenkins, who stated that he was negotiating a sale of books and if successful, this addition would see the C.H. library complete with all genuine Frank Richards writings. It was unanimously agreed to advance funds from the general fund to complete the purchase. All the Nelson Lee Libraries from 1921 until 1933 are now in the section devoted to the famous detective and the boys of St. Frank's. This news given by Bob Blythe who gives such good service in his section of the library.

The election of officers for 1967 then took place. Don Webster, who was proposed by Len Packman and seconded by Bob Blythe, was the only nominated candidate for chairman and thus will occupy the chair for 1967. Don holds the unique record of having been chairman of both the Liverpool and London Clubs. Rest of the officials were the old guard re-elected "en bloc." Hearty vote of thanks was accorded to the retiring chairman, Bill Lofts, the two librarians, Roger Jenkins and

GATHERING UP THE THREADSBy William Lister

It occurred to me that in the course of say twelve to eighteen months, many statements are made, many questions are asked and many thoughts are written in "Collectors Digest" to which there is no response, either in the form of answering the question or commenting on the statements. It was with this in mind I took up my copies of "C.D." for 1965 and 1966 and spent several hours browsing among them, the result being as follows. (It must be taken into account that I have one or two copies out on loan which may mean I have missed a vital point or two.)

"A Marvellous Idea" says page 3 of C.D. for April 1965, but what became of it? A reader's suggestion that a badge or necktie would be most acceptable was received with enthusiasm and for several issues afterwards brought letters of favourable comment. I do not see any final decision on this matter in later copies.

In the same copy, the character created by E. S. Brooks, Ezra Quirke, was mentioned with a quote from the current Nelson Lee editor, ("one of the most amazing characters in schoolboy fiction") and a challenge to our Magnet and Gem friends, who were asked if Charles Hamilton had ever produced the like of Ezra Quirke. It appears that, so far, none of our Hamilton friends have come up with the answer.

The January copy for 1966 contained the sad news of the passing of E. S. Brooks on Dec. 2, 1965, but what a wealth of interesting information poured in later. Those of us who have read his works since we were 12 years old or even younger, till we are 54 or even older, realised how little we knew of our favourite author. Being a lay-preacher myself I was most interested in the statement that his father was a lively Congregational Minister, and political writer for "The Times" - the Rev. George Brooks, as revealed in the article by W. O. G. Lofts in C.D. for August 1966. In fact all who wrote concerning E. S. Brooks contributed something of interest to Lee-ites.

By March 1966 our editor was complaining about the word "commuter" (page 3). He doesn't like it - and neither do I. Funny how one can take a dislike to a word, though he points out a film of 50 years ago was called "The Commuters." According to the "Concise English Dictionary" the word has several shades of meaning. I was just as surprised to read in "The Haunted Man" by Charles Dickens (from his

Xmas books) Chap. 1 "We took a liking for a picture that hangs in what used to be, anciently, afore our ten poor gentlemen commuted for an annual stipend in money, our great Dinner-Hall." I still don't like the word.

The Great March Mystery was reported on page 3, C.D. for April. Being in the K to L group I was one of the victims and received (instead of a packet of my favourite reading matter) one empty, fully-stamped envelope. Our editor saw to it that we all got a copy, but was the mystery ever solved and who bore the brunt of the extra cost? In the same issue page 17 George Sellars speaks of a Wharton in the family. Last year I went to hear a Rev. Harry Wharton speak at the Blackpool Public Lecture Hall. If he comes this way again I intend to ask him if he has heard of our Harry.

Gerry Allison in June speaks of a forgotten magazine he had traced, which led me to think of a "Boys Magazine" I used to take. That I had not seen it mentioned in C.D. was confirmed in a letter from R. F. Redhead, Nov. 1966, page 28 when he mentions the same paper. Does anybody know enough about it to inform us further? Tom Satchell of Plumstead tells us that Billy Bunter was originally thin and weedy in the "Red Magnet" and wants to know did Bunter become fat suddenly?

An excellent article in the August 1966 issue "Are Authors Nuts?" mentioned authors who were bored or bothered by their fictional creations, and in one paper I see that Mrs. Fleming thought that keeping up with the demand for James Bond drove her husband too hard.

I wonder if someone will respond to the letter in October, page 27 from A. V. Packer (Tottenham) as to whether Charles Hamilton actually invented 51 schools. Have any readers traced "Ally Sloper" yet or was Neil Bell mistaken in his book "My Writing Life"?

And now to the last copy for 1966, December and The Patriotic Plate by O. W. Wadham. Yes! I do remember the plate of the historic scene of Armistice Day 1918 in Piccadilly Circue given in Union Jack Nov. 13, 1926. I can even recall walking out of the shop looking at it (I was 14 then) and for some reason or other it took my fancy. I kept it for a year or two and have remembered it on several Armistice days though I can't tell you why this should be. Maybe special days such as Xmas and Easter and Nov. 11th with its two minutes' silence meant more to us then than they do today.

By the way, before I close, I notice a Mr. A. Wesely of 12 Monmouth Rd., London W.2. often advertised his book-binding services in "C.D."

I have thought if instead of saying "reasonable prices" there was a quote for binding say 12 copies of C.D. in a cheap form and one in a good binding it would encourage fans to make a snap decision according to their pocket. How often I intended writing him to find out and never got round to it, whereas if I had seen the cost in print, I would at least have acted one way or another.

As I am writing the T.V. newscaster has just announced that the "Boys Own Paper" is drawing peacefully towards its close. Sad? Very!
Long live Collectors' Digest!

LONDON REPORT (cont'd from page 28)...

Bob Blythe, the secretary-treasurer, Ben Whiter and the auditor, Charlie Wright.

A reading about Paul Pontifex Prout was given by Roger Jenkins, Don Webster won Neil Beck's quiz, a fine talk on Reginald Kirkham's stories in the "School Friend," "Schoolgirls' Own" and "Schoolgirls' Weekly" was given by Ray Hopkins and the Leeds Club quiz by Cliff Webb and which was jointly won by Eric Lawrence, Don Webster and Nicholas Bennett completed the entertainment side of the gathering except for the numerous discussions. The catering was in the capable hands of Josie Packman and there was no shortage of washing up volunteers. A very enjoyable meeting indeed. Next meeting at 71, Olive Road, Cricklewood, London W.C.2. Phone GLAdstone 8148. Hosts Bill and Marjorie Norris.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

E X C H A N G E : Bound Vol. Misc. Gems: Loose Magnets:
H.A. 1930, 1937: Greyfriars Herald (new series) 1 - 7.

W A N T E D : Dixon Hawkes: Thomsons 1934 - 1938.

McMAHON, 54 HOZIER CRES., TANNOCHSIDE, UDDINGSTON.

Want Kinema Komics, Old Film Funs, Boys Cinema 1928 - 1933,
U.S. Film Mag. 1928 - 1932. Exchange Schoolboys Owns 63, 121, 174
for above.

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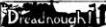


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