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Collectors' Digest

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

Vol. 21

No. 246

JUNE 1967

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Price 2s. Od.



ENTER BLAM! EXIT YAROOOOGH!

A few years ago Mr. E. S. Turner (well-known to our clan for his book "Boys Will Be Boys") approached me in connection with an article he was preparing on the old papers for the Daily Telegraph. Mr. Turner lunched with me, I gave him what help I could towards his project, and we spent a pleasant couple of hours chatting on various aspects of old boys' book lore. I believe that he also arranged meetings with one or two others concerned in the hobby.

His article, when it appeared, accompanied by a picture of Mr. and Mrs. Packman among their collection, made pleasant reading. Mr. Turner had taken care to give no offence to those of us who find enjoyment with the old papers.

Now a further article has flowed from Mr. Turner's typewriter. It appeared in "Tit-Bits" at the end of April. Our Exeter reader, Mr. Charles Churchill, sent me the centre-spread of "Tit-Bits" containing the article. Headed "Yes, Boys Will Be Boys," with decorations of Blam! Powie! Splat! Vroom! the article compares modern papers for the young with those of years ago.

Mr. Churchill confessed to being "somewhat ruffled," and the old papers do not seem to fare so well this time. Mr. Turner writes well, but he makes a few comments which he might have left untyped.

He gives a comprehensive survey of modern periodicals presumably

put out for an age group of about 8 to 12 years. In fact, the rather bloodthirsty-looking little boy whose picture dominates the heading to the article would seem to be about 9 years old. But the Hamilton papers with which he makes some comparison were probably catering for boys between 11 and 15, while the Sexton Blake novels found their main readership among young people over the age of 14.

Mr. Turner writes: "Old copies of Magnet and Gem may be treasured by elderly sentimentalists who meet for readings and quizzes, but the youth of today just doesn't want to know about monocled young toffs in ivy-covered academies. 'Yarooooogh' is out and 'Aaaaaaargh' is in. 'Ha! Ha! Ha!' is replaced by 'Heh-heh!'"

After a few comparisons of the 1967 Thomson papers with those from the same stable which were on the market between the wars, Mr. Turner remarks: "Its (Rover and Wizard's) type is easier on the eye than that provided half a century ago by Lord Northcliffe, who gave his young readers 20,000 words of small type for twopence. And today's stories are much better written."

Are they indeed? And if you must compare type-size, why go back half a century to a time when the old papers were NOT twopence?

Among a few sentences on Sexton Blake, Mr. Turner says: "He returned soon afterwards in paper-back form as a hero for adults, a wiser and worldier man than the middle-aged bore who fell out of a balloon over the English Channel in the Marvel in 1893."

Well, Mr. Turner has spoken. We can only suggest that if some of the powie and blam lot last as long in popular appeal as that "middle-aged bore" they won't do badly.

According to Mr. Turner, you'd hardly expect to sell a paper with "a name like Boy's Friend." He may be right. But Boys' Friend disappeared from the shops forty years ago.

The "elderly sentimentalists" are likely to feel that Mr. Turner this time has not held the balance too fairly between the old and the new. It seems to us that there is not much published today for youngsters over-all, a point which he ignores.

246 MONTHS OLD:

We weren't being coy about our age last month. By a printing error we got the number 225 on our May cover. It should, of course, have been 245.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST WHO'S WHO:

This year is the 21st birthday year of Collectors' Digest. As part of our celebration of same, we propose to issue a new edition of Collectors' Digest Who's Who. The last one was published in 1962,

five years ago. Financially it was not a success. We have, in fact, a parcel of the 1962 Who's Who which has never been opened. The failure on that occasion was due, probably, to the fact that it followed too quickly on the previous issue. Which is the reason why we have delayed over the project of publishing an up-to-date one.

Now that five years have passed into history since 1962 we are venturing again. Quite a few readers have asked from time to time for a new Who's Who, but it takes, naturally, the support of more than quite a few readers to make the project a success and the expense and the work worth while.

With this issue of the Digest you will find a special form on which you are invited to submit particulars of yourself and your interests. The main details will be placed in the Who's Who free of charge. If you wish to enlarge on your interests, the charge for additional lines is 2d per word.

Fill in your form, remembering that the completing of any item is optional, and return the form to the Editor at Excelsior House, Grove Rd, Surbiton. Only readers who return the entry form will have their names included in the Who's Who. Please return the forms speedily, which will ease the massive amount of work in connection with the Who's Who.

In order to allow the names of overseas readers to be included, if they desire, the last date for the acceptance of entries is JULY 15th 1967.

Your entry form is not an order for the finished publication. An order form will be included with next month's Collectors' Digest.

The Who's Who is our first celebration item in connection with our 21st birthday year. In October, which will be our 250th number, we come of age. It is possible that we may issue a Double Number of the Digest to mark this great occasion, even though it would be a mighty job at a time when the preparation for the 21st issue of the Annual will be in full swing.

In any case, it would take a lot of filling. If you are keen on the idea, we ask all our contributors to send along articles and items for publication, either in the Annual or in the Double Number of C.D.

A Double Number presents its own problems. As well as eating voraciously into our material for publication, there is the matter of the double price which would have to be charged.

Drop me a few lines as to whether or not you would like a Double Number to mark our 250th issue and our 21st birthday.

THE EDITOR

THEY ARE COMING!

THEY WILL SOON BE HERE!

LOOK OUT FOR THEIR ARRIVAL!

CHING LUNG AND HIS CHUMS,

FERRERS LORD, GAN WAGA, RUPERT THURSTON, and all the merry crew of brave and intrepid adventurers in a Grand New Tale, entitled

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or, the adventures of Ching Lung and his Chums in Search of a Lost Land"
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THE BOYS' FRIEND,

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PRICE ONE PENNY.

Mr. E. S. Turner, famous for his book "Boys Will Be Boys," wrote recently: "You'd hardly expect to sell a paper with a name like "Boy's Friend." Mr. Turner means, of course, in this day and age. Above is an advertisement for the Boys' Friend, in 1905. The story "Mysteria" was reprinted a few years later in the Magnet. It was one of many long serials by Sydney Drew.

EXCHANGE ONLY MAGNETS 828, 829, 830, (Lochmuir Series) offered for ANY ONE of the following 1043, 1071 in GOOD CONDITION.

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WANTED: MAGNETS, GEMS, BOYS' FRIENDS; runs of Ranger, Triumph, Bullseye, Boys' Magazine, etc. Chums.

H. MACHIN, 38, ST. THOMAS RD., PRESTON.

WANTED: Magnets 1352, 1354, 1357, 1359-62, 1364-67, 1369-71, 1379-82, 1390, 1392-1402, 1415, 1424, or Magnet Vols. 45 & 46. Several Magnets for sale or exchange. A. DACRE, 7 LEOPARD ST., BARROW-IN-FURNESS.

OUR JABBERWOCK

By W. O. G. Lofts

Since the publication of my "Hundred Years of Boys Weekly" lists in the C.D. Annuals of some ten years ago, many 'new' boys papers have been discovered by me in my researches into the history of juvenile literature. These have been most carefully recorded and will at some future date be published to bring the records up-to-date.

Probably one of the most interesting of my recent discoveries has been a boys' and girls' magazine in the 1905 period with the unusual title of OUR JABBERWOCK. This, at least to my knowledge has never been mentioned in any collecting magazine, or by any collector in our hobby, the reason probably being that they would now be touching 70 to remember reading it in their childhood.

OUR JABBERWOCK appeared firstly in August 1905 and was described as a monthly magazine for boys and girls, priced 6d. Its editor was a woman writer Brenda Girvin, and the publishers the well known Chapman & Hall. As readers probably have guessed by the title the contents had mainly a Lewis Carroll flavour. JABBERWOCK being a mythical monster in 'Through the Looking Glass'....

"And hast thou slain the jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy"

Our own Charles Hamilton, was of course fond of using the expression of 'Jabberwock' in his school stories.

It consisted of 96 pages and was extremely well produced on excellent paper, slightly wider than Magnet size. Its cover after the first few issues was drawn by Paul Hardy of CHUMS and pirate story illustrations fame. Portraying a dragon and boy and girl in the background. Other cover illustrations had Louis Wain and some amusing pictures of his cats, as well as articles in the centre pages. Louis Wain, as most readers know, eventually went insane; it has been said through his mania for drawing cats. A most sad story which may be told in full some day.

Stories included such well known writers as the former editor of "Captain," R. S. Warren-Bell, and a former editor of the B.O.P., Dr. Gordon Stables, plus the brilliant tales by F. Wishaw who contributed to most of the 'classic boys journals.' Another writer worth mentioning was Evelyn Everett Green who penned the tale of Greyfriars, which has no connection with the famous school in Kent! Stories were also by 'Alice' and 'the white rabbit' whilst interesting features included 'The Rainy Day Club' Puzzle pages and letters from readers in

a column entitled "When the Postman Knocks" (later "Called") and a really informative piece on the biggest school in the world, The Jews Free School.

OUR JABBERWOCK is the type of paper which I feel sure enthusiastic collectors would like to get hold of today, and if they had been born much earlier, probably would have been delighted by its contents. It ran for a total of 27 monthly issues finishing in October 1907, when it was incorporated with GENTLEWOMAN.

Most certainly a high class paper in its two-year run, but by its price of 6d. probably restricted to the rich classes in 1905! Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland is with English literature for all time, and it was curiouser and curiouser that I discovered a boys' and girls' paper with his coined name, now in the English language, of OUR JABBERWOCK.

DANNY'S DIARY

JUNE 1917

Doug had promised me, almost with his hand on his bossoom, that he would buy me the new Martin Clifford story "After Lights Out" in the Boys' Friend 3d Library. Unfortunately, I offended him grievously by borrowing his cricket bat to knock the stumps in, in the garden, when I was doing some bowling practice. I only dented it a little bit, but Doug was implackable. I had to spend thrippence of my own money to get the story. It is an excellent tale, mainly featuring Cardew and Levison.

The Gem, too, this month, has had a long Cardew series. It was tip-top, though we are getting a bit too much Cardew.

In "Lacy of the Grammar School," a new boy there recognized Cardew as having been expelled from Wodehouse for theft. In the next story, "The Finger of Scorn," Cardew gets Grundy condemned for theft, but his reason is only to prove that it is possible for someone entirely innocent to be blamed.

In "Sticking It Out," Cardew saved Gordon Gay of the Grammar School from drowning in the river, and in the last tale of the series "The Outcast's Luck," it turned out that Cardew had been wrongfully blamed and expelled from Wodehouse on account of the wickedness of a senior there. A fine series.

The month's final tale in the Gem was terrible. Entitled "The St. Jim's Competition Syndicate," it told of how the boys formed a

group in order to enter for a kind of limerick competition in a paper. This tale reintroduced the character named Parker. I hope we have heard the last of him now.

It has been a disastrous month. All the papers are now reduced in size once again, and the Gem and Magnet are down to 16 pages.

The Germans have started sending aeroplanes over by daylight to drop their bombs on London. The zepps don't come so much now, and only on dark, still nights. There was a raid on London by 18 planes one morning, and a bomb fell on a school in East London. Nine of the planes were destroyed over Kent and Essex.

The Boys' Friend has been good, though it is a smaller paper now. The Erroll series has concluded with four more tales. In "A Straight Game," Mornington is jealous of Erroll's cricket, but he also believes that Erroll is the son of a cracker. Erroll meets Gentleman Jim in a hut, and Morny spies on them. Erroll gets Morny in his power, but throws away his advantage, and Morny orders Erroll to leave Rookwood.

A new series entitled "The Rival Caravanners" by Richard Randolph started in this issue of the Friend.

In "The Hidden Schoolboy," Gentleman Jim kidnaps Mornington in order to keep his mouth shut. In "From Foes to Friends" Erroll rescued Mornington who was kept a prisoner in the quarries, and the feud between the two is now over.

In the last tale of the series "Light at Last," it is proved that Erroll, who was carried away as a tiny boy by Gentleman Jim, is really the son of Captain Erroll.

A lovely series, and I sighed when it ended.

In the final tale of the month "The Trick That Failed" there is yet another new boy at Rookwood. They come in a never-ending stream. This one is named Lattrey, and he is an expert lock-picker and a bad lot. He gets Jimmy Silver suspected of theft, but Erroll foils Lattrey.

At the cinemas we have seen Mary Miles Minter in "Youth's Endearing Charm;" Douglas Fairbanks and Bessie Love in "The Good Bad Man;" Lou Tellegen in "Victory of Conscience," and Charles Ray and Bessie Barriscale in "Four Irish Girls in America." They were all good, and Charles Ray is a great favourite of mine.

The Magnet has been particularly interesting this month, as Frank Richards is giving a kind of new slant to the Bounder's character. Smithy is now a mixture of good and bad, and he is more interesting now than he has ever been.

But first there was a rather sub-standard tale entitled "Peter Todd's Vengeance." This was a sequel to the recent series where

Harry Wharton's leadership was challenged. Todd's vengeance is on Ponsonby & Co for what they did on the eve of the election in that series.

Then came a four-story Bounder series, and it was excellent. The Bounder, provoked, lapsed from the straight and narrow path, and was put out of the cricket. The first tale was "The Fall of the Bounder." Then, in "The Bounder's Match," the Bounder kidnapped on a barge the Remove cricket eleven, and the St. Jim's game was played by the Upper Fourth with Vernon-Smith in their team.

In "The Last Straw," the Bounder aided the erring Peter Hazeldene, and in the final story "The Bounder's Way" everything turned out all right, though it is obvious that the Bounder is no longer a good boy. A very fine series, I thought.

During this month we all went to see a new Revue at the Comedy Theatre in London. It was called "Bubbly," and we all enjoyed it very much.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: So it is exactly fifty years since the famous Martin Clifford story "After Lights Out" appeared in the shops. This tale falls into three natural sections, and it is a fair conclusion that it was originally written as three separate stories for the Gem. Just why, then, was it published in the B.F.L.? We can rule out any idea that there was a shortage of stories for the monthly, though it is still possible that the editor thought it might give the B.F.L. a boost. On the other hand, it shortened the supply of genuine material available for the Gem. Is it possible that Pentelow would think such a shortage would not matter? Another possibility, perhaps unlikely, is that the editor may have thought the Gem was presenting a little too much Cardew and Levison. It's just another intriguing item for meditation.

Perhaps some readers incline to the view that the Mornington-Erroll friendship was introduced as a result of the success of the Bounder-Redwing theme. Danny, this month, reminds us that such was not the case. The Erroll-Mornington friendship was the first in the field.)

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BLAKIANA

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

The following is a short list of reprints of Sexton Blake stories sent to me by Mr. W. H. Bradshaw of Californis. In my opinion the original titles of these stories were by far the best. There always seemed to be a complete lack of imagination on someone's part when reprints were retitled. What do other Sexton Blake fans think?

Perhaps some of you might care to send me a short article on the subject for insertion in "Blakiana." I am always in need of fresh material.

Josie Packman.

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| First Prof. Kew story. | Union Jack No. 511 dated 26th July, 1913 "The Aylesbury Square Mystery." Reprinted in the Detective Weekly No. 347 dated 14th Oct. 1939 under the title: "The Doctor's Dupes." |
| First Carlac story. | Union Jack No. 468 dated 28th Sep. 1912 "The Regent Street Mystery." Reprinted in the Detective Weekly No. 349 dated 28th October, 1939 under the title "Danger in Diamonds." |
| First Yvonne Cartier story. | Union Jack No. 485 dated 25th Jan. 1913, "Beyond Reach of the Law." Reprinted in the Detective Weekly No. 351 dated 11th Nov. 1939 under the title "The Girl who made Pearls." |
| First Council of Eleven story. | Union Jack No. 555 dated 30th May, 1914, "The Council of Eleven." Reprinted in the Detective Weekly No. 360 dated 13th Jan. 1940 under the title "The Council of Eleven." |
| First Huxton Rymer story in U.J. | Union Jack No. 488 dated 15th Feb. 1913 "When Greek meets Greek." Reprinted in the Detective Weekly No. 366 dated 24th Feb. 1940 under the title "The Vengeance of Yvonne." |
| First Wu Ling story. | Union Jack No. 507 dated 28th June, 1913 "The Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle." Reprinted in the Detective Weekly No. 367 dated 2nd March, 1940 under the title "Brotherhood of the Beetle." |
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- First John Marsh Union Jack 342 dated 30th April, 1910 "The Mystery story of Room 11." Reprinted in the Detective Weekly No. Plummer's Partner. 368 dated 9th March, 1940 under the title "The Riddle of Room 11."
- First Kestrel Union Jack No. 620 dated 28th Aug. 1915 "The Case of story. the Cataleptic." Reprinted in the Detective Weekly No. 377 dated 11th May, 1940 under the same title.
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S E X T O N B L A K E

By W. O. G. Lofts

(Reproduced from the Saint Magazine by kind permission of Leslie Charteris and W. O. G. Lofts.)

Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) founder of the Amalgamated Press, was not only one of the cleverest men ever to start a publishing Empire, but he was, primarily, a man whose concern it was to give his readers full value for their money. After successfully starting ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS in 1888 (later shortened to ANSWERS), in 1890 he launched those two world-famous comics ILLUSTRATED CHIPS and COMIC CUTS. Always keen to expand his publishing firm, he decided in early 1893, to enter the field of boys' periodicals.

On the look-out for a writer to start off this new venture with a series of detective stories, his eye was caught by a series of articles in the London Sunday PEOPLE. These were entitled "Third Class Crimes" or the Undiscovered Crimes of London. They were written by one Harry Blyth and when Harmsworth read them he decided that here was the man he wanted.

When they met, Harmsworth greeted Blyth by saying: "So you are the crime merchant?" to which Harry Blyth replied: "Just as you are the newspaper merchant." Harmsworth was greatly impressed by this, as he always showed a great liking for any man who stood up to him. In preparing this series Harry Blyth asked his teenage son (also named Harry) what name he liked best for the detective hero - Gideon Barr or Sexton Blake. Young Harry plumped for Sexton Blake - and so the famous name was born.

The story was duly written, and appeared in No. 6 of the first Harmsworth boys' paper entitled the HALFPENNY MARVEL, on the 29th October, 1893. It was published under Blyth's pen-name of "Hal Meredith," the surname being the maiden name of his mother. I later met his son, then aged 80 (and now deceased) and I was able to glean at first-hand the story of the creation of Fleetway's great fictional character. Although many other detectives were featured in these

early stories, such as Stanley Dare, Frank Ferrett, Martin Steele and Gideon Barr, all have long since passed into oblivion and one often wonders whether, if Sexton Blake had been given the ordinary name of, say, Frank, he too would have suffered the same fate.

Harry Blyth, sad to relate, died only a few years later in 1898 from typhoid fever, at the early age of 46, so he did not live long enough to see how famous his creation was to become. Since 1893 over 3,500 stories have been written about Sexton Blake by nearly 200 different authors - making a grand total of almost 200,000,000 words, apart from also being published in about 15 different languages!

It is commonly assumed that Sexton Blake was based on Conan Doyle's famous detective, Sherlock Holmes, but personally I have always found this difficult to accept. The first descriptions and illustrations show a middle-aged Victorian gentleman dressed in the typical clothing of that period - complete with curly-brimmed bowler and carrying a heavy walking stick. He was the son of Dr. Berkeley Blake, a surgeon of Harley Street, and according to early chroniclers was educated at Ashleigh Public School, St. Annes - and later Oxford and Cambridge. He had two brothers, Nigel and Harry, the former a waster and scoundrel. In the UNION JACK Christmas Number for 1901, when Blake was living at Norfolk Street, Strand, it was mentioned that he had a wife; but this was and has been the only reference to his married status. It has always been accepted that he remained a strict bachelor.

In those days Sexton Blake did not live in Baker Street but in New Inn Chambers, and in later stories at Wych Street (a turning off the Strand) where he was in partnership with a French detective by the name of Jules Gervaise. More important, whilst that other famous mythical detective of Baker Street, Sherlock Holmes, seemed to solve most of his problems by his own fireside - clad in a stained dressing-gown and digressing to his somewhat dense admirer, Dr. Watson - Sexton Blake travelled to the four corners of the world to bring his cases to a successful conclusion.

After a succession of editors on the UNION JACK - Somers J. Summers; W. H. Maas, J. H. Pym, and Percy Bishop, it was not until W. H. Back took control in 1904 that Sexton Blake really came into his own. Tinker, his most famous assistant, arrived in October of that year in a story entitled CUNNING AGAINST SKILL whilst one of the most popular characters of the Blake household, his housekeeper, Mrs. Martha Bardell, came a year later. Plump and garrulous, with a gift for malapropism, Mrs. Bardell had a use (or mis-use!) of the English language which was both weird and wonderful. Another addition to

the household in this period was Pedro, the famous bloodhound, sent to Blake by a well-wisher by the name of Mr. Nemo. This historic event appeared in a story entitled THE DOG DETECTIVE...

In 1915, following the great success of the BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY, W. H. Back (by this time a Director) thought up the brilliant idea of having a full-length original 60,000 word story of Sexton Blake each month - and so the famous library was born.

The first story, which appeared on the 20th September, was entitled THE YELLOW TIGER and was really wonderful value in those days, being 120 pages for only 3d. Although stories were anonymous for many years this first tale was later proved to have been written by George Heber Teed, a Canadian, and in the firm opinion of many of the old guard readers it was the finest Blake story ever written. That the Library was a success is proved by the fact that later on, two issues, then four, and then five (reverting again to four) were published each month up until the paper shortage of the Second World War.

Up to this period Sexton Blake had been drawn by a large number of artists and these included R. J. MacDonald, H. M. Lewis, "Val" (Val Reading), E. E. Briscoe, R.A., Fred Bennett, T. W. Holmes, J. Abney Cummings, Harry Lane, and Arthur Jones - all first-class illustrators but none of them seeming to portray Blake as his readers imagined him. Then 1922 saw a young artist by the name of Eric Parker (who had the distinction of being the first LCC scholar to win an art scholarship), making his first illustration in the UNION JACK.

This story was EYES IN THE DARK and Parker depicted Blake, Tinker - and Pedro - just as many readers in those days visualised them. Blake himself was tall, lean, strong-limbed, with hair thinning on top and a high intellectual forehead. He wore a red dressing-gown, smoked a blackened briar pipe and had a favourite chair - all this was shown in a pleasant and honest style. Parker's brilliant use of shadows, colour-sense, etc., and his acute perception of physiognomy gave whatever scene he depicted something which heightened its realism - always his work had a slickness and magnetism which enhanced the attractiveness of the text and gave vivid realism to the characters and atmosphere.

Blake, as the reader may have already gathered, had appeared in stage productions as far back as 1909 - probably the first in the West End at the Prince Edward Theatre, Old Compton Street, in 1930, where he was portrayed by Arthur Wontner. The first film featuring Fleetway's detective in the major role was in 1914 - a three-reeler

called THE CLUE OF THE WAX VESTA - and in the thirties a considerable number were made. Easily the best at that period had its premiere at the Ritz Cinema, Leicester Square, which disputes another chronicler's assertion that Blake never had a West End showing. George Curzon played Blake and other parts were played by Greta Gynt, David Farrar and Tod Slaughter (who incidentally had a large collection of Blake stories). Another Blake film featured, in a minor role, a 16-year-old girl by the name of Jean Simmons - now a world-famous film star.

(To be concluded next month)

BUNTER & CO ARE STILL EARNING

-----But not for themselves or their creator. Articles about them are still flowing continuously from the pens of professional writers, and they get constant mention in various headlines in the popular and not-so-popular press.

An amusing and satirical little item under the title of "Yaroo! Play the Game, you Cads!" by Mr. E. S. Turner appeared in Punch in mid-May. Greyfriars received a 95% intake from State Schools, and the long-haired newcomers caused chaos among the chums of the Remove. For some reason, D'Arcy of St. Jim's was among the Greyfriars boys, and Hurree Singh had become the Nawob. It was all good fun, with more than an undercurrent of truth.

Finally Bunter discovers the facts of life from a computer, and the innocent Greyfriars fellows are horrified at what they learn. Naturally the "State School cads" jeer. The Famous Five fled from Greyfriars and were never seen again.

Don't you believe it, Mr. Turner. The Famous Five will turn up again very shortly. Professional writers never grow tired of falling back on Greyfriars.

But, as we said before, this Punch item is good fun. It will cause hilarity in dentists' waiting-rooms for many years to come.

THE CAPTAIN:- Bound volumes from XIV to XXI inclusive (Oct. 1906 to Sept. 1914). Excellent condition. 10/- per vol. Delivered Birmingham area.

W. W. MORGAN, 14 LITTLE GREEN LANES, SUTTON COLDFIELD, WARWICKSHIRE.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

(CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD)

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'Sby Jim Cook

It turned out a very wet Wednesday afternoon and being a half-holiday all outdoor activities were abandoned. The only way to spend the time was either gossiping, playing games in the Junior Common Room or gazing out into the Triangle at the falling rain. As neither of these pastimes appealed to me I felt at a loose end but not for long. For some time I had been wondering what had happened to Raithmere Castle; whether Reggie Pitt still owned it and why it wasn't even mentioned these days. You know how it is, past events keep nagging in your mind for days on end and suddenly you decide to do something about it. Well, I decided to seek out Pitt over in the West House and ask him about the old castle. You may recall that this stately old castle was left to Pitt by an eccentric great-uncle and Reggie had invited a crowd of juniors and Moor View girls to a Christmas party at the time of his strange inheritance. But since that time nothing had been heard about the castle for very soon afterwards the St. Frank's juniors went off on a world tour in a school ship named the St. Francis and the Raithmere Castle episode took a back seat as it were.

I found Pitt in his study and strangely enough the weird adventures which had occurred at the castle were suddenly brought back to me with a rush for sitting also in Pitt's study was Ezra Quirke. Now strictly speaking this junior belongs to the dead past for he is no longer at St. Frank's and neither is he persona grata with the great majority there but Reggie Pitt is an easy going junior and is a charming host.

I stayed there quite a while for after learning that Raithmere Castle is still very much a feature in the little village of Market Donning and Reggie still owns the castle I became interested in Ezra Quirke. It seemed he had dropped in to consult Pitt about the old castle, and, since Quirke lives in Market Donning, I suppose Quirke considers himself a neighbour of Pitt's. Anyway, what really kept me in the study was Quirke's conversation. For this very strange one-time junior at St. Frank's is very intelligent and erudite to a degree but his mania for studying the Occult precludes his association

with the majority of the chaps. But for once he wasn't talking about Elementals, psychical research or any of the other esoteric avenues to the path of the Beyond. Instead he was showing Pitt sheets of typewritten information and pointing out passages which I had rudely interrupted with my arrival.

To read about Quirke is one thing but to come face to face with him is most decidedly another. For you instinctively prepare yourself a defensive guard and try not to be drawn towards him. You get the same feeling when confronting a man of power. But for Reggie Pitt's presence, I do believe I would have succumbed to Quirke's magnetism which seems to surround him like an aura. It was only momentary, and after being introduced to Quirke, Pitt offered me a seat.

The upshot of my visit to the West House was to know Quirke had prepared a curriculum which he was suggesting could be the basis of a new method of teaching. Pitt was approached because Quirke was in the throes of a dilemma. An entirely new and revolutionary course of study had been invented by Quirke but no school would adopt it. Certainly not St. Frank's. And Ezra Quirke's visit to Pitt stemmed from the fact that Reggie was the owner of Raitmere Castle and it was in Quirke's mind that Pitt could use the castle - which was almost derelict anyway - as a school to be run under the new system. Quirke was explaining his new brand of instruction when I entered the study.

Pitt, being a good natured fellow, listened throughout Quirke's discourse with a benign smile, and Pitt was still smiling when Quirke finished and Reggie stood up and opened the door.

Now Handforth would have dealt differently with this situation. He would have thrown Quirke out long before this, but Pitt is a remarkable junior and an excellent host. And as Quirke departed Pitt advised him to try the River House School or Moat Hollow, preferably the latter since it was empty. It wasn't long before the whole Lower School was talking about what Nipper called Quirke's Curriculum. And in spite of the extraordinary methods Quirke had prescribed in his formulae for the promotion of knowledge, there were the usual juniors who could be relied on to fall in with the crazy idea. Heaven help Old England if ever cranks like Quirke get into power. But there are among us the type I would call the intelligent cranks who flourish high in our society and earn the esteem granted gratefully for their good deeds, but they have a fringe activity that is pursued outside the knowledge of the general public.

The basic item in Quirke's Curriculum was free discipline in school. But the rest of his idea was too revolutionary to be accepted except, of course, by the cranks.

HAMILTONIANA

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 112. WHAT DID THEY DO WITH THE EMPIRE?

Though there is a general tendency for collectors to regard the Empire Library as a Hamilton paper, it is comparatively but little known and probably but little sought. From the fact that it ran for only just over a year it seems likely that it enjoyed but little success.

It is not entirely a fallacy that the Empire was a Hamilton paper, but actually Charles Hamilton did not have a lot to do with it or for it. But he certainly was the inspiration behind it. It is fairly certain that the publishers hoped that it might be another Gem or Magnet. That it never really won the popular fancy is undoubtedly due to the fact that it was merely a shadow of the two far more famous papers.

Rylcombe Grammar School was, without any question at all, the creation of Charles Hamilton. It featured extensively in two of the very early Boys' Friend Libraries - "Tom Merry & Co," and "Tom Merry's Conquest," specially written for the Library. Both these stories were slightly re-written a few years later, and each was re-published in two blue Gems.

Charles Hamilton created Frank Monk, the Wootton brothers, and Delamere, the Rylcombe captain. But it is fairly clear that he did not create Gordon Gay, who was to be the new junior leader of Rylcombe Grammar when that school was given the honour of its own paper - the Empire Library.

Mr. W. O. G. Lofts, some time ago, indicated the likelihood that C. M. Down wrote many of the Rylcombe stories, and I feel sure that this is right. Mr. Down, who wrote some of the earlier substitute stories in the Gem, had a pleasantly readable style, and in my view he was one of the most successful of all the stand-in writers. He lacked mannerisms with his pen, which was an advantage, and he

produced that kind of rather facetious dialogue which is also found in so many of Charles Hamilton's lighter efforts of earlier days.

All of Mr. Down's stories were on the light side. This may have been intentional. If he was writing a few stories with the benevolent approval of Charles Hamilton, Mr. Down may purposely have written slight, "not to be taken seriously," items, leaving the more serious stuff to his leader. One can see a vast difference in the quality of "The School Under Canvas," the Gem serial concerning Rylcombe Grammar which was unquestionably written by Hamilton.

Though Mr. Down's flair was comedy, he never descended to arrant nonsense as one or two of the substitute writers did. Nevertheless, it may have been the consistent comedy themes which prevented the Rylcombe Grammar stories from ever really clicking.

Though Charles Hamilton declared that he never wrote under the pen-name of Prosper Howard (with the exception of "School Under Canvas" which he alleged he expected to be published under the name of Martin Clifford), I can find one complete story, and one only, which I feel fairly certain he wrote in the Empire. This was "The Doctor's Double." There may have been another or so. My collection of the Empire is not complete.

It is possible, in passing, that we have further evidence here that, as I suggested a couple of months ago, Hamilton felt no antipathy to the substitute writers at this time. He certainly adopted Gordon Gay and one or two of the other Empire characters and used them quite affectionately in his Gem tales as time went on.

The Empire Library started in February 1910, and stories of Rylcombe Grammar appeared for 15 consecutive weeks. With No. 16, without any previous announcement of what was to happen, Jack Rhodes, by Alfred Barnard, featured instead of Rylcombe. Only a very few more Rylcombe tales were to appear. The usual star turn from now on was to be a sporting or detective story. The detective was Panther Grayle, whose adventures were related by Jack Lancaster.

With No. 27 the number of pages in the Empire Library was increased, without any increase in price. The first 26 issues had comprised 20 pages for one halfpenny - quite a bargain. Now for the same price readers were given 24 pages.

Though Charles Hamilton's connection with the Rylcombe Grammar stories was slight, if it existed at all, the editorial office still felt that it could not get on without him. In No. 19 his famous serial (under his own name) "The Rivals of St. Kit's" commenced. This was, of course, reprinted from Pluck, and, from the short

instalments given in the Empire, it seems almost certain that the tale was pruned.

But in the newly-enlarged Empire No. 27 commenced a story which he wrote specially for the Empire - "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays" - and the extra pages were used to give longish instalments of this famous yarn. In fact, it would seem probable that the enlargement came about for this purpose.

Just why did the regular appearance of the Rylcombe stories cease after the 15th issue. Mr. Down, perhaps, had not the time or the inclination or the inspiration to maintain a regular series. Charles Hamilton had more important things to do. There was at least one other writer, who had the horrid habit of penning long sections of dialogue without any indication of who was speaking.

It is probably unlikely that the cessation of the Grammar School tales was due to a shortage of writers. In those days there must have been plenty of authors who would put their pen to any work which offered itself.

Almost certainly the real reason was that the stories failed to click. Only one of them - "Gordon Gay on the Halls" - seemed to have a fairly serious theme. The series was just not good enough when there was so much competition from the Gem and the Magnet.

We have a fair proof of that in the fact that, so far as I can trace, only one of these stories was ever reprinted. And that one was "The Doctor's Double," which, in my belief, was the only one written by Charles Hamilton. It appeared as makeweight in one of the Double Numbers of the Blue Gem.

Of course, the Empire has a definite charm today. Most collectors like to have a few copies of it among their treasures. And its scarcity makes it all the more desirable.

The Empire, with its deep pink, slightly-glossy, cover, was always attractive in appearance. Its swan song was in May 1911, after a run of 64 issues.

In closing, just an observation or two on "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays." Though this was reprinted later as a serial in the Gem, the same heading being used as in the Empire, it is not a strikingly good tale. Though the character of Dolores Pelham is neatly etched, and Tom Merry & Co with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy play their parts in it, the pace tends to be pedestrian. It was, of course, also reprinted in the Boys' Friend 3d Library, but it gets little mention nowadays.

I always think it a little strange that this story, along with

some of the others which Hamilton wrote specially for the B.F.L. - "The Boy Without a Name" for instance - were never reprinted in the Schoolboys' Own Library. One can only assume that the editor of the B.F.L. overlooked them, which was rather a pity.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

RAY HOPKINS: Let's Be Controversial No. 110 contains the first (at least in my reading) intimation that Mr. Hamilton looked kindly upon the sub-writers at any time. I have always been under the impression that he was very much against the using of his own pen-name linked to that of work of inferior writers. The thought that he may have welcomed this unkindly-regarded (in the main) group of writers never entered my head, principally because I would have thought that Mr. Hamilton considered that he alone should use his own pen-name. However, it is a fact that this group of writers could very well have saved him from a certain amount of pressure and tension which he must have run into when he was perhaps beginning a new series of characters (The Rio Kid, Cedar Creek and Ken King stories spring to mind) who were not necessarily acting against the backdrop most familiar to him - that of the school precincts in country areas of England. I think too that the publication of five sub-stories in a row - a series - could have given him the realization that perhaps some day he would no longer be required to write the Greyfriars stories at all. As he was the creator this could have been a severe jolt to him; however, Mr. Hamilton was so versatile that he probably thought that he could make up for the loss of one series with the invention of one or two others - but to have Greyfriars taken away from him forever would not, I fancy, be a notion Mr. Hamilton could take kindly to. He probably would have not minded relinquishing the Rio Kid or Ken King but Greyfriars was a whole world of school and one which Mr. Hamilton had lived with too long to say farewell forever. The improved excellence of his stories following the long substitute series could well be taken as proof of "writing on the wall," and perhaps after all, it all happened for the best, and was instrumental in causing him to produce his later, greater work in the twenties and thirties.

PETER HANGER: It is not so much the words as the illustrations that, so far as I am concerned, date a Magnet. I can accept those of the twenties without any undue jarring, but before this the drawings

might almost be of creatures from outer space.

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THE POST-WAR D'ARCY

By O. W. Wadham

In 1949 Spring Books, printed by Dragon Press Ltd., Luton, Beds., England, issued three most attractive hard-covered Tom Merry books.

First was "Tom Merry of St. Jim's," second was "Talbot's Secret," and third was "The Secret of the Study."

In 1951 another Tom Merry story was added entitled, "The Scapegrace of St. Jim's." A Jimmy Silver yarn, "The Rivals of Rookwood" was also issued that year.

I recently secured the four Tom Merry stories, and have been very impressed by their uniformity and general appearance. All the stories run to 188 pages, the coloured covers are the best yet that I have seen of St. Jim's characters, and all of them give prominence to the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. In fact D'Arcy is the "comic relief" in all four stories, and makes one wonder if Charles Hamilton was not trying to make that odd character steal some of the thunder away from Billy Bunter, who had then reached the height of this fame, and was even soon to become a TV character. If such was the case those four hard covered volumes were made attractive enough to take the eye of many book buyers. As events transpired, however, those Spring volumes were the first and last time the St. Jim's boys were ever to appear in well-bound books exclusively devoted to them.

EDITORIAL COMMENT: The stories mentioned by Mr. Wadham were originally published by Mandeville Publications. Spring Books, from the firm of Dacres, came along a little later with some new titles. Mr. Wadham is our New Zealand correspondent, and it is possible that overseas publishing did not coincide with that in the U.K.

FOR SALE: Comic Life 1913, 52 copies unbound £8; Boys Realm Football Lib. 16 - 41, bound £2; Few Boys Realm; Boys Friend; Nelson Lee; Oddments. S.A.E. WANTED: Diamond Lib. Kettle & Co. stories.

W. H. CLOUGH,
 3, FONTHILL GROVE,
 SALE, CHESHIRE.

SWEET ARE THE USES OF ADVERTISEMENTBy Len Wormull

That it pays to advertise is certainly true in the realm of boys' books. Not long ago I ran an Ad. for pre-war boys' periodicals, in a quest for books I once read. The response took me and my pocket - by surprise.

Like all collectors and Micawber, I confidently expected something to turn up - in short, a "scoop." But from the outset I was haunted by a spectre called Boy's Own Paper, from which I shrank. It seemed every household in the land was anxious to lay it at my door. I felt rather sad for this unwanted pariah of the old papers, but adults don't read juvenile matter without sentimental attachments. In any venture of this sort one has to count the cost, and I had perforce to reject a wealth of material which would have delighted other collectors. Among other things was Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday, No. 740, July, 1898. Noting the recent interest shown in this character, I enquired if he was still available. But, alas, Ally Sloper had gone, and the mystery remains....

Then, one day, it happened. A card from an antique dealer in Portobello Rd. said: '500 Boys Friend Weekly - Boys Herald - Chums, all in series from 1903-27!' This must be it, I thought, jubilantly on my way. In a dingy back-room, there they were, standing high in all their majesty. They had been taken from an old house, recently cleared. The books were musty, the edges of some decaying with age, but otherwise wonderfully preserved. This awe-inspiring sight was to me what Tutankhamen's tomb was to Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon. The first hundred or so Boys' Heralds, with their white covers and double Spring numbers, was in itself a rare scoop. The 1914-15 red monthly Chums was another rarity, and something I hadn't seen before. Two long runs of green Boys' Friends completed the hat-trick, with several of the Rookwood numbers still containing free gift booklets. All in all, a bonanza of the first magnitude, even though the dealer was alert to present-day prices. I took them home, like a dog with two tails! My wife's comment? What a load of old rubbish!!

It was not without its humorous moments. One small boy came round carrying two heavy volumes of Boy's Own Paper - "Daddy said how much will you give him for these?" I shuddered involuntarily, but gave him a tip for his trouble. A woman offered a volume of Girl's Own Paper - "I could get £5 for it, but because of damaged spine will let it go at a bargain price of 25/-. If required, please let me

know by return so that you can have it in time for Christmas." I asked one correspondent if he would name a specific price, rather than "offers." Back came the reply: "Sorry, but I don't know the value of the books myself. But they must be worth a bit to collectors." At least he was honest! But for sheer impudence, this one 'took the biscuit.' Eight Magnets were offered in fair condition, including a 1920 Christmas number - "£9.10. the lot, plus postage - will not sell below this price." I didn't press the issue. There sure is gold in them thar books!

The experiment proved there's still plenty of the old papers around; that "offers" was the play-safe method mostly used; that some had a false sense of values; that the "golden" age of the Magnet is right now. Fortunately, too, there are the genuine bargains to be had - depending on what you collect. Yes, folks, for a spot of excitement, plus the occasional scoop, I recommend advertising. But mind you don't get landed with every copy of B.O.P.!

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross): Many thanks for another most enjoyable issue of ye good old CD. When I managed to get my Dad's hot hands off it, the first thing I said was, "Hello, WC Fields on the cover. Didn't know he was in the comics." Dad said, "That's Ally Sloper," and when I stopped talking and started using my head and read the words, I found out that it was. However, I still think there's a certain resemblance between Ally and Mr. Fields as he appeared in David Copperfield as Mr. Micawber. W.C. is thicker set than Ally, but the nose, hat and dress I immediately identified as Mr. Micawber. John Evans looks like a good addition to the ranks of the CD cover artists. Frank Shaw's article on Ally was most illuminating to one who has never seen a copy of this old paper.

The placement of the name Owen Nares with the film title "The Rolling Stones" caused a smile. The "gather no moss" meaning of the name has rather been lost since the cacaphonous pop group erupted. Owen Nares is only known to me by appearances as leading man for Jessie Matthews, Gracie Fields and (I think) Renate Muller (In "Marry Me" - not the celebrated "Sunshine Susie") in the thirties. He appeared to be a most dignified gentleman. I understand that he was a real "matinee idol" in his earlier days. However, I didn't realise that

he back-dated to 1917. Danny, as always, is full of interest.

LEN WORMULL (Romford): Would you please let me know if any article has been written in C.D. or the Annual concerning the Bullseye or Surprise, 1932-1933. My father once mentioned that he read Tom Harkaway's Schooldays. Mr. Lofts made reference to the name in an earlier C.D. Is anything known of this character? I have a feeling the stories may have appeared in the "Penny Dreadful."

(We have published articles on all the above subjects, and no doubt will publish more in the future. Don't think there was ever a paper officially named Penny Dreadful. I believe that Tom Harkaway featured in Boys' of England. - ED.)

H. MACHIN (Preston): Danny's Diary is still my favourite item on the programme. I am fortunate enough to have all the C.D's. from No. 1. They can be read over and over again.

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge): I was interested to see Roger Jenkins' reference to "Figgins' Fig-Pudding." I have never read that Gem, but possess Penny Popular No. 33 of May 1913 which carries the reprint under the title "Figgins' Blunder." This was a very good number of the Popular as it also contained "The Black Horseman," the reprint of the third of S. Clark Hook's incomparable 1/2d Marvel Jack, Sam & Pete stories.

BOB WHITER (Los Angeles): I thought the picture of Ally Sloper very good - a splendid effort on the part of the artist. I was surprised that no mention was made of C. H. Chapman in the article on Ally Sloper. Surely he illustrated Sloper among his many other character studies.

MAURICE KUTNER (Clapton): Re the Magnet cover illustration on the April cover of the C.D. - Although I have no Magnets of that period, and therefore cannot make any closer inspection of the illustration than what can be seen in your reproduction, may I make a tentative guess that the artist is R. Simmons, examples of whose work can be found in the Pluck of 1923.

Those seeking "collectors' pieces" should hang on tightly to the May No. of the C.D. which is numbered 225 instead of 245.

WANTED: 'Mickey Mouse Weekly' comics and early 'Dell' comics (Disney and Warner Bros. characters). Please specify what offered, and price.

G. JONES, 'MOORFIELDS,' BARKER LANE, GREASBY, WIRRAL, CHESHIRE.

NEWS FROM THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 25th April, 1967.

The acting secretary was absent so Tom Porter made a record of the proceedings which were passed on to him.

There was a good attendance of 12 members; the meeting was one of the best for some time. A new member Mr. Bert Fleming of Old Hill was cordially received. This is our third new member since the beginning of the year and is very encouraging. Also amongst those present was John Mann of Retford who had travelled 80 miles. There is enthusiasm if you like!

Mr. Fleming was invited to address the meeting and said he had read the Magnet years ago and greatly enjoyed it. He had been impressed by the TV series on Greyfriars and had also heard "Floreat Greyfriars." He had also been interested in The Dick Turpin Library, but could never work up much enthusiasm for the "Gem." He was very pleased to be among such kindred spirits as ourselves. He was of the opinion that Boys' Papers of today did not compare with those of yesteryear.

George Chatham entertained the meeting with a record programme. George is busily preparing a musical programme to entertain us. He said he always thought of "The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies" when Mrs. Mible was mentioned. His idea is to choose a record programme which reminds listeners of selected Greyfriars characters.

Tom Porter's popular game, "Take a Letter" was played, the titles of Schoolboys' Own Libraries being the solutions, and John Mann, Bill Morgan, Norman Gregory and George Chatham enjoyed the sweet smell of success. This was followed by the raffle won by Bill Morgan and his prize, Sexton Blake Library No. 35 was entitled "An Event Called Murder."

The usual feature Anniversary number and Collector's Item was presented by Tom Porter. The items were Magnet No. 1471 dated 25th April, 1936 and one of the celebrated Putnam Van Duck Series. The Collector's Item was "The Flaming Coach," Dick Turpin Library No. 35 published by George Newnes. As usual these evinced great interest.

The date of the next meeting was moved forward from May 30th to May 23rd to avoid clash with the Spring holiday. Members and friends should take careful note of our changed date. The next meeting will be the A.G.M.

JACK BELLFIELD Correspondent.

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 13th May, 1967.

When the Library was arranged before the meeting it was good to see the new books recently bought, and members soon availed themselves of them. When the Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, opened the meeting there were ten members present (Ron. Hodgson arriving later to make it eleven) which was the smallest number for some months. Wembley had claimed Jack Wood, and a family Silver Wedding Jack and Annie Allison.

After the Minutes of the A.G.M. had been read, Gerry Allison gave his Treasurer's Report, which showed the effect of our recent Library purchases, but seeing the books displayed all felt that it was very well spent. The correspondence was lively and interesting, and amongst it Gerry gave us the following extracts. From Derek Vaughan a tale of a near miss of "Magnets" at an auction sale brought tears to our eyes, (almost). A rhyming quiz came from Cliff Webb for our future fun, and Cyril Rowe has invited Sexton Blake to "speak" at our next meeting!

A discussion followed regarding the "Magnets" (and hobby papers generally) held by the British Museum, and other official libraries. Apparently some members had found gaps when calling to look up a favourite item.

Now we sat back to enjoy a light-hearted evening. First Gerry Allison had a puzzle of 25 letters in a square making the names of five Greyfriars boys in different forms. The first to pick them all out in correct order was Geoffrey, and Elsie Taylor quickly followed. Another of Gerry's word puzzles followed comprising six seven-letter words criss-crossing in star fashion to make a crossword to be filled in. Two of the words were supplied and Mollie Allison was the first to solve the remainder from the clues given.

Next, Tom Roach gave a good start to our Greyfriars serial with two chapters he wrote when Bunter first starred on television. The dialogue was of brisk and authentic flavour, and soon brought appreciative chuckles, and a round of applause was given. Next month Jack Allison takes the story a little further.

The refreshments were as welcome as ever and there was time for plenty of chat and exchange of news before the final item on the programme which was the 20 questions session. The team was Myra Allison, Elsie Taylor, Bill Williamson, and Harry Barlow. Several other members had brought two or three questions each to puzzle the team. Out of eleven the team failed on only two which were "Pluck"

and "The Shoulder" which was a very good effort, and made an amusing close to the Meeting.

Next Meeting is Saturday, 10th June, 1967.

M. L. ALLISON
Hon. Sec.

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L O N D O N

The inclement weather did not spoil the meeting at Eastwood House, Surbiton, as for some considerable period prior to the indoor activities, we were able to enjoy the beautiful amenities of the garden, complete with flowers in bloom, the song birds, a martin or two and the friendly squirrel. Also noticed in the garden was a replica of Mrs. Kebble's cat. Truly an ideal pastoral and sylvan setting.

Chairman Don Webster opened the meeting by welcoming one and all and thanking the worthy host, Eric Fayne for, once again, having such a large and happy gathering.

President John Wernham addressed the meeting and stated that he hoped to have another publication ready for Christmas.

Both sections of the library did excellent business and few books changed hands. Brian Doyle mentioned the issue of "Punch" which contained an article about Greyfriars and boys sent there by the State. "How would the school re-act?"

But, as is customary, it was the host who conducted the highlights of the gathering. Two teams, blue and red, were picked, Roger Jenkins being captain of the blues and Eric Lawrence skipper of the reds, with George Keppell as score-taker. Four games were indulged in. First one was called "Quickies." Red won this 9-8. Lummey was won by Blue. Take a Letter was a tie and Football was won by Blue, one goal to nil. Happy games - and the overall winners were the Blues, 80 points to 68. Eric very kindly presented prizes to the winning team, Margaret Sutton very apt in distributing the awards; one presented to herself.

The feed in the familiar room left nothing to be desired and Don Webster proposed the thanks to Eric and the ladies for their very untiring work in getting the fine display of comestibles ready for the company present. Among the latter was Bob Whiter and his friend, Jame Pobage, who had flown in that morning from Los Angeles, Miss Edith Hoo the six Becks from Lewes and all the other old faithfuls, Next meeting at B. J. Litvak's residence 58 Stanwell Road, Ashford, Middx. Kindly inform if attending - Sunday, June 18th. UNCLE BENJAMIN

HAPPY HOLIDAYSBy D. R. Clutterbuck

They called it 'The Greyfriars Holiday Annual,' with the emphasis on 'Holiday.' This was an inspired decision. Here, the title promised, is a book to complete the joy of escaping from school to the wide open spaces. To unwrap on Christmas morning, breathlessly parting the sharp clean pages. To open as the train moves off, bound for the seaside.

Certainly the best-remembered holidays of my own boyhood are associated with books. In particular I recall a golden moment at Margate in the early thirties. Having bought a twopenny magazine at a kiosk on the sands I was turning to go when the woman behind the counter said, "Don't you want to roll the dice?"

Then I noticed a little wooden chute surmounted by a waterwheel arrangement. The woman gave me three dice.

"Put them in the top and let them roll down. If you get eighteen you win a prize."

Obediently I rolled the dice. A moment later we were both gazing at three upturned sixes.

"You've done it, too!" she cried. "Now choose a prize."

She pointed to a row of books, mostly annuals, on a shelf behind her. But without giving me time to choose - or even to see what books they were - she took one down and pushed it into my hand. "How about that one?"

The stiff-covered book I carried dazedly away comprised a mixture of Schoolboys' Own and Boys' Friend Libraries - about eight in all - bound in shiny maroon linen. The cover picture related to one of the stories within - "Who Punched Prout?" Someone at Amalgamated Press had hit on a good way of using up remainder copies, but to me the book was a glittering prize indeed - better than an annual because of its unexpected contents.

I liked the story "Who Punched Prout?" best. Next best, a St. Frank's story in which a boy claiming occult powers was exposed as a charlatan - by either Singleton or Browne, I think. I could seldom resist a St. Frank's story: but at that school one was always uneasily aware of a sinister undercurrent - a permanent whiff of the Gothic. It was different at Greyfriars, where fresh air blew across the quad: there, one felt more secure. At Greyfriars, when they locked the school gate at night and bolted the doors, this was usually proof against intruders. If one's ears caught stealthy footsteps along the passages in the small hours, they almost certainly belonged only to

Price or the Bounder returning from the Cross Keys. At St. Frank's on the other hand, it always seemed to me that the first stroke of midnight was the signal for half the underworld of London to come swarming over the walls.

Some months back the Editor of this magazine referred to those well-loved stories without which, for some of us, 'Christmas would not be Christmas.' Thanks to Armada Books, I now possess such a story myself, albeit much abridged - the 1931 Mauleverer Towers series. I remember that the delighted 11-year old who devoured the original series particularly cherished two things about it: the loving care with which the illustrations were decorated with sprigs of holly; and Bunter's hilarious taxi tour which ended at last at Mauleverer Towers, recognisable through the powdery snow by 'the great gateway, with the light burning over it, flanked by great pillars surmounted by stone lions.'

A certain Easter holiday was memorable for a series in which Harry Wharton and Co took a villa on the Thames riverside. Their neighbours were a shady set composed of Vernon-Smith, Skinner, Snoop and Stott. On second thoughts, possibly the Bounder's companions were Ponsonby and Co. The details, unfortunately, have faded. But at any rate I remember that it was an explosive situation...which in due course exploded.

A year or so after winning the book at Margate I discovered science fiction - then a territory of wondrous paths and called 'scientification.' But apart from the classic romances of Wells, Conan Doyle, Verne and a few others, there was little to be found in the public library. To read further in the field one had to scan the newsagents' racks for rare copies of those brash American magazines, Astounding Stories, Amazing Stories and Wonder Stories. These reached our shores two or three months after the publication date and usually sold at threepence each.

One August, strolling down Thornton Heath's sunbaked High Street on the eve of our annual departure to Margate, I paused at my favourite newsagent, who used to put these magazines aside for me. (This admirable and reprehensible man also did a special line in exotic assorted cigarettes - Egyptian, Turkish, Russian etc - at two for a penny. Over the past year or two he had sold me some hundreds of these - often giving me a light for the first one of each purchase into the bargain.)

That day he had two fresh Astoundings of successive months! This had never happened before. I remember one of the cover illustrations well: it depicted a bright green organism (extraterrestrial, of course)

much like a mass of magnified frog-spawn. Irresistible! But by a great effort of will I refrained from opening the magazines until we reached our boarding-house at Margate next day.

But it was H. G. Wells above all who fired my 14-year old imagination - that little Cockney genius who through England's industrial murk saw shining civilizations and created people for them with names like Weena...Myres...Ostrog... And in 1936 the spirit of Wells was embodied in a film, 'Things to Come.'

On a summer Saturday evening of that year (on the first day of what was to be our last holiday at Margate) I rushed out after tea to roam the promenade and streets. Some stills displayed by a cinema riveted my attention. They were scenes from 'Things to Come,' the showing of which was to commence the following day. This was astonishing luck, and completely unexpected, for the film was still at the West End and had not yet been generally released.

It was an expensive cinema - all seats bookable and the cheapest seat one shilling. Fortunately having this sum (just!) I bought a ticket for the next evening's performance.

My father was horrified. A shilling! But how could he understand, having suffered the enormous deprivation of not having read Wells in his youth? It would have been useless to try to explain my extravagance. What matters is that on a summer evening in August, 1936 I saw that noble film, and wandered afterwards on stars through Margate's emptying streets.

How I remember Margate! The more so because that seaside town in Kent cannot be too far from that sunny happy realm, Frank Richards' Land. From Margate we sometimes went by open-top 'bus to Ramsgate, and there was something about Ramsgate that made me feel that Pegg ought to be just around the coastline...or if not, then certainly just beyond that...

WANTED: C.D. Annual 1954 and "Captain" year 1917. Your price paid.

L. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, LONDON, S.E.22.

SALE: 30 Eagles (1952), 30 Lions (1952) sixpence each; Fun and Fiction (1912) 3/6d; Boys Journal (1913) 3/6d.

O. W. WADHAM, 12 MILITARY ROAD, LOWER HUTT, NEW ZEALAND.

SALE: No. 1 Magnet Bound. Offers.

S. J. WARD, WOOD END, BLUNTISHAM, HUNTINGDON.

SPECIAL NOTICE

On the Who's Who Entry Form enclosed with this issue of Collectors' Digest, we have inadvertently omitted a space for your telephone number. If you are on the telephone and would like the number included with your particulars, print it clearly at the top of the form. We will do the rest.

FOR SALE: Further items from the Bill Gander Collection.

Magnets: Bound volumes, (a) 1403 - 1428; (b) 1429 - 1454; (c) 1455 - 1480; (d) 1481 - 1506. These four volumes at £12 per volume plus postage. (e) 1507 - 1532; (f) 1533 - 1558; (g) 1559 - 1584. These three volumes at £10 per volume plus postage.

Gems: Bound volume 1612 - 1635 £8 plus postage.

Populars: Volumes (a) 519 - 544; (b) 545 - 570; (c) 571 - 596; (d) 597 - 628. These four volumes at £8 per volume plus postage.

Champion: Bound volume containing Nos. 27 to 58. £7 plus postage. 48 excellent loose copies of Boys' Friend, after finish of Rookwood up till the final issue: £5.10.0. plus postage. Some loose copies of Pluck between 1902 and 1906 (some without covers, but all good copies) 3/- each plus postage.

Excellent volumes, beautifully bound.

Write, NOT with s.a.e., to Eric Fayne at Excelsior House, Grove Rd., Surbiton. You will only receive a reply if the items desired are still available.

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: **GEMS:** Some issues between 801 and 832; 953, 954, 959, 960, 967, 970, 974, 975, 981, 984, 985, 986, 987, 989, 990, 992, 993, 995. **POPULARS:** 401, 403, 407, 409, 413, 415, 421, 422, 427, 433, 441, 442, 466, 467, 474.

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