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# COLLECTORS DIGEST

AUGUST  
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# Collectors' Digest

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by

W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by

HERBERT LECKENBY

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## THE BEST OF MAGNET & GEM

On another page our reviewer writes enthusiastically of the new publication "The Best of Magnet & Gem." It is undoubtedly excellent value for money, and it will please all Hamiltonians and those who remember. Unfortunately, once again - and this is really quite astonishing - we are receiving widespread reports from readers who are finding great difficulty in obtaining the new book. On a great many occasions in recent years we have criticised the obviously inadequate system of distribution by which customers, anxious to purchase, cannot have their wants supplied by publishers who, one would have thought, would be anxious to sell.

A regular columnist of the "Daily Telegraph" referred to "The Best of Magnet & Gem" in his article, and "to refresh failing memories" reproduced a portrait of Billy Bunter. The columnist also referred to "the extraordinary fascination" of Charles Hamilton's "fustian school stories."

"Fustian" seems a somewhat inappropriate word to describe the Hamilton tales. According to the Oxford dictionary it means "inflated, turgid, or absurdly lofty language; bombastic, ranting; or, in the 16th century, jargon, gibberish."

Maybe the columnist himself needed more than a portrait of Billy

Bunter to refresh a failing memory.

IMPROBABLE!

The Telegraph columnist referred to "Greyfriars and other equally improbable schools."

Almost all school stories contain some aspects which are improbable - fiction is often larger than life - but it never seems to me that, broadly speaking, Greyfriars was all that improbable in its own day and age.

Nowadays, of course, it would be most improbable, for discipline was strict at Greyfriars. Nowadays discipline seems to be almost non-existent in our schools, and much of the trouble with young people stems from this. Greyfriars had tradition. A certain amount of tradition is good, but not too much. A school is for the children of today, not for the children of thirty or more years ago.

But discipline is different from tradition. A school can be a good one without tradition: it can never be a good one without discipline. In fact, I would go further and say that without discipline a child will never learn. For discipline is education.

I see there is a proposal that more popular types of works should be used as "set books" in future examinations in English Literature. Those of us who remember struggling with "Paradise Lost" and "The Canterbury Tales" on sultry afternoons will realise how much happier we should have been with something like "Billy Butler at Butlin's" or "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs." But examinations are a form of discipline as well as a test of brain power and expression. When they become easier - and experience tells us that they will - it will be a slide just a little further down the hill.

NEXT MONTH:

In our next issue we shall be giving you advance particulars of our very special 21st Birthday Number, due to be published in October. It is also our 250th issue.

This month we send you your order form for Collector's Digest Who's Who, to be published during the autumn. It will help us if you will kindly use the order form when notifying us of your requirements.

THE EDITOR

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WANTED: Magnets 1277 - 1284.

W. HOWARD BAKER, 82 GIRDWOOD RD., PUTNEY S.W. 18.

THE BOYS' FRIEND

Over the past few months we have had quite a bit to say about the Boys' Friend. Most of us are acquainted with this periodical when it featured Rookwood, but its pre-Rookwood years are not so well known nowadays.

It was, of course, an old paper by the time Rookwood made its bow. It was first published as a ½d paper as long ago as January 1895, and it saw more than 330 issues at this price. In June 1901, it was doubled in size, and became a penny paper.

I have just been browsing over the first volume, new series, from the late Bill Gander's collection (an item shortly to be offered for sale). It is a terrific volume, in more senses than one. Containing, as it does, a whole year of the Boys' Friend, it is terrific in size. My own volumes of the later Friend are bound in half-years, which makes them more convenient to handle. But it provides wonderful browsing ground and hours of entertainment for the addict.

It strikes me forcibly that in 1901 the Boys Friend was years ahead of its time. Other papers of this period seem crude, but one does not get this impression with the Friend.

Hamilton Edwards was the editor. I recall that he has been criticised adversely as such. His editorials are ponderous and pompous, and he clearly had a high opinion of himself. Nevertheless, I have no doubt at all that he was one of the really great editors of all time. There is an enormous "punch" in the Friend of his years, a sense of novelty and occasion, an unending variety, a striking cameraderie albeit a slightly smug one. In my view there is no question that he led the way in presentation and format, a lead which was followed by other periodicals so that by the outbreak of the first world war a standard had been attained which has rarely been equalled since.

He gave his editorials far too much space, which seems to have been one of his characteristics. Nevertheless, for all his pomposity and his inconsistency of outlook, those editorials contain much that is fascinating to us today.

Many times he informed boys that they must not smoke till they reach the age of 21, though he adds generously that after 18 "it is optional." Yet the Friend, which carried plenty of advertisements, regularly printed an advertisement for "Tab" cigarettes - 5 cigarettes, 5 holders, and a picture card for one penny. The tobacco firm was Ogden's.

"Tab" cigarettes seemed to have a sales promotion idea which would not disgrace the slick salesmanship and advertising of our mad "sixties." They issued albums to hold their cigarette cards, presumably one album holding one complete set of cards, probably 25 or 50 cards to a set. They announced that they would buy, at 10/- each, completed albums, and that they would then present these completed albums to hospitals and charitable institutions. Now 10/- was quite a substantial sum in 1901. One can imagine customers buying penny packets of "Tab" cigs frantically, in the hope of completing the albums, and starting second and third albums with duplicates. And with certain cards printed only in very small numbers, one can imagine a large sale of "Tab" but a not very large purchase of albums. Or am I looking at it with all the cynicism of the mad "sixties."?

Oddly enough, Edwards was a trifle less exacting over the matter of drink. "I do not tell my boys to abstain from drink. Only to be moderate."

But the hamminess of the editorials was a minor detail. The presentation of the stories, all lavishly illustrated, was superb, and even that was to show considerable improvement as time went on. There were serials and complete stories, covering every subject which could be expected to appeal to boy readers. The serials were astonishingly long. The main writers of 1901 - 1902 were Maxwell Scott, Sidney Drew, and Henry St. John. Scott's famous "Birds of Prey," much later reprinted in the Gem and elsewhere, started with No. 1 new series. Later, his "Silver Dwarf" held the stage.

Sidney Drew gave "Beyond the Eternal Ice," "Through Trackless Tibet," later to be reprinted, and one or two other tales. Henry St. John offered mainly school stories, including one of St. Basil's. Maxwell Scott seems to have created Nelson Lee, and "Birds of Prey" may well have been his most famous Lee story. Sidney Drew over-did the slapstick in his stories, though he was undoubtedly popular. Henry St. John, who also wrote as distinguished Mabel St. John, had a flair for the rather sentimental school story, and his popularity in those pre-Hamilton days seems to have been enormous. In passing, the output of Mabel St. John serials was so enormous that it seems likely that Henry had his own substitute writers.

The artists were mainly H. M. Lewis, G. M. Dodshon, Arthur Clarke, and "Val." None of these artists had quite developed his well-known characteristics at this time, and was none the worse for that. Dodshon, in particular, was drawing better in 1901 than when we knew him at Cliff House many years later.

Though by 1901, the papers were on the fringe of that era which presented Double Numbers for any reason which offered itself - and marvellous issues they were - there was only one Double Number in the volume I am considering at present. This was for Christmas 1901. A splendid issue, though the colours of the special cover were well below the quality which was to be reached after another decade had slipped by.

The volume does, however, contain one number which is unlike any other I have ever seen. This was a Special Blues Number to celebrate the Varsity Boatrace. The entire issue was printed in blue ink, instead of the normal black. It was most striking, and, so far as I am aware, unique.

Editor Hamilton Edwards never ceased in his condemnation of "blood and thunder" papers. All the same, there was plenty of blood and thunder in the "Boys' Friend" of that era, and the average boy must have loved it.

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WANTED: PENNY POPULARS Nos. 262 and 277. 15/- each offered for good copies.

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\*

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# DANNY'S DIARY

August 1917

On August Bank Holiday we went to the Gem Cinema to see Mary Pickford in "Romance of the Redwoods." It was a good picture. In the middle of the night, I woke up and looked out of my window. In the distance there is a street lamp, far across the fields. If that lamp is out, I know there is an air raid on. It is quite a long time since we had a night air-raid, and the light was lit all right. But there was a red glow in the sky, and I could see the flickering from the flames of a big fire somewhere.

I felt quite bad that it might be the cinema, where we had seen Mary, burning down. Actually, it was quite a long way farther off, but we did not know till the next morning that it had been the Dartford tram depot burning down. They had no night watchman, and every one of the 13 trams in the depot was destroyed. They thought some bank holiday reveller had left a lighted cigarette in a car.

It was a serious matter, for a lot of munition workers had ridden on those cars to work. However, the area was only without transport for one day. Then the Bexley Council took over the system, and, borrowing some covered-top cars from the L.C.C., ran a service from Woolwich to Horns Cross.

The Boys' Friend gets gooder, and better, and bestest. A new series of stories about Frank Richards' Schooldays has started, this month. They are by Martin Clifford and I like them awfully much. And Rookwood has been marvellous. The Boys' Friend couldn't be better.

First Rookwood tale was "Mornington's Foe," continuing the series. Lattrey, whose father is a detective, finds out that Mornington will lose all his money if the real heir to Mornington turns up.

Next week in "The Missing Heir," Mornington rescues his proddergy, 'Erbert, from drowning and sees on his shoulder the Mornington birthmark. So 'Erbert is the real owner of all Morny's money - and Morny is bitter.

Then, in the third week, came the start of "Frank Richards' Schooldays," which was the title of the first tale in the series. Frank Richards, at St. Kit's, is told by his father that they have lost their money, so Mr. Richards is going to take a post in India while Frank has to leave St. Kit's and go to live with his uncle in Canada. But before he leaves, Frank's eleven beats the Fifth Form at cricket.

The Rookwood story this week was "Brought to Heel" in which

Lattrey found out that 'Erbert is the missing heir to the Mornington estates. And Lattrey blackmails Morny.

Next week in "Game to the Last," Lattrey orders Morny to let down the cricket team against Woodend, and then lays bets on Woodend. But Morny is a hard nut to crack, and plays the game of his life so that Rookwood wins.

Frank Richards, in the story "Westward Ho," is met at Montreal by his cousin Bob Lawless. On their way across to the backwoods, they stay the night in a town named Cedar Creek. And on their way on to the ranch the next morning, they are attacked by redskins - but it's all a joke on the part of cousin Bob.

In the middle of August we all spent a week with my Gran and Auntie Gwen at their home in Laver Marney. It is, of course, very quiet, and I missed the picture palaces and the trams. But one evening we went into the village of Tollesbury where there was a travelling theatrical company giving a show for a week in a marquee. There was a different play each night. The one we saw, of all things, was "Weary Willie & Tired Tim," the idea taken from the Chips characters. The following night they played "East Lynne," and Mum and Auntie Gwen went to see it with Dad, who drove them in a trap. My Dad understands horses. But I stayed at home with Gran, while Doug went out courting.

Doug had given me the two latest Union Jacks. Now that the U.J. is reduced to 16 pages the print is very small and close together, and Gran said it would ruin my eyes, but I don't think it did. The first story "The Thumbnail Clue" was good. It was about a stolen invention. The other Union Jack contained "The Secret Hand" and it introduced Prince Menes and the Vengeance of Ra. They were new to me.

The Magnet has been about average this month. I didn't like the first story which was called "On the Wrong Track." Wibley and Skinner had put to sea in a small boat. They were rescued by a man named Smale who was really Douglas Marsh. Ferrers Locke came into this tale, but it wasn't very good.

"Hurree Singh's Secret" was fairish. Inky, in helping an old friend, Kuri Din, gets rather a bad reputation for a time, and at the finish Johnny Bull still holds Annie Mossity and so Inky and Johnny are at daggers drawn. In the next tale, "Parted Pals," it is the Bounder who thinks up a drastic plan to make them friends again.

Last of the month, "The Greyfriars Organiser" was amusing in a luke-warm way. Coker helps the war effort.

A new serial at one of our cinemas is "Boy Scouts - Be Prepared" but it's not exciting. We saw Alma Taylor, Henry Edwards, and

Stewart Rome in "The Cobweb" and Mum liked it a lot. It is a Hepworth film, and they are always good for grown-ups. Another time we saw Antonio Moreno in "Captain of the Grey Horse Troop" and this was really more in my line.

Last month in the Gem we had "His Brother's Keeper" and this month the series continued with "A Son's Sacrifice" and "Backing Up Manners." It is very sad in parts and highly dramatic, and I think it is the best Gem series for quite a while.

The last two tales in the Gem, however, were not very easy to read. In "D'Arcy's Deal," Gussy became the possessor of a racehorse, and in "Bonny Lad's Race" the horse was entered for an event. Not a bad plot, but hard going.

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THE DESERT SONG

(Editorial Comment)

Last month our "Let's Be Controversial" columnist made mention of the revival of the "Desert Song" at London's Palace Theatre. He quoted some of the remarks made by newspaper critics. Since the article appeared, he and I went together to see the show - and we both enjoyed it enormously. It is tuneful, splendidly acted, and clean as a new pin.

Bob Whiter, who was over here on holiday, has now returned to California, and writes as follows: "I went with a party to see 'Desert Song' at the Palace and we all thought it very good indeed. It was a treat to see John Hanson's excellent company follow the book so faithfully, quite different from the production we saw here at the music centre a few months ago of 'The Great Waltz.' The latter had been given the so-called modern treatment - in other words, Hollywoodised, - and it was a pain in the neck. I might be old-fashioned but I like that sort of thing left as it was originally written, whether it be a musical show or one of the stories we loved as kids."

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WANTED: Any odd issues of "MAGNET" in any of the following years - 1921 - 23 - 24 - 25 - 26 - 27 - 28 - 30 - 33. Also "GEM" Nos. 1659 - 60 - 61 - 62 - 63.

W. TITTENSOR, 18 PARKWAY, DAIRYFIELDS, TRENTHAM, NORTH STAFFS.

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

27, Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

In BLAKIANA for January 1965 there was an article by Mr. John East - whose grandfather not only produced the play SEXTON BLAKE in 1908 and played the title role but also owned the original PEDRO - entitled STORY OF THE DRAMATISATION OF "SEXTON BLAKE."

A very fine book written by Mr. East has recently been published (Allen & Unwin Ltd) entitled 'NEATH THE MASK,' and pages 273 to 276 are devoted to Sexton Blake. I am indebted to Mr. John East for his kind permission to reproduce these pages in BLAKIANA.

In 1893 emerged a fictional superman, whose tumultuous career captured the imagination of tens of thousands of avid readers. His name was Sexton Blake. The character was that of a fascinating, daring, elusive, and ingenious adventurer, who, in retrospect, appears to stand midway between a celibate SHERLOCK HOLMES and a fist-swinging JAMES BOND. The seemingly endless chronicle of Sexton Blake's assignments appeared in THE UNION JACK - ten chapters of cruelly small print for one penny - by a succession of hack writers, some of whom were well-known authors working under pseudonyms. As if this was not indignity enough, they had to compete with rival SEXTON stories appearing simultaneously in half-a-dozen other periodicals including THE PENNY PICTORIAL and DETECTIVE WEEKLY. An escapist world thus created saw Sexton Blake triumphing over such diabolical foes as the 'Criminals Confederation' or the 'Brotherhood of the Yellow Beetle,' not to mention a succession of megalomaniac assassins, from the 'Vulture' to the 'Phantom.' Sexton Blake restricted his love affairs to the occasional flame, the less virtuous of whom sought to compromise his reputation as a bachelor PAR EXCELLENCE

A great new industry had been created, but it was John East who was one of the first to realise the potential reward from a dramatisation of this legendary character. He interested Percy Nash in the project, and Nash negotiated the rights with the Harmsworth Press. Brian Daly commenced work on a freely-adapted version of one story called FIVE YEARS AFTER which originally appeared in 1906. He cut out the secondary villain, Haydon Creed,\* and substituted an unprincipled adventuress with the picturesque name of Miss Philadelphia Kate - not Daly's own invention. She came out of another SEXTON adventure.

This switch was fully approved by the original author, William Murray Graydon.

A company called Melodramatic Productions Syndicate Ltd, was floated on February 20, 1908, a month after a copyright performance at the King's Theatre, Hammersmith. Offices were opened at 34, Maiden Lane, behind the Adelphi Theatre, and five months later they moved to 16, Panton Street, Haymarket. Four days after the company was formed, a revised version of the play opened at the Crown Theatre, Peckham. It was still not right, and John East, by then free from his pantomime commitments at the same theatre, took charge of the production. He cast himself as a veritable Bill Sykes of a character called Simon Faggus, who would stoop to anything, including murder.

Here is a synopsis, which gives the ingredients for a successful play (circa 1908):

SEXTON BLAKE

----VICE----

PHILADELPHIA KATE (Miss East Robertson), a wicked, wicked woman.

She exerts her evil influence on:

RANDOLPH LOVELL (Charles East), a weak spineless, n'er-do-well.

They are contrasted with:

--VIRTUE--

In the persons of:

FARMER BLACKBURN (Brian Daly), pure and philanthropic.

MARJORIE LOVELL (Lily Hammersley), cousin to Randolph

- also as pure as the driven snow.

----MOTIVE----

RANDOLPH LOVELL will inherit upon the death of the Squire.

----ACTION----

RANDOLPH LOVELL hires SIMON FAGGUS (John M. East)

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. To murder the Squire | 2. To testify having seen the hero ROGER BLACKBURN (William Felton) run away from the scene of the crime. |
|-------------------------|---|

----CONCLUSIONS----

The audience were enthralled. The mystery unravelled - but when would the wonderful detective, SEXTON BLAKE, his inseparable companion, Tinker, and the bloodhound, PEDRO, arrive to see that the innocent did not suffer?

Why had Blackburn shouldered a crime that he wrongly thought had been committed by his father?... Who killed the old Squire?

The cool, methodical Sexton Blake duly came on the scene, within days foiled several attempts on his life, and solved a crime which had baffled 'Sergeant Widgeon of the Yard' for no less than five years.

A thousand one-pound shares were shortly to be invested in the Melodramatic Productions Syndicate. The success or failure of the entire venture rested on the casting of the title role. An actor had to be found who had sufficient experience to carry the play on the one hand, and fit the description 'tall, handsome, virile, calm and deliberate' on the other. Exhaustive auditions were held, and eventually John East's choice of Horace Hunter was accepted. Happily Hunter justified his faith, and the tour opened at the West London Theatre on March 30, 1908. The company played throughout Great Britain, week by week, until December of the same year. When the pantomime season concluded, the first of eight subsequent tours was sent out - for a period of four years. A sequel, HUSH MONEY, OR, THE DISAPPEARANCE OF SEXTON BLAKE, also had a considerable run. The Melodramatic Productions Syndicate was finally wound up in 1915.

Another tricky piece of casting for the original tour of SEXTON BLAKE was Pedro, the bloodhound. John East chanced to see an advertisement in EXCHANGE AND MART and after making a long journey out to Streatham saw the ideal specimen. At the end of a lengthy interview with the owner, an elderly lady, John East mentioned that he needed the animal for a play. She looked blank. 'A dramatic entertainment, madam.' But she cut him short. 'Good morning, Mr. East. I could never agree to my Ponto becoming an actor.'

Luckily John East remembered the wild beast dealer in Hoxton who had supplied six alligators for the Britannia Theatre. He went down straight away, and purchased a beautiful pedigree bloodhound at cost price - the reason being that it had recently been imported from Russia, unbeknown to the authorities. He took the beast back to his Chiswick home, where an enormous kennel awaited 'Pedro.' There was even a long chain fitted, which allowed a reasonable freedom of movement for the dog to wander about the garden.

Pedro had a single meal a day at precisely 11 o'clock. One morning two-year-old Grace East took pity on the beast. Without compunction she threw her father's breakfast, one pound of rump steak and a bottle of beer, straight out of the kitchen window. The raw steak satisfied Pedro's appetite, but the broken glass from the beer bottle lacerated his paws. But true 'pro' that he was, Pedro went through the performance that night without a hitch, the brown bandaging being unnoticeable from the front. Later on Pedro became such

a box-office attraction that he occupied second billing to Sexton Blake himself.

Pedro died during the First World War, much to the sorrow of all who knew him.

\* \* \* \* \*

\* It would appear that Murray Graydon later changed the name of his character Haydon Creed to LABAN Creed.

Josie Packman

\* \* \* \* \*

S.B.L. REVIEW

TREASON REMEMBERED

W. HOWARD BAKER

Looking at the front cover of this book it appears as though Paula Dane has come to a sudden and sticky end. But the corpse in the wickerwork hamper is not Paula, but an equally shapely blonde who was in life step-mother of Larry Bacardi, a pop-singer and entertainer, commanding a large following of screaming, frenzied adolescents.

Mention of Bacardi may stir a chord in the memories of some of the regular S.B.L. readers, for this story is a reprint of the novel which opened the 1960 programme, published under the title of 'Epitaph To Treason.' The only difference is that whereas the original version appeared under a nom-de-plume - Wm. A. Ballinger - the re-issue has the real name of the author - W. Howard Baker - appended to it.

This is a quiet story with physical violence pushed well into the background in order to give Blake plenty of scope for that detective skill which both the present writer and the late Anthony Parsons have in the past written such compelling who-dun-it narratives around. When Bacardi's young step-mother is delivered to him dead by poison in a clothes-hamper, Blake is quite willing to accept a handsome offer for his services in tracking down her murderer. He is hardly prepared for the offer of the same handsome fee to drop out of the case, and, of course, being the man he is, it only makes Blake more determined than ever to bring the killer to justice. Linked with the blackmailing of a famous newspaper-owner which in turn is linked with a treason trial during the Munich crisis of 1938, when an innocent man was driven to suicide when found guilty because of perjured evidence against him, Blake is at his best in clearing the dead man's name.

A story well worth the re-telling; but there is one point of strong criticism I must make about this book. The name Sexton Blake is completely missing from the front cover, and there is no indication

at all that it features the world's most famous detective. It may have been an oversight, but, in any event, it should be remedied.

Walter Webb

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G. H. TEED - LADIES MAN

From the "Sexton Blake Catalogue" it would appear that the first story by G. H. Teed appeared the week before the 1912 Xmas issue of the UNION JACK and was called "Dead Men's Shoes." His second story "Beyond Reach of the Law" was published eight weeks later and had the distinction of introducing Mlle Yvonne, who appears to be very highly rated by those fortunate enough to have read this series. She continued on intermittently until the latter part of 1925 when her last solo appearance was in "The Green Rose" (U.J. 1148).

The following week Teed introduced a new femme fatale called Nirvana who eventually superseded Yvonne. However, Nirvana and Yvonne teamed up for six consecutive issues late in 1926 (U.J. 1198 to 1203). In the Xmas Number "The Adventure of the Two Devils" (U.J. 1208) Nirvana finally bowed out too.

In 1927 Teed wrote a story called "Poisoned Blossoms" (U.J. 1305) which introduced June Severance, a very pleasing personality, who was featured in five stories.

Mlle Roxane Harfield made her appearance in "They Shall Repay" (U.J. 1378) in 1930, and continued until 1932, in which year her final story "Blood Brothers of Han-Hu" (U.J. 1497) had her co-starred with Wu Ling, who was first introduced by Teed back in 1913.

Other feminine characters evolved in the fertile mind of G. H. Teed were Marie Galante, Vali-Mata-Vali, and an interesting person called Muriel Marl, a platinum blonde Hollywood Star. You don't need the services of Sexton Blake to tell you that she was based on the late Jean Harlow.

If I have omitted your favourite, my abject apologies, but please remember this article was based on information gleaned from the "Sexton Blake Catalogue."

'Anon.'

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FOR SALE: Magnets - in mint condition: Nos: 743, 1446, 1456, 1477, 1479, 1480, 1482, 1681, 1682, 1683. In good condition: No. 184.

A. C. YOUNG, 6 KNARESBOROUGH PLACE, EARLS COURT, LONDON S.W.5.

# HAMILTONIANA . . . .

## REVIEW

THE BEST OF MAGNET AND GEM

Fleetway Publications  
3/6

CONGRATULATIONS, FLEETWAY PUBLICATIONS! And it gives us a glowing heart to be able to say it - at last.

For this book is really top-notch, and everything about it is going to delight boys and girls of any age from thirteen to ninety-three. The title is just what it should be, set out with the words Magnet and Gem printed in that much-beloved style. The golden cover, with the reproductions of Magnet and Gem covers, is more than striking - it is superb. And most satisfying of all, perhaps, is the caption on the cover. Here it is:

STORIES AND PICTURES FROM THE TWO TOP BOYS' MAGAZINES  
OF THE CENTURY FEATURING BILLY BUNTER AND TOM MERRY.

Note that! The two top magazines of the century! They might have damned with faint praise had they said "the top magazines of thirty years ago" or even "the top magazines of yesterday." But no. There it is for Mr. Turner and everybody else to read - "the two top magazines of the century." Magazines, mind you! Not comics!

Bless you, Fleetway.

The main attractions are two Greyfriars stories from the Magnet and one St. Jim's story from the Gem. Each story is introduced by a full-page "blow-up" of the cover of the periodical which contained it. And the stories are accompanied by all the illustrations used when the tales originally appeared. Best of all, the stories are uncut. They are reprinted in full, just as they were written - published as they should be published.

By a coincidence, the reproduced cover to the story "Lame Bunter" is one of those "oddy" covers we mentioned in a recent editorial, and it was actually drawn by R. Simmons. The other pictures are by those two magnificent artists, Messrs. Chapman and Macdonald.

"Lame Bunter," originally published in 1923, is a whimsically amusing little story, showing Frank Richards at his brightest and best. Nothing better could have been selected for a book of this type.

The second Magnet story "The Barring of Bolsover" is a substitute story. It is a pity that this happened, and clearly it should not have happened. There is really no excuse for it. In addition,

Bolsover was part of the Magnet's dead wood which was chopped away in the later years of the paper. Having said that, we will add that this one is far from being a bad substitute story, and readers will undoubtedly take it in their stride without carping too much. It is the one fly in the ointment. (Period 1924).

The Gem tale is "Grundy Going Strong" from 1924. Grundy was not Martin Clifford's (Yes, they call him "Martin Clifford" which is just as it should be) most popular character or happiest creation. But this is one of the best Grundy tales, with Martin at the top of his form, and St. Jim's fans will love it.

There are splendid heart-warming reproductions of pages from the Greyfriars Herald and the St. Jim's News, and some tip-top pictures and verse from the Holiday Annual. There is a short St. Jim's story (another substitute effort, this one, but being short it doesn't really matter) from an early Holiday Annual.

One picture, used in conjunction with a "The End" caption, actually comes originally from the Boys' Friend where it was used as the heading to a serial "The Sports of St. Clive's." I doubt whether the compiler actually knew this. It was probably reproduced in a Holiday Annual, and he "lifted" it from there.

All in all, it's a grand job. Without much question it is the finest publication of its type since the war, not the least of its many attractions being the absence of tampering with the stories. It deserves the utmost support. If it doesn't get it - then you and I should be booted from Friardale to Courtfield.

We end as we started. Congratulations and thanks, Fleetway Publications. You've rung the bell this time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Do You Remember?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 65 - Magnet 396 - "Backing up Bunter"

The first World War was a curiously dead period in the Magnet. All the characters were there, acting in the same way as usual, but there seems to be an absence of vitality, a strange lacking in inventive genius. The war must have dampened the spirits of everyone, and many of the stories gave the impression of routine performances - the show must go on, but the audience had to make allowances for the trying conditions.

Magnet 396 had as its theme Bunter's fall from fortune. His father had been doing well on the Stock Exchange for a while, but suddenly the horn of plenty ran dry (apparently Mr. Bunter was never

content to be merely a stockbroker - he must have been playing the market himself) and Bunter was left with a very curtailed circle of friends but a greatly enlarged circle of debts. So far the situation was promising enough.

What went wrong with the story was the way in which it loosely joined a series of almost completely disconnected episodes - Bunter losing his new-found friends in the Remove, the bridge game at Highcliffe, and the benefit concert at Greyfriars. Each was, in itself, quite convincing: it was only when they were viewed as a whole that they became unsatisfactory. Furthermore, about this time Bunter's character was becoming most unpleasant. The vague futility that marked him out in early days had been succeeded by a rather cunning rascality, and his character was completely unattractive.

Magnet 396 has, however, an importance of its own in the history of the paper, since it was the last red Magnet. The readers were prepared for the change in appearance by a lengthy explanation. "The golden-coloured cover which has for years been a distinctive feature of the Magnet library will be temporarily discarded, and a white cover, printed in bronze-blue ink, will take its place. The reason for this somewhat drastic change is contained in the fact that there is a shortage of aniline dye in this country at the present time, owing to the Great War." The Gem managed to retain its distinctive cover for several months more. It must have seemed at the time like the beginning of the end, but for the Magnet, at least, its great days were still to come, and both papers had three-quarters of their life ahead of them.

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### LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

#### No. 114. FRANK RICHARDS' SCHOOLDAYS

Jubilees of one sort and another have been much in our notice of late. Last month it was exactly fifty years since Nipper went to St. Frank's. Now we have reached the Cedar Creek Golden Jubilee.

In post-war years Charles Hamilton often stated that he thought of himself more as Frank Richards than as Charles Hamilton. This was understandable, for it was Greyfriars and Billy Bunter which brought him great fame in the post-war years. Frank Richards and Billy Bunter were synonymous.

I think it doubtful whether he felt the same way in 1917. I think it unlikely that, had he felt himself as Frank Richards then, he would have set about creating Frank's mythical schooldays and

setting them in North America, a country which he had never visited and was never destined to visit. In fact, when genuine fame came to him belatedly, some professional writers, with the casual inaccuracy which is typical of some of those gentlemen, informed their readers that Charles Hamilton had been educated in Canada.

Probably, in 1917, Charles Hamilton thought of himself as Charles Hamilton. If he had any tendency to think of himself more under one of his pen-names, it seems reasonable to assume that it would have been as Martin Clifford, for it was really as Martin that he consolidated his success as a writer of school stories. Maybe that was why Martin was given the job of narrating Frank's adventures at school in Canada.

I think that we can find a pointer to this in the fact that Cedar Creek was the only one of his main sagas to which he did not add with the passing of the years. In the post-war years he wrote stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, Ken King, the Rio Kid, and even of the School for Slackers and Cliff House. But after the Cedar Creek series ended in mid-1921, he never wrote another story about his famous Canadian characters to add to the myth that he had been educated in Canada.

Yet, in its time, he never wrote anything which can have been more popular or more successful than "Frank Richards' Schooldays."

In August 1917, when Cedar Creek made its bow, Charles Hamilton was in tremendous form, and, with the introduction of Cedar Creek, the Boys' Friend became, for a long time, the most attractive of all the Hamilton papers.

Sparkling form indeed! The Mornington-'Erbert series - a long one with such remarkable twists and turns in the development of its plot that it is doubtful whether he ever wrote anything better of its type, was running in the Friend when Cedar Creek started. In book form it would make one of the finest school stories ever written. In the Gem, the "His Brother's Keeper" series was featuring, and this, in my view, was the most outstanding series in the Gem during the first world war. For the Magnet, the "Judge Jeffreys" series was clicking out from his typewriter, and this was the series which was to start the Magnet off down a brilliant vista of years which was to make the Magnet eventually the most famous and most loved boys' paper in the world.

A few months ago, I ventured the opinion that a long series by Pentelow in the Magnet gave this tremendous impetus to Hamilton's writing. His "marking-time" period was over. He would show them!

The atmosphere of the Cedar Creek series lacked the authenticity of the Rio Kid stories. Nevertheless, in an artificial, somewhat contrived way, the Cedar Creek tales had an atmosphere all their own, which charmed and delighted the thousands of boys who read them. The backgrounds and the dialogue of the Rio Kid stories were real; the backgrounds and the dialogue of the Cedar Creek stories were the author's own invention, but they were just as eminently satisfying to the average reader. Often, Hamilton used his English school plots and gave them his idea of a Canadian background. Some of this was incongruous, if one had ever bothered about it. For instance, the stories about the Cedar Creek amateur dramatic society, with the boys presenting Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" did not really ring true, while Mr. Peckover's private school was a most unlikely institution for the rough, scattered population of the Thompson Valley.

The series where Gunten altered a newspaper advertisement, making it appear that Miss Meadows was seeking a husband, never struck a false note if accepted at its face value, though such a plot was obviously more suited to an English school background.

Characterisation, though completely adequate, was not outstanding, but outstanding characterisation was not needed to make a roaring success of a series of this type.

Probably the best single character was Vere Beauclerc, though, of necessity, he played second fiddle to his more ordinary friends. Miss Meadows is memorable, though this is partly due to the novelty of the Head being a woman. Without being a great character, she won all hearts among readers, and that, after all, is the real aim for any writer. Chunky Todgers was just from the Fat Boys' pool. Gunten, especially in the earlier tales, was a good deal above the average run of black sheep, even though this was partly due to his Swiss origin. Yen Chin was amusing and believable - a good deal more believable, in fact, than Wun Lung of Greyfriars. The pidgin English which was out of keeping in a boy at an English public school was just the ticket for the son of the Thompson laundry man.

My own view is that the most successful of the various series within the Cedar Creek saga were those not set at the school at all. The chums had some splendid holiday adventures which made sparkling entertainment for any reader.

The saga falls fairly naturally into two parts. The first part ended with Gunten's expulsion from Cedar Creek. The second part saw the opening of "Hillcrest," Mr. Peckover's school, to which Gunten was sent, and a good many stories in this second part told of rivalry between the two schools, very reminiscent indeed of the rivalry

between St. Jim's and Rylcombe Grammar School. With the coming of Hillcrest, the stories became just a little less credible, though they were no less well told. In this, Cedar Creek differs from the Rio Kid series in which the actual writing of the yarns deteriorated after the second year.

As is the case with Nelson Lee and Nipper transferring their activities to St. Frank's, the question arises whether Frank Richards' Schooldays resulted from an editorial inspiration or whether it was the author himself who had the idea. It seems most probable that Hamilton himself was responsible, and, though his gifted imagination helped him enormously with the background, he must have done considerable reading before embarking on a series set in the backwoods of Canada. With the threat of substitute writers in the shadows of the Gem and Magnet, it seems a little strange that he should have embarked upon yet another series which would inevitably leave him less time in which to concentrate on St. Jim's and Greyfriars.

It is a problem to which there can never be a solution at this late stage. On the face of it, it looks as though he did not bother unduly about what happened to the Gem or the Magnet. It is a phenomenon which we have met before when Rookwood was introduced, and it is one which we are to meet again in the decade which follows the birth of Cedar Creek.

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#### CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

W. O. G. LOFTS: Although it is true that the majority of post-war boys' papers are simply trash compared with the excellent periodicals published in our youth, it must be mentioned that Odham's "Boys' World" and Fleetway's "Ranger" were genuine attempts to publish a high-class paper for boys. You hit the nail on the head when you say that mass circulations are publishers' main interest today. The two papers I have mentioned closed because the hard core of fine youngsters was not sufficient to make them pay well.

It is also true that the majority of post-war reprints of old stories left a lot to be desired, due to sheer bad pruning. Personally, I think that stories should be reprinted as Charles Hamilton (or substitutes) wrote them, or not at all. The souvenir issue of Magnet No. 1 for instance, was wonderful value for money. Recently, I sent "A Strange Secret" (Hamilton Museum) to a former sub-editor for him to read. I was astonished to receive back four sheets of criticism on how the story had been mutilated in a way which did Hamilton no credit. Atmosphere was spoiled, yet the repetitious biffing and bashing was

left in. Also it was unjustified to cut out most references to the war yet leave other similar references in. I must make it clear that I am not expressing my own opinion as I was never a Gem reader. But it does seem that we have a case of the pot calling the kettle black. Only one man could ever trim or prune a Hamilton story, and that was the grand author himself.

E. J. DAVEY: I was very interested indeed by your remarks in "Let's be Controversial," No. 113. "SURVIVAL! REVIVAL!"

I particularly liked your final paragraph beginning "In Britain today..."

This I feel is quite a masterly summary of the present day "standards" of depravity and cynicism.

But I would suggest, hopefully, that there is much more than a hard core of fine youngsters. In fact I would say a very sizeable number; but as you say so rightly, they simply do not get the chance of getting good papers.

I feel that especially the more poorly educated people are fobbed off with a lot of sensational rubbish, far-fetched and improbable, both in popular reading matter and the important new element of television.

Whilst this, including for example "Batman" and "The Avengers," is I feel in direct descent from the Penny Dreadful etc., of yesteryear, and may be pretty harmless, this modern development has a new element of real vulgarity, depravity, and cynicism.

And yet the new medium of television in particular, could have such marvellous possibilities for civilising and educating folks as well as being amusing and entertaining.

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### THOSE MYSTERIOUS ARTISTS

By W. O. G. Lofts

How right Maurice Kutner is! R. Simmons was most certainly the artist who drew those MAGNET covers in 1923. Several artist friends of mine, well up in knowledge of old A.P. art work, suggested that R. Simmons looked the most likely illustrator, but I wanted more concrete information before putting this in print. This has now materialised from an official source, and R. Simmons was named as the cover illustrator.

Apart from his MAGNET work, R. Simmons drew in CHAMPION (where his work is credited alongside the author), PENNY POPULAR, and many other papers of that period. He is not to be confused with the writer

R. Simmonds who wrote in many boys weeklies in the 1910 era. The only logical explanation I can give, as to why Mr. Simmonds should have been given the task of illustrating the front covers, is that Mr. C. H. Chapman was overworked and needed help. Although technically a better artist than Mr. Chapman, somehow I don't think that R. Simmonds was happy at drawing the Greyfriars boys. The characters seemed 'wooden' in appearance, and lacked the life and sparkle that C. H. Chapman, and later the wonderful Leonard Shields, put into Charles Hamilton's creations. On the other hand, and in fairness to R. Simmonds, his work in other fields shows him a talented artist.

The mysterious artist who drew the last few Rookwood illustrations in the green BOYS' FRIEND was a V. S. Daniel. I don't know anything about the artist at the time of writing, or really why he should take over from George William Wakefield. Wakefield who was also a boxer may have injured his hands, and been unable to draw his angelic boys for a couple of weeks! But seriously, our editor's view is the most likely. Drastic changes were taking place in all departments of the BOYS' FRIEND in that period, and a change of artist in the circumstances, was not to be wondered at.

In contacting Mr. R. Simmonds, who lives at Ewell in Surrey not far from the home of the C.D. he informs me 'that there is not much to tell about him illustrating the MAGNET covers for a period! The explanation simply was that Mr. C. H. Chapman had so much work that someone had to help him out until things became something like normal again. Mr. Simmonds agreed with my remarks that he did not feel at ease at illustrating the boys at Greyfriars, the reason being that his true vocation was of drawing for adventure stories.

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Bound volumes, 1886, 1887, 1890, 1891, 1893, 1894, 1903, 1904, 1905,  
1922, 1923, several with Christmas Numbers.

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# NELSON LEE COLUMN

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

CONFESSIONS OF A CONVERT

By R. ACRAMAN

Gentlemen,

May I request the pleasure of your attention for a few minutes, nay hours, while I dwell on a matter of considerable interest to us all, - that is the fabulous and fantastic success of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. Gentlemen, - these are no idle words I speak but are sincere and straight from the heart. You do not at this stage believe or credit me in my remarks? then tarry with me awhile while I, one who has seen the light after long and wearisome travels over this great and magnificent planet of ours from Australia to South America, India to South Africa, Switzerland to North Africa, Ceylon to Sicily, Italy to Spain, dwell on something that had I known about before commencing these travels would have saved me much time and expense; that is what a real delight it is to settle down with the good old NELSON LEE. As a pure and deliciously exciting contrast to what was previously 95% sacred Hamiltonian ground, in the incredibly ridiculous microscopic space of what we all like to refer to as our spare time, the success of the Nelson Lee in winning myself over leaves nothing to be desired.

Please forgive me Gentlemen if in the well intentioned enthusiasm with which I write I remark that those of you who have not read the NELSON LEE from cover to cover as I have, the serials as I have and in the order that I have, then - I deeply regret to say that it is my opinion that you haven't lived, - no forgive me - I should not say that, but you have missed the finest exciting exquisite contrast to Hamiltonia that could have ever been devised. It is a fiery contrast of enthralling story containing excitement and contrast in imaginative controlled doses, (and what is imagination if you do not use it? Let's face it, dull stuffy sameness) sprinkled throughout a tantalisingly schoolboy world of school stories that far too often bring us back to another term commencing at St. Frank's, with the musty classrooms, japes, half days and detentions on gloriously sunny days that we know and love so well with Frank. Edwy, as I, a convert, know, can give us all of the above and lacks none of the magic of Frank, YES I repeat lacks none of the magic of Frank, and indeed even adds to it for although Frank seldom wandered far into fantasy ( - remember Frank's story in the H.A. as an example of the boy who sold his soul to play

cricket) Edwy's occasional fantastic stories showed us what really could be done in the pleasurable daydreaming mind and HOW WELL HE DID IT. You will all bear with me when I say that what a dull old place this world would be if we were to deny ourselves imagination in our leisure moments, for that is what our stories are, an exercise in our imagination - so why stop short after taking the first step, that was an introduction to Hamiltonia? Why not say, "Well that was a darned nice story but I am not limiting my views to just one author of this type of story, I want a contrast to really bring out the full richness of both. I do not want to go through life with just one single view, I WANT TWO in order to give me a more balanced view and contrast of the leisure I love. Say this first and THEN DO IT! and believe me you will not regret it. For the sheer ecstasy of reading pleasure give me the balanced doses that go together. Do not make it the Scotch without the soda, white without the black, old without the young, up without the down. Even in the decoration world red without the grey, modernity without the contrast of antiquity would be dull, drab and unexciting. Indeed, Gentlemen I would go further. Do not live in the twilight world of only experiencing one half of our pleasures, but get out and demand the very best that life can give you. Get the pleasure of after enjoying your lunch (Frank or Edwy) to settling down to your wine (Edwy or Frank) as the case may be. How many times have you been so contented with say a regular booking for say Margate or the Hebrides each year and thinking you were perfectly satisfied until suddenly you went to say Switzerland, perfectly satisfied with the home you moved into and think nothing could be nicer until you moved ten years later into an even nicer home and then you wondered whatever you could see to love in the old house? have been perfectly satisfied with say the new Vauxhall you have just bought and think that nothing could be nicer until two years later you buy a Rolls Royce. In each case you originally thought your first choice (Hamiltonia) could not be bettered and then ZINGO - WHAM! you discover St. Frank's. You try something new for the first time, and for the first time your first love is seen in its true perspective. THREE D - You have arrived. You can now smile tolerantly at your fellow club members living dully in the grim dull grey of sameness, while feeling the real rich full blooded experience of maturity, knowing that you can speak equally and keenly on both works, while the stunted outlook of others not so endowed allow them to speak so, on only one.

In closing Gentlemen, let me say that from a 95% previous experience of Hamiltonia (my name as a schoolboy being even published in the GEM, and owning a complete set of Holiday Annuals, and some 190

Magnets, 90 Gems, 50 Populars etc.,) regret my wasted early years and now my rating is 50% each way for both Edwy and Frank. In fact my NELSON LEES now total to over 200 being more than my Magnets or Gems and on average have cost the same. My regard for both Frank and Edwy is such that one without the other is a wine without a palate, a drink without a thirst, a winter without a summer all nice but dull. Many years ago when I first joined the club my borrowings were all primarily Hamiltonia but in the last few months my borrowings have been NELSON LEES, in order to help me to catch up on some of the great saga's of St. Frank's. I have sat up reading them until one and two o'clock in the morning to reach and pass the all important climax and nothing would have wrenched the NELSON LEE from my hand until I had followed climax after climax and seen the final outcome of the series. When at the next meeting I borrow Hamiltonia it will be like I have been away on a long exciting holiday; I will be brain-washed and fresh to greet Greyfriars or St. Jim's on another novel and refreshing contrast as I had turned from them to St. Frank's. My mind has been continually active darting from one environment to the other comparing the merits of each and savouring the characterisation of each, of our favourites. There will never be another "Handy." Grundy or Coker are not the same character, or Lovell of Rookwood. Each is positively different. In fact, Grundy or Lovell are very poor also rans. D'Arcy or Archie Glenthorne, Harry Wharton or Nipper, Pitt or Tom Merry, Bernard Forrest or Vernon Smith, Fatty Little never quite so present as Bunter, Nelson Lee himself as against Mr. Railton or Quelch, and where is the counterpart of Ezra Quirk. All of these characters like Willy Handforth and Wally D'Arcy while alike in some respects will never be the same and yet while different are intriguingly fascinating. Gentlemen if you have not read Nelson Lees, as I have read them "You have not - no sorry, then you have an enthralling experience to come after the next club meeting. Gentlemen I give you Bob Blythe, our Nelson Lee librarian, but only after he has first given me this month's requirements. One final word. Remember, to bring out the full richness of our hobby you need a contrast and E. S. Brooks or Frank Richards both provide that vital link. USE THEM.

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A LETTER TO THE EDITOR ----

From BOB BLYTHE

That I found the July Digest as readable as ever goes without saying. This is true of each issue, but if I were to write you every month on these lines it would get monotonous - so I don't write and

you have to take the will for the deed.

However, sometimes something crops up, as in the July issue, which makes me feel I must write something or bust!

When I think that on the 50th anniversary of the creation of St. Frank's the best that the Lee fraternity can do is - apart from my own efforts - absolutely nothing!

I was shocked, nay, disgusted (as a scholastic gentleman once remarked) at the lack of interest. Do you realise that without my contribution there wouldn't have been a single thing in the issue (apart from your editorial comments) to mark this auspicious occasion? I just can't understand it.

The easy answer, of course, is that not many people are interested, but this is just not true. The letters I get from the library borrowers prove that.

I once wrote an article based on the Who's Who in which I was able to prove that, apart from the Magnet, more people were interested in the Lee than in any other paper.

Why is it, do you think? Why are they less articulate than the Hamiltonians, to the point of being dumb? I wish I knew the answer.

Having got that off my chest, here's one or two comments on some of the things mentioned in the Digest.

I disagree with you when you say that the Lee was more popular when written in the first person. In my opinion the Lee was at the height of its popularity during the period 1925-28. The pretence of Nipper having written the stories was given up in 1924. I must confess, though, that seven years of stories in the first person is not a bad record, and they must have been popular. Personally, I found that Nipper irritated me, inasmuch as the stories made him appear omniscient.

Danny, in his diary, says that Tinker was also writing in the first person, and the story was entitled "Twixt Sunset and Dawn." It may interest you (and Danny) to know that the story was by Brooks. I hope that Danny was successful in borrowing it from his brother, for I have never read the story or seen a copy. It was the third story that Brooks had written for the Union Jack as far as our knowledge goes at the moment.

. . .

----- AND THE EDITOR'S REPLY

It is indeed pleasant to find somebody so keen as Bob Blythe, but he does the Lee fraternity a slight injustice. At the moment there is no shortage of Lee material in the editorial files, and if - perish

the thought - Mr. Blythe's own article had not been forthcoming, the Lee cupboard would not have been bare. Perhaps he means that nobody else wrote concerning the jubilee, and that would seem to be right. But it is still possible that very few people knew beforehand that the Jubilee was imminent, in the same way that some may not have realised that the Cedar Creek jubilee falls this month.

We thought, in fact, that we gave the auspicious occasion quite good acknowledgment in our July issue. All our reproductions were of Lee items. Our front cover showed the first story which E. S. Brooks wrote for the Lee. Quite a large part dealt with the Lee in our Editorial, which was given a famous Lee heading. Danny made reference to the occasion in his 50-year old diary. And Mr. Blythe's own article was quite a long one, though it may have seemed shorter from the fact that, at Bob's own request, we printed his lengthy extracts in small type.

Especially when space is tight, as it was last month, it would be imprudent to use up too much of our Lee material with no recognition of the possibility that famine may still come to the Lee files in the future as it has done in the past.

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## *News of the Clubs*

MIDLAND

### Meeting held June 27th, 1967

Annual holidays affected the attendance, only nine members being present.

A letter from Molly Allison was read concerning our proposed meeting with our Northern friends at Chesterfield on a date to be fixed. She suggested an Autumn meeting as we had left it late and the holiday season was upon us. After a discussion in which members were sounded on their being able to get to Chesterfield on certain dates it was decided to offer the 24th Sept., and Oct. 15th as possible dates and await an answer from our Northern friends.

Two very interesting items were brought along by Tom Porter - Anniversary Number Nelson Lee Library (O.S.) No. 525 "The Spectre of the Sea," dated the 27th June, 1925, and No. 7 of "The Vanguard," was the collector's item. This was a Thomson publication and a companion paper to The Rover, Hotspur and Adventure etc.

Ivan Webster, chairman, got the proceedings going with a quiz from

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one of our youthful members, Ian Parish. This was along the 20 questions lines, but owing to shortage of time only 5 questions were allowed. All the solutions were the names of Hamilton characters. This was amusing as almost all members solved their question easily.

Ray Bennett's short talk was based on the idea of each member bringing along a different Old Boy's publication to discuss at each meeting. The more obscure and unfamiliar the better he maintained. He himself showed us a copy of Top Spot, a juvenile publication which appeared about a dozen times about 4 years ago. It was certainly quite unfamiliar to us. There must have been many books that appeared for a brief space of time and then stopped being published and were forgotten.

A discussion led by Norman Gregory posed the question "Did members, in the days when they read their 2d papers prefer long stories to short ones?" The general opinion seemed in favour of short stories, but our members differed in their preferences, when it came to different books.

Tom Porter read from Magnet 1588 giving an account of Bunter trying in his own inimitable way to be pleasant and engaging to the Famous Five, and Norman Gregory gave a short talk on Woodville, famous war artist of "The Illustrated London News."

We meet again on 25th July when we hope to have visitors to our meeting well known to the O.B.B.C. world.

J. F. Bellfield  
Correspondent.

\* \* \* \* \*

LONDON

We were again favoured by fine weather for our visit to Wokingham (Berkshire) as guests of Eric Lawrence and his family. Unfortunately our Hon. Secretary - Breezy Ben - was on holiday, so Don Webster was called on again to act in his stead.

The Chairman in welcoming those present said how pleased he was to see Mr. C. H. Chapman (that youthful veteran) with us again. After the preliminaries had been dispensed with, such as very satisfactory reports from our Librarian and our Treasurer, Roger Jenkins set us a short quiz on Magnet Titles. The 5 winners were Eric Lawrence (2) Nicholas Bennett (1) Don (1) and Marjorie Norris (1). We then discussed the proposed visit to Maidstone (including the Museum) and 15 members signified their intention to join the coach party. The date has been fixed for Sunday, 3rd September, and other

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members interested should contact Secretary Ben as soon as possible. The all-in charge is about 35/-. The question of a Dinner later in the year at "The Sherlock Holmes" was left in abeyance. Eric Lawrence next read us most lucidly an extract from a Magnet entitled "The Boy Who Wouldn't be Caned!" This was very well received.

Tea was then served - and what a lavish Lawrence spread it was - partaken either indoors or outdoors as one preferred.

We recommenced our meeting with Len Packman providing 2 excellent records. The first one "Murder on The Portsmouth Road" (with Arthur Wontner in the main part) was referred to in a recent C.D. whilst Tod Slaughter as "Sweeny Todd" was a popular encore.

Finally Bill Lofts gave us a talk on some of the Thomson papers, including a long discussion on Wilson, the champion athlete. This was followed by a general debate on the difference the artists made to our favourite periodicals - imagine a Magnet with no illustrations! So ended another happy meeting ere we wended our way home by car, or minibus. Next meeting is Aug. 20th at Ruislip - full details will appear in our Newsletter: but if coming phone RUI. 4151 (Bob Acraman) in good time. No 'Hamilton' Library at this meeting, but Roger will be "open for business" as usual at Maidstone.

D.B.W.

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NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 8 July 1967

Another delightful day of high summer with a Club Meeting at its end. What more could one desire? Thirteen Northern members, at least, seemed happy and satisfied as they sorted through the Library items (Nelson Lee well to the fore with a display of immaculate copies) prior to the opening of the meeting by the Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde.

Geoffrey reminded us that this was Northern's 207th consecutive meeting and the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the founding of St. Frank's. He called for the minutes of the June Meeting which were read by the Secretary, and then the Treasurer's Report and correspondence. Gerry Allison revealed that our finances were on an even keel and then read extracts from postal members' letters, including Bill Badrock, whose thoughts were with us as we met. Our meetings are greatly indebted to our postal members whose letters and contributions make such an enriching part of them, and there is no item more enjoyed and looked forward to each month than the comments and anecdotes penned by our distant friends.

A short discussion about various items followed, including:-

"Wooster's World," an intensive compilation of Wodehouse lore recently published; the name of H. Singh among the Indian Cricketers causing John Arnott to reminisce about Greyfriars; and the availability, or otherwise, of the new publication "The Best of the Magnet and Gem."

Now followed the main item of the evening - Jack Wood's talk on St. Frank's. He started by reminding us that the Nelson Lee saga changed from wholly detective stories to School and detective on the 12 July, 1917, quoting for us the first words of the first issue. Jack's talk was long and touched on many aspects; the coming of various boys and their characters; the style of writing including the influence of Conan Doyle and P. G. Wodehouse; the series both fantastic and adventurous. Altogether a very expert and informative talk and a tribute to the Golden Anniversary of St. Frank's.

Tea and sandwiches, etc., were not handed round for the interval. And then Gerry Allison produced a word building game from lists of single syllables, all the words being names of St. Frank's characters - many mentioned by Jack already. Appropriately, he was the winner, Geoffrey next with Ron Hodgson and George Riley joint third. Elsie Taylor led the ladies score with Myra Allison second.

After two instalments of our Greyfriars serial Mollie Allison now took up the cudgels and put a new turn in the plot. Her first chapter was set in Dr. Locke's Study, and the second saw a party of ten Removeites cycling to Pegg for a day's sailing in John Redwing's boat.

It was now 9.30, and members had to say "Goodnight" and depart homewards.

Next meeting, Saturday, the 12th August, 1967.

M. L. Allison  
Hon. Sec.

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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.

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

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INTERESTING ITEMS  
from the  
EDITOR'S LETTER-BAG

# THE POSTMAN CALLED

ALEX PARSONS (Tranmere): I was delighted to know that you propose publishing a Double Number to celebrate October's coming of age. I think it a remarkable achievement for a magazine such as ours, and the occasion warrants something extra-special. The extra charge is to be expected; one can't have two for the price of one.

I've always regretted I didn't discover C.D. when it was born. As a reader since 1960 I'm only a third form fag, but read the works of the grave and reverend seniors with respect and admiration. What a lot of wonderful fellows they are!

Best wishes for a nice fat and juicy D.N.

C. L. FARROW (Boston): Writing of stories in the Gem, Danny says: 'Next month it was Fatty Wynn who was "A Disgrace to the Study." He is accused of hogging food in wartime. Actually he is helping a widow whose husband has been called into the army!'

I cannot fathom this one. How can she be a widow if she has a husband? However Danny is so enjoyable; we will forgive him this time. Please let us have more of Danny.

(That Danny of ours is a caution! The use of the English Language was never his strong point. -ED.)

WALTER WEBB (Birmingham): I wonder if you caught that interesting bit of conversation on Greyfriars from the commentary-box at Headingley during India's great fight back in the first Test Match? I had just switched on in time to hear John Arlott point out the name of H. Singh on the score-card and ask his fellow-commentators, Alan Gibson and Trevor Bailey, if they remembered another H. Singh who bowled consistently well for over half-a-century for Greyfriars. It was good to hear that both commentators remembered not only Hurree Singh and Greyfriars but also some of Inky's performances with the ball when playing against St. Jim's and Rookwood. Trevor Bailey remarked enthusiastically that he simply loved reading about Greyfriars and having seen him play at Edgbaston several times, sometimes with a feeling of frustration because the Warwickshire bowlers found it

impossible to shift him from the crease, I must now pay tribute to his good taste in the literature he used to read before he made his name on the cricket field. Who said that cricket commentaries were dull?

E. DAVEY (Christchurch): Mr. Loft's mention of the death of George E. Rochester reminds me of the time I read his book "The Greystones Mystery" and then a few weeks later the story by Talbot Baines Reed "The Master of Shell" and found to my surprise that the former was apparently a rehash in modern dress of the original T. B. Reed book, the main plot and details being identical.

Can anyone tell me if this sort of thing happens often in their experience?

LEN WORMULL (Romford): D. R. Clutterbuck, writing in the June C.D., made the interesting observation that midnight at St. Frank's was the signal for half the underworld of London to come swarming over the walls. He compared it to the calm at Greyfriars, where stealthy footsteps were usually those of the Bounder or Price returning from the Cross Keys.

Greyfriars by day, however, had its own quota of "undesirables." These were usually tramps and footpads, lurking in the undergrowth, with cudgels at the ready. Waiting in the wings, so to speak, as potential 'plot-resolvers.' How C.H. loved these characters! The master assailed; the schoolboy to the rescue; the complete vindication. It became almost a trademark of the Hamilton Schools. Indeed, one could almost visualise the maestro at the piano with 'Variations on a theme of Footpad,' by "Old Covey." He was inclined to overplay the number; it must be conceded that he did it with a virtuosity second to none. Like the famous Paganini Variations, they blended harmoniously.

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FOR SALE: (from the Bill Gander collection): Various copies of Fun & Fiction 3/6 each; special Christmas Double Number of Fun & Fiction 7/6; various copies of The Bullseye 4/6 each. Postage extra. To be offered soon: splendid volumes containing full year of Boys' Friend from 1901 onwards.

Write, without s.a.e., to Eric Fayne, Excelsior House, Grove Rd., Surbiton.

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