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COLLECTORS

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21st BIRTHDAY NUMBER

21
TO-DAY



H. WEBB

Collectors' Digest

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by

W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by

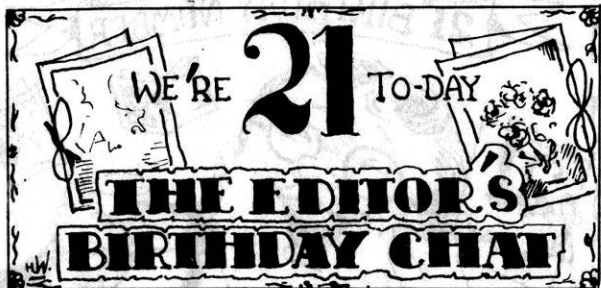
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 21

No. 250

OCTOBER 1967

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WE COME OF AGE

This would have been a proud day for a kindly, gentle Yorkshireman - Herbert Leckenby, the man who launched Collectors' Digest twenty-one years ago, and who edited it and produced it for so many successful years.

As we look back to the beginning and to the man who achieved so much - Herbert Leckenby, enthusiastic and tireless, who had so very much more in his shop than he showed in his window - we feel sadness that he was taken from us so prematurely.

The magazine which he gave us reaches this month its 250th issue, and its twenty-first birthday. For those of us who believe in a guiding star, in a Hidden Hand, in a still small voice - Herbert Leckenby IS proud of Collectors' Digest to-day.

Time, the good healer, has eased our sense of loss at his passing. But we never forget him. We never cease to honour him. On our 21st

birthday we pause to pay tribute to him.

TWENTY-ONE YEARS

To the young, 21 years seems an enormous length of time. To older folk, the year 1946 seems as vivid as yesterday. It stands clearly outlined against a background of memories. So sharp is the picture that it is almost with a chill that we tell ourselves that 21 long years have gone by since Collectors' Digest was born.

Down in the valley between 1967 and 1946 there rushes a torrent - a torrent of new ideas, new thoughts, new fashions; a violent cataract of rapid change; a tumbling river of disorganised progress; in some ways, a welter of slipping standards.

It was a very different Britain in which Herbert Leckenby launched Collectors' Digest during that late autumn of 1946, twenty-one years ago.

The world war had been over for more than a year. "Land of Hope and Glory" still meant something to the people of the tight little island. King George the Sixth was on the throne with his gracious Queen at his side. Mr. Attlee was Prime Minister. The British Empire was still intact. The railways were not yet nationalised. The trams were still running in London, Leeds, Liverpool, Glasgow, Southampton, Edinburgh, and other British towns.

Not yet were the country roads shuddering under the passing of a thousand petrol and diesel engines in as many seconds. Ticky Tapp's gambling dens were still illegal, restricted to the pages of the Gem. Just a few television sets had their owners, but the time was still distant when TV would become the addiction of the masses. The cinemas were still enjoying a prosperity such as they would never know again.

Every large town still had its music hall, and names like Vera Lynn, Donald Peers, Gracie Fields, and Duggie Wakefield could be guaranteed to fill them. To make a fortune in the entertainment world it was still necessary for a singer to be able to sing.

There were many more newspapers than there are to-day. The Bunter Books were not yet born. Even then, Charles Hamilton was wondering what, if anything, the future might hold in store for him. The Amalgamated Press was still in operation in Farringdon Street.

Not yet had started the terrifying upward spiral of the cost of living. The postage on a letter was 1½d. It cost just one penny to post you your copy of C.D. A call from a telephone kiosk was twopence.

Rock 'n Roll, even, was still far distant. The Beatles were bounding wee boys, probably giving but little indication that they were destined to be millionaires. Pat Pocock, the Surrey bowler, due

to play for England in the coming tour of the West Indies, was not yet in the land of the living. Alan Knott, England and Kent wicket-keeper, was a baby.

Supermarkets and X-certificates were still waiting complacently in the wings. Lovely old Georgian and Victorian houses still stood solidly in their trim gardens, not foreseeing that the avalanche of time would sweep them away to make space for giant blocks of flats. Not yet were the skyscrapers towering up to the heavens.

Your train left at 7.30 p.m., not 19.37. The temperature outside was 68F, not 21C. Swearing, obscenity, and pornography were not yet fashionable among self-respecting people. In fact, self-respect was not yet old-fashioned.

Policemen still walked their beats. Dishonesty was not considered clever. Violence -- well, I could go on like this for a long time, but you know it all yourselves.

Such was Britain when Collectors' Digest was born.

FROM THEN TILL NOW

In the very early days, Collectors' Digest was published at intervals of two months. Otherwise our 21st Birthday Special would be No. 252 instead of No. 250.

The most remarkable point in the history of the magazine is that, in a changing world, the tastes of our readers have changed but little. In C.D. No. 1 you find Hamiltoniana, Blakiana, and the Nelson Lee Column. You still find them in 1967, twenty-one years on.

In 1946, Hamiltoniana had the greatest number of enthusiasts. It still has in 1967. There has been no weakening of the interest. We know so much more of the subject than we did 21 years back. With the introduction of such regular features as Let's Be Controversial in comparatively recent years, the interest has grown, and we have become more critical. Long, long ago, we thought that the supply of topics for discussion must run dry, but it never has.

Blakiana still runs proudly, with loyal, dedicated folk at the helm. With great skill they link the modern Blake with the stories of the much-loved character of earlier times. When C.D. was young, there was no thought that Sexton Blake would find a new career in paperbacks.

The Nelson Lee always formed a substantial part of C.D. Its following is perhaps more substantial to-day than it has ever been.

Joining his more illustrious seniors in recent times has been Danny with his Diary, and to-day Danny's Diary is one of our most popular features.

Our policy in later years has been to widen the scope of the Digest, and some of our finest articles have dealt with subjects some distance away from the parent themes. Readers have varying views on the question of what should come within the scope of the Digest, but most people are content to leave it to the editor to decide.

Collectors' Digest owes a real debt of gratitude to those wonderful people who have contributed articles to the magazine down the years, for any magazine is only as strong as its contents. Many thanks to all our contributors.

PERSONAL FEELINGS

Naturally on the occasion of our 21st birthday, I am very proud indeed. But, beyond pride, there is a thankfulness for the unflinching loyalty of readers, many of whom have been bulwarks since No. 1 made its appearance. You send me splendid letters, which I often cannot find time to answer though I deeply appreciate every one, and in the course of my work I have made many hundreds of dear friends. I feel myself very lucky.

The man at the helm of C.D. has a full-time job, and as he has, in addition, to earn his own living if he is not to fade away, he gets really no spare time at all. But he feels amply rewarded in the wonderful affection of his readers.

We commenced this Birthday chat with a look back at a great Yorkshireman. It may be appropriate (if not exactly modest) to end with an extract from a letter written by another great Yorkshireman - one of the greatest of them all - Gerald Allison.

He has written me as follows:

"If only I was a poet! What a paean of praise and thanksgiving I would write to welcome the appearance of No. 250 of the dear old C.D., and to congratulate you on your 21st birthday.

"But truly words cannot express the feelings which are in my heart at this moment. How many times has the appearance of the old familiar buff envelope with Collectors' Digest inside seemed to save my life. May you have all the joy and happiness you have brought into the lives of your readers returned to you a hundredfold. In truth the mantle of Elijah has fallen upon Elisha. If only dear old Herbert could know about No. 250 of his beloved Digest!"

Any editor - even though he knows full well that the sentiments expressed are far, far greater than he deserves - cannot fail to be deeply touched by a letter like that. I shall cherish it always.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL

The 21st edition of the Annual is now in the course of prepara-

tion. Roger Jenkins, who is unrivalled among our writers, has contributed one of his finest - a survey of the development of the character of Harry Wharton. Our distinguished contributor "Comicus" is represented with a real novelty under the title "Cut It Out!" Leonard Packman, who knows the old comic papers from A to Z, has written a beautifully comprehensive article on the characters we used to love in our pre-Bunter days. Frank Lay takes on a rather neglected paper, which was very popular in its day - "The Boys' Magazine."

And that's only a start, but my space has run out. Are you advertising in the Annual? And have you ordered your copy yet?

THE EDITOR

FINE ARTICLE ON THE THOMSON PAPERS

Readers who have happy memories of Wizard and the Rover between the wars should obtain the July issue of WORLD SPORTS (2/6). This number contains a splendid article under the title "The Wonderful World of William Wilson" by Tom McNab. He writes about some of the great sporting characters of boys' fiction, and the article is delightfully illustrated with pictures from the Thomson Papers. This article is a must for those who remember Rockfist Rogan and the Cannonball Kid.

Mr. McNab was aided by reference to papers loaned to him by C.D. reader, Jim Swan of Paddington.

MAGNETS (Mostly Blue/Gold) Greyfriars S.O.Ls, Holiday Annuals(1932 1933 1939) offered for exchange. You can make your own terms if you can offer from the following list of my wants. MAGNETS: 874-877, 879-888, 925-931, 958, 959, 975-979, 995, 1007, 1012, 1013, 1035, 1043, 1071, 1084-1086, 1110, 1133, 1134, 1255-1261, 1264, 1265, 1269, 1271, 1273-1275, 1289-1307. RIO KID'S GOLD MINE, B.F.L. 569 (or 275). ST. JIM'S SOLs. 196, 214, 218, 258, 260. KING OF THE ISLAND B.F.Ls. 602 (or 365), 442, 489, 589. ROVERS. 718, 719, 726, 727, 732, 740, 742, 742, 758, 763, 764, 765.

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DANNY'S DIARY

OCTOBER 1917

The Gem is still marking time. In fact, I think it takes one step forward for every two steps backward, like when my brother Doug goes out marching with the Cadet Corpse which he joined lately.

I must say that the first two tales in the Gem have not been so bad - they had their moments, like Mae Murray - but there were bits in each story which made me feel kind of uncomfortable. The first one was "Clampe's Cousin," and this was about such horrid snobbery that it didn't really ring true. Also, it seemed waste of time and space to devote a whole tale to a minor cad of the New House.

Clampe's cousin was an officer in the Navy. Redfern's brother was a seaman in the Navy. Clampe's cousin, walking in the woods, heard Clampe making snobbish remarks about Redfern's brother only being a seaman. So, when Clampe's cousin turned up at St. Jim's, he arrived as a rather boozy seaman, and it taught Clampe a lesson.

Next tale was "Mr. Selby's Dilemma," and though it wasn't bad it really somehow wasn't a very pleasant tale. Mr. Selby has been a great one for making recruiting speeches, a bit after the style of Mr. Horatio Bottomley. Both say they are so sad that they can't go as privates in the army, which is safe enough when you're over age. Mr. Selby caused annoyance to Monty Lowther, and Monty arranged for the ex-actor, Horatio Curll, now a relief pianist at the Courtfield Cinema, to turn up at St. Jim's to pretend he was a recruiting officer raking Mr. Selby into the army. The tale was funny in parts, but it didn't seem quite nice for the boys to make Mr. Selby look such a fool.

Apart from their themes, those two tales were nicely written, but the final two tales came among the unspeakables. "The St. Jim's Parliament" was Gussy's idea. It looks as though it will be a series, and it promises to be a dry one. The boys plan to hold their parliamentary sessions in a barn owned by a local man named Mr. Erasmus Zachariah Pepper.

Last tale of the month, "Grundy the Patriot," continued about the St. Jim's Parliament. Mr. Pepper has the reputation of being a miser, and Grundy thinks this is unpatriotic in war time. He seeks to punish Mr. Pepper. Marie Rivers flitted on the scene in this tale, but it was a dull affair.

Mr. Macdonald, the old Gem artist, came on leave from the Navy this month, and he illustrated the story "Mr. Selby's Dilemma" just

for the one week. It was nice to see him back for the little visit to the Gem.

With the days getting shorter and shorter, the air raids have been hotting up, and it has been an exciting month. We thought we had seen the end of the zeppelin raids, but 12 came over one dark night, but our own planes go up to fight them now, and I reckon we won't see much more of the zepps. On this occasion, four were brought down, and one of them was almost intact, so our own air people can look it over.

From the Huns' point of view, the aeroplanes are more effective for the raids. One moonlit night, four groups of planes dropped bombs on the south-west of London. Ten people were killed and about forty injured.

On my birthday, Dad took us all to Daly's Theatre in London, and we saw the 300th performance of "The Maid of the Mountains." It is a lovely show, and it featured a girl named Yvonne Arnaud who was very good indeed.

My Gran bought me a scooter which is very good fun. Unfortunately, the wheels are wood, and they are not wearing evenly, so I hop up and down as I go along. Mum is a bit doobious about the scooter, as it causes me to wear out my right shoe very quickly. Doug bought me some books, and one of them was a Sexton Blake Library entitled "The Mysterious Mr. Reece." Often I find that the Blake stories are a bit heavy for me, but this one was really good. I hope to get some more tales about Mr. Reece who is the head of a criminals' confederation.

The Magnet has continued with the Judge Jeffries series, and what a real whanger it is. In "The Barring Out at Greyfriars," Mr. Jeffreys, and his henchman, the horrible Mr. Schwartz, drive the Remove into rebellion, and it was a terrific tale.

Then followed "Victory," in which Jeffreys was at last given the order of the boot. A grand series, and all too short.

The next story, "Rivals of the Chase," was a bit of an Auntie Climacks. Quite a chunk of drivel. Jack Archer, Mr. Prout's nephew, had invented something useful in the war. He has left the plans at his lodgings, and Mr. Prout sends some of the Greyfriars boys to collect the plans.

The last tale "Ponsonby's Pal" was fairish, though I don't care a lot for tales about Wingate's minor. Jack Wingate has been gambling with Ponsonby, and steals some of Gwynne's sports fund in order to pay his debt. The Bounder takes a hand, and the fag is able to replace the money before it is missed.

In North London two trams collided, and 24 people were injured.

One of our cinemas, the Popular, has been closed down for a few months. It has now been re-opened under the name, Palais De Luxe. It really sounds much better than it is. They have started a new serial entitled "Patria," and it features Mrs. Vernon Castle. Also, for the opening, they had a very good Hepworth film entitled "Merely Mrs. Stubbs," which starred Henry Edwards and Alma Taylor.

We have also seen Theda Bara in "Darling of Paris." Theda Bara is quite a corker. Gladys Cooper and Owen Nares were in "The Sorrows of Satan." It is said that Gladys Cooper is the most beautiful woman in the world.

We saw Jack Pickford and Louise Huff in "Freckles," and I loved this one. Jack Pickford and Louise Huff have made several pictures together, and I read in the paper that they are getting married in real life. Jack is Mary Pickford's brother.

One Saturday, Doug and I went to see a football match at Charlton. After the game we went on a tram to New Cross, where Doug had taken tickets for the first house at New Cross Empire. We saw a most wonderful magician named Chung Ling Soo. In his act, somebody shoots a gun at him, and he catches the bullet between his teeth. A wonderful trick. Also in the programme were Nellie Wallace, C. H. Chirgwin, and Daisy James. A rattling fine show, and the New Cross Empire is a lovely red-plush place. It is one of the Moss Empires.

Sir Douglas Haig has won a big victory at Passchendaele. His nephew, Ned Haig, is at school with me. I told Ned that I would swap my brother Doug for his uncle, but Ned wasn't having any.

As usual, the Boys' Friend has been a winner all the way. First Rookwood tale of the month was "The Rookwood Refugee," and this was the sequel to the story about the convict (Gunner, an old Rookwood boy) in last month's B.F. Gunner is hiding in a secret place he knew near his old school, but he is trapped at last.

The Cedar Creek tale "Gunten's Sweepstake" was great. Gunten, who arranged the sweep, fixed it so that he himself drew the favourite, but he got advance news that the favourite hadn't won.

Next month, "The Winning Goal" was the Rookwood tale, and it was good fun. To please his uncle, Dodd played Cuffy in the Modern Side's team. The Canadian story was "Trouble for Three," in which Frank Richards & Co came across a sour apple farmer (I mean the farmer was sour, not the apples) named Grimm. However, the boys rescued Grimm's daughter from death, and so, when Grimm arrived at Cedar Creek, it was not to make a complaint to Miss Meadows. This story was very much like an old Gem tale I remember called "The Scamps of the School."

Then came two fine Mornington stories. Lattrey has always been sore that Mornington turned over a new leaf. In "A Thief in the Night," 'Erbert, who now has Morny's wealth, has money stolen from him during the night. It looks as though Morny is the thief. The Cedar Creek tale this month was "A Cockney in Canada" and told of the arrival of a new boy, Harold Hopkins. Hopkins, from London Town, had his leg pulled a lot by the Canadian boys. This tale reminded me of another old Gem tale, in which Harold Hammond, a cockney, went to St. Jim's.

In the final Rookwood story, "Mornington's Triumph," Morny managed to prove that it was not he who had stolen from 'Erbert. The guilty one was Lattrey. This time the Cedar Creek tale was "For His Father's Sake," and it was grand. Beauclerc's father, drinker and gambler, was desperately in need of money. And his son managed to win it by taking terrific punishment in a prize fight.

HUTTON MITCHELL - Original Magnet Artist

(From THE TIMES- Sept. 16th 1967)

MONTREAL, Sept. 14 - Three British brothers, who were the original models for illustrations of characters such as Billy Bunter in popular boys' books early in the century, have been reunited after 46 years.

Alan and Bruce Mitchell are now prominent figures in the Montreal art world. The third brother, Alexander, lives in Brisbane, Australia. They have all changed over the years, but Alexander had no trouble recognizing his brothers when he arrived at Montreal central station recently.

The two Montreal-based brothers said today they had been convinced they would never see Alexander again, until he won a small fortune on a sweepstake ticket which enabled him to go to Canada.

The three were brought up in Sussex, where they played golf with Arthur Conan Doyle, Creator of Sherlock Holmes and a neighbour of theirs. Their father, the novelist and artist Hutton Mitchell, illustrated Billy Bunter and other popular boys' stories of the period, using his sons as models. The three recall stuffing pillows into their trousers to portray the pudgy Bunter. - Reuter.

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NELSON LEE COLUMN

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

A LETTER TO THE COLLECTORS DIGEST FROM NIPPER OF THE ST. FRANK'S REMOVE

Dear friends,

I have been asked to say a few words on this occasion which marks the 21st Birthday Number of Collectors' Digest. It gives me great pleasure to know St. Frank's is still remembered today and even if we are no longer available to the chroniclers we are very happy to live on our happy memories, memories that will live forever in the minds of some of you.

Strangely enough, St. Frank's is no different today from when it was decided to record the last events here, although much has passed into history since that time. I well recall those old days when from my notebook the history of the old school was published; life seemed to be very much happier then than it is today. The Guv'nor has often spoken of the good old days when we used to make a dash to Gray's Inn Road and leave St. Frank's to its fate. But even so, there was always the glorious home-coming, for St. Frank's will always be our real home.

In spite of the artificial censorship which has descended upon the old school's present-day life I can assure you that were I able to publish all that has gone into perpetuity the events of long ago would read simple by comparison.

I have always considered the time when dear old Dr. Stafford was drugged to change him into a bestial beast as one of the outstanding happenings at St. Frank's, but both during the Second World War and its aftermath the old school went through many periods of sensational activity. These eclipsed even the most macabre moments I ever recorded and I have set them down in the hope that one day they will see the light of prominence just as the earlier St. Frank's history was made public.

Meanwhile though the scene may change the characters are all still here. All very much the same. Handforth still reigns in Study D to rule over the destinies of Church and McClure. Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson continue to look after me in Study C. Forrest, Gore-Pearce, Gulliver and Bell to say nothing of all the other cads you know so well are still smoking and backing horses.

The Duke of Somerton looks as untidy as ever while dear old Archie Glenthorne still relies on Phipps for guidance and the early morning

tea. Teddy Long is sneaking and listening at keyholes as ever while Guy Sinclair and Kenmore of the Upper School are no better than they should be.

Cecil DeValerie hasn't changed one bit - I don't suppose he ever will for Dr. Karnak seemed to alter his whole being when he succumbed to the Egyptologist's spell. Yet Val was always a dark horse when he first came to St. Frank's.

Buster Boots, Timothy Armstrong, Bob Christine & Co., are as large as ever and Reggie Pitt is as ready as always to stand in as captain of the Remove should I be called away with Nelson Lee on a case.

But LordDorrimore - dear old Dorrie - and Umlosi are away somewhere in the African jungle looking for trouble.

Yes, life at St. Frank's is very much the same as it was in the old days for whatever comes along to disturb us we eventually put things right.

We've had some narrow escapes, though, in the past. There have been times when the fate of St. Frank's hung in the balance as you know, but we overcame them. Times like the German-American millionaire William K. Smith's attempt to completely turn the St. Frank's area into one vast industrial factory. Times when rebellion threatened to lose a cause and times when a return to school from abroad seemed utterly remote. Yet we came through them all victoriously. Just as we did in other tight corners unknown to you.

Finally Mr. Nelson Lee, my beloved gov'nor, sends you his best wishes, His hope that Collectors' Digest will carry on many more years is echoed by us all here at St. Frank's.

Do try and visit us sometime. Old Josh Cuttle has strict instructions to open the lodge gates to you at any old time and to escort you safely to Study C in the Ancient House.

Yours to a cinder,

Nipper.

* * * * *

"A BRAND FROM THE BURNING"

By GERRY ALLISON

I enjoyed immensely Bob Acraman's excellent article CONFESSIONS OF A CONVERT and congratulate him on getting such immense pleasure from reading the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. I really envy him, and such fervent admirers of E. S. Brooks as William Lister whose truly wonderful essay A TALE OF TWO YULETIDES in last December's Digest was read aloud at

the Northern Club's Christmas party.

As I wrote in the March 'C.D.' I have never been able to read the NELSON LEE, despite many attempts to do so. As readers of this magazine will know, my interests are wide and varied - I am by no means an 'idolatrous Hamiltonian.' On the contrary I can read and enjoy almost any old boys' - or girls' - paper.

Wycliffe and Haygarth are as enjoyable to me as Greyfriars and St. Jim's - almost as good as Rookwood. David Goodwin's stories in the B.F.L. - I have 60 of them - are read and re-read. Sexton Blake is as popular as Nero Wolfe or Philip Marlowe with me. The stories of Tim Pippin by Roland Quiz I find delightful, as also the serials in the comics - THE GREAT ADVENTURE, THE SCHOOL BELL, THE GIRL FROM GAOL, etc. The fantastic stories in FUN & FICTION and FIREFLY, and the sentimental stuff in CHEERIO and the RED MAGAZINE are favourites of mine. And, believe it or not, I can even read Jack, Sam and Pete - in small doses.

Why therefore - like the late Tom Hopperton, and others I could name, - do I find St. Frank's quite impossible? Bob Acraman says he obtains equal pleasure from Hamilton and Brooks - or Frank and Edwy - and I must believe him, amazing as I find his statement.

I remember once thinking 'dammit, I will read a Nelson Lee,' and settled down grimly with "All His Own Fault" No. 103 1st New Series, N.L. Lib. It was an unfortunate choice, and 'grim' was the very word. It is a story about Handforth the greatest 'character' at St. Frank's. I found his behaviour so gross, so fantastic, so completely unbelievable that I was soon groaning in sheer misery. Let me quote a few lines from the very first page - Handforth has overslept and his chums, Church and McClure are awakening him with a wet sponge - note his reaction.

Handforth spluttered and gurgled

"What do you think you're doing? he shouted at last.

"By George! You-you silly idiots! I'm drenched!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth dragged the bedclothes over him, and lay down again. His face was angry-looking, and his eyes were blazing.

"I'll smash the pair of you for this when I get up!" he said hotly. "Of all the mean, contemptible tricks! Splashing water on a chap when he's asleep!"

Church and McClure lost their grins.

"Well, there's no need to get shirty about it, Handy," protested Church.

"I'll get as shirty as I like!" roared Handforth. "I was fast asleep, and I'm jolly well going to make you suffer for playing a

filthy trick like that!"

"Hang it, don't exaggerate!" said McClure. "It was my idea in the first place, so you needn't blame Churchy. We only splashed a little water into your mouth."

"And you're a fine chap to talk, anyhow!" put in Church. "How many times have you tipped the cold water jug over us, Handy?"

"I'm different!" said Handforth curtly.

That is only the beginning - it gets unspeakably worse. So once again I had to admit defeat, and put the book down, unfinished. As Bob Acraman said, our spare time is limited. I certainly could not waste mine reading stuff so stupidly impossible as to make its perusal sheer misery.

Well, at the last Northern club meeting, we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of St. Frank's, and had a truly fine talk by Jack Wood - whose knowledge of E. S. Brooks' work is only exceeded by his own good temper. (Why are many Leeites so irascible?)

And then came the August DIGEST, with Bob Acraman's 'Confessions,' and so, yet once again I decided I would read a copy of NELSON LEE. This time I selected a single story of a humorous nature, "THE ST. FRANK'S APRIL FOOLS" 1st New Series No. 152. And not only did I read it from start to finish, but, I will admit that I got quite a bit of pleasure from it!

In fact I quite enjoyed it. The plot is a startling one - as many of Brooks's are. The principal characters have been away from England for 3 months on a world tour the School Ship Series. When they return, they find that St. Frank's has been turned into a girl's school, and that their own school has been removed into what was the workhouse!

The plot is skilfully worked - by the girls of Moor View School, and even the infallible Nipper is fooled. (In my earlier attempts at the Nelson Lee, Nipper's know-all attitude has irritated me as much as it has done Bob Blythe.)

There is a light-hearted air about the story which particularly appealed to me. And I liked such touches as 'as they came along the street in Bellton, the travellers were greeted with a cheery nod here and there from the village folk.'

Of course, there were certain things which I could criticize, but I will not spoil the effect by mentioning these. Like the Caterpillar at Highcliffe, I feel grateful to Jack Wood and Bob Acraman for plucking me like a brand from the burnin'.

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POLEMIC: MARCHING FORWARD - OR LOOKING BACKWARD?

By Christopher A. J. Lowder

I don't know what the first issue of "Collectors Digest" looked like, because I wasn't around at the time. Well, no - that's not strictly true. I was, but only just. Anyway, for all that I was born five years after the demise of the Magnet. I was still reared on the "right stuff," so to speak. Or, at least, what I think was the "right stuff." And thereby hangs this article.

The Lion was my Magnet and the Eagle my Gem. The order, to me, is significant. I prefer Greyfriars to St. Jim's, and the stories (picture-strip and written) in the Lion were more meaty than those in the Eagle.

For instance, Sandy Dean's Tollgate - brimming over with mysterious masters, hooded monks who glided through the corridors at the witching-hour of midnight, raiders from rival schools, barrings-out, and secret passageways that made the ancient, ivy-heaped buildings seem like huge cheeses - was a closer approximation to my ideas of what a Public School was not, than the Alma Mater of the Three Jays. Therefore Sandy Dean, and the Lion, came well ahead on points. (I later went to a Public School and was agreeably surprised to find that, for once, I had been right.)

Captain Condor, too, was my man. Whereas Dan Dare, of the Eagle, was very Establishment, Condor started off by being branded as an outlaw by the Dictator of Earth (a gentleman of indefinite age who went about in what looked like a vicuna smoking-jacket, wore Glenn Miller-type glasses, and had a general lunatic air about him). Condor raced off to the planet Zor in a battered old freighter, managed to capture one of the Dictator's top space battleships, and, on returning to Earth, ended the Dictator's Gestapo-like reign by luring the latter's secret weapon - a monstrous robot - onto the positive and negative blocks of the Atom Smasher (or was it Atom Cracker?), thereby sending the Dictator to where he belonged in no uncertain terms and a superb explosion that wrecked half of London. Captain Condor, and of course the Lion, won by a K.O.

Not that I scorned the Eagle. Far from it, in fact. In conjunction with the radio serials, for instance, P.C. 49 and Jeff Arnold were stories into which one could get one's teeth, and at least the religious stuff on the back page wasn't rammed down one's throat but, by its very presentation, was made into exciting reading. Too, if one had an inclination towards the more serious side of life, there was always Macdonald Hastings (Eagle Special Investigator), George

Cansdale, the eminent zoologist, and that awful chap (whose name escapes me now) who was forever trying to get "us lads" to make palatial rabbit hutches out of a couple of bits of old wood.

And then there was the Sun and the Comet, two tabloid-type journals (as opposed to the semi-broadsheet size of the Eagle) which will surely go down in boys papers' history as the greatest of the 1950s. Packed full of good things, these two were - Dick Turpin, Claude Duval, Max Bravo (the Happy Hussar), Billy the Kid (the Masked Avenger, not that real-life lout), Robin Hood, and the ubiquitous Battle Britton (surely the greatest English comic hero to emerge from the post-war years). Even Greyfriars and St. Jim's were thrown in - the former being brilliantly drawn in picture strip form by the great C. H. Chapman.

Which brings me to the artists - largely anonymous - of my era. Their various styles were/are as identifiable, to me, as those of Val, Arthur Clarke, Leonard Shields, et al., were/are to an older generation. One of my particular favourites - I, unfortunately, do not have my note-books with me as I write, so names in this article will be few and far-between, memory being, so to speak, the order of the day - was the chap (I'll call him Anon) who illustrated most of the Dick Turpin yarns in the Thriller Comic Library, the Sun, and elsewhere. His Knights of the Road were truly dashing - and distinguishable one from another, which was a welcome change from those strips where you could never tell Turpin from Tom King, and the only difference between Flick and Pat was that Pat, being Irish (or Oirish - I think they're a separate race) had slightly darker hair.

Anon's draughtsmanship in general was splendidly Gothic. His illustrations for Thriller Comic Library (hereinafter initialled as T.C.L.) No. 37, Harrison Ainsworth's classic "Windsor Castle," were all that one could ask for in a tale of its type, Herne the Hunter being particularly Satanic. Anon's scions of noble blood were always noble, his evil Barons unfailingly evil. For the latter, take a look if you can at T.C.L. No. 214, a Robin Hood tale which concerned a boy (lost heir, naturally) who had been brought up amongst wolves. This particular story, incidentally, contained nearly every element that goes to make up the best type of Gothic thriller - lost heir, wicked Baron, courageous hero (Robin Hood), venerable, old woodsman and wife, brutal and licentious soldiery and an awe-inspiring castle. The only thing missing was a flash of lightning here and there, but I suppose the wolves made up in some part for that notable omission.

Most of the artists of my day had presumably graduated from the

pre-war A.P. stable, since attention to detail appeared to be of paramount importance - unlike the slap-dash methods (one hesitates to use the word "artistry" in this context) of today's lot. A.N. Other (I do really apologise) was a case in point. He was the one who had D'Aragan and the Three Musketeers under his wing, and a splendid job he made of them. No interchanging of Athos and Aramis here, and who could ever mistake the lusty Porthos for anyone else? A.N. Other was exceptionally good at drawing huge, turreted old castles that stuck out of the plains of France like pointing fingers of doom. These usually collapsed about the ears of their inhabitants at some appropriate point in the story.

Certainly the artists who illustrated the papers of my era were craftsmen, one and all. They knew how to draw. U.N. Known, who "did for" Captain Dack, Ernest Dudley (the Armchair Detective), and a variety of characters in the old Super Detective Library (S.D.L. - wherein one could find illustrated versions of such crime classics as Edgar Wallace's "Door With Seven Locks," Sapper's Bulldog Drummond - rather a Fascist, but an amiable one certainly - yarns, Leslie Charteris's "The High Fence," etc., etc.,) was another of my favourites. He was at his best when the fenland mists were stealing over the country mansion and three (at least) house guests had already been slaughtered.

The great, the magnificent Eric Parker, too, was very well represented in the lists. He was inimitable - still is. Familiarity with his style will never breed contempt in me. Not a great artist, as such, but he had that indefinable magic that is so rare even amongst craftsmen.

Mind, credit where credit is due. The artists of today, and here I am thinking more of certain of our American cousins, are not duds. But - and here is the crux of the whole matter - there is no discipline in their work. The lines are crude, the features unformed. Artists are indistinguishable from each other. Colour (should I say "color"?), where it is used - though this is more to do with the production side of things than any fault of the artists concerned - is washy, sometimes even amateurish. The contents - i.e. the story-line (story-line? - is usually worse. Quite frankly, the majority of these "thrilling" comics of today are about as thrilling as a wet Sunday afternoon.

It is my belief, after perusing the contents of as many and as wide a range of juvenile papers that I could lay my hands on recently, that a large part of the early - and middle-teenage world has a reality grasp of approximating to - or perhaps even lower than - that of the three or four year old section of the populace. Now, in my day...

Of course - here's the point I wish to make. I have no doubt that, in 30 years time, there will be people who will recall the adventures of Superman, Batman, the Spider and the rest with affection and nostalgia. Just as I recall the Lion, T.C.L., Sun, Comet, etc. Just as my older readers recall the Magnet, Gem, Union Jack, Nelson Lee Library, etc., etc. Just as... And so on, ad infinitum.

Say what you like, the - dare I put it this way? - sentimental thread which connects golden youth to russet middle-age never fully breaks (though it may get a mite frayed here and there), and the youngsters of today - though attitudes, codes of behaviour, morals, manners, rules of the game may change through the years - are, deep down, the same as I once was, and the same as you once were.

That is why, in this the 21st year of Collectors Digest's existence, I think it is very important for readers, contributors, and collectors to take a serious look at the aims and ideals of our magazine.

Its existence is entirely due to three men and one fictional character - Charles Hamilton, John Staniforth (Maxwell Scott), Edwy Searles Brooks and Sexton Blake. Its foundation is due to the late Herbert Leckenby and a hard core of enthusiasts who formed themselves into a society after the Second World War to preserve the memory of the, so to speak, "what-used-to-be." After them - the deluge.

But the sands of time run fast. Can there be ten men still alive who recall reading "The Missing Millionaire" way back in the mists of the early 1890s? Even those who remember purchasing the very first issue of the Magnet with any sort of clarity must be relatively few and far between.

It seems to me that the C.D. should reflect youth through its reading matter. Not just the youth of 40 or 50 years ago, but youth - period. If the scope of our magazine is limited to the era 1900 - 1940 the object of the exercise is defeated. Naturally.

Of course, it all depends on whether readers care for this particular exercise. It all depends on whether readers agree with my views on the object of the Digest. Therein lies the heart of the matter.

It would be interesting to hear what other people have to say about this. Should the C.D. widen its scope to include a generation who knew not - at least, at first hand - the Gem, Magnet, S.B.L., and other papers of 40 years ago? Should it reflect the juvenile tastes of the 1940s and 1950s, with Sexton Blake, Greyfriars, St. Jim's and St. Frank's as the corner-stones?

Personally, I could go on for ever. I haven't even really begun

to extract the memories from my brain. Memories of the old Knockout; the short-lived Rocket (edited, or so it was said, by Douglas Bader); the Wizard and the Adventure; of how Wilson, damn near single-handed, shattered the Aussies in the great Test series of - 1953, was it?; of the best, and funniest, Grammar School serial of them all, "Don's Diary" (which can still make me chuckle); and of that tireless Scotland Yard sleuth from the Radio Fun, who first put me, by various devious avenues, on to Edgar Wallace, the detective tale in general, Sexton Blake in particular, and, logically really, Collectors Digest. Funny how things pan out.

Whatever happens, it is to be hoped that that latter journal will continue to prosper for another 21 years - and more. The store of juvenile memories from every generation is really, when you come to think of it, infinite. And always varied.

So let it be that from every generation we may take our delight.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The scope of Collectors' Digest is NOT limited to the period 1900 - 1940. We have published plenty of articles dealing with mid-Victorian publications and also with post-1940 material. Articles dealing with ANY period of Old Boys' Book lore are always welcome at the editorial office.)

DOUBLE NUMBERS

By Don Webster

There's magic in those two words - Double Number! What memories they recall. Many older readers will remember with nostalgia those issues of their favourite periodicals with the coloured covers and extra pages. Oh, the feel of a Double No. You couldn't believe your good luck, when after the exciting announcement the previous week, it was actually in your hands. How thick it felt. Sometimes we even had 64 pages!

We had Spring Double Nos., Summer Double Nos., and Christmas Double Nos. The latter were a great favourite. I can see their covers now, with snow dripping from the front page title, and the seasonable illustrations inside.

We all have our favourite Double Number, but I venture to think that some of the following would be accepted as amongst the most popular choices:-

MAGNET No. 253	"Drummed out of Greyfriars" (Xmas Double No.)	
357	"The Return of The Prodigal"	" " "

MAGNET No.	392	"Schoolboys Never Shall be Slaves"	(Summer Double No.)
	409	"Harry Wharton Co's Pantomime."	(Xmas " ")
	461	"The House on The Heath."	(" " ")
GEM No.	250	Nobody's Study	(Xmas Double No.)
	302	Mystery of the Painted Room	(" " ")
	375	Winning His Spurs.	(Spring " ")
	393	The Housemaster's Homecoming	(Summer " ")

The Gem seemed to be in the ascendancy prior to the First World War as regards Double Numbers, and it is a sad fact that these enlarged issues were never published after 1917. What fine Magnet Double Nos. we could have had.

Of course the "Union Jack," Sexton Blake Library and Nelson Lee, etc. all had their Double Numbers, but I am not qualified to write on these magazines.

The "Boys Friend" with its beautiful coloured cover and presentation Art Plates was outstanding for its Double Numbers, but copies of these seem unobtainable these days. Those of us who are lucky enough to remember can visualise the comic papers with extra pages, and at Christmastime the covers were adorned with drawings of snowflakes, holly, and plum puddings.

Oh, halcyon days of the Double No. - when times were peaceful and the world wasn't in such a hurry - these are gone, alas, never to return.

Our own C.D. has produced its Double Nos. too - but I daresay somebody else will have dealt with them elsewhere in this issue.

We are indeed privileged that we have an Editor with such a youthful outlook, for he knows that secretly we've been counting the days until this special Double No. arrived. I wonder when the next one will be - ?

EXCHANGE: 3 Playtime Comics (1920); 7 Young Britains; 1 Startler No. 6; 1 Rover (1927) 1 Rover (1938); 2 Wizards (1938) 2 Wizards (1939).

WANTED: Dixon Hawke Libs.

McMAHON, 54 HOZIER CRES., TANNOCHSIDE, UDDINGSTON.

SALE: 21 Magnets, 1482, 1488, 1503, 1506, 1531, 1535, 1555, 1576, 1597, 1580, 1603, 1605, 1608, 1630, 1652, 1668, 1673, 1670, 1674, 1675, 1677. £3. 10. 0. posted.

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BLAKIANA

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

For some considerable time I have had great difficulty in keeping BLAKIANA going. Thanks to several staunch supporters I am able to use my full quota of pages this month. This is all the more pleasing as it is in keeping with the 250th (special) number of the Collectors' Digest.

Maybe the present radio series featuring Sexton Blake - and the t/v series to appear later on - will induce some of you to write something for this section of the magazine! (I have been conducting BLAKIANA now for over fourteen years!!)

To ALL my supporters - past, present and future - I say THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

* * * * *

Josie Packman.

DEATH OF TWO MORE BLAKE PERSONALITIES

During a recent visit to Fleetway House I learned of the death of Len Pratt, editor of the Sexton Blake Library from about 1921 until the mid-'fifties when W. Howard Baker took over.

Living in retirement at Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, Len Pratt was seventy-six.

Whilst having lunch with Leslie Charteris, the world-famous SAINT creator, and talking about authors in general, Mr. Charteris mentioned that Hugh Clevely had died. Clever writer of the "Gangsmasher" stories, Hugh Clevely wrote several excellent Blake yarns in the 'fifties.

Once more a fine writer has gone from us and left a gap in the ranks of thriller writers that will not be easily filled.

W. O. G. Lofts

* * * * *

HOW DOROTHY SAYERS INTRODUCED SEXTON BLAKE

By Ross Story

I bought a copy of DETECTION, MYSTERY AND HORROR on a secondhand bookstall for the magnificent sum of 6d, edited by Dorothy Sayers, and in her introduction, where she touches on all the aspects of detection - Sherlock Holmes, Poe, Dupin, etc., she writes the following: (Incidentally, the date of this book was September 1928)

"While on this subject, we must not forget the curious and interesting development of detective fiction which has produced the Adventures of Sexton Blake and other allied cycles. This is the Holmes tradition, adapted for the reading of the board-school boy and crossed with the Buffalo Bill adventure type. The books are written by a syndicate of authors, each one of whom uses a set of characters of his own invention, grouped about a central and traditional group consisting of Sexton Blake and his boy assistant, Tinker, their comic landlady, Mrs. Bardell and their bulldog, (sic.) Pedro. As might be expected, the quality of the writing and the detective methods employed vary considerably from one author to another. The best specimens display extreme ingenuity and an immense vigour and fertility in plot and incident. Nevertheless, the central types are pretty consistently preserved throughout the series. Blake and Tinker are less intuitive than Holmes, from whom, however, they are directly descended, as their address in Baker Street shows. They are more careless and reckless in their methods, more given to displays of personal heroism and pugilism; more simple and human in their emotions. The really interesting point about them is that they present the nearest modern approach to a national folklore, conceived as the centre for a cycle of loosely connected romances in the Arthurian manner. Their significance in popular literature and education would richly repay scientific investigation."

* * * * *

THE UNWRITTEN STORY MYSTERY

By "Anon"

In 1932 the Editor of the UNION JACK devised a contest between six of its authors in which each, given details of the same identical situation, had to write a story around it. This, of course, was the famous "Proud" Tram series.

For those not familiar with the theme which formed the basis of the contest it was this:

On night in a North London tram depot, the cleaners discover on a tram's top deck, the body of a stout, middle-aged man named Alfred Mowbray Proud, and at his feet, the unconscious figure of Sexton Blake. The man has a number of unlikely articles with him ranging from two pawntickets (one for a mandolin, the other for a carpet) to maps of London's Underground and Tram systems; from a mousetrap and a knuckle-duster to a fireman's brass helmet and a rolled up banner with the wording: "WE DEMAND JUSTICE FOR OUR FELLOW SUFFERERS."

The authors involved originally were Gwyn Evans, Donal Stuart, Gilbert Chester, Anthony Skene, G. H. Teed and Robert Murray.

Stories by the first five authors appeared as scheduled, then the following announcement appeared in the Editor's "Round Table" chat.

"Robert Murray will be unable to write the sixth and last of the Tram Series stories as promised. Instead it will be written by Edwy Searles Brooks.

"A sudden attack of influenza and a sort of nervous break-down to follow has put Robert Murray on the inactive list. A few weeks ago he wrote to say

'...I am making satisfactory progress with this story, THE MAN FROM MANDALAY. Here are a few incidents from the yarn.

A mysterious blind man, living in a mysterious house with a girl secretary who, terrified by certain events, comes to Blake, telling him how her employer is driven to a frenzy each day by a man who arrives outside the house, places a carpet on the pavement, squats down and plays "The Road To Mandalay" on a mandolin. Every day the blind man in the house, despite his evident hatred, sends out a pound note - when the player departs.

Each day, the girl takes the blind man on a tour of London's Underground and Tram systems followed by the mandolin player. The blind man is trying to determine by sound, a certain station or stopping place.....

'These are only a few points. I hope you will like the yarn when it is finished.' "

The Editor averred that all the readers should have enjoyed it, and I heartily concur.

The question now arises - was this story ever finished or was it abandoned when Robert Murray couldn't meet the dead-line? Over to you Mr. Lofts.

The Editor then went on to tell how he sent out an S.O.S. at the last minute to Edwy Searles Brooks, to write the final story in the series - which he did in a couple of days. By a strange coincidence this substitute story dealt with a blind man and was called THE MYSTERY OF BLIND LUKE, but the plot in no way resembled Murray's.

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that the readers of the UNION JACK were asked to vote as to which author wrote the best solution to the Proud Tram Mystery. The winner was the added starter - E. S. Brooks.

It is interesting to conjecture who would have won, had Robert Murray been able to finish his story!

(On one of the occasions when Bob Blythe and myself visited Edwy Searles

Brooks we asked him about this "stand-in" story. He told us practically as related above, and added that so far as his own contribution was concerned he found no difficulty at all in writing it - in fact it was quite easy!

Len Packman.)

* * * * *

Approximate transcript of a talk recorded at the B.B.C. between John East and Len Packman for the radio series TODAY (Home Service).

(Mr. East speaks about all the Blake material he has seen when visiting my house, including seven or eight hundred Sexton Blake Libraries of the 1st and 2nd series, about 18 bound volumes of the Union Jack, many odd issues of such as Pluck, Dreadnought, Detective Weekly etc., and the bust of Sexton Blake).

J.E. How did your interest in Sexton Blake start?

L.P. I began reading about his adventures when I was a boy of about twelve. At that time my father (home on leave in 1917) used to have the UNION JACK every week, and when he had read it he let me have it. Since then I have never lost interest in the character - and that covers a period of over fifty years!

J.E. What was the date of the first Blake story?

L.P. The very first story (as far as we know), called "The Missing Millionaire," was published in December 1893 in a little paper called the MARVEL. His assistant, Tinker, did not join him until 1904, and his other assistant, Pedro, the bloodhound, was not created until 1905.

J.E. What sort of character was or is Blake?

L.P. He has always been the same (in my opinion). He is a man of many parts or facets; strictly methodical, at times taciturn, determined and fearless; but when the occasion warrants it he can be (and often has been) kind and merciful. There is some magnetic quality about him which has made him attractive to every strata of society: to the schoolboy - the hero par excellence; to the father - a phantasy figure.

J.E. What is this magazine, the Collectors' Digest?

L.P. It's an amateur monthly magazine about juvenile publications of the past - such as the Magnet, Gem, Nelson Lee, Union Jack and so on. One section of it is devoted to Sexton Blake and is conducted by Mrs. Packman, for her interest in Sexton Blake is as great as my own, indeed, our collection is more hers than mine! Subscribers to this magazine are all over the world, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ceylon, Brazil and Iceland.

J.E. Who wrote the stories?

L.P. They were written by many different authors. I personally know of over 150 (to include pen-names), including Rex Hardinge, G. H. Teed, Gilbert Chester, Donald Stuart, Edwy Searles Brooks - who also wrote under the names of Berkeley Gray and Victor Gunn - and the present very fine writer W. Howard Baker.

J.E. What is it that has made the character so enduring?

L.P. Throughout the whole of the Blake saga his adventures have always been topical; by which I mean the stories were always up-to-date and woven around any particularly noteworthy event of the time...he even had television in 1928!

J.E. Would you say the character has changed out of all recognition?

L.P. No. I disagree! Apart from being more sophisticated or 'with it' as they say, he is the same Blake as he always was, and the current paper-backs portray him excellently.

J.E. Some of the stories were dramatised, were they not?

L.P. Yes. He has appeared in plays and films; in fact, in your book 'NEATH THE MASK' you tell about the play, SEXTON BLAKE, produced by your grandfather in 1908.

J.E. That is true.

J.E. What do you say to the present description of Blake as "Sexy Sexton?"

L.P. He is no more sexy than is in keeping with the times. This is what you might call the "sex age" ... You could say the same of Tinker, but he is no more sexy than his master. If you mean has Blake ever had any subtle feelings towards women - he had a very soft spot for a certain Mdlle. Yvonne Cartier, but he never let his heart override his profession.

J.E. Will Blake be here in 74 years time?

L.P. You had better ask Mrs. Packman about that!

J.P. Oh yes. We shall be in the space age by then, and no doubt Sexton Blake will be making trips to the moon chasing his adversaries!

* * * * *

Issue No. 1 of the UNION JACK (2nd series) is dated 17 October 1903. (This was a non-Blake story by T.C. Bridges titled WITH PICK AND LAMP.)

Unlike the Collectors' Digest, the U.J. did not have a "Special Birthday Number" twenty-one years later. The issue dated 18 October

1924 did in fact feature the Criminals' Confederation.

The story THE MANDARIN'S MILLIONS was a good one, and introduced many popular characters of the time, including: Dirk Dolland (the Bat), Professor Jason Reece, Fan Too, Inspector Coutts, John Fade, The Black Duchess (Ysabel de Ferre), Sir Henry Fairfax and Mrs Bardell.

It is actually one of a series of 'Confederation' stories running at that time (not consecutively but at intervals and spread over a long period).

On page six there is a special column about the famous Criminals' Confederation, and for the benefit of readers of the Digest who have never had the pleasure of reading the exciting stories featuring this Organisation (and perhaps also bring back pleasant memories to those who have!) the following extract may be of interest.....

....."Mr. Reece met his death as a result of his anti-social warfare, and simultaneous attempts were made by two members of the Confederation to snatch at the presidentship. One of these aspirants was Ysabel de Ferre, known as the "Black Duchess" of Jorsica; and the other was Hoang Ho, a Chinese mandarin.

But Mr. Reece did not intend that either of these should step into his shoes. Professor Jason Reece, his brother, was a prisoner in the French convict settlement on the island of Tutea, and plans were made to rescue him and invest him with the presidentship.

Meantime the once-powerful Confederation had languished, and the new President set himself to the task of re-establishing it. His first care was to obtain a steel chest which his dead brother had hidden, and which contained the secret of the hiding-place of the sum of a million pounds, put by as a reserve fund in case of need.

Professor Reece is robbed of this money almost in the act of taking it by Fan Too, the son of the Mandarin Hoang Ho, who has died in one of the battles with the Black Duchess.

In the last episode published (No. 1094, week ending September 27th), Professor Reece is on the run from Sexton Blake, close pressed after his abortive attempt to raise money to make up for the loss of the million. He escapes by aeroplane from Wimbledon Common, just eluding Sexton Blake and the detectives from Scotland Yard.

The present story takes up the thread from there, and will be followed shortly by another which will relate the end of the events which are now being dealt with."

(The final episode of this particular series appeared in U.J. No.1117 FOUND - AND LOST. A new series of episodes between Sexton Blake and the Confederation began with U.J. No.1119, dated 21 March 1925, entitled REECE'S REPUBLIC.)

Len Packman.

BLAKE IN OUR LIVING ROOM SOON

Under the above heading, James Green wrote in the "Evening News" in mid-September:

"Sexton Blake, the stiff-lipped 19th-century detective who never lost a case through thousands of weekly 'penny dreadfuls' is to star in a TV series starting on September 25.

Laurence Payne is to play Blake and Roger Foss will play Tinker, his assistant. The ITV series is set in the early 1930's.

No sex

This means there will be two Sexton Blakes in Britain this year. The other Sexton Blake, played by William Franklyn, is already being heard on radio's Home Service.

Like the illustrious Sherlock Holmes, Sexton Blake lives in Baker Street. And, like Holmes, he never becomes romantically interested in any of the heroines he helps. "

* * * * *

R E V I E W"THE TRAIL OF THE GOLDEN GIRL"

Rex Dolphin
(Mayflower 3/6)

This story is "Modern Blake" with a vengeance. "Hippies" and "Flower People" are not mentioned simply because the story was written before those weirdies hit the headlines, but their equivalents in the grimy, sordid scene of "swinging Britain" - beatniks, lower grade pop-groups, marijuana puffers, and layabouts - are disturbingly convincing.

The plot is a good one, and the backgrounds are as striking as they are varied. A rich man's daughter disappears, and Sexton Blake is engaged to find her. The trail takes the detective, Paula Dane, and Splash Kirby into strange places and through thrilling adventures before the shatteringly unexpected climax.

Some of the dialogue is earthy; some of the episodes are lurid. There is a great deal of violence in the story, and it is violently written. There is a sickening sequence in which a member of the cast is brutally manhandled and then stamped to death in the sand by several dozen loutish beatniks.

Characterisation is vivid. Sexton Blake is extremely well portrayed; Edward Carter, who is grudgingly called "Tinker" on a few occasions, plays a very small part. There is a novel touch in a reference to the Eric Parker bust of Blake in the Baker Street apartments.

It is a story which will almost certainly be popular with the under-twenties. If you are over twenty, and like tough reading, you may enjoy it too. Whether you enjoy it or not, it will make you think.

* * * * *

SEXTON BLAKE IN STIFF COVERS

It has only taken seventy-five years to put stiff covers on Sexton Blake. The two Blake Omnibus volumes are now published, and they make handsome additions to the most self-respecting bookshelves as well as being delightful souvenirs of this unparalleled saga.

Volume No. 1 contains "The Break Out" by Wilfred McNeilly and "Laird of Evil" by Martin Thomas. Plus "This Man Blake," a short history of Sexton Blake. And what a history it is!

Volume No. 2 contains "Murdered at Large" by W. A. Ballinger, and "Let My People Be" by Desmond Reid.

These volumes are intended for libraries, and they are not available in the shops. As indicated in our July issue, the book can only be obtained direct from the publishers, Messrs. Howard Baker, 82 Girdwood Rd., London S.W. 18 at a cost of 9/6 each, including post and package.

Collectors' Digest readers can do their bit towards increasing Blake's following. They can make sure that their local library is aware of the fact that Sexton Blake is now to be had in library editions at, for books of this wordage, extremely genial prices. Naturally, this applies to overseas libraries also.

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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WANTED: MAGNETS, GEMS, POPULARS, years 1917, 1918, 1919.

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LONG-TIME AGOby William Lister

21-years is a long time.

Long enough for the first World War to finish and a second World War to begin (1918-1939) for a second World War to finish and a third to be looming in the background.

Long enough for a new born babe to pass through childhood, schooldays, college, work, marriage, fatherhood and even divorce and death.

Long enough to see a mother and stepfather buried, to see a Silver Wedding come and go.

Long enough for a man of 34 with a reasonable head of hair and reasonably slim, father of a schoolgirl daughter, to become a man of 55 reasonably bald and reasonably fat with a married daughter and two grandsons.

21 years is a long time - a long time ago.

And now our beloved "Collectors' Digest" has come of age. Mind you, I have only known it for about 8 years and in the first days of every month waiting for it to arrive has added pleasure to life.

I believe some of our friends have copies from the first number - how fortunate they are. The first 5 years I kept passing them on hoping to interest others. Still, I have about 3 years' supply to look back on and re-read and I am adding month by month.

C.D. keeps alive for many of us the characters and scenes and authors of our favourite Old Boys' Books, "Nelson Lee," "Magnet," "Sexton Blake" and but for the O.B.B.C. some of these would have been lost in the limbo of the past.

Occasionally one has noticed a touch of sarcasm in the comments and writings of some people, when referring to our hobby. This is nothing to be alarmed at - it is simply that some people do not understand us or our hobby (hence the wisecracks). I have the same fault myself, being unable to understand pot-holers or mountain climbers and when they kill themselves, I cannot understand, and refer to them as dim-wits, (this is not true of course it is only my reaction), so one must expect some reaction from those who fail to understand our 21 years of rejoicing over "Collectors' Digest."

To never think of the past is to have no past.

Some people never keep birthdays or Easter or Whitsuntide or Xmas or wedding anniversaries; dull, unimaginative people - eat, drink, for tomorrow we die, type - no past, hence no future.

Not that keeping these days ever put a penny in my pocket (the price of cards and presents sees to that) but they never did me any

harm so God bless them, I say.

Many people like to look back on old family photos of loved ones, some ageing and some now gone for ever, and their hearts warm to days gone by.

May we not be forgiven if we look on our old "Nelson Lee's," "Magnets," and "Sexton Blakes" with affection? And if we look forward to settling down to read the 21st Birthday issue of "Collectors' Digest" remember someone has said "God gave us memories that we may have roses in December" - and like it or not December will come to us all - so thank God for memory. Memories of the old weeklies - of the first copies of C.D. and a welcome for our anniversary number, looking forward to another 21 years of our favourite monthly.

Yes! 21 years is a long time, not that everyone would agree with me, still it seems a long time.

HAMILTONIANA . . .

THREE MORE FOR THE LIST!

by Laurie Sutton

Among a batch of Gems that I have recently read are numbers 955 ("The Mystery Cricketer") and 668 ("The St. Jim's Hunger Striker.") I was astonished to find that nobody has apparently spotted up till now that 955 was written by G. R. Samways, and surprised that 668 has previously escaped detection as a sub story - it was actually written by F. G. Cook.

This is particularly surprising in that both stories were included in the reprints of the 1930's, 955 as 1585 ("The Mystery Cricket Coach") and 668 as 1624 (original title).

Both 955 and 668 were omitted from the list of substitute stories in the 1964 C.D. Annual feature "And Every Story Not a Gem" but there were a number of other omissions; just one obvious example is 386 ("Finding His Level," by J. N. Pentelow).

Having made a very detailed study of the various sub-writers works over a period of several years I find myself in a position to undertake to identify every story of J.N. Pentelow, and certain stories of G. R. Samways, F. G. Cook, and S. E. Austin with one hundred per cent certainty. Pentelow, of course, apart from his unique style, had an extensive "trade-mark" vocabulary, but other writers had their own little mannerisms and frequent usage of certain words and expressions which reveal themselves in a careful study and extracting of notes

from their stories. A file of Samways stories reveals certain facts that a casual reader would not notice. Apart from creating his own characters, such as Phyllis and Archie Howell, Dennis Carr, Dick Mason, etc, Samways also created two places which were featured exclusively in his own stories. One was the Elysian Cafe in Courtfield, and the other was the town of Burchester, which appeared first in the Magnet but later also in the Gem, including 955 to which I refer. Among Samways "trade marks" were the common use of "So saying,..." to start a paragraph, and "at this (or that) juncture.." These may sound common enough expressions, but my statistics show that they are practically unused by any other Magnet and Gem writers.

Both "So saying..." and "at that juncture.." appear in 955, but quite apart from this the story is absolutely typical of Samways style and characterisation. It is interesting to recall the famous incident in Magnet 436 (Samways) when Prout walked across the sightscreen, causing Wingate to lose his wicket, and the Greyfriars captain called Prout, among other things a "dolt," an "insane imbecile" and a "frabjous dummy." In Gem 955 Ratcliff walks across the sightscreen when Gussy is well set, whereupon Bob Bradshaw (the new school cricket coach) bellows at Ratty, "Hi, you frantic idiot!" As further evidence, Bradshaw's absurd order that every cricketer (senior and junior alike) must in future bat only left-handed could only have appeared in a story by Samways or one of his imitators in farce, such as F. G. Cook.

F. G. Cook was not so prolific as Samways or Pentelow, and only a detailed study has recently enabled me to identify his stories from extensive notes taken on each story read. With regard to Gem 668, there are a couple of typical Cook incidents which should at least prove their non-Hamilton origin. The first is the episode in chapter 2 where Taggles just happens to appear at the foot of the stairs with a pail of whitewash as Selby and Wally D'Arcy go rolling down. In case anybody objects that ink, gum, soot, etc featured extensively in Hamilton's stories I would point out that such incidents invariably had some bearing on the plot, and we knew in advance that the mixture was prepared and why the person possessed it!

The second incident is much more conclusive. Wally D'Arcy has mounted a ladder to speak to Gussy through the window of the punishment room. Selby ascends after him, whereupon Wally goes down past Selby underneath the ladder. F. G. Cook tells us: "The ladder was rather an old one, and several of the rungs were loose. Wally took his penknife from his pocket, and as he climbed down he hacked at the rungs. Mr. Selby, making clumsy efforts to get down, did not perceive what Wally was doing. By the time Wally reached the bottom of

the ladder he had wrenched six rungs from their places, thus leaving a long gap between Mr. Selby and the ground." Imagine removing six ladder rungs (which had just borne a man's weight) with a penknife in less time than it took Selby to descend the ladder! Later Dr. Holmes arrives on the scene: "D'Arcy minor, your disregard of discipline is amazing! Kindly replace those rungs in the ladder, so that Mr. Selby can descend!" One final un-Hamilton quote from the end of the story: "but none was more glad, it is verily believed, than Gussy himself."

If the foregoing fails to convince I would add a few examples from the F. G. Cook vocabulary, with Gem numbers of other Cook stories in which they also occur: ..like a Paladin of old (652); "You dunder-headed jabberwock" (651); wondering mightily (651); semblance of a smile (621.651); face went pink (621); suiting his action to his word (645); the Cloisters (622, etc) - I don't think C.H. ever referred to the Cloisters at St. Jims, but only at Greyfriars; the Rylcombe Lane (656, etc.) - Cook and other sub writers usually referred to the Rylcombe Lane, but Hamilton always just Rylcombe Lane; a choleric look (621.652, etc.)

Gem 386 is so clearly the work of J. N. Pentelow that it is unnecessary to go into details. The story creaks along in the inevitable Pentelow style and, of course, there is the usual quota of "notions," etc.

Going back to G. R. Samways I recently discovered, quite by chance, that he was the author of the Gem football serial "Renton of the Rovers," which appeared in 1920 under the pen-name of Paul Masters. I had been reading the Levison - Dirk Power series when the word "Burchester" caught my eye in the serial when turning the pages. I only needed to read the first page and to run my eyes down the rest. There was the paragraph commencing "So saying,..." Apart from this, two schools mentioned in the story (Grandcourt and St. Clive's) featured in Samways St. Jim's story in Gem 681, and in another story that I recall and could dig out. Finally, I would confirm that S.O.L. 15 ("Football Heroes") already acknowledged as a sub story, was also the work of Samways.

* * * * *

FRANK RICHARDS AND THE ISLE OF THANET

By Brian Sayer

"I came to live in Thanet," Frank Richards once told me between puffs at his pipe, "because I heard that no one ever dies here."

- The twinkle in his eyes conveyed that he did not really believe

that old local legend - but there was no denying that in spirit at least he remained ever young.

It is the air, clear, bracing, often with a cold nip that probably gave birth to myth of immortality.

The fresh air, lots of sunshine and golden sands are the reasons why (dare I say it?) the island has for so long been a "magnet" for holidaymakers and retirement couples.

Bunter, we are told in the Easter Cruise series (Magnet 1314 "Saved From The Sea") liked Margate.

"And there was one thing he specially liked about Margate - the air made a fellow feel hungry."

Earlier, Bob Cherry declared that it was "jolly." Said the author: "It was difficult for anybody not to feel jolly in the bracing air of Margate."

Frank Richards used Thanet as a backcloth for Magnet stories at least three times in the Magnets of the 1930's.

W.G.B., we are told in "Saved From The Sea," knew every place between Westgate and Broadstairs. Potter and Green talked about going to the Winter Gardens.

Of course Bunter knew about Margate and other places in Thanet: so did Frank. For some thirty years the island was his home.

I was born in Margate. By one of those intriguing coincidences my first happy acquaintance with Greyfriars came as a small boy after world war two with a few Magnets which included the Muccolini Circus series, part of which was set in Margate.

Spurred on by youthful imagination, I used to cycle in the woody Kingsgate area on the fringe of Margate, hoping that by some magical chance I would meet Wharton and Co somewhere along those leafy lanes.

Alas, there was no jingle of bells from five fellows on jiggers with a fat perspiring Owl trailing behind.

I might, had I realised it, have met their creator on a cycle jaunt from his nearby home.

In "The Boy Who Knew Too Much" (1490), Bunter's fat career nearly came to an end in Thanet at the hands of the rascally circus master.

Lured along the beach, Bunter was left on the sands at a point where the beach between Margate and Kingsgate was flooded by the incoming tide. Luckily, Ferrers Locke and Wharton and Co. were on hand to rescue him.

Curiously, Thanet was cast again in the last series of the Magnet. Bob Cherry remarked that the weather was "tip top for a pull along to Broadstairs or Ramsgate" in "The Unseen Enemy" (1678).

As in other Magnet and Gem yarns, caves and the sea played an important role in that spy series. The real thing was only a short walk from Frank's home.

Frank was no doubt referring to his Kingsgate home when he wrote in his autobiography of "some little property on the south east coast where he now lived."

The area became a danger zone in wartime and Frank moved to London.

He returned in peacetime to find "no real damage had been done in the little hamlet, though places nearby had been badly bombed."

He added: "five years neglect" had left his property "in a shocking state."

Rose Lawn, Frank's home, was in Percy Avenue, Kingsgate - a pleasant, almost rural part of Broadstairs.

At the bottom of Percy Avenue are grassy cliffs which drop to the beach and form delightful bays (and no cockle and whelk stalls within sight!)

In one direction lies "Merry Margate" - as Frank termed it - and the other, Broadstairs and Ramsgate.

It was natural that Frank should put Bunter on a donkey (and off again rather sharply!) on a trip to the seaside.

I have since wondered, however, how we missed hearing him crunching Margate rock or becoming sticky with candyfloss.

And Bunter on the scenic railway or in the ghost train seems too good to have been missed.

Frank lived quietly in Thanet. Indeed, the majority of locals, though familiar in one way or another with W.G.B., did not realise that his creator was in their midst.

Broadstairs takes great pride in the fact that Charles Dickens penned some of his work in that resort. There is an annual 'Dickens Festival' comprising various Dickens-style events.

Similarly, perhaps Kingsgate - which to me, at any rate, means 'Hamiltonia' - will one day boast of its famous resident.

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 116. There In His Noisy Mansion ---

Having been a schoolmaster for a great many years, I may possibly be able to turn the spotlight upon that species without giving offence to other members of the brotherhood. For when, treacherously, I have

a chuckle at the expense of schoolmasters, I am laughing at myself.

Authors can make schoolmasters. Charles Hamilton made plenty, all much from the same mould. In real life a good schoolmaster can never be made. A good schoolmaster must be born.

I forget who it was who made the slightly spiteful, and mildly amusing, comment that a schoolmaster is a man among boys and a boy among men. Generally speaking, it is not true, of course. Schoolmasters throw their weight about in class. They do not expect their remarks to be challenged, and they are not challenged. So accustomed are they to having their own way in class, that they anticipate the same success in adult life. And what they expect they usually get, for people are often accepted at their own valuations.

Most schoolmasters, as a result of their calling, are more or less dogmatic, and many of us, without realising it, carry our dogmatism into adult life. Chesterton once observed that a teacher who is not dogmatic is simply a teacher who is not teaching.

What do we remember of our own teachers? Surely we hardly thought of them as real people at all. We regarded them as brainy people, infallible in their teaching, but so simple when it came to the normal facts of life. It never occurred to us that they might be sensitive, that they might have their own frustrations, or that they were, in fact, ordinary human beings like our own mums and dads.

When we assemble the staff of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, or Rookwood we look upon a gathering of theatrical characters - a group of puppets - a cast. And that, for boy readers, at any rate, is just how it should be. A cast of characters. Is not that just how we remember our own teachers?

And just as they intended, too, for how else could they preserve their private personality except by assuming a public mask?

The Hamilton schoolmasters, on the surface, were true to life. But in life, the real schoolmaster removes his mask when he gets away from his work, except in the rare cases when the mask develops into part of the human personality. We only saw the Hamilton masters with their masks on.

With the exception of Quelch and Prout, all the Hamilton masters were like characters in a theatre set. And Quelch and Prout obtained their characterisation by accident with the passing of time. Quelch soon gained the reputation of being a severe but just master, and there was nothing particularly remarkable in that. It was not really till the Rebel Series that the real characterisation of Quelch was developed, and that came as a foil to Wharton. In the Stacey Series,

Quelch even seemed out of character. We could not accept that the shrewd Quelch should be taken in by a cunning schoolboy. Of course, he was not out of character at all, for schoolmasters are only human like everybody else. It's just that we tend to regard them as something different. A cunning schoolboy in real life can take in a shrewd schoolmaster, for most of us are not nearly as shrewd as we think we are.

Prout originated as a comedy creation. It was as a foil for Coker that he developed as a masterpiece of character creation - weighty, pompous, and overpowering. Magnificently jealous of his own dignity, like all we schoolmasters are.

Few real schoolmasters escape being dubbed with a nickname. We are just lucky if it happens to be not too offensive. A nickname can be a symbol of dislike or it may be a sign of condescending affection. Where were the nicknames among the Hamilton masters?

The best was "Old Pompous," shortened to "Pompey" just as would certainly have happened in real life. "Pompey" was Mr. Greely of Rookwood, who, in many ways, was an echo of Prout.

A good one was "The Acid Drop" for Hacker, and we never heard of that till the Magnet was an old paper. Smedley was "The Creeper and Crawler," which was more of a description than a nickname. It was not nearly slick enough. Ratcliff was "Ratty" which was merely cause and effect. Were there any others among the permanent cast? If so, I can't bring them to mind.

In real life, almost all masters, popular or unpopular, have nicknames, and the origin of those nicknames is usually lost in the mists of time.

Hamilton was more successful with his older adults, but he had the odd quirk of speaking of the older staff as though they were elderly. He would refer, on occasion, to the Headmasters, or Quelch, or Prout, or Bootles, as the "old gentlemen," when they cannot have been anything of the sort. They cannot have been much more than middle-aged, for it would not have made sense. Of course, he did the same thing with the parents and relatives. Redwing's father was often "the old sailorman;" Harry Wharton's uncle was "the old colonel;" Levison's father was "the old gentleman."

This was clearly a weakness, giving as it did, a false impression. Nevertheless, Hamilton's older characters were more successful than the younger ones. So far as I was concerned, Lascelles and Dalton, to name but two of the younger staff, seldom rang the bell. They seemed artificial and coy.

So, among that masked cast, we had the severe, the verbose, the pompous, the fluffy, the disagreeable. We never really knew which were good teachers and which were not. We could assume that Monsieur Charpentier was not a good teacher, for he was portrayed as a poor disciplinarian, but, for the rest, there was no indication.

With Jimmy McCann, Hamilton gave us the reforming Headmaster. As I have commented before, "The School for Slackers" failed because the Headmaster never succeeded. The idea was a good one, and the characterisation was sound. It could have been a smash hit in a long story in which the Headmaster won in the end. But, in a series, the Headmaster could not win, for that would bring the series to an end. So, by and large, the idea was a flop, even though some individual tales made good reading.

Mr. Hamilton might well have tried out the same idea at Highcliffe, which suffered from "dry rot" due to an inefficient Headmaster and staff. But if Highcliffe had been reformed, it would not have been Highcliffe as we knew it and wanted it. So the dry rot remained in Highcliffe.

Talbot Baines Reed gave a brilliant little cameo of the zealous, reforming Head in the first couple of chapters of "A Dog With a Bad Name." Here, the result of the reform was tragedy. The loutish nineteen-year old, driven from his rut into a Rugby scrum, seriously injured a much smaller and younger lad who was crippled for life. The weakness of the idea was that so big a fellow should be playing at all in a game with much smaller boys, but it made a basis for a fine story, and the picture of the reforming Head is memorable.

So Charles Hamilton gave us a commendable cast of masters. We salute him. We remember those masters with affection.

All the same, it is to Goldsmith we have to look for the true, simple sketch of the schoolmaster. He wipes the smug smile from our faces, and leaves us with a tear on our eyelashes.

"Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face."

As Bob Cherry might have said: "Have a care. Quelchy has a nasty glint in his eye."

"Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee,

At all his jokes, for many a joke had he."

Any schoolboy knows that his master likes to crack feeble jokes - and it is expedient to laugh at them dutifully.

And perhaps Goldsmith really sums us up:

"In arguing too, the parson owned his skill,

For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still."

Mmmmm! Does he mean that, with British grit, we never say die? Or could he mean that we never admit ourselves in the wrong?

As we have done so much quoting about schoolmasters, perhaps it is as well to close with the words of Seneca: "It is when the gods hate a man with uncommon abhorrence that they drive him into the profession of a schoolmaster."

So let's shed a tear for Messrs. Ratcliff, Selby and Manders. Obviously the gods made them what they were.

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

GEORGE SELLARS: I think the first St. Jim's stories in the old Pluck Library did a great deal in making Charles Hamilton a great writer of school stories. I have only read a few of these of Blake & Co. in the Gem reprinted later, and very sad to say never read the arrival of one of my most loved characters as, of course, it was never reprinted. I refer to the Hon. A. A. D'Arcy (Gussy). In my opinion most of his first fresh bloom work was written in those grand old Blue Gems in his early days when I could imagine C.H. was well under 30 years of age, so youthful and fresh in his style. Yes, same as you dear editor I think the old Blue Gem was always his first love, and some of his greatest work.

WANTED: UNION JACK LIBRARY, especially 1312, 927, 869, 868, 1333, 1329, 1323, 1476, 1480, 1484, 1500, 1504, 1508, 1513, 1526, 1529, 1493; ALDINE BUFFALO BILL 4d NOVELS, especially 66, 119, 164; BOYS' FRIEND 4d (NEW SERIES), especially 8, 9, 12, 28, 30, 36, 37, 38; NEWNES "BLACK BESS" LIBRARY (NEW SERIES) 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16; MONSTER LIBRARY, CHUMS, SCOUTS ANNUALS, SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY - List of available items with prices appreciated.

ROBERT W. STORY, 34 ABERDEEN CRESCENT, BRAMALEA, via Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

WANTED: MAGNETS 862 - 865, 1038, 1043, 1047, 1049, 1118, 1125, 1208, 1312, 1313, 1316 and others; also Gems 1023, 1024, and Hamilton B.F. Libraries. Will buy or exchange. Magnets and S.O.Ls. for sale.

NEIL BECK, 77 HIGHDOWN ROAD, LEWES, SUSSEX.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held August 22nd

The attendance was thirteen, a good turn out considering two very regular members, Ivan Webster and Norman Gregory were on holiday.

A spate of correspondence was to hand, amongst which was a thank you letter from Roger Jenkins on his welcome to our meeting last month. Also one from Fleetway Publications informing us that the recent publication "The Best of the Magnet and Gem" has been sufficiently successful for them to consider another book in the near future. A letter from Molly Allison concerned with the proposed Chesterfield reunion fixed the date at 15th October, a Sunday. We are at present awaiting confirmation from the Portland Hotel, Chesterfield, granting us a booking. About 25 members of the Northern and Midland clubs seem likely to go.

The programme was entirely in the hands of the acting secretary for the evening, although an impromptu item was included at the end. This was a reading by Gerald Price's eleven year old son of a Bunter story he had written himself. We were all delighted with it.

The programme consisted of a quiz with all the questions in rhyme (these were taken from the 1920 Holiday Annual), a reading from Magnet No. 1519 and a discussion based on George Orwell's criticisms of Charles Hamilton's writing in his now very well-known essay, "Boys' Weeklies."

The quiz was unusual and proved amusing and not too difficult. All the rhymes described Greyfriars characters and these had to be written down. Tom Porter and Mervyn Adams were winners with eight correct out of ten.

The reading described a stand up row between Mr. Quelch and the snobbish Mr. Mobbs of Highcliffe with Mobby getting very much the worst of it. This was a brand of humour Charles Hamilton did superbly well and the reading caused much amusement.

The discussion dragged on while we partook of coffee and cakes, the last named provided very generously by our worthy chairman George Chatham. Tom Porter said that much abuse had been poured upon Orwell by Hamilton devotees but the fact was that the essay contains praise as well as criticism, though he thought Orwell had not read the old papers thoroughly enough to give a just appraisal.

Charles Hamilton was defended by Gerald Price and Bert Fleming who thought that Orwell's criticisms were beside the point. The discussion could well be pursued at another meeting.

The Anniversary number and Collectors' Item brought by Tom Porter were Boys' Friend Library No. 504 "In the Days of the Knights" by Alfred Armitage (the Collectors' item) and Magnet 1227 "A Dog with a Bad Name," published on 22nd August, 1931. This was 36 years old to the day.

The raffle winners were John Price and Ted Davey and the proceeds were as usual to buy books for our library.

We meet again on September 26th and we hope for yet another good attendance.

J. F. Bellfield
Correspondent

LONDON

The fifth Annual Lunch Party of the club took place on Sunday, September 3rd. The rendezvous on this occasion was the Royal Star Hotel, Maidstone. Twenty one members etc., boarded the now familiar 'Claude Duval' coach at Victoria and had a good run down. First meetings were in the Cavalier bar of the hotel where those coming by their transport joined the coach party. Then proceeding to the Oak Room of the hotel, the hosts of the meeting, John and Mrs. Wernham, welcomed one and all. The two honoured guests of the luncheon were Miss Edith Hood and Mr. C. H. Chapman. A very fine menu had been selected and the souvenir cards were the gift of the President, John Wernham. John had chosen some illustrations of "The Boy's Own Paper" to grace the menu cards and this year's one will be a worthy companion to its four predecessors. After grace had been said by the President a very fine lunch was enjoyed. Then came the toasts, the first by Len Packman, who made a very fine, short and concise speech. The toast was "The Old Boys' Book Club." Following this toast, it was the turn of Roger Jenkins to propose the toast to the guests, this after another fine speech given by Roger in his own inimitable style.

After the lunch it was coach and other transport to the Charles Hamilton museum. Here the first item was the inspection of the museum, truly a collectors' dream of delight. Those for whom it was, their first visit, and those who had been before, found plenty to interest them. After a lengthy perusal by all it was up to the meeting room and the cinema show. Films shown dealt with "Roselawn,"

Frank Richards, C. H. Chapman's drawings and the one showing Gerald Campion taking both Billy and Walter Bunter parts on the occasion when they changed places for a short time at Greyfriars. Several other interesting short films were shown and then Len Packman read two club reports from Newsletters one and twenty four. He conducted a quiz from the latter and it was chairman Don who was the winner.

An excellent reading by Roger Jenkins on early "Magnets" and the characters who appeared in them, followed. After this Marjorie Norris read a story from her new book, "Give A Dog a Bad Name." This about her brother Tony Bilbow and his dog was greatly enjoyed. The book is to be published shortly by Hutchinsons at 21/-.

An excellent tea was supplied by the hosts but John Wernham refused to reveal the title of his next publication. Nevertheless all enjoyed the day's proceedings and coming after the Eastwood House, Greyfriars, Friardale, and Ashford gatherings it was the delightful drive homeward for all, Mr. Chapman joining the coach party. Thus six weeks to the homely atmosphere of 35, Woodhouse Road, Leytonstone, London, E.11 for the next meeting, hosts Reuben and Mrs. Godsave. The date, Sunday, October 15th.

Uncle Benjamin.

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 9th September, 1967

Even though the O.B.B.C. does not indulge in a "Summer Recess" (perish the thought) there is always an air of holidays-over-let's-get-down-to-it about the September meeting. When the proceedings were opened by the Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, though one or two regulars were absent, we were pleased to see Alan Barker, Breeze Bentley and Norman Smith again, and in all eighteen were present.

The minutes and finance disposed of, Gerry Allison read an item about Nelson Lee memories from Northerner II in the "Yorkshire Post." Letters from postal members contained holiday news, and a general discussion followed re holidays in Ireland, several OBBC-ites having favoured the Emerald Isle this year.

Schoolmaster members, Geoffrey Wilde and Breeze Bentley reported lending "Magnets" to convalescing children of colleagues. Apparently said children could not be prised away from them - proof again that the old magic can enthrall modern youngsters still.

The programme then started with the next instalment of our Greyfriars yarn. Jack Wood, giving the last but two episode tied a few ends together. Bunter and Wibley, missing for a week, are prisoners

in the smugglers caves which lead to Greyfriars. Ferrers Locke (on the trail of the stolen space-craft plans) is revealed as one of the mysterious unknowns, and, on the lighter side, Coker once more rashly invading the Rag, departs decorated with ink, soot and glue! Over now to Ron Hodgson for next month.

A break for tasty sandwiches, tea and biscuits gave a chance of general gossip and future programme arranging.

A quiz was next by Gerry Allison. He read initials of Greyfriars characters and the answers had to be called out. Some responses came in chorus, but others, with not-so-familiar middle names, took a little pondering. Jack Wood had most, with George Riley and Mollie Allison seconds, and Elsie Taylor, Breeze Bentley and Ron Hodgson, were jointly third.

A talk which Cliff Webb had sent to Gerry, was read by John Roberts. It was entitled "Why I am an Old Boy," and the note it struck found a response in all present. Especially the contention that appreciation of these stories of past decades does not mean that one is living in the past.

About twenty minutes remained, and the Secretary provided four items for a "20 Questions" session. Team, Kenneth Whittaker, George Riley, Breeze Bentley and Alan Barker, did very well, getting all four objects, although "TEA IN HALL" was a near thing.

Next meeting, Saturday, 14th October, 1967.

M. L. Allison

Hon. Sec.

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

R. ACRAMAN (Ruislip): I am rather at a loss to understand reader Jack Cook's letter in Postbag last month, following my article in the previous month's magazine. Surely, since I stated that I was previously a 95% Hamiltonia man it is obvious that I am completely familiar with Rookwood, the Benbow, the Rio Kid and Cliff House - all of which I have read thoroughly and enjoyed as a lad and also as an adult. Since it was only this year I started seriously reading E.S.B. my praise for the writer surely extends to all his writings including Sexton Blake - a collection of whose works I already have. I am afraid reader Cook is rather off the rails here, since it must also be quite clear that my article was not addressed to obvious E.S.B.

stalwarts, such as Bob Blythe, Len & Josie Packman, Charlie Wright, John & Neil Beck etc., etc., all of whom need no telling of the attractions of E.S.B.

Had any Nelson Lee man written, I would have expected something along the lines of "Your article is just what was wanted to let other soloists see what they are missing in E.S.B., and a much-needed shot in the arm for Nelson Lee" instead of which I am left with the impression that his remarks are ill-chosen, and that he considers my article a reflection on himself for some reason. If this is the case, I hope my remarks above clear the point but it cannot be denied that E.S.B.'s works deserve wider recognition in the Club by Club members.

Incidentally, in closing, I would add for the guidance of readers that the first five serials I read (unfortunately not printed) were:- The Ezra Quirke series; the Banishing of Bernard Forrest; the Return of Bernard Forrest; the Death of Church and the First Northestrian series.

RAY BENNETT (Solihull): I know I am voicing the sentiments of many when I say we do appreciate your efforts with the C.D., keeping interest sustained in surely the most delightful hobby of all, which has also made many friends for me in 21 years, without whom my life would be poorer.

TOM JOHNSON (Neston): Congratulations to C.D. on its 21st Birthday. The arrival each month of this grand little mag is indeed a red letter day for me. I look forward to it immensely. I am probably one of the "oldest" subscribers - as my first copy (No. 3) was sent to me by Herbert, and I've had every copy since. Long may it flourish.

LEN WORMULL (Romford):

21 years of C.D. - what a wonderful achievement! The editor says he is lazy by nature. I only wish I had a fraction of the energy he puts into this noble enterprise; the job must be all-consuming. C.D. already holds the "key" to success. Its fresh arrival each month provides the same thrill in adulthood as did the old papers in boyhood. It is the vital link in holding together the chain of happy memories. Happy birthday greetings - with the hope of many more to come!

O. W. WADHAM (Lower Hutt, New Zealand): The July issue of Collectors Digest, plainly postmarked July 1, reached me on August 28th. I notice J. S. Elliott comments: "There is quite a lot which could be written about Spring Books, a detail of which O. W. Wadham seems

woefully unaware." Quite true. I never knew Spring Books existed till this year. They were published at a time when I was a member of the N.Z. Permanent Army, and, serving for 21 years, I had little chance to renew acquaintance with boys' papers. Maybe J. S. Elliott could supply for C.D. some of those details of which I am unaware.

H. G. MARTIN (Orpington): To think that "Collectors' Digest" has reached its 250th issue - and I've missed 237 of them! Yes, I'm that much of a "new boy." I was introduced to it by Laurie Sutton, who lives at the other end of the town, and he also gave me the opportunity to handle and savour again the very first "Magnet" I ever read.

Although during the years 1927-1934 I sampled most of the boys' literature of the day, and found great pleasure in the pages of "Wizard," "Hotspur," "Bullseye," "Gem" and the rest, it was ultimately to Greyfriars that I gave my unswerving allegiance.

It was that first story - "Six in the Soup" - which sparked off the interest, and although it took a little while to enter completely into this new and fascinating world in which I found myself, with its myriad characters, its history, geography, background and tradition, Hamilton's Kentish school had clearly cast its spell. Whilst other papers were "swapped," my "Magnets" were jealously hoarded so that by the time I left school I must have accumulated 300 or more. Then, during a "spring-clean," they were consigned to the dustbin by my mother who, in all fairness, did not know just what they meant to me. If I was unhappy then - and it took me weeks to recover from my loss - the mere thought nearly drives me frantic now!

Of course I grew up, acquired other interests and read more sophisticated literature - but always lurking in the background was Greyfriars and the friends I had made there. Then, like so many others, I found as I approached middle-age a re-awakened passion for them which was something more than mere nostalgia.

To-day I must largely live with my memories, which are still so sharp and clear that, in the space of an hour a year or so ago, I was able to jot down the names of 65 of the scholars (including some of the lesser personalities) and classify most of them in their forms. All the masters, too, I remembered, as well as such "background" characters as Mrs. Mible and P.C. Tozer.

I have been able to acquire a few odd copies and hope one day - when other commitments permit - to seriously begin collecting. In the meantime what a blessing is "Collectors' Digest."

One thing is certain. Although I have a tidy-minded wife and two destructive children, these will not suffer the same fate as my lamented "Magnets":

MR. BUDDLE'S

GREATEST

By Eric Fayne

It was a warm afternoon. As the heat from the autumn sun penetrated the cloth of his jacket, Mr. Buddle moved his shoulders in mild discomfort, and wondered whether he might have been a little premature in donning his winter woollies.

He had enjoyed his tea on the shady verandah of Ye Olde Devonshire Tea Shoppe. Now he had crossed the narrow High Street of the village of Everslade, and he found himself on the sunny side, gazing into a window of Mr. Passenger's second-hand shop.

Mr. Passenger's shop was double-fronted. On one side he had on display a considerable variety of junk - aged oil-stoves, an unusually heavy-looking bicycle with rusty handlebars, a perambulator with tired springs, and a number of pots and pans of all shapes and sizes.

It was the other side, however, which interested Mr. Buddle. Second-hand books of every type were laid out in array in the space behind Mr. Passenger's left-hand window. When he was in Everslade, Mr. Buddle usually paused for a few minutes to gaze in at the books Mr. Passenger had on display. Up till the present, Mr. Buddle had never, in all his years on the staff at Slade, crossed the threshold of the second-hand book shop. He was about to do so now.

There were about fifty books spread out to make a window display. No doubt Mr. Passenger had selected the less-worn of his stock, along with some which had lurid dust-jackets, to tempt a prospective customer who stood, like Mr. Buddle, on the outside looking in.

For a while Mr. Buddle stood in doubt, thoughtfully scanning one of the volumes. It nestled snugly between Hall & Knight's Algebra and Elinor Glyn's "Three Weeks." Suddenly, as he realised that the sun was getting uncomfortably warm, he made up his mind and entered the shop.

It was dusky inside. It was hot. There was a decidedly fusty smell.

A big bald-headed man, in shirt sleeve yellow braces, and with a cigarette in the corner of his mouth, came forward. He eyed Mr. Buddle lazily without speaking.

"There is a book in the centre of your window. It is called, I think, the Greyfriars Holiday Annual. That one there!" Mr. Buddle and Mr. Passenger leaned over the low partition which divided the window display from the shop proper, and Mr. Buddle pointed. "Could I, perhaps, have a look at it?"

Using his tongue to transfer his cigarette from one corner of his mouth to the other, Mr. Passenger stretched out an arm over the partition. With a grunt he managed to withdraw the book indicated, and haul it out of the window. He banged on it and blew on it to dispel some dust, and then passed it to Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Buddle scanned the cover which bore the words Greyfriars Holiday Annual, and the date 1922. He flicked over a few pages and was intrigued by what he saw.

He glanced at Mr. Passenger.

"How much?"

"Four bob!"

Mr. Buddle raised his eyebrows.

"That's expensive, isn't it? Four shillings for a second-hand book."

Mr. Passenger spat out his cigarette and put his foot on it.

"Three bob to you, then - and it's a gift at that price."

Mr. Buddle took out his purse, and extracted three shillings which he placed on the grimy counter. He held out the book to Mr. Passenger.

"Thank you. Perhaps you will wrap it up for me."

Mr. Passenger glared.

"Wrap it up?" He sounded as though he could scarcely credit his ears. "You don't want much for three bob, do you? We don't wrap up second-hand books."

Mr. Buddle tried to think of a devastating reply, but none was forthcoming.

Tucking the book under his arm, he emerged into the sunshine. He felt rather conspicuous with the naked book under his arm, and hoped that he would meet none of his pupils.

He had only taken a few steps when he saw Mr. and Mrs. Fromo coming towards him on the narrow pavement. Mr. Fromo was the senior housemaster at Slade, a rather bulky man with irritable tufted eyebrows, and an unusually large nose. He taught Latin and Greek to the upper forms in the school.

Mr. Buddle said "Bother!" under his breath. He raised his hat politely to Mrs. Fromo, and Mr. Fromo returned the salute.

"You have been making a purchase, my dear Buddle?" observed Mr. Fromo pleasantly.

"A present for a young relative," explained Mr. Buddle. He turned pink.

"Marvellous weather for the time of year, Mr. Buddle," put in Mrs. Fromo.

Mr. Buddle agreed that it was. Indeed, marvellous weather for the time of year, and Mr. and Mrs. Fromo walked on.

But Mr. Buddle's ordeal was not yet over. He had only gone a few hundred yards further when a young man emerged from a shop. It was Mr. Crayford, who was sports master at Slade.

Breathing hard, Mr. Buddle pushed the Holiday Annual further under his arm. So vigorously, in fact, that it slipped out behind him and fell on the pavement.

Before Mr. Buddle could collect his property, Mr. Crayford had darted forward and picked it up. The sports master glanced at the book, and grinned. He handed it to Mr. Buddle.

"Do you want to be an engine driver when you grow up?" enquired Mr. Crayford. He walked on, laughing.

For the second time that afternoon, Mr. Buddle struggled to think of a devastating reply, but once again he struggled in vain.

Pinker than ever, Mr. Buddle hurried on his way. When he saw two big Slade fellows - Antrobus, the Slade captain, and Scarlet, a prefect - coming towards him, Mr. Buddle dived into a newsagent's shop, and bought a newspaper. It came in handy to wrap up the Holiday Annual.

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Mr. Buddle enjoyed himself with his Holiday Annual. Indeed, he found it fascinating. Before retiring to bed that night, he browsed through it, thoroughly savouring its varied contents.

When eventually he went to bed, Mr. Buddle started on one of the stories. It was entitled "To Save His Honour." He had not been reading for long before he realised that he had read the story before. The discovery intrigued him.

"Undoubtedly a story from the Gem," mused Mr. Buddle. He was quite well acquainted with the Gem, and liked it immensely. Any Gem story was worth reading a second time, in his opinion. He settled down to read.

It took him three successive nights to complete his reading of that story, which was a long one.

By Saturday he was reading a story about Rookwood School. Mr. Buddle was not well acquainted with Rookwood, though he had come across it on one occasion.

For Sunday there was a lengthy narrative around a school named Greyfriars. Mr. Buddle found it entertaining. He had come to the conclusion that his outlay of three shillings on that Holiday Annual had been money well spent.

On Monday evening, having marked a set of exercises worked by one of his English classes, he settled himself comfortably in his armchair to read the last story which really interested him in his Holiday Annual. It was a story of the boys of St. Jim's, and, with a touch of sentimentality, Mr. Buddle had purposely kept it to wind up his glut of that type of reading.

The autumn dusk had fallen, and he had switched on his study light. From a distance came the sound of boyish voices as Slade fellows, with their evening "prep" finished, betook themselves to the Common Rooms for a gossip or to the gymnasium for some sparring.

Mr. Buddle, however, was undisturbed by the distant sounds of youthful high spirits. He was immersed in his second story of St. Jim's provided by the Holiday Annual.

After a while he sat back for a few minutes to rest his eyes, and to think over what he had read. He was about to resume his reading when a tap came at the door.

Mr. Buddle grunted. It still wanted

nearly an hour before he would be due to carry out a junior dormitory inspection, and he did not relish any encroachment on his limited spare time.

"Come in!" he called out.

A man entered. He was carrying a square box by a handle bolted to the top. For a moment Mr. Buddle thought it was a portable sewing-machine.

The man closed the door. He approached the table, and put down his box. He panted a little, as though his burden had been heavy.

Mr. Buddle stared at him in amazement.

"My name is Glyn," said the newcomer.

"Glyn!" echoed Mr. Buddle. The name seemed familiar. He scanned his visitor.

Mr. Buddle's first impression had been that the intruder was a young man, but at closer quarters the lines were evident in his forehead. Deep lines. The hair which had seemed flaxen from a distance was actually white. He was of below average height. He wore a shabby mackintosh.

"What do you want with me, Mr. Glyn?" asked Mr. Buddle. He spoke sourly. "You should not visit my study unannounced. This is a private part of the college."

"I have made a remarkable scientific discovery," said Mr. Glyn. His voice was low, with just the suspicion of a lisp. "I felt that you would be interested, Mr. Buddle."

"A scientific discovery!" ejaculated Mr. Buddle. He rose to his feet, and went on irritably. "I am not interested in science, sir. Much of the misery has been brought to this world by science. You must be seeking our science master - Mr. Crathie. You will find his study farther along the corridor."

The strange little man shook his head.

"No, Mr. Buddle, I am not seeking Mr. Crathie. I have purposely come to you. You are aware that the most astounding strides have been made in science in the last thirty years. Things which we accept as normal to-day would have been regarded by our grandparents as impossible - magic - quite unbelievable."

"No doubt!" said Mr. Buddle. "Well?"

"To-day my invention is beyond belief, in the same way that radio and electricity, talking pictures and air travel, would have been beyond belief to our grandparents."

The man lowered his voice to little more than a whisper. "Mr. Buddle, I have solved the problem of the seventh dimension."

"The seventh dimension!" muttered Mr. Buddle in wonder.

Mr. Glyn smiled. He looked more youthful as he smiled.

"I have conquered Time, Mr. Buddle. I have long realised that all eras - past, present, and future - are in existence together on different planes. By turning a switch, I can transfer a person from one plane to another - from the present to the past, from the past to the future. I can take you back into the dear dead days. No longer are they beyond recall. If you will, I can provide you with a visit to any year of the present century."

Mr. Buddle gave a half-suppressed snort. He took a couple of paces forward.

"This is sheer nonsense!" he rapped out. "Mr. Glyn, please leave my study, or I must ring for a servant to escort you out."

"It is not nonsense, Mr. Buddle. My machine is here. I call it the electronic, radiophonic, anti-clock. You can test it for yourself. You will come to no harm. At present my range is limited. At the moment, about thirty years is the utmost I can take you back in time. After further research, I shall be able to convey my passengers to an infinitely greater depth. It will be possible to discover whether Bacon wrote Shakespeare and how the Druids managed to convey those huge rocks to Stonehenge."

Interested in spite of himself, Mr. Buddle leaned over the table. Mr. Glyn unfastened strong clips and removed the cover of his box. A queer-looking machine - if it were a machine at all - was disclosed. It consisted of a thick rod of metal, with metal handles projecting from it. Insulated wires disappeared among a mass of valves.

"A most odd device," observed Mr. Buddle dubiously.

"So far, I have conquered the seventh dimension. In time I shall do more. Where, at this moment, I can only take you into the past, there will come a time when I shall be able to take you into the future. You will be able to pay a visit to the year nineteen-ninety-nine, Mr. Buddle."

"Perish the thought!" yapped Mr.

Buddle. "Under no circumstances would I wish to see into the future." Solemnly he quoted the words of his favourite hymn: "God holds the key of all unknown - and I am glad."

Mr. Glyn shrugged his shoulders. "Nevertheless, you will accompany me on a brief trip into the immediate past. You will enjoy that. I may say that I have paid several visits to the early years of the century. Yesterday I had lunch at the Hotel Cecil in the Strand, in the year 1920. I have always returned to our own day and age without difficulty. There is no danger, Mr. Buddle."

Mr. Buddle wrinkled his brows in thought.

He said slowly: "A visit into the past. It would be pleasant, just for a very short time, to find oneself a young man - even a boy - again."

Mr. Glyn shook his head.

"You misunderstand, Mr. Buddle.

Though we may go back half a century, you yourself will not change. I shall merely transfer you, as you are, from one plane to another. At the present time you are sixty --"

"At the present time I am fifty," snapped Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Glyn bowed.

"I was merely speaking in round figures. You are fifty now. You will be fifty when we alight in the year nineteen hundred or thereabouts. I cannot change human beings, but I can change their planes. In a few years time, families will go back into history to spend their summer holidays. 'Where are you spending your holiday this year?' someone will ask. And the reply will come 'We are going into the days of Good Queen Anne.' Fascinating, is it not, Mr. Buddle?"

"I don't believe it," said Mr. Buddle.

"You will see!" promised Mr. Glyn.

He pointed to the machine. "Hold one of the handles, Mr. Buddle. With your other hand, grip my shoulder. I must keep one hand free to manipulate the controls. Do not be afraid. You will not go into orbit. Once you seize a handle, you cannot let go till I switch off. You will feel but little - merely a floating sensation."

Mr. Buddle hesitated. The experience was so strange - so bizarre. The

remarkable Mr. Glyn spoke sharply.

"Take a handle!"

Mechanically, Mr. Buddle took a handle. Mr. Glyn stretched out a hand, and twisted first one knob and then another. He adjusted a clock-like device. He pressed a button.

There was a deep hum from the machine. The light in the study snapped out; there was a sudden burst of sunshine.

"Down!" ejaculated Mr. Buddle.

"Yesterday's sunset!" came the hissing voice of Mr. Glyn.

The hum grew louder. Mr. Buddle was conscious of motion - ceaseless motion - an odd whirl in which his senses grew giddy. Flashing light and dark, like Firework Night gone mad. A sensation of rushing -- rushing --

"We are there!" came the voice of Mr. Glyn.

Mr. Buddle released the handle. The machine was resting on the top of a low wall on the verge of a green, grassy common. The sun was warm. The sky was cloudless.

"Where are we?" demanded Mr. Buddle.

Mr. Glyn was pale with excitement. He consulted a dial on the machine.

"We are in the year 1913 - the autumn, I think, from the look of those trees. I regulated the machine to move a mile for each year clipped away. If my calculations are correct, we are on the outskirts of Plymouth."

"Wonderful!" muttered Mr. Buddle. He drew a deep, deep breath. The air was like the rarest wine.

"We cannot stay long, but you would like to have a short walk?" suggested Mr. Glyn. "I cannot leave the machine - it might be stolen or tampered with. But you can stroll for a while."

"I should dearly love to," said Mr. Buddle impulsively.

Mr. Glyn held up a hand.

"A word of warning, Mr. Buddle. I can give you, at the very outside, an hour in which to look around. Take note of this spot, in order that you can find me again without difficulty. My batteries and accumulators are not as powerful as they will be when I have completed my research. I must get back soon in order that I may replenish them. Should you be longer than an hour, you would return to find me, and

my anticlock, gone. You would be left in the year 1913. It might be impossible for me ever to find you again."

Mr. Buddle nodded. He spoke breathlessly:

"I will be back quickly. I will just have a look round. It will be most instructive. I shall return in less than an hour."

"Take note of the surroundings," warned Mr. Glyn.

"A common with a brick wall, and a small lake in the distance. A pillar-box for letters. A see-saw for children. I shall find the spot again easily."

Mr. Buddle spoke with assurance. He hurried away across the common, and reached a main road. He looked back, and a distant Mr. Glyn waved to him. An open-topped tramcar hummed along the road. Mr. Buddle signalled it, the car stopped, and he boarded it. Before he had ascended to the top deck, the tram was in motion again.

The trolley-wheel sang on the wires above. The wind blew in his face.

A conductor came up to him.

"The town centre!" said Mr. Buddle recklessly.

"A penny!" said the conductor. He clipped a ticket with the ting of a bell, and slid the penny into his money-bag without looking at it.

Soon Mr. Buddle found himself alighting, and the car sped on its way. He was in a fairly busy street. The air was fresh and pleasant. Two horse-drawn vehicles were in sight.

"The air is marvellous," said Mr. Buddle aloud. "No petrol fumes, of course."

A milkman was pushing a square trolley along. Hanging all round the trolley were leaden-coloured cans. Mr. Buddle stood watching for a few moments as the man stopped the trolley.

Lifting a large four-gallon can from the centre of the trolley, the milkman approached a house adjoining a shop. A woman appeared with a jug. The milkman detached a ladle, filled it with milk from the can, and tipped the contents of the measure into the jug.

As he returned, the man noticed Mr. Buddle staring at him.

"You'll know me again, mister!" said the milkman.

"No bottles!" crooned Mr. Buddle. "Where I come from, we get our milk from bottles."

"In this country we get it from cows," retorted the milkman.

Mr. Buddle strolled on. A watering-cart, drawn by a horse, was spraying one side of the road. Two small boys were dancing joyfully through the puddles left behind. The dust was effectively laid. A slight steam rose from the watered surface of the road, and the colours of the rainbow gleamed in the steam in the sunshine.

A muffin-man passed along, ringing his bell. Mr. Buddle hadn't seen a muffin-man for years.

"No rush and tear!" murmured Mr. Buddle "So quiet - so leisurely."

There were plenty of people about, but nowhere was crowded. The women wore long skirts nearly reaching the pavement. They wore large hats perched on masses of hair.

"I always thought," mused Mr. Buddle, "that Edwardian clothes for women were ugly - but really these ladies look quite beautiful."

Something about the men struck Mr. Buddle as odd. For a while he could not think what it was. Then he realised. All the men wore hats or caps. They looked as though they might feel semi-naked without their headgear. Arriving on his visit from a less-hat-conscious generation, Mr. Buddle found the change quite striking.

"An absence of flesh," decided Mr. Buddle. "Hands and faces are all these people have. All the rest of them is clothes, clothes, clothes."

A motor-car, open to the sky, with a goggled driver sitting high behind the wheel, chugged past. Beside the driver sat a lady, wearing a fur, a big hat, and a huge veil which covered her face and her hat as well.

"Were cars ever like that?" Mr. Buddle asked himself.

Enthralled, he passed slowly along the lines of shops, peering in the windows. A mangle, with large wooden rollers and a giant handle, caught his eye.

"My mother had one like that," exclaimed Mr. Buddle.

His eyes drifted to some furniture. A grandfather chair with armrests; a grandmother chair without armrests; a sofa.

The card announced: Suite 4-19-11d.

"Amazing!" crooned Mr. Buddle.

He strolled on again. Then he stopped before a newsagent's shops. Beneath the window front were newspaper placards, held in place by wire mesh.

One read: Daily News - Mrs. Pankhurst places wreath on grave of woman killed at the Derby. Another: Daily Chronicle - Vesta Tilley Dangerously Ill - Little Hope; A third: Evening News - Kent are the Cricket Champions.

Mr. Buddle was conscious that the placards were there, but he did not read them. On an impulse, he entered the shop. The counter was piled high with papers and periodicals of all shapes, sizes, and colours.

A plump woman with a large wart on her chin looked curiously at the little schoolmaster.

"Have you a paper called the Gem?" he asked.

Without speaking, the woman jerked a blue-covered periodical from a large heap.

Mr. Buddle extracted a shilling from his pocket, placed it on the counter, and waited for his change.

The woman took up the shilling, scrutinised it, and then glared at Mr. Buddle.

"Foreign money!" she said scornfully.

Mr. Buddle was startled. The possibility of a currency problem had not occurred to him. He gave a self-conscious laugh.

"It is English money, madam, but from many years on," he assured the astonished shopkeeper.

"From which?" she demanded. She folded plump arms across her ample bosom. Mr. Buddle smiled.

"I am a visitor from the future, madam," he said chattily. "I do not belong to the year 1913. I come from a year long after."

"Long after what?"

"Well, I suppose I mean long after the war," said Mr. Buddle.

"What war?" The woman looked startled and suspicious.

"The war against Germany, madam! This is the year 1913, isn't it?"

The woman did not answer. Trying to act unobtrusively, she picked up a small

hammer which had been lying on top of a slab of toffee on a tray. She gripped the hammer hard.

Mr. Buddle did not notice. He went on excitedly:

"Next year, madam, this country will be at war with Germany. The war will go on till 1918. During that time, golden sovereigns will disappear and you will use money made of paper. After that, women will be given the vote. People will fly across the Atlantic and back in a few hours. By turning a switch you will be able to hear an orchestral concert from the continent."

Suddenly the woman waved her hammer in the air, and the startled Mr. Buddle hopped back.

"Bert!" shrieked the woman. Apparently she was calling for male assistance from somewhere beyond the door behind the counter. She said to Mr. Buddle:

"Get out, you! You're potty! I won't be murdered without a struggle. Get out before my Bert comes and deals with you."

Once again she waved the hammer ferociously.

"Oh, calamity!" gasped Mr. Buddle. Hastily, he skipped out of the shop.

Somewhere a clock was striking. The sound gave Mr. Buddle a sense of urgency.

"Good heavens, how long have I been?"

It must be more than an hour. I must find Mr. Glyn."

He felt perspiration standing on his brow. Anxiously he looked round for a tramcar, but none was in sight.

"Oh, dear! I shall be left behind in 1913. What a catastrophe!" panted Mr. Buddle.

He walked fast in the direction from which he had come earlier. He broke into a run. People scattered as he sped along the pavements. The crowds on the pavements seemed to thicken.

The scene was changing. He could see the green common in the distance. There was the lake, the pillar-box for letters, the see-saw for children.

Mr. Buddle's feet pattered across the grass of the common. There was no sign of Mr. Glyn. No sign of the anticlock machine.

Mr. Buddle was calling as he panted along.

"Mr. Glyn -- Mr. Glyn -- Where are you, Mr. Glyn? Come back for me, Mr. Glyn--" Perspiration was flying from his brow. He was making no progress. He tried to force his legs up and down like pistons, but they acted like machinery badly in need of lubrication. He caught his foot in something and went staggering forward. He flung out his arms.

"Mr. Glyn, where are you?" The common was spinning. The light was fading. The atmosphere was hot and stifling. Still Mr. Buddle attempted to run, but could not. He tried to shout but no words would come. He felt that his chest was bursting.

"Sir!" came a voice.

"Mr. Glyn!" gasped out Mr. Buddle.

"Sir!" repeated the voice. Someone was shaking him by the shoulder.

Mr. Buddle opened his eyes. His study looked peaceful in the glow from the shaded electric light. A boy stood at his side, looking at him with some concern but with an amused glimmer in very blue eyes.

"Meredith!" ejaculated Mr. Buddle. The schoolmaster sat upright in his armchair. Jerking a handkerchief from his breast pocket, he mopped his damp forehead.

Meredith spoke respectfully, but Mr. Buddle was conscious of that gleam of fun in the boy's eyes.

"I've brought my essay, sir. You told me to do it again, sir, and bring it to you this evening. I knocked on your door, sir, but you didn't answer. I heard a funny noise like a pig grunting, sir, so I thought I'd better come in."

Without a word, Mr. Buddle took the exercise book which the boy was holding out to him.

"I thought you might have been taken ill, sir. I thought you might be having a fit, sir," said Meredith softly.

"I had dropped off to sleep," snapped Mr. Buddle. His eyes rested on the Holiday Annual which had fallen to the floor. After a moment, he picked it up.

"I purchased this book in Everslade last week, Meredith. It seems to be the sort of literature which appeals to you. If you care to have it, you may take it away with you."

"Oh, sir, that's awfully good of you!" Meredith took the book, and turned over a few pages. "I should love to have it, sir. Thank you very much indeed, sir."

In the kindness of his heart, the fair-haired youth omitted to mention that he already owned a copy of that edition of the Holiday Annual, given to him long ago by his father.

"Very well!" said Mr. Buddle stiffly.

"You may go, Meredith."

Meredith tucked the book under his arm, and turned to leave the study.

"There is," said Mr. Buddle dreamily, "a curious tale in that volume about someone who invents a machine which can conquer time. It is, so far as I remember, entitled 'Glyn's Greatest.' It was probably beyond reason at the time it was written, but, in these modern times, with so many new scientific discoveries, it does not seem so very far-fetched. You should read the story, Meredith. It will give you food for thought."

"I'm sure it will, sir," murmured Meredith. "Good night, sir!"

There was an inscrutable smile on his face as he left the study.

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FOR SALE: Greyfriars S.O.Ls. 406, 409. Live-Wire Head S.O.L. 299. 6/- each. inc. postage. "Backwoods" story in S.O.L. 184, 5/- inc. postage. 6 Gold Hawk books. St. Jim's. 2/6 each.

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REALITY or IMPROBABILITY

By Maurice Kutner

I was interested in the editorial comment in the August C.D. that Greyfriars was not all that improbable in its own day and age.

Its own day and age is as far removed from the present screaming sixties as the old-fashioned request to the local barber "just the usual short back and sides, please," is to the modern tonsorial request for "just a little off the shoulders."

Youth, in the first quarter of this century, may not have desired, or always expected, reality in their school stories. The reality of school days were not always pleasant even if the middle-aged reminiscient believes them to have been so. As to school itself, the seemingly eternal home-work, and the sword of Damocles, in the shape of The Cane, casting its shadow before, - and sometimes behind, are two of my main realities. Even "sunny, carefree days" could have their little irritations like the sudden shock of an inky paper pellet reaching its mark with unerring aim.

Greyfriars, to the young reader was certainly a real school, but perhaps some of its happier moments were definitely bordering on the improbable, thereby keeping the reader happy - and faithful.

One amongst many of these improbable moments at Greyfriars was when Wally Bunter exchanged places with his cousin Billy, so granting St. Jim's the questionable honour and pleasure of Billy Bunter's company for the duration.

The Bunter that carried out his imposture at Greyfriars became overnight a mighty fighting man, sportsman, and erudite scholar. No one, not even the gimlet-eyed Mr. Quelch, or the keen Vernon Smith, queried or became suspicious of this sudden miraculous re-birth except, strangely enough, Sidney James Snoop, who kept Wally's secret to the end.

Wally felt safe in his deception until his cousin Bessie Bunter wished to visit him. He was convinced that she was not as stupid as the rest of the Greyfriars personnel, and he had a dismal foreboding that she would see through the imposture

The genius of Frank Richards could paint bold strokes of black and white, fusing them at times into delicate and entertaining shades of grey. Improbability and realism often ran side by side, and in this particular series the characters of Snoop and Wally are finely drawn by the author as reality and drama are introduced in the shape of Snoop's unfortunate father, once a sleek City man and company promoter, and now an escaped convict desperately seeking help from his

frightened, miserable, and shame-filled son.

During Snoop's struggles to get the better of his own weaknesses, Wally is drawn closer to him than any other fellow at Greyfriars. One may conjecture on the ultimate effect on Sidney Snoop's character had Wally Bunter remained a permanent pupil at Greyfriars.

Back again to improbability:- we see the supposed Billy Bunter, magically overnight discarding the seven deadly sins, becoming one of the best scholars in the Remove and helping Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, with his French lessons. One remembers a sad, long history of shouted misunderstandings when poor Tom is asked, for example, such a simple thing as to "pass the salt, please." Even Bob-Stentor-Cherry, possessor of the strongest lungs in all Greyfriars, whose roar could nearly blast one's ear-drums at six paces, had often in the past been accused by Tom Dutton of "mumbling." So we are left with the vision of Wally trying to teach his deaf study-mate French verb conjugations and adjectival endings.

The author, in attempting to make a reality of an improbability, studiously omits to refer to the condition of Wally's throat after each lesson.

So the Greyfriars saga is composed of a fair percentage of improbability. And why not? Charles Hamilton himself once indicated (in the Orwell affair) that the young reader would have to face the realities of life soon enough, - all too soon!

THE START OF IT ALL

By Charles H. Matthews

I wonder how many of us can pinpoint with any accuracy the date at which we started to read the old papers?

I am fortunate enough to possess a series of photograph albums arranged chronologically, covering the period 1915 to 1960, ones that I made myself, and having a spare moment the other day, and a mood for nostalgia, I thumbed over the first of these albums.

One of the photographs, dated 7th April, 1925, shows my girl cousin and myself on the front at Brighton. We were not, it seems, short of reading matter, for I am holding up in front of me, The Popular, and my Cousin - The Sunbeam, so I thus have indisputable proof that I was reading The Popular at the age of 10, at least.

When, I wonder, did I start reading The Magnet and The Gem?

Actually, I suppose, it was some years previous to this, as my Cousin and I spent all our holidays at Brighton with an Uncle and Aunt who had a Confectionery and Newsagent's Business in the Queens Park Road.

The boys' and girls' weeklies were a great attraction to us, and we were allowed to read them before they went on sale, provided, of course that we kept them clean. Childhood memories never seem to include wet days for the sun always seemed to shine, but wet days spent indoors could never have been irksome to us with so much congenial reading matter at hand.

At first the mysterious happenings at St. Frank's did not interest me, until in 1927 I succumbed to the lure of Handforth's "Barring Out" and read, and read again, the Christmas number in that fine series.

So well indeed, did I like that Series, that I put them away, and in fact still have the eight numbers that comprised it. Incidentally I wonder how many C.D. readers have the original numbers they purchased themselves all those years ago.

My interest, like the boys of St. Frank's, survived the vicissitudes of flood and fire, and even the relegation of their exploits to the back of the Nelson Lee Library, and I remained a regular reader until the age of 18, when the old paper merged with The Gem. This proved a mortal blow to my interest in Nipper & Coy. and I read no more about St. Frank's for I did not care much for The Gem of that time.

I was still, however, at 18, a regular subscriber to The Magnet, and used to buy back numbers whenever I could get them. There was always one place in the very early 1930's where I could always be sure of picking up White Magnets, S.O.L's and back numbers of the Nelson Lee Library published before my time. This was a stall in Water Lane, Brixton, near the subway entrance to the station. I can recall, as if only yesterday, the voice of the neighbouring stall holder, who unceasingly called "Shopping bags and iron-holders, lady, shopping bags and iron-holders" while I was turning over The Magnets and other boys' books.

To this same stall in about 1932, I well remember taking a whole pile of Magnets, and receiving 3d. a dozen for them. How I wish I had kept them, as I did the White Magnets, which I still have. I cannot now imagine why I kept these for I neither liked the stories nor the illustrations.

I did, however, keep and still have the very fine second Wharton Rebel series of 1932.

I continued to read and really enjoy The Magnet until it finished when I was 25 years of age. For the last year of its existence I had to get my own lunch on a Saturday, and the menu never varied - sardines and bread and butter, cream eclairs, and the good

old Magnet to read.

I can remember, oh, so very clearly my dismay (on enquiring of my newsagent on Brixton Hill, the reason for the non-delivery of "The Battle of the Beaks") when he told me that no Magnets had come through, and that he understood there would be no more "until after the war."

But the end of the Magnet also signified for me, the end of the sardines and cream eclairs, and a way of life to which I never returned, for within three weeks I was instructed to report to Stanmore in Middlesex, to join the 50th Bn. The Royal Fusiliers.

The loss of The Magnet did not worry me during the years I was in the Army, but on my return to Civvy Street, I wrote the first of many letters to the Amalgamated Press asking when, if ever, the Magnet was coming back. The early replies I received blamed "the present shortage of printing paper" for its non-appearance, but in subsequent letters, it was regretted that "no information can be given at the moment as to the possible re-publication of The Magnet."

I think I realised at last that the good old Magnet, like many other things enjoyed in the halcyon days of Peace, had gone for ever. I deeply regretted then, the huge pile of Magnets I had sold for so little before the war, and consoled myself by reading, and re-reading the few survivors that I still had - a mere four dozen or so.

After a while, however, things began to look up with the issue of the hard cover Bunter and Tom Merry Tales, and I discovered Bill Martin John Medcraft and Joseph Baguley, from whom I started to buy Nelson Lee's, until I almost had a complete collection. And then - unpredictably, I lost interest and sold my collection of Lees, most of which went back to Bill Martin.

With the proceeds of this sale, my wife and I spent a fortnight in Vienna in 1952, but how I wish now, that I had my collection of Nelson Lee's.

My interest today, is as great as ever it was, but I realise only too well that the present prohibitive prices will preclude me from ever again building up such a collection, and last year, with the co-operation of Bob Blythe and Roger Jenkins, I started once again to read the Magnets and the Lee's that had given me so much pleasure in the past.

It is a sobering thought when I look back, to realise how much I am indebted to Charles Hamilton and Edwy Searles Brooks, for taking me to the scholastic shades of Greyfriars and St. Frank's.

No more will I see the good old Magnet come through the letter box but I await just as eagerly now, the appearance of Collectors' Digest.

WHAT COLLECTORS' DIGEST LOOKED LIKE WHEN IT WAS
VERY YOUNG

THE COLLECTORS DIGEST

