

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 261

SEPTEMBER 1968

PRICE 2/3d.



*Or, the Adventures
of Arthur Augustus
and how he fared
at the hands of
Jack Blake and
Figgins & Co.*

TIME 1906. THE ARTIST: almost certainly the young Leonard Shields, long before his greatest gifts matured.

Announcing
THE WHO'S WHO OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Compiled and Edited by

BRIAN DOYLE

Remember Brian Doyle's "Who's Who of Boys' Writers and Illustrators"? Published privately in 1964 it sold 500 copies throughout the world in three months. It is now something of a rarity.

For the past three years, Brian Doyle has been working on a much more comprehensive work, which covers leading authors and illustrators of children's books since around 1800. The writers range from Hans Andersen to Arthur Ransome, from Louisa M. Alcott to Enid Blyton, from Mark Twain to W. E. Johns and from E. Nesbit to Richmal Crompton; the illustrators from Greenaway to Wildsmith, from Caldecott to Shepard, from Mabel Lucie Atwell to Ardizzone, from C. H. Chapman to Eric Parker. Apart from its value as a work of reference for collectors, librarians, teachers, parents and everyone interested in children's books, past and present, it will also provide hours of nostalgic browsing. Here are the stories behind the creation of such favourites as Alice, Babar, Peter Pan, the Wizard of Oz, Winnie-the-Pooh, Just William, Billy Bunter, Biggles, Jennings, Peter Rabbit, Sexton Blake, Nelson Lee, Weary Willie and Tired Tim, Tiger Tim, Rupert Bear, Tom Sawyer, Sherlock Holmes, Worzel Gummidge, Tom Brown, Eric, and Pinnochio.

There are over 300 entries, with biographical, bibliographical and background details. The 106 illustrations include stills from films made from children's books, famous fictional characters as seen by several different illustrators, reproductions of illustrations and title-pages and many portraits of authors and artists. The frontispiece is an original composite picture of C. H. Chapman of Billy Bunter in various moods. There are 380 pages.

THE WHO'S WHO OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE will be published in mid-September, 1968, by Hugh Evelyn Ltd., 9, Fitzroy Square, London, W.1. at 63/-. Orders should be placed through your usual bookseller.

DON'T FORGET YOUR COPY!

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by

W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by

HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 22

No 261

SEPTEMBER 1968

Price 2s 3d

**THIS IS
THE
EDITOR'S
PAGE
AND
YOURS!**



Come into the Office!

**GATHER
ROUND,
CHUMS,
FOR A
CHEERY
CHAT!**

THE YOUNG IDEA

Last month, when I visited the tramway exhibition in London, I was very much impressed by the large number of young people taking part. It seemed to me that at least fifty per cent of those in charge of the fascinating exhibits were young men who obviously had been born long after the heyday of the tramcar.

I had a long chat with an enthusiastic young fellow of about nineteen. He had built a magnificent working model of a demi-car, the type of vehicle which was not seen on British roads after about nineteen-twenty.

I find the same welcome phenomenon in our own hobby. Every month I have a number of letters from lads who were born long after our old papers ceased publication. These lads are excited to find a world which they never knew. They write me long letters, packed with questions which I try to answer for them.

Some of these youngsters do not stay the course - they drop out after a year or two. But then, they always did. In the golden summer of the boys' papers, the length of a generation was reckoned to be two years. After that, as is natural with youth, they looked round for fresh worlds to conquer.

It was only a small minority of weirdies - like you and me - who continued to buy the old papers long after boyhood was left behind. I myself was a traitor to the cause only once - when I

dropped the Gem in that unpleasant period of 1929 - 1930. And because so many of us did the same thing, the stories of that time are very hard to come by. Substitute stories though they are, I have been seeking some of them for years without success. For no chain can be complete without every link. My frustration today is a punishment for my disloyalty yesterday.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

From all over the country I have had reports from people who have tried, without success, to buy the Dean's Sexton Blake books. Newsagents, booksellers, and wholesalers make varied excuses for not supplying the goods - and our readers fume.

As we have commented so many times in recent years, it is a most astounding state of affairs.

Of course, there is a vast difference in newsagents. My own is a good man who, almost invariably, when I order something one day, has it waiting for me the next. 'Recently he went on a fortnight's holiday. While he was away, his "locum" never succeeded in completing one of my orders. Each day I was met with that vacant stare and that sad shake of the head which is the resort of the inefficient. Then, one Monday, the regular newsagent was back to hear my tale of woe. Everything I had ordered was waiting for me on Tuesday.

There are just a few hard-working, efficient people left in this land which we love. But not many.

SHALL OUR DANNY GROW A BEARD AND FALL IN LOVE?

So many of our clan love our Danny, and from the large numbers of anxious enquiries concerning the health of his "Gran," it would seem that, in her own way, Gran is almost as important as Ena Sharples. A Danny fan of Preston, Mr. H. Machin, who nearly always says something about Danny in his welcome letters, asks now: "By the way, does Danny grow up and go to college, and later become a teacher, still retaining his boyhood love for the Magnet and Gem - or has he wisely discovered the secret of perpetual boyhood?"

From his spelling 50 years ago, not to mention his misuse of grammar, we can't help feeling dubious as to whether Danny was doomed to become a teacher. But time changes everything, and most certainly it changes the Dannies of this world. A fairly nice youngster in 1918 might have become a fairly nasty young man by 1928, and a horrible old so-and-so by 1968. I'm not suggesting,

of course, that such was the history of Danny. Idly, I wonder whether our readers want to see our Danny growing up and gradually changing from - well, a Danny into a - let's say - Mr. Ratcliff.

SLOW. SLOW. QUICK. QUICK. SLOW

We can't surmise how many thousands the Post Office has spent on newspaper advertisements to inform us of the imminent increased postal charges and slower service with which we are to be blessed from September onwards. The reasonable or unreasonable service (according to whether or not one is lucky) is to rise from 4d to 5d, while second-class mail is to become abnormally slow or abominably slow with a rise from 3d to 4d.

To be strictly fair, there are times when our post office, like our policeman, can be wonderful. More often than not it's pretty awful, but we have to make the best of it.

Normally, the C.D. will go out by the 4d mail, but there are certain to be some readers who will wish to pay the extra to take advantage of the less-slow service. (I nearly wrote "quicker.") We shall try to devise some system by which we can meet the wishes of these readers.

Possibly, the only advantage to mail-sufferers is that all mail can now be sealed, which will make for safer transit. For the present, at least until our existing stock of envelopes is exhausted, we shall probably continue to send the magazine unsealed.

ANNUAL TIME

With this issue we send you the order form for the Annual which is due for publication in mid-December. Production costs are heavy, and we cannot print more copies than will be needed. You will help a good deal if you get your order in, in good time. You will also be insuring yourself against possible disappointment.

Your favourite writers are turning up trumps for the 1968 edition. Already, a number of fine articles are in print.

You will be helping us - and, at the same time, I hope, helping yourselves - if you advertise in the Annual. Advertisements are still 2d per word, as they have always been, down the years, in the Annual. As well as advertising something for sale or giving notice of your "wants," may we suggest that you send the season's greetings to your hobby friends by way of a small ad in the Annual?

THE EDITOR

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

SEXTON BLAKE IN 1939 - A Broadcast - Was it the first one?

Recently I was looking through some of my Sexton Blake Libraries for 1939 and came across an interesting item. On the back page of No. 660 dated February 1939 was an announcement as follows -

LISTEN IN!!!

to the

THRILLING DETECTIVE DRAMA

now being

BROADCAST of

SEXTON BLAKE

on

Every Thursday Afternoon

at 3.15 p.m. (Reg)

and in the evening

at 7.30 p.m. (Nat)

In the "Consulting Room Chat" the Editor remarks as follows -

"The foremost item of interest this month is that Sexton Blake is definitely on the air. You will remember that back in October a story entitled "Three Frightened Men" was especially written for the broadcast of the famous detective, but, unfortunately, it had to be postponed. Under the title of "Enter Sexton Blake" you can now listen in to it every Thursday afternoon at 3.15 p.m. (Reg) and evening at 7.30 p.m. (Nat). For the benefit of those readers who are eager to refresh their memories regarding the incidents and progress of the plot, a special version of each instalment is appearing week by week in our companion paper "Detective Weekly" every Thursday, price 2d."

"Maybe, too, you have others in the family circle, and friends in general who would like to read and listen to the greatest detective thriller ever put across the ether. Tell them about it."

Well, now, I wonder if any of our Blake enthusiasts today remember listening in to this broadcast and if so what their memories of it are. Perhaps they would care to write about it via the "Blakiana" section of Collectors' Digest.

Josephine Packman, August 1968.

THE END OF A GREAT AUTHOR

By W. O. G. Lofts

And so another mystery has been solved. W. J. Bayfield, that grand writer of stories in the period 1908 until 1925, when he was at his best, died on the 3rd June 1958 at the ripe old age of 87.

W. J. Bayfield seems to have adopted the words of the famous song "Old Soldiers Never Die" as I must confess after reading a letter sent to him by one of his greatest admirers - namely Harry Dowler. I never dreamed that he could have lived to 1958. Such are the difficulties for a researcher, who can take nothing for granted.

It was in 1942 that one last had any news of W. J. Bayfield, when he wrote to Harry Dowler mentioning the fact that he was "past three-score years and ten, in very poor health, and living in war-torn London," and one assumed wrongly that he could not have lived long after that, or as Walter Webb mentioned in a recent article, could have become one of the victims of an air-raid. Identity unknown.

At Staines, Middlesex, is a large building called "The Eventide Home." As the name suggests, it is a home for retired and elderly folk where they can spend their remaining days in rest and contentment. They have their own rooms, where they can spend as long as they like in reading, writing, or in any recreation they wish. There are grounds surrounding the home, with beautiful lawns, trees, flowers, and further afield the wonderful peaceful countryside. It was here that W. J. Bayfield spent his last three years, coming from another Home at Ashford, which had unfortunately closed down due to the illness of the proprietor. Although very feeble in body, Mr. Bayfield was able to get around with the aid of a stick, and enjoyed walking in the ground. He was friendly with other guests, and was in general happy at the home. His only visitors was his sister, who used to see him every week. Mr. Bayfield died very suddenly and was cremated at Woking. The secretary of the Home, and his sister were the only mourners. It speaks volumes for the man's character that a letter was found, "to be opened after his death" in which he expressed his thanks in being allowed to stay at the home, and expressing the pleasure gleaned in his declining years.

Despite letters to his sister, and a niece, no replies have been received from either (though the sister probably also has passed on by now) and so unfortunately no more personal details are available about him and his life.

However, investigation proves at least several factors, and destroys some myths about this popular author.

William John Bayfield, was born at St. Edmunds in Suffolk on the 5th January 1871. His father was a Sergeant in the West Suffolk Militia and his mother's maiden name was Holland. Certainly there is no foundation at all that he was of Scotch descent, even though he used the very Scottish pen-name ALLAN BLAIR. This data may have come from an editorial "blurb."

Another surprising thing, if I may correct Walter Webb in his recent article about this author; there is no record of his being on the staff of Amalgamated Press at all, at least in the last 50 years - though it's quite possible in the very early days, like Lewis Jackson, he may have served on a paper for a short period. Nor have I found any member of the present staff, many of whom served on boys paper editorials for 40 years, who knew him at all.

Without I hope raising controversy regarding the "GORDON CARR" stories, and to whether this was a pen-name of W. J. Bayfield or not, I think Walter Webb's article puts a finger on the pulse of the matter, when he mentions that A. S. Hardy probably had a hand in some racing stories written by W. J. Bayfield. It seems obvious that more than one author wrote under the ALLAN BLAIR pen-name, and it is a fact that GORDON CARR is also Scottish in name. Obviously W. J. Bayfield could have cleared up all this mystery once and for all.

It is remarkable that I have passed "The Eventide Home" several times during the last few years on my way to see a world famous author, who likewise first started to make his name with the old Amalgamated Press. In his heyday the name of "ALLAN BLAIR" and W. J. Bayfield was known to millions of readers throughout the world, and it is sad in a way that he should pass from this earth with only two mourners. I hope and trust that this article will at least show that the name of W. J. Bayfield is still remembered with affection, above all as a very talented author.

- - - - -

GWYN EVANS, MASTER OF THE UNUSUAL

By "Anon"

(continued)

Another excellent character who makes his appearance a few chapters later is "Symphony" Sam Hicks, an engaging little Cockney crook, who got his nickname because of his love of music and his whistle that sounds like "a flock of nightingales."

How Bill comes to meet up with "Symph" and how the latter helps him considerably, need not be gone into here, as it would take away the element of surprise for those who may get to read this serial some day.

The tasks that "Hercules Esq." was called upon to perform were challenging, and the way they were carried out makes exciting reading.

When Bill visits No. 9 Rice St., Pimlico, he finds a putrifying body with a knife in its chest. He also finds the yellow envelope containing the following:

TASK NUMBER ONE

"You will proceed at once to Liverpool. You have 24 hours' grace. After that period you must consider yourself a hunted man. Your task is to remain hidden for a week, without disguise, and without leaving Liverpool or its environs. You must not under any circumstances use a false name or break any of the conditions you have already signed.

If you succeed in evading capture for that period - ending on midnight on Friday next - you will have succeeded in your first task."

Thanks to Edgar Allen Poe, an amiable drunk, and some information from Symphony Sam, Bill successfully concludes his assignment. Then comes -

TASK NUMBER TWO

"Out of Sweetness came forth Riches;
 Out of Riches came forth Beauty.
 Heed not one whose voice bewitches;
 Trust her not, but do your duty.
 A barn in Holland with open portal -
 Perished now, but still immortal.
 Find it, steal it, but beware,
 Danger lurks beneath the stair!
 Clues you'll find on every station,
 If you heed alliteration.
 End your task within a week,
 And be nearer what you seek!"

At first Bill is stunned by this seemingly meaningless piece of verse, but he got his first clue from an advertising poster in a Tube station, which sends him hurrying to Fleet Street to look up the files of one of the newspapers. There he discovers what

it is he has to steal. Also he discovers "Echo's" name is Dorothy. Fate has Symphony Sam cross his path once again to render him assistance together with much needed help from Dorothy.

The third of Bill's Herculean labours staggers him.

TASK NUMBER THREE

"You will, within a week from the receipt of this note, take a bath in public in London, without a bathing costume.

You are expressly debarred from camouflaging your act as a publicity, cinema, or stage stunt. You must be witnessed in your bath by any member of the public who happens to pass, and if a breach of the law is committed, or you are ordered by the police to desist, you will automatically forfeit the million pounds.

Ponds, lakes, private houses or public swimming baths are expressly debarred from being the scene of your exploit. A report, if successful, of your accomplishment, must be furnished by you, not later than midnight, seven days from today."

"Holy smoke!" gasped Bill Kellaway. "I've said goodbye to that million quid! Who do they think I am - Mr. Godiva?"

However, after some thought, he decides to accept the challenge, and with some aid from Henry, succeeds. How he manages this is extremely clever and again shows the author's ingenuity.

TASK NUMBER FOUR

"You will yourself obtain the million pounds from the Safe Deposit Vault."

You will recall that the safe is held jointly in both Bill's and Lenoir's names, and only in the event of the death of one of them can the other have access to its contents. Does Bill murder Lenoir to obtain the million? Well, not exactly, but he does get the money, aided once again by that prince of valets, Henry.

Then comes the unexpected. Bill and Henry are drugged in a taxi and the briefcase containing the money is stolen. Lenoir, when contacted, assures Bill this is not part of the plan and is genuinely upset when he hears about it.

However, unbeknown to Lenoir, the member of the Secret Six who conceived this Task had arranged to have the money stolen from Bill should he succeed in getting it.

The next yellow envelope states:

TASK NUMBER FIVE

"Your fifth task is to find the million and bring it to our

Headquarters, within seven days from today."

Dorothy feels that Bill has been treated most unfairly over Task No. 4, insofar as he had secured the money successfully from the safe deposit, so she has no compunction in telling Bill where the money is, and the location of the H.Q. of the Secret Six. In a thrilling sequence, the money is nearly destroyed in a fire, but Bill manages to save it.

When Bill walks into the Headquarters with the money, Lenoir takes it upon himself to provide Task Number Six. This is something of an anti-climax and rather a let-down after the previous five.

Lenoir tells Bill he is to marry Dorothy within seven days or forfeit the million. Bill steps outside for a moment and returns with Dorothy, saying that they were married by special licence that afternoon.

"Our million, I think," said Hercules Esq.

"Indubitably, sir," said Henry, imperturbable to the last.

And so Bill winds up with the million, the girl, and of course that priceless valet, Henry Squared.

FOR SALE: MARVEL Christmas Double Number for 1911: 7/6. 2 PLUCKS containing "Charlie at the Bank" and "Charlie, the Perfect Lady" 6/- the two. 13 1915 Plucks containing Sexton Blake, Plummer, Huxton Rymer, stories and pics from early silent films: £2 the 13. 13 Plucks 1915-1916 containing Nelson Lee, Nipper, Huxton Rymer, Blake, stories from early silent films: £2 the 13. Pluck No. 587 containing tale of Plummer plus "Corsair Captain" by Charles Hamilton 3/6. Pluck No. 580 containing story of Detective Sparring 3/-. 33 Gems (on the rough side) for 1938 - 1939: 2/6 each. Blue Gem 397 "Honour of a Jew" (very rough) 2/6. Blue Gem 308 (coverless and rather rough) 3/6. Blue Gem 306 "Ghost Hunters" 4/- (coverless). 7 Gems 568, 571, 575, 581, 586, 630, 1564: (very rough) 8/- for the 7. Gems 1486, 1487, 1489, 1494 5/- each. Red Magnets 325 "Coker's Plot" and 359 "Patriotic Schoolmaster" £1 each. 358 "Billy Bunter's Uncle" (corner of back cover torn off) 15/-. Postage and packing extra on all items.

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

WANTED: Boys' Friend Libraries Nos. 553 and 554 "House of A Hundred Eyes," "Vull the Invisible." Also Union Jacks for 1917.

MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE RD., EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

DANNY'S DIARY

SEPTEMBER 1918

We spent most of the month at Layer Marney. I was supposed to go back to school in the middle of September, but I wanted to stay with Gran, though Doug went home in the second week. It was more important for Doug to go back than me, and, besides, Gran wanted me to stay.

The big drawback of living in the country is that it isn't easy to get the papers every week. There is no newsagent in Layer Marney, so the newspapers are delivered daily from Tollesbury. But I often went into Colchester with Mo, the carrier, and I managed to get my weeklies from a shop in Maldon Road in Colchester.

I often went to the pictures in Colchester, too. Mary Pickford and Thomas Meighan in "M'Liss" was tip-top, and with it was a screaming Keystone - Fatty Arbuckle in "Coney Island."

Another good one was Jack Pickford in "Tom Sawyer," and Mum went in with me one afternoon and we saw W. S. Hart in "Wolves of the Rail." My mum loves W. S. Hart, who is a good bad man. Another time Mum and I saw William Farnum in "The Heart of a Lion." Both Mum and I like William Farnum very much.

It goes without saying that the Boys' Friend has been just grand again all the month. It always is. Following the caravanning series, Rookwood reassembled for the new term. As the main building was being repaired, after the bomb damage, the school was under canvas. A very novel idea indeed.

The first story was "Rookwood Under Canvas" in which Van Ryn played ventriloquial tricks on Mr. Pumpkin, a visiting lecturer. This was delicious.

Then "Done in the Dark" which told of the juniors trying to get their own back on Carthew. In "For the Scapegrace's Sake," Algy Silver got himself into trouble, and, in order to save Algy, Jimmy allowed Peele to knock him, Jimmy, down. A good dramatic tale.

Last of the month, with Rookwood still under canvas, was "Peele on the Warpath" in which Peele had a feud on with the French master, Monsieur Monceau.

The Cedar Creek series continued with Frank Richards & Co on holiday all the month. In "Danger Ahead," Chunky Todgers showed himself as something of a hero. In "Rounded Up," the villain, Alf Carson, was at last delivered to the mounties. In "The Stranded"

Schoolboys," the holidaymaking Cedar Creek boys met up with Gunten and Keller and saved them from drowning. In "The Schoolboy Gold-Seekers," the boys found gold, Gunten and Keller returned evil for good, and Yen Chin was found to be taking money to gamble with G. and K. So Frank & Co booted Yen Chin out of the party. Awful good tales.

With electrifying suddenness the war news has changed. The Huns are retreating everywhere. It is almost impossible to believe it. And it is quite a time since there was an air raid. There was one bad bit of news. The Union Castle liner "Galway Castle" was torpedoed, and 154 passengers are missing.

There has been an excellent series of stories running in the Nelson Lee Library. The first four tales, all this month, were "The Coming of the Serpent," "The Boat-Race Mystery," "Nipper in Disgrace" and "Expelled from St. Frank's." An unpleasant but interesting new boy is Reggie Pitt, who is nicknamed "The Serpent." There is a lot of excitement in the tales, and a good deal of mystery. In the third story Nipper lost the captaincy, and in the fourth tale Sir Montie was expelled. It looks as though Nipper may have met his match in the Serpent.

It has been a very poor month in the Gem. "Doing His Best" was a sequel to part of last month's "The Final Event," and it told of Talbot, his cousin Crooke, and Colonel Lyndon. But none of it reads very well.

"Tom Merry & Co's Triumph" was the month's best, being a story of rivalry with the Grammar School. The last two of the month were "Two in the Toils" and a sequel "Prisoners of the Moat House." Skimpole and Trimble got shut up in a moated house by a Professor Burnham, and it was all very silly.

The serial "Twins from Tasmania" has ended this month. I have never read much of it.

A new act has been passed in parliament which says that women may become M.P.'s. I think it's a good idea, and I told Mum she ought to put up at the next election. But later on I thought better of it. It would be simply awful to go home from school at dinner time, all ready for a meal, and find that Mum was away being an M.P. Auntie Gwen says that parliament should be filled with women, as they have far more brains than men, but Mum smiled and said it will be a bad thing for England if women ever think that their place is not in the home. I agree with Mum.

The Magnet started off with "Dick Russell's Chum" which was

very sickly. Russell needed money for the repair of Mr. Quelch's typewriter, and Ogilvy earned the money by becoming a strolling player.

Then started what I think is the finest series the Magnet has had for a long time. "Smithy's Scheme" was to compel Skinner to get out of Study No. 4 so that Redwing could join up with the Bounder. The scheme worked, but when Redwing learned of it, he disapproved.

In "The Broken Bond," Redwing and the Bounder quarrelled, and the Bounder accused Redwing of being friendly on account of the Bounder's money. Finally, in "Rough on Redwing," Mr. Vernon-Smith learned of the quarrel, and, though Smithy was sorry by this time, his father blamed Redwing, and told him about the scholarship which he had founded for Redwing's benefit.

Redwing throws up the scholarship, but the Head orders him to stay on till the end of term. And Redwing broods over the possibility of running away. At any rate, the Bounder-Redwing friendship is in runes. A truly magnificent series.

My Gran seemed to have picked up quite a bit. She tells everyone that I did her good, and calls me Doctor Danny which emberaces me and makes me blush. She has been able to sit out for a little while in the orchard when the sun was warm. Her real doctor told my Mum that Gran has done wonderfully, even though she is frale, and that, providing we look after her and she doesn't get a chill or anything, she may be spared to us for quite a while yet. Gran made me laugh when she said she is worth fifty dead 'uns.

Near the end of September, Mum decided that we could go home, though I wasn't a bit sad that I had already lost two weeks of school. I said I was willing to stay longer with Gran, but Mum was firm, and said no. I made Gran promise that she will come to us for Christmas, and she says she will if all goes well.

Back home at the end of the month, we went to the pictures on the night before I started school. We saw Dorothy Dalton in "Love Letters," Charlie Chaplin in "Champion Charlie" which I had seen before, and a new series called "Protea." We liked the whole programme.

And the war news gets better and better.

WANTED: Good copies only "GEMS" Nos. 982, 983, 984, 1088, 1089.
Also 'First Christmas at Huckleberry Heath' "Gem". 20/- each copy.

B. ADAM, 28 DERWENT STREET, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, NE15 6NT.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S By Jim Cook

When Cecil DeValerie was referred to as a rotter the other day by another junior it reminded me that it was Val's nickname when he first came to St. Frank's, and it also reminded me that quite a number of juniors received epithets in similar vein although as time went by these choice appellations seem to disappear.

Nowadays nobody refers to DeValerie as a Rotter as they did a long time ago; neither does Reggie Pitt get called The Serpent as he was on his arrival at the school. Pitt and Val are very different characters today and it speaks well for St. Frank's as a seat of learning that bad influences which may enter the school generally find an atmosphere of decency which reforms them into young gentlemen.

Unfortunately not all succumb to this happy social status. Teddy Long still merits being called the Sneak of the Remove. Harry Gresham was temporarily the Funk of the Remove. But Timothy Tucker very often is called the Lunatic still and the great T.T. hasn't changed at all since he came in spite of the proximity of his uncle Professor Sylvester Tucker, the science master, at St. Frank's.

Sir Montie Tregellis-West often deserved being called the Fashion Plate of the Remove in the old days but there are some others who would equally fit this description. Fullwood, when as leader of Study A dressed fashionably in a snobbish sort of way, vied with Montie in the latest dress shades but with the coming of Archie Glenthorne they both took a back seat, for the Genial Ass, as Archie was affectionately known, became the beau monde in the world of dress.

To be fair, Archie's styles were selected by his man Phipps who dictated Glenthorne's daily attire. No other junior has ever received such assistance in having a valet at St. Frank's and I don't think any would want this gentlemen's gentleman business other than Archie. It's true the Duke of Somerton could do with a little help in the way of donning apparel but Sommy is a hopeless case and never will look tidy.

Enoch Snipe is still referred to as The Worm. St. Frank's has failed to change his cringing habits and The Worm he will always be.

I think I should mention Buster the Bully. John Busterfield Boots isn't a bully now but when he first came to St. Frank's he had big ideas and the methods he employed carrying out these ideas soon earned him the title of Bully. Actually J.B.B. is a dark horse. I would never be surprised to see him revert to his former grandiose scheme of "taking" over St. Frank's. Tom Burton was at times alluded to as The Skipper, but as this term was synonymous with that of the captain of the Lower School it was soon dropped.

While some nicknames were applied in a derisive manner, other names were applied more in a jocular sense such as the one given to Mr. Crowell, the master of the Remove. Unknown to him the boys had labelled him "Old Crowsfeet".

Then there is "Old Stocky" the master of the Modern House but even Mr. Stockdale doesn't mind this. But I'm sure M. LeBlanc, the French master also in the Modern House, would not take kindly to "Froggy" as the boys automatically refer to him when he is not within earshot. When James Little came to St. Frank's it was obvious James would be called "Fatty." And the good-natured Jimmy Little has never objected to this description.

I haven't covered all the owners of nicknames both derogatory and affectionate at St. Frank's for some are just general names that fit some according to their nature. For instance, Mr. Pyecraft, the ill tempered master of the East House, has many fancy names to his credit although I think the most popular one is "Nosey". I've even heard the name "Pieface" applied to this gentleman which I must say is a bit near the edge, for Mr. Piecraft is a very learned and erudite master - he would have to be to get a position at St. Frank's - but one of these days I will see St. Frank's through the spectacles of one of its masters. Until now the old school has been portrayed from the view of the boys. Perhaps a very different scene would emerge if a master presented his side of school life.

There is also another side to school life which inevitably keeps in the background. I refer to the domestics. They are just as important as any other department of St. Frank's but perhaps "Fatty" Little could supply an adequate description of the domestic life at the school for more than any other resident Fatty Little is aware of kitchens and other places where food is prepared.

Before I end this letter I would like to mention the one name I think is the best of them all. It is both affectionate and apt. It is a name I wouldn't mind having myself but I'm afraid I shall

never earn it. It's a short name, being both concise and worldly. It is Nipper's beloved "Guv'nor" ..Nelson Lee!

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MY VIEWS OF HUMOUR

By Len Wormull

When it came to humour there wasn't a boys' writer to match Charles Hamilton. His fantastic output of laughs spanning a long career was of a quality unsurpassed in schoolboy fiction....

I had hardly begun this tribute to Hamilton the laughter-maker when the July C.D. arrived with a letter from J. Twells saying: 'There is no doubt in my mind that E. S. Brooks' school stories are more consistently humorous than any other author....' Well, now. How can one avoid a collision course with such a debatable subject as the humour of Brooks and Hamilton? 'I know what I like,' says our friend - and who can say him nay? The funny thing about humour is that we are not all tickled by the same things. For instance, here is a contrasting point of view.

As a youngster I read and loved the school stories of Brooks and Hamilton, both writers exciting me in their different ways. Brooks enthralled me by the sheer wizardry of his descriptive writing and his sense of the fantastic. I liked his dramatic style, the sinister undertones, his coverage of sport and, oddly enough, his villains. But mention humour to me and I am at once on the other side of the track. Right from the start the question of laughs was settled for me by the discovery of Greyfriars - the greatest fun factory in fiction. Hamilton was so gifted a humorist, such a giant in this field, that he simply dwarfed all others. His rich vein of humour was the very essence of the Magnet's long life - 32 years in fact. How's that for consistency,

I see the humour of both writers like this: Hamilton plumbed the depths of my funny-bone; Brooks merely scratched at the surface. Admirers of Handforth will probably slay me when I say that his was the chuckle humour rather than the hilarious kind. His amorous antics saw him at his funniest, with Handy the sleuth a close second. Although the star turn, he was perhaps best seen as a light relief. Brother Willy also comes into this category, his most amusing assets being his worldly-wise philosophy and 'father to son' technique with Ted. The wit of William Napoleon Browne - a hit. Archie Glenthorne comes out strongest with his dithering humour, his Awful Aunts, and his many 'Wooster and Jeeves' encounters with valet Phipps. But I have to say it. The St. Frank's

funsters lost out in the battle for laughs against the formidable line-up of the opposition - Bunter, Coker, Wibley, and the genius of Hamilton in charge.

This may shock Lee die-hards, but it's my conviction that St. Frank's needed injecting with the laugh-potential of a 'Bunter' to sustain it. After all, he it was who kept the Magnet flying right to the end, when others had floundered. And he it was who received the accolade of fame in post-war years. Your correspondent thinks Handforth the 'greatest.' I say this distinction goes to Bunter. Do I hear the sound of sabres a-rattling? Funny thing humour.

R E V I E W

THE CASE OF THE RENEGADE AGENT

Desmond Reid
(Mayflower 3/6)

The title of this story somehow gives it a warm glow reminiscent of pre-war days, and the Blake - Tinker relationship should give it plenty of appeal for older readers. Blake, Tinker, and Paula are on holiday in Italy, when their vacation is suddenly changed into a desperate hunt for an indiscriminate killer. It is a well-plotted tale, and should please readers who like a yarn of swift action with a little bit of sentiment thrown in for good value.

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Here is the second instalment of the story in which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was created. Written 62 years ago, it was never reprinted, and very few hobbyists have ever seen it. It is so rare today that only one or two copies are probably still in existence.

THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S

HAMILTONIANA

"Here's a game?"

It was Figgins of the New House who uttered the words. He had just come out of the New House, with his chums, Wynn and Kerr. The three were known all over St. Jim's as Figgins & Co., and they were the leaders in all the marlums and excursions against the School House.

Figgins was long-limbed and lank, the fastest forward among the New House juniors. Wynn was short and fat, but a mighty man in goal. Kerr was of medium size, a reliable half, and a jolly good fellow.

"Here's a game," repeated Figgins, and the Co looked up joyfully. "What sort of a giddy kipper is that, chaps?"

The station hack from Rylcombe had driven in at the gates, and stopped. There were trunks piled on the roof till they were in danger of toppling over. There was a lurking grin on the stubbly face of the driver. But the eyes of Figgins & Co were fixed upon the individual who had alighted from the vehicle.

There were some swagger fellows at St. Jim's. There were some dandies in the Upper Forms who fancied themselves immensely. But even the most gorgeous Brummel in the Sixth would have paled into insignificance beside the newcomer.

He was evidently a new boy, and a junior. He was rather tall for his age, and slim. He was clad in Etons that fitted him like a glove. He wore the silkiest of silk hats, the fanciest of fancy waistcoats, the shiniest of shiny patent leathers, the most delicate of lavender kid gloves. He wore an eyeglass; he had screwed it into his eye, and was looking around him with languid interest.

Figgins took him in at a glance, eyeglass and all. It took the New House chief one second more to realise that this gorgeous stranger was going into the School House. Then he fell round the necks of the

Co., and almost wept with joy.

"Oh, dear! Oh, scissors! What is it?"

"Ask me another," said Kerr.

"Oh, my aunt!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

"And it's going to belong to the School House! Oh, my eye! What larks!"

"Is this the School House?" asked the stranger, in a languid voice. "Where is the portah to take in my twunks?"

"His twunks!" said Figgins, in a hollow voice. "Twig that? His twunks! Don't laugh. Let's go and talk to him, like good and kind schoolmates. There's Blake and his lot at their window, and it's sure to please them."

The Co chuckled joyously, and they bore down upon the new boy. Blake and his chums from the window of Study No. 6 were surveying the newcomer in dismay. In their wildest imaginings they had never calculated for anything like this.

Figgins approached the new boy with an air of deference. A crowd was already gathering, looking on joyfully. The newcomer turned his monocle upon Figgins.

"Are you the portah?"

Figgins nearly choked. But he restrained his impulse to massacre the stranger on the spot.

"No," he said, "I am not the portah. I am the portah's little boy. May I humbly enquire your lordship's name?"

"Certainly. My name is Arthur Augustus D'Arcy."

Figgins appeared to be suffering from some internal pain, for he doubled up in the most curious manner.

"His name," he said, turning to the Co., "is Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. This is where we kow-tow."

Down went the three in a really excellent performance of the Chinese kow-two.

D'Arcy surveyed them in amazement.

"This is most cuwious!" he said. "What extwemely peculiah little boys!"

A roar of laughter from the fellows around him seemed to increase his surprise. He gave them a haughty stare.

"How vewy wude!" he exclaimed. "Dwivah, please wait until someone fetches my twurks."

He handed the jehu a coin, and the man gasped with amazement when he saw that it was a half-sovereign. Half-sovereign tips from schoolboys were rare to the driver of the station hack, and he promptly transferred it to his pocket after biting it to assure himself that it was a good one.

"Thanky, kindly sir," he said. "You're a gent, you are!"

D'Arcy received the tribute with a haughty nod, and walked towards the School House. His carriage was lofty, not to describe it as a strut. The grinning boys made way for him. Up jumped Figgins & Co, and fell in behind him in file, Figgins carefully imitating his strut, and the Co behind carefully following his example.

The sight was too ridiculous for words, and the boys yelled. Thus they passed in procession up the steps of the School House, D'Arcy quite unconscious of his admiring following.

Mr. Kidd, the master of the School House, came out of his study to see what the uproar was about, and met the procession at the door.

"Dear me!" ejaculated the housemaster.

He tried heroically not to laugh, but it was no use. The sight of D'Arcy strutting along, and Figgins & Co strutting behind him, with solemn faces, was too much, and he burst into a roar.

D'Arcy had allowed his eyeglass to fall. He now screwed it into his eye again, and surveyed the housemaster.

"I fail to perceive the cause of your merriment," he remarked. "May I beg you to direct me to the quartahs of the house-mastah?"

"Yes, certainly! Ha, ha! Figgins, how dare you? Leave off this instant."

Figgins & Co vanished. From the quad came howl on howl of laughter. The New House boys were enjoying the joke immensely.

"I am the housemaster," said Mr. Kidd impressively.

But if he expected Arthur Augustus to be impressed, he was mistaken.

"Weally?" said D'Arcy. "My name is D'Arcy - Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and I am a

new boy. I am vewy pleased to make your acquaintance."

And he extended his hand condescendingly to the housemaster.

Mr. Kidd looked at it as if it were some peculiar zoological specimen submitted for his inspection.

"Dear me!" he said to himself. "So this is the new boy the Head told me about. He is more absurd than I thought. I shall have to --"

"Kindly give diwections for my twurks to be taken to my wooms," said D'Arcy, with a wave of the hand. "I should like my tea sent up immediately. The tea must be stwong, and the muffins hot. If the muffins are cold I shall complain to the doctah. Where are my quartahs?"

Mr. Kidd gasped feebly.

"Blake!"

Blake was coming downstairs.

"Yes, sir."

"This is D'Arcy, who is to share your study. Take him up. Take him into the dining-room at tea-time. See if you can make him understand things."

And the housemaster retreated into his study and closed the door. Arthur Augustus was a little too much for him.

"Come on, kid," said Blake.

D'Arcy stared at him.

"Are you addressng me?"

"Yes, I am, fathead! I told you to come along."

"You are insolent. Unless I am tweeked with gweatah respect I shall be compelled to chastise you."

Blake gasped.

Arthur Augustus never knew how near he was at that moment to having his tall hat flattened on his head, and his head knocked against the wall.

Blake remembered his promise to Kildare in time, and restrained himself from committing assault and battery.

"You are to share our study - Study No. 6," he explained patiently. "I want to show you the way. Please follow me."

"You should have spoken like that at first," said D'Arcy. "Lead the way. I will follow. I twust my wooms are not vewy high up."

"Not vewy," said Blake faintly. "Come along, for goodness sake!"

D'Arcy followed him up to the second

corridor, to the door of Study No. 6. When Blake showed him into that famous apartment, he looked about him with an expression of calm disapproval, which got Herries' and Dig's backs up at once.

"You don't mean to say that these are my quarters?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I do."

"It is very inconsiderate of Doctah Holmes to give me so extremely small a woom," said D'Arcy. "I suppose I must submit, howevah. My aunts said I should have to submit to many discomforts at a public school."

"Your aunts were sensible women," said Blake. "Did they tell you also that if you put on side you might get your neck wrung?"

"N-no."

"An oversight on their part. Did they warn you that if you turned up your nose at a fellow's study you might have that same nose rubbed in the ashes in the grate?"

"N-n-no."

"A pity. They ought to have warned you of that," said Blake, shaking his head.

D'Arcy looked at Blake wonderingly, evidently not quite knowing what to make of him.

"What are these boys doing in my woom?" he asked. "I cannot have my quarters crowded up like this."

Sheer amazement had held Herries and Digby silent. But this was too much. With one accord they rushed on the stranger. Blake jumped in the way.

"Hold on, you chaps. No ball - I mean, you're off-side. Kildare asked me to see that he wasn't slain, or I'd have slain him myself before this. Let the prig alone."

"Look here, Blake," said Herries wrathfully, "if you think I'm going to put up with that thing in this study, you've made a big mistake."

"He wants killing," said Digby.

"Leave him to your uncle," said Blake. "We shall have to educate him if he's going to remain in this study. We must do it all by kindness." He turned to the new boy again. "Master D'Arcy, you are going to share this study with us three. You'll have a bed in the big dormitory upstairs."

"Impossible! I must have a bed-woom to myself. And as for sharing this study, I weally could not. There would not be woom enough. Besides, my aunts warned me

(Another instalment of this 62-years

most particularly to be careful what company I kept at school --"

"I shall slay him - I know I shall," said Herries wildly.

A loud thumping and bumping was audible from without. The three chums rushed from the study.

The school porter was coming up with a heavy trunk, which he bumped down viciously on every stair. Down in the hall were trunks and hat-boxes in numerous array. The porter was perspiring and muttering expressive words.

"Hallo, Taggles!" said Blake. "Who does all that luggage belong to?"

"Ask 'im," said the porter, with a far from amiable look at D'Arcy.

"Those few boxes are mine," said D'Arcy. "The west is at the station."

"The rest!" said Blake feebly. "What's in 'em?"

"My clothes," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"My aunts thought I had better bring only a few things with me. I have only three silk hats, and not more than six pairs of boots. Of course, I had to bring my dress-clothes, but I limited myself to ten waist-coats. Then there are my football things--"

"Your what?" gurgled Blake. "You don't mean to say you play football?"

"I have never yet played," said D'Arcy, "because it is a wuff game." I do not approve of wuff games. But I am told that football is a great feature at public schools, and so I shall probably play in the first eleven."

Blake held on to the banisters. For the moment he was speechless.

"There goes the tea bell!" said Digby.

"Come on! Do you hear, D'Arcy? Tea!"

"I have already ordered my tea to be sent up," said D'Arcy.

"Whom did you order?"

"The housemestah!"

Blake seized D'Arcy by the collar and ran him down the stairs. Herries and Digby followed, laughing. Heedless of D'Arcy's expostulations, Blake ran him into the dining-hall, and plumped him down into a seat at the Fourth Form table.

"Now, sit and hold your tongue, for goodness' sake!" he exclaimed.

And D'Arcy set to work restoring his rumpled necktie into its place, and trying to smooth his crumpled collar. (old story next month)

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 71 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 232 - "The Rebel of Grimslade"

When the Amalgamated Press replaced the Popular with the Ranger in 1931, they must have done so with a glance over their shoulders at the challenge of the Thompson papers, for the Ranger was undoubtedly aimed at the same type of market as the Scottish boys' papers. Even Charles Hamilton's contribution had a new look - bright, breezy, and energetic.

Grimslade school was situated on the borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and the two houses (White's and Redmayes') were intended to echo the Wars of the Roses. The headmaster, Dr. Sammy Sparshott, was youthful and unorthodox in his outlook, and the school specialised in breaking in unruly boys. Jim Dainty arrived as the unwilling new boy, spoilt by his mother in his father's absence and now sent to his father's old school. It is not difficult to see the Harry Wharton theme being worked out again in shorter compass.

Charles Hamilton could seldom let slip the chance to have a joke with a surname, and so we had two friends called Bacon and Bean, and a German fat boy named Von Splitz. There was nothing attractive or sympathetic about him, and the humour consisted in laughing at his bad English and his German conceit.

When one looks over the Greyfriars stories of 1931, it comes as something of a surprise to realise that they were written at the same time as the early Grimslade tales. Of course, Charles Hamilton's weekly contributions to the Ranger were very much on the short side, which eliminated the possibility of the more leisurely development that the length of the Magnet tales afforded. It is also a fact that school stories (like real schools) need time in order to build up a convincing atmosphere and to establish a tradition. Grimslade's career was too brief to allow this to happen.

Even so, Charles Hamilton at his least inspired was never less than readable, and the Grimslade stories were well above this level. At the beginning they were very much in the nature of character studies when Jim Dainty was learning to respect his headmaster but still inclined to acts of rebellion. When it is considered that they represent only an insignificant part of Charles Hamilton's prodigious output, it is astonishing how much he put into work which was only of minor importance to him.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 127. THE LAST DAYS OF THE EMPIRE

Last year, in the "Controversial" series, we published an article entitled "What Did They Do With the Empire?" As I made clear in that article, my collection of Empires was not complete. I fell into a trap of my own making. I stated that with No. 27 the number of pages was increased without any increase in price. The first 27 issues had comprised 20 pages for one halfpenny. Now for the same price readers were given 24 pages. Actually, I allowed myself to be guided by the rather vague comments in the editor's chat in No. 27.

What happened was this: After No. 27, the Empire started at No. 1 (new series). The number of pages was NOT increased. The periodical now became of the same size as the sheets of the Boys' Friend, and the actual amount of paper used in an issue was exactly the same as before.

Although I have known the Empire for so many years I never knew before that it appeared in Boys' Friend format. "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays" started as a serial in No. 1 (new series). With No. 9 (new series) there was a return to the Rylcombe Grammar School stories, though these new tales were very short indeed. Following Ethel came another new Charles Hamilton serial "The Rivals of St. Wode's". I am quite unacquainted with this one. It was illustrated by Hayward.

A peculiar innovation occurred with No. 15 (new series). This was the start of a serial entitled "The Dark Lantern," telling of the boyhood of the notorious criminal, Charles Peace.

But the most intriguing item of all occurred with No. 21 (new series). With a flourish, the editor announced that "world-famous Tom Merry" was to join the pages of the Empire. It was to be written by Martin Clifford, and would appear under the title "Tom Merry's Island." For several weeks the editor plugged the forthcoming serial "Tom Merry's Island," and even published letters from Tom and Gussy telling readers to be ready for the new serial.

Then, suddenly, there was no further reference to it. The sands of the Empire were running out, and the paper ended with issue No. 28, dated May 6th 1911. With stunning naiveté the editor said that he realised most of his readers did not have much pocket money and could not afford two papers a week. So he had arranged to give them two papers for the price of one. The Empire

was to be amalgamated with "The Football & Sports Library."

And what happened to "Tom Merry's Island," the serial which Martin Clifford had written especially for the Empire? Almost certainly it became the 3-story South Seas series in the Gem, but they must have been snappy about it, for that series began in the Gem at the start of June 1911. One story in that series was entitled "Tom Merry's Treasure Island."

What a sad, sad pity that Charles Hamilton did not pack out his Autobiography with items like that! There must have been scores of such anecdotes on similar lines. How we would have revelled in them!

He might have written: "Early in 1911 I was commissioned to write a Tom Merry serial for the Empire Library. I did a story of about 80,000 words, and named it 'Tom Merry's Island.' I had, however, only just finished it when the decision was made to close down the Empire. I was then asked to convert the long serial into three complete stories for the Gem, and this I did. The resulting three stories were "The Mysterious Document," "Tom Merry's Treasure Island," and "The Schoolboy Castaways." Tom Merry and his friends went back to St. Jim's with part of the proceeds of the treasure which they had found on the island, and the idea came to me that they should use the money in a celebration to mark the coronation. The result was 'Coronation Day at St. Jim's.'"

But anecdotes concerning single stories did not mean anything to Charles Hamilton. What a shame that there was nobody at all to tell him that they meant a great deal to us!

A few final thoughts about the Treasure Island series. It was a superb piece of writing. Of course, it was really too short. Like so many of the blue Gem themes, it could have been so advantageously lengthened.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

W.O.G. LOFTS: I think it only fair to say that, at least where Amalgamated Press was concerned, they did pay extra to authors when stories were reprinted. This was roughly 12½% of the original payment. This was called Honorariums (voluntary fees) when they had no legal obligation to do it. As our editor rightly says, some authors resented this reprinting wholesale of their works, as it curtailed their output in getting full rates for fresh stories. On the other hand I have found that some authors, not so prolific who welcomed these honorarium cheques, as they came right out of

the blue at times when they needed the money badly.

(What happened when chunks from 2 or 3 tales were compressed into one S.O.L? Or when one story was cut into three portions to be served up in three successive weeks in the Popular? - ED.)

H. MACHIN: I wonder whatever became of Gussy's two dotting maiden aunts and what were Lord and Lady Eastwood thinking of when they entrusted their son to the tender mercies of the said maiden aunts.

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

JOHN GOCHER (Sudbury): It is seldom that I write to you being content to wallow in the monthly luxury of the C.D. which, to my mind, goes from strength to strength. One complaint - I do wish we could have articles about the Champion and Triumph authors - these were my favourites for many years.

Have you ever come across juvenile magazines of the name of Toby & Wonderland?

Toby was being published in 1932 from 93, Long Acre. It was one shilling monthly and was called an entertaining monthly for boys and girls. Articles 800 - 900 words - short stories 2,200 - 3,500 words appealing to boys and girls up to the age of 15. Must be well written, with plenty of incident but not too blood thirsty. Also published how to make it articles and paid 21/- per thousand words to authors!

I would be interested to learn if anyone has ever seen a copy of this paper.

(Our New Zealand contributor, Albert Watkin, writes on the Champion in the new C.D. Annual. - ED.)

BERNARD PRIME (Sanderstead): I found the first instalment of the D'Arcy story charming. By far THE attraction (to me at least) of the August C.D.

GEORGE McROBERTS (Glasgow): In these days of horror films, space stories and ghastly sex tales, it is refreshing to turn to the old C.D. and read something pleasant. Many thanks to you and the grand number of contributors to the magazine.

W.O.G. LOFTS (London): With regard to S. Gordon Swan's interesting article on mysterious authors of the B.F.L., I can inform him,

that as far as A.P. authors are concerned, all pen-names are now known and they will be published some time in the future. "Victor Cromwell" originally wrote in the Gem as a serial, and it hid the identity of A. E. Bull, a well-known writer. Our editor is quite correct about "Mr. Paul Pontifex Prout" and this hid the identity of the late W. Stanton Hope.

ROBERT MILLER (London): According to the researches of Mr. Blythe and others, E. S. Brooks would seem to have launched his literary career about 1908. I have a book called "Historic Boys," by E. S. Brooks, published by The Gresham Publishing Co. Ltd., London about 1886 (this is quite clearly indicated by the author on page 19). Would this be the father of your E. S. Brooks, or is it just a coincidence that someone with the same name also liked to write for boys of an earlier generation?

Another matter which puzzles me concerns the name "Ravenscar." W. Lofts refers to this as one of the creations of Michael Storm. There is a story in the Holiday Annual 1923 called "The Mystery of Ravenscar - a grand story of Westavon College," by Edmund Burton. Also I feel sure that in a recent number of C.D. there was a reference to "Ravenscar" in yet another setting by yet another author. It seems a favourite name for a place or school!

And while I have your attention, may I comment on the odd silence regarding the Boy's Magazine, which flourished round about 1924-8. It was what some of us called "far-fetched," but quite popular, and I am astonished that no reader seems anxious to trace the old copies.

JOE CONROY (Liverpool): What about our own famous detective FERRERS LOCKE? Somehow he always seems to be left out in the cold or perhaps forgotten.

When did Ferrers Locke first make his appearance and is he a creation of Frank Richards? Being a relation of Dr. Locke I should think so.

My first recollection of him I think was in the Hollywood series - I know he was definitely in the China series. Have any detective stories featuring Ferrers Locke, other than when he has had cases in connection with Greyfriars, been written? He has always been an interesting subject to me and certainly on the same plane as Nelson Lee.

(Ferrers Locke first appeared in the St. Jim's stories in the ½d Gem. In later years, Hamilton wrote certain detective stories

about him, and he was also featured by one or two other writers. He was a Hamilton creation. - ED.)

FRANK PARKER (Thames Ditton): May I say that I enjoy C.D. hugely? Apart from the fascinating contents, it is beautifully produced and edited - much superior to anything of the kind I've seen in other fields of amateur publishing. The results should make you very proud; I wonder are they taken too much for granted?

On one point, though, I'm left unsatisfied. The issues I've read still offer no answer to the question: what manner of man was this Charles Hamilton? I'm fascinated by his accomplishment, but nowhere near understanding what made him tick.

He chose to serve a market held in scorn and contempt by his adult contemporaries - and not without reason judging by the penny dreadfuls of the late Victorian era. He was a literate man (surely a graduate in the humanities?) who eschewed "literature" as then understood. A man of culture who, surely, could have moved in superior circles. A master of characterisation capable of becoming a fashionable novelist. A man of iron self-discipline - how otherwise explain that incredible 30,000 words-a-week output, week after week, year after year? Yet this highly capable, productive, well-educated man chose to write for the "comics."

Was he opting out from something? Or did he have a sense of mission, to inject some quality into the schoolboy literature of the time?

(In an average week, Charles Hamilton turned out considerably more than 30,000 words, when he was at the peak of his career.-ED.)

TOM PORTER (Cradley Heath): What a delight C.D. is again with its fascinating first instalment of the coming of Arthur Augustus to St. Jim's and what a delicate and graceful gesture - an inspiration, in fact, - to the memory of Bill Gander to add the title of his famous magazine to that of our own C.D. and to call the latter STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST. Congratulations.

FOR SALE: B.F.Ls. ½d and 1d Vanguards, Marvels, Plucks, U.Js., and Friends. Aldines including Robin Hoods, Bills, Detective, Lees, New Series, Nugget Library, Modern Boy's, Bunter/Merry hardbacks and Annuals. Other Annuals include Holiday, Chums, B.O.P's., Captains, Young England, Champions and many other pre war. Also early Rainbows and Children's Annuals.

NORMAN S. SHAW, 84 BELVEDERE RD., S.E.19. 771-9857 Evenings.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held July 30th, 1968.

There was a good attendance at the Birmingham Theatre Centre despite the calls of holidays. Eleven members were present including John Mann from Retford and your correspondent, who was able to report the meeting at first hand instead of from information received as they say in police circles.

It was an informal meeting but a lively one, most of the time being spent on discussion. This revolved round George Orwell's famous essay on Boys' Weeklies. The point was made that Orwell gave quite a lot of praise to Charles Hamilton as well as the criticism which his devotees find unpalatable as indeed did Charles Hamilton himself.

Another topic was the recent Royal Commission on public schools. Most of our members would be saddened if there ever came a time when these schools, on which Charles Hamilton built his universe of discourse and gave it such verisimilitude that his characters really lived for thousands of schoolboys and adults, were abolished by the state. This was felt by us all.

As Tom Porter was away on holiday Ted Davey brought along an Anniversary Number, dated 29th July, 1939. Not quite to the day but the best that Ted could manage. Also Norman Gregory brought along a bound volume of the Captain and Ivan Webster a beautiful copy of Magnet 409. These were the collector's items.

The chairman, Ted Davey informed us that Mrs. Hamilton Wright is due to visit our club at the September meeting. She is the niece of Charles Hamilton and is at present writing a book on her famous uncle.

Members were delighted to see John Mann, who had travelled 80 miles from Retford to attend, a great example of enthusiasm for the hobby.

The next meeting is on August 27th.

J. F. Bellfield
Correspondent.

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NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 10 August 1968.

The meeting was opened with the sad news given by the Chairman

that Dorothy Robinson had died suddenly from a heart attack on Sunday morning, 21st July, as she prepared for Church. Dorothy (who had attended the July meeting) was our oldest lady member. She had been thirteen years in the Club and her devotion and interest for the hobby were very evident, the "Gem" being her favourite paper. We shall all miss her quiet, gentle presence in our midst.

The business continued with Minutes, Treasurer's Report and then news from postal members and friends. We are glad to hear that a former member, Edmund Dinsdale, had rejoined the Club. A discussion followed re the availability, or otherwise, of the new Sexton Blake hardback books. Gerry Allison had written to Deans, and Geoffrey Wilde had been in touch with a local bookseller. Ron Hodgson had obtained a set in London, but generally the supply was felt to be sparse. It seems that these books may be more plentiful in Autumn - up to Christmas!

Jack Wood produced a theatre programme from Manchester of the "Blandings Castle" play which had some well-known names in the caste - James Hayter, Robertson Hare, Peggy Mount, Austin Trevor and Jon Pertwee amongst them. Jack was also the leader on the evening's programme and he gave extracts from "The Happiest Days" by G. F. Lamb. These proved, once more, that compared with Truth, Fiction is a pale shadow; judging by the boisterous goings on (including barring out) at real schools, our favourite writers can never be accused of "stretching it," in their stories. Jack concluded with a Quiz compiled by the Clubs, from the 1958 C.D. Annual. Answers were called out and though no score was kept, memories seemed to be pretty good on the whole.

After refreshments, Mollie Allison gave a reading from the ninth Gold Hawk book "D'arcy's Disappearance." She chose the three chapters telling of Gussy's adventures during a summer night in Kent, when encountering a grouchy caravanner, and two rather Laurel and Hardy-ish horse thieves.

This brought the meeting to an end, and members dispersed in their various directions homewards. Next meeting, Saturday the 14th September 1968.

M. L. Allison
Hon. Secretary

L O N D O N

Thirty-one was the attendance at the August meeting, held at the home of hospitable Len and Josie Packman. President John

Wernham was present, and brought along by Frank Vernon-Lay was Edmund Burton Childs, the old boys' book author of about 65 years. Mr. Childs gave a talk and illustrated it with many fine specimens of old boys' books and later answered numerous questions.

Two librarian reports were given by Roger Jenkins and Bob Blythe, the latter having nearly all the Nelson Lee Libraries from 1915 to 1933 for loan.

Brian Doyle, back recently from Dublin, gave the news of his book, "The Who's Who of Children's Literature." It will be published in September, by Hugh Evelyn Ltd. Brian had brought a copy for members' perusal and stated that the C.D. will review the book. The filming in Dublin, which Brian was engaged in, was of Aldine flavour, to wit, Tommy Steele as Dick Turpin.

John Wernham gave the news of forthcoming publications; the one in preparation for pre-Christmas issue, the menu card for the September luncheon party and a new Hamiltonian catalogue. Members and collectors are asked not to write for copies of the latter as they are still in the course of preparation and due notice will be given in the columns of C.D. when they are ready.

Frank Lay read a couple of passages from a copy of "Pluck," circa 1906 and entitled "Sent to Coventry." The story was one of Charles Hamilton's very early efforts and dealt with "Rookwood" school. Bert Staples confounded all the experts with his "Boys' Friend" quiz. But it was Roger Jenkins the winner with a very low score, second Bill Hubbard and the three thirds Winifred Morss, Frank Lay and Laurie Sutton.

Laurie continued the good work by discoursing on the substitute writers in the "Magnet." An amusing talk and instructive. Majorie Norris read one of her own short stories about Mr. Poolton the Cat. It was read some time ago by Richard Hearn on B.B.C. radio.

Full particulars of the September luncheon party and outing to Folkestone on Sunday, 8th, will be communicated by post to all who are participating.

Must not forget to mention that Tom Porter made a very welcome appearance at this jolly gathering and with hearty votes of thanks to Len and Josie, the meeting terminated.

Uncle Benjamin

WANTED: Radio Fun Magazines Sept. 1944 to March 1945 (33 issues).
Will pay £15 or more or swap 100 or more (1946 to 1952) issues.
P. THOMPSON, 2 ALWYNE MANSIONS, ALWYNE ROAD, WIMBLEDON, LONDON

No. 1. Where have all the heroes gone?

Undoubtedly one of the basic concepts of schoolboy fiction is that of the hero. They were many and various as were the stories in which they were placed. Nowadays one of the nostalgic pleasures of life is to thumb through copies of the old papers reading and re-reading their exploits. All were to some extent larger-than-life; some, especially in the Thomson papers, many times so. Others, particularly the creations of Charles Hamilton, were much nearer reality - indeed at times they seemed more real than our greatest friends.

Adult fiction often seems strangely lacking in such noble characters. When they do appear they are often hugely successful. I am sure that part of the success of Sherlock Holmes and of Hornblower is that they are out in this heroic mould, performing almost superhuman feats of deduction and action in the grand tradition. Other novels, however, have central characters in plenty - but where are the heroes amongst them? Who is the hero of 'Angel Pavement' - or even of 'Pickwick Papers'?

In more recent times a new type has appeared - the anti-hero. The actions of this peculiar species and indeed of the standard 'hero' often seem indistinguishable from those of the villain. Gone seem to be the days of the fine upstanding characters whose actions were governed by a regard for duty and honour and carried out with courage and humanity. Gone? Well, luckily, not entirely.

There are still a few authors writing who make their characters act in a manner which would not disgrace the pages of the Magnet or Chums. Outstanding among those is Alistair Maclean, who first came to the public notice with his brilliant novel about a Russian convoy 'H.M.S. Ulysses' in 1955.

Maclean has now had twelve books published - and eleven of these are currently available in paperbacks which must be something of a record. He specialises in fact action thrillers and spy stories and war stories. He is one of the country's best-selling authors and he has achieved this position without have his characters behave in the manner other authors consider to be essential. Women play little part in his novels - in several none at all. He believes that they slow up the action - and I am sure many of the old authors would agree with him!

He often creates situations in which his heroes (yes in the

old tradition) have to behave with superhuman courage just to survive. There are times when he seems obsessed by snow and the extreme limits of cold - A Russian convoy, the Arctic Circle, the Alps in winter and so on. Seven of his novels, are set in those kind of conditions. In those settings the action the motives and even some of the dialogue might well have come from a boys paper of the golden era.

So if you do ever reflect sadly on the passing of the characters we used to read about, take heart. There are just a few left.

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

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

W A N T E D: Magnets, Gems, Populars, Lees (Old Series), Monsters, Bullseyes, Skippers, Wizards, Pilots, U.Js., SOLs, Scouts, Captains, Chums, BOP's, Holiday Annuals and similar.

NORMAN S. SHAW, 84 BELVEDERE RD., UPPER NORWOOD, LONDON S.E.19

A LAST LOOK ROUND

Identical twin daughters (Barbara and Heather) for our wizard of the drawing-board, Bob Whiter, and his charming wife, Marie. Congratulations to this happy Mum and Dad. To tell one from the other, one twin will wear Greyfriars colours, the other St. Jim's.

Frank Case sends us a press cutting from the Derby Evening Telegraph. A long article concerning the old papers. Frank doesn't like it much. Nor do we. All the papers are lumped together as 'comics,' and that hoary old chestnut about No. 1 Magnet being worth £10 upwards is served up piping hot. The columnist talks about dealers who stop working and give all their time to book-dealing. There may be something in it, in isolated cases. He mentions that the 74-year-old Halfpenny Marvel is now worth 30/- which is good news for us, as we shall be offering some next month. Have your 30/- ready, and don't get killed in the rush.
