

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

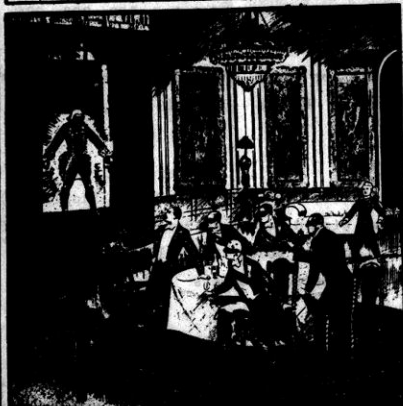
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EVERY WEEK IT'S QUITE UNIQUE!

VOL.
22



THE DIAMOND KING



A figure slipped across the sill of the opened window, presenting a spectacle so astounding that Martin Holt could scarcely believe his eyes. The man's strange garments were encumbered with glittering jewels. The Blue Wolf & Thurgood Williams stood with dilated eyes, and the waiter was with him directly across to their feet, gazing curiously at the diamond-encrusted figure which had come from the night outside.

No.
262

2/3

OCTOBER 1968

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* * * * *

P. J. HANGER

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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. 262

OCTOBER 1968

Price 2s 3d

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



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

THIS TWO-TIER BUSINESS:

Last month we referred to this new lark which the G.P.O. has rather pompously called its two-tier service. The pomposity and the expensive advertising which has announced it all is merely a screen for the fact that we are to be given a less efficient service at greater cost. At any rate for the present, this magazine will go out to subscribers by the 4d mail. The post office may have some elaborate system for dividing the sheep from the goats, but it would be difficult for C.D. to run a two-tier service.

More worrying from our point of view is POP - and I am not referring to the strange sounds produced by some modern "singers." POP means Post Office Preferred - and the Post Office, with 1984 drawing nearer, prefers envelopes of certain sizes and quality. Our envelopes - and we always use good quality stationery - are 10 x 7 in dimension, and these are outside post-office "preference." If we continue to use this size you may be faced with a surcharge and your editor may well be sent to the Tower. A solution would be to fold C.D. down the centre, and insert it in a 9 x 4 envelope. The editor has nightmares in which irate C.D. readers pelt him with eggs from one direction while the executioners of the all-powerful post-office wave axes.

There is a respite on POP, however. POP is postponed temporarily, while the powers-that-be at the G.P.O. get their brains working and think things out. There will be a clanking of rusty machinery. One thing is certain. Whoever benefits in the long run, it won't be the general public.

TAKING THINGS FOR GRANTED:

In last month's "The Postman Called" a correspondent wondered whether some readers take the Digest too much for granted. For the most part they don't, I think, but it is fairly certain that with all of us familiarity can breed contempt.

The sparkling Thames, so beautiful in its upper reaches, flows placidly along exactly 2 minutes walk from Excelsior House. In the late afternoon of the recent bank holiday, I felt suddenly that I would like a walk. I went down to the Thames, crossed the river in the quaint little ferry, and then pondered whether to enter the vast and glorious Home Park or to walk up the towpath. I decided on the latter, strolling along the shady river bank, past the punts and sailing craft and river steamers and the lovely island at Thames Ditton, and the south bank with its splendid houses and lawns which run down to the water's edge. I strolled along the two miles to the wonderful grounds of Hampton Court, musing all the while on the Water Lily which the Greyfriars chums had towed along that same bank thirty years ago, and the Old Bus which had graced the unchanging scene forty-five years or so back.

People often say: "How lovely to have the river almost at your front door, like this!" and I smile vaguely. Truth to tell, it must be many, many years since I last walked along that beguiling towpath which teems with Greyfriars and St. Jim's history.

So we really do tend to take for granted some worth-while things which have become familiar to us. Like those of us who have vast collections - and only glance through one volume among many in one month among many. The only thing is that we should miss them if we suddenly knew that they were no longer there for the asking.

THE EARLY BROOKS:

Robert Blythe's article on the early career of Edwy Searles Brooks, which we print this month, will be of immense interest to all readers, and not only to Lee fans. The young Brooks clearly understudied the importunate widow, and he deserved to succeed from his persistence alone.

Naturally one wonders whether all writers for the popular

weeklies were so dedicated, and whether, for instance, Charles Hamilton would have pocketed his pride to the same extent. Probably he would and did. It is true that he claimed he never had a story rejected, but the early career of the very young Hamilton is a closed book to us.

What is very evident, and we have proofs also from other sources, is that publishers were deplorably slow in paying their authors. In those days at least publishers did not give heed to the aphorism that he who pays promptly pays twice. They seemed to think that their writers could live on air.

It is remarkable - and we are indeed lucky - that this revealing correspondence between Brooks and his various publishers exists to-day.

THE ANNUAL FOR 1968:

The 1968 edition of Collectors' Digest Annual will be packed with articles by our experts, covering many phases of old boys' book lore. We shall be able to print but very few copies beyond the number ordered in advance. Have you ordered your Annual yet?

THE EDITOR.

FOR EXCHANGE only on very generous basis:

MAGNETS: 521, 522, 530 to 32, 536, 543, 743, 744, 748, 774, 779, 783, 784, 787, 795, 796, 797, 799, 936, 983, 1014, 1031, 1046, 1090 to 1115 (complete HOLLYWOOD and LODER TYRANT series) 1147, 1149, 1166, 1176, 1186, 1188, 1192 to 96, 1203, 1207, 1210, 1212 to 14, 1216 to 19, 1225, 1233, 1272 to 1278, 1281 to 1296 (including complete WHARTON REBEL series) 1300, 1301, 1305, 1306, 1312, 1314 to 1317, 1320, 1323, 1333, 1336, 1337, 1340, 1343, 1344, 1346, 1348 to 54, 1359, 1361, 1364, 1366, 1367, 1369, 1370 to 1372, 1376 to 78, 1387, 1395, 1399, 1400, 1401, 1422, 1423, 1425 to 30, 1432, 1436, 1438, 1554, 1609 to 12, 1674. GEMS: 620, 723, 730, 731, 733, 737, 830, 856, 921, 953 to 54. Holiday Annuals 1920 to 1928. Boys Friend Weeklies - hundreds of Rookwood issues. Many rare Hamilton Boys Friend Libraries and many S.O.Ls. The first 2 Xmas Red Magnets in mint.

WANTED: the following MAGNETS in very good condition for binding: 664, 748, 761, 763, 766, 797, 848, 862, 876, 942, 959, 1117, 1125, 1126, 1169 to 74, 1191 to 94 - also GEMS 461, 564, 600. My pretty good copy as replacement if necessary.

S. SMYTH, No. 1 BRANDON ST., CLOVELLY, N.S.W., AUSTRALIA.

DANNY'S DIARY

OCTOBER 1918

"Where did that one go to, 'Erbert,
Where did that one go?
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh,
Say old chummy, that was rummy,
Tell me if you know"

And so on. That's the song the boys out at the front are now singing, and everybody is singing it at home, too.

The Germans are still falling back everywhere, and the war news keeps good. It looks as though the war will soon be over - at last.

The Boys' Friend is always so good that my chant gets mernottonous. The first Rookwood story this month was "Settling With the Sharper." Jimmy's cousin, Algy, is being blackmailed over a photograph which shows Algy with Joey Hook, the bookmaker. But Mornington takes a hand.

Next story was "Jimmy Silver's House-Warming." Rookwood is repaired after the bomb damage, and the boys have finished with being under canvas. The tale told of rival celebrations to mark the return to the restored Rookwood.

Then came a special number with a free art plate by Dodshon of the serial "The Boys Who Beat the Kaiser." This issue contained the first story of a wonderful new Rookwood series, with a wonderful new artist. He is the man who illustrates Cheerful Charlie Brown in the Butterfly. The story was entitled "Lovell's Disappearance." A new football coach named Lagden comes to Rookwood, but there is a mystery about him. As Bulkeley confides to Neville, he doesn't know much about football. And Lovell, who thought Lagden might be a distant relation, disappears.

Second story of the series, still on about the mysterious Lagden, was "A Baffling Mystery." I think it's the best Rookwood series ever. And I hope the new artist carries on.

For the first half of the month, the Cedar Creek holiday series continued. In "The Claim Jumpers" a villain named Gomez tried to rob the boys' mine, and was defeated by Yen Chin. In the final holiday story "Homeward Bound," Gunten and Keller stole the little money bag which the friends had from their mine, and it was Yen Chin who got it back from them. The end of a fine series.

Then the start of a new Cedar Creek series. Gunten, found gambling by Miss Meadows, was expelled, and Old Man Gunten, a

school trustee, wangled things so that Miss Meadows was sacked. This story was "The Order of the Boot."

Next week, a Mr. Peckover was put as Head of Cedar Creek in place of Miss Meadows, and the result was "The School on Strike."

There has been a strike of railwaymen in South Wales, and Mr. J. H. Thomas, the secretary of the N.U.R. has resigned, for he says the strike was brought about by pacifists.

The Gem started off with "Raid and Rescue," the final story of the third-rate series about Skimpole and Trimble being kidnapped in the Moat House.

After this, "Sister Mabel" was one of those stories about school rivalry which the Gem always does so well. Clive's sister arrives while Clive is away, and she gives the St. Jim's pals a high old time. It's really Gordon Gay in disguise.

"St. Jim's on the Warpath" was fairly good. Mr. Chumper wants Rose Cottage, at present let to Mrs. Hastings whose husband is a soldier at the front. St. Jim's takes a hand.

Final story of the month was very odd. Called "Cousin Ethel's Champions" it told how Ethel went to visit St. Jim's in order to join in celebrations to mark the Head's 60th birthday. Perhaps she'll blow out the candles on the cake.

There has been a sea disaster. The Canadian Pacific steamer "Princess Sophia" foundered off Alaska, and 346 passengers were drowned.

With the days getting shorter, I have been going to the pictures twice a week. I saw Wallace Reid in "Nan of Music Mountain." John Barrymore was excellent in "Raffles." I once saw the play in London with Doug, but the picture was better.

Wilfred Lucas and Constance Talmadge were in "The Microscope Mystery." Douglas Fairbanks was in "In Again, Out Again." Olive Thomas was in "Broadway Arizona." Olive Thomas is an unusually beautiful girl. Elsie Ferguson was in "Rose of the World." A new serial has started named "The American Girl."

Jack Pickford was great in "Huck and Tom," after a Mark Twain story which I once read. Henry Edwards and Chrissie White were in "Dick Carson Wins Through."

All one week one of our cinemas had the latest Charlie Chaplin film "Shoulder Arms." This is in 3 reels and is very funny.

In the Nelson Lee Library, the Serpent Series has been completed in a second month. The stories were "The Remove on Strike," "Poor Old Handforth," "The Closing of the Net," and "The Serpent's Redemption" At the finish, Pitt, who has been responsible for

such wicked schemes, redeems himself by saving Watson from a fire - and repents of all his bad deeds.

All told it has been a rattling good month in the Magnet. The opening story "Fallen Fortunes" was the final tale in the latest Redwing series. The Bounder thought out a way to make Redwing keep the scholarship which he had made up his mind to give up. This series has been splendid reading.

After this "The Greyfriars Tree-Dwellers" was an anti-climacks. It was a very hot September, and dust from a wall which striking bricklayers had been building blew into the studies. So the Famous Five made themselves a study up in the trees. I suppose the real Magnet writer must have a rest now and then, so we ought not to complain, even though it wastes three-halfpence.

"The Missing Masterpiece" was a grand tale. A real gem of gurgling comedy. Hobson was a fugitive from Hoskins who had composed a march in F major. Frank Richards is really rich with a tale like this.

Finally, a good serious tale "A Case of Conscience" about a new boy at Greyfriars. Hilary is the son of a conscientious objector, and he finds life hard going. This looks like being the first story of a series, and it's a good one.

And the German retreat goes on -- and the air raids seem to have ended - and Christmas is coming -----

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The Rookwood story "Settling With the Sharper" was the last to be illustrated by Hayward. "Lovell's Disappearance" was the very first to be illustrated by Wakefield who illustrated most of the Rookwood series from now on.)

FOR SALE:

MONSTER WEEKLY: Nos. 1 - 44 bound (Vols. 1 and 2) complete £7.10.0. All in one volume. YOUNG BRITAIN: Vols. 1,2,3 in exceptional condition beautifully bound half leather, £12.0.0. 96 BOYS FRIENDS No. 20 New Series to 119, only 3 missing. Some a little ragged round edges but carefully repaired. £8 the lot, very cheap. 250 Scouts 1950's & 60's £3. All post extra. Many other O.B.B's available and wanted.

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THE LEGEND OF SEXTON BLAKE

By Deryck Harvey

What is it that makes so many people cherish the legend of Sexton Blake? Nostalgia might be as good a reason as any to explain today's following for the pre-war schoolboy heroes, but with Blake it is probably a good deal more.

The very name itself is attractive. I confess that of all the storybook heroes of a miss-read youth, the ring of the syllables "Sexton Blake" gave the great detective a head start in my esteem. The name conjured a personality already partly suggested by the word "detective."

I believe post-war generations of Blake devotees to have been inescapably conditioned to the English literary way of detection. I cannot remember a time when I was not aware of the "existence" of Sherlock Holmes, Poirot, the Saint, the Toff - or Blake.

Intriguingly Blake, to me, remains the only living legend. Holmes, despite Conan Doyle's undoubted literary merit, grew musty. Poirot, Templar and Rollison became cardboard characters conceived in ingeniously artificial plots redolent of the 'thirties.

But Blake goes on. He has survived innumerable poor stories, inadequate characterisation, and frankly preposterous plots on one hand, to a total revamp of his office and status on the other. The odds have been against him, but he has always come back for more - so why?

Evidence that the legend perpetuates its own attraction was given on the back covers of the first six issues of the fifth and current series of the Sexton Blake Library. Here, established authors, actors, and real-life detectives, paid tribute to the ever-intrepid Blake.

Three of these tributes were especially revealing. "Sexton Blake was one of my earliest heroes, and often inspired me to 'play detectives,' said television's Maigret, Rupert Davies, "and here I am - still playing one. Maybe I have Sexton Blake to thank for that."

Ex-Chief Superintendent Cherrill, C.I.D., commented: "It was Sexton Blake, this intrepid hero, who first fired my imagination to become a detective." And ex-Detective Superintendent Gosling

added: "Sexton Blake....is the personification of the perfect detective."

Praise indeed - and only possible because of Blake's remarkable longevity. Not only is he the longest-running hero in detective fiction, but his circumstances make him so absolutely unique. An important reason he has lasted so long is that he has been a communal hero to hundreds of writers.

The wonderfully encouraging thing is that Blake is by no means finished yet. Just at a time when he should be outmoded, in a world of espionage and callous heroes, he has this year been featured on radio and television and has appeared between hard-covers for the first time.

At this rate, another generation will grow up always having known Sexton Blake, positively relishing the name, enjoying the stories, becoming familiar with the whole cast of characters, and finally taking to the legend without a thought. I believe the fellow is in his prime!

* * * * *

I MEET DEREK LONG

By W. O. G. Lofts

Recently at the Press Club, London, I met Derek Long the writer. Many older readers will remember that he wrote two excellent Sexton Blake stories for the S.B.L. No. 133, December 1946, The Case of Lord Greyburn's Son, and No. 224, The Mystery of the Italian Ruins, published in September 1950. Both, of course, in the 3rd series, and in my own favourite period of reading.

Mr. Derek Long (if one will excuse the pun) is a tall man, in his middle 50s, and with a great sense of humour. I had several hours of interesting conversation with him about old authors, and his own career as a writer. He could not help becoming a writer, as nearly all his family were in the writing game, though not in boys' fiction. As a boy he avidly read the MAGNET and GEM each week, and also Sexton Blake stories. Possibly the writer that influenced him more than any other was Edgar Wallace, who as a boy sold newspapers outside the famous Press Club where we were now conversing. Mr. Long joined the Amalgamated Press, and was on the staff of those famous pre-war girls'/women's papers THE MIRACLE and ORACLE. Walter Tyrer who was a great friend of his, was the man who created such gripping type of fiction loved by the female masses in the 30s. Walter Tyrer is still alive, and

lives not far from Brighton.

Derek Long wrote women's fiction, apart from his own editorial duties, but did write a series of detective stories for a boys' paper run by Montague Haydon featuring Martin Steele (these at the time of writing have still to be traced). Came the war and he joined the Infantry which cut short his career like many of us for a time. Returning from war service, he unfortunately developed T.B. but was cured in time, and after a short spell on a paper he decided that it would pay him more to become a free-lance writer, which he has done to this day.

He wrote his S.B.L. stories on the invitation of Len Pratt, the editor, and certainly would have liked to have done more, but the market was limited, and women's stories paid much better.

In discussing the many authors he knew pre-war it was interesting to learn that he knew 'Lewis Essex' very well, as Essex was a great friend of his father's, and often used to visit him, with his two daughters. If Lewis Essex was still alive he would now be at least 80, and Mr. Long would like to know what happened to him. Mr. Derek Long has a brother who writes boys' fiction (mostly in script form) and whose name is Justin Long - but apart from this, there is little to add except to say that although he only wrote two S.B.L. yarns - they were exceptionally good - and I myself shall have happy memories of when I met Mr. Derek Long!

REVIEW

VALIANT BOOK OF TV'S SEXTON BLAKE

Fleetway Publications
6/6

The greater part of this book is devoted to stories in pictures which probably means that it is intended for youngsters. All the same, there is a good deal in it which will appeal to the older Blake enthusiast. Not least, the Eric Parker illustrations. Some of the reading matter seems to come from the pre-war Sexton Blake Annuals. The very first Sexton Blake story ever written is reprinted (probably abridged). Unfortunately, and, indeed, incredibly, we are informed in large print that the tale first appeared in the Union Jack.

There is something heart-warming about the covers, showing Blake, Tinker, Pedro, and the Grey Panther as we like to think of them. A book well worth including in your collection.

* * * * *

Everybody knows Gussy! But very, very few ever knew him as a new boy. Here's your chance to join the few. This story, written 62 years ago, was never reprinted.

THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, was in charge of the table. Mr. Lathom was a little gentleman in glasses, extremely short-sighted, a circumstance of which the boys at his table were not slow to take advantage. He was a solemn little man, much given to imparting wisdom in the form of aphorisms.

"You must be more quiet, boys," he said, raising his hand. "Silence is - ah - golden. Let the meal proceed in silence."

He had noticed an unusual amount of whispering and giggling, but Arthur Augustus had not yet dawned upon him. There was silence for about two seconds after Mr. Lathom's admonition, and then the buzz of whispering broke forth again.

"What is it, Blake?" murmured Percy Mellish. "Where did you pick it up?"

"I found it in the hall," replied Blake.

"What's its name?"

"Arthur Augustus D'Arcy."

"My hat!"

Arthur Augustus sat with speechless indignation listening to the comments passed with schoolboy freedom upon his personal appearance.

"What a giddy collar!"

"And that necktie!"

"Did you ever see a waistcoat like that before?"

"And, oh, chaps, sock his spots - I mean, spot his socks!"

"And an eyeglass!"

"And diamond studs!"

Arthur Augustus was getting annoyed. The tea was weak and half cold, the bread and butter was tasteless to one so pampered in his training. It was the custom at St. Jim's for the boys to supplement the somewhat plain fare out of their own pockets, but D'Arcy knew nothing of this. He eyed his plate with disdain, and sniffed with disgust.

"I think you are extremely wude boys!" he said, looking around him. "I am accustomed to being tweated with respect."

"We must tweat him with respect," said Percy Mellish. "How's that for a start?"

He jerked a pellet of bread across the table, and caught Augustus in the eye. D'Arcy jumped up, startled and hurt.

"Sit down, there," said Mr. Lathom.

"Sit down."

"He thwew somethin' at me!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I am extwemely hurt."

"Sit down!"

Arthur Augustus sat down.

"You beastly little sneak!" hissed Percy across the table. "I'll wring your beastly little neck presently."

"No, you won't!" said Blake. "Let him alone. Fun's all very well, but you don't want to chuck things at him."

"Mind your own business!"

"Silence!" said Mr. Lathom. "If there is any more talking, I shall cane the next offender."

Arthur Augustus, for the moment relieved of his tormentors, gave his attention more fully to his tea. He had come a long way, and he was hungry. There was nothing on the table that he really fancied, but hunger knows no fastidiousness. He decided to take the best of what he could get.

Percy Mellish was helping himself from a little jar of strawberry jam, and D'Arcy thought that some of this would be an improvement upon his dreadfully tasteless bread and butter, so in the politest way he requested Percy to pass the jar across. Percy stared at him.

"What did you say, you horrid bounder?"

"I requested you to pass me the jam."

"Catch me!"

"You are wude! Kindly pass me the jam!"

"Rats!"

As Percy evidently didn't intend to oblige, Arthur Augustus rose and reached across for the jar. He proceeded to help himself, while Percy stared at him in rage and astonishment.

"Give me my jam, you thieving little beast!" he exclaimed, reaching across.

"What's the matter there?" said Mr. Lathom, frowning.

"This new kid is scoffing my jam, sir, and he won't give it back to me!" howled Percy.

"Dear me! Boy, what is your name?"

"Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, my good man!"

"Your - your what? Are you mad, boy?"

How dare you address me like that? Call me 'Sir'!"

"Weally ---"

"How dare you take Mellish's jam?"

Return it to him instantly!"

D'Arcy obeyed. As he had already taken a big spoonful on his plate, the obedience did not cost him much, and Percy received it with burning indignation.

He could not wreak his vengeance while Mr. Lathom's eye was in that direction, but as soon as the master's attention wandered Percy lowered himself on his seat, reached under the table with his foot, and gave D'Arcy a kick on the shin.

D'Arcy gave a yell of surprise and pain, and jumped up, knocking over backwards the form on which he was sitting. There were three other boys on the form, and they went down, sprawling and yelling with alarm.

One of them was in the act of raising his teacup to his mouth, and in the fall the cup jerked from his hand, and the contents went over D'Arcy - all over his beautiful waistcoat - and he gave a howl of woe unspeakable.

Percy Mellish, a little alarmed at the unforeseen result of his reprisal, sat looking as innocent as he could. Mr. Lathom jumped up, and came along the table.

"What do you mean by pushing this form over, D'Arcy?" he exclaimed, seizing the new boy by the collar. "How dare you, sir, behave like a savage at a public school - how dare you?"

Poor D'Arcy coloured to the roots of his hair. That he - Arthur Augustus D'Arcy - should be accused of acting like a savage - he whose charming manners were the admiration of countless maiden aunts! It seemed like a ghastly dream.

"Sir," he gasped, "Sir you are insulting. I shall complain to the doctah."

Mr. Lathom shook him.

"Is this impertinence, or is this boy weak in the head?" he gasped. "Boys, how

dare you laugh? There is nothing comical in such absurdity."

But the juniors thought otherwise. They simply yelled.

"Pway release me, my good man!" said D'Arcy. "You are soiling my collah."

Mr. Lathom breathed hard.

"I think," continued D'Arcy, "you should punish the boy who kicked me so bwutally undah the table. It is weally vevy painful."

"Oh, who kicked you?"

"That wude and bwutal boy!" said D'Arcy, pointing to Mellish. "I think he should be flogged, or expelled f'wom the college."

"Mellish, did you kick D'Arcy?"

"Pardon me!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"That question, sir, seems to imply a doubt of my vewacity, and I am not accustomed -"

"Silence! Mellish, answer me!"

"I may have knocked against him, sir," said Percy.

"You could only have done it on purpose. Come to my study after tea."

Mr. Lathom, passing his hand over his brow, went back to his seat. The form was replaced, and the boys sat down again.

"You little sneak!" whispered Percy as soon as he dared. "I'll be even with you for this. I'll jam your rotten eyeglass down your throat!"

"Who is that speaking?" asked Mr. Lathom, peering down the table.

"It is that disagweeable boy again!" said D'Arcy. "He is thweatening to jam my eyeglass down my thwoat, and I pwotest ---"

"You again, Mellish! I shall not forget this!"

That eventful meal was finished at last, and the boys trooped out. Percy Mellish wanted badly to interview the new boy, but he could not neglect Mr. Lathom's kind invitation to follow him to his study. Arrived there, the master of the Fourth gave him a couple of cuts on each hand and a few words of warning.

"You appear to have picked upon this new boy because he is simple," he said. "If I hear of anything of the kind again I shall cane you severely."

Percy left the study in a white heat. After Mr. Lathom's warning, he dared not openly "go for" the new boy, but he was determined not to be deprived of his vengeance. He set his wits to work to plot and plan. Percy Mellish was not a good-

natured boy. He was Jack Blake's rival for the leadership of the School House juniors; but he had no chance against Blake, for his qualities were not such as to endear him to his schoolfellows.

To Percy Mellish a joke never seemed really a joke unless someone was hurt.

When he felt himself aggrieved he generally contrived to get his own back somehow, very often by "ways that are dark." And now, as he schemed how to obtain vengeance upon D'Arcy without risking a caning, it was not long before he hit upon an idea. The troubles of that day were not yet over for the new boy.

(Watch for Next Month's fascinating instalment.)

Do You Remember?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 72 - Boys' Friend 4d Library No. 417 - "Frank Richards'

Schooldays"

To a literary historian, the most astonishing thing about the Cedar Creek tales is that Charles Hamilton, using one of his pen-names, should have written about the fictitious schooldays of another of his pen-names. There was really no reason at all why the Cedar Creek tales should have been linked with the Magnet and Gem in this way, and it is an indication of the immense popularity of Hamilton's writing at the time that such a series should have been commenced. It is interesting to note that Martin Clifford wrote of Frank Richards' schooldays, although Frank Richards might equally well have written about Martin Clifford's schooldays, but it seems quite clear that by 1917, when the Cedar Creek tales began, Greyfriars had oustripped St. Jim's in popularity, and so it was the Greyfriars author who was to be the hero of the new series.

There is no gainsaying the immense popularity of the Cedar Creek stories in their time. Charles Hamilton completely succeeded in capturing the imagination of his readers with the magic touch that he could infallibly wield in those far-off days half a century ago. The Cedar Creek tales in the old Boys' Friend 4d library were more numerous than those of any other Hamiltonian school, and No. 417, the first of the reprints, possessed the unique merit of retaining the original titles under which the stories had first appeared in the weekly Boys' Friend, thus making it quite clear that the first nine stories were being reprinted. This monthly volume had the additional charm that the hinges were on the shorter side of the book, making it open lengthwise with six columns of print facing the reader.

The first story tells how Frank Richards had to leave St. Kit's because his father had lost all his money, and right away we begin to wonder how much there is of truth and how much of wishful

thinking in the presentation of the young hero. When we are told that Frank Richards likes Latin and knows the Greek alphabet, we can nod approval, since these were true facts, but when we read that Frank Richards scored a century and made the winning catch in his last match at St. Kit's, we begin to fancy that this is what Charles Hamilton wished he could have done. Quite clearly the main part of the Cedar Creek plots was purely imaginary, but there might be some autobiographical touches embedded, and indeed it is possible to think that Charles Hamilton caricatured himself in the portrait of Mr. Slimmey - the assistant master from England who was patient, academic, ineffectual, and hopelessly in love with the headmistress, Miss Meadows.

The main characters in the stories were deftly sketched in these nine early tales. There was Frank Richards' cousin, Bob Lawless, who was always taking advantage of Frank's ignorance of Canadian customs: when he persuaded Frank to turn up at Cedar Creek in Eton suit and top-hat, we inevitably think of Tom Merry and the velvet suit. Vere Beauclerc was the son of the remittance man, and his proud bearing did not recommend him to the other boys in early days. Chunky Todgers was a fat boy of harmless manners, Eben Hacke was the loud-mouthed American boy, and Kern Gunten the Swiss rogue. Although these were original members of what was a school cast, there is the feeling that the school was only a tenuous link in the background. It was a day school in the middle of nowhere, and what happened within its walls was usually the least important part of the story. To my mind, the Cedar Creek saga really consisted of adventure tales, a splendid series of stories to which "Frank Richards' Schooldays" is just the fascinating prelude.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 128 SIXTY CANDLES

The Gem was one of those papers which was either very very good or very very bad. Which means that it is a periodical of rare interest to those who study the history of the old papers.

During its best periods - the years of the blue covers and a lengthy time in the early "twenties" - it was unsurpassed. At other times it was occasionally intolerable for anyone with a real love for St. Jim's.

Danny, in his Diary, is at present in the midst of one of the most infuriating periods of the Gem, though, as we have shown

before, it is one of those periods full of interest for the historian, and, in fact, very different from that dead time between 1928 and mid-1931.

Danny refers to a story entitled "Cousin Ethel's Champions," and he describes it as "a very odd story." And that is one of Danny's rare under-statements. To Danny it was just one of those fearfully inept tales which appeared all too often to make the loyal reader tear his hair. Fifty years later, however, there are one or two points which cause us to linger for a few moments over this oddest of odd tales.

According to those invaluable lists compiled by Mr. W. O. G. Lofts, "Cousin Ethel's Champions" was written by H. Clarke Hook. There is no reason to doubt that Mr. Lofts's information is correct. The writing is stodgy; the whole thing is heavily over-written, and it is not a tale which the average St. Jim's enthusiast would find very readable.

What Danny does not indicate in this month's particular extract from his Diary, and, quite naturally, Mr. Lofts does not show in his list, is that "Cousin Ethel's Champions" is the first tale of a 3-yarn series. The succeeding stories in the series were "The Black Sheep of the Shell" and "In Honour of the Head," and a surprising point is that Mr. Lofts' list shows these two stories as having been written by Pentelow.

Now it seems mostly unlikely that a 3-story series would have the first tale written by H. Clarke Hook, and the other two added by Pentelow. Unlikely, but not impossible, as we must admit when we recall the episode in 1916 when Pentelow wrote "In The Seats of the Mighty" as something of a sequel to Hamilton's "All the Winners."

However, the theme of the October 1918 series, of which Danny describes the opening story as "odd" (possibly as a euphemism for preposterous) is such that we can really discard the likelihood that more than one person had a hand in the writing of it. The series is constructed round Dr. Holmes's sixtieth birthday and the celebrations arranged to mark that birthday. Cousin Ethel who is "like a daughter to the Holmes's" goes along to join with the Head in making whoopee over his reaching that milestone. The idea that a Headmaster would announce his 60th birthday, let alone that his public school would make it an occasion for celebration is really too funny for words.

We must confess, of course, that we are faced with an author

who was ingenuous enough to write such piffle, and an editor who was dumb enough (unless the Gem's cupboard was hopelessly bare) to accept it. Is it possible that the editor, so thrilled with this remarkable theme of the first yarn, was moved to write two more stories himself and tack them on to make a series?

Fifty years on it's not very important. But it goes to prove that this period of the Gem, infuriating though it often was for the reader, was not without its points of interest.

I have always contended that it was easier to write an imitation Greyfriars tale than a similar one of St. Jim's. Providing the plot was reasonable (it often wasn't!) the sub writer was adequate with Greyfriars. He rarely approached adequacy with St. Jim's.

I made this point delicately with a Mr. Claud Lowe who telephoned me recently, and he agreed with me completely. Mr. Lowe claimed to have written St. Jim's tales for the Gem, and there is no doubt that he did. He added that his first Gem tale was entitled "D'Arcy the Ventriloquist," about 1920. I can't trace this, and the blue-covered "D'Arcy the Ventriloquist", much earlier than 1920, was almost certainly a Hamilton story.

Mr. Lowe asked me to send him a copy of C.D., and promised an article concerning his activities for the Gem. I sent him the C.D., but, so far, have heard nothing further from Mr. Lowe. I am still hoping that he will crop up again, for his comments would provide interesting thought for Gem enthusiasts.

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 FOR SALE: Bound volume of Pluck containing Nos. 1 - 21 (mostly bound without covers, but covers present on No. 1 and 5 others). Dates 1904 - 5. Interesting collectors' item. £3-10s plus postage. Holiday Annuals 1937 and 1939: 30/- each. 5 Halfpenny Marvels and 1 Halfpenny Pluck (fair condition) 3/- each. Gems: 1138 (Xmas No.) 6/-; 1139, 1141, 1142, 1151, 1157, 1482, 5/- each. Excellent copies of the 1903 Union Jack: No. 3 containing Held by the Enemy (Murray Graydon), No. 4 Hunting Gold by Cecil Hunter, No. 5 For Liberty by Dowling Maitland, No. 6 Son of the Regiment by Alec Pearson, No. 7 Squatter's Revenge by Mark Darran, No. 8 The Sea Rovers by A. S. Hardy, 5/- each. 3 early Halfpenny Union Jacks (on the rough side) 2/6 each. Red Magnets: 327 Rough on Coker 15/-, 329 Boy from the Farm 15/-, 330 The Wrong Sort 17/6. Postage and packing extra on all items.

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

NELSON LEE COLUMN

EARLY STRUGGLES

THE "PENNY MAGAZINE" AND THE "NUGGETT LIBRARY"

By Bob Blythe

The year is 1909 and Edwy is still casting his net in his endeavours to get his stories published. So far, as we have seen, he had been casting it in strange waters. His next venture was no less strange.

The Penny Magazine

April 26th, 1909

Dear Sir, I have read your "Denman Cross" story, and am returning it herewith with thanks. In the first place, it is rather too long; secondly, I do not think the mystery is well sustained. It is very obvious almost from the start who committed the murder. At the same time if you care to submit other stories, I shall be pleased to consider them.

Yours etc.

This must have been rather a blow to our young author, and it must be remembered that he was young - only 16, but he knew, even then, where his fortune lay, and was not going to take "no" for an answer. And so we find the following letter in reply.

Bacton on Sea, Suffolk. 28.4.1909

Dear Sir, Your letter, enclosing my "Chesterton Murder" received this morning, with thanks. You suggest that should I submit other stories

May I remind you that you already have two of my efforts in hand? ("Dardy" - Cassels Mag. & "A Stolen Match" - Chums). Before I send you other stories I should be obliged if you would let me know what you intend doing with regard to these.

Yours etc.

However, he took the editor's criticism to heart, for he rewrote the whole story and submitted it once again.

Nov. 27 1909

Dear Sir, A short time ago I sent you the enclosed story, "THE CHESTERTON MURDER, A tale of Denman Cross, Detective," and you returned it to me, saying in your letter that it was too long, and that "it was almost obvious from the start who committed the murder."

If you would be good enough to read the enclosed I think you will admit that I have remedied the deficiencies. I have thoroughly revised it: in fact, rewritten it, taking much out, adding much to it, and I sincerely trust the result will be satisfactory.

May I ask for an early decision?

Faithfully yours,

Written on the bottom of E.S.B's copy of this letter are the following terse comments.

Dec. 23, got the story back without a word!

With that Edwy must have decided that the "Penny Pictorial" was a waste of time, for there the correspondence ends - and yet, six years later, in February 1915 we find the following.

Dear Sir, I enclose a short story entitled "One Guns Double Game," which I trust will be acceptable for publication in the "Penny Pictorial."

Faithfully yours, etc.

One wonders why he felt it necessary to submit such a story

after this lapse of time, for I feel that the tone of the letter indicates that he had not written anything for the P.P. during the intervening years. I may be wrong, of course, but my research into this magazine has only reached 1909, so I've a long way to go yet, and who knows what I may find? Incidentally, I don't know whether this story was ever published. There's only this one letter.

The year 1909 ended for E.S.B. with his efforts to get a story published in the "Nuggett Library," published by Henderson. This was a magazine something like the 4d B.F.L. containing a single story and appeared monthly. He started hopefully enough.

Nov. 27th 1909

Dear Sir, May I ask your special attention to the enclosed M.S? I make this request because I have written the story, "The Black House" expressly for publication in the "Nuggett Library." Before commencing to write, I studied and read several issues of your periodical, and the enclosed school story is, I think, the required style and length (26,000 words). Nothing would please me more than the privilege of becoming a regular contributor to the "Nuggett."

May I ask for your early decision? Yours etc.

P.S. I may add that I have had several stories published by Messrs. Shurey's, and that a tale of mine was published in the June issue of the "Novel Magazine." E.S.B.

**All he got from this was a rejection slip!
Nothing daunted he wrote,**

Dec. 30th. 1909

Dear Sir, I am sorry you cannot see your way to accept my story, "THE BLACK HOUSE," which I received back yesterday morning.

As I had written the school story expressly for the "Nuggett" I was more than surprised at your enclosing nothing but a printed form of rejection.

Would it be troubling you too much to tell me in what way the tale is unsuitable, and the style of story you do require? I enclose a stamped and addressed envelope for the purpose. May I ask for an immediate response? I am, etc.

One cannot but admire his cheek!

Anyway, it got results, for the editor sent the following explanation. This in itself is something remarkable. Editors do not usually explain or apologise if they reject a story.

Red Lion Court, Fleet St. Dec. 31st. 1909.

Dear Sir, The principle reason for returning your story is because, at the present time we have so many accepted MSS awaiting publication, that we were unwilling to keep you waiting six to eight months before it could be published.

If you will send us the MS. of the story in two or three months from now we think it would probably be acceptable for publication in "Lot-O'-Fun" "Comic Life" or the "Nuggett Library."

This should have been communicated to you at the time, when the MS. was returned to you, but, by an oversight on the part of a Sub-Editor, only a printed form was sent to you.

For this we beg to apologise, Yours faithfully, etc.

Brooks replied with a short note to the effect that he noted the contents and would submit it again in March. Which, in due course, he did. A letter dated 3/3/1910 to the editor reminded him of this, although part of the letter must have been written with tongue in cheek.

"Accordingly I now again submit it to you for consideration, and sincerely trust that you will number me amongst your contributors. As I have said before, I wrote the tale EXPRESSLY FOR THE "NUGGETT" and it would be gratifying to see it appear in that periodical. I say that partly for this reason, but more especially in view of your previous remarks, I have kept the story back this last two or three months, as I would, of course, prefer it to appear in one of your papers. I am, Dear Sir, etc.

An acknowledgement of receipt was received on the 11th March, but nothing transpired until the 30th March, when Brooks, possibly urged on by pangs of hunger, (he had had nothing accepted for months, remember!) wrote to the editor asking, in effect, what was happening?

This had the desired effect, for on the 4th April he received this reply, which must have cheered him up considerably.

Fleet St. April 4th, 1910.

Dear Sir, We are sorry that we have been so long in giving you a decision with regard to your story "The Black House" but owing to pressure of work, we have been unable to read it until this week-end.

We now write to say that we shall be pleased to take this story for one of our publications if you are prepared to accept the payment of 10/- per 1,000 words for all rights in the story. Yours truly, etc.

He replied promptly on the 5th accepting these terms and at the same time asked for details of the type of story required for the "Lion Library." (Note, another paper to be investigated, as this is the only reference to this paper in the archives). He ended the letter with this P.S. "In your response will you kindly let me know about what date I may anticipate the receipt of cheque for "The Black House."

He was still waiting for some cash in May, by which time he had written another lengthy story. This he submitted to the editor of the "Nuggett Library" with the following comments.

May 5th, 1910.

Dear Sir, I beg to enclose herewith MS. of a new school-detective story, 36,000 words in length, entitled "In Peril at Mandlehurst." As you will see it deals with the same characters and scenes as are contained in "The Black House" which you have been good enough to accept. It is, in a way, a continuation of "The Black House" - although, of course, both stories are quite complete in themselves.

May I remind you that I am still awaiting a reply to my letter of the 5th in which I agreed to accept your offer of 10/- per 1,000 words for sole rights in "The Black House."

Thanking you, etc.

The postal service of 1910 really puts that of 1968 to shame, for, on the same day the editor replied.

Dear Sir, We are in receipt of the MS. of your story entitled "In Peril at Mandlehurst," and we will endeavour to give you a decision with regard to it at the earliest opportunity.

With regard to the story "The Black House," We are sorry if your letter has remained unanswered, but we thought that the matter was settled when you accepted our offer of 10/- per 1,000 words for the sole rights. Yours truly, etc.

Another month rolled by, and still no cash. In desperation, I feel, he tried again.

June 11th, 1910.

Dear Sir, May I venture to remind you that I am still awaiting your decision with regard to my story, "In Peril at Mandlehurst." I dislike writing you in this manner as I am always averse to displaying any undue impatience; but in your letter of May 5th you said that you would give me a decision at the earliest opportunity, and I am thinking perhaps that pressing work may have caused you to overlook the matter. I am, etc.

In a piece of blarney as a PS, he adds

"May I take this opportunity to congratulate you upon your new offspring - "The Merry-Thought." I feel sure that if the present standard of excellence is maintained - as I have no doubt it will be - the new journal will attain the long and healthy life which it deserves. E.S.B.

A few days later he received a short letter telling him that he would have a decision within the week - but still no cash.

On June 20th the story was returned - with regrets etc. This rebuff might have dampened the spirits of some would-be authors, but not our Edwy!

June 24th, 1910

Dear Sir, I have received the typescript of my story "In Peril at Mandlehurst" accompanying your letter of the 20th, and regret to learn from the latter that the editor of "Comic Life" and "Lot-O'-Fur" is unable to make use of the tale as a serial.

It has occurred to me, however, that the story may not have received your consideration in its relation to my tale "The Black House" which you accepted a month or two ago, and if you have no objection I should like to submit "In Peril at Mandlehurst" again after you have published "The Black House" as the former story brings in all the characters and scenes dealt with in the latter. Will you kindly let me know if this proposition has your approval?

Can you also let me know when you contemplate publishing "The Black House" and when I can expect cheque in payment for the story? Faithfully yours, etc.

However to show that he was not averse to taking advice, he added the following PS. "Can you give me an idea just why "In Peril at Mandlehurst" did not appeal to the editor of "Comic Life" and "Lot-O'-Fun."

Which called forth the reply:

Aug. 11th, 1910.

Dear Sir, With regard to your serial "The Black House." The price offered for this was 10/- per 1,000 words, which would word out at £15 for the whole story if paid on publication. If, however, you desire payment in advance, we are willing to make you an offer of £10 cash down. Yours etc.

Working on the principle that half a loaf is better than none Edwy accepted. It was just as well he did for we find that two years later, in February 1912, in reply to a letter of enquiry, the following.

Feb. 19th, 1912.

Dear Sir, In reply to your letter. We have not yet been able to find a way of using your story entitled "The Black House" in any of our publications. Yours etc.

Finally, the curtain comes down on the unprofitable negotiations with Henderson's with these letters.

Aug. 12th, 1912

Dear Sir, As you doubtless remember, you accepted a story of mine - "The Black House" - in April 1910, although it has not yet appeared in print. Some time after that I sent you the enclosed story, "In Peril at Mandlehurst" - hoping that it would be acceptable, as it concerns the same school and the same characters who figure in "The Black House."

You returned it to me, however, although I personally thought it was a better story than the first one.

Now, as the characters are the same as in the "Black House" I cannot, of course, offer the story for sale to another firm. As a matter of fact, I have been waiting for the B.H. to appear, so that I could then submit the enclosed story again. It has been lying in my drawer for months. (He really meant years, but didn't like to say so. R.B.) I am sure I could have disposed of it if I had chosen to retype it all out, but I didn't want to do that; I would much prefer it to appear in one of your papers after the "Black House" has been published.

Since you are the only firm who could handle it in its present form - and as I have plenty of other work to be getting on with at present - I feel disposed to offer the yarn to you at half the usual rates. That is, I will accept 5/- per 1,000 words for sole rights in the story should you decide to accept it. Of course, this is a very low rate of pay, and I should not accept it under other conditions. But I wrote the story specially for you, and I should like to have it published by you. I should like you to buy it straight off, and settle the matter.

Should you want any little alterations I shall be only too pleased to make them for you. I am, etc.

And their reply? They couldn't use the story - even at half the price! Knowing the E.S.B. of those days as we do, I wouldn't be surprised to find that "In Peril at Mandleshurst" was eventually published by the A.P. under some other title! Stand by for further developments.

FOR SALE: (also WANTED): N. Lees, Gems, Marvels, S.O.L., C.Ds., S. Blakes, Bunter Books, etc. S.A.E. please. No callers.

F. BOTTOMLEY, 38, DOWNHILLS PARK ROAD, LONDON, N.17.

S A L E: Nelson Lees. O.S. 532, 576, 440, 373, 317, 265, 246, 224. Union Jacks 735, 736, S.O.Ls. 309, 312, 343, Boys' Friend 605. Greyfriars Holiday Annuals 1921, 1924, 1928, 1931, 1933.

JAMES GALL, 1, CHAPEL COURT, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND.

FOR SALE: Annuals: Rainbow 1939, Bruin Boys' 1934: 14/- the 2. The English Review Vols 1 to 4, 1908-9. Lovely mint condition. £1 the 2 plus postage.

L. MORLEY, 76, ST. MARGARETS RD., HANWELL W.7.

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.

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

W.O.G. LOFTS (London): The E.S. Brooks who wrote novels in 1886 was not our Edwy Searles Brooks, or a relation. I think the former initials stood for Edward Sidney. Names of schools are not copyright, and there are dozens of cases where authors have used the same name for a school. There is a demand for old issues of BOYS MAGAZINE.

I first saw a copy of TOBY down Fleet Street, when I met F.G. Cook the Magnet and Gem substitute writer. Mr. Cook was a contributor, and he told me that none other than Gwyn Evans was the editor for a short while! Gwyn however, was too irresponsible to hold the position long.

Miss E. B. FLINDERS (Hitchin): I am so pleased to read the story of how Gussy came to St. Jim's. It is a story I've always wanted to read. Over the years he somehow collected quite a large family: a father and mother, and two brothers. This is a much larger family than most of the characters could boast. Have you ever wondered at the number of orphans at St. Jim's and Greyfriars? Also the great age of all the fathers and mothers and uncles and guardians. The women have old kind faces, and the men have white hair and moustaches. I know all youngsters think anyone older than themselves old, but they know the difference between an 'old' twenty, and an 'old' sixty. As a young reader I used to think the authors didn't know the difference between parents and grand-parents.

I always look forward to 'Collectors Digest.' I only wish there was a little more about the Gem in it, but I suppose it had its turn in the past, and I'm very grateful for the Gussy story. I do hope you will print all of it.

RON HODGSON (Mansfield): Certainly don't want to wish my time away, but I'm waiting to be able to read the whole story of dear old Gussy coming to St. Jim's. What a delightful thought it was to reprint this.

Am just reading the Merlin "B.B. and the Bank Robber" and the story is most familiar although I know I have not read it in the Magnet or S.O.L. My reading of this was in the Modern Boy, when Len Lex got on the trail of Mr. Egerton-Young, the Mystery Master. A case of me reading the "copy" story before coming across the original.

TOM DOBSON (Australia): As time goes by C.D. seems to get more

attractive every year. Danny's Diary should be very good in the "roaring twenties." The movies he is seeing now are just a bit before my time.

I hope he followed the serials featuring Pearl White in "The House of Hate" (The Hooded Terror). Another good one, I liked, was "The Shielding Shadow" with Leon Barry and Grace Darmody, I think.

Now I really am journeying down "Memory Lane."

HARRY LAVENDER (Manchester): Are there many sets extant of the Greyfriars (chocolate) cigarette cards? Is the price high?

(Have any readers sets of these cards? - ED.)

M. HALL (Penryn): I have in my possession several 2d Diamond Libraries featuring Dixon Brett also "Aldine Thriller Library" featuring same detective. The Diamond Library runs from 104 to 152. The Aldine Thriller from No. 2 to No. 12 - also No. 23 described as Dixon Brett Detective Library. Could any reader tell me the year in which these issues were published? I would also like to know when No. 55 and No. 100 of Newnes "Dick Turpin Library" were published also No. 1 and 2 of Newnes "Deadwood Dick Library."

I would be grateful to any reader who would give me information on these lesser known and in my opinion sadly neglected characters who move through the pages of our hobby.

CHARLES DAY (Keighley): I was interested in the remarks by one or two of your contributors re Sexton Blake, as portrayed by Laurence Payne. For me also, he doesn't fill the bill in portraying S.B. Eric Parker always set the seal on my idea of what Blake should look like.

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.

WANTED: 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.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held August 27th 1968

The holiday season played havoc with the attendance which was down to 6 members, so the meeting was informal.

Tom Porter presented Ian Bennett with two Modern Boys of 1937 vintage containing his favourite "Captain Justice" stories.

There were several interesting items on show. One was a mint copy of the famous "Boys will be Boys" which stimulated interest in our hobby so much just after the Second World War. This was obtained for sixpence by your correspondent from a bookstall at a fete by the boys of the preparatory school near Repton, the famous public school.

The anniversary number, our usual item, was Magnet 1280 for the 27th of August, 1932. The Lure of the Golden Scarab, one of the "Egypt" series. Also there was a very interesting Collectors' Item, Boys' Friend Library No. 228, 2nd May 1913 - A Sexton Blake Story.

The raffle prizes this month were given by Tom Porter, Stan Knight and Bill Morgan and were won by Win Partridge, Tom Porter and Bill Morgan.

Informal discussion arose from letters received from absent and postal members.

John Bond wrote and made the point that the later work of some authors was inferior to their earlier work. Was this true of Charles Hamilton? On this question there was a division of opinion. Stan Knight wanted to know what were the mottoes of the well-known Hamilton schools. So far nobody has been able to tell him.

A letter from Ivan Webster who was holidaying in Ireland said that if the 'little people' have any Magnets and Gems begorra he would be looking for them.

Ian Bennett who is an authority on the Captain Justice stories said during the discussion that the science fiction aspect of the later stories did not always please him. Your correspondent who always had a taste for science fiction, along with a taste for the classics and Old Boys' Books, did not see eye to eye with Ian, but of course bowed to the opinion of the expert on these particular stories.

Next month with the proposed visit of Mrs. Hamilton Wright, niece of Charles Hamilton, we should see a real gathering of the

clans.. One of the points likely to be raised is the biography of her famous uncle she is compiling and will be, of course of tremendous interest to all lovers of his work, when it is published.

The next meeting is on Sept. 24th at 7.30 at The Birmingham Theatre Centre.

J. F. Bellfield
Correspondent.

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LONDON

At 9 a.m. on Sunday, 8 September, 15 "Happy Wanderers" boarded the fifty-seater coach of that name at Victoria, bound for the Sixth Annual Outing of the London Club at Folkestone, Kent. A stop for coffee was made at The Pilgrim's Rest, Wrotham at 10. Further along the route we passed the Charing Crematorium where lie Frank Richards' ashes. On arriving at the Clifton Hotel we greeted our 14 other luncheon companions and are just in time to sit down at 12 noon. The Gem is honoured this year on our President's much admired menu, R. J. MacDonald drawings throughout, and miniature green Gem covers of favourite Talbot stories gracing the cover. A most enjoyable Olde English meal of Roast Beef and Yorkshire was enjoyed by all and then we moved to the adjoining TV room for coffee and speeches. Our Chairman outlined the afternoon program for us, greeted wives, sweethearts, relatives and friends of members present and then asked us to toast our special guest, Miss Edith Hood. Our President was then called upon and told us of new additions to the Charles Hamilton Museum kindly presented by Mr. C. H. Chapman consisting of original illustrations both by himself and by Leonard Shields, and letters from Frank Richards to Mr. Chapman. The Hamilton Library Catalogue will be the Christmas publication of the Charles Hamilton Museum this year. It will be illustrated and should be another collector's piece for us. Don Webster then gave a toast to the Old Boys' Book Clubs, and thanked the President for the program and for the delightful menu. At 2 p.m. some of us again boarded the "Happy Wanderer" and in 15 minutes, after some lovely hill and valley scenery, and a climb through narrow, winding country lanes, found ourselves at the gate of "Apple Trees," near Hawkinge, Mr. Hamilton's weekend cottage. There we were welcomed by the present occupants, Mr. and Mrs. Smith and Mr. Smith's sister, Miss Smith, not forgetting Candy, the Golden Labrador who greeted us all individually. The Smiths

kindly allowed us to view the interior of the addition Mr. Hamilton caused to be built where he did his weekend writing stints. Photographs and cine films were taken in glorious sunshine, then it was back to the Clifton via the village of Hawkinge. There was an hour to spare before tea and so we were able to partake of the sea breezes along The Leas and to listen to the music and singing of old music-hall songs from the bandstand. After a buffet tea at 4 o'clock served in the TV room, we made our farewells and the coach left at ten past five. A change of route took us through Canterbury and Maidstone, and in addition, we were able to have the pleasure of our President's company on the way back. There were no traffic hold-ups and we had pleasant recollections of yet another enjoyable annual outing to the coast as we returned to the big city.

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NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 14 September 1968

The meeting was opened by Vice Chairman Elsie Taylor in the absence of the Chairman Geoffrey Wilde. (Geoffrey, who came along later, was having a busy evening with appointments before and after the OBBC meeting.) Elsie commented on the smaller attendance, eleven in all, holiday still being enjoyed by some lucky ones.

The minutes and financial report were read, and Gerry Allison gave news from postal members which included John McMahon, Derek Vaughn, David Lord and Fred Cockroft. This is always a favourite item and the meetings are enlivened by these anecdotes and comments from absent friends. Regarding the Sexton Blake hard back books, Geoffrey had discovered a selection in a Mail Order Catalogue and, so if the M.O. firms are selling them a wider public may be reached than we thought.

Harry Barlow was the opener of the 'programme' and arranging a large table from card tables, he introduced us to a new card game - a "Beg 'o my Neighbour" cum "Rummy" sort of game. Trumps were decided and each player had three cards, which were exchanged, borrowed, discarded in turn, until one player drew the 'Joker.' (This instead of cap and bells, showed the familiar fat face of Bunter!) The player with the least trumps then fell out, and so with a change of trumps another round continued. At last Ron Hodgson and Gerry Allison waged a duel for outright winner. This was Gerry with one point more than Ron, and Harry presented him with a "Tom Merry's Annual."

We then had refreshments whilst sitting round the table. There was quite a party atmosphere after the game, and then we separated into two teams (led by Ron and Geoffrey) to complete a Quizzle sent by our London friends. Ron's team were the first to complete the questions which gave the key to the sentence to be filled at the foot of the form. And the verdict of all was "So say all of us."

Time had flown, and we look forward to the next meeting on Saturday, 12th October, 1968.

M. L. Allison
Hon. Sec.

COMIC COINCIDENCE

by O. W. Wadham

The GOLDEN comic was a production of the last of the golden years of the old time comics. The front page characters of the short lived GOLDEN had lived before in a more colourful setting. In 1936 the 12 page SPARKLER was featuring, on the front page, Lieutenant Daring and Jolly Roger, the Bold Sea Rovers, in a set of nine pictures per issue. In 1939 the GOLDEN, in its second year, was reprinting the SPARKLER efforts. The drawings were exactly the same, but the letter-press was different. And the GOLDEN told the story in eight sections. But Daring and his Jolly Roger looked far more attractive in the nicely-coloured SPARKLER. It was rather a pity to bring them back to life simply in gold, black and white. I am wondering, too: Were they that popular, first time round, to warrant second birth in a sombre setting?

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IDLE THOUGHTS

by an

IDLE FELLOW

by 'Soton'

No. 2. The Last of the Many

Thirty or thirty so years ago one of the focal points of a small boy's life was the local newsagents shop. To such a boy it must have presented an enthralling sight with its copies of boys weeklies such as the Magnet, Gem, Nelson Lee and a host of others on display. In days before television and the widespread availability of radio much of his amusement was derived from this source. As he grew up and his interests changed to other things the newsagents attractions lessened. He was unaware of the many changes in the items offered for sale. Probably not until he became the father of a small boy himself did he see the shop again in the same way as he did in his childhood. Then he might be in for something of a shock.

Like all else, boys papers are mortal and it was inevitable that many pre-war publications would fall by the wayside. Anyone today searching for papers for a boy to read, however, would find that the mortality rate amongst the old papers is well-nigh 100%. Their replacements, unfortunately, are in the lazy, modern tradition of presenting entertainment in the form of pictures. With the growth of television this may be inevitable but to me it seems regrettable all the same.

So can the father of today find anything which will strike a chord in his memory? Yes he can. There is just one paper - or to be more precise two halves - which he would recognise, the 'Rover and Wizard.' This paper, formed by the amalgamation of the 3 old Thomson papers Rover, Wizard and Adventure appears to be the sole survivor of the dozens of boys papers where the stories are written - not drawn. It might be called the last of the many.

The occasion for this article is the fact that I have been trying to find something suitable for my small son to read. Compared with the riches I was offered at his age I feel that his opportunities are poor indeed. However having settled on the Rover and Wizard as something he might read, naturally I had a look too.

The paper sports 6 stories per week - at less than 1d. per

story - good value by today's standards. In general there are 5 serials and 1 complete story in each issue. The subject matter of the stories does not appear to have changed much - war and sport (particularly football) form the main diet leavened by the occasional school or crime story. Even the titles are familiar, at least from the immediate post war period. "It's Goals that Count" and "Braddock" go rolling on. Tales of boys with weird machines that were a feature of the Rover in days gone by have apparently lost popularity as have westerns, space and detective stories at least judging by the most recent series. One must respect it as the sole survivor but somehow it seems a pale shadow of the Thomson papers I knew as a boy.

Perhaps it is out of date anyway, in which case it will not be long before it finally ceases publication. If and when it does we shall have cause to mourn. Whatever their quality, the boys magazines of the past encouraged youth to read. In a world which at times seems increasingly illiterate this encouragement seems more needed than ever. However this event has yet to come to pass, and until it does I at least will be able to keep an eye on my son's latest reading matter. Well it's quieter than playing with his train set.

THE IMPORTANCE OF C. H. CHAPMAN

by C. M. Kelly

I started reading the 'Magnet' as a very small boy indeed, following the gift of the 1921 Holiday Annual for Xmas. After that, I was always inclined to believe that the Holiday Annual, and the 'Magnet' which never came quickly enough thereafter, could not possibly mean as much to anyone else as they did to me.

You see, I was a rather solitary boy, very advanced in reading and writing, and so highly strung that the doctor told my mother she would be lucky if I did not develop St. Vitus dance.

He advised electrical treatment, which she sensibly refused to consider. But at last a complete cure was effected by means of a splendid uncle, who took me cycling at weekends, and regular doses of the extrovert Greyfriars characters and their adventures.

But I have long realised, of course, that there were, in fact, many other youngsters to whom the Greyfriars boys were more real than the lads in their own classroom. I now know, too, that these legendary figures were of C. H. Chapman's creation.

His status as an artist does not come into the matter at all.

The figures we knew so well and admired so much, were created for us by Chapman. True, Frank Richards put words into their mouths, and told us what they were up to every week, but it was C.H.G. who showed them doing it.

Now it is a fact vouched for by the one person who should know more about Charles Hamilton than anyone else, that he was not terribly interested in his illustrations. He believed his stories could quite well have stood by themselves without illustration at all, and that if he had any preference it was for Arthur Clarke, the first artist to work on Greyfriars material.

Which just goes to show that a man can make a good living writing for boys, and be genuinely fond of boys, without fully understanding them.

For illustrations to a children's tale are absolutely vital. Macmillan's knew this when they engaged Tenniel to do 'Alice;' Methuen knew it when they asked Ernest Shepard to do A.A. Milnes's little books. These two artists fixed their characters for ever.

It would appear that Hamilton's editor knew even less about youngsters, for he blithely changed artists as though it didn't matter in the least. Without warning, and apparently without rhyme or reason, he suddenly switched to Leonard Shields in the mid-1920s, and immediately many boys, including myself, missed some of F.R.'s best yarns because we stopped buying the paper.

It would be interesting to know just how many did switch from the 'Magnet' for that reason. I remember clearly what a terrible shock it was to me to find that my dearly-loved friends at Greyfriars had suddenly disappeared, and that a bunch of ordinary boys were trying to take their place.

Because Shield's boys were much more ordinary than Chapman's, I have a terrible suspicion that the editor was such a numbskull that he preferred them for that reason. No doubt he was keenly aware that the Thomson papers were in full spate, with their deliberate attempt to cater for a different type of lad, and their deliberate drawing of a much less cultured, more common or garden type of character. (This process has surely reached its nadir now.)

I have today seen what purports to be a Greyfriars story in paperback form - "The Remove Rebellion." The cover shows what appears to be a mob of young thugs on their way to cause a riot at a football match. Ugh!

The editor may have thought, the ass, that the way to fight the Thomson competition was to 'Come down to earth' alongside. What an error! All stories take place in fairyland if they are any good at

all, whether it be the World of Wooster or the Never Never Land of Greyfriars.

We know well enough that the Famous Five and their friends lived in another world, a better one, and that was how we wanted it. To try and make them more 'true to life' (I can almost hear the editor saying that) was equivalent to dressing Arthur's knights in modern dress and giving them umbrellas.

Even as a small boy I knew that C.H.C.'s characters were too much alike. But though like each other, they were unlike anybody else. We were used to them. We expected them to wear Etons and to stand rather stiffly with their hands in their trouser-pockets. Chapman's Quelch was Quelch - his Bunter was Bunter. How could there be any other Bunter?

Shields was probably a better artist and I am inclined to think he was. But he could not be expected to achieve the impossible - to kill people off and then replace them. I don't think he was as interested in Greyfriars as Chapman was, though Shields was a skilled and very rapid worker who could, and did, draw anything the A.P. asked him for at a moment's notice.

But try this for experiment, if you can - take a very early Greyfriars story with Clarke's illustrations, another with Warwick Reynolds', another with Chapman's and another with Shields'. And ask yourself this question - which of these is Greyfriars? I feel sure the answer will be "Chapman's."

The sad thing is that when C.H.C. returned at last to the Greyfriars scene, his characters had lost something of their originality. Perhaps he was told by the editor to carry on where Shields left off?

But I believe the original pre-eminence of the 'Magnet' over the St. Jim's and Rookwood stories was primarily due to the illustrations Macdonald's characters in the 'Gem' seemed to me to be too lifelike, even though they included the redoubtable D'Arcy - without whom St. Jim's would have been a barren place indeed.

Characters need to be larger than life. That is why Bunter ranks with the immortals (D'Arcy his only rival). He is larger than life, just as the characters in Dickens were larger than life. And just as 'Phiz' was the perfect artist to show us the strange world of Dickens (which was simply the world of 1830 seen through the eyes of a child) so C. H. Chapman showed us a school that could never stand on this earth, and scholars of 'such stuff as dreams are made on.'

And that was what we wanted.

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