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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

NOVEMBER 1968

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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Founded in 1941 by
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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 22

No. 263

NOVEMBER 1968

Price 2s 3d

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



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

THE SPIRIT OF SIXTY-EIGHT

Plenty of booksellers nowadays charge at least a shilling extra for obtaining any book especially to a customer's order. It seems to me rather extraordinary, so far as the average book is concerned, that a Tradesman should charge extra for obtaining the very thing which he exists to provide.

Last week I asked for an Agatha Christie Fontana at a local bookshop. It wasn't in stock. When asked if he could obtain it, the salesman told me that it wasn't possible to order just one copy of any book. I toddled straight off to my newsagent, whom I praised not long ago. He obtained the book for me by the next morning. So often bad service is due to sheer lack of efficiency - and often to cussedness - on the part of those behind the counter.

TO LEND OR NOT TO LEND

A reader wrote me recently to ask my opinion as to whether he is selfish in refusing to lend items from his collection. It is, in fact, a question which crops up from time to time in readers' letters to me.

I feel strongly that collectors are wise to follow rigidly the old advice - neither a lender nor a borrower be. It may sound selfish, and perhaps would be if only single items of less value

were concerned. But, for instance, in the case of a high quality volume of rare items, there is not only the value to be considered but, beyond everything, the fact that the items are almost irreplaceable, and no amount of compensation from the best-intentioned borrower could make up for their possible loss.

Long years ago, a collector friend of mine was never happier than when he was lending me books. I can honestly say that I never asked him for them. He would send me beautiful and precious copies of double numbers of the Boys' Friend, rolled up with open ends in newspaper wrappers. I always returned them to him, packed flat. On one occasion I happened to mention to him that I had long been seeking a certain issue of the Sexton Blake Library. Within a few days, he sent me the copy, and, with what I thought an extremely generous gesture, he asked me to accept it as a gift.

About a fortnight later he wrote me urgently, asking me to send the copy back to him, as the owner was pressing for its return.

At that time I possessed two volumes of Pluck which contained all the very earliest St. Jim's stories - as rare then as they are today. My friend knew that I had them, and one day put me in a real tizzy by writing and asking to borrow them. I dodged and hedged, but he was persistent, and he had so frequently lent to me that I found it difficult to refuse. I sent him the two volumes by registered post.

After a great lapse of time and after so much evasion on his part that I felt sure something must be wrong - it added to my determination to get them back - the volumes came back to me. The Pluck covers had been left intact. All the St. Jim's tales had been carefully removed.

I never knew who had them. My friend was as generous with other people's treasure as he was with his own. He had lent my volumes far and wide, and he had no idea who had removed the St. Jim's stories.

That sad, true story is an extreme case. Very few people, probably, would act as irresponsibly with other people's treasures as he did. But there are always risks which can bring embarrassment and real grief, both to the lender and the borrower. That is the reason why I would never lend my real treasures today. And that is the only answer to those who have been asking me and asking themselves the question "To lend or not to lend."

THE CLUB WITH THE ZING!

I have just read a copy of the Magnet which was never on sale

in the shops. It has been produced by our Northern Club. One member wrote the first chapter of the Greyfriars story, a second member carried on with chapter two, and so they went on until a great many members had carried on the tale to its intriguing conclusion. They gave it a real Magnet cover, and a "Come Into the Office" editorial. It even has a gratuitous advertisement for Collectors' Digest on the back. What more could one ask? You can't buy it, of course. You wait until your turn comes round for you to have the copy for a few days. They're always up to something new in that Northern Club of ours.

THE ANNUAL

Time is drawing nearer when Collectors' Digest Annual for 1968 - packed from cover to cover with fascinating articles - will be on its way to readers. Have you ordered your copy yet?

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

REQU I R E D : Monster Libraries, Bullseyes, Magnets.
W I L L E X C H A N G E : Champion and Boys Friend Libraries, S.B.O.L., Silver Jacket, Comics, Captain, True Blue, Marvel, Adventure, Boys of England, Football Library, Gem, Modern Boy, Sports Library, Dreadnought, Startler, Rover and Adventure, Lion, Tiger, Knockout, Hotspur, Chums, B.O.P., Holiday Annuals, Radio Fun, Film Fun, Tip Top, Beano, Tiger, Champion Annual, etc. etc.

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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.

He is Arthur Augustus D'Arcy - New Boy. It is his very first night at St. Jim's. Nobody has even thought of christening him "Gussy" yet. 62-years later Collectors' Digest lifts the curtain and lets the sunshine fall on a long, long forgotten gem of Hamiltonia.

The Swell of St. Jim's



The Third Form youngster strutted along behind the swell of St. Jim's twirling a poker in lieu of a cane

Kildare met Blake in the Hall.

"Well, what do you think of the new arrival, Blake?" he asked.

Blake grimaced.

"There's no words to describe him," he said. "He's a scorcher. Every chap in the Form wants to boll him in oil."

Kildare laughed.

"But you won't let them do it, Blake?"

"I've taken him under my wing," said Blake. "I'll try to educate him, and I won't let him be bullied. Don't you worry - what?"

"I rely on you, Blake."

Blake sought out the new boy, and piloted him to Study No. 6. D'Arcy's numerous boxes had been taken up to the dormitory, but the biggest of all had been shoved into the study by the porter, who wanted to get out of carrying it up the next flight. It pretty well filled up the room, and Herries and Digby were holding a counsel upon it when Blake arrived with the owner. Herries had borrowed a chopper, and he was banging at the box when D'Arcy came in.

"Whatevah are you doing?" exclaimed D'Arcy, in dismay. "Leave off, leave off. My dress clothes are in that twunk."

"Are they?" said Herries. "Well, I'm sorry for your dress clothes, because I'm going to use the trunk for firewood."

"You must not; you must not, weally. If you touch my twunk again, you will weally pvoke me to violence!" exclaimed D'Arcy excitedly.

Herries dropped the chopper, and jumped up with a warlike look.

"That's just what I want. Come on. Get out of the way, Blake, you beast. He's challenged me to fight him, and I'm going to."

"You keep your wool on. You mustn't hit him."

"I'll hit him if you don't mind."

"You can hit me if you like," said Jack, "but you must let that maniac alone. I tell you I've promised Kildate."

Herries looked as if he would hit him for a moment, but he thought better of it. He took up the chopper again.

"Hang it," said Blake, "you mustn't chop up his trunk."

"Do you think we're going to have it in here?" demanded Herries, in wrath.

"Give me a hand with it into the box-room, then."

"I'm not going to carry his blooming boxes about."

"Don't be a pig. Lend me a hand."

Herries reluctantly consented, and the offending trunk was borne away. When Blake returned he gave the new boy a serious talking to. He was getting a little out of patience himself.

"Look here, D'Arcy," he said, "your manners and customs may be all right in the monkey-house you seem to have come from, but they won't do for St. Jim's. You'll have to change 'em or you'll be ragged."

D'Arcy stared at him.

"I've stood up for you," continued Jack, "because you don't know the ropes, and I want to make things easy for you."

"You have been vewy good," admitted D'Arcy. "I wegard you as a fwend."

"Well, take a friend's advice," said Blake. "Don't put on side. Don't act the goat more than you can help. Don't sneak. You told tales in the dining-hall. What sort of a pig do you call yourself?"

"The disagweeable boy kicked me."

"Yes, and if you had punched his head for it, that would have been all right, but you told tales and got him a caning. That was mean, cowardly, no class, and ungentlemanly."

The last word moved D'Arcy more than all the others.

"I do not know the wules of this college," he said. "If you say that it is considahed ungentlemanly here to complain when one is bwutally assaulted, I can only express my surpriswe. I will avoid wepetition of the action."

"That's right. Stick to that, and don't be a beastly sneak," said Blake encouragingly; "and don't start wolfing another chap's tommy, either."

"But --"

"You see, the college provides only bread and scrape, and we buy the other things ourselves. Mellish laid out sevenpence-halfpenny on that pot of jam, and he naturally didn't want it scoffed. You've got plenty of money to buy things for yourself if you want them."

"Certainly - certainly. I was not aware that the jam was pwivate pwroperty," said D'Arcy. "I weally owe the person an apology, though he was so disagweeable."

"You see, he ain't such a howling bounder

after all, chaps," said Blake, pleased with the new boy's docility. "When he understands things better, he will leave off playing the giddy ox, you'll see."

D'Arcy left the study in search of Percy. He met him in the passage, soon after his coming. Percy glowered at him. Arthur Augustus screwed his eyeglass into his eye, and approached Mellish.

"I owe you an apology," he said gracefully. "I was not aware that the jam I took was your private property. I apologise."

Percy's face cleared. It was necessary for the success of the scheme of vengeance he had formed that he should make it up with D'Arcy, and win his confidence.

"Don't mention it," he said gracefully. "I was a little hasty. I've just had a licking, but, bless you, I don't mind in the least. It was like my cheek to kick a superior person like yourself. I hope you will forgive me."

"With pleasuah!" replied D'Arcy.

"By the way," continued Mellish, "where are you going to sleep to-night? A fellow like you will have a bed-room to himself. Only us common chaps sleep in dormitories."

"Blake says I must sleep in the dormitory like the othahs."

"That's all my eye. Don't you trust that chap, D'Arcy. He's jealous of you because you're so superior, and wants to keep you out of having a bed-room to yourself. Now, I put it to you - is it likely that Dr. Holmes would put a fellow of your class to sleep in a dormitory with a lot of riff-raff?"

"Weally, it did not seem to me vewy pwobable."

"I should say so," said Percy emphatically. "The fact is, the doctor asked me to show you to your room to-night. In case of any rough horse-play from the common boys here, you are to have a bed-room to yourself in the other building. Don't say a word to any of the others, or they may start on you before going to bed. Just before bedtime, I'll show you where you are to go."

"I am extremely obliged to you," said D'Arcy.

"Don't mention it. It's always a pleasure to a boy of my humble class to do anything for a superior person."

"I suppose so," assented D'Arcy simply.

Percy managed to smile, and D'Arcy left him without a suspicion. He did not return to No. 6 Study, but wandered into the common-room. There he beheld a scene that filled him with indignation:

A number of Third Form youngsters were amusing themselves with a new game. One of them strutted up and down with an enormous silk hat on his head, twirling the poker in lieu of a cane, and keeping a shilling screwed into his eye in imitation of the new boy's monocle. The rest were screaming with laughter, which was redoubled as D'Arcy was sighted.

"How dare you laugh?" exclaimed Miggs Minor, whose performance was exciting such mirth. "Don't you know who I am? My name - aw - is Arthaw Augustus Julius Caesar D'Arcy. Get off the earth, all you common people."

D'Arcy beat a retreat from the room, the juniors strutting behind him.

Mr. Kidd, the housemaster, spotted him and called him into his study. He gave him some sound advice which had about the same effect as water on a duck's back, and asked him questions concerning his scholastic attainments which really frightened him. Then he gave him some preparation to do for the morrow's work, and sent him to his study.

D'Arcy was looking blue when he came into No. 6. He had been under a tutor at home, who was too much afraid of his dotting aunts to make him work, and though he was not naturally a fool, his training had almost made him one.

At St. Jim's, however, work was evidently the order of the day. It was a change that was beneficial, but which he did not appreciate.

The table was completely occupied by the three chums, who were also preparing their lessons. Herries and Digby showed no inclination to move, but Blake made room for him.

"Get along, you chaps," he said. "Don't be pigs. Squattez-vous ici, mon garcon. I'll lend you a hand if you like."

"Thank you," said D'Arcy gratefully. Blake made the new boy's ordeal a good deal easier. When their prep was finished, the chums left the study, and D'Arcy was left alone. Blake felt he had well fulfilled his promise to Kidare, and he was not inclined to burden himself with a

helpless duffer for the rest of the evening.

D'Arcy soon grew tired of the study, but a doubt as to the reception he would get outside kept him there for some time. Finally, growing dreadfully bored, he put on his hat and walked out.

A senior came down the passage and stared at him in passing. Without a word he reached out and knocked D'Arcy's hat off. The shiny topper went rolling along the passage, and D'Arcy uttered an exclamation of dismay and rage.

"Don't do that again," said the Sixth Former, passing on.

D'Arcy stared after him in amazement, and then picked up his hat and put it on again. He walked on, past the Sixth studies, and the door of one of them opened and Rushden of the Sixth came out. He glanced at the junior, and knocked his hat off.

"Don't do that again," he said frowning. And he passed on.

D'Arcy staggered against the wall in sheer astonishment. That the big boys should knock his hat off was unpleasant, but not inexplicable. But what they could possibly mean by telling him not to do it again was past his comprehension. He walked on as soon as he had replaced his topper, and as he entered the hall, again the unfortunate hat was knocked over his eyes. He swung round fiercely to find a stalwart Sixth Former glowering at him.

"What do you mean by it, kid?" exclaimed the latter.

"Mean by what?"

"Don't do it again, that's all!"

And the senior scowled at him and strode away.

D'Arcy gasped with amazement. He began to think that he had come into a lunatic asylum. His hat was showing signs of wear and tear, too. He smoothed down the ruffled nap, and replaced the hat on his head, and left the School House. He heard voices in the gym, and the light was inviting, so he strolled in.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, was there. He was talking to a thin-faced, rather sour-looking fellow, whom D'Arcy did not know, but whom anyone else could have told him was Monteith, the head prefect of the New House at St. Jim's, generally known among the School House youngsters as "Cad Monteith."

Monteith glanced at D'Arcy.

"Is that how you allow your juniors to behave, Kildare?" he asked, shrugging his narrow shoulders.

Kildare bit his lip.

"D'Arcy, come here."

D'Arcy obeyed.

"Take that hat off!"

"What's the mattah with it?"

"Take it off!"

D'Arcy removed the offending headgear.

"I think you're all mad heah!" he exclaimed. "I'm sowwy I came. The school isn't fit for a gentleman."

"By Moses!" said Monteith. "If a junior of my House spoke to me like that, I'd take the skin off his back."

"He doesn't understand," said Kildare shortly. "D'Arcy, you must not speak like that. Go and put your hat away. Juniors are not allowed to wear silk hats except on Sundays, or when taken out by the masters."

"I am accustomed to pleasing myself in such mattahs," said D'Arcy.

"Take that hat away instantly!"

Kildare looked savage, and D'Arcy stopped short in his remarks and obeyed in a hurry. He made his way to the door through a grinning crowd.

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Figgins, the New House chief. "I say, Aubrey, are there any more at home-like you?"

"My name is not Aubrey," said D'Arcy, "and I considah your question as impertinent."

"Oh, I'm impertinent, am I, you juggins? Gimme that topper!"

"I wefuse!"

The hat was jerked away. He made a spring to rescue it, but the Co. held him back.

Figgins examined the hat.

"This tile wants brushing," he remarked. "I'll brush it for you, Aubrey. You can trust me, Adolphus. See me brush it, Algernon."

He brushed it with his sleeve, but as he brushed it the wrong way, its appearance was not improved.

Arthur Augustus gave a howl.

"Give me my hat, you wuffian!"

"There's a dent in the side. I must straighten that out for you."

Figgins straightened it out, and made a big bulge in place of the little dent.

Arthur Augustus tore himself free from the

Co., and tried to wrench the hat away. The brim came off in D'Arcy's clutch, and the rest remained to Figgins.

"Dear me!" said Figgins. "You've quite spoiled the hat. Permit me to return it to your highness."

He returned it, jamming it down tightly over the new boy's ears. D'Arcy, with some difficulty, dragged it off, and beat a retreat from the gym. Almost in tears, he returned to the School House. There he met Percy Mellish.

"Hallo!" said that bright youth. "Getting near bed-time. Would you like to go to your room, my lord?"

"Yes," quavered D'Arcy. "The bwutes have spoiled my hat. I have nevah seen such wuff bwutes in all my life. I should like to go to my woom."

"Come along, then, sir."

And Percy led the way. He crossed the quadrangle towards the New House, and the unsuspecting new boy followed him. Arthur Augustus knew nothing of the rivalry between the two houses at St. Jim's, or what was likely to befall a boy of one house found wandering in the other.

"You see," explained Percy as he went along, at the same time keeping a wary eye open for New House fellows, "the Head has arranged for you to have a room in the other house, so as to be sure there's no horse-play. It would hurt him awfully if you were treated with disrespect by any of the Juniors. If anyone comes into your bedroom, don't stand on ceremony with him. Tell him to get out, and if he begins any nonsense, shy a pillow at him. That's the way to treat these fellows."

"Vewy good," said D'Arcy.

They entered the New House, and Percy led the way to Monteith's room. He knew the New House prefect was in the gymnasium, and so the room was sure to be empty. D'Arcy surveyed the cosy apartment with much satisfaction.

There were curtains to the windows, bookshelves on the walls, a handsome desk, and a table. The bed was let into a recess in the wall, and a big flowered screen shut it off from view.

"Bai jove," said D'Arcy, "this is vewy comfortable. It is more like home. I am extremewly obliged to you, my lad!"

Percy's teeth came together, but he controlled himself.

"I hope you sleep well," he said. "Please ring when you want your hot water in the morning. Don't stand any nonsense if you are disturbed."

"I will wemembah. Good night."

"Pleasant dreams!" said Percy sardonically.

Arthur Augustus might have pleasant dreams, but he was certain to have an unpleasant awakening when Monteith came to his room.

Percy escaped unnoticed from the New House. Arthur Augustus proceeded to undress and get into bed. He was tired, and he was soon sleeping as sound as a top. Nor did he awake at the sound of voices and footsteps.

* * * * *

(There will be a further instalment of this 62-year old story next month.)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A WRITER

Musings from Ray Hopkins

"The Swell of St. Jim's" continues to hold one's interest and some of D'Arcy's dialogue sounds very like what it was to become later on in the Gem. It's surprising that this story was never reprinted when the SOL started. The style in which it is written would not have seemed quite so different when the SOL's first came out as it does now. However, seeing that it really is 62 years old, it is incredible that it reads as well as it does. It makes one realize what a tremendously improved writer Frank

Richards had become by the 1930's.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The improvement, and much of it within only a very few years, is remarkable. As we have commented before, there are many places in this old tale where a hint of the coming genius peeps through, but there are also badly-constructed sentences which would have caused the author - later renowned for his impeccable English - to shudder, twenty years on. None of the old stories of which this one forms a part was ever reprinted. A few of them were re-written, introducing the Terrible Three and Mr. Railton, and were published thus in the blue Gem. But for the most part they were neglected, and this was chiefly due, no doubt, to the absence of Tom Merry. By the time that the S.O.L. was sitting up and chirping - and wolfing up material - there may have been gaps in the A.P. files.)

- - - - -
LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 129. HA, HA, HA! YOU AND ME!

In an early Slade story, Mr. Buddle laughed in chapel. Later, ashamed of himself, he recalled the comment of Goethe that you can judge a man by the things he laughs at.

We all have our funny bones located in different spots. We are not all tickled by the same thing. And as we grow older our sense of humour changes.

Way back, in the days of the silent cinema, there were two types of comedy popular at the same time. One type came from John Bunny and Flora Finch. Theirs was, I am told, a quiet, reasonable style of domestic comedy which delighted and amused adults of the early years of King George the Fifth. The majority of children had no time for it at all.

On the other hand, the Keystone Comedies, presented by Mack Sennett, were slapstick and knockabout-stuff run riot. All children loved the Keystones, and, secretly, most adults loved them as well. The phenomenal success of Keystone was the timing and the inventiveness of the men and women concerned. Mack Sennett has said that he rarely worked to any form of script. They found or manufactured the fun as they went along.

Which probably was one of the reasons for their success. It is the man who tries desperately hard to be funny who usually ends up as a colossal bore.

Comedy, of course, depends not alone on taste or situation, but on the way it is presented. In one of the Chaplin 2-reelers, Charlie is sitting up in a gallery of a restaurant or ball-room with Edna Purviance. They are enjoying ice-cream. Quite accidentally, and it is all so cleverly done that the contrivance is never obvious, Charlie's ice slips from his dish. It falls to the floor, slithers through the slats, and plops on to the neck of a stout lady, beautifully dressed in low-cut gown, seated beneath the balcony. The ice then gradually slides down the horrified lady's back. The effect is hilarious. So well is it done that it appears as a screamingly funny accident.

In fairly recent times, in a Sexton Blake story, a young lady, at one of Sexton Blake's staff parties, shoves an ice-cream down Tinker's neck. It is intended to convulse the reader, but it sadly misfires. A normal reader sees the act merely as a piece of infantile bad manners which is too stupid, and too unlikely, to be even mildly amusing. Such are the two effects of ice-cream.

It is probable that the Bunny-Finch comedies, considered good in their day, would fail to amuse in modern times. But the few extant Keystones, despite deterioration in the negatives and the cut off tops and bottoms of the picture caused by the difference in picture size on modern projectors, still delight audiences. They clearly had genius - a genius, in fact, which was lost long ago, and never found again.

Which brings me to the point of this exercise. In the September Digest, Mr. Len Wormull compared the humour of Hamilton with that of Brooks. Mr. Wormull found the Hamilton humour more to his liking.

I have not read enough of Brooks to be able to make a fair comparison, but I feel fairly sure that Hamilton was unsurpassed in the matter of introducing subtle humour into his stories. Mr. Wormull, in coming to his decision, quoted Bunter, Wibley, and Coker as the funny men who helped to give Hamilton the edge.

I enjoyed plenty of the Wibley stories, but he never struck me as very funny. Coker was responsible for a good deal of fun, unintentional on his part, and he starred in some splendid tales. But Coker was very much an acquired taste. Sometimes he went on too long and became tedious. The author was delightful when he presented restrained pictures of Coker. He was less successful when he tried desperately hard to be funny at Coker's expense.

Bunter, of course, featured in hundreds of extravagant episodes which one could read without mustering a smile. But in

the golden age of the Magnet he starred in dozens of delicious sequences which are real gems of perfect comedy. So many people slam Bunter because they only know a part of him.

The real comedy of Hamilton is found in his own "asides" in the stories, in some of his descriptive matter, in his pictures of the relations between the masters, in stories like "The Missing Masterpiece" (quoted by Danny last month) when Hobson was trying to avoid hurting the feelings of his musical friend, yet unprepared to suffer the torture of listening to one of his compositions. Hamilton was at his most humorous when he tilted at so much of the fun in humanity. It was not his comedians who made him a good humorist. He could be funny with any character. Gussy and Cardew were not comedians, but they were often given superbly funny things to say, and, by contrivance in which the actual contrivance was skilfully hidden, plenty of the more serious characters were placed in situations which tickled and delighted the reader. Hamilton, like Sennett, had real genius.

In this month's Digest, Mr. Jim Cook, who, and all credit to him - is always ready to leap to the defence of St. Frank's, suggests that it was the Billy Bunter type of humour which has caused the old papers to be "lumped together as comics." It wasn't really anything of the sort. The term "comics," to embrace all types of juvenile papers, is one of the less desirable post-war imports from America. A year or two ago an Australian reader referred to the "Union Jack" as a "comic." Anything less like a comic than the "Union Jack" it would be hard to find.

Mr. Cook says "The Nelson Lee Library was not a comic paper" - perhaps inferring that the Magnet was. Of course the Lee was not a comic. But, if modern youngsters ever mentioned the Nelson Lee Library, they would still term it a comic, just as they do the Magnet.

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E C H O E S

W. LOFTS: Whilst it does seem strange that a series of three stories in the Gem were written by different authors, this is by no means uncommon. I have found many cases where even a serial has been started by one author and finished by another. Pentelow was fond of enlarging a story into many parts if it were possible, and never believed in wasting a plot. Will Gibbons an office boy on the BFL once wrote a Magnet story, had it almost rejected, and then bought at a reduced fee, then Pentelow wrote a sequel to it!

But the classical case of all was where Clive Fenn had a story rejected, and later found that Pentelow had not only used the idea but made six stories out of it!

Mr. C. D. Lowe certainly wrote a few stories for the Gem, but never "D'Arcy the Ventriloquist" though he may have submitted a story with that title and had it altered. Mr. Lowe did write stories under two pen-names, but my information is that he was a scenario-writer who once wrote a Tom Merry script for a film, which was shelved. All the same like our editor I am hoping that he can be contacted again, as he may provide some interesting material.

* * * * *

R E V I E W S

THE WHO'S WHO OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Brian Doyle
(Hugh Evelyn 63/-)

The appearance in the shops of this book by Brian Doyle, together with the report that the Billy Bunter Picture Book is also on sale in this way, reminds us that not only Wimbledon has turned professional in this year of grace 1968. Anything - whether animal, vegetable, or mineral - must be truly first-class in its own sphere before it can find professional backing and meet professional competition.

And this book, which represents years of work on the part of Brian Doyle, is first-class in every respect, and is indispensable to every library and to most home bookshelves. It reads beautifully all the way through; the writer never lets his reader's interest flag; the illustrations, and there is a profusion of them, are delightful and heartwarming; the production is impeccable.

Do not assume, however, that you may now throw away Mr. Doyle's previous "Who's Who of Boys' Writers and Illustrators." You will still need both books, and, with them, your reference library to the old writers and illustrators for the young will be as complete as it is ever likely to be.

The new book is almost certainly aimed at the carriage trade. How else can we justify the full-page reproductions of the covers of the Boys' Own Paper, the Captain, and two different covers of Chums, while there is no picture at all of the Magnet which was probably the most memorable of the lot? It is only fair to add that the frontispiece is a composite collection of Bunter sketches from the brush of C. H. Chapman, and the caption to this picture pays tribute to the Magnet, which makes the lack of a cover

reproduction all the more surprising.

I find it a trifle hard to understand the slot devoted (deservedly) to C. H. Chapman, while there is no mention at all of such well-loved artists as R. J. Macdonald, Leonard Shields, and Warwick Reynolds. The inclusion of the one tends to spotlight the exclusion of the others.

Happily enough, that wonderful artist J. Louis Smythe is listed with the illustrators, though the author tells us that "he finds a place here because he was the first artist to draw Tiger Tim." Smythe, surely, deserves his place for outstanding merit far beyond his remote connection with Tiger Tim.

The author, in fact, forestalls such minor criticisms in his excellent introduction, where he points out that "if complete thoroughness had been aimed at, the work would have taken up several volumes."

One particular joy among so many in this book is coming across titles of stories we read in childhood long ago and now finding particulars and pictures of the men and women who wrote them. It is a lovely, worth-while volume which will provide hours of immediate joy, and will give unfailing pleasure for all the years to come.

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W. A. Ballinger
(Mayflower 3/6)

DOWN AMONG THE AD MEN

Exciting story concerning the disappearance of a model who has been hired for a giant advertising campaign. The whole post-war Blake organisation plays a part, and the tale is written in the modern idiom. Edward Carter who "reluctantly answers to the name of Tinker" is well to the front, and the yarn is sufficiently middle-of-the-road to satisfy the older fans as well as the newer generation of Blakians.

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W A N T E D : Pre-war O.B.B's papers, comics, annuals. Also some children's annuals and post-war Bunters.
FOR SALE: HAMILTONIA, SOLS, LEES, VANGUARDS, PLUCKS, etc. Annuals include Chums, BOA's (and some loose copies), Captains, Champion, Union Jack (Henty) etc. 1947/49 Champions, Rovers, Adventures, Hotspur, Wizards, 18/- doz. post extra.

NORMAN S. SHAW, 84 BELVEDERE, LONDON, S.E. 19.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

I should like to say 'thank you' to those readers who so kindly wrote to me about the 1939 Sexton Blake Radio Serial. With their permission I will publish extracts from their letters in December BLAKIANA. I am sure you will all be interested.

Josephine Packman

W. M. GRAYDON

By W. O. G. Lofts

William Murray Graydon had always an ambition to visit the home of his ancestors. Indeed, one of them could be traced right back to Charles I, when a Captain Graydon served with great distinction in His Majesty's army. When one of his books was due to be published in England, W. M. G. then took the opportunity to visit England, so setting sail from America with his wife Pearl, son Robert, and younger daughter Rachael he landed in this country about 1898.

Victorian England, it should be mentioned, was a boys fiction writers paradise. Unlike the twenties and thirties remembered by the majority of collectors, when the Amalgamated Press Ltd, and D. C. Thomson dominated the scene, many other large publishing firms were flourishing at this period such as Aldine's, Charles Shurey, and James Henderson to name only a few. A prolific writer could earn, and especially with the skill of Graydon almost as much as they could write. There was no question that any material would be rejected. Competition of getting the best writers for publishing firms was too fierce in the fear of upsetting a contributor by turning down his work.

Although returning to the U.S.A. for shortish periods at the turn of the century W.M.G. in time decided that not only did the English way of life suit him, but the English market as well. Settling at Norfolk, he decided to make England his home, much to the great dismay of his lawyer/Judge father, who in a way never forgave him for leaving the U.S.A. but more about this later.

William Murray Graydon's output was really tremendous, as he wrote for almost every publishing firm, using the new invention the dictaphone for hours on end. A keen student of geography he

could write authentically about any country in the world, and his tales about the Congo, and Siberia were tremendously popular with readers who longed to know more about the mysterious countries that were so much in the news at that period. "Sexton Blake in the Congo" one of his earliest efforts which ran as a serial in the green BOYS FRIEND for six months is still considered a classic story by many collectors, as W.M.G. also expressed his own strong political views on Belgium's treatment of the natives.

Although like the majority of other writers he penned Sexton Blake stories, and had his own Scotland Yard man Inspector Widgeon, he also created other detectives such as Carfax Baines; Gordon Fox; Abel Link; and Derek Clyde, but none of these ever caught on with the public, and soon his whole output and interest was practically on the greatest detective of them all Sexton Blake.

His first Blake yarn incidentally was in 1904 in the Union Jack, and he laid claim shortly after this date to immortality by creating Mrs. Bardell and Pedro, two very important characters indeed in the Sexton Blake saga.

So much has been written in the past about the style of W.M.G.'s writings that I will not dwell long on it here. Although I am not a strong supporter of the clan who claim to tell a writer's style at once, I must admit that in his case, sometimes it is unmistakable. He usually made Tinker address Blake as "Governor" or "Sir," and the detective usually answered with "My Boy." He was fond of the word "Vowed" and nearly always in expressions he used the phrase "A lump rose in his throat" or "choked with emotion." In short W.M.G. was the supreme master of melodrama as Victor Colby of Australia so aptly phrased it in a recent article. "His stories were a world of swooning maidens, noble virtuous youths with lumps rising in their throats as they contemplated the wickedness of the world, and of wrong heirs living in abject poverty because of the machinations of a mixed bag of evil step-brothers, uncles and usurpers generally."

His stories in the early days mostly started with a prologue, and other characters created by him were Fenlock Fawn, Basil Wicketshaw, Cavendish Doyle, Laban Creed, and last but not least Matthew Quin the big game hunter. Apart from using his own name he used the nom-de-plume of "Alfred ARMITAGE" (sometimes spelt Armytage) mainly for his historical stories, and William Murray. There is no doubt that he used other names as well to cover his identity in other fields, but concrete proof is still to be ratified.

At his best W.M.G. was a very fine writer, and his historical stories are still collected and sought after today by collectors. Unfortunately he sacrificed quantity for quality, by simply churning out his stories, and this probably caused him not to move with the times, by concentrating on the current trends of the boys fiction market. His writing style in the early 20s was still of the period of the 1880s or earlier, or to be blunt simply outdated. When H. W. Twyman took over the Union Jack in 1921, and was a man with fresh ideas and a modern outlook on life, he simply would not accept W.M.G.'s work, nor would many other editors - so an author who had been as prolific as the great Charles Hamilton gradually found his work "unsuitable" though Len Pratt of the Sexton Blake Library was far more charitable, and still accepted the odd S.B.L. yarn until he retired from writing altogether about 1930.

W.M.G.'s father was a lawyer/Judge and a very wealthy man, and coming into a small amount of money (certainly not as much as he would have got, because he raised his father's displeasure at living in England) he was able to live on the interest.

1940 saw W.M.G. living down in Cornwall, where after his wife Pearl died during the early part of the last war, he became seriously ill. He recovered to some extent, and his daughter Rachael came and looked after him, but during the last two years of his life he practically never left his bed, where he eventually died on the 5th April 1946 aged 83. After giving so much pleasure to millions of people it was a very sad ending to such a grand writer. Retaining his American citizenship always, W.M.G. was of average height, slim, or wiry build, and with an auburn moustache. Of fresh complexion, he spoke like a country gentleman with no trace of an American accent.

Probably the reader may wonder why so far I have not mentioned Robert Murray Graydon his son who died even earlier in 1937. Never probably have a father and son been so different. But that is another story.

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A UNION JACK COMPETITION

By O. W. Wadham

Not many boys' papers passed through the Golden Age without running a variety of prize-giving competitions.

In December 1924, the Union Jack ran a Prize Competition "to surpass all others." The first prize was £10 a week for life (equal to more than £30 these days), or you could have £4,000 cash down. Second prize was £300, and the third was £200.

The contest was conducted in conjunction with Answers, Pictorial Magazine and All Sports, and ran for 15 weeks.

The result should have been known about March or April 1925, and if any readers of the Collectors' Digest have copies of the Union Jack around that period it should be interesting to look them up and see who the winner was.

There is a big chance that he or she would still be alive today - and maybe still getting those ten lovely notes each week.

The winner would, it is presumed, still be interested in Sexton Blake, even if he or she has never heard of the Collectors' Digest.

If the right person could be contacted after all these years, what a pleasant surprise he or she would get to know so many people are still interested, and still possess, those old weekly publications.

Seeing that the competition was for "the biggest prize ever offered in a popular journal," up to that time, I would like to know who secured it.

Of course the person may have been a reader of the other three papers mentioned, but I would like to think the winning entry came from a reader of the good old Union Jack.

* * * * *

This competition started in Union Jack No. 1107 dated 27.12.1924 and ran for 15 weeks until 14.3.1925. The last set of pictures appeared in Union Jack No. 1118.

The result of the competition was given in Union Jack No. 1132 dated 20.6.1925, the winners being listed as follows:

1st Prize: Mrs. E. C. Bulbick, Trentham, Victoria Avenue, Westgate-on-Sea, Kent.

2nd Prize: Mr. Frederick Wills, 12 St. John's Road, Croydon.

3rd Prize: Major W. J. Stomm, Grove Hill, Harrow-on-the-Hill.

Mr. Pointer of 4, Station Terrace, Westgate-on-Sea, sold the Union Jacks to the First Prize winner and received £50 for so doing.

Incidentally, there was an earlier competition run on similar lines. This one, called "Celebrities," started in U.J. No. 1097 and finished the same week that the "Far and Near" competition started. Amazing!

There were a lot of competitions in all the Companion Papers at that time. I often wonder if people did really win any prizes.

Josephine Packman.

DANNY'S DIARY

November 1918

The War is over!

Even as I write it now, a week or two after, it just doesn't seem possible.

It caught everybody on the hop. It came with stunning suddenness. It only seems a few weeks back that the war news was terrible. Though we never believed we would lose the war, it felt as though there was a long, long grind ahead. And now, just like switching on a light, it's all over.

For just a short while the news was good, and we knew that the enemy was falling back everywhere. Air raids were done with. Then, on November 3rd, Austria surrendered. It was wonderful news though we still thought Germany would be a tough nut.

On November 4th the German navy mutinied. It was good news, but we were corshuss. We didn't think it possible that the war was really running out at last.

And then, on the morning of November 11th, our Headmaster came into the classroom. He looked wild and woolly and flustered.

He said: "The war's over - at the eleventh hour of the eleventh month. Go home, boys, go home. Get out your flags and put them up."

At home we put up the flags. Doug and Dad came home early, and Doug had managed to get some fireworks. Goodness knows where they came from or what he paid for them. And we all went mad that day. We laughed, we linked arms with strangers, we shouted, we cheered. And everybody was deleeriously happy, except those who were thinking of the ones who would never come back.

The war is over, and what has it left behind? Many of the old papers have gone as the years went by. Those which are left are so small that they are ghosts of what they used to be.

The trams, too, have taken a terrible thrashing from the war. The tracks have been allowed to deteriorate, the cars have had no maintenance and have been kept going with string and sealing wax.

But it's over, and now we can laugh, and be happy again, and hope that it can never happen again.

As is fitting for this marvellous month, the Boys' Friend has been grand as usual. The kidnapping series has been the best of Rookwood I have ever read. The stories which continued the

series in November were "The Vanishing of Newcombe," "The Missing Trio," "The Kidnapping of Jimmy Silver," "The Secret of the Vaults." We knew, all the time, that Captain Lagden must be the kidnapper, and, at the finish, it turned out he was not really Lagden at all, but the rascally Baumann, who had once been expelled from Rookwood.

The last Rookwood tale of the month was "Tubby Muffin's Benefit." It was quite good, but an anti-ckimacks after the kidnapping series. Muffin was supposed to owe a large bill to an outfitter who was dunning him, and the juniors put on a show to make the money for him.

The Cedar Creek Barring-out series has also gone on, right through the month. The boys were on strike because Miss Meadows had been sacked, and old Man Gunten had put Mr. Peckover in her place.

The stories were "The Striker's Triumph" (in which Old Man Gunten called in the aid of the Sheriff); "Facing the Foe," "The Siege of Cedar Creek," "The Rebels' Surrender" (in which Bob Lawless received a message that his father was dying so the strike was called off. Then Bob came back, and the strike was on again); "A Desperate Venture." This is a great series.

The Gem and the Magnet both just get by this month - on points. Each has had three pretty good stories out of the month's total of five.

The Gem continued the series about the Head's 60th birthday, and the two tales were "The Black Sheep of the Shell" and "In Honour of the Head." At an assembly all were ready to hand over their presents to the Head. Kildare made a speech which must surely have been written by Mr. Lloyd George. Then they all stepped forward to give their presents - even Taggles. Only the Terrible Three - poor lads - had no present to give. No wonder the Head gave them a straight look. Their present was to have been a framed photo of St. Jim's - but Racke & Co had pinched it. Awful tripe, this series.

Then came a 3-story series which was pretty good. Tales featuring Tickey Tapp are usually worth reading. He had opened a gambling den in the bungalow rented to Racke through "Racke's Man." Strangely enough, the bungalow was named Laurel Villa. Funny for the author to use that name when he had so many others to choose from. Clive smashed up the gambling den when he found that Cardew was involved. This tale was "Called to Order."

Then two more stories, in which Talbot was kidnapped by Tickey

Tapp. These were "Talbot's Foes" and "Brought to Light." So the Gem got by - on points.

Quite a startling thing happened towards the end of the month. A Handley-Page bi-plane flew over London carrying 40 passengers. Fancy passengers in an aeroplane. I wonder whether the time will come when we travel by air instead of by train.

And now for the Magnet. "His Country's Call" was the sequel to the story about Hilary, the son of the conscientious objector. Then "Coker's Latest" - Bunter was teaching Coker to be a ventriloquist - was very funny indeed, and very enjoyable.

"Walker of the Sixth" was feeble. Something of a reform on the part of Walker who began to talk like a "Peep Behind the Scenes."

"In Spite of Himself" was good of its type, though I don't care a lot about tales of Snoop and his soldier father.

Lastly "Spring's Brother," another of those scatty tales about the mysterious new boy Spring, was a wash-out.

So, like the Gem, the Magnet just got by - on points.

At the pictures this month I have seen Wallace Reid in Rimrock Jones; Alma Rubens in "I Love You." (This one was awful!) Charles Ray in "His Mother's Boy" - and I always like Charles Ray pictures. Pauline Frederick in "Jealousy." Theda Bara in a spectacular but rather dry film called "Cleopatra." And Pearl White is in a new serial "The House of Hate." I like her muchly, and always think of her as "Elaine."

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WE DON'T LIKE asking for "offers" for items, but in this case we don't know the value of the items or who might be interested. Nominal prices only asked. Anyone interested may like to make an offer for any of the following: Rather rough and worn volume of BOYS OF ENGLAND (original series Vol. 1. Nos. 1 - 26. 1866-67.) Aged volume of THE BOYS' JOURNAL (Vol. II. July - December 1863.) THE HOME CIRCLE (Jan - June 1853. Covers rather rough, but contents quite good.) THE WORKING MAN'S FRIEND (October 1851 - March 1852). Fairly good considering age. Also GOLDEN DAYS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS (fascinating volume in nice condition. Volume II. 1889 - 1990) and THE QUIVER (volume for 1910. Lots of interesting reading - fairly good condition). The following FREE to anyone interested who will pay the postage: 2 volumes of the FRANCO-GERMAN WAR which belonged to Charles Hamilton when he was a young man. Each volume has his autograph on the inside front cover.

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

NELSON LEE COLUMN

THAT CONQUEST TOUCHBy Norman Wright

Though ostensibly a writer of school stories E. S. Brook's postwar fame can be attributed almost entirely to his detective and thriller novels under his Berkeley Gray/Victor Gunn pen names.

Norman Conquest, veteran of four dozen hard back novels deserves special mention as he ranks with the Saint in being a sustained favourite with readers over a period of three decades. During the late 1920's and through the 1930's the super-dynamic devil-may-care type of hero was emerging as the trend in popular thrillers. 1927 had seen the birth of the Saint ("Meet the Tiger") who within 12 years was to become an institution and achieve the status of omnibus book form, and a format reserved for the Bulldog Drummonds and Sherlock Holmes of the fictional world.

Conquest first appeared in print between the covers of the "Thriller." Most of these early tales were later published in hard-back form by Collins, who have published all of the conquest thrillers. Many of the novels were reprinted in White Circle paperbacks during the 1940's and early 1950's. Fontana reprinted five of the novels as paperbacks, and Four Square have re-issued "Call Conquest for Danger" in paperback. Prior to the White Circle reprints Collins had issued many of the Conquest novels in cheap editions.

The inevitable fate of a long running series is a deterioration in the quality of the plot, and this in my opinion, happened to the Conquest Saga in its later years. Up until the mid 1950's the stories had good plots and good characterisation, they were closely linked stories with numerous references to past adventures, an overall plot running from story to story Mandy, Superintendent Williams (formerly Chief Inspector), the Pace Special (acquired in "Blonde for Danger" and destroyed by a crook named Reed Lonson while attempting to escape the law), Conquest Court (formerly "Underneath the Arches" in Bayswater), and Aunt Susan were familiar trimmings that appeared in almost every story. Gradually this list thinned out. Superintendent Williams stayed - the pawn in many a game. He was to Conquest what Inspector Teal was to the Saint. Mandy made rare appearances in later years, but his character seemed watered down. Conquest himself changed, he lost his reckless air

and adopted a much more sophisticated manner of dress - perhaps influenced by the popularity of Bond and the sophisticated anti heroes of the last ten years. After the pace special was destroyed its place was taken by a variety of flashy cars that never lasted more than a couple of stories. The influence of the Bond era was destined to increase the number of gadgets used. These had been virtually non-existent during the 1930's and early 1940's scattered moderately over the novels of the following decade and over abundant during the late 1950's and 1960's. A sad loss was the "1066" sign which must surely have been filched from Leslie Charteris?

The Conquest Saga was certainly popular even in its later days as a perusal over any lending library will show, though it must be admitted the books lost ground to more modern heroes, and even at their height did not have quite as big a demand as the Saint, the Toff, the Baron or the Agatha Christie thrillers. Nevertheless, they are very readable stories and helped to preserve the name of an author whose stories will be remembered when the Saint and the Toff have long been forgotten.

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In reply to Len Wormull's "My Views of Humour"

By Jim Cook

We have all at various times become incensed and irritated when our beloved papers and books have been scathingly referred to as comics. And it is true that for the very most part it has been the Hamilton papers that came under this heading since it is mostly Bunter that is reviewed.

Now I wonder whether it is due mainly to Len Wormull's idea of humour which he states is so consistent in the Hamilton stories. Because it seems to me that it was Bunter's type of humour that was responsible for the longevity of Charles Hamilton's name and not the classical humour Hamilton so delightfully gave us. But since Len hasn't defined the type of humour he likes best in the Hamilton tales I take it he prefers the childish Billy Bunter type. In which event it is not remarkable when the old papers are lumped together as comics.

But I cannot understand why he mentioned E. S. Brooks. The question of whether Brooks was less of a humorist than Hamilton does not arise for the purposes of his article unless it is Len's idea of humour by placing a cat among the pigeons.

The Nelson Lee Library was not a comic paper. Its strength lay in its Dramatic Unities. But also we were off tension as it

were with the lighter side of school life that was introduced between acts. And this was not too repetitive which made it all the more welcome.

If it is laughs Len is seeking I advise him to try and obtain some of those endearing comic papers like CHIPS, COMIC CUTS, etc. Therein he will find good, solid humour specially designed to make us smile. I feel sure he had these papers in mind when he began his article.

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FOR SALE: Volumes of CHUMS: 1901 (rather rough volume) 7/6. 1918 (cover water-damaged) 7/6. 1921 (fair volume) 10/-. 1931 (good) 15/-. 1939 (good except for bullet-hole through it; perfectly readable) 10/-. 1941 (good) 12/6. HOLIDAY ANNUALS (priced according to condition): 1925 (30/-) 1929 (30/-) 1931 (30/-) 1932 (20/-) 1935 (20/-) 1939 (25/-). GEMS: 788 and 790 (from Schoolboy Pug series) £1 the two. 794, 1123, 1127, 1128, 1130, 1131, 1132, 1133, 1135. 7/6 each. Bargain parcel of 22 later Nelson Lees (1928 - 1933 range odd issues) Some good, some indifferent, one with cover missing: 22/- the lot. RED MAGNETS: 331, 344, 391, 15/- each. 388, 390, 12/6 each. Coverless Red Magnet No. 24 "Four on the Warpath" 12/6. Later Magnets Nos. 1643 to 1650 (all from the Water Lily series) 48/- the 8 copies. Nos. 1554, 1654, 1659, 6/- each. THE BOYS' OWN ANNUAL - Volume One. (one leaf missing) 30/-. THE BIG BOOK FOR BOYS (Herbert Strang) Two different books - date uncertain, but probably early 1920's. 7/6 each. A few PLUCKS still available at 3/- each. A few MARVELS at 2/- each. Postage and packing extra on all items. Write before remitting. No answer sent if items already sold.

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

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SALE OR EXCHANGE: Nelson Lees, G. E. Rochester Books, Stamps.

WANTED: S.O.Ls., Detective Stories by E. S. Brooks, Rochester.

65 BENTHAM ST., BELFAST.

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FOR SALE: Holiday Annual 1927. 25/-.

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

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

LEN PACKMAN (East Dulwich): "The Shielding Shadow" featured Leon Barry and GRACE DARMOND. Grace Darmond also appeared (as from the time of her screen debut in 1914) in such as "The House of a Thousand Candles," "The Black Orchid" and "Wives of the Rich." Her earlier stage experience helped considerably toward her film success.

The cigarette cards ("Billy Bunter Series") were put out by MAYNARD & CO (sweets). This little set is well-nigh impossible to obtain. Indeed, I have been trying to get them for the past fifteen years - without success. My efforts through all the largest cigarette card companies in the country have only produced TWO ODD CARDS. Anyone who is successful in locating this set can consider themselves extremely lucky! In fairness to anyone who may possess a set, I think I should point out that even relatively large sums of money cannot unearth them today.

PHILIP TIERNEY (Grimsby): Is Miss Flinders quite correct in her opinion that the number of orphans at Greyfriars and St. Jim's is unusually high?

After some hard thinking I can name only nine at the most - Wharton, Hurree Singh, Lord Mauleverer, Sir Jimmy Vivian, Tom Merry, Talbot, Cardew, and possibly Lowther and Tompkins. I am not sure about the last two.

But there are hundreds of stories which I have not read and these stories could have revealed details of many others whom I know nothing about.

W.O.G. Lofts (London): According to Mr. C. H. Chapman, Leonard Shields was introduced into the MAGNET to take some of the work off his shoulders. Mr. Chapman was overworked, and as a consequence some of his work suffered - which can be gone into more deeply at a later date. According to the Magnet editor many readers liked Shields' illustrations, and possibly readers were gained more than lost. This is easily confirmed in our own circle today when, including our editor, quite a number have always remembered the brilliance of Shields since boyhood days. Leonard Shields died before he could ever be interviewed on his views of his Greyfriars boys, but according to his son, whom I have met, his work on the Magnet was always painstaking and he loved to draw them. Even when he was severely handicapped in later life by arthritis he

spent hours on his drawing board still drawing them, which suggests he had more than a commercial interest in them.

LES ROWLEY (Bangkok): The good old "Digest" still maintains its high standard and is a joy to look forward to every month. There is always something interesting to read; some controversial echo to maul over; and Danny's Diary to ponder upon. Where would we be without it? Perish the thought!

HARRY LAVENDER (Manchester): Having read Mr. Kelly's interesting article on the importance of C. H. Chapman's work as "Magnet" artist I would like to add a few comments myself. The sudden change-over to Leonard Shields in mid-summer 1926 and occurring when "C.H.C." was at the very height of his powers (all the earlier 'stiffness' having long since disappeared from his style) was indeed a shock, not only to myself but also to most of my "Magnet" taking colleagues at school. I think, however, that a lot of them remained loyal for the sake of the stories and continued with the paper. I myself, however, made an immediate switch to the 'Popular' where, fortunately, a small ration of C.H.C. was still in existence.

I cannot agree with Mr. Kelly's suggestion that all Chapman's boys looked alike - e.g. take any drawing containing the 'Famous Five' in a group - each member is clearly recognisable - not so with Shields! (or who, for that matter could distinguish between Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther in one of McDonald's illustrations?) The 'new style' Chapman (à-la-Shields) appeared many years earlier than 1936 when he again became the regular "Magnet" illustrator; in fact in the "Popular" of November 1926 it is apparent that the change of style was enacted in a single week. The Greyfriars boys suddenly appeared shorn of all their lovely curly locks and wearing wide trousers and even wider grins on their faces! It almost appears as if that particular editor (aye, curse him!) suddenly interrupted Chapman in the middle of his work and commanded him to 'make more drawings like those in this week's Magnet or else-?' The St. Sam's drawings appearing in this paper at the same time underwent similar transformation and it is interesting to note that the Greyfriars drawings in the 1928 Holiday Annual (which probably went into production in early 1927) are a mixture of 'vintage' and 'new style.' The transformation of Bunter's appearance was, however, a much slower process. It was a full two years before he developed full "Shieldsian" characteristics (i.e. lack of facial expression and detail of eyes, familiar hair quiffs

missing and adopting that peculiar stance of right hand to side of mouth etc.)

Mr. Kelly suggests that Shields was probably a better artist than Chapman. Let us first examine the work of the latter during the years 1924 to 1926 (not 1911 to 1920) and let us imagine also a "Greyfriars Portrait Gallery" or "Bunter at Cricket" cartoon by Shields and then make our decision.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: All readers will not agree with Messrs. Lavender and Kelly. In spite of our great affection for Mr. Chapman and his work, some - and I am one of them - think that the Magnet was at its greatest during the Shields period. But I do not profess to understand art. It's just that I found Shields' work highly attractive.)

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NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 24th September

The meeting was a special one as Mrs. Hamilton Wright, niece of the famous Charles Hamilton, was present to give members a talk on some of the lesser known facts of her famous uncle's life.

As she has often done before Win Partridge designed a welcome poster for Mrs. Hamilton Wright, who kindly obliged members by signing it. As usual, the standard of Win's work was first class.

Formal business was reduced to a minimum to enable Mrs. Hamilton Wright to have as much time as possible to talk about her uncle.

It appears that in his very early days Charles Hamilton tried his hand at romances and 'who dunnits' before finally turning to school stories. When, however, after writing a number of adventurous stories a publisher suggested he should try his hand at school stories he was perplexed and remarked "Nothing ever happens at a school."

On second thoughts Charles Hamilton decided that things could be made to happen and all the world knows how he created the world of St. Jim's, Greyfriars, and Rookwood and at one time wrote a million and a half words a year.

Mrs. Hamilton Wright dealt with a dauntingly large subject in a charming way and also with many questions from members. The

time passed very quickly with much animated discussion of Charles Hamilton's outlook on life. The evening was fittingly concluded by a presentation to our distinguished visitor of a bouquet of flowers by Ivan Webster.

The next meeting is on the 29th October and although it is listed as an informal one, it is hoped Ian Bennett will give another talk on Captain Justice which was unavoidably held over at the September meeting. His first talk was very good indeed and we look forward to another one. Norman Gregory is also due for a talk and will, no doubt, show there were other schools as well as those which were created by Charles Hamilton.

J. F. Bellfield
Correspondent.

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AUSTRALIA

On 24/9/68 members assembled at their rendezvous - Cahill's Restaurant in the city of Sydney, and, too long denied the companionship of Bette Pate, were delighted beyond measure to find her there. It was most gratifying, that despite all the difficulties at home with sick folk, Bette had been able to rejoin us on this occasion, and her presence infused new life into the proceedings.

The recently issued Sexton Blake card series was mentioned, and greatly welcomed by the Cartophilic members, who saw in this, a link between their two hobbies - the cards and the books. It was pleasing that, although it took Blake 75 years to appear on cards given with merchandise, he made it at last.

We were very interested to hear of member Stan Nicholl's continued successes in action roles on Sydney Television. May he go on from strength to strength in this exacting field, is our earnest wish.

Ernie Carter told us of his experiences in obtaining the Dean reprints of the Sexton Blake Library. What a pity it is that Blake material old or new is so hard to come by.

So the evening went by, animated conversation ranging from authors and books to actors, films and T.V. A very happy time in very congenial company.

V. E. Colby

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NORTHERNMeeting held Saturday, 12 October, 1968

The Library Session as usual started the meeting at 239 Hyde Park Road, Leeds 6, when fifteen members arrived in the quickly gathering dusk at our Club Room. The Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, was pleased to see so many in spite of the ominous weather forecasts of wind and rain. The minutes and financial report read, Gerry Allison gave news from postal members and friends which included Norman Smith (hoping to be with us again soon); Roger Jenkins (mentioning the grand trip to Folkestone of the London Club,) and John Jarman (comments on A. Conan Doyle, one of John's favourite writers.) Any other business included details of the Christmas Party - only two meetings away!

Our Librarian had been putting in some research about Miss Primrose, Headmistress of Cliff House School and a talk, with readings from old Magnets was the result. This was read most effectively by our newest lady member, June Arden, and as it covered the attempt by the innocent Alonzo (at Skinner's instigation) to bring "two loving hearts together," i.e. Miss Primrose and Mr. Quelch (!) the members were soon chuckling. At the close a good discussion arose as to whether Miss Primrose was revealed as too credulous, but it was finally felt her action was justified as she had someone other than Mr. Q. in mind!

A rhyming quiz on Rookwood sent by Cliff Webb of Wigan was next, and answers were called out. Geoffrey had 3 correct, George Riley 2 and several members 1; two names defeated us - "Raby" and "Duff" which were won by the ingenious compiler, Cliff. A break for the welcome cup of tea, etc., followed, and then it was time to hear the first entry in our Short Story Competition. (During the summer various members have been trying to write a story which had to contain the words:- Icicle, Fez, Revision, Offside, Trancendental, A four foot square sheet of hardboard, and end with the words "the telephone box was the wrong colour.") First story was again from the versatile pen of Cliff Webb, and entitled "The Vanishing Verger." It was racy, amusing, and very mysterious. Cliff complied with all conditions triumphantly, and, read by Geoffrey, it started the competition off with a high standard.

This was the last item of another happy and lively evening enjoyed by all.

M. L. Allison

Next meeting Saturday, 9 November, 1968.

Hon. Sec.

LONDON

The annual meeting at Leytonstone, usually held in October, ranks amongst all the other gatherings in popularity and on this occasion it lived up to its high reputation.

Bill Hubbard had persuaded Mr. Irving Rosenwater, the eminent cricket writer, to attend. This proved to be the highlight of the meeting as Mr. Rosenwater had prepared an excellent talk on the late John Nix Pentelow. Much research had been done by Mr. Rosenwater and a very interested audience listened to his discourse. The talk lasted up to the tea-break and afterwards it was question time and many members asked Mr. Rosenwater about points of the talk.

With cricket still in the air, Ray Hopkins read a passage from one of Hylton Cleaver's school stories.

The host of the meeting, Reuben Godsave, obliged with a fine talk on 'The Environs of St. Frank's.'

After this item, Bill Hubbard conducted an O.B.B.C./Cricket Quiz in which all present, including Mr. Rosenwater, joined. The winner was Don Webster, Eric Laurence was second and Laurie Sutton was third. Prizes, kindly supplied by Bill Hubbard, were awarded to the three.

Good library business was done and to the Hamilton library, Brian Doyle presented a copy of his new book "The Who's Who of Children's Literature."

Chairman Len Packman, thanked Mr. Rosenwater for attending and asked if he would come on another occasion. Bill Hubbard was thanked for persuading the distinguished guest to attend and the host and hostess Reuben and Phyllis Godsave, were also thanked for a very good meeting.

Next meeting at Bob Blythe's new address, 47, Evelyn Avenue, Colindale, London, N.W.9, on Sunday, November 17th.

Uncle Benjamin

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F O R E X C H A N G E : S.O.L. Nos. 7, 15, 17, 148.

W A N T E D : Nos. 149, 151, 167, 169, 170, 171, 175, 177, 181, 186, 189, 207.

PHILIP TIERNEY, 6 ABBEY PARK ROAD, GRIMSBY

" I REMEMBER --- "says S. Perry

I look forward to Collectors' Digest each month the same as did other books when I was a boy, which proves I suppose that we really never grow up.

I remember at one time I longed for Tuesday to come around so as I could buy The "Popular." They gave away marvellous pictures of railway engines in colour.

Another time it was "Boys' Magazine" on Saturdays. They gave photographs of football teams each week - large ones! It also had a thrilling serial at that time "The Lure of the Lost Land" by John Hunter.

Then came the "Champion!" They gave photographs of "Champion" Glossy ones of Georges Carpentier, Joe Beckett and the like. Also marvellous serial stories "The Bell of Santandino" by Eric W. Townsend, "The Outcast of St. Basil's" by Henry St. John and Sext Blake stories - one by Arthur S. Hardy, and one by Hartley Tremain.

The Boys Friend Weekly was a regular at one time; I don't think they gave anything away, so I must have bought it on its merits! I remember "Bulldog Holdfast" a detective who never even gets a mention these days, other fine serials, and, of course, Rookwood.

Then I went on to Union Jack and Detective Weekly - I still have No. 1 of D.W. and also the last No. but very few in between.

After the war there seemed to be nothing at all worthwhile. I used to take "John Bull" each week then. It had very good serial stories by Victor Canning, Andrew Garve and the like, and also 'Hornblower' stories - I wonder why it had to end? There is no periodical for men now - such as "Woman," "Woman's Own" and the other weeklies for ladies - I know there are plenty like "Men Only" but it's not the same! Surely The "Thriller" would sell these days at about 1/6 per week!

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DON'T FORGET TO ORDER YOUR ANNUAL!

REMEMBER FLASHMAN? WATCH OUT FOR HIS RE-BIRTH!

Harry Flashman, the cad and bully in Thomas Hughes' TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS, is to be 're-born' in a new novel due to be published next Spring. Author is George Macdonald Fraser (a journalist on the "Glasgow Herald") and the title of the book is to be simply FLASHMAN. Herbert Jenkins are to publish.

The author has set down in novel-form the adventures of Flashman from the day he was expelled. He returns home to his father, enlists in the Army, ending up with Lord Cardigan's 11th Light Dragoons (after seducing his Dad's mistress!). Before the end of the book he wins the V.C., becomes a Brigadier and even gets invited back to his old school (Rugby, of course) to present the prizes on Speech Day. But to the end he remains the cad and bully he always was.

It all sounds fascinating and a great idea. It now only remains for some bright writer to launch another novel about the characters of Greyfriars School in their later adult lives. What possibilities there would be there! (Excuse me - I'm just about to embark on a fat, no-punches-pulled novel which is a cert. for the best-seller lists. The title? Simply BUNTER, of course.....)

Brian Doyle

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FOR SALE: Set of The Harmsworth London Magazine (Amalgamated Press) Volumes 1-6 (1898-1901) The first two volumes beautifully bound in black, blue, red, and gold; the rest in original bindings. Excellent set £3 the lot plus postage. Write: Excelsior House.

FOR SALE: Holiday Annuals: 1921 to 1927; 1929; 1930; 1931, 1933 to 1936; 1938; 1941. All good condition. Nelson Lees 1930 - 1936 (20 copies, good condition). Greyfriars Prospectus (fine). WANTED: Holiday Annuals 1920, 1928, 1932, 1936, 1937, 1939, 1940. Sexton Blake's. Chums 1918, 1921.

Mr. James Gall, 1, Chapel Court, Justice St., Aberdeen, Scotland, LOST - and much missed by its sorrowing owner. Volume containing early Penny Populars (1911) Nos. 1 - 12. Newly bound in dark brown with lettering on spine in gold. Very substantial reward for any finder who will send it home.

Eric Fayne, Excelsior House, Grove Rd., Surbiton.