

Vol.  
23

No.  
266

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HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 23

No. 266

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## The Man at the Wheel.



### RICHMAL CROMPTON

With the death of Richmal Crompton on January 11th England has lost an institution, the hobby has lost a golden link with days long passed, and I have lost a personal friend. From time to time I had been a visitor at her home down in Kent for a great many years. It is hard to realise that I shall never again see her awaiting me, with her car, outside Petts Wood railway station.

She was one of the sweetest women I ever met. Anyone who really knew her stories in all their magic would be astonished that so gentle and kindly a person could have such a shrewd knowledge of human nature and character as she possessed.

A great many of us grew up with her William - though William himself never grew up. I was introduced to William by one of my closest pals, named Carter, while I was at school. He loaned me one of the very early William books. I never parted from William again. Carter died, while still at school, of a disease then named Sleeping Sickness or Botulism. I bless his memory because he made me a William fan.

Miss Crompton was a school mistress when her first William story was published in a magazine. She loved to tell of how the

Headmistress of the school sent for her one day and said: "Miss Lamburn, I suggest that you sever acquaintance either with your publisher or with me. You cannot continue to try to serve both." Luckily for us Miss Lamburn gave up her teaching career and concentrated on her writing.

She would also tell of how, while shop window-gazing one day she was astounded to see William in stiff covers. It was the first intimation she knew that the William tales, written for a monthly magazine, had been collected together in book form. Unwittingly she had disposed of the copyright of the early stories, and she was not entitled to royalties. Fortunately her publishers met her half way in the matter, and she received an ex-gratia payment of some sort. She was, in fact, one of those rare writers who are loyal to one publisher throughout their careers. She did all her work for Newnes.

She was mightily well-served by the fine artist Thomas Henry who illustrated William for so many generations of readers. She readily forgave him his great mistake of giving William a different school cap from his friends though they all attended the same school. And she would tell with relish the tale about his drawing a dust-jacket of a cow without an udder. She would add sadly, but with a twinkle: "I did not see the picture until it was too late to have it altered."

Thomas Henry, like Miss Crompton herself, was at his best when sketching scandalised adults.

Like Charles Hamilton, Richmal Crompton had a golden age with her stories. It would be idle to suggest that any of her many post-war books have reached the same high standard as the earlier ones. For the best of William one needs to go far back to those published in the twenties and the thirties. Nevertheless, right to the end, Richmal Crompton has remained eminently readable. Her descriptive powers, down the years whether writing of village life or village characters have been constant and peerless.

Richmal Crompton and her work have been written about by countless professional critics. Not one of them has observed, as Collectors' Digest pointed out long ago, that the pre-war Williams were written for adults, whereas the later ones have had child readers mainly in view. Miss Crompton told me herself, long ago, that Collectors' Digest was the most perceptive of all her critics. William is at his funniest when he is, as it were, starring solo with a background of adults. But in the latest (and presumably the last) new William book, which is reviewed in C.D. this

month, William appears in every story with his band of "Outlaws." The Brown family, often so deliciously and hilariously depicted in the past, has long been relegated to the background.

There is but little doubt that the William stories will be published and re-published to entertain new admirers for many years to come, but the creator of William will be sadly missed, and I personally shall miss a very dear friend. There are all too few people like Richmal Crompton in the world today.

So far as our hobby is concerned, she carved out a corner which, for all time, will be hers alone.

#### DID SEMI-ILLITERATES READ THE MAGNET?

The report of our Midland Club's meeting, in January C.D., included the following:

"The long-winded prolixity of the Magnet style to which George Orwell took exception was, in Bill Morgan's opinion, a helpful factor in helping the semi-illiterates of those days to read with understanding."

I would cross swords with someone or other over the assumptions contained in that little paragraph. George Orwell, in the essay concerned, was either trying to be clever or, more likely, he was fishing in waters of which he knew very little. I would challenge the assertion that Frank Richards was either long-winded or prolix (both words mean the same thing, possibly) in style. In later days, though he strenuously denied it, he resorted to padding, but he did it cleverly, and it was something rather different from prolixity.

I should have thought that stories, written by one guilty of prolixity, would have been the very last things to appeal to semi-illiterates. I just can't see semi-illiterates spending their coppers on the Magnet which consisted almost solely of reading matter.

From the report it would seem that Mr. Morgan's talk "consisted of memories and reflections on life in the Edwardian era." But only two years of the Magnet's thirty-two occurred in Edwardian times, and the Orwell criticism covered a far wider span.

That youngsters of the first forty years of this century benefited from papers like the Magnet goes without saying. have reserves about the semi-illiterates.

Last year, on two different occasions, I met young fellows, each holding down a fairly well-paid job, and each confessed to

me that he could not read. Probably most of us, even in the sixties, run across youngsters who make the vast sums spent today on education something of a mockery. I really wonder whether there were any more semi-illiterates in Magnet times than there are now.

### THIS MONTH'S COVERS

Our cover pictures this month are reproductions of two news-agents' posters which Mrs. Lee of Woking found behind a mirror. The date would seem to have been about 1905. I think that readers will find them fascinating. A few photographs have been done of each picture (size about whole plate) and these are available at 3/6 each plus postage to anyone who would like such an interesting souvenir of long-gone days.

### THANK YOU

I have received very large numbers of letters, expressing appreciation for the 1968 Annual and sympathising with me for my recent indisposition. It has not been possible to write personally in reply to all who wrote, but I am deeply grateful to all who sent me such pleasant and kind letters.

THE EDITOR

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For Sale Magnets (Complete Series): 1331 - 1340, £4.10.0.; 1471 - 1478 £2.16.0; 1510 - 1515 £2.2.0; 1518 - 1521 £1.8.0; 1533 - 1535 £1.1.0; 1536 - 1540 £1.15.0; 1626 - 1629 £1.4.0; 1660 - 1675 £4.16.0; 1676 - 1682 £2.2.0; Single Copies. Nos. 1390, 1392, 1395, 1447, 1451 7/- each; Nos. 1516, 1517, 1556 6/- each. Nos. 1582, 1586, 1631, 1635, 1637, 1651, 1659, 1664, 1683 5/- each. Also, Greyfriars S.O.Ls. 343, 346 and 349 (Kenya Series) £2. C.D. Annual 1968, New 11/-.

W. SETFORD, 24, COLWYN AVENUE, DERBY.

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WANTED: Champion weeklies, 1928-1940 Libraries Nos. 204, 241 and 267.

WEST, 4 Police House, Verdayne Gdns., Warlingham, Surrey.

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 B.F.Ls., 13 Rio Kids, 14 King of Islands etc.

ED: Magnets 1457-8, 1470.

MACHIN, 38 ST. THOMAS' RD., PRESTON.

# DANNY'S DIARY

February 1919

Journeys by air. It looks as though they are coming. A service has been started between London and Paris, with giant Farman planes, each carrying 14 passengers. The trip is done in the indelible time of 3½ hours. The world is becoming a very small place, says Dad.

The grand series about the strike of the masters is going on in the Rookwood tales in the Boys' Friend. The first tale this month was "Backing Up Bootles," in which the juniors are supporting Mr. Bootles, who was sacked for sticking up for Jimmy Silver against the Head. The Colonial Co get on to the real culprit - Leggett - who tripped up the Head.

Next month in "Masters on Strike," Leggett confessed to the Head, who still refused not to sack Mr. Bootles. So all the masters "withdrew their labour." This series is just great.

Then, in "The School Without Masters," the school carried on with the prefects temporarily in charge of the junior forms - and Carthew had an almighty clash with the Fourth.

Last of the month was "The Rumpus at Rookwood." New masters had been engaged now, but Mr. Strange was a brute. At the end, Dr. Chisholm sent him packing. The masters' strike goes on.

Cedar Creek, in the same paper, was well up to standard. "Gunten on the Warpath" told of Gunten taking advantage of the fact that Miss Meadows had made the chums promise not to touch him - so they have to keep clear of him, which looks cowardly. At last, Miss Meadows learns the truth, and the promise is cancelled. So Gunten had a surprise.

"The Remittance Man's Peril" centred round the Flour-Bag Gang, which has been mentioned several times in recent tales. Mr. Beauclerc had once been in cahoots with Poker Pete, the rustler. Poker Pete comes after Mr. Beauclerc, who is saved by his son.

"Hunting the Road Agents" was comedy. A reward is offered for the capture of the Flour Bag Gang, and Dicky Bird and Co think they have won it - till the captured rustler strips off his disguise.

Then the story "The Flour Bag Gang" was real drama. A end of it, Sheriff Henderson is shot by the gang. Exciting.

It has just been announced that all the county cricket games this year will be of two days duration only. I expect there is a

shortage of cricketers after the war - or, maybe - they haven't been able to get all the grounds back to normal.

There have been some screamingly funny Keystone on at the cinemas this month, and I liked them all, especially the Fatty Arbuckle ones. I think I like Fatty better than Charlie Chaplin.

Among big pictures, we have seen Billie Burke in "The Pursuit of Polly"; Marion Davies in "A Runaway Romany"; Norma Talmadge in "Ghosts of Yesterday"; Mary Pickford in "Captain Kidd Junior"; Dorothy Gish in "The Little Yank." Triangle Film Co have a delightful new child star named Thelma Slater, and we saw her in "In Slumberland." Mum thought it lovely.

There used to be two film magazines - "Pictures" and also "The Picturegoer." They have been combined under the title of "Pictures and Picturegoer." It costs tuppence a week, which is an awful lot of money, but I have it now and then.

The Penny Poplar has been mighty good this month. Among the old Greyfriars tales have been the ones where Bunter lost his memory from diving into the empty swimming bath, and also the one where the Bounder comes as a new boy.

It seems queer that another writer should put a story into the middle of a series written by the normal writer, but that has happened this month in both the Magnet and the Gem. The series about the change over of the Bunters - running in both papers - continues, and is a knockout. The first one, in the Magnet, continued the series, though it was by a different writer. It was "The Amazing Bunter," and told of a friendship which developed between Wally and Snoop, and it also introduced a number of the Courtfield Council School boys. Not bad, though the writer is a bit smug.

Second tale of the month was "Bravo, Bunter" in which Nugent went through the ice, and Bunter saved him. As a reward, Bunter claimed a place in the football eleven - and surprised the natives. This was followed by "For Another's Sin" in which Clara Trevlyn was determined to box Bunter's ears because he had said that she was sweet on him. But Bunter saved Clara's father on the cliffs, so all was forgiven. In this tale there were two Cliff House girls of whom I have never heard before - Barbara Redfern and Dolly Jobling.

Finally, in "The Black Sheep of Highcliffe," Lantham is due to play the Remove, but Lantham is an older team, so the Remove expect a licking. But Skinner finds out that Lantham is much weakened by influenza, so he lays a bet on Greyfriars with Ponsonby

of Highcliffe. When Pon learns the truth he tries to bribe Bunter to put a drug in the Remove team's ginger beer. A jolly good month in the Magnet.

There has been a strike on the Underground Railways. The motormen, who have an 8-hour day, want their meal-times included in the 8 hours.

Bombardier Billy Wells was knocked out in the 5th round of his fight with Joe Beckett at Holborn Stadium.

The Gem has been good, continuing with the Bunter series, though one tale was not by the usual writer. The first tale, "Spoo!" was very good. Bunter, owing to the courtesy of Gussy, is landed in Study No. 6. Jack Blake & Co manage, by trickery, to get rid of Bunter, who asks for a transfer to Study 2, that of Mellish and Trimble.

Next week, in "Bunter in Search of a Study," Trimble and Mellish refuse to have Bunter in Study 2 - and Bunter tries to land himself in other studies. A delightful tale.

After this, "The Owl's Nest" was not by the usual writer, though it continued with Bunter trying to get a study. He ends up, lonely and forlorn, in a box-room.

Final tale of the month, "The Two Bunters," was the best of the series so far in either paper. Mr. Penman is to visit Wally at St. Jim's - so Billy decides that he and Wally must change back again for the afternoon. Billy goes to the matinee at the Abbotsford theatre - while Wally comes to St. Jim's, shines as a footballer, deals with the matter of the study, and entertains Mr. Penman. Great stuff for everybody, this one.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: As mentioned by Danny this month, it would seem that the Magnet tale "For Another's Sin" is memorable as the very first appearance of Barbara Redfern of Cliff House. No doubt, at this time, Charles Hamilton was busy tapping out tales for the School Friend, which was only a few weeks away. Luckily he did not write many, or the sub writers would have had even more work to do for the Gem and the Magnet.)

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FOR SALE: Magnet No. 1. Mint. Realistic offers invited. Aldine, Dick Turpins, Buffalo Bill, Boys' Friend Libraries, Gems, Nelson Lees, Popular, 1d Pictorial Magazine No. 1, Sports Budgets, Goldhawk No. 11. S.A.E. appreciated.

L. WALTON, 41 WOODLAND ROAD, LEVENSHULME, MANCHESTER M19 2GW.



# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

## NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

By Josie Packman

(Not even Sexton Blake stories)

Under the impetus of the recent article in the Digest about reprinting Blake stories, and having recently acquired copies of two of our old papers, I was inspired to write this little article.

The first of these two papers is THE BOYS' FRIEND WEEKLY dated 20 April 1907; the other is THE DREADNOUGHT dated 14 December 1912.

The B.F.W. features a serial titled "Sexton Blake in the Congo" by W. Murray Graydon. This story subsequently appeared in full in the BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY (1st series) in July 1910.

Another serial in this issue is "Britain At Bay" by John Tregellis. This story was also reprinted in the BFL (No. 118) in 1910.

The third serial "The School Against Him" by Henry St. John (not a St. Basil's story) was reprinted as a serial in the UNION JACK in the year 1909 and again reprinted in the B.F.L. (1st series) No. 219 (early 1913).

The DREADNOUGHT'S main feature is a Sexton Blake serial called "The Man From Scotland Yard," being the first George Marsden Plummer story. This had already appeared in UNION JACK No. 222, dated 11 January 1908. (The author was Michael Storm).

Another serial is "War in the Clouds." This story is about a German inventor of a marvellous flying machine called the "Hoverer. Shades of the modern helicopter! I wonder if Hitler ever read these flying stories and thus had an idea that he could invade Britain in that way? If so, it didn't come off - any more than it did in the original tales.

Finally, and to complete the quota, a fine serial by Robert W. Comrade (E. S. Brooks) "Scorned by the School" was reprinted in the B.F.L. (1st series) No. 403.

The cover illustrations of these two issues are very attractive

The DREADNOUGHT cover features Blake, Tinker and Pedro. Blake and Tinker are in the background, seated in their consulting room. Pedro is in the foreground and is standing in front of Blake's filing cabinet. His two front paws are up in the air and resting

against one of the top drawers.

The B.F.W. cover has a large centre picture with several smaller ones around it. One of the latter depicts Pedro in shallow swamp water holding his unconscious master above the water by gripping the shoulder of Blake's jacket with his strong teeth. He has almost got him ashore, but very close behind the bloodhound is a wicked looking alligator with partly opened mouth! The large, main illustration shows Blake prone and unconscious on the ground with Pedro standing over him and guarding him, for only two or three yards away and facing them is a massive lion.

The DREADNOUGHT cover illustrator is G. W. Wakefield. The B.F.W. illustrator is T. W. Holmes.

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I would be most grateful for some more material for Blakiana as I have come to the end of my supplies. Will someone please come to my rescue for the March C.D. at least? It's amazing how quickly all this material gets used up so go to it Blake fans and let me have more articles please.

Josie Packman

\* \* \* \* \*

THE MAN WHO WAS "CHARLTON LEA"

By Walter Webb

In the October issue of C.D., Mr. M. Hall, of Penryn, observed that certain characters once featured in the Aldine periodicals of long ago were a sadly neglected coterie in the pages of our hobby. I am in complete agreement with Mr. Hall's views. Names like Dixon Brett, and those of a household nature, such as Robin Hood, Dick Turpin, Claude Duval and others, are featured not nearly enough these days, and would make welcome addition to those characters from the A.P. journals whom we read about each month in C.D. This is written not in criticism of editorial policy which is naturally governed by the articles an editor receives, but with a feeling of regret that such articles have not found their way into his sanctum. The wells of the A.P. have been tapped to the extent that they are rapidly drying up; but not so with the Aldines where there is a considerable amount of interesting information waiting to be published. As an example I cannot do better than quote the case of the man who wrote as "Charlton Lea."

In C.D.A. No. 2 the late Herbert Leckenby, in the compilation of his AUTHORS WHO'S WHO, wrote of Charlton Lea "... was probably a pen-name, but, if so, his real one is lost in the mists of time."

But Herbert wrote without the advantage of research into the works of his subject, for nearly 50 years previously Mr. Walter H. Light, an Aldine editor, had unwittingly revealed Lea's real name on no fewer than three occasions. It is astonishing that despite the amount of research that has been going on into the authorship of the boys' stories of long ago that of the most famous pseudonym of all should have still been shrouded in mystery 60 years after an editor had unknowingly slipped up in divulging it, and points to what extent a more thorough probing into the archives of the Aldines might achieve in the way of bringing to light more interesting information. As a matter of fact, the Aldines brim with pen-names not previously listed, and the preparation of reference works involving authors and their nom-de-plumes should not be undertaken without a look at the Aldines, for, as I have discovered, there is so much new material to be included as to put instantly all those already on the market both incomplete and out of date.

As an avid Sexton Blake fan, the identity of "Charlton Lea" was of particular interest to me for the reason that his son in later years was to join that distinguished band of writers who chronicled the adventures of the famous sleuth. From both the style of writing and Mr. Light's disclosures, there is no possible shadow of doubt that the pen-name "Charlton Lea" concealed the identity of ALFRED SHERRINGTON BURRAGE, brother of the equally well-known Edwin Harcourt Burrage, also an old Blake contributor.

Mr. Hall has asked for information about Dixon Brett and some of the Libraries.. Well, as far as Dixon Brett is concerned, the Library which featured him only ran to about 30 issues, and No. 23 appeared either in late 1927 or during the early months of '28. The creator of this character has never been named, but I am almost certain that Stephen H. Agnew conceived him, a sure guarantee of top quality narration in any paper to which this author contributed. The Aldine Thriller Library I must confess to having no knowledge of at all, but I can name the exact date on which his DIAMOND LIBRARY No. 104 was published. It appeared on Thursday, 25th August 1910, and copies were issued at the rate of three per month, publishing date being the last Thursday in each. Newnes's DEADWOOD DICK LIBRARIES Nos. 1 and 2 appeared in 1928 and their DICK TURPIN LIBRARY from 1922 to 1930. Copies were published spasmodically, but as near as I can ascertain in view of the fact that no dates were given is that No. 55 appeared in 1925 and No. 100 sometime in 1928.

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BLAKE ON T.V. DOWN UNDERFrom S. Gordon Swan

In the course of half a century there have been a number of plays and films dealing with the adventures of Sexton Blake, but owing to various circumstances I have never been able to see any of them. Consequently I was pleasantly surprised to see the magic name of Sexton Blake included in the local T.V. programme. I was also somewhat incredulous that it was going to be made possible at last for me to see my lifetime hero in flesh and blood after so many years. But it turned out to be true.

I do not intend to make any personal criticism of the programme, but I wish to reproduce here a comment from the T.V. critic in our local Sunday paper, The Sunday Times, issue dated 5.1.69. The critic calls himself the Monitor, and is usually rather hyper-critical:

CLASSIC CRIME -- AND WITHOUT THE SHAME

WHEN I was a little boy who used to pull the legs off flies, shoot pretty birds with my catapult, and tie tins to doggies' tails, I also used to read Sexton Blake on the woodheap behind the woodshed.

My people had brought me up nicely and I was not allowed to read harmful literature or smoke Lucky Dream cigarettes.

Sexton Blake was as forbidden as sex in those days.

Men fainted when women showed their ankles and No Orchids for Miss Blandish would not appear for another decade.

The British schoolboys were all upright and sexless and girls were a bit of a bore.

But these excellent young men were so well educated that they could pit their sexless brains and identities against the most depraved criminals of the day.

What a relief from J. Bond, Esq., who uses sex instead of brains for the same results.

In these days, one does not know the goods from the bads. I think the goods are the bads. That's my philosophy of life.

But from the British schoolboy it shone like the morning star. It wasn't sex.

Sexton Blake and goodness went together like priests and religion. But my Dad still forbade me to read it.

At 6.30 p.m. weekdays on Channel 2 now, instead of Bellbird, I am getting my first real unashamed look at a classic crime buster who was great before I was born -- Sexton Blake.

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I am sending this extract in the belief that it will be appreciated by CD readers. It is heartening to read anything of this nature in these cynical times.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Miss Bette Pate writes from Australia, re the Blake TV series: "It really is quite pathetic that Blake should be treated in such a paltry fashion. The whole production is just too cheap for words.")

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REVIEW

WILLIAM THE SUPERMAN

Richmal Crompton  
 (Newnes. 10/6)

Richmal Crompton is in sparkling form in this latest collection of stories about the inimitable William. There are plenty of Miss Crompton's priceless adults on the stage, and the formidable band of small children, headed by the fearsome Arabella Simpkin, convulse the reader when they become convinced that William has foreknowledge of an impending flood and is building an ark.

General Moulton, approaching his ninetieth birthday, makes a welcome reappearance in one of the stories. This one is full of fun, and we are told, in one of those delicious chunks of throw-away humour in which the author specialises, that Miss Thompson had presented an iced birthday cake. "She had intended it originally to represent the Victoria Falls but it had gone flat in the making and now represented the Table Mountain."

My own favourite in this happy book is the tale in which Violet Elizabeth, disguised in a Beatle wig and a skirt belonging to one of the mistresses, runs away from boarding school, owing to the fact that she refuses to eat "minthe." Her mother, the superb Mrs. Bott, has gone to Paris to acquire local colour. "When they'd finished with her face, her eyes - blue shadowed and heavily lashed - seemed to leave no room for the rest of her features, and when they'd finished with her hair she looked as if she hadn't got any." Mrs. Bott's Paris hat looked like the Eiffel Tower rising from the middle of a frying-pan.

William himself has many adventures, in one of which he sets out to rescue Robert from getting a "criminal record."

Fine value for money, this book is a "must" for the William fan - and for anybody at all who enjoys a good laugh.

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 Will exchange Magnets etc., for Bullseyes and Monster Libraries.  
FRANK L. KNOTT, 29 COLSON STREET, AVALON, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND.

## NELSON LEE COLUMN

EARLY STRUGGLES

By Bob Blythe

THE "BOY'S FRIEND"

By the year 1910, Edwy was beginning to get his stories published. It would seem, from the evidence of the letters that his first successful contact with the A.P. (or Harmsworth Press, as it was then), was with Arthur Marshall, the editor of the Boy's Friend. As we have seen, through Marshalls' introductions, he was able to meet other editors and so eventually to establish himself.

It all commenced with a letter to Hamilton Edwards --

Four Elms, Stoneham Parva,  
Suffolk. April 22, 1910.

Hamilton Edwards, Esq.,  
Managing Editor,  
Harmsworth's Boys' Papers, etc.

Dear Sir,

Will you kindly let me know whether you would be disposed to consider a "Sexton Blake" story from my pen, for the "Union Jack" Library, if I write such with a special view to its publication therein? I have an excellent idea for such a story, but naturally hesitate to work it up without some knowledge that it will at least receive consideration at your hands. If you are able to give such a story your consideration, and would like to see it in synopsis beforehand, I should be very pleased to send it to you in that form before actually writing the story. Of course I understand that even though you might like the synopsis you could come to no decision as to the final suitability of the story until I had placed it before you in its complete form.

I have just completed a 65,000 - word story for boys, entitled "Among the Solar Planets" - which title explains the nature of the tale. If this is likely to be of service to you for any of your publications I shall be very pleased to forward it for your consideration if you will kindly let me know.

I may add that I have had many stories published by Messrs. C. A. Pearson, Ltd. and Messrs. Shurey's, and a boys' serial which I wrote immediately previous to the above mentioned work has just been accepted by Messrs. J. Henderson & Sons.

I enclose stamped addressed envelope for reply, and thank you in anticipation for an early answer.

I am, Dear Sir, etc. etc.

P.S. I am also a regular weekly contributor to a South Wales periodical.

P.P.S. I have for many years made a study of the papers which you control, so that I am fully conversant with your main requirements. As a result Edwards sent the following letter.

Fleet St. April 25, 1910.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter, I shall be pleased to give my best consideration to your story "Among the Solar Planets." Kindly address the MS to the editor, "The Boys' Friend." Yours, etc.

Now this must have presented Edwy with quite a problem for I'm sure that he wasn't expecting it! If you would look at C.D. for July of last year you will find reference to a letter written to "Chums," dated April 9th, 1910, in which he had sent to the editor the MS of this very story! And it hadn't been returned to him at that date. The next day, the 25th, by the very first post, I'll bet, a letter was written to the editor of "Chums" asking had he read the story, what did he think of it, and if he didn't want it would he return it. The letter ended thus -

" - - - I enclose 6d in stamps - 4d. postage, 2d. registration and if the story does not meet with your requirements I shall be glad if you will kindly send it back to me by return of post, so that I may offer it elsewhere without unnecessary delay

Faithfully yours, etc.

However, it wasn't until the 11th May that he got the MS back accompanied by the following letter - which I'm sure was meant to be helpful.

"CHUMS," May 11th. 1910.

Dear Sir,

I have read your serial with considerable interest, but regret that it is not quite the kind of thing we are looking for. If you will pardon me for pointing it out to you, I would suggest that the chief fault the story has from the point of view of a serial is that the adventures on each of the planets are not sufficiently different. On each planet the adventurers meet with weird inhabitants and fall into their hands and then fall out again. It seems to me that you have missed chances of really thrilling adventures. However that is only a personal opinion with which you may differ.

Again thanking you for letting me see the story,

Yours faithfully, etc.

Whatever E.S.B. may have thought of this helpful advice is not

recorded. It did not stop him promptly sending the MS to the editor of the "Boys' Friend," Mr. A.C. Marshall, and may he be forgiven for the white lies contained in his letter!

Stoneham Parva, May 17, 1910.

Dear Sir,

I regret not having replied before to your letter of the 25th ult. wherein you requested me to send you my story "Among the Solar Planets," which I had then just finished writing. The typing now being completed I have pleasure in submitting the MS for your consideration.

As you will notice, suggestion is made towards the end with regard to a sequel to the story. If you are favourably impressed with "Among the Solar Planets" I shall immediately commence writing the sequel. Should you prefer it, however, I could easily alter the last chapters and add a further 40,000 words (making about 100,000 words in all) and thus convert it into one long story. I shall await your decision with some expectancy.

I am, Dear Sir, etc.

The resulting history of this story is interesting, but too lengthy to be gone into here. Suffice it to say that the next time Edwy heard about the MS it had been found on the pavement in Fleet St! There is quite a lot of correspondence between E.S.B., the editor and the finder, and as far as I can make out the mystery of how it got there was never solved. But as far as the "Boys' Friend" was concerned it was "no go" as the editor explained.

THIS ARTICLE WILL BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH

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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

From Bob Blythe

Congratulations on another marvellous Annual! It doesn't seem possible that after 20 odd years there is anything left to write about. And yet, there it is, as full of good, well written articles as at any time in the past.

There are one or two items in Dec. C.D. that I feel require an answer. First Derek Smith's article entitled "More Conquest." The last story that Edwy wrote was "Curtains for Conquest" (a prophetic title if ever there was one!). However it is not generally known that after his death Mrs. Francis Brooks decided to try to carry on the Conquest stories. This she was doing with the aid of a ghost writer. Whether she was using one of Edwy's



plots or one which was entirely her own, I cannot say. Before the book was finished she too, had died. It was then that her son Lionel, although not a writer by profession, decided to finish it himself. He was far from satisfied with the work of the ghost writer and in consequence set about rewriting the whole thing. The book "Conquest Calls the Tune" published by Robert Hale is the result. Obviously some of Edwy's talent has been passed on to his son.

After that very complimentary letter from J. Conroy it would be churlish not to provide him with the answer to his query. The story of the Tour of Australia and New Zealand was told in the School Ship series, 1st New Series Nos. 140 - 151 dated Jan - Feb 1929.

I wish I could answer Gordon Swan's letter re the young E.S.B. The earliest address (Feb. 1908) I have is "The Croft," Bacton-on-Sea, Suffolk. All I can say is that his first published story, as reprinted in the Annual, was written in 1906 and that he would have been 17 in that year. From internal evidence in the earliest letters, there is no reason to suppose that the Brooks family ever lived in the west of England.

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 WANTED: C.D. monthlies Nos. 1-6, 8, 9, 16, 18, 21.

SALE OR EXCHANGE: C.Ds. 203, 213 - 216.

M.E. KING, 18 BARTON RD., LANGLEY, BUCKS.

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 FOR SALE: 23 consecutive copies of PLUCK (Nos. 486 - 508) with stories from the early cinema etc. £3-10s plus postage. VANGUARDS Nos. 59, 61, 84, 90, 95, 97, 121, 127, 134. 5/- each or £2 the lot. B.F.L. 246 (new series) Island Castaways by A.S. Hardy (lovely collectors' item) 7/6. Champion Library No 43 Phantom Speedman by Donald Dane. Excellent copy. 5/-. Robin Hood Library No 50 (1920) 3/-. Buffalo Bill and the Black Prince (Aldine) 3/- (excellent). Early BFL's Nos. 137 "Redcastle & Co" by David Goodwin, No. 122 Pete's School, No. 193 Chief Constable Pete. 7/6 each. Boys' Wonder Library No 24 Air Patrol by G.E. Rochester (excellent copy) 1/6. Postage extra on all items,

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

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 WANTED Any Series or Double Numbers Magnet or Gem.

W. TITTENSOR, 18 PARKWAY, DAIRYFIELDS, TRENTHAM, STOKE-ON-TRENT, STAFFS.

Over 60 years ago Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was created, and went to St. Jim's, but he was rather different from the Gussy with whom we were to grow up. Collectors' Digest gives its readers the opportunity to meet Gussy - New Boy.

## THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S

"Now then, you kids, pull up your socks and follow your uncle!" exclaimed Jack Blake, coming into No. 6 Study, a few days later.

"What's the matter?" queried Herries.

"It's time to get our own back on those New House wasters" replied Blake, "and now's our chance. They haven't given us a minute's peace since D'Arcy came. They call him the swell of the school, and chip us about him no end. They've taken to calling the schoolhouse a lunatic asylum. Are we going to take it lying down?"

"Certainly not; but what's the jape?"

"Those New House bounders are holding one of their rehearsals in the wood shed, and this is where we come in."

Herries and Digby jumped up at once.

"Get your pea-shooters," said Blake. "I spotted Figgy and the others going there with bundles under their arms, and we shall be in good time."

"May I come?" asked D'Arcy timidly.

"You'll only be in the way, fathead!" said Digby.

"Rats, let him come," said Blake. "He won't do any harm anyway. Have you a pea-shooter, D'Arcy?"

"N - no."

"I have one I can lend you. Do you know how to use it? No? Dear me, where ever were you brought up? Think of that, chaps, a fellow with seventeen fancy waistcoats and not a single pea-shooter!"

"Not seventeen, Blake; only ten."

"Only!" grinned Blake. "Well, here's the shooter. This is how you use it. Shove a pea in your mouth -- so -- and so --"

"Oh!" gasped D'Arcy, as the pea caught him on the nose. "Oh! I see."

"Shall I show you again?"

"Nunno, I can understand perfectly."

"Then come along."

And the four left the study for the

warpath. The wood shed was a secluded spot, seldom if ever visited by the boys - for which reason the New House Dramatic Society had chosen it for rehearsals. Figgins meant to stagger humanity with a performance of "Hamlet" later on, and he kept his cast well up to the mark so far as rehearsing was concerned. He had chosen "Hamlet" for representation with a calm assurance that the New House Amateur Dramatic Society was equal to the task. Himself, of course, he had cast for the Prince of Denmark.

Blake and his chums reached the scene of action. Deep voices within the shed warned them that the rehearsal had started.

Blake stepped silently to the door of the shed, which opened outwards, and forced a wedge of wood under it. So long as that wedge remained there, no efforts of the inmates could open the door. Then he led the way to the window. The window was a small one, but there was room for the four sharpshooters.

Within the shed a couple of bicycle lanterns burned, hung upon the wall. Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Pratt of the New House were there. Figgins was declaiming.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us! Is that right, Kerr?"

"That's right. Get on."

"I can't remember the next. Did we cut it there?"

"Of course, we did. If we acted all that was written we should be all the term about it. The next is: 'Be thy intents.'"

"'Be thy intents wicked or charitable?'"

"'Thou comest in such a questionable - questionable - questionable --.' What on earth is it he comes in, Kerr? Is it sheet?"

"Shape, fathead!"

"'Thou comest in such questionable shape,'" said Figgins.

He was addressing Wynn, who had a sheet over his head, and was evidently intended for the ghost of Hamlet's pater.

"Why don't you answer?" exclaimed Hamlet impatiently.

"Silly ass!" replied the ghost. "I don't answer here. You go on."

"Do I go on, Kerr?"

"Of course you do; and then Pratt comes in as Horatio."

Figgins consulted a closely scribbled paper.

"All right. My mistake:

"What was this mean,

That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel,

Revisitest thus the glimpses of the moon,  
Making night hideous ---"

"That's another cut," said Kerr. "Go it, Pratt!"

"Where do I come in?" asked Pratt.

"It beckons you to go away with it."

"Who does?"

"Idiot! That's what you've got to say."

"Have I? All right: 'It beckons you to go away with it.'"

"Ass! You've got to say it to Figgy."

"'It beckons you to go away with it,' Figgy," said Pratt.

Kerr tore his hair.

"It's enough to make an angel weep to stage-manage for such a blithering set of cuckoos!" he exclaimed. "Figgy isn't Figgy, you silly ass; he's Hamlet!"

"Oh, I forgot! Sorry. 'It beckons you to go away with it,' Hamlet."

"You don't call him Hamlet."

"What do I call him, then?"

"Nothing at all. Just spout and have done with it."

"'It beckons you to go away with it,'" said Pratt. "How's that?"

"That's all right. Why haven't you got your written part?"

"I left the blessed thing in my study."

"Silly goat! Now Marcellus is supposed to talk, but we leave him out. Now, Hamlet."

"Right you are," said Figgins. "'It will not speak, then I will follow it.' You didn't beckon me, though, Wynn. You ought to have beckoned me."

"Never mind," said the stage-manager. "Go on, Horatio."

"Don't go, Figgy" said Pratt. "I mean, do not go, my Lord. I keep on forgetting you're Hamlet."

"I'll punch your head if you forget again," said the stage-manager. "Your turn, Hamlet."

"Why, what should be the fear?" spouted Figgins.

"'I do not set my wife at a pink knee!'"

"What?"

"That's what's written here."

"It can't be. Let me look at it. Oh,

'I do not set my life at a pin's fee.'"

"Your writing is so rotten, Kerr, I

thought it didn't make sense. 'I do not

set my life at a pin's fee.'"

"What if it tempt you towards the flood,

Figgy - I mean, my lord?" said Pratt. "Oh,

crikey!"

"What's the matter with you?"

"Something stung me."

"Rats!"

"It wasn't rats; it was a wops - I mean a wasp - or something."

"A wasp at this time of the year!" said

Kerr witheringly. "Oh, you silly ass! Oh,

scissors!"

He clapped his hand to his ear.

"What's the matter?"

"Something stung me!"

"Nonsense!" said Figgins warmly. "Let's get on with the rehearsal. Oh, my nose!"

"What's the matter with your nose?"

"I felt a sudden pain - like a sting!"

"You're all off your rockers!" exclaimed Wynn impatiently. "You're doing all the

talking, and I haven't had a chance. Look here, where am I to begin? I've got it

all by heart, too. I -- Oh lord!"

He clapped his hand to his cheek.

"He's got it, too!" said Kerr. "It can't be wopses. It felt like ---"

There was a roar of laughter from the window. Instantly the eyes of the Amateur

Dramatic Society turned in that direction. Four grinning faces, one of them adorned

with an eyeglass, were looking in at the window.

"The School House cads!" exclaimed Figgins & Co. in a breath.

Figgins made a dash at the window.

A volley of peas from the shooters met him, and he stopped short. Kerr sprang to the door.

"Come on," he shouted, "come on! We'll wipe up the ground with them!"

But the door refused to budge.

The New House juniors threw their weight against it, but it would not move. Then it

dawned upon them that they were trapped.

Meanwhile the marksmen at the window kept

up a shower of stinging peas.

The New House juniors, panting with wrath, charged at the window. Blake and his chums retreated out of reach, and still kept up the shooting. Figgins grabbed the window and slammed down the sash. The peas rattled upon the panes.

Crash!

A pane of glass was not likely to protect Figgins & Co. when Study No. 6 was on the war-path. The pane flew into a thousand pieces, and through the opening the peas came in fast, stinging wherever they hit.

Figgins & Co. jumped and yelled and threatened. A pea-shooter is a really effective weapon in skilful hands, and Blake and his chums made every shot tell.

Figgins made an heroic attempt to clamber through the little window.

"Be thy intents wicked or charitable.

Thou comest in such a questionable

Shape!"

chortled Blake, as he gently rubbed his hands, which he had filled with earth for the purpose, over Figgy's flushed face.

Figgins gasped and choked, and dropped back into the shed.

The prisoners made another attempt upon the door, but it would not budge. All the time Blake's party kept up an effective fire. Suddenly an idea darted into Figgins' mind. He blew out the lanterns, and the shed was in darkness.

"Now, you beasts!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, all right!" said Blake, putting away his peashooter. "Good-night!"

"I say, you're not going, leaving us fastened up here?" exclaimed Figgins, in dismay.

"Why not? You'd go for us if we let you out."

"Yah! You're afraid!"

"Not a bit of it, Figgy; but we're masters of the situation now, and there's not a bit of a reason why we shouldn't remain so."

"Don't be a cad - let us out!"

"Are you willing to knuckle under, and make it pax?"

"We'll make it pax; but as for knuckling under ---"

"Rats! You're done brown, so why not own up to it?"

"I'll make you sit up for this!"

"All in good time. What are you going to do?"

"We give in," said Figgins reluctantly.

"Now let us out."

And Blake removed the wedge, and the door opened. The Amateur Dramatic Society came out, looking red and furious. But they did not attack their conquerors; they had made "pax" with them, and honour held them to the truce.

"But just you wait!" said Figgins & Co., as they turned away towards the New House. "Just you wait, you horrid bounders!"

And, as it happened, a time was coming for Figgins & Co.

(There will be another instalment of this 62-year old story Next Month.)

### A CORNER ON PENTELOW

PENTELOW AS EDITOR AND AUTHOR.....by Ray Hopkins

Following Irving Rosenwater's talk on John Nix Pentelow at a meeting of the London Club, a question period revealed more interesting information about the former Amalgamated Press Editor and writer. Asked if Mr. Pentelow encouraged young writers, Mr. Rosenwater stated that as Editor of The Magnet and The Gem, his job was the commissioning of new stories. "John Wheway was one such young writer who was first given authorship status by him." Over 30 years later, in the 1950's, Mr. Wheway wrote in the AP House Magazine of his appreciation of Pentelow's kindness to him as a beginning writer. This would give the lie to the impression that one might receive from reading Pentelow editorials in the

Companion papers that he was a rather unapproachable and malicious man. Mr. Rosenwater has copies of many letters written about Pentelow and "they all agree that he was a most kindly man." G.R. Samways, who collaborated with Pentelow on occasion in the writing of boys' fiction, says of Pentelow's appearance, "I formed the impression that Pentelow was well above military age with his white hair and unfortunate deafness." No doubt this was a sign of his not very robust constitution which caused a struggle against ill-health for the last seven years of his life. Mr. Samways goes on to say, "He had an air of fatherly benevolence in the early 20's which made him seem older than his colleagues." Pentelow may have been just carrying on a tradition of bad-tempered editorial writing which is especially noticeable in the early volumes of The Boys' Own Paper. This irate attitude was also carried on by his AP predecessor, H. A. Hinton. Readers write in for advice or to comment on the stories and are verbally chastised, presumably for taking up the Editor's valuable time with "stuff and nonsense." In those days, children were to be seen and not heard, and for daring to write to the Editor, especially with complaints of aches and pains, the Editor was in fact spanking them and sending them to bed without their tea with what sounds like exasperation, not to say vituperation, on occasion. However, as one boy reader who never wrote a Dear Editor letter in his early days, I have wondered if these answers are in reply to genuine letters. If it came to a choice of writing to the Editor (ld) or putting the postage toward buying another paper, the latter would win hands down every time. I feel these boy letter writers must have been mythical. In a circulation conscious organization like the AP, no Editor would willingly offend and thus lose a reader. Children, it seems to me, tend to laugh at others' misfortunes, therefore, it is possible that these old Editors were just using good psychology in that a reader would chuckle at somebody else being told off.

Despite varied opinions of Pentelow as a writer of Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories, Herbert Leckenby, for one, believed Pentelow to be a great story teller when writing of his own schools, Wycliffe and Haygarth. I was interested to hear that he was also versatile enough to write schoolgirls' stories under the name of Madge North. Pentelow's sentimentality, for which his boys' stories have been criticized, it would seem, should have made him a superlative writer of girls' stories. Mr. Rosenwater was asked how the Madge North stories compared with the Jack North yarns. He replied that they were far inferior, despite the fact that he

was aided with advice from his wife. His output for the girls' papers, however, was small. His girls' stories were mainly short and complete in one issue of the weeklies. Digging among the old volumes I have gone through recently, I discovered a series of 18 titles in The School Friend concerning Newcombe House School, and three 10,000-word complete stories in The Schoolgirls' Weekly. He has only three titles in The Schoolgirls' Own 4d Library under the name of Madge North.

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THE SUBSTITUTE STORIES OF J. N. PENTELOW by Laurie Sutton

In October "Collectors' Digest" reference is made to Gem 559, "Cousin Ethel's Champions" and the fact that Bill Lofts' lists credit this story to H. Clarke Hook. The writer states, "There is no reason to doubt that Mr. Lofts' information is correct." The succeeding paragraphs, however, indicate that there is every reason to doubt it, and I can go further and state as a fact that the story was, like the following two, written by J. N. Pentelow, just as certainly as Charles Hamilton wrote, for example, "The Housemaster's Homecoming."

In commenting on "Cousin Ethel's Champions" in the November C.D. Bill Lofts states that it is "by no means uncommon" for a series of three stories in the Gem to be written by different authors. I challenge Bill to name one such series (his own "official" lists don't agree with him.) In statements which follow this Bill omits to name any of the stories to which he refers, and I wonder if he is recording established facts or gossip of elderly men relying on elderly memories? I am puzzled, for instance, by the rejected Clive Fenn story that Pentelow made into six stories. Can we be told the six stories? Pentelow's longest series (unless one calls the Shell v Fourth stuff a series) was the Remove election in Magnets 477-481, a total of five stories. His next longest was of three stories, so perhaps even Pentelow himself realised that the poor kids could only stand so much while they waited for a readable story to appear again!

I have met two of the sub writers and corresponded with another, and not one of them had more than a very hazy idea of what he had, or had not, written for the Magnet and Gem. With the similarity or duplication of story titles it is very easy for them to become confused when asked about stories written perhaps more than fifty years ago.

I am fully appreciative of Mr. Lofts' research, which has given

us much valuable and correct information, but it is a fact, as I have proved in the past, that there are a number of errors in the Gem and Magnet sub lists. Apart from proof that I have supplied we now have further proof since the bringing to light of the E.S. Brooks manuscripts by Bob Blythe, proving that Brooks wrote some stories previously attributed to Charles Hamilton, one of them being Magnet 256, "The Greyfriars Pantomime," which I had already identified as a definite sub without being able to name the author at the time.

However, in the case of J. N. Pentelow I am in the unique position (after many years of study, research, and tabulating statistics) of being able to positively identify every Gem and Magnet story written by J.N.P. As these include stories attributed in the Bill Lofts' lists to such writers as Charles Hamilton, E. S. Brooks, and G. R. Samways readers may be interested in details of corrections to the lists appearing in the 1962 and 1964 C.D. Annuals where Pentelow is involved, either through omission or addition.

There are no less than 32 errors in the Magnet list, plus 4 errors in the Gem list concerning Pentelow's work. The first, and most important, is an omission from the Gem list that, in effect, blames Charles Hamilton for Gem 386, "Finding His Level." Previous to this Gem 347, "Tom Merry's Find," is listed "presumed sub - author unknown" - the author can now be confirmed as J.N.P. (Incidentally, how can these words "presumed sub, etc." appear when the information is claimed to originate from the publisher's official lists?) The other Gem errors concern 559, "Cousin Ethel's Champions" and 566 which is listed as Pentelow but definitely not written by him - the author was probably R.S. Kirkham, as it bears the same image as 568 which is listed as Kirkham (who can probably claim the record as the very worst of all the sub writers).

The most important error in the Magnet list is the crediting of Pentelow's 495, "On the Wrong Track," to E.S. Brooks. In this case, in addition to the usual Pentelow "trade marks" such as the inevitable "notions," plus "twig," "twigged," "It's no odds," "y'know," "dead off," "apt to," we have some very convincing proof in some dialogue that occurs in Magnet 495 and 499 (this one correctly listed as J.N.P.). In 495 there appears this rather atrocious pun in keeping with Pentelow's feeble humour: "Oh, Toddy knows Toddy's nose, all serene!") Then in 499 we have this: "No one knows," says Bunter. "Not even Toddy's? It's about the longest here," says Bob Cherry. If further proof were needed, in

495 there is a reference to the American author, O. Henry. Now J.N.P. was very fond of plugging his favourite authors, and he referred to O. Henry in several stories, besides other writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and Sir Walter Scott. In fact, solely for this purpose, Pentelow converted William Cuthbert Gunn of St. Jim's into a bookworm who repeatedly referred to these authors. As a final clincher Chapter 5 is absolutely typical Pentelow with its tedious clever-dick dialogue put into the mouths of schoolboys.

Of the remaining 31 errors in the Magnet list, 14 concern stories listed as Pentelow but actually written by G. R. Samways. These are: 417, 436, 449, 468, 550, 562, 675, 679, 683, 686, 724, 727, 728, 813. The authors of the other 17 stories I cannot definitely identify at this time, but can nevertheless say with certainty that they were not by J.N.P. These include the Belgian battlefields pair of stories, 601 and 602, clearly written by someone who had seen active service there I should think. The following 15 make up the list of corrections: 454, 557, 604, 653, 658, 658, 659, 671, 714, 717, 719, 746, 747, 790, 835, 842.

Every number listed in this article has been carefully scrutinized, so that the necessary corrections can be safely made to the 1962 and 1964 C.D. Annuals.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Does a literary analysis really produce a result which is beyond the possibility of error? Even computers make mistakes, as we find to our cost. In any case, most of us, sufficient for our normal wants, can tell the "feel" of a Pentelow story.)

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DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 75 - Boys' Friend Weekly No. 728 - "Smythe's Little Sweep"

Soon after the Rookwood stories began in the Boys' Friend in 1915, a disgruntled reader wrote to the editor to express his disappointment with them. He declared that they were little more than good-natured farce without any moral purpose, and he admitted that he had hoped they would be more like the school stories in the Magnet and Gem. It is rather astonishing for such a mature judgement to have been expressed in a reader's letter, and it is easy to see why this reader was dissatisfied: the early stories in which Jimmy Silver took control were strangely lacking in depth. They still seem too facile when read today, and they are a poor guide to the riches that lie ahead.



"Smythe's Little Sweep," which appeared later in the year, had more bite to it than many of the previous stories. In the early days Smythe's dishonesty plumbed the very depths, and we are told that he had conducted another sweep in the previous term. The favourite on that occasion was drawn twice, once by Higgs of the Third and once by Smythe. When the favourite won, Smythe kept the winnings and told Higgs that there had been a mistake and he should have drawn a blank. Unkind rumours persisted to the effect that it was Smythe who had drawn a blank and had written in the name of the favourite afterwards. Be that as it may, there was a marked reluctance on the part of the juniors to subscribe to Smythe's next sweep.

At this stage Leggett came forward with a brainwave. He told Smythe to announce that a quarter of the winnings would be sent to the Red Cross, and thus anyone who refrained from buying a ticket could be branded as mean and unpatriotic. Leggett did not actually buy a ticket himself, but agreed to take as a reward a share of Smythe's winnings. Leggett seemed pretty certain that Smythe would win.

The story continued with trickery and blackmail, culminating in an unexpected twist that Charles Hamilton could so adeptly contrive to bring complicated plots to a fitting climax. "Smythe's Little Sweep" was a little gem of a story, and one that was never reprinted as it revolved around a wartime theme. Nevertheless, it must have convinced the disgruntled reader that the Rookwood stories were developing with a depth and originality that promised great things for the future.

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 Struggling to compile representative collection. One or a few copies of each of the following required:  
 Magic, Happy Days, Bubbles (1935 or 1936); Dandy (August 1939); Knockout (up to 1943); Jingles (any copies to 1943 £1.0.0. offered for No. 1); Adventure (early wartime with Human Torpedo); Playbox (early wartime smaller format); Champion (Dec. 1946 to March 1947); Crackers (1936-1940); Sparkler (Amalgamated Press); Sunbeam (1936-1940).

M.A. MARKEY, 9, VICARAGE HILL, NEWPORT, MONMOUTHSHIRE. NPT 4EB

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 WANTED: Boys Friends 780-809 inclusive- 918-952 inclusive; 955-958 inclusive; 961-964, 966, 969, 971, 973, 974.

ROWE, LINDENS HORSFORD, NORWICH NOR 84X

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

Miss E. B. FLINDERS: I am writing about the article in this month's C.D. called "Cliff House Confusion." There is a very simple and astonishing answer! The authors of the Cliff House stories were not allowed to write about Greyfriars. It was one of the first questions I asked when I started working for the Girls magazines, because it really was a puzzle. The books were grouped together in small numbers under one chief editor. Mr. Eves was the head of the schoolgirl department, which strangely enough included the Triumph - a boys book. But this department had no connection with the boys school stories, and they were often not even in the same building.

ROGER JENKINS (Havant): Philip Tierney's piece on Cliff House Confusion made interesting and amusing reading. I wonder if he realises that the villain of the piece was Charles Hamilton himself?

It is well known that Charles Hamilton created Cliff House in the pages of the red Magnet, and that after the first World War it was given independent life of its own, Charles Hamilton writing the first six stories in the "School Friend." Then the paper was handed over to another writer, and there seems no doubt that it was with Charles Hamilton's consent, because he never complained about this afterwards, and he stipulated that the "School Friend" was never to mention Greyfriars and its characters.

It is easy to see why he made this condition. Had he not done so, he would have given a substitute writer carte blanche to feature Greyfriars and its characters every week in another paper. It is possible that "The School Friend" would have featured Greyfriars as much as Cliff House, and in the end the paper might have become a rival to the "Magnet." So he had the foresight to reserve the Greyfriars characters for himself, and though it might have puzzled some readers at the time I think that most collectors today must feel glad that he did so.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT): Mr. Jenkins' explanation seems to be the only feasible one concerning that mystery of the School Friend. But if Charles Hamilton had the power to make such stipulations (and I believe he had) it makes his post-war protestations against the substitute writers look a little flimsy. We have to remember, too, that in late 1919 and 1920 the Penny Popular was devoted

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entirely to new substitute stories of Hamilton's three main schools. If he could bar Greyfriars to the School Friend, why not to the Popular? His Autobiography seemed hollow because he omitted to explain mysteries of this type.)

K. J. BONUGLI (Bedford): I feel that some confusion is growing over the story "Sexton Blake - Detective" which appeared in the "1968 Valiant Book of T.V's Sexton Blake," and in answer to Mr. Cox whose letter appeared in the January C.D. I offer the following

I wrote to Fleetway Publications to try and clear this matter up and received a helpful letter from a Mr. Page who edited the 1968 annual which stated that he had been unaware of the 1893 "Missing Millionaire" story which had appeared in the "Halfpenny Marvel" but had believed that Sexton Blake originated in the first story of the Great Detective to be published in the Union Jack, i.e. the U.J. dated May 4th 1894. (A myth perhaps perpetrated by the story which Mr. Cox found in his 1940 annual). This then is the story which has been reprinted and not the December 1893 "Halfpenny Marvel" story.

This explains Fleetway's insistence on the date May 4th 1894 which is correct. The mistake is in the statement that this story is the first Sexton Blake story ever.

BILL LOFTS (London): I thought the Annual really interesting this year with something to cater for all tastes. Stanley Smith's article on the wonderful Sherlock Holmes had my own detective brain asking if Arthur Whitaker is still alive, and what happened to those other stories he wrote. Surely worth finding out. I should also very much like to know, from Gerry Cunliffe's advert, when such comics as 'Tootla' 'Tally-Ho' 'Juggler' 'Jack-in-the-box' 'Coco-Cubs' and Joyfull' did appear, and publishers. Although I have made many enquiries, I have yet to see any record of them, and they certainly are 'ghost' comics until one turns up. There is no record of them in British Museum or publishers guide of periodicals - unless they were given away free with a weekly publication.

Rev. A. G. POUND (Birmingham): May I thank you for, and congratulate you on, an extremely good C.D. Annual? For me it is very definitely the best ever. So many of the articles are of great interest to me. About this time every year I look forward to the arrival of the Annual - it forms part of my Christmas pleasures; but this year I am more delighted with it than ever.

I like very much the reprint of "The Boys of Beechwood," as I

also like the reprint of "The Swell of St. Jim's" in the C.D. The differences from, and similarity to, the later more developed styles and characterisations in Hamilton stories are most interesting.

As a bit of a Sherlock Holmes fan myself I am interested to learn from Derek Smith that the story "The Man Who Was Wanted" which I had always felt I ought to read was, after all, not written by Conan Doyle. So my mind is now more at ease. "The Man Who Was Wanted" is no longer wanted by me!

MACKENZIE DAVIDSON (Muchalls): I have enjoyed "Serious or Funny" by that doughty old encyclopaedia W. O. G. Lofts - may I be bold enough to indicate a slip of his prolific pen in writing PAGANINI in place of PAGLIACCI. But the clown in that opera is, of course, TONIO who speaks the famous Prologue, and this is what Mr. Lofts really meant I suppose.

JOHN TROVELL (Colchester): Thank you for a really splendid Annual. Congratulations and thanks to all your talented contributors.

How pleasant to have Danny back in an unusual but absorbing mood, and top marks to Les Rowley for his two delightful articles.

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OFFERS INVITED from anyone interested in the following: BOYS OF THE EMPIRE Vols 1 and 2 (1888 - 89) Nos. 1 to 51. (These volumes were purchased for £4 from the John Medcraft collection in 1948). Containing lovely colour pictures The Home Circle Jan to June 1853 (contents excellent but needs re-binding). Brett's Boys' of England Vol. 10. (good copy but 1 page has somehow got detached and lost). FOR SALE: Henty's Union Jack: Rough and incomplete volume, but masses of browsing for the enthusiast 5/-, plus postage. BOYS' REALM Nos. 579 - 640 (1913-1914). Bound in two volumes. £10-10s the 2 volumes. Postage extra.

Contact ERIC FAYNE

WANTED: All Hamiltonia also U.Js., Lees, Bullseyes and most pre-war Mags. Annuals also required - Holiday, Chums, B.O.As., Captains, Scouts and any bound periodicals. Large quantities also available for sale.

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

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JOHN GUNN, M.H.C.I., Meadow Inn, 91, Arkwright Street, Nottingham, NG2 - 2 JS.

# NEWS OF THE CLUBS

## MIDLAND

Meeting held 17th December, 1968

On the kind invitation of Mrs. Hamilton Wright, our December meeting was held at her lovely home in Sutton Coldfield. Most assuredly, as Dr. Locke would say, it was one of the most enjoyable and successful meetings ever held in our Club's history. We had a very pleasant evening and our sincere and warm thanks were expressed to our charming hostess, who had spared no pains to make our evening thoroughly enjoyable.

The comestibles were delicious, superbly cooked and tastefully served. Any schoolboy or girl would have been delighted, and indeed the Wrights' own two young daughters were very loth to leave us for their bedtime!

Bunter would have been delighted too, but strange as it would seem to him, food is not everything. We enjoyed companionship and conversation in beautiful surroundings, we welcomed an opportunity of meeting Mr. Wright, and were interested in meeting several other guests including a very charming young lady from far away Japan.

Also there was a most interesting collection of relics of her famous Uncle. These included a sheet of handwritten manuscript done before he acquired the famous Remington, and a  $\frac{1}{2}$ d magazine of 1896 containing a love story written by Mr. Hamilton under his own name. Interesting too were some family photographs, and a very fine drawing done by our hostess herself as a girl, showing her uncle reclining on a settee before an evening out at the Theatre. There was also a roulette playing card issued many years ago by the Casino at Monte Carlo. But had Mr. Quelch seen this latter in the possession of Smithy or Bunter, the gimlet eye would have glistened, and he would have grasped a cane in a firm and businesslike way!

Very appropriately several copies of the Magnet and other old books were displayed, including our customary Anniversary number, (this month, Magnet No. 723, dated 17.12.21), and a Collectors' item, BFL No. 862, dated 15.12.17.

Some long standing customs of our Club were observed also. There was that enormous and scrumptious pork pie, there were two bottles of "Mrs. Mible's Pop," generously donated by members, and as is her excellent custom on red letter occasions, Winifred Partridge had done us a very fine and appropriate poster. All

present signed this along the margins, and the poster was then presented to and received with much appreciation by, Mrs. Hamilton Wright.

Naturally the time just whizzed by. After Auld Lang Syne our warmest thanks were expressed to our hosts, and Ivan Webster presented a lovely bouquet of flowers to Mrs. Hamilton Wright on our behalf.

EDWARD DAVEY  
Chairman

### NORTHERN

#### Meeting held Saturday, 11 January, 1969

"Another rolling year..." and at this first meeting of 1969 the Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, had good wishes for all members. Thirteen were present and Bill Williamson had called at the Library Session and left. Bill, since our last meeting, has been in hospital for an operation, but, we are glad to say, is home again and making good progress.

The minutes of the December party were read by the Secretary, and Gerry Allison gave his financial report and then news from postal members. These included Dennis Hillier, Bill Thurbon and Cliff Smith. Gerry had, on loan, a copy of "The Swoop" an early book by P.G. Wodehouse, now extremely rare, and he read a short extract; later in the meeting, Jack Allison read a further chapter to us, and we were very amused to hear how the Boy Scouts saved England during an invasion!

A general discussion followed about the Cliff House stories without mention of Greyfriars, and from Geoffrey, news of a local press which is re-printing very old books by photographic methods.

Members were then arranged in a Circle and we reverted to the "Party" atmosphere as Jack Allison introduced his card game left over from last month. Basically, this was "Happy Families" but Jack had made 100 cards with groups of hobby persons and things. Soon we were asking each other politely (more or less!) "Have you a Cream Bun from Bunter's Haul?" or "Do you happen to have Joe Banks from 'The Fraternity'?" Tom Roach was the final winner with 4 families to his credit.

Our Chairman has been broadcasting on Radio Leeds, and we now heard a recording of his interview on Boxing Day. The topic was mainly on the Christmas Annuals, and Geoffrey made special mention of how in the old days the Christmas theme was much more emphasised. He had taken copies of some, and some Christmas numbers with him to the studio. It was a very interesting item, and we broke into a

clap as Geoffrey's recorded voice concluded

Refreshments had been partaken during the game, and now it was time to close; the time having flown and we had to hold over again a Team Crossword by Gerry for future enjoyment

Next Meeting Saturday, 8 February 1969.

M. L. ALLISON

Hon. Sec.

### LONDON

The first meeting of 1969 took place at "Friardale" in the charming old world village of Ruislip alias Rylcombe on Sunday, January 19th. A beautiful winter's day, an ideal run on the "Metro" from Baker Street of happy detective memories. Thus with the car travellers, there were 21 present plus the three junior Acramans. Regret that Len, Josie and Charlie were all indisposed, unable to attend. Best wishes to all three for complete recovery.

Increased business reported by Roger Jenkins re the Hamilton library; reason given was the advent of the magnificent new catalogue. 1,500 books loaned out in 1968 from the Nelson Lee Library, per information given by Bob Blythe. More E.S. Brooks' manuscripts shown by Bob proved that the former wrote for "Champion," "Western Weekly," and "Rover." One of the stories featured was "A Zulu Against the Redskins." Bob also mentioned the name of Kenton Steele. Does anyone know about this boys' paper detective?

Brian Doyle had recorded an interview with Mr. C. H. Chapman and this was played over and enjoyed by the gathering. Bill Hubbard rendered a fine talk entitled "Comments on a Namesake." Hamiltonian, Eric Lawrence, conducted a Cryptic Nelson Lee Quiz. The winner was that staunch Leeite, Reuben Godsave.

Continuing on the subject of Nelson Lee, Ben Whiter rendered a talk on Ezra Quirke, "The Schoolboy Magician," illustrating it with the bound series that is in the club's library.

The third Sunday in April was fixed for the 21st. Anniversary meeting. Details of this will be communicated to all members.

Excellent catering by Betty and Bob Acraman added to the great success of the meeting. Finally, in the unavoidable absence of Len, it was the good old Don who occupied the chair.

The Annual General meeting will be held at Bob Blythe's home on Sunday, February 16th when it is hoped all members who can do so will attend.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

VERY GOOD PRICES PAID FOR NOVELS: By GUNBY HADATH - Blue Berets, Happy Go Lucky, Paying The Price, Sparrow Gets Going, St. Palfry's Cross, The Atom, The Big Five, The House That Disappeared, The Men of the Maquis, Twenty Good Ships, Wonder Island. By JOHN MOWBRAY - Feversham's Brother, Feversham's Fag, Something Like a Hero, The Frontier Mystery, The Megeve Mystery, The Strongest Chap in the School.

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# THE SCARLET BUTTERFLY



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