

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.
23



THE HAUNTED SCHOOL!

Nº
267



2 1/3

THE HOUSE-MASTER ADVANCED INTO THE APERTURE OF THE WALL!

(A Thrilling Scene in the Mysterious Lamp. Complete School-Story contained in this Number.)

M
A
R
C
H

1
9
6
9

Collectors' Digest

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 123

No. 267

MARCH 1969

Price 2s 3d

The Man of the Wheel.

WHAT MAKES US TICK?

There is nothing unusual in people collecting. Almost everything under the sun, from tram-tickets to railway engines are accumulated and gloated over by folks who seem to be blessed with at least average intelligence. Some do it for the sheer love of collecting. Others do it as an investment.

I was reading somewhere the other day that people who collect old boys' papers do it in an effort to regain their lost youth, or, at least, in an effort to cling on to that youth.

I suppose there is some truth in every generalisation, but I think there is very little in this one. For every person who actually collects the old papers, there are probably about fifty who are deeply interested without

collecting. Are all C.D. readers holding out yearning hands towards their boyhood?

For many of us, youth is far too distant for us to be tilting at the windmills of our boyhood. Plenty of others, among our numbers, are still enjoying their own youth.

Many of us were with C.D. when it started 22 years back. We

were, obviously, 22 years nearer to our own youth than. But the enthusiasm has never waned, and the numbers joining in have increased with every passing year. It is amazing that this should be so. It is now nearly 30 years since the last Magnets and Gems were on show in the shops, and a good deal longer for many of the other papers. Yet, as they drift farther and farther into the past, the interest in them increases.

The reason, probably, is obvious - and it is nothing at all to do with yearning for one's youth. There is a marked national trend for yearning hands to stretch - not towards a lost youth but towards anything pre-war. Items of Edwardian and late Victorian origin are sought far and wide. Audiences flock to revivals in the theatre; old films on TV, despite the constant sneers of the lofty critics, enjoy an enormous popularity.

It is not lost youth that we mourn over - but lost England. Because the England, which even the comparatively young of today knew, is gradually but positively disappearing for ever, and there is nothing we can do about it, we grasp at those items which were part of the land which we loved.

Roaring inflation has made thrift a waste of time. Giant towns have eaten up miles of the countryside where we once rambled; massive roads have swept away the winding lanes and the thatched cottages which gave charm to our land even so little as twenty years ago; skyscrapers and supermarkets and takeover bids and screaming traffic and undisciplined youngsters who look like invaders from another planet overwhelm us and bewilder us.

Amidst the din of air and road traffic, the vice, the violence, the constant greed and grab, we sigh - not for our youth but for the quieter age we find between the pages of the old stories. The whole character of our land has changed and will go on changing - faster and faster - till there is nothing left to love but memories.

The old papers give soothing balm to our hearts which ache, not for our lost youth but for a lost England.

DEATH OF A LEE FAN

While, as I indicate above, passing time brings us more and more friends who are attracted to the hobby, it also carries away others in its wake. Reg Sanderson was a keen Lee fan, and, a few years back we published a number of interesting articles from his pen. He died recently after a very brave fight with serious illness. We have received the following touching letter from his

widow, Mrs. Emma Sanderson:

"It is my sad duty to inform you of the death of my dear husband at the early age of 54. He was one of your readers, and a very keen Nelson Lee fan. For many long weary months he has fought a losing battle against lung cancer, and, being bed-ridden for most of the time, he passed many a lonely hour, reading his C.D. and his C.D. Annual. Some years ago he wrote a few letters to you, some of which were printed in C.D.

In his boyhood, he was an enthusiastic Nelson Lee reader. How he looked forward to the beginning of each month and to the arrival of his C.D. had to be seen to be believed. Thank you for giving, through your magazine, so many hours of pleasure to such a brave and sick man."

Readers all over the world will join with me in expressing deep sympathy to Mrs. Sanderson in her great loss.

THOSE COLLECTORS

I have spoken before about what people collect. Some time ago I referred to an offer I had from a Scottish Town Council of steam-rollers. But I think the oddest of the lot has come to hand this week. Someone in Staffordshire writes that he has a bottle of Bass Old Crown Ale, bottled in 1902. He says it is not fit to drink - but will I please tell him what it is worth.

RICHMAL CROMPTON

There were "no flowers, by request" when Miss Crompton died. But she had always taken great interest in the Mission to Lepers, and suggested that, at her death, money which might have been spent on flowers should be sent to this good cause. Her cousin, Canon Robin Lamburn, runs the Leper Mission at Rufifi, Tanzania. Collectors' Digest has sent a donation to Canon Lamburn's leper fund, in grateful memory of a wonderful writer. If any reader would care to send a donation, and even a few shillings would be helpful to the cause, letters and donations can be sent to THE U.S.P.G., (for the Canon Lamburn Mission), 15, Tufton St., London, S.W.1. or direct to Canon Lamburn c/o the Post Office, Mohoro, DAR-ES-SALAAM, TANZANIA.

NEWLY-LITERATE! NOT SEMI-ILLITERATE!

Last month, in this column, we glanced critically at a report we had published on a talk given to our Midland Club by Mr. Bill Morgan. Mr. Morgan has written us as follows:

"Regarding the precis of my talk to the Midland O.B.B.C. signed by Jack Bellfield and commented on by you may I make the following observations:

I am not guilty of using the phrase "long-winded prolixity" (too prolix for me). I used the words "leisurely," "comfortable" "relaxed" and the like.

The term "semi-illiterate" I also repudiate. I said "newly-literate" i.e. "Recently having acquired the facility to read." No reference to unteachables or untaught was intended. My contention was that Frank Richards' entire technique, not only his leisurely pace but his method of dealing with mysteries, his keeping abreast with the best of modern boys' ideas and tastes and a host of other touches made him the writer par excellence for boys just discovering the new world of reading. The period referred to was not strictly Edwardian but pre 1919. I agree that semi-illiterates are by no means unique to that period. Certainly semi-articulates are not. Agreed too, that the former were unlikely cash customers for the Magnet.

I started the Magnet with No. 10 and C.D. with No. 141. Both opened new vistas for me.

I am particularly enjoying (selfishly) "The Swell of St. Jim's" as it is of my golden age of uncritical reading. "

Many thanks to Bill Morgan for his kind letter.

THE EDITOR

 CASH OFFERED for any of the following: MAGNET 958; ROOKWOOD SOLS 170, 202, 224, 296; CEDAR CREEK 4d Boys' Friend Libraries 417, 465, 469, 473, 497, 509; ROVERS 718, 719, 726, 727, 732, 742, 758; CHAMPIONS 726-835; COMICS years 1934-1939; SKIPPERS, WIZARDS, ADVENTURES years 1936-39; NOSEY PARKERS COMIC (1936 ROVER SUPPLEMENT).

P. J. HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, KINGS HEATH, NORTHAMPTON NN5 7LQ

 VOL. 1 and 2 of "FRAGMENTS" 1919 (Comic Journal Ed. by B. Bairnsfather) 50 copies - £2. 15 copies "NEW ILLUSTRATED" 1919 11/- . Postage on both items.

L. MORLEY, 76, ST. MARGARET'S ROAD, HANDWELL W.7.

 The Jester 1930 - 34. 30/- per good copy offered.

Please write: F. WESTWOOD, 9 CHEVIOT CLOSE, CHADDERTON, LANCs.

DANNY'S DIARY

MARCH 1919

The masters' strike has come to an end in the Rookwood series in the Boys' Friend, and it was grand reading all the way, even though it fizzled out just a bit at the end. This month's first tale was "Stormy Times" in which a new master, Mr. Whibbs, turned out to be a secret drinker. The next two stories were excellent, and were entitled "The Master With a Past" and "Schoolmaster and Cracksman." Mr. Bootles recognized Mr. Egerton as a man concerned in a robbery at a school in the north. Bootles tried to warn the Head, who refused to take any notice. Finally, the old masters succeeded in trapping the crook, but Dr. Chisholm was not particularly grateful.

The last story in the strike series was "Jimmy Silver's Campaign" in which Jimmy sets to work to get rid of all the new staff, who are a weird lot. Then the old staff offered to come back, and the Head welcomed them with open arms at last.

Final Rookwood story is terrific. A new boy "Putty of the Fourth" comes to Rookwood, and he is a practical joker. His name is Teddy Grace, and he is named Putty "because he is so soft."

This month my brother Doug has had a Sexton Blake Library named "The Station Master's Secret." He let me read it, and I think it extremely good.

Two giant new airships have had their trials this month. They are the R.33 and the R.34. There is also a new newspaper. It is called "The Daily Herald," and Mum bought No. 1 to see what it was like. George Robey is in the Honours' List just announced. The Grand National was won by a horse called "Poethlyn."

The Magnet has been pretty good this month, and at the end of the month it was announced that Mr. Hinton was back in his old job as editor of the Companion Papers.

The first yarn of the month was "When Rogues Fall Out." It was a sequel to last month's "Black Sheep of Highcliffe" in which Ponsonby of Highcliffe and Skinner & Co of Greyfriars had bets on a football match in which Greyfriars played Lantham Ramblers. The stakes were held by Spencer, a Highcliffe prefect - who spent the £15 placed in his hands as bets. This was a good serious tale, showing the slackness of Highcliffe.

Next came "Standing by Snoop" in which Lord Mauleverer lost £10, and Snoop was suspected of stealing it. Wally Bunter backed up Snoop. The £10 was not lost at all - it had been left in a

jacket which Mauly sent to his tailor's for repair.

In "Wally's Wheeze," Snoop planned to increase the money he had saved. He intended to place a bet on a horse with Mr. Lodgey. But Wally took a hand, with the assistance of Wibley. A fairish tale, though not very original in plot.

"Hoskins' Chance" was a winner, though it did not introduce the Bunter changeover business. Hoskins had composed a Victory March, and he thought that Messrs. Blimper would pay him £250 for it. It turned out that Blimper's had to be paid £50 for publishing the march, which was awkward for Hoskins, as he had run into debt on the strength of his expectations.

Final of the month was a wash-out. It was "Giants at Grips" in which Wingate challenges St. Jim's to one of those tedious sports tournaments. It is made all the more silly by the arrival of a new boy in the Sixth, Wilding, who decides to become captain of Greyfriars in Wingate's place.

There has been rather a terrible affair in an army camp near Rhyl. There was a riot among Canadian soldiers who were there awaiting their return home, and 12 men were killed and many injured.

An aeroplane has flown from Folkestone to Paris, doing the 172 miles in 74 minutes. A record time. Such wonderful things make one wonder what is going to happen next.

The Gem has been tip-top this month. "Bunter's Fund," in which Billy Bunter got up a fund for a "fourth-former down on his luck" - and tricked Tom Merry & Co into backing him up - was amusing. This was followed, during the next fortnight, with two real winners in which Bunter tried out his ventriloquism at St. Jim's. The stories were "Bunter on the Warpath" and "The Haunted School." I really chortled over these two.

"The Rival Entertainers" was a step down - an auntie-climacks after recent weeks. The Fourth and the Shell put on rival "Victory Concerts" in aid of the hospital.

Last of the month was "Bunter the Billionaire." Bunter had faked a letter from a very rich grandfather. To his surprise, the very rich grandfather turns up at St. Jim's - and then, to the surprise of the very rich grandfather, another very rich grandfather arrives. Passably amusing, my dear Tinker.

There is a new serial in the Magnet called "Goggs - Grammarian." I find it a bit grim.

At the end of the month we put the clocks on one hour. It was a bit early, I think. It makes it dark in the mornings until the days pull out a bit.

There is a new serial at one of our cinemas. It is called "Maciste." There have been some good pictures on this month. We saw Jack Pickford and Louise Huff in "Mile-a-Minute Kendall;" Charles Ray in "Playing the Game;" Florence Turner and Henry Edwards in "A Welsh Singer;" W. S. Hart in "The Tiger Man;" Cecil B. DeMille sent us an exciting film called "The Whispering Chorus," which starred Kathlyn Williams. Constance Talmadge was in "Up the Road with Sally," and Enid Bennett was a lion-tamer in "The Biggest Show on Earth." They were all very good.

There is a trend in the cinemas which I don't much like. They call it the double-feature programme. It means there are two long pictures instead of one long one with a lot of short ones like the serials and the Keystones. I hope it won't go on. For one thing, I like the short pictures; for another the second feature in a double-feature programme is often no good.

Apparently there is a law by which there has to be a half-hour gap between programmes in a continuous performance. Some nut in parliament has pointed out that the cinemas are breaking the law by not emptying the cinemas during this half-hour. It's very silly. Who wants to go out for half-an-hour in the middle of an entertainment? They call it the Ventilation Act.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: It has often been noted that Pentelow's Greyfriars Gallery ran to a hundred articles, while the similar feature in the Gem only covered 41 characters. Danny mentions this month that Hinton returned to the editor's chair in March 1919. The St. Jim's Gallery finished abruptly at the same time. It is hard to think that the two events were not related.)

SALE OR EXCHANGE: Magnets, Wharton Rebel (1932); ditto (1925) in 3 S.O.Ls. Magnets 960-970 India Series (£3.10s.); 1092-1107 Hollywood Series (£5) + postage.

38 ST. THOMAS RD., PRESTON

WANTED: Boys Favourite Library (monthly) published 1948 to mid 1950s. Also Boys Thriller Library same dates. Also required "Modern Boys," any quantity. Will buy or exchange 1500 "Magnets" for the above.

M. FOLLOWS, 44, FRANK STREET, LEICESTER.

SALE: 30 Wizards 1923/27. All complete and in good trim.
V. SMITH, 9 MELROSE AVENUE, DIDSBURY, MANCHESTER 20.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

EARLY STRUGGLES
THE "BOY'S FRIEND"

By Bob Blythe (continued)

Fleet St. May 27th,
 1910

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of your letter of yesterday's date. I am glad that you have got your MS back, and shall await your next communication with interest.

Regarding the tale itself, I gave it a careful reading almost as soon as it came in. I like the style in which the story was written but the subject of "Among the Solar Planets" is too much against it. From previous experience I know perfectly well that such stories are not appreciated by my boys and if I may say so I consider your yarn better suited for publication in book form than serially. In my opinion the highly imaginative style of fiction is quite unsuited for the working class boy.

I am sorry not to be able to make use of "Among the Solar Planets" but I should like to see something else from you. It is more satisfactory to me if authors will submit synopses in advance of the actual copy.

Yours faithfully, etc.

Taking advantage of the last paragraph E.S.B. suggested a circus story. The editor asked for a synopsis and as a result Brooks wrote the following.

Stoneham Parva, June 1st, 1910.

Dear Sir,

Many thanks for yours of the 30th ult.

I am gratified to note that you are desirous of seeing the synopsis of the circus story which I referred to in my last letter, and that you are of the opinion that the topic is a very promising one. Accordingly I now have pleasure in handing you in synopsis chapter five to last of "Caravan and Canvas." As I had already written the first four chapters I am enclosing these in preference to reducing them to synopsis form, especially as, in their entirety, they will, I think, give you a very good idea of what the finished story will be like. If, as I hope, the tale appeals to you, I could let you have the remaining ten chapters in completed form in about a fortnight's time for final consideration.

I thank you for the attention which you are giving to the matter of the lost MS., and note that you will let me hear from you

again in regard to it when you have been able to trace the cause of the miscarriage.

Faithfully Yours, etc.

On the 10th of June the editor acknowledged receipt and promised to read it. However on the 20th. Edwy jumped the gun somewhat as this letter shows.

Stoneham Parva, June 21st, 1910.

Dear Sir,

I have pleasure in handing you herewith the remaining chapters of my "Caravan and Canvas." The MS was completed on Saturday, and as I have not heard from you regarding the first four chapters I thought it as well to let have the whole, completed story in your hands as quickly as possible.

It is 53,000 words in length. I trust it may strike you favourably. I shall await your decision expectantly.

Faithfully yours, etc.

Once again he was to be disappointed but the editor's (Arthur Marshall) letter contained the germ that was to make him one of the A.P.'s. most popular authors - he invited him to come to Fleet St. for a chat. It was on this occasion, E.S.B. told us, that the editor at first thought he was one of his readers, he was so young!

Fleet St. 24th June, 1910.

Dear Sir,

I have given your story "Caravan and Canvas" a most careful reading and though as it stands it is not quite acceptable for use in the "Boys' Friend" you are very near to our requirements and I can assure you that with so many boys' papers we are always looking for new authors.

I am not returning your MS nor going into details regarding it in this letter because I am wondering if you will have anything to bring you to town in the near future. I could tell you so much more of our requirements and where you miss the point in a short chat and should be only too pleased to make an appointment to see you on any day except a Saturday.

If, however, you find you have nothing to bring you to town I will then return your story with a detailed criticism.

Yours faithfully, etc.

And that seemed to be that, as far as this story was concerned. As we know he later offered it to "Chums" who also turned it down, but it was eventually published in 1912 in No. 200 of the "Boys Friend Library." Edwy accepted the invitation to visit the editor with alacrity.

Stoneham Parva, 25th June, 1910.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

I am much obliged to you for your nice letter of the 24th inst. from which I am glad to learn that "Caravan and Canvas" at all events comes very near to your requirements.

With regards to your suggestion that I should come and see you I shall be only too pleased to do this, as I am quite in agreement with you that a personal interview would be far more satisfactory than any amount of letter writing; and, moreover, I am anxious to save you any unnecessary trouble.

As far as I know at present there will be nothing to bring me to town for the next two weeks, but at the expiration of that time, my parents, with whom I reside, are taking up their abode in London. So that I shall be coming up to town for good in a fortnight, and, unless it will inconvenience you to leave the matter in abeyance for that length of time, I shall be able to see you on or about July 11th. Please let me know, and I will then arrange a definite appointment with you later. I am, Dear Sir, etc.

After an acknowledgement by Marshall E.S.B. moved to London and lost no time in arranging a meeting.

(This article will be continued next month)

- - - - -

A MATTER OF CHARACTER

by R. J. Godsave

It is a frequent complaint that some characters are introduced by authors with a certain amount of flourish, only to be relegated to the background, and in some cases never mentioned again.

Those never heard of again are usually those who serve their purpose in a particular incident. One can bring to mind Mr. Rodney Briggs, who was Headmaster of Beechwood College, the school the Hon. Douglas Singleton bought in o.s. 246 "Singleton's Rival School" of the Nelson Lee Library. With the collapse of the building due to the River Stowe overflowing its banks Mr. Briggs made his exit, never to be heard of again.

Generally speaking, a new boy dominated the series in which he was introduced, and thereafter was heard of only infrequently. Ernest Lawrence is a case in point. His arrival at St. Frank's heralded an unusually lengthy series which also introduced Mr. Smale Foxe, the temporary Housemaster of the College House. This

was a fine series with Lawrence showing his prowess as a boxer. Little was heard of Lawrence after this series.

In contrast, Reginald Pitt and Cecil DeValerie, apart from dominating their introductory series, continued to be leading lights in the St. Frank's saga. Both were guilty of vicious conduct in their early days. Having sunk to the depths of school-boy wickedness and risen to the general level of good behaviour indicates strength of character.

It is inevitable that those of a weaker character should serve a passing moment, whilst those of a dominant character are to the fore.

One would have thought the characters created by an author would become part of him or her, and impossible to forget. In answer to a correspondent in "Between Ourselves" which appeared in "The St. Frank's April Fools" No. 152 New series, Brooks states that he cannot remember a Sixth-Former named Jesson in his stories, and asked his correspondent if he could tell him the number and date of the last story in which his name was mentioned.

This lack of memory is in itself surprising, as Jesson took a leading role in some of the old series of the Nelson Lee. His appearance on the front cover of No. 233 "Barring Out the Bully" in which he was tarred and feathered by the rebel Removites during the Howard Martin rebellion series confirms this point.

Possibly the build-up of new characters in the later Lees could have caused Brooks to devote his energies to the newcomers and at the same time forgetting the old.

FOR SALE: COLLECTORS' MISCELLANY collection from No. 1 (April 1928) to Nov. 1953 (77 copies) £4. STORY PAPER COLLECTOR collection from Jan-March 1941 to Jan 1966 (97 copies) including title pages, contents and index for 3 vols) £5. COLLECTORS' DIGEST collection as follows: 1947 (Feb missing) 12/-. 1948 (Jan and March missing) 12/-. 1949 (Jan missing) 12/-. 1954 (March missing) 12/-. All other years complete from 1950 till 1964 at 12/- per year. Also 9 issues of 1965 plus 3 issues of 1966: 12/-. GIRLS OWN ANNUAL Vols 1, 2, 3, 7, 18 (nice clean condition) selling at 8/6 each to anyone taking them all. POSTAGE EXTRA on all sales.

MISS D. HARRIS, "GORDON," CAROLINE RD., LLANDUDNO.

WANTED: THOMSONS, certain MAGNETS 1000 - 1360, BULLSEYES, N. LEE
(first ser) No. 160. FEW MAGNETS, BULLSEYES for exchange.
SUTTON, 41 SWALECLIFF AVE., MANCHESTER M23 9DN.

DRAWING TOWARDS ITS CLOSE. This story, written well over sixty years ago, was the very first to introduce Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to St. Jim's. As a new boy, he was different in many ways from the lovable character whom we were to know and love later on. Collectors' Digest has lifted a dusty curtain and taken you back to an almost-forgotten age.

THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S

"What are we going to do this afternoon?" said Blake on Saturday.

It was a half-holiday, and the chums of Study No. 6 were considering their plans. The four of them were putting their heads together upon the subject, for by this time Arthur Augustus was tacitly admitted to a share in the fellowship of the study. He had been little more than a week at St. Jim's, but he had already dropped a good deal of his nonsense, and was beginning to see things more sensibly. Nothing would ever cure him of his dandyism, probably, but that was not a crime so long as it was kept within bounds. And he had learned to take good naturedly the fun the boys were never tired of poking at him. And, strange as it may seem, he was in the way of becoming popular in the School House.

Perhaps his liberality in money matters had a little to do with it. Not, of course, so far as Blake and his chums were concerned. But a good many of the boys were willing to forgive a lot to a fellow who could, and would, stand unlimited treat at the school tuck-shop. And Arthur Augustus's devoted relations kept him well supplied with pocket-money; he had, in fact, much more than was good for a boy of his age.

"No footer this afternoon," continued Blake. "The ground ain't fit. And there's no chance of a row with Figgins & Co., because they're gone out. I saw them go."

"That's rotten!" said Herries. "I should like to raid another of their giddy rehearsals. What a silly ass Wynn looked, got up as the ghost of Hamlet's governor! I say, what do you say to a visit to the Den?"

"Bit chilly this weather," said Digby.

"Oh, if you're afraid of the cold you can stay at home and get into the oven!"

"I'm not afraid of the cold, fathead! It will be damp in the Den too."

"Oh, wrap yourself up in cotton-wool and have done with it!"

"What's the Den?" asked D'Arcy. "I have nevah heard of it."

"Of course you haven't," said Blake. "It's a secret retreat. It's up on Castle-hill, and out of bounds. That's the charm of it."

"Bai Jovel! How did you discovah it?" "We discovered some Third Form fags there one day. They had gone there to smoke cigarettes on the sly," explained Blake. "Thought themselves no end doggish. We boxed their ears and kicked them out, and appropriated the place. Now it's our den. We'll go there, chaps, and show it to D'Arcy. We can take some grub along."

"Vewy good ideal!" said D'Arcy. "Let me stand tweek. You chaps have been awfully good to me. And I had a fiver from my aunt to-day."

"Bless your aunt!" said Blake. "I wish I had a few like her. What do you say, kids - shall D'Arcy stand a feast?"

Herries and Digby promptly agreed, and the four immediately adjourned to the tuck-shop. There D'Arcy made purchases that opened the eyes of the chums. They were accustomed to limited pocket-money, but D'Arcy "blew" his fiver like a millionaire. Every good thing the school tuck-shop provided - and a good many bad ones - D'Arcy gathered in, and, when he had finished, a big basket was crammed with the purchases.

"Come along," said Blake: "we'll carry that basket in turns. It will be lighter coming home - that's one comfort. Allons donc."

The quartette set off. They left St. Jim's behind, and followed the footpath through the wood, crossed a stretch of

moorland, and came in sight of the ruined castle, which was a familiar landmark in the district. This was the uttermost limit of the bounds even on a half-holiday; but the chums kept on. Beyond the castle rose the Castlehill, and on its furzy side was the Den.

In one spot the hillside rose abruptly, so that climbing was a matter of some difficulty. There was a thick growth of bush and bramble, green enough in summer, but now dry and rusty. Through the thicket went the path to the Den. D'Arcy made a wry face as Blake led the way, pushing through the bushes. He was nervous for his immaculate attire. But there was no help for it now, and he followed Blake.

The path through the thicket was muddy and trampled. It ended at a place where the hill rose like the wall of a house, and there a wide opening appeared. It was a cleft running back some distance into the hill, and, overhead, masses of vegetation formed a kind of roof, through which the sunlight thinly filtered.

Blake stopped breathless before the opening. He put down the basket he had been carrying to rest for a moment.

"That's the Den," he said.

"What a jolly place!" said D'Arcy. "I suppose you often have feasts up here in summer?"

"We hadn't found it out last summer," replied Digby. "Of course, it would be more jolly in summer. But it's all right. The chief charm about it is that it's a secret. No chance of any of the New House cads finding us here."

"Suppose they followed you some time?" Blake laughed.

"I wish they would," he said. "At the top of a steep path like this, one chap could keep a dozen from coming up. I'd like to see Figgins & Co. go for us here!"

"If Figgy knew anything about it," remarked Herries, "he would be more likely to get ahead of us and keep us out."

"Well, he doesn't know about it," answered Blake. "Figgy is smart but he doesn't know everything. Here goes! By Jove, this weighs something!"

He lifted the basket again and carried it into the Den.

His eyes, unaccustomed to the dimness within, failed to note anything unusual in

the aspect of the Den. He set the basket down. The next moment he gave a yell.

From the dimness sprang three forms, and he was seized and hurled forth in the twinkling of an eye.

He went with a crash right into the trio, who were following him into the Den.

The utter unexpectedness of the shock was too much for them; they simply went flying. Herries lost his footing and rolled headlong down the slope, and brought up in a mass of foul-smelling bushes a dozen yards down. Digby staggered backwards down the path, vainly clutching at nothingness to restore his balance. Blake fell on his back, and lay dazed, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy fell on top of him.

Three forms appeared in the opening. Three voices were raised in triumph.

"Hear us smile!"

"Who's cock-house now?"

The unexpected had happened. Figgins & Co. were on the spot.

Jack Blake jumped up in wrath. Before he was fairly on his feet a shove from Figgins sent him spinning down the slope. He crashed into Herries and rolled over in the damp bush. Kerr sent Arthur Augustus flying after him in a jiffy.

Again Figgins & Co. chortled joyously.

"Yah! Who's cock-house now, you cads?"

The chums picked themselves out of the bushes. Herries was smothered with mud; Digby was little better; and Blake was muddy from head to foot, had his collar torn out, and had lost his cap.

Arthur Augustus was on his knees, searching frantically for his eyeglass, which had become detached from the cord.

Blake stood on the path, and looked up the steep. At the mouth of the Den stood Figgins & Co., kissing their hands to the defeated School House juniors.

"My hats!" said Blake, breathing hard.

"This is a little bit too much!"

"I never dreamed they were there!" said Digby. "They must have found out the Den, and seen us coming, and laid in wait for us."

"The question is, how to get them out of it. They've got all our grub in there." Figgins waved his hand with mocking politeness.

"Many thanks for the basket!" he called out. "Going to have a little picnic, were

you? We are much obliged."

"Extremely!" said Wynn.

"Wathawi!" chimed in Kerr.

"Run away and play, like good little boys!" continued Figgins. "Don't you know that this hill is out of bounds, and it would make your kind teachers angry to know you were here? Run away and wash yourselves!"

"Give us our grub, you measly bounder!" said Herries wrathfully.

"Can't; we want it ourselves. Open the basket, Kerr, and see what's inside!"

Kerr obeyed. Blake and his comrades

looked at each other in silent wrath.

"My giddy Aunt Maria!" exclaimed Kerr. "Here's a feast! Cold chicken, ham and tongue, pork pies, jam tarts, apple dumpling, red currant wine, soda water! The bounders were going to do themselves very well this journey!"

"To the victors the spoils!" said Figgins serenely. "Gimme the soda water; it may come in useful here. You're a carver, Fatty; carve the chicken."

"Right you are, Figgy!"

"They're going to wolf our grub!" said Blake desperately. "Come on; we can't stand that!"



The chums of Study No. 6 scrambled desperately up the steep path.

"Ware, Kids!" called out Figgins. "Shoulder to shoulder, New House!"

The Co. sprang promptly to back up their leader. Figgins had the syphon of soda water in his hands. He allowed the School House juniors to get within easy range, and then he directed a stream of soda water in to Blake's face. Blake gasped and choked, and Figgins turned the stream upon Arthur Augustus, catching him fairly in the neck.

When he considered that Herries had had his share, he turned his attention to Digby. Digby roared, as the

Figgins allowed the School House Juniors to get within easy range, and then directed a stream of soda-water full at them. Arthur Augustus caught it fairly in the neck.

stream caught him full in the face.

"Ow, you cadsi!"

Their reception might have daunted bold hearts, but the School House boys were seeing red just then. They came on fiercely; but the disadvantages of the attack were too great.

The path was so steep that it was not easy to keep their balance and Figgins & Co. had only to shove them from above.

Herries soon went rolling down through the wet bushes, and he was a pitiable object when he reached the bottom of the slope. Blake, with a desperate bound, flung himself upon Figgins, and bore him backwards into the Den. Digby tried to follow his example, but he was clutched by Kerr and Wynn, and sent flying. D'Arcy, who was coming on behind, met him in full career, and both of them went rolling down together.

Blake had gained the Den, but his last state was worse than his first, for Figgins struggled with him till the Co. came to his help, and then the three of them pinned Blake to the ground.

"Surrender!" panted Figgins. "Give in, you silly cuckoo!"

"Rats!"

"Hold him tight!" said Figgins. "By Jove, what a catamount he is!"

"Yah, you cadsi! Give us our grub!"

"He wants his grub." said Figgins, as the Co. sat on Blake, and allowed their chief to jerk himself free from the School House leader. "He wants his giddy grub. He's had his soda water, but he's greedy, and wants his grub, too. We'll let him have it - some of it."

He picked a jam tart from the basket, and flattened it in Blake's face.

"Oh - ooh - you beast!"

"Well, you asked for it. Anything to be obliging. Now you shall have a marmalade tart if you are a good boy."

"I - I - oh - yah - beast!"

The marmalade tart was jammed upon his mouth, effectually silencing him.

"Now for some wine!" said Figgins.

"You can't drink our healths just now, so you must take it externally. Say when!"

He began to pour one of the bottles of red currant wine on Blake's head. The unfortunate junior struggled and yelled.

"Say when!" repeated Figgins. "By

Moses, he wants it all! Well, he can have it; there's plenty more for us."

He emptied the bottle. Blake was looking a deplorable object by this time, but he was still struggling.

"Obstinate pig!" said Figgins. "He won't be quiet. Luckily, there's plenty of wine. I'll start with a fresh bottle." The threat was too much for Blake.

"Here, chuck it!" he exclaimed. "Don't be a beast!"

"Do you surrender, then?"

"No - yes!"

"We've got the whip-hand now!" chuckled Figgins. "I thought we'd make you sit up for that pea-shooting business. You wouldn't make it pax unless we caved in. This is where we make you sing small. Are you sorry you interrupted that rehearsal?"

"No."

"Very well. Where's that blessed corkscrew!"

"Yes," exclaimed Blake. "I mean, yes!"

"Ah, I thought you did. Don't you think we are jolly good actors, all of us?"

"No - yes!"

"Will you promise to be a good little boy in future if we let you go?"

"Hang you - no!"

The contents of the second bottle descended in a steady stream into Blake's face. He opened his mouth to expostulate, and it was filled in a moment. He gurgled and choked and gasped. The stream suddenly stopped.

"Now," said Figgins, "will you be a good little boy if we let you go?"

"Oh, my aunt, yes!"

"Chuck him out, chaps!"

So Blake was "chucked out." Herries and Digby were scrambling up the path again, and Blake landed upon them. In a few moments the three found themselves at the bottom of the slope, without exactly knowing how they got there. Blake staggered up.

There was a shout of laughter from the Den. Blake looked up. Figgins, Wynn, and Kerr were seated in the opening, feasting royally upon the contents of the basket.

"Hear us smile!" shouted Figgins, with his mouth full. "Yah! Who scores this time?"

Blake and his comrades looked weakly at one another, and without a word turned their faces towards St. Jim's, and stole silently away.

It was one to the New House, with a
vengeance!

(THERE WILL BE ANOTHER INSTALMENT NEXT
MONTH)

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 132. BUNTER - and BUNTER

Fifty years ago Danny was enjoying the series where Billy Bunter and Wally Bunter changed places. This was one of the occasions when Charles Hamilton employed the "doubles" theme, and, though, on the face of it, the whole thing was incredible, it was handled so well that it provided fine entertainment for the reader in its earlier stages.

It was also the first instance of what Roger Jenkins has called "twin series" - in which the plot was played out at both Greyfriars and St. Jim's, with the Magnet and the Gem being synchronised.

Of necessity, the foundation for the series was laid at Greyfriars, so that three stories were written in preparation in the Magnet before the Gem joined in. Taken as a whole, the series occupied 18 weeks in the Magnet, and 15 in the Gem, though some of the tales during this period did not deal with the actual "doubles" plot.

It is my opinion that the Gem had the better part of the arrangement. On the whole, the Gem stories in the series were superior to those in the Magnet, and the reason for this was that Billy Bunter went to St. Jim's. Nowhere in the entire range of Hamiltonia is the importance of Billy Bunter as a valuable Hamilton asset more obvious than here.

There was no outstanding characterisation at all in Wally Bunter. Apart from his plumpness, which was not used for humour in his case, he was a very ordinary, somewhat stodgy youth, whose conversation and outlook were rather old for his years. There was fine fun while the Greyfriars fellows, assuming Wally to be Billy, received many surprises. But once it was assumed that 'Billy' had all the attributes which the fellows had thought him lacking, that particular phase was squeezed dry, and Wally, as a decent sportsman, and accepted as such, had to be used for other purposes. So, after the early stories in the series, it all developed into run-of-the-mill stuff until the time came for Billy to return to Greyfriars.

The choice of Snoop as the character to co-star with Wally in one or two stories was not a particularly happy one. The very

name of Snoop was unbelievable, and he was inevitably a character who gave the average reader the itch.

But St. Jim's gained Billy Bunter, and in the Gem we had a number of outstanding stories in the series. Billy, taking advantage of the old-world courtesy of Gussy, was hilarious. Then, in what was possibly the best story in the series in either paper, Billy and Wally had to "change back" for one afternoon while Mr. Penman, Wally's benefactor, visited St. Jim's, so we had in a shorter but not less effective form, the joy of seeing Bunter surprising the natives at St. Jim's.

Billy Bunter, too, was a ventriloquist. In a couple of joyous Gems, he turned St. Jim's into a haunted school. It was a formula of inevitable success for any but those who had an aversion to the extravagance of such stories.

So, in my opinion at least, the Gem presented the best of this twin series while Charles Hamilton himself was writing.

There can hardly be any doubt that Hamilton planned the double series with Pentelow. During the run of the series there were two substitute tales in the Magnet as against six in the Gem. Pentelow wrote the yarn which landed the St. Jim's team at Greyfriars a man short, so that Wally could play for St. Jim's and impress Tom Merry & Co. The actual match was included in a Magnet story from Hamilton. In a couple or so other Gem tales in the series, Pentelow carried on with the theme.

Hamilton, surely, would have been wiser to have written all the Gem items, thus keeping the master finger on Billy. The substitute writers might not have shown up quite so much if they had been handling the more ordinary stuff which featured Wally in the Magnet.

All in all, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the series ran too long. Had it been restricted to about nine tales in the Magnet and six in the Gem, Hamilton could have written them all - and what an advantage that would have been!

It seems probable that the series may, in fact, have covered more time than Hamilton intended at the outset. It was extended by the insertion of substitute stories. Possibly this was deliberately done by the editor. But it was essential that the Magnet and Gem should both arrive at the end of the series at the same time, and, unless the editor had both final stories in hand, he may have had to do some manipulation.

Despite the series overstaying its welcome by a few weeks,

it is invaluable as showing the worth of Billy Bunter to his creator.

"I SEEM TO BE GETTING NOWHERE" writes W. O. G. Lofts

A chinaman jumped on a wooden horse on a roundabout. He paid his fare cheerfully each time the attendant came round. After ten rides he was heard to remark: "I seem to be going a long way and getting exactly nowhere." I feel something like that chinaman when I try to defend my "Lists of Authors of Substitute Stories" from yet another attack on them by Laurie Sutton.

So often I have tried to explain the great difficulty anyone meets in compiling a list of authors who wrote during the first world war; - a difficulty due to the racket that was going on owing to the editor buying up stories cheaply and re-writing them himself. It should be obvious to anyone that, under these circumstances, characteristics of Pentelow may be found in certain tales which, in the lists, are credited to other people.

I have never claimed that my lists are 100% correct. But they are as near to correct as was possible in the enormous task entailed.

With regard to Magnet 495 "On The Wrong Track," not only did E. S. Brooks write it according to the official book of records, but I have actually seen Brooks' signature over an official receipt of payment for writing it. It is quite possible that the story was altered by Pentelow, but that does not mean that he wrote it.

Clive Fenn wrote several times about his rejected story being carved up into six parts by Pentelow. I had no reason to doubt what Fenn alleged.

"The Greyfriars Pantomime" was not in my lists, simply because the records, like many others, were missing. I once sent a copy of the story to Brooks for perusal, and he replied to the effect that he did not write it. The tag "presumed sub" was given against a story in the lists when records of them could not be found. It might have caused a bigger outcry if I had said "presumed Hamilton." One cannot win, either way.

What puzzles me is that there were two glaring errors in the lists, confirmed by Roger Jenkins but apparently unnoticed by Laurie Sutton. Magnets 287 "Self Denial Week at Greyfriars" and 291 "Up Against It" were actually written by Chas. Hamilton. The errors happened because records were missing for that period, and

"experts" assured me that their data was correct.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Most readers will have found Mr. Lofts's lists, published in C.D. Annuals, of immense value. There is no blame attaching to Mr. Lofts for the fact that some mistakes crept in. In so gigantic a work, covering so many years, so many stories, and so many authors, and a war-time period when something of a racket was going on in the editorial office, it is to his credit that there were not more. But it is a surprise to learn that there was ever a doubt that "Self Denial Week" and "Up Against It" were anything but genuine stories.)

POSTSCRIPT FROM LAURIE SUTTON: In the Editorial Comment on my article "The Substitute Stories of J. N. Pentelow" the question is raised as to whether a literary analysis produces a result beyond the possibility of error. It certainly can in some cases, at least. If a schoolmaster had a class of boys, one only of whose spelling was of the Coker style, wouldn't this enable that boy to be infallibly identified? Similarly if one really knows the words and phrases that Pentelow uses in every one of his stories (quite distinct from any other author) plus a complete knowledge of his style one can be equally certain of identifying Pentelow.

The remark that "most of us" can tell the "feel" of a Pentelow story is not confirmed by my experience. It may be the case with a few of the "experts," but from conversations with many ordinary OBBC members at monthly London club meetings I am well aware that nearly all rely on guidance in picking out any sub stories, let alone identifying different authors.

GREYFRIARS SERIES TO BE RE-ISSUED

We understand that the end of April will bring a novel idea in reprints. Howard Baker Publications expect to issue, in one volume, a complete facsimile of 8 issues of the Magnet. The series selected is the Egypt Holiday Story of 1932. The reproduction will be identical with the original, but the paper will be of far better quality. Cost: 32/6, which seems very reasonable.

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.

BLAKIANA

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

NOTES AND NEWS ON THE BLAKIANA FRONT

A considerable time has elapsed since the last Sexton Blake paperback was issued, and, coupled with the irritating irregularity of publication in the past year or two, readers can be excused for wondering whether the great tec is at last on his way out. It seems that the hiatus has been caused by disorganisation due to Mayflower Dell, who originally published the paperbacks, being taken over by another firm. We are given to understand that, beginning in the late spring, the paperback versions of Sexton Blake adventures will once more appear. They will be issued by Howard Baker Publications on a regular monthly basis, and will (we are promised) be "the mixture as before" - that is, new stories for the most part, with the occasional classic included for lovers of vintage Blake.

The news is welcome, though many will hope that the reprinted classic will not be quite so "occasional" as it was after the last similar promise. So far as we can recall, there was only just the one lonely classic - the Bismarck Memoirs tale - among the series of 45 Blake tales put out by Mayflower Dell.

While on the subject of those paperbacks, the series from No. 11 till No. 45 inclusive appears entire on the Howard Baker Publishers' list, so it would seem that anyone needing certain copies to complete a set can get those copies, if within the run of serial numbers mentioned, by sending to Howard Baker Publishers Ltd., 47 Museum St., London W.C.1. The paperbacks cost 3/6 each. Remember to include postage.

Plans are afoot to produce Blake in hard-back for Libraries. All these stories will be original. The first book in this hard-cover edition is entitled DRIVEN TO KILL by Rex Dolphin, and it is due to appear in late February. The price is 16/-. Advance publicity tells us that it is a genuine thriller of the "old school." Just exactly what that means you will find out when you buy the book in due course.

In addition, the Fifth Sexton Blake Omnibus will be published in April 1969. This one contains the two stories "EVERY MAN AN ENEMY" by W. Howard Baker, and "MURDER ON THE MONTE" by Ross

Richards. These two yarns were reviewed in C.D. when they first appeared. The 5th Omnibus costs 18/-. Still available are the 3rd and 4th Omnibuses at 12/6 each. The 1st and 2nd Omnibuses are out of print.

- - - - -

THAT ARTICLE IN THE TV TIMES

We received a considerable number of letters from readers who were hot under the collar as a result of an article which appeared in the TV TIMES. We did not see the article ourselves, but it would seem to have contained one or two of those inaccuracies which are apparently inseparable from articles of that type in the national press. Representative letters received a showing in our "The Postman Called" column. The latest comes from Mr. Gordon Swan in far-off Western Australia, and we publish it here as a last few words on the subject.

Concerning the rumours connected with the "relationship between Blake and Tinker," there were certainly no such rumours in the twenties. They would be rubbish at any time, but any relationship provides fodder at stag parties for those who find entertainment in dirty jokes. Nothing and nobody are immune from such people. The only time that I ever heard of the "rumour" was when somebody wrote to justify the new set-up in the S.B.L. in the early "fifties."

Here, then, is Mr. Swan's letter:

"I have been sent a copy of the English T.V. Times, dated Nov. 16 - 22, 1968, and containing an article on Sexton Blake by Ross Richards, who claims to have written five Blake stories, although so far I have only encountered one under that name. Certain statements in this article caused me to write immediately to the editor of that periodical and challenge the remarks.

Firstly, Mr. Richards states that Edgar Wallace, Sax Rohmer, Leslie Charteris and Peter Cheyney all wrote tales of Sexton Blake. This does not appear consistent to me with the information obtained by Collectors' Digest researchers. Indeed, I understood that Leslie Charteris, in particular, had denied ever writing any yarns for the Baker Street saga.

Secondly, it is stated that, during the twenties, unpleasant rumours circulated about the relationship between Blake and Tinker. I now quote the article: 'But, surely all the world must by now know that these foul imputations have been exposed as the inventions of the malign, violin-playing, albino dwarf known as Zenith?'

The dragging in of an unsavoury reference to homosexuality is totally unnecessary, but to attribute the rumours to Zenith, of all people, and to describe Anthony Skene's character as a malign albino dwarf displays an appalling ignorance on the part of one who claims to carry on the Blake tradition. How on earth did this distorted description of that romantic if dangerous individual ever evolve? Or is it just part of the current trend to deride and degrade anything that is the product of an earlier and cleaner era?"

S.O.S. TO ALL BLAKE FANS: Articles are urgently needed for this column. If there is some part of Blake history on which you would like to write or if you have views on the current stories of the great detective, please get to work and let us have your efforts. Keep the Blakiana flag flying!

OFFERED FOR EXCHANGE: Magnets, Comics (Funny Wonder, Dandy, Larks, Jingles, Golden, Jolly), Skippers, Gems, Modern Boys. MY WANTS INCLUDE: Magnet 958, Rookwood SOLs. 170, 202, 224, 296. Cedar Creek 4d. Boys Friend Libraries 417, 465, 469, 473, 497, 509. Champions 726-835. Rovers 718, 719, 726, 727, 732, 740, 742. Nosey Parkers Comic (1936 Rover Supplement). Comics, Skippers, Wizards, Adventures for the years 1936-1939.

P. J. HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, KINGS HEATH, NORTHAMPTON NN5 7LQ.

SALE MAGNETS 1471-1478 £2.10.0. 1536-1540 £1.10.0. 1660-1675 £4.10.0. 1676-1682 £1.15.0. 10 copies (1447-1651) £2.0.0.

SETFORD, 24, COLWYN AVENUE, DERBY.

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.

REG GUEST, 35 THORNSETT ROAD, ANERLEY, LONDON, S.E.20. Tel:

01-778-6850.

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross): I was brought up short in one instalment of "The Swell of St. Jim's" by the following:

"I was told this was my room!" sobbed D'Arcy, beginning to realise how matters stood; and, in his pain and terror, he even forgot to lisp "

People with speech impediments do not, even in moments of stress, lose that impediment, so it makes one wonder if D'Arcy when first invented was going to be discovered to be "acting a part" and would, at some time revert to talking without using the w for the r. However, as those of us know who have been acquainted with Gussy for the past forty-odd years, he never did again revert to another style of speech.

VICTOR GILES (Barking): I can't honestly say that the Annual was the best ever! It long ago reached such a peak of perfection that it can hardly go higher. What is remarkable is that you and your contributors maintain such a standard year after year. And when I read in the January C.D. editorial of your personal difficulties that had to be overcome I am breathless with admiration!

Incidentally, when reading recently a book on writers by Harvey Day I happened on the following paragraph:

"There used to be a man named Gilbert Patten who wrote under the pseudonym Burt L. Standish. In 1895 he embarked on a series of boys' stories, each running to 20,000 words, and completed one every week. His payment was £10 a story and in all he turned out 900 in succession. Once, when pressed, he wrote two and a half stories in one week."

I may have missed it, but I don't recall this author being mentioned in either the "Digest" or the "Annual." In the words of the magistrate: "Is anything known?"

BILL SHARPE (Australia): The C.D. Annual arrived last week and was soon wolfed down. Will do my second read soon. I specially enjoyed Les Rowley's and Roger Jenkins' articles (marvellous to get a fair feast of articles on the masters) and also Christopher Lowder's article on Sexton Blake. These 4 articles were in the best tradition of the C.D.

I did sorely miss Mr. Buddle. Not that I mean this critically, as I am sure you more than fill your quota - dozens of times over! I hope he will reappear ere long.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Large numbers of readers have written that they missed the Buddle story. Unfortunately, the writer of the Buddle yarns was indisposed in the same way as your editor last autumn. The Buddle tale "The Buddle Pavilion" was half-written, but it couldn't be finished. We replaced it in the Annual with "Boys of Beechwood," so readers were lucky after all. We hope that Mr. Buddle will be back in a Slade story one of these days, and thank all those who have written on the subject.)

L. M. ALLEN (Bournemouth): I thought the back cover reproduction of the poster (February C.D.) excellent.

(We still have a very small number left of the whole-plate photographs of each of the posters. These can be obtained at 3/6 each plus postage, from the editorial office. The posters have now gone to a permanent home at the Museum of Childhood, Edinburgh.
- ED.)

E. J. DAVEY (Knowle): Very specially appreciated in the February issue was the first Editorial item; on the late Miss Richmal Crompton.

However, I was somewhat disgruntled by the second Editorial in the same issue, namely the one on semi-illiterates. As I would appear to be the main reporting culprit in this matter, I am very willing to take up your challenge and cross swords with you on this question.

The report Jack Bellfield sent you for the good old S.P.C.D. was based largely on my report in the Midland OBBC Newsletter. Incidentally Jack was not at the meeting to hear the talk.

Coming now to the burning question of the semi-illiterates, I still stand firmly behind that paragraph in the report beginning "It is well known" etc. Although possibly a more tactful term would have been "leisurely," rather than "long drawn out." Many intellectuals get bees in their bonnets on certain questions, and to me that essay by Orwell on "Boys' Weeklies" in "Inside the Whale," has always been immensely funny because he so completely missed the whole atmosphere and purpose of the Hamiltonian school stories.

In this essay Orwell said in effect, fancy taking 100 words just to tell the reader that Bunter was in detention. The actual quotation comes from a Magnet in the 1500's, and relates how unutterably stale, flat, weary and boring Bunter found detention. Surely the hands of the clock were not moving at all, etc. etc.

But anyone with insight into human nature knows that that is exactly how so many people, especially those of limited intelligence, feel about the jobs to which they are tied until knocking off time!

Much to my amused interest also, Orwell quoted yet another awful example of prolixity. From the "Blackrock Island" Series, (Magnets No. 1626 to 1629). "There were six of them in the soup, landed and stranded, diddled dished and done." etc. etc. Lovely! What I always call the "Groan" Series. Ever so many less words could have been used, but what a lovely story it is! Like sipping delicious nectar!

But this was why I was so interested in Bill Morgan's suggestion, although I think he called it "Leisurely," that the Magnet was so repetitive, but also very readable and interesting, so that boys who could only read with difficulty would be able to follow the story and indeed gradually become more proficient at reading.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: I feel sure that we all agree with what Mr. Davey meant in his report, but I don't think he actually said what he meant. The item in the Newsletter, on which our report was based, is as follows: "It is well known that the Magnet was written in an exceedingly long drawn out style, prolix, not to say long winded! George Orwell grumbled about this in his famous essay, but Mr. Morgan suggested a very valid educational advantage, even if unintentional, in this: namely, that it must have been very helpful to the many semi-illiterates of those days in learning to read."

Mr. Davey's quotations from the Magnet are isolated illustrations of the use of prolixity for the sake of effect - and Hamilton was joyous and unsurpassed at that sort of thing. That does not mean that Hamilton's style was generally long drawn out, not to say long-winded. If it had been, Hamilton would never have become the world's most popular writer of school tales. Mr. Morgan, whose letter appears in this month's editorial, makes it clear that his talk was not too accurately reported.)

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: GEMS: Some issues between 801 and 832; 953, 954, 959, 970, 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.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 28th January, 1969

The very reasonable total of 11 members were present, and we were very pleased to see Mrs. Hamilton Wright also.

Even before the meeting started members were very interested in a copy of the January number of the "Birmingham Sketch," a glossy magazine, which contained a very good report of that never-to-be-forgotten party at "Wharton Lodge" on 17th December. The report was illustrated with a very fine large reproduction of a splendid group photograph of us. Mrs. Hamilton Wright brought along copies of three other photographs taken at the party, and a number of copies were ordered.

After a reading by Tom Porter from SOL No. 385, "The Tough Guy of Greyfriars," and a coffee interval, we came to the main item this evening. This was a most interesting talk by Tom Porter on his collection and how it was gradually built up to become what must be one of the largest collections of Old Boys' Books in the world. It includes one of only four complete collections of the Magnet known. Naturally it has been a long and arduous trail even although Tom did get 584 Magnets in one scoop! Many a tale can be told of adventures grave and gay en route, and in fact the subject is so vast that next month we are to hear some more of quite a fascinating story.

The anniversary number tonight was No. 142 of the School Friend, dated exactly 47 years earlier, namely 28th Jan. 1922.

The Collectors' item was BFL No. 704, first series, entitled "Pots of Money," or Handforth's Golden Windfall.

Every month valued and interesting letters are received from correspondents, and at this meeting reference was made to letters which had been received from Roger Jenkins, Stan Knight and Ben Whiter.

EDWARD DAVEY

Chairman.

- - - - -

LONDON

The twenty-first Annual General Meeting of the club was held at the Cricklewood home of Bill and Marjorie Norris on Sunday, February 16th. At short notice, Bill and Marjorie 'done us proud,' as there were two other venues fixed for the meeting but owing to

indispositions, both East Dulwich and Collindale were out of the question. Chairman, Len Packman, opened the proceedings with a hearty welcome to all present and stated that there were two others present who were with him at the inaugural meeting way back in 1948, these being Bob Blythe and Ben Whiter. A letter from Bob Whiter wishing the meeting every success and stating that he was with those present in spirit was quoted from.

After the usual items, viz the various reports, Don Webster was elected unopposed to be the chairman for 1969-70. Rest of the officers were re-elected en bloc, these being those who served so well during the past twelve months. Librarians, Bob Blythe and Roger Jenkins, Hon. auditor, Charlie Wright, Programme Organiser, Bill Hubbard and the secretary-treasurer, Ben Whiter.

The details of the club's 21st Birthday luncheon party at the Rembrandt Hotel next April were discussed and some of the details settled. Excellent study feed followed and the usual conversations and get togethers, which everyone likes so much.

After tea, Brian Doyle gave a reading from Hutchinson's "Summer Pie" of 1944 entitled "The Career of Charles Hamilton." This was the publication that gave the first Carcroft stories. Len Packman conducted a "Handicap Quiz" and it was Charlie Wright the winner and two seconds were Josie Packman and Bill Hubbard. Bill Hubbard gave a talk "K.K.-O.K." (A repeat of a talk given in 1966.) Following that Nelson Lee item, Bob Blythe read another Trackett Grimm story from the Nelson Lee Library.

It was given out about the probable facsimile edition of the Bunter Court series being published.

Hearty votes of thanks were made to all the officers for their sterling work during the past year and with an early finish due to the inclement weather it was au revoir until the meeting at Larry and Mrs. Peters, Kensal Rise, on Sunday, March 16th. Full details as to how to get there will be communicated to all members.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 8 February, 1969

With snow abounding almost everywhere we were glad to see an attendance of nine when Chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened the meeting - seven local residents and Jack Wood and Ron Hodgson who had braved the elements coming from York and Mansfield respectively.

After the formal business, Gerry Allison gave news of postal members, and we were sorry to hear of illness and bereavement from friends, Benny Egan, Albert Lorryman and Bernard Robinson, and much sympathy was felt for them. News also came from Jack Roberts, soon to return to England from South Africa.

The programme for the next few meetings will include the reading aloud of the last Magnet, and Geoffrey then led a general chat on the possible reasons why publication stopped so suddenly. At the end it was generally felt that to stop whilst at full strength was better than fading off into mergers and nothingness.

Now we had a team Crossword compiled by Gerry, and four ladies played four men; the former having the Across Clues and the latter the Down ones. Final result was Men 55 letters on the board and Ladies 51, (which the distaff side felt was not too bad as none of them regarded herself as an expert!)

Refreshments were eaten round the four card tables at the front like a family party with chat and chaff, and the sandwiches and biscuits circulating. When the crockery was cleared we settled down to hear a talk by Jack Allison. This was on the Greyfriars Motto "Conamur Tenues Grandia" quoted in Mr. J. S. Butcher's Greyfriars Prospectus, and translated there as "Though slight we strive for Greatness." (Reference Horace I, vi, 9) First Jack gave out a copy of the Ode to each one present (but he did not fix a gimlet eye on us and rap out "Construe!") Instead he gave examples of quotations taken from their context which can imply very different sentiments to those intended by their writers, though this was hardly the case here. This was followed by his translation of the Ode, and then the versions of the Motto given by various translators in the past. This talk touched a new topic, and was much enjoyed by the members.

The evening was now over, and we prepared to depart. Next month we shall have a visit from a photographer at 6.30 p.m. from the "Leeds Graphic" (for whom Gerry is writing a short article) and friends are urged to arrive in time to be included in the picture.

Next meeting, 8th March 1969, Saturday.

M. L. ALLISON

Hon. Sec.

WANTED: Hard-backed Bunter Books:- B.B.'s Bargain; Barring-Out; Beanfeast; at Butlin's. B.B. of Cliff House (condition important). Magnets 1457-8, 1470. 38 ST. THOMAS ROAD, PRESTON.

BOYS MAGAZINEBy Kenneth Bailey

This was the first boys' paper that I ever purchased. The pink covered paper was the only publication of its kind published by Allied Newspapers of Manchester and from whose offices came the Daily Dispatch newspaper.

B.M. came out on Saturdays and I first became acquainted with it in 1928. Being of rather tender years I found it rather strong stuff - too strong in fact - and I very soon changed to less potent publications like Modern Boy, but in later years I found it not so sinister.

Stories of lost worlds (dinosaurs etc.,) were fairly common as were such epics as the invasion of Britain by the yellow races and a time machine series - a sort of contemporary Dr. Who. Like most books it had a school series which chronicled the adventures of Johnny Gee, Dick Bannister and Co. of Saint Gideons (nearest village Merival). Other characters were Timothy Catchpole, Marmduke Mist and Rumble the school janitor. Catchpole was the school inventor whose schemes often "ganged agly" and in one story I recall a hilarious farce surrounding the launching of a Catchpole water craft which ran amok on the local river. It remains in my memory as something excruciatingly funny and I very much doubt whether the printed word has made me laugh so painfully since.

Falcon Swift, monocled and nattily bowler-hatted was the regular detective in the B.M. ably assisted by Chick Conway. Swift favoured a Hispano-Suiza car and appeared to be a boxer, oarsman, fencer etc. of Olympic standards. The cover of one issue showed him suitably uniformed and tin-hatted leading his men over the top in some unspecified Great War battle. Presumably he was really with M.I. 5 or its equivalent at that time.

I cannot remember any authors names appearing with stories, apart from John Hunter's who contributed several serials. One told the story of a Division One football side beset by perils from some fearsome gang. In the series Hunter used the names of real teams apart from the hero's team of course.

Cowboy stories were not published often but one such was a series featuring Rex Remington.

Apart from Hunter's soccer story, the B.M. didn't seem to go for sports stories in a big way, although many of the free gifts given were in the form of photographs of cricketers and footballers.

At other times I can recall ten buttonhole badges of the Earls Beatty and Haig, a cardboard model of a ranch and smoked glasses for viewing the eclipse of the sun being given away. Jack Greenatts Useless Eustace, of Daily Mirror fame, appeared on the letter page each week.

The end came, as far as I can remember in the spring of 1934. The editor announced that for many years he had been planning a trip up the Amazon and the opportunity had now come which meant the end of the old magazine. (At the time I couldn't understand why another editor couldn't be found.)

The one series that was still running was completed in the "Champion" and so the old pink 'un went quite peacefully,

BEANO DAYS

By Norman Wright

The "Beano" came out on Thursdays, and whatever its shortcomings may have been I was a loyal supporter of "Dennis The Menace," "Bash Street Kids," Lord Snooty etc., for a large chunk of my comic reading years. "Beano" cost twopence in 1956; it remained thus until only a few years ago.

I remember keeping all my copies and hoarding them in a wooden clothes chest that stood outside my bedroom door.

The boy who lived in the house backing onto ours was younger than I. He saved all of his comics, "Dandy," "Eagle," "Beano" etc., and would often give me back numbers. I can remember being interested in his earliest "Beano" (about 1953) as it contained a WRITTEN story. I never read this but I think it was about a space explorer.

I often read through serials again and again, even though they were all in pictures with only a few words. Many remain fresh in my memory. "The Wild Boy" and his fight with a batch of prehistoric reptiles that had been brought to life by an earthquake. "Jimmy and His Magic Patch" (sown on the seat of his trousers of course) that would whisk him through time to places of great historical importance. I remember one incident where he came to the aid of the Greeks, and ended up inside the famous "Wooden Horse of Troy." "Bash Street Kids" (previously titled "When The Bell Rings") continued to play havoc with their long suffering teacher. (Thank God they hadn't heard of L.S.D.) The "Iron Fish" rescued drowning men. "General Jumbo" and his remote controlled miniature army continued to trap foreign spies.

I kept my "Beans" for several years before they fell victim to a spring cleaning sortie. My "Beano" books disappeared one by one - relegated to the dust-bin, but well thumbed before their final annihilation. I still have one copy of the "Dennis The Menace Book," kept for old times sake.

"Beano" still flourishes, though I doubt if it is as popular as it was ten years ago. It must face great competition from the glossy, television orientated comics that seem to dominate the market.

I tried to read a copy recently, but found that I had lost the knack of successfully negotiating strip cartoons. I don't think that I would ever want to collect copies of "Beano," but I can look back on it with some nostalgia, which must prove it had some worth - even if it did not come up to the standard of "Magnet" and "Gem."

NELSON LEE LIBRARY, OLD SERIES. Nos. 114, 144 and 146, are required for completing sets for binding into book form. Will anyone kindly help --

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

WANTED: "Film Funs," "Kinema Komics," "Boys Cinemas," American Movie, (pre 1932) and Detective (1930-36), Bunter Books and Teddy Lester stories. £1 for "Film Fun" with Charlie Chaplin on front cover or inside.

THOMPSON, 53 Wallasey Park, BELFAST, BT14 6PN.

FOR SALE: Lovely bound volume of a year of the Boys' Friend, mid-1907 to mid-1908. Superb collectors' item. £10. Bound volume of Boys' Realm, containing Nos. 612-640 (1914) £5-5s. The Girls' Own Annual for 1892: 10/-; The Girls' Empire Annual (date uncertain but probably about 1904) 7/6. Red Magnets: 355: 12/6; 351: 10/-. White Magnets: 429 (coverless and roughish) 449 (roughish) 466, 533, 5/- each (not collectors' items). Gems: 1087; 1098; 1090; 1550; 1549: 1548: 1546: 1528: 1521: 1518. 6/- each. Postage extra on all items. S.a.e. first to -

ERIC FAYNE, Excelsior House, Grove Road, Surbiton.