

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

SMASHING "BANDITS OF THE LINE!" STARTS
NEW SERIAL TO-DAY!

Vol. 25 *The* **MAGNET** 2^D

No.
293



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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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IMPROVEMENTS - OR MERELY CHANGE?

My calendar often carries a thought-provoking message. Yesterday, for instance, it informed me that "a man is as old as he feels - but never as important." The day before warned me that "a wise man never blows his own knows."

Today, however, the thought for the moment is somewhat shattering. Especially for anyone who is as discontented with the modern world as I am. Let's see whether the message will startle you as much as it did me. Here it is: "Old age begins when a man dislikes improvements."

Before I hang my ancient head in shame, I should like to weigh matters up a little. After all, editors of the old papers often announced great improvements in their papers - for instance, the Gem

was to be vastly superior as a pocket-sized paper with a mustardy cover; the Modern Boy went to a record number of changes in format, all heralded as improvement; the editor of the Popular hearily burst with pride when he announced that, in future, there would be brand new stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood every week, but omitted to mention that all would be by substitute writers; two wonderful new serials meant that the favourite long complete story became a short complete story; and the promise of no less than five complete stories often meant five hacked-off chunks of old stories.

In fact, improvements were often euphemisms for changes, many of which were strikingly unsuccessful, and some of which were fatal.

So, at the risk of premature old age, I have to confess to a dislike, or at least mistrust, of certain improvements. I am quite unexcited by the new £50,000 premium bond prize, which seems to be an invitation to people with pots of money to buy up large blocks as an investment; the giant pools' wins, which the promoters advertise with such pride, leave me cold - I would rather see a lot get a little than a little get a lot. I am never likely to travel in the enormous aircraft which roar through the skies, and their noise does not soothe me. Magnificent new roads impress me, but I wonder whether they are worth the loss of countless homes, thousands of lovely trees, and the shrinking and gradual disappearance of the beautiful English countryside.

I'm not too sure about our greatly improved, Egyptian-type, decimal currency which is not even true decimalisation. True, it may aid us in the common market, but I'm not even convinced that that will be an improvement either.

Sack the editor! He dislikes progress. But all progress is not improvement. And some progress is surely not progress at all.

(And, in parenthesis, a final thought comes to one who sends and receives huge numbers of "air letters" every year. Years ago, our British air letters seemed to be pretty good. Who on earth designed the new, improved British air letter, which seems to me to be about the worst in the world?)

DEATH OF A PAPER

In our time, plenty of us have been in at the death of various periodicals. Before my time, Hamilton Edwards "Boys' Herald" became "Cheer, Boys, Cheer" which did not last long, and "The Girls' Home" became "Our Girls" which was equally unsuccessful. I had given up the Boys' Friend long before it died a natural death. I was at the funeral of the Popular, and did not transfer my allegiance to the Ranger, which it became. I saw the failing Greyfriars Herald become another Boys' Herald. I was very small when the Firefly was linked with a more successful, though no less attractive paper, and the new periodical became "Butterfly and Firefly" for a while, though retaining the charm of neither.

Very sad was the death of the Gem, though the editor tried to transfer the allegiance of Gemites to the Triumph. I took Triumph for a short time after the amalgamation, but found I was on an entirely different wave-length.

Some of us can recall the Daily News and the Daily Chronicle lining up to become the News Chronicle, which was later to be swallowed by the Daily Mail. We can remember when there were a great many more morning, evening, and Sunday papers than there are now. And the latest casualty is the Daily Sketch, while the Daily Mail, which is in difficulties, is to swallow the Sketch, and adopt a different format.

The death of great national newspapers is always a step backwards for any country, and, to the man in the street, it is always something of a puzzle why papers, which seem to have big circulations, drop out of the race.

When I was at school the Daily Sketch was known as the Daily Graphic. I recall it with affection because it once featured a number of pictures from a school play of "Julius Caesar" in which I appeared as Mark Antony. For years I could recite "Julius Caesar" throughout from the opening line to the last. I found it helpful when I took my School Certificate - though that is a long, long time ago.

And the Daily Mail seemed to be always with us, like the poor. Charles Hamilton was proud of the fact that he took the Daily Mail from No. 1. Presumably it was still being delivered to him at the time

of his death.

And now the Sketch is to disappear, and the Mail is to be what I think is called a tabloid.

"Old age begins when a man dislikes improvements --"

But that is where we came in.

OUR PUBLICATION DATES

For the benefit of some readers who have been anxious when their S.P.C.D. has not arrived about the first day of the month, I will repeat my explanation that it is the aftermath of the postal strike. If we had dropped a number entirely, we could have resumed publication on normal dates, early each month. For instance, this issue, No. 293, could have been May and June combined, which would have been a simple solution.

But this is our Silver Jubilee Year, and we are due to reach No. 300 in December. So, if it is possible, we are striving to catch up the lost time, so that No. 300 will appear at the start of December 1971. It may still not be possible - but we are doing our best. Please bear with us.

THIS AGE OF THUGS

Recently, some unspeakable monsters beat wild birds to death as they nested at an Aldershot gravel-pit.

The following is an extract from the leader article in a local newspaper:

"Any youngster who can take a stone and beat a bird to death has accepted the idea that violence is allowable. This week, a helpless bird. Next year, a helpless old lady?

"Society is too soft with thugs. It is time we returned to the simple moral standard of the old-fashioned school stories, in which the bully only bullied as long as he was allowed to get away with it."

We wonder which old-fashioned school stories the writer had in mind. Pretty obviously, the school stories which we ourselves remember with such affection. Not that they are really old-fashioned. For sound moral values and a sane discipline in life are never old-fashioned. It is only that a greedy and sinister minority have succeeded in making them seem so.

THE EDITOR

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 88 — "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School"

It comes as something of a shock to realise that nearly a quarter of a century has slipped by since the first post-war Greyfriars story. The age of the Magnet seems a different world nowadays, but the hard-backed Bunter books, published first by Skiltons and then by Cassells, have very much a contemporary air. It is difficult when looking back on the first book in the sequence to remember the impression it made in far-off 1947.

During the war, Charles Hamilton wrote to me as follows: "Billy Bunter is gone for ever, as I have completely severed my connection with the Amalgamated Press; and these people claim - by what right I cannot say - to prohibit me from writing Greyfriars stories for any other publisher. I am getting a little too old to enter into a legal wrangle: so I decided to begin something entirely new. Perhaps, after so long a run, it was time for Harry Wharton & Co. to make their final bow and retire from the scene." Charles Hamilton went on to praise his new Carcroft stories, but there is no doubt of his elation when the Amalgamated Press did relent: he was on top of the world. The letter he wrote in No. 2 of the C.D. announcing the facts was obviously composed under the stress of deep feeling and excitement.

After many delays caused by the paper shortage and fuel crisis, the book eventually appeared in September 1947, illustrated (none too happily) by the Gem artist Macdonald. The story told how Bunter was given an ultimatum by Mr. Quelch to reform or else leave Greyfriars. There were some amusing touches: Bunter falling asleep in class, and his indignation when Quelch told him his decision ("He said I was lazy, idle, greedy, undutiful, untruthful - me, you know! Not one of you fellows - I could understand that. But me!"). This was the authentic light touch, but on its own it could not sustain the old traditions. Even in 1947 there were some perceptive critics despite the general euphoria that existed among the reviewers in Nos. 11 and 12 of the C.D. Herbert Leckenby mentioned that some incidents reminded the reader of old stories, John Shaw stated that there was too

Nelson Lee Column

MUSINGS OF A LEE FAN

R. J. GODSAVE looks at various aspects of reading, with particular attention to the Lee saga

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

In fiction the objects of description can be roughly divided into People, Places and Activities. From the author's point of view it is necessary that the reader shall have some idea of what the characters of a story look like, whether they are fat or thin; dark skinned or pallid; tall or short. But it is not by any means necessary that their faces and clothes should be described in detail. Given a few hints the reader should form his or her own picture of their appearance.

As it is possible for people to know each other without knowing the colour of each other's eyes, so it is possible to enable a reader to know a character well without telling him such details.

One of the most descriptive writers in fictional history was probably Charles Dickens. His literary pictures of characters in every case are so vividly portrayed. This is born out by the fact that in the majority of Dickens' plays and films, characters invariably coincide universally with the mental pictures of these characters which have already been impressed on the audience by the written word. This, in spite of the fact that the plays are produced, directed and acted by an enormous diversity of people.

Descriptions of characters, apart from initial physical details, upon their introduction by the author, are essentially constructed in the dialogue, as this medium is the only one which the writer can use in continual process throughout the book; therefore, all mannerisms, character, and points of recognition, are generally conveyed by conversation of the various characters.

Descriptions of places and activities are not quite so difficult. The worst that can happen to an author's account of the sunlight falling

between the fluttering leaves of the giant oak, onto the green carpet of the cricket field, is that it may be skipped by the reader. On the other hand, such passages are interesting if they are kept within bounds.

The mention of a market town, for instance, would probably be identified with that of a market town of the reader's acquaintance. An illustration is usually of a single building or a few shops, which could easily be incorporated in the mental picture of the town as a whole.

Descriptive accounts of activities such as Cricket or football matches are similar to those of places, except that the author must be accurate in his details, and must have a thorough knowledge of the activity of which he writes. This does not, of course, mean that an author must commit a crime in order to be sent to prison so that he can write about an escaped convict.

The whole object of realism is to give the impression of reality. The reader only requires a general impression, which is what he or she gets in real life.

RESIDENT DETECTIVE

It has often been said of the Nelson Lee Library that life in the form-room at St. Frank's was practically non-existent. This is true if a comparison is made between the writings of Hamilton and Brooks.

I find it difficult to compare the writings of these two authors. They both trod different paths although with the same objective, that of writing stories of school life at public schools.

Having a resident detective as House-master at St. Frank's made it impossible for Brooks to write stories similar to those of Hamilton, as to do so would have the effect of virtually ignoring the detective capabilities of Nelson Lee. This fact gave Brooks an immense field in which to develop his talents.

Many of the fine series in the Nelson Lee were due to the activities of Lee who impersonated or disguised himself as occasions required.

As Mr. Philip Smith Gore in the Hon. Douglas Singleton series,

Lee joined forces with the two crooks who were intent on swindling Singleton out of his fortune.

The famous Howard Martin barring-out series gave Nelson Lee the opportunity of returning to St. Frank's - after having been dismissed by Martin - in the person of Mr. Simpson Wrott and so take up his old position as House-master of the Ancient House.

In these circumstances, it was necessary to curtail the form-room activities unless they formed a part of the series running, such as the Clement Heath series in which Handforth's brother-in-law came to St. Frank's as a temporary form-master. In this series Lee impersonated the Comte de Plessigny in order to find out what the actual connection was between Heath and the Comte.

By importing a resident detective in the "Courtfield Cracksman" Charles Hamilton was in a similar position to Brooks. In this case Inspector Irons acted as Richard Steele, form-master and the form-room was naturally well to the fore.

One could say, that having a House-master detective at St. Frank's was a tower of strength to Brooks in that he was able to write stories of a different type to other authors.

CONTRADICTIONS

Few authors of the papers we collect and borrow from the Club libraries would have thought that so many would have survived the years.

It is possible that they wrote just for the week, after a few months would assume that few of their writings would even be in existence. If that was the case, then apart from keeping to the original line upon which the stories were based, they were quite at liberty to contradict statements made five or six years earlier.

Five years or so, means a new generation of readers, and in the case of the early St. Frank's stories these must have been a mystery to later readers. Even with the reprints in the Monster Library the Nelson Lees prior to O.S. 158 must have been unknown to the majority of the new generation.

In the Jack Mason series O.S. 178-185, Reginald Pitt passes himself off as his own sister in order to discredit Mason, or Grey as

he was to become. In a subsequent form-trial Pitt is found guilty on the grounds that there was no such person as Miss Pitt, which Pitt admits. Further evidence proved that he had borrowed a girl's outfit and a wig from a big costumiers in Bannington. Just over six years later Winnie Pitt was introduced as the sister of Reginald Pitt.

Again in the Clement Heath series the readers were given to understand that Handforth had only one sister, Edith, who was his elder by five years or so. Ena Handforth was introduced to Lee readers as his younger sister in the autumn of 1924.

On the other hand, it is possible that an author who writes so many stories over the years can genuinely forget incidents that have happened in his earlier efforts and be unaware of any contradiction.

STOP GAP?

The Christmas number of the Nelson Lee Library for 1918 was O.S. 186, "The Mystery of Grey Towers." The Jack Mason series had just been concluded with the reunion of Sir Crawford Grey and his long-lost son Norman, as Jack Mason proved to be. Immediately following this single Christmas number came the famous Colonel Clinton series.

The previous 1917 Christmas number was O.S. 130, "The Phantom of Tregellis Castle," the one and only St. Frank's double number. With the short series of two Nelson Lees stretching partly into a third for 1919 gives one the impression that "The Mystery of Grey Towers" was written as a stop gap. As 1919 proved to be a year of some of Brooks' best series it would seem that he was eager to commence the new year with the Clinton series.

Personally, I find "The Mystery of Grey Towers" rather a hollow sort of yarn lacking Brooks' usual touch. This, of course, is possibly the result of a Christmas yarn being confined to one Nelson Lee which would prevent the author from giving his best.

Other Christmas numbers have occurred in the middle of a series and have been a continuation of the theme running through the series, although still retaining a Christmas atmosphere. The Solomon Levi and Trenton series are two cases in which this happened.

One item of interest comes to light in "The Mystery of Grey

Towers" is that of Handforth's father being honoured with a knighthood a month or so previously.

Never again in the old series was one Nelson Lee to be the beginning and end of a Christmas mystery.

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EDITORIAL POSTSCRIPT:

To our Nelson Lee fans. A further supply of good articles on Lee lore is essential if this famous Column is to appear regularly.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS FROM READERS

W. LISTER (Blackpool): So we have a writer of humour in our midst; and I have been given to understand that to write something humorous is the hardest type of writing. I refer to the article "Bloodshot" by R. Hibbert in the April C.D. Three-and-a-half pages with delightful glimpses of humour, and a St. Frank's fan to boot. I was still chuckling after my third reading of it.

BILL LOFTS (London): There is no record in official files of Clive Fenn ever writing substitute tales of the Hamilton schools. There is, however, some evidence that Charles Hamilton on very rare occasions did have a 'ghost.' A relative once wrote a Tom Merry tale which he 'touched up' - whilst curiously also in 1921 a sub-editor that I met was convinced that a Gem tale he had to proof read in the office was not by Mr. Hamilton - even though he had sent it. Stanton-Hope once in a letter to me - spoke of him and Charles Hamilton collaborating in the Herlock Sholmes stories - and at a meeting hinted that he had a hand in some of the Rio Kid yarns. But I would hasten to add that these stories were isolated instances. The Schoolboy Hunger Striker in the Gem - and which was not included in my Annual lists as a substitute story was omitted simply because no record could be found about it at that time. As it was reputed by some of the experts to be a genuine tale - I left it out. Since that date however, both our editor and Laurie Sutton are to be congratulated as it has now been found to have been written by Fred Gordon Cook.

Our classic serial from the first decade of the Century.

THE ONLY WAY

Courtney washed and washed. There was ink on his ears, and ink on his hair, and ink down his neck. There was slimy, wet soot all over him. He had discarded his clothes. It was doubtful if he would be able to wear them again. He was standing in his pants, laving himself in the washstand basin, when Wingate came in.

Wingate could not help grinning.

"Do you think you will ever get that stuff out of your hair?"

Courtney grunted.

"I don't know," he said. "For goodness sake get me some more water out of your room, Wingate, and some soap. All mine's as black as ink."

Wingate brought in a fresh jug of water, and sat on the bed, watching the Sixth-Former while he laved his inky and sooty hair. Courtney's hair was naturally fair and curly, but it did not look very fair now.

"We found the young rascals who did it," said Wingate. "It was Wharton, Nugent, and Cherry of the Remove."

"You caned them, I hope?"

"Yes, I expect they're still wriggling."

"Serve the little beasts right."

"It seems to have been a mistake, Courtney. Bob Cherry said he had intended it for Valence."

Courtney plunged his face into the water. Wingate waited quietly until he raised it again.

"Did you hear what I said, Courtney?"

"Yes," muttered the senior.

"For some reason they expected to find Valence coming out of his room in the middle of the night."

"Did they explain why?"

"I think perhaps you know why," said Wingate.

"I!" exclaimed Courtney.

"Yes. You see, you went out about the time they expected Valence. What did you go out for, old man?"

Courtney did not reply.

"I think I can guess," said Wingate.

"You knew he was going to break bounds,

and you went out to stop him. He was fully dressed, I remember, when he showed up in the passage."

"I'd rather not say anything about it, Wingate."

The Greyfriars captain nodded.

"Very well," he said. "Only remember that you are a prefect, and you've got your duty to do. I suppose I needn't remind you of that."

Courtney flushed.

"I'm doing it as well as I can," he said. "It's a difficult position for me."

"Valence was going out?"

"I believe so," said Courtney, reluctantly.

"Do you know where?"

"I suspect."

"To the Cross Keys?"

"Oh, no, I think not."

"Then he is the poacher," said Wingate quietly.

Courtney did not answer.

"Come," said Wingate. "I know perfectly well that when Sir Hilton Popper's keeper said he saw a Greyfriars fellow, he was speaking the truth. The only question is, who was it? Was it Valence?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"And you knew this - you, a prefect," said Wingate sternly. "I'm awfully surprised at you, Courtney. You ought to have interfered."

"I did."

"If your remonstrance was no good, you ought to have reported the matter at once to the Head. What do you think he made you a prefect for?"

"It was Valence, you see," groaned Courtney. "He's made an ass of himself, but he was my friend - and there's - there's Vi."

"His sister?"

"Yes. She asked me once if I'd keep an eye on him, because he had got among bad companions," said Courtney, in a low voice. "I said I would. It would be rotten rough on her if anything happened to him."

"Better let him get a ragging from the Head than go on till he is caught by a keeper, and perhaps arrested."

"I suppose so."

"And he's going out to-night?" exclaimed Wingate.

"I don't know. I think he won't have the nerve to do it after what has happened, with half the school awake."

"He hasn't much nerve, but he's ass enough for anything," said Wingate abruptly. "I shall look into his room before I go to bed."

Courtney was towelling his head.

"I'm going to turn in now," he said.

"We'll look in on Valence, if you like, but I know you'll find him in bed all serene."

Wingate left the study, followed by Courtney. He opened Valence's door and called in the darkness.

"Are you there, Valence?"

There was no reply, and there was no sound of breathing in the stillness of the room.

Wingate struck a match, stepped into the room, and lighted the gas.

Courtney cast a hurried look towards the bed. It was empty. Valence was not in the room.

Wingate turned to his startled companion with a grim smile.

"Well?" said Wingate.

"He's gone," Courtney muttered.

The captain of Greyfriars knitted his brows. He was very angry indeed. Valence had gone out, knowing that Wingate was awake - and after the scene in the afternoon with Sir Hilton Popper.

Wingate sat down, and Courtney turned an anxious look upon him.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to wait for Valence."

"And when he comes --"

"Take him straight to the Head, if Dr. Locke is still up. If it's too late, I shall report him in the morning."

Courtney changed colour.

"I suppose you must do it, Wingate," he said, "but, couldn't you go lightly just this time?"

"What do you mean? Do you want me to let the rotter off, when he's doing his best to disgrace the school?" demanded

Wingate.

"No, but --"

"You know that Sir Hilton's keepers will be more on the watch than ever to-night," said Wingate, "and he will run heaps of risks of being caught. It would serve him right, but it would mean police-court proceedings. Think of the disgrace. It would get into all the papers. The fellow seems to have no sense at all. My hat, I'll give him some plain English when he does come in."

"You're right, Wingate, but --"

"But you want me to let the fool off for his sister's sake," said Wingate abruptly. "It can't be done! Besides, he'd be at it again next week."

"Give him one more chance, said Courtney, in a low voice. "Let me wait up for him instead of you, Wingate -- just this once. I'll wait up for him, and if he doesn't promise, honour bright, to drop it for good and all, I'll leave him to you."

"Would he keep his promise?"

"He's not so rotten as all that."

He'd keep his word."

Wingate hesitated.

"I don't want to be hard on any chap -- and his sister's a nice girl, and I shouldn't like her to be hurt," he said, "but it's asking a lot, Courtney."

"I know it is. But you'll do it, Wingate?"

The Greyfriars captain gave an impatient shrug of the shoulders.

"Yes, I'll do it," he grunted, "and I hope it will lead to good, but I haven't the slightest expectation of anything of the sort. Good-night, Courtney!"

"Good-night, Wingate!"

The captain of Greyfriars went to his room. Courtney remained in Rupert Valence's room, waiting, with knitted brows and anxious thought, for the scapegrace of the Sixth to come in.

(Another instalment of this old classic next month)

BLAKIANA

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

I am now able to give some more definite details about the reprint of the Sexton Blake Catalogue and the new Supplement. These have been promised for the end of April so they should be in my possession by the time you have this month's C.D. The prices will be fairly reasonable considering how much more everything costs these days. The Catalogue will be £1.00 and the Supplement 17½p. Postage will be extra, but I cannot say exactly how much until I have a copy of each weighed at the post office. However, I should think 20p will be about right. So please start sending your orders, together with P.O./Cheque. (The Supplement only should be about 3p or 5p for postage.)

I have some material in hand for Blakiana but should like some more, also I would be grateful if someone could start writing an epic for the Annual this year. We Blake fans must keep our end up so now is the time to begin thinking of that article you were going to write but did not get round to doing so.

Regrettably, there are no signs of any further Blake volumes appearing, but we can only go on hoping.

SOMETHING FRESH ABOUT

MICHAEL STORM

by Cyril Rowe

As has been long known, the creator of George Marsden Plummer in the Blake Saga, Michael Storm was much of a Mystery Man himself.

One theory has it that he died or disappeared just prior to the first world war, and another opinion has it that he took a police job in Africa and died there in the 1930's.

As a keen Storm fan I picked up a book "The Grey Messengers" by Michael Storm, published by Blackie's during the second world war. There is no date, but the "Book Production Economy Standard" inscription is on the back of the title page, which dates it to that extent.

On the signature leaves is a number F745 which I believe indicates the date of publication as 1945. I could not believe when I bought it that the story could be by Michael Storm, but the name attracted me nonetheless. It turned out to be a fine, well written tale about Secret Service in South Africa and the frustration of a native uprising. Now for the sequel.

In Union Jack No. 1339, dated 15 June, 1929, there appears an advertisement on page 8 for the current issues of the Boy's Friend Library. Here is what it says of No. 194, "The Death Drums":-

"Tap! Tap! Tap! You hear it rise and fall at all times of the day and night in the dark African Continent. It is the beating of the drums and those who know its secret know many other strange things beside."

"The Death Drums" tells of the adventures of a secret service agent who investigates a powerful native Secret Society in the heart of unknown Africa. Becoming initiated into the weird brotherhood of the Grey Messengers, he discovers amid strange rites and ceremonies the plot for the big native rising. The author was himself a secret service agent in Africa and the story is based on his own experiences.

The Boy's Friend Library No. 194 was anonymous (apparently). I have not read it but it is certainly the same tale as the Grey Messengers which I possess, bought last June. Michael Storm had been an old Amalgamated Press author and this evidently is his work. How did it pass from the A.P. to Blackies and who was the agent involved? I hesitate to write to Blackies for information (if they are still in existence). Perhaps someone more knowledgeable than I might try, and also find out if Blackies did any more.

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SIX OF THE BEST

by William Lister

A strange title for a Sexton Blake article, you may think, more in keeping with Hamiltonian or Nelson Lee sections with the boys of the old schools facing up to their misdeeds.

However, old fruits, the six of the best you have in mind are not of the same nature, but if the title captures the interest of our

school yarn enthusiasts and leads them to consider the claims of Sexton Blake for a while - so much the better.

It is a far cry to the days when the writer could enter the newsagents and purchase a "Union Jack," not that he took it regularly (the Nelson Lee held that position) but if there was 2d to spare and a Union Jack on the counter he could not resist it. In those days to say Union Jack was to say Sexton Blake and in order to explain my "bent" towards this paper it should be made clear that the very first full length detective story I ever read was indeed a Sexton Blake.

While this story was in the Sexton Blake Library and while it was possible to purchase at least four copies a month, at fourpence a copy, my "bent" for Sexton Blake had to be satisfied in the pages of the Union Jack. Let me explain. Money was scarce and having speculated 2d on the "Nelson Lee" I had to look at the four monthly titles of the Sexton Blake Library and then decide which copy was the best fourpennyworth. As so often I did not have 4d I found the Union Jack satisfied my thirst for Sexton Blake. At 2d it met my pocket, as a weekly I did not have to wait a month for my next story, and thirdly it did not involve trying to work out which title to buy as there was only the one, and not four to choose from.

By now my readers will be wondering at what point the writer will reach the aforementioned "six of the best." It occurred to me one evening that it would be nice to read a few Union Jacks for old times' sake and so the next step was to contact Mrs. Josephine Packman, Sexton Blake Librarian, with a request for the loan of a copy or two. In due course a parcel arrived at my door containing six copies dated between 1924 and 1932, they were undoubtedly six of the best, the cover illustrations capturing the imagination instantly. Have you noticed that magazine and book cover illustrations of today for the most part lack imagination? Whether sex, adventure or detective tales the cover rarely gets beyond a nude or semi-nude or a passionate embrace scene, or some gooey-eyed nurse looking for a doctor lover, even the modern fiction detectives and spy characters seem to be more concerned with chasing women than criminals.

However, the six copies of the Union Jack I have before me have covers of imagination, pictures to quicken the interest, something to

make you want to read them.

The 1924 copy featuring Waldo could be by E. S. Brooks, though no name is given. The "Leopard of Droone" invites you to its pages as you gaze at the cover depicting a gaunt, rambling old house in the background, one upstairs window light casting an orange glow on a leopard guarding a high wall against unwelcome visitors, this also in deep orange colours against a dark background makes the scene "come alive."

The 1929 copy brings us "The Gnomid" and what a fearsome-looking fellow lurking out at you from a dark blue background, a creation of the well-known Gilbert Chester, captured by the cover artist as the very thing to make you want to buy a copy.

Next "The Foot of Fortune," author not mentioned. If you do not care much for man-eating leopards or terrifying Gnomids, how about a mummified foot? Very nice for a change and there it is on the cover for your inspection.

Arthur Pattison brings us next a combination of cowboy and detective "The Flaming Trail." I'm not a cowboy fan myself but no doubt some of my readers will hit the trail on glimpsing the cover.

G. H. Teed brings a thousand thrills in "The Crime of the Creek," a murder on the Essex mudflats, the cover artist brings you a view of the actual murder - you lucky people! You will also meet a drug-crazed maniac in a car on the Essex roads.

Last, but not least, Gilbert Chester turns up again with "Aerial Gold." The cover? I have no doubt readers will remember Pearl White and kindred characters being trapped times without number in a flooded cellar, the swirling waters slowly rising. Here you see Sexton Blake and Tinker in exactly the same fix as late as 1932.

Well, there you are, six Sexton Blake tales and six of the best.

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing one or more of the following: GEMS 801, 817, 826, 828, 832. Also POPULARS 401, 403, 407, 413, 415, 422, 441. Also GEMS 727 - 737 inclusive.

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DANNY'S DIARY

MAY 1921

The Royal Albert Hall was exactly 50 years old this month, and the King attended a special Jubilee Concert there to celebrate the occasion.

Doug had a very good Sexton Blake Library which he passed on to me. It was "The Lady of Ravensedge," and it featured that surprising criminal, Leon Kestrel. I always like the Kestrel tales. I also had a copy of the Boys' Herald. It had the start of a new naval serial, "The Lad from the Lower Deck." It is quite good, but the Herald is rather a shadow of what it used to be, and I wouldn't want it regularly. I bought a copy of the Nugget Library which contained a good St. Frank's tale entitled "The Amazing Schoolboy." His name was Timothy Tucker.

The Boys' Friend, as always, has been a star turn. The series about Mr. Dalton, the new master at Rookwood, continued. Opening tale this month was "Prefect versus Form-Master," in which Carthew carried on his feud with Mr. Dalton. Carthew made sure that the Head got to know that Mr. Dalton was a professional boxer, and the Head said he would have to think things over. However, he did not have to think for long. In the next story "The Fighting Form-Master," an awful Old Boy of Rookwood, turned up with a dog-whip, intending to lay it around the Head. So it was lucky there was a boxer on the staff, and the Head was suitably grateful.

"Wrongfully Accused" and "Carthew's Great Catch" told of Carthew looking for trouble with the Fistical Four. He even told the Head that the Four were drunk in their study from drinking spirits. But the spirits were only turpentine, and they were painting their study. Very good fun.

The Cedar Creek stories continued with Frank Richards getting around the Canadian West on his own. First tale, "Frank Richards - Rolling Stone," told how Mr. Penrose still bent his elbow too much, and sold his newspaper - including Frank's share - in order to get drunk. Drifting on, we found Frank "At The Gold-Diggings," coming up against a villain named Red-Deer Smith.

Rancher Lawless had offered "One Hundred Dollars Reward" to

anyone who took Frank Richards home to the Lawless Ranch. Silas Tutt thought he would trap Frank, and get the reward, but Frank had other ideas. Finally, in "Dead Man's Canyon," the villain, Le Couteau, attacked a gold-miner named Bronze Bill. Frank went to the assistance of the miner, and blew up the mine to foil Le Couteau. It's a great series, better than ever.

The Australian cricketers, under Armstrong, are going great guns. The Aussies have won the first Test Match at Nottingham.

And the cost of living is still going down.

The Magnet has had rather a cloudy month. Opening tale was a sequel to the one about Bob Cherry on the films. It was called "The Schoolboy Film-Stars." It was pretty awful. Really the Greyfriars boys seem to spend more time on the films than in school.

In "Mauleverer's Peril," Bunter borrowed Mauly's hat, so he was kidnapped by Huck Jagers who thought Bunter was Mauly.

"Bunter's Picnic" was a longer Magnet story than usual, and it was good. General Skepleton of Hawkscliff House was an old friend of Colonel Wharton. The General sent to Harry to invite him to take his friends on a picnic at the General's house, but Bunter got the letter, and he and Skinner and Snoop accepted the invitation, pretending to be Harry Wharton & Co.

Finally, in "The Vengeance of Woo Fing," a Chinese tried to steal the handbag of Miss Clegg, Uncle Clegg's niece, but Harry Wharton chipped in - and then the Chinese tried to get his revenge. Wun Lung played a part in the tale, but it was a silly affair.

A lady named Olive Clapham has gone to the bar - but not like Mr. Penrose. She is this country's first woman barrister.

I had a Jester, a paper I always like. P.C. Cuddlecook and Bobbie, the Terrier Tec., are still going strong.

The Gem has been half good and half bad. "Exiled From School" told of the juniors barring out in the house near Rylcombe Woods, in protest against the new Head, Dr. Grierson.

In "Chumming With Wildrake," Cardew and Wildrake became friendly. It was arranged that Cardew should arrange the first outing for the two, and Wildrake should arrange the second. Cardew took Wildrake to a gambling den, and when they returned, Tom Merry & Co.

gave them both a warm reception.

In the next story, Wildrake found himself unpopular in "His Chums Against Him." He took Cardew for a ten-mile walk, and had to carry Cardew home. Finally, Cardew put Wildrake right with his friends. An exceptionally good pair of stories, with a good new plot.

Final in the month, "Baggy Trimble's Great Swindle" was pretty silly. Trimble pretended to be the lost heir of Lord Noddy. But the lost heir had a shamrock tattooed on his elbow - and Tom Franklin was the one with the shamrock.

The cinemas have been good for the most part. We saw W. S. Hart in "Sand;" Charles Ray in "The Midnight Bell;" Lionel Barrymore in "The Copperhead;" Norma Talmadge in "Popper;" and Mabel Normand in "Jinx." Mabel is always good, but I liked her better in the Mack Sennett pictures of a year or two back.

At the end of the month there was rather a sad event when the Taunton Tramway system closed down. This was the second British Tramway system to close, the first being Sheerness in 1917. Taunton had the smallest tram system in the British Isles, but during its lifetime it carried over 15 million passengers. The closedown came as a result of a squabble with the Taunton Electric Supply Co. Some of the Taunton cars have been sold to Torquay, and the bodies of two single-deckers have gone to Gravesend in Kent.

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XX
TO OUR ADVERTISERS: Please print your copy-matter clearly. Some ads sent to us are difficult to decipher.

THE ELEPHANT AND CASTLE

(Eric Fayne continues the series in which he looks at some theatres and cinemas he visited in the roaring days of his youth, when he wore Oxford bags, a striped blazer - but never a hat.)

The district of London known as Elephant & Castle was the tramway enthusiast's paradise in its day. From a central spot, one could probably see thirty or forty trams at the same time. Trams converged on Elephant & Castle from all directions. One service - I think it was route 68 - enabled one to travel from Waterloo to Elephant & Castle for a penny, which may be the reason why we have been here before in this series and will come again later on.

The Elephant & Castle Theatre stood directly opposite the lovely new Trocadero Cinema. I only went once to the Elephant, which must have been a very old theatre, and that visit took place during the last week of its existence. It was the home of ripe melodrama. Probably, in Edwardian times, it had featured such plays as "The Lights of London" by George R. Sims. By the time that I knew it, it was featuring "Sweeney Todd" and the like, relics of Victorian "melodrammer," as novelties. The play I saw in the last week of the theatre's life as a theatre was "Maria Martin" or "The Mystery of the Red Barn." It was a real-life murder story which had always interested me, possibly because I had come across it in one of my sister's papers, the Girls' Reader, years earlier. I cannot swear to it, but I believe the play was presented by that famous old actor-manager, N. Carter Slaughter, who probably played the role of Corder, who bumped off Maria Martin and buried her in the Red Barn.

At that time, Mr. Slaughter would have been well beyond his prime, but I had seen him once before in a similar play at the famous Collins, Islington. Youth, after all, was not everything. Mr. Slaughter, if not romantic, was energetic in his stage villainy.

After "Maria Martin," the Elephant was pulled down, and a new cinema, also named the Elephant & Castle, was built in its place. This, of course, was in direct competition to the Trocadero.

Though it was probably smaller by at least a thousand seats, it was still a very fine and bright cinema, extremely comfortable,

elaborate, and well-appointed. It had a very wide and striking proscenium, but perhaps no stage to speak of. At any rate, I do not recall ever seeing cine-variety at the Elephant.

It had a lavish-looking organ, and each performance had its organ interlude, but the instrument could not compare with the magnificent Wurlitzer across the road. At any rate, it squeaked a lot, and I always used to refer to it as "Christie's Old Organ," in memory of a famous tear-jerker which I think I never read.

However, the Elephant played the finest films of the day, while the Troc, though it ran huge film programmes, relied more on its mammoth stage productions. At the Elephant I saw what I consider three of the finest films ever made: "Captains Courageous," "San Francisco," and "Mutiny on the Bounty," all of which, needless to say, we played in our own school cinema, not long after.

I believe that the Elephant & Castle Cinema still stands, but, if so, it is now named the A.B.C. Personally, I rather regret this standardisation of the names of cinemas. I loved Trocaderos, and Gems, and Rembrandts. I am much less excited by A.B.C.'s, Odeons, and Essoldos, even when they show films I might like to see. Usually, these days, they don't.

LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

by O. W. Wadham

When a Magnet collector dies other keen collectors wonder what is going to be done with his collection. In the case of the late Leo Maingot, of Wellington, N.Z., who died while on holiday in England last December, the question has been solved by the son.

Cyril Maingot, a part-time Varsity student, intends to hold and cherish his father's collection of over 300 golden age Magnets.

In a letter to collector Frank Knott, young Maingot writes: "I have been keen on Magnets, Gems and Schoolboy's Own Library since I started school. I have read and re-read every one in my father's collection. I can recall once so thoroughly believing in Greyfriars and St. Frank's that I asked my father if I could go to one of them to school!"

Cyril Maingot's other interest in science fiction, and he is at present working on a science fiction novel.

When Charles Hamilton died young Maingot was on the staff of the New Zealand Broadcasting Commission. He gave a memorial talk on the great man from a Wellington radio station.

It is certainly good to know that a son can be as enthusiastic as his father about boys' books of the Golden Age.

* * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 158. TAP, TAP, TAP!

No, dear friends, I am not returning to the theme of that far-off Christmas Number of 1908, when Binks, the School House page, went round the secret passages of St. Jim's tapping on the walls, and giving the impression that the famous ghost was walking. The taps in the title of this item refer to the monotonous click of the typewriter as the author pounds away at his machine, and the story gradually unwinds into a manuscript.

A reader, whose letter appeared in "The Postman Called" last month, asked whether Charles Hamilton was an expert typist or the reverse, and drew attention to the fact that the author always used the capital "I" to represent the figure 1.

Certainly Hamilton was an experienced hand with a typewriter - he seemed to have been tapping away for over 60 years, so he could hardly be anything else. It is unlikely that he had ever been trained in the use of the machine. He was probably like most of us - a member of the two-fingered variety. His use of the capital "I" as a figure would indicate this. It is, in fact, most remarkable that any man could be typing for so many years and yet never get round to the correct form of the figure 1.

Bill Lofts once wrote that Hamilton manuscripts were beautifully typed, and indicated that they were models of their kind. I am rather inclined to doubt the accuracy of that statement.

I have seen quite a number of the Hamilton manuscripts, and none of them was such that the average publisher would regard it as meeting the normal requirements for such work. I am, of course, speaking relatively. It is possible - even probable - that the requirements from authors submitting so many thousands of words week after week to the Amalgamated Press were much less demanding than those expected of an author submitting a novel or other work for a rather different readership. Bill Lofts may have meant that the scripts were models for the particular medium for which they were prepared.

A publisher usually wants a work typed on quarto-sized paper. The work should be double-spaced throughout, to make things easier

for "readers" and printers. A black typing ribbon should be used, and the type itself should never be small.

The Hamilton manuscripts which I saw did not meet any of those requirements. He used foolscap-size paper; he typed with single-spacing; in all the years I knew him he always used a purple ribbon, and the manuscripts I saw were in purple; the type of his machine was small.

Each of these details strays far from the impeccable manuscript which delights the heart of a publisher. They do, however, fit in with the fast-working author who has 55,000 words to tap out each week in a limited time. They also save paper for any writer who may be of a thrifty turn of mind.

A great deal more reading matter can be got on a foolscap sheet than on a quarto sheet, especially when it is accompanied by single-spacing and a very small type-face. The time needed to change paper in the machine is cut down considerably.

It may well be that all the prolific writers for the old papers turned out their MSS in this way. It saved them time, and was economical with paper, but it must have placed considerable strain on script-readers and printers.

So, perhaps, the only puzzling item is the purple ribbon. Why type in purple when black is normally necessary for manuscript work? It might have been an odd whim of the author. He might have regarded it as a kind of personal trademark. On the other hand, it is possible that a man of poor eyesight found it easier to follow his work in purple than in black.



CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

TOM SHERRARD. Two C.D's in one month proves that one cannot have too much of a good thing, especially when they contain what, to my mind, is one of the best features - the column "Let's Be Controversial." I always look forward to this splendid feature.

It is a coincidence that I myself read "Tom Merry's Christmas Quest" only about a fortnight earlier. Not having read the old Gem

Christmas Number you mention, I cannot compare the two stories. But having read recently quite a few of the Spring books and Mandeville issues of post-war Hamilton, I think it was not a matter of quality - the quality was always good - but of lack of original ideas.

You read one, you read the lot. Bunter is either chasing a jar of jam or being blamed for japing a beak - or Arthur Augustus was in trouble - or was it Cardew? Even the Carcroft tales offered nothing new. As for nostalgia - yes, nostalgia for the pre-war Magnet and Gem, to be spice up with Rookwood. Perhaps we do have memories. I like lamps and gaslight.

M. MILSTON. I disagree with you that the quality of the post-war Hamilton writings deteriorated. I vividly recall many scenes which will always be imprinted in my mind, coming from post-war Hamiltonia. Bunter crying at his Mum's bedside when she is lying ill in "Billy Bunter's Bolt;" Tom Redwing arriving on the platform to save Smithy in "Just Like Bunter." You mentioned "Billy Bunter's Beanfeast" as one you could not remember. I can never forget the scene when Smithy stole money from Coker's pocket while Coker was washing. How Hamilton described Smithy's descent into the world of the thief is to me unforgettable. I am not saying that post-war Hamiltonia is superior to pre-war Hamiltonia. Only that the war made no difference to a writer of Charles Hamilton's standard. He carried on just where he had left off.

(But, in fact, Redwing arriving on the platform to save Smithy was not Hamilton at all. - E.F.)

The Postman Called

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

RON BECK (Lewes): The reference in Danny's Diary to Shaun Spadah winning the Grand National in 1921 reminded me that this horse was trained at Lewes by George Poole and ridden by Fred Rees who lived locally. Every school child in the town was presented with a shilling by the trainer as a memento. Shaun Spadah is buried on Lewes

Racecourse, just a few minutes walk from my house.

A. V. PACKER (Southgate): With reference to Jim Cook's remarks in the Postman Called - I often went to the Cinema in my early youth to the River Hall and the Coronet, both in Islington. The entrance fee was $\frac{1}{2}d$ on Saturday afternoons. Before we went in we had a ha'penny middle-bit and ha'porth of chips at the fish shop. Happy days!

CYRIL ROWE (Norwich): Your mention of Sunday Companion reminds me that it was in this journal around 1914 (I was five), that I first really read on my own - "little stories with Big Meanings."

How long ago it seems now, when I've read hundreds and thousands of millions of words since then!

REV. GEOFFREY GOOD (Batley): I shall be sorry indeed if you are compelled to change the size and format of Collectors' Digest. Such a convenient size at present for a typed booklet. Convenient, too, for a section to be presented in two columns (as the present reprint).

Will you be forced to change the size? It seems to me that demand for the old standard sizes of paper will still continue, most especially when the old sizes are of undoubted proven convenience.

Congratulations, however, on the C.D. publication. Its arrival is met with the delight that heralded the publication of the Magnet in days long gone! To the C.D! Long may she reign!

C. H. MATTHEWS (Market Harborough): Your comments on Excelsior House at Surbiton and its surroundings are very true. I think we have all found that a favourite district has deteriorated with the passing of the years. I can remember when Brixton Hill in South London was lined with the Mansions of the rich City Merchants. Now those gracious houses are gone, replaced by soul-less blocks of flats, and smaller houses occupied by several families, their large front gardens filled with the refuse of years, and scrapped cars. It made me feel very sad when I went back to see Brixton Hill a few years back. Not far away, too, was Tulse Hill which in my younger days was lined with Georgian, Regency and Victorian Villas, each in their own grounds. All have been swept away in the sacred cause of progress.

Another thing I have noticed, too, is the disappearance of the

old established family grocer who stocked the finest of the quality foods for the occupiers of those same Villas. Within the last few years one by one they have closed down unable to compete with the Super Market whose customers know not the joy of gracious living.

I still get my Patum Peperium, my Fortts Bath Olivers, my Red Windsor Cheese, etc., etc., but I have to go a long way to a town quite 45 miles or so away.

Still we must be thankful for what has taken the place of gracious living, The Bingo Hall, The Disco, The Strip Club, the Amusement Arcade and the goggle box. Ah! me. I must be getting old.

W. SETFORD (Derby): Please don't alter the size of the Digest. If the change is inevitable, we must blame the March of Progress, or, rather, the March of the Maniacs who try to run this country. I hope you will be able to keep the old format of the Annual, too.

BEN WHITER (London): Along the Hackney Road and just before reaching the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children, there is a dingy looking passage named Sebright Passage. On the right track, as a public house sign board notified one that the Sebright Arms was nearby. Reaching the pub, a fairly new building, one came to the conclusion that the old pub and the theatre-cum-cinema could not have been very large. However, the chappie who kindly gives me a lift in his car, had all the information that I required. He remembered the cinema and pub. It was on the opposite side of the street from whence it now stands. Demolished now, and the pub, newly-built, on the opposite side of the road. My friend attended the cinema ere it was demolished and told of the bell that was rung at 9.50 p.m. which was ten minutes before the pub closed, so that patrons could have a last drink. The film stopped running during that ten minutes whilst the thirsty ones quenched their thirst. Thus you were correct re the dingy neighbourhood. The access from Mare Street was by dingy byways. Sebright Street is known by another name now, probably due to the fact that there is a Seabright Street in Bethnal Green. In the days of the cinema, the site was in the Shoredith borough and now the new pub is in the Bethnal Green part of the Tower Hamlets Borough. Thanks for the

local memory.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

NORTHERN

Meeting held April 10th, 1971.

Falling this year on Easter Saturday, our Annual General Meeting attracted a smaller attendance than usual, though we were glad to see Gerry Allison back in his accustomed place. The proceedings were inevitably overshadowed, though, by the news of Secretary, Jack Wood's sudden death a few days earlier. The Chairman in his opening remarks paid tribute to Jack not only as a long-standing and vigorously active member of the Club, but as an outstanding Nelson Lee scholar whose presence will be sorely missed wherever the hobby is practised.

Jack's loss was particularly untimely just as we were preparing to celebrate our 21st anniversary, and much of the evening's business was devoted to planning as well as we were able the special arrangements for next month's extraordinary meeting. The election of officers for the forthcoming year did not delay us long, Ron Hodgson taking over as Secretary, and the remaining office-holders being re-elected en bloc. It was agreed that a sub-committee should meet during the interval to keep check on the progress of arrangements.

All told a somewhat subdued gathering, very much applied to the work in hand, but there was the chance of rather more relaxed fare after the break for refreshments. Meanwhile we all look forward to a very notable occasion indeed on May 8th, with a great host of friends to mark the event. Don't forget the date, and the early start - 5.00 p.m.

JOHNNY BULL

LONDON

There was an attendance of twenty-one members at the April meeting of the club, held at the Richmond Community Centre, host

being Don Webster. Ron and Kit Beck made the journey from Lewes and Roy Parsons from Southampton. Notable absentees were Roger Jenkins and Mary Cadogan. The latter up in Yorkshire, probably making contacts with the fellow collectors of the Leeds Club.

Exhibit number one was a copy of Frank R. Bimber's book "Companion of 20th Century Literature" published by Longman's. It has one or two of the authors that the old boys are interested in. The chairman, Brian Doyle, brought it along.

Bob Blythe read extracts from club newsletter of April 11th, 1954. Meeting venue East Dulwich. Don Webster gave a discourse on Frank Nugent. Ray Hopkins gave a talk on the "Modern Boy" and one of its chief characters:- Captain Justice.

Larry Morley's Quiz resulted in Bill Lofts being the winner. Second was Brian Doyle and third place being filled by Ray Hopkins.

Bob Blythe read the Trackett Grim story "Marmaduke Much, the Midnight Mail Marauder." Brian Doyle read "The A to Z of Funnies" from a copy of "Mayfair Magazine."

Lastly the news that both the new impressions of Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake catalogues will soon be available.

Exhibit number two was a copy of "Five Years After," a S.B.L. that was reprinted from an original "Union Jack" and was acted as a play. A fine photograph was shewn round of the players that were featured on the stage.

Next meeting at 27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, S.E. 22, on Sunday, 16th May. Kindly inform Josie Packman if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN



REJOICE WITH US IN OUR JUBILEE YEAR.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST CELEBRATES ITS 25th BIRTHDAY
IN THE AUTUMN.



Early in the century, the Boys' Friend came up with a Double Number (32 large pages and a charming coloured cover) four or more times a year. One such special number was the Coronation Double Number, to celebrate the Coronation of King Edward the Seventh. The following comprises extracts from a rather fascinating article which appeared in this Coronation Special. The year - 1902.

WHEN THE KING WAS A BOY

SIXTY YEARS AGO AND NOW

In these days, when so much is being said and written about the Coronation of the King and about the triumphs of science in inventing and building airships and fast steamers, wireless telegraphy, the improved telephones, and railway engines which run at a speed of 80 miles an hour, it is just as well to enquire about some of the conveniences which were placed at the disposal of your grandfathers when the King was a boy.

His Majesty is 61 years old, having been born in 1841. In those far-off days everything was old-fashioned, slow, and tedious. There was none of that excitement which governs the life we are living to-day. Since the year the King was born everything has been changed - everything revolutionised, and to such a great extent that if the old folk came back to life and visited the scenes of their youth they really would not realise they were in the same world. Indeed, it is almost quite another world.

For instance, 61 years ago there were only nine daily newspapers in London; now there are three times that number. There were only 58 weekly newspapers, but now there are 350. In all England there were only 200 newspapers, but now there are 1,500.

In those days, newspapers were taxed, and your grandfather had to pay 4d for his morning paper; but now you can get a much better one for one halfpenny. If, 60 years ago, anyone had said that the day would come when you would buy a paper like the Daily Mail or the Evening News for a halfpenny, such a person would have been regarded as insane.

What two or three boys' papers there were then would not be tolerated now. Rubbishy fiction and unreliable articles proved the rule. There was not that care exercised which your Editor wields over the

pages of the Boys' Friend; nor had the boys of 60 years ago the benefit of a writing staff such as that which loyally works under the direction of the Editor of the Boys' Friend. The authors who write for your paper are University men and are highly paid for their work.

In the year 1841 there were only eight railway companies, owning a few hundred miles of line, but in the present year of grace there are over 70, owning 30,000 miles of railway.

If you want to send an urgent message you now send a telegram, but when the King was a boy there was no such convenience. The electric telegraph was known to the scientists, but it was not used in commerce. The King was a baby when Mr. Wheatstone patented his alphabetical printing telegraph.

The only means your grandfather had for sending an urgent message to any distant part of the country was by post-horse. The cost was six guineas from London to Manchester and back; now a telegram costs you only sixpence.

A message to and from Australia took over 6 months. To-day you can cable your friend in Melbourne, and get a reply from him in about an hour.

There is a wonderful difference, too, between the post-office of 1902 and that of 1841. The uniform rate of one penny a letter had only just commenced when the King was born, and as only 6 out of every 10 people could write, the correspondence of the day was light compared with the millions of letters that now pass through the post-office.

Adhesive stamps for letters first came into use in the year his Majesty was born. Sixty-one years ago tea, bread, and sugar were taxed heavily, and were very dear in consequence. Bread was then 1/6 for a quartern loaf (now it is 5d), and sugar was 8d a pound as against 2d to-day.

The omnibus was introduced by Shillibeer, and the fare between Paddington and the Bank was one shilling - now it is three-pence.

You are much better off than your grandfathers were when they were boys, because you have many more chances of becoming great and rich men than ever your grandfathers, or even your fathers, had.

