

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Vol. 26 No 307 JULY 1972

SEXTON
BLAKE

SEXTON BLAKE—star of

UNION JACK

An Omnibus Edition

THE PLAGUE OF THE UNION MEN
THE CRIMINALS' CONFEDERATION

UNION
JACK



This nostalgic gem
of crime novels of
the Thirties
contains

**SIX
THRILLERS**

from the
UNION JACK and
**DETECTIVE
WEEKLY**

The halcyon days
of pulp crime
fiction

The Plague of the
Union Men by
Gwyn Evans

Behind the Fog
and
Sexton Blake Wins
(The Criminals'
Confederation) by
Robert Murray

Land of Lost Men
by Rex Hardinge

The House of Light
by Edwy Searles
Brooks

Plus
**DETECTIVE
WEEKLY NO 1**
Lewis Jackson

The Plague of
ONION MEN

By Gwyn Evans



15p

The Union Jack returns to the shops for the first time in 40 years. This is the dust-jacket of the Union Jack volume published this summer by the firm of Howard Baker.

Ben Whiter provided one of his own style quizzes, one about the girls schools and naturally Mary Cadogan was the winner. Josie gave a fine C. D. June issue quiz which Eric won. Truly a happy and jolly meeting. Grateful thanks to the hosts.

Next meeting at the home of Brian and Mrs. Doyle, 14A Clarendon Drive, Putney, London, S. W. 15. Phone 788 1086. Sunday, 16th July.

NO OTHER CLUB REPORTS RECEIVED THIS MONTH AT THE
TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

UNCLE BENJAMIN

IN THE VAN WITH JUSTICE, BIGGLES,

by R. Hibbert

HUGHIE, GOFFIN AND GUBBY

I read the Modern Boy in my formative years and I'm the better for it. That greatest of all boys papers prepared me for the supersonic seventies.

Readers were in good company. In Magnet 1418, 'Quelch's Easter Egg,' page 20, we read:

'Mr. Quelch sorted out sections of a weekly paper - the Modern Boy. There were readers of that periodical in his Form. He had seen Harry Wharton and Co. gathered round a copy, reading it over one another's shoulders.'

The Magnet might teach us not to sneak on schoolfellows - "I say, you chaps. Winterbottom Major's the Mad Axe Murderer who's been terrorising the neighbourhood." "Quiet, you ass. The beaks might hear." It might din into us that smoking, playing billiards and backing horses just weren't done. It might give us a few stern aphorisms - 'Cricket comes before friendship' is one I've always prized - to see us through life, but it didn't give us the all round education the Modern Boy provided.

We had Pidgin English lessons from Charles Hamilton in his King of the Islands stories. I can still rattle off Pidgin the way old copper faced Kaio-lalulalonga taught me. As I said to my class only last week:

"Fellah belongum exercise booky toposide top teachah fellah's desk bettah do-um worky belongum home, break time or top teachah fellah tannum. Savvy?"

They were neat, pleasant, and efficient, and well earned any tip one might leave, though the doors of the Lyons' tea-shops as well as the menu cards bore the strict advice "No Gratuities."

How really first-class those Lyons' tea-shops were! Just when they first became a feature of London I don't know - probably long before any of us was born. But they flourished side-by-side with the old papers which we loved. The heyday of the one was the heyday of the other. As a child, the highlight of my school holiday was always a day in London, with a visit to the Coliseum matinee, and a meal at Lyons.

For the two decades between the wars, the prices did not vary at all. Everything was clean, spick and span. Service was excellent. A cup of tea was 2d. A pot of tea was 3d. per person. A mixed-ice was 4d. A banana split - a mouth-watering delicacy - was 9d. A cheese salad was a shilling, and on each table stood a bottle of "Lyonnaise" from which you helped yourself as liberally as you liked. They don't make Lyonnaise any more - of course they don't - but I always thought it the most delicious salad cream on the market.

A couple of chapters of the Magnet over a delightful meal in the Lyons on the corner of Kingsway in Holborn - and then the first house at the Holborn Empire, with, perhaps, Max Miller, the Houston Sisters, and Scott and Whaley topping the bill. That was my idea of a little bit of heaven. They did you proud in Lyons. Today the restaurants just "do" you - that is, if your digestive system can put up with "chips with everything."

They don't call them Lyons any more, of course. I'm not really sorry, for they are so different. They used to advertise "Where's George? Gone to Lyonch!" I daresay you remember.

There were other groups of tea-shops, of course. There were ABC's, and other names which elude me now, but somehow Lyons seemed to me always that little bit superior to the others.

A few days ago I popped back to Surbiton for a few hours. In a café I asked for a cup of tea and a pastry. "You mean a glarse of tea," the waitress told me haughtily.

I agreed that I probably meant a "glarse" of tea. It turned out to be a glass of hot water in which was soaking a tea-bag. For my glarse of tea and a pastry I was charged 16 pee. Which, dear friends,

Roger's articles are always a delight to read; something one can look forward to; and something one can share. A century of memories is a memorable century indeed. May fresh figures long continue to be registered on this particular score board!

LEN WORMULL (Romford): I have just been reading George Orwell's Essays, in which appears his article on Boys' papers, and the reply by Frank Richards. This is my first reading, and I must say that I thought our author's reply most brilliant. You may be aware of it, but a footnote states that it was much discussed and enjoyed in literary circles at the time and by Orwell himself. Before reading it, he expressed his apprehension about it ... "As I've no doubt made many mistakes, but what he'll probably pick on is my suggestion that these papers try to inculcate snobbishness."

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

NORTHERN

Meeting held on 10th June, 1972.

A lively gathering at the usual venue in Hyde Park, Leeds.

An early subject of discussion was the recent Howard Baker publications. The Chairman had that day received his copy of the Water Lily Series and was rather disappointed.

We all felt that the early reproductions had been of high standard, but there had since been a deterioration. Some pages were heavily printed and on others the type was faint. Of particular concern was the proposed reduction in the size of the Magnet volumes. There seemed no justification for this. No longer would we have true facsimiles, and future publications would not be uniform with our present volumes.

'The Magnet Companion' was mentioned and said to be 'a plethora of errors from beginning to end.'

It was unanimously agreed that a letter be sent to Howard Baker expressing our concern.

We arranged that during the next months certain of us should give talks on the subject, 'How my Collection Started.' Next month the

those days, any man could assert complete independence? Regarding Pentelow's influence, I have the feeling that H. A. Hinton was only accepted back into the editorial chair because of his war service, and that somebody put metaphorical tin-tacks on the chair. Was there some significance in Hinton splashing his return in the editorial columns and putting his name at the end? Agreed, Hinton always made a splash, but did he drown himself this time? What about the mystery of Hamilton's "St. Kit's" stories in Hinton's "School and Sport?"

Pentelow appeared to take a vicious swipe at Hamilton in Magnet 524 when he had Ogilvy say: "It's not Scotch, and nobody but an ignorant ass says Scotch ... He should say 'Scots' or 'Scottish.'" It is difficult to believe that Pentelow, after combing the Magnet files for his "Greyfriars Gallery," was unaware that Hamilton invariably used the term "Scotch."

I suppose most writers have a certain conceit and pride in their work, and an editor is in a good position to plug it - not you, Mr. Buddle, I love you! Percy Griffith was another example of this.

Regarding Courtney, I agree that he was not a serious loss. Gwynne was a better partner for Wingate if only because, being Irish, he provided a contrast.

I agree that we regard the Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories a lot more seriously than did the publishers, A. P. staff, and sub writers, but I suspect that Charles Hamilton himself had an equal reverence for them.

These are fascinating questions, but we will never be certain of all the answers. I suspect that Eric Fayne, Roger Jenkins, and myself are all partly right and partly wrong!

ERIC FAYNE adds: Mr. Lay strays a little from the point. The question was not what other A.P. workers thought of Hamilton but whether Pentelow could have been guilty of the failings of which he was accused. If Wheway wept at the memory of Pentelow, all those years later, he must have been an unusually sentimental man. If friendship was so great, it could mean that Wheway saw his old pal through rose-coloured glasses. We can accept that Pentelow was a very nice man to his friends.

Whether Hamilton was a snob and a hypocrite is irrelevant. It is obviously preposterous to accuse a man of hypocrisy because he condemned smoking and gambling in stories written for boys. If Hamilton was shy and distant, as they claim and I believe he was, it seems unlikely that people in the office can have known much of his private life. Maybe Wheway spoke with the hindsight of which Mr. Lay speaks.

Whether Hamilton was a snob it is difficult to say. I never saw anything which suggested it in the years I knew him. He may have been a bad mixer, but so are plenty of us through no fault of our own. My personal belief is that envious people

DANNY'S DIARY

JULY 1922

Another fine month of Rookwood in the Boys' Friend. The only bother is that the stories are so short, squashed into two pages.

"At the Eleventh Hour" was the last story of the present Mornington series. Jimmy is sentenced to expulsion for pinching the French master's watch. But in the end, Mornny repents, and confessed to the Head that he had plotted it all. So Mornny is expelled from Rookwood instead.

But, though Mornny is expelled, it is clear that we have not done with him. In "The Rookwood Exile," Erroll has a letter from Mornny, who is unhappy at home with his Stacpoole cousins. Rookwood juniors go to play cricket at Highcliffe, but, owing to "knowing best," Lovell loses the train, and Rookwood arrives a man short for the game at Highcliffe. But luckily Mornington is there as a sightseer, he plays for Rookwood, and wins the game.

In "Gunner's Deep Game," Gunner takes up hypnotism. It is good fun when his pal, Dickinson Minor, makes Gunner think that he, Gunner, has really got the power. In "Gunner's Latest" he tries to compel Jimmy, under hypnotism, to play him, Gunner, in the cricket match against Bagshot. It doesn't work. Moderately funny.

Finally, the first story of the holiday series. The Fistical Four are planning a walking holiday. In "Lovell's Bargain," Lovell buys a horse and trap from a man named Walker. But later on, a handsome, sunburned young man, arrives with a policeman to claim his pony and trap which has been stolen. The handsome young man is Mr. Richards. However, he is a good-natured young man, so he lends Lovell the pony and trap for the holidays.

Doug had one of the five new Sexton Blake Libraries. It was "The Fallen Star," about a cinema sensation, and it stars Leon Kestrel, the master mummer. I read it, and liked it a lot.

There has been a bad train smash at Liverpool Street Station. Nobody was killed, but 45 people were injured. There has also been a kind of Royal Wedding. Lord Louis Mountbatten, who is related to the

Frank standing four square to the elements like Ajax defying the lightning!

I have never, to my knowledge, wittingly or unwittingly, portrayed E. S. B. in such a light. You say that Brooks certainly cringed, and that I had made it very clear. I should like to know where. If, possibly, you are suggesting that his, and his editors, letters prove this then you are sadly off beam. What the letters do show, I think, is a dogged perseverance and a willingness to learn at a time when he must have been very hard put to make ends meet. Surely, admiration for his courage would be more apposite. If, instead, you are suggesting that his continuing to write for the Lee, in spite of editorial interference in the 30's was cringing then you are refusing to recognise the economic facts of life as E. S. B. saw it. He did not just bemoan his fate and do nothing. He decided to switch from writing stories for boys to writing for the adult market, and, after 20 years of the former, it required no small amount of moral courage to give it up in favour of the latter.

My whole enjoyment of your article was entirely spoiled by that totally unnecessary and insulting insertion.

LAURIE SUTTON

I was extremely interested in the June "Let's Be Controversial," which puts a different view to Roger Jenkins on the Hamilton/Pentelow relationship. I should like to offer some comments, although I did not have the advantage of meeting Charles Hamilton. My own views have been formed by reading along - and between - the lines of the Magnet and Gem, and by considering the views of others, including Eric Fayne and Roger Jenkins.

There are certainly unfathomable mysteries regarding Charles Hamilton's relationship with Pentelow, and his attitude to sub writers generally.

Undoubtedly Hamilton was a craftsman, with a fierce pride in his work and creations, and I cannot accept the view that he would willingly tolerate the substitute rubbish published under his pen-names. To that extent I support Hamilton's views as expressed in the later years. I can understand his adoption by request of substitute characters obviously introduced to boost geographical circulation - such as Clifton Dane and Sidney Clive.

or get payment for it.

"Bravo, Bulstrode" was pretty awful. In fact, awful rot. Greyfriars, in the Public Schools Cricket Championship, is due to play Grandcourt School in the final at Lords. Surely, if Greyfriars were in anything of the sort, the first eleven would play - not the Remove. The Greyfriars eleven goes out in a boat which gets caught in a storm, and all get soaked and have a terrible time. So Harry Wharton and Co. cannot play in the final. They send a second eleven to Lords, captained by Bulstrode - and this second eleven wins.

Finally "Mauly's Pals" is the first of what looks like being a holiday series. Mauly is to take a party on a yachting tour in the summer vac. Mauly finds himself with plenty of friends who want to go with him on the yacht, including Loder and Walker, whom Mauly snubs. Then Billy and Sammy Bunter fail in a ruse to get Mauly to take them on the yacht.

WANTED:- MONSTER LIBS.; S.O.L.S.; SEXTON BLAKES; GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUALS; ADVENTURES; CHAMPIONS; HOTSPURS; ROVERS; WIZARDS (pre-1955).

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND, AB2 2LR.

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S A L E:- GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUALS, MAGNETS, GEMS, PENNY POPULARS, NELSON LEE'S, SEXTON BLAKE'S. HOBBIES ANNUAL, £1. BLACKIES BOY'S ANNUAL £1. AUTOBIOGRAPHY FRANK RICHARDS £1.60. TURNER'S BOY'S WILL BE BOYS £1.50.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND, AB2 2LR.

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BULLDOG BREED BOOKS

by O. W. Wadham

An excellent story paper for boys, published during the 1914-18 war, has never, that I can recall, ever been mentioned in the varied pages of Collectors' Digest.

NEWNES' BULLDOG BREED LIBRARY gives no indication as to whether it was a weekly bi-monthly or monthly publication, but it certainly gave good value for two-pence, especially in war time.

Pages were the same size as the GEM in its last days, and there were 64 of them. Covers were nicely coloured and the print was clear and readable.

I have No. 7, "The Pirate Hunters," by STANLEY PORTAL HYATT, who also wrote "Dead Men's Gold," another BULLDOG BREED story. Other writers were, FELIX O'GRADY, OLIVER STUART, E. LE BRETON MARTIN, JAMES WYNNE BANDER, and Capt. RICHARD BENSON.

Imposing-sounding names and quite good writers. I wonder how many of them are known to Digest readers?

There were ten excellent drawings in each issue. Does any reader of Collectors' Digest know how long NEWNES BULLDOG LIBRARY lasted?

ECHOES ON "A SHADOW OF DOUBT"FRANK LAY

I was much impressed with your Let's be Controversial No. 171. This ties up very much with your editorial article as so much is written about Hamilton and Pentelow from hindsight rather than actual knowledge.

It has been my pleasure over the years to meet a number of persons who knew them both and the picture that emerges of them both is rather different than the one envisaged from reading the pages of the Digest and the Annuals. Normally the A. P. writers were a happy-go-lucky crowd, many living from hand to mouth, frequently borrowing or getting a 'sub' on the strength of material yet to be written and frequently fraternising over a pint at their favourite meeting places, the Fleet-street pubs. Into this picture Hamilton did not fit. He did not mix or fraternise, and the words you quote from my article on Wheway were echoed by others. He was regarded as a snob, albeit with awe and respect for his ability and a certain amount of envy. He was also regarded as somewhat of a hypocrite, writing with tongue in cheek of the horrors of smoking, playing cards and backing the horses and at the same time losing his own shirt at Monte Carlo. Conversely friends who knew him when he lived at Hampstead speak of him with affection as 'a bit of a gay dog' and 'a lad with the ladies.' It would seem very likely that he kept his business and his private life very much apart with only a few friends in the writing world.

The picture that emerges of Pentelow is rather different. Like Hamilton Edwards he was something of a 'father figure' with encouragement of new blood and the steady maintenance of old favourites. Wheway was certainly not exaggerating when he spoke of Hamilton, his views were expressed by too many others. When he spoke, however, of Pentelow, tears came to his eyes and in true Pentelow style he said 'It would not be true to say I liked him, rather that I loved him!' And for a grown man to confess such feelings is rather moving. He had nothing but good to say of Pentelow as being mainly responsible for his own growth as an A. P. writer, as an editor and as a man of generosity and understanding. In the cricket world where he was even more famous, many remember Pentelow with great affection.

It is probable that if Hamilton had visited Fleetway House more

rabid Hamilton fan.

In the few years immediately after the end of the war, this Water Lily series received tremendous acclaim from many of the old boys, but, in more recent times, some have come to the conclusion that it was overrated. This is your opportunity to decide for yourself.

Readers can hardly fail to enjoy a great deal of this sunny trip up the silvery Thames, and it should be added that the Magnet was really jam-packed in those halcyon days with material to please the average Greyfriars fan.

TWO OLD PERIODICALS

by S. Gordon Swan

IN THE PAST I have seen occasional references in Collectors' Digest to a periodical called YES OR NO, but cannot recall any mention of its companion paper, THE WEEKLY TALE-TELLER - for I believe these two were produced by the same publishing house.

THE WEEKLY TALE-TELLER was the better paper of the two. It specialised in short stories and there were half a dozen of these in each issue, so that one obtained a sixpenny magazine for one penny. And the stories were of a high standard, often better than one found in the higher-priced magazines.

In these pages I first encountered the name of E. R. Punshon, who wrote a story called The Scourge of God about Attila the Hun. I must admit I had never heard of this historical character until then, as I had never been taught about him at school. Punshon went on to make a name for himself as a writer of mystery yarns, his later books being published by Victor Gollancz. His Bobby Owen series of detective tales ran through the nineteen-thirties, forties and fifties. Since the mid-fifties I haven't heard of him, so must regretfully assume that he has passed on, like so many of the old stalwarts.

Neither of these periodicals was intended for boys, but I remember taking both of them in for some time. YES OR NO had a different policy: generally it contained one or two shorts, a long complete novel and an instalment of a serial. At one time a story by Edgar Wallace was running through its pages. The title was The Man Who Was Nobody, and it was a long time before I secured this in book form. Although many of Wallace's yarns are still in print I don't think this particular story is obtainable now.

Although there does not seem to be any connection between YES OR NO and THE BOYS' FRIEND, there may be a tenuous link. In issue No. 740 of the latter periodical, dated 14th August, 1915, there commences a serial by "Famous Maurice Everard," entitled Polruan's Millions. In his chat, the Editor says that readers won't be familiar with the name of Maurice Everard, "for he has hitherto worked in another and higher sphere." (I don't know who the Editor was at this period, but it is hard to imagine Hamilton Edwards admitting that there was a higher sphere than his boys' papers!)

Then, in No. 756 of THE BOYS' FRIEND, begins a new story by Maurice Everard, A Tale of Twelve Cities, dealing with detective Garnett Bell and his assistants. I have a vague recollection that, among the long complete novels in YES OR NO there were some dealing with the adventures of Garnett Bell. I am open to correction on this point: is there a reader whose memory goes back to those days and who can confirm that this investigator actually did appear in YES OR NO? I am sure I had heard of Garnett Bell before the name became associated with Maurice Everard and THE BOYS' FRIEND.

If this character did feature in that old paper of fifty-five years ago, then YES OR NO might be the "higher sphere" to which the Editor referred. Or again, Maurice Everard might have contributed to the more expensive magazines before he began writing boys' stories. Are there any copies of these two old periodicals still in existence?

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 101 - Gem No. 1205 - "The Shady Three"

In that dim twilight of 1928-31, the real Martin Clifford wrote a mere handful of stories for the Gem. The surprising thing is not so much why he didn't write more - or better ones - but why he wrote any at all. When it is realised that it was not until 1939 that Charles Hamilton took up his pen to relate the St. Jim's saga in earnest once again, the twilight stories remain a curious enigma to puzzle and tantalise the reader.

Gem 1205 began with Baggy Trimble and a cake missing from Gussy's study, which ended up in Mr. Lathom's room after being confiscated. The Shady Three were in fact Cutts, Prye and St. Leger, who were using Mr. Lathom's study as a means of egress and ingress after dark. In one thrilling chapter they all came in contact with Mr. Lathom who got knocked down in the dark, and he blamed Trimble. It was hardly a novel situation, but it made a competent story, and perhaps some discerning readers felt it constituted an agreeable change after all the substitute stories.

The St. Jim's story was rather brief, as there were two serials being run at this time, Rookwood being promised for the following week. Even more disquieting was a page of silly chatter from Whiskers, the office boy, and a strip of cartoon facts and puzzles entitled "Would You Believe It?" It is sad to note how far the Gem was resorting to gimmicky material in an attempt to maintain its circulation. It is true that the red Magnet at one time featured a page of cartoon jokes, but that was in the distant past, and certainly since those days the Magnet presented an appearance which consistently maintained a dignity far above the Gem in its twilight years. Of course, what the Gem needed was not more gimmicks and serials but a long run of genuine Hamiltonian material.

There were some interesting items, nevertheless, in Gem 1205. Cardew contributed a typically Hamiltonian dissertation concerning Nelson's last words, and there were some good character studies of St. Leger and Cutts. St. Leger was said to be related to half the peerage, and his behaviour was certainly far superior to that of his shady friend. All the same, these two items were hardly sufficient to raise

of the mill bossy headmasters. Mr. Martin was willing to have a bash at fratricide and there isn't a lot of that about; not in the teaching trade anyway.

The Colonel Clinton Series (Nelson Lee Library Old Series 187 - 194) and the Howard Martin Series (Old Series 229 - 236) were both reprinted, in 1926, in "The Monster Library of Complete Stories." They're good examples of the high class melodrama Edwy specialised in. Melodrama set against a public school background. Only a genius could combine the traditions of Henry Irving's Lyceum with those of Tom Brown's Rugby.

Mr. Martin is one of those teachers who begins as he means to go on. One of the "I never warn, I always strike" brigade. He's such a despot that by the end of his first day the Sixth Form are threatening to leave St. Frank's en masse, by the end of his second day Nelson Lee has been sacked and by the end of his third day the Ancient House section of the Remove have rebelled.

"Hands up all those who vote for a revolt against the Head's tyranny," says Nipper. "Hands up those who are on the side of justice and right."

It all sounds a bit French Revolutionish. And no doubt a very similar speech was made by the sixteen year old Byron in 1805 when he led his fellow Harrovians in revolt against their new head master.

In no time at all the Fossils have barricaded themselves in the West Wing.

Martin uses threats, force, trickery and a private army of mis-guided Boy Scouts. He almost succeeds in putting down the revolt. But the wordly wise Nipper knows that there is one greater than even the most powerful head master. So he kidnaps the Chairman of the Board of Governors and threatens to tar and feather him unless he signs a document restoring to the boys all the liberties they enjoyed before Mr. Martin arrived. And, with this new Magna Carta safely tucked away in the breast pocket of Nipper's Eton jacket, the barricades come down.

Tar and feather the Chairman of the Governors.

There are some passages in Nelson Lee that are so anti-establishment, so against what most adults would regard as lawful authority they make "The Little Red School Book" look like a tract put

No. 427. What I feel is that Blake was evidently so popular, that by Editorial decision, or by some conversion in Hayter's own mind to the thought that Blake tales would sell more easily, the change was made from Dove to Blake. My collection runs to No. 438 and all the Blake tales are set in this venue. Bear in mind that there is no mention of Tinker or of Pedro, nor of Baker Street, nor of the customary Scotland Yard detectives who appeared in the Union Jack at that time.

When calling them "long complete novels" the Penny Pictorial Editorial policy did this for all their short stories; the fact is that they were of about five pages and I estimate of 5 or 6 thousand words each. They were neat little deductive tales, certainly much less adventure in them than in the far longer efforts in the Union Jack. And, by the way, anyone looking back on many of those yarns must be struck by the adventure element of Blake, in many, many cases this outweighed the detective element. The outwitting of an outlaw, adventurer or crook, by a powerful honest antagonist in straightforward conflict.

In No. 445, which I possess, Blake is operating from Messenger Square. My gaps run till 462 and 463 where Blake is still at this residence. I possess numbers in the 470's where the venue is indeterminate. Presumably Messenger Square. I believe the Aston Villa set-up was throughout by C. Hayter, the Messenger Square scenes also by Hayter and other authors. Certainly 490 is by Michael Storm as it brings in Lady Molly Maxwell.

No. 491 "The Mystery of the Egyptian Bonds" may help the Michael Storm students as it recounts the capture by Blake and the sending to prison of Rupert Forbes. George Marsden Plummer appears first in U. J. 222, "The Man from Scotland Yard." He escapes from prison together with Rupert Forbes in B. F. L. No. 96 "The Mervyn Mystery," Forbes dying at the end of the tale leaving Plummer to carry on (escaping again) in U. J. 315 "The Swell Mobsman" and in many issues thereafter. This may help readers who start with the "Mervyn Mystery" to realise how the former capture of Forbes came about.

I possess long runs (with gaps) up to 757 which seems to be the next to last appearance and in this Blake is still in Messenger Square. Still no Tinker, no Pedro, though oddly enough the pictorial heading to the tales through many years was of Blake smoking, in an armchair by

character by Hamilton or Brooks.

He indulged in japes that were far removed from the usual type, and his prowess at cricket was near-county class.

The following extract from Nelson Lee New series 157 "Mutiny" sums up Browne in a few words.

"Well done, Browne!" said Nipper enthusiastically.

"You did it like a master."

"I did it like a Browne!" corrected William Napoleon

"Which, as you will admit, is the same thing."

Although these characters are not alike, any story in which they appear is bound to be of an extremely high grade.

THOSE STORY COMPETITIONS

by W. O. G. Lofts

Readers with inspiring ambitions to become story writers, rubbed their hands with anticipation by the announcement by editor H. A. Hinton in MAGNET No. 399, 1915. He stated "that he would pay £15 to the reader who sent in the best Greymfriars story of 30,000 words. The winning entry would also be published if it was of sufficient standard."

How many 'budding Frank Richards' sent in manuscripts will never be exactly known, though G. R. Samways a Chief-sub editor well remembers John Nix Pentelow the war-time editor (who took over when Hinton left on war-service) smoking endless cigarettes and spending many hours pouring over the manuscripts which were in the main written in longhand. As Roger Jenkins once suggested, "the competition was simply inaugurated to order, to ensure that, come what may, the war would not compel the MAGNET to close down." Simply, it was an attempt to find substitute writers.

The winner was eventually announced as ROBERT LANGLEY, 233 Lynton Road, Bermondsey. A Londoner living in the Bricklayers Arms district. There is no evidence that his story was ever published, nor have I traced of anything by him in print. Though his story could never have been worse than some that appeared in that period. Further lists of a hundred prize winners were announced in later issues, where in the main they received a bound volume of Longfellow's poems. Amongst the prize-winners were the names of L. E. Ransome, W. L. Catchpole,

(cont'd on Page 20)

more than the Slater Case which was again in the headlines 20 years after poor Miss Gilchrist had been battered to death.

In the story the setting is Edinburgh instead of Glasgow; the aged spinster has become Miss Susannah Gilbertson and the wrongly imprisoned man is "Otto Slade."

Author's names were not given in the Union Jack in 1928 but a glance at the Sexton Blake Index reveals that the writer in this case was that mercurial son of Wales, Gwyn Evans, as might be expected from the presence in the narrative of the reporter Splash Page, about whom Evans wrote so often.

The story starts in 1908 with the murder of Miss Gilbertson and switches to 1928 when Otto Slade is released from prison, which is just the curtain-raiser to Blake, Tinker and Page becoming involved in an adventure which results in the discovery of the real man on the stairs for whom Slade was mistaken in 1908.

Slade is fully cleared and restored to the world of free men - where, incidentally Tinker notes that "the thing that startles Slade more than anything after 20 years in clink, is not wireless, aeroplanes or the movies, but short skirts." In a touching farewell scene, the released prisoner, his cheeks wet with tears, takes Blake's hand in gratitude. "Heaven bless you, sir. I - I knew justice would be done in the end." At this Splash Page is moved to remark, with indignation: "Justice! You'll jolly well not be satisfied with that Slade, old boy. If the "Daily Radio" don't get you twenty thousand pounds for your sufferings, dash it, I'll live in Tooting!"

Well, this brings us back, with some irony, to the letters found in the Manchester cellar. Because the real life counterpart of Otto Slade did not receive twenty thousand, but only six thousand. Conan Doyle raised one thousand pounds for Slater's defence, £330 of it out of his own pocket, and it seems, the content of the letters was concerned with Doyle's attempts to recover this sum from Slater.

Otto Slade's cheeks may have been wet with tears of gratitude and Oscar Slater might even have shed a tear or two, but his expressions of gratitude did not extend to paying Conan Doyle that £330. Doyle died in 1930 without Slater having paid up.

Nevertheless, the creator of Sherlock Holmes was charitable

more than the Slater Case which was again in the headlines 20 years after poor Miss Gilchrist had been battered to death.

In the story the setting is Edinburgh instead of Glasgow; the aged spinster has become Miss Susannah Gilbertson and the wrongly imprisoned man is "Otto Slade."

Author's names were not given in the Union Jack in 1928 but a glance at the Sexton Blake Index reveals that the writer in this case was that mercurial son of Wales, Gwyn Evans, as might be expected from the presence in the narrative of the reporter Splash Page, about whom Evans wrote so often.

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character by Hamilton or Brooks.

He indulged in japes that were far removed from the usual type, and his prowess at cricket was near-county class.

The following extract from Nelson Lee New series 157 "Mutiny" sums up Browne in a few words.

"Well done, Browne!" said Nipper enthusiastically.

"You did it like a master."

"I did it like a Browne!" corrected William Napoleon

"Which, as you will admit, is the same thing."

Although these characters are not alike, any story in which they appear is bound to be of an extremely high grade.

THOSE STORY COMPETITIONS

by W. O. G. Lofts

Readers with inspiring ambitions to become story writers, rubbed their hands with anticipation by the announcement by editor H. A. Hinton in MAGNET No. 399, 1915. He stated "that he would pay £15 to the reader who sent in the best Greyfriars story of 30,000 words. The winning entry would also be published if it was of sufficient standard."

How many 'budding Frank Richards' sent in manuscripts will never be exactly known, though G. R. Samways a Chief-sub editor well remembers John Nix Pentelow the war-time editor (who took over when Hinton left on war-service) smoking endless cigarettes and spending many hours pouring over the manuscripts which were in the main written in longhand. As Roger Jenkins once suggested, "the competition was simply inaugurated to order, to ensure that, come what may, the war would not compel the MAGNET to close down." Simply, it was an attempt to find substitute writers.

The winner was eventually announced as ROBERT LANGLEY, 233 Lynton Road, Bermondsey. A Londoner living in the Bricklayers Arms district. There is no evidence that his story was ever published, nor have I traced of anything by him in print. Though his story could never have been worse than some that appeared in that period. Further lists of a hundred prize winners were announced in later issues, where in the main they received a bound volume of Longfellow's poems. Amongst the prize-winners were the names of L. E. Ransome, W. L. Catchpole,

(cont'd on Page 20)

No. 427. What I feel is that Blake was evidently so popular, that by Editorial decision, or by some conversion in Hayter's own mind to the thought that Blake tales would sell more easily, the change was made from Dove to Blake. My collection runs to No. 438 and all the Blake tales are set in this venue. Bear in mind that there is no mention of Tinker or of Pedro, nor of Baker Street, nor of the customary Scotland Yard detectives who appeared in the Union Jack at that time.

When calling them "long complete novels" the Penny Pictorial Editorial policy did this for all their short stories; the fact is that they were of about five pages and I estimate of 5 or 6 thousand words each. They were neat little deductive tales, certainly much less adventure in them than in the far longer efforts in the Union Jack. And, by the way, anyone looking back on many of those yarns must be struck by the adventure element of Blake, in many, many cases this outweighed the detective element. The outwitting of an outlaw, adventurer or crook, by a powerful honest antagonist in straightforward conflict.

In No. 445, which I possess, Blake is operating from Messenger Square. My gaps run till 462 and 463 where Blake is still at this residence. I possess numbers in the 470's where the venue is indeterminate. Presumably Messenger Square. I believe the Aston Villa set-up was throughout by C. Hayter, the Messenger Square scenes also by Hayter and other authors. Certainly 490 is by Michael Storm as it brings in Lady Molly Maxwell.

No. 491 "The Mystery of the Egyptian Bonds" may help the Michael Storm students as it recounts the capture by Blake and the sending to prison of Rupert Forbes. George Marsden Plummer appears first in U. J. 222, "The Man from Scotland Yard." He escapes from prison together with Rupert Forbes in B. F. L. No. 96 "The Mervyn Mystery," Forbes dying at the end of the tale leaving Plummer to carry on (escaping again) in U. J. 315 "The Swell Mobsman" and in many issues thereafter. This may help readers who start with the "Mervyn Mystery" to realise how the former capture of Forbes came about.

I possess long runs (with gaps) up to 757 which seems to be the next to last appearance and in this Blake is still in Messenger Square. Still no Tinker, no Pedro, though oddly enough the pictorial heading to the tales through many years was of Blake smoking, in an armchair by

of the mill bossy headmasters. Mr. Martin was willing to have a bash at fratricide and there isn't a lot of that about; not in the teaching trade anyway.

The Colonel Clinton Series (Nelson Lee Library Old Series 187 - 194) and the Howard Martin Series (Old Series 229 - 236) were both reprinted, in 1926, in "The Monster Library of Complete Stories." They're good examples of the high class melodrama Edwy specialised in. Melodrama set against a public school background. Only a genius could combine the traditions of Henry Irving's Lyceum with those of Tom Brown's Rugby.

Mr. Martin is one of those teachers who begins as he means to go on. One of the "I never warn, I always strike" brigade. He's such a despot that by the end of his first day the Sixth Form are threatening to leave St. Frank's en masse, by the end of his second day Nelson Lee has been sacked and by the end of his third day the Ancient House section of the Remove have rebelled.

"Hands up all those who vote for a revolt against the Head's tyranny," says Nipper. "Hands up those who are on the side of justice and right."

It all sounds a bit French Revolutionish. And no doubt a very similar speech was made by the sixteen year old Byron in 1805 when he led his fellow Harrovians in revolt against their new head master.

In no time at all the Fossils have barricaded themselves in the West Wing.

Martin uses threats, force, trickery and a private army of mis-guided Boy Scouts. He almost succeeds in putting down the revolt. But the wordly wise Nipper knows that there is one greater than even the most powerful head master. So he kidnaps the Chairman of the Board of Governors and threatens to tar and feather him unless he signs a document restoring to the boys all the liberties they enjoyed before Mr. Martin arrived. And, with this new Magna Carta safely tucked away in the breast pocket of Nipper's Eton jacket, the barricades come down.

Tar and feather the Chairman of the Governors.

There are some passages in Nelson Lee that are so anti-establishment, so against what most adults would regard as lawful authority they make "The Little Red School Book" look like a tract put

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 101 - Gem No. 1205 - "The Shady Three"

In that dim twilight of 1928-31, the real Martin Clifford wrote a mere handful of stories for the Gem. The surprising thing is not so much why he didn't write more - or better ones - but why he wrote any at all. When it is realised that it was not until 1939 that Charles Hamilton took up his pen to relate the St. Jim's saga in earnest once again, the twilight stories remain a curious enigma to puzzle and tantalise the reader.

Gem 1205 began with Baggy Trimble and a cake missing from Gussy's study, which ended up in Mr. Lathom's room after being confiscated. The Shady Three were in fact Cutts, Prye and St. Leger, who were using Mr. Lathom's study as a means of egress and ingress after dark. In one thrilling chapter they all came in contact with Mr. Lathom who got knocked down in the dark, and he blamed Trimble. It was hardly a novel situation, but it made a competent story, and perhaps some discerning readers felt it constituted an agreeable change after all the substitute stories.

The St. Jim's story was rather brief, as there were two serials being run at this time, Rookwood being promised for the following week. Even more disquieting was a page of silly chatter from Whiskers, the office boy, and a strip of cartoon facts and puzzles entitled "Would You Believe It?" It is sad to note how far the Gem was resorting to gimmicky material in an attempt to maintain its circulation. It is true that the red Magnet at one time featured a page of cartoon jokes, but that was in the distant past, and certainly since those days the Magnet presented an appearance which consistently maintained a dignity far above the Gem in its twilight years. Of course, what the Gem needed was not more gimmicks and serials but a long run of genuine Hamiltonian material.

There were some interesting items, nevertheless, in Gem 1205. Cardew contributed a typically Hamiltonian dissertation concerning Nelson's last words, and there were some good character studies of St. Leger and Cutts. St. Leger was said to be related to half the peerage, and his behaviour was certainly far superior to that of his shady friend. All the same, these two items were hardly sufficient to raise

rabid Hamilton fan.

In the few years immediately after the end of the war, this Water Lily series received tremendous acclaim from many of the old boys, but, in more recent times, some have come to the conclusion that it was overrated. This is your opportunity to decide for yourself.

Readers can hardly fail to enjoy a great deal of this sunny trip up the silvery Thames, and it should be added that the Magnet was really jam-packed in those halcyon days with material to please the average Greystriars fan.

TWO OLD PERIODICALS

by S. Gordon Swan

IN THE PAST I have seen occasional references in Collectors' Digest to a periodical called YES OR NO, but cannot recall any mention of its companion paper, THE WEEKLY TALE-TELLER - for I believe these two were produced by the same publishing house.

THE WEEKLY TALE-TELLER was the better paper of the two. It specialised in short stories and there were half a dozen of these in each issue, so that one obtained a sixpenny magazine for one penny. And the stories were of a high standard, often better than one found in the higher-priced magazines.

In these pages I first encountered the name of E. R. Punshon, who wrote a story called The Scourge of God about Attila the Hun. I must admit I had never heard of this historical character until then, as I had never been taught about him at school. Punshon went on to make a name for himself as a writer of mystery yarns, his later books being published by Victor Gollancz. His Bobby Owen series of detective tales ran through the nineteen-thirties, forties and fifties. Since the mid-fifties I haven't heard of him, so must regretfully assume that he has passed on, like so many of the old stalwarts.

Neither of these periodicals was intended for boys, but I remember taking both of them in for some time. YES OR NO had a different policy: generally it contained one or two shorts, a long complete novel and an instalment of a serial. At one time a story by Edgar Wallace was running through its pages. The title was The Man Who Was Nobody, and it was a long time before I secured this in book form. Although many of Wallace's yarns are still in print I don't think this particular story is obtainable now.

Although there does not seem to be any connection between YES OR NO and THE BOYS' FRIEND, there may be a tenuous link. In issue No. 740 of the latter periodical, dated 14th August, 1915, there commences a serial by "Famous Maurice Everard," entitled Polruan's Millions. In his chat, the Editor says that readers won't be familiar with the name of Maurice Everard, "for he has hitherto worked in another and higher sphere." (I don't know who the Editor was at this period, but it is hard to imagine Hamilton Edwards admitting that there was a higher sphere than his boys' papers!)

Then, in No. 756 of THE BOYS' FRIEND, begins a new story by Maurice Everard, A Tale of Twelve Cities, dealing with detective Garnett Bell and his assistants. I have a vague recollection that, among the long complete novels in YES OR NO there were some dealing with the adventures of Garnett Bell. I am open to correction on this point: is there a reader whose memory goes back to those days and who can confirm that this investigator actually did appear in YES OR NO? I am sure I had heard of Garnett Bell before the name became associated with Maurice Everard and THE BOYS' FRIEND.

If this character did feature in that old paper of fifty-five years ago, then YES OR NO might be the "higher sphere" to which the Editor referred. Or again, Maurice Everard might have contributed to the more expensive magazines before he began writing boys' stories. Are there any copies of these two old periodicals still in existence?

ECHOES ON "A SHADOW OF DOUBT"FRANK LAY

I was much impressed with your Let's be Controversial No. 171. This ties up very much with your editorial article as so much is written about Hamilton and Pentelow from hindsight rather than actual knowledge.

It has been my pleasure over the years to meet a number of persons who knew them both and the picture that emerges of them both is rather different than the one envisaged from reading the pages of the Digest and the Annuals. Normally the A. P. writers were a happy-go-lucky crowd, many living from hand to mouth, frequently borrowing or getting a 'sub' on the strength of material yet to be written and frequently fraternising over a pint at their favourite meeting places, the Fleet-street pubs. Into this picture Hamilton did not fit. He did not mix or fraternise, and the words you quote from my article on Wheway were echoed by others. He was regarded as a snob, albeit with awe and respect for his ability and a certain amount of envy. He was also regarded as somewhat of a hypocrite, writing with tongue in cheek of the horrors of smoking, playing cards and backing the horses and at the same time losing his own shirt at Monte Carlo. Conversely friends who knew him when he lived at Hampstead speak of him with affection as 'a bit of a gay dog' and 'a lad with the ladies.' It would seem very likely that he kept his business and his private life very much apart with only a few friends in the writing world.

The picture that emerges of Pentelow is rather different. Like Hamilton Edwards he was something of a 'father figure' with encouragement of new blood and the steady maintenance of old favourites. Wheway was certainly not exaggerating when he spoke of Hamilton, his views were expressed by too many others. When he spoke, however, of Pentelow, tears came to his eyes and in true Pentelow style he said 'It would not be true to say I liked him, rather that I loved him!' And for a grown man to confess such feelings is rather moving. He had nothing but good to say of Pentelow as being mainly responsible for his own growth as an A. P. writer, as an editor and as a man of generosity and understanding. In the cricket world where he was even more famous, many remember Pentelow with great affection.

It is probable that if Hamilton had visited Fleetway House more

or get payment for it.

"Bravo, Bulstrode" was pretty awful. In fact, awful rot. Greyfriars, in the Public Schools Cricket Championship, is due to play Grandcourt School in the final at Lords. Surely, if Greyfriars were in anything of the sort, the first eleven would play - not the Remove. The Greyfriars eleven goes out in a boat which gets caught in a storm, and all get soaked and have a terrible time. So Harry Wharton and Co. cannot play in the final. They send a second eleven to Lords, captained by Bulstrode - and this second eleven wins.

Finally "Mauly's Pals" is the first of what looks like being a holiday series. Mauly is to take a party on a yachting tour in the summer vac. Mauly finds himself with plenty of friends who want to go with him on the yacht, including Loder and Walker, whom Mauly snubs. Then Billy and Sammy Bunter fail in a ruse to get Mauly to take them on the yacht.

WANTED:- MONSTER LIBS.; S.O.L.S.; SEXTON BLAKES; GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUALS; ADVENTURES; CHAMPIONS; HOTSPURS; ROVERS; WIZARDS (pre-1955).

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND, AB2 2LR.

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S A L E :- GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUALS, MAGNETS, GEMS, PENNY POPULARS, NELSON LEE'S, SEXTON BLAKE'S. HOBBIES ANNUAL, £1. BLACKIES BOY'S ANNUAL £1. AUTOBIOGRAPHY FRANK RICHARDS £1.60. TURNER'S BOY'S WILL BE BOYS £1.50.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND, AB2 2LR.

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BULLDOG BREED BOOKS

by O. W. Wadham

An excellent story paper for boys, published during the 1914-18 war, has never, that I can recall, ever been mentioned in the varied pages of Collectors' Digest.

NEWNES' BULLDOG BREED LIBRARY gives no indication as to whether it was a weekly, bi-monthly or monthly publication, but it certainly gave good value for two-pence, especially in war time.

Pages were the same size as the GEM in its last days, and there were 64 of them. Covers were nicely coloured and the print was clear and readable.

I have No. 7, "The Pirate Hunters," by STANLEY PORTAL HYATT, who also wrote "Dead Men's Gold," another BULLDOG BREED story. Other writers were, FELIX O'GRADY, OLIVER STUART, E. LE BRETON MARTIN, JAMES WYNNE BANDER, and Capt. RICHARD BENSON.

Imposing-sounding names and quite good writers. I wonder how many of them are known to Digest readers?

There were ten excellent drawings in each issue. Does any reader of Collectors' Digest know how long NEWNES BULLDOG LIBRARY lasted?

Frank standing four square to the elements like Ajax defying the lightning!

I have never, to my knowledge, wittingly or unwittingly, portrayed E. S. B. in such a light. You say that Brooks certainly cringed, and that I had made it very clear. I should like to know where. If, possibly, you are suggesting that his, and his editors, letters prove this then you are sadly off beam. What the letters do show, I think, is a dogged perseverance and a willingness to learn at a time when he must have been very hard put to make ends meet. Surely, admiration for his courage would be more apposite. If, instead, you are suggesting that his continuing to write for the Lee, in spite of editorial interference in the 30's was cringing then you are refusing to recognise the economic facts of life as E. S. B. saw it. He did not just bemoan his fate and do nothing. He decided to switch from writing stories for boys to writing for the adult market, and, after 20 years of the former, it required no small amount of moral courage to give it up in favour of the latter.

My whole enjoyment of your article was entirely spoiled by that totally unnecessary and insulting insertion.

LAURIE SUTTON

I was extremely interested in the June "Let's Be Controversial," which puts a different view to Roger Jenkins on the Hamilton/Pentelow relationship. I should like to offer some comments, although I did not have the advantage of meeting Charles Hamilton. My own views have been formed by reading along - and between - the lines of the Magnet and Gem, and by considering the views of others, including Eric Fayne and Roger Jenkins.

There are certainly unfathomable mysteries regarding Charles Hamilton's relationship with Pentelow, and his attitude to sub writers generally.

Undoubtedly Hamilton was a craftsman, with a fierce pride in his work and creations, and I cannot accept the view that he would willingly tolerate the substitute rubbish published under his pen-names. To that extent I support Hamilton's views as expressed in the later years. I can understand his adoption by request of substitute characters obviously introduced to boost geographical circulation - such as Clifton Dane and Sidney Clive.

DANNY'S DIARY

JULY 1922

Another fine month of Rookwood in the Boys' Friend. The only bother is that the stories are so short, squashed into two pages.

"At the Eleventh Hour" was the last story of the present Mornington series. Jimmy is sentenced to expulsion for pinching the French master's watch. But in the end, Morny repents, and confessed to the Head that he had plotted it all. So Morny is expelled from Rookwood instead.

But, though Morny is expelled, it is clear that we have not done with him. In "The Rookwood Exile," Erroll has a letter from Morny, who is unhappy at home with his Stacpoole cousins. Rookwood juniors go to play cricket at Highcliffe, but, owing to "knowing best," Lovell loses the train, and Rookwood arrives a man short for the game at Highcliffe. But luckily Mornington is there as a sightseer, he plays for Rookwood, and wins the game.

In "Gunner's Deep Game," Gunner takes up hypnotism. It is good fun when his pal, Dickinson Minor, makes Gunner think that he, Gunner, has really got the power. In "Gunner's Latest" he tries to compel Jimmy, under hypnotism, to play him, Gunner, in the cricket match against Bagshot. It doesn't work. Moderately funny.

Finally, the first story of the holiday series. The Fistical Four are planning a walking holiday. In "Lovell's Bargain," Lovell buys a horse and trap from a man named Walker. But later on, a handsome, sunburned young man, arrives with a policeman to claim his pony and trap which has been stolen. The handsome young man is Mr. Richards. However, he is a good-natured young man, so he lends Lovell the pony and trap for the holidays.

Doug had one of the five new Sexton Blake Libraries. It was "The Fallen Star," about a cinema sensation, and it stars Leon Kestrel, the master mummer. I read it, and liked it a lot.

There has been a bad train smash at Liverpool Street Station. Nobody was killed, but 45 people were injured. There has also been a kind of Royal Wedding. Lord Louis Mountbatten, who is related to the

those days, any man could assert complete independence? Regarding Pentelow's influence, I have the feeling that H. A. Hinton was only accepted back into the editorial chair because of his war service, and that somebody put metaphorical tin-tacks on the chair. Was there some significance in Hinton splashing his return in the editorial columns and putting his name at the end? Agreed, Hinton always made a splash, but did he drown himself this time? What about the mystery of Hamilton's "St. Kit's" stories in Hinton's "School and Sport?"

Pentelow appeared to take a vicious swipe at Hamilton in Magnet 524 when he had Ogilvy say: "It's not Scotch, and nobody but an ignorant ass says Scotch ... He should say 'Scots' or 'Scottish.'" It is difficult to believe that Pentelow, after combing the Magnet files for his "Greyfriars Gallery," was unaware that Hamilton invariably used the term "Scotch."

I suppose most writers have a certain conceit and pride in their work, and an editor is in a good position to plug it - not you, Mr. Buddle, I love you! Percy Griffith was another example of this.

Regarding Courtney, I agree that he was not a serious loss. Gwynne was a better partner for Wingate if only because, being Irish, he provided a contrast.

I agree that we regard the Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories a lot more seriously than did the publishers, A. P. staff, and sub writers, but I suspect that Charles Hamilton himself had an equal reverence for them.

These are fascinating questions, but we will never be certain of all the answers. I suspect that Eric Fayne, Roger Jenkins, and myself are all partly right and partly wrong!

ERIC FAYNE adds: Mr. Lay strays a little from the point. The question was not what other A.P. workers thought of Hamilton but whether Pentelow could have been guilty of the failings of which he was accused. If Wheway wept at the memory of Pentelow, all those years later, he must have been an unusually sentimental man. If friendship was so great, it could mean that Wheway saw his old pal through rose-coloured glasses. We can accept that Pentelow was a very nice man to his friends.

Whether Hamilton was a snob and a hypocrite is irrelevant. It is obviously preposterous to accuse a man of hypocrisy because he condemned smoking and gambling in stories written for boys. If Hamilton was shy and distant, as they claim and I believe he was, it seems unlikely that people in the office can have known much of his private life. Maybe Wheway spoke with the hindsight of which Mr. Lay speaks.

Whether Hamilton was a snob it is difficult to say. I never saw anything which suggested it in the years I knew him. He may have been a bad mixer, but so are plenty of us through no fault of our own. My personal belief is that envious people

Roger's articles are always a delight to read; something one can look forward to; and something one can share. A century of memories is a memorable century indeed. May fresh figures long continue to be registered on this particular score board!

LEN WORMULL (Romford): I have just been reading George Orwell's Essays, in which appears his article on Boys' papers, and the reply by Frank Richards. This is my first reading, and I must say that I thought our author's reply most brilliant. You may be aware of it, but a footnote states that it was much discussed and enjoyed in literary circles at the time and by Orwell himself. Before reading it, he expressed his apprehension about it ... "As I've no doubt made many mistakes, but what he'll probably pick on is my suggestion that these papers try to inculcate snobbishness."

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

NORTHERN

Meeting held on 10th June, 1972.

A lively gathering at the usual venue in Hyde Park, Leeds.

An early subject of discussion was the recent Howard Baker publications. The Chairman had that day received his copy of the Water Lily Series and was rather disappointed.

We all felt that the early reproductions had been of high standard, but there had since been a deterioration. Some pages were heavily printed and on others the type was faint. Of particular concern was the proposed reduction in the size of the Magnet volumes. There seemed no justification for this. No longer would we have true facsimiles, and future publications would not be uniform with our present volumes.

'The Magnet Companion' was mentioned and said to be 'a plethora of errors from beginning to end.'

It was unanimously agreed that a letter be sent to Howard Baker expressing our concern.

We arranged that during the next months certain of us should give talks on the subject, 'How my Collection Started.' Next month the

They were neat, pleasant, and efficient, and well earned any tip one might leave, though the doors of the Lyons' tea-shops as well as the menu cards bore the strict advice "No Gratuities."

How really first-class those Lyons' tea-shops were! Just when they first became a feature of London I don't know - probably long before any of us was born. But they flourished side-by-side with the old papers which we loved. The heyday of the one was the heyday of the other. As a child, the highlight of my school holiday was always a day in London, with a visit to the Coliseum matinee, and a meal at Lyons.

For the two decades between the wars, the prices did not vary at all. Everything was clean, spick and span. Service was excellent. A cup of tea was 2d. A pot of tea was 3d. per person. A mixed-ice was 4d. A banana split - a mouth-watering delicacy - was 9d. A cheese salad was a shilling, and on each table stood a bottle of "Lyonnaise" from which you helped yourself as liberally as you liked. They don't make Lyonnaise any more - of course they don't - but I always thought it the most delicious salad cream on the market.

A couple of chapters of the Magnet over a delightful meal in the Lyons on the corner of Kingsway in Holborn - and then the first house at the Holborn Empire, with, perhaps, Max Miller, the Houston Sisters, and Scott and Whaley topping the bill. That was my idea of a little bit of heaven. They did you proud in Lyons. Today the restaurants just "do" you - that is, if your digestive system can put up with "chips with everything."

They don't call them Lyons any more, of course. I'm not really sorry, for they are so different. They used to advertise "Where's George? Gone to Lyonch!" I daresay you remember.

There were other groups of tea-shops, of course. There were ABC's, and other names which elude me now, but somehow Lyons seemed to me always that little bit superior to the others.

A few days ago I popped back to Surbiton for a few hours. In a café I asked for a cup of tea and a pastry. "You mean a glarse of tea," the waitress told me haughtily.

I agreed that I probably meant a "glarse" of tea. It turned out to be a glass of hot water in which was soaking a tea-bag. For my glarse of tea and a pastry I was charged 16 pee. Which, dear friends,

Ben Whiter provided one of his own style quizzes, one about the girls schools and naturally Mary Cadogan was the winner. Josie gave a fine C. D. June issue quiz which Eric won. Truly a happy and jolly meeting. Grateful thanks to the hosts.

Next meeting at the home of Brian and Mrs. Doyle, 14A Clarendon Drive, Putney, London, S. W. 15. Phone 788 1086. Sunday, 16th July.

NO OTHER CLUB REPORTS RECEIVED THIS MONTH AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

UNCLE BENJAMIN

IN THE VAN WITH JUSTICE, BIGGLES,
HUGHIE, GOFFIN AND GUBBY

by R. Hibbert

I read the Modern Boy in my formative years and I'm the better for it. That greatest of all boys papers prepared me for the supersonic seventies.

Readers were in good company. In Magnet 1418, 'Quelch's Easter Egg,' page 20, we read:

'Mr. Quelch sorted out sections of a weekly paper - the Modern Boy. There were readers of that periodical in his Form. He had seen Harry Wharton and Co. gathered round a copy, reading it over one another's shoulders.'

The Magnet might teach us not to sneak on schoolfellows - "I say, you chaps. Winterbottom Major's the Mad Axe Murderer who's been terrorising the neighbourhood." "Quiet, you ass. The beaks might hear." It might din into us that smoking, playing billiards and backing horses just weren't done. It might give us a few stern aphorisms - 'Cricket comes before friendship' is one I've always prized - to see us through life, but it didn't give us the all round education the Modern Boy provided.

We had Pidgin English lessons from Charles Hamilton in his King of the Islands stories. I can still rattle off Pidgin the way old copper faced Kaio-lalulalonga taught me. As I said to my class only last week:

"Fellah belongum exercise booky topside top teachah fellah's desk bettah do-um worky belongum home, break time or top teachah fellah tannum. Savvy?"

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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The Union Jack returns to the shops for the first time in 40 years. This is the dust-jacket of the Union Jack volume published this summer by the firm of Howard Baker.