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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

SEPTEMBER 1972

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*VOL.
26*

*No.
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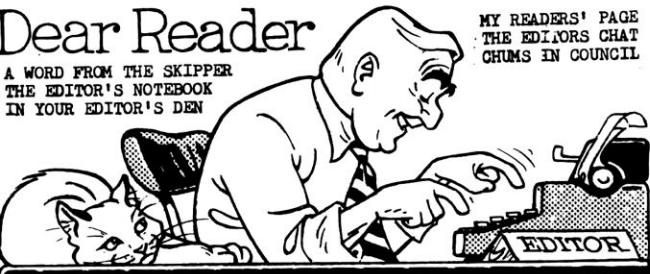
SEPTEMBER 1972

Price 15p

Dear Reader

A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER
 THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK
 IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

MY READERS' PAGE
 THE EDITORS CHAT
 CHUMS IN COUNCIL



ALWAYS READ THE SMALL PRINT

Last month one of our most knowledgeable contributors of the Blake saga lamented that so many great Sexton Blake stories, which appeared in the era of very small print - 1917 till the early twenties - are never likely to be reissued.

That tiny print, which we took in our stride when we were very young, cannot be read so easily now by most of us. The boys' papers mainly affected by that small print craze were the Union Jack and the Sexton Blake Library, not to mention the Penny Popular. Clearly the

editors wished to provide, in the smaller issues brought about by war-time paper restrictions, the same amount of reading matter as had been enjoyed in happier times. It was understandable in the case of the Penny Pop, which always offered three stories, but, in the case of the Sexton Blake yarns, one would have thought it would have been preferable to apply a certain shrinkage to the tales themselves. Plenty of them were unnecessarily long and would have suffered but little from careful pruning. On the other hand, even some children do not have perfect eyesight, and must have found the minute print difficult to negotiate.

Of course, larger print was introduced in the Union Jack very early in the twenties, when the paper was enlarged and it was a period of very fine stories.

Many of the Pierre Quiroule stories of small print days were reprinted years later and I was mainly responsible for this happening. One never reprinted, however, was the first Blake I ever read. This was "The Mystery of the Turkish Agreement," and it has always puzzled me as to why it was not given a second airing.

It is, probably, unlikely that we shall now see facsimiles of the small print masterpieces to which Mr. Swan, our Blakiana contributor, referred. All the same, the Detective Library, reduced in size, features rather unaccountably in the excellent new Union Jack volume. Maybe, some time, somebody will blow up in size some of the old small-type Union Jacks and give a new generation the chance to enjoy them.

C. M. DOWN

Elsewhere in this issue we report the death of Mr. C. M. Down, in his early eighties. He was the editor for whom I always had the greatest affection. I had a considerable amount of correspondence with him long ago, when I was responsible for the Gem reprinting the old Tom Merry tales from the beginning. I still have, packed away among my souvenirs, many of the letters which he wrote me at that time. At first he was adamant that the suggestion I made could not be considered, but later he wrote that it was to be given a short trial period. That period lasted for eight years, and must have worked out successfully. Though I lost touch with Mr. Down in recent years, I still had a number of delightful and informative letters from him in the ten years after the

war ended.

His death is the cutting of almost the last link with the Companion Papers which he loved so much.

THE ANNUAL

With this issue we send you the order form for the 1972 C. D. Annual to be published in December. With production costs as they are, it will not be possible to print many extra copies to allow for those who may be very late in ordering. Those wishing to advertise in the Annual should send in their "copy" not much later than mid-November.

We have some wonderful articles in store for you in this 26th edition of the Annual. All is now safely gathered in, and, in our opinion, it is a splendid harvest. Les Rowley, in meditative mood, presents us with a Greyfriars Calendar which gives much food for thought. Bill Lofts discusses an unusual St. Frank's tale, Mary Cadogan presents her views on Marjorie Hazeldene and S. Gordon Swan gives us one of his thoughtful studies of the Sexton Blake saga. Roger Jenkins is on top of his form and among many old favourites you will find sterling offerings from Harold Truscott, T. M. Cockburn and Charles Baker. Mr. Buddle is also back in a new adventure at Slade. Plus plenty more, of which more news anon.

YOUR EDITOR

REVIEW

BUNTER & THE SECRET OF THE SCARAB

Frank Richards
(Armada 20p)

This is "The Secret of the Scarab" from the Magnet's Egyptian series of 1932. One single Magnet to one Armada book is good sense in many ways, enabling the publishers to offer the story in good clear, large print, without any pruning.

Another advantage is that, though the Egyptian series is inclined to be episodic in its entirety, without much plot development, each single story was excellent of its type and is really almost complete in itself. These Armadas are good value for money. The Shields illustrations from the original are reproduced inside the book. It is a pity that one could not be reproduced as a cover illustration.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Roger M. Jenkins

No. 103 - "Mike" by P. G. Wodehouse

P. G. Wodehouse's school stories were written in his early days and few critics would dispute that they were of a decidedly variable quality. With "Mike" he undoubtedly excelled himself, for it was first reprinted from the pages of the Captain by Black in 1909 and it has been available in various editions most of the time since.

The tale falls neatly into two halves, the first dealing with Mike Jackson's arrival at Wrykyn. It is a story redolent of those remarkable Edwardian summers and the sort of unashamed prosperity that allowed Mr. Jackson to hire a professional cricketer from the Oval to coach all his sons. The Wrykyn episodes are based entirely on cricket. There is no villain and the only source of conflict is whether Mike Jackson will get his older brother's place in the school team. There are many descriptions of cricket matches and one or two diversionary escapades, but not one single classroom scene, which is rather surprising, as Mike's bad reports cause his father to withdraw him from Wrykyn just when he is about to become captain of cricket. He is transferred to Sedleigh, a much smaller school with a reputation for good academic achievements. Incidentally, P. G. Wodehouse fans can have a certain mild amusement in identifying the originals of his various public schools.

At Sedleigh Mike meets Psmith, who has been transferred from Eton for the same reason. They join forces and become archaeologists in order to avoid cricket. It is at this point that the story shifts its emphasis completely. Psmith steals the limelight and the story becomes one of conflict, against other seniors who claim their study, against Mr. Downing who dislikes them and against Adair, the cricket captain. Psmith is the directing intelligence behind their campaigns and becomes a memorable character, with a fastidious elegance, a disconcerting habit of looking at people through a monocle and a quaint mode of utterance, as on the occasion when a fight was about to break out in his study:-

Psmith turned away and resting his elbows on the mantelpiece, gazed at himself in the looking-glass.

"I'm not the man I was," he sighed, after a prolonged inspection.

"There are lines on my face, dark circles beneath my eyes. The fierce rush of life at Sedleigh is wasting me away."

It is not surprising that Psmith was destined to turn up again and again in various Wodehouse novels, but Mike, the hero of this story, sank gradually into obscurity. He was last heard of living in a humble villa in West Kensington in "Leave it to Psmith," a reference that must have meant nothing to those unaware of Psmith's illustrious history. It is interesting to note that Wodehouse is probably the only author of school stories who later used the same characters in adult novels. He certainly never aimed at the Peter Pan illusion, but this fact does not detract in any way from the quality of his school stories and anyone who puts down "Mike" cannot help wishing with a sigh that P. G. Wodehouse had never been drawn into the world of adult novels. Dated though his school stories inevitably are, he possessed an integrity and sense of vision that could have carried him to the heights of school story writing.

DEATH OF MAGNET & GEM EDITOR

It is with deep regret that I have to record the death of Mr. C. M. Down during March this year. He was 82. Starting on the staff of PLUCK and MARVEL around 1905, he had the distinction of being on the MAGNET & GEM from the first to last issues - apart from a break for war-service during World War I. It was in 1921, following the hasty departure of H. A. Hinton, that he became Companion Papers editor.

W. O. G. LOFTS

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DANNY'S DIARY

SEPTEMBER 1922

In the Boys' Friend Library this month there is an exciting new story "The Idol of St. Frank's." This is the first time I remember St. Frank's being in the B. F. L. General Tucker is the uncle of Timothy Tucker, the crank of St. Frank's who plays a big part in the tale. There is a mystery and a good deal of fun, concerning Rur, the idol, which is sent to Timothy Tucker.

Despite the small print, the Rookwood tales in the Boys' Friend are now shorter than they have ever been. They usually occupy two pages, but when one allows for the pictures, the advertisements and the large competition block which now are included with the two pages, the reading matter cannot occupy more than one page.

The holiday walking tour continued with "Trouble for the Tramps," in which Mornington decided to leave Stacpoole Lodge and to join up with Jimmy Silver's holiday party. Next week in "Mornington's Resolve," his uncle comes in pursuit of Mornington, gets into danger and is rescued by Mornington. At the end, Mornington goes home with his uncle and relations between uncle and nephew seem to be much better.

Continuing their holiday, the chums come into contact with Grundy, Wilkins and Gunn of St. Jim's, not to mention Honest John, a pedlar who steals their horse and trap and the St. Jim's trio's bicycles. The Rookwooders get back all the stolen things. This was named "Ructions En Route."

Though it is late in the season, we had a nice cricket story when the Rookwood tramps again met up with Grundy & Co. in "The Rookwood Recruits."

Then "The Man Who Escaped" was the last of the vac series. On their last night in camp, the chums clash with a criminal who has burgled a mansion at Deepden. Jimmy almost captures the man. Back at school Jimmy meets up with the new football coach Mr. Wilmot. Jimmy is dumbfounded to recognise the new coach as the burglar of Deepden. The start of an exciting new series.

The two old comic papers "Comic Life" and "Lot-O-Fun" have

now been enlarged and are now tuppence each. So is "Chuck's."

Very old characters appear in the new stories in the Sexton Blake Library - in "The Case of the Bogus Laird" there is George Marsden Plummer and in "Mystery of the Clock" there are Count Carlac and Professor Kew. My brother Doug says that these characters have been appearing longer than he can remember. And Doug, at seventeen, is quite an old man.

In Paris, Georges Carpentier has been knocked out by Battling Siki in the 6th round. Poor old Georges.

In the Irish Free State, the first Irish parliament of all time has met. From now on there will be peace and quiet in the lovely Emerald Isle.

The Magnet started off with two comedy tales which are fairly funny if a bit silly. A firm named Sharkey & Co. advertise for plays which can be used as curtain-raisers in London theatres. Coker writes a play, but it is Bunter who sends in a play for consideration. This story is entitled "Coker's Rival." In the sequel "Skinner's Chum," Skinner makes Bunter his pal, in the belief that Bunter is to get money for the play. But it turns out that Sharkey & Co. are merely agents on the make. There is rather a curious bit where Bunter writes to Wally for a loan, and Wally sends him ten bob. It doesn't look as though Wally is a Greyfriars form-master any longer.

These two little bits of fun were from the real Frank Richards, but the one next week, "The Schoolboy Divers," wasn't.

This was very far-fetched, but not a bad little tale. A diving ship called the Comet comes off the coast near Greyfriars to search illegally for gold bars on a sunken ship. The captain, Captain Holden, uses the Famous Five as divers and Bunter stows away on the ship. There is one bit which makes me think.

"I'm at Greyfriars, near here," says Harry Wharton.

"Were you here during the war?" asks Captain Holden.

"Yes," says Harry.

"All the time?" asks Holden.

"Yes," says Harry again.

Well, of course, Harry was in the Magnet all through the war. But the war has now been over four years and it is eight years since it

started. If Harry is a boy of fifteen, he can't, to make sense, have been a boy at Greyfriars all that time. Authors don't think we readers have any sense.

Next, from the real Frank Richards, came a jolly little Keystone comedy named "The Persecution of Mr. Prout." Prout punishes the Bounder and the Bounder, in revenge, inserts a small ad. in a local paper in Prout's name: "Balding school-master needs advice on hair troubles." Mr. Prout gets some odd visitors who make him tear what hair he has left.

Finally, "Fishy the Footballer," another little trifle which could not have taken the real Frank long to write. Fishy blackmails Wharton into giving him a place in the football match to be played on Saturday. Mr. Hiram K. Fish comes to the game, but Harry has altered the fixtures so that Fishy plays with the fags.

There has been an explosion in a mine at Whitehaven and thirty-five miners have been entombed. A very sad disaster.

Some wonderful pictures in the cinemas in the old town. Now the autumn is coming in, I like to go to the pictures quite a lot. Dorothy Gish in "Ghost in the Garret;" Norma Talmadge in "Smilin' Through" (this was a lovely one); William S. Hart in "The Whistle;" Betty Balfour in "Squibs Wins the Calcutta Sweep," and this was great. These were all good, but the great event of the month has been "Way Down East." The stars of this wonderful film are Lillian Gish and Richard Barthelmess, and also in it are Burr McIntosh and Creighton Hale. It is produced by D. W. Griffith. The scenes on the ice are just marvellous and the orchestral accompaniment I shall never forget. Mum and I enjoyed it so much that we went to see it twice. It was on all the week.

The great Levison series has gone on in the Gem and it is a lovely piece of writing. The first of the month was "Hard Luck on Levison." Trimble has spread the rumour that Levison was expelled from Greyfriars for robbing the Head. Levison falls out with all his friends over the matter. In "In Deep Disgrace" Cardew played a trick to prevent Doris Levison and Cousin Ethel from visiting St. Jim's while Levison is in trouble. "The Outcast of the School" told of Levison barred by all his friends.

In "Down and Out," Frank Levison, thinking to help his brother,

went to see Dr. Locke at Greyfriars and made matters worse. Levison had not been expelled from Greyfriars for theft, but he had been compelled to leave. Levison had entered St. Jim's without the Head of that school knowing his story. So now Levison is expelled from St. Jim's.

Final of the month was the last of the series - "Levison's Chance." Levison, on his way home, gets badly hurt in saving Mr. Selby from a ruffian. Young Frank stops a passing motorist and pants: "My brother's hurt - dying perhaps. Give me a lift with him, for the love of Heaven." I don't think a fag would really talk like that.

But all is forgiven now at St. Jim's and it was a truly great series.

Doug has a crystal set and earphones and he gets some wonderful reception. Some people have loud speakers and Doug hopes to experiment with one soon.

SPOTTING THE SUBS!

by Laurie Sutton

From time to time I have made observations on the substitute writers and their stories in the Magnet and Gem. For the benefit of anyone who feels I may be presumptuous in claiming a special knowledge and authority on this subject, I should like to give some idea as to how my knowledge has been acquired.

I adopted the method which has proved to be the only really sound way of identifying a particular writer, although there are many cases where there is insufficient evidence, and such stories must be set aside as not proven. My method now is that I do not merely read the stories, but study them and analyse them. It is a laborious task and entails keeping a sheet of paper with each story and pausing in the reading to write down every phrase that is slightly unusual, every unaccustomed character or place name. This slow and detailed reading obviously gives a far closer feel and insight into the various authors' styles than could be gathered from a normal reading, although style is only one factor in identifying a particular author. In fact, only two writers can be positively identified on style alone - J. N. Pentelow in practically all his stories and Charles Hamilton in all his greater stories when he is in the full flow of his genius. All other authors provide only pointers to be considered along with other factors.

A study of more than two thousand story analyses is revealing. I must first make it clear that I never consult the "official lists" before studying a story, so that I cannot be influenced by prior knowledge. At risk of weakening my case, I must confirm that Bill Loft's lists, as published in the C.D. Annuals of 1962 and 1964 are mainly correct and clearly based on authentic evidence. This does not, however, alter the fact that intimate acquaintance with the stories proves beyond doubt that there are a considerable number of errors in these lists, through no fault of Mr. Loft's, who has accepted his information and evidence in good faith. Fortunately I am supported by factual proof on some of these errors, and it clearly follows that if some errors are possible in these official lists then others are also possible.

The most influential support for my research came from Bob Blythe, through the original manuscripts of E. S. Brooks. Two stories, for example, that Mr. Blythe could positively identify as Brooks were Magnet 256 and Gem 1050. I had already identified

cont'd on Page 19



Conducted by

Josie Packman

THOSE
SEXTON BLAKE
STORIES IN BRAVE
AND BOLD WEEKLY.

Brave and Bold Weekly where Sexton Blake was metamorphosed into Gordon Keith, was published by Street and Smith, a prolific publisher of various weeklies, libraries and series from 1855 on. Brave and Bold was not a weekly of original stories, over 90% of the material published first appeared in many libraries and series. Some Serials were abridged by the editors to meet the 32-page format. In

THE UNION JACK LIBRARY.

2^D

A Thrilling Complete Story of Mystery and Detective Adventure, introducing **SEXTON BLAKE and TINKER**, the world-renowned Detectives of Baker Street, and "GRANTS" GRANT, the King's Spy.

some cases left over stories from defunct weeklies were also included.

Brave and Bold started on 22nd December, 1902, and ran for 429 issues to 11th March, 1911. It ran many types of stories in its pages, Western, Sea, Historical, Mystery, Rags-to riches and adventures in various parts of the world. With #168 a new "author" was introduced under the name of "Lawrence White Jr." and a new fictional character, Gordon Keith. But it was not until in #377 that through carelessness in the editorial office the name of Sexton Blake slipped out. The caption under the picture of the cover read "an Earthquake Shock!" cried Sexton Blake. It must have puzzled the youthful readers not to find the name of Sexton Blake in the body of the story. From all indications there was no effort made to change any of the other characters names, with the exception of Tinker who became "Checkers" Pedro stayed Pedro.

The writer has given titles of the stories, dates of their publication, first chapter heading and first lines of thirty of the thirty-one stories in the hope that some knowledgeable readers or literary sleuths can pinpoint the American reprints to their correct English counterparts. It would be desirable from a bibliographic viewpoint to have the correct author and the publication dates of the English Sexton Blakes included.

A selection of the titles is published and a further lot will appear next month. If anyone can supply the answers will they please send them to Mrs. Josie Packman.

The Sexton Blake Stories in Brave & Bold (U. S.)

- | | | |
|----------------|--|---|
| <u>No. 159</u> | January 6, 1906. | <u>That Boy Checkers</u> or, Chased Half Way Round the World. |
| Chapter 1 | The Click of the Tape. | |
| 1st Line | In the corner of the room a tape-machine started to click. | |
| <u>No. 168</u> | March, 1906. | <u>The African Trail.</u> |
| Chapter 1 | The Explosion. | |
| 1st Line | At eleven o'clock of a crisp and sunny autumn morning. | |
| <u>No. 172</u> | April 7, 1906. | <u>Under Many Suns</u> or Gordon Keith's Longest Chase. |
| Chapter 1 | The Theft of the Belcaster Jewels. | |
| 1st Line | The day was just like any other day, London was | |

-
- No. 181 June 9, 1906. The Lost Chief.
Chapter 1 Chased by Comanches.
1st Line Colonel, what do you think of it? Is it any use to go on?
- No. 184 June 30, 1906. On Sampan and Junk.
Chapter 1 The Clue of the Mother-of-Pearl Dust.
1st Line Checkers, Gordon Keith asked, as he entered his consulting room.
- No. 188 July 28, 1906. Tracked Across Europe.
Chapter 1 The Disappearance of Mr. Luke Tregellis.
1st Line Gordon Keith sat listening to one of the strangest tales
- No. 206 December 1, 1906 The Sky Smugglers.
Chapter 1 The shot in the Wood.
1st Line "A fine morning Mr. Lade," said William Bashfield.
- No. 210 December 29, 1906 Gordon Keith in Java.
Chapter 1 Black Balty Scents Danger.
1st Line About 4 o'clock of a February afternoon a Hansom
- No. 214 January 26, 1907 On the Pampas.
Chapter 1 An Unexpected Interruption.
1st Line The Court was Crowded.
- No. 226 April 20, 1907 Marooned in the Ice.
Chapter 1 Missing for Ten Years.
1st Line Gordon Keith was in want of something to do.
- No. 232 June 1, 1907 In the Land of the Slave Hunters.
Chapter 1 The Plunge in the Dark.
1st Line The night was dark as pitch.
- No. 236 June 29, 1907 To Unknown Lands.
Chapter 1 A Message From Afar.
1st Line Gordon Keith Puffed thoughtfully at his pipe.
- No. 240 July 27, 1907 Among the Witch Doctors.
Chapter 1 The Aklhani Scouts.
1st Line "Fool, and son of a fool" bellowed an angry voice.
- No. 251 October 12, 1907 The Red Wafer.
Chapter 1 The Red Wafer.
1st Line A tall, gaunt looking man, with long nervous fingers.
-

ZENITH'S (SHORT LIVED) RIVAL

by Derek Smith

One of the minor mysteries of the Sexton Blake saga can be found in the "UNION JACK" No. 919. The story was "THE THIRTEENTH BOWL" (May, 1921) and was billed by the editor as "the latest exploit of Sexton Blake against Nihil, Zenith's successor and rival." Zenith had (apparently) been left in a nameless grave on Holy Island, so a successor was required, but - despite the Editor's introduction - Nihil's first recorded exploit was also his last.

The story concerned the disappearance of a valuable diamond necklace and a pottery moulder with an inexplicable habit of smashing crimson punch-bowls. Holmesians will not require a broader hint than that; neither did Sexton Blake. His investigations were soon interrupted by the arrival of one Detective-Inspector Banks of New Scotland Yard who proceeded to identify Blake as "Greatorex, the jewel thief" and place him under arrest. This latter-day Lestrade was, of course, none other than Nihil himself, and the "arrest" was a daring counter to Blake's moves against his criminal organisation.

The organisation was Nihil's one real claim to fame, since he had neither the presence nor the ability of the detective's super-crook adversaries. He was described as a tall, pale man with splay-ended fingers - the result of "the picking of oakum at some less fortunate moment in his career." He was entirely lacking in the sporting spirit, having a preference for fighting with foul blows and a complete disregard of the Queensberry rules. He also threatened Tinker with a red-hot poker, struck his prisoner Blake in the face and the tried to murder him with a trench dagger - an unholy combination of knife and knuckleduster.

Such a crude villain was obviously doomed to early extinction. Blake was sternly moralistic and grimly prophetic: "While this good earth repays an honest man for all the labour he puts into it, a crook only digs a grave for himself and his hopes."

Nihil shivered, as well he might. The race was not yet run, but he had already made the fatal error of under-rating the intelligence of his adversary and Blake was "risking his life to let the entire complicated machinery which Nihil's perverted genius had built up, run completely out of gear."

cont'd on Page 18

THIS MONTH'S SPECIALS

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	1429 - 1454	
	1403 - 1428	

GEMS as above

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188 - 241	1403 - 1435	1517 - 1556 and <u>to</u>
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Blake's penultimate venture in the campaign was a near-suicidal visit to a modern and luxurious thieves' kitchen known only as "Smith's." In this subterranean thieves'-parlour, with dozens of secret exits and entrances, surrounded by a catacomb of blind alleys (many of which were lethal) Blake found not only Nihil, but Zenith himself, mysteriously returned from the dead.

Blake, in his turn, seemed destined for the Valley of the Shadow. Zenith bore him no malice. "With an inimitable bow (he) offered Blake his tiny gold case, on which a fantastic 'Z' was traced in brilliants. 'Once again, and for the last time, Sexton Blake, I congratulate you. I like to see a man die with a cigarette in his lips. Honour me by accepting one of mine.' Blake complied in self-possessed silence ... 'Ave, Zenith!' he said at length, with a politeness no less grotesque. 'Morituri te salutamus!'"

Needless to say, Blake was not tamely accepting his fate. "He owed his continued existence to the fact that he was a fighter - that, so long as life was in him, he would continue fighting, even to the lower-most deep of the last ditch." A daring climb up a lift cable took him to the roofs above Essex Road, where Nihil was waiting. A wrestling match ended in the master-crook's fall through a skylight, from which he miraculously emerged unhurt.

The final struggle was only briefly delayed. The scene was the famous old Shot Tower of Lambeth, on the South Bank of the river. Blake and Nihil met face to face, for the last time, on the railed gallery which surrounded the summit of the tower. A brief salutation, a desperate struggle over the void and Nihil recognised impending doom. "But he would take Sexton Blake with him to the land of the shadows. Using his remaining strength with the recklessness of a madman, he clinched with Blake, and forced him backwards into the sifting-chamber"-towards the unguarded hole in the middle of the floor, down which molted lead was sieved into drops, which in falling such a great distance became spherical and cooled into shot.

"Too late, on the edge of the hole, Blake tried to recover, swaying in the grasp of the crook. But Nihil, with a hoarse laugh, threw his weight forward. The two men, locked together, disappeared into

the dark interior of the lower tower, turning slowly over and over, even as shot fell by day."

It seemed like the end for both, but - as Blake explained - "Nihil was underneath. There is a shallow pool of water at the base of the Shot Tower. That pool of water, and the fact that I luckily fell uppermost, accounts for the fact that I am now sitting here longing for a cigarette."

So passed Zenith's short-lived rival and the stage was set for the Albino's return. It was inevitable: there was only one Zenith and only one Sexton Blake.

 continued from Page 11

The Magnet as a definite sub, and the Gem as Brooks' work, but the official lists credit the Magnet to Hamilton and the Gem to C. M. Down. It may be recalled that some time ago I gave a detailed research into Gem 668 (reprint 1624), "The St. Jims Hunger-Striker," credited to Hamilton in the lists. I revealed that this story was written by F. G. Cook. Later, Eric Fayne re-read this story and agreed with my findings that it was a sub, and the following month Bill Lofts confirmed this and said that it was now found to be by F. G. Cook. I wonder if any others in our circle could identify a story by F. G. Cook?

I recently read a run of the last pre-reprint Gems, from 1200 to 1219. There are 19 subs among these - 6 by W. L. Catchpole, 5 each by Stanley Austin and Francis Warwick, 2 by Hector Hutt, 1 by K. Orme. I had identified all 16 by W.L.C., S.A., and F.W. correctly and marked the other three as unidentified subs. Considering that Hutt had only one previous story credited to him and Orme had none, it is not surprising that I couldn't put a name to them, but it is significant that I did not mistake them for any of the established authors.

What it really amounts to is that practically every writer has his own style, mannerisms and favourite phrases. I have no doubt that if I were to do a similar analysis on Eric Fayne's "Slade" stories a similar pattern would emerge. The one author who cannot be pinpointed in this way is Hamilton, for the sole reason that others were paid to deliberately extract his "trade-marks."

In looking over my story extracts certain expressions and phrases stand out more clearly than others and there is an obvious pattern of identification. Some writers have unusual or exclusive expressions. If, for example, you find the exclamation, "What the pliceman!" in an early story, you have the first and very positive pointer that you are reading Percy Griffith (as it happens, no other writer ever used this). Other "P.G. tips" are, "Chuck it off your chest" and "Arthur, put your tie straight!" (a leg-pull of Blake on Gussy - used in at least three P.G. stories). Now, if I have "What the policeman!" together with several other P.G. trade-marks in one story I can be quite certain of the author. In fact, all my P.G. stories agree with the official lists, but if I found the same combination in a rubbishy story that screamed "sub," I would regard it as a proved P.G. story even though the official lists gave it to Hamilton. I can hardly imagine any reasonable person arguing with the correctness of that policy. In fact it applies very clearly in a story by H. Clarke Hook - Gem 99, "King of the Castle."

NELSON LEE COLUMN

THE ST. FRANK'S SAGA

by the Duke of Somerton
and told to Jim Cook

During my next "session" with the duke I lived again those very exciting and momentous times that has become part of the history of St. Frank's. From the duke's diary, which reads like the files of a newspaper office, the unfolding events gathered one thing in common and that was a creation of sustained interest followed in each case by an equitable conclusion.

Knowing that I could visit the local scene recorded my interest was considerably heightened for I had only to step outside or stroll along to a study or a form-room to recapture the atmosphere of past battles and incidents, but as almost every inch of the old school is covered in notable events the saga of St. Frank's will apply to every nook and cranny in the college and its environs.

You will recall the duke broke off his reminiscences with the episode concerning the Hon. Douglas Singleton. After which came the period when the servants went on strike. Timothy Tucker was prominent in this affair since it enabled him to propound the virtues of Karl Marx. The domestic staff won their cause in the end and "Sommy's" diary has a footnote which says there may never be another strike of servants at St. Frank's. He was very prophetic for St. Frank's had learnt a lesson it never forgot.

Somerton's next entry dealt with a very long period that covered one main event. It all began when Mr. Crowell became very absent-minded due to overwork and another master filled his position when old Crowell was sent away to convalesce. It is often remarked that truth is stranger than fiction; if ever a time came to St. Frank's when this old adage could be justifiably applied then this was it.

Like the wards in a timed combination lock each incident fell into pattern to make one grand total of thrilling interest to result in the series now known as El Dorado. And it is strange to think this area to which Lord Dorrimore took the St. Frank's party is as mysterious today as it

was then.

Dick Goodwin occupies pride of place next for when the party returns from El Dorado a strange new boy ~~shuts~~ himself away from everybody and causes both comment and concern. But Dick has permission from the Head to blockade himself within a study'. The duke's footnote to this story was to the effect that the world is much better off for Goodwin's invention.

One or two minor happenings after this the duke skimmed over until he came to The Schoolboy Cinema Owners. The Bannington cinema enjoyed a monopoly since no other cinema was around and this caused the proprietor not to be too particular in his choice of programmes. The result was cheap hire films suitable only for a certain section of the public.

Solomon Levi made his first appearance at this juncture and Levi could see the possibilities at once. Through his father he bought the cinema after a battle with the owner and several juniors became shareholders in the cinema.

You'd imagine a big school like St. Frank's would have a champion boxer; it may well have but it wasn't until Ernest Lawrence arrived that this point became definite. For Somerton's next item in his diary refers to Lawrence as the new boy and the best boxer St. Frank's had ever housed.

Form masters, like anybody else, become ill at times and Mr. Stockdale, the College House master, was no exception. He went away to recuperate and a temporary housemaster took over the reins of the College House. Mr. Smale Foxe was a strange master with weird ideas. I expect you have met the type sometime or other. Somerton recalls that Foxe scrapped all rules and regulations for the sole purpose of dragging the fair name of the school into the mire.

Cecil De Valerie entered the study at this juncture to announce it was time for bed. Somerton thereupon arranged to continue the saga with me the next evening, tomorrow being a half day and an important cricket match in which the duke had a place. But during morning lessons I could if I wished look at the diary myself he said and on the principle that hope is good for breakfast and bad for supper I did go in to Study G and make a few more notes.

There is a lot of detail in the diary which though succinct it is sufficient to give a full appreciation of what happened. For the next part of the history deals with an airship called The Suffolk Queen. And Lord Dorrimore is invited to join in a trial run in the dirigible. Naturally the boys want to come. But on returning to base a sudden squall causes havoc and the airship is swept away into the stormy sky. Finally coming down somewhere in the Adriatic Sea the party board a mysterious three masted schooner which has drifted. The ship appears to have been abandoned for there is nobody on board. But appearances are deceptive. There is a man imprisoned down below and Nelson Lee is to recognise him as Prince Paul of Mordania.

The schooner eventually lands on a wild, desolate coast, and the St. Frank's party after many adventures, succeed in putting King Boris back in power.

An Australian junior appears when the juniors return to St. Frank's from abroad and he is Jerry Dodd, cricketer extraordinary.

The next item refers to an adventure in Montana. There's Lord Dorrimore, Umlosi, Nelson Lee and the boys of St. Frank's, but I see no reference to the duke. Evidently Somerton had obtained the facts from Nipper who always kept notes. This is a true Western with cow-boys and cattle and ranches and - gold. And the pity of it is that I can only record a few words about it. But do try and read the published version for I am certain you will enjoy it.

I must pass over several smaller episodes that the duke has mentioned and come to the time when St. Frank's passed through a very trying time. Some cranky but erudite gentlemen had installed a science master in the school with the object of ousting Dr. Stafford and thus make way for another headmaster. A drug that brought to the surface all the bestial instincts in man that civilisation and culture had kept dormant was given secretly to the Head and the resulting exhibitions during which the drug was active and the Head behaved like a wild animal prepared the way for the rebellion that began in all places at Dorrimore Hall during a Christmas party. This time Nipper did not lead the rebels. But juniors Armstrong and Tucker really came into their own. And taking control of the Ancient House they defied the rest of the school. It was a clever move for the Ancient House had food,

shelter and warmth. The two Timothys - Tucker and Armstrong - had collected enough supporters to make the revolt a serious threat to Nelson Lee's own plan of action to expose the true reason behind the Head's tantrums.

Tucker issued his famous manifesto which he displayed from the windows of the Ancient House and Lee in his wisdom gave the rebels full control of the school. St. Frank's was run on Communist lines but Nipper and his supporters remained loyal to the Head and carried on in the old way. This story is an object lesson for those who desire to break away from tradition and plan to run the world their way.

I had to break off here with the arrival of Nipper who came to tell me the Duke of Somerton was off to Helmford for the cricket match and had invited me to accompany him. As I had hurriedly glanced over the diary I noticed the next entry deals with the coming of Archie Glenthorne. And there is quite a lot of data about Archie! So I decided to go to Helmford and watch the match and leave Archie for my next visit to St. Frank's.

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XX

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL



No. 173. STRANGE, EVENTFUL HISTORY

In the early twenties, just over fifty years ago, Hinton launched his weekly periodical named "School & Sport." As we observed some time ago in this series, Hinton had been sacked from the Fleetway House for his activities concerning a story entitled "Bunter's Baby," which he had written himself, using portions of a very old Hamilton tale to bolster it up.

When he left Fleetway, Hinton took with him a large mailing list which he had acquired during his many years in the editorial department of the Amalgamated Press. When "School & Sport" was ready, he used this list to send personal letters out to everyone whose name was on the list, giving information of the new paper and ending the letters with his familiar "Your Editor" signature.

The Amalgamated Press, obviously incensed and perhaps a little cheaply, issued warnings to their readers that the new paper was nothing to do with them and was a pirate trying to cash in on the fame of Greyfriars and St. Jim's.

Hinton was on a loser from the start, even though he had Charles Hamilton writing for him. It is a question whether the A. P. knew that Hamilton was writing for this rival periodical and, on the face of it, it seems unlikely that they knew. They would surely have regarded it as disloyalty on the part of their star writer, especially as his involvement in writing for the rival paper inevitably meant less time for him to write

for their papers.

It is uncertain, of course, whether Hamilton was under any contractual restrictions, but it would seem almost certain that he was.

Hamilton wrote two long serials for "School & Sport." The first was "The Nameless Schoolboy" and the second was a sequel. It is many years since I saw a copy of "School & Sport," but I have the idea that Hamilton wrote under the pen-name of "Clifford Clive," and it must be admitted that the stories were very Hamiltonian. If the powers-that-be came on copies of School & Sport, one would think they could not fail to realise that their star writer was responsible for "The Nameless Schoolboy." And surely those powers-that-be would make it their business to keep an eye on this publication from a new stable.

All the same, the Fleetway House was well-acquainted with writers who tried to copy the Hamilton style and Hinton himself was known as one who was capable of attempting to imitate the star writer.

"The Nameless Schoolboy" was really a re-write of "The Boy Without a Name" of 1915. It was hackneyed, even fifty years ago. The outlines of the plot had been used, and the characters and even some of the actual names, plus most of the situations, were out of the well-thumbed stock drawer of Hamiltonia.

Like all "missing heir" themes, the story had a great deal of contrivance, and, like the contrivance in so many of the tales of Talbot Baines Reed, it was contrivance which was full of appeal for young people. It was also very, very well-written.

Nameless, on his way to St. Kit's, is met by the stock fat boy, Bunny Bootles, who tries to borrow money. Still on his way to St. Kit's, Nameless follows precedent by diving from a bridge into a fast-flowing river, to rescue the Caterpillar-type St. Leger, who becomes his friend. Later he rescues St. Leger's father, Lord Westcourt, from a thug, and then disappears before he can be thanked. The fat boy poses as the hero and presents the usual amusing bill: trowsis tawn £2; cap tawn 2/6; and so on.

In the sequel, Colonel Wilmot, the brother-in-law of Lord Westcourt, turns out to be the nameless boy's father. All very predictable and extremely readable and enjoyable. By the time of the second serial, the funeral bell was tolling over "School & Sport."

It is a question whether, when "School & Sport" gave up the ghost, many people wanted to read any more of the adventures of the boys of St. Kit's which had faded through no fault of the hard-working author. But the really astonishing factor was when, a few years later, two new serials concerning those very boys of St. Kit's appeared over a lengthy period in the Boys' Friend. It is hardly credible that Hamilton decided to write again of Wilmot & Co. several years after the death of their parent paper. It could be claimed that he did not wish to discard a set of good characters, but it seems unlikely that he would have bothered unduly about these characters which were carbon copies of many other more famous ones in his much-loved schools.

The new serial in the Friend told how Harry Wilmot wrested the junior captaincy from Vernon Carton, and a serial sequel followed the well-trodden tracks of a barring-out. My personal opinion is that both these stories were written for School & Sport, which ended before they could be used (in the same way that there was a stockpile of Greyfriars stories ready for the Greyfriars Herald, and these were shunted into the Magnet and the Holiday Annual).

It seems to me that Charles Hamilton may have held on to these two further St. Kit's stories until he felt that sufficient time had elapsed for the unmentioned School & Sport to be forgotten and then he submitted them for the Boys' Friend.

Perhaps most astonishing of all in this strange, eventful history, was that, later still, at the very end of 1927 "The Nameless Schoolboy" (now entitled "Parted Chums") appeared in the Schoolboys' Own Library, to be followed soon after by its sequel "The Boy Who Found His Father."

Charles Hamilton told us that Hinton defaulted and never paid a penny for the St. Kit's serials. No doubt the author felt completely justified in offering them to the Amalgamated Press. It is to be assumed that they paid for them, so love's labour was not lost.

W A N T E D: Magnets 1141, 1204, 1207, 1208, 1220, 1221, 1227, 1237, 1263, 1265, 1267, 1269, 1273, 1274, 1317, 1323; C.D. Annual 1947 (first); C.D. No. 26; The Saturday Book (published 1945).

REV. G. GOOD, STAINCLIFFE VICARAGE,
BATLEY, YORKSHIRE.

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

JOSIE PACKMAN: I really must deny the implication in Mr. Samways' letter that he gave Mr. Charles Hamilton the names and plots for the Talbot series. At the time these stories were first written I doubt whether these two gentlemen had even met. According to Len's records the first Gem story by Mr. Samways was No. 398 which appeared in the Summer of 1915, after the Housemaster's Homecoming was written. At that time also Charles Hamilton was not in this country so how could he know Mr. Samways. I think it is a matter of wishful thinking, in my opinion. Although I do have many of the Talbot stories written by substitute authors I do not care for their mawkish sentimentality, not to be compared with the writings of the "Master." As regards S. E. Stanley being given a series to write, well this is ridiculous. There does appear five tales in row by him, once again according to Len's records, but that's the only instance.

HAROLD TRUSCOTT: I was, as no doubt numbers of others were, knocked back, to coin a phrase, to read Samways' claim that he invented the Professor and Marie Rivers; and, I'm afraid, I still find it rather difficult to swallow. It depends, too, on what one means by inventing. After all, Dickens rather foolishly claimed to have invented Mr. Pickwick and the idea of the Club - which, in fact, was Mr. Chapman's, of Chapman and Hall, idea. Seymour's widow claimed a lot, too, for her husband, which may have been true. But no-one but Dickens wrote Pickwick; as Chesterton once wrote somewhere, to claim to have contributed an idea to Dickens was like claiming to have contributed one glass of water to Niagara. Something of the same situation exists when people claim to have invented ideas used by Richards' - one has only to read tales by substitute authors to see the truth of this.

BILL LOFTS: In my book MEN BEHIND FICTION, under the entry of Stanley E. Austin, I said "unlike many other substitute writers, he was trusted to write long series." Mr. Samways unfortunately misread this to mean that Austin was the only writer to do so. Practically all the other substitute writers did only write single yarns, apart from Pentelow, Francis Warwick and E. S. Brooks. Mr. Samways does point out something which I have tried for so long to explain to enthusiasts unsuccessfully.

Pentelow dialogue was 'edited' into many war-time stories, and it is no wonder that the authorship is slightly confused, as well as the paysheets. Personally I think that as our editor says so rightly - even if characters are editorially suggested to an author, it is the end product in the finished stories that matter.

The Postman Called

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

H. W. VERNON (Australia): The Boys' Own Annual for 1913 contains the following most interesting item:

A Clever London Scholar

Master Eric Parker, a London County Council scholar attending the Northwold Road School, has given such evidence of unusual artistic ability that he has puzzled the authorities what to do with him. The Council has no school sufficiently far advanced to give him the scope he requires, so the Education Committee met and decided to award him a special Art Scholarship and a maintenance grant to cover the cost of travel, etc. It is rarely indeed that such advanced ability is met with in the Council Schools. The future of this clever young scholar will be watched with undoubted interest.

A fine oval photo 3" by 2" accompanies this interesting article.

LEN WORMULL (Romford): Thanks to Roger Jenkins for his stimulating series - Do You Remember? I wonder how many readers remembered that his century choice, Nugent Minor in the Magnet century, was mirrored in an earlier issue? Same meat but the gravy was delightfully different. In my view, Master Richard was an unsympathetic character who deserved all the spanking he got - and more!

Recently I had cause to remember his most controversial entry of 1964 - The Schemer Of St. Frank's, B. F. L. No. 435. A copy of this original post-Lee St. Frank's yarn came in a parcel of books from the Leckenby collection. It looked good, it starred a favourite character of mine, Vivian Travers, and I was curious. Well, I tried to go along with it, but the situations were so artificially created, the blackmail

scenes between Forrest and Travers so crudely handled, that I almost gave up in despair. With no wish to rake over old ashes, I think it clearly demonstrated the author's inability to write good St. Frank's at this stage. In fact, reading again Roger Jenkins' review on that explosive occasion, I find myself marvelling at his restraint.

J. A. WARK (Kilmarnock): Despite all that has been written about Pentelow, I must lift my hat to him for the pleasure he gave me with his cricket yarns penned under the name of Richard Randolph. How I looked forward to the summer B. F. L's containing his stories about Test and County Cricket! Such titles as "Young Yardley," "Carden of Cardenshire," "Smith of Rocklandshire," to mention but a few, were read and enjoyed to the full. I classed Pentelow along with John Finemore and Gunby Hadath as tops in describing cricket matches.

JIM COOK (Auckland): I have lately come across some entertaining dedications by well-known authors and it occurred to me that although our favourite school story writers have now departed from us perhaps we could offer dedications that may have been offered by them.

You may remember P. G. Wodehouse's dedication to "The Heart Of A Goof" - 'To my daughter Leonora, without whose never-failing sympathy and encouragement this book would have been finished in half the time.'

I like Nigel Balchin's dedication to his "Income and Outcome;" 'To my bank manager, to whom, in truth, I owe more than I can ever hope to repay.'

A. M. Terhune inscribed his "The Life of Edward FitzGerald;" 'To Annabelle: Who Toiled That I Might Spin My Yarn.'

I suppose to write a dedication to such a publication as the GEM, MAGNET or NELSON LEE wouldn't have been thought practical, but it may have happened.

Dennis Wheatley once sent me his book "Forbidden Territory" with the inscription 'To James Cook.'

In Victor Gunn's (Edwy S. Brooks) "The Golden Monkey" our New Zealand's Jack Murtagh has this dedication: 'To John Redman Murtagh of Hastings, New Zealand, who, a glutton for punishment, has read my stories for more years than either of us care to remember.'

Thanks Jack."

P. TIERNEY (Grimsby): Laurie Sutton's comments on Bulstrode Minor and Bolsover Minor interested me very much - particularly his belief that the latter was originally intended to go the same way as the former.

I do not dispute that Mr. Sutton is right but how strange that Hamilton should intend to repeat the morbid theme of Magnet No. 178 so soon afterwards in Magnet No. 210 - the victim in each case being the young brother of the "bully of the Remove."

JACK COOK (Benwell): W. O. G. Lofts posed the question: "Which Thompson paper featured St. Frank's?" So far there has been no reply.

"Cheery Chicks" was published by Spearman's, not by Aida Reubens as stated by Bill Lofts.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND BRANCH - OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

Meeting held 25th July, 1972.

There was again a small attendance, but the meeting was one which Bob Cherry would have described as jolly. It was informal and contained only two items that had been planned. The rest of the time was spent chatting about the old books. Several letters had been received. One of these contained the idea of a get together of the London, Cambridge and Midland Clubs. This idea came from Ian Bennett unfortunately absent with an injured foot. It was left in abeyance.

A reading by Jack Bellfield from the Holiday Annual for 1941, the last one, from Billy Bunter's Busy Day which displayed the Hamiltonian style of humour at its very best, was much enjoyed and Tom Porter's game of "Take a Letter" was played with Norman Gregory and Ivan Webster taking the honours.

The Anniversary number was Magnet 24, 25th July, 1908, sixty-two years old and in mint condition and the Collector's item Nugget 3d. Library No. 50.

J. F. BELLFIELD
Correspondent.

AUSTRALIA

At our meeting at the end of June, Syd Smyth, our chairman, introduced his fiancée, soon to become Brigitte Smyth. This charming lass has a keen interest in Hamilton lore so we were doubly pleased to welcome her. Ron Brockman was celebrating his promotion to Experimental Officer so we toasted both Ron and Syd.

Members discussed a wide field from the Philosophy of Humour with Jerome K. Jerome, Oscar Wilde, Ben Jonson and Richard B. Sheridan to the respective claims of the white cover Magnets as against the golden peak of this publication from 1926 to 1935.

Queries were raised as to why Howard Baker had left untouched the virgin soil of the blue and white covered Magnets. This is the field in which most people are lacking.

Great regret was expressed on learning of the passing of F. Addington Symons.

B. PATE (Secretary)

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NORTHERNMeeting of 12th August, 1972.

On this pleasant summer's evening Vice-Chairman Harry Barlow presided over a gathering of twelve of our members.

Jack Allison gave a reading from the book by P. G. Wodehouse - 'Psmith, Journalist.' Psmith was in America with a friend who had gone to play in a series of cricket matches. Good Wodehouse humour.

This was followed by a game organised by Mollie Allison in which we were to guess the names of places connected with the schools. It really seemed after a while that we would have to say with the Dodo, 'Everybody has won, and all must have prizes!' But there were four of us for whom good fortune (or superior knowledge) eventually prevailed. Harry Barlow and Ron Rhodes won three rounds and Jack Allison and Keith Balmforth won two.

Geoffrey Good gave the second talk in our series, 'How my collection started.' Geoffrey took us back some thirty-odd years to his aunt and uncle's grey, Yorkshire farmhouse where, in the long school holidays, nestling in the thick pile of the sitting-room rug, he was allowed to read his cousin's Magnets.

Of especial interest to him were the kidnapping stories, most particularly the kidnapping of Mr. Quelch. As Geoffrey explored the mysterious passages and attics of the ancient farm buildings he couldn't help wondering, with schoolboy naivete, if it might not be possible to incarcerate certain schoolmasters of his own unfortunate acquaintance!

But his story, said Geoffrey, was all too mundane, and he would finish off by reading from the 1949 C. D. Annual, Herbert Leckenby's article, 'How My First Collection Started.' A delightful story of some pathos, and written in HL's own charming style.

* * * *

LONDON

Despite the holiday month, there was a good muster to support the worthy president, John Wernham, on the occasion of the Friardale meeting. The five Acramans were in splendid form as hosts and with the Don in the chair, a good time was had by all. Included in the latter was new member Stephen M. Marshall. John Wernham mentioned his writing to the two daughters of the late C. H. Chapman offering the sincere condolences of the club. Following this he spoke of his next opus and the problems relating to printing of the same he has come up against. However it will probably appear at the usual time. Adam Bradford conducted a competition by which members had to make as many words as they could out of the key word Greyfriars. Millicent Lyle was an easy winner with thirty-three words. Roger Jenkins quiz was won by Bill Lofts. Bob Blythe read passages from a newsletter of 1955 vintage and Ray Hopkins read from an S. O. L. reprint of Gem 749, "The St. Jim's Tea Shop."

Don Webster conducted a numbers and letter quiz. Roger Jenkins was the winner at the end of ten rounds.

Bob Acraman put on a cine show of some of his holiday wanderings.

A grand gathering and with votes of thanks to Bob and Betty Acraman it was homeward bound. Next meeting at 35 Woodhouse Road, Leytonstone, London, E11 3NU. Hosts - Reuben and Phyllis Godsave. The phone number is 534-1737. Kindly advise if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN