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COLLECTORS DIGEST

VOLUME 30 No. 352

APRIL 1976

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GRIST FOR THE MILL

Commenting on the work of Charles Hamilton, I have often remarked that all was grist that came to his mill. The same thing applies to the man whose duty it is to churn out an editorial each month. I have, tucked away in the recesses of my mind, a couple of items which caught my eye in the past few weeks.

Our contributor, Mr. W. Thurbon, whose letter appeared in our Postman Called column last month, observed: "If all boys' papers were lost, a 21st century student of 19th and 20th century childhood would get

a very distorted idea of the subject. We are far too near Charles Hamilton to make a proper judgment of him."

I venture to disagree. My experience is that, even with old papers in front of them, modern writers will usually get a "very distorted view" and be quite unable to decide what made old authors tick and what made their work so popular.

My view is that the farther we get away from Charles Hamilton, the less likely it is that truth will be written about him and his work. Once the subject of a biography is dead, there is nothing to stop the biographer from tacking on bits of assumption.

In some cases, where the subject may have been a retiring man or woman, or even one who in his lifetime made enemies from being outspoken or through jealousy, it is only too likely that the very reports which go to make up a biography may be tainted by the fact that many of them came from those very enemies. I'm sure it happens in the case of all biographies.

My second subject for thought comes from "You're a Brick, Angela" which is fast becoming famous and, I hope, a best-seller. The authors say: "These Amalgamated Press papers were especially popular with girls from poorer homes because they were inexpensive, crammed with small-print stories and attractively illustrated." I wonder whether there is really any evidence to prove that statement, or whether the writers are assuming something and stating it as a fact,

A LADY OUT OF LIZZIE

When I was small my father used to bring me home Lot-O-Fun on Saturday mornings, bought from the market at a penny a bundle of three or something of the sort, and then would sit and roar with laughter at the adventures of Dreamy Daniel. I remember when I used to have the Butterfly and Merry & Bright regularly. Not only did the comics of those days present delicious comic pictures. They also contained stories which were by no means badly written - for instance, unless my memory is playing tricks, there were Cheerful Charlie Brown, Jolly Jack Johnson, Bluebell and her magic gloves, and Val Fox and his pets.

But, in those days, comics were never quite respectable, though we loved them dearly. I would never have taken one to school, and I

think it likely that, when I bought "Funny Wonder", I would fold it up and slip it into my pocket before leaving the shop.

We have, of course, published some magnificent articles on comics and reproduced any amount of their covers in the thirty years of C.D., even though the papers, especially the larger-sheeted ones, had not worn too well sometimes, owing to their being handled by very young children who destroyed as they went. Who would have thought that the day would come when little heaps of old comics would be on offer within the hallowed walls of Sotheby's, with prosperous gentlemen flourishing their chequebooks in the hope of acquiring a few dozen old copies of Firefly or Tiger Tim's Weekly? Or that comics would have their own Convention at one of London's luxury hotels?

When I was a youngster there was a song "Henry's Made a Lady Out of Lizzie", referring to the development of the Ford car from the days when it starred in Keystone Comedies.

Now somebody has made a Lady out of Comic Life, Funny Wonder, and Kinema Comic. Meet Lady Beatrix Buttercup and Dame Keyhole Kate - not to mention Lord Tom, the Ticket of Leave Man, and Sir Portland Bill. They have come into their own at last.

LOOKING AHEAD

These days it is over-presumptuous to look ahead very far, but, as all our regular readers know, Collectors' Digest will be 30 years old, celebrating its Pearl Jubilee, next November, while, come December, we shall reach the Pearl Jubilee edition of the Annual. We hope to present a special double number of S. P. C. D., to mark the occasion.

We invite our readers to send along literary contributions for these special issues, reminding them at the same time that short articles are a boon and a blessing while there is always a certain worry and difficulty in the presentation of very long ones. Already we have a number of first-class items in hand for these editions.

TAILPIECE

When I was a lad, my girl-friends were hooked on that famous school-story writer, Angela Brazil. They always talked of her as

though she was related to the delicious nut, and, down the years, whenever I thought or spoke of her, I always pronounced her name nut-wise. It was quite a surprise, when I saw those charming and talented ladies, Mrs. Cadogan and Miss Craig, on television recently, to hear Angela's surname pronounced "Brazzle". It won't be easy for me to get out of the habit of thinking of Angela as a tasty piece.

THE EDITOR

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Danny's Diary

APRIL 1926

Things look very, very ominous in the Boys' Friend. I am afraid that "The End" has been written on Rookwood in that lovely paper.

Of course, it really has not happened suddenly. For quite a while change has been in the air, and, so far as I am concerned, it is not a change for the better.

The series about Lovell as junior captain has gone on and been completed. The first tale of the month was "Friends Again". Lovell goes back to join the Fistical Four in this story, the rift is healed, though Lovell is still junior captain. But in the next story, "Lovell Plays Up", he resigns from the captaincy and Jimmy Silver is back in his old place as skipper.

The third tale was "Money Talks" in which Tubby Muffin becomes popular when he is sent a cheque for £50 by his uncle Montagu. But it is sent only to let Tubby keep his end up. On no account is it to be presented, as there are no funds to meet it in the bank. Mildly funny. Next, "Tubby the Protector", in which Tubby, by a clever piece of thought that was a bit uncharacteristic of him, cleared Jimmy Silver of the charge of insulting Mr. Dalton.

And that I think, very sadly, is the end. One point is that Mr. Wakefield, the usual artist, has not done any of the Rookwood pictures this month. I don't know who the new artist is, but he doesn't seem right. And in a full-page advertisement the editor announces that from next week the Boys' Friend will meet the present-day tastes and needs of

the boys of the British Empire. There will be six entirely new stories. And there is no mention of Rookwood being among the six. It makes you feel awful.

It has been a very wet and unusually cold month for April. But there is some good news from the Royal Family. The Duke and Duchess of York have a baby daughter who is to be named Elizabeth Alexandra Mary.

Change seems to be in the air, too, for the Nelson Lee Library, but in this case it is not ominous. At least, we hope not.

The series has continued and concluded concerning Horace Stevens, the brilliant schoolboy actor. His father, before he died wrote a play, but that play was actually stolen by the villain, Roger Barton. The first story of the month, called "The Stolen Play" contains an elaborate First of April joke on Handforth. He receives a letter from a firm of solicitors to say he has been bequeathed half a million pounds by a distant uncle. Handy goes to get some of the money, with his friends, and they meet a pretty young lady receptionist and then a lawyer. But Handy has to wait for his money - "we legal people make a practice of prolonging these preliminaries to the last minute." However, the lawyer willingly rings up the new Dominion Theatre in London to book it at £700 a week, so that Stevens' father's play can be presented. However, when Handy gets to the Dominion, they know nothing about the booking - and the lawyer turns out to be Nipper in disguise while the pretty secretary removes her bobbed hair and her eyelashes and turns out to be none other but Reggie Pitt.

Roger Barton's play is to open at the Emperor Theatre, and many St. Frank's fellows are there to see it. It gets great applause - but it is the play which was stolen by Barton from Stevens.

The last three tales of the month were "Handy Behind the Scenes", "St. Frank's In Court" (there is a legal action over the ownership of the play), and "Handy's Round-Up" in which Roger Barton gets his punishment at last, partly owing to Handforth but mainly owing to the activity of Nelson Lee, the great detective.

And, starting from next week, the Nelson Lee Library is to be permanently enlarged, with more of everything.

The new issue of the Monster Library is entitled "Expelled!"

It costs one shilling. It is, of course, by E. S. Brooks.

The clocks went forward to give us Summer Time on 18th April - and it always seems cold for the first day or two after that.

Two excellent stories in the Schoolboys' Own Library this month. They are "The Invasion of Greyfriars" in which the Cliff House girls have to go to live and take lessons at Greyfriars, as there is something amiss with the nature of the soil on which Cliff House is built, and "Sacked" which is a serious St. Jim's tale mainly about Gore. I liked them both a lot.

In the Cup Final, which was played at Wembley Stadium, Bolton Wanderers beat Manchester City.

The Pedrillo series continued in the Magnet. In "The Circus Schoolboy", Harry Wharton and his friends are puzzled as to why the rich Sir James Hobson is on familiar terms with Senor Zorro, the owner of Zorro's Circus. "Righting a Wrong" was the final tale in this series. Due to Harry Wharton's intervention, Pedrillo finds out that he is Hobson's cousin. And Pedrillo was kept out of the way in the circus so that Hobson's father could use Pedrillo's money. As Wharton said, "Hobby's paper must be a pretty hard case", but Pedrillo stays on at Greyfriars and he and Hobson become great pals. A nice little series, though the separate stories are a bit on the short side.

Next came "The Temptation of Peter Hazeldene". The winner of the Wilmot-Snell scholarship gets £50, and Hazeldene is tempted to take a short cut to win the money. Last tale of the month was an exceptionally good one, "The Ragging of Mossou", in which Wharton, is falsely accused of leading a rag against the French master - and so joins in the rag with a vengeance. This one carries on next month.

At present, there is quite a big programme in the Magnet, apart from the school story - while most of us buy the Magnet for the school story.

Mum and I went to the pictures and saw Alma Rubens and Lou Tellegen in "East Lynne" - a lovely sad tale which Mum liked and so did I. Also at the pictures this month we have seen Laura La Plante in "The Teaser", Tom Mix in "The Everlasting Whisper", Victor McLaglen and George O'Brien in "Once to Every Man", and Betty Blythe in "She". The last one was a good adventure tale and very mysterious.

First of the month in the Gem was "April Fools All" which was meant to be very funny. "Trimble the Trickster" was a lot better. Knox boxes Trimble's ear - and Trimble goes deaf. I really enjoyed this one. "His Honour at Stake" told how Racke & Co. plotted against Grimes, the grocer's boy. Last of the month was "Trimble's Cup Final Party" in which Trimble opened Gussy's letter from home - and found seven tickets for Wembley.

There is a new serial in the Gem entitled "The Scarlet Streak". I'm not reading it, of course, but it is the story of a serial now running in the cinemas, including one of our cinemas near my home.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S. O. L. No. 25, "The Invasion of Greyfriars" comprised three consecutive halfpenny red Magnet stories of the Spring of 1909. No. 26 "Sacked" comprised two consecutive blue Gems also of 1909. These two showed the S. O. L. at its best, with no drastic pruning necessary in either case.)

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Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

I suppose it is inevitable that boys in one college would have their own special girl chums in a neighbouring Girls' School. Thus it is at St. Frank's and the near-by Moor View School for girls.

Miss Charlotte Bond, the headmistress of the Moor View, has a Victorian precept about boy and girl friendships, and in spite of the proximity of the two schools the distance does not lend enchantment to Miss Bond and her mistresses.

But of the thirty-five girl pupils at Moor View there are eight at least who have formed friendships with eight St. Frank's fellows.

Nipper's special girl friend is Mary Summers. Her uncle is Dr. Beverley Stokes, Housemaster, West House.

Handforth and Irene Manners' friendship will last forever.

Reggie Pitt and Doris Berkeley are well matched.

Archie Glenthorne and Marjorie Temple.

Vivian Travers with Phyllis Palmer.

Stanley Waldo and Betty Barlowe.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood's friendship with Winnie Pitt is eternal.

William Napoleon Browne and the beautiful nurse Dora Manners.

Dora is cousin to Irene Manners, but Dora's connection with St. Frank's is as School nurse.

Claude Gore-Pearce's association with Joan Tarrant has a dubious foundation since both use each other for their own ends. But I must not forget Vera Wilkes, daughter to Mr. and Mrs. Wilkes, of the Ancient House at St. Frank's. But the only time Vera has been worthy of mention was her brief association with K. K. Parkington whose stay at St. Frank's was only temporary. I have always thought it strange that a daughter of a member of Dr. Stafford's staff at St. Frank's would have received so little limelight.

But Vera Wilkes was not particularly interested in any of the St. Frank's chaps, I was told. She is chummy with lots of them and does not seem to be pining over Kirby Keeble Parkington.

I seem to have mentioned most of the girls whose friendships with the boys at St. Frank's have been recorded. Wait though: there's Joan Tarrant's girl chums, Maudie Royce, Bessie Groves and Hilda Smith. These young ladies are sometimes to be seen in Gore-Pearce & Co.'s study from a Study A invitation. The snobbish Gore-Pearce makes a virtue out of necessity inviting these Moor View girls for Joan Tarrant & Co. have no socially distinguished parents as have most of the other Moor View girls. Claude's attempts to act as a young gentleman to girls like Irene Manners & Co. will always fail for lack of breeding.

I expect to be told off by Tommy Watson for not mentioning his sister, Violet, but like Ethel Church, Agnes Christine, Ena Handforth (sorry Handy!), Muriel Halliday, Sylvia Glenn, Molly Stapleton and Annie Russell these Moor View girls have no special chums at St. Frank's.

If ever you wish to visit the Moor View School for Young Ladies - phone Bannington 112 - you travel to Bellton, stroll through the old-world village and up Bellton Lane and pass St. Frank's College until you reach Bannington Moor. On your left is the Moor View School. A road bearing to the right leads to Edgemoor.

The Moor View School has a quaint history. It 'began' as The Mount, a private residence of a Mr. Howard Ridgeway and his wife who

took over the house to continue his work as a novelist. Later, a Mr. Grahame Tarrant resided there. Two years later, the large house was rebuilt and today it is The Moor View School for Young Ladies.

The staff is: Miss Charlotte Bond, headmistress; Miss Perry and Miss Broome, undermistresses, Mrs. Tracey, housekeeper. I feel sure there are some members of the school to look after the destinies of the thirty-five girls sadly missing from my knowledge, but information on this point is difficult to obtain from the very strict Miss Bond.

You may wonder why I have, so far, omitted to mention another Moor View girl, Tessa Love. Her special St. Frank's junior is Johnny Onions it would seem; but there is also Albert (Bertie) Onions, brother to Johnny, and Tessa's friendship to both stems from their circus days before they came to our notice.

So the association of these three young people really deserves a much longer account that would justify a thumb-nail sketch as I have given the others.

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BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Two widely different aspects of story writing are touched upon in this month's Blakiana, although both are inclined to be humorous. I can only say that both subjects are of great interest to me, so I will trust they will also be of interest to our many Sexton Blake fans. I myself was brought up on the silent Cowboy and Indians films and I still love them. Don't have enough good ones on TV these days. The "Big Bugs" up at the TV Centres think we are a bit moronic and think they know what's best for us to see. Even the current Ellery Queen "Whodunnit" on Tuesday's is rather childish. In fact Ellery has not received any better treatment at the hands of the TV Moguls than our own Sexton Blake.

SEXTON BLAKE AND THE SUPERNATURAL

by Don Harkness

Being a hard-headed, realistic man with a highly trained

scientific mind, it is safe to assume that Sexton Blake did not believe in ghosts. Perhaps this is the reason that the chroniclers of the great Baker Street detective's adventures avoided writing stories dealing with the supernatural. At least four stories which come to mind, deal with this theme, but always with a perfectly logical down-to-earth explanation. I refer to "The Mystery of the Siping Vampire" (U. J. 1314), "The Case of the Ghost Ship" (U. J. 1319), the "Case of the Bradford Dragon" (U. J. 1333) and "The Ghost Mobile" (U. J. 1467).

Readers who picked up J. W. Robin's "Siping Vampire" in 1929 expecting an eerie Dracula type story were doomed to disappointment. There was no counterpart of Count Dracula capable of changing himself into a bat or living by day in an earth-filled coffin and seeking his gory sustenance at night. Bram Stoker gave us a real vampire, compared with Union Jack's vampire which was merely a deranged (mentally) doctor who roamed the countryside perpetuating the myth of a vampire until Sexton Blake came on the scene and proceeded very smartly to clear up the matter.

Gilbert Chester who wrote "The Ghost Ship" revealed that the ship in fact was a very real vessel engaged in gun-running. However, in "The Case of the Bradford Dragon", author Gwyn Evans played a little more fairly with his readers. The dragon was, in reality, a fifteen foot dragon lizard which had been brought back from the Dutch East Indies. A touch of horror was also included for good measure but was, unfortunately, never followed up, for after the following description was not mentioned again. "He cared now no longer if the world knew of the horror that he kept hooded in the lower room of the tower, that ghostly half-human freak that he had tried to cure by grafting on to it the gland of an ape, and of his dreadful failure." The hooded horror wasn't even referred to when Blake was summing up the case for Tinker's benefit at the end of the story. Gwyn Evans was also responsible for writing "The Ghost Mobile" in which he provided an ingenious but logical explanation for the vehicle concerned.

It is interesting to contemplate how Sexton Blake would have coped with a real ghost in a suitably spooky tale,

Perhaps the story, laid in the mid-twenties, would have taken place at Maudaunt Castle built on the edge of the Bradshire moors

complete with moat and drawbridge. On a dark and stormy night Blake and Tinker are called in to discover the cause of the eerie happenings which are terrifying the owner, Sir Humphrey Lambert. Blake is frankly puzzled and Tinker somewhat nervous of the indistinct white figure which appears at frequent intervals and passes through solid stone walls and heavy oak doors. Finally Blake discovers a secret panel in the old library and behind it the skeleton of a man with his skull crushed in. From rotting clothing and old papers Blake discovers it is the real Sir Humphrey while the other man is a cousin, Percival Lambert, who had committed the murder in order to gain the inheritance and the snobbishly sought after knighthood. Just before he died the real Sir Humphrey swore that he would haunt his killer as long as that killer lived and proceeded to do just that. The constant appearances of the apparition weakened the false knight's heart and the final appearance of the spectre pointing an accusing finger proves too much and the murderer dies of a terrible heart seizure. At the end of the story Tinker gasps "But gov'nor what does it all mean?" "It means" replies Blake, "we have been dealing with a real ghost."

(As one who fervently believes in ghosts I feel sure that Blake would have known how to bring peace to a troubled spirit. J. P.)

SEXTON BLAKE GOES WEST

by Raymond Cure

You either like stories of the Wild West or you do not. Zane Grey liked them. He liked them so much he took to writing them, the general public liked them too. I am not a cowboy tale fan. If I do enjoy one it must be a Zane Grey, none to beat him. (Riders of the Purple Sage was the most well-known, especially after it had been made into a film.) My love for cowboy films too died out with Tom Mix. Not even the coloured TV productions can revive it. So what am I doing reading "The Adventure of the Apache Chief" and "The Scourge of No-man's Land"? These stories appeared in the Union Jack Nos. 1302 and 1304 in September and October of the year 1928.

Of course, if Sexton Blake will get himself involved with the cowboy and Indian fraternity, I have to go along with it, like it or not.

Arthur Paterson was the author of these two stories and he

introduces us to Mogollon, a crook of Apache ancestry, as well as being leader of a present day gang of Apaches, he also has the controlling power of a score of huge Chicago enterprises. By the way when I say "present day" I refer to the year 1928. Take a look at them through the eyes of the artist. A right motley crew they look too. With a background of wigwams and a foreground consisting of a blazing open fire, about 20 Apaches are squatting around. A very colourful cover drawing. Some of these Indians were in full Indian dress, some with only a two-feathered headdress, looking rather like a half-plucked chicken, some in old Trilby hats, and "odds boddikins" one in a bowler hat. This drawing is on the first and second inside pages of U.J. 1302. I won't describe their faces, they may frighten you. Sexton Blake is standing in the midst of this motly crowd pointing to a mark on his arm, an old "Blood-brother mark" no doubt. I get the impression that some of these boys are of a similar type to the Union men who go against the advice of their leaders. If so, the blood-brother set-up isn't going to work for Sexton Blake.

When I tell you that the closing scenes of this tale find Blake fastened to a torture stake with the Apache chief raring to get going with his knife you will see what I mean. In fact if it wasn't for Pedro the bloodhound, leaping from the shadows to fasten his teeth in the aforesaid Apache's throat and knocking him to the ground things would have been nasty for Sexton Blake, blood-brother or no blood-brother. Personally I never went for that kind of thing, people change their minds so, even Apache Indians!:

Now for a peep behind the scenes of story No. 2, "The Scourge of No-man's Land". Actually it has a Wild West flavour of a more natural kind. By that I mean you are really "Way out West". What can be wilder than Sexton Blake (clad in Tom Mix's cast-offs) engaged in cracking a villain over the head with a whiskey bottle or Tinker, likewise clad in cowboy gear, astride a horse jogging along with a pack-horse behind loaded with the usual cooking pans, probably to warm up the coffee and beans. Yippee!:

Notices nailed to trees and whatnot call for hanging for robbers and murderers (not a bad idea), lots of galloping horses and cracking gums bring up the rear. Great stuff for Wild West fans, though

personally I don't see Blake as a substitute for Tom Mix.

ERRAND BOY'S SHERLOCK HOLMES

The Arthur Barker firm can be congratulated on a bright title (to be published in April) to be called **SEXTON BLAKE'S EARLY CASES** (£3.75). Not for nothing was Sexton Blake called the errand boys' Sherlock Holmes. Many a Holmes fan cut his young teeth on a weekly called **UNION JACK**, published (on dreadful paper) by the old Northcliffe-owned Amalgamated Press, which cost one old-style penny.

SEXTON BLAKE'S EARLY CASES has been culled from **UNION JACK** and let no-one call that a 'penny dreadful'. Northcliffe, early on his career, set out to kill them, and succeeded. Dorothy Sayers once said that Sexton Blake's adventures were the nearest thing to a national folk-lore we had. Overstating the case, perhaps, but S. B. was translated into most languages, including Hindi and Afrikaans. Over a hundred different hands wrote the yarns and most managed to keep his character the same. Like Holmes, Blake seemed to be a bachelor, employed an assistant called Tinker who, with the bloodhound Pedro, became nearly as famous as his hawk-eyed boss.

His first assistant was a Chinese called We-wee (dropped quickly) and the second was an orphan boy called Griff. Tinker arrived on the scene in 1904 and was still there when I gave up reading the U. J. when my voice broke. By then, I'd met them all - the great villains: George Marsden Plummer, Leon Kestrel, Waldo the Wonder Man, Zenith the Albino - the lot. Nice to meet some of them again.

Eric Hiscock, **THE BOOKSELLER** (17.1.76)

(Send by Brian Doyle)

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 S.O.L's, 134 copies. Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood, 75p each. St. Frank's 70p each.
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LITVAK

58 STANWELL ROAD, ASHFORD, MIDD.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 206. THE END OF THE SILVER TRAIL

Fifty years ago, as Danny reminds us in his Diary this month, the Rookwood stories came to a close in the Boys' Friend. They had been running for eleven years, and there can be no doubt of their popularity, not only then, but right down to the present time.

I have, of course, discussed the matter before, but one could not let this anniversary pass without returning to the subject briefly.

There are different views as to whether Rookwood ended on account of an editorial decision or whether Owen Conquest decided that enough was enough. My personal view, as I have said before, is that it was an editorial decision. I do not believe that Hamilton himself would have deliberately cut off a source of a good income. I see no reason why he should have done, and I don't believe that he would have done.

For at least six months, there had been very marked signs of change in the old green paper. The presentation was different. The type of story offered was different. The four-column lay-out replaced the five-column one, and from that moment one sensed that change was in the air. Whether it was change for the sake of change, or whether the circulation was causing uneasiness so a change was regarded as essential we do not know. But with the end of April 1926, all the old series had gone, and now the Boys' Friend was to adopt an entirely new programme which would make it "the greatest paper in the world". The new Boys' Friend was to last for 20 months after Rookwood departed. A sad anti-climax.

As we mentioned last month, Wakefield, who had illustrated Rookwood in the Boys' Friend for about 8 years, departed from that paper at the end of March. Rookwood lasted another 4 weeks, illustrated by an unknown artist.

The series in which Lovell fell out with his closest friends and became junior captain was wound up abruptly, to be followed by a couple of single tales featuring Tubby Muffin - a couple of tales which may have been kept for emergency in the editorial office.

And, as I have previously commented, Rookwood was never

mentioned again in the pages of the Boys' Friend. It was remarkable that a series which had run for eleven years should disappear without trace from the paper. Surely some readers must have written in to the editor and asked: "What about some more Rookwood?" But if any reader actually wrote in that way, the editor never referred to it.

Hamilton wrote very little more about Rookwood at all. And nothing that was memorable. Rookwood, of course, went into the Gem for a time, later on, in serials and complete tales, but they were mostly by some substitute writer.

After the war there was the book length story "The Rivals of Rookwood" which was competent and readable, without having any quality which caused it to remain in the memory. And in the post-war Annuals, not to mention one or two monster books put out to cash in on the Christmas trade, there were a few little pot-boilers on Rookwood which never registered.

The later days of Rookwood in the Boys' Friend were rather marred with too much Lovell. He was starred constantly, but, like Coker, though one loved him, he became a bore in over-large doses.

Not so very many years earlier, there had been that curious hiatus in the Rookwood saga when the Fistical Four were transferred to a ranch in the Wild West in a series of first class tales which lasted for the best part of a year. The four eventually returned, and the saga was resumed, though I thought that Rookwood was never quite the same again.

In the post Wild West period, there were two thoroughly good and memorable series, original in plot at that time. They were the delightful set when Mr. Greeley became Head of his own school, and the charming summer series concerning the paying guests on Captain Muffin's floating boarding-house. The latter was slightly marred with too much Lovell.

Somehow it was a curious error of judgment on the part of Hamilton that he set about grooming Lovell to be the star comedian in the same way that he made the mistake of overplaying a comic Gussy in the latter-day St. Jim's. Probably he was seeking another kind of star after the manner of his prime creation, Billy Bunter.

So Rookwood ended in the Boys' Friend, and to all intents and

purposes it was the end of the saga. But Rookwood was re-living its life in the Popular, and it could be that it was even more successful in that format where no pruning was ever necessary. And a few more years further on, when the Rookwood tales ran to their end in the Popular, that glorious old paper met its end at the same time.

One of the most satisfactory aspects of the Rookwood story in the Boys' Friend, which is the only part of Rookwood which matters, is that the substitute writers had but few fingers in the pie. Something like a dozen of the Boys' Friend Rookwood tales were by the subs. All the rest came in a competent and usually memorable stream from the creator of the school.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Long-standing readers of Collectors' Digest now have the entire Rookwood saga in the Boys' Friend covered critically and by title in Danny's Diary. It occurs to me that plenty of our readers might find it interesting and useful to have Danny's survey of Rookwood, with all his comments on every Rookwood story, gathered together and published in booklet-form, together, perhaps, with some of our leading articles on Rookwood. If you like the idea, drop me a line, and we will try to get it out in the Autumn.)

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SCOTT AND HAMILTON

EDWARD SABIN writes: In the February "C.D." Roger Jenkins stated that Charles Hamilton had only a contempt for Scott's characters.

In the March issue of "C.D.", Wm. Thurbon says, "I wish Roger would elaborate on this".

Well Sir, I would like to put a point of view about this. Has Roger forgotten that in 1908 the young Mr. Hamilton, (he would I think, have been 32 then) not only adopted the first name of Scott's Frank Osbaldistone, but insisted in using it for the rest of his life (about 53 years).

It is still the name by which we know him in 1976!

Not much contempt there Roger! Again, we are told in "The World of Frank Richards", that when only 11 years old, he could recite by heart, the whole of Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel". A fantastic feat that, considering the length of that poem. Only a great love and regard for a great author there.

There were in Scott's "Rob Roy", eight Osbaldistone's in all.

The Father, his six sons, and Frank his nephew. One can see traces of a younger Frank in Harry Wharton, who was the best of the bunch and the hero of the novel. Rashleigh, the youngest son, was not only a cad, but a real right cad at that. Evidently a grown-up Ponsonby here!

Sir Walter put out a considerable amount of material in his writing life.

Nowhere near Charles Hamilton's of course, but then Mr. Hamilton's writing life was about thirty years longer than Scott's who died at the comparatively early age of sixty-one.

One can write quite a lot of stuff in thirty years!

The most interesting fact about Scott, is that all his work was done with quill pens. No Remington's in the days he wrote "Rob Roy", (1817). Or even steel nibs! He must have used thousands in his writing life.

ROGER JENKINS writes: W. Thurbon's request for me to state my sources for the statement that Charles Hamilton despised Scott's characters caused me some long research, but I have traced the authority back to Charles Hamilton's first Horizon letter. There he listed writers who could make characters live (Shakespeare and Dickens) and rather contemptuously dismissed Scott's characters as "Historical suits of clothes with names attached". I think that the Floreat Greyfriars LP referred to his learning one of Scott's poems by heart before he knew any better!

Nevertheless, he did at one point refer to Scott's genius. If poetry and characterisation are excluded, only plot construction is left as a major item. Scott was rather addicted to the missing heir theme, and I suppose that this is what Charles Hamilton admired, as he used this device so often. The strange thing is that he parodied this theme in Magnet 814, just before the two series about Mick, who turned out to be Angel's brother who had been kidnapped by gypsies.

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 FOR SALE: Approx. 200 Boy Friends all with Rookwood stories in with polythene dust jackets, £150 or best offer. Magnet No. 132 WANTED, £6 offered and Gem 1569, £3 offered.

H. FRANKLIN

83 UFFINGTON AVENUE, HARTSHOLME ESTATE, LINCOLN.

OUR CLASSIC SERIAL.

MISSING!

Study No. 6 was quiet - very quiet and a shade of gloom hung over it. The faces of the three chums were long and dismal.

They had chipped D'Arcy freely enough when he was with them. His eye-glass, his drawl, and his lisp, his patent-leather shoes and fancy waistcoats had formed inexhaustible topics for their jokes. But now that he was gone all his little weaknesses were forgotten. They remembered only that he was a true chum, and that he was missing.

"Poor old Gussy!" said Blake. Blake was sitting on the table. He hadn't touched his preparation; he was in no mood for work. "I'd give my new cricket-bat to have him back here safe and sound. He's a jolly good sort."

"So he is," agreed Herries. "If that brute Barenegro does him any damage, we'll make him smart for it somehow."

"I suppose there's no doubt Barenegro's got him?" observed Digby.

"None at all. Barenegro had a motive, and he was in the wood at the time."

"But his motive? He might have laid into Gussy with his cudgel, but kidnapping him is another matter."

"Everybody knows that D'Arcy's people are rich. He would have given that brute a sovereign if I hadn't stopped him. Precious few Lower Form kids have sovereigns to give away. That may have put the idea into Barenegro's mind."

"But if Barenegro wants money for releasing him, he'll have to write to the

doctor."

"Of course."

"Well, he hasn't done so."

"How do you know? The doctor would send the letter to old Skeet, but he wouldn't be likely to take us into his confidence."

"I suppose not," said Digby, after some reflection. "He may have had a message from the gipsy, and said nothing about it."

"It's as plain as a pikestaff. Mr. Kidd announced to-day that D'Arcy was safe, and would return later. Something must have been heard. If it wasn't a message from Barenegro, I'll eat my hat."

"I think you're about right, Blake," said Herries. "But what can we do?"

"If we want D'Arcy found, we've got to find him," said Blake. "We are the chaps who can do it. Masters and seniors are all very well in their way, but when it comes to a difficult job it requires three chaps about our size."

Herries and Digby nodded assent.

"Barenegro's got him, and is holding him to ransom," continued Blake. "We're going to nip his game in the bud by rescuing D'Arcy."

"But how are we going to do it?"

"That's a mere detail," replied Blake loftily. "Barenegro shoved D'Arcy into the thickest part of the wood, where we found those tracks. Of course, that was to hide till after dark. The question is, where? Now, although he didn't leave the wood until after dark, I fancy he'd have found it

hard to march D'Arcy off very far without the poor kid being able to get away or call to somebody or other for help. In other words, he had a hiding-place for Gussy not so very far away. Guess where it is?"

"A hollow tree, perhaps," suggested Herries.

"Rats!"

"A cave," ventured Digby.

"Rats, again!"

"Well, out with your idea, if you're so clever," said Herries.

"Well, you know that Castle Hill is just on the other side of the wood, and that the ruined castle is there, within easy reach," said Blake.

"Jolly cold place this weather!" said Digby, with a shiver. "But the ruins are quite open, Blake, and if the gipsy camped there he'd be seen."

"I haven't finished yet. There are vaults under the old castle, and nobody ever goes into them. There may be secret passages, for all we know. Just the place for Barengro."

"There may be something in it," said Herries thoughtfully. "Anyway, we may as well go and search the old castle. I suppose that's your idea?"

"That's it; only it's out of bounds, and the doctor wouldn't allow us to go there and risk meeting the ruffian. So there's no alternative but to take French leave."

"That means we shall have to go after lights are out."

"Precisely. Just as I did that time when Figgy and I stalked Ratcliff there, and snowballed him," said Blake, grinning at the recollection.

"Well, it will be cold work, and

risky if the gipsy's there," said Herries; "but I don't mind that, for one, if we can do poor old Adolphus any good."

"Then it's settled; but keep it dark."

Not a word was said outside Study No. 6, but they made their preparations, and did not forget to arm themselves for a possible fray. Three cricket stumps were smuggled into the dormitory and hidden in their beds ready. The trio looked as innocent as lambs when they went up to bed with the Fourth. Kildare came to see lights out, and saw nothing suspicious.

The captain of St. Jim's was looking grave. During the afternoon he and Mr. Kidd had paid a visit to the ruined castle, and searched it well. They discovered nothing. They explored the ruins and the vaults beneath.

They had not the least suspicion that the same idea had come to Study No. 6, and that the chums were planning a similar expedition.

"Good night!" said Kildare.

The door of the dormitory closed. Blake and his chums intended to allow the rest of the dormitory to fall asleep before rising.

The school clock had boomed out half-past ten before silence was unbroken in the dormitory. Blake stepped quietly out of bed. A whisper roused Herries and Digby. It was a cold night, but there was no hesitation. The matter was serious.

They dressed quickly. There was a certain window in the School House by which Blake had left the house before on a certain occasion. They crept downstairs as quietly as they could, and

reached the window.

They had donned their overcoats, and the cricket-stumps were hidden under them. Blake opened the window, and they dropped out one by one. Then it was closed, and left unfastened. At a well-known spot they climbed the ivy, and dropped over the wall into the Rylcombe Road.

It was a cold and dark night. The wind was sharp, and they muffled themselves up against it.

Dark and gloomy was the wood as they entered it. There was no sound save the rustling of the trees in the wintry wind.

Suddenly Blake halted.

"Stop!" he whispered. "Did you hear anything?"

"Yes," said Dig between his chattering teeth. "There's somebody in the trees."

"I heard it, too," murmured Herries.

They listened. The keen wind was blowing towards them, and it bore to them the faint sound of whispering. They could not distinguish the voices, but they felt sure on one point - that Barenegro was not one of the speakers.

They stole on tiptoe up the path.

The whispering voices grew clearer as they proceeded.

"You're right, Simms. It looks as if the brute can't be coming to-night."

Blake started, and nudged his companions.

"Skeet!" he murmured.

He knew the voice. It was Inspector Skeet of Rylcombe who was ambushed by the dead oak at the end of the footpath. The chums knew nothing, of course, of the kidnapper's letter to the

doctor, or of the plan the inspector had based upon it.

"But we must stick it out, Simms," went on the whisper. "If the scoundrel comes, we must nab him. He'll find me a match for him".

"He ain't likely to come at this time of night, though, sir."

"I don't know. He might not dare to come in daylight. Anyway, he made the condition that if Dr. Holmes agreed to pay the ransom for the boy, he was to make the chalk-mark on the dead tree, and so he must come some time to see if it is here."

"Maybe he guesses we're watching."

"Not likely. But shut up now."

Dead silence. The whispered words had enlightened the chums on many points. They retreated the way they had come, to discuss the matter.

"It's Skeet and a policeman," said Blake, in a low voice. "They are waiting for the kidnapper. If we go past, Skeet will pounce on us, thinking we're the kidnappers. Nobody uses this path of a night, you know."

"That will be a show-up for us," said Herries. "Skeet doesn't like us, and he'll tell the doctor like a bird."

There was a sudden disturbance in the silence of the wood. It sounded like a man falling and crashing through a thicket. A dark figure came out of the trees quite near the boys, and hurried to the dead oak, now deserted by the watchers. A match flared out, and the stranger hurriedly scanned the riven trunk. Then a muttered oath was heard as the match flickered out. But, in that moment, the boys had recognised Barenegro.

The gipsy lingered only a few seconds. Then he strode away swiftly from the spot, in the direction of the ruined castle on the hill. Skeet and his companion came blundering back through the wood. They had caught the glimmer of light as the match flared.

"Did you see him, Simms? Collar him!"

"He ain't here, sir."

"What do you mean by letting him escape? You utter fool!"

Mr. Skeet was angry, and not in a mood to be reasonable. He was cross, and his subordinate reaped the benefit of it.

"Silly ass!" murmured Blake. "He's lost the gipsy, and he ought to be punished. Lucky I've got my peashooter with me."

It was dark, but the sound of the inspector's angry voice was a sufficient guide to so deadly a marksman as Blake.

Mr. Skeet gave a sudden yelp.

"What's that? How dare you, Simms!"

"I didn't do anything, sir!" exclaimed the constable, in amazement. "What's the matter?"

"Something hit me. It felt like - like a bullet. Ow, there it is again."

The inspector clapped a hand to his

fat face. A sudden thought flashed into his mind.

"It's the kidnapper! He's pelting us. We'll have him yet."

Blake roared with laughter.

The inspector was petrified for a moment. Then he made a rush in the direction of the sound. The chums bolted into the wood. The crashing of twigs was clearly audible to Skeet and Simms. They crashed through the thickets in pursuit. The chums were not laughing now. It would not be a laughing matter for them if they were caught. Blake swung himself into the low branches of a tree, and Herries and Dig followed.

Clinging there in the darkness, still as mice, they saw Skeet and Simms go blundering by. Inspector Skeet's foot caught in a root, and he went down with a thump. Simms tumbled over his sprawling legs, and, unfortunately, his knees were planted in the inspector's back. Skeet gave a grunt as the wind was knocked out of him.

"This is where we mizzle!" murmured Jack Blake.

The chums dropped from the tree. In a few moments they were in the foot-path again, and speeding on towards the ruined castle.

(More of this 70-year old "classic" next month)

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WANTED: Gems, Nos. 1585 to 1598; 1635 to 1640; Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, particularly 1920, 1929. Monsters; Stolz, "Somatic Development of Adolescent Boy"; Boys' School Stories by Gunby Hadath, any other authors of School Stories.

JAMES GALL

49 ANDERSON AVENUE, ABERDEEN.

BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 25. VIVA VILLA - THOSE WERE THE DAYS

About this time a new clause was included in every film contract. It was to the effect that "it is agreed that the total length of the programme, of which this film forms part, shall not exceed a total running time of $3\frac{1}{4}$ hours." It was no secret that this was done to curb the programmes being put on at the Trocadero, Elephant & Castle, where a show might include three big feature films, or two films, six or more variety acts, and an organ recital. I can recall two films plus a full-length touring stage revue, and, on another occasion, two films plus a full-length touring pantomime. When you went to the Troc, you really had an evening out.

There had been many complaints, in the Kine Weekly, from other exhibitors, who had no chance of competing with the Troc and its huge seating capacity. Probably the new clause in the contract clipped the Troc's wings to some extent.

Our opening big film for the new term came from Warner's and was James Cagney and Bette Davis in "Jimmy the Gent". I have a feeling that this was the one in which he gave his leading lady a straight left to the jaw. Then came one we described as "The Great British Naval Film" though I have no record of the cast. It was "White Ensign", and it came from M. G. M., no doubt released as part of their renters' quota. Next, from Warner's, Barbara Stanwyck and Joel McCrea in "Gambling Lady". I see that at this time we were playing many cartoons featuring a character named Bosko. They were in

Warner's "Looney Tunes" series.

Then a double-feature programme. From Wardour Films came Will Hay in "Those Were the Days" (it sounds good but I remember nothing of it though it was our first Will Hay picture) plus, from Universal, Joel McCrea, Sally Blane, and Berton Churchill in "Half a Sinner" which I seem to recall as a tip-top comedy-drama.

Then, from M. G. M., Robert Montgomery and Elizabeth Allen in "The Mystery of Mr. 'X' ". (Makes one feel very blue-Gemmish, though I'm sure it was nothing about Captain Mellish.) Next, from Warner's, came Jean Muir in "As the Earth Turns".

After that, another double-feature programme, both from Universal: Lee Tracy and Gloria Stuart in "I'll Tell the World" plus Ken Maynard in "Doomed to Die". Followed by Guy Kibbee and Glenda Farrell in "The Merry Wives of Reno", from Warner's.

Now yet another double-feature show, both once again from Universal, and both, probably, renters' quota films: Lyn Harding in "The Man Who Changed His Name" plus George Wallace in "A Ticket in Tatts".

Then came Marion Davies and Gary Cooper in "Spy 13", which is obviously the film referred to by our Australian reader, Mr. G. S. Swan, a month or two ago. This came from M. G. M.

Also from M. G. M. came Spencer Tracy and Madge Evans in "The Show-Off", and the following week brought Laurel and

Hardy with Jimmy Durante in a full-length feature "Hollywood Party". This also was from Metro.

Next came Hal Leroy in "The Dancing Fool" from Warner's, followed by, from Univensal, Chester Morris in "Let's Talk It Over". Then, from Wardour, Leslie Fuller in "The Outcast", and the next week, another from Wardour: Ralph Richardson in "The Return of Bulldog Drummond".

Then, from Warner, James Cagney was back with Joan Blondell in "He Was Her Man", and the following week a truly stunning, Boys' Own Paper adventure from M. G. M.: Wallace Berry in "Viva Villa". This was one of the Metro greats of all time.

The term ended with Ramon Novarro in "Laughing Boy".
(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS SERIES SOON)

The Postman Called

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

PHIL HARRIS (Montreal): One is at a loss to describe the C.D. Annual. Such a treasure - such an enjoyable trip down memory with your contributors. Really enjoyed the Christmas adventure of Mr. Buddle. By a strange coincidence when the annual arrived, I was reading "Gem" Double Xmas No. dated 17 Nov. 1917 - No. 510, which was the issue in question in Mr. Buddle's picture. Oh, and before it slips my mind again - I thought Mr. H. Webb's cover for the December Digest really oozed the spirit of Christmas. Weary Willie and Tired Tim and that huge "pud". Great stuff. What memories it recalled of all those Christmas numbers of "Chips". To both Mr. Webb, and your good self, a tip of the jolly old hat - and thanks for the memory.

KEN HUMPHREYS (Nottingham): I suppose every Collector has had, or has, 'The Dream'. The Dream consists of discovering a Treasure Trove. Piles of Magnets, Gems and the rest, all heaped in glorious profusion. A glittering Cornucopia, resting unheeded in some dusky back street shop. Well, the dream became a reality for me yesterday. The shop was not 'back street' by any means, but be warned. The prices turn the dream into a nightmare. Imagine how I felt as I glanced in the widow and saw an early Holiday Annual! I walked in and saw the unbelievable display and then heard the unbelievable prices. I asked for a 1926 Magnet. Price - £2.50. Ah well - I've unearthed my

Treasure Trove. And much good it's done me!

J. McMAHON (Tannochside): I am enclosing a cutting from the "Sunday Post". As you will see, it announces the demise of "Nosey Parker" and "Nero & Zero". Both these strips have been running as long as I can remember (at least 40 years). "Nero & Zero" were in the Wizard from 1929 till 1939; "Nosey Parker" ran in the Rover for many years, first on the back page and then on the front cover. "Desperate Dan" has replaced them in this week's "Post". Next week will be "Dennis, the Menace".

The other favourites in the "Post", "Oor Wullie" and "The Broons" are still running, although they are no longer drawn by Dudley D. Watkins, the Thomson papers' chief cartoonist.

A. G. DAVIDSON (Melbourne): I look forward to my C.D. every month. In my opinion "Danny's Diary" is the mostest, especially the films of yesteryear. Danny certainly is a genius to remember all the film titles and stars. I don't think that he has ever made an error, although I think that he should have mentioned Wallace Beery in the cast of "The Lost World".

Mrs. W. MORSS (Walthamstow): In the friendliest way possible, I must disagree with your statement (March CD) regarding a nation's 'moral tone' in which you say "men don't really count for much".

To say this about men, is as unrealistic as saying about women that a good country depends mainly on its women, for its high moral tone.

Of course, both sexes count; and so they should. We all share in the results of our actions, therefore we all have the responsibility for social conscience in the first place. Surely it is the unreasonableness of any society making any one sex responsible for a nation's moral tone that Mary and Patricia are pointing out when they quote from the Rev. John Todd in "You're a Brick Angela".

Mrs. J. PACKMAN (East Dulwich): I was rather hurt by the remarks in Mr. Doupe's letter. He admits that he has been taking the C.D. for a short while, has never contributed anything in the way of an interesting article and brushes other people's efforts off with the pepper pot and the marmalade. If he thinks so little of our combined efforts why does he

continue to buy the magazine?

BILL LISTER (Blackheath): I see that one chappie, who has a letter in the postbag of March C.D., doesn't seem too enthusiastic. So far as I am concerned, that's his loss - not mine, poor fellow! Keep on keeping on!

BENJAMIN G. WHITER (London): At the Gladstone Park meeting of the club which took place today, there was an unanimous vote on a resolution which expressed complete confidence in your admirable production of the monthly Collectors' Digest and Collectors' Digest Annual. On all sides there was high praise for the many years that you have produced this happy magazine. Striving to please everyone must be a gigantic task and in the opinion of the members present you do an exceedingly fine labour of love.

Mrs. MARY CADOGAN (Beckenham): I was extremely surprised to read Mr. Doupe's letter in the March C.D. suggesting that the scope of its contents should be widened. Surely the fact that its 30th anniversary is looming large proves that C.D. continues to give enormous pleasure to its varied and loyal readership. It could never have flourished for so long if it had been less specialized.

The C.D.'s appeal rests essentially in its nostalgic - and critical - assessments of the Hamilton papers, the Nelson Lee and Sexton Blake. Can anyone seriously suggest that these are not worthy of their own monthly magazine? Other periodicals exist for different purposes - and good luck to them - but let's keep the C.D. as it is. Tom Porter said everything in his spontaneous tribute last month: without C.D. 'a light would go out in all our lives'. I for one look forward to its warmth each month.

And incidentally I am surprised that Mr. Doupe can absorb the contents of each issue over his breakfast cereal, bacon and toast. I consider myself a quick reader, but find there is plenty to chew over, or chuckle at, in every edition. Another of Mr. Doupe's comments seems strange: i.e. that you do not publish critical letters. I feel you have, on several occasions, shown great tolerance in publicizing views which you - and most readers - do not share. Also, although Sexton

Blake, Hamilton and Nelson Lee must remain the nucleus of the C.D., you often publish in the monthly, and particularly in the Annual, articles about other papers. (Why - even the unappealing Bessie Bunter got centre page treatment from C.D. last month, although the girls' papers are popular only with a minority of readers.)

This is perhaps a good opportunity of saying how much we all owe to the C.D. Collectors' Digest is more than a magazine: it is a friendly link between us all, individuals and clubs alike. And what an incredible amount of work and effort you must put into it - month after month after month!

G. L. DENNINGTON (Whitstable): St. Laurence Church, Catford, survived the war virtually unscathed, but it could not survive an even more destructive instrument of mankind: the motor car. It was pulled down about 10 years ago to make way for a large car-park. It was no great architectural loss, unlike the old Town Hall which fell victim to another scourge of the age: local government bureaucracy. It was pulled down to make way for new Council offices. Lewisham Hippodrome was demolished, together with the cinema next door, to make way for a particularly hideous shopping precinct.

R. H. ACRAMAN (Ruislip): I was interested to see the article by Mr. Lofts in February C.D. in which he states the interesting discovery that Clifford Owen the author of the St. John's school stories in the Aldine Diamond Library was Charles Hamilton.

Another name has also been discovered for Charles Hamilton; not only "Clifford Owen" but also "Owen Clifford". My Diamond Library No. 34 advertises on the back cover another story of St. John's school by Owen Clifford called "The Bully of St. John's": From here not much imagination is required to see that if Charles Hamilton changed his 'pen' name so many times at this period, it is possible that other names have been used by him, in the Diamond Library stories. Howard Carr, for instance, could be one such name. Look at the opening lines of the "Wyeminster" College story appearing in No. 34 of my Diamond Library called "The Rye House Rivals":

"Caesar was a giddy ass!"

Cuthbert Kettle jabbed his pen savagely into the inkpot as he

voiced the remark, and then ran his fingers through his curly hair and stared at the exercise book which lay on the table before him with a mingled expression of doubt, perplexity and wrath.

"Oh dry up!" growled Augustus Snope nibbling at the end of his own pen and frowning thoughtfully.

The story continues in much the same strain, with phrases and names used so often in Hamilton stories. Other characters in the above story are Fatty Flynn, Fish, Vane and Brace - the latter two, I would add, appearing in my collection of "Topham" school stories by him and "Headland Girls School" by Hilda Richards. Of course it could be coincidence but the resemblance to Hamilton's style of writing is noticeable. Can Mr. Lofts delve deeper into his researches and throw some further light on the matter?

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News of the Clubs

LONDON

Another jolly and happy meeting at the Gladstone Park residence of the Baddiell family. There was an excellent attendance including Bill Norris who is recovering from his recent indisposition. Roger Jenkins in the chair, welcomed new member W. J. Bradford of Ealing and called upon Mary Cadogan to give a short talk on the publication notices of her and Pat Craig's book. A recorded tape of the interview on Start THE WEEK, B. B. C. radio 4, was played over and enjoyed. A copy of YOU'RE A BRICK, ANGELA! was kindly presented to the club library.

Josie Packman's Detective Quiz was won by Eric Lawrence. Bob Blythe read extracts from March 1959 newsletter. Brian Doyle rendered a fine paper entitled "Tune In At The Same Time Next Week" which dealt with Radio heroes. The Baddiell family were suitably thanked for their excellent hospitality.

Next meeting at Bob and Louise Blythe's residence, 47 Evelyn Avenue, Kingsbury, London, NW9 0JF. Phone 205 0732. Kindly

notify if intending to be present and inspect the complete Nelson Lee Library collection.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

HAROLD FORECAST

It is with very great regret that the Cambridge Club has to report the death of their Chairman, Harold Forecast, which occurred on 25th February, at Addenbroke's Hospital, Cambridge.

Harold was an early member of the Club, joining it in 1972, shortly after its foundation, and accepted the Chairmanship in 1973.

His special interest in the Old Boys' Books Club scene was as an author; he had written many stories, and story lines for picture strip stories for the Thomson papers. Members of the London Club will recall his delightful and informative talk on this subject when they visited the Cambridge Club.

His genuine interest in all sides of the hobby, his interest in and support for the club in all its activities, his genial presence, his wise comments and his happy and friendly nature made him a popular and valued chairman. Those of the members who were in touch with him during the last year greatly admired the quiet and patient way he bore his illness.

By his death at a sadly early age the members of the Cambridge Club have lost a greatly valued friend and fellow-enthusiast.

CAMBRIDGE

A smaller than usual gathering met at Edward Witten's home on Sunday, 14th March, several members being absent owing to illness or other causes. The Secretary was in the chair. Members recorded their deep regret and sense of loss felt at the death of their Chairman, Harold Forecast. The Secretary read a letter of acknowledgement from Mrs. Forecast of a message of condolence and of flowers sent to Harold's funeral. He also read tributes to Harold's memory from the Club President, and from Eric Fayne, whose kind message was greatly appreciated by the club.

A number of items of interest were referred to, including an article on G. A. Henty in a recent 'Sunday Times'; reviews of Mary

Cadogan's book; a T. V. interview with John Edson, and a recent book on the Brock brothers as artists.

The Secretary reported that Mary Cadogan and Danny Posner would be among speakers at the Comics' Convention.

A symposium on "Barring-out stories" was opened by Jack Doupe, who gave a well researched talk on real life rebellions and barring outs at Public Schools during the 18th and 19th centuries; the list included Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Winchester (three occasions), Marlborough and Christ's Hospital; on fictional barrings-out he had found only one in "The Captain", and one in R. S. Warren Bell's "Tales of Greyhouse". Jack Overhill made an interesting comparison between Frank Richard's Greyfriars "great rebellion" series and E. S. Brooke's "Barring out at St. Frank's" series. He also referred to a rebellion at the real life Leys Schools in the 1890's. Other contributors to the symposium referred to tales in early "Pucks", in the 1912 "Champion" - a "Captain" type magazine, not the later well known paper - the Rookwood Island barring out series in the Boys' Friend, and to Ernest Raymond's "Tell England".

Other interesting items were discussed; Jack Doupe asked about the possibility of collecting the badges that were issued by clubs run for readers of boys' papers such as the "Chuckles Club". In a conversation among members on Henty and Ballantyne Jack Doupe surprised and interested members by describing how he had once dived into the cave believed to be the original of the one in Ballantyne's "Coral Island".

Next meeting at 5 All Saints' Passage, on Sunday, 11th April.

NORTHERN

Saturday, 13th March, 1976

A good attendance of members at the end of a week of bus strikes, rail strikes and inclement weather!

Chairman Geoffrey Wilde presented his review of 'The Durable Desperadoes' by Vivian Butler.

The book is a survey of the gentleman outlaw of the thriller-reading public - the type of hero who grew up between the two world wars and has survived up to today.

There is a preface by Lejeune, who grew up with writers like

Charteris, Buchan, Rider Haggard and the rest. "Perhaps youth is wise", he says, "No author who gives pleasure to his readers can be dismissed lightly".

The author makes reference to various points of Hobby interest, including the classic encounter between Orwell and Richards. He alludes, too, to Frank Richards being asked, did he not want to do anything better than write stories for boys? To which Frank replies, "There is nothing better."

Reference is made, too, to the prodigious output of some writers. Brooks, for example, was writing some 20,000 words a week for 16 years, and, incidentally, he wrote 1½ million words for *The Magnet* and *The Gem*.

Harold Truscott talked about wild west stories - emphasizing the difference between fiction and reality! Few stories, and few films, ever saw the American Indian as anything but an uncivilised, fiendish brute. The concept that there could be justice on his side was almost never present.

Harold spoke about Custer's last stand - dealt with carefully and accurately by David Humphries Miller in 1957, but with considerably less accuracy by most other novelists and historians.

Custer was not the brave hero that fiction later made him. Custer and his men were themselves the aggressors and were armed. They had miscalculated the number of Indians present - and Custer had disobeyed orders! Red Cloud had only just signed a treaty in Washington and this was known before Custer set out on his punitive mission - by military law he should never have set out - and the treaty was broken almost immediately. The Indians were simply carrying out the annual migration of the buffalo herds, made necessary because of the white man's wholesale and wanton destruction of the buffalo.

Now, if we want to, we may know the truth - through such a book as Dee Brown's 'Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee' - a very different version from the classic westem.

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