

\* STORY \*  
PAPER

# COLLECTORS

VOL 30  
No 360

# DIGEST

DECEMBER  
1976

20p



SPECIAL BUMPER PARCELS:

25 Gems, Magnets, approx.  $\frac{1}{2}$  of each. Fair reading copies in 1938, 39, 40, all different. £10 post free. Also other mags., U. J., Detective Weekly, Modern Boys, Lees - you name it! My selection. 25 for £10, post free (Reading copies). Good stock at usual prices. Large collection of 'Penny Dreadfuls' and "oldies" recently purchased. These include - mostly bound, Aldines, Half Holiday, Young Folks Weekly Budget, Comrades, Bow Bells, Boys' Herald 1870/80's, Boys' World, Boys' Comic Journal, Boys' of the Empire, Boys' of England, British Boys, Every Boys, Young Briton, Harkaway, Boys' Guide, Our Boys' Journal, up-to-date Boys, Aldines invention, O'er land and sea, 1st rate, Robin Hood, Turpin, etc. Many Brett, Hogarth House, etc.

Sorry, far too many to list, please state wants or interests. Satisfaction always assured.

Eagle (Dan Dare) original artwork available. Viewers very welcome almost any time, but please ring first! The visit will be well worthwhile. You'll be amazed! All the very best for Xmas and the New Year to my customers/friends.

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STORY PAPER

**COLLECTORS' DIGEST**

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by  
W. G. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

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CHRISTMAS

With the passing of time, everything changes. For no particular reason apart from the fact that change for the sake of change is part and parcel of life for the trendies who, despite being in the minority in this country, always seem to get their own way.

May this coming Christmas, be one of your happiest ever. For you, may it be a Christmas to remember joyfully for ever and a day. That you will enjoy the best Christmas that ever was is my wish for you.

And may the new Year bring you peace, prosperity, and joy.

RECORDS

The re-issue of the Frank Richards record - Floreat Greyfriars -

by E. M. L., in time for Christmas, will be welcomed by new boys, who will wish to add it to their souvenirs, and by old boys, who have worn out their old ones and are delighted to replace them with new ones. Originally issued on 3rd December, 1965, it should sell well on its second time round.

Frank Richards is the star of the record, and he is superb and the only one who matters. Readers of certain extracts from his stories do not shine unduly, while the interviewer did not know his job as well as he might have done, and dwelt too much on the closing years of the great author's career. But the grand old man himself overcomes all obstacles. Originally costing 32/-, the new issue is just over £2 - another victim of inflation.

Speaking of other records, I wonder how many of my readers remember Broadcast records which appeared in the shops in the late twenties and early thirties. The smaller record, which had the playing time of the 10-inch record of its day, was 1/3, and the larger record, the same size as the 10-inch orthodox but with the playing time of the 12-inch, was 2/-.

They were excellent, and I still have a number of them, preserved from those far-off days. To meet the competition of Broadcast records, the price of H. M. V. and Columbia records, so long sold at 3/- each, was dropped to 2/-.

#### THAT "PEARLY" ISSUE

I have been very much moved by the enormously warm reception given to the Pearl Jubilee Double Number which we published last month to celebrate 30 years of this magazine. In the week following publication day, I received well over a hundred letters, and they have been coming in ever since. With deep gratitude I thank all those who have written me such wonderful letters concerning that November special. It has been quite impossible for me to answer everyone who wrote, but the letters have been warmly appreciated and will be kept and treasured always.

#### TAILPIECE

I don't often read press reports concerning Westminster, but when I do I always think of Greyfriars when I read of Mr. Skinner, M. P.

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for Bolsover.

My childhood Christmases (they had a special magic quality all their own in those days) are noteworthy for the fact that the best Gem Christmas stories were gone while the best Greyfriars Christmas yarns were still to come. How I bless the second-hand bookshop and the book stalls in the market on Saturdays, where I could pick up old, old papers at 2 a penny,

A considerable number of readers have written me concerning the film "Anthony Adverse". It is surprising that so many have happy memories of it, while I myself had long forgotten everything but the title. Let's hope it will turn up on TV one of these days.

Owing to the Christmas break, we shall go to press a day or two earlier than usual in December in order to assure that the January issue gets out without too much delay. It will help a lot if contributors, reporters, and advertisers will make sure that their "copy" reaches our editorial office as early as possible this month.

Finally, the Pearl Jubilee edition of Collectors' Digest Annual should be out and coming your way in December. I hope that it will help to add gaiety and pleasure to a Very Joyful Christmas.

#### THE EDITOR

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WANTED: 1930's Comics. Bubbles, Playbox, My Favourite, Mickey Mouse, Sunbeam, Pucks 1932, 1933, Puck Annuals, Champion Annual 1937, Athletic News, Football Annuals, 1930/31, 1939/40, 1947/48. Cash or Exchange.

HEARN, 20 WINGATE WAY, CAMBRIDGE.

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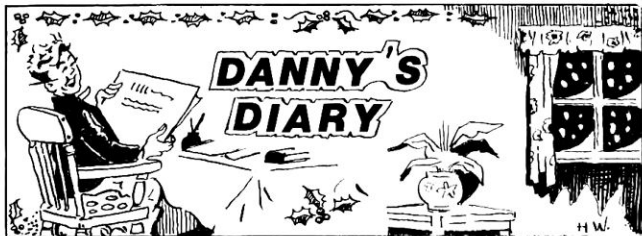
WANTED: Mint condition. Howard Baker Magnets, No. 18, 22, 24, willing to pay over market price, within reason.

R. G. ARNOLD, 83 CANTERBURY TOWER  
ST. MARK'S STREET, BIRMINGHAM.

\* \* \* \* \*

Merry Xmas and Happy New Year to all hobby chums. When I win the Pools I will visit you all.

MCMAHON, HOZIER CRES., TANNOCHSIDE.



CHRISTMAS 1926

Whenever a strange man in black turns up at Greyfriars, we know that there is going to be dirty work at the crossroads. Or that something sinister is in the air.

The latest man in black is a Mr. Poynings who comes to see Coker in the first story of a new series in the Magnet: "Coker on the War-Path". The Famous Five see Mr. P. on his way to the school, and his beaky nose is unforgettable. Mr. Poynings is the secretary of Coker's Uncle Henry, and Mr. P. tells Coker that his uncle is ill and advises Horace not to go home for Christmas. And Coker boots out Mr. Poynings.

When the Famous Five are on the way back to Greyfriars from Cliff House, it starts to rain hard and they try to get shelter at a lonely bungalow. The owner drives them away, but not before the boys have recognised the man as Coker's visitor.

Next week, in "Missing From School", Coker saves Bob Cherry, who has fallen in a swollen stream. And then Coker disappears. Aunt Judy turns up to ask Coker's friends to stay on at school in the holidays, and look for Coker. The Famous Five agree - but Potter and Greene are not having any.

Next, a lovely Christmas Number, "The Prisoner of the Bungalow" in which the Famous Five rescue Coker, who has been kidnapped by

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Poynings and held in the bungalow. And the Five go home for Christmas with Coker to Holly House. But the uncle is in Poynings's power, and afraid to kick the man out. Mr. Coker helped a lawbreaker to escape from the police, and Poynings holds a letter which shows what Uncle did. Finally "Coker's Christmas Party", in which Bunter turns up and tries to gate-crash the party. And he spots Poynings putting poison in Mr. Coker's medicine. So, at last, Poynings is kicked out, the shadows are lifted, and everybody - including Bunter - is set for a merry Christmas.

I loved this series. Of course, the same plot has been used before more than once, but somehow it all comes over jolly well. A grand month of Greyfriars stories.

The Christmas mails were delayed this year by a lightning strike of 600 temporary workers in the London sorting-offices. Luckily it was quickly settled.

Two excellent tales in the Schoolboys' Own Library. "Billy Bunter's Christmas Pudding" is especially good, with Bunter seeing a phantom pud fixed up by Wun Lung. More serious is "The Boy From Nowhere" in which a mysterious boy, just like Smythe in appearance, turns up at Rookwood.

The shilling Monster contains "The Ghost of Bannington Grange", an exciting tale about one Christmas with the St. Frank's boys.

I feel a bit ashamed, in a way, but I just can't like the Christmas series which has run over the four weeks of the month in the Gem. It has ghosts and a Christmas party and a spooky mansion on the edge of a cliff in Devonshire with a hundred steps going down to the haunted caves, but somehow everything seems to be wrong for the kind of Gem Christmas that we have been used to. The leading character is Kit Wildrake, whom everybody, even the author, calls just Kit all the way through (the real Martin Clifford never does that). And there is his rough cowboy uncle, Buck Whipcord, who is the host of a party. Perhaps it doesn't seem right for cowboys to be giving a ghostly Christmas party in an old Devonshire mansion high up on the cliffs overlooking the wild sea waves. The titles of the series are "The Man from the Bootleg Ranch", "The Ghost of Drere Manor", "The Mark of the Hawk" and "The Secret of the Hundred Steps". Maybe the plot isn't all that bad. It might be all

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right as a separate tale about different characters. It could be that it's just as a St. Jim's series it's all wrong. But the Macdonald cliff pictures are lovely.

I love going to the pictures, and 1926 has given us a very successful new British film producer. His name is Alfred Hitchcock, and this year he has produced two excellent films named "The Pleasure Garden" and "The Lodger".

And I mustn't forget what I have seen myself at the cinema this month. There has been Bebe Daniels in "The Splendid Crime", Adolphe Menjou in "The Grand Duchess and the Waiter", Syd Chaplin in "Oh! What a Nurse!", Lon Chaney in "The Blackbird", and May McAvoy and Pat O'Malley in "My Old Dutch".

The Nelson Lee has gone on with the series about the Honour System at St. Frank's. In "All the Fun of the Fair", Fullwood must find £20 to pay a debt of honour, and Handforth tries to help by going to a fair and running a vegetable-and-fruit shy. Next month in "Uncle Handforth", Handy, still trying to help Fullwood, turns up as Uncle Julian from the Argentine. The last story of the series is "The Remove on the Warpath". Fullwood, with the shadow of the sack over him, disappears from St. Frank's. Nelson Lee takes a hand, with the Remove, and they raid the gambling den in Bannington.

The Christmas Number is very late in the month, and the opening story of the new series is "The Spectre of Handforth Towers". And the place is nothing like the boys and the Moor View girls expected. It's tumbledown and ghostly - and there are plenty of thrills in this Christmassy fare.

Christmas in the Popular has been the real thing, but what a glut of wicked secretaries there is this December. The St. Jim's story is the one about Mr. Bloore trying to poison off Lord Eastwood, and the Rookwood one is about Mr. Spencer who has stolen Mr. Silver's Rembrandt. So, with Bloore, Spencer, and Poynings, we have a Terrible Trio with a vengeance. The Greyfriars one is about Harry Wharton carrying a precious packet to Scotland for Mr. Kerr, the father of the St. Jim's chap. The Popular is so very good.

My brother Doug gave me the new Holiday Annual for Christmas, and it is fine, right through from Mr. Macdonald's lovely cover to the

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last story in the book which tells of the arrival of Nugent Minor at Greyfriars. There is a Wodehouse story and a Cedar Creek story, plus a specially-written tale about Bunter running away from Greyfriars and landing himself first at St. Jim's and then at Rookwood. It's great fun. There is an old story of St. Jim's in which Lord Eastwood gives Gussy a cheque book, and a Rookwood story about rivalry with Bagshot School. I like most of the book very much.

Christmas Day this year was on a Saturday. On the Tuesday after Christmas we all went up to the London Palladium to see the pantomime "Aladdin". My Gran and Auntie Gwen were with us for Christmas, and Gran paid for the seats for the pantomime, though she did not go with us herself. To go out to a show like that would be too much for her now, but she loved to see us go off to enjoy ourselves. Clarice Mayne was Aladdin. I like her very much indeed. She sang several new popular songs, two of them being "What'll I Do?" and "Me and Jane in a Plane". Charles Austin was Mother Twankey, and Bransby Williams was the wicked uncle, Abanazer. It was a lovely show. After it was over, we went in the Lyons Tea Shop next to Oxford Circus Station and had a nice meal before we went on the Underground to Charing Cross to catch our train home.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: S.O.L. No. 41, "Billy Bunter's Christmas Pudding", comprised the Christmas Double Number of the Magnet in 1909 plus a few chapters of the actual Christmas story of a month later. The double number story was mainly about the blackmailing of M. Charpentier, plus a stranger cast up on the beach. The sequences about the phantom pudding may have been slipped in to the story for the sake of Christmas, which was still many weeks away. The cover picture of Bunter in bed, gazing at the ghostly pudding, is one of the most famous of all Greyfriars covers, and appeared many times. In the S.O.L. cover, it was reversed, with Bunter gazing from left to right instead of right to left in the original. Like the Sovereign's head is reversed on postage stamps when a new King or Queen comes to the throne. The Rookwood story, S.O.L. No. 42, "The Boy from Nowhere" was discussed recently by Roger Jenkins in our pages. It comprised the Clare-Smythe-Muffin series, four tales of early 1920 in the Boys' Friend, plus a slightly earlier single tale popped on in the front as make-weight.

The Mr. Bloore story appeared originally in the Gem near Christmas 1921. The Mr. Spencer Rookwood story featured in the Boys' Friend at Christmas 1922. The Harry Wharton's Trust story was first in the Magnet at Christmas 1920. It fitted snugly into two issues of the Popular, as it had actually been written as two separate stories for the Greyfriars Boys' Herald, switched into the Magnet after Greyfriars had finished in the Herald.)

# BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

My opening remarks are short this month as Blakiana is a bit longer than usual, so all I will say is thank you for all the material which has been sent to me this year and to take this opportunity of wishing everyone a Happy Christmas.

## MYSTERIES OF THE DETECTIVE WEEKLY

by Josie Packman

Recently whilst searching through some Detective Weeklies for a bit of information I discovered an error among those listed in the Sexton Blake Catalogue. I decided to check up on them all and publish a new list in Blakiana for people to amend their Catalogues. I have most of the Detective Weeklies from No. 251 when the reprints began, to the last one No. 379, so set about the task of checking the stories with the aid of my collection of Union Jacks and S. B. L's,

Before starting I must say that in my opinion this was one of the worst deceptions perpetrated by the old Amalgamated Press. From the way the selection of tales was made and what was done to them, it looks as if someone just stuck a pin in a list of them here and there and the resulting selection passed over to the office boy to rewrite. In comparing the originals with the reprints I found some dreadful hashes had been made. For instance, in the Dr. Satira series two Union Jack tales had been used for the one issue of the Detective Weekly. Not surprisingly quite a bit of each story had been cut out.

By sheer chance another mystery was solved. I was sorting out a few Thriller Libraries for one of my borrowers when I came across a tale by G. H. Teed which struck a cord, I had been reading so many of the Detective Weekly stories that I remembered the South American names used and these also appeared in Thriller Library No. 519 called The Plunder of Santa Maria and published in January 1939. The D. W. tale was called "Don Rico's Millions" and dated April 1939. Sexton Blake did not appear in the Thriller tale, whereas a few chapters had been inserted in the Detective Weekly one to introduce Sexton Blake. The mystery is, one wonders why go to all this trouble when such a

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wealth of tales were at hand for use. Was it really necessary to reprint a tale in April 1939 which had appeared in another paper as recently as January 1939. The mind really boggles!:

Another tale by G. H. Teed D. W. 265 called Limehouse Loot would appear to have been written as a sequel to his last original story in the S. B. L. No. 608 in which Dr. Rymer was supposed to have died in the fire at Abbey Towers. The date of the S. B. L. was January 1938. That of the D. W. story March 1938. The real mystery is why wasn't the sequel published in the S. B. L. Maybe it was one of Teed's unfinished manuscripts and someone else just finished it off. Most of the minor characters were unknown, not Teed's usual small time criminals. I am afraid this is a mystery which even Sexton Blake could not solve.

Another mystery which I have reason to think is now solved, is the short Blake story in D. W. No. 268, called The Riddle of the Fake Clues. Incredible as it may seem I feel certain it is a short story from a "Penny Pictorial" called "The Murder of Morton Green". The name in the D. W. tale is Morton Geen. The name is too similar to be a mere coincidence. If anyone has a copy of Penny Pictorial No. 649 perhaps they would be kind enough to confirm this for me.

D. W. No. 355 a Plummer tale is obviously a reprint of an early Plummer story by either Michael Storm or Norman Goddard which I am unable to trace as I do not possess all the early Union Jacks. Perhaps someone who has may be able to trace it. This is the story in which Plummer poses as an American detective called Ezra G. Turley and takes a flat in Baker Street opposite Blake's own residence. The Green Eye of Banyah is a priceless emerald. Does any Blake fan remember the tale?

The remaining tales which I have not been able to trace any original ones for are D. W. Nos. 253, 255, 267, 276, 280, 290, 328 and 376. Maybe they were original tales but I doubt it. Maybe someone can come up with the answers to many of these mysteries of the Detective Weekly.

AMENDED LIST OF DETECTIVE WEEKLIES CONTAINING SEXTON BLAKE TALES

DW 251 S. B. L. 377 2nd series  
253 No trace

DW 255 No trace  
257 S. B. L. 406 2nd series

cont'd...

DW 259 U. J. 1101  
 261 U. J. 1102  
 263 S. B. L. 163 1st series  
 265 Sequel to S. B. L. 608  
 266 U. J. 1107  
 267 No trace  
 268 Penny Pictorial 649?  
 269 S. B. L. 269 2nd series  
 271 S. B. L. 294 2nd series  
 273 U. J.'s 1365 and 1366  
 276 No trace  
 278 U. J.'s 1206 and 1209  
 280 No trace  
 282 U. J. 1211  
 284 No trace  
 286 U. J. 1217  
 288 U. J. 1400  
 290 No trace  
 292 U. J. 1248  
 294 S. B. L. 317 2nd series  
 296 U. J. 1249  
 298 S. B. L. 265 2nd series  
 300 U. J.'s 1250 and 1251  
 302 No trace  
 304 U. J. 1523  
 306 U. J. 1326  
 308 S. B. L. 293 2nd series  
 310 U. J. 1289  
 311 U. J. 1297  
 312 S. B. L. 250 2nd series  
 313 U. J. 1312  
 314 S. B. L. 291 2nd series  
 315 S. B. L. 285 2nd series  
 316 U. J. 1327  
 317 No trace  
 318 No trace  
 319 U. J. 1293  
 320 U. J. 1285  
 321 Thriller 519, Jan. 1939  
 322 U. J. 1301  
 323 S. B. L. 233 2nd series

DW 324 S. B. L. 218 2nd series  
 325 No trace  
 326 U. J.'s 1350 and 1359  
 327 U. J. 1247  
 328 No trace  
 329 S. B. L. 247 2nd series  
 \* 332 U. J. 1230  
 333 S. B. L. 272 2nd series  
 334 U. J. 1240  
 335 S. B. L. 271 2nd series  
 336 U. J. 1221  
 337 U. J. 1252  
 338 U. J. 1291  
 339 S. B. L. 267 2nd series  
 340 U. J. 1222  
 341 U. J. 1296  
 342 U. J. 1262  
 343 U. J. 1216  
 344 No trace  
 345 U. J. 1300  
 346 U. J. 591  
 347 U. J. 511  
 348 U. J. 476 A. Blair  
 349 U. J. 468  
 350 U. J. 644  
 351 U. J. 485  
 352 U. J. 472 A. Murray  
 353 U. J. 475 N. Goddard  
 354 U. J. 492  
 355 No trace  
 356 U. J. 478  
 357 U. J. 495  
 358 U. J. 459 N. Goddard  
 359 No trace  
 360 U. J. 555  
 361 No trace  
 362 U. J. 498  
 363 U. J. 514 A. Murray  
 364 U. J. 334 M. Storm  
 365 U. J. 594  
 366 U. J. 509

DW 367	U. J. 507	DW 374	U. J. 654
368	U. J. 342 M. Storm	375	No trace
369	U. J. 567 J. W. Robin	376	No trace
370	U. J. 525 A. Murray	377	U. J. 620
371	U. J. 518	378	U. J. 1104
372	U. J. 1276	379	No trace
373	U. J. 1242		
* 330	U. J. 1219		
331	1273		

## TO RUSSIA WITH LOVE

by Bill Lister

Nostalgia - I'm full of it. It is no good looking at me with a slightly supercilious glint in your eye and saying "Nostalgia" as if to put me off. I'm full of it, brimming over with it, exceedingly glad of it. You can supply me with huge doses of it if you so wish, I revel in it and why not? may I ask.

Talking of nostalgia, a delightful little book came my way recently, entitled "Five Years After" first published in 1906 and this copy in 1919 fairly breathes, oozes and overflows with this nostalgia.

"Five Years After" has a full Christmas setting weatherwise. Cold winds, frost and snow with Church bells ringing out over the snow covered hills and dales. "Probably" says the editor, "the most popular Christmas novel that has ever been written, it was later dramatised and played in theatres all over England. (Very true, see footnote by J. P.)

Shades of East Lynn, Murder in the Red Barn and Sweeny Todd, I am old enough to have seen these plays on stage and screen and for wicked squires, heartbroken maidens and equally heartbroken lovers to say nothing of penniless tenants being turned out of their homes "Five Years After" takes the biscuit. I would love to have seen it on the stage. I really would! Look at it this way, if you have not felt a cold shiver go down your spine while viewing Sweeny Todd, etc., or wept buckets as the curtain dropped on East Lynn you really have not lived, nostalgia or no nostalgia.

For O. B. B. C. enthusiasts however, "Five Years After" is a must. It stars Sexton Blake, Tinker and Pedro (to think I missed seeing it on the stage breaks my heart), however through the kind auspices of the Josie Packman Library, at least I have been able to read all about it, in

fact, I have read it, hence this article. Before I go further make sure you have a large handkerchief ready, if you are very sentimental make it a towel, I would not like to think that falling tears had damaged your Christmas C.D.

Our cover depicts a harrowing scene, one that is described in the opening chapters. Before your very eyes you see the villain (the square) in all his splendour, a top hat, longtailed coat, walking cane - real class, No he's not called Jasper but Marmaduke - Marmaduke Lovell, and even if he does die in the opening chapters you will remember him the rest of your life. There he stands unmoved, as the poor unfortunate trio, father mother and son are being turned out of their home (heavily mortgaged to the squire) the home of the family for over 300 years and now, kicked out on Christmas Eve. The old father dangling his V.C. in front of Squire Marmaduke's face. "I won this for saving your life squire and this is your gratitude." I don't really know which war this happened in, could not have been so recent as the South African War seeing the story was written by W. M. Graydon in 1906. Both men would have been too old.

Do you think this softens the squire's heart? Not on your Marmaduke and so our hapless trio trudge, heads bowed with grief, into the snow towards a broken-down, roof-leaking cottage a kind neighbour had let them have. "Begone" shouts the Squire, brandishing his stick, "don't let me see your faces again".

Allow me to pause while I remove the lump in my throat, I find I cannot go on, I'm so overcome. I will let the author take over.

"In the wretched little cottage, a short distance from the village, to which they had crept like hunted animals, sat the three innocent victims of Squire Lovell's wrath. (Everyone was frightened of the Squire's wrath in those days.) Crushed by the blow they had been sitting thus for a couple of hours, too miserable to speak. From the comfort of Hall Farm they had come to this rickety abode which a tramp might have scorned, the roof leaked badly, the walls were damp and the stone floors full of ruts."

Well there you are, penniless, foodless, hopeless and of all times on Christmas Eve. However, Dad Blackburn still has his gun and out he goes into the snowy frosty moonlit night to see if he can shoot a hare for their Christmas dinner (and jolly good luck to him I say). Now

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back to Marmaduke - he is to be found dead on Christmas Day and bad as he is I cannot help feeling sorry for him; who wants to die on Christmas Day either naturally or by being "bumped off".

Now you can see the plot of our story getting under way, poor old Dad Blackburn out with a gun on Christmas Eve and the wicked Squire found dead on Christmas Day. Look's like Dad is going to get the blame for it, I mean, look at the motive, Dad has every reason to dispose of the villain. They call it circumstantial evidence or something. However, luck changes for our down and out V.C. hero and his family because at this point Sexton Blake, Tinker and Pedro appear on the scene and you instinctively know that right will triumph, but as I have only drawn on the first two chapters there is a long way to go yet before you breathe a sight of relief.

In case my reader has fallen off his chair laughing at the mere mention of this hum-dinger of an old-fashioned melodrama, may I point out that there were such Squires in the distant past and huge baronial type dwelling places, unfortunately side by side with Dad Blackburn's leaking candlelit cottage.

By the way I am told that in Russia the works of Charles Dickens are very popular. The natives of that country still having the idea that the schools and orphanages and the boys climbing up the chimneys to sweep them are just the same today. If that is so anyone who could translate our "Five Years After" starring Sexton Blake, Tinker, Pedro and supporting cast of villainous squires and hapless evicted tenants, sidewalk vendors and matchsellers, published in the Sexton Blake Library No. 105 in 1919, into the Russian language, should make a fortune.

Footnote. This story was originally published in Union Jack No. 165 in December 1906. The play was first performed at the old Crown Theatre, Peckham, London, SE15 on 24 February, 1908. Details are in the Supplement of the Sexton Blake Catalogue. J. P.

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Merry Xmas to one and all. Still WANTED: Nelson Lees, o/s 114, 144.

JOHN and WINIFRED GUNN

65 WALTON GARDENS, GRANTHAM.

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# Nelson Lee Column

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

by Jim Cook

gaudeamus igitur

"Don't let him taste it - he might like it!" screamed Nick Trotwood when Tom Burton offered Fatty Little what looked like an unusually shaped jam tart. Jimmy Little's weight is still a problem to his study mates.

Everybody in the Junior Common Room joined in the laughter at the look on Fatty's face as Burton quickly withdrew his present. Whether the stoutest junior at St. Frank's would have survived Tom Burton's mysterious pastry will never be known for it was never seen again.

The weather was cold and wet outside, and the prospect for tomorrow's important football match with Helmford was in the balance. The ground on Little Side was already under water from the heavy rains. The thoughts in the minds of the Junior XI had somehow spread to the rest of the juniors, and an air of ennui had settled on them.

Thus when Burton entered holding something on a plate which he placed in front of Fatty, Trotwood's cry of alarm created a spark of interest and the juniors woke up suddenly.

The incident went to show how very short we are these days of jollity. Until that moment before Burton came into the room the scene was a very dismal and unhappy one; yet a simple action such as I saw exemplified the need for an uplift when in the throes of the doldrums.

So I made a tour of the college and interviewed seniors and juniors, also masters and even domestics, and made notes of their remarks selecting those that will perhaps bring a smile to those of you who are weary and heavy laden.

I do not guarantee the origin of these remarks since some are based mainly on hearsay. For instance, Reggie Pitt told me that he overheard Bernard Forrest and Gore-Pearce conversing in the village and Forrest suddenly saying he had left all his money in his study. Gore-Pearce shrugged, "What are you worried about? We're both here ..."

I guessed Billy Nation would trot out a proverb or saying and I

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was right when he said: "A critic is a man who expects miracles." I am still thinking about that.

From Nipper I got: "Diplomacy is to do and say the nastiest thing in the nicest way." He should know!

Archie Glenthorne. "There is no pleasure in having nothing to do; the fun is in having lots to do and not doing it."

I wanted a short extract from a Trackett Grim story from Handforth but he wouldn't part with it.

I asked Fatty Little later to give me his opinion on life in general. His comment was: "There is no love sincerer than the love of food."

Solomon Levi: "In converting Jews to Christians, you raise the price of pork." How true, Solly!

I ran into Clarence Fellows in the West House and asked him to make a comment on his study mate, Timothy Tucker. I didn't want a dissertation from T. T. on politics. Fellows obliged with: "That man's silence is wonderful to listen to." Before Fellows continued in rhyme I took off.

I expected Johnny Onions to say something concerning circus life. "The first one to catch a circus in a lie is a boy."

Tommy Watson: "It must be great to be rich and let the other fellow keep up appearances." Sir Montie take note!

I should think Tommy reminds himself of this quotation each time he passes the Moat Hollow.

It seemed to me there was a conspiracy among the boys to throw quotations at me each time I asked them to contribute a piece for the annual. At least, it appeared to me their answers were quotations; they had that rhythm so familiar in proverbial sayings.

So I approached one of those juniors that never seems to figure in any of the recorded events at St. Frank's. I ran into Terence O'Grady as he was emerging from Study No. 8 in the Modern House. Here, I thought, I would get something entirely different ... perhaps a glimpse of Irish humour. And O'Grady willingly obliged. An Irishman answers the phone: "Is that Dublin Two-Three-Double Four?" "No, sorry, this is Dublin Two-Three-Four Four."

"Oh, sorry to disturb you." "That's all right, I had to answer the phone anyway, it was ringing."

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And: Q. How do you confuse an Irish labourer?

A. Show him two shovels and tell him to take his pick,

Phew!

Hussi Ranji Lal Kahn obliged in a similar strain when he told me he was "unanimous of the opinion schoolwork should be more joyful,"

After that I interviewed some of Dr. Stafford's staff. Mr. Crowell, the Remove master, who quoted, "A diligent scholar, and the master is paid."

Mr. Barnaby Goole, Housemaster East House, who is very careful what he eats. "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are." I did not tell him what I ate.

Mr. Pagett, the Fifth form master declined to be associated with old boys' magazines!

Mr. Horace Pyecraft, Fourth form master: who, looking at my notes observed, "Don't you believe in sayings; they are all made by men, for their own advantage."

You may remember Mr. Stockdale, the Modern House master, is an artist of no mean ability, so I asked him to say something about his hobby. "Like the Greek gods, artists are only revealed to one another," he quoted. Exeunt your correspondent.

An inscription on the wall in Dr. Stafford's study says: "A clear desk is a clear conscience."

There is a popular belief that professors are brainy people. Until I tried to interview Professor Tucker, the science master, I shared that belief. All I got from the professor was a discourse on the possibility of life on the planets. An odd man the professor.

That strange man of all trades, Phipps, enlightened me on a point I had nourished for many years. He asked me to include in this letter the fact that "a man Can serve two masters",

From Mr. Nelson Lee.

"My contribution is to ask your readers to follow my fight against crime. The criminal has advanced his methods from the old days when burglars were depicted carrying a swag bag and a jemmy. Now today, arch criminals like Zingrave, cross swords with the law with a disturbing equality of skill; but although virtue is not always triumphant, the old tag that crime doesn't pay is in our favour."

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The Rev. Goodchild: "Absit Invidia."

Larry Scott, the West House junior: "It is a sin to tell a lie."

At one period of my visit to St. Frank's I ran into Lord Dorrimore. He wishes to be remembered to you all. He complained of the lack of unexplored areas in this shrinking world. His opinion is that the future of the world lies in the stars. Old Umlosi couldn't have put it better!

Ralph Leslie Fullwood offered the following advice:

"A young gambler will become an old beggar."

Old Josh Cuttel, the School porter and guardian of the lodge gates:

"Ask me,"

I was interested to know what Yung Ching, the Chinese junior in the West House, would give me for my letter. He told me he had just discovered the meaning of the term "Chinaman" in cricket. He was very pleased to inform me that the name derives from the Chinese bowler Ellis Achong, who played for the West Indies, and who practised this kind of bowling, although he was not the first to do so. A moment of national pride for Ching!

I felt I just couldn't omit the girls of The Moor View, and encountering three in Bellton Lane, who turned out to be Irene & Co., their comments are hereby mentioned.

"As it is generally assumed I have a soft spot for Ted Handforth, I will admit it," Irene Manners,

Doris Berkeley would like to advertise her opinion of Joan Tarrant: "Joan Tarrant is a fizzig and I don't care who knows it!" Reggie Pitt please explain the meaning of a Fizzig. And Marjorie Temple having spotted Archie Glenthorne in the offing had no comment,

To round off I have Mary Jane Potter, domestic, servant and cook at St. Frank's, to make the final remark.

"To enjoy your pleasure proper you've got to earn it."

\* \* \* \* \*

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No. 138 - "Billy Bunter's Christmas Party"

The first Greyfriars Christmas story to appear after the war, "Billy Bunter's Christmas Party" received an enthusiastic welcome when Skilton's published it in the winter of 1949 - indeed, they explained at the back of the book that the enormous demand coupled with a shortage of paper had led to some earlier stories going out of print. The long series of Bunter books was just getting under way, and goodwill abounded.

Bunter's Uncle Carter had installed himself at Tankerton Hall near Folkestone, and wanted Bunter to bring a large party with him for Christmas. It was no secret to the reader that it was really an expensive boarding house (charging two and a half guineas a day, a princely sum in those days), but Bunter concealed this fact from the Famous Five and Squiff, who were rather mystified by remarks about extras and things having to go down. Billy and Bessie got a free holiday on the strength of the six guests in question and, although this was quite in character, it was a bit of a mystery to know what had happened to the supposed wealth of the Carter family. In the 1938 Magnet series, Uncle Joseph Carter was supposed to have been thinking of leaving £50,000 to Bunter, but Uncle Humphrey Carter, the lessee of Tankerton Hall, seemed to have little money to spare.

Naturally, this was only a minor aspect of the story. There were two main themes running through the book - Sir Hubert Tankerton, now a garage proprietor, and his search for the hidden hoard of banknotes (£50,000 again) which his miserly grandfather, Sir Julius, had hidden before he died; and the mysterious hauntings at the Hall, the ghost who had scared away a series of Uncle Carter's guests. Of course, there were many seasonable touches, such as the groans heard in the Oak Room and the white face seen at the window during a snow-storm on the evening of Christmas Day. Needless to say, there were no critical voices raised in 1949 when such traditional Yuletide fare was offered.

Nevertheless, it seems obvious now that this story was not the equal of the famous Magnet Christmases of the past. It is easy to say that the Bunter books lacked the sheer zest and flair and style of the

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earlier Greyfriars stories, but there is more to it than that. The Bunter books were about three times the length of the average Magnet, but because they were written as one continuous story they lacked the rhythmical rise and fall of tension that was possessed by each number in a Magnet series. When I hinted as much to Charles Hamilton in 1954, he wrote back to me as follows: "I think there is no doubt that the best stories appeared after the old paper ceased to be red. Many readers have told me so, and I agree with them, that the later the Magnet, the better: and the same applies to the books, which in my opinion are well ahead of anything that appeared in the weekly numbers. On the other hand, there was such scope in the old paper .... a series might run to twelve issues, which did give Frank Richards room to move;" I did not expect him to agree with me completely, but there is no doubt that he did share some of my hankering after the glories of the past.

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#### LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

#### No. 211, SO MANY CHRISTMASSES

There were so many Christmases in the Magnet, and it could be argued that the best of them were spent at Wharton Lodge. The Lodge forged its own especial corner in the sentimental hearts of readers.

The Magnet's first Christmas holiday was spent at Wharton Lodge - and the second. Curiously enough, they were far from being memorable Yuletides. In fact, there was no memorable Christmastide in the whole of the red Magnet period.

The first Christmas at Wharton Lodge was dated after Christmas was over, and it seems very probable that it did not appear on the book-stalls until the festive season had gone.

Christmas Day in 1908 was on a Friday. The publishing day of the Magnet at that time was Tuesday. Occasionally, over the Christmas holidays down the years, a paper would appear on Christmas Eve, a day or two ahead of its normal publication day. But it is improbable that they published one Magnet on the Tuesday of Christmas Week, and then another (dated 2nd January) on Christmas Eve (Thursday). So it is almost certain that "Home For the Holidays" did not appear until

Christmas was over.

It holds some interest today as being the first at Wharton Lodge.

Bunter, naturally enough, went home with Harry Wharton and his friends - Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and the Nabob of Bhanipur. There was no question of his getting an invitation by trickery in those days. Also with them, this time, went Wun Lung, who had only recently joined the cast.

There was no plot. Just a few episodes strung together inconsequentially. There was a snowballing opening. Then a chapter on the train, with a misunderstanding about sandwiches. They alighted at Wharton Magnus station. Marjorie and Peter Hazeldene joined the party. In Magnet history it was rather remarkable that so many youngsters spent Christmas away from the bosoms of their own families.

Bunter gave a ventriloquial entertainment one evening, but he had not yet mastered the art. He could throw his voice, but his direction was faulty, so his voice came from unintended victims of such art as he possessed then.

There was a shooting party. There was a poacher named Black George, and several other villains who were rounded up by the chums and Wun Lung.

It was all over in a total of a dozen chapters, and I doubt whether anybody bothered a lot when the end came. If it gave any promise for the future, it was not evident. It has never been remembered for there was nothing memorable about it.

One year later, at Christmas 1909, it was the mixture as before. This was entitled "The Christmas Winners". Once again, the Famous Four, plus the inevitable Bunter, set off for Wharton Lodge. There were mishaps in the snow. There was a chapter in the train, and once again there was a sequence concerning sandwiches, though Wun Lung was absent this time. The compartment was very cold, but they all shared a foot-warmer (whatever a foot-warmer was, in the railway travel of those days). Marjorie and Peter Hazeldene, plus Clara Trevlyn, were in a house nearby, but spent their time with the Greyfriars party.

There was no ventriloquism this year. Instead, Bunter went sleepwalking, as he did sometimes in the early stories. There was

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skating on the ice, and there was another shooting party. The last three chapters dealt with a Christmas pudding competition, in which they all joined. Bunter came down in the night and put liquid shoe-blackening in the other fellows' puddings. But Bob Cherry was watching him, and put cement into Bunter's effort. So Marjorie Hazeldene won the competition.

Marjorie's pudding was eaten with much relish, while the other puddings were buried in the garden.

And on Boxing Night (which was actually a Sunday in 1909) they had a dance at Wharton Lodge. So it seems likely that the Monday was regarded as the real Boxing Day.

And that was that. Once again, nothing at all memorable from the man who was to be so renowned, years later, for his wonderful Christmas stories. Not memorable, that old pair of yarns, but precious period pieces to us all these years later.

Earlier, that year, there had been a Christmas double number, entitled "Billy Bunter's Christmas Dream", which was not really a Christmas tale at all, the phantom Christmas pudding being added to a normal tale, probably, to make it suitable for a Christmas Number.

Exactly 50 years ago, Danny bought the Schoolboys' Own Library entitled "Billy Bunter's Christmas Pudding", which comprised the double number mentioned above, plus a few chapters from the Wharton Lodge story "The Christmas Winners". He refers to it in the extracts from his 1926 diary which we publish this month.

Not memorable, perhaps. But great times.

\* \* \* \* \*

(The following is an extract from an essay on Charles Hamilton by the Rev. Arthur Pound of Birmingham)

### GLIMPSE OF GENIUS

by Arthur Pound

With his ability in narrative and humour - an ability bordering, if not more than bordering, on 'genius' - Charles Hamilton gained the abiding affection of thousands of "the older generation".

The late C. M. Down, Public-Schooled and for twenty years editor of "The Magnet", has written his testimonial: "From the first day of joining the staff" (i.e. The Magnet) "I made a point of reading every Frank Richards manuscript that came into the office . . . As I read

more and more of the stories I came to have a great admiration for their author ...

The passionate attachment of so many thousands of readers ... was never any mystery to me ... It was inspired by the author's happy knack of projecting his own personality into his stories, through the characters he created." Those characters are most vividly still alive - the venerable Dr. Locke, the severely disciplinary Mr. Quelch, the honest but sometimes extremely wrong-headed Harry Wharton, the ineffably fatuous Billy Bunter, the superbly asinine Horace Coker ("A tale of Coker is a joy forever") and all the rest of them.

Not everything which Charles Hamilton produced was first-rate. If you write or type over a million words of 'juvenile fiction' every year for a considerable number of years, you are not always on top of your form. Nor was his work without certain palpable defects. A lover of verbal correctness may be somewhat repelled by Charles Hamilton's persistent misuse of such words as 'provender' for ordinary human 'provisions' and the archaic 'Peeler' for the more up to date 'Bobby' or 'Copper'. Still less acceptable perhaps are the abusive epithets hurled repeatedly at Bunter - even at times by a form-mate - 'Fat Jack of the Bonehouse' and 'Bladder of Lard' - which suggest the unfortunate influence of a not too high-class music hall. But in spite of - and perhaps because of - his imperfections, Charles Hamilton is pre-eminent. Over and over again he repeats words or phrases - derived from Lewis Carroll, Gilbert and Sullivan and others - and the very repetition of these phrases adds to the attractiveness of his narrative. The reiteration of the mantra helps to produce the magic; and among the initiated is no lack of realisation of the "Magic of Greyfriars". Over and over and over again the same story can be read with no diminution of freshness.

Many of Charles Hamilton's stories - short and long - are extremely well constructed. Some are gems of perfection. A 'Magnet' - lengthed story, "The Dunce of Greyfriars", in the 1936 "Holiday Annual", is a classical example of his humour.

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SALE OR EXCHANGE: N. L. L. (old series) Nos. 138 - 185; 195 - 263; 312 - 327; 369 - 395, 500 - 525; 552 - 568. Excellent condition.

PORTEOUS, 18 LON-Y-GROES, GABALFA, CARDIFF.



CONCLUSION of our Serial from 70 Years Ago,- MISSING -

Barengro, the gipsy, had but a few minutes before he quitted the cell, after the fierce struggle with the kidnapped juniors. He had not the slightest suspicion that foes were at hand, and he was taken completely by surprise.

Figgins's stump crashed upon his head as he swung round at the sound of footsteps, and he staggered. Before he could recover himself the four juniors were upon him.

Digby and Herries each hit out as hard as they could, and the ruffian reeled under the blows, and Kerr gave a lunge with his stump which knocked a considerable amount of wind out of Barengro, and Fatty Wynn, cutting behind him as he staggered, tripped him up, and he went to the ground with a crash.

He had no chance to rise. Figgins jumped on his chest, and plumped down there in a sitting position, a knee on either side of the prostrate ruffian.

Digby seized his right arm, and hung on to it tenaciously; while Herries took equally good care of his left. The gipsy kicked out wildly, and Kerr staggered from a fierce kick; but he retaliated with his stump, and Barengro was soon glad to keep his legs still, as the stump cracked on his shins.

Then Fatty Wynn sat on them, and his weight was more than sufficient to pin them down to the ground. Kerr came to Figgy's help, and fastened his hands in the gipsy's unkempt hair. Barengro was seeking to reach Figgy with his teeth, but the tug on his hair soon stopped that.

The odds were too heavy even for his savage strength. He was a helpless prisoner in the hands of the juniors.

"Got him!" said Figgins, with keen satisfaction. "Hear me smile, Barengro!"

Barengro cursed wildly. The end of a cricket-stump jammed into his mouth, and speedily cut short the fine flow of his language.

"Now we've got him!" said Figgins. "What have you got to say for yourself, Barengro?"

Barengro had nothing to say, for the end of the stump kept him speechless, but his rolling eyes spoke volumes of hate and rage.

"Nothing to say?" went on Figgins cheerfully. "Well, I don't see what you could have to say. You're a beast, and you couldn't deny that. But the question before the meeting is, what have you done with Blake and Gussy?"

The gipsy's eyes burned.

"You can take that stump out of his mouth now. I want him to answer. My gentle friend, where are Blake and D'Arcy? Where have you put them?"

Barengro was silent.

"You won't answer?"

Still silence.

"Prod him with the sharp end of the stump, Kerr."

Kerr obeyed with willing promptness. Barengro gave a yell of pain.

"Going to answer my question, kid?" asked Figgins.

"I will tell you nothing," said the

gipsy between his teeth. "You will never find them. If I am arrested I will say nothing, and they will starve to death. No one but me knows the secret."

It was quite possible that Barenegro, if arrested, would keep his word; but the juniors did not intend to give him a chance. They meant to take the law into their own hands. They did not intend to let Blake and D'Arcy remain incarcerated for the sake of sparing Barenegro. That was not to be thought of.

And Barenegro soon found that they were in deadly earnest. He was twisted over on his face, and his hands forced behind him, and secured with his own belt, which was taken off for the purpose. Then his ankles were tied together.

"Now, are you going to speak, Barenegro?" asked Figgins patiently.

The gipsy replied with an imprecation.

"All right. This is where we persuade you."

Figgins took up a stump. He swished it through the air, and brought it down with a slash on the gipsy's back. Barenegro gave a terrific yell. Again the stump descended with slashing force. The victim howled and wriggled.

"Are you going to answer me now, chappy?" asked Figgins.

"No! Perdition! No!"

Thwack! The third blow nearly cracked the stump. Barenegro roared with pain.

"Leave off! Don't! I will tell you!"

"Thought you would in time.

Patience and persuasion are good things. Where are your giddy victims, chappy?"

"Release me, and I will show you."

"You'll have to show us without being released, my dark beauty, unless you want me to break that stump on your back," said Figgins.

"How can I move with my feet bound?" snarled the gipsy.

"Well, we'll untie your trotters," said Figgins.

The ruffian's feet were loosened sufficiently to allow him to walk, but not to kick out. He was dragged upright.

"Now, lead on, Macduff!" said Figgins, prodding him. "No time to waste. You've given us too much trouble already. Buck up!"

There was no help for it. The gipsy sullenly stumbled on amid the juniors along the dim succession of vaults, Herries and Digby lighting the way with lanterns. Barenegro stopped at a blank stone wall.

"Feel over the stone," he said. "There is a hollow. Press in it, and the stone rolls back on a pivot."

Figgins followed the directions. The stone rolled away, and a dark aperture was disclosed. There was a shout from within.

"Hallo, Figgins! My Aunt Matilda, but this is luck."

Jack Blake came into the light. Following him came the swell of St. Jim's. Barenegro was shoved aside, and the five juniors surrounded the rescued captives, and the deep, dark vaults rang again with their cheering.

"Hurrah!"

Jack Blake hugged his old enemy, the redoubtable Figgins.

"Never thought I'd be so glad to see your face at any time, Figgy!" he exclaimed. "It isn't much to speak of as

a face, but I'm jolly glad to see it now. Don't let that brute Barenro get away."

"Not much!" said Herries. "We may as well shove him in there till the police can come for him."

"Ha, ha! Yes, give him a taste of his own medicine."

The gipsy was bundled headlong into the secret cell, and the door closed upon him. The ruffian was cursing furiously, but the stone cut off all sound from within. The report of a cannon would hardly have penetrated the massive wall. The juniors, in gleeful mood, escorted the rescued prisoners up the stone stairs, and they started for the school.

Figgins & Co. were missed at calling-over by Monteith, the prefect of the New House, who was taking the roll that evening; and Herries and Digby were also found to be missing. Their absence was reported to the doctor, who selected a nice strong cane for their especial behoof when they should come in.

But while the doctor waited for the delinquents there was a sudden shouting in the dusky quadrangle. Dr. Holmes went to his window and looked out.

Seven juniors were marching from the gate, surrounded by a cheering crowd of boys of all Forms. The doctor gazed at them in amazement.

As they came nearer he recognised Figgins & Co. and the chums of Study No. 6. His heart gave a leap at the sight of D'Arcy.

He understood now what the shouting meant. Somehow the juniors had rescued their schoolfellows, and brought them back

in triumph to St. Jim's.

Taggles had opened the gates to the returning party, and word had flown like wildfire through St. Jim's that D'Arcy was coming back. Half the school turned out to look at him. Mingled with the cheers were howls of laughter, for the appearance of the erstwhile swell of St. Jim's was decidedly comical.

He still had on the big ancient coat, for the night was cold. He looked like anything but a swell at present. Mr. Kidd tapped at the doctor's door and entered. The Head turned from the window.

"The missing boys have returned, sir," said the housemaster. "The lads who were missing at calling-over seem to have found them and brought them back. I have told them to come here."

The juniors followed the housemaster in. D'Arcy looked shamefaced in his scarecrow outfit. Figgins & Co. and the chums of Study No. 6 looked decidedly pleased with themselves.

"Dear me!" said the doctor. "I am very glad to see you again, D'Arcy, and glad to see that you are not injured; but you are a shocking sight. You must have a hot bath, and go to bed immediately. Now, my boys, I shall be glad to hear what you have to tell me."

Figgins told the story. The doctor and the housemaster uttered ejaculations of surprise and satisfaction when they learned that Barenro was a prisoner - left in the cell to "wait till called for", as Figgins put it.

"You have done well and nobly, my lads," said the doctor in a moved voice, when he had heard all. "I am proud of you. I could not have consented to your going

into danger, but, as it turned out so fortunately, I can only express satisfaction. I do not think, Mr. Kidd," he added, turning to the housemaster with a smile, "that these juniors need be punished for missing call-over. You may go now, boys. I am proud of you all."

And the juniors marched off, well satisfied. Barengro was found in the cell by the police, and most of the money was recovered. The ruffian went to prison, and the boys of St. Jim's saw the last of him; and for nearly a week there was peace between Study No. 6 and Figgins & Co.

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BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 33. GEORGE FORMBY

We opened the new term with Marion Davies and Dick Powell in "Hearts Divided" from Warner Bros. The usual formula with Davies films - the strong supporting star (in this case, Warner's biggest male heart-throb, Dick Powell) - was evident with this one. I haven't checked, but I believe this may have been our last Marion Davies film. It may, in fact, have been her last film, too.

Next, from the same firm, came Pat O'Brien in "China Clipper", a rousing adventure story, followed by, from A. B. F. D. this time, Chas. Farrell and Fritz Kortner in a thriller "Midnight Menace". Then, from A. B. F. D., came Virginia Hopper and John Loder in a big British film "Lorna Doone", very well done indeed, so far as I remember.

Then, from A. B. F. D., George Formby in "Feather Your Nest", a tip-top British comedy. After that came James Cagney in "Something to Sing About", from A. B. F. D. This was the only Cagney we played which did not come from Warner's, and it would seem that Cagney was loaned to the other firm. I have a feeling that it was below his usual standard, but I really remember nothing about it.

Then, another great George Formby attraction, from A. B. F. D., "Keep Fit".

After that, from Warner, came Olivia de Havilland and Alice Brady in "Call it a Day", followed by a good boxing film from the same firm, Edward G. Robinson, Bette Davis, and Wayne Morris in "Kid Galahad". Next, Leslie Howard and Bette David in "It's Love I'm After", from Warner's, followed by, also from Warner's, another big Dick Powell musical "The Varsity Show".

Now, back to adventure, with Pat O'Brien and Wayne Morris in "Submarine D. 1." from Warner's, followed by another Warner Musical, Dick Powell yet again, this time in "Hollywood Hotel".

Next, our first double-feature programme for some time, both films from Warner's: Hugh Williams in "The Dark Stairway" and Frank McHugh in "He Couldn't Say No". Then, from Warner's, Pat O'Brien and Kay Francis in "Women are like That", followed by another double-feature show, both from Warner's, Keith Falkner in "Thistledown" and Dick Pursell in "The Daredevil Drivers".

This was followed by another double-feature programme, both from Warner's, the main film being Claudette Colbert and Charles Boyer in "Tovarich".

hailed by the critics as a fine and stylish comedy, though I doubt whether it may have been quite up the street of our audiences. The supporting film was a little British effort, Claud Hulbert in "Simply Terrific".

To wind up the term we had a magnificent double-feature programme: from G. F. D., a Universal film, Edward Arnold in "Sutter's Gold", a marvellous adventure story which I would love to see again. The supporting film came from Warner's, and was Humphrey Bogart in "Swing Your Lady". A terrific show in its day.

This was our first term for quite a

number of years that we had nothing from M. G. M., and the reason eludes me. In fact, it was to be some time before we played anything again from M. G. M. It was certainly not due to any shortcoming in the firm or to any differences that I had with them, for our dealings with M. G. M. were always of the happiest and, later on, we were to show a long, long string of their finest productions. At this particular time, though, I can only think that I may have been after the George Formby films which were released by A. B. F. D., and switched over to them the dates which would previously have gone to M. G. M.

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REVIEWS  
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YAROOH! A Feast of Frank Richards

Gyles Brandreth  
 (Eyre Methuen: £4.50)

This is the ideal Beside Book, to provide many, many hours of contented browsing. An introduction to Frank Richards inevitably contains much that is very, very familiar, but Mr. Brandreth writes with a kindly warmth which is endearing. Intriguing is an extract from a letter which Frank Richards wrote to a friend concerning a Gilbert Harding book in which Harding quoted from a Magnet for the purpose of a sneer at Richards. I, myself, drew attention to the quotation, in C. D. and was certain that it came from a non-Hamilton story. This was the first knowledge that Hamilton had of the matter.

Under the title of "Exit Bunter" are a few chapters from a previously unpublished manuscript. These chapters are undoubtedly genuine Richards, and I think it likely that they come from the story which was intended to follow the "Shadow of the Sack" story, which proved to be the final Magnet. If I am right, we have here a few chapters of "Battle of the Beaks".

Richards's famous reply to George Orwell, in Horizon, is given in full, and there are several items which show the famous Magnet author in unusual moods, particularly a couple of songs concerning the Abdication Crisis of 1936.

A few stories come from post-war Annuals, including a Rio Kid tale and a Herlock Sholmes riot, and there are many little tales which will be new to practically everybody. One entitled "The New Master" by Frank Drake, causes me to ponder. It does not really read like any genuine Hamilton of any period, but Frank Drake was a pen-name of his in Vanguard days, early in the century, though all the Drake tales in my possession are much longer. It is one of those things you can only decide for yourself, and even then, you may be wrong.

I have only skimmed over here just a few of the items in this delightful book, which will certainly please the Hamilton fan, even though he may feel that such a volume is worthy of a less hackneyed title.

Mr. Brandreth possesses a warm and friendly personality, and that personality spills over

happily into his book. In passing, the pictures are superb and worth their weight in gold.

THE CHARLES HAMILTON CENTENARY  
COMPANION

Frank Richards  
(Museum Press: £3)

Here, too, we have a glorious and generous pot-pourri of Hamiltonia, jam-packed with marvellous pictures and items of Hamilton interest from here, there, and everywhere. My own favourite is a reprint of a much-loved Gem story from 1911, entitled "Tom Merry's Concert Party", published at a time when the blue Gem was at its greatest and best.

A charming article on Rookwood is contributed by Roger Jenkins, and Les Rowley explains in his own style why he likes Greyfriars so much. There are several other essays on aspects of the author's career, written by people who are not well-known in the hobby, but who hold the interest. Cedar Creek and the Rio Kid are represented in excellent tales, and there is a Carcroft tale to represent the later years. A profusion of extracts from the Greyfriars Herald and the Holiday Annual, including a welcome Rookwood story, will keep the reader entertained for hour after hour and day after day.

There is so much for everyone in this lovely book. But, for me, it will always be precious for the blue Gem tale - and for the marvellous pictures, many of them previously unknown to me, of Hamilton with his cat, Sammy.

Special note! This volume cannot be ordered in the shops. It can be obtained by post direct from the Museum Press, 30 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent, or from Collectors' Digest Office. The price is £3.50 including postage.

The creation of John Wernham, the volume is a "must" for Christmas.

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WANTED: S.O.S! Bullseye Nos. 41, 89; Surprise 3, Boys Mag. 580, Film Fun 571. Buy/Exchanges.

41 SWALECLIFF AVENUE, MANCHESTER 23.

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**NEWS OF THE CLUBS**

MIDLAND

The first meeting of the new term was held in the usual study on 26th October.

With refreshment neath their belts everyone settled to enjoy two readings. Ivan Webster entertained with an excerpt from the Popper Island series; Jack Bellfield followed by dipping into the treasure trove of the 1925 Holiday Annual relating an hilarious incident from The Bunter Cup.

Tom Porter delved into his bottomless holdall to produce two anniversary numbers: Gem 559, Cousin Ethel's Champions, dated

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26.10.1918 (58 years old to the day) and Magnet 1445, Saved by his Enemy, dated 26.10.1935 (41 years old to the day). Tom's collectors item was a bound volume of old series Nelson Lee Library, nos. 27 to 39 (between 11.12.1915 and 4.3.1916).

All in all an encouraging meeting with the renewal of old familiar faces (seven), news of country members, and the mutual rekindling of enthusiasms for the hobby. Meetings: usually last Tuesday of the month (except December when held on 14th) at Dr. Johnson House, Birmingham, 7 p.m.

### NORTHERN

#### Meeting held 13th November, 1976

Fourteen faithfuls braved a bitter evening to attend our November meeting, though one or two were obliged to depart early. Among these were our Minutes Secretary, though not before he had managed to acquire the new nicknames of The Staincliffe Cracksman - for further revelations, watch this column!

Harold Truscott, Darrell Swift, and Chairman Geoffrey Wilde told us of their recent visit to Radio Leeds. From what had been committed to tape, they looked forward to a serious and worthwhile discussion of the Hamilton Centenary, but the date of the actual broadcast is not yet fixed. Darrell also had on display specimens of the Centenary Stamp design submitted to (but rejected by) the GPO.

Harry Blowers caught us all on the hop by offering a quiz on comics - we clearly all mis-spent our youth in reading the serious stuff like Gem, Magnet and Union Jack! Alliterative answers were generally a good guess, but could sometimes fail to ring the bell - there was no Stonehenge Sam, Harry told us. He was Stonehenge Kit, the Ancient Brit. Comic Laureate was Ron Hodgson with 20 points out of 30, with Mollie and Bill Williamson tying for second place.

Christmas Party, 11th December, at the Swarthmore Institute, 4.30 onwards. Cake and tea available at purely nominal charge, bring your own savouries, champagne, etc. Those thinking of attending please contact Mollie Allison on Leeds 756615. We'll look forward to giving you a right Yorkshire welcome.

JOHNNY BULL

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CAMBRIDGE

The Club met at the Shelford home of Jack Overhill on Sunday, 14th November.

A message of greeting was received from Jack Doupe, now in Teneriffe. The Secretary reported that John Edson had visited Cambridge on the evening of 27th October; he had spoken to John on the telephone, but they were unfortunately unable to meet.

The first item on the programme was a "quiz" on film and theatrical and Music Hall artistes. Vic Hearn was winner of this.

Vic Hearn was unanimously elected Chairman of the Club.

Jack Overhill gave one of his interesting talks on atmosphere in books and readers; quoting many of his personal experiences to show both the power of some books to so enthral a reader as to make him forget his surroundings, and conversely how sometimes physical conditions, such as heavy snow or rain, could spoil what had been a long-looked forward-to book. He specifically referred to "Bunter the Blade" which had left him with a memory of blue skies that had convinced him it was on an April day he had read the story, only to find many years later that the book was issued in February!

Mrs. Overhill provided a tea of real Bunterian magnificence, and an interesting discussion arose during the enjoyment of this. Topics ranging over the Hamilton schools, the Hotspur, Vic reminding us that this was a paper containing five school stories, the famous one being "Red Circle" "Stalky and Co.", Comics, and the Children's Newspaper". Vic said that one of the greatest pleasures of his boyhood was taking round piles of books to "swop". The great thing about swopping was that there were no age barriers. The books formed a common bond between boys and led to friendships that would not otherwise have been made.

Edward Witten gave his list of "Desert Island books".

Bill Thurbon then read a short paper as a footnote to his "footnote on Sherlock Holmes's Cambridge College" 'proving' that it was not Porterhouse of Tom Sharpe's "Porterhouse Blue".

The meeting closed with a warm vote of thanks to Jack and Mrs. Overhill for their hospitality. Next meeting on 12th December when Edward Witten will be host.

LONDON

The Centenary of Charles Hamilton and the Pearl Jubilee of the Collectors' Digest Luncheon Party was an unqualified success. Held at the Rembrandt Hotel, there was a very good attendance. Grace was said by the President. John Wernham, and then an excellent repast was enjoyed. Don Webster proposed the Loyal Toast, and that eminent Hamiltonian, Roger Jenkins, proposed the toast to the immortal Charles. Following this it was the turn of Mary Cadogan to propose the toast of the Collectors' Digest to which Eric Fayne responded with a very good address. John Wernham proposed the toast of the visitors. The reply to this was given by the distinguished author, Gyles Brandreth. An autographed supply of the latter's book "Yaroo" which contains the story "Exit Bunter", was available as were copies of John Wernham's volume three of the Charles Hamilton Companion. The superbly produced souvenir menu cards were another of John's publications. Winifred Moss distributed catalogues of the Walthamstow Public Library Centenary Charles Hamilton exhibition. Then the adjournment to the lounge for afternoon tea and the small groups of convivial chatter. Here one could move from table to table and meet old friends. Thomas Porter was a worthy representative of the Midland Club whilst another guest was Thomas Keen, an authority on the girls' papers. A fitting occasion to celebrate the two anniversaries.

Next meeting at the home of Josie Packman on Sunday, 19th December.

BENJAMIN WHITER