

# THE STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

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## THE PUBLISHING HISTORY OF COMET AND SUN

COMET started on Friday, September 20th, 1946, and was issued fortnightly by J. B. Allen of Stretford, near Manchester. This was a new series. It seems by the editorial in Number 1 that the paper had appeared before, in 1939, and had to cease publication owing to the war. No trace of this previous series is recorded in the British Museum files.

Number 71, dated Tuesday, May 31st, 1949, was the first issue to bear the publisher's name as The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., when they obviously had bought the paper from J. B. Allen. Number 85 featured the first Billy Bunter story, and from Number 96, dated May 20th, 1950, the paper appeared weekly.

To give an example of what strange names are sometimes given to comics, it is worth re-

cording that in March, 1947, there appeared two comics, each with only one issue, called *Gosport Courier* and *Stretford Courier*. Both were incorporated into *Comet*. In the issue dated April 4th, 1947, which was Number 15, and which incidentally started the use of a far better quality glossy paper, one can see under the title *Comet* the words "Incorporating *Stretford Courier* and *Gosport Courier*."

Who would have dreamed by the titles that these papers were comics?

SUN appeared first on Tuesday, November 11th, 1947, also published by J. B. Allen of Stretford. Its first four issues were called *Fitness and Sun*, but with Number 5 *Fitness* was dropped. By the editorial it appears that, like *Comet*, the paper had appeared before in the 1939-

1940 period, as this was called a new series. But again no record is known of the run of the earlier series.

In the first few issues of *Fitness and Sun*, apart from the comic strips and stories, there were articles on how to keep fit. This probably was the reason for the name of the paper. These sports articles were soon dropped.

Number 41, dated Tuesday, May 24th, 1949, was the first issue to be published by The Amalgamated Press. With Number 67, dated May 20th, 1950, it began to appear weekly.

Another strange fact worth recording is that both *Comet* and *Sun* featured the work of a remarkable number of Sexton Blake contributors. Apart from Eric Parker, the well-known artist, they included such authors as John Hunter, Martin Frazer, Jacques Pendower, Barry Ford, Lewis Jackson, Rex Hardinge, George E. Rochester, and probably others. — W. O. G. LOFTS

[Publication of *Comet* and *Sun*, as recorded in S.P.C. Number 71, was suspended with the issues dated October 17th, 1959.]

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## SOME THRILLING CLIFF- HANGERS

By AL FICK

**D**EEP IN THE HEART of every boy is a love of, even a need for, adventure and excitement. In his search to satisfy this want more fully the boy of yesterday turned to books, papers, and magazines, thus extending to unlimited horizons the narrow boundaries of his sometimes humdrum life.

To those who point proudly to the "adventure" available to

boys today at the twist of a television dial, the lover and collector of old boys' papers smilingly taps his own skull with a forefinger. There are no adventures equal to those of one's own mind—all of the fun and none of the discomforts!

The authors and editors of the story papers of yesteryear capi-

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# The Story Paper Collector

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No. 73—Vol. 3

Priceless

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## The Early Career of Fisher T. Fish: A Study In Psychology

By ROGER M. JENKINS

**S**ELDOM DID Charles Hamilton depict a villain so utterly despicable that he was unredeemed by a single saving grace. Ponsonby, perhaps, was one such, though there were one or two occasions—usually after he had had a narrow escape—when he seemed almost repentant. Most of the bad characters, however, were not painted so black as Ponsonby. Some had a saving touch of humour like Skinner, some had other saving graces like Cardew, and others were too timid to go as far as they wished, like Snoop. Fisher T. Fish, if he belongs in any of these groups, must be included in the last one.

Fisher Tarleton Fish arrived in *Magnet* Number 150, in which he was described as being the

son of Vanderbilt K. Fish, the American railroad king. He expressed the opinion that Friar-dale needed a system of electric trams to wake it up, and he was generally contemptuous of the ancient monuments at the school. He was ordered to share study Number 14 with Bunter (Wun Lung and Alonzo Todd having moved out in disgust) but, though Bunter welcomed the millionaire's son, there was no advance cashing of the long-expected Postal Order. It is interesting to note that, although Fishy was portrayed as being very sharp and boastful, he was also stated to be very determined and could take a joke against himself.

All new boys were featured prominently after their arrival,

and the advent of Johnny Bull did not detract from the attention paid to Fisher T. Fish. He was invited to Wharton Lodge for Christmas in Number 152, and his hopelessness at sport was well shown in Number 153. After a while the good points in his character became harder to find, and he became firmly established as the unscrupulous business-man of Greyfriars, though a somewhat impecunious one: his father's fortune had mysteriously disappeared. A typical example of early days was his competition in Number 237: such is the imperfection of human life that none of the competitors was half as satisfied as the organizer.

THE MOST FAMOUS of the early stories about the American junior was Number 242 entitled *The Greyfriars Insurance Co.* Fishy was insuring against breakages, amongst other things, and a mysterious outbreak of window-smashing induced nearly everyone to join in the scheme. Vernon-Smith refused to participate, and his windows were constantly being smashed by the unknown miscreant. The Bouncer did not suffer this persecution for long, however, for he smashed windows belonging to those who had insured, and the rush of claims ensured that the

company soon went bust. A moneylending business in Number 272 incurred the wrath of the headmaster, whilst a pawn-broking business in Number 284 was equally unsuccessful. It need hardly be added that Fishy's participation in the new tuckshop business in Number 290 led to quite a number of complaints from vociferous dissatisfied customers.

Famous characters of one Hamiltonian school occasionally visited another, and Fisher T. Fish was *Gussy's Guest* in *Gem* Number 294—a sure sign that he had achieved a high degree of popularity with the readers. Another novel role for Fishy was that of detective: in *Magnet* Number 302 he became convinced that Monsieur Charpentier was the local cracksman.

So long as *The Magnet* retained its red covers there was always a great deal of amusement to be derived from reading about Fishy's unscrupulous antics. *The Punishment Policies* in Number 381 has become even more of a classic since the B.B.C. announced that boys in an East Anglian school were following in Fishy's footsteps and were insuring against lines, canings, and detentions. Bunter even insured against the non-arrival of his Postal Order, but Fishy was not to be caught so easily. Never-

theless, the insurance scheme did fail, and he was equally unsuccessful in Number 383 when he tried to take advantage of Messrs. Gobbey's claim that £50 would be paid to anyone who discovered any impurity in their ginger-beer. Fishy was sure of his ground, because he had inserted the impurities himself!

By 1916 it became apparent that the war was going to last a long time, and great indignation was aroused in England by President Woodrow Wilson's unfortunate remark that America was too proud to fight. All this resentment against the U.S.A. was poured into the character of Fisher T. Fish, with the result that the stories about him were tinged with such bitterness that they are now quite unpleasant to read. In Number 413 he was trying to make a profit out of an organization sending comforts to service-men, whilst in Number 420 he was sending anonymous letters to Mr. Quelch. This was not only unpleasant but uncharacteristic, because it was not in Fishy's nature to expend his energies towards unprofitable ends. Not quite so unpleasant was *Magnet* Number 465 in which he attempted to gamble on the Stock Exchange with Lord Mauleverer's money.

Mercifully there were few of these bitter satires, perhaps because the Americans entered the war in 1917. It was not long, however, before the peace brought disputes about war debts, and it was no surprise that Fishy featured again in 1922, in Number 753 entitled *Bunter's Raffle*. Having bought a ticket, Fishy succeeded in discouraging everyone else, with the result that he won the gramophone being raffled. The sting was in the tail: Bunter had not kept up the instalments, and the gramophone was reclaimed. A similar disappointment was experienced at the end of Fishy's treasure hunt in Number 841, by which time the pre-war gaiety had returned to the tales about the Remove business-man.

The single motivating factor in the make-up of the American junior was undoubtedly avarice pure and simple. It was hardly a complimentary portrait of one of our transatlantic cousins, but similarly unpleasant portraits of Englishmen are to be found in American literature, and one does not need to be anti-American to enjoy the stories about Fish.

The most famous stories about Fisher T. Fish were written after 1924—the Hollywood series, the kidnapping series, the Popper's Island rebellion series, and the



Portercliff Hall series. As late as 1939 he was starring as *The Tuck Hoarder* of Greyfriars. It is not essential to be conversant with the early stories in order to enjoy the later ones, but there is no doubt that the earlier tales have considerable merit and display some admirable ingenuity

in construction, an ingenuity far more intricate and detailed than that in the later stories. There are quite a number of fine tales to be found within the pages of the red *Magnet*, and none are so amusing and at the same time so carefully constructed as those dealing with Fisher T. Fish.

### SOME THRILLING CLIFF-HANGERS

(Continued from Page 316)

talized on these interests of boyhood to a degree which insured successful long runs of the old-time publications. A prime element in the boys' papers was maintenance of interest week after week, in which the serial stories naturally played a most important part.

With great skill the writers laced their yarns with exciting crises; with equal finesse the editors ended weekly instalments on a high note of suspense, calculated to bring young customers back to the news dealer each week. Is there any curiosity greater than the desire to learn "what's going to happen next" when the hero is left hanging from a cliff?

Let us savour a few examples of this tantalizing art of "cliff-hanging."

In *The Boys' Herald* Number 430 for October 14th, 1911, Ralph Simmonds' serial, *The Pirate Submarine*, builds to a breaking point of tension, leaving the reader with:

*"Look out, sir, for Heaven's sake! She's sinking! I could see her periscope going. And she'll be up to us in another five minutes!"*

What a long seven days until the following week's instalment hit the stands! Seven more columns of stirring adventure on and under the sea finds the heroes (and the reader) in this dire predicament:

*And thus, stumbling at their best speed over the reef, the party approached Todd's submarine, reached the water-doors, and entered.*

*They were barely in time; for as Captain Hardy passed in, last, a green glow came creeping up over the reef, from behind the wrecks.*

*A minute later the gloomy shape of the pirate craft appeared, closing*

upon his enemy, like a wounded animal that has been brought to bay in its lair.

Also in Number 431 we have the following finish to the first instalment of Allan Blair's *From Newsboy to Editor*:

*With almost a snarl of defiance, Jim rolled up documents and "copy" into a ball, and, with a wild cry, thrust them into the flames!*

*Maitland Harker slung him savagely aside, and, throwing himself forward upon his knees, snatched frantically at the burning papers.*

Is it any wonder that a boy carefully hoarded his tuck-money so that he would have the necessary penny left for the following Wednesday?

**N**ATURALLY, what worked for one paper worked for another. The *Boys' Realm* was no exception. Early in its run (Number 41, April 11th, 1903), a splendid serial entitled *The Five Hundredth Boy* was leaving readers on tenterhooks:

*It was Mr. Goddard who spoke — to Thorpe.*

*Before the rest realised his deed of self-denial — for the boys of the school he loved better than life — Mr. Goddard had thrust his oar into Thorpe's hands and leapt into the sea.*

Skipping along the years with this same paper to February

20th, 1915 (Number 664), we happily find the same proven serial policy still in force. In T. C. Wignall's sport story, *Behind the Scrum*, we are intrigued by this rousing instalment ending:

*It was at that moment that Eric pulled back his right fist and crashed it against Douglas's jaw.*

*Douglas, out to the world, fell like a log.*

Also from this issue of *Realm* we offer more examples, without reference to the titles of the stories. Perhaps *Story Paper Collector* readers will feel lured to check their files for the tales containing these instalment-closing gems:

*He was only just in the centre of the clearing when, with a roar as though of a thousand cannon, the rending explosion took place.*

*It seemed as though the whole monastery rose bodily in the air, and a mass of white flame leapt skyward.*

Another:

*Then he clutched at the wound at his side once more, and a sudden gush of blood welled from his mouth, and he collapsed.*

*Sir Frederick sprang forward, and turned him over, but the man was dead!*

And a third:

. . . Then all four fell down flat while the torrent of flame billowed over them!

Since this writer's collection is so small as to be almost non-existent, he is not able to finish reading any of these tantalizing serials. He is irrevocably hung from a very high cliff, wishing he

could comply with the Editor's admonition given in *The Boys' Herald*:

(Next week: *The final conflict with The Pirate Submarine. Don't miss this grand instalment on any account. To avoid disappointment, you are urged to order your copy to-day.*)

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## THE CIRCULATION MYSTERY

By W. O. G. LOFTS

### FOREWORD

COLLECTORS who in recent years have written articles dealing with the early history of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* have for some reason assumed that the circulation of *The Gem* from 1908 (when the first *Magnet* appeared) until 1914 was much higher than that of *The Magnet*. Indeed, some years ago one writer suggested that in this period the *Gem* figures were almost double.

I have not the slightest doubt that at the time the respective collectors were writing in good faith and were giving a perfectly honest opinion in their statements. I should like to make it perfectly clear to them that in

writing this article it is not my intention to deride anything they may have written, but I do feel in the interests of accuracy and authenticity that the following statements from persons actively connected the production of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* should be made known to *Story Paper Collector* readers, so that they may judge for themselves the question of circulations.

### PART ONE

IT IS PROBABLE that, apart from C. M. Down, Editor of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* for so many years, the most knowledgeable person alive today on the inner workings of the Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories is G. R. Samways. I loaned Mr. Samways



a pile of *Collectors' Digest Annuals*, *Story Paper Collectors*, and *Collectors' Digests* to peruse during the Christmas holidays. I especially asked him to make notes on anything which he thought inaccurate. His notes on the circulation figures, and why he thought *The Magnet* more popular than *The Gem*, follow.

Dear Mr. Lofts:

I do know for a fact, that when I joined the *Magnet* office in early 1914 the circulation of *The Magnet* was much higher than that of *The Gem*; and I have always understood that it was from the beginning. I have read in one of the *Collectors' Digest* articles that "the period 1914-21 has been described as the start of the decline of *The Gem*." This is incorrect, as in that period Charles Hamilton wrote what I consider to be the finest of all his *Gem* stories, the Reginald Talbot and Marie Rivers yarns. There was in fact a considerable increase in *The Gem's* circulation in this period, though it never exceeded that of *The Magnet*.

[Edward C. Snow, a sub-editor of this period, writing in an Australian newspaper some years ago, also stated that *The Gem* showed a large increase on the publication of the Talbot yarns, confirming Mr. Samways' statement.—W. O. G. L.]

I have read of all sorts of theories

in the collecting magazines you so kindly lent me as to why *The Magnet* was more popular than *The Gem*, but one of the main reasons, not stated, was that boys had more pocket money available on Mondays than on Wednesdays! In those days, you must remember, pocket money was strictly limited, and many boys could only afford the luxury of one weekly paper. *The Magnet*, coming out earlier in the week, was their automatic choice. I also consider (though this is purely a personal opinion) that Greyfriars had a stronger appeal than *St. Jim's* at that time. They preferred the Kent school, and the characters. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, for instance, was far from being universally popular. Billy Bunter was much preferred to Baggy Trimble whilst Bob Cherry was easily the most popular character of the lot!

There was also a more realistic, true-to-life atmosphere about Greyfriars. It is hard to define, but nonetheless a fact. A psychologist could explain all this; but I am not a psychologist.

I don't think that the merits of the various artists had anything to do with the circulation figures. I was in charge of the readers' letters column for many years and I cannot remember any criticisms about them. Warwick Reynolds was a close friend of H. A. Hinton, who regarded him as the finest of all the artists, and I cannot remember any depreciation of

his work, as suggested by one collector. After all, *The Gem* was bought for the stories, and not for the illustrations!

## PART TWO

**H**ARPENDEN in Hertfordshire houses many famous people in the world of art, the stage, and writing. Amongst its inhabitants is Jack Trevor Story, the well-known Sexton Blake writer and successful author of one of the most humorous books ever written, *The Trouble With Harry*. Although I know Mr. Story quite well and call on him often, it was to another house that I called one week-end—the residence of Mr. C. M. Down, Editor of *The Magnet*, *The Gem*, and the rest of the Companion Papers from 1921 until their end in 1940.

Tall, distinguished looking, and every inch a gentleman, it is quite easy to see how Charles Hamilton created the lovable "gentleman" type of character in "Gussy," though I hasten to add that Mr. Down does not talk with a lisp! I had several hours of most enjoyable conversation with Mr. Down, and at a later date he very kindly confirmed in writing some details of the circulation figures.

*My Dear Lofts:*

*I was on the staff of The Magnet from the very first issue in February,*

*1908, and I can well remember the preparation of the first number. Now, although I do not as a rule give away information about circulations, which are the private concern of The Amalgamated Press, there is no harm, however, in this case in my saying that, to the best of my recollection, the Magnet figure exceeded that of The Gem from the start—The Gem having been raised in price to a penny—and settled down to a somewhat higher figure, even when both papers were the same price.*

*I was most interested to read your article on Warwick Reynolds, as in my opinion he was easily the best of all the A. P. black-and-white artists. I can well remember him coming to me for his first commission to draw for The Gem, and when he presented his first illustrations I knew instantly that here was a first-class artist whose art was far superior for the type of papers he was illustrating. Although he left The Amalgamated Press later to go in for better things, he was always so grateful to me for accepting his work in his early days that he used to send me drawings each year for Holiday Annuals until his early death in 1926.*

Mr. Down's statement, although brief on the subject, was at least to the point, and it does seem that *The Magnet's* circulation was always higher than that of *The Gem*.

AN EDITOR once told me that "the only sure way to tell when a paper's circulation was in a bad way was when the publisher started to give away free gifts with it, to try to boost up the figures." This, if true, seems to suggest that *The Gem's* actual decline must have started in 1928, as it was in this period that free gifts were extensively advertised to help boost the flagging circulation. (It is only fair to state that free gifts were also given in *The Magnet* in this period, which seems to suggest that it, too, had slumped, mainly due to the strong rivalry of the Thomson papers.)

Drastic measures were needed, it seems, to keep *The Gem* alive, and much credit is due to the present Editor of *The Collectors' Digest*, Eric Fayne, for his efforts to get The Amalgamated Press to start reprinting the old stories from the beginning, which they decided to do in 1931. That this was a success I have no doubt: proof of this is the fact that they continued with this policy for about eight years.

Much criticism has been made of the Sub-Editor responsible for the reproduction of the reprinted stories—actually Arthur Aldcroft, who had to abridge old long stories to fit a much smaller space, and to modernize outdated tales for a new genera-

tion of readers. And it is only fair to state that he had a most difficult task, one which could perhaps in other sub-editors' hands have been performed much worse!

In 1939 new tales by Charles Hamilton were started, but following the outbreak of war, when the paper shortage became acute and papers with the smallest circulation had to go, *The Gem* was incorporated with *The Triumph*, which had a very healthy circulation at that time.

IT WOULD BE treading on very delicate ground for me to give the source of information regarding the actual figures of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* circulations, and I don't think I am at liberty to reveal my informant. But I can tell the reader that they have come directly from a former circulation manager at The Amalgamated Press. At its peak *The Magnet* sold 250,000 copies a week, while *The Gem* was considerably lower. In 1940 at the sudden end of *The Magnet*, that paper's circulation had fallen to 80,000 copies a week. This decline was mainly due to the fierce competition from the D.C. Thomson school story paper, *The Hotspur*, which had with its famous Red Circle school stories made a big impact on the then generation of schoolboy readers.

Another Amalgamated Press boys' paper, *The Champion*, had in 1940 almost double the circulation of *The Magnet*, to be exact 150,000 copies weekly. When the decision was made to stop more publications because of the paper shortage, *The Magnet* was one that had to go.

To put the record straight, it

is not correct to say that *The Magnet* just finished, although the end was not announced in the final number, as a little later it was officially incorporated with *Knockout Comic*. Four stories in hand, unused by the *Magnet* office, were going to be used in another paper—but that is another story!

## Those Parodies Of Famous Poems

IT HAS COME OUR attention that some of our readers read Roger Jenkins' short contribution in *The Story Paper Collector* Number 72, which appeared under the heading C. H. Wrote *Parodies Of Famous Poems*, as detracting from the credit due to Mr. G. R. Samways for his contributions to the *Companion Papers* for so many years.

We wish to make it clear that Mr. Jenkins was referring to original parodies (if we may be permitted that wording) which were published during the years after Mr. Samways discontinued writing for the *Companion Papers* in 1928.

In this connection, these paragraphs from a letter Mr. Samways wrote to W.O.G. Lofts will be of interest:

*Every single poem, written for The Greyfriars Herald, The St. Jim's Gazette, Billy Bunter's Weekly, and The Greyfriars Holiday Annual, between the years 1914 and 1928, was from my pen. Most of them, of course, were written under the names of Greyfriars and St. Jim's characters—chiefly Dick Penfold.*

*The Greyfriars Herald and The St. Jim's Gazette, in supplement form, were written entirely by me.*

*. . . Mr. Maurice Down will, I feel sure, gladly confirm this, and also that I was, in fact, the writer of all the verse appearing in the Companion Papers and The Holiday Annual during the period mentioned above.*

We regret any misunderstanding that has arisen from our printing the paragraphs in Number 72; they were excerpts from a letter Mr. Jenkins wrote us and came in useful for filling a small space.

## TOO MUCH LOOKING TO THE PAST?

IT IS VERY SELDOM that a professional writer uses the pages of a commercially-published magazine to aim a blast at a department of a privately-published amateur magazine of very limited circulation, or at a small group of hobbyists. In fact, we do not know of its ever having been done before. But it has been done now, and the pages used were those of the Magazine Section *Mailbag* in *The Sexton Blake Library* Number 445, February, 1960.

The blast, or perhaps we should say criticism, was penned by a Sexton Blake author, Martin Thomas, in a long letter to the Editor. The gist of his criticism was, that the *Blakiana* section of *The Collectors' Digest* and members of the Sexton Blake Circle give too much attention to Sexton Blake of the past and too little to Sexton Blake of the present.

The Editor of *The Collectors' Digest*, Eric Fayne, made a very reasonably-worded reply in the March issue of his magazine, ending with:

*And the Editor, as he wriggles under the weals of castigation which have joined the cradle marks of editorship*

*on his tender hindquarters, promises readers that he intends, as he always has intended, to "do right" by the modern Blake.*

In the April issue, Mrs. Josie Packman, who conducts the *Blakiana* section, also replied, stating that articles about the modern Blake could not appear if they were not forthcoming. She also wrote that

*The Collectors' Digest as a whole was (and presumably still is) produced primarily for those who are no longer in their youth but who delight in reading about and/or collecting the papers of their boyhood days, papers which—with one or two exceptions—are no longer published.*

TWO MONTHS after the appearance of Mr. Thomas's letter in *The Sexton Blake Library* there was a reply (in Number 449) by Leonard Packman, together with a rebuttal by Mr. Thomas. Among other points made by Mr. Packman was this:

*The Collectors' Digest is primarily produced for the older generation of readers, 80 per cent of whom are only interested in the past. This, let me stress, is not an opinion but the actual fact for the continuance of*



The Collectors' Digest by the present producer and publisher!

In his reply Mr. Thomas stuck to his guns, ending his letter:

*The historically minded fans are entitled to their own interests, of course. But aren't readers of the modern Blake also entitled to some consideration?*

Two other letters referring to the subject appeared in *Sexton Blake Library* Number 449. James W. Cook, of Wembley, wrote:

*I wholeheartedly agree with Martin Thomas's letter in S.B.L. Number 445.*

But he felt that if the brief appearance of Nelson Lee and Nipper in a December Christmas story had been expanded, it might well have enlarged the *Sexton Blake Circle*.

Miss Margaret Cooke, of Withington, Manchester, wrote:

*What Martin Thomas said in his letter was true, of course. Moreover, it was something which needed saying, I am afraid—but he had no right to say it.*

If a new Circle for enthusiasts of the modern Blake were to be formed, she thought it should be separate from the present Circle and run officially from The Fleetway House; it should have its own club rooms, lectures and discussions.

ONE MORE OPINION is available, and well worth quoting, at the time this symposium was prepared. It is from a letter written by Victor Colby, of Beverly Hills, N.S.W., Australia, to the Editor of *The Collectors' Digest* and appeared in the April issue of that magazine:

*Re the Martin Thomas criticism, I feel a sense of proportion should prevail. Blake has been going strong for 66 years, the new look only 3 years, yet the new look already has one of the seven pages of The Collectors' Digest devoted to Blake. One in seven is much higher than 3 in 66, so I feel they aren't doing so badly.*

*I'm interested in the new look, but the old look has greater scope for articles. Everyone has access to the new Sexton Blake Library, everything is fresh, and there is no mystery. The information on the old look is important, because of the scarcity of copies and knowledge.*

That strikes us as being very reasonable comment, getting things in the proper perspective.

At the conclusion of his original letter in *The Sexton Blake Library* Mr. Thomas wrote:

*There is obviously a place for the collecting of historical and statistical aspects of Blake lore. But if the Blakiana feature can cater for only those interests, there is evidently*

room and a need for a separate Circle—to cater for today's Sexton Blake reader. A Circle to go forward with that reader and with Sexton Blake . . . into the 1960's.

WE WOULD THINK that, if readers of today's *Sexton Blake Library* feel any need of a Circle, with a fan magazine, to concern itself with the modern Blake, they should be quite capable of forming one.

There are many thousands of them, as compared with the very few hundreds—or even only scores—of known collectors of, or enthusiasts for, Blake stories of the past.

But would such a Circle be able to fill as many, or as few, as seven pages of a magazine each month, with only three or four years of the new Blake to draw on for inspiration?

—W. H. G.

## What Is That Name Again?

TRYON MOVED to the door, but appeared to think better of it, and going to his locker found pen and notepaper and settled himself at a desk, prepared for action. Then he cocked his head askew with his blue eyes on Gandy.

"Please, Gander—"

"My name isn't Gander. It's Gandy."

"Sorry," Tryon murmured very contritely. "Well, please, Gander—I mean Gandy, I could write all my letter by telling my people how brainy the sergeant is." His voice was humble and innocent, almost pleading. "I say, Gander—I mean Gandy,

would you say his degrees again, please? If you say them slowly, I can copy them down."

—From *The New House at Oldborough*, by *Gunby Hadath*, in *Chums Annual for 1923*, page 271.

\* \* \*

## Sexton Blake In India

A FEW YEARS AGO, when copies of *N. Z. Chums* were coming our way, we noticed a serial story about Sexton Blake, without Tinker, on the north-west frontier of India. It was titled *The Flaming Frontier*, the author being John Brearley.

We wondered at the time, and continued to wonder, just where the story came from, for it was

apparent that some at least of the stories in *N. Z. Chums* were reprints. At least one complete yarn was reprinted from *Chums*, for we found the same story in a *Chums Annual* of the 1930's.

Now we know where *The Flaming Frontier* came from, thanks to Walter Webb. He tells us in the instalment of his feature, *Century-Makers*, in the *April Collectors' Digest*. The story originally appeared in *The Boys' Friend Library* in 1939!

It was of absolutely no importance to us to know this. But still we are gratified to know it!

\* \* \*

## Forty Years On!

A PLEASANT DAY in April was made even more pleasant for us by Tom Langley, of Hall Green, Birmingham. On that day we received from him the gift of a copy of *The Popular* Number 96, dated November 20th, 1920. We enjoyed looking through it, reading the stories and determining which of the school yarns had been written by Charles Hamilton. (We feel that Mr. Hamilton wrote the Rookwood story and that the Greyfriars story was by G. R. Samways.)

What was really intriguing, however, was a rubber-stamped impression on the front page:

*Clements News & Cigar Store/929 Rosser Avenue/Brandon - Man.*

What a surprise that was to us! How interesting it would be to know who bought this copy of *The Popular* at Clements News in Brandon—which city is 140 or so miles west of Transcona—in 1920. And even more interesting to learn into whose hands it has come in the last forty years!

\* \* \*

## Eighty Years Ago!

NOVEMBER 18th, 1879.—Three famous English magazines, *The Boy's Own Paper*, *Sunday at Home*, and *Leisure Hour*, made their first appearance in Winnipeg bookstores, which had hitherto been able to stock only American magazines; the rush of buyers showed the number of purchasers who had been starving for periodicals from the "Old Country."

—From the *Winnipeg Free Press* for November 18th, 1959.

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