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c/o Central Registry, Northern Command, York.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

London, Fifth Series -- and Birmingham: A fortnight or so before my holidays were due I was feeling very down in the mouth, everything seemed to be going wrong. Then one evening I spoke on the 'phone to that staunch comrade of mine, Charlie Wright. Said Charlie, "Cheer up, old man, it may turn out to be as good as all its predecessors." Oh what a true prophet Charlie proved to be. Here I have been back home half-an-hour, my coat off, and my head is in a whirl as I sit down and attempt to describe in the space available all the delights, all the thrills, I have experienced among our Brotherhood of Happy Hours since I left home nearly twelve days ago. (Oh blow it, I'll add four pages, that's eight really, so that I can spread myself without encroaching on other matters.)

Dead on time on the afternoon of September 15th, the train arrived at King's Cross. The faithful Len was there to meet me, that was inevitable, as sure as the sparks fly upward. He did so despite the fact that he was on the verge of a severe chill, which unfortunately led to him being confined to the house for most of my stay. This was my only

regret, for otherwise everything worked according to plan, every appointment, no matter how far the distance between one and the next was kept without a single hitch.

Came lunch with Len, he returned to his office whilst I went down to Foyle's and other places. At 4.30 we met again and Len accompanied me to John Shaw's near Camberwell Green. In the following days I was to see more of John and his father than in previous years, much to my advantage, and here I pay a tribute to all they did to make me comfortable.

Tuesday morning found me at Liverpool Street where I met Jimmy Hunter and Eric Landy, an annual event this. So absorbed did we get in a journey back to the early years of the century that they stole back to their offices an hour late. Moreover, it was decided that the confab should only be adjourned - until the following Friday.

Then on to Bill Martin's, where I am a privileged visitor. I saw something of Bill's own collection. Seems to me Bill will have the distinction of being the first to boast of complete collections of Gems and Magnets. I also saw some of those curiosities which so interested Noel Whitcombe of the "Daily Mirror", including a letter written by Crippen the night before the historic crime, and a letter of apology written by Bernard Shaw. Rather unique, that one, surely. Leaving Bill reluctantly I took a bus to King's Cross to meet, for the first time, Bill Lofts. We roamed the Euston Road whilst Bill told me of some interesting correspondence he had had with John Hunter. A real Blake enthusiast, Bill.

Wednesday morning at 11 o'clock I was on Grays Inn Road to meet dear old Tom Strype. By a misunderstanding we did not see each other last year: we made sure this time. As admirers of Nelson Lee we always for sentimental reasons meet in the vicinity of his reputed residence. Tom escorted me to a quiet church-yard on Pentonville Hill where he showed me the grave of Grimaldi, most famous of all clowns. A chat over a substantial lunch, then to Madame Tussaud's (Tom confessed that though a Londoner born and bred, he had never been there) where we spent a couple of hours. Then on to Waterloo where by bus I travelled through now tremless London to Greenwich and the familiar home of that peerless pair, Charlie and Olive Wright. There I had the pleasure of meeting Ray Hopkins who joined our circle a few months ago. Unfortunately he will be departing for the U.S.A.

soon. We shall miss him. Another happy evening sped on wings.

Thursday to Wood Green. I needed no directing there. I found Bob Whiter installed in his new premises: the same cheery Bob (I nearly wrote Cherry) looking not a day older than when I first met him four years ago. We chattered all the afternoon, and discussed sketches for the Annual. I also caught a glimpse of "Uncle Benjamin" as full of Max Miller like chaff as ever. Then back to Central London and the Montague Hotel nearby the British Museum to be greeted by Peter Walker; Peter and I have corresponded for years, but this was our first meeting. A quiet corner in the hotel where we talked to our hearts' content - so much so that my vow to be in bed before midnight for once went all awry. 'Twas well worth it, though, Peter.

Friday morning the 19th found me at Liverpool Street again for that adjourned meeting. We parted with a vow to be there again next year. Next the Ministry of Civil Aviation for my annual visit to Arthur Richardson. In a lengthy, imposing conference room, no doubt used at times for more important discussions, we two talked uninterrupted except for the arrival of tea. As usual we had to watch the clock, for I was due to meet Roger Jenkins at the Marble Arch at 6 o'clock. However, despite the chaos of rush hour Oxford Street I was greeting Roger on time. More tea in the vast Corner House where I congratulated Roger on his superb Bunter article for the Annual. (You will be echoing my words soon.)

Then to Hyde Park, St. James Park, and miles and miles of London's street. Who'd think I was nearing the retiring age? Of a truth the air of London Town - and the company of the clan - invigoretes me.

By Cleopatra's Needle near noon on the Saturday morning to meet Charles Vennimore. In the next three hours I added materially to my knowledge of London, and heard more about that amazing collection of periodicals of all kinds. On parting I set off to Archdale Road. Poor old Len was looking very disappointed, for under doctor's orders the Brighton trip was off for him. Nevertheless, he and Josie succeeded in making it a very pleasant afternoon and evening for Charlie Wright and me.

Next morning I was up bright and early and under the famous clock at Victoria at 9.15, to find Charlie and Olive

already there. Soon a goodly number of the members were assembled. It struck me that it was just the occasion for those badges to be worn. Speed 'em, Bob.

Several of the party had been kindly invited to lunch by Bill Jardine, so on arrival at Brighton we proceeded to his home. And what a lunch! As I said afterwards, some people in the north declare loftily that southerners can't make Yorkshire pudding. They should try Mrs. Jardine's. I never cease to marvel at the generosity of so many members of this Club of ours. Lunch over, we went on to Hove, and "Robby's". There once again that delightful hospitality, and the entertainment with "The Exploits of Elaine". But you will be reading all about that elsewhere. Altogether a wonderful day.

The early part of Monday was spent with Len, then on to Bob Blythe's. Bob's home is in the shadow of Holloway Geol, but needless to say, none of its atmosphere seeps into Bob's cosy rooms. Bob told me all about an important event he had arranged for me for the following day - a visit to the Oxford University Press at Meadsden, and an interview with Mr. G. T. Hollis, one of its editors.

That interview the following day was most interesting and gratifying to me. Mr. Hollis subscribes to the Annual and he had many nice things to say about it. He thinks the hobby we indulge in is of no little importance and is of the opinion that the real history of boys' weeklies through the ages should be written for all to read.

Bob also took me on a tour of the vest building, an experience which was greatly enjoyed.

Followed a long bus ride to Waterloo, then on to Eric Fayne at Surbiton. There Eric gave me a graphic account of his air trip to Singapore. He recalled the series in which the Famous Five and Bunter went out there. He has written an entertaining article contrasting their experiences with his. You'll be able to enjoy it next month.

Wednesday, the 24th, brought my thrill-packed stay in London to a close. I spent the last hours with Len, then on to Euston.

As I passed through the suburbs on my way to Birmingham I thought of the saying that London can be the loneliest place in the world. Yes, maybe, but not if you know the members of the Old Boys' Book Club.

It was my first visit to the great Midland city, but in less than no time I was made to feel at home. Jack Corbett

met me and hustled me off to his home at Quinton. There a
ter which would have made even Bunter smile with satisfaction.
Later Ted Davey and Norman Gregory arrived and straight away
we were chattering and arguing like old friends, Mrs. Corbett
looking on amusedly, and no doubt thinking of the audacity
of men who declare it's the women folk who talk.

I looked at the clock thinking it would be about eight;
it wasn't, it was nearer ten. A car arrived and bore me off
through pouring rain to the Rev. Mr. Pound's at the other
side of Birmingham where another hearty welcome awaited me.
More hospitality and talk until after midnight. Next day
Mr. Pound took me on a tour of Birmingham, then back to tea
and meeting Peter Mellor and Frank Willison. How grand to
meet the chaps with whom one has only corresponded. Another
jolly evening. 'Tis a wonder I didn't lose my voice. I was
awakened next morning by Mr. Pound bringing me in a cup of
tea. I rubbed my eyes and realised with a sigh that my
never-to-be-forgotten holiday had reached its close.

Mr. Pound and Jack Corbett bid me farewell and I settled
down for the homeward journey with a notebook and preparation
for this C.D.

Yee, verily, Charlie Wright was right.

It Won't be Long: Needless to say I refer to the Annual.
Since last writing Harry Homer has handed me the combined
efforts of the members of the Sexton Blake Circle. As time
is so short I know my colleague Maurice won't mind me
referring to it here. As I scanned the many, but not too
many, pages, I thought of two proverbs which seem to contra-
dict each other - "Too Many Cooks Spoil the Broth" and
"Many Hands Make Light Work". On this occasion the former
does not apply, but if you revise the other slightly and say
"Many Hands Make Fine Work" it certainly does. I have handled
many splendid articles since I started the C.D., but honestly
I think this beats them all. It's to be called "Kings of
Crime" and for Blake fans it is a veritable mess of informa-
tion. Moreover, others will admire it, too.

Now a word about Roger Jenkins' article on Bunter.
Gallons of ink have been spilt over the fat one, but this is
the shrewdest, most thorough one ever. Roger has surpassed
himself.

Editors have always had a habit of declaring that some-
thing or other is to be the best ever. But honestly, when I

survey the copy as it comes to hand I do feel justified in assuring you that our sixth Annual will be at least as good as any of its predecessors.

Now just a plea. Orders so far are a little behind last year, despite several from new chums. There may be reasons for this; failure to realise how time is getting on, the main one. I am sure the great majority of you will want as usual, so please don't leave it too long for I shall have to place the order soon. And there's still a dearth of advertisements. See what you can do, for no publication can get along without a few.

Can Anyone Help? George H. Hess, Junr., 40 North Mississippi River Blvd., St. Paul 4, Minnesota, U.S.A. would be grateful if anyone could tell him the length of the run of the Wild West Weekly, published by the Amalgamated Press. (It started December 3rd, 1938). He is also anxious to get No. 28, to complete a run up to 29. He would pay 50 cents, about 3/6 for this one, and for any others after 29 providing the run was not lengthy.

I don't think there are many copies of this paper about, but one never knows. How about it, chaps, can you help an American cousin? He is an enthusiastic Magnetite.

Tom Merry's Own: Whilst in Birmingham I caught a glimpse of the new edition in the leading book shop. It looked good. The dust jacket is very attractive, and the "intruding" non-Hamilton stories of other years have been dropped. More about it next month.

If this issue (with its 36 pages) gives the impression of hurried preparation, and is a little delayed, I am sure you will excuse

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

FOR SALE: "Collectors' Digest" monthlies from December 1949 to current issue, 1/- each. Collectors' Digest Annuals, 1949, 1950, 1951, 7/- each, plus postage. Mint condition. Preference to buyer taking the whole. James W. Hurrell, Glenisle, 10 Ilfracombe Gardens, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex.

POPULAR PAPERS OF THE PAST

No.20. - THE BOYS' MAGAZINE

By Ron. C. Deacon

(Still another new contributor to our pages with an informative article. More please. - H.L.)

The "Boys' Magazine" ran from 1922 until 1937, so there were about 800 issues of this small sized, pink paper, which contained 36 pages and was very popular during most of its existence. Many fine stories of all possible types were featured in its pages, and there must have been many other people who were as sorry as I was when I bought the last issue, in August 1937 I believe, and found that it was to be incorporated with another paper. Incorporation of course meant that for all practical purposes it ceased to exist from that time onwards.

It was quite a shock to read in the last editorial that the "Boys' Magazine" would appear no more, because the stories were still of a high standard and there had been no previous warning that the paper would cease publication. The reason the editor gave for the discontinuation of the book was the best one I have ever heard. At the time I believed it; but I know better now. He said he had to give up his editorship as he had been invited to join an expedition which was going up the Amazon! Of course he couldn't pass up such a wonderful opportunity!

During the first few years of its existence the "Boys' Magazine" was owned by Hulton Publications, the firm which now publish "Picture Post" and the "Eagle", but it soon passed into the hands of the Amalgamated Press. After the change of publishers the quality of the stories rapidly improved, and the characters who were to make regular appearances in the paper for the rest of its duration were introduced to the readers.

There was the school series of St.Gideons where Johnny Gee and Co., Catchpole, and Fatty Slocum had all kinds of humorous and amazing adventures. At the time I read these stories I liked them better than any other school stories except those of Greyfriars by Frank Richards.

The "Boys' Magazine" also had its own detective character. Falcon Swift aided by his young assistant Chick Conway was the hero of many stirring battles against every kind of crook

from jewel thieves and kidnapers to murderers and fire raisers. His supercharged Hispano-Suiza helped him catch many crooks, and he also owned a private plane.

Rex Remington and his boys of the Bar X ranch were the heroes of a thrilling series of complete stories about the American West which appeared from time to time in the pink paper. Then there was a riotously funny series about the adventures at sea and on shore of Fat Burns, his girl friend Teresa Green and his strangely assorted crew of seamen.

In addition to these series which appeared regularly there were many gripping serials. John Hunter was a prolific author of serials for the "Boys' Magazine" and he wrote football, gangster, science fantasy, and motor-racing stories. One of his best stories was about a man who not only starred in a football team, but also drove racing cars. Another of his serials mixed motor racing with fantasy when the central character of the story discovered a lost valley, the only entrance to which was a water-filled tunnel. The people and animals in the valley had been cut off from the outside world for centuries and were of course living a primitive existence far behind our modern one. Strangely enough, they seemed to be happier than we are with all our vaunted civilisation.

Another fine Hunter serial concerned an explorer who discovered a new island which was infested with dinosaurs, sabre-toothed tigers, mastodons and other prehistoric monsters. He took a ship there and loaded it with reptiles intending to exhibit them in England. The ship was wrecked on the English coast and the monsters roamed all over the countryside, some of them reaching London, where a brontosaurus a mere ninety feet long and forty feet high wrecked Tower Bridge, before all the reptiles could be killed.

There were some good historical series also. One that I recall very clearly was about the adventures of a Pimpernel type of character in France during the Revolution. Another starred the little General, Napoleon Bonaparte, and his war against Russia.

Many outstanding science fiction serials appeared in the pages of the "Boys' Magazine", the best of all in my opinion being "The School in Space" by Edwy Searles Brooks which appeared in 1927 or 1928. The characters were very similar to the St. Franks characters, practically the only difference being the names used. Apart from schoolboy characters reminiscent of Fatty Little, Edward Oswald

Hendforth, etc. the wealthy owner of the Space Ship was Lord Dorrimore to the life.

A party of schoolboys were being shown around the Space Ship and the character who resembled Hendforth interfered with the controls and started the ship on a journey into outer space. They landed on Venus and discovered a city with immensely strong high walls around it which was ruled by an American who had journeyed there twenty years before and had no desire to return to earth. The natives of Venus looked upon him as a god. Only certain of the Venusian foods could be safely eaten by people of earth, and most of the schoolboys, led needless to say by the boy who resembled Fatty Little, indulged heavily in the forbidden foodstuffs. The foods tasted better than anything obtainable on earth, but unfortunately, for about 12 hours after eating, the boys thought they were dying.

Giant prehistoric monsters such as Tyrannosaurus Rex and the flying Pterodactyls abounded on Venus which was the reason for the strong walls around the Venusian city, which was kept in complete darkness at night, as lights attracted the monstrous reptiles. Somebody switched on all the lights and searchlights and the city was almost destroyed by the saurians during a thrilling battle, the earth party shooting at them from the city walls.

I discovered a book, published by Swan publications in 1945 entitled the "School in Space" and immediately recognised it as E. S. Brooks' serials from the "Boys' Magazine". But according to Swan's it was an original story by Reginald Browne being published for the first time. When E.S.Brooks attended one of the London O.B.B.C. meetings I told him about it. He said it was certainly his story and that nobody had asked his permission to republish it!

Another science fiction story I easily recall was written by H. Wedgwood Belfield who wrote many of the serials of that type that appeared in the "Boys' Magazine". In this story several people went to the moon where they discovered a people who roughly resembled human beings, but off whose rubbery bodies, bullets bounced. They used guns which fired bolts of electricity which merely paralysed Earthmen temporarily, but which were deadly to themselves. All through the story the earth people were trying to obtain some of their electric guns and they tried to steal the bullet firing automatics from earth.

There were some excellent air war serials, the best being "Bullets from the Blue" by John Hunter, set in the 1914-18 war and one by Arch Whitehouse about a future air war between England and China which had become a great military power and wished to conquer the world. The war was fought over England and our greatest defence apart from the planes themselves was an enormous steel net which was spread all over London and held up by balloons! The net was electrified and any enemy plane that touched it was immediately brought crashing down in ruins.

The "Boys' Magazine" gave me many happy hours of reading pleasure, and apart from the Magnet was my favourite paper. Many of the stories and characters live on in my memory, including some stories I read when only eight years of age. I think there is no doubt that the "Boys' Magazine" was one of the finest papers ever published.

WANTED: Magnets between 700 and 900 or Bound Copies. Pre-war Hotspurs, Triumphs, Skippers, Adventures, Wizards, Rovers also collected. Lists to Church Cottage, Leleham, Nr. Steines, Middlesex.

WANTED: "H.A." for 1920, 21, 22 and 25. Can offer for exchange copies in excellent condition, 1923, 27, 29 - really first class. J. Corbett, 49 Glyn Farm Road, Quinton, Birmingham 32.

FOR SALE:- 170 Different S.B.L's (3rd series), 3 Boys' Friends, 3 Boys' Realms (1909-16), 3 Champion Libraries (1933). Exchanges also welcomed for the above. S.A.E. please. W.O.G. Lofts, 42 Ashbridge Street, London, N.W.8.

WANTED: Boys' Friend Libraries (all old series) Nos. 504, 509, 641 and 642. - Nelson Lees (all 1st series). Any Travel series. E. Hubbard, 58 South View Crescent, Sheffield 7.

A MINUTE TO TWELVE APPEAL:

Circumstances have arisen which make it imperative that we know in the very near future how many copies of the Annual we shall require.

Therefore, if you have not yet ordered your's, please do so at the earliest possible moment. We don't want anyone to be disappointed. Subs. can be sent later.

+++++
+ HAMILTONIA +
+++++

Conducted by Herbert Leckenby

Continuing my endeavours to put on record something of the history of Charles Hamilton stories, I'll start off this month with some details of the circus yarns he wrote for "Pluck" in 1909-10, under the pen-name Harry Dorrian. For most of the details I am indebted to John R. Shaw. The list, as complete as we can get it, is as follows:

No. 253 (Sept. 4th, 1909) "Jungle Jack"; 254, "Jack Talbot's Birthday"; 255, "The Circus Hero"; 257, "Circus Rivals"; 263, "The circus Ventriloquist"; 264, "The Circus Riding Master"; 265, "Queen of the Ring"; 266, "The Circus Pupil"; 267, "The Showmen's Enemy"; 268, "The Bogus Ringmaster"; 269, "The Reformation of Bibby"; 271 (Jan. 8th, 1910) "Jack Talbot's Rescue".

As the stories were appearing almost every week probably 259-262 also contained them, but 258 did not. We have no information after 272. I have No. 253, "Jungle Jack" before me and judging by the opening chapter it would appear there had been one story before it, for it states briefly that a few weeks earlier Jack Talbot had left the National School at Abbotsdale, joined Signor Tomsonio's Circus as a horse-boy, and risen quickly to become one of the most prominent members as "Jungle Jack, the Boy Tiger Tamer".

You will observe that the hero of the stories bore a name that was to become famous to all Hamiltonians in after years. Others who appeared prominently in these circus stories were Jocy Page, the clown, Clotilda, the Queen of the Ring, Samson, the Strong Man, Signor Tomsonio, and Jim Carson, an acrobat, known as The Handsome Man, and Jack's rival.

No. 263 was particularly interesting. It was a double number and in the circus story there appeared none other than Billy Bunter. Doubtless he was the ventriloquist of the title. Bunter would appear to have had a liking for circuses, for, of course, twice in his Magnet career he made the acquaintance of them.

Postscript: Whilst in London I heard of two other of these circus stories. One appeared in Magnet No. 200, Wingate's Folly, and the other as second story in a Gem Double Number, No. 302, the St. Jim's yarn being the famous "Mystery of the Painted Room."

HAMILTON COUNTRY

By P. L. Walker

(We haven't had one of Peter Walker's popular nostalgic articles for some time. Well, here's one.

Many pleasant and lucrative hours can be spent in the study of maps. By learning a little map-reading one can form perfect pictures in the mind's eye. The variations in the colour and shading make it possible for you to visualise very accurately the type of country depicted on the map. You can find the little lanes leading through woods and eventually becoming cart-tracks and footpaths. You can find the clear cool streams and wide rivers. The hills and mountains are easily distinguishable.

It is looking for features like these which makes map-reading so fascinating, and the other day I found myself contemplating a beautifully printed map of Kent.

And to a Collectors' Digest fan, and follower of Frank Richards and Martin Clifford and the Gem and the Magnet, a map of Kent conjures up visions of Greyfriars, and Friar Dale and Courtfield and all the area which I know as "Greyfriars Country". I found myself wondering where Mr. Hamilton had located his Greyfriars School when he first decided to include it in the Kent countryside way back in 1907.

Firstly, it was close to the sea, as frequent mention is made of this fact. Sea mist is a regular weather vagary at Greyfriars, and the villages of Pegg and Hawkscliff are well known to Hamilton fans. Secondly, it was close to a river - the Sark - and the proximity of Courtfield Common showed large open spaces. There was also wooded country, and Folkstone wasn't far away.

So I looked with renewed interest at this map of Kent, and decided that Greyfriars School must be just there!

And, having settled its location, I realised that one of Mr. Charles Hamilton's greatest assets is his ability to create the atmosphere of the English countryside. Kent and Greyfriars in the Magnet. Sussex and St.Jims in the Gem.

All the earlier readers of the famous yarns will recall the thrill of reading about St.Jims under snow in depth of winter, and of the chums of the Greyfriars Remove whirring down the dusty roads on their bicycles in the hot July sunshine. Those leafy Kent lanes had few cars roaming along them in those days. Cyclists, farm carts and hay-wagons were

the road users. The summers were hot, long and dusty, and the Friardale Woods afforded welcome shade. The River Serk was a cool, clear stream, while the shouts of the Greyfriars fellows echoed across the water on sunny Saturday afternoons.

Stunning picnics on Poppers Island with Bunter in hot and shiny pursuit. The towing path by the river, with Smithy keeping a sharp look out for "pre's" before embarking on a dubious excursion over the fence around the Three Fishers.

There is a lovely picture of Little Side on a perfect day in June. Of blue sky and fleecy white clouds with Wharton and Smithy piling up the runs. The old school is partially visible through the elms which line one side of the cricket ground, and, as the match with Highcliffe is in progress you can hear the sound of a threshing machine dealing with the hay in a nearby field.

The little village of Friardale, lezy in the hot afternoon sunshine, with a black cat stretched out in front of Uncle Clegg's shop. The breezy Courtfield Common over which Quelch and Prout stride on windy October afternoons. And with the coming of autumn and longer nights, Greyfriars seems to nestle in a peaceful countryside of gold and red and brown.

What a place is Greyfriars for November fogs! There's Smithy skilfully utilising this Heaven sent chance for a swift flutter at the Three Fishers. Bunter, despite very short sight, finds the fog an ally in some grub marauding scheme. The Famous Five use it to conceal their identity whilst carrying out a jape against one of the Sixth Form ceds.

December arrives and we see those leafy lanes bare and cold with the frosty branches of the old elms etched against a steely grey sky. Overnight the Greyfriars countryside is transformed by snow and the old quad glimmers in the yellow wintry sunshine.

In the old days the arrival of Christmas saw the Greyfriars and St.Jims men depart from the school for Rylcombe Station in a horse drawn "brake". Of latter times this was inevitably superseded by 'bus and car, but we had always one consolation - it snowed!

The muffled sounds and sensations which accompany heavy snow were most accurately pictured by Mr. Hamilton, and one could almost see the frosty breath of the snow-fighting schoolboys in the lane between St.Jims and Rylcombe Grammar School.

I always revelled in the opening chapters of the good

old-fashioned Christmas numbers. In the Gem "The Ghost of St.Jims", for instance - "Snow, thicker and thicker. The white flakes were falling incessantly." One drew the arm-chair up closer to the fire, and settled down for a grand evening with the chuns of St.Jims.

The Gem Christmas Number for 1917 entitled "The Shadow of the Pest", opens with Jack Blake and Co. tramping home in the deepening gloom of a snowy night, and suddenly becoming aware that they are being followed. A not unusual theme, this, but always welcome. In a yarn entitled "The House on the Heath" which appeared in the Magnet, the Kent countryside under deep snow is vividly depicted, and an exciting trudge through snowdrifts to the lonely house in which a dangerous German prisoner is being afforded a haven is a grand bit of Frank Richards.

A feature of the St.Jim's stories was the feeling of the cosiness of the Sussex countryside which Mr. Hamilton so ably portrayed. In summer one can see the St.Jims men pushing out from the old boat-house, the River Ryll gleaming in the sunshine, and the willow trees lining its banks. And in the winter the river is in full spate, its muddy waters rushing under the old stone bridge, whilst those smiling fields are lashed with the rain, and the Shell fellows, their coat collars pulled up, and water dripping from their caps, tramp down the muddy lanes from Rylcombe to St.Jims.

During the course of the history of the Magnet and Gem there were many yarns dealing with the exploits of the St.Jims and Greyfriars fellows as caravanners. Probably the best series of this type was that appearing in successive issues of the Gem in its early 600's. Here we had Charles Hamilton at his best, with grand descriptions of leafy lanes, wide moorlands, rippling streams and dusty roads.

Other yarns in similar strain followed from time to time, and one recalls that excellent series which dealt with a hectic chase through several counties for Bob Cherry's Holiday Annual by the redoubtable Pon of Highcliffe.

The frequent holiday excursions abroad, taking our schoolboy friends as far afield as China, India, Africa and elsewhere, made most interesting reading, but it was with something approaching relief that we welcomed the Greyfriars men back to Kent, a county in the front line from 1940 to 1948, the home of the "Hamilton Country".

HARRY WHARTON, CAPTAIN OF THE REMOVE

By Miss S. Stevens

At a meeting of the Australasian Branch, O.B.B.C. some time ago Miss Sheila Stevens gave a talk on Harry Wharton. It was so interesting - and controversial in its comparisons with Tom Merry and Jimmy Silver, that I am taking the liberty of reproducing it as it appeared in abbreviated form in their Newsletter. It proves in striking fashion that there were girls who were as keen on the Magnet as the boys.

Of the many great characters created by Charles Hamilton, Harry Wharton was the first and most outstanding. Modelled with loving care on Charles Hamilton's own best boyhood friend, there is nothing small or mean about him - both virtues and faults being on the grand scale. Strangely enough, he seems a modern version of Homer's Achilles, that semi-divine hero of the earliest known literature, so revered by the ancient Greeks, and by multitudes since. I thoroughly agree with Roger Jenkins that Harry Wharton and not Billy Bunter made the Magnet. From the first issue to the last he was the pivot on which it turned.

St. Jim's could have managed quite well without Tom Merry, but not Greyfriars without Wharton. There were not many Magnets which did not feature Wharton's faults or virtues. He far outshines Tom Merry and Jimmy Silver, having all their good points, such as courage, generosity, unselfishness, loyalty, and brilliance at sports, together with other qualities not possessed by them. Harry is clever and studious with a genius for leadership. Merry has none of these qualities, and while Silver has the first two traits, and also was a leader, he sometimes received a study licking when an idea either produced trouble or didn't suit his followers. Likewise Tom Merry was bumped by his friends, but it is inconceivable for Wharton ever to receive similar treatment from his friends.

Jimmy Silver exhibited his inferiority as a leader in the way he derided all ideas but his own and kept the parts in his plays in his own clique. Wharton, on the contrary, encouraged everybody in the Remove to voice ideas, and often allows them the leadership in putting their plans into effect. An example of this is Mauly's leadership of the stay-in strike. He lacked the self-righteous meddlesomeness which

characterised both Merry and Silver. Though Cardew was a far finer character than Vernon-Smith, Tom Merry's contemptuous treatment of the former was at strong variance with Wharton's attitude towards Smithy. Likewise Silver sometimes interfered with the Rookwood nuts.

Wharton was quick to perceive virtues in anyone and thereafter stand by them in an endeavour to help them overcome their faults. Look at the way he championed and reformed Levison, which, though only temporary, prepared the way for a permanent reformation later. Note how thoroughly Levison went to the bad after he came to St. Jim's; with Tom Merry never lifting a hand to stay him.

The Remove Captain also had a great sense of responsibility for anyone whom he thought unable to look after himself, as witness his continued care of Bunter and the many times he wrote lines for Coker to save that opinionated individual from trouble. Neither Tom Merry nor Jimmy Silver possessed this trait.

Harry was never snobbish as (for example) the way he treated Linley and Crum compared with the way Tom Merry treated Redfern and Co. and also Hamilton.

Neither Tom Merry nor Jimmy Silver could have any great series based on them, because they themselves did not possess greatness. The early Magnet stories featured his fight to suppress his sullen, passionate, resentful and wilful temper until he became the fine character that he was throughout the life of the Magnet. But those qualities were never more than dormant and the struggle to master them continuous. Later series (particularly that great 1925 series) dealt with his gradual, though temporary downfalls as those faults mastered him so that he did things of which he was normally incapable. But his fine character was never completely obscured and would eventually regain the mastery. Harry Wharton, Captain of the Remove, remains the greatest and finest schoolboy in fiction.

Robert Ferish, of Longtown, Cumberland, has sent me a very interesting article which appeared in "The Cumberland Evening News. It is headed, "I say you fellows - who is this Bunter?" and runs to a column and a half. The writer, J.W. Nichles, certainly knew his Greyfriars. He makes only one error, when he says Dr. Locke and Ferrers Locke were brothers.

And he makes a most gratifying revelation, for he says:

"We lent old copies of the Magnet during the past two years to 30-40 Cumberland lads aged between 10 and 15 years. Each was asked whether he liked that kind of yarn, or preferred stories about space ships and atomic wonders. Without exception the answer was "Your Bunters are best. Have you any more?"

It would appear there are some sensible lads in Cumberland.

FRANK RICHARDS, COMPOSER

By W. H. Goodhead

It seems strange to me that in the innumerable (and fully merited) tributes to the genius of Charles Hamilton which have appeared in the C.D. and other periodicals there has, as far as I can gather, never yet been a reference to one of his most pleasing accomplishments, namely his ability as a composer of light verse. I use the word "verse" because the necessary limitations to Mr. Hamilton's choice of themes prevent an assessment of him as a poet in the strictest sense of the word.

Nevertheless, as a composer of light verse Mr. Hamilton stands unique in his own sphere. The series of character studies in verse, the poetic tributes to various landmarks and events in and around Greyfriars, and the rhyming plays of Holiday Annual fame have a sparkle, humour and rhythm which have no counterpart in the works of any other author of boys' literature. Even the omnipotent and ubiquitous Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee never claimed to be poets of any degree whatever. Indeed, the only rhymers who ever appeared in the pages of the U.J. was, as far as I know, Dr. Huxton of that ilk.

It is interesting to note that in "Boys Will Be Boys", Mr. Turner mentions the fact that, just prior to the publication of the Magnet, Mr. Hamilton was "wasting a good deal of time on music and art", and also mentions that he was composing songs. (Here, surely, is an unexplored field for the ardent Hamiltonians to explore). This early training, I think, accounts for the strong rhythm of his verse, not to mention his clever rhymes. Also, it may account for the fact that a lot of his poems are parodies of well-known songs, ballads and operatic arias. For instance, my favourite has always been his character study of Gwynne in No. 1253 of the Magnet. This is an extremely clever parody of "No Possible

Doubt Whatever" from "The Gondoliers". Perhaps other readers can quote further examples. (Incidentally, this habit of parodying is by no means detrimental to his status as an exponent of light verse. Many highly respected poets have done the same, notably Rudyard Kipling.)

As I have already said, this aspect of Mr. Hamilton's genius seems to have gone unnoticed hitherto, but there must be enough of his verse scattered throughout the Magnets, Gems and Holiday Annuals of the inter-war years to fill a dozen volumes. Although I suppose it is too much to expect a "Definitive Edition of Charles Hamilton's poetical Works" for some time, I think a Poets' Corner would make an interesting addition to "Hamiltonia". I'm sure that the high quality of the verse would surprise many readers.

MAGNET TITLES (Contd.)

("S" denotes Substitute.)

1015, Smithy's Pal; 1016, Breve Bunter; 1017, The Men from the South Seas; 1018, The Treasure Chart; 1019, Tom Redwing's Quest; 1020, Bunter the Stowaway; 1021, The Southern Seas; 1022, The Whip Hand; 1023, The Treasure Island; 1024, The Rival Treasure Seekers; 1025, Black Peter's Treasure; 1026, The Greyfriars Castaways; 1027, Skinner Tries it on; 1028, Tom Redwing's Return; 1029, The Great Fifth at Greyfriars; 1030 (S) A Ventriloquist at Large; 1031, The Road of the Remove; 1032, Levison Makes Good; 1033, Sent to Coventry; 1034, Levison's Luck; 1035, The Prefect's Secret; 1036, Bunter's Christmas Present; 1037, Bunter the Benevolent; 1038, The Mystery of Wharton Lodge; 1039, Billy Bunter's Convict; 1040, Convict 19; 1041, The Form-Master's Foe; 1042, The Fellow who wouldn't be Cened; 1043, Dismissed from Greyfriars; 1044, The Rebellion of the Remove; 1045, The School without a Master; 1046, High Jinks at High Oaks; 1047, Mutiny; 1048, The Boy Headmaster; 1049, The Return of the Rebels; 1050, Black Magic; 1051, The Schoolboy Hypnotist; 1052, The New Boy's Enemy; 1053 (S) In Merciless Hands; 1054 (S) Bunter's Prize Essay; 1055 (S) Cocker's League of Friends; 1056, Bunter's Prize Cake; 1057, For the Honour of Greyfriars; 1058 (S) The Hero of the Fifth; 1059, The Boy from the East; 1060, Friend or Foe; 1061, By Luck and Pluck.

THE NELSON LEE COLUMN

All communications to Robert Blythe,
46 Carleton Road, London, N.7.

Once again we welcome to the "Column" Len Allen with some more reminiscences. But before he goes ahead with his chat, may I make yet another appeal for articles? Especially from those of you who have not, so far, written in these pages. As I have mentioned before, there are over sixty N.L. collectors and only a handful have ever submitted an article.

(Note:- To those of you who have written for this column, even if only on one occasion, please skip this paragraph. It doesn't apply to you.)

My own attitude to the "Column" is this, that while I like doing these articles there comes a time when I think how nice it would be to read an article on the Nelson Lee from someone else, instead of, as at present, having to prepare something myself each month, knowing that if I don't there may be nothing concerning the N.L. at all. And that gets pretty disheartening at times, I can tell you. After all, Blakiana has contributions by different writers nearly every month. That Hamiltonia does, goes without saying. Why, therefore, cannot the N.L. Column? The interest is there, as I know full well - I'm not worried on that score - but I do feel that this section of the C.D. deserves better support in the form of more articles than it has been getting, if only to give my poor old brain a rest from time to time. So what about it? Can I rely on you?

And now before everybody breaks down and weeps all over everybody else's shirt-front, I'll let Len carry on.

FURTHER REFLECTIONS

By Leonard M. Allen.

Second to Professor Zingrave and the Green Triangle organisation Brooks introduced Jim the Penman as Nelson Lee's criminal antagonist. This character was founded on fact, for the appellation originally referred to James Townsend Seward, alias Captain Bevan who, for a time, flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century. Seward was a man of good family, intellectual and well educated, but a criminal streak proved to be predominant. Although he had an excellent practice as a barrister he became the scourge of the London

bankers with a remarkable series of forgeries and it was not until 1857 he was detected and stood trial. Found guilty on March 5th of that year he was transported to Australia and soon met a miserable end, murdered by a fellow convict. The Brooks character, Douglas James Sutcliffe, had many of Seward's characteristics, thoroughly unscrupulous but brave and chivalrous on occasion. His hey-day was in the first hundred of the old series Lee, followed by a series in the Detective Library in 1920. Brooks re-introduced him in the Lee in 1924 when he joined forces with Zingrave and I believe he made a fleeting appearance at St. Frank's in the second new series. Our author was not the first to utilise this colourful character for the famous Victorian novelist, Dick Donovan (J.E. Muddock) had made him the central figure of his novel with the title "Jim the Penman".

Whilst Waldo, to a certain extent, was founded on fact his name appeared to be original, but on glancing through some copies of "Encore" for 1918/19 a quarter page announcement caught my eye:-

Lord Charles Waldo, The Masked Nobleman presents the Biggest Illusion Act on Earth. Including stage full of gorgeously dressed assistants, 5½ tons of original illusions that will set any town in Great Britain talking, etc.etc.

This week:- Theatre Royal, Glossop, etc.

..... any inspiration found here, I wonder.

Incidentally, whilst still browsing through these papers I came across another indirect connection, this time - Sexton Blake. "The Era" of October 12th/21 gave an excellent write-up of the Poluski Brothers' new act which featured Sherlock Holmes and Sexton Blake. Evidently a comedy offering, both detectives had a series of disguises to outwit the other, with Holmes triumphant, just before the curtain, as an old butler. "The Stage" of Sept. 29th/21 also revealed an interesting fact, that fellow collector, Wheeler Dryden, was appearing at the Savoy Theatre, San Francisco, as Borthwick in a play, "Peggy Machree".

Can anyone throw any light on the identity of Charles Wentworth who, as far as I can trace, first appeared in the "Boys' Realm" in 1927? At one time it was thought this was another pen-name for E.S. Brooks, for at the time many Blue

Crusader football stories were credited to Wentworth. Although these stories are Brooksian as to the plots, the style differs. Practically all of the Wentworth Crusader stories were re-printed in the Boys' Friend 4d Library sometimes alternating with those by Brooks. For instances, starting in October, 1930:- No.257, The Cad of the Crusader - Wentworth (B.R. serial), No.261, BosSo'the Blues - Brooks. No.277, Rivals of the Blue Crusaders - Brooks. No.281, Wide Awake for Wembley - Wentworth (B.R. serial). No.297, The Football Pierrots - Wentworth (B.R. serial).

The same characters were used by both authors, but in No.261 Brooks introduced the St.Frank's scholars. Wentworth was also credited with a serial in "The Ranger" in 1932 titled "Peril Castle", this was later republished in the B.F.4d Lib.

The Blue Crusaders Football Club must be the oldest in fiction for it was founded by Arthur S. Hardy in the original pink "Boys' Realm". The story of how the club came into being was re-published in the "Boys' Realm Football Library" (20 pages for one halfpenny weekly!) in 1909. Only one of the original characters endured, Fatty Fowkes, the goal-keeper. This was another character founded on fact, for William Foulke was the twenty-stone goal-keeper for Sheffield United in their best period, 1897 to 1902.

It's a long time since we gave the list of titles, but that has been simply because of lack of space. There's only another 76, so here's 40 to be going on with.

2nd New Series

- No.111, The Rajah's Secret; 112, The Quest of the Silver Dwarf; 113, The Trail of Fortune; 114, The Missing Heir; 115, The Final Round; (Note 112-115 Reprints of early Maxwell Scott stories). 116, The Green Triangle's Decree; 117, The House of Dread; 118, The Secret of Salcloth Island (Detective) (Note:- Author's name not given. Could it be a reprint of a Maxwell Scott story?) 119, Shadows of Doom (St.Franks) 120, The Crook Headmaster (St.Frank's) 121, The Beggar of Keshapore (Detective) 122, The Danger Ship (Detective) 123, Looters of the Far North (Detective); 124, Mystery Island (Detective); 125, The Pirate Submarine (Det.); 126, Plunder Ltd. (Det.); 127, The Peril Trail (Det.); 128, The Brotherhood of Vengeance (Det.); 129, Working Up St.Franks; The Men from Chicago (Det.) 130, The Dud Form at St.Franks; The Fortune Trail (Det.); 131, The Fourth on the Warpath; The Shadow (Det.)

132, Buster Boots Challenge, On His Majesty's Service (Det.)
 133, The Japers Japes, The Grey Bat (Det.); 134, Detective
 Handy on the Trail, The Prisoner of the Temple (Det.);
 135, The Fighting Head of St.Franks, The Case of the King's
 Spy (Det.); 136, Archie's Awakening, South Sea Loot (Det.);
 137, The Head's Foe, The House of Horror (Det.); 138, Sur-
 prising the School, Double-crossed (Det.); 139, The Kingswood
 Belt, The Mystery Box (Det.); 140, The Cunning of Mr.Pyecraft,
 The Treasure of Wu Ling (Det.); 141, Fighting Jim Does It,
 The Island above the Clouds (Adventure).

Concerning this period of the N.L. I feel that a few
 comments are called for.

In the first place (apart from the short five-page
 St.Franks stories from No.129-141 which were all part of a
 serial entitled "Waking Up St.Franks) the only stories
 credited to Brooks were the first and the last. None of
 the others did although they featured St.Franks Zingrave
 and Lord Dorriemore at various times. This is the first
 time in a long while that I've looked at these books, and
 having glanced through them, I'm confident of one thing,-
 they were not written by E.S.B. In view of the approaching
 demise of the old paper I'm inclined to the view that they
 were reprints, or perhaps modernised versions of old
 stories. For instance, can No.118 possibly be a story by
 Maxwell Scott? There is at least a connecting link with
 the four stories Nos. 112-115.

Although I'm not very familiar with G.H.Teed's style,
 the fact that the majority of these stories take place in
 far distant countries and are full of adventure, make me
 wonder. If certain proof is wanted that E.S.B. did not
 pen these stories, how about Nos.129-134? Lord Dorriemore
 is introduced in these but not Umlosi. He's not even
 referred to. Instead we hear of his Chinese manservant
 Wung Foo!

As I mentioned some months ago, the 2nd New Series is
 practically unknown territory and we could do with some of
 the U.J.'s team of researchers to do their stuff on these
 stories. There may be some surprising results.

LONDON OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

Trewellard, Hove. Sunday September 21st, 1952.

Down to the St. Jim's county for their annual visit there wended the London members complete with vice-president Herbert Leckenby. Local country members also made their way, Norton Price from Margete, Roger Jenkins from Havant and Harry Homer from nearby Heathfield. Bill Jardine of Woodingdean kindly invited eight of the party to lunch at his place, regretting that lack of space prevented the whole company attending. This luncheon party was a good start to the day as it gave the fortunate visitors the opportunity to inspect Bill's collection. From here the party of eight went on to the main meeting place, viz. the home of "Red Magnet" Robby. Here was quite a large gathering assembled but owing to indisposition our worthy chairman was unable to be included. Bob Blythe ably took the chair and after opening remarks by him and the vice president, our Herbert, read a letter from Len expressing his regret at not being able to attend. In reply a greetings telegram was dispatched from all present wishing Len a speedy recovery. Herbert spoke of the "C.D." Annual and the feast of good things that it would contain including some fine Sexton Blake work from the "Circle". He thanked Harry Homer and those responsible and then went on to say that Bill Gander be asked to include himself in the "Who's Who" feature of "The Story Paper Collector" ere volume 2 comes to an end. This proposition received unanimous agreement. On matters of the club badge it was stated that progress was being made and answers awaited from the other clubs. The "Triumph" quiz was won by Ron Deacon, Bob Whiter was second and Herbert third. The other quiz held was won by John Geal with Ron Deacon and E. Reynolds in the second place. Official business then terminated and Robby came into his own with two further episodes of "The Exploits of Elaine" on his film projector. This was greatly enjoyed as was the tea that hostess Key with the aid of Elaine, Julia and Angela provided. And so another memorable occasion came to an end with the knowledge that we meet again at "Cherry Place", Wood Green, on Sunday October 19th.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

Northern Section Meeting, September 13th, 1952.

J. Breeze Bentley in the chair with 15 members present, Secretary Norman Smith during his report explained the

proposal for a Club Badge, sponsored by the London Club. Briefly, if a minimum of one gross could be ordered, they could be obtained for 2/6 each. All members present promised to buy one if they were purchased. It would be appreciated if postal members would advise the secretary as soon as possible whether or not they are in favour of the proposal.

Treasurer-Librarian report showed how popular the library continued to be, and a healthy bank balance.

Top of the bill on this occasion was Gerry Allison himself with an engrossing talk on "Roland Quiz, creator of Tim Pippin." Despite the fact that the majority of the members had probably never heard of Roland Quiz, Gerry was listened to with as much rept attention as if he had been talking about Greyfriars or St.Jims. It was another example of the possibilities for varied talks at our meetings.

This was further emphasised by the outline of programmes for the coming winter months. Speakers will include J. Breeze Bentley on Ernest Levison, Harry Stebles will chat on the famous Frank Reade invention stories, and Horace Twinhem will have something to say about the days when comics were comics.

After refreshments came a cleverly compiled Quiz kindly passed on by the Merseyside Branch. You "stumped" quite a lot of us, Liverpool, but one has to expect that when Yorkshire is up against Lancashire. Anyway, the umpire's ruling was "quite fair".

H. Leckenby,
Northern Section Correspondent.

Midland Section Meeting, 25th August, 1952.

Members away on holiday included our Chairmen, and a letter from him (of apology and good wishes, was read accordingly.

Formal business included a report on the ramble held on August 16th. Incidentally, this long cherished ambition proved a most delightful walk up hill and down dale round Romsley and Clent (beauty spots near Birmingham). We had many delightful upland vistas and passed bracken reminiscent of Courtfield Common. An unexpected treat was a most scrumptious tea of ham and egg. "I say you fellows, it's prime." Certainly we must have another soon, and we are much indebted to our leader (Miss Partridge), for the most

admirable and efficient arrangements which she made on our behalf.

The formal business concluded, the writer of these notes then took a deep breath and opened a discussion by expressing the heretical view that Billy Bunter was not the mainstay of the "Magnet". A very animated discussion followed in which many interesting points were made and which, in fact, showed quite an amount of support for a less sweeping heresy that Bunter (in later years) received too much of the limelight. Even so though, the proposition that there should be less Bunter in the stories was lost by a two-thirds majority. Evidently most members felt that they could not have too much of a good thing!

A quiz followed. Prepared by two valued members from the Black Country (Messrs. Bellfield and Porter), this took a novel and scholarly form, as the questions consisted of quotations often used in his stories by Charles Hamilton. The quotations were read out with certain words missing which we had to insert. Thus "as fixed and immutable as the laws of the" (insert "Medes and Persians").

Our brains must have been sizzling, because no less than three members tied for first place. A second round of three questions resulted in Victor Smith winning the prize, (a "Goldhawk" Book). Congratulations, Victor!

By now it was library time, and all too soon thereafter we were having our final sing-song round the piano.

EDWARD DAVEY, Hon. Secretary.

Mersyside Section, 14th September 1952.

The meeting opened at 8 p.m. to the usual attendance. The chairman dealt with club matters; he read a letter from Edna in which she says she will be home about the 12th October; we shall be most pleased to have her with us again. It was proposed that, now winter is approaching, we should start an advertising campaign in the local press, and this was unanimously approved; in fact, there was a whip round there and then to defray the initial expenses, and we are hoping to get some results in due course.

The secretary then read the minutes, and financial report; on behalf of the Section he thanked Mrs. Webster

for her generosity in donating a sum towards club funds; such kindly gestures are much appreciated. He then read a letter from the London Section re badges; after discussion it was decided to send a reply re our decision.

After refreshments we entered in the quiz devised by Peter Webster; this was won by Jack Morgen, much to our pleasure; it is gratifying to see the honours travelling round, and it is up to him to get his own back on us next month. We then participated in a game invented by Don Webster, and, after getting the hang of the rules, we had a high old time trying to wipe the floor with each other. George Timmins was the eventual winner: congrats, George, you are getting "very hot!"

Bill Horton having supplied us with our library "wants", the meeting closed at 10.15 p.m., and we are looking forward to our next on October 12th.

F. CASE,
Secretary.

THE TOM MERRY BOOKS

HAMILTON AND COMPANY

No.9. D'ARCY'S DISAPPEARANCE

A 'topping' yarn. One of the best of the present series.

Arthur Augustus again proves himself a gentleman, a hero, and finally, a fine batsman. Has he ever played for the Greyfriars Remove before, by the way?

I suppose that now that Bunter has appeared on T.V. we should not cavil at the Television set in the Common Room at the old school. But it was a distinct shock when Mr. Quelch mentioned it!

Cardew is still 'the Cad'. What a coward's trick to hurl a book at gentle Mr. Lathom, from concealment. What if it had caught his eye? Still, I suppose we must take his 'confession' as a sign of grace.

Yes, an excellent tale you will enjoy.

G.A.

++++++
+ L E T T E R B O X +
++++++

Can You Help Frank Richards?

September 15th, 1952.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

Thank you for your letter and the C.D. - good reading from cover to cover.

Yes, the Bunter books will now be published by Cassell's: and the next volume, "Billy Bunter's Beanfeast", will appear this autumn under their imprint. I used to read "Cassell's Saturday Journal" in the eighteen-eighties, and could still relate many of the stories I read in it: little guessing that six decades later I should be writing for that famous House. The Autobiography, however, remains with Skilton's, if any belated reader is interested. About the rest of your query, that is on the knees of the gods.

I had a letter from Bill Martin to-day, with a copy of the Daily Mirror dealing with his unique collection in an article, very interesting to read. I have asked Bill to keep an eye open for a copy of Lucilius, if ever it should come his way: and it occurs to me that perhaps some reader of the C.D. might know where to pin one down. As I think I have told you, many of my leisure hours are expended on a new version of Horace, which will—perhaps!—dazzle the world one of these days. So I just must have Lucilius: and my old copy was lost many years ago, and I don't seem able to get a new one anywhere. There is a Loeb edition, but that—of course!—is out of print. but there must be a good many copies in existence. The title is "ENNIUS and LUCILUS, and Other Fragments of Old Latin" in the Loeb Classics. If any reader knows where a copy is to be had, I should be extremely glad to hear of it.

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

In the Home of Frank Richards

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

I think it will interest members of the C.D. to know

that I am one of the lucky ones - along with Mr. Peckman, Mr. Bob Whiter and yourself. I went recently with my wife for a few days in London, and before I did so I wrote to Mr. Hamilton, saying that I should like to come to Broadstairs and, if convenient, give him a look-in. He replied, very kindly inviting me to call at Rose Lawn on the Wednesday afternoon.

When I saw Mr. Hamilton I was not very surprised - but pleasantly satisfied with what I had, more or less, expected. I found him looking exactly like that photograph of "Frank Richards in 1951" which appears in his Autobiography. We talked on all sorts of subjects - literary, religious and social - for well over two hours, and I think that I personally learned a little more about life in general. Mr. Hamilton is very nearly the same age as my father; and one can always learn from the experiences of the previous generation.

Although Mr. Hamilton is still keen on Bunter I found him most enthusiastic on the subject of Horace, whose verses he has been translating into appropriate English over a number of years. When he was explaining in detail, certain metrical intricacies, he reminded me of a University Professor - a very learned, eager and charming old professor! I seized the opportunity to urge Mr. Hamilton - as I have done before - to produce a volume of "Barcroft Ballads" and to publish in stiff boards, like the Bunter books, his story "The School for Slackers", which appeared first in "Modern Boy". I cannot claim to know nearly so much of Mr. Hamilton's work as do many other C.D. readers, but I consider that The Barcroft Ballads, "The School for Slackers" and the early Talbot stories are the best representation of all Mr. Hamilton's works.

It was a real pleasure to meet and chat with "Frank Richards":

Yours sincerely, A. E. POUND.

WANTED: Gems (1934-40), Rangers, Skippers, S.O.L's. A.S.Matheson, 11 Ackergill Street, Wick, Caithness, Scotland.

WANTED: Police Gazettes. Reasonable. E.V. Holmes, 38 East Front Road, Pagham Beach, Bognor Regis, Sussex.

The "C.D. Strikes Fresh Territory

4, Boyd Place,
Colombo, Ceylon.

9th August, 1952.

Dear Mr. Leckenby,

Thank you very much for your interesting letter of 4th July to which I delayed replying until I received copies of the Collectors' Digest. These came yesterday and I am delighted with them. May I congratulate you on the fine work you are doing for all of us? I should like to have any back numbers that are available.

I have completed the application forms for the Annual and enclose them herewith.

I have established contact with William H Gender in Manitoba and the Old Boys' Book Club, London, which I shall be joining as an overseas member.

With kind regards and best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

A. C. H. DE SCYSLA

277 Kings Road,
Kingston-on-Thames,
Surrey.

August 24th 1952.

Dear Editor,

Whilst having a browse through some of the early numbers of the "C.D.", I came across the following extract from a letter from Leslie Vosper, in issue No.5, dated May 1947:-

"The readers of the "Magnet", of the "Gem", the "Nelson Lee" and all other boys' journals are all links in a great and binding chain. I visualise each of these sections as a link bearing its own particular number, the whole as a great brotherhood - shall we say "The Fraternity of the Links", with membership open to all who once were readers and many applying for the coveted Certificate of Enrolment. ~~Why~~ Why! the "Collector's Digest" might even become the Fraternity's official organ."

This appeared over a year before the O.B.B.C. had its first meeting. The dream of the writer has certainly been fulfilled beyond all imagination. Truly - "The Voice of the prophet". Yours truly, JOHN W. GEAR.

BLAKIANA.October 1952.Edited by H.M. Bond, 10 Bryn Wen, Rhylbina, Cardiff.1. The Round Table.

The first words this month comes from a very old Sexton Blake fan, Mr. John Gocher Junr of Sudbury. He wonders who the new Blake writer "quentin Ford" can be. A story by this "new name" appears in the 1953 edition of the "Knockout Annual". Is it a non-de-plumae? John goes on to applaud Mr. Lofts "Three cheers" he says, for Mr. Lofts who gives friend John Hunter a build up. Of all the present Sexton Blake writers he is the only one whose stories I can read without being bored". It would be interesting to hear that other readers have to say about this. Your Editor is inclined to think that there is too much of a sameness about all the Hunter yarns. John wishes to get hold of a number of S.B.L. 2nd series volumes and would be glad to have details of any that readers might wish to dispose of.

Thanks to Rex Dolphin for sending along some splendid material for the 1952 Annual. Readers will be pleased to know that he has compiled yet another Blake Crossword puzzle and I really think that it is the best thing he has done yet, in the puzzle line of course. And then he submits a really splendid article entitled "Sexton Blake - As They Saw Him". Something indeed for you to look forward to.

Anthony Baker of Barnet suggests that the Walter Webb articles are too brief and says he thinks it would be a good idea if they were published as one booklet. The idea is, of course, a good one but unfortunately the suggestion has come along too late for we are concluding Walter's series in this number. It will be something to remember in the future though. Thanks for the suggestion Anthony.

Yet another interesting letter from Neil C. Gourlay who says: "Apparently from the other letters you quoted recently I am not alone in decrying the lack of imagination

in modern Sexton Blake stories. At one time the A.P. were always reprinting old Blake yarns. Now the LASKET and GEM are dead, the NELSON LINE is no more but the Sexton Blake Library is still alive. Would it not be possible for them to give us reprints of the famous Blake cases of yesteryear? It would be grand to read the names of Rymor, Plummer, Zenith, the Confederation, Yvonne etc on the cover of a 1952 S.B.L. Could a group of Blake fans not write to the A.P. with the suggestion? (Shortage of paper and a need to keep the Blake of to-day recall up to date seems to be the reason why Mr. Gourlay's suggestions are not practicable. Ed). By the way, I first read about Yvonne in 1939 in the D.W. Now I believe these stories were reprints. I remember enjoying the discussion as to whether Blake should marry Yvonne. There were some fierce letters for and against. I was for the proposed marriage for the principal reason that it was only natural. It is funny how many thriller writers of the 1930's had their heroes almost "living in sin". Frank King's Dormouse Charteris's early "Saint" stories for example. Also our old friend M. S. Brooks' "German Conquest" lived in the same flat many years with Joy Overard until conscience & Mrs. Grundy must have appeared to the writer who later married the couple. I surmise that the sequence of events shows that M.S.B. was thinking of Conquest as Baldo in another guise. Baldo belonged to Sexton Blake and boys' fiction in general, the ethics of which were entirely different. The disclaim of the anti-marriage section of D. W. readers was really amusing. They did not want "romantic mush" to spoil the greatest detective in fiction. Nevertheless I maintain that a Mrs. Yvonne Blake would have lent verisimilitude to the Blake legend, which, without a natural love interest is surely inclined to be a "bald and unconvincing narrative". Anyway his "wife" need not have appeared in every story. Most tales could deal with his bachelor days and be completely empty of any female characters whatsoever. Now I think back on it, the whole argument over the Yvonne-Blake relationship must have been meaningless since the D. W. "Yvonne" stories of 1939 were reprints and therefore no new factor could possibly be introduced. The editor of D. W. in those days was fooling us. Were any of the "Confederation" tales reprinted in D. W.? I fancy I can recall such a type of story in 1939.

Even then I enjoyed what I now know were reprint stories in D.M. much more than original tales of that date. It shows that even by '39 poor old Blake was having a raw deal in authors. I never read U.J. but from comments in C.D. it was the greatest of the Blake papers. By the way, I have just read a detective story "The Franchise Affair" by Josephine Tey, "Penguin" edition pp 101-2:- "And it is not proper that you should turn yourself into a - that is it? a....Sexton Blake for our benefit." Evidently Miss Tey has read of the great detective of Baker Street. (Many readers will now know that "Miss Tey" was actually a non de plume for that brilliant writer "Gordon Daviot whose death was recorded recently. Ed.)

And that is the end of the Round Table for this month, we now make way for the conclusion of that brilliant series by Walter Webb:-

SEXTON BLAKE IN THE EDWARDIAN ERA. Chapter 14.

If his serial instalments happened to be late - and they were fairly often - and his editor was worried, with printer and publisher also in the same anxious frame of mind, then why should he worry too? That was Andrew Murray's serene outlook on life; he always believed in living for the day and letting tomorrow take care of itself, believing that everything would come out alright in the end. This attitude was reflected in his writing, for his stories were written in a smoothly-flowing style, forceless, unhurried, yet convincing. When George R. Sims staged the revival of the play "The Lights of London", it was Murray who wrote the serial version. George R. and Andrew Murray were good friends until the former passed away on the 4th September 1922. Unfortunately Murray survived him by only a little over 12 months, and his untimely passing left the team of Blake writers much poorer. So great was Blake's popularity at that time - it was the year 1910 - that the editor of "Answers", Mr. Arthur Bax, decided to run a series of short Blake stories. These appeared every other week, and among the first contributors was a new author named Michael Poole, a very raw beginner. Now, reluctantly, the curtain must be rung down on the Edwardian Era, the close of which saw Blake rapidly approaching that unique popularity never before, nor since, afforded any other fictional character.

And now we welcome back to our pages WILL COLCOTRE. Once again he has written an article which will appeal to all readers of Blake stories, young or old. Some will recall the character he describes so well:-

THE BLACK EAGLE.

by William Colcombe.

One of George Hamilton Toad's lesser known creations, Sexton Blake first came into contact with the man called "The Black Eagle" in the story of that name which appeared in the "Union Jack" No. 1048.

Blake had been at a certain secret gaming club in Grafton Street, London, as had Mr. Geoffrey Howland, who was later found dead in the hall of the building of flats, where he lived, with his neck broken. The evidence at the inquest made it appear that the dead man had fallen down the stairs as he was climbing to his flat, but through certain incidents, Sexton Blake not only proved privately that the man was murdered by having the neck broken from side to side, but he ran down the killer in the person of a certain David Stone, an artist who lived in a fantastically conceived narrow old fashioned house at the corner of a secluded crescent off the Edgware road.

Few persons there were who had personal acquaintance with this artist. But his pictures were good and commanded a ready sale, and from a dealers point of view that was all that was necessary. And if there were few who could claim personal acquaintance with Stone, there were fewer still who had the remotest suspicion that David Stone, artist, and the "Black Eagle", the mystery man from Devils Island, were one and the same.

Sexton Blake found out from the dossier of the Paris Surete regarding the personal history for some twenty years of a certain John Hasford, who had been sent to Devils Island for the killing; Helen Marchandier, an artist's model, in the Latin Quarter of Paris after a students orgy.

John Hasford had served a life sentence, and then been released on licence and permitted to cross to Cayenne on the mainland of the French Colony. As soon as he could he had

escaped across the border into British Guiana, and there had joined a diamond prospecting party. Finding himself a rich man, John Masford had made his way back to civilisation. He had stopped in Cuba long enough to kill a man. He had stopped in New York to kill another, both had been members of the wild party in the Latin quarter that twenty years before. Then, in a small cabinet-makers shop in the Seven Sisters Road in the Finsbury Park district of London, a new tenant had appeared. The curious connection between "A Lame", cabinet maker of Seven Sisters Rd, and David Stone, the artist who occupied the old house in the Crescent off the Edgware Road, had a distinct bearing on the sudden death of that well known clubman, Mr. Geoffrey Howland. That was how Sexton Blake had discovered the connection between Stone and the man from Devil's Island, who had been known among his fellow convicts as "the Black Eagle".

Sexton Blake had discovered that it had been a beautiful model, Camille Desaulino, who had killed Helene Marchardier out of jealousy, and had seen John Masford convicted for the crime and sent to Devil's Island. Masford had killed three men of that group on the tragic night before the truth became known to him. It did not, however, weaken his vow to pursue the course of a professional criminal, to take general toll of ordered Society which he believed had outraged him.

During his term of imprisonment he had developed almost superhuman strength in his arms, wrists and hands. It was seeing him swing up the contents of no less than three packs of playing cards and, in an almost minded way, tear them in half as easily as the ordinary strong man could take a single pack, that had given Sexton Blake a clue as to the real manner of Geoffrey Howland's death. In all the Black Eagle appeared in eight Sexton Blake yarns, viz: SBL 1st series No. 372. "The Case of the Pink Incau". S.B.L. 2nd series No 19. "The Great Canal Plot". (together with most of Toed's other characters) No.21 "Under the Eagle's Wing", No 35 "The Case of the Luminified Hand" (again with most of the Toed familiar characters) and in the U.J. No 1048 "The Black Eagle" (the final story to mention this character). 1092 "The Secret of the Bottle", No 1122 "The Monte Carlo Mystery" and 1170 "The Adventure of the Bowery Tar -Baby".

THE END.

The "ditor of "Blakiana" is anxious to obtain copies of certain numbers of the "Sixton Blako Library" 1st and 2nd series. If anyone has all or any of the following issues to dispose of please send along to No 10 -rwy Wen, Rhif-bina, Cardiff without delay. 6/- each are offered for the 1st series and 3/- each for the 2nd series. All the S.B.Ls listed are by the late George Hamilton Toed/

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	144	153	161	165	175	178.		

Next month we have another fine article by Bill Colcombe for your enjoyment. It is entitled

BLAKIE'S BROTHER.

It has been suggested by several readers that we should reprint certain articles that have appeared in earlier numbers of Blakiana. I want to know if this idea would be welcome to the majority. I know that a lot of new readers have come along since the early days of the C.D. and as back numbers have always been difficult to obtain due to the smallness of each edition, it is on the cards that quite a lot of readers would welcome the reappearance of some of the early (and I might say, brilliant) articles such as Tom Martin's wonderful opinion of Eric R. Parker etc. I would appreciate it if you would let me know what you think about the idea of reprints and IF there are any issues you have missed. If the majority vote says YES we will have an OCCASIONAL reprint. It will not be a regular feature. H.M.B.