

THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOLUME 12, NUMBER 135

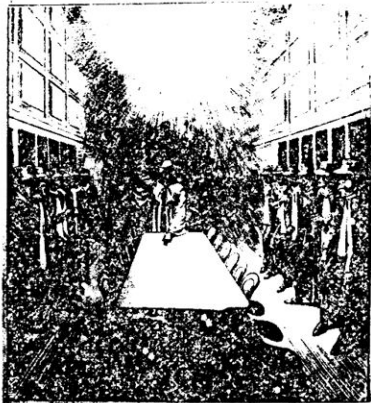
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MARCH 1958

THREE LONG COMPLETE STORIES

PLUCK

ONE PENNY



No. 1 - The first PENNY "PLUCK" (New Series)

ITEM OF INTERESTby E. V. CopemanMAGNET No. 520 - ANOTHER CLAIM TO FAME

Magnet No. 520 issued on 26/1/1918 contained a memorable "sub" Greyfriars yarn, A VERY GALLANT GENTLEMAN, by J. N. Pentelow. This was the story which told of the death of one of Hamilton's characters, Arthur Courtney of the Sixth, of whom Dr. Locke said when addressing the assembled School, "He died as he lived -- a very gallant gentleman!"

But this particular Magnet has another claim to fame and it is found on the back page under the heading of "ANOTHER GREAT STORY". It reads as follows: "On Friday in next week will be published another splendid school story...No. 413 of the BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY.

The author is Mr. Owen Conquest, and the title is "THE FEUD AT ROOKWOOD". For three years now, Mr. Conquest's stories of Rookwood have been appearing in the "Boys' Friend" and have won him many thousands of admirers. Rookwood has come to be almost as well-known, the Editor of the Green 'Un might say quite as well known, but I am not prepared to go to that length -- as St. Jim's and Greyfriars; and Jimmy Silver and the rest of the Classics, with the three Tommies of the Modern Side, are "familiar in our mouths as household words." But this is the first story in book form which tells of them, and I have no doubt whatever that it will meet with a hearty reception.

*

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The famous Volume 2 Boys' Herald - bound. What offers?

F. A. WILLISON, 49 LONGMOOR ROAD, HALESOWN, NEAR BIRMINGHAM.

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THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Vol. 12 No. 135

Price 1s. 6d.

MARCH, 1958

Editor: HERBERT LECKENBY,
12 Herbert Street,
Hull Road, York.

or

c/o YORK DUPLICATING SERVICES,
12A The Shambles, York.

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

THE GOLDEN JUBILEE NUMBER. Well despite its size the greatly enlarged number was dispatched dead on time thanks to some good planning at 12A The Shambles. Soon comments began to flow in. Among the first came those of Len Packman, congratulating the contributors generally he said he particularly liked Eric Fayne's "I meet the Magnet". Ben Whiter and several others said it was like the Annual all over again. Well, I must say that as I read all those tributes the same thought occurred to me. Honestly I do seem to work under a lucky star for everything went off splendidly for all the articles submitted were got in.

And now onward to the Diamond Jubilee!

* * *

IN THE MIDST OF LIFE. In the hey-day of boys' weeklies countless serials were written about the rise to fame of some fictitious football club, the Blue Crusaders and West London, for example. They told of triumphs and tribulation and stirring events on and off the field, some of them rather fantastic.

But, nothing A. S. Hardy, Maxwell Scott, Robert Murray and other masters of the craft ever wrote could compare for sheer drama and stark tragedy with what happened on that Munich airfield when the herces of mighty Manchester United, together with famous sports

writers, were killed or gravely injured. Almost before the ink was dry on the newspapers which told of the players' deeds the day before, they, and the men who had written about them were being mourned; once again proving that truth can be stranger, and in this case, sadder than fiction.

* * *

WORTHY OF RECORD. I have frequently referred with good reason, to the devotion some members have for our hobby. Well here's another example which deserves to be written in letters of gold. Twice, in connection with the exhibition at Leeds and York, Stanley Smith has travelled up from East Anglia. On the second occasion he drove the 200 miles by car snatched a cup of tea, then got down to planning the lay-out of the York one, working right on into the early hours of the morning. After an hour or two's sleep he was at it again so that by night fall the twelve cases at the York Public Library were superbly filled, and the race against time to have it ready on the appropriate day, February 15th, was won.

An amazing fellow, Stan.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY

FOR SALE: GEMS Nos. 513, 1170, 1219, 1241, 1429, 1430, 31, 38, 39, 1444, 46, 1453, 1454, 55, 56, 57, 1460, 1461, 1466, 1468, 1473, 1476, 1477, 78, 79, 1485, 86, 87, 1489, 1491, 92, 1532, 1541, 42, 43, 44, 45, 1606.

MAGNETS 1521, 1522, 1585, 1676, 1608, 1681.

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MORE ABOUT THE "DIAMOND LIBRARY"

By W.O.G. Lofts

I was very interested to read the recent article by Roger Jenkins in the January C.D. about Bertie Bly and the school of St. John's. I quite agree with Roger that the style of writing was very similar to that of Charles Hamilton - though I seem to remember some time ago the late Percy North telling me "that Charles Hamilton denied ever writing the stories - under the name of "Clifford Owen" for the Aldine Publishing firm."

Actually the "Bully of St. John's" was not the first St. John's tale to be published - though it was the first to appear in the "Diamond Library." These earlier stories were published in some Aldine paper which up to the time of writing I have not been able to trace. The first issue of the Library was a school story entitled "The Fifth Form of St. Edgars" written by an Adrian T. Osborne - who was also credited with having written in the past stories of St. John's such as "The Captain of St. John's", "The Hero of St. John's" and many other tales.

This first story of St. Edgars was mainly written about a school-boy named Tom Drage, a sort of amateur detective, who's father was a famous investigator - Caleb Drage - advertised by the Aldine firm as being the greatest sleuth since the days of Sherlock Holmes. Stories featuring Caleb Drage had appeared for many years previously in many Aldine publications, all written by T. G. Dowling Maitland.

Later on in stories in the "Diamond Library" Tom Drage had left St. Edgar's and was working with his father, when all the stories were written under the name of T. G. Dowling Maitland, so it is fairly safe to assume that Adrian T. Osborne and T. G. Dowling Maitland were one and the same person, as apart from this connection the style of writing was similar in all details.

With the above facts at my disposal it seems to suggest that the stories of St. John's were written by T. G. Dowling Maitland - who according to an article in an early Collectors' Digest wrote also as Max Hamilton and Tristram K. Munck; these believed to be the pen names for none other than Cecily Hamilton! In checking up stories written by Max Hamilton in other papers I was struck by the great similarity of the writing style to that of especially "Clifford Owen", so it seems as if we must credit the St. John's tales after all to a HAMILTON.

Other stories appearing in the "Diamond Library" which I am certain also were by the same author were of the school Wye Instur, or perhaps better known as the Kettle & Co. tales - these were written under

several different names such as "Howard Carr", "Walter Herrod", "Frank Howard" and others. It is really remarkable that characters in these tales were named Snoop, Loder, Fish and a Jack Blake besides a place named Rookwood.

A very good explanation of why the Editor of the Aldine Publishing Co. - thought fit to change the names of authorship to the stories so often, was given to me some time ago before this St. John's query came up. The Editor who was a Mr. Walter Light had a sort of mania for putting different names to stories every week, so as to give the impression that he had plenty of authors on his staff. Actually the Aldine firm paid very poorly for stories in relation to other firms, and the offices at Crown Court, London, consisted of two small dingy rooms occupied by the Editor - his assistant - and an office boy - certainly not an impressive place for the amount of papers they produced.

(Note - Yes, Mr. Hamilton has stated that he did not write the St. John's stories or for the Aldine Co. at any time.

There is, I believe, a good deal of truth in what Bill Lofts says in his last paragraph. H.L.)

GEMS REQUIRED - Good condition essential. 313 - 322; 326 - 333; 336; 338 - 342; 348; 356; 358 - 9; 379 - 380; 382 - 388; 390; 392 - 395; 400; 449.

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Blakiana

conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22.

In this issue you will find the promised article on G. H. Teed, and I am sure you will all agree that Bill has done a good job of work. I may say that Bill has sent me a number of other articles, and these - added to the forthcoming features already announced in January - ensure some attractive programmes for Blakiana during the coming months. A full list will be found at the end of these pages.

For the benefit of "V.C." (and others), I am continuing the Union Jack titles whenever space will permit.

JOSIE PACKMAN

* * *

UNION JACK TITLES - YEAR 1947 (JULY - DECEMBER)

No. 712	A Case of Extradition (The Black Rat)	G. H. Teed
No. 713	The Mystery of Dead Tree Hill	A. Blair
No. 714	The Three Millionaires (Yvonne)	G.H. Teed
No. 715	Uncut Diamonds (The Black Rat)	G.H. Teed
No. 716	The Problem of the £20,000 Witness (Dexter)	M. Osborne
No. 717	Twice Charged	A. Murray
No. 718	The Case of the Lorimer Twins (Black Rat)	G.H. Teed
No. 719	On the Night of the Storm	S. Drew
No. 720	'Twixt Sunset and Dawn	E.S. Brooks
No. 721	The Thumb-nail Clue	E. Alais
No. 722	The Case of Reincarnation (Prince Menes)	G.H. Teed
No. 723	The Secret Hand (Prince Menes)	G.H. Teed
No. 724	When Rogues Fall Out	S. Drew
No. 725	When Greek Meets Greek (Humble Begge)	A. Murray
No. 726	The Riddle of Yew Hollow	E.S. Brooks
No. 727	The Pearls of Silence	G.H. Teed
No. 728	The Case of the Crimson Terror (Menes)	G.H. Teed
No. 729	The Valley of Crags	E.S. Brooks
No. 730	The Case of the Uncensored Letter	W.M. Graydon
No. 731	The Invisible Ray (Prince Menes)	G.H. Teed
No. 732	The Strange Case of the Red Pocket Book	A. Blair

No. 733	The Secret of the Third Panel	E.S. Brooks
No. 734	The Broken Bail (Aubrey Dexter)	M. Osborne
No. 735	The Hair of Quarterlands	A. Blair
No. 736	The Ordeal of Gordon Wood	R. Murray
No. 737	The Peril of the Trehernes	E.S. Brooks
No. 738	Run to Earth	E.S. Brooks
No. 739	The Case of the £10,000 Fee (Lawless)	A. Murray
No. 740	The Amazing Affair of the Brixton Burglary	
No. 741	A Gamble for Life	W.M. Graydon
No. 742	The Case of the Two Financiers (F. Lord)	S. Drew

(Number 712 is dated 2nd June, 1917 and Number 742 is dated 29th December, 1917).

* * *

TEED - THE MAN HIMSELF

By W. O. G. Lofts

"They burned poor old George this morning".

That was how the news was conveyed to a group of people who had known him, had been his business acquaintances, colleagues or friends, actively or inactive.

George Hober Hamilton Teed, was no more!

The speaker was his best friend on this earth, and despite the light-hearted tone and his choice of words, it was just his way. Crichton Miln was like that. (See C.D. June 1957, page 156).

There was a slight pause at his remark. It seemed like an epitaph. It was the only epitaph George Teed ever had; and looking back (the man who heard them uttered told me), those words will serve. He has never forgotten them, and they seem to express a finality that conveyed Teed's extinction, and the fact that never more would there be another story of his to delight readers.

On the morning of that day when the news was imparted, just before the Christmas of 1939, George Teed had been cremated. He had been ill for some weeks, and died in the London Hospital, Whitechapel, with cirrhosis of the liver as the main cause of death.

It was perhaps an inappropriate place to break the news, but nevertheless one which Teed himself would not have disapproved - the bar of a pub in Fleet Street frequented largely by Amalgamated Press men, Teed included. There is an official name to it which my informant could not call to mind; everyone knows it merely as Poppin's, for

that is its location - Poppin's Court.

"Many's the time we've had drinks together there", said my informant. "He didn't often have beer. White Horse whisky was his favourite, or when he switched to gin - Booth's. I can hear him ordering now...."

We all know - and especially his admirers in Blakiana - of the quality and appeal of Teed's work, and it is not my intention here to elaborate on that. The question rather is, what of Teed himself, the man as his friends knew him?

I have had the pleasant privilege of meeting and talking to most of them, and believe I am now able to assemble as much of the full and authentic knowledge of him that survives today. George Teed's grave never existed; his epitaph was drowned in the clamour of his favourite pub. So maybe this writing of mine, inadequate though it is, may serve as some sort of memorial.

What made him a fine writer? Primarily, I think it was his rare faculty of observation, plus his quality of imagination. As we know, he was a world-traveller, and the scenes and sights of his adventurous wandering life he never forgot. They could be summoned up in his mind to the fullest degree and transferred to paper not as in a guide book, but with the magic of his imagination added. The result was those many, variegated and apparently inexhaustible stories which have fascinated us through the years. And, incidently, we are indeed fortunate that he did transfer his experiences to paper. I am told that it was only occasionally that he would narrate any of them in conversation, and that only when the subject came up naturally during the course of the talk. Perhaps he felt it might have been considered unwise to risk getting the reputation of a travelled bore or a travelogue specialist. "Actually," said his friend, "you could listen to him for hours."

We of Blakiana are accustomed to thinking of G.H. Teed as the peak and pinnacle of adventurous detective-story writers. And indeed I have documentary proof that the readers of "Union Jack" thought the same of him too. Yet it has been noticed that there seems to be a doubt about this; as demonstrated in connection of the well-remembered 'Tram' series.

Readers will remember that in 1932 there appeared a series of stories in the "U.J." each by a different author but having a number of incidents in common all connected with a character in them called Mr. Proud. At the end of the series a contest was held and readers were asked to name the authors of the stories in order of preference. It was considered a good notion, the then editor told me, to obtain a reliable estimate of the authors' popularity, for they each would be

working with more or less similar material.

But the notion misfired. It had been expected that Teed would top the list, instead of which he was only fifth in readers preference, apparently. Perhaps, it was thought, this was because that sort of story was not Teed's sort of story and he hadn't done justice to himself. But it wasn't that. The whole contest was based on a fallacy. It turned out that the voting had been in the reverse order of reading; the author whose story was published first got least votes, and the one published last got the most, and so on practically throughout the series. In short, the contest represented a kind of memory test, the story freshest in mind getting the votes.

As a matter of incidental interest, the result was:

No. 1	Edwy Searles Brooks	Author of 6th story
No. 2	Gwyn Evans	" " 5th story
No. 3	Donald Stuart	" " 4th story
No. 4	Anthony Skene	" " 2nd story
No. 5	George Hamilton Teed	" " 3rd story
No. 6	Gilbert Chester	" " 1st story

- but it means nothing, except in the way suggested.

Teed seemed a trifle dashed when he saw his place in the list, but brightened as the obvious reason was revealed. He had no illusions about the appeal of his own work, and was quietly proud not only of his popularity but the fact that he was the oldest inhabitant among the Blake regulars. He used sometimes to refer to himself as the doyen of them. (His French, by the way was fairly fluent - with a marked Canadian accent that could have left the natives with no doubt of his nationality. He lived at one time for many years in Paris.)

Most readers are aware that his birthplace was New Brunswick; but to me more specific, St. John was his hometown. Teed was born there 13th April, 1878 - and how this exact date came about is related in the following manner.

One lunchtime at the Amalgamated Press, an Editor was out with Teed when they locked in at Melhuish's the ironmongers in Fetter Lane - now non-existent, bombed flat - when this Editor wanted to buy a fixture for his bathroom. Whilst waiting at the counter Teed told him that it was his birthday and that he was 50 that day. Only a few months ago this fixture came away from the wall, and the Editor had found for some reason he had written on the back of it the date and price of purchase, which was 13th April, 1928 - which of course makes Teed's birth-year 1878 and his age at death 61.

Probably the corner of New Brunswick in which Teed was born is as

attractive a place to live in as any other, especially to those born and raised there, but by about his 16th birthday George Hamilton Teed had begun to tire of its appeal and he decided to see something of the world instead.

"What particular country did you want to see?" asked his U.J. editor, who told me the story.

"It wasn't a country", Teed answered. "I suppose I'd been reading books about the tropics or something. What started me off on my travels was that I wanted to see real live palm trees."

"And did you see it?"

"Yes. I was on deck early in the morning - just about sun-rise, and I must have been the only passenger on that ship to sight it. We were passing fairly close and it was sharp and clear against the sun. It seemed to be growing right up out of the water and had the whole sea to itself."

"Eh?"

"It was on Watling Island, the reputed landing place of Columbus. It's a very low-lying sort of island, and all I could see was the tree" added Teed, "and I've never forgotten the thrill of it in all these years."

(I have just been looking up the place in the atlas. It is one of the islands in the Bahamas group. Doubtless in his later world-wanderings George Teed saw innumerable other palm trees - but they didn't mean a thing to him after that one.)

Most of his early life and circumstances are obscure. He was never one to talk much about himself, but his friends in Fleet Street all seemed to have the impression that he came of a fairly well-to-do family - his father's ownership of sawmills near the city was one informant's recollection. It was certainly plausible, for surely no boy of 16 could have enough money to buy steamship passage for the Bahamas or beyond. More probably his father yielded to young George's urgings to be allowed to go and see the world. He at one time settled in Australia where he was the proud owner of a sheep station; another time he was an overseer on a Jute farm in French Cochin. It was there around 1912-13 that Teed set sail for England and the apocryphal story (which has been related before) of the meeting between him and Mrs. Storm, who was just completing a world cruise - after the death of her husband the popular Blake writer Michael Storm. Mrs. Storm who knew a great deal about her late husband's work is said to have given a great deal of help and advise to Teed in his early writings, which started I am told, around 1913.

So far as it is known Teed never mentioned ever having returned to New Brunswick, even for a visit, so he must have liked what he saw in other lands. He had an adventurous disposition as well as imagination. On the other hand, one of his relatives once travelled a long way to see him whilst he was working in London, one of my fact-suppliers recalled; a sister came over from New Brunswick on a visit to her brother. The suggestion was that it had to do with dividing the family inheritance their father having died, but my informant had his doubts about that. "I've never know Teed anything but near broke", he said "and just about one jump ahead of his creditors. Besides, we should all have known if he'd ever come into money."

This is the only occasion that Teed is known to have referred directly to his folks back home. Moreover, an odd fact, he wrote repeatedly about most of the countries to which he came, especially the colourful ones, but I can recall only two instances of a story of his being laid in his native New Brunswick - "Bribery and Corruption" (U.J. No. 616) and "A Mystery of the Big Woods" (U.J. No. 997). To a psychologist this might suggest that G.H.T. didn't have as much love for his native land as a poet might think he should have had - or not - who knows?

There is another matter which has often been specula*ed about in Fleet Street - was Teed a Jew?

(Whether he was or wasn't has not the slightest bearing on his standing as a writer, of course. Or for that matter, as a man. But what I am trying to do here is to present an accurate and rounded picture of him for the record.)

As regards appearance, he was thickset, and certainly had a nose that was something between hooked and aquiline, but it was also bent slightly to one side it could just as well have indicated nothing more than an accident on the football field - or the result of a free-for-all in one of those oriental tinky-tonks on the China coast, which he so well described in his Blake stories and which he himself may have experienced in his time.

However, Jew or Gentile matters not; one thing is certain - George Heber Hamilton Teed was THE Sexton Blake writer.

* * *

FORTHCOMING FEATURES

More "How's Your Memory?" Teasers; Wal I'm Derved; I Remember These; Gilbert Chester and the Bond Street Dentist; Please Don't Forget the Chef; Who was "Frank Lelland?"; The Round Table was No Fraud; I

met "Martin Frazer."

* * *

STRANGE MEETING

Stanley Smith, Chairman of the Northern O.B.B.C. was in an Essex Hotel recently and couldn't help over-hearing a conversation that was going on in another part of the room. He couldn't resist joining in when he heard someone say, "You can't give us the full names of the "Famous Five". Yes you find Greyfriars cropping up everywhere. But the really remarkable thing was that one of the company proved to be none other than Mr. Leonard Pratt, for many years editor of the Sexton Blake Library. A small world isn't it? H.L.

MAGNETS WANTED - 1563, 1619, 1633. Mint Condition only and fit for binding. I have FOR EXCHANGE 100 pre-1934 MAGNETS and will give TWO FOR ONE to complete long run for binding.
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Greyfriars. S.O.Ls.

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JOSIE PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22

WANTED URGENTLY: I offer 10/- each for any copies of Chips from January, 1916 to October 28th, 1916. In good condition.

LEONARD PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E. 22.

FOR YOUR NOTEBOOK: Brian Honeysett's address is now;
58 ST. ANDREWS ROAD SOUTH, ST. ANNES ON SEA, LANCs.

HAMILTONIANA

Compiled by HERBERT LECKENBY

My word! Things have been happening since I spoke here last. First let me tell you the result of the contest for the Greyfriars Golden Jubilee Cup. As you know the Cup was generously given by Leslie Rowley, the Clubs had to compile a 16 page Greyfriars Herald and these were judged by Bill Gander. Well, after careful consideration Bill gave his decision as follows:-

First.....	Midland
Second.....	Northern
Third.....	Merseyside
Fourth.....	London.

As soon as the result was known the three beaten Clubs offered their hearty congratulations to Midland.

Selections from their excellent effort will appear next month, followed in later months by articles from all four Clubs. There will be plenty to amuse you for a long time.

* * *

THE EXHIBITIONS. The one at the Leeds Public Library opened on 1st February thanks to the hard work of Gerry Allison. It continued for three weeks. It succeeded in creating a considerable amount of interest and a number of enquiries which led to new members for the Club. There was a good deal of press publicity, most of it very friendly, but here and there a little banter from reporters who were not old enough to appreciate what the Magnet meant to their elders.

On Monday, 10th February, Margaret Jackson had an interview with the Chief Librarian of the York Public Library and asked him if he would be agreeable to an exhibition there. He promptly said he would be very pleased to, and recalled the very successful show put on there some years ago. He was most helpful saying we could have the use of as many display cases as we required. We got twelve, sufficient to allow us to display not only Magnets, but also Gems, Penny Populars, S.O.Ls, all the Bunter and Tom Merry Hooks, photos and articles concerning Frank Richards and C. H. Chapman, together with material concerning the activities of the Old Boys Book Club.

When he heard that 15th February was the actual 50th

Anniversary Day he urged us to have it ready by then. This meant a good deal of work for Margaret, Jack Wood, myself and above all Stanley Smith, as described in my remarks on another page.

Five minutes after the last case was filled on the Saturday evening a new member, a Gem fan, was booked. From what I have seen it has certainly a great appeal, especially to the older generation.

* * *

Now here's a letter from Frank Richards from which you will see he evidently enjoyed the Jubilee number.

7th February, 1958.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

A really great number! I cannot quite think that Frank Richards merits all those tributes: but they come very pleasantly all the same. The old boy could almost have been heard to purr as he perused them.

I like that little "fantasy" of yours on pages 62/3. If the old seer had spun me such a yarn in 1908 I should have thought it the tallest story I had ever heard. But it is the unexpected that happens.

I like too, Bob's picture cover, what a leap from the halfpenny Magnet in 1908 to T.V. fifty years later! It doesn't seem like half-a-century to me: but how gorgeously youthful we all were in those days! - the editor and I not a lot over thirty, Hinton still in his twenties, and Down, whose advent coincided with that of the Magnet, not out of his teens! Labuntur anni! Fifty years, yet it seems only the other day that I was looking at the first number of the new paper.

And I like very much Mr. Pound's verses, and especially the line "Of fancied Youth uncynicised by time". A gentleman of much penetration, as Alan Breck would say.

There are so many good things in this number that I must not use up precious space by commenting on them all; but I just must say a word about Stanley Smith's article, which made me lay down the C.D. and ponder for quite a long while. It made me sad and glad at the same time, if I may so express it. It is something for an old man in the eighties to feel that he has been of some real use in the world, and Stanley has made me feel just that. Many thanks Stanley!

With kind regards,

Always yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS

No. 28 - MAGNET No. 186 - "THE ONLY WAY"

There was an intriguing set-up in the Greyfriars Sixth Form in the hey-day of the red Magnet, there being five seniors with well-defined characters. The black sheep were Loder and Carne (Walker was not often mentioned), and on the other side of the ledger were Wingate and Courtney. In between was Rupert Valence.

Arthur Courtney was Wingate's closest friend, whilst Valence with his waywardness and instability of character was someone with whom the rugged and forthright Wingate had little patience. Courtney however, was very much attracted to Valence's sister, Vi, and was in consequence closely connected with Valence's affairs. This was the Hazeldene theme all over again, but, because of the age of those concerned, it was much more plausible and realistic. It is therefore hardly surprising that all these characters should have featured in the finest red Magnet story of all, "The Only Way".

There is no disguising the fact that this story is a period piece, a drama which comes dangerously close to being melodrama. Yet when all this is freely admitted, the story lives today because of the convincing display of characterisation, which triumphs even when the theme is so Victorian as this passage in which Courtney censures Valence:-

"You have been after the game"

"Well, supposing I have? I remember you had some of the partridges when I stood a game supper in my study."

"That's not so bad. I don't hold with it, considering that the birds are private property; but poaching a partridge or two for a feed isn't so bad. But- "

"But what?"

"You've done more than that!" said Courtney sternly. "You've been poaching birds to sell. You know you have. You've sold a dozen brace in Friardale.

Valence flushed red."

It was Sir Hilton Popper's preserves which were being raided, and when Valence was caught red-handed one evening he gave Courtney's name to the keepers. So it was that Courtney received a stern letter from the baronet inviting him to Popper Court for a flogging as an alternative to reporting the matter to the police. How Courtney saved Valence from this predicament and what thanks he received for his pains

constituted the main part of a most engrossing story.

As most collectors know, Courtney and Valence were removed from Greyfriars by Pentelow in that famous story "A Very Gallant Gentleman". In the interests of accuracy it is only fair to point out that collectors regard this story with very mixed feelings, some esteeming it highly for its noble sentiments, and others deploring it for its sentimentality. But whatever may be thought of this story as a single story, it is obvious that, considered as one of a sequence of many hundreds of Greyfriars stories, it is entirely misplaced. Death was not a proper topic for the pages of the Magnet, and permanent characters were not to be disposed of in such a manner.

Pentelow himself declared that this story had brought him more letters than anything else published in the Magnet for years past, and added that some readers had confessed to crying over the last chapter. It was clear that he thought that "Frank Richards" had excelled himself on this occasion. At the same time, it is equally clear that Pentelow had some doubts about what he had irrevocably done; "Those who talk about a big gap left by Courtney's disappearance are guilty of exaggeration. Some times we heard nothing of Courtney for months together; and in only two or three stories did he ever play more than a minor part." This excuse has some validity if the characters had in fact been his to dispose of. As it is, one can only wonder what the 'twenties and 'thirties might have held in store for Courtney and Valence if Pentelow had not intervened.

At all events, the fabric which Charles Hamilton had so carefully woven was mutilated beyond repair by the work of a minute, and the Sixth Form at Greyfriars was never so interesting again. The other prefects - Gwynne, Sykes, North, Bancroft etc., - were merely names, and Wingate was left with no intimate friend. That is why, in later Magnets, he seems something of a lone wolf, an isolated figure in the school with no-one he really trusted and with no-one upon whom he could completely rely. That is why collectors who like the occasional story about the senior forms can only deplore Pentelow's judgment in writing "A Very Gallant Gentleman". There were many substitute writers, and many of them made mistakes, but only Pentelow succeeded in perpetrating irreparable damage, For the sake of his Roman holiday he deprived future readers of many interesting possibilities in later years.

"The Only Way" was, in events, a path which Charles Hamilton never trod again.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

(In this series, Eric Fayne touches on certain matters of interest to students of the Hamilton Papers. He gives his own views superficially. If you will write to him, expressing your opinions on the topics he discusses, he will summarise readers' views in a future issue).

No. 12. Which was the better written of the two WHARTON, THE REBEL series.

In his very fine article in the Annual, Roger Jenkins had stated that the 1932 series was the better written, and Basil Adam has disagreed.

Writing on this theme in the C.D. some years ago, I believe that I suggested that the 1925 series was the better written, but that the 1932 series made for happier and pleasanter reading. That feeling persists with me today.

I admit that I should find it difficult to qualify my claim for the 1925 series. It is merely my impression. The 1925 series was heavy drama with no light relief, but it contained character painting of remarkable power. It has ever struck me as the most "adult" story ever to appear in the Magnet.

The holiday at Monte Carlo with the Bounder, with the inevitable ensuing break-up of the ill-starred companionship with Vernon-Smith, probed the very depths of boyhood drama, and is, in my view, unsurpassed in any literature of its type.

Roger points out that Wharton, in treading the verges of the road to blackguardism, (as he actually did in the 1925 series), was acting out of character, and this is true. All the same, a dog with a bad name, unjustly acquired, may go astray simply because he feels that he may as well have the game as the name.

Personally, I find the second series the more enjoyable, and I believe that most readers would so do, but does this necessarily mean that it was the better written?

Against the first series I would set the fact that the drama was almost painful in its prolonged intensity, while Bunter was depicted as a thoroughly unpleasant young rascal; in its favour, the remarkable depth of character painting, and a true-to-life ending - an ending which admittedly lost some of its later impact owing to the substitute stories which followed the series.

Against the second series I would suggest that the fundamental

reason for all the trouble was less concrete than in the 1925 series, while the ending, though skilfully handled, was more contrived. In its favour, it was less sombre, with much brilliant dialogue, and one had more genuine sympathy with Wharton. The penultimate story, concerning Wharton and Nugent, was superbly written, and has an unexpected twist at the finish, the whole sequence comparing very favourably with the Christmas holiday episodes in the original series.

All this is really splitting hairs, for I regard both series as magnificent and superior to any other school story ever written. I would sum up by giving my opinion that the 1925 series was written with greater depth and power, but the 1932 series was far more satisfying.

It's just my point of view. What's yours?

* * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 10. WE WHO IDOLISE

ROGER JENKINS writes:- "I agree with most of what you say about Pentelow and, if Harry Broster felt that we had done an injustice to that Magnet editor, all the more power to his elbow for standing up for his favourite author, though it is a pity that he and his sympathisers did not join in the "Controversial Echoes" at the time.

It would be a dull world if we all thought the same, and it would be a dull C.D. that was all fact and reminiscence, and no criticism and original thought. I like controversy, too, but I like it to be confined to its own subject-matter and am not so happy when criticism is directed not at the views expressed but at those who express them. And I fancy, from that Harry said, that he meant to include me amongst the blind worshippers at the shrine of Charles Hamilton, "those who idolise."

It is a little difficult to answer such a sweeping attack, and, it takes too long to prove a negative in any case. My opinion, however, for what it is worth is that no article should be merely factual but should contain a criticism of the stories being reviewed, an appraisal of the good parts and a frank recognition of the bad. If this is idolising, I am at a loss to know what is not. Anyway, I hope you will not be deterred from continuing "Let's be Controversial", which constitutes the most stimulating section of the C.D. And now I must write to three correspondents who object to my criticisms of Charles Hamilton's writings: it is a pity that we idolaters are

always disagreeing with one another."

HARRY BROSTER writes: "In my article "In Defence of Pentelow" it is said I launched an attack on those who idolise Charles Hamilton. To the contrary, I was criticising those who over-idolise and can find nothing to admire in the work of any other author. I am not alone in this feeling as I feel sure that most of our fraternity, Hamiltonians, Leeites, Sexton Blake fans, and others all enjoy any type of old boy's yarns, and even if preferring one particular author, find something worth while in the others."

GEORGE SELLARS writes: "Since I read my first Gem 43 years ago I must have read thousands of books by famous authors, also all the Hamilton papers and numerous Nelson Lees. My favourite authors were Jeffrey Farnol, Conan Doyle, Rider Haggard, W. W. Jacobs, Sapper and Sydney Horler. Now, excellent and interesting as these grand authors were, I continued to read the Hamilton papers, and I enjoyed them more than the other books I read. This may seem strange to some people.

Of course, you and I, and all Hamiltonians, know the reason why we prefer Charles Hamilton's stories to others. I am quite certain there is no author, past or present, who has entertained his readers for such a long time (from boys to men). Fathers, sons, and daughters are still enjoying his stories. I don't think anyone would be surprised if any of Mr. Hamilton's admirers did idolise him. I am certain that every Hamiltonian has the greatest admiration for the dear old man at Broadstairs who has given us all so many happy hours through the years. That he may continue to do so is the fervent wish of myself and all his admirers."

DON WEBSTER writes: "I must write and support you re idolatry. Yes, I suppose I do idolise the works of Charles Hamilton, for, although I have read so many tales of school life, none have given me greater pleasure than those of St. Jim's, Greyfriars and Rookwood. The great charm of these yarns to me is the allusions from the Bible and the classics, (and I even include references from the Gilbert and Sullivan operas).

Many of us at some time or another have thought it would be easy to take on the role of a sub-writer, but none of us could possibly hope to write about "passages" between Messrs. Quelch and Prout, or portray such a character as Wharton in his varying moods, or Gussy, be he obstinate or gullible.

No sub-writers for me, thank you."

ERIC FAYNE writes: "Apart from the foregoing contributions, I have received some correspondence on this topic when the writers have asked that they should not be quoted, so, naturally, I have respected these requests. One, for a reason which he does not give, writes, "I wish you had not brought up the subject." Whether he means the original "Controversial" on the sub writers or the recent one on "We Who Idolise" I do not know, but, in either case, I feel no remorse.

Another, referring to a certain club member, says, "His view is that it is wrong to criticise the stories from an adult viewpoint. They were written for boys, and should be criticised from that angle."

I do not agree with this opinion, but it is an interesting topic which I hope to discuss in a future 'Let's be Controversial' article.

LETTER BOX

THOSE ERRORS:

49 Glyn Farm Road,
Quinton,
Birmingham, 32.
13th February, 1958.

Dear Herbert Leckenby,

On reading February Digest I noted in 'From the Editor's Chair' under the heading THE ANNUAL you refer to the few errors which very occasionally creep into the 'Digest'.

It is on very rare occasion that I rush into print but I do feel that your remarks warrant these few words of praise. After spending over five years working for a printing and publishing concern, starting by typing copy, then on to compilation, setting out and finally reading printers' proofs, I would like to say from experience that I have yet to see a better job turned out than our little monthly magazine. I have, on many occasions, remarked to Jack, about the neat and accurate set-up and lack of errors. This is a lovely little job and York Duplicating Services are to be praised for it. One has only to read the daily papers to see errors facing one at every column and after all these people are professionals, doing the job for their living - not as you do - for a labour of love.

Don't worry Herbert, about the odd error. What your readers have to worry about is who is going to take on this very big task if you ever feel it's getting too much for you. MADGE CORBETT.

OLD BOYS BOOK CLUB

LONDON SECTION

Fortunate are we of the London Club as to the many hospitable rendezvous that we hold our monthly gatherings. Horace Roberts' Streatham residence was no exception to the rule and one of the finest meetings we have had was held there on Sunday, 16th February, when the "Magnet" Golden Jubilee gathering was celebrated. Horace, with his fine collections of "Magnets" etc. on show, was the ideal host. The attendance was good. The best surprise of the evening was the excellent cake in the shape of a book and depicting the February "Collectors' Digest" cover plus a few ornamental flowers. Josie Packman ably cut the cake after a few photographs had been taken by the host. A letter from Frank Richards was read out and a suitable greetings telegram was dispatched to our esteemed president. The result of the "Greyfriars Cup" was announced and the unanimous congratulations of all present were offered to our Midland Birmingham colleagues on their success in being the first worthy winners. Finally, as our chairman remarked, we hope to have many more such happy gatherings in such convivial surroundings.

March meeting on Sunday, 16th at Kensington, hosts Roger Jenkins and David Harrison. It is proposed to show the famous school film "Goodbye Mr. Chips", David being the projectionist.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

* * *

NORTHERN SECTION MEETING - 8th FEBRUARY

A very enjoyable afternoon and evening. Before the meeting all who could manage it had been along to see the Exhibition at the Leeds Public Library to celebrate the Greyfriars Golden Jubilee. Chief credit for this went to Jerry Allison who as all agreed had made excellent use of the material at his disposal. The Exhibition was having a three weeks run and it quickly brought enquiries from interested viewers. One of them turned up at the meeting and went away a member and with a number of Magnets from the library under his arm.

We were able to welcome too, Cliff Beardsell on one of his surprise visits, on the other hand unfortunately we were without Bill Williamson who was down with bronchitis. Very seldom indeed has Bill

been absent. All wished him a speedy recovery.

I was able to reveal that the Midland Club has been successful in winning the contest for the Greyfriars Cup and we as runners up extended our hearty congratulations. I also told of the warm welcome I had received when I attended their January Meeting.

Then we got down to a "Bunter Drive" and a most exhilarating Elimination Quiz built up appropriately on the word "Magnet". Both items prepared by Gerry Allison.

Next meeting, March 8th. It's a noteworthy occasion for its Roger Jenkins' annual visit. Subject of his talk - Mr. Quelch. A big attendance hoped for.

HERBERT LECKENBY

Northern Section Correspondent.

* * *

MIDLAND SECTION

Report of meeting held 27th January, 1958 in the Club Lounge, Chambers of Commerce, Birmingham.

Fourteen members turned up to give a hearty welcome to Herbert Leckenby. This was the first time a few of these had met Herbert and were not disappointed at the pleasure of hearing him give one of his famous talks on old boys' book lore. How he came to take an interest in the old papers, how he started the Collectors' Digest, personal memories of some of the old collectors and friendships he had formed through the medium of the C.D. and collecting. All this and many items of information regarding current activities of the Clubs were given us and we all could sense and appreciate the tremendous amount of happiness Herbert derives from the colossal amount of work all this involves.

This was a tip top start for the new year and what with the sight of a fresh lot of Magnets and Gems on the library table, 1958 should be as good as last year. Anyway, we kicked off on a good note thanks to Herbert.

HARRY BROSTER,
Secretary.

* * *

MERSEYSIDE SECTION - SUNDAY, 9th FEBRUARY.

Inclement weather led to a rather smaller gathering than usual, but nevertheless it was a cheery meeting of members that arrived for

our monthly meeting. After giving the financial situation, which is still healthy the Vice-Chairman, Frank Unwin spoke about the present membership of the Merseyside Branch, and the view was expressed that more regular attendances by two or three members would help the branch as a whole, and would also keep the library books in better circulation.

The Secretary then announced the result of the "Greyfriars Herald" Competition. Congratulations are being sent to the Midland Branch.

February, being a special Greyfriars month, each member gave his personal story of when and how he first came to read the Magnet. Some most amusing stories were told and an interesting recollection was the existence of "Swop Shop" in the days of our youth.

Tea and library business followed, and we then settled down to Frank Unwin's new game entitled "Nelson Lee v Sexton Blake". We were divided into two teams, each side was given an identical set of cards, on each being printed a question, the answer to which was a single letter. The total number of letters formed a hiding place in which the spoils of a robbery were hidden. Much brain fagging was done before the solution was found and the Sexton Blake team knew the answer. Many thanks for this quiz Frank, it was a corker. Next meeting Sunday, 9th March at 7 p.m. Full attendance please.

NORMAN FRAGNELL

Secretary, Merseyside Branch O.B.B.C.

S.B.L. REVIEWS

MARCH - 1958

Collapse of Stout Party (No. 401)

Jack Trevor Story

An unusual title, but then it is an unusual story. It's back to St. Harping again, that small town of big and sensational happenings, scene of Blake's case of the Blonde and the Boodle. The boodle on this occasion is the proceeds of a bullion robbery carried out at Preston Airport, perpetrated by one Herbert Arthur Gilchrist Smith, known for obvious reasons as Hags. When Hags is arrested on Blackpool sands following Blake's recognition of him whilst on holiday the hunt for the hidden bullion is on.

Presented in the well-known Story manner of easy and relaxed narration with its unexpected sharp thrusts of humour - wicked at

times, unforced always - Blake is shown in much the same mood in a case which does not extend his capabilities to the full and leaves him at the end as nonchalant and unscathed as at the beginning.

Rating.....Very good

* * *

Murder Most Intimate (No. 402)

W. Howard Baker

A lunch date with Paula in Fleet Street is the starting point of another case for Sexton Blake. Walking along the Strand the pair are horrified to see the body of Gillian Prentiss, Secretary to a Greek ship-owner, falling from a sixth floor window. Murder or suicide? Ironically enough, it is the killer who clears Blake's mind on this debatable point and puts the detective on the right trail. An Indian who has photographed the girl in her death div. presents Blake with an important clue, as does Hazel, the gentle giant, whom he met for the first time in the Murmansk convoy during the war. Now Hazel not only reads the MAGNET, he collects them and through the good offices of the O.B.B.C. is the proud possessor of 1,122 copies! How Blake is helped in his investigations by a note with which Hazel has used to list his required MAGNET issues introduces a personal note into the proceedings and infuses a pleasant atmosphere that really makes it Murder Most Intimate!

Rating.....Very good

WALTER WEBB

HAMILTONIANA - LATE NEWS. Just as we were going to press I heard that Bob Mortimer's Greyfriars Jubilee window display at Bentalls', Kingston-on-Thames had been on. Judging by letters I have had it evidently created a lot of interest and admiration. I shall have more to say about it next month.

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* * *

NELSON LEE COLUMN

by JACK WOOD

Nostaw, 328 Stockton Lane, York.

Phone: 25795

* * * * *

Since my delve into realms normally associated with other writers last month, I have been asked about other meetings between St. Frank's and the Hamilton Schools on the sports field.

My research so far have been occupied with with Gem Library in the 1934-35 period which followed the merging of the Nelson Lee Library into the Gem. My information comes from the columns of the inset Tom Merry's Weekly, and relates to two competitions, the Glyn Cup and the Eastwood League.

Unfortunately, I do not now possess all the Gems concerned, but in the second round of the Glyn Cup in No. 1406 dated January 26th, 1935, I find that St. Jim's had a runaway 14-4 win over Jarrow. While St. Frank's won a great battle over their old rivals at River House, by seven goals to six. Pitt (3), Nipper (3) and Watson scored for the Saints, and Brewster (5) and Church (own goal) for River House.

I have an idea from memory that St. Jim's beat St. Frank's in the final some time later by the odd goal. Perhaps someone can refresh my memory.

In the League, St. Frank's won by 4-3 at Greyfriars, drew 6-6 with St. Jim's at St. Frank's, and beat Greyfriars 5-3 at St. Frank's.

By a strange coincidence, the League Championship was decided by the last games of the campaign. St. Jim's beat Rylcombe Grammar School 5-3 at Rylcombe, while St. Frank's went down at home 4-2 to the River House, whose goals were all scored by Brewster.

Greyfriars, Rookwood and Highcliffe finished third, fourth and fifth in the table.

The Glyn Cup was stated to be presented by Mr. Lyell Glyn, Bernard Glyn's father, for competition by 64 public school elevens.

And now, more news from our Resident Correspondent at St. Frank's, Jim Cook -

Owing to the inclement weather down here, several sports fixtures have been postponed or abandoned. The first week of this month Little Side was invisible. First a carpet of snow covered the ground, which caused the Head to forbid the match with Abbotsbury being played, then

a couple of days later on the Saturday the pitch was inundated after a heavy downfall of rain. This stopped the all important tussle with Bannington Grammar School being decided. You can imagine the gloom that settled over St. Frank's during these bad spells because the seniors were also affected. Big Side had similar troubles and important fixtures were put off.

By the way, the great majority of the chaps here treat me as one of their own, but I have observed sundry black looks from one or two who are going to be mentioned. Chambers, of the Fifth, actually veered off when I approached him. I only wanted to know if he would say a few words...about himself! Which should have pleased him, considering! The occupants of Study A are the same old characters. Nothing has changed them, not even time! Bernard Forrest wanted to know if I was gathering information for a magazine called "Confidential" and if I were how much was it worth for a few juicy bit-bits! I didn't get the drift of this remark until Gulliver mentioned the Moor View School. Bell remarked he got regular reports from Joan Tarrant. I seem to remember Joan is a schoolgirl under the wing of Miss Bond, and that her outlook on life coincides with that of the Study A conception. I left that study for some cleaner atmosphere.

I have seen Kenmore, Frinton, Wilson and Jesson. They know why I am here and seem to treat me with respect. Perhaps they think I know a lot more than I really know! Well, they shouldn't have guilty thoughts about themselves. As I told Fenton, the skipper of the seniors, a day or so ago, any information I pick up and relate through these pages couldn't do anybody any harm. I could be quite nasty if I were so inclined because I do collect some odd news around the Houses, and in the village! But a lot of it is pure gossip.

I never thought St. Frank's occupied such a huge topic for scandal in Bellton! You remember old Mr. Binks' shop there which is frequently patronised by the boys of St. Franks? Well, I went there to purchase some eggs and butter to augment the larder of Study C - my journalistic instincts getting the better of me, I gossiped and old Binks gave me some items of news that never reached the pages of the Nelson Lee Library! But I can say with certainty that Mr. Lee is "reckoned a fine gentleman."

I met Nelson Lee in the Triangle the other day. We were both hurrying to escape a shower and finished up at the entrance to the Ancient House. He asked me if anybody was actually interested in what goes on at St. Frank's since a certain gentleman no longer recorded the daily happenings at the school. I replied that many were still living

those days again and again and that St. Frank's was one of those places where life never died. The history of St. Frank's was still being written by common consent of many admirers. "Well, there's plenty of material for new chronicles of what has been happening here these last few years" he said. "I am surprised nobody has recorded the events before and after the last war. The old school has seen many strange things at one time or another, but at one time during the war....." What a great pity I am not able to put down the remarkable events that Lee related to me. But I can say St. Frank's is still the same as it always was. Nothing has changed, not even the boys, or the masters.

Old Crowell still studies astronomy. You may remember he very nearly lost his reason owing to overstudying this vast subject, but these days he is better fitted to delve into the mysterious realms of space. A lot more literature is being made available for such people and it is much more probable that Mr. Crowell will have supporters.

How I wish you could have seen the Remove master's face when I told him he has been in our thoughts for a great number of years and that we admired and respected him. And, I said, he was equally popular with the boys although they didn't show it.

Phipps, the Head's valet and Archie Glenthornes man-servant, hasn't altered one bit. He is still Archie's first glimpse of the world each morning with the inevitable cup of tea! What a life! I asked Phipps if the cup of tea first thing in the mornings could be extended to include myself and Phipps replied it could be done. I think I shall be staying quite a while at St. Frank's.

I have met such a lot of people, old friends whom we all know, that it would take me too long to record it all in one sitting, so to speak. I even know where Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi are! Of course, they are in Africa. Who wouldn't be, this time of year! Nipper tells me Dorrie intends to take the usual gang to the South Pole this coming summer to lock up old haunts. I suppose it is Northestria where they intend to go. No sorry, that is of course at the other end of the world, I mean New Anglia, that glorious kingdom left over from the old world nestling amid the snows of the South Pole. I seem to remember the St. Frank's party had promised to return some day.

There is a hint of the coming spring evident all around the countryside. Belton Wood is gradually taking on a new colour, and even the usually dismal Bannington Moor shows promise of brighter hues. The waves are less angry at Shingle Head and there's a general air of expectancy everywhere. This sudden transformation coincides with the lighter evenings.