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Vol. 1
15

THE SCHOOL FRIEND

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COLLECTORS

FEBRUARY

1961



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THE COLLECTORS' DIGEST

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Editor:

ERIC FAYNE

Excelsior House,
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HOW THEY BEGAN

No. 2

The second in our series of covers of First Issues appears on our own front cover this month. The first issue of THE SCHOOL FRIEND, dated May 17th, 1919. The weekly school story, featuring the same characters each week, had been introduced for boys as far back as 1906. Now, in 1919, the same plan is to be tried out for girls.

The Cliff House girls had been introduced spasmodically into the Greyfriars stories right from the beginning of the Magnet - but Bessie Bunter had only recently come into existence, no doubt taking her place as Billy's brother in readiness for the launching of the new weekly. As is well known, Charles Hamilton wrote a few opening stories, after which Cliff House passed into the hands of another writer. For years, the School Friend was the same size as the Magnet, but in its declining years adopted a pocket-size format.

Copies of the paper can still be come across today, which is fair proof that boys bought it as well as girls.

Artist from first to last was G. M. Dodshon, whose work can be found in various A.P. papers from early in the century. No reader was successful in forecasting the name of the artist, as required in our January competition.

* * * * *

OLD PAPER DIES - and TWO OTHERS MARRY

RADIO FUN, after many years of publication, is closing down for good in February. "ADVENTURE" and "ROVER" ceased as separate papers in January. They now appear as one paper, under the name "ADVENTURE and ROVER."

POT - POURRI

THOSE WERE THE DAYS!

By F. ADDINGTON SYMONDS

More years ago than I care to remember, a grubby little urchin (me!) used to meet several other ditto on a piece of waste ground adjacent to their respective homes. Each of them carried, either in their pockets or stuffed up their clothes, sundry scruffy copies of what were then described, by their parents, as "penny dreadfuls" which they proceeded secretly, and with great excitement, to swap, read and discuss.

These papers, which their parents had forbidden them under pain of severe penalties to read, had been bought, scrounged, borrowed or pinched from various sources and had passed through so many hands that they were almost falling to pieces. But they were treasure trove, the more precious because they had been "verboden." They were of an almost infinite variety, ranging from the Ha'penny Marvel to True Blue, the Dick Turpin Library and the Boy's Friend. There were also some copies of two weeklies which were comparative newcomers, the Gem and the Magnet. And some of the more enterprising among the gang had even managed to discover odd copies of other journals belonging to an almost prehistoric period, such as Boys of England and Boys of the Empire.

Our parents, doubtless acting (misguidedly) for our own good, had lumped all such publications together as being "blood and thunder" and I think one of the reasons for this was the off-putting titles, such as the Ha'penny Marvel, and the lurid covers - especially those of True Blue, which were nearly always bespattered with gore. Actually, of course, none of the papers was in the least harmful and many afforded great delight to their youthful readers.

My own special favourite was the Big Budget, which was not on the parental Index, probably (a) because the title was innocuous and (b) because the cover always consisted of a set of comic pictures dealing with the adventures of Airy Alf and Bouncing Billy. Its companion paper, the Boys' Leader, was no less in demand but this only managed to escape the Index after I had provided it with an alibi by pointing out that it emanated from the same editorial office as the Big Budget!

I still remember vividly many of the famous characters in the almost countless stories which I read in these and other journals. Their names, no less than their adventures, held and still hold a kind of magic for me. One of the most spectacular was Graydon Garth, "Statesman, Empire Builder and Leader of Men," by Sidney Drew, who also created

his counterpart in Ferrers Lord for the Boy's Friend, and, many years later, "resuscitated" them both in their character of Royston Drake, for my own paper, The Champion.

Then there were the famous Big Budget and Boys' Leader detectives - Kenyon Ford, Vernon Read, Vernon Trew (and his dog "Clutch"). And, talking of detectives, there was that picturesque array in the various Amalgamated Press publications, headed by the immortal Sexton Blake and including Royston Gower, Dr. Messina, Dr. Nevada, Kit and Cora Twyford (the brother and sister 'tecs), Frank Dudley, Inspector Spearman, John Sleath and Stanley Dare.

Other unforgettable characters were, for instance, Jack, Sam and Pete, of the Marvel; the Cap'n, the Cook and the Engineer (the Cook being Cookie Scrubbs and his 'Ambone) of Pluck; and a strange, rather original creation called "Hairpin" who also, I think, appeared in various stories in the same paper. But the most famous of them all were, of course, the boys of Greyfriars and St. Jim's, in the Magnet and Gem, and I personally found almost equal delight in reading about Billy Bunter and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Today, the aristocrat of St. Jim's seems an out-dated, almost unreal character, but I think that Billy Bunter was predestined for immortality, taking his place from the outset in the gallery of the great English comics. It may come as a shock to some of us, but if we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that we recognize some of our own little weaknesses in Billy - our temptations, sometimes, to exaggerate, to pull a fast one, or to wriggle artfully out of an uncomfortable situation. Of course, unlike Bunter, we never - or hardly ever - yield to such temptations and we forgive the fat Owl of the Remove because, thanks to the genius of his creator, he is presented to us with such a rich fund of humour, so that we chuckle even while we condemn!

There were, too, those other schoolboy characters, Gordon Gay and Co., whose adventures ran in the Empire Library; and I well remember the stories of Jimmy Silver and Co. of Rookwood. But none of these had - for me at any rate - the fascination of the boys of Greyfriars, entertaining though they undoubtedly were....

Other papers which I remember, but of which we hear little nowadays, even in the C.D. were the old Boys' World, the Nugget Library, the Aldine Cheerful, and a rather odd weekly called the Boys' Mail. There was also the Scholars' Own, and two weeklies published by Newnes - Boy's Life and Boy's Best. The former was a sort of companion to the old Captain - a "quality" paper which published some very distinguished stories; the latter was run on more "popular" lines, but did not live for very long, though I was sorry to see it go.

Those were indeed the days and I look back upon them with nostalgic gratitude. The pleasures they afforded were unique, in that they are unlikely ever to be repeated. We live now in such an unromantic, "realistic" age, and the young people of today do not realise what they have missed by being born several generations too late.

* * * * *

ALMOST A COLLECTOR

A Tragic Tale
by FRANK SHAW

I could scarcely read when I found my first "Magnet" on top of a wardrobe. It had been left there, with a number of others, by my brother who had gone to the war. He, now in his sixties, had read the paper from its beginning. I became a regular reader about 1917, another brother handing me down his "Magnets" and "Gems" as he did his trousers. Was it earlier? (The story was "The Honour of a Prince.") I kept them and the ones from the wardrobe top. From 1919 I bought them myself as well as the "Realm" "Boys Friend" and others. Reading about the early Greyfriars in the "Popular" sent me searching second-hand bookshops for red-backs and green-backs and I found plenty at a penny each.

By 1925, when I moved on to "John O'London's" and "Passing Show" I had a good collection. They went back, unbroken for some years, to 1910 and included "The Race to the Tuck-Shop". A few I sold to a collector in U.S.A.

With them, in an attic, I had the "Children's Newspaper" from first issue with the first "Holiday Annual" "Happy" and other mags, comics ("Funny Wonder" was best, "Chuckles" worst,) the marvellous "Marvel", sports papers, copies of the "Scout", "Chums", "Boys' Magazine", "Captain" and the early "Champion."

To them all I preferred the "Gem" and "Magnet" - in that order, (am I eccentric? Well, I preferred Vernon-Smith to Wharton and quite a number of the boys to Bunter.)

That the stories were by the same author I spotted early. The drawings delighted me, especially Warwick Reynold's wonderful penmanship and the "Phiz" quality of Chapman.

I seriously considered a long study of Frank Richards, far beyond what Orwell tried later and, of course, con amore.

I am sorry that, like Quelch's "History of Greyfriars" (it was he, not Dr. Locke, wasn't it?), the work was never completed.

Shall I tackle it now? Turn over my valuable collection? I

wish I could. Perhaps I should have told you sooner - already I think your readers may be beating a path to my door, jingling guineas - not one of them exists. I left home in the thirties, and in my absence, a vandal sister (who herself collected the "School Friend") destroyed them in an overpowering lust for tidiness. (See "Who's Sentimental?" C.D. page 100, April 1960.)

I never smiled again

Well, no, that's not true. But don't you feel for me?

During the last war I typed for my sons, from memory, the old stories with valiant attempts to illustrate them. They have gone too. But I recall that the original author approved and sent me some of his current work (now in the hands of grandchildren except one Gussy yarn my boy of 16 can be heard almost every night chuckling over.)

So all the Hamiltoniana I now have are two letters signed "Frank Richards."

Some day I'll forgive my sister.

* * * * *

ME — AND THE 1960 ANNUAL

By RAY HOPKINS

It was my great pleasure, this year, to do something for the very first time: to read the Annual hot off the press, as it were. It has always happened that I would be reading all the excerpts from congratulatory letters received by the Editor in the monthly C.D. at about the same time I received the Annual. This of course in no way dimmed my own reading pleasure, but did tend to cut my own non-verbal cries of pleasure because, by the time Ye Ed received them, they would be very much in the nature of an anti-climax.

This new 1960 Annual was a most splendid and enjoyable issue. Not only was the look of it good, but the cover reproductions, always so mouthwatering, came out so beautifully. I liked very much Bob's idea of Bunter and Sexton Blake masquerading as Santa Claus and Father Time - very seasonable and very apt, I thought, as both these characters keep on a-rolling, year after year, and we of the O.B.B.C. are fortunate that they do.

Our own O.B.B.C. artist never lets us down and always turns up with something witty and, of course, beautifully drawn. It was good, too, to see the double feature picture of Bunter and his T.V. portrayer. Mr. Chapman's work in the pages of C.D. is always a delight.

And now to the reading. What a feast of information is provided by Messrs. Hopperton and Allison in their Tag-list! It was a joy to go

through it and re-encounter many favourite quotations. Messrs. Lofts and Adley, too, in the Popular's Greyfriars Stories, have done a most valuable service in presenting their compilation. These two articles must have taken hours of research. Mr. Maurer's article on what is for most of us a new field also shows much research and a knowledge of these old papers of which he is obviously very fond. When I was very young and prior to my discovery of SUNBEAM (my first A.P. publication) I used to read a small paper called FAIRYLAND TALES. It had a shiny cover of the same quality as the new S.B.L. and had a bright red margin all around with an illustration containing a most excellent colour process. I believe it was priced 2d and the back cover always illustrated the contents of the following issue. I have no idea who the publisher was and nobody to whom I have mentioned this old paper has ever recalled it. But it very evidently was of the same kind as Mr. Maurer mentions, though I do not recall series featuring characters week by week.

The contribution of the Sexton Blake Circle is always enjoyable to read, and this one appeared more racy than usual, due no doubt, to the emphasis on the new S.B.L. I still find my greatest delight, however, in reading articles about the old S.B. characters, although I myself am a school story enthusiast and never really took to detectives.

Every article, in fact, in this latest Annual, was first-class of its type and full of intense interest.

I must not close without a word about the three "originals" in this year's Annual. I refer to those contributions from the pens of Bette Pate, Peter Todd and Eric Fayne. Bette Pate's was thrilling, and Peter Todd's was amusing. What a good thing that Master Todd was able to take time from his studies at Greyfriars to produce this comical story. In "No End In Sight" I feel the writer portrayed perfectly the agony we had to go through waiting for next week's number (the weeks in our youth were far longer in time than they are now), and also the delight in becoming re-acquainted with old friends in subsequent issues. As for the characters, I hope our Editor will not allow this to be the only appearance of Messrs. Buddle and Meredith. Slade Must Rise Again!

* * * * *

GREYFRIARS ON RADIO

By W. H. GOODHEAD

I wonder if any of our members read in the Christmas edition of the T.V. Times that Charles Tingwell, the Australian-born hero of Emergency Ward 10, began his professional career at the age of 17 by playing Bob Cherry in a radio serial, "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School."

Apparently four instalments were broadcast each week, which indicates that the serial must have played an important part in the nightly programme in Australia.

It would be very interesting indeed to have some further details of this forgotten epic. Perhaps our friends down-under (or even Mr. Tingwell himself) could be of assistance in this matter.

It certainly indicates that the Australians have the correct approach to the problem of putting over the Greyfriars Saga. I myself have always maintained that the only medium capable of handling the stories we all knew and loved, with their melodrama, genuine humour, adventure and excitement, is the much despised "steam radio."

The main difficulty encountered in a visual presentation of a Greyfriars story lies, I think, in the fact that the characters always seemed to be rather older than they were actually supposed to be and also seemed to be slightly larger than life (an excellent thing this. We had standard to live up to - the modern generation has not). This makes the actual presentation of a visual Coker, Vernon Smith, Inky or Skinner, for instance, extremely difficult. Remember, Bunter at present is being played by an actor nearly thirty years old.

Via sound radio, however, these difficulties disappear. It is quite easy to accept the voice of a seventeen or eighteen year old actor in the part of a fourteen or fifteen year old schoolboy, and given this new freedom, who knows what could not be done with the Lamb series or some of the adventure epics.

As I have previously stated, the Australians seem to have realised this years ago, and further information would be very interesting.

* * * * *

WHERE ARE THE LADS OF THE LEE BRIGADE TO-NIGHT?

By WILLIAM LISTER

In E. C. Carter's "Glimpses into the Nelson Lee" (1960 Annual) he asks "What has become of old readers of Nelson Lee?" I should like to give my view of the answer.

While I was fond of the "Magnet" and the "Gem", etc., my favourite was always the Nelson Lee, which I continued taking till I was 18 years old. Then I thought I was getting too old for the paper.

I am now 48 - so we are going back 30 years. A couple of years ago I mentioned to an old uncle of mine (he is over 80) about the old days, the old books, and we talked of Handforth and Ezra Quirk after all that time. We had no idea that there were any old copies available. We did not know of Collectors' Digest.

Later I began buying the Sexton Blake Library, and I became acquainted with the Digest. Thus opened up for me "a new old world."

There must be hundreds like my uncle and me who, if they knew of Collectors' Digest, would like to renew contact with the old days. But they do not know! Would this not answer Mr. Carter's question?

* * * * *

MEMORY OF A FAMOUS ARTIST

JOHN JUKES wrote to us as follows: "I came across the enclosed letter today. It is from artist Briscoe. I think it is one of the most poignant letters I have ever possessed, for the poor chap was dead within a few short months after writing me. I think he was genuinely pleased that he was remembered after all the years."

The following, dated July 1956, and written from Hever, Kent, are the words of E. E. Briscoe, the artist, who so many of us remember;

"I am taking this, my first opportunity to express my warm thanks and gratitude to you for sending me this charming and cheering letter of very kind appreciation. It is very gratifying to a conscientious artist to receive some assurance that, after the passing of many years, there are still enthusiastic 'old boys' who have not forgotten him and still remember appreciatively his early efforts with his pen and brush to thrill and amuse them when they were young.

You have delighted me more than you can really know, and helped me to plod with patience and persistence the rough road to 'journey's end' that now lies before me.

I feel that I must thank you again, from my heart, for your perceptive sympathy and kindness. May 'goodness and mercy' follow you.

Yours sincerely, E. E. BRISCOE."

* * * * *

ODDS AND ENDS

By GERRY ALLISON

ACID RETORT BY HENRY SAMUEL! "Billy Bunter's Swiss Roll," at the Victoria Palace got quite a good report in The Guardian, but the critic, Edward Greenfield allowed himself one bit of sarcasm which evoked some well known thunder! He said: "Like the Frank Richards stories from which the characters come, this play is hopelessly dated - Mr. Quelch in Norfolk jacket and tweed breeches, if you please." The next issue of The Guardian had the following letter in its correspondence column, under the heading GREYFRIARS:

Sir, in his critical comment in your journal on the vacation in Switzerland currently being enjoyed by certain of the Remove scholars of Greyfriars and myself, Mr. Edward Greenfield sees fit to suggest that

the clothing I elect to wear for the occasion is demode. I can only assume that he is unaware of the sporting attire affected by the Prime Minister of this country earlier this very year; indeed, it was from that august and conservative source that the inspiration for my own costume was acquired.

Yours &c., MR. QUELCH - Greyfriars School.

As the Bounder would say "Man down!"

BLACK MARK, B.B.C! A recent item in Woman's Hour, as announced in the Radio Times, gave me the greatest thrill for months. It read, TALES OUT OF SCHOOL, by Frank Richards.

At 2 p.m. on The Day, I was sitting with my ear glued to the wireless, gleefully chuckling over the opportunity afforded me by my convalescence to hear our beloved President on such a topic!

And then came the overwhelming disappointment. The speaker may have been a Frank Richards, but he was not the Frank Richards. Surely, after writing school stories for over fifty years and creating the most famous schoolboy of all time, the one and only Frank Richards should be allowed the copyright of his name, especially for such a subject as Tales Out of School. Urrrrgh!!!

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The London Club Library offers 10/- each for the following books: Magnet 751, Gems 713, 714, 715, 755, 758. Schoolboys' Owns 215, 217, 219, 221, 269, 275. Also required "Boy Without a Name" in Boys' Friend 3d Library.

ROGER JENKINS, "THE FIRS," EASTERN ROAD, HAVANT, HANTS.

PLEASE NOTE that BRIAN DOYLE'S new address is GARDEN FLAT, 13 NORTHBOURNE ROAD, LONDON, S.W.4. Tel. No. MACauley 7946.

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS. DON WEBSTER'S new address is 143 GLOUCESTER COURT, KEM GARDENS, SURREY.

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BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN

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

I am completing the "Gilbert Chester Story" this month. Our thanks are due to Bill Lofts for supplying the photograph of "Gilbert Chester" and to Eric Fayne for so kindly having it reproduced for Blakiana.

I shall be very glad of any short articles with "bits and pieces" about Sexton Blake for use in conjunction with the longer lists of S.B.L. Blake titles and authors to commence next month.

DO PLEASE RALLY ROUND AND GIVE ME YOUR LOYAL SUPPORT!

JOSE PACKMAN

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THE "GILBERT CHESTER" STORY

(continued)

Mr. H. W. Twyman, Editor of the UNION JACK in 1921, can remember seeing "Gilbert Chester" for the first time. A slight figure of a man, rather nervous by disposition, "Chester" admitted that he had 'ghosted' stories for Andrew Murray, but quickly proved by his manuscripts that he was, indeed, a writer of first-class calibre. And thus it was, from then on, "Chester" poured out stories for the U.J. and Sexton Blake Library.

Apart from his work "Chester" still wrote women's and juvenile fiction stories for other papers - especially stories on motor-racing, of which he was of course an expert. He wrote mostly at night, not only for the absolute quiet which existed but also because he always seemed to be at the top of his form at that late part of the day. Whilst he was writing he drank endless cups of tea - which he enjoyed at any time - and when thinking out his plots walked endlessly up and down. He used to talk them over with his wife, who was a good listener. Mrs. "Chester" also used to read over his manuscripts, and offer criticisms and suggestions, for which "Gilbert" was always very grateful.

Although he had little time or opportunity to go to football matches, cricket matches, etc., he was always interested in sport and liked to listen to them on the radio whenever he could spare the time.



Before his health broke down he was an indefatigable walker, thinking nothing of a twenty-mile walk just for the pleasure of it. He did not read much fiction, except "to keep up with the market," but as a boy his favourite papers were the UNION JACK (Sexton Blake stories) and the BOYS' REALM. Amongst the novelists he liked were Rudyard Kipling, whom he regarded as the master of all short-story writers, Somerset Maugham and Compton Mackenzie. He did not care much for poetry, though he liked Shakespeare and, of the more modern, thought very highly of James Elroy Flecker's "Hassan." The reader may recall that Hassan said "You have broken my heart, and I have broken my lute." "Chester" used to say "that's the sort of thing that makes me feel I want to break my own lute," meaning, of course, that Hassan was so fine that "Chester" felt he would never attain such perfection in his own art.

In non fiction he liked history, biography, archaeology and general scientific works - particularly astronomy. His knowledge of the latter subject was put to good effect in many of his stories: old U.J. readers will remember "The House of the Horoscope" particularly. I have mentioned in a previous article how, as a hobby, he used to give readings on one's horoscope to personal friends. A point about this is that he regarded the actual time of one's birth as being most important in making a correct and accurate reading.

"Gilbert Chester" was very fond of music. As a rule he wrote with a quiet background of classical music, such as Wagner's "Valkyrie" "Twilight of the Gods," "Siegfried," or passages from Tschaikowsky's symphonies. Classical music was actually his foremost favourite among music, particularly Wagner's compositions. Other of his

favourites were Puccini, Tschaikowsky, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Delius, Stravinsky, Beethoven, Walton, Bliss, Ravel, Vaughan Williams and Liszt. At the same time he had a great interest in and liking for lighter music, especially the popular numbers in the musical-comedies of his youth, such as "The Merry Widow," "Florodora" "The Arcadians" and, slightly later, "Tonight's the Night," "Chu Chin Chow," and "Rose Marie." The last show he attended was as the guest of his daughter at the Brighton production of "The Sleeping Prince" prior to its West End run.

He was very fond of children, and although somewhat shy in their presence, he really had a wonderful way with them, because he never 'talked down' to them. He was also very courteous to women of all ages. Someone once expressed surprise that he gave up his seat in a bus to a little girl of eight, to which he replied, "Well, they are all little ladies, you know." It made him furious to see men letting women, especially the old and infirm, stand in buses and trains. A favourite expression of his relating to this was "Some people seem to think there's something democratic about rudeness. There isn't. The true democrat is always courteous."

"Gilbert Chester" was also fond of animals, particularly cats and squirrels. He liked gardening and the countryside, and was very fond of the sea, from which, he said "All life originally came, and because it is always the same - and yet changing and different."

Although now not living in London he remained fond of the town of his birth, though in his opinion it was never the same after World War 1. It had changed so much since he was a youngster - and mostly not for the better - that he definitely preferred the countryside.

At the height of his writing career (1925-35) he was 5 ft. 8 in. tall, hazel-eyed, and if he hadn't shaved, had a red beard. He went slightly bald in his early twenties. His taste in dress was very conservative, and he disliked anything that was "flashy." His favourite colour was orange, with blue and green good runners up. He had a fairly small appetite and preferred plain food. So far as drink was concerned one could almost call him a teetotaler; a glass of Guinness a day (and not every day) was all he favoured. Up to 1944 he was a chain-smoker, and then he decided to give it up because, he said, "Tobacco is now such foul muck." In fact, from that time onward he never did smoke again.

In the summer of 1938 "Gilbert Chester" trained as an air-raid warden, and on the outbreak of war in September, 1939, became Post-Warden of Post A.3 in The Drive, Rickmansworth, Herts. He still managed to fit his writing of Sexton Blake stories into such time as he was not

needed at the Post, and he had special permission from Colonel Peebles, the Chief Warden, to go up to town (Fleet Street) when essential. For the first few months of the war the Post was actually his dining room, which he temporarily gave up to be sandbagged and used as a Post until the official one was built. He did great work during the blitz, for which he was awarded the Defence Medal.

After World War II his health was obviously not what it had been, and after a number of X-rays the trouble proved to be a lung entirely relapsed with cancer. An operation was brilliantly performed by a Mr. Siddons at The Brook Hospital, Woolwich. For several years the trouble seemed kept at bay, but after the loss of his wife in August 1957 his health took a noticeable turn for the worse. In May 1958 he was sent for deep X-ray treatment but, like Mr. Dulles, was no longer strong enough to stand it. In the middle of May 1958 he was admitted to the Rayland Nursing Home, Brighton, not expected to live for more than two to five weeks at the most. However, his constitution was so marvelous, and his strength of will so great, that he lived until the 14th of November, 1958, having put up a long, cheerful and gallant fight for life.

"Gilbert Chester" continued to take a great interest in world affairs right up to the last few months of his life, when he became too ill to read or take much in. His interests were really so wide that I have by no means covered them all in these articles. His real great interest was in people - what made them 'tick'; their hopes, fears and struggles to live, and learn, and love, and make something worthwhile of their own lives and those of others.

Incidentally, "Chester" often used to tell, with great amusement, the story going the rounds that G. K. Chesterton the famous detective writer, had written some Sexton Blake yarns. There was never any truth in this. It is thought that this rumour was started by some editor who assumed the name "Chester" to be an abbreviation of Chesterton. Having the same initial as well, he put two and two together - wrongly!

This, therefore, concludes the "Gilbert Chester" story, and if, from his place in the spheres, "Gilbert Chester" is still cognisant of Sexton Blake affairs, I am sure nothing gives him greater pleasure than to know that his stories are still appreciated by old readers all over the world.

His first UNION JACK story was No. 1012 entitled "The Case of the Petrol Turbine," and his first SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY No. 289 (1st series) entitled "The Great Revue Mystery." Both these stories featured his creations Gilbert and Eileen Hale.

A QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIPBy S. Gordon Swan

I am rather late in making comment on an item that appeared in the "C.D. ANNUAL for 1959" but as I only recently secured a copy I hope the delay is pardonable. The particular item to which I refer is the suggestion at the end of the list of Sexton Blake authors that "Arthur J. Palk" is probably Arthur Paterson."

So far as I know, Arthur J. Palk wrote only one Blake story - U.J. No. 1525 dated 7th January, 1933, entitled "The Call of the Dragon." At the head of the story is the following statement: "Like his colleagues of the Union Jack, Arthur J. Palk knows his stuff. This stirring yarn of his, told against the background of his well-known Melbourne, reveals the knowledge of a native-born Australian of his own country, and a flair for story-telling which will ensure his welcome to these pages."

From what I recall of an article dealing with Arthur Paterson prior to the appearance of a serial by him in the U.J. called "A Son of the Plains," it was said that he was born and brought up in New Mexico. Then, again, the Arthur J. Palk yarn was published in 1933, some years subsequent to Arthur Paterson's death.

Furthermore, just over fifteen years ago, I picked up an Australian paper-back dealing with espionage in Australia in World War II, by Arthur J. Palk. I cannot recall the title, but I seized upon the book as the author's name was immediately familiar to me. So that Arthur J. Palk was still writing long after Arthur Paterson passed on. If I could remember who published the paper-back in question, I would write to them for particulars of this Australian author.

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SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY TITLES AND AUTHORS (1st series)(continued)

| | | | |
|---------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| No. 283 | The Eight-Pointed Star..... | (Rymer) | G. H. Teed |
| No. 284 | In Darkest Madras..... | (Gunga Dass) | H. E. Hill |
| No. 285 | The Case of the Four Barons..... | (Cavendish Doyle) | W. M. Graydon |
| No. 286 | The Secret of Thurston Towers..... | | L. H. Brooks |
| No. 287 | The Outlaw of Yugo-Slavia..... | (G. Grant, Mile Julie) | W. W. Sayer |
| | (Reprinted in 2nd series No. 455) | | |
| No. 288 | Down East..... | | W. M. Graydon |
| No. 289 | The Great Revue Mystery..... | (Gilbert & Eileen Hale) | H. H. C. Gibbons |
| No. 290 | The Last Clue..... | | W. J. Bayfield |
| No. 291 | The Man Behind the Curtain..... | (A. Steele) | A. Murray |
| No. 292 | In Savage Hayti..... | (Dr. Ferraro) | R. C. Armour |
| No. 293 | The Mystery Mandarin..... | (Plummer, Dexter) | J. W. Bobin |

| | | |
|---------|---|------------------|
| No. 294 | The Arctic Trail | W. M. Graydon |
| No. 295 | The Actor's Secret (Gunga Dass) | H. E. Hill |
| No. 296 | The House of Fear (Kestrel) | J. Lewis |
| No. 297 | The Mystery of the Dover Road | W. M. Graydon |
| No. 298 | The Secret of the Lagoon | R. C. Armour |
| No. 299 | The Crook's Double (Lawless) | A. Murray |
| No. 300 | The Case of the Five Dummy Books (G. Grant, Mile Julie) | W. W. Sayer |
| | (Reprinted in 2nd series No. 458) | |
| No. 301 | The Doctor's Secret | W. J. Bayfield |
| No. 302 | The Case of the Adopted Daughter | W. M. Graydon |
| No. 303 | The Lost Expedition (G. Grant, Mile Julie) | W. W. Sayer |
| | (Reprinted in 2nd series No. 523) | |
| No. 304 | Solved in 36 Hours | H. H. C. Gibbons |
| No. 305 | The Mansion of Shadows | E. J. Murray |
| No. 306 | The Shield of the Law | W. M. Graydon |
| No. 307 | The Crimson Belt (Rymer, Wu Ling, Yvonne) | G. H. Teed |
| | (Reprinted in 2nd series No. 463) | |
| No. 308 | The Case of the Master Organiser ("Boss" Walmer Stone) | A. Murray |
| No. 309 | The Desert Trail | R. C. Armour |
| No. 310 | The Path of Fear | W. M. Graydon |
| No. 311 | The Case of the Man in Black | O. Merland |
| No. 312 | The Orloff Diamond (Rymer, Mary Trent) | G. H. Teed |
| No. 313 | The Affair of the Three Gunmen | W. M. Graydon |
| No. 314 | The Case of the Mysterious Germs | R. C. Armour |
| No. 315 | The Secret of the Carpathians | H. H. C. Gibbons |
| No. 316 | The Mawpeth Millions | W. Reynolds |
| No. 317 | The Shrine of Kali (Gunga Dass) | H. E. Hill |
| | (Reprinted in 2nd series No. 488) | |
| No. 318 | The Secret of the Black Wallet (G. Grant, Mile Julie) | W. W. Sayer |
| | (Reprinted 2nd series No. 475) | |
| No. 319 | The Great Museum Mystery (Gunga Dass) | H. E. Hill |
| No. 320 | The Case of the Income Tax Frauds | W. J. Bayfield |

* * * * *

Q U A N D A

(Our Questions & Answers Column)

A. G. DAVIDSON (Australia) asks: "Can you please give me any information concerning an author who wrote stories under the name of "John Long?"

REPLY: Bill Lofts says: "You can take it from me that there was never an author of any repute who wrote under that name in connection with our hobby. He can only have penned a few yarns in some obscure paper. John Luther Long, of course, was the author of "Madame Butterfly" and other Japanese musicals."

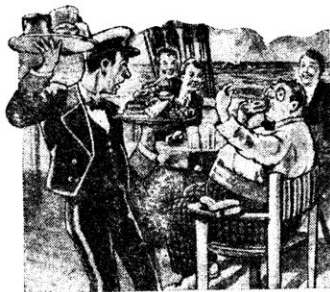
* * * * *

Y E O L D E C Y N I Q U E I N N

A cynic knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

HAMILTONIANA

FAMOUS SERIES No. 4



"BILLY BUNTER'S EASTER CRUISE" the opening story of a series in which Bunter's relative buys a yacht and runs it as a floating boarding-house. Harry Wharton and Co. join Bunter's party, expecting to be guests, and find out, too late, that everything that "goes down" goes down also on the bill. Appeared in 1933.

Frank Richard in entertaining form. A popular series, though the basic theme had been used before in the Rookwood series.

Artist - Leonard Shields.

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DO YOU REMEMBER? By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 36 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 28 - "The Boy Who Was Soft."

When a new boy arrived at a school in a striking manner, the reader could always be certain that the author intended him to be a character of some importance. Do you remember how Jimmy Silver on his first day at Rookwood made off with the brake intended for the Modern seniors? How Lord Mauleverer arrived at Greyfriars in a manner just as startling? And how Lord Mornington (as he was then) was dragged to Rookwood by the Fistical Four at the end of a rope? But none of these arrivals could compare with the amazing advent of Teddy Grace who astonished everyone from Dr. Chisholm ~~downwards~~ by entering the hallowed precincts on the back of an elephant.

Teddy Grace was unique in another respect: he seems to be the only Hamiltonian character who informed the school of his own nickname. He announced that he was called Putty because he was rather soft, and

and Putty Grace he remained. By appearing artless he escaped punishment for the episode of the elephant, but the juniors soon tumbled to him, and the soft boy had a hard time on occasions.

Putty Grace was allotted to Study No. 2 by Mr. Bootles, and this study compared with No. 7 at Greyfriars in the freakish nature of its occupants. Jones minor was decent enough, but Higgs was a most unpleasant bully and Tubby Muffin was as fatuous as Bunter. Putty's arrival was sufficient to put the stamp of eccentricity on No. 2 for good.

Putty's early adventures were amusing but not noteworthy. He was the son of a rich coal-owner, and his wealth brought him the attentions of the usual set of spongers. He fell foul of Carthew as well as Higgs, and played a number of practical jokes, for which he soon achieved notoriety. His liking for sketching in the impressionist manner showed a more serious side to his nature of which more was to be heard later when it took him out of bounds.

It was customary in the very early days for a new boy to save someone's life before he would be accepted in the form, and one can think of a variety of characters to whom this rule applied, from Alonzo Todd to Jimmy Silver. When Putty saved Bulkeley's life, however, the author had a different motive in mind: it was to allow an unscrupulous braggart (Muffin) to claim the credit. We were then treated to the usual comic sequences in which Muffin regularly had tea with Bulkeley, borrowed money from him, and finally presented him with a bill for £2 18 6 in respect of damage sustained to clothing whilst saving Bulkeley's life (an incident which bears close comparison with the story in Magnet No. 430). Putty had been keeping quiet in order to avoid being punished for breaking bounds, but eventually the truth came out, and Muffin's bill was never settled.

Putty did not, perhaps, feature so greatly as his portentous arrival had promised, but he remained to the end a likeable scamp with a distinctive Rookwoodian touch, and despite his superficial resemblance to Christopher Clarence Carboy he would have been quite out of place at Greyfriars or St. Jim's. Any story in which he appears is always certain to be delightful and pleasing - but, then, what Rookwood story is not?

* * * * *

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. 47. THE UGLY DUCKLING

I have never yet met anyone who speaks with very great affection for the POPULAR. It is, maybe, disregarded as a paper which presented reprints. It is despised, perhaps, as lacking originality. Its format causes annoyance to anyone who likes method and order. Authors detested it for very few earned cheques from writing for the Popular. Even the work of the artists was repeated over long periods. Even in its veritable heyday - the time when it was white and Oxford blue - it was a complete hotch-potch of reprinted material.

And I have always loved it. To my shame, it has one of the warmest corners in my sentimental heart.

You, of course, have concrete reasons for disliking the Pop, but I am by no means sure why I liked it so much. Things happen that way. The Rio Kid, about the only original character that the Popular ever presented in a long series, has ever been a great favourite of mine, but I loved the Popular long before the Kid rode the ranges.

Probably it was merely the nostalgia of it all. Renewing acquaintances with fondly remembered old stories, and wondering what was coming next.

The original Penny Popular, which I bought up in stacks from second-hand book stalls in a public market, struck a quaint note, with its 3-picture cover. For five years it featured Tom Merry, Sexton Blake, and Jack, Sam and Pete, and I have observed before that these characters made odd bed-fellows. Obviously they were the most popular characters of the day, but they appealed to three entirely different classes of readers. On second thoughts, there may have been method in the Editor's madness. Of course, those Penny Pop stories were pretty long, and the pruning which had been necessary had been well done.

After the war, when the paper re-appeared, the format was the same as when it had been suspended - stories of St. Jim's, Greyfriars, and Rookwood. Tiny print and monotonous presentation can only have been countered by the immense popularity of the material. It could be that I was the only Popular reader who felt melancholy when the Editor announced that brand-new stories of each school would form the future bill of fare. For a time I dropped the paper, coming back when the old stories came back.

A great many - too many - of the most famous characters of the juvenile world figured in the Pop during its lifetime. As Bill Lofts shows us in his mammoth work in the C.D. Annual for 1960, many of the Magnet stories appeared in three sections under three different titles.

It was not very good policy. So often, the Popular offered too much - five stories, a supplement, and a serial in its 28 pages.

Possibly it was handicapped by having only the Rio Kid fresh from the pen of Charles Hamilton. If so, it had the advantage of presenting masses of his earlier work.

The Ugly Duckling. That despised Popular. Yet plenty of readers must have supported it, for it lasted for twenty years. Its rapid deterioration to an ignominious demise is one of the mysteries of the Amalgamated Press.

An Ugly Duckling - for you perhaps. But always a swan for me. It's just my point of view! What's yours?

* * * * *

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 45. CHRISTMAS AT WHARTON LODGE

FRANK URWIN. I'm with you all the way. Wharton Lodge always possessed that Christmas spirit, if not the Christmas ghost. The true spirit of Christmas was never more epitomised than in the description of the cosy hall of the Lodge, with the crackling Yule log, the merry laughter of the boys, and good old Wells hovering in the background. "Christmas at Wharton Lodge" is not a story; it's an institution; and a very tiny brickbat to Frank Richards for not taking us there this year.

KENNETH KIRBY. I fully agree that the Christmases at Wharton Lodge are among the very best things done by Charles Hamilton and by themselves make a very strong argument for the thesis that the Magnetis is better than the Gem. Charles Hamilton reminds me very much of Dickens in style and the descriptions of Christmas festivities are not paralleled by any other writers than they.

* * * * *

AUSTRALIA IN THE PICTURE

In January, the Australian "Sun Herald" presented an excellent article on Frank Richards, plus a photograph of the famous author, under the heading "No Fadeout For The Fat Boy."

The pleasantly-written article gives facts and figures already familiar to English readers, and comments "Mr. Richards believes the 'boys' who read his first Bunter books - now fathers and grandfathers - are still among his most avid fans. They wrote hundreds of indignant letters when the publishers tried to change Bunter's check trousers after the war to make him look "less phenomenal"."

The cutting was sent to us by Bette Pate of our Australian Club.

GEMS OF HAMILTONIANA

Hobson of the Shell was a great admirer of his musical chum. He really believed that Claude was a jolly old genius, and that some day people would be talking of Hoskins' Earlier Period, just as now they talked about Beethoven's Later Period! Only he couldn't stand the row in his own study when Hoskins was composing. He couldn't stand having to

keep as still and quiet as a mouse while Claude was jotting down his inspirations. No fellow could stand it, as he told Stewart of the Shell, and Stewart fully agreed that no fellow could - or would, anyhow!

(From the Jim Valentine series)

WANTED: Sexton Blake Libraries. 1st series Nos. 11, 17, 37, 105, 109, 111, 198, 201, 219. 2nd series Nos. 293, 296, 306, 422, 474, 495, 520, 667. Union Jacks Nos. 689, 691, 693, 695, 702, 703, 704, 711, 717, 721, 725, 736, 740, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 793, 798, 800, 802, 803, 809, 811, 813, 814, 818, 819, 1041, 1064, 1098, 1390. MRS. J. PACKMAN, 27 ARCHDALE ROAD, EAST DULWICH, LONDON, S.E.22.

WANTED: GEMS: 338, 339, 340, 356, 358, 359, 457, 459, 493, 549, 773, 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 979, 984, 985, 986, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1116, 1126, 1129, 1133, MAGNETS 45, 52, 134, 138, 141, 195, 205, 238, 277, 318, 319, 344, 345, 346, 347, 353, 357, 358, 386, 388, 389, 400, 411, 417, 469, 439, 446, 422, 435, 719, 752, 773, 809, 834, 849, 850, 856, 858, 862, 863, 964, 965, 866, 968, 900, 921, 924, 925, 935, 936, 940, 942, 943, 944, 946, 948, 949, 951, 954, 955, 958, 965, 988, 996. POPULARS: 370, 385, 390, 396, 398, 452, 455, 461, 474. A thousand Magnets, Gems, Lees, etc., available for liberal exchange.
ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

WILLIAM GOSLING

By "Squiff"

OLD GOSSY, otherwise William Gosling, the School Porter, like the old ruins or the ivy that clings to the ancient walls, is one of the institutions of Greyfriars. He first came to the school in the dim and distant past, though perhaps not, as some worthy has it, in prehistoric times.

Nobody knows his actual age, but if, as some of us suspect, Quelch's "History of Greyfriars" shows that his job of school porter dates back to his demobilisation after the Crimean War, we can make a jolly good guess.

Gosling loves boys, but he has a queer way of showing it. Beneath his crusty exterior, he obviously has a keen sense of humour, as witness his malicious chuckle as he clangs the gates in our faces at lock-ups, or watch the sly grin as he hoists some unfortunate victim for a Head's flogging.

His vocabulary is not extensive, being limited to such elegant expressions as "Wot I says is this 'ere," or "all boys should be drowned at birth," and "which I'll report yer to the 'Ead, yo young rips." Yes, dear reader, Gossy loves boys. He makes the famous Mr. Chips look like an also-ran.

Work and Mr. Gosling are sworn enemies - they have nothing in common. When there is a job to be done he locks the door of his lodge, and, like Brer Rabbit, lies low and says nuffin. He is as deaf as a doornail when his services are required, yet he shows a remarkable sense of hearing to such questions as "Has anyone lost this half-crown?" and can hear coins jingle. To give him his due, he can be most helpful to chaps if you first cross his horny palm with silver.

Gossy's nose gets redder and redder with the passing years. It must be a permanent cold - to us innocent fellows. Only suspicious eads would say that "something hot" (and not out of a medicine bottle either) was the cause.

Dear old Gossy. We all love him, but I daresay, like Tenyson's Brook, he'll go on for ever.

Nelson Lee Column

(CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD)

NEW PAPER! NEW SCHOOL TALES! NEW DETECTIVE STORIES!



"BIRDS OF PREY" The Story of a Man and a Boy
By Maxwell Scott

"Birds of Prey," a famous Nelson Lee story,
written by Maxwell Scott.

lead in everything. He ousted Fullwood from the Captaincy and made the Ancient House supreme.

His chums in Study C were Sir Montie (begad! Dear Old Boy) and Tommy Watson, brother of the fair Violet. They were quite content to follow his lead except in the matter of top hats, ties and fancy waist-coats, on which subject Montie was the expert, although later he had serious competition from Archie and Singleton.

Nipper was amazingly versatile. The best swimmer and oarsman in the Remove apart from "The Bosun" (souse me); the star of the cricket team until Jerry Dodd arrived; in a class on his own as a boxer until

With two more instalments of Herbert Leckenby's memories to go, we have a break this month with an article by a newcomer to our fold, but a keen Leeite for all that; we hope to hear more from Mr. Chapman in the future. Here is his first major contribution to our Column.

* * *

"NIPPER"

By H. Chapman

He was known at one time as Dick Bennett, and Umlosi always referred to him as the "Nimble Manzie." As he had been Nelson Lee's assistant for 30 years before making his appearance at St. Frank's at the age of 15 he might also have been called "Peter Pan."

He had already been all over the world at this time and had amazing adventures.

Although he had had no proper education, he soon settled down in the Remove and took the

Lawrence appeared on the scene. In fact, the best at everything until a new prodigy came along to be the main character in a new series.

He could drive anything on wheels, pilot an aeroplane, and knew all about wireless. He led most of the jokes against Christine and Co., Brewster and Co., etc; kept the boundaries in more or less good order; led Barring Outs against tyrant Heads (and Headmistresses) and School Governors. Founder and editor of "Nipper's Magazine" and "St. Frank's Magazine"; leader of the Anti-bullying Leagues and other things, he still found time to help his "gumnor" with detective work and was indignant if Lee left him out.

The number of coiners, kidnappers, burglars, and murderers in the district was amazing. Every new master was surrounded by mystery. Every new boy was either kidnapped or swindled by crooks. Every old house in the locality was occupied by coiners, kidnappers or mad scientists (hardly a healthy spot for a school; one wonders how St. Frank's survived all the notoriety.)

Nipper helped to solve all these mysteries, helped by his little spaniel "Boz" which he bought for 10/- from a member of the crew of Dorrie's yacht. Surely a wonderful 10/- worth.

He had the peculiar gift of willing himself to wake at any time during the night, and it never failed him. Rather discouraging to the makers of alarm clocks, I always thought. He had various ups and downs. Was kidnapped, sent to Coventry, kicked out of the Remove captaincy several times, expelled (unjustly, of course), but returned disguised as a new boy and cleared his name.

Was never known to act unwisely or speak indiscreetly (as he was the narrator of most of the stories perhaps this had something to do with it.) Later in the series, however, he did develop one little weakness (name of Mary Summers). Personally, I would have risked Handy's wrath and plumped for Irene Manners.

There were many changes in the later stories, all for the worse, I thought. Nipper and his chums took less of the limelight ("Handy" taking more of the stage.) The stories were told in third person; a big disappointment this, as I liked the old style so much better.

It was the last straw, however, when the name "Nipper" almost ceased to be mentioned and he was always referred to as Dick Hamilton, and seemed to become just one of the crowd. Perhaps all these changes were the cause of the Nelsen Lee's loss of popularity and ultimate extinction as I always thought the stories in their original form the best ever to appear in a boy's paper.

When one read "the narrative related throughout by Nipper" at the head of the stories, one could always depend on a good, well told yarn,

SEXTON BLAKE TODAY

THE LATEST NOVELS IN THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY Review by WALTER WEBB

THE DEVIL TO PAY (No. 167)

REX DOLPHIN

Dark and sinister happenings in a remote, superstition-ridden village in Oxfordshire. Blake and Paula working together in an atmosphere of supernatural evil, where witchcraft and devil-worship hold sway. Who were the fanatical group known as the Devil's Dozen, and to what extent were they involved in the brutal murder of film starlet, Sandra Kennedy? The pall of evil hanging over Aston Deville like a black shroud is dispersed by Sexton Blake only after a series of weird and horrific adventures which his attractive secretary shares.

In this down-to-earth, matter-of-fact age a novel such as this has to be handled convincingly. And has been, although, perhaps, the psychiatrist, Dr. Roger Lamartine, is a rather too obvious shadow in the wings.

The higher the standard of story-telling an author achieves, the more difficult it is for him to keep up with it. For me, the writer just fails to register with the same impact here as he did in his four previous novels.

Rating..... Good

THIEF OF CLUBS (No. 168)

GILBERT JOHNS

When a man whose duty it was to uphold the law and another whose liberty it was to transgress it, died suddenly and prematurely, it opened up two parallel lanes of hatred and violence, which, merging into one broad thoroughfare, trafficked by plotting and murder, had Sexton Blake driving warily towards his objective - the person behind the murder of Simon Pomfret, A.C. The mysterious Mr. Card, Soho racketeer and gang-leader.

In the pursuit of his quarry the lights are mostly at a warning red against Blake; but "Mr. Card" is destined to be yet another criminal to make the bitter discovery that even the widest thoroughfare becomes a cul-de-sac when Sexton Blake determines to get his man.

This really does seem to be written by a new hand, though, contrary to advertising claims, the story does not feature either Paula Dene or Splash Kirby.

Rating..... Good

GENERAL COMMENTARY

BLAKE AUTHORS AND THE B.B.C. The more observant of Blake fans who take in that organ of the B.B.C. - the RADIO TIMES - must have been gratified to see the name of one of the most famous of all Sexton Blake writers mentioned last month as being the author of one of its forthcoming plays to be heard on the Home Service.

Some Blake authors are by no means strangers to Broadcasting House, and well-remembered chroniclers include Alfred Edger, whose highly successful play of a doctor's research into the mentality of crime - "The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse" - was both seen and heard in 1951. Written under his adopted name of Barre Lyndon. Columnist Lionel Hale wrote of it as"A corking good thriller."

Twenty-three years ago, the late Gwyn Evans appeared in a talk (on radio) with an ex-Scotland Yard detective, whilst Gerald Verner, who, as "Donald Stuart" was a regular contributor to the S.B.L. before the war, took part with a panel of experts, which included L.A.G. Strong, in, at least, one programme on the Light.

Not so long ago, there was brought to the pages of Radio Times a breath of nostalgia

when a name - that of Michael Storm - was mentioned in connection with a series of plays produced for the entertainment of Home Service listeners. This was not the actual Blake author who started the Plummer series, of course, but a younger man who may just possibly have been related in some way to the Michael Storm of the Blake Saga.

Now, the latest and most famous of them all and a Blake centurian (in stories) makes his bow. None other, in fact, than ANTHONY SKENE, creator of the famous albino, Monsieur Zenith, who is given as the name of the author of "Stage Play" heard on 9th January last. One of the more ambitious of B.B.C. productions, it lasted for an hour and a half.

OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB

MIDLAND

Meeting held 19th December, 1960.

What should have been our Christmas Party turned out to be a pleasant little meeting of seven members. Works parties and business commitments kept down the numbers on this particular night and the illness of Beryl Porter kept away her husband too. It was strange to have a meeting without those two and all present were concerned about the health of our valued librarian and the wish was in our hearts that all would be well very soon with them. Ray Bennett, too, has had illness in the family and we hope also in his case, his mother will improve and we shall have him once again in his usual place.

This was our last meeting at the Hope and Anchor Restaurant. The Club has not been too satisfied with this venue for our meetings and following a suggestion by Madge Corbett, the Secretary has fixed up more suitable quarters at the Arden Hotel in New Street, Birmingham - a trifle more expensive but worth a trial, being nearer to trains and bus services.

There was no fixed programme so we sat round the fire for a general chat on various matters - books of course. Win Brown gave us her eight selections for her Desert Island holiday. These were varied but highly interesting, though not all old boys books. Her first choice was the Bible, 2. Dr. Heal's "Faith"; 3. Methodist Hymn Book; 4. "Three Men in a Boat" by Jerome K. Jerome; 5. Once again the famous Magnet "Water Lily" series. Another famous Magnet series came next - "The Bounder's Double" - the Bertie Vernon stories. For No. 7 on her list Win chose an omnibus edition of Mystery stories. Finally, the Mount Helicon Book of poems. A nice choice and heartily applauded by the rest of us.

The welcome, but unexpected news, that we had again won the Greyfriars Cup was followed up by George Chatham reading one of the entries from the winning magazine. This was a Greyfriars Bunter story and was well received. It was strange to see no library books available, due to Beryl's illness and there had been no quiz prepared so we had to be content with the programme so hastily arranged. We hope that a special effort will be made to attend our first meeting of the New Year in the new club room - Arden Hotel, New Street, Birmingham. The usual greetings of the season were exchanged and on that note, may the Midland Club send their special good wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year to all their friends of the other four Clubs.

HARRY BROSTER - Secretary.

MERSEYSIDE

If the remainder of the meetings in 1961 are only half as good as this one, then we are in for a really good year! There was a capacity attendance, which included Ernie

Sheen, who has been unable to be with us for some months. We got away to an early start, and, following the opening remarks by the chairman, and the financial report, various matters of club interest were dealt with exhaustively, including suggestions for the next Greyfriars Cup Contest, and a more varied programme of section quizzes and entertainments were arranged for future meetings.

We then took part in an hilarious "Trick Quiz" submitted by Frank Unwin, which was won with a maximum score by Bill Windsor, with Frank Case a poor second. After refreshments came another game "Missing Words," the winner being Jim Walsh, followed by Don Webster and John Farrell; this was a most enjoyable game. The rest of the evening passed all too quickly, as we had the pleasure of welcoming the Liverpool journalist and writer, Frank Shaw, who spoke most effectively on his knowledge of the hobby. He intends to write an article shortly on Frank Richards, and the old books, and was glad to learn from Don Webster and Co. certain information which he lacked for that purpose. We look forward to meeting Frank again in the near future, as he has promised to give us another talk, this time on Liverpool slang, on which he is an acknowledged expert, and we should find this both amusing and enlightening. Despite our New Year resolution to finish the meetings promptly at 9 p.m., it was nearer 9.30 before we got away; even so it was with reluctance we had to depart from this scene of good-fellowship and happy hours.

FRANK CASE

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 14th January, 1961.

In spite of the cold and fog, which made travelling difficult for some of our members, sixteen of us turned up for this the first meeting of 1961. Gerry Allison gave us the welcome news that he is much better, and was starting work on a part-time basis the following week. Gerry also confirmed that readings of Frank Richards' fine story 'Rivals and Chums' (the sequel to 'The Boy Without a Name') would be included in our summer programme.

Regret was expressed that we had not succeeded in retaining the Greyfriars Cup, but all present extended their heartiest congratulations to the Midland Club on their victory.

After business had been disposed of, a copy of "The Foghorn" that very interesting sheet from Merseyside, was passed round, and then Jack Wood told us about his visit to the Victoria Palace, London, to see 'Billy Bunter's Swiss Roll.'

The talk this evening, entitled 'Famous Encounters' was given by Geoffrey Wilde, and illustrated by extracts from 'Magnet' stories, read in Geoff's usual vivid and entertaining style.

After refreshments, we had a game 'Mixed Doubles,' devised by Gerry Allison, the winner being Geoff Wilde.

We wended our various ways homeward after a most enjoyable evening, conscious of having made a good start to 1961.

Next meeting - Saturday, 11th February.

F. HANCOCK - Secretary.

DON WEBSTER'S telephone number is Richmond 5251.

YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

People with hobbies don't go crazy, but this doesn't apply to people they live with.

EDITORIAL



Peter Abbott,
Editor



George Smith,
Editor



Mark Twain,
Editor



Herbert Hoover,
Editor



Frank Sinatra,
Editor

A man's real possession is his memory. In nothing else is he rich, in nothing else is he poor. So wrote Alexander Smith.

PROGRESS: Every copy of the January Digest was mailed at a main Post Office about 2 p.m. on Friday. To the best of our knowledge, no reader received his copy before the following Monday, some copies being delivered with the second post. Time Marches On.

MORE PROGRESS: Just as the warning "Wet Paint" may tempt some of us to try our luck with our finger-tips, so the sight of a string of consecutive serial numbers on a heap of magazines may tempt us to collect. The last-named temptation is passing, however. There are few serial numbers left.

Those of us who look back in pleasure instead of in anger, those of us who tend to think that modern periodicals are, at least, no better than those of pre-war days, are accustomed to being contemptuously dismissed as die-hards, and we are well-acquainted with the patronising "We're in the nineteen sixties, old boy, we must move with the times." Some of us, indeed, are sufficiently long in the tooth to remember ancient times when it was possible to see a cinema programme without the added delight of accepting fifteen minutes of advertisements and when there was none of that exquisite risk of sitting down, in the dark, on a half-eaten choc-ice.

We concede that we must move with the times. We are quite sure that there is much to be said for the modern snack-bar, with its tiny tables of weird design and its narrow, uncomfortable seats, and we smile frozenly as we pay an exorbitant price for a modern "brash-burger" and a spot of coffee, half-froth, in a thick, transparent cup. Of course, if we are old-fashioned enough to be plump, we could never sit down at all in a really modern snack bar.

As the poet might have said: "Ours but to wait to die, ours not to reason why." In view of this, dare we venture to ask on what grounds the use of serial numbers has been discontinued? Almost all periodicals a good many newspapers, even Mum's grand old paper "Woman's Weekly,"

have dispensed with serial numbers. We just can't think why.

The collector of to-morrow, when dealing with today's mags, will have to go by the dates. What fun he'll have allowing for weeks when strikes stopped publication! Of course, the March of Time may bring euthanasia for all collectors.

CHANCE TO VOTE: The editor of SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY is running a Pop Poll to determine the type of story most liked by his readers. The categories, which readers are asked to place in order of popularity, are as follows:- Whodunit, Espionage, Overseas Adventure, War Stories, Science Fiction, Occult, Humour. A very wide range of subjects. We urge readers of Collectors' Digest to join in the poll and register their votes.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *

Yours Sincerely

(Interesting extracts from the Editor's Letter-bag)

HAROLD LACK (Northampton) Ah, those happy halcyon days at Greyfriars, Rookwood and St. Jim's - there was never anything like them before, and I am quite sure there never will be again. To me, Harry Wharton, Tom Merry, Jimmy Silver & Cos., are ageless and they always will be.

L. S. ELLIOTT (London) Mr. E. C. Carter in his article on Nelson Lee (1960 Annual) mentions he is No. 1074 of the St. Frank's League. I am No. 134, and I still have the certificate, dated 13th July, 1925.

J. BREEZE BENTLEY (Guiseley) Especially have I enjoyed the long list of sources of quotations (1960 Annual) from Charles Hamilton's writings. I am sure that the author of the Greyfriars yarns himself will be astonished by the number and variety of them. They were, I think, a very distinctive feature of the stories (am I right in saying, especially of Greyfriars stories?) and many were old favourites, coming up from tradition - e.g. Quelch's gimlet eye - Marion's nose.....

GEORGE McROBERTS (Belfast) The Digest is splendid. I would like to see more about the old comics such as Chips, Comic Cuts, etc. It is years since I lost contact with Weary Willie, Tired Tim, Casey's Court, Homeless Hector. How I loved the comics, especially at Christmas time.

(We bet you got a kick out of our last month's issue, George. - ED.)

HARRY DOWLER (Manchester) I am sure that "Sexton Blake's Christmas Case" was not written by Maxwell Scott. It has not the faintest resemblance to a Maxwell Scott story. It was written by William Murray Graydon. All Graydon's favourite words, such as "yowed" "bade" etc., and the slushy sentimentality and padding are instantly recognisable. Moreover, Roger and Marjorie Blackburn are introduced into this story, characters who appeared

in another Xmas No. about 1906 or 1907. It is interesting to note that this story formed the basis of the melodrama "Sexton Blake, Detective" which was performed on the stage throughout the country, and which I myself saw when I was about 16.

LESLEY ROWLEY (Hanover) I would often like to send my comments on "Let's Be Controversial" but, unfortunately, the Digest seldom arrives in time for me to pen my views and send them to you in time for the next issue. Could the column be left open for overseas comment for a further month?

(Invariably the Echoes appear two months after "Let's Be Controversial." This is expressly to give overseas readers the opportunity to join the discussion. Even after the Echoes have appeared, however, comments are always welcome from readers anywhere. ED.)

TOM DOBSON (Australia) Could you print the names of the books from which the Gems of Hamiltoniana are taken? It would be nice to look them up if one was lucky enough to have a copy.

WHAT READERS SAID ABOUT THE 1960 ANNUAL

Letters concerning the Annual poured in a giant flood into the Editorial Office. Without exception, every single article received its meed in praise, and all readers were enthusiastic about the pictures. It is quite impossible to quote from many of the letters, but the following are typical comments from readers -

CLIFF SMITH (St. Annes) Please convey my admiration and thanks to all concerned in the compilation of our Annual, with a special bouquet to yourself for what is such a labour of love. I wish old Herbert could see this latest Annual - he'd be the happiest of the lot of us.

STAN KNIGHT (Cheltenham) A magnificent effort, of which you can be justly proud.

JOHN STOKES (Dublin) A super-smashing Annual.

WALTER WEBB (Birmingham) A tip-top Annual.

CLIFFORD LETTEY (Bristol) I thought the Annual very good, but was sorry to see nothing in there by Roger Jenkins.

JIM HURRELL (Romford) A truly great effort - the best yet. The phrase 'it will be read from cover to cover' certainly applied here. I could not put it down.

MAURICE KUTNER (Clapton) Thanks and congratulations to all concerned. I'm sure that Herbert Leckenby looking down from that place to which all good editors go, must be nodding his head most emphatically with approval.

H. CHAPMAN (Barton-on-Humber) It is very nicely produced, full of interesting reading, and good value for money, except for St. Frank's fans. Although the Annual is a very worthy production, it could have been better with more Lee material.

ALEX PARSONS (Trenmere) Congratulations on the charming and delightful Annual, which I have enjoyed immensely. But, oh, how nostalgic! The reproductions of the old papers' front covers brought back many memories: happy ones, I am pleased to say. Congratulations, also, to your many contributors.

ROBERT McCABE (Dundee) The Annual made my Christmas complete. The articles and illustrations are first-class. "Memory Lane" brought back many memories of my childhood, especially the Penny Bazaar. Congratulations on a grand piece of work.

ARTHUR HOLLAND (Australia) I'm really delighted with it - this latest Annual surpasseth them all. One can easily see that a tremendous amount of work has gone into it, and to the best possible advantage. I regard it as the very best piece of duplicating work I have ever seen.

NEIL LAMBERT (Chessington) A really wonderful Annual. In its pages are reflected the time and immense trouble that has obviously been taken in the preparation of such a volume. I look forward to its annual publication with the same eagerness that I experienced with the famous Holiday Annual. To me, it has amply taken the place of the latter.

CHARLES BAKER (Caernarvon) Quite apart from the really fine articles, I have never before seen such splendid typing and duplicating which I can only say is magnificent. I should think both you and the York Duplicating Services have about reached perfection with this 1960 Annual. I am sure you must be very proud of it. I know Herbert would be if he could see it - perhaps he can.

GREYFRIARS CUP FINDS PERMANENT HOME

- FINAL WINNERS BECOME OWNERS OF THE FAMOUS TROPHY -
- GREAT NEW CONTEST COMING

It is nearly five years since Mr. Leslie Rowley, member of the London Branch of the O.B.B.C. and one of the most enthusiastic members of our entire clan, put into practice the brilliant idea which had been exercising his fertile brain; with splendid generosity, he provided the beautiful Challenge Cup, which he named the Greyfriars Cup, for competition among the four English O.B.B. Clubs.

Les, as he is affectionately known to us all, laid down the rules for the first year. Each Club was to prepare a miniature booklet on the lines of the old Greyfriars Herald, the entries were to be judged by an independent umpire, and the Club which came last was to "set" the contest for the ensuing year.

Our MIDLAND Club won the first year, with a brilliant entry. The judge was Mr. Bill Gander of Canada.

For the second contest, each Club had to enter four stories of certain length - stories of the three Hamilton schools and St. Frank's. Once again, Mr. Gander was the judge, and this time our LONDON Club was to take the Cup. For the third year, we again had a Greyfriars Herald type of entry, and the Cup went North, to our NORTHERN Club; Mr. Chapman was the judge. Finally, in 1960, the clubs were required to enter three stories - one had to feature Sexton Blake, the other two had to be school stories; Mr. G. R. Samways acted as judge. For the second time, our MIDLAND Club won the cup.

It should be added that, each year, Mr. Rowley, with characteristic thought and generosity, paid for the suitable inscription of the Cup, and, further, paid the expenses for the trophy to be transported from one Club home to the next.

Now, Mr. Rowley has decided that the MIDLAND Club, in winning the laurels for a second year, shall become the proud possessor of this splendid trophy for all time. The following is the letter which our Les has forwarded to the Editor of COLLECTORS' DIGEST:

Dear Mr. Editor,

The "Greyfriars Cup" competition, having now run the gamut of four years with the Midland Club members being justifiably the winners for two out of these four years, I think that the Midland Club should be considered the outright winners and that the Cup should now become the property of that Club. I hope that the members of the Midland Club will see their way clear to accept the Cup for posterity as it were and that they will also accept my very best wishes for their victory.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank most sincerely the unstinting efforts of all who helped in the past competitions. In particular, the chaps who wrote the stories, the Club Secretaries who dealt with the correspondence, the judges for their kind impartiality, and - of course - the Editor of this magazine for the space so generously offered.

Another type of contest is under consideration and in this case a monetary prize will be offered in the hope that all readers of the Digest at home or overseas may feel able to take part.

Sincerely,

LES ROWLEY.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST congratulates our MIDLAND Club on their well-earned honour of becoming the permanent owners of the trophy. On behalf of all the Clubs, we thank Leslie Rowley for the wonderful gesture which has brought us all so much interest, incentive and happiness.

AND WHAT OF THE FUTURE? Les is now planning a gigantic new Contest, in association with the Editor, which will be open to EVERY SUBSCRIBER to COLLECTORS' DIGEST. He has already deposited the sum of £5 with this magazine, and this handsome prize can be won by any C.D. subscriber in any part of the world.

At the moment, a most thrilling and fascinating contest is being prepared for you all. ANY C.D. subscriber, with a little initiative, a little imagination, and a little luck can win this monetary reward during the coming year. At present, it is all in the embryo stage, but we shall be making an announcement in this magazine shortly.

WATCH COLLECTORS' DIGEST
FOR PARTICULARS OF THE
GREAT NEW LES ROWLEY CONTEST!