

ONE HALFPENNY

PICTURES, PRIZES, JOKES.

ONE HALFPENNY

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Comic Cuts.

1d.
2

No. 1747

ONE HALFPENNY WEEKLY

June 12, 1962

THE STRONG MAN FRAUD:
DR. THE WORLD AND BALL.



THE LATEST BOTANICAL DISCOVERY:
AND ITS CAUSES.

BY HOOK AND CRO-K.

It is a new discovery that the world is a globe, and that the only way of seeing the world is to go to the top of it.

THE JOYS OF THE SUMMERHIT.



WHY TIMPKENS IS GOING TO MOVE AGAIN.



Collectors' Digest

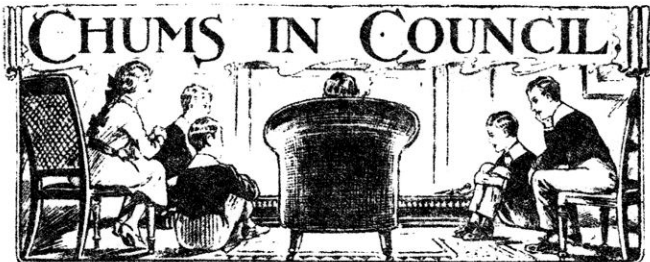
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Number 186

JUNE, 1962

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THE EDITOR CHATS WITH HIS READERS

THE NICEST PEOPLE:

In my preface to the 1962 Collectors' Digest Who's Who I suggested that the readers of this magazine are the very nicest people in the world. All the time little things are happening which convince me that I was right in what I wrote.

Some time ago a Mr. Maurice Cooper, who lives near Paris, wrote to the Illustrated London News to try to get information concerning an old periodical called "Ally Sloper's Half Holiday." The editorial department of the Illustrated London News put Mr. Cooper in touch with me, and he told me how much he would love to be able to buy a few copies of that very old "Ally Sloper" periodical. I mentioned the matter to one of our readers, Mr. Frank Pettingell, and he promised me that he would write to Mr. Cooper.

The matter slipped from my mind after that, until a few days ago when I heard from Mr. Cooper. He wrote:

"It was good of you to have given my address to

the famous actor, Mr. Frank Pettingell, and to have enquired whether, by chance, he might have an odd copy of Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday to sell. We have been exchanging letters. He found, in searching through his collection, a duplicate volume for 1895. Finally, you will be glad to hear that he asked me to accept this volume with his compliments, and, of course, I joyfully did so. The volume arrived safely last week. Now I shall have some happy hours of youthful recollections."

The arrival of Mr. Cooper's letter made me very cheerful. Mr. Frank Pettingell is not only one of the finest character actors in the country, he is also one of the Nicest People. And Mr. Cooper, in remembering to write and say Thank You for the little that I had done, must also be a Very Nice Person.

WHICH SCHOOL?

A national newspaper, skimpily reviewing the Autobiography, made a few sour comments concerning the mystery of the school which Charles Hamilton attended. Does it really matter which school he attended? He wished to keep it secret, and it is no business of ours. Whatever and wherever the school was, he was a great credit to it! And, in our view, that's all that matters.

THE EDITOR.

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BRUSH WITH A BODY

Maurice McLoughlin, the writer of the Bunter stage shows, has written a comedy thriller entitled "Brush with a Body". The play is being sent on a short tour of the provinces, prior to West End presentation. It is presented by City Stage Productions who are responsible for the Billy Bunter productions during the Christmas season.

The following is a list of the provincial dates, the play being staged for a week in each case:

Brighton Theatre Royal June 4th; Oxford June 11th; Hull June 18th; followed by Golders Green and Streatham Hill.

A strong cast has been engaged, including the famous star Mary Merrall, and our own Bernadette Milnes. No doubt plenty of C.D. readers will wish to enjoy a visit to the play when it comes within reachable distance of their homes.

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THE MAGIC OF "NO. 1."
By F. Addington Symonds

One of the greatest delights of my boyhood was the appearance of a new paper, whether it was The Magnet or Smith's Weekly, both of which first numbers I remember well.

There was for me a fascination in the appearance of "No. 1" on the front page, comparable to the expectant thrill one felt when sitting in a theatre and waiting for the curtain to go up. Here was something brand new, a fresh adventure, a "mystery" which was to reveal itself, page by page and issue by issue - for of course I followed the progress of each new paper week by week, at least until the novelty wore off - or the paper faded into oblivion, as, alas, it sometimes did!

One of the sad little company of "infant mortalities" which I remember most vividly was a weekly published by George Newnes Ltd., and called The Boys' Best - or, to give it its full title, The Boys' Best Story Paper. No. 1 is before me as I write and I see that it bears the date October 7th, 1911.

The front page - which was "Boys' Friend" size - was printed in two colours, red and black, which was in itself sufficiently exciting in those days. It contained a large line drawing which illustrated a serial called "Tom at Melfield" by G. A. Weston, and pictured two school-boys falling headlong over a broken bridge on to a passing goods train below. ("There was a rending crash of splintering woodwork as the bridge gave way and Tom and his enemy, locked in a struggling embrace, fell on the swiftly moving train...!")

That was more than sufficient to whet the appetite and one turned the page with eager excitement...

The first chapter of the serial was prefaced by an editorial blurb in which it was confidently predicted that "Tom would quickly become the most talked-of boy in Britain!" And a footnote, running across all four columns of the page promised that "THE BOYS' BEST STORY PAPER is going to be the BEST and MOST POPULAR Boys' Paper ever published!" - a prophecy which, unfortunately, was far from accurate! (The paper lasted, I believe, for about six months).

Following "Tom at Melfield" came "Once a Week" - the Editor's Page, - which was obviously modelled on the Hamilton Edwardes style, so well-known in the Boy's Friend, Realm and Herald. Here the Editor advised his readers to show the paper to their parents because it claimed to be the sort of paper that "a boy can take home without running the risk of his father or mother objecting to his reading it" a tilt, of course, at the prevalence in those days of the alleged penny

dreadful!

Next came the first of a series of complete stories, "the Adventures of Captain Cartridge" by Paul Jones - the setting being in Mexico and the hero being a boy called Harry Hawkwood. Captain Cartridge was an outlaw - and the rest of the plot you should easily be able to guess!

A second serial followed, entitled "Bob Hollins' Quest", by Walter Rees. The name of the artist was not given but the trained eye soon recognized the work of the once famous Paul Hardy. This serial was sub-titled "The Most Exciting Sea and Land Adventure Story Ever Written" - the Editor was plainly much addicted to superlatives! One of the chief characters in the yarn was a rascally old sea-dog called Raspberry Joe, and the story itself was written with a rare and infectious gusto.

At the time when the Boys' Best first made its appearance, the Scout movement was just catching on and it was perhaps inevitable that the new paper should feature a serial with the significant title "Be Prepared." This was written by E. le Breton Martin, whose "Boys of the Otter Patrol" had already earned him well-deserved fame, and was a real scoop for the new paper.

Turing the pages, we next came to a series of articles on Stamp Collecting, "How to Make," and Football - all of which were excellently illustrated with diagrams, etc.

Two more stories followed - a serial entitled "The Black Star", featuring a new detective, Gilbert Gray, and written by Oliver Stuart; and the first of a new series of short completes, "Chums of the Port Watch," by Harry Campbell.

Such were the contents of the first, 16 page issue of The Boys' Best; and, to assist the paper in its launching upon the unknown and perilous seas of public approval, the Editor dreamed up the idea of establishing a corps of "paid assistants" numbering 1,000, to be drawn from among the readers themselves and called "The Boys' Best Pioneers." Readers were invited to "earn 2s. 6d. a week" by helping the Editor to make the paper better known and were informed that they would be told what to do in return for filling in a coupon with name and address, etc., and sending it to the editor.

Obviously, the response to this invitation was not too enthusiastic since the paper itself, as I have said, disappeared after about six months. I remember my own keen disappointment over its loss, for its contents during that brief period were of a comparatively high standard and many of the stories were well worth the penny charged for each issue. There was, too, an infectious enthusiasm about the editorial

direction, a "personal touch" reminiscent of the old Big Budget which endeared the paper to me and can still awaken nostalgic memories.

Looking back upon it now, it seems to me that the cause of the early demise of The Boys' Best was its too lavish imitation of the Hamilton Edwardes model, plus an attempt to copy the sincerity and enthusiasm of that great Editor, Arthur Brooke. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery; but it can also be a very dangerous and tricky business, especially where boys are concerned - they are so quick to detect anything that is not absolutely genuine. And I fear that the anonymous Editor of this paper fixed too rapt a gaze upon the personality and work of Arthur Brooke, who was, of course, inimitable.

A pity - indeed, a great pity! The Boys' Best might have developed into quite one of the best papers of its kind, if only

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COMING NEXT MONTH

BY SPECIAL REQUEST

Large numbers of readers have been writing continuously to the Digest Office requesting a story in Collectors' Digest of Mr. Buddle and Meredith of Slade. We try to give our readers what they want. Your Editor had a straight talk with our author of the Slade stories, with the result that, in our July issue, we shall bring you a brand-new tale of Slade.

MR BUDDLE'S HAIR SHIRT

— IN COLLECTORS' DIGEST NEXT MONTH —

THIS MONTH'S COVER

HOW THEY BEGAN, No. 19. On our cover this month we bring you the very first issue of the much-loved comic paper "COMIC CUTS."

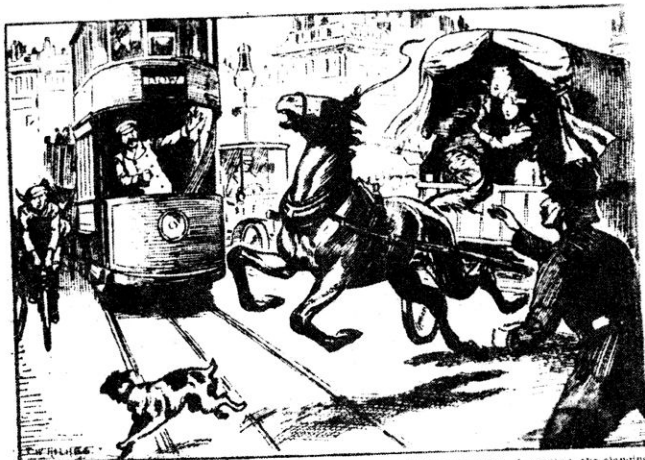
YE OLDE CYNIQUE INN

It is not the mug who becometh the big pot.

WANTED: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16 S.P.C. Will pay 1/- each.
TOM LANGLEY, 340 BALDWIN'S LANE, BIRMINGHAM 28.

WANTED: Magnets and Populars 1923 and 1924; Young Britains and early film magazines, and film star postcards, stills, etc.
T. JOHNSON, 18 RABY PARK ROAD, NESTON, WIRRAL, CHESHIRE.

DANNY'S DIARY



Dashing out of the by-street, the runaway had reached a busy cross. There were shouts of warning, the clanging of bells and then—crash!—the cart was dashed to splinters, horse and

JUNE, 1912

A few days ago my brother Doug brought home one of the June issues of the Boys' Friend 3d Library. It was entitled "Everybody's Favourite", by Atherley Daunt. It's a most original story, about the rivalry between two chains of Music Halls. Doug says it's based on the rivalry between the Stoll Theatres and the Moss Empires.

For several years now Oswald Stoll has been building, all over London and the provinces, lovely Music Halls with thick carpets and plenty of plush and gilt. There is the London Coliseum, of course, and Empires at Chiswick, Wood Green, Hackney, Chatham and other places. Mr. Moss has a big theatre at Oxford Circus, and has built Empires at Holborn, Finsbury Park, Stratford, New Cross, Bristol and elsewhere. Doug says there is a third big group called the Syndicate Halls, which have theatres at Islington, Croydon,

Putney, Watford, Walthamstow, Kilburn and other places. So the Boys' Friend Library is very topical.

Dad says he thinks the picture palaces may hit the Music Halls, but Doug says the pictures have hit the legitimate theatres but not the illegitimate ones. So I expect that Mr. Stoll and Mr. Moss will go on building their Empires.

Speaking of pictures, a story in the Gem this month was "Tom Merry's Picture Palace." I laughed myself silly. Glyn invented a moving-picture camera, and a projectile to show the films with.

It has been a good month in the Gem. A story about Lumley-Lumley and Grimes, called "Disowned by His Father," was excellent. The best story, I think, was "Facing the Music". A new master, Mr. Fitzgerald, came to St. Jim's, and Mr. Selby said he was a safe-breaker. Nobody believed Mr. Selby till Levison got shut in the Head's safe, and Mr. Fitzgerald betrayed himself by getting Levison out of the safe.

They call the Gem the "All-school-story paper" now, because there is a new serial "The School Under Canvas", about Rylcombe Grammar School. It is a grand tale, and, though I don't often read serials, I am enjoying this one. It is by Prosper Howard, but he writes just like Martin Clifford, and uses Martin Clifford's characters. Perhaps Prosper is Martin's brother. If not, he is a bit of a plagiatonist. I don't mind. I love the story.

The Derby was won by a horse called Tagalie, and Dad says it is the first grey nag to win the Derby for nearly a hundred years. I suspect that Dad put his shirt on Tagalie (what would Martin Clifford think?) for he has taken us twice to the theatre this month.

We saw "Princess Caprice" at the Shaftesbury Theatre, and the stars were Cicely Courtneidge, George Graves and Nelson Keys. Doug says Cicely Courtneidge is a vivacious wench, and I think he has fallen in love with her. Then, last night, Dad took us to the Empire, Leicester Square, to see "Everybody's Doing It." Ida Crispi was in it, and it was terrific. Doug has a lot of ragtime records for his gramophone. Some of them are H.M.V.; some are Wigners; and some are Edison Bell.

There is a new serial in the Magnet. It's called "Twice Round the Globe," by Sidney Drew. I don't like it much, but my pal Carter says it makes him laugh.

Only a fair month in the Magnet. I suppose the best tale was "Down on His Luck". Bob Cherry thought he saw Mark Linley in a pub called the Bird-in-Hand, and so they quarrelled. Actually it was a fourth form boy called Gilmore, who had disguised himself to look like Mark Linley. Later on, Gilmore tried to make Mark drunk, by putting whisky in his lemonade, but Wun Lung changed the glasses, so it was Gilmore who got drunk. It was quite an indelible story, but interesting. Gilmore hated Linley, and wanted him to lose his scholarship, but it was Gilmore who was expelled in the end.

There was also a sad story about Bolsover's young brother, and a funny one called "The Greyfriars Gardeners."

During the month there was a collision between two French aeroplanes. Both pilots were killed. It was the first time there has ever been a collision in the air. You'd think they'd got plenty of room up there. Not like the roads. Dad says the traffic problems are getting awful, and if something isn't done soon the streets of London will come to a standstill. What larks!

Aunt Fan came to visit us, and gave me a threepenny-bit, so I spent a penny on the Marvel. Main story was "Pete the Diver," by S. Clarke Hook, all about Jack, Sam and Pete. It was fair to middling.

I have been thinking what a lot of artists they have working in Bouverie Street on our papers. Doug says that "School Under Canvas" is illustrated by Shields, and Macdonald does St. Jim's. Then there's Chapman in the Magnet and Dodshon in Pluck. In Cheer, Boys, Cheer there is T. W. Holmes, and someone who signs himself C.H.B. The Robin Hood stories in this paper are illustrated by Harry Lane, and I think he's good.

In C.B.C., T. W. Holmes illustrates a serial called "Midst London's Millions", and he drew one of a tram, but the driver didn't seem to have any controls. Or maybe he'd got controls but no brake handle. It was quite indelible.

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSEPHINE PACKMAN,
27 Archdale Road, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22.



First of all I would like to thank all those who have recently sent me material for Blakiana. It is a long time since I was in the happy position of announcing 'forthcoming features' and this I can do now once again.

Like Oliver Twist, I still ask for more (articles), for with the completion of the S.B.L. Titles and Authors - to the point that I consider appropriate - it will mean that the space thus freed will have to be filled with something else.

I am most grateful to those who have "rallied round", and I look forward to hearing from more of you.

JOSIE PACKMAN

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THE DETECTIVE IN FICTION

By Victor Colby

In the pages of "The Detective Magazine", vol. 2, No. 19, dated 3rd August, 1923, an article was featured bearing the above title, and written by one Norman K. Harrison.

Here it is, in part:

The detective of everyday life has his parallel in fiction, and some of the creations of the writer's brain have obtained considerable

notoriety.

Probably no tale has as great an attraction as the detective story. They are read by young and old of both sexes and by all professions.

The detective of fiction is generally an unusually gifted man. He possesses an uncanny knowledge of criminals, is the master of disguise, speaks several languages fluently, has great power in high quarters, and often considerable scientific or medical knowledge.

Sherlock Holmes was a notable creation in detective fiction. His tall thin form in the chemical stained dressing gown became a familiar figure. His deductive powers were undoubtedly great.

In France a noteworthy creation was M. Lecoque, the invention of Emile Gaboreau. The French detective stories of that writer were longer and more involved than their English counterparts but they were undeniably interesting

Other fine detective stories have been written, but to write a detective story is not to create a living personality, and few have achieved that.

One cannot leave the detectives of fiction without mentioning a name nearly as well known as Sherlock Holmes - Sexton Blake.

Who created him the writer does not know, though years ago he read the story of Blake's schooldays; but he does know that the longer stories which are issued monthly are read by many people other than schoolboys.

Sexton Blake is a different type from Sherlock Holmes. The latter rarely left England; the former has work to do all over the globe. While some would say that Holmes is more deductive than Blake, many cases will be remembered in which the latter detective was at the height of his deductive powers.

The writer has often thought it would prove a good test for, say, Edgar Wallace to create the crime, and then Sexton Blake and Sherlock Holmes each to attempt the solution in his own way. Many lovers of detective fiction would delight in the contest of brains.

* * * * *

E. W. ALAIS, an early Blake writer

By Derek A'Leay

In January last I was fortunate enough to contact H. Clement Alais, nephew of E. W. Alais, one of the early Blake writers, whose name appeared in the 'official' list of Sexton Blake Library titles secured some time ago by Bill Lofts.

Very little has been written about this author up to now, for the obvious reason that - apart from the fact that he wrote stories of Kit and Cora, detectives, under the name of Cedric Wolfe - information about him has been very limited.

Ernest W. Alais was the brother-in-law of James Harwood Panting, another prolific writer of boys stories. The latter was at one time editor of Young Folks. He wrote many stories under the name of Claude Heathcote, two popular yarns by him being Clive of Clair College and Boys of Blair House.

To return to E. W. Alais, here are a few tit-bits of information about him as given to me by his nephew:

Although born with only one lung, E. W. Alais was a continuous and heavy smoker of the strongest tobacco, his favourite being the old Irish twist. When he was writing there was always a long column of smoke coming from his pipe, but at any interruption the pipe was gently put down. He was a marvellous raconteur, and told all his yarns without the slightest facial movement. He always carried a walking stick when out of doors; for visitors and special occasion, he kept Morris's Havana cigarettes. He could literally smell a fog coming, and would then retire to bed until it cleared. He was sixth of a family of seven, my informant's father being the eldest.

His tact in any emergency was unsurpassed, and his outstanding mental ability was in striking contrast to his delicate physical condition. He made his debut in the literary world with the publication of a story in the "Golden Penny." Among his Blake yarns were "Sexton Blake in Morocco" and "Tiller and Tideway", the latter being published in the Boys' Friend Library 1st series. The majority of his Blake stories were published in the "Union Jack" although quite a number appeared in the Sexton Blake Library.

In addition to his literary work he was a brilliant caricaturist and what would today be called a cartoonist. He was also a fine black and white artist, a water colour artist and a steel engraver. The latter art he acquired from his father, W. J. Alais, a well-known steel engraver who engraved many of Landseer's works.

The final question I asked H. Clement Alais was as to the pronunciation of the name Alais. Many of us have our own way of pronouncing this name, but never before have I heard it pronounced correctly. Actually, it is pronounced exactly the same as the French port Calais.

Ernest W. W. Alais was born at Reading on 30th December, 1864, and died at Streatham, London on 7th January, 1922.

Extract of letter from Brian Doyle:

An Irish author named Flann O'Brien was being interviewed at his home in Dublin. He published a book called "At Swim-Two-Birds" in 1939 which received 'rave' notices from the top literary critics at the time, but didn't sell particularly well because of the outbreak of the war. He has just written a new book, and his old one has also been re-printed. In the interview he admitted that he wrote under several other names. Then came the following dialogue:

INTERVIEWER: I believe I'm right in saying that you've written several Sexton Blake detective stories?

O'BRIEN: Yes, I have.

INTERVIEWER: Are you proud of this?

O'BRIEN: I am very proud of it. Very proud indeed.

INTERVIEWER: How many did you write?

O'BRIEN: I've written five Sexton Blake stories ...

Then the talk turned to other things.

In his letter Brian went on to say that he thought the above might be of interest to students of Blakiana.

A few days ago I received a very nice letter from another of our readers, Mr. A. W. Rhodes (B.F.P.O. 19), on the same subject. Mr. Rhodes enclosed a page extracted from The Listener containing the following:

Peter Duval Smith interviewed Flann O'Brien, hailed by Joyce and Greene as a master when he published At Swim-Two-Birds in 1938. Twenty years later he published a propaganda novel, advocating more public lavatories for women. He has not been idle in the meantime. He has worked as an Irish Civil Servant, written five Sexton Blakes (*) and under pseudonyms had written many books which though not exactly pornographic were not exactly not.

(*) My underlining. J.P.

Now, Detective-Inspector Lofts, how about ferreting out the titles of those five Blake stories?

* * * * *

"DEATH OF SEXTON BLAKE"

The enquiry by Mr. P. J. Creighan, of Eire, in May C.D. is answered as follows:-

The series in which Sexton Blake was supposed to have been killed was THE DOUBLE FOUR. Their names were: King Karl of Sarbovia, known as the ACE, or KING CROOK; Dr. Gaston Lenior, mental specialist; Scarlati, stage illusionist and conjuror; "Colonel" Tony, the tiny circus midget with the appearance of a boy of five, but with the cunning and brains of a grown man. NOT a retarded specimen in the modern sense; Lou Tarrant, famous female impersonator; Samson, the strong man; Carfax, Crewe, the Wizard Cracksmen; Richard Dann, confidence trickster.

The series was written by the late Gwyn Evans, commencing with U.J. No. 1233, dated 4th June, 1927. (A series of six, but not consecutive). In U.J. No. 1235 Sexton Blake "dies", the front cover depicting a newsboy bearing a placard "Death of Sexton Blake." This particular story introduces Ruff Hanson. Another favourite character, Splash Page, also makes a welcome appearance. U.J. No. 1236 is entitled "The Return of Sexton Blake," the cover illustration being an excellent picture of Blake. The final story, U.J. No. 1239, brings retribution to the King Crook. Full list of titles as follows:

- U.J. 1233 The Problem of the Double Four
- 1234 Duped by the Double Four
- 1235 The Gallows Mystery
- 1236 The Return of Sexton Blake
- 1238 The Mystery of the Ivory Beam
- 1239 The Adventure of the Vanishing Shop

Some ten years later the King Crook was revived, his adventures appearing in the Detective Weekly. How he managed to survive the "acid bath", in which it was presumed he had dissolved, I do not know!

Josie Packman.

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SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY TITLES AND AUTHORS (3rd series) (contd.)

No. 245	The Mystery of the Girl in Green	A. Parsons
No. 246	The Case of the Man with No Name	J. N. Chance
No. 247	The Case of the Frightened Girl	R. Hardinge
No. 248	Top Secret No. 1	F. Warwick
No. 249	The Case of the Crooked Skipper (Capt. Lack)	A. J. Hunter
No. 250	The Mystery of the Lost Loot	J. G. Dickson
No. 251	The Bad Man from Cairo	A. Parsons
No. 252	The Secret of the Desert	R. Hardinge
No. 253	The Riddle of the Blazing Bungalow	F. Bond
No. 254	The Mystery of the Sabotaged Jet	J. N. Chance
No. 255	The Case of the Girl on Remand	A. J. Hunter
No. 256	The Riddle of the Crooked Gambler	R. Hardinge

No. 257	The Case of the Missing Scientist	A. Parsons
No. 258	The Dilemma of Doctor Hiley	W. Tyrer
No. 259	The Spiv's Mistake	A. K. Hunter
No. 260	The Man Without a Passport	A. Parsons
No. 261	The Man with a Grievance	F. Warwick
No. 262	The Case of the Blackmailed Prince	A. Parsons
No. 263	The Case of the Doped Favourite	A. J. Hunter
No. 264	The Hire Purchase Fraud	W. Tyrer
No. 265	The Man from Space	R. Hardinge
No. 266	The House on the River	J. N. Chance
No. 267	The Case of the Banned Film	A. Parsons
No. 268	The Man from Dieppe	J. G. Dickson
No. 269	The Victim of the Crooked Hypnotist	A. J. Hunter
No. 270	The Case of the Dope Dealers	P. A. Clarke
No. 271	The Case of the Japanese Contract	A. Parsons
No. 272	The Scrap Metal Mystery	W. Tyrer
No. 273	The Prisoner of the Manor	R. Hardinge
No. 274	The Trail of Raider No. 1	F. Bond
No. 275	Calling Whitehall 1212	H. Clevely
No. 276	The Case of the Bogus Baron	W. Tyrer
No. 277	The Mystery of the Mason's Arms	A. Parsons
No. 278	The Man with a Number	F. Bond
No. 279	The Woman on the Spot	A. J. Hunter
No. 280	The Big Circus Mystery	J. G. Dickson

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SEXTON BLAKE - AND THE "TITANIC"By Jack Hughes

Living in retirement in Sydney, Mr. Tom Tavener, now aged 76 years, has just given some reminiscences of his experiences in the disaster of the Titanic's sinking in 1912. His story has been published in the April 25th issue of the Australian magazine EVERYBODY'S.

A survivor of this tragedy, Mr. Tavener had signed on for the voyage to New York as an assistant cook. He tells of the fateful night when at ten minutes to midnight on April 14th the iceberg sliced through the ship's double bottom and ripped a 300 ft. gash in her belly.

Blake fans will be interested in the following:-

"On the lower decks the jar was more pronounced - a definite jolt accompanied by what one woman later described as a "sound like the tearing of a silk sheet." But deep down in the ship there was no mistake about it. Tom Tavener who was resting on his bunk with a Sexton Blake thriller sat bolt upright at the hideous scraping grind. It was a sound like nothing else on earth. The next moment whistles were blowing and alarm bells clanging, and Tavener and his mates scrambled from their bunks.

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FORTHCOMING FEATURES

Sexton Blake, Ancient and Modern.....	By S. Perry
Ramblings on Past and Present.....	By C. Lowder
Battles Royal.....	By V. Colby
Warwick Jardine.....	By W.O.G. Lofts

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RESULT OF OUR MAY COMPETITION

Our judges found great difficulty in deciding the best out of the many entries in this competition, all of which were excellent.

After long consideration, it is decided that our Book Awards go to the two following competitors:

Herbert W. Hilton of Oldham, whose favourite story was "Britain at Bay" by John Tregellis (No. 118 in the B.F.L.) He wrote:-

"It is yellowing and minus its original cover...a fugitive from a hot, dusty, summer's day in far-off 1913. Nearly fifty years of associated memories flood from its brittle pages as I turn them gently in this atomic age...incidentally, it's a good story, too!"

Alex Parsons of Tranmere, who wrote:-

"We read it together. my sister, brother and me. Page by page, night after night - three happy children breaking our hearts at the death of Russell.

Fifty years later I smile at boyhood tears, and recapture the thoughts of childhood when I read 'Eric, or Little by Little'".

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Magnets - several volumes 1936-39 for sale or exchange. S.A.E. for particulars. Also 10 vols. complete series Nelson Lee 1st New. Warren Bell, Greyhouse Days, v.g.d. 5/- T.B. Reed, The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's, fine illustrated edition 5/-, later edition 4/- . The Willoughby Captains modern edition v.g.d. 5/- . George Bourne, I Flew with Braddock reprinted from the Rover, fine now o.p. 6/- . Vachell, The Hill, nice copy with fine illustrations of Harrow College, 1st ed. 7/6. The Schoolboy Omnibus, Desmond Coke contains The Bending of a Twig, The House Prefect and The Worst House at Sherborough, v.g.d. 7/6. P. C. Wodehouse, Sam the Sudden, 1st fine 5/- . Lord Emsworth and others, fine 4/- . The Target Book for Boys, few copies left at 5/- (Pub. at 8/6d) contains Rookwood, Rio Kid, Carcroft, Felgate, Ken King, etc. Wanted copies of Chuckles, post-war Hamiltonian and Brooksiana.
VERNON LAY, 52 OAKLEIGH GARDENS, WHETSTONE, LONDON, N.20.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

Conducted by JACK WOOD

AN INTERESTING NUMBER!

By W. O. G. Lofts

Collectors in the past, have written about many interesting numbers that have appeared in boys' fiction. First issues; Christmas and Summer Double numbers; and such highly-collected stories as 'Bob Cherry's Barring Out' in the MAGNET, and 'School and Sport' in THE BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY.

But probably one of the most interesting numbers that I have seen in recent years was actually THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY - No. 156. First New Series, dated 27th April, 1929, and entitled 'Scorned by the School.' The tale is of course quite good, as all Edwy Searles Brooks' yarns were in that period, and was actually the fifth in 'The Sneaks Paradise Series.' It was not the story, however, that attracted my attention, but the highly interesting feature entitled 'Between Ourselves', conducted personally by the author of the St. Frank's stories, Edwy Searles Brooks.

At the top of the page, and opposite the usual small photo reproduction of Mr. Brooks, readers who have this issue, will find at the top right hand side of the page another photograph of a reader - a Julius Herman, from Tarkastad, South Africa. In his letter published in the column, Mr. Herman 'hopes that his portrait of a middle-aged pedagogue's physiognomy will interest readers', and in reply Mr. Brooks tells him that 'it will' - and that 'the St. Frank's stories have met with the approval of an astonishing number of masters - including headmasters.'

Now who was Julius Herman? the reader may ask. Although it was not uncommon for middle-aged men to read school-stories, I doubt very much indeed if even Mr. Brooks knew at that time, that Mr. Herman was a writer himself! It probably would have astonished him and readers also to know that at one period Julius Herman had some hand in Hamiltonian affairs, writing various pieces for the 'Magnet' and 'Gem' - and above all had at least one story published in the 'Magnet'. The story was No. 666, in 1921, entitled 'The Circus Hero.'

It has been far from easy to glean information about Julius

Herman, and efforts have been made to trace him in South Africa without much success, so it is feared that he may have now passed on. But some information is known however, and his connection with the Companion papers makes very interesting reading. Julius Herman, it seems, was a very avid reader of all Charles Hamilton's writings and bombarded the MAGNET and GEM office with letters about his favourite characters and schools. In 1915 there was the now famous Greyfriars story writing competition in the MAGNET in which hundreds of budding young would-be authors wrote a story of Harry Wharton and Co. - in the hope of being another 'Frank Richards.' Julius entered, and that his writing must have been above average, was the fact that his name is to be found in the list of prize-winners. Mr. C. M. Down, editor of the Companion Papers for so many years, can remember him quite well, and in 1920, when Julius Herman paid a visit to this country on an educational tour (he was a school teacher at an African school) he visited Mr. Down in his Fleet Street office, where much work including the already mentioned Greyfriars story, was accepted.

Another former sub-editor, now living in Australia, also remembers Julius Herman. He described him as 'A very short-round type of person - complete with glasses - indeed a typical Billy Bunter, (this can be confirmed to some extent by the photograph), speaking with a high-pitched tone of voice, and using that familiar phrase in the Greyfriars dialogue, 'I say you fellows!'

If still in the land of the living, Julius Herman would, I feel sure, be a most interesting person to meet. That he also had a great interest in the St. Frank's stories is certain by several letters of his appearing from time to time in the columns, similar to those of a Miss Rosamond Woods, of St. Albans, later Bricket Wood, Herts, one of which appeared in the same interesting issue!

Now who was Rosamond Woods and where is she today? In this case I am pleased to say that 'Miss Woods' is very much alive. Collectors may well remember already excellent articles by 'Ross Woods' in the C.D. Annual recently. Well, Rosamond' and 'Ross' are but one and the same person!

Gaining inspiration from the wonderful writings of E.S. Brooks, Rosamond on leaving a Commercial College where she became a fully qualified shorthand-typist - started to write western stories purely for a hobby. On completion, they were just shoved into a cupboard and forgotten.

Later in meeting Jack Trevor Story (and eventually becoming Mrs. Story) she was persuaded by him to have them published, which she did with great success. They were published by Herbert Jenkins and Co.

under the pen-names of 'Ross Woods' and 'Charles H. Lee'. Indeed, Mrs. Story had the distinction of being the only authoress of Western stories in England.

Apart from bound books, she is a poet of more than average ability having several published in the daily press, and in the Poetry Review. A great lover of animals, especially cats (there are about a dozen in her house in Sussex, including a 'Bunter' and the smallest cat believed to be in England), a story of a fox was published in 'Argosy' alongside such other famous names as L. A. G. Strong, and C. S. Forester of Captain Hornblower fame.

Bringing up a family halted her writing career for a time, but recent writings include in fact a Sexton Blake story, which was published under the 'Desmond Reid' pen-name. Here history is almost certainly made in Blake lore - as this is the only positively known case of a woman penning a story of the great detective. Her story in question was 'Witch-Hunt', No. 451, published in May, 1960.

Other recent novels have been published under the pen-name of 'Catherine Tracy' dealing with the Deep South, which were so authentic that some reviewers thought that an American must have written them! But last, but not the least, I should think her most recent efforts in the writing field will be of interest to all St. Frank's readers. Purely for her own amusement - and to read to her son Lee each evening, Mrs. Story wrote a St. Frank's story - which like Topsy just 'grew and grew' until a complete novel appeared entitled 'The Kidnapped School-boy.'

Her husband, Jack Trevor Story, now a well-known author and film script writer (he has five films going at the same time at the moment) read it, and was so impressed with its format that he thought it should be published. Fleetway Publications have given her permission to write about the characters, and Edwy Searles Brooks in letters to Mrs. Story has been most agreeable to the suggestion that the story should be published. He writes:-

'Of course you have my permission to go straight ahead, and I wish you luck. I feel that I must also congratulate you on getting the feel and atmosphere of my original tales, and your dialogue is excellent. On the whole you have produced a very fine authentic St. Frank's story. With my very best wishes, and wishing you all the luck in the world, and with my renewed congratulations for your remarkably fine effort.'

And so I draw to a close my comments about this issue of the

NELSON LEE LIBRARY. Just two names, but what a wealth of information one can write about two old readers. There are probably many other readers who have won fame to some extent in the writing fields and who in their boy and girlhood days were inspired by Edwy Searles Brooks - they may be written about at some future date - but number 156 of the First New Series to me, will always be regarded as a very INTERESTING NUMBER.

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FOR SALE: 2 copies Felix Farley's Bristol Journal (Newspaper) dated 1811 and 1815. Offers, MRS. M. JARRETT, 111 WINCHESTER ROAD, BRISLINGTON, BRISTOL, 4.

WANTED: S.O.L. 58. B.F. (Green 'Un) 762, 764, 780, 1062, 1257, 1264, 1294 to 1298 1 TIMBERTREE ROAD, OLD HILL, STAFFS.

WANTED: Most issues between 400 and 500 GEMS. Most issues between 772 and 879. Also Nos. 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 985, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1129, 1150. MAGNETS: 45, 52, 134, 136, 141, 195, 295, 237, 238, 239, 277, 318, 353, 400, 417, 442, 439, 319, 706, 719, 752, 773, 751, 752, 762, 763, 764, 809. Most issues between 821 and 890. 900 921, 924, 925, 936, 938, 940, 942, 943, 946, 949, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996. POPULARS 183, 190, 370, 385, 452, 455, 466, 474. Your price paid or liberal exchanges. Volumes bought containing any of the above issues. Good condition essential. ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

WANTED: S.O.L's 42, 258. Nelson Lee No. 130 (old series). Your price paid plus postage. The advertiser has some S.O.L's, Nelson Lee, Gems and Magnets for exchange only. BRIAN HOLT, BRITISH EMBASSY, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND.

WANTED: S.O.L's Nos. 60 and 68. Magnets Nos. 829, 862 - 865, 867, 868, 874, 869, 879, 884, 886, 897, 900. DR. R. WILSON, 100 BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW, N.1.

JUNE COMPETITION

Can you find TEN characters from the following clues?

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. A chopper at Greyfriars. | 2. A Prayer at Rookwood. |
| 3. Deportment at St. Jim's. | 4. A fish at St. Frank's. |
| 5. A country with no beginning in the Union Jack. | |
| 6. A refined instrument of torture at St. Jim's. | |
| 7. A building at St. Frank's. | |
| 8. A landmark of London at Greyfriars. | |
| 9. A policeman in the William stories. | 10. An over-worker at Rookwood. |

Jot down the names of the ten characters you think are intended, on a postcard or a sheet of paper, and send to the Editor. Closing date - June 17th.

A book award for their library will be sent to the two competitors whose list comes nearest to that looked in the Editor's desk.

HAMILTONIANA



FAMOUS SERIES, No. 20: Here we have a picture from the "Schoolboy Pug" series which started in the Gem in March, 1923. One of Charles Hamilton's finest character series of all time. Our picture shows the chums of Study No. 6 entertaining the new boy, Oliver Lynn to tea. The boys are disgusted with Lynn's table manners, and, unfortunately, show their disgust. A study of schoolboy psychology, rather rare in stories written for youngsters, this series was one of the most adult to appear in the Gem. Artist - R. J. Macdonald.

MEMORIAL TABLET TO FRANK RICHARDS

Last month we referred to the Memorial Tablet which is being placed at Charing Crematorium to the memory of Frank Richards. Due to our rusty Latin and failing eyesight we made a couple of slips in our report on the matter. The following, kindly sent by Mr. MAX LYNE, Editor of the Latin newspaper "ACTA DIURNA", should make the matter clear to all.

If the quotation in C.D. is an exact copy of the words on the tablet, and does not contain two printer's errors, I imagine that Frank Richards (if able, as I hope, to look down upon the scene) is grinding his teeth with rage. On second thoughts, and remembering that he never had much sympathy with poor old Quelch, he is probably laughing his head off. For not only is the quotation itself wrong; the reference is wrong too! I admit that I had no recollection of this particular verse (especially in its mutilated form); it is, however, a choriambic, which is not one of the most frequent metres in Horace. So I thumbed my way through the Asclepiads, ignoring all the other odes, and found it in Book IV. I give the correct wording and reference:

Dignum laude virum Musa vetat mori.

Horace, Odes IV, viii.

"The Muse does not allow to die a man who is worthy of praise."

Which means, of course, that the favoured few are given a place in heaven. Whoever chose this verse chose it well. It is not very well known, and therefore not hackneyed; and it is exactly right.

* * * * *

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By ROGER N. JENKINS

No. 39 - Schoolboys' Own Library No. 174 - "Living Lie"

Snobbery is a topic that seldom makes either a pleasant or an interesting story. Even Charles Hamilton's resources were not always sufficient to overcome the natural distaste and objection most people have to reading about this subject.

In the stories that he wrote before the first world war snobbery assumed dimensions that seem alarmingly incredible to us today. "The Boy Without a Name" and its remarkable sequel "Rivals and Chums" reveal not only the antipathy that Pensonby and Co. showed towards the new scholarship junior (Courtenay), but also the fact that they despised many other Highcliffians whose parents were nobodies - doctors or solicitors who had to work for a living.

Amazing as this attitude may now seem to us, the two tales in question were not spoiled by it. This is because the snobbery was only incidental to the story: the main interest was the growing friendship between Courtenay and de Courcy, and the development

of plot and counterplot between the two factions. But when snobbery was used as the main theme of a series, it seemed as though the whole structure of the story was built on shifting sands.

In the 'twenties the Magnet saw the publication of the de Vere series and the Boys' Friend readers were similarly treated to the Montmorency series, which was reprinted in No. 174 of the Schoolboys' Own Library. Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency was a new boy at Rookwood who was exceedingly elegant, wealthy and superior. It later transpired that his real name was George Huggins, and that he had once been page boy to Sir Gilbert Goby. He had been the dandy of the Servants' Hall, where he was known as Gentleman George.

The series revolved around Montmorency's attempts to avert disaster, and much ingenuity was displayed in showing how he quelled the dangers that threatened him from one source after another. The author's handling of the situation compels our admiration perhaps reluctantly, and there was sound character-display in relating how various juniors reacted to the new boy; Townsend and Topham friendly at first but distant later when the truth was hinted at; and Rawson, the son of a plumber and who had been treated with haughty disdain, showing mercy to the new boy in forbearing to tell his secret. It is also probably very true that upstarts are more snobbish than anyone else.

Yet when all is said and done, the series seems to have hardly any point to it. It seems to matter little whether Montmorency is shown up or not, because his secret was of such trivial interest. And the conclusion of the story was perhaps the unkindest out of all: Montmorency's uncle lost his newly acquired fortune, and Jimmy Silver saw Gentleman George employed as a waiter in a London hotel. It is true that Montmorency was an unpleasant character, and his assumption of good breeding was silly and despicable, but to load this final humiliation on him seems (to use a favourite expression of the author) like piling Pelion upon Ossa. On the whole it seems true to say that the stories dealing about snobbery were the only distasteful ones that Charles Hamilton ever wrote concerning his three main schools.

* * * * *

THE "MAGNET" AND THE MODERN BOY

By Gerry Allison

The Modern Boy referred to is not the Magazine, but the living and breathing Boy of 1962. And, as a result of an interesting experiment just concluded, I have to give you the sad news that the Magnet is DEAD.

How often have we old-stagers said - "Why don't they publish the Magnet today? It would be sure to sell." NOT A HOPE!

Below I give the answers I have received to twelve questions from two boys of more than average intelligence. The elder, age 13, is at a Grammar School, whilst his younger brother who is 10, is in the top form of a County Primary School. To prepare them for this ordeal - for that is what it turned out to be! - I lent them the series of Magnets beginning at No. 1255, in which Vernon Smith ousts Wharton from the captaincy of the Greyfriars Romove. A series which - in my opinion - has about everything - humour, drama, characterisation, plot, suspense.

The two boys, Kevin and Robert, were asked to read the Magnets at their leisure, and they had them for nearly eight weeks. After

about an month I received an interim report from their mother: "I am afraid progress is rather slow on the Magnets; what with homework, T.V., etc., but I can assure you the cartoons and jokes have been very much appreciated by both the boys."

And later - when the Easter holidays arrived - "I keep looking into their bedroom, hoping to find them reading the Magnets, but rarely find them doing so." I had particularly asked that the boys should not be pestered about reading them.

Well, last week, I collected the Magnets back from them, and asked the boys to fill in the questionnaire I had prepared. "Please be quite candid in your replies - don't bother about me" I said. Here is the result:

	<u>ANSWERS</u>	
	<u>Kevin Holmes</u>	<u>Robert Holmes</u>
1. What was your age last birthday?	13	10
2. What school do you attend?	Roundhay Grammar.	Moortown C.P.
3. What Form are you in?	2nd Year	7A
4. Did you manage to read any Magnet?	Yes	Yes
5. How many did you finish?	Three	One
6. Did you enjoy reading them?	Yes	Yes
7. Could you tell they were a series?	Yes	Yes
8. Would you have preferred the story in picture form - as a comic?	No	No
9. Do you like Billy Bunter on T.V.?	No	No
10. If the Magnet still came out each week, would you want to buy it?	No	No
11. Do schoolboys read school stories these days?	No	Not many
12. Do you like "LOOK & LEARN" better than the Magnet?	Yes	Yes

(Note: "LOOK AND LEARN" is a weekly paper in colour issued by Fleetway Publications - the price is 1/-.)

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 58. CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS

Who is the most popular of the Hamilton Captains? So far as characterisation goes, there is probably little to choose between them, yet somehow, as with all his characters, Charles Hamilton succeeded in making them all rather more than mere names. Yet names, we must admit, count for a lot. It would be difficult to work up much enthusiasm over a character called Snoop or Racke, however sympathetically he might be presented.

I think that perhaps I reserve the warmest spot in my heart for Kildare. Maybe it was just the lilt of his name, maybe it was the Irish in him. Yet, for any stories in which he featured very prominently we have to go back to blue cover days, when we found him in rivalry with Monteith, the head prefect of the New House. And even then, some of the stories were re-written from the Pluck days. Reminding us that, in the pre-Gem era, Charles Hamilton tended to focus his work on seniors rather than juniors.

Monteith was a fine character study. His neglect, after the first few years, is one of the most regrettable oddities of the Hamilton story as a whole. The tales of the rivalry between Kildare and Monteith take their place among the most outstanding of the blue Gem. Would that there had been more of them.

Wingate I never found quite so attractive. I liked him in his less important appearances, as, for instance, when he accused the unscrupulous Stacey of having cigarettes in his pocket. That episode, when Wingate clashed with Mr. Quelch, was brilliantly written - in fact, just one of the brilliant episodes which place the Stacey series among the Magnet's very greatest.

But I have never been able to work up much enthusiasm for the Loder-Captain series, in which Wingate and his minor played such prominent parts. In the Lancaster series I liked Wingate - the human older boy seemed to show through the pomposity with which, to me, he seemed sometimes to be clothed. But then, the Lancaster series was sheer gold all the way through.

Bulkeley I found little but a name - and rather an awkward bulky name. He was an adequate school captain, of course, but he featured in nothing very outstanding in the Rookwood story.

It is not inappropriate to turn the spotlight, just for a moment, on the supporting seniors. Greyfriars owed a lot to Loder - it would not have been the same without him. He was consistently-handled rotter

from the very early days. In fact, apart from the skippers, it is the bad or weak characters who stand out among the seniors. Walker and Carne each played their prominent parts, gems of weakness given authority. Ionides was an interesting senior once. It was a pity he was lost in the swirling mists of time. Carberry was another who out-Lodered Loder - and paid the price. I wonder whether readers missed him when he was expelled. Then, of course, there was Courtney, Wingate's friend, who starred in many strong dramas in the red Magnet.

At St. Jim's Knox was not an unbelievable character, though he never made the same impression as Loder. Seniors with strains of weakness were Darrell, Langton and Rushden. The stories of their adolescent indiscretions were told in worth-while stories in the blue Gen. Baker of the New House played an excellent supporting role in the Kildare-Monteith stories.

To get a really vivid picture of the St. Jim's seniors we are compelled to look far back down the years. At Greyfriars the seniors were kept more in the picture all the time.

The older supporting cast at Rookwood made little impact. Neville was just a name. Garthew and Knowles were mere copies of Knox and Loder, though Loder, in his moments, was a far better study.

Stories of the seniors made a welcome change from the normal bill of fare. The names of the Captains Courageous, in particular, will never be forgotten while the schools are remembered.

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

* * * * *

MONEY AND HAPPINESS

By Robert Mortimer

Does money bring happiness? According to those who have plenty it doesn't, and they should know. As one cynic wrote:

Riches are a burden,
The wealthy tell us so;
But none seem ever willing
To let their burdens go.

Let us look at some of the boys at Greyfriars: Herbert Vernon Smith, son of a self-made millionaire, is undoubtedly the wealthiest fellow at the school. The Bounder is one of my favourite characters, so I mustn't criticise him too much, but the fact remains that much of Vernon-Smith's recklessness is due to his having too much pocket money, supplied by an over-indulgent father.

In the old days, when the pocket-money of the average junior boy was half-a-crown a week, we read of Smithy taking out an expensive Russian leather wallet filled with currency notes and one or two fivers.

On the other hand, Bob Cherry, son of an Army Major is by no means rich, but ~~the~~

Bob is certainly a much happier fellow than the Bounder.

Actually, money doesn't mean much to the Famous Five. If one has a remittance from home, it is shared among them all. If funds are low they make the best of a frugal tea in the study, unless the generous Mauly invites them to tea.

Our old fat friend, Bunter, has often boasted of the glories of Bunter Court, the stately butler, and his many titled relations, but we all know that Bunter senior is a not too prosperous stockbroker in the City, and that they live in a comfortable, but modest, villa in Surrey. Perhaps it is just as well that the fat Owl is not wealthy. If he had a well-filled wallet like the Bounder he would have burst all over the quad long ago.

Horace James Coker, the chump of the fifth form, is always well supplied with money, thanks to his dotting aunt Judy. Horace is always generous with his cash, but would his two-study-mates, Potter and Greene, be so loyal if there were no lavish spreads in the study? I doubt it. As they have so often remarked: "As we have to stand Coker, he is expected to stand the spreads."

Lord Mauleverer is certainly very wealthy, but money means little to him. His lazy Lordship's idea of happiness is to be left alone in peace to doze comfortably on his luxurious study sofa, and let the rest of the world go by.

One fellow who is certainly interested in money is Fisher T. Fish. On a sunny half holiday, when the rest of the boys are enjoying themselves on the cricket field, or on the river, the American junior will be found in his study counting his money, or making up his account books. Fishy in his time has devised many weird and wonderful schemes for making money, but they have seldom met with success.

Cedric Hilton, the Knut of the fifth form is well supplied with that useful article - cash - but Hilton has expensive tastes, and a fondness for smokes and backing his fancy. So his money seldom lasts him long.

Over at St. Jim's we have the one and only Arthur Augustus D'arcy, who is never short of money. Dear old Gussy is the soul of generosity, and when he receives one of his celebrated "fivahs" from home there is usually a sumptuous spread in Study 6, leaving just enough for a new necktie or a pair of fancy socks.

Aubrey Racke and Gerald Crooke are both wealthy fellows, but both are black sheep, so their money doesn't seem to do them much good.

So perhaps money doesn't bring happiness after all. But with it one can be miserable in much greater comfort!

Old Boys' Book Club

THE CONVENTION

This long-awaited Easter, when the O.B.B.C. Convention was to be held, arrived at last, and members began to assemble on Good Friday at the Queen's Head Hotel, Matlock. "Myne Host" of course is John Gunn, himself one of our fraternity, and right welcome he made us.

There were eight arrivals on the first day, Frank Lay and Mrs. Lay and daughter Beverley, and Mrs. Lofthouse (mother of Mrs. Lay), and also Bill Lefts, all from London, and Gerry Allison, Myra Allison and Elsie Palmer of the Northern Club. A get-together

and general introduction took place in the lounge, followed by a welcome cup of tea, specially brewed by our host himself.

Bill Lofts, who unfortunately could not stay because he was due at a wedding the following day (Saturday), presented the Convention with a Red Magnet, No. 123, "Study No. 1 on Tour" to be given as a prize for a quiz or contest.

On Saturday there were seven more arrivals, Stanley Smith, Margaret Jackson, Frank Hancock, Molly Allison, Ronald Hodgson and Doreen Hodgson (Northern) and Harry Broster (Midland), so that we were now fourteen strong. Informal discussions on various matters took place, the most important being the Frank Richards Memorial Project.

After dinner we again gathered in the comfortable and cosy lounge, and had a grand evening's fun, provided by Stanley Smith with his Greyfriars Chase Game and His Criss-Cross Quiz. These provided first-class entertainment for the O.B.B.C. enthusiast and are a tribute to Stanley's own enthusiasm and ingenuity. Some 'swopping' also took place.

The weather, which so far had not been pleasant, suddenly relented and Sunday was a beautiful day. It was pleasant walking around this picturesque little town without having to take any thought of raincoats and umbrellas! Photographs and moving pictures were taken, which will no doubt be circulating in due course.

There were also three new arrivals, John and Irene Jarman (Northern) and Frank Case (Merseyside) so that, except for our friends overseas, all the clubs were represented.

Back in the hotel, Gerry Allison gave us a talk on Courtney of Greyfriars (or rather the late Courtney, since he is one of the very few Hamilton characters who lost his life). The matter of the Frank Richards Memorial was also discussed again, it being the general opinion that a playing field bearing his name would be an ideal choice. It was recognised that this would be beyond the resources of the clubs alone, and that help from outside must be obtained in some way or other. This was very clearly expounded by Stanley Smith, who thought the scheme would have an excellent chance of success if the aid of the press, and various well-known people, could be enlisted. He agreed to contact certain people who might be willing to help, and to explore various channels, and let us know the results in due course. This was felt to be an excellent idea, and Stanley was given carte blanche to go ahead with his inquiries.

Another very pleasant social evening followed. Molly Allison gave us her interesting talk "Miss Spinks Seminary for Young Ladies" and the rest of the time was occupied with games and quizzes of various kinds.

That, alas, was the end, or almost so. Most of us had to depart the following day (Monday). Never had a week-end sped by so quickly; it was all most enjoyable, the hotel was ideal for our purpose, and our host, fellow collector John Gunn, was most hospitable. The sudden improvement in the weather was all we needed to make it completely enjoyable.

This was the first O.B.B.C. Convention. Assuredly it will not be the last.

MIDLAND

Meeting held 22nd April, 1962

Harry Broster was again, unfortunately, absent so there were no minutes. As a result the programme commenced very shortly after 7.30. First came a "Guess the Number" competition which was won by Joe Marston - the prize a S.B.L. Then came my quiz which was won by John Tomlinson, followed by Collectors Items. This month I showed and briefly described Nelson Lee Library (O.S.) No. 1, the well-known "The Mystery of Limehouse Reach" the front cover of which was reproduced a few months ago in the C.D. The last item before the interval was a very lively discussion started by Jack Corbett who wondered if the idea of a "Cook House" club touched upon in the current issue of the C.D. was in the best interests of the hobby. In the discussion which followed it was made clear that the members of the Midland branch did not favour this idea at all. During the interval I reported briefly on my visit to Matlock on Easter Monday and distributed a number of "Gems" and "Modern Boys". These were all eagerly snapped up. After the interval came a

word building game won by Madge Corbett and the programme ended with a fine reading by Edward Davey - an article written by himself entitled "Bunter the Witness" and contributed to C.D. No. 143 (November 1958). Besides myself those present were - Madge Corbett, Jack Bellfield, Jack Corbett, Ted Davey, Norman Gregory, Joe Marston and John Tomlinson.

TOM PORTER - Chairman

Footnote by the Secretary - My thanks to Tom for his report in my absence - I had not got back from my holiday at Matlock - in short the very enjoyable and for a first venture, the highly successful O.B.B.C. Convention.

HARRY BROSTER.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held 13th May, 1962

There was a good attendance at this meeting, all the regulars with the exception of Bill Greenwood, being present. After the formal business, including the financial report, had been concluded, the members were given a brief account by Frank Case of his visit to the Convention at Matlock. He found this to be a very enjoyable affair, affording an ideal opportunity of meeting old and new friends, and both the venue and the catering were really first class, thanks to John Gunn. We really must do our best to see that Merseyside is more fully represented on future occasions; those unable to attend are missing a lot, and these get-togethers make a nice change from the ordinary meeting.

After the library business came refreshments, followed by some animated discussions on one or two controversial issues chosen by Jack Morgan from those submitted by Eric Payne in past issues of Collectors' Digest. Many and varied were the points of view voiced by the different members, and, if there was no complete unanimity at the conclusion of the debates, we found the opinions expressed of great interest. There is much scope for this type of discussion, and we intend to have a similar one at the next meeting.

Once again "closing-time" arrived all too soon, and we look forward to our next evening together, which will be on Whit Sunday, 10th of June, at the usual time of 6 p.m. Don't be late please.

FRANK CASE

NORTHERN

Chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened our May meeting before another good attendance, although the weather outside our comfortable club-room was anything but May-like.

After formal business had been disposed of, Gerry Allison dealt with an unusually interesting selection of correspondence received this month, and reported that three new members had been enrolled. Gerry also reported on his visit to Vera Nicholls in hospital, and we were all very pleased to hear that she seems to be slightly improved, and hopes to return home soon.

There was a discussion on Bunter books which are to be published in the future, and possible writers of the same.

The Secretary then gave the meeting a short account of the Convention held at Matlock. The several members present who had attended agreed that it had been a most pleasant experience, and had established a precedent which would certainly be followed.

Then we had the highlight of our programme this month, a talk, recorded for us on tape by Tom Hopperton. His subject was a story published in the Boys' Friend Library entitled "The Pride of the Ring" by Mark Linley. This was one of the most humorous and entertaining (and at the same time shrewd and analytical) talks we have heard for a long time. Members greatly enjoyed it and were pleased to hear that there are more such talks to come.

After an interval for refreshments, there was a general discussion on topics of

interest, in which all members participated, and another enjoyable meeting was over.
Next meeting - Saturday, 9th June.

F. HANCOCK - Hon. Sec.

LONDON

Some two dozen members attended the meeting on May 13th at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Blythe at Dollis Hill. We missed our cheery secretary, Ben Whiter, who was unavoidably absent.

Frank Lay and Bill Lofts reported on their visit to the Matlock Convention and the prospects regarding a memorial to our late President, Frank Richards.

The ballot was taken for the new President, and as a result John Wernham will be invited to accept. Bill Gender and Edwy Searles Brooks will be asked to be vice-presidents.

The Gem catalogue is almost ready and the work on the Nelson Lee catalogue is proceeding satisfactorily. Books for the Nelson Lee library are now in the hands of Bob Blythe, the librarian.

After an excellent spread we had a quiz from Winnie Morss. Ray Hopkins, Len Packman Thomas Wright and Eric Lawrence shared points. This was followed by a witty Magnet reading by Brian Doyle from "The Rise and Fall of William Gosling." Finally, a quiz from our host Bob Blythe, with Len Packman the winner.

Next month we are to include a debate in our programme in which a member starts off "In my opinion...." Frank Lay will start the ball rolling.

Next meeting, June 3rd at Garden Flat, 13 Northbourne Road, Clapham, S.W.4.
(Monday 7946). Please notify Brian Doyle if attending.

YOURS SINCERELY

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

R. BECK (Lewes): The arrival of the Digest is eagerly awaited, not only by myself, but also by my two sons, who, I am pleased to say, are Magnet and Lee enthusiasts. Neither of them has any taste at all for the so-called juvenile literature of the present day, but my collection, though on the small side, has been their main source of reading for many years. Like father, they go back and re-read, again and again. The only thing we differ on is that I prefer Magnets and they prefer Lees, but we all enjoy them all. Continued success to C.D. and I trust that you have a very enjoyable holiday and come back refreshed to carry on giving us our monthly tonic.

(The Book Souvenir which is awarded every month for the Star Letter of the month goes to the sender of the above. - ED.)

A. FENNER (Highams Park): I am really thrilled with the Digest and the Annual and wish I had met them years ago. The Memorial Issue was really splendid. I have read it over and over again. These days I rely on the Digest to bring me a breath of the past. Apart from the Bunter Books, all I have is 5 Magnets, 4 Gems, and 21 Nelson Lees, all of which I bought myself as a boy. I don't know why I kept them out of the hundreds I had, but I am pleased that I did.

C. H. CHAPMAN (Reading): I like the nice clean cover of the May Collectors' Digest - a reminder of my dear old friend "Mac" - a typical "Tom Merry."

(Mr. Chapman has drawn a delightful new study of Billy Bunter, especially for Collectors' Digest. It will bring you joy on our cover very soon. - ED.)

JACK HUGHES (Brisbane): The Brisbane Cinema has given us a reminder of the hobby in two films recently released here. Peter Sellers' reference to his employer in "The Battle of the Sexes" as "that puffing Billy Bunter" - and Jack Trevor Story's name in the story credit for a delightful comedy "Invasion Quartet."

ARTHUR CARBIN (Rugby): I enjoyed the April Digest very much indeed. It gets better each month. The cover brought back many memories of the short-lived "Red Arrow" one of Thomson's few failures. I also enjoyed "Odd Man Out". It was nice to see something new written about the chums of St. Jim's.

ROSEMARY LYNE, DAVID YOUNG, JOHNNIE LYNE, SHEILA MCCARTHY, ALLAN PITMAN, VINCENT SINHA (an Indian boy), SUSAN PITTMEN, MARILYN PITTMEN, PETER JARRETT, ALEX ROGERS (North Finchley): We young readers of the Bunter Books are fed-up with Frank Nugent, who is an absolutely useless fellow. He can't do anything. He can't lead like Wharton, fight like Bob Cherry, bowl like Inky, or keep goal like Bull. He is too pacific and foolish, and keeps on licking Wharton's boots all the time. We are going to write to Cassell's and have him dropped from the Bunter adventures, and we think it would be far better if we had the "Famous Four" in future and useless Nugent dropped dead.

(Ye gods, you're exactly forty years too late with your Ban Nugent campaign. We advise you to stock up with ammunition. Frank has countless admirers, and we can see them descending on North Finchley with catapults, pea-shooters and water-pistols in hand. Leading them will be Mr. Don Webster, and, we warn you, he is some fighter. - ED.)

P. J. GREIGHAN (Eire): The Digest has scored another triumph. "Danny's Diary" is excellent. I am looking forward to more extracts. It will bring back nostalgic memories to large numbers of readers. Congratulations on the fine illustrated heading "Chums in Council" which heads the Editorial.

W. O. C. LOFTS (London): "The Terrible Three's Air Cruise" was originally written by Ernest Brindle, a famous war-correspondent of the Daily Mail. In fact, when Herbert Leckenby visited Charles Hamilton a few years ago, he asked him if that was the name of the man he mentioned in the Autobiography and Mr. Hamilton replied that it was. The first substitute story in the Gem was actually No. 43 "The Schoolboy Jockey" written by C. M. Down.

MISS E. B. FLINDERS (Hitchin): I'm always pleased to see the Digest drop through the letter-box. I love "Danny's Diary". I hope there's plenty more of it.

BASIL ADAM (Newcastle): It seems to me that Kenneth Kirby is bending over backwards to prove that he is the only one to understand the complexities of Harry Wharton's character. I did not mention them in my reply to the Controversial because I took it for granted that most Magnet and Gem readers would be aware of the make-up of Wharton and Tom Merry. Sorry if I embarrassed Mr. Kirby too much.

E. N. LAMBERT (Chessington): "Danny's Diary" was a very welcome addition to the May C.D. It will bring back memories to many generations. May its chronicles continue for years to come.

GERALD ALLISON (Ilkley): How I revelled in 'Danny's Diary' What memories it evoked!

GEORGE SELLARS (Sheffield): I greatly like "Danny's Diary" and I am delighted to see it is in similar style to the Tom Merry Cavalcade which appeared in C.D. Annual a few years ago. I thought the May cover grand.

W. J. A. HUBBARD (Kenya): Strictly from a literary viewpoint, how many of Charles Hamilton's stories were really outstanding? You can leave out stories like the China series and the first South Seas series as they were not school stories at all; neither were such series as Bunter Court and Whiffles Circus or even the Wharton Lodge series. I think the number of really outstanding school stories he wrote could be counted on the fingers of one hand. "Boy Without a Name" "Outram series" the first Wharton the Rebel series, "Housemaster's Homecoming", the "His Brother's Keeper, series perhaps. All dramatic stories and all rather approaching the adult angle, the first Rebel series very much so. I wonder if Mr. Hamilton ever really tackled a school story written mainly for adult consumption.

ARTHUR V. HOLLAND (Australia): Congratulations on the excellent May cover. A delightful drawing of Tom Merry expressing the stirring qualities as portrayed by the author of the stories. I greatly enjoyed the interesting and unusual new feature "Danny's Diary" which so delightfully awakens memories of my youth. Collectors' Digest always comes up to expectations.

Sexton Blake Today

SPOTLIGHT ON MURDER (No. 499)

Martin Thomas

"The real difficulty of this case" said Sexton Blake, "lay in the multiplicity of incidents - the diversity of motives and events. It was a question of which motive accounted for which crime."

This drama of hatred, passion, jealousy, blackmail and revenge in circus life, played out against a background of crowds, sideshows, circus performances, sit-down demonstrations and a multiplicity of characters outside circus life, has the authentic atmosphere of resin, light, brass-bands and dare-devil stunts.

A well planned story told with all the skill and artistry we have grown to expect from Mr. Thomas. The descriptive passages are excellent, the characters are well drawn, and the whole novel is packed with incident. A novel which will give pleasure to all readers, new and old.

SOMEBODY WANTS ME DEAD (No. 500)

Richard Williams

When Harry Snogg, successful author, left his home and journeyed to London in search of the "unusual glimpse of life" which would bring him equal fame as a photographer, he missed his change point and strayed into a series of adventures as exciting as any created by his own imagination.

After catching a bank-robber single-handed, this normally modest young man began to feel, and act, like his own chief character Ryley Steele, heroic detective of Boy's Realm fame - "You stay clear off the case and leave me to wrap it up alone" he said to Sexton

Blake. "In return, I'll hand my next case to you" Harry Snogg offered generously.

Sexton Blake closed his eyes and counted up to five slowly. "This isn't a game Mr. Snogg. These men are not playing. They're killers. They use real guns with real bullets," he said.

The men were not playing - armed robbery was their business and death their play-thing. Since Harry Snogg was the only person who could identify them with murder, his life was in danger. So, too, was Sexton Blake's as the investigation continued.

A good story, full of incident and colour, with flashes of humour to ease the tension. Once again Richard Williams has created new exciting adventures for Blake (and Harry Snogg) to face, tough crooks to be tracked down and out-witted. Plot, dialogue and characterisation are excellent. I would vote Harry Snogg the best new character of the year. I recommend this book to all Blake lovers - especially the older, long-term readers, like myself.

AUSTRALIAN CLUB REPORT

The first touch of winter made club members appreciate their snug quarters at the Book Bazaar for their meeting on May 17th.

The election of officers took place with the result that present office-bearers were returned en bloc. All the regular members were present, excepting Vic Colby who was greatly missed by us all.

The secretary announced the good news concerning the taperecording from London and arrangements were discussed for a special meeting to be held at the home of the secretary to celebrate its arrival. We are looking forward to meeting, in this way, the many good friends already known through the medium of their letters.

Thanks to the generosity of Bill Hubbard we now have a coloured photograph of most of the London members, together with a detailed identity list. Another item of great interest was a reproduction (via our postal member, Arthur Holland) of the letter received by Gerry Allison from P. G. Wodehouse, accepting the presidency of their Northern Club. The letter was in great demand, the lucky recipient being Stan Nicholls, long a Wodehouse admirer.

Interesting letters from Bill Hall and Bruce Fowler were read out, followed by over-seas news. From Harry Broster came a man-on-the-spot account of the Easter Convention. We will be there with you all, one of these days.

Discussion followed on various points raised by correspondents, and on several features in the May C.D. A unanimous vote of enjoyment was passed on the new feature "Danny's Diary", which it is hoped will be a regular feature for a long time, as its professional style made it one of the best treats yet offered in C.D. Our congratulations to the anonymous author for reviving some very happy memories.

After three hours of chatting, our parched throats welcomed refreshments before members took their ways homeward.

B. PATE - Secretary.

For Next Month:

"MR. BUDDLE'S HAIR SHIRT"
