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GRAND ENLARGED CHRISTMAS ISSUE

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Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 17

Number 204

DECEMBER, 1963

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JUST CHRISTMAS

Christmas, of course, is not what it was when we were children. But then, few things are.

Everybody seems to agree that Christmas is too commercialised nowadays. The preparations for it start

too early; the money is too lavishly squandered, the hustle and the bustle are so riotous, the noise so blatant that the old, gentle message of Peace on earth, good will towards men, is almost lost.

In the old days we made our own pleasures; we did not rely on the television screen to entertain us throughout the Christmas. Much of the joy of Christmas was in the looking forward to it. In last year's Collectors' Digest Annual, our young friend Danny took us back to peep into Christmas time, fifty years ago. Mother making the puddings, with all the attendant joy of preparing the ingredients - and Danny eating much of the fruit which was intended to go into those



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puddings. The house filled with the steam of the boiling puddings. The making at home of the simple Christmas decorations. The buying of the grand old Christmas Double Numbers which meant so much to us then.

I wonder sometimes whether Christmas can possibly mean so much to children now as it did when we were young. I wonder, if we could take young Danny, turn a switch to put him forward over fifty years, and plant him down in the middle of Christmas 1963, still a youngster, just what his reactions would be. Would he find the modern world vastly superior to the one from which we had taken him? Would he prefer an evening before the telly so superior to that night out at the panto with Mum and Dad? Would he find more pleasure in a disc cut by the Beatles than in a browse over the Christmas Double Number of the Magnet in the year 1913? I just don't know. Maybe he would.

Early in November two small boys, probably under five years of age, came rushing down the street. One tripped, and fell at my feet, his small, chilled hands smacking hard on the pavement. He let out a terrific yell. I picked him up, and said: "Come on, son. You're not hurt. Rub your hands together."

He looked up at me with a tear-streaked face and said smartly: "Can you spare a penny for the guy?"

I laughed out loud, and presented him with a sixpence. He was off like the wind with his companion. They had no guy. The request had just come automatically.

We had guys, of course, when we were children, but it seems to me that the "Penny for the guy" rite is something fairly new. I wonder what my mother would have said, long ago, if her small son had stood about the street chanting "Penny for the guy." She might have said nothing, but she would have had a fit. Nowadays we see the "Penny for the guy" brigade out and doing, at least four weeks before November the Fifth.

I have wandered away from Christmas, and that will never do in our Christmas Number. Christmas, after all, is what we make it ourselves. Many of us are lucky, for we have those old-time Christmas Numbers among our most cherished possessions, and we can spend an hour in an atmosphere of an old-fashioned Christmas if we feel so inclined, when our modern television set begins to bore us.

May the message of the first Christmas get through to us all this coming festive season, and may its spirit of love, happiness, and peace remain with us in the New Year soon to be born.

THE ANNUAL:

COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL is like a Christmas stocking. Packed

with good things, just waiting for us to dip within to sample the contents. Here in alphabetical order, is a list of the contributors to this year's edition:

Derek ADLEY; Neil BECK; Harry BROSTER; James COOK; Richmal CROMPTON; DANNY; Rex DOLPHIN; Brian DOYLE; Eric FAYNE; Frank HANCOCK; A. W. HANSON; Tom HOPPERTON; Roger JENKINS; Frank Vernon LAY; John UPTON; Albert WATKIN; Henry WEBB; Geoffrey WILDE; Charles WRIGHT.

That gallant band have given of their best to assure us a Merry Christmas - and the Annual is lavishly illustrated to warm all our nostalgic hearts.

My very best wishes to all my readers for a happy time this Yuletide, and for the best of everything in 1964.

THE EDITOR.

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Penalty for Improper Use



A Story of Greyfriars

It looked Christmassy, as Bob Cherry had observed cheerfully. It had started to snow in the middle of the afternoon. The fall had been heavy for a time. Now it had ceased, but the bitter cold had intensified.

The local train for Friardale stood at the bay platform of Courtfield Junction. The ancient engine was fussing and panting, and emitting a stream of white steam into the dark, frosty atmosphere. If the engine was impatient to get going, the passengers in the local train were no less so.

Normally, the local did not carry many passengers. It was, in fact, only the spasmodic traffic for Greyfriars School, near Friardale, which kept the line open at all. On this mid-December Wednesday there

were a fair number of passengers on the train - a couple of dozen Greyfriars boys, and a few Friardale residents who were returning to the village after a shopping spree or a visit to a cinema in Courtfield. There seemed little promise that their journey would be completed very speedily.

The local ran in some connection with the main line expresses. The up train, only a few minutes late, was long gone, but the down train from London was already fifteen minutes behind time, and was still not signalled.

Bob Cherry passed a hand over the misted window of the compartment, and gazed out over the indifferently lit platforms.

"If this train doesn't soon get a move on, we're going to be late for call-over."

he said.

The Famous Five were all present in the compartment. Greyfriars Juniors had been playing football against Courtfield County School that afternoon, and Dick Trumper's team had held the visitors to a draw. It was not one of the hardest matches on the Remove's fixture list, and it gave Harry Wharton the chance to play some of his second-class men. Stott, for instance, had replaced Johnny Bull in goal, and Redwing had been given his opportunity on the left wing. A dozen or so Removites had gone over with the players to watch the game, and footballers and supporters had now formed into small groups and were scattered in compartments along the train.

It had been the last match of the term. Within a few days, Greyfriars would be breaking-up for the Christmas vacation.

The service on the local line from Courtfield to Friardale was not very frequent, and the crowd of Removites had found time to enjoy a substantial tea in Chunkley's restaurant before heading for the station.

"One thing," went on Bob, "they can't blame us for cutting roll if the jolly old train is late. Quelch is an athlete for his years, but he won't feel up to giving six to a couple of dozen fellows."

"That sounds like the London train now," commented Frank Nugent.

A distant rumble increased in volume, and with a clatter and a squealing of brakes the electric express drew up on the far platform.

In the corridor outside the compartment occupied by the Famous Five, a boy sauntered past. The local train comprised old corridor rolling-stock, now used on the branch line since the main line was electrified.

"I believe that was Redwing," said Harry Wharton.

He rose and passed into the corridor, closing the compartment door behind him.

"Reddy!" he called out.

The boy who had sauntered past turned at the call. It was Tom Redwing, who had been playing in the game that afternoon.

It was cold in the dimly-lit corridor. Windows were wide open, and flakes of snow were drifting in. Apart from the two juniors, the corridor was deserted.

Tom Redwing smiled as the captain of

the Remove walked up to him.

"Where's Smithy?" demanded Wharton.

Redwing gave the slightest shrug of his shoulders.

"He's not on the train."

"Not on the train?" Wharton stared at Redwing. "Where is he, then?"

"He's gone by road. He said he'd get a taxi. He won't, of course!"

Wharton smothered an ejaculation of impatience. He spoke angrily.

"The mad fool! You knew Smithy was in detention to-day, Redwing. You knew Quelch only let him come out because I said we wanted him in the game. Why didn't you stop him?"

"Can anyone stop the Bounder when he's made up his mind about something?" asked Redwing drily.

"If you'd told me, we'd have soon stopped him," snapped Wharton.

"I daresay! He didn't give me the chance. He was off and away before I could do anything about it. After he finished his tea he said he had an appointment to see someone in Friardale. He just disappeared before I could do a thing."

Wharton made a gesture of annoyance.

"An appointment in Friardale! The shady beast. He's gone to see some booby rake at the 'Cross Keys' or the 'Three Fishers.' He won't get a taxi on a night like this. He'll have to hang about for a bus."

Wharton checked himself as a man passed along the corridor. It was Joyce, a game-keeper on Sir Hilton Popper's estate.

Wharton nodded to him, and the man entered a second-class compartment and slammed the corridor door.

Wharton went on: "Smithy will miss call-over, and that'll mean an enquiry, and an interview with the Head for him."

Redwing nodded. He looked worried.

"If the train hangs about much longer, we shall all be late for call-over, he said hopefully. "In that case, the Bounder's absence won't be noticed. It's a chance. The only chance, I think."

The down train had gone, accompanied by blinding flashes from the snowy conductor rail.

Wharton looked at his watch.

"It's not much of a chance. We shall

about make it for call-over. I reckon this train is off now."

As if in response to his comment, an engine whistle sounded, and the local train jerked into motion. Redwing placed a hand on a window frame to steady himself as the train moved.

"Well, Smithy will have to take his chance," said Wharton rather grimly. "Unless there's any more delay, we shall all get in for call-over. My hat, it's cold out here in the corridor. Come in with us, Reddy."

Redwing shook his head.

"I'm going along to the toilet to have a wash. These carriages are filthy." He displayed his open palms, marked with the grime which had rubbed off from the window frame. "I'll see you presently, Harry."

Redwing moved along the corridor, and Wharton returned to his chums. It was cosily warm in the compartment after the icy draughts of the corridor, and Wharton sank down gratefully on the cushions.

The train jogged along at an easy pace to the rhythmic clack of the wheels. Outside, the snow flakes swirled past the windows.

The Famous Five chatted merrily, living again some of the more exciting moments of the afternoon's game. The train had been in motion for about ten minutes when there was a grinding of brakes.

Bob Cherry rubbed the misted window, and peered out into the darkness.

"Not Friardale yet," he said. "What's she stopping for?"

With a number of jerks and grunts the train came to a standstill.

Bob lowered the window, and put his head out. It was a short train, and the Co occupied a compartment in the last of three carriages. The engine was panting, and belching smoke into the night.

"Must be signals!" said Nugent.

"They don't use signals on this line now," replied Bob. He brushed snow from his eyes.

"An avalanche! All hands to the shovels!" put in Johnny Bull.

"Shut the esteemed window, Bob," begged Hurree Singh. "The parkifulness of this preposterous climate is terrific."

Bob stared into the darkness for a few moments more. He saw the fireman descend

from the engine.

"Locks like a breakdown," said Bob. He closed the window, and settled down again on his corner seat.

The minutes passed, and still the train did not move. The guard came along the corridor. He opened the door, and looked suspiciously at the Famous Five.

"You young guys been larking about?" he demanded.

"Larking? No! What's the trouble?" asked Wharton.

The guard was frowning. He spoke surly.

"Somebody's pulled the communication cord further up the train. Can't find any reason for it. Some young monkey from the school, I'll swear."

He departed, leaving the compartment door wide open.

"What larks!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

Another ten minutes went by before the train once again jerked into motion with a protesting roar from the engine.

.....

"Pretty goes hon!"

Gosling, the porter, made that remark as he let in the Removites - about half an hour late for call-over. Gosling eyed them grimly through the gloom.

"Wot I says is this 'ere —" he went on.

Cheerfully ignoring the porter, the score or so of juniors tramped away through the snow which covered the quadrangle. The Famous Five brought up the rear, with Redwing.

As they walked a shadowy figure detached itself from behind one of the old elm trees and joined them.

"Smithy!" ejaculated Redwing.

The Bounder spoke irritably.

"Where the dickens did you fellows get to? I've been kicking my heels, frozen stiff, waiting for you. I got back to school in tons of time for roll, but I couldn't very well go in without the rest of you."

Harry Wharton paused with Redwing, but the others hurried on towards the warmth of the School House. Wharton glared at the muffled figure of the Bounder.

"It's not good enough, Smithy," he said impatiently. He was speaking in a low

voice. "Quelch let you out of detention this afternoon on the understanding that you played football for the Remove and stayed with the team. After tea, you cleared off to meet some of your shady friends. You utter fool, you know that Quelch has had his eye on you ever since half term —"

"Can it! I got back before your lot, at any rate," snapped the Bounder. "I could have made call-over with fifteen minutes to spare, but Quelch might have been suspicious if I'd gone in without the rest of the gang. Skinner said you weren't in, and it's been darned cold waiting for you."

"Thank goodness you're in," said Redwing. "How the dickens did you do it, Smithy? I thought you were bound to be late. There would have been an unholy row —"

"I told you what I was going to do," grunted the Bounder. "I got a taxi from Courtfield. Ten times faster than the puffing Billy."

"I didn't think you could possibly get a taxi on a night like this."

The Bounder chuckled softly.

"Money talks, Reddy! The taxi driver said that if I gave him a pension he wouldn't drive through the snow to Friar-dale and Greyfriars. I waved a fiver under his nose — and he changed his mind quickly. Simple, isn't it?"

"You mad ass!" muttered Redwing.

As the three juniors entered the School House they were approached by Sykes, the prefect.

"Wharton, Vernon-Smith, Redwing — Quelch's study at once, all three of you," said Sykes. He eyed them thoughtfully, and added: "You'd better get out of those wet togs first, but don't waste time."

About ten minutes later the three juniors were standing before their form-master in his study. Mr. Quelch, seated at his desk, had an angry red spot on each of his bony cheeks.

"Sorry we're late, sir," said the captain of the Remove. "The train was delayed —"

Mr. Quelch held up his hand.

"I am aware that you boys are not to blame for being late for roll. The communication cord on the train was pulled,

with consequent delay to the service."

"Oh!" murmured Wharton.

"The station-master at Friar-dale has telephoned me," said Mr. Quelch crisply. "It appears that the emergency cord was pulled in one of two first-class compartments in the centre of the train. There were no passengers in either of these compartments when the guard investigated. You knew about this, Wharton?"

The captain of the Remove stared in surprise at his form-master.

"I knew the communication-cord was pulled, sir. The train was kept hanging about a good fifteen minutes. The guard seemed to think somebody had been larking, but I suppose they had to make sure."

"Quite!" Mr. Quelch's brows were knitted ominously. "The station-master tells me that there was no genuine emergency."

"May I make a suggestion, sir?" drawled the Bounder.

"Well?" barked Mr. Quelch.

"Probably someone lives near the line. He didn't want a long walk home through the snow. So he pulled the chain — and got down into his own back garden."

Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes bored into the Bounder.

"For a while, Vernon-Smith, they believed that the train was stopped to give some person the opportunity to leave it between Courtfield and Friar-dale. A search round the train with the aid of flash-lights proved that this was not so. Nobody could have left the train without leaving marks in the snow. There were no marks in the snow. The person who pulled the cord was still on the train."

"It sounds like a detective story, sir," said the Bounder coolly.

"There is reason to believe, Vernon-Smith —" Mr. Quelch's tones were icy. "There is reason to believe that you pulled the communication cord."

"I, sir?"

The Bounder's eyes opened wide with astonishment. Wharton and Redwing were staring at their form-master.

Mr. Quelch tapped a paper on his desk.

"I have a list here of all the boys who were not present at roll-call. You, Vernon-Smith, are the only one named on the list who would be reckless enough — stupid

enough - to do such a lawless act."

The Bounder was red with anger. He spoke impulsively.

"Talk about giving a dog a bad name. Of course I didn't pull the cord. Why should I? What utter rot!"

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet. He leaned forward over his desk.

"Mr. Clegg, the Friardale tradesman, was a passenger on the train in a second-class compartment adjoining the first-class compartment in which, as was later ascertained, the cord was pulled. He had noticed a Greyfriars boy pass in the corridor a few moments before the brakes were applied. Mr. Clegg gave this information to the Friardale station-master - and added that he was sure the boy he had seen was Vernon-Smith."

The Bounder breathed hard. He glared bitterly at his form-master.

"The stupid old fool, he's blind as a bat. I tell you I know nothing about it. Why should I pull a communication-cord on a dirty old train?"

"Do not raise your voice, Vernon-Smith!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

Harry Wharton was stirring uneasily. He hardly knew what to say for the best.

"It was not Vernon-Smith, sir," he said.

The gimlet eyes were turned on him.

"Indeed, Wharton? Can you assure me of that? Was Vernon-Smith with you when the cord was pulled?"

Wharton reddened.

"No, sir."

"You mean you know that somebody else pulled the cord?"

Wharton's flush deepened.

"I don't know who did it, sir. I know it wasn't Vernon-Smith."

Mr. Quelch made a gesture of impatience.

"If Vernon-Smith was not with you at the time you can know nothing about it, Wharton." Mr. Quelch turned to Redwing. "I sent for you, Redwing, because you and Vernon-Smith are usually together. Were you with him when the communication-cord was pulled?"

Redwing shook his head. His face was troubled.

"It wasn't Smithy, sir," he said in a low voice.

Mr. Quelch's frown relaxed a trifle.

"If Vernon-Smith was in your company when the train was halted, and you assure me that he was not the guilty person, I shall accept your word, Redwing," said Mr. Quelch.

Redwing stood silent. There was nothing he could say.

Mr. Quelch's expression hardened again. "I am waiting for you to speak, Redwing. Was Vernon-Smith in your company on the train?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked almost fierce now.

"Then how dare you say that Vernon-Smith did not pull the cord when you are unaware whether he did so or not? The station master and the guard of the train are convinced that it was the act of a reckless schoolboy. Apart from Greyfriars boys, the guard was acquainted with all the passengers on the local train. Such an act is in keeping with Vernon-Smith's normal intolerable behaviour, and, furthermore, Mr. Clegg recognized him."

"Mr. Clegg didn't recognize me," said the Bounder angrily. "Wharton and Redwing know that I didn't pull that lousy cord."

"Wharton and Redwing have stated that they were not in your company, so they can know nothing pertinent to the matter," rapped Mr. Quelch.

"They know I didn't pull the cord because they know I wasn't on the train at all," hooted the Bounder.

Mr. Quelch jumped.

"What! You were not on the train? Nonsense! Take care Vernon-Smith --"

"I tell you I wasn't on the dashed train. I came home by taxi."

Mr. Quelch stood in silence for a moment.

"Is that true, Wharton?" he demanded at last.

"It's true, sir," said Wharton reluctantly.

Mr. Quelch's eyes gleamed with anger.

"You were under detention this afternoon, Vernon-Smith. For some time you have been under suspicion of having made undesirable acquaintanceships outside the school. I allowed you to play football at Courtfield on the clear understanding that you remained with the team the whole time you were outside the school gates. You now confess to me that you left the team and returned to

the school by yourself." Mr. Quelch turned his severe gaze on his head boy. "I blame you very much, Wharton. You knew the conditions under which this boy was allowed to join your team this afternoon."

Wharton was starting to speak, but the Bounder interrupted.

"It wasn't Wharton's fault. I cleared off alone while they were having tea in Courtfield. Wharton couldn't do anything about it."

Mr. Quelch paused. He stood in thought for a moment.

Then he said: "Wharton and Redwing, you may go."

The two juniors left the study, neither giving a further glance in the Bounder's direction.

Vernon-Smith stood in silence, his face sullen.

"Why did you not return by train with the team, Vernon-Smith?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"I wanted to call at a shop in Friardale - a matter of a Christmas present for my father, sir."

The Bounder spoke easily and smoothly. Mr. Quelch's keen gaze searched his face.

"Then the shop keeper will confirm your visit and the object of it, Vernon-Smith. Name him, and I will telephone him."

"Unfortunately, no, sir. The shop was closed when I reached Friardale."

"I thought it likely," said Mr. Quelch. "It is impossible to believe any statement you make. Even if your visit to Friardale was innocuous as you claim, you were still flouting authority in leaving your friends in order to return to school by yourself. I accept your assurance that you were not on the train, so you could not have pulled the communication cord. Mr. Clegg was clearly mistaken, and I shall inform the Friardale station-master. The fact remains that you should have been on the train."

The Bounder did not speak. He had called the tune and he was ready to pay the piper.

Mr. Quelch stood in some indecision. The Bounder watched him.

"I am reluctant to worry the Headmaster so near to term-end," went on Mr. Quelch slowly. "Nevertheless —"

"It's Christmas, sir," ventured the Bounder.

Mr. Quelch ignored the reminder.

"I shall deal with you myself, Vernon-Smith," he said. "Your punishment will be severe. You will bend over that chair."

Mr. Quelch selected his stoutest cane.

* * * * *

It was half an hour later that the Bounder entered study No. 4 on the Remove passage. Redwing was there, seated at the table, working on his preparation. There was an anxious expression on his face as he watched the Bounder cross the study and sit down against the fire.

"Going to do your prep, Smyth?"

"Prep!" The Bounder scowled at his chum. "No, I'm not going to do any prep. I used to say that Quelch couldn't whop, but he excelled himself to-night, the old brute. He'll hardly expect me to do any prep after the laming he gave me. He made the punishment fit the crime, but if he thinks the criminal is going to do prep after it, he's got another think coming."

Redwing nodded. He went on with his work, while the Bounder stared into the fire. A few minutes went by, and the Bounder spoke again.

"Reddy!"

Redwing looked up.

"What is it, Smyth?"

"Do you think they'll get the man who pulled that emergency chain?"

"I suppose they might. I doubt it. He took care nobody saw him."

"Uncle Clegg saw someone."

"He thought he saw you. It wasn't you, and if that was their only clue, they won't get far. I don't suppose they'll bother. The Friardale Flier isn't all that important."

Redwing returned to his work, and the Bounder leaned forward and stirred the fire.

"Do you reckon it was a Greyfriars man, Reddy?"

Redwing grunted irritably.

"Smyth, please shut up, old man."

"I've got prep to finish, whether you bother about yours or not."

"I asked you whether you thought it was a Greyfriars man."

Redwing sighed.

"I daresay it was. Now shut up!"

A hard smile was playing over the Bounder's lips.

"If I knew who it was, Reddy, I'd black his eye."

"Would you?" Redwing eyed him steadily. "Why?"

The Bounder laughed softly.

"If that train hadn't been delayed, we should all have got in for roll-call, and Quelch would never have known that I came home on my lonely own. But somebody pulled the cord. Penalty for improper use - twelve mighty whops from Quelch's birch. Some fellow had the fun of the improper use - and I paid the penalty. Oh, yes, Reddy, I'd black his eye."

Redwing closed his exercise book. He sat in silence.

The Bounder leaned back in his chair. He put the tips of his fingers together, and gazed at the ceiling.

"Of course, Reddy, the horrid bloke might have meant well. He might have forgotten that I've more money than is good for me. He might have taken it for granted that I should be late back. He might have delayed the train with the bright idea that if everybody was late back my own late return would be lost in the crush."

Still Redwing did not speak.

"Do you think that far-fetched, Reddy?"

There was a mocking gleam in the Bounder's eyes.

Redwing rose to his feet. He placed his books tidily on the shelf.

"Very far-fetched, Smithy!" he said.

It's hardly credible that any fellow could

be fool enough to like you enough to stop a train so that you could be saved from a licking you'd begged for."

The Bounder gave a hard laugh.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy!" he quoted. He laughed again, and stood up. He winced, as he felt the effects of Mr. Quelch's cane. He went on: "Do you think old Clegg was just a sadistic old beast, out to get me a whopping, Reddy?"

Redwing rubbed his chin.

"I suppose he was just mistaken."

"He was mistaken all right." The Bounder moved across the room and stood by Redwing's side. "If you see two people about together a great deal, you might not know t'other from which. You might just know them as Marks and Spencer, Laurel and Hardy, or Weary Willie and Tired Tim. One night you might see one of them, and think to yourself - Why, there's Weary Willie! And probably it isn't Weary Willie at all. It's Tired Tim."

Redwing smiled faintly.

"You get the weirdest ideas, Smithy. I'm going down to the Rag. Bob Cherry has a kind of Christmas party going on to celebrate the end of term. Coming?"

The Bounder opened the door, and switched off the light.

"Lead the way, Tim," he said.

* * * * *

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NAME THE AUTHOR (8) By Walter Webb

THE SEXTON BLAKE STORIES BY C. M. HAMMILL

The above heading is quite true, yet not strictly accurate. This sounds a little contradictory, but is explained by the fact that although the author certainly wrote Blake stories, it is not under such a name that they should be appended. True enough, it was the real baptismal name of the contributor concerned, but for some reason - writing purposes, probably - it was changed in early career, and so appears in the official records under the one adopted.

Cicely Mary Hammill was born 15th June, 1872, in Sussex Gardens, Paddington, and was the daughter of Captain Denzil Hammill, a British Army officer. Educated at private schools both here and in Germany, where she was still known as Cicely Hammill, she entered journalism, and eventually became a director of "Time and Tide," a periodical devoted to the publishing of serious and light articles and short stories, for which payment was made at the rate of one guinea a column.

By this time the writer had changed her name to Cicely Hamilton, and it was under this identity, though several years earlier, that she came under the notice of Hamilton Edwards, a real live-wire of an editor, when Edwards was casting around energetically for more blood to accommodate the reservoirs of his growing empire of boys' periodicals. This was about the year 1900, when Miss Hamilton was combining her journalistic activities with acting, yet without gaining much recognition in either profession.

Miss Hamilton did a lot of good work for Edwards, both for the editor's GIRL'S FRIEND and many of the boys' papers he had under his control. Which raises a very interesting point. How many women writers were there writing boys' stories for the weekly papers at that time?

Cicely Hamilton was not the first lady contributor to the pages of

the UJ, for early in the halfpenny series, an editor confessed - and quite proudly, too - that the author who wrote as "Wilton Mordaunt" was a woman. That lady has never been identified, and most probably never will, since all records appertaining to the halfpenny series are not in existence: but it can be confidently said that she was not Cicely Hamilton, for the style in which "Wilton Mordaunt" wrote was not hers. But the latter may well have been Miss Evelyn Everett-Green, who, on commencing her literary career in 1886, subsequently wrote stories for boys and girls, and had the distinction of writing the second serial in the very first volume of CHUMS, in 1892-93.

Combining free lance journalism with acting and lecturing, Cicely Hamilton was a very busy woman during that period of her life when others of her sex are contemplating marriage and settling down to a life of domesticity with the man of their choice; but it was obvious that acting and writing meant so much to her that she was prepared to sacrifice them in the devotion to her career.

Miss Hamilton's work can be found in most of the papers run by Hamilton Edwards, for whom she wrote boys' stories under the name of "Max Hamilton"; and at the age of 33, following several complete stories and a serial, all of strong human interest, she penned her first Sexton Blake story, - "The Circus Detective," - which appeared in 1906, in issue No. 130 of the UJ.

It is not being chivalrous to say that Cicely Hamilton portrayed Blake better than any male contributor before her - it is the truth; for, in the hands of this talented authoress, Blake was, in complete contravention of Norman Goddard's interpretation, presented in such fashion as to make her model the ideal one for newcomers to the Blake arena to weave their narratives around, and, although it may be argued that there were male authors too who drew masterly pictures of Blake - men like G. H. Teed, Jack Lewis, Gwyn Evans, Anthony Skene, and Gilbert Chester - these were all writers of a later era. In her own epoch, Cicely Hamilton, in my opinion, towered head and shoulders above all her male contemporaries in the presentation of the character of Sexton Blake.

In between her writings of Blake, Miss Hamilton had a one act play produced in Brighton, in 1906, and later at Wyndham's Theatre, a venture which gained her very little recognition, but which was to prove the fore-runner of several longer and more successful plays, of which the first, - Diana of Dobson's - produced at the Kingsway Theatre in 1908, was to plant her feet firmly on the ladder of fame.

Before following the playwright into her more affluent days, a

few comments on the style in which she wrote her Sexton Blake stories - nine in all - will not be out of context, since, by comparison with the stories which appeared under her pen-name, "Max Hamilton," they settle the question of her authorship of them quite conclusively.

Miss Hamilton had a tendency for over-elaboration, and her script was noticeable for the excessive number of little dashes she used with which to punctuate it. As an illustration, the following extracts from "The Circus Detective" serve to indicate what is meant: (a), "But he wore glasses - smoked glasses - and a very thick beard..." and (b), "It was the fight to get out - the mad, p anic rush - that all the injuries were caused..." The authoress was also fond of beginning a sentence with the word "Nor," and I can recall only one Blake author doing this with the same frequency as Miss Hamilton, and he was G. H. Teed, who was to enter the Blake field some five years later. The adverb, "coolly" was also used a lot by the authoress, and, although it has to be admitted that the word "returned" was utilised by most of the early Blake chroniclers when used as an appendage to a sentence of dialogue, it was in her excessive use of the word in that capacity that Miss Hamilton's stories can be identified. Examples: "He's evidently interested in you," Franz returned lightly; and "Is that your answer?" he returned coolly. (From "The Silent Witness," a detective story, by "Max Hamilton".)

Subject to confirmation, here are the nine stories of Sexton Blake, which, I feel certain, the famous playwright wrote for the UJ: No. 130: The Circus Detective, No. 153: Sexton Blake Among the Brigands, No. 167: Lost on The Alps, No. 168: A New Year Mystery, No. 183: Sexton Blake in Wales, No. 194: Beware!, No. 205: Sexton Blake in Amsterdam, No. 210: The Mystery of The Lightship, No. 220: Sexton Blake - Chemist, (last story of 1907, and Cicely Hamilton's last Sexton Blake story).

The best of the bunch was, to my mind, No. 183, a fine story with a thrilling climax. In fact, it was a memorable issue, not only on account of it being written by a woman, but by the fact that Arthur Clarke illustrated it. Clarke rarely contributed to the UJ, and his drawings for a Sexton Blake story can be counted on the fingers of one hand. It was the other C. Hamilton - Charles - whose work Clarke mostly appended his fine illustrations to; but it is agreeable indeed to record that Cicely was also privileged in being teamed up with so splendid an artist.

A staunch advocate of the Equal Rights For Woman Movement, Miss Hamilton no doubt demanded - and got - the same rates of payment for her Sexton Blake stories that her contemporaries of the male species

received for theirs. After comparing her work with that of some of the male contributors, who shall be nameless, one is bound to concede that, in this department, at least, Miss Hamilton gave ample proof of the justification of the Cause, and if she received for those very good Blake stories the same sized cheque that those considerably less talented males got for theirs, then she was a very much underpaid lady, indeed!

(To be continued)

Sequel, "CICELY HAMILTON - HER RISE TO FAME" to follow.

* * * * *

Sexton Blake - "UNION JACK" - official information

No. 2 By W. O. G. Lofts

When Derek Adley and I started the tremendous task of compiling a Sexton Blake Authors Who's Who for the 1959 C.D. Annual, we had to sort the wheat from the chaff - that is to check all authors who had been previously listed as writers of a Sexton Blake story, and that had not come to light from our own official sources.

One such name on a list was Edwin Harcourt Burrage, but despite letters to the late Herbert Leckenby and to W. Webb, as to the source of this information, both denied that it came originally from them, and so we had not any alternative, but to delete the name from our lists.

Now, as events prove - Edwin Harcourt Burrage did write at least one Sexton Blake UNION JACK story No. 134 'The Far Far North' 5.5.1906 and according to Walter Webb a very good one at that. Walter also tells me that the name did originate from Herbert despite his denials, but knowing only full well of poor Herbert's health and worry in producing the C.D. in the last few years of his life, he can well be excused for a lapse of memory, and it's a great pity that he is still not with us so that he could personally see his statement proved in print.

To try and attempt to write all the history of Edwin Harcourt Burrage would be a sheer impossibility in even a complete C.D. Annual. Born in 1839 he wrote for all the Victorian papers - and also many of the grim penny bloods condemned so much in the early days of boys' literature. Editor for a time of Ching Ching's Own and writer of the stories. His most famous work was the famous 'Tom Tartar at School' and 'The Lambs of Littlecote' for the Aldine's.



For readers who may desire to collect other stories by this prolific author I can name the following in which stories by him appeared. Chums, Crusoe Magazine, Vanguard Library, Marvel, Captain, Ching Ching's Own, Boys Realm, Nelson Lee Library (reprints), Girls Realm, Boys World, Our Boys Paper, New Boys Paper, Boys Pocket Library, Young Briton, British Boys Paper, Boys Own Library, True Blue War Library, Boys Lesure Hour, Boys Standard, Garfield Boys Journal, Boys Friend Library, Cheerful Library, Life and Adventure Library, Aldine Half-Holiday, and many many other adult papers.

He also wrote under several non-de-plumes - probably "Owen Lander" and "E. Elton Barron" - and for the record he died at 168 Station Road, Redhill, Surrey, on the 6th March, 1916.

Other members of his family were also very prolific writers - his brother Alfred Sherrington Burrage, and his son Athol Harcourt Burrage - whilst his nephew Alfred McLelland Burrage is probably the best known to Blake fans for his stories about the great detective under the pen-name of 'Frank Lelland' in the Detective Weekly.

SEXTON BLAKE IN AUSTRALIA

So was the opening headline in the Australian 'Golden Hours Magazine' for the first issue in March 1960. Vic Colby wrote a highly interesting account of the various stories which have appeared in the UNION JACK and S.B.L. featuring the golden land down under. I have not as yet, obtained the official author of U.J. No. 104, but according to Walter Webb, it was E. A. Treeton - he basing it on the proof that Treeton had penned Nos. 81 and 91.

But I can state that No. 119, most aptly titled 'Sexton Blake in Australia' was written by none other than that fine writer T. C. Bridges! Of course Bridges had written a Blake before, one solitary story in the S.B.L. 2nd series 487 in July 1935 - nearly 30 years later! and it is more than likely that he may have penned a great many in between the years 1904-21, when so many mysteries still remain, but I hope to clear up a few more in my next instalment.

* * * * *

FOR EXCHANGE: 1 Union Jack Annual; 6 Harper's Young People's Annuals. (All size B.O.A., value £1 each). 1 Chums Annual 8/6; 1 Scout Annual 8/6; 1 Holiday Annual 1940; 10 Captain Annuals; 6 Chatterbox Annuals; 4 Little Folks Bi-Annuals; Several Boy's Friend 3d Library (some without covers). Set of Children's Encyclopaedia (Mee's); Many bound American mags: Health & Efficiency, etc. WANTED: Union Jacks, Bulls-eyes. Clarinet in good condition. R. B. KEELING, 312, MATHER AVENUE, ALLESTON, LIVERPOOL, 18.

GREYFRIARS IN THE WEST END

Preparations are going on apace for BILLY BUNTER MEETS MAGIC, the new production which opens at the Shaftesbury Theatre on December 23rd for a season of a month. The play is written as usual by Mauric McLoughlin, an enthusiastic Greyfriars fan and a keen supporter of Collectors' Digest. Since the last Greyfriars production, Maurice has to his credit "A Letter to the General," which featured Anna Neagle on television and was quite the finest new TV play of the year.

BILLY BUNTER MEETS MAGIC starts in the form-room at Greyfriars, and the scene moves subsequently to Polpelly in Cornwall. This year, an exceptionally distinguished cast has been engaged for the production.

DAVID NIXON, one of television's most famous and lovable personalities, plays a substantial role as Higgins, the crook with a taste for magic. PETER BRIDGMONT, who has appeared with ever-increasing success as Billy Bunter in recent years, once again portrays the Owl of the Remove.

MICHAEL ANTHONY, the brilliant character star who is well-known to many of us, appears, for the first time in a Bunter show, as an Englishman. Previously he has portrayed a foreigner who falls foul of our Greyfriars chums.

Of last year's Famous Five, two remain. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull were superbly cast last year, and we shall see the same talented lads as Bob and Johnny. Harry Wharton will be played by a young artist, recently returned from a successful season on the New York stage. Nugent and Huree Singh will also be played by newcomers to the Bunter shows. No less than fifty lads were auditioned this year for the parts of the Famous Five, ample evidence of the care taken by the producers to ensure expert casting of the beloved schoolboys.

Mr. Quelch will be played by Clement McCallin, currently appearing with great success in "Never Too Late" at the Prince of Wales Theatre.

Advance bookings for BILLY BUNTER MEETS MAGIC are heavy, and all the leading booking agencies have secured large blocks of seats for every performance.

With their usual generosity, City Stage Productions are giving the entire proceeds from the gala opening performance to the SAVE THE CHILDREN fund.

We hope that Collectors' Digest readers will go along in large numbers during the run of the show - and remember, if you can make up a party of twenty you can obtain reduced price concessions in all parts of the theatre.

Eric Fayne will be at the piano at every (continued on page 31)..

DANNY'S
DIARY



C H R I S
G R E E T



CHRISTMAS
DOUBLE
NUMBER



No. 529.

November 29th, 1913.

THE SACRED SPHERE

✻ A Christmas Story with a Deeply Laid Plot ✻

INTRODUCING

**SEXTON BLAKE, YVONNE, DR. HUXTON RYMER, and
WU LING, etc., etc.**

DANNY'S DIARY



DECEMBER 1913

What a sensation on December 10th! Everybody thought that Bombardier Billy Wells was going to win in the fight at the National Sporting Club. But Georges Carpentier of France knocked him out in 73 seconds. I wouldn't care much about being a boxer. I don't like getting hurt.

Carpentier is the most handsome boxer who ever existed, so all the ladies love him, but Doug says that if he goes on fighting his beauty will get spread.

For a Christmas present, Jessie, who is our maid, gave me the Sports Library. I had never seen this paper before. It contains stories about the Blue Crusaders, by Arthur S. Hardy. They are football stories, and there is a stout goalkeeper called Patty Fowkes. It is a nice paper for anyone who is very keen on sport.

In return, I bought Jessie the Answers Library Christmas Double Number. This contained two long complete stories. One was "Magden's Little Girl," the story of an old lag's Christmas. What a lot of stories there are nowadays about golden-hearted convicts! The other story was "The Curate's Conscience." Both tales looked sloppy, but I know that Jessie likes sloppy tales. Her favourite author is Charles Garvice, and she has just got a book by him from the public library, called "Queen Kate."

My Christmas cards came from Pain's Presents House at Hastings, and they cost 1/3 for 25. They were nice cards, and they gave free envelopes for any card which was of an unusual size. One night, while Mum was making mince-pie, I got all my cards ready for the post, and all the time I was absent-mindedly dipping my hand in the raisins and eating them.

The Gem has been great this month. "The Cockney Schoolboy" was about a new boy called Harry Hammond, who dropped his hatches. Gussy did not like him at first, but Hammond rescued Cousin Ethel from the mill-stream, so Gussy and Hammond became friends. According to the artist, Ethel kept her hat on in the mill-stream, and even her feather did not look wet. I suppose it was her hat-pins that did it.

Next week came "Parted Chums" in which Levison did a despicable trick, so that Gussy and Hammond quarrelled. In this issue of the Gem a new serial called "Secret Service" commenced.

Then came "The Ghost Hunters" which was very suitable for Christmas time. A ghost was haunting St. Jim's, but at the same time a thief was at work. In the end, the culprit turned out to be Prye of the Fifth, and he was expelled from St. Jim's.

Lastly, a story of House rivalry. There have been plenty of stories of this type in the Gem, but this one, "Caught Napping" is quite the best so far.

On the day school broke up, Mum took me to our local Grand Theatre. We lined up

for early doors. You have to pay 3d more for a seat by "early doors," but it means you can get a good seat in comfort. It was a nice variety programme. The star was Tom Costello, who sang "The Ship I Love" and "Comrades." These were sad songs, but people liked them, and Tom Costello sang "My Old Dutch" as an encore. Also in the programme was Victoria Monks who sang "Hitchy Koo" and "You Made Me Love You."

My cousin Robin, who lives at Aldershot, sent me the Union Jack Christmas Double Number for a present. It contained a very long Sexton Blake story called "The Sacred Sphere" which introduced Yvonne, Dr. Huxton Rymer, and Wu Ling. It was an exciting tale.

I passed it on to Doug in exchange for a new Boy's Friend 3d Library, called "The Ghost of Rupert Forbes," an 80,000-word tale of Sexton Blake. I read this, and then sold it to Mr. Lindsay for tuppence, which I spent on The Boy's Friend Christmas Double Number which contained five complete tales and four serials. The main story, however, was a two-part story entitled "The Red Man's Ghost" which is thrilling and mystifying. I must try to get next week's copy to find out how it ends. Luckily, it will only be a penny next week.

I have been busy buying Christmas presents. I bought Dad an ounce of Bell's Three Nuns Tobacco which cost me 6d. For Mum I got a bar of Pear's soap which cost 6d. My grandmother and my Auntie Gwen are coming to spend Christmas with us, and I intend to get my presents for them from Mr. Woolworth's 3d and 6d stores.

Dad evidently means it to be a very lively Christmas, for he has bought two bottles of Max Sutaïne 1906 Champagne at 5/- a bottle, and a bottle of Quinta Superba Port which cost him 4/6. He has booked seats for all of us to go to the pantomime "Puss in Boots" at the Prince of Wales Theatre on New Year's Eve.

A splendid month in the Magnet. "In Borrowed Plumes" was a most exciting story in which Billy Bunter got kidnapped by people who thought he was Lord Mauleverer.

Then came the Magnet's Christmas Double Number. It had a coloured cover. The Greyfriars story was "The Four Heroes" and it was good, though, so far as the title went, at any rate, it had a kind of aunty-climax. The Head received an anonymous letter from a man who said he was a Colonial who had been rescued by a Greyfriars boy. The supposed Colonial enclosed £20 to be given to the hero. Four boys claimed to be the hero. Then the Bounder stepped forward and said that he had sent the letter, in order to show how wicked and deceitful certain boys were. The Bounder was expelled for playing such a trick on the whole of Greyfriars.

The second part of the story switched to Christmas at Wharton Lodge. Bunter fell through the ice, and the Bounder rescued him. Colonel Wharton informed the Head, who was so pleased that he decided to let the Bounder go back to Greyfriars.

Also in this Double Number there was another complete story called "By Sheer Grit." This was an adventure tale, and I did not read it. There was, as well, a play about Greyfriars called "The Spectre of No. 1 Study."

Now an odd thing happened. Though we had had the Christmas Number, with the boys enjoying Christmas at Wharton Lodge, the following week we had "Harry Wharton's Christmas Number," where Harry decided to produce a Christmas Number of the Greyfriars Herald. This story was set at the school, of course. A kind of a jump back to the previous term.

The last story of the month was "Good Old Coker" in which a man called Rooke robbed Aunt Judy of all her money. Harry Wharton found the criminal hiding from justice in Spindrift Cottage, near Greyfriars. A fine tale.

The week before Christmas I had the Double Number of Comic Cuts. It was packed full of snowy pictures and Christmas tales.

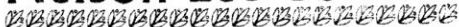
Sebastian Ginger had a "dubble kollum" and he started off: "The saim 2 U. I no wot yu awl ad on the tips ov yore tungs, so I thert I wood loose no time in wishin yu 1st wot yu awl wish me, a Jolly Appy Merry ole Kristzus wiv the best ov luck in the way ov Kristzus presents & puddens!"

I mustn't let Dad see that. He would never let me buy another Comic Cuts.

My grandmother and Auntie Gwen came on Wednesday, Christmas Eve. Dad and I met them in the early evening at Liverpool Street Station.

(continued on page 31)...

Nelson Lee Column



CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

Once again it is my happy privilege to wish all my contributors and readers the merriest of Christmases and the most prosperous of New Years. How time does fly, and yet how, thanks to our happy, nostalgic, companionship, it remains at the same time static. For, in the joys of our former reading, we keep brilliant the flame of youth - a flame which burned ever brightest at Christmas time when E.S.B. mixed Xmas festivity, mystery and a snow-covered countryside, in an ever-delectable seasonable concoction.

Perhaps one of the shortest Xmas series was that which was centred on one of Lord Dorrimore's ancestral homes on the Kentish coast. A series of only three Nelson Lee Libraries, Nos. 237-239 Old Series sandwiched between the end of headmaster Martin's reign of tyranny and the opening, in January 1920, of the Spendthrift of St. Frank's series.

It was a delightful short series on a smaller canvas than Brooks was to paint his Xmas thrills of later years. But none the worse for that. Possibly because it was an interlude between two major series; possibly, too, because Brooks was now busy with St. Frank's stories in the Boys Realm.

In the NLL stories there are brief references to Handy & Co. spending an eccentric Xmas with the Earl of Granmore. In the last of the NLL series, a companion series dealing with Handy's holiday is advertised in the Realm "by the author of the St. Frank's stories appearing in the Nelson Lee Library."

There were, according to Bob Blythe's admirable NLL catalogue, two Realm stories, The Ghost of Granmore (39) and The New Year Carnival (40), which he lists as "doubtful if by Brooks." It is the second which is advertised in the NLL, and the following of the general practice of cross-referencing stories and plots in the two companion papers, seems good reason to me for removing the "doubtful" tag.

In addition, the two Realm stories fall between two definite Brooks' series featuring the cheerful T.T. - Timothy Tucker. The first of those Tucker series is also listed after another "doubtful" series

dealing with a new master at St. Frank's. That series (Nos. 28-35) was later reprinted in Nugget Library 43, The Master of the Remove. It also appeared again in Swan's hard-back Whoopee at Westchester (see Page 42 of the catalogue).

Again, I would suggest, evidence of authentic Brooks, and good reason to remove more "doubtful" tags. Not, of course, that all the Realm St. Frank's stories were by Brooks; far from it, but in recalling E.S.B. later, even the editor admitted no-one else could write a genuine St. Frank's story.

Sentiments with which we would all agree. So once again, to E.S.B. himself, and to all my fellow devotees of his, a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year.

* * * * *

SECONDS OUT

In recent months, Collectors' Digest has given a certain amount of space to argument among contributors and readers as to whether E. S. Brooks was a better writer than Charles Hamilton, or vice versa. Since Ross Story started it all, various opinions have been expressed, and a wonderful time has been had by all. Tempers have been kept (more or less) and critics have been restrained (more or less). We have been reminded (more or less) of political candidates who try to sway the floating vote, and, in our hobby, this is the equivalent of flogging the dead horse, for there is no floating vote among Digest readers. Leeites and Hamiltonians are all conservative (non-politically speaking). No argument in the world would convince the staunch Leeite that Greyfriars was the superior school, and any Hamiltonian worth his salt would never yield an inch over repudiating the idea that St. Frank's knocked spots off Greyfriars.

Last month, the ball was tossed into our Hamiltoniana Column (are we getting our metaphors mixed?) and Roger Jenkins took up the cudgels. This week, the ball comes back to the Lee Column, so here we go again.

Well, it's all clean fun (more or less), and, at the risk of letting the whole thing become tedious, here are a few more views. In the end we shall all agree that both Brooks and Hamilton were matchless in their own particular lines (God bless them both) and that their particular lines were as unlike as chalk and cheese.

ROSS STORY (who started it all) writes: My article certainly stirred up some activity, both in the Hamilton and Brooks camps. Strange, though, how Roger Jenkins and others seem to think I am disparaging Hamilton when I state my reasons for thinking Brooks was better. I would be the last not to give C.H. his due - but surely I am entitled

to my own opinion as to the merits of his and Brooks' writing? (That isn't supposed to sound dogmatic - it's just that some of the Hamiltonians seem to take everything said about Hamilton as a personal insult!)

BASIL ADAM writes: I really must congratulate Roger Jenkins for his splendid article in the November 'C.D.' It is one of the most stimulating articles we have had for some time.

How I admire his clear logical style, as compared with the emotional outbursts of some of the Leeites. I must say I found the St. Frank's characters very unreal, and most of the stories had an air of fantasy about them.

NORMAL PRAGNELL writes: Once again the age-old myth that Edwy Searles Brooks could not write a school story that would compare with those of Hemilton, has come to the front. This time it arrives from Roger Jenkins whose great knowledge of Greyfriars is more than counter-balanced by his extreme lack of knowledge of the St. Frank's saga. The idea that he was only at his best when describing the more exhilarating and dramatic stories is just not correct. I would like to give just a few of the stories in which the dialogue was sparkling and could equal anything from the pen of Charles Hamilton. How about the fall of Nipper in the "Sneak's Paradise," and the delightful series describing the rivalry between St. Frank's and the River House School? You could add to those the "Funk" series and the Alan Castleton series, these being just a few from the First New Series only. While they may be criticised by some who do not over-care for Handforth's role, they were not ruined by such a character as Billy Bunter, who to my mind can only be described as the world's biggest bore. Roger Jenkins' statement that some of his brightest school-children could produce work as good as the series dealing with Horace Stevens' play, is not worthy of him. Quite frankly I doubt if Roger believes that himself, for he must know in his own mind that such a statement is impossible. Had Roger said that one of his pupils could have written a story to compare with the post-war Bunter books I would have been inclined to agree with him, for I have managed to struggle through quite a few of them.

Roger Jenkins makes great play with the character of Harry Wharton and asks what can be found comparable in the pages of the Nelson Lee Library. Obviously nothing. Harry Wharton was created by Charles Hamilton, and is peculiar to the pages of the Magnet. Brooks, however, created an equally great character in Reggie Pitt. The 'Scandal' series in which Pitt upheld the honour and tradition of St. Frank's is equal

in characterisation and detail to any of the Harry Wharton series. Pitt, a creation of Brooks, was, next to Lee and Nipper, the finest character to appear in the Nelson Lee Library. So let Roger read his Magnets while Ross Story and I read our Nelson Lees. We, at least, are quite sure who wrote the best school stories.



CHARLES CHURCHILL writes: I am inclined to agree with Maurice Kutner that the illustrations, or some of them, probably put some people off the Nelson Lee. I'm sorry to say that the Nelson Lee had periods of good and really bad covers. Badly-drawn covers can put any lukewarm reader right off.

HARRY BROSTER writes: Both sides have much in their arguments, but I always thought Brooks was too far-fetched. Everything about the St. Frank's set-up is overdone. It seems to me that he followed the theme of the popular song "Everything you can do, I can do better." He did not try to go one better than Hamilton; he tried to go three or four. Fancy a school with four Houses of lads of 15 - 16! Two forms of them. About 87, I think, in those two forms. Hamilton introduced 39 regulars in the Remove from 1908 - 1940, not counting comings and goings. Brooks introduced "everything" to beat the Hamilton yarns. Fancy bringing down the Blue Crusaders from Browton (A. S. Hardy put this in Lancashire) to Bannington. With Fowkes, Dave Moran, Uncle Tom Cogley, and all. Look at the extensive "peerage" in those two forms at St. Frank's, besides a knight and a baronet or two. Test cricketers and pro-footballers at 15 years of age! No, give me Hamilton for feasibility - though he could over-do it at times.

FRANK VERNON LAY writes: The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Many of Hamilton's characters are household names, but not so Brooks. Although I am a great admirer of E.S.B., I do not feel that his stories will live on when the generation that read them as youngsters has passed on, whereas Greyfriars is still gaining new adherents and the demand for Charles Hamilton's writings has never been greater.

WANTED: Magnets Nos. 829, 873, 875, 882, 884, 888. S.O.L. No. 60.

DR. R. WILSON, 100, BROOMFIELD ROAD, GLASGOW N.1.

Hamiltoniana

Do You Remember?

By Roger Jenkins

No. 46 - Magnots 981-984 - Holly House series

Coker of the Fifth was not the sort of character one expected to find playing a part in a Christmas story. His holiday appearances were usually limited to summer-time, when he would be found hiking or caravanning in company with Potter and Greene, who were often foolish enough to get lost and so unluckily deprive themselves of his fascinating company for a while. These misadventures were observed not only by the Famous Five: Coker had a happy knack of being encountered in the pages of the Gem and the Boys' Friend as well. But though his summer appearances were frequent, he was seldom featured at Christmas. The 1926 Magnet series was therefore unique, as it centred wholly round Coker.

Aunt Judy was spending the Christmas with her brother Henry at Holly House, but his secretary Poynings took it upon himself to visit Greyfriars and suggest that as Uncle Henry was ill it would be better if Coker and his friends kept away at Christmas. Coker told him to mind his own business, and then mysteriously disappeared. The identity of the villain was quite clear, but the series has two delights: its characterisation and the unfolding of the plot in the final number.

The Head graciously gave permission for any boys who wished to search for Coker to stay at school over the Christmas vacation, and Mr. Prout conveyed this information to Potter and Greene in a memorable scene:-

"But I'm afraid we shouldn't be any use, sir," said Greene. "In fact, as the police have failed to find Coker, it seems that it would appear rather a check on our part -"

"Quite impertinent, I'm afraid," said Potter, shaking his head. "I should not like Inspector Grimes to think me impertinent. I respect him very much."

"And as you think, sir, that no useful purpose would be served by

it -" went on Potter.

"We feel bound to give in to your opinion, sir," added Potter.
Mr. Prout coughed once more.

"I merely desired to know your decision," he remarked rather dryly.

But although Potter and Greene showed such callous indifference to the fate of their study-mate, the Famous Five did take up the search, for reasons that are made clear in the story.

This was the last Christmas series in which Bunter failed to appear in every number. Wharton had agreed that Bunter should spend Christmas with him, but when Bunter found out that it was to be spent at Greyfriars he indignantly stalked off. Reggie Coker, the swot of the Sixth form, came out of obscurity for the last time to express his general concern (which was so great that it had even caused him to make some mistakes with his Greek) and to leave the search to Wharton and his friends. And so the Famous Five were left alone with Mrs. Kebble and the inevitable snow. Even Fisher T. Fish seemed to have found somewhere else to go.

Of course, Coker was found, but there was no real evidence against Poynings. Coker invited the Famous Five to Holly House, and the final act of the drama was played out there, with Bunter returning to feature in an important part as an eavesdropper. The mystery was eventually solved, and the rascally Poynings was kicked out into the snow.

The Holly House series was, perhaps, a little jerky in construction, and very short compared with some of the later Christmas series in the Magnet. But despite this, it was eminently readable and the twists in the plot maintained (and even heightened) the interest right up to the end. Though it was at times rather sombre it was always seasonable, and must have gladdened the hearts of thousands of readers in that far-off year 1926.

Another seasonable - and certainly less sombre - touch was to be found in the centre pages of these Magnets: Dr. Birchmall at St. Sam's was having trouble in trying to cadge an invitation for the Christmas holidays. An eventful time awaited him as a gate-crasher at "Merry Manner"!

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(TWO great articles by Roger Jenkins appear in Collectors' Digest Annual for 1963)

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GEMS OF HAMILTONIA (No. 2. New Series)

"I say, Harry, old chap!" murmured Bunter, after his third helping of turkey.

"Yes, old bean?"

"This is a prime turkey."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Not like the turkeys we have at Bunter Court, of course," added the Owl of the Remove.

"Oh!"

"But prime, all the same. I think I'll have some more."

Bunter had some more.

Then he had more still.

And some more!

The morefulness, as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh remarked in a whisper to Bob Cherry, was terrific.

But he was ready for the Christmas pudding.

His eyes expanded behind his spectacles as it was brought on the table, flaming.

"Oh," he gasped, "good!"

How many helpings of Christmas pudding Bunter had he did not trouble to count. He would probably have lost count, had he tried.

A shiny look came over Bunter's face. A fishy expression came into the little, round eyes behind the big spectacles. He breathed with some difficulty. But he was enjoying himself. Happiness beamed from his face. A dinner like this was worth exertion. Bunter exerted himself. He did not talk much; he had no time for that. The talk of others passed by him like the idle wind which he regarded not. It was a time for action, not for words.

Once or twice Miss Wharton glanced at him with growing alarm. The colonel eyed him once or twice with some uneasiness. Even the chums of the Remove, who knew their Bunter, and his wonderful powers in the gastronomic line, could not help thinking that Bunter was taking risks.

Where he put the mince-pies was an insoluble mystery. He must have put them somewhere, for they disappeared at a great rate like oysters.

How he managed to cram in even one walnut was a puzzle. But he crammed in some dozens.

But the time came when even Bunter could do no more. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.

He toyed idly with the candied fruits.

Bunter liked candied fruits; and he made a noble effort. But it was in vain. Hardly a pound of candied fruits vanished inside Bunter.

Even Bunter had a limit, and he had reached it - if not over-passed it. When the juniors rose from the festive board Bunter was very

slow in rising.

He seemed to be glued to his chair, and to detach himself therefrom with a herculean effort.

(In a few months' time there will be a special competition in connection with this latest series of Gems of Hamiltonia. Watch for announcements!)

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 70. THE ONE AND ONLY:

GEORGE SELLARS: Dear Old Gussy. A very colourful character, and a pillar of St. Jim's. Any story of Tom Merry & Co without him in it would have seemed dull indeed. He played a worthy part in countless tales, and I liked him as much in drama as in comedy.

The stories I used to love (and still do) were those of his love affairs, always mid-way between pathos and laughter. Needless to say, Gussy is a great favourite of mine. In "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays", Manners made up a song about him for a concert. This is a verse of it:

He's always dressed
In his Sunday best,
Complete with shining topper.
A modest cap, this lofty chap
Regards as most improper.
His waistcoat, too, is pink and blue;
For spats he's fairly fussy;
He is the nuttiest of the nuts,
Our own immortal Gussy.

CHARLES CHURCHILL: I quite agree that Gussy was without doubt one of the pillars of the Gem. I never thought, though, that we had too much of him as we did of Billy Bunter in the Magnet. In my view the latter paper suffered from a surfeit of Bunter, and I always preferred St. Jim's and Rockwood because of it.

STAN KNIGHT: The one and only Gustavus was always a great favourite of mine, too. I much preferred him to Billy Bunter.

ANDREW LANGMAN: I was delighted with the survey you gave of the One and Only, and thought it the best Controversial of an excellent year. I have always loved Gussy, and you presented an aspect of this great piece of characterisation which I had never appreciated before. I hope that you may be tempted to select some of the other outstanding characters, now and again, and spotlight them in the same way in Let's Be Controversial.

ERIC FAYNE adds: In an article entitled "Gerry Was Right" in our November issue my friend, Bill Lofts, commenting on the fact that I stated that Charles Hamilton wrote all the Cedar Creek stories, said that I had been misled by Mr. Hamilton. This was not the case. So far as I know, Charles Hamilton never claimed that he wrote all the Cedar Creek stories. Certainly he never made such a claim to me. My slip was entirely due to a faulty memory, and the great lapse of years since I read the Cedar Creek tales.

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WELL! WHO DID?

asks Ron Crollie

I was extremely interested in Laurie Sutton's article - "Who Did Write Them?" I have not cared to bring up the matter till now, but it was pretty obvious to me, as soon as I had read Bill Lofts' article in the Annual, that his list of authors of the "Magnet" substitute stories was far from accurate.

My collection of "Magnets" is not a large one, but I spotted six errors in the 1916-17 period alone.

The following stories, in Bill Lofts' list, are attributed to J. N. Pentelow.

- | | | | |
|---------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|
| No. 417 | Foes of the Sixth | No. 449 | Billy Bunter's Bolt |
| No. 426 | The Terrible Two | No. 454 | Fishy's Latest |
| No. 436 | Called to the Colours | No. 468 | Linley Minor |

None of these stories is written in a style remotely resembling Pentelow's. Many Hamiltonians, of course, dislike his Greyfriars and St. Jim's efforts intensely but whether his style is pleasing or jarring to individual readers, it is unmistakable.

It is my opinion that "The Terrible Two" and "Called to the Colours," at least, were written by Samways.

In "Called to the Colours," the following incident occurs after Mr. Prout has walked in front of the bowling screen while Wingate is batting in a practice match.

"Wingate glared at the intruder almost murderously. He was beside himself with passion, and completely forgot where he was and what he was saying."

"'You dolt!'" he roared. "'You insane imbecile!'"

"'What! What!'"

"Mr. Prout almost collapsed. The sudden tirade of abuse, coming as it did so unexpectedly, fairly took his breath away."

"'I was ninety eight!'" thundered Wingate.

"'A couple more and I should have completed my century! And then you go and expose your fat carcass in front of the bowling screen and put me off! Oh, you frabjous dummy!'"

This improbable situation, more reminiscent of St. Sam's than Greyfriars, is typical of Samways, and nothing could be more unlike Pentelow's style than this.

"The Terrible Two" contains similar dialogue and there is another indication that it is another of Samways' efforts, in the fact that Skinner is shown acting decently, under the influence of Phyllis Howell.

The authorship of the other four stories I have mentioned is not quite so obvious but one thing is certain. None of them was written by Pentelow.

Like Laurie Sutton, I have no wish to detract from the exhaustive research which Bill Lofts must have undertaken in order to produce the list of substitute authors, and he had every right to assume that his sources of information were absolutely reliable. But, with the examples I have given in mind, I cannot help feeling that there are many inaccuracies in the list.

* * * * *

SUDDEN DEATH OF FRANK RICHARDS'S SISTER

With very deep regret we learned of the sudden death of Mrs. Una Harrison on November 6th. Mrs. Harrison was the sister of the late Charles Hamilton, who died at Christmas nearly two years ago.

Mrs. Harrison, who was 81, was found unconscious. She was rushed to hospital, where she died some hours later of heart failure.

Mrs. Harrison was born in 1882, the eighth child of John and Marion Hamilton who then lived in Ealing. Only two years later her father died, and the family moved to Mill Hill Park, and later to Chiswick. As a child, Mrs. Harrison suffered from eye ulcers. She spent long periods of childhood with her eyes bandaged, and her brother, Charlie, read to her. Brother and sister were devoted to one another throughout their long lives.

In 1899 Mrs. Harrison went to the Royal Academy of Music, and had her soprano voice trained. In 1906, now fully qualified as a teacher of singing and voice production, she left the Academy. In 1907, while on holiday in the Isle of Man, she met Percy Harrison. A long musical friendship ensued, culminating with their marriage in 1911 at St. Stephen's Church, Hampstead. There is still in existence a panoramic photograph of the wedding reception at Frascati's. The picture, which shows about eighty guests at the reception is distinctly impressive. Far at the back, almost hiding himself with characteristic reticence, is brother Charles.

The young couple honeymooned in France, Switzerland, and Venice, where Charles joined them at the end of the year.

Early in 1912, they came home owing to the illness of Mrs. Harrison's mother. Mrs. Hamilton died in the autumn of that year, and Charles, who was passionately fond of his mother, was so grief-stricken that there were fears for a while that, in his sorrow, he might take his own life.

When war broke out in 1914, the Harrisons, with brother Charles, were on the continent. They returned home, and during the war Mrs. Harrison occupied herself in various phases of war work.

In 1922 a daughter was born, who was named Una after her mother. She is, to-day, Mrs. Hamilton Wright, well-known as the niece of the famous author.

In 1924 the Harrisons moved to Park Drive, Golders Green, moving in 1936 to

News from the Clubs

MIDLAND

Meeting held 29th October, 1963:

Eight members were present, Norman Gregory (chairman), Tom Porter, Jack Bellfield, Jack and Madge Corbett, Win Partridge, Ray Bennett and Ted Davey. In the absence of the Secretary, Norman read the last Newsletter in lieu of the usual minutes and welcomed a new postal member John T. (another John T.) Mann from Retford. Another Greyfriars "old boy" by the way. It was an informal evening and no fixed programme so after the sighs of relief that no one had concocted a "quiz", Tom produced his Anniversary Number. The first was Gem No. 717, dated 29th October, 1921. Also, appropriate to this particular time of the year, the following week's Gem No. 718 "Guy Fawkes and Bonfire Day at St. Jim's."

Collectors items shown were C.D. No. 1 and C.D. No. 3A. A discussion was introduced by the chairman, the subject, contents of a letter received from the Secretary re the recent articles in S.P.C. and C.D. relating to the "Schooldays of Frank Richards." The feelings expressed in that letter could not fail to find agreement from the very loyal admirers of Frank Richards who were present. The "Greyfriars" Bingo Game was won by Win Partridge and the library raffle, by Madge Corbett who received a "Gem" and a "Greyfriars Herald." The enjoyable night's programme finished by Madge reading extracts from C.D. No. 3A.

NORTHERN

Meeting held 9th November, 1963

There was another good attendance when chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened our November meeting. As Geoff remarked, the weather was cold and uninviting outside, but all was warm and cosy as usual in our cheery room.

The minutes and monthly reports having been dealt with, Gerry Allison gave us the news and correspondence of the month, which included a letter from Cliff Archer, one of our members in the Manchester area, expressing warm appreciation of our postal library facilities.

A discussion about our Christmas Party followed. This will be held on Saturday, 14th December, commencing at 4.30 p.m., and we shall be very pleased to see any members of the other clubs who are able to make the journey. As usual we have a bumper programme laid on and all is set for a most enjoyable evening.

We then had an exciting game of 'football' between two Greyfriars teams, Shell (captain Gerry Allison) versus Remove (captain Geoffrey Wilde). Members of the teams had to compose a rhyme of not more than eleven words, the initial letter of each word being that of a member of the team, on the team sheet supplied by Gerry. Each letter was allotted a number, the eleven letters totalling 34 in each team. It was good fun, trying to compose a rhyme using as many of the eleven words as possible, and some extremely amusing efforts were read out! A break for refreshments was welcome after

this strenuous literary exercise.

The second part of the programme was devoted to a quiz by Frank Hancock on characters of the various schools. It was quite a lengthy affair, with a maximum of 34 points. Geoffrey Wilde and Elsie Palmer were joint winners with 31 points each, Jack Wood and Bill Williamson next with 29 points each, and Ron Hodgson third with 25.

A short discussion on general topics followed, and the meeting terminated at 9.20 p.m.

F. HANCOCK Hon. Sec.

AUSTRALIA

Syd Smyth opened the meeting at 6.30 on November 14th, and the first item was presented by Don Harkness, a keen amateur photographer. Don had recently visited Bill Hall, and had made a film record of Bill's superb collection. Don now showed the film to members, who greatly enjoyed the special treat.

A letter from Arthur Holland sparked off an interesting discussion on the current C.D. and several controversial subjects written upon by Roger Jenkins and Laurie Sutton. It occupied a pleasant, if at times heated, half-hour.

This was followed by the reading of an excellent article, received from Gordon Swan, on Sexton Blake's lady-friends. The article will feature at an early date in "The Golden Hours Magazine."

From Ron Hodgson came news of the project concerning the publication of Charles Hamilton's stories in "Look & Learn." Blake enthusiasts were interested to know that the very first Greyfriars story in "Look and Learn" was actually written by W. Catchpole, who had also written of Sexton Blake. We 'look and learn' but apparently the publishers don't. They still have a lot to learn on the subject of Chas. Hamilton.

An amusing quiz from Ron Hodgson had the Aussie collectors on their toes, with Stan Nicholls and Vic Colby shining the most brightly.

During the half-hour chat in the local coffee shop, we discussed the plans for the Christmas Party to take place on Thursday, 19th December, when we hope to be sitting down to a Chicken Dinner in ideal surroundings. A big cheerie for Christmas to all our friends.

B. PATE (Secretary).

LONDON

Inclement weather again for the Dollis Hill meeting on Sunday, November 17th. But along they came to enjoy a happy time, spent browsing over some of the books and papers of both the Hamiltonian and Nelson Lee library which the two librarians, Roger Jenkins and Bob Blythe have for loan. Roger manages to cope with his large collection, despite 758 papers being out on loan; good job he has a car to help in the transport of some of what he loans out. Bob Blythe, being the host, had all his complete library stock available except what the borrowers have. Both these two chaps do an excellent spare full time job, a proper labour of love.

Bill Lofts, composer and questionmaster, put Roger Jenkins through his solo quiz, and Roger acquitted himself very well.

"Hunch-Backed Hiram, the Houndsditch Hustler," featuring Trackett Grim, was Bob Blythe's choice for a reading and judging by the applause at the conclusion it went down well.

The Hamiltonian reading was a chapter from "S.O.L." 207, "Who Punched Prout?" This was appreciated; reader Roger Jenkins.

The forthcoming Christmas Bunter show "Billy Bunter Meets Magic" was discussed and

all able to do so were urged to support this show at London's Shaftesbury Theatre.

A variety of subjects, drawn at random from the hat, each member having a minute to elucidate on the one drawn, was greatly enjoyed.

The December Christmas meeting will be held on Sunday, 15th, at Hume House, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London, S.E. 22. Hosts Len and Josie Packman. Let them know if attending by letter to their private address or 'phone TOWNley 2844.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

Yours Sincerely
Interesting Items from
the Editor's Letter-Bag

CHARLES VAN RENEN (South Africa): I love the old Gem. My interest in the old papers is confined to the Hamilton saga. I had a large collection of Lees which I picked up years ago, but I could not work up any enthusiasm for them, and I have since disposed of the lot. Blake has no charms for me; I much prefer Conan Doyle. Still, every man to his tastes, and it is evident that there are plenty whose first loves are Blake and Lee.

SYD SMYTH (Australia): The Double Number was a lovely job to look at handle - and read.

G. T. WAINE (Wroughton): The Digest is always a joy. No. 200 was a rare item towards my collection of Double Numbers.

FRANK HANCOCK (Leeds): The mention in your columns recently of the 'Football Favourite' aroused happy memories, as I read this paper for a time in the 'twenties. I remember little of the contents now, except the stories about Percy and Steve, and a later series, Percy and Steve, the Millionaire Sportsman. I think they were written by Montague Hay (I may be wrong here) and I wonder if these very funny stories were ever reprinted in the B.F.L. or elsewhere? Maybe some of your readers could enlighten me on this point.

R. W. STORY (Ontario): With each succeeding copy of the Digest it seems that the zenith of perfection has been reached, but now, with No. 200, it would appear that there is really no limit to the excellence of C.D. Congratulations in full, though seemingly inadequate, is once more given to our inimitable editor for his continuing remarkable achievements.

(Sir, your kind remarks are much appreciated. The old editor is overwhelmed from his flat feet to his swollen head. - ED.)

GEOFFREY WILDE (Leeds) The October C.D. was another monthly packet of pure pleasure - not least the chatty editorial. Childhood memories must naturally become embellished with time, yet I wonder if we don't underestimate our powers of accurate recollection from a period when, after all, we were acutely impressionable? Those wonderful summers of old would seem to be an acknowledged and incontrovertible fact - in this case a pretty depressing vindication of a child's memory, since it amounts to saying that our climate is becoming steadily fouler.

LESLIE FARROW (Boston, Lines). Bob Blythe's article on his visit to Edwy Searles Brooks' home was sheer joy. I read it over and over again till I was word perfect. It was something I had wanted to know for years ; about Brooks himself, his home, and his opinion of St. Frank's. What about a photo of Mr. Brooks soon?

What real happiness I gain from the Digest! Permit me to congratulate you on the 200th number. It was really great.

W. J. RAYNER (Clare). Congratulations on the splendid C.D. It has improved beyond all recognition. An eagerly-awaited monthly treat of nostalgia.

W.O.G. LOFTS (London). I'm afraid that Walter Webb has slipped up badly over 'Ida Melbourne' as it is not a pen-name of Horace Phillips at all! The real identity is L. E. Ransome - a writer of many many thousands of girls' stories since 1919. I have been in regular correspondence with him for years and, in fact, he recently wrote me pages of type disapproving of people trying to find out facts about C.H.t. Some of his points are so good that I am thinking of putting them in an article. But plenty of time yet.

EDWARD THOMSON (Edinburgh). I, too, was very disappointed at the poor attempt Look & Learn had made of the original adventures of our old friend, Billy Bunter. A real let-down, wasn't it?

(Large numbers of readers have written us in similar terms concerning the reprints in Look and Learn. We thank all who wrote. - ED.)

ALBERT WATKIN (New Zealand). Did Mr. E. R. Home-Gall ever write as "Home-Goal" in the Aldine Football Library? Who wrote the "Smith of the Secret Service" stories in the Boy's Friend Library?

L. F. ASHLEY (Canada). No. 200 was splendid. Long may the Digest continue to brighten our days and enhance your reputation. I particularly liked and enjoyed Mr. Buddle, and would like to see a Slade story ; preferably a double-length one - in the Annual. I thought Tom Hopperton's "Pride of the Ring" well up to his usual witty standard. A fine piece of work. We are indeed fortunate to have so much willing talent in the clan.

(Mr. Buddle features in "ADVANTAGE VANDERLYN" - a story of Slade, while Tom Hopperton contributes a masterly survey of some of the work of Sidney Drew - in COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1963. - ED.)



R E V I E W"JUBB" (Keith Waterhouse)By F. Vernon-Lay

Keith Waterhouse is well known as the author of "Billy Liar," a book that has been made into a popular film. My only excuse for reviewing his latest effort in these pages is that he would appear to have more than a nodding acquaintance with our hobby.

I would describe "Jubb" as one of the most revolting novels I have ever read, even in this day and age. After giving a repulsive pen-picture of himself, the hero (!) Jubb goes on to talk about his activities as a collector of Old Boys' Books. It is clear that the writer of the story knows a good deal about the hobby and the old papers, though comments in connection with prices tend to suggest that some of his knowledge may have come from television programmes.

All this would be of little importance except for the fact that Jubb's reason for collecting O.B.B's is that his sex-life is unsatisfactory. It is possible that any reader might class all O.B.B. collectors on a par with Jubb, and judge them accordingly. There is no mention of the real reason why so many decent, clean-living people derive great pleasure from our hobby.

WANTED: Good loose copies or bound volumes containing any of the following: MAGNETS - 52, 131 to 149 inclusive, 195, 205, 237, 238, 239, 277, 318, 319, 353, 400, 417, 422, 435, 469, 706, 719, 751, 752, 753, 762, 763, 809. Most issues between 821 and 890, 900, 921, 924, 925, 936, 938, 940, 942, 943, 946, 951, 965, 967, 988, 996.

GENS - Many issues between 400 and 500. Many issues between 800 and 879. Also Nos. 925, 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, 1129, 1150. POPULARS: 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474. EARLY PENNY POPULARS: Nos. 12, 13, 45, 47, 48.

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