

GRAND ENLARGED CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

VOL. 18
NO.
216.

DECEMBER

1964

PRICE

2/-

COLLECTORS DIGEST



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS
TO ALL READERS.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 18

No. 216

DECEMBER, 1964

Price 2s. Od.

Chums In Council



SOME SPECIAL CHRISTMAS:

Most of us, of course, are able to look back upon certain special Christmases. Most of us, I daresay, have enjoyed more Christmases than we care to remember, and, after all, one Christmas is very like another. But in every life there are some Yuletides which are recalled for some especial reason, and it is likely that those very special Christmases occurred when we were children. Almost all of us found a special charm in the Christmas Numbers of the old papers.

Even till the outbreak of war in 1939, each Christmas Number of our favourite paper made a landmark in our memory.

Modern Christmases start too soon, and are too commercialised. Is there any danger that the old-fashioned Christmas, as it was once known in this country, may be lost to memory as the years go on? Possibly not, for the fundamentals of Christmas are the same this year, next year, every year.

For me, Digest readers with their affection, kindness, and ever-green memories, make it Christmas all the year round. It is one of the very real blessings of my life.

To all my readers, in every corner of the world and at home, I wish a very, very special Christmas of happiness, joy, and promise for the future.

THREE YEARS BACK:

Three years ago, come Christmas Eve, Charles Hamilton died.

In an article in the current Australian "Golden Hours" Magazine, Mr. G. R. Samways concludes with the following:

"Some writers have lamented that the news of Charles Hamilton's passing spoil their Christmas. But who would have wished him to struggle on against blindness, increasing infirmities, and the weariness of the weight of years? Here was no sombre tragedy, but rather a timely and a merciful deliverance. He is at peace."

It was quite natural that the death of Charles Hamilton, announced so unexpectedly on television at tea-time on Boxing Day 1961 marred what was left of the Christmas season for most of us. He died in his sleep, which is a wonderful way for anyone to be taken from this life, but the unexpected nature of his death added greatly to the shock for those left.

All of us would have been grieved had he been stricken and suffered a long illness. We are thankful that such a thing did not happen. But Mr. Samways' comment seems to suggest that death for Charles Hamilton was what is often called a happy release - that he was wearied with the weight of years. I am quite sure that Mr. Samways is in error.

Charles Hamilton was an elderly man, but he loved life, and, so far as I am aware, he enjoyed good health until the end. Miss Hood, his housekeeper, has said: "Mr. Hamilton was interested in everything and everybody to the last, and quite wished to see at least another decade, for he was never old in mind. His end was far from a 'happy release' for him. It came as a great surprise."

At his death he had completed three new full-length Greyfriars manuscripts, and a fourth was two-thirds completed. All have been published since his death. In fact, he died in harness as he would have wished.

His time had come. He had lived his life - and it had been a good life, for him and for the youth of Britain. I do not believe for one moment that Charles Hamilton saw the closing months of that life as a struggle against increasing infirmities and the weariness of the weight of years.

Great age takes its toll, but there can be few men with whom Time has dealt more kindly.

ANOTHER KIND OF COLLECTING:

Susan Sontag, the new American glamour addition to the B.B.C.'s Monitor programme, described as the most intelligent woman in the U.S., is said "to have something rather special in hobbies." She collects stills from old-time films. They are all there on her walls - Laurel & Hardy, a juvenile Mickey Rooney, Garbo, Dietrich, Beery.

"I am interested in movies," says she. "But no one can be interested in the kind of movies they make nowadays - so when I started collecting I had to go all the way back."

We seem to have heard of the same yardstick being applied to another kind of collecting.

RINGING THE OLD YEAR OUT!

Winging your way in mid-December will be our giant Year Book, Collectors' Digest Annual. Our superlative team of contributors have given of their very best to provide you with fascinating reading over Christmas time. And there are some of those delicious little surprises which you all like to find in the Annual year after year. Henry Webb is responsible for the magnificent cover, and I shall be surprised if you do not all vote it as the very finest work ever to come from his gifted brush.

In the editorial office, it is always our aim to make each succeeding Annual better than anything which has gone before. I shall be keeping my fingers firmly crossed till your letters come tumbling in, following the publication of Collectors' Digest Annual for 1964. The final verdict, as always, is yours.

THE EDITOR

* * * * *
WANTED: Collectors' Digest; Boys' Friends; C.D. Annuals for 1954, 1957-8; 1961.

H. MACHIN, 38, St. Thomas Rd, Preston, Lancs.

OUR CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

ELIMINATION: In the list of words, cross out (in each case two words):

- (a) A St. Jim's boy. (b) Two words associated with JACKET.
 (c) A famous comic paper. (d) Two words associated with WILLIAM.
 (e) Two words associated with SIDE. (f) Two names associated with PENMAN. (g) Two writers of Sexton Blake stories. (h) Two St. Frank's boys. (i) Two words associated with BRIGHT. (j) Two words associated with NEW. (k) A character in our Buddle stories. (l) Two writers about Nelson Lee. (m) Two non-de-plumes. (n) Two minors. (o) Two boys who might give you the pip. (p) Two assistants. (q) Two words associated with Lancaster. (r) Two words associated with famous comic paper characters. (s) Two words associated with PAUL. (t) Two words associated with OLD.

You then have one word left. Write the word on a postcard, with your own name and address, and post to the editor.

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Abbey | 2. Skim | 3. Methuselah |
| 4. Eton | 5. Prout | 6. Rain |
| 7. Tired | 8. Douglas | 9. Cricketer |
| 10. Classical | 11. Drake | 12. Jim |
| 13. Cherry | 14. Teed | 15. Wingate |
| 16. Grey | 17. Richards | 18. Toad |
| 19. Brooks | 20. House | 21. Come |
| 22. Comb | 23. Scott | 24. Boots |
| 25. Honey | 26. Merry | 27. Pole |
| 28. Bus | 29. Norfolk | 30. Patriotic |
| 31. Comrade | 32. Levison | 33. Lemon |
| 34. Tinker | 35. Cracksman | 36. Weary |
| 37. Bow | 38. Tell | 39. Modern |
| 40. Dick | | 41. Thomas |

(Note: You may not wish to mark your copy of the Digest. Copy the words on a sheet of paper, and do your marking thereon.)

As the postcards come in, they will all be put in a bag. On December 17th, which is the last day for receiving cards, a member of the staff at Excelsior House will draw from the bag. One of our book awards will go to the senders of the first three correct solutions drawn from the bag.

* * * * *

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

DR. R. WILSON, 100 Broomfield Road, GLASGOW, N.I.

GRAND XMAS DOUBLE NO!by Comicus

Every year, round about the middle of December, I unlock an old tin trunk, kept in an obscure corner of my sanctum, and take out carefully and reverently, a pile of Christmas Double Numbers of comic papers. From these I make a selection to be read when Yuletide arrives.

There are many favourite books for Xmas reading. Dickens' "Christmas Carol;" "The Mystery of the Painted Room;" "The Spectre of Polpelly;" "The Ghost of Bannington Grange;" "The Mistletoe Milk Mystery." These and many others are read and re-read with delight.

But in my opinion, nothing can recall those blissful sparkling snow-white Christmases of fifty or so years ago as can the dear old Comics - their very titles dripping with snow. Let me describe those which I have chosen for my Xmas holiday reading this year.

First and foremost, the greatest comic of all time "CHIPS." Here is No. 536, the Xmas Double Number of December 8th, 1900. Not many of our little coterie will remember this issue - 16 glorious pink pages, price 1d!

Who else should appear on the front cover, but the immortal Weary Willie and Tired Tim? "Twas Christmas Eve, and the snow was falling gently...." - thus begins the story. I must save the rest for later on!

Turn the page, and here is a greeting from the Editor - old Cornelius Chips himself. Also one from the charming Miss Chips, who had a column each week of her own. Below, we find our friend Philpot Bottles describing "Bottles Xmas Party." "Suns ov the Empire, i grete yu wun an orl." Alack, where is the Empire now?

Here now is my second choice - "LOT O' FUN" Number 198, date December 25th 1909. "Dreamy Has A Right Merry Christmas." A full front page picture of dear old Dreamy Daniel's adventures, drawn by George Davey. In full colour, of course, with Dreamy Daniel as Santa Claus - until he woke up! Again, 16 pages of festive fun and frolic. Remember Patriotic Paul, and the Red Lion Scouts from Comic Life? There they all are in red, white and black, on page 16.

And now my own particular favourite "BUTTERFLY." The Double Xmas Number 325, for December 3rd, 1910, on paper of a delicate green, and again 16 pages! "Portland Bill's Toboggan Slide" in on page one - with the final 'frame' on page 15. And there are all the "Butterfly" favourites, having their Christmas Dinner served up by the most

buxom beauty anyone could wish to see. For "Butterfly" specialised in glamour - turn to page 16, and see "Flossie - the up-to-date Schoolgirl

But the scene changes - date December 9th, 1911, and here is that superior coloured comic "PUCK," price 2d! Grand Xmas Double Number. Jolly Joe Jinks and his Pocket Pierrots spend a Merry Xmas in full colour - on page one, whilst on page TWENTY-FOUR! that wonder man, Professor Radium "Has a Magic Christmas Party and all is Joy." Think of it, 24 pages, crammed with stories, jokes and jollity, read in those bygone days by the cultured kids of Kensington, and the bejewelled babes of Bayswater. The Val Fox story was alone worth the money. Some Double Number, indeed. We shall never see its like again - and all for tuppence!

But here is another grand favourite for December 21st, 1912. No. 1180 of "COMIC CUTS": Rival of "Chips" itself in popularity. Behold - Tom, the Ticket-of-Leave Man, with a stolen goose under each arm, pursued through the falling snow by his arch-enemy, P.C. Fairyfoot. Only 14 pages this time, oddly enough, but with Waddles the Waiter, Pansy Pancake, Chuckles and Sniggers, Martin Steel and his Twelve Girl Detectives, The Red Rovers, and Sebastian Ginger, Orfis Boy, it is still a 'bumper number.'

Here is "COMIC CUTS" again, for the war-time Christmas of 1915. beautiful copy this, in mint condition - No. 1336, December 18th. To the Ticket-of-Leave Man is in bed on Christmas Eve. Outside in the snow, are Inspector Flipflap, Constable Coughdrop, and P.C. Fairyfoot, singing carols in aid of the Police Fund for Ancient Convicts. On page 16, the Mulberry Flatites Give Their Christmas Guests a Warm Reception whilst in the Comic Cuts Colony, the nigs all have fourteen helpings of plum-pudding, and Stripes the Tiger has fourteen helpings of nig. The Red Rovers is still going strong - I was told that the author sent his son to Eton on the proceeds from this story - but Harry Hinton and Pac Flanagan, are now serving their King and Country. What a feast of reading these 16 pages contain.

But I must ration myself. Six helpings of Double Numbers are enough for one Christmas. Next year, I must see what Butterball and Tall Thomas are doing in "COMIC LIFE," and Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutch are up to in "CHUCKLES" - to say nothing of Tiger Tim and the Bruin Boys in "RAINBOW."

For the present, in the words of Sebastian Ginger in that thrilling story "The Ornted Bungerlo" - "may i now wish mi readers A Very Appy Krismus.

Trooly yorn,
COMICUS

THOSE OFFICIAL RECORDSBy Derek Adley

As a collector who accepts official records as the ultimate answer to our O.B.B. queries, and also on behalf of Bill Lofts, I should like to answer Laurie Sutton's article in last month's C.D.

It is perfectly true that authors can make errors when commenting about stories written upwards of 50 years ago, if, they have to search their memories, in the absence of actual copies. However, in the majority of cases i.e. Messrs. Twyman, Catchpole, Newman, Warwick, Samways, these authors still have the original stories in their files at home. Apart from this, their claims to have written certain stories have all been confirmed by records at Fleetway House. The majority of these stories have always been accepted by the majority of collectors as subs anyway, why then should one doubt the evidence when discovered?

It is true that this information from official sources has only come to light in recent years, and to explain as tactfully as I can, Bill has written about 15 full length articles for Fleetway Publications, and in the course of doing so he has been given access to information not available to the general public. I for one am only too glad, as probably other collectors are, that he has passed on a great deal of this information to the C.D.

On the subject of 'it being impossible' for Charles Hamilton not to know that substitute stories appeared before the tale mentioned in his Autobiography, Mr. Hamilton told me, not once, but several times in his lifetime that he had no idea what went on in the Magnet and Gem office, and rarely bothered to look at the stories as they appeared in published form. This has been confirmed by the editorial staff who have said that he only paid very fleeting visits to Fleetway House.

Percy Griffith was a very strange man indeed, and Mr. Hamilton as revealed by Bill sometime ago, could not have described the first editor of the Magnet and Gem more accurately. It would be just like him not to mention to Mr. Hamilton that he had written some of the stories himself! Come to that Messrs. Hinton, Down, Pentelow, and R.T. Eves (Boys Friend Rookwood yarns) controlling editors of the Companion Papers all wrote Magnet and Gem stories themselves.

In closing, I would like to say that during the last ten years Bill Lofts has solved more mysteries, and given more valuable data, than probably all other collectors put together, and I am at a loss to understand why Mr. Sutton should try to create fresh mysteries, especially when he is basing his facts purely on theory all the time.

If anyone could prove Bill wrong, otherwise than theory, I feel

matters, conjuring up, as it did, a vision of some sub-human creature like Caliban.

But there was no doubt that the story was a very reasonable one: there was plenty of snow and ice-skating, with the compensatory comforts of blazing log-fires and appetising meals, and the war was not sufficiently advanced for shortages to be apparent. Furthermore there were secret passages, inexplicable noises, and Gussy staying up all night to watch for the mysterious intruder, with surprising results. All in all, it would have been a very carping critic indeed who, in 1916, would have been disappointed with "Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party."

It is interesting to note that the story was reprinted on a number of occasions, with slight but significant alterations each time. In the 1923 Holiday Annual, where it was re-titled "The Mystery of the Priory," all references to the war were omitted, whilst in No. 284 of the Schoolboys' Own Library Private Silver had just returned from Palestine instead of the Western Front, and all the horse-drawn vehicles were replaced by motors: an open coach, not a brake, arrived to take juniors away from Rookwood to the station, whilst cousin Phyllis drove a car instead of a trap from Lexham station to the Priory. The march of time is inexorable!

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 82. THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL FOR CHRISTMAS

Though published each September, from 1919 till 1939, the Holiday Annual was undoubtedly put out for the Christmas market. It was decidedly a volume which a kind uncle might purchase as a present for a favourite nephew.

I never had the first one, though I recall that it was loaned to me, later on, by a boy at school.

For the next four or five years, I received the H.A. as a Christmas present regularly from my sister, and I still have those volumes which she gave me, inscribed by myself with my name, written in the appalling round hand which I cultivated in those far-off days.

The early Holiday Annuals were delightful books, and in the case of those which came from my sister, I still have the transparent outer jackets which the publishers presented with them. Probably there are not a great many of those dust-jackets still in existence to-day.

After the first issue, they changed the name. They called it the Greyfriars Holiday Annual. It was a change I resented. I always had a soft spot for St. Jim's, and I saw no reason why Greyfriars should be given the honour of having its name bestowed upon the Annual.

As time passed, the Holiday Annual deteriorated. The price was reduced from 6/- to 5/-. The thinner, better-quality paper was replaced by a thick paper which seemed to have something of the quality of cardboard. The Annual became a falsely fat book, which really contained less than the thinner volumes of earlier days.

After my sister arrived at the conclusion that I was too old to be given a Holiday

Annual for Christmas, I did not buy it as a Christmas present to myself. I waited till the New Year, when all Annuals were sold off at half-price. Very occasionally, I was too late altogether. In the long run, it was poor economy. To complete my set in later years, I have had to pay many times the original cost of the books. No doubt you have done the same.

After the first few issues, Charles Hamilton really had but little to do with the Holiday Annual, though his work throughout was the main feature. The publishers were, possibly, economising, though there is no evidence, so far as I know, that substitute writers were paid any less than the genuine writer of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood. I believe, however, that after the later twenties, nothing new appeared in the Annual from the genuine pen.

The main attraction of the Holiday Annuals was the reprinting of so many of the early Hamilton stories, and in that, probably, the economy showed itself. Before the war, it does not seem that authors were paid anything when their work was given a second, third, or even fourth reprinting.

Charles Hamilton's original stories in the early Holiday Annuals were exceptionally good. It has always surprised me, when so much reprinting was done, that those original tales in the H.A. were not given a second showing. Maybe they were overlooked.

Two stories, which have never ceased to delight me, were most unusual for Charles Hamilton. They went into the realms of fantasy, and, at the finish, turned out to be dreams. The first of these was a St. Jim's story, in which Bernard Glyn invented a machine capable of taking its passengers back into history. It is a charming little story, which was well worth a revival.

Another, told of one, Parkinson, who sold his soul in return for a magic proficiency at Soccer.

Both stories would, no doubt, have been out of place in the Gem or Magnet, but were just the thing for the Christmas Annual.

Another original story in the Holiday Annual featured Drake and Rodney, both from the defunct St. Winifred's which had been carried on as the school on a ship - the Benbow. After the Benbow series ended in The Greyfriars Herald (or the Boys' Herald, as it later became), Drake and Rodney went to Greyfriars, and the stories featuring them continued in that paper. So far as I know, almost all of these stories were by the genuine Frank Richards - indeed, possibly, all of them. Some of them were reprinted in the Gem of the late Thirties.

I believe that Drake, as a schoolboy, was mentioned in a few Magnets, but, to the best of my recollection, Rodney never was.

However, in the story in the Holiday Annual, both Drake and Rodney featured. Harry Wharton did not take either seriously as a sound sportsman. He recalled the St. Winifred's team as represented by Daubeny and Co. Drake did a great service for Wharton and claimed, as a reward, that he and Rodney should be allowed to play for the junior side. It goes without saying that their performances eventually startled their team mates with their brilliance.

It was not really a new theme, though it was probably new to most readers of the Holiday Annual. A similar plot had been worked out in connection with Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence in the blue Gem.

Another story in the early Holiday Annual told of Bunter on the run from Greyfriars and visiting the other Hamilton schools in turn. I have not checked, but I believe this tale was specially written for the Annual, though the basic theme was not unknown in the Gem and the Magnet.

Charles Hamilton has been criticised for repeating his plots. As we have comments more than once in this column, the surprising thing was not that he repeated his plots, but that he repeated them so seldom. His school stories, upon which criticism is concentrated, stretch in an unbroken line from the start of 1907. Hundreds upon hundreds of schools stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood. And hundreds upon hundreds of them of the very highest quality in their class. In spite of the occasional bleat!

of detractors, his record proves him to have been the world's greatest writer of school stories.

I wonder sometimes why Charles Hamilton did not use some of his less well-known stories as foundations for his post-war Bunter stories. The dream solutions of the time machine story and the Parkinson story would have been too unusual, probably, for the Magnet, but either might have made a charming basis for a post-war Bunter book. "The Flooded School" from a single blue Gem would surely have offered equal opportunity with the compression of a well-known, much later, series into a single full-length Bunter book - and it would have had the advantage of being much fresher material for the average reader. The plot of the Outram story "A Strange Secret" is another that could have been used, and, of course, there are plenty of others.

The closing feature of the Holiday Annual was always a play in verse. These were undoubtedly clever, though I suppose I never read one right through. I wonder whether they were ever performed, either at Christmas parties or elsewhere. If so, I never heard of such performances. Is it just possible that three or more of these little plays would make suitable entertainment for a Christmas show in a London theatre?

The final teasing question is why the Holiday Annual was never published again in post-war years. Whatever doubt could be cast on the prospects of a newly-born Gem and Magnet, there could surely be no doubt about the Holiday Annual for Christmas - when anything goes. To put it a little unkindly, if Billy Bunter's Own sold satisfactorily at 8/6 a copy, the Holiday Annual must surely have done much better.

I am only guessing, of course, but it looks to me very much as though there was a gentleman's agreement between the author and his old publishers. The Holiday Annual, publishing some of the author's old single stories, would have been serious competition for anything in the post-war Bunter line.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 80. THE HARD CORE

CHARLES CHURCHILL: I think you are right in that the editor or the author ignored the Hard Core. This also happened in the Nelson Lee, and I believe helped to bring the end nearer.

PETER HANGER: I think you hit the nail fair and square when you wrote that Harry Wharton & Co would not have been in the Remove for longer than three terms. For this reason I prefer to regard the Hamilton saga as a collection of complete stories. I note the inconsistencies, but they don't worry me, for I know the reason. The fact that Charles Hamilton was so consistent down the years, without the aid of an elaborate filing system, must surely be regarded as one of the many miracles of his work. If one can accept the idea that Wharton & Co were in the Remove for only 3 terms, and you had to select stories to represent those 3 terms, which would you select? My own selection would be: Autumn term: Secret Seven series; Christmas Hols: Cigarette Case series; Spring term: Carter series; Easter Hols: Bunter Court series; Summer term: Bertie Vernon series; Summer Hols: Manleverer South Seas series.

W. H. BROSTER: Keen students of the Magnet and Gem will be likely to add more examples of what might be snubs to the 'hard core.' Myself, I always wondered why Martin Clifford jettisoned those two gifts of Levison's - sleight of hand and ability to copy handwriting. In the first Holiday Annual of 1920 Loring came to Rookwood, was placed in the 'Modern' House, fought and beat Lovell, saved Cousin Phyllis and then was never heard of again. And - the Modern personnel was not so very numerous. The Three Tommies could have done with more support. When Harry Hammond came to St. Jim's they found out he was a right winger of great ability. The series finished, Hammond never got a place in the Junior side, not even in the School House eleven.

JOHN TROVELL: I doubt that Hamilton ever visualised a critical hard core during his early writing, and never a one that would exist, throughout, and even after, his career as a school story writer.

Constant reference to the details of his schools, the staff and pupils, the surrounding districts, and checking what had been written probably years previously, would have been necessary to prevent the occasional inaccuracy from occurring, and the prodigious amount of work Hamilton was producing, could have given him scant time for this.

For me incorrect study numbers were a particular aversion, but this could easily have been the fault of the printers and not the author.

Those pardonable lapses were happily at a minimum, and as our editor remarked, without them some of the best of Hamilton would never have been written, for the pleasure and delight of the hard core.

ROBERT WHITER: I would have loved mentions of earlier episodes in the later stories, and, like you, I really enjoyed the occasional instance. One comes to mind in the Hacker: Headmaster series - a brief mention that Prout wouldn't get the post owing to the trouble that arose on an earlier occasion when he was Acting Head. This referred to the Secret Seven series. Another case was the secret panel in Mr. Quelch's study, leading to the vaults - mentioned several times over the years.

I wrote to Charles Hamilton asking him to consider a story featuring the old minor character. He replied that he didn't think anybody would remember them, but that at the same time he would think about it.

W. H. BROSTER (on an earlier topic): It must have been terrible disillusion to the Librarian of the London Club to find one substitute story amongst all the genuine Hamiltonia amassed over twelve years. A still more terrible blow to the unfortunate borrower who unluckily received it. No wonder he was indignant. While commiserating with both, I wonder what happens if a member of that library suddenly becomes curious enough to want to read the substitute stories - just to compare them with the genuine. Otherwise how can he or she compare one with the other. Perish the thought that he or she might like some of them. There were one or two really well-established authors of boys' fiction among those subs, and their fans might possibly wish to see what sort of job they made of Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories. The thought also came to me regarding the complete or near complete collections we read of in C.D. Do these include the substitutes or do they keep in line and ignore them as of no merit or value of any kind? If one of these collections was bequeathed to the London Library would there be wholesale burning? - the likeliest way of disposal as being of no value they would serve no purpose in exchange let alone for sale. The borrowers apparently would not have them as a gift.

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GEMS OF HAMILTONIA No. 14 (New Series)

Bunter was not much given to reading. English literature was a subject in the curriculum at Greyfriars - it was, therefore, work - for which reason Bunter had a strong antipathy for English literature. He did not expect to derive much enjoyment from reading the "Christmas Carol." He had no expectation of finding a murder in it, or even a long-lost lad who, in spite of a wicked uncle, came at last into the title and estates.

Certainly he did not find anything of that kind.

But, to his own astonishment, he found himself interested. Scrooge interested him.

He found that he was quite keenly following the remarkable

apparitions of the Ghost of Christmas Past and the Ghost of Christmas Present and the Ghost of Christmas Future.

The slow but sure change in the character of that unpleasant old gentleman, Scrooge, interested him.

Sitting on a form with his back to a wall and his feet on a desk, Bunter read and read and read, amazingly engrossed in a story which did not contain a single murder or a long-lost heir.

He forgot the Form-room and his detention task; he forgot even his disappointment of the morning.

For once, Bunter was taken out of himself, and forgot even William George Bunter - hitherto a person who had been incessantly in his thoughts.

He read eagerly.

His anxiety for the ultimate fate of Tiny Tim was intense.

For the first time on record, Bunter actually thought with deep solicitude of a person whose initials were not W.G.B.

The magic of the Master enthralled him.

He felt that he would gladly have stood Bob Cratchit a roaring fire in the Tank, and would have expended his celebrated post-order for that good object.

He had an intense desire to kick Mr. Scrooge.

His eyes and his spectacles were fairly glued on the book, and he read it breathlessly.

The minutes passed unheeded.

When he came to the end of the story Bunter heaved a deep, deep sigh. He wished it had been longer.

Laying down the book, Bunter leaned back and pondered.

His uncle had told him to read and reflect. He had read, and now he was reflecting.

His uncle fancied there was some resemblance between his own character and Scrooge's. That was absurd, of course. Scrooge had been a thoroughly selfish fellow, thinking only of himself - a mean, grasping fellow, like Fisher T. Fish or Skinner, for instance - not like Bunter.

But ---

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ANOTHER BRANCH OF HAMILTONIA

Reader Robert McCabe of Dundee has sent us a book which intrigues us immensely. Paper backed, with sheets about Magnet size, about 48 pages, thickish quality paper, named "Strange Suspense Stories," sold at 2/6, this comprises, with the exception of 6 pages, stories told in pictures. It is, in modern parlance, unashamedly a "comic." It is

Nelson Lee Column

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

Here we are once again at the end of another year, and I would like to wish our worthy editor, the C.D. production staff, all our contributors and readers another very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

The last year has seen an increasing interest in Lee affairs, though I regret that no-one seems to have thought of putting Nelson Lee and/or St. Frank's on stage or screen, or republishing some of the many fine series in paperback format.

We have also seen a very lively, and often unnecessarily acrimonious debate on the merits of ESB and Charles Hamilton. Why people have to get so worked up I really don't know. Presumably as boys we read what appealed to us most, and if that happened to be ESB or Hamilton, well, then, we were judging the stories, at the time, by the standards we as readers wanted. To produce a maturer judgment now, as men, seems a little intolerant. Personally, as a boy (and even until now) I read, and can read, both with equal enjoyment.

I can also read quite a wide range of other authors, and I hope it may be practicable among the Sexton Blake reprints we are half-promised to include some of the fine old yarns from Pierre Quiroule, G. H. Teed and Anthony Skene (as well, of course, as some of the old Waldo stories from ESB).

Meanwhile, another correspondent has his say to add to the recent controversy with the Hamiltonian diehards as we move towards another year.

* * * * *

POINTS OF VIEW

JULIUS LENNARD: "Room For Both" by Harry Broster, is one of the best articles I have read. He is quite right in what he says about the substitute writers. We are all wiser after we know.

The war which has been going on between the followers of Charles Hamilton and those of E. S. Brooks has been bitter at times. Both writers are great, and I often wonder how great E. S. Brooks might have been had the Nelson Lee come out before the Magnet and the Gem. My first love was the Nelson Lee, but I think the two finest characters which have ever appeared in any periodical are easily Sexton

Blake and Tinker.

Coming back to school stories, good as the late Charles Hamilton was, E. S. Brooks at his best was his equal, but while E.S.B. deteriorated at times, C.H. was good most of the time. E.S.B. kept we boys on tenterhooks, week after week, month after month. We could hardly bear to wait till the following Wednesday to read what had happened to our heroes. Yes, sir, both were grand writers.

We can't sing the praises of one without singing the praises of the other. They both did a noble job in keeping we kids happy, so let this argument end, and each one of us be proud that two men like these graced our boyhood days. Both were great. Let's leave it at that. To Charles Hamilton, God bless you, and thanks a million; to E. S. Brooks, God bless you, too, and may you be here for many, many years to come.

H. CHAPMAN (on THE HARD CORE): As a reader of the St. Frank's stories almost from the beginning, I am sure that E. S. Brooks did regard them as a whole.

He must have had a marvellous memory and kept very accurate records as he very, very seldom wrote anything which contradicted what had gone before. The characters always behaved true to form.

One series often led quite naturally into, and provided the plot for the one which followed.

He also seemed to write as if he was writing for the same readers year after year. This must have been so to a great extent if one considers the letters he answered and commented on in "Between Ourselves" from readers of from 5 to 10 years standing. They would certainly have noticed any discrepancies and objected to them.

With regard to the changes in the later years (which were not his idea) I personally did not like them, but they were popular with some readers. Until the Second New Series, that is, which was of course very poor stuff, and partly responsible for the end of the Nelson Lee.

L. S. ELLIOTT: Our Mr. Lofts has come up with another discovery which I should think was known to quite a few E.S.B. enthusiasts; i.e. the references to his R. W. Comrade "Frank Kingston" stories. In an article in C.D. No. 84 (December 1953) Eric Fayne referred to "The Hound of the Moor" by R. W. Comrade, featuring Frank Kingston, Detective, and added the comment that R. W. Comrade was a pen-name of "our old friend, E. S. Brooks."

Mr. Lofts states in his article that "all were anonymous," and no mention is made of the story which Eric Fayne mentioned in 1953.

December 1914:

"We do not intend to let the Kaiser interfere with the weekly publication of good old Comic Cuts, which is wanted these times if only to act as an antidote to the German killjoy.

"This time next year we shall, of course, be all going about our usual business, there's very little doubt about that, and we shall have no need to take our pleasures sadly; not that it's ever possible to look at Comic Cuts with a long face. But our brave boys will be back again, and we shall know once again the blessings of a peace that should never more be disturbed.

"Mr. Chips has a new story ready by the author of 'The Red Rovers.' He can't do better. Harry and Paddy, true-hearted British lads, are the most popular in any tale now being published. The Empire, football, and Comic Cuts for ever!

"By the way, remember a good resolution for the New Year of 1915! Comic Cuts Monday, 'The Funny Wonder' Tuesday, and 'Chips' Wednesday, are all one halfpenny each, and are Companion Comics. Try a year of them, and make 1915 that year."

That's what the editor wrote in the Christmas Double Number of Comic Cuts. I hope that he's right, and that peace will soon be back. But a lot of people said it would all be over by Christmas, and it's still going on. Somehow there seems to be a bit of a damper over the old papers. There was a Christmas Double Number of Chips and Comic Cuts but not of the Funny Wonder. There was a Christmas Double Number of the Magnet but not of the Gem or the Boys' Friend. The Gem didn't really have a Christmas Number at all. It was called a "Winter Number," though there was a Christmas story. The Boys' Friend had a kind of Christmas Number, but the editor said he hadn't made it a joyful number as he thought we shouldn't be joyful. He wished us "a Good Christmas" as he didn't want us to have a merry one. Well, that's all right, of course, but I think the editor of the Boys' Friend is a bit of a lettuce.

A dreadful thing happened in the middle of the month. Some German cruisers bombarded Scarborough, Hartlepool, and Whitby, and about 18 people were killed and a lot of homes destroyed. No wonder the newspapers call the Germans "baby killers."

I expect the Germans were angry because a few days earlier a British submarine passed under the Dardanelles minefields and sank the Turkish battleship "Messudiyeh." Rule Britannia!

The Gem has had some wonderfully good stories this month. Three out of the four have been about Talbot, and I can't help thinking that we are getting a bit too much of him. Even Tom Merry seems to be playing second fiddle these days.

"Keeping it Dark" was a tip-top tale. Cutts was furious because his pal, Fresham, was expelled last month. Cutts tried to have his revenge on Talbot, but Kildare took a

DANNY'S



DIARY

hand to stop him. Kildare got his overcoat smothered in ink, and Gussy saw someone going on the tiles in an inky overcoat and thought it was Kildare. It was really Cutts.

"The St. Jim's Refugee" was the only story not about Talbot. Gussy smuggled a little Belgian refugee boy into St. Jim's, and it was fun while it lasted. The refugee's mother turned out to be an old friend of the Head's wife. What a coincidence!

"Talbot's Triumph" was fine. Mr. Packington was a new science master at St. Jim's, and Glyn House was robbed. Talbot recognized Mr. Packington as being a villain known as "The Professor." Talbot told the Head, and the Professor was taken away by Inspector Skeat with gripes upon his wrists.

The last tale was "Talbot's Christmas" which took place at Tom Merry's home at Huckleberry Heath. Cousin Ethel and Marjorie Hazeldene were there. How ever did Tom come to know Marjorie Hazeldene, and what was she doing away from her family's bosom at Christmas time? It was a good tale, though, in which Wally D'Arcy and Joe Frayne were kidnapped by German spies, and Talbot saved them.

Dad always takes us to a London show on New Year's Eve, and we had to make up our minds what we wanted to see, so that he could book the seats. There's "Sleeping Beauty Beautified" at Drury Lane, with George Graves and Will Evans. Well, that seems to be the same Drury Lane show they have had for the past two Christmases, with the same cast, so we wiped that out. At His Majesty's there is "David Copperfield" and that really made me shudder. I might as well go to school on New Year's Eve as go to Dickens. At the Duke of York's there is "Peter Pan," with Madge Titherage as "Peter," but I have seen Peter Pan before. At the Aldwych there is "Cinderella" with Lily Iris as the Prince, but I was attracted by "Jack and the Beanstalk" at the Lyceum, and that's where we're going. Dad has booked the seats - 5/- ones in front. Jessie won't be coming with us this year as she has gone into a munitions factory near Dartford to make her fortune. She says she will come back to us next year when the war is over.

The editor of the Magnet has sprung a surprise. A special Greyfriars story by Frank Richards, entitled "The Boy Without a Name" is to appear in the Boys' Friend 3d Library on New Year's Day. It is the first time that Frank Richards has been in the B.F.L. I expect that's why the Magnet tales have been a bit weak lately. He's been busy writing this long story.

Doug had a magazine called "The Car," and in it there's a report that there has been an increase of 111,695 motor vehicles in the United Kingdom this year. It's pretty awful. Dad says that London will soon grind to a standstill. Goodness knows where it will end. It soon won't be safe to bowl a golf-ball along the tramlines. The other day a motor driver swore at me, using a word I'd never hear before.

Mum bought a kettle and when she got home she found it had got (at'd page 23)..



POINTS OF VIEW (cont'd from page 17)...

Mr. Lofts - and very good luck to him - has been an energetic detective since the war in connection with old boys' books, but he only became interested during and since the war. Some of us can go back much further than that. I corresponded with E. S. Brooks, P.G. Wodehouse, Leslie Charteris, John G. Brandon, Dennis Wheatley, Philip Lindsay and Charles Hamilton long before the war, and have many letters, autographed photos, and details of stories from all the authors mentioned.

("The Hound of the Moor" by R. W. Comrade appeared in a Gem Christmas Number. This may have been apart from the main series of Comrade stories, which may account for Mr. Lofts missing it. - ED.)

CHARLES CHURCHILL: Bill Lofts apparently compares Nelson Lee at St. Frank's with the Lee detective stories written by Maxwell Scott. Surely Brooks' Nelson Lee detective stories (pre St. Frank's) should be the ones to be compared. I think they are equally as good. What about the Jim, the Penman yarns, Eileen Dare and the Circle of Terror ones, to say nothing of all those single stories he wrote? I have practically all the first 110 Nelson Lees, and I can assure Bill that there are plenty of good tales there by E.S.B.

Re the repetition of themes mentioned by Laurie Sutton, of course some were repeated as they were in the Hamilton papers. He mentions the 32-year run of the Magnet against only 15 years of St. Frank's. The Nelson Lee Library ran for 17 years, and after St. Frank's appeared, Brooks did not have any sub writers.

A LETTER FROM ST. FRANK'S

By Jim Cook

On June 12th, 1965, Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks is expected to attend St. Frank's College to receive an award to mark the fiftieth anniversary of his connection with Nelson Lee and Nipper.

Although it was over two years later that Nelson Lee and Nipper came to St. Frank's to escape the attentions of the Chinese Secret Society it was felt that strictly speaking Mr. Brooks' personal association with the Grays Inn Road specialists goes back to the time when he first recorded the chronicles of the great detective.

What shape this award will assume I do not know for Nelson Lee has told me only the barest details. In fact, I don't suppose he knows himself for it is Dr. Stafford who is behind the project. But since Mr. Lee will be the most important part of the ceremony it was felt that the housemaster-detective should know that he avail himself

to be present on that day. It is always possible the detective could be away in another part of the world just when he was wanted at St. Frank's.

But although Dr. Stafford is credited with the idea of presenting Mr. Brooks with this Golden Anniversary award Nipper tells me Lord Dorrimore has a finger in the pie for Dorrie looked very mysterious when we saw him the other day and if there's one thing old Dorrie can't do it is to keep a secret. It was written all over his face that he had been up to something and Browne of the Fifth asked him point blank what was in the wind and Dorrie whispered something about a birthday present for the professor.

In any event it will be very interesting when Edwy comes down to the old school next June. It seems as if more than one award is being given for Lord Dorrimore does not do things in a small way and perhaps there will be many surprises in store for quite a few people.

Talking about surprises it amazes me when visitors come to see over the school, their first and foremost desire is to see the Ancient House before any of the other Houses. For the first building that greets you when you pass through the school gates is really the West House - that is if you are looking straight ahead of you. Immediately to your left would be the Chapel and should you glance directly to your right you would perceive the East House with the Gym a little to its right.

But the fascination of the Ancient House must arise from its importance for here are housed the leading lights of the school. To belong to the Ancient House is an honour and although the West House comes next in order of merit, as you might say, the Modern House in the right corner of the Triangle deserves consideration for on this site is the old College House and this new building actually contains most of the stone blocks that were originally in the College House building.

Visitors have frequently remarked on the imposing Head's residence which lies behind Inner Court. But you have to go through Big Arch to reach here for the fine and commanding structure of the School House with the junior and senior wings flanking the sides bars the way. Then through Inner Court where Head's Residence reposes in a sea of calm and serenity.

I have often tried to listen to the excited calls of the juniors in the Triangle from this inner sanctum but one may as well try to hear the waves breaking on Shingle Head three miles away.

Adjoining the Head's house is the school sanatorium and immediately behind lies the Head's garden with his garage making the tip of the circular lane that surrounds the school.

When St. Frank's is open to visitors the poor guide is bombarded with questions about the old school and the other day the honour fell upon Dr. Barry Stokes to show parents and guardians the beauties of St. Frank's. And very interesting it was for I attached myself to the little crowd that went round and learned quite a few things about St. Frank's that Barry Stokes had dug from the records.

It would appear that Dr. Stafford ruled over the destinies of the boys some twenty years before Nelson Lee arrived and many and varied have been the attempts to alter those rules by new masters and school Governors. But I think the most interesting and exciting period in these abortive changes since Nelson Lee came is the one which visitors find most amusing. That is when women teachers took control of St. Frank's. But as this event occurred before Barry Stokes came to St. Frank's the matter is referred to Mr. Stockdale who frequently accompanies Barry and Old Stocky - as the juniors impolitely refer to the Modern House master - is quite happy to recall those momentous times for in all the school's history it was the one and only occasion St. Frank's was ruled temporarily by women.

But to return to Edwy Searles Brooks' fifty years association with Nelson Lee.

Nipper is as much in the dark about this "prize giving day" as Lee himself, but it is quite early to make enquiries and later on I may be able to tell you more about it. Nelson Lee is both amused and flattered that he will meet Edwy Searles Brooks for the first time. And Nipper will feel honoured to shake the hand of the man who successfully hid them in St. Frank's for so long. Both Lee and Nipper will never forget the time they climbed through the skylight of the engraving works adjoining their Grays Inn Road chambers when they decided to leave London for St. Frank's. Such an ignominious departure yet so necessary.

We must be thankful for this Chinese secret society for bringing Nelson Lee and Nipper to St. Frank's. And St. Frank's is equally grateful for the stirring times these two characters brought about by their presence at the school. The history of St. Frank's may never have been written had not Mr. Brooks smuggled Mr. Lee and Nipper out of London and ensconced them in St. Frank's. Fullwood would have retained his position as Form captain, there would have been only two Houses instead of the four today, in fact St. Frank's would never have come to our notice and remained hidden down in Sussex.

FOR SALE: Nelson Lee 1st New series 3/- each; 2nd New series 2/6 each.
BOB BLYTHE, 40 Ellesmere Rd, Dollis Hill, London, N.W.10

DANNY'S DIARY (cont'd from page 19)..

"Made in Germany" stamped on the bottom. She was furious and took it back to the shop and demanded her money back.

We haven't done much decorating this year as we are going to my Gran's for Christmas. But I put up some of last year's paper chains and a few bits of holly which I collected after dark from a neighbour's garden. There doesn't seem to be much mistletoe about, this year.

I don't know how it is, but the Magnet doesn't seem what it was. Maybe it's because they start the serial in the front of the paper these days, and it doesn't seem right.

The first story of the month was "The Snob of the Remove." A new boy named Von Limberg came to Greyfriars. He was a German who had been born in England. I asked Doug about it, for I can't see how a German could be born in England. Doug was silly about it. He said that if I had been born in Belgium it wouldn't make me a Brussels sprout. At any rate, Von Limberg was very proud. He even put his foot on Bunter's neck. It seems that Von in Germany is likd Lord in England. A kind of title. In the end Skinner found out that Von Limberg was really the son of a waiter named Klein, who had come into a lot of money and changed his name. I didn't like it a lot. I don't like tales about snobs.

Then came the Christmas Double Number of the Magnet, which wasn't all that Christmassy. It had a coloured cover with a picture by P. Hayward called "Fighting His Battles Over Again." It showed an old soldier of some prehistoric war showing his sword to some boys. The Greyfriars story was "The Return of the Prodigal," but except for the fact that Mr. Quelch fell down on a slide at the beginning, it wasn't Christmassy. The Prodigal in the story was Percy Locke, who was the Head's nephew. It pained the Head when his nephew got drunk. It gave me a bit of a pain, too.

Best thing in the issue was "Tom Merry's Weekly," which was a reproduction of the St. Jim's magazine. That was good fun.

"Billy Bunter's Uncle" was fair. Bunter read in the paper that a Captain Bunter was a hero of Mons, and claimed it was his uncle. When Captain Bunter arrived at Greyfriars, it was Wibley in disguise. It turned out there had been a printing error in the newspaper, and the hero was really Captain Hunter.

Last story of the year was "The Patriotic Schoolmaster" in which Mr. Lascelles got up a boxing display to help the Belgian refugees, and Skinner and Co tried to throw a spanner in the works.

We went to the pictures one evening and saw Mary Pickford in "Such a Little Queen," and I liked it quite a lot. They have stopped showing the slides of all the war leaders, and I am rather glad, as most of the slides had got cracked.

As I wrote down a little while ago, the Boys' Friend Christmas Number wasn't very good. There was the start of a new serial, "The Headmaster's Daughter" by Sidney Drew, but I don't care about Mr. Drew's stories, and shouldn't want to read it all. Best story was "Bob Grainger's Gratitude" by Horace Phillips. It all took place on one Christmas Eve, and was very appropriate to the season. A rum story was "An Old-Fashioned Christmas." They didn't name the author, but the artist was Arthur Clarke. I must say the pictures looked as old-fashioned as the Christmas.

On Wednesday, December 23rd, we went off to Layer Marney in Essex, to stay with my Gran over Christmas.

(*DANNY FOR MERRIE CHRISTMAS* appears in Collectors' Digest Annual for 1964. It contains further extracts from Danny's Diary for Christmas 1914, exactly fifty years ago.)

MAGNETS for SBLs: Magnets (1931-1939), Gems, Lees, Union Jacks, or cash offered for 2nd series SBLs. Generous terms also offered for near-mint copies of Magnets 1511, 1515.

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IN AND AROUND BAKER STREET (2) - - - By Walter Webb

Ruictions at the Amalgamated Press

In 1910 the Blake papers were threshing wildly in the teeth of a hurricane of frustration and dissent, which swept through the entire offices of the Amalgamated Press, leaving in its wake a trail of ascerbity, disillusionment, and open hostility. Hamilton Edwards, controlling editor of the boys' journals, which, of course, included the UNION JACK and other Blake papers as well, was in open rebellion following criticism of his department by Lord Northcliffe, founder and chief of the A.P. Edwards, who, obviously regarded this as an unwarranted intrusion, threatened to resign with a demand for heavy compensation. In a brief clash earlier on, Lord Northcliffe had back-pedalled somewhat following an exchange of excited words, and, after telling Edwards not to be ridiculous, advised him to try a dose of ptomaine poisoning and then he would readily understand his (Northcliffe's) unusual irritability. If this was intended as an apology it is little wonder that Edwards was not mollified, and the year progressed in an atmosphere of smouldering hostility on the part of both.

Fuel was added to these fires when, in the summer of that year, a case of fraud was heard at the Old Bailey, they having been committed as a result of advertisements which had appeared in some of the Amalgamated Press publications. The judge who tried the case mentioned a number of them, and remarked that if he could have had his way the cost of the prosecution would be paid by those owners of publications in which the advertisements had appeared.

Following this adverse criticism, which was gall indeed for Lord Northcliffe, he began to take a more than usual interest in the administration of the juvenile papers, and what he saw on inspection of some of them - the comic papers, chiefly - angered him, and he accused his editors of depraving juvenile tastes, with the threat of sharp action if improvements were not carried out immediately. Of late the papers, in his estimation, had got out of hand and there were now hundreds of vulgarities and indecencies in them. To Evelyn Wrench, sales manager of the A.P., he protested that on the front cover of the third issue of the newly launched comic paper, MERRY AND BRIGHT, there was an

illustration of a fat man and an over-developed young woman; page two contained a story, entitled "The Girl Without A Home." (Obviously the Chief considered that if a girl was without a home she must be a girl of the streets, hence his objection to the apparently inoffensive title); page three was, in his opinion, rather vulgar, and on page six, contrary to his principles, there was a man holding a revolver. Whether he objected to revolvers in the illustrations only is not clear, but if he was against them being used in the stories too - well, one can only say his was a most unrealistic attitude to adopt, for how was an author to write a detective story under such a censorship? He might just as well have issued instructions to an editress of one of his romantic story papers and tabooed all kissing in love stories.

Other things that aroused Lord Northcliffe's ire were the number of prison stories, detective stories, bad girl stories, and sensational and always very badly drawn pictures, which he deplored as being only too consistent with the juvenile papers, and they, he declared, would be vigorously dealt with. He took immediate steps to scrap such headings in the papers as "Behind Prison Walls," etc., and, to those concerned, issued orders to go over all page proofs and remove vulgarities. One enterprising young editor who had been sending up the circulation figures to heights not reached since the palmy days of "Comic Cuts" and "Chips" by such means as Lord Northcliffe so fiercely disapproved, was accused of being a bounder and sacked.

What an eventful year 1910 must have been, for, of course, this was the year, too, that Michael Storm did his famous disappearing act, causing consternation throughout "Answers'" office when he left a serial half finished and an urgent telegram had to be despatched to Cecil Hayter at his address just outside Brighton asking him to finish it off. A survivor of those days, who actually joined "Answers'" staff that year, recalls it as a succession of surprises and gentle shocks, and well remembers Hayter's dash to London that day during the late summer months, picking up all the previous instalments, and, with no fuss at all, producing the following week's instalment in time for the printers.

Hamilton Edwards - A few words

It was the policy of Lord Northcliffe to extend to any young man who worked for him the opportunity of great rewards for good work on the principle that the best way to make a department grow was to give the man in charge a pecuniary interest in its success. As the A.P. it was quite common for a man earning a modest weekly salary to draw some thousands a year in commission, and a case in point was that of a young man named Robert Hamilton Edwards.

Edwards, at one time, was employed by Geo. Newnes, Ltd., and was regarded by some of his less ambitious colleagues as being a rather extraordinary fellow because he used to take work home with him for the purpose, so he stated, of getting on! Eventually, Edwards joined ANSWERS, and became one of those drawing a small salary and a commission. The commission grew well into five figures annually, and when, in March 1912, he brought about a near-crisis by again threatening to resign with a claim for heavy compensation, the money he would have been entitled to draw from the kitty was quite a considerable amount. As a matter of fact, Hamilton Edwards did depart from the A.P. a few weeks later, and in possession of a considerable fortune. No doubt he was glad to go too, for his papers were in a parlous state (his own words to an author who once wrote for the UJ), and there was no doubt that by this time the boys' papers were not the force they were, and Edwards considered that he was only flogging a dead horse by carrying on. And so, it was left to Mr. William Back, who joined the firm in 1896, to take up the reins. He had previously assisted Edwards in the running of the boys' papers, and, as controlling editor, with Lewis Carlton as his assistant, he steered the UJ and Sexton Blake to a smooth passage in the intervening years to those dark days immediately preceding the first world war.

BARDELL versus VENNER

Besides being one of the best Sexton Blake authors of all time, Anthony Parsons was also one of the most amusing, and introduced some delightful touches of humour into his stories. Some of the dialogue between Mrs. Bardell and Superintendent Venner of the Yard was, at times, quite mirth provoking, and enlivened the Baker Street residence to an extent not achieved since the days of Gwyn Evans.

The feud between Mrs. Bardell and the Yard ace began when Mrs. Bardell discovered that Venner was getting all the credit in the papers for work that had really been done by her famous employer, after which, in her eyes, Venner was not a welcome visitor at any time. When Venner rang the doorbell just before 7 o'clock one evening he was made well aware of this:

"I wouldn't answered if I'd known it was you!" said Mrs. Bardell, with a sniff as the sooper raised his grey homburg with exaggerated gallantry.

"Stow it, you old battle-axe!" growled the sooper. "I want to see the Great Man. Is he home?"

"He wouldn't be - to you!" retorted Mrs. Bardell. "Not if I 'ad my way, 'e wouldn't! What d'you want now? Fallen down on your

job agen?"

"It's a good thing you don't fall down on yours often!" cracked the sooper. "I'm thinking of the floors, of course."

"Well, you needn't bother much on account of your own floors, there's that about it," came back the lady with gusto. "Only thing you need to worry about are the ceilings - getting knocked about by your bone head!" and having delivered herself of that stinging retort, Mrs. Bardell turned and sailed down the hall like a Thames barge in a stiff breeze.

(Extract from "The Mystery of the Whitehall Bomb," published in SBL No. 158, in 1947.)

(continued)

Part 2

Sexton Blake Authors who were Editors * * * By W. O. G. Lofts

I hope that all my editor friends will forgive me when I say that if a poll was conducted as to who was the most popular editor of all time Hedley O'Mant would come well out on top!

Hedley seems to have been a very popular person indeed, and dozens of former writers, editors, and artists I have met in the last 10 years all speak of their friendship with him, and especially his great personality. Editor of RANGER, PILOT, NELSON LEE, (under the control of C. M. Down) apart from working in the Hamilton papers group, O'Mant was the originator of the 'Hedley Scott' pen-name (used at times by other writers) and that of CAPTAIN ROBERT HAWKE (used also by G. M. Bowman who also wrote one S.B.L. and was on the editorial staff) and who incidentally was "Warder Lynk" in RANGER and BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY.

Writer of Magnet and Gem stories - plus (to be confirmed) under the name of HAMILTON SCOTT in the BOYS REALM, although Hedley only wrote two S.B.L. stories in the second series. He wrote also the Ferrers Locke detective stories after Charles Hamilton had ceased to write them in the small BOYS REALM - where the only adverse comment I have ever heard about O'Mant was from the great man himself, when he told me that he had lifted his characters - lock, stock and barrel!

I don't think that F. ADDINGTON SYMONDS needs any information to readers as to what papers he controlled! CHAMPION first and foremost, followed by ROCKET and PLUCK - as already known the HOWARD STEELE pen-name was used by other writers such as L. H. BROOKS, ALFRED EDGAR, CECIL HAYTER, in the Panther Grayle detective stories, whilst EARLE DANESFORD was his own pen-name.

ALFRED EDGAR controlled PLUCK and must have almost set up a record

for different papers in which his work appeared. ROGER FOWLEY, JAKE DENVERS, BARRE LYNDON are just a few of the non-de-plumes known to have been used at present - whilst many of those thrilling anonymous stories in BULLSEYE and its companion paper SURPRISE came from his pen.

The remarkable GWYN EVANS an editor? I did not think it possible until FRED GORDON COOK (who was on the staff of CHUMS and wrote one Blake in the DETECTIVE WEEKLY) told me. I knew he had been given an editorial post at FLEETWAY HOUSE, but in the words of an editor, one had to chain him to his desk to keep him there! Gwyn's reply was to make paper chains and walk up and down the corridor with them on his wrists and ankles! Editor of the short-lived boys' paper TOBY, Gwyn Evans will live long with us for his brilliant Blake stories. BARRY WESTERN and ARTHUR GWYNNE were two pen-names of his, in Boys Papers and Comics.

NORMAN GODDARD who was of course MARK DARREN, and who was fated to be killed in the first world war, is famed for his brilliant Plummer yarns. Editor of the U.J. for a time, as recently revealed he was NAT BARR in those early adventure tales in the GEM before St. JIM's commenced. He also wrote as CAPTAIN FERGUS HAVILAND in the 1st series U.J. J. R. CANNON in the EMPIRE LIBRARY, B.F.L. and PLUCK (2nd series) and PETER PERGARTH in the U.J. (2nd series). His brother Ernest Goddard, who incidentally did not write a Blake, although editor on boys' papers, wrote as ERNEST HAMILTON in the U.J. (1st series).

Stanton Hope, who died only a few years ago out in the country he loved so well, Australia, was an editor of several papers before free-lancing. CHUCKLES the comic, and GREYFRIARS HERALD (later BOYS HERALD) are two that I know of. One could attribute 'PAUL PONTIFIX PROUT' as being one of his pen-names, as he wrote these tales in the Greyfriars Herald, as well as the majority of HERLOCK SHOLMES tales under the PETER TODD pen name after C.H. Writer of Magnet Greyfriars stories (though no St. Jim's) Stanton Hope's Sexton Blake stories were always first class, and his DONALD DEAN and WILLIAM STANTON pen-names need no introduction.

What a sporting character was ARTHUR S. HARDY, and one who could play the games he wrote about equally as well, which was more than most writers could do! Formerly an actor, his early life and death are still of something of a mystery, which Walter Webb is still investigating. Editor of ALL SPORTS and FOOTBALL FAVOURITE, and being sports editor on many other papers, he wrote as ARTHUR STEFFENS, CLEMENT HALE, and CAPTAIN ARTHUR LEIGH, the latter being in the U.J. (1st series). It should be emphasised however that the majority of his tremendous output was published under his own name.

Who once said that Walter Shute (Walter EDWARDS) editor of the U.J. before H. W. TWYMAN was a taxi-driver in the last years of his life? According to a close friend of his, he could not drive a car to save his life, and it was probably Lewis CARLTON who drove the taxi. Personally, I have always liked the Blake stories by WALTER EDWARDS - when apart from this name he used the GORDON MAXWELL name to cover the old Jack, Sam, and Pete reprints (greatly rewritten) in the small BOYS' REALM.

There were of course many, many other Blake writers who were editors at one time or other, and my two articles on the subject, touch only the most popular of them.

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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, 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. GEMS - 413, 415, 493. Many issues between 800 and 879. Also Nos. 935, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998. POPULARS: 183, 190, 370, 385, 396, 452, 455, 466, 474. EARLY PENNY POPULARS: Nos. 12, 13, 45, 47, 58.

ERIC FATNE, "EXCELSIOR HOUSE," GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.

FOR SALE: "Digest Annuals" 2948 to 1962 (except 1958); "Black Bess," "Jack Harkaways Schooldays," "Ned Nimble," "Our Boys Paper," Vols. 1, 2, 3 and 4; "Young Folks" 1886; "Young Englishman" 1882/3; "Big Budget" 1902; "Boys of England" volumes 38 and 51; "Our Boys Journal" Vols. 5, 6 and 7; "The Lads of the Village" Vol. 1; "Young Tom's Schooldays."

RAWSTORNE, 19, Manor Avenue, Fulwood, Preston.

FOR SALE: MAGNETS - complete series: 1374-1382, 72/-; 1383-1389, 56/-; Singles - 960, 1094, 1097, 1104, 6/6d. each. GEMS - 1504/1505, 10/-; Singles - 1430, 1447, 1453, 1496, 4/6d. each. KINEMA COMIC 286, 4/- . LOT O' FUN DOUBLE XMAS NOS. 1910, 1911, 10/- each. PICTURE SHOW ANNUAL 1938, 15/- . Offers invited for LOT O' FUN No. 1.

GERRY ALLISON, 3, Bingley Road, Menston, Ilkley.

Boys' Own Paper 3/10/1908 - 25/9/1909, Bound Volume. 824 pages. What offers? Write: Mrs. G. M. TUDDENHAM, Corporation Hotel, Middlesbrough, Yorks.

FOR SALE: Boys' Own Paper, Bound Vol. 35 (1912-13). Good Condition.

Offers to: PHIPPS, 40, Pankhurst Drive, Bracknell, Berks.

DAN O'HERLIHY only wants 3 Magnets to complete his set: Nos. 39, 768, 933. Very high price offered for same.

Write: Bill Lofts, 56 Sheringham House, Lisson Street, London, N.W.1.

WANTED URGENTLY: Magnet No. 435. Good loose copy, or volume containing same.

ERIC FATNE, "EXCELSIOR HOUSE," GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY

News from the Clubs

AUSTRALIA

The usual friendly and enthusiastic atmosphere prevailed when members foregathered at the Book Bargain Bazaar, Crane Place, Sydney, for their October meeting on Thursday 15th.

However their enthusiasm was considerably dampened when the secretary announced that the anticipated visit from publisher, Mr. Charles Skilton would not be taking place on Nov. 10th. It had been hoped that members would have the pleasure of entertaining Mr. Skilton to dinner on this date but unfortunately his tour of Australia has now been cancelled. From his very friendly letter of apology members received the heartening news that the pleasure is merely deferred as he hopes to be with us next year, an event which all members will look forward to with great anticipation.

From our long distance member, Arthur Holland who lives at Wellington, several hundred miles west of Sydney came the usual friendly and interesting letter. The photos taken at a recent meeting had been sent to Arthur and as hoped they had conveyed the atmosphere of our club meetings, bringing him into our circle in fullest enjoyment. From Arthur also came a letter of thanks, expressing his appreciation for the most welcome gift of some long wanted Lees - arranged by Victor Colby, this gift on behalf of his fellow club members, had been sent to Arthur to express their appreciation for his loyal support and continued interest in club activities and to help make him feel that, despite the tremendous distance between, he was regarded as a very active member of The Golden Hours Club. Thanks were conveyed to Victor Colby for originating and arranging this gesture.

From Jim Cook of New Zealand who also wields a most well informed and imaginative pen, came several welcome letters full of interesting news items. One in particular, the news of the removal of Scotland Yard from the famous building on the Embankment to more modern quarters was of great interest to the Blake enthusiasts and quite a stimulating discussion ensued, followed by the suggestion that Jim be invited to write an article on this subject so that his knowledge and up-to-date information could be enjoyed by a wider public with equal pleasure.

The always welcome 'Newsletter' from our friends in the Midland Club, via Harry Broster, were passed around, contributing to the enjoyment of the evening.

Details of the Christmas Party were discussed and a tentative rendezvous selected - final arrangements will be made at the November meeting to be held on Thursday 19th, usual time and place.

As usual the meeting was concluded in the friendly atmosphere of the local coffee shop.

B. PATE (Hon. Secretary)

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MIDLAND

Meeting held Tuesday, October 27th, 1964: Despite the absence of the two Corbetts, Ray Bennett and Gerald Price, an interesting evening was spent by the other eleven members of the club. There was no fixed programme but the idea suggested by Norman Gregory some meetings ago, i.e. to bring along a copy or copies of our particular favourites of other days, produced much enjoyment. Amongst them all, mostly vintage except Norman's which were pre-1900, were No. 1 and 2 of the "Empire," 1908 and 1914 Plucks; 1908 Marvels; Young Britains; Boys Realms and Boys' 1908 Realm Sports Library; Boys'

Friends and Boys' Friend Libraries. All of them were much admired and our Treasurer's pre-1900 - Fun and Fiction - Ally Sloper's Comic most of all. Two newly bound volumes of Gems just collected from the book binders by Ivan Webster excited interest especially as they had the reprints of the early Greyfriars stories in them, too, starting from the immortal first Greyfriars yarn. This developed a general talk on the early days of Greyfriars and Win Partridge read a favourite piece of her's from the C.D.A. on the same subject. An extract from a Holiday Annual Bunter story was read by Jack Bellfield. We have had it before but it still retains its funny appeal to all of us. Bunter wins a bike (amongst many other prize winners in a competition) and finally, for his share, gets a 6d P.O. There was a High Coombe story, very amusing and well read by Win Brown. Anniversary number this month was Nelson Lee Library No. 438, exactly 41 years old. One of the John Bunterfield Boots v the Remove series. Collectors' Item was BFL No. 517 published July 1920, "Under Sealed Orders" - reprint of Gems Nos. 190, 191 and 192. Library raffle was won by Ted Davey.

HARRY BROSTER

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MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held Sunday, November 8th: I am pleased to report a full house for this meeting in spite of the cold weather. Norman Pragnell read the correspondence in which was included a letter from David Hobbs. The financial report showed that we are still solvent and again it was felt that some of our surplus cash should be used to improve our library, and I would like any members of C.D. to know that if they have any books, Nelson Lees, Magnets, Gems, S.O.L.s. etc., to dispose of at reasonable prices we are interested. The first quiz of the evening was provided by Norman and this was won jointly by Frank Unwin and Bert Hamblett.

After the tea break we had another quiz, this time presented by Frank Unwin. As one might expect from Frank it was something quite out of the ordinary. We had to identify certain ejaculations or expressions which some of the school characters might use under given circumstances. It certainly made us think and, much to my surprise, I was the fortunate winner with Jim Walsh as runner up.

We then had a long discussion on the programme for December which is the Christmas meeting. We decided to start earlier than usual, 5-30 prompt, and the bill of fare is to be extended. Additional items are to be added to the refreshments including a drop of something to warm the cockles of our hearts and with which to drink the health of the club and absent friends. We hope to have a 100% attendance again and it will be very nice if some of our temporarily departed members, - Frank Case, Don Webster, George Riley, Ernie Stein, etc. are able to be present.

I would like to take this opportunity of sending best wishes from Merseyside to all our friends of the O.B.B. Clubs in England and Australia and also to our friends in the U.S.A., Canada and New Zealand.

Next meeting Sunday, December 13th, 5-30 P.M. PROMPT.

BILL WINDSOR

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NORTHERN

Meeting held on Saturday, 14th November, 1964: There was another excellent attendance at our November meeting, which got away to an early start at 6.40 p.m., after the usual brisk library business. As Geoffrey Wilde could pay only a fleeting visit owing to another engagement Elsie Taylor took the chair this month.

Minutes, reports, and correspondence having been dealt with, Jack Wood gave us a few items of news. It seems there will be no Bunter show on the London stage this year, chiefly because of difficulty in finding a suitable theatre available. Lee fans were pleased to hear that a new book by Berkeley Gray has just been published. The 'Daily Telegraph' coloured supplement, including an article about the hobby, and photographs of

Len and Josie Packman and their collection, was passed round and discussed. It was agreed that a great deal of information had been given in little space, and that more photographs of the Packmans and their very fine collection would have been welcome.

The Christmas party was then discussed, and arrangements finalised. This is on Saturday, 12th December, commencing at 4.30 p.m., and as usual a bumper programme is being organised.

The chief item on this month's programme was a talk by Breeze Bentley, who was paying us one of his all-too-rare visits. His subject was St. Jim's, the oldest of the three great Hamilton schools, and in the earliest days the most popular, although for various reasons, as Breeze pointed out, down the years it has had to take second place to Greyfriars. He began with the early days, with Jack Blake & Co. at St. Jim's, and the arrival shortly afterwards of Tom Merry & Co. from Clavering, then Gussy, Levison, Lumley-Lumley, Cardew, Knox, and all the colourful characters we know so well - not forgetting the masters - and some who were little more than names. Breeze also dealt with the different types of stories, and the treatment they received at the hands of the various authors, and the A.P. Altogether, an hour crammed with information and entertainment which passed all too quickly.

After refreshments we had a competition devised by Gerry Allison, which consisted of the surnames of fifty Hamilton characters each of six letters, the first and last letters only being given, the winner being the one who guessed the most, 'regulars' only being allowed. This proved to be Bill Williamson, who got 46. Another most enjoyable meeting.

Christmas Party, Saturday,
12th December, 4.30 p.m.

F. HANCOCK (Hon. Secretary)

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LONDON

There was a good attendance at the Dollis Hill meeting on Sunday, November 15th, host Bob Blythe, nice to see him after his indisposition of the previous month.

A representative programme was enjoyed. On show was the complete set of the Nelson Lee Library, the famous map of St. Frank's and environs and the collection of Nelson Lee books and papers that Bob Blythe has for loan. Brian Doyle read the article '70 Years of Sexton Blake' from an issue of 'The London Magazine' and Bill Lofts whilst giving the second part of his number ones of old boys' books had about 40 specimens on show and which were passed round for members' perusal. After Winifred Morss and Laurie Sutton had jointly won the quiz which the Merseyside Club had sent and which Don Webster conducted, Laurie read two very humorous passages from a 'Magnet' and a 'Gem,' both very much enjoyed.

Roger Jenkins reported a very good month of Hamiltonia library borrowing and steady progress was the report given about the Sexton Blake catalogue.

The Christmas meeting will be held on Sunday, December 20th, at Hume House, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22. Kindly let the host, Len Packman, know whether intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

FOR SALE: Sexton Blake Libraries as follows: 649; plus (later series) 157,177,178,179, 180,182,189,191,192,193,197,201,202,210,213,215,227,253,261,271,273,276,277,282,290,297, 305,308,321,329,330; plus Cherry Tree Books Nos. 235,268,270,272,278. Price £3.3s.0d. the lot. Postage extra. S.a.e., first, please.

'Excelsior House,' Grove Road, Surbiton.

BOYS' OWN ANNUALS: Five bound copies 1904-5; 1905-6; 1906-7; 1907-8; 1908-9. Excellent condition. Best offer accepted.

FLINT, 1 Windermere Road, BLACKPOOL.

THE POSTMAN CALLED

(Interesting Items from The
Editor's Letter-bag)

R. J. GODSAVE (Leytonstone): With reference to your remarks in the Editor's Chat on the lack of articles for such papers as the "Champion," "Wizard," etc.

From my own point of view I regarded the "Champion" and the "Wizard" as intruders when they first made their appearance on the bookstalls.

They appeared to me to be brash, and compared to the Nelson Lee and the Hamiltonian papers crude.

These were my impressions when I was young.

It therefore, follows, that although I enjoy writing an occasional article on the Nelson Lee and Hamiltonia it would never occur to me to write about the "Champion" and the "Wizard".

Wm. H. GANDER (Transcona, Manitoba): Is "Quelch" a unique name? There are just as many Quelches in the Metro Winnipeg Telephone Directory as there are Ganders: one of each of us! And mark this: Mr. C. S. Quelch lives in Transcona and at the end of the school year last June he retired as Principal of the Transcona Collegiate Institute!

BASIL ADAM (Newcastle-on-Tyne): If, as Larry Morley states in his letter in the October Collectors' Digest, Roger Jenkins compared Charles Hamilton with Dickens, then I agree with Mr. Morley that this is pure nonsense. But my agreement is for rather different reasons to Mr. Morley's! To me Dickens' characters are more like caricatures. Most of them very black or very white. Sickly sentiment and cheap melodrama made up most of Dickens' stories.

When one thinks of all the great character studies by Charles Hamilton in all the best "Magnet" series, especially the 1924-25 'Rebel' series, and 'Stacey' and 'Lancaster' series, - then, indeed, there is no comparison!

JOHN BECK (Lewes): The Old Boys' Magazine display in Lewes Library is a reality. There are only two showcases, but we have managed to cover quite a large field. In one showcase we have placed emphasis on Hamiltonia. In the other we have Nelson Lees, Boys' Realms, S.O.L.'s, the Nugget, S.B.L., Penny Pop and the Boys' Friend. I hope it will prove of great interest to local library patrons.

Mrs. U. HAMILTON WRIGHT (Sutton Coldfield): I was so pleased to see that there has been a demand for articles on some of the other old-papers, and other series of C.H. I look forward to something interesting on Ken King, my favourite of the lot. I always felt that Uncle was completely natural and unaffected when writing that and I think it enshrines his boyish pipe dreams. Did you know that he had the plans of a ketch drawn up by a boat-builder with a view to having one built? He didn't pursue the project because I think he got cold feet about sailing it in middle life and didn't want to be dependent on a crew. But he often used to bring out the plans and spread them out on the table when I was a little girl and 'show me round' the boat - as a result I can remember growing in stature at school because I was so knowledgeable about sailing boats!

(Mrs. Hamilton Wright is, of course, the niece of the late Frank Richards. - ED.)

D. M. HILLIARD (Stapleford): Sometimes in reading C.D. I feel that contributors miss a great deal in O.B.B.'s through attempting to analyse the writings and writers as though the original stories were written as sociological studies. I really love these readings of the old schools. They bring back happy memories and they picture an age passing swiftly away.

E. J. DAVEY (Solihull): Where could you wish to see anything funnier than Magnets Nos. 1656 and 1658 (the Coker, expelled series)? Aunt Judy with her baggy broolly raised in wrath, etc. Of course, intelligence can be very selective, and people have what can only be called blind spots. Perhaps everyone agrees that a sunset is beautiful and that young animals are pretty, but for many things there are people who don't "see." George Orwell actually quoted some delicious bits from the Magnet and quite evidently couldn't see anything in them. And yet he was a far-sighted and sagacious man in many ways.

JACK OVERHILL (Cambridge): An item of great interest in Danny's Diary this month was the reference to the GEM Tom Merry's War Fund published 50 years ago. I started reading the Companion Papers with that. I read the story in the light of the swing oil-lamp in my father's workshop - he was a shoemaker - and when I went to bed I was living in another world. I was a new boy at St. Jim's - so no wonder at it!

NORMAN WRIGHT (Pinner): I was pleased to see in Controversial Echoes No. 79 a short item from a 15-year old enthusiast. I myself am only fifteen, and I have often wondered how many more enthusiasts of my own age there are. I think the best parts of C.D. are Danny's Diary and the cover illustrations which are a great help in my hunt for copies as they give me some idea what to look for.

JACK COOK (Benwell): I wish fellow collectors would allow the storms of wrath to subside. Any story is a good story if it is allowed to tell itself. Any author is a good author if he is nowhere in sight. Author intrusion can spoil an otherwise good tale.

PAT CREIGHAN (Monaghan): C.D. has become part of my life. At the beginning of each month I wait impatiently for it to arrive. I wonder what the cover will be like but it is sure to be pleasing. You have never let us down yet. I don't know how you do it. I am sure you can only devote a limited time to the "Digest" but it is such a professional looking production that it must put to shame magazines that have full-time editors. God spare you for many, many years!

(Sir, we take time off to blush. You do us proud. - ED.)

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A LITTLE WHITER

Congratulations to Bob Whiter and his charming wife, Marie, on the arrival of a son. Born on the 17th October, he is to be named Roger Eric. His name has already been entered at Greyfriars, where we haven't much doubt that he will be placed in Study No. 1 in the Remove passage.

Bob, Marie, and Roger Eric now live in the sunshine of far-off California, which is the reason we have not had the pleasure of presenting so much of Dad's work lately. But, with our Bob, the grand old hobby still comes high on his list of firm favourites - third only to Marie and Roger Eric. One of these days you will find him on C.D. cover again with one of his grand pictures.

URGENTLY WANTED: Gems 413, 415, 493 and Magnets 205, 237, 238, 239, 277. Good copies, or volumes containing same.

ERIC FAYNE, "EXCELSIOR HOUSE," GROVE ROAD, SURBITON

BOB BLYTHE DARES TO BE A DANIEL!

BOB BLYTHE, a leading light in the hobby ever since its inception and last year's chairman of our London club, withdrew abruptly from a rehearsal and refused point-blank to take part in a television programme when he saw the form that the programme was taking. A fifteen minute item on Old Boys' Books was to be put out live in the regular show "Time Out" on B.B.C.2 on Thursday evening, November 19th. Rehearsals were taking place. Mr. Blythe was being interviewed. The producer asked: "How did you come to start the Old Boys' Book Club, Mr. Blythe?" Mr. Blythe's reply was a bombshell. He said: "I am sorry if this causes you trouble, but I cannot take part in this programme, the aim of which is to cast fun on a hobby enjoyed by large numbers of my friends."

Result: Sensation and Consternation.

In spite of the blandishments and pleadings of producers and the like, who tried to assure him that the show was not intended to be mickey-taking, Mr. Blythe stuck to his guns. He would not - and did not - appear.

And what of the show itself, which went on the air shortly afterwards, minus Bob. It was like the curate's egg. On the debit side there were some disjointed extracts from a very, very old silent film which featured Sexton Blake and Tinker. The name and date of the film were not given. Amusing and quite fascinating in itself, this snippet, standing alone, did not help the reputation of Sexton Blake. It should have been followed by an extract from a more modern Blake film, and could have been proof of the many years during which Blake has been a major attraction.

There was a little too much stress on the more lurid type of boys' paper published between the wars. At long last, the Gem and Magnet came on the scene, and someone read, in an idiotic falsetto voice, the captions beneath pictures to certain Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories.

To be fair, we did not consider the atmosphere of the programme to be "mickey-taking." The three or four interviewers were extremely pleasant, and leaned over backwards in favour of the old papers. Mr. W. O. G. Lofts appeared and his image came over attractively. Youthful C.D. reader Nicholas Bennett explained why he prefers the old papers to modern ones. A directing official on the juvenile publication branch of one of the largest firms of periodical publishers, asked to comment on the remarks of Nicholas, made the surprising statement that more than five or six times the number of boys'

periodicals are sold to-day compared with the old days.

On points, we would vote the show successful, though it was handicapped by being compressed into 15 minutes. It is clear that an absorbing full-length documentary on the subject could be put on television, but such a programme needs several weeks of careful preparation, a good deal of scripting, and adequate rehearsal.

Mr. Bob Blythe discussed the incident with Collectors' Digest after the programme ended. He had been put off at the outset by learning that the item was to be given a name something like "You Spoofing Rotter!" He was deterred by the laughter in the studio when the Blake film sequence was run through. Further, he felt that in the very short time he would be allowed to speak, it would be impossible to place the hobby in its true perspective. In fact, the time previously allotted to Mr. Blythe was added to Mr. Lofts' time, and Bill acquitted himself well.

It is more than obvious that Mr. Blythe's decision and consequent action required determination and more than a little courage. He joins Danny Blanchflower as one who refuses to abandon his principles at the shrine of television.

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THE HOBBY AND THE "DAILY TELEGRAPH"

A few weeks ago two pages of the Daily Telegraph Colour Supplement were given over to the hobby. Mr. E. S. Turner, famous writer of "Boys Will Be Boys" contributed an entertaining and altogether pleasing article on the subject of Old Boys' Papers, and it was obvious that he had gone to a good deal of trouble to get his facts correct. A colour photograph showed Mr. and Mrs. Len Packman, our Blakiana experts, among some of their treasures. The only disappointment was that there were not a few more photographs of this type.

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NO BUNTER SHOW THIS YEAR

For the first time for quite a number of years there will be no Billy Bunter show in the West End this Christmas. A new play "Billy Bunter Lays the Ghost" was in preparation, but it was found impossible to obtain a sufficiently large theatre for the season.

City Stage Productions will be producing "Pinocchio" at the Apollo Theatre starting on December 23rd, matinees only.

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