

COLLECTORS'

2/-

DIGEST

No.

2

3

3

A GREAT NEW SERIAL STARTS THIS WEEK!

Fun and Fiction 1st

Vol. 2. No. 78.

Week Ending March 22nd, 1915.

ONE SHILLING.

Judith Hate



This is the central character in our Magnificent NEW Serial which starts this week on page 575. Commence reading it to-day.

Vol.

2

0

+

+

+

MAY 1916

Collectors' Digest

FOUNDED in 1946 by HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 20

No. 233

MAY 1966

Price 2s. 0d.

THIS WEEK'S CHAT



YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS PLEASED TO
HEAR FROM YOU.

WRITE TO HIM AT
"Excelsior House", Grove Road,
SURBITON.

WE LIVE AND LEARN

It is rather remarkable, in this hobby of ours, how something fresh is always turning up. In an article, in this month's Collectors' Digest, Mr. W. O. G. Lofts writes of his discovery of yet another series which was started by Charles Hamilton - a series of school and football tales centred at Pelham College.

I have read the story to which Mr. Lofts refers, and I have no doubt at all that it was written by Charles Hamilton. A clue to the age of the tale is found when, towards the end, the author follows the practice of many Victorian and early Edwardian writers of changing from the past into the present tense.

I should add that I was able to read the story through the trustful generosity of Mr. Lofts who loaned it to me from his fine collection of Number Ones.

Things like this turn up just when we think we know everything. Apart from Mr. Lofts's discovery, I have found out something for myself which I did not know before, though some readers may shudder at my ignorance. My few copies of the Dreadnought are those which contain reprints of the old Magnet tales. They are of similar size and

format as the Magnet and Gem of those days. I always thought that the Dreadnought's format was ever thus.

I find that it was not. When the Dreadnought started it was of the size of the Boys' Friend. Its programme was similar to that of Fun & Fiction, to which it was a companion paper. Later the Dreadnought was reduced to about Magnet size, and comprised 36 pages.

I have never seen the large-sheeted Dreadnought? I wonder if any are still in existence in private collections.

WORTH WAITING FOR

The announcement in our Blakiana Column this month that the warmly-anticipated reprinting of the famous Sexton Blake story "The Mystery Box" is to take place in July will be exciting news to all our Blake fans. We have waited a long time for it - and it is worth waiting for. The story is to be issued under the intriguing title of "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs."

I, personally, highly recommend this story to every reader of Collectors' Digest. Pierre Quiroule, the author, is a master of descriptive English. His use of superbly constructed metaphor is something rarely found in any story of detection. His delightful, readable style of writing is to Sexton Blake, Tinker, and Pedro what Charles Hamilton's easy fluency was to Harry Wharton and Tom Merry.

Especially charming, and somehow of startling poignancy, are the first two chapters which take the reader back to late Victorian times, one cold, misty, October day in a London now long gone. Then the seeds of the mystery are sown in an atmosphere which is as real as it is full of charm and fascination. Later, the story moves forward thirty years for Blake to solve the mystery, but, if you are like me, you will, after you have enjoyed the whole novel, turn back again to the beginning just to savour afresh the atmosphere of those first two chapters. I think you will never forget them.

"The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs" will not be on sale till July. If you order from your bookshop, ask specifically for Sexton Blake Library No. 28: "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs," published by Mayflower Dell at 3/6. You can, if you wish, order direct from Press Editorial Services, 82 Girdwood Rd., Putney, London S.W.18, allowing for postage. Or, as a last resort, you can write to Collectors' Digest, and we will make sure that you get a copy.

EYESIGHT - AND ALL THAT

Way back, somewhere about 1918 - 1920, there was something of an outcry about the small print contained in boys' papers of the day.

"Their eyesight will be ruined," wailed parents and the like, foreseeing a long line of offspring in gold-rimmed spectacles.

Some of us took the small print in our stride, without any appreciable depreciation in our eyesight. But it is certainly surprising, in 1966, to note the small, close print in which Woman's Weekly Library, 1/-, is presented. That small print is too much for my aged eyes now, but 5 different stories are now to be issued in the series each month, so clearly the stories overcome any drawbacks occasioned by tiny print. So much for progress.

THE EDITOR

DANNY'S DIARY

MAY, 1916

We've been learning all about it in school. The idea started in 1907 with a Chelsea builder named Willett. He said that everybody got up an hour or two too late in the summer so they only had a very short evening for outdoor recreation. He had a rather elaborate plan for putting our clocks on.

Now the government has simplified the plan, an act was passed in parliament on May 17th, and on Saturday night, May 20th we all put out clocks and watches on by one hour. So we got up at 7 instead of 8 on Sunday morning. And in the evening we had lots and lots of daylight.

People who grizzle about everything have been making a fuss, but it is really no trouble at all. As for me, I think it's just wonderful - real magic. Three cheers for Mr. Willett.

Dad says it will save the gas and electricity, too.

On points it has been a first-class month in the Gem. I didn't like the first tale which was called "The Conquering Heroes" and which was one of those rather silly sporting affairs. Tom Merry answered an advertisement when an army team advertised for cricket matches, and there was also a swimming competition. Mason, who played his "last match" some time ago, came into this one.

"Grundy the Ventriloquist" wasn't bad as Grundy stories go, though they don't go far. Grundy rescued Tom Merry from the river, and Tom promised he would do anything Grundy asked him - and Grundy asked him for a place in the cricket team.

"In Spite of All" was a magnificent school drama. Cutts, to revenge himself on Manners Major, got Manners Minor into great difficulty. "True to Himself" was also a tip-top story, this one starring

Talbot. The Head has a guest, Captain Bertie, but the Toff recognises Bertie as a criminal, Gentleman Jim, who used to live in Angel Alley.

Rookwood, in the Boys' Friend, has been as good as always. The stories have all featured Mornington, and at the end of the month it is obvious that another barring-out is on the way.

In "The Freak Match" we learned that Mornington's guardian, Sir Rupert Stacpoole, is a governor of Rookwood. As Jimmy Silver won't play Mornington in the junior cricket eleven, Mornington gets up an eleven of his own, paying his players. He challenges Jimmy to a game. Jimmy accepts the challenge, but turns out with only two men - himself and Tommy Dodd - much to Mornington's mortification. And Jimmy's twosome beat the Mornington eleven. This was an amusing tale, but I don't think it really made sense.

Next week came "By Request of the Head" in which the Head, persuaded by Sir Rupert Stacpoole, ordered Jimmy to play Mornington in the match against St. Jim's. However, Rawson and Flynn prevented Mornington from playing, so all was well.

But in "The Rascal of Rookwood," Mornington kidnapped Jimmy on the eve of the Bagshot match, and Jimmy was kept prisoner all night at the top of the old tower. When it came to light, Mornington was given a Head's flogging for his dreadful deed.

Last tale of the month was "The Tyrant of the School." Dr. Chisholm was ordered to resign because he had flogged Mornington, and Mr. Scroop became the new Headmaster. Mr. Scroop favours Mornington, but puts everybody else's back up, including Bulkeley, and it is clear that serious trouble is coming.

One of our local cinemas has re-opened early this month, and the re-opening ceremony was done by Mr. Horatio Bottomley, the editor of "John Bull." Mum says that Mr. Bottomley is a very wonderful man who has done a lot for the poor. He is a rather plump gentleman who seems to shout a bit. He has made a lot of recruiting speeches since the war started. In his paper, "John Bull," he runs a competition called "Bullets," and he gives you several hundred pounds for a six-penny postal order, if you are lucky. Mum has never been lucky.

The pictures we saw were Florence Turner in "Doorsteps" and Charlie Chaplin in "Carmen." "Carmen" is a 4-reel picture, but I was terribly disappointed in it. It didn't seem to be a bit funny, though it was supposed to be satyr. I hope Charlie won't make any more like this.

Other pictures we have seen this month have been Ivy Close in

"Darkest London," Mary Picford in "Nell Gwyn," Norma Talmadge in "An American's Home," and Mary Pickford in "Poor Little Peppina."

I had a copy of Chuckles this month. It contained an old Greyfriars story called "Last Man In," taken from the early Magnet, and also a school story by Prosper Howard. A nice little paper is Chuckles.

The Magnet has been so-so. The first tale "The Forbidden Match" had a lot of sporting events.

"Silence, sir!" raved the Head, stamping his foot angrily.

Bolsover punched Loder, and Loder caused a deep silence of horror by then kicking Bolsover. So the Famous Five punched Loder. The Head left their punishment to Loder, "but you mustn't flog them, Loder. Anything else!" So Loder detained them for the next cricket match. A rather footile yarn.

"The Hero of Greyfriars" was much better. Bob Cherry rescued Sir Hilton Popper's niece who was sitting on the railway track. Bob was out of bounds at the time, so Bunter took the credit. There was a very funny bit where Bunter sent in a bill to Sir Hilton for damage to his suit caused by collision with a locomotive.

"The Boy from South Africa" was a new junior. His name was Piet Delarey. His father was supposed to be a rebel against the British, but it turned out he was a hero. Delarey made friends with the naturalised-German Rattenstein, who didn't like the British much.

Last of the month was "Kicked Out of School." The one who was kicked out was Rattenstein, who turned out to be a German spy after all.

Just before our school Easter holidays ended, Dad took Mum and me to a matinee at the London Coliseum. This is a huge London theatre - a Stoll one - and gives a variety show which is very select but quite good. There are performances twice daily at 2.30 and 7.30. It was quite a good bill. We saw Lorna and Toots Pounds, who are Australian ladies who mimic, and the Two Bobs, whose real names are Bob Adams and Bob Alder. They present rag-time.

On the day before school started we went to the pictures and saw Ethel Clayton in "The Great Divide." She is a lovely girl, and I hope to see some more of her pictures. Also in this programme was Charlie Chaplin in "The Floorwalker." Very funny.

And as I read my books on the last day of the month, a great naval battle was raging in the North Sea - the Battle of Jutland.

Wanted GEMS before 1310.

Write: LOFTS, 56, SHERINGHAM HOUSE, LISSON STREET, LONDON, N.W.1

THE PENTELow CONTROVERSYBy Laurie Sutton

In his defence of J. N. Pentelow Gerry Allison quotes a couple of others who share his admiration for that author, but he must be well aware that he could have found plenty of evidence of collectors holding contrary views.

Gerry is as entitled to his opinion as I am to mine - which happens to be that Pentelow was the biggest bore who ever put pen to paper. Yes, I have read - or, rather, attempted to read - Pentelow's Wycliffe and Haygarth stories; but I found them as great an effort as his Greyfriars and St. Jim's tales, and as laboured as "The Fourth Form at Franklingham," "Twins From Tasmania," "Goggs - Grammarian" (the wonder-boy who could do anything you cared to name to an absolute peak of perfection!)

I often wonder if some of the older collectors who profess admiration for Pentelow's writing have not allowed youthful nostalgia to cloud their adult judgement. I also have treasured books that I read as a youngster, but I don't actually read them now, and I certainly couldn't read them daily as I do Greyfriars or St. Jim's. Even with Charles Hamilton's work, I realise that my boyhoodheroes, Lumley-Lumley and Talbot, are greatly inferior to dozens of other characters.

The fact, as I see it, was that Pentelow lacked the facile ability to turn out short weekly stories. His plots are invariably bogged down in a colossal amount of padding, which usually takes the form of deadly-dull dialogue, often used as a means of showing off Pentelow's clever-dick repartee, which, placed in the mouths of boys between twelve and fifteen years of age is just too ridiculous.

In one of the articles from which Gerry quotes, mention is made of Pentelow's sporting knowledge - "He knew his subject, be it cricket, footer, boxing, or athletics." Since people are fond of criticising Charles Hamilton for his sporting descriptions (the latest on the cover of "Floreat Greyfriars") it is interesting to note that Pentelow was also, in fact, very hazy about soccer, as the following extracts from his "Victims and Victors," Magnet 464, conclusively prove:

"...as Delarey jumped to fist it out, the big man charged him, ball and all, into the net." This would have been a foul on the goalkeeper, who cannot be charged while his feet are off the ground, and apart from that it shows ignorance of the game. If the 'keeper was attempting to fist the ball it would never be in his possession; he would either miss it, when it would go straight into the net, or he would make contact, when it would go back upfield.

"The goalkeeper got his fingers to it; but Wharton got his

shoulder against the goalkeeper's chest in the same second, and the ball dropped into the net." Another foul, and revealing ignorance of the game. If the keeper only got his fingers to the ball he would not be in possession and therefore could not legally be charged; and in any case it is not permitted to charge a goalie (or anyone else) in the chest.

"Courteney put in a regular pile-driver, and the goalkeeper got a number eleven boot to it." Here we have the same error that C.H. is often faulted for! No goalkeeper ever puts his boot to a shot - much less a pile-driver! If he tried it the ball would almost certainly spin off into the net.

It would seem that if one can accept Pentelow's other stories one can stomach his Greyfriars and St. Jim's tales. I cannot pretend to do either. My discussions and correspondence suggest that most collectors agree with me.

FUN AND FICTION

On our cover this month is Judith Hate, and Judy is quite a girl. Pedants may have shuddered when the editor constantly referred to her as "the wickedest woman in the world" - though it is doubtful whether any pedants were readers of FUN AND FICTION. Judith was the main character - clearly we cannot call such a wicked woman a "heroine" - of a serial which ran for many months, and in all the illustrations she was never without that curious spiky headdress which was certainly a symbol of her wickedness.

Fun & Fiction ran from October 1911 till February 1914, a period of just over two years. It is not alone in being a paper which makes one wonder at what type of readers the paper was actually aimed. Officially, it was a boys' paper. Indeed, there were times when the editor claimed that it had the highest circulation of any boys' paper in the world. To substantiate that, there came along the Dreadnought, a companion paper to Fun & Fiction, and run on similar lines. But editors are notorious for talking with tongue in cheek. If, indeed, Fun & Fiction ever enjoyed an enormous circulation it is hard to see why it was wound up, to be replaced with The Firefly, a paper of similar format which soon became a typical comic paper of its time.

Fun & Fiction has a good deal in common with the Champion, which appeared a decade later. Nevertheless, there was never any doubt at which type of readers Champion was aimed. Champion was masculine to the last line.

Recently I have been browsing over volumes of, respectively, Fun

& Fiction and the Champion. As an adult, I find Fun & Fiction completely fascinating. I can browse over it time and time again. It never palls. But one helping of Champion was enough. I was interested to con over it once, but to repeat the experience would be tame. Fun & Fiction, I am sure, could never bore.

Neither was a paper which I should ever have bought regularly when I was a boy. Fun & Fiction, of course, had passed on before I was sitting up and taking notice. But Champion was going strong when I was at school, though it never attracted my weekly tuppence.

The astonishing thing about Fun & Fiction now is that it never gives the impression of being old-fashioned. And that is odd, considering its astounding obsession with women, whose clothes date so speedily. In fact, the great and enduring charm of Fun & Fiction is due to its artists, and particularly to J. Louis Smythe who really "made" the paper.

The ingenuity of the writers was startling, ably supported by the art of the illustrators. Lingering deaths and amazing escapes followed one another swiftly on the covers of Fun & Fiction, probably appealing to either the juvenile sense of excitement or the mild sadism which is found in the make-up of most youngsters. In a year or two, cinema serials like "The Exploits of Elaine" were to take up the lingering death story where Fun & Fiction left off. Though why a potential murderer should abandon the swift bullet from a revolver in favour of tying the hero on the railway line or leaving a heroine tied to a rock in readiness for the rising tide has never been explained.

Fun & Fiction bristled with women - all beautiful, some wicked, some good. "Judith Hate" was bad to the core. "The Woman With the Black Heart" sounded wicked but wasn't. She was so named from having a black heart on her forehead, though the author failed to explain whether the heart was tattooed, a birthmark, or a piece of black sticking-plaster. The serials, "Mother Love," "She Sent Her Mother to Prison," "His Convict Bride," and the like were intended for - well, your guess is as good as mine.

Towards the end, Fun & Fiction had been advertising the coming Firefly. "Owing to the success of Fun & Fiction, I have been asked to start a new paper. It will be called Firefly."

A new series, "Branded," a series about convict life, was announced to start in Fun & Fiction. It did - in the last issue of Fun & Fiction, when it was announced that "next week F. & F. will be called The Firefly." But Firefly, though it was run on similar lines to Fun & Fiction, had an entirely new programme of stories and pictures. Fun & Fiction was finished. A strange ending for a

periodical which had claimed an immense circulation. And, while F. & F. had been a penny paper, Firefly was issued at ½d for 20 pages.

Why did Fun & Fiction fail? Its weekly programme had included melodramatic serials, detective tales, cowboy stories, narratives of mystery, series of articles on stage personalities and even series on famous criminal cases, together with pages of comic pictures attractively presented. The editor, who wrote with more evidence of enthusiasm than good grammar, must have been astounded at what happened.

Maybe the episodes presented in the various series were not well enough written. For the most part, despite their ingenious plots, the tales were crude. Maybe the lurid pictures, fascinating though they were, tended to put off parents who were more particular in those days than they are to-day.

My favourite picture? Perhaps the one of the Woman with the Black Heart leaping from a Thames bridge to fall down one of the funnels of a passing steam yacht. The episode was passed over in a few lines in the story itself. Quite absurd? Maybe. But no more absurd than many of the spy tales seen now on TV and in the cinemas.

WANTED: Magnets 981, 983, 984, 1043, 1051, 1118, 1125, 1208, 1264, 1274, 1275, 1281, 1303; SOLs, Gems, BFLs; will buy or exchange for similar. SALE: Gems, Lees.

S.A.E. - NEIL BECK, 77 HIGHDOWN ROAD, LEWES, SUSSEX.

FOR SALE: HAMILTON SOLs and BOUND VOLUMES 1937, 1942 PICTUREGOERS.

S.A.E. - TODD, 23 MANATON ROAD, LONDON, S.E.15.

WANTED: Single copies Comics (col) 1919-20, approx. Chips, Jester, Funny Wonder, etc.

76, WEST AVENUE, FILEY

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: MAGNETS: 32; 39; 40; 41; 42; 44; 45; 131 to 149 inclusive, 205; 238; 239; 309; 328; 337; 351 to 359 inclusive; 435; 752; 753; 762; 763; 773; 850; 858; 862; 863; 864; 865; 868; 921; 940; 942; 951; 985; 988. GEMS: 493; some issues between 801 and 832; 953; 954; 956; 975; 980; 984; 985; 989; 990; 992; 993; 998. POPULARS: 452; 455; 466; 472.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE RD., SURBITON, SURREY.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

(CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD)

The Nelson Lee Library & St. Frank's Magazine

By Herbert Chapman

The contents of the Nelson Lee Library varied considerably from time to time.

I must confess, though, that I myself at no time took much interest in anything but the St. Frank's stories.

I have before me a number of Lees for the year 1924, and notice on the front cover the paper is entitled "The Nelson Lee Library" in large print and underneath "The St. Frank's Magazine" in small print.

In No. 442 The St. Frank's Magazine was introduced as a supplement.

I think that might have been a good opportunity to gradually increase the size of the print in the second title, eventually making it the larger, thus changing the title of the paper and then asking readers to ask for the St. Frank's Weekly instead of the Nelson Lee Library in future, chums. After all Lee took a very small part in later years, sometimes not being mentioned for long periods. New readers might have been excused at times in wondering where the name of the paper came from.

Unlike previous supplements to the Lee, which usually took the centre eight pages, the St. Frank's Magazine was placed at the end of the paper, except that the very last two pages were filled with advertisements such as "Height Counts," "Stop Stammering," "Don't be Bullied," "Blushing Cured," etc., and for other boys' papers.

At this time the Lee was more attractive. Inside the front cover was usually a full page illustration. On page 1 proper was a small picture and as at this time the stories were usually spread over 8 weeks, there was a very brief description of previous events.

Another important event was the following: "Related throughout by Nipper and set down by E. SEARLES BROOKS," the author at last being given credit for his work after writing the stories for roughly eight years.

There are several quarter and half page illustrations of the stories which take up 27 or 28 pages of the paper. Page 28 or 29 was usually given over to a competition.

Sometime previously the author had paid a lengthy visit to America and used the knowledge gained to write a series of over 40

one-page articles under such headings as the following: "Night on an American Train," "A Glimpse of the Mighty West," "Through Colorado and New Mexico," "Sunny California," "Charlie Chaplin at Work," "Trip to Hollywood," All very interesting and authentic. Needless to say the author found America a wonderful country, superior to England in many ways, but inferior in others.

Another very interesting feature comes next in the form of a weekly series of Art Sketches of Public Schools by the famous artist E. E. BRISCOE. I know little about art, but these sketches appear to be excellently done. There is a brief reference to the school buildings under each, extent of playing fields, number of boys, year of foundation etc. The boy supplying the above information received the original drawing as a reward.

Now begins "The St. Frank's Magazine." On the left of the title is the college arms; on the right a drawing of the Clock Tower. Below is a comic strip "The Adventures of E. O. Handforth." We find that Handy dominates the 'magazine' in the same way as he does the Lee for long periods.

On Page 2 is Nipper's Page, showing as a heading a picture of Nipper at the Editor's desk, and followed by comments on past, present and future contributions.

This is followed by one of a series of "The Adventures of Trackett Grim" by E. O. Handforth. Trackett Grim is, of course, a detective and is assisted by a youngster named 'Splinters.' These yarns took up 3 or 4 pages and should have been amusing to the more youthful readers at least.

Then follow two short articles "Ancient Aqueducts" by Dick Hamilton, and "Oases" by Arnold McClure.

Back to 'Handy' again for three pages with "In Reply to Yours," correspondence answered by Uncle Edward. These answers are by turn abusive, witty, indignant, charming (to girl readers) explosive, etc.

To wind up we get "Travel Tales" by an old boy (Lord Dorrimore's Weekly Trifle). There can be no doubt that at this period in its lifetime the Nelson Lee gave its readers value for money.

Quality, quantity and variety. The St. Frank's stories were quite up to standard. The American Notebook and Public School Illustrations excellent and instructive, and many of the features in the mag. amusing to the younger readers, at least.

One wonders, however, whether the majority of readers would rather have had a school story from cover to cover, instead of so many bits and pieces. The paper was doing very well at this time,

though, so the majority must have been well satisfied, especially as St. Frank's was the subject of most of the articles, etc. There was, however, too much of Handy at times.

It was a different matter years later, when by editorial policy, the St. Frank's story was very much shortened and the other features were a mixed bag of unconnected stories and articles. This was most certainly chiefly responsible for the end of the Lee, which had been such a favourite as long as the St. Frank's story monopolised the paper.

* * * * *

"A SMALL DISCOVERY"

By C. H. Churchill

In the Nelson Lee Catalogue page 45, dealing with stories under the pen-name of Victor Gunn, Bob Blythe says, regarding these novels, - quote - "it must be assumed that they are all based on stories that originally appeared either in the U.J. Detective Weekly or the Thriller." He adds that neither he, Jack Wood nor Jim Sutcliffe possess both the novels and the relevant originals and therefore is unable to make this section as complete as he would like.

I can clear up one small piece of this puzzle. I possess a "White Circle" thriller (paper back) published (I don't know when) by Collins containing the Victor Gunn story "Nice Day for a Murder" listed in the catalogue as being published in 1945. I have read it many times as I consider it one of the best Ironsides stories.

Now recently I borrowed from Bob Blythe's library some N. Lees to read and to my amazement, when reading 2nd new series No. 10 "The Fatal Wager," I found the plot identical to that in "Nice Day for a Murder." Naturally the former was written around Nelson Lee, Nipper and the boys of the Detective Academy, whilst the latter features Cromwell and Johnny Lister. The latter, of course, is a very much longer affair but in essentials the plot is an exact duplicate of that in the Nelson Lee story. Names of characters are different needless to say.

If anyone is interested they can now put a note in their Nelson Lee catalogue against "Nice Day for a Murder" - rewritten from N.L. 2nd new series No. 10.

CHARLES HAMILTON MUSEUM HANDBOOK

John Wernham is deeply grateful to all those who sent him congratulatory letters in connection with the above publication. It is impossible for him to reply personally to these letters, but he has asked us, through Collectors' Digest, to express his thanks to all who wrote.

BLAKIANA

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

IN AND AROUND BAKER STREET (10)

By Walter Webb

The Perils of a Sexton Blake Writer

In the files of the NEW YORK SUN there is an exciting account of an affair in which the life of one of our most popular Blake writers was placed in the greatest peril. In fact, had the bullet which struck and killed a negro, who was close to the author at the time of impact, been a little off target, we Blake fans might never have experienced the pleasure of reading any of Mr. G. H. Teed's fine stories, nor relished the adventures of his colourful repertoire of characters. The very thought of Blake being deprived of the chronological skill of Mr. Teed is enough to give the Blake statistician palpitations - fortunately, the little mission of lead missed, though it was unfortunate that it had to find a human target at all.

The SUN's account refers to a series of exciting incidents which took place in South America in 1907, which saw Mr. Teed, then a young man of 21, occupying the position of Superintendent of Commissaries in Costa Rica for one of the largest fruit companies in South America.

Joe Gordon, a negro, was a most exemplary worker on one of the banana estates before he took to crime with violence. His career as an outlaw began with the robbery of one of the commissaries under the control of Mr. Teed. This was followed by other raids on other commissaries. The efforts of the native Spanish police to capture him were not successful, so they conceived the idea of taking his wife to the cuartel in Port Limon in an effort to entice him out of the jungle, where he had sought refuge. The result was unexpected. One moonlight night Gordon tramped into the town, raided the cuartel, shot the guard, rescued his wife, and then shot four pursuers who sought to capture him. Efforts to lure Gordon from his jungle hide-out were unavailing. He was armed to the teeth, possessing a rifle, a sawed-off double-barrelled shotgun, a revolver of heavy calibre, and a knife - a dangerous man to encounter at any time and under any circumstances.

It was Mr. Teed's unfortunate experience that, accompanied by the then superintendent of one of the plantation divisions, he should be confronted by Gordon as they were riding on a small hand trolley

pulled by two negroes. Both Mr. Teed and his companion were taken completely by surprise when Gordon came out of the bananas at the side of the railway track, and, though armed, had no time to draw their weapons. Fortunately, having run amuck as he had, Gordon was not sufficiently "loco" as to deliberately kill a white man, and both Mr. Teed and his companion were relieved when he turned and disappeared into the jungle.

A little later our Blake author was travelling from one commissary to another on inspection duties when one of his trolley negroes was shot dead from ambush in the bananas, bringing Gordon's tally of murders up to eleven. From then on determined efforts were made to run him down, and, at last, Mr. Teed and a party of about thirty Europeans ran him to earth in a small hut in the heart of a big stretch of bananas. The hut was surrounded one night and riddled with bullets. Came the dawn, and there was a determined rush into the hut to secure the crazed negro; but, to the amazement of the besiegers, it was empty! A trail of blood led from the hut, and, on this being followed, Gordon was found seriously wounded a mile away. During the night he had managed to crawl through the cordon, and had covered the distance from the hut on his hands and knees, a feat almost impossible for a white man to have accomplished with a wound as serious as Gordon possessed. He was taken into Port Limon on a hand trolley, taken to the cuartel where he died the same night from his wound.

When it falls to the lot of an author to experience the sort of perils he writes about in fiction, it gives his stories that little extra "bite" - something that was apparent in the work of the old Blake writers generally, but particularly in the productions of George Hamilton Teed. What an easy and relaxing sort of man he was to read! Select any story he wrote in the twenties, pick a quiet spot on a pleasantly warm day, and one can pass in sheer contentment many an hour in his company.

Maybe you couldn't chuckle with him as you could with Hamilton; Teed's tales of his Famous Five - Blake, Tinker, Plummer, Rymer and Yvonne - were written in serious mood, unrelieved by even the slightest touch of humour likely to bring a twitch to the lips or a flicker of amusement to the eye; but, in his heyday, the travelled author was to UNION JACK what Charles Hamilton was to the MAGNET, and as long as Sexton Blake is remembered so will the memory of G. H. Teed linger too.

* * * * *

SHE WAS NO ANGEL !

It is apparent that Paula Dane is no universal favourite with the older readers of the Library. This seems both a little strange and inexplicable to me. Why such animosity towards a girl of good character; who fights side by side with Blake against crime and the criminal, and who, on the face of things, is utterly devoted to him and the duties she is committed to carry out for him? Some of those who decry Paula Dane were only too happy to settle for Yvonne in the old days. And Yvonne was not only a crook and an adventuress, but a murderess as well. For one life she was prepared to either take or ruin seven or eight in return. Make no mistake - Mademoiselle Yvonne was no angel. She was a strange mixture of good and evil, who could love and hate in equal measure. But readers liked her, and in letters to the editor and published in the editorial columns of the U.J. some even wanted her to become Mrs. Blake! The reward of her popularity was a run of some 13 years in the pages of the U.J. and S.B.L.

It is really fantastic how readers' tastes change. A past generation viewed with contentment the association of their favourite character with a woman with a criminal record. And, today? There are those among us who view with distaste his friendship with a highly respectable young woman who has chosen the path she treads shall run parallel with that of her employer's. Maybe some readers cannot forget an occasion when Paula was prepared to be something more than just a secretary. But so was Yvonne before her. So was Roxane. And several others. You had to read between the lines to discover this, of course; but the inference was plain. The old Blake author expressed himself behind a thick curtain of timidity and ambiguity; but he meant exactly what Mr. Baker and his men with much less equivocation are saying in the modern series.

Compared to Paula Dane many of the old feminine favourites show up in a most unfavourable light. They were mostly out for what they could get, and abused the law to do so. Now the past has claimed them, and they lie dead and buried in the dust of time. May they continue to do so. As for Paula, her loyalty to Blake is one of the most refreshing features in the current series, and whether she is indispensable to Blake or not, her exit from the scene would leave the organisation a less attractive body, and the stories less bright and interesting.

* * * * *



3/6

THE CASE OF THE BISMARCK MEMOIRS

The papers of a long-dead German chancellor threatened a national scandal—if they fell into the wrong hands.

PIERRE QUIROULE



readers will be interested to compare both the story and the manner of its telling with the more sophisticated Sexton Blake of the present day.

For here Blake relies not so much on physical prowess, fast action, and his handy Luger for solution of the mystery; but on his powers of observation and deduction - and his ability to assume such convincing disguises that, quite literally, even his best friends fail to recognise

him."

That is an extract from the cover "blurb" on Sexton Blake Library No. 28 - "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs" by Pierre Quiroule - to be published in July. Yes, this is the long-awaited reprint of "The Mystery Box" which will be none the less welcome because we have been anticipating it for so long.

The acid test of any story is said to be whether it is readable more than once. It applies particularly in a mystery story. If it is true, then this story passes the test with flying colours. I have read it many times down the years, and have always enjoyed it immensely.

Though it first appeared in 1920 in the S.B.L., a very short version of a part of The Mystery Box had been published in the Union Jack some years before. Pierre Quiroule took his Union Jack story and re-wrote it into the heart of "The Mystery Box," and he made a splendid job of this piece of literary surgery.

"The Mystery Box" was reprinted in 1934, but this time the name of Bismarck was dropped from the story, and the "Chancellor" was anonymous throughout. It is possible that the dropping of the name

"This story, first published in 1920, is one of the 'classics' of the Sexton Blake Library.

Long-standing readers will enjoy this novel, with its nostalgic flavour of the twenties; new

of the Chancellor just slightly lessened the rigour of the story, and it is not quite clear why it was done. It is possible that in 1934 Bismarck may have sounded old-fashioned; more likely the Amalgamated Press had in mind the libel action which Metro Goldwyn Mayer had recently lost over their film "Rasputin."

At any rate, Bismarck is back in the new edition of the story, and though memories of the Iron Chancellor will be vague in 1966, I doubt whether they were any less vague in 1920. It doesn't matter. It's the story which counts.

Only a very few of Pierre Quiroule's novels were set entirely in England. "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs" is one of the few - and that may even be part of its charm.

The cover blurb, quoted above, stresses the difference between many modern Blake tales and "The Bismarck Memoirs" tale. This difference **is largely** the difference between Fleming and Christie. And who would deny that both command a huge market?

"The Bismarck Memoirs" is a detective story - and a clever one at that. The fascinating tale holds the interest from the first line till the last, and Pierre Quiroule's easy, fluent style keeps the reader on velvet.

As the blurb suggests, a sequence in the story portrays Blake in a disguise which even his best friends do not penetrate. Here the author has Blake treading in the footsteps of Sherlock Holmes. It may be argued that such a disguise would be impossible in real life and that the sequence dates the tale. I don't know. I do know that in Agatha Christie's long-running play "The Witness for the Defence," about ten years ago, the leading female actress played a double part in this way, and it was impossible to penetrate the disguise. In the film of the play, this double character was enacted by Marlene Dietrich, and it was impossible to detect the apparently obvious Marlene in her cockney disguise. In spite of close-ups on the screen. So the change of voice, possible to a clever artist, helped largely in the illusion. If Marlene could do it, who are we to say that Sexton Blake could not disguise himself so that even his best friends fail to recognise him?

Those pre-war favourites, Granite Grant and Mademoiselle Julie, feature in "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs" though they play comparatively small parts. It will be wonderful to welcome them back.

Remember! "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs" will be published in July.

* * * * *

Sexton Blake ReviewFRENZY IN THE FLESHDESMOND REID

Lucky the man who can cast off the shackles of a dismal English winter and, without preamble, head for the sunny warmth of a place like the French Riviera. Luckier still when you can get paid a commission for doing so. And throw in a desirable specimen of womanhood, young, honey-blonde and intelligent who holds sacred the very ground you walk on and what more could man wish for?

As a case it did not promise much excitement when Blake, Tinker and Paula Dane arrived at the small French fishing port of La Pouce. The supposed death of a talented but obviously insane artist whose horrific but brilliant paintings are still appearing after his seeming burial appear to Blake to be just a matter of finding the artist, the *Vicomte de Gaillac*, minor scion of the French nobility, and the assignment would be completed.

Controversy is likely to rage round this novel with opinions sharply divided. But as Blake says at the end of it all "you can satisfy some of the clients all of the time and you can satisfy all of the clients some time. But you can't satisfy all of the clients all of the time....." Very true words, Mr. Blake! They apply to your readers, too! And, as you remarked, it was a vile case.....

Horror, sadism, insanity, torture of mind and body were evils strange to find in such a setting of picturesque beauty and tranquility, the perfect frame for the so-English Paula Dane, whose presence is akin to that of a stream of sweet-smelling air being wafted gently into an evil-smelling sewer. No less refreshing is Paula's modesty when, her woman's intuition having warned her that unseeing eyes are watching her every movement, she resists the temptation to throw off the old-fashioned bathing-suit, which is part of her disguise, and bathe in the sun-kissed waters of the Mediterranean in her birthday suit.

Of its type, this novel is quite good. Flimsily constructed, it has its moments of suspense, and once started, I did not want to put it down.

Walter Webb

*

* * * * *

*

HAMILTONIANA - -

Do You Remember?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 58 - Magnets 950-51 - Harry Wharton's Feud Series

To collectors, one of the special joys of the Magnet was Harry Wharton in a rebellious mood. Although there were often painful episodes in such stories, there was always high drama of the kind that Charles Hamilton could depict so convincingly - the individual in conflict with society. It was on these occasions that Magnet readers knew for certain that they were reading the work of an author who really understood the workings of the human mind and the patterns of human behaviour.

In 1926, when Magnets 950-51 were published, there was no lack of precedents in the Magnet for such rebellious behaviour. The first Wharton the rebel series had appeared in Nos. 879-888, and earlier still, in No. 446, we had had an account of how Wharton's hasty temper had led him to quarrel with Nugent. This was appropriately entitled "A Split in the Study."

The pair of Magnets in 1926, however, were concerned with Wharton's feud with Monsieur Charpentier. The French master, harassed by the financial burdens of supporting his orphaned nephews and nieces, became irritable and exasperated, and when Wharton attempted to quell the noise in the French set Monsieur Charpentier punished him for talking in class. Not surprisingly, when Wharton told the French master, with an irritating shrug of his shoulders, that he would not write the imposition of five hundred lines from the Henriade, the barometer was set for stormy weather.

Charles Hamilton's knowledge of schoolboy psychology was unerringly accurate - surprisingly so, for someone who was never a teacher himself. He made crystal clear a truth which some idealists prefer to ignore - that the vast majority of children do not want to learn: there was only one Linley in the Remove. Furthermore, though individual pupils may feel sorry for a weak disciplinarian, this does not prevent them from joining in a rag when the opportunity occurs. Mossoo's troubles, amusing though they may be to read about, are very real burdens for some poor souls in the teaching profession - and not every school has a Mr. Quelch handy to restore order by caning the whole form!

The pair of stories did not really afford sufficient space for the full development of the theme, but there is no doubt that they provide reading which is not only entertaining but instructive.

* * * * *

AN ASTONISHING CHARLES HAMILTON CREATION

By W. O. G. Lofts

No. 1. THE ALL-FOOTBALL STORY PAPER. No. 1.



Charles Hamilton created many fine schools apart from the world-famous Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood. My main regret is that he never had a weekly paper devoted to his minor school Highcliffe. Mr. Hamilton thought that his rare Boys' Friend Library stories centred at Highcliffe were the best work that he ever did.

Probably Cliff House, with Bessie Bunter, could be termed his fourth most famous school. Though other writers wrote hundreds of tales of Cliff House, it was a Hamilton creation, for the school and the characters appeared in the Magnet long before the School Friend was thought of.

Charles Hamilton was the creator of Gordon Gay & Co of Rylcombe Grammar School, stories which appeared in the Empire

Library in 1910. Although Mr. Hamilton admitted writing a B.F.L. featuring the school, he strongly denied being the author of the weekly yarns. Maybe he did not like to dwell on unpleasant subjects of the past, but the fact was that he had a dispute with the first editor of the Gem and Magnet (Percy Griffith) about the stories, and after the first few, the series was written by H. A. Hinton and C. M. Down. It is worth noting that No. 32 "The Grammar School's Great Jape" was a genuine Hamilton tale, so he may have changed his attitude after a while, unless it was an early tale held in reserve.

It is, then, a fact that Mr. Hamilton was a brilliant creator of

schools, not forgetting other features like Herlock Sholmes (later written by Stanton Hope and Will Gibbons); the Ferrers Locke yarns (later taken over by Hedley O'Mant under his Hedley Scott pen-name; the Will Hay stories in the Ranger, and the Rio Kid stories.

Recently I have been puzzled by an anonymous series of school tales in THE BOYS' REALM FOOTBALL LIBRARY, which first appeared in 1909 (illustrated by Leonard Shields). Priced at $\frac{1}{2}$ d, it was about three-quarters the size of the Gem, and had 18 pages. The stories featured Jack Noble & Co of the Third Form at Pelham School, the theme being football. The only other yarn was a serial "The Blue Crusaders" by Arthur S. Hardy.

As in later yarns Jack Noble joined the Blue Crusaders, the late Herbert Leckenby assumed that Hardy wrote the Pelham School yarns also.

I have the first issue, and I was puzzled that the main tale seemed like vintage Hamilton, with his weakness for the repetition of names. As well as Noble there were Russell and Clifford. I was not surprised to find, from official sources, that the opening story was indeed written by Charles Hamilton, which meant yet another creation of his to start a weekly paper for the Amalgamated Press.

I could not find the authorship of the second story, but the third was by Andrew Murray, so it looked as though Mr. Hamilton just started yet another series to oblige the editor.

I have never been more astonished in my collecting career than when I found that further stories of Pelham School were written by a number of Sexton Blake authors - and famous ones, at that. Here are a few of them listed:

4. Clifford's Capture, by Andrew Murray.
5. Jack Noble's Strike, by J. G. Jones.
6. The Phantom Team, by Norman Goddard.
9. The Football Poachers, by H. Clarke Hook.
11. The Unseen Enemy, by A. C. Murray.
12. Jack Noble's Double, by Charles Hamilton.
17. Capped for his School, by T. C. Bridges.
21. Jack Noble's Uncle Ned, by S. Gordon Shaw.
30. Clifford, the Road Hog, by Ernest Protheroe.
39. Those Bounders Binks, by E. J. Murray (Sydney Drew).
46. The Brothers Bunce, by A. S. Hardy.

More than ten authors to write a series of short school football tales! It sounds incredible for such renowned authors as Andrew Murray (creator of Kew); Norman Goddard (Mark Darran, and probably one of the best-ever Blake writers); and the others, to carry on another writer's creation when they were top writers in their own

field. H. Clarke Hook, of course, was an early Gem substitute writer, while Ernest Protheroe wrote school yarns in the Boys' Friend, later issued in the S.O.L.

A. C. Murray (not to be confused with the other A. Murray) had the distinction of writing the first Nelson Lee Library. J. G. Jones, who also wrote girls' stories, went blind, but continued as an author, his daughter typing his tales.

The editor must have got tired of priming new authors on the set-up of Pelham School, and it is beyond my reasoning why a whole band of famous authors should have written of Pelham.

After No. 57, dated 15th October, 1910, Jack Noble joined the Blue Crusaders in a tale named "The New Crusaders," written of course by Arthur S. Hardy, and so the series and the serial were amalgamated, Jack Noble gradually fading out.

Charles Hamilton started a new series, under his own name, with the title "Captain of Clyffe" in the Xmas Number that year, and later on contributed "The Rollicking Schooldays of Sidney Redfern." The Boys' Realm Football Library was later renamed The Boys' Realm Football and Sports Library - and after No. 299 became the famous Nelson Lee Library.

Maybe the real story behind the Jack Noble series will never now be known - but you never can tell.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: Mr. Lofts' discovery is indeed an astonishing one, and of great interest to hobby students. It seems evident that the opening story must have been written some time before it was published, otherwise the succeeding writers could not have continued the series. I think it likely that Mr. Hamilton may have written it for Pluck - it is about the length of the tales he wrote over a number of years for that journal.

Charles Hamilton did not, of course, deny creating Rylcombe Grammar School. He denied writing under the pen-names of Prosper Howard. He expected "The School Under Canvas" to be published under the name of Martin Clifford, as had been "Tom Merry & Co" and "Tom Merry's Conquest," which introduced the Grammar School, in the early B.F.L.)

- - - - -

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 99. RIFT IN THE LUTE

From the very extensive correspondence I was having with Charles Hamilton some twenty years ago, I came to the conclusion that, while

he always had the happiest memories of editor Hinton, he never had any time at all for editor Pentelow.

Just why he clashed head on with Pentelow has never been quite clear, but I feel sure that Hamilton's strong feelings over the matter of the substitute writers originated under Pentelow's editorship.

In this column in the past I have ventured the opinion that there is evidence that Hamilton was working in close co-operation with his editor throughout 1915. At the request of Hinton, Owen Conquest had introduced Jimmy Silver & Co of Rookwood, and, because Hinton was anxious to make a success of the Boys' Friend which he had newly taken over, the author was willing to concentrate on Rookwood, leaving a large slice of Greyfriars time to other writers. St. Jim's however, Charles Hamilton still kept more to himself, for he still regarded the Gem as of more importance than the Magnet.

In December 1915 there was issued a story by G. R. Samways entitled "School & Sport." Mr. W. O. G. Lofts, referring recently to this tale, wrote "The fact must be accepted that it was tremendously popular with readers at the time." I don't suppose that in the files at Fleetway House there is a special silver star attached to this story to indicate its popularity, so I wonder how Mr. Lofts reached his conclusion. True, Hinton, in his editorials, spoke of the great popularity of "School & Sport," but Hinton's editorials are not noted for their truth. C. M. Down was in the armed forces at the time, so he probably had no first-hand knowledge. It seems rummy to me that it is always the popularity of some substitute story which we are expected to "accept as a fact."

The story "School & Sport" marked the initial appearance of Phyllis Howell. According to Hinton's editorials, he had a great many letters from readers who expressed delight with Phyllis Howell, but we can discount that side of the matter.

Into the Magnet in January 1916 came a Samways story "Bob Cherry's Challenge" featuring Phyllis Howell. In February came "Coker's Engagement," also featuring Howell, but this was a Hamilton story. It told of Coker's infatuation for Phyllis, and how a letter which Coker wrote to her was used to provide anxiety for Coker and joy for the reader.

In March, a Samways tale named "Skinner the Skipper" introduced Phyllis. This was followed by two Hamilton stories entitled respectively "His Highness" and "When Friends Fall Out," about a new boy named Rattenstein who caused trouble which was cleared up by the intervention of Phyllis Howell.

It is hardly feasible to believe that Charles Hamilton would have introduced Phyllis Howell in this way if he had had, at this time, any strong feelings about the substitute writers. One would, I think, have expected him to feel rather anxious about the quality of some of the material being published, mainly in the Magnét, but from the fact that he adopted Phyllis Howell it would seem that he did not bother.

Just why did Hamilton use Phyllis Howell? Later on, I am quite sure, the name of the Pentelow character Delarey was slipped into Hamilton stories by the editor now and then, but any suggestion that Phyllis Howell got into genuine stories in this way would be absurd.

Clearly, if Hamilton had been antagonistic to the use of a character created by a sub writer, he need never have introduced her.

I think it must be obvious that Charles Hamilton introduced Phyllis Howell into his tales to please his editor and, maybe, to give encouragement to a substitute writer. If such a reason seems quite unlikely to us, it is only because we have known the author's comments in days post-Pentelow - and after the A.P. had dropped his services fairly early in the war. Charles Hamilton, by 1946, was infuriated with what seemed to him to be the dog-in-manger attitude of the A.P.

When Hamilton assembled the Cliff House characters for the School Friend in 1919, both Phyllis Howell and Philippa Derwent (a Pentelow character) were there, but in a situation like this, he may have regarded it as impossible to abandon them. Philippa Derwent soon disappeared, but in the many years of Cliff House in the later Magnet, there was never any mention of Phyllis Howell.

I, personally, have no doubt at all that Hamilton and Hinton were close friends, working in co-operation, and that, in my opinion, was why Phyllis Howell featured in those Hamilton stories under Hinton's editorship.

But when Pentelow replaced Hinton, Pentelow's attitude may have been very different from that of his predecessor. Pentelow's own stories dropped into the Gem with a dull thud - and the Gem was never to be quite the same again. He was the one sub writer who made no effort to approximate to the Hamilton style. It has been said that Pentelow held over genuine tales in order to make way for his own work. If that is true - and I feel sure it is - we may comprehend why Hamilton did not love him.

It may well be that a happy-go-lucky arrangement, to which Hamilton had graciously agreed with Hinton, became a very ominous threat once Hinton had gone and Pentelow taken his place. And if the other substitute writers of that time sided with their editor - it would be natural for them to do so, if they knew which side their

bread was buttered, irrespective of the rights and wrongs of the matter - this may have been the birth of Charles Hamilton's intense dislike of those writers. And soon he was to be writing "Frank Richards' Substitute" in the Cedar Creek series.

A few years later, when Hinton tried his hand as a free-lance publisher, Charles Hamilton wrote two serials for the ill-starred paper which Hinton had hoped would rival the Magnet and Gem. Idly, one wonders whether, if the author was under contract to the A.P., he should have done this. In any case, he clearly placed friendship first. The second of these stories was later serialised in the Boys' Friend, and, still later, featured in the Schoolboys' Own Library. Again, one wonders whether the A.P. was aware of the actual history of the Harry Wilmot story.

- - - - -

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 97. INQUEST

JOE CONROY: I think the main reason for the collapse of the Nelson Lee in 1933 was the really poor stuff that was being written for it at the time. Here the blame must be equally shared by E.S.B. and the editor.

If, as would appear to be the case, Mr. Brooks had lost interest in the St. Frank's school yarns, then I think the editor had a right to his readers to have engaged a first-class substitute writer who would have shown an interest and kept St. Frank's going. There is no doubt that when Mr. Brooks was writing his school stories in the Nelson Lee it was as good a paper as any. The deterioration set in when he gradually made them adventure-cum-detective stories. The bulk of the readers who, I would say, also bought the Magnet and the Gem, wanted pure school stories.

This last comment is a good answer to Norman Gregory's idea at a recent meeting of the Midland club, about the adaptability of Charles Hamilton and E.S.B., and their writing of school and adult yarns. The Magnet and the Gem continued to delight us until the paper shortage killed them. The Nelson Lee was killed by its writer getting suspended between school and adult stories.

PETER HANGER: You make no mention in "Inquest" of the invasion from North of the Border. I feel sure the pressure from the Thomson papers was not without its effect.

(But that pressure from the Thomson papers would effect all A.P. boys' papers, and not just the Popular. -ED.)

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 29th March, 1966

This meeting was the best attended for some time, 11 members being present. No doubt the scheduled item, the playing of the Greyfriars record, "Floreat Greyfriars" proved an attraction. Members were very pleased to see Ted Davey again after a long absence due to his wife's illness.

The vexed question of the steep rise in the cost of hiring our room at the Arden Hotel was discussed. There appears no chance of getting it reduced and Norman Gregory our treasurer was asked to prepare a financial statement in relation to the extra costs and how much money would be needed for us to pay our way.

The collector's items for the month were on display as usual. The anniversary number was Gem No. 268, "Hidden Treasure at St. Jim's," published on 29th March, 1913 and 53 years old to the day. The collector's item was the recent publication "The Charles Hamilton Museum" published by the London Club and a very fine book well worth 5/- of anybody's money. The acting secretary also brought along the "Billy Bunter at St. Jim's" series published in 1919 and which he had bound himself.

The winner of the raffle was Gerald Price who though not present had been thoughtful enough to send money for tickets to swell our funds. A nice gesture when money is needed so badly at the moment.

The record "Floreat Greyfriars," was then played and what a treat it was for lovers of the old books such as our members. Charles Hamilton was 85 years old when the record was made. He gave the impression of a man mellowed graciously with age, contented in the fact that he had made a unique contribution to the life and thought of countless schoolboys now grown to men. It was not difficult to believe that one was listening to a genius in his own right in the field of juvenile literature. Nor is it without significance that the mind that produced such a wealth of creativeness was schooled on the classics and the great books of English Literature.

The extracts were beautifully read showing various facets of Charles Hamilton's works, the tense dramatic moments and those which show a rich humour. His comments on his writing and the ingredients which recommended it to the youthful mind gave one insight into his

success. He never wrote down to his readers. Perhaps this is why adults find them so fascinating.

A very enjoyable reading came from Madge Corbett from Magnet 1367, the Greyfriars Herald supplement item called "Greyfriars - 100 years Ago."

Our next meeting is on April 26th and we hope the good attendance of the March meeting will be maintained.

J. F. Bellfield
Correspondent.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held 10th April.

This meeting, held on Easter Sunday, drew a very small attendance, and apologies were received from those who, for various reasons, including illness, were unable to be present. The writer of this report, having made the rather long journey from Nottingham on a surprise visit was, not unnaturally somewhat disappointed in failing to meet once again some of his old colleagues, but his appearance helped to swell the number on parade, and the evening was far from wasted.

In the circumstances it was impracticable to run the meeting on regular lines, and, as there was little formal business to be dealt with, this developed into one of those get-togethers in which spontaneous discussion became the keynote, and for once hobby matters took rather a back seat. Sport and gardening were but two of the many topics covered - not surprisingly, perhaps, in a city famed for its football, and the exotic flowers which bedeck its every street. Well, a couple of the streets, anyway.

Edgar Rice Burrough's Martian stories, "Three Men in a Boat," and a chat on the old comics helped to prevent the evening being entirely non-literary, and when departure time arrived we had had a jolly good time, despite the unpromising start. Nevertheless it is sincerely hoped the next meeting on 8th May will be more fully attended; do your utmost to turn up, and don't be late!

Frank Case

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 9th April, 1966

On Easter Saturday through teeming rain fifteen members came to

our sixteenth Annual General Meeting. After Library work closed, Chairman Geoffrey Wilde opened the meeting, greeting all - especially new member Kenneth Whittaker, who had traced the Club through Display put on in Menston Library during National Library Week. The minutes of the last meeting were read and signed, and the Treasurer gave his report for the month and also the year, which showed that whatever happened outside the Club Room, inside - our heads were well above water! The Chairman surveyed the Club's activities for the past year, and invited discussion. This was interesting and varied, covering programme suggestions, meeting places, book sales, library charges, etc., and finally the Chairman thanked the officers for work done, and also the ladies running the refreshment side. The Treasurer moved that thanks be recorded to the Editor of C.D. for generous space allowed to Club reports.

The Election of Officers followed, and all were re-elected for a further year en bloc.

After refreshments Jack Wood took his seat on the Bench to preside over a Court deciding which three of the following, travelling in a balloon which was losing height, should be jettisoned to prevent a crash on a mountainside! A. E. Lovell, F. T. Fish, C. Hilton, H. Vernon-Smith, Alonzo Todd, A. J. Raffles, H. Skinner, H. J. Coker, R. Gadsby. The unfortunate balloonists were represented respectively by Gerry Allison, Keith Balmforth, Norman Smith, Harry Barlow, Jack Allison, Geoff. Wilde, Ron. Hodgson, Mollie Allison and Elsie Taylor. With four minutes at their disposal, each of the would-be Perry Masons pleaded eloquently to the jury of three (Keith Whittaker, Myra Allison, and Annie Allison) to consider the merits (!) of his, or her, client. Laughter rippled round the room as plausible and ingenious points were scored. The jury after the Judge's summing up - warning jury members to decide by the cases pleaded and not to be influenced by ANYTHING THEY HAD READ, concerning the balloonists - picked on F. T. Fish, H. Skinner, and Alonzo Todd, to be cast overboard! (As these three were amongst the lightest of the passengers, it would almost seem that the jury had disregarded the warning of the learned Judge!)

It was 9.30 p.m. and this brought our meeting to a cheerful close. Next meeting Saturday, the 14th May, 1966.

M. L. Allison

Hon. Sec.

- - - - -

LONDON

With the president of the club, John Wernham, in attendance, last month's total of 35 members was increased by one, there being 36 for this very interesting gathering. Chairman, Bill Lofts, welcomed one and all and then asked the president to address the meeting. This he did admirably and stated how many letters of appreciation he had received re the Charles Hamilton museum handbook. Copies of the latter were on sale. Going on, John Wernham said it was contemplated of having another booklet published with the Hamilton illustrations therein. Interest was shewn in a letter from Frank Byrne of Chadwell Heath about having, perhaps, some of the finest Hamilton articles in the Collectors' Digest Annuals and Story Paper Collectors in a "Companion" similar to the Sherlock Holmes and Charles Dickens ones.

From Hamilton to Nelson Lee and a good report from the librarian, Bob Blythe, who also read extracts from a Maxwell Scott story culled from a halfpenny "Marvel." John Beck followed up with a reading from a Nelson Lee all about Fullwood. Nicholas Bennett conducted his quiz that dealt with Nelson Lee, Sexton Blake, Magnet and Gem. Bill Hubbard won this and Bill Lofts and Roger Jenkins filled the second place. Nicholas won the museum booklet quiz, his prize a copy of the booklet.

Good report by Roger Jenkins on the Hamilton section of the library and then both Roger and John Wernham got busy with the film projector and the company was treated to a very fine edited film of Frank Richards, "Roselawn" and the drawings of C. H. Chapman. Miss Edith Hood present must have watched with happy memories. The second film was one of the beautiful Kent countryside all in colour.

Full marks to Len and Josie Packman plus daughter, Eleanor, for such excellent catering. It must have been a great effort to get ready for such a large attendance. The long distance travellers must have thought that their journeys were well worth while; Les Rowley from Paris, John Bush from Whitstable, Edith Hood from "Roselawn," Eric Lawrence from Wokingham and Roger Jenkins from Havant, not forgetting our president coming up from Maidstone.

Next meeting at 14A, Clarendon Drive, Putney, London, S.W.15. Phone PUTney 1086. Host Brian Doyle. Kindly inform if intending to be present. Kindly bring cup or mug.

Uncle Benjamin

* * * * *

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

STAN KNIGHT (Cheltenham): What a grand "Easter Egg" edition of C.D! One goes "Crackers" over Henry Webb's fine cover, and the inside ingredients are every bit as good. Danny is, as usual, full of nostalgic reminders of days and events long past. The Nelson Lee Column is always of especial interest, and this month's reference to the Great Flood series reminds me how I was thrilled by this same series as a boy.

W.J.A. HUBBARD (Leytonstone): With regard to the reprinting of articles written long ago, I fear that I, as a contributor who is likely to have articles reprinted, must protest against such a decision. I am all for variety, but there are dozens of old papers that have only been given a general review. Such papers are the B.O.P., Chums, The Captain, The Girls' Friend, and there are many others.

I must compliment Gerry Allison on the way he stood up for J. N. Pentelow. As I stated in my article "The Wycliffe Saga" in the 1959 C.D. Annual, the Wycliffe stories alone would have been sufficient to establish Pentelow as a writer of more than ordinary interest and power.

RAY BENNETT (Solihull): I am not in favour of reprinting old articles. The C.D. would lose something by repetition. Anyway, what would you omit in order to find space? Perhaps Danny - but this would undoubtedly cause a storm of protest from his fans.

I am quite satisfied with the contents of C.D., but would welcome more contributions which depart from the well-beaten track. There must be tremendous scope for material in Boys' Cinema, Champion, Triumph, and the old Thomson Papers. I notice we sometimes tend to wander into foreign territory, e.g. William, and other hardbacks. Please, Editor, a firm hand.

(William, at least, has a very large following among C.D. readers -ED.)

LES FARROW (Boston): As a comparative newcomer to C.D., I would welcome the reprinting of old articles. I think this could be done without cutting out anything. My solution is to increase the size of C.D. by 8 pages, and put up the price to 2/6. I am sure nobody would grumble at the increase. Simple solution, is it not?

M. HALL (Penryn): I share Mr. J.P.H. Hobson's sentiments. Being a regular reader of the Rover, I have read many fine stories recently, and it seems a pity that we never know the authors' names. I was a regular reader of Dixon Hawke Library, along with Sexton Blake, before the war, and I have written to the editor of Rover suggesting a reprint

of one or two Dixon Hawke series, as we have had old favourites returned like Wolf of Kabul and the Red McGregor. I also am grateful to the Thomson Press for keeping an old favourite going and sticking to stories that are read and are not just picture strips.

W.O.G. LOFTS (London): I am against the reprinting of old articles. I have had hundreds of articles published in C.D., but I would not like any of them to appear again. As you so rightly say, a lot of the early ones were full of errors which have been corrected down the years.

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton-on-Trent): Most St. Jim's lovers, if asked who was the last cad to reform, would say Levison. But was he? In one of the post-war stories "Down & Out," Gilmore is one of the decent cricketing seniors, and Cutts and St. Leger are on their own. Yet in every Gem I have read, Gilmore was as bad as Cutts. When did Gilmore reform?

(We have a feeling that Gilmore, like Sefton, was expelled in the white cover era. Charles Hamilton's memory of distant minor facts played him false now and then. -ED.)

BILL SHARPE (Australia): I doubt whether reprints of articles on the old "bloods" would have general interest. There do not seem to be many collectors interested in them. Personally, Danny's Diary doesn't interest me much - but this is because it antedates the period of my own boyhood. I adore Slade stories. Wish they could be in book form.

H. CHAPMAN (Barton-on-Humber): I would like to suggest that the name of the Nelson Lee Column be changed to bring in the name of Brooks. Very few readers show interest in the Lees apart from the Brooks' stories. In any case, substitute "section" for "column," as a Column is not enough for the subject.

Miss E.B. FLINDERS (Hitchin): When I first started reading the Gem I thought Gussy spoiled all the stories. It was not till I pretended he spoke in a la-di-da Oxford accent that I began to like him, and in the end he became my favourite character. If he had been modernised as the years went by and most of his silly affectations dropped I believe the Gem would have been a lot more popular. By the way, we don't hear much of the Gem in C.D. these days.

DEATH OF ARTHUR HARRIS

A couple of months ago Arthur Harris of Llandudno was sending us his tribute to the memory of Frank Pettingell. Now Arthur Harris himself has passed on.

About two years ago Mr. Harris suffered the loss of his wife, Irene, and he never recovered from the blow. His health steadily declined after Irene's death.

Arthur Harris's main interest was in comic papers published before the first world war, and he is reputed to have had a large collection of them. With his death the collecting world loses an expert in his own sphere - and a very kindly and charming personality.

Edited by Eric Fayne, Excelsior House, Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey.
Litho-duplicated by York Duplicating Services, 12a The Shambles, York.