

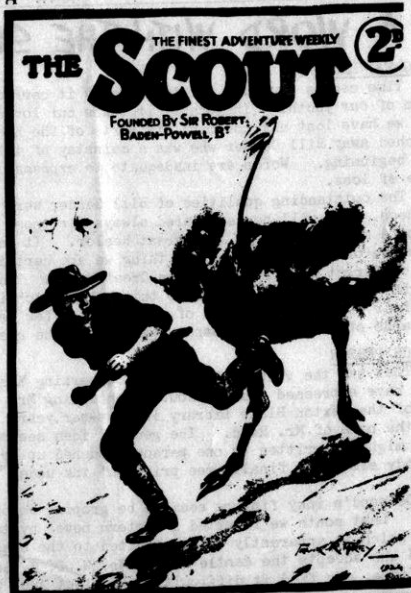
Collectors' Digest 2/-

VOL. 20 No. 237

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1966



The ostrich is the last creature on earth, while behind him come the ostrich, its short wings extend like the neck, and backwards and its back, stem. Could he possibly escape?

Collectors' Digest

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by

W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by

HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 20

No. 237

SEPTEMBER 1966

Price 2s. Od.

A WORD WITH THE SKIPPER

THE GREAT HEART

Time can be cruel. All too quickly it carries away from us the bloom of our youth. Inexorably it takes our loved ones. In a year when we have lost all too many stalwarts of the hobby, Time has now snatched away Bill Gander who was a mainstay of the movement from the very beginning. Words are inadequate to express our sorrow and sense of loss.

The outstanding qualities of Bill Gander were gentleness and kindness. He will be remembered always for those qualities. Time, in spite of its cruelty, is a great healer. It can ease and deaden any sense of loss. But of one thing we are certain. Time can never make us forget Bill Gander of the Great Heart. Just a few souls have brought a mellow graciousness to this hobby which is all the better for their having been a part of it. Just a few leave footprints on the sands of Time. Bill Gander was one of the greatest of the few.

NO SICH PERSON

That was the view of Betsy Prig concerning Mrs. Harris. She might have expressed similar doubts concerning Mr. Desmond Reid. Fans of the Sexton Blake Library in post-war years are well acquainted with the name of Mr. Reid. The general idea seemed to be that a story might be written by one person, touched up or re-written by somebody else, and finally see printers' ink under the name of Desmond Reid.

Desmond's inky fingers seem to be groping beyond the S.B.L. these days. Last month we reported a western novel by talented Mrs. Ross Story which is apparently to be credited to the shadowy Mr. Reid. Anyone who accepts the mantle of our Mr. W. O. G. Lofts in, say, forty years time, may find it difficult to find out just who wrote what

under the name of Desmond. He won't half have a time of it, won't he?

WHAT PRICE PRICES?

Recently I was passing a junk shop. In the window was a list of books for sale, and among these was the information: Woman's Weekly 1924 5/-. In the innocence of my heart I thought that a volume containing W.W. for a year was being offered, and that it might prove interesting.

I entered, with my five bob at the ready. One solitary, grubby, tattered copy was placed before me on the counter. Just one weekly issue of Woman's Weekly for 5/-. It occurred to me that it isn't only the owners of Magnets who shrewdly assess the possibilities in copies of the old papers.

COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL for 1966

With this issue of the Digest we send you the order form which will enable you to ensure the the arrival of your copy of the new Annual next December. At the same time, we invite you to help the exchequer by advertising in the Annual. Small ads are accepted at 2d per word. If you like to send your season's greetings to hobby friends, we suggest that this might be a good medium. Next month we will announce some of the contents of our next giant Year Book.

ONE CROWDED HOUR

Just a few hot sunny days, and we dig out our shorts and our bright summer shirts and forget at once all the dreary, chilly, drizzly weeks which we have lived through since the English summer began. Just a sight on three successive days of thousands being turned away from an already packed Oval, and we forget that cricket is a dying game which nobody watches any more.

Oh, these critics! And how shoddily they write sometimes. Bobby Simpson, writing in the Evening Standard, said: "It takes only one second of indecision or carelessness by a batsman to undo the good he has done. This was the case when Tom Graveney foolishly ran himself out to-day."

How did Graveney, with 165 runs under his belt when he was run out, undo all the good he had done for England? I don't know. I don't suppose you do, either. I wonder whether Mr. Simpson does.

THE EDITOR

Wanted GEMS before 1310.

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

DANNY'S DIARY

September 1916

There is a marvellous new invention called the Tank. It's a kind of an armour-plated motor-car, and men can ride in it while bullets and bombs bounce off. It has just been used for the first time, and we think it will win the war. A British invention, of course. It has taken the Huns by surprise.

The Magnet has had some very original stories this month, so I am rather ashamed to write that I did not really like them extremely well.

"The Sentence of the House" starred Ogilvy and Temple. Temple thought Bunter had pinched a £10 note (actually Temple had used it as a book-mark), and Ogilvy defended Bunter. Bunter later threw a brick at Temple, and Ogilvy was blamed for it.

"The Great Bat Mystery" was described by the editor as the last cricket story of the season, but actually there was another one. Loder caused Squiff's bat to be smashed by a lawn-roller. Squiff bought a 2nd-hand bat for 12/6, and a man named Brandon kept trying to steal the bat. Brandon had stolen a dye formula and hidden it in the bat. I shouldn't have thought that would have improved the bat, but Squiff called it his wonderful new willow.

In "Billy Bunter's Bolt," the Owl ran away and joined a circus as a man-eating savage. Mr. Prout, who had a new motor-bike, chased Bunter, and Wharton rode on the pilyion. A bit daft, all the way through.

"For D'Arcy's Sake" was a good holiday tale about a cricket week at Eastwood House. Captain Punter came into this one, and tried to get the Co gambling in the train. Later Punter pretended that D'Arcy owed him money. Larry Lascelles and Micky Kildare, both in the army, came into this tale, as well as Jimmy Silver. An all-star cast, as they say in the skinnemas.

I thought "The Mystery of Mauly" rather silly. Mauly had a cousin and double named Aubrey Spencer. Spencer was under sentence of expulsion from Abbeyside School. A master caught Mauly, thinking he was Spencer, and took him back to Abbeyside, while Spencer went to Greyfriars and surprised everyone.

In the end, the doubles changed back, and only Loder, who had a big part in the tale, knew the secret. Rather footile.

There was a big zepp raid on the 13th. A number of zepps flew over London, and I stood in the garden and watched one go over. It

was very exciting, and Mum kept yelling to me to go indoors and get under the table. A zepp was brought down at Enfield.

Jack Cornwell, the boy hero of Jutland, has been awarded the V.C. apostrofously. Several papers are giving away picture of Jack Cornwell.

Mr. Macdonald is no longer illustrating Rookwood in the Boys' Friend. He is in the navy. His place as an artist has been taken by a man named Hayward. Macdonald always drew Mornington with an eyeglass, and Hayward is doing the same thing. I wonder why, for Morny doesn't wear an eyeglass.

Rookwood, of course, has been tophole again this month. In "Jimmy Silver's Week-end," Smythe rang up Jimmy, pretending he was Admiral Topcastle who appeared last month, and invited the Fistical Four for the week-end to Topcastle's bungalow "Spitfire." When Jimmy & Co arrived, the bungalow was locked up, so, as there was no train home, they broke in and enjoyed themselves. In the night they caught a burglar, and when Topcastle turned up, the Admiral was pleased.

"Cornering the Cad" was next, and was good. Jimmy & Co raided the Moderns' dorm in the dark, but Mornington refused to help. However, someone went into Mr. Manders room and biffed him with a pillow, Jimmy & Co were blamed, and all half-holidays were stopped. But Muffin knew that the culprit was Mornington, so he started blackmail which didn't last long.

In "The Rookwood Co-Operators," Sergeant Kettle was profiteering in the school shop, so Jimmy collected money from the whole form, bought food on wholesale terms, and started a shop. But Tubby Muffin ate the lot.

Next week "The Colonial Schoolboy" was Van Ryn, a new boy from South Africa. He fell foul of Higgs, in whose study he was put, but later they became friends.

Then "The Rookwood Ventriloquist" which was Van Ryn. A typical ventriloquist tale, but I loved it. Mr. Manders owns a parrot, and Van Ryn caused it to talk. Whoops, Polly!

We have had some good visits to the pictures this month. Didn't care a lot for Pauline Frederick in "Audrey," but I was thrilled to death with Douglas Fairbanks in "His Picture in the Papers." Douglas Fairbanks is an athlete. I hope we see some more of him. Mae Murray was in "To Have and to Hold" and Mum liked this. Miss Murray has a bunch of fair hair.

Charlie Chaplin in "The Count" was a dream and a scream. I yelled my head off. Another Chaplin on this month was "The

Floorwalker," which was just as funny as the rest.

Though there have been three excellent stories in the Gem this month, so far as I am concerned it really hasn't been a great month. "Holiday Camp" was pretty awful. It wasn't written by Martin Clifford at all - it was nothing like his type. The tale started right off with 16 boys under canvas; nothing to show how they came to be there. They helped a farmer, and Cutts & Co played a part, too. The best thing about this issue was some fine pictures by artist Warwick Reynolds.

"Heroes of the Fourth" was no better, and it clearly was written before "Every Inch a Hero" which appeared last month. Sylvia Carr appeared in it. There was a cricket week at Eastwood House - What! Another one? - and Tom Merry & Co played cricket against the girls of St. Evelyn's. Gussy bet Sylvia Carr "a kiss" that St. Jim's would win. In the end she told Gussy he could claim his reward. Awful mush! Gussy quite, quite out of character, just as he was in "Every Inch a Hero."

"Friends or Foes?" was good. Crooke persuaded Talbot to break into Mr. Railton's study to get an incriminating letter from a Mr. Lodgey, but actually Crooke was intending to trap Talbot. The Toff was saved by Levison.

"Levison on the Warpath" was a rattling good tale which I enjoyed. Levison broke into Mr. Tiper's printing works and inserted in Tom Merry's Weekly a rude poem about Mr. Ratcliff. At the same time, he altered the advertisement which Ratty had put in the local paper. Tom Merry got into trouble over the poem, for Mr. Tiper stated that it would have been impossible for the thing to be interfered with in his printing office. However, when the advert appeared in the local newspaper, he changed his mind. Great fun.

Last tale of the month was "Levison Minor" in which Levison's young brother, Frank, came to the school. It was a bit coy, but a good yarn. Lodgey, the billiards sharp, came into this tale again. I don't like him much.

Speaking of brothers, Doug gave me two copies of the Union Jack this month. "The Food Profiteer" was an interesting tale, introducing John Lawless. The other one contained a Leon Kestrel tale called "The Fool's Highway or The Strange Case of the Cocaine Victim." This one was so long that they had to leave out the usual instalment of the serial. I always enjoy Kestrel tales.

It was a very long time since I had bought a Marvel, so when my Gran sent me five shillings I bought one. It is much the same as it

used to be, though a bit smaller. Tom Sayers is now a Boxing Airman. The story about him was set in Bulgaria, and was named "The Ruined Chateau." The Jack, Sam, and Pete tale was "The Prisoner of Black Island."

I read in the Daily Chronicle that the Germans are rationed to $1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces of soap a week each. Doug says that would last me a month. That's an awful insult. I always wash my neck once a week, whether it wants it or not.

THE
Story Paper Collector

Printed and issued occasionally by Wm. H. Gander, P. O. Box 60,
Transcona, Manitoba, Canada.

No. 1.

JANUARY-MARCH, 1941

Vol. 1.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND"

A FAMOUS BRITISH BOYS' JOURNAL...
1895-1927

ONE of the most popular story papers published in Britain during which it flourished "Boys' Friend," number to the 1st until Dec. 31, 1914 in the same size 11 inches—and familiar green paper—until a change to yellow paper in 1915. The excitement of the war in 1915

No. 1 was a 16-page number of 8 pages named: one half-page contained a serial as is found in



WILLIAM H. GANDER

being filled with items, plus a what the Editor included a ditior. Later we man relinquish the paper before fenced publica- other gentleman a still later remilton Edwards the paper from

articles in No. 1 on of the "pen- I am told that dwards' writers to those same s, maybe their d purified when sed them. In ng his papers, als for some of

BILL GANDER

The news of the death of Bill Gander, who died very suddenly on July 26th, has come as a great shock to his collecting and hobby friends all over the world. Like Herbert Leckenby, he had that wonderful quality of gentle kindness which earned him the love and warm respect of hundreds of people he had never met and was never likely to meet.

Mr. Gander was an Englishman. He was born in Croydon on September 29th 1898. With his parents, he went to Canada in 1911, settling in Portage la Prairie, where he

entered the employ of a local newspaper. On account of ill-health he was unable to continue in the printing trade.

In 1922 the family moved to Transcona, and Mr. Gander went into partnership in a Book Store, later becoming the sole owner. He continued in business until his retirement in 1962.

A keen collector of English periodicals, he is reputed to have owned a very large collection. His main favourite was the Boys' Friend, and his collection of Rookwood stories was almost complete.

His Story Paper Collector saw its first issue in 1941.

From time to time, Bill Gander seems to have been plagued by ill-health, and in 1945 he had come to the conclusion that he would be unable to carry on with the magazine, and this decision brought about the birth of Collectors' Digest with the late Herbert Leckenby at the helm. However, Mr. Gander's health improved, and with the passing of time, the Story Paper Collector was once more sailing merrily on its way.

Several times, in recent years, declining good health had caused Bill to dally with the idea that the end of Story Paper Collector must be in sight. In the past few months he had reached the final decision that the magazine would end in a blaze of glory when No. 100 should be reached. In fact, it reached No. 95, and from his recent letters, one could not but feel sadly that he had a premonition that his own swansong was near.

Like Herbert Leckenby, Bill Gander was a prolific letter-writer, full of enthusiasm and kindly impulse. His last letter to Collectors' Digest can only have been written a few days before his death, and we quote from it in this issue.

As recently as mid-July he was away on holiday at Detroit Lakes U.S.A. with his beloved niece and her family, and this was his first trip out of Manitoba since he arrived there from England in 1911.

David Hobbs of Seattle writes us as follows, and every reader of COLLECTORS' DIGEST will be grateful to David for allowing us all to be present when the last sad farewell was made to a very grand man:-

We were among the very few who knew of Bill Gander's passing in time to do anything. Transportation to Transcona in time for the funeral was impossible - Bill's own brother, a retired railwayman, living in British Columbia was unable to get passage.

Therefore I took it upon myself to send flowers, accompanied by the following message:

"From LaVonne (my wife) and David on behalf of STORY PAPER COLLECTORS everywhere. A Fond Farewell"

Today we received a long letter, written the day after the funeral, from Bill's niece, from which the following is an excerpt:

"First of all I would like to acknowledge your beautiful flowers. They were, by far, the loveliest of all, and I'm not writing that just because you're not here and can't see them. They were a picture. Gorgeous red-orange gladiola, and huge white 'mums, with green fern and leaves, and a huge orangy-red bow to match the glads. They were sitting in the room with Bill when we went over to stay with him for a while on Friday evening - our last chance to spend a few private moments with him. The wording on the card brought more tears, of course, but they were hardly tears of sadness, rather tears of gratitude for the wonderful friendships he made thru' his printing, which, in turn, gave him many, many hours of pleasure."

I feel sure this response will justify my making so bold as to presume to speak for the entire hobby.

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CYRIL ROWE, "THE LINDENS," HORSFORD, NORWICH, NORFOLK.

WANTED: C.D. Annual 1948. Magnets 1277, 1283, 1466, 1644. Gems 1931-2. Populars 1922. Magnets 1935 to 1939. S.O.Ls. 184, 188, 373, 391.

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NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER FOR COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Collectors' Digest's new telephone number is 01 - 339 - 3357
 Correspondents dialling in the London area ignore the 01 preface.
 For some time to come, any caller using the old number will be connected without difficulty.

BLAKIANA

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

NO TEARS FOR "POOR PAULA"

By Walter Webb

If my critic in the June issue of the C.D. imagined that I was canvassing for sympathy on Paula Dane's behalf he was mistaken. There was no need. Having appeared in nearly every edition of the SBL since her debut in June 1956, it is clear that she has found such favour with the modern reader as to ensure her retention in the stories for a long time to come.

It is true that many old readers heavily biased in favour of the old set-up may never have read a story of Yvonne and Roxane, though I did not say that they were unreasonable in rejecting Paula Dane following acceptance of the earlier characters. To make my point a little clearer a return trip to the twenties is necessary.

It is an indisputable fact that the early romance between Blake and Yvonne led in its popular appeal to the later episodes between Blake and Roxane, and that the popularity of the original series paved the way for a veritable flood of glamorous female characters who threw in their lot with the various master-criminals of their choice who were crowding the Blake stage to overflowing at that time. There is no denying the appeal of those stories - they made fascinating reading, and I freely admit to having enjoyed them. That the writing of some of them was very crude was obviously due to the necessity of having to adapt them for juvenile consumption.

In previous generations I could well have understood readers in their thousands being antagonistic to the presence of some of those loose-living adventuresses. Their morals left a lot to be desired, their ambitions questionable. Blake's friendship with one of them - Roxane Harfield - was one of the least creditable happenings in the old set-up. This is not to be assumed as criticism of the author, G. H. Teed, who wrote in accordance with editorial policy and not always of his own volition; but the fact remains that Blake should have emerged from this series with his reputation considerably impaired - as it certainly would today - following his stormy association with the revengeful and sadistic Roxane. If there was even mild antipathy against this irreconcilable character during her turbulent

reign in the late twenties and early thirties there is no evidence of it, so it must be taken that if there were any protests they must have been negligible.

Roxane, who would have been described in the vernacular of today as a "popsie," departed before the close of the old set-up, and in her place we have as sole resident apart from Marion Lang the subject of my previous article - Paula Dane. And the comparison I made then still stands. So does that feeling of mild perplexity that even a small minority should regard with disfavour a character who is as thoroughly decent in her femininity as are Blake and Tinker in their masculinity, who occupies a worthy corner in a triangle of friendship, and whose morals are in sharp contrast to those of the intransigent females who preceded her. Crime is a sordid business. It is Blake's business too, so a certain amount of its squalor must come into the stories. But wherever else it has penetrated it does not exist at the Berkeley Square offices, and one may rest assured that it never will.

I do not subscribe to the view held by my critic that Blake has been transformed into a shadow of an American "private eye" because he happens to have taken on a glamorous partner to manage his office affairs. If you reason that Blake has been Americanised simply because he has an attractive secretary, then the same tag must be applied to any other Englishman in business having what his American counterpart possesses. Is a Londoner to be considered as having become transformed into the shadow of a Gallic dog-owner because he keeps a French poodle as a pet?

All the same, if not exactly for the reasons he expressed, my critic's condemnation was justified except that he directed his accusations not against the persons meriting them but against those who have done so much to disarm them. It was in the old set-up prior to the war with Nazi Germany, that Blake and Tinker were portrayed as two wise-cracking American "private eyes," and one chiefly responsible for this infuriating state of affairs was William J. Bayfield, more familiarly known to old boys' book collectors as "Allan Blair." One of the most English of all the Blake authors, Bayfield was, paradoxically enough, a Scotsman, and that he should delve suddenly and with no apparent reason into a series of Americanisms was remarkable. It was bad enough having Tinker address Blake as "chief," but for Blake himself to indulge in such involuntary ejaculations as "Gee!" and sundry other Americanisms was putting him completely out of character. Criticise the modern stories how you will, but be sure of one thing:

the present management would never disappoint Blake's readers by letting him down in this fashion. For Bayfield, whose work in this field I have a very deep affection, a word in defence. Many manuscripts were altered before reaching the printers, so it is possible that some crass sub-editor inserted the Americanisms in the fond belief that he was improving on the original dialogue.

Some months back there was interesting criticism of a passage I made in one of the reviews which prompted the query: "Did your pre-Dane Blake ever strike you as lonely? Or is it just possible that you liked him to be busy tracking crooks rather than "growing younger" in the company of Miss Dane?" That strange apathy which seems to hold the modern Blake enthusiast in its grip has prevented any sort of reaction, which is a pity because the questions inspire such interesting comparison of the two Blakes.

Taking the second query first, the short answer is that Blake is doing both. Today he appears as a more youthful figure than in the old set-up where E. R. Parker gave us such gaunt, ascetic pictures of him for 30 years. Did Blake ever strike me as being lonely? I never had any other impression. They were all lonely men - Holmes, Lee, Hawke, Brett - the lot. Martin Steel I absolve for twelve good reasons, all feminine. The term "detective" is only almost correct when applied to him. A more apt description would be one of Mrs. Bardell's most commonly applied malapropisms, though the stability of Mr. Steel's banking account appears to have been unquestioned.

My impression of Blake as a lonely man came at an early stage in my reading of him. A man with a host of casual friends but few intimate ones; a man without relatives, without a wife, without children, and living alone save for a boy, a dog, and an elderly housekeeper to attend his needs. The very atmosphere of Baker Street in the days of the old set-up breathed isolation and chastity. It breathed comfort too, but it was a comfort tinged with austerity. Not quite the atmosphere, I think, for a youth of Tinker's tender years to be reared in. One was never conscious of these things when following Blake's adventures all over the world. Yet diligence serves merely as a cloak. It is the camouflage of loneliness, not the antidote for it.

One is not so aware of these things today. The palatial offices in Berkeley Square and the reconstruction of the old Baker Street chambers has destroyed a lot of that Victorian atmosphere which clung to it right into the 1940's. Tinker's transformation from boy to man has helped a lot too. What he is doing in manhood today is a

sight more conceivable than what he did as a lad in the old days. His promotion was long overdue and occurred, I suspect, only after many readers had been lost due to the dated nature of the fare offered. It also stilled a major criticism of Blake of employing a mere lad to help him actively withstand the menace of the ruthless gun-man, for there is no doubt that in the minds of many a parent Blake was considered guilty of gross irresponsibility in exposing one so young to the evils of crime.

On the moral issue those who criticise the tone of the modern stories and compare them unfavourably with the old skate dangerously over very thin ice if they assume that no such criticism can be levelled against them. In my view, a mild sex interest for responsible adults is of far less consequence than stories for adolescents which gave the impression on far too many occasions that crime did pay. How many times did the more astute criminal, such as Reece, Plummer, Kew, or Waldo get away with it, if not the loot then certainly with their liberty? In those days an editor would glibly inform us that by preventing the crook from getting away with the booty it was yet another triumph for Blake. What rot! When setting out on any case Blake's intention is the apprehension of the law-breaker. If he fails to do so it is a defeat. The crook retains his liberty and only loses something he was never entitled to, any way.

When morals in the old set-up are debated the case of Rupert Waldo will take some beating. Here was a man who was not only a crook and a blackmailer but a murderer. Not only a murderer but a man evil enough to frame an innocent man for his crime and to then sit calmly back and see his unfortunate victim hanged. Did Mr. Waldo pay the extreme penalty or even get punished for his blackmailing activities? No; he got away with it, completely and absolutely. In fact, in later stories, whilst still pursuing his criminal ways, he was made to appear a hero, and, later still, was given, in effect, an illuminated address of welcome to Baker Street. After a brief period as an ally of Blake and a forgiving Scotland Yard, Mr. Waldo appeared as the crook he could never otherwise be. He could no more have changed his spots than could that particular Leopard of Droone, which both he and Blake encountered in that almost forgotten UJ story, published just prior to Christmas, 1924. Frankly, I found Blake and Tinker's admiration for Waldo distasteful, for a more cynical way of enticing the young reader to crime could hardly have been devised.

Rupert Waldo's biography is sketchy. He was certainly a bachelor of no fixed abode, age about the middle thirties, and with no interest

in the opposite sex. As a man, that is. As a boy young Rupert must have had other ideas, and I still recall my surprise on the occasion Stanley, his 15 year-old offspring, arrived as pupil for the St. Frank's Remove. The materialization of Stanley is one of the unexplained mysteries of Blake lore. No doubt some sort of explanation was given for it in the N.L.L; but so far as the Blake saga is concerned, there was never any reason given as to how a bachelor with no previously known experiences with the opposite sex could possess a son.

Morals? I really think we of the old set-up, high up in our glass commentary-box, should hesitate before we cast our stones. They could so easily be flung back with most shattering effect!

* * * * *

YOU BRING BACK MEMORIES TO ME :

by William Lister

Just about a year ago, August 1965, to be exact, you printed an article I had sent in the "Nelson Lee" Column of Collectors' Digest under the title "Ghosts of Our Past." I mentioned reading a book entitled "Teaching the Mother Tongue" by P. B. Williams (published 1921) - a schoolmaster who had much to say about our old favourites.

Since then I have noticed in various books brief references by leading authors to Bunter, Blake, and Nelson Lee.

W. Riley, world-famous author of "Windyridge," a book running to many large editions down the years and still being published, as well as many other of his books, mentions in his autobiography his early reading of Sexton Blake and the school stories.

Another author Neil Bell, with dozens of books to his name, says in his book "My Writing Years" : "I read such papers for boys as Chums, Pluck, Boys' Own Paper and Ally Sloper."

By the way do any readers know who Ally Sloper is?

Writing an essay recently for my correspondence course with the T.U.C. I wrote concerning our hobby.

The examiner on returning the papers, duly marked, wrote at the side of my references to Nelson Lee, Sexton Blake, and Billy Bunter, also "Puck," "Tiger Tim's Weekly," "Chips" and "Funny Wonder," these words: "You bring back memories to me."

All of which causes me to ask myself, do we of the Old Boys Book Club, really appreciate the influence our favourite authors and their fictional characters must have on many outside our circle, and what steps we could take to introduce "Collectors' Digest" to all such.

Perhaps a fund to provide spare copies to any we read of who refer to past interest in the old papers?

Would not this be an appropriate memorial fund to keep alive the memory of Charles Hamilton and Edwy Searles Brooks and the old popular Sexton Blake authors, by keeping their names and writings before the public via "Collectors' Digest" with its increased circulation.

Is it possible that our readers come across references to the characters and authors of our favourite stories in the course of their reading? Why not make a note of it and send it in to our worthy friends of "Collectors' Digest" who have done so much research for our hobby. Maybe they could compile a list of such quotations under the heading "Adventures in Reading."

I don't think it a bad thing if someone should say of us or our hobby "You bring back memories to me," particularly if those memories are of happy days spent among the company of the fiction friends we love so well.

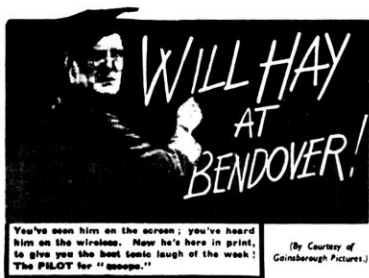
(EDITORIAL COMMENT: While Collectors' Digest is obviously always happy to gain new readers, there are two schools of thought with regard to publicity and the consequent expansion of the clubs. Some fans, at least, would be sorry to see the hobby enter the realms of little big business, and it can hardly be doubted that there is some chance of the whole face of our movement being changed by expansion. Whether that would really be desirable is not a matter for C.D. to decide.

In The Sunday Times of August 21st, there was a prominent little article under the heading "Jolly Gems," dealing with the activities of some members of our London Club. It made pleasant reading, whether or not one agrees with publicity of this kind.)

FOR SALE or EXCHANGE: Magnets 960, 962, 970, 8/- each. 1247-1254 Flip Series 50/- . 1162, 1216, 1255, 1256, 1295, 1314, 1315, 1419, 1421, 6/- each. 1319, 1320, 1452, 4/- each. 1676-1681 Eastcliffe Lodge series 40/- . 1457, 1497, 1562, 1583, 2/6 each. 4 Armada paperbacks 2/6 each, plus postage. WANTED: Magnets 1352, 1354, 1357, 1359-1362, 1364-67, 1369-71, 1379-82, 1389-90, 1392-1400, 1402, 1411, 1415, 1417, 1424, 1446, 1487, 1548, 1619, 1633.

A. DACRE,
 7, LEOPARD ST., BARROW-in-FURNESS, LANCs.

HAMILTONIANA - - - - -



(By Courtesy of
Gainsborough Pictures.)



By W. O. G. Lofts

My favourite pre-war English comedian was Will Hay. How I remember his amusing films with such titles as 'Windbag The Sailor;' 'Oh! Mr. Porter;' and 'Boys Will Be Boys!' The latter film was shown at a London O.B.B.C. meeting.

Will Hay was joined in many of his films by those grand character actor stooges - Graham Moffat the fat boy who may have made an excellent Baggy Trimble, and Moore Marriott who played the part of the old man. All three are now, alas dead, and I can well remember learning with some astonishment that in real life Will Hay was an extremely serious man, who never joked. He was also a very clever man, being an astronomer of repute.

Many readers may wonder what connection this has with our hobby. Quite a lot in fact, as none other than Charles Hamilton wrote a delightful long series of stories featuring Will Hay at Bendover School. This has never been written about before in our hobby, the probable reason being that the papers in question are exceedingly scarce.

"Frank Richards" in his Autobiography says "There was another series I remember with pleasure, which featured the popular comedian Will Hay. This series was published in a paper called The Ranger,

edited by Mr. Montague Haydon..... The Will Hay series lasted a long time, and it is a pleasant episode in Frank's memory."

The Will Hay series however, did not appear in the Ranger at all! They appeared in a paper called The Pilot long after the Ranger had finished - almost 18 months. As The Pilot was in a way a continuation of the Ranger under a different title, I can only conclude that 'Frank Richards' must have been under the impression that they never changed the name.

The Pilot in 1937 was publishing the alleged early life stories of famous stars in the world of sport, stage and screen. Stainless Stephen, the famous radio comedian, was one. Alex James, the famous Arsenal footballer, another - whilst another I can recall was Bluey Wilkinson the Australian speedway rider. All stories were of course greatly distorted from the real truth, and were penned by 'ghost writers' - and certainly not by the stars in question!

Will Hay in the late 30s was at the height of his fame, and so what better new feature could there be than a series of amusing school stories of him at Bendover School! (The film of Will Hay in his famous schoolmaster role was called Narkover.)

Characteristic of Frank Richards' favourite theme for the arrival of a newcomer to a school, Will Hay arrived at Doddlebury station (for Bendover School) in The Pilot No. 72, February 13th, 1937. All the fourth were lined up on the platform to meet him, and what a colourful crowd they were too! Many readers have commented in the past on Frank Richards' brilliant use of names to characters, and as this series was meant to be highly amusing, and verging on slapstick, surely no other school could equal the names as given to the pupils and staff at Bendover?

Headmaster was Dr. Erasmus Shrubbs, a kindly man modelled on the lines of Dr. Locke. Master of the Fifth was Mr. Choot; a portly pompous individual who had hunting trophies in his study, an obvious relation to Mr. Paul Prout. French Master was a Monsieur Le Bon - nicknamed Mossoo Bong - shades of the excitable master at Greyfriars. Another Master who was fond of the bottle was named of all things Mr. Shandy! Nearest public house to the school was called "Three Fishers" - so he may have been a frequent visitor! Dr. Paynem was the school doctor. "Toots" the page. Kelly the school porter. Boys starting with the Sixth were Billy Stuckly. The Fifth Albert Edward Gunter - and Parker. Whilst the Fourth form of which Will Hay was master, and which were mainly featured in the stories were as follows; Dicky Bird the Captain, Jimmy Cartoy, Jerry Smart, Tubby

Green, Sammy Straw, Issy Cumming - the Jewish Junior, Podger, Amos B. Gowing, Eric Garnett, Gaston, and the two cads or black sheep of the remove, Reggie Pyke and Fruity Snell.

Will Hay, of course, was ragged unmercifully in his early days at Bendover, but always managed to hold his own by sheer cunning and great wit. Although a buffoon in appearance, he was shrewd, and in time he became very popular with the boys of his form. That was with the exception of Reggie Pyke, who must have been some relation to Cecil Ponsonby. Rather surprisingly in view of the slapstick vein in the tales, the stories run in longish series, with Reggie Pyke in the leading role. Reggie's father, Dunkley Pyke, was a shifty schoolmaster, and he wanted badly to get a job - none other than the Headmastership of Bendover. Will Hay of course stopped all their shady schemes, and eventually both were kicked out of the school after a barring out series.

Another long series featured a Yankee Trader from the South Seas with the name of Cyrus X. Shook. He was trying to kidnap a new junior at Bendover, a Kanaka South Seas Islander who talked in sing-song pidgeon English and was called Koo-Kalinga-Lolulo-Ulolo-La!

Single stories in between series had a very familiar ring of ventriloquism and other popular Hamilton themes. One story, extremely amusing indeed, had spinster ladies coming up to the school in answer to a local advertisement with views to marriage. Will Hay (like Mr. Quelch) had a very difficult time in convincing these good ladies that it was all a terrible mistake - and all he wanted through his advert was a new bike!

In time, the stories became shorter by the introduction of a comic strip also featuring Will Hay, and possibly a few of these stories were written by editorial staff. The tales by this time seemed to have lost their appeal with readers. No. 129 March 19th 1938 was the last written story, and the issue following had Will only in a picture strip. The last issue of The Pilot even had Will Hay's photo removed from the front page near the title - and in this issue The Pilot died - readers being asked next week to buy Wild West Weekly.

Another series of Will Hay stories appeared in Modern Boy starting with No. 42, Dec. 3rd, 1938, written by 'Hedley Owen' but these were based on film scripts and were penned by Hedley O'Mant who was editor of Ranger and Pilot. These could hardly be classed as successful as they only ran for six issues.

Readers who may have extreme difficulty in getting hold of Pilots may be able to get hold of two Boys Friend Libraries:-

No. 647. Nov. 1938. Will Hay at Bendover (Pilot 72-83)

No. 649. Dec. 1938. The Barring-Out at Bendover (Pilot 85-102)

Readers who only like Charles Hamilton in his serious tales would obviously not care for the Bendover stories, but those who revel in his most amusing yarns would enjoy his Pilot ones. Admitted at times the dialogue borders on slapstick, but who can resist a chuckle at the following?

Dicky Bird: "Sir, could you tell me the winner of the 3-30?"

Will Hay: "Clothes Line. Because you can put your shirt on it!"

Probably the only thing about the stories that seemed so unlike Charles Hamilton was Will Hay calling his boys "Little Warts" repeatedly.

Dear Old Will Hay; neither he nor Charles Hamilton is any longer with us, but what memories they bring back. My favourite comedian combined with my favourite school story writer - certainly together when comedy was King.

Will Hay also appeared in the Boys Cinema. Stories adapted from his most famous films. He also appeared in comic strips Comic Cuts and Radio Fun. A special Will Hay number was issued of Mickey Mouse Weekly in the 30s - drawn by Basil Reynolds - and conducted by Will Hay himself. Will Hay made a total of 18 films between 1934 and 1943, and died aged 60 on April 18th, 1949. I have full biographical details about this great comedian - to anyone interested.

* * * * *

REVIEW

BILLY BUNTER'S HOLIDAY ANNUAL 1967

Odham's Press 9/6

Though ostensibly put out for the juvenile Christmas market, there is not much doubt that the publishers of this new Holiday Annual expect loyal support from the vast army of Charles Hamilton's "old boys." And there is not much doubt that they will get it. Most of the old brigade are going to be happy with this pleasantly nostalgic volume.

Despite the overall measurements being longer and broader - and a good deal thinner - the appearance of the book is decidedly reminiscent of the pre-war Annual. The colour-plates and full-page black and white pictures are excellent, most of them coming from the old Holiday Annuals, and bringing back such famous artists as Briscoe and Lumley. A little trio of Warwick Reynolds portraits of St. Jim's

favourites is delightful. Plenty of verse, most of it presumably emanating from the young Samways, is also more than welcome.

There are three long stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood, respectively. These are all average Hamilton material, and the editor of the volume - unwittingly, I imagine - has provided an interesting study, for the individual stories come from widely separate stages of the Hamilton career.

The Greyfriars story "Saving Bunter's Bacon" is the one published under the same title in the Magnet of 1939. This is a typical story of the later Magnet, competently written and providing pleasant reading. It is, perhaps, not a particularly good choice for the Annual, for the stories of the Magnet of 1939 were very long. The new version has had about half a dozen chapters lopped away. A shorter tale from a few years earlier would have made pruning unnecessary.

The St. Jim's and Rookwood stories are probably taken from pre-war Holiday Annuals, for the Rookwood illustrations are by Savile Lumley, who never illustrated Rookwood in the Boys' Friend. The St. Jim's tale "Fire-Fighters of St. Jim's" originally appeared in the Gem in 1920 under the title "Fighting the Flames." It is an amusing little tale, once more typical of the period in which it was written.

Perhaps the most interesting tale for the collector is the Rookwood offering "Getting Their Own Back" which first appeared in the Boys' Friend as long ago as June 1915 under the title "A Stern Chase." Followers of Danny's Diary may like to turn back and see what Danny had to say about this yarn fifty years ago. Herr Kinkel, the German master of the story, was later found to be a spy, and disappeared from Rookwood.

Not the least of the attractions of this charming book is that the readers can compare the styles of Charles Hamilton down the years, even though all the offerings are in light vein.

The two Greyfriars stories in pictures will provide a mild "crunch" for the older Greyfriars fan.

There are lists of boys, with ages and heights - rather a waste of space this, especially as boys long dispensed with help to represent an absurdly top-heavy Remove.

Mr. C. H. Chapman is in splendid form, with a wealth of pictures.

All told this is an excellent effort and well worth anybody's 9/6. We advise you to order your copy from your bookseller while it is still available. And we feel quite certain that most of you will.

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 103. GRIST FOR THE MILL

In Collectors' Digest this month there appears an excellent article from the facile pen of Mr. Bill Lofts concerning the "Will Hay" series which Charles Hamilton wrote for a paper named The Pilot.

There can hardly be any doubt that Charles Hamilton actually wrote these stories, for he says he did, in his Autobiography. But the mystery, to my way of thinking, is how and why on earth an author of his standing ever came to be associated with a series of that type.

Until recently I had never seen a Will Hay story, and in the old days a Pilot never came my way. Now, through the courtesy of Mr. Derek Adley, I have been able to browse over one of them.

I must confess that had the information not come from the author himself, I would never have believed that Hamilton wrote the Will Hay story contained therein. It seems crude, and I am sure that any hack writer could have done just as well and possibly better for the medium in question. It astounds me that the creator of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood descended to that sort of thing.

It is, perhaps, possible that Hamilton did not write all the Will Hay series. It was not unknown for him to claim to have written an entire series when, in fact, he only started it off. That might explain this one story which I have browsed over. But it would not explain how he came to be associated at all with an anonymous series of this sort.

With most authors there are aspects of their careers which are puzzling. There are few authors who present more puzzling aspects than Charles Hamilton. It is too late for us to find the solutions to those puzzles now, but even were he still with us we should be reluctant to ask him the questions. We can only wonder.

There is clearly an interesting story behind Charles Hamilton's associations with the Trapps Holmes Co, early in the century. The author himself claimed that he wrote not less than a thousand tales for Trapps Holmes, under a large variety of pen-names. Yet we ourselves have traced but a small fraction of those thousand tales and their various pen-names.

In his Autobiography Hamilton makes but little reference to Trap Holmes even though his connection with the firm was obviously substantial.

Perhaps it seems strange that Charles Hamilton should have given his time to writing such eccentricities as the Herlock Sholmes tales

in the Greyfriars Herald of 1915, while substitute writers were helping to keep the Magnet's flag flying. Such satire was as good as a holiday for him, and many of the little yarns were brilliant of their type. But there was more than a holiday in the Greyfriars Herald for the author. I think it was profitable in the financial sense. Apart from the Sholmes stories, the author of Greyfriars wrote most of the contents of those 16 issues of the Herald. To my mind it was clearly a joint enterprise for editor Hinton and author Hamilton. It ended suddenly before the paper shortage became acute.

Hamilton's writing of the Will Hay series is much more odd than his little fling with Herlock Sholmes. It seems unlikely that the idea of writing a comic series on the adventures of a stage and screen droll occurred to the author himself. Possibly the idea occurred to someone at the Amalgamated Press and authors were invited to submit a sample story. If that was the case, it would have been difficult to see Hamilton accepting such an invitation in earlier times. This was something far different from the Herlock Sholmes situation.

By 1937, when the author turned to the Hay series, he was still enjoying a very substantial regular income, but there could hardly have still existed the same demand as of ten years earlier for his work. Greyfriars was still going strong, providing tasty bread and butter, but Rookwood had ended, and only reprints of St. Jim's were being used. There was the occasional limited series for Modern Boy, but by 1937 Charles Hamilton was by no means so much the resident attraction in that paper that he had been. Series like Packsaddle and Grimslade never caught the public fancy as others had done. An occasional serial was not outstanding.

Probably a chill wind was blowing in 1937, and it is at least possible that Hamilton was glad to step down to something like the Will Hay series to add jam to the bread and butter.

When the Magnet ended in 1940, it must have seemed to many as well as the author that a remarkably successful career had closed. As we know, the most successful part of that career - as well as another strange phase - was yet to come.

In the few years following the end of the war, he wrote a fair quantity of short stories which appeared under the imprint of obscure publishers. Not remarkable, but at least worthy of his reputation, were the few tales printed in "Pie." This was a good-class magazine, and his little efforts found themselves in sound company.

But quite different were a number of run-of-the-mill short tales which formed series of several boys' schools and of one girls' school.

A short series of romances under the pen-name of Winston Cardew seemed a most curious venture. An abominably-printed "western" is, so far as the production side goes, best forgotten. A kind of comic, with stories in pictures, the only reading matter being three or four very short tales of the Rio Kid, only came to be noticed by the Digest long after publication - and small wonder. There were even a few stiff-covered school stories, moderately-printed abroad, and imprinted with the price 7/6 though they were never intended to be sold for that price, and were marketed at 3/6 or less in the "bargain sales" for which they were made.

According to report, two of Charles Hamilton's obscure post-war publishers featured in police proceedings later on and disappeared entirely. How on earth did Charles Hamilton ever persuade himself to write for publishers of this kind?

Certainly things were difficult for authors in those early post-war years. But even if times were hard, it is difficult to believe that the payments from back-street publishers could have amounted to more than a pittance. Surely it was a risk to his reputation as a writer, and he would have been wiser to have bided his time.

The question arises as to whether Charles Hamilton did actually aim, without success, at any of the bigger publishers. If he did, we have never heard so from any source.

And yet, his greatest success was still to come. Soon that far-sighted publisher, Mr. Charles Skilton, was to seek him out and put before him the project which was to bring him the fame, publicity, and success such as are the reward of but few writers. Even then, Charles Hamilton was averse to the idea of royalties. He wished to sell his work outright. Was there some inferiority complex which actuated this great author? It was a lucky day for Charles Hamilton - and also for us - when Charles Skilton saw the potentialities of Billy Bunter.

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 101. FOR SUMMER IS A-COMING IN - AND CRICKET

ROGER JENKINS: I have always been surprised when critics claim that Hamilton's descriptions of cricket and football matches were unconvincing, and I often wonder whether they are looking for the same things as I am. I definitely do not want a long and detailed account of a cricket match, hit by hit, or even batsman by batsman. This "School and Sport" approach should be irrelevant to any serious writer's purpose.

What I seek in sporting descriptions is a convincing background for the drama, and in the Stacey series that you mention there is just that. When Stacey gets Wharton run out, or when Stacey's performance suddenly deteriorated in the middle of a cricket match (because of the arrival of an awkward letter concerned with gambling) the theme of the drama is brought out in fullest relief. The characters of the protagonists are clearly

drawn for every reader to appreciate, and the cricket match is seen for what it is - not the centre of the story, but definitely a subsidiary part, though a very pleasant one.

GERALD ALLISON: The bowling of lobs in a Wodehouse cricket match was criticised -- never, in all my life, have I seen lobs bowled in a good-class match - or in any match, for that matter. But, of course, Wodehouse was writing in 1909 - quite a long, long time ago. Things may have been different then.

I wrote to the president of the Northern Club and received the following reply:--
"Very interesting the point you bring up about lobs. The last time I saw them bowled was in 1928, Dulwich v Free Foresters. Their captain actually opened with them. I don't know if they were ever widespread, but you will be startled to hear that at the turn of the century (or maybe earlier) Worcestershire's star bowler was a lobster - Simpson Hayward. And I'm not at all sure he didn't play for England - or I may just be dreaming that. I played against him once in about 1906, and he had me out very promptly. The ball broke about two yards. He was very hot stuff. Best wishes to all the gang. Yours sincerely, P. G. WODEHOUSE."

DON WEBSTER: As an ardent cricket enthusiast, I really must write and voice my humble opinion on the subject of whether Charles Hamilton wrote satisfactorily on the Summer Game.

Of course the day dawned bright and sunny always (rain never held up play) and players (even teams) were kidnapped to prevent them playing. Also matches were won by one run or the winning hit was made in the last over. All this appealed to us as youngsters who formed the majority of his readers.

No, he didn't write for the connoisseur for obviously he wasn't one himself - making many "faux pas" in his time, but his descriptions of the tense atmosphere - as for example the "running out" of Harry Wharton in The Stacey Series cannot be surpassed. Smithy, Mornington and Cardew also had their moments on the cricket field.

PETER HANGER: A doubly-enjoyable article, for I agree with almost every word you write. Like you, I am a lover of the great summer game, and I enjoy summer and cricket more than Christmas and winter stories. In my experience, Summer stories read even better in mid-winter (your own article will, also) than in season. But this reversal process does not apply to winter, especially Christmas, stories. Only on one small point can I bowl you a bumper. I enjoyed the Bertie Vernon series every bit as much as the others you mention, although, when I first read it, I could not quite accept "doubles." Then one day, in the shadow of the gasometer, I first saw Alec and Eric Bedser. Then, to me, everything was perfect.

STAN KNIGHT: I have always been a lover of cricket - mainly as a spectator or as a reader of cricket yarns. It is years since I read any of the Hamilton cricket stories you mention. I shall read the Stacey series at the earliest opportunity, in view of the very interesting "Controversial" article. The cover picture of the Gem cricket scene and the title "The Demon Bowler" reminded me of a S.O.L. I read some while ago, only the title of that was "The Demon Cricketer."

BILL GANDER: One of the very best articles in a very fine series. I liked this one especially, perhaps because I do not remember ever seeing a cricket match. They can be seen in Winnipeg's Assiniboine Park, I think, but that is out the other side of the city from Transcona and my visits there are usually several years apart.

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following:
MAGNETS: 131 to 149 inclusive, 205, 238, 239, 309, 328, 337, 356 to 358 inclusive, 435, 773, 850, 858, 862, 863, 864, 865, 868, 942, 951, 985, 988. **GENS:** some issues between 801 and 832, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998.
POPULARS: 452, 455, 466, 452.

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

NELSON LEE COLUMN

(CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD)

FULLWOOD'S REFORMATION

By R. J. Godsave

Herbert Chapman in his interesting article on Ralph Leslie Fullwood wondered how it was possible for him to reform to such an extent as to be on friendly terms with those juniors who hitherto has been far from friendly. Not having read the series which leads up to Fullwood's reformation he was somewhat bewildered as to how it became possible for so great a change to come about.

Perhaps the change was not so great as it appeared. Fullwood had more virtues than he has been given credit for. In spite of his caddish ways, he was endowed with plenty of pluck, and on quite a few occasions took punishment for misdeeds without bringing his equally guilty partners in.

One has only to read "The Price of Folly" o.s. 382 to find that he had plenty of will-power and a cool calculating brain. In this fascinating story he borrowed £18 which was entrusted to his care as captain of the Remove from the Remove Sports Fund to bet at the Helmsford Races. Using a doubling-up system - which always requires a certain amount of courage to operate - he would have netted £80 had not the bookmaker swindled him by denying the bet. As a schoolboy he had no redress whatsoever. Overcome by the threat of exposure and in dire despair he threw himself into the River Stowe. He was rescued by Archie Glenthorne who good naturedly replaced the £18. His gratitude to Archie was such that he resigned the captaincy at Archie's request in favour of Nipper.

On the occasion when St. Frank's temporarily transferred to London, Fullwood thanked Nelson Lee for punishing him for his part in the kidnapping of Sir Montie Tregellis-West and not reporting him to the Head. This was genuine remorse.

The series which dealt with Fullwood's reformation introduced Clive Russell who eventually became his best friend. An invitation extended to members of the Remove by Lord Dorrimore for a cruise on his yacht was accepted by Fullwood. It was on this occasion that both Gulliver & Bell were unable to join their leader.

The absence of his friends caused Fullwood to join in the healthy activities of Nipper and the others, greatly to Fullwood's benefit. In this series one reads that only Fullwood was in a position to go to

the assistance of Russell who was in serious difficulties. Although he rescued Russell he placed himself in difficulty. It must be said that an internal struggle took place within Fullwood before he went to Russell's assistance. It would appear to be a question of an even balance of good and evil, and in this case good came out on top.

A good series was undoubtedly the outcome of Fullwood's reformation which took place on a healthy trip in which the atmosphere was just right.

The friendship which Winnie Pitt gave Fullwood was, no doubt, the greatest incentive for him to give up his old ways.

Fullwood's successors as leaders of the knuts were of a different type, being extremely vicious and a thoroughly bad lot, and lacked the strength of character that Fullwood possessed.

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HUMOROUS GLEANINGS

By "Leeite"

The opening chapter of "The Schoolboy Crusces" No. 366 old series, portrays E. O. Handforth in one of his aggravating moods.

Edward Oswald Handforth grinned.

"What rot!" he exclaimed. "You ass! You don't expect me to believe a yarn like that, I suppose?"

"But it's true!" shouted Church excitedly.

"Rubbish!"

"I tell you --"

"It may be possible to spoof you, my son, but you can't spoof me!" interrupted Handforth. "Somebody's been pulling your leg. That's one thing I pride myself on - nobody can ever pull my leg! I'm too fly!"

Both Church and McClure nearly collapsed on the spot. If there was one thing that Handforth was more susceptible to than another, it was leg-pulling. It was always a matter of supreme ease to spoof Handy up to the neck.

"Oh, don't be silly!" exclaimed Church. "It's true - every word of it! If you don't believe me, go and ask Nipper - he'll tell you."

"I wouldn't be such a fathead as to mention the matter," put in Handforth. "Do you think I want all the fellows grinning at me? A trip to the Pacific and the Solomon Islands! Huh! Starting on Saturday! Huh! Three weeks before the end of the term! Huh! Rot!"

"It seems a bit thick, I know," put in McClure. "But it's true, all the same. As a matter of fact, Nipper has formally invited the three of us to join Lord Dorrimore's party.

Handforth glared.

"Are you going to shut up?" he snapped.

"But, my dear chap, we've got to decide," said Church quickly.

"I've decided already!"

"What!"

"I'm not going," said Handforth. "I wouldn't go if Lord Dorri-more begged of me on his bended knees! Who in thunder wants to go pottering about among the Solomon Islands? Might just as well go to Whitechapel!"

"Whitechapel!" gasped Church.

"Of course!" said Handforth, "I expect there's nothing but Jews there!"

"Jews!" howled McClure.

"Don't yell like that!" exclaimed Handforth, frowning. "Jews-yes! Ain't they called the Solomon Islands! That's Jewish, I suppose? I expect these giddy islands are a Hebrew colony--"

"You-you babbling lunatic!" shouted Church. "The Solomon Islands are a group in the Pacific, near the East Indian Archipelago, and all the inhabitants are black - except for the white settlements. And I don't suppose there's one Jew among the whole lot!"

"Then why are they called the Solomon Islands?" demanded Handforth. Church and McClure breathed hard.

"Then I'm to tell Nipper you won't come?" asked Church.

"Yes!" said Handforth. "Do you think I believe this tommy-rot! I know that Lord Dorrimore's here at St. Frank's, but the idea of him starting off on a trip to the South Seas now is potty.

Just then Reginald Pitt came hurrying out of the Ancient House. He was looking flushed and supremely happy.

"Been talking to the pater over the 'phone!" he grinned. "It's all serene!"

"What's all serene?" asked Handforth.

"The pater's given me permission to go on the trip!"

"Trip?" said Handforth sharply. "What trip?"

"Haven't you heard?" said Pitt in wonder.

"Of course he's heard!" put in McClure "But the ass won't believe it. And, anyhow, he says he wouldn't go to the Solomon Islands for a pension! Hates the place like poison.

Reggie Pitt grinned.

"We couldn't exist without Handy in the party" he said cheerfully.

"You-you imbecile!" howled Handforth. "What's the idea of this? Are you trying to pull my leg, too?"

"My dear chap, it's real truth - the absolute goods!" declared Pitt solemnly. "About twenty chaps are going, I think. And for the

first two or three weeks we shall have lessons on board."

Handforth grasped at the empty air, and staggered.

"Hon-honour bright?" he panted weakly.

"Yes, honour bright!"

"Great pip!" gasped Handforth. "I-I thought these chaps were spoofing! Then it's true? The chaps are going to the Abraham Islands?"

"Going where?" grinned Pitt.

"That Jewish place - Solomon Island, I believe," said Handforth.

"That's just the very spot I've always longed to visit! By George. You can count me one of the party all right. I'll be there!"

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 26th July, 1966

There was a poor attendance for our July meeting. Seven members and one visitor, the daughter of our chairman Penny Webster, were present. We are now in the middle of the holiday season and attendances tend to be low at this time of the year.

Our chairman, Ivan Webster is not enjoying the best of luck these days in club matters. He told the meeting of his repeated but unavailing attempts to get copies of the group photographs taken by the "Express and Star" at our last meeting. Following on the B.B.C. let down this made Ivan feel that modern business methods have fallen to a very low level.

The chief item on the programme was the tape recording on Bill Gander's interview with David Hobbs of Seattle, U.S.A. on Bill's career both as a printer of the amateur magazine "The Story Paper Collector" and as an enthusiastic collector of Old Boys' Books.

The recording illustrated fairly clearly that Bill's interests were centred more or less exclusively on the works of Charles Hamilton. We were surprised to learn that he had not much interest in the works of Edwy Searles Brooks. At one time apparently he corresponded regularly with Charles Hamilton.

As Tom Porter was absent our usual feature, the anniversary number was not on view. Norman Gregory, however, provided a collector's piece. This was "The Captain Magazine" for the year 1904 and it evoked great interest. There was no raffle this month either as this is run by the librarian Tom Porter. These features will be resumed next month.

The final item was a reading from the 1929 Holiday Annual. "Chequemate," a Greyfriars story shows Bunter up to his artful tricks spreading it around that he has a £50 cheque.

The reading concluded our meeting and we meet again at the Birmingham Theatre Centre on August 30th.

J. F. BELLFIELD Correspondent.

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 13th August, 1966

With holidays and cricket in full swing a few regular attenders were away. However, thirteen were there when the Chairman opened the meeting, remarking this was the final "summer" programme although the weather lately had been anything but summerlike. The formal business despatched, the meeting was grieved to hear from the Treasurer's letters

of the death of member Tom Hopperton in a York Hospital; a speaker and writer of great wit and distinction. Then we heard another loss in the passing of Bill Gander of the "Story Paper Collector." Both will be greatly missed in the Hobby, and our sympathy goes to their families.

The interesting discussion regarding lobs in first class cricket was carried a stage further. Our President, P. G. Wodehouse, sent us chapter and verse of those he had seen, and Chairman Geoffrey Wilde had been doing research also. Apparently lobs are still legal, if the bowler gives notice of his intentions to bowl them, but (though in practised hands can be very deadly) nowadays are almost always a sign of "protest." The talk went on to cricket vagaries, and the Chairman finally said this subject though fascinating, was endless, and so brought the meeting to the next item.

Harry Barlow had promised a game and he now arranged the company in two's at tables, handing each table a package. These contained identical jigsaws of the dust cover of the recent reprint of Magnet No. 1. - and the race was on to see which couple was most skillful in the art of jigsawing. First, were Ron Hodgson and Norman Smith, second, Geoffrey Wilde and Bill Williamson, and third, Gerry Allison and Tom Roach. A very enjoyable diversion.

After the interval and refreshments, a reading was given by Elsie Taylor. This was one of the lighter episodes from the Da Costa series, where Bunter, thanks to the Famous Five, did not have Coker's pie when Coker appealed to Wingate. The meeting enjoyed Elsie's rendering of Bunter full of injured (though unusual) innocence.

The final item was a Quiz of 25 questions from Ron Hodgson. This being from several sections of the Hobby was (like the famous advert) not too hard and not too easy, but just right! Elsie came first with 17, then Gerry 15 and Geoffrey 14. By now the evening had sped away, and it was time to go.

Next meeting, Saturday, 10th September, 1966.

M. L. ALLISON Hon. Sec.

MERSEYSIDE

Meeting held Sunday, August 7th

As the holiday season is not yet over we experienced yet another thinly attended meeting. However, we hope that by the time the next meeting is held everybody will be back, brown and healthy, and the meetings will get back to normal.

We had a welcome visitor in Frank Shaw and, as one might expect where Frank is concerned, the conversation turned to the Liverpool of our school days. The main topic of discussion however concerned the names of the Hamiltonian characters. By carefully comparing the names of the boys with their characters we tried to establish a connection. In many cases the name did seem to fit the boy. Bulstrode the bully; Johnny Bull (at a gate post) the stubborn determined type; Snoop, a somewhat questionable character; Cherry, Merry and Silver all healthy cheerful and bright. But what of Fisher T. Fish? When Charles Hamilton created this exaggerated American schoolboy, did he decide that only a caricature of a name (connected perhaps with the herring pond) would fit? We could have gone on all night, the subject is so interesting. However, time ended the meeting for us and the origin of many of the names still remains a matter of "You pays your money and you takes your choice."

Please note that the next meeting will be on Sunday, October 2nd. As I will be away for almost every weekend in September it was decided not to hold a meeting during that month.

BILL WINDSOR

LONDON

"Jolly Gems." Thus was the heading of about eight paragraphs in the Attic's column of "The Sunday Times" of 21.8.66. It referred, of course, to the London Club's meeting at the Y.M.C.A. in Great Russell Street, almost the centre of the great

metropolis. About thirty members were present, amongst whom was Tom Parker, his first meeting. Also present to report the meeting from "The Times" was Stephen Clarke.

Bill Lofts, chairman for 1966, welcomed one and all and then paid tribute to our late vice-president, Bill Gander. Further suitable tributes were expressed on all sides and it was mentioned that a lasting memorial to Bill would be the treasured bound volumes of "Story Paper Collector."

Bob Blythe gave a report on the Nelson Lee section of the club's library and stated that owing to holidays, borrowing had been rather slack. Whilst on the subject of Nelson Lee, Len Packman read out a very nice letter from Mrs. Edwy Searles Brooks, known as Frances to all her friends. The letter stated how pleased she was to know how many friends her late husband had and the enormous interest taken in his writings. When time to sort out things had happened, manuscripts and "Union Jacks" will be presented to the club. It was unanimously agreed to make Mrs. Brooks a honorary life member of the club and invite her to be a guest on the occasion of the Margate outing, when the feature of the menu cards, kindly presented by our president, John Wernham, will be drawings of Nelson Lee etc.

Norman Wright read out a humorous passage from a school story by the president of our Leeds club, F.G. Wodehouse, and this was enjoyed.

Don Webster's Quiz was won by Eric Lawrence with Len Packman and Laurie Sutton in the second place.

A magnificent talk, "K.K. and O.K." was given by Bill Hubbard. Featuring St. Frank's it was well received, thus keeping up the Nelson Lee flavour of the meeting. At the conclusion of the talk, Len Packman, Bill Lofts and others joined in a very fine discussion of the talk.

And so our first meeting at the Y.M.C.A. was quite a success.

Next gathering is the Margate outing. Meet on Sunday, September 4th, outside Woolworths, Vauxall Bridge Road, Victoria. Time 10.00 a.m. sharp. A programme has been arranged if inclement weather.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

SOME SENSATIONAL SCOOPS by O. W. Wadham

Recently privileged to explore the varied collection of story papers and comics possessed by Frank L. Knott of Avalon, Hutt Valley, New Zealand, I came upon one never mentioned in Collectors' Digest.

Born in January 1934 SCOOPS must have been something unusual in boys' weeklies of the period. It was a twopenny paper, published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., in Henrietta Street, London.

Pages were about an inch longer and wider than Magnets of the time, and covers were coloured red, white and blue. SCOOPS was said to be "Britain's only science story weekly," and "the story paper of tomorrow."

That latter declaration was surely an understatement. Even today, nearly 33 years later, the horrors of "metal men of Zog," the gruesome creatures from outer space, and top-like humming horrors from other worlds seem to be well into the future.

No writers' names are given in the paper, except for one famous contributor. In number 13 of SCOOPS published on May 5, 1934,

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

BILL GANDER (Canada): My copy of original Magnet No. 1 has the letter 't' missing from the word "Sent" in the heading of the first chapter. The stereo-type plate must have been damaged on the press during the run. Also in my copy the price "One Halfpenny" is missing from the top of column 2 of both the seventh and ninth pages. I doubt very much if G. A. Henty ever wrote for the Boys' Friend. I have all the issues from No. 1 in 1895 to around 1914, and I have looked at them page by page more than once. I feel sure I would have remembered Henty's name on a story. It would be, as you suggest, Hinton who wrote the editorial.

C. LESLIE FARROW (Boston): Please thank W. O. G. Lofts for his article on Edwy Searles Brooks. I enjoyed it so very much. Last but not least, I have just obtained C.D. Annual 1959. How I enjoyed "Tom Merry Cavalcade - A Game With Time!" My comment on this, I thought I was reading the work of Frank Richards himself it was so good. What a pity the youth of today cannot be brought up on this kind of reading. There would be a lot less violence and the world would be a better place.

BERNARD PRIME (Sanderstead): I thoroughly agreed with Mr. Wright in July C.D., and cannot agree with your remarks about the matter in August C.D. If, as you state, there are large numbers of C.D. readers who have no collection, this is probably due to prices being too absurdly high. It is not true that people simply collect things that are in short supply. Many, for instance, collected weekly papers when they were still being published each week, and no doubt found it just as enjoyable - it was certainly cheaper. Borrowed books do not and cannot give the same pleasure.

(When we saved the papers each week after buying them, we were not collecting. We were amassing, which is rather different. - ED.)

H. MACHIN (Preston): What an inspired piece of writing is Danny's Diary. Reading it, one almost lives again in August 1916. Very interesting was the Edwy Searles Brooks Story, but E.S.B. must have been rather an "old boy" when he was an avid reader of the Gem and Magnet. After all, he was 17 in 1907 when the Gem started, and 18 when the Magnet first appeared.

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): Mrs. Frances Brooks would like to thank William Lister very much indeed for his Berkeley Gray and Victor Gunn article. It was greatly appreciated. In answer to S. Gordon Swan's query in his interesting article 'Not always for Boys' as to the identity of 'Hampton Dene' he was S. Clarke Hook who also wrote the Jack, Sam, and Pete tales. It just goes to show once again how an author can mask his style under another non-de-plume. Personally I suspect that S.C.H. was greatly influenced by the book 'The Jungle' which certainly is one of the most revolting books ever published.

HAROLD LACK (Northampton): The front cover of the August issue brought back happy memories. My cousin used to take "School Friend" and passed them on to me, and somewhere about 1923 I started to get "Schoolgirls' Own," and enjoyed it so much that I was always looking out for earlier issues. Then, one Saturday afternoon, I managed to purchase about 100 of the back numbers at $\frac{1}{2}$ each! Halcyon days! I have most of the early issues (with a few gaps) from No. 1 onwards, and, of course, including "The Pinkerton Prize." Although I enjoyed both papers, I confess that some of the girls' names at Morcove tended to irritate - such as, for example, Cora and Judith Grandways, and all those alliterative names, like Madge Minden, Tess Trelawney, Dolly Delane, Ella Ellgood. However, the stories were wonderful, as were those of Cliff House, of course.

R. STOREY (Newcastle): One of the few halfpenny Marvels I possess is No. 204, and I

agree with S. Gordon Swan. I often wondered how it came to be printed. "The Fatal Button" was given to me by the late Herbert Leckenby. I mentioned to him how much I liked "Don Darrel, the boy who led a double life" in the 4d Union Jack. Again Herbert did his good deed, so that, as well as Marvel No. 204, I now also possess No. 200 of the Boys' Own Library "The Schooldays of Don Darrel" by Henry T. Johnson.

DENNIS M. HILLIARD (Nottingham): The hobby to me is a place of quietness after the activity and problems of my day-to-day work as a Probation Officer. My work is fascinating, but exhausting. The hobby acts as a reservoir of quietness. I thank you sincerely for the hard work done by yourself and so many contributors to present such monthly delights.

LES ROWLEY (Bangkok): I wanted very much to write a reply to the letter by the youngster who wrote that he and his contemporaries couldn't afford the exorbitant prices for the old papers. As we all know, the club libraries do a fine job and provide plenty to read. Some of the old 'uns are worse off than the youngsters with little more than their pensions to finish their lives on. It is nice to have your own collection, but not having one is no deterrent to enjoying the old stories.

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross): Danny's Diary this month started the family on a period of reminiscing. It's astonishing the bits of history which are brought out at these sessions. The early closing bill Danny mentioned caused the ladies to come up with a number of memories of their own. The old silent stars Danny writes about always bring a chorus "Oh, yes, I remember her in so-and-so."

CLIFF WEBB (Wigan): Last week I obtained the C.H. Museum Book. What a grand job! And what memories it must bring back to those collectors who remember the Magnet and Gem of 50 years ago.

H. FRANKLIN (Lincoln): Why don't we have any Gems of Hamiltonia now? It used to be a great favourite of mine in C.D.

(Series is rested temporarily. Later on, a third series will run. - ED.)

GENS: Numerous copies, 1920's. 5/- each. Some complete years. 1930's £13 per year. Some complete Magnet series, 1920's, 1930's, Nelson Lee, Old and New Series, 3/- to 4/6d. Rovers, Modern Boy, Tiger Tims Tales, etc.

S. A. E. L. SUTTON, 112, REPTON ROAD, ORPINGTON, KENT.

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SOME SENSATIONAL SCOOPS (continued from p. 30)

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle began a serial effort, "The Poison Belt." It told of how this world floated into a zone of poisonous gas. Compared with some of the other yarns about metal men with death-dealing rays, and huge fishlike creatures invading the earth, Conan Doyle's yarn seems rather tame, but he was an old man then, as a photograph in SCOOPS clearly shows, and was past his literary prime. In its 28 pages SCOOPS carried more advertising than most other twopenny papers of the period, and it would be interesting to learn how long it lived. One thing is certain: it is one old-time story paper that is not going to "date" for many decades. The stories are far too fantastic for that.

Edited by Eric Payne, Excelsior House, Grove Road, Surbiton, Surrey.
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