



# Collectors' Digest

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR  
Founded in 1941 by  
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST  
Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 20

No. 239

NOVEMBER 1966

Price 2s. 0d

## A WORD WITH THE SKIPPER

### FIRST LOVE

The word "nostalgia" comes from two Greek roots - one of them meaning "return" and the other "pain." So, presumably, nostalgia is really a return of pain. Nowadays, we employ the word loosely when we wish to indicate the pleasure we get when looking back. It is a word which is frequently used in the many hundreds of letters I receive each year.

I am always deeply interested to note the different ways that readers react. Some, I know, find constant satisfaction in reading the old stories continuously. Some have a favourite series which they read at long intervals, like a special Christmas story without which Christmas would not be Christmas. Others tell me that they are unable to read the stories in adulthood - the literary scope is too limited, confessed one recent letter-writer - but they have the warmest affection for the memory of the old tales. For almost all Collectors' Digest readers, those old, old periodicals were their first love.

Poets and writers have told of first love with abler pens than mine. There is something about our first love that stays, an inward memory that never loses its sweetness. Although the years and circumstances change our ideals and our hearts, nothing can destroy or take away the magic moments of our first real love, even in the deeper contentment of shared joys and sorrows.

Surely, for all of us in this little clan, our first love was the Gem, the Magnet, the Lee, or even perhaps the Butterfly or the Rainbow. Maybe Collectors' Digest is welcome each month, simply

because it enables us, to some extent, to relive our first love.

### A QUESTION OF MORALS

In our "The Postman Called" section this month we print a letter from Mr. Wadham, our New Zealand contributor, who chastises those people who advertise copies of Story Paper Collector for sale. No doubt plenty of us question the morality of selling something we have received for nothing, but I am not sure that we are entitled to interfere with the activities of people who do not see things as we do. It is all too easy to don one's halo on matters of this kind.

It is true that the late Bill Gander, with great generosity and, probably, self-denial, sent out his magazine free of charge to his readers, but it cannot be denied that back numbers of S.P.C. have been bought and sold by plenty of folk for many years past.

There is another way of looking at it. The fact that people seek S.P.C. to-day is a great tribute to warm-hearted Bill Gander. Our New Zealand friend suggests that Bill Gander "disapproved." Personally, I think that he would be happy that people should still seek his work, and I do not believe that he would wish to be dictatorial over a gift which he gave without strings.

### THAT DANNY AND HIS DIARY

A reader whose letter featured in "The Postman Called" last month suggested that Danny's appeal would be greater if that Diary of his was only thirty or forty years old instead of fifty. Danny, of course, ante-dates most readers, but, all the same, I have the feeling that the majority would prefer him to remain in his fifty-year old oasis.

Many readers tell me that they copy out Danny's comments on Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood, and enter them into books to build up the histories of the stories. This would seem to be especially useful in the case of Rookwood, for the full history of early Rookwood has never previously been fully set down.

I suppose that if readers in sufficient numbers would like the Danny extracts brought nearer to the present day we would give the matter consideration. But is it really necessary for a reader to have personal memories of 1916 for him to enjoy Danny's entries about the life he led and the books he read in that far-off day when things were so different?

### THE NEW HOLIDAY ANNUAL --

The Billy Bunter Holiday Annual has been shown on sale in some shops, but we have still heard from a number of readers who have found

it difficult to obtain the book to order. Once again it seems to be the wholesalers who are to blame. We have said before, and we say again, that it is an odd state of affairs when customers cannot buy from firms which should be anxious to sell. Does that sort of thing happen anywhere but in Britain?

I wonder whether, later on, we shall be told that there will be no more Holiday Annuals as it did not sell well.

-- AND OUR OWN ANNUAL

COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL FOR 1966 is coming nearer all the time. The final items are now going into the giant menu prepared for your enjoyment this Christmas.

Expert Hamiltonian, Roger Jenkins, writes thoughtfully and in his usual entertaining manner on the Style of Charles Hamilton. Frank Vernon Lay turns the spotlight on one of the most popular boys' writers between the wars; Bill Lofts gives us a pen-picture of Leonard Shields, the famous artist; Neil Beck links the St. Frank's cricketers with the 1966 Sussex team and even brings them into contest with the West Indies; our distinguished contributor Comicus will convulse you with the delightful and delicious "History of Tiddlervil;" Leslie Rowley makes a study in acid - the acid coming from Horace Hacker, master of Greyfriars; Jim Swan, in typical tongue-in-cheek-style, has quite a bit to say about the Thomson Papers; Mr. Buddle comes back to be involved in a little affair which goes under the name of "D'Arcy Maximus at Slade."

Those are only selections from the menu; there is plenty more to make up the enormous feast of reading which comes to you under the title of Collectors' Digest Annual for 1966. Have you ordered yours?

BE WARY!

Recently a person with a Stoke-on-Trent address wrote to Mr. W. O. G. Lofts offering a number of Gems for £1. Mr. Lofts sent off that sum. After a silence of some time, Mr. Lofts wrote again, asking for his Gems or for his money back. Shortly he received a post-war Tom Merry Annual and a ten-shilling postal-order.

That sort of thing is an impudent swindle, and anyone caught in this way should notify the police. We believe that a few other readers have heard from Stoke-on-Trent with an offer of Gems.

THE EDITOR

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Wanted GEMS before 1310.

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



## A TAIL ABOUT A DOG !

By W. O. G. Lofts

PICKLES, the mongrel dog who sniffed out the World Cup not so long ago won international fame. But like other headline news items, in time he will soon be buried in the past like so many of his bones.

Like so many other comic character enthusiasts how well I can remember another mongrel dog that appeared in the pink comic CHIPS. This dog entertained

millions of boys and girls for over 45 years. His name of course was HOMELESS HECTOR.

Even before I saw Homeless Hector again in recent years in my research into old comic papers, I could picture in my mind's eye his extremely comical face, though it must have been 25 years since I last read of his weekly adventures.

Two comic paper editor friends told me that "no dog with features like that could have ever existed in real life" yet I don't know so much. Only recently on Reading Station I saw his double - with short legs. An obvious mongrel cross between a dalmatian and an unknown breed.

As revealed in an earlier article Homeless Hector was created by A. T. Brown and first appeared in Chips No. 944 on October 3rd 1908. Great publicity was given to his arrival. The Mayor and Councillors and whole town were there to greet him. A special speech was prepared in his honour followed by a banquet of fourteen courses at the Town Hall. Sad to say, Hector would have none of this, and was drawn away by the attractions of the bone-yard opposite!

The success of Homeless Hector as a comic character was tremendous and the editorial office was bombarded by every post with bones and parcels of titbits by kind children for their Hector. Offers of

adoption ran into thousands, and it only goes to show what a 'real life' character the doggie had on the impressions of a young mind.

Shortly afterwards Homeless Hector appeared on the front page of Chips with Weary Willie and Tired Tim - as well as appearing in the centre pages - but in time settled for the centre pages where he became a regular star turn.

What amusing escapades he had each week! Adventures with chefs with joints of meat. Butchers and strings of sausages. Large cooks with pies on window-sills. Irate fat policemen. Mayors presenting gold and silver cups to him. Hector adopted by rich old ladies - and living like a king - but surprising enough next week being 'Homeless' again and roaming the streets. Collecting money on behalf of the local dogs' home - and last but not least those hundreds of adventures where he ran into those large street pipes.

As related in an earlier article, many artists drew Homeless Hector after the creator - when he was engaged on other things. One brought in Homeless Hector's playful pups, whilst another had a series of adventures running into story form.

The years rolled by, and as most readers know in 1953, Chips, which had reduced to a much smaller size, died. Homeless Hector who had been joined by this time by another of A. T. Brown's creations MOONLIGHT MOGGIE were in the last issue No. 2997 dated September 12th.

"Come on Mog. We'll fade away quietly into the shadows" said Homeless Hector.

And so that was the last we saw of dear old Homeless Hector after an unbroken run of over 2,000 consecutive issues.

Old rich man throws jewelled stick into the air, and asks Homeless Hector to retrieve it. Hector does - by taking it into the pawn shop - and then buys joints of meat with the proceeds.

Corny? Yes, perhaps today - but I'm sure that many readers will always remember as well as I do that wonderful doggie without a home, the one and only HOMELESS HECTOR.

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£1 each offered for reasonable binding copies Gems 805, 807, 812, 813, 814, 816, 817, 818, 822, 826, 828, 829, 831, 841, 845, 846, 847, 852, 862, 866, 951, 952, 970, 980. 10/- each for 844, 863, 991.

Write airmail:

CHARLES VAN RENEN, Box 50, UITENHAGE, SOUTH AFRICA.

## DANNY'S DIARY

November 1916

It was my half-term holiday at the very beginning of the month, and Doug took me to Alexandra Palace. There was a special exhibition of war relics on there, in aid of the Prisoners of War fund. We went from Kings Cross Station direct to Alexandra Palace, which has its own station, a terminus, right in the Palace grounds.

It is a huge place, on the top of a high hill, in the middle of lovely gardens. It was a sunny day and a bit misty, but even so it was a glorious view. We talked to an attendant who told us that Alexandra Palace has always been a white ephelant, but I think it must be rather a popular place, for, as well as having its own station, it also has two services of single-deck trams which go up the hill either side of the Palace. I asked whether it was named after Queen Alexandra, but the attendant said he didn't think so. He said it was built a long time ago, and he thought it was named after one of Queen Victoria's daughters.

The exhibition was quite nice, and I bought a fragment of a German zepp for 1/-. After seeing everything, we went down the hill on a tram, and after having tea in a little town named Wood Green, we went to another town named Finsbury Park.

Doug said I might as well make him bankrupt while I was about it, so we went to the first house at a lovely theatre called Finsbury Park Empire. It is very large, with thick carpets and red plush seats. Normally they have variety and revues at this theatre (it is one of the Moss Empires), but we saw a play called "Under Two Flags" by a writer named Ouida. The star was N. Carter Slaughter and he was very dramatic.

After the show, we went on the underground to Charing Cross, and it was late when we got home that night.

It has been an unusually good month in the Gem, though the Christmas Double Number was a disappointment. First tale of the month was "D'Arcy in Disgrace" which was excellent. This one was illustrated by Hayward, who now illustrates Rookwood. Gussy had a letter from a Mr. Banks, acknowledging the reseal of £1 in connection with a horse. Levison spied into the letter, and gossiped about it. It got rumoured that Gussy was betting with Banks, the bookie, and there was much disturbance among Gussy's friends. But finally it turned out that it was another Mr. Banks - a carrier who had three sons at the front.

Top-whole tale.

"All the Winners" was good, too. Trimble entered for a competition which offered a money prize to anyone naming the winners in four horse-races. The tale ended with Tom Merry & Co pretending to accept invitations to Trimble Hall for Christmas. But, during the train journey, Trimble managed to dodge them.

The Christmas Double Number, with a coloured cover by Warwick Reynolds, was a sequel to "All the Winners" but it wasn't by the same writer, and was rather a washout. Lord Eastwood and Lord Conway were away from home, so Gussy found himself the head of Eastwood House, and he had a large party there for Christmas. Horsman's Circus put in at Eastwood House, and Tom Merry fought somebody twice his size. But it was a poor affair. This issue contained some funny extracts from Tom Merry's Weekly.

The final tale of November was "The Third Form Sweepstake" which was good. Piggott got up a sweepstake to which, in order to avoid wickedness, they paid in stamps, and got a total of £4. Piggott arranged it so that he drew the favourite, but Frank Levison's outsider was the winner. Cutts came into this tale.

All the la-di-da people must be upset, for the price of The Times has gone up from 1d to 1½d. It won't affect us.

It has been a very stormy month nearly all the time, so there have been no occasions hardly when the street lights have gone out to indicate a zepp raid. But the price of a 4-lb loaf has gone up yet again to 10½d this time. They say that the price of food has risen 78% since the war started.

How very early some of the Christmas Numbers appear? The week after the Gem's, Doug bought me the Christmas Double Number of Chuckles. It had 8 pages of coloured pictures, and plenty of good stories too. There is a serial called "Adventure Island," a story called "Christmas Crackpots" about Captain Custard and his nephew, the Nib; a story named "The Great Adventure" about Claremont School; and one named "To The Rescue" which introduced Ferrers Locke, the detective, and Wingate and Vernon-Smith of Greyfriars. A good double number.

In the Boys' Friend, the Jimmy Silver - Expelled series continued. "Rawson To The Rescue" was the first tale, in which Rawson called in Jimmy's father, and managed to prove that Jimmy was not guilty of the theft of Beaumont's banknote. Beaumont and Mornington were expelled.

But in the next tale, "The Hero of Rookwood," Mornington pretended to be ill, so he was in the sanatorium, and the fellows were annoyed that he was dodging the order of expulsion. But the Head's

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house caught on fire, and Mornington rescued Rosie, the Head's daughter, so Mornington was pardoned.

After this, in "The Rookwood Reformers," Leggett bought a second-hand roulette wheel, and set up a gambling den in the crypt under the school. So Jimmy & Co had to start reforming the gamblers.

"Spoofing the School" was amusing. Tubby Muffin pretended to be dumb. Finally - and a bit late - came a November 5th tale, "The Moderns' Triumph." The Classics had a guy of Kaiser Bill. But the Moderns substituted a live Classical for the guy of the Kaiser.

At the pictures we have seen Mary Pickford in "The Eternal Grind," Pauline Frederick in "The Moment Before," and Louise Lovely in "The Gilded Spider." All quite good.

The P & O liner "Arabia" has been torpedoed. It's awful the things the Huns do.

They now issue two Sexton Blake Libraries each month, and Doug had one of them called "His Excellency's Secret." It brought in Professor Kew and Count Carlac. Doug liked it, but I got a big bogged down.

A good month in the Magnet. In "The Rascal of the Remove" Frank Richards said that though Herr Gans is a German he is not a Prussian. Skinner had a feud on with Herr Gans, and he set about making Herr Gans think that Herr Gans was mad. I keep repeating the name Herr Gans to avoid ambiggeroolity. Quite a good tale.

"Mauleverer's Detective" was also good. Mauly lost his pocket book containing a lot of money, and he engaged a detective, Mr. Sharp, to find it for him. Mr. Sharp discovered it had been stolen by Courtney of Highcliffe - but Mr. Sharp was Ponsonby in disguise. It was the Caterpillar who put things right. Very interesting yarn.

"Coker's Spy" was a comedy. Coker thought he saw a German spy on the Shoulder, and called in the assistance of the police and Mr. Prout with his rifle. But it was only Pete Hooker, a longshoreman, who had found it convenient to leave Pegg for a while.

Last of the month, "The Rivals of Greyfriars." To annoy the Famous Five, Temple fixed up a match with a Highcliffe team, led by Ponsonby. But Pon, as usual, behaved like a hooligan. Later, Temple thrashed Pon in the woods - but Pon told the police that the damage had been done by a tramp against whom he had a grudge. In the end, Temple went to the police and told them the truth - and Pon had to answer for his lies.

Another month gone by - and another Christmas nearly here. How time flies!

# NELSON LEE COLUMN

(CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD)



## NIPPER'S MAGAZINE

By R.J. Godsave

An important milestone in the history of the Nelson Lee Library was reached with the appearance of o.s. 338 "The Head's Other Self" in November 1921. This was the beginning of the famous Trenton series.

With this issue the price was increased to 2d. and the whole lay-out of the Nelson Lee was completely altered. The number of pages were increased to 40 with an extra 8 page supplement given free with each issue.

So was born Nipper's Magazine, the journal of the

Remove of St. Frank's. In the previous issue o.s. 337 "The Secret of the Box Room" the activities of the Removites engaged in the preparation of No. 1 were recorded.

Nipper's Magazine was a complete and compact journal. It was possible to detach from the Nelson Lee without any detriment whatsoever.

A fine drawing of Timothy Tucker, purported to be drawn by Harold Doyle of the Remove, adorned the front page of No. 1. An introductory letter by the Editor - Nipper - expressing his hopes that the adventure would be successful, and inviting constructive criticism from readers, whether belonging to the school or outside to write to him.

There was no lack of contributors of articles. According to Nipper some were good, some bad and some only passable. Edward Oswald Handforth writes under the title of "The World's Greatest Detective." Apart from a mention of Nelson Lee, now and again, it would be more accurate to say that it was an appreciation of the author's own detective ability.

Apparently this contribution by Handforth was regarded by the Editor as a humorous article, as he was commissioned to write a series of articles entitled "The Fellows I Admire." As Handforth was an unconscious humourist, he, no doubt, regarded them as serious.

The first of these appears in No. 4. and any admiration of the subject of the article is overshadowed by the self admiration of the author.

Timothy Tucker writes an introduction to "An Analysis of the Modern Schoolboy." As the introduction takes a full page the Editor informs the reader that the article itself will not appear.

Some doggerel by Jimmy Little on how to make life worth living, could in fact, be answered in three words - plenty of grub.

A short story by Bob Christine "When Bessie came to Study Q". In this case Bessie was an oil stove, and how she misbehaved herself and finally exploded makes tragic reading, especially in view of the 1000 lines each that Bob Christine & Co. collected.

For the thriller "The Mystery of Moor Cottage" filled the bill. It was unusual in that Nipper received four manuscripts of the same story - one by Reginald Pitt, one by Dick Goodwin, another by Solomon Levi, and the last by Sir Montie Tregellis-West. How this came to be is explained in a foreword by the Editor. The story was worked out by Nipper and two or three of his assistants in the editorial office. He did not actually commission any particular fellow to write up the yarn, which explains a lot.

As a novelty he decided to publish the story in four weekly parts

- each part by a different author. Nipper thought the effect would be startling, and he was dead right.

Not by any stretch of the imagination could one believe that Sir Montie - in Solomon's Levi's section - would call to his companions "By my life, come on chaps." It would be equally difficult to imagine Reggie Pitt in Sir Montie's section, saying "Pray don't be so shockingly absurd, dear old fellows."

One constant feature in the magazine was "Topical Mixture" by the Editor. This comprised humorous and witty remarks on the various happenings which occurred at St. Frank's.

Another interesting feature was "Who's Who at St. Frank's," a short biography of some of the juniors giving details of their first appearance at the school with highlights of subsequent activities.

No. 5 of Nipper's Magazine coincided with the Christmas Number of the Nelson Lee with the whole magazine devoted to a play by Reginald Pitt called "The Secret of Hill Cottage." With only six persons acting the parts, and the only scenery necessary being the interior of a country cottage, it was possible for any of the readers to stage the play at home. Guidance was given in a short article entitled "Hints for amateur actors."

It is interesting to note that this play was performed by the St. Frank's juniors at the Christmas Party given by Lord Dorriemore. It was described by Nipper in "The Christmas Plotters."

In this case the play was reduced to a farce by one of the actors, namely Handforth, taking certain lines as personal remarks addressed to him.

No. 9 saw the first instalment of "Peck's Bad Boy." This was indeed a scoop. The adventures of "Peck's Bad Boy" were really funny. This was a book that had been filmed and had made all America laugh.

There is no doubt that E. S. Brooks excelled himself, and had pulled out all the stops to make "Nipper's Magazine" a great success.

Perhaps the initial issues were too good to last. In o.s. 344 the eight pages of the magazine were included in the forty pages to which the Nelson Lee had been increased.

It is to be regretted that this wonderful little magazine occupied less and less pages as time went on, only to disappear completely from the pages of the Nelson Lee Library.

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WANTED: MAGNETS for own collection, odd copies acceptable. Please sent issue numbers available and price required to:-

J. de FREITAS, 29 Gilarth St., Highett S21, Victoria, Australia.

# BLAKIANA

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

ODDITIES IN THE BLAKE SAGA

\* \* \*

By S. Gordon Swan

No. 130, First series of the Sexton Blake Library, was entitled "African Gold, or the Kaffir's Secret," and written by W. Murray Graydon, though his name did not appear. Under the title appeared the following description:

"A thrilling Romance of British South Africa and the wild regions to the North, introducing again to the reader Basil Wicketshaw, the Gilt-edged Crook, and the splendid Zulu warrior, Shumpogaas, and telling how Sexton Blake and Tinker and Cavendish Doyle, the celebrated Secret Service man, after many perilous adventures, thwarted the designs of a Gang of Villains and helped to raise the value of the sovereign."

The odd thing about this story is that the Gilt-edged Crook referred to did not appear in it. Basil Wicketshaw was conspicuous by his absence. There were a number of villains in the narrative, and the chief of them was one Gabriel Penterleith, who we were afterwards to hear of as Wicketshaw's associate in crime, along with Rupert Vole.

No doubt Murray Graydon intended to bring Basil Wicketshaw into the story, and possibly Gabriel Penterleith would have proved to be another alias of the master criminal, but either the author forgot, or changed his mind and omitted to remove the name of the character from the foreword.

With reference to the aforementioned Rupert Vole, this character was killed beyond the possibility of recall in one episode, but turned up alive and vigorous in a later story!

The intrepid Cavendish Doyle was subject to inconsistencies of background and association. In one Union Jack, "Besieged in Malabar," he had a teenage daughter, Nellie Doyle, whereas in a previous story, "The Great Abduction Mystery," (No. 56 Sexton Blake Library First Series) we are given to understand that Cavendish Doyle was a pseudonym, that his real name was John Hamilcar, and that he had a wife and a little son.

We are accustomed to hearing Mrs. Bardell spoken of as 'Martha' -

- once, if recollection serves me correctly, she was referred to as 'Maria.' But on reading the early stories of W. Murray Graydon, who is credited with being her creator, she is on several occasions referred to as 'Betsy Bardell.'

As for our old friend Coutts, for a long time he has been known as 'George Coutts.' Robert Murray, I believe, originated this character, and hardly ever referred to him in any other way than as 'Detective-Inspector Coutts.' But in Union Jack No. 763, "A Mid-Ocean Mystery," he is specifically noted as 'John William Coutts.'

The last story in the Sexton Blake Library to appear under the authorship of Lewis Jackson was No. 244, Third Series; "The Man From Persia." On reading this story I received the impression that it was not written in the style one associated with this author. It is true that Inspector Harker was the Scotland Yard man involved, and there was a paragraph in which mention was made of Leon Kestrel, the Master Mummer - both creations of Lewis Jackson. Nevertheless the feeling persisted that this particular yarn was not by him.

It was not until some years later, when I obtained some pre-war copies of the Sexton Blake Library, that the truth came to light. No. 404 Second Series, "The Victim of Devil's Alley," by Paul Urquhart, was a story that I had read many years before, but on re-reading it I found that it was substantially the same tale as "The Man From Persia." Paul Urquhart's story had been re-written, and with most of the names altered. No mention was made in it of Leon Kestrel, however, and in the original, Inspector Harker was replaced by Inspector Coutts.

One wonders if Lewis Jackson was given this story to revise or whether he made a few alterations in somebody else's story and submitted it as his own work. This was not an era in which reprints were being issued. In any event, it would appear that the last original story by him was No. 206 "The Man Who Left Home."

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FURTHER TO THE BISMARCK STORY

By C. H. Churchill

I would like to add to the notes regarding this subject in the October C.D. I have recently read both the new S.B.L. and the N.L. 2nd new series No. 139 which was published in 1932 under the title of "The Mystery Box." According to the N.L. Catalogue, No. 139 is a reprint from S.B.L. 1st series No. 151 "The Mystery Box" and not "The Clayton Moat Mystery" a Union Jack story as suggested in the C.D.

After reading both these stories I found the one in the N.L. purely and simply an abridged version of the New Sexton Blake one.

The plot and action seemed fairly complete except that the prologue was omitted, and many of the trimmings left out. If one had not read the full version, the N.L.L. story would have seemed quite good, but compared together, the full story is, of course, very much better.

The N.L. 2nd new series contained, in all, three stories by Pierre Quiroule, all reprints from the S.B.L. namely:

"The Case of the King's Spy" in No. 135

"The Mystery Box" in No. 139

"Secret Service" in No. 155

(R/P "The Mystery of the Turkish Agreement" in S.B.L.  
1st series 135.)

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### R E V I E W S

#### DEATH ON THE SPIKE

Desmond Reid

It is well known that if you want Sexton Blake to take on an assignment in which he has no particular interest, it is best to threaten him with violence if he does so. When such a threat crackled along the wires into the flat in Baker Street, it dispersed all hesitancy in Blake, and before the receivers were cradled at either end the mystery of the murder of DAILY POST columnist, Leslie Langford, was already on its way to being solved. The guns of the enemy were destined to be spiked as effectively as the head of the unfortunate newspaperman, which had been discovered impaled to a desk of rejected copy in the office in which he worked. Full marks and bonus points here for a welcome, if gruesome, touch of originality, although most of what follows is rather more commonplace.

Blake is not so much the detective as the strategist here, working on a link of the recent Great Train Robbery, involving a quarter of a million in gold bars, the objective of rival factions of a dis-united gang. His plan is simply to let the two sides fight it out between themselves and to then step in with his own little band of allies and round up the depleted forces of both combatants. Tinker, less in the limelight than in his boyhood days, has a good role. A huskier physique, bringing with it the ability to "out" his man with the same swift precision, has increased his value to Blake enormously in their ceaseless campaign against the unabated violence of modern organised crime, and this is ably demonstrated here.

This can hardly be classed as a who-dun-it, for the identity of the murderer seems obvious. To the extent that one is left wonder-

ing uneasily whether he is going to be a victim of the author's subtlety or a butt of his sophistry. Not the very best of Blakes, but good average fare, with effective rather than spectacular dialogue in a narrative which runs smoothly and reads easily. Altitude is lost about two-thirds of the way through but regained in a fitting climax which has Blake participating in an aerial chase over the treacherous Goodwins armed with a weapon of the future.

Walter Webb

FIRE OVER INDIA

W. Howard Baker

One of my favourite authors of the Sexton Blake Library in the 1940s was Anthony Parsons. I looked forward with eager anticipation to everything written by him, in particular I liked his stories about Blake in India.

So with something approaching the feeling I had years ago, I settled down to read this month's offering from W. Howard Baker.

I now find myself in a quandary. The first few chapters of this book have an impact which too much knowledge of the plot will spoil, so choosing my way carefully I take the plunge.

The year was 1942. Rangoon had fallen, and the Imperial Armies of Japan were advancing to the very gates of India.

Craille, head of Britain's counter-espionage service, heard rumour of a plot to sell out India to the enemy. One woman held the key, and somewhere among Calcutta's teeming millions this woman was to be found.

Craille's agent had thirty-six hours in which to find her.

This is an enjoyable story, with many twists to the plot, and an exciting climax. The final chapter is very good - a pity it wasn't longer.

"The Angry Night," of which this is a reprint, was published in May 1960. This version, a revised and enlarged edition is, in my opinion superior to the original.

Ray Norton

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WANTED: Magnets, years 1930-40; Skippers; Hotspurs; Wizards and Greyfriars S.O.Ls.

D. MALLETT,  
24, BATCHELORS BARN ROAD, ANDOVER, HANTS.



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# HAMILTONIANA

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 61 - Gems 1647-1663 - Silverson Series

It is curious that the last Gem series of all should have been the longest of all, running to seventeen numbers, and it is also an odd co-incidence that it should feature Tom Merry in a strong leading role. On the other hand, this series is like the other three new series that Charles Hamilton wrote for the Gem in 1939 - slightly out of touch with the atmosphere of St. Jim's in its heyday. Cardew appears but his whimsicalities have gone; Gussy is featured a lot, but he lacks the power to amuse us in a surprising manner. There are no false notes - it is just that the magic touch is gone.

James Silverson was a distant relative of Tom Merry's, and he obtained a post as a temporary master of the Fourth form with the object of getting Tom Merry disgraced so that he could inherit Miss Fawcett's fortune. This immediately brings to mind the Smedley series in the Magnet, as does the manner in which Silverson delayed Mr. Lathom's return. The episode of the Guy Fawkes masks recalls the Secret Society series in the Magnet (or an even earlier Rookwood one) while the defiant attitude of Tom Merry seems to echo the second Wharton the rebel series, especially when he discusses with Trimble the advisability of claiming that he saved a man's life as an excuse for breaking detention. Finally, the episodic nature of the series, in which Silverson tries and fails each week with his plotting recalls the later Magnets. Only the episode of Mr. Linton's watch ran into two numbers.

It is possible to see a number of reasons why this series fails to hit the bullseye. Tom Merry is miscast as a rebel, and both Railton and Linton are shadowy figures compared with Quelch. Even Silverson himself is poorly presented, one minute the cool schemer and the next minute completely enraged, throwing caution to the winds. When all the main protagonists are drawn unsatisfactorily, the series cannot be a real winner.

Yet despite all its defects, it has the supreme quality of readability: Charles Hamilton never really lost his power as a storyteller. If the series cannot stand comparison with Magnet and Gem stories of the Golden Age, it can at least still enthral the reader

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with its fascinating plot and counter-plot. There are also some nostalgic war-time touches that crept in about October 1939 - references to the black-out, A.R.P., and service aircraft. Perhaps the saddest notes of all, however, were the very last words of the story:-

"And it's going to be a ripping next term at St. Jim's!" Tom Merry declared.

"What-ho!" agreed Manners and Lowther.

but, alas, for the first time in over thirty years there was to be no next term for the schoolboys in the Gem.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 105. THE MYTH OF GREYFRIARS

I think it probable that some of our readers listened with blissful happiness to the hour-long programme "The Myth of Greyfriars" on the Third Network on September 29th. In fact, one or two have written me to say, in effect: "Wasn't it wonderful!" I daresay that others, like myself, listened with mixed feelings.

It is difficult to make an appraisal of the presentation without hearing it a second time. I can only comment on what seemed to me to be, on the one hearing, the gist of it all. Not that I want to hear it repeated!

The programme was studded with illustrious names. It was written and produced by John Chandos. Passages were read by Hugh Burden. There were reminiscent comments by Professor Sir Denis Brogan and Dr. Ronald St. Blaize-Molony. It was produced by George MacBeth.

Even though these gentlemen have not, so far as I am aware, followed parallel paths to those trodden by the clubs and Collectors' Digest, one assumed in advance that they were experts on the Greyfriars story. But after I heard a melodramatic chunk from a substitute story included in the readings, I began to wonder. Our own experts, with much less illustrious names, would have known the difference at once between a genuine tale and an imitation one.

The readings themselves were adequate, if not exactly inspired. The passages selected for reading could have been a great deal better than they were. We, in fact, have published infinitely better material in our Gems of Hamiltonia series. There was nothing on

radio to show the delicious, subtle humour of which Charles Hamilton was capable. There was but little to indicate the brilliant little items of characterisation and drama which flowed at times from the famous author's pen.

Hamilton's most successful creation was presented in the stock manner with Yaroooh! Wow-ow-wow! Groooh! That, of course, is the shallow view of Billy Bunter, accepted by those who have only a superficial knowledge of him.

And, as we have already mentioned, one, at least, of the readings came from a tale which was not Hamilton at all. Could anything be more fantastic?

I am not certain whether it was intended to infer that Hamilton's Greyfriars, over forty years and more, with all its plots and counter-plots and, at times, vivid characterisation stemmed from "Stalky & Co." But I am fairly certain that the programme was meant to be a kind of analysis to find out why Hamilton was a success, why he wrote his stories, why thousand upon thousand of boys down the years read those stories, why some of those boys continued to read those stories after boyhood was passed, and why some adults still read those stories to-day.

It's all a great big, big, big mystery, inferred the programme.

You know, and I know, that there is no need for any psychological analysis to find out these things. In fact, to try to make an analysis is creating a mystery where none exists.

Charles Hamilton was a phenomenon, but he was no freak. Our hobby of collecting the old papers, or reading them in adulthood, or both, may place us in a minority group, but we are no curiosities. We are no more bizarre than those who like to hit a golf ball into the distance, walk after it, and then hit it again. Or those who take guns and shoot little wild animals in the woods - or try to. Any hobby is only freakish to those who do not understand it.

The analyst may decide that Greyfriars appealed to boys from poor homes and slum schools - boys who liked to lose themselves in the dream world of Greyfriars. He may also decide that adults who read Greyfriars have the I.Q. of the average 11 - 13 age group. In fact the analyst may arrive at a whole number of conclusions.

We know quite well that the adults who read Charles Hamilton's stories include highly-qualified doctors, clergymen of all denominations and creeds, headmasters, specialist teachers, barristers, solicitors, civil servants, and the like. The I.Q. of these citizens can hardly be in doubt.

As a boy, I suppose I was an average youngster. I daresay you were, too. I had a reasonably comfortable home; I attended reasonably comfortable and efficient schools; I had reasonably affectionate parents. I never had the slightest wish to go to Greyfriars or to change my home for Wharton Lodge.

Analysis would not produce anything in my case which I could not explain quite simply. I liked well-written school stories. I read Charles Hamilton because he was the best writer of school stories I knew. When boyhood was passed, I still read Charles Hamilton because he was still able to entertain me.

Many years have gone by since the last Magnet appeared. I seldom read Charles Hamilton now. To-day I browse over him. I study him. I consider the different phases of his career, his moods, his tastes, the respective values of his various innumerable series.

To-day I am quite satisfied that Hamilton was the world's greatest writer of school stories - and I still like well-written school stories. It's all too simple for analysis.

Analysis can tell us nothing concerning the success of Charles Hamilton either. He succeeded because he wrote well - and because he worked like blazes. His style appealed to the average boy. His work was enjoyed by generation after generation, so there was a continuous demand for his stories as the decades slipped by. His success was born in him. And he wrote so well that intelligent adults enjoyed reading him too. There's no mystery in it, whatever the Third Programme experts may think.

A final thought or two on "The Myth of Greyfriars." In a sequence about discipline, the radio reader showed several boys up for a flogging and "Dr. Locke wielding the birch and enjoying himself for the next few minutes." I could not place that particular sequence, but it did not sound like the real Richards.

Whether anything was gained by the inclusion of the voice of the author, recorded only three months before his death, with his dry little chuckles, is a question. Probably it added authenticity and novelty, though I, personally, was rather sad to hear him singing in Latin.

How I wish that it had been possible to hear him in some recording made twenty, or even ten, years earlier, speaking firmly and confidently in the tones and terms with which he routed George Orwell and other critics.

About a year ago we discussed the shortcomings of "Prospectus." Now we apply the same yardstick to radio and TV programmes of recent

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years. It is odd that the very people who know the whole story from A to Z, the real experts, are never asked to assist with these affairs. They are merely analysed.

In Radio Times, dated October 13th, appeared a letter from Mrs. Hamilton Wright, niece of Frank Richards, though Mrs. Wright was criticising the advance blurb (written by John Chandos) published in the Radio Times, and not the programme itself. We are all the way with Mrs. Wright when she condemns the omission of any reference to the post-war Bunter books and the TV plays, even though it is a matter of opinion whether the post-war period was the best (as suggested by Mrs. Wright) or whether the new story, published last year, added anything to the saga.

But we are all a hundred per cent with Mrs. Wright when she hits the nail on the head with her closing comment: "Frank Richards' magic lay in his ability to capture the youth of each generation in turn."

In one sense of the word, the 'Myth' of Greyfriars was not a bad name for this programme. It is astounding, and perhaps of but little credit to us, that this "myth" is being built up under the very noses of those of us who know better.

(NOTE: The substitute story from which a passage was read was "In Merciless Hands," published in 1928.)

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NO. 103. GRIST FOR THE MILL

CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

PETER HANGER: I feel that your comments on the immediate post-war activities of Charles Hamilton show a total lack of sympathy to an elderly gentleman who found himself with no regular source of income, almost alone in a strange and unfamiliar world. Those were not easy times for those of us who still had our youth. But, bearing in mind the acute paper shortage, to an elderly author whose writings were the only string to his bow, they must have seemed hopeless. The fact that the writings in question were below the standard of his pre-war stories (they could hardly have been better) does not mean, as you seem to infer, that they were worthless and should never have been written or published. Incidentally, there were two girls' schools - St. Olive's and Headland House.

LURIE SUTTON: I can't quite agree with the criticism of Charles Hamilton's early post-war writings for small publishers. C.H. could

surely not be expected to anticipate what happened later.

Neither can I see why he should be faulted for writing the Will Hay stories for the Pilot. We may have preferred that he used his talents in writing St. Jim's or Rookwood yarns, but if the kids of the day accepted Bendover that was their business. After all, we have been left a lifetime of glorious reading by the master; and we don't have to read the Will Hay stories if we don't feel so inclined. I feel we sometimes tend to overlook the fact that Charles Hamilton was writing primarily for the children of the day, and not to insure against adult criticism of 30 years later.

JACK OVERHILL: Why did Frank Richards write for some poor-type weeklies after the second world war? According to letters he wrote me in 1946-47 which I've still got - because he was broke, with no prospects and an income-tax hangover. "Oh, for the 1880's!" he said. And how was it that some of your correspondents called on him. I was eager to do so, but when I mentioned it he said "No visitors, please!" What could I do but submit to his wishes?

W. O. G. LOFTS: I must take you severely to task when you say "Yet we ourselves have traced very little of the C.H. stories in Trapps Holmes." In fact, I can well remember doing at least six months' research on the subject which was published in C.D. for May 1962, and in which C.H. wrote possibly nearly 2000 short tales under his own name and a host of others. As C.H. himself stated many years ago he used the names of Ridley Redway, Frank Drake, and Robert Stanley, and I can confirm his statement. I have 878 names alone to stories. I can only conclude that this article has been completely forgotten, mainly perhaps through the turmoil of C.H.'s death when it was published. If ever any article should be republished, this should be it.

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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. GEMS: Some issues between 801 and 832, 953, 954, 956, 975, 980, 984, 985, 989, 990, 992, 993, 998, POPULARS: 452, 455, 466, 452.

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

# NEWS FROM THE CLUBS

## MIDLAND

Meeting held 27th September

The attendance of nine members was an improvement on last month, but we hope for even better in the winter sessions. We enjoyed a lively and interesting get together in our new, cosy headquarters at the Birmingham Theatre Centre. There were apologies from John Tomlinson, Jack and Madge Corbett and Mr. Hull. The meeting was very pleased to hear that Madge Corbett is now on the road to recovery following her stay in hospital. "Get Well" cards were sent to her and Roger Jenkins who is in hospital for a minor operation at the moment.

The postal members' letter bag was full of interesting items. These were read and passed round. Stan Knight, John Tomlinson and Mr. Hull had all written to the club during the past month.

The New Holiday Annual should have been on sale as Ivan Webster, our chairman, had obtained a dozen copies, but he had inadvertently forgotten them in the rush to get to the meeting. He took orders, however, and promised to get them delivered. Those members who had seen a copy were pleased with it.

The acting secretary gave a mixed quiz which reduced writing to a minimum and Win Brown was the winner getting a nice copy of a Blue and White Popular for a prize. This was followed by a game by Ian Parish on the 20 questions idea on Radio and T.V. Win Brown and the acting secretary gave the correct solutions.

The Anniversary number was Magnet No. 294, "Bravo the Bounder" dated 27th September 1913 and was 53 years old. It was published barely twelve months before the Great War had engulfed the peoples of Europe and disturbed for ever the serenity of Edwardian England.

The Collector's Item was again a very famous book, Boys' Friend Library No. 383 "After Lights Out." This was added to our library for the use of members. George Chatham took it out to read during his week's holiday. We had no doubt he had a treat in store for it is a very fine story.

As two members due to give items in our programme, Ted Davey and Madge Corbett, were unavoidably absent, the acting secretary gave a reading from the 1930 Holiday Annual from a St. Jim's story "Gussy's Latest Stunt." Gussy is converted to the ideals of Communism

by Skimpole and in his usual ingenuous way confounds the local inhabitants and his schoolmates by his disregard for the rights of property. The discovery of the "humbug" which the protagonists of Communism talk teaches him a valuable lesson. Apparently Communism is all right applied to other people's property, not one's own.

The evening was concluded by a discussion of ways and means of giving our club a "shot in the arm" and generating new interest led by Norman Gregory. Several good ideas were put forward, but we decided to let members think them over and the subject will be brought up again at our next meeting.

Our next meeting is an informal one and we meet at the Birmingham Theatre Centre on the 25th October.

J. F. Bellfield  
Correspondent.

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NORTHERN

Meeting held 8th October, 1966

When the meeting opened formally with a muster of 15, Elsie Taylor again took the Chair as Geoffrey Wilde was unfortunately on the sick list. All hoped Geoff would soon be well and with us again. A postcard from Tom Roach holidaying in the South of France, explained the absence of another "regular."

The minutes and financial report given, we listened to Gerry Allison's interesting news from postal members. This included comments on the Frank Richards' broadcast (which was also discussed fully later in the meeting); purchase of Nelson Lee items; an incident Gerry had related to "Northerner II" of the "Yorkshire Post" (who published it in his column next day) regarding a member's experience in ostrich-handling!; and Gerry had a card to be sent to our President on his birthday.

Vice Chairman Jack Wood reported a new Mayflower issue of "Plum Pie" (?) and a forthcoming P. G. Wodehouse book. He also referred to the tie-up of the "Bismarck Memoirs" with the Nelson Lee, which had been mentioned too at the recent Birmingham Club Meeting.

Harry Barlow had contacted Armada seeking information of any further Greyfriars publications. A letter back confirmed that Fleetway are to publish some paper backs and so are retaining the copyright. It would seem that there is still hope of more re-prints, and we all hope it will be soon.



Now Keith Balmforth gave a talk which was on a subject not broached before at a Club Meeting, namely, on the presentation of the Greyfriars Scene in poetry, from the "Holiday Annuals." He started at the school gate with Gosling, then a general scene, followed by incidents in the life of Coker, and Bunter. Appropriately Keith ended with breaking up day. Keith read with good effect, and this novel item was much enjoyed.

Gerry had another of the ever-ingenious Cliff Webb's descriptive quizzes. The answers were all titles of hobby books and magazines, and the winners were Neville Vear and Bill Williamson, jointly.

Now followed the refreshments and chat. After this we tried to make a list of all the Hamilton schools which we see has been quoted as 51. The list reached 45 - 46, and still research goes on. Two readings then followed. The first from "Tom Brown's Schooldays" read by Gerry Allison, featuring Tom's famous arrival at Rugby. The second by Jack Wood was from "The Heart of a Goof" by our president, P. G. Wodehouse. Both these items went down very well.

The meeting wound to a close with a very lively discussion which covered many subjects from the B.B.C's understanding (or misunderstanding according to opinion!) of the Frank Richards' saga, to the Battle of Stamford Bridge, recently commemorated in Yorkshire! At 9.20 p.m. members bade farewell and departed homewards.

Next meeting on 12th November, 1966, (film evening).

M. L. Allison

Hon. Sec.

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LONDON

There were 23 members present at the Leytonstone home of Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Godsave. In the unavoidable absence of Uncle Ben, it fell upon Don Webster to act as his deputy.

After the minutes of the previous meeting had been read, confirmed and signed, the financial report was given, which showed a loss of £2. 12. 0. on the recent Margate outing. Two or three more members would have turned this into a small profit.

There was a discussion on the advisability (or otherwise) of Press Publicity. Roger Jenkins strongly emphasized that he was not in favour of any further publicity and referred to the visit of "The Sunday Times" reporter attending the Y.M.C.A. meeting at short notice. Brian Doyle took the opposite view, and it was finally decided to

adhere to the Club's previous decision to bar all publicity in future. Len Packman then produced a mammoth Scrap Book presented by Harry Dowler of Manchester and it was agreed that members could have this on loan for a month. The Secretary was asked to write and thank Harry for his gift to the Club. Charlie Wright added that he also would lend his Scrap Book for the benefit of members. Len Packman read an article from the C.D. (No. 20 - 1948) written by the late Herbert Leckenby, entitled "Street of Memories" - as it was the 9th anniversary of Herbert's death. This item was very well received.

The meeting ended with Ray Hopkins playing a tape recording of a conversation between the late Bill Gander and David Hobbs, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all present.

The hosts were then thanked for their hospitality and we made our way homewards with "echoes of the past" ringing in our ears.

Next meeting - Sunday 20th November, at Dollis Hill (Mr. and Mrs. Bob Blythe).

D. B. W.

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THE JESTER WAS NO JUMBLE

By O. W. Wadham

While The Jester was noted in its early years for giving more fiction than picture fun, by 1930 it was one of the neatest and best balanced comic papers in all the vast array of penny comics that crowded the bookshops in those days. I doubt if any other comic looked so trim and tidy. There were no single picture joke blocks, so often weak and woeful in similar publications. The picture pages just had a most entertaining company of regular characters who gave good measure every time.

First came Constable Cuddlecook, and next in importance, and taking up all the back page, were Basil and Bert. Middle section was principally populated by Lizzie and her Comical Courtiers, Francis Hake (a very fishy looking bloke) and Walter Rally. Others were Uncle Squibs and his Naughty Nibs, Seezum and Squeezum, the Artful Arabs, Sandy and Dusty, the Regimental Rascals, and Jessie Joy, Just like a Boy. Jessie was a Sunbeam, the innocent Imp type, but looked about 16 or 17 and had a skirt well above her shapely knees. She must have been a great favourite with older readers for she surely showed a cunning drop of leg.

Fiction pages were nicely planned, too. First came "Just We Three," the story of two homeless brothers and a girl companion with a touring circus. Then over to the Double D. in the U.S.A. with "The Man From Texas." After those two serials came two complete

NEW WILLIAM ADVENTURES IN THE SHOPS

The publication of a new William book is always an event for large numbers of readers. In WILLIAM AND THE MASKED RANGER (Newnes; 10/6) Richmal Crompton is in sparkling form. Though ostensibly on the market for youngsters, the book is assured of a mighty welcome from the young in heart of any age.

Miss Crompton never loses her joyful gift of contrivance which lands William in so many hilarious dilemmas from which he always emerges "this side up with care." Each of the six stories in this new collection has its moments of bliss for the reader, but my own favourites are the last two, "William and the Art Club" and "The Play's the Thing." These two, I feel sure, will provide the greatest joy for the older reader, for in these William comes into contact with some of Miss C's adult creations. And Miss C's adults, down the years, have always been a dream of delight.

The old favourites, Robert and Ethel, are mentioned but little, which will disappoint some of the fans, and the author seems to have forgotten all about Violet Elizabeth and her ample mother. But, with William, there is always the consolation that there will be a next time.

If you can afford this book, it is a must. If you can't afford it, well, get it just the same. It will make you forget your troubles.

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W A N T E D : C. D. Annual 1947; C.Ds. 2, 4-7, 9; S.P.Cs. 1, 10, 34, 37 - 41, 77, 78 and index for Volume 3.

JOHN BECK, 29, MILL ROAD, LEWES, SUSSEX.

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W A N T E D : Pre-1939 single Magnets.

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FOR SALE: Four leather-bound volumes "CHUMS" - years 1896 to 1899. Excellent condition.. 50/- plus postage.

JOHNSON, 139 High Street, HARROLD, BEDFORD.

# THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

WALTER WEBB (Birmingham): I was surprised to see you mis-quoted in the May issue, but even more so to observe that the misquotation has been allowed to pass without comment. I entirely disagree that many old articles were full of errors, as you were quoted as saying. There have been mistakes of course - I have been guilty of a few - but in comparison to the hundreds of articles which have appeared in C.D. very few have been proved to contain errors. On the other hand, those of a most blatant kind are still being made, despite what you said about our knowledge being greater than it was twenty years ago. In recent issues collectors like Laurie Sutton, Ron Crollie, Gordon Swan and Harry Dowler have disputed this in articles, and as far as Sexton Blake lore is concerned both Mr. Swan and Mr. Dowler are perfectly right in what they said.

Is information gathered in 1966 to be regarded as the more authentic if in opposition to that gathered in 1950? I do not think so.

O. W. WADHAM (New Zealand): I am only irritated by one type of offer that Collectors' Digest sometimes features. For instance in August issue an advertiser offers "Story Paper Collector," 1 to 50, for sale.

The late Bill Gander spent much time and money printing his most interesting little paper, and sent it freely and willingly to any one who loved the hobby of story paper collecting.

It is unfair and ungrateful to try and sell what was unselfishly given. I well know that Bill disapproved of such a practice, for he wrote about his disfavour in a letter to me some months ago.

C. L. FARROW (Boston): Could Mr. Lofts please supply any information on a Boys' Friend 4d Library "Spence of the Spurs," published, I believe, in 1922? Spence was a protege of Jimmy Seed (or was it Tommy Clay?) who went on to play for Spurs and England. If I remember rightly, many of the Spurs players of that period were brought into the story. I think the writer was Wheway.

R. F. REDHEAD (Poulton-le-Fylde): I am surprised that no mention of "The Boys' Magazine," circa 1932, appears in any C.D. I have seen. I felt the publication fell below the standard of Modern Boy and Magnet, but it was far superior to its contemporaries like Rover and Wizard, etc.

JOHN TOMLINSON (Burton-on-Trent): The Gem Catalogue is very useful to compare with Danny's remarks about the tales. Reading his current

remarks demonstrates the way in which the reprints in 1938 were thrown haphazard into the paper. Whereas, in 1916, the story about Levison saving Talbot from the scheming of Crooke was followed a fortnight later by the arrival of Frank Levison; in 1938 the stories shot up to 1919 reprints and we heard nothing about Levison for months. Then we switched back to Levison Minor's coming of 1916.

JOHN McMAHON (Tannochside): Every month of the year is made brighter by the arrival of C.D. I always turn first to Danny's Diary with keen anticipation. He still has a few years to cover before he reaches my time.

G. W. MASON (Dawlish): The late Bill Gander's single-handed contribution to the hobby is probably unsurpassed. As a pioneer in this field and as a true artist, he will be remembered as much as the great literary figures of the Old Boys' Books world are remembered and the characters they portrayed. We shall seek our Story Paper Collectors as eagerly as we sought our Magnets and Gems and other beloved periodicals of the past. Well done, Bill!

E. DAVEY (Christchurch): Glad others remember Will Hay. I had the pleasure of seeing "Oh, Mr. Porter" again some three years ago on the Sunday before one of our last local cinemas closed down and became the inevitable "Bingo Hall."

It was as hilarious as I remembered it to be and my wife who had never even heard of Will Hay before, agreed. Come on, B.B.C. Let's have the Will Hay films on T.V. !!!

GERALD PRICE (Birmingham): I continue to enjoy reading C.D. As I see it, the hobby has a far more important role to play than many enthusiasts seem to realise, i.e., to draw attention to what has been good, wholesome, successful, and entirely acceptable literature for youngsters in the past, in the hope that the highest standards may be aimed at now and in the future. I believe we can play a useful part in bringing this about, and, in fact, our influence has already had some effect, and whatever publicity we get helps towards this end in the long run.

CHARLES H. MATTHEWS (Shepshed): As an expert on the Greyfriars tales, has it ever occurred to you to wonder why the parents of the boys in the Remove are always portrayed as elderly people? I am not thinking of Colonel Wharton, who, although the brother of Wharton's father, could well have been a much older brother. Other parents, such as Major Cherry, Mr. Vernon-Smith, etc., are always well on in

years.

(This peculiarity has been touched upon in various articles in the past. - ED.)

HARTLEY RHODES (Keighley): Regarding your editorial comment Sept. 1966. It was by reading "Jolly Gems" in the Sunday Times that put me in touch with you and Collectors' Digest. I should like to say that if publicity places you in a strong bargaining position, by offering guaranteed sales with some publishers to re-issue a number of Old Boys' Books unabridged, it would be well worth while.

GEORGE McROBERTS (Belfast): The standard of C.D. and of the Annual is excellent, and in these days of horror stories and space ships, it is great to look back over the years and find something really enjoyable to ponder over. This we can always find in the old C.D. May you and your splendid contributors be spared for many years to continue the good work. The Digest has filled the gap caused by the loss of the late Frank Richards and the loss also of the old Magnet and Gem.

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): Charles Hamilton created no less than 91 different schools who all appeared as the main theme in various papers. In Derek Adley's and my own joint Bibliography of Charles Hamilton's work we have a full list of them - plus dates of stories and papers appearing. This figure is far from being complete as much has still to be discovered of his very early writings. His first story was in 1895 - the first school yarn traced in 1902. So far computed C.H. wrote a total of 4,255 yarns, of which 3,111 were reprinted at one time or other. His peak output was in 1911 when he wrote a total of 223 original stories. His total words written by our records (including the Bunter books and Annuals) are no less than 85,100,000. A list of all his schools may be given in a future C.D. or Annual at the discretion of our editor. (Data copyright).

STAN KNIGHT (Cheltenham): I was disappointed in my copy of The Bismarck Memoirs. Not from the point of view of the story, but from the binding. I treated it as carefully as I treat all my books, but this one fell into three sections. The story itself I greatly enjoyed.

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THE JESTER WAS NO JUMBLE (continued from page 26)...

weekly story series, Jerry Jones and his prattling Parrot, Uncle Bones; and one that was popular for years, "A Night Watchman's Tales." Seven years later, in Jester of the 1937 period, those Night Watchman yarns were still running, and so was Jerry Jones and his Bones bird. In fact, the Jester had changed but little in those seven summers. Basil and Bert had been elevated to front page honours, while Constable Cuddlecook had pride of place in the centre pages. Three other new strip characters filled the two pages. Funniest was Cinderella and her Artful Sisters. Then came Larry the Larky Legionnaire, and the Screen Screams. Gary Cooper's "Oregon Trail" picture strip filled up page eight.

It was a pity Jessie Joy had been discontinued. Maybe she was giving the boys ideas, and some stern parent had protested.

In 1937 the Jester was green, and the end was not far away. I am sure that in those dark days of depression in 1930 it was in its most attractive period, when it was a black and white publication. Its life began under the title of Wonder and Jester in May 1902. Over the years it teamed up with the Wonder again, but the name of Jester did not go off into the limbo of lost things till May, 1942. Its life-long companion, Wonder, lived for eleven more years before it took the count in 1953.

### HOW DID YOU GET IN ?

By Cliff Webb

Have you ever thought of the thousands of possible ways a man in his prime might renew acquaintance with the old yarns and thus join the hobby? I have often felt it would be really fascinating to read some of the strange and wonderful circumstances which so often put a copy of the Magnet or Nelson Lee into the hands of a former reader, often after a gap of twenty years or so.

In a hobby like ours, which deals mainly with boys' fiction published over a quarter of a century ago, I suppose it is inevitable that the majority of collectors should be men and women over forty.

Presumably many collectors carefully preserved their weekly copies, bought back numbers when publication ceased, and now, in middle-age, possess sizeable and near complete collections.

But most of us, I fancy, acquired a taste for the stories early in life and then discarded the habit in our teenage years. For us, the task of acquiring a collection of sorts has generally proved to be an expensive and lengthy process.

Why do mature men and women spend money amassing what are, after

all, stories written mainly for schoolboys? Why go to all that trouble?

Well, I know the short answer is that the appeal of the stories themselves is irresistible to us. But I feel it would be a worthwhile experiment if our Editor could spare a little space, occasionally, to publish a selection of some of the more interesting accounts of why some collectors took up the stories again in later life.

As a small boy in the early thirties I was asked if I had ever heard of a magazine called Magnet. I hadn't, but I bought a copy out of curiosity, and from then on I was "hooked." I continued to buy the Magnet until its demise.

The Chums of St. Jim's and Rookwood I met, and loved, in the S.O.L. When the grand old papers were no more I was lucky enough to find a friendly newsagent who had a boxfull of S.O.L. back numbers, so I was able to read them for many months afterwards. I chose only the Greyfriars and St. Jim's yarns, completely ignoring St. Frank's and Rookwood. It still hurts to think I could have bought the lot at 4d each!

As it was, the war brought more serious problems to interest my generation, and the old tales were pushed into the past. But they were never quite forgotten.

It was not until 1952 that I chanced on Greyfriars again. Then, I was on holiday in Torquay when I spotted Bunter's name on a second-hand bookstall. Eight bob brought me BILLY BUNTER OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOL and BILLY BUNTER'S BANKNOTE.

I bought them out of sentiment, I suppose. My wife thought me slightly mad, and I hadn't even the excuse of "buying them for the kids" then. But a few chapters soon convinced me that Greyfriars still had its magic for me.

Later, in another place, I bought Holiday Annual 1923 and seven Greyfriars S.O.L. for a total of 8/6 and I still feel like a thief - but a happy thief!

Subsequent items have proved more costly, of course, but that was my introduction to the hobby. Comparatively painless, you might say.

I'm sure others must have far more interesting tales to tell of their introduction to the hobby. How did you get in?

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