

COLLECTORS DIGEST

~ DECEMBER 1966 ~

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VOL. 20
No 240

~ CHRISTMAS
GREETINGS TO ALL
READERS ~



Collectors' Digest

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

Vol. 20

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DECEMBER 1966

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A WHITE CHRISTMAS

I haven't the heart to wish you a White Christmas. After all, your bones, like mine, may have seen long service and tend to ache when the icy wind blows chill. Your head, like mine, may have long been denuded of fur so that the snow flakes melt on your naked pate. Your circumference, like mine, may have spread so far that it is no longer easy to negotiate snowy paths and slushy roads with so much weight to carry. Much water has flowed under London Bridge since we bought the Cavanaugh series or first read of Handforth on the trail of a

Christmas ghost.

In the old days, as soon as December came in with its frost and murk, we began to think of Christmas Numbers. There

was always a white Christmas in the Christmas Numbers - and we loved it. Apart from the comic papers, which were a joy at Christmas time, those special numbers did not really always come up to expectation, as some of us will admit. There were often too many pages of advertisements, and stories of barring-outs or boys kidnapped in caves or a Christmas with a smuggler on the high seas just didn't seem right. But I am carping.

In 1966 we still think of

Christmas Numbers - the same ones. Most of us will spend a few happy hours digging into a favourite Christmas series from long ago.

I'm tempted - but I really can't wish you a White Christmas this year, except in the old Christmas Numbers. But with deep sincerity I wish you the most joyful of Christmases and all that you wish yourselves for the New Year. I shall think of you all, this Christmas. I hope that you may think of me.

THE BUGLE AND THE BUSHEL

Two quite separate items appeared in Collectors' Digest last month. The representative of our London Club reported that the club is "to bar all publicity in future." Our "Let's Be Controversial" columnist, criticising a recent B.B.C. broadcast, remarked "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."

One or two readers have linked those two items together and seem to infer that one is the result of the other. One friend writes: "We cannot expect the B.B.C. to come to us for guidance in the preparation of a programme if we give them the cold shoulder."

But when have the Hamilton experts ever given the B.B.C. the cold shoulder? Mr. Roger Jenkins, the greatest expert of us all, mentions this month that the only time the B.B.C. approached him he gave them the assistance asked. And I can state quite categorically that never once has Collectors' Digest been approached by the B.B.C.

As I see it, with regard to publicity, there is a vast difference in blowing a bugle in the street to draw attention to oneself and in hiding one's light under a bushel. So far as Collectors' Digest is concerned, it does not seek publicity, but would not ban it indiscriminately.

One thing seems obvious to me. For years certain authorities have deliberately ignored the clubs, our experts, and Collectors' Digest. This can hardly be due to the London Club's decision last month to ban publicity.

TO ENTERTAIN YOU THIS CHRISTMAS

COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL, of course. And here are some of the outstanding items from the massive feast of reading which our giant Year Book will bring you:

"CHARLES HAMILTON'S STYLE" by Roger M. Jenkins.

"THE LEAF" by Cliff Webb.

"SEXTON BLAKE'S BLUNDER" by Ray Norton.

"THE FIRST PERSON" by Charles Churchill.

- "THE LEONARD SHIELDS STORY" by W. O. G. Lofts.
- "THE GREAT SCOUT" by Alex Parsons.
- "REMINISCENCES OF AN OLD-TIMER" by Frank Verron Lay.
- "THE ST. FRANK'S CRICKET FESTIVAL" by Neil Beck.
- "THE HISTORY OF TIDDLERVIL" by Comicus.
- "EDWIN RUSSELL & HERBERT BULSTRODE" by Philip Tierney
- "KING OF THE SKY" by Norman Wright.
- "HORACE HACKER - A STUDY IN ACID" by
Leslie Rowley
- "THE OUTSIDER" by W. J. H. Hubbard.
- "D'ARCY MAXIMUS OF SLADE" by Eric Payne.



here's Wishing YOU
All That You Can
Wish Yourself This
Jolly Christmaside!

Your Editor

And plenty more besides, from our leading contributors. The entire volume is lavishly illustrated with pictures to please you over the Christmas season, with special work from our own gifted artists Henry Webb, Geoff Harrison, and

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A. W. Hanson.

THE EDITOR.

SOUVENIR OF THE SUMMER

A souvenir booklet containing magnificent photographs of the London Club meeting held at Excelsior House in June has been prepared by John Wernham. It is a "must" for anyone present at the meeting - and plenty of other readers will like to have a copy of the booklet. It is yours in exchange for 2/6 to John Wernham, 30 Tonbridge Rd, Maidstone, Kent.

DANNY'S CHRISTMAS

(Extracts from DANNY'S DIARY for December 1916)

There has been no ordinary dried fruit this Christmas. No currants, no raisins, no sultanas. Only prunes. Mum made her Christmas puddings with prunes and dates, but somehow - I don't know how she manages it - they seemed to taste just as nice as they always do. My Mum's a marvel.

The shops have looked fairly nice, in spite of the war, but they don't have outside lights like they did before the war. Mrs. Tucker, who sells everything from corned beef to nugget had her window all covered with bits of cotton wool to imitate snow, like she does every Christmas.

The first Rookwood story this month was "Mornington Minor." Morny and the nuts were going out for a car drive, but before they had gone far, they came upon a poor boy lying by the side of the road. To the annoyance of the nuts, Morny stopped. The poor boy looked half-starved, and Morny looked at him with constipation. The boy said his name was 'Erbert Murphy, and Morny befriended him and took him to Rookwood. In the end, by quoting the Head's sermon of the Sunday before that we are all brothers, Morny even persuaded the Head to allow 'Erbert to stay on at Rookwood for the time being.

Now came the Boys' Friend Christmas Double Number. There was a new serial called "The Secret City" by Duncan Storm, and a complete tale named "The Secret of Trevethlock Priory" by Victor Nelson. The Rookwood tale was "Jimmy Silver's Christmas Party" and it was written by Owen Conquest in collaboration with Frank Richards and Martin Clifford. It brought in St. Jim's and Greyfriars boys and Cliff House girls, which really didn't make sense, for you don't ask everybody you've met in your sports fixtures to join you at your Christmas party.

The Fistical Four, on their way home for Christmas, called at Wapshot Camp to see Jimmy's uncle, Private Silver. But Private Silver, accused of theft, has deserted. Then, at the Priory, there is a ghost in the offing, and they find the secret passages locked up. Of course, it's Uncle John all the time, and Cousin Phyllis, aided by Gussy of St. Jim's, is in the know. It all comes right in the end. I should think that this story was written some time ago. For one thing it introduces John Silver, and it is quite a while since the John Silver series. And the story is fully illustrated by Mr. Macdonald who went in the navy quite a bit back. (The lovely coloured cover is by

Hayward). And the story comes right in the middle of the Mornington-'Erbert series. Not that that means much. They seem to publish tales in any order nowadays.

But this is quite the best of the Christmas Numbers.

Then, next week, back to the Mornington-'Erbert story, this one called "The Waif of Rookwood." Mornington, at the Bird-in-Hand for dingy doings, is betrayed by Peele - but 'Erbert saves him at the finish. And Morny makes up his mind that 'Erbert shall stay on at Rookwood as a pupil.

Last tale of the month in the Boys' Friend was "The Boy from Canada" in which a Canadian boy named Pons came to the school. This brought in the rivalry between Rookwood and Bagshot school.

It has been a very foggy month, and very quiet indeed so far as zepp raids go. Mr. Asquith has resigned as Prime Minister, and his place has been taken by Mr. Lloyd George.

A new Act of Parliament has made a limitation in meals. Only 3 courses may be served in restaurants between 6 and 9.30, and only 2 courses any other time of the day. So you can eat more at night just before you go to bed, which is likely to give you a nightmare.

The gubverment has no heart. They are going to put a tax on amusements. In the New Year our cinema prices will go up to 4d, 7d, and 1/2. It's rank robbery.

I could not place my hand on my boosom and say truthfully that the Gem has been very good this month, but that just means that most of the tales have not appealed to me much.

The first was "Herries Orchestra" which seemed rather awful. Herries tried to get up an orchestra to give a concert in aid of the Red Cross, and he advertised in the local paper for musicians. A Mrs. Tyle-Loose and a Mr. Boozey-Smith (he was a drinker) answered the advert among others. Very Comic Cutsy.

The next one, "Barred by the School," was a rather good story. Croke insulted Mossoo Morny. Later, Mossoo was struck down, and Croke was blamed, but the real culprit was Herr Schneider, who confessed at the finish.

I find Levison Minor a bit too coy. In "Levison Minor's Luck," Colonel Lyndon and Captain Lord Conway were at Abbotsford Camp, about to go out to the front. When Colonel Lyndon visited Talbot and Croke, his nephews, at St. Jim's, Croke arranged matters so that Lodgey, the sharper, should come forward and claim acquaintanceship with Talbot. So the Colonel lost all faith in Talbot. But Levison Minor went through the snow, ice, and fog to Abbotsford to tell the Colonel the real truth.

"The Cross Country Cup" was one of those affairs with a lot of sport and not much story. An old boy, Charles Witherinton Wilslow, won the V.C., and to celebrate he gave a £30 cup to be won by the first man home in a cross-country race, with a gold medal for the runner-up. Talbot won the cup; Levison won the gold medal. Too much Talbot and Levison, if you ask me. A slimy character named Peter Peters came into this one.

Lastly, "For His Brother's Sake" - not bad, but a bit treacly. Levison went out to a disreppertable place called "The Friv," at night. When a dormitory inspection was made, Levison Minor got into his brother's bed, so they thought Levison Major was there. But they found Levison Minor's bed empty. I have not counted up how many times in this tale Levison Minor said "Oh, Ernie!"

I came a cropper at school just before we broke up for Christmas. Thinking to please Mr. Scatterby, my form-master, I said smugly: "Sir, I went to the pictures last night and saw Sir Herbert Tree and Constance Collier in 'Macbeth.'"

Old Scatterbags snarled: "Oh, did you? I understand that that vulgar Charles Chaplin was in a film in the same programme."

I felt pretty awful. Of course, "Macbeth" had bored me stiff, but I had split my sides over Charlie Chaplin in "The Count."

Another picture we saw this month was Dorothy Gish in "Daphne and the Pirate." Dorothy Gish is a lovely new star with dark hair. Lately our cinemas have shown a lot of comedies with a couple of comedians named Ham and Bud. Sometimes they are quite funny.

I bought Doug the Christmas Double Number of the Union Jack for a pre-Christmas present. I read it first and liked it quite a bit, though it is a novel. It is called "The Blue God" or "The Third Christmas." As well as Sexton Blake, Tinker, and Pedro, it introduces Yvonne, Dr. Huxton Rymer, Hamilton Palmer, and the Hoo Fent Tong of Sandakan. There is a lot about China in it, and I don't really know whether it is a detective, love, or adventure story.

Doug was very touched by my kind thought, and to recipprikate he bought me the Christmas Double Number of the Nelson Lee Library which contained an exciting tale called "A Christmas of Peril" which featured Nelson Lee, Nipper, Professor Zingrave, Jim, the Penman, and a girl detective named Eileen Dare.

A mad monk named Rasputin has been murdered in Russia. At least, some of the newspapers say he was mad.

At Crayford they built a theatre called the Princess Theatre, especially for the munition workers. This has been destroyed by fire, so all their pantomime people will be out of work now. There has been



a terrible explosion in a munitions factory "somewhere in the north of England" and 26 women have been killed. Awful, just a Christmas time.

Every week I have a halfpenny comic called "The Firefly" and I enjoy it muchly. On the front is T. E. Dunville, a music-hall star, known as the "elongated lump of comedy." On the back are Lazy Leonard and Lively Laurence, the lads of the village. In the middle are Grabbem and Pinch, the comical coppers; Tommy Dodd, the tricky traveller; Rushing Rupert, the reckless reporter; and Professor Pipp and his marvellous hat.

There are two serials - "The Woman Who Dared," the story of a woman who "didn't care a scrap for anybody," and a really lovely one named "Friendless." There are short stories of Abel Daunt, the king of detectives, and another lot of funny tales called "Firefly Revues." It is a wonderful comic paper.

The Magnet this month? Well, very good, I think. "Billy Bunter's Reformation" was a delight. Cora Quelch paid another visit to Greyfriars, and Bunter reformed once again.

In the Magnet Christmas Double Number was "The House on the Heath" which I enjoyed. A prisoner of war, Ludwig Wolf, escaped. On the way home to Wharton Lodge, the train was snowed up, and the Greyfriars chums set out to walk across country. They went into a large old mansion in some quite thrilling chapters, and eventually found the German prisoner hiding there.

In this issue started a new series named "The Greyfriars Gallery," and No. 1 was all about the history of Harry Wharton.

Next week in "The Way of the Transgressor," Bunter was spending a lot of money, which he had got from a Courtfield moneylender named Strauss. It was Monty Newland, the Jewish boy, who saved Bunter's bacon.

Next came "Foul Play." Greyfriars First was to play soccer against Highcliffe First. Carne and Ponsonby betted on Highcliffe - but they had plotted that Carne should give a party for the home team, and put something in their food to make them all ill. Bunter found out about the plot, but nobody believed his story.

No. 2 of the Greyfriars Gallery, "Bob Cherry," was in this issue.

Final tale of the month, "Victims and Victors." Not by the usual writer, but not so bad, I suppose. Bunter found a wallet containing a

lot of money, and Skinner made him go halves. Wingate's team was supposed to play an army team at a tiny village named Wethersden, but Wingate found he had another fixture so he asked Wharton to take on the game. Wharton included Courtenay and the Caterpillar in his team. They were to go back to Greyfriars by charabanc after the game, but Skinner & Co had emptied the petrol tank. Through a dreadful storm they went to a dark old house, and could hear the sound of a printing press running. A passing motorist gave them some petrol, but on the journey Vernon-Smith was thinking deeply. Ha, ha! A sequel coming, methinks.

Gran and Auntie Gwen from Layer Marney came to us for Christmas, and we had a lovely time. Among the things in my stocking I found one of the latest Sexton Blake Libraries, "The Case of the Cashiered Officer" - a tale of two Christmases.

On New Year's Eve, Dad took us all to His Majesty's Theatre to see the 200th performance of "Chu Chin Chow." It is a lovely show, with lots of grand music.

I mentioned to Gran that the old Greyfriars stories are to start in "The Penny Popular" in January. I told her how I would love to read them, but happened to add sorrowfully that I shouldn't be able to afford them. Gran took me to the newsagent, and paid for three months' Penny Populars in advance. So I shall have them after all.

What a lovely old lady is my Gran! A real Mother Christmas!

FOR SALE: Postage included. HOLIDAY ANNUALS 1923, 1925, 1927, 1928, 25/- . CD ANNUALS 1955, 1957, 1958, 1962, 1963, 1964, 12/6. BOYS' FRIENDS 823, 824, 829, 830; MAGNETS 1201, 1402, 1443, 1473, 1501, 1504, 1505, 1519; LEES - small 286, 309, 311, 321, 324, 325; CHIPS 521 to 527; all 5/- each. GREYFRIARS SOLs 99, 319, 8/-; 301/304 16/-; 343/346/349 24/- . MAGNETS 1570, 1582, 1586, 1608, 1668, 1673, 3/6; 1434-1439, 36/- . UNION JACKS 1335, 1344, 1349, 1441, 1442, 1446, 1451, 1459, 1468, 1489, 1490, 1509; GEMS 1512, 1568, 1569, all 2/6. "MY QUEEN LIBRARY" (Aldine) No. 1, 5/-; Nos. 2 to 694, 10 for 6/- .
LOT o FUN 719 Christmas Number 7/6.

GERRY ALLISON, 3, BINGLEY ROAD, MENSTON, ILKLEY.

FOR EXCHANGE: WIZARDS 5 (1925) 1 (1938) 4 (1939) 9 (1940) 14 (1941) 9 (1943); SKIPPERS 4 (1938); CHAMPIONS 8 (1922); HOTSPURS 9 (1941); DIXON HAWKE CASE BOOKS Nos. 7, 12; CHAMPION ANNUALS for 1926 and 1938
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NELSON LEE COLUMN

(CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD)

A TALE OF TWO YULETIDES

By William Lister

It is the year of Our Lord, 1927, with but one day to Christmas Eve. For a few hours there had been the promise of snow, short flurries of it, breaking into sleet and rain, but now with the coming of dusk it had settled itself down to snowing steadily, placing a white carpet on the busy streets of Manchester.

Pressure of traffic and crowds of pedestrians had been crushing it into slush, but now they were being conquered by nature. The snow was beginning to hold, on buses and tramcars, on lamp posts and trees it fell, transforming the whole scene into the appearance of a moving Xmas card. Not only to the sense of sight, but to the sense of hearing, came the Christmas message as a band of waits could be heard rendering the old carols.

To a lad not yet 15 year old, things seemed just right. It was good to have snow at Xmas, no matter what anyone else thought, and nature was not by itself in putting on a seasonable picture.

The large stores with lights and a colourful display of merchandise, (the main interest centred on the toy-fair), reigned over for a few brief days by none other than the perennial Father Xmas, the fir trees, holly and the mistletoe, the Xmas crackers, plum puddings and poultry, all aided and supported by the smaller shops their windows filled with Yuletide attractions, all adding up to what is known as "an old-fashioned English Christmas."

On the hoardings, posters told of the pantomimes just commencing and in case you missed seeing them, a line of sandwich-board men trailed wearily round the busy streets, their notices catching your eye.

The lad moved swiftly among all these sights and sounds, with a set purpose, turning from the main thoroughfare into the side streets - and across to the market ground, which in turn served as an open-market, a cattle market and a fairground. The latter twice a year, Easter and Xmas.

The market lights were brilliant, as he turned out of the darkness of the streets to wend his way among stalls, groaning with the weight of all the usual multi-varieties of merchandise to be found in these establishments. But for the youth only one kind of stall was of

interest - and toward this he pushed his way. It was loaded with books of all sizes and descriptions from highly educational matter to low class paper back sex novels, and all of the second-hand variety.

It was clear that the boy had some set purpose in mind as he turned to a large basket full of old weekly papers, and commenced to rummage among them. Suddenly his eyes fell on some copies of a small magazine of the type that featured school yarns, and across the cover in large red letters could be seen the name "Nelson Lee Library" 2d.

He was by now visibly excited as he found not one or two, but three dozen copies and all different, of this little paper, and fumbling in his pocket for money, dropped a coin in his haste.

The stall-holder could see he had a sure customer here.

"How much for these" asked the boy, holding up his parcel. The man glanced through them and looked again at his excited little customer.

"Shall I say 3d. a dozen?" he said, and before you could say "A Merry Xmas" he found nine pennies thrust into his hand. So the most satisfied customer in that market (this was his lucky day) made his way home.

For a few years he had taken this periodical, and devoured each copy. Only the day before he had purchased the latest issue from a newsagent's whose counter was stocked with Xmas numbers of all the weeklies.

"Magnet" Double number, the "Gem," "Nelson Lee," shared the parade with John Bull, Tit-Bits, Answers and the Union Jack. All of which boasted extra pages, big bumper issues at twopence a time.

The lad crossed the cobbled street and wound his way through a block of tents and caravans sheathed in the darkness of the snowy night.

Opening the door of one of these caravans, he groped for a match, lit the oil-lamp that stood on the table and settled down to examine his purchase. He had reason to be pleased. He had never read these before - real vintage year issues and there on the cover "St. Frank's School" tales by Edwy Searles Brooks.

These may be the days of a clear distinction between the haves and have-nots, and this Xmas some would have next-to-nothing while others would have more than was good for them, but nobody was likely to have such a Xmas as this boy. Something to eat and drink (there would be that, of course) and then to delve into the adventures of the boys of "St. Frank's."

Suddenly the music of the round-a-bout organ struck up, and one by one the tents and caravans began to glow in the light of dozens of flare-lamps, fuelled by paraffin and throwing a fan-shaped light

similar to a gas jet.

The tent flaps were opened to reveal coconut shies, shooting ranges, archery stalls, not to mention a fat lady exhibition, giant rats, and a 1/- a time circus that ran for an hour. You could also visit the boxing booth and win £5 (if you knocked out the challenger) - entrance fee 3d. only. Roast potatoes and hot peas could also be purchased. From such places came the phrase "All the fun of the fair."

The lad placed his treasures under the pillow of his bunk bed, for this caravan was his home, and the fairground outside, his livelihood. The next few nights he would be out there tending his stall, but every moment looking forward to the 11 p.m. close down and crawling to bed to read a little each night until the whole three dozen copies had been thoroughly enjoyed.

Never was there such a Xmas and there could be no doubt as to who was the happiest lad for miles around. Such was the power and sway the Nelson Lee stories by Edwy Searles Brooks had over him.

It was a far cry from a fairground caravan dim-lit on a snowy night to the ancient walls of the St. Frank's school for boys. Always in his imagination, this was his school and Nipper, Handforth and Ezra Quirk were his schoolmates.

Shall we leave him there with his dreams with the snow piling steadily on his caravan roof and the sound of carols in the distance?

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It is the year of Our Lord, 1966, and once again the season of Christmas is upon us. Thirty-eight Christmases have come and gone since that snowy night in 1927.

Some of them, white with snow, some mildly warm in a winter's sunshine, some washed with heavy rain and at least five of them spent midst the fears and bloodshed and horrors of war, and even then we were still "wishing for a white Xmas."

The large stores and the small shops and the thousand and one markets have put on their Xmas dress.

Mark you, the Father Christmases are not so plentiful. There was a time when every store sported them but now it is only the occasional one. Television has made our children old before their time. They still have their world of make-believe, but it is a world of plastic machine-guns, hand-grenades, death ray machines, bringing the message of over-kill instead of over-love.

However the Xmas cards are still with us, the tinsel and the crackers, the fir trees and the holly and the mistletoe.

The lad of the twenties has given place to the man; the old-

fashioned fairgrounds are almost a thing of the past; he has not seen a cheap travelling circus for years and even the Big Tops have closed down.

If he could find a market stocking three-dozen "Nelson Lees" within range of his pocket, he would still get a little excited and would still put aside his other reading till he had devoured them. The newsagent's counter is sporting a few Xmas numbers of periodicals but no Union Jacks, Magnets, Gems or Nelson Lees. Tit-Bits is still with us. Gone are the days of bumper Xmas Double Numbers.

However all is not lost. Miss things we may, but much remains. "We'll have our Merry Xmas still." The children will laugh and sing and open their presents. Cries of a "Merry Xmas" will mingle with the strains of carols.

The members of the "Old Boys' Book Club" will rummage among their collections and view the old time double numbers, or borrow them from the club libraries.

The postman will bring our Xmas number of "Collectors' Digest" and, as a bonus, Collectors' Digest Annual for 1966.

Was it Charles Dickens who said "Christmas never did me anything but good. God bless it I say." ?

And so say all of us!

W A N T E D: Story Paper Collector Nos. 37, 38, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 51, 65 and title page, contents and index for Vol. 2.

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HAMILTONIANA ~ ~

Do You Remember?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 62 - Magnets 985-990 - Dury series

In 1927 Charles Hamilton was approaching the peak of his powers. His characters had been firmly etched for many years, but in the Magnet he was now displaying in a masterly manner his ability to extend the scope of his plots. The Dury series, with its rapid development and convincing characterisation, is typical of many of the Golden Age.

The series began with a reference to the kidnapping of Coker series. The juniors were departing from Holly House to spend the remainder of the Christmas holidays at Wharton Lodge. There was snow, the awe-inspiring presence of Dr. Locke as a guest, and Bunter as a gate-crasher. With such irresistible attractions, it would have been a very churlish reader indeed who was dissatisfied with the opening number of the series.

Richard Dury was, rather incredibly, a professional boxer of about fifteen, possessed of such phenomenal strength that he was able to dispose of three tramps who sought to waylay Dr. Locke. His reward was a place in the Greyfriars Remove, but it was not only schoolwork that he found difficult: it was the ways and manners of the juniors that puzzled him as well. It was not until he received a kind word uttered carelessly by Hilton of the Fifth

"A Macdonald drawing, typical of his delightful work in the old Christmas Numbers."

that he found someone that he really admired in the school.

The series inevitably challenges comparison with the Oliver Lynn series in the Gem, but the Magnet series was far superior. Whereas the St. Jim's juniors objected to Lynn's table manners, the Removites disliked the way in which Dury crowed over defeated opponents, and whereas Lynn's regard for his relative St. Leger was never adequately explained, Dury's hero-worship of Hilton rang psychologically true, arising when Dury was the outcast of the form, and desperately in need of friendship. Equally convincing was the manner in which Dury discovered that his idol had feet of clay. Cedric Hilton was witty, urbane, and elegant, but he was also deceitful, unscrupulous, and utterly ruthless when his own interests were at stake.

The pleasing aspect of the series at this time was the way in which further developments would occur to create a satisfying variety in the plot, and the Dury series was no exception, since it ended with an account of a feud between Loder and Dury, culminating in the latter leaving Greyfriars for good. There are only six numbers in this series, and it can truthfully be claimed that it has never a dull moment.

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CHRISTMAS FOR REMEMBRANCE

No. 106 OF OUR "LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL" SERIES

Shakespeare, in one of his sonnets, wrote:

"When to the session of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought."

The bard, of course, was not thinking of Magnets and Gems. Many of us, who for years and years have sighed the lack of some elusive copies, may find ourselves in sympathy with him.

As I sit before the glowing fire, with holly on the walls, with the distant sounds of the waits singing my favourite carol, and with Christmas so near that it is really in the frosty air, it comes as something of a shock to me to realise that my entire life has been spent with a backcloth of St. Jim's, Greyfriars, and Rookwood. And my entire life is a very, very long time indeed. Just how long is my own business and none of yours, so don't write to ask me whether I went with Tom Merry to the Franco-British Exhibition.

I'm not sure whether I really see pictures in the Christmas fire - probably not - but there is nothing like that fire, with the dancing shadows which it casts round the room in the late twilight to bring memories of the past to life.

Oddly enough I cannot associate any particular issues of the old papers with any major event of my life. But certain issues bring back memories of unimportant things I was doing at the time I bought them or read them.

I found a shop - I remember the name of the street - Arthur Street - at the back of a famous cricket ground - where one could obtain the Gem several days ahead of the normal publication date. The Gem came out on a Wednesday, but in Arthur Street you could get it on the previous Friday. I suppose the newsagent was breaking a rule of his trade in order to steal a march on his competitors, but it suited me. On Friday afternoon, after school, I would walk a mile out of my way in order to visit Arthur Street and buy my Gem a few days earlier than I should have had it. The series I bought in this way was the one about Rogue Rackstraw and the kidnapping which was part of his nefarious plot to swell his bank balance.

I became a "regular" reader of the Magnet in the middle of the first rebel series. I had to write away to Fleetway House to obtain the opening stories of the series. I do not think I ever again missed a Magnet issue, though I did not start retaining my copies till 1931.

It was owing to my persistence that the old Tom Merry stories were reprinted in the Gem. And from the first issue of the reprints, the Gem came regularly to my home, right till the end. And from the start of the reprints, I retained all my Gems and Magnets.

My collection to-day, from 1931 onwards, comprises the issues I bought myself, week after week, year after year.

---But with at least one exception. When, in post-war years, W. H. Smith's firm was binding my copies, a couple of volumes at a time, they lost Magnet No. 1200. The volume, incorrectly, started with No. 1201. Later I obtained a copy of No. 1200, but I was surprised at the difficulty I encountered in obtaining a copy of sufficiently pristine freshness to join the rest of the book. At last I had the volume broken down and the copy inserted.

That copy was one of the Carne-Tatters series, and I fancy that the villain of the piece was another Rackstraw.

My memories in the fire conjure up yet a third Rackstraw. When I was smaller, my sister bought me the Holiday Annual for Christmas. But as time went on, and I grew larger and lost my innocence, if I ever had any, I bought my Holiday Annuals at half-price in the post-Christmas sales at a shop named Bryant and Rackstraw. Some readers may recall seeing on TV, earlier this year, a huge Woolworth store burning. That Woolworth's stands on the site of Bryant & Rackstraw's where, long ago, I bought my Holiday Annuals.

Though, throughout the thirties, I was retaining my Gems and Magnets, I don't think it occurred to me until 1937 that it might be possible to obtain some of the earlier issues. And even then it would have been beyond the bounds of my belief that the day would come when I would have the entire run of both Magnet and Gem.

It must have been by chance that, about 1937, I advertised - and I forget the medium - for early Gems and Magnets. I had a reply from a man who offered me Gems No. 1 - 400 for £4. He added that he also had Penny Popular No. 1, for which he wanted 2/6. There was no doubt at all that this was a genuine offer.

But I must have been greedy. Also, money was tighter in those days. I wrote to him - and I blush now at my greedy impudence - that I would buy the 400 Gems for £4 if he would throw in that copy of Penny Popular No. 1. He replied, naturally enough, that he could not agree to my proposal, and had sold his papers elsewhere. I never again haggled over the price of anything I really wanted very badly. We learn by experience.

For a short time I mourned, like Rachel, and refused to be comforted, but soon John Medcraft came into the picture. I had never heard of him before, but from that time we were to correspond fairly frequently. He offered me all the early Gems up till 1913. They were bound in fourteen volumes - not very well bound, perhaps, but adequately. I forget the price he asked. It was not particularly high, though many times the £4 for which I had been offered that other four hundred. Alas, it was far too much for me to find to buy the whole set.

Dear John Medcraft! He told me that I could buy the volumes one at a time, just when I felt that I could afford one, his only stipulation being that I should work backwards, receiving the later ones first. He kept his word, and though I believe it took me nearly two years, the time eventually came when all fourteen volumes were mine.

I have always regarded those 14 volumes as the real hub of my collection. When my ship comes home, if it ever does, I shall have all those volumes rebound to match the rest in quality and appearance.

John Medcraft had told me that, when I had bought all the Gems he had, I could follow on and buy all his early Magnets. That part of the bargain he did not keep - and I could not blame him, though I was disappointed. By the time I had bought the Gems, he had disposed of his Magnets. There is a grateful warmth in my heart when I remember John Medcraft as I gaze into the fire.

I have always believed that if you want anything badly enough you will get it eventually. Life has worked out that way for me.

Maybe there is a guardian angel who looks after those collectors who try hard with a simple affection tugging at their heart strings. Though I had not secured John Medcraft's Magnets, there came a time when Len Packman was to secure for me, at a more than reasonable price, a wonderful run of red Magnets.

Len Packman is one to whom nothing is too much trouble when he sets out, as he so often does, to help someone else. In that Christmas fire of mine, I see the happiest of memories of Len.

As a small boy, one day, I went to the butcher's to collect the family joint. Hygiene in shops was not so important in those days as it is now. On the counter was a huge heap of old Gems which the butcher was using for wrapping paper. Our joint, first protected by a sheet of "grease-proof," was wrapped in the entire story of the old Gem "Brought to Book," the last of the Goring-Clavering series. I asked the butcher if I could have the rest of the pile of Gems. There must have been fifty or sixty of them.

He said: "Son, if you like to bring me an equal pile of newspapers, you can change them for this lot - but I can't wait."

I dashed home, got a pile of newspapers from my mother and from neighbours, and scurried back to the butcher's. All the Gems had gone. The butcher gave me a copper for my newspapers.

To this day, I still have that old copy of "Brought to Book" which was wrapped round a joint of beef so long ago.

One day I was travelling by rail from Charing Cross down into Kent in a crowded railway compartment. I was reading a Magnet, one of the Hollywood series. I was chuckling away to myself continuously as I read about Bunter, the ventriloquist, making Coker order whisky from a scandalised waiter in a prohibitionist United States. I laughed and laughed. Suddenly I looked up. Every single person in the compartment was watching me, and every single person was vastly amused and chuckling with me. A sailor said to me: "Cock, that tale must be a knockout!" I blushed - and the company cackled.

I remember one day buying a Gem from the bookstall on Surbiton railway station. I bought it for old times' sake, for it was in that period about 1930 when the Gem was devoted to nothing but substitute stories. I rarely bought a Gem in those days, but to my delight it turned out to be a genuine tale. It was called "The Shady Three." The following Wednesday, full of hope, I bought the Gem again. Alas! "The Shady Three" had been only a flash in the pan.

I first met Tom Merry in "D'Arcy's Libel Action." My sister was reading it aloud to me as I was being given a bath in a zinc tub in

front of the fire. My sister was a magnificent reader, and I loved listening to her, even though she pronounced Gussy's "Yaas, wathah!" as "Yarss! Watt hah!" It was to be some years before I bought the Gem regularly, but if you had heard my sister reading "D'Arcy's Libel Action" you wouldn't be surprised that the Gem became my favourite paper for all time.

My acquaintance with the Magnet came later. On Sunday evenings my mother, after church, visited a Mrs. Allen who lived near. I went with my mother, - and Mrs. Allen, a kindly Yorkshire woman with a terrific brogue, played Moody and Sankey hymns on her harmonium. Naturally I was bored, though I have always loved "Dare to be a Daniel" and "Ho, my comrades, see the signal."

One evening Mrs. Allen gave me a box of Magnets which had belonged to her son Horace. So I sat on the carpet behind an armchair and read my first Magnet - entitled "The Greyfriars Insurance Co." - while Mrs. Allen played "Bringing in the Sheaves."

When we left, Mrs. Allen said: "Take them all with you, dear. Horace won't want them again."

How like a Mum! Maybe Horace raised Cain when he came home and found his Magnets gone but not forgotten. He was grown up, by that time, and had already retained his Magnets for quite a while.

I recall one day going on to that famous cricket ground of which I spoke earlier. I belonged to their juvenile club to which boys were allowed to affiliate themselves for about a guinea a season. I still have my old membership cards from those innocent days. (Do not say things under your breath, Glastonbury!) One day I took a Boys' Friend on to the ground with me, intending to enjoy Rookwood for a change. Woeful day! Like Horace Allen's Magnets, Rookwood was gone but not forgotten. There was a school story on the front page - I forget the title, but it comprised just the name of the school. But Rookwood had finished. I had wasted my tuppence.

In my early days as a schoolmaster, I can recall two occasions when I found a Gem and a Magnet, respectively, in boys' desks. The Gem was entitled "Who Kissed Ethel?" Hypocrite that I was! I recall my expression of horror that my boys should read such literature. To-day I can only exculpate myself to some extent by remembering that it really was an awful tale.

I forget the title of the story concerned in the second incident, but the cover picture showed Quelch tripping over a cord and a caption read "Quelch Comes a Purler." More tongue in cheek remarks from me. Can one's youth excuse hypocrisy of this sort? In a few years time,

I am thankful to say, I threw all my weight into helping circulation in the last year or two of the Gem, and in post-war years we gave away hundreds of Bunter and Tom Merry books as prizes of one sort and another.

As a small boy, with my parents, I visited my paternal grandparents. Their home, in the heart of the country, was filled with delightful bric-a-brac and masses of photographs of relatives, some long passed on. At the bottom of a piece of furniture which I think was called a chiffonier I came across a copy of Sexton Blake Library No. 2 entitled "Illgotten Gains." It had apparently been left behind by some visitor at some time. I appropriated it, though I do not recall that I have ever read it. I still possess that very copy, still in excellent condition, though, somehow or other as the years have slid by, it shed its covers which were lost in the mists of time.

In my Christmas fire, I must see Christmas dreams. I think the editors and publishers always cheated at Christmas time. The Double Numbers were often not quite double the size. And, when Double Numbers were things of the past, they cheated more than ever. "Our Greatly Enlarged Christmas Number" contained pages of advertisements which spilled far beyond the four extra pages added.

All this is getting ridiculous. It's the effect of my Christmas fire. The editor expects me to be Controversial in this column - and I have only become autobiographical. And one man's autobiography can be another man's poison.

That fire's going out. Excuse me while I fetch a Yule log ----

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CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES

No. 105. THE MYTH OF GREYFRIARS

JOHN WERNHAM: I cannot go all the way with you in your criticism of the radio programme "The Myth of Greyfriars." On the whole, I enjoyed it but I will listen to my recording again now I have read your views.

At the top of page 21 you state "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." I find this complaint very difficult to understand in the light of our policy to have no publicity and certainly nothing to do with the B.B.C!

I would not wish to question a decision taken by the members but we cannot expect the B.B.C. to come to us for guidance in the preparation of a programme if we give them the cold shoulder.

JOE CONROY: The crux of the article was in the one paragraph that the people who really know the facts and the story of Charles Hamilton are never consulted. Such is life! The reference to Mrs. Hamilton Wright and her suggestion that the post war Bunter stories were the best really pleased me. I have read so many times that Frank Richards' best work was in the golden era, circa 1930, and that his post-war books were inferior that it was a pleasure to see someone querying this. I have always felt that some of the hard-back Bunter books were as good in content and story power as any that were written pre-war. Stories I have in mind are "Bunter in Brazil," "Among the Cannibals," "Bunter Afloat," the "First Case" and the "Beanfeast." Yes, Frank Richards maintained his great pull right to the end.

Mrs. HAMILTON WRIGHT: I was so glad you approved of my letter to the Radio Times. I felt that the programme didn't go far enough for devotees such as club members and also did not reveal sufficiently to newcomers the springs of the magic. So probably both camps were unsatisfied. How right you are when you lament the B.B.C.'s. lack of consultation - they could have done much better had they referred to you. But on the other hand as it is the policy of the clubs to refrain from publicity - how are the B.B.C. or anyone else supposed to know about the gallant band of experts? If you hide your light under a bushel you can hardly expect them to contact you when in need of a torch! I suggest that a review of this policy would be timely in view of the fact that so many 'with-it' intellectuals are showing an interest in Uncle and Bunter and getting so many details wrong. It seems to me only fair to publish it abroad that there is an unsullied source of information on the subject. What about this for a 'Let's be Controversial' - how far is it the duty of Collectors to 'go public' in the interests of truth?

I liked your reasoning on page 20 of this month's Digest. It is so good I hope you will let me quote it.

ROGER JENKINS: I agree with you completely about the attitude of broadcasting authorities to people in O.B.B.C. circles. Generally speaking, they are quite willing to deride the Clubs, but when they want information for a broadcast they go elsewhere. I shall not forget in a hurry the way in which B.B.C. TV asked me for some Magnets from the library, and requested some of the classic series. When they got them, they combed them for episodes of the 'Yarook' type, and deliberately broadcast the most puerile extracts they could find.

I see no point at all in pursuing publicity, which is a will o' the wisp, and will land you in the quagmire. The London Club is bursting at the seams, and we can thrive without such dubious assistance, and this we have emphatically decided to do.

Of course, there are other fields in which we could offer advice, but it is not wanted. The reprints of the old papers, like those in Armada books and the new Holiday Annual, are decided by people in business, who must be presumed to know what will sell and what will not. The Floreat Greyfriars record and the Greyfriars Prospectus were compiled without consulting the Clubs, and though we might think we could have done better we must face the fact that the people who finance such publications must decide for themselves. After all, the Clubs comprise only a small proportion of those who are interested in the old papers, and it would be presumptuous for us to think ourselves to be more knowledgeable than the next man.

On only one occasion did I ever succeed in advising effectively. This was when an anthology of school stories was being compiled, and a short Greyfriars story was wanted. The one I suggested was in fact used - but then, the query came from Charles Hamilton, and as he passed on my suggestion it is not surprising that it was actually used.

JACK OVERHILL: Like you, I thought the B.B.C. talk about C.H. and his works poor stuff. Why don't they get men who know on the radio talking about Magnets and Gems?

JOHN TROVELL: Analysis and criticism can never make a myth of Greyfriars. The simple fact will remain that Frank Richards possessed the talent, energy, and ability to create characters so convincing to incorporate in the best of school stories, that the resultant quality of those stories has withstood the test of time, and appeal even today.

Let the analysts rate our I.Q. as low as it pleases them; at least in the harmless occupation of attempting to retain from those stories some of the happiness of youth, or a brief respite from modern high-speed living, the wild creatures need have no fear of mangled limbs or lingering death in the process.

In the unlikely event of a team of our own experts being given the opportunity to present Greyfriars to the listening public, one feels certain that an accurate and entertaining presentation would result, but certainly not entitled THE MYTH OF GREYFRIARS.

ERIC FAYNE adds: Were we "presumptuous" in pointing out that a sequence from a substitute story was included in the readings in the B.B.C. programme? My opinion is that the clubs and Collectors' Digest know far more about the old papers - and Hamiltonia in particular - than anyone outside.

BLAKIANA

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

A PATRIOTIC PLATE PROBE

By O. W. Wadham

The cover of the Union Jack dated November 13, 1926, was hardly likely to attract readers seeking a thrilling and stimulating story of the great Sexton Blake.

Eight years after the Kaiser's war had concluded there must have been a surge of patriotic fervour in the sacred portals of Fleetway House. For the cover of the issue in question announced, in deep yellow and pale purple, a great "Free Plate Within!" Below was a picture of the presentation effort. None other than a reproduction of "the historic scene in Piccadilly Circus on Armistice Day, 1918."

Seldom have so many been herded so close together since the Black Hole of Calcutta. And most of them were, of course, waving flags.

One attractive looking female was standing in the middle of an upturned table, borne aloft by merry soldiers; another bold bit was behind a soldier on a plunging horse. A kilted Scot, one arm in a sling, was wildly waving a flaming torch.

All page 2 was taken up with particulars of two more plates to be presented in the next two weeks. One was "Mons, 1918. The entry of British troops on Armistice Day." The other was described as a vivid and beautifully produced presentation of the German Fleet being escorted to its last anchorage in Scapa Flow."

The point about all this is: would customers be attracted to the Union Jack by offers of pictures about events that took place eight years before? I should imagine that by 1926 most people would be wanting to forget the first world war. Especially with the first grim effects of the world's worst depression being felt. And I wonder how many of those Armistice Day plates were preserved and framed?

Over the years hordes of story papers have given away coloured plates with more popular appeal than the Union Jack efforts of 1926.

I venture to suggest that most of them ended in flames long before the contents of publications presenting them had been read and approved by the customers.

In the 1920-30 period the Union Jack had some striking and attractive covers. That effort of Nov. 13, 1926, must have been the weakest link of the lot.

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SEXTON BLAKE and ELLERY QUEEN

By S. Gordon Swan

AT FIRST SIGHT the only connection between these two names would appear to be that their owners both followed the same profession. Otherwise one is an Englishman, the other an American; the one is twice the age of the other; their paths have never crossed. Yet there is a closer link between the two, as I have discovered.

In Ellery Queen's Anthology (1966 Mid-Year Edition, Volume 11) is to be found on page 151 a story entitled: "£5,000 for a Confession," by L. J. Beeston. To those acquainted with the formidable list of Sexton Blake authors, this name will be familiar as the writer of five Union Jacks:

- Union Jack 221 The House of Fear.
- Union Jack 239 Sexton Blake, Pavement Artist.
- Union Jack 263 The Willow Court Mystery.
- Union Jack 274 The Adventuress.
- Union Jack 318 Bridge.

Those appeared in the period 1908/9, so that one is agreeably surprised to find a story by the same author in a top-class mystery magazine fifty-seven years later. But read what the editor has to say of this long-ago Blake writer.

"In our opinion L. J. Beeston is one of the most underrated writers of the pure "thriller," of the sheer, nail-biting, edge-of-your chair melodrama (in the best sense of that maligned word) in the entire mystery field. He mixes a powerful drink, does Mr. Beeston, and here are his ingredients for a Literary Old-Fashioned: take a journalist, a doctor, an actor-manager, and an amateur detective - put them (almost said pour them!) into divan chairs in the lounge of the Yellow Club (definitely fin de siecle) -- stir in a blood-curdling situation - shake, serve, and you have "£5,000 for a Confession" -- and hold on to your head!...."

High praise for a Sexton Blake writer from an acknowledged master (or should it be masters? Ellery Queen is two men in collaboration) of detective fiction.

This discovery recalls to mind something which I found some fifteen or sixteen years ago, in the Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine

itself. This particular issue which unfortunately I did not keep, contained a story of a French detective by Arthur Sherburn (or Sherborne) Hardy. It was the very first story in the volume, as it happened, and I wondered at the time, could it be our Arthur S. Hardy of Sexton Blake, Tom Sayers and historical story fame?

Years later, in the records of the Collectors' Digest Annual I found this author's name given as Arthur Steffans Hardy, so that it would appear to be a different man who wrote the yarn that appeared in the E. Q. M. M. (The source of the story was not given, but frequently old stories of merit are resuscitated in this magazine.)

I am still doubtful on this point. In an old $\frac{1}{2}$ d Marvel I found a story of a French criminal by A. S. Hardy and I remember that one of Blake's investigations recorded by him took the detective to France. And the short story in the magazine was about a French detective. I cannot now recollect its title. The only hope of securing any information would be to communicate with Ellery Queen as to the original source of the story.

Whether or not the two A. S. Hardys were one and the same, the tribute to L. J. Beeston already quoted is sufficient to indicate the quality that has prevailed in the Sexton Blake saga from its early days. It also refutes the ridiculous assertions of detractors which I remember hearing years ago, that the stories were written by the office boy!

Many writers of distinction have contributed to the legend of Sexton Blake, and we hope many more will do so in the future.

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REVIEW

Desmond Reid
(3/6)

"THE SNOWMAN COMETH"

An expedition to the Himalayas headed by Sir Portland Firth searches for proof of the existence of the legendary Abominable Snowman.

The expedition's hopes are fulfilled, but their joy is short lived. Within minutes disaster strikes; the expedition is wiped out. Sir Portland Firth is the sole survivor.

One year later, Sir Portland's life is threatened, and Sexton Blake's vision of a quiet and peaceful Christmas, fades.

This is bad luck for Blake, but good luck for us, because we have now a Blake story in the old tradition.

Most of the action takes place at Sir Portland's home, Medleigh Towers.

"The Snowman cometh" said the card, when sentence of death was passed on Sir Portland Firth.

The first snowman appeared in the grounds of Medleigh Towers a couple of days before Christmas, a bizarre touch this, because no snow had fallen in the area.

The next snowman to appear is nearer The Towers, the third one closer still, and Blake calculates: a snowman will appear in Medleigh Towers on Christmas Day, and Sir Portland Firth will die.

Blake and Tinker have a frantic race against time to try and save their client's life.

Everything is here to please the "Old Guard" readers: a pre-Christmas party at Baker St., with Mrs. Bardell calling Tinker "Master Tinker," and going on to say "Oh dear, I'm sorry. It's just - well, it brings back the old times does Christmas and having you all together again. Well it's real neuralgic."

And nostalgic it is, so go out and buy this one, and spend a few happy hours over Christmas in the company of Blake, Tinker, Pedro, and the rest of the gang.

After enjoying this story, as I did, am I being hypercritical in wishing that greed and revenge were the only motivating factors in the campaign of terror?

Ray Norton

(NOTE: "The Snowman Cometh" was written originally to be one of the stories in the Sexton Blake Bedside Book which failed to appear last year. The Snowman was to be accompanied by Pierre Quiroule's chill thriller "The Living Shadow." We hope that Shadow, like Snowman, may eventually come to us as a separate entity.)

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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.

WANTED: Old Chips containing serial "The Red Inn." 7/6d each paid.

O. W. WADHAM, 12, MILITARY ROAD, LOWER HUTT, NEW ZEALAND.

OUR CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

ELIMINATION! From the list cross off TWO words for EACH of the clues. You will then have one word left. Write the word on a postcard, with your name and address, and post to the editor to reach him by the 17th December. All the cards will be put into a bag, and a draw made on that date. The sender of the first correct solution drawn will receive the newly published Agatha Christie novel "Third Girl." The second drawn will receive the newly published Richmal Crompton book "William and the Masked Ranger."

Runners-up will receive a copy of "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs," or the new S.B.L. Christmas story.

BOY	BAG	LAW	SPAR
OUT	SUIT	OGRE	BIRD
TODD	VILLA	ETHEL	BRIAN
PILOT	STONE	SCOTT	GORE
FANCY	BROWN	ETON	LITTLE
FRAYNE	OUTRAM	LAUREL	ERROLL
WRITER	ROLLING	MURPHY	MODERN
SHOT	ASHPLANT	CHARLIE	CHAMPION
HAZELDENE	PRISCILLA	WILDRAKE	BROOKS
MORNINGTON	MAULEVERER	WAISTCOAT	PEOPLE
SUBSTITUTE			

1. A Removite's relative. 2. Two Kits. 3. It doesn't, of course, mean new junior. 4. For whom tales were written. 5. A school. 6. Two ladies associated with St. Jim's. 7. Two Valentines. 8. Two Peters. 9. Home with Tom Merry. 10. Two items often in hand in the stories. 11. Cheerful youth. 12. Two papers. 13. Dazzler in study No. 6. 14. Author of "The Case of the Bismarck Memoirs." 15. Two anagrams. 16. Douglas! 17. The next best thing. 18. Two people who had much to say about Nelson Lee. 19. Two waifs. 20. Once worn with a Greyfriars tie.

* * * * *

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

W. O. G. LOFTS (London): I'm afraid that I disagree with Walter Webb, and he seems to miss the point completely. Our knowledge of matters pertaining to the hobby is obviously far greater than it was say 15 years ago. I should think that almost every contributor would like to revise comments made in articles written long ago in the light of fresh data received since that date. Walter has many times revised his own articles (in the light of new information received) and is no exception. Regarding Mr. Swan and Mr. Dowler disputing facts given by me in Blake articles I can only say that they are entitled to their own views on the subject, but I simply beg to differ with them on the facts I have gleaned from my own sources. Certainly in the William J. Bayfield/Gordon Carr question a lot has still to be investigated before a complete satisfactory conclusion can be reached.

R. J. McCABE (Dundee): Danny's Diary is one of my favourites even though it's before my time, so please don't change him.

JACK OVERHILL (Cambridge): Danny brought back a memory this month when he mentioned the Gem double number for 1916. This is one of the few old 'uns I've got - IN THE SEATS OF THE MIGHTY. I didn't remember Tom Merry fighting somebody twice his size; what I remembered was Gussy falling in love with a circus girl. That was all I liked about the story when I was 13 - nearly 14; I couldn't stand circus tales. Gussy was always falling in love; one of his loves was 38 and very kind to him when she told him her age; I can't think of the name of the story.

A bit later when I was 14 I learned Pitman's shorthand. I was ever so interested in a story in which Gussy started learning shorthand to report a meeting. Kerr did the reporting and Gussy watched flabbergasted as the outlines went down in a note-book. Good for Kerr! Gussy was still learning the shorthand alphabet! I hoped for more references to shorthand but there was none, or I didn't see them. What the name of this story was I've forgotten.

(I think the story to which you refer is "D'Arcy's Libel Action." - ED.)

PETER HANGER (Northampton): Surely anyone interested in Old Boys' Books, particularly the works of Charles Hamilton, cannot fail to be fascinated by Danny, even if it does not coincide with his boyhood. The only criticism I make of the Diary is the references to the early

cinema which I feel are out of place in a journal devoted to O.B.B. Danny will be well advised to confine his entries to O.B.B., but with occasional reference to the changing social scene.

BEN WHITER (London): I read that one of your correspondents is diving off the deep end re the sale of copies of "The Story Paper Collector." In a recent advertisement, one of the clan has numbers one to fifty for sale. Perhaps the advertiser only wants to be paid for what it cost him for the binding. I have all my copies bound, the latest costs of binding three volumes by the monks of St. Michael's Abbey, Farnborough, Hants, is £1-13-0 each, this without postage, which, as you are aware, has gone up considerably recently. Your advertiser, incidentally, gave me number 9 to complete my first volume gratis. It even has his pencil notes of some mistake which I have never erased.

I wonder if the complainant gives anything away for nothing.

HARRY DOWLER (Stockport): I am grateful to Mr. O. W. Wadham for pointing out a sad lack of taste on my part in selling Bill Gander's S.P.C. In this life we are always making mistakes - we do things without realising some factor which has escaped our notice. It is kind of you to give another way of looking at the matter, but so far as I am concerned, I accept Mr. Wadham's point of view.

(Long, long ago I bought the first 30 issues of S.P.C. Far from criticising the vendor, I was grateful to him. If ever I decide to dispose of them I certainly shan't expect to give them away. - ED.)

GEORGE SELLARS (Sheffield): By gum, don't ever think of changing the years of Danny's Diary, even if the sub writers in the Gem and Magnet were very busy then. In any case, I believe that most readers younger than myself like to read about those days which they are too young to remember.

ARNOLD WOOD (Huddersfield): When I joined the army in the first world war, the Magnet, Gem, Union Jack, etc, were my bosom friends in off-duty hours, in spite of the sarcasm I sometimes met for reading them. I went on reading them with no regrets.

G. W. MASON (Dawlish): Many thanks for a fine publication. Thanks also to your contributors past and present for their wonderful research into a fascinating subject. Collectors' Digest ranks with the best of the books in the old boys' book world. Will it surpass even these?

KEN ELLIOTT (Australia): I love Danny's Diary, and, whilst I would

like to see my own particular "golden years" written up, I feel that it is most interesting to read how things were in those days and the history of the stories, etc. Did you know that Tiger Tim and Mrs. Bruin's school are now in Jack & Jill?

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A REAL FOOTBALL STORY !

By W. O. G. Lofts

Mr. C. L. Farrow of Boston most certainly has a remarkable memory. The story he mentions in "The Postman Called" (Nov. 66 issue) was printed in the BOYS FRIEND LIBRARY No. 45 (Second Series) published in May 1926 and entitled 'Spence of the Spurs.'

Mr. John Wheway the author told me personally at his office at Fleetway House before his retirement of the pleasure he got in writing this story as he had been a strong Tottenham Hotspur supporter all his life. The tale was exceptional in the fact that he brought real live characters into the plot, with the full blessing of the Spurs Manager Mr. Peter McWilliam and players.

From memory I would say that Spence was a protege of the then black-haired Jimmy Seed whilst Tommy Clay, Walters, Skitt, and Hinton were to the fore, not forgetting Arthur Grimsdale the Spurs Captain. Jimmy Seed who became Manager of Charlton in later years and died a short while ago was not only a clever player and Manager, but in his younger days entertained the Spurs players by his brilliant piano playing and could draw amusing cartoons well up to professional standard.

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S A L E : MAGNETS, some complete series, 1930's. Also Blue and Whites. GEMS 1920's. Quantity of Populars, Greyfriars Heralds, Boys Friend Library and Green 'un. Early S.O.Ls., Modern Boy, Nugget Library. W A N T E D : MAGNETS before 377. GEMS before 471.

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NEWS FROM THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held October 25th, 1966

There were ten members present at the Birmingham Theatre Centre and we had a very jolly and cheerful evening together. Among the apologies was one from Jack and Madge Corbett. We were very pleased to hear Madge is progressing steadily after her recent illness.

There was a lively discussion on the recent radio programme, 'The Myth of Greyfriars' which appeared on the Third Programme or rather Jeremy Rundall's comments about it in 'The Sunday Times.' The old issue was raised, the criticism of George Orwell about Charles Hamilton's escapism and Charles Hamilton's reply, "Happiness is the best preparation for misery, if misery must come." Members felt that the charge of Orwell missed the point. We all need escapism at times to get away from the depressing facts of everyday life and if our hobby provided it, it was a very good thing.

Gerald Price complained that the programmes on radio and T.V. never mentioned the Bunter Books which he thought had kept the interest in Charles Hamilton's work alive since the war. He wondered whether this was caused by the contemptuous attitude of many Old Boys' Book enthusiasts towards the Bunter books. He thought this attitude absurd. In their way they were very good.

George Chatham gave us a short talk on his impressions of "After Lights Out," Boys Friend Library No. 383, that he had read recently. He said it was so good he thought it should be made compulsory reading for all Hamilton devotees. This is very high praise, but this story is very highly regarded by many Hamilton experts.

There were two readings by the acting secretary. One was from a Magnet which describes Fisher T. Fish being blackmailed by Bunter into treating him to loads of tuck and thereby hitting Fishy where he lived, so to speak. There was also a tit-bit from the 1921 Holiday Annual showing Tucky Toodles slanging Daubeney on his shortcomings on the cricket field.

Arrangements for the Christmas meeting were discussed and it was agreed to follow the same course as last year when we all brought what we could for pooling. It was generally agreed that this was very successful.

The Collectors items, Anniversary number and Collector's piece

were this month: Gem No. 872 "Dick Julian's Trial" published on 25th October, 1924, 42 years ago and "Redfern Minor" Boys' Friend Library (1st Series) No. 479. The latter book, a very fine story, has now been added to our library.

The winner of the raffle was again the acting secretary for the second month running and he received No. 170 of the Popular "Bob Cherry's Barring Out" as a prize.

We look forward to November 29th when we meet again at the Birmingham Theatre Centre.

J. F. Bellfield
Correspondent

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NORTHERN

Meeting held 12 November, 1966, Saturday.

A group of Northern members in the garden at No. 239 at 6.15 p.m. suggested an alfresco meeting, but the arrival of the caretaker with a key soon put matters right. When the half hour's library session closed, all were glad to see Chairman Geoffrey Wilde, fit and well again, opening the meeting. Geoffrey had a warm welcome for the twenty members present.

The minutes were read; the Treasurer's Report was called for, but first Gerald had a piece of sad news as only that morning, Mr. A. Taylor, husband of member Elsie, had passed away after a brief illness. Everyone was shocked by this sudden happening and to Elsie we send our greatest sympathy. After a few moments Gerald proceeded with his Report, showing a very satisfactory position, in spite of high postage costs. He had news from several members and mentioned a possible get-together of enthusiasts, in the Nottingham area.

A count was taken for the Christmas Party to be held on the 9th December (at 4.30 p.m. for 5 p.m.) and later the ladies arranged the eatables side. Games and other items were decided for the programme, and we look forward to a happy evening.

Now it was time for Harry Barlow to set up his projector and the first film was soon flashing on the screen. "The Musical Box" with old timers Laurel and Hardy took us back to our youth! This was followed by some fine colour films of Harry's holiday in Belgium and France. He then kindly showed a film brought by Mollie Allison of her American cousins' visit. After this short, we saw some very natural scenes around Harry's home with commentary.

The refreshments were served, and much enjoyed. The final film

was the "World Cup Match" between England and West Germany. And so we came bang up-to-date. Many thanks to you, Harry.

We were sorry that time did not allow us to hear Ron Hodgson's tapes, but we look forward to doing so later, as Ron said he would bring them again.

Next meeting: Saturday the 9th December, 1966 (The Christmas Party).

M. L. Allison

Hon. Sec.

(Correction: In November's Northern Report: "Plum Pie" is a forthcoming book by P. G. Wodehouse. Apologies. - M.L.A.)

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LONDON

There was an excellent attendance at the November meeting held at the residence of Bob Blythe. Therefore there was a distinct atmosphere of Nelson Lee, the famous map of St. Frank's and its environs in a suitable position for all to see. Bob gave a very good report on the progress of his section of the library and Roger Jenkins not to be outdone also gave an excellent report of the month's borrowing in his Hamiltonian section. It was decided that the Harry Dowler giant scrap book be loaned to members on a monthly basis at a fee of one shilling. Bill Lofts said that the scrap book was very interesting.

Brian Doyle gave out about the forthcoming paper back Penguin that will deal with the comics and also the facsimile Strand Magazine that is to be published at 7/6.

Ben Whiter exhibited the last unfinished volume of Bill Gander's magnum opus, "The Story Paper Collector." The word "Unfinished" is blocked on the spine of the volume.

Charlie Wright, who is loaning his scrap book to all who are interested, gave a good treatise on the Aldine library. This was greatly enjoyed by the gathering.

Andrew Barres had compiled a Sexton Blake quiz and as one wit said, he could have easily taken over the Sexton Blake section of the "C.D." However it was Bill Hubbard who had most correct answers. Second place was filled by Josie Packman. Len Packman and Michael Lynskey were joint thirds.

An amusing Eliminator quiz was won by Reuben Godsave. Some very original entries were read out.

A discussion about new members took place, the main topic was the accommodation or rather the lack of it.

Excellent refreshment break took place, many thanks to the hosts, Bob and Laura Blythe.

Christmas meeting on Sunday, December 18th, at Hume House, Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London, S.E.22. Phone TOWNley 2844. Hosts Len and Josie Packman. Kindly inform if intending to be present.

Uncle Benjamin.

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CHRISTMAS CONUNDRUM

By O. W. Wadham

Someone once said: "If the after-thought came first what a dull world this would be." That phrase certainly applies to the old coloured comic Lot-o'-Fun at the close of 1921.

The issue for December 24 has not one picture or story, or even a decoration, connected in any shape or form to the festive season.

A most unusual event, especially for a popular comic bearing the publishing date of Christmas Eve.

But there was certainly a surprise in store if one read the Editor's "Notes and News."

Therein it is stated that "a Christmas number to 'surpass all others' will be issued on December 27th." Considering that the number in question was to be only 8 pages, and Lot-o'-Fun, in its Henderson years, (in 1921 Fleetway were the owners) was famous for 16 page Christmas issues that Editor was surely pulling hard on the long bow.

And many readers must have wondered why they had to wait until the day after Boxing Day to read Christmas fare, when New Year material would have been much more to the point.

It was an odd idea, to say the least.

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W A N T E D : MAGNETS; SKIPPERS; HOTSPURS; WIZARDS; GREYFRIARS
S.O.L's; HOLIDAY ANNUALS; FILM FUNS and other pre-war papers.

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

UP THE REBELS !By N. Wright

Few fictional schools have not had revolts and rebellions. Greyfriars, St. Jim's, Rookwood and St. Frank's have probably had more than any others. But even such obscure academies as Greyhouse, St. Kits and St. Kildas have had thousands of words devoted to the fast moving stories of schoolboy revolt. Most O.B.B. collectors enjoy reading such tales, many of them even thrive on them. But how many have chuckled and said to themselves "Very good, but this could never happen in reality." Probably a lot....But they would be wrong!

Most of the great Public schools of Britain have, at some time in their long histories had revolts. Some have been large, some have been small, all have shown the spirits of youth.

One of the earliest revolts worthy of mention took place at Eton in 1783, when the boys revolted against an unpopular headmaster named Dr. Davies. After a list of grievances had been ignored by the head the rebellious schoolboys became violent and drove the headmaster from the school, forcing him to take shelter in the Provost's lodge. The rebels followed up this victory by smashing all of the windows in the school, and destroying the unpopular head's papers and furniture, together with the flogging block. The masters, seeing that things were getting a little out of hand, and wishing to restore order before some cheerful idiot tried to set fire to the school, gave way to some of the rebels requests and thus ended the rebellion. Due to the damage that the rebels had caused the boys were sent home early for the Christmas Holidays, a treat that must have been greatly appreciated by all and sundry.

A revolt that caused widespread publicity occurred at Westminster school in 1791, when the whole school was punished for a crime committed by one pupil. A polite letter was sent to the school wardens, who were to inflict the punishment, asking that the one culprit be punished and the rest of the school be exempt. The letter was not answered and revolt flamed up. The school keys were seized and the rebels locked out their wardens, and captured the tower over the school gate. Provisions were confiscated from the school shop, and weapons were gathered ready to repel invaders. News of the revolt spread like wild fire and a huge crowd, thousands strong gathered at the gate to see what the result would be. A Magistrate was called

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

SPECIAL ENLARGED CHRISTMAS NUMBER



to deal with the trouble and he saw that the boys had good reason for revolt. He thus forced the wardens to give into the boys' just demands. The revolt ended, but as soon as the wardens were once more firmly established in the school they brushed aside the magistrate's judgement and carried out their unjust punishment of the whole school. This enraged many pupils and some resigned their places as a protest against the wardens actions. But this did little, or no good and the rebels were forced to "Toe the line."

An unusual rebellion occurred at the Ley's school in the 1870's. It began when the boys were refused a whole holiday in order to celebrate the birthday of Queen Victoria. The boys gathered outside the headmaster's house and dared him to come out. The headmaster in desperation called in the Police, but the rebels learnt of this and so they gathered on the school playing fields and prepared to resist the Police. This they accomplished by throwing stones at the policemen's mounts causing them to throw their riders. The rebels were eventually starved out, and their leaders were expelled. There ended the last major rebellion to take place at an English school.

If you wish to read of a rebellion today, then you must lock yourself away in the never, never land of the "Magnet" and "Gem," the "Nelson Lee" and the S.O.L. and re-live with the youthful heroes who grace their pages the excitement and thrills of the rebellions that they encountered in the 1920's and 1930's.

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 ANNUAL FOR 1966 ARE NOW BOOKED! WE
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