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# COLLECTORS DIGEST

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# Collectors' Digest

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR  
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W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST  
Founded in 1946 by  
HERBERT LECKENBY

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## ANYONE WANT A STEAM ROLLER?

Last week I received a letter. It was short and to the point, though it gave nothing away. It read as follows:

"Please send me a free copy of Collectors' Digest, as I think it may give me the information I desire."

Obviously a letter like that is mildly irritating. The chances are that the writer may be a collector of beer-bottle labels or just one of those folk who write away for free samples of anything. But courtesy comes first. I sent the gentleman his free copy of C.D.

Back came his reply, as follows: "I wrote to you because I have two Coronation Coaches for sale, and I was astonished to receive a magazine devoted to old comics. Please send me a free copy of any paper you may run devoted to other collecting."

It's funny, of course, but it is the backwash of the ambiguity of the title of our magazine. Every year I get hundreds of letters from people who wish to sell something far, far removed from the sphere of old boys' books.

Last month there was a letter from the town clerk of Aberdeen, who informed me that his council had for sale six road steam rollers. And one from a lady in Aberystwith who wished to dispose of a one-hundred-years-old camera and would I please tell her what it is worth.

An American who collects old motor licence plates wrote: "I have written to the Prime Minister and he has given me your name." I wonder how they found out about C.D. in Number Ten.

And so it goes on. There is no lack of variety, the spice of life, in this office.

#### TWENTY YEARS WITH THE O.B.B.C.

At Excelsior House we are to be privileged to act as hosts to the London Branch of the Club on May 19th, and we are to be joined by a contingent from the live-wire Midlands section. Mr. Len Packman, our energetic chairman, has reminded me that it is exactly 20 years since the first Surbiton meeting was held.

That first meeting at Surbiton - on May 2nd 1948 to be exact - was the third meeting of the newly-founded O.B.B.C.

Twenty years. A very, very long time. A remarkable achievement. Let us pause to digest the magnitude of that wonderful record, and to pay tribute to the club's co-founders, Len Packman and Bob Blythe, not forgetting another who was in it from the beginning - "Uncle Ben" Whiter, whose enthusiasm, loyalty, and hard work have added so much to the success of the London Branch all down the years.

Make no mistake about it, London owes an immeasurable debt to those three great and lovable personalities. A club is only as strong as the men at the helm. In this land of ours, innumerable clubs of one sort and another are started every year. Most of them fail because, like the seed in the parable, they have no real roots - no depth of earth. The O.B.B.C. has been a rip-roaring success because, at the heart of things, have been men who have never allowed their steam-pipes to grow cold. The unquenchable flame of their enthusiasm and effort has carried the club from strength to strength, and it has never looked back.

It was at Surbiton, a little later on, that Herbert Leckenby attended his first London meeting. Here was another man who had that drive and persistence which was essential if Collectors'

Digest was to be a success. Most amateur magazines fail because the producer lacks the verve to keep it going as the light of his enthusiasm dims. If Collectors' Digest had not put in its appearance regularly early each month, the interest of readers would have died slowly but surely.

But Herbert Leckenby had that same trait which distinguishes Messrs. Packman, Blythe, and Whiter, - and, of course, the leading lights of all our clubs. DEDICATION! Hats off to the splendid men behind the clubs.

#### NOT FORGETTING DON WEBSTER

Last month, in some comments about the Magazine Programme produced by the brother of Edwy Searles Brooks, I referred to the "Q" Theatre where the Magazine Programme was in use for many years. I mentioned the owners of the theatre, Jack de Leon and his wife, Beatrice Lewisohn.

Our May issue had not been out many days before I had a telephone call from Don Webster, the founder of our Liverpool club and now one of the stalwarts of London. Mr. Webster had managed to contact Beatrice Lewisohn, and presented her with the May issue of C.D. He tells me she was delighted, and, before long, we may be able to let you have some of her comments on the Magazine Programme.

Since my last editorial was written, I have been reliving countless delightful hours I spent at the old "Q." I mentioned last month some of the stars who started at "Q." I now recall Beatrice Lehmann and Jimmy Hanley in "They Walk Alone," tried out at "Q" and later transferred with the same cast to the West End. There was also a splendid production of "Good-bye Mr. Chips," far better than the film for the story-line was much stronger. I forget who played Chips, but his wife was played by Pamela Nell. Then there was the famous negro actor Norris Smith (he was in "Show Boat" at Drury Lane, and recorded for Columbia the songs from that musical) in "Watch on the Rhine." Norris Smith's son was a pupil in my own school for many years. An extremely gifted youngster.

#### --Or GERRY ALLISON

The famous weekly "Reveille" devoted a whole page early in May to an article on our Northern Club's activities, and embellished it with a smashing picture of George Figgins himself (Mr. Gerry Allison, to you) having a right royal time surrounded by the many treasures in his collection. There were also delightful reproductions of the Magnet, the Gem, and Chips. You can't keep that

Northern Club of ours out of the news. They've certainly got something up there.

THE EDITOR.

## DANNY'S DIARY

JUNE 1918

It has been a marvellous month in the cinemas. From my point of view, the most outstanding picture was Charlie Chaplin's new 3-reel comedy "A Dog's Life." It's grand, and I went to see it twice as it showed for 3 days at the Empire and then the next three days at the Gem Cinema. With it at the Empire was Chrissie White and Henry Edwards in "Broken Threads" and this was lovely. With it at the Gem was shown Marguerite Clark in "Bab's Burglar" and this, too, was tip-top. Marguerite Clark is said to be a rival of Mary Pickford.

A picture which had a lot of advertising was "The Kaiser - the Beast of Berlin." It wasn't all that hot, really, as it was a kind of history of Kaiser Bill. One evening we went to see Pauline Frederick in "The Hungry Heart" which was too heavy for me, but a new serial Molly King and Creighton Hale in "The Seven Pearls" was good and so were two Keystone comics.

This month "A Little Bit of Fluff" has ended at the Criterion Theatre with its 1241st performance. What a run!

The Magnet has been pretty well up to average this month without being a blazer. The first tale "Billy Bunter's Birthright" was a silly affair. Bunter claimed to be the heir of Sir Foulkes Bunter of Chuckfield Place.

But the other Magnets were pretty good. "Bolsover's Way" told of Elliott, who shared a study with Bolsover, and who was in his last week at Greyfriars. But Elliott has got himself in debt to a man named Smiles, and if Elliott's uncle found out about Smiles, then the uncle would probably have nothing more to do with Elliott. Harry Wharton tried to help, but it was finally Bolsover who solved Elliott's problem.

Next week "Napoleon of Greyfriars" is a new French boy, Dupont, who is put into Bolsover's study in place of Elliott.

Then "William the Good" which was really very funny. Bunter reforms - but his reform turns out to be painful for all the chums. They decide that Bunter is less trouble unreformed.

Finally, "Bolsover's Enemy" was a sequel to "Bolsover's Way." The man, Smiles, turns up again, and seeks revenge against Bolsover.

The Derby was run at Newmarket and was won by a horse named "Gainsborough."

The Gem has been patchy but a winner on points. The first tale "The Champion of the Shell" was very good indeed. This was odd, really, for it was all about chess, but there were a good many side-turns and the chess contest, between Manners and Koumi Rao, was finally won in an air raid.

Next week "Against All Comers" was not a winner. All about wrestling, it never interested me a bit.

After this, "Six on the Scent." This time, points in the contest were to be won for detection. Skimpole had written a 300-chapter book on the progress of the war. It disappeared, and the junior detectives tried to find out what had happened to it. Fairly good fun.

"Herries' Special Turn" was by no means a bad tale. Points were to be won for the best musical item, and Herries had the idea of playing the cornet, the piano, the drums and the symbols all at the same time. He went to Mr. Horatio Curll for instruction.

Lastly, "The Hidden Hoard" was pretty good, though it starred Mr. Pepper and Grundy. Grundy had the idea that Mr. Pepper was hoarding food. Actually the old chap was storing paving stones and Grundy nearly got landed with a libel action. Fairly funny.

This month postage for a letter has gone up to 1½d. Awful price for sending a letter. Our last post in the evening now comes in about 6.30, so though the price has gone up the service has gone down.

The hospital ship "Llandovery Castle" has been torpedoed though it carried big red crosses on each side. 230 people were lost.

There has been a very unusual case going on in the law courts. For some time past a man named Pemberton Billing has been talking about his black book which is supposed to contain the names of pro-Germans and bad-living people. He has mentioned all sorts of famous people who are said to be in his black book. He is a bit of a nut, but a lot of people believe him. But he said some awful things about a lady named Maud Allan, and she took him to court. She lost the case, but most decent people seem to feel sorry for her. My brother Doug says it has been a "cows celebrated" which is French for "famous trial."

The Boys' Friend this month - oo-la-la! What a paper! Oui, oui! The opening Rookwood story was "Brought to Light." Tubby Muffin found out that Catesby was looking after the bonds which

Bulkeley's father was supposed to have stolen.

Next week in "Foul Play," Knowles tries trickery and villainy to stop Bulkeley coming back to be captain of Rookwood. This was good, but next week "The Scare at Rookwood" about money being offered for the capture of an escaped tiger was rather weak.

Then "Getting Even With Carthew" was good entertainment. After that "The Hidden Hun" told of a German prisoner who escaped and hid at Rookwood. He managed to flash lights to air raiders, and bombs were dropped on Rookwood, doing much damage.

The Cedar Creek series has gone on its triumphant way. The last of the runaway balloon series was "Dropped from the Clouds." This has been a fine series.

Then two stories about a rather timid-seeming new master at Cedar Creek, Mr. Shepherd. These two were "The Gentle Shepherd" and "Pluck Will Tell."

After this, in "Lord Todgers," Chunky thought he was hair to an earldom. A bit hack-kneed this one, but quite rib-tickling. Finally, the start of a new series with "The Haunted Mine." There is a local mine, called "Bailey's bonanza" in the district. The owner disappeared a few years ago, and is said to haunt the mine. When Frank & Co think they might buy it, and go to inspect it, they get the first taste of the haunting. Looks like being a good series.

(EDITORIAL NOTE: "The Scare at Rookwood," mentioned this month by Danny, was only the fifth substitute Rookwood tale in the Boys' Friend.)

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FOR SHERLOCK HOLMES FANS

James C. Iraldi of New York (he has long been an enthusiastic Collectors' Digest reader) has written an original 14-000-word story to add to the Sherlock Holmes saga. Based on the characters created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the novelette is not a parody or burlesque of the great detective, but a serious study on the part of Mr. Iraldi to recapture the style, settings and atmosphere of the original stories. Entitled "The Problem of the Purple Maculas," the story is available in a limited edition, as a collector's item, at 3 dollars, including postage, from Luther Norris, 3844 Watseka Avenue, Culver City, California, U.S.A.

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 The Jester Annual. £2 offered. Write:

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# BLAKIANA

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

## GWYN EVANS' RELATIONS

So much has been written in the past on the immortal Gwyn Evans' wonderful characters, and especially his Dickensian conception of them, that it would be futile to comment further on them here. But a fact not known before, and possibly where he inherited his flair for writing is that his great-aunt was none other than Marian Evans - who under the pen-name of George Eliot was world famous for her writings including the immortal "The Mill on the Floss" a classic in English literature. Gwyn, whose favourite actress was Jessie Matthews, and enjoyed the simple things of life in smoking woodbine's and drinking only beer, was also probably one of the world's most famous joker's, and amusing stories of his escapades would be a good seller for any publisher. Gwyn's father was a highly respected Wesleyan Minister who had his living at Portmordoc in North Wales. Greatly interested in what stories his son was writing, Gwyn sent him a couple of tales that he had written for the UNION JACK.

His father wrote back to him on the 29th November 1929 as follows:

My Dear Gwyn,

I have read both of your stories; and of the two I preferred THE HOUSE OF EYES, though both are rather grim tales, but they show that you are very clever in devising plots, and that you have a very vivid imagination. ....

I don't think that any Blakiana reader would disagree with this statement. The Rev. Evans it should be added, was a writer himself, but mainly on church affairs. Gwyn incidentally, had one sister, and was married in 1926. He had one daughter named Patrica Gwyn Evans, who is now married to an American executive, lives in the U.S.A. and who takes an interest in all her late father's writings.

Gwyn died at a very early age, just before the last war and certainly long, long before his time, but his brilliant writings certainly remain, and will be with us for most certainly a very long time to come.

W. O. G. Lofts



I MEET MRS. TEED

By W. O. G. Lofts

It is still remarkable when I think of it. After searching Wales for the widow of Mr. Gwyn Evans; and eventually finding her actually living a short distance away from me in London in the N.W.1. district. I then find the widow of Mr. G. H. Teed, after searching London, living down in South Wales! Such is the experiences of a researcher.

Now living at Penarth, a suburb of Cardiff is an elderly lady, who has very nostalgic memories about the greatest of all pre-war Sexton Blake authors. Her name of course is Mrs. Ivy Teed. Now aged 78, I have found her an extremely interesting correspondent, and with the mental abilities of one many years younger. Especially so where data is concerned about such a great author. Such was my interest in the letters that Mrs. Teed wrote me, that I thought it worth while a visit to see her. In conversation, one can get through far more things than lengthy correspondence. Accepting Mrs. Teed's kind invitation to lunch, I caught the now fast Pullman train from Paddington, and within three hours was meeting Mrs. Teed at her home, where she now lives with her sister.

Looking years younger than her years, Mrs. Teed looks very much like Barbara Mullen of Dr. Finlay's Casebook, and I soon found that she was an extremely well educated and cultured person. During our talks, I was able to gather quite a large number of new facts about George Hamilton Teed. Mrs. Teed always used to call him 'Hamilton' and so for the sake of brevity I will likewise call him that in this article.

George Heber Hamilton Teed, to give him his full correct name, was born at a small place, near St. John's, New Brunswick, Canada. His father was Almon Isiah Teed, a very prosperous merchant, who owned saw-mills, a fleet of boats, a coffee plantation in South America, and also used to ferry goods right out to the West-Indies. At an early age Hamilton's father died, and his mother married again, but his father's business was shared out between him and his two sisters. Educated at Canada's most exclusive school McGill's University, Hamilton it could be said had as good an education as anyone in this world. Whilst in his teens, Hamilton who by this time had had a step-brother, and who he simply did not get on with at all, decided to see the world "I wanted to see the palm trees" was his explanation many years later to Mr. H. W. Twyman editor of the Union Jack. Hamilton certainly saw far more than this, as he travelled round the world twice before eventually finishing up as

a sheep-farmer in Australia.

Unfortunately, the drought one year beat our author, and early 1912 saw him on the boat to England almost broke, and with no real prospects of a job in the home country. During the long voyage 'home' as it were, Hamilton made the acquaintance of a lady named Mrs. Storm. One only has to experience the long journey on a passenger liner to appreciate the fact, that within a short time Hamilton became great friends with her. Listening, sympathetically to his troubles, and hard luck down-under, Mrs. Storm who by her account had recently lost her husband, and was a widow, was on her way back to England to inform his publishers of his death, and try to get them to publish some of his work, which she had found amongst his (Michael Storm's) effects.

Becoming greatly interested in the scripts that Mrs. Storm showed him, eventually it was decided that Hamilton would write some stories and Mrs. Storm would take them up to Fleetway House and get them published as being the hand of the late Michael Storm. It should be added that Michael was regarded as a brilliant author and anything from his pen was usually accepted without question. As it is well known now, this materialised, and eventually Hamilton appeared himself to the astonishment of Willie Back, who thought that the 'ghost' of Michael Storm must really have arrived, as their styles were so similar.

So much has been written in the past and recently on Mrs. Storm, that I will simply close my remarks about her by saying that she was a very strong willed woman and eventually she and 'Hamilton' had a dispute and they parted company.

Now an established Sexton Blake writer, the war in 1914 saw him in Paris. Returning to London, he joined the King Edward's Horse, a Canadian Troop, and served in France. Later he was stationed in Dublin, where he became very ill with pneumonia. Invalided out of the services, surprising enough, when he was offered a post in French Cochin he accepted and did not resume his writing career. Possibly he thought that the hot climate on the West coast of Southern India would be far more beneficial to his health, than the damp in England. It was here, as branch manager of an export firm, that he first met Mrs. Ivy Teed at a fancy dress ball, who incidentally was the daughter of a government official. They were married in 1920, and with the closing down of the export branches and making them agencies, Hamilton decided to resume his career in London of writing Sexton Blake yarns, and so they arrived

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back in England in 1921. After a short while, they moved over to France, where they lived in the Latin quarter in Paris. Mrs. Teed took a deep interest in her husband's writings, and they often used to discuss plots. Hamilton's favourite character was that arch criminal Huxton Rymer, whilst he based Yvonne on his favourite actress star Yvonne Arnaud. He used to type his stories straight out with no pages ever wasted, nor no subbing afterwards. But above all he really enjoyed writing his Blake yarns, which is certainly different from some authors I have met who considered writing a grind, and more like an imposition. If any author ever influenced him it was obviously Michael Storm, and he used to enjoy talking about him and his writings. Not of course knowing that such interest would be shown about Michael Storm some 50 years later, Mrs. Teed unfortunately did not remember as much as she wished she had done at the time about this author - except to say that most certainly her husband had never met him, as he had died long before he ever contemplated writing Blakes.

Mrs. Teed can well remember Mr. H. W. Twyman coming to Paris to discuss a plot with Hamilton for a story. They went to a cathedral, and became so engrossed in a theme for a plot, that Hamilton picked up a jewelled scarab and put it in his pocket. It took a lot of explaining to the guide, before things were back to normal!

Hamilton could speak French fluently, as he had learned it in his boyhood in Canada, where French is the second language. Surprising, he very rarely talked about his old home life and he eventually sold his shares in his father's business, after a sister had visited him in London. Hamilton, however, often brought his own real life adventures into his stories, and what man better than he with his vast experience in world travels, and with his various localities so authentic in colour.

Towards the end of the 30's, however, Hamilton became very ill, and eventually died in London at Whitechapel, just before the war. Mrs. Teed has an old, now very tattered copy of the Union Jack which her husband wrote, which has been read over and over again; and two bound books "Volcano Island" and "The Voodoo Queen" one of which is autographed, and has a photograph of Hamilton in his prime inside the cover.

Memories not only of a husband, but of probably the greatest Sexton Blake writer of them all.

(continued)

I mentioned Blyth's style earlier, and said that it was not exactly brilliant. Looking back on it, it strikes me as being a little unfair, a comment of that nature, for he was undoubtedly a professional.

Yet, of all the writers in this collection of Marvels, only Maxwell Scott truly stands out - a diamond amongst a heap of coloured stones. Scott, of course, was otherwise known as John Staniforth, creator - or, again, maker - of Nelson Lee. His only fault, as far as I'm concerned, is a tendency to be slightly pedantic. Apart from this, he writes with impeccable precision - a fine stylist, indeed.

Blyth has a definite narrative and descriptive skill - but, alas, he falls down on his dialogue, which is stiff and unreal.

"There is small need for you, my friend, to tell me how eager you are that I should succeed," says a character in "Silver Camp" (Halfpenny Marvel, No. 36).

Comparisons are odious, as we all know, and times do change. But if we read dialogue by such contemporaries of Blyth as Arthur Morrison or Conan Doyle it is at once clear that Blyth was indeed uncomfortable when reporting the conversations of his characters.

And yet, as I said, when it comes to describing a fight or a fire or a stormy night in Alaska he is as skilled as the next man, if not more so.

That last appears in "Brought To Bay" (No. 23) written under the Hal Meredith by-line.

"Across the plain, towards the forest-trees, the wind rushed with a howl and a shriek, and from time to time a howl, even more fierce, arose from the starving wolves which infested that wild land. As the wind died away to a low wail, the sound of bells was heard, then the crack of a whip, and a sledge, drawn by four magnificent grey horses, appeared in sight."

This tale is, incidentally, quite extraordinary in many ways. Blyth writes a beautifully atmospheric first chapter - the shrieking wind, the flurries of snow blinding the traveller, the howling wolves, the haunted house owned by the miserly old Jew who soon gets his just deserts (he is thrown down the stairs and breaks his neck) etc. Chapter 2, quite the opposite, is hilariously funny, with the author going to great lengths for belly laughs. In Chapter 4 he draws, in words, a superb picture of Our Hero being chased

and attacked by ravening wolves - a tremendous piece of description, this chase - and then, in the last chapter, we are handed about 3,000 words of sheer, outrageous padding, a description of a bear-hunt that is completely extraneous to the story.

The whole thing is most odd, since it is blatantly obvious - the Editorial "chat" is twice its usual length, too - that Blyth, the professional, has miscalculated his normal 22,000 words.

In his next novel - "The Horrors of Siberia" (No. 24), written under his own name - Blyth takes us back to the world of blood-and-thunder, with the accent heavily on the former.

Percy Lorrain is sent to Russia in order that he may never find out that he has been swindled by his "trusted" guardian. In St. Petersburg, he is lured into the fell clutches of a secret society, almost blown to pieces by an infernal machine (they were remarkably lucky in this respect, those lads of yesteryear), captured by the Tzarist police as an anarchist plotter, and sent off to Siberia, where he, just by chance, meets a friend who has suffered the same fate. They escape, are pursued across an ice-covered river, where their pursuers (a troop of soldiers) perish when the ice cracks, cross the Pamirs to Samarcand and over the Roof of the World - where they are captured by brigands - to India. Thence to England, Home and Beauty, just in time to save the heroine from a fate that was usually reckoned in those days to be very much worse than death.

And that is only the half of it.

"The Horrors of Siberia" rattles along at a tremendous pace and shows that Blyth must certainly, in the past, have written more than his fair share of those same penny-dreadfuls that so infuriated Alfred Harmsworth, his employer.

"The Lone Islander" (No. 42) is in a much quieter vein and, to a certain extent, is much more interesting.

The hero comes upon the villain in the act of stealing an all-important pocket-book, but, unfortunately, he hasn't the sense to understand the implications thereof. Consequently, the villain has him press-ganged. After a storm in the Atlantic, he finds himself stranded on a barren island in the centre of the Sargasso Sea - and then Blyth really gets down to business.

In effect, he gives us a lesson in survival - seven chapters of quite brilliant description of how to live on nothing on a deserted island. He also, for instance when describing a sunken galleon, comes up with gems like this:

"It was a sight so suggestive of life, activity, and the

bustle of human beings, that it thrilled him with new ideas, and fired his imagination. He could picture this noble galleon, proudly breasting the waves, with white, bulging sails, and her well-polished guns glinting in the sun. The bravery and pride of Spain paced her decks, and, while she was heavy with silks and jewels, spices and doubloons, she grandly pursued her course.

"Now this proud thing lay stranded by the shore, her treasure rotting in the silent waters, and the bones of her masterful commanders grimly mingling with the wealth they had fought so hard to obtain."

Added to this descriptive excellence is the eerie sense of desolation, of being raised, so to speak, on a small platform in the middle of a limitless, around and in depth, sea - a thought that must fill even the most unimaginative amongst us with horror.

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OFFERS: EXCHANGE ONLY - "Magnets" 879, 885, 916, 983, 1066, 1093, 1096, 1179, 1180, 1198, 1228, 1285, 1355, 1361, 1365, 1372, 1440, 1441, 1449, 1450, 1477, 1491, 1506, 1531, 1533, 1534, 1666.

"Gems" 802, 906, 996, 1013, 1014, 1015, 1107, 1111, 1136, 1345, 1346, 1347, 1350, 1424, 1434, 1441, 1448, 1541, 1580, 1597, 1599, 1602. "The Greyfriars Herald" new series No. 1, 35, 40, 48, 50. "S.O.L's" 146, 147, 150, 154, 158, 172, 215, 217, 221, 246, 249, 251, 304, 343, 346, 349, 411.

WANTED: EXCHANGE or BUY "Magnets" 704-5-6-7, 809, 812, 828, 981, 982, 984, 1080, 1082, 1088, 1089, 1271, 1272, 1284, 1325, 1378, 1379, 1404, 1409-10-11, 1466, 1471, 1472, 1500, 1508, 1519, 1521. "Gems" 774, 812-13-14-15-16-17-18, 1135, 1174, 1331, 1363, 1023, 1024, 1048, 1066, 1095, 1442, 1469, 1587, 1594, 1595, 1598, 1600, 1601, 1603, 1604, 1616, 1642 and others. S.O.L's., Greyfriars, St. Jim's or Rookwood. "COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUALS" pre 1951.

W. TITTENSOR, 18, PARKWAY DAIRYFIELDS, TRENTHAM, STOKE-ON-TRENT

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W A N T E D : Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: GEMS: Some issues between 801 and 832; 953, 954, 959, 960, 970, 974, 975, 981, 984, 985, 986, 987, 989, 990, 992, 993, 995. POPULARS: 401, 403, 407, 409, 413, 415, 421, 422, 441, 442, 466, 467, 474.

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# HAMILTONIANA

## LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

### No. 124. WHICH WING FOR BILLY BUNTER?

I notice in our Midland club's report this month that they have been discussing "the learned gentlemen who are always having a sneer at the Magnet and the Gem and exposing their own ignorance and prejudices."

A month or two ago an editorial in Collectors' Digest drew attention to something of the sort, and it is possible that Midland's discussion stemmed from this. Our editorial commented on a literary review of a newly-published autobiography, and the following is an extract from that editorial:

"I wonder sometimes why some of these intellectuals seem to have a passion for destroying the happy memories of the very things which seemed so worth while in years gone by."

"Intellectuals" was probably a euphemism. But I have a sneaking suspicion that a political bias is behind attacks of the kind to which we referred.

Politics have no place at all in our hobby. At our meetings we do not bother two hoots whether the enthusiast sitting next to us is right wing, left wing, or fed up to the teeth with all wings. We are just as unconcerned about his or her political views as we are about his or her religious beliefs.

I have not seen the autobiography to which I referred above, so I do not know whether there is anything outstanding in it. Only two reviews of the work came my way - one from a left wing writer. The other from a left wing periodical.

The two reviewers in question seem to have selected that particular opus for review for the simple reason that the writer of the autobiography had a father who hated the Gem and the Magnet. One of the reviewers, at least, wasted little space on any appraisal of the autobiography, but took the opportunity to attack the two famous boys' papers. He sneered at the "snob appeal" of the Gem and the Magnet, and then carried on to condemn them as "rubbish."

Snobbery is easy to cope with. It is so loathesome in itself that it is wide open to attack. Harder to deal with is inverted snobbery, for those guilty of it don a "holier than thou" halo which never tarnishes in their own eyes.

For the extremists, the Gem and the Magnet become the subject

of ridicule and contempt for the simple reason that they deal with public school life which those extremists detest. But dozens of other papers featured stories of public school life. Then why select the Gem and Magnet for attack? Simply because Charles Hamilton was the man who wrote the finest stories on the theme down the years, and they were the most universally loved.

Any man is entitled to his own opinion about the public schools as such. But it is arrant nonsense for anybody to suggest that "snob appeal" was the reason you and I bought the Gem and the Magnet each week and have followed their fortunes down to the present day. We spent our sparse pocket-money on those papers because we loved the stories they offered and admired the morals they taught. We loved Greyfriars, but not because any of us would have wished to go to Greyfriars. We loved Christmas at Wharton Lodge, but not because any of us would have exchanged a Christmas at our own modest homes for one in the elaborate surroundings of Colonel Wharton.

I was brought up in a radical atmosphere. My father and mother were liberals. Both of them were what would today be termed "left wing." In fact, my mother was often quite vociferous on the subject of social reform. But never did either of them condemn my papers because the stories told of public school boys and of people who had far more money than we had. In fact, the whole family enjoyed the papers from time to time. So long as the moral tone was good and the tales were reasonably well written, that was all they bothered about. Nobody ever suggested in those days that there was anything political about the Gem and the Magnet.

Most of Charles Hamilton's readers came from the middle classes, which never featured at all in his stories, and from the lower classes for whom there was always just the slightest breath of patronage. Did any of those readers resent such schools as Greyfriars, or feel bitter about Gussy who was so often tipped a "fivah"? Of course they didn't.

The Amalgamated Press was a firm with a tilt to the right. Few of us could doubt that, basically, Hamilton was a mild right-winger. He didn't believe that Jack was, of necessity, as good as his master. He didn't believe that the world owed everybody a living which meant that he had no time for layabouts. In Edwardian times he was gently satirical about socialism. He thought the suffragettes figures of fun, though he was careful to make Arthur Augustus have an opposite view.

He was proud of Britain and of the Empire and of what, in his



view, it stood for. Boys from the Empire, irrespective of colour, were the cream of the earth. He believed in birth and breeding, and he was embarrassingly tart about upstarts. Self-made millionaires seldom shone in a good light. Though a gentle snob himself, he portrayed snobbery for what it is - the most degrading of vices.

He admired the old aristocracy, but, with characters like Sir Hilton Popper, he showed that there are black sheep in every fold.

Probably he had not much time for parliamentarians at all. All down the years, when governments were changing from right to left and from left to right, he poked mild fun at those in power. He never seemed to have a very high opinion of Americans, though it is unlikely that when Miss Vanessa Redgrave next goes out to protest she will be waving a Magnet.

He wrote of boarding school life, not because he had any first-hand knowledge of it, but because a day school would have given no scope for his stories. Despite the sneers of those who claim that there was never a public school like Greyfriars, he was amazingly convincing because he wrote so well. His characters had money because without it so many of their adventures would have been impossible.

And there were times, all down the years, when he wrote strongly on social conditions in a manner which made a lasting impression on his youthful readers.

Among his critics, one, George Orwell, lamented the absence of sex from the Greyfriars stories. Anything of that sort is merely ludicrous.

It has seemed incomprehensible sometimes that Richmal Crompton's lovable rascal, William, has become the object of the mud-slingers now and then. But we must remember that William's home had a breakfast room, a morning room, a drawing room, a cook, a housemaid, and a gardener. Very class-conscious! His critics, in their walled-in prejudice, failed to see that William is hilarious in the effect he has on the fluffy, pompous, or toffee-nosed people he meets in the immediate circle of his parents. He would be quite unfunny if he lived in Coronation Street. And Richmal Crompton has ever been a non-respecter of all political parties.

Of course, I may be wrong in seeing a political bias in the barbed utterances of some of the critics, but I doubt it. In recent years, politics have crept into all too many walks of life. It's a bit too much when they are allowed to creep into a delightful hobby in an effort to smear the memories which mean far more to us than the slanted views of critics of any wing.

BUNTER - VENTRILOQUIST

by R. J. Godsave

Does the gift of ventriloquism automatically endow the speaker with sufficient brainpower to imitate the voice and personal colloquialisms used by the person whose voice is being imitated?

It is obvious that the ventriloquist must be able to assume the voice, and, more important the oral personality of the person he is imitating. The manner of delivery would also be of the utmost importance. Imitation being idiomatic as well as tonal.

It is, therefore, surprising that Bunter in the Muccolini Circus series, who is always portrayed as a poor scholar and not gifted with fluency, should be able to emulate the headmaster Dr. Locke, his form-master Mr. Quelch and Loder of the Sixth. Equally, at the other end of the scale he is able to imitate, successfully, all and sundry of those who are connected with the circus, even the ventriloquist Mr. Tip himself, again successfully.

To be able to do this entails a considerable amount of concentration. How Bunter managed this is beyond my comprehension, even allowing for author's licence - which is, unfortunately, frequently stretched beyond the bounds of credibility, and often serves to make an otherwise enjoyable yarn have a false ring and thus destroy the concentration of the reader.

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W A N T E D : "ADVENTURE;" "HOTSPUR;" "ROVER;" "WIZARD;" and their Annuals. However old or new, but particularly 1950 - 1964.

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S A L E : Nelson Lees, 1st New Series, 192 copies. Two wanted to complete set. Moderate to mint. Offers. 31 copies, mostly 3rd, including last issue. £3. Post extra. No callers.

LEN WORMULL, 245 DAGNAM PARK DRIVE, ROMFORD, ESSEX.

## NELSON LEE COLUMN

CONDUCTED BY JACK WOOD

E. S. BROOKS and RICHARD STARRBy L. S. Elliott

Referring to letters in the Jan. and Feb. issues on Edwy Searles Brooks and Richard Starr, I would like to clarify two issues.

The story "The Stowaway's Quest," was definitely written by E. S. B. as "Robert W. Comrade."

I have a letter from Mr. Brooks dated June 20th, 1927, (from Barton House, Halstead) wherein he says so. In fact, he lent me his copy, with several others, of his old "Boys' Friend" stories.

I wonder how many other boys, at that time, knew that "Martin Clifford," "Frank Richards" and "Owen Conquest" were only 'pen-names' and that E. S. Brooks had written both Gem and Magnet yarns but not Rookwood.

He told me, in confidence, all this, and much more; also, that he had never used the "Owen Conquest" nom-de-plume but had a couple of yarns due in forthcoming "Holiday Annuals."

With reference to Richard Starr (his correct name) he only used the name Lewis Essex for "Spartacus" in the beginning of "Young Britain," nothing to do with the Blake author.

He mentioned his sister, who is buried in the cemetery at Goring-on-Sea.

Richard Starr was writing a serial when the 1914-18 war started. It was immediately turned into a war story. Then he enlisted in the Royal Flying Corps, but continued the story, while training in the new No. 41 Squadron.

He was suddenly ordered to France, after only six weeks, which threatened to stop the serial. He suggested to his sister, with the consent of the editor - Garrish - that she continued the serial, as she had already sold a few short stories. She did this for the three years Mr. Starr was away in France - with Mrs. Starr doing the typing - and when Richard Starr returned he resumed and completed the story "The Dauntless Three" ("The Big Three" later in the Jester).

Editor Garrish gave the sister further work on the Jester and she later wrote several stories for "Young Britain" as Vera Lovell

There is much more I could write about papers like "Young Britain," "Pluck," "Rocket," and "Champion," but I am afraid "C.D."

has not the space to spare.

Referring back to E. S. Brooks, the years from 1927 when I corresponded with him, reveal a mine of information and give me a feeling of nostalgia, and shock that I had forgotten so much.

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TREASURE TROVE

By William Lister

When you are young it is possible to think in terms of the discovering of hidden treasure - treasure trove is the term used. A pirate's map may fall into your hands and from then on the treasure is as good as yours.

However, the passage of time creates a good deal of doubt, as to whether any such treasure does exist in our modern world. And our hopes grow dim along with our eyesight.

Once again we can take heart! Hidden treasure does indeed exist. At least for all the fans of "Nelson Lee" and Edwy Searles Brooks. Not only is it known to exist; it has been found.

The first jewel in the casket is on show on page 23 of "Collectors' Digest" for March 1968 and is exhibited by Mr. R. Blythe.

In his article "Early Days" we have our first glimpse and there are no doubt other treasures likely to be exposed to our eager eyes at a later date.

Vera Brittain in her book "On Becoming a Writer" says "The early struggles of distinguished writers to get their first foothold on the ladder of fame seem to be more interesting and varied than their activities when they get to the top." and R. Blythe's article would suggest this is true.

Here is a little gem; speaking of a 360 page story of 70,000 words, Edwy says "I intend to send it to Blake and Sons, publishers (its been lying on my desk for the last month.) It'll cost about one shilling and twopence to send. I'll have to get it off soon, though."

Way back in 1909, there did not seem to be much money about for beginner writers, in fact, to quote Vera Brittain, "just before the 1939 war "Dark Tide" my first book, netted nothing after paying £50, my share of publishing fees and my second only £16 for many months work" (though later she wrote two best-sellers).

Arnold Bennett's first novel left him 20/- after paying his typing bill. We are told that Antony Merton of "Baron" fame collected 700 re'ection slips before earning his first 10/6.

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George Bernard Shaw's first five books were rejected - while W. L. George, South African writer of the last generation, papered his walls with rejection slips before fame came his way.

Who said "If at first you don't succeed, try - try again"?

No doubt Edwy recouped his 1/2d. losses in due course.

There are those who would say that after all, apart from Edwy Searles Brooks later years as Berkeley Grey and Victor Gunn, most "Collectors' Digest" enthusiasts admire him for his St. Frank's tales in the "Nelson Lee" and these are not among the 'classics.'

May I remind all such of the words of Dr. Gogswell, when opening the Astor Library in New York in 1854. "Everybody among our readers at the library reads excellent books, except the younger fry, who employ all the time out of school hours in reading trash, such as Scott; Fennimore Cooper; Dickens and Punch."

It appears the younger fry of 1854 knew what they wanted - and the fans of "Nelson Lee" cum St. Frank's School cum Edwy Searles Brooks are not one whit behind them.

We are all waiting for R. Blythe's next dip into the treasure chest.

#### ADVICE TO WRITERS - 1912 VINTAGE

By Len Wormull

Among my recent acquisitions is a 1912 publication - "How To Write For The Paper: A guide for the young author," by Albert E. Bull. Most of the boys' papers of the period are listed as prospective channels for the writer, outlining their particular requirements. The author's comment on this scene of long ago might be of interest :-

"Don't be led astray by grown up people's ideas of boys' books. There are certain works that every adult has read which he regards as triumphs of boys' literature. But they are not true patterns for the reason that few boys read them till they are grown up. Let us take two of these, "Treasure Island" by Robert Louis Stevenson, and "Tom Brown's Schooldays" by Thomas Hughes.

"Stevenson was discovered by the late Mr. James Henderson the publisher, and his story - because it seemed promising - was risked as a serial in Young Folks, then a highly popular journal. The grown up people welcomed a new master of writing, but a plebiscite of the paper's readers showed that the boys would sooner have their old favourite, Alfred R. Phillips, a writer whose tales are now almost forgotten.

"Tom Brown's Schooldays," because it is a fairly faithful account of the school in which a great number of influential men were educated, has been puffed and advertised by the applause of a generation now passing from us. It is scarcely a schoolboy's book at all. It deserves rather to be placed among those very interesting works of reminiscences that have a value historically. This book has been described as "the most immoral work of its century," setting out as it does ideals of snobbishness, and teaching the youth of England the best way to prepare for a life of magnificent idleness.

"The taste of the boy reader is constantly improving. What satisfied the youth of twenty years ago would be flung aside unread to-day. The choice is no longer between Tom Brown's Schooldays (which wasn't read), and Jack Harkaway (which was). Jack Harkaway would never grip the present reader. He was too heartless, too contemptible and too unreal.

"It may be news to many of the public, but it is an open secret among writers, that the real authors of a large number of the boys' stories now appearing, are men and women who are famous in other fields of journalism. A well-known playwright is the historian of a famous boy's detective, and a novelist now ranking among the first dozen or so, has other names by which he is known to an immense army of boy readers. This is stated that the beginner may be saved from supposing that he is competing with writers of little calibre.....

"School Stories. These are probably first favourites. The school should always be a boarding-school since the limited hours a day-boy spends on the premises scarcely allow sufficient opportunity for adventures. The thrilling events of school life cannot always take place in classrooms. In one important point there has been a great change in school stories in the last few years. The story of a decade ago made the masters the butt of the boys' witticisms. The modern idea is to hold up the masters as admirable and just-minded men, who take a joke in good part and who often contribute to the fun."

MAGNETS (Mostly 1936/7) for exchange: SIX Magnets offered for any ONE of the following Magnets - 958, 1012. FOUR Magnets offered for any ONE of the following 4d B.F.L. (Cedar Creek) 417, 465, 469, 473, 493, 497, 509.

P. J. HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, KINGS HEATH, NORTHAMPTON.

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

BILL LOFTS (London): This morning I had a coffee at 'The Billy Bunter's.' Nothing perhaps unusual in this, the reader may say - probably just a nick-name for a local café. But this is the actual name of the place painted up outside in blue lettering, and with a small picture of Bunter each side of the shop front. Large blown-up pictures of the fat owl, from the Knockout are also to be seen inside. The address of this place is 442, Edgware Road, W.2., on the right-hand side going down from Marble Arch and just before you get to the Fire-Station at Maida Vale. So far I have not been able to question the proprietor as to why he called his café by this so apt name, but it's certainly a place in which Billy Bunter would have been a more than regular visitor.

EDDIE KELLY (Dublin): As well as the debt we owe to Charles Hamilton we must not forget the set-up of the Companion Papers with their covers and the (at times) very beautiful drawings of the schools and boys. As Frank O'Connor said on Irish TV not long before his death: "Our eyes are starved of beauty." He meant the terrible cult of ugliness in most designs today and the senseless destruction of the countryside in our deteriorating environment.

PHILIP JENKINSON (Harrow-on-the-Hill): My brother has five volumes of a magazine for boys and 'old boys,' called The Captain. The volumes are twice-yearly and Volume One came out in 1899. In Volume XIV in 1908, there is the story "The Lost Lambs" by P. G. Wodehouse. It is stated that it is a sequel to "Jackson Junior." The latter is "Mike at Wrykin" and the former "Mike and Psmith." I notice that you say the stories were published in 1909. The story in The Captain is published in six serials, which appeared in the months April to September 1908. The stories were probably published in book form in 1909.

W. J. A. HUBBARD (Leytonstone): The May C.D. is to hand and I found it a most interesting number. Mr. Edward Thomson is correct when he states that Olive Thomas was Jack Pickford's first wife. She did not remain his wife for very long, however, as she died on the 10th September, 1920, a suicide, from an overdose of deadly pills. A Vogue model, Ziegfeld showgirl and popular actress it was later given out she was a confirmed drug addict.

Readers of C.D. who are keen on the old silent films will no doubt recollect that the death of Olive Thomas 'sparked' off a succession of Hollywood scandals - those concerning Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle, Mary Miles Minter and Mabel Normand (Charles Chaplin's leading lady) and one of the most popular leading men of the day - the handsome, athletic Wallace Reid. Mary Miles Minter and Mabel Normand were both mixed up in the murder of the famous Hollywood Paramount Director, William Desmond Taylor, which has received notice in a previous number of the C.D. The careers of "Fatty" Arbuckle and of Miss Minter and Miss Normand were, of course, brought to a sudden end and I do not think that any of them ever appeared in films again while Wallace Reid died in a mental home in 1923. He was another drug addict.

The extracts from Mr. Norman Linford's letter contained some interesting details relative to the characters and stories in "The Schoolgirl" and "The School Friend" and I would like to see a good article in the C.D. Annual giving particulars of the various stories and series in these two papers on the lines of the "Gem" and "Magnet" articles written years ago in the Annual. Could not Mr. Linford oblige, for he seems to have a good collection of both "The Schoolgirl" and "The School Friend"?

FRANK CASE (Bramcote): C.D. is as enjoyable as ever, and cheap at any price. I am rather surprised that you didn't increase the price long ago, and, what's more, not to 2/3 but to 2/6. My pay packet is modest, but the C.D. is one thing I shall always be able to afford. And I still think it dirt cheap.

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross): A nice tribute to Allan Blair (by Walter Webb), a famous name of the 20's and 30's in the Sexton Blake saga.

Danny got me into quite a muddle (only mentally) with his mention of H.B. Irving in "The Lyons Mail." Ah, yes, I thought, the H.B. Irving who was in "King of Kings." Then I thought, no, that was H.B. Warner. Then it must be the Henry B. Irving who was in "The Birth of a Nation." No, that was Henry B. Walthall (after another think). Oh, HENRY Irving of Ellen Terry fame (or perhaps, vice versa). No, it couldn't be. HE wasn't around in 1918. So, who is H.B. Irving, then? Incredible how Danny makes one's brain begin to tick over. According to Who Was Who, 1916-1928, H.B. is Henry Broadribb, son of the late Sir Henry, an actor manager who died in 1919. It doesn't mention his films, but says he lived in Harrow and his publications reveal he was interested in the



THE HAMILTON EDWARDS EMPIRE

Without any question, Hamilton Edwards' greatest success was the Boys' Friend. Only about a dozen of the pre-war story-papers saw more than 1,000 issues, and, so far as my personal records go, the Boys' Friend scored 1717 issues, and with that great score heads the list. It just beats the Gem, which saw 1711 issues, which was the highest of any Hamilton paper.

The Boys' Friend, of course, was a Hamilton paper for 11 years, and it is that period which probably all of us would regard as the Golden Age of the Friend. But it is fairly certain that the Boys' Friend enjoyed its heyday earlier, when it was under Edwards' control.

It was at the start of 1895 that the Boys' Friend first saw the light of day as a halfpenny paper. Its success is obvious, for six years later Edwards doubled its size and price - and on the strength of the success of the B.F. set about adding to his empire. In mid-1902, he launched the Boys' Realm. This ran for 717 issues, until it became a war casualty in March 1916. It returned after the war, and ran for a further 500 or so issues, though, by that time, Edwards was no longer in control.

Less successful seems to have been the third addition to Edwards' empire. This was the Boys' Herald, which was launched in the wake of the Friend and the Realm in August 1903. It is hard to see just why the Herald should have been less successful than the other two, for it was completely similar in format, design, and scope. The same authors and the same artists contributed to all three, and, to anyone browsing over these journals today, the Herald is every bit as fascinating.

Sometime towards the end of 1911, the paper became just The Herald. It seems likely that Edwards, seeking to increase the circulation somehow, aimed now to make it a family paper.

For many weeks during the Spring of 1912 Edwards announced a forthcoming new Maxwell Scott serial "Nipper's First Case," but the week that the serial actually started was the last in the life of the Herald. With the issue dated 18th May 1912, Edwards gave notice that from now on readers were to ask for "Cheer Boys Cheer" and that it would contain no less than 36 pages. He seems not to have mentioned in advance that the sheet pages would now be only half the size; - that is, Magnet size.

Cheer Boys Cheer was a clumsy title for any paper, even though

it is a question whether the name of a paper really counts for much. Somehow, it was typical of Hamilton Edwards. Cheer Boys Cheer lasted only just over a year (68 issues), after which the name was changed yet again to the Boys' Journal. As such it ran for 72 issues, after which it was amalgamated with the ill-fated Dreadnought, whose own days were numbered.

So the Friend, Realm, and Herald were the main bulwarks of Hamilton Edwards' empire - and stunning bulwarks they were. Throughout the first decade of the century, Edwards had proudly listed his empire at the top of his chat page, even though, in the final issue of the Herald, he claimed to have been associated with other papers, including the Gem, Magnet, Union Jack, Marvel, Pluck, and so on.

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MEMORIES OF YES AND NO!

From Maurice Kutner

I was interested in your mention of the Yes and No periodical. Nearly 50 years ago, when I read everything from The Daily News to Eve's Own, a period when 90% of my reading was practically forgotten almost as soon as read owing to the heavy pressure of reading matter, I used to buy the Yes and No. One's memory can play curious tricks after half a century, and certainly not to be trusted, so I am curious to see how my slight recollection of the Yes and No compares with any concrete facts of that unusual periodical that may be supplied by your readers. I use the word "unusual" because (memory, please be true to me!) it had no coloured cover; in fact, it had no cover at all. Under the title heading Yes and No which occupied about two inches of space down from the top of the 'cover,' the story began immediately below.

I cannot recall the stories; they may have been love stories, but I have the impression they were written for a more adult person than one of my tender years, a far slicker language than I was used to in the Magnet and Gem.

The size of the Yes and No was about the same as the Boys' Magazine, and I feel sure there were no illustrations throughout its pages, just black printed words on white paper.

I am curious to learn how far the passing of time has misled my memory. I feel strongly that it was called YES OR NO.

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WANTED: £3 each offered for following Magnets in clean binding condition: Nos. 664, 797, 848, 862, 876, 942, 959, 1117, 1125, 1126. A good copy also given in return.  
SYD SMYTH, 1, BRANDON ST., CLOVELLY, N.S.W., AUSTRALIA.

## NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLANDMeeting held April 30th, 1968

In spite of a thunderstorm 11 members attended. It was a cheery meeting despite the weather and says much for the enthusiasm of those who attended. Win Brown had flown in from Holland and come straight to the meeting!

The chief item of news was Tom Porter's completion of his set of Magnets and that his collection of Gems was also lacking just one number, No. 805, to complete his set. Also club members were gratified to hear that Pat Hughes of Wall Heath had donated £5 to the club - a very fine gesture indeed.

The collector's item brought by Tom Porter was Boys' Friend Library (1st series) No. 39 "Sexton Blake in Siberia" and the anniversary number was a Nelson Lee Library (1st new series) published on 30th April, 1927, title - "Shunned by St. Frank's," a story of Harry Gresham, "The Funk of Greyfriars."

An interesting talk was given by Ian Bennett under the title "Boys' Periodicals as I knew them." This was recorded on tape for future use.

Ted Davey, whose talks are usually concerned with Horace Coker, his favourite character, gave a surprise item. He discussed the learned gentlemen who are always having a sneer at the Magnet and Gem, but this, Ted remarked, usually exposed their own ignorance and prejudices.

The raffle prizes donated by Stan Knight, Bill Morgan and Tom Porter were won by Win Partridge, Ivan Webster, Win Brown, Bert Fleming and the treasurer.

There was a discussion at length of Eric Fayne's invitation to all Midland members to the London O.B.B.C. garden party on May 19th, a Sunday. It was decided to meet at New Street Station at 9-0 a.m. and the return train was expected to arrive back at Birmingham at 9-45 p.m. It was also decided to hurry along the newsletter this month so that members intending to go could get the detailed arrangements for the trip.

The next meeting will be the A.G.M. combined with some items to be given by Norman Gregory, the treasurer. This will be on 28th May at 7-30 p.m.

J. F. Bellfield

Correspondent.

NORTHERNMeeting held Saturday, 11 May, 1968

In chilly wet very un-springlike weather fifteen members met to be presided over by Vice Chairman Elsie Taylor, because Chairman Geoffrey Wilde had been taken ill. All were very sorry to hear this, and hoped Geoffrey would soon be feeling better again. Another 'regular' absent was Jack Wood, on duty at Wembley, and so unable to give his contribution to the programme but we look forward to it in June.

Interesting news from postal members was given by Librarian Gerry Allison. We were glad to hear about Frank Case, Jim McMahon, and David Lancake. The last named is going to Canada and all wish him well. Gerry reported that the 'Yorkshire Post' article continued to bear fruit. A correspondent had sold us copies of "Chums" from Shipley. Also the "Reveille" report of Club doings had appeared complete with photograph. A charming letter was read by Gerry from a reader of the 'Yorkshire Post' thanking him and the Club for renewing memories of old times and papers.

The next item was a talk by Harry Lavendar, entitled "A Day at Greyfriars." This started like an autobiography when Harry's father told him he had decided to send him to Greyfriars instead of letting him start work! How young Harry fared on his arrival, meeting Gosling, Bunter, The Famous Five (he was in Study No. 1) Loder, etc. was read in lively express style. Soon Harry found himself in the wars from all sides, and we were all laughing to hear his turbulent adventures. Even when he decided to run away he fell in with a footpad. However, the shaking he got turned out to be his father waking him up at home - and it was work after all!

Refreshments over, and enjoyed, and then Jack Allison gave us a new game. Two teams were picked and Jack put up a giant crossword puzzle on the board. One team had the Across Clues "Red" and the other the Down Clues "Black." Answers were given in turn by each team, and filled in on the board in the respective colours, and it was a race to see which team got the most letters on the puzzle. The clues were hobby inspired and the result very close. Black were 47, and the Red's got 45.

Thanks to Harry and Jack for two original items. Next month we hope to hear from guest Roger Jenkins, Jack Wood, and (after taking the draw tickets round himself) Gerry Allison, who got the marked paper! Next Meeting, Saturday, 8th June, 1968.

M. L. Allison, Hon. Sec.

LONDON

The twenty-first annual garden-party meeting was held on Sunday, May 19th at Excelsior House. The weather was fairly fine but rather cold. However, the garden was looking very green, and numerous photographs were taken. With Tom Porter there were nine visitors from the Midlands Club, and also present was Bert Hamblett to represent the Liverpool Club. Including the lady helpers, there was a total of 53 people.

Chairman, Len Packman, opened the meeting with an address of welcome to all. In nostalgic mood, and speaking in terms which were often very moving, Len looked back to the first Surbiton "fixture" which took place in May 1948, and paid warm tribute to "Madam" who has moved so quietly, kindly, and efficiently "behind the scenes" at every Surbiton meeting since that first one so long ago. John Wernham, president of the London Club, then addressed the large gathering. He spoke of the success of "The Billy Bunter Picture Book," and announced that another opus will appear next autumn though the title was unrevealed.

Tom Porter spoke for the visitors and said how pleased they all were to be present.

Tea was then served - and what a spread it was! Ably served by Madam and her willing helpers, it was done full justice to by all present.

After tea, the host, Eric Fayne, took over. First item was a Nostalgic Memories Musical Quiz, which proved immensely popular. Winners were Bob Blythe, Bill Norris, and Larry Morley.

Following this was one of the famous Quizzes, and in record time Roy Parsons solved it. A Stump Speech competition followed, and evoked some excellent impromptu talks. Roger Jenkins was voted the winner, with Bill Hubbard and Don Webster filling second place. Finally, a general knowledge quiz to find the M.A. of old periodical lore. Roger Jenkins was an easy winner in this sphere. Prizes were presented to all the successful contestants.

Votes of thanks to the host, Madam, and the lady helpers concluded a very happy and jolly meeting.

Next gathering at Ruislip on Sunday, June 16th.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

WANTED: Collectors' Digest memorial issue for February, 1962.

CLARK, 172, CAMP HILL ROAD, NUNEATON.

REFLECTIONS ON THE POSTWAR WIZARD

By Bert Hamblet

Although The Magnet was and still is my favourite, I always had a soft spot for the Wizard.

I first came into contact with the Dundee Papers, Rover, Adventure, Wizard and Hotspur in 1945 - (incidentally, I was once the proud possessor of the first 5 numbers of the Hotspur, I bought them in 1947 for fourpence each and sold them for fivepence each a month later). The Magnet had been retired from active service 5 years before.

Even in those days 1945/7 the Magnet was not easy to get, second hand bookshops in the Merseyside area were already asking sixpence each for them.

The Wizard seemed to stand out in quality very much, they really knew how to write stories, particularly when it came to soccer; it is well over 20 years since I read them, but they still stand out vividly in my mind.

One football story which I enjoyed very much in those early postwar years was I think called "The Man With The Staring Eyes." The story was about a struggling 3rd Division football team which was taken over by a strange rich man who started sacking all the players and Directors and in next to no time he had a new team of unknown players who started playing like champions and shooting up the league tables. The rich eccentric was a hypnotist with strange powers, who signed players with weak minds and personalities, he would sit alone in the Directors box in a trance sending messages to the players on the football pitch below. The ending came, with one of the players killing himself and the eccentric man going blind and insane - strong stuff for a schoolboy of 11 years of age in 1946.

Another excellent football story of that time was about a group of gangsters who went all over the country kidnaping international players and performing plastic surgery to change their appearance, and brainwashing them so that they had no recollection of who they were; they would all be put in one team with new names, needless to say the team became world beaters. Before long people started becoming suspicious about this fabulous team of unknowns. I forget the title but it was in the Wizard about 1945.

Another great football story around 1948 was called 'The Goal Maker.' This was about an unknown gypsy who suddenly turns up and starts playing brilliantly for a football team; a newspaper reporter discovers from old photographs that a player who is the

exact double of the present day player played for a team 20 years before in 1928 also in 1908 and 1888; it turns out that he is like the mystical bird called the pheonix and kept popping up every 20 years under a different name.

The Wizard certainly had plenty of good material. Other stories they featured at that time were the famous athlete 'Wilson' also the 'Wolf of Kabul' was still turning up. A great detective story came out in the Wizard in 1947 called 'The Voice on the Wire'; a series of murders happen in a City all with one link, the victims were all old boys from the same college. The men were found drowned in the most unlikely places, tops of buildings and in the street miles from the nearest river. An unknown person keeps ringing up the Police Inspector giving him tips and clues; the only name he is known by is 'The Voice on the Wire.' The killer is found to be an old newspaper seller who had an artificial arm full of water. This man has a grude against his old school and goes round killing his old school friends by pumping water into their throats and drowning them.

The Hotspur had Red Circle and Cannonball Kid; the Rover had Nick Smith in 'It's Goals that Count' and the 'Wonderman;' the Adventure had Dixon Hawk, also an excellent football story called Baldy Hogan the brains of the football team, but in my opinion the Wizard left them all standing.

THE POSTMAN CALLED (cont'd from page 24)...

criminal fraternity. He wrote of the trials of Mrs. Maybrick and Franz Muller, and also wrote about "Remarkable Criminals" and "19th Century French Criminals," as well as a life of Judge Jeffreys. Well, we live and learn, thanks to a nudge from Danny.

FOR SALE: Long run of Modern Boys between 1934 and 1939: 10/- per half-dozen. (Copies specially looked out singly at 2/6 per copy to aid M.B. collectors). Also 23 of the very large format Modern Boy (Nos. 1-24 excluding No. 7) 45/-. 43 of the medium format M.B.: £4 7 copies after reversal to original size: 12/-. Holiday Annuals 1934, 1936: 30/- each. 5 perfect "Knockouts" Dec. 1960 and Jan. 1961 plus one (May 1961) damaged in delivery. All containing Rookwood 6/- the 6. Brand-new binding on Magnet Christmas Double Number for 1913 - story "The Four Heroes": 32/-. Red Magnet 320 "Easy Terms" 15/-. 1d White Magnets 427 "False Evidence," 440 "Giant of Greyfriars," 451 "Mystery of Mauly," 454 "Fishy's Latest" 12/6 each. Gem 499 "Walker" 7/6. Magnet 1656 "Run Out of Greyfriars" 6/-.

Postage extra on all items.

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

A WONDER ABOUT WATCHES

By O. W. Wadham

One thing often strikes me about New Zealand's horde of bare-kneed college boys: How well covered their wrists are with expensive watches. Very few lads lack them.

I wonder if schoolboys of 40, 50 or 60 years ago were so watch conscious.

If so, they certainly did not wear wristlet watches. Nevertheless the constant encouragement in comic papers must have resulted in many Harry Wharton's or Vernon Smith's sporting turnip-like timekeepers.

From 1900 to about 1939 there was hardly an English comic paper - and many of the story type as well - that did not appear without several watch "catch advertisements."

Five guinea timepieces were being offered for 1/- - and a promise to sell some soap, seeds or jewellery.

One advert, in a copy of Chips for 1900, offers "Our Faithful Timekeeper 2/6." It was guaranteed five years and all a buyer had to do was send three extra penny stamps for postage. No mention of selling anything. To get a watch with a 5-year guarantee for 2/9 seems fantastic today... And there was probably some "catch" about it then.

Same issue of Chips another watch importer gives a three-year guarantee for a 2/9 watch, and offers a free Mexican silver chain with it.

It is safe to say that watch selling firms were the main advertisers in the old style comics. Is there, among the many readers of Collectors' Digest, anyone who once took advantage of any of those wonderful watch offers?

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CAN ANYONE HELP in my search for first 'Sexton Blake Annual' - specially wanted to complete set of four. Fair price offered or would appreciate kind loan. Also wanted: S.O.L's, 2nd series "Blakes," Magnets: 1277, 1279, 1280, 1283. All letters answered.

DENNIS M. HILLIARD, 45, MOORBRIDGE LANE, STAPLEFORD, NOTTM, NG9 8GR

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WANTED: Copy of "Floreast Greyfriars" record by Frank Richards. Please write stating price to:-

GRAHAM HOADLY, 34, THE AVENUE, HORNCHURCH, ESSEX.