

STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

VOL.

24

No.

279



THE LIE THAT LED TO TROUBLE FOR BILLY BUNTER!

(An extract from the first complete tale (No. 1).)

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COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR.

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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 A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER
C. D. TO COST MORE

With the next issue of Collectors' Digest the price of the magazine will be increased to 2s.6d. It is with regret that I make this announcement, but I feel that no reader will want me to apologize for something beyond my control. The price has been held down for as long as possible, but constantly-rising costs have made an increase in price now unavoidable. I can only ask for the sympathetic understanding of my readers and friends.

We draw our readers' attention to the fact that we now use a two-tier system in the dispatch of copies, which can be received by either first-class or second-class mail, according to personal wish.

INFLATION

Four out of five of the readers who write to me have something to say about Danny's Diary. Oddly enough, it is not so much the boy's comments on the papers of his day that rivet the modern reader's

attention. It is his capturing of news items of the period, and particularly what he says about the films he saw, that tickles so many memory buds.

Looking over his Diary for the year 1920, I myself am much intrigued by his references to the cost of things. Prices rocketed after the First World War obviously, but - and this is the crux of the matter - inflation was defeated as time passed, prices fell again, and they were held stable through most of the twenties, and all of the thirties. No government since the Second World War has avoided inflation though it has only been in the roaring sixties that it has really taken the bit between its grimy teeth. Possibly inflation is unavoidable in an affluent society such as ours today. The fact remains that it is a constant anxiety for those on low or fixed incomes, those who cannot strike continually for higher pay - and always get it.

Back to Danny. The cost of periodicals was remarkably constant. The Boys' Friend Library had gone up to 4d. at the end of the first war. It was still 4d. when war broke in 1939, though the book had been much enlarged and improved. Our own favourite papers rose from 1½d. to 2d. in the early twenties - the papers were enlarged and improved - and they remained unchanged till the end of the thirties.

Danny tells us that there was a short taxi strike in early 1920 because petrol had risen 8d. a gallon to the astronomical price of 3/8d. a gallon. But in the thirties, the top-grade petrol was 1/6d. a gallon, and some brands sold at 1/3d.

Butter was scarce in 1920, and "government butter" sold at 3/4d. a pound. By the later thirties, butter was 1/- a pound in the large shops. Sugar was dear in 1920. In March it went up to 10½d. a pound; by May it was 1/2d. a pound. In the thirties, it was 4d. a pound. Despite the cost of sugar in the early twenties, sweets rose but little in price. It seems possible that the government, with children in mind, may have subsidised sugar for the sweet manufacturers. Be that as it may, confectionery prices remained stable.

Railway fares had risen by 75% since 1914, from 1d. a mile to 1¾d. a mile in 1920. In the early twenties, however, there was a sharp cutdown, due to the introduction of the "cheap day return." The day return from Surbiton to Waterloo was 1/3d. when I first came to live in

Through the thirties it was 1/4d. Now it is 6/-. Bus and tram fares rose a little in 1920, but tram fares, in particular, had always been very low. The increase was soon off-set by the "2d. all the way" fare on L.C.C. cars. Before the war, the bus fare from Surbiton to Richmond was 5d. Today it is 2/3d.

Cinema tickets have gone out through the roof. The 1920 nine-penny is now 6/-. A front stall in a West End theatre was 12/6d. to 15/- during the thirties. Now it is 40/- and more.

I sometimes think that the biggest increase of all is found in men's haircutting. In 1920, Danny's dad got his hair cut for 6d.; Danny's own mop was trimmed for 3d. Only a very few years back a man's haircut cost 3/6d. Now it is 5/6d. to 6/-, with only a very small reduction for boys. No doubt this is partly the reason why so many boys are allowed in school today looking like nothing on earth.

It is, possibly, unworthy to kick Authority for its inability to combat inflation in these days when we get so much for nothing. Or do we?

PROTECT THE YOUNG - From Bunter!

With sex, violence, and villainy extending their tentacles from every hoarding, bookstall, and cinema or TV screen - with gambling, swearing, lawlessness, and general licentiousness the main pastime of the day - the powers-that-be naturally think of protecting the young. They started by banning the innocuous William and the cheerful Noddy. It was inevitable that Billy Bunter should join William and Noddy in banishment if the youth of Britain is to be adequately sheltered from the evils of the world. So the librarian at Ipswich has placed the Bunter books behind curtains, and maybe the Home Secretary will breathe a little more easily.

Billy Bunter is almost the last link with a society of stability. Now - in Ipswich, at any rate - he is banned.

This grotesque event tempts one to ask a question without an answer. How crazy can any country get?

THE EDITOR

WANTED - any Magnets. Please write stating price to -

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BLAKIANA

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

ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

from J.A.C. Bridgwater

I feel that "Anon" is rather hard on Paterson's "The Bandit of the Bank" (UJ 1295). I made a point of reading this tale immediately after the criticism and in spite of its obvious weaknesses it is quite enjoyable. It is the weakest of the seven Paterson stories I have read in Union Jack and if one reads it, as I did, before reading the others, the final impression after reading all seven, is how much better the others are. It is almost as if Paterson's schoolboy son wrote a story about one of Dad's characters and proud father thought it 'not half bad,' did the minimum amount of editing and submitted it to the Amalgamated Press. There are parts of "The Bandit of the Bank" which remind me very strongly of the story-telling efforts of my own son produced for his Form Master in his early years at grammar school, in plot construction, incident detail and language. In these respects this story seems to me to be quite different to Paterson's other stories. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to compare it with "The Scourge of No-Man's Land" (UJ 1304) or "The Hunchback of Brotherhood Hall" (UJ 1288). The main character of these stories is not quite such a poor specimen as "Anon" implies. I think "The Gold Gang of Bear's Creek" (UJ 1316) should be read before coming to a final conclusion. The naming of this character was, however, grossly overdone. Krock Kelk was bad enough (Napoleon L was hardly used at all, and a good thing, too), but to call anyone Brotherhood Abe - well, I ask you!

Right from the start Paterson seems to have hankered after writing a 'big' series with a 'big' character. The proliferation of names in the short-lived Krock Felk series points to this. In the first story of his I can find, "The Terror of Goringhurst" (UJ 1244), the crooks get away in the end with the suggestion that they are not small fry by any means. The same applies to the two Mogollon tales, "The Adventure of the Apache Chief" (UJ 1302) and "The Flaming Trail" (UJ 1329). I get the impression that a projected series was cut short with UJ 1329. The best Paterson to my mind were his two 'singles.' "Double Identity (UJ

1303) and "The Law of the Gun" (UJ 1298). The last named being my choice for his best story even though quality did waver a bit at the end. On the whole Paterson seems to be best represented by his 'wild west' stories, though his third has its merits. As far as I can find out, Paterson only wrote eleven stories so is one of the few authors of Sexton Blake who could be conveniently studied.

In the same article "Anon" asks other readers to pass an opinion on Anthony Skene's Zenith story, "The Humber Woodyard Mystery" (UJ 1325). After differing somewhat in opinion with "Anon" over Paterson I thought it likely I may do so over Skene. Having read the UJ in question I think it possible that "Anon" would have the same difficulty, only more so, in reading Dickens. In UJ 1325 Skene uses what I may call the 'sustained sentence.' Until you get used to reading them the sentences carry on longer than you expect them to and the reader stumbles, rather like stumbling over a step reached a little sooner than expected. In an exaggerated form these sentences appear in Dickens, they go on and on first reading you get a feeling of 'stumbling and sagging' in the framework. When the style is mastered by the reader, however, it flows, soars, sinks and rises again and carries the reader along as a straw in a strong, turbulent current. When it is done with the touch of the master, as in Dickens, there comes a satisfaction from the flow of the words themselves, their meaning being of quite secondary importance. To me Skene is one of the stylish Blake writers in the class of the later Teed. The love of language for its own sake is to be seen through the pattern of story. Such an appreciation of style, if found, can add appreciably to one's enjoyment of reading whether intended by the writer or no. Reading is, after all, a creative pursuit, I think it was Lord David Cecil who agrees with me, and it may be that this is one of the great charms about Hamilton's works.

One final point. To write off Skene's treatment of Zenith on the evidence of one story, "The Humber Woodyard Mystery," would mean consigning G. M. Plummer to perdition on the evidence of Teed's "The Secret of The Slums" (DW 31), where Plummer is poorly handled, being a mere cardboard cut-out of a character. "Anon" does not give more titles to support his criticism so it is just as difficult to refute as my Plummer example on the evidence supplied. It would be interesting to

know the titles which were responsible for such an opinion.

WAS I BORN TOO SOON?

by Raymond Curé

This was the question I asked myself as I unwrapped the small parcel containing "Tiller and Tideway" or "Sexton Blake, Barge Master" by W. Murray Graydon and published May 1908. I stood holding a book of 120 pages in my hand, and at a quick glance over 300 words per page, with only one page devoted to advertisements - but I did say it is a 1908 date on the cover, price 3d.

My birthday being in May meant that this story appeared four years before my birth. I could not help wondering how many people had read this story - perhaps from this very copy - down the years and 62 years is a long time.

My mention of so much for so little as 3d. will cause some readers to say, "But after all there have been large wage increases over the years."

However, I still think Old Charlie the cowman of "Three Men in New Suits" by G. B. Priestley has something when he says (just after World War II), "When I started long ago, as a cowman, I was young Charlie Shuttle at the tail end of the procession, as you might say, with me pennies in me 'and, waiting for me bit of meat and then me beer and baccy. 'An now I'm Old Charlie, still at the tale end of the procession with me shillings in me 'and - true enough - but getting no more meat nor beer nor baccy. May be not as much."

In fact that's what we all think at times. However, back to "Tiller and Tideway." Readers may sometimes feel as I do, that Blake has lost something by having too many authors. But one must confess that there are occasions when Blake has been all the better for this. The conglomeration of writers bring more experience in the realm of wit adventure and comedy.

After all, what one man can combine the thoughts of many, unless he be a Shakespeare or a Charles Dickens?

W. Murray Graydon's story is, in parts, dated (after all, it is 62 years old). We find Tinker and Blake still a bit shocked at murder, and who is today? We can read of a real murder in every piece of paper

wrapped around our fish and chips.

Some of the characters in this book are outstanding. I go so far as to say they are Pickwickian characters! Any reader of the "Pickwick Papers" will know how easy it was for Mr. Pickwick to land himself in trouble and will recognise a fellow character in Antony Tibblewitt, a bald little man with ginger side-whiskers and, to wit, a village grocer.

Here is a gentleman whose love-life had been blighted because his fiancée dislike the smell of bacon that had permeated him. Very early in the story this quaint little fellow finds himself the centre of an hilarious scene as his stock-in-trade crashes round him, amid a hub-bub of bother.

Of murder and mystery and comedy you may take your fill in the pages that follow.

Even the crooks have a comic streak in them. One has a familiar sounding name, Mr. Grooge (shades of Ebenezer Scrooge). Note his character which is in line with his namesake. Approached by 'Enry, a barge boy, "But I'm hungry mister! I ain't had nothing to eat since me dinner seven hours ago." "Since dinner! He had dinner seven hours ago and now he is hungry again!" Mr. Grooge exclaimed in tones of disgust, "Oh, the gorging propensities of boys - only seven hours since he had dinner and he is hungry again!"

Now if that doesn't remind readers of Ebenezer Scrooge, "Are there no poor-houses?" or Beadle in Oliver Twist when Oliver asks for "More," then they have never read Dickens.

To the last page you have your mystery, comedy and suspense, plus a few ghostly thrills when Sexton Blake, Mr. Tibblewitt and Grooge are involved in a ghost scuffle.

It is here, almost at the end of our story Mr. Grooge departs this life. I have the impression that the producer of the "Carry On" films could make something of this. Maybe a "Carry On Sexton Blake."

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing one or more of the following: GEMS 801, 817, 826, 828, 832. Also POPULARS 401, 403, 407, 413, 415, 422, 441.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON.

DANNY'S DIARY

MARCH 1920

Mary Pickford has been in the news this month. At the start of the month she divorced Owen Moore and at the end of the month she married Douglas Fairbanks. It seems funny to think of the World's Sweetheart in that sort of thing. On the screen she seems like a little girl. Georges Carpentier, the French boxer, has also got married this month.

Two new papers are going strong. They are "Film Fun" and "Tiger Tim's Weekly." I think I enjoy them more than the papers I take regularly, for those have been so weak lately.

The Gem has been dull. "Fingo of the Fourth" was a new black boy from South Africa, and Clive didn't like him till he saved Cousin Ethel and Doris Levison from a ducking. "The Disappearance of Baggy" was about Trimble and his minor, Teddy. "The School House Allotment" told of Tom Merry & Co helping the food situation by growing their own. Mr. Ratcliff's watch and what happened to it was mixed up with this. "The Secret of the Castle" was about a hidden treasure.

Queen Alexandra unveiled a statue to Nurse Edith Cavell. It stands on the corner of Trafalgar Square, near the London Coliseum, the big variety theatre.

The sugar ration has gone up to half-a-pound a week, but it is 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a pound, which is fearful.

It has been a pretty good month in the Boys' Friend. Two very good stories of Rookwood. Peele had a photograph of Teddy Lovell talking to Joey Hook. Peele blackmailed Lovell of the Fourth over this, until Jimmy Silver took a hand. These tales were "The Whip Hand" and "Peele Meets His Match."

Then came a rather short Rookwood tale, not written by the real Owen Conquest. It was "The Missing Manuscript." Mons. Monceau is writing a book on the French Revolution, and the manuscript gets pinched. Finally a new series started. A new boy comes to Rookwood. He is Arthur Beresford-Baggs, whose father has become a millionaire, making his money in munitions. The boy is all right, and the scroungers are after him, but his father is what they call an upstart.

Cedar Creek started off with "The Cedar Creek Poet" in which Chunky Todgers tried to write a great poetic masterpiece, and started talking in rhyme. Quite funny. In "Algy's Farewell," Algy Beauclerc is recalled to England, and leaves Cedar Creek. I never liked him much, and hope he has gone for good. Finally the opening tales of a grand new series. Frank Richards comes into the possession of a map of a gold mine which belonged to Bronze Bill. A villain named Cabrera the Californian is after the map. Frank Richards decides to take a holiday searching for the gold mine. The stories in the series so far are "Frank Richard's Trust" and "Bronze Bill's Bonanza."

Cambridge won the Boat Race by four lengths. Up the light blues. Troytown won the Grand National.

A poor month in the Magnet. "The Hold-up at Greyfriars" was carried out by a gang of thieves. In "The Silent Strike" all the Remove refused to talk, as a protest against Mr. Hacker who became Headmaster while Dr. Locke was away. "Mauleverer's Mission" was to deal with a set of thugs, named the Deadshot Gang, in the village of Friar-dale. Dick Trumper featured in this tale. Finally, in "Bob Cherry's Secret," Bob was helping his cousin, Jimmy Travers.

Summer time came in on March 28th. I think it's a bit early. It's fearfully cold going to school in the morning. Luckily we shall soon break up.

There are two new serials at the cinemas. One is "The Iron Test," starring Antonio Moreno and Carol Holloway. The other is "The Great Gamble." My favourite film this month was Charles Ray in "Hay-foot Strawfoot." We also have seen Theda Bara in "A Woman There Was"; Matheson Lang in "Mr. Wu"; William Farnum in "The Lone Star Ranger"; "Tarzan of the Apes"; and Mabel Norman in "The Pest."

One evening we went to the little Grand Theatre in our town. We don't often go, as the place is considered to be one where nice people don't go. But we heard the show this week was good. It was called "Mr. Tower of London," and the chief players were Archie Pitt who is amusing, and a girl called Gracie Fields who has a very nice voice.

URGENTLY WANTED: Magnets (1922-1933), also S.O.L's. Please write stating price and condition to P. J. MALLETT, 52 Sunnymede Drive, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex.

The story from the start of the century - when Jack Blake was young and St. Jim's was new.

STAUNCH CHUMS AT ST. JIM'S

The chums of Study No. 6 were in the school tuck-shop. They had spent the half-sovereign right royally, and had enjoyed their feast. But satiety had come at last and, while there was still some small silver left, cream-puffs and tarts and ginger beer ceased to tempt them.

"This," said Blake dreamily, "is what I call happiness. I wonder where that half-sov came from. I wish some more would come from the same place."

"Blake - Blake!"

"Hallo! What do you want, young Higgs?"

"Kildare wants you."

"Oh, dear! What is it now? I suppose the Sleath beast has been complaining," said Blake. "I can't possibly stand a licking after that feed. I shan't go."

"Better," said Herries. "Explain how it is to Kildare, and get him to lay it on lightly."

"I suppose I shall have to go.

Here, young Higgs, come and have some tarts. I'm in funds to-day. I've had a windfall and there's still some left. Was there anybody in Kildare's study with him?"

"Yes, some seniors from the New House."

"I'm in for it," sighed Blake.

"Why can't they leave alone an innocent kid who only wants to be 'appy?"

"I think I weally ought to come with you, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "I was with you in waiding the New House."

"You stay where you are. One licking is enough," said Blake.

And he betook himself to the study of the St. Jim's skipper.

Blake looked in astonishment at the grave faces of the seniors. He could understand why Sleath had come over to complain, and Monteith, too, but the presence of Webb and Baker surprised him. It

seemed a case of much ado about nothing with a vengeance.

"Well, here he is," said Monteith spitefully. "You had better question him, Kildare. He's more likely to tell you the truth."

"Yes, here I am," said Blake cheerfully. "Still the same polite kind of a pig, ain't you, Monteith - still got the same lovely manners?"

The New House prefect scowled. He had never been able to frighten Jack Blake with his black looks, and his failure in this respect annoyed him.

"This is a grave matter, Blake," said Kildare quietly. "Sleath has made a very serious accusation against you."

"All right," said Blake. "I know it means a licking, but Sleath pitched into me. I don't see what he's complaining to you for. Still, I'm ready to be a martyr. Which hand, and how many?"

"You don't understand. Sleath discovered you in his study --"

"Yes, I was there, large as life," agreed Blake. "If I had known the cad was just coming in, you bet I wouldn't have gone into his study. I'm ready to take my gruel. Lay it on lightly, because I've just been filling myself up to the chin in the tuckshop, and I don't feel so fit as usual for a whacking."

The seniors looked at one another doubtfully. It was evident that Blake had not the slightest suspicion of the real object of the New House seniors' visit, or else he was the most accomplished actor they had ever seen.

"He's putting this on," said Monteith angrily. "You may as well stop this fooling, Blake, and own up. You're found out."

"Of course I'm found out." Blake looked bewildered. "Sleath found me in his study, and half a dozen of your fellows saw

him sling me out. I haven't denied it, have I? You haven't come about Figgy's study, have you?"

"We have come about the money you stole from Sleath's study."

Blake started back. For a moment he looked at the New House prefect in incredulous amazement.

"The money!" he repeated vaguely, dazedly. "What money?"

His startled glance went from face to face.

"You know well enough," said Monteith.

"You mean to say I took money from Sleath's study?" panted Blake, amazement giving place to indignation and anger.

"Yes."

"You liar - you beast - you cad!"

The words came out in a torrent. "You rotten cad!"

Blake's eyes were blazing with rage. Right at Monteith he dashed, his fists flying wildly, and the prefect staggered back from the sudden attack.

"You little hound!"

Blake's fists crashed into the prefect's face. Monteith grasped him savagely, and drew back his clenched hand for a heavy blow. Kildare gripped him and slung him away.

"Kildare, let me go --"

"Stand back, Monteith," said the captain of St. Jim's savagely. "Stand back, or you'll have to reckon with me."

"He struck me --"

"Stand back!"

Kildare's eyes were blazing now. The prefect thought it better to obey. He let his hands drop to his sides.

Blake's passion had passed now. He stood, white and shaken, with tears struggling to his eyes, but keeping them back by tremendous effort.

"You liar," he muttered. "You liar!"

"You must calm yourself, Blake," said Kildare. "If you are innocent, I understand how you must feel; but you know that you should not strike a prefect."

"If I am innocent!" repeated Blake. "You don't mean to say that you

believe a word that cowardly cur says?"

"Do you think I'm going to stand that, Kildare?" broke out Monteith, white with rage.

"Hold your tongue! You've said enough against Blake anyway."

Blake's eyes were fixed on his captain.

"Kildare, you don't believe it?"

"By George, I don't!" exclaimed the generous Irish lad. "It will be explained somehow. But you must not be so hasty, Blake. It is not Monteith who is accusing you, but Sleath. Monteith has only taken it up as a prefect."

"If Sleath says I took anything from his study he lies!"

"There is a mistake somewhere," said Kildare with a harassed look. "In the first place, Sleath, are you absolutely certain the money is missing?"

"Monteith, Webb, and I have thoroughly searched the study. Not that it was necessary. I know I left the money in the drawer of my desk."

"Which was not locked?"

"There is no key to it."

"That was gross carelessness, in the first place."

"How was I to know that any of your juniors would come burgling?"

Kildare's eyes glittered.

"Blake, you admit being in Sleath's study?"

"Of course I do. I was there."

"What were you doing there?"

"I skipped in because I heard Sleath coming upstairs. I didn't want to be caught. I didn't know it was Sleath's study till he came in. I just nipped in because there wasn't any light showing under the door."

"A likely story," sneered Sleath.

"Did you explain that to Sleath at the time?"

"Yes, he asked me what I was doing there, and I told him."

"What were you doing in the New House?"

"We went to raid old Figgy's den."

"You were not alone?"

"D'Arcy was with me. He left first, though. I went back to leave a message for Figgins. He got clear, and that was how Sleath caught me."

Kildare's brow grew more clouded. Blake did not seem to realize it, but his having gone back, after his companion left the New House, told heavily against him.

"Very cunningly put," sneered Monteith. "I don't suppose anybody here will take stock in such a yarn. It's pretty clear what he went back for."

"Then you deny, Blake, knowing anything at all about the money that is missing from Sleath's study?" asked Kildare.

"I didn't know any was missing till now."

"Baker picked up a half-sovereign outside Sleath's door, where you were turned out. Did you drop it there?"

"No. I hadn't a half-sovereign on me."

"You'll never get the truth out of him," said Monteith. "The question is, where is the money? If he is searched, and his belongings, it's pretty certain to come to light. And it ought to be done before he has time to hide it."

Have you any objection to being searched, Blake?"

"Not if you think I ought to be, Kildare," replied the junior promptly.

"That means that he hasn't the money on him now," said Monteith. "He's got it hidden away somewhere."

Blake's eyes flashed, but he controlled himself now.

"I don't see what's to be done," said Kildare, looking worried. "Nobody can say he saw Blake take the money. His explanation of being in Sleath's study is perfectly reasonable."

"Which means that you do not believe him guilty?"

"No; I cannot."

"Then you refuse to take the matter up?"

"How am I to take it up? If you choose to search Blake and his belongings, you are at liberty to do so. He has given his consent."

"Thank you. I'm not a policeman. If you refuse to take the matter up, I shall take it to the doctor."

"Very well. The matter will certainly have to go before the doctor, anyway, so the sooner you do so the better."

"Come on," said Monteith to his friends. "It's no good staying here. Kildare stands by a chap in his own House, even if he's a proved thief. Let's go to the Head."

And the New House seniors quitted the study. The School House lads looked at each other in grim dismay.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish!" exclaimed Darrel.

Kildare dropped his hand on Blake's shoulder.

"Blake, do you give me your word of honour that you are innocent, and know nothing about the matter?" he said earnestly.

"Yes," said Blake, looking him fearlessly in the eyes.

"I believe you," said Kildare. "I don't understand it at all. But there's something more than a mistake somewhere."

"Blake had better remain here," suggested Rushden. "There will be a search, and we mustn't put it in Monteith's power to say he had time to make away with the money."

Kildare nodded.

"Yes, stay here, Blake. One of you fellows had better stay, too. I must go and see the Head. It's a beastly business."

And, with a darkly-clouded brow, the captain of St. Jim's followed in the footsteps of Monteith to the study of the Head.

(A FURTHER INSTALMENT OF THIS OLD TALE

NEXT MONTH)

WANTED: "UNION JACKS" years 1922-1929.

BUSH, 34 FORD CLOSE, HERNE BAY, KENT.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

EARLY STRUGGLES :: "THE SCOUT"

by Bob Blythe

The "Scout," as you may remember, established the record a few years ago of being the longest running weekly boys' paper in existence. It had had a lengthy life of over 50 years, and during that time obviously saw many changes. In the very early days (with which the letters in this article are concerned) it was, on the whole, a story paper - said stories being of a high moral tone - with one or two pages devoted to Scouting activities. Its heyday was, like so many boys' papers, in the late 20's and early 30's. After the war it went gradually downhill until it was a ghost of its former self. And so it finished, rather ignobly I thought. As my own personal interest in Scouting dates back to 1928, I suppose I was more concerned with its passing than perhaps others who knew not the Scout Movement, its aims or ideals. Still, that's neither here nor there. For the purpose of this article we are back in the year 1911, the Scout Movement is booming, and the "Scout" is three years old and our Edwy is preparing to have a go!

Now, there is a lot of correspondence in connection with the "Scout," and so I propose to let the letters tell their own story. I shall also use this method when I come to deal with the "Magnet" and "Gem." You may feel by the time you reach the end, as I have done, that surely there was an easier way to make a living!

We start at a point where E.S.B. sends his first story for consideration. Although I'm not certain on this point, I have a feeling that the editor, Bernard Everett, was the brother of Percy Everett (later Sir Percy Everett), friend of B.P. and Deputy Chief Scout.

I enclose herewith a short adventure story which I trust will be acceptable for publication in the SCOUT. I may mention that I am a regular - and large - contributor to the Harmsworth boys' papers.

April 11th, 1911.

In accordance with my interview with you on Wednesday last I herewith have pleasure in submitting the synopsis of a school story, which I trust will suit your requirements. If you should think it necessary to discuss the matter personally it will be quite a simple matter for me to run up to town.

August 7th, 1911.

I am sorry to say that I do not care for the idea of your proposed School story. The whole atmosphere of the story does not seem natural, and it contains too many underhand dealings. Both Wrencham and Fenton are too unprincipled in their actions, and to make somewhat of a hero of Fenton after the way in which he has treated Hutton does not arouse the readers' sympathies.

I am afraid the present plot has no possibilities from my point of view. Perhaps you can let me see another in which "villains" are more conspicuous by their absence than their presence?

I am returning the MS. herewith.

August 9th, 1911.

I have, planned in my mind, a story of adventure among the planets. Would such a story be acceptable to you at the present time, for serial use in the "SCOUT?" If so, I should be glad to submit a full synopsis, and the first instalment written up. I am quite sure I could make a good story out of the idea.

I am by no means a beginner in this class of stuff, having had many short stories in the "Boy's Friend," "Realm," and "Herald," and a serial entitled "The Stowaway's Quest," in the latter. I wrote a serial nearly 400,000 words long for the "Gem" and am now writing "Sexton Blake" stories.

But I've always thought I'd like a serial in the "Scout," and, you may remember, had a short interview with you in August last, with the result that I sent in a school-story synopsis - which, unfortunately, was not to your liking. I intended sending in another synopsis, but, as some other work had to be done, I thought, after a week or two, that I should be too late. If you're not full up now I should like to have another shot at something: for if you don't care for the planets idea I might be able to do something else.

In any case, as I am coming up to London tomorrow for the day, perhaps you could spare me just a few minutes, and let me know verbally whether you have an opening for anything?

February 21st, 1912.

The portion of the First Instalment of your story, "In Quest of Millions" seems quite promising, with the exception that it is rather spun out, and the language at times wants toning down. Some of the expressions used are a bit stronger than we care for. I shall be glad if you will arrange to send me the first two instalments, and a detailed synopsis of the remainder of the story. I shall then be able to get a good idea if it is likely to be acceptable.

I am returning the MS. herewith.

March 25th, 1912.

I enclose herewith the first two instalments of "In Quest of Millions," as you requested and I sincerely hope they will strike you as being favourable. I have cut some of the first instalment out, and toned down the language, in accordance with your wishes.

With regard to the synopsis of the remainder, I only enclose a brief outline of the next chapter or two. Do you not think it would be the best plan for me to send in a fully detailed synopsis of each instalment before writing it up? Then you might suggest any alteration that you thought necessary - and I shall certainly be able to make a better story of it if I am not compelled to outline the whole story at this stage; for ideas will strike me as each instalment is written. I have a general plan in my mind, but an adventure yarn depends mostly on the incidents. (cont'd...)

Perhaps you would like to discuss the story with me, and if so I shall be only too pleased to call upon you. But if you would prefer to have the entire story mapped out chapter by chapter I will send in the complete synopsis as soon as I hear from you.

April 25th, 1912.

Your story, "In Quest of Millions," seems quite promising, but there are certain alterations which I should like you to make. I shall be glad, therefore, if you can arrange to come up and see me about them the next time you are up in town.

I shall not be able to commence publication of the story before the New Year, so there is no immediate hurry. Please let me know when I may expect you.

May 1st, 1912.

I am enclosing herewith a formal offer for your story "In Quest of Millions," and at the same time I am returning the first two instalments, so that you may make the necessary alterations.

The length of the story should, provisionally, be twelve instalments.

May 3rd, 1912.

I enclose herewith a short adventure story which I have written for the SCOUT, and I hope you will find it suitable.

I have not sent in the "In Quest of Millions" stuff yet as I know there is no hurry. I will, however, let you have the first two instalments corrected as arranged, and the third instalment, before long.

June 16th, 1912

Enclosed I am sending you a formal offer for your story, "The People of the Peak," which I should like to use, if I may be allowed to cut it a little.

June 21st, 1912.

Thank you very much for your letter of the 21st inst., enclosing the formal offer for my story, "The People of the Peak." I am glad you think the story is suitable for the "Scout," and I have no objection to your cutting it to suit yourself: I am confident that you will do the cutting so that the story will be improved rather than otherwise.

June 23rd, 1912.

Thank you for the cheque received on Friday morning last, in payment of my story "The People of the Peak." I have pleasure in enclosing the receipt, stamped and signed.

I also enclose another short story which I trust you will find suitable. I have written it especially for the Scout, and I think it is of the style you require.

Will you kindly make a note that for the next two or three months I shall be living in London, and should you have any occasion to write to me, to address your letter to:

The Hut, 56 Sunnybank, South Norwood, S.E.

Sept. 30th, 1912.

I should like to use your story, "Between Two Fires," if you will cut out the incident

of the man who fires at the beginning of the story, as he has really no connection with the bear incident.

Then, would a bear follow a boat as you describe? I should like to be assured on this point, and some explanation ought to be given as to why Mr. Roxwell did not shoot the bear when it was hanging on to the boat.

I return the MS. herewith, so that you can make the necessary alterations.

October 3rd, 1912.

Thank you for your letter of the 3rd inst. I am glad you like "Between Two Fires" and I have pleasure in enclosing it herewith corrected according to your wishes. As you say, the incident of the man who fires is not really necessary, but I introduced him for the purpose of providing a good cause for the pair drifting too far down the river. With regard to your query as to whether a bear would follow a boat as I describe, I can only tell you that I procured my facts from a true hunting adventure which appeared in the "Edinburgh Journal" many years ago. I never hesitate to work into a story an incident which happened in real life - although sometimes these absolutely true incidents seem more improbable than mere invented ones.

October 6th, 1912.

TOP PRICES for Collections or Items surplus to requirements.

FOR SALE: Hamiltonia including Magnets, Gems, S.O.Ls, Bunter and Merry Annuals and hardbacks, G.H.A's etc., Populars, Heralds, Triumphs, Champions, Marvels, Plucks, Young Britain, Modern Boy and Wonders, New Boys World, Pilots, Friends, BFL's, B/Bills, DW's, Thrillers, UJ's, Realms, SBL's, Nugget, Champion and Boys Library, Lees, etc.

ANNUALS INCLUDE Chums, BOA's, Captains, Champion, Thompson, Strang, Modern Boy, C.D., etc. Some early Film Annuals and post-war Journals.

NORMAN SHAW, 84 BELVEDERE ROAD, LONDON S.E.19.

Most evenings 01 771 9857.

GEMS WANTED - Nos. 3, 5, 7, 11 to 15, 17, 21, 24, 37. 1d. GEM 3, 41. ANY MAGNETS WANTED.

JAMES GALL, 49 ANDERSON AVE., HILTON, ABDERDEEN, Scotland

WANTED: STRAND MAGAZINES for 1931/33/35/40/61. Loose copies or bound volumes.

E. N. LITTLE, 10 BROWNING CLOSE, LEXDEN, COLCHESTER, Essex

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 79 - Magnet No. 1651 - "Condemned Without Evidence"

There was an air of renaissance about the single stories published in the Magnet in the Autumn term of 1939. War had broken out, but of course as the weekly papers were published many weeks in advance, there was no reference to this for some time. These stories were varied and ingenious, and seemed to suggest that a promising era was about to open in the history of that old paper, but they were, alas, false prophets.

The term started late (in October, actually), because the Water Lily series had run for so long. It was the very last Autumn term in the Magnet, and it began with one of those familiar scenes on Lantham station. Vernon-Smith had thrown an orange at Coker and knocked off his topper. Accordingly, Coker threw the same orange back at Vernon-Smith, missed, and succeeded in knocking off Mr. Prout's hat, revealing a bald spot that was generally concealed from public view. It was the usual hilarious horseplay, but, as so often happened, it led to matters of deeper significance.

It was a story with an obvious moral, in that the lesson to be learnt was so clearly stated. Usually the pill was embedded in jam, but here it had to be swallowed neat. Vernon-Smith worked on the basis that telling lies to the beaks was fair game, but having been caught out once and suspected in another case, it was not long before he was expelled for a crime he had not committed. Dr. Locke made it clear that if his passionate denials were not believed he had only himself to blame. Even a young reader could have seen the moral in this lively story.

The stories Charles Hamilton wrote after 1935 show a slight weakening in characterisation. He could still weave his plots with all the old skill, but complex characters like Cardew and Vernon-Smith and even Bunter were not handled with the same finesse as before. Vernon-Smith in this story ranged from horseplay to cynical laughter, and from hypocrisy to savage passion, but the enterprising nonchalance, the gay insouciance that he showed, for example, in the Courtfield Cracksmen series a decade earlier were qualities that were ~~lost~~ for ever. We were left with a Vernon-Smith showing a savage doggedness: he retained our interest, but delight was a feeling that was never to return to the reader.

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 144. THE SCHOOLBOY AUTHOR

There is no question at all that the stories which dealt with Frank Richards' schooldays at Cedar Creek were immensely popular. They ran originally for about four years in the Boys' Friend, and plenty of them were reprinted in the Boys' Friend 4d. Library. The series was reprinted, almost in entirety, in the Popular, and, in fact, a goodly number of the stories appeared twice in the Popular, again in the Gem, and a few featured in the Schoolboys' Own Library and the Holiday Annual. Clearly, Cedar Creek was widely loved. It had an irresistible charm which has never faded.

Quite a number of these stories deal with Frank Richards as a schoolboy author. He was supposed to be writing a series of stories in connection with his own schooldays at St. Kit's, for Mr. Penrose's weekly newspaper which served the Thompson Valley, and one never bothered to wonder whether stories of English public school life would really be likely to appeal to the rough and ready population of that picturesque valley.

Frank was shown as something of a wonder boy with his pen, and, had the Cedar Creek tales been written by Frank Richards himself, a reader might have been excused for thinking that Frank was saying things which he might modestly have left for someone else to say. But as Martin Clifford wrote Cedar Creek, it was assumed - at any rate by those who did not guess the truth - that he was being warm-hearted and generous to a rival writer who was also a close friend. And the effect was excellent.

Mr. Penrose's circulation rose by leaps and bounds on account of the schoolboy author. Seeing the success of the "Thompson Press," a rival came into the field. He offered the schoolboy author double what Mr. Penrose was paying for the stories. Frank refused. He was loyal to his first publishers, and, as Martin Clifford stressed, "Frank did not bother and has never bothered about money." Frank himself was to stress the same point in his autobiography, many years later. It is impossible for us to guess whether Frank was really quite so

happy-go-lucky in real life as Martin Clifford and the autobiography claim. A man might be irresponsible with money without being indifferent to it.

So the rival did not bag the schoolboy author to write for him, and the circulation of the rival paper faded away.

Interesting among the Cedar Creek tales is the one when Frank was unable to make the deadline with his weekly story, and was horrified to find a story from some other writer put into the paper under his name. It has been suggested - and I used to think the same - that with this story Charles Hamilton was making a protest against the substitute writers of the Magnet and Gem.

I have no doubt that the situation at the A.P. provided the source of the plot, and, as I have said before, any plot was grist to the mill of a writer who had to find plots in an endless stream. But, if an author wanted to protest, that protest would be most effective if made to the publishers themselves. It seems unlikely to me that a verbal protest from the star writer, and the most prolific writer that the A.P. had at that time, would have been ignored by the people who mattered.

A protest in the text of a story would be cheap and pointless, and, in any case, the story had to be passed by the editor before it was accepted. He would be unlikely to accept a story in which he saw a criticism of himself. The editors at that time were Hinton and Down, both good friends of Hamilton. I fancy it likely that editors and author saw the story as a good joke, and chuckled over it together.

"Somebody has used a split infinitive under my name," hooted the schoolboy author in his annoyance at the sub story in the Thompson Press. There was a bit of irony in this for those of us who recall "The Swell of St. Jim's," written long after Frank had left his schooldays behind. At the time when this story was serialised in C.D., we looked at it critically and compared the author's writing of it with his penmanship of later years. "There is a clumsy split infinitive in the first chapter," we observed.

But, by the time the Cedar Creek tales were written, seventeen years had gone by, and by then the author was incapable of slovenly writing and was critical when he saw it in the work of others.

"You will receive half the cheque," mentioned Mr. Penrose, as a bait to Frank to agree to a sub writer taking over when he, Frank, was unable to fill the bill. The schoolboy author was not impressed.

That remark from Mr. Penrose strikes us as rather odd, and, perhaps, noteworthy. Does it mean that Charles Hamilton received a certain payment for every substitute story published introducing his characters? If such was not the case, it is very strange indeed that he should put such a comment into the mouth of Mr. Penrose. There may be no significance in it, but Charles Hamilton himself told me that he was paid two guineas every week that Billy Bunter appeared in comic strip form in Knockout.

With Cedar Creek, the author had an outstandingly successful formula. It is puzzling that he never added to the Cedar Creek saga after the original series ended. Possibly Frank Richards was becoming increasingly world-famous, and he did not wish Cedar Creek to be regarded as biographical in any way.

Mr. Lofts has indicated that A.P. authors received a payment each time one of their stories was reprinted. Both the publishers and Charles Hamilton obviously had a money-spinner in Cedar Creek.

DICK TURPIN 1d. Aldines, Charlton Lea. Several bound volumes from No. 1. Bound volume Black Bess (Harrison) Nos. 86-169.

ROBIN HOOD 1d. Aldines, Ogilvie Mitchell etc. Several bound volumes from No. 1 and loose copies.

NORMAN SHAW 84 BELVEDERE ROAD LONDON S.E.19

SALE - Postage Extra. Annuals - "Playbox" 1920 10/-; 1921 9/-; 1924 12/6d. "Pip & Squeak" 1930 11/-. "Young England" volume 50 10/-; 53 12/-. "Rainbow" 1924 10/-. List of hardbacked OBB's available. S.A.E.

NORMAN WRIGHT 9 MILL FARM CLOSE PINNER MIDDLESEX

WANTED: Collectors' Digest Annual for 1969. £1 offered.

JACK MURTAGH 509 WINDSOR AVENUE HASTINGS NEW ZEALAND

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

We started the New Year well with two very interesting programme items, at our meeting on 27th January.

The first programme item was a talk by Ray Bennett, very modestly, and rather misleadingly, introduced as a "few remarks off the cuff." Actually he discussed the quite important question of the style and manner of approach to the hobby by press and publicity people. Illustrated from a number of press cuttings Ray had brought along, some of them dated back nearly twenty years. Many of these showed an unfortunate tendency to treat the hobby facetiously. Ray felt, and members agreed with him, that a suitable name for the hobby would be very helpful in giving status.

Our second programme item was a play-back on George Chatham's tape recorder of a Greyfriars Quiz, originally set to the London Club by Roger Jenkins. Extracts from twelve Magnet series had to be identified and Ivan Webster was the winner with eight. Followed up by our worthy Treasurer with seven. As Norman is our "enfant terrible," famed for criticising Greyfriars, this result was especially pleasing.

Norman Gregory exhibited at this meeting two choice bound volumes of the Nelson Lee Library: for parts of the years 1923 and 1925. These volumes were much admired.

After that very interesting talk by Ray Bennett, he went on to pay us a compliment in saying how he had appreciated our friendship over the years. Later on in the evening Ray was formally presented with the copy of that latest Wernham publication, which the London Club had so kindly sent to be presented to Ray.

Altogether a well-packed evening to start the New Year.

EDWARD DAVEY, Chairman & Secretary.

L O N D O N

There was an excellent attendance at the 22nd Annual General Meeting which was held at the Archdale Road home of Len and Josie

Packman. Don Webster, the retiring chairman, opened the proceedings with his usual hearty welcome to all. When eventually the election of officers for the ensuing year came round, it was Leslie Rowley who was return unopposed to the chair. As for many years past, the rest of the officers were re-elected en bloc. Before vacating the chair, Don Webster thanked everyone for his support during his year of office and was given a unanimous vote of thanks for his sterling work during the past twelve months.

Most of the press cuttings on the Ipswich Bunter controversy were available and the company had many amusing moments whilst some of these were read out.

Len and Josie saw to it that a fine feed was enjoyed by all.

The Hamilton library acknowledged with gratitude a gift of £5 from an anonymous donor.

Bill Hubbard conducted his excellent quiz and Messrs. Jenkins, Webster, Charlie Wright, Whiter and Blythe being the panel against the 'rest.' In this order, "Magnet," "Gem," Sexton Blake, the Comics and Nelson Lee, Bill Hubbard asked the panel questions. If not answered the rest took over. But eventually it was the panel who had the most correct answers. A very fine competition and regretfully Bill's last, as other commitments will make him unable to take part in the activities of the club. A vote of thanks was accorded to Bill for his fine work over the past few years as programme organiser.

Len Packman read passages from club newsletter of Jan. 17th, 1954.

The next meeting will be held at the home of Larry Peters, 89 Kempe Road, Kensal Rise, London N.W.6. Phone 969-4110. Kindly inform if intending to be present.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, 14th February, 1970.

When the Chairman, Geoffrey Wilde, opened the meeting after the Library business, he was quick to mention the Hobby item very much in the news, i.e. the Banning of Bunter by the Ipswich librarian. Though this has its lighter side, several members have written or will write

either to Ipswich or their newspaper protesting at this banning of the Greyfriars stories and presenting expert views on the whole saga. As for the reason alleged for this action the general feeling was - almost everyone can find in literature portrayals of his or her own personal handicap or failing - and there is no reason why fat boys should be protected from the universal thump!

We were glad to welcome two new lady postal members - Mrs. Mary Cadogan or Beckenham, Kent, who is interested firstly in Girls' Papers, and Mrs. Bessie Barron of Witton Gilbert, Co. Durham (a Harry Wharton fan since her youth). Mrs. Barron sent a photo of herself and perhaps later in the year may be able to attend in person.

A quiz by Geoffrey followed in which one had to pick the right answer out of four or five examples in fifteen questions. Bunter Court figured in some questions, and Elsie Taylor was the winner, closely followed by June Arden and Bill Williamson.

The final instalment of our "Battle of the Beaks" was given by Mollie Allison who had managed to straighten out Mr. Quelch's problem (and a small matter concerning Price of the Fifth, Joey Banks and a fiver!) The "battle" between Mr. Quelch and Mr. Hacker over Wharton left the Remove Master the winner.

After refreshments the final item was a mixed quiz from Gerry Allison's archives of past parties, and after thirty questions, two Jacks (Wood and Allison) tied for first place.

Next meeting, Saturday, 14th March, 1970.

M. L. ALLISON
Hon. Secretary

WANTED - MAGNETS 1189, 1194, 1197, 1204 and 1220. I will give any two Magnets from 1933 - 1940 for any one of the above five.

W. SETFORD 24 COLWYN AVENUE DERBY

WANTED: Film Fun, Tiger Tim, Hurrican Hawk, Buck Rogers, Popular Mechanics, 1937 - 42.

GAVIN SOUTER, "Sydney Morning Herald," 85 FLEET ST., LONDON EC4

The Postman Called

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

LEN WORMULL (Romford): I enjoyed Bill Loft's article on the little-known FILM PICTURE STORIES, together with the cover illustration. As I mentioned in the 1968 Annual, this paper took over from BULLS-EYE, but must admit I had no knowledge of it until now. I wonder if readers will recall another "lost" film paper called FILM STAR WEEKLY, circa 1933-34. Small in size, it contained film news, stories and pictures, with a highly-finished cover in sepia. It is of particular interest to me as it saw my first published letter at thirteen, to be quickly followed by several others. I aspired to the prize of one guinea for best letter, which I managed to win twice during its short life. In recent years I spent an eerie afternoon jotting them down from copies in the British Museum. It is not to be confused with the more successful and capacious FILM WEEKLY, also in sepia. Although a game little effort, Film Star Weekly soon succumbed to the reigning giants - Picture Show, Film Pictorial, Picturegoer, Film Weekly.

GEORGE BEAL (Winchmore Hill): If Charles Hamilton said that Mauleverer would not have been 'Lord' Mauleverer while his father lived, he was in error. As it was pointed out, Lord Eastwood had a son, Lord Conway. This is perfectly feasible. It depends upon the status of Lord Eastwood's peerage. He must have been at least a Viscount, in which case, he was likely to have been a Baron. His full title would have been Viscount Eastwood and Baron Conway, of (somewhere). His son would have been granted the courtesy title of Lord Conway. This would not have entitled the son to sit in the House of Lords, although he could have been elected to the House of Commons, as many courtesy-title peers are.

So, it follows, that Lord Mauleverer's title could have been a courtesy one, and his father would have been a Viscount, Marquis or Duke.

(Presumably Charles Hamilton meant that two Lord Mauleverers could not be living at the same time. - ED.)

W. T. THURBON (Cambridge): Jack, Sam and Pete were very popular

characters before Sexton Blake took over the U.J., and before Charles Hamilton began the transformation of the school story in the Gem and the Magnet.

So, the 'J.S.P. LIBRARY' was started, but fortunately wiser counsels prevailed, and the Library became instead the B.F.L. The first four numbers of the B.F.L. included three J. S. & P. tales. No. 1 of the B.F.L. was "Jack, Sam and Pete's Adventure in Africa."

This was a rewrite of the last two J. S. & P. tales in the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Marvel and the first two in the 1d. Marvel.

$\frac{1}{2}$ d. Marvels 532 Larne's Revenge; 533 The Haunted Mountain.

1d. Marvels 1 The Isle of Fire; 3 The Phantom Chief.

No. 2 of the B.F.L. "J. S. & P. Treasure Hunt" was a combination of the first J. S. & P. $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Marvel tale, "The Eagle of Death" (No. 385) and a J. S. & P. serial for the Boys' Friend.

No. 3 B.F.L. was "J. S. & P. in South America" and was a large expansion of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Marvel. No. 389 "The Black Horseman."

No. 4 of the B.F.L. was a Nelson Lee tale "Birds of Prey" by Maxwell Scott.

L. MORLEY (Hanwell): With regard to the Blakiana article On Stage and On The Air, Roger Sansom says that Tinker in the "Enter Sexton Blake" serial was played by Brian Lawrence, an "actor unknown to me." As many readers will remember, Brian Lawrence was a very popular vocalist of the 1930s, sang with Fred Hartley & His Sextet for many years, as well as other bands of the day. Later, I believe, he went solo and toured on the halls.

P. TIERNEY (Grimsby): Mr. Martin Hammond's remarkable article, "Cosy Violence," makes it clear that he is, or was at one time, well acquainted with the Greyfriars stories although some of his observations would give the impression that his opinion of Greyfriars was based on the Billy Bunter comic strip cartoons.

How, with this knowledge, he can write as he does simply baffles me although I know there are other people who think as he does that hundreds of thousands of young "Magnet" readers longed to share the public school life which they read about.

Personally, I thought the disciplinary standards at Greyfriars

were terribly strict - fagging, prefects' beatings, public floggings, prep every night, etc. It was all very enjoyable to read about but I had not the slightest desire to participate in it and I would have been horrified by the prospect of being sent to such a school. And I am sure the overwhelming majority of child readers would have felt exactly the same.

I wonder what kind of frightful school a boy would have to attend to make him regard Greyfriars, as Mr. Hammond does, as a place "where no work is done" and to envy the boys there for their "freedom" and "untrammelled idleness."

As for the masters being cyphers, I am quite certain that such masters as Quelch, Hacker, and Lascelles would, in their different ways, be very useful in some of the "blackboard jungles" we have been reading about recently.

MOLLIE ALLISON (Leeds): I must say how much I enjoyed the Annual. Mr. Buddle goes from strength to strength (rivalling S.B. now with his detection!).

I cannot understand those who say they were not born when Danny's Diary was written and would like their own days better. I am the other way round. I like to hear of times I did not know.

With thanks to you for all your devoted work to the Hobby - and the C.D. suits me as it is!

E. N. LAMBERT (Chessington): Once again the Annual surpassed itself. The articles and stories were superb. Mr. Buddle made a very welcome return to its pages and I am sure he is rapidly rivalling Mr. Quelch as "top of the scholastic pops."

MISS E. FLINDERS (Hitchin): I thought this month's Digest very interesting, especially the article by Mr. Roger Jenkins about Miss Priscilla Fawcett. I agree with him that she became an old scarecrow and an embarrassment to all those round her. Plenty of women make fools of their menfolk. Just a soft sentence here and there would have been humorous, but all that rubbish about 'Purple Pills for Pale People' and Tommy's little chest made you dread her coming into the stories.

Another over-exaggerated theme was Skimpole's Professors Barmy-crumpet and Loosetop. Do you remember Gussy punching Skim-

pole and saying it wasn't his fault, it was his heredity and environment? No one has any responsibility for anything they do! To think, since then a whole generation has been more or less ruined by this philosophy. It is a cosy and comfortable way of life, I even find myself thinking. I was born that way, when I'm not doing something I jolly well ought to be doing.

G. FUDGE (Bridgwater): Please! do not allow any more analysts to spoil our wonderful world of Hamiltonia. Martin Hammond's bold and unrealistic theories will fortunately be treated with the derision they deserve by all Greyfriars schoolboys whether they are 8 years old or 80.

There are too many people at large today, who take a delight in besmirching the names of all our heroes and good institutions of the past and are also vain enough to believe that their opinions are accepted as being authentic. Martin Hammond could be better employed in directing his research and energies into the unsavoury elements that plague our lives today. One gracious gesture however must not be ignored, in that there is a "chord of Englishness." I doubt if any Greyfriars schoolboy, or any Charles Hamilton fan is anything but proud of being English.

G. ALLISON (Menston): Twenty years ago we regarded ourselves - or at least, I did - as being avant-garde members of the hobby. We - or again I - felt a vague pity for old chaps like Herbert Leckenby, Harry Dowler and Harry Stables in their 60's who used to ramble about Jack Harkaway, Frank Reade's Iron Man, Maxwell Scott and the old Aldines.

Three letters this week have made me realise that I am now in the rear-guard. What do I know about Rover, Adventure, Pilot and especially Hotspur? I shall soon have to add to our library's stock of these papers.

I fully sympathise with Mr. M. Kutner in his plea for a "Pentelow's Corner" and would love to contribute, but, to be realistic, the Collectors' Digest will soon have to think about extending its scope to cover the Thompson House papers. Herbert Leckenby used to say they would never become collectors' items, but dear old Herbert was wrong for once I fear.

O. W. WADHAM (New Zealand): It would seem that very soon as many

words will have been written about Charles Hamilton, his stories and his times as he wrote in all his long life time. Surely there cannot be very much more to say. I think that he could well be given a rest in the pages of COLLECTORS' DIGEST. Surely there are other authors, other stories in many old time papers that can be commented on from time to time. We have had little, for instance, about S. Clarke Hook, who wrote the Jack, Sam and Pete yarns in the old green MARVEL; J. R. Cannon, who wrote many boxing yarns for the BOYS' FRIEND, and the writers of many excellent serials in CHIPS, COMIC CUTS AND LOT-O-FUN.

There are many UNION JACK authors that might be discussed, and some of the artists who drew popular characters in comics like THE WONDER, BUTTERFLY and THE JESTER. So, please, a little less about Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest and E. S. Brooks, and see if we can learn a little more about the lesser lights.

MAGNETS WANTED — I am interested in buying virtually all issues prior to No. 1275. Send availabilities quickly; series particularly welcome. ALSO — I want complete N.L.L. series in Old Series and 1st New Series. Objective — complete collections by 197-?
ALSO — WHO has Monster Libraries for sale?

Please, good condition — and I've a lot of GEMS for sale.

P. GOMM, 33 KNIGHTS AVENUE, TETTENHALL, WOLVERHAMPTON.

 MAGNETS ... MAGNETS ... MAGNETS 1483 to 1682 and GEMS ...
 GEMS ... GEMS about 200 various copies below 500, also Aldines, Buffalo Bills, Robin Hoods, Union Jacks, Marvels, Thrillers, Dick Turpins, Paul Duvals, Boys' Friend Library, S.O.L's, Champions, Diamond Library, True Blues, etc., for exchange for most Magnets below 1358, or sale. J. DE FREITAS, 29 GILARTH ST., HIGHETT, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3190.

WANTED: I wish to buy (regret have no copies for exchange) issues of THE SCHOOLFRIEND, THE SCHOOLGIRL and SCHOOLGIRLS OWN LIBRARIES from 1925 to 1940, also SCHOOLFRIEND ANNUALS. Please reply with details to — MRS. CADOGAN, 46 OVERBURY AVENUE, BECKENHAM, KENT.

ONE of the best contributors to the old boys' papers was Alec G. Pearson. Unfortunately and inexplicably a lot of his work was published anonymously, but a clue here and there provides the necessary information to prove his authorship of certain stories. Why his name was omitted in so many instances is one of those mysteries that remain unsolved; but where the name of the author of some tales was not given, the editor would betray his identity in the weekly chat to readers or in some other way — a completely mystifying proceeding which applied to other writers as well.

Pearson wrote both naval and military stories and seemed to be an authority on both these topics. His work is to be found in the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. U.J. and the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Marvel of the eighteen-nineties. He also wrote a large number of detective tales and created quite a group of detectives: Royston Gower, Dr. Messina, Stanley Dare, Quong Ha, Dr. Nevada. I believe he also wrote the Frank Ferrett stories.

Royston Gower appeared in a serial in the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Marvel and later was the hero of several long complete yarns in the Boys' Friend. Dr. Messina was featured in a series of four-page stories in the Jester of 1902 and afterwards in shorter stories in the Boys' Realm, as well as in Pluck and the Boys' Herald. He was a kind of combination of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Nikola. (By the way, how many people to-day know who Dr. Nikola was?)

Stanley Dare was a young detective whose adventures ran from time to time through the pages of the 1d. Marvel, though he is also to be found in Pluck. In the Boys' Herald there was once a serial which brought in a mixed trio in the shape of Stanley Dare, Dr. Messina and Quong Ha, a Chinese investigator. I don't know if the last-named figured in any separate tales.

Similarly in 1d. Pluck there was a story of three detectives: Dr. Nevada, Dr. Messina and the latter's niece, a girl called Estelle Grahame. Dr. Nevada was a somewhat similar character to Dr. Messina and his exploits were recorded in occasional stories in Pluck. To the best of my knowledge, both the complete story and the serial in the Boys' Herald were named The Three Detectives.

Frank Ferrett's adventures were published in the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Marvel

and much later in the short-lived Detective Library. These latter were probably reprints as were Maxwell Scott's Gordon Gray tales, which were also in the D.L.

Alec G. Pearson, if not for the foregoing examples, has a claim to fame in that he wrote a number of Sexton Blake tales in both the 3d. and 1d. Union Jack, and I have read that the name of Arnold Davis, another contributor to the Blake saga, also covered this author. About this I cannot speak with authority.

I can find only two Boys' Friend Libraries to the credit of Alec G. Pearson, an odd circumstance, as his output was considerable. No. 316 (First Series) The City of Flame, is a good story in the Rider Haggard tradition, dealing with the discovery of a lost civilisation in Egypt. No. 477 (First Series) is entitled The Land of Mystery, an exciting tale of adventure in Tibet. These two may have appeared previously as serials, though so far I have not encountered them in any of the old periodicals.

I don't know when this author ceased writing; the last examples of his work that I know of were five short stories in a volume of Chums for 1919. As for his personal history, I know nothing. Biographical details of Alec G. Pearson would be welcome.

No. 112 O.S.

by R. J. Godsave

The first St. Frank's story "Nipper at St. Frank's" No. 112 O.S. is famous as the break-away point from the pure detective stories of the Nelson Lee Library to those of school stories with a detective element.

For a book that was intended to introduce new fields to its readers it is astonishing how little care was taken over small details.

An attractive cover showing Nipper being frog-marched across the Triangle at St. Frank's by the College House juniors emphasized the school story nature of this issue. Yet, printed across the top of the front cover it states that No. 112 is a 'Long, Complete Detective

Novel.' Apart from a foreword giving the reasons as to why Nelson Lee and Nipper were at St. Frank's, the whole must be considered as purely a school story.

The centre page at this period of the Nelson Lee was devoted to the inside drawing depicting various incidents which occurred in the story. In this particular Lee it shows Mr. Alvington as Nelson Lee was known, at St. Frank's, accompanied by four juniors in his search for the missing Housemaster, Mr. Thorne. In the story only Tregellis-West and Watson could be persuaded by Bennett, as Nipper was known, to accompany Nelson Lee and himself.

Such errors as this in drawings were not confined to the Nelson Lee Library, and it makes one wonder whether the artists are guilty of not reading the MS carefully or are just given an outline of the story, in which case he would have to trust to luck that his efforts coincide with the written word.

One is informed in No. 112 that the College House caps were olive green with yellow circles, and those of the Ancient House, blue with gold circles. On the cover of this particular Nelson Lee the College House boys were wearing blue caps with red circles which became in subsequent Lees the cap colours of both Houses.

Naturally, the two colour cover had to be considered in the light of its prominence, and blue and red was obviously the most suitable combination.

It is extremely unlikely that the original readers noticed these errors, or if they did, could not care less. It is only through adult eyes that one sees these differences which may be summed up in the saying that there are two ways of doing a job — a right way and a wrong way.

WANTED:

Good loose copies or volumes containing one or more of the following: Gems 801, 817, 826, 828, 832. Also Populars 401, 403, 407, 413, 415, 422, 441.

ERIC FAYNE

EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON, SURREY.