

COLLECTORS DIGEST

EMERGENCY EDITION

Dear Fellow Collector,

Several cases have come to our notice recently where collecting members of our circle have had, to say the least, unfortunate experience in their quests for their favourite papers.

The circumstances are so serious that we decided to issue a special edition of our journal to relate all the facts as we know them. By so doing it may be we shall be saving other collectors time, trouble and greivous disappointment.

We have five cases before us, the first four being related, the fifth somewhat different. In the four with a connection it should be noted that each collector had advertised in "The Exchange and Mart" and where they are concerned we give the details in the sequence they came to our notice.

CASE No.1: Mr.Wm.Colcombe told us that through his advertisement a woman had written him saying that she had 1,000 "Union Jacks" to sell, part of a big quantity of papers left her by an uncle. After later telling him she had changed her mind and did not want to sell after all, she agreed to send them on condition that he (Mr.Colcombe) sent the money quickly. Mr.Colcombe wired her Six Pounds Ten Shillings. Time passed and no "Union Jacks" reached him. He, becoming anxious, wrote several letters demanding an explanation, but failed to get a response.

CASE No.2: This concerns Mr.Roger M.Jenkins, well known to readers of "The Collectors Digest".

We will let him tell his story in his own graphic way:-

SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

The first intimation I had that my advertisement had appeared in "The Exchange and Mart" was on Saturday morning not so long ago when I was awakened with some tea and a handful of letters. None of them looked very promising, I thought as I blinked the sleep out of my eyes. There were the inevitable half-dozen from other collectors who had none to dispose of, but plenty they wished to buy. I was shocked into consciousness, however with startling rapidity as I perused a missive from a certain lady in Leicester who signed herself Miss L. Pearson, of 70, Knighton Fields East, Welford Road. She apparently had just been left in a will a house containing about six thousand books among which were "Magnets and Marvels complete from 1907-1932" and "Nelson Lees, Gems, Dreadnoughts." The good lady knew someone who had offered £40 for the lot and wished to know if I would offer more for some, or all of them. The only drawback was that she wished to dispose of them by the week-end. So if I wanted any, it would be advisable to telegraph the money. I am not certain exactly why I didn't accede to her request; the offer was enough to turn the head of the most phlegmatic collector. I compromised: I sent a registered letter containing a post-dated cheque for £12 for certain of the Magnets, and sent a reply paid telegram stating my offer.

The sequel came the same evening when I received a telegram stating that my offer was accepted but an ominous reservation was made by the words "Telegraph money not cheque". To someone who had recently inherited property, I would have thought that a cheque would be as acceptable as a money order, especially as it would save her the bother of going to the post office to collect the money. But even then I hesitated. Finally I went over to the post office, only to find that it was closed. I could telephone a telegram, but not a money order. Fate seemed to

conspire to keep me from sending the money.

On Sunday I found a taxi man who was willing to take me to Leicester on the morrow, and chance the state of the roads. Accordingly, I sent another reply-paid telegram saying I was arriving by car to collect the books. As no reply came by nine a.m. Monday morning I set off for the 160 mile journey feeling as though I was treading on air. The fates dealt me another blow at Winchester, however, when the radiator commenced to steam so persistently that we were obliged to turn back. I had wild thoughts of going by train and sending the books off by registered post from Leicester. I toyed with the idea of telegraphing the money, until the driver announced that we might be able to start off again at noon.

This time we did travel without a hitch, and all the way up I thought of the congratulations I would receive from other collectors on my good fortune. I imagined myself extending barbed sympathy to such redoubtable authorities as Mr. John Shaw saying - "Yes, I remember what difficulty I experienced in rounding up my last few Magnets". Such selfish thoughts as these helped to keep out the cold weather, although they seemed to have remarkably little effect in keeping out the cold from the driver or in preventing the car from skidding on the treacherous icy roads.

We got to Leicester at six, and after some difficulty found the abode of Miss Pearson. I must confess that I was not favourably impressed with the house. It did not look exactly a suitable habitat for heiresses, and although I did not expect a great deal from someone who wrote such clauses as "They was left to me along with other property", I was not prepared for the blowsy looking woman who opened the door and lolled in the passage as she informed me that no Miss Pearson lived there. After some questioning, I gleaned the information that a Mr. Pearson lived there but had gone to Nottingham for the day, and was not expected back until midnight.

I was flabbergasted. Of all the possible outcomes, I had not anticipated this. I went to the

nearest hotel, and after some dinner I 'phoned home, to learn that a letter had arrived from Leicester marked URGENT. It was duly opened and read out to me. I learned that the books had been sold to a Leicester dealer. "So therefore your journey to me by car will not have to be made by you". The writer had changed sex during the interval, and was now signing himself Mr. Pearson. There was not one word of apology, or explanation, just a bare statement.

I will not dwell on my further trials and tribulations that were occasioned by the weather. I sat nursing ideas of suing for breach of contract until the suspicious nature of the whole episode forced the realisation upon me that I was nearly swindled, but not quite. A letter to the Editor soon confirmed this suspicion. I have thus recorded the whole miserable rigmarole in the earnest hope that no other collectors will be sent on wild-goose chases by people who want money telegraphed to them for any reason, however plausible. As I stopped payment of my cheque at the bank I made a mental resolve never again to let my heart get the better of my head.

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Well, we cannot add much to that, but think of it you "Magnet" and "Gem" lovers. Picture Roger on that 160 mile journey through the blizzard, buoyed up by the thoughts of those stacks of papers, including hundreds of those with the golden covers of yesteryear waiting at his journey's end. Then a reception like that! One's blood boils at the very thought.

Reading Mr. Jenkins story we instantly thought of Mr. Colcombe. He had not mentioned the name of the woman with the "wonderful collection", but there seemed to be a connection. So we wrote and asked him "Was her name Pearson of the following address" Back came the reply "Yes, that was the name and the same address"..

CASE No. 3: On February 25th we heard the shocking story of Mr. T.G. Satchell of Shooters Hill. Although his case comes third here actually he seems to have been the first victim (at least, the first of whom we know) for he had been approached last November. There was the same plausible story of thousands of copies for disposal and the request for money by telegram. At the moment of writing she has had Twenty-five Pounds of his money, and he hasn't a single copy from that "gigantic collection" despite several assurances that they would be dispatched almost immediately.

CASE No. 4: Thursday, February 27th, brought Mr. Eric Payne into the picture. He too had heard from the mysterious female of Leicester. Still once again there was that captivating story of thousands of "Magnets", "Gems", "Union Jacks", etc., left to the lucky lady by an uncle who had had to leave them behind him when he passed on. Mr. Payne had a collection which is the envy of many, but he still wants a number to make it complete, so naturally he was interested, though a little surprised that so many copies of such coveted papers could be lying idle at this time of day. However, hoping for the best, he sent her a cheque for Ten Pounds.

On Monday, February 24th, she wrote him a letter returning his money with the naive admission that she didn't like cheques. Would he wire her the money and do so quickly as she was going away for a few days? There was more about the heavy task of packing and a hint that she should be paid for that too.

Well, she'll be disappointed; she won't get a penny from Mr. Payne.

Now note. Whilst she was coolly writing that letter she already had had handsome sums from Messrs. Colcombe and Satchell, and Mr. Jenkins had been told the books had been sold to a Leicester dealer! Further, in one of her letters to Mr. Col-

combe, she talked of hundreds of blue covered "Magnets" and orange covered "Gems". This may have been a slip of the pen, but it may be that 'Miss Pearson' was not very familiar with the one time covers of those popular papers.

Well, that is the remarkable story up to the time of writing, but it may be there will be more to tell before it is circulated. Possibly some will express a hope that by that time part of the news will be that the lady with the benevolent uncle has "gone away" for more than a few days.

CASE No.5: As we have said, this has no connection with those already related, but it has its regrettable features and was no less exasperating and disappointing for the genuine collector concerned, Mr.F.Snell, of Bideford.

Some time before Christmas last, he came to an exchange arrangement with Mr.R.E.Poynter of Box Hill Road, near Tadworth. He was to send Mr.Poynter 250 "Gems" and 36 "Schoolboy's Own Libraries" and receive in return, 322 "Magnets". Mr.Snell sent his papers off and they were acknowledged by Mr.Poynter who also said he was despatching the "Magnets" in two parcels. Time passed and no parcels arriving, Mr.Snell began to get anxious. After making enquiries locally he sent Mr.Poynter a wire asking him to take the matter up at his end, and also mentioned what he considered the present value of the papers he had sent. Mr.Poynter replied insisting that he had sent the papers off and also expressed his resentment because Mr.Snell had sent a telegram.

More time elapsed and still no books arrived for Mr.Snell. Parcels do sometimes go astray at Christmas time but it does seem rather strange that two should do so, unless they had been stolen. However, Mr.Snell makes no suggestion that the parcels were never posted; it was Mr.Poynter's subsequent conduct which gave him a right to feel annoyed; to say the least it was unhelpful, unreasonable and

some of his statements ridiculous. When Mr. Snell asked him to put in a claim for a certain amount he refused, saying "the price asked for these second-hand books at any secondhand book shop or stall is a recognised figure of ½d (1d in a few isolated cases). I have 20 years of collecting experience in London and many large towns, the same price prevails in all cases. Therefore the figure you suggest is fantastic". Mr. Poynter also makes the claim that he was a collector of "Nelson Lees".

Note: Mr. Poynter was saying this in the year of grace 1946. One can only assume that, to borrow the title of one of Dennis Wheatley's latest novels, he was "The Man who Missed the War", for he seems to be quite unaware that for years "Magnets", "Gems", AND "Nelson Lees", at any price, have been as scarce in secondhand book shops as cigarettes in an automatic machine. Neither did he improve matters when he said he had only Mr. Snell's word for it that he had not received the books. What on earth would Mr. Snell's motive have been if he had. One would say he would have been too happy browsing over his "Magnets" to think about doing anything so absurd. Mr. Poynter, too, seems to have forgotten that he could have removed all mis-understanding if he had spent a few more coppers in registering the parcels.

Further correspondence followed, and Mr. Snell suggested he had a right to his "Gems" back. To this Mr. Poynter replied that he had disposed of them. It would be interesting to know if he parted with them for a halfpenny each!

Then came the crowning insult. Mr. Poynter offered, though not admitting liability, to allow Mr. Snell ½d each for the "Gems", 2d for the "Schoolboys Own Libraries" - 11s.4d, less fares of 10d and 8d he had incurred in posting them - 9s.10d in all. He added: "the two trips have wasted two or three hours of my time, not to mention having to lug those confounded books a mile each way, both collecting and posting."

Yes, indeed, Mr. Poynter's attitude was not exactly reasonable, helpful, generous, or that of one genuine collector in the hobby of story paper collecting towards another.

Needless to say, Mr. Snell did not accept his "generous" offer and in these early days of March, is still without his "Magnets" or his "Gems" and "Schoolboys Own Libraries".

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Well, it is a dismal record of hard-luck and heart-breaking experiences we have had to relate herein, making this special issue not as bright as we think we can say "The Collectors Digest" usually is.

In conclusion may we suggest that, where strangers have approached collector advertisers in "The Exchange and Mart" those advertisers should take advantage of the deposit system offered by that paper. We can appreciate that when these glittering prizes are dangled before the eyes of eager collectors there is a paramount temptation to close the deal as quickly as possible. But it is better to wait a week than wait for ever with a reduced bank balance in addition. In cases like Mr. Snells it should be insisted upon that parcels MUST be registered. That would at least lessen risk and remove suspicion.

One last word - "The Collectors Digest" is always at your service. We are determined to do all we possibly can to ensure that our readers should have a square deal, and to expose any would-be fraud or profiteer.

Yours sincerely,

HERBERT LECKENBY,
H. MURICE BOND,

Joint Editors.

P.S. There is no charge for this issue, but if any subscriber would like to contribute a little to out-of-pocket expenses, your Editors would be grateful.

S T O P P R E S S !

Just as this issue was being typed came news of another extraordinary case, and again Mr. Jenkins was selected as a prospective victim. Once more the bait was a wonderful collection of "Magnets", 1 - 1382, "Gems", 500 odd to 1037, and "Schoolboys Own Libraries", 1 - 380.

In this instance the lucky 'owner' was a gentleman with the impressive name Roger Anthony Carstairs and a Southsea address. There was a very attractive plausible story of how his treasure had been stored in an old chest for many years and a wish that it should be passed on to someone worthy of it and at a reasonable price. Cash was asked for or an un-crossed cheque.

All that Mr. Jenkins could learn on a visit to Southsea was that the address was a lodging house of a better type. No Mr. Carstairs lived there, and all that the proprietor could say was that he had received a mysterious letter from a gentleman of that name saying he proposed visiting the address and asking the proprietor to sign for any registered letters that came for him.

Except that the Police have been informed, that is the end of the story to the present.

More news in our next issue. Meanwhile, beware of Mr. Roger Anthony Carstairs !
