

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

No. 70. — "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY.

Vol.
23

The
CAPTAIN
of **ABBOTSCRAG**

A POWERFUL TALE
OF SCHOOL LIFE.

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STORY PAPER COLLECTORS' DIGEST

STORY PAPER COLLECTOR

Founded in 1941 by
W. H. GANDER

COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Founded in 1946 by
HERBERT LECKENBY

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THE WORLD OF - HOSPITAL

Lots of readers have sent us very heart-warming comments on our Christmas Number. There is, of course, always something a bit special about a Christmas Number. There always was. Our own Christmas Number, this time, was unique, in that much of it was edited and planned from a hospital bed.

Perhaps you may wonder what brought your editor to hospital. Domestic rates are so high in Surrey that you might expect the streets to be paved with gold. Such is far from being the case. In fact, the authorities, with an eye on assuring the future of Britain, spend so many thousands on students and the like that they have to be a bit cheeseparing in other directions. When there is a freeze-up, they are reluctant to spend the little bit necessary to have some sand thrown down to make the roads and paths safer for local pedestrians and motorists. So your editor, picking his way gingerly over the snow and ice in the main thoroughfare last January, suddenly came a purler and hit the road

with a thud which shook the foundations of a nearby skyscraper. The result was trouble with those little things called discs which we have in our spine, a summer and early autumn of plenty of pain and discomfort, and an order into hospital early in November.

Your Editor's Christmas Chat was written with the old boy lying flat on his back, his normally active anatomy held firmly in a rack-like device which might have broken the spirit of Guy Fawkes. Above his head, your poor old editor had a chunk of thick cardboard fixed. To this was pinned a large sheet of paper. In that way, the Christmas editorial took shape. A ball-point pen would not work, as, owing to the angle, the ink ran back into the pen instead of to the ball point. So he sent for pencils, very soft and black - and gradually that Christmas Chat was written.

At this stage I take the opportunity to pay tribute to the wonderful First Lady of Excelsior House who came to my bedside twice daily, through all weathers - 42 visits in all - bringing in my immense mail in the afternoons and carrying away my varied and intricate instructions in the evening, all so faithfully carried out that "the show went on" without a hitch.

How very much like the World of School is the World of Hospital, at any rate for anyone who is in for a stay of a number of weeks. The Matron - dignified yet kindly - is Dr. Locke to a 'T.' The two Sisters - one, stern, grimly efficient, and gimlet-eyed is a veritable Quelch; the other, gentle, lively, yet meaning what she says is, perhaps, Mr Railton. The Staff Nurses are the prefects. They remind you of Kidare, Wingate, Bulkeley, Darrell - and there is even one who is something of a Loder personified. The little trainee nurses are, perhaps, the Fifth-formers - Lefevre, Hilton, Coker, Potter, Green, Blundell, and the rest. And your fellow sufferers are the boys of the Remove.

The first night you arrive, you can see nothing but unending gloom ahead of you, just like the first day at school. And when, as happened to me, two prefects are so very kind to you, you feel, in your exaggerated state of mind, that you would die for them. But you know nobody, and it's a dreary prospect.

And then, the day before you leave, it suddenly comes to you that you know it all; you have masses of friends; you even call some of the prefects by their christian names; you're an old hand; it has all passed in a flash; and, somewhere inside you, you feel sorry to be leaving. Just like school.

You know that, in spite of all the protestations of undying friendship for those around you, hospital friendships, like school

friendships, seldom last after one gets out into the world again.

One morning when I was completely surrounded with the implements of my editorial trade - pages and pages which would soon be the Christmas Number of C.D., the Head - I mean the Matron - looked into my room.

"And how are you this morning?" she enquired, with her customary kindly dignity. I assured her that I was fine.

Her eyes landed on the sea of Christmas C.D. in which I was wallowing. Her brows knitted, and she gave me a severe glance from gimlet eyes.

"I hope," she said grimly, "that you are not working too hard."

"Oh, no, Matron! Certainly not, Matron! By no means, Matron!" I babbled, feeling like Billy Bunter caught raiding the pantry.

She compressed her lips, seemed about to say something, and then departed, shaking her head.

I sighed with relief. It would have been a blow, had she confiscated the lot.

On the day that I left, I was collected by one of my "old boys" - he is a police officer - in a police car. The Sister who escorted me out looked surprised to see it. I'm sure she left me with the idea in her mind that the police had caught up with another fugitive from the Train Gang.

THE ANNUAL

I mentioned above that "the show went on" without a hitch. That was not strictly the case. We did have a hitch over the despatch of the Annuals, but that was nothing to do with your editor's indisposition. It was something over which we had no control at all. It was due to one of those let-downs which occur too often today in British industry. The envelope covers for the Annual, ordered as early as September, had not arrived. The Annual itself was all ready for posting early in December - and there were no covers to send it in. The overseas copies were all got away at the usual time, as were a few home copies - but the main bulk of the Annual was subject to a delay - and at Surbiton and York we could only fume and fret - and wait.

POSTERS FROM THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Early in December I received a letter from a Mrs. Lee who lives in Woking. The Daily Mail had put her in contact with me. She had found two posters advertising, respectively, "Comic Cuts" and "The Marvel." They had been at the back of a mirror and their

date was about 1905. Mrs. Lee wondered whether they would be of any interest and value.

I have no recollection, in my time, of posters being issued to newsagents to advertise boys' periodicals, and it intrigued me that such posters were once displayed.

The Comic Cuts one, showing a butterfly, is quite charming. The Marvel one shows the famous characters, Jack, Sam, and Pete, who, early in the century were perhaps the most popular of all fictional characters till they were displaced by the coming of the school story era.

I told Mrs. Lee that there was no question of their interest, but I was doubtful as to their possible value. Victorian and Edwardian items are much sought these days, but the size of the posters would make them difficult to keep. Naturally they are a bit time-worn and time-soiled, and the only real way to keep them would be on a wall, under glass. In a small museum, or something of the sort, they would be delightful.

I informed Mrs. Lee that I was prepared to buy the posters for a few shillings, on the offchance that I could have them photographed for reproduction in C.D. She accepted my offer. I have had them photographed, and the result is first-class. I am hoping to be able to reproduce them in C.D. next month.

I also hope to be able to make a few copies of the photographs available to any readers who would be interested in possessing such pleasant links with long ago. If anyone at all cares to make an offer for the original posters in due course, I shall be only too happy to pass on the extra money to Mrs. Lee.

A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO ALL MY READERS.

THE EDITOR

- - - - -
VERY GOOD PRICES PAID FOR NOVELS: By GUNBY HADATH - Blue Berets, Happy Go Lucky, Paying The Price, Sparrow Gets Going, St. Palfry's Cross, The Atom, The Big Five, The House That Disappeared, The Men of the Maquis, Twenty Good Ships, Wonder Island. By JOHN MOWBRAY - Feversham's Brother, Feversham's Fag, Something Like a Hero, The Frontier Mystery, The Megeve Mystery, The Strongest Chap in the School.

REG GUEST, 35 THORNSETT ROAD, ANERLEY, LONDON, S.E. 20. Tel:

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 A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO BETTE AND ALL THE SYDNEY MEN -
 TOM DOBSON

DANNY'S DIARY

January 1919

There is a most unusual, remarkable, and rib-tickling double series running in the Gem and the Magnet. It's all quite delightful and deleerious to find the two papers running in harmony like this, and I wonder whether the editor still expects his readers to believe that the series are written by two different authors.

Billy Bunter, and his cousin, Wally - who are doubles - have changed places. Billy has gone to St. Jim's, pretending to be Wally, and Wally has gone to Greyfriars, pretending to be Billy.

The foundation for the series was laid in the Magnet where the whole thing began 3 weeks before it kicked off in the Gem. In fact, the first tale of the Magnet series was "Bunter the Punter" last month.

The first tale of the New Year was "Wally Bunter's Luck." Wally, who works in an office at Canterbury, stops a robbery and earns the undying gratitude of his boss, Mr. Penman. Mr. Penman decides to send Wally to his, Mr. Penman's own old school, St. Jim's. Wally is visiting Greyfriars at the same time that St. Jim's arrives for a football fixture with two men short. Luckily, one of the short men was a reserve, but Wally Bunter fills the place in the team, and does great work for St. Jim's.

Next week comes "Billy Bunter's Wheeze," in which Billy, up to his neck in trouble, persuades Wally to come to Greyfriars as Billy while Billy goes to St. Jim's as Wally. Great fun.

Then came "Wally of the Remove" in which some of Billy Bunter's troubles caught up with Wally. In this issue of the Magnet appeared No. 102 of the Greyfriars Gallery - and the last of them. I have enjoyed this feature very much - better than the one in the Gem.

The final tale of the month in the Magnet was "A Dog with a Bad Name" in which Wally, with everybody thinking him Billy, finds life hard-going.

And now to the Gem side of the picture. The first tale was "Left Behind." This tale was not written by the real Martin Clifford, but he was obviously behind it and must have directed operations. It told how Manners and Roylance got stranded when the football team set off for Greyfriars, so that St. Jim's arrived at Greyfriars with a man short - the vacant place which Wally Bunter filled. Apart from that very interesting bit, it was

not much of a story. Next week, "Rival Detectives" was a fair theme but badly written. It told how Herries suspected that someone was poisoning Towser - and D'Arcy and Grundy took up detective work.

Then, in the third week of the month, the real Bunter series reached the Gem. The story was "Billy Bunter at St. Jim's. Figgins & Co, thinking that the new boy is Wally Bunter, decide to bag him for the New House.

Final of the month was "Bunter of the New House," but at the end Bunter gets back to the School House and by this time his real reputation is catching up with him. This is all a real smash-hit idea.

And on the 24th of the month, the Penny Popular came back. It is wonderful to have it again, and wonderful that there has been no change at all in its appearance or in the contents. The only difference is that the Penny Pop now costs three-halfpence.

With No. 1 there is a free art plate of Billy Bunter. The stories are "Billy Bunter's Postal-Order" which Doug says was called "The Postal Order Conspiracy" in 1910; "D'Arcy's Delusion" which had the same title in 1914; and the very first Jimmy Silver tale "The Rivals at Rookwood" which first appeared in 1915. Doug says that whole chunks of the stories are left out, and I know this is true. All the same, the tales read quite well, and it is lovely to have them back, all of them accompanied by the old pictures which they originally had.

There have been some rattling good pictures on at the three local cinemas. On all the week at one of them was "God Bless our Red, White, and Blue" which was the story of the war, mainly made up, I should think, by shots from the news reels.

Mum liked Pauline Frederick in "La Tosca," but it bored me, but we both liked W.S. Hart in "Blue Blazes Rawden." Dorothy Dalton was in "Love Me," and Douglas Fairbanks was in "Bound in Morocco." Tom Mix was exciting in "Six-Shooter Andy," Mildred Harris was all right in "The Price of a Good Time," and Maurice Costello was pretty fair in "Mr. Barnes of New York." Several of the old Chaplins have come round this month, including "Tillie's Punctured Romance," "Charlie at the Bank," "Shanghaied," and "The Perfect Lady." There is a new comic named Winkle, and we saw him in "Winkle Works with a Will" and "Winkle Works Wonders."

Mary Pickford has been in "How Could You, Jean?" and in "The Little Princess." Henry Edward and Chrissie White were in "The Hanging Judge" and Alma Taylor and Chrissie White were in "The

Refugee." These last two were both Hepworth pictures, of course, and made in England. Most of the films nowadays are American. There was also a Sexton Blake picture "The Great Cheque Fraud," which was good. I've got a feeling this one had been on before.

We went to Chatham Empire, a Stoll theatre, early in the month, and saw a good variety bill including Talbot O'Farrell, Nellie Wallace, Pimple, and Bert Terrell who was a female impersonator.

The Boys' Friend has been back on form again this month. The first Rookwood tale was "The Mystery of the White House," which was not all that good. This was a sequel to the Christmas story last month. But the rest were fine. "Tubby's Little Trick" told of the disappearance of Mornington's watch. Tubby Muffin hid it, thinking a reward would be offered for its recovery.

Then started a grand new Rookwood series. "Jimmy Silver's Sentence" was that he should receive a flogging for arranging a cord across the corridor to trip up the Head. Jimmy was not guilty, but Dr. Chisholm did not believe him. Mr. Bootles, however, did believe Jimmy, and in the next story "Dismissed from Rookwood," the form-master interfered to stop the flogging, and was given the sack. This is all really splendid.

The serial "The Boys Who Beat the Kaiser" has now ended, and a new one "The Boys Who Caught the Kaiser" has started. It is by Duncan Storm, and I don't like it, though I expect some readers do.

The Cedar Creek tales have been all about the new school, Hillcrest, and well up to standard. The first, "Mr. Peckover's Party," told of the Cedar Creek chums sending out false invitations to some of the boozy layabouts in the neighbourhood, so that they turn up at Hillcrest expecting something for nothing.

In "A Schoolboy's Treachery," a gang of unknown bandits comes on the scene. They corner Gunten, who is at Hillcrest after being expelled from Cedar Creek, but Frank Richards manages to rout them. Then, in "The Hero of Hillcrest," Gunten claims to have been the one who foiled the bandits, and a presentation is to be made to him at Hillcrest. But Frank Richards & Co expose him.

Finally, in "Frank Richards & Co's Predicament," Miss Meadows makes Frank & Co promise that they will not touch Gunten. Gunten learns of the promise - and takes advantage of it.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: The Mary Pickford film "How Could You Jean?," enjoyed by Danny in January 1919, was directed by William Desmond Taylor, to whom Mr. Bill Hubbard made reference in C.D. some time back. Three years later, Taylor, an odd character, was murdered, and the ensuing scandal finished the careers of Mabel Normand and Mary Miles Minter. Why or by whom Taylor was murdered is still one of the greatest mysteries of Hollywood to this day.)

(ON NEW YEAR'S DAY, 62 years ago, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was at St. Jim's - but only just! He was very much a new boy. This old, old story was never reprinted, and the original has long been lost down the corridors of Time. Collectors' Digest has swept away the gathered dust of over six decades, and at last gives you the chance to meet Arthur Augustus - New Boy.)

THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S

"Come on, D'Arcy; it's bed-time! What on earth have you been doing in the New House?"

"I went to bed there. Mellish told me that the woom there was mine, and then a beastly prefect came in and pulled me out, and tweated me most bwutally!" said D'Arcy.

"I have nevah been tweated so in my life before!"

"Who was the prefect?"

"They called him Monteith."

Jack gave a whistle.

"You must have had a warm time if he caught you snoozing in his quarters. He's the biggest bully in St. Jim's. But what a giddy donkey you must be to be taken in so easily! I told you that you were to sleep in the dormitory."

"Yes, but Mellish said ---"

"Well, you were an assi! Look here, Mellish, that was a beastly mean trick to play on an innocent, bleating lamb like this kid!"

Percy Mellish sneered.

"As mean as his telling tales of me and getting me a caning?" he inquired.

"He's got you there, D'Arcy! By the way, didn't they ask you who sent you there?"

"Yes."

"And you told?" exclaimed Mellish anxiously.

"No, I said I pweferred not to, as it was not gentlemanly to tell tales," said D'Arcy, with great dignity.

Jack Blake nearly choked.

"Fancy telling a housemaster that! What did he say?"

"I am to see him aftah pwayers in the morning."

"That means a licking!"

"And then he'll blab it all out!" said Mellish nervously.

"I shall not!" said Arthur Augustus.

"I think you ought to be punished for your caddish behaviour, but I shall say nothing."

"We shall see," said Percy, who was feeling very uneasy.

The Fourth Formers trooped up to bed. The long dormitory, with its rows of white beds and washstands, did not seem half so cosy to Arthur Augustus as the prefect's study he had been compelled to vacate; but he had no choice in the matter, and so when Blake pointed out his bed he proceeded to undress again and tumble in.

There was a heap of luggage beside his bed. The master in charge of the dormitory had not yet decided what was to be done with it. D'Arcy opened one of the trunks in quest of his night-garments. When he had arrayed himself in his pyjamas he was the wonder and admiration of the whole dormitory.

"Oh, my eye!" said Percy Mellish. "Spot my pyjams!"

"What a giddy pattern!" said Herries.

"How gorgeous are we!" sighed Digby.

"Oh, Aubrey, how can you!"

D'Arcy took no notice of these rude remarks, but tumbled into bed. He was soon fast asleep, and this time he was not disturbed. There would probably have been some jokes played on the new-comer, but it was known that Blake had taken him under his wing, and that was his safeguard. He was allowed to sleep in peace.

When the rising-bell went the next morning it seemed to D'Arcy, as to most of the boys, that he had only just closed his eyes. He opened them, yawned, and closed them again. Blake, who was always first out of bed, gave him a shake.

"Jump up!"

D'Arcy opened his eyes again.

"It's not time to get up yet. I nevah

get up till nine."

Blake grinned.

"Then it's time you started, my son. If you're not out in five minutes there will be a prefect along with a cane, and you'll have to go down half dressed."

"Have they sent up my hot watah?"

"No, they haven't sent up your hot watah a most unaccountable oversight!" grinned Blake. "You'll have to do without it this morning, and every other morning that you're at St. Jim's."

"You don't mean to say that you wash in cold watah?" said D'Arcy, shivering.

"Yes, I do. It's all right when you get used to it. Buck up, or you'll have to go down without washing at all."

That terrible possibility was worse to the fastidious D'Arcy than the cold water, and so he got out of bed. He washed and dressed himself very carefully, taking care to put on a new waistcoat in the place of the one that had been spoiled the day before. He had plenty to select from. His toilet was a lengthy operation, and was evidently a labour of love. He had not finished when the others were ready to go down.

"Buck up, D'Arcy!" exclaimed Blake. "Shove the things on somehow!"

"I'm afraid my jacket would be cweased," replied D'Arcy. "It is weally most incon-sidewate to hurry us like this! I am accustomed to taking my own time."

"Then it's time you learned better!"

D'Arcy was the last one down, but he got down at last. At the appointed time he made his way to Mr. Kidd's study. The housemaster gave him a severe look.

"I trust you have thought better of your obstinacy, D'Arcy. I should regret to be compelled to punish you. What is the name of the boy who sent you to the New House last night?"

"I wegwet that I cannot inform you, sir."

Mr. Kidd took down a cane.

"Very well. I shall not be severe with you, as you are a new boy, and do not yet seem to know the respect due to a housemaster; but I cannot allow your impertinence to pass unpunished. Hold your hand out!"

"You are not going to cane me, sir?"

"I am."

"I protest! I do not approve of such bwutality. My aunt would nevah have let me come here if she had known that I should be

subjected to such tweekment!"

"Hold out your hand!" said the housemaster, in a voice of thunder.

D'Arcy jumped, and reluctantly obeyed. He received a cut that made him wriggle.

"Now, the other!"

"The othah, sir?"

"Yes, the other!" exclaimed Mr. Kidd. "Don't waste my time!"

The other hand was held out, and received a cut. Then the housemaster put away the cane.

"You may go now, D'Arcy. I trust that upon another occasion you will not think of disputing the orders of a housemaster."

D'Arcy left the study. Unaccustomed to punishment as he was, he felt the tingling of his palms a good deal more acutely than the average boy, and he was strongly inclined to weep as he went.

When he joined the class a good many eyes were turned upon him curiously. Most of the Fourth knew why his visit had been paid to the housemaster's study, and the general opinion was that he would save his skin by sneaking.

The sight of him squeezing his hands together showed that he had been caned, and as Mellish was not sent for, it was evident that the new boy had not given him away.

"He's not such a bad sort," whispered Blake to Herries, who sat next to him. "He only wants to know the ropes, you see, and then he'll be all right. If Mellish had been in his place, I fancy he would have told."

And Herries nodded assent. Percy Mellish was a good deal relieved in his mind, and as the new boy, after all, was not a sneak, however great a muff he might be, Percy saw his way clear to playing a good many more ill-natured tricks upon him.

Mr. Lathom was taking the Fourth in history, and D'Arcy, whose knowledge was just extensive enough to enable him to scrape into the Fourth, waited in extreme uneasiness for his turn to come.

He hoped the master would miss him, but it was not to be. Mr. Lathom was fighting the battle of Hastings over again for the benefit of the class, but he was not getting much attention. Figgins was talking to Kerr, next to him, on the all-absorbing topic of football, taking advantage of the master's short-sightedness. Some of the boys were throwing paper pellets at

each other.

"Give me attention!" rapped out Mr. Lathom. "Attention is the - ah! - foundation of learning. D'Arcy! Tell me the date of the - ah! - Conquest."

D'Arcy looked round helplessly.

"Cannot you answer that simple question, D'Arcy?"

Percy Mellish leaned over his desk and whispered to the new boy.

"Shall I tell you?"

"Please," breathed D'Arcy.

"The forty-fourth of February, nineteen-ninety."

D'Arcy was too confused to perceive the absurdity of the answer till he had rendered it to the master. Mr. Lathom gave him a paralysing look.

"What did you say, D'Arcy?"

"The - the forty-fourth of February, sir, in the year nineteen-ninety."

"D'Arcy! Have you no sense at all, sir?"

"I -- I -- I ----"

"Go down to the bottom of the class."

D'Arcy obeyed.

Mr. Lathom breathed hard. He glared through his spectacles at the grinning class, and at last saw the animated conversation passing between Figgins and Kerr.

"Figgins!"

"Yes, sir."

"You have been paying strict attention to the lesson, I hope?"

"I hope so, sir."

"You were speaking to Kerr. What were you talking about that was so interesting?"

"Football, sir," said Figgins candidly.

"Good old Figgy!" murmured Blake. "No fibs from Figgy."

Mr. Lathom looked at Figgins witheringly.

"So you were talking football? We will see if you know as much about the battle of Hastings as you do about football. If you do not, it will be my painful duty to give you an imposition upon the subject. Now, what were the opposing forces at the battle of Hastings, and who were the commanders?"

"Normans and Saxons, sir," said Figgins promptly. "The home team were captained by Harold, and the visitors ---"

"The what?"

"The invaders, I mean, sir; they were led by William. The Normans kicked off ---"

"The -- the -- Normans did what!"

"I mean they got going first," said Figgins, "but the home team defended their

goal, and the visitors could not get through. At half-time ---"

"Figgins!"

"Yes, sir. At half-time the score-sheet was blank, and the Saxons had the best of the game in the first half."

"The -- the ---"

"In the second half the visitors drew the defence. The home team attacked, and the visitors' forwards got through and ---"

"Figgins!"

"And the visitors pulled off the match, sir."

"Figgins! Is this stupidity or impertinence?" gasped Mr. Lathom. "In order that you may learn that there is a time for study and a time for football, you will kindly write out this sentence: 'I must not talk football in class' one hundred and fifty times."

"Yes, sir," said Figgins.

The class were in convulsions over Figgy's description of the Battle of Hastings. It was in vain that Mr. Lathom strove to fix their attention after that, and he was glad when he dismissed them.

Figgins wrote out his impot, but it did not take him long. Figgins could be stupid when he chose. He presented himself at Mr. Lathom's study that evening with his impot. The master of the Fourth took it and looked at it, and then looked at Figgins.

Figgins had written down one line.

"I must not talk football in class one hundred and fifty times."

"Figgins!" Mr. Lathom looked hard at the boy, whose face was absolutely wooden in expression. "Figgins, what do you mean by this?"

"Isn't the writing good, sir?" said Figgins anxiously. "I wrote it very carefully, sir."

"I told you to write out this sentence: 'I must not talk football in class' one hundred and fifty times."

"That's what I've done, sir. I hope the spelling is good?"

"The spelling is correct, Figgins."

"Then what is wrong, sir?"

"I meant -- you must surely have understood me -- but no matter. You may go, Figgins."

"Thank you, sir."

And Figgins departed. He left Mr. Lathom wondering whether he was the biggest fool of the deepest scamp in the school. Other

masters had wondered that before about Figgins without being quite able to make up their minds.

(TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT MONTH'S COLLECTORS' DIGEST)

DO YOU REMEMBER?

By Roger M. Jenkins

No. 74 - The 1920 Holiday Annual

It is a sobering thought that nearly fifty years have elapsed since the first Holiday Annual appeared, in September 1919, and dated for the following year. It was the first of a series of twenty-two, and it bestowed an aura of respectability on the world of Hamiltoniana. A six-shilling volume was obviously far superior to 1½d Magnets and Gems, and also far less destructible. To open the pages of the 1920 edition is to enter once again that magic world of eternal youth. It would be a very perverse child indeed who would not have been entranced with the fine presentation and first-class illustrations in this volume.

Charles Hamilton wrote three new stories for this volume, one each of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood, and the themes were all ones that he was to use again. In later years stories were still sometimes specially written for the Holiday Annual, but never again on so lavish a scale. "Ructions at Greyfriars" revolved around Bunter and his troubles. The Famous Five attempted to help him out, but the whole attempt ended disastrously: not many authors would have allowed their heroes to have finished in abject though hilarious failure. "Rivals of Rookwood" was a dramatic tale of Lovell's unreasoning dislike for a new boy, a study in solitary stubbornness that Charles Hamilton was so skilled at, but the cream of the volume was undoubtedly "The Wandering Schoolboy." D'Arcy's dignity compelled him to retire from St. Jim's for a while, and he visited Greyfriars and Rookwood. There was a delightful ending when Gussy gave his word to the Head as one gentleman to another that he would not act so unreasonably again. When he left the Head's study he heard a peculiar noise - "but it was impossible to suspect the Head of laughing, and he dismissed the idea from his mind "

Later editions were called "The Greyfriars Holiday Annual," and although the word "Greyfriars" did not appear on the cover in 1920 there was no doubt that Frank Richards had the lion's share of the volume, for a reprint of the two Heath stories completed the volume. But it was not the stories alone that made this volume memorable. A host of chatty articles, sketches, and poems about the three schools provided such an air of authenticity that many

readers must have been convinced that the schools really existed. The illustrations, too, were outstanding, especially Warwick Reynolds' pieces for the St Jim's story. Whatever views collectors may have of him as an illustrator of the Gem, he undoubtedly surpassed himself in the riverside scenes and the Rookwood episode depicted on the front cover. It is without doubt a volume to savour again and again - a bold publishing venture but obviously highly justified by its striking success for over two decades.

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LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 131. GEMS - and Magnets - OF HAMILTONIA

I rarely read Charles Hamilton these days, though I browse constantly over the various facets of his work. But just occasionally - possibly once a year - I get the urge to read and read from the old stories, and I enjoy it all the more after having neglected it for so long.

I had such an urge, and such a read, during December. I picked them out by chance. Three from the Golden Age of the Magnet, two from the later blue cover era of the Gem, and one very early Magnet.

I started off with the Hollywood Series, and I could not possibly fail to be entertained with anything from the very heart of the Golden Age. I always loved this series, and have read it many times before. It delights me just as much today as it did all those years ago when it was first published. It is dated, of course. Well-written school stories never date, but the Hollywood series is not a school story. It was topical when it was written, so it must be a period piece forty years on. Set in the early days of talking pictures, with mention of certain popular film stars of the time, it carries a quality which makes one who read it when it first came out feel old. Leonard Shields' superb illustrations, showing the director with his megaphone, are oddly and quaintly old-fashioned. The sense of period is further enhanced by the party's long-lasting journey across the States by train.

But it is all so very well-written that it will surely still ring a peal of bells even fifty years more on. One is struck by the various members who star in their turn. Bunter is fairly evident throughout, but Vernon-Smith, Mauleverer, Coker, Hurree Singh, and Harry Wharton all shine in outstanding sequences.

Next, I went further back to the threshold, more or less, of the Golden Age. The magic of that Golden Age is evident throughout. The Christmas with Coker series showed a Coker who was drawn with a much more restrained pen than was the Coker of later years. And because there was more restraint, he was even more amusing, never tedious, and far more entertaining. The plot is not all that convincing, and there is an absence of the ghostly trappings which made some later Christmases delightful. But there is that vaguely-sinister background which Charles Hamilton always depicted so well.

I carried straight on to the Game Kid series, which actually followed the Coker Christmas series. I never considered the Game Kid series reached the same high standard as the Schoolboy Pug series in the Gem, but the Game Kid had some great moments, and there is some splendid character work concerning Hilton and Price of the Fifth.

Not yet sated, I now turned to the Gem. This time it was "Algy of St. Jim's," reprinted under the much better title "Green as Grass," and internal evidence would indicate that this was the author's original title for it. It appeared in 1914, when the heyday of the blue Gem was really over. Though some of the comedy concerning the new boy, Algernon Blenkinsop, is too extravagant, there is never a dull moment, and the many amusing sequences help to pass an hour or so in hilarity. At the finish Blenkinsop was left on the scene, though he was never again prominent. He remained as dead wood for a while.

Still lingering in Gemland, I passed on to "A Message of Mystery," reprinted as "The Sign of Three." Though published only about a year earlier than Algy, this one was real vintage blue Gem. With a Sherlock Holmesian flavour, the story is packed with incident though the potentials of the plot were not fully exploited. As with so many Gems of the blue cover era, one gets the sense of plot wastage. The story would have made an excellent series. The comments on the political scene of India would have been topical very many years later.

Tom Merry's uncle, General Merry, is featured in the yarn, and he is a first-class character. He appeals to me far more than Major Cherry ever did. It is inexplicable that, so far as I recall, General Merry never again appeared in a St. Jim's tale. It would seem that the author forgot him, and it is a great pity that there was nobody to jog his memory. We might well have had a Gem India Series later on, and what an asset that would have been!

Finally, I went a very long way back - as far as Magnet No.

20, written in 1908, and given the quaint title of "Billy's Treat." What I could not resist in this one was its innate charm, and the freshness and ingenuousness of its writing. As in most of the early Magnets, two little themes develop side by side. The Removites are challenged by a group of French boys to meet them in an athletics contest. Secondly, Billy Bunter raises money by a spot of blackmail on Bulstrode, the character so liberally featured in the early Magnet, but dropped long before the Magnet ended. The early Bunter, of course, was a lovable Owl, far removed from the one we were to grow up with. Herr Rosenblum of Beechwood, a school closed by that time, was then temporary German master at Greyfriars.

I greatly enjoyed my December reading. Oddly enough, the story I found most dated was the newest of them - the Hollywood series - and this dating was due to the world of school being replaced by the ever-changing world outside. "Message of Mystery," too, must be a period piece, with its distant background of Indian politics, but in this case the dating does not seem so obvious to the reader. There were still fanatics left behind, long after the Indian Empire went the way of all flesh.

At the end of my reading, I had a sense of gratitude to the man who left behind such a wealth of literary treasure for those of us who are attuned to enjoy it.

REVIEW

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CHAS. HAMILTON LIBRARY CATALOGUE

This delightful booklet is, in common with everything produced by the Hamilton Museum, beautifully arranged and in impeccable taste. Apart from listing huge numbers of stories written by Charles Hamilton, all available to lucky borrowers, it makes a lovely souvenir item for any collector. The pictures, large and small, from the famous artists associated with Hamilton, are quite superb and give a tingle to the memory.

Apart from looking back to the gentle, peaceful joys of yesterday, the catalogue looks forward to tomorrow. The Librarian tells us what the library charges will be in new pence, after decimalisation. As Charles Hamilton would surely have made Billy Bunter ejaculate: GROOOH!

BLAKIANA

CONDUCTED BY JOSEPHINE PACKMAN,
27, Archdale Road, London S.E.22.

SECOND TIME ROUND

Early in December, the Sunday Times published a fascinating article by Tony Dawe. It dealt with Mr. Howard Baker, so long associated with Sexton Blake, and it was headed with an excellent photograph of Mr. Baker, plus reproductions of the S.B.L. cover to "Studio One Murder" by W. A. Ballinger and the cover of "The Girl in Asses' Milk" by W. Howard Baker, published 5 years later. According to the article, the two stories are almost one and the same.

For those who may have missed this very interesting article, here are a few extracts from it:

Mr. Baker, who has been one of the main writers of the Sexton Blake detective stories, has been reissuing some of his old stories with new names and titles and a few thousand words added. Similar word-for-word copy can be found when you read The Sea Tigers, a Sexton Blake library story of February, 1958, and Strike North, published by Mayflower in 1966.

The Last Days of Berlin came out in the Sexton Blake library for 10d. in 1958; ten years later the same story but called The Girl, The City and the Soldier sells in hardback at 18s. ... and in between there was yet another version published as The Rape of Berlin by Consul Books in the early 1960s.

The novel The Girl in Asses' Milk published by Mayflower-Dell started its career as Studio One Murder in the Sexton Blake library in 1962. Sexton Blake becomes Richard Quintain in the later book - though there is a momentary clue for alert Blake fans. When the phone rings for Richard Quintain, Baker writes that the host "handed Blake the receiver."

Howard Baker looks like a detective out of his own stories. He edited the Sexton Blake Library at Fleetway Publications, from 1955 to 1963.

For the past five years, he has run Press Editorial Services, a "writing factory" which produces light novels to order and where the "plot king" and the rewrite men are as important as the author. His activities do not break the law. Nor do they infringe

anyone else's rights. Writing factories are becoming an important part of the publishing world and Howard Baker defends his "re-issue" activities by saying that authors have been rewriting their stories for years.

"Rewriting Blake stories has been going on since the 1920s," he says. "There's even a word for it, deBlakenising."

"There's a clause in our contract with Fleetway which says an author may at some later date rewrite his story in a different setting. I don't often do it and I am at least reproducing stories which are my company's copyright. Some people have pinched Blake stories they didn't even write."

Mr. Howard Baker said that each new version is really a re-write. "You can't just change the names on a 35,000 word Blake story and reissue it as a paper-back. It would be too short. The story has to be lengthened and extra detail written in; it involves writing another 10,000 to 15,000 words."

However, Mr. Baker and his factory have also produced plenty of original Sexton Blake stories in recent years.

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STARRING SEXTON BLAKE

By S. Gordon Swan

WHEN NO. 1 of the Detective Weekly, dated 25.2.1933. appeared on the bookstalls, the cover boldly displayed the slogan: "Starring Sexton Blake." Adherents of the old Union Jack, even if they did dislike the yellow cover of the new paper -- as many did, according to the correspondence columns -- must have been gratified to note that the adventures of their hero were to continue in weekly instalments as of yore.

Who was to know that those three magic words, with all their implications, were to disappear from the front cover; that the Sexton Blake stories were to become half-length, with another non-Blake tale occupying the rest of the book? Presently the Baker Street detective was to be relegated to the back pages, while the "other" story enjoyed the prominent position. The final indignity was committed in No. 131, in which issue Blake did not figure at all, nor was he to do so for more than two years.

I remember my own dismay at my favourite being replaced by other characters, even though many of the authors were the same, but I continued to buy the paper in the hope that Sexton Blake would return. But some time in 1936 I ceased to become a reader, having come to the reluctant conclusion that the Man from Baker

Street had departed for good. It wasn't until early 1939 that I found Blake had re-entered the lists about a year before. (I can't think why this fact wasn't advertised in the Sexton Blake Library). From making this discovery I became a regular reader of the D. W. until its demise in 1940.

In the past few years I have been able to re-read some issues, and read for the first time others that I missed, and have decided that there were some good stories among the non-Blake items; also a few queries have been aroused in my mind.

In No. 106, dated March 2nd, 1935, appeared a £200 prize story, "The Poultry Farm Murder," by H. E. H. Tracy, and No. 112 featured a story by the same author, "The Great Aerodrome Mystery." These were good yarns, in which the detective work was done by a doctor and his wife. (Husband and wife teams were popular in this era, probably inspired by that overrated, alcoholic novel "The Thin Man.") The question arises, who was H. E. H. Tracy, and what became of him after this promising start? There does not seem to be any evidence of his subsequent existence. Was the name a pseudonym for a better-known writer, or was he just a two-story man? Records which are not available to me may provide the answer.

Among the best of the non-Blake tales are three adventures of Zenith the Albino which appeared in Nos. 152, 166 and 177. Somewhere at the back of a hard-cover novel I have seen the title: "Monsieur Zenith," by Anthony Skene, and I imagine this trio of stories constitute that book, but I have never come across a copy, so can't be sure.

Other yarns were by John Hunter, Rex Hardinge, Ladbrooke Black, Edmund Snell, John Creasey and similar well-known names, but a lot of these were reprints from the Thriller. A series of short stories about Marcus Max, Detective, were, I believe, adapted from Blake tales in the Penny Pictorial of pre-World War I days.

Mention should be made of the serials in the D. W. These maintained a good standard, among them being "The White Rider," by Leslie Charteris, "Arsene Lupin the Elusive," by Maurice Leblanc, "The Book of Fate" by Anthony Skene, (later published as "The Masks,"), "A Count in the Fo'cstle," "Five Years For France," and others. Later serials were by Gerald Verner and Edwy Searles Brooks.

When Blake returned in No. 251 on Dec. 11th, 1937, the majority of the stories were old ones, culled from the S.B.L. and the U.J. Some of the latter dated back to the 1913-14 period (Yvonne, Carlac, Rymer, Kew, etc.,) while there were at least two

Plummer stories from the Michael Storm era, which was even earlier.

One G. H. Teed story was reprinted as by George Hamilton. But a bigger oddity is the tale in No. 302, "The Trail of the Black Knight," by G. H. Teed. With a few alterations, this was originally S.B.L. Second Series No. 235, "The Masked Marauder," by Robert Murray, and anyone acquainted with the respective styles of the two authors would realise that G. H. Teed never wrote it.

Very few new yarns were published during this period, the most notable being the Mr. Walker tales by Ernest Dudley, and the radio serial, "The Man in the Iron Mask." Even if the coming of the war had not dealt a death-blow to the Detective Weekly, as to many other of the great story-papers, it is doubtful if this periodical would have lasted very much longer. But Blake was destined to carry on throughout in the Sexton Blake Library, and in picture-strips in the now defunct Knockout.

One can only be thankful that the legend of Sexton Blake survives to-day in more than one medium. May it continue to do so in this constantly-changing world.

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, 974, 975, 981, 984, 985, 986, 987, 989, 970, 990, 992, 993, 995. POPULARS: 401, 403, 407, 409, 413, 415, 421, 422, 441, 442, 466, 467, 474.

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

 1965 C.D. Annual 10/-. 40 Digests from 1965 £2. 9 Magnets circa 1939 30/-. Greyfriars Prospectus 10/-. Bunter Picture Book 7/6d. 1927 H.A. £2. Exchange bound Magnets 1634-1659 for similar volume. Postage extra.

35, TESTLANDS AVENUE, NURSLING, SOUTHAMPTON.

W A N T E D : Greyfriars Holiday Annuals 1922, 1932, 1936, 1937, 1939, 1940, 1941. Magnets and Gems for sale. Several Greyfriars Holiday Annuals; Boys Own Annual 1939-40; Girls Own Annual 1907-8, 1908-9.

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EARLY STRUGGLES

"CYCLING" AND "THE HOME CIRCLE"

By Bob Blythe

It seems difficult to think of a more unlikely paper than "Cycling" in which to find a story by our budding author. But nothing was too obscure if there was a possibility of the editor accepting a story from him.

The only letter from the editor was rather uncompromising.

23/4/1910

Dear Sir,

How on earth can we say if a serial story would be acceptable until we see it? Length would depend on the serial - about 5,000 to 10,000 words.

Yours etc.

Whatever story Edwy had in mind was never published as a serial. Nevertheless, one or two stories were accepted, such as "How I didn't Commit Suicide," which appeared on the 15th June 1910 and "At Dead of Night" on 5th Oct. 1910. Both, of course, concerned themselves with an adventure with a bicycle.

Unfortunately no correspondence exists concerning these stories and with the following his brief flirtation with cycling finished.

Brockley,

5/10/1910

Dear Sir,

I notice that you publish my story "At Dead of Night" in the issue of Sept. 28th and beg to point out that my name is not "E. S. Brodie." My full name - Edwy Searles Brooks - was typed quite plainly on the MS. so I fail to see how the mistake occurred.

I have been expecting to hear from you, but as you have not written I presume the matter of the cheque has been temporarily forgotten. I should be obliged if you will let me know when I am likely to receive it.

Yours etc.

If you thought that "Cycling" was off the beaten track (sorry!) how about "The Home Journal"?

By August 1910 he had exchanged letters with several A.P. editors including Rex Hayden of the "Boy's Realm" and Arthur Marshall of the "Boy's Friend" (you'll be hearing about these in

a future article), and through Marshall he met Percy Mander, who was editor of several women's papers including "The Home Circle." As the following extract in a letter to Marshall shows,

"I -- I saw Mr. Mander on Friday last, thanks to your kind introduction, and he has told me to let him have synopsis of a 5,000 word story for the "Home Circle." I posted it off last night."

The following letter is the result of that meeting.

15/Aug/1910

Dear Mr. Mander,

I have read the story in the "Home Circle" you gave me, and now beg to hand you the synopsis of two stories 5,000 words in length each. I rather think that "A Wrong Righted" is more suitable for you than "Who Killed the Colonel?" However, I shall be glad to have your opinion.

Faithfully yours, etc.

Later that month, Mander replied.

24th Aug. 1910

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I have read the two enclosed synopses. I shall be pleased to receive a story of 5,000 words, to the synopsis entitled, "A Wrong Righted," but I regret to say that the other synopsis entitled "Who Killed the Colonel" is far too dramatic for the "Home Circle."

Yours faithfully, etc.

Within a day E.S.B. had written the story.

Aug. 27th, 1910

Dear Mr. Mander,

Thank you for your letter of the 24th. I have pleasure in handing you herewith "A Wrong Righted" in its completed form. Its length is about 5,000 words.

I also enclose another synopsis for a story with a similar number of words and trust it will meet your requirements.

Faithfully yours, etc.

However, this was 1910 not 1968 and the story was returned for the following reasons.

1st Sept. 1910

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I have read the enclosed story entitled "A Wrong Righted" and regret it is not up to the standard of the "Home Circle."

I would point out to you that I always advise my readers that love at first sight is hardly possible, and I think you have gone rather beyond the limit by allowing "Sir Oswald Caine" to start

making an appointment with the girl after a few second's conversation.

If you would like to have another try with the enclosed synopsis which you submitted to me, I shall be pleased to give it my consideration.

Yours truly, etc.

By the time E.S.B. took up the offer contained in the last paragraph, he had reached the turning point in his literary life. He had, during the past few months, been corresponding with Percy Griffith, the editor of the "Gem," had had a Tom Merry story accepted and had commenced writing his mammoth serial "The Iron Island" which ran in the "Gem," with variations, from 1910 to 1912. However, rest your souls in patience, all will be revealed!

Back to the "Home Circle"!

Oct. 3rd 1910

Dear Mr. Mander,

Thank you for your letter of the 1st ult. I regret that "A Wrong Righted" was not suitable for "The Home Circle" but in response to your invitation have pleasure in sending you herewith the story "Saved at the Altar," which I trust will be more to your liking. I am sorry I have been so tardy in replying to your letter, but as I have been extremely busy, writing for Mr. Griffith of the "Gem" this last two or three weeks, I have really had very little time.

Faithfully yours, etc.

Mr. Mander accepted the story but said -

17th Oct. 1910

Dear Mr. Brooks,

Will you kindly make the following alterations to the enclosed story:

From pages 12 to 14 I want you to explain how Henderson obtains the news (or the supposed news) of Gilberts roguery, as the reasons you give are not good enough to satisfy the wants of my readers.

Also on the last page, I do not see why you allow Nuttall to take part of the money. As you make him a rogue, you must give him an unhappy ending.

Kindly make these corrections and let me have the story back, and I shall shortly be using it in the "Home Circle."

Yours truly, etc.

This story was probably published, although I haven't established this as yet. Whether this was the end of his writing for the "Home Circle" I have no means of knowing - further

research is needed here - for here the letters end until a year later.

Aug. 12th 1911

Dear Mr. Mander,

You will find enclosed the synopsis of a short story, together with the outline of a serial. I should be pleased if you will let me know whether they are suitable,

Yours sincerely, etc.

And two weeks later -

Aug. 24th 1911

Dear Mr. Mander,

I am sorry you were too busy to see me to-day, and was a little surprised when the boy who took up my card informed me that you were unable to give me anything at present; for the other day you told me that I could do a short story. I have already sent you a synopsis (together with an idea for a long story), and I trust that by now you have had time to glance over them

Yours sincerely, etc.

And finally,

28th Sept. 1911

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I regret I have no opening either for a long complete story or a serial on the lines suggested in the enclosed. Very many thanks for your kind offer.

I may add I have now no connection with "Home Circle."

Yours truly, etc.

One wonders what was going on. Had Mr. Manders been promoted or demoted? At the A.P. anything could happen.

As you can see, by the end of 1910 Edwy was gradually improving his position and was getting more stories accepted and was receiving less rejection slips.

1910 was also the year he began his very long connection with the A.P. So we leave E.S.B. with his feet on the first few rungs of the ladder of success, however insecure that A.P. ladder was - he had made it at last.

LOST - and much missed by its sorrowing owner. Volume containing early Penny Populars (1911) Nos. 1 - 12. Newly bound in dark brown with lettering on spine in gold. Very substantial reward for any finder who will send it home.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON.

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

ALEX PARSONS (Tranmere): Many thanks for December issue of C.D. This couldn't have suited me better. Firstly because of its attractive illustration, which, incidentally, happens to be that of one of my favourite N.L. Christmas series, and which I'm re-reading at this period. It's a great yarn with a ghost that had me guessing at the first reading so many years ago. Secondly, because of the very fine article by Roger Jenkins on the Reynham Castle series of the Magnet. Everything seems to be a coincidence as this, also, is one of my favourite series, and, in my opinion, one of the greatest C.H. ever wrote. I can't add anything to Roger's statements, but agree most heartily with all of them. Thirdly because of William Lister's charming, nostalgic piece. This must surely find an echo in all reader's hearts. As a lover of verse, I thought those in his article extremely lovely in their simplicity and sentiment. Who was (or is) the poet?

WARWICK SETFORD (Derby): I would like to say that I agree with the remarks in your editorial concerning the re-birth of Greyfriars characters. I should think that your contributor who likes this idea has some very funny ideas about what is good for the hobby. In any case such a re-birth would be sheer nonsense as we all know that the Greyfriars fellows never grew up. The Famous Five, Bunter, Mauleverer, Wibley, Coker, Wingate, and the rest are still at Greyfriars in the same forms and always will be. So I think that any book issued in the form of a Greyfriars re-birth, should be regarded as having no importance or effect on the Greyfriars stories by C.H. The same would apply to St. Jim's and Rookwood of course.

RANDOLPH COX (Minnesota): I made a quick comparison between the text of "Sexton Blake - Detective" as it appears in the SEXTON BLAKE ANNUAL of about 1940 and in the 1968 VALIANT BOOK of TV's SEXTON BLAKE. There have indeed been cuts made. It would be interesting to compare these with the original story as it appeared in the Half-penny Marvel of 1893 as "The Missing Millionaire." Curious this insistence on the first appearance in the 4th May 1894 issue of UNION JACK. A tidier explanation, no doubt. What was in that 1894 issue, anyway?

JACK MURTAGH (New Zealand): At the end of Controversial (Nov. 68) reference is made as to why our beloved papers are referred to as

Comics.

One of the reasons for this I believe is the fact that a Billy Bunter comic strip was run in one of the later boys' papers and I feel that this is the only contact and knowledge that many of the younger reporters and critics have of Billy Bunter and they assume quite wrongly of course that the earlier adventures of Billy Bunter and others were in comic strip style. Could it also be that the original meaning of comic is being lost? I know a teenage collector of Magnets, Gems, Nelson Lees, etc., who always refers to them as comics. To him the word comic means boys' papers; to us it means papers with stories in picture strip form. Perhaps we 'oldies' are 'not with it.'

(Editorial Comment: We would be very surprised if the all-embracing use of the word "comics" has anything to do with Billy Bunter. Most youngsters today only know modern picture papers, and are unacquainted with a world when anything else existed.)

JACK COOK (Newcastle-on-Tyne): A recent article in Nov. T.V. Times by Ross Richards describes Zenith the Albino as - in his own words - "the malign violin-playing albino dwarf known as Zenith -"

The illustrations of Zenith have always depicted him as a tall figure in black cloak and silk hat. Where does Mr. Ross Richards get the idea that Zenith was a dwarf? It would be interesting to get an explanation.

JOHN McMAHON (Lanochside): A few weeks ago I had a wonderful bit of luck. I bought the first eleven issues of the Dixon Hawke case-books. I was beginning to despair of ever seeing these volumes, and then out of the blue I was in possession of them.

I wonder when someone is going to do an article on Dixon Hawke. When you consider that there were over five hundred D.H. libraries and twenty case-books published over a thirty year period, it is obvious that there must be a vast ocean of material that should be of interest to lovers of Old Boys Books.

RAY HOPKINS (New Cross): I was interested to hear that Bill Lofts has found many cases where even a serial has been started by one author and finished by another. I recently came across an example of this. In "Schoolgirls' Weekly" of 1934 appeared a serial "Try Again, Toots" by Elsie Trevor. After the first 4 instalments, the author was given as Louise Carlton, right till the end, and when it was reprinted Louise Carlton was named as author.

DERYCK HARVEY (Cambridge): Thank you sincerely for "Collectors'

Digest" throughout the year. It continues to be a mine of entertainment, and most exceptionally good value.

NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 26th November, 1968

Considering the atrocious weather, an attendance of ten was good.

The meeting began with the news that Mrs. Hamilton Wright niece of the great Charles Hamilton had invited the club members to her home at Sutton Coldfield for the Christmas gathering. The Christmas meeting will also probably be the occasion of a visit by the B.B.C. This is not certain for members will well remember that once before the B.B.C. unit failed to appear when expected.

Several interesting items were on view including a bound volume of the Magnet - the Stacey Series Nos. 1422 - 1433 and Anniversary No. Gem 172 "All Figgins' Fault" dated 26th November, 1921 and Collector's Item "Schoolboys' Own Library No. 410 - the last issue and based on Magnets Nos. 1273 to 1275. These were brought along by Tom Porter.

After the coffee break came a highly interesting talk by Bill Morgan. It consisted of memories and reflections on life in the Edwardian era and the juvenile literature associated with it. Bill's comments on life in 1908 were very intriguing and he told members that he started to read the Magnet at school. He read the first 500, with enjoyment but quite uncritically. He read the rest with an adult, critical mind but still had enjoyment from them.

The long-winded prolixity of the Magnet style to which George Orwell took exception was in Bill Morgan's opinion a helpful factor in helping the semi-illiterates of those days to read with understanding. As Bill is a retired schoolmaster his opinion would be one to which we must pay respect.

Bill also mentioned the technique of Charles Hamilton in dealing with mystery plots. He pointed out that the interest lies in resolving how the culprit is brought to book, not who the culprit is. We know that more or less from the start. Bill was warmly thanked for his fine talk.

This next meeting is earlier than the usual last Tuesday in

the month and will be on 17th December. This is to avoid clashing with the Christmas week rush.

J. F. BELLFIELD

Correspondent.

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NORTHERN

Christmas Party held Saturday, 14th December, 1968

All the preparations for the Party completed, with a record number of guests expected, the local committee held its breath to see if the weather would be kind. And after a week of intermittent fog - it was! Cold, yes, but reasonably clear and dry, and it was grand to see thirty-one happy faces at the specially extended table enjoying the party fare provided, and the company of old friends again. For some it was a first experience of a Northern Christmas Party, and for Cliff Kelly from Sheffield and Barbara Riley (with her husband George) the Chairman Geoffrey Wilde had a special welcome, when at the end of the meal he rose to propose a toast to our President, P. G. Wodehouse, whom all present rose to acclaim.

After tea, the Library was spread out, and at the same time, for others who were not browsing and borrowing, pencil and paper was provided, and drawings round the wall, (each representing a Hamilton character name,) had to be interpreted. Everyone had a try at this competition, and later in the evening it was found that the winner was George Riley, with all 30 pictures correct, for which stalwart effort George was presented with a copy of "Boys will be Boys."

Now came the feature of the party. The film show of sound films loaned to us by London's President. We saw the beloved Frank Richards in his home "Rose Lawn" (and older silent scenes of his youth), many pictures of the characters we love so well, and an excellent Pathe Pictorial, including a very interesting interview of Mr. John Wernham on the subject of the Hobby. These scenes were followed by a film of Gerald Campion (as both Billy Bunter and Wally Bunter) of T.V. fame, and everybody applauded enthusiastically when this unique show ended. We were lucky to have with us Mr. Arthur Turner of Bramley to put on these films very expertly for us, and who also is familiar with the C.D. we found!

Now followed a Shooting Game brought by Harry Barlow. It was not lethal at all, for the 'bullet' was a suction cup fired at a

target, and strange to relate, the ladies seemed to excel at this! The winner was Marion Wilde, with two Bullseyes in rapid succession. It was now 8.30 p.m. and supper was brought out, and an opportunity of chat and relaxation, and also the Prizegiving, when everyone received a toothsome gift. Afterwards, time pressing we decided to hold over a Card Game by Jack Allison, and instead a Short Story Comp. entry by his brother Gerald was read by the Chairman. A Sexton Blake tale this time, called "The Hardboard Mystery," and then Alfred Hanson rounded off the programme with a seasonal ghost story from the Dalesman. As members started to bid each other farewell, Elsie Taylor thanked all who had helped to make the evening so successful, and "Long Live the Old Boys' Book Club."

Next meeting, Saturday, 11th January, 1969.

M. L. ALLISON
Hon. Sec.

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LONDON

"Christmas Present" at Hume House, East Dulwich, attracted 33 members who were keenly interested in "Christmas Past," as read by the host, Len Packman, from Newsletter number 8, January 1953, giving details of the 1952 Christmas meeting at "Cherry Place," Wood Green.

Three of the last three Yuletide greetings cards, showing the attendance at Hume House were on show, proud possessions of Len. President of the Club, John Wernham, expressed suitable seasons greetings to all and gave details of his publications. Two are out of print, the British Council taking a further ten copies of the Billy Bunter Picture Book, the publication of the magnificent new Hamiltonian catalogue and the promise of another 'secret' one in time for the Surbiton meeting next year. Don Webster was congratulated for being the first one to spot the only spelling mistake in the Hamilton catalogue.

Bob Blythe rendered some "Further Comments on the Brooks Papers." The lost mss., that was found with a bootlace tied round it, caused great amusement. A fine feature this.

Ray Hopkins gave a reading from a "Captain," circa 1914, story, "No Heroes Allowed" by Max Rittenburg. One of Ray's fine readings - he certainly knows where to choose his material.

Len Packman gave a talk on the four Sexton Blake Annuals, Gwyn Evans came into the talk with all his Christmas story titles

and to conclude Len read out an advert in the "Union Jack" 40 years ago which he had inserted.

The usually fine fare that Josie puts on at these Hume House Yuletides was greatly enjoyed by the gathering, especially the hot mince tarts. Plenty of time for get-togethers and reminiscences, some good sales and exchanges, both librarians busy, a considerable number of the Hamilton catalogue disposed of and all too soon homeward bound. Next meeting at "Friardale," 2, North Drive, Ruislip, Middlesex, Phone 713-4151, on Sunday, January 19th.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

Rainbow 1930 and Tiger Tims 1938. Complete years run of each (52) in mint condition £9.10.0. each run. Boys Monster Weekly 1899 Nos. 1 - 44 complete set Vols. 1-2 bound in one huge volume publishers cover, good condition £7.10.0. scarce. The Union Jack 1881 edited by Henty. A fine copy of this rare volume 35/- cheap. Boys similar 1893 publishers cover, fair/good condition, 25/- . Many similar annuals including BOA's, CHUMS, CAPTAINS, YOUNG ENGLAND, etc. and other OBB's. - post extra.

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

DISPOSAL 19 Modern Boys (1932-37) offered for Magnet 958. After one week first sensible offer secures.

HANGER, 10 PARK SQUARE, NORTHAMPTON, NN5 7LQ

SALE: MAGNETS - 9 1936 issues 49/6; 4 1937 20/-; condition medium, but complete. 3 1939 15/- good. Complete Stacey series (10) 60/- good. Post extra.

PARSONS, 4, PARK ROAD, TRANMERE, B-HEAD, L42-5N.N.

EXCHANGE: Dixon Hawke Case Books Nos. 6, 7, 8, 11, 20.

WANTED: Dixon Hawke Libs. Thomson Papers 1935-1942.

McMAHON, 54, HOZIER CRES., TANNOCHSIDE, UDDINGSTON.

WANTED: Magnets as follows:- 1932 - 1247, 1269, 1285, 1289 and 1290. 1936 - 1488, 1490, 1492 to 1500, 1502 to 1504. 1937 - 1508 1509, 1516, 1517, 1519 to 1523, 1527 to 1530, 1551, 1555 and 1557. 1939 - 1627.

ERIC FAYNE, EXCELSIOR HOUSE, GROVE ROAD, SURBITON.

CLIFF HOUSE CONFUSION

By P. Tierney

Norman Linford's article on the "Schoolgirl" and "School Friend" stories of Cliff House interested me very much. My own knowledge of these stories is only slight, but enough to annoy me intensely by the appalling liberties which the authors took with the Courtfield-Friardale scene which Charles Hamilton had created.

A few months ago I bought an old "School Friend Annual." The first article I read was about Bessie Bunter who seemed to be a very different character from the Bessie of the "Magnet." It was admitted, rather grudgingly I thought, that she had "two fat brothers" at school. But she seemed to have a different set of relations from those of her brothers which must be very unusual in a family.

There was a long Cliff House story which I commenced to read but it seemed a strangely unfamiliar Cliff House. However I was beginning to think that perhaps I knew where I was when some of the girls visited Friardale. P. C. Tozer was there. So, I think, was Uncle Clegg's tuck shop. But at this point "Hilda Richards" had the audacity to state that the other large school near Friardale was "the boys' school, Lanchester."

The boys' school, Lanchester! I had not the patience to continue the story after that. Whatever merits it possessed would have been lost on me.

As a comparatively new reader of the "Collector's Digest" I do not know whether this subject has been fully discussed before. If it has not I cannot understand why. Substitute authors have frequently been criticised for their treatment of Charles Hamilton's characters but, in my opinion, this Lanchester nonsense was the greatest "crime" of all. Surely even the killing off of Courtney was a minor offence compared with the removal of Greyfriars itself from the Greyfriars setting and the substitution of a new school and a new set of characters.

I have discovered a few more details since then but I cannot possibly understand why it was considered necessary to cause this stupid confusion. Can anyone tell me?

Copyright could not have been involved because the "Magnet" and the "Schoolgirl" had the same publishers.

Was it that the Cliff House authors felt unable to deal competently with Greyfriars characters? This is possible but surely they could have introduced them on odd occasions or at

least acknowledged their existence. For instance it would have been just as easy to mention "the boys' school, Greyfriars" as "the boys' school, Lanchester."

No doubt they wished to use some of their own characters but they could have done so without creating havoc with the established scene. The new girl characters did not matter so much. There might have been two hundred girls at Cliff House and as only a relatively small number of them had previously appeared in Greyfriars stories there was no contradiction involved by the introducing of others. In fact it would be necessary to do so.

And if it was considered necessary to bring in new boys, not belonging to Greyfriars, why could they not have invented more Highcliffe characters? Or, if they wanted a completely fresh field, Redclyffe and St. Jude's were not far away and either of them could have provided a readymade setting for Jim Tolhurst & Co or whatever they were called. By such simple co-ordination all confusion could have been avoided and an overall picture presented which would have been recognizable to both "Magnet" and "Schoolgirl" readers.

I borrowed some very early "School Friends" and the editor's answers to letters from obviously puzzled readers added to my own bewilderment. The editor was not merely ignoring Greyfriars and the "Magnet." He was scrupulously avoiding any mention of them.

There were such replies as these:

"Yes, Bessie's brother is at the school you mention."

"I do not edit the papers you mention."

"There are two boys' schools near Cliff House."

"The boy you mention is Marjorie's brother."

There was also an assurance given that boys would be featured in the stories in due course. This was obviously paving the way for the Lanchester characters.

The editor must have been inundated with indignant letters when these interlopers made their appearance and such letters must have been frequent throughout the whole life of the paper. Evasive replies such as I had quoted would certainly not satisfy the more knowledgeable readers. They would only annoy them.

It also seems strange that not only one but all the new authors should go these absurd lengths to avoid Greyfriars. Perhaps it was editorial policy. But it seems unlikely that the editor would enjoy being in continual difficulties with correspondents.

Was it that the publishers did not want to attract girl readers from the "Magnet" to the "Schoolgirl" and were trying to cater for

entirely new readers with no previous knowledge of the characters. This is possible particularly as the two papers did not advertise each other. But then there was no point in using the Greyfriars setting at all. Or the pen-name of Hilda Richards.

There must be plenty of people still living who can throw some light on this subject so I shall be very grateful for any information.

ANOTHER "OLD-TIMER" IS GONE

I have just received a letter from Penelope Wallace - daughter of the great Edgar - to the effect that RICHARD STARR has died, about three weeks ago, leaving a widow.

He was over 90 and, although in pain the last months, kept his faculties and sense of humour to the last. I enjoyed my contact with him.

He will be remembered by "Young Britain" collectors as RICHARD ESSEX, FRANK GODWIN etc. ("SPARTACUS," "BOLD ROBIN HOOD," "MARCUS BULLER, DETECTIVE," "MAXIM LAW," etc. etc.) Also "Jester," "Chums" and others.

Again for his fine yarns of "Slade of the Yard," versus "Lessinger."

Incidentally, Penelope Wallace is starting an "EDGAR WALLACE CLUB" on Jan. 1st, 1969.

Four "Newsletters" annually, subscription 10/- the year.

L. S. Elliott

Will pay 10/- each for Boys Friend Lib. 4d New Series No. 12, 30, 36, 37, 38, Old Series 738. Buffalo Bill Novels 4d No. 66 and 5/- each for Boys Friend Lib. New Series No. 8, 9, 49, 53. R. STORY, 34 ABERDEEN CRES., BRAMALEA, via BRAMPTON, ONTARIO, CANADA

FOR SALE: Gems, Nelson Lees, Aldine (1902) - O'er Land - Sea 394, Dick Turpins 153, 155. BFLs., Sports Budgets, Popular 259, 1d. Pictorial No. 1, Vol. 1 (1899), Science Fiction Magazines and Paperbacks. WANTED: Pre-war American Pulp Magazines.
L. WALTON, 41, WOODLAND ROAD, LEVENSHULME, MANCHESTER M19 2GW