

STORY PAPER
COLLECTORS' DIGEST

Vol.
23

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THE FAMOUS MAGNET ARTIST CELEBRATES
HIS NINETIETH BIRTHDAY THIS MONTH

23

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 Man of the Wheel.



NINETY YEARS YOUNG

Mr. Charles H. Chapman, the celebrated artist who was associated with Greyfriars for so many years, this month celebrates his ninetieth birthday. Not the least wonderful factor of a remarkable career. Collectors' Digest, on behalf of its readers, congratulates Mr. Chapman on his splendid achievement, and wishes him many more years of good health and happiness.

WHAT THE DIGEST SAYS TO-DAY ---

In our editorial last month we commented on the reason why so many people turn with affection to the old papers which we loved long ago. We suggested that a revulsion against much in present day life caused us to look lovingly at the past. You may recall that we ended with the following comment: "The old papers give soothing balm to our hearts which ache, not for our lost youth but for a lost England." By a coincidence, only a few days after our March issue had gone

out to readers, the Evening News expressed very similar sentiments to our own. The Evening News was looking for the reason behind the phenomenal success of "The Forsyte Saga" on television, and, though their choice of words was perhaps better than ours, the Evening News came up with exactly the same thoughts.

Here is an extract from the newspaper item:

"We are not looking back nostalgically to a period in time but to a condition in society. So is half the world - looking upon a condition of civilised, orderly living that we have all lost and all want to restore. For all its faults we see that it is preferable to the Permissive Society. It has dignity, poise, kindness and integrity. The triumph of the Forsyte Saga is profoundly symptomatic of a change in the contemporary mind. The pendulum of Permissiveness has reached its limit. The swing back has begun, and with it all kinds of spuriousness and decadence will be jettisoned.

"In fiction and the drama, the kitchen-sinkers have had their day. They never did amount to much; they never constituted a genuine artistic advance. For them and their kin, the Forsyte Saga, with its huge intelligent following, is the writing on the wall."

And that, largely, was what we said about the huge intelligent following of the old papers. It is nice to think that we said it first, even though we were less optimistic.

THAT MAN PENTELOW

Next to Hamilton and Brooks, probably no man has featured more in Collectors' Digest columns down the years than John Nix Pentelow. Though, unlike them, he has usually collected more kicks than ha'pence.

I think it likely that Hamiltonians have done him less than justice and I myself am no less guilty in that direction than anyone else. Prejudices - especially those from youth - die hard.

I do not think I ever read any of Pentelow's yarns divorced from the Hamilton schools. Yet he must have had worth as a writer, for his prolific output was widely published, which indicates that he had a popularity all his own.

Another point is that he loved the Hamilton schools and characters. He must have done, otherwise he could not have written

the Greyfriars and St. Jim's Galleries which gave proof of constant and affectionate reading of Hamiltonia. It has been suggested that he even tried to "take over" the writing of the Hamilton papers. I can see no proof of this after a hard study of the Pentelow period. Legend has it that Hamilton and Pentelow had a blazing row over something or other. I can find nothing to indicate that either. All the evidence, from Pentelow's period of editorship, is that he and Hamilton were working together in harmony. Pentelow's editorship ended, so far as Hamilton was concerned, in early 1919. Any disagreement that Hamilton had with Pentelow after that date can hardly have affected the supply of Hamilton stories to the Companion Papers. It was long after Pentelow's editorship ended that the real glut of substitute stories hit the Gem and the Magnet.

Recently, Pentelow has been mildly criticised as rude to mythical readers, in his editorials. In fact, that trait was far more evident with Hinton than it was with Pentelow, who had less space to spread himself during the years of the war. Indeed it was Pentelow who, over many weeks, devoted most of his editorial space to brief histories of both the Gem and the Magnet, and published a complete list of story titles to date, in both papers. This gesture must have been keenly appreciated by readers, and was proof of a pleasant and whimsical sentimentality on the part of the editor.

THE EDITOR

FOR SALE: Offers are invited for the following. The number of copies available for each year given is shown in brackets.

BIG BUDGET: 1898 (37); 1899 (32); 1900 (21); 1901 (14); 1903 (13); 1904 (24); 1905 (45); 1906 (18); 1907 (18); 1908 (32). THE WONDER 1902 (10). WONDER & JESTER 1902 (2). JESTER & WONDER 1902 (32); 1903 (35); 1904 (50); 1905 (26); 1906 (50); 1907 (35); 1908 (42); 1909 (20); 1910 (35); 1911 (39); 1912 (49); 1913 (49); 1914 (49); 1915 (42); 1916 (50); 1917 (39); 1918 (33); 1919 (39); 1920 (49); 1921 (45). Postage extra on all deals.

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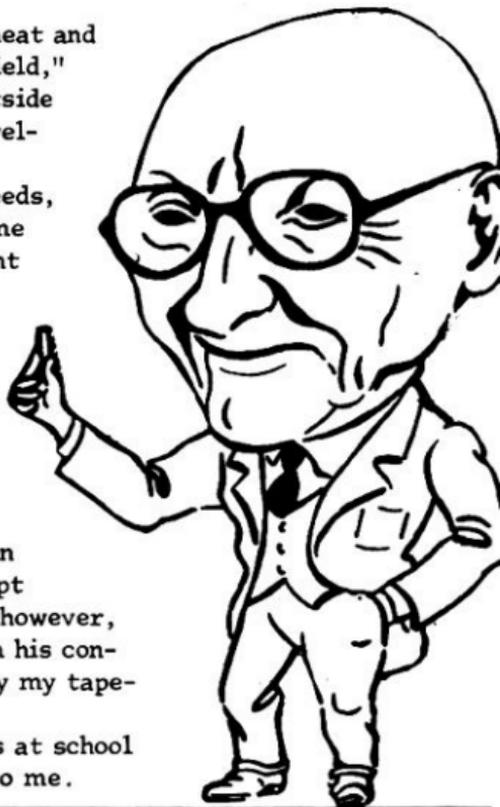
**BRIAN DOYLE MEETS DISTINGUISHED "MAGNET" ILLUSTRATOR
C. H. CHAPMAN SHORTLY BEFORE HIS 90th BIRTHDAY**

When Charles Henry Chapman - 90 years old on April 1st - wrote and invited me to pay him a visit shortly before last Christmas, I was delighted. His invitation came, I suspect, as a token of his appreciation of my choosing one of his Billy Bunter composite pictures as the frontispiece illustration to my recently-published book "The Who's Who of Children's Literature." I, in my turn, was grateful for his granting me permission to use it and I was pleased that I could mark my admiration and liking for his prolific work over the years in this small way.

My taxi drew up outside a neat and compact modern bungalow, "Wingfield," in Tokers Green, a village just outside Reading, in Berkshire, and I was welcomed by Mr. Chapman himself, a sprightly, small man, wearing tweeds, a cap and a cheerful grin. He led me through the garden and into a bright and cosy, white-painted shed adjoining the house. This was his 'den,' where he kept many of his books, drawings and paintings. We settled into a couple of comfortable chairs and began chatting.

The biographical details of Mr. Chapman's career have often been told before, so I won't attempt to outline them fully here. Here, however, are some interesting 'quotes' from his conversation (captured conveniently by my tape-recorder):

"I used to win all the prizes at school for drawing. It came very easily to me.



"All I ever wanted to do when I left school was draw, but my father said there was no future in art and apprenticed me to an architect in Basingstoke. I stayed there for three or four years, but secretly drew funny pictures! One day I played truant and went up to London by myself. I called at the offices of several well-known comic-papers and boys' magazines and sold a few drawings easily enough. I continued contributing free-lance stuff to papers like Comic Cuts, Chips, Scraps, Chums and Boys' Friend (my first-ever drawing appeared in The Captain). I drew a lot of covers for Ally Sloper's too.

"Soon after I joined the staff of C. Arthur Pearson's and did a lot of work for Big Budget, which was edited by a very nice man named Arthur Marshall. By this time I had married on the strength of all the work I was getting. Then I was offered quite a bit more money by the A.P. and, being an ambitious young chap with responsibilities, I went over to them.

"I was called into The Magnet office one day and told that Arthur Clarke, who had been doing all the illustrations, had died suddenly. This was around 1911. Would I care to take over The Magnet pictures, covers and all, being sure to copy Clarke's style exactly so that readers wouldn't suspect anything? Of course, I said yes. My first Magnet illustration, as far as I can remember (and this is going back 58 years, don't forget!) was of a fight between Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry at Greyfriars. I enjoyed doing fights and had done a lot for Big Budget. They must have been satisfied with my work because I continued doing The Magnet illustrations, cover and inside, for the next 16 or 17 years without a break. I went on doing them right up until the paper finished in 1940 too, of course, but Leonard Shields did a lot during the '30's too.

"The big appeal in The Magnet in those early days, of course, was The Famous Five. Billy Bunter only appeared in a minor role as a rather silly fat boy. Then he gradually wheeled his way in and I gave him glasses, parted his hair in the middle and supplied those famous check trousers. Why the check trousers? It was simply to make Bunter immediately distinguishable from his fellow-pupils, especially from Johnny Bull who, in those days, was a lot plumper than he later became. Bunter was 'groomed for stardom' and eventually became the star with the paper becoming sub-titled 'Billy Bunter's Own Paper.'

In the mid-fifties I took over the illustration of the hard-cover Bunter books when R. J. MacDonald died and did them until the series ended in 1965. I did lots of drawings for the Holiday Annuals and for all the later Billy Bunter's Own Annuals too. I've drawn Billy for so long now that people say I could draw him in my sleep or with my eyes closed. And I suppose I could. He's been good to me and I've got a soft spot for Billy. Of course, I might not feel so friendly if he started stealing tuck from me!

"In the early days my usual payment for a drawing was 15/- . Then, for illustrating a whole issue of The Magnet - cover plus six or seven inside drawings - I was paid 16 guineas. Later I received much more but that's all you're going to get out of me regarding the financial side

"I only met Frank Richards a few times. The first occasion was in The Magnet office when I'd been doing the paper for about a year. He dashed in, shook hands, said how much he liked my work, advised me to 'keep it up,' then dashed out again. He was always very nice and friendly."

Towards the end of our chat, Mr. Chapman showed me several canvases he had been working on. Some were of hunting scenes (Mr. C. is a keen student of horses and hunting and spent a lot of time riding in his younger years). They were full of movement and colour and breathed the atmosphere of the English countryside. Mr. Chapman hopes to arrange an exhibition of his work at a Reading art gallery in the near future.

Then we went into the bungalow where Mr. Chapman introduced me to his two charming daughters, who are both retired members of the nursing profession.

My cab-driver remarked as I drove away: "I've heard about him. He's a famous artist, isn't he?" I told him about C. H. Chapman and his work and when I mentioned Billy Bunter, the driver's face creased into a happy smile. "Billy Bunter! Well now, he brings back memories. And for the rest of the journey back to Reading Station we discussed the magic of Greyfriars. "What a marvellous old boy," was the driver's comment as I paid him. And that just about summed it up.

For, next to Frank Richards, 'the one and onlie begetter,' C. H. Chapman is surely Greyfriars' most distinguished - and marvellous - 'old boy'

BLAKIANA

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

SEXTON BLAKE IN THE "DREADNOUGHT"

by

Norman Wright

Your mention of Sexton Blake in the Dreadnought (February C.D.) prompted me to write this article as I had recently acquired several dozen Dreadnoughts that contained Sexton Blake serials.

"The Man from Scotland Yard" was the first Blake story to feature in the Dreadnought, and ran for 8 weeks (from number 27, November 1912). It was followed in quick succession by two other Blake serials featuring Plummer, "The Man of Many Disguises" and "The Man who Vanished" beginning in numbers 35 and 42 respectively. The latter story ran for 8 weeks and there followed a break of 11 weeks before Blake appeared again in number 61, "The Great Conspiracy," I don't know how long this story lasted, as I only have copies up to number 63. "Gordon Fox Detective" had featured in Sexton Blake's place during his absence. Another popular Dreadnought Detective was Marcus Track (referred to as Martin Track in E. S. Turner's book "Boys will be Boys").

Hamiltons Tales of Cliveden School (featuring Poindexter) ceased its run of 29 weeks in number 61, "Cliveden Julius Caesar."

Many cover illustrations featured Blake. Number 61 for example shows Pedro leaping at a "knife in hand" character who is bending over the prostrate figure of Blake.

From the S.B. catalogue, it would appear that the "Man from Scotland Yard" was a reprint of "Union Jack" number 227 and "The Great Conspiracy" (DN) a reprint of "Union Jack" number 324. I presume the other Blake serials in the Dreadnought were also reprinted from the "Union Jack," but had their titles changed.

Flicking through the covers of the old green coloured Dreadnought one finds such serials as "Doom," with illustrations of earthquakes and falling houses, "The Land of Fire," "Sea of Silence," etc. Incidentally,

the serial "War in the Clouds" lasted for 12 issues beginning in number 24. It was a sequel to "The Man from the Clouds," which had commenced with the first issue.

* * * * *

A FIRST BOW

by Derek Smith

"DONALD STUART. Real name: Gerald Verner. Was said to have written his first Sexton Blake story when down-and-out on the Thames Embankment, but the truth of this legend is not guaranteed!"

So begins an intriguing entry in Brian Doyle's "Who's Who of Boys' Writers" (1964). Whatever the author's circumstances, Mr. Stuart's first tale for the Sexton Blake Library certainly began with a fog-enshrouded murder on the Albert Embankment - which may have given impetus to the legend!

The novel was "The Clue of the Second Tooth," published on the 31st of August, 1927 (S.B.L. 105, New Series). The cover showed a helpless Blake pinioned to a couch of fire, with Tinker plunging gallantly to the rescue. Perhaps even more damaging to the nervous reader's susceptibilities was the overlying motif of a wicked pair of pincers nipping firmly on a villainously rooted tooth. The title page showed a top-hatted, Jack-the-Ripper like figure in the very act of extracting the tooth from the supine body of his recently slain victim.

This demented dentistry was the chief feature of the first chapter. The second began with the arrival of Detective-Inspector Coutts at Baker Street, where he enlisted Blake's aid. The detective and his assistant were soon speeding towards the scene of the crime, the Albert Embankment. There was an intriguing first glimpse of the great sleuth at work. "Sexton Blake's keen, grey eyes, that never missed the slightest detail, swept the place in a swift, comprehensive glance. The habitual, slightly bored, expression which he usually possessed, had given place to one of intense virility. His well-chiselled nostrils quivered, like a hound on the scent, and his whole personality radiated an atmosphere of intense alertness. Those people who only knew the dreamer of Baker Street would have witnessed a revelation if they could have seen Sexton Blake at work."

Blake had barely completed his examination of the dead man in the mortuary when the news arrived of a second victim. It was

Henry Castleford, explorer, and namesake of the first murdered man. He, too, had been stabbed, then robbed of his left-hand canine tooth!

In the grounds of the explorer's house at Dorking an encounter with the murderer led to the discovery of yet another victim - the long-lost father of Castleford's wife. Inevitably, his canine tooth had been extracted; but the killer had dropped it in flight. Blake found the tooth and removed the gold filling, disclosing "a small, round steel ball, like a bullet." This, it seemed, had caused the death of three men.

Now the murderer's attention was directed towards Blake himself. Some complicated shadowing led Tinker to a house on the North Side of Clapham Common, the residence of one Doctor Trood. Meanwhile, Blake had been decoyed to a slum off the Kennington Road, where he was assaulted and robbed of the steel ball. Bound to a couch, he watched helplessly while the Doctor and an accomplice set a candle stump burning amid oil-soaked straw. The stage was now set for the stirring scene depicted on the cover, as Tinker appeared in the nick of time. "He had to half carry Sexton Blake from the room, for the tight cords had stopped his circulation, and his limbs were for the moment numb and powerless. It was not until they were outside in the street that Sexton Blake spoke. 'Thanks, young 'un,' was all he said, but there was a world of meaning in the pressure of his hand as it clasped Tinker's in a firm grip."

More stirring scenes followed in places as diverse as a Safe Deposit in Victoria Street and a filthy "dive" known as "Chirky" Joe's in Limehouse. Doctor Trood was finally captured - after an exciting chase along the river in a police-launch - in the mud of the Dartford Marshes.

The missing teeth, or their contents, proved to be the key to a fortune in stolen jewels. The villain eventually cheated the gallows with poison. Coutts was displeased, but Blake took the news philosophically. Murderers in those days always met with well-deserved and appropriately sticky ends.

Altogether, it was a rattling good yarn, lacking only the surprise solution that became a prominent feature of the later Stuart/Verner yarns, and was a most promising debut for one of the best thriller

writers since the late lamented Edgar Wallace.

* * * * *

OBITUARY

GRANVILLE THOMAS WAINE

It is with deep regret that I recently - and very belatedly - learnt of the death of Granville Waine on 12 August, 1967.

A short time before his death he developed severe headaches; after a few days in bed he was taken to hospital, where he fell into a coma from which he never recovered.

To those of his (and my own) generation, Granville was looked upon as one of the "greats" in our collecting Brotherhood.

Kind and generous, and a man who treated his old papers with the loving care they deserve, his loss will be sadly regretted by all who knew him.

Like myself, Granville was a Government Servant, and happy were the times we spent together when he came to London on business and was able to meet me in the early evening after we had both finished our Official duties.

One of my wife's greatest treasures is the bust of Sexton Blake which Granville gave her on one of his so looked forward to visits to our house.

Granville Waine leaves a widow and a married son, Darroll.

LEONARD PACKMAN

WANTED: All Hamiltonia also U.Js., Lees, Bullseyes and most pre-war Mags. Annuals also required - Holiday, Chums, B.O.As., Captains Scouts and any bound periodicals. Large quantities also available for sale.

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

WANTED: Good loose copies or volumes containing any one or more of the following: GEMS: Some issues between 801 and 832; 953, 954, 959, 970, 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

DANNY'S DIARY

APRIL 1919

It has been a most unusually cold early Spring, which I suppose is to make up for the fairly mild Winter. It was quite amazing that we had very heavy falls of snow right at the very end of April. As I trudged along Windmill Street, I saw all the lilac bushes - there is about a half a mile of them on the top of high walls - all broken down with the heavy snow. Dad has given me an Ensign box camera, and I took some pictures of it all to show my grandchildren when the time comes.

The Boys' Realm has come out again this month after being closed down during the war. It contains stories about St. Frank's. I had the first issue, but I shan't be able to take it every week. There are also two new papers: the Robin Hood Library, and the Prairie Library, but I don't care for that kind of thing.

All the Rookwood tales in the Boys' Friend have featured the new boy, Putty Grace, and they have all been delicious. The titles were "The Scamp of Rookwood" in which Putty put Carthew to rout; "Sold Again" in which the Fistical Four, Carthew, Mr. Bootles and Mr. Manders received invitations to tea - at different times of day - from Sir Leicester Stuckey, a sour governor of Rookwood. It was Putty who had sent the invitations.

In "Rookwood's Hero" Bulkeley was rescued by Putty from a watery grave, and Tubby Muffin took the credit. Finally, in "Tubby's Triumph," Bulkeley learned the truth about the rescue just as Tubby presented the bill for the damage to his clothes: 1 shirt spoiled, 10/- . And so on. Great fun and much enjoyed.

Cedar Creek has been pretty good. "Dicky Bird's Bonanza" was a gold-mine on an island - a gold-mine specially prepared by the Cedar Creek chums. In "Gunten's Gold-Mine," Gunten stole a march on Dicky Bird - and registered the claim for himself to have the whole gold-mine. Gunten was so unpopular that Hillcrest became too warm for him, and Mr. Gunten asked that Kern might go back to Cedar Creek. Miss Meadows refused - and the joke about the mine came out. So Kern found himself still a schoolboy and not a wealthy mine-owner.

In "Too Much of a Joke" Gunten inserted an advertisement on the board of the Thompson store to say that Frank Richards wanted to buy a horse - price no object. Poor Frank found himself harassed. Last of the month was "Wanted - a Poet" which was rather daft.

At long last the Bunter changeover series has ended in both the Magnet and the Gem. I have enjoyed it all very much.

In "The Artful Dodger" it turns out that Billy Bunter has a sister who is named Bessie. She is to visit Greyfriars, where she, at least, would be sure to know that Wally wasn't Billy. So Snoop takes on Bessie. Excellent fun.

In "Loder's Luck," Loder is hard up, and is all set to borrow the money which Snoop has saved up to help his father. Loder doesn't succeed. Then, in "The Terrible Uncle," Snoop's father arrives near Greyfriars just at the time that Snoop's uncle, who pays Snoop's expenses, comes to visit Snoop at school. In the finish, Snoop's father and uncle met and became friends at long last. Rather good, I thought.

Finally, in "The Return of the Native," Billy Bunter decided to come back to Greyfriars, so Wally had to clear out and head for St. Jim's.

One evening Doug took me with him to the Alhambra in Leicester Square, and we saw Hetty King, T. E. Dunville, Norah Delaney and Talbot O'Farrell. Talbot O'Farrell sang "My Irish Home Sweet Home."

Talking of songs, there is a lovely new song being sung and whistled all over the place. It is named "Wyoming" and has a chorus which starts, "Go to sleep, my baby, Close your pretty eyes."

The main picture in our cinemas this month has been a British one entitled, "Tinker Tailor Soldier Sailor." It is divided into four sections, starting in Victorian times. There is a competition in connection with it in the Pictures and Picturegoer weekly magazine. You have to write about the parts played by Owen Nares and Isobel Elsom. Mum is entering for it, and she is going to send in an entry in my name, too.

Other films were Mary Pickford in an army story "Johanna Enlists;" Max Linder in "Max Goes to America;" (I never liked Max Linder much, and his first American picture is a bit weary. Of course, he is getting matoor). Ellen Terry was very, very heavy for me in

"Her Greatest Performance." I was awfully disappointed with Mabel Normand in "Joan of Platsburg." Mabel is all wrong in heavy drama. But William Farnum was fine in "True Blue."

The Gem this month has been like a ham sandwich with delicious slices of ham on the outside and two bits of dry bread in between. The opening tale "The Stony Study" was a real joy. The Terrible Three are stony broke, and try to find means of earning some cash. Bubbling with fun.

In "Two of a Kind" Bunter and Trimble think they will act as good Samaritans to Mr. Pepper, the miser. "Heroes of Sport" was yet another of those awful, endless sports tournaments with no plot, no interest, and no sense. The Head gave a silver cup, bless his cotton socks.

Final tale, "Bunter - and Bunter" brought the Bunter change-over series to a close in the Gem. Wally went back to St. Jim's, and finally was sent to take up a wonderful job in Paris.

The Penny Popular has been running an interesting series from old Magnets, where the Greyfriars chums go to the West Country to spend Easter with the relatives of Hazeldene, and meet up with a sinister man from South America. I love the old tales in the Pop. (EDITORIAL COMMENT: "Wanted - a Poet," mentioned by Danny this month, was the very first substitute story in the Cedar Creek series, which had been running since August 1917. When the Cedar Creek series was reprinted in the Popular, this one was omitted. It is uncertain whether a literary analysis would indicate just who wrote it, but a cursory examination shows that Charles Hamilton didn't. So the Boys' Friend could boast just one substitute Cedar Creek tale in nearly two years, and just seven substitute Rookwood tales in over four years. It is clear why the substitute writers were necessary to fill in for the Magnet and Gem.)

It is surprising that very little reprinting was ever done of the Bunter Exchange twin series. It seems only once to have enjoyed the light of day after the original printing. In 1926 just a few of the tales from the series - both schools running at the same time - featured in the Popular. All the tales were very drastically cut, and a number of Hamilton's best tales in the series in both papers were omitted entirely. Inexplicable.)

DRAWING TO A CLOSE. The first story ever to feature Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, written well over 60 years ago.

THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S

Four wretched juniors, feeling that life was not worth living, crawled in at the gates of St. Jim's. Their utterly weebegone appearance attracted general attention at once, and they were escorted to the door of the School House by an admiring crowd.

Fortunately they escaped the notice of any masters, who would certainly have wanted to know how they came to be in such a state. They bolted into the first bathroom, and began to clean themselves.

Blake's task was the longest and hardest. He was in a shocking state, and it was a long time before he was presentable.

Blake was too great a general to attempt to disguise his defeat. He frankly admitted that Figgins & Co. had got the best of it.

"But there'll come a time," he said, "and it won't be long. We'll make it come. Figgins & Co. won't crow for long, I can tell you!"

"I wish we could catch them at another giddy rehearsal," said Herries as he towelled his face.

"No chance of that. They hold 'em in the New House now, in a room old Ratzliff lets them have," said Blake. "They don't risk it in the wood-shed any more. I should like to see them. Old Figgy as Hamlet is too funny for words. They say Kerr is awfully clever at making up, though. Hallo, Gussie! What's your trouble?"

"I've lost my eyeglass."

"All the better. You'll look considerably less of a silly owl without it! There, I feel a bit cleaner now. I wish I could think of some way of getting even with those New House brutes. But it'll come."

By the time Study No. 6 had cleaned up and changed their clothes the hungry boys were coming in to tea. Figgins & Co. came in, but they were not hungry.

They met the School House champions in the quadrangle, and smiled at them.

"Thanks!" said Figgins. "It was a ripping spread!"

"We've enjoyed it immensely! said Kerr.

"Ah, rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "It was great!"

"Aw - it was weally kind of you!" went on Kerr, screwing an eyeglass into his eye, and imitating Arthur Augustus's manner. "So considerate, don't you know. You must have guessed we should be - aw - hungry, and so you brougnt us all those nice things deah boys!"

"Why, that's my eyeglass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, making a dash for it.

Kerr gave him a push on the chest.

"Hands off!" he said. "It's the spoils of war. Get off the earth, all you common people! Make way for Arthur Augustus Aubrey!"

And he strutted off, the eyeglass screwed in his eye, amid shouts of laughter. D'Arcy, enraged at seeing his property thus carried off before his eyes, made a leap at Kerr, and caught him by the hair.

Arthur Augustus was not wanting in pluck, but he had never learned to fight, and his only idea of attacking anybody was to claw at him, and he clawed at Kerr. Kerr went down with a yell, and Arthur Augustus sprawled over him.

"Give me my eyeglass!"

"Let me get up!" roared Kerr. "I'll pulverise you!"

"Give me my eyeglass, then!"

"I'll give you socks! Pull him off, chaps!"

Figgins and Wynn clutched at D'Arcy, and Blake and Digby rushed in between. In a moment School House and New House were mingled in a struggling mass. In the midst of them there was Kerr on his back, with D'Arcy astride of his chest.

"Are you going to give me my eyeglass?"

"No."

"Then I will tweak your nose for you!"

said D'Arcy. "I am extremely sorry to have to use violence, but I must have my property returned."

D'Arcy, suiting the action to the word, gave his enemy's nose a tweak. Kerr struggled desperately, but the advantage was all on Arthur's side, and he kept him pinned down by sheer weight.

"Now, will you give me my glass?"

"Take it, you little beast! I'll slay you for this!"

D'Arcy took the precious eyeglass, and slipped it for safety into his pocket. At the same moment the tea-bell began to ring, and a master's voice was heard - the acidulated tones of Mr. Ratcliff.

"What is the meaning of this disgraceful scene?"

The uproar ceased as if by magic.

D'Arcy allowed Kerr to rise. Mr. Ratcliff surveyed the group in contemptuous anger.

"Some more of this absurd house quarrelling, I suppose. You boys are a disgrace to the school. Who started it?"

There was no reply.

"I think I can guess who the leaders are," said Mr. Ratcliff, much incensed at receiving no answer. "Figgins and Blake, I have no doubt."

The two juniors named exchanged a grim look, but did not speak.

"I shall punish you both!" said Mr. Ratcliff severely.

"Pardon me, sir," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, coming forward with his best bow, "you are slightly under a misapprehension. Figgins and Blake are entirely blameless in the matter."

Mr. Ratcliff stared at him.

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir, indeed. It was I who began the row."

"The what? Oh, the row! Why did you begin it?"

"I - oh! Somebody took my eyeglass --"

"The boy you were pommeling on the ground, I suppose. So you are to blame for this disturbance, Kerr?"

"Yes, sir," said Kerr sullenly, with a vicious look at D'Arcy.

"Come with me, then. I shall cane you. The rest of you go in to tea."

And Kerr followed the housemaster. His face was long - he knew how hard Mr. Ratcliff could hit. When he came out of

the housemaster's study, he was wriggling painfully.

"That interfering little beast got me the licking," he said, when he rejoined his friends. "I'll pay him out for it!"

"You can't lick him," said Figgins.

"He couldn't stand up to a Third Form infant."

"I'm not going to lick him. I've got an idea."

What that idea was Kerr refused to say, only saying that they would see in time if they lived long enough, which was unsatisfactory. However, as it was some joke up against the School House, his chums were willing to let him "Have his head," as Figgy expressed it. Meanwhile Blake was giving the swell of the School House a lecture.

"Look here, you ass!" he said politely. "I can't have you bringing Study No. 6 and the whole House into disgrace. Where did you learn to fight?"

"I nevah learned," said D'Arcy. "I don't know how."

"I should say so. You mustn't claw a chap by his top knot and sit on his chest when you get him on the ground."

"What am I to do, then?"

"Don't you know anything about boxing?"

"Nothin'," replied D'Arcy dolefully.

"Well, after tea I'll give you a lesson in the study."

"Will you?" said D'Arcy, brightening up. "I shall be extremely obliged. My aunts always taught me that fighting was bwatal; but where all the othars are bwatal, I shall have to be bwatal, too. I think Kerr will be angry."

Blake grinned.

"You may bet your giddy socks on that, kid. He's pretty certain to go for you, but I'll put you up to some tricks in boxing."

After tea they adjourned to No. 6 for the instruction.

"Now," said Blake, "I'm going to hit you on the nose as often as I can, and you've got to stop me. See?"

Arthur Augustus admitted that he saw.

"Well, there's for a start."

Blake gave him a light tap on the nose. Then he began to spar. He did not hit hard, but Arthur Augustus gave a great jump whenever the glove plumped upon his nose. The desire to escape that punishment, light as

it was, made him buck up, and in a surprisingly short space of time he was guarding his face well.

"You're to hit me if you can," said Blake. "Never mind how hard; I can stand it."

"You don't mind it if I hurt you?"

"No," grinned Blake. "I don't mind."

But Arthur Augustus was picking the thing up very quickly. Blake came on carelessly. Arthur Augustus guarded and let out his right, and caught Blake on the nose with a force that brought a rush of water to his eyes, and made him sit down in a hurry.

"Was that wight?" asked D'Arcy anxiously. "Did I hit you pproperly?" Herries and Digby roared.

"Did he hit you pproperly, Blake?" asked Dig.

Blake rose. He was rather hurt in his feelings, but perfectly good-tempered.

"That's all right," he said. "See if you can do it again."

D'Arcy tried his best, but he could not do it again, now that Blake was looking out. For a beginner in the noble art, however, his performance was very creditable, and Blake pronounced that he was a promising pupil.

"You'll do!" he exclaimed, as he peeled off the gloves. "You'll improve; and I fancy you'll need it, for Kerr's certain to go for you, and he can use his fists. And, of course, we can't interfere when it's one to one."

But Blake was surprised on the morrow to see that Kerr kept his distance. He showed no sign of contemplating an attack on Arthur Augustus that day or the following. As a matter of fact, he was biding his time. Blake did not neglect his pupil. Every evening the boxing lessons continued in No. 6 Study, and D'Arcy rapidly improved; and though Kerr as yet lay low, a time was coming when Arthur Augustus would need all his knowledge of the manly art.

* * * * *

On Wednesday afternoon there was joy in the breast of the swell of the school, and in no other breast in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. For Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, was taking advantage of an

unusual spell of sunshine to take his Form for a walk.

To Arthur Augustus the news brought pleasure, for it gave him the chance of appearing again in all the glory of a silk topper. To the rest of the boys it brought feelings too deep to be expressed by mere words. For that promenade of a whole form in twos, with a master at the head, was an abomination in the eyes of the Fourth Formers.

They hated marching along like a lot of giddy convicts with a warder, as Figgins expressed it. They hated having to speak in decorous tones, and to listen patiently to Mr. Lathom whenever he chose to prose to them. They hated wasting part of the half-holiday, which they would have preferred to spend their own way. Above all, they hated to be defencelessly exposed to the chaff of the village boys, who often collected in crowds to see them pass, and assailed them with rude remarks, and asked them if they were going into the Ark and things like that.

But there was no help for it, and when the word went forth that Mr. Lathom intended to take out the Form, the boys savagely dressed themselves for the promenade, put on their silk hats, and formed up in the quadrangle.

"Nice set of blithering asses we look, don't we?" said Figgins, who happened to be near Blake. A common grievance had made peace between them for the time being. "The funniest part of it is that the old donkey thinks we like being taken for a walk like a parcel of blooming kids."

"Oh, it's too rotten to talk about!" said Blake. "To think that we might be on the footer ground instead of being marched about the lanes like this. Fancy a master not having more common hoss-sense than that I wish I could get out of it somehow. I thought of shamming ill, but it wouldn't be quite playing the game. I don't see Kerr. How has he escaped the ordeal?"

Figgins grinned.

"He cheeked Monteith and got an impot to keep him in."

"My aunt, I never thought of that."

"Oh, I don't know! I'd rather toddle round like this than stay in on a sunny afternoon," said Figgins. "I shouldn't wonder, though, if Kerr goes out after

the coast is clear and stands a licking to-night. It's almost worth it. Hallo! This is where we start."

The procession marched out of the school gates and turned into the lane towards Rylcombe. Two or three country youths in the lane stopped to stare at them. The column marched on, pretending not to hear the remarks made to them.

Mr. Lathom strode ahead, peering through his glasses, now and then halting the column while he expatiated learnedly upon some object of interest in the landscape.

"Why can't he get on?" murmured Percy Mellish. "It wouldn't be so bad if he'd let us get it over, and not stop to talk that giddy rot."

"What did you say, Mellish?"

"I was saying to D'Arcy, sir, that it's very kind of you to take us out for walks like this and explain things to us," said the veracious Percy.

Mr. Lathom gave a gratified smile.

"I am truly glad to afford my boys this harmless and innocent pleasure!" he exclaimed. "So you prefer a gentle and

thoughtful promenade, Mellish, to the rough and boisterous hilarity of the football field."

"Infinitely, sir," replied Percy, and this time he spoke the truth, for he was a slacker of the first water and avoided all manly games. "I wish you knew, sir, how the whole Form regards your kindness in taking us out like this."

"It would be a shock to his system if he did," murmured Blake, sotto voce.

"Mellish, you cad, stop telling lies, or I'll give you away to the Lathom idiot!"

"It is vewy w'ong to tell untwuths, Mellish," said D'Arcy. "My auntie says ---"

"Oh, blow your auntie!" said Mellish crossly.

"If you speak disrespectfully of my auntie," said Arthur Augustus, "I shall punch your head, Mellish."

And Percy, who had heard about those boxing lessons in No. 6 Study, said no more.

(THERE WILL BE A FURTHER INSTALMENT OF THIS STORY NEXT MONTH)

FOR SALE: Excellent Red Magnets nos. 351 and 352, in brand new lovely binding of black with gold spine lettering £2. Also very early B.F.L. No. 34 "Nelson Lee's Rival," a Christmas story by Maxwell Scott, bound without original cover, interior time-worn, brand new stiff-cover binding in blue with gilt spine lettering (collectors' item) £1. Also B.F.L. No. 312 "The School Republic" by David Goodwin (original front cover) time-soiled but very good item, with brand-new blue binding, gold spine lettering, 13/6. Unbound, excellent copy of B.F.L. 756 "The Barring-Out at Haygarth" by Jack North 10/-. Gems 1488 and 1489 (readable items but not collectors' copies) 7/6 the two. Also one year of the post-war School Friend (Nos. 53 - 104) May 1951 to May 1952: £3. Postage extra on all items. Write first to

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

SALE: Five 1917 LOT-O-FUNS, one FIREFLY (March 22, 1916) and two 1917 CHIPS. Twenty-five shillings, post free.

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

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIALNo. 133. MASTERS ON STRIKE

In recent years, striking schoolmasters have been very much in the news. Too much. Personally, I find something distasteful in schoolmasters striking for more pay. Schoolmasters should be dedicated to their work. A dedicated schoolmaster thinks first of the young people in his charge. A striking schoolmaster is thinking first of himself.

A schoolmaster's lot is not an easy one, and nobody knows that better than I do. But a man who is striking one week can hardly be surprised if he finds that he is unable to gain obedience and respect from his class the following week. Our society being what it is, with so many distorted values, schoolmasters and the like should be dedicated people who follow their chosen vocation because they love it. And if they don't love it, they should be doing some other job where a bad example can do less harm.

Which brings me, in a rather roundabout way, to the masters' strike at Rookwood which occurred in a long series, fifty years ago.

Rookwood is notable as a Hamilton school in which certain plots were tried out first, or to which certain plots are peculiar to this day. The masters' strike was one of the latter.

The character pictures of Dr. Chisholm and Mr. Bootles were brilliant. Beautifully told, with utterly convincing dialogue, the first three tales in the series have never been surpassed, not even in the golden age of the Magnet. The general lay-out of the plot is well known. Mr. Bootles, deeply conscientious, stood up against Dr. Chisholm when Jimmy Silver was sentenced to a punishment which Mr. Bootles considered unjust. Mr. Bootles was asked to resign, refused to do so, and was then dismissed. In the end, the other masters supported Mr. Bootles, and "withdrew their labour." The sequence was a rare masterpiece from Charles Hamilton at his wittiest and best.

"And why," boomed Mr. Greely, "why, sir, should not we, because we happen to belong to the professional class - the intelligentsia, in fact - why should not we exercise the privilege, sir, that is exercised by workmen and others in similar circumstances? Have

we no right? Have we no dignity? Are we, sir, slaves to be trodden upon?"

This was superb reading, even more delightful for adult readers than for youngsters, possibly. And when the masters eventually faced the Headmaster:

"Is it possible?" The Head almost gasped. "Is it possible, Mr. Greely, that the staff of Rookwood contemplates a strike like discontented hands in a factory?"

These scenes which led up to the strike were so splendidly written that there was almost bound to be an anticlimax, for the adult reader, at least. The high standard of writing was not quite maintained after the strike began, and the series became a string of episodes in which various people tried to take over the Rookwood forms, the members of which all wanted their old masters back.

There came along the stock characters of school fiction - the bullying master, the cracksman, the effeminate teacher, and the alcoholic. Everything was vastly entertaining for the boy reader. As adults, we love it still, even though we know that, after the strike began, the quality slipped just a trifle.

The single story about the alcoholic was a bit of a tragedy. Schoolboys must have chuckled over it, and, in a way, it was harmless enough. But the frailties of mankind are thin material for humour, and the adult reader realises only too well that there is nothing funny in the plight of the secret drinker, the alcoholic.

The pair of tales concerning the schoolmaster cracksman, though a wee bit incredible, were of high quality. Read now, they seem slightly hackneyed - many schoolmaster cracksmen have fascinated juvenile readers since the time when Mr. Egerton plied his nefarious trade during a fortnight at Rookwood. But at the time it was a novel theme, and readers loved it all.

I believe Danny commented, in an extract from his diary we printed recently, that, at the end, "the series fizzled out." And so it did. The Headmaster, worn out with the succession of weird masters whom he had been unfortunate enough to engage, climbed down. And Rookwood returned to normal in the course of a paragraph or two.

It is a series which never really quite reached the heights which

it might have done, but the opening stories give ample proof of the Hamilton genius. It remains today, still one of Hamilton's greatest successes.

As seen from this great distance, it is obvious that Hamilton's work for the Boys' Friend had the result of so many substitute tales in the Gem and Magnet. But, with the Masters' Strike series in mind, among plenty of others, it is a fair conclusion that Rookwood was very worthwhile.

* * * * *

REVIEW

BILLY BUNTER'S BENEFIT

Frank Richards
(Armada 2/6)

This story, first published in 1950, provides a leisurely stroll in the pleasant by-ways of Hamiltonia. Billy Bunter buys a bike - at least, he obtains the machine and sends the bill to his father, thus presenting that gentleman with a "fat accomplice" - a happy joke which Mr. Richards spoils by explaining.

Mr. Bunter refuses to pay for the bicycle, and Harry Wharton & Co. stage "Hamlet" as a benefit for the Owl. In a very amusing sequence, Coker tries to wreck the performance by dropping stink-bombs down the chimney, so, as might be expected of Coker, a meeting in Masters' Common-room ends in bad odour.

Light though it is, this is one of the best of the post-war Bunters, with plenty of fun for the Bunter fan.

* * * * *

EDGAR WALLACE CLUB

Most readers of "C.D." are familiar with the books, stories and films, of Edgar Wallace.

Soon also, will be seen, from Thames T.V. a series based on "The Mind of Mr. J. G. Reeder," with Hugh Burden playing "Reeder."

Readers interested, however, in the EDGAR WALLACE CLUB, and the quarterly "Newsletter," No. 1 of which has just been issued, should write to

PENELOPE WALLACE, 4, BRADMORE ROAD, OXFORD.

NELSON LEE COLUMN

EARLY STRUGGLES
THE "BOY'S FRIEND"

By Bob Blythe

(continued)

240, Brockley Rd.
July 8th, 1910.

Dear Sir,

As you will see from the above address, I am now in Town, and shall have much pleasure in calling at your office at about 11 o'clock on Monday morning next, when I trust we shall be able to go fully into the matter referred to in our previous correspondence.

I am, Dear Sir, etc.

And so, as the Monday following the 8th July was the 11th (I've looked it up!) we can actually pinpoint the beginning of Edwy's career with the A.P. to 11 o'clock on Monday morning the 11th July, 1910! How's that! As a result of this meeting he had obviously been asked to submit another story.

240, Brockley Rd.
July 15th, 1910.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

Referring to my interview with you on Monday, I herewith have pleasure in handing you for approval first chapter and synopsis of a 9,000 word story entitled "The House of Death."

Kind regards, Faithfully yours, etc.

With such a title it's not surprising that this was also turned down.

Fleet St., July 19th, 1910.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I have given your first chapter and synopsis a most careful reading, but am sorry to say it is not quite the style of thing I am looking for. The subject is a very unpalatable one and the pure boys' interest rather thin.

Have you a Telegraph Messenger idea at hand you could work up?

Yours faithfully, etc.

Disappointing as this may have been he was still willing to learn.

Brockley Rd., 20th July, 1910.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

Yours to hand with thanks. Sorry "The House of Death" did not suit. I note what you say re unpalatableness and will let you have the Messenger synopsis in the course of the next few days.

I take it that you want something less gloomy, more lively, and shall write accordingly.

Faithfully yours, etc.

A synopsis was duly sent but still he couldn't quite make it. But at least the editor was encouraging.

Fleet St., July 27th, 1910.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

You are much nearer the mark this time. The opening of your yarn is, however, slow and does not grip. Commence with a big incident, work back to lead up to the narrative and then proceed along the lines you have mapped out. It would be better to substitute a widowed Mother for the sister - more hackneyed of course, but better from our point of view.

If you will work out the tale on these lines and submit it to me I shall give it prompt attention.

Yours faithfully, etc.

Again Edwy revised the story and dispatched it on Aug. 4th., doubtless with all fingers crossed. And this time it was accepted - although he had to wait some months before he saw it in print (and doubtless before he got paid!). He had entitled the story "Harry Oliphants' Pluck" and it eventually appeared in the "Boys' Friend Weekly" in no. 492, dated 12th Nov., 1910 with the title altered to "Hurled through Space." It was also around this time that he made his first contacts with Mr. Griffith of the "Gem" and Rex Hayden of the "Boys' Realm" and by a strange coincidence his long running serial "The Iron Island" commenced in the "Gem" no. 144 on the same day and his first story for the "Boys' Realm" appeared in no. 442 a week later on the 19th Nov. Truly Edwy had arrived! It cannot have happened to many budding authors to have three stories printed in three papers within the space of eight days! It would seem that his patience and perseverance had paid dividends at last. But his life was not suddenly to become a bed of roses over-

night, as we shall see.

He wrote again to Marshall in August.

Brockley Rd., Aug. 10th, 1910.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

I have got an idea for a stage story - how a call boy makes his way up in the world until he becomes a popular actor. There will be, of course, difficulties to contend with, but in the end he wins.

May I write the synopsis and send it along to you, if the main idea suits your requirements?

Faithfully yours, etc.

P.S. I am hoping "Harry Oliphants' Pluck" has proved satisfactory. He was then asked to submit a synopsis - which he did. It was returned as not quite suitable and again he revised it, and with this revision said he had an idea for an aeroplane story.

However, before anything came of all this he had a letter from the editor concerning his story "Hurled Through Space."

Fleet St., Sept. 27th, 1910.

Dear Mr. Brooks,

I like your yarn very much. The weak point of it all is the motif for the robbery. Bank notes are not worth the stealing and I think it would be far better to arrange for some special consignments such as diamonds or specie to be in the post. The title too is poor and hackneyed.

I should be glad if you would remedy these slight discrepancies and let me have the copy again.

Yours faithfully, etc.

Edwy took the editor's remarks to heart and - as usual, being always ready to learn, altered the story to suit Mr. Marshall.

You will remember that Marshall had introduced Edwy to Mr. Percy Mander of the "Home Circle." It is also obvious that he was introduced to Mr. Griffith of the "Gem" as well, as this letter indicates, and for which Edwy was very grateful, as a later letter shows.

Brockley Rd., Sept. 27th, 1910.

Dear Mr. Marshall,

Thank you for your letter received this evening. I am very glad you like the Telegraph-boy story, and have remedied the slight mistakes as requested. As regards the consignment of specie only a few

words were necessary to effect the change. The title is now, I hope, more to your liking, but should it still be unsuitable I might suggest as alternatives: "Three Men and a Boy," or the "Telegraph-boy Hero." Personally I prefer the title which I have written on the MS. and I have an idea you will also.

I saw Mr. Griffith after I left you on Thursday and am pleased to tell you that I am very busily engaged on the first instalment (18,000 words) of a proposed new serial to go in the "Gem" in the form of complete stories. If I can please Mr. Griffith with the first instalment, and the tale catches on with the "Gem" readers, it looks as though I shall be kept busy for some little time to come. I naturally hope this will be the case; nevertheless, if this should turn out to be so, I shall still have time to undertake other work during the period - and I very much hope that you will let me transact some more for you. I should like to write up the stage story, if you will permit me to do so - you don't say anything about the synopsis in your letter today, so possibly you have overlooked that little matter.

Faithfully yours, etc.

Concerning this serial, which was entitled "The Iron Island," it will not, I think, be amiss if I quoted, at this point, a letter written two years later. It is right out of context, but it has to do with this serial and is of great interest.

It is addressed to Mr. Hinton, editor (at that time) of the "Gem."

(This article will be continued next month)

 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.

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NEWS OF THE CLUBS

MIDLAND

Meeting held 25th February, 1969

Whilst the number thirteen is popularly, and in fact quite erroneously, believed to be unlucky, all present at our meeting had quite an enjoyable evening.

Tom Porter was to give us a further account of how he acquired his exceedingly large collection. Although this talk occupied most of the evening, it was listened to with very considerable interest and some amusement. Young men are exhorted to join the Navy and see the World, but Tom has seen quite a lot of Old England at any rate. Journeys to Crumpsall near Manchester, Gainsborough, Lincs., and goodness knows where else besides, on the trail of choice Collectors' items. It was very hospitable of the man who had a rather battered copy of the original Magnet no. 1 for sale to offer tots of whisky!

Tom has several complete runs, of which a complete set of the Magnet is an outstanding achievement. As he only requires one Gem it is to be very ardently wished that Tom could acquire no. 805, and thus complete the set. Even with one short it is still a remarkable achievement. Almost unprecedented and unparalleled as Mr. Prout was wont to say.

Much life and interest in the Club is contributed by our esteemed correspondents, who are for one reason or another unable to attend meetings. Stan Knight is a regular correspondent, but it was also very pleasant to hear from Jack Bond after rather an interval.

Exactly 47 years old was tonight's anniversary number; Popular no. 162, dated 25.2.22. The Collectors' item tonight was BFL, 1st series, no. 465, "The School in the Backwoods," by Martin Clifford.

Raffle prizes were kindly presented by Jack Bellfield, Bill Morgan and Tom Porter.

Next meeting 25th March when we look forward to a long-awaited talk by Treasurer, Norman.

EDWARD DAVEY

Chairman.

AUSTRALIA

The Golden Hours Club held a meeting on March 4th at the

restaurant next to the Theatre Royal. With sadness we learned that this historic theatre is to be swept away in the name of progress. Sydney is fast losing any personality and charm, and is becoming a jungle of big shops, insurance offices, and banks.

A list of the great stars who have appeared at the Theatre Royal would fill pages of the Digest.

We had a splendid, friendly meeting, and discussed almost everything from cigarette cards to music. It was a pleasure to hear that the Greyfriars Egypt series is to appear in book form. Inevitably, members quoted their own favourite series which they would like to see reprinted - Trail of the Trike, Ravenspur Grange, the 1932 Wharton Rebel series, and the Brander tales.

It seems that our club is about 13 years old, and Ernie Carter produced enlarged photographs of some of our first meetings.

SYD SMYTH

* * * * *

NORTHERN

Meeting held Saturday, March 8th, 1969

There were thirteen members present at Hyde Park, with secretary, Mollie Allison (at present on a short stay away from Leeds) the only notable absentee. We had all turned up on good time, for this was to be something of a special occasion. A gentleman from the Leeds Graphic - an old-established and rather aristocratic local monthly - had come along to take photographs of us and our library display, and he was accompanied by Miss Diana Stenson of Radio Leeds. Both visitors registered the keenest interest in the hobby and the many collectors' items we had to show them. After we had all done our best to look photogenic Diana tape-recorded some interviews which (no doubt heavily edited) will go out on the air in due course, and Geoffrey Wilde, who has already done some broadcasting for Radio Leeds, arranged to visit their studios next day and read a Magnet extract.

And so, the excitement over, back to normal business, necessarily rather curtailed. Before the refreshment interval we had just time for a puzzle conducted by Gerry, which proved a distinct teaser. Jack Allison proved a worthy winner with a score of 16 out of 25; the runners-up were Geoffry with 14 and four others with 13 each.

Though Mollie was unable to be with us in person, she was very much present in spirit, for she had sent along her contribution to the Northern "tram-series" story-competition, and this, ably read by brother Jack, proved the highlight of the evening. Hers was the first entry to date to offer a Greyfriars story, and not only was the atmosphere and dialogue charmingly authentic, but the theme of the tale was refreshingly new and natural. All the prescribed items were smoothly introduced, but of course the real problem is that brute of a final sentence. The almost impudent ingenuity of Mollie's solution brought an appreciative chuckle from everyone, and left the Chairman quite speechless. Well done, Mollie! When voting-time comes round I've a strong hunch we'll see you at the top of the charts.

Next meeting, Saturday, April 12th.

JOHNNY BULL

* * * * *

LONDON

Another new rendezvous for the March meeting, the residence of Larry and Gladys Peters at Kensal Rise. Everything complete, a separate room for the librarians and a good room for the meeting. A splendid spread provided for the long tea and get-together interval after the main business of the meeting had been efficiently dealt with by Don Webster during which time Bill Lofts had given details of the Egyptian series facsimile reprint of the Magnet. The highlight of Bill's talk was the showing round of a specimen copy of the reprint, a very fine effort and Magnet lovers are in for a fine treat when publication day arrives. First item for the entertainment of the gathering was a superb talk by Roger Jenkins entitled "Early History of Highcliffe." The general opinion was one of thorough enjoyment and all present would like to see it in permanent form.

Larry Peters did not finish at providing a good meeting place plus study feed but followed up with a wonderful Combined School's quiz. Very original it was. How do they keep compiling new ideas for these quizzes? Charlie Wright was the winner, followed by Roger Jenkins and Ray Hopkins in the second place.

"Top of the Pops," "Public Schools," and "The Games we used to Play," were the titles of three articles from the Reading "Evening Post."

The first one dealt with Frank Richards and the other two, well what can one say, they were all very much appreciated.

Finally, part of "The Myth of Greyfriars" was played over by Brian Doyle, who has two forthcoming features in "Home this Afternoon." These being "The Children's Newspaper" and C. H. Chapman.

The next gathering will be the luncheon party at the Rembrandt Hotel on Sunday, April 20th. Kindly let the secretary know if intending to be present at this 21st anniversary meeting and do not forget to send the deposit. Date line is April 13th, for booking purposes.

A vote of thanks to the hosts terminated the meeting.

Regret the fact that Josie Packman's name was omitted in last month's report as being present at the inaugural meeting in 1948.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

WANTED: Greyfriars Holiday Annuals, any, particularly, 1920, 1922, 1932, 1940 and 1941. Magnets, Gems, also "Billy Bunter's Beanfast," "Bessie Bunter of Cliff House School," "Bunter and the Blue Mauritius," any other Bunter titles.

JAMES GALL, 1 CHAPEL COURT, JUSTICE ST., ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND

 Ten complete years of Fantasy and Science Fiction, every issue published in U.K. up to Nov. 1968. Offers for complete lot, either in cash or swap for OBB's, S.O.L's, Gems, Magnets, N.L.L's, etc.

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

 Will Swap Lees 382-389, 393, 396, 397. 2nd New 75-77, 79-83. Schoolboys Own 171, 173 (Dallas), 174 (Rookwood) for a few "Boys Cinemas 1928-34. American Movie 1927-30, "Kinema Komics," old "Film Funs."

THOMPSON, 53 WALLASEY PARK, BELFAST, BT14 6PN.

FOR SALE/EXCHANGE: 9 Holiday Annuals, 8 T.M. & B.B. Annuals, 12 St. Jim's Hardbacks, 30 Bunter Books, some odd "Magnets."

WANTED: "Magnet" series, also "Magnet" no. 1487.

DEREK VAUGHAN, TREM Y WAWR, 10 PORKINGTON TERRACE,
 BARMOUTH, MERIONETH.

THE POSTMAN CALLED

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

DEREK SMITH (London): I was intrigued to read that Gerry Allison had actually located a copy of "THE SWOOP" by P. G. Wodehouse. I have been chasing this book - unsuccessfully! - for years, and had come to the conclusion that all copies must be lost.

Other "lost" work by P. G. W. includes a series of articles for Punch before the first World War, a serial for Chums called "The Luck Stone," another book for A & C Black in 1904 entitled "William Tell Told Again" (try and find a copy - I can't), and another series of Wrykyn tales for The Public School Magazine.

Two other volumes I have never seen were written in collaboration with H. Westbrook: "Not George Washington" (Cassell 1907) and "By the Way Book" (Globe 1908). "A Man of Means" was an episodic serial in six parts for the Strand Magazine (1914) written in collaboration with C. H. Bovill, and never to my knowledge reprinted.

Among the many lost tales in the adult magazines are my personal favourites, those dealing with an amiable young man-about-town named Reggie Pepper. Reggie is now completely forgotten, but may well be regarded as the first sketch for the now legendary Bertie Wooster. One or two of the tales, such as "Helping Freddie" were later remodelled for inclusion in the Jeeves saga for Herbert Jenkins.

But perhaps the most astonishing Wodehouse discovery was made by Leslie Charteris for the Saint Detective Magazine (Oct. 1955). He reprinted a full-blooded murder story entitled "The Harmonica Mystery" which not only introduced that legendary fictional device, the cat with the poison-smearred claws, but was apparently only one of a series of mystery yarns from P.G.'s talented pen. I devoutly wish I knew where to find them!

DENNIS M. HILLIARD (Nottingham): I note that you had the pleasure of the personal acquaintance of the late Richmal Crompton. How I envy you over this. Miss Crompton retold the stories of boys I knew and still know. Boys with all the tendency to rebel against parental authority but ever wishing to emulate its more adventurous exploits. For years she produced a graphic account of everlasting boyhood - so fragrant that I am convinced her stories will have evergreen quality.

BRIAN DOYLE (Putney): In answer to Bill Lofts' query regarding the 'ghost' comic Cocoa-Cubs, I can 'lay the ghost' for him at once. Cocoa-Cubs was the official monthly magazine of The Cocoa-Cubs, a children's club organised by Cadbury's Bournville Chocolate Co. Ltd., manufacturers of Bournville Cocoa and in existence around the late-1930's. I was a Founder-Member, I recall, and received the magazine regularly. It was a part-coloured, part black-and-white publication containing stories, pictures, puzzles, etc., aimed at children from about 6 - 11. It was not on sale at newsagents but was sent regularly, together with a badge, newsletter, etc., in return for the nominal annual subscription which, I believe, included two or three labels from the aforesaid cocoa tins! Whenever people asked me if I was a Cub I was always sure to get a laugh if I replied "No, but I'm a Cocoa-Cub...."

The whole scheme was similar to the pre-war 'Ovaltines' run by the Ovaltine Company (remember the Radio Luxembourg show which started with the song "We are the Ovaltines, happy girls and boys..?").

G. FUDGE (Bridgwater): I was glad to read a little bit about the Boys' Magazine; it is quite true that it did lean a bit towards science fiction more than any other book of its day. I remember giving up the book in or around the year 1927 and taking up the Nelson Lee instead (funds would not run to more than one 2d book per week) and I remember one of these, either the BM or the NL would insert an advert free in the book if one sent a coupon cut from it. Also there was an enrolment arrangement, and I believe I still have this old certificate somewhere at home, certifying that I am a member of the club or whatever it was called. I can remember also that one or other of these books gave away small metal models of racing cars (they had to be bent into shape) when Sir Henry Segrave clocked 200 miles per hour in that huge red car of his, (I forget its name) but a model of it was given free in either the BM or the NL.

LAURIE SUTTON (Orpington): W.O.G. Lofts is hardly fair in mentioning Magnets 287 and 291 that were "apparently unnoticed by Laurie Sutton." My article dealt solely with stories concerning Pentelow, and did not attempt to cover all errors in the C.D. Annual lists. More to the point, how does Mr. Lofts explain those two "glaring errors" in official lists. If there were two, could not there have been a hundred?

If Brooks did not recognize or recall "The Greyfriars Pantomime" as his own work, when we now know beyond doubt that it was his, this surely emphasises my remarks about "elderly men with elderly memories."

(In 1913 - 1915 there were two stories with similar titles, viz: "The Greyfriars Pantomime" and "Harry Wharton & Co's Pantomime." Could there be some confusion between the two? - ED.)

Bound together, intact with covers easily removable. The following items all in fine condition:- MAGENTS: 1,683, Final Issue, Mint; 1,000, Special No., Mint; 672, Xmas 1920. GEMS: 1,000, Special No., Mint; 1,526, Coronation No.; 458, Xmas Double No. 1916; 39, 1/2d. No. YOUNG BRITAIN: 180-183, 4 Mint Nos. PLUCK: 274, 275, 395 and 405. ALSO: Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 379 (final no.) DETECTIVE WEEKLY, Mint. GEM: 1,663 (final no.) Mint. GEM 1,587. DREAD-NOUGHT: No. 6, 1914 (Sexton Blake and Calcroft). GREYFRIARS HERALD: No. 8 (new series) 1919. Reasonable offers invited.

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