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COLLECTORS DIGEST

Vol. 30

No 359

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A WORD FROM THE SKIPPER 30 YEARS LATER

FACT & FICTION

Some fifteen years ago we had a series of Oxford examinations running for about a fortnight in our School Hall. One evening, after tea, I went across to the Hall to check for the next day's work. I found that all the lights in the building had failed. No doubt saying things under my breath, I examined all the fuses, but could find none that had blown.

Obviously, the main fuse had gone, and the main fuse was in a sealed box which could only receive attention from the electrical authority.

I rang the electrical authority, and eventually an engineer arrived. The main fuse had, indeed, blown. He repaired it, but as soon as he

switched on the current, the main fuse blew again.

We were there for two hours, illuminated only by torches and candles, before he found the source of the trouble. Somebody had taken out a bulb in a cloakroom, inserted a coin - a halfpenny, I think, - into the holder, and then replaced the bulb. As soon as that particular light was switched on a mighty short occurred, and the main fuse was blown.

The next morning, I went on to the platform in the examination hall, held up the coin, and invited the owner to claim it. Nobody came forward. A number of external candidates were sitting the examination as well as my own boys, and I felt sure in my own mind that I knew which external candidate had played such a stupid and infuriating prank. But I had no proof, and I never expected any.

I had never heard of such a thing before, but years later I used the idea in one of our Mr. Buddle stories. In passing, many of the Buddle stories contain something which actually happened in my own school career.

A week or two ago one of my nephews gave me an old anthology of short stories, published in 1935, which he had come across in a second-hand book shop. It contained a short story - "The Vanishing Diamond" by John Rhode - in which lights mysteriously fused. The solution was that a sixpence had been placed in the electric lamp-holder. Dr. Priestley found the sixpence on the floor, and deduced what had happened. It is the only time I came across the idea in fiction, and it carried my mind back to my personal experience and to the Mr. Buddle story.

Which brings me to Roger Jenkins's contribution in the forthcoming C.D. Annual. In a delightful article, entitled "The Magnet Lives To-day" he links his own personal experiences as a schoolmaster with a number of extracts from Greyfriars fiction. It is intriguing reading which you are going to enjoy immensely.

THE ANNUAL

This year's Annual contains some of the finest articles we have ever published, and they are in great variety. Here are just a few of them, in addition to the charming one by Mr. Jenkins.

Mary Cadogan is in great form with an article which she describes as "an appreciation of Angela Brazil and Charles Hamilton"; Brian Doyle gets us all in nostalgic mood with a fascinating retrospective survey of Bunter on Television; Harold Truscott weighs legend against fact as he discusses Custer's Last Stand; Bob Blythe gives us another interesting visit to the early days in the career of E. S. Brooks, while Reuben Godsave looks at the way the same author was associated with "Snow". R. Hibbert is very witty indeed in bringing us to the conclusion that Bulldog Drummond must have been a pupil at St. Jim's; Leslie Rowley is his inimitable self in a fantasy concerning Greyfriars; Sexton Blake is expertly handled in articles by Josie Packman and S. Gordon Swan; and Jack Overhill takes us back, to entrance us with a memorable article entitled "Back Street Boy". Mr. Buddle is with us again this year in a new adventure entitled "Tammadge". Mr. Henry Webb once again is responsible for our charming cover.

And, of course, lots more in the Pearl Jubilee Edition of our Annual. Have you ordered yours yet? The supply will be very limited.

TAILPIECE

Doug had taken his young lady home for tea, and Danny, as usual, "put his foot in it".

"How old are you, Freda?" asked Danny.

"Oh, you rude little boy!" replied Freda. "We don't ask ladies their ages. It just isn't done!"

"Apologize, Danny!" ordered Douglas.

"Oh, don't scold the child, Douglas," said Freda. "I'm not ashamed of my age. It isn't till we get like your mother's age that we start being ashamed of ourselves."

Collectors' Digest is 30 years old this month. In human life, at 30, the first bloom has passed. It is the time when we set back the clock by one year and remain 29 for the next decade.

Like Doug's girl friend, the Digest is not ashamed of its age. On the contrary, it is proud of being 30. It's proud of its readers, too, who have allowed it to reach that ripe old age.

Here's to the next celebration.

God bless you all.

THE EDITOR

DANNY'S DIARY

NOVEMBER 1926

The series about Bob Cherry as a "swot" and an outcast has continued and ended this month in the Magnet. I have got very interested in it indeed, and have liked it much better than I thought I would. It is strange how some series grow on you.

The month's opening tale was "The Deserter". Bob Cherry and his chums are at daggers drawn, mainly through misunderstandings. Major Cherry has been displeased with his son's school reports, and says that Bob must pass an examination. Bob and Johnny Bull have a big fight which is thrillingly related, and at the finish Bob plays for the Upper Fourth, Temple's team, against the Remove - and Bob kicks the winning goal for the Upper Fourth.

But all that sort of thing makes Bob increasingly unpopular with his friends and with his form, and "Nobody's Chum", the next tale, was rather a sad one. Bob helps Hurree Singh in a terrific fight with a party of Highcliffe fellows led by Ponsonby, and Bob gets knocked about. So much so, that he does very badly in his examination.

The clouds roll by in the last of the series "Bob Cherry Wins Through". Bob is sent a letter by his father, but the letter is stolen by Bunter. As a result, Bob does not keep the appointment with his father. Major Cherry, very annoyed that his son has not stayed at the school to see him, is striding through the wood when he falls down a chalk rift, owing to the plank having been deliberately loosened by Ponsonby. The Major is saved by his son, who now calls his son "Bob" again, and all the troubles are ironed out. So Bob is to stay on at Greyfriars on his old footing with his chums. There have been five stories in this series.

I shouldn't think that "Heroes of the Air", the month's last tale in the Magnet, has pleased many readers. The chums go out for an afternoon's scouting, but get shanghaied in an aeroplane. Bunter falls out of the plane, but luckily is wearing a parachute. The man who has stolen the plane, later compels Harry Wharton and his chums to jump into the sea. They manage to cling on to the Black Rock buoy, until they are picked up by a Royal Navy warship by means of a searchlight.

And Harry Wharton & Co. are thanked by the Government. Not by the real Frank Richards, of course.

Mr. Shields is doing all the interior pictures, but this month somebody else - I think it is Mr. Chapman - has done the covers. They look a bit foreign, and I am not sure that Chapman is the artist.

This month the Prince of Wales has opened new promenades at Ramsgate and Margate. They will be all ready for the holiday-makers next year.

The new Schoolboys' Own Library is "Aliens at Greyfriars" which is good fun, and tells how Hurree Singh came to go to Greyfriars along with all the aliens of Herr Hoffmann's Academy. Eventually the aliens left, but Inky stayed on. The other tale in the S. O. L. is "The Mystery Schoolboy" by Ernest Protheroe, whoever he is. I wonder where the editor dug up that tale.

There has been a lot of fog this month, and it has been rather a bad month for railway accidents. A passenger train to Weymouth collided with a milk train near Farnborough. More serious was a smash in the fog on the Tilbury line from Fenchurch Street. The accident occurred near Barking where there was a collision. Luckily the train was moving slowly, and though 70 people were injured, nobody was seriously hurt.

Finally, on the L. M. S. near Rotherham a signal post struck a passenger train, and 9 people were killed and a few injured.

In the Nelson Lee Library, the series continues where the boys are all on their honour (if any) and normal school rules are abolished. A lazybones charter or a bully's benefit, I would think, but it's not a bad idea for a story.

First tale of the month is "Every Boy His Own Master" which carries on the plot against a background of fireworks, guys, and bonfire night. Next, "The School Without Rules", in which the bad boys make hay while the sun shines, but the better and more sensible boys, mainly led by Handforth, set up a Vigilance Committee to try to get a bit of order into things and make the wilder fellows toe the line.

Now a second plot is introduced into the series with "The Cads of St. Frank's" in which Forrest and his cronies arrange a trap for Clive Russell, trick Fullwood into dishonour, and cause strife between the two

friends. Last of the month is "Caught in the Meshes" in which Fullwood gambles at a gambling den in Bannington and loses £20 of Russell's money. But the Vigilants find out, raise the money, and send it to Fullwood as though it came from the croupier of the gambling den. Very dramatic.

They are still giving away cut-out figures of film stars in the Nelson Lee, and this month we have had Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin and Tom Mix.

A new Monster Library, cost one shilling, is out entitled "The Voyage of the Wanderer" in which the St. Frank's boys go to the Amazon.

There are any amount of 6d magazines on the market now. It seems rum that they all pay their way. The Premier Magazine, formerly 1/-, is now 6d. The Merry Magazine and the Violet Magazine (previously 7d) are now 6d each, and there is a brand new one, "The All-Story Magazine", at 6d. Mum has the Violet regularly.

There has been a big court case in which a man named Alfonso Smith was charged with shooting and murdering his friend who had fallen in love with Mr. Smith's wife. The murder occurred at a villa named "Stella Maris" in Whitstable. Marshall Hall defended. Mr. Smith was found not guilty, but he was sent to prison for possessing a revolver.

Jack, Sam & Pete are back in the Boys' Realm. I wonder whether they are new stories or reprints of old ones.

Not much of a month in the Gem. In "A Split in the School" Racke becomes junior captain in place of Tom Merry. Loads of plot but not much interest. Racke runs a gambling-den in a cellar. More nonsense the following week in "Gussy's Newspaper". Gussy bought a newspaper, but the Head advised him to close it down. "Standing Up For Justice" also had lots of plot. Mr. Ratcliff takes charge of St. Jim's, and there is a barring-out, and Talbot is the first junior to beat Kid Morgan of America. Awful!

The only tale by the real Martin Clifford is the last of the month, "Trimble Tries It On" in which Trimble tries all his tricks to avoid an exam. Nice little comedy.

Doug gave me a Sexton Blake Library this month entitled "The Bloodhound's Revenge". Pedro played a star part, and I liked it a lot. I wonder why they don't tell you the names of the authors of the Sexton

Blake stories.

At the pictures we have seen Gloria Swanson in "Stage Struck"; Betty Balfour in "Somebody's Darling"; Betty Blythe in "Queen of Sheba" (this was a very spectacular Fox film); Constance Bennett, Joan Crawford, and Sally O'Neill in "Sally, Irene and Mary"; and George O'Brien in "The Flood". All pretty good.

I love the Popular, and have always loved the Popular. This month they are running the series about a new bootboy, Sandy Smacke, at Rookwood. There is a bit of a mystery about Sandy. There is also a mystery about Mornington, who was expelled from Rookwood in the summer but who keeps turning up at the most unexpected moments. The Head - and the boys - just can't think how Morny manages to appear and disappear so suddenly at Rookwood.

(EDITORIAL COMMENT: "Aliens at Greyfriars", No. 39 of the S.O.L., comprised two consecutive $\frac{1}{2}$ d Magnets of the autumn of 1908 plus a third one which appeared a few weeks later. The second and third stories lost a few chapters, but the whole thing was quite well done. The story of the aliens bordered on tedium at times, but it makes fascinating reading today. It was of the plotless style of inconsequential writing which the Gem did so very much better, mainly because the Gem characters were just that bit more convincing than some of those in the early Greyfriars.)

The "Stella Maris" case was the last capital trial defended by the great Marshall Hall. He died only a few months later, I believe. The Rookwood Sandy Smacke series ran originally in the Boys' Friend in late 1922.)

* * * * *

DEATH OF O. W. WADHAM

We regret to learn of the death of Oswald ("Ossie") Wadham of Wellington, New Zealand. He loved C.D. and the hobby, and they gave him much pleasure for many years. Ossie was a frequent contributor to our pages, being one of those helpful souls who sent along pieces of much interest and convenient length. We shall miss him. Ossie's health began to fail nearly two years ago, and he passed on in September at the age of 70.

* * * * *

COMING IN DECEMBER. The PEARL JUBILEE EDITION of COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL. Have you ordered yours yet?

BLAKIANA

Conducted by JOSIE PACKMAN

Our Blakiana this month is embellished by an unusual article from our contributor John Bridgwater and in connection with it he wishes me to publish the following extract from the letter he sent with the article. This is as follows: "I would like to offer the article "Telling Titles" as a small Jubilee year tribute to Leonard Packman. With the exception of the bits about Sexton Blake Annual and the 5th series S. B. L's it is entirely based on the actual copy of that delightful and indispensable Sexton Blake Catalogue he sent me years ago, when, if I remember correctly, the 5th Series was still appearing regularly."

My grateful thanks to John for his kind thought.

TELLING TITLES

by John Bridgwater

How many stories or articles have you read just because the title took your fancy? This happens to me continually. Only recently I read Magnet 1618 simply because it was entitled "Sexton Blake Minor". As is often the case, it turned out to be quite different to what I imagined. However, I enjoyed it just the same.

Over the years Sexton Blake tales have had some really eye-catching titles. The Union Jack in particular has excelled in intriguing titles. How about "The Mists of Sleep" (No. 890), or "The Sealed Bride" (970), "The Soap Salvors" (994) or "The League of the Cobblers Last" (847) to set the imagination simmering? Could you pass "The Hate Doctor" (1405) and "The Sixpenny Doctor" (556) without just one peep between the covers? What keen gardener could ignore "The Adventure of the Giant Bean" (1031) or not be the least bit curious about "The Affair of the Lacquered Walnut" (1035)? The railway enthusiast must surely want to know all about "The Case of the Stolen Locomotives" (1005), and "The Strange Affair of the Mantle Register Grate" (1139) is a title to arouse anyone's curiosity.

The Detective Weekly has one title which I find most evocative, "The Secret of the Whispering Wharf" (62). It also has two 'hot' titles which I find quite irresistible; "The Hot Cross Bun Murders" (112) and

"The Pepper Box Mystery" (113). Is it coincidence that these two were in consecutive numbers, or was there a humourist lurking in Fleetway House? Consider, for instance the consecutive tales in the Union Jack published in the winter of 1919, "The Clue of the Frozen Knife" (799) and "The Affair of the Bronze Monkey" (800).

Looking through that splendid guide to the Sexton Blake saga "The Sexton Blake Catalogue" makes one suspect that coincidence in related consecutive titles was sometimes somewhat assisted editorially. Going back to the Penny Pictorial we find "The Two M's" (488) followed by "The Case of the Second Mate" (489) and "The Case of the Missing Minister" (490). In the Union Jack the quaint address:

"The Sign of the Yellow Dragon"
The Street of Many Lanterns"

is given by Nos. 1063 and 1064. The Sexton Blake Library also has its pairs of titles. The 2nd series has "The Great Tunnel Mystery" (284) followed by "The Crime of the Catacombs" (285). In the 3rd series "The South Coast Mystery" (196) is followed by "The Mystery of the Missing Angler" (197). Other 3rd series pairs are "Stand-in for Murder" (389) and "Find Me a Killer" (390), "Lady in Distress" (404) and "High Heels and Homicide" (405). It has one threesome: "Collapse of Stout Party" (401), "Murder Most Intimate" (402) and "Crime of Violence" (403). A nice pair in the 5th series are Nos. 17 and 18: "A Company of Bandits" and "Such Men are Dangerous".

Two titles in Sexton Blake Annual No. 3 give us an unexpected pair: "The Riddle of the Cross" and "The Case of the Wandering Jew".

Browsing in the catalogue one is struck by the changing fashions in titles. The two extremes are exemplified by SBL 1st series "The Avenging Seven or The Mystery of the Cinema" (117), one of the several stories with two titles, and "Imposter", 4th series, No. 517. I think authors like A. Murray were ahead of their time with their one word titles.

Reprints do not always improve on the originals but The Penny Popular certainly did in some cases where U. J. tales were reprinted in two instalments and two titles replaced the original. I think "Wanted for Wealth" and "The Avaricious Aristocrat", (PP Nos. 208 and 209) a considerable improvement on the original UJ (369) title, "Sexton Blake

Taxicab Driver". Another improvement is "The Penniless Playwright" and "The Unfinished Drama" (PP 144 and 145) for "Sexton Blake Playwright" (UJ 314).

The Popular has a few nice pairs of its own: "The Changed Eyes" (74) with "Twice Cleared" (75), and "Clearing His Name" (127) followed by "A Fresh Start" (128). These are unrelated tales.

Looking at the list of Dreadnought serial titles they almost tell a tale of their own: "The Great Conspiracy", "The Men Who Changed Places", "The Man Who Vanished", "The Heir from Nowhere", "The Merchants Secret". I wonder how "The Man from Scotland Yard" fits in?

Making up stories out of titles can be quite tricky but a game of Sexton Blake Bullets (or Nuggets), similar to the old John Bull and Answers competitions, allowing full range of the catalogue, is good fun, and I am sure Blake would approve of the mental exercise.

A CROOK FROM THE PAST

by S. Gordon Swan

Many criminals were created by the various authors involved in the Sexton Blake Saga. All of these, whose names are legion, were original conceptions, although some of them may have been inspired by other fictional figures. So far as I know, there is only one instance of Blake encountering a character borrowed from an author who had no connection with the Sexton Blake legend.

This character is A. J. Raffles, the cricketer-cracksman, whose name is a household word and who was the brain-child of E. W. Hornung. Hornung died in 1921, his last book about Raffles having appeared in 1909, but his creation, like Sherlock Holmes, Sexton Blake, Fu Manchu and others, lived on after his death.

In 1932, by permission of Hornung's estate, Raffles was revived by Philip Atkey, better known as Barry Perowne. (It appears that the offer to resuscitate him was first made to Leslie Charteris, who declined.) The new adventures took place in contemporary settings and appeared in that periodical which brought fame to so many writers - The Thriller.

Some years later was conceived the bright idea of bringing Raffles into conflict with Sexton Blake and four stories resulted from this notion. Three of them appeared in The Sexton Blake Library and one in the first Sexton Blake Annual.

The stories in the S. B. L. were: "Raffles v. Sexton Blake", "Raffles' Crime in Gibraltar" and "The A. R. P. Mystery". The tale in the annual, which was divided into three episodes and which seems to have been the third in the series, was entitled "Scuttler's Cache".

The second story of those listed above was reprinted in hard-covers by Dean & Son Ltd., a few years ago, at a time when Blake was on television. I am not aware if the story in the annual has ever been published in book form.

The World War intervened and there were no further encounters between these two famous characters. More adventures of this nature would have been appreciated but Fate ruled otherwise. Memory of these exploits has been revived, however, by a book called "Raffles Revisited", published in 1974 by Harper & Row. This comprises fourteen short stories derived from various post-war magazines and there is a preface which refers to Raffles' return in *The Thriller* in 1932. The writer of this foreword, however, makes no reference to his conflicts with Sexton Blake. As usual, our own particular hero is not accorded a mention.

Raffles has receded into the past in his new exploits, which are all laid in the original Hornung period. Like the master-cracksman, Sexton Blake has also retreated into an earlier era, as the latest book about him exemplifies. The difference lies in the fact that the latter stories, though welcome, are not new.

With the idea in mind of bringing a character from another venue into the Sexton Blake Saga, one wonders what would have resulted from a battle between the great detective and Professor Moriarty (himself revived from the Reichenbach Falls), Dr. Fu-Manchu or other notorious criminals of fiction.

* * * * *

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Nelson Lee Column

RELATIONS

by C. H. Churchill

Anyone thinking about the characters in the St. Frank's stories in the old small series of the Nelson Lee could be intrigued at the large number who had no parents. First of all, take Nelson Lee himself. Surely he must have been in the age group of 35 to 45, yet we had never a mention of where he came from nor anything about his parentage. Having such a large medical knowledge one would assume he went to University, but we read nothing of this aspect either. Nipper, as we all know, was an orphan. Later on we learnt that his real name was Richard Hamilton. Many readers, having been used to "Nipper" for so long, found it hard to become accustomed to the change, especially as he did not take such a leading role as heretofore.

Next, let us take Lord Dorrimore. Somewhat of the same age as Lee, we never knew if he inherited his title or had it bestowed on him for some reason. All we read was that he had a sister, Lady Mornington. This was in old series No. 237.

Now let us look at some of the boys. How many were orphans? Sir Montie, Somerton, Singleton, Willard certainly were, plus possibles in De Valerie, the Onions Brothers, Ezra Quirk and Lord Pippinton. I mention these as "possibles" as I do not remember any mention of their parents being made.

As regards wives, I think that only two of the many masters featured were married, namely Barry Stokes and Mr. Wilkes. Dr. Brett was single as, of course, was Phipps.

Another thing that comes to notice is the fact that "mothers" very seldom appeared where "fathers" were introduced into episodes in the stories. Take, for instance, "The Mystery of Grey Towers", O. S. No. 186. Why were Sir Edward Handforth and the chums of Study D motoring about at Christmas time without Lady Handforth? Then we have "The Christmas Plot", O.S. No. 290, in which Levi and his father were invited to Tregellis Castle for Christmas without Mrs. Levi. Rather strange, I think.

There were many series where fathers were featured but no mothers. Think of the series about the following, - Ernest Lawrence, Jack Grey, Tom Burton, Fatty Little, Dick Goodwin, Levi (although we were told that his mother sent him hampers), Alf Brent and Clive Russell. These are ones that come readily to mind.

E.S.B. seemed reluctant to introduce female characters prior to when he invented the Moor View School. After that time we seemed to get quite a few. One wonders whether it was editorial inspiration to have a girl's school or whether it was Edwy's own idea. In any case, it undoubtedly broadened the canvas on which he could work.

To anyone reading these remarks I would say that I have only dealt with the old small series of Lees. I would not know of any developments that might have taken place in the later "Large" papers as I have very few of these to refer to, but I believe there were characters who could be included in some of the items mentioned above.

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

by William Lister

"Every picture tells a story" - well - more or less; more if anything. For that reason I take note of the illustrations accompanying the tale I happen to be reading. During a recent re-reading of the original Ezra Quirke series I took special notice of the drawings.

I was most impressed by the cover picture portrait of Ezra Quirk which can be seen on the very first copy of the Quirk series "The Schoolboy Magician" (No. 542, Oct. 24th, 1925).

There sits our Ezra with a huge volume in front of him (no doubt a book of spells), opened in the centre, his finger is resting lightly on the page. His elbow resting on the desk, his chin cupped in his right hand. There is a far-away look in his eyes. Perched on his left shoulder is a large white owl. At the right hand side of the desk a small idol figure, an incense burner, the smoke of which is rising almost perpendicular. On the left hand side there is a small Buddha.

Now, I have noticed that our "Collectors' Digest" has some very excellent artists, as also our "C.D. Annual" and I am going to digress now, and plead with them to secure a copy of "The Schoolboy Magician" (on loan from Bob Blythe or Mollie Allison) whose addresses can be obtained from the editor, and provide a copy of this portrait for a future

issue of "Collectors' Digest" cover, gaining the undying gratitude of us "St. Frank's" enthusiasts.

Looking at some of the smaller illustrations (through a magnifying glass) I found those of Ezra Quirke somewhat disappointing. In fact, in a few he looks positively "gormless". Some, however, pass muster, and show him as the mysterious figure he really is. In one, (the first page of "Schoolboy Magician"), Ezra stands with a crystal ball in his hand. With the other hand, he is making strange passes at a St. Frank's fellow. Poor chap, his hair is lifting his hat off, through sheer fright. Just behind him is a hand and arm hovering in outer-space. Personally, I always feel that clutching bodiless hands and arms are rather hair-raising.

A later picture shows Nipper and Co. getting a bird's-eye view of Ezra's first appearance at St. Frank's - the caption, as follows -

"His (Quirke's) long hair was waving weirdly in the wind, and his white face looked utterly ghostly." In the illustration he looks like a skeleton in a monk's habit.

Overall, there are not many illustrations depicting our Ezra in the eight copies of the first series. A few more are added in a later series, but I am of the opinion that the only one to do justice to Ezra Quirke is on the cover of "The Schoolboy Magician".

(Please do let us see this on the cover of our "Collectors' Digest".)

However, if the likenesses of Quirke are few and far between, the results of the omens and disasters threatened by the Schoolboy Magician are amplified.

There are illustrations of vague shapes that resolve themselves as white-bearded gentlemen of the middle ages.

Ghostly, grasping, dripping hands appear and disappear, under the skill of the artists, strange gossamer shapes like black ghosts float on the moonbeams. Desk lids rise and fall unhandled.

"The Cellar of Secrets", Nelson Lee No. 547, has such a ghostly face on its cover that even Edward Oswald Handforth finds his hair standing on end, and if you turn the pages - of all the horrors - can you imagine hovering over the framework of your door, a fearsome looking head, the face too grotesque to be human. If you can't imagine it, take a look at page 29 of this Nelson Lee.

There are of course several other pictures that tell their own story - but enough for now.

Well! reluctantly I am about to wrap up my parcel of thrills in words and pictures, in coarse brown paper and return it to my librarian. You see, they are not my copies - it is so sad.

Still it would cheer my heart a little if I could be sure that some happy day, our editor and his artists will provide us with a C.D. cover portrait of the immortal Ezra Quirke.

PINPRICKS

by R. J. Godsave

There is no doubt that the difference in the reading of our favourite papers by a young person, for whom the stories were written, and an adult is that the reading is made from a different angle.

It is fairly accurate to say that parts of a story known as padding is not read closely by the young reader whose interest is mainly concentrated on the printed word relating to conversation and action, with only a brief scanning of the padding in which the adult reader finds such a wealth of descriptive passages.

What to the adult reader could be called pinpricks would possibly be ignored or unnoticed by the younger reader. I refer to the extravaganza, which in the case of the Nelson Lee Library appears at rare intervals in what is otherwise a more or less serious story. This is evident in the old series in which Jerry Dodd became a scholar at St. Frank's.

The reader is introduced to a firm of detectives engaged by a London firm of solicitors acting on instructions from Jerry's father. The sole purpose of Messrs. Podge and Midge, the two detectives who went under this title, was to guard Jerry Dodd from being molested by a band of Burmese fanatics with whom Mr. Dodd had had connections in the past.

Mr. Podge was a man of huge proportions, with his partner, Mr. Midge, being the opposite in stature. It is their business card which is the pinprick. Under the title of the firm - Podge & Midge - was the professional description given as the 'Deadliest Sleuths on Earth' with the address 'Wrotland Yard, London, W.' The telephone number given as Central 99999 with telegrams 'Incompetence'. In the smaller print one is informed with other information that there are

special charges for overtime.

Messrs. Podge & Midge made humorous appearances throughout the story, and had the business card been somewhat more businesslike and sensible, then there would have been no cause for complaint.

This type of ridiculous insertion is not confined to the Nelson Lee. One wonders whether an author feels he must indulge in a little foolishness in order to prevent himself from feeling hemmed in mentally, by the writing of serious stories.

* * * * *

THIRTY YEARS OF COLLECTORS' DIGEST

by The Editor

For many years, Story Paper Collectors' Digest has carried at the masthead of the "Skipper's" page the names of two men. Herbert Leckenby who founded Collectors' Digest in 1946 and W. H. Gander who founded Story Paper Collector in 1941.

In a number of ways, the two men were very similar, which is, perhaps, not surprising. Both were gentle and kind. Each had a compulsive simple charm, which made them easy to know.

Both were lonely men as they found themselves in late middle life, and this may have been partly due to the fact that they allowed their horizons to become too limited. A good hobby is a splendid thing, but it is a mistake to let it become an obsession as Herbert Leckenby undoubtedly did. Each man was a prodigious letter-writer.

In certain ways, however, there were differences. Bill Gander was a bachelor. Herbert Leckenby was married. Bill Gander was at least ten years younger than Herbert, and Bill was prosperous, whereas Herbert was not.

Bill Gander had been apprenticed to the printing trade, and had worked on a newspaper. He always loved printing, but he gave it up as a career, possibly because it did not suit his health, or, more likely, because a better opportunity came for him elsewhere. He became a partner in a successful bookshop, later on becoming the sole owner. At the age of 64, he sold his shop and retired, with happy memories of a successful career behind him.

Herbert Leckenby was not prosperous, and his memories may not have been all that happy. But he was to find joy and interest in the

post-war years.

By a strange quirk of fate, both men, with scores of friends who really loved them all over the world, died in loneliness.

Collectors' Digest came into existence because Herbert Leckenby, its first editor and producer, was an amazing letter-writer. He never owned a typewriter, and all his letters went out in his small, neat hand-writing. Just when his bent for letter-writing first took over his life, it is impossible for me to say, but it had taken a good hold when I first became acquainted with him. The time he devoted to it must have been enormous.

This, clearly, was something which was unusual in a married man. A man who is at work all day, and spends all his spare time writing letters, is not able to give as much attention to his wife, one would think, as she would expect and be entitled to. In fact, had the Leckenby home, thirty years ago, been a particularly harmonious one, there would almost certainly never have been a Collectors' Digest. But that side of the matter is no business of ours, and we can leave it at that.

My first acquaintance, to the best of my memory, in what was to be known later as "the hobby", was Cedric ('Tex') Rickard of Canada. He wrote to me out of the blue as the result of seeing my name and address printed in a Gem of somewhere about 1938. For a time we corresponded at intervals. Later, Mr. Rickard mentioned me to Bill Gander, and Mr. Gander and I became correspondents.

At that time, Mr. Gander was in correspondence with Herbert Leckenby, who wrote to me himself from his address in York - not, however, from his home address but from the army telephone exchange where he was employed as an operator. Later on, after Collectors' Digest came into existence, the editor's address was always given as at that telephone exchange, and, for some time after he retired from his working life, he used the printing firm's address as his own in the magazine. It was not until his last year or two of life that his actual home address appeared in the magazine.

Herbert, himself, had no great affection for, or knowledge of, the world of Hamiltonia. Born in the later eighteen-eighties, he was a lad when the Boys' Friend was created. He loved that paper, and,

indeed, he loved the whole Hamilton Edwards' empire of Boys' Friend, Boys' Realm, and Boys' Herald, and he had a good knowledge of the comic papers which were appearing during the first decade of the century. Well before the first world war, Herbert had ceased to buy any of those papers, though obviously they remained in his memory. But Herbert was never a collector, in the real sense of the word.

Bill Gander, on the other hand, ten years younger than Herbert Leckenby, was thoroughly well-acquainted with the red Magnet and with the wartime Magnet, and, in later years, he built up a collection of these. But, even with Bill Gander, his first love was the Boys' Friend.

In 1941, Bill Gander started Story Paper Collector, a delightful, neatly-printed little magazine, which he sent out, free of charge, to his hobby acquaintances, for Bill, too, was a great letter-writer.

He loved printing, and owned his own printing-press, and, with Story Paper Collector, he was able to amalgamate both his hobbies. About four issues a year were to be produced, and there was no fixed date of publication.

Herbert Leckenby launched Collectors' Digest in November 1946. He had the nucleus of a readership in the large number of his correspondents, but he had no printing facilities of his own. He had to pay a professional firm to produce the magazine.

The magazine, with wild optimism, was to be published monthly, near the beginning of each month.

Herbert Leckenby was heart and soul in the job of running C.D. Unfortunately, though he was a magnificent hobby man, and an excellent and hard-working editor, he was no business man. His income was small, and it was essential that the magazine should pretty well pay its way, if it was to continue to appear every month. But, though there were many grand people in the hobby in Herbert's time, there were some who took advantage of his slapdash methods.

Herbert hated to lose a reader, which was natural, and all right as far as it went. But in any readership there is bound to be some "coming and going". Readers are like the seed sown in the Parable of the Sower. Some are bound to fall by the wayside, because enthusiasm varies greatly in its intensity and in its motivation.

Herbert could not recognise this, and with the passing of time he found himself in deep waters.

However, by the early fifties, everything was going well, and Herbert was delighted. Suddenly, however, he became worried when Tom Hopperton announced that he intended to start a quarterly magazine which, though Mr. Hopperton did not say so in so many words, was intended to be a great improvement on the monthly C.D. and would be just what readers wanted. He saw nothing out of the way in expecting Herbert Leckenby to publicise the Hopperton magazine, thereby putting to his own advantage the C.D. subscription list which Herbert had built up by hard work and sheer guts.

Mr. Hopperton announced that he would be paying certain famous people to write for him, and, in fact, Charles Hamilton accepted £5 as payment for an article which he contributed. It looked very much as though Mr. Hopperton intended to sweep Herbert and C.D. out of his way.

Herbert was worried for a time. C.D. was run on a shoe-string, and the loss of readers in any appreciable number would send it on the rocks. Hobbywise, it might not have mattered a lot, providing the new man was dedicated, but it meant a lot to Herbert. However, the Hopperton quarterly had no marked success, and disappeared after only a very few issues. It is pleasant to record that Tom Hopperton returned to the C.D. fold, and in later years contributed some splendid articles to the monthly and to the C.D. Annual. My own relationship, as editor, with him, was of the very happiest.

By the late fifties, Herbert was getting into difficulties, and he was neglecting himself as he slaved with the magazine. In the autumn of 1959 he wrote and asked me if he could visit me at Surbiton, as there was something he wanted to discuss with me and something he wanted to ask me. I arranged for the visit, and Herbert came to me in mid-September.

He wanted me to take over the magazine. It was more than a request, really - it was a plea. It came as a complete surprise to me, and I have often wondered since why he turned to me at that time. We had been friends for many years, he had often confided his problems to me (and he had quite a few) and asked my advice, but he had never given me any reason to think that he regarded me as his successor or that he was even contemplating giving up the magazine.

I could not answer at once. It was a matter which needed much

consideration. A few days later I wrote to him and agreed to take over C.D. It was arranged that I should go to York on a Friday in October. Herbert and I were to meet at the offices of our printers in the Shambles at that city. My hotel was booked.

On the very morning that I was to leave Surbiton, Mr. Gore-Browne, the head of our printing-firm, rang me up to tell me that Herbert had been found dead in his bed.

A few days later I went to York and attended Herbert's funeral. I met and had a long talk with Mr. Gore-Browne, and so began a wonderful association between us that has lasted to this day.

I met members of Herbert Leckenby's family. I sensed that they were surprised at the great and abiding affection shown for Herbert. A few days later I had a wonderful letter from one of Herbert's brothers, and it touched me deeply. After expressing his gratitude that I was taking over the problems of C.D., the brother ended by saying that Herbert had been regarded by the family as something of a failure, but it was Herbert who had gained the deep and sincere love of people all over the world - and, in earning that love, perhaps Herbert had really been the greatest success of them all.

Just what killed Herbert Leckenby is uncertain. There was a rumour that he died of lung cancer (he was a chain-smoker), but I never believed it. A few days before his death he wrote me that he had collapsed in the street, and had been taken home, and he seemed perplexed but not unduly worried by it. I have always been certain that he died of malnutrition due to self-neglect. It was a sad and lonely ending for one who was so widely loved, but his memory is evergreen. He lives on while C.D. lives on. He would be delighted today with the magazine which he started and ran so well for 13 years of its life.

Herbert's last issue of C.D. was that of November 1959, the 13th birthday of Collectors' Digest. And that was 17 years ago exactly.

I was supposed to take over in the January, but, as it happened, I had to don the hairshirt of editorship in the November, and buckle in straight away. It is remarkable that C.D. has never missed an issue in all its 30 years, but it was a miracle that we did not miss one that December.

Some half a dozen years later, great-hearted Bill Gander also

passed on, and, as he had long wished, Story Paper Collector was amalgamated with Collectors' Digest. Like Herbert Leckenby, he will never be forgotten while S. P. C. D. lasts.

Whether the hobby is so pleasant and jolly as it was in the gentler days at the beginning is a question. Basically I think it is. It still enfolds many of the nicest people in the world.

It owes much more to nostalgia than it used to. That is because the whole nation is taken up with nostalgia, which doesn't say much for the way this country has been governed since the war.

The first fifteen years were the years of the real thing. Many of the authors, the artists, the editors, were still living, and there were plenty of original copies of periodicals around. The second fifteen years have brought us the age of the facsimile. Many people who never knew the real thing have become completely hooked with the facsimiles.

Everything is glossier today. There is a hankering after publicity, which I have never believed is good or necessary for the hobby. A country town is not always improved by an influx of great numbers. It is the quality, not the quantity, which counts.

30 years! And never a month missed in that long time. The secret of the longevity of C. D. has been that contributors, loyal and true, send along items and articles which are right up the street of our own particular readership. And a part of the success has also been the regularity and the frequency of the Digest's publication.

Just now and again, I think to myself that, purely from the production point of view, monthly is too much. It is too much work, too much strain, too much worry, too much of a tie. "Have you been away for your holidays yet?" readers often write and ask me. The answer is that, if the editor went off on holiday, there would almost certainly be no Digest the following month. The old Ed. has no time for holidays.

"I should think NOT indeed!" purrs Mr. Softee. "Come on, Skipper, tell the truth. Even without the Digest, you couldn't leave me in a cattery to pine while you were enjoying yourself. So you wouldn't go in any case."

I guess that darn cat's got something there, as our American readers would express it.

Yes, the Digest is a tie. But the reward - the love of so many, many readers all over the world - is more, much more, than ample recompense.

With change and decay in so much that I see all around, my readers have not changed. They are still the lovely, generous, enthusiastic and affectionate folk who warm my heart, as they warmed Herbert Leckenby's and Bill Gander's, all those years ago.

* * * * *
CONGRATULATIONS TO COLLECTORS' DIGEST by Roger Jenkins

It comes as something of a surprise to me when I realise that I now have thirty years' copies of Collectors' Digest in my bookcase. Anyone who looks back on those early smudgy numbers produced by Mr. Wood's agency and who compares them with the recent issues cannot help noticing the vast improvement that has taken place. The clarity of the magazine makes it a joy to read.

The first copy was priced at a shilling, the second at 1/1d, and it is a tribute to the financial stability of those times that this remained unchanged for over four years, when it went up to 1/6d, a price maintained by Herbert Leckenby for the rest of his life. It was launched amid prophecies of gloom, and I can remember John Medcraft warning Herbert Leckenby that he would never get enough articles to maintain monthly publication. In point of fact, Herbert had so many articles pending that he had quite a backlog on his file, and he used to advertise forthcoming attractions.

Collectors' Digest has remained the only monthly publication of its type, all similar magazines, like Collectors' Miscellany, Story Paper Collector, and Old Boys' Book Collector, being quarterlies, with all the consequent disadvantage of publication at long intervals. A monthly periodical generates comments and discussions and, as Gerry Allison used to say, the Collectors' Digest alternating with the club meetings keeps interest in the hobby ticking over nicely.

I was also surprised to observe that Eric Fayne has been editor since November 1959, a longer period than Herbert's tenure of office. If Herbert got the magazine off the ground, it is Eric who has kept it going during times of great difficulty, and I think few readers can really

appreciate just how much work is involved in editing an amateur magazine, a labour of love indeed. Certainly we are all fortunate in having editors of this calibre in our charmed circle.

If I may be forgiven for introducing a personal note, I see that I had an article published in the first copy of the Digest, but I do not wish to have an article in the final number. I rather like to hope that it will survive its present readership and go forward in strength to a future generation of readers. In that case, this is only one of many jubilees ahead.

ECHOES FROM THE PAST

by Josie Packman

The echoes are about the "New Look" Sexton Blake Library as presented in the Collectors' Digest.

During our recent hot summer when it was too hot to do any manual work, I spent the time reading through the "Mailbag" section of the S. B. L.'s of 1960/61. Amongst the varied letters there were many about the lack of "New Look" articles in Blakiana. In fact some of the correspondents went so far as to accuse both the Editor and myself of deliberately omitting to publish any articles about the new type of S. B. L.'s. Despite replies written by my dear Len on my behalf these accusations continued for some time. Now, after all these years, I decided to check up on the material used in Blakiana during that particular period, i. e. 1960/1 and to my pleasure found quite a considerable amount of material on the New Look. Nowhere in the Collectors' Digest could I find any mention of not using any "New Look" articles. In fact just the opposite. The C. D. issue for September 1960 contains these words in my preamble: "Martin Thomas will, I am sure, be interested to hear that apart from the article by Keith Chapman, the response by readers to my request for material on the modern Blake at the present time (8 August, 1960) has produced - nothing! I am still hoping that Mr. Thomas will consider my suggestion of sending me something himself." Now many years later I am still crossing swords with Mr. Thomas about the new Blake's this time about the too sexy covers, a subject started by one of my regular contributors. Actually I always have preferred Mr. Thomas's stories to any of the other new authors, especially his tales of the supernatural.

After the first fine articles on the modern Blake's, both in the C.D. monthly and Annual, there was a complete dearth of material in spite of my oft repeated requests for such articles. Nowadays hardly anyone remarks about the new look characters. Maybe it was because of non-continuing "Bad men" as distinct from the range of crooks created for us in the early days. However, I am sure that over the 30 years of its admirable existence the Collectors' Digest has always given everyone the opportunity to voice their opinions on their favourite detective and his various opponents in the world of crime, but as I have said so often, I cannot print material I do not receive. Many thousands of words have been penned by enthusiastic lovers of Sexton Blake. Some of our writers have fallen by the wayside, death has taken some of our most ablest of early years, but still the work goes on. Present day writers can be assured that Blakiana will contain any of the work they send me. Time has proved that the modern Blake did not become as popular as the old in the Blake Saga so both the C.D. and myself have now been vindicated.

I must add that in my opinion the stories in the last series were excellent and if only the action had taken place from the old Baker Street menage they would have equalled in quality any of the early ones.

Now I must finish on a happy note, to say how grateful I am for our wonderful C.D. and for all the kind words about my work to keep Blakiana going and the loyal support of my many contributors. May it continue for another 30 years.

PEARL ANNIVERSARIES OF C.D. AND C.D.A.

by Jim Cook

Who would have thought it! Even dreamt it! That thirty years after the launching of the Collectors' Digest and Collectors' Digest Annual we would still eagerly await their deliveries!

It must surely be the greatest tribute to those old authors who penned our stories that today should see a never flagging interest maintained and enjoyed.

The Collectors' Digest and its annual is a true reflection of the grand value of our old boys' books; this in spite of changing interests and inflationary times.

The literary wealth of the years that was contained in those grand

old school and adventure stories has echoed in the pages of Collectors' Digest and annual, made possible through the untiring efforts of the editors and contributors.

God Bless Them.

MEET MR. QUELCH

by Les Rowley

"Grotesque!"

Prout stabbed with a podgy finger at the magazine he held in his other, equally podgy, hand. "Grotesque," he repeated for he liked the sound of his own voice, "but, as I am sure you will agree, my dear Quelch, the artist has managed to capture your likeness in several ways - the deep lines and deeper furrows ---"

Mr. Quelch did not agree! He was not in an agreeable mood to start with, having just received a complaint from Mrs. Kebble regarding a missing pie. He was not at his bonniest but even if he had been he would not have agreed with Prout that the picture on the cover of that magazine bore any resemblance to Henry Samuel Quelch. The subject of that illustration had too austere a countenance, too severe an expression for any connexion between that picture and himself. It was just like Prout to pretend that there was!

"I shall be obliged, Prout," the Remove master replied with an air of indifference, "if you will kindly allow me to borrow that magazine. If that caricature is linked to my name I shall complain - in no uncertain terms - to the Editor!"

"By all means, Quelch. And if you require further information regarding the magazine then I recommend you to question Vernon-Smith of your form. He it was who dropped the publication in Masters' Corridor, doubtless unaware that it would be recovered by a master. I place myself at your disposal, my dear fellow, should you be in need of guidance - guidance from a senior colleague - guidance from one ---"

"Thank you, Prout. Should I be in need of advice I shall certainly avail myself of your offer." There was something in Quelch's tone that indicated that the chances of such a contingency arising were remote - very remote indeed - and it was a considerably ruffled Prout that left the Remove master's study for his own.

Mr. Quelch rang for Trotter and despatched that youth to find

W. G. Bunter of his form and to request that ornament of the Remove to come and see him at once. The mystery of the disappearing pie was about to be investigated and the placing in readiness of a cane on the Remove master's desk indicated that he did not expect the investigation to be a protracted one. Quelch knew his Bunter!

He had another look at the offending illustration on the magazine's cover. It is only human for us to think that we look better than we do to others and Mr. Quelch was only human. The likeness, in fact, was quite a good one, after all he was a rather severe looking gentleman - one could only deal with a form like the Remove by being severe and some of that experience was bound to show! And as he looked at that likeness Quelch found himself moderating his transports so to speak. There was a dignity and determination in the picture that he had not observed before and there was something else. Above the portrait appeared the title "Collectors' Digest" and Quelch found himself wondering what it was that the subscribers were collecting and he turned the pages idly to satisfy his curiosity.

Bunter, if Trotter had successfully fielded him, was not showing any sign of urgency in obeying his master's command and presenting himself. Possibly Bunter had hazarded a guess at the reason for the summons. Snaffling pies was a procedure frowned upon by the School authorities and - or so it seemed to Bunter - he was always being unfairly picked upon to explain any missing commestible. So Bunter did not hurry to answer the call to Quelch's study - hoping no doubt that the Remove master's temper would - like wine - improve with the keeping!

Such might have been Mr. Quelch's introduction to "Collectors' Digest" and we can be sure that it would have been just as interesting an experience for him as it would have been for us. He might even have been persuaded to contribute the odd article when he was not writing for the "Public School Review". We may never know, but on this especial occasion we must turn our thoughts for once from fiction to fact. And the facts are impressive.

THIRTY YEARS is half a lifetime to many of us - and perhaps not the best half in many respects. The stories we remember for the most part belong to an earlier age and were, in fact, peculiar to that age. For a copper coin or two we could purchase those golden hours to chase

the favourite characters across the closely-printed page. We can continue the chase even today - thanks to our own collections or the libraries of the Clubs that were formed by those far-sighted pioneers.

Doubtless we are more than a little wistful that we cannot pop down to the newsagents and ask for a copy of the "Gem", "Magnet", "Union Jack", "Nelson Lee Library" or any other favourite and perhaps that wistfulness adds to the elusive magic of the hobby. That it is an elusive magic is beyond doubt for I have never seen it defined, described or diagnosed. But magic - elusive or otherwise - is not magic unless it is shared with others and for thirty years the "Collectors' Digest" has involved hundreds of people in that sharing.

We have been lucky with our Editors who have worked so selflessly to ensure the magazine's success and to make our enjoyment of its contents complete. There isn't an abundance of Herbert Leckenby's or Eric Fayne's and with the sad passing of the one we could still count our blessings with his successor. Their dedication has been our good fortune.

My especial thanks are for being allowed to pass - in such good company - through the gates of my favourite school, Greyfriars. We may never have met personally but together we have punted a footer round the quad; toasted each other in pop at the tuckshop and cheered the Remove on Little Side. Through the medium of the "Collectors' Digest" we have been able to do that in the past. Let us look forward to sharing those joys in the future.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

by Jack Overhill

I didn't know Frank Richards, Martin Clifford and Owen Conquest were one and the same man when I was a boy. The style of writing didn't give the game away to me. I hadn't perception of that sort. And for the little notice I took of authors' names the stories might have written themselves. It was the same with the illustrations. A machine might have done them.

I believed Billy Bunter could imitate the talk of adults, including Dr. Holmes and Mr. Quelch. A ventriloquist was somebody who could 'throw his voice' and in doing it imitate another person's voice so that listeners thought it was the real thing. Bunter wasn't long-winded about it and he used words in common use that anyone might use. His throaty

cough cleared the deck for action. That put everything right with me.

There was much that I read that I didn't believe.

Merry And Bright. Jolly Jack Johnson, the boy mesmerist, putting on the 'fluence with a few waves of the hands, magnetic flashes coming from them (illustration). It was all too daft for words, so were the things he made people do.

Sexton Blake Library. George Marsden Plummer (my favourite crook) laying out one of the Tong gang, changing into his clothes and shuffling off to mix with the others, talking perfect Chinese, looking perfect Chinese - and they didn't know him from the one he'd put in cold storage!

Comic Cuts. Paddy of the Red Rovers walking round a room on his hands at the first attempt. I'd watched local gymnasts practising on the ground and the horizontal bars. Paddy had got to do a handstand before he could do that and learning to do a handstand was a slow process. Walking on the hands even more so. A picture showed Paddy doing it. Not with his body at that angle he couldn't!

Union Jack. Two young lovers falling overboard on a cold winter day, getting fished out of the water and cooing lovey-dovey to each other for half an hour before going below deck to change their wet clothes. I swam a lot, knew how cold water was in the summer under 60 degrees, let alone in the winter when it was nearly freezing. Tell me another!

Boys' Friend Library. The Baddies hot-foot through a tropical forest after the Goodies in search of hidden gold. A brain-wave of the Goodies: Saw through several rows of giant trees, wait till the Baddies get close, give all the trees in the back row a shove, they'd knock down the row in front, they'd knock down the row in front and so on till the Baddies copped it. But of course the Baddies didn't cop it. Hearing those giant trees crashing down they bolted like scared rabbits - the cowards.

Boys' Own Library. Ship trapped in the weed of the Sargasso Sea. The young hero and his companions catch birds, fix messages to them telling of their plight and release them bound for Britain. Along comes a balloon to the rescue. And would you believe it - Yes, you've guessed - the young hero turns out to be the long lost son of the wealthy titled balloonist to whom the messages had been sent. (I had twelve

brothers and sisters, so a bit of luck like that wasn't likely to come my way.)

Half a tick, Eric's nudging me. He says I mustn't keep on all day. All right, I'll pack in, but what about that South Sea story in the Boys' Friend in 1915. A boy, one of two brothers wrecked on a desert island, sees two eyes gleaming at him when he's alone in the dark of a cave. Another thrilling instalment next week. I longed for the week to pass as though I were immortal. And when it passed and the mystery was solved, they weren't the eyes of a baleful pre-historic monster, only those of a harmless goat. Ever been had? was a catch-phrase at the time. I felt that I had. And it wasn't fair - say what you like, it wasn't.

MANY HAPPY RETURNS:

by W. O. G. Lofts

A very happy birthday to the C.D. on its 30th anniversary, and it's like congratulating a very close and dear friend! I have much to thank the C.D. for. Not only its editor for keeping it going all these years, but also to many of its subscribers. By showing such interest in my researches, encouragement by letters, has resulted in me now having several bound books to my credit, plus my name in dozens of other biographies. As also a consequence, I am now consulted by literary agents, legal departments, publishing houses, and Universities throughout the world in all matters of research.

The C.D. has also resulted in me making dozens of friends. Not only in the hobby, but famous personalities as well. Through the years I became friendly with the editors of Magnet/Gem/U. J. /Detective Weekly/S. B. L. /School Friend/Film Fun/Bullseye/Rainbow/Tiny Tots/ and a host of other greatly loved papers. Directors, artists, and hundreds of authors. Many alas, have now passed on, but I still have lunch sessions with those that are left.

At this time, one must not forget those great enthusiasts of the hobby, and who contributed a lot to the C.D. pages, and as Herbert Leckenby phrased it so often 'The grim reaper has called', Len Packman, Gerry Allison, and Walter Webb. They must be with us in spirit today.

Many readers have expressed astonishment how I have managed to write, and do so much research for the C.D. over the years. The

answer is purely, a great love for all aspects for the hobby, and interest in all subjects. Nothing gives me more satisfaction in solving some little mystery, and to also help some reader, perhaps living in a remote spot in the world, and no chance to do the sleuthing himself. I'm fairly confident of still writing for the C.D. on its next landmark in the words of the famous Harrow school song 'Forty Years On'.

PEARLY LUSTRE

(An Appreciation from the girls of Cliff House School - and Mary Cadogan.)

How tophole that COLLECTORS' DIGEST is celebrating an unbroken thirty year run! As editor of the CLIFF HOUSE WEEKLY I know how much work and enthusiasm this represents.

BARBARA REDFERN



What-ho! Gratters and all that. C.D's a super tonic to us daughters of the Bulldog Breed. And even without its monocle, my wonky eye can cope with its large clear print. Keep the flag flying, old sport, for at least another thirty years. Cheer-oh!

JEMIMA CARSTAIRS

A Pearl Jubilee demands a real celebration, so I'm making a tray of my very special toffee for Eric Payne!

DOLLY JOBLING

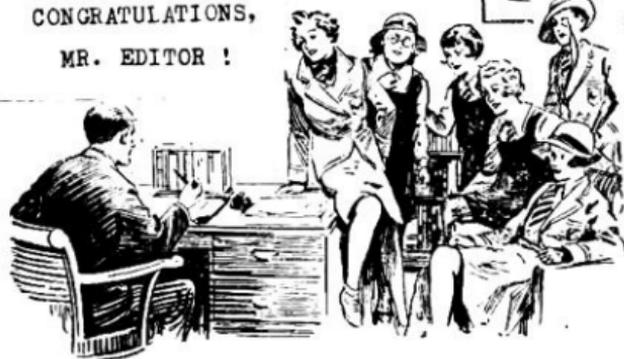
Oh dear! I was afraid Dolly would suggest that. Of course she'll burn the toffee to a cinder and set fire to our study chimney again. Never mind, Mr. Editor, you know it's the thought that counts. I always enjoy your magazine: it is so good to read those nice things about Harry and Bob in its pages.

MARJORIE HAZELDENE

I'm not over-keen on most literary rot but I must say C.D. is a thunderingly ripping stunt. Can't think of any way to improve it - except the addition of regular hockey hints. More power to your elbow!

CLARA TREVLYN

CONGRATULATIONS,
MR. EDITOR !



COLLECTORS' DIGEST is deservedly popular in the Cliff House staff-room - but I must protest at its illicit circulation amongst the girls! Most unsuitable for them to read so avidly a paper which, however attractive, is largely devoted to the exploits of mere males! (I vigorously endorse Clara's suggestion about a hockey column - and I trust that you have taken note of the excellence of the recent Ladies' cricket match at Lords.)

Miss A. BULLIVANT
(Maths and Drill Mistress)

Bless my soul! Thirty years of this charming little journal. It seems only yesterday that dear Mr. Quelch first showed me a copy and suggested I should take out a subscription for my Cliff House teachers, who have enjoyed it so much ever since.

PENELOPE PRIMROSE
(Headmistress)

It's orl verree wel four yew to gett bigg-headed with these complements, Mr. Edditer, butt yew arr stil missing yor graytest opertunnittee! As I wroat inn my larst letter, yor maggerzeen needs a reelly beyooterfull, brilliyant starr, sum-wun trooly luvvly by naytcher and in apeerence - me, of korss! Chukk away orl thoze artikles about sopy olde Wharton and Cherry and rottin greedee Billy - and deevoat yor payges to me! Yew wil nevvver reegrett itt - and C.D. wil go onn fromm sttrentge to sttrentge four menny, menny morr yeez!

BESSIE BUNTER

After rounding up these congratulatory notes from Cliff House I would like to add my own, though I still feel a 'new girl' when I consider the long, not-out run of C.D. I didn't discover it till the end of 1969, when I had the joy of starting as a reader with the Christmas issue, and the Annual.

My best Christmas present that year was the realization that so many people - C.D.'s readers and contributors - shared my nostalgic affection for the old papers. C.D. has brought me many friendships which I shall always value, - and it was COLLECTORS' DIGEST that inspired my first attempt at authorship (appropriately an article on Cliff

House School which appeared in the 1970 Annual). I must mention Eric Fayne's unfailing encouragement and courtesy: since sending him my first article I've blossomed out in other literary directions - but I shall always have a special feeling for the C.D.

Warmest thanks to all its contributors - and most of all to Eric Fayne (and Herbert Leckenby) who have given us so much.

MARY CADOGAN

C.D. SPECIAL NUMBERS

by J. Beck

There are those who would say that every issue of the C.D. is a special number and who am I to contradict, but the object of my little exercise is to tell of previous 'special' special editions.

Each centenary has been celebrated by an enlarged or double number, with a 48-page No. 100, a 60-page Spring Double No. 200 and a 60-page Special Christmas No. 300, which also celebrated the magazines 25th birthday. The 150th number was landmarked with a 44-page 'Special enlarged number' and a 56-page No. 250 also had the honour of being the coming of age issue.

With the old books which form the subject matter of the C.D., special numbers were all too few, apart from the Christmas Double Number issued before the first world war. But the C.D. must be the only present day publication to give its readers a regular bonus of seasonal enlarged issues. There have been 8 Christmas, 3 Spring, 2 Easter, 3 Summer and 1 Autumn special enlarged issues of 36 pages and 2 that celebrated nothing in particular but were nonetheless very welcome.

There has also been a special coronation No. (78), Sexton Blake Diamond Jubilee No. (83) and a Greyfriars Golden Jubilee No. (134) published in February 1958, No. 181, was a special Film number and 182 The Frank Richards Memorial Number which had 40-pages and featured tributes to that great author.

Mention should also be made of the famous 3A which exposed the Pearson swindles to the collecting world and no doubt saved others from being caught before the rogue was brought to summary justice in true old boys' book tradition.

Let us hope that there are many more special issues in the

future, but never the need for another 3A.

* * * * *

LET'S BE CONTROVERSIAL

No. 210. THE MAGIC THIRTY

In case it hasn't occurred to you yet, Collectors' Digest this month celebrates thirty years of amateur publication.

The job of C.D. is to keep alive the memories of those old papers which were produced for our entertainment and edification in the far-off days of our youth. Perhaps we might spare a few moments to dwell on those Hamilton papers which actually lived to celebrate their thirtieth birthday (not many of them did), and see just exactly what they were doing 30 years after their birth.

The Gem was born in March 1907. Thirty years later, in March 1937, they were still going strong with the re-prints of the successes of much earlier years. A Talbot series was in progress. Talbot was a popular character, but his impact was dulled down the years by over-exposure and by the constant harping back to the effects of his past when it caught up with him.

The first couple of long Talbot series had been superb, but, as time passed, some readers got the "we have been through all this before" feeling. By early 1937 Talbot had won the King's pardon. He went back to St. Jim's, but he was now too poor to resume as a pupil at the school. So, in a most unlikely story, "The Toff's Chance", he went back to fill the post of boot-boy, fallen vacant, in the New House at St. Jim's. This story had been entitled "Working His Way" in a 3-story Talbot series which first featured in the Gem in late 1914.

The secret of Talbot's birth, incidentally, and his relationship to Colonel Lyndon and Crooke, was never explained for Gem readers of the re-print period of the thirties, for the simple reason that the story, "The Housemaster's Homecoming", (a summer Double Number of the Gem in 1915) was never reprinted.

The Gem had the longest life of all the Hamilton publications.

The Magnet was born in February 1908. 30 years on, in February 1938, the Carter series was running. Carter was, of course, a relative of Billy Bunter, and his adventures are too well-known for us to

linger on them here. It was with the Carter series that the static nature of the plots of the later Magnets became evident. The plot was related in the opening story. It never developed, as plots had done so dramatically in earlier years. Each story was complete in itself. In each story Carter plotted and the plot was defeated. It could go on for a long time, till the author decided to cry "enough"! The Carter series went on for 12 weeks. You could have missed a tale or two in the middle without having any difficulty in picking up the threads.

I always regard the Carter series as one of the best of the latter-day Magnet, and enjoyed it.

Finally, the Boys' Friend. This did not become a Hamilton paper until early in 1915, but it had been born in 1895, the brain-child of that great editor Hamilton Edwards. A disgruntled Edwards left the Amalgamated Press somewhere around 1912, but he did not leave without making clear to his readers that he was leaving.

As a result of the war, the Boys' Friend passed into the hands of Hinton, who asked Charles Hamilton to create a new school for the paper. Hamilton did just that. He created Rookwood, and, a couple of years later, Cedar Creek.

The Boys' Friend attained its 30th birthday at the end of January 1925. The Rookwood story in that issue was "Bulkeley's Enemy". The enemy was Carthew of the Sixth, who found himself at daggers drawn with the school captain. Bulkeley had entered for the Head's Greek Prize. In bitter malice, Carthew went to the captain's study, while Bulkeley was absent, and destroyed Bulkeley's work. Then, his spiteful work done, Carthew turned to leave the study - and found himself locked in - to await Bulkeley's return.

It was one of those perfect little school stories which often made such impact on the Rookwood scene, maybe because the stories were shorter and the cast smaller.

No other of the papers to which Hamilton brought prosperity - the Popular, the Schoolboys' Own Library, and the Modern Boy - lived long enough to celebrate a Pearl Jubilee. But it has been pleasant to linger for a few minutes with those which did.

* * * * *

Our Serial from 70 years ago. Concluding chapters.

- MISSING -

Mr. Kidd's face was gloomy as he came out of the doctor's study. Dr. Holmes had not blamed him. But the good old doctor was deeply distressed at the disappearance of Jack Blake, and the house-master himself was very disturbed.

"The boy is certainly in the gipsy's hands," said Dr. Holmes. "Either he discovered something to Barengro's disadvantage, or else the ruffian intends to do a second stroke of business in the same way. That he will not keep faith is clear; as, although he has received the ransom, D'Arcy has not been released. Now, I suppose, we shall receive a demand for payment for Blake's release, under the threat of ill-usage to the boy. It is very unfortunate."

"I blame myself," said the house-master, looking harassed.

"Nonsense! The ruffian demanded that a boy should be sent with the money, and had Blake remained out of the vaults he would have been in no danger. The police were too close at hand for that. It was by going down the steps that he placed himself in the ruffian's hands. He acted, of course, with good intentions, but the result is very unfortunate. You say you have searched the vaults thoroughly."

"Yes; Mr. Skeet and myself left not a single spot unsearched."

"And there was no trace of the gipsy or of either boy?"

"None."

"Then I am afraid we are in Barengro's hands. We shall doubtless hear from him in the morning, and until then

we can only wait."

To this the house-master assented. He left the doctor; and as he went to his own quarters in the School House, he found Herries and Digby waiting for him at his door. They were both looking anxious. Mr. Kidd glanced at them kindly enough.

"You wish to speak to me, boys?"

"Yes, sir," said Digby.

"Come into my study."

Mr. Kidd opened the door and went in, and the chums followed him. Then they looked at each other dubiously. Neither exactly liked to begin.

"Well, my lads?" said the house-master quietly.

Digby nudged Herries, who blurted out:

"It's about Blake, sir."

Mr. Kidd nodded.

"Would you mind telling us, sir, where you sent him? You see, sir," Herries went on, gathering courage as he proceeded, "that brute Barengro has collared young D'Arcy, and we know he has a spite against Blake. We are afraid he may have done Blake some harm."

"That's what we are afraid of, sir," said Dig, encouraged by the house-master's kindly look. "If you wouldn't mind telling us --"

Mr. Kidd's brow wrinkled a little. He understood the anxiety of the boys, and sympathised with it. Although nothing had been said of the letters from the kidnapper, the whole school had decided that Arthur Augustus had been kidnapped

by the gipsy. If Blake failed to return, they would guess what had become of him. There could be no harm in telling the chums, therefore.

"I think it quite possible, my boys," said the housemaster gravely, "that Blake has fallen in with the gipsy. I do not believe that he has been hurt, but he is being kept away from the school. That is all. I hope that we shall find him soon; I may say that we are certain to do so. You need not be anxious about his personal safety."

Dig and Herries would have liked to ask more, but they could not do so very well; so they thanked Mr. Kidd and left the room. They went to Study No. 6 to consult.

"What's to be done?" said Herries desperately. "Kidlets means well, but they won't find Blake. I don't know where Kidd could have sent him, but if the gipsy's got him, he'll be shut up under the old castle somewhere."

"We searched there once, and found nothing."

"We saw the gipsy there," said Herries. "There's not the slightest doubt that he hides there, and that Blake and D'Arcy are there somewhere."

"Suppose we have another hunt?"

"That's my idea. But it's no good us two doing it alone. The gipsy is a ruffian, and he might collar us both and shove us along with Blake and D'Arcy. That wouldn't improve matters."

"My aunt! No, it wouldn't."

"Two of us wouldn't be enough. But five would make a big handful for Barendro to tackle, especially if we took cricket-stumps with us. Figgins & Co.

would come."

"Let's go and ask them."

"Come on, then," said Herries.

The chums sallied out of the School House, and marched across the quadrangle to the rival house. Usually the New House gave a warm reception to any School House boys venturing within their borders, but now there was peace between the rival factions. The disappearance of Arthur Augustus, and now the discovery that Blake was missing, had cast a shade of gloom over St. Jim's. For some days there had been hardly a single row between the two houses.

Herries and Digby entered the New House, and, unmolested, went up to the study shared by the New House chums, Figgins, Wynn, and Kerr. Figgins and Co. were at tea, and they gave a surprised but cordial welcome to their visitors.

"Hallo, you School House wasters! Any news of Blake?"

"No," said Herries. "He hasn't come back."

"Hope nothing's happened to him. Sit down, Kids, and have some grub. Shove over those sardines, Fatty. Now, Kerr, how long are you going to be opening that condensed milk? Make yourselves at home, Kids."

The School House chums accepted Figgins's hospitality. They were anxious, but anxiety had not spoiled their healthy, boyish appetites.

"Thanks, Figgy," said Herries.

"You're a good sort. But we didn't come here to feed, though. We want you to help us."

"To find Blake, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"I'm on," said Figgins instantly.

"Wire into those sardines. Have you any idea where he's got to?"

"I feel certain that Barenro's got him."

"What makes you so sure about it?"

"You can keep a secret, Figgy?"

"Of course I can. A dozen, if you like."

Herries explained how the chums had searched the ruined castle by night for the missing Arthur Augustus; how they had seen Barenro there; and Blake's theory of a secret passage.

"Well, you've been going it!" said Figgins, with a whistle of astonishment. "Why didn't you ask me to come with you? We might have laid the gipsy by the heels then. You School House chaps could not expect to make anything but a bungle of it."

Herries and Dig looked wrathful, but Kerr interposed and poured oil on the troubled waters.

"Shut up, Figgy, can't you?"

Honour the guest that is within the walls, you bounder."

"Sorry," said Figgins. "I forgot. Still, I wish I had been there. What's your idea, Kids? To have another search for Blake and D'Arcy in the castle?"

"Yes. If five of us go we shall be able to handle the gipsy if we fall in with him. What do you say?"

"Jolly good idea! We'll go the minute we have finished tea. We shall be late in for calling-over, but that can't be helped. If we could find Blake and bring him back, that would get us off all right. Wire in and make a good meal, and we'll start."

They laid in a good supply of provisions - internally. Then they prepared for the expedition. Avoiding the watchful eyes of prefects, they slipped away from the school, each with a stump hidden under his coat. They hurried down the road and took the footpath through the wood.

It was a dark, fine evening, with stars glimmering in the sky. A dim, soft light was falling on the grey old ruins as the five juniors entered them. Herries led the way directly towards the opening of the vaults. He stopped there to light his lantern, and Digby started another.

"Looks beastly dark, doesn't it?" said Kerr, with a shiver.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Figgins suddenly. "What's that?"

It was a sudden sound from the grim blackness below. The five juniors stood as if petrified, their ears strained intently to listen. The sound of a voice, raised in a savage imprecation, reached their ears. They looked at each other quickly. It was the voice of Barenro, the gipsy. Figgins made Herries and Dig a sign to extinguish the lanterns. The lights were promptly put out. Then Figgins stepped on the top stair and bent to listen.

There was a sound as of a man growling with pain, and Figgy caught a gleam of light. He crept silently lower, and stared into the vault. Then he stood quite still, his heart beating hard. Equally silent, equally tense, the others crowded behind him. Each of them gripped a stump in his hand. Ruffian as the gipsy was, they did not fear him with such odds on their side. They looked over

Figgins's shoulder at the gipsy. He was standing in the vault beside a lantern, which was resting on a stone.

There were streaks of blood on his swarthy face from a deep cut in the forehead. He was binding a neckerchief about the wound, and the cloth was dyed through in several places. All the time he was muttering curses.

It was evident that Barengro had been in the wars. He had received a severe blow on the head, and the blood had flowed freely. His face was unusually pallid under the dusk of the skin.

He had his back partly to them. The pain of his wound had perhaps caused him to forget his usual caution. Figgins glanced round at his followers.

Fortune had favoured the searchers at last. They had come upon the kidnapper, and at a moment when it would be easy to take him by surprise. Herries, Digby, Kerr and Wynn met Figgy's meaning glance with a nod. They understood, and they gripped their stumps hard.

"Come on!" muttered Figgins.

(THIS OLD, OLD STORY WILL BE CONCLUDED IN OUR GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER NEXT MONTH)

EXHIBITION AT EASTBOURNE

Mr. Neil Beck, the Stock Editor of the East Sussex County Library, has put on a Hamilton Exhibition at the Eastbourne Library, where his wife, Susan, is also an official. Material for the display was drawn from the Beck family collection, and some jackets were supplied for display by Messrs. Howard Baker.

Magnet, Gems, S.O.L's, etc., plus a number of post-war publications were also on view, as well as a number of Howard Baker re-prints drawn from the County Library's stock.

Interest was quite keen, Mr. Beck tells us, and the purpose of the Exhibition was explained in a leaflet for the benefit of visitors.

POINT OF VIEW

HERBERT HOLMES of Barrow writes: I have just read Hamilton's final series in the Gem, about Silverson. I think it as good as anything he ever wrote for plot and material. He certainly was on the ball with this one. Entertaining right through.

Re the editorial comment concerning "Nipper", yes, I liked him as Nipper, but I liked him more when introduced into St. Frank's as Bennett, the schoolboy acting as the school character and not narrating parts of the stories himself. A moot point, as you remark, but my view.

REVIEWS

THE MAGNET COMPANION '77

(Ed.) George Beal
(Howard Baker: £3.25)

Obviously publishers know what their readers want - they have to, if they are to remain in business - but it is quite surprising that there is a demand for yet another reprint of the total list of titles of Magnet stories. And, in fact, this neat little book gives us the total list not once, but twice. We get them all in chronological order, under their years of birth, followed by the whole lot again in alphabetical order.

One gets a sense of "deja vu", but I doubt if that matters a lot to Greyfriars fans.

There is another one of those biographical accounts of Frank Richards, the like of which there has been a glut down the years and especially this year. This one, in parts, is uncannily familiar. The author's career, so well-known to all but the novices, is detailed, and accounts of his childhood and his forebears (accounts which must be apochryphal in places) are given. We are told yet again that Hamilton's father was a carpenter (strenuously denied by Charles Hamilton's niece), and the guesswork that Hamilton went to a "Private School for Young Gentlemen" is printed again as a fact.

A list is given of the Greyfriars Schoolboys' Own Libraries, with the serial numbers of the Magnets from which they were taken. This is part of a massive work which was undertaken by Roger Jenkins and John Shaw, purely for love, for Collectors' Digest Annual of 1959.

There are interesting biographical comments on the Magnet's editors, artists, and substitute writers. In addition, 19 pages are devoted to the titles of the Howard Baker Greyfriars facsimile volumes, with an account of the contents of each. Presumably, this section is to whet the appetite of the newcomer or to revive memories for people who already possess the books. The Howard Baker Holiday Annuals from 1973 are also listed, and mention made of the Greyfriars contents.

The book is attractively illustrated with Magnet interior pictures down the years.

To sum up, one would think the main value of the book will be to the newcomers, but there is no doubt that some who know it all will find

it handy for a quick reference and will want it on their shelves.

GREYFRIARS HOLIDAY ANNUAL 1977 (Howard Baker: £4.50)

This volume is a gorgeous Christmas treat, full of surprises, for the Hamilton fan. It just can't miss hitting the bullseye.

The 1934 Christmas period in the Magnet was devoted to a festive season spent at Hilton Hall. This has never been one of the paper's most remembered series, but it is novel, with its background of Blackmoor and its prison, not to mention an escaped convict, and with the Famous Five and Bunter augmented by a party of Fifth-formers. Needless to add, Bunter blackmailed his way into the fifth-form party. This series comprised three Magnets.

Next comes "A Rift at Rookwood", specially written for the 1929 Holiday Annual. It holds the interest.

One of the most fascinating items in this Annual is "Talbot's Christmas", in which the Toff goes to spend Yuletide with Tom Merry and his friends. It is a period piece, naturally, appearing as it did in December 1914, and it is all the more absorbing for that. Set in the rare atmosphere of Laurel Villa, with Miss Priscilla and Hannah spreading a pleasant scent of old lavender, there is plenty of excitement with a German spy who plays ghost, and Wally and Joe Frayne turn up to pull the heart-strings of those who remember.

There was no Christmas Number as such in 1914. This one, though it appeared in Christmas Week, was named as a Winter Number. But that was not unknown in the Gem.

A pleasant surprise for Cliff House enthusiasts is the inclusion of a School Friend of Christmas 1924. The story "Flap Derwent's Lonely Christmas", illustrated by Dodshon, starred a character created by Pentelow in the Gem serial "Twins from Tasmania".

A Magnet from 1919 "The Terrible Uncle" is a story at the tail end of a series within a series. Wally Bunter was at Greyfriars in the shoes of his cousin Billy, but the secondary series related the reform of Snoop. Some readers will regard it as sub-standard Hamilton, though it is typical of the period.

Finally, a Schoolboys' Own Library, "Seven Schoolboys and Solomon", blown up in size to meet the format of this volume, and

consequently easier on ageing eyes. A completely delightful story from a superb holiday series of the Gem of 1921. The 4-story series loses a few chapters and a sequence or two in this version, but it is but little spoiled, and is entrancing reading.

The charm of this volume is its inconsequential variety. A delight for Christmas, it should be a best-seller.

* * * * *

The Postman Called

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

SYD SMITH (Clovelly, Australia): I love the "Small Cinema" feature. It's like getting the old film programmes of the local cinema we went to all those years ago. Were we ever that young?

N. GAYLE (Exmouth): I have just discovered St. Frank's and am avidly devouring every Lee I can get my hands on. The twist in the end of the Ezra Quirke series rivals anything I have read in Agatha Christie.

S. PERRY (Maidstone): I first learned of C.D. through the Sexton Blake Library, which was struggling at that time. In their Readers' Letters they mentioned a Sexton Blake Circle. The only condition for belonging to that Circle was that one had to subscribe to Collectors' Digest which I, for one, have never regretted. I started with No. 157, January 1960, just after Herbert Leckenby had died. After 17 years C.D. has not altered a great deal, and is as fascinating as ever. Congratulations to our Editor. May he live for ever.

LEN WORMULL (Romford): It is now ten years since my chance discovery of C.D., an event happily coinciding with my own renewed interest in the old papers. With an almost complete set for reference, what a rich panoramic feast it all provides. Looking back on its salad days - young though hardly inexperienced - this was a period of great enthusiasms and absorbing interest; the "Big Three" competing for space with other past favourites. A period of awakening and wonderful bargains.

For all-round brilliance and sparkle, I think the Sixties was unbeatable, the year 1964 surpassing all others. What a year for the campaigners of Hamilton and Brooks! The no-holds-barred confrontation,

bringing forth some of the most stimulating correspondence ever seen. After which it was back to square one, with neither side the victor!

At thirty C. D. has mellowed with age. We are all a little older, the ardour perhaps not so intense as it once was. The world which was once ours is still faithfully projected, entrancing and fascinating as always. Happy anniversary, and thanks a million!

Miss MARGO RUDD (Montreal): It's hard adequately to express my great pleasure in Collectors' Digest. I find "Danny's Diary" especially interesting now, as he is beginning to talk about the Magnets that Dad and I have so painstakingly collected. I'm very happy remembering these splendid stories with Danny. The discussions and arguments in the Digest have prompted me to re-read our entire collection of Magnets and Gems once again. I started at 1925 and have progressed to 1927; No. 996, "Bunter's Brainstorm", a long-time favourite of mine.

Thanks again for providing Dad and me with such enjoyment.

DEREK SMITH (London): I expect you're right about the Parker Pyne stories, but I don't know which magazine commissioned them. The Strand Magazine printed "The £10 Adventure" in the November 1932 issue. This was a longer and more enjoyable version of "The Case of the City Clerk" which later appeared in "Parker Pyne Investigates". I think it was the original (Strand) text which was reprinted in the THRILLER, though I haven't seen this issue.

Besides the twelve stories in the book, there are two more Pyne yarns in Agatha Christie's American short story collection "The Regatta Mystery" (1939) - the title story and "Problem at Pollensa Bay".

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WANTED: Howard Baker reproductions Magnet, Volumes 22, 23 and 24.

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BIOGRAPHY OF A SMALL CINEMA

No. 32. SAN FRANCISCO & CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS

We started the new term modestly with a feature from Warner Bros: Guy Kibbee in "Modern Madness". The following week, for some reason which completely eludes me all these years later, we played an "all Patsy Kelly programme". This comprised Patsy Kelly in the M. G. M. picture "Kelly the Second", plus two Hal Roach comedies, each featuring the comedy pair of Patsy Kelly and Thelma Todd, and entitled respectively "Opened by Mistake" and "The Misses Stooze".

Next from M. G. M. came Jack Haley and Arthur Treacher in "Mr. Cinderella".

Then came one of my own favourite films of all time - "San Francisco", starring Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy and Jeanette Macdonald. This superb film culminated with the great earthquake of 1905, and I doubt whether the spectacle has ever been surpassed in the cinema. Great entertainment by any standard. Years later, M. G. M. reissued it, and we played it again. I have seen it many times since.

After this came the latest Laurel & Hardy full-length feature, "Our Relations" from M. G. M. This was, I believe, the first of the comedians' pictures which was directed throughout by Stan Laurel, and many of their fans consider it their finest film.

Now came a picture from Warner Bros. which I recall with some wonder. Very long - over 15,000 feet, which means

about 3 hours playing time - it was Fredric March in "Anthony Adverse". I remember nothing at all about the story (which was a dramatisation of a modern American novel of the same name by one, Hervey Allen), and that fact alone makes me wonder, for it was heralded well in advance as a screen masterpiece. I cannot recall whether it was good or bad, set in modern times or in period, or anything at all about it. The film, the book, and the author all seem long forgotten. I wonder just how many of my readers now remember anything at all about "Anthony Adverse".

Next came a superb drama from M. G. M. This was Spencer Tracy and Sylvia Sidney in "Fury", a story - rather terrifying in its way - of how a totally innocent man, just a chance visitor, was caught up in mob violence and accused of murder. Exceptional entertainment.

Next, a very modest little British quickie: Claude Hulbert in "It's Not Cricket". Not a bad little comedy, in its way, I seem to recall, but purely a film released by Warner Bros. to help their Renters' Quota and actually played by them at the Warner Theatre, showing only early in the day to fill, in this case, their Exhibitors' Quota. We ourselves played it simply as a novelty in our school Cricket Week, and the boys chuckled over L. B. W. (Lemon Barley-Water, as it was first designated in this particular bit of screenfare.)

Now, from Warner Bros., Humphrey Bogart in "Black Legion". I am sure that our audiences heaved a sigh of joy when "Black Legion" came on the screen, for earlier in the programme had been "Electricity and Magnetism" which sounds very instructive, though they may well have enjoyed a technicolor travelogue "Pearl of the Pacific", which may have been one of the earliest of the Fitzpatrick Traveltalks of which we played scores as time went on.

Then, from M. G. M., came yet another which I place in my own top ten. This was a lovely film, "Captains Courageous", beautifully adapted from the Kipling story of the fishing-boat "We're Here". Spencer Tracy was superb as Manuel, Lionel Barrymore gorgeous as the skipper, Micky Rooney delightful as the ship's boy, and Freddie Bartholomew excellent as the little son of a wealthy father - the boy who fell overboard from the liner and was picked up by the fishermen. After the war, M. G. M. reissued it, we played it again, and wept again at its unforgettable artistry. Quite truly, it is a long, long time since the cinema made anything so darn good.

To wind up the term, from Warner Bros., came Erroll Flynn in "The Green Light" which was probably good, but is quite forgotten now.

And now the Small Cinema was moving house, and during a vacation our Kalee Sevens were changed for Kalee Eights. Our sound system which had served us so well over the years since we installed sound, was changed to the latest R. C. A. equipment. Considerable technical advance had been made in those years, and the new equipment was so much smaller, neater, and more compact. Clumsy dials

became buttons or small switches, with every control close at hand.

Somewhere about this time, too, we put in a splendid new nonsync machine, which was the last word in perfection in playing records over the loud speakers before programmes began and between films.

We had a service contract with a fine firm of cinema engineers - the branch we dealt with was somewhere in the Morden District, not far from the Kingston by-pass. Every vacation our equipment was "serviced", but if, by chance, anything happened to go wrong during a performance, the speed with which an engineer arrived in answer to an S. O. S. was remarkable. A professional cinema could lose quite a lot of money if there was a break-down. That side of the matter did not apply to us, of course, but we still benefited from a splendid service.

With regular servicing, a break-down was very rare indeed. We may have had one or two, but the only time I can recall sending an urgent call for assistance was when we broke down in the middle of a film named "The Boys From Syracuse". We lost about half an hour, and I recall omitting a couple of thousand feet of the film in order to make up for the lost time at that particular performance.

In passing, the head of the firm was a Mr. Robert Hollyman, a very fine man. We became very friendly, and we often visited one another socially. Only a few years ago, Mr. Hollyman retired, and went to live at a place named Ashford, near Barnstaple. There he took up painting as a hobby, and, in fact, sold many pictures. He was one of the leading lights

in an Arts Society in Ashford.

He died suddenly of a heart attack about a year ago. I had never lost contact with him and his charming wife, and I was deeply saddened to learn of his death.

One final memory from the time that the Small Cinema moved to its new abode. Every week, for many years, the Kinematograph Weekly, published by Odhams, had come by post to the Small Cinema. This was (and perhaps still is) a large, glossy magazine, published for the exhibitor. Bought in the shops or from the bookstalls, it cost about 1s/6d. But bonafide exhibitors could receive it by post every week for considerably less - I think at about 25/- a year.

I had had it for many years, ever since the Small Cinema began. When we were moving, it was a problem to know what to do with hundreds of Kine Weeklies, as well as plenty of copies of The Cinema, which was another trade magazine.

The front door of our Annexe, as we called it, was covered in with a large conservatory, and I placed this great stack of magazines in the conservatory while I

decided what to do with them.

A man - an "old rags and bones" man with a barrow - came to the door. He offered to take them away. "You can have the lot for £2", I told him. "I wouldn't pay for them, but I'll take them away for nothing," he replied. "They're not for disposal," I told him. "Leave them where they are."

That night when I went to bed at about 11, the great pile was still there. Next morning, when I rose about 7, every single copy had gone. "Old Rags and bones" had obviously come back in the middle of the night and cleared off with the lot.

It is many years now since I set eyes on a Kine Weekly, though I subscribed to it regularly through our more than quarter of a century of booking films. Sad to say, I have not now one single copy of the old Kine Weekly among my souvenirs, though there is plenty of other material saved to keep my memories green.

(ANOTHER ARTICLE IN THIS SERIES SHORTLY)

£65 plus box of 50 King Edward 'Invincible' cigan offered for thirty Dandy, Beano, Magic Comics 1937 through 1939.

Exchange Only: Comics; Skipper 1 to 6; Rover, Hotspur, Wizard, Adventure; pre-war Radio/Film Fun, Tip Top, Jingles, Jolly, Jester, Joker, etc.

Few 1936/8 American Comic Books; The Funnies, Star Ranger, Funny Pages, Funny Picture Stories. Some 1950's. Worlds of Fear, Adventures into Terror, etc.

Annuals; Dandys Desperate Dan, Dandy Monster Comics 1941/47/50; Beano Book 1942; Film/Radio Fun, Knockout runs; Frank Topham's 'Invisible Dick', Funny Wonder 1937; Jingles 1937; Mickey Mouse 1933/46; Skipper 1936; Wizard 1940; Adventureland 1927 and others, inc. Rover 1934. WANTED: Dandy, Beano Magic Comics 1937 through 1940.

G. HARDAKER

14 ACREGATE, LITTLE DIGMOOR, SKELMERSDALE, LANCS.

NOSTALGIA?

by M. S. Fellows

With reference to the letter from N. Gayle (Exmouth) in the August edition of "Collectors' Digest", I can see no reason why objective criticism of the work of Frank Richards should not be possible. Whether it is wanted; or even whether it is desirable is quite another matter. Nevertheless, even someone who read the Magnet in his youth should be able to write literary criticism of the works if he has been trained so to do.

I can see N. Gayle's point. Most of the writing is pure nostalgia; and when it is not it tends to be of the 'sociological' variety which is often obnoxious.

Nostalgia needs no defence. When it is healthy, there is something warm and satisfying about it. I would guess that there is some psychological value in it. It can be healing.

For those who require something more about the objective side of the writings, perhaps I can offer a small contribution - a mere beginning to the examination of the text.

I have recently been concerned with the matter of Readability in children's books. In this connection, there are a number of formulae which offer a rough guide to the level of difficulty of a text. Most of them involve measuring word and sentence length.

The two formulae which I have used successfully are the Fog Index and the Mugford Readability Chart.

It occurred to me that it would be interesting to apply them to "The Magnet" and try thereby to ascertain what Reading Age a young person today would have to have in order to cope successfully with the writing of Frank Richards. (Reading Age is not, of course, the same as chronological age; but one would, perhaps, find it interesting to look back and remember at what age one was reading "The Magnet" in one's youth and coping successfully with it.)

In order to apply the two formulae, it was necessary to take a number of samples of the writing. For this experiment, my samples came from Magnets numbers 1059, and 1064; and some from 1065.

Both the Fog Index and the Mugford Chart calculations revealed that a Reading Age of 13+ is necessary in order to be able to read "The

Magnet" successfully.

This is an average, taken from a large number of samplings.

It is interesting that with the Mugford Chart, which is, perhaps, more discriminating, there were indications that one or two samples of text required a Reading Age above 15+. Beyond that age, the Chart does not give a Reading Age, but offers a 'Difficulty Index'. This was as high as 18.

A typical passage which required a higher reading ability was one on Page 9 of Number 1065, where Frank Richards was writing about Mr. Gedge's attitude to "assault and battery". The text includes some fairly sophisticated words.

Another sample required only a Reading Age of 12. This was a passage with plenty of action and dialogue.

The results of these formulæ are, of course, based on the reading ability of large numbers of children and young people in this country and the U.S.A. in recent years.

As I remember, my contemporaries in the 1930's had no difficulty at all in reading the "Magnet" and they were much younger than 12 and attended elementary schools, grammar schools and even public schools. I never remember them saying that they found any difficulty in the style or vocabulary. Yet many of the 12-year-olds that I try to teach today would certainly have some difficulty with a passage like the one about Mr. Gedge, mentioned above.

* * * * *

DESERT ISLAND BOOKS

by Larry Morley

If we were asked to select eight books to read while stranded on a desert island, the choice would be difficult. We might be stuck there for a long time, and variety would be essential.

I believe that nostalgia plays a big part in the enjoyment of the old papers. We pick up a copy of a certain paper and say to ourselves: 'I remember buying this as if it were yesterday.'

With this in mind I would like to select eight items and place them more or less in order of time.

My first selection is a comic - but to my mind a very special comic. Up to the present I have not come across another copy. It is the

1937 Double Christmas number of FUNNY WONDER.

For a number of years I used to collect my FUNNY WONDER every Friday night from a paper-shop owned by two spinster ladies. The usual price was 1d.

A couple of weeks before the Christmas of 1937 a special double number was issued, price twopence. I mentioned this to my mother and she replied that times were hard and she just could not afford to give me the extra penny. As I approached the paper shop I reasoned that maybe they would not notice that the comic was twopence that week.

I picked it up and handed over the coin. The lady appeared to notice nothing unusual and I left the shop. Imagine my dismay when I got outside and found the free gift was missing. (I forget what it was.)

I paced up and down in front of the shop for a while in a dilemma: what to do? Give up the gift or risk being found out? Throwing caution to the wind I re-entered the shop. 'I lost the free gift', I stammered. Giving me a very old-fashioned look she handed it to me. 'You dropped it on the floor,' she said.

Now I wonder if she knew the correct price of the comic and let me have it half-price in the spirit of the Yuletide season.

My second choice is a HOTSPUR book. They came out every year but unfortunately never dated them. All of these annuals of the 1930's looked alike.

This choice is because I took the HOTSPUR for a year or two. I loved to read of Red Circle School. The Big Five - WIZARD, ROVER, ADVENTURE, HOTSPUR and SKIPPER were big sellers in my neck of the woods. I knew of only two boys who read THE MAGNET and THE GEM and they were grammar school chaps with superior attitudes who cracked jokes in dog Latin and French.

I collected my HOTSPUR on a Tuesday and this was washday at home. How I dreaded coming home from school for dinner (or lunch as they call it in the South). The kitchen would be full of steam and soap-suds with my mother leaning over a zinc tub pounding away with the 'dolly'.

'What's for dinner, Ma?' It was a daft question: the menu was always the same: 'bubble and squeak' - fried potatoes and cabbage left over from Sunday. How I hated the steaming plateful of greasy spuds

and yellow cabbage! Even today I can't look at it without a shudder.

Choice number three is **FILM FUN ANNUAL** for 1939. The first book I paid for entirely off my own bat. The method of payment was as follows; around October our Sunday paper-man would come around taking orders for Christmas. We called the paper-man Hannen Swaffer because he looked like the late Dean of Fleet Street: dirty, shoulder-length grey hair, always smoking half a cigarette. I never saw him with a full one in his mouth. Rumour had it that he bought packets of half-smoked fags. He wore a large floppy hat.

You gave him your order and paid for it a copper or two per week, and he marked the payments off on a little card. The Annual cost 3/6d, and believe me, I really worked to pay for that book. By Christmas I felt I had earned it. One had to tramp miles for a penny on errands, but on the Sunday before Christmas Day, when Hannen Swaffer delivered the book in its pristine greaseproof cover, what a wonderful feeling of achievement and ownership!

Item four is **JUST WILLIAM** by Richmal Crompton. The first book I borrowed from a public library in the autumn of 1940. Len Packman used to talk about his 'purple period' which I believe was 1917; my 'purple period' was the autumn of 1940, because with the gas lamps painted blue and the time of the year, the streets did look purple.

In a room attached to the Miners' Welfare Club, the branch library was situated. A lady opened it every Thursday at seven o'clock. Next door was a dance-hall in which dancing lessons were given. In that little library I discovered all the hitherto unknown delights of literature: the works of Conan Doyle, Leslie Charteris, Zane Grey, and many others. I did not discover the delights of Greyfriars until the winter of 1940. Up to that time I had been an avid reader of **WIZARD**, **ADVENTURE**, **HOTSPUR**, etc. While confined to bed with an attack of German measles (those Nazis got everywhere), I was presented with a seven years' run of **THE MAGNET** by a young fellow who had been called up for the R. A. F.

I remember trying to read the smallish print by the sickly light of a night-light. My mother shouted from downstairs 'Put those papers down, you'll go blind.' To remind me of this period may I take a 1940 **HOLIDAY ANNUAL**?

In the January of 1945 I was unfortunate enough, together with thousands of others, to be in Holland, a humble infantryman in the York & Lancs (49th Division). The German armies were on the run more or less surrounded by the 1st British Army, American 9th and Canadian. To stop the advance they blew up the land dykes, causing all but higher ground to be flooded. Our battalion was split up into separate units, all situated on small islands. I can honestly say I have never been so cold and miserable in my life, freezing to death in a trench, staring at the distant enemy and kicking the Bren gun to relieve my feelings. This somewhat upset the gunner, who used to rebuke me in a Brummigan accent. I can't repeat what he said, this being a family magazine.

After two weeks in the line we were relieved and sent back to a rest centre at Eindhoven. There we got fairly comfortable billets and hot food, also a free cinema show. The film they showed us was 'Tommy Trinder in 'Sailors Three'. There was a song in it called 'All Over the Place'. I remember two or three hundred voices all singing the song along with Trinder; it was very touching yet at the same time it cheered me up. Life wasn't so bad, after all.

To remind me of these times I would like to take a PICTURE SHOW ANNUAL for 1944. The film 'Sailors Three' was mentioned in this with a page of 'stills'.

It wasn't until I met Len and Josie Packman that I became interested in the Sexton Blake saga. Thanks to them I have since read and enjoyed hundreds of stories: wonderful tales by such writers as Gwyn Evans, Teed and Murray. I will be forever in their debt.

To remind me of my introduction to Blake and the Packmans I would like to choose a SEXTON BLAKE ANNUAL, any year of the 1930's. Like the Thompson annuals, they were never dated, or so I believe.

My final choice is any copy of the COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL, to remind me of the wonderful people I have met since belonging to the London branch of the Old Boys' Book Club and the occasional Midland and Northern members whom I met at the Chesterfield dinners in Herbert Leckenby's time.

An armful of books and papers to bring back bitter-sweet memories and to pass away the time on my desert island.

puzzled frowns appeared on the faces of members. In the end Bill Lofts and Edward Witten were joint winners.

Jack Doupe gave his list of "Desert Island Books" (5 boys' books and 5 adult books that he would take to a desert island - Bible and Shakespeare excluded). Jack's wartime experiences included service in Indian and Burman waters as well as New Zealand and the South Seas. He aroused members envy with hints of a visit to Tahiti!

Some interesting discussion followed.

Mary then played cassettes of her interview (with Arthur Marshall) on Woman's Hour in a discussion of Gillian Freeman's book on Angela Brazil, which included a discussion on Charles Hamilton; and on her interview by Gordon Clough on Charles Hamilton; she concluded by playing a recording of the song "Amy, wonderful Amy" about Amy Johnson - Mary had at an earlier meeting given a talk on girls' flying stories.

Jack Overhill, an experienced broadcaster with 54 broadcasts to his name, led the chorus of congratulations to Mary on these excellent talks.

Bill Lofts reverted to the Sherlock Holmes theme with an account of Edgar Wallace, when he was writing racing columns in one of the London papers.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to Vic and Mrs. Hearn for their hospitality.

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LONDON

The Blakiana meeting at East Dulwich was very well attended and the 125 mint copies of the S. B. L. for sale soon found eager purchasers. Two readings enjoyed were those by Roger Jenkins and Bob Blythe. Roger's was two humorous chapters from Magnet 1078, the Japer of Greyfriars and Bob Blythe's was the nostalgic one of newsletter, October 1959.

Three competitions were held, the Eliminator, General Knowledge and Confectionery. Four winners of the first one, Bob Blythe, Reuben Godsave, Brian Doyle and Ray Hopkins. Josie Packman won the second and Winifred Morss won the third.

Winifred gave details of the Walthamstow Frank Richards' Exhibition which will be held at the public library, 25th November until 14th December.

Josie Packman gave a short paper about the mysteries of Dectective Weekly.

Details of the new Edgar Wallace pub were given out.

Finally the luncheon party at the Rembrandt on 21st November. Cost of tickets is £4. Kindly inform secretary whether intending to be present.

The Club was very appreciative of gifts from W. Westwater and C. White, to the Hamilton library of the Gems recently advertised for.

UNCLE BENJAMIN

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NORTHERN

Saturday, 9th October, 1976

Harry Barlow began our evening with a cine-film entitled 'Greyfriars Fantasy', new to some of our members and still fresh and entertaining to the others. Harry had made his film at an old Grammar School in Huddersfield, and with the signs 'Oak Lane' and 'To Friardale' in a secluded countryside it was easy to imagine that we were actually seeing Greyfriars.

A handsome, dark-haired schoolboy (Harry Wharton?) beckoned us in and were able to see a game of football on 'Little Side', boys with books hurrying along - and - dare we say it - there was Bunter himself!

We saw the old stone chapel and school buildings - yes, we could quite easily imagine Greyfriars. Which was, after all, Harry's intention!

Harry then followed on with an epidiascope show and he presented a varied selection of cigarette cards showing the Royal Jubilee, film stars, soldiers, steam engines and old motor-cars!

Tom Roach followed by presenting a quiz based on a record he had made of various voices. The only clue given was that the voices were played according to the alphabetical order of their owners' names!

The winner was Bill Williamson with eleven correct, second

Harold Truscott with nine and three tied in third place with seven each - Harry Blowers and Jack and Annie Allison.

Tom presented Bill, the winner, with a generous box of home-grown apples!

URGENTLY WANTED FOR MY COLLECTION:- Wizards, 1263, 1269, 1376.
 Comets, 10, 110. Suns, 27, 31, 42, 131, 145, 146, 150, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 164. Good prices paid or will exchange.

GUY SMITH, 87 BROWNS LANE
TAMWORTH, STAFFS. Tel. Tamworth 62309.

WANTED: Nelson Lees, old series, 112, 114, 116, 120, 122, (132-146), (150-155), 186, 237, or bound volumes between (112-155).

JACK GREAVES, 20 CAMBRAY ROAD, BLACKPOOL, FY1 2LX.

WANTED: "Comic Lives", 1920's, especially Christmas Numbers, exchanges.
PAT CREIGHAN, 25 BELGIUM SQUARE, MONAGHAM, EIRE.

JOLLY JACKS ANNUAL by Derek Adley

During that trip down memory lane, back to my childhood just before the last war, I have always been filled with nostalgia for those children's Annuals that gave me so much pleasure. Those widely popular titles such as Holiday, Hotspur, Film Fun and others from the 'big two' A. P. and D. C. Thomson do of course rank very high in my memories, but I have always had that attachment for the Annuals published for the Newspaper Corporations.

My great favourite was Teddy Tail Annual which was one of the Daily Mail's contributions, the main attraction for me being the artwork of Herbert S. Foxwell. My affection for this Annual probably drew me to another similar special from the Sunday Dispatch, Jolly Jack's Annual, the title character being featured every Sunday in its pages.

As with Teddy Tail Annual, Jolly Jack's was actually published for the newspaper by William Collins and first appeared in 1934 though dated 1935 on the cover. Both Daily Mail and Sunday Dispatch were of course products of Associated Newspapers.

Again the foremost artist was Foxwell but whilst his animal drawings were always unforgettable I found his studies of boyish faces quite extraordinary especially Jolly Jack. They were so mature as if he was drawing an adult in children's clothes, certainly he didn't seem at ease when drawing boys and indeed his drawing of Jolly Jack was much the same as that of Rollocking Rollo in Teddy Tail Annual.

Naturally as this was Jolly Jack's Annual the cover was graced by this character, by Foxwell as stated, but I suspect at times some of the inside smaller illustrations of this hero may have come from another hand. Incidentally in the same way that Foxwell had taken over Teddy Tail from Charles and Harry Folkard so was Jolly Jack originally a Folkard character.

The format was almost identical to that of Teddy Tail Annual with word stories of Jolly Jack together with some in



No. 214.

Now Novel Every Wednesday.

picture form, 'The Captives of Cannibal Island' being an example of the former and 'Jolly Jack Plays a Trick' and 'Captain Bowsprit's Tug-of-War' depicting the picture story.

A regular yearly game such as 'A Race to Jolly Jack's Treasure' and Jolly Jack's own page 'A Letter to You' together with a poem illustrated by Foxwell all served to make it a Christmas treat.

Another popular feature in the Annual was the adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Leo and their 'boys' and 'girls'. These were uncannily like the feature that Foxwell was so famous for in Tiger Tim, one character, Lulu, being the double of Tiger Tilly. Reservedly, I say Foxwell must have trod on someone's toes with this feature and I must further add that any follower of Tiger Tim's adventures must include these items in Jolly Jack's Annual. Two outstanding examples being 'Christmas Fun With Mr. Leo' and 'Chubby and Lulu Collect Mrs. Leo's Parcels'.

With the many Annuals appearing at this period there were a regular set of contributors that supplied very short stories for this age group and they were in abundance in Jolly Jack's Annual. Ruth Cobb who also illustrated her own story 'The Kings Birthday Cake'. E. M. Shawe with 'Snowman Ahead' and lots of other writers such as Agnes M. Pape, Cecily H. Drury, Hilary Grane, E. Noel Roberts and John Oliver Essex. Though these names appeared in so many Annuals around this period I must confess I know little of them or their identities. The rather more famous Captain Frank Shaw was in evidence with 'Rescue By Air' and also there was an animal drawing feature by the comic artist Walter Bell.

Jolly Jack's adventures aboard the Fun Ship also featured his companions Captain Bowsprit, Captain Spinnaker, Timothy and Pimple the Parrot. Together with Mr. and Mrs. Leo there was also the odd one page feature drawn again by Foxwell, Professor Simple and his boys, the first Annual included 'Professor Simple's Dashing Boys' and 'The Origin of a Christmas Pudding by Professor Simple's Boys'.

On reflection I can see now that from its format and presentation this Annual was directed at the very young reader and offers little to those who study literary values. Probably its contents now seem somewhat dull, but for me and those who remember it in its original period it was a real prize for the Christmas stocking.

The last issue appeared in 1939 and was dated for 1940, from then Jolly Jack died. I know little of its history from then on in the Sunday Dispatch but I suspect the demise of the Annual meant that Jolly Jack vanished into obscurity.

For the record, back in 1933, 20th August to be exact, the Sunday Dispatch gave away free, Jolly Jack's Weekly, originally an eight page supplement this had a black and green front and back page with a black and orange centre spread. Foremost contents were 'Chubby and Lulu' drawn by Foxwell and 'Jolly Jack's Fun Ship' drawn by at that time by Harry Folkard. Other Foxwell items were 'Toby and Tinker' together with 'Professor Simple'.

Some of the other features included 'Billy and Nanny', 'Darktown', 'Kangaroo Twins', 'Merry Monkeys', 'Cheery China Folk' and many more.

With the issue for 29th July, 1934 - the fiftieth incidentally - the supplement was reduced to four pages and was eventually suspended with the issue for 16th December, 1934, having appeared for 70 weeks.

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COUNTRY ATTRACTION by O. W. Wadham

Visiting the small country town of Carterton I found recently that the old shop and the same counter on which I got my boys' papers over 60 years ago was still standing. Carterton, a town of 2,000 people has not changed much in all that time. I was overjoyed to find that the shop had the very same counter that once held my Magnets, Gems, Lot-O-Funs, Chips, and Comic Lives and Union Jacks, was still in place, but all the papers had gone of course, and in their place was a maze of straps, dog collars and general saddlery. No change had been made at all in the layout of the shop - only the leather goods were crammed into it. It was owned 60 years ago by a Mr. Phillpots, who must have long since vanished from this mortal coil, but what pleasant memories it did get from me. I could just picture it those far off days with the journals of my fancy lying around. A dealer in leather goods had moved in, but there was no change in the small shop; quite a pleasant scene to gaze on it again and relive the days of 60 years ago in fancy. May that shop have a long life ahead as a memory site of my young days.
(The above is Mr. Wadham's last article for C.D. As reported elsewhere in this issue, he died recently.)